



MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

Fixture List: April - June 2013

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dear Hikers

The second quarter of 2013 ushers in a rather fresh Autumn, and also a spectacular time to get outdoors, to enjoy the cooling weather, mostly-rain-free hiking, and to see our beautiful KZN landscape in technicolour!

The Mountain Backpackers 2nd quarter hiking fixture list offers a wide selection of hiking options, from easy to advanced hiking, as well as close-to- and further-from-home destinations.

MBC invites you to join us, get fit, get healthy, and to spend quality family-and-friends time. Get out there. Move into the peace and quiet, still your mind, and let your body thrive in its natural environment!

Having trained for and recently returned from our winter ascent of Mt Toubkal in Morocco, I have to say that I am always in awe of how much magnificence surrounds us on this Earth. There are places to see that our imaginations could not conceive. There is enormity beyond comprehension, and splendour beyond belief all around us. We just have to muster up the sense of adventure that takes us there!

...And the Mountain Backpackers Club can help you get to some of the most awesome places KZN has to offer!

Happy hiking! And we look forward to seeing you again.

Karen Miller

MBC Chairman

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

Ashwin Sewdwari & Family
Brandan Sapsford & Family
Bruce Rodda & Family
Carl Dreyer
Christelle Du Toit
Claire White
David Van Der Veen
Felicity Kromhout
Horace White & Family
Joanna Richards

William Vermaak & Family
Mark Milton
Meredith Neeff
Michael Howitz & Family
Michael Leviton
Nerita Singh
Paul Schoeman & Kerry-Lee van Heerdan
Shanil Balgobind
Sharon Fay & Family

Grading of hikes

1. Very easy trip
2. Easy trip
3. Moderate trip - physical fitness advisable
4. Strenuous trip - **physical fitness essential**
5. **Very strenuous** trip requiring a high degree of fitness

Please take particular note of **distance and height** as well as the **grading of the backpacking trip** you intend doing and ensure that your level of fitness is adequate.

April 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
23 MAR – 5 APR	Grand Traverse of the Drakensberg Sentinel car park to Sehlabathebe Lodge	230km >10000m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon- Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	5
29 MAR – 01 APR (Easter w/end)	Sea Park - Social Weekend away at a beach house 8kms from Port Shepstone. Day Hikes on the beach. Visit a nature reserve close by, or just chill on the beach. The house has direct access to the beach and is fully equipped. Cost is R100 pppn.		Anitha Regnard	office +27 (0)31 266 7327 mobile +27 (0)82 456 8739	
APR 6 - 7	McKenzies Cave in the Mkhomazi area. Meet at Nottingham Rd Spar at 8:00. Drive in convoy to Mkhomazi Wildlife Office for a 9:00 start.	22km 640m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 083 419 0196 FaroukO@telkomsa.net	3
APR 13	CUMBERLAND NATURE RESERVE, PMB. Hike to waterfall along cliffs. Bring snacks & water. Meet at reserve entrance at 08h00. Entrance fee R10pp. Phone leader to reserve place on hike & for directions to reserve. This is a combined hike with MBC, Ramblers, Midlands Hiking Clubs.	12 Km (approx 4 –5 hr)	Dave Tighe	Tel 0314649033 Cell 0760280708	2
APR 13	African Fish Eagle Trail , lots of birdlife and maybe the odd croc, walk along Umgeni river R20pp meet at Green Hub Durban, 08h00 leave 08h15. Bring cash for tea at SPCA 1/2 way.	13 km	Heidi Cox	Tel: 031 572 6847 Cell: 082 706 4283	2
APR 21	Stainbank Nature Reserve , Yellowwood Park. 2-3 hr walk though forest and bushveld. See Castle. Contact for time and meeting place. Adults R20 Children R10	5 km	Arthur Bester	SMS 083 482 3590 or email Arthur.bester@gmail.com	1
APRIL 20 - 21	BUSHMAN'S NEK - Backpacking to & overnight in Whytes Cave - Our route will be via Painters Cave & White Horse Cave (both with excellent Bushman's paintings) - We will also visit Langalibalele Cave, so 4 caves in the weekend. Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Cost: R45 pp inc entry fee & levies.	26 km (12-14 km each day)	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za Cell 082 846-6179	3
APRIL 20	Kloof Gorge Day Hike. 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 (please contact to confirm hike	John 082 6595111	2
APRIL 26 - 28	The 3rd "High" - Mont-Aux-sources Meet at Royal Natal Park on Fri 26th and walk via Gudu Pass up to Witsiehoek & camp (Overnight camping -R50.00 pppn). Sat 27th summit Mont-Aux-sources & return to Witsiehoek camp. Depart on the Sunday to walk back to our cars. Return via "The Crack" Sat night buffet -R90.00pp. Full English Breakfast –R65.00pp (Please support the restaurant for at least one meal as they are doing us a favour by allowing us to camp.) Other options, should one not get the Fri off work,	3282 mts	Christine Bro / John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	3

