

# The Wonderful World of Weeds – A Lesson in Foraging

**Location:** Howick, KZN

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**Photos:** Various



One bright and sunny morning, a group of (slightly mad) hikers gathered on the outskirts of the mostly picturesque village of Howick — gateway to the KZN Midlands — for a hike with a twist. This was not just a walk through rolling countryside, but a chance to see the landscape through new eyes, guided by edible-weed expert (and local legend) Nikki Brighton.



Nikki, accompanied by her ever-present assistant Bean met us at various points along the route. Our first stop was where the path opened onto a dirt road still frequently used by locals. Here we lingered for nearly half an hour as Nikki introduced us to an impressive array of edible “weeds,” many with remarkable nutritional and medicinal properties and long histories of use as muti. From dandelions to brambles, we sampled leaves and seeds whose flavours ranged from bitter to zingy, and everything in between.



Between lessons, a few keen-eyed hikers were thrilled to stumble upon a bounty of ripe gooseberries — a sweet reminder that the trail itself was very much part of the classroom.



After bidding Nikki and Bean farewell for the moment, we continued along a route that



meandered beside Symmonds Stream, climbed above Eagle Ridge, and eventually joined the Curries Post Road. From there, the ascent to Beacon Hill rewarded us with spectacular panoramic views of Midmar Dam, Howick, and as far as Hilton College. And then there was the heat. It was *hot*. Every scrap of shade was treasured, though few and far between. After a welcome hydration (and tea) break, we descended towards the paths along the uMngeni River, where Nikki and Bean rejoined us for another fascinating foraging session. Nikki’s depth of knowledge was nothing short of astounding, while Bean, clearly unimpressed by the temperature, kept a vigilant eye out for shade — cooling off in the water only once, and very deliberately.



A leisurely stroll along the river led to a quick lunch stop before tackling what many hikers agree is the least enjoyable terrain of all: hot tar through the streets of Howick. Still, spirits remained high, and the promise of a cold drink kept us moving. The hike ended on a refreshing note at the Treatery, where tired legs and warm hikers were suitably revived. A big thank you to Nikki for generously sharing her knowledge, and a warm welcome to the three new club members who joined us on this hike. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day out — educational, scenic, and memorably hot.

