



Social:
15 May 2013

Topic: Snakes

go hiking

MIDLANDS HIKING CLUB NEWS

Volume 2 No. 12

25 March 2013



All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking.
Friedrich Nietzsche

EARN A COMPOSTELA!



www.sacredsites.com

The Camino de Santiago

Some words by Brigitta Simpson

Why not walk the Camino de Santiago and earn yourself a Compostela? Thousands of people have pilgrimaged the Camino (or The Way of St James) and after having completed it, received a certificate from the St James Cathedral in Santiago.

“You should have your *credencial* or Record stamped daily at the *refugio*, a church, town hall (*ayuntamiento*) or the local office - *cuartel* - of the Guardia Civil, to make a record of your pilgrimage. At Santiago you present your Record at the Pilgrim Office close to the Cathedral and you will generally be given a *Compostela* certificate (the traditional document, in Latin, confirming the completion of the pilgrimage). Walkers and pilgrims on horseback must have completed at least the last 100km and cyclists the last 200 km, in one stretch, to qualify.”

www.csj.org.uk

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Chairman's Chatter

by Brian Henwood

What are we all about?

While driving to the Ntsikeni Nature Reserve last weekend, after several days of rain and predictions of further rain, I was having my doubts whether we had made the right decision. Driving home on Sunday my mind was revisiting our activities over the weekend, remembering those many funny incidents, and there was no doubt that we had made the right decision. We had all had a ball!

We came together as a group of 14 club members but the one thing we shared was a fascination of nature's beauty and a love of the outdoors. Nobody complained about the appalling condition of the jeep track leading to the lodge, negotiated in the mist, and nobody complained of the cold shower on the first night.

But we all had much to say about spotting the waterfall, the large herd of galloping wildebeest, the four reedbeek, the forever patient jackal buzzard, or was it an eagle, and a variety of smaller birds. Also seeing the Ntsikeni Peak emerge from the early morning mist and cast its long shadow across the vleij; and the mist lifting to reveal blue skies and two days of lovely warm weather.

When our leader, Bushy, suggested on Saturday morning that we climb Ntsikeni Peak then walk the length of the ridge overlooking the vleij, nine said 'yes please' while the other five chose to do something less strenuous. When we returned to the Lodge that afternoon we exchanged our stories and sightings over a few cold refreshments shared around the braai fire or in the communal lounge warmed by the central fireplace.

We all contributed in some way towards our braai. Liz had baked a big cake, Dallas presented us with a steamy mealie bread, others tossed up a few salads, someone threw in the charcoal, and others contributed to the variety of tarts. Saturday evening was all about bringing and sharing, but also exchanging stories and jokes.

But isn't this what makes the Midlands Hiking Club so special. It is not just about the hiking, it is also about sharing experiences, appreciating what nature has to offer, building friendships, exercising and enjoying life.

And until next month, keep hiking.

Brian



When you are walking ...

"Watch your way then, as a cautious traveler and don't be gazing at that mountain or river in the distance and saying, "How shall I ever get over them?" but keep to the present little inch that is before you and accomplish that in the little moment that belongs to it. The mountain and the river can only be passed in the same way and when you come to them you will come to the light and strength that belong to them."

~Kelty



St James

Visit the **MIDLANDS HIKING CLUB** on Facebook!

Editor's Letter

One could say that the inspiration for this issue was the recent social where the Reverend Nicholson spoke about the Camino de Santiago. It is probably every hiker's dream to undertake this pilgrimage. So, think about it... what a great adventure it could be.

Enjoy this issue and enjoy your hiking.

Brigitta

Welcome to our New Members!

Shanil Balgobind, Nerita Singh, Jenny Bitcon, Barry Stapleton, Barbara Davies, Johann & Talita Kassier

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SOCIAL CLUB NIGHT 15 MAY 2013

Michael Cowling will talk about snakes found primarily in the in the Berg and Central KZN and snake bite procedures.

We hiked to ...