	is to drive up to Witsiehoek and meet us there. Encourage those not sure of their fitness as one can walk as far as Sentinel Car Park / Chain Ladder / or Tugela Falls. Once again physical fitness and a head of heights is a requirement for getting to the top and back.				
APRIL 27 - 28	Monk's Cowl - Zulu Cave, Cat Cave, climb Intunja if weather permits. Fitness required Last bookings on 22 April. Book by e mail only Cost: R45 pp inc entry fee & levies	14 km /day climb 600m	Dave Sclanders	e-mail: bergfree@absamail.co.za	3
APRIL 27 - 28	Injasuti: Lower Injasuti Cave and return, visiting Fergy's Cave and Dead Dog Cave.	20kms/ 345mts	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3

May 2013

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
MAY 4 – 5	Cobham: Gxalingenwa Cave via Emerald Stream, returning via Ndlovini Mountain.	26Km/ 465mts	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3
MAY 4	GIBA GORGE – 07h30 starting time. Hike starts at St Helier, proceeds past Cucumber Farm with a view of the gorge, drops down to waterfall & returns along hiking route. Meet at St Heliers Lake parking area - phone leader for directions if unsure & to confirm your attendance. This is a combined hike with MBC, Ramblers, Midlands Hiking Clubs.	14 Km	Dave Tighe	Tel 0314649033 Cell 0760280708	2
MAY 11- 12	Mkhomazi - Mc Kenzies Cave Circular route	12 Km / day, climb 500m	Dave Sclanders	e-mail: bergfree@absamail.co.za	3
MAY 10 - 12	Social weekend away @ Roseland's Outdoor adventure Centre This is a place you must go to at least once in your lifetime. I have led trips there several times in the past and a club trip there is long overdue. See http://www.roselands.co.za/ Cost is R440 per person for accommodation for Friday and Saturday night and including meals from Friday supper to Sunday lunch. Vegetarians will be catered for. There are loads of activities. All bookings must be done and paid for by 20th April. Email me on aj@ProfPM.com if keen to join and I will send you the banking details.		Anitha Regnard	office +27 (0)31 266 7327 mobile +27 (0)82 456 8739 Email - aj@ProfPM.com	
MAY 11	Umdloti to Umhlanga - beach walk and lunch at Bush Tavern. 12.5km on sand, meet at 08h00 start at 08h15 Umdloti Beach carpark	12,5 Km	Heidi Cox	Tel: 031 572 6847 Cell: 082 706 4283	2
MAY 18 - 19	Mountain Shadows Resort : Tenting R60 or book accomodation on tel 033 2677 493. (Caravan R70, Hut R80, In House	10 Km	Arthur Bester	SMS 083 482 3590 or email Arthur.bester@gmail.com	2

MAY 18-19	Lower Injasuti Cave. Meet at the Injasuti Wildlife Office at 9:00. Ideal for first time backers unsure of their fitness.	16km 300m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 083 419 0196 FaroukO@telkomsa.net	3
MAY 18	Kloof Gorge Day Hike. 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 (please contact to confirm hike)	John 082 6595111	2
MAY 19	DARGLE CONSERVANCY - Day hike through indigenous forest on private land - climbing to above forest for magnificent views of surrounding areas - prolific bird life. We will be guided by the owner who is very knowledgeable about the local plants, trees, birds & animals - stunning location & not to be missed. This is a very popular & interesting venue. Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Cost: R15 pp Donation to conservancy.	12km	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za a Cell 082 846-6179	2
MAY 25 – 26	Giant's Castle: Camp at the top of Jarateng (Jarding's) Pass. Climb Giant's Castle and return via Giant's Castle Pass. Tents required.	39Km / 1614 mts	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	5
MAY 25 – 26	4th High - Cleft Peak Meet at Didima office 8am Physical fitness required	Approx 34kms 3277 mts	Christine Bro / John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	4/5

