



# MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

## Fixture List: Jan - Mar 2014

### CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Greetings hikers!

Last year was a great year for the Mountain Backpackers Club. We hosted a great number of fun and exciting hikes as well as enjoying a plethora of entertainment at our fortnightly social evenings. Our Annual Club Campout was a blast (literally!), and among our biggest accolades of achievements in 2013, was the Annual MBC Grand Traverse led by Dave Gay, and the 13 Highs led by Christine Bro and John Pickup.

I have always loved that our club is vibrant, friendly and active. Hiking and weekendng together is an extraordinary way to bond with new and existing friends, and to see the Berg and the Wilderness as cannot be done by vehicle. To experience 'back-to-basics' in this magnificent province, with our majestic Drakensberg is a privilege and a pleasure. Thanks to our leaders who afford us these many opportunities to enjoy our heritage in a guided, safe and fun environment.

Please also feel welcome to attend our Social evenings. The MBC hosts these evenings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday evening every month, starting 7pm for 7.30pm. There are eats for sale, and a cash bar. Our speakers are sourced from within and from outside the club, and they tell us their tales of local and international travels, experiences in these places and often inspire the would-be hiker to adventure beyond the city and into the very GREAT outdoors!

If you have an exciting trip to talk about, please let us know on [chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za](mailto:chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za) and we'll arrange an evening for you to speak.

Speaking of which, we have an exciting line-up of speakers for the socials in 2014's first quarter.

Sharon Jordan will regale us with her experiences on the Outeniqua and Harkerville Trails. Tanya Hall will take you abroad and share her overland trip through China/Vietnam/Cambodia/Laos and Thailand, and Dave Schlanders will share his tales of hiking in the Alps, on the Tour du Mt Blanc. In addition to which we are hosting a cracker of a movie show, called the Asgard Project – a climbing epic.

Please see the fixtures list and social calendar for more details.

Thanks to you all for making the Mountain Backpackers Club the pleasure and adventure that it is. It is its members that make a club what it is, and we are Great!

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
Fixture List / Magazine	Alan Etchells	082 3984103
Secretary	vacant	
Marketing	Heidi Cox	082 7064283
Committee member	Chris Cox	
Socials	vacant	
Socials	vacant	

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The Committee currently has vacant portfolios and would like to encourage members to join in and assist in the smooth running of the club. If interested, please contact Karen.

### NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN REGARDING MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2014

Please note that Membership fees for 2014 are due in **JANUARY 2014** and have been increased from R160 to R180 for Single members and from R200 to R240 for Family memberships. The committee has been very conservative with their increase this year.

In an effort to improve on the administration of membership renewals as well as reduce the club's expenditure by saving on postage, cards will in future no longer be printed and posted to members but will instead be e-mailed in pdf format. Members still requiring for their membership cards and the 4 newsletters to be printed and posted, must please add a surcharge of R30.00 to their renewal fees.

#### The MBC Banking details are as follows:

FNB - Westville  
acc. name: MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB  
acc. no: 50780007264  
branch code: 223526

We look forward to your renewed membership for 2014, and to a year of fun-filled hiking and great friendships.

