



MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

Fixture List: October - December 2010

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dear Members

2010 has been a fantastic year for the club and we've certainly pushed ahead in areas like training and new membership, with over 70 new members this year. Leader training has continued this year and, in this regard Gavin Raubenheimer has picked up from where Andrew Friedeman left off. Andrew contributed a significant amount of his time and effort into the training of our leaders and other interested members, and I'm sure this training will no doubt save a life or two in years to come. Gavin Raubenheimer is continuing these efforts and the benefits of this training will be felt for years to come. The MBC Committee thanks Gavin for all his effort over the past few months.

We have had a few committee members move on to greener pastures this year, and I wish them all the best in their new adventures. Special thanks go to Dave Gay, Joanne Hall and Jeanne Rapson who have all contributed to the wellbeing of our club.

We must also tip our hats to the other committee members who have given of themselves selflessly. Thank you, Bobby Stanton for taking care of the club finances, training and of course the publishing of the club magazine. Thank you Jovita da Silva for tirelessly ensuring that membership details, cards, and general enquiries always get top priority! You've gone far beyond the call of duty. Thank you Eddie Von Barga for ensuring that our club leaders submit fixtures on time, and for giving of yourself at club events.

Thank you also to our leaders for giving of your time! Without you this club simply would not exist.

Look out for the upcoming AGM and year-end braai in the social fixtures.

All the best and I hope to see you in our mountains

Grant Wilkinson

MBC Chairman

If you are not receiving Grant's weekly emails please ascertain why. Have you changed your email address? Have you ticked the appropriate box on your website profile? Most important, have you paid your club fees?

You may miss something important if you don't receive the Club's emails. If you don't have an email address don't worry about this.

MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789
Vice Chairman:	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535
Treasurer:	Bobby Stanton (temporary)	031 4655535
Fixture List / Magazine:	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535
Membership / Subscriptions:	Jovita da Silva	082 6919180
Backpacking /Day Hikes Convener:	Eddie von Bargaen	083 2811288
Socials / Pro:	vacant	

Tel: PRO: 072 226 2772
 Fax: 086 504 3382

Postal Address: P O Box 37702
 OVERPORT
 4067

Website: www.mountainbackpackers.co.za
 Email: info@mountainbackpackers.co.za

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

Megan Finestone	Hermann Schmitz
Beryl Tonkin and family	Ian Shooter and family
Brendon Cadman	Karen Chislett and family
Celeste Jefferys	Lindy Duffield
Dave Herselman	Nicole Zeiler and family
Desmond Samuel and family	Sarah McMaster
Felicity Paxton and family	Claire Perrett
Gen James	Kathy Holland

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.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

11 November

At the Sherwood Bowling Club

starting with a free wors-roll braai at 7pm. AGM will start at 7.45.

