



MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

Fixture List: Jan - March 2015

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER – 1st Quarter 2015

Welcome 2015 and your New Year's resolution to get 'out there' more!

With an action-packed selection of hikes to choose from this quarter, suitable for all shapes and sizes, fitness levels and ages, there are NO excuses! Come join us for a fun and friendly hiking experience, whether you're training for the Grand Traverse, or just giving your office-bound body a well-earned leg-stretch, this is the right time, and the right place, and the right people to do it with!

Don't forget to also read the '**advanced fixtures list**' (after the fixtures list), and if you would like to join one of the hikes, you have enough notice to book, train and diarise the event. We are looking for helping hikers to second this year's Grand Traverse- lead by Dave Gay – this will be to resupply food and other necessities to the GT participants, as well as entertain them with friendly faces and yummy dinner (and maybe some soap!!!)

In addition to enjoying the hiking, you are also welcome to 'armchair hike' at our **Thursday night socials** at the Sherwood Bowling Club. We have a number of speakers lined up for you. Our socials happen on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month (unless there is a public holiday nearby...).

For the newer (and some older) members: we will be hosting a **hiking equipment/packing/clothing/food ideas and other hiking skills/etiquette, evening** soon. Please indicate if you would like to attend at some point: on chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za.

Our MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB **Facebook page** has exploded in popularity. Please share our page with your friends, and ask them to LIKE it. Committee members: Brett Bentley, Jacqui Kennedy and Roy Bowden as well as the Chairman are able to announce events, post your stories/pics of MBC hikes.

The **website** is due for a little facelift, with additions of recent hiking trips stories and pics, leaders' bio's and handy information and hiking tips.

Please save this emergency number into your cell phone: **080 000 5133. This is the Mountain Rescue Provincial Control Room**, and is to be contacted in case of a mountain/hiking emergency. This information was supplied by Gavin Raubenheimer of the Mountain Club of South Africa.

Welcome the 2015 committee: we also have 3 new pairs of hands aboard this year. Remember that the committee is only too happy to help you. Thanks to all of you for the work that you do.

PHOTO COMPETITION: please remember our annual photo competition when you're out and about. Entries usually close at the end of July, and judging usually in September. We will give you more information on this when the time comes.

Take care in the mountains, have a good time and HAPPY HIKING!

Karen Miller
Chairman: Mountain Backpackers Club

MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman	Karen Miller	082 742 3266
Vice Chairman	John McGovern	082 659 5111
Treasurer	Bobby Stanton	031 465 5535
Fixture List / Magazine	Alan Etchells	082 398 4103
Marketing	Heidi Cox	082 706 4283
Committee member	Chris Cox	082 466 8814
Social media	Brett Bentley	
New member mentorship	Sorin Dimitriu	084 681 8920
Recruitment	Roy Bowden	082 901 5301
Website	Jovita da Silva	
Leadership liaison	Jacque Kennedy	083 399 9255
Secretary / admin: (paid position)	Philip van Gass	

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 NEW MEMBERS TO THE CLUB

Karyn Sills.

MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2015

Single memberships: R200

Family membership: R260

If you require your fixtures list to be posted as opposed to emailed (as recommended): R30 extra

Please note your club dues are payable by the end of December 2014.

Please EFT your payment to ...

MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB
FNB Westville Branch: 223 526
Current/Cheque account: 507 8000 7264

PLEASE LEAVE YOUR NAME AS THE REFERENCE.

*** **PLEASE DO NOT DEPOSIT CASH INTO THE ACCOUNT**- the bank fees are exorbitant.

You may however pay cash on a social evening to a committee member (PLEASE GET A RECEIPT!!!).

