

Cape of Good Hope Trail: 28-29 Aug 2010

It looks as though judging from this report from Brian and Sue that the Cape Point overnight trail was a success in spite of some bad weather on Saturday morning. Click for an extract from my new book on Sirkelsvlei and River Frogs. The trail passes Sirkelsvlei on the 1st day. Here is the report, happy hiking, from your editor, Tony.

A windy, wet and cold Saturday morning was what 13 hikers faced at the start of the above trail, but things only got better as the day progressed. After odd morning showers, by lunchtime we could pack away our rain gear. The views were spectacular, especially with the heavy rain clouds at sea and the trail route differed from the usual day walk paths, which made it interesting.

Our packs were delivered to the huts safely along with our bedding, food and drinks and we all had a good braai outside that night, in near perfect weather. Apart from a blocked shower outlet, no electricity and 3 rechargeable lights, which each only lasted 30minutes, there were no other problems.



We woke next morning to a beautiful sunny but windy day and after a leisurely breakfast and standing for endless group photos, we left for the return trip along the False Bay coastline. The one thing that we didn't miss, was not seeing or hearing one baboon during the 2 days - much to Jenny's delight (who seems to have more than enough trouble with them at home). Conrad may have been the official leader, but Malcom led us safely from start to finish - well done Malcolm, a true young hike leader in the making!

We arrived back at the cars at about 15H00 after a great 2 days of hiking, in an area which is a privilege to hike in. Anyone who hasn't done this trail before should make sure they book the next time it's advertised. What a pity that this trail wasn't fully booked and that some people who had booked, pulled out at the last moment. This is very unfair on the club, as well as the hike leader, who puts a lot of time and effort into organizing a weekend away. We'll definitely do it again.

Thanks Conrad for organizing the trail.

Brian and Sue

Silhouette Trail: 6th - 10th August 2010

Organisers: Tommy and Yvonne Hiscock

Leader: Geoff Tinker

Participants: Lynette, Mary, Anthony, Debbie, Bret, Jeff Barton, Alison, John and Jamy Boakes and Marie-Paule.

The variety of activities packed in these four days left one with the feeling that we had been away for much longer. Ending with the leisurely mineral soaks at the Citrusdal Baths completed the relaxation from the daily work grind.

A short impromptu tour and dress rehearsal for the evening, given by the entertainer of the Lord Milner Hotel in Matjiesfontein threatened our timely arrival for the tour at the Sutherland Observatory. Our Astronomer Tour Guide explained to us the workings and differences between the conventional hyperbolic telescope and the spherical SALT. He was quite insistent that we knew SALT stood for Southern African Large Telescope and not South African... as its existence is the result of the collaborative efforts of six countries. What fascinated me was that only eight small hovercraft cushions are sufficient to rotate the huge structure of SALT on its base.

Unusually warm weather made for a lovely supper braai that evening at Ezeljaght farm. Alison was brave enough to sleep privately under the stars.

The well laid out trail took us on a round and about tour of interesting vantage points on the farm territory. As well as being able to see the domes of the observatory on the horizon line, we also saw the aviation radar station. It is a rather strange looking structure that harbors instruments apparently able to identify any flying airplanes with speed, distance, height and direction. So, don't be fooled into thinking you are flying incognito, Big Brother is watching!

The dolerite formations covered in luminous green lichen offered interesting sky lines as well as playful scrambling. I wished I knew more about Karoo Botany to be able to identify the fascinating plants we came across.

Walking ahead of the closing weather, we returned to the cars on time to make our exit as the rain started.

The scenery of the region is really beautiful. Layers of blue mountains in the distance finally explained to me the many oil paintings I have seen depicting the Karoo. Welcomed by our friendly hosts Schalk and Karen Van der Merwe, we settled in the original renovated farm house at the farm Matjiesfontein situated 30km outside Calvinia. Such comfort after the confined huts of the previous farm! The bedroom Alison, Debbie and I shared contained three beds, a bulky wardrobe, dressing table and bedside tables and still felt spacious enough to be able to dance about. We spent a very sociable evening huddled around the big fire place, sipping red wine and learning about the Van der Merwe generations and each other, whilst waiting for the delicious Karoo lamb roast we were about to be served. The call of black bellied Koraans heralded the dawn of the following crisp frosty morning.