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

Candice Saunders  
Bheki Sithole  
Sarah-Lynn Williams

Darryl Colenbrander  
Alice Uys  
Kitty Bao

### THE 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 – 1<sup>st</sup> QUARTER

Jan 2014

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
28 <sup>th</sup> Dec - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Jan	<b>Waterberg Trail (Ficksburg) and Kameelkop Trail (Marquard).</b> Hike the new year in! Limited to 8 hikers. (Eastern Free State)	23km 365m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
31 <sup>st</sup> Dec - 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan	<b>HIGHMOOR</b> - Your chance to celebrate New Year's Eve (& N.Y. Day) in Aasvoelkrans Cave with Keith & Margaret - Short backpacking hike to the cave, then explorations of the area from the cave - lovely waterfall & pool - bring swimming gear & all your goodies to celebrate in style. Book early to secure place (12 max) Approx cost - R45 pppn incl. entry & levies - R90 total pp.	12 -15km each day	Keith Ashton	Phone - 033 2395023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2 - 3
5 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>MINERVA HEIGHTS, BYRNE AREA:</b> Day hike from Minerva Heights Farmhouse through grasslands & indigenous forests. R10 per person donation to farmer. Meet leader by 08h00 at the Byrne Church, adjacent to the turn off to The Oaks Hotel in Byrne. Please phone to confirm your attendance on the hike. Combined hike with MBC, Ramblers & Midlands Clubs	12km	David Tighe	Tel 031 4649033 or 076 028 0708	2
11 – 12 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>Garden Castle</b> - Whyte's Cave via the Giant's Cup Trail, Langalibalele Cave, Painters Cave and White Horse Cave, returning via Wave Cave and Hidden Valley.	24 km 685 m	Dave Gay	Phone 031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
11 – 12 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>Highmoor Area</b> - Relaxed hike to Aasvoëlkrans Cave, suitable for hikers unsure of their fitness, we'll also visit one of the high points in the area to get some great views, or the option of swimming the afternoon away is also available.	+ - 10km	Grant Wilkinson	Cell: 081 3725611 Email: gwilky@gmail.com	2
18 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>Kloof Gorge Day Hike.</b> - 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
25 – 26 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>Mkomazi – McKenzies Cave</b> - Meet Sat at Mkomazi KZN Wildlife office. Return on Sun via a different route. It's a long climb – fitness needed. Last Booking 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan – Cost R45.00 (Combined Midlands/ MBC hike)	28 km 600 m ascent	Dave Sclanders	Note new e mail: <a href="mailto:dave@bergfree.co.za">dave@bergfree.co.za</a>	3
25 – 26 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>Bushman's Nek</b> Tarn Cave via Three Pools and Ostrich Cave, returning via Vast Cave	30 km 680 m	Dave Gay	Phone 031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>African Fish Eagle Trail</b> - Lots of birdlife, walk through Beachwood Mangroves and along North bank of Umgeni river, meet at Green Hub Durban 08h00 leave 08h15. Bring cash for tea at Springfield SPCA 1/2 way. <b>Note:</b> Rain stops play.	1 3km	Heidi Cox	0827064283 heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2
26 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>UMGENI VALLEY NATURE RESERVE</b> - near Howick - Lovely local day hike in a beautiful area - great views & chance to see plenty of game & bird life. Several trail variations. Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Last bookings by 22 Jan. Cost - R 24 Entrance fee.	12-15 Km	Keith Ashton	Phone - 033 2395023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2

31 <sup>st</sup> Jan – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	<b>Mhlopeni Nature Reserve.</b> SA Natural Heritage Site, Muden area, self catering camp (R150 pp) and own tent (R80pp) accommodation available, can be chilly overnight. Guided hikes Saturday and Sunday beautiful bushveld, game and prolific birdlife. Pre-booking and payment essential: joy@mhlopeni.co.za. <b>NOTE:</b> The weekend will go ahead regardless of Durban weather, as it is often raining here and not a drop there.		Heidi Cox	0827064283 heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2
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### February 2014

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	<b>CUMBERLAND NATURE RESERVE, PMBURG:</b> Hike along cliffs to bottom of waterfall, return through grasslands. Meet at the entrance of the reserve at 08h00. Cost R10.00 per person. Please Phone to confirm your attendance on the hike. Combined hike with MBC, Ramblers & Midlands Clubs	12km	David Tighe	Tel 031 4649033 or 076 028 0708	2
8 – 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>BUSHMAN'S NEK</b> - Backpacking to & overnight in Sherry Cave (New) - The hike is a similar route to Whyte's Cave but we will do variations & also visit Bushmen's paintings. Spectacular views from cave. As access to the cave is along a ledge & there is a drop of many meters in front of the cave it is not suitable for children. Sleeping space is also limited. Visit 4 caves during the weekend. "Combined weekend with Midlands Hiking Club". Last bookings by 3 Feb. Cost -R45 pp incl. entry & levies	12 Km each day	Keith Ashton	Phone - 033 2395023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2
8 – 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Mkhomazi</b> - McKenzie's Cave via rock art site, returning via the Nzinga River and Cyprus Cave.	23 km 710 m	Dave Gay	Phone 031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
15 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Kloof Gorge Day Hike.</b> - 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
15 - 16 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Cobham</b> - Gxalingenwa Cave via Emerald Stream and Pinnacle Rock, returning via The Hub, Gorge Cave and the Pholela River.	32km 875m	Dave Gay	Phone 031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
16 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Umdloti to Umhlanga</b> Beach walk and lunch Bush Tavern. Mainly on sand, meet at 08h00 start at 08h15 -Umdloti Beach carpark. Note: Rain stops play	12.5km	Heidi Cox	0827064283 heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2
22-23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	<b>Monks Cowl, Zulu / Cat Caves &amp; Intunja</b> Visit Cat Cave on Sat afternoon. If weather permits, climb Ntunja on Sun. Return via Keartlands Pass. Fitness required. Last Booking 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb – Cost R45.00 (Combined Midlands/ MBC hike)	28 km 600 m	Dave Sclanders	Note new e mail: <a href="mailto:dave@bergfree.co.za">dave@bergfree.co.za</a>	3
23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	<b>Monteseel</b> - Joint hike with Midlands / MBC. Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown at 07.00 or meet at Max's at 7.30. Petrol-sharing R25.00pp. Tea with Sonny Boy and his family and	15km (steep in parts)	Max	031 7837876 083 9684434	3

