

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks – South Africa – Giants Castle

SOUTH AFRICA ICE CLIMBING AT GIANTS CASTLE JUNE 2005 By Karen Hauptfleisch

According to David Bristow Giant's pass is extreme – add rain and mist as well as an extremely heavy backpack filled with ice climbing gear and you get extreme deluxe. A decision was made not to procrastinate so the hike up was cold and wet from the start. The climbers are definitely not your average hiker – most of my normal hiking gear had to make place for the ice-axes, crampons, helmet, rope and taking an extra pair of socks was considered a luxury. We made it to the top just before sunset and we had to help a group pitch their tent since they were suffering from hypothermia.



Stopping for a break was out of the question. It was freezing and I wouldn't have been able to pick up my backpack again

Something hot to eat and drink was not an option since the water was frozen and since the wind was howling no-one felt like melting some snow. Around midnight Martin discovered another use for a zip-lock bag but I won't go into details.

I volunteered the next morning to stay behind while the rest went ice-climbing. Danie and Kees finally arrived and said they were forced to bivvy in the pass. That afternoon some of us went for a hike while the rest of the group tried to dry their stuff. It was also decided that the Basoetoes would be nuts trying to steal our stuff since the wind never stopped howling for one second. That evening very interesting meals were prepared and by 19h00 everyone was ready for bed. Around 3 there was a lot of shouting and everyone rushed out of their tents thinking the Basoetoes were upon us – but it was only a lady that had to go to the loo. (The zip-locks don't work for woman)



The experienced ice-climbers didn't feel the cold or wind howling.



The spectacular sun rise

Friday morning was spent ice-climbing and at least the wind was not howling near the waterfalls. The afternoon the "hikers" hiked to Giant's Castle where we had an awesome view of the Berg. It was also decided to watch the sun rise the next morning on the peak. Ken, Sue and Phillip joined us and that evening more interesting meals were prepared. Dean pitched up at 19h00

The alarm never went off at 4h30 and since it was freezing Danie and Kees said they were going to start without us. Me, Martin and David took another 10 minutes to get ready and arrived at Giants Castle just before sunrise – but the wind was blowing too much and it was too dangerous to get to the top. I was reminded of my skydiving days and we didn't stay too long. The rest of the morning was spent ice-climbing and we did several solo climbs. Lofty also announced that we were going to leave the next day and I must say for the first time in my life I was looking forward to getting off the mountain. Kees, Danie and Nicole left at two and it was rather sad. The evening was spent

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sipping Bells and trying to finish our food. I put on all my layers (5 at the top and 6 at the bottom) and slept quite warm that evening.

On Sunday Ken, Lofty and Dean decided to go ice climbing while the rest of us started hiking down the pass. It took us 5 hours to get to the bottom. The 3 ice-climbers made it down in record time – 3 hours and then Lofty and David went back to fetch Roy who had problems with his knees.

Boy oh boy was I glad to get out of the wind and into a hot bath once at home. Geoff said he had to run down the pass in order not to smell himself!



Thank you to all my friends who bought me my climbing boots.