A beautiful waterfall in the canyon of the Doorn River, followed by the scenic drive to the fascinating Kokerboom Forest, pannekoek and tee served in the NG church hall in Nieuwoudtville occupied the morning as we made our way towards Citrusdal and the Baths. Of the flowers, there is little to tell as we did not see much since the day was overcast. The most we saw was around Clanwilliam.

We all made a bee line for the soporific soak of the mineral pool. Lost in misty conversations we whiled away the afternoon.

Before you might think this "hiking" weekend degenerated into a lazy slumbering trip, we were up on a brisk climb of the mountain behind the resort building at 07:30am the next morning. The flowering vegetation in the early light was all the garden one would wish for. Fresh air, beautiful views and the mountains were, for me, such a boost of energy and joy that morning. I totally reveled in the pleasant company and thank all who organized and took part for a really enjoyable trip.

Marie-Paule

REPORT ON THE SILVERMINE RAMBLE LED BY ROSEMARY PAUL

Narrator – R Paul

Lee, Jeff and Rory plus 5 visitors joined Rosemary

What a perfect day to hike in Silvermine – no wind at all. Only a small turnout because of the soccer on at Green Point. But the 9 of us enjoyed the not too strenuous ramble. One of our visitors had to turn back half way as he was still weak from a tummy bug. Even my slow pace was too much for him LOL!!!

We left from the Silvermine Gate House parking and went down the Old Wagon Trail to the last big hairpin bend and there took the footpath off to the right up to the top of the ridge. This is a lovely lazy long slightly sloping approach and one not often used. We came out on the gravel road above the dam and turned onto the Ampitheatre Path. This is where our visitor left us, walking down with a kind gent who was going past. Because of the long delays in waiting for our unwell hiker we stopped at the rock overhang for our tea break and not further along as planned.

After tea we continued along the path and stopped often to admire the spectacular views in both directions one gets from the top. We turned down towards the dam and connected with the gravel road which took us to the dam. I love walking through the trees and plants that the various hiking groups planted after the forest round the dam was removed. Who can remember going there in the blazing sun and trying to find a bit of soil to make a hole in and plant their tree?

We returned down the river path to the cars. Finished at 5.30 because of our many stops but it was still sunny so we all got home before dark. Rory thinks we must have done about 10km.

I tried to find 'my' tree the other day and took a photo of it but when I got out my album to compare the two spots my original one did not have a rock next to it. So unless the rock grew there recently I had the wrong tree. Never mind, will just have to go back and try again.

"The Mystery of the Lost & Found Happenings on the Noordhoek to Kommetjie Walk"

First of all, on this gorgeous sunny day, 6 of our group disappeared for a good 3/4s of an hour while they shuttled cars to our lunch pub in Kommetjie. Meantime, while awaiting their return, Mary and Anthony set off literary and vanished in a haze of coastal mist – never to be seen again! Actually they hot-footed ahead of the pack as they had planned returning via the 9.5km beach (19km in total!). The rest of us finally set off at a gentle pace, both our leader and I having hiked the previous day.

We soon faced our first obstacle – a fast flowing river to cross, something none of us had come across before (pun?). We walked almost to Hout Bay in order to find a suitable "boots on" boulder hopping spot to cross. As we pressed on, we overtook and were overtaken by many dog-walking families. Then another disappearing act. A dachshund retrieving a tennis ball which his owner had thrown into the swirling waves. The poor dog was completely swept under, only to surface moments later with the ball in it's jaws, then swim like hell back to shore and his delighted owner. Both Anthony and Bafana Bafana would have been impressed! I wasn't. There are sharks in those treacherous seas and I would never treat my Rosy like that!