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 – 1st QUARTER

January 2015

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
31 st Dec – 1 st Jan	HIGHMOOR - Your chance to celebrate New Year's Eve (& N.Y. Day) in Aasvoelkrans Cave with Keith & Margaret for their 10th time at New Year - 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. COST: R45 pppn incl. entry & levies= R90 total	12 -15 km each day	Keith Ashton	Tel/Fax: 033-2395023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2-3
28 th Dec – 2 nd Jan	MONKS COWL: Keith Bush Camp; Gray's Pass; Didima Cave; campsite behind Eastman's Ridge via Tlanyaku Pass; campsite below Ntunja (Gatberg). Tents required.	46km 1820m (6 days)	Dave Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	5
30 th Dec – 2 nd Jan	CATHEDRAL PEAK AREA: Meet at Didima 8am & overnight at Tseketske Campsite (the old hut area). 31 st Dec - up Tseketske Pass & overnight on the escarpment. 1 st Jan- Down to Twins Cave 2 nd Jan- Return to Didima via the Bell Traverse.	68km	Clinton Bro	Email: clintstimbers@gmail.com Cell: 0828202139 (between 5pm – 8pm)	4-5
9 – 11 th Jan	DRAKENSBERG GARDENS. For something different, meet no later than 6pm for an evening walk to PILLAR CAVE . Saturday we will spend exploring and walking over to SLEEPING BEAUTY CAVE . Sunday is a short walk back to the cars and home.	15km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	3
10 – 11 th Jan	GARDEN CASTLE: Mzimude Cave via Tsepeng Pass, returning via Mzimude Pass and Hidden Valley. Head for heights essential.	27 km /1230m	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	4-5
10 – 11 th Jan	PHOLELA CAVE - overnight at Pholela Cave in the Cobham area, 14 kms from parking. Return 16 kms via Lakes Cave, Whale back ridge, Siphongweni Rock & Shelter National Monument. Meet at Himeville Hotel at 08h00 or Cobham at 8h30. R65 pp for one night in cave.	30 km	David Tighe	Phone 031 4649247 or 076 0280708	3
17 th Jan	KLOOK GORGE DAY HIKE. Leaving at 8.30am from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Confirm with John beforehand.	4 – 5 hrs	John McGovern	John 082 6595111	2
17-18 th Jan	ASSVOELKRANS CAVE: Short hike in the Highmoor area of the Berg. Good for first timers and those unsure of their fitness. Option of walking to Mt Lebanon, with a day pack on Saturday afternoon. Waterfall and pool next to the cave. Bring your costume if you feel like going for a dip.	10km/ 100m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 083 419 0196 farouko@telkomsa.net	3

24-25 th Jan	CATHEDRAL PEAK: Forest Shelter via Solar Cliffs, returning via Phillip's Folly and Mike's Pass.	30km/ 445m	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
30 th Jan – 1 st Feb	BUSHWILLOW caravan park in the Karkloof area. See their website http://www.bushwillowcaravanpark.co.za/ Camping and accommodation options are available. Camping is R110 pppn. Please book and pay by 23 rd Jan.		Anitha Regnard	Phone 031 2665207 or 0824568739 Email: aj@profpm.com	
31 st Jan	AFRICAN FISH EAGLE TRAIL: Lots of birdlife, walk through Beachwood Mangroves and along North bank of Umgeni river, meet at Green Hub Durban @ 08h00 & leave 08h15. Rain stops Play. Bring cash for tea at Springfield SPCA 1/2 way.	13km	Heidi Cox	Phone 0827064283 or email heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2

February 2015

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
1 st Feb	HOWICK MEANDER - Local day hike - Symmonds Stream Conservancy, Beacon Hill Conservancy, along the Umgeni River to Howick Falls - option to the bottom of the falls - several local eateries for food & drinks at the end of the hike - note the distance & grade - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club - last bookings by Wed evening 28 Jan Approx Cost: R20 pp for the conservancies	15km	Keith Ashton	Tel /fax - 033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2+
7 - 8 th Feb	LOTENI: Tent at the top of Buttress Pass and return via Hlatimbe Pass (North).	34Km/ 1670m	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	5
7 - 8 th Feb	TENTING TRIP TO HIDDEN VALLEY: Route to Hidden Valley from Garden Castle via the Giants Cup Trail. Lovely pool next to the camp area. Bring your costume if you feel like going for a swim. NB: Hiking tent required.	16km 300m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 083 419 0196 farouko@telkomsa.net	3
7 - 8 th Feb	KAMBERG - Sinclairs Cave , reasonably easy first time hikers. Return by different route. Cave sleeps 8, thereafter late bookers must bring tents. Great views of Central berg. Last booking -- MONDAY 2nd February. Booking by e mail only Cost: R55 pppn cave fee	10–14Km per day	Dave Sclanders	033 2395013 Phone evenings only	3
14 – 15 th Feb	EDWALENI - Camping trip at Edwaleni situated 43kms east of Mooi River. Directions: Take the off ramp to Mooi River from the N3, turn right into Old Main Road, at the Circle turn right onto the R622 to Greytown. Look out for Joubert Store on the right & then take the district road opposite, cross the Mooi River, take 1st Road to the right follow to Edwaleni. Camping R80.00 pp, alternative accommodation available if required.		David Tighe	Phone 031 4649247 or 076 0280708	2
14 – 15 th Feb	INJESUTHI AREA: Bring your Valentine, or just yourself, plus old swimwear for a Supa Swimming fun weekend in MARBLE BATH CAVES.	15km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	3

