



MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

Fixture List: April - June 2014

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Greetings hikers!

Welcome Autumn, and Welcome to some dry-weather hiking! We have fantastic offerings of hikes for this quarter for YOU!

The MBC Committee Welcomes you to attend the Club Socials (the 2nd and 4th Thursday evenings of each month). We invite speakers who have travelled far and wide to talk to the MBC on their adventures. It's a wonderful way to armchair-hike and learn about far flung places and epic MBC events like the 13 Highs Challenge of 2013, and the Grand Traverse!

Please check the MBC FACEBOOK page (and 'LIKE' the MBC page!), and we will keep you posted on upcoming events, notices and any changes to fixtures. The MBC Twitter account is also active and we will also keep notices posted there.

As many of you know, we have had problems with the mailing system, and I do believe we are now back in action and going to be able to access hundreds of members on our database. You may 'unsubscribe' on the emails coming from the MBC, however, if you are a current member, and you do this, remember that you will no longer receive correspondence from the MBC.

If your fees are still outstanding, please settle your dues without further delay. Please contact membership@mountainbackpackers.co.za if you have any queries in this regard.

Happy Hiking. We look forward to seeing you OUT THERE.

Karen Miller

Chairman: The 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	vacant	
Marketing	Heidi Cox	082 7064283
Committee member	Chris Cox	
Social Media	Brett Bentley	
Socials	vacant	

Fax: 086 504 3382

Postal Address: P O Box 37702, OVERPORT, 4067

Website: www.mountainbackpackers.co.za

Email: info@mountainbackpackers.co.za

The Committee currently has vacant portfolios and would like to encourage members to join in and assist in the smooth running of the club. If interested, please contact Karen.

REMINDER FROM THE CHAIRMAN REGARDING MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2014

Please note that Membership fees for 2014 were due in **JANUARY 2014**. These were increased from R160 to R180 for Single members and from R200 to R240 for Family memberships, which is a very conservative increase.

In an effort to improve on the administration of membership renewals as well as reduce the club's expenditure by saving on postage, cards will in future no longer be printed and posted to members but will instead be e-mailed in pdf format. Members still requiring for their membership cards and the 4 newsletters to be printed and posted, must please add a surcharge of R30.00 to their renewal fees.

The MBC Banking details are as follows:

FNB - Westville
 acc. name: MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB
 acc. no: 50780007264
 branch code: 223526

We look forward to your renewed membership for 2014, if you have not already done so.

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

Olivia Bambus	Thanda Zama	Clive Rossam
Brett Bentley	Jocelyn Ford	Jan Lens
Sarah Fernandes	James Wylie	Chan Reddy
Claire Perrett	David Krone	Laura Washington
Bronwen Saville	Jean Stephenson	Margueritta Pitout
Brigette Boaden		

