

three tree hill

history • nature • culture

THREE TREES EXPERIENCES

EXPERIENCES FROM THE LODGE

GUIDED EXPERIENCES

All guided experiences must be pre-booked & are subject to guide availability.

Please allow yourself enough time to enjoy the lodge surroundings and facilities when making your reservation.

Recommended minimum stay is 3 nights.

Please pre-book to avoid disappointment.

Nature Walk - Trails (ranging between 2 – 9km) on the farm can be arranged with a guide free of charge. This is a particularly great activity for families with young children that may not join the Game Walk in the reserve. It is an interpretive experience, that focuses on the small things – plants, insects, tracking & sometimes even game spotting. (FREE OF CHARGE)

Mountain Bike Rides - Exhilarating mountain bike trails on the farm snake through the hills, following narrow single tracks. For casual riders a gentle free-wheel down to the village is also memorable. Bikes, helmets & gloves are available for the use of guests. Guided trails range between 2km – 20km. Cost is for the day (R740 per person – 2026) (R815 per person – 2027)

Game Walks - Bush walks in the neighbouring Spioenkop Game Reserve can be pre-arranged with our resident guides. These are more strenuous than the Nature Trails on the farm, as the route does not follow a set trail. Uneven, rocky, hilly terrain will be encountered and walks may last between 1.5 – 3 hours, depending on the game distribution. Maximum number of people is 8. Minimum charge is 2 persons. Unfortunately, no children under 12 years allowed. (R865 per person – 2026) . (R950 per person – 2027)

Guided Horse Trail Riding - Trail Rides can be arranged to suit the experience and pace of the riders. Inexperienced rides are approximately 30 – 45 minutes, while experienced rides 60 – 90 minutes. English-style saddles with snaffle bridles are used. Hard helmets are compulsory. These are provided. Rides are taken on the working cattle farm, adjacent to the game reserve, where game may be seen from time to time. Maximum weight limit 90kg (R1 024 per person – 2026) (R1 125 per person – 2027)

Three Tree Hill Artillery Trail

This is a fantastic battlefield option for families with children, since it involves a gentle stroll (5km) to the summit of Three Tree Hill, which was captured on the 20th January 1900 and became General Warren's headquarters. An abbreviated version (approximately 2 hours) of the Spioenkop Tour. Spectacular views of Spioenkop from the firing positions of the British. (R750 per person – 2026) (R825 per person – 2027)

Hambrook Village Excursion

(by Bicycle or Vehicle) A truly authentic experience with one of the Three Trees staff members who takes you to the nearby village (8km down the road) for a look into the lives of the Hambrook residents. (R740 per person – 2026) (R815 per person – 2027)

SELF-GUIDED EXPERIENCES

Who needs a guide when there are so many great things to do on your own!

Nature Walking Trails on marked routes (ranging between 2 – 9km) on the working cattle farm, adjacent to the reserve.

Sundowners at a beautiful look-out towards the Drakensberg Mountains & Spioenkop dam. Arrange at afternoon tea with service staff or reception.

Relax beside the pool, on your own room verandah or on the viewing deck under the large Acacia tree.

Read the multitude of Africana, Natural history, political & inspirational biographies in the Molly Blackburn Library, which holds over 3000 books.

Play at the children's adventure area – trampoline, jungle gym, swing ball, slide, swings, sand pit & Fantasy House

Mountain bikes are available for the use of guests at a nominal rental fee. Cycling down the road & around through the village or tackling one of the more technical routes on the farm.

Birding is rewarding in both the summer and winter months, with a bird list of 270 species, provided in your room.

Picnic at the Magic Faraway Tree or Old Kraal (600m from the lodge) with a lunch provided by the lodge. Please arrange with reception or service staff evening before the picnic.

Yoga Mats are available in all rooms, should you wish to do your own vinyasa in the privacy of your room or out on the viewing deck surrounded by nature.

Rangeworthy Cemetery holds the graves of those killed in the battles of iNtabamnyama & Bastion Hill. Follow the road by foot(or Bicycle Ride) out from the lodge back towards the village. There is even a Geocache hidden here... This trip to Rangeworthy Cemetery 3km down the road (and back up again!) can be done by vehicle, on foot or by bicycle.

