



MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

Fixture List: July - September 2009

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dear Members

In accordance with the Constitution of your Club there has to be an annual general meeting and notice of this meeting has to be given to all members well in advance. The committee recently set down the date to be the 22nd October. In order to attract members to this usually mundane but important event we will put on a small party with food and drink. So, you have been duly warned.

The new website is experiencing a few minor glitches which should be cleared up soon. Leaders cannot yet add their own fixtures nor can they update the hike statistics with the names of those who attended theirs hikes. These problems are all in the realm of PHP, SQL DBMS, HTML and CSS, and probably some Javascript, etc. If you understand what I am saying then you will probably appreciate the extent of the problems and sympathise, the rest can just yawn and go back to sleep.

The annual Club Campout went off without a hitch and was enjoyed by all. Good winter weather helped. See our website for more pictures.

The 2009 Grand Traverse led by Dave Gay also went off well and the intrepid explorers have probably forgotten by now all the huge hills they climbed and the aching bodies and feet, and are thinking of next years' GT, which will be led by yours truly by the way. See the story of this year's GT, by Carlos Gonzalez, and the advanced notice section of the magazine for all this.

This Chairman's Chatter has to end with a whinge unfortunately. Our day hike fixtures are slowly fading away due to lack of leaders. Where are all those past leaders who knew the interesting corners of the Midlands and in and around Durban? We need you now, otherwise those day hikes will just be a memory. I hear that our fellow hiking clubs, which specialize in only day hikes, are attracting large numbers each weekend.

All the best
Happy Hiking
Grant Wilkinson
MBC Chairman

The Committee of the Mountain Backpackers would like to extend their deepest sympathies to Grant Wilkinson, our chairman, who lost his father recently due to illness.

MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Grant Wilkinson	073 616 8789
Vice Chairman:	Bobby Stanton	031 465 5535
Treasurer:	Laura Wood	073 279 5289
Fixture List / Magazine:	Bobby Stanton	031 465 5535
Membership / Subscriptions:	Jovita da Silva	082 691 9180
Backpacking Convenor:	David Gay	031 765 4246
Day Hikes Convenor:	Eddie von Bargen	083 281 1288
Socials / Pro	Jeanne Rapson	074 148 6474

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 Email: info@mountainbackpackers.co.za

THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS TO THE CLUB

Franz Angerer	Mala Pather
Florian Staude	Errol Human
Bonita Scaife	Albert de Jong
Karine Grobler	Cavashy Ankiah & Family
Ivan Maloney	Heinz-Luder Haesloop
Tony Rahme	Kerry Lee Jones & Family
Jan Harm van Straten & Family	Grant & Eloise Holness
Ryan Pitout	Lloyd Lowe
Elmarie Thole	Liane Greeff
Willemien Scally & Family	Roy MacGregor

Grading of hikes

1. Very easy trip
2. Easy trip
3. Moderate trip - physical fitness advisable
4. Strenuous trip - **physical fitness essential**
5. **Very strenuous** trip requiring a high degree of fitness

Please take particular note of **distance and height** as well as the **grading of the backpacking trip** you intend doing and ensure that your level of fitness is adequate.

