

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks – Drakensberg – Langibalele Pass

SOUTH AFRICA DRAKENSBERG – LANGIBALELE PASS JULY 2004 By Karen Hauptfleisch

My trip to paradise started with an e-mail to my boss on Friday

-----Original Message-----

From: Karen Hauptfleisch
Sent: 30 July 2004 09:46
To: XXXXXXXXX
Subject: Mountains

Don't look for me after 10h00 - it's snowing on the mountains and they've been shouting since Wednesday. I'm just going for a quick hike up Giant's Castle.

Off course – we only got a peak of the castle the next morning after 7h00 while sipping some Wimpy coffee in Mooiriver trying to explain to a pale lan (it must have been something he ate a few hours ago at Taps) why it was absolutely necessary to get up at 5h00. And since the grocery store only opens at 8h00 (and lan forgot about food and a few other minor details such as benzene, Old Brown Sherry and that we were coming) we had to squeeze in a Wimpy breakfast as well.

And it was only after providing lan with some anti-head-throbbing tablets and chatting to a group of Capetonian ice climbers heading for the frozen waterfalls in Giants Pass, that we started our hike up Langibelele pass. lan's backpack was way too heavy and off course the fact that I gave him the tent to carry and the thirst he must have developed by now made for some interesting conversation.



lan waiting for the rest of the group

We came across some Eland and baboons and after reaching the contour path (it's 2km of unrelenting up hills) we took the recommended break and had some snacks (Which, thank goodness, left lan with 2 liter water less to carry and us with another 4 km to go). And this is where the Strauss waltz got stuck in my head – I just wanted to waltz. Andre declared that The Sound of Music's song, something about "high on a hill is a lonely goat" was stuck in his head.

And then someone gave a shout (it could have been me) but there it was – snow. And all of a sudden Andre got his sense of humour back and me and Lorna got an instant snow-crazy buddy.

The rest of the way me, Lorna and Andre had permanent grins on our faces despite the climb (And I presume lan was feeling much better since he was sprinting to the top). Once on top lan suggested that we pitch the tent instead of hiking another kilometre to Bannerman's cave (okay, so I do have an obsession about finding caves) since the mist was rolling in (and the chances of actually seeing the blue moon became slim.) And then the battle to get warm started...

We put on dry clothes, pitched the tent, had some anti freeze and then everyone got in the sleeping bags to get warm. (I was giggling outside because I got to sit on lan's famous camping chair without him seeing me and then the nagging started. "Fuzzy – get inside the bloody tent. Are you an ADD sufferer?" "No lan, I'm a Gemini so it's NORMAL for me to have nervous energy" And then I finally

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got inside the tent and sleeping bag – and I really tried not to disturb everyone else (Yep – apparently everyone gets warned (I'm not saying by whom) not to share a tent with me because I have ants in my pants and a weak bladder).

And then the thought that I'm wasting my life sleeping made me grab my headlamp and I went for a walk. It was really beautiful but all of a sudden I got this eerie feeling that made me want to run back to the tent so I turned around and ended up sitting in Ian's chair staring at where the moon was supposed to be.



Lorna and myself

And there she was in all her glory. It was awesome and (did I shout so loud?) Lorna, Ian and Andre rushed out of the tent. We took a stroll to the edge of the escarpment and sat there for a long time in silence admiring a view impossible to describe. My heart filled with gratefulness and my tears kept melting the snow. Gratefulness for being given the opportunity to witness the Berg covered in snow with the blue moon providing us with light. We hugged one another and decided it was time to stand on our heads – hehehe. What are blue moons for?

The rest teamed up against me and I was told to get inside the tent again – which I did – but my heart stayed outside thinking that I might still convince one of them to join me in a nice summit a bit later on. Unfortunately the only reply I got during the night was “No, maybe a bit later” – and it was not coming from Ian or Andre. Thank goodness – the time to get up came soon afterwards since Ian's sleeping bag got wet and everything was freezing around me. So I thought I'll warm up by taking a nice stroll up a hill – big mistake since I don't have snow boots but luckily I defrost quickly and Ian was so kind to sleep with my socks. Plus I got a foot rub. And then it was time for some inspection –

Things that froze (and they were inside the tent)

- The boots
- My shampoo
- My cream
- Ian's socks
- My waterbottles
- My walking sticks
- A part of my sleeping bag

Things that didn't freeze

- Lorna's gaiters (but only because Andre slept with them)
- The condensmelk

After melting some snow and having some soup/coffee we decided to go back via Bannerman's pass. Ian had to be back by 13h00 and he headed down Langibalele. It was great fun (and a good workout) getting to the top and after a while we decided to skip the caves and head straight for the pass). It was at about this stage that I decided to look where I'm going since I was getting tired trying to get up every time I fell and eventually we all came to the responsible conclusion that considering the weather it was maybe not such a bad idea to turn back and go down Langibalele pass – which



This is where we decided to turn back

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we did.

The part where I got lost and couldn't get down because of steep cliffs? Well, no need to go into details.

My feeling about the hike? It's came sooooo close to Ruwenzori

Andre's feelings? Ek is regtig op 'n "HIGH" hoor! Alles is nog steeds besig om in te sink...

Lorna's feelings? Aaagh the photos came out great! It brings back such good memories! Thanks guys for a wonderful weekend. The good news is that my ankle is fine, it is not sore at all for which I am extremely grateful. I think it was that wonderful swim that did it so much good. Pity about the Moon photos but the memories will always be there.

Ian's feelings? This is my church.....