

Monks Cowl : 11-13 November

Surprisingly only 10 members took to opportunity to enjoy this weekend in the mountains. In my view this is one of the nicest campsites in the berg, looking onto those majestic peaks, and with excellent ablution facilities, and the road is tarred all the way. It was no surprise, however, to get rain on Friday afternoon and evening, but fortunately this had abated by morning.

Brian set a comfortable pace on a delightful trail via the Sterkspruit Falls, then through the Hlatikulu Forest, passed the Makhulumane Rock, up to Nandi Falls where we stopped for lunch. We then made our way back to camp along the Gorge Trail.

Our attempts at getting together for a braai on Saturday evening were somewhat thwarted by the rain, but we did eventually manage to get our meat cooked, and all scampered back to the shelter of our tents to enjoy our meals. But then, I guess that's to be expected in the berg in summer!

Sunday morning we woke to a persistent drizzle, which delayed the morning walk, but eventually Brian rallied the troops at around 9:30 and headed for the Sphinx, the highlight of the outing being the sighting of a crowned eagle not 20 meters away.

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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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'



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New Year's Eve Party

New Year's Eve party on 31st December at Springside Nature Reserve, after the hike. Bring meat, drinks and salads to share, chairs. Camping is permitted. R10 per person for the evening/night. Contact Trevor on 765 5133 or 083 450 7109

From the Chair

Hello Dear Hikers

Sorry that I have been so absent, lots of weekends away. New Year should be better!

Subscription forms have been included in this edition. The Committee proposes that subscriptions remain the same as this year. This amount has to be ratified at the AGM which will be held on 15 February 2006. Subscriptions will then be required by 15 April 2005. Members are urged to attend the AGM as this is where the committee is elected. Please consider volunteering your services as a committee member. A weekend organiser is required as Merle has filled the post for three years and is obliged to step down. Erica Jacobs has also requested that she be relieved of her position as publicity organiser and there are other positions that may fall vacant. If any of you are in a position to stand on the committee, please contact me on 031 312 1503 (evenings) and let's talk about it.

A lot of effort goes into putting information into the magazine. It is discouraging when it is not read. Please read it and diarise date and times so you do not forget or need reminding. This is a good habit of a successful person!

Best wishes for a happy festive season and a wonderful 2006. Let us have a cheerful and positive year.

Love
Biff Maggs, Chairperson

MEMBERS' NEWS

New Members

Welcome to new members: Glyniss Ellens, Pauline and Frank McDonald, Renee Freeburn. We look forward to hiking with you.

Condolences

To Norman Radford on the passing of his wife, Shirley.

MEMBERS' NOTICES

Monthly Get Togethers	Meet at 19:00	Contact Mike on 082 822 3106
20 Jan	Cockle Jacks along Percy Osborne past licensing dept end of road turn right couple of 100 metres on right hand side.	
24 Feb	Swine and Tankard, Fainting Goat Centre, Opp Falcon Crest Estate.	
31 March	Bean Bag Bohemia Windermere Rd.	

Wednesday Walks

Colin Turner and Philip Gatenby organise a morning hike every other Wednesday, i.e. January 4 and 18, February 1 and 15 and March 1, 15 and 29. 09:00 – 12:00 followed by picnic (BYO) and chat. All welcome. Phone Colin on 708 3517 or Philip on 201 3592 before the day to find out details and meeting place.

KILIMANJARO and the INCA TRAIL with NOMADIC ADVENTURES

Three degrees south of the equator, lies Kilimanjaro, highest mountain in Africa at an altitude of 5895m. The summit can be reached via one of 6 different trekking routes, in a minimum of 5 days. The routes vary from the easier, to the more difficult, with one route, the Marangu, having hatted accommodation and the other 5, tented accommodation. Extra acclimatisation days are recommended and can be added in at various spots along the routes. The trek is fully portered.

We were extremely lucky to have a clear sunny day. It would have been unpleasant doing the steep ups and downs in strong wind or wet under-foot conditions.

Sincere thanks to Biff for organising this challenge. For those of you who missed it this time - watch out for the next one. The Cavern has added a Sungabala Challenge in 2006. This will be included in the weekend hiking programme.

