

## A Magical Sunday Meander

**Author:** Amy Jacobs

**Date:** 3rd August 2025

**Location:** Gnome Trail, Karkloof Conservancy, Howick

**Photos:** Various hike members

**Hike Leader:** Margret Kirsten

**Distance:** approx. 14kms



On a slightly frosty Sunday morning, 15 bright-eyed hikers gathered at the entrance to Amber Ridge, ready to stretch their legs and breathe in some fresh forest air. With a cheerful warning from our fearless hike leader to *"watch out for runners and cyclists!"* still echoing in our ears, we set off along the whimsically named **Gnome Trail**.



The path led us over a bubbling stream and into a mix of pine and eucalyptus plantations, alternating like nature couldn't quite make up her mind. As we steadily climbed, jackets came off, chatter grew louder, and so did our anticipation for the views ahead.

Eventually, the trees gave way to a clearing where the old **fire lookout hut** stood proudly. We soaked up the sunshine, recharged with snacks, and naturally—posed for the group photo (because if there's no

photo, did the hike even happen?)



From there, it was downhill into a grove of young eucalyptus trees, and then... we met **The Gnome**. Yes, *that* gnome. With his slightly lopsided grin and a broken bicycle, he graciously welcomed us for lunch. While he tinkered with his ride, we enjoyed our sandwiches and a good laugh—definitely a contender for most charming lunch spot of the season.



After a relaxed break, we continued the loop, crossing a sluice wall and wandering alongside the stream. Here, to our surprise and delight, we stumbled across **two peach trees in full bloom**—a little burst of spring in the middle of August! The group consensus? Definitely peach trees. Probably.

Winding our way around the blossoms, we climbed again into a shaded pine forest—thankfully cooler as the day warmed up more than expected. The scent of pine, the crunch of gravel, and the occasional bird call made for a peaceful end to our trek.

And so, with happy hearts and mildly tired feet, all 15 hikers returned safely to the starting point—no gnome left behind.

