



# MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

## Fixture List: April - June 2011

### CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dear Members

Thanks to all hike leaders, for your continued support, it has been a great period for the club and I hope that this year continues on like this.

The social committee has also been working tirelessly to revamp our socials, and I'd just like to thank them for everything that they've done. The emails that have been coming out have also certainly added to the club and I look forward to staying in contact. If you haven't been receiving email notifications, please let us know via [chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za](mailto:chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za) and I'll update your details so you get the regular emails letting you know the latest news.

Training: once a month we hold a training course for our leaders and interested club members, this is quite expensive for the club and has been poorly attended, but is very necessary for all leaders and those who take family members into the berg. Please don't be complacent, being prepared is the wisest approach to hiking in the mountains. We need your support for these courses.

The annual Club Campout on the 19-21<sup>st</sup> March at Bushwillow Park in the Karkloof was well attended. Thank you to the social committee for organizing it. Unfortunately there were incidents of unacceptable behavior and the Committee will be addressing the members concerned.

Please look out for news on the Out Door Fair, its an informational fun day on various outdoor clubs and societies in which we are participating, 43 and 41 Kloof Falls Road on Saturday and Sunday 28 and 29 May 2011, I'll send out more info closer to the time.

Happy hiking  
Grant Wilkinson  
MBC Chairman

## 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:	vacant	083 2811288
Socials Committee	Barry Stapleton	082 6574345
Socials Committee	Brendon Cadman	082 4556986
Socials Committee	Jo Hall	031 5356203
Socials Committee	Lisa Guastella	082 8604043
Socials Committee	Marie von Bargaen	082 5027072

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

Amy Dennison  
Cecile Balkema  
Edith Futre  
Grant Baudin  
James Marx & Family  
Joanne Fanner

Kathy Kruger  
Lee-Ann Conway & Family  
Natasha Williams  
Robert Howes  
Shaun Thomas

### **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.

### April 2011

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
2	<b>Springside Nature Reserve</b> , Hillcrest. Enjoyable walk through grassland, indigenous forest & pools. All the family welcome on this easy walk. Meet at Springside Reserve for 2pm. BYO braai.	6 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	0
3	Hike to the magnificent 80m high <b>McIntosh Waterfall</b> & the 30m <b>Kirkman Falls</b> . Visit the Umhlatuzana Shelter which was occupied some 100,000 years ago. R10 p.p. for parking in safe parking area. Start at: Giba Gorge Cycle Track Parking Area at 08h00	12 km	David Tighe	0314649033 076 0280708	2
2-3	Social weekend at <b>Injasuti</b> . Day hike on the Saturday up Cataract Valley down via Grindstone Cave. Relax and swimming on the Sunday. Options to camp (R75pppn), stay in the 2 bedded safari tents (R140 pppn) or in the chalets (from R215 to R280 pppn). Early booking and payment essential. Start at: at 08h00	14 km 400 m	Anitha Jaipal	031 2665207 082 4568739 after hours only or email aj@ProfPM.com	2-3
2-3	Hike to <b>McKenzie's Cave</b> return via Cyprus Cave, Great for first time backpackers, and anyone who wants to see a great view of the berg.	12 km 500 m	Farouk Omarjee	083 4190196	3
9	<b>Kloof Gorge</b> . 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. BYO Sundowners.	7 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
9	<b>Trail Run</b> - Umdoni Trail Series. Please contact leader 2 weeks before to find out more details. Start at: at 08h00		Diane Wearne	diane@paprika-sa.com	3
9-10	<b>Lower Injisuthi Cave</b> sleeps max 12 people. Its a lovely hike and very nice cave - perfect for beginners. Start at Injisuthi Parks Board Office at 08h00.	16 km 300 m	Eddie von Bargaen	083 2811288 a/hrs	3
16	<b>Mpiti &amp; Porcupine Falls</b> . Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee. BYO sundowners	6 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	1
17	Mountain bikers and runners will take to the hills in the annual <b>Juicy Lucy Classic</b> on 17 April at the Mid Illovo Club in KwaZulu-Natal. The 18km and 40km mountain bike races, as well as the 18km trail run, go through the picturesque Gwahumbe Reserve Game & Spa. There's also an 18km Family Experience, an 8km Trail Run and 10km Kids Ride. Visit <a href="http://www.roag.co.za/">http://www.roag.co.za/</a> or e-mail <a href="mailto:info@roag.co.za">info@roag.co.za</a> . Start at: Mid Illovo at 08h00	18 km	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	
23	<b>Palmiet Nature Reserve</b> , 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/h 031 7029138	1
22-25	Tenting trip to climb <b>Mnweni Pass</b> and return via Ntonjelana Pass. Physical fitness required. Start at: Mnweni Cultural Centre at 08h00	46 km 1731 m	Clinton Bro	082 8202139 between 18.00 and 20.30 and weekends only please	4-5

