

Lost and Found in Hout Bay

There's something about a "simple" plan in nature that almost guarantees it won't stay simple for long.

Our first full day at our Airbnb in Hout Bay was meant to be exactly that, simple. A short three kilometre morning hike, a bit of fresh air, maybe a few photos, and then back in time for breakfast. Nothing too ambitious, nothing too dramatic.

Our host had told us about a nearby trail. All we needed to do was walk a few hundred metres up the road, find a coded gate, and from there we'd be on a private hiking route used by residents. Easy enough.

And it started that way.

We found the gate, entered the code, and set off. The morning was calm, and quiet, the kind that makes you slow down without even realising it. We were chatting, taking photos, just enjoying being out there. It felt like one of those effortless outings where everything just flows.

Until it didn't.

Not too far in, we reached an area where a number of pine trees had been cut down. Suddenly, the trail wasn't so obvious anymore. The path disappeared under branches and debris, and what had been clear a few minutes before now felt uncertain.

Still, we carried on.

At first, it made sense. Maybe the trail just wasn't used much. Maybe it would open up again. But instead, it got thicker, bushier, more overgrown. And somewhere in that quiet decision to "just keep going," we lost the trail completely.

It was only after walking close to two kilometres that we realised something wasn't right.

Out came the AllTrails app. And there it was, clear as day, we were nowhere near the actual path.

That's when things got interesting.

We decided to cut across, trying to reach the proper trail again. What looked like a straightforward adjustment quickly turned into a scramble through rough, uneven terrain. At one point, I stepped onto what I thought was a solid tree stump. It wasn't. It shifted, rolled, and suddenly I was very close to going down the hill with it. A small mouse darted out from underneath, which somehow made the whole situation even more chaotic.

Thankfully, my dad caught me before I fully committed to that fall.

After a fair bit of effort, and a good number of scratches, we eventually reached a jeep track. Relief. From there, things felt a bit more stable again. We followed the path, climbed steadily,

and found ourselves in a beautiful forested area with what should have been a waterfall, although it was more of a gentle trickle thanks to the lack of rain.

It felt like we had recovered the day.

Until we turned around to head back.

Somewhere along our earlier detour, we had crossed what we thought was just a broken fence. Turns out, it wasn't just any fence. We had unknowingly crossed into a SANParks reserve.

And now we were on the wrong side of it.

No permit, no access code, and no obvious way out.

For a moment, we considered climbing over. Luca was ready to give me a boost so I could get across and open it from the other side. But common sense won, and we decided to rather follow the path and look for a proper exit.

That led us past a property filled with barking dogs, which, I won't lie, was slightly terrifying. So we kept moving.

Eventually, dad spotted a small gap under a fence. Not exactly an official exit, but at that point it felt like our best option. One by one, we crawled through, not entirely sure where we'd end up.

On the other side, everything changed.

Suddenly we were walking through beautifully kept gardens, flowers neatly arranged, little bridges crossing a stream. It was peaceful, almost too perfect. And that's when it clicked, we were definitely on someone's private property.

Not ideal.

We kept going, a bit more cautiously now, until we spotted an elderly couple walking their dogs. They took one look at us and immediately knew, we were lost.

After a quick explanation, they confirmed it. We were somewhere we absolutely weren't supposed to be. Our options were to go all the way back, which wasn't happening, or take a route through the riverbed to reach public land.

So, into the riverbed we went.

It wasn't the cleanest solution, muddy shoes were inevitable, but it worked. Eventually, we reached a public park, and that same couple helped guide us back toward our Airbnb.

There was a small, unexpected moment in all of this that stuck with me. The man was blind, and while his partner walked ahead with my dad, I stayed back and guided him along the path. It was such a simple thing, but it felt meaningful in a day that had otherwise been a bit chaotic.

By the time we finally made it back, we had been out for nearly four hours.

Needless to say, mom was not impressed.

But looking back, it's one of those days that stands out. Not because everything went right, but because it didn't. Because somewhere between getting lost, finding our way again, and meeting complete strangers who helped us out, the whole experience became something far more memorable than the original plan ever could have been.

Sometimes, the best stories start with, "we were only meant to be gone for an hour."