



MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

Fixture List: July - Sept 2013

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dear Hikers

The Mountain Backpackers 3rd fixture list of 2013 ushers in an already chilly winter – and a promise for some great 4 season hiking.

The MBC 2013 Club Campout has been tabled for the 6-8 September at the Garden Castle Campsite, just outside of Underberg. You can read more about it later in this newsletter.

The 2013 Photo competition is due to close for entries at the end of July. We encourage that you send in any interesting photos that you have taken on your hiking travels. They can be scenic, of fauna and flora or of people. We welcome all hiking-related entries. Again, please read more about it in this newsletter.

The 2013 Grand traverse was a cold, rainy, windy success. Thanks to their leader, Dave Gay for all his efforts and for getting his group successfully and safely back home. Well done all of you!

Thanks to our MBC leaders for their great efforts to give our members such hiking variety. We are really spoilt for choice to explore our natural environs. From Beach to Berg, this club seems to offer it all. In addition to which, great thanks to the interesting speakers we have had talk to the MBC on the 2nd and 4th Thursday evenings of each month. We invite all our members to come and hear these adventures of out and abouts – and maybe even inspire your own!

The MBC sometimes joins up with the Ramblers and the Midlands Hiking Clubs to add even more variety to our fixture list. We thank these clubs for their friendliness to the MBC members.

Happy hiking!

Karen Miller
Chairman: Mountain Backpackers Club

MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman	Karen Miller	082 7423266
Vice Chairman	John McGovern	082 6595111
Treasurer	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535
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Committee member	Chris Cox	
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THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS TO THE CLUB

Ben Campbell
Darryn Haug & family
Debra Hancox & family
Dianne Winn
Garth Wight & family
Gordon Scott
John Darby

Kayden Naganna
Kelly Spence
Lindsay Walker & family
Lindsey Nicolay
Lorinda van Aardt
Peter Lunt
Tim Whelan & family

2013 Club Campout

The annual 2013 MBC Club Campout will be held on 6-8th September 2013.

Venue: The GARDEN CASTLE campsite, near Underberg. This shady campsite is situated in a short walk away from the river, and lies beneath the impressive Rhino Peak. There are cement caravan platforms, which are convenient gathering spaces on level ground for skottels and chairs and tables. There are freezers and a basic, undercover kitchen preparation area. The men's and ladies ablutions are small, clean and have gas-heated showers. The campsite is serviced daily. (And if there is rugby on, you can go to the Drakensberg Gardens Hotel (via the golf course). There are basic braai facilities. Please bring your own everything, including firewood and charcoal. The committee will contact attendees regarding catering for the communal Saturday night meal.

Activities: there will be fun club events. There are also a host of day walks in exquisite Berg territory. Short walks to Pillar Cave, Sleeping Beauty Cave and of course the mammoth 10-12 hour hike to the top of the Rhino Peak. Feel free to indicate your willingness to participate in any specific day hike, and we will try to arrange suitable leaders. Only members who RSVP ahead of time will be entered onto the attendees list. This is to prevent the outlay from the club being wasted on non-arrivals. We respectfully ask for your commitment to the weekend by no later than the end of June 2013. Please RSVP to Jill, our club secretary, on info@mountainbackpackers.co.za. The cost of accomodation is R60 pp pn, children R30 pp pn.

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.

FIXTURE LIST – 3rd QUARTER

JULY 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
5 – 7 th July	Eastern Free State (Marquard): Kameelkop Hiking Trail. Limited to 8 hikers. 3 days. Accommodation: R250 per person.	23 Km 365 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
6 – 7 th July	Mountain Shadows Resort, Kamberg. Day hikes. Tenting at R60 pppn. For Accommodation booking, contact Resort on 033 2677 493	14 Km	Arthur Bester	SMS 083 482 3590 or email Arthur.bester@gmail.com	
7 th July	Valley Of A Thousand Hills from The Pot & Kettle. Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown at 8:00 (or at The Pot & Kettle at 8:30) for what is bound to be an interesting day hike. (Ramblers Club Hike)	15 Km	Jon	082 4591522	2
13 th July	MINERVA HEIGHTS - BYRNE AREA - Hike from farmhouse at Minerva Heights Nature Reserve. Meet at church adjacent to the Oaks Hotel entrance road which is in Byrne Village at 08h00. Secure parking & R10pp to farm manager. (Combined hike -MBC/ Ramblers /Midlands Hiking clubs)	12 Km	Dave Tighe	Tel 0314649033 Cell 0760280708	2
13 th July	Kloof Gorge Day Hike. Leaving at noon from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat,water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Not suitable for children. Confirm with John beforehand :	4 – 5 hrs	John McGovern	John 082 6595111	2
14 th July	UMGENI VALLEY NATURE RESERVE - near Howick - Lovely local day hike in a beautiful area - great views & chance to see plenty of game & bird life. - Several Trail options - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Last bookings by Wed night 10 July. R24 Entrance fee.	12- 15 Km	Keith Ashton	033 239-5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2
14 th July	Bluff from the SANDF base - Hike around and over the end of the Bluff. See the Millennium Tower; the old Whaling Station, and enjoy harbour, city and sea views. Meet at Glenwood Village Centre, Che Guevara (Moore) Road at 8:00, or at the security gate in Lighthouse Road/Marine Drive at 8:30 (Ramblers Club Hike)	12 Km	Duncan Hiles	083 2297748	2
21 st July	Mt Gilboa, Karkloof - Hike to the top of Mt Gilboa from Bushwillow Camp Site. Steep, hopefully not muddy, footpath through beautiful indigenous forest. Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown in time for a prompt 7:15 departure, or on verge outside Amber Valley, Howick at 8:15am. R25.00 pp (to be confirmed). Petrol-sharing R60.00pp. (Chalets/camping available for anyone who wants to make a weekend of it. See Bushwillow website.) (Ramblers Club Hike)		Guest leader: Mike Kirby	Marie: 082 5860266 031 7053122	3