July 2009

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
4	Longshadows Trail, Kloof. Hike upriver in the Krantzkloof reserve to the escarpment and down again. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	2
5	Tala Valley hike, followed by braai. Start at Tala Valley at 08h00.		David Honour	031 2408800 082 9064875 Email: dave.honour@wspgroup.co.za	2
11	Palmiet Nature Reserve, Westville. Walk through beautiful scenery to Cascades waterfall. Meet at Village Market carpark, opposite Westville Hotel, for a 2pm start.	7 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	1
12	Beach hike: Umdloti to Umhlanga, followed by optional lunch at Bush Tavern. Start at: Pinecrest Mugg & Bean at 07h45		John Pickup	072 1512031	2
11-12	Bushman's Cave, returning via Ngwangwane Pass and Tomathu Pass. Optionally climb Thaba-Ngwangwe. Start at: Bushman's Nek at 08h00	24 km 750 m	Carlos Gonzalez	076 4599127 Email: homearanya@gmail.com	3-4
11-12	Climb Ka-Masihlenga Pass from the contour path campsite, returning via Redi Pass. Start at: Loteni at 08h00.	28 km 1760 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) Email: cougar1@telkomza.net	4-5
18	Kloof Beacon. Downriver & up Kloof Gorge to the survey beacon on top of the escarpment. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site, Kloof Falls Road for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	2
18-19	Lower Injasuti Cave. Ideal for new members and those unsure of their fitness. Experience one of the finest caves in the berg and learn the fundamentals of backpacking. Start at: Injasuti at 08h00	22 km 250 m	Gary Smart	083 7831969 Email: garysmart@webmail.co.za	3
17-19	Climb Cathedral Peak from Barker's Chalet (cave). Start from Didima - Cathedral Peak.	17 km 1555 m	Clive Powell	031 5646169 (after 19h00) Email: powellc@durban.gov.za	3-4
18-19	Tarn Cave, returning via Gargoyle Cave and Vast Cave. Bushman's Nek area.	26 km 700 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) Email: cougar1@telkomza.net	3-4
25	Mpiti & Porcupine Falls. Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee	5 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	1
26	Spar Ladies 10 km Walk: Ladies to walk in hiking gear, men to walk in drag as per race rules! Details to be confirmed. A social will be organised for after the walk.	10 km	Jeanne Rapson	074 1486474 Email: Jeannerapson@gmail.com	
26	Midlands Hiking Club morning hike to World's View, Hilton. Through forests with good views over Maritzburra. Meet & park at Crossways Hotel at 09h00, socialise for drinks, snacks or lunch at Crossways after the hike.	8 km	Neville Lee	083 6269983	2
25-26	Social "Winter Warmer" Weekend at Lilani Hot Spring Spa: Join us for a fun and relaxing weekend at this natural hot spring spa situated 20 km from Greytown. See www.lilanihotsprings.co.za/index.html for more details. Cost: R300 per couple per night or R200 per single per night. Friday night is also available if anybody is interested. Limited spaces available, so please book and		Anitha Jaipal	082 4568739 031 2665207 (after hrs) Email: Anitha.Jaipal@bcx.co.za	3

	pay early.				
25-26	Climb Intunja (Gatberg) from Zulu Cave (Monks Cowl area).	28 km 765 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
25-26	Climb Rhino Peak from a campsite at the top of Mashai Pass (Garden Castle area).		Greg Walker	031 7056414 Email: cathedral@tiscali.co.za	3-4

August 2009

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
1 Aug to 15 Sep	Road trip of approximately 7000 km in 4x4's and dual purpose motorcycles. South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania to the northern side of Lake Malawi, returning through Malawi, Mozambique to South Africa. Lots of snorkeling, hiking and exploring to be done! Grade – Very adventurous		Sharon Jordan	083 6563231	
1	Training course at Monteseel: Leadership and group management skills		Andrew Friedemann	031 7672160 Email: info@wildways.za.net	
1	Springside Nature Reserve, Hillcrest. Enjoyable walk through grassland, indigenous forest & pools. All the family welcome on this easy walk. Meet at Springside Reserve for 2pm. BYO braai	4 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	1
2	Day hike in Cumberland Nature Reserve. Bring your own lunch. R10 entrance fee.		Mike Meyer	031 7029711 083 6256784 Email: mike.meyer@sasol.com	2
1-2	Gluwein-making contest at Mzimkhulwana Hut. Younger members are encouraged to participate.	16 km 600 m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	3
1-2	Gxalingenwa Cave via Emerald Stream, returning via the Ngenwa River and Giant's Cup Trail.	26 KM 540 M	Elaine Bushell	031 7675414 (18h00-20h00 only) Email: elaine.bushell @maccaferri.co.za	3
8	Kloof Gorge. Come down Kloof Gorge and along Molweni River to base of Kloof Falls. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	7 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	2
8-10	Hodgson's Peaks from Sani Top Chalet.		David Honour	031 2408800 082 9064875 Email: dave.honour@wspgroup .co.za	3
8-10	Bird's Nest Cave, Sulphur Spring and Kaula Cave (Vergelegen area). Younger members are encouraged to participate.	35 km 800 m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	3
8-10	Cannibal Hiking Trail. This beautiful trail is situated in the Rooi and Witte Berg Mountains of the Eastern Free State, 5 km from Clarens on the road to Fouriesberg. The first night is spent in a restored cow barn with electricity, kitchen, bunk beds, mattresses and hot showers. The second night is spent in a more rustic cave with mattresses, flush toilets and a braai. The route takes you through differing landscapes, from stunning	16 km	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	3