GUIDED BATTLEFIELD TOURS

Please note that it is essential to pre-book battlefield tours should you be particularly interested. We do not run every single tour type every day, and our guides may already be committed. Please speak to someone in the reception to arrange.

The American Professor Shelby Foot said, 'You cannot hope to understand the American people without understanding the Civil War.' It could likewise be said that you have little chance of understanding modern South Africa and South African people if have no understanding of the South African War, aka the Great Anglo-Boer War.

Three Tree Hill Lodge (formerly known as Three Trees at Spioenkop) specializes in the history of the South African War, (2nd Anglo-Boer War 1899 – 1902) with the Battle of Spioenkop being our focal point. One cannot however hope to understand this watershed event (not just for South Africa, but also for Great Britain, being the 'the longest, the costliest, the bloodiest and most humiliating war that Britain fought in between 1815 and 1914') without studying what caused one of the smallest countries in the world to declare war on the world's greatest empire of the time. Our guides, bring this dramatic period of our history to life, presenting world class, holistic, evocative and insightful tours.

1. Battle of Spioenkop – Three Trees Flagship Tour – half-day(4hours) This tour tells of the bloodiest single day of the entire South African War. During January, General Sir Redvers Buller was joined by Lt General Sir Charles Warren, but their renewed attempts to breach the Boer defense line along the Thukela River were unsuccessful. Spioenkop was the highest point on the Boer defensive line and on 23 January 1900, a British attempt to capture it began. Astonishingly, Louis Botha, Winston Churchill and Mohandas Ghandi all played a role in this battle. The result of this battle confirmed that those early disasters of 'Black Week' were not merely beginners luck on the part of the Boers. Spioenkop, together with Majuba, are arguably the best known of all the battles between the British and the Boers.

2. Battle of Colenso & Churchill's Capture – half day (4 hours)

The Boers, in response to the anticipated arrival of thousands of British troops in Durban, took up defensive positions along the Thukela River near Colenso. In mid-December a British force of over 15,000 men, under Sir Redvers Buller, suffered a humiliating defeat in attempting to break through to Ladysmith. In this battle 7 Victoria Crosses were won, contributing to two of only three father & son VCs ever to be awarded. Young Winston was contracted by the Morning Post to cover the war in South Africa. However, his capture near Frere and subsequent remarkable escape, thrust him into the political and public limelight, and arguably launched his political career. Less than a year later, aged 25, he became a MP for Oldham.

3. Ladysmith Siege, Battle of Caesar's Camp & Wagon Point – half day (4 hours)

The siege of Ladysmith lasted 118 days from 02 November 1899 until 28 February 1900. The town was the northern post of the British garrison in Natal, chosen for its strategic position

on the Klip River and the junction of the railway lines from Durban to both the Free State and Johannesburg, providing communications between the harbour and the interior.

4. Three Tree Hill Artillery Trail – 2 hours by foot – Suitable for children under 16 years
This 5km (return) walking trail to the site of General Warren's Camp, provides you with spectacular views of the Drakensberg & Spioenkop from the British perspective. Opportunity to visit all 16 marked gun placement sites.

5. Anglo-Zulu War Tours: Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift – full day (10 hours) The British army under Lord Chelmsford had moved from the Eastern Cape border to the Zululand border during 1878. When the British ultimatum to the Zulu king, Cetshwayo, expired in January 1879, the British invaded Zululand in three separate columns. The Battle of Isandlwana took place when the central British column came into contact with the Zulus and suffered a humiliating and bloody defeat at the hands of a spirited Zulu army.

6. Battle of Blood River 1838, Battles of Talana & Elandsplaagte – full day (10 hours) In 1838, the mighty Zulu army was defeated for the first time by the Voortrekker Commando under their leader, Andries Pretorius, hereby opening the way for the proclamation of the first Boer Republic – The Republic of Natalia. Talana was the Boers opening gambit in Natal, and although hailed as a British success, it was a pyrrhic victory with the Boers withdrawing in good order, leaving major casualties on the British side, including their general. Elandsplaagte, fought the next day, was, after a bloody struggle, a decisive British victory. It may be considered to be the last of the set piece battles of the war. Curiously, having driven the Boers from the railway line, the British immediately withdrew, allowing the Boers to re-occupy it.

