



## Fixtures List & Magazine: April-June 2017

### CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER-2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2017

#### **The Mountain Backpackers Club turns 30 years old in 2017!!!**

Autumn is, in my opinion, the BEST time for Drakensberg hiking. You get the last of the afternoon summer storms that roll through the valleys, but also the best weather! Cool evenings, clear days, crisp water in the streams and rivers. If you are venturing out into the Berg for the first time, you'll be very pleasantly surprised!

Please see our fixtures list for the second quarter 2017 below: there are hikes for all abilities to many interesting places in the Berg and also in suburbia.

Keep an eye on the MBC Facebook page for MBC news. If you're a paid-up member, you'll receive weekly or bi-monthly emails on fixtures updates and any new announcements. If you are NOT receiving these mails, kindly let us know on [membership@mountainbackpackers.co.za](mailto:membership@mountainbackpackers.co.za). Remember that the fixtures list can also be found on and downloaded from [www.mountainbackpackers.co.za](http://www.mountainbackpackers.co.za), along with a host of other interesting information about hiking, equipment and some articles about Club activities.

Please pay your subs for 2017 if you haven't already. Huge thanks to those who have!

We look forward to seeing you OUT THERE.

Happy Hiking.

Karen Miller

Chairman: Mountain Backpackers Club

### **MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE 2016**

Chairman	Karen Miller	<a href="mailto:chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za">chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za</a>
Vice Chairman	Andy Brown	072 101 2498
Treasurer	Bobby Stanton	031 465 5535
Fixture List / Magazine	Andy Brown	072 101 2498
Marketing	Heidi Cox	082 706 4283
Secretary	Amy Grantham and Brent Kloppers	<a href="mailto:amygrantham@futurenet.co.za">amygrantham@futurenet.co.za</a>
Social media	Karen, Heidi, Andy, Amy	<a href="mailto:info@mountainbackpackers.co.za">info@mountainbackpackers.co.za</a>
New member mentorship	Sorin Dimitriu	084 681 8920
Recruitment	Roy Bowden	082 901 5301
Student/youth liaison	Amy Grantham	<a href="mailto:amygrantham@futurenet.co.za">amygrantham@futurenet.co.za</a>
Leadership liaison	Amy Grantham and Brent Kloppers	<a href="mailto:amygrantham@futurenet.co.za">amygrantham@futurenet.co.za</a>
Membership: (paid position)	Philip van Gass	083 440 1651

**Fax:** 086 504 3382  
**Website:** [www.mountainbackpackers.co.za](http://www.mountainbackpackers.co.za)  
**Email:** [info@mountainbackpackers.co.za](mailto:info@mountainbackpackers.co.za)

### **MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2017**

Single memberships: R250  
Family membership: R310

(50% Reduction in Fees are offered to NEW members from September to November 2017)  
(NEW members joining up in December will be at the 2018 rate, but will include December and all of 2018.)

If you have not done so already, kindly pay your 2017 MBC Fees as soon as possible.

Please pay by EFT and NOT cash deposit or cheque at the bank! (The bank charges are prohibitively expensive).

Should you wish to pay cash, please pay the Chairman/committee member at one of the Socials (make sure you get a receipt!) and we will process your payment with the administrator.

If you do pay by EFT, please give us a meaningful reference –surname, name and membership number is ideal.

Please EFT your payment to:  
FNB - Westville Branch  
Account Name: MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB  
Account No: 50780007264. Branch code: 223526

## THE GRADING OF HIKES

1. Very easy trip.
2. Easy trip.
3. Moderate trip – Hiking fitness required.
4. Strenuous trip – Backpacking fitness required.
5. Very strenuous trip- High degree of physical fitness essential.

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

## FIXTURE LIST – 1st QUARTER

**April 2017**

Date	Description	Dist / Elevation	Leader	Contact	Grd
8 April	AFRICAN FISH EAGLE TRAIL: We'll be looking out for 30 things for our 30 <sup>th</sup> anniversary year on this hike. Lots of birdlife, walk through Beachwood Mangroves and along North bank of Umgeni river to the SPCA and back. Meet at Green Hub Durban @ 08h00 & leave 08h15. Please confirm attendance prior to hike. Rain stops Play. Bring cash for tea at Springfield SPCA 1/2 way.	12.5km	Heidi Cox	<a href="mailto:heidi.dinan@gmail.com">heidi.dinan@gmail.com</a> <a href="tel:0827064283">0827064283</a>	2
8-10 April	<b>Three day hike during the school holidays in the Injisuthi area.</b>  Day 1 - To Marble Baths Cave. 9km  Day 2 - To Grindstone Cave. 8km  Day 3 – Return to Injisuthi Camp. 5km	Total: 22 km 650m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 081 530 8447 <a href="mailto:farouko@telkomsa.net">farouko@telkomsa.net</a>	4
14-17 April	Garden Castle.  Day 1. Wilson's Cave from Castle View farm.  Day 2. Sandleni Cave via Stones Pass (North)  Day 3. Fun Cave via Sandleni Pass  Day 4. Return via Mzimkhulu Pipeline	46km 1260m	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 – 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) <a href="mailto:cougar1@telkomsa.net">cougar1@telkomsa.net</a>	5
22-23 April	<b>Monk's Cowl area.</b> Monk's Cowl Cave via Monk's Ravine. Serious bundu-bashing and rock hopping involved.	28km 1500m	Andy Brown	072 101 2498 <a href="mailto:andybza@gmail.com">andybza@gmail.com</a>	5

