



BUNDUPYN

~ SUMMER 2011 ~



AFRICAN CELEBRATION ISSUE

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*The journey up the hill may be more difficult,
But the view is more spectacular.*

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Out of The Chairman's Backpack



Recently, Bonny and I had the opportunity to visit some of the great sights of North America – the Rockies, Grand Canyon, The Painted Desert and Yosemite Park in the Sierra Nevada Mountains . We have our memories, our photos, our abiding images. But there were features that really made me appreciate our African Wilderness – the summer crowds and the commercialism.

Yes, Grand Canyon is everything you see in pictures and more, much more. The real thing inspires a sense of majesty, a feeling of awe, a realisation of how small we are when put up against the panorama of nature. But we were not the only ones. One particular famous viewing site, Mather Point, had about two hundred people standing along the rails. As we walked the paved path along the edge, we encountered people, kids to grannies, . Yes, we were there at the height of summer, but I was told the main visitors area of Grand Canyon is always that busy.

My daughter Anuschka got married in the Royal Gorge in the Rockies. The Gorge is over 300 m deep in places, and is spanned by the second highest suspension bridge in the world. The Arkansas River is just a blue-green ribbon along the bottom. However, to me the sight would have been that much more precious if there was not a train track along

the river, if the whistle did not sound twice daily as it transported tourists through this magnificent gorge. The train is there purely for viewing, purely for those who are not able or willing to don their boots and backpacks or climb into their kayaks and do it the old fashioned way.

The crowds were in the Painted Desert too, and even more in Yosemite, where the viewpoint of one of the world's most imposing granite faces, El Capitan, was traffic-jammed with tourist buses.

Yet, it was not that difficult to escape the crowds – I did it twice in Grand Canyon, by getting up at sunrise and hiking into the Canyon itself.

Everyone has a right to the view, to experience the splendour, of that I have no qualms. And take a look at the statistics – 98% of visitors to Grand Canyon do not leave the paved paths, the visitors centres, the refreshment kiosks. Of the 2% that do, only one in seven ever overnight in the wilderness areas.

This, however, brought home to me that our sights, our mountains and canyons and spectacular coastline, are not yet sullied by over-commercialism, nor are they frequented by masses of people with their cars, buses, litter and noise.

While we have the opportunity, we, the hikers, need to get out into our African wilderness and value the great privilege of having it isolated, unspoilt, quiet and largely free. Get out there and hike!

Khotso – Deon.

P.S. to see this BunduPyn in full colour, go to our website.

BunduPyn contributions can be sent to vanik@iafrica.com or by fax to 0118961327. You can phone snippets to Deon on 083 286 9934 or Bonny on 082 324 3013. Remember, the best contribution each month wins a R50 voucher. Please note: The editorial staff and the BHC committee take no responsibility for opinions, comments and jokes expressed in this newsletter. Refer in all cases to the individual contributors, please!

THE BEAT OF THE BUSHDRUM ~ CLUB NOTES, NEWS & NOISES ~



From the Committee

A special welcome and thanks to newer members David Stirling and John Goddard, both of whom have been co-opted onto the executive committee to assist with our various activities.

Amongst the hike leaders, a special word of thanks to Sharron Fourie, Dee Mills, Charmaine Hannan and for adding new blood to the that small pool of hard working, dedicated team that arranges and leads the hikes.

We are noticing fewer visitors actually signing on as members – we need your help to make them welcome, to make them WANT to be part of our special family. .

The Xmas Party

This year our theme is “Stars of Africa.”

We will have five leaders each choosing a subject for their tables and to decorate their part of the room, and it will be up to you, the members, to join a team and give it all you got.

As before, the proceeds from the Xmas party will be donated to a worthwhile charity. Snacks will be included, and the bar is for individual account.

Xmas Camp

We have planned a Xmas Camp at Port Edward this year. This lovely section of KZN, bordering the Wild Coast, offers a range of hiking, birding, game viewing and boating options, as well as all the

classic options offered by being beside the seaside!

A few extras are planned – like some partying, special Xmas dinners and fun evenings.

Spaces are limited, so get your bookings in early.

Upcoming Hikes & Activities

An annual favourite, the Cherry Festival, makes its usual summer appearance. This event caters for runners, golfers, music fans and shoppers as well as hikers.

Dee Mills is leading a group to Buffelsdrift, which promises hikers aaaaopportunities to see game, and it is smack in the middle of the bird-breeding season.

