


On the last day we reached the highest point at Thule (2537m) after spending a very comfortable night in Eagles Nest Cave which was just below the border in KZN. From Thule we dropped steeply down ridges and valleys to the St. Bernards Peak Hotel which is about half way between Underberg and Kokstad.

The total distance walked was about 60 kms over 4 days, with the last day being the longest at 24 kms. It was wonderful to be with a group of people who have the adventurous spirit to put a heavy rucksack on their backs and go exploring. A big thank you to Neil of the Pietermaritzburg Ramblers who organised the hike and to Malcolm who, with his faithful GPS, kept us in the right direction and informed on altitude, distance travelled and distance still to go.

Apart from the cold wind in Lesotho we had warm sunny days and clear nights with millions of stars twinkling above. A great hike.

Thanks to authors for contributions. If you have any tales to tell we would love to hear about them. If you do not see your article in the magazine following provision of copy, please do not despair or become despondent. It will be used in the next edition. Please send copy to the editor at PO Box 888 Mount Edgecombe or e mail to JFerguson@canegrowers.co.za (text only please)



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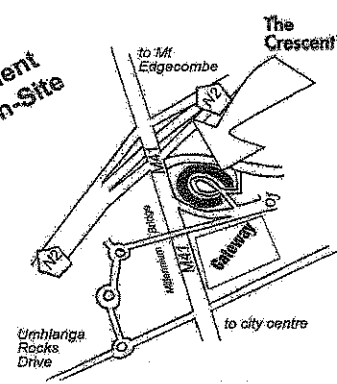

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This is the official newsletter of the Durban Ramblers Hiking Club. Contributions are welcome, but the right to edit any contribution is reserved. The opinions expressed in any published article or insert do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Durban Ramblers Hiking Club.



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OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2004

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Sherlock Holmes and Matthew Watson were on a camping and hiking trip. They had gone to bed and were lying there looking up at the sky. Holmes said, "Watson, look up. What do you see?"
"Well, I see thousands of stars."
"And what does that mean to you?"
"Well, I guess it means we will have another nice day tomorrow. What does it mean to you, Holmes?"
"To me, it means someone has stolen our tent!"



Knock Knock.
Who's there?
Oakham.
Oakham who?
Oakham all ye faithfull

Where Hillcrest Scout Hall, Shortlands Road, Hillcrest. Take Hillcrest turn off from M13. Right into Old Main Rd. At Heritage Market right into Stonewall Rd. Right at T-junction into Springside Drive, down hill past Springside Nature Reserve entrance & up the other side of hill. Left into Shortlands Road, Scout Hall +/- 1 km on left.

When 27 November 18:30 R50/person.

Feast on Vichyssoise followed by roast turkey, gammon, roast potatoes and veg. Mince pies for dessert. Limited wine available on table.

Bring Your own drinks and drinking glasses and lots of party cheer



Direct deposits appreciated but you may also pay any committee member. If paying cash please put money in envelope marked with your name and what it is for. Remember to clearly print name on deposit slip and mark it Christmas Party. Hall grounds and facilities available for campers. Bring own tent and breakfast. Contact Biff 082 900 6965 for details.



MEMBERS' NEWS

New Members

New members to the Club include Paul Harrison, Frances Rawling, Jillian Krajicek and Ronelle Turpin. Welcome to Ramblers – we look forward to hiking with you.

MEMBERS' NOTICES

Constitution

The Constitution of Durban Ramblers Hiking Club is available either electronically (Jon Stevens Jon.Stevens@Comparex.co.za) or by post (Ingrid D'eathe. Tel 262 3753). Financial statements will be available mid January 2005 if required. Contact Biff Maggs.

Sunday Hikers

Will be pleased to note that tea "goodies" will once again be available on Sunday hikes. The first aid kit has also been restocked.

