



MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

Fixture List: July - September 2010

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dear Members

We have had yet another successful three months of hiking with lots of new members joining our ranks. Welcome to all new members and we hope that you will enjoy getting to know us and the mountains and shores we love.

John Pickup led this year's Grand Traverse from The Sentinel to Bushman's Nek in just 12 days. Well done to him and his Team which includes Christine Bro, Thora Honiball, Joanna Hall and Yours Truly. A special congratulations go to Joanna for completing her first Grand Traverse, and we look forward to hearing all about it in the upcoming GT presentation (LOOK OUT FOR THAT!). Last but not least, thank you to this year's cheerful re-supply team for their selflessness. They fought the cold, the steep ascent of Bannerman's Pass as well as some snow, to bring extra provisions to those who needed them, and Joanna who had too much food anyway.

Over the following fixtures we are going to start seeing a few new leaders. I'd like to wish them all the best during this exciting time. Being a leader is a huge responsibility, however its very nature makes it exceptionally rewarding and will no doubt stand them in good stead when facing their everyday lives. Please help our new leaders in anyway you can, whether it is pointing out something of interest or simply listening to them when they have something to say.

Photo Competition – Over the next 2 months the club will run a photo competition! To enter simply upload a photo to the gallery and in the description field type your name and membership number is. Please be sure to upload the picture to the "Club Photo Competition 2010"

Rules

1. Prize - Encounters with the Dragon – by photographer John Hone
2. Competition Closes 30th September 2010
3. Pictures must be taken on a hike.
4. Landscapes and Still life
5. Committee to Judge entries
6. Club membership must be up-to-date
7. Pictures may be used for a Club calendar next year (therefore we need your copyright).

I wish you a happy and safe winter; please make sure you are prepared for some snow over the next few months as you venture into the mountains.

Happy Hiking
Grant Wilkinson

MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789
Vice Chairman:	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535
Treasurer:	Bobby Stanton (temporary)	031 4655535
Fixture List / Magazine:	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535
Membership / Subscriptions:	Jovita da Silva	082 6919180
Backpacking / Day Hikes Convener:	Eddie von Bargaen	083 2811288
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THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THE
 FOLLOWING MEMBERS TO THE CLUB

Scott Sieviewright	Skapie van Niekerk
Tercia Amos	Mike Bennett
Michael Smith and family	Geoff Purnell
Derek Matthews	Nicholas Stofberg
Justin Baker	Diane Wearne
Pat Loureiro	Amber Steorts
Yuriy Tsupko	Pieter de Witt
Christopher Hunter and family	Helen Mitchelmore
Tracy Hilliar	Ilna Matthews
Lynne Thompson	Christien Steenkamp
David Bendzulla	Karen Miller
Megan Williams	

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.

July 2010

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
3	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.	4km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
4	Cumberland Nature Reserve: Hike to waterfall and along top of cliffs. Meet at Reserve Entrance at 8.30am (Combined Midlands Hiking Club & MBC)	10km	David Tighe	076 0280708 031 4649033 (h)	2
10	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.	7km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
10-11	Visit the Sulphur Spring from Bird's Nest Cave. Vergelegen area.	30km 600m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
17	Longshadows Trail, Kloof. Hike upriver in the Krantzkloof reserve to the escarpment and down again. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
18	Joint hike with the Ramblers Umlazi Meander. Hike down into the lovely stretch of the Umlazi River above Shoongweni Dam and enjoy the bird life. Petrol sharing costs R20.		Gary Sharpe	072 902 4899	2-3
17-18	Tarn Cave from Bushmansnek - Backpacking weekend to Tarn Cave. - Lovely hike and great views of Devils Knuckles from cave which borders Lesotho. Sunrises and sunsets are fantastic. Climb and return via different routes. The brave can swim in Cedrics Pools on way back! Will cost about R40.	24km 350m	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@ iuncapped.co.za	3
17-18	Kamberg - Sinclairs Cave – via Devil's Dyke Sunday - return via Glasdstone's Nose along high Eland Path to Kamberg office. - Exploration route last bookings 13 July	30km 600m	David Sclanders	082 4434287 email bergfree@ absamail.co.za	3
24	Palmiet Nature Reserve, Westville. Walk through beautiful scenery to Cascades waterfall. Meet at Village Market carpark, opposite Westville Hotel, for a 2pm start.	7km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
23-25	Exploration up Nguza Pass and Down Ntonjelana Pass (Mweni area). Head for heights, tents and physical fitness required Start at: Mnweni cultural centre.	38km 1900m	Christine Bro	082 7826025 or 072 151 2031 info@ karkloofcanopytour .co.za	4-5
24-25	Giants Castle- Night Hike to Bannerman's Hut. Full Moon time. Leave car park after early supper at 17h00, arrive hut 21h00 hrs. Return via Lost Valley or Langalibalale Ridge Hut sleeps 8 - bookings by 11 July. Hut costs R45.00. Last bookings 30 June -11 July.	30km 650m	David Sclanders	082 4434287 email bergfree@ absamail.co.za	3
31	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.	8km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2