	mountain views, river walks, forest ambles to boulder hopping along gorges. The second day offers breathtaking views of the Malutis, Horeb, Woodhouse, Generalskop, Visierskerf and George's Pimple.				
15	Longshadows Trail, Kloof. Hike upriver in the Krantzkloof reserve to the escarpment and down again. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	2
15-16	Climb Sterkhorn from Monk's Cowl campsite (Monk's Cowl/Cathkin area).	16 km 1495 m	Clive Powell	031 5646169 (after 19h00) Email: powellc@durban.gov.za	3-4
22	Palmiet Nature Reserve, Westville. Walk through beautiful scenery to Cascades waterfall. Meet at Village Market carpark, opposite Westville Hotel, for a 2pm start.	7km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	1
21-23	Social Weekend at Mkuze Game Reserve: Several accommodation / camping options available. Group decision will be taken re camping / accommodation. Guided walks and game / night drives can be arranged at an additional cost. Early booking essential. Please book no later than Friday 3 July in order to ascertain if trip will go ahead. Cost: Safari Tents – R286 pppn; rondavels - R190 pppn; camping R70 pppn.		Anitha Jaipal	082 4568739 031 2665207 (after hrs) Email: Anitha.Jaipal@bcx.co.za	2
21-23	Yellowwood Cave (Loteni area). Ideal for new members and those unsure of their fitness. Explore natural forest and visit spectacular waterfalls.	24 km 350 m	Gary Smart	083 7831969 Email: garysmart@webmail.co.za	3
29	Kloof Beacon. Downriver & up Kloof Gorge to the survey beacon on top of the escarpment. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site, Kloof Falls Road for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	2
28-31	Mlambonja Pass to Icidi Pass (Northern Berg area). Transport has been arranged from Mnweni back to Cathedral Peak. Tents to be carried. Physical fitness and a head for heights essential.	70 km 1935 m	Christine Bro	082 7826025	5
29-30	McKenzie's Cave, returning via Cypress Cave (Mkhomazi area).	23 km 705 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) Email: cougar1@telkom.co.za	3-4

September 2009

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
5	Mpiti & Porcupine Falls. Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee	5 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	1
5-6	Sehlabathebe Lodge (Bushman's Nek area). Mules will carry heavy items up to the lodge. Return via Tarn Cave. A valid passport is required. Places limited to 12.	24 km 695 m	Clive Powell	031 5646169 (after 19:00) Email: powellc@durban.gov.za	3
5-6	Whyte's Cave via Hidden Valley (from Garden Castle office). Return via Langalibalele Cave and the Giant's Cup Trail.	30 km 800 m	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535 084 4655535	3-4
12	Springside Nature Reserve, Hillcrest. Enjoyable walk through grassland, indigenous forest & pools. All the family	4	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	1

