



# MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

## Fixture List: Oct - Dec 2013

### CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Greetings hikers!

We have had a busy quarter during this mild winter. Thanks to our leaders, for their time and effort, in scheduling gorgeous hikes to entertain us.

Also, the MBC thanks Heidi Dinan (marketing portfolio on our committee) for her sterling efforts, and time, to market our Club at the Ufudu Outdoor Fair and the Moonlight Market at the Waldorf School - and also for her efforts to co-ordinate the MBC's participation in the International Coastal Cleanup. Thanks to the other members who also helped.

The annual **club campout** was held on the 6-8 September 2013 at the Garden Castle Campsite. The day hike lead us to Pillar Cave and its auxillary cave, and a good way towards Rhino Peak. Our little camp was invaded, and partially dismantled, by a gusty gale that sent us running after our equipment and staying up all hours to hold our tents down! But a hilarious time was had by all. Thanks to the organisers for a super weekend.

The **2013 Club AGM** will be held on 24 October 2013. Please make every effort to attend. Free hot-dogs will be available to attendees!!! We will elect our committee for 2014, and Bobby will summarise the Club finances, Jovita the membership, and any other General items are open to the floor. If you would like to raise an issue, please either let me know ahead of time. Email me on [chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za](mailto:chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za), so I can have a solution at hand, or feel free to bring it up at the meeting. If you would like to stand for election onto the committee, or have someone in mind to nominate for a position, please also contact me ahead of time. We welcome as many hands as available to help out. And it's actually fun!

In the run-up to the end-of-year holidays, we appreciate the value of family time and rest time. The MBC offers you such retreat time, to wind-down in nature and re-energise for the New Year. Please look at our new fixture list and plan your holiday fun in the mountains.

**The annual MBC end of year party** will be held on 28 November 2013, at the Sherwood Bowling Club at 6.30 for 7pm. We extend a warm invitation to all our members and leaders to attend this event. We will enjoy a fun evening of laughs, regaling tales from hikes and events, and a meeting of like-minded folk who love the outdoors, and who have a host of experience to share. We welcome YOU to join us in the festivities.

See page10 & 11 for new great trade discounts the Committee has negotiated for you - make the most of it.

If you have any ideas or hikes you would like to do for 2014, please let me know and I'll put it to the leaders. If you have anyone in mind that has a good talk to give us at our twice-monthly socials, please also let me know. If there are upcoming events you would like the club members to know about (only non-profit, non-commercial), I am able to let the members know.

Happy Hiking, Happy Holidays and see you in the mountains...

Karen Miller  
Chairman: Mountain Backpackers Club

## MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman	Karen Miller	082 7423266
Vice Chairman	John McGovern	082 6595111
Treasurer	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535
Fixture List / Magazine	Alan Etchells	082 3984103
Secretary	Jill Etchells	073 7124537
Marketing	Heidi Cox	082 7064283
Committee member	Chris Cox	
Socials	Lisa Guastella	082 8604043

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

Alison Maskell  
 Kate Coleby  
 Kristin Leppens

Mike Ivey & Family  
 Richard Mace

### 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 – 4<sup>th</sup> QUARTER

October 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
6 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Stainbank Nature Reserve</b> - for beginners Three hour hike around reserve Meet at gate entrance at 9am.(Phone first)	+5km	Arthur Bester	083 482 3590 or email <a href="mailto:Arthur.bester@gmail.com">Arthur.bester@gmail.com</a>	
6 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>La Mercy to Mt Moreland</b> Meet in the parking area opposite the Bush Tavern, Umdhloti in time for a prompt 8:00 departure. Cross La Mercy River and hike cross-country to King Shaka Airport and back. Optional late lunch at the Tavern afterwards ( Ramblers Club Hike)	18 km	Brian M	083 2281981	2-3
13 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>DAY HIKE TO BAYNESFIELD</b> Please note this is a combined hike for MBC, Ramblers & Midland Club members. This hike is in the area of the Baynesfield Estate & the farm of Malcolm McKenzie of Osgodsbys. The day hike takes in the historical rustic cottage built by Joseph Baynes in the 19th century. It winds through plantations & indigenous forests & returns along the Mageu Trail.	14kms / 400m.  (approx 5 hr)	Co-leaders David Tighe / Philip Swart.	Phone David on 076 028 0708 or 031 4649033	