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 – 2nd QUARTER

April 2014

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
6 th April	GIBA GORGE: This scenic hike takes in McIntosh Falles & the Umhlatazana Shelter. Meet at the Giba Gorge cycle track, R10pp entrance gate. The hike starts at 08h00 Grade 2 approx 4-5 hours. Bring water & snacks. Phone co-Leader Philip Swart to book your place	4 – 5 hours	David Tighe / Philip Swart	Home: 031 4652776 Cell: 072 6066599	2
13 th April	Mt Gilboa - New Hike - not been done before. Good climb to start, then sort of flat area, then back down to cars. Through some forest on cycle track, then open grasslands with no path. Bring water- non available on the day. Phone evenings only. Cost: R45 pp inc entry fee & levies	15km	Dave Sclanders	082 4434287	2
12-13 th April	Giants Castle Area. Tenting trip to climb Giants Castle. Overnight at the bottom of the pass.	32km 3314m	Clive Powell	Contact: 0315646169 after 19:00 or email clive.powell@durban.gov.za	3-4
18 th – 21 st April	NQUZA PASS / NTONJELANA PASS Meet at Mnweni Cultural Centre, Friday 18th April @ 9am. Overnight Sunshine Cave or camp depending on numbers. Saturday up NQUZA Pass, camp at the top of the Nquza. Sunday make our way to the top of Ntonjelana Pass. (possible summit of North Peak of saddle) Monday down the pass and back to the Cultural Centre. PHYSICAL FITNESS REQUIRED. HEAD FOR HEIGHTS REQUIRED. TENTS REQUIRED	37 km 1890m	John Pickup / Christine Bro	John 072 151 2031 Christine 0827826025 christinebro3@gmail.com	5
18 th – 21 st April	ROCKERIES PASS / NTONJELANA PASS Meet at Mnweni Cultural Centre, Friday 18th April @ 9am. Overnight Sunshine Cave or camp depending on numbers. Saturday up ROCKERIES Pass, camp at the top of the Nquza Pass. (meeting up with John Pickups group) Sunday make our way to the top of Ntonjelana Pass. Monday down Ntonjelana Pass and back to the Cultural Centre. PHYSICAL FITNESS REQUIRED. TENTS REQUIRED	43 km 1890m	Clint Bro	Clint - 0828202139 or email christinebro3@gmail.com	4/5
Fri 25 th - Sun 27 th April	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 with Midlands Hiking Club. - Please book early to secure your place - Last bookings 11 April. Cost : R160 total per person (R80 pppn)	12 -15 km each day	Keith Ashton	Phone - 033 2395023 email - keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2-3
26 th – 27 th April	Bushman's Nek: Bushman's Cave via Halfway Cave, returning via Ngwangwane Pass, Senotlolong Shelter, Goats Cave, Lammergeier Cave and Cedric's Pool.	26km/ 875m	David Gay	074 5803511 (18.00 – 20.00 Mon-Thur only) Email: dave@hhs.co.za	3,5

May 2014

Date	Description	Distance / Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
3 rd May	Mountain Shadows /Highmoor in Kamberg Area: Actual hike to be decided on the day depending on number of hikers & weather conditions. For those who wish to stay over on either Friday or Saturday nights, there are excellent camping facilities, as well as first class chalets. For more details phone the leader.		David Tighe	Phone: 031 4649247 or Cell: 0760280708	
3 rd – 4 th May	Kamberg - Sinclair's Cave - great for 1st time overnight hikers. Circular route Last bookings on 25 April. 1 st 8 bookings sleep in cave. Later bookers must bring tents Book by e mail only. COST: R45 pp inc entry fee & levies	12 Km each day climb 600m	Dave Sclanders	082 4434287	3
Sat 10 th May	Karkloof Area- Day Walk to the highest point in the Karkloof, which is Mt Gilboa. Bring your lunch pack. COST R25.00 for trail maintenance. Meet at Bushwillow Caravan Park. 8am. Children with parents are welcome as one can turn around at Grey Mares Falls. Find Directions on www.bushwillowcaravanpark.co.za Enjoy a weekend in the Karkloof with a Hike up to Mt Gilboa on the Saturday and cycling the very popular Karkloof Mountain Bike ride on Sunday 11th. Details for the bike rides can be obtained from ROAG. There are many overnight options available in the Karkloof or surrounding areas besides Bushwillow Caravan Park or you will be more than welcome to pitch a tent on our farm at no cost.	20km	Christine Bro	0827826025 or email christinebro3@gmail.com	3
Sat 10 th May	African Fish Eagle Trail , lots of birdlife, walk through Beachwood Mangroves and along North bank of Umgeni river, meet at Green Hub, Durban 08h00 leave 08h15. Rain stops Play. Bring cash for tea at Springfield SPCA 1/2 way.	13km	Heidi Cox	Cell: 0827064283 / email: heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2
16-18 th May	Montezuma Ranch, near Pennington Join us for a social weekend away with day hikes, game drives, 4x4ing, bird watching or just chillaxing in the beautiful gardens of Havenrock overlooking the ranch. Only an hour from Durban on the border of Vernon Crookes Nature Reserve, about 30km inland from Pennington. Cost R90 pppn. Payment must be made by 30 April to secure your place. Families with babies / small children welcome.		Anitha Regnard	Phone : 0824568739 / 031 2665207 (after hours) or Email: aj@ProfPM.com	
17 th May	Kloof Gorge Day Hike. - Leaving at 8am 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
May 25 th	DARGLE CONSERVANCY - Day hike through indigenous forest on private land - climbing to above forest for magnificent views of surrounding areas - prolific bird life. Our guide is the owner, who is very knowledgeable about the local plants, trees, birds & animals - stunning location & not to be missed. Combined hike with MHC. Cost: R20pp - Donation to the conservancy	12km	Keith Ashton	Phone - 033 2395023 email - keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2

