



MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

Fixture List: January - March 2009

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dear Members

January marks the beginning of a year, and with a little help from our Club leaders I'm sure we can add some adventure to our coming year. So get out those hats and hiking boots and come and join us on an adventure.

I'm sure by now you have noticed the new Club logo. I would, like to extend a very big thank you to Paul Kraus from ITI who has greatly assisted us in the design process, as well as Dave Gay and Bobby Stanton. We hope you are as excited about the change as we are.

A new year brings a newly elected committee and new committee members. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Eddie von Barga, Jeanne Rapson and Laura Wood to this year's committee. We already have some great ideas and energy coming from our new committee and hope to share all these new developments with you throughout this year.

The Club's annual fees are due. As per the recommendation of last year's Treasurer at the Annual General Meeting held on 16th October 2008, the meeting agreed to increase the club fees by a nominal R10. This increase will bring our membership fee for 2009 to R100 for single membership and R120 for family membership. So please start filling out your renewal forms and sending them through to Jovita together with proof of payment. Alternatively hand them directly to her at the next social you attend. Please don't forget to include your membership number or full name when making a deposit into the club bank account. The main reason for the increase is so that the club can spread its wings in a number areas.

Website Upgrade – Brilliant Web has been commissioned to upgrade our club website functionality. This will give us a space to share pictures and stories freely, among other functionality, so keep an eye on the website for future developments.

Special Projects – It is time that the Club gave back to the community in some way or another. We should endeavour to share our passion for our country and our heritage. With this in mind the Club will be embarking on a number of community projects Details will follow as and when we finalise each project. If you are interested in getting involved in any special projects please contact a committee member.

URGENT NOTICE – We are seeing a rapid decline in the number of day hikes. The MBC committee is urgently appealing to those who would like to lead these hikes to raise their hands and come forward as leaders. To this end, new leader workshops will be held over the coming months to try and give new leaders some guidance and support. Please think about this, as at our current rate of decline the Club might not have the capacity to do ANY day hikes in the foreseeable future, it would truly be a sad day when this happens.

October saw the club lose a valued leader and friend, Luciano Colombo. He was hiking in the Cathedral peak area and tragically slipped and fell. Our hearts go out to his family and friends, and he will be missed by us all.

Happy Hiking
Grant Wilkinson
MBC Chairman

LUCIANO COLOMBO
4.11.1940 – 26.10.2008

Luciano leaves behind lasting memories of a wonderfully motivated and vital person who knew how to take the time to play, to take the time to be friendly and to take the time to laugh. Luciano was a very well known and much loved leader and a friend of the Mountain Backpackers Club since the mid 1990's. I can't think of him without a smile and will always remember those twinkly blue eyes, the Italian drawl and that considerable charm! He will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him for his drive and energy, sense of humour, anecdotes and unflinching cheerfulness and optimism. He was always very fit and on hikes and met adversity with equanimity and was an inspiration and a mentor to many hikers in our Club and wherever he went. Despite his vast hiking experience in Southern Africa and abroad he remained a humble and unassuming person – somewhat shy and wanting to stay out of the limelight. To his family and all who knew him, our sincere condolences from the hiking fraternity. A star has dimmed momentarily, but will always shine bright in our hearts and minds

.Jovita da Silva

MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Grant Wilkinson	073 616 8789
Vice Chairman:	Bobby Stanton	031 465 5535
Treasurer:	Laura Wood	073 279 5289
Fixture List / Magazine:	Bobby Stanton	031 465 5535
Membership\Subscriptions:	Jovita da Silva	082 691 9180
Backpacking Convenor:	David Gay	031 765 4246
Day Hikes Convenor:	Eddie von Bargaen	083 281 1288
Socials / Pro	Jeanne Rapson	074 148 6474

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

Debra Jane Green
John Hodgson
Danny Pillay and Family

Bernadette Young and Family

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.

