

## HODSON'S PEAK CIRCUIT

# PEAK HIGH

## Mountaineering



**Duration:** 3-5 days.

**Venue:** Southern KwaZulu- Natal  
Drakensberg

### **General Information**

Hodson's Peaks are located in the southern

Drakensberg. (note: Hodson's Peaks are sometimes referred to as the Giant's Cup) The southern Drakensberg rises to similar heights as the northern part of the range. There are however fewer freestanding peaks and pinnacles in this area and the overall landscape is more gentle. The lower hills or "Little berg" is not as steep as in the north, which makes for easier cross-country trekking.

The trek starts from the Nature Conservation office at Cobham in the mZimkhulu wilderness area. The route follows good paths to the foot of the Hodson's peaks, then ascends the final few hundred meters on a rough trail to the summit plateau. The main peak has two very distinct summits. It is possible to scramble to the south summit (3256m) via a "C" grade climb and the north summit is a walk (3251m).

The route then heads in a southerly direction along the plateau and descends the mountains via "Stones" Pass or "Minaret Pass" and then back to the starting point. There are many different variations to this route and treks of between 3 and 5 days can be accomplished.

The real feature of this area is the wide pen spaces and amazing sandstone rock formations. There is also an abundance of primitive San/Bushman rock art in many of the caves of this area. The entire trek takes place within the Drakensberg World Heritage Site. Traditional Lesotho herdsmen and boys are often seen along plateau area. These herders tend flocks of sheep in the summer in this area.

### **The Route and some variations**

The start is at Cobham ranger station at 1650 meters. There is a camp site and ablution facilities and a small shop situated here. The trek heads west and then north over the Pholela river, then climbs to Pinnacle Rock at 1988m. Distance 10km. We either camp at this point or walk on to Gxalingenwa cave which is an extra 3 kilometers further. Both places are beautiful overnight stops. The landscape is open grasslands bisected with huge rock formations and fast flowing streams.

On day 2 starting from 1988 meters, the route heads west towards Hodson's and the Masabasuba Pass. The pass follows a route between the two summits and ends on the main Drakensberg plateau at 3050 meters. Distance 10km. The summits can be climbed from this point. The rest of the day the trek goes south along the plateau which forms the South Africa / Lesotho border. There are many possible campsites in this area and the guide chooses a suitable location. The Minaret Pass also descends in this area which is a possible shorter trekking route. This campsite is in wild wilderness area.

Day 3 a short walk along the plateau brings one to Stones Pass summit at 2883 meters. The trail goes down along a rough and winding path to eventually end either at a camping spot at about 2020 meters or at Lakes Cave at 2150 meters. Distance 15km.

Day 4 is an easy hike of 13 kilometers along the Pholela river and is on a good path.

Some possible variations: From just south of Hodgson's Peaks one can descend Minaret Pass and come down past Lakes Cave and walk all the way back to the start the same day. This is a total of three days.

A five day route can also be done by walking further south and spending a night in Sandleni cave at 2800 meters. By doing this, greater time is spend exploring the spectacular summit plateau.

Note: The caves that are used for camping in are not what most people envisage a cave to be. Drakensberg caves are more like huge over-hangs of rock. They are not deep dark tunnels going into the mountain!

### **When to visit**

This trek can be done at anytime of the year. It must be noted that June to September are the colder months with night temperatures often below freezing. Snowfalls can also occur. During the southern African summer the mountains receive afternoon thundershowers and high daytime temperatures. However, cold, wet and windy weather can be encountered at anytime of year!



### **Guided Trekking**

Peak High offers this trek at any time of the year. No set dates are used as each trip is individually put together. Parties could consist of one to as many as ten people in a group.

Unless porters are used, clients are required to carry their own backpacks, equipment and provisions for a 3-5-day round trip. Peak High can provide all communal equipment including stoves, pots, tents, cutlery, food and maps. Extra items such as sleeping bags can be hired for a nominal fee.

Peak High offers a personal door-to-door service including airport transfers to and from Durban. If flying from overseas, all flights land either at Johannesburg or Cape Town from where a connection must be caught to Durban or Pietermaritzburg. All guiding and climbing is done by a professional, certified guide.

### **What to bring**

Clients need to bring the usual personal items, including breathable shell clothing, polar fleeces, large backpack, hiking boots, hat, gloves, flash-light, water-bottle, sun-cream large rucksack, sleeping bag, mattress, cup, plate and cutlery.

### **About Peak High Mountaineering and Gavin:**

**Peak High Mountaineering** is owned by **Gavin Raubenheimer** and has been operating since 1992. The business is registered with Tourism KwaZulu-Natal as a Tour Operator. Gavin Raubenheimer is a certified Mountaineering Instructor (M.I.A.) endorsed by the Mountain Development Trust of SA and the U.I.A.A. He is a NQF National Mountaineering, Cultural and Nature Guide (NQF level 4). Gavin is a past President of the KwaZulu-Natal Section of the Mountain Club of SA. He has been involved in mountain rescue since 1992 and since 2005 has been the Convener of Mountain Rescue in the province. He is sponsored by **first Ascent** outdoor clothing company and by **RAM Mountaineering**.

### **For more information and bookings contact:**

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