31-1 Aug	Tarn Cave via Cedric's Pool, returning via Gargoyle Cave and Vast Cave. Bushman's Nek area.	24km 700m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
31-1 Aug	McKenzies Cave returning via Cyprus Cave (Mkhomazi area).	23km 705m	Eddie Von Bargaen	083 281 1288	3

August 2010

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
7	Mpiti & Porcupine Falls. Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee	6km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
8	Byrne Valley - Circular day hike from Minerva Heights Farmhouse. Meet Leader at Byrne Church adjacent to the entrance to the Oaks Hotel at 08h00. R10pp donation to farmer. Joint Midlands & MBC hike.	12km	David Tighe	076 0280708 031 4649033 (h)	3
6-10	5 day escarpment hike to Makheke (third highest peak South of Kilimanjaro) from Injasuti . 1st night tent at the bottom of Leslie's Pass. 2nd and 3rd nights at Upper Injasuti Cave. Returning via Judges Pass and Centenary Hut (4th night). Physical fitness essential – 8 people only.	62km 2000m	Elaine Bushell	031 7675414 (between 6.00pm and 8.00pm) elaine.bushell@ maccaferri.co.za	5
7-9	Sehlabathebe Lodge & National Park: Hike from Bushman's Nek to Sehlabathebe (Lesotho. Spend the long weekend at the lodge with a day hike or horse riding on the Sunday and then hike back on Monday. Mules will carry gear up to the lodge on the Saturday. Cost is R160 pppn. Payment required to secure your booking. Max. 12 people. A valid passport is required.	28km 600m	Anitha Jaipal	031-2665207 082-4568739 aj@ProfPM.com	3
7-9	Climb Thabana Ntlenyana (the highest peak in southern Africa) from Sani Top Backpackers Lodge. A shepherd will be your guide. A valid passport is required. Payment of R300 for your accommodation confirms your booking.	20km 630m	David Gay	031-7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	4-5
14	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.	4km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
14	Training Course conducted by Gavin Raubenheimer. Topic: Understanding maps and compasses. Venue: Spirit of Adventure, Shongweni. See directions at the end of the magazine. Cost: R20 per club member. Compulsory for all prospective new leaders		Gavin Raubenheimer	Contact: Gavin 033 3433168 / 082 9905876 or Bobby Stanton 031 4655535 / 084 4655535	
14-15	Hike to Whyte's Cave , one of the most beautiful caves in the berg. Young members encouraged to join. (Garden Castle area)	23km 600m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	3-4
14-15	Gxalingenwa Cave via Emerald Stream, returning via the Hub (Cobham area).	35km 905m	Eddie Von Bargaen	083 281 1288	3
21	Kloof Gorge. Come down Kloof Gorge and along Molweni River to base of Kloof Falls. Meet at Krantzklouf Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	7km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
20-22	Highmoor Area - "Mountain Shadows" , near Glen Garry. Cottages, cabins, caravans and campng. Excellent facilities. Central	24km 20m	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@ iuncapped.co.za	2