January 2009

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Phone	Grd
3	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.	8 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	2
10	Mpiti & Porcupine Falls. Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R10 per person Reserve fee	5 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	1
10-11	Training course at Cobham: Water Hazards, River Crossings and Camp Craft - conducted by Andrew Friedemann from Wildways Adventures on the Saturday. Mark Edmunds from Underberg will be presenting a talk on poisonous snakes of the Berg (with live specimens!) on the Sunday morning. All members welcome!	-	Andrew Friedemann	031 7672160	-
10-11	Wave Cave (Garden Castle area). Explore Hidden Valley and visit Sherry Cave, Curtain Cave and Rob's Cave. Email: homearanya@gmail.com	27 km 550 m	Carlos Gonzalez	076 4599127 (after 6 Jan)	3
10-14	Otter Trail: 5 day trail through Tsitsikamma Nature Reserve. Fully booked, waiting list only.	-	Marie Nicholas	082 5027072	3
11	Easy walk through Ferncliffe Nature Reserve. Meet at Mug & Bean in Pinecrest shopping centre, Pinetown at 7am or Cascades shopping centre, Pmb at 8am. Leader will meet at Cascades shopping centre.		Jan Lens	082 8009135	2
17	Palmiet Nature Reserve, Westville. Walk through beautiful scenery to Cascades waterfall. Meet at Village Market carpark opposite Westville Hotel, for a 2pm start.	7 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	1
17-18	Relaxed hike to Xeni Cave with visit to Neptune's Pools and optional visit to the base of Xeni pass (Cathedral Peak area). Suitable for first time backpackers unsure of their fitness. Younger members are encouraged to participate.	12 km 400 m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	3
17-18	Grindstone Cave (Injasuti area). Ideal for beginner hikers as the shorter Saturday hike (6 km) gives you the opportunity to acclimatise. Email: Anitha.jaipal@bcx.co.za	20 km	Anitha Jaipal	082 4568739 or (A/H) 031 2665207	3
17-18	Wonder Valley Cave via Van Heyningens Pass (Injasuti area). Email: elaine.bushell@maccaferri.co.za	16 km 500 m	Elaine Bushell	031-7675414 (between 18h00 and 20h00 only)	3
24	Kloof Gorge. Come down Kloof Gorge and along Molweni River to base of Kloof Falls. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	7 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	2
25	Old World's View hike in Hilton area. Meet at Mug & Bean in Sanlam Centre at 7:30am or Crossways Pub in Hilton at 9am. Leader will meet at Crossways		Neville Lee	083 626 9983	2
24-25	Mzimkhulwana Hut via the Giant's Cup Trail, returning via Siphongweni National Monument rock art site and Pholela River (Cobham area). Suitable for first-time backpackers unsure of their fitness. Teenagers welcome! Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	19 km 340 m	Dave Gay	031-7654246 (A/H 18h00- 20h00 Mon- Thu only)	3
31	Longshadows Trail, Kloof. Hike upriver in the Krantzkloof reserve to the escarpment and down	8 km	Linda Marsden	083 6211687 a/hrs	2

	again. Meet at Krantzklouf Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.		King	031 7029138	
30-1 Feb	Camping weekend at Highover, near Richmond. Optional tenting (R70) or bunkhouse (R100) accommodation. Stunning day hikes on Saturday and Sunday in spectacular forest. Game drive, foefie slides, canoeing and obstacle course. Braai facilities and communal kitchen. See www.highover.co.za		Marie Nicholas	082 5027072 after hrs.	2-3
31-1 Feb	Zulu Cave via the Sphinx and Hlatikhulu Nek (Monk's Cowl area). Email: lwood.za@gmail.com	23 km 600 m	Laura Wood	-	3-4
31-2 Feb	Climb Giant's Castle from Highmoor. Tents required.	50 km 1334 m	Christine Bro	082 7826025	4