October 2010

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
3	Rob Roy (Ramblers Club hike) Starting from the Copper Kettle, Jon will lead a hike down into the Valley of 1000 Hills along easy footpaths, far from civilization. Always beautiful. Long uphill on the way back. Either meet in Pinetown at 8.00 or at Copper Kettle at 8.15 am. Petrol sharing costs R10		Jon	082 4591522	
2-3	Bushman's Cave via the Bushman's River, returning via Tomathu Ridge. Optional visit to Ngwangwe Cave. Bushman's Nek area.	22km 800m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
9	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.	8km	Gerald Hall	0825691383 a/h 031 2051089	2
10	Adamshurst in the Midmar Dam area. (Ramblers Club hike). An exciting new hike from Adamshurst, which has an indigenous nursery as well as a delightful coffee shop. Distance is approximately 16km over various farms in the area. Wonderful views over Midmar Dam Petrol sharing costs R35	16km	Rob King	083 4177805	
10	Circular hike from Enon Cottage in the Byrne Area. Hike through Plantations & indigenous forest. Meet leader at the entrance to Richmond (just off R56) at 08h00	12km 150m	David Tighe	076 0280708 031 4649033 (h)	2-3
9-10	Mzimkhulwana Hut via the Giant's Cup Trail, returning via the Siphongweni Rock National Monument rock art site. Cobham area.	20km 420m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
16-17	Whyte's Cave via the Giant's Cup Trail, Langalibalele Cave, Painters Cave, Sherry Cave and White Horse Cave. Return via Rob's Cave, Secret Cave, Enagement Cave and Sleeping Beauty Cave. Garden Castle area.	28km 580m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
19-17	Cowl Cave via Keith Bush Camp, returning via Cowl Fork. Monk's Cowl area.	28km 1550m	Greg Walker	031 7056414 mlambonja@telkomsa.net	4-5
23	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. BYO sundowners	8km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
24	Drummond/Peacevale (Ramblers Club hike). Max will lead this hike starting from his house in Drummond. Around Peacevale and other areas. Bring your drinks for afterwards. R15 petrol sharing costs. Phone for meeting point.		Max	Max 031 7834173 or Jenny 084 9520622	
23-24	Vaalribbokkop Cave via Three Pools Cave and Stable Cave, returning via Hlatikhulu Nek and the Sphinx. Monk's Cowl area.	30km 610m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
30	Mpiti & Porcupine Falls. Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee. BYO sundowners	5km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	1

30-31	Relaxed hike to Pholela Cave from Cobham, young members encouraged to join.	28km 400m	Clinton Bro	082 7826025	3
-------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------	-------------	-------------	---

November 2010

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
6	Training Course conducted by Gavin Raubenheimer. Topic: Technical clothing and equipment . Venue: Spirit of Adventure, Shongweni. Cost: R20 per club member. Compulsory for all prospective new leaders.		Gavin Raubenheimer	Contact: Gavin 033 3433168 / 082 9905876 or Bobby Stanton 031 4655535 / 084 4655535	
6	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	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	1
6	Hike at Highmoor Nature Reserve , view Bushman paintings. Meet at Parks Board Office. Parks Board Fee for day hike applies		David Tighe	076 0280708 031 4649033 (h)	3
7	Beach hike from Ballito to Salt Rock and back. Enjoy sandy beaches, rocky outcrops and tidal pools. Combined Mountain Backpackers and Ramblers hike. Meet next to service station at Pick n Pay Hypermarket, Durban North at 7.30 am.	10km	Duncan Hiles	031-2029994 083-2297748	2
6-7	Glade Cave via Lakes Cave, returning via Weaver Cave, the Mzimukhulwana Hut and the Giant's Cup Trail. Cobham area.	35km 540m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
6-7	Tenting week end at Giants Castle . Hike up to the old Giant's Hut (burnt down) via Oribi Ridge, tent at the hut, and return via Giant's Ridge- Cost KZN Wildlife hiking tariff - New tariff from 1st November	25km 583m	Dave Sclanders	082 4434287	3
13	Kloof Gorge . Come down Kloof Gorge and along Molweni River to base of Kloof Falls. Meet at Krantzklouf Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee. BYO Sundowners.	7km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
14	Joint Ramblers / Backpackers hike . Explore the western section of the Vernon Crookes Nature Reserve, starting from George's Farm. Visit Umzinto Waterfall and Gorge enjoy the rolling green hills and stunning spring flowers. R10 entrance fee to park. Petrol sharing costs R25. Bring a windproof jacket for the ride back to the farm from the Reserve on the back of George's bakkie.		George Archibald	George 083 4191191 or Jenny who is co-ordinating the travelling arrangements on 084 9520622	
21	Giba Gorge and Shongweni (Ramblers Club hike) Dieter will lead us on his very popular hike starting from Giba Gorge through to the Shongweni circuit. Meet at Giba Gorge car park at 8.00 am (parking R10)		Dieter	031 4627445	