Long term, we have two old favourites – the Otter Trail and the Fish River Canyon, as well as the adventurous but inspiringly majestic Naukluft Trail.

A lot of our hikers have used the opportunity to join the JHC on their weekly Magaliesberg Day Hikes. This is a great way to keep up your fitness levels as well as meet like-minded people and get sweaty with them.

Tailpiece

{The tailpiece is meant to be a “Joke of the Month” sort of thing. Well I am starting to run out of ‘new’ jokes, so send in your outdoor and hiking humour, please.}

An ambitious yuppie finally decided to take a vacation. He booked himself on a Ocean cruise and proceeded to have the time of his life... until the boat sank! The man found himself swept up on the shore of an island with no other people, no supplies.....nothing. Only bananas and coconuts.

After about four months, he is lying on the beach one day when the most gorgeous woman he has ever seen rows up to him. In disbelief he asks her:

"Where did you come from? How did you get here?"

"I rowed from the other side of the island," she says. "I landed here when my cruise ship sank."

"Amazing," he says. "You were really lucky to have a rowboat wash up with you."

"Oh, this?" replies the woman. "I made the rowboat out of raw material that I found on the island; the oars were whittled from gum tree branches; I wove the bottom from palm branches; and the sides and stern came from a Eucalyptus tree."

"But-but, that's impossible," stutters the man. "You had no tools or hardware. How did you manage?"

"Oh, that was no problem," replies the woman. "On the south side of the island, there is a very unusual strata of alluvial rock exposed. I found that if I fired it to a certain temperature in my kiln, it melted into forgeable ductile iron. I used that for tools and used the tools to make the hardware. The guy is stunned."

"Let's row over to my place," she says. After a few minutes of rowing, she docks the boat at a small wharf. As the man looks onto shore, he nearly falls out of the boat. Before him is a stone walk leading to an exquisite bungalow painted in blue and white. While the woman ties up the rowboat with an expertly woven hemp rope, the man can only stare ahead, dumb-struck.

As they walk into the house, her beautiful breasts bouncing with each step, she says casually, "It's not much, but I call it home. Sit down please; would you like to have a drink?" "No thank you," he says, still dazed. "Can't take any more coconut juice." "It's not coconut juice," the woman replies. "I have a still. How about a Pina Colada?"

Trying to hide his continued amazement, the man accepts, and they sit down on her couch to talk. After they have exchanged their stories, the woman announces, "I'm going to slip into something more comfortable. Would you like to take a shower and shave? There is a razor upstairs in the cabinet in the bathroom." No longer questioning anything, the man goes into the bathroom. There, in the cabinet, is a razor made from a bone handle. Two shells honed to a hollow ground edge are fastened onto its end, inside of a swivel mechanism.

"This woman is amazing," he muses. "What next?" When he returns, she greets him wearing nothing but vines and a shell necklace-strategically positioned-and smelling faintly of gardenias. She beckons for him to sit down next to her.

"Tell me," she begins suggestively, slithering closer to him, "we've been out here for a very long time. You've been lonely. I've been lonely. There's something I'm sure you really feel like doing right about now, something you've been longing for all these months? You know what I mean... " She stares into his eyes.

He can't believe what he's hearing. His heart begins to pound and blood starts to boil. He's truly in luck: "You mean...", he gasps, "you mean I can actually check my e-mail from here???"

Counting the Blessings of Southern Africa *by Landa Inganekwane*

So, what are the top Natural Features of our neck of the woods? Let us first, for the sake of this article, define the area we are talking about. How about this - any place within three days of relatively easy driving of Boksburg? That excludes places we need to fly to, like Kilimanjaro and The Maldives. We may need a 4x4 for some of the destinations, but that, too, is part of seeing the Real Africa in the 21st Century.

It does include Victoria Falls, which is made extra special by its proximity to an abundance of large game and unspoilt wilderness. Further downriver on the Zambezi is Lake Kariba, man-made but certainly, with its jagged and rocky shoreline and nutrient-rich water provides a home to fish, fowl and fauna of startling variation.

What fantastic Game Parks we have to choose from? Luangwa in Zambia, with a resident leopard every half-mile along the river, Chobe with the densest elephant population, or the waterholes of Etosha with their own unique beauty and endemism, these all have something special found nowhere else. I love the wide open spaces of the Kgalagadi, whilst some prefer the forests of Tembe, Mkuzi and Umfolozi. Don't forget the luxury of the private parks like Sabi Sand and Mala-Mala, where the rangers can introduce you to rhino, bataleur, crocodile steaks and Diemersfontein Pinotage all on the same day. Of course I have not yet mentioned your personal favourite - that just proves how much we have to offer, so no apologies.