February 2009

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Phone	Grd
7	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 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	0
8	Hike new Fort Nottingham. Catch a glimpse of the Blue Swallow. Meet at Mug & Bean in Pinecrest shopping centre, Pinetown at 7am or at Spar in Nottingham Road at 8:30am. Leader will meet at Spar.		Jan Lens	0828009135	3
7-8	Stable Cave from Monk's Cowl car park via Jacob's Ladder (Monk's Cowl area).	30 km 650 m	Clive Powell	031 5646169 (after 19:00h)	3
7-8	Ceremony to dedicate the refurbished cottage at Mkhomazi to the memory of Luciano Colombo. Overnight at McKenzie's Cave and return via the Nzinga River and Cyprus Cave (Mkhomazi area). Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	24 km 675 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (A/H 18h00-20h00 Mon-Thu only)	3-4
14	Palmiet Nature Reserve, Westville. Walk through beautiful scenery to Cascades waterfall. Meet at Village Market carpark, opposite Westville Hotel, for a 2pm start.	7 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	1
15	Visit the Bluff – see the harbour widening activities, old military installations, go down to the beach and visit the Millennium Tower. Meet at Glenwood Village Centra (Old Buxtons) 8:00	12 km	Duncan Hiles	031 202 8677	2
14-15	Summit Rhino Peak with overnight stay at Pillar Cave (Garden Castle area). Email: lwood.za@gmail.com	18 km 1200 m	Laura Wood	-	3-4
14-15	Gxalingenwa Cave via Emerald Stream, returning via The Hub and the Pholela River (Cobham area). Physical fitness essential. Good GT trainer! Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	31 km 890 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (A/H 18h00-20h00 Mon-Thu only)	3-4
21	Kloof Beacon. Downriver & up Kloof Gorge to the survey beacon on top of the escarpment. Meet at Krantzklouf Picnic Site, Kloof Falls Road for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	2
22	New Leader Training – Interested in becoming a leader for MBC? Not quite sure where to start?		Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	
20-22	Weekend away at Cape Vidal. Cabins or camping (whichever is available). Day hikes or just relax. Early booking and payment essential. Email: Anitha.jaipal@bcx.co.za.	-	Anitha Jaipal	082 4568739 or 031 2665207 (A/H)	-
21-22	Training course at Highmoor: 3 hour training session followed by a night exercise to simulate restricted visibility navigation. Limited space – book now!	-	Andrew Friedemann	031 7672160	-

21-22	Wonder Valley Cave from Monk's Cowl via the Eland fence (Monk's Cowl area). Email: homearanya@gmail.com	32 km 700 m	Carlos Gonzalez	076 4599127	3-4
28	Mpiti & Porcupine Falls. Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee	4 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	1
28-1	Camping weekend at Cathedral Peak campsite. Saturday attempt a climb of Cathedral Peak.	22 km 1500 m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	3

March 2009

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Phone	Grd
1	Manzimnyama stream, gorge and waterfall, Boston area. Varied walk, no path in places, rock pool. Bring lunch, swimming costumes and refreshments in daypack. Fitness essential, brisk pace. R15.00 donation to landowner. Please phone leader by Friday 27 February for meeting time and place.	10 km 250m	Philip Grant	033 9971817 082 417 9163	3
7	Palmiet Nature Reserve, Westville. Walk through beautiful scenery to Cascades waterfall. Meet at Village Market carpark, opposite Westville Hotel, for a 2pm start.	7 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	1
8	Hike through New Germany Nature Reserve. Start at 9am. Phone leader if interested.		Arthur Bester	083 4823590	2
8	Hike through Kloof Gorge. Meet at Stokers Arms at 7am. Don't forget WATER as the gorge can be very hot.	11 km	Greg Walker	082 0531315	3
7-8	Tseketseke Pass to Cockade Pass (Cathedral Peak area). Physical fitness essential. Good GT trainer! Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	23 km 1710 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (A/H 18h00-20h00 Mon-Thu only)	4-5
14	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.	8 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	2
15	Exploration of Demagdenberg. Hike on forest roads and grasslands. Karkloof area. Meet at Mugg & Bean in Pinecrest at 7am or Howick Hotel at 8.15am.	14 km	Gary Sharp / Grant Wilkinson	082 9024899	3
14-15	Sandleni Cave via Castle View farm and Stones Pass South, returning via Stones Pass North (Garden Castle area). Physical fitness essential. Good GT trainer! Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	38 km 1230 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (A/H 18h00-20h00 Mon-Thu only)	4-5
21	Kloof Gorge. Come down Kloof Gorge and along Molweni River to base of Kloof Falls. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	7 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	2
21-22	Hike at Haven rock (mid south coast) from Friday evening, Saturday climb Msikazi (table mountain of south coast) Sunday half day hike or game drive on Montezuma Ranch		George Archibald	0834191191	3
21-22	Whyte's Cave from Garden Castle via the Giant's Cup Trail and the Painter's Cave and White Horse Cave rock art sites (Garden Castle area).	25 km 760 m	Clive Powell	031 5646169 (after 19h:00)	3
21-22	Overnight at Spare Rib Cave (Giant's Castle area). Next day, climb Bannerman Pass and return via Langalibalele Pass. Physical fitness essential. Good GT trainer! Email: homearanya@gmail.com	28 km 1600 m	Carlos Gonzalez	076 4599127	4-5