Weekend Reviews

Hlalanathi : 9 – 11 September

This weekend was planned to coincide with the Cavern's Big 5 hike, but it also coincided with the Mont aux Sources 50km Challenge, with the result that the campsites and all the chalets were fully booked, with endless traffic in and out of the place. Be that as it may, it's still a great venue. The resident dassies think so too!

While the more energetic of our number headed off to the Cavern early on Saturday morning, the rest of us drove around to Mahai. We left our cars in the car park and set off via Fairy Glen towards Gudu Falls. On the way there, we were all fascinated by the size of a cabbage tree right next to the pathway, and Brian and Steve took the trouble to measure its diameter – 6 meters! After lunch at Gudu Falls, we returned via Lookout Rock to the car park, enjoying the beauty of the mountains around us.

On Saturday evening we all gathered around the braai fire to hear how the Big 5 had been tackled. Then on Sunday morning, we headed for the hill behind Hlalanathi, the top of which yielded great views of the "5" route, and returned via the river and golf course to camp.

Eagle View : 14-16 October

Lois and Werner introduced Ramblers to Eagle View – a caravan/campsite on a private farm at the western extreme of The Valley of 1000 Hills. While 8 of our group opted for the comfort of Castaway Cottage, the other 13 pitched their tents (and one caravan) at Eagle View Campsite overlooking the gorge with a view of one of the waterfalls on the other side. What a lovely place to camp, and with first-class ablution facilities and access to electricity, what more could we ask for!

Three impressively high waterfalls spill over ledges on the opposite side of the gorge from the campsite. The misty weather, which is to be expected at this time of year, cleared now and then to reveal wonderful views of the gorge that carves through the terrain from close to Wartburg to Inanda Dam in the east.

Saturday dawned with mist shrouding the gorge, and we set off along the "northern" lip of the gorge without being able to see where we were headed, but every now and then the mist lifted and we managed to catch glimpses of the stunning views along the gorge. Werner set a good pace, and we made it to "the Crack" in good time. After some debate, it was decided that it would be too slippery and dangerous to attempt to descend down the crack, so we made our way a little further on where we stopped for lunch, taking in the breathtaking views across the valley and beyond. Then came the long walk back to camp. All in all, we probably hiked about 20 kilometres. The cool, cloudy weather was much appreciated, as the terrain was very open.

That evening we all gathered at Castaway Cottage, the old farmhouse half a kilometre away, for a communal braai. With six double bedrooms, lounge, a spacious kitchen and diningroom, a very large verandah area AND bedding, towels, chocolates on each bed and a rose on each nightstand, the Cottage is a steal at R85.00 pppn. A great venue for a good party. However, most of us were feeling a little footsore and weary, and we weren't long out of bed that night.

Sunday saw an enjoyable short, circular, sunnier walk through Pine forests to a dam, and back through sugarcane lands. We all thoroughly enjoyed this most suitable venue, and appreciated the short distance from home on good roads.

Weekend & Trails Programme : January – March 2006

NOTE: Philip Gatenby will be co-ordinating transport arrangements for weekend away for those wishing to share lifts or travel in convoy. Telephone 031 201 3592

Date	Description	Leader	Tel
Feb 3-5	Mount Currie awaits you in East Griqualand. Fairly easy climb for great views. Fri – Sun (2 nights). Self-catering accommodation R85 pp/pn sharing. Limited tenting R45 pp/pn. Book with Glenys Bentley by before 11 Jan 2006	Mike White	Glenys 031-5647632 a/h
March 10-12	Glengarry Park. Kamberg area. Camping at R40 pp/pn – payment to Club by mid Feb. Chalets at R130 pp/pn can be booked direct with Glengarry on 033-2677225 or e-mail info@glengarry.co.za . This is a popular venue, so book accommodation early.	To be advised	Merle 032-4394317 (B) 031-5613038 (H) 0824540521
April 14-17	ADVANCE NOTICE Easter at Injasuthi – Variety of hikes from camp. Camping @ R54 pp/pn (no electricity). Chalets can be booked direct with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife on 033-8451000 or e-mail book on line at www.kznwildlife.com	Brian O'Connell	

AND, TALES OF TRAILS

The Cavern Big Five - Audrey Vickers - "the two stick Rambler".

The Cavern Big Five walk is a challenge to hikers to climb the five highest peaks surrounding the Cavern Resort, which is in the northern Drakensberg. On 10 September 2005, 16 Ramblers joined a group of 30 to take up this challenge.