For Sale and Hire

Sale of 35mm slide projector – R100. Magazines to hold 320 slides – R20.
 Hire of backpacks at R5/day and R50 deposit. Contact Philip Gatenby on 031 201 3592.

Nike Air Hiking Shoes. Brand new. Size 9½ UK size. What offers? Contact Ken Dell on 767 0638 or Arthur on 765 4720.

New Oxigeno imported books. Separate upper and lower lacing system. Ideal for wet, muddy rocky or snow conditions. Genuine Argentina Leather, padded top and tongue, high-grip sole, light weight. Size 10/44. Price R890. Also, Mars black leather boots. Size 9 good condition. Contact Cedric Biggs on 031 702 4905 or e mail cedbiggs@hotmail.com

Although a bit brown at the moment, lovely scenery with tiny flowers pushing their way into the world, beautiful forests. The hut is comfortable and most important the company was great, such divine four days. Let's do it again sometime.

Schlabathebe : 7 - 9 August : Merle McKenzie

After anxiously watching the weather reports and numerous calls to the lodge office, 14 Ramblers set off for the long weekend in the Lesotho mountains. After registering with the Parks Board at Bushmansnek on Saturday morning and getting through passport control, there was much consternation when we realized that there was no sign of the mules that were supposed to assist in carrying some of our gear up to the lodge. Some hasty rearranging of backpacks ensued, with some tough decisions to be made as to whether to leave the beer and OB behind in an effort to lighten the load.

We eventually hauled our heavy packs onto our backs and headed off along the trail, ever hopeful that we would meet the mules along the way before we had to commence the steep climb towards Devils Knuckles. No such luck! It was 14 very weary hikers who arrived at the lodge in the mid-afternoon, to learn that somehow the request for mules had not got through.

There were still remnants of the snow that a week earlier had blanketed the entire area. This, together with a stiff breeze, made for a very chilly weekend, despite the sunny days, so we were very grateful to be in the comfortable lodge with a warm fire each evening. Consequently, we had a short hike on Sunday morning to look at the interesting rock formations and the numerous caves near the lodge, before heading back to the lodge to escape the cold wind, but not before John started a snowball fight which soon had everybody joining in. In the afternoon a few brave souls decided to hike to Tsoelike Falls, while others sat a chatted indoors or had a snooze.

We thankfully managed to organize the mules to assist on the return journey on Monday morning, and set off for the border via Tam Cave. The wind added to the chill factor, and we found that even some of the puddles formed from melted snow the day before, had frozen solid overnight. However, as we got lower down the mountain, we soon had to start stripping off some of the warm clothing.

There's something magic about the Drakensberg – the clear air, the spectacular views, the grandeur of the peaks – no wonder Grahame & Chris are enjoying their new way of life in Underberg, away from the rat race. Makes us all quite jealous!

Bushman's Nek to St. Bernards Peak Hotel via Schlabathebe National Park : Audrey Vickers (May 2004)

From Bushman's Nek we climbed to Lammergeir Cave, traversed below the Knuckles to Schlabathebe Lodge. After a very comfortable night at the Lodge we went south, passed the Tsoelike Falls into an area of wide valleys and high ridges towards the Lesotho, KZN border. This is cattle rustling country, a great problem for the farmers of East Griqualand. Despite the presence of Lesotho and SA army personnel the poaching of livestock continues. We followed the border for quite a few kilometres at around heights of 2000m. The views were wonderful over wide open spaces.

below. We stopped for a short break at Cycad Camp, and then continued along the Grasslands Trail, enjoying the abundance of bird life and spotting a variety of game including impala, nyala, blesback, zebra, and wildebeest. The giraffe were initially illusive, but we eventually found them on our way back in the afternoon. After hiking all the way to the boundary fence, we then followed the trail back along the Umgeni to Nkonka Camp for lunch. After a long rest, we made our way up the Black Eagle Trail – quite steep at first, but an interesting trail with stunning views, and very pretty with the aloes in bloom.

