

UMPHAFYA

NATURE RESERVE

Off-site Activity Information Pack



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WEEKEND EXCURSIONS

There are a number of tourist destinations a short drive away from the UmPhafa Nature Reserve where interns can take part in activities and excursions at weekends. These activities and excursions are at the discretion of the Project Coordinators, based on the workload of activities needed on the Reserve, and thus do not take place every weekend. Likewise in the event of a situation arising on the Reserve, they may need to be cancelled at the last minute.

The activities chosen by the majority of the group will take preference and are not compulsory, so those wishing to relax can stay behind on the Reserve.

Interns are personally responsible for the cost of the activities (prices provided in this document may vary as per the latest tariffs of the activity provider). Interns are encouraged to take around £100 per week pocket money, which should be ample to cover these trips, as well as snacks.

Places to visit include the Midlands and Drakensberg, both of which have several activities available.

MIDLANDS

The KwaZulu-Natal Midlands is an area situated halfway between the Drakensberg Mountains and the east coast of South Africa.

This area is a very popular weekend getaway destination for locals looking to get out of the cities and into the countryside. The area boasts many B&Bs, guest houses, restaurants and artisan shops selling many home-made products. The area is renowned for its rolling green hillsides and often misty conditions (just a reminder of back home!).

DRAKENSBERG

The Drakensberg mountain range runs from east to west across a large portion of South Africa. The mountains were initially formed through tectonic plate movement and also have a volcanic rock covering.

The Central Drakensberg boasts the highest peaks in South Africa with the top three being, Champagne Castle (3377m), Njesuthi (3408m), and Mafadi (3450m). This part of the Berg is also a very popular holiday destination for local and international tourists. There are numerous hotels, B&Bs, backpackers, chalets and camping spots all around the Berg and there are stacks of activities to enjoy and good food on offer.



MIDLANDS ACTIVITIES

1. HOWICK FALLS AND TRADITIONAL CRAFT MARKET

The Howick Waterfall is the 4th highest waterfall in South Africa, dropping a total distance of 111m into the uMgeni River below. Howick Falls' other name is KwaNogqaza the 'place of the tall one' – the waterfall is a 95-metre cascade into a broiling, restless pool, regarded by the local Zulu's with grave superstition, and said to be the place of the spirits of ancestors. Local legend believes that in the Pool lives a giant snake-like creature and probably because of this, only sangomas (Zulu witch doctor) are safe close to the Falls.

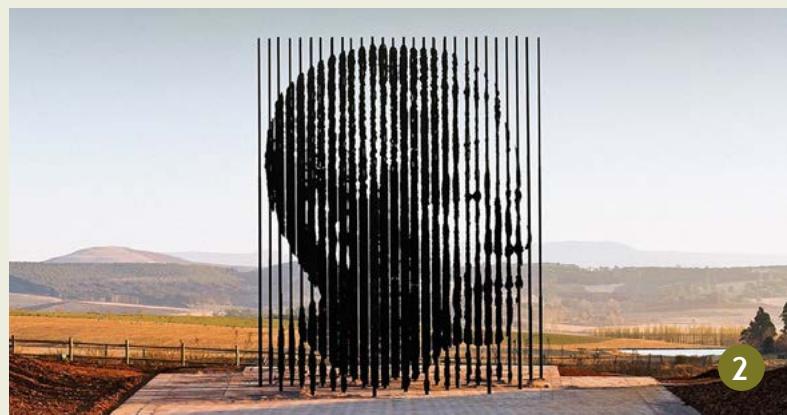
There are 3 different trails with different vantage points for you to enjoy. The local craft market sees local vendors set up in the street selling an array of handcrafted goods made from wood, stone, wire, beads, and also painted and sculpted artworks.



2. MANDELA CAPTURE SITE, MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE

The Mandela Capture Site is situated at the exact location where the authorities of the time first captured Nelson Mandela. Together with this site's historic significance, there is also a museum that takes you through a step-by-step account of Mandela's life during the Apartheid years, his involvement in the "movement", his years spent in prison, and his time as president of South Africa.

A very impressive 3D sculpture is also on show at the site.



Minimum number - 4 people

Full Day Trip

Entry to Mandela site - R180

3. KARKLOOF CANOPY TOURS

The canopy tour is made up of a series of 12 Platforms and 10 Zip-lines – the longest is 200m and you travel from platform to platform in the tree canopy high above the forest floor. The views are spectacular and the thrill of "flying" through the air is nothing short of exhilarating. An added bonus is that you get to spend some time exploring the second largest natural forest in the country, the Karkloof forest.