27–28 th July	6th HIGH - CHAMPAGNE CASTLE Meet at Monks Cowl 8h00. Hike to Keith Bush Camp where we will set up our tents. On Sunday we will depart early to walk up Grays Pass and summit Champagne Castle Peak 3377mts. After taking our photos we return to tents via Gray's Pass, pack up and return to Monks Cowl. Physical fitness required.	Approx distance 40 Km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	4
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AUGUST 2013

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
3 rd - 4 th Aug	Cathedral Peak: Forest Cave via Solar Cliffs, returning via Phillip's Folly and Mike's Pass.	30 Km / 445m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
4 th Aug	CUMBERLAND NATURE RESERVE - PMBURG Hike along cliffs to the bottom of waterfall, return through grasslands. Meet at the entrance to the reserve at 08h00. Cost R10pp. This is a combined hike for MBC/Ramblers/Midlands Hiking clubs.	12 Km	Dave Tighe	Tel 0314649033 Cell 0760280708	2
11 th Aug	African Fish Eagle Trail - lots of birdlife and maybe the odd croc, walk along Umgeni River R20pp fee to Green Hub; meet at Green Hub Durban, 08h00 leave 08h15. Bring cash for tea at SPCA 1/2 way.	13 Km	Heidi Cox	0827064283 Heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2
9 – 11 th Aug	Giants Camp to Giants Hut to Bannerman's Hut - Circular route. The huts only sleep 8. Used to be a club favourite years ago. Last bookings on 24 July 2013. Book by e mail only. I will be hiking in the Alps from 1st - 20 July, so early booking is essential Giant's hut is presently under re-construction and should be available in the near future. R90 pp inc entry fee & levies	50Km / Climb 600m	Dave Sclanders	e mail: bergfree@absamail.co.za	3,5
17 - 18 th Aug	ZULU CAVE: Meet at Monks Cowl Wild Life Office at 8:00. Route to Zulu Cave and back via the Sphinx trail. Please book before 9/8/2013.	28km 950m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 083 419 0196 farouko@telkomsa.net	3
17 th Aug	Kloof Gorge Day Hike. Leaving at noon from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Not suitable for children. Confirm with John beforehand :	4 – 5 hrs	John McGovern	John 082 6595111	2
24 - 25 th Aug	BUSHMAN'S NEK - Backpacking to and overnight in Bushman's Cave - Beautiful hike alongside Bushman's River & via Slab Cave - lovely waterfalls & pools en-route. Options to explore further from cave.- Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Last bookings by Mon. 19 Aug.	12-15Km each day	Keith Ashton	033 239-5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	3
30 th Aug – 1 st Sept	7th HIGH - DEVIL'S KNUCKLES 3050mts Meet at Bushmans Nek 8h30 on Fri 30th Aug. Walk up to the Sehlabathebe lodge, where we will stay. Possibly explore Thamatu village for refreshments or Tsoelikane Falls. On Sat we have the entire day to climb all 3 Knuckles. Sat evening can be spent around the fireplace after a "Bring and Share" dinner (details of dinner	Approx distance 40km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	3

	to follow). On Sunday return to Bushmans via Irish Cave. COST:- R150.00 per person per night A DEPOSIT OF R150.00 SECURES YOUR SPOT - PASSPORT REQUIRED OPTION B Walk to lodge on the Sat.(Find your own way) Join in for the dinner and walk back with us on Sun. Physical fitness required.				
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SEPTEMBER 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
6 – 8 th Sept	GARDEN CASTLE The 2013 MBC Club Campout will be held on 6-8th September 2013. Venue: The Garden Castle campsite, near Underberg - this shady campsite is situated a short walk away from the river and lies beneath the impressive Rhino Peak.			RSVP to Jill, our club secretary, on info@mountainbackpackers.co.za .	
7 th Sept	Giba Gorge Nature Reserve – Hike along trails to McIntosh Falls and Umhlutuzana Shelter, returning via Giba Falls. Cost R10.00pp. Meet at St Helier Lake car park at 8:00. Please phone leader to confirm attendance and get directions. (Joint Ramblers/MBC/MHC hike)	14 km	Dave Tighe	Tel 0314649033 Cell 0760280708	2
15 th Sept	PALMIET NATURE RESERVE - WESTVILLE - This hike will start from the main entrance to the reserve at 08h30. Walk on well maintained paths. Approx four and a half hours - no charge for entrance.	10 – 12 km	Dave Tighe	Tel 0314649033 Cell 0760280708	2
13 –15 th Sept	DRAKENSBERG GARDENS - Cottage weekend - Fully equipped & very comfortable - Beautiful Area in the heart of the mountains - Max 10 members. Day hikes from cottage or simply unwind on the property (10 acres). DSTV for news & sport etc - Hot baths & showers - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Please book early to secure your place - Last bookings by 30 Aug.	12-15Km each day	Keith Ashton	033 239-5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2- 3
14 –15 th Sept	Giant's Castle: Bannerman Hut, returning via the contour path and Langalibalele Ridge.	25Km / 550m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
14 –15 th Sept	HIDDEN VALLEY: Tenting Trip -meet at the Garden Castle Wild Life Office at 9:00. Route to Hidden Valley via the Giants Cup Trail. Please book before 6/9/2013.	16km 100m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 083 419 0196 farouko@telkomsa.net	3
21 st Sept	Kloof Gorge Day Hike. Leaving at noon from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Not suitable for children. Confirm with John beforehand :	4 – 5 hrs	John McGovern	John 082 6595111	2