28	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 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/hrs 031 7029138	0
29	Haven rock – Hike to Drumdorige farm via Montezuma Ranch. Meet at Buxtons Spar Glenwood, Drive in convoy to Leaders farm.	14km	George Archibald	083 4191191	3
28-29	GT shake-down hike: Wilson's Cave via Lakes Cave, Glade Cave and The Island. Return via The Island, Mzimkhulwana River, Mzimkhulwana Hut and Giant's Cup Trail. GT participants only! Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	42 km 505 m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (A/H 18h00-20h00 Mon-Thu only)	3-4

Advance Notices

Date	Description Distance Height	Leader	Phone
4 April	Training course at Monteseel: Mountain-related illnesses.	Andrew Friedemann	031 7672160
4 – 13 April	Not-so-Wild Coast. Port Edward to Port St Johns slackpacking, with vehicle support. Carry your daypack only. R500.00 deposit for share of expenses.	Duncan Hiles	031 202 8677
4 - 17 April	Grand Traverse 2009: Sentinel car park to Sehlabathebe Lodge (14 days; 250 km). Put your name down now with the leader and get backpacking to qualify! Email: cougar1@telkomsa.net	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (A/H 18h00-20h00 Mon-Thu only)
6 - 13 Apr	Contour Traverse from Lotheni to Cathedral Peak (137 km). Grade 4 – physical fitness essential. Email: bergfree@absamail.co.za	Dave Sclanders	033-2395023 082-4434287
4 - 16 April	Naukluft Hiking Trail in Namibia. 8 Days of Hiking. Physical Fitness essential. Distance 120km. Grade 3-4. A medical form is needed to be completed by your doctor not earlier than 40 days prior to arrival. Max 12 places. Early booking essential. See hike details on http://www.namibweb.com/nauklufthikingtrail.htm or http://www.footprint.co.za/naukluft.htm .	Anitha Jaipal	082 456 8739 031 266 5207 after hrs or Anitha.jaipal@bcx.co.za
10 - 11 Apr	GT Re-supply at Bannerman Pass (Giant's Castle area). We need your support, so please volunteer! If you are fit enough, there will be an option to join the GT party and continue to Sani Pass with them (10-14 April).	Dave Gay	031-7654246 (A/H 18h00-20h00 Mon-Thu only)
25 Apr – 3 May	Wild Coast: Port Edward to Port St Johns (110 km). 7-day backpacking trip along the spectacular Transkei coastline. <i>Experienced hikers only</i> . Max. 12 people - book early to avoid disappointment.	Eddie von Bargen	083 2811288
26 Apr – 2 May	Guided beach hike, Kosi Bay to Piti Lagoon, Mozambique	Duncan Hiles	031 202 8677
16 May	Training course at Monteseel: Emergency procedures.	Andrew Friedemann	031 7672160

FREE Training sessions

WILDWAYS Adventures will be offering free training sessions on a variety of hiking related topics. See the fixtures list for upcoming sessions. Training will be from 9am – 12 noon at our training centre at Monteseel. Cost is R10 pp to cover tea/coffee and minor printing costs. Bookings essential:- Phone **031 767 2160** or email info@wildwaysadventures.co.za

Note

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

Your illustrious committee has produced a booklet entitled **A Survival Guide For New Members**. This will be given to all new members and will be available to existing members at Thursday social evenings. Thanks are due to Dave Gay who did all the hard work. Here is an excerpt from the booklet:

Booking Your Hike

The Club offers several hikes each weekend and at other times during the year. You must choose hikes within your capability, and for this reason each is graded:

Grade 1 - Very easy (e.g. half-day walks)

Grade 2 - Easy (e.g. half / full day walks)

Grade 3 - Moderate (physical fitness advisable; e.g. full day walks and easy backpacking trips)

Grade 4 - Strenuous (physical fitness essential; e.g. longer backpacking trips)

Grade 5 - Very strenuous (requires a high degree of fitness; e.g. backpacking expeditions)

Read the fixture list carefully because sometimes a backpacking trip will span more than one night and there may be some special prerequisites (e.g. tent, valid passport or a head for heights).