There are still some unexplored gems, like Mount Mabu in Mozambique where seven previously unknown animal species were recently discovered, and Luando Strict Valley in Angola that has plants and flowers found nowhere else in the world.

Drop down the coast a few hundred miles and you find the Namaqualand, with its annual glorious wildflower display converting a rock-strewn sandpit into a soft, swaying technicolour carpet. Did you know that the Cape Fynbos is the smallest floral kingdom in the world in land area, but has the largest diversity of species?

From the hikers viewpoint, it has long been recognised that the Otter Trail is one the world's finest, the Naukluft one of the most unique, and the Mziki one of the

most dangerous. There is something for everyone with just, perhaps, a concession to the fact that we do not have glaciers, permanent snow or true rain forests. Our mountains are not the highest, nor are they the most dramatic or dangerous. But they are the oldest. The *koppies* around Barberton are the oldest on the planet, and even the Magaliesberg is a thousand times older than Mount Everest. This may be strange and estoric bit of information, but renowned geologist Prof. Derek Farber calculated the weird fact that the rocks of the Cedarberg are the most *irregular* in the world.

But the real treasure lies a little deeper, and needs a little imagination, an enquiring mind, and most of all, a love of nature. Every wild place has something special and unique about it - you just may need a little effort to find it.



UNSUNG AFRICAN HEROES

Here are a few Southern Africans you may well not be familiar with – but they hold a special place in the annals of our ‘outdoor history’, or made a significant contribution to preserving our natural heritage.

JAMES STEVENSON-HAMILTON, also known as *Skukuza*, the one who sweeps clean. The first chief game ranger of Sabie Reserve, later known as the Kruger National Park, he was largely instrumental in building Kruger to the park we know and love today.

MOJADJI, the Rain Queen. If she had not declared the royal forests and mountains of her ‘homeland’ as sacred areas, the Indigenous Forests of the Magoebaskloof and Wolkberg regions might well just have been pine plantations today.

LAWRENCE ANTHONY, the Elephant Whisperer. The man who rescued the animals of Baghdad Zoo, who built Babylon’s Ark, and is continuing his good work, will probably be most revered for his endeavour in saving rogue elephants. His astonishing work has vastly increased our understanding of these remarkable animals, and let us know how little we really do understand about nature.

TSUI-GOAB, the original deity of the Khoi people, who was perhaps the earliest ‘prophet’ to teach us to respect Mother Earth.

BOOKEY PEEK, author and conservationist, who made saving small mammals a popular and worthwhile activity. She taught us that even wild creatures are part of our extended family.

CREDO MUTWA, teller of myths and legends, from whom we learned that traditions can be oral and we do not always need the written word to value our history.

The Re-supply to the Grand Traverse Hike – 25-26th July 2011

John Goddard

We were a team consisting of 15 hikers who volunteered to do the resupply of rations to the team, which included three of our club members - George Jackie and Susan, whilst the other hikers included members from Johannesburg Hiking Club. We were based at the Injasuti camp site in the Drakensburg, a spectacular setting.

We were up early on Sunday and made our way to Giants Castle, about 2 hours away by road though only about 20 km as the crow flies. Our group parked our cars, unloaded our backpacks. There were a few youngsters amongst us the youngest being nine years old. One of the youngsters had a scale so we proceeded to weigh our packs then we distributed the weight more evenly, though some tough guys carried more than others. After a group photo we left on our adventure. Walking through the resort was quite easy as there were roads and paved paths, but that would change very soon.



After crossing a river there was a short flat walk then the path turned skywards. The terrain was grassy but it would go up sharply and then flatten out for a short distance and go up again like giant steps. If you had to look from the top of the mountain it was like a giant hand with fingers. The fingers would be

separated by rivers running down from the top. After two of these steps we stopped for a rest. The stronger hikers were in front and waited for the others to catch up. There was a cold wind blowing so the packs would come off and the jersey would go on when we rested. When we were all together and rested we continued.

The views were amazing - there were buck grazing in the distance, wind blowing, not too hard but enough to be cool. It was good company and we had a feeling of true self sufficiency – everything that you needed was on your back and freedom from the world could wait till you got home.

At our stops the snacks would come out and we sat on the grass waiting for the others to catch up a rule imposed by Deon, our group leader. We would look at the GPS and see how far we had walked and how many metres we had climbed. One of the young nine year olds suddenly shouted “there is a snake”- It turned out to be a Berg Adder and it had a friend and not three metres from where we sat. Meanwhile we were being watched by the team that were on top. After a short walk the path actually went down and we came to a small but very pretty waterfall.