31 st May – 14 th June	Fish River Hiking Trail - from Hobas to Ai-Ais, about 90km. Includes 4 day canoeing trip on the Orange River, overnighing in the Kgaligadi Transfrontier Park, Augrabies, and Mokala. Costs R3562-00 per person, standby only at this stage. 14 fit hikers max. Transport costs are excluded and are to be arranged amongst the group. Cost to enter parks and meals also excluded, except for canoeing, they will supply meals.		Eddie von Bargaen	083 281 1288.	
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June 2014

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
8 th June	Enon Forest area, close to Richmond : Hike from Enon Cottage through plantations, indigenous forest and grassland. Meet at the BP Garage on the main road through Richmond at 08h00.	6 hours	David Tighe	Phone: 031 4649247 or Cell: 0760280708	2
Fri 6 th - Sun 8 th June	BUSHMAN'S NEK- Short (one km) backpacking to Bushman's Nek Hut for a two-night stay.- 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) - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Please book early to secure place - last bookings 26 May. Cost: R160 total per person (R80 pppn).	12-15Km each day	Keith Ashton	Phone - 033 2395023 email - keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2
7- 8 th June	Mkhomazi: McKenzie's Cave via rock art site, returning via the Nzinga River and Cyprus Cave.	23km/ 710m	David Gay	074 5803511 (18.00 – 20.00 Mon-Thur only) Email: dave@hhs.co.za	3,5
14-16 th June	Umzumbe, South Coast. Social Beach Cottage long weekend. The cottage has direct access to the beach. Cost per person will be +- R140 pppn depending on how many bookings we get. Max 15. Families with children and babies are welcome. Booking and payment must be done by end March.		Anitha Regnard	Phone : 0824568739 / 031 2665207 (after hours) or Email: aj@ProfPM.com	
14-15 th June	Monk's Cowl: Vaalribbokkop Cave via Steilberg, Three Pools Cave and Stable Cave, returning via Makhulumane Forest	28km/ 660m	David Gay	074 5803511 (18.00 – 20.00 Mon-Thur only) Email: dave@hhs.co.za	3,5
14 - 27 th June	Grand Traverse 2014 - Sentinel to St Bernard's Lodge (North to South) Only for the very fit and committed.	230km	Grant Wilkinson	Cell: 081 3725611 Email: gwilky@gmail.com	5
21 st -22 nd June	Grand Traverse resupply, via Giants Castle Pass. Do your bit for those masochists on the GT via this annual tradition. Fitness required.	28km 1700m	David Gay	074 5803511 (18.00 – 20.00 Mon-Thur only) Email: dave@hhs.co.za	3-4
21 st June	Kloof Gorge Day Hike. - Leaving at 8 am 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

21-22 nd June	<p>Highmoor Camp Site: Tent and do day walks from camp on both days. Ablution and braai facilities available. Good for new hikers. Last booking by 11 June to get a place. Money with booking, when you book I will give bank account to pay into. Once paid, and you cancel, you must bring a replacement hiker - No refunds . Booking by e mail only.</p> <p>COST: R90 total per person (R45 pppn)</p>	12 – 15 Km each day, climb 300m	Dave Sclanders	082 4434287	3
29 th June	<p>Lower Mpushini Valley Conservancy Joint MBC / Ramblers exploratory hike from the gemstone and rock museum/shop. Hike through scrub / bushveld and hopefully see some wildlife. Optional late lunch/drinks at Bundu Bistro on site afterwards. Meet at Union Main Centre, Old Main Road, Pinetown (be aware of one-way system for access) in time for a prompt 7.30am departure. Conservancy fee R20pp. Petrol-sharing R30pp. Please phone leader if you'd like to attend – don't SMS!</p>		Tanya Hall	031 2662305 / 0824147482	2,5
28 - 29 th June	<p>Cobham to Sani Lodge Backpackers, via Emerald Stream, Pinnacle Rock with lunch at Gxalingenwa Cave. Overnight at the Sani Lodge Backpackers, spending time next to the blazing log fire. Return via Stromness trail and Giants Cup Trail. Please book your own accommodation (Camping, Dorm room or room with ensuite) at the Backpackers on 033 70220330 or 083 987 3071 or info@sanilodge.co.za www.sanilodge.co.za Order meals or self cater.</p>	36km	Christine Bro	0827826025 or email christinebro3@gmail.com	3
27 - 29 th June	<p>Mhlopeni Nature Reserve, SA Natural Heritage Site, Muden area, self catering camp (R150 pp) and own tent (R80pp) accommodation available, can be chilly overnight. Guided hikes Saturday and Sunday beautiful bushveld, game and prolific birdlife. Pre-booking and payment essential: joy@mhlopeni.co.za. Contact Heidi for more info</p>		Heidi Cox	Cell: 0827064283 / email: heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2