	indoor / outdoor boma with pool table and table tennis + dstv. Farm animals to keep kids amused. Day hikes from Highmoor. Lovely spot, just relax and chill out if you wish. Please book early and pay to reserve a place if not camping.				
28	Longshadows Trail, Kloof. Hike upriver in the Krantzkloof reserve to the escarpment and down again. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
28-29	Gxalingenwa Cave via Emerald Stream. (Cobham area) returning via The Hub and Gorge Cave. Visit rock art sites en route.	31km 400m	David Gay	031-7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
28-29	Lower Injasuti Cave (Injasuti area).	15km 300m	Eddie Von Bargaen	083 281 1288	3
28-29	Injisuthi - Cave overnight in Grindstone Cave (short route to cave - 3 km) then day packs to explore upper higher areas towards Old Woman Grinding Corn. Sunday maybe back via Cataract Valley. Cave cost R40.00 per night. Last bookings 14 August	24km 400m	David Sclanders	082 4434287 email bergfree@ absamail.co.za	3

September 2010

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
4	Kamberg Reserve. Day hike to Rock Art Sites - view seldom seen Bushman paintings, very scenic area. Reserve fee to Parks Board. Meet leader at Kamberg Parks Board office at 08h00.	12km 200m	David Tighe	076 0280708 031 4649033 (h)	2-3
4	Palmiet Nature Reserve, Westville. Walk through beautiful scenery to Cascades waterfall. Meet at Village Market carpark, opposite Westville Hotel, for a 2pm start.	6km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
4-5	Hike to Bushman's Cave. Return via Ngwangwane Pass and Thamathu Pass. Young members encouraged to join.	24km 650m	Clinton Bro	082 8202139	3
4-5	Trip To Zulu Cave. (Monks Cowl area). Optional to climb Intunja	25km 650m	Clive Powell	031 5646169 (after hours)	3
11	Training Course conducted by Gavin Raubenheimer. Topic: Movement on steep ground. Venue: Spirit of Adventure, Shongweni. See directions at the end of the magazine. Cost: R20 per club member. Compulsory for all prospective new leaders.		Gavin Raubenheimer	Contact: Gavin 033 3433168 / 082 9905876 or Bobby Stanton 031 4655535 / 084 4655535	
11	Kloof Beacon. Downriver & up Kloof Gorge to the survey beacon on top of the escarpment. Meet at Krantzkloof Picnic Site, Kloof Falls Road for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	8km	Linda Marsden-King	083 621 1687 031 7029138 a/h	2
10-12	Monks Cowl area, Mountain Splendour Eco-Resort - This venue comes highly recommended. Lovely spacious campsites with electricity points. Excellent ablutions with hot showers, etc. Tennis courts, volley ball, swimming pool, childrens playground and animal farm. Short hikes around the farm and longer hikes from Monks Cowl reserve close by. Entry fee to Monks Cowl is R35.	18km 35m	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@ iuncapped.co.za	2
10-12	Strenuous all-day walk: Climb Wilson's Pass from Swiman Hut, returning via Mashai Pass. Garden Castle area. Arrive Friday evening,	18km 1265m	David Gay	031-7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only)	4-5

	depart Sunday. Payment of R100 for accommodation confirms your booking.			cougar1@telkomsa.net	
18	Mpiti & Porcupine Falls. Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee.	6km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 031 7029138 a/h	2
19	Summerveld Area. Joint Backpackers/Ramblers hike. Start at: Stokers - Kloof at 08h30	13km	Gary Sharpe	072 902 4899	2
18-19	Whyte's Cave via the back door ie. Hidden Valley (Garden Castle area)	25km 900m	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535 084 4655535	3-4
24-25	Exploration Hike to Rhino Pass from Fun Cave and Castle View Farm (Garden Castle area).	32km 900m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	4
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.	13km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 031 7029138 a/h	2

Advance Notices

Date	Description	Leader	Phone
6 Nov	Training Course conducted by Gavin Raubenheimer. Topic: Technical clothing and equipment. Venue: Spirit of Adventure, Shongweni. See directions at the end of the magazine. Cost: R20 per club member. Compulsory for all prospective new leaders.	Gavin Raubenheimer	Contact: Gavin 033 3433168 / 082 9905876 or Bobby Stanton 031 4655535 / 084 4655535

Note: It is the prerogative of a hike leader to accept or reject members or other applicants from participating in his or her hike, after questioning the applicant on their fitness and experience. It is a privilege not a right to participate in a hike.