	welcome on this easy walk. Meet at Springside Reserve for 2pm. BYO braai.				
11-13	Weekend at Haven Rock Lodge (mid South Coast) from Friday evening. Saturday: Circular hike to eastern section of Montezuma Ranch. Return via the Mpambanyoni River valley. Sunday: Half day hike or game drive.		George Archibald	039 9711621 083 4191191	3
12-13	Centenary Hut via Fergy's Cave (Injasuti area), returning via Cloudland Col and Field Rangers Outpost.	24 km 930 m	John Pickup	072 1512031	3-4
12-13	Mzimkhulwana Hut via the Giant's Cup Trail, returning via Siphongweni Rock National Monument (Cobham area).	19 km 340 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) Email: cougar1@telkom.co.za	3
19	Kloof Gorge. Come down Kloof Gorge and along Molweni River to base of Kloof Falls. Meet at Krantz Kloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	7 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	2
19-20	Lammergeier Cave via Cedric's Pool, returning via Goats Cave and Tomathu Ridge (Bushman's Nek area). Younger members are encouraged to participate.	20 km 750 m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	3
26	Longshadows Trail, Kloof. Hike upriver in the Krantz Kloof reserve to the escarpment and down again. Meet at Krantz Kloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 after hrs 031 7029138	2
24-27	Mini-Traverse: Loteni Camp to Sani Pass via contour path, up Hlatimba North Pass and down Ngaqamadola South Pass. Transport arranged from Sani Backpackers.	72 km 1450 m	Gary Smart	083 7831969 Email: garysmart@webmail.co.za	4-5
24-27	Mini-traverse: Gray's Pass to Thuthumi Pass via Didima Dome and Roland's Cave, returning via Eastman's Ridge and Zulu Cave.	78 km 1855 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) Email: cougar1@telkom.co.za	4-5

Advance Notices

Date	Description Distance Height	Leader	Phone
19 April – 1 May 2010	Grand Traverse 2010 - 230 km Sentinel to Bushman's Nek Start your fitness programme NOW by hiking every weekend.	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789

Note

It is the prerogative of a hike leader to accept or reject members or other applicants in participating in his or her hike, after questioning the applicant on their fitness and experience. It is a privilege not a right to participate in a hike.

FREE Training sessions

WILDWAYS Adventures will be offering one more free training session. **1st August - "Leadership and group management skills"** this session will be held at our training centre at Monteseel. Cost is R10 pp to cover required printing costs. Bookings essential:- Phone **031 767 2160** or email **info@wildwaysadventures.co.za**

FREE Training information

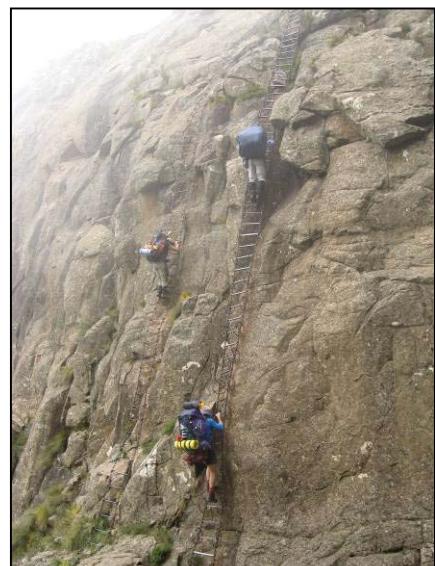
If you have missed out on any of our training sessions, the information sheets are available free of charge from our website as PDF documents. Please go to www.wildwaysadventures.co.za or www.aqn.org.za to download this information.

**The following articles and/or stories are also available on the club website at
www.mountainbackpackers.co.za**

The Grand Traverse 2009 (April 4th-April 17th)

Finally, the big day had arrived. We were all feeling extremely excited. The first timers like me were the most anxious. I could feel the bite of the cold air of the Drakensberg on my shaved head. The stitches had only been recently removed and the wound was still tender. A fortnight ago I had fallen while hiking up Bannerman's Pass, landed on my head and literally scalped myself. One of my first thoughts after the fall had been that the Grand Traverse (GT) was over for me. I had been airlifted to Greys Hospital in Pietermaritzburg where I was stitched up. After all this drama I couldn't believe that I was able to be there.

This year's GT was lead by Dave Gay. He organised everything flawlessly, route, transport, resupplies and accommodation both at Sani Pass and Sehlabathebe National Park. Now it was the time for fun. Thora Honiball, Neil Kemp, Sagren Moodley, Richard Strickland, Peter Hilder and I made up his hiking party. Sagren very kindly had arranged transport for the team, both to the start and finish points of our hike. Peter was only going to be with us for the first week, he had joined us at the last minute and that was all the leave he could afford. Dave and Peter had vast experience in the Berg and had done the GT before. The rest of us were "novices". We were a strong party nonetheless. Thora was the only woman. She had been hesitant about joining us and although she had only started hiking last July when I met her, I knew she was a very strong hiker. I had encouraged her to join us because I knew she wanted to do it as much as I did and like me, she too had actually joined the club because of the opportunity to hike the Grand Traverse.



