

Henley Lapa Overnight Hike

Date: 22 February 2026

Start Time: 06:30

Distance: 11.3 km

Hikers Present: 6 [including Hike Leader]

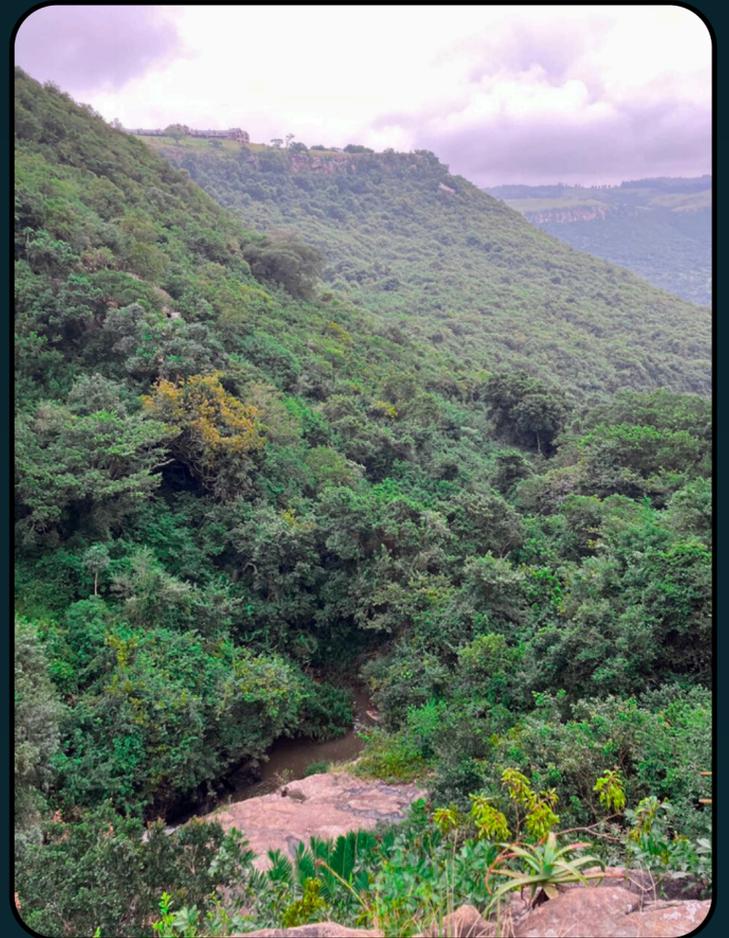
Hike Leader: Janna de Gouveia

Venue: Hilton College Nature Reserve

The Hike That Nearly Wasn't...

This was the hike that almost didn't happen! We had planned a dreamy weekend of tented camping at the Henley Lapa on the Hilton College estate — stars above, campfire glow, the whole storybook scene.

But Mother Nature had other plans. Heavy rains and a dramatic thunderstorm rolled in, making overnight camping unsafe. So, in true seasoned-hiker style, we pivoted effortlessly and turned it into a Sunday morning day hike instead. And what a great decision that turned out to be!



A Wild and Wonderful Slow Wander

Although our group was small — just six hikers — the morning felt rich and full. The reserve gifted us with sightings of Nyala, Giraffe, Warthog, Impala, and a sprinkle of other game along the way.

The trails were slippery, and there was more sliding than striding at times, but the weather was gentle. Cloud cover kept things cool, and we were grateful not to be roasting in full sun.

🌿 Gwens Waterfalls: At Full Force & Full Beauty

The Gwens waterfalls absolutely did not disappoint. After all the rain, they were roaring with energy — a spectacular show of whitewater and mist.

We took a well-deserved break perched on the rocks overlooking the pools of Gwens 2, soaking up the sound of gushing water while the sun tried (and almost succeeded!) to tease its way through the clouds.



🌲 The Climb Back: Tough but Terrific

The return route through the plantations delivered a genuine workout. This hike lulls you in with a lovely decline... before reminding you rather pointedly that what goes down must climb back up. But the conversation was pure top-tier quality — the kind that makes the tough parts feel surprisingly manageable. We chatted, laughed, reflected, and before we knew it, we were back at the cars wondering where the time had gone.

☀️ Final Thoughts

What started as a thwarted camping trip turned into a truly memorable hike — full of wildlife, waterfalls, camaraderie, and just enough mud to make it all properly adventurous. Sometimes the best experiences are the ones that come from a last-minute pivot... and this was definitely one of them.