

**SWAZILAND
SIBEBE, EMLEMBE AND MALELOTJA
JANUARY 2005
By Karen Hauptfleisch**

Someone predicted bad weather for the weekend but I spend at least 2 hours on the net surfing for a weather-site predicting sunny weather – and voila – how bad can a cloud with one tiny drop somewhere in the distance be?

At 14h00 Bernelle, Frans, Lorna, Andre and myself were on our way in our two Uno 1100 s to the Kingdom of Swaziland. We spend the night at Legends-a backpackers lodge with some very interesting characters and were woken at 2h00 by that one drop that turned into million big drops. But not to worry – when our guide turned up at 3h30 the weather was perfect and we were off - to climb the second largest rock mass in the world - Sibebe.

We didn't get very far when Nthulani informed us that the rock was too slippery and that we had to turn back.



The adventure cavers

Lorna and I ended up watching birds and the other three had a rest. And then we were off to

do some adventure caving. Swaziland is really a beautiful place and after the caving we were sopping wet and we had a nice "swim" in the cuddle puddle close to Legends.

And then we were off again – and this time the rock was mostly dry – but what a mental challenge. A little voice inside my head kept on

telling me that it is absolutely impossible to get to the top without ropes – but luckily Fluff was brave (maybe because she could not turn around?) and I had some serious conversations with myself (one shuffle at a time/don't look down/you can do it/are you \$#@ crazy!!! etc)

Once on top it took me a while to get my knees to stop shaking (and to find Bernelle who fell in love with the place and went exploring) and then the adventure started again. We took a different route down and had some nice bum slides. We also had to squeeze through a beautiful cave where I donated some skin. Once down everyone agreed that it was a mind over matter thing – it seems quite possible when you're at



The rock was too slippery at 04h00



Unfortunately, there was no turning back

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks – Swaziland

the bottom but half way up you get a closer look and it is quite freaky.



The whole Sibebe team safely down

And that was the Sibebe challenge. We packed and headed for Malelotja but we missed the turn-off and spend the night camping outside Piggs Peak. It started raining but we're getting good at pitching the tents in the rain.

The next morning I got the distinct feeling that some senses of humour were a bit lost but we headed for Bulwer in any case (it was only drizzling). What a nice surprise. We were able to get hold of a guide and the hike up to Emlembe (The highest peak in Swaziland) was - although a bit rushed - great.

On the way to Malelotja, some people got into a better mood after being fed but I got a bit grumpy because no one wanted to stop to do some bird watching. Malelotja is a beautiful place, the campsites are awesome and we had a great time around the fire.

Monday morning Frans and myself followed Bernelle to the Malelotja falls where she discovered the adventurous mushroom route. Another challenging hike back to the campsite followed with heavy lightning striking, just to discover that our dry clothes and hot food were locked in my car and that the keys were somewhere on a game drive. Eventually, everyone calmed down after 2 hours when Andre and Lorna arrived back and we enjoyed a hot shower/something hot to eat/the birds and a final whisky in our coffee before we headed back to the rat race.



On top of Emlembe