22-23 April	<b>HIGHMOOR</b> - Backpacking hike to overnight in Caracal Cave - Ideal for first time backpacking & sleeping in a cave, but also good for more experienced hikers as we will do some exploring from the cave so smaller day-pack also recommended - reasonable fitness required - Bring enough water bottles to last overnight - Combined hike with other clubs. - MAXIMUM 12 MEMBERS, first come & paid first served - Last booking by Tue 18 April. R70 p/p	10 to 15km per day	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	3
29 April to 1 May	Day 1. Lynx or Hlatimbe Cave (North) via Mlahlangubo Pass Day 2. Birds Nest Cave via Mkhomazi Pass Day3. Return via the Mkhomazi River	40 km 1550m	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 – 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	5

### May 2017

Date	Description	Dist / Elevation	Leader	Contact	Grd
6 May	<b>Karkloof. Mt Gilboa.</b>  The highest point in Karkloof. and last 4km quite steep. First	15km	John and Christine Pickup	<a href="mailto:christinebro3@gmail.com">christinebro3@gmail.com</a> 082 782 6025 072 151 2031	3
6-7 May	<b>Cobham area. Day Hikes. Tenting or Pholela hut.</b>  Saturday: Hike over nDlovini mountain return via Emerald stream path.  Sunday: Bathplug Cave and return. Early booking essential. Hut is booked at central reservations: 033 845 1000	14km per day	Dave Sclanders	Email only: dave@bergfree.co.za	3
12,13, 14 May	(Friday Optional)  Swiman Hut. Garden Castle. Day hikes for beginners.		Clive Powell	<a href="mailto:clive.glynis@gmail.com">clive.glynis@gmail.com</a>  031 564 6169  083 303 4778	2-3
13-14 May	<b>Cathedral Peak area:</b> Forest Shelter via Solar Cliffs and The Junction. Return via Phillip's Folly and Mikes Pass	30km 445	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 – 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3
20-21 May	<b>Bushman's Nek area.</b>  Bushman's Nek to Ngwangwe Cave via Bushmans Cave. Returning via Tomathu Pass. Cave at 2993m.	27km 1494m	Greg Walker	076 154 3643 gregory04@mweb.co.za	3
20-21 May	<b>Wonder Valley Cave, Injisuthi area of the Drakensberg.</b>  Climb Van Heyningens Pass then across Shada Ridge to Wander Valley Cave. There is a waterfall and pool in the valley below the cave. Perfect for a dip.	18km 470m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 081 530 8447 farouko@telkomsa.net	3

26 – 28 May. Fri-Sun	<b>Mhlopheni Nature Reserve</b> (near Greytown). SA Natural Heritage Site, Muden area, we may hit 0 degrees at this time of year – so wrap up warm! Self-catering camp (R300 pp for the weekend) or own tent (R160pp for the weekend) accommodation available, can be chilly overnight. Guided day hikes Saturday and Sunday beautiful bushveld, some game and prolific birdlife. Pre-booking and payment essential: <a href="mailto:joy@mhlopheni.co.za">joy@mhlopheni.co.za</a>	Guided day hikes	Heidi Cox	<a href="mailto:heidi.dinan@gmail.com">heidi.dinan@gmail.com</a> <a href="tel:0827064283">0827064283</a>	2
27-28 May	<b>Bushman's Nek:</b> Tarn Cave via ridge route. Return via base of Devil's Knuckles and Lammergeier Cave	25km 660m	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 – 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) <a href="mailto:cougar1@telkomsa.net">cougar1@telkomsa.net</a>	4
30 May to 2 June	<b>DRAKENSBERG GARDENS</b> - Cottage - 3 nights MID-WEEK. Fully equipped and 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). Full DSTV for news & Sport etc. Hot baths and showers. Combined with other clubs. Please book early to secure your place. First come and paid first served. Last bookings by Mon 22 May. R360 total p/p (R120 pppn)	12-16 km each day	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 <a href="mailto:keimarg@iuncapped.co.za">keimarg@iuncapped.co.za</a>	2