21 –22 nd Sept	Giants Castle - Exploration Hike. To find Simon's Cave, one of the caves the very early Game Guards lived in before proper accommodation was built for them. Last bookings on 12 Sept 2013. Hike limited to 12 hikers only. Tents required	12-15Km each day / climb 500m	Dave Sclanders	e mail only: bergfree@absamail.co.za	3
21 st or 28 th Sept	International Coastal Clean Up – in conjunction with KZN Wildlife; details available closer to event.	TBA	Heidi Cox	0827064283 Heidi.dinan@gmail.com	1
28 - 29 th Sept	8TH HIGH – INTUNJA 2408mts Meet at Monks cowl Sat 28th at 08h00. Overnight in Zulu Cave and on Sunday we first climb Intunja and then return to cars. Physical fitness and head for heights required.	Approx distance - 28km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	3
28 - 29 th Sept	Cathedral Peak: Climb Cathedral Peak from Sherman's Cave.	17Km/ 1554m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	4

Advance Notices

Achieve 13 Highs with Christine Bro and John Pickup in 2013 - Put this in your diary

(Contact Christine on 082 7826025, christinebro3@gmail.com and John on 072 1512031, johnpickup9@gmail.com)

Date – 2013	Venue	Goal	Height (m)	Distance (km)	Tents
27/28 July	Monk's Cowl	Champagne Castle	3246	40	No
30/31 Aug	Bushman's Nek	Devil's Knuckles	3050	30	No
28/29 Sep	Monk's Cowl	Intunja	2408	30	No
25/26/27 Oct	Garden Castle	Rhino / Mashai / Walkers Peaks	3056/3309/3306	42	Yes
24/25 Nov	Sani Top	Thabana Ntlenyana	3482	24	No (passport required)
8/9 Dec	Monk's Cowl	Sterkhorn	2973	17	Yes

NON HIKING EVENTS

Date	Event	Contact Person(s)	Contact Details
20-21 st July	Ufudu Outdoor Adventure Fair - Kloof Falls Rd, Kloof. 08h00 – 17h00 Saturday and Sunday	Heidi Cox / Karen Miller	0827064283 Heidi.dinan@gmail.com
3 rd Aug	Waldorf Moonlight Market – Waldorf School, Alverstone. 15h00-21h00 Saturday only	Heidi Cox	0827064283 Heidi.dinan@gmail.com

The Grand Traverse – 2013

Date: Sunday, 24 March 2013 to Saturday, 6 April 2013.

Place: uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa.

Distance: 242 km from Sentinel Car Park to Bushman's Nek Border Post.

Team Members

Dave Gay – the team leader from Hillcrest, Durban. Dave, an IT specialist, was a strong and fit leader with a very good knowledge of the Berg, especially the Southern Berg – after all, he has done three GTs to date. He was always like a bullet from the word go and if you procrastinated, he would already be in the distance. He carried a heavy backpack with ease.

David van der Veen – from Waterfall, a 15 year old school boy, the second youngest to complete the whole traverse. David is a pupil at Dave's school and is a strong hiker. He was usually with Dave in the front of the group. He shared

a tent with Dave and every now and again at camp, his backpack would “explode” in their tent to the chagrin of Dave. But they survived!

Otto Solomon – a timber farmer from Pietermaritzburg. He was called Otto “Beep-Beep” because of his extreme fitness, always far ahead, always investigating new ways to go, rarely walking behind in line / row, ready to go and climb an interesting mountain top. His wife, Christine, came up with the resupply team and was there to meet him when he ended the hike.

Roger Rood - from Hillcrest, these days an American. Roger was the quiet and highly efficient hiker of the team, living and carrying very light – his pack only weighing 18 kg. His tent was only big enough to house his mattress. Roger was never intimidated on the hike – taking everything in his stride, taking pictures, speaking to the local Basutho children and spoiling them and also the team. He was actually a pillar for the team.

Ruan Adendorff – a young farmer and dam-building civil engineer from Newcastle. It was his second attempt to complete the traverse after having injured his foot on the first attempt. This time around he was ready and was a strong and hardy hiker, always trying to speak English although his mother tongue is Afrikaans.

Sonja Hoffmann - a German medical doctor from Pretoria. Sonja and the writer shared a stove and shovel because she was very attentive to carrying as little as possible in her backpack - although when she got to Sani, she couldn't resist buying a lot of chocolate bars. She was the team's doctor giving advice and dishing out a pain pill or two.

Jeanette Brueck – a teacher, spinning instructor, master chef, and business manager from Ladysmith. Jeanette was well prepared for this GT, always ready with good advice and real nice food. She and John shared a tent and it became the team's regular party venue because it was sealed so well that even in sub-zero temperatures, it was like a sauna!

