

# Mtentu Amble - 25 to 28 Sep

## Hike report by Hettie Randall

12 intrepid travellers arrived at Ku-Boboyi, Port Edward on Wednesday night and had our first sleepover, an introduction to the group entertainment that was to follow.

An early morning meeting with our hike organiser, Kelly, and Guide Sonny, at the Casino saw us off on our Wild Coast Amble Adventure. Sonny was an experienced local villager, who patiently kept us all together as we stopped and collected shells, took photos and fooled around in the lapping waves.

They had, had heavy rains for a couple of days before we arrived and Sonny was concerned about the paths being muddy and so we took the beach route on Day 1.

14kms of beach was a challenging start for some of us, weighed down by far too much water, in trepidation of having no water on route.

We then followed an obscure path into the hinterland, crossing paths with villages and the typical Pondoland huts now scattered around us, but before long we sighted much merriment from a nearby cluster and we wandered in. A warm welcome from the local quaffers, a shared refreshment with one for the road, we finally completed the last furlong to our homestay overnight.

Our hostess had obviously been preparing for us all day. We were given spotless huts with flushing toilets (ingeniously engineered with a standby bucket of water for the cistern and a septic tank!) hot water bucket showers from water heated on an open pit fire, (just to mention, we had passed a 12v battery and pump at the stream below!!) Mpondo bread and tea on arrival which evolved into a banquet of food at dinner. Incredible hospitality.



The next morning, we headed out for the Hiking Shack, our overnight for the next couple of nights. We had quite a few river crossings over the 3 days. Today we were expecting to have to ferry over the Sikombe River but the tide was going out and the river mouth shallow enough for us to take to the water with waves breaking around us. Quite exhilarating! The path covered beach and inland walking, where many spring flowers of exquisite colours adorned the short coastal turf, we crossed the smallest red desert in the world with our views constantly providing us with the pristine, expansive coastline, unique to the Wild Coast. True to its name, the broken trees and branches spread across the high tide mark, were a relic to the mighty force of the tides. And of course, let's not forget, we encountered a small herd of Transkei cattle, lying totally chilled in the sand watching the waves!

We arrived at the Hiking Shack, a 12 bed dorm with a kitchenette and ablutions, gas feed for hot showers. Luxury! Again, the catering was exemplary. On the first night we had a braai around an open fire pit and soon stories were being shared, topics covering cricket attire to pole vaulting amidst much laughter.

Day 3 we made our way to the Mtentu River, passing the newly built Mtentu Lodge. We took the ferry across the Mtentu Estuary two by two and then hiked up into the Mkambati Nature Reserve, stopped to see the Weolmi shipwreck before heading up to Baboon cave where we had lunch. After a quick swim by a couple of us, we made our way back to the Shack at a slow trot as we were keen to watch the rugby - yep, we were provided with a big screen TV balancing precariously on a plastic table in the sand, we watched the Springboks annihilate the Argentinians. How amazing is that!

The next morning, we left by taxi transfer back to the Casino. 150 minutes of rocking and rolling - in fact we had to get out and walk a section as the road surface was too bad for the Quantam to get through with 12 of us on board! It brought home to me, how humbling it was that our hosts, both Homestay and at the Shack, had gone to so much time and cost, to prepare for our comfort. The meals and accommodation were faultless.

This will definitely become a repeater.

