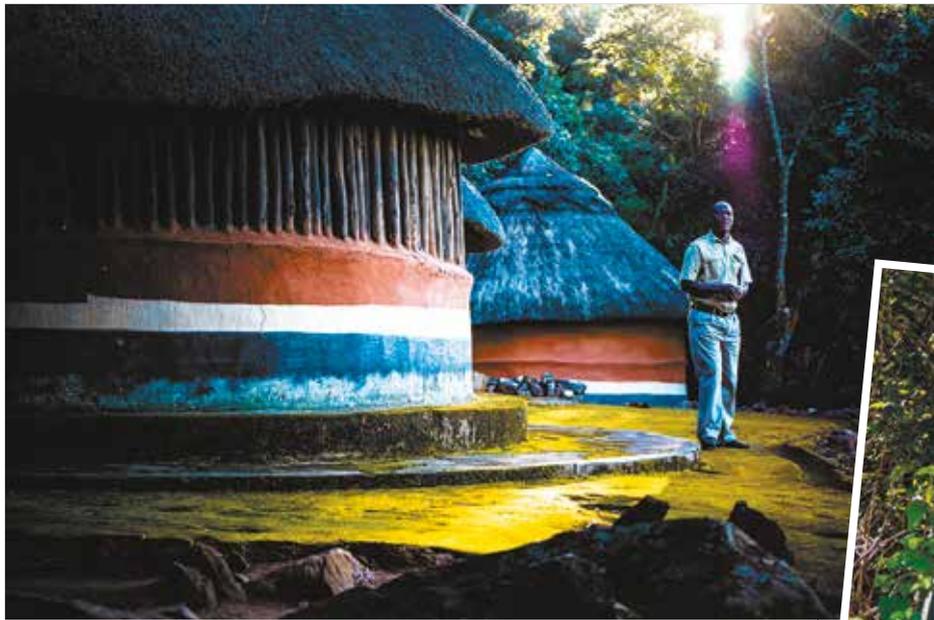


holy mtb fun IN LIMPOPO



Head north to Limpopo, the Rainbow Nation's most unexplored province, and you are sure to discover some mountain bike destinations of note. The Fundudzi Camp, one of the camps making up the African Ivory Route, is a case in point. Photographs and words by *Jacques Marais*.

Local Buzz:

Driving into the Thohoyandou region is a bit like blinking and waking up in Rwanda (in a good way, though). People who know East Africa will appreciate the similarity of forested hills, verdant tea plantations, clear streams and high-density rural spread. The camp itself is in close proximity to the surrounding traditional villages, so expect to hear some tavern revelry on the weekends.

Do not let this bother you, as Fundudzi comes packaged with heaps of plus-points. Head straight into their mountainous backyard to

lose yourself within a mix of Mondi plantations and huge swathes of indigenous forest. Pristine streams and placid lakes shimmer amidst dense vegetation, and the birding, biking and running here are off the charts.

Fundudzi is set in the Vhembe Region of Limpopo Province, within the high-lying reaches of the Soutpansberg, and the area is better known as the 'Land of Legends'. Their Venda language and culture can be traced back to Central Africa, from where the original people moved south centuries ago.

"Head straight into their mountainous backyard to lose yourself within a mix of Mondi plantations and huge swathes of indigenous forest."

Trail Low-Down:

Wham bam, thank you Ma'am! Anything goes, from a 5km quickie outride to a thumping 100km-plus outback trail mission. For one of the prettiest three hour mountain bike rides you can imagine, head out of the entrance to Fundudzi Camp and turn left up the steep and rutted gravel road. Bite the bullet, as the surface is loose and slippery when wet, but the pain and suffering will only last for a few hundred metres.

Crank hard until you reach the summit and continue to a scenic mountain stream (1.2km), then cross it and into the Mondi plantations along a faint forestry track. Keep looping left onto both footpaths and forestry tracks as you ascend, passing through some indigenous forest before eventually dropping down to the dam (8.1km). Keep in mind that these are working plantations, so areas may be felled, with trucks and work teams on location.

Pass along the northern shoreline of the dam until you reach the inlet

stream, where a bridge allows you to cross onto a winding gravel road meandering to the Holy Forest, a sacred site to the local Venda people. Should you decide to head upwards and onwards along these remote dirt roads, you will be best off with a GPS or a good map, as there is very limited signage along the way.