John Borrowdale – a milk farmer from Kokstad. John was the proper farmer on the hike –tough and unperturbed by the weather or circumstances. John shared a tent with Jeanette and he had her buy all their food supplies! He of course would rather have had bread, eggs, Milo and real butter than energy bars and powdered milk. But Jeanette made sure that he got all his daily calories because although he was the oldest man on the hike, he was a strong hiker.

Tish Bryson - joined the group at the Bannerman Pass resupply. She is a swimming teacher from Gillitts. Tish has done two GTs, one each way, and this grandmother was a sturdy hiker. Although she initially was slow, she picked up the group's pace and was a blessing to the group with clear knowledge about the Berg, about routes, etc.

André Kleynhans – a dominee from East London. André has done two GTs and this was his third. He brought along his GPS with a track from Jenny Owen. This proved to be invaluable because most days had thick mist conditions and then Dave relied on him and his GPS to lead the group in the mist over ridges. He also helped Dave to navigate and to adjust his routes. André and Ruan did the GT last year and he came back to help Ruan complete his first GT.



The Grand Traverse Team

The Daily Report

Saturday, 23 March 2013

John and André drive up from Kokstad and meet with Mavis Morris. She takes them to Royal Natal's Mahai Camp from where they decided to hike up to Sentinel Car Park. They set off at 11h05 to walk up the mountain. The path is well defined till about Gudu Falls and the Crack. But they decide to hike up to the Nek which is not in use any more. This results in an overgrown path and some bundu bashing. Because of the extra day's food, André's pack is quite heavy and he finds the going tough but John has only a day's food in his pack as Jeanette would bring up his food the next day. He flies up the mountain. At the Nek we get onto the paved road which leads up to the car park and is still about a 6 km slog. We most probably had walked 12 km in total to the car park. At the car park we check out the accommodation and decide to sleep in the hut as storm clouds gather around the Sentinel Buttress. At about 19h00 there is a tremendous rain and hail storm and the temperature drops to zero. The storm is so loud that we can't

communicate with each other. This storm does not bode well for our hike but we have the hut all to ourselves and we have the opportunity to chat with people coming and going up the mountain.

Sunday, 24 March 2013

The rest of the group arrives around 11h00 at the car park. The day is beautiful and clear. We leave the car park at 11h35 after filling in the register and paying our fees. Everyone is in high spirits and no one wants to sleep over in the hut. At 13h15 we are at the Chain Ladders and negotiate them pretty well. We only walk 10 km that day to a campsite near Ifidi Pass and pitch out tents just before the rain comes. But it passes quickly and we have time to wash and get into the rhythm of camping on the Berg. Basutho herders are already watching us. The group also starts to gel with one another.

Monday, 25 March 2013

This is the day that we originally would have started the GT. Everyone is up and ready to go by 07h00. Although it rained last night, we slept relatively dry. The weather is fine with high clouds. In the thick mist which arrives around midday, we find Rat Hole Cave with the GPS – its a small cave with a low roof – this is where we have lunch – the rain is falling steadily outside. We decide to walk 15 km but eventually walk 17,3 km to a campsite in the vicinity of Rwanqa Pass, where we arrive around 14h00. Again we just get our tents pitched before the rain comes. It rains all afternoon and we can have an afternoon siesta. By 16h00 the rain stops and we can get our chores done. I hope for better weather, but by 19h00 a thick mist rolls in around the camp site.

Tuesday, 26 March 2013

During the night there was heavy rain until about 22h00 and tents leaked and condensation made things damp in the tents. The morning is overcast and we walk the whole day in thick mist. Regrettably we miss out on the magnificent views of the Mnweni Needles, the 12 Apostles, Rockeries and Nguza Pass. We therefore decide to cut the corner of the origin of the Senqu River and save about 5 km. Some of our group's boots are really wet. The Berg is a water fountain and every spring and stream and hole is full of water. We don't have to carry a lot of water because of this. We walk about 17 km to the Saddle between the North and the South peaks. There is some let-up in the weather and we can get some of our clothes dry. But this is short lived and by evening the rain starts again.

Wednesday, 27 March 2013

It rains heavily during the night and one could hear the increased noise levels of the stream nearby as it changed into a roaring river. All around us the mole holes became springs with water bubbling out of them. Some of the tents are flooded and some lose a whole night of sleep because of this. This morning we have to take our tents down in the pouring rain, but we manage to leave at 07h10 and arrive at Organ Pipes near Windy Gap at 14h45 after 19,3 km. The whole day was misty with rain coming and going throughout the day. We climb over ridges near Elephant Gully and Cockade Pass. We pass Tsekeseke Pass where we have lunch. The Kwakwatsi River is in flood and we have to wade through it. I had lost my one gaiter coming up to the Nek from Mahai and my boots were dripping wet after crossing the river. We also decide to go around Cleft Peak and down into the Valley above the Organ Pipes. Everyone is exhausted after the day's hike and the sun doesn't break through the clouds. John and Jeanette had brought the wrong gas canister for their stove and had to borrow David's burner for use with their canister. In a traverse like this, it is important that the group looks out for one another and makes sure that everyone survives. The group has reached the 64 km mark after 4 days hiking.