19 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Kloof Gorge Day Hike.</b> Leaving at noon from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Not suitable for children. Confirm with John beforehand :	4 – 5 hrs	John McGovern	John 082 6595111	2
20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Monteseel / Valley of a Thousand Hills</b> Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown in time for a prompt 8:00 departure, or at Max's house at 8:15. Please don't forget to bring fruit (no citrus) and veggies for the rescue animals Roger and Julie have adopted – your fee for safe parking! Hopefully we'll have tea with Sonny Boy and his family en route, so please bring cash for a donation. Petrol-sharing R30.00pp. (Ramblers Club hike)	14km (Steep in parts)	Max	031 7837876 083 9684434	3
20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Bluff beach walk</b> - to the whaling station and back, possible snorkeling in rock pools if tide and weather permits. Meet 08h00 Brighton Lifesaver Club. National Marine Day - come enjoy! Phone first, cancelled if raining.	+12km	Heidi Cox	0827064283	2
19–20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Full Moon NIGHT HIKE – Bannerman Hut, Giants Castle</b> Meet Giants Camp at 16h00 on Saturday evening , supper at car, hike later. Sunday return via a different route. Late bookings may bring tents. NB. KZN Wildlife require money with booking. Only 8 hikers - book early (Last booking - 7 Oct with money) APPROX. COST- R45	28 km 600 m ascent	Dave Sclanders	e mail: <a href="mailto:bergfree@absamail.co.za">bergfree@absamail.co.za</a>	3
27 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Table Mountain, Pietermaritzburg</b> Joint Ramblers/MBC/Pietermaritzburg Ramblers hike up to and around this popular landmark. Indigenous forest, flowers, waterfalls with good views of Nagle Dam and The Valley of a Thousand Hills. Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown, at 8:00. (Be aware of one-way system for access.) Petrol-sharing R30.00pp plus R10.00pp for guide/car guard.	14 km	Duncan Hiles	083 2297748	2-3
25 - 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>9th, 10<sup>th</sup> &amp; 11th HIGHS - Rhino- 3056mts, Mashai-3309mts &amp; Walkers- 3306mts</b> 3 Days for 3 Highs. Meet at Garden Castle. Up Mashai Pass to summit Rhino Peak 3056mts, then camp for the night. Saturday we shall endeavour to summit Mashai Peak 3309mts and either camp or use Mzumide cave for the night. On Sunday it will be a long day as we wake early, summit Walkers Peak 3306mts, down Mzumide pass and back to Garden Castle via the Giants cup trail. Tents required NB: Physical fitness required.	Approx distance 42 Km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	<a href="mailto:christinebro3@gmail.com">christinebro3@gmail.com</a> <b>0827826025</b> <a href="mailto:johnpickup9@gmail.com">johnpickup9@gmail.com</a> <b>0721512031</b>	4

### November 2013

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
3 <sup>rd</sup> Nov	<b>Mt Edgecombe Meander</b> Meet and park at Spar, Flanders Drive, Umhlanga, at 8:00 for a circular hike through cane, across grassland and around Marshall Dam. (Ramblers Club Hike)	18 km (steep in parts)	Jenny	084 9520622	2-3