21 st Feb	KLOOK GORGE DAY HIKE. Leaving at 8.30am from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Confirm with John beforehand.	4 – 5 hrs	John McGovern	John 082 6595111	2
21 – 22 nd Feb	BUSHMAN'S NEK - Whytes Cave - Backpacking via Painter's Cave, Sherry Cave & White Horse Cave & return via Langalibalele Cave (5 caves in the weekend) - nice pool & waterfall near Whytes Cave - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club - Last bookings by 11 Feb. Approx Cost: R20 pp for the conservancies	12 – 15 km each day	Keith Ashton	Tel /fax - 033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	3
21 – 22 nd Feb	VERGELEGEN: Tent above Mlahlangubo Pass and return via Ngaqamadola Pass (South).	36Km/ 1550m	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	5
27 th Feb – 1 st Mar	HAVENROCK , a rustic farmhouse surrounded by beautiful gardens and overlooking the Montezuma Game Ranch. Single Beds (without bedding) , stove, fridge, cutlery and crockery is available. We will braai on the Saturday evening. Cost is R200 pp for Fri & Sat night. It is an hour's drive from Durban. If you want to travel in convoy on Fri, we will meet at the Engen garage outside the Pavilion at 4pm in order to get there by latest 5:30pm. Families with little children are welcome. As we have a toddler, we will do short walks, game drives, swim at George's farm or just chill on the veranda and enjoy the view. Anybody wanting to do a more strenuous hike will be given directions and depending on hiking experience, I will arrange a guide. Bookings and payment has to be made by 12 th Feb.		Anitha Regnard	Phone 031 2665207 or 0824568739 Email: aj@profpm.com	

March 2015

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
7 – 8 th Mar	COBHAM: Gxalingenwa Cave from Sani Backpackers and return.	20Km/ 540m	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3
7 – 8 th Mar	EAGLE VIEW camp site situated in the Harburg area - the camp site is adjacent to the edge of the valley of Thousand Hills with spectacular views into the valley. The hike includes 3 waterfalls plus farmlands. The waterfalls cascade down into the indigenous forest. Directions from Durban: Take the R614 from Tongaat or alternatively from PMburg. Proceed to Wartburg, stay on the R614 pass Bruyns Hill. Camping R100 pp per night. Please note: This hike can be accomplished as a day hike.		David Tighe	Phone 031 4649247 or 076 0280708	3
7 – 8 th Mar	MKHOMAZI: McKenzies Cave , see Bushman paintings and great waterfalls . Long up-hill hike, but plenty of water. Cost: R55 ppn cave fee	10–12Km per day	Dave Sclanders	033 2395013 Phone evenings only	3
15 th Mar	MT GILBOA - New route, drive by car to the start, and do a long flat walk over the top of Mt Gilboa. NO steep climbing. Small conservation fee	15Km	Dave Sclanders	033 2395013 Phone evenings only	2+

20-22 nd March	MHLOPENI NATURE RESERVE: SA Natural Heritage Site, Muden area, self catering camp (R300 pp for weekend) or own tent (R160pp for weekend), it can be chilly overnight. Guided hikes Sat and Sun, beautiful bushveld, game and prolific birdlife. Pre-book by 9 Mar and payment direct to Mhlopeni: joy@mhlopeni.co.za.		Heidi Cox	0827064283 heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2
21- 22 nd March	LOWER INJASUTI CAVE: Meet at the Injasuti Wild Life Office at 8:00. Ideal hike for first time backpackers.	16km 100m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 083 419 0196 farouko@telkomsa.net	3
27- 29 th March	DRAKENSBERG GARDENS - Cottage weekend - Fully equipped & very comfortable - Beautiful Area in the heart of the mountains - Max 10 members. Day hikes from cottage or simply unwind on the property (10 acres). DSTV for news & sport etc - Hot baths & showers - combined with Midlands Hiking Club. - Please book early to secure your place, first come & paid first served - Last bookings by 16 Mar. Approx Cost: R200 total pp (R100 pppn)	12 – 15 km each day	Keith Ashton	Tel /fax - 033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2 -3
28- 29 th March	CATHEDRAL PEAK AREA: Our favourite peak to stand upon is Cathedral. Overnight in SHERMANS CAVE and climb on the Sunday	20km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	3/4
28 th Mar -12 th April	THE GRAND TRAVERSE 2015 - Amphitheatre to St Bernard's Peak – 15 days Only for the very fit and committed. Start your fitness program NOW.	250Km	David Gay	031-7640298 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	5