Thursday, 28 March 2013

Thursday morning had high clouds but no rain. As usual we begin our day at 05h00 – a time we would rarely change throughout the hike. We visit the upper Ndumeni Caves and use the opportunity to phone home and let everyone know that we are safe. Clouds keep forming over the Cathedral Range of mountains and a cold wind blows throughout the day. But towards the evening, these clouds move further northwards. Because of the high river down Yodler's Cascades, Dave takes us to a contour path near Didima Dome via Windsor Castle and the Sphinx, and we look down onto the Yodler's Cascades. We eventually come down near the top end of Yodler's and have lunch next to the river. After lunch we tackle the valley up to the path leading to Ships Prow – and how it always happens that we walk uphill after lunch, nobody knows. We get up the valley in quick time and then have a long slog over good paths. We camp near these paths near Gray's Pass. That evening is absolutely beautiful, with clear skies, bright stars and lights from the Midlands far below. We finished the day with 20 km and 84 km for the whole trip. The rain had cleared and just after 20h00, all the lights in the camp had been turned off.

Friday, 29 March 2013

After a good night's rest, everyone has recovered and by 06h50 we are ready to go. A few frost patches appear on the ground. We walk at a brisk pace of 3,8 km/h and reach Ship's Prow Pass in no time. We follow Dave around the back of Ship's Prow. Down in the valley the other side we move up the river past the Ape (our intended campsite) and up the ridge past Leslie's Pass and Scaly Peak. Then it is on up to Mafadi, which we hear may be renamed Mt. Mandela. As usual a cold wind blows across Mafadi. After a few quick photos, we move down the valley and find a nice camp spot for the night. As always the Basuthos are not far off and come to claim an offering. There are nice bathing spots. This makes for a wonderful evening of chatter, "kuier", and eating. Tomorrow it is our resupply day and only about 10 km to Bannerman. Tonight the resupply team sleeps at the Bannerman Hut and comes up the last 3 most difficult kilometres in the morning. We have done 20 km today and have crossed the 100 km mark.

Saturday, 30 March 2013

After a still night's rest, we move down the valley and up between The Judge and Popple Peak. It is a nice, easy ascent around Popple. Otto, Roger and André climb Popple Peak and then the group heads for Bannerman in the

mist which boils over the escarpment edge. We arrive at the Bannerman campsite at 09h45 after 9,5 km and our total stands at 114,5 km. The resupply team begins to arrive at 10h30 and is eventually 25 people. Jack Daniels and Easter eggs are handed around. But at about 17h30 the camp vibe is dampened by rain. Yet everyone is in high spirits and we visit one another till late

Sunday, 31 March 2013

It rained the whole night until 01h00. It was a cold and miserable day. A thick mist hangs over the Dragon. After the traditional "hip-hip-hooray!" and with Tish joining us, we leave the resupply team. Initially she is slow on the uphill but keeps up on the flats and downhill. The Bannerman ridge is easily climbed in the mist, but Mt. Durnford is a tough, long and steep uphill. All the rivers on the escarpment are flowing strongly and the whole day we must negotiate the river crossings with the utmost care. Only after we have crossed the Giant's Castle Ridge after lunch, does the sun come out for the first time that day. Our clothes that have been attached to the back of our packs, begin drying out. We set up camp near The Hawk at 14h45. There is only signal for Vodaphone cell phones at the escarpment edge in this area of the Drakensberg. We had done 20 km that day and had passed the halfway mark at 134 km.

Monday, 1 April 2013

The beginning of this day is wonderful with bright sunshine and at 07h00 we start to negotiate the first ridge near Ka-Masihlenga Pass. We pass Redi Peak and the cliffs that clearly divide South Africa and Lesotho. We descend sharply into a valley and some of us go and investigate the northern Hlatimba Cave. We then tackle with monotony the next ridge near the Mlahlangubo Pass at the top of which we can see Ngaqamadola Peak and Ntsupenyana Peak. When we reach the river we have lunch. Then we head up the valley 3 km past our intended campsite and we achieve 23 km for the day. We stand at 157 km. There are a lot of Basuthos in these parts and sometimes their presence at the campsites are a bit intimidating. Luckily Ruan can speak a bit of their language and he could let them know that we would like some privacy. Our campsite is just 2 km from Thabana Ntlenyana. Everyone is excited with the idea that tomorrow we reach Sani and just the thought of having hot showers and real food lifts our spirits. The evening's silence is broken with herdsmen calling, dogs barking and sheep bleating.

Tuesday, 2 April 2013

Everyone is excited this morning and very early we are ready to move – at 6h30. Because Thabana Ntlenyana is covered in mist, we skip the summit and head off to Sani over the Sehonghong River, past the Wool Shed and up the valley past the Sani River. It is a lovely, hot day and we finish the 17 km at 11h30. Some choose to have lunch at the chalet immediately and others first have a shower, wash some clothes and then have a lunch at the Backpackers Lodge. But everyone is in high spirits. There is clear cell phone reception here and we can phone our loved ones. That evening there is a scrumptious meal next to hot fires. Before supper we play 30 Seconds, but by 21h30, everyone is in bed in the Backpackers Lodge. Our plan is to leave at 9h00. We have done 175 km to date. People at Sani are in disbelief when they hear what we are doing – perhaps thinking that we are all mental cases!