June 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
JUNE 1 – 2	Bushman's Nek: Sehlabathebe Lodge via Bushman's Pass, returning via Gargoyle Cave and Vast Cave.	26Km / 685 mts	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	3
JUNE 7 - 9	DRAKENSBERG GARDENS - Cottage weekend - Fully equipped & very comfortable - Beautiful Area in the heart of the mountains - Max 10 members. Day hikes from cottage or simply unwind on the property (10 acres). DSTV for news & sport etc - Hot baths & showers - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Please book early to secure your place. Cost: 160 total per person (R80 pppn)	12-15Km each day	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za Cell 082 846-6179	2 - 3
JUNE 8	Kloof Gorge Day Hike. 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 (please contact to confirm hike)	John 082 6595111	2
JUNE 9	KILLARNEY ROCKERIES, CATO RIDGE. Take Exit 53 Cato Ridge, turn left and follow "Highstakes" signs to 4x4 track & store. Hike starts at Highstakes, Cato Ridge at 08h00. Safe parking approx R25.00. Phone leader to confirm your attendance - This is a combined hike with MBC, Ramblers, Midlands Hiking Clubs.	12 Km	Dave Tighe	Tel 0314649033 Cell 0760280708	2

JUNE 8 - 9	Drakensberg Gardens Area Climb Rhino Peak via Mahai Pass. Sleepover in Annex Cave.	14Km / 1231mts	Clive Powell	031 5646169 (after 07:00 PM)	4
JUNE 15 - 17	Highmoor- NEW HIKE AND ROUTE - Giants Castle - Highmoor. From Highmoor to Giants Hut area. 1st night. Then to past Meander Hut area. Last day explore for rock art , and return past Caracal Cave Last bookings on 10 June	12 – 15 Km / day, climb 500m	Dave Sclanders	e-mail: bergfree@absamail.co.za	3
JUNE 15 - 17	BUSHMAN'S NEK- Short (one km) backpacking to Bushman's Nek Hut for a two-night stay - public hol on Mon. - Beautiful day hikes from this base to see waterfalls, bushmen's paintings, caves & lovely pools for swimming. Hut has lockable rooms with bunk beds & mattresses + flush toilets & showers (only cold water, but no problem) - Option to also stay 3 nights - i.e. inc Fri - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Please book early to secure place. Cost : 2 Nights R160 total - 3 nights R240 total (i.e. R80 pppn)	12-15Km each day	Keith Ashton	033 239 5023 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za Cell 082 846-6179	2 - 3
JUNE 15 - 16	Monks Cowl: Tent at Monks Cowl. Hikes towards Blindmans Corner and Sterkhorn : Parks Board Entrance R80	15 Km	Arthur Bester	SMS 083 482 3590 or email Arthur.bester@gmail.com	3
JUNE 22 - 23	Wonder Valley Cave. Meet at the Injasuti Wildlife office at 9:00. Climb Van Heyningen's Pass to the top and across Shada Ridge to the cave. At the bottom of the valley is a lovely waterfall and pool. Bring your costume if you feel like going for a dip.	16km 470m	Farouk Omarjee	031-577 6336 083 419 0196 FaroukO@telkomsa.net	3
JUNE 23	Spar Ladies' 10km Kings Park, Durban; breakfast at Mugg & Bean Suncoast (pre- book).	5 or 10 Km	Heidi Cox	Tel: 031 572 6847 Cell: 082 706 4283	2
JUNE 28 - 30	Montezuma Ranch -Social Weekend away - join us for a weekend away in a rustic farmhouse aptly named Havenrock overlooking the magnificent Montezuma Ranch. Day Walks, Game Drives or just chill with a book on the patio enjoying the view. Cost R100 pppn. You can come up for both nights of just the Saturday. About an hour from Durban. Email me on aj@ProfPM.com if keen to join and I will send you the banking details.		Anitha Regnard	office +27 (0)31 266 7327 mobile +27 (0)82 456 8739 Email - aj@ProfPM.com	
JUNE 29 -30	Mhlopheni Nature Reserve , SA Natural Heritage Site, Muden area, self catering camp (R150 pp) and own tent (R80pp) accommodation available, prepare for cold overnight. Guided hikes Sat and Sun. Pre-booking and payment essential.		Heidi Cox	Tel: 031 572 6847 Cell: 082 706 4283	2
JUNE 29 – 30	5th High -Giants Castle Meet 8am at Giants Castle Physical fitness required	Approx 32kms/ 3314mts	Christine Bro John Pickup	christinebro3@gmail.com 0827826025 johnpickup9@gmail.com 0721512031	4/5

