

WEEKEND AT STANFORD Robin Cooper 1:39pm Nov 15 2011

Thanks to Geoff Tinker and to the Martin Family who hosted us we had a delightful and memorable weekend away, in spite of the rain. Going away and having a change from one's normal routine is like a breath of fresh air. The break from normal routine is always refreshing and invigorating. A major highlight which will remain in my memory for life is the 4 seater airplane flight with John Martin as our able pilot who flew us over Hermanus Lagoon, On route to Gansbaai and Pearly Beach we were delighted to see dozens of whales with their new born calves. For me other highlights were, boating in the sunset up the river to the Lagoon, a walk around Stanford, visiting antique shops and the Saturday Market, tasting cheese at the Klein River Cheese Factory (buying at half price their prize winning matured Gruyer, a delectable cheese) and a stopover at Birkenhead Brewery for a pint of the best bitter ale in the Cape. A 2hr walk on Hermanus cliffs brought us right up close to the whales. The cherry on the top was a visit to Thordis's for Capucino at her picturesque wooden house on stilts at Fisherhaven and a walk next to the lagoon. The scenic coastal route added to the pleasure of driving back home after a great weekend.

Kleinrivier - near Stanford 11.11.2011 – 13.11.2011 by Marie Paul

The count I made gave 22 people staying at the farm. A big thank you goes to Judy and John Martin who so kindly opened their farm and hosted the Trails Club group who gathered that week end. John went the extra mile by offering to take us up for flips in his small plane. Many thank you's go to Lynette and Geoff Tinker for arranging this action packed week end and for the use of their boat and kayak. The weather was all four seasons with the raining bits and the sunny bits at the right times. Some slept in a bungalow, some slept in tents, some slept in their vans, and some who were not of the 22 slept somewhere else altogether. We enjoyed playful time and sundowners on the quiet waters of the river followed by a whopping braai on the windless Friday evening.

The resident rooster crowed his morning call at 5:30 am some ten meters or so from Gudrun's and my tent. I was up and showered, driven by bad leg cramps, before it could rooster its second call. The weather was great and sunny and perfect for the air flips that John offered. He took us in his small four seater plane to have a bird's eye view of the river, the mountains, the Hermanus lagoon and the many whales in the bay. By the time 11am arrived, almost all of us had a turn but the weather became too turbulent to fly. For those of us who do photography this was a feast. Jenny Morkel wielded a big zoom lens and I am sure took some stunning pictures. Maybe she might show them to us sometime? In Thorde's words, it was "awesome"! Never mind the fact that some suffer from air sickness and others just hate the takeoff and the landing, this was an opportunity we did not miss. So the weather having put paid to that activity, we moved onto what we really were on about and that is hiking. Again, the indefatigable John led us up a kloof to go and visit two high waterfalls. The Fynbos was in bloom and beautiful. The walk under the riparian trees was very pleasant. Robin (not Cooper) cheekily moved a ladder whilst the rest of us were hoo-ing and haa-ing at the fall, and trapped us on the rocks of a high pool. Anthony was the only brave one who did a quick dive into the icy pool. We got back in the early afternoon and enjoyed a rest and "free" time until some of us adjourned to Stanford for supper at the Arts Café and others stayed and braaied another supper. Tony did some other activity on which he commented in his report. His alternative to the hiking was beer and cheese tasting in Stanford.

The weather was least nice on Sunday. It started with rain. Those of us who slept in and around the bungalow huddled for morning coffee and chat time until the rain stopped.

When it did stop, the temperature was great and it was very still. So paddling on the river and water skiing were on the menu. We all packed and took our leave of our friendly kind hosts, in dribs and drabs, around lunch time and went our varied ways back home. Variety and great fun were definitely what comes to mind when thinking about the week end; and as always, good camaraderie!

Thank you all.

Maybe we can do this again sometime?

CAPE POINT - 22 & 23 OCTOBER 2011



All the hikers: Brian, Sue, Phil, Janine, Sandy, Barbara, Arabel, Thordis, Steffi, Alan, Julie & Gail



Everlasting!!!

