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It's down to earth, eco friendly, organic and recyclable

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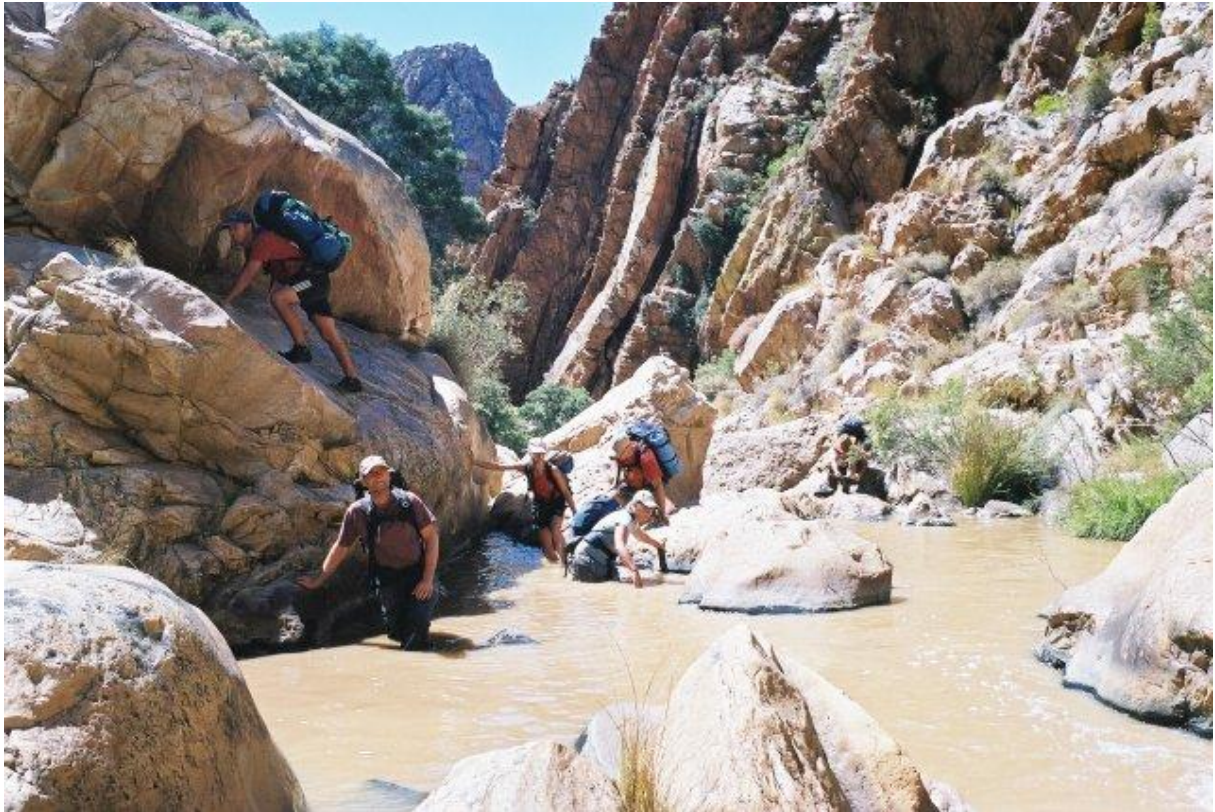
# The Kloof News

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February - 2006



Dear Friends of Simonskloof

While I write this, Cape Town and most of the Western Cape is battling with power black-outs. This just after we had a LPGas supply crisis in November and a Fuel crisis in December. Energy the "juices" that keep us going are in short supply. Now people and businesses are rushing out to buy generators, candles, gas cookers etc to "survive" this crisis and keep life as normal as possible...

Would it not be for my little radio (solar powered :-)) and regular phone calls from my dear friend Mareletta, who works right in the middle of "Crazy" Town, I would have no clue... Life out here is as nice and normal as it always is, except for the occasional hiccups, like bush fires, car trouble, rain water crisis, internet slow down and a pair of AWOL ostriches visiting this morning.

So of course I can't keep a smile off my face when I hear those stories of lack of crisp toast never mind fresh bread, no hair dryer, no TV, no red robots (traffic lights), no fast food, no electricity, simply no luxury... some of those were my exact words in our very first flyer for Simonskloof six years ago, when we came up with the unique points out here. Now it's everywhere and causes chaos – well, for a short while at least - until people calm down, "make a plan" and find alternatives to their life in the lap of luxury. Sure there are the ugly sides to it, too: hospitals without power, food that goes off and turns to poison, burglary alarms not functioning, TVs blowing tubes, electric gates not opening and so on. Yet it brings home a reality, the fact that we are far too complacent, "just plug in and switch on" is the attitude.

My granddad - who lived on Simonskloof for almost 20 years and told Eskom to get lost when they proposed to build a power line through the kloof and supply him with a free connection (never mind the monthly accounts...) - always said: "You are all just button pushers. Want to go up, push a button. Want to have a meal, push a button. Want light, push a button. Want to write, push buttons. Want to get from A to B, push buttons..." we lost touch and most of all the essence of live. Now as the system comes crashing down we stand agape with not a clue how to, where to.