Advance Notices

Date	Description
JULY 6 – 7	<p>Christmas in July at the top of Sani Pass Feel like a white Christmas at the top of Sani Pass? (huge potential for snow at the time). Come join us for some great fun & festivities. You have an option of walking up the pass (8km / 1000m) or you can drive up if you have a 4x4.</p> <p>Various accommodation options available: Lodge: Twin / Double Bed Rondavel – R885 each DBB Lodge: Family Rondavels – R885 each DBB ¾ person – R665 each DBB Backpackers: 2 or 6 sleeper Dorms – R495 each DBB Camping: Camping + Dinner + Breakfast – R395 each There will be a surcharge levied by the Lodge for setting up the place for the Christmas theme. All bookings and payments have to be made by end April. To book please email Anitha Regnard on aj@ProfPM.com or call on 0824568739 / 031 2665207 after hours.</p>

Achieve 13 Highs with Christine Bro and John Pickup in 2013 - Put this in your diary

(Contact Christine on 082 7826025, christinebro3@gmail.com and John on 072 1512031, johnpickup9@gmail.com)

Date – 2013	Venue	Goal	Height (m)	Distance (km)	Tents
26/28 Apr	Sentinel car park	Mont-Aux-Sources	3282	20	Yes
25/26 May	Cathedral	Cleft peak	3277	34	Yes
29/30 Jun	Giant's Castle	Giant's Castle	3314	32	Yes
27/28 July	Monk's Cowl	Champagne Castle	3246	40	No
30/31 Aug	Bushman's Nek	Devil's Knuckles	3050	30	No
28/29 Sep	Monk's Cowl	Intunja	2408	30	No
25/26/27 Oct	Garden Castle	Rhino / Mashai / Walkers Peaks	3056/3309/3306	42	Yes
24/25 Nov	Sani Top	Thabana Ntlenyana	3482	24	No (passport required)
8/9 Dec	Monk's Cowl	Sterkhorn	2973	17	Yes

MNWENI CIRCUIT HIKE 2-5 JANUARY 2013

A hike with Ian Shooter, advanced mountain walk leader and owner of Drakensberg Hiker



FRONT: IAN BACK LEFT TO RIGHT: KATHY, BRONWYN, ERIC, TAMBLYN
CAMPSITE ON DAY TWO WITH A VIEW OF THE NORTH PEAK OF THE SADDLE



DAY 1

We were transported from PMB by Drakensberg Hiker to the Mnweni Cultural Centre in the Northern Berg for the start of our 4-day hike.

The 5 of us on the hike were:

Ian - our guide ; Eric - a student from the Netherlands who has been living in Switzerland for about a year and who is studying Botany - he must have photographed every flower/plant en-route, until his camera battery died that is ; Bronwyn Berry - a director/producer from JHB who owns her own production company called Ruby Rocket Media - she's produced, among others, "The Wild", "Takalani Sesame" and "Gazlam" and is engaged to Stephen Francis, the co-creator of Madam & Eve ; Tamblyn Lord - an Australian actor/voice makeover artist and yoga instructor and finally myself - an unemployed 40-something... quite an interesting group of people! Funnily enough, in the mountains, everyone is on an even par and whatever one's profession, it has no impact whatsoever on the experience. Ian's main porter, Caiphus (who is also a guide) and two other porters completed our party (i.e. 8 people in total).