Options to do Thukela Heights, Vaalkrans or any other Voortrekker sites can be arranged on request.

What to expect:

Half day tours begin either at 08h30 & return around 13h00 for lunch or begin after lunch around 13h30 & return at sunset around 18h00. Times will be determined by guest numbers on the tours. Full day tours will depart at 07h00 & return around sunset.

Picnic lunches & refreshments are included on the tours. However, it is possible to dine at eateries on the battlefields route at your own cost.

A small amount of walking on fairly uneven terrain is required, so comfortable walking shoes are recommended. Sunscreen, sunhat & sunglasses are always required, winter or summer. Light fleece or jacket to be taken during all seasons. Light rain or wind proof jacket also recommended. Binoculars are recommended if you have an interest in nature, as you never know what might be encountered whilst on tour. Children under 16 years will not enjoy the full or half day tour. We recommend the 5km Artillery Trail as an alternative.

PRICES

Half Day Tours 1,2,3 – R1 680 per person (2026) R1 850 per person (2027)
per half day tour (minimum charge 2 persons)

Tour 4 – R750 per person (2026) R825 per person (2027)

Full Day Tours 5, 6 – R15 715 per tour (2026) R17 300 per tour (2027)
for the guide & vehicle (1 – 6 persons)

These tours may be outsourced depending on expert guide availability.

EXPERIENCES NEARBY (within an hours' drive)

We recommend a combination of these for day-trips out into the area with your own vehicle. Best to focus on one area at a time to truly enjoy the region and what it has to offer.

Please enquire at the reception should you need maps, directions or telephone numbers. If possible, let us know the evening before, should you require a picnic lunch.

Northern Drakensberg Area (Royal Natal Park) - 60km

Un-parallelled natural beauty in the mountains with hikes ranging between 1 hour - 7 hours.
(R160 per adult, R80 per child entrance)

Walk (or stroll with a push chair / wheelchair) to the **Cascades waterfall** (1,6km - 1 hour)
Smooth, concreted walkway alongside the Mahai stream, under the shade of giant yellow wood trees. Remember to pack your costume for a refreshing swim at the end!

Hike alongside the Tukhela River until you reach the **Tukhela Gorge** (14km – 5/6 hours), where the world's highest waterfall tumbles down the sheer rock face (can only be seen in summer) Route goes through alternative sections of protea veld & forest until the gorge is reached.

All Out Adventure Centre provides entertainment for the whole family ranging from quad bike trails, extreme cable tours, bridge swinging, paintball & mountain biking. (Various package deals available)

The Forest Retreat at The Cavern is the perfect spoil for mum, while the boys are at The Adventure Centre. Luxury spa treatments under the forest canopy while listening to the Putterills stream cascading below.

If you are feeling peckish & your picnic didn't fill you up, then why not try the **Tower of Pizza** for something fun with great outdoor lunch options with a children's play area. Payment by credit card only, no cash.

Central Drakensberg Area (Champagne Valley) - 60km

Monks Cowl Hikes (entrance Adults R160 each, Children R80 each) **The Blind Man's Corner loop** (12km – 5/6 hours) goes up past the Sphinx then to the contour path and returns via Kearthland's Pass. It's a fairly tough route, but the views of Cathkin and Sterkhorn are really good. You can also see Mafadi and other high peaks in SA fairly clearly on a good day. Otherwise, the **Sterkspruit Falls**, which is a 2,5km (1.5 hour) round trip, with options of dipping in the cold mountain stream if you dare!

Dragon Rock Reptile Centre has an amazing collection of invertebrates, arachnids, mammals & reptiles. Personalized tours with an enthusiastic, knowledgeable guides make this a

memorable experience. No children under 5 years. Opportunities to interact and touch these creatures are afforded where possible. (Adults R150pp) Closed Mondays & Tuesdays. Pre-booking is essential.

Falcon Ridge Raptor Show Thrilling daily shows (10h30) highlight the power, speed and intelligence of a varied selection of birds of prey. An insight into Falconry is included in the show and the public will learn how these birds use their wings, sharp beaks and claws to their advantage. (Adults R150) (Children R100) Closed Mondays & Fridays

Valley Bakery Stone ground, locally grown unbleached flour from the region is transformed into delicious meals at this special spot in the valley. Closed on Sundays.

