



*4 Wheel Drive Club SA - Western Cape*

*Dating to Highlanders Campsite*

*Trawal - Western Cape*

*Organiser / Leader George Purchase*



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1) **The Idea:**

Like with all good things in life, a small spark can start a flame, and indeed the idea by George, our guide, sparked an excellent flame to capitalise on an extra-long weekend, whilst we celebrate and remember at the same time, those very special people in our lives, our wives! Those to join in were out to do what is in line with the spirit and credo of the club, to enjoy what we do safely, with respect for the environment and most importantly that we have great fun!

2) **Planning & Organising:**

Very quickly a WhatsApp Group was set up and the communication, ideas, questions, proposals, etc., started flying. It was very quickly transparent that whilst there is a formal programme, our leader is open minded and flexible for individual needs.

The end-product was a very easy-going programme that will involve some excitement (4X4'ing), some relaxation, some individual time, use the opportunity that a splendid flowering season in Namaqualand promised to and indeed presented this year after good rains in the region.

3) **The Day Arrives:**

We (most of us.... the writer pleads guilty 😊) all departed around 07h00 for the well-known Kardoesie atop Piekenierskloof Pass for a breakfast. With brekkies pre-ordered, we used the time for introductions, a good catch-up amongst the older members and just having a good time together. George reminded all about the protocols of convoy driving and soon (after assisting a group of bikers with a flat battery) we were on our way for the rest of our journey.



4) **The Final Group:**

The final Group of 22 persons, convened at Kardoesie which consisted of:

George & Cheryl, Kobus & Marian, Kevin & Emily Alp and their daughter Silin, Kevin & Jenni Childs, Kevin & Lesley Staegemann, Sam & Karen, Victor & Ann, Jacques & Nadine and their son Sebastian, Neville & Etha, , Jose & Fatima.

Regrettably, Jacques, Nadine and Son had to abort the trip, due to increasing illness amongst the family..... Next time Jacques & Nadine!

5) **What did we do?**

a) *Day 1 – Thursday 09th:*

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With radio communications checks completed we left Kardoesie, heading for Citrusdal, the name of the town that certainly needs no explanation of the nature of farming, with which most farmers are engaged in! We worked our way through Citrusdal and headed out on the eastern side of the Olifants River, northbound, off the beaten track for our basecamp destination at Highlanders Campsite in Trawal. Shortly after leaving Citrusdal we stopped for a first burst of colourful flowers on the side of the road. This opportunity was used to deflate to correct tyre pressure for the balance of the road, which was hard gravel and a quick explanation to all about the route to be followed.



After this brief stop we were soon on our way proceeding to the 4-way crossing for the turn-off to Algeria. The road lead us up the Nieuwoudts Pass through stunning scenery in the Cederberg Mountains Wilderness area with a good ascend to entertain us to more outstanding views down the valley as we approached the turn-off to Clanwilliam. We took a sharp left to the town of Clanwilliam a mere 500 meters short of Algeria Campsite soon thereafter passing Grootkloof forestry village and its primary school, proudly advertising it's "Rugbyveld" deep down in the valley where the Rondegat River flows after good rains high up in the mountains. Soon thereafter we passed Jamaka Organic farm on a journey filled with lots of "oohh's and aaaahh's" as we appreciated the wonder of nature. We were awed and surprised as we appreciated a 100% filled Clanwilliam Dam. A mere 3 months ago this dam level was below 30%. It was particularly rewarding to view it from a different vantage point than the usual view from the N7 highway.







Again, after a quick leg stretch in the town of Clanwilliam, we were back on the back roads passing the Rondeberg Holiday Resort and the Bulshoek Dam in the Olifants River, winding



our way through the landscape until we saw the first signs of agriculture as the Namaqualand vineyards of Trawal started appearing and we crossed the Doring River low-water bridge to join the N7 just north of the

confluence of the Doring River and the Olifants River on the final stretch back down south for a few kilometres to Highlanders campsite where we put up camp at leisure and were treated to a wine tasting to end off the formal day's activities, after which we settled in around a good bon fire and a communal braai at the conversational pit. We agreed on the activities for the next day, which was doing Bergkraal 4X4 trail and depending on how time goes, we might fit in a drive out towards Calvinia and surrounds for some flower watching.

*b) Day 2 – Friday 10th:*

We departed for Bergkraal 4X4, between Klawer and Vredendal where we met up with owner Frikkie van Zyl. A briefing on the some of the basics and signing of indemnity forms we departed on the challenging route which presented us with a mixture of rocky terrain, dongas, enclosures and obstacles including a fun filled sandy section, mostly grade 3, possibly touching here and there on grade 4 skills and experience. The full route includes a section that is a full grade 5 section, which we wisely opted, for the sake of time, not to do.