We sat down where we could and had lunch. From where we sat I could not see the last stretch to the top of the mountain which to my surprise was +- 60-65 degrees and a good 800 to 900 metres upwards still. Deon was not feeling well at that point and decided to stay at the waterfall, pitch tent and continue back down with the rest of us the next day, handing the leadership over to others.

I got around the corner, then I saw that this was to be some mean and nasty climb. I started up, stopped and at one point sat down for about fifteen minutes. Meantime George and some other hikers came down. They must be strong, crazy or both as they had been walking for 7 days and still had a whole lot more to do plus extra that was not expected.

I continued and one of the youngsters gave me one of his hiking sticks as I was on my hands and knees a lot of the time. It did help. When I got to the top I noticed a piece of plastic which in the end turned out to be part of a battery from a helicopter which crashed a few years ago – even the rotor blades were lying in the grass. I eventually got to the camp site where I immediately found a spot and pitched my tent and put on all the clothes that I had ... it was COLD!. I must have looked a sight as I had my cycling arm and leg warmers on too.

There was concern about Deon who had been left down below on his own. Some of the group thought he might even have had a heart attack! Jackie and George prepared the two pieces of chicken that I had carried in for them, and together with some starch proved to be *almost* sufficient for us. Susan had asked me to bring up some red wine, and I had some sherry which complimented the fine mountain meal. Hikers seem very fond of wine and sherry!

Then it was time for bed but my hands were freezing so while everyone else was in their tents I was warming my hands talking to my neighbours and looking at the stars. I had a 360 degree view which was magnificent. When my hands were warm I finally got into my tent and went to sleep.

Big camp party that night!



The next morning everyone was up making coffee and packing up so I got water, put it on to boil and continued to pack up. My water fell over so I repeated the process, continued to pack, and then the water fell over again, so I decided to sit next to it and keep an eye on it till eventually I got my rusk with a nice cup of hot coffee.

We had a escarpment-top group photo then the guys on the traverse said their thanks to us and were on their way - last bit of packing was done and we headed down for the worst part of the trip –DOWN! Deon was gone by the time I had got to the bottom of the steep climb. He had packed up and started down, so we were relieved he had not had a heart attack. The walk down was pleasant and we came across a troop of baboons near the bottom which scared some of our group. We eventually met our prodigal son near a river and rejoined the fast walking people of our group, so we waited for the rest to catch us, resting up in the meantime.

After every one had caught up, rested and drank from nature's water source, we all walked the last kilometer and a half together to the car park, where a shower was waiting – I won't say hot because it wasn't, but it was certainly welcome!

Do's and Dont's of S - t - r - e - t - c - h - i - n - g

A collaboration between Guillaume (Jeff) Malan, Biokineticist, and Dr. Kim Nolte (PhD – Human Movement Sciences).

Most people know that stretching can be beneficial specifically in terms of injury prevention and sports performance. However, it is important that stretches are performed correctly in order to get the benefits of the stretches therefore this article addresses the things that you should or shouldn't do when stretching.

What is a stretch? Stretching is a way of lengthening soft tissues, specifically muscles and tendons (as opposed to hard tissue such as bone). Try to touch your toes with both legs perfectly straight, you will probably feel that the muscles at the back of your thigh are being placed under tension such as a rubber band being stretched. Now straighten your elbow as much as you can. You'll see that even though the joint has gone as far as possible, you probably don't feel a stretch in your arm, thus the bones in your elbow itself is the reason it can't go further. If you try to touch your toes everyday, the stretching will eventually allow you to go further. But, no matter how often you straighten your elbow, that bony block will always be there.

Why stretch? When you are flexible it means the joints in your body have a large range-of-motion (ROM). Those of us that have less than normal ROM are stiff, and regular stretching can have many benefits such as:

- less chance of injury;
- greater sports performance; and
- maintenance of mobility into old age.

There are many factors that influence how flexible you are, as well as how you will be affected by a flexibility programme. Some of these factors include joint structure, age, gender, connective tissue, weight training not done through full ROM, and your activity level.

Below follows the important do's and don'ts of stretching.