Blesberg Farm (Lidgetton area), Sunday 3rd February 2013. Report and photos by Rod Hart, additional photos courtesy of Peter Rippon (go to www.gohiking.co.za)

John Fourie the hike leader described this as a "Morning hike on the slopes of Blesberg through indigenous bush and across grassland with beautiful scenery. Picnic lunch at the dam." John also notes that there is accommodation available in 4 cottages on the Farm"

Sixteen of us We met first at St Ives at 7:30 on Sunday morning and travelled from there to Blesburg Farm in convoy. The trail John had planned is an interesting trail through indigenous forest and mostly in shaded areas which would suit the sunny day ahead. However even the best laid schemes of mice and men are wont to go awry, as we found when we came to the river crossing to find the wooden bridge trailing on the opposite side of the river in the fast flowing water.

Despite his best efforts (while we lazed over an early tea break) John was unable to find a suitable alternate crossing. The revised plan was to head up to a viewpoint and lunch up there. Under the late morning sun the climb was hot and steep, but we were rewarded with a cool breeze on the higher slopes and good views of the surrounding countryside and distant mountains. The return trip down the hill was a pleasure and a stop off at the dam for a swim for some was a highlight of the day and lured many in clothes and all.



Bulwer Mountain Hike Sunday, 10 March 2013 Report and photos courtesy of Rod Hart

We met leader Brian at Sven's Hilton home to finalise lift arrangements and then set off for Bulwer, with the rain and mist clearing, then re-emerging along the way. Dave provided a Norwegian weather sites prediction of 14 deg C with mist which proved to be accurate when we arrived at the Bulwer Mountain Park Hotel. Altogether 14 hikers braving the wet and misty conditions.

The hike is marketed in our Fixtures List as a: "walk to the top of Bulwer mountain where the hunks and their hang gliders hang out" - well, we neither got to nor saw the top of the mountain, and I would imagine the hunks and their hang gliders were wisely not venturing out onto the mountain with the mist swirling around. What we did however see, which was not advertised, were some quite good, though sadly

vandalised Bushman paintings. Also an inadvertent "detour" along our hike led us to a waterfall, which on a hot sunny day would have been a charming setting - remember it for next time!

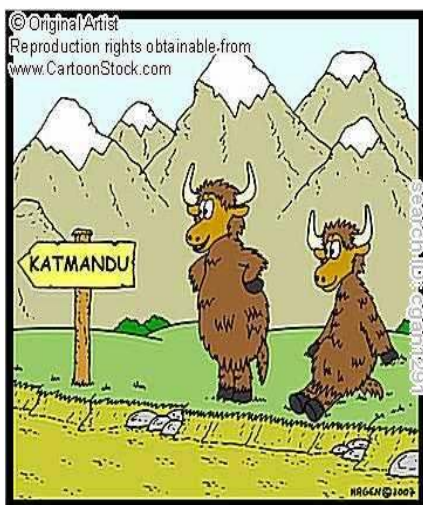
Starting out from the hotel where the key for the gate and a brochure detailing the description and directions of the various hikes is obtained, the hike leads towards the mountain along a wet, rugged and slippery path. Further along the paths, junctions are no longer clearly designated, and higher up the mountain they become very indistinct, and thus because of the misty conditions, resulted in us abandoning our quest for the summit and also of circumnavigating along a contour path. The path we were following petered out and it was deemed safer for us to re-trace our steps back down the mountain, leaving the heroics of standing on the summit for another sunnier day.

The hike concluded happily enough with tea/coffee, scones with cream/jam, and/or hot vegetable soup in the warm, hospitable, hotel basement bar.



We hiked to ...

Cyprus Cave 16—17 February 2013 Report by Peter Rippon. Photographs by Keith Ashton and Peter Rippon.



I never tire of watching Hippies go by:
They're so colourful...

The cave is a 4km hike from the Mkhomasi office, which makes it a good hike for beginner backpackers. John Fourie was the hike leader, joined by Christie, Keith, Margaret, Katy, Charlie, Karyn, and me. We were also joined on the first morning by Mary Clover's group of hikers who were staying at the Spinney.