20	Safari Hike at Phezulu Safari Park. Super chance to take a guided hiking tour of this safari park. R20 per person. Meet at entrance to Phezulu Safari Park, Old Main Road, Botha's Hill	7km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
20-21	Hike to Sleeping Beauty Cave. Garden Castle area.	4km 360m	Greg Walker	031 7056414 mlambonja@telkomsa.net	3
20-21	Gxalingenwa Cave via Emerald Stream and Pinnacle Rock, returning via Giant's Cup Trail. Cobham area.	28km 450m	Elaine Bushell	031-7675414 (between 6pm and 8.00pm) elaine.bushell@maccaferri.co.za	3
20-21	Rock Art appreciation weekend: Watch the slide show and visit Game Pass Shelter (R50 per person) en route to Sinclair's Cave. Also visit Willem's Shelters, Christmas Shelter and Rockfall Cave. Kamberg area.	26km 520m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
27	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. BYO Sundowners	8	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
27-28	Kaula Cave , returning via the sulphur spring and Bird's Nest Cave. Vergelegen area.	34km 995m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
27-28	Swimming at the Roman Baths , great for first time backpackers unsure of their fitness. Kamberg area.	16km 100m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	3

December 2010

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
4	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 a/h 031 7029138	1
5	Killarney Rockeries Hike - meet at Highstakes, Cato Ridge. Beautiful rock formations.	12km 100m	David Tighe	076 0280708 031 4649033 (h)	2-3
4-5	Swimming, kloofing and abseiling at Aasvoelkrans Cave. Return via Caracal Cave and Fulton's Rock, with optional descent into the "Dangerous Hole". Highmoor area.	25km 120m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
11	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. BYO sundowners	8km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
12	Kloof Gorge (Ramblers Club hike). Margie has a wonderful hike from the Krantzkloof car park to the top of the Gorge and along to Nqutu. Lunch at Soros Pools. Meet at Stokers at 8.00 am		Margie	073 4376915	
11-12	Exploration from Lower Injasuti Cave to find Hilton Pass. Injasuti area.	24km 1500m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	4-5
16-19	Mini-traverse: Starting from the Cathedral Peak Hotel, we will overnight at Twins Cave (via Mlambonja Pass), Roland's Cave and Nkosasana Cave. The hike will end at Monk's Cowl via Gray's Pass. Mini-bus transport will be provided.	60km 1920m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	5

18	Mpiti & Porcupine Falls. Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee. BYO sundowners	6	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	1
18-19	Christmas in McKenzie's Cave. Present exchange and loads of fun. Mkhomazi area.	23km 705m	Christine Bro	082 7825026 nfo@karkloofcanopytour.co.za	3-4
31-2 Jan	Get into the hiking groove for 2011 with this New Year hike: Spend a day and two nights at Stable Cave soaking up the glorious views. Optional sight-seeing to Anton's Cave and Zunkel's Cave rock art sites. Also visit the elusive Hospitalspruit Cave. Monk's Cowl area.	28km 650m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4

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.

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

An Alternative View of the Mountains

**Philip Grant
Southern Secrets Hiking and Backpacking**

I have been a Professional Mountain Guide since 2005. My view and perception of the South African Drakensberg Mountains and the Maluti Mountains of the independent Kingdom of Lesotho have changed in ways that I could never have realised. Let me explain.

Once qualified as a guide, I imagined that I would swap my usual South African hiking club companions with paying clients from overseas countries, and that the hikes I would guide would be ones we generally all know well, or at least variations of them.

To some extent this has been true, but like most South African hikers, my knowledge of the mountains ended more or less at the Lesotho border. I had previously done some road trips within Lesotho, including visiting the obligatory Katse Dam and Mokhotlong, but my hiking experiences were still limited by the uneasy suspicion I felt when meeting Basotho people, mainly because of my own ignorance.