	wonderful views of the Valley of a Thousand Hills. (Please bring a cash donation of R10.00pp.) BYO braai after the hike and please don't forget carrots, veggie greens and fruit (no citrus) for Roger and Julie's menagerie (the fee for safe parking)				
28 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 2 <sup>nd</sup> March	<b>ROSELAND'S OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CENTRE (RICHMOND AREA)</b> A stunning place! See <a href="http://www.roselands.co.za">http://www.roselands.co.za</a> for details. Cost is R450 per person for accommodation for Friday and Saturday night and including ALL meals from Friday supper to Sunday lunch. Vegetarians will be catered for. There are loads of activities. A guided hike (Grade 2-3) will be arranged for the Saturday, however there are a lot of trails and if you don't feel like a big hike, you are welcome to stroll along one of the many trails. All bookings must be done and paid for by 31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2014. Contact Anitha to join who will send the banking details.		Anitha Regnard	Phone : 0824568739 / 031 2665207 (after hours) or Email: <a href="mailto:aj@ProfPM.com">aj@ProfPM.com</a>	2- 3
28 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 2 <sup>nd</sup> March	<b>GARDEN CASTLE NATURE RESERVE</b> near Drakensberg Gardens Hotel - Stay in Swiman Hut & enjoy an exploration weekend with the Ashtons - lovely large variety of hikes from base. Swiman Hut has electricity, bunk beds with mattresses + hot water shower & bath + flush toilets + indoor fireplace & outdoor braai areas. "Combined weekend with Midlands Hiking Club". Book early to secure places in hut. Last bookings by 21 Feb. Cost - R80 pppn - R160 pp total for the weekend	12 -15 km each day	Keith Ashton	Phone - 033 2395023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2+

### March 2014

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
2 <sup>nd</sup> March	<b>KILLARNEY ROCKERIES, CATO RIDGE:</b> Take exit 53 at Cato Ridge, turn left & follow High Stakes sign to 4x4 track & store. Hike starts at High Stakes, Cato Ridge at 08h00. Safe parking R25. Please phone to confirm your attendance on the hike. Combined hike with MBC, Ramblers & Midlands Clubs	12km	David Tighe	Tel 031 4649033 or 076 028 0708	2
1 <sup>st</sup> – 2 <sup>nd</sup> March	<b>Monk's Cowl</b> - Vaalribbokkop Cave via Steilberg, Three Pools Cave and Stable Cave, returning via Makhulumane Forest Walk.	28 km 660m	Dave Gay	Phone 031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
15 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Kloof Gorge Day Hike.</b> - 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
15 – 16 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Garden Castle – Lammergier Cave</b> A cave visited very seldom, with wonderful views of the lower valleys. On Sun climb to Goats Cave and look into Lesotho – down via Thomathu Pass Last Booking 11 <sup>th</sup> Mar – Cost R45.00 (Combined Midlands/ MBC hike)	25km - 740m	Dave Sclanders	Note new e mail: <a href="mailto:dave@bergfree.co.za">dave@bergfree.co.za</a>	3
22 <sup>nd</sup> - 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	<b>Monks Cowl</b> - Wonder Valley Cave from Monks cowl, return via Wonder Valley.	28km/ 400m	Grant Wilkinson	Cell: 081 3725611 Email: gwilky@gmail.com	3

21 <sup>st</sup> - 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	<b>Sani Pass</b> Drive up Sani Pass and spend 2 nights at the Sani Mountain Lodge Backpackers. Climb Hodgson's Peaks and Thabana Ntlenyana.	28 km 660m	Dave Gay	Phone 031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3,5
28- 30 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>DRAKENSBERG GARDENS</b> - 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 weekend with Midlands Hiking Club. - Please book early to secure your place - Last bookings 18 March. Cost - R160 total per person (R80 pppn)	12 -15 km each day	Keith Ashton	Phone - 033 2395023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2- 3