Advance Notices

2015 can be your opportunity to become a regular cave dweller and possibly win the title of **Mr or Ms** Flintstone . We have selected 17 interesting caves and routes from various areas. These hikes will be lead and organized by either John, Christine or Clint
John Pickup: 0721512031 johnpickup9@gmail.com
Christine Pickup : 0827826025 christinebro3@gmail.com
Clinton Bro: 0828202139 clintsttimbers@gmail.com

DATES	CAVES AND ROUTE DESCRIPTION	AREA	Kms	GRAD E
18 – 19 th April	Sleep in BIRDS NEST CAVE and return via Sulphur Springs	Verge- leglen	28km	3/4
1 st – 3 rd May (3 day weekend)	Start at Mnweni Cultural Centre 1st May, overnight either in 5 STAR CAVE , or SHEPHERDS CAVE . Ascend Mnweni Pass to spend the night in either MPONJWANE or LEDGERS . The sun should waken us up bright and early on the 3 rd day for a early start down Rockeries pass	Mnweni	40km	3/4
29 th – 30 th May	STABLE CAVE , Via Jacobs Ladder. Return via Hlathikulu Nek	Monks Cowl	28km	3/4
20 th – 21 st June	Winter solstice in AASVOELKRANS CAVE , Highmoor area. For the energetic, meet at Glen Garry Campsite and we walk up to Highmoor from there. Our Flintstone Masterchef will judge our soup evening. Your soup will be judged for flavour, appearance and most unusual.	Highmoor Camp or Glen Garry	8km ex Highmoor & extra 20km ex Glengary	3
18 th – 19 th July	CANNIBAL CAVE: From Monks Cowl, because the views from Shada Ridge are magnificent. Return via the houses	Monks Cowl	40km	3/4

8 th – 10 th Aug (3 day weekend)	Meet at Bushman's Nek and we shall follow the Bushman's River to BUSHMANS CAVE . Day 2 we will make our way to sleep in WHYTES CAVE exploring the area as we go along. Return on the 3 rd day via the Giants Cup trail	Bushmans Nek	30 km	4/5
25 th – 27 th Sep	Stand on either end of the "Giants Cup" something to remember every time you travel into Underberg and see the cup. First night will be spent in SPECTACLE CAVE . Following day we take our packs with us to C30, Hide them and with a hop, skip and jump we will be up Masubasuba Pass. Climb Hodson's Peak South, the Hodson's Peak North. Come down to C30 where hopefully our packs will still be. Over the Hub to GXALINGENWA CAVE where we can rest our weary bones. The following day we return to our cars via Pinnacle Rock and Emerald Dome.	Cobham	38km	4/5
24 th – 25 th Oct	In remembrance of our friend Luciano. ROLANDS CAVE We will walk up Mikes Pass, Organ Pipes and return via the camel.	Didima	30	3/4
21 st – 22 nd Nov or 20 th – 22 ND	Not often visited is GRASSCUTTERS CAVE in Mnweni. To embrace the Mnweni village life, join us on the Friday 20 th Nov as we spend the day at the Cultural Centre cycling, chatting with the locals and enjoying a Juba with them at one of the many spaza shops. Camp or book a bed at the Centre. Otherwise we see you 8.30am Sat at the Cultural Centre to start hiking to Grasscutters Cave.	Mnweni	36	3/4
12 th – 13 th Dec	End the year off with a Flintstone Christmas in "Mini Paradise." A short walk to the beautiful CYPRUS CAVE , where one can dive into the pools for a refreshing swim, and sit either on the grass or on a rock chair around the rock table. The distance from the cars to cave is only 3.5 km, therefore we can carry loads of Christmas snacks and pressies to share. A prize for the best dressed Flintstone. Lunch at the Bierfassel on the way home. Ps. There is another cave opposite the river which could also be used for sleeping.	Mkomazi	7	

Advance Notices (cont)