Peter, from the Cavern resort, plus two guides, led the group. The first two and a half hours we went to the top of Hlofela Peak, a long steep climb, at first through indigenous forest, then Protea grassland, up a steep crack onto sparse slopes to the top at 2.1 metres. We were greeted by a fly-past of Lammergeier, Vultures and Crows who kept a wary eye on us throughout the day.

From the ridge there were extensive views over Northern Natal, the Drakensberg and Qwa-Qwa. A steep descent and, another not so steep, took us to peak no 2, the Battleship. Between here and peak 3, Sugar Loaf, there was a stretch of undulating walking along a good path. A mid-morning snack was welcome – thanks to Philip for carrying it.

Sugar Loaf, is a short steep up and down cone overlooking the Cavern Valley. To get to Peak No 4, Broome Hill, is a reasonable gentle walk around and along Cold Corner to the highest point, at 2.210 metres. Browne Hill is above the Royal Natal Resort and the start of the Tugela River nestling below the Amphitheatre. We then had to back track 200 metres along Cold Ridge to make a very steep climb down a grassy slope and another crack to our lunch stop at Cannibal Cavern, a large cave in the cave sandstone, which gave the resort its name.

The guides had carried a welcome hearty lunch. After a short rest, we had a long undulating walk along Surprise Ridge through protea grassland to the final peak, No. 5; the Camels Hump. Another short steep up had us looking down on Rugged Glen Resort. A weary group made the long down-hill back to the Cavern despite all the aches and pains, jubilant that they had 'made it'.

The warmest months on Kilimanjaro are from mid to late December, January, February, September and October, with the cooler months being June to August. The rains often come in April and early May, as well as November and early December.

The cost is \$1242 per person sharing excluding international flights, visas etc but including accommodation, transfers, tents/huts and all meals on the mountain. Flights are about R3200incl taxes.

INCA TRAIL

A four day trail through the Andes in magical Peru, will take you along roads originally laid by the Inca's, about 1200 years ago, to the incredible sanctuary and cultural site, of Machu Picchu. The maximum altitude reached is 4200m and accommodation is in tents. The trek is fully portered but advanced booking of three months is essential

The trail boasts no less than 250 species of orchid and a myriad of bromeliads. The route takes you past old Incan ruins, where your guide will explain the historical significance. A basic 10 day tour to include the Inca Trail and three days in Cuzco is from \$1700 per person sharing, to exclude international flights etc. Longer tours are also available.

BACKPACKERS TOUR TO PERU: This tour departs SA on 28th April 2006, returning 21st May 2006. Cost is from \$2700 per person (excl flights) and includes the Inca Trail, Amazon, Puno, Lake Titicaca, Nazca, Ballestas Islands, and Huaraz. Space is still available. Interested parties can e-mail nomadicadventures@mweb.co.za or call 031-7673373 for more information.

Website: www.nomadicadventures.co.za

E-Mail: nomadicadventures@mweb.co.za

Thanks again to Biff, Liew and Ramblers for inviting us to present these two treks.

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.

Communication

Members are requested to let Derek Pretorius have their e mail addresses. This will be used in the event that any urgent messages need to be sent out. Derek's e mail is sandrajp@eject.co.za

General

- Each member should keep medical aid and emergency contact details in their backpacks.
- Note that the hikes are organised in various areas according to the season. Hence many hikes are planned in the Kloof area during summer as this area offers shadier hikes.
- 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. See front cover for banking details.

HIKING PROGRAMME : JANUARY- MARCH 2006

Saturday Hikes

Hikers may meet at Musgrave Park Medical Centre before 13:30, or earlier if indicated in the programme, 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.

