

## TREKKING IN SOUTH AFRICA'S 'DRAGON MOUNTAINS' 11 – 18 July 2009



### JULY CAMP 2009 - GIANT'S CASTLE



On 10 July all the participants to this year's UIAA Global Youth Summit Meet will be in South Africa, ready to take on this adventure! They will be accommodated in a Backpacker's Lodge in Dunkeld, Johannesburg. After a light Continental breakfast - sponsored by the Lodge - we will leave Johannesburg by 08h30 and head down to Kwa-Zulu Natal, or more specifically, to the Giant's Castle Reserve, a drive of six or seven hours. Our gear will be stacked on a tractor and trailer and taken to Base Camp, about five kilometres from the main entrance to the Reserve where all vehicles will be left and we walk the rest of the way.

The site for the Youth Meet will be in the historic Giant's Castle Reserve - home of the eland and the majestic bearded vulture (pictured above) - which lies in the Central Berg region of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, a World Heritage Site. This site offers a number of excellent opportunities for trekking, both in the Little Berg and on the Escarpment. The area is very well known for its superb examples of rock art created by the San people, the early inhabitants of the area, and the Lammergeyer (bearded vulture) is endemic to this region. More information about this fascinating area in South Africa can be found on:

<http://www.southafrica.info/travel/wildlife/drakensberg-050705.htm>

Base Camp will be based north-east of the outcrop known as the Chimney Pot (Maqomfa 1 894m) and overlooks the Mamnedeni Stream which drops to join the Bushman's River near the Witteberg Gate entrance to the Reserve. July Camp endorses a comprehensive system of environmental practices that address, *inter alia*, conditions of access, reinstatement and rehabilitation, pollution and the impact of the event on soil, animals, vegetation and other area users. **The MCSA, together with the UIAA, subscribes to the "Kathmandu Declaration on Mountain Activities" and the "Tyrol Declaration on Best Practice in Mountain Sports"** - a copy of the MCSA's Code of Conduct has been provided to each participant.. The Drakensberg is the main watershed for KwaZulu-Natal, so all Campers are required to use biodegradable soaps and shampoo and to ensure that grey water is dispersed directly onto a grassed area and not into a watercourse.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

Base Camp is situated on Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife land and each camper will be required to carry a valid permit to be in Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife area and to produce it if required. **Individual permits will be issued in Base Camp. The cost of the permit is included in the fees. To avoid international problems, participants must also carry passports valid for Lesotho as we are likely to traverse the Escarpment.** We have asked participants to bring two photo copies of their passports which should be valid for at least 6 months after departure from South Africa, and must have two clear pages; original + 1 copy of Medical Insurance and their Alpine Association Membership Card.

Our tents will be provided (2 persons sharing). You must not forget that you have to carry all your own equipment and supplies for the duration of the trek - there are no porters! A large tent will be pitched in Base Camp for storing excess kit when personal tents are taken on sub-camps.

In Base Camp all meals are prepared and served by members of the kitchen staff, but Campers wash their own mugs, cutlery and dishes in the facilities provided. After supper, weather permitting, Campers will gather around the campfire in the enclosure for a briefing/de briefing and enjoy a mug of chocolate or cocoa. Limited hot water is provided at the rustic bathrooms. Toilet facilities are provided in Base Camp. Human waste will be buried when not in Base Camp. Campers with specific dietary needs have been advised to provide for their own requirements.

Large rubbish bags will be provided to each participant - the principle of 'carry in, carry out' applies. Participation in July Camp is on the understanding that each Camper will carry out and take away ALL the rubbish he/she generates both in Base Camp and on the sub-camp

## **CLIMATE IN JULY IN THE MOUNTAINS**

July is winter in South Africa: it is dry and cold with a possibility of snow fall. Nevertheless day time temperatures can be a mild 20°C, usually peaking at 24°C, but it could be a bit warmer. Night temperatures can be down to -4° or even -12°C. Rain is infrequent, but does occur in July. More on South African weather can be found on: <http://sawweather.co.za>

## **ITINERARY**

Saturday night will be spent in Base Camp. It will have been a long day. On Sunday after breakfast, we will go out for the day and return to Base Camp to spend another night there. This will allow us to acclimatise and get used to walking in the area. It will also allow us to make any adjustments to our equipment to ensure that we are comfortable. On our return to camp on Sunday food and other supplies will be drawn from the Quartermaster's Store and our packs prepared. Remember there are no porters! On Monday morning we will leave Base Camp after breakfast and only return on Friday afternoon and we will be camping out every night.

The maximum daily distance will be 18 kilometres (probably only 1 day of this distance!); elevation will be from 1 400 metres to 3 100 metres. Shortly after we leave Camp on Monday morning we will reach the Main Caves Museum. We will stop here for a short time where the group will be taken on a guided tour of the Caves - we will see fine examples of San rock art which depicts life as they experienced it all those many years ago. We will then move on up Giants Ridge and a few days later come down Bannerman Pass. However, our Guide may have to change the route if circumstances demand this.

On Saturday 18 July we will break camp early for the drive back to Johannesburg. Our Italian participants will be taken straight to the airport for their flight home, whilst the others will again be taken to the Backpackers Lodge, for another adventure that starts very early the next morning!

## **IN CLOSING**

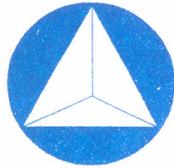
The UIAA GYS Youth Meet is fully subscribed! We have 20 international participants (including Youth Leaders) from UK, France, Spain, Italy, South Tyrol and 4 South Africans. Only a few weeks to go now but we in the MCSA are looking forward to welcoming all our Participants!

Jenny Paterson - Meet Administrator

Our contributors and sponsors - to whom we are most grateful!

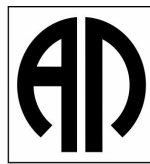


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