

SOUTH AFRICA
Drakensberg – The Grand Traverse
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I stopped believing in coincidences a long time ago so when my blind dancing partner asked me to join him on the 230km Drakensberg Grand traverse, I started packing. The traverse was organized by the Roodepoort hiking club as part of their 25th anniversary and they decided to raise funds for the society of the blind. Mmm, there was no way a blind guy can out walk me, was my exact thoughts!

On Sunday, the 22nd of April 12 eager hikers started the 13 day hike at the Sentinel. Andre, my friend decided in the end that he was not fit enough but Jaco Lubbe, who has got 5% eyesight joined us. The average age of the group was 47 – with Walter Mössner (74) the oldest and Jaco (30) the youngest. Our senses of humor were tested thoroughly and some of the highlights included:

- Strong winds that knocked some of us off our feet
- Hail and temperatures below -10°
- Snow
- Visiting Mafadi and Thaba Nthlenyana, South Africa and Southern Africa's highest peaks (And in Jaco's case, doing handstands on them)
- The pictures we took of ourselves first thing in the morning to see who looked the most like the michellin man. (I woke up one morning thinking I won the prize when I could not see anything. Unfortunately, I was then informed by Jaco that the reason I could not see anything was because I had my beanie over my face.)
- The beautiful sunrises
- Jaco saying someone left their teeth in his boots when he started getting blisters

The mountain was exceptionally clean and we only send two bags of litter (mostly plastic bags left in the streams by the locals) down with the resupply team.

It's been a real privilege to:

- see some parts of the Drakensberg I haven't seen before with my new hiking friends.
- hike with Jaco (with his 5% eyesight he made me aware of the beauty of the Drakensberg's reflections in the streams) and last but not least

It's been an honour hiking with the stubborn 74 year old Walter who refused to let us carry some of his belongings after he had a fall.