<i>Do's</i>	<i>Don'ts</i>
Do a warm-up beforehand – think of a 'fizzer' sweet, left in the sun it becomes extremely pliable, but put in a freezer it'll snap if you bend it! Soft tissues such as muscles follow a similar pattern	Don't force a muscle to stretch while still cold.
Do static stretches for the major muscle groups of the body that are limited in ROM.	Don't stretch a muscle that is still painful from a recent muscle tear.
Do hold the position still at the point of feeling the stretch (slight tension in the muscle).	If you've stopped flexibility training for a while, don't try to stretch as far as you could previously.
Do stretching a minimum of two to three times per week, ideally five to seven times per week.	Don't bounce at the end of a stretch. (It makes your stretches less effective and may possibly injure you).
Do hold each stretch for 30 seconds (holding it for longer does not necessarily make it more effective)	Don't stretch an already overly mobile joint if it's not necessary for sports performance.
Do each stretch four times.	Don't stretch so far that it is painful.
Do breathe slow and deeply during stretches.	Don't do the stretch rapidly. Go slow and steady!

It is important to remember that you get different types of stretches. This article focuses mainly on static stretches (holding the end-point of a stretch still) but dynamic stretches (active type of stretching) such as swinging the leg in kicking motions are commonly used by athletes as it is more sports specific. It is essential that you are warmed up before doing these types of stretches.

What does all of this mean for me as an athlete's parent? In short these are the important points to remember about stretches:

- Sport participation requires a degree of flexibility. The amount of flexibility differs depending on the sport.
- You can improve flexibility by stretching regularly.
- Before stretching, warm-up thoroughly. Appropriate warm-ups include jogging or cycling for ten minutes at moderate intensity or a continuous activity specific to your child's sport.
- Start off with static stretches, hold each for 30 seconds. After which dynamic stretches that are similar to your child's sport movements can be performed, for example arm swings for netball or throwing sports, leg swings for rugby or running.
- Ideally stretching is done after activities, simply because the body is thoroughly warmed-up. Stretching will improve your flexibility and lower your risk of injury, but stretching directly before a training session will not lower risk for injury during that specific session. Thus, think of the long-term benefits.
- Stretch daily. How frequently your child stretches will be the most important variable that will determine how quickly and by how much his or her flexibility improves.

To conclude, stretching should form an important part of every training programme, and should ideally be done regularly. Remember, like other training variables, once ideal flexibility level has been achieved it is easy to maintain. To reap the full benefits of stretching and to prevent injury keep in mind the do's and don'ts of stretching.



GRAND TRAVERSE OF THE DRAKENSBERG APRIL 2011

Jackie Cilliers



As the bus left Jhb just after lunch on Sunday 17 April 2011, an adventure and challenge rated the hardest in my life began. 6 months of planning and organizing had come to a head - we were headed for Harrismith and then early on the 18th to

Witsieshoek and the Sentinel Car Park to start the ultimate South African hike.

On Monday morning the weather was overcast and misty - plenty of rain had fallen over the previous few days, but nobody was concerned. All

10 of us were optimistic that the weather would give us a break. Sue Desmond was the leader and organizer (veteran of 5 GT's already), and she appointed George Christian as her second. He led a GT 2 years ago and had the GPS research and tracks in hand. Hilke Kruger is doing her 3rd GT, also an old hand. The rest of us were GT virgins - Don Cater, Sabine Behr, Dennis Cox, Penny Allen, Susan Hilder and myself. We all knew what we were in for though - the Drakensberg is not to be taken lightly. If you don't like the weather - wait 10 minutes, if you don't like the view, turn around....

Sue, George & Hilke are typical hikers....liers with bad memories! How else could they have persuaded 7 of us to join them on this hike?? Backpacks were laden with gear and food, and some luxuries. Sabine was the lightest at about 12kg and Don the heaviest at over 20kg. I came in at about 13kg, and was satisfied with that. George was carrying the tent and our cooking utensils, so I took more of the food.

After a group photo where everyone was still clean and smelt nice, we headed up to the chain ladders - climbing from 2500m up to the escarpment at 3000m. Drizzle accompanied us on the way up, and even a break to retrieve Anthony's hiking pole did not slow us much. Up the ladders we broke through the cloud and had tea at the river with the sun warming us up. We continued all in good spirits and had completed 12km when Sue stated that we would make camp. A couple of us moaned that it was too early and we would like to continue. Sue justified her

decision with the reason that it would be better to ease into it....so a few of us walked to the top of Icidi Pass for some sightseeing.