On Sunday Sally came to lead us along the delightful Dwarf's Dawdle Trail and on to the view site, where we sat for a while taking in the scenery and spotting the game way down below, before making our way back along the ridge.

For all those who've never hiked Umgeni Valley – it's well worth a visit!

Ngeli Trail : 17 – 20 July (Led by Philip Gatenby and told by Daryl Kinder)

It was quite cold at 06:30 when we all mustered at the airport for the drive to Ngeli Lodge, Weza Forest, Harding area. We left our cars at the Lodge and headed for the hills on foot – so glad the bakkie took our gear! I thought it was a "little walkies" up the hill to the hut (11km), as usual I was wrong and, as usual, I kept up the rear. Audrey carried her full back pack! There were 13 of us in the hut, lots of bunks and a change room which also ended up being the room for bucket baths. A very pleasant setting with views. (Ed. really Daryl?) On the first night not too much sleep, a Baroque Symphony at its best whilst I lay there staring at the ceiling and wondering if I also snored. Trouble was, I couldn't sleep to find out!

The next day, Sunday, Monica, Di Di, Gerald and I stayed at the hut whilst the others took off to Kings Halt for a hike (12km). We had a strenuous day relaxing, doing a small walk through the pine forest and down to the indigenous forest below the hut and which was so peaceful and almost eerie. A real hobbit forest actually ... had to extend one's imagination a bit. After a long hike, nearly 8 hours, the others returned to the hut. Gerald had made sure there was hot water for the showers and the kettle was on the boil. I promised the intrepid hikers that there would be roast lamb etc when they got back sorry, I lied!

The following morning, Monday, we all contoured up to about 1600m and a few went on a little further to Eagles Nest. We came across small pockets of snow along the way, made good ice lollies! That night Maeve, Colleen and I were bored so we decided to add some new things to the club constitution. One of them being the introduction of Potties for Hikers. We thought that, as it was too cold to go out of the hut every night to attend to the "call of nature" we could patent special potties. How about different colours, designs – small, medium, large, extra large, even a Ramblers design logo. We were in hysterics, things got a bit out of hand anyway, what else can you do when it is dark at 17:30 and you can't read, play games and you definitely can't go to sleep so early!

We left our hut early Tuesday morning and trekked back to Ngeli Lodge. A few good things come to mind ... Gerald for always getting up early to get the kettle going. Diane for being such a star. Audrey you are a legend, amazing lady. Jack for having Rennies available. Philip for just standing behind his bunk grinning. Philip, what were you grinning at? Colleen and Maeve for their fun during the Sunday night potty debate, Clive, Jill, Monica, Cedric and Jean it was so nice being with you.



Monthly Get Togethers

Monthly get togethers are proving popular. Meet at 18:30 at the following venues:

October 22	Point Yacht Club
November 19	Butcher Block, Buxtons Village, Moore Rd
December 17	Johnny Fox 295 Florida Rd .

For further information contact Mike on 082 822 3106 or office 563 5871. In addition, Scrabble evenings are arranged for the 1st and 3rd Friday evening of the month. Contact Coleen Seath on 202 2279 for further details.

General

- Each member should keep medical aid and emergency contact details in their backpacks.
- Hikers may only hike on official paths in Palmiet Reserve and not in Wilderness area.
- Change of contact details to be advised to Derek Pretorius who is maintaining the Club's membership data base. Telephone 765 5029.
- If possible, please pay monies due to the Club either by cheque, bank transfer or internet banking. This will keep bank charges to the minimum. Cash deposits are expensive. Remember to mark the deposit slip with your name and item for which you are paying and post copy of slip to the Treasurer.