### June 2017

Date	Description	Dist / Elevation	Leader	Contact	Grd
11 June	<b>DARGLE CONSERVANCY</b> - Day hike through indigenous forest on private land - climbing to above forest for magnificent views of surrounding areas - prolific bird life. Our guide is the owner who is very knowledgeable about the local plants, trees, birds & animals - stunning location & not to be missed. Combined hike with other clubs. - Last bookings by Wed 7 June. R20pp donation to conservancy.	12km	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 <a href="mailto:keimarg@iuncapped.co.za">keimarg@iuncapped.co.za</a>	2
16-18 June	<b>Cobham Area.</b> Day 1. Gxalingenwa Cave via Pinnacle Rock. 15km Day 2. Gxalingenwa Cave to Sani Lodge BPackers. 12km Day 3. Return to Cobham. 9km	36km 1000m	Andy Brown	072 101 2498 <a href="mailto:andybza@gmail.com">andybza@gmail.com</a>	3
23-25 June	<b>Garden Castle area. Rhino Peak.</b> Day 1. Night hike to Pillar Cave. Friday evening. Day 2. Climb Mashai Pass, tent at stream near Rhino and climb Rhino. Day 3. Sunday return	22km 1200m	Greg Walker	076 154 3643 <a href="mailto:gregory04@mweb.co.za">gregory04@mweb.co.za</a>	4
25 June	<b>Midlands area. Lidgeton</b>  Hill, forest and grassland meander.	12km 200m	Dave Sclanders	Email only: <a href="mailto:dave@bergfree.co.za">dave@bergfree.co.za</a>	3

**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.**

### Advance Notices

Date	Description	Dist / Height	Leader	Contact	Grd
2 July	Beach Walk: Umdloti to Umhlanga and lunch at Bush Tavern (please confirm so I can book). meet at 08h00 start at 08h15 Umdloti Beach carpark.  NB *possible river crossing, bring dry clothes in case. Confirm attendance by Fri 30 June / prior to hike.  Rain stops play.	12.5km on sand	Heidi Cox	<a href="tel:0827064283">0827064283</a> <a href="mailto:heidi.dinan@gmail.com">heidi.dinan@gmail.com</a>	2
12 August	<b>CHOC Sani Walk</b>  Although this is not an MBC hike, it is a charity well-worth supporting. Please see the end of this mag for all the details.				
Spring 2017	<b>The Grand Traverse 2017</b> <b>April was not popular with potential GT hikers. I have therefore postponed until Spring.</b> <b>Please advise interest EARLY so we can plan ahead.</b> <b>Circa SEPTEMBER</b>	220km	Andy Brown	072 101 2498 <a href="mailto:andybza@gmail.com">andybza@gmail.com</a>	5
	<b>MBC Winter Campout</b> Proposed dates are 25,26,27 August 2017. The venue is Mahai.		MBC Committee	<a href="mailto:amygrantham@futurenet.co.za">amygrantham@futurenet.co.za</a>	2
16 Sept	INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP  A very important event on the international environmental calendar held every year on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday in September around the world. 08h00 to meet for briefing, location to be advised nearer the time (KZN Ezmvlo Wildlife will allocate out "spot"). RSVP for organisational reasons by 8 Sept		Heidi Cox	<a href="tel:0827064283">0827064283</a> <a href="mailto:heidi.dinan@gmail.com">heidi.dinan@gmail.com</a>	
Sept/Oct 2017	<b>GIANTS CUP TRAIL</b>  Starts on the 30 <sup>th</sup> September and ends on 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2017. During the October school holidays.	Total 60 km. Approx 12 km	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 / 081 530 8447 / <a href="mailto:farouko@telkomsa.net">farouko@telkomsa.net</a>	4

<p>Day 1 – From Sani Backpackers to Pholela Hut (Cobham)</p> <p>Day 2 – From Pholela Hut to Mzimkulwana Trail Hut</p> <p>Day 3 – From Mzimkulwana Trail Hut to Winterhoek Trail Hut</p> <p>Day 4 – From Winterhoek Trail Hut to Swiman Hut (Garden Castle)</p> <p>Day 5 – From Swiman Trail Hut to the finish at Bushmens Nek</p> <p>Travel arrangements will be sorted out once the number of participants are confirmed.</p> <p>Cost R120 per night. Total R480.00 payable to KZN Wildlife.</p> <p>For full details click on the following link or copy and paste the address in the search bar of your browser: <a href="http://www.kznwildlife.com/travel-information/wilderness-trails/gc-trail.html">www.kznwildlife.com/travel-information/wilderness-trails/gc-trail.html</a></p>	<p>each day.</p>			
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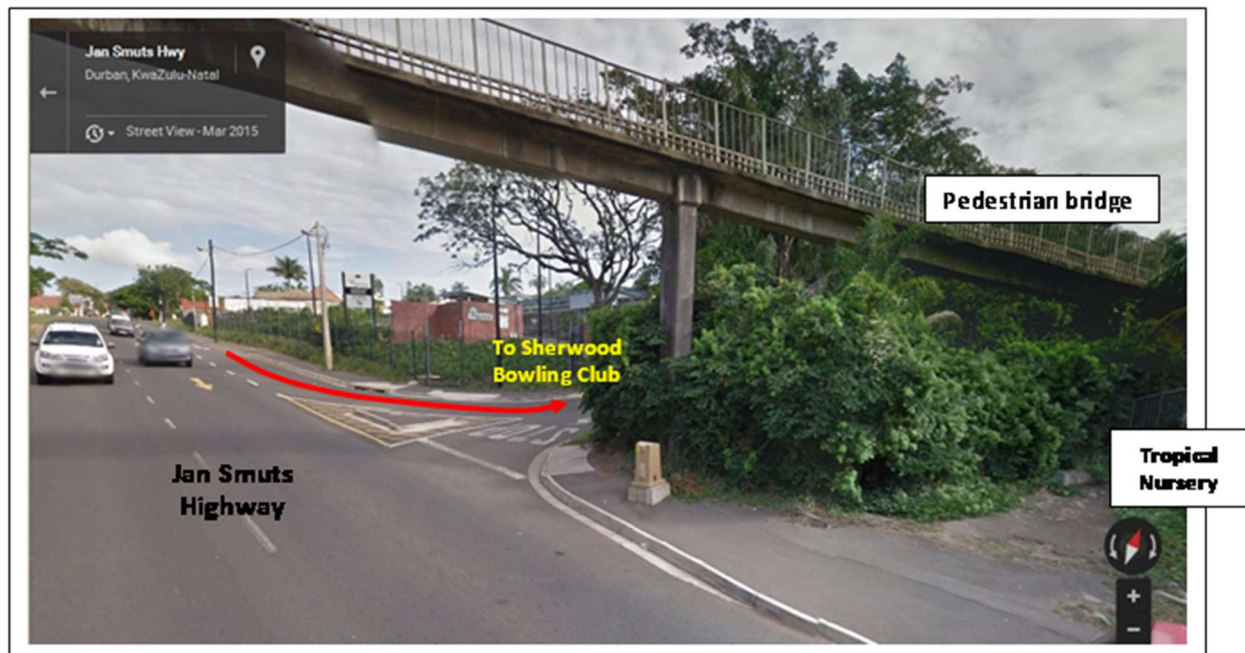
## MBC SOCIAL CALENDAR – PLEASE NOTE THE VENUE

