

ROUTE DESCRIPTION FOR THE HARKERVILLE FOREST HIKES

1) Blue Duiker Amble - (2,75km Time 1 - 1,5 hours) - 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 which takes you 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 Walk (6.5km Time 2-3 hours) The Bushbuck Walk 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 onto 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. This path joins the Akker Pad before joining the Geelstoot Pad. After that, the last leg is on Nicos Bos Vark pad.

3) Elephant Hike (10km Time 3 to 4 hours) - Elephants 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 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 halfway a steady climb brings the hikers out onto the GeelStoot Pad for the amble home via Nicos Bos Vark Pad.

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.