

Western Cape, Part 1. 2012.

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Travelling to the Western Cape. Drakensville Resort.

Monday November 26th

We left Richmond in the morning on our first major excursion with our new caravan. We stopped at Southgate Mall in Pietermaritzburg for supplies and then went to the Hospice book shop to hand in and buy some more books to take away. Our next stop was at Rawdons where we bought a few bottles of beer and, as it was lunchtime, stayed for an excellent meal accompanied by some decent beer.

When we bought the caravan we got several vouchers for campsite in KZN. We went to one of the sites in Ballito for a couple of free nights last week to try out the caravan and awning and were delighted that when it poured with rain for a couple of hours we were nice and snug with the full awning up.

We're using another of our vouchers (again 2 free nights) at Drakensville Resort which is near The Royal Natal Park in the Northern Drakensberg. It's primarily a family resort with pools, trampolines etc but quiet midweek which is fine for us. Apart from a couple of overland trucks it's either families with pre-school age kids or retirees like us!

We were pleased that it didn't take us long to set up the caravan and the roof awning (no need for the sides as it was a lovely hot day) however the stuff on several of the shelves was all over the place – and that was after travelling on decent tar roads – so a re-think is in order.

Tuesday November 27th

In the morning Kevin cleaned the bakkie mats while I re-arranged some of the items on the shelves – we shall see if it's any better when we move on tomorrow.

After lunch we had a quiet afternoon. It was overcast most of the time with a few sunny periods but not cold at all.

We chatted to some of the other campers and I helped one couple download photos from their camera to their computer.

Travelling to the Western Cape. Mokala National Park

Wednesday November 28th

We took the back road via Clarens and Fourisburg to the N1 and then south to The River of Joy campsite which is about 30km north of Bloemfontein. The section of road alongside the Sterkfontein dam was in very poor condition with lots of potholes and evidence of an attempt at road mending but along the 30 or so km stretch we only saw