### 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 under the pedestrian bridge and at the first traffic lights take a right U-turn to join the opposite lane, drive down and turn left just before the pedestrian bridge, up this narrow lane for about 200m and then turn left through the gate into the Bowling Club parking.

From Westville - take the M13 towards Durban, past Westwood Shopping centre, through 45th Cutting traffic lights, down Jan Smuts Highway, turn left just before the pedestrian bridge, up this narrow lane for about 200m and then turn left through the gate into the Bowling Club parking.

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 under the pedestrian bridge and at the first traffic lights take a right U-turn to join the opposite lane, drive down and turn left just before the pedestrian bridge, up this narrow lane for about 200m and then turn left through the gate into the Bowling Club parking.





## SOCIAL CALENDAR

**MBC Socials normally take place every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month.  
We gather at 19:00 for a 19:30 start.**

13.04.2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14 April 2017 – Good Friday</li> </ul>	No meeting
27.04.2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>27 April 2017 - Freedom Day</li> </ul>	No meeting
11.05.2017	Lisa Smith	The Free State, a forgotten province with many hidden wonders: Caves and ladders (but no snakes) - Lisa Smith takes you through the Cannibal, Holhoek and Meiringskloof trails.
25.05.2017	Gavin Raubenheimer  -Professional Mountain Guide -Owner of Peak High Mountaineering -Convenor: MCSA Mountain Rescue	Understanding wilderness and mountain rescues and the knowledge of what to do when trouble happens. A talk covering the skills and knowledge about what to do in an emergency that First Aid courses never teach.
08.06.2017	Andy Brown	Central Berg Traverse. Schlepping in Lesotho.  One of the spectacular areas of the Berg with its high peaks and amazing passes. Come and share the experience of wonderful sunrises and vistas from high escarpment caves.
22.06.2017	Frack Free South Africa with Heidi Cox and Judy Bell	Fracking in the KZN Midlands and elsewhere in SA. What this means to YOU, your drinking water and our environment. <b>STAND UP AND BE COUNTED AS WE OBJECT!</b>

## **Advertisements**

### **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 and Lesotho, including visits to rock art sites, with a fully qualified and registered Mountain Guide (KZN0904) and Nature Guide (KZN1025). Single or multi-day trips.

Contact Philip or Christeen Grant 033 9971817 cell 0824179163/2 email [pgrant@yebo.co.za](mailto:pgrant@yebo.co.za) or visit [www.southernsecrets.co.za](http://www.southernsecrets.co.za)

### **Berg Free Adventures**

David Sclanders 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](http://www.bergfree.co.za).

### **Peak High Mountaineering**

Peak High Mountaineering is South Africa's leader in guided hiking and mountaineering. We conduct tours and courses in a variety of destinations in southern Africa, including the Drakensberg, Cape Town (Table Mountain), Cederberg, Magaliesberg and Free State.

**Contact: Gavin Raubenheimer** [gavin@peakhigh.co.za](mailto:gavin@peakhigh.co.za) Tel: +27.333433168  
Fax: +27.333433168 Mobile: +27.829905876

## **REPORTBACKS FROM RECENT CLUB HIKE... PTO**

## REPORTBACKS FROM RECENT CLUB HIKES

# The “Soleful” tale of Sun and Fun and Floods. 17-18-19 February. Distance 45km. Elevation 1100m

By: Andy Brown

Route. Cobham to Spectacle cave. Spectacle to Sani Lodge backpackers. Sani Lodge to Cobham.

Five hikers departed Cobham on Friday for our little adventure under sunny skies and waterlogged paths. With the exception of club stalwart John Constable this was an all leader affair with Farouk Omarjee and John and Christine Pickup joining me on the trip.