Advance Notices

Date	Event	Contact Person(s)	Contact Details
22- 24 th Aug	<p>Mhlopeni Nature Reserve, SA Natural Heritage Site, Muden area, self catering camp (R150 pp) and own tent (R80pp) accommodation available, can be chilly overnight. Guided hikes Saturday and Sunday beautiful bushveld, game and prolific birdlife. Pre-booking and payment essential: joy@mhlopeni.co.za. Contact Heidi for more info</p>	Heidi Cox	Cell: 0827064283 / email: heidi.dinan@gmail.com

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.

Advance Notices - Non Hiking Events

Date	Event	Contact Person(s)	Contact Details
26 – 27 th July	Ufudu Outdoor Adventure Fair , 43 Kloof Falls Road, Kloof 10am-4pm. Bring your friends to visit us and many other outdoor interest stalls and activities.	Heidi Cox	Cell: 0827064283 / email: heidi.dinan@gmail.com
Change of date from 22 June to 24 Aug due to Topgear Festival	Spar Ladies' 10km Sahara Stadium , Durban; (book yourself online www.sparwomensrace.co.za -5 or 10km) Unfortunately Heidi is already committed to leading a Mhlopeni weekend, so won't be able to participate on this revised date.	Heidi Cox	Cell: 0827064283 / email: heidi.dinan@gmail.com

BYRNE HIKE – MINERVA HEIGHTS – 5TH Jan 2014 by David Tighe

Sometimes one yearns for the wide open spaces and then needs to head for the hills and wallow in the smell of fresh dew on grasslands with the sound of birdsong and get away from nagging cell phones, crowded shopping malls and traffic jams. It was a privilege to arrive to the welcome of barking dogs at a very special and relatively unknown farm - Minerva Heights. Malcom Anderson, the farm owner has created a private museum on the farm which houses an extensive collection of old vehicles and engines as well as a vast collection of many old and unusual things, it would probably take one a full day to go through the museum. The farm is situated high above the Byrne Valley, and is a comfortable forty-five minute drive from Durban; this splendid reserve is a must, and a nature lovers dream.

With the sun beating down and the temperatures rising, twenty-four enthusiastic hikers mostly from the Durban Ramblers club started the hike by heading off towards the Peak. It would have been an unbearably hot and uncomfortably hike had it not been for the cool refreshing easterly breeze which stayed with us throughout the day. We were very fortunate to have Rose Dix with her wealth of knowledge on wild flowers to identify the varieties of indigenous plant species, some of which are endemic to this area. Look down on the picturesque view to the south of the Peak reminds one of a typical English country side, with neat rows of hedges and trees and with a feeling of serenity and tranquility.

We left the Peak and walked down the service road to pick up a path which would lead us through a dense indigenous forest and take us back to the farm road. The climb through the forest with very tall trees and dense undergrowth as well as the incessant calling of Cicadas beetles accentuated the humidity of the forest and it felt like being in the middle of one of David Attenborough's Plant Earth Series.