This started changing after I was approached by the owners of Sani Lodge Backpackers to guide their standard trips into Lesotho, with their tour company Drakensberg Adventures. These trips have evolved as an attraction for their clients, who come from all over the world, and are of any age group, the main essential requirement being an adventurous spirit.

All Drakensberg Adventures Lesotho trips involve as much interaction with the Basotho people as possible, sleeping in traditional huts and eating local food. They are designed to benefit as many people in the surrounding communities as possible. All support local community tourism initiatives that have developed and evolved within Lesotho. Examples are two and three day cultural visits, two, three and four day pony trekking trips, and trekking trips where kit is carried by pack animals, such as to Thabana Ntlenyana (3482m), the highest point in Southern Africa, from a Basotho village.

I now had the new pleasure of introducing visitors to the Drakensberg and Maluti Mountains who were prepared to pay for the sort of experiences that we take for granted! By closely observing their open minded, enquiring, interested and respectful interactions with the Basotho people, free of the sort of antiquated mental baggage that unfortunately a lot of us South Africans still carry around, and seeing how they were received and treated in return, showed me very quickly how I had been missing out hugely up until then. Since then, each visit to Lesotho adds more to my knowledge of the Basotho, their way of life and their culture. The more I get to know them, the more I am learning to understand and respect their age old traditional ways, and have now come to a point where I can abandon my suspicions. I have gained enough insight, to see for the first time in my life, how outsiders and the rest of the world must appear to Africans.

As my knowledge of the physical terrain increases, in place of a limited view of the Drakensberg as an escarpment ending at the Lesotho border, I now see the whole Drakensberg / Maluti massif as one unit, with the South African Drakensberg as the very beautiful wilderness edge to an area of such size and potential as to be almost limitless in scope. Now the paths leading up the Drakensberg passes which we as hikers are so familiar with make sense, and when I see the paths continuing and disappearing into the Lesotho interior, I want to follow them, to experience more of the tranquil, friendly, peaceful and welcoming village life that I know is not far away. A Drakensberg high traverse now seems to be like hiking against the natural flow of the mountains instead of with it, and conversely a hike over the Drakensberg escarpment into the Lesotho interior and back, makes absolute sense.

I am now increasingly frustrated when I overhear the general talk amongst South African hikers of Lesotho and the Basotho, much of it based on ignorance and suspicion, and dare I say it, plain old fashioned prejudice.

Philip Grant 2010

In response to an obvious interest from overseas visitors, I set up my own Southern Secrets Cross Border Cultural Hike (or Cross-Cultural Hike) in 2008, involving a night or nights in a wilderness cave with a night or nights in a Basotho Village across the border. The response has been very good, to the point that about half my own trips are Cross-Cultural hikes.

I would like to share my knowledge and experiences with South African hikers, as I know how it can increase the appreciation of the potential of our mountain surroundings. To this end I am putting together a three day (two night) version of my Cross-Cultural Hike for anyone interested from the Mountain Backpackers Club and the Midlands Hiking Club.

The hike would be;

- *Day 1: Hike to the village over the Drakensberg (18kms 950m ascent and 300m descent, approximately 8hrs)*
- *Day 2: All day to experience a day in the life of a Basotho Village. There would be a guided walk around the village and the optional extra of pony riding.*
- *Day 3: Hike back on the third day by a different route (16kms 650m descent, approximately 7hrs).*

The only costs would be the two nights in the village (currently R160.00 per person per night dinner bed and breakfast = R320.00, and tip for our village guide split between the participants). Additional costs would only be for optional extras such as pony trekking from the village and beers from the local shop! Numbers would be limited to six at a time. Packs would be light as we would only have to carry three lunches, personal clothing, warm and wet weather gear and a sleeping bag. VALID PASSPORTS ARE ESSENTIAL as is an open, enquiring mind and a sense of fun and adventure!

If anyone is interested in such a hiking experience, please phone me to discuss – based on the response, I will set a date. I reserve the right to telephonically interview all prospective participants.