Day 1. Spectacle Cave. 14km.

Just one kilometre out and the fun began with John C and his right sole parting company. We all broke out our “Macgyver” kits and a team effort saw John’s boot cobbled back together with parachute rip cord. Two kilometres further out and ‘hey presto’ John C and this left sole now magically parted company. (Apparently, there is no truth in the rumour that the boots are as old as John). With the temperature now in the low thirties we soldiered on past a myriad of waterfalls to the shade of Boundary Rock

to again do some cobbling. It was lovely to see so much water after the drought, as we walked we could see plenty of evidence of flash flooding where the path had recently been a raging stream. Shelter Rock provided the ideal spot for lunch with some much-appreciated shade and welcoming swimming pools.

Our first crossing of a somewhat swollen Pholela was uneventful but the second was more fun and resulted in a few wet feet. As we completed our steady climb we were treated to the sight of a small herd of Mountain Reedbuck. Upon reaching the Amakehla Junction, Spectacle Cave was a welcoming sight and shady relief from the relentless sun. The waterfall was in full bore but we all slept peacefully through it under a clear star filled sky.



Day 2. Onward to Sani Lodge via Gxalingenwa valley. 22km.

There is nothing like some Bundu-bashing first thing in the morning, so thirty odd minutes of hacking our way through the woods saw us back at the Pholela for our final crossing of it and the commencement of our steady pull up to Fingall's Rock. After ninety minutes, we were there, again under baking skies but with magnificent views of Hodgson's Twin Peaks. After another hour long pull up the hill we reached the contour path close to The Hub.

We passed Gxalingenwa Cave at around eleven thirty and stopped by the river for an early lunch. By now the relentless heat had most of us seriously fixating about cold beers at Sani Lodge. We pressed on into the Gxalingenwa valley heading for Ngenwa Pool at the intersection of the Giant's Cup trail. Sadly, upon reaching the pool the bridge had disappeared, presumably swept away by the floods. The river was impassable. Undeterred, we Bundu-bashed along the south bank until the path once again re-joined



us. At this juncture, we heard the familiar sound of Berg thunder and the gentle shower quickly turned to hail.



Only two kilometres to the road but just our luck, three more river crossings to go. The water was by now in places almost waist high (for me anyway) so my trusty hiking pole proved invaluable. Soaked and chilled we reached the road. Our fixation with cold beer had now been replaced with one for hot showers and hot chocolate. After a brief trudge



up the road we reach the shelter of Sani Lodge which was its usual festive self with plenty of interesting foreign tourists to chat to in the common room.



Day 3. Return to Cobham. 9km.

We awoke to more rain and very poor visibility. As John C's boots had by this time given up the ghost completely we elected to abandon him at Sani Lodge.

There was little point in hanging around to smell the roses so a rapid two-and-a-half-hour blast saw us over the hill and back at Cobham. After a quick change, we collected John and headed to the NIP Inn at Bulwer for an excellent relaxing lunch on our way home.

Kudos to John C for hiking 36km in broken boots and thanks to all for a great adventure.

Cheers AndyB

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Celebrating 30 years of the Mountain Backpackers Club: 2017 hosts TWO Club Campouts...

## SPLASHY FUN IN THE BERG

### MBC Summer Campout 24-26 March.

Friday evening saw 36-odd souls descend upon Dragons Peak Mountain Resort in Champagne Valley, under heavy skies with lightening flashing all around and steady rain. Upon arrival, some of our allocated sites were somewhat waterlogged, so, to the resorts credit, they gave us free rein to relocate. We had soon commandeered the entire western end of the site.



Heidi erected the MBC banners, and Amy and Brent ably established the command centre in the huge army tent they had brought. One person (me) in their haste to beat a retreat to the resorts bar had deftly erected their tent with the fly sheet back to front which made accessing the inner tent impossible later on in the pouring rain. Damp but with no dampened spirits we all socialised for a few hours before retiring.









Saturday morning saw us awaken to the wonderful vista of mist and low cloud. Much to my surprise everyone was up and about and thirty-one campers elected to join me on the walk to the foot hills of the Lower Berg by Steilberg. Kilometre by kilometre groups turned back as the mist turned to light rain. "Accuweather" really must change its name as it is far from accurate.







During the afternoon, tea and coffee seemed to be the order of the day with not a cold beer to be seen- with the exception of the “usual suspects” catching a glimpse of the rugby in the bar.

As the evening progressed so did the rain, but the team’s ingenuity prevailed and we soon had the braais safely cocooned beneath a large tarpaulin. Amy and Brent had magically transformed the command centre into a hospitality suite with salads and snacks aplenty. The OBS and beers flowed as we cooked our food and converted the field into a mud bath around the braais. How no one slipped and saw their ### I have no idea. The rain stopped and the revelry continued as the braais were converted to fireplaces.

PTO





Sunday morning and we rose to more mist and low cloud. Not surprisingly the madding crowds had dwindled and only seven other brave souls joined me on the walk up the Sphinx towards Verkykerkop. As we reached the Sphinx the mist cleared and the sun



broke through allowing us views of our campsite and the previous days walk. By early afternoon our “Splashy Fun” field was nearly deserted with everyone heading home to put their washing machines and lines to good use.