2 <sup>nd</sup> - 3 <sup>rd</sup> Nov	<b>Wilson's Pass to Mashai Pass.</b> Tents required. (Garden Castle area )	20km 1410m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	4,5
10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Alverstone and surrounds</b> Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown in time for a prompt 8:00 departure. (Be aware of one-way system for access.) Hike over rolling hills and through indigenous bush. Game viewing guaranteed! Petrol-sharing R20.00. (Ramblers Club Hike)	15km	Jon	082 4591522	2
9 – 10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Sinclairs Cave – Kamberg</b> Chance to visit San Paintings - cave only takes 8 in comfort, late bookings can bring tents.	26 km 400 m ascent	Dave Sclanders	e mail: <a href="mailto:bergfree@absamail.co.za">bergfree@absamail.co.za</a>	3
16 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Kloof Gorge Day Hike.</b> Leaving at noon from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Not suitable for children. Confirm with John beforehand :	4 – 5 hrs	John McGovern	John 082 6595111	2
17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Plantations and Railways, Pietermaritzburg</b> Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown, in time for a prompt 7:30 departure, or outside Botanic Gardens, Mayor's Walk, Pietermaritzburg at 8:30 for 8:45. We'll travel up Zwartkop Road to Boughton Station and go on a hike that touches old and present railway lines, the new tunnel under Hilton and an old historic tunnel near World's View. Petrol-sharing R40.00. (Ramblers Club Hike)	12km	Francois Marais	083 9838007	2
17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>MTB ride Mt Edgecombe – to the airport &amp; return, mostly sugarcane roads, EMBA temp licence required, 08h00 SARS car park Mt Edgecombe, purchase EMBA day pass Cyclab Gateway and other cycle stores prior to ride. Some fitness required, phone first.</b>	+30km	Heidi Cox	0827064283	3
23 <sup>rd</sup> - 24 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Mhlopeni Nature Reserve, near Muden.</b> Beautiful walks in a scenic game reserve, prolific birdlife. Pre-booking and pre-payment essential. Hutted camp.		Heidi Cox	0827064283	
24 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>HOWICK MEANDER - New day hike -</b> 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. Last bookings by Wed 20 Nov. - Combined hike with MHC. R20 per person for the Conservancies	15km	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2+
24 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Bartlett's Estate/Assagay Coffee Farm</b> Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown, in time for a prompt 8:00 departure. (Be aware of one-way system for access.) Parking at Assagay Coffee and plan to have coffee and cake after the hike or pay R10.00pp for safe parking. Hike over rolling hills, through cane and grass and enjoy beautiful scenery in the upper Sterkspruit valley. Petrol-sharing R25.00 (Ramblers Club Hike)	15 km	Jenny	084 9520622	2-3

24 – 25 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>12th High - Thabana Ntlenyana 3482 mts.</b> The highest point south of Kilimanjaro. Meet Friday evening (23 <sup>rd</sup> Nov) at Sani Lodge Backpackers, which is the backpackers at THE BOTTOM of the pass. On Sat we will be transported up the pass and the climb Thabana Ntlenyana. This is an 8 hour walking round trip. Return down pass on Sat and spend a night at the backpackers. GROUP size will be limited to the transport I can organise. OR take Friday off, walk up the pass and meet us at the top on Sat for the hike to Thabana Ntlenyana. Passports would be required, as well as physical fitness.	30 km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	<a href="mailto:christinebro3@gmail.com">christinebro3@gmail.com</a> <b>0827826025</b> <a href="mailto:johnpickup9@gmail.com">johnpickup9@gmail.com</a> <b>0721512031</b>	4
30 <sup>th</sup> Nov – 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec	<b>Cathedral Peak Area</b> Forest Shelter via Solar Cliffs, returning via Phillip's Folly and Mike's Pass.	30km 445m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) <a href="mailto:cougar1@telkomsa.net">cougar1@telkomsa.net</a>	3,5
30 <sup>th</sup> Nov – 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec	<b>Hike to Centenary Hut</b> Return via Cloud land Col, and the rangers look out post over looking Injasuti, great views of Injasuti and Monks cowl.	30km	Grant Wilkinson	081 3725611	3