### Advance Notices

Date	Event	Contact Person(s)	Contact Details
12 - 24 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Grand Traverse 2014</b> - Bushman's Nek to Sentinel (South to north) Grade 5. Only for the very fit and committed. Start your fitness program NOW.- 230km	Grant Wilkinson	Cell: 081 3725611 Email: gwilky@gmail.com
14- 16 <sup>TH</sup> June	<b>UMZUMBE - Social Beach Cottage Weekend</b> Relaxed weekend away on the South Coast. Cottage has direct access to the beach. Cost per person will be +- R140 pppn depending on how many bookings we get. Max 15. Please note that there will be no organised hike however if people are wanting to go on walks there are plenty in the area. Families with children and babies are welcome. Booking and payment must be done by end Jan.	Anitha Regnard	Phone : 0824568739 / 031 2665207 (after hours) or Email: <a href="mailto:aj@ProfPM.com">aj@ProfPM.com</a>
31 <sup>st</sup> May – 14 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Fish River Hiking Trail</b> - from Hobas to Ai-Ais, about 90km. Includes 4 day canoeing trip on the Orange River, overnighing in the Kgaligadi Transfrontier Park, Augrabies, and Mokala. Costs R3562-00 per person, standby only at this stage. 14 fit hikers max. Transport costs are excluded and are to be arranged amongst the group. Cost to enter parks and meals also excluded, except for canoeing, they will supply meals.	Eddie von Bargen	083 281 1288.

**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 (Non Hiking Events)

Date	Event	Contact Person(s)	Contact Details
Sunday June 22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Spar Ladies' 10km Sahara Stadium, Durban;</b> (book yourself online <a href="http://www.sparwomensrace.co.za">www.sparwomensrace.co.za</a> ) meet 10h30 for breakfast at Jewish Club coffee shop, Playfair (pre-book). 5 or 10km	Heidi Cox	0827064283 heidi.dinan@gmail.com

## KZN Table Mountain (Pmburg area) HIKE - 27th OCTOBER 2013 by David Tighe



This massive 658m flat-topped mountain dominates the western end of the valley of a thousand hills it is clearly visible from the N3 Highway. The Zulu name is emKhambathini [Place of Giraffe Acacia trees]. The meeting place was the local school grounds, where a combination of 31 hikers from Mountain Backpackers, PMB Ramblers & DBN Ramblers clubs parked our vehicles within the securely fenced area of the school grounds with two car guards in attendance. On hand to meet us was Ambrose our guide for the day. Fortunately we did not take the weather forecast seriously, even after experiencing heavy down-pours of rain whilst travelling to our destination. Upon arrival the weather conditions started to clear, and with the promise of good conditions we started off along an easy route to the summit at a reasonably steady pace.

Ambrose was a wealth of information explaining that the people live under an Inkosi or chief who administers and retains the customs and traditions of their cultural group. Houses and thatched huts some painted in various bright colours with satellite aerals, cattle, goats, and chickens being kept by many families, are a feature of this landscape. Nowadays all is peaceful with tribes living comfortably side by side. The problems today are of a social rather than a political nature, as they were during the troubled late 1980s when faction fights and political intolerance between Inkatha and ANC took place.

Grasslands cover most of the flat topped plateau and support a fascinating and diverse flora. Growing among the rock outcrops along the edge of the escarpment, protected from wind and fire, are miniature gardens of moss, lichens, succulents and terrestrial orchids. All these are able to survive by obtaining moisture from the regular mists and rain. The dark clefts fall sheer into the valleys below with gorges and overhanging precipice with deep clefts and chasms, which have been carved out by wind and water and are worth further exploration. An ancient Glacial pavement was of great interest, as were the sunken forest and a number of large depressions and sinkholes. A stream which disappears into the ground and then reappears as a waterfall in a shaded moss and fern grotto was of particular interest as the name KOGH 1909 was deeply caved into the rock next to the waterfall. One wonders if this name could be the same white man who built a house in this area and then mysteriously disappeared along with the house that he built. Ambrose said that not even a solitary brick was ever found?