We met at the Mkhomasi office and signed the mountain register. The weather was overcast and drizzly, so people donned their rain gear and we set off. Less than 500m into the hike we were faced with a fast flowing river (the Kumalungana), so it was time to tie our boots around our necks and wade through. We were up to our waists in water, whereas the report from the Cyprus Cave hike three months ago shows the hikers only up to their ankles crossing at the same point, which shows how much rivers can change.

Once we had our boots back on, we were off again, climbing uphill for about a kilometre before the land levelled off. The last few kilometres to the cave were a gentle downhill. The tops of the surrounding mountains were hidden in clouds, but at times sunlight snuck through and lit the sides of the mountains, making them shine out from the gloomy valleys below.

We finally met up with the Nzinga River and followed the path down the bank to Cyprus Cave, nestled under a fast flowing waterfall. We had a snack break in the cave, and then both groups set off together for some further hiking (those of us in John's cave group left our heavy backpacks in the cave).

We headed up the long slope of the mountain west of the cave. The top of ridge closest to us was barricaded by a long cliff face, broken in only two places. John led us through the gap on the south-western end of the ridge, and we had lunch at the top of the ridge, overlooking the valley with Cyprus Cave our left, and a ravine to our right that separated us from another ridge of the mountain.

**go to www.gohiking.co
for more**



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christieex@mynblackberry.com

We hiked to ...

THE SPINNEY 15 TO 17 FEBRUARY Report & photographs by Mary Nellist

Penny, Libby, Mary, Stella, Harry, Sandy and Dave all arrived at the Spinney in the Loteni on Friday afternoon, where we were warmly welcomed by our hosts Jan and Russel. We settled into our accommodation, Stella and Harry in The Annex, Penny, Libby, Sandy and Dave in The Spinney, and Mary in the house. We all gathered together for drinks, followed by a delicious dinner prepared for us by Jan.

Such a treat!

Early on Saturday morning we made our way to Mkhomazi to meet up with John's group of hikers, who were going to spend the night in Cyprus cave.

Fifteen of us set off for the cave on a beautiful, soft, cool, misty morning. There had been

a lot of rain recently, and the Nzinga River was high and running very strongly. Luckily we had some strong men to help us across. River crossing over, we put on our boots, strapped on our packs and set off into the green wilderness. As we walked the mist lifted, revealing beautiful vistas and trickling waterfalls. We stopped to compare back packs - the over-nightersand the day hikers. We arrived at the cave, hidden behind the waterfall, at about 11.30, just in time for elevenses.

Refreshed, we all emerged into the brightening day to climb the mountain. The stream was flowing too strongly to allow for a safe crossing where the foot path led, so we made our way through the wet grass, with Sandy urging us onwards and upwards, very determined to reach to top. It was well worth the effort! We sat on the edge of the mountain to eat our lunch surrounded by beautiful views of the berg

emerging from the mist. The day hikers left the cave over-nighters to explore some of the waterfalls we had passed on the way up, and we made our way back to the camp, Harry and Dave safely negotiating our way onto the correct path, and helping us across the river. We all thoroughly enjoyed the hike, the views and the company, and we were very happy to return to the comfort of the Spinney, and a Bring and Share dinner with Jan and Russel, accompanied by lots of fun and laughter.

Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny, and Jan took us on a meandering walk to have a look at some waterfalls and more views. Then home for lunch.

We had a wonderful, restful weekend with Jan and Russel, and we were thoroughly spoiled by their hospitality. Can't wait for our next visit.



Minerva Heights, Byrne, 24th February 2013 Leader: Bushy Kirby.

Report by Annie Waterhouse.

