

## **Rapids Trail**

The Belfast and Dullstroom areas of Mpumalanga Province are home to some of the most beautiful but little known areas of South Africa. The area sits on the edge of the Drakensberg escarpment where many gurgling brooks start their life as crystal clear streams that flow over stunning waterfalls. The town of Belfast is traditionally associated as a centre of farming but its recent history has been overtaken by the development of open cast coal mining. Not far from the town but a world away from its scarred exploitation by humans lies the natural beauty of the Rapids Trail.

The trail was originally developed by Chris Lerm in the heyday of the Roodepoort Hiking Club and fond memories remain of my early experiences of my walks on this trail. The old South African Railways fibreglass igloo that served as the basecamp and the beautiful riverine forest with its numerous cascades, pools and the magnificent waterfall are just part of those memories that will remain with me into my steep days of recollections of days of hiking in our land.

After many years of neglect and eventual closure the farm changed ownership and 2015 saw the redevelopment and re-opening of this trail.

### **Trail description**

There are two single day trails that form the basis of the new Rapids trail. The Igloo, although still evident is not in use these days by hikers, rather you are now accommodated in a specially built tent camp.

Day 1 – 10km approx.

The trail begins from the camp and very soon you start your ascent up the mountain side. As you ascend stunning views of the gorge and the craggy surrounds come into view. The trail skirts around the high points offering you vistas of weathered rock formations and steep grassy mountainsides strewn with Lichen covered rocks. The final part of the trail takes you steeply down to the Langspruit stream and an easy walk back to your camp.

Day 2 6km

This day of your visit to the Rapids Trail takes you on an exploration of the riverine forest through which the Langspruit stream flows. You cannot but be amazed at the wonderland that has created by the forces of nature over millions of years. Moss covered boulders create obstacles in the stream that in turn create cataracts and deep pools of cool crystal clear water that beckon the brave of you to go for a dip. A myriad of forest vegetation serves to provide excitement to your eyes as you explore along this deep sided gorge that culminates in a visit to the stunning waterfall. From here you retrace your steps crossing numerous bridges along the way as you make your way back to your basecamp and the end of an amazing experience of the wonders of nature.

### **Highlights**

The highlights of this trail must be the gorge through which the Langspruit flows, the magnificent waterfall and the craggy rock peaks. The fact that this trail is relatively close to Gauteng is a bonus.

### **Trail type**

2-day base camp trail

**Accommodation**

Tented camp which sleeps 12 people in a comfortable surroundings (To be completed in July 2015)

Accommodation at the moment in self catering chalets

**Where is it**

Close to the Mpumalanga town of Belfast

Turnoff to farm S25 37.832 E29 57.282

**What should I know about security?**

The Rapids Trail is on a private well-fenced estate on a quiet farm road. No evidence of any security problem exists.

**How fit do I need to be?**

The trails are relatively short and should be managed by persons of moderate fitness level and children from the age of 10.

**Background information**

For those who fancy a more upmarket form of accommodation there are fully equipped self-catering chalets for rent

**Contact details**

**Jacana Travel Marketing and Reservations**

Telephone 0861 522262

Website [www.jacanacollection.co.za](http://www.jacanacollection.co.za)

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