

Kamberg Day hike 2nd August 2014

A day hike in the Berg is essentially a light hearted and leisurely occupation—a combination of exercise, a breath of fresh mountain air and a chance to commune with the beauties of nature.

This world heritage site, has outstanding scenery, geological features and magnificently sculpted



basalt cliffs. Beneath them are the light-coloured cave sandstone forming undulating plateau's, with sweeping grasslands, brilliantly green in summer, pastel and yellow in winter which adds to this spectacular scene. Krantzes or cliffs run under the summit in the little berg, and in these sandstone layers hundreds of rock shelters and overhangs are

to be found. In these shelters San hunter- gatherers made their homes and the richest concentration of rock paintings in the world are to be found. Some of the paintings are well protected and well preserved and are of exceptional quality, especially those in Game Pass Shelter. However these shelters are still eroding, this is partly due to moisture in the rock, and to a lesser extent to sudden temperature changes. This means



that the great wealth of rock art in them will eventually disappear entirely. While time and nature will continue to take their toll, the deterioration of many paintings during the last hundred or so years has been caused mainly by humans. Therefore visitors must always be accompanied by an accredited Amafa Rock Art Custodian when entering into an area within 50m of any rock art site in the province of kwa-Zulu Natal. All the above makes up an enjoyable, interesting and rewarding visit to the Berg.

Philip, Clive and myself had made an early start from Durban and arrived at the Kamberg reserve to meet up with Rose, Cheryl, Gordon, Max, Neville, Erica, Fiona, Rob and Tony; some had overnighted at Mountain Shadows and all were keen to get going. As we climbed up to the plateau below Game Pass Shelter we were rewarded with the sighting of between forty or fifty (what I identified?) as Jackal Buzzards. Few sights could be more impressive then these birds soaring high overhead.



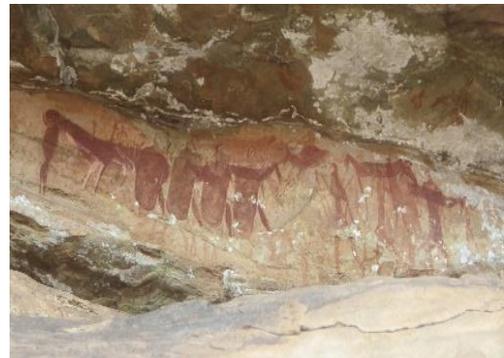


The exceptionally dry winter was evident at our first stop at the Obathwa shelter, the normal curtain of water flowing over the lip of the shelter was now just a trickle. The route starts to rise and rapidly gains altitude for the next few hundred metres, after which it contours around a game track to a stream crossing. From here on the scenery is outstanding with numerous waterfalls cascading into delightful pools and with impressive massive rock formation towering above. We scrambled up to Christmas cave which is situated high up in the sandstone band. The paintings in this shelter are mainly painted on the roof, there was much debate as to the reason for this.

At this point two members of our group felt that they had gone far enough, I then made arrangements for Philip to accompany them back to a recognised point and for them to wait there for our return. Philip would then meet up with the rest of the party at Willem 1 & 2 caves. I lead the rest of the group over the top and arrived at the caves and met Philip who greeted us with the disturbing and concerning news that one of them had disappeared. I must emphasize that as a leader I assume responsibility for the safety of each member of the group. This disappearing act was extremely unnecessary and irresponsible on the part of this hiker and could have had serious consequences.



The paintings of a group of Eland on the wall of Willem2 cave were still well preserved and well worth the effort it took to traverse over from Willem1.



After picking up Gordon, who had been waiting patiently at the arranged site, we set off back to the car park which was mostly downhill, we arrived back pleasantly tired, rejuvenated and relieved to find that the lost soul had not ended up in cyber space on Planet Apple!!

DAVID TIGHE