Day hikers are requested to phone the leader beforehand to confirm their attendance and that the hike is still on schedule.

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

Mweni Guides

Some of you may have heard of the efforts being made by club members to collect hiking equipment in support of the Mweni Guides. The Guides are a group from the Mweni Cultural Centre who offer guiding services in to this area of the Berg. Here is a short note from John Pickup who is leading the effort:

Thank you very much for the kind donation of clothing, and backpacking gear which was handed over to Agrippa and the Guides at the Mweni Cultural Centre.

There were huge smiles all around and it was a good feeling to see how much they appreciated the goods and before we had left they were trying on the boots and putting up the tent to see how many could sleep in it.

If you have not yet hiked in the Mweni Area I urge you to consider doing so, as not only are the Mountains spectacular but the villagers very welcoming. Plenty of shops close to the Cultural Centre selling cokes and essentials. As one of the group members commented as the hike was coming to an end "it is like trekking through Africa."

Please continue to let me know if you have any gear or clothing that you no longer need, for the people, and I shall make arrangements for collection.

Regards

John Pickup

The 2010 Grand Traverse of the Drakensberg By Christine Bro

Memories, mates, mountains and 'magic pants' – that is what GT 2010 was all about. For the five of us who embarked on this epic 12 day journey across the Drakensberg, it is difficult to explain why we did it. Some would say it was crazy, and even I question my own mind at times. It certainly wasn't about the cost: at R8.33 per person per night (self catering), GT 2010 was a HUGE bargain. But this is certainly not what motivated us.

For me, it is the sense of freedom that comes from only having with you what you need. While packing, we wrestled with what we really needed and what we thought we would need, because it is always tempting to add in one more treat or one more item of clothing; but with experience we quickly learn that we can survive without our wardrobe full of clothes or our bursting grocery cupboards. In fact, we found out that we can survive by wearing just one unwashed shirt for five days. For the tent partner this may be a bit of a strain, but as long as you adopt an "I'm fine, Jack, bugger you" attitude, you can get by.

Surviving was made measurably more pleasurable, of course, with the arrival of much appreciated food and drinks bought up Bannermans Pass by friends and family. The treats tasted all the better considering they were carried in sleet and snow – far better than any takeout meal or fine feast in a fancy restaurant. An element unique to the GT is the sense of camaraderie among us. Friendships formed and grew stronger over the days and nights where we shared our lives, and even shared our loo paper. For example, where we in the "real world" seldom have friends over for dinner, on GT this was an every night occurrence. We visited each other every evening, sharing the cooking, our favourite hiking recipes ... even the last piece of chocolate.

It is on the GT that we were able to take time out of our busy lives to think our thoughts, ponder on our problems and dream new dreams. To be able to simply have the time to be able to sit still, absorb the scenery, the timeless beauty of the mountains and watch the sunset was an incredible bonus.

We faced challenges along the way, both seen and unseen. The obvious challenges included getting over the next hill and climbing up and out of steep valleys. Blisters, ebbing energy levels, the dreaded tummy bug, the effects of altitude and the noses that continually ran were just a few of the hurdles we had to overcome. Challenges that were not quite so obvious ran a little deeper below the surface.

For those who enjoy their own company, it was at times difficult to be in the company of others 24 hours a day, all day, every day. An unspoken and underlying cord of competitiveness also lay just beyond the realms of polite conversation. But we all knew who was the first to arrive at Sani Lodge, and who was the first to finish. That's an inside joke, one of many we'll share for a long time to come. Another such inside joke is the phenomenon known as "Magic Pants." Let me explain – everytime the rain clouds came out and it started to drizzle, Grant would stop and put on his heavy duty rain gear. No sooner had he done this, the clouds moved on. This happened a number of times over the 11 days, so eventually every time we were getting cold and wet we demanded that Grant put on his "Magic pants" and we would not allow him to take them off, even if he was perspiring!!!

We look back and are amazed at how quickly the days went by. Within our group our different skills and personalities all played a part in making GT 2010 memorable. What we were so looking forward to, planning and training for is now only a precious memory.