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
3 rd – 6 th April	GIANTS CASTLE: Grand Traverse 2015 Resupply - Bannerman Pass to Giant's Castle Pass	45km/ 1600m	TBE	Dave Gay - 031-7640298	4-5
24 – 26 th April	DRAKENSBERG GARDENS - Cottage weekend - Fully equipped & very comfortable - Beautiful Area in the heart of the mountains - Max 10 members. Day hikes from cottage or simply unwind on the property (10 acres). DSTV for news & sport etc - Hot baths & showers - combined with Midlands Hiking Club. - Please book early to secure your place, first come & paid first served - Last bookings by 13 Apr. Approx Cost: R200 total pp (R100 pppn)	12 – 15 km each day	Keith Ashton	Tel /fax - 033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2 -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.

EASTER HIKE - UP NGUZA PASS AND DOWN NTONJELANA PASS - APRIL 2014

by Kathy Kruger



THE TOP OF NGUZA PASS

Not many hike Nguza Pass. Could be that it's not always easy to find the route. That plus the fact that the pass is exceptionally rocky. The preferred route for most hikers would be Rockeries Pass.

We were fortunate to have a write-up and photographs obtained from both Tony Marshall and Sabine Behr on the route to be followed, without which we may well not have found a way through. As it was, we were slightly off course but thanks to the experience of the hikers in the group, we were soon back on track and heading in the right direction.

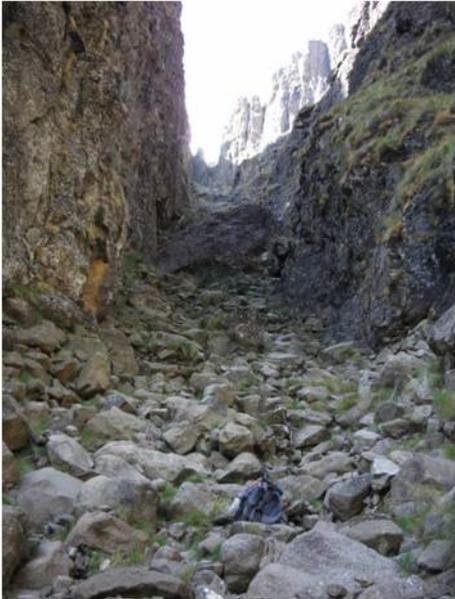
DAY 1

Christine, John, Tish and I set off from the Mnweni Cultural Centre early on Friday morning. Truth be told, we got a lift with one of the locals as it seemed pointless walking almost 5km to get to our starting point and that along a rural road which really isn't very exciting. It was a warm day and we had a relatively easy walk ahead. The initial plan was to overnight in Sunshine Cave but on reaching the cave, it was decided to continue to the base of the pass and tent there as we knew that the next day would be a long and challenging one. We were joined by three other hikers whom we had met at the start of our hike at the Mnweni Cultural Centre and who were going to be heading up Rockeries Pass the following morning. It was a perfect evening, with Tish opting to sleep under the stars.

DAY TWO

The next day dawned and with a bit of trepidation, we headed off, uncertain of what lay ahead. Christine and John had attempted Nguza Pass before, but had ended up in a gulley from which they could not access the top of the pass.

I was hoping that we wouldn't make the same mistake. The terrain was extremely rocky and boulder hopping became the order of the day. We got to the huge chockstone (in layman's terms, a stone of whatever size that has become wedged or chocked in a constriction in a crack) as described by Tony and with the assistance of John, who pulleyed our backpacks up first, we managed to scramble along a narrow ledge to the right of the chockstone and



THE CHOCKSTONE



STONES AND MORE STONES

A while later we saw a 'cave' to the left of us that sort of matched Tony's description though we seemed to be heading straight up the gully, which looked somewhat foreboding as we got closer. My heart sank as I looked up - it seemed that we would have to do some serious rock climbing to get out of the gully - it didn't seem possible. There was a somewhat steep and daunting-looking grass slope that traversed the bank to the side of the gully - Tish suggested that we re-look at the description and photographs as she was convinced that that was the route we needed to take. We back-tracked slightly and headed towards the grass verge. This was it. The path that would take us to the top. We got to the point which overlooked where John and Christine had ended up on their previous hike - they had been on the right hand gully, from where there was no way out. From here the pass got very steep and we all walked at our own pace until eventually we got to the top. The rocks are exceptionally loose in the gully and one has to be so careful not to dislodge them.