Despite the weather everyone was in wonderfully high spirits and had a great time. Now that we know the weather is no obstacle we can start wishing for snow at our Winter Campout!

Cheers.

AndyB



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# **A History of the Drakensberg.**

Courtesy of Andy Brown. Material from zulu.org.za

## **The Geology or Geological Formation of the Drakensberg**

The imposing Drakensberg escarpment as we know it is the product of millions of years of sculpting by the elements. The foundations of the mountain range reach back billions of years. Its formation provides a fascinating story, and its imposing rock walls and deep, green valleys have provided a home for an ever-changing variety of life through the ages.

Eons before the first lavas began to flow in the area of the present- day mountain range we call the Drakensberg, the place was part of a shallow depression fed by inland waterways. It was an enormous inland lake, the waters of which floated upon a vast area of an ancient land mass called Gondwanaland. This supercontinent included Africa, Australia, New Zealand, South America and Antarctica. The sediments carried into the lake were gently deposited upon granite foundations which had formed almost three billion years ago. Today, in areas such as Wit Umfolozi, Old Baldy in Valley of 1000 Hills and Kloof Gorge, small portions of these grandfather granites are exposed giving visual evidence of the ancestry of the landforms. These oldest of rocks are exposed nearest the coast where the elements have worked hardest to reveal their secrets.



The sediments of mud and sand were deposited for millions of years into the vast central swamp - a place where dinosaurs lived and died. They became agglomerated and compacted through the immense pressure caused by the weight of all the overlying layers. This thick blanket of sediment built up about

490 million years ago and today the resultant sandstone can be seen forming the typical table- top shapes in the Valley of 1000 Hills and around Oribi Gorge near Port Shepstone.

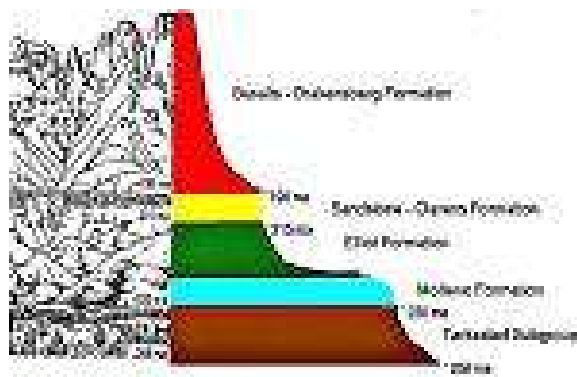
Through the next 250 million years, several more thick layers of sediment were deposited into the swampy depression. These sediments resulted in the formation of red, green and purple-coloured mudstones that contain rich fossil deposits of both carnivore and herbivore reptiles and of the vegetation they fed upon. However, during the deposition of what is known as the Beaufort Series of sandstones, life on earth all but disappeared. Fossil evidence shows that more than 90% of known species became extinct, but no one really knows why.

The next layer of sediments deposited over the Beaufort sandstones built up the blue and grey Molteno and red coloured Elliot formations about 200 million years ago. These form the small cliffs in the foothills of the Drakensberg. The layer is easily recognised due to the way it sparkles in the sun. The glistening is due to tiny quartz crystals, which form a cement between the sand grains. It was also the even Molteno layers that the Bushmen were to use as canvas for their art and even later was to be used by farmers to build their houses.

These layers also contain early dinosaur fossils. The footprints of these early creatures can be found in the sandstone caves of the Drakensberg foothills, often exposed on the ceilings where the softer sediment layers below them have been worn away.

Towards the end of the period during which these sandstones were deposited, a long period of desiccation occurred with the deposition being caused no longer by rivers, but by wind in a desert environment. These wind-blown deposits formed the Cave Sandstone and built up the massive sandstone cliffs which today run along the entire length of the Drakensberg sometimes reaching heights of 200 metres.

It was on top of these deposits that the Drakensberg mountain range was to grow, and it was partly the immense weight of all the sediments, which contributed to the massive breaking up of the landmass which occurred.



Some 160 million years ago, enormous internal pressures contributed to the cracking apart, breaking up and drifting away of the continents which once constituted Gondwanaland. This movement also resulted in enormous cracks in the crust of the African continent and it was through a series of these cracks or fissures that the massive lava flows which were to create the Drakensberg began. This was

volcanic activity, but it was not of the explosive kind. Rather, the thick lavas flowed and cooled, flowed and cooled, adding from 30 cms to 50 metres of lava at a time from the fissures which occurred roughly where Lesotho is today. Throughout 20 million years these flows built up a deposit of basaltic rock over 1,5 kilometres thick in some places and covered an area extending from inland of present day Lesotho over most of KwaZulu-Natal as far as Mozambique and the Indian Ocean.

The basaltic lavas were far from solid, being riddles with holes from trapped gas bubbles and tubes where the hot bubbles escaped upwards. Later these spaces were filled with white zeolite minerals, resulting in the white inclusions called amygdales, some of which are the beautiful blue, grey and white agates, chalcedony and quartz crystals which delight rock collectors and reward sharp-eyed hikers. In the lower reaches, amonites existed at the same time as the mountain dinosaurs and both faced the same fate when, about 65 million years ago, a large meteorite impact contributed to their extinction.

