

TCSA News Letter - December 2007

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TCSA 2008 Fees Waivered

“In line with its 25th Anniversary the Trails Club has decided to waiver its entrance, visitor and membership fees for 2008. With other words: no need to pay your member fee for 2008, it's **FREE!!!**

Just a reminder why it is beneficial to be a member: regularly receiving our hike schedule via e-mail and getting preferential treatment and rates on our popular trails.

If an ex-member or a visitor wants to join from now on, this means that it's really easy to join the Trails Club of South Africa: you **go on a hike** and if you like the places you go, the people you meet and the experiences you take away with you, just ask the hike-leader for a membership form. Fill it in, there and then, and hand it back... it's as simple as that!!

Swellendam Trail 21-26 September 2007

Hike Leader: Mervyn Henderson

Hikers: Di de Villiers, Paul Burman, Conrad & Jenny Thomas, Marie-Paule Henshall-Howard, Brett Hollands, Debbie Marshbank, Gesine Pasche, Karen Cousins.

Report: Debbie Marshbank

The first thing that comes to mind when I think of this hike is that it was tough! I am pleased Mervyn decided to cut out the long section to Nooitgedacht Hut, his reason being that you don't get much more from scenery and fynbos point of view, for the amount of hiking involved, and six days would have been too long in my opinion.

Day one involved a lot of uphill climbing, and with our packs still full, this was quite tiring, but on the positive side, the weather was cool, and having had some rain during the night, the bushes and reeds were sparkling like jewels as drops of water caught the sun. The view also got more spectacular the higher we got. However, I remember wondering when the Boskloof hut was ever going to come into sight – the walk seemed to go on forever! Anyway, we made it eventually, and the weather turned quite chilly, so most of us were trying to cook our evening meal inside the hut. Fortunately the group who was supposed to join the 10 of us didn't arrive, so we could spread ourselves out a bit.

After a rather sleepless night, listening to showers of rain, people snoring, the creaking of beds as the odd person got up to go to the loo in the middle of the night; the morning dawned grey and wet. Half of our group decided to start off early, wearing all their rain gear. The rest of us thought we would wait and see if the weather cleared up. There were a few gaps when the rain stopped, so after an early lunch the rest of us departed. There were some amazing views on the odd occasion that the cloud lifted, but eventually, once over the top of the mountain, it started sleeting. The wind was very strong and biting cold, and one of our members had problems with a blister on his foot, so was struggling with that, as well as the extreme cold. When we finally made it to the Goedgeloof huts, he was just about hypothermic, and with a little bit of help getting his wet clothes off (he was shivering so much he couldn't undo his buttons), he got straight into his sleeping bag and we made him a hot cup of tea, after which he thawed out a bit.

Day three dawned clear and sunny with the remnants of clouds and mist still lurking on the mountain. After an initial uphill to a neck in the hills, we had a pleasant, mostly horizontal walk through proteas and beautiful pink Erica's, to get to the next hut at Protea Valley. We got there reasonably early and spread all our damp clothes and boots out to dry in the sun. We also lounged about on the grass soaking up the warmth and enjoying the view of pink Erica's and the amazingly high mountain, Misty Point (1710 m) which seemed to create its own weather – a plume of cloud blowing off the top. Someone commented that the cloud was blowing the other way the previous day and was now blowing back and, without hesitation and with much authority, Mervyn said: “Yes, it's called ‘blowback’”, upon which I rolled about laughing so much that I struggled to explain to the two ladies sitting close by, what was so funny. You had to have been there, I suppose.

The following morning we walked 3 km up the hill without packs (which would have been the way to Nooitgedacht Hut) but we just wanted to see the view at Vensterbank and then go back. It was a spectacular gap in the mountain, with vertical cliffs, through which you could see the landscape on the Swellendam side. We had to hold on to everything we had, as the wind was so strong it felt like it was going to rip the clothes off our bodies, not to mention that we didn't want to get blown over the cliff!

After returning to the Protea Valley hut, and having lunch, we set off on day four, encountering some steep uphill again, and then a lot of downhill, which is almost worse, as the knees start taking strain. This downhill also seemed to go on forever, and when we first caught sight of the hut, it was way down in a valley almost vertically below us. A couple of the braver people went to swim in the river, the rest of us opting to jump in and out of a cold shower. That evening we watched as a beautiful full moon appeared over the opposite side of the valley. I always feel there is something magical about watching a full moon rise.

