



**Report by:  
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### **Cobham weekend - 14 to 16 November**

Our group of 15 dwindled to 12 as the weather warnings did not improve. But the Brave Dozen who did arrive, had a cozy hut through the wind and rain on Friday night and woke to a clear if damp day on Saturday.

After an Indaba and another consultation with the map, the route was changed from Pinnacle Rock and its SanArt to Sphongweni and its SanArt. The reason predominantly being that the former had a very overgrown path of long grass, with the wetland section restricted by tall thatching grass, that even in fine sunshine had been a challenge. The main hiking trail from Pholela Hut up to Lake and Pholela Caves, seemed to be clearer.

We had to rise to the challenge of this Grade 3 after 5kms, (this fixture had a warning of a 23kms route), with a climb of 1km to the top of the Mzimkhulwana ridge.

It was then another push upwards and onwards to the Sphongweni cliff face which showcases the SanArt which are among the most important in the Drakensberg, depicting various day to day living scenarios of those early San people.

After a break and refreshments, the map came out again and we once more consulted over doing an exploration walk to find the zigzag path as shown on the Ezemvelo – Cobham map as an alternative to going straight back the way we had come up. The weather had lifted, the air was calm and dry, the views magnificent. The consensus was that we should walk the 2kms. the distance indicated on the map to the drop off point and assess.

We did come across a cairn at the 2kms mark but the drop off did not indicate any noticeable “path” which was not surprising. Walking down at this point with a group and not being sure if this was indeed the way down, caution called a stop to attempting it!

The route from the cave had folded out onto rock slab and the faint path we started out on, soon petered out but the sub-alpine grasses on these shallow soils on this high altitude plateau, were soft and delicate, a variety of beautiful seedheads interspersed with spring flowers and Protea dracomontana adorned with new buds. Absolutely delightful. We decided to push on a bit further and a kilometre further on, turned reluctantly back and followed our footsteps back to base.

We had a long and challenging hike but the views and underfoot conditions were a treat, walking through a natural paradise of form and colour with the Giants Cup in front of us, The Policeman and The Titty to our left and The Whale looming ahead, surrounded by the majestic mountains, after the Art Gallery Intro. What a thrill.

We came home in time to miss heavy showers that followed that evening and persisted into Sunday with heavy mist filling the valley. We decided to pack up and go through to Himeville for breakfast, a Level 5 idea!! What? Yes, the menu was too delicious – all of it!

Thank you to my team of hardy hikers, we achieved an awesome day out on the Mzimkhulwana ridge overlooking the magnificent valleys and peaks, surrounded by beautiful grasses and flowers at our feet and experiencing our heritage first hand through the Sphongweni San paintings, which told their own story. Feel proud!

