

Getting there!



We started the trip by meeting at Exeter services where we were all buzzing with excitement to get onto the coach all the way to Heathrow Airport. Everything in the airport went fairly smoothly considering there was about 20 of us to get through baggage, customs and security. From Heathrow we were getting an Airbus to Dubai and from there another Airbus to Durban in South Africa. We flew with Emirates which was very nice as we got two meals on every stage of the flight and drinks whenever we wanted which we all took full advantage of. After an 8-hour flight via Dubai we finally landed at Durban. Unfortunately, it seemed as if we brought the English weather with us as it began to rain. We then packed onto a coach and headed to a nearby resort named Cane Cutters rather than heading straight to Entabeni as it was getting dark. We enjoyed a lovely BBQ and were informed of the plans for the following day.

Getting to Entabeni

The next day we met Nick who is the owner of Entabeni, a very accomplished man who fled South Africa and moved to the UK due to his political views whilst he served in the South African army. We then got on our big coach again and drove to the Drakensberg's which took 5 hours. When we arrived we were shown to our lodge type rooms which we would be sharing with about 8 other people and met Tristan, a half British half African intern and Morgan an intern from America. We were then given a tour around the base and told what was happening in the next few days.



Helping the Zulu primary school:

Over a few days we planned to help the school by making their existing garden bigger and better, fix their playground, get rid of any safety hazards and make a sand pit which we managed to do and it actually turned out to be great fun! Coming near to midday a cook from Entabeni invited us to her home at the village to have lunch which she had prepared; a traditional Zulu meal. When we entered we was seated so the women were on the left and the men on the right. This was to protect the women if an intruder came in and opened the door, he would first see all the men and the women would be hidden by the door. After eating we headed down to the school where the children were waiting for a football game we had promised, South Africa vs England. At first we were getting one goal after another bringing it to 5-2 to England unfortunately that changed quickly when they picked up their game and ended the game 12-7 to South Africa.



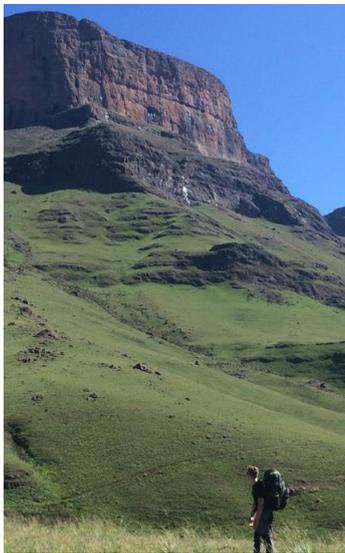
Warm up walks:



In the next few days we embarked on a few warm up walks on the mountains surrounding the Entibeni base in preparation for the 3-day expedition up Giants castle the tallest mountain in the Drakensberg's at 3,500 MAS. The idea of these walks were to find out who would be doing the expedition and summiting and who would be doing the 3-day low level cave expedition. We had just done our 2 days of warm up walks and we were getting ready for the expedition when everyone started to get ill, including the staff, it seemed that some sort of bug was going around camp so Entibeni had no choice but to postpone the expedition a day and wait for the bug to pass. Luckily for me and about 8 others we didn't get ill so we spent the day that people were recovering in, mountain biking, canoeing and doing some archery so for us it was quite fun.

Start of the hike

As we missed a day hiking we were taxied to what would have been our first camp site and on the drive up we could see lots of wild life especially baboons. Nick and Morgan were our leaders for the hike and once we were all together and ready we set off the first thing we saw was 'Stone 75', the British 75th regiment cook carved the number '75' into a rock during the Langalibalele rebellion in 1874. On our way up we also saw the largest species of antelope, the Giant Eland. Once we reached base camp we set up our tents and washed in a river nearby. When we had food and the sun went down there was a magnificent view of the stars and constellations, unlike anything you would be able to see in the UK's urban areas. The next morning, we were up at 0500 and were walking at 0600. It took us 5 hours to get to the pass which is a very steep valley that we walked up and from there it took us a further 2 hours to get to the summit which was amazing



The Massacre of Isandlwana

Arriving at the entrance to the battlefield we first came to a Zulu memorial accompanied by a small buffalo thorn tree. The memorial was an iron sculptor of a neckless made of leopard claws which would be given to warriors for acts of bravery.



The thorn tree was used as a way to hold the souls of fallen warriors to then take them back to their families to watch over their homesteads. We then climbed a small hill to have a full

view of the battle field so it would be easier for the guide to tell the story of what happened. Looking across the landscape you could see piles of white stones. This was to signify where a cluster of bones from British troops were found, as the animals ate the corpses the remains was unidentifiable. We then followed down Fugitives path the route used by two British soldiers to try and save the Queens Colours. All the way was littered with white stones of where fleeing troops fell. Finally, on the other side of a river there is a large white memorial where the two men died.

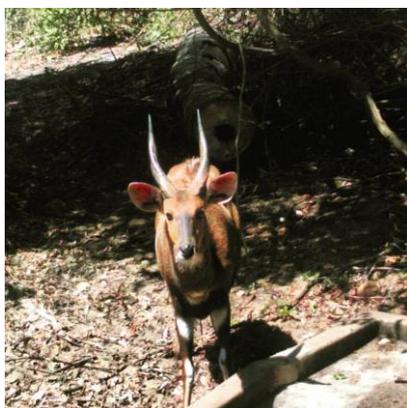
Rorke's drift:



The following day we visited Rorkes Drift where a second battle happened after the massacre. Much of the area was renewed as it was destroyed during the battle but it was kept in a similar or same layout to give people the feel of what happened. The site had 3 memorials, two for the British soldiers who fought and survived the battle and one for the Zulus. After looking around and the guide telling us the story of the event we went to the shop where you could purchase Zulu spears for 500 rand or roughly 22 pounds (which is a good deal). We then pressed on to our campsite for the few days we spent in the nature reserve.

Safari

We were split into two groups, one of us was set off on foot to get as close as possible, animals with the help of the rangers, they got us very close to some giraffe but not a lot else as it would have been too dangerous. The others would go around in the jeeps spotting animals all across the reserve. Half way through we would swap over and experience what the others already had. We came across loads of wild life from antelope to rhinos.



On this day we went on a full day safari in open
going around we managed to see a lioness stalk around its kill. But unfortunately the park



vehicles,

had recently had some poaching and we saw a dead rhino. We were told by our guide that it was a regular occurrence. After finishing the safari, we went to our final destination in St Lucia a popular holiday destination.

St Lucia

St Lucia was the final phase of our trip which was going to include a really nice hotel, normal food, another safari, beach, a Hippo boat cruise and a visit to a croc center. It was all incredible and I would probably say St Lucia was one of the best parts of the trip! Every day we did something completely different, I'd probably say the beach was the best part as we got snorkel and sun bath all day with some beach games



Crocodiles at home

Nearing the final day, we visited a nearby crocodile sanctuary, that held a wide range of different species, including the dwarf crocodile. They also held some alligators in the area. Nearing the end of our tour we were given the chance to hold an infant crocodile.



Home:

The last day we went to the amazing croc center and then headed home which was a 5-hour coach journey followed by 13 hours in planes and airports and then another 4 hour trip back to Devon!

All in all it was a fantastic trip that I got a great deal out of and I would love to go again and I would recommend anyone else that is thinking of going out there!