Useful contacts

Philip Grant

Southern Secrets Hiking and Backpacking 033 9971817 Cell 0824179163

www.southernsecrets.co.za

www.drakensbergadventures.co.za

Kilimanjaro Experience

Dates 23 to 30 July 2010

Route Lemosho

Participants Dave Honour and Paul Adams.

Reaching your 50th birthday is an occasion that most people want to do with some special event so being an avid hiker what better way could there be than climbing Africa's highest mountain. So last year I decided to start making arrangements for this to happen although I had hoped to do it before turning half a century but events in my life with moves to Mauritius had delayed that somewhat. Now doing it alone would be a bit boring and probably demoralizing so I asked a friend of mine in the UK if he would want to join me. Paul Adams was also turning 50 and being a fit guy (still playing soccer) and always keen for an excuse to visit SA he jumped at the chance. We arranged for the wives to have a week in Kruger at a time share that Paul could arrange and we were set. Paul left the arrangements of the climb up to me as he admitted not having the first idea of where to start, so I surfed the internet for the best options. I knew that I did not want to do the standard "Coca Cola" route and also that by by-passing the normal tour operators I could maybe save some money. I found a company on line called "climbingkilimanjaro.com" which seemed obvious but they had all the answers for what I was looking for in as much as they only dealt with the actual climbing and could offer all the routes. Their rates were the best I could find and so I arranged to book with them and used the local travel agent at work for the flights.

Knowing Paul had no experience at all at hiking let alone altitude I decided on using the Lemosho route for our climb as this would give us more time and would be more scenic. It is also not a popular route and would give us a bit more space as I hate walking in crowds. I booked and we were sent our itinerary and climbing brochure ready for us to start the preparations.

Paul had the problem of not having access to good hiking venues so concentrated on his overall fitness and stamina. I started my preparation by arranging climbs in the Berg with work and the Mountain Backpackers Club.

In 2009 I started with my usual annual climb of Hodgson's Peaks above Sani Pass followed by the Rhino. In 2010 I climbed Thabana Nthlenyana settling any fears I may have had of hiking at altitude then worked at fitness on my usual Tala Valley hikes and leading trails in Krantzklouf Nature Reserve for the Honorary Officers. In the last couple of weeks leading up to the start of my climb I planned to do solo hikes of Ngomankulu on my Tala Valley hike and with two weeks to go I felt I had reached peak fitness. Then with one week left disaster struck when I went down with bronchitis. The Dr prescribed all sorts of medication in a hope of curing me but I still ended up travelling to Tanzania with a very slight wheeze in my chest and my mind thinking of all sorts of possible terrible outcomes. I met Paul at Joburg airport and together we flew to Kilimanjaro via Nairobi in Kenya. We arrived at 7:00pm and were met by the local agent for the climbing company Zara International and with two other South African climbers we travelled to the Zebra Hotel in Moshi. We had meant to stay in the Springlands Hotel but had been transferred due to a problem there. Next morning we were taken to the Springlands where we went through the initial registration process and met our guide Zamir, well his actual name is Josephat but we knew him as Zamir.

We were put together with some other people who were starting the Lemosho route and together we travelled by Land Rover to the Londolozi gate for registration. This journey took about four and a half hours through the Tanzanian countryside stopping at a small village en-route for the local guides and support staff to get lunch. We arrived at the gate where the porters were waiting ready for being assigned to a group. Whilst we had our lunch the guides worked out how many porters would be required to get us to the top and back in comfort. In our case this meant our guide, an assistant guide, a cook and six porters each carrying a 15kg load as well as their own rucksack.

After lunch and the necessary signing in had been completed we were back in the Land Rover for an adventurous one hour drive to the start point at the bottom of the Lemosho path. The drive was all part of the excitement with some extreme maneuvering done on behalf of our driver and a moment of panic when Paul's kit bag fell off the top of the vehicle half way up a steep incline. After a final slide through what appeared an impassable muddy ditch we were at the beginning of the trail in the middle of the lower forest slopes.