The panoramic spectacular views to the east requires quite an effort to take in the whole scene at once with the Msunduze and Umgeni Rivers making there tortuous way through the valley of a thousand hills to empty into the Indian Ocean at the Blue Lagoon. Whilst the view to the north overlooks the picturesque Nagle Dam which impounds the waters of the Umgeni River and contributes most of Durban's water supply. As we approached our lunch stop, we caught up with the herd of Nguni cattle which had been a dim smudge on the horizon earlier on. These cattle are regarded by the Zulu as very intimate and personal belongings. This magnificent healthy looking herd with their multi-colours and various patterned hides must be the pride of the local Inkosi. In their culture it is considered improper to count cattle, so the umfaan herder knows each of the cows by sight and name. The cattle are named by the colour and pattern of their hides, the shape of the horns also gives rise to some beautiful descriptive names, they can also frequently be named after significant occurrences that have taken place within the community, their names can be regarded as a [walking history].

After a relaxed lunch we headed off in an easterly direction with a splendid picturesque view of Nagle Dam with a background of innumerable hills and valleys in the distance.

Passing a fenced off section which Ambrose explained was an experimental area where a number of indigenous tree species are being successfully cultivated to form a wind barrier as well as a shade area for the cattle once the trees are fully grown. The route now climbs over a hill and approaches a rock strewn ridge which at first was comfortably wide. With the dense mist settling in, the ridge narrowed down to about 2 metres wide with deep exposures on either side and then abruptly ends. As we had now circumnavigated the top of Table Mountain and

accomplished our objective, we then turned back and headed through the curtain of mist to connect with the path that would take us back down to the school.

Duncan and Francois had done an excellent job of leading, organizing as well as arranging security. I personally was impressed and appreciative of Ambrose's input and information and departed with many pleasant memories from this highly recommended hike.

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## **A Tribute to Christine & John for their organization of the 2013 "HIGHS"**

**By Kathy Kruger**

A sincere thank you to both Christine and John for their dedication and effort in making 2013 an enjoyable and memorable hiking year. I think the popularity of their "highs" surpassed all expectation and certainly added a new dimension to hiking.

Apart from my other hikes during the course of the year, some with the MBC and some with private groups, I was privileged to do 3 of their 13 "highs" - Cathedral Peak (3004m), Mont-Aux-Sources (3282m), a hike which included the mighty Tugela Falls, the second highest waterfall in the world and Thabana Ntlenyana, in Lesotho (the highest peak in Southern Africa at 3482m) and what amazing "highs" they were. Nothing beats the thrill of standing on top of one of the peaks, at over 3000m and taking in the surrounding awe-inspiring views and to be able to look back from ground level and say "I was there". From the hikes themselves, to the snow fights, to the card games, to sitting in the back of a 4 x 4 in the pouring rain coming down Sani Pass, to Jacqui's famous chocolate brownies, I loved every minute. For me, Mont-Aux-Sources especially will always hold a very special place in my heart - bitter sweet memories of fun times shared with special friends, a journey of self-discovery, of love and so much more. Perhaps one day I will find the courage to return there.

Whilst hiking can be pretty strenuous at times and we often vow, "never again", within a few days the hardships are forgotten and we're already planning the next challenge. Whatever our reasons for hiking and whoever we are, out there in the mountains the playing fields are levelled and often it is team work and a little word of encouragement from a fellow hiker that gets us through.

It is indeed a privilege to have leaders like Christine and John who are willing to give of their time and to share their knowledge, for our benefit and to further share the experience with others who have a passion for the magnificent Drakensberg mountains. I've seen some really awesome parts of the berg and have met some wonderful and interesting people, from all walks of life and all this made possible by the selflessness of two "ordinary" people whose energy and enthusiasm has inspired us to challenge ourselves, encouraged us to step out of our comfort zones and helped us to achieve our goals. Not forgetting others who have assisted in some or other way, special mention must be made of Clint, MBC's own intrepid and highly knowledgeable hiker - from sweep, to car guard, to transporting us and our backpacks - thank you for sacrificing your weekends for us and for your unfaltering patience - without you, some of us would still be clinging precariously to a rope on the side of a mountain, dangling from the chain ladders or wandering aimlessly around the berg...

For me, hiking has become an integral part of my life. Being in the mountains is one of the few places where I feel completely at peace, a place where time stands still, a place that restores my soul and makes me feel alive, a place that makes me believe that I am invincible. It's unadulterated freedom at its best.