Day five dawned misty and we set off for the last 10 km back to Swellendam. We had to climb up again, out of the valley, eventually emerging above the mist into the bright sunshine. Looking around, it felt like we were on top of the world, mist covering the valleys below us, rising, falling and swirling like the sea as we watched. After a couple of hours of walking up and down a few more hills, we got back to the cars and civilisation, ending the hike and putting all the calories on again by going for lunch at a local restaurant.

Wed 28 Nov 2007 - Karbonkelberg Lookout

Hike Leader : Lynne Fouché

4 of us enjoyed the sunset from the Karbonkelberg Lookout last Wednesday. A perfect end to a perfect day. The South Easter got up whilst we were eating snacks and it got very cold very quickly. We made a rush down to our cars to get out of the wind. Still, it was a lovely walk, just the thing for a mid-week break.

We were 4 hikers, Yvonne and Tommy Hiscock, Di Kilpert and myself.

Saturday 08 September 2007 - Karbonkelberg – Radar Station

Hike Leader : Lynne Fouché

11 club members met at Fish On The Rocks, Hout Bay where we piled into 3 cars and started the hike at the top of Bayview Road. The weather was perfect and also the pace which enabled everyone to chat and catch up on all the news.

There were different sorts of proteas to be seen and a few little blue bobbejaanties. The views just got better and better and we took full advantage by stopping a few times. Quite a way up the route the path is very eroded and we had to jump from side to side in several places, but it was good fun. Nearing the top we noticed that the path was quite overgrown, but personally I liked it as it was more of a hiking path.

Lynne had a marvelous tea stop planned overlooking the ocean and with views of both Little Lions Head and proper Lions Head.

We all could have stayed much longer but the clock was ticking. The descent was much quicker and we were back at the meeting place just after 17:00.

Thank you Lynne for a stunning walk.

SUE WINDO

HIKE TO CHAPMAN'S PEAK: Sunday 28th October 2007

Hike leader: Tommy

PRESENT: Yvonne, the Coopers, Gazena, Dianne, Lenny, Conrad & Vasco

We met at Noordhoek beach car park at 9-30 am, which is a very civilized meeting time for a Sunday. The weather was overcast which was ideal for hiking. We started off and after 15 minutes the Coopers gave up and no one knows why. We went round and round to the top in the face of a fierce wind and jackets came on. On one of our many stops for breath intake we saw below us close to the shore 2 whales giving us a display, which was a wonderful sight. A few easy scrambles and we were at the top with Gazena hugging the beacon. This was her third attempt to reach the summit. The other times she had to turn back. We were glad to get to the top to be out of the wind, where we were rewarded with spectacular views when the clouds cleared away. At the top we met a group of friends who were on a hiking mission. They started on Friday and each day they covered about 20 kms. This day they started at Constantia nek on to Chapmans peak and along Noordhoek beach to Kleinplasië dam in Redhill reserve. At night they were fetched and slept at home and started the following day at 6 am. I noticed they all wore takkies. After a half hour lunch stop we started our descent in the wind to be again entertained by the whales. Vasco of course collected samples of Kankerbos for tea. Soon we reached the windless Noordhoek beach, where a parks board employee was doing a survey of beach amenities. The Hiscocks and I decided to have tea and scones at the Hohenhort in Constantia, which was a charity event organized by St. Lukes. I found the scones a bit small. Afterwards we strolled around the magnificent gardens which have all sorts of interesting plants including several 300 year old magnificent huge Camphor trees. The farm is well worth a visit.

Reporter: Lenny Stern

Genadendal Trail : 27/28 October 2007

Unfortunately only four of us were able to do the trail. Actually four of us plus a very friendly dog. Friday night was spent at the old school hostel in Genadendal, where after a good braaivleis, we retired to bed in a rather nice dormitory upstairs.

We set off early in the morning making good time stopping for lunch at Groot Koffiegat, where another group caught up with us. After lunch we were back on the trail to the night stop, where after visiting Mr and Mrs Oakes to buy some wine, we settled in at the cabins.

Sunday, after an early breakfast, we were back on the trail. After a slight hiccup at the starting point – we were soon on the Jeep Track, spotting the big rock at the turn off, where after a brief water stop, we were on the long haul up to the top.

Crossing through the pines at the top, we descended to the 850m level, where we stopped for lunch, before the long descend to the cars. Thanks Tony, Mary and Anthony for a very good weekend.

Highlights for me:

1. The good companionship.
2. The trail itself, in spite of some pathway being in poor condition.
3. The spring flowers.
4. Tony's bolognaise supper complete with Parmesan cheese.
5. And of course our very friendly dog who did the whole trail with us.

Thanks gang for a very good weekend.

PS: The dog enjoyed eating bananas.

Geoffrey Barton



**Have a Merry Christmas and
a Prosperous New Year!**

