

WILD DOG ESTATE

ESCAPE TO SOUTHERN DRAKENSBERG

The preferred Drakensberg Destination

**UKhahlamba Drakensberg Park
South Africa – World Heritage Site**

Tucked away in the foothills of the Southern Drakensberg, you'll find the towns of Underberg and Himeville, one of the last districts settled by pioneer farmers. An untouched wilderness; it was and still is, the perfect refuge for those seeking to escape the pressures of advancing civilisation, providing solace for the soul and rest for the weary.

The original inhabitants were San (Bushmen) who spent summers in this district and then moved towards the coast to follow game before winter. Nguni splinter groups filtered into the area but it remained scantily inhabited on account of the high altitude and very harsh climate with heavy snowfalls.

And so, even in this 21st century, one can enjoy wild, natural beauty and a gentler pace of life in pristine countryside with rolling farmlands and the backdrop of magnificent mountains.

Welcome to the Southern Berg Escape..... your sanctuary in the Drakensberg.

The Southern Drakensberg forms part of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park, declared a World Heritage Site in November 2000. What makes this declaration so significant, is that it met with criteria for both cultural and natural World Heritage properties. A 130-million-year history is recorded in the evolution of the African continent, before and after the break-up of the Gondwanaland land mass. The escarpment reaches its greatest and most spectacular expression in the form of the Drakensberg Mountains, providing mountain and wetland ecosystems with their full compliment of plants and animals, with many endemic and internationally recognised threatened species which include the high altitude and unique Southern African alpine vegetation and its associated endemic palaeo-invertebrates.

Then there is the world's greatest rock art, treasures of outstanding cultural value. This art represents uniquely, a coherent tradition that embodies the beliefs and cosmology of people, whose cultural traditions are now extinct in the region.

The famous Sani Pass is the only road linking KwaZulu-Natal and the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho, and our registered tour operators offer a historical eco-ethnic cultural "Kingdom to Kingdom" experience. Originally this was a mule track cut into the mountain, and was first negotiated by vehicle in 1948. At 2873m you enter another world, where Basotho herdsmen lead a life untouched by civilisation and the journey to the top in 4X4 vehicles, is an experience not to be missed. A pit-stop at the highest pub in Africa at 2874m, is compulsory to take in the mountain views and possibly sight the Orange Breasted Rock Jumper, Drakensberg Siskin or Bearded Vulture.



Nowadays the Pass also provides a venue for challenging sport events such as the Sani Stagger Endurance Race and mountain bike races, held in November/December each year. Sani Pass is currently undergoing an upgrade and the first 14kms from Himeville will be tarred up to the proposed new South African border post at Good Hope. This upgrade will provide tour busses and visitors a smoother and safer access to the hotel and other accommodation establishments.

Fly-fishing in the Southern Drakensberg must be one of the highlights and is appreciated for its pristine rivers and dams, which can yield wild-spawned trout up to 8lbs-10lbs. The district affords more fly-fishing opportunities than any other district in South Africa, and is the home waters of the Underberg-Himeville Trout Fishing Club, the largest fly-fishing club in the country. Today, it holds the fishing rights to more than 150kms of river and 44 dams with a surface area of more than 400 hectares.

The Southern Drakensberg is a “treasure trove” of nature's delights - boasting a high biodiversity and large numbers of endemic or threatened botanical species. Birdwatchers come here to see rare and uncommon cranes, raptors (the mighty Bearded Vulture & Black Eagle) and mountain grassland species like the Drakensberg Siskin and the Orange-breasted Rockjumper. Some of the oldest rocks in the world are found here, and some very rare Rock Art which is not depicted anywhere else in the Drakensberg mountain range.

There is no shortage of wonderful hiking opportunities, whatever your level of fitness or skill. Grand views, picnic spots and mountain pools await you. The 5-day Giant's Cup Trail starts at Sani Pass and accommodation is provided in overnight huts. In all, there are 26 peaks in the Southern Drakensberg that are higher than the magical 10,000-ft (3050 m) like Hodgson's and Rhino Peaks. Thabana Ntlenyana at 3,482 m, is the highest point in Africa, south of Kilimanjaro.

To bag these peaks, you'll probably need 2 or more days, so bring your tents or choose your cave. The solitude, the views at sunrise over KwaZulu-Natal and the triumph of reaching the top, make for unforgettable experiences. Accesses to these hikes are via KZN Wildlife and a cash entrance fee of R15.00 is charged.

The Southern Drakensberg is the destination for active, outdoor enthusiasts, families who still have traditional values and folk just wanting “time-out”. One of the best ways to experience our grasslands, game and mountain views is on horseback. Another way is on a mountain bike and there are many challenging and scenic routes, which include forests and of course, Sani Pass.

Three golf courses offer stunning mountain views, wildlife, birds, natural water features and are counted as the most beautiful in the country.

The rivers provide visitors with endless hours of fun swimming, tubing, river rafting or canoeing. The Drak Challenge takes place each year in March, and this canoe race down the mighty Mzimkulu River, does take its fair share of sacrifices. It doesn't have a Nyami-Nyami, but it does have some awesome waters.

The famous Splashy Fen music festival, Bell's Fly-Fishing Festival, Classical Music Festival, bike races, equestrian events, golf tournaments, polo games and other sporting events are listed on the Southern Drakensberg District Diary. More information and accommodation options are listed on our website: www.drakensberg.org