Times like these are invitations to reflect, to rethink and become aware of our wasteful nature and taking for granted-ness. What better time now to take a look at alternative ways, alternative energy sources, like solar heating, photovoltaic panels, wind generators, but most of all economical usage and recycling of resources. As a friend of mine in Durban once said to me, when I searched for recycling methods for a sports event: "The best recycling is NOT to create waste!". The methods are endless – just google the web. Once you got into (more) conscious living and recycling, it's hard to stop and it becomes a way of life and even fun. Plus it make this earth a more healthy place to live and might just give her a couple of 100 more years to spin around the sun.

### **Simonskloof gone SOLAR**

As Ghandi once said: "Be the change you want to see in the world", I'm pleased to tell you that since October last year Simonskloof has truly gone Solar. Where as in the past, these newsletters were written with a noisy petrol driven generator rattling in the shed, powering my laptop and office light, it's now done solely on solar power. My reduction of fuel in those last 5 months: A whopping 280 litres or in cash terms: R1680.00 (!) which is 30% of the cost of the system, never mind the reduced pollution and unused fuel! Plus, let me tell you that you don't need all that fancy equipment the big companies want to sell you. All we have is a 80 watt panel, a basic converter/controller, two 105Ah deep cycle batteries and a basic inverter to change the 12V into 220V (the latter was donated) other wise it would add another R1500.00 to the R5500.00 of my total cost... My conclusion: A+, I've never had any power shortage, even charged visitors cellphones, digital cameras and my battery drill. For an affordable supplier (in Montagu...) phone Ludwig van Heerden at 082 574 0005.



### **Whiskey "On the Kloof"**

No, not a free drink served at Simonskloof. Whiskey barks, chews flip-flops and is Matata's new friend - in fact it's her grandson. A brown and white border collie, he was born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2006 on the banks of the Breede River on the farm of my folks and has arrived at his new home here in the kloof. Why Whiskey? Well I guess he looks more like a cappucino, yet I was lead astray and thought about Irish Whiskey... makes sense? No? Well, he's cute and still cuddly and loves to bite guest's toes and heels or sleep at ones neck, when lying in the hammock.

### **The Nuy River Gorge EXTREME (Kloofing/Canyoneering with a difference)**

On the note of Dogs. End of January I took a quick recci trip through the Nuy River Gorge to prepare for an special "extreme" kloofing trip. Taking Matata along, who is not a keen swimmer at all, we had a fantastic time out in the wilderness, realising again how fortunate I am doing this for a living. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February she came with again, joining a group of 6 kloofers for 3 days out in the wild, abseiling shear rock faces, scrambling steep slopes, bushwhacking through dense alien forest, bivouacking (sleeping out under the stars) next to the river, criss-crossing the gorge through waist-high water up sun and fynbos-covered mountain sides, chasing baboons, drinking water from crystal streams and swimming in murky waters. The culinary side did not spare taste nor innovation either so the group commended, the Cabernet (at perfect "room" temperature of course) wasn't missing either. Not to mention the freshly baked bread on the second morning... Every muscle



ache and scratch worth while I was told, even Matata agreed walking stiff legged, yet her nose filled with thousands of scents.

Interested? Our next Extreme Kloofing Trip is "scheduled" for the Easter weekend 14.-17. April 2006, other Classic trips (2 days) are 10<sup>th</sup> of March, and 12<sup>th</sup> of May, weather permitting, but any date can be arranged, if you have a group of minimum 4 people.



### **WWOOF (Willing Workers On Organic Farms)**

From Canada, Belgium, Italy, Scotland to Germany and Switzerland and of course South Africa, the volunteers have been plentiful and VERY helpful to say the least, coming from all corners of the globe it's cultural as much as work exchange. Work done included: Clearing of apricot orchard, burning shrubs, establishing a veggie garden (nice tomatoes!!!) building on the Gecko trail + guitar lessons: Thanks Jean (hope you enjoy your trip through Africa). Fixing the access road, burning shrubs, cooking and dietary "lessons": Thanks Caroline. She's a brilliant and innovative vegetarian chef, Japanese trained you find her in Brussels or at [cbaerten@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cbaerten@yahoo.co.uk). Hmm, has anybody got contacts, ideas to get her to work in CT - she loves our country!!! Clearing the campsite, philosophical exchange (still smoking?): Thanks Heiner and friends. Cleaning of dam and garden, then piling fire wood: Thanks to the McGregor Volunteers :-) Bit's and pieces plus good company: Thanks Georgy and Annalette. Repairing the pergola, burying the water pipe, cleaning windows (sorry guys for the sometime dusty outlook...) fixing of caravan: Thanks Thomas. For our Swiss friends: Ever felt out of sync? Thomas conducts lovely workshops and therapy tours to the Canary islands and South Africa, get him at [balance@gmx.ch](mailto:balance@gmx.ch). Cleaning, cleaning, fixing of furniture and stripping of granddad's cupboard, plus a Gnoggi making session: Thanks Louisa and Francesco. If you ever travel to Italy, check out [www.cimbolello.it](http://www.cimbolello.it), it's a little paradise and the home of L. & F. in the mountains of Umbria, e-mail them at [podere@cimbolello.it](mailto:podere@cimbolello.it), they offer organic produce, accommodation and WWOOFing. Are you interested to WWOOF at Simonskloof? Don't wait, but contact us, it's fun, it's life, it's got soul!



So much for now, about the progress on our Gecko trail more next time, for now all the best and please become more energy conscious, there is only so much yet plenty if we're look after it.

Jurgen & Matata, Guzzle and little Whiskey

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