Wednesday, 3 April 2013

In spite of some snoring, we all have a great night. At 07h00 we have an early breakfast as there is a group of tourists that had to leave early to climb Thabana Ntlenyana. John even orders a half loaf of bread which makes everyone green with jealousy. But we leave Sani at 08h50. It is misty. After we climb over the Hodgson's Peaks ridges, the weather starts to deteriorate and it begins to rain and also hails lightly. We move fast and our lunch is taken near the northern Stones Pass but in the rain. It is miserable to stop in the rain for lunch because one gets very cold and stiff. So after a short lunch we move on past the Stones Passes. Luckily we have the GPS to guide us up past the Sandleni Buttress and down the other side to our camp site where we arrive at 13h30. Four tents are set up in the rain and the others decide to camp in Sandleni Cave. It rains for the whole of the afternoon and in the evening the rain changes to snow. It is freezing cold and I decide to catch rain water from my tent's roof rather than going outside with wet clothes to collect water. Most of our clothes are wet or damp. Nobody moves from their tents. The Berg is cold tonight and chooses to hide herself in mist. But we have done 191 km in total after today's 16 km.

Thursday, 4 April 2013

During the night a thick layer of snow has fallen as far as the eye can see over the Drakensberg – about 4 to 6 cm. Everything has frozen and the tents are half covered in snow. It's a struggle to get going as hands and feet become numb and useless. Because of the rain, essential clothing such as my gloves were wet and frozen and useless to wear. The cold causes a struggle to get the tents down – latches won't release, poles won't slide out their sleeves. But the blessing is that the morning is wind-still and the sun is shining. After a make-shift take-down of the tent and fixing it to the backpack, I rush off to a sun spot to acquire some heat and as the day gets going, our hands and feet start to thaw. Today three ridges have to be climbed - No Man's Peak, Wilson's Peak and past Mashai Peak. At Sani I decided to buy some BB tobacco and paper and make up 30 "zolle" or cigarettes. As I start to hand them out to the Basutho herdsmen, their response is full of gratitude. After a day of snow and sunshine, we set up camp at the 20 km mark above Mzimude Pass. Our total is 209 km and in just two more days our GT 2013 will be a thing of the past. It is going to be a cold night as our tents start to freeze by 18h00. We turn in for an early night which is usually between 19h00 and 20h00.

Friday, 5 April 2013

Our penultimate day starts with an amazing sunrise, no frost on our tents and open skies. At 07h00 we start our ascent of Walker's Ridge and then follow a detour descent that takes us near Moroke Peak. We then descend to a tributary of the Tomathu river. We pass behind Isicatula Pass, Andre's Knob and Thaba Ngwangwe. We follow a valley route that takes us past wheat fields and eventually to Tomathu Village. At the village we talk to residents and

John and Jeanette visit a primary school where the headmistress gives them a lunch of samp and beans, while the others visit the local store to buy Maluti beer, chips, Coke and eggs for the evening's celebrations. A young man leads us out of the town while the children laugh and skip as they walk with us. Outside the village we start to climb the ridge south of the Devil's Knuckles and then descend down to Sehlabathebe Lodge. We then head for the edge of a valley where Tarn Cave is situated. We reach it at 16h00 after 22km. Tarn Cave is a big overhang which easily accommodates all of us. John and I pitch our tents in the cave and the others just sleep in the open. As we are more than 500 m lower than the average height of the escarpment (around 3 000 m), it is much more warmer. It is a fitting closure for our GT. The sun is warm and bright, there are nice, lukewarm tarns to wash in and the food that we bought at Tomathu village is very welcome.

Saturday, 6 April 2013

This is our last day with just 11 km to cover. We decide to leave at 07h30 and hope to walk it in 3 hours down Bushman's Nek Pass. We pass a container which stands on the border between SA and Lesotho and which probably contains fire-fighting equipment. Down Bushman's Pass we go – it is terribly eroded and washed out with big boulders and loose stones. By 10h30 we are passing over the last hurdle – the Ngwangwane River which is quite full. Some take off their boots and wade through and others seek a rock-path over the river – we all make it!

The GPS tells us that we hiked 242 km at an average speed of 4 km/h, but with breaks included this falls to 2,6 km/h. We completed the traverse in 61 hours walking time with 31,5 hours of rest time (excluding the overnight stops).

At the SA Border Post, we say our farewells to one another – a sad feeling but a trip that will have a lot of memories for us. Our lifts, family and friends are there to meet us and transport us back to our respective homes.

Some are planning hikes already for next weekend – perhaps to fight off the post-GT blues? For me, my feet must first recover before I'll be able to tackle another adventure like the GT.

I must express my gratitude to everyone that made this GT possible – my family, for letting me go for 2 weeks, for Dave and his team who organised it, and the resupply team. Thank you GT Team for the spirit and laughs and encouragement you gave us.

André Kleynhans



The Grand Traverse and Resupply Teams

HIKE TO THE THIRDS "HIGH" - MONT-AUX-SOURCES 26-28 APRIL 2013

By Kathy Kruger

Many thanks to Christine Bro and John Pickup for yet another awesome hike. A huge thank you too to Clint for once again coming to our assistance. Not having to carry our backpacks to our destination made a huge difference as did the lift back from the Sentinel Car Park. For graciously allowing us to make use of the facilities in his cottage, another huge thank you - to have some home comforts thrown in was indeed a treat.