Sagren's van struggled along the road to the Sentinel Car Park. It eventually overheated and we had to stop several times to give the engine a break. In the end we decided to start the Grand Traverse 1

kilometre before the parking area. We couldn't wait and we were already running late. It was 10:30 but at least it was only a short 12 km day to Ifidi Pass.

Our backpacks were very heavy. Mine was close to 30 kg with no water. We were carrying food for more than 7 days. We were all wondering whether we hadn't overdone it. I was a little bit worried about going up the chain ladder with such a load but somehow it wasn't a problem. On top of the Amphitheatre we saw something bizarre: about ten 4x4s parked in a row. It wasn't a pleasant sight.

How they had got there we didn't know. The top of the Tugela Falls was surprisingly busy despite the mist and poor views. I felt much better once we crossed the first ridge and left the crowds behind.

The first 2 days had been scheduled to be strategically short. Our monster backpacks were at their heaviest and our muscles needed a warm up. On the second day to Fangs Pass we arrived at our campsite by midday. At that stage we were still feeling fresh and did some exploration around the campsite. It wasn't going to be as easy from then on.

Dave got us into morning routine from the first day. Every morning we would get up at 5am to start walking by 6:30 am. Our tents would be still soaking wet with dew and we would have to dry them up at lunch time if this was long enough. We would usually walk until 4 in the afternoon, with a few short breaks in between and lunch would never exceed 45 minutes. If the weather was good enough we would have a bath and/or wash our clothes. By 6 we would all have had dinner and soon after we were slumbering.

The first mornings were the hardest ones. This was specially so for Neil who was clearly not used to early mornings. Usually Neil was still munching his breakfast, sorting out his socks and had half his stuff lying around on the ground. Dave set off regardless. It was a very comical scene: two arms flailing about trying frantically trying to cram everything into his backpack. Gradually over the days Neil's punctuality improved, but only slightly as without fail he somehow always ended up doing most of his packing in a last minute rush. He admitted that he maybe needed a bigger backpack and a watch!

The scenery on the escarpment is always spectacular but the section from Fangs Pass to Mponjwane in the Mnweni area is beyond telling. It was our third and retrospectively probably the best day. We were still in high spirits, not too tired yet to look around and admire the landscape. It was windy, freezing cold and there were big clouds building up but the visibility was still great. What lay in front of us was simply mind-blowing: Madonna and her Worshippers, Mnweni Pinnacles, Mnweni Needles, Mponjwane Peak, the Cathedral Peak Range in the distance.



By Mponjwane we were rewarded by the magic scene of a large colony of Cape vulture flying in circles. We had planned to stay at Mponjwane cave that night but it was already occupied when we got there. We pitched our tents on a spot nearby where we were feeling vulnerable below the heavy stormy clouds. In spite of the light rain we still manage to have a beautiful pink sunset. It had been just a perfect day.

The next day we were in a white out. We couldn't see more than 5 metres away in the thick mist. No matter how many times it has happened before but you're going to make the same mistake again and again. You can't see anything but you know the area well, you know exactly where you are, you know the route and you think you know which way to go. Well, it's not that easy as we soon learned on our way down to Rockeries Pass. After bumbling around for a while we miraculously got to the pass. We knew where we were again but couldn't help making the same mistake and got lost again. Eventually we admitted defeat and used our GPS. Hiking in these conditions is psychologically very tiring. You got this funny floating in the clouds, dizzy feeling. We were lucky to have made our goal for the day at Tseketeke Pass just before dark. Soaking wet, exhausted and ravenous we were fast asleep by 7pm, just as well as the next day was going to be the longest one.

It was a treacherous 22km with huge climbs: Cleft Peak, Ndumeni Dome and the final 600m to Didima Cave. We had the weather on our side and the views were astounding. For the first time we could enjoy the comforts of sleeping in a cave. Peter suggested leaving at 7:30 am the next day which everybody readily supported (especially Neil) and Dave even agreed!