Our route would now follow a 4X4 track called Cunningham Castle gaining about 200m in height up to a relay mast, which stands at 1556m above sea level and is the highest point of this hike. On route we had an extended water break at Lookout Rock with its incredible northern view of the Byrne valley. Picnic Rock was our next objective as most of us wanted to explore the caves beneath the rocks, this experience certainly added an exciting dimension to this hike even for those who had been there before.

This hike was a ramble rather than a strenuous march which suited the weather conditions on the day. This reserve offers lovely trails for hikers who prefer a more leisurely stroll. However it also offers a number of more strenuous trails for the seasoned hikers and adventure seekers, who won't find the distance particularly challenging but still have a very good workout. If one is passionate about S.A history there so much one can research such as the 1850 Byrne Settlers, as well as the 1906 Bhambatha Rebellion.

The highlights of this hike were the glorious panoramic views, the visit to the caves, the flashes of colour displayed in the distance by the indigenous flora, the cool swim in the dam and the visit to the museum and the cool refreshing breeze.



Enjoying the view at Lookout Rock



Heading down to the caves



Cave with an "A frame" roof

NEW YEAR HIKE: SHIP'S PROW PASS - LESLIE'S PASS 30 DECEMBER 2013 - 2 JANUARY 2014

By Kathy Kruger

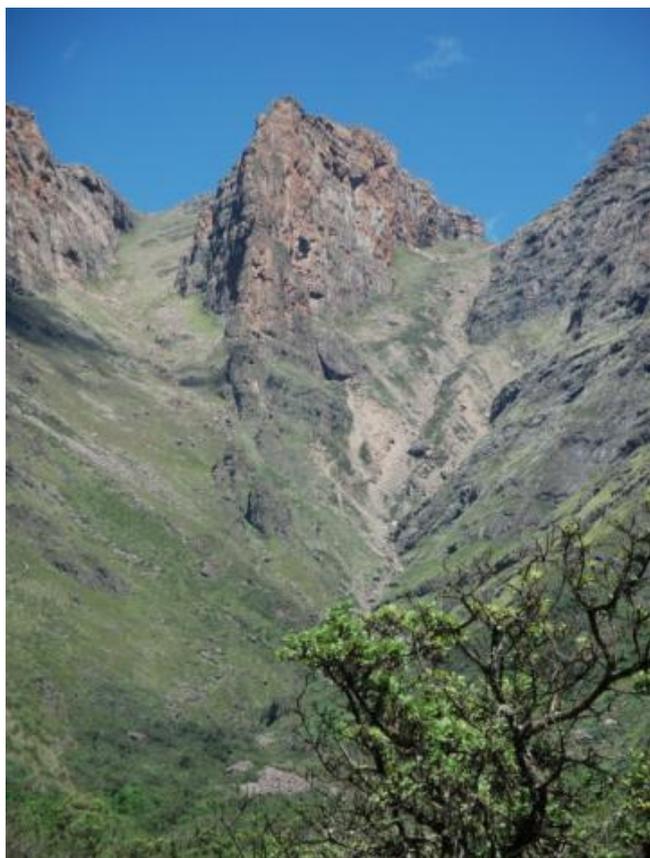
DAY 1 (approx. 14km/7hours)

After leaving the hutted camp at Injasuti, one passes through a short section of forest before reaching Van Heyningen's Pass, a pass named after J Van Heyningen, the chief forester at Monk's Cowl in the 1930's and the proprietor of Champagne Castle in the 1980's. Whilst not too strenuous a pass, a reasonable level of fitness is required as the hike does afford some steep ascents, exaggerated by carrying a weighty backpack, something which one obviously learns to master with practice. This is one of the easier and more popular routes to the top of the little berg. One continues on the path leading straight up the ridge towards the mountains, (keeping left where there is an alternative) until reaching the contour path, where one turns left along the contour path to Cowl Fork. Traversing Shada Ridge, one eventually arrives at the very overgrown Cowl Fork Campsite, which is situated at the bottom of the south gulley leading up to the saddle between Monks Cowl and Champagne Castle. The campsite boasts spectacular views of Monks Cowl (3234m), which takes its name from the peak between the towering mountains of Champagne Castle and Cathedral Peak.