For those of you keen on keeping the ride shorter, ascend back from here into the pine plantations above the dam inlet. Continue into a gradual climb en route back to Fundudzi, with the anti-clockwise loop leading back parallel to the valley. Exceptional views across to Thohoyandou and the surrounding tea plantations will open up on your right, with various route options dipping into the valley.

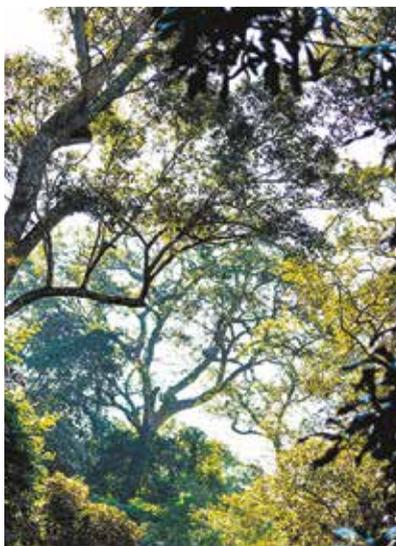
If you kept going beyond the dam bridge, keep an eye out for occasional signs indicating the way to the Holy Forest. You will cross two more streams before reaching the entrance at a sign welcoming you to Thathe Sacred Forest. For the next 3-4km, it is important to stick to the main dirt road, as it is taboo

to venture into the forest where the spirits dwell.

Depending on your route choice, you can bank anything from an easy 10km gravel ride to a 100km-plus marathon out to the Holy Forest and back. Whichever way, you are spoiled for choice here in the 'Land of Legends'!

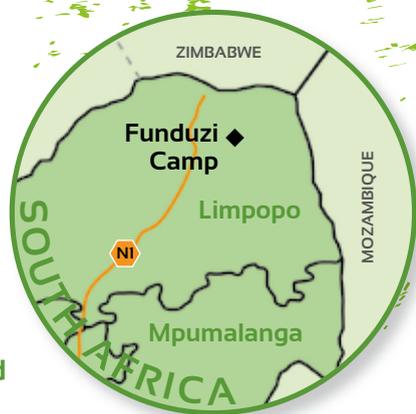
Getting there:

From Thohoyandou, follow the R532 for 9km, then turn towards Gonden on the D3681. Turn left at sign to Mukumbani; after 3.3km, the road will become gravel – continue for another 2.6km following the African Ivory Route signs to Fundudzi Camp. 

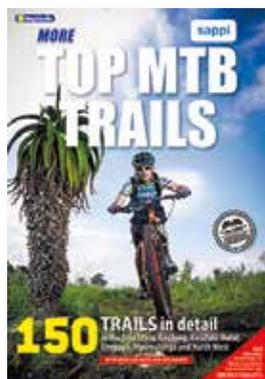


where are we?

In rural Limpopo the Fundudzi camp offers visitors the chance to immerse themselves in a beautiful environment. Along with the Mondi plantations there are tea plantations and spectacular natural veld. You'll also be spoilt for choice with traditional Venda cultural attractions like the Minwenda traditional clothing and the Domba Dance.



SUS the Fundudzi MTB Route:



150 TRAILS in detail

MapStudio
www.mapstudio.co.za

Grading:

Easy to Intermediate (steep)

Duration: 3 hours

(Holy Forest Route)

Configuration:

Circular/Return: 46km

Start Point: Fundudzi Camp

Terrain: Forestry tracks; gravel

road; some single-track

Cell Reception:

Very limited signal

Post-Ride Beer: Kid's Corner

Tavern, in the local village

Must-Do Event: There are

currently no MTB events listed for the area

Access: The roads are all public access

Accommodation:

Thatched rondawels with shared ablutions; clean and secure

Local Contact: Speak to Nelson

at Fundudzi Camp for info –

(+27) 15 - 781 0690

www.africanivoryroute.co.za

GPS: S22°53.668" E30°24.273"



Jacques Marais is the

South African trail guru.

If he's not scouting a

new MTB trail he's trail

running a new route in

the Drakensberg.

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