

Drakensberg Mnweni Circuit Hike

📍 Pins Cave, Okhahlamba Ward 5, Okhahlamba Local Municipality, Uthukela District Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



The 3 day Mnweni Circuit hike in the Drakensberg is regarded as one of the top hikes to do in South Africa in terms of scenery.

What is the Drakensberg 3 day Mnweni Circuit hike all about?

Well allow us to indulge you. If you are looking for a challenging , multi day guided hiking experience in the majestic Drakensberg, then this is the hike for you.

Alright...so let's sort the hikers from the slack packers and the strollers from the rollers and those who trust us from those who don't, because if you don't get the bigger picture of how challenging this hike is today, you're not on this site shopping, you're on it shoplifting. The Drakensberg 3 day Mnweni circuit hike in the Northern Drakensberg is rated as one of the most scenic hikes in the area. Partly due to the remoteness and rugged beauty of the area and partly because of the incredible, towering spires and basalt pinnacles.

The first part of the Drakensberg 3 day Mnweni Circuit hike covers about 15km to the base of the Mnweni Pass. We set up camp in either the cave if its available or tents. No don't be too tents about that. Unless of course you have put on a few extra kilograms and need an extra tent. The second day of the hike sees us slogging our way up the Mnweni Pass to our humble abode for the Knight. Well it won't be for the knight as you are just a humble hiker remember and Sir Lancelot has got an appointment with the past so he won't be able to make it.

The humble abode in mention is known as Ledgars Cave which is situated just below the edge of the escarpment at about 2900m. Accountants seem to love this place and we love spending time with them discussing the pros and cons of diffusing the monosytematical deviations of a bespoke, turnkey solution to control account alterations into real time ledger accounts. See. We don't just hike in the Drakensberg. We also very kleva too. The third day is a 17km descent via Rockeries Pass. The dropping altitude is about 1300m.

How difficult is the Drakensberg 3 day Mnweni circuit hike?

In terms of grading the hike against a typical Drakensberg hike we'd say it has a 7/10 difficulty rating. Not all grading systems are the same. People freak out when they hear 7/10, thinking that the hike is too challenging for them. I mean, an Everest climb for example would be rated as say a 9/10 in terms of severity. We cannot rate the Drakensberg hikes on the same rating system. There are so many different factors to take into consideration between a kick ass high altitude mountain and the Drakensberg.

Having said that, this hike is considered challenging. Let's break it down shall we. We cover 43km in 3 days. So thats say 15km a day on average. And yes you will be hiking with a backpack that weighs about 12kg. So add that into the mix. The trail includes typical upper Drakensberg terrain which means single track paths with lots of small rocks to dodge.

The ascent will involve an altitude gain of say 1200m over 5km, which equates to quite a steep gradient. And of course there is the descent of the same proportions. Not that we are trying to scare you away but this hike should only be attempted by hikers with a moderate level of fitness.

And yes, we want to know that, by completing this challenging Drakensberg hike, you will be helping yourself find perspective on life and NOT become a haughty, hoity, stick it up your toity, high and mighty, tight-nosed, toffee-arsed, sun-dried-tomato-eating lah-de-dah.

Is this a good choice as a first hiking experience?

If you have never hiked before, let alone in the Drakensberg would we suggest you join this hike? No can do. And that is not a place near Khathmandu. As mentioned, the hike is challenging and if you have never experienced a multi day hike covering 45km we suggest maybe starting with a less challenging hike like our 3 day Cathedral Peak hike or even the 3 day 'slack packing' hike in the Amphitheatre region. And if hiking 45km is not your game, then we suggest you order an Aristotle of the most ping pong tiddly in the nuclear sub and get back to your knitting.

About the Mnweni Circuit Hike

So basically the Drakensberg 3 day Mnweni circuit hike a circular route covering about 43km over 3 days/2 nights. The hike is fully guided by one of our area experts and includes the food, tents and hiking equipment. We make our way to the top of the Drakensberg escarpment via the Mnweni Pass. The first days hiking covers 14km to the base of the Pass. Although there is not a major ascent profile, the day is pretty long.

We overnight in tents. The second day will see an ascent up Mnweni Pass. The altitude gain is about 1200m with the majority of the gain in the last 3km.