On reaching the top of the pass, we could hear someone calling. An elderly gentleman appeared - he had been hiking with his son who had gone off to do some exploring on his own, thinking that his father had continued with the large group whom they had met on route. This elderly gentleman was somewhat disorientated and wasn't too sure where they'd come from and where they were going. He had his backpack but no tent and no food, not a good situation to be in on top of the escarpment, where temperatures plummet to below zero without the slightest warning. Fortunately it wasn't too long before father and son were re-united.



THE NORTH PEAK OF THE SADDLE

We set up camp and headed off to explore the North Peak of the Saddle. Very few have climbed this peak and standing looking at the peak, from the safety of the rocky outcrop opposite, it's easy to understand why - there are few footholds and nowhere to really attach a rope to, the risks involved are just too great. One foot wrong would spell certain death. It is not often that I will decline a challenge - North Peak is indeed magnificent and certainly holds some allure, but something held me back that day. Tish finally conceded that she would never get to climb North Peak and Christine simply turned and walked away. Tish and I held our breath as we watched John make his way up the side of the peak. It was then that we left him to explore the peak and headed slowly back to camp. As harsh as it sounds, should John have fallen, there would have been nothing that we could have done to help him. Climbing North Peak is a noteworthy achievement and without ropes, even more so. Well done John.

Christine, Tish and I were relieved to see John appear back at the campsite a short while later.

DAY THREE

We had a fair amount of uphill climbing as we headed in the direction of the pass down which we were to descend. On route we took a short break atop a ledge overlooking the Cathedral Peak range before proceeding to the top of the pass where we had another stop. Ntonjelana Pass (2902m) is a well known dagga-smuggling route from Lesotho into South Africa. The first part of the pass is very rocky, lessening the further down one goes, but continuing to zig-zag all the way to the bottom. Walking is treacherous at times, with the loose little pebbles acting like marbles and the going is heavy on one's legs, especially one's calves and quads, from the constant downhill braking. It seemed never-ending and it was a relief to finally get to the bottom. We still had a bit of climbing to do to reach Waterfall Cave, where we were to spend the night. Waterfall cave is fairly secluded in the sense that the cave is almost hidden from view, but unfortunately it is used by the locals, the remnants of a fire in the middle of the cave evidence of this. The cave is also very dusty. Another option would be to tent at the base of the waterfall, which cascades down in front of the cave, to the one side. The only accessible water once in the cave, is that which trickles down from the rocks above, on the far side of the cave, which is more than sufficient.

DAY FOUR

It was a short and fairly easy walk back to the road from where we had started our hike. Once again we got one of the locals to give us a lift back to the Mnweni Cultural Centre. After a hot shower, we were ready to hit the road again and after one further stop for lunch, we were soon heading back home.

Graded 5 and covering approximately 37km in total, the Nguza Pass hike is certainly one that is well worth doing. It is a Pass that has been on my hiking 'to-do' list for a while, one which I can now proudly tick off.

Thanks again to Christine and John for putting this hike together and for sharing their knowledge of the mountains with us. A hike with you is always an enjoyable and memorable experience.

'Recce' hike to the new Sehlabatebi Lodge in Lesotho

Led by Clive Powell and assisted by Eddie Von Bargaen

By: Jacqui Kennedy



21 excited hikers were up and about really early on Saturday the 25th October for the 3 hour drive to Underberg, in Southern Drakensberg.

The meeting place was the Bushman's Neck border post.

The weather was cool, and slightly overcast as we set off, our group was made up of hikers with different walking paces and we soon found our rhythm. We followed the Ngwangwane River for about 4km before the long haul UPGathering together again at our snack breaks. At lunch time we were ¾ of the way to our destination and as we were enjoying our meals, the wind came up slightly, the temperature dropped and we all got the rain gear out - and on the last leg of our hike, there was a rumbling of a storm which did not amount to much – unfortunately. We all gathered at Jonathans Lodge, where we were going to be collected for the last 10km to the new Sehlabatebi Lodge by our hosts, John and Derrick.

This was a popular overnight spot with the club in years gone by – it is now occupied by the park rangers and we hear that it will be refurbished and open to the public in Easter 2015. We were happy to hear this, as this is a perfect hiking distance from the border post - 13.5km. Far enough to get there at about 2pm and have time to explore. The area surrounding the lodge is a MUST see, with the most beautiful rock formations, the only waterfall in the National Park, Shepard's huts built into the rocks, one with a stone grinder outside the hut, used for grinding corn.