Carrying only daypacks, our group of 23 hikers started the hike from The Royal Natal National Park. The Park forms part of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site, the main features of which are the Drakensberg Amphitheatre, the Mont-Aux-Sources Peak (where the Orange and Tugela rivers have their source) and the Tugela Falls. The Amphitheatre is one of the most recognisable and dramatically imposing features of the Drakensberg

mountain range. It is a sheer wall of rock (basalt), rising over 1000 metres from the Tugela Valley to the Lesotho plateau nearly 3000 metres above sea level and extending from the Eastern Butress to the Sentinel Peak in the west, for approximately 5 kilometres.

The walk to Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge via Gudu Pass is approximately 12km. The weather was perfect - it was a lovely hot, sunny day. Shortly after the start, we made a slight detour off the path to see The Cascades. On route we passed numerous waterfalls, with Tiger Falls and Gudu Falls being visible in the distance. The lodge is situated at the base of the Drakensberg's Sentinel Peak and, at 2286m above sea level, it is the highest lodge in the central Drakensberg. The lodge had kindly given us permission to utilize their open ground and it wasn't long before we had all set up camp. After a hot shower and lunch, some of us gathered in Clint's cottage where we chatted the afternoon away. It was an early night for some, though some chose to take advantage of the lodge's hospitality and enjoyed a drink or two at the pub. What happened thereafter, well, as they say, "what happens in Witsies stays in Witsies"...

Day 2 saw us make our way to the Sentinel car park, a 7km stretch of road (mainly dirt road) from the lodge - some ran, some walked and some simply caught a lift with our self-appointed driver, namely Clint. From the car park, a relatively well maintained path ascends gradually towards the three Witches and the Zig-Zags, taking one to the base of the Sentinel, from where one veers right, following the contour path below the Western buttresses with the land sloping steeply to the north and east, offering spectacular views of the Malutis and the Witsieshoek plateaux. There are incredible views of The Devil's Tooth and The Toothpick from just above the Zig-Zags.



AT THE SENTINEL CAR PARK, WITH THE THREE WITCHES TO THE LEFT AND THE SENTINEL TO THE RIGHT

To get to the escarpment, one has the option of hiking up The Gully, which takes one to the top of Beacon Butress (3121m), though the famous chain ladders, which are approximately one kilometre on from The Gully, are the more popular choice.

About half a kilometre from the chainladders are the two Sentinel caves, which are situated on the escarpment in a large crack in the back of the Sentinel. These caves are only about 20 metres apart and face each other. We regrouped at the top of the chain ladders. The two chain ladders consist of two sections (40 and 20 metres respectively) and are firmly bolted onto the rock. Despite this, they can be quite intimidating, especially if one suffers from a fear of heights, as they are somewhat exposed. Fortunately there was no wind, which can make the ladders more daunting. We all reached the top safely and took a short breather, admiring the views, amongst which was yet another waterfall, plunging into the gorge below. We headed off towards Mont-Aux-Sources, a basalt plateau which measures 3282 metres high. It was discovered in 1836 by French missionaries and christened Mont-Aux-Sources or "mountain of springs". As we got closer to the peak, the patches of snow increased dramatically until eventually there was snow everywhere, making it a complete winter wonderland. Walking was quite strenuous at times and it was a relief to finally reach the peak. There's something magical about snow, no matter what one's age and much fun was had by all - snow angels were made and many took advantage of the icy slopes, skiing down them on their butts. With a bit of teamwork, we managed to build a snowman and after a lengthy photo shoot, the inevitable snow fight ensued. Shortly thereafter, we were off again. The snow got thicker and thicker as we headed in the direction of the Tugela Falls - at times we were sinking into snow that was knee deep. Waterproof hiking boots would have been a huge bonus... Some of the group made a detour higher up the mountain to take a look at Crow's Nest Cave (3154 m), the only cave on the summit of the amphitheatre, while the rest continued towards the falls. We thankfully eventually got to drier ground. There is an undeveloped campsite and a mountain hut immediately above the falls. Sadly, this hut has not been maintained and is in total disrepair. From here it was a short distance to the falls, which

were abuzz with activity. I think that the snow and the recent rains (which make for breath-taking views of the falls) were a huge draw-card - there must have been at least 50 people milling around at the top. The total drop of the falls, in five free-leaping cascades, is 948metres. This makes these falls the second highest falls in the world and the highest in Africa. It was indeed an awesome sight to see such a volume of water cascading over the face of the Amphitheatre down to the Royal Natal National Park below. The falls are easily viewed after heavy rains from the main road into the park, glistening from the reflection of the late afternoon sun.

On our hike back, the group split up, with half returning via the chain ladders and some opting for the more strenuous route down The Gulley, a short but very steep and rocky section. Almost 8 hours after leaving the car park, we arrived back there again, spent from our day's hike. The route in total, from Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge to Mont-Aux-Sources and back, via the falls, covers a distance of approximately 30km

That evening, we enjoyed a hot meal at the lodge and then relaxed in the lounges, some playing cards, some playing darts and some just chatting. After a hard day's hike, it was just what we needed and many a good laugh was had. On that note - Clive, you really need to brush up on your card-playing skills before our next hike...

Despite having to carry our backpacks on our walk back to The Royal Natal National Park, it was relatively easy going. We took a different route back, returning via The Crack (and of course there had to be one clown in the group who would show off his crack...) - a somewhat steep, slippery and very rocky descent with a short chain ladder thrown in to test our climbing skills. Needless to say, it was a breeze after climbing the chainladders at Mont-Aux-Sources.