Looking back, it was worth it all. Why? It bought us out of our comfort zones and there was an element of risk. It was rewarding, exhausting and exhilarating. It was an adventure.

"And so from the hills we return refreshed in both body, mind and spirit, to grapple anew with life's problems. For a while we have lived simply, wisely and happily, we have made good friends, we have adventured well. The hills have taught us to be content in our faith and in the love of God who created them."

Frank S. Smythe.

Our agenda:

DATE /DAY	OVERNIGHT	TIME TAKEN / KMS	WEATHER	COMMENTS
Sunday 17th	Sentinel car park			Arrived just after 8pm
Monday 19th	Back of Fangs Pass	7h00 – 15h30 / 8.5hrs = 21.74kms	Sun-wind-rain-hail-t/storm during night	Ice on tents in morning
Tuesday 20th	North Peak base camp	7h00 – 14h40 / 7hrs 40 mins = 18.34kms	Sunny but icy wind. Rain during the night	
Wed 21st	Organ Pipes Pass	7h00 – 15h15 = 8 ¼ hours = 19.55km	Dry, misty, cold and wind	
Thur 22nd	Greys Pass	7h00 – 16h05 = 9h05 = 22.45kms	Sunny with a icy wind	Visit rolands cave
Fri 23rd	Upper Injisuthi Cave	7h00 – 15h00 = 8 hours = 19.12kms	Very cold but sun shone. Thick mist after lunch	
Sat 24th	Bannermans Pass	7h10 – 10h20 = 3hours 20 mins = 9.34kms	Cold, cloudy snow when the resupply arrived	Loads of fun, friends & fellowship
Sun 25th	The Hawk base camp	7h30 – 15h45 = 8 1/4 hours = 19.79kms	Very cold start, ice on the tents	
Mon 28th	Mkhomazi Pass	7h10 – 14h41 = 7 1/2 hours = 18.73kms	Very cold start. Warmed up but occasional cold wind	
Tues 27th	Sani Lodge	7h00 – 13h30 = 6 1/2 hours = 21.60kms	Cold and cloudy	Lovely hot meal and warm fires. Bed and blanket
Wed 28th	Sandeleni Cave	8h45 – 13h45 = 5 hours = 14.33kms	Cloudy with occasional rain	Grants' magic pants came in handy
Thur 29th	Leqooa Valley	7h00 – 14h15 = 7 1/4 hours = 17.99kms	Sunny cloudy with a cold wind	
Fri 30th	Bushman's Nek			

**Bordering SA's Wild West
by Claudine Basson**

(on Anitha's Orange River paddling adventure)

The journey to Vioolsdrif from Durban is 1600km across four pages of my roadmap book. Leaving routine behind on a Friday afternoon brought butterflies to my stomach as I realised my escapade had begun. Playing passenger for hours didn't excite me but camera in hand and I was transformed into artiste.

After Clarens for the first night, the scenic route above the Lesotho border takes me past Bloemfontein, holey Kimberley, little Keimoes, Kakamas and a riverside hotel in Upington which surprises me for its out-of-place city styling. Feeling somewhat Area 51 / Roswell when I spy more out-of-place stuff in the form of vineyards, I realise the Orange River bears plenty water to sustain the surrounding land and an hour later, Augrabies National Park finds me sighing relief at the end of a long day's travel. Familiar with East Coast sunrises, I'm poetic about the sunset against the orangning Namibian mountains although I do suspect the smooth locally-produced Oranjerivier Shiraz is the catalyst.

Facing the glare of a desert sun the next morning, I follow the wooden walkway to Augrabies' main waterfall. Thundering gallons gush over the edge fiercely juxtaposing the dryness of the immediate vicinity as dassies forage in the fynbos and blue-headed lizards recharge on warming rock faces. The many smoothed rocks tell of the mighty river and the heights it's previously reached. A drive along the park's 70km route brings me metres away from a mountain goat type of buck, the Klipspringer. Later on in my adventure, I'll see them effortlessly sprinting up a mountainside which will pardon my

mountain goat judgement. On this short route alone, the terrain changes from browns and greens to harsher black and red stacks of layered rock surely caused by volcanic activity.