Booking is essential for this trip as they use time slots, if you are keen, please give us plenty of notice.



4. PIGGLY-WIGGLY

Piggly is a little complex of shops and restaurants that sell a variety of goods, many of them handmade, including: clothing, bath and beauty products, art, candles, furniture, kitchen goods, second hand books, linen, toys, deli goods, leather products and South African wines.

There is also a Belgian chocolate shop and a Reptile Park where you can get up close to some scary animals!



Minimum number - 4 people

Canopy Tour - R850 pp

Take spending money for curios, gifts, lunch

5. EPIC OUTDOOR KARTING

If you feel the need for speed then this may be an option for you, race each other around a 390m outdoor track which has elevation changes that makes consistent lap times difficult to achieve.

Karting Cost:

10mins R180 pp / 20mins R320 pp



There is also a transport cost of R800 which will need to be split between the interns going.

NAMBITI BIG FIVE GAME RESERVE

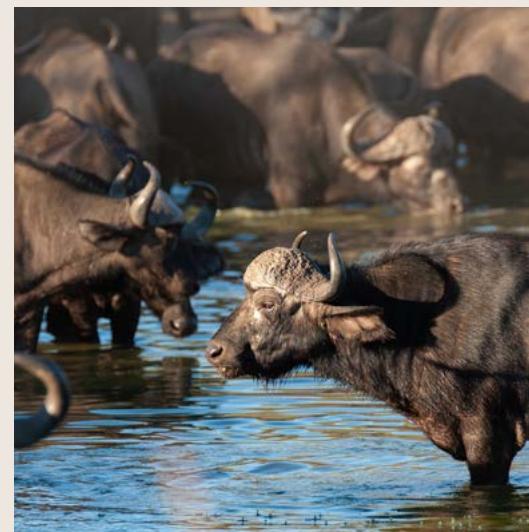
Nambiti is the only game reserve in the area with the Big 5 and currently has over 40 species of game, including cheetah, hippo and hyena.

Minimum number - 4 people

3-hour Game Drive

Trip Cost - R800 pp Includes Conservation Levy

You can also treat yourself to lunch for R150 pp



DRAKENSBERG ACTIVITIES

1. FALCON RIDGE BIRDS OF PREY CENTRE

Falcon Ridge has been operating in the Berg as a breeding and rehabilitation centre for birds of prey. They fly the birds daily in order to keep them fit and as part of their rehabilitation programmes. Located in Champagne Valley it provides an excellent opportunity to see these magnificent birds in action above the majestic Drakensberg Mountains. There are daily shows which include an informative talk and an amazing display of what these raptors are capable of.

Falcon Entrance fee - R150 pp



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2. DRAKENSBERG CANOPY TOURS

Experience nature like never before as you slide through the forest canopy and enjoy a unique birds-eye view of the world around you.

Set within the magnificent Blue Grotto Forest, the Drakensberg Canopy Tour is guaranteed to take your breath away. The forest is home to over 150 species of bird including the rare Bush Blackcap. Led by trained guides, as you glide between platforms perched in trees and on cliff faces, allow your senses to flood with the timeless atmosphere of the indigenous forest, waterfalls and the cascading stream. The tour typically lasts 3 hours after which you will return to the reception to enjoy a well-deserved light meal.

Minimum number - 4 people

Trip Cost - R850 pp



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3. DRAKENSBERG BOYS CHOIR

Spend a few hours with South Africa's singing ambassadors, the Drakensberg Boys Choir is internationally famous for its African flair and for dramatising favourite works such as Shosholoza and night sounds. Definitely worth a visit!

Entrance fee R230

Available dates for a Saturday morning starting at 10.30AM

- Check with coordinators for dates



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4/5/6. ALL OUT ADVENTURES

This centre is situated in the shadow of the Amphitheatre, one of the most impressive peaks in the Berg. The activities on offer here include:

Extreme Cable Tour - Cost R810 pp

On this zip line experience, you can reach speeds of up to 40mph during some of the cables which make up the 900m cable system across the forest!

Paintball - Cost R430 pp

Get your teams ready for a tactical game of war in the forested arena at the adventure centre. Each participant is issued with 200 paintballs. The paintballs can cause welts and bruises so not for the faint hearted. Games typically last 30-45 minutes. Minimum of 2 people.