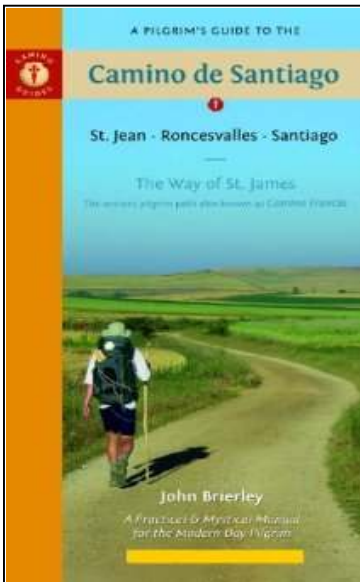
Christie, John, Annie, Pat and Bushy set off from the Minerva Heights farmhouse in thick mist. Because of the conditions Bushy decided not to hike to Breakfast Rock but to scale the heights behind the house. The heavy dew on the grass and flowering plants created a

magical atmosphere of sparkle and shimmer. On route to the relay masts we peered over the edge to see the magnificent indigenous forest below! Well, Bushy told us it was a magnificent indigenous forest below. We had to believe him as the heavy mist kept this delight from us until passing it on our return when we were rewarded with a wonderful view! The downside to this however was wet shoes and feet!!!

We hiked to the relay masts which are 1556m above sea level. Our experience was of spectres in the mist suddenly appearing in the gloom! While having lunch the sun came out and we had a lovely unhurried hike back to the farmhouse.

A leisurely 10km hike in cool conditions, greatly enjoyed by all. Many thanks Bushy!

go to www.gohiking.co.za



Now updated to include newer maps and photos—and lighter in weight to support carefree traveling—this comprehensive guidebook to the Camino de Santiago and its offshoots contains all the information needed by modern-day pilgrims wishing to walk the sacred Way of St. James. Overview route planners plus daily stage maps and detailed town plans help sojourners with all the advance preparation they need. The maps feature contour guides to help distinguish the terrain that will be crossed each day, while full information on all pilgrim hostels, as well as details for alternative accommodation, allow travelers to plot adequate nightly stopping points. All reference information is accompanied by helpful spiritual guidelines to support the seeker's inner journey as well as the outer pilgrimage. Otherwise known as the Camino Francés, the main route covered in this volume is the most popular sacred route through Spain, from St. Jean Pied de Port to Santiago. www.amazon.com

Cartoons just for you!

Ha
ha
Ha..
Ha
ha



"Our pilgrimage is over, gentlemen."



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The Way is a 2010 American [drama film](#). It is a collaboration between [Martin Sheen](#) and his son [Emilio Estevez](#) to honor the [Camino de Santiago](#) and promote the traditional [pilgrimage](#). Saying he did not want the film to appeal to only one demographic, Emilio Estevez called the film "pro-people, pro-life, not anti-anything. Thomas Avery is an American ophthalmologist who goes to France following the death of his adult son, killed in the [Pyrenees](#) during a storm while walking the [Camino de Santiago](#) (the [Way of St. James](#)), a [Catholic](#) pilgrimage route to the Cathedral of [Santiago de Compostela](#) in [Galicia, Spain](#). Tom's purpose is initially to retrieve his son's body. However, in a combination of grief and homage to his son, Tom decides to walk the ancient spiritual trail where his son died. While walking the *Camino*, Tom meets others from around the world, all looking for greater meaning in their lives. He reluctantly falls in with three other pilgrims in particular. Joost ([Yorick van Wageningen](#)) is an overweight man from [Amsterdam](#) who says he is walking the route to lose weight to get ready for his brother's wedding and so that his wife will desire him again. He is a warm extrovert who is the first to start walking with Tom. Sarah ([Deborah Kara Unger](#)) is a Canadian fleeing an abusive husband, who says she is walking the pilgrimage to quit smoking. Jack ([James Nesbitt](#)) is an [Irish](#) travel writer who when younger had desires to be great author like [Yeats](#) or [Joyce](#) but never wrote the novel he dreamed of. He is the last to join the quartet and has been suffering from ["writer's block"](#). As the pilgrims travel the *Camino*, they occasionally meet and talk with other pilgrims — two Frenchmen, a young Italian and an elderly priest from New York named Father Frank. Thomas occasionally sees his son alive and smiling among other people. On the pilgrimage, the group have various incidents such as when a young [Romani](#) steals Tom's backpack. Although the thief escapes, his father drags him back to Tom to return the pack with his embarrassed apologies and an offer to attend a street party in compensation. www.wikipedia.org