DAY 2 (approx. 11km/14hours)

It was with much excitement that our party of 8 left the Cowl Fork campsite, at 6.30a.m., ready and eager to conquer Ship's Prow, blissfully unaware of what lay ahead. Little did we know that it would be 14 long hours before we would finally reach our destination. Walking was initially fairly easy but then the real test started.

Boulder hopping and river crossings became the order of the day and for the best part of the hike there was no path. At times the vegetation was so dense that we were forced to clamber up and over bushes, often on all fours, breaking branches and grabbing onto the long stemmed grass and bushes for support in a desperate attempt to clear a way through the vegetation. At one point we were forced to walk in the river bed as there was simply no other way through. Cut, scratched, bruised and sunburnt, we persevered, until finally we got to the base of the pass. By now it was 2.30p.m.



Ship's Prow Pass is a deeply incised gully immediately to the south of Champagne Castle. The V is divided into two gullies by a narrow flange, like the prow of a ship, hence the name. These two gullies meet a few hundred metres below the summit to form the main gully. The pass is notorious for its rockfalls. One tragedy that stands out in particular is that of 3 young Stellenbosch students who disappeared in 1981, on a 5 day hike and whose bodies were found in the pass about 10 days after they started their initial hike. There were a number of theories surrounding their demise, one of which is that they were thought to have been trying to cross the stream at the contour path when they were washed away, their bodies battered beyond recognition against the massive rocks found in the pass. A chilling reminder of just how quickly conditions can change in the mountains.

Access to the top of the pass is via the south fork - the initial path eventually peters out and becomes a long steep slog up the grassy slopes until one reaches the top of the pass, which, at 3300m gives it the highest summit of any pass in the Drakensberg. The northern gully is extremely dangerous and should be attempted with caution. The distance from the contour path at the base of Ship's Prow Pass to its summit is 4.5 km with an altitude gain of 1400m.

The mist started to roll in and we finally reached the summit. The temperature by now had plummeted dramatically. The younger members of our group entertained us with their rendition of various musicals/songs, with some of us joining in, as we walked the final stretch to our overnight stop. The time, 8.30p.m. Tents were pitched and supper was made. Tired and weary, the group soon dispersed into their respective shelters for the night. Only two of us braved the cold to welcome in the New Year, which we toasted with rice cakes and champagne. The stars were out and it was a perfect start to what promises to be an awesome year of hiking.

Day 3 (approx. 16km/9hours)

We got off to a relaxed start and headed off in what we thought was the direction of Leslie's Pass. After a short break at the top of the pass, we began our descent. The pass was really steep and rocky and it wasn't long before our leader realised that this was in fact not Leslie's Pass, but some unnamed pass. Undeterred, we retraced our steps to the top before heading back in the direction we'd come from, finally reaching the pass quite a while later. The pass was named after Leslie, the son of Roden Symons who became the second warden of Giant's Castle Game Reserve in 1906. It is the only viable pass in the Injasuthi area and is also the most direct non-rock pass to access Mafadi (3450m), the highest peak in South Africa which is about 6 km south of the top of Leslie's Pass (3070m). Striking features of this area are the huge cliffs of the Molar which tower above one at the top of the pass and the Marble Baths below. The pass is fairly long and winding and is full of scree, making staying upright somewhat difficult if you are me - it's like walking on marbles. Not wanting a repeat of the previous night's escapades, we decided to camp at Leslie's Pass campsite for the night, in lieu of trekking to the Marble Baths campsite. We pitched our tents in a "laager", had a refreshing "bath" in the river and happily spent the afternoon and evening chatting and feasting on our new year treats before retiring to bed. Not even a few short bouts of rain and the threat of a storm could dampen our high spirits.

Day 4 (approx. 14km/7hours)

We awoke to yet another perfect day, the view of a twin waterfall in the distance greeting us. The Ape bid us farewell as we left our campsite. About an hour and a half later, we arrived at our next stop, Marble Baths (1800m). The setting is quite spectacular, the landscape dotted with a variety of medium sized pools and chutes which cut through sandstone bedrock. This is a popular spot for visitors from the hutted Injasuti campsite and it wasn't long before we were joined by a number of other hikers. The Marble Baths Caves, of which there are two, overlook the large but unnamed river which has its source in the Leslie's Pass area and which flows into the Injasuti River about 2km down the valley from the cave and are set fairly high up on the hillside above the Marble

Baths but can be reached via a gently sloping path from the river. We spent some time playing in the chutes and sunning ourselves like dassies on the rocks. Then it was time to leave. Looking back en-route, one has a clear view of Old Woman Grinding Corn. The mood generally of the group on our walk back was somewhat subdued. For me, it's always a bit sad to leave the mountains.