### December 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
1 <sup>st</sup> Dec	<b>Summerveld / The Ginnel and surrounds</b> Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown, in time for a prompt 8:00 departure and enjoy a day hiking around the Summerveld area. Petrol-sharing R20.00pp. (Ramblers Club Hike)	15km	Jon	082 459152	2
8 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>13th High - Sterkhorn 2973m</b> - followed by prize giving. We are planning on setting up camp at Monks Cowl Camp Friday afternoon for a very early start on Saturday. After we summit our last high - Sterkhorn 2973mts, we shall return to camp for prize giving, party and braai. (Details to follow) Please join us no matter how many Highs you have achieved or join us as we celebrate the accomplishments of others. Invite friends.	15 km	Christine Bro / John Pickup	<a href="mailto:christinebro3@gmail.com">christinebro3@gmail.com</a> <b>0827826025</b> <a href="mailto:johnpickup9@gmail.com">johnpickup9@gmail.com</a> <b>0721512031</b>	3
14 – 16 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>Climb Amakehla Pass</b> - from Lakes Cave, traverse south and then descend to Wilson's Cave via Pitsaneng Pass. (Cobham area)	47km 1275m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) <a href="mailto:cougar1@telkomsa.net">cougar1@telkomsa.net</a>	4,0
14 – 16 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>High Traverse - Cathedral Peak</b> Twins Cave, Rolands Cave and return via Organ Pipes Pass.	40km	Grant Wilkinson	081 3725611	4 -5
28 <sup>th</sup> Dec – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Jan	<b>Waterberg Trail (Ficksburg) and Kameelkop Trail (Marquard).</b> Hike the new year in! Limited to 8 hikers. (Eastern Free State)	23km 365m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 - 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) <a href="mailto:cougar1@telkomsa.net">cougar1@telkomsa.net</a>	3,5

## Advance Notices

Date	Event	Contact Person(s)	Contact Details
12 - 24 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Grand Traverse 2014</b> - Bushman's Nek to Sentinel (South to north) Grade 5. Only for the very fit and committed. Start your fitness programme NOW.- 230km	Grant Wilkinson	081 3725611

**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.

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### HIKE TO SINCLAIR'S CAVE, KAMBERG, CENTRAL BERG by Kathy Kruger



**“I shall find solace in the mountains, with it's gently flowing rivers and ever-changing landscape. It is there amidst the beauty of nature, that my heart shall be happy and my soul restored”.**

Thanks again to Dave Sclanders for yet another enjoyable hiking weekend in the mountains, this time in the Kamberg Area. It was a combined club hike with the Mountain Backpackers Club and the Midlands Hiking Club.

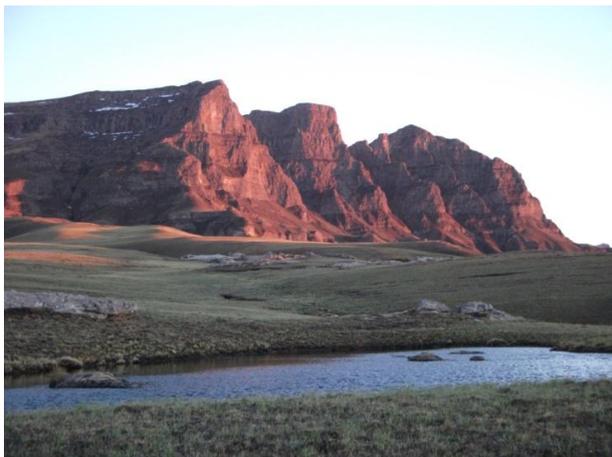
It was a somewhat hot morning when our party of 11 set off from the Kamberg Rock Art Centre. Not long into our walk, we encountered a rinkhals on the path, which reared up, with it's hood flared. Backpacks and all, hikers can be pretty nimble when they want to be! Fortunately the snake slithered off, without further incident. The hike offers magnificent views of Giants Castle but be warned, local belief has it that this mountain brings up stormy weather when pointed at with a straight finger! The hike took us up and around past Gladstone's Nose (named thus because it resembles the profile of a former British Prime Minister). Walking was often difficult as a lot of the "paths" were eland tracks, which are not easy on one's footing. We were fortunate to see a number of these magnificent animals, whom the Bushmen believed were "the animal of the greatest spiritual power, the animal of well being and healing, of beauty and peace and plenty". Our lunch stop was a most welcome break, despite the lack of shade and after re-energising ourselves with something to eat, we delighted in the refreshing water of the nearby river. We arrived at our destination, Sinclair's Cave, in the late afternoon. It had been a long day, aggravated by the heat, which took it's toll on one hiker in particular, resulting in severe cramping, hence the need for numerous stops along the way. After taking a short breather, some of the hikers proceeded to set up camp whilst others took a walk to survey the surrounding area. A few drug runners were spotted high up on the mountain top, but the hikers presence did little to deter them and it was "business as usual". Sadly, even in the mountains, one cannot escape the criminal element of society.