At the same time as the fissure flows were adding a massive cap over the softer sandstones and shales, other flows which could not reach the surface were being forced into underground cracks and crevices. Unlike the brittle basalts of the cap layers these underground lavas formed hard blue dolerite dykes and sills throughout the area. The resistant horizontal sills resulted in time if the formation of land forms, usually waterfalls, such as Howick Falls.

In some places the doleritic dykes have eroded much faster than the surrounding rock, as is the case in the high Berg where it is surrounded by basalt, and this process created the Crack in the Royal Natal National Park area, and the pass at Bannerman's Pass in the Giant's area of the Drakensberg, amongst other features.

Once the massive flows of basalt lavas had cooled they were immediately exposed to the erosive forces of wind, rain, ice, lightning, heat and drought. Where the elements broke through the basalt cap into softer layers, erosion was faster and caused steep sided valleys with churning rivers tumbling seawards. The erosion backwards to the present-day escarpment was a relatively rapid process - about 200 kms in 140 million years, or an average of 1,42 mm per year. Even so the Drakensberg lavas are resistant to erosion and form the high peaks of the escarpment as well as the protective capping of the little Berg.



The lava flows ceased about 140 million years ago and since then no more building up has occurred. Instead of deposition, erosion became the dominant force in the mountain paradise, forming the imposing peaks and steep sided valleys we know today. The high peaks and vertical walls were to issue an irresistible challenge to mountaineers, just as the hills and valleys would call to hikers, rewarding their efforts with opportunities to swim in clear icy pools and shower beneath refreshing waterfalls. Much was still to happen in these mountains before that time came to pass.

Through the centuries, the slow build up of fragile soils on the steep slopes provided a base for vegetation, food for the vast herds of game which roamed the grasslands. It was into this world that the little apricot-coloured hunters appeared and lived in the peace of this world which had arisen out of the swamp millions of years before.

The San people moved into the mountain paradise centuries ago, and certainly long before the Bantu-speaking people or the Europeans did. Recent discoveries of Namibian rock paintings are dated at more than 14 000 years old, suggesting that such rock art originated in Southern Africa, not Europe. These tiny nomadic artists roamed the southern plains and mountains, adapting themselves to all manner of environments, and recorded their experiences upon thousands and thousands of rock canvasses. They used paints prepared from iron oxides, charcoal, gypsum, ochre, and paintbrushes made of reeds, hairs and feathers. With these tools they created the rich and unique heritage left to those who came after.

The Stoneage San were people of the eland, and their culture was based on hunting these largest of antelope with bows and arrows. Their activities and beliefs were reflected on the walls of their shelters by their artists - the battles, the hunts, the animals and birds, the mythological beings, bees and fish, ladders and digging sticks, dances and families. Some of these paintings date as far back as AD 970, and the most recent to around AD 1720-1820. And so the San people lived on in their mountain wilderness, enjoying the plentiful herds of buck, the clear waters of the highland streams, the music they made and their oneness with their world - and recorded it all on the plentiful canvasses of the Drakensberg sandstones.





However, the lives of peace and of harmony with the environment enjoyed by these little people were about to come to an end. The Nguni people were beginning to move onto higher and higher ground from their origins in the north, in turn pushing the San even higher into the Little Berg. Despite the initial fears which must have beset the San people, the new arrivals were pastoralists and the two ways of life did not interfere with one another.

Somewhere around the end of 1835 the noise of horses and wagons was heard for the first time in the foothills of the Quathlamba Mountains, as they were known to the Embo-Nguni. With the encroaching settlement of Voortrekkers amongst the foothills of the Drakensberg, serious trouble began and the very existence of the San people was threatened. These trekkers shot and poached in areas used by the Bushmen for centuries. Soon the San themselves were being shot.

Such raids against the San, thought of as stock thieves and vermin - hardly human - continued until around 1900. By the turn of the century tiny hunters had vanished and the mountains which had been their home was empty of the eland artists, never to see them again.

The mountains, from late in the 19th century, became an ever stronger magnet to those who sought peace, quiet, space and challenge - the first mountaineers claiming the first of those mighty freestanding Drakensberg peaks as their own around 1887. Sterkhorn, for example, was first climbed in 1888 by the Stocker brothers, who claimed several other peaks during that year. Even before that, mention has been made of those determined explorers who laboured to the top of several passes and were the first to see the green province laid out before them in all its spacious wonder (further information can be found on the Mountain Club of South Africa 's website: <http://kzn.mcsa.org.za/>).



The Natal National Park was established in 1916, changing its name to the Royal Natal National Park after a visit by the British Royal Family in 1947. The park included the area of some 7000 hectares below the majestic Amphitheatre and included the mighty Tugela Falls. Through time, more and more land along the length of the mountain range was added to the protected area, some by the Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board and some by the Department of Forestry. By late in the 20th century the majority of land along the length of the Drakensberg had become consolidated and was administered in its entirety by the Natal Parks Board. The Board later combined with the KwaZulu Department of Nature Conservation and the new KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service was formed. In the first year of the millennium, there was another change in the name and the organization

became known as KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (further history can be found on their website: <http://www.kznwildlife.com>)

The Drakensberg was declared a World Heritage Site in 2000 by UNESCO. This honour bestowed upon the age-old mountain paradise, provided global recognition of a unique and special place, and was a fitting beginning to a new century of its history.