Graded 6 (yes, 6), this was certainly not an easy and relaxed hike. I guess Clint would have spent New Year's alone if we had all done our homework properly. I now know why no-one wants to do Ship's Prow. Still, it was a pass that has been on my hiking to-do list for some time now and I'm glad that I've done it. Thanks again to Clint for looking after us in the mountains, hiking with you is a pleasure.

All in all, it was an awesome 4 days in the mountains. Despite the extreme heat and the nature of the hike itself, we had the most fantastic group of people to share the experience with. Each member of the group brought something special to the hike. Special mention must be made of Terri, who must be commended on seeing the hike through, after almost returning to the campsite shortly after the start on Day 1 after being overcome by a sudden and severe bout of nausea on Van Heyningen's Pass. Not even the dense undergrowth of the Ship's Prow Pass could deter her after that - "Back off twig" became her new catchphrase, one that was adopted by all when fighting our way through the chi chi bush at the bottom of the pass. We had a lot of memorable moments, much fun and laughter aplenty. We even had our own angel Gabriel to watch over us...

Don't let what you hear put you off doing a hike - for each one of us, the experience is different. Challenge yourself. You'll never know what you're capable of if you don't give it a shot.



OUR CAMPSITE AT THE BOTTOM OF LESLIE'S PASS

Mountain Backpacker Club Shirts



The Club is offering the opportunity to purchase very practical Mountain Backpacker Club shirts that are affordable and great for hiking.

The short-sleeved shirts will be made from quick-drying 100% polyester lightweight Qantec fabric, no more soggy shirts on your back, and quick to rinse through and dry overnight. While the men's shirts are straight-cut, the ladies' shirts are shaped to a more flattering fit, both have front chest pockets with Velcro flaps for handy storage of small items.

We need to put the order in for all the shirts required at the same time for the shirts, as they are made in batches. We intend to do this in the new year and the shirts will be available +- 4 weeks after the order has been placed.

The shirts will be available at R160 each, please send orders to chairman@mountainbackpackers.co.za and ensure that payment is made at the time of order.

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 or visit 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.

Discounts for Members

MBC members are offered discounted rates at the following three outdoor gear outlets:

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

Address: 23B Calder Road, Mayville, Durban Phone 0312093649 Website: www.trippersports.com

The Kingfisher, Durban

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

- The discount will be dependent 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 online. Contact Gany to agree on the discount that will apply.
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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 Phone: 0313683903 Address: 53 Hunter Street, Durban

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).

Flamingo Sales (cont)

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 Phone 0315395401

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 normally take place every 2nd and 4th 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 th April	Hoeorikwaggo Trail - Jovita da Silva and Lisa Smith share their experiences on the Hoeorikwaggo trail, a 5-day trail from Cape Point to Table Mountain.
24 th April	13 “highs” for 2013 – Christine Bro & John Pickup will give a presentation of the highlights of their very successful & well attended hikes to 13 of the highest points in the Drakensberg.
8 th May	Lesotho Adventure , by Jurie Pohls (ex Spirit of Adventure). The trip across Lesotho began with a hike from Mweni to Mokotlong. After meeting up with the support party and the canoes, they continued the trip canoeing down streams leading to the Orange river and ending on the western side of Lesotho near the SA border.
22 nd May	Tanya's Pictorial Asian Adventure (Part 2) Backpacking and overlanding via all means from Cambodia through Laos, Thailand and back to Saigon / Mekong Delta in Vietnam. Spiked drinks, deadly Dengue fever and no flight home, all adding to the adventure.
12 th June	To be announced
26 th June	Hong Kong & Thailand - Heidi & Chris Cox share their Far East experience