The above photo is the grinding stone found outside the hut

The area around the above shepard's hut is surrounded by a low wall used to keep the goats & sheep in one place for the night. In the hut a platform bed made of rock – this is topped with cut grass for comfort and if you look at the picture, on the right of the hut, at the top is a chimney, the fire was used for cooking, heating the hut as well as stones, which were then put underneath the bed to generate heat for the sleeping herdsman.

We ended up getting a lift in 2 taxi's. Because of a threatening storm, our hosts had asked them look out for us & give us a lift to the lodge - this cost us R15 each, happily paid by all...we were looking forward to the warmth, local Maluti beer and HOT SHOWERS...

The 10km was quickly navigated by our drivers & we arrived at the new lodge to receive a warm welcome by the staff. Coffee and tea was provided and we were soon sipping on Maluti beers. John arrived shortly and showed us to the most luxurious rooms I have ever had the pleasure of staying in, on a hike!



Crisp white bedding, the MOST comfortable bed I have ever slept in, other than my own! Under floor heating, fridge, microwave, stove, coffee and tea...GLIKING – glamorous hiking – named by our Own Ingrid...and boy we were treated like Kings and Queens.

Zambezi Kanyemba Safaris is the company that runs the Lodge, all information and bookings can be made here: www.zksafaris.com they are expanding as we speak to include camping area's for the 4x4 enthusiasts, new backpackers are being built, social area's like pubs are being put up in different locations to offer the best possible views, this to be decked out with fireplaces etc....our Jonathans Lodge to get a facelift...all sorts of happenings. The Lodge can be accessed by road and accommodates families with ease...John can be contacted on 076 640 3653 or e-mailed on mcknight@thesolution.co.za

We went for a small walk around the area after dropping our stuff in the rooms.



We headed back to the Lodge as the mist was coming in, had a hot shower & then gathered for what was to be the feast of all feasts!! We were spoilt with a starter vegetable, beef and barley soup with hot freshly baked homemade bread & real butter. This was followed with a baked veg pasta for the vegetarians with a green salad and an Oxtail Potjie that had so much meat in it, we could have fed another 10 people, cooked in red wine, this served with rice. The desert was the highlight of the evening, with everyone going back for seconds and thirds !! Sponge cake with hot AMARULA CUSTARD, a non-alcoholic custard, & a fruit salad. One of our members was willing to sell another for the AMARULA CUSTARD recipe...

After our bellies were filled, there was much laughter and more drinking - to keep warm of course... Clive gave us the agenda for the following day and 21 weary heads had the best sleep ever.

The following day was wet and cold, Clive and Eddie led us back a different route, passing Irish Cave



And the Arch, where one can, in better weather, see the Devils Knuckles



The last 10km were a quick march home. At one point we had backpacks off for a short scramble down a rockface, with our Mountain Men helping all the ladies one at a time...Thanks to all the Mountain Men

It is always a pleasure being in the mountains, no matter the weather, what makes it all so much more enjoyable, are the people who accompany each other on these adventures !!

Thanks to everyone who made this one – one to remember!!

See you on the next one !

Rolands Cave hike and climbing the Sentinel

by Christine Pickup

“When we wake in the morning we have two simple choices. Go back to sleep and dream, or wake up and chase those dreams.”

CLINT METAMORPHISES INTO SUPERHERO AND GRANNY SHIMMIES UP THE SENTINEL

Poor ol Jacqui, for about 2 years she has been trying to visit Rolands Cave in the Didima area. Each time a hiking group had been organised, for some reason the trip was cancelled. Clint had a trip to Rolands in the October fixture list and once again because of foul weather it was cancelled. It is no good spending an extreme amount of energy getting to the cave if one cannot appreciate the view.

So like the David Kramer song of years gone by “Ag Pleez Daddy won’t you take us to the drive in” Jacqui asked Clint “ Ag Pleez Clint won’t you take us to Rolands in November.”

An email was sent to those who were to hike in October and they all, plus extras, committed to the end of November.

Getting to Rolands is ALL UPHILL. Firstly we walk up Mikes Pass, briefly enjoy the views knowing it’s another UPHILL to the old Lookout Hut. Another quick break as Organ Pipes Pass is looming. At the top, by the cairn, we don’t want to rest too much because the day is passing and it is still more UPHILL to the cave, with the added weight of carrying our water.