Day 2 dawned and we were ready at 7.05am (5 minutes late thanks to Sue & Susan, who were not allowed to get away without a few jibes) The morning went quickly and we covered a lot of ground, with beautiful scenery - some of the best on the escarpment - Madonna and her worshippers, the Donkey, the Traveller plus superb views of the valleys below. Walk about 2 hours, stop for a break, walk another 2, stop. The day stretched and just after lunch the first few comments arose...knees, feet, backs....when will we be there? We only made camp at the source of the Orange River in the Mnweni area after 4pm - a long, sore and tiring day for many. A 'group huddle and stamp' took place for the first night. It didn't always happen. This is supposed to close off the day and prepare mentally for what lay ahead. Thereafter we did a stretching session as a few aches appeared that followed some of the group right to the end...Only George & I walked to the head of Mnweni Pass that evening. Just as we got there a small group of Basutu's chased a herd of donkeys up, returning from a 'dagga run'. They waved back with smiles when they saw we were only curious. A cold river bath preceded dinner - another interesting combination of Backcountry. Late night sudoku in our sleeping bags lulled us to sleep.

Day 3 brought frost, and all the tents were covered in ice, along with the ground. The temperatures were well below zero and warm clothes were

kept on to start with. A short walk over to Rockeries had us standing above a large colony of Cape Vultures, who were already soaring in the strong winds, seeking thermals. Several were witnessed bring green foliage in their beaks towards the cliff face and their 'home'. Others stayed put in the cold winds, eying us out as we peered out at them.

We left the vultures and carried on towards tea time – at some little stream or river that offered a bit of shelter and warmth. Breakfast usually consisted of a cereal bar on waking (5.30am) and Oatso easy at teatime, with HOT tea! The Mnweni pinnacles, Cathedral Peak and the Bell plus many more features were admired. The Woodstock Dam lay long and stretched out below us – visible for many days in a row. On the right into Lesotho, the diamond mine sat like a scar on the horizon. Local shepherds stopped to watch us, some venturing closer to chat in broken English. They were rewarded with a sweetie or choccie, usually from George or myself. Not everyone had extra snacks or were prepared to share them. That hiker-Basotho relations could be nurtured with something so simple as a smile and a 'chomp!' The only women we saw on the hike also passed today, bags on heads and babies on backs!

Today we witnessed one of a few clashes between our leader and second. Sue was convinced the 'Elephant' corridor lay to the left and George insisted it was a few hundred meters to the right. The group milled, most following Sue...to a dead end! The group re-gathered and followed George around to the right path. A

short sharp down followed by an equally sharp up. And it started to rain a little. Over the other side we headed around to camp with the most glorious rainbow to lead us there. We camped near the top of Tseketseke Pass, which George and I had personal history with that involved a chopper rescue!

Cold, wet & tired but happy, we put up tents and made supper. Don's casino opened and loud cries of 'rummy' and laughter were heard. Others begged drugs from the 'pharmacy' for sore knees, backs and feet. Some of the group had feet strapped for blisters but complaints were few. A familiar sound of Anthony's voice saying 'hello Mimi' – to Anique on his satellite phone brought smiles.

The sky was on fire the next morning, the most amazing sunrise. As most camps were at a river or stream, it usually meant a climb first thing in the morning. This morning it was Cleft Peak 3300m. We puffed our way up. Being relatively fit still doesn't mean we could run up mountains at that altitude with laden backpacks. Cleft was a tough one but worth all the views and photos once there.

The weather deteriorated but we didn't feel it while walking. A hop down Thutumi and back up Smugglers Pass and we were into 'Windsor Way' – the most beautiful valley. This led to Yodlers Valley where the streams, pools and waterfalls were exquisite. We made camp high up in Yodlers. Bathing in the river was in warm sunlight and a good stretching session followed. It was a mild night with a beautiful sunset.

Day 5 - The resupply day was getting closer now so packs were a little lighter and spirits up. It was Penny's birthday as well and all sorts of little offerings were given. The weather was warm and pleasant - with a blanket of clouds below us looking like cotton wool. Lots of oohs and aahs were uttered and plenty of photos were taken. Penny took a bad tumble on the way down to lunch river, and moaned in pain for a few minutes with a twisted ankle. She had us all very worried. It was good to get down to the river for a break.

Camp came early as we were well on schedule, but a thick mist enveloped us. Penny lost her favourite hat but asking really nicely had George & Don retracing steps on the GPS and they found it about a km back. She was really glad. 5 of us had crammed into Dennis's 2 man tent for some 'socialising' before supper.

