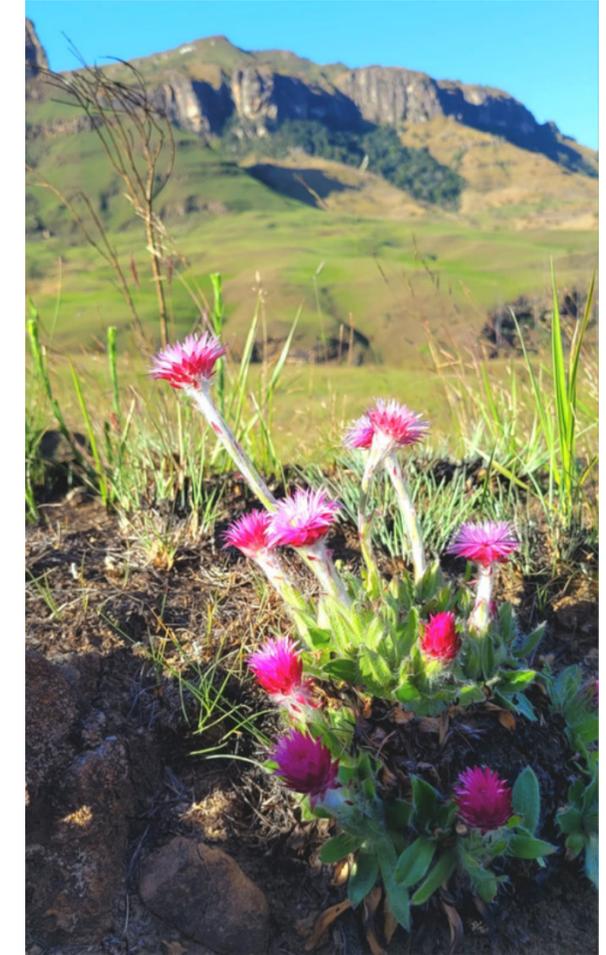
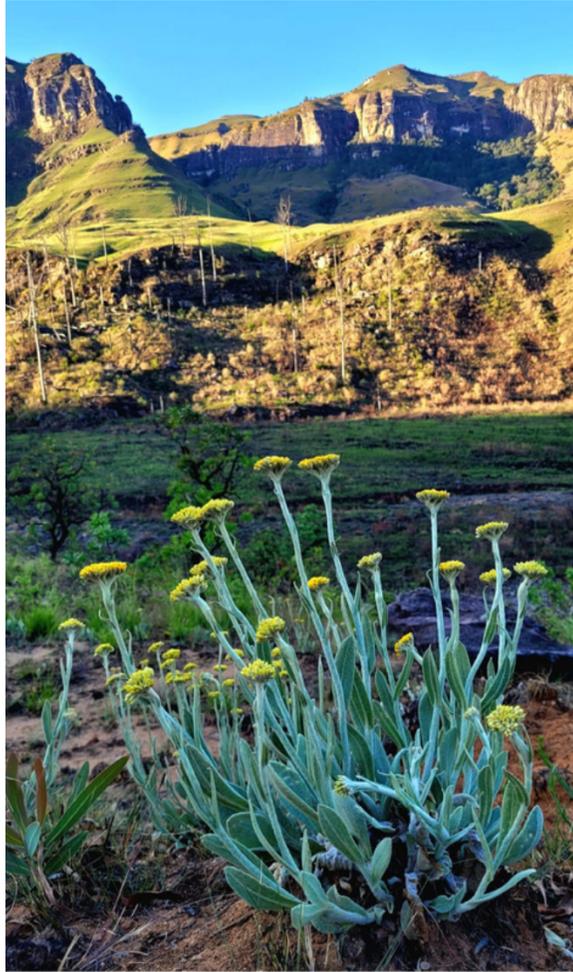


# INJISUTHI LONG WEEKEND 22-25 SEPTEMBER 2023



**Group: 15 hikers** – Hettie Randall, David Sclanders, Iain Kerr, Dusty and Mel Shaw, Kevin and Sarah Wallis, Ed Hohls and Sharon Lennon, Lizette Gerber, Carolee Thompson, Libby Deysel, David and Sharon Hockly.

**Photographs:** Dusty Shaw, Iain Kerr, Libby Deysel, Sharon Lennon, Sharon Hockly, Lizette Gerber, Carolee Thompson

**Leaders:** Carolee Thompson, Dusty Shaw, Iain Kerr

**Reporter:** Hettie Randall

We arrived at the Injisuthi camp on Friday late morning. The last 5kms of road were not good, almost has no surface. A loose clay topping was being graded over the top. We all put up our tents and some very home from home rigs I must say! After lunch, Carolee, Libby, and Sharon went for a walk to the Old Dip Tank via the Yellow Wood Forest. It was a stifling hot day.