22-2 May	Backpack the 110kms from <b>Port Edward to Port St Johns</b> along the beautiful <b>Wild Coast</b> . The scenery is spectacular; the route varies from beach to grasslands. You will need to carry your own food, clothing and tent for the 10 days. Transport will be arranged and cost shared. Survival bags are required for river crossings. This is a wonderful opportunity to shed a few kilos and get fit at the same time! The group is limited to 10. Start at: Wild Coast Sun Parking, Port Edward at 08h00.	110 km 100 m	Eddie von Bargaen	083 2811288 a/hrs	3-4
24 Apr-6 May	<b>Grand Tranverse</b> Sentinel to Bushmans Nek	230 km 9000 m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789	5
30	<b>Kloof Beacon.</b> 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. BYO sundowners.	7 km	Linda Marsden King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
30 Apr-2 May	<b>GT resupply.</b> Day 1 Bannermans Hut Tenting. Day Day 2 Meet GT Team at Bannermans Pass. Day 3 Return via Langalibalele Pass	26 km 1480 m	Greg Walker	031 7056414 082 0531315 mlambonja@telkomsa.net	4-5

### May 2011

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
7	<b>Longshadows Trail, Kloof.</b> Hike upriver in the Krantzklouf reserve to the escarpment and down again. Meet at Krantzklouf Picnic Site for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee. BYO Sundowners	8 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
6-8	<b>Highmoor area</b> - "Mountain Shadows" (near Glen Garry) - Cottages / Cabins / Caravans & Camping - excellent facilities - central indoor/outdoor boma with braais + DSTV - day hikes from base - Lovely spot - just relax & chill out if you wish. - New routes also added - A general e-mail was issued with full details so please contact Keith asap for spaces still available. Combined weekend with Midlands Hiking Club		Keith Ashton	033 2395023	2-3
14	<b>Springside Nature Reserve,</b> 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/h 031 7029138	0
15	<b>Minerva Heights,</b> day hike from farmhouse through grasslands & indigenous forests. Meet leader at Byrne Church adjacent to Oaks Hotel. Suitable for beginners with some physical fitness. R10.00 p/p to the farmer for safe parking.	14 km 500 m	David Tighe	0314649033 076 0280708	3
14-15	<b>Gxalingwenya Cave</b> via Emerald Stream and Pinnacle Rock (Cobham area). Returning via Ngwenya Pools and the Giants Cup Trail.	24 km 400 m	Elaine Bushell	<a href="mailto:elaine.bushell@maccaferri.co.za">elaine.bushell@maccaferri.co.za</a> Phone 031 7675414 (6.00 to 8.00pm)	3-4
14-15	Tenting trip to Hidden Valley, Great for first time backpackers who are unsure of their fitness	16 km 100 m	Farouk Omarjee	083 4190196	3

14-15	<b>Wave Cave via the Giant's Cup Trail</b> and Hidden Valley, returning via Secret Cave, Engagement Cave and Sleeping Beauty Cave (Garden Castle area).	23 km 575 m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
14-15	Combined Mountain Backpackers and Midlands Hiking Club. <b>Giants Castle</b> - Bannerman's Hut - return via Langalibalele Ridge-. Early booking essential as EKZN want payment with booking. Last booking date 27 April 2011	28 km 550 m	David Sclanders	082 4434287 or email bergfree@absamail.co.za	3
21	Training course conducted by Gavin Raubenheimer. At Spirit of Adventure, Shongweni. <b>Emergency and planned bivvies. Skills and equipment.</b> 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	
21	<b>Kloof Gorge.</b> 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. BYO Sundowners.	7 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2
21-22	<b>Wonder Valley Cave</b> from Monk's Cowl. Magnificent views of the escarpment!	31 km 710 m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
21-22	<b>Mzimkhulwana Hut</b> is the second overnight hut on the Giants Cup Trail and can sleep 30 people. Come and join us on this relaxed, easy hike suitable for beginners. The hut is in an idyllic location on a tributary of the Mzimkhulwana river, with an outside ablution block with gas-fired hot water. The cost to stay in the hut is R70pp.	18 km 300 m	Eddie von Bargaen	083 2811288 a/hrs	3
28	<b>Mpiti &amp; Porcupine Falls.</b> Hike upriver from Kloof Picnic Site to see both waterfalls. Meet for a 2pm start. R15 per person Reserve fee. BYO sundowners	6 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	1
28-29	<b>Weaver Cave via Lakes Cave</b> , returning via the Siphongweni Valley, Mzimkhulwana Hut and Giant's Cup Trail.	32 km 530 m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4