The first day's hiking through the Yellowwood Forest was fairly short as we had only got to the start at about 3:00pm but it was very enjoyable. It was also the first time we were to encounter the term "Pole-Pole" (slowly slowly) as the speed we were to go at, something we were to hear constantly throughout

the next six days. Even going slowly we still managed to beat our porters to the first camp at 2800m. This meant a small wait for our kit to arrive but thankfully both Paul and I had spare clothing in our day packs to avoid getting cold whilst the tents were being erected and hot food and drinks prepared. We sat in the small mess tent that had been erected just for Paul and I and we made ourselves a hot drink from the flask of boiled water that had been provided. To snack on we were given a plate of freshly made popcorn which was to be the norm after each day's hike and then the cook brought in an insulated bowl and proudly announced "cucumber soup" as he took off the lid. The soup was very good and both of us had a second helping expecting that this was the main meal of the evening. The bowl was removed and as a joke I said to Paul that maybe that was just for starters and we were going to now get lamb and roast potatoes. You can imagine the look on our faces when the tent opened again and we were presented with a plate of beef stew and roasted potatoes. From that meal onwards we were just amazed at what the cook could produce at each mealtime, all with fresh ingredients and cooked to perfection. I was told by a friend before leaving that her son had said he was given hot chips when he climbed some years before, we also were graced with this delicacy at a lunch stop on day four at about 4000 metres above sea level, incredible. During supper Zamir the guide came in and told us what our trail would be the next day, and as it was to be quite an extensive hike we should get a good nights sleep. We didn't need pushing, we were already feeling tired after what had been a long day.

Day two started with me being totally bunged up and coughing, my fears about the previous week's bronchitis were now coming to haunt me it would seem. Zamir heard me and asked if I was OK, I explained about the previous week and that I was not too bad but would need to check as we went higher. Zamir asked if I had taken Diamox (altitude sickness tablet) which I hadn't as I had purposely not brought them. He advised that I must not take them at all but should have a painkiller instead. I took two "Stillpain" and continued the same remedy each morning with great effect.

After a breakfast of porridge followed by egg and sausage (another standard) we set off through the last section of the forest and up to the Shira Plateau. The Plateau was a long section of undulating hills covered in a kind of fynbos and at the hike was becoming very enjoyable. I kept checking Paul as this was his first real experience of hiking in Africa and I had to constantly remind him to drink, something he was not accustomed in doing back in the cool climate of England. At midday we reached Shira 1 camp and stopped for lunch. The landscape had now changed to the arid lava fields with sparsely scattered low bushes and in front loomed the unmistakable shape of Kilimanjaro, still some way off but there all the same. After lunch we carried on to Shira 2 camp reaching there late in the afternoon and worryingly before our porters with all the kit. Even more worrying was that the 18 km trek had taken its toll on Paul whose lack of drinking had caused him cramping and exhaustion and he was feeling the effects of the 3800m altitude. The porters arrived very late due to one of them falling ill on the way; I searched my bag and gave Paul a rehydrate to get him right again. Thankfully this had the result we were wanting and we soon enjoyed a hearty supper. We were now a lot closer to Kilimanjaro and later that night we were rewarded with the view of a full moon rising over the mountain, absolutely awesome.