It was certainly a hike with a difference. It's not often that one gets to enjoy the luxury of a nice hot shower at the end of a hike or have a hot meal in the evening and sink into a nice comfortable chair and socialise in the lounge until late into the night. We were furthermore fortunate to be blessed with perfect weather, accompanied by stunning views and it was a privilege to be able to share our love of the mountains with like-minded people. All these factors combined to make this a most enjoyable and memorable hike. To my own hiking group - you guys are the best - a hike simply isn't the same without you.

Graded 5, this is a challenging hike, but one that is well worth the effort. To date, Christine and John's "13 highs" have proved very popular amongst the hiking fraternity, the attendance of hikers indicative of this. I would suggest that if you haven't yet been on one of these hikes, that you book your spot NOW...



Snow sliding



At the top of the chain ladders



23 smiling faces at the top of Mont-Aux Sources

Can't Someone INvent... a Soundproof Tent?



When living in a tent, TAKE CARE
of what your neighbours overhear
Furious quarrells, billing and cooing—
Makes no difference what you're doing

When seized by passion or indigestion,
Pause - and ask yourself this question
"Do I want them ALL to hear,
as they're camping quite so near?"



When Nature demands a midnight trip
You open your tent - zip, zip, zip.
Having answered your urgent call,
Back into your tent you crawl
Repeating, on your return trip,
that infuriating zip, zip, zip!



Burps and farts, snores and sneezes
Coughs and splutters, sniffs and wheezes —
Natural noises can at least
be blamed on viruses or yeast.
Voluntary noise should be
restrained if not sotto voce.

Anonymous



Note: It is the prerogative of a hike leader to accept or reject members or other applicants from 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.

Day hikers are requested to phone the leader beforehand to confirm their attendance and that the hike is still on schedule.

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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.

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NAVIGATION TRAINING WORKBOOK

NAVIGATION Anyplace Wild – by Andrew Friedemann This very practical workbook has tasks to complete in it, & is aimed at anyone who travels in the outdoors and needs to navigate. Although written primarily for walkers, it will work for anyone including horse riding, cycling, military teams etc. It has been fully revised and updated to be applicable anywhere in the world, so no matter where you are it will work for you.

The book is 160 pages in full colour with great pictures from all around the world where we have travelled, our guided trips and training courses – making it a great coffee table book too. It comes with a pull out map on which most of the tasks are completed and the website will have additional free tools available for download and in the near future additional tasks and maps for you to continue practicing skills and gaining knowledge once you have finished the book. Chapter 1 is downloadable for free from the website (*4mb*)

There have been a number of variations of the book over the years with each new one being tweaked after use on courses and from feedback received from people who have used it. Reviews of the book can be seen at www.navigationskills.com For all South African orders, please contact Mammoth Outdoor in Cape Town 086 100 0370 or hello@mammothoutdoor.co.za

Discounts For Members

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

FOR SALE: First Ascent Summit pants.

Breathable microtex, water and windproof. Mens medium size. Cost R1369.00. A bargain at R750 – no offers (worn only once) Contact John at 0826595111.

Photo Competition 2013

Your entry pictures may be of any hiking related subject - flora, fauna, scenery, action shots etc. The entries can be viewed in the Photo Gallery, and will be judged in September. The winning photos will be used in the first-ever MBC Club calendar (2014) which will include winning pics from previous years.

Prizes: 1st place: Book: The Barrier of Spears (or large format book of similar value)

2nd place: R 200 cash/voucher

3rd place: R100 cash/voucher

We look forward to having you participate in this annual event. To upload your pics please login in and click on "Submit a photo" on the right hand side of the screen.

If you have difficulty uploading or have forgotten your login, please email your photo to info@mountainbackpackers.co.za. Closing date is 31 July 2013.

SOCIAL CALENDAR – PLEASE NOTE THE 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 2 nd and 4 th Thursday of the month at the Sherwood Bowling Club, 7:30 for 8:00pm Wors rolls or Hot Dogs are sold at the venue for R15 each.	
DATE	DESCRIPTION
11 th July	Duncan & Linda Hiles - "50 shades of Blue" - a trip to chilly Antarctica via Argentina.
25 th July	Lisa Smith – "Castles & Cliffs" - a tour of Ireland and Scotland with its numerous strategically-placed castles. Includes the Giant's Causeway (Ireland) and amazing cliff scenery and seabirds of the Isle of May (Scotland).
8 th Aug	No presentation (public holiday on Fri 9 th Aug)
22 nd Aug	Photo Competition judging by the Bluff Camera Club.
12 th Sept	Sharon Jordan - "Lechery on the High Seas". Join Sharon as she ducks and dives her way across the North Pacific from La Paz on the Baja Peninsula to Zihuatenejo in Mexico. Hear about the flying Mobulas and stark beauty of the islands in the Sea of Cortez. Experience anchorages in unusual destinations. Finish off with visits to pyramids and a chat about the unexpected beauty of Mexico City. Sharon will also give a short introductory on her adventure travel book entitled "One Woman's Journey" which includes a few exciting adventures with Mountain Backpackers members. Her book will be available and for sale at R180.00 (The shops are selling it for R195.00)
26 ^h Sept	David Gay – "Onward Ho" - presentation on the Clubs 2013 Grand Traverse, Southern Africa's longest, most gruelling and spectacular mountain hike.

