



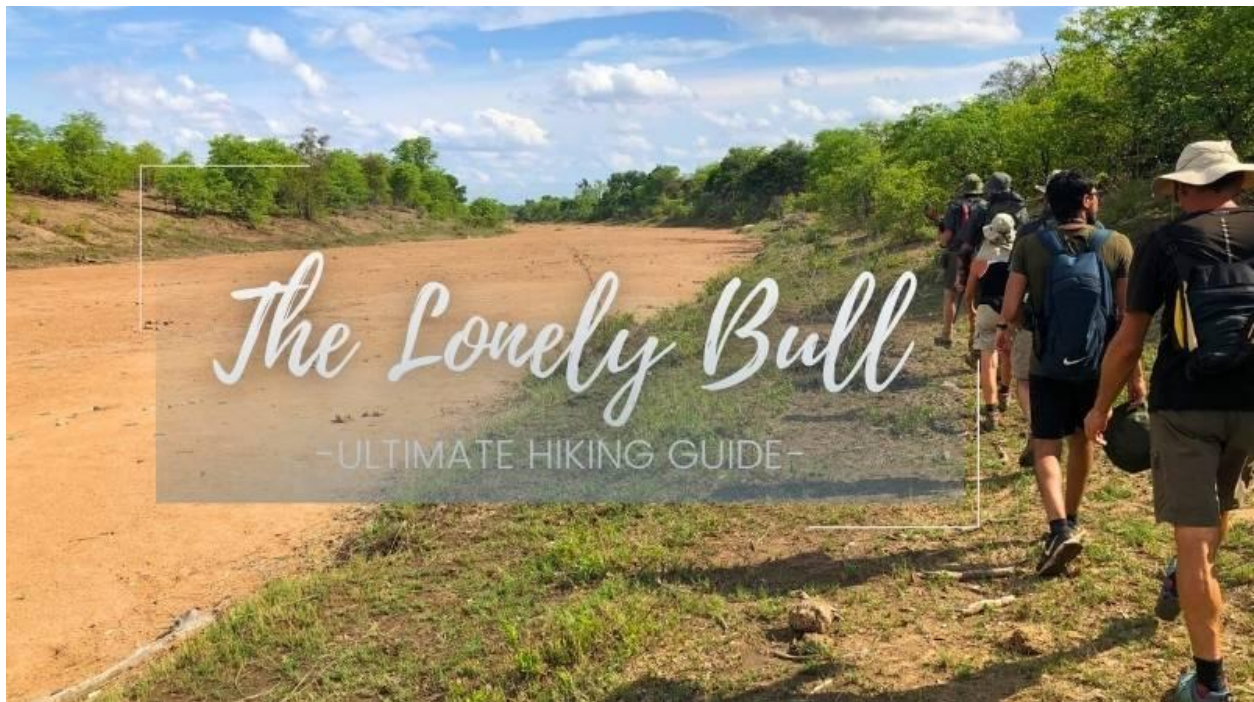
THE  
**TRAIL FOOD**  
COMPANY

## The Lonely Bull Backpack Trail - Ultimate Guide

Are you craving a raw, immersive wilderness adventure where wildlife roams freely, the only lights at night are stars above... and the experience doesn't break the bank?

The Lonely Bull Backpack Trail in the heart of Kruger National Park strips back modern life and takes you deep into Big Five territory. With no set route, no facilities, and no fences between you and nature, this self-supported, guided trail invites you to reconnect with the wild on its terms.

It's not just a hike - it's a rare, affordable opportunity to experience the solitude, survival, and magic of a true Big Five wilderness.



## Contents

Why Should You Choose The Lonely Bull? .....	3
Things To Look Out For on The Lonely Bull .....	3
When To Hike The Lonely Bull .....	4
About The Lonely Bull Trail (What You Need To Know About the Hike).....	4
The Lonely Bull Route & What To Expect .....	5
The Route .....	5
Expect:.....	6
Current Cost To Hike The Lonely Bull (2025) .....	6
Other Expenses.....	6
How To Book To Hike The Lonely Bull .....	6
Getting To The Lonely Bull Backpack Trail.....	7
About Mopani Rest Camp .....	7
What To Pack For The Lonely Bull Trail.....	8
How To Pack For The Lonely Bull .....	8
Don't Forget To .....	8
FAQs .....	8
Top Tips.....	9
Anything Else? .....	9



# Why Should You Choose The Lonely Bull?

For a truly raw and untamed hiking experience, the **Lonely Bull Backpack Trail** - operating from Mopani Rest Camp—takes you deep into the northern heart of Kruger National Park.

This self-supported, guided wilderness trail winds through the mopane woodlands and along the Letaba and Tsendze Rivers, offering a rare chance to walk through Big Five territory with nothing but your pack, your group, and the wild around you. There are no fences, no facilities, and no fixed paths—just pure immersion in nature.