The group split because of the size and 5 of us walk more UPHILL to spend the night in Ndumeni Dome cave.

We climbed a total of 20 kms UPHILL, that equals to a lot of downhill and stiff legs the following day.

Getting into and out of Rolands is a little nerve racking if one is afraid of heights. There were quite a few pairs of shaky legs in the cave and the greatest fear, especially amongst the ladies, was what if one needed the dreaded loo during the night.

We awoke to a magnificent sunrise and awesome views of the Drakensberg. We could see across to the area where some of us planned to be next weekend, climbing Sentinel.

Always after a good trip we sleep well in our own beds. Some of us were already dreaming of our next adventure, which would be climbing Sentinel. Jacqui was happy to be able to say that finally she slept in Rolands, Irene could hardly believe how brave she was and continued to smile for the rest of the week and Tracey who always yearned to be above the clouds had her wish fulfilled. We all grew in confidence within ourselves and learnt a little more.

Thanks to Clint for leading the hike, and John for helping the ladies into and out of the cave.

It is great to have the opportunity to help others make their dreams come true, and the following weekend with guidance from Gavin and Inky, myself and others climbed the Sentinel. Something I had always wanted to achieve. For me, this was an amazing experience and once the adrenaline had stopped flowing through my veins I had an immense feeling of pride in my achievement. To be on the summit and taking in the views was something I had thought of for so long.

The Sentinel is a very prominent block of mountain which features in my photos from the early days when I first used the chain ladders. Aimed at whilst running the Mont- Aux Sources runs. Used as a background for GT group pics and made a memorable Kodak moment for the 23 who stood in front of the Sentinel, participating in one of our 13 highs last year .

So as a hiker and not a climber, to always be going past, looking and wishing, it was for me a goal achieved. I learnt that Grannies can do things out of their comfort zones with a helmet, harness, ropes, and a little help from friends. Thank you to Gavin and Inky.

Thank you also to Karen and her team at MBC for without the existence of the club perhaps I and others would not have had the opportunity to climb Sentinel or sleep in Rolands Cave or any one of the many other activities that the club has presented as opportunities during the years.

So this little non technical article is to encourage other “ordinary” people to share their talents with fellow club mates, whether it is cooking hotdogs on camp out, fixing ropes, leading hikes, the list goes on, to make 2015 a truly great year for MBC.

Rolands Cave Hikers

Clint Bro, Roger Rood, Andy Brown, Farouk Omajee, Johan Van Rens, Mark and Irene Wisdom, Jacqui Kennedy, Ingrid McGregor, Tracey Steart, Christine and John Pickup

Sentinel Climbers

Gavin Raubenheimer, Inky Daly, Jacqui Kennedy, Roger Rood, Andy Brown, Ingrid McGregor, Farouk Omajee, Christine and John Pickup



John assisting Irene into Rolands. Photo taken by Farouk



On the Sentinel climb



Morning view from Rolands Cave

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

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

Tripper Sports: 23B Calder Road, Mayville, Durban. Phone 0312093649 Website: www.trippersports.com

The Kingfisher: 53 Hunter Street, Durban. Phone: 0313683903 (Ganny)

Flamingo Sales (Columbia gear): Contact Conrad Buchner Phone 0315395401 conrad@flamingosales.co.za

Cape Union Mart: www.capeunionmart.co.za/

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 normally take place every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month
at the Sherwood Bowling Club, 7:00 for 7:30pm

DATE	DESCRIPTION
22 nd Jan	Anita & Don: Northern Namibia odyssey A 3 week camping trip was done by the intrepid travelers, Don and Anita, visiting Northern Namibia. Places visited include Palmwag, Epupa Falls, Etosha Park and the Caprivi Strip. Namibia is a must go place and should be on everyone's bucket list.
12 th Feb	Sorin Dimitriu: In Sept. The Desert Knights Park. This is a friendly mountain bike tour, riding at night under a full moon in the Ai/Ais-Richtersvelt Transfrontier (NAM-ZA). Some highlights: Fish River Canyon, Ai/Ais hot springs, Gamkab Canyon, paddling on Orange river, climbing the Helskloof Pass and of course plenty of adventure.
26 th Feb	Shane McPherson from Crowned Eagle Research, will give a presentation on his research into crowned eagles in the greater Durban area.
12 th Mar	Open mike night – bring & braai and share your hiking photos with everyone
26 th Mar	To be announced