The morning once again surprised us as the weather worsened and we ended up in a vicious hailstorm with lightning striking far too close for comfort. We were lucky to find an overhang to shelter in. However as soon as we stopped the temperature quickly dropped below freezing and Thora showed signs of hypothermia. Fortunately we didn't have to wait for too long and we were able to continue. Oddly enough it was sunny by the time we got to our campsite at Leslie's Pass. We were even more delighted that it was warm enough to have a river-bath. It had been 4 days since we had last washed and the stench was taking its toll!

Day 7 was the day of the resupply at Bannerman's Pass. From the campsite some of us decided to walk by the escarpment. We had fantastic views of Greater and Lesser Injisuthi Buttress, The Red Wall, the Triplets and The Trojan Wall. We got together at Injisuthi Pass and followed the ridge all the way to Mafadi, the highest point in South Africa and along our trip. The mist rolled in by the time we got to the last ridge. Once again the GPS came in use, as we needed to locate our established campsite where our resupply team awaited us. It took us 2h30m to do the last 4.5 km. However, when we arrived at the site nobody was to be seen. It was only until they heard our voices that they turned up to show they were actually there. Their tents were only 10 metres away! All 15 of them had generously hiked all the way up the escarpment with our supplies. We had hiked with most of them before and it was great to see our fellow hikers again and our morale and energy levels were lifted. This was also Peter's last day. He had been such great company and he had inspired much laughter. Unfortunately Richard had to pull out too after hearing that his house had been broken into. Richard had been amazing and although he hadn't hiked for long he had been one of the strongest. It was as disappointing for him as for us. With only 5 of the group remaining we bade farewell, our backpacks feeling heavy again.



After the first ridge I could see the spot where the helicopter had picked me up barely 3 weeks ago when I had my accident. We had fantastic clear and cloudless conditions that were to last us for the rest of the hike. We were aiming for our next goal, the night at Sani Pass but it was still a long way with tough days to come. That day we had to hike over two huge ridges up Mt Durnford and Giant's Castle. From the latter we could already see The Tent where we would camp for the night. The Hawk was a little further up the big open valley and the light was magic - it was without a doubt the most scenic campsite. However it felt a little too quiet without our 2

other buddies. Neil hadn't had enough and decided to climb the Tent. The rest of us chose a bath in the river instead.

On day 9 we walked 19 km to Mkhomazi Pass. To start with we had another huge climb to Redi Peak. We were pretty fit by then so it didn't feel as difficult as we had been told. Then it was an unending downhill to Hlatimba Pass. The rest of the day was easy with just a minor ridge before our campsite.

Dave had planned to eat freeze-dried food of Backcountry Cuisine for the whole trip. He clearly wasn't enjoying it much as he tried out his trading skills with his team members. Sagren's meals often didn't just have Dave salivating but all of us. I reckon Sagren could have sold his food to Dave for a fortune!

We were eager to get to Sani Pass where beds, showers and hot food were awaiting us. High ridges and deep valleys didn't deter us from our mission nor did we pay attention to Thabana Ntlenyana. We steam-rollered ahead, arrived at Sani Pass at 2 and headed for the pub. My burger and my coke were the best thing ever, the hot trickle of the shower I had afterwards was glorious. The dinner was disappointing though. For days our eyes had been growing at the same rate as our stomachs had been shrinking. The bed wasn't comfortable either and I didn't have a good sleep. I must have been missing my camping mattress.

The next morning Sagren and I decided to prepare our own breakfast. The others went to the lodge again for the cooked breakfast. We had got up late at 6 am started walking by 8:30. After being spoiled we all felt a bit sluggish for the first few hours of the new day. It felt as hard as the first day. However we soon got back into GT mood. Neil and I climbed Hodgson's Peak North and joined the rest to do the south peak too. Afterwards Sagren, Neil and I decided to walk by the escarpment whereas Thora and Dave followed a more direct route. While scenic, this didn't prove to be a good idea and we added quite a few more kilometres to the day. That night we were supposed to stay at Sandleni Cave but it was such a beautiful afternoon that we decided to pitch our tents instead and enjoy the rest of the daylight.