The Lonely Bull Trail is perfect for:

- Wilderness seekers craving true isolation and adventure
- Birders keen to explore a region rich in raptors, storks, and riverine species
- Hikers wanting to unplug completely—there's no signal, no tech, just trail
- Those comfortable with wild camping in dry riverbeds under the stars

## Things To Look Out For on The Lonely Bull

- **Wildlife**
  - Big Five Sightings: Depending on your luck, you may spot elephants, lions, buffalo, rhinos, and leopards.
  - Hippos and Crocodiles: Particularly along the Letaba River.
  - Antelope Species: Look for kudu, waterbuck, and impala along the trail.
- **Birdwatching Highlights**
  - Fish eagles
  - Saddle-billed storks
  - African jacanas
  - Various species of kingfishers
- **Natural Beauty**
  - The trail follows the Tsendze and Letaba Rivers, providing stunning riverbed campsites.
  - Mopane woodlands dominate the landscape, adding to the remote and isolated feel.
  - Stunning sunsets over the wilderness, with no artificial lights to disrupt the view.

# When To Hike The Lonely Bull

Be aware that Kruger Park's three backpack trails, including The Lonely Bull Backpack Trail, only operate from 1 February – 30 November – so plan your trip accordingly.

The best time to hike the trail is between May and August. You're (hopefully) looking at cooler temperatures, lower humidity, and less chance of encountering high water levels!

Temperatures can still exceed 28°C in winter, so be prepared for heat even in the cooler months.

## About The Lonely Bull Trail (What You Need To Know About the Hike)

For an unforgettable adventure in Big 5 territory, the **Lonely Bull Backpack Trail** is one of the best ways to experience the Kruger National Park like never before. Leave your run of the mill game drives behind and walk straight into the wild?

Here's all the essential information you need to know for The Kruger National Park's Lonely Bull Backpack Trail.

<b>How Long is the Lonely Bull Trail?</b>	Distance covered varies depending on the group, water availability and the guides' decisions (usually between 30km and 40km in total).
<b>How Many Days</b>	Four days and three nights
<b>Difficulty Rating</b>	Moderate: The terrain is mostly flat but can be physically demanding due to heat and carrying a full pack.
<b>Fitness Level Required</b>	Moderate fitness is needed.  You must be able to carry your own backpack for the duration of the hike.
<b>Age Limit</b>	Minimum age: 12 years old  Maximum age: No official limit, but you must be physically capable. If you are over 65 years of age then you will be asked to supply a letter from a doctor specifying that you are capable of the hike.
<b>Backpack Information</b>	Self-carry: You must bring all your own food, water purification, and camping gear.  Need lightweight, just-add-water meals? Trail Food has a full range of hearty hiking-ready options – browse the <a href="#">menu</a> here.

	No slackpacking options are available.
<b>Group Size</b>	Maximum group size: 8 people  Minimum group size: 4 people (individuals can book, but the hike will only go ahead if at least four participants are confirmed)
<b>Accommodation</b>	Wild camping with <u>no huts</u> or facilities.  Tents are compulsory due to the presence of predators.  You will camp in dry riverbeds or other selected locations chosen by your guides.
<b>Water</b>	You will need to bring a water purifier and even drops potentially.  Water will be taken either from the closest river or you might need to dig in the riverbed for water.  *See Top Tips for more information.
<b>Facilities</b>	None. The trail follows a strict “leave no trace” policy.  Please note that there are <u>no toilets</u> – hikers must follow bush etiquette (e.g., cat-hole method).
<b>Important Information</b>	Departure days: Every Wednesday and Sunday from 1 February to 30 November  No cellphone reception – a true digital detox!

## The Lonely Bull Route & What To Expect

### The Route

- The trail starts from Kruger National Park’s Mopani Rest Camp.
- Vehicles can be safely left at the designated parking area in Mopani Camp.
- The group is transported by an open vehicle with a trailer to a drop-off point.
- There is no set route, allowing guides to adapt based on wildlife movements and water sources.

- The hiking pace and distance are determined by the group and agreed upon with the guides

### Expect:

- No fixed campsites – each night's stop is determined by the guides.
- Encounters with wildlife on foot – an exhilarating but humbling experience.
- Small fires are sometimes allowed but are not for cooking. That's why [The Trail Food Company's](#) cook-in bags are so handy.
- Night-time sounds of the African bush – from lion roars to the grunts of hippos.
- A true wilderness experience, completely isolated from other tourists

## Current Cost To Hike The Lonely Bull (2025)

There are three primary costs involved in a Kruger Backpack Trail.

1. **The Activity charge:** As of 2025 this is R4018 per person.
2. **A Conservation Fee** per person per day (rate depends on your nationality and age).\*
3. **A Community Fund Fee** of 1% will be added to the cost of all accommodation and activity reservations.

\*If you have a valid Wild Card then this fee is not applicable.

### Other Expenses

Budget for accommodation before and after your Olifants Trail adventure, as well as the costs of getting to and from Kruger Park.

[Mopani Camp](#) offers a variety of accommodation options to suit all budgets.