Sinclair's cave is almost level with the grass in front of it and is relatively sheltered from the wind. The cave sleeps between 6-8 people, but the accommodation is far from ideal, hence some of us opted to sleep in tents, probably a far more comfortable option, the only drawback being the extra weight that one has to carry, in an already loaded backpack. There is a small pond at the base of the cave, fed by a waterfall that flows over the lip of the cave, providing fresh, clean water, always a bonus when setting up camp, as opposed to having to walk for miles to find any. The cave is at an altitude of just over 2100metres and though there is not much of a view from the cave itself, a short climb to the top of the hill behind the cave provides a good view over Mkhomazi towards the escarpment.

After a hearty supper, a relatively early night was had by all and despite the rumblings of thunder which we'd heard during the previous afternoon/evening, we awoke to another beautiful day. We took a different route home and the going definitely seemed a bit easier. We stopped at a few caves on route to look at some Bushman paintings - these mountains are certainly steeped in history. We later lunched alongside a river, where some members of our party braved the cold waters to cool off. Waterfall Shelter was our final stop, before pressing on, homeward bound. The Bushmen believed that the water cascading over this cave was holy water and that whoever was to stand under it would be spiritually blessed by it's restorative powers. It was a tempting thought, as my feet were killing me, but the pull of home, at that point, was that much stronger.

Graded 3 and considered a fairly easy hike (is there really such a thing?), covering approx. 20km, this is a hike well worth doing. Dave is a wealth of knowledge and always has many interesting stories to tell, of both past hikes and of his experiences in the mountains, which always adds to one's overall hiking experience. We are indeed fortunate to have leaders such as Dave who are willing to give of their own time for our personal pleasure and enrichment.

### **HIKE FROM BUSHMAN'S NEK BORDER POST TO SEHLABATHEBE LODGE IN LESOTHO** by Kathy Kruger



**The Devil's Knuckles, viewed at sunrise**



**The Devil's Knuckles, viewed through a rock arch**

What an awesome 3 day hike! I can honestly say that this was one of the best hikes that I've done with the Mountain Backpackers Club/Midlands Hiking Club to date.

#### **DAY 1**

After eventually managing to locate someone from the SAPS to stamp our passports, we started off on our hike - without the pack mules that were supposed to assist in carrying some of our extra goodies. We learnt a valuable lesson - always be prepared to carry whatever you bring - after all, this is Africa and there are no guarantees that said mules that are booked and paid for will arrive on time or arrive at all. There was much excitement when, a few kilometers into the hike, the hired transport was spotted - but coming in the opposite direction. The mules were in fact horses and were on their way to make a drop-off at the border post before returning to assist us. Undeterred, we soldiered on. For the most part, the weather conditions were quite pleasant, with a bit of rain, mist and wind in the latter part of the hike. Derelict buildings of a now defunct Lesotho Border Post signified that we were nearing our destination. It was a worrying sight to see vehicles parked at the lodge, especially when we were under the impression that the lodge has been booked solely for our hiking group. Being so remote, there sometimes seems to be confusion over bookings. Fortunately the vehicles belonged to campers, though there was a very pleasant young couple from Switzerland who were staying at the lodge but who were leaving the following morning. If a romantic getaway was what they were looking for, we certainly put paid to that.