Hats off to the brave few, George, Kevin Alp and Jose for attempting

Padagat and the steep rocky incline at the very start of the trail. By



Frikkie's own admission the vast majority of vehicles, regardless of the combination of correct tyre pressure, tyre type, skills and technique manage it successfully through Padagat and his "brother". After the recovery straps were put to task, we were on our way to enjoy



the rest of the rocky section, inspired by George, Kevin and Jose's attempts.

The final obstacle on the rocky section of the trail, a nail-biting donga crossing, we decided to take the detour around the grade 5 section, up a pass, which gave us a spectacular view over the Olifants River down below, lined by the vineyards on both sides of the banks of the river, some of which have already started blooming. (“*Way too early for this region .....*” according to Frikkie with his many decades of experience in farming in this area.)



The sandy section was thoroughly enjoyed by all and most obstacles required a second or even third attempt, which is an indication of the degree of the challenge the course presented to a well experienced group.....so well done to all.

The camaraderie and cohesiveness in the group saw us all through the day without any major damage.....a few “*band-aid strips*” here and there to the vehicles and we could all proudly add the Bergkraal 4X4 route to our selection of “*done-it-got-the-T-Shirt*” stickers!!☺ Suffice to say that good memories were celebrated around the evening’s communal braai, after a fun-filled and exiting day at Bergkraal, which comes highly recommended under the watchful eye and guidance of Frikkie van Zyl.



c) *Day 3 – Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>:*

We departed for Nieuwoudtville via Van Rhynsdorp with a beautiful view of the majestic Hantam Mountains as they were brightly lit by the early morning sun rays. En-route, we sadly had to see Kevin Alp and family who had to turn around, after some technical issues with his vehicle.

Another unplanned stop or 2 to attend to vehicle matters, saw a quick stop halfway up the Van Rhyn’s Pass for a panoramic view over the Hantam Mountains and “Knersvlakte”, challenged by



a very strong easterly wind. Shortly thereafter we reached the normally laid-back town of Nieuwoudtville, now lively with tourist. A drive through the town itself and a few stops to take pictures of the colourful display of flowers inside the town along the roadsides and in the

locals’ backyards, saw us stopping for a while at the Tourism offices where some enjoyed some local craft





shopping, indulged in coffee and pancakes made with extra care by the local “tannies”.

We departed to arrive at Matjiesfontein farmstall, 13km directly south of Nieuwoudtville where we



enjoyed a lunch from a selection of homemade traditional meals. These included “Afval” (tripe), which to the dismay of our leader, was out of stock, so

we settled for freshly baked “roosterkoek”, a choice between Bobotie, Curried Lamb Stew or Venison pie, rounded off by “melktert”. Well satisfied after this great lunch we departed on a circular route of approximately 12km for a spectacular display of flowers, which met and exceeded the wildest of our expectations. This was indeed the best display of flowers after several successive average or below average flower seasons and indeed complimented an already outstanding trip thus far.



The group continued due south on the scenic backroads via Doringbos and the Pakhuis Pass to basecamp via Clanwilliam.

The day was celebrated with well deserved beverages and some of the group prepared a good selection of different Potjiekos, whilst other’s opted to clear up the “excess” of the previous 2 evenings’ braais.

d) *Day 4 – Sunday 12th:*

After a good night’s rest, we gathered for a group breakfast at the Highlanders Pub where we exchanged memories of what was an unforgettable, exiting and most enjoyable long-weekend, batteries fully charged and already anticipating the next outings between now and the year’s final outing in-the-making.

6) **A bit about “basecamp”?**



True to its claims on its website, Sparky, owner of Highlanders Campsite and Lodge personally met us and ensured that he and his team live up to their promises. From the campsites’ facilities to the pub area, swimming pool and the ablutions we were well looked after right up to our departure point where Sparky again personally greeted us,

thanked us for our support and wished us a safe journey.

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An outstanding feature of the site, which most of the group who camped noticed, was the absence of glass from the “windows” in the showers! The stunning unobstructed and crystal-clear view over the Cederberg and surrounding vineyards truly makes this a unique experience at Highlanders.... well done Sparky! We'll be back!



7) **Summary & Overall Experiences:**

As new members to the Club, my wife and I certainly treasure the outing and activities in all regards, but after all said and done, the fostering of new friendships and the strengthening of existing friends of the Club is undoubtedly the biggest reward of joining in on this outing.

A stunningly situated basecamp, not far from basic needs and shopping, complimented by a fine selection of activities, spiced by the flexibility to appreciate and respect individual needs, speaks of excellent leadership and guidance by an experienced George Purchase..... take a bow George!

