

# Firetower Hike, Howick Forests

Leader: Iain

Date: 25 April 2026

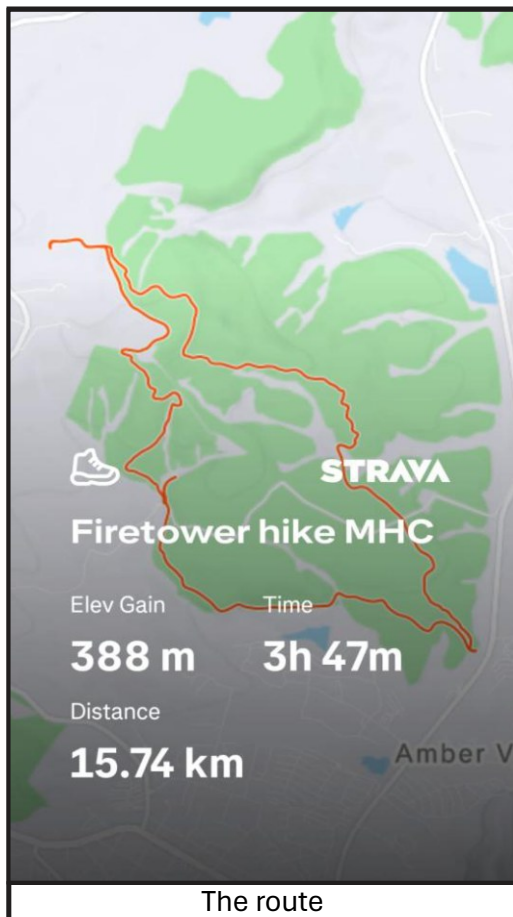
Distance: 15,74 km, Ascent 388m

Weather: Cool and Sunny with a light breeze (Max. Temp 25 degr C)

Number of hikers: 6

Severity of hike: A moderate hike up to the Sappi firetower using little used mountain bike (MTB) trails, with a stop at the dams located next to Alex's Alley.

Report by: Iain



The route



The Profile

Sappi have just opened the trails within the last week after harvesting. At the start of the hike the scenery was quite bleak after the burning of the trash resulting from harvesting operations, with half burnt branches and logs strewn across the landscape. Conditions were cool at the start. Ideal for a hike that starts with a long gradual climb up to the top of the hill.



Newly planted Eucalyptus tree



Our small group of hikers

We followed the following mountain bike trails, the names of which raises questions as to how those names were derived. They hark back to the days of the Howick Mountain bike club which existed up until 2020, before it was absorbed into the Karkloof Country Club. Rushalot was challenging in places – slippery and steep. Obviously built as a downhill MTB track, hence the name.

1. <u>Hyslops</u>	10. Sheep's Pass
2. Pines Extension	11. Face Extension
3. Bushbuck	12. Yebo
4. <u>Rushalot</u>	13. Duiker's Drift
5. <u>Haibo</u>	14. Mike's Lights
6. Crank Alley	15. Grassy Road
7. Kathryns	16. Nyaga <u>Nyaga</u>
8. Up some More	17. More Nyaga <u>Nyaga</u>
9. Alex's Alley	18. New Track Ext.

Going up crank Alley, I imagined cyclists knocking their cranks against the rocks or alternatively, cranking their bikes up the path. Alex's Alley is named after the farmer who owns the farm on which the dams are located.



At the top of Haibo



Coffee break at the tower



Happy hikers at the highest point on the route

We enjoyed a brief respite at the tower after hauling our bodies up Kathryn's around rocks strewn in the path and then headed down to the dams via Up some More, in this case down some more.



The dams located alongside Alex's Alley



Lunch at the dam

The trek down to our start outside Amber Ridge gate was along paths that have not been maintained for a long time and we had to trudge over sticks and leaves that littered the path all the way down. We made good time and were back at the cars by about 12H30. Good company, good weather and interesting trails made it another exhilarating and memorable outing in our local natural environment.

Photo credits: Mary and Iain