

LOWER GUINEA-FOWL TRAIL

The trail is situated between the **Third Avenue Dip** in **Newton Park**, leading down river to **Settlers Park** and **Brickmakers Kloof**. The walk follows the Baakens river which must be crossed by means of stepping-stones on numerous occasions. These crossings become hazardous and in places impassable after rain, when seasonal flooding occurs. The walk is suitable for reasonably fit persons who are advised to walk in groups, wear stout shoes and take a sunhat and drinking water. **NO DOGS** are permitted in the Settlers Park section of the trail.

The Guinea-fowl Trail alongside the **Baakens River** passes through a steep-sided valley in the city suburbs for its full length. The river which is 23 km in length has its source in the **Hunters Retreat** area and ends where it enters the sea at the Port Elizabeth harbor. Where the path climbs above the flood-plain the vegetation consists of **Eastern Cape Fynbos** (reaching its eastern limits in Port Elizabeth), which also has a good scattering of conspicuous **succulents** on dry Northern aspect slopes. Patches of **Valley Bushveld**, consisting of small trees and bushes occur in kloofs which enter the valley predominantly from the north. These kloofs act as seasonal tributaries to the river.

Sections of the valley and river are infested with **alien vegetation**, the removal of which is ongoing but proves to be a slow and costly process. **Biological controls** have been introduced onto certain invasive plants: *rust fungus* on *Port Jackson*, *gall wasps* on the *Long Leaved Acacia* and *weevil* on the *Sesbania*.

A high, sheer, **knife-edge spur** protruding into the valley from Linkside provides a reference point to hikers when crossed by means of a boardwalk which descends to the boundary of **Dodd's Farm**. Access to the trail can be gained through Dodd's Farm from **Ninth Avenue, Walmer**. **Bat's cave**, is located at the Dodd's Farm river crossing before the trail traverses open veld through the old **Trollips Farm** to **Target Kloof**.

Wellington Park offers a panoramic view of the **Baakens Valley**. The trail route through Settlers Park, offers one the opportunity to look up at the high **Lovers Rock**, which is the home of the rare **peregrine falcon**.

In Settlers Park, one may see **guinea-fowl**, **peafowl**, **mountain tortoise (leopard tortoise)**, **dassies** and **mongooses** and, if you are lucky, also see **grysbok** and the beautiful **Knysna Lourie**.

NOTE: USE OF THE AREA IS ENTIRELY AT YOUR OWN RISK.