

5 South African hiking trails to explore this Easter Weekend

As South Africans are, once again, able to travel domestically under lockdown Level 1, the upcoming Easter Weekend offers the perfect opportunity to explore all there is to love and enjoy about South Africa.

Evan Sparks, co-founder and managing director at Afritrails, says travellers should maximise on the last warm days before winter. “During alert Level 3, which was re-implemented in December 2020, travellers were not allowed to enjoy the country’s beautiful beaches, rivers, dams and public parks. The Easter Weekend will allow such travellers to enjoy what they could not enjoy under alert Level 3,” adds Sparks.



Base Camp - © Cazzie Rae

Here are the five South African hiking trails to explore over the Easter Weekend.

Mosamane Trail

The Mosamane Hiking Trail is not too difficult and is suitable for both adults and children over the age of 12, making for a great family activity.

Located in the Free State, this eight-kilometre-long trail starts on Beatrix farm near Rosendal, a converted barn where hikers wanting to spend the night or weekend are accommodated.

As you travel through the grasslands and dongas, you will see streams and waterfalls that run off the rocks and wildflowers that bloom in spring. This shady trail will be thoroughly enjoyed by all who take part.

The Amatola Trail

Found near a small town in the Eastern Cape, Hogsback, the Amatola Trail is an amazing hike that is commonly viewed as the toughest and best hiking trail in South Africa. With a length of 100km, the trail starts at Maden Dam and finishes in Hogsback. The hikes are six days and five nights long, with you sleeping in a hut every night, walking an average time of seven hours per day and covering distances between 14-20km.

If you are a fan of hiking, exploring and observing nature, you will enjoy the Amatola Trail experience as you walk through the rain forest, mountains and pass many waterfalls, fields, pools and lookouts.



Amatola - © Matt Shaw

Mphongolo Trail

Situated in the Kruger National Park, the Mphongolo Trail is the perfect fit for backpackers. It starts from Shingwedzi Camp and takes place in the large wilderness area between the Shingwedzi and Mphongolo rivers.

The trail stretches over four days and three nights, allowing its participants to spend their nights in this wilderness area without having the constraints of having to get to the next point or of following a set route.

Guests are expected to provide their camping equipment and food for the duration of the trail as there are no overnight huts on this trail.



Mphongolo - © Maris D Bruyn

Chokka Trail

The Chokka Trail is a diverse coastal hike in the greater St Francis area (Oyster Bay, St Francis and Cape St Francis) of the Eastern Cape.

On this trail, hikers will encounter fishermen's footpaths, jeep tracks, a dune field, coastal forest and thicket as well as the rugged coastline around the southeasternmost point of Africa. In addition, hikers will pay a visit to Port St Francis, a working harbour and home to the Chokka fleet, where they do calamari tasting, as well as a sunset cruise on the famous St Francis canals.

The hike is four days and three nights and is ideal for novice and older hikers. It is guided by the owner on day two, three and four, fully catered for and includes luggage transfers.



Chokka

Base Camp Trail

Located in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, in KwaZulu-Natal, the Base Camp Trail is four days and three nights' hike.

Hikers will be given a true South African experience of sleeping in the African bush, walking in the untouched wilderness area and have the opportunity of close up sightings and encounters with the 'Big Five' and other wild animals.

Throughout this trail, hikers are accompanied by an armed trails officer and a field ranger, who will guide and protect them on their ventures but will also ensure that their experience is all-encompassing as they part their knowledge about the land and history of the region.

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