#### June 2011

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
3-5	<b>Garden Castle Nature Reserve</b> near Drakensberg Gardens Hotel. Stay in Swiman Hut or camp in lovely site & enjoy an exploration weekend with the Ashtons - lovely hikes from base. Swiman Hut has electricity, bunk beds with mattresses + hot water shower & bath + flush toilets + indoor fireplace & outdoor braai areas. Camp site (no elec.) about 1km from hut. Combined weekend with Midlands Hiking Club.		Keith Ashton	033 2395023	2-3
4-5	The <b>Giants Castle</b> area is very scenic to hike in. Come and join us for a hike up to the burnt out ruins of Giants Hut, where we will tent for the night. Beginners are welcome.	25 km 500 m	Eddie von Bargaen	083 2811288 a/hrs	3

11	Training course conducted by Gavin Raubenheimer at Spirit of Adventure, Shongweni. <b>Mountain hazards and how to avoid them.</b> 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	
12	Hike to <b>Joseph Baynes cottage</b> from Campbell McKenzies Farm through plantations, grasslands & indigenous forests with spectacular views of Baynesfield Estate. Meet leader at BP Service Station in Shepstone Road Richmond. R10 p/p to farmer for safe parking.	14 km	David Tighe	0314649033 076 0280708	3
10-12	<b>Boston</b> - "Boston T-Party" - This is a really lovely spot not far away & we had a great time there at the end of November last year - Local day hikes will be done from our base. Accommodation includes :- private en-suite rooms, 8-bed dormitory, indoor pre-erected 2-person tents, lovely outdoor campsites - self-catering fully equipped kitchen-cum-lounge, communal showers with plenty of hot water. Full details issued to members by email previously. - "Combined weekend with Midlands Hiking Club"		Keith Ashton	033 2395023	2-3
11-12	<b>Sinclair's Cave</b> via Game Pass Shelter (Kamberg area). Willem's Shelters and Christmas Shelter. Visit Rockfall Cave.	26 km 520 m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
11-12	Combined Mountain Backpackers – Midlands Hiking Club. <b>Cobham - Lakes Cave</b> - return via Siphongweni Rock Art site - fairly easy hike.	26 km 520 m	David Sclanders	082 4434287 or email bergfree@absamail.co.za	3-4
16-19	<b>Ithala Game Reserve</b> in Northern KZN. Join us for a long relaxing social weekend. Cost R1695 pps, incl 3 night's accommodation in a 8 bedded bush camp, 1 guided game walk and 1 guided game drive + 3 days of conservation levy. Other accommodation options are available. Early booking essential. Deposit of R500 pp required by end Feb, remaining payment required by end April 2010.		Anitha Jaipal	031 2665207 082 4568739 after hours only or email aj@ProfPM.com	2
16-19	Exploration hike to climb <b>Rwanqa Pass</b> (Mweni area). Return via a different pass, possibly Ntonjelana. Head for heights and physical fitness essential	58 km 1831 m	John Pickup	072 1512031	4-5
18	<b>Palmiet Nature Reserve</b> , 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/h 031 7029138	1
18-19	<b>Gxalingenwa Cave</b> via Emerald Stream and Pinnacle Rock (Cobham area), visiting rock art sites en-route. Return via Ngenwa Cave and the Giant's Cup Trail.	25 km 430 m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
25	<b>Kloof Beacon</b> . 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. BYO sundowners	7 km	Linda Marsden-King	083 6211687 a/h 031 7029138	2

25-26	<b>Vaalribbokkop Cave</b> via Three Pools Cave and Stable Cave, returning via the Makhulumane Rock forest walk (Monk's Cowl area). Some clambering is required!	28 km 650 m	David Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thu only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3-4
25-26	Exploration trip to <b>Wilsons Pass</b> via Engagement Cave, return via Cods Eye Cave (Garden Castle area).	20 km 1200 m	Grant Wilkinson	073 6168789 gwilky@gmail.com	4

**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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The following articles and/or stories are also available on the club website at  
[www.mountainbackpackers.co.za](http://www.mountainbackpackers.co.za)

## NOTES ON BASOTHO CULTURE FOR HIKERS AND OVERLAND TRAVELLERS IN LESOTHO

by Philip and Christeen Grant  
January 2011

Christeen and I have been taking South Africans and overseas visitors on day and multi-day trips to Lesotho as a mountain guides, for more than five years, sometimes two or three times a week.

