

SOUTH AFRICA
Wolkberg
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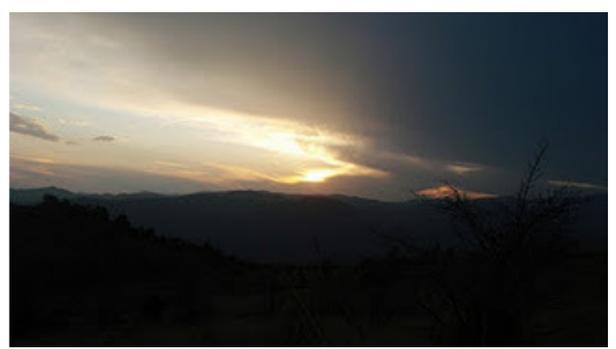


Wolkberg

Thanks to several warnings, pictures and a video clip, we knew the road to the MCSA hut was going to be bad. We parked the 4X4 in the shade, just before the road got horrendous. Jimmy Stone and his son, who arrived the next morning, tried to go further, got stuck twice and decided to park close to us.

The hike to the hut was a pleasant one, with definite signs of where the other land rovers and 4X4 got stuck the previous weekend.

The litter-free MCSA hut was a pleasant surprise. Thanks to a handful of Haenertsburg ex-service men and their friends, building started in June 1951. Building material was loaded onto an armored car (from 2nd ww and armor removed) and got the first building material to the hut. It took them 4 days to get down again so further material were either carried up manually or on donkeys. Today most people take the hut for granted. Hopefully future users will use it with the respect it deserves. (More info in the 1997 MCSA Journal).



Beautiful sunset

Bird watching, a nice swim in the pool, a sunset and sitting around a cozy fire chatting before crawling into my sleeping bag ended my first day in this beautiful remote wilderness area.

Saturday: The next morning Etienne was very excited about the dormouse he encountered the previous evening. Reading through the journal in the hut he discovered that his name was Wallace. Wallace was a true gentleman and only took some of my breakfast cereal and a bit of Etienne's. After breakfast we explored the area about 1km upstream from the famous pools. Our first attempt up the stream was barefoot and lasted about 30 minutes. Our second attempt was hiking through the bushes next to the stream. After several encounters with brambles, we decided to hike in the stream. The last stretch required pangas and we turned back reluctantly.



This bit required pangas

The hike back was awesome and we spotted a lot of birds, duikers and a reedbeek. Once again the swim in the pool was awesome. The rest of the afternoon was filled with bird discussions.

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks - South Africa

The evening was spent story telling and just admiring this beautiful unspoiled place and lightning.

Sunday: 5 Minutes after waking up a decision was made to keep the hut as base camp. Etienne and Jimmy told me that Wallace and his cousin, Mr. Cutie Pie (A Fluffy Tailed Mouse) would have been kicked out if they were not indigenous. I went exploring while the rest of the group waited for the weather to clear. Around 10h00 Etienne and I started the "official" hike to the top of Wolkberge.



The top of Wolkberg

We startled a little reedbuck that injured his leg. It left both of us sad. It was spectacular on top. After our third attempt, we found a pass down. Etienne stepped on a berg adder – so much for injuring animals. The hike back was lovely and we arrived at the hut around 4 o'clock. After a nice sunset I was ready for bed.

Monday: We decided to explore a bit more and took the Jeep track we spotted the previous day. After +- 15km we turned back and hiked for another hour. Then we entered the "aqua/brandnetel" route. Hiking in the river turned out just as much fun as the previous time and we finally got the spot where we started exploring the previous time. Etienne shoe sole came undone and he looked pretty silly picking up his feet! Going up the hill on top of the famous pools, Etienne cleared the path using the cutter. The path to the hut was also very overgrown. By this time, my legs full of scratch marks were shouting for mercy. Etienne decided to head for the car to find something he can fix his boot with while I tried my best to avoid the brambles and other branches poking into my legs. The path was badly eroded. The swim in the pool at the MCSA hut must have been the best I ever had.

Once can easily spend a month here. There are so many beautiful places to explore (if you ignore the nasty plants). Etienne build another campsite after he fixed his boot.

Tuesday: We started at 8h00 and got to Oom Paul's nose around 12h00. What a beautiful unspoiled place. The scramble down was hectic at first. Once in the Sprokieswoud we took a wrong turn and discovered a lot of litter. Needless to say, it spoiled the moment. We picked up what we could and had the rubbish bags with us the rest of the hike as a reminder how selfish people can be. It was an awesome sight watching hundred's of fireflies in this magnificent forest.



Picking up litter left behind by hikers in the forest

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks - South Africa

Wednesday: The bramble made the hike to the bottom house extreme – at some stage we carried our backpacks on our necks following a river until it got too deep. The next step was to leopard crawl through the bushes. A very exciting hike indeed. Once we got to the house we left our back-packs behind and speed walked the 5 km to the vehicle.

This is a truly wilderness experience and I can easily spend a month here.



We had to abandon this route when we had to swim



Leopard crawling