HIKING PROGRAMME : OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2004

Saturday Hikes

Hikers may meet at Musgrave Park Medical Centre before 13:30, to travel in convoy or to share transport to the start of the hike. Please get to starting point by 13:45 in order for hike to begin on time. A cost of R8.00 for transport is payable to the relevant driver. Hikes marked ** are suitable for beginners. Hikes marked # involve an entrance fee into the nature reserve. Visitors are to pay R4.00 to the Club. Bring the correct amount of money as change is not always available. For directions to the starting point, please phone one of the organisers between 12:00 and 12:45 on the day. Children are welcome but check suitability of hike with leader. Please bring at least 1 litre of water, a snack for half time and a hat.

Organisers : Ann 767 1027 Brian 072 995 6565 Rodger 2667458.

Sunday Hikes (Note new summer daylight saving times)

Please try to get to the meeting places at least 10 minutes earlier so that fees can be collected and lifts arranged timeously. Bring the correct amount of money as change may not be available. Please bring at least 2 litres of water, lunch and a hat. Add R5 for visitors. Sunday hikers are welcome to join Saturday hikes and the following social.

Meeting Places	Durban	Leave 07:30	Musgrave Park, Cnr Berea & Musgrave Roads
	Pinetown	Leave 08:00	Union Main Centre, Old Main Road
	Bluff	Leave 08:00	BP Garage, Edwin Swales Drive

If there is a change to the meeting time this will be noted in the hiking schedule below.

IMPORTANT : if you need a lift from the meeting place, contact the hike leader or one of the hike organisers to ensure that somebody will be there.

Date	Description of Hike	Leader	Tel
Sat 2 Oct	Krantzkloof. Nkonka. Meet Krantzkloof picnic site. Up behind Interpretive Centre across Bridle Rd. Spectacular gorge and sea views. #R7. BYO	Ann	767 1027
Sun 3 Oct	Baynesfield. The owners will re-open the trail for us. Please give it your support. R30 plus R5 for entrance fee.	Philip	201 3592
Sat 9 Oct	Inanda Rd. Surrounds. Hillcrest. Old Main Rd. off ramp off M13, through Hillcrest right into Inanda Rd. Park on Jackson's farm, opp. Kirtlington Estate. Brisk walk – riverine and cane.	Colin	708 3517
Sun 10 Oct	Mushroom Meander. Not mush room for mistakes here as Brian navigates around the Clifton tower. R10	Brian	072 995 6565
Sat 16 Oct	Thornridge – Cato Ridge. Meet at Assagai Hotel at 13:20. Walk a good pace through indigenous bushveld. Bring and braai on farm. #R5.	Trevor	765 5133
Sun 17 Oct	Inanda Dam. Medium hike with great views of the dam. R20	Steve Watson	082 443 4155
Sat 23 Oct	Roosfontein Nature Reserve. ** Meet Westville Prison Gates. Open grassland walk.	Werner	208 7532
Sun 24 Oct	Shongweni/Summerveld Circuit. Moderate hike through sugar cane and grassland with a steep climb to Summerveld to start the day. R15	Dieter	462 7445
Sat 30 Oct	Stainbank Nature Reserve. Yellowwood Park. ** Shady walk. #R7. BYO sundowners.	Clive	765 5051
Sun 31 Oct (Away w/end)	Bhonga Bhonga. Join the weekender on a hike in the Umgwahumbe Valley. Relaxing. R35	Mike Serrurier	082 822 3106
Sat 6 Nov	Krantzkloof – Beacon. Park at picnic site. Walk on contour path to Survey Beacon. Good views. #R7	Ann	767 1027
Sun 7 Nov	Inkonka Meander. Kloof gorge area. Medium hike. Entrance R7. Petrol R10	Brian	072 995 6565
Sat 13 Nov	Drummond. Meet 1000 Hills Hotel. Meander into Valley of 1000 hills.	Bran	072 995 6565
Sun 14 Nov	Bluff Retreat. See the forgotten Bluff. Long hike but level. Meet at BP garage on Edwin Swales Drive at 08:00. Park at Dutch club at 08:30 R10.	Mike White	083 325 5348
Sat 20 Nov	Palmiet Nature Reserve. Old New Germany Rd. Opp. Westville Hotel. ** Walk along river, some boulder hopping.	Ingrid	262 3753
Sun 21 Nov	Gilboa. Howick area. Back by popular demand. A hike on Shawswood farm. Steady climb through indigenous forest to a scary waterfall. Scenic views of the Midlands. R40 DBN 07:00. PTN 07:30	Neville	309 2298
Sat 27 Nov (Party)	Krantzkloof – Longshadow 1. ** Meet Krantzkloof picnic site. Shady walk up stream. #R7 BYO	Philip	201 3592
Sun 28 Nov	Giba Heights and Woods. Moderate to strenuous, dizzy heights, distant views, indigenous forest and waterfalls. A steep descent and after lunch a steep climb (to be consistent). R10	Dieter	462 7445
Sat 4 Dec	Springside Nature Reserve. ** Meet at reserve. 2 nd traffic light right off Old Main Rd. Hillcrest. Right into Stonewall Rd. Right into Springside. #R5 donation. Bring and braai.	Trevor	765 5133