The **Drakensberg Boys Choir** is representative of the multi-faceted cultures that make up this wonderful country. The school has created a new trend in the international choral scene that transcends the conventional. A unique style of diversity – Bach, Beethoven, Freddy Mercury, African, Jazz, Folk, etc. – whatever the style, they perform it with excellence and aplomb. Concerts are generally held on Wednesday afternoons (15h30) during school term. Because of high demand pre-booking is essential. (R230 per person)

Helicopter Flips Nothing can match the totally exhilarating experience of flying in a helicopter, especially across the breath-taking scenery of the Drakensberg. A much more relaxing way of discovering these treacherous peaks and gullies. Flights depart from Dragon Peaks. Pre-booking essential & weather permitting (from R1,700 per person)

White Water Rafting (November – May only) This is your typical one-day outing, five to six hours on the water. This section of the river offers more than enough action for all levels of experience on whitewater. It is surprisingly big, fast, continuous and safe (rapids from class 1 to 3+). You will be seeing parts of the Tukhela river that few people do. To ensure a quality river experience, group numbers are limited to six. (R750 per person)

The **Drakensberg Canopy Tour** is a fun and safe eco-adventure for the whole family. The tour typically lasts 3 hours, after which you will return to the reception to enjoy a well-deserved light meal. Led by well-trained guides, you glide between platforms perched in trees and on cliff faces, being inspired by the nature of the majestic Drakensberg. The ancient indigenous forest, waterfalls and cascading streams make this an opportunity not to be missed. (R850 per person) Open 7 days a week - rain or shine.

Vertical Rush Cable Tours – Traverse along a 300m hiking trail along a cliff, harnessed in, while you are clipped onto the safety line. This 1,5 hour excursion consists of various obstacles in and amongst lush indigenous Drakensberg vegetation along a cliff face, so requires a certain amount of agility. Cost R550 per person.

Golf 18-hole course at Champagne Sports Resort is designed by Hugh Baiocchi and set on perfectly manicured grounds and has spectacular scenery. R295pp

Sandra Lemmers Antiques & Museum takes you back in time to the 50's when a Rand could stock your fridge.

Drakensberg Brewery is a 600 litre batch brewhouse situated in the picturesque Drakensberg region. The beer is made on site from malted barley, hops, yeast & fresh spring water. There is also a small wine & gin list for those that don't enjoy beer. 10c from every beer sold goes to vulture conservation. Closed Mondays & Tuesdays.

[Cathedral Peak Area \(Didima\) - 65km away](#)

Mushroom Rock Moderate 3 hour hike. Although this hike is short (6 km) it is a rather steep ascent to the spectacular sandstone landmark that has been eroded by wind & water. Push past the rock feature for another 500m and you will be rewarded with jaw-dropping views of the escarpment & the Tseketseke River Valley (R160 per person park entrance)

Rainbow Gorge A moderate 5 hour hike (12 km) This is probably one of the most picturesque hikes in the area. Start from Didima Camp Car park & head towards the base of Tryme Hill, then eastwards on the path into the gorge. Once in the gorge itself, the path follows the river. Stick to the path right of the river until you can no longer. Cross over & keep walking up the gorge till you reach the chock (enormous boulder) wedged above your head over the river. River may be unpassable in summer (R160 per person park entrance)

Cathedral Peak Hike An extreme 8 -10 hour hike (20km)

A long arduous hike requiring a high level of fitness. Starts from Cathedral Peak Hotel, up the path to the Cathedral Ridge. Rock scrambling is often necessary due to rock slides on the gully below the peak. Essential to arrange a guide from the Cathedral Peak Hotel prior to arrival. (R160 per person park entrance, then additional R60 per vehicle hotel gate entrance Approx R800 for local guide)

Golf Cathedral Peak Hotel offers a challenging 18-hole golf course, set against the magnificent backdrop of the Drakensberg and has been termed the "thinking golfers" course.

[Golden Gate Area \(little more than an hour..\)](#)

Golden Gate National Park - 145km (1,45 hr) Impressed by two gigantic sandstone rocks, gold-coloured by the late evening sun and standing 76 meters high forming a kind of a gateway, this park was named "Golden Gate". A variety of bird, plant & animal life can be found whilst driving or walking through the park.

Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre – 145km (1,45hr) The Centre is a unique interactive facility that offers visitors an innovative, creative and quality demonstration of world-class scientific knowledge of the dinosaurs and geological features that roamed this specific region. There are fossil displays and interactive exhibits, including one of the oldest dinosaur embryos ever found. This world-class centre celebrates heritage, science, and culture. Open daily. R250 pp

Old Voortrekker Pass - 75km (1 hour)- A wonderful trip from the Lodge is to visit the old Voortrekker Pass, where in 1837 the Voortrekkers under Piet Retief and Gerhard Maritz crossed the Drakensberg Mountains. You can still see and read the graffiti at Kerkenberg where on Piet Retief's 57th birthday his daughter painted his name. The old pass is still clearly visible and at the top of the pass is the statue of the 'Barefoot Woman'. The views of

the KwaZulu Natal Drakensberg are breath-taking! This is in the eastern Free State and not far from the Golden Gate National Park and the quaint town of Clarens.

Clarens - 165km (2 hours) A quaint little artist retreat that has blossomed into a busy tourist mecca, with art galleries, restaurants, craft breweries surrounded by spectacular sandstone cliffs.

Sterkfontein Dam - 75km (1 hour) This highly effective reservoir was constructed in the early seventies. The wall is an earth gravity type. The dam wall contains 19.8 million cubic metres of material making it the largest dam wall in South Africa with regard to volume. Great scenery across this turquoise blue body of water.

Drakensberg Pump Storage Scheme - 55km (45 min) It is difficult to imagine a power station inside a mountain, when there are hardly any signs on the surface. A special feature of the station is that it is constructed entirely underground with only a dam wall, lift shaft buildings and transmission lines visible at the surface. The four reversible pump turbines are situated 52 storeys below ground level. (FREE - pre-booking essential)

Midlands Area

Nelson Mandela Capture Site – 145km (1,45hr) An extra ordinary audio- visual display in the museum tells the story of Nelson Mandela's journey through life and how he built a new nation from within a conflicted South Africa. There is a unique sculpture at the site, which is a collaboration between artists Marco Cianfanelli and Jeremy Rose. It comprises 50 steel columns – each between 6.5 and 9.5 meters tall – set into the Midlands landscape. The approach to the site leads one down a path towards the sculpture where, at a distance of 35 meters, an image of Nelson Mandela, looking west, comes into focus. The 50 linear vertical units, line up to create the illusion of a flat image.

Tsonga Shoes - 140km (1,45 hr) Using the finest leather and their handcrafted promise, Tsonga bags and shoes are unique in style and comfort. 100% Made in Africa .

Blue Berry Hill Cafe - 125km (1,20 hr) is a gallery for local artists and artisans, as well as a celebrated café, housed in large, barn-like structure that gives the venue an understated appearance. Inside, there are large, open-plan areas filled with a rich tapestry of wares, ranging from furniture and household goods, to local artists' paintings and sculptures. As famous as it is for its coffee, Blueberry Hill is revered for its blueberries, which are freshly picked on the farm and sold during the months of December to February.

Fordoun Spa - 125km (1,20 hr) Fordoun Spa boasts a team of experts that include skilled masseurs, Reiki and Bio-energy specialists, a traditional African Healer and highly trained aestheticians. Fordoun owns signature range of products, created in conjunction with the late Dr Elliot Ndlovu, herbalist and ethno-botanist, who is a traditional African Healer and Inyanga, and a director of Fordoun Spa. Under his guidance, a number of products have been carefully created from indigenous traditional healing plants, especially for Fordoun. The range includes soaps, shower gels, massage oils, bath salts, creams and sprays, based on the theme of the seven Chakras and the seven colours of the rainbow. A luxury Eau de Toilette range, Ma'Ndlovu for women and BabaNdlovu for men, has been designed for both the local and export markets.

Ardmore Ceramics - 135km (1,35 hr) Ardmore Ceramics has grown into a vibrant art pottery making unique pieces of ceramic art. Since 1985, artist Fee Halsted has created modelers and painters from the local community and they have become renowned for their exuberant use of colour and their distinctive modelling of African flora and fauna. The sale of these wonderful pieces of ceramic art uplifts and supports the Ardmore community and their families. There is also a unique range of homeware, handbags and fabric to add to this stable.

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