

MIDLANDS HIKING CLUB

NGENWA POOL, MZIMKHULU WILDERNESS AREA - HIKE REPORT



Hike Leader
Brian Henwood



Polela Hut



Giants Cup Trail Route

The Mzimkhulu Wilderness Area extends from the Ezemvelo KZN Cobham Office to the Lesotho border. To the north is the Sani Pass Road and to the south is the Drakensberg Gardens Road. The only access to the Wilderness Area is via a 22km long gravel road from Himeville.

Our meeting point was the recently upgraded Pholela Hut which adjoins the Cobham camping site. The wooden double bunks can comfortably accommodate about 20 hikers. It is the first overnight stopover for hikers doing the Giant's Cup Trail.

Including myself and Sandy, our group of 12 comprised Donald Deane, Di Mason, Sharon and David Hockly, Marlene Conradie, Beth Bester, Kevin Stoffberg, Sue van Malsen, Penny Purchase, and Margaret Kirsten.

Having safely crossed the Pholela River by way of a suspension bridge, kindly provided by Ezemvelo KZN, we headed off in a northerly direction. The first section of the 16km route was a gentle climb up By-pass Ridge to an elevation of 1820 msl. Enroute, we passed a scenic waterfall and in the distance was a large herd of Eland grazing on the first green shoots of spring.

We joined the Giants Cup Trail at the top of the ridge and walked another 2km to our tea break view site. In the valley below was the Sani Pass Hotel and golf course, and further down the road was the Sani Lodge Backpackers.

The next section was a gentle descent over 2km until we reached a shelter where the path then descended steeply down to the Ngenwa Pool on the Gxalingenwa River to a level of around 1650 msl.

This was our lunch break wonderland with large boulders, rock ledges and one of the biggest natural pools in the berg.



The Plateau beyond By-Pass Ridge



Large Boulders Upstream of Ngenwa Pool



Downstream View of Ngenwa Pool

A trip up the Sani Pass on the previous day had revealed an awesome sight. The waterfall as we approached the top was frozen and the flanks were decorated with hundreds of dripping icicles.

So, it was no surprise that the temperature of the Ngenwa Pool was probably below 5 degrees. Nevertheless, three males took the plunge and felt much better once back in the sun.

For the return journey we were planning to follow the Giants Cup Trail route via Dolerite Sill but due to time constraints we returned along By-pass Ridge.