Sehlabathebe Lodge (also known as Jonathan's Lodge) is a self-catering lodge and was built in the 1970's for the personal use of the then prime minister of Lesotho, Leabua Jonathan and is located in Lesotho's Sehlabathebe National Park, bordering the far southern Natal Drakensberg in the Underberg district and is at 2 400 metres.

It is a prefabricated building complete with bathrooms, fully-equipped kitchen, dining room, lounge with central fireplace and several bedrooms - some of which have sumptuous king-sized beds. The adjacent outbuildings house the maids who make the beds, wash the dishes and start the fires. Everything is run on gas - this being the only drawback, as the gas fumes are ever present.

After unpacking and having a nice hot bath, we soon settled in to our weekend home. We retired to bed early after a hearty supper, the hard day's walk of 13 kilometres, via Bushman's Nek Pass, taking its toll. Sleep eluded some of us and a jackal was heard calling in the night...

## **DAY 2**

Our 8a.m. start saw the majority of us head off to explore The Devil's Knuckles, which are clearly visible through the lounge window of the lodge. These magnificent mountains stand at just over 3 000 metres and are truly an awesome sight - small patches of snow scattered on the peaks bore testimony to a previous cold spell. After ascending via the gully furthest from The Devil's Knuckles, which involved some steep uphill climbing, we eventually reached the plateau and then walked along the ridge of the mountains. The altitude and one's degree of fitness plays a huge part in how one feels on reaching the top. A while later, we were elated to be standing on what was thought to be The 3<sup>rd</sup> Devil's Knuckle. Posing proudly, our elation was short-lived as we discovered that The Devil's Knuckles were in fact behind us - somehow we had wandered off course. Subsequently we proclaimed that we had discovered The 4<sup>th</sup> Devil's Knuckle. Back-tracking, we eventually reached The 1<sup>st</sup> Devil's Knuckle, where we had a welcome lunch-break. The weather was perfect with clear views - those of The 2<sup>nd</sup> Devil's Knuckle were particularly breathtaking. Sitting at this altitude, one can truly claim to be "on top of the world". While it's easy to tell The Devil's Knuckles apart when viewed from below, it's another story when one is standing on them and there was some friendly banter between our hike leader, Keith Ashton and good friend Dave Sclanders (also a hike leader) with Keith spurring Dave as to which of The Devil's Knuckles we had climbed - there was much waving of hiking poles by Dave on our descent. The descent itself was quite hectic and a sure and steady foot was required. We stopped to view the remains of an old stone shelter, used by the herd boys in days gone by. Similar other shelters and remnants of old kraals were seen dotted around the landscape. We arrived back at the lodge at about 3 p.m. and shared our experience with the hikers who had remained behind and who had done some exploring of their own.

After a short break, six of us headed off to explore the area in the vicinity of the lodge. The sandstone rock formations here are incredible, interspersed with numerous tarns - probably some of the most beautiful and fascinating that I have seen in the berg. We visited Irish Cave, which, needless to say, has no roof, saw The Arch, through which there is a perfect view of The Devil's Knuckles and numerous other arches and interesting rock formations. This exploratory fun meander rounded off a fulfilling day's hiking.

That night, we were treated to a delicious Thai Chicken Curry, prepared by Jacqui, who had offered to cater for us. Eight of us tucked into a really scrumptious meal while the remaining four enjoyed meals of their own choice. Some of us chattered in the lounge for a while after dinner and even "braaied" marshmallows over the fire before retiring to bed.

