

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks – Namibia - Brandberg

NAMIBIA BRANDBERG APRIL 2006

By Karen Hauptfleisch

“Leave your 4 season tent behind – it never rains in Namibia”. Parting words of Frans and since he's been to Namibia I left the tent, splash cover and general raingear. It never rains in Namibia.....

Two days before we left South Africa I booked a camping site via the internet and made some enquiries about guides. “Are you fit?” came the reply. I didn't have time to explain about my genes and I told Riaan and Glen to get fit two months ago so I ignored Basil's e-mail.

The guidebook mentioned guides at the tourist centre in Uis so we stopped there and met Siegfried – our soon to be guide. He informed me that we were planning to take the difficult route. Difficult equals scenic and after some deliberations with Glen and Riaan we decided to go scenic. It was not that difficult to convince Siegfried to take us on the scenic route.

Day 1: We forgot to set our watches according to Namibian time but Basil had a sense of humour when we woke him up at 5. Mmmmm, so it never rains in Namibia. Well, we had to improvise and 3 minute tents were packed and our hike started officially at 7 at the entrance to the White lady – in the rain.



Everyone still had their senses of humour

8 hours later I didn't dare ask if anyone lost their sense of humour. The normal scenic route was not so normal anymore with all the rain and we went up one mountain side, then down it just to go up again 10m further. Eleven hours of boulder hopping (most of it done in the rain that never rains in Namibia) started to take its toll. I had another spectacular fall and landed with my face in the sand.



My scratched legs

I felt like Livingstone exploring – my legs were a network of scratches and I ended with several thorns stuck in them. The evening was spent in our minuscule tents listening to the rain wetting our sleeping bags.

Day 2: 8 o'clock at night and we were lying in our tents in wet sleeping bags watching the tents getting wetter and wetter.

We started our adventure at half past eight in order to try and get some of our stuff dry. Nine hours of falling over boulders. Glen behaved the best when he lost his sense of humour. Myself? Let's not elaborate. Riaan? It was hilarious. Our guide? The last I heard was “Your boots can stay outside in the rain” when I asked him to keep it in his tent.

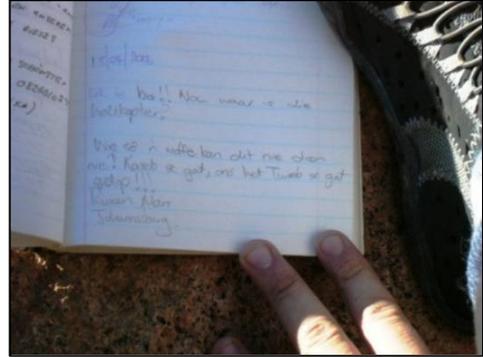
The hike was the toughest one so far in Africa. Boulder after boulder made us doubt our guide's sense of direction and left us with something to talk about in the future.

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Something I definitely will recommend is long pants. Our casualties? I can't pick up my leg – I suspect a pinched nerve. Siegfried – not sure but he's freezing in his tent – no sense of humour. Glen – battling to walk – been chafed badly. Riaan? Besides almost fainting his back is killing him.

Day 3: "Ek is bo. Waar's die helikopter. Wie't gesê dis nie vir moffies nie. Kaseb se gat. Ons het Tsiseb se gat geskop" was Riaan's entry in the journal on top of Konigstein.

We all got up at 4h30 and by 5h00 we were on our way. The sun started rising at 6h00. So we made one mistake. When I asked our guide if I can leave my backpack and run to the top his inappropriate reply "If you can find it again" made my sense of humour splatter down the mountain. I told him that I will find my own way to the top and that it was in his best interest to stay as far as possible from me, Riaan and Glen have decided to take their time with the ascent. When they finally arrived at 7h00, peace was restored and we spend two hours on the top drying our stuff.



Riaan's entry into journal on top



On top of Brandberg

Siegfried's reply when asked how long to descent was four hours.

Four hours later we were at Longipools. His reply when asked how much further was – four hours! It is a beautiful mountain so I didn't lose my sense of humour.

The descent was quite adventurous with loads of boulder hopping/climbing/crawling and every now and again a voice yelling "Siegfried, I'm stuck! Come help"

Four hours later, when the reply to the question "how far still to go" came, it was a good test of character. Another four hours which made our total hiking time for the day 10 hours. Basil was asked to wait at the camping site and a unanimous decision was made not to ask Siegfried how far still.

When it got dark and Glen and Riaan had to fall over the boulders because Riaan's torch batteries were flat and Glen had to give Siegfried his, it was another test of character.

Thirteen hours of challenging hiking and dear Basil waiting for us with an ice cold beer. I have never been so glad to see a vehicle! Brandberg is awesome! - Karen

"I know why it's inappropriate to hike with a gun – we would have been without a guide by the end of day two" – Riaan

"Awesome mountain – my first and an experience that I doubt can be bettered" - Glen



And Black Diamond wanted to know what I have done with my hiking sticks!