We set off in cool, overcast weather, which pretty much lasted for the duration of the first day's hike. The start of the hike is unfortunately on a rural road and it takes a good hour before one starts ascending into the mountains. Our late start and an early river crossing saw us stop for lunch before continuing to the base of Rockeries Pass. Walking, up to this point, was relatively easy and everyone was in high spirits by the time we reached our destination. We spent the night in tents, high up alongside the Ntonjelana-Eshonalanga River.

DAY 2

Soon after leaving our campsite, we came across Scaly Cave (at 2 356 metres) - a relatively easily accessible cave located just off the path near the base of Rockeries Pass. The climb up Rockeries Pass (so named for obvious reasons) is very steep and the going is tough, but well within the capabilities of the average hiker. The pass gains 800 metres and is approx. 3km long. There are stunning views of The Rockeries from the top of the pass, which is at an altitude of approx. 2 950 metres. The Rockeries consists of a ridge serrated by pinnacles, which are identified on paper by the letters A-H. Once at the top of the pass, one can see the Mnweni Cutback, to the north, as well as The Devil's Tooth. A short distance from the top of the pass, to the south, is a Vulture Colony, where we stopped for lunch. These Cape Vultures are one of the most threatened vulture species in South Africa and are truly magnificent birds - ugly from up close but oh so graceful when in flight. Many were seen either gliding through the vast airspace in front of the colony or occupying ledges on the upper reaches of the escarpment face. After a lengthy rest at the Vulture Colony, we walked a bit further before setting up camp for the night. We had perfect views of both the North Peak of the Saddle and of Woodstock Dam, which was directly in front of us - this is the main source of water for the Thukela-Vaal Water System. We all did a bit of exploring on our own prior to settling down to supper. I explored the area closest to the North Peak of the Saddle and was awestruck by the breathtakingly beautiful gulleys - photographs simply do not do them justice. The wind howled in the night and there were rumblings of thunder, but nothing came of it.

DAY 3

This was by far the longest and most strenuous part of the hike.

It wasn't long after leaving our campsite that we started climbing. A while later, we came across a crystal clear pool, which was tempting enough for both Eric (affectionately known as "The Dutchman") and Tam to cool off in, with both

braving its icy waters. After yet another uphill climb, we had tea atop a ledge (at approx. 3 200 metres) overlooking Cathedral Peak, The Bell, The Outer Horn, the Inner Horn and the Chessmen - it was kind of eerie as these peaks were shrouded in mist and only the tips were protruding. Despite our isolation, it was here that we heard of the passing of Burry Stander, South Africa's mountainbiking legend, thanks to MTN. A sad day indeed for South Africa and the cycling fraternity. A field of flowers welcomed us a bit further on as we headed towards Ntonjelana Pass. A short while before the pass (which is at 2 900 metres), the mist had come down and visibility was greatly reduced. This pass is a well known dagga-smuggling route from Lesotho into South Africa, evident by the pedestrian traffic past our campsite later on in the day. The first part of the pass is very rocky, lessening the further down one goes, but continuing to zig-zag all the way to the bottom. It was also very wet due to the mist 'rain'. It was quite tricky to negotiate at times and very easy to lose one's balance - there was much slipping and sliding among us. Unfortunately the views (of the Cathedral Peak range) were completely obscured by the mist. Walking was quite treacherous and the going heavy on one's legs, especially one's calves and quads, from the constant downhill braking. It seemed never-ending and it was a relief to finally reach the river and our next lunch stop. By this time the sun was out again and it had warmed up, a lot.

From here, it was about an hour's walk to our next overnight stop. We set up camp a short distance from the Ntonjelana-Ephumalanga River, alongside a marijuana field.

DAY 4

It had rained quite heavily during the night and we awoke to mist. We left our campsite later than usual as the views were once again obscured. The walk back to the Mweni Cultural Centre was a mere two and a half hours walk from the campsite and was relatively easy going in comparison to the rest of the hike.

Throughout our hike, meals were provided by Ian. Breakfast and lunches were simple - cereals, rolls, crackers, ham, cheese, eggs, apples, two minute noodles with tuna ; suppers consisted of meat with honey and mustard sauce and wild rice, tuna and pasta, smash with chakalaka. We were given tea/coffee during the day and hot chocolate at night. Extras such as biscuits and chocolates were also provided. The advantage of having porters was not having to carry, erect or dismantle a tent, fetch water or wash dishes...