Day three started with only a slight repeat of the blocked sinus of the previous day but I took the painkillers all the same. It was then that I realized how well I had hiked the day before and that I was maybe going to make it to the top. We set off up the slope from Shira 2 and were soon looking down on the camp itself. Zamir had told us that today we were going high to the Lava Tower to test our ability at altitude then would descend back down to sleep at roughly the same level as where we had come from. The climb up was slow going at the usual Pole-Pole pace and when we stopped for lunch we were still some distance from the Tower although we could see it clearly. The final path up to the tower we did with a bit of ease both of us were hiking well and not feeling any shortage of breath or headaches and nausea the usual symptoms of altitude sickness. Zamir was very pleased with our progress and we spent a bit of time at the tower having photos taken as this level of 4600m was an achievement for both of us. The climb back down to Baranco Camp (3800m) we did at a fast pace which both of us agreed was a bit reckless as the terrain was not good and we could have easily lost our footing. Anyway we arrived at camp safely and relaxed in our tent both listening to music on our MP3 players. The temperature that night dropped considerably and there was a heavy frost, the fleecy lining in the sleeping bag was very welcome addition to the kit that night.

The morning of day four found us looking up the Baranco Wall trying to assess the route to the top. I showed Paul the tiny specks of the Porters slowly snaking their way up the sheer face, something which gave him a sense of apprehension. Paul had never climbed a path up such a rock face before and every step up was a nerve racking event for him. When we reached the top I exclaimed that in my

opinion that was the best section of the hike so far and probably the best I had experienced anywhere before. Paul's feelings can not be repeated in print. At the top we rested and shared our feelings with some of the friends we were now making among the other groups of climbers. But we couldn't stop for long as we still had quite a long trek ahead of us to get to Barafu Camp back up at 4600 metres. The rest of the day seemed to be one long slog up a gentle never ending path, with only a short stop on a small plateau for a tasty hot lunch of hot chips and crispy chicken. It was at this point that we encountered one of those humorous moments that makes it all worth while. We were sitting at our table enjoying our hot drink when over the edge of the plateau arrived a lone Australian hiker whom we had bumped in to on several occasions. He took one look at us and said "I must have a word with my manager; I'm obviously with the wrong tour operator". He later admitted when we saw him back at the hotel that the one memorable moment he will take from the whole experience is getting to the top of that terrible climb up the most exhausting hill and the first thing he sees is "two bloody Pommies drinking tea"!

When we eventually reached Barafu Camp it was mid afternoon and we settled in to our tent for an early night. The view from the entrance of the tent was stunning; way below us was the top of the clouds above Tanzania. We had both agreed on the way up that this camp was our target; we would only go to the summit from here if we both felt right. We were both at this point feeling great, we were going to the summit.

We were woken up at 11:30 that night and were soon in the mess tent having a hot drink and some biscuits. Already outside there was a procession of people going past and up the path towards the top. At midnight Paul, myself and our guides Zamir and Babu joined them. Although there was still a fairly full moon it was pitch black and all we could see was the little circle of light from our headlights. The altitude was still not affecting us and before long we found ourselves overtaking the early groups, something that was a bit worrying as we felt maybe we would run out of steam at any moment. We plodded on and up, the ground below our feet was unstable, the path seemed non existent. To keep myself going I thought of anything I could, songs, I rehearsed e-mail messages to the family for when I get back to the hotel, anything that would keep my mind active. At about 4:00am I had run out of things to think of, my mind was beginning to go numb, I started to doubt my ability to carry on so I convinced myself that I might as well walk up as down. By 5:00am I was totally bored and feeling that I had reached as far as I could go. We made one of our regular stops and I asked Zamir how much further, he said it was half an hour to Stella Point. I said to Paul that I had half an hour left in me and he agreed he was the same, we carried on. Half an hour passed and we stopped again, "nearly there" said Zamir, we looked at each other, took a deep breath and carried on. All of a sudden Zamir exclaimed "Stella Point, we're here" we had made it to the summit ridge.