Waking on day 6 we had a goal today - Mafadi - the highest peak in South Africa at 3451m. Seemed quite daunting but some strolled up as if it was a walk in the park. Others felt the increased elevation and puffed their way up. The vegetation changes and it looks just like a moonscape up there. After tea in the lee of the wind we all had a photo session, seeing if we could get a photo of at least 9 of us in the air - above the highest point in SA! One of us had to take the pic....

An easy stroll down towards Judges Pass and off to the right had us making camp by 3, giving some chance to rest up and others to go for a sightseeing stroll.

Re-supply day!! Day 7 dawned and we could leave a little later as we

were well ahead of schedule now. Chatter revolved around seeing family & friends and getting some much needed food etc. We arrived at the agreed meeting place by 12 noon and headed hopefully to the top of Langalibalele Pass to see if they were in sight. Nothing.

A couple of hours later we made out tiny figures far away - a large group strung out over a kilometer. It was getting late for them to be so far, so George asked if a couple of the guys would accompany him down to help. Don, Anthony & George headed down the pass. Good move. George got to the group and quickly assessed and organized. He then assisted the slower ones by spreading their pack weight. First up were Wayne and his son Shaun - The rest were all up by 4.30pm, excepting Deon. He and George made the decision for him to camp lower down as he was not feeling well. We all worried about him that evening. The best evening weather wise so far. Who would think that home made soup and cooked pork sausages could taste so good! Little bottles of alcoholic beverages were shared around and we were all in great spirits. Some of us even had a change of clothes. John gave up his toothpaste for us.... Kim had a full on cold river bath....more pharmacy supplies arrived for those in pain... At least 15 colourful little tents dotted the hillside that night, quite daunting for any would-be local thief!

Nobody even thought of opting out and walking down with the re-supply team - even those with painful conditions like Sabine's back, Susan's knees and Penny's ankle. The group remained intact.

Our group left before the rest in the morning as we had Durnford in front of us, or is it DARNford?? Quite a climb, past the carbineers grave and on up. We watched from high above as they snaked there way down a little later. Spirits were still high even though packs were heavier again. Camp that night was further than needed, between the 'Tent' and the 'Hawk'. During the night the wind came up quite strong, and by morning it was almost gale force. Packing everything within the confines of the tent was quite interesting. Crawling out at the last minute to pack the tent was the way we did it. George said - 'No blowaways please!' Little did he know....

We started up towards the ridge with the wind pushing from the side, the higher we got the stronger it got. Anything not tied really tight onto our packs was blown over the edge into South Africa - Sue's hat, our 'bum pads', Sabine's bottle top. Don recovered my water bottle as it came by at high speed.

We were blown over like skittles and had hardly covered half a kilometer in an hour. Lying flat on the ground at times was the only way to prevent being pushed towards the edge. Don came repeatedly to take some of the girls and drag them to the next rock which provided a small lull. We figured out eventually how to make some headway. Linking arms in 2's or 3's we had more strength to move forward. Breathing into the wind was impossible for me, I had to turn or pull my buff over my face.

Don was the only one to take photos that morning. By lunch time we were exhausted. Once over the ridge

and down into the next valley we could make a bit of time up so tea and lunch stops were shorter. The clouds had been building and every now and then a small sharp shower came past or over us. After lunch as we neared the area for our camp the sky got darker and more ominous. The surrounding mountains disappeared one by one in the looming storm. And still we continued. I kept thinking to myself - Sue please let's make camp now, before it hits us. Sue seemed oblivious to the storm and continued up the valley towards where she had in mind. The storm engulfed us, first rain, then ice or sleet, driven by the winds, stinging our faces. Huddled over, we carried on. After about 15 minutes like this people were hesitating and Sue called a halt. It was level and there was water. Still the ice rained down. George & Don wasted no time - we followed instructions and within minutes 2 tents were up. Susan and I took shelter in our tent while George helped others. Eventually the storm passed over and we all came out of hiding to finish setting up camp. Sabine and penny were wet through (or they are the only one's to admit it). The sun came out and gear was spread out to dry.

I found the plastic bottle of Amarula carried up by one of our resupply guys and Susan, Sue, George & I polished it off. We only left the tents for toilet reasons that night, each cowering behind a rock to see to business as quick as possible....

The next morning was still windy, but not raining. We had a purpose today - Thabana Ntlenyana (highest peak in Lesotho & southern Africa) and then SANI!!!! A warm bed, hot

REAL food, gluwein and hot chocolate, a fireplace. They beckoned like a beacon in the dark. But first, a climb. No little one, because camp was at 2780m and the peak at almost 3500m. Do the maths....