Ian is very passionate about the mountains, as is evident by his motto "do what you love, love what you do" and has a good overall knowledge of the berg and South African History in general. Whilst he will tell you that neither is he a babysitter nor a maid, he shows empathy for his clients and one feels completely at ease/relaxed in his company. The Northern Berg hikes are more remote and rugged than most and there are often no paths and certainly no signs. It is thus imperative that one has a reliable and competent leader/guide, which Ian certainly is.

Before heading home, we visited the Thokozisa Lifestyle Centre, just outside Winterton and had a delicious lunch at the restaurant there.

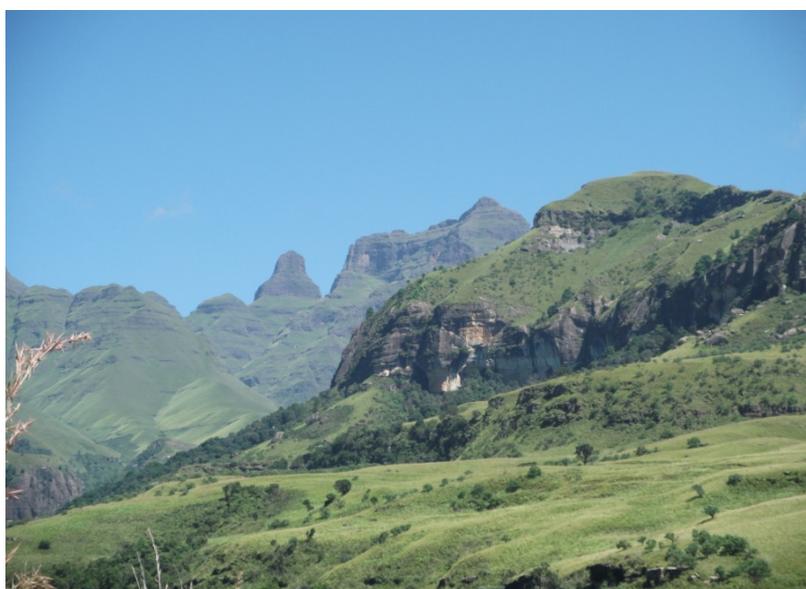
It was a tough but enjoyable 4 days of hiking, with some hectic river crossings inbetween. Having previously hiked to Ledgers Cave and Mponjwana Cave, I can honestly say that for me, there is just something special about this part of the berg. Whatever it is, it is an area that certainly warrants exploration. It was furthermore a privilege to be able to share the experience with Ian and others who have a similar appreciation for nature and the beauty of the magnificent Drakensberg mountains.

HIKE TO CATHEDRAL PEAK 23-24 FEBRUARY 2013

By Kathy Kruger



THE ROUTE TO THE SUMMIT



THE BELL TO THE LEFT, CATHEDRAL PEAK TO THE RIGHT

There's no better way to describe it than "simply awesome"!

Standing on top of Cathedral Peak, at an altitude of 3004 metres, I am reminded why I hike.

Cathedral Peak is one of the most instantly recognisable summits in a line of free-standing peaks that have been separated from the main escarpment by erosion. Supposedly it is one of the best known and most climbed peaks in the Drakensberg. Standing at the end of the Cathedral Range, which runs perpendicular to the main escarpment, it can be climbed as a day hike. The peak is dramatically shaped and steep on all sides, with the normal route running up the eastern face, the least steep of the faces. Behind (west of) Cathedral Peak is the very distinctive Bell (2928m), then the Outer and Inner Horns (both 3005m), the Chessmen, the Ntonjelane Needle, the Mitre (3023m), and the Twins (2899m). It is possible to traverse the slopes of all these peaks by a route known as the Bell Traverse, a hike that I anticipate doing in June. The views, I am told, are usually good in the winter months.

