

BAVIAANS CANYON TRAIL

11-17 April 2026



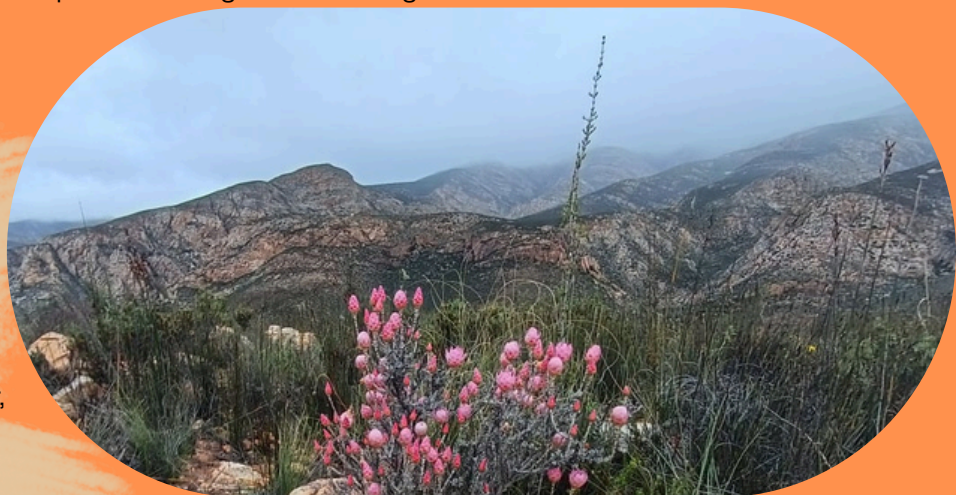
With our arrival at the base camp the excitement was palpable as we prepared for the Baviaans Canyon Trail, boxes scattered, gear piled high, and the familiar frenzy of last-minute packing. Anticipation of the rugged cliffs and canyons with hidden pools ahead, kept spirits high, even as we wrestled with what to squeeze in and what to leave behind.

Our spirits were lifted by Ina and Jan's warm hospitality, a lamb feast cooked over the fire, with a creamy potato salad, followed by a rich chocolate brownie that made the perfect ending to the evening before the start of the trail.

Day 1

If you have ever found yourself daydreaming in front of mountains, imagining what it would be like to hike along their summits, the Baviaans Canyon Trail is a dream realised. From the outset, the route lifts you high onto the mountains and keeps you there, allowing the dust and noise of city life to fall away.

In its place comes the clarity of clean mountain air, the subtle fragrance of indigenous fynbos, and a profound, almost tangible silence that fills the landscape. Technically, Day 1 offers both challenge and reward. Within the first hour, hikers traverse the ancient African Plateau, greeted by uninterrupted 360-degree views across the vast Baviaanskloof.



The rugged flanks of the Cape Fold Belt dominate the horizon, their formations dating back more than 450 million years, shaped during the Gondwana collision and forming the dramatic backbone of this remarkable terrain. The day's walk covers approximately 17.5 km, with a total ascent of around 800 metres and a descent of 778 metres—figures that remain somewhat provisional as the trail is still being developed and refined based on feedback from early groups.

Two significant climbs define the day: an initial ascent onto the plateau, followed by a second major climb midway through the route. Both are balanced by rewarding descents and expansive views that continually reveal the scale and grandeur of the kloof. Around the halfway mark, Gabriel's Pools provides a welcome shaded rest point—an ideal place to pause, cool down, and gather energy before continuing.

Key highlights include Kudu Corner (1.7 km), Grysbok Kloof (6.5 km), Leopard's Rest (8.6 km), Gabriel's Pools (9.4 km), Hunter's View (11.2 km), and Dragon's Ridge (12.6 km). As shared in the podcast by the two brothers who developed the trail, their vision is clear, the Baviaans Canyon Trail is designed to elevate you—to place you high above and fully immerse you in the sheer magnitude of the Baviaanskloof.

For those who may find the repeated ascents more demanding than anticipated. Day 1 set the tone for what lies ahead. We were fortunate to be welcomed by a mountain in one of its most memorable moods—a shifting, mist-laden landscape that added both drama and mystery to the experience.

#moodymistymountain.

This is only the beginning; the next four days promise an adventure of remarkable depth, beauty, and perspective.

(Day 1– By Alta Keyter)

Day 2

After our first night at Cedar Camp, marked by a delicious braai and a warm fire, we set out early the next morning to tackle the day's first challenge—the Red Cliffs. The steep ascent covered a short distance but quickly gained height, rewarding us with sweeping views from the top. As we climbed, the calls of baboons echoed through the valley, announcing the start of their day alongside ours.

The trail carried us along the ridge, offering breathtaking views before descending into Ghonpa Kloof. Our

final 5 km wound through Bird Song Valley, where the sounds of nature accompanied us. Arriving at Kudu Camp, the sight of the pool was a welcome relief for our tired feet. That evening, after celebrating Rebecca's birthday, A clear night's sky offered an ideal moment to admire the stars and catch glimpses of shooting stars streaking across the sky.