## **DAY 3**

It was an early start for some of us. Dave had said that sunrise over The Devil's Knuckles was well worth seeing and so, not wanting to miss this opportunity, five of us set off, in the dark and waited patiently in the chilly morning air for sunrise. Though we never got the full reflection of the mountains in the pool of water in front of The Devil's Knuckles, we weren't disappointed - the mountains were truly spectacular as they slowly started to change colour - they had an orange glow to them.

We returned to find most of the rest of our party up and about, preparing for our return hike. We stopped at Irish Cave and The Arch, for the benefit of those who hadn't seen them the day before and after a quick photo-shoot, continued. Further on, we passed The Tarn, with its many pools and popped in at Tarn Cave. We were fortunate to spot buck in the valley below (some were also spotted on the way back to the lodge after descending The Devil's Knuckles the previous day). Some fun was had a short while later at Hole Rock - as the name implies, a huge rock formation with a hole in it, a few metres from the ground - just big enough to pop one's head through and then slide through from the one side to the other, on one's stomach. After a short break, we continued, eventually reaching Cedric's Pool, where we stopped for lunch and where myself and another member of the party very briefly braved its icy waters. Since starting the day's hike, there had been some hectic uphill climbing and some seriously strenuous downhill walking. From here, it was relatively easy going back to the Border Post. The return trip from the lodge is about 12 kilometres.

The superb organisation of the hike leader, Keith Ashton, coupled with the hike itself, the candlelight dinner prepared by Jacqui and the overall good company of our fellow hikers contributed towards making this a fun and eventful weekend and certainly one of the "not to be missed" hikes on the calendar. The lodge itself was a

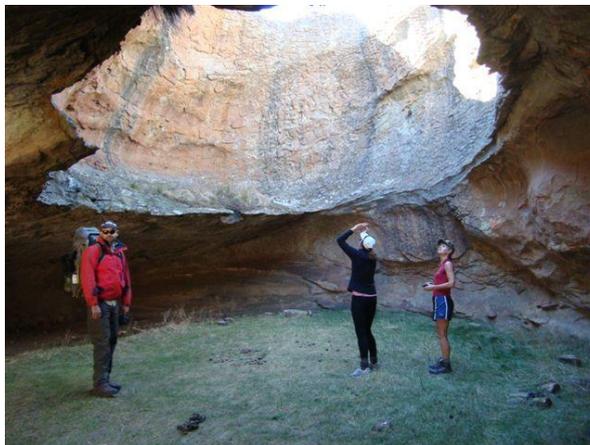
treat and it was nice to be spoilt with some home comforts, steaming hot water and cosy beds - it made quite a change to the usual cold showers and hard, cold floors that we as hikers are accustomed to. The highlight, for most I am sure, was the challenge of climbing one of The Devil's Knuckles.

It is indeed a privilege to have leaders like Keith and Dave who are willing to give of their time and to share their knowledge, for our benefit and to further share the experience with like-minded people.

Whilst by no means an easy hike (approx.35 - 40km in total), it is certainly well within the capabilities of the average regular hiker and one that I would recommend without hesitation. I myself hope to one day go back and climb the remaining two Devil's Knuckles.



One of the many rock features near the lodge



Irish Cave, with the hole in the roof

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An advertisement for Trail-Smart Hikers. The background is a scenic view of a mountain range under a blue sky with white clouds. In the foreground, a hiker with a large backpack is walking on a trail. The text is as follows:

**Online Training For**  
**www.TRAIL-SMART.com**  
**Hikers**

Be self confident when out hiking, prepared for what you may find and experience on the trail. Never feel out of your depth, and be able to share with other walkers from a basis of good solid knowledge and skills.

Prepare for your next hike in your own time with online training by qualified Guides and MIA's (Mountaineering Instructors)

**www.trail-smart.com**

### HambaNathi

#### “Walk with us” Guided Wild Coast Hikes

HambaNathi offers guided hikes along the Wild coast, South Africa's most beautiful, wildest and most exciting stretch of coast. Camp on unspoilt beaches, swim in magical rock pools, see an abundance of marine and coastal life. All hikes are fully catered. Transport and last night's accommodation in Mbotyi are arranged. Visit our Website at <http://www.wildcoasthikes.co.za> or phone 031 202 9994.