Graded 5, getting to the top of Cathedral Peak is no easy feat. 16 of us set out on Saturday morning from the Didima car park just before 10a.m. There is a river crossing a short distance from the start. It was a really hot day, but fortunately the walk to Sherman's Cave was fairly easy, taking between 2-3 hours. The path climbs gently through grassland, after which the gradient soon steepens. As one gets closer to the cave, there is a less-travelled path heading down to the right, which leads to Barker's Chalet, a fairly substantial overhang overlooking a wooded gorge with a natural pool, which some of us went to explore. If one continues on the main path one will eventually see the faint, steep path leading up to Sherman's Cave, which is a fairly deep, but low overhang, comfortably sleeping 10 people. Some of the group chose to sleep in tents a bit higher up, on the grasslands of the little berg, while the rest of us took on the title of cave dwellers. There are streams and small waterfalls nearby, so water is easily accessible for both drinking and bathing, an important aspect when deciding where to overnight.

The mist settled in on Saturday night and never really lifted much the next day. It was an early start, those with tents rising at 4a.m., to give themselves sufficient time to pack. We hid our backpacks high up in the surrounding grassy slopes, concealed behind rocks and thick bush. The cave is quite exposed and just off the main path and it was too great a risk to take a chance at leaving our backpacks in the cave, for fear of theft. An early start is crucial as it takes about 4 hours to summit the peak. We followed the path past the cave and went up past where the tents had been pitched the previous night. We continued straight up the ridge and then right into the gully up to Orange Peel Gap, a short but steep ascent, which is very overgrown. The path continues for a long stretch, on fairly level ground, straight towards the peak, which soon becomes visible (on a clear day). Then it's the arduous climb up towards Bugger Gulley, aptly named because of the rocks that one has to clamber over. The gulley is not followed all the way to the top. Instead, we followed a path which led out onto the grassy slopes to the right. We then had to traverse across a sloping basalt slab and continued to the left along the path, zig-zagging up the face and up a few similar basalt slabs. There are bolts which have been strategically placed on some of the rock faces, to which ropes were secured, either because of the rock faces being wet and slippery or because of the height. The rock faces are not that technical to climb, but a slip could prove fatal. I would say that the one section in particular would have been very difficult to negotiate without the aid of a rope, due to there being little to no footholds, etc. There are 6 scrambles in total, some of which involve some C Grade scrambling (A-Grade indicating an easy footpath on moderate terrain, B-grade indicating a route that requires some easy rock scrambling and C-grade indicating a route that requires more difficult rock scrambling and exposed terrain). If the correct path is followed, the other scrambles will take one across and up a few more sloping slabs and up a short (8m) chain ladder, after which point the path ascends diagonally to the right, zig-zagging a few more times and eventually coming to the eastern edge of the final rock band. From here, there is a last brief scramble onto the summit, which I must admit, I myself found a bit daunting, as it is somewhat exposed.

Whilst there was disappointment for some that the thick mist and cloud cover completely obscured the views from the top, for others it was a blessing in disguise - I think that there were those who would have panicked had they seen how high up we actually were and also where they had climbed. Sadly, the magnificence of the landscape below was somewhat compromised by the cloud cover. On a clear day, the 360° views from the top must be spectacular, with the Mnweni valley below one on one side, Cleft Peak on the other and Champagne Castle way to the south.

We had a short lunch break and a photo shoot or two before starting our descent, following the same path that we had taken for the summit. Whilst one's breathing is not as laboured going down, it is far more strenuous than going up, as one is constantly breaking, for fear of falling, which takes its toll on one's quads and calf muscles a few days later. We reached Sherman's Cave 4 hours later, gathered our backpacks and made good time, returning to the car park an hour later. The total walking distance from the start to the summit is about 10km and the differential altitude gain is about 1600m, so it's a substantial ascent and a round trip of 20km.

For 12 people, out of our group of 16, climbing Cathedral Peak was a first, a huge achievement indeed, especially for those with a fear of heights. Well done to all of you and especially Terri, who bravely faced her fear - don't know whether it was relief or elation, but she had a huge smile (as always) when she summited the peak.

Despite the obvious disappointment of not having experienced the views from the top, the overall organisation of the hike, the hike itself and the good company of our fellow hikers made it all worthwhile. A huge thank you to Christine for organising this hike. It is indeed a privilege to have leaders like her who are willing to give of their time and to share their knowledge, for our benefit and to further share the experience with others who have a passion for the magnificent Drakensberg mountains. I think that her 13 "highs" of 2013 are going to prove very popular with a lot of hikers. A special thanks too to Clinton, Tony and Farouk for their patience and assistance in ensuring our safety on the hike - we couldn't have done it without you.