These notes are an attempt to help hikers, when hiking over and along the top of the Drakensberg Escarpment, and overland travellers, understand some of the basic differences between their own and Basotho culture, and understand some of the 'way things work' in The Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. We trust these notes will go some way to fostering more positive and tolerant attitudes, and avoid potential confrontation from misunderstandings and suspicion, caused by a difficulty in language communication and possible innocent ignorance. Experienced hikers and frequent visitors to Lesotho will possibly find that many of the points have become 'second nature' to them. Please accept that these notes have been written with the inexperienced or first time hiker and visitor in mind, but we hope that regular visitors to Lesotho will still find them useful.

As this list will probably never be fully complete, we intend to add to this document in future and would welcome contributions! We have had these notes checked for accuracy by several Basotho friends. If there are any other inaccuracies, we would like to hear about them, as we still have so much to learn!

- The country is called **Le-Sotho** (the place of the Ba-Sotho). The people are called **Ba-Sotho** (plural). One Basotho is a **Mo-Sotho** (singular). The language they speak is called **Se-Sotho** (or Southern Sotho).
- **Lesotho is not a province of South Africa!** The independent country of Lesotho (formally Basutoland) has a very different history, and works very differently to most of South Africa. Because the country is so isolated by its mountainous terrain, its traditional Bantu and African culture is still strong, more especially in the 'highlands' which comprise about 70% of the country. This attribute is a tourist 'draw card' and many overseas visitors pay a lot of money to experience and interact with this age old culture and lifestyle, long gone in developed countries.
- **No agricultural land, including the high altitude grazing areas, is owned privately in Lesotho.** Although the perception of visitors to the country is that nobody owns the land, because there are no fences to be seen, the reality is that everyone owns the land, and when travelling off-road, or hiking, you are still crossing someone's land.
- **For Basotho people, the eastern border of Lesotho is the escarpment edge, or 'The Cliffs of Natal'.** Although the South African KwaZulu Natal / Lesotho border is technically drawn along the watershed or continental divide of Southern Africa, this is a detail lost on the average Mosotho. So when you climb to the top of the Drakensberg, our advice is to regard yourself as having entered

Lesotho territory. For a poorly educated Basotho shepherd (or herder), the border is where his sheep or goats start falling over the edge of the 'Cliffs of Natal' (or Drakensberg) into South Africa!

- **When you cross into Lesotho you are no longer in the Drakensberg.** The top of the Drakensberg in Lesotho are called the Maluti (sometimes spelt Maloti) Mountains. The Eastern part of the Malutis are known on South African maps as the 'Drakensberg Range', but they are not the Drakensberg! Ask any Mosotho. They even look different!
- **You will see and come into contact with people on top of the Drakensberg and the Maluti Mountains.** Do not expect it to be deserted! Particularly in the summer months, there will be numerous shepherds (herders) tending their family's or extended family's domestic animals in the form of sheep (wool) goats (mohair) cattle (tractors) horses (cars) and donkeys (trucks).
- **Shepherds (or herders) are almost without exception young boys.** Their ages will range from as young as 9 or 10 years old to about 17 or 18 years old. Being a shepherd is an integral part of Basotho culture. But there are also adult shepherds as well, because options to gather wealth are very limited in Lesotho.
- **Shepherds (or herders) live in small temporary dwellings called Motibo.** These are basic rondavels with enclosures for their animals nearby. Two or three shepherds share a Motibo. The youngest one will have to do all the hardest work, just like what happens in an all-boys boarding school!
- **When you are hiking in the high Malutis (or on the top of the Drakensberg) in Lesotho, you are in their space.** They are not in yours!
- **A friendly greeting, broad smile and a wave work well!** This usually relieves any tension and suspicion from their side as to your intentions.
- **The shepherds will probably have dogs with them.** They have dogs primarily for their own protection and to protect their young animals from predators such as the Black Backed Jackal.
- **When in Lesotho you will have company! People will sit close to you when you stop for a rest or to have something to eat.** Even though it may be considered impolite in their culture, they will tend to approach you out of curiosity, or in an attempt to see what they can get from you. If you can greet them in Sesotho and convince them that you know something about their ways, it will help to establish some respectful 'distance'. Remember that their 'sense of personal space' is different from yours, and they will tend to sit or stand closer to you than what you are comfortable with in your western culture.
- **Basotho shepherds are hungry!** They have to survive on very little food by our standards, and learning to live with hunger is part of their upbringing as shepherds. In years gone by young men would have been drafted into warrior regiments after completing their initiation school at around 16 or 17 years old. Being a shepherd (or herder) is part of the toughening up process or 'rite of passage' to manhood. But they are not 'starving'.
- **It is rude to give something to a Mosotho with your left hand.** It is also considered rude and demeaning to throw rather than give something to them.
- **If you hand a food item to anyone in the mountains, remove the wrapper first.** Shepherds (or herders) have little or no concept of littering as we understand it. Take the wrapper back with your rubbish. If you are travelling through Lesotho, try to leave as little of your rubbish there as possible. Lesotho does not have the same sophisticated rubbish removal services and facilities for dealing with waste, as in most parts of South Africa. Should you as a visitor, add to their problem?
- **When in Lesotho you will have an audience!** Especially in the remote mountain areas, you are an object of intense curiosity. Your appearance, clothes and equipment are strange. You look to them, like a person from outer space would look to us! Many younger shepherds will probably never have seen a tent before. A 'house' and sleeping bag that you carry in a rucksack on your back is a completely alien idea to them! A camping stove is equally foreign, as is the way you cook your food.
- **Being a shepherd is mind-blowingly boring for most of the time.** You will be helping to relieve their boredom while you are up there with them!