Dusty and Mel, David and I, went to explore the escape route Just In Case! 6kms 216m elevation.

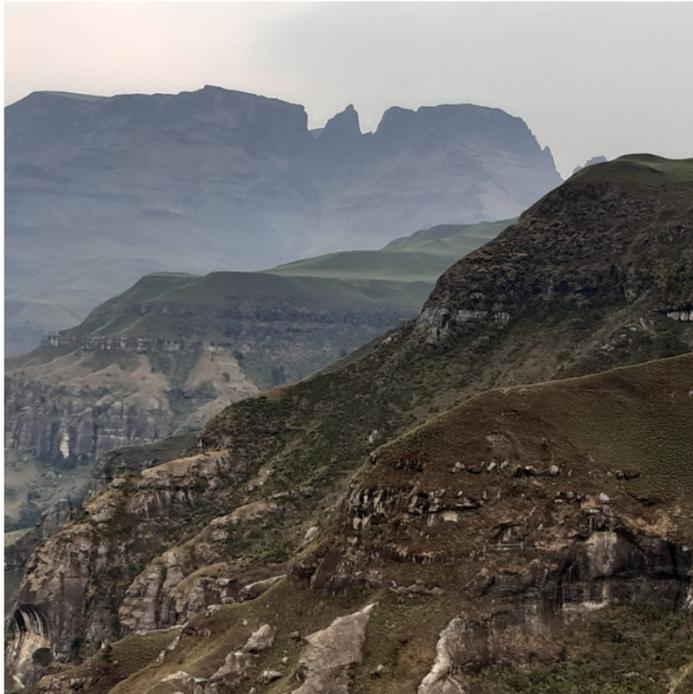
We crossed over the bridge and took the path to the left, straight up to the lower krantz line. We walked through a grove of protea trees all coming into flower, too beautiful. There were a huge number of *Greyia Sutherlandii* (Natal Bottlebrush) in full bloom, their delicate brush like vibrant red flowers a statement against the dry background. We also marvelled at the *Cussonia spicata* (local Cabbage Tree) with their new growth feathering through the old canopy on these age old specimens. We crossed Poachers Stream and joined up with the main path coming down from the escarpment. The path is alive and well, easily followed so that is a relief to know!

