

GAMKASKLOOF FACT SHEET

Please read these notes very carefully. We cannot account for incorrect assumptions made by hikers:

Gamkaskloof trail is a 3 day, 2 night, fully catered, partial self-carry hiking trail traversing end to end through the remote and isolated Gamkaskloof Valley, otherwise known as 'Die Hel'. You will overnight in restored original farmhouses/cottages or a Safari A-frame camp. Except for lunch on the first day, all meals are provided. Please note that this is not a slackpacking venture, and except in the case of emergency, there is no vehicle support during your hike. For this reason you should be prepared to carry with you everything that you require on the hike, except for meals and bedding/towels which are provided.

Please Note:

- Depending on the type of device you use to measure hiking distances, you might find that the distance you walked differs from ours. We use Strava which is GPS based. If your distance measuring app is a "step counter" be sure that our distances will not be the same.
- Our guide is equipped with a Garmin In Reach satellite communicator, which enables continuous real time text communication in the absence of mobile cellular coverage. Similarly the VW T6 transporter is equipped with the same type of device. This ensures that you are able to establish emergency communication at all times. Although our guides are very experienced and certified, you are ultimately responsible for your own safety.
- We do everything possible to remain in contact with the Farmer's association that extracts water from the Gamkaskloof Dam so that we can synchronize our hikes to ensure that the Gamka River is not flooded with irrigation water at the time of your hike. It has happened before that the farmers deviate from their advertised schedule. If this is the case, you may not be able to safely cross the Gamka River on Day 2. We would then reschedule the hike.

A summary description of the trail is detailed below.

Overall description

The trail difficulty is easy to moderate. Most of the hiking is on reasonably flat terrain and easy going. The ladder is a steep rocky scramble to get you down to the valley floor. You will need hiking poles or a good stick to support your knees on this section. Experience has shown that groups vary – so your descent on this section may take anything from 45 minutes to 2,5 hours. Once on the valley floor there is one more hill to master and then the trail follows reasonably flat jeep tracks. On day 3 you will walk out of the valley floor via Elands Pass, which is a steep switchback jeep track. This portion of the trail may take up to 2.5 hours depending on your level of fitness.

Weather

Our hikes usually span the early summer months and late summer months. Mid summer is generally too hot and winter conditions may include snow and ice. If you are an experienced hiking group we can make exceptions. In hot conditions a minimum of 2 litres of drinking water should be carried and your bottles should be topped up at streams along the way. An empty water bottle is a useless item when you are hot and thirsty. Evenings can be cool, so a set of warm clothing should be carried.

Logistics (please refer to the map provided)

Day 1: You will meet us at 16 Queen Street Calitzdorp where a brief intro and collection of indemnity docs and other preliminaries takes place. Your vehicles are parked on the property which is gated. Our VW T6 Transporter will take you via the magnificent Seweweeks Pass to the head of the trail. This road transport takes about 1,5 hours. You will start walking and after about 3 to 4 hours you will get to the top of Die Leer where you will find a lovely lookout/ picnic spot.

This 'Ladder' part of the hike (Die Leer) is steep and you should take your time, stop frequently and enjoy the spectacular scenery while you catch your breath. It involves a scramble over loose rocks at times and a careful placing of your feet. At the bottom of the 'Ladder' there is a stream for cooling off and replenishing water bottles, then approximately 3km further you get to the overnight accommodation at Boplaas. Dinner consists of a traditional Braai (vegetarian options available) which is brought from Fonteinplaas to your accommodation and either prepared by your guide or yourselves. Drinks and alcoholic beverages can be pre ordered for delivery to Boplaas. Please ask us if you require this add on. Day 1 involves about 17km of walking.

Day 2: From Boplaas you will walk eastward on the valley floor, crossing the Gamka River via a low water concrete drift. You may be required to remove your boots and wade if the river overflows the drift. Shortly after crossing the river you will be met by Piet Joubert who provides a brunch followed by a detailed history tour as you walk towards Fonteinplaas. A detour to a large natural swimming pool in the Gamka River is optional. Fonteinplaas is your next overnight stop, where dinner and breakfast are provided. Fonteinplaas has a well stocked bar for your liquid refreshment. Day 2 involves about 11km of walking.

Day 3: After breakfast at Fonteinplaas you continue eastward for about 6 km to the foot of Elands Pass. Elands Pass is a serpentine road built in the 1950's as part of the first roadway into Die Hel. It is a steep walk and best done with frequent pauses to take in the view westward across the valley to Die Leer in the far distance. At the top of Elands Pass our vehicle will be waiting with ice cold drinks, champagne and sandwiches. The drive back to Calitzdorp takes you along the incredible Otto Du Plessis drive with vast mountain vistas, to the junction with the Swartberg pass, and then back to Calitzdorp. This drive is approximately 3.5 to 4 hours

in duration and the scenery is incredible . You can expect to be back at your vehicle in Calitzdorp at approximately 16:00 on Day 3. Day 3 involves about 13km of walking.

What to pack

This list is not exhaustive, but it is a rough guide to what you should consider carrying. You will be carrying whatever you pack into your bag:

- Food - lunch for day 1, water (2 litres), rehydration sachets, snacks, energy (sweets, dried fruit, nuts, biltong)
- Clothing – good hiking shoes or boots are essential, spare hiking clothes, warm jacket and longs, socks, undies, swimming trunks, small towel, hat, flip flops or comfortable shoes for evenings, anorak / waterproof garment
- Essentials – soap or shower gel (just enough for 2 nights), toothpaste, toothbrush, sanitary items, sunscreen, plasters in case of blisters. Don't forget your medications (if any)
- Kit – pocket knife, phone and charger, pocket torch, sunglasses, matches, toilet roll