In hindsight it wasn't too bad, we were up at the top of Thabana Ntlenyana by 9.30am - 2 and a half hours. Sue said it was all downhill into Sani, and with George leading, the group hightailed it down the hill. At least the fast one's did. Those who were a little slower on the downhill or wanted to stop for a photo or 2 found themselves 200m behind in a minute or 2. This is the only day I felt annoyed by my fellow group members. Sani was still more than 15km away, why start racing? I wasn't the only one feeling like that, and Sabine let them have it when they finally halted for all of us to catch up. George apologized, realizing what had happened.

Only a few people consistently spent time with those who moved over certain terrain or inclines slower.

There was a long gentle incline for the last 5 or so km into Sani which for me went on for ever. When it finally came into sight we still had a couple of km to go but at least our goal was visible. We waltzed into Sani Top Lodge just before 3pm, after 24km that day. Dumping our packs on the verandah, we thought a group photo and drink in the bar would be our first priorities, but Sue was set on sorting out our rooms, so we all obliged and then headed back to the bar and lounge. Our Sani resupply guys were not there yet, so we would have to wait before our washbags and clean clothes arrived. Their gluwein

tasted real good! Anthony kept a close eye on the pass road snaking down below the lodge - after all, Mimi was coming!

The food was soooo lekka! And the hot chocolate. We all 'kuiered' in the lounge and bar area after supper and shared stories of the last few days with Deon & mom, Roger & Juliette and Anique, Keegan & Taygen. We all like those boys that have been a big part of this adventure.

The next morning (Day 11), we were all clean, well fed and ready to go. Whoops, not all. Hilke decided to withdraw at Sani as her mom was not well. The team missed her and mused over her logic. The rivers were iced that morning and it started out quite cold but as the day wore on it warmed up and turned into a beautiful day with lots of nice views over the edge and not too difficult terrain. Just after lunch the group decided to do 'one last hill' before making camp. Coming down the other side Anthony and I identified a suitable spot and most of the group came to a stop awaiting Sue. Sue marched on though, clearly not happy with the spot. Confusion and dissent arose. Don marched after Sue while the rest of us milled around. Eventually Sue beckoned from far ahead stating she had a good spot. So we walked...and walked...and walked, following Sue about half a k back. She had her head down and went. I couldn't catch her if I tried. For about 2km we followed - through all sorts of stumbly terrain and right into a cutback. Half the group was livid by then. When she found a suitable camp, she & George had words that were only resolved later by Anthony calling a pow wow to

get the group back as a unit. His words rang true and the group rallied.

Time was running out now and Day 12 held some big climbs - Wilson's being the worst. Anthony must have had steroids at Sani because he ran up about half an hour ahead of the back lot. I plodded up, not as strong as other days, but got up well before the last. Another climb up Walker's and then it was time to start down, a very steep section, successfully navigated by George & Anthony who got us all down safely to a river. A couple of k's later we made camp in close proximity to some local settlements. One young guy who spoke English came for a chat. He was 19 and went to school but did not matriculate, and helped his uncle with the flocks. We gave him some sweets and tea, which he was grateful for. It paid off because the next morning his uncle saved us time by showing us the correct path as we ambled on down. I wasn't well on day 13, and lagged a little. My legs felt like lead when we had even a gentle up. One last altercation between leader and second regarding our route was witnessed before we were on the home run. Anique and the boys were

waiting at Bushmansnek border post with cold drinks for us. And suddenly it was all over, and we sat around waiting for our bus to Himeville Arms.

Afterwards, people asked me weird questions eg:

Were there huts and toilets? The answer is no. We carried our own tents and went to the loo behind a rock.

Did you go past Long Tom Pass? No. That is in Mpumalanga, about 500km or more from where we were.

Weren't you cold? Um, yes. A lot of the time. But never hypothermic. We had the right gear. And body heat DOES help!

Did you bath at all? Yes - downriver. Upriver was for drinking. The water temp was just above zero most of the time.

What did you do to pass the time? Walk. And walk.

Did you go up Sani Pass? No. We got there from the chain ladders, about 150km to the north. On foot.

Would you do it again.....Most of the time while on the move I would have said NO! But after only a week it became maybe, and now? Well, we'll see what a couple of years brings.....

See pictures on Shutterfly.

~ Henry David Thoreau ~

I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes.

I would rather sit on a tree stump and have it all to myself than be crowded on a velvet cushion.

The horizon is never quite at our elbows.