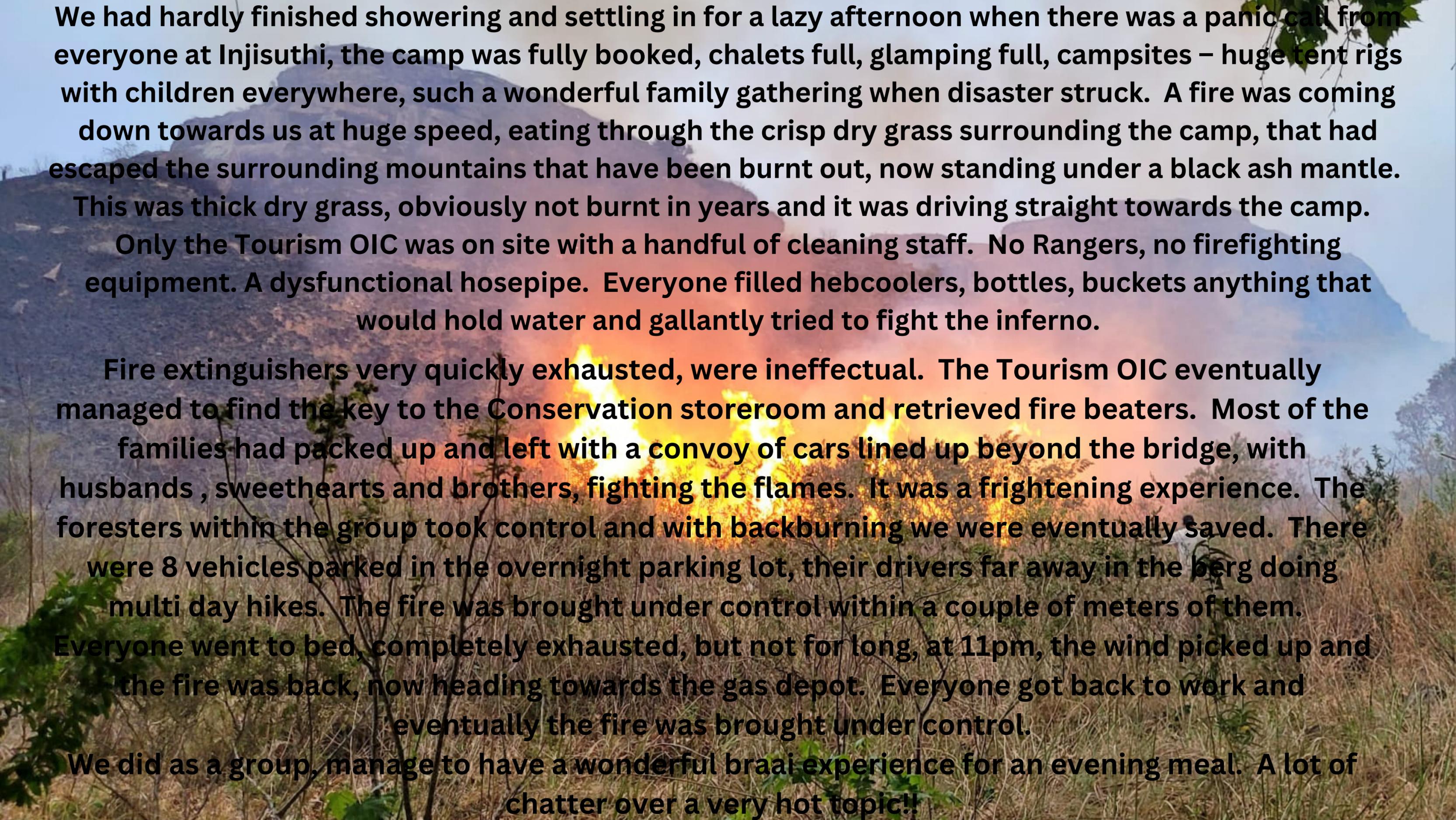


Saturday we all set off to climb van Heyningen's Pass with Iain taking the lead. Distance 8.52k Elevation 475m  
Despite serious earlier burn on most of the route, the new grass was pushing through, softening the darkness, with spring flowers, especially the little everlastings, lifting their bright little flowers to the sun. A carpet in tones of pink and yellow.  
The path through the forest has not changed! Steep but so interesting! Moss, tangled creepers and fallen trees, yellow woods, Hallerias in flower and magnificent views! Bubbling streams under the canopies as we passed in and out of the patches of indigenous forest.



We finally arrived at the top. Oh wow, we sat having munchies at the viewpoint, looking out from what felt like heaven, on the campsite far below us with Champagne Castle, The Monk, Cathkin Peak and Ship's Prow looming majestically to our right. On the way back, we branched off to the viewpoint to the left on a brow which we could see and relate to from the campsite afterwards, as the one outcrop of rock had a huge rock balancing on top, clearly placed there?? We came down much quicker and spent the afternoon chilling. It was another incredibly hot day.





**We had hardly finished showering and settling in for a lazy afternoon when there was a panic call from everyone at Injisuthi, the camp was fully booked, chalets full, glamping full, campsites – huge tent rigs with children everywhere, such a wonderful family gathering when disaster struck. A fire was coming down towards us at huge speed, eating through the crisp dry grass surrounding the camp, that had escaped the surrounding mountains that have been burnt out, now standing under a black ash mantle. This was thick dry grass, obviously not burnt in years and it was driving straight towards the camp.**

**Only the Tourism OIC was on site with a handful of cleaning staff. No Rangers, no firefighting equipment. A dysfunctional hosepipe. Everyone filled hebcoolers, bottles, buckets anything that would hold water and gallantly tried to fight the inferno.**

**Fire extinguishers very quickly exhausted, were ineffectual. The Tourism OIC eventually managed to find the key to the Conservation storeroom and retrieved fire beaters. Most of the families had packed up and left with a convoy of cars lined up beyond the bridge, with husbands, sweethearts and brothers, fighting the flames. It was a frightening experience. The foresters within the group took control and with backburning we were eventually saved. There were 8 vehicles parked in the overnight parking lot, their drivers far away in the berg doing multi day hikes. The fire was brought under control within a couple of meters of them.**

**Everyone went to bed, completely exhausted, but not for long, at 11pm, the wind picked up and the fire was back, now heading towards the gas depot. Everyone got back to work and eventually the fire was brought under control.**

**We did as a group, manage to have a wonderful braai experience for an evening meal. A lot of chatter over a very hot topic!!**

Sunday was forecasted as a wet day, it was cooler with cloud and mist but we set off with brave faces to hike to Grindstone Caves. The mist came and went but it stayed relatively dry until we got to the top, with low cloud swirling around us, feeling wet and cold. We had a long haul always upwards, but manageable as we eventually got to the caves, the effort was once again so worth it. Views, and a few faded SanArt plaques, with caves, with waterfalls, another Injisuthi phenomena that is so unique. A very special place.



We were back by lunch time. Another chilled afternoon. We closed off a very successful and dramatic weekend with another braai. It started raining quite heavily towards the end of the evening (prayers answered) but we were all cloistered under the Hockly gazebo.

Monday dawned, wet, misty and cold. The idea of a morning hike did not materialise. We all packed up and left early. The clay topping on the road out was a nightmare, now a slippery mudbath! But, it was a weekend to remember.

It's experiences like this, that strengthens and teach us how vulnerable we are in nature, without the basic precautions of camp management, this could have been tragic.