Later at the wreck "Kakapo", 3 rangers or "Observers of Muggers" were found to be fast asleep inside the rusty shell remaining of the wreck, but awoke at our presence. They pretended to be very alert while on "anti-muggers" duty, so obviously their hiding and sleeping tactics worked as no muggers made an appearance. As is customary, we stopped there for tea. No sooner had we set off again when Carol lost a lens from her sunglasses, but after a short search Leah found it.

The cherry on the top was when Tommy admirably carried me across the south end river (also fast flowing and deep), and I landed safely on the opposite bank, he forgot to put the other "bag" back on his back. I only noticed the absence of it about 1/2 a km. down the beach – back he had to go! We finally arrived at our pub at 1pm for a well deserved lunch and drinks where we also caught up with Anthony & Mary. Thanks Tony, so lovely doing something different every once in a while, and without the huffing and puffing, yet we still had the exercise and fresh air. So nice being able to chat to new found friends Bea, Colin and Leah too. Margarethe and Vasco were the other members of our party.

Report by Yvonne.

PS In 1780 this beach was known as "Het Lange Strand" (the Long Beach) (J. Burman).

Boss 400 – 28/3/2010 Leader: Anthony Sneath

A perfect day dawned and to begin with, we always warm the limbs up slowly, as we set off over the sand dunes towards the jeep track above Sandy Bay. Once there, a breathe-taking view of the coast appears, from the wrecked barge southwards to Llandudno in the north and Oudeskip in the middle. Then a slight descent to the contour path, facing the wreck, which, at that point, only looks 20 minutes away! The path although hemmed in on both sides by thick bush, is very well defined.

Kind hackers (I think Meridian Hiking Club) had cleared the bad patches we had endured a few years ago. In a couple of spots we had to do the “bum shuffle” which was quite good fun as it was on soft dry sand, covered in leaves. The ladder (which rather disappointed me last time), had thankfully vanished, so we could all practice our scrambling skills!

I do rather repeat myself, but each time we do this hike, I always call it the Peninsula’s mini Otter Trail – very picturesque. A great assortment of coastal fynbos had Vasco collecting samples as usual.

Maintaining an easy pace, we reached the wreck at 11-30 for an early lunch. Unoccupied this time, except for a variety of sea birds, it has completely broken in two halves. The sea is washing right through the lower sections and she is looking rather sad. Yet cruise boats and hikers continue to find her fascinating to gape at.

Always a great hike, thanks Anthony. We got home early enough for a long soaking bath, supper and our second outing to “The Last Night of the Proms” – maybe we could include the latter as a club social next year. Stirring stuff!

Report by Yvonne.

DASSIES KASTEEL TRAVERSE

Nerina led a group of 11 – Tony, Yvonne, Marjolain, Rosemary, Val, Vasco, Sue, Ron and 2 visitors – on this interesting hike on Saturday 17 April. We left the parking area at 13:30 and enjoyed a pleasant stroll past Kleintuin Kop.

Nerina warned us that, once we started going across the traverse, there would be no turning back. At this stage Ron chose rather to meet us at Bertie’s Balcony via an alternative path.

The scrambling took a bit longer than planned, as some of it was not short person friendly. Yvonne and Vasco were excellent guides as tail-end Charlies.

The view from the top of Dassies Kasteel made it all worthwhile. It was a perfect autumn day for hiking with crystal clear views of Table Bay, Gordons Bay, Noordhoek and Hout Bay. We thought that Ron would have a long wait at Bertie’s Balcony. He had, however, headed for Bertie’s Balcony from the Amphitheatre but, after an hour, found that he had circled round and was back at the Amphitheatre so he was also somewhat delayed. We saw a rare Erica flowering at Berties and this was special as it only grows in that vicinity.

The hike ended at 6:15. Many thanks to Nerina for leading a hike that was adventurous and fun. Tony was able to update the notes for his book.

Report by Rosemary Davis