This article was compiled, with thanks, from the vast sources of information to be found in: A Field Guide to the Natal Drakensberg by Dave and Pat Irwin

A Cradle of Rivers - the Natal Drakensberg by David Dodds

A Climbers' Guide to Natal Rock by Roger Nattress

The Drakensberg Bushmen and Their Art by A Willcox

The Natal Monocline: explaining the Origin and Scenery of Natal, South Africa by Lester King

An Introduction to the Historical Geology of South Africa by J Truswell

Excerpts from an explanatory pamphlet from the University of Natal's geology museum with thanks to Deanna Meth

Steve Cooke, MCSA KZN Section Search & Rescue Convenor, personal communication

Ron Uken, Geologist, personal communication

# CHOC SANI PASS WALK

## 12<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2017

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual CHOC Sani Pass Walk takes place on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2017 from the South African Border Post on Sani Pass to the top of the Pass and back down again – a distance of 16kms in total, walked on the road the whole way.

Requirements: A valid Passport

A 4x4 or 2x4 vehicle to get to the Border

Food and drinks for the walk

Suitable hiking shoes and warm clothing

Registration: From 4.00pm to 8.00pm on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> August at the Grind Café, Trout Walk, in Underberg or from 7.30am to 8.30am on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> August at the S.A. Border Post, Sani Pass. Please make sure you register with me before starting your walk in order to receive your t-shirt and wristband with your food and drink choices printed thereon.

T-Shirts: Specially printed t-shirts will be provided for every walker, the cost of which is included in the registration fee.

Food: Sani Round Table will once again provide each walker with a meal and drink on completion of the walk at the S.A. Border. Please take snacks for the walk.

Cost: Adults – R275.00 each

Children under 16 – R100.00 each

The cost includes your t-shirt, food and drink on completion of the walk as well as your donation to CHOC.

Payment: The entrance fee must be paid into CHOC Durban Account at Standard Bank, Killarney, Current account number 241319978, Branch Code 007-205. **Please use Sani and your Surname as reference** and email proof of payment to [sanichoc@gmail.com](mailto:sanichoc@gmail.com)

Cut off date: 21st July 2017 (to allow the t-shirts to be printed in time)

**Please complete the attached registration and indemnity forms and email them to me at [sanichoc@gmail.com](mailto:sanichoc@gmail.com).** The indemnity needs to be printed, signed, scanned and emailed to me.

I hope you are able to join us for this worthwhile fund-raiser.

Kind regards,

Joy de Witt

Cell: 072 0406091

Email: [sanichoc@gmail.com](mailto:sanichoc@gmail.com)

P.S. If you wish to be removed from the mailing list please let me know.

## USEFUL INFORMATION REGARDING THE CHOC WALK

**CHOC**: stands for Children's Haematology Oncology Clinics now known as The Childhood Cancer Foundation of South Africa. This organisation survives on donations raised vigorously and imaginatively for children with cancer. The money raised from this event is used to

“KEEP MORE THAN HOPE ALIVE” by:

Providing free accommodation for caregivers and child

Providing a warm bed and a clean environment

Providing 3 meals per day and unlimited tea and coffee

Providing a free laundry service

Providing a cleaning service

The Student Social Worker provides counselling to the mums and conducts support groups.

Providing a CHOC INTERACTIVE PLAY GROUP in the wards 4 times per week. The volunteers provide Stimulation and Development programmes to the children.

All of this is done to allow caregivers to be free to be with their children during this critical treatment period.

**SANI PASS DISTANCES:** From the N3 turn off on the R617 at Merrivale to Himeville is 117kms. Himeville to Sani Pass Hotel is 16kms on tar. Sani Pass Hotel to the S.A. Border is 14kms on dirt at an average speed of 25kms per hour requiring 4x4 or 2x4 vehicles. Anyone needing transport in a 4x4 please make your own arrangements with a Tour Operator – a list of names is attached after the list of accommodation.

**T-SHIRTS:** Extra t-shirts may be ordered at R70.00 per Adult t-shirt, R50.00 per child.

**ADVERTISING:** Please consider advertising your company logo on the t-shirts at a cost of R750.00 per advert. An estimated 500 t-shirts will be printed.

**FOOD:** Please take drinks and snacks with you for the walk as food is only provided at the finish by Sani Round Table. Please indicate your choice of food and drink on the registration form and take note that Sani Round Table finish serving food at 4pm.

**THE WALK:** Starts and ends at the S.A. Border and is 16kms in total on the road. It is an extremely strenuous walk and should only be undertaken if you are relatively fit and in good health. There are no prizes for walkers – if you need to turn around at any point – just do so. A Medic will be on standby in case of emergency.

**PARKING:** There is extra parking at the top of the concrete driveway on the left hand side at the Border.