With each hike, I love hiking more. I've seen some really awesome parts of the berg and have met some wonderful and interesting people, from all walks of life. Whilst it can be pretty strenuous at times and we often vow, "never again", within a few days the aches and pains are forgotten and we're already planning the next challenge. Nothing like a weekend in the mountains to restore one's sanity.

The Cathedral Peak hike is certainly a "must do" on any hiker's calendar and whilst a head for heights is recommended, a sense of adventure and a bit of determination will go a long way in getting one to the top.

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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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

Discounts For Members

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

CHOC Sani Pass Walk - 15 June 2013 (NOTE – this event is not organised by MBC)

Due to the resounding success of our previous three Sani Pass CHOC Walks, it is time to dust off the hiking boots and prepare for our 4th event taking place in June this year. CHOC (The Childhood Cancer Foundation of SA) survives on donations raised vigorously and imaginatively for children with cancer.

The 4th Sani Pass Walk will be used to raise funds and awareness for CHOC and will be held on Sat 15th June 2013. Those wishing to join us will need a valid passport and a fit pair of legs that will help you climb one kilometre in height over eight kilometres on the road.

Registration will take place at the Border Post at 9.00 a.m. where you leave your vehicle and begin your walk – up and down (16 kms in total). Sani Round Table has once again agreed to cater for the lunch, which you can enjoy at the Border once your walk is complete. Specially printed T-shirts will be provided for each walker and additional T-shirts can be ordered at R60.00 each.

The cost of the walk is R200.00 per adult and R100 per child, which includes your donation to CHOC, your T- shirt, your lunch and something to drink. We will have a medic on standby in case of need.

If you wish to join us please contact Joy de Witt on sanichoc@gmail.com or phone on 031 7644827 or 072 0406091 THE CUT OFF DATE IS SUNDAY 26th MAY 2013

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 Hot Dogs are sold at the venue for R15 each.	
DATE	DESCRIPTION
11 th April	<p>Heidi & Chris Cox – Recycling for dummies. A practical overview of how to recycle effectively – and easily. We are running out of space for landfill. Efficient separation at source is the key to viable recycling and a massive reduction of waste going to landfill, as well as other environmental benefits, but only if the manufacturers can use the materials they receive.</p> <p>Chris Cox is a technical expert in paper recycling and Heidi has done extensive research to get to the bottom of the “do’s and don’ts” of other recyclable items from a technical perspective.</p> <p>The presentation will end off with some photos of Mhlopeni Nature Reserve (Muden area), which is on the hiking calendar for 29-30 June – a must-see in aloe flowering season.</p>

25 th April	Errol Douwes – Hiking the Fish River Canyon: a must for all serious hikers... as long as you can make it through the snow...! The journey to Namibia was delayed given the heavy snow-falls here in KZN, but even with a days delay, we made it there and completed the hike. One of Errol's photos achieved 2 nd place in our annual photo competition – now come see the rest.
9 th May	Lisa Smith - Discover New Caledonia: This is the largest Pacific Island (after New Zealand), some 450 km long by on average 50 km wide, located about 1500 km east of Brisbane, Australia. A mountainous tropical paradise surrounded by warm, crystal clear waters and coral reefs, inhabited by the Kanak people and French invaders. Lisa was lucky enough to attend a conference and squeeze in a bit of touring (and cycling) to the south of the island. The presentation will end off with a quick tour of Sydney Harbour National Park and the Blue Mountains.
23 rd May	Sharon Fay - 5 day trek in Namib desert after vehicle became bogged down in sand. Minimal water & navigation equipment. Miracles do happen
13 th June	Debbie Bouwer - Mt Kenya & Mt Meru - a comparison of 2 quite different treks.
27 th June	Karen Miller & John Mc Govern - the snowy 2013 Winter ascent of Mt Toubkal (4167m) in the High Atlas Mountains in Morocco. Glimpses of the old, history-rich city, Marrakech.