On Saturday morning we met at Cape Point main gate and 10 of us set off hiking the 20km Atlantic side with the north westerly wind at our backs - a good decision. The route was long but not too strenuous with a large variety of flora to enjoy (identification with the help of Sandy) - fields of restio alternating with white everlastings, looking like snow at a distance, plus some curious but shy Bontebok. Past Sirkelsvlei we found a pretty, sheltered spot for tea. On and off with the rain gear along the coastline past Gifkometie - a few ostrich and Bontebok then the rain cleared as we continued on level terrain. A lunch break on the rocks then an easy and interesting walk while we could enjoy the birds, buck etc. without tripping over our feet! At Pegram's Point, some chose the "short cut" for the huts while others continued on to the point, surviving strong winds above Cape of Good Hope along the boardwalk, but worth the effort. A beer at the restaurant a welcome respite before ascending Da Gama peak to the Restio hut to join the others. Hot showers very welcome, the accommodation was clean and comfortable and we had an enjoyable braai and pink sunset. Alan and Julie eventually joined us, having started later, preferring to run the trail.



Huts in sight



Sunset

Sunday dawned overcast and cool but cleared later with a slight wind. A shorter 13km hike on the False Bay side but more ups and downs. The sea at Buffels Bay was a beautiful turquoise with similar patches along the whole route. The baboons passed us on their way to join the picnickers, and after some enjoyable rock hopping, we had our tea at Kanonkop. Occasionally stopping along the way to enjoy the beautiful views, we skirted the base of Paulsberg (a relief for some!!) to lunch on the edge of De Boer peak, then, sadly, back to the main gate - taking in more wonderful views of Smitswinkel and the bay. Many thanks to our leader Brian and Sue, we all went home weary but replete.

Regards,

Gail



Buffels Bay



Looking over the bay to a distant hut

TSITSIKAMMA HIKING TRAIL : 29 DEC - 4 JAN 2011

Report written by Patty Colborne.

For the record, the 18 people on the hike were Robin, Debbie, Vicky, Tommy, Yvonne, Geoff, Lynette, Mervyn, Leisa, Gudrun, Barbara, Juerg, Marjolein, Alan, Jamie, Patty, and leaders, Brian and Sue Ford.

DAY 1: 29 DEC. 2010.

The hike started at Nature's Valley, with a short walk to the Kalander Hut, in the forest that fringes the beach. It was very muddy and wet, but we made use of the lapa - covered braai in the evening, and were dazzled by a display of fire-flies flitting in the bushes around the hut.

DAY 2: 30 DEC. Kalander Hut to Blaaukrantz Hut – about 15 km.

It was once again wet and muddy. There was a fine, misty drizzle to keep us cool as we ascended steeply, through pristine fynbos, to the plateau. From the top we had an excellent view of Nature's Valley. The trail passed through beautiful indigenous forest. Sue said she enjoyed the light rain dripping through the trees. Vicky had fun photographing the fascinating variety of forest fungi. Gudrun liked the raindrop- bedecked spider webs which looked like sparkling jewels. We all enjoyed the birdcalls in the forest. Our forestry track passed beneath the N2 motorway, then we followed a forest path to the Staircase Falls, where we had a stop. The falls were in full flood, with lots of foam blowing in the strong wind. On the way to the hut we could clearly see the Blaaukrantz Bridge. The hut overlooks the upper reaches of the Blaaukrantz Gorge. We were all glad to take off our heavy packs, because there was no portage from the first hut.

DAY 3: 31 DEC. Blaaukrantz Hut to Keurbos Hut – 13,4 km.

After crossing the river below the hut, we climbed steeply for about 2 km. We passed through Buffelsbos forest, then descended to the full and fast-flowing Bloukrans River, which we had to cross using a chain. There the beautiful deep pool, Waterwitelsgat, was our stopping point, where most people swam and cooled off. The trail climbed steeply out of the gorge and then we walked through the welcome shade of Benebos indigenous forest. After that we followed a forest track most of the way to Keurbos Hut. There games of Boule and Bingo were played to enliven New Year's Eve. The New Year was toasted with champagne and then the weary hikers had an early night.