When you contact leaders to book on their hikes, you should expect to be questioned about your level of fitness and the quality of your backpacking equipment if you are not well known to them. They will provide more detail concerning the level of difficulty and the required equipment, and it is up to them to decide whether you can participate or not. Our leaders often find that members new to backpacking over-estimate their fitness by failing to consider other factors such as the effects of high altitude (in the Berg), the weight and initial discomfort of their backpack, the dissimilar exercise, etc. We want you to enjoy your hiking, but taking on something too difficult too soon can be very discouraging. Rather assess yourself by starting off with easier hikes and progressing towards harder ones as you become fitter, more comfortable and more experienced.

When you phone to book on a hike, leave a message if the leader cannot be reached on your first attempt. He / she will get back to you as soon as possible. Once you have been accepted, treat it as a commitment because withdrawing affects transport arrangements and denies other members the chance to participate. Arrangements are usually finalised by the Wednesday before a weekend hike, so do not try to book on a weekend hike later than Wednesday. Ideally you should book at least one to two weeks before the event.

It is seldom necessary for there to be more than two or three phone calls to book on a hike and finalise transport arrangements. The leader may ask you to contact the person you will be getting a lift with so that you can arrange a pick-up point, get directions and discuss transport costs and other arrangements. Your lift may plan to stop at a restaurant on the way home, and you will need to take extra money for this.

For most hikes there is also an entry and / or overnight fee. The leader will advise you of these costs and occasionally may require payment in advance.

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

THE GIANT'S CUP TRAIL **"A Field of Flowers!"**

6 November 2008 – 10 November 2008

60 km's...5 days...11 people....youngest 20yrs, oldest 72 yrs...

Eddie von Bargen (Leader)
Marie Nicholas
Ron & Christine Exall
Donovan & Anita van Luyt
Cheryl Maitre
Lauren Maitre
Tyrone Maitre
Roy & Rose Glen

The Giant's Cup trail, as the name implies, has a regular view of an enormous cup shape against the horizon (on a clear day!) bounded by Hodgson's Peaks within the Lesotho border. Elevation is around 1800m, peaking sometimes in excess of 2000m. The terrain varies from alpine type meadow to rocky outcrop and each day started off with steep ascents and many descents throughout the five day trail. The time of the year that we chose to do this hike, was just the perfect season to see all the indigenous flowers in bloom! There were little white, pink, yellow and blue flowers all over the fields as far as the eye could see! The Watsonias were also all in bloom – sometimes an entire hill would be covered in orange blooming flowers – a feast for the eye indeed! Everyone who loves the Drakensberg should do this hike, even just once in their lifetime – it is not difficult at all. Most parts are really flat to walk and the scenery is simply breathtaking and the accommodation a steal at R60 per night. It's a lovely walk to bring the whole family along on.

DAY 1 (13.3km)

We chose to leave our vehicles at the end point – Bushman's Nek – and hired the services of a local transporter Steven Botha, who previously owned Sani Tours. We were picked up in two vehicles and driven to the start at Sani Pass for a nominal fee of only R70 per person. We had a late start in the day, and our hike only starting at 11.45. The weather was brilliant bright skies and very hot, the only hot day of the entire trail, as we were later to find out! We stopped for lunch at a beautiful pool where we could not resist jumping in to cool down. Afterwards, we pushed on since we had started so late. We reached the first overnight stop, Pholela Hut at 5pm, everyone suitably exhausted. It was a pretty steep hike in some parts but generally very easy. The hot showers were such a perfect welcome to the end of the first day! We all had a "communal" supper out on the verandah and the party got to know each other really well!



DAY 2 (9 km)

After a communal breakfast, we were packed up and ready to go at 8am. A steep ascent started the day and just a few minutes later we were at the top. It was another clear, sunny day. A very easy walk and we arrived at the next overnight stop, Mzimkhulwana Hut at 11am. Minutes later, the skies clouded over and it poured with rain, which signaled the end of our plans to explore the area! The afternoon was spent lazing about, and then we spent a good couple of hours playing Uno, building bugs and frogs puzzles, keeping everyone severely mentally challenged! We then played a good few rounds of "broken down telephone" which resulted in much hilarity! Eventually it was time for the night time ritual of booze and food making, everyone curious to see what everyone had for supper! We had expected cold showers, but were totally delighted to see that gas heaters had been installed for hot showers! Some went off to bed early, while a few others had lots of chatting to catch up on and some others played pranks with recorded jackal sounds from a cell phone.