The next few minutes were a bit of a blur, I was sitting on a rock on the top of Kilimanjaro feeling absolutely exhausted, both physically and mentally. Zamir said that Uhuru Peak was close and almost flat from where I sat but I would have to move soon as it was very cold. My feet were already beginning to lose their feeling and I didn't think I had anything left in me to continue. I crunched on a frozen Snickers bar and had a drink and agreed to attempt to make the final summit. Zamir and I slowly made our way up the path stopping every 50 metres or so to catch my breath. After about half an hour Zamir stopped me and told me to turn around, the sun was appearing over the horizon. The appearance of the sun seemed to lift my spirits and being able to see the actual summit gave me an extra spring in my step. Then all of a sudden I had a terrible thought, Paul had the only camera with him and I didn't know where he was. I said to Zamir that I hadn't seen Paul leave Stella Point so he was probably coming on behind us with Babu. We waited for about five minutes but they didn't appear. I made the decision that I would have to continue to the top and would have to have the event un-recorded. We set off again across the ice field and to the sign board that signalled Uhuru Peak, the absolute top of Africa. At 6:45am I stood on the summit and to my sheer relief the first person I saw was Paul, he had gone on ahead of me with Babu and both of us were under the impression that each other had given up at Stella Point and gone back down. We made the best of our time at the top taking as many photos as possible then it was the start of the dreaded hike back down.

The way back was as direct as the guides could make it and not a pleasant one at that. The way was so steep we literally skied down the soft ash and often ended up on our backs. At 10:00am we were back at the tents where we grabbed a quick nap before setting off again down to our last camp at Mbweka 3600m. We had hiked for 16 hours and were totally exhausted but Paul found something to cheer us up, they sold beer at the camp. OK at 4 \$US a bottle a bit pricey but by then we decided we deserved it.

The last day started early with photos of the whole group, then a short sharp route march down through the clouds to the Mbweka gate and taxi trip back to the Springlands Hotel for a well deserved shower. We took Zamir out for a few beers in the evening to say thanks for his leadership then it was back to the hotel for a night in a proper bed. We left Moshi at 4:00am the next morning to get the first flight out of Kilimanjaro International airport and back to South Africa. All in all an amazing experience and all the more worth while as Paul had done it for charity raising nearly £3000 for the Brain and Spine Foundation in England.

Dave Honour

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 or visit 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.

Discounts For Members

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

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

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

Example

For a weekend hike, to hire one backpack you will need to put down a R100 cash deposit. You will be charged R20 per day, so the hiring fee will be R40 provided you return the backpack by the end of the Wednesday following the hike. If you return the backpack on the Thursday you will be charged an additional R20. You will therefore be charged a total of R60, which will be taken from the deposit. The balance of R40 will be refunded to you in cash.

All arrangements regarding the hiring of Club equipment are to be made with **Piet Smit (Tel. 031-2662881)** and the items must be collected from / returned to him at **4 Bohmer Place (off Knoll Road, off Blair Atholl Road, Westville)**.

Items must be checked (i.e. count pegs, poles etc.) and cleaned (i.e. wash inner sheet of sleeping bag). Tents, sleeping bags etc. are to be hung out and shaken before returning. If it has rained on the weekend, hang items out to dry as soon as possible after your hike.

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 Hamburgers are sold at the venue for R15 each.	
DATE	DESCRIPTION
14 October	Roger Scheffer will present a talk on his Durban 2 Dublin BMW Motorcycle Trip in support of the Pebble Project.
28 October	Photo Competition. Announcement of the winner and prize giving, plus a talk on the judging by members of the Durban Camera Club.
11 November	Annual General Meeting starting with a free wors-roll braai at 7pm. AGM will start at 7.45.
25 November	End of Year (free) Braai. Please let Grant, Jovita or Bobby know if you are going to be there, for catering purposes.
9 December	An experimental evening. Open Screen Night. Bring your special slides of your special trip on a usb stick or CD/DVD and show them (max 15-20 min). No need to prepare a special show or talk. If no one is ready to do this we will just drink and eat and talk.

Dear Members.

Your social calendar may look a little sparse this time. The reason is that **you** haven't volunteered to be the social's organizer. Don't automatically expect someone else to do it. Stand up and volunteer.