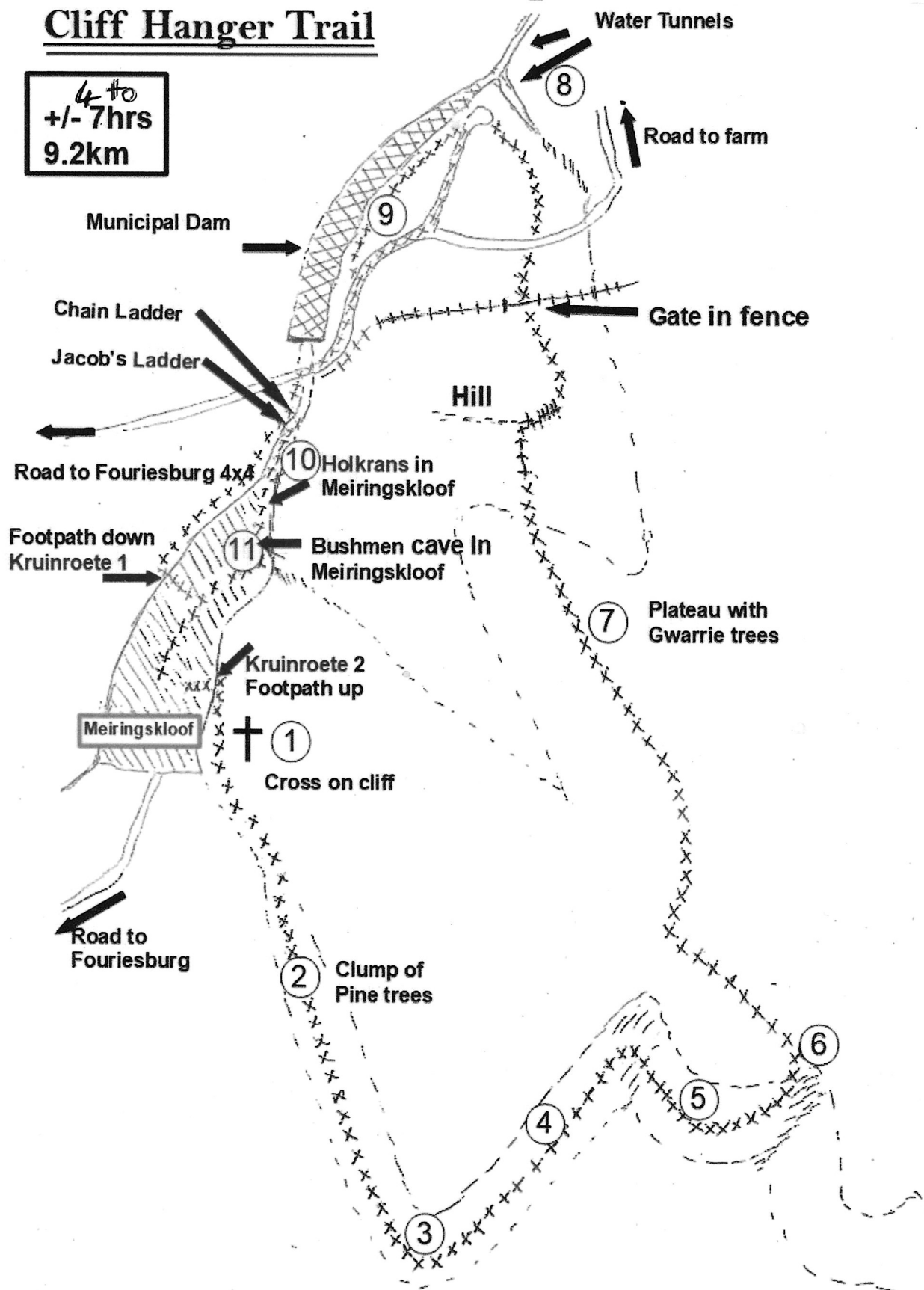


Cliff Hanger Trail

~~4 to~~
+/- 7hrs
9.2km



Cliff Hanger Hiking Trail (9.2 km; 4-7 hrs depending on fitness and stops made)

The Cliff Hanger Trail is a circular hiking trail that starts and ends in Meiringskloof. It starts with a beautiful walk along the Meiringspruit, and then a fairly steep climb up with many steps to reach the Cross on the Cliff on top of the cliff (±40 min).

The trail then mostly follows the mountain contours all along the cliff edge, with sheer drops a few metres away on the right-hand side, and steep inclines to the mountain tops on the left. Many different plant species can be seen along the way such as watsonias, tea bushes, everlasting flowers (“sewejaartjies”), sugar bushes, cabbage trees, and a variety of heather plants (“erikas en heide”). There are magnificent views to the west (Wolhuterskop), south (Witteberge / Visierskerf) and south-east / east (Maluti Mountain Range in Lesotho).

Interesting places to look out for are Arpa Dam which is used for the Annual Polar Bear Plunge in July, the Calendonspoort Border Post with Lesotho, Destiny Castle faraway on a mountain ridge, the protruding mountain rock called Queen Victoria (listed as one of the 20 highest loose-standing rock formations in the Free State, and resembling the seated monarch), the Brandwaterkom (the area bordered by the Caledon River, Witteberge and Rooiberge; conquered territory that was originally part of Lesotho), Lesotho and the Maluti Mountains (with an altitude of up to 3482m).

After about 2 to 3 hrs / 5 kms the trail joins an abandoned 4x4 trail for a steep climb up to the mountain ridge where it first flattens out and then drops down to a plateau with many gwarrie trees, and further descends towards the inflow of the municipal dam where the Water Tunnels are.

The Water Tunnels is a wonderful place to take special photographs of the interesting rock “ceiling” formed by many years of water erosion. Those brave enough can take a dip in the icy cold “arctic” pool with its waterfall in the small stream to the right.

Hikers return to Meiringskloof by walking along the edge of the dam (and can enjoy an exhilarating jump into the dam for a swim) before crossing the car bridge and turning left to reach the edge of the cliff bordering Meiringskloof.

To hike back down into Meiringskloof hikers can either (1) climb down the Chain Ladder or Jacob’s Ladder, pass through the Holkrans (an impressive hollow cave about 100m in length and 40m deep in the widest part), and follow the footpath down to the chalets and camping sites, with an optional short detour through Boesmangrot/Khoisan Cave (which has an ancient top-to-bottom stalagmite/column, some intact paintings, and at shoulder height a layer with white animal bone fragments in the back of the cave); or (2) stay on top of the cliff, and follow the white paint marks until the Footpath Down bord is reached. This is a steep climb down to the chalets with many steps, straight down, or via the Castle View footpath.