### **Southern Secrets Hiking and Backpacking**

Discover some of the exquisite secrets of the Drakensberg Mountains and Lesotho, including visits to rock art sites, with a fully qualified and registered Mountain Guide (KZN0904) and Nature Guide (KZN1025). Single or multi-day trips.

Contact Philip or Christeen Grant 033 9971817 cell 0824179163/2 email [pgrant@yebo.co.za](mailto:pgrant@yebo.co.za) or visit [www.southernsecrets.co.za](http://www.southernsecrets.co.za)

### **Berg Free Adventures**

David Sclanders runs single and multi day guided trips into the Berg, visiting rock-art sites, sleeping in tents, caves and mountain huts. He is a member of the South African Mountain Guide Association registered as a guide with the Department of Tourism, Registration Number KZN0050. He can be contacted on telephone or fax **033 239 5013**, Cell **082 443 4287** or visit [www.bergfree.co.za](http://www.bergfree.co.za).

### **Discounts For Members**

We are pleased to announce that Mountain Backpackers Club members have been offered discounted rates at three outdoor gear outlets – another reason to encourage others to join in the fun with MBC!

#### **Tripper Sports:**

15% discount to MBC members

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

Membership card and ID must be produced

#### **Street Address:**

Tripper Sports  
23B Calder Road  
Mayville  
Durban  
4091

**Office:** 0312093649

**Website:** [www.trippersports.com](http://www.trippersports.com)

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

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

- The Kingfisher's discretion on the discount will be used depending up on whether it is a full price or already discounted item
- The MBC member must present their membership card and ID document (with photo)
- The purchase is made in store OR
- The purchase is made online, but the MBC member must phone The Kingfisher store to speak to Gany on 0313683903 to agree on the discount that will apply.

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

#### **Contact details:**

Gany

**Store:** 0313683903

**Street address:**

53 Hunter Street  
Durban

## Discounts For Members (cont)

### Flamingo Sales (Columbia gear)

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

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

#### Contact details:

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

Office: 0315395401

### Request for Equipment

Mhlopheni Nature Reserve needs to replace some items damaged and stolen during the recent unrest in the greater Greytown area, if anyone has a 3-man or similar size tent in good condition that they would like to sell at a reasonable price, please contact [joy@mhlopheni.co.za](mailto:joy@mhlopheni.co.za) or Heidi Cox 0827064283

## SOCIAL CALENDAR – PLEASE NOTE THE VENUE

### Directions to Sherwood Bowling Club - 860 Jan Smuts Highway

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

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

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

### SOCIAL CALENDAR

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

DATE	DESCRIPTION
10 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Climbing &amp; Caving</b> – the presentation will be given by James Voortman, president of KZN Section of Mountain Club of SA.
24 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Club AGM</b> Free boerie rolls available. We just need you. Come on people, we want to see the venue full. Those who would like to step forward as a committee nominee, please contact Jill Etchells (073 7124537) or Karen Miller (082 7423266) There will be some 2nd hand camping and hiking gear items for a fun auction - details will be advised via e-mail at a later stage.
14 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Adventures in South America</b> - Karen Miller takes us to Peru where she hiked the Mallapata trail (near the Inca Trail), then went on to the Amazon basin and finished with 3 nights in BA, Argentina.
28 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>End of the Year Party</b> and 'Bring and Braai' at the Sherwood Bowling Club (7.00pm). Contact <a href="mailto:info@montainbackpackers.co.za">info@montainbackpackers.co.za</a> or tell a social committee member if you are coming. Salads and rolls will be provided.
12 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Details of the speaker for this social will be advised by email and on the website as soon as finalized.