Quad Tours - Cost R1010 pp

Come and disturb the peace in the mountain valleys with a fully automatic quad bike on a 10-mile trail, including the waterfall challenge, led by an experienced guide. Typically lasts between 1 - 1.5 hours.

Minimum number 4 people

Trip Cost - R140pp plus the cost of the activity you wish to do.



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There is also a transport cost of R500 which will need to be split between the interns going.



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DRAKENSBERG ACTIVITIES - FOOD AND DRINK

After your adventures there are many places to stop and enjoy a lunch, a waffle, a slice of cake, shop for curios or go hiking.

1. CATHEDRAL PEAK WINE TASTING

The first and only wine estate in the Central Drakensberg. Wine tasting is done every day.

Costs – R95 pp and includes 4 wines to choose from



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2. VALLEY BAKERY

Situated in Champagne Valley, the shop is filled with delicious pastries, tarts, cheesecake, bread and much more. A lovely spot for an afternoon coffee and cake or breakfast. Please note it is not open on a Sunday.



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3. THE WAFFLE HUT

The Waffle Hut serves super delicious waffles, pancakes with some unusual but tasty flavours. Or you could enjoy a light lunch or a pizza from their new Pizza Oven.

Also on site is KwaZulu Weavers where you can look at the rugs made on site, as well as candles and other curio items.



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4. THOKOZISA

There are a small number of shops here, including clothing shops, herbal beauty products, a leather shop, a gemstone shop, a wood craft shop and a deli, as well as a wine cellar and restaurant.



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5. HIKING FROM MONK'S COWL

Monk's Cowl, taking its name from the peak sandwiched between towering Champagne Castle and Cathkin mountains, is part of the 260,000-hectare Maloti-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site. Monk's Cowl is the gateway to some of the most magnificent mountain wilderness areas in Africa.

With breath-taking vistas of sweeping grasslands on the lower reaches, to magnificent towering cliffs and waterfalls cascading for hundreds of metres. From Monk's Cowl there are a few walks you can take to explore this stunning scenery.



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There is also a transport cost of R500 which will need to be split between the interns going.

SOMETHING A BIT SPECIAL!

BERG FLYING HELICOPTER FLIPS

A breathtaking way to view the Drakensberg mountains and the stunning scenery below. They do a variety of flights:

Scenic
(15 mins)
Cost- R1700 pp

Champagne Stopover
(20 mins + stopover on the Mountain with Champagne or Appletizer)
Cost- R2800 pp

Round Trip
(40 mins + stopover on the Mountain with Champagne or Appletizer)
Cost- R4400 pp

Champagne to Mweni
(+/- 55 mins + stopover on the Mountain with Champagne or Appletizer)
Cost- R6600 pp

There is also a transport cost of R500 which will need to be split between the interns going.



DRAKENSBERG BALLOONING

This is one of those bucket list items and a once in a lifetime experience. To view the sunrise over the Berg from a hot air balloon is something you will never forget and if the wind is right, you might even be able to see some of the wildlife on a nearby reserve. The flight includes a buffet Champagne breakfast once you're back on the ground!

Scenic
Cost = R3650pp (45-60 mins)

Safari
Cost = R4200 (45-60 mins)

Minimum Number - 4 people but we can contact them and we could add you to a group.

There is also a transport cost of R500 which will need to be split between the interns going.

WEEKENDS AWAY

1. DRAKENSBERG SUN RESORT

Drakensberg Sun is set in a beautiful area in the Cathkin Park range and is a relaxing destination. The hotel offers a bed, dinner and breakfast rate. The activities available at the Resort includes horse riding, canoeing on the lake, some stunning hiking trails around the area using the hotel as a base, as well as a spa and outdoor swimming pool. Recharge those batteries at this luxury hotel.

Costs pp sharing per room are on average R2500 pp per night. Transport cost would be R800 shared by the group.



2. ZINGELA SAFARI & RIVER COMPANY

Zingela is situated in the heart of the wilderness game country. A riverside bush camp nestled on the banks of the Tugela River, Zingela is a place where you can choose from a wide range of activities or simply relax and absorb the breath-taking scenery. They do both self-catering and bed and breakfast, but also there is a main camp on site where you can join for selected meals. All the buildings have been made to fit the environment where they are in situ with the use of natural materials.

Activities include: Rafting R650 / Abseiling R300 / Guided Game Walks R150

Accommodation Costs: from R700 – R2700 (depending on whether you want a safari tent on the edge of the river or a hotel room.)

