

Route description for the Hakerville Forest hikes

1) Blue Duiker Trail- (2,75km Time 1 to 1, 5 hrs) –The Blue Duiker is the smallest of the forest antelope and is rarely seen but its tiny footprints may be seen at stream crossings or on the footpaths. It was hunted by the woodcutters and was considered a real delicacy by them Ideal for younger families. This stroll follows a forest path past ancient saw pits, and fallen Yellow Wood trees, through a fern filled glen up to the Geelstoot Pad. Here the forest opens for a while which is great for bird watching before the trail heads onto Nicos Bos Vark Pad for the last leg home.

2) Bushbuck Trail (6.5km Time 2-3 hours).The Bushbuck is more common and can sometimes be seen if one walks quietly through the forest. It hides up in the dense forest during the day and ventures into the open areas at night. A great walk for slightly older families. The route goes past the saw pits and through a couple of streams with wooden bridges to keep your feet dry. The path joins the Akker Pad before joining the Geelstoot Pad. After that the last leg is on Nicos Bos Vark pad

3) Bush Pig Trail (10km Time 3 to 4 hours) – Bushpigs are herd animals and can be found in groups of up to 20 animals. The evidence of them rooting around for bulbs and edible roots is all over the forest. These animals are dangerous if cornered but are generally heard crashing through the forest undergrowth as they run away. This longer Route follows paths and also the Water Pad. The highlight being a small waterfall and swimming hole at the mid way point. After half way a steady climb brings the hikers out onto the Geelstoot Pad for the amble home via Nicos Bos Vark Pad

The composition of the forest varies, depending on height above sea level, rainfall, soil type, slope and other factors. It is thus classified into eight different forest types, from very dry to very wet. The classification is done according to the combined assessment of moisture regime, ground, shrub and tree flora as well as factors such as tree form and canopy height. Some trees are labelled. Species encountered include ironwood, yellowwood, white pear, stinkwood, Cherrywood, Cape beech and fine examples of Cape ash. Onderbos (black witch-hazel) abounds in the understory and in the wetter parts you will encounter tree ferns. Various climbers (e.g. wild grape), epiphytes (such as old man's beard and tree orchids), ferns (maidenhair fern), lichens and colourful fungi are also found.

The indigenous fauna forms an integral part of the forest. The animals are not often seen but their tracks and droppings are often seen on the walk. Larger mammals include Bush pig, Bushbuck, Blue Duiker, Baboon and Vervet monkeys as well as Leopard and Caracal. Bush pigs are omnivorous and are found in sounders of 6-20 individuals while Bushbuck are either solitary or in pairs. They are nocturnal but are occasionally seen when disturbed during the day. 35-40 species of forest birds are found here, while more are found in areas adjacent to the forest. Species include Knysna Lourie, Narina Trogon, Olive Thrush, Chorister, Cape and Starred Robins. Sound takes priority over sight in the forest, and the birds thus have loud, penetrating calls. Snakes such as the very poisonous boomslang occur but are seldom seen. Its favourite diet is the Knysna dwarf chameleon