DAY 3 (12.2 km)

It rained throughout the night and we woke up to more rain, no clear skies to be seen. We set off again at 7.30am and braved the wet weather. At 8am, we were halfway up the first steep hill, to hear the thunder roaring loudly overhead. We all stopped to put on our rain gear. Our boots were soon covered in mud and we were almost soaked through to the skin...hmmmm...not a pretty sight! It was very misty, and we were unable to enjoy any of the spectacular views that we had expected to see from the ridge. It was a long, but very easy walk past the Blue Crane tarn which was totally dry. We looked for the petrified tree but it eluded us and we never found it. Despite the rain and mist, the fields were alive with colour, all the dainty little flower faces lit up the dullest of days.



We pressed on and part of the trail included a section of road on the way to Drakensberg Gardens resort and by this time, some of the party were a bit tired. The very last bit of the trail was very, very steep and the next overnight stop lay at the bottom of a hill through the cattle paddock and we had to climb the stile. The little rondavels looked a lot more romantic from far, than what they were from near! No hot water, no lights, no nothing! We huddled together in the kitchen rondavel for the afternoon – trapped while it rained continuously all afternoon (and all night!) The 2 youngest in our group – Lauren & Tyrone – put on their slops and set off in the rain to find some new snacks from the nearest store. They returned after a couple of hours, having hitched a ride to the store which was closed due to renovations. They then got a lift all the way to Drakensberg Gardens to buy a few luxuries. They convinced their Mom to go back with them to Castleburn to watch the rugby, SA against Wales. Cheryl could not resist, she was desperate to also get soaking wet, what a Mom! Nobody was going to volunteer for a cold shower, so we all went to bed dirty!!



DAY 4 (12.8 km)

We woke up and it was still raining!! No choice, but saddle up and head for the hills at 7.30am. This one was a really steep

ascent – almost to the top of Garden castle – so sad that the mist spoiled our views of Castleburn Lake. We could not see a thing from the top. We pressed on regardless, and caught a slight glimpse of Lake Naverone and eventually it cleared up as we neared Drakensberg Gardens resort. It was an opportunity to finally catch up with the photography. It was a long descent and finally we reached the next overnight stop – Swiman Hut. What a lovely facility, a 3 bedroomed house with lounge that had a fireplace, a fabulous bathroom with hot shower! We were really at home here – despite the puff adder who watched our wet boots drying out from all the rain! It had stopped



raining – hooray – so we all took advantage and took long walks to the luxury resort and went shopping (for wine of course!) and enjoyed tea at the restaurant overlooking the lake and golf course. In the evening Ron made a fantastic fire in the lounge and we had a great time sitting around chatting.

DAY 5 (12 km)

Everyone had a fabulous night's rest and we all had breakfast together in the lounge in the morning. Sunny skies at last. After we had cleared away all the empty wine bottles and before we could set off for the final leg of the race Ron's boots were falling apart and needed to be tied up with cable ties. It was a fairly easy start with a small hill where we stopped to enjoy the views. It was a long descent past a waterfall and finally reached the stunning bridge over the Mzimude River. We stopped here for a while for refreshments and Christine was in the water before she was able to fill her water bottle! A few unsuspecting victim's backpacks were loaded with rocks while they weren't looking. The next leg of the trip was exceptionally steep and poor Ron (the geologist) could not understand why he was unable to cope with his unusually heavy pack. When we reached halfway, we spilled the beans (and the rocks) fortunately Ron has a great sense of humour. We went up a very steep pass and were rewarded with an exceptional 360 degree view of the area. We visited Langalibalele Cave which has Bushman paintings, it was most unusual. A loooooong way down and eventually we reached the end – Bushman's Nek. After some fond farewells, we all set off back to the city at around 1pm. The end of a very, very stunning hike – ABSOLUTELY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.



MARIE NICHOLAS

See the website for glorious colour photos of these hikes.
(www.mountainbackpackers.co.za)

Important

Marie has brought our attention to the advantages of owning a "WILD CARD" smart card. For the price of R180 pa. for an individual one has free access to all Ezemvelo-KZN Wildlife's areas, or for R235 one has the same access to many more wildlife 'clusters' around the country. Couples and Families gain even greater advantages at a slightly higher price. There are also discounts on many other items such as car rental. You can buy them online, or at the Msinsi head office at 43 Old Main Road, Hillcrest, or KZN Wildlife at 262 Sydneham Road Overport. Call centre is 086 1234002. More about this in the next magazine.