## How To Book To Hike The Lonely Bull

**Call:** +27 (0)12 428 9111

The SanParks Central Reservations Call Centre is open Monday to Friday from 07:30 AM to 3:45 PM

**Book online:** <https://www.sanparks.org/reservations/overnight-activity>

**Email:** [reservations@sanparks.org](mailto:reservations@sanparks.org)

Early booking is essential as spots are limited.

## Getting To The Lonely Bull Backpack Trail

- The closest Airport is
  - **Hoedspruit (Eastgate) Airport** (which has daily flights to and from Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban)
- **Drive**
  - You will need to then drive or arrange a transfer to **Mopani camp**.
- **Nearest Kruger Gate**
  - The closest entrance gate to Mopani Rest Camp in Kruger National Park is the **Phalaborwa Gate**. Driving time once you are inside the park will be 1.5 to 2 hours depending on game sightings and road conditions.
  - The most direct route is usually via the H9 tar road to Letaba Camp, then head north on the H1-6 to Mopani.
- **Speeding Restrictions**
  - Bear in mind that the roads in Kruger have speed limits of 50 km/h on tar and 40 km/h on gravel, and wildlife sightings can cause unexpected delays—though those are the best kind of delays! So give yourself ample time to get to the starting point.
- **Meeting point:**
  - Mopani Rest Camp at 13:00 on the day of departure.
  - Do not be late – the open vehicle transporting you to your drop off point leaves at 2pm sharp.
- **Trail Start and End**
  - Hikers are transported to and from Mopani Camp at the start and end of the trail.

## About Mopani Rest Camp

Since you are going to head this way, we've highlighted 3 of our favourite things about or near to Mopani camp.

1. The camp overlooks **Pioneer Dam**, providing spectacular sunsets and fantastic birdwatching right from your chalet or restaurant deck.
2. Just 3km from Mopani, **Shipandani overnight hide** lets you sleep inside a bird hide overlooking a waterhole - completely alone (with a radio for emergencies). This is a highly recommended experience!
3. Compared to southern Kruger camps like Skukuza or Lower Sabie, Mopani is **quieter, more remote, and less commercial** - perfect for those seeking a peaceful pre- or post-hike stay.

# What To Pack For The Lonely Bull Trail

It can be overwhelming to figure out what should stay and what should go when you're trying to pack for any hike. Take a look our super handy tips on [what to pack](#) for your next trail!

## How To Pack For The Lonely Bull

When preparing for the Lonely Bull Trail, aim to pack as light and compact as possible—every gram counts when you're carrying everything on your back for four days.

A common tip is to plan your meals so you consume the heaviest and most perishable items first, freeing up space and lightening your load as you go. Fortunately, with Trail Food's [lightweight, dehydrated meals](#), you won't have to worry about bulky tins or heavy ingredients. Our [packs](#) are designed to be space-saving, easy to carry, and packed with the energy you need out on trail.

Here are some expert pointers on [how to pack your backpack](#) if you're feeling slightly uncertain about what should go where.

## Don't Forget To

We understand that hiking in a Big 5 area can be a scary thought. But don't worry, your guides are well-trained. So...

- **Listen to your guides** – they ensure safety in big game territory.
- **Respect nature** – follow the “leave no trace” principle.
- **Check weather conditions** before your trip.

## FAQs

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about the Lonely Bull Trail and hiking in the Kruger National Park.

**Is the trail dangerous?** Wildlife encounters are possible, but experienced guides ensure safety.

**Can I hike alone?** No, a minimum group of four is required.

**Is there a backup vehicle?** No, but guides carry emergency radios.

**What happens in case of an emergency?** The guides have radios to call for assistance if needed.

**Can I bring alcohol?** If you're going in the depths of winter maybe take a [tiny tipple](#) just to warm you up – but you definitely don't want to be carrying cans and bottles. Remember it's important to be safe for yourself, the other hikers and the guides.

## Top Tips

- I have 2 water filters, a small hand-held MSR one and then a larger hanging one that enables you to filter larger volumes of water. On a number of occasions hiking not everyone has a filter so I have found that it is useful for me to bring the larger one to help others out.
- **Bring a treat to share:** A bar of chocolate or something like that to share with the group on one of the nights. It's a nice way to get the group chatting and a nice, sweet treat for everyone.
- **Don't forget to tip your guides.** Lead guide should usually get around R150 per person per night and back up guide should get about R100 per person per night. SANParks Rangers don't get paid a lot so every bit of appreciation makes a difference.

## Anything Else?

For a truly unforgettable wilderness experience, the Lonely Bull Backpack Trail offers one of the most immersive ways to explore Kruger National Park. It's a chance to step away from the crowds and into a world where the rhythm of nature sets your pace.

And with your [Trail Food meals](#) neatly packed and feather-light, you can hit the trail knowing your nutrition is sorted—no overpacking stress, no bulky tins, just simple, satisfying meals ready when you are. Now get out there and enjoy the adventure!