I leave for Port Nolloth and Alexander Bay to check out the northernmost tip of SA coastline and the mouth of the Orange River. It's more for bragging rights that I drop in on these towns as there's not much activity at the end of the R382. However, I do spend a colourfully dramatic evening watching the sun melt into the big swim.

Back inland to Vioolsdrif for the main feature and en route I see the gods' play pit where rocks and boulders have been neatly sorted into unmarked hills. They must still be crazy. Or bored. As Customs stamp me out of SA and into Namibia, I'm reminded of the order we maintain at home. Bureaucracy is rightly belittled in this environment. I return immediately to SA soil and head to base camp to meet up with the rest of our tour group for the exciting part of a 4-day river rafting adventure.

After the first night in a sleeping bag under the stars, I'm still exhausted but excited about what's in store. The morning's shower is an outdoor one and I keep an eye on the reed walls for creepy crawlies. While I'm keen to rough it, I'm not quite there yet. A quick introduction and safety instruction by our guides kicks off the morning. Once our small wardrobe allowance is packed into dry bags and roped to the 2-man crafts, we're shunted into the water and begin our adventure.

Paddling takes a little getting used to but the flowing river makes it lighter work. Along the way, the river yields some exciting bumpy stretches. Due to recent flooding I work easily through two sloppy rapids, Chicken Run and Sjambok, mindful of my triple-bagged camera. Thanks to a past trip through Richards Bay, I recognise a Malachite Kingfisher and later on am grateful for the expanse of water separating me from hyperactive riverside baboons. If, like me, you haven't paddled before and your arms resemble flabby wings, sitting up front avoids the frustrating steering work otherwise you'll find yourself turning circles.

Under this wild smogless sky, I glimpse three repositioning satellites and a shooting star. As I repeatedly spot the same black-and-white birds, I'm patiently informed that Pied Wagtails are common all over SA. Moving me to goose bumps, the Fish Eagle's unmistakable cry rebounds domineeringly off the mountainsides. Closing my awe-gaping mouth to avoid swallowing the umpteenth *miggie*, I watch the wake of a monitor lizard crossing our path for the banks. So much for the rainy weather warning I received two days ago. The sun doesn't know winter's approaching here and I slip out the boat a number of times to cool off in the brown water. As graceful as a cat with buttered paws, I clamber back onto the boat but it's worth the laugh to feel more human.

Paddling 67.5km of river may seem daunting but like starting school, nothing's too much when it's all new. I've become used to the sight of my permanently sandy toenails and everyone's in on the less-scrubbed look. My nature calls become less self-conscious under the starlit sky and full-moon and with such scenery, I'm happy to squat when need be, ignoring the dung beetles with their heads buried in the sand.

All the time, the experienced Bushwhacked guides were present on the outskirts to help someone into their boat, fix a sandal or mend sunglasses. Real-life MacGuyvers, they're so organised I hardly knew they were around - except when my stomach hollered greedily toward mealtimes. They toiled tirelessly, cooking, cleaning up and watching the group, sometimes amused, like the night the tequila and vodka flowed. They're respectfully conscious of the environment unlike some other groups who'd left before us. River life is a leveller and no one is an all-rounder. It inspires teamwork and constantly reminded me that living is about knowing your strengths and lending them out for the greater good.

The 10-day escape was physically tiring but so spiritually energizing I'm planning the next one to the SA's northernmost tip on the East Coast. There's much to explore in our rich land.

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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.

Discounts For Members

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

OUTDOOR WAREHOUSE offers 5% discount when presented with **a valid membership card.**

BACKPACKING EQUIPMENT

In the past some members have not hiked because they did not have the necessary equipment, particularly winter gear. Our club has a full range of backpacking items, making it unique in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition to the backpacks and tents, there are sleeping bags, rain gear and gas stoves. Comfortable, warm jackets are for hire on club trips by MEMBERS only.