Sunday Hikes (Full Day)

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

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
Sun 1 Jan	New Year's Day. No hike		
7 Jan	Nkonka Falls, Krantzklouf Nature Reserve. Grasslands and waterfall. Meet 13:45 at car park. R10 entrance. BYO Sundowners	Trevor	765-5133
Sun 8 Jan	Virginia-Umhlanga Ramble. Start the hike as the sun rises. Meet at Virginia Airport at 05:00. Bring breakfast. Back to airport before lunch. Cost R0.	Glenys	083 375 2252
14 Jan	Palmiet Nature Reserve**. Meet 13:45 at car park. Nice shady walk. Drinks and supper (optional) at Waxy O'Connors, Westville	Philip	201-3592
Sun 15 Jan	No hike.		
21 Jan	Longshadow & Porcupine Trail**, Krantzklouf Nature Reserve. Shady walk. R10 entrance. BYO Sundowners	Dennis	0833204951
Sun 22 Jan	Steve's Surprise. This might involve pubs and ice cold beer. Steve is not saying yet. Cost R?	Steve Nel	083 454 0569
28 Jan	Emberton** - nice circular grasslands walk to Springside Nature Reserve. Meet Emberton Driving Range car park at 13:45. Tea and cream scones afterwards	Trevor	765-5133
Sun 29 Jan	Virginia-Beachwood. Start at Jon's house, thru cemetery, coastal forest and beach. Drinks at Jon's afterwards. Cost R10	Jon Stevens	082 459 1522
4 Feb Away W/end	Clifton Watchtower - fairly steep climb to stunning views. Meet at Assegay Hotel car park 13:45. Drinks and supper (optional) at Assegay Hotel	Dieter	462-7445

Sun 5 Feb	No Hike. Away weekend.		
11 Feb	Stainbank Nature Reserve** - shady walk with game viewing. Allow plenty of time for entry into park as each visitor has to sign in. R10 entrance fee. BYO Sundowners	Clive	765-5051
Sun 12 Feb	Averstone/Bothas Hill. Pleasant hike through country lanes and farmlands. Cost R15	Dieter	462 7445
18 Feb	Winston Park - new walk! Meet at far end of Jan Smuts Avenue 13:45. Drinks & supper (optional) at Hungry Duck, Gillitts	Philip	201-3592
Sun 19 Feb	No hike.		
25 Feb	Mpiti Falls** -meet at Krantzklouf Nature Reserve car park at 13:45. R10 entrance fee. Drinks/supper (optional) at Green Man (formerly Tina's Hotel).	Ann Olds	767-1027
Sun 26 Feb	Summerveldt. Roam KZN's horsey area. Cost R??	Brian O'Connell	072 995 6565
4 March	Assegay Meander - 10km road walk through farmlands, lovely views. Meet at Sugar Loaf Centre, Botha's Hill at 13:45. Drinks/snacks (optional) at new Tapas Bar, Fainting Goat Centre, Botha's Hill.	Lois	767-2969
Sun 5 Mar	Cathy's Canter. Start & end at Cathy's. Different hike to last time. Bring drinks for afterwards. Go directly to Cathy's or meet in Pinetown. Cost R10	Cathy Kirkpatrick	765 1746 083 301 0435
11 March Away w/end	New Germany Nature Reserve** - grasslands walk, possible game spotting. Visit aviary. Drinks and supper (optional) at Black Forest Inn, Pinetown.	Cedric	702-4905
Sun 12 Mar	No hike. Week end away.		
18 March	1000 Hills Meander - meet at 1000 Hills Hotel car park, Drummond at 13:45. Stunning views. Drinks and supper (optional) at Stationmaster's Arms, Hillcrest	Brian	0729956565
Sun 19 Mar	Roy Roy. From Rob Roy hotel penetrate deep into Valley of 1000 Hills. You will feel them! Cost R15	Steve Watson	312 7108
25 March	Thornridge Farm, Cato Ridge - beautiful indigenous bushland. Meet at Assegay Hotel 13:30. R5 donation to conservancy. Bring and braai afterwards at farm, with optional visit to plant nursery.	Trevor	765-5133
Sun 26 Mar	Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve. Walk among giraffes, gambol with zebras, run like hell from the rhinos (kidding no rhinos). Cost R40 + R10	Merle	082 454 0521

Helpful Hint for Winter Campers.

Before a cold weather trip and during the trip, one should ingest large quantities of cabbage and beans. The warm gas which results, "inflates" the sleeping bag with a warm, cosy aura which not only keeps out the cold, but may also pre-empt an invasion of one's privacy. Care should be taken to avoid matches, lighters and other sources of naked flames (unless they be old ones) in order to avoid the dreaded "Roman Candle" affect (which can be truly spectacular in a tent) or make one very unpopular in a cave when the detonation might bring down a shower of loose rock from the roof on one's companions. Yours in more enjoyable camping. Philip Gatenby.