If the success of the 2013 "highs" is anything to go by, I think we can look forward to some equally exciting adventures in 2014. So, for those of you returning, I look forward to sharing many more epic hikes with you and for those who have been quietly observing from the sidelines, don't miss out - it's time to brush the cobwebs off your boots, shape up and get ready - there are mountains to climb and passes to conquer, most of which are well within the capabilities of the average hiker.

See you all in 2014, atop a mountain somewhere...

Some summit photos from the 13 'HIGHS'



Party of 23 at the top of Mont-Aux-Sources



11 hikers at the top of Champagne Castle



Only 9 made it to the top of the 1<sup>st</sup> Devils Knuckle



Party of 21 who made it to Thabana Ntlenyana



Party below Rhino Peak, which was climbed later in the day



On top of Mashai, showing NO 10 peak with our hands

**MORE ABOUT THE 13 "HIGHS" by Christine**

- 1. REDI PEAK 3309mts:** A total of 17 hiked and 7 made the summit. Many came to enjoy the social of camping at Loteni and a walk to contour path only.
- 2. CATHEDRAL PEAK 3004mts:** A total of 16 hiked and ALL made the summit. We can forever look at Cathedral peak and remember the day. For 12 climbers it was their first time to get to the top. I was very proud of the team for the team work involved.
- 3. MONT-AUX-SOURCES 3282mts:** A total of 23 took Friday off work to hike and ALL 23 made it to the summit.

**4. CLEFT PEAK 3277mts:** A total of 8 slept on top of Cleft Peak. A first for us to sleep and survive a very cold and windy night on the summit. The only injury for the 13 highs occurred when I fell on my pinkie and disjointed it on the way down.

**5. GIANTS CASTLE PEAK 3314mts:** 21 camped at the base with 15 standing on the summit. 6 turned back, some due to not feeling well. We had Hannah, at 14 the youngest, and Rob, at 63 the oldest, standing on the summit

**6. CHAMPAGNE CASTLE PEAK 3377mts :** A total of 12 hikers, with 11 celebrating on the summit with JC Le Roux Champagne. For 5 it was the first time to climb Champagne Castle. Clint stayed at Keith Bush to be camp guard, as one of us had heard funny noises in the night.

**7. DEVILS KNUCKLES 3050mts** The wind blew 18 of us up Bushmans Pass to the warmth of Sehlabathebe Lodge, where we invited Tebello to join us in our endeavour to climb the Knuckles. 11 shouted Whoo Whoo on the first Knuckle, 5 continued to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Knuckle, whilst the rest of the gang made a dash back to the Lodge for refreshments and bingo. They did a good job of organising the delicious dinner and drinks.

**8. INTUNJA 2408mts:** 8 ladies and 2 guys - lots of chatting and drinking tea - spent a lazy time in the river on the Saturday, then on Sunday we awoke to mist and drizzle. Perhaps that was a good thing as those in our group nervous of heights and scary climbs could not see where they were going. After our attempt of a group yoga pose on top we scrambled down back to base. This trip Jan broke Rob's record of being the oldest hiker.

**9, 10 & 11. RHINO PEAK 3056mts, MASHAI PEAK 3313mts AND WALKERS PEAK 3306mts:-** Three peaks, two passes, one long weekend. 8 of us bonded as we flew up the ridges, pass and peaks. Whilst some slept peacefully in camp, others were kept awake by the "Giant Slush Puppy Machine", wind and mopping up the drips in the tent. A much warmer and sociable second night was spent in Mzimude cave.

**12. THABANA NTLENYANA 3482 mts:-** I have a photo with banner to prove that we managed to convince 27 hikers to attempt the highest point south of Kilimanjaro. 21 stood on the summit. For most in the group it was their first time to be at 3482mts and for almost all it was their first time to be driven up the pass and then down again, in a storm, in a Lesotho Taxi.

**13. STERKHORN 2973mts:-** We were overwhelmed with mixed feelings as we stood on top by the white cross. YES we had achieved our goal of 13 highs in 2013 but then again sad that it was the end.

#### FOR THE RECORD, by Christine

- TOTAL OF 61 DIFFERENT PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN THE 13 HIGHS.
- TOTAL DISTANCE WALKED WAS APPROXIMATELY 340KMS.
- THORA HONIBALL & I ACHIEVED ALL 13 HIGHS
- JOHN PICKUP NAVIGATED US TO THE SUMMIT OF 12 HIGHS
- MAVIS MORRIS ACHIEVED 10 HIGHS
- JACQUI KENNEDY ACHIEVED 9 HIGHS OUT OF 11 SHE ATTENDED. INSTEAD OF HIKING STERKHORN JACQUI AND HANNAH SET UP AND DECORATED CAMP FOR PRIZE GIVING AND ALMOST CONQUORED THE GIANT,
- TISH BRYSON ACHIEVED 8 HIGHS.