Two more ridges up to No Man's Peak and Mashai Peak took us to Mzimude Cave, our last night in the mountains. The trip was coming to an end. That day I felt especially out of energy. On the contrary, Neil was incredible the last days. While the rest of us were getting increasingly tired he seemed to be getting stronger. He was determined to make the most of the last remaining days. That afternoon he decided to do an extra climb to Mzimude Peak and the next morning Walker's Peak.

Day 13 is traditionally the last one of the Grand Traverse. From Walker's Peak is a long downhill via Tomathu Pass to Bushman's Nek. This year Dave wanted to do something different and we went down to Lesotho by the scary Isicatula Pass instead. At the bottom we would join the valley coming from Walker's Peak. However, we didn't go down Tomathu Pass but walked further south, behind the Devil's Knuckles past a Basotho village, to spend an extra night at Sehlabathebe National Park. I had heard many times about it and I was looking forward to it. When we got to the lodge we were received by a special committee. It was a big surprise. Richard and Peter had come on horseback with food and drinks and were going to make a memorable party for us. The team was complete again!



Although the lodge looked little more than a mountain hut inside it was actually strangely luxurious. It was almost ridiculously kitsch. Someone didn't have very good taste. But we enjoyed it nonetheless. Before sunset we opened a bottle of champagne and had a toast for the accomplishment. We then relaxed seating in the pompous sofas in the sumptuous lounge while Peter prepared the most delicious dinner. We ate like kings and drank more than we could bear. We all quickly got drunk. We finished the day recalling some the best moments we had gone through. In the morning, it was Richard's turn and he spoiled us with a cooked breakfast.

We still had to walk the last 10 kilometres back to Bushman's Nek. It was the most perfect morning and the Devil's Knuckles dominated the scenery. I had a hangover though and struggled down the eroded path. When we got to the camp, Sagren's uncle and son were already waiting for us. Sagren got a scale from the van and we all checked our weight. We all had lost an average of 4 kg. Before leaving we were to be spoiled once more though. They had brought with them the most unbelievable Indian meal I had ever had. I reckon I must have recovered at least 1 kilogram.

The trip was finished and everybody was glad that it was so. We were tired but on the way back home I was already thinking about next year's.

Carlos Gonzalez

HambaNathi

“Walk with us” Guided Wild Coast Hikes

HambaNathi offers guided hikes along the Wild coast, South Africa's most beautiful, wildest and most exciting stretch of coast. Camp on unspoilt beaches, swim in magical rock pools, see an abundance of marine and coastal life. All hikes are fully catered. Transport and last night's accommodation in Mbotyi are arranged. Visit our Website at <http://www.wildcoasthikes.co.za> or phone 031 202 9994.

Southern Secrets Hiking and Backpacking

Discover some of the exquisite secrets of the Drakensberg Mountains with a fully qualified Mountain Walking Guide. Single or multi-day trips. Contact Philip Grant (033) 997 1817 or Cell (082) 417 9163. or email pgrant@yebo.co.za.

Berg Free Adventures

David Slanders runs single and multi day guided trips into the Berg, visiting rock-art sites, sleeping in tents, caves and mountain huts. He is a member of the South African Mountain Guide Association registered as a guide with the Department of Tourism, Registration Number KZN0050. He can be contacted on telephone or fax **033 239 5013**, **Cell 082 443 4287** or visit www.bergfree.co.za.

WILDWAYS Adventures

WILDWAYS Adventures will be running an Advanced Mountain Walking Leader course from the 10th – 21st August. Although an advanced course, the training starts with the basics and builds on the knowledge through the week. The course is split into 5 days of theory training run at our training centre at Monteseel and then a 5 day practical hike where you can practice the skills you have learnt on the theory section under the watchful eye of your trainer. One however does not need to attend both sections. For more information please contact Michelle on info@wildwaysadventures.co.za or **031 767 2160**.

WILDWAYS Adventures

Have you ever wanted to do one of the best walking trails in the world? A trail through Alpine meadows and over 2 international passes. Join **WILDWAYS Adventures** on our 2010 trip to hike the **Tour du Mont Blanc**. For more information please contact Michelle on info@wildwaysadventures.co.za or **031 767 2160**.