We top out at 3000m and is known as the Drakensberg escarpment. We spend a night in the incredible cave known as Ledgars. The cave is situated on the lip of the escarpment and affords hikers with not only a majestic view to the North but is a really cool spot to spend the night.

The third day is long. We cover 17km and descend via Rockeries Pass. Again, the worst part of the descent is covered in the first 5km. In fact, we drop about 800m over the 4km. So you might need your knees for this one. Why is it called Rockeries Pass? Well nothing romantic I'm afraid. This famous Drakensberg Pass got its name from hikers because it is strewn with small rocks. So a lot of rock dodging and an occasional roller skating stint, Drakensberg style is the order of the day when descending it.

Plants on the hike? And here's a cool fact. The route is popular with the weed smugglers from Lesotho. Chilled out guys who we occasionally bump into.

And don't worry, they are cool. The only thing they are armed with is colourful language, a feather duster and bad breath We will also encounter a few Basotho Shepards on the escarpment. They are looking after sheep and cows. They only frequent the area in the summer months though.

The average hiking distance and time per day?

Okay, so we would just like to start off with this. We average between 1.5-2km/h on this Drakensberg 3 day Mnweni Circuit Hike, (which includes the rest breaks). So this is where our mathematical degree comes in handy. Let's say we average 14km distance per day. Divide that by 2km per hour and...Robert's your father's brother....7 hours hiking time per day. Savvy?

A fully inclusive guided hiking experience in the Drakensberg

We supply the guides, equipment such as tents, sleeping bags, sleeping mats, backpacks and eating utensils and of course some scrumptious food. the only things you really need to bring on this hike are your clothes, some snacks and an abundance of dad jokes that we can add to our arsenal. And then it's one foot in front of the other as you willingly follow the guide into these ancient mountains.

Who leads the way?

Our Drakensberg hikes are led by experienced mountain guides. They have an intimate association with the mountain, routes and environment. Not only have they guided on some big ass mountains in the Himalayas, Andes and Russia but have led over 500 hikes into the Drakensberg as well.

We not only grew up in the Drakensberg but have been guiding in them for over 20 years. So we have been on the learning curve for a while and like to believe we know what we are doing.

Tour Facts

Group Size:

12

Duration:

3

Language:

English

Tour Type:

fixed

Tour Itinerary

: Day 1

Our meeting point for this Drakensberg 3 Day Mnweni Circuit Hike is located at Mnweni Cultural Centre (google maps) at 9am. Once the group is all here our guides will conduct a briefing and check everyone's pack for illegal contraband such as strawberry flavoured twinkies.

We aim to start the hike by 10am. Today we cover about 14km and set up camp at the base of the Mnweni Pass. The hiking time is usually about 6 hours. So in camp by 4:30pm. We then set up camp, get dinner going, and say hello to the small ants. Dinner is served at say 7pm followed by some good conversation under the stars. We then tuck you into your sleeping bag with your favourite teddy bear and sing sweet lullaby to influence the falling asleep process.

Duration
6 Hours

: Day 2

Wakeup call is at 6am. Breakfast is served by 7:30am. So that give you 1.5 hours to have a wee and pooh, break down the tents and pack your backpacks ready for the days hike. We set off at 8am. Today we slog our way up Mnweni Pass onto the Drakensberg escarpment.

Once we reach the top, we shed a tear or two before taking the 45-minute hike to Ledgars cave-our humble abode for the night. Total hiking time today is about 6 hours covering about 8km. Easy Peasy...not Japanesey. We usually have time for an afternoon siesta in the cave followed by the usually routine of dinner, crying, fending off dragons and bed time

Duration
6 Hours

: Day 3

2 fully clothed Ninjas and 16 red ants will wake us up at 5:30am. Yes, an early wake up I'm afraid. Now why would we be so cruel? Oh yes. Because we have 17km to cover. And the descent of 1300m always brings with it a few whimpering, woe is me souls who shuffle down the mountain in search of enlightenment.

With is usually found at the 78th rock down on the left. So....we have breakfast by 7am and hit the trip by 7:30am. On average, we are back at the car by about 2:30pm where we say goodbye to this incredible Drakensberg 3 Day Mnweni Circuit Hike

Duration
7 Hours