Additional costs include a R70 conservation levy charged at Zingela, as well as a R500 transport cost for us to get you to Zingela to be shared amongst the group going.



3. AMPHITHEATRE BACKPACKERS

Offers panoramic views over the Northern Drakensberg. The quirky hostel has a rock pool, hot tub and restaurant. Free Wifi is also available. Live music and entertainment are offered on a regular basis. Staying here could be your base to see the highest waterfall in Africa, the largest number of cave paintings and the biggest indigenous forest in the Berg.

Tours / Hiking plus other activities are also on offer for an additional fee with qualified guides.

Costs for a 2 night stay for 2 people would be approx R1700. Transport costs for us to get you to the Backpackers would be R900 shared between those going.



4. DRAGON PEAKS

Dragons Peak Mountain Resort located in the Champagne Valley and situated in the heart of the beautiful Drakensberg Mountains of KwaZulu-Natal. We border the prestigious Ukhahlamba National Heritage Park renowned for both its cultural and geographical significance, as well as some of the finest hiking trails in South Africa.

Dragon Peaks offers self catering facilities comprising 2 – 12 sleepers. There is a restaurant and pub on site, as well as a small shop for your basic needs.

Activities at Dragon Peaks include hiking, horse riding, fishing, swimming plus numerous other activities.

For more information on what they offer visit the Dragon Peaks website for availability and costs.

Please note that there is a charge for transport to get you there which will be R500 split between all interns going.



ADDITIONAL TRIPS

5. ALOE'S MEATS

Trip to Aloe's to purchase speciality meats from South Africa for your Braai!

This has become very popular with our Interns as they wish to try all types of meat from South Africa, not only do they cater for chicken, beef, lamb, pork and ostrich lovers, other meat on offer is: bushpig, crocodile, eland, kudu, zebra, fish, venison, warthog and springbuck.

If you wish to do a trip there to purchase your meats, there is a transport cost of R200 split between all that wish to go. Alternatively ensure you plan a trip on the way back from another off-site activity.

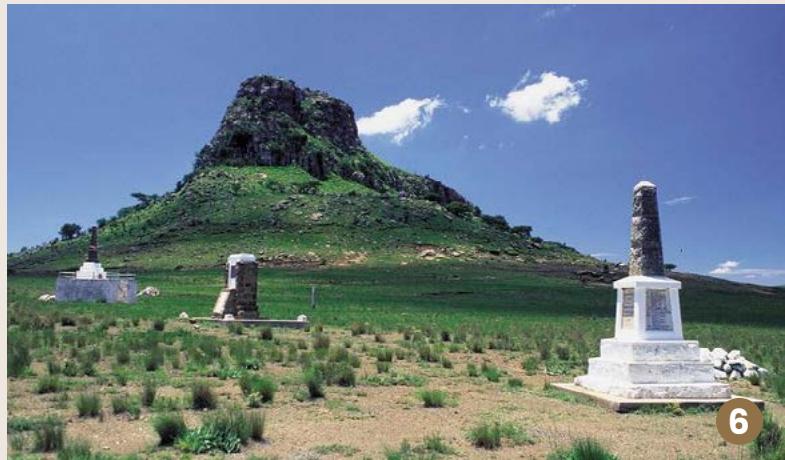


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6. THE BATTLEFIELDS

If you are interested in history then this is a trip for you, learn from knowledgeable Battlefields guides about the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 at the Battle of Isandlwana which was a decisive victory for the Zulu people and caused the defeat of the first British Invasion of Zululand, and then on to the Battle of Rorke's Drift where 11 Victoria Crosses were awarded.

If this is something that interests you, please ask for costs and details.



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7. FREEME WILDLIFE

FreeMe Wildlife is a rehabilitation centre for rescued and injured animals. Based near Howick they have so far reintroduced an African wild cat, 3 spotted eagle owls and 2 large spotted genets to UmPhafa. They have a completely hands off approach to the rehabilitation of their animals which is why they allow no public viewing.

However, as UmPhafa is an introduction site and we are an educational reserve, we have been allowed to make planned visits to see the work they are doing.

They are completely reliant on donations for the work they do – If you do wish to visit, please ensure you make a donation. Between R100 – R200 per person is a usual amount.

Please note that there is a charge for transport to get you there which will be R800 split between all interns going.



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All prices and information is correct at time of publishing (January 2026) and may be subject to change.