Discounts For Members

CAPE UNION MART offers members 5% discount - **membership cards must be produced**.

CAMPING & OUTDOORS offers members 5% discount off most items on presentation of **valid membership cards**. The Crescent, Umhlanga Ridge.- tel 031 566 3177.

New store at Bailey's Centre, Builders Way, Hillcrest – Behind Oscar's – 031 7657595

OUTDOOR WAREHOUSE offers 5% discount when presented with a **valid membership card**.

BACKPACKING EQUIPMENT

In the past some members have not hiked because they did not have the necessary equipment, particularly winter gear. Our club has a full range of backpacking items, making it unique in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition to the backpacks and tents, there are sleeping bags, rain gear and gas stoves. Comfortable, warm jackets are for hire on club trips by **MEMBERS** only.

Hiring Fees

Item	Deposit	Daily Fee
Tent	R100	R20
Backpack	R100	R20
Sleeping Bag + Liner	R50	R10
Gas Stove	R50	R10
Jacket	R50	R10
Mattress	R25	R5
Groundsheet	R25	R5
Poncho	R25	R5

EXCITING SOCIAL CALENDAR – PLEASE NOTE NEW VENUE

Directions to Sherwood Bowling Club - 860 Jan Smuts Highway

From Durban - Take N3 out towards PMB, after Tollgate take the Sherwood off-ramp and turn right under the freeway in to Jan Smuts Highway, up the hill, past Jungle Nursery on the right, turn right under the pedestrian bridge into Tropical Nursery parking, follow the road past trees to the back of the nursery.

From Westville - take the M13 towards Durban, past Westwood Shopping centre, through 45th Cutting traffic lights, down Jan Smuts Highway, turn left under the pedestrian bridge (in front of Naked Ladies) in to Tropical Nursery parking, follow the road past trees to the back of nursery.

From PMB, from Hillcrest take the N3 past the Pavilion and four-level interchange, take the Sherwood glide-off, keep left in to Jan Smuts Highway, past Jungle Nursery on right, turn right under pedestrian bridge in to the parking of Tropical Nursery, follow road to the back of Tropical Nursery.

SOCIAL CALENDAR	
MBC Socials take place every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at the Sherwood Bowling Club, 7:30 for 8:00pm Wors rolls or Hamburgers sold at the venue for R15 each.	
DATE	DESCRIPTION
9 July	Trans-Alpine Race- presented by Dave Pearse Last year, Dave Pearse took part in yet another extreme endurance race, this time across the Alps. Completing the run over 8 days with ascents of +2000m and distances of up to 40km a day. Come hear about the blood, sweat and tears of this incredible Trans-Alpine Race.
23 July	Mapping the Game Parks of Northern Malawi-presented by Eddie and Marie Von Bargen. Eddie and Marie undertook a 5 week trip through Mozambique-Zimbabwe-Malawi-Botswana with the aim of using GPS to map the game parks of northern Malawi. An extraordinary adventure! Come hear their tales.
26 July	Spar ladies 10km Walk Ladies to walk in hiking gear. Men to walk in drag as per race rules! The aim is to promote hiking and our club. Brochures will be provided. A social will be organised after the walk. Please watch the website and emails for more information.
13 August	NEW! Barnyard Theatre Evening- LM Radio (Music of the 60's and 70's) All welcome! R115 per person at Barnyard Theatre, Gateway. Book your own tickets and ask to sit with Mountain Backpackers Club. They'll put us all at a table together. The more the merrier! Phone 0315663045 to book. For more information on Barnyard Theatre and show visit http://www.barnyardtheatre.co.za/
27 August	Trekking to Everest Base Camp and climbing Island Peak (6189m)- by Sorin Dimitriu Sorin spent four weeks trekking over 250km in the Khumbu region of Himalaya and climbing 3 peaks over 5500m. An amazing feat by one of our very own members!
10 September	Pub Night- Firkin Pub. Roof top parking at The Pavilion. 7:30pm. Come and enjoy a chance to catch up and meet MBC members.
24 September	Public holiday- No social