- **Shepherds (or herders) are teenagers.** Testosterone levels are running high, just as with all male teenagers. This can lead to excessive bravado, posturing, role playing, and 'showing off' in front of visitors to their areas. They may not have seen a female for a long time. If you are male, remember what you were like in your high school or army days!!
- **Shepherds (or herders) wear grey blankets and carry short heavy sticks.** These sticks are called Mulamu and are often carefully decorated with brightly coloured wire. A Mulamo is a 'traditional weapon' and it is a sign of being a 'young man' to carry one. Young boys learn traditional stick fighting as they grow up, as a 'martial art'. It is a sign of respect from Shepherds to put their Mulamu on the ground when they talk to you. (But if they continue to hold it in their hand it does not necessarily mean they are about to attack you!). Shepherds may also carry a 'knobkerrie' or stick with a lump on one end, especially if they are hunting with their dogs.
- **Shepherds wear Balaclavas.** From years of conditioning in picture books, advertising and the media, the image of a strange person approaching you wearing a balaclava when you are already out of your 'comfort zone' awakes the image in your mind of a criminal or burglar. In Basotho culture a shepherd should uncover his face when speaking to you, but he has probably been wearing the balaclava for so long that he has forgotten that he has it on! You can request him to remove it before speaking to him.
- **Shepherds herd their animals by throwing stones.** With sheep and goats, the stones are directed either side of, or ahead of the herd to direct them, and keep them together. They control their dogs by throwing stones at them. If the dog is barking at you, and the shepherd is behind the dog, it might appear as though they are throwing the stone at you instead of the dog. This could lead to unfortunate misunderstandings!
- **Let the shepherds approach you first, rather than you approach them.** They usually have large dogs with them. The dogs can be unpredictable and provoked if you move too quickly towards them. This could give you the unfortunate impression that their dogs are being 'set' on you.
- **Shepherds and even most adult Basotho in the highland villages have little or no understanding of why you are there!** Going hiking for 'fun' is a completely foreign concept for them. Climbing up the Drakensberg to see the views and vistas they see every day makes no sense to them. Equally strange to most Basotho people is the idea that anyone from a developed country would want to come to their country to ride a horse, stay in their villages, eat their food, and pay for the experience! Riding a bicycle up and down their mountains, when they have perfectly good horses also makes no sense. Paddling a boat or kayak down a river seems very strange to them!
- **Do not give 'handouts'.** Anything you give to people should be part of a friendly two way interaction. If people sit with you and interact in a friendly way, it would be appropriate to share some of what you have. Shepherds love cigarettes, and this can be a good medium of exchange in the right circumstances. If you are hiking, cycling or kayaking they are not heavy, and do not use up your carefully prepared food rations. Basotho shepherds and many men usually smoke anyway so you are not teaching them any new bad habits!
- **Expect to 'pay' 'something' in exchange for photographs of people, and always ask permission first.** In many African cultures, people consider that you are taking something from them when you take a photograph. It has a lot to do with their traditional belief systems. What you exchange with them for that privilege would depend on their age and the actual circumstances. It could be a cigarette, food item, R2.00 or even R5.00, if the subject is an adult. If you are not prepared to be part of such an exchange, rather put your camera away! If your interactions have been very friendly up to then, they may not ask for anything. Generally, Basotho people really enjoy seeing their picture on the camera's screen. Do not tell people that you will send copies of the pictures to them, unless you mean it! It is considered disrespectful to take photos of government buildings, the house of a Chief or the King's house.
- **Many Basotho shepherds smoke Cannabis (or Dagga).** It is cheaper than tobacco, relieves boredom and the pangs of hunger, helps pass the time, and helps them to feel warmer when it is cold. But it could possibly cause them to behave 'out of character' at times.
- **Children ask for sweets because they have been given handouts of sweets in the past.** You are paying for the thoughtless past actions of previous visitors. Handing out sweets for no reason promotes a 'culture of begging and expectation'. That child will grow up to be a shepherd, and then an adult, who will expect something from you for nothing, later. We have witnessed visitors throwing sweets at children along the road as they drive past in their 4x4's. There are very few dentists in Lesotho, and