DAY 4: 1 JAN 2011 Keurbos Hut to Heuningbos Hut – 13,4 km.

We waited at the hut until 9:15 for the porters to arrive, in case the rivers had swollen, but they came later. After about 1,5 km we crossed the Lottering River. Then came a long climb, in very humid conditions, up the Rushes Pass. From there we could look back at the mountain tops peeking out of the low-lying mist. It was still very slippery underfoot. We all enjoyed the fynbos, which was exceptionally beautiful. Mervyn and Leisa saw a puffadder on the path. We had lunch and a swim at the Elandsbos River bridge. There is a lovely pool near the Heuningbos Hut. In the evening the wind blew in heavy rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning.

DAY 5: 2 JAN. Heuningbos Hut to Sleepkloof Hut – 13,9 km.

The trail ascended the Splendid Pass, named after the protea *Mimetes Splendidus*, to Mostertshoogte. We crossed the Witteklip River before winding up misty Nademaalnek. Brian had fun writing encouraging messages in the path for those following him up the long pass. The mountainsides were covered in fields of pink watsonias. There was a huge fire in the area about 4 years ago, and the regenerated fynbos is now looking its best. At the top of the pass the mist lifted and the view unfolded below to reveal our next distant little hut. We descended to a lovely indigenous forest with a river running through it. Robin enjoyed the silence of the forest and the bird calls, where the only other noise he could hear was the sloshing of his water bottle. He said that is what hiking is all about!

DAY 6: 3 JAN. Sleepkloof Hut to Storms River Bridge.

The porters came on time and we set off on a short walk mostly through forest to the Paul Sauer Bridge. The portage made a big difference to the enjoyment of the trail, as we only had to carry our day packs. It was a shock to get back into the fast-moving N2 traffic after life had slowed down to a walking pace for 6 days.

Thank you to our leaders, Brian and Sue, who did a wonderful job organizing the trail and making sure it was so enjoyable and safe for everyone in our large group. It was a wonderful way to start 2011.

Easter Weekend 2011 - Leopard Trail Guest House



The highlight of being a member of the Trails Club is to go away for a weekend or go on a trail.

Once again this theory was proved to those that had the good fortune to be on Brian and Sue's Leopard Trail Guest House Weekend.

The guest house, situated at the base of the beautiful Langeberg Mountains was a spacious comfortable farmhouse, well equipped with 2 fridges, stove, microwave, a large fully equipped kitchen and a spacious dining room. Several liters of real fresh full cream cows milk (not the anaemic decreamed milk we have got used to buying at the supermarket) was waiting for us in the fridge.

We had the choice to either chill out or choose between several delightful hikes.

The country dorp of Bonnievale was fascinating especially exploring some of the unique shops, one selling 2nd hand goods collected over 70yrs, selling everything between a needle and an anchor.

Some of us decided to hike the 12km Fish Eagle Trail to the top of 'Rooikrans'. To kill time for 2hrs before the start of the trail at 1pm most of us sat in the pretty shaded garden of Van Loveren Wine Estate and before we realised what has happened had our arms twisted to have a free wine tasting. The temptation was too much for us all and 12 different bottles of red, white and desert wine were plonked onto our table. Very little wine was left because Trails Club hikers are very thorough when tasting wine. The wine estate must have made a loss with our bunch of hikers.

Some Trails Club members had tremendous difficulty due to their conscientious tasting, when hiking past the Breede River and climbing up a very steep never ending gradient of 500 metres to the top of Rooikrans with views of the Robertson valley vineyards and distant mountain ranges.

The following day we hiked into the beautiful foothills of the Langeberg Mountains just below Leeurivier Peak the highest mountain in the area.

In the evenings we were kept entertained with several of Brian and Sue's collection of games. Even with the snoring it was a relaxing long weekend away, thanks to Brian and Sue.