Sun 5 Dec	Amanzimtoti Circuit. A mixture of coastal hills and beach. Leave DBN and PTN at 08:00 to meet John at Doonside/Warner Beach glide off at 08:30. R15	John van Zyl	462 7952
Sat 11 Dec	Summerveld. Meet Assagai Hotel, park at Mushroom farm. Long walk to view falls and railway tunnel.	Colin	708 3517
Sun 12 Dec	Alverstone/Bothas Hill. Pleasant hike through country lanes and farmlands. Somewhat different from last hike in the area. R15	Dieter	462 7445
Sat 18 Dec	Krantzkloof – Porcupine Falls. ** Meet Krantzkloof picnic site. Shady walk up stream to falls. #R7. BYO	Linda	702 9138
Sun 19 Dec	Longshadows. Fay's favourite walk. A short walk starting from Fay's house at 09:30 Met at PTN at 09:00 if you need a lift. This will be followed by a bring and braai. R10 only if you need a lift.	Fay	082 530 3758
Sat 25 Dec	No hike..		
Sun 26 Dec	No Hike.		

Weekend & Trails Programme – October –December 2004

Date	Description	Leader	Tel
29 – 31 Oct	Bhonga Bhonga. Lovely campsite in Eston area. Also open-ended bunkhouse sleeps 6. Bring own mattress and sleeping bag. R20/p/n. Numbers limited first come first served. Contact Biff for bookings.	Mike Serrurier	Biff 082 900 6965
12 – 15 Nov	Blinkwater Trail. Day walks plus easy backpacking hikes through indigenous forest and grassland to a variety of delightful accommodation. R30 per person per night, plus transport costs. R100 deposit by 31 October. Maximum 12 people.	Philip Gatenby	201 3592

If anyone sees a potential for a club hiking weekend during one of their private weekends away, please contact Merle McKenzie on 082 454 0521. Likewise, any ideas for day hikes or half day hikes in and around Durban, please contact the Saturday/Sunday hike organiser or any committee member.

AND, TALES OF TRAILS

3rd Quarter Weekend Review

Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve : 25-27 June Merle McKenzie

Strange that this venue didn't seem to appeal to many, as only 11 members booked to go and in the end, with 4 cancellations, only 7 made the short trip to Howick. Needless to say, those 7 thoroughly enjoyed the weekend, despite the chilly winter nights! The chalets up near the entrance to the park are fairly new and well equipped and have en-suite shower & toilet. The dormitory was very comfortable, although the ladies would have appreciated curtains on the showers! Thankfully there was no shortage of hot water.

On Saturday, we drove down to the Ndulo car park, and set off on the Grassland Trail, taking in the spectacular views of the steep cliffs, with the Umgeni River snaking its way through the valley