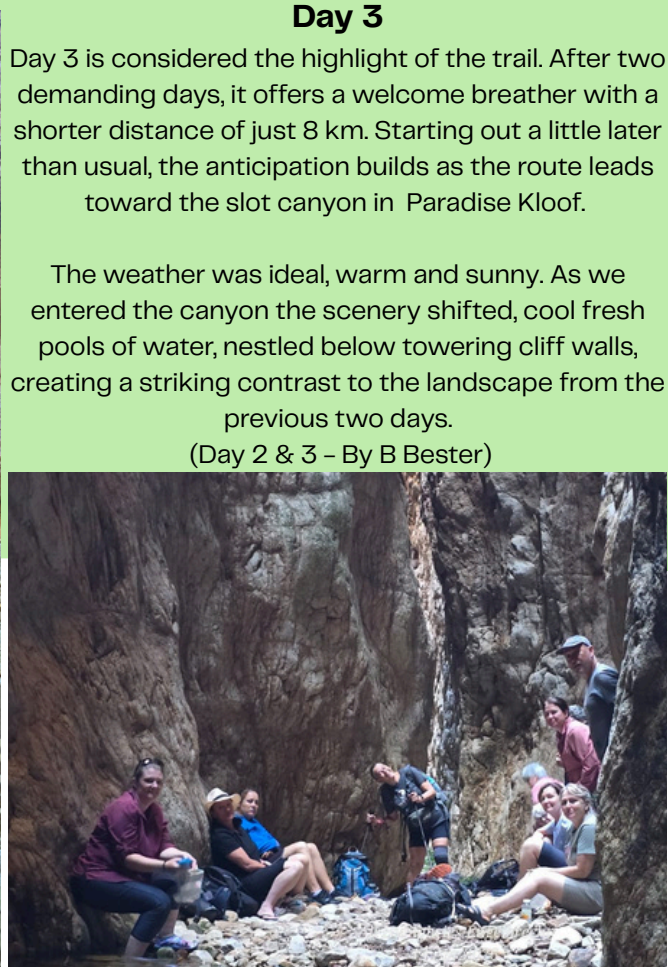


Day 3

Day 3 is considered the highlight of the trail. After two demanding days, it offers a welcome breather with a shorter distance of just 8 km. Starting out a little later than usual, the anticipation builds as the route leads toward the slot canyon in Paradise Kloof.

The weather was ideal, warm and sunny. As we entered the canyon the scenery shifted, cool fresh pools of water, nestled below towering cliff walls, creating a striking contrast to the landscape from the previous two days.

(Day 2 & 3 - By B Bester)



Day 4

Began with the kind of confidence usually reserved for people who haven't yet checked the elevation profile. Leaving Savannah Camp, we strolled cheerfully through towering aloes, blissfully unaware that the trail was about to humble us in spectacular fashion.

The gentle start soon gave way to a relentless climb onto the African Plateau, the kind that makes you question your life choices but also rewards you with views so vast they almost make up for it. Almost. Then came the creatively named "What Goes Down" (ominous in hindsight), immediately followed by "Must Come Up," where we zigzagged down one mountain and straight up another like determined, slightly dehydrated ants. Breaks became sacred, offering both a chance to admire the scenery and to confirm we were, in fact, still alive.



Just when we thought we'd found our rhythm, the "Dropoff" arrived... less a trail, more a character-building exercise involving ladders and selective vision. The agreed strategy was simple: don't look down and trust the ladders like old friends. Watching everyone descend was its own form of entertainment, ranging from elegant poise to something best described as interpretive panic. The "Playground" section followed, which felt like a generous use of the word "play," unless your idea of fun involves more ladders and creative scrambling over, around and between various sized boulders. All the while, canyon walls loomed dramatically above us, as if quietly judging our efforts.

With some lukewarm "encouragement" from the path crew (equal parts motivation and mild intimidation), we hopped and wobbled across a riverbed of ever-changing stones, our energy levels steadily declining. Just as we began to suspect the trail might actually go on forever, it threw in one final "up & over" for good measure because why not. And then, as if conjured by sheer desperation, camp appeared! We made a beeline for the pool, dunking our thoroughly betrayed feet and basking in that special mix of exhaustion, triumph, and mild delusion that had us pretending that the Day 5 was a long way away.

(Day 4 by Amy Jacobs)



Day 5

Our final early morning start, beginning with a steep zig-zag climb up a hill named Morning Glory. At the summit, sweeping views invited us to pause, reflect, and savor the beauty of our last day on the trail. Rebecca even added a touch of humor with some impromptu trail maintenance along the way.

Our final stretch led us through Leopards Kloof. After the boulders and ladders of previous days, this gentler path, framed by striking orange cliffs, felt like a fitting, graceful conclusion. As we rounded the corner and the fence came into view, a tinge of disappointment reminded us the journey was ending. Yet the warm, jubilant welcome from the staff quickly lifted our spirits. Together, we took turns to ring the bell in celebration, marking the completion of 77 km of unforgettable trail.

(Day 5 by B Bester)