Hiring Fees

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

Example

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

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

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

EXCITING SOCIAL CALENDAR – PLEASE NOTE THE VENUE

Directions to Sherwood Bowling Club - 860 Jan Smuts Highway

From Durban - Take N3 out towards PMB, after Tollgate take the Sherwood off-ramp and turn right under the freeway in to Jan Smuts Highway, up the hill, past Jungle Nursery on the right, turn right under the pedestrian bridge into Tropical Nursery parking, follow the road past trees to the back of the nursery.

From Westville - take the M13 towards Durban, past Westwood Shopping centre, through 45th Cutting traffic lights, down Jan Smuts Highway, turn left under the pedestrian bridge (in front of Naked Ladies) in to Tropical Nursery parking, follow the road past trees to the back of nursery.

From PMB, from Hillcrest take the N3 past the Pavilion and four-level interchange, take the Sherwood glide-off, keep left in to Jan Smuts Highway, past Jungle Nursery on right, turn right under pedestrian bridge in to the parking of Tropical Nursery, follow road to the back of Tropical Nursery.

SOCIAL CALENDAR	
MBC Socials take place every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at the Sherwood Bowling Club, 7:30 for 8:00pm Wors rolls or Hamburgers sold at the venue for R15 each.	
DATE	DESCRIPTION
8 July	Mary Johnstone - You will be captivated by the adventures and challenges of Mary, a single non-Spanish speaking woman doing about 330kms of the Camino Pilgrimage , in Spain, on her own!
22 July	Gary Sharp – Hike Leadership Basics - Gary spent many years in the RAF as a navigator as well as completing a number of courses in mountain leadership and survival. He has traveled the world conquering many a mountain and therefore has a wealth of knowledge to impart to our members. This talk is aimed at members who would like to start leading or anyone who could benefit from this talk.
12 August	Clinton Wyness - Something different and dramatic - Top Gun trip - share Clinton's wonderful photos and experience through Dubai, Bharain and onto the American Aircraft Carrier The US Theodore Roosevelt.
26 August	Jovita Da Silva and Lisa Smith – Shipwreck Trail. A new hiking trail between Port Alfred and the Fish River encompassing coastal dunes, a forested tree house, shell-crushed beaches, a canoe trail, a majestic lighthouse and not one shipwreck! Jovita, Lisa and friends were the second group to complete this hike in January 2010.
9 September	Jo Hall - GT 2010 , the highs, the lows and all the fun.
23 September	Sharon Jordan - The Olifants River Backpacking Trail , a fascinating and memorable 4 day, 45km hike along the Olifants River in the Kruger National Park.

DIRECTIONS TO SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE AT SHONGWENI DAM

FROM DURBAN ON M13:-

- Travel on **M13** up Field's Hill
- Take **EXIT 33** off ramp marked **Shongweni/Assagay**
- Left at top of off ramp into **KASSIER ROAD** – petrol station on left and polo grounds on right
- Cross bridge over N3 and travel +/- 1 km
- First left to **Shongweni Dam**
- Pass Denny Mushroom Farm on left
- First right to **Shongweni Dam**
- Travel along this road for +/- 6km through the sugar cane and the Shongweni Village until you reach the Reserve gates.

FROM DURBAN ON N3:-

- Travel on **N3** towards Pietermaritzburg
- Pass through **Mariannhill Toll Plaza**
- Travel for **6 km** then take **EXIT 32 Hillcrest/Assagay/Shongweni off ramp**
- Left at top of off ramp and travel +/- 1 km
- First left to **Shongweni Dam**
- Pass Denny Mushroom Farm on left
- First right to **Shongweni Dam**
- Travel along this road for +/- 6 km through the sugar cane and the Shongweni Village until you reach the Reserve gates.

FROM PIETERMARITZBURG ON N3:-

- Travel on N3 towards Durban
- **NB** – Be sure NOT to take the glide off to Hillcrest
- Take **EXIT 32** off ramp marked **Shongweni/Assagay**
- Right at top of off ramp, over bridge over N3 and travel +/- 1 km
- First left to **Shongweni Dam**
- Pass Denny Mushroom Farm on left
- First right to **Shongweni Dam**
- Travel along this road for +/- 6km through the sugar cane and the Shongweni Village until you reach the Reserve gates.

Note: There is a R35 entrance fee in to the Shongweni Reserve