Tony Burton

Here is a more sedate armchair impression of the Easter Weekend away:

Easter Week End 2011 at Leopard Trail near Bonnievale – a different perspective

Excerpts from Marie-Paule's Diary.

Having spent four and a half weeks of hobbling on the broken leg, trying to pretend life is normal, it is good to put ones feet up and be in a mode of truly doing nothing. It feels good to be with friends, to have the cross pollination of different minds and their interests...Internally, I hold on to the Easter message!

It is a gorgeous day here. With the approaching cold front the wind is picking up but Gudrun and I are relaxing on the stoep of the house at Leopard Trail,... The rest of the group has gone off hiking or swimming in the dam. The leg is up on the cushion on a chair and the mind is racing as I am writing...

Yesterday we made an excursion into Bonnievale. ...We had such a lovely interaction with the young lady at the counter of the wine shop. She is getting married in October at Breede River Escape, a potential venue for my own daughter's wedding.

We met up with the rest of the group at Van Loveren wine farm where after some tasting and a good shot of port to remove the mid morning coffee craving, I settled discretely on a bench behind a vegetation screen to wait for the farm to close and the public to leave me in sole possession of the place, whilst the others went hiking up the three peaks hill behind the farm. The greenery garden of Van Loveren with its secret corners and secluded pathways are just the type of garden I wish to have. Feeling very much in my element I reveled in spending four hours of solitary indulgence exploring the foliage, tree ferns, garden artifacts and creative fountain. Installing my chair on a piece of lawn studded with guinea fowl feathers, the magnificent vista in front of me was of vineyard rows leading the eye to a stand of crimson cannas edging the lower reaches of the Langeberg.

Reclining in comfort, I first explored my surroundings visually from behind the lens of my camera. Two hours of immobility disappeared between the pages of "Three cups of tea" in the world of the Baltistan valley and the works of philanthropist Greg Mortenson. (A true story and a must read)...

A need for different action drove me to fold up the chair and hobble on my crutches touring the garden for yet another in depth inspection and a lap around the winery building. At the hopping pace of a three legged creature, I inspected the stainless steel wine vats, the garage, the stack of tannin pungent grape husks discarded behind the building. The carpet design of grape seeds embedded in the dust attracted my eye and I studied the interwoven single layered arrangement formed by the pips.

Viewing the world and mostly photographing it on crutches takes a different dimension all together....This successfully occupied the fourth hour.

In varying state of sweatiness and fatigue, the group arrived back from the mountain in dribs and drabs.....

Gudrun and I took a drive on Easter Sunday afternoon of exploration and photography. The passing cold front left a population of clouds that lent a dramatic light play on the scenery of the Overberg.

Derelict barns, plowed fields, sheep, rolling hills edged with single rows of trees, cows, Langeberg foothills and illuminated autumn vineyards, all lended themselves as photographic subjects.... Thanks G for you kind and friendly care.

Evenings on these week ends with Bryan and Sue invariably end up in raucous affairs of social games. Pitching our intellect and talents against one another, sweets as rewards in the bargain, much screaming and laughing astound us as we retire to bed. Puzzled by the abandon of our dignified adult behavior, we nevertheless chuckle at the more or less successful antics of the night before in our attempts at solving the clues of the games...

Food always plays a major part on these gatherings. This time, Tony exhibited his culinary talents with a pot of curry that emitted deliciously scented bursts of steam from the simmering mixture...

One takes away deep feelings of contentment from such gatherings. The longing regret of not being able to hike was more than compensated by the friendship.

Sue and Bryan as always did an excellent job at organizing the week end. I was particularly touched at their kind concern and taking the trouble to arrange permission for me to stay in the gardens at Van Loveren, and showing us where Breede River Escape is.

Thank you for letting me keep my place on the week end in spite of the broken leg.

Re-reading the diary entry prompted me with a need to share a different perspective on a hiking trip and imparting a message to all in our Trails Club.

Never underestimate the therapy of friendship!