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 with a fully qualified Mountain Walking Guide. Single or multi-day trips. Contact Philip Grant (033) 997 1817 or Cell (082) 417 9163. or email pgrant@yebo.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.

WILDWAYS Adventures

Ever wanted to try Abseiling or Rock Climbing? **WILDWAYS Adventures** offers experiences every 2nd weekend at Monteseel (half way between Durban & PMB). Abseiling from 9am – 12 noon ~ Rock Climbing from 1:30 – 4:30 Saturday & Sunday. Cost is R50 pp per session and bookings are essential. To book phone **082 864 0011** or email info@wildwaysadventures.co.za

Tuesday evenings @ Anitha's home.
Renew your body.....and your mind.....and your spirit?

“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

5:30pm to 6:30pm – 6km Exercise Walk in Westville.

7:00pm to 8:00pm - Light dinner / socialize

8:00pm to 8:30pm – ½ hr Bible Study / discussions on interesting topics & life skills.

Start your new year with a commitment to enjoying life to its fullest.

Commencing on 20 Jan and ending on 31 Mar.

If interested, contact Anitha Jaipal on 082 456 8739 or 266 5207 after hours, or email on Anitha.jaipal@bcx.co.za.

Discounts For Members

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

CAMPING & OUTDOORS offers members 5% discount off most items on presentation of **valid membership cards.** The Crescent, Umhlanga Ridge.- tel 031 566 3177.

New store at Bailey's Centre, Builders Way, Hillcrest – Behind Oscar's – 031 7657595

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

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

EXCITING SOCIAL CALENDAR – PLEASE SUPPORT / ALL WELCOME

Directions to Whirling Wheels Club - Proceed north along **NMR Avenue** and then turn left into **Walter Gilbert Road**, Pass Kings Park rugby stadium and at the robot turn left into **Umgeni Road**. At the next robot turn left into **Arbuckle road**, next to Pennylane cars. At the T junction turn left again and the functions are held in the Whirling Wheels clubhouse, **29 Cobham Grove**. The bar at our clubhouse is open so members are requested to support it. Lets also invite family and friends to our “socials” to encourage / enhance recruitment and new members!

SOCIAL CALENDAR	
VENUE:	WHIRLING WHEELS CLUBHOUSE
TIME:	7.30 PM for 8.00 PM
ENQUIRIES	Jeanne 074 148 6474
DATE	DESCRIPTION
15 January	<u>The Marathon des Sables presented by Dave Pearce</u> Dave competed in the renowned Marathon des Sables, an endurance race across the Sahara Desert in Morocco. In this 6 day/230km race competitors are required to carry all food, cooking equipment and survival equipment over ground ranging from sand dunes to uneven rocky ground in temperature of up to 50° C.
29 January	<u>Hiking, kayaking and snow skiing in Gippsland, Australia presented by Alan Howgrave-Graham</u> Alan is a past hike leader for the Mountain Backpackers Club. Come hear of his tales of hiking in Gippsland, the southern most tip of mainland Australia, skiing amongst the snow gums in the nearby Australian Alps as well as exploring the rainforests, rivers and lakes of Gippsland.
12 February	<u>Cycling trip through Vietnam presented by Alison and Gordon Chadwick</u> In September 2008 Gordon and Alison did a 2 week cycle trip through Vietnam, cycling some 550km. Highlights include seeing rural Vietnam, exploring the coast and the small villages on the way and visiting the Chu Chi tunnels.
26 February	<u>A smorgasbord of hiking skills presented by Andrew Friedemann of Wildways Adventures</u> Ten or more practical skills you have never thought of that will make for enjoyable hiking and may possibly save your life. The talk includes practical demonstrations
12 March	<u>Adventures in India – presented by Jason Hickel & Jeanne Rapson</u> Jason is an Anthropologist. He spent 6 months living in Nagaland, the home of the world's longest-running civil war. Entry to the area is very limited, so many of the villages he visited had never before met an outsider. He worked with a development agency organizing community-based women's groups. Jeanne spent time hiking and exploring in Jammu & Kashmir, the northern most part of India. Hear the stories!
26 March	<u>Waxy's Westville</u> 7:30 pm at a WAXY's pub in Westville to chat and meet mountain backpacker's members in a social and relaxed environment.