#### A BIG THANK YOU GOES TO:

- The club and committee for the avenue in which we can encourage others to enjoy the outdoors.
- The club for R500.00 towards the trophies.
- ALL who participated, even if only for the socials.
- The emails sent to us, your kind words encouraged us to continue to the end.
- Our unexpected but much appreciated gift voucher.

## Mountain Backpacker Club Shirts



The Club is offering the opportunity to purchase very practical Mountain Backpacker Club shirts that are affordable and great for hiking.

The short-sleeved shirts will be made from quick-drying 100% polyester lightweight Qantec fabric, no more soggy shirts on your back, and quick to rinse through and dry overnight. While the men's shirts are straight-cut, the ladies' shirts are shaped to a more flattering fit, both have front chest pockets with Velcro flaps for handy storage of small items.

We need to put the order in for all the shirts required at the same time for the shirts, as they are made in batches. We intend to do this in the new year and the shirts will be available +- 4 weeks after the order has been placed.

The shirts will be available at R160 each, please send orders to [chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za](mailto:chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za) and ensure that payment is made at the time of order.

### **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).

#### **Discounts For Members**

MBC members are offered discounted rates at the following three outdoor gear outlets:

##### **Tripper Sports:**

15% discount to MBC members

Goods must be purchased either online (ex Tripper website) or from the Tripper shop at the factory (Da Vinci building near Tollgate Bridge Durban) – details below. Membership card and ID must be produced

Address: 23B Calder Road, Mayville, Durban Phone 0312093649 Website: [www.trippersports.com](http://www.trippersports.com)

##### **The Kingfisher, Durban**

Up to 10% discount can be offered to our members based on the following criteria:

- The discount will be dependent on whether it is a full price or already discounted item
- The MBC member must present their membership card and ID document (with photo)

The purchase is made in store OR online. Contact Gany to agree on the discount that will apply. **The**

**Note:** EFT is required for the purchase to be valid and any delivery charges due will still apply over and above the price of the goods.

Contact details: Gany Phone: 0313683903 Address: 53 Hunter Street, Durban

### **Flamingo Sales (Columbia gear)**

A selection of items has been made available which qualify for a 20% discount to MBC members provided a minimum of 10 items are purchased at once, viable if setting up for an expedition or a group of people purchase at the same time. Further information can be obtained from Conrad Buchner (Flamingo) or Heidi Cox (MBC).

The purchase must be made via Conrad Buchner at Flamingo Sales. If you need to try on an item or want to see a physical sample, the Columbia Store at Gateway is likely to have it, however the discount does not apply from the Gateway shop.

Contact details:

Conrad Buchner - [conrad@flamingosales.co.za](mailto:conrad@flamingosales.co.za) Phone 0315395401

## **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 45<sup>th</sup> 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 normally take place every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month  
at the Sherwood Bowling Club, 7:00 for 7:30pm  
Hot Dogs are sold at the venue for R15 each.**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
23 <sup>rd</sup> Jan	<b>Join Sharon Jordon</b> - for a presentation on hiking through the unsurpassed mountain and coastal scenery of the Outeniqua and Harkerville Trails.
13 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Asgard Project</b> - The Asgard Project is an astonishing film that follows Leo Houlding's ambitious project to make the first free ascent of the North Face of the incredible Mt Asgard on Baffin Island deep in the Arctic. Leo teams up with fellow big wall climbing god, Stanley Leary (USA), the duo hope to make a wingsuit descent from the summit. Arriving late in the season the trip soon begins to go wrong, after a spectacular arrival skydiving over Mt Asgard, conditions turn against the team, where just reaching the base of the climb becomes a massive challenge.
27 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Asian Adventure</b> - Join Tanya Hall for her adventurous 3 month SE Asia trip, where she backpacked overland from Beijing through China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and into Thailand.
13 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Tour du Mont Blanc</b> – Join Dave Sclanders for his presentation on a 14 day trek through the many mountain crests of the Mont Blanc region of the Alps – this is alpine scenery at its finest.