their parents would not be able to afford their services anyway. Before giving anything to a child you should consult their parents first. (Just as you would like a stranger to do before giving anything to your children!).

- **Respect for elders is an integral part of Basotho culture.** Demand this respect from younger Basotho by not showing any signs of being intimidated, and by demonstrating that you have some knowledge of their culture.
- **Learn some basic Sesotho greetings and pleasantries.** Just as when you would visit any foreign country where the residents speak little English, some time spent on this beforehand will pay handsome dividends.
- **Ask people their names and the name of their home village.** Give them your names. Just like you, they also want to be recognised as people.
- **Ask the shepherds to point out where their Motibo (small shepherd's house) is situated.** Do not approach a Motibo before being invited to come closer because there are often large dogs there. Even if a Motibo appears deserted, shepherds often leave dogs there to protect it and their food supply. The dogs sometimes lie around camouflaged amongst the rocks, waiting to give you a nasty surprise!
- **Take an interest in their lifestyle.** Basotho people have a fascinating, unique and harsh existence which is a story on its own. They learn independence and self sufficiency from an early age. Most of our young people no longer have the privilege of learning these lessons! **Recommended reading;** 'Shepherd Boy of the Maloti' by Thabo Makoa. Morija Museum and Archives. ISBN 99911-632-3-9.
- **When in Basotho villages make a fuss of, and admire the children!** As with us all, but even more so in Basotho culture, their families are very important to them. It is a very good way of 'breaking the ice' and establishing common ground.
- **Basotho children are often only trying to communicate.** They learn some basic English at school, and questions such as 'what is the time?', and statements such as 'give me sweets', 'give me money', and even 'give me your camera' (!), although harsh to our ears, are mostly an attempt to get a reaction!
- **You display immense wealth to the average Mosotho.** Even the kit carried by an overnight hiker represents more than the average shepherd is likely to own. Overland travellers with a 4x4 vehicle and off-road trailer, loaded with all the things needed for their journey through 'Darkest Africa', represents more than the average Mosotho family will own in their whole life! Generally, Basotho people cannot understand why we need it all!
- **Ask permission before making camp.** If there are older shepherds around and you are near a Motibo you should consult them and ask permission (if possible). When you are travelling through the lower villages you should **always** locate the Chief or Headman for permission before making camp. He (or in some cases she) will probably expect you to camp where he and his extended family can take responsibility for, and ensure your safety. This might not be the most ideal or 'beautiful' spot from your perspective!
- **It takes much longer to get anywhere in Lesotho than you might be tempted to think from distances on the map!** Driving times are increased by the many animals being herded along the roads, the state of the roads themselves, and the very many sharp corners that can only be negotiated at a 'snails pace'. Measure distances in 'driving time' rather than kilometres, to avoid rushing through the beautiful scenery, Basotho villages and towns, and possibly risk colliding with children or domestic animals. Take the advice of people who have done the trip before!
- **Of course there are criminals in Lesotho!** Just as in South Africa or any other country, there is a criminal element at work. But there is no reason to believe that the proportion of criminals to non-criminals in Lesotho is any higher than in any other country. The average Basotho hates these criminals as much as you do! Most South Africans would be very offended if the foreign media advised potential visitors to our country to be suspicious of all South Africans because we have a high crime rate!
- **If you have any crime problems, and you have an idea where that person lives, the first recourse would be the nearest Chief or Headman, if possible.** If the 'problem' comes from a child, then the first recourse would be the child's parents. Locating the parents of a child can be time consuming and inconvenient, but if you persevere, the child will be punished and you will save a future visitor to

Lesotho from a potentially more serious encounter with that 'child' as it becomes older and bolder! You may also save that child from a prison sentence sometime in the future! **If the crime is committed by an 'outsider' to the local villages, the next recourse would be the police.**

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## GIBA GORGE

Contributed by Dave Tighe

One would not exaggerate to say that Giba Gorge is one of the most excellent hiking areas in Durban. It doesn't take much to find oneself outside city life and in a wilderness setting of great beauty. It was refreshing and exciting to be able to lead a group of 25 enthusiastic, experienced and novice hikers to explore this paradise. After leaving our vehicles safely parked at Giba Gorge entrance next to the restaurant, we proceeded along the well-used cycle track before turning off at a check point to cross the Giba River. After another 1km the cycle track makes way to a hiking trail and crossing under the N3 toll road bridge, well over 100m above the gorge and enters private property. One is inspired by this impressive concrete construction, and the contrast of speeding vehicles above and the tranquillity of the Gorge below.

The combination of waterfalls, which include the magnificent 80m high McIntosh falls (right) and the 30m high Kirkman Falls tumbling into the gorge are of great scenic beauty. Recent good rains added to the spectacular picturesque scenery.

The route climbs to the top of the falls and crosses the Umhlatuzana River and then rises to a higher level and enters the Umhlatuzana Rock Shelter, the history of which stretches back to the Stone Age and is of immense historical value. The Shelter is protected from the elements, faces north and is well screened by vegetation. The rock shelter is 43m long, reaches a depth of 6.5m and the maximum roof height is 17m, and was discovered in 1982 by Dr R R Maud during a geological survey of the proposed N3 toll



road. The floor of the shelter was excavated in 1985 to a depth of 2.6m and contained deposits of pottery, stone tools, seeds, beads, shell, bone, ground stone and bone objects. Along with the radiocarbon dates there is proof of human habitation here 70000/100000 years ago. Evidence of this is documented in archaeological manuscripts housed in the Natal Museum. The shelter was also used by the

McIntosh family as an emergency safe haven in times of unrest.

Apart from the prolific bird life the other unique feature in this environment is the Potter Ruby footed giant black millipede (shongololo) endemic to this area.

After reaching the highest point, by way of a safely constructed chain ladder the route descends back to the base of McIntosh falls and picks up a well maintained cycle track. As the clouds had persed, the welcome ramble through the tall leafy tree section back to the restaurant went by in a flash. We arrived back pleasantly tired to a welcome cool refreshing drink. To arrange this hike I met with Colleen and Rick Witten The owners of Edgecliff Estate (McIntosh Falls as well as Kirkman Falls are on this property) they have contributed immeasurably to the conservation of this environment and have wonderful and exciting plans for the future which include sustainable management with eradicating of alien vegetation, and establishing erosion controlled hiking tracks and the reintroduction of Rock Hyrax {Dassies}. All these projects are quite a challenge. When Durban wants to brag about their great hiking trails, this 12km approx. 5 hour hike, which is not strenuous must rate as one on top of the list.

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*Here is a technical hiking tip from a Lonely Planet guide book on Nepal contributed by Dr John McGovern*

### **The Rest Step** By Stan Armington

Of course you know how to walk; you've been doing it all your life. But walking all day in the mountains is very different from walking on city streets. One of the most important things you can learn to make your trek more pleasant is the mountaineers rest step. If you learn to do this correctly, you can push on up the steepest hill without getting tired. My old (age 76) trekking partner, Bob Pierce, has mastered this technique (he says it's because he's lazy). He sometimes falls far behind, yet he is often the first one in to camp – and still has energy to walk back down to the village for a beer.

Practice this on a reasonably steep hill. Lock your downhill leg and swing the uphill leg up, placing it on the ground. Pause for an instant, being totally relaxed, with your locked downhill leg carrying all your weight. Shift the weight to your uphill leg, straighten it and lock it, and repeat the process. Move slowly up the hill. You will fall behind the porters at first, and then pass them as they rest and you keep walking. You can go on like this for hours without stopping if you maintain the rhythm and coordinate your breathing with your walking. It's so easy you can even carry on a conversation as you walk up a steep trail. Don't look up the trail, just concentrate on walking, and before you know it, you'll be at the top of the hill.

## **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).

### **TOUR du MONT BLANC TRAIL**

Have you ever wanted to do one of the best walking trails in the world? A trail through Alpine meadows and over 3 international passes. Join **WILDWAYS Adventures** on our 2011 trip to hike the **Tour du Mont Blanc**. For more information please contact Michelle on [info@wildwaysadventures.co.za](mailto:info@wildwaysadventures.co.za)

### **NAVIGATION TRAINING WORKBOOK**

**NAVIGATION Anyplace Wild – by Andrew Friedemann** This very practical workbook has tasks to complete in it, & is aimed at anyone who travels in the outdoors and needs to navigate. Although written primarily for walkers, it will work for anyone including horse riding, cycling, military teams etc. It has been fully revised and updated to be applicable anywhere in the world, so no matter where you are it will work for you.

The book is 160 pages in full colour with great pictures from all around the world where we have travelled, our guided trips and training courses – making it a great coffee table book too. It comes with a pull out map on which most of the tasks are completed and the website will have additional free tools available for download and in the near future additional tasks and maps for you to continue practicing skills and gaining knowledge once you have finished the book. Chapter 1 is downloadable for free from the website (4mb)

There have been a number of variations of the book over the years with each new one being tweaked after use on courses and from feedback received from people who have used it. Reviews of the book can be seen at [www.navigationskills.com](http://www.navigationskills.com) For all South African orders, please contact Mammoth Outdoor in Cape Town 086 100 0370 or [hello@mammothoutdoor.co.za](mailto:hello@mammothoutdoor.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.**

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#### FOR SALE :

1 pair of First Ascent snow trousers in perfect condition (size medium), only used once. Purchased at end of 2010 at a cost of R1300. Selling at R 950. No offers. Phone John McGovern on 0826595111.

### 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.



## 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.

<b>SOCIAL CALENDAR</b>	
<b>MBC Socials take place every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month</b> <b>at the Sherwood Bowling Club, 7:30 for 8:00pm</b> <b>Wors rolls or Hamburgers are sold at the venue for R15 each.</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
14 April	<b>Brendon Cadman</b> chats about his Vergelegen Hike and an interesting 4 x 4 trip to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.
28 April	<b>Bring and Braai</b> - bring along your meat and salads and join us for a social braai at the club. Fires will be ready at 7.00pm.
12 May	<b>Lisa Smith</b> talks about the beautiful Outeniqua and challenging Harkerville 6 day hike and 4X4 trip through the Baviaanskloof done over New Year.
26 May	An interesting presentation on those midnight marauders, Bats by <b>Alan Taylor</b> from The Bat Interest Group of KZN. Thanks to folklore and vampire movies, BATS are one of the most maligned animals on the planet! In fact, they are very beneficial and one of the most prolific, with over 900 species living worldwide, representing over 20% of all mammals. They are the only mammal to have attained powered flight! Did you know that a single bat can consume 1200 mosquitoes per hour?? To hear more about these fascinating mammals. Alan Taylor, will be coming along from The Bat Interest Group of KZN which is a non profit organisation. They aim to promote bats and their value to the environment and to humans by educating members of the public and dispelling myths. Please support this presentation.
9 June	Take a walk on the wild side. <b>Eddie and Marie von Bargaen</b> present a talk on their recent Wildcoast (Port Edward to Port St Johns) hike. 12 Survivors, 10 days along ONE wild coast hike! Come and hear of the pain and suffering, the beauty and strength of the group as they traverse 110kms along the rugged, wild Transkei Coast line from Port Edward to Port St Johns. Each person had to carry their own tent, food and clothing for 10 days - follow their footprints in the sand and view awesome photography of this fabulous trip.
23 June	<b>Camp Fire Stories:</b> Join us around a braai fire and listen to the leaders reminisce about past hikes, and their interesting, funny, or strange stories. Bring and braai at 7.00pm.

### Membership fees are due on 1 January 2011

Please note annual fees have been increased to R130 for Singles  
and R160 for Family memberships.

A renewal notice has been posted to you. Please pay promptly.

The Club's banking details are:

FNB Westville, Branch code 223526

Account name: Mountain Backpackers Club

Account number: 507 8000 7264

Please use your name and/or membership number as a reference.

NEW EMAIL & FAX NUMBER FOR MEMBERSHIP ONLY:

[membership@mountainbackpackers.co.za](mailto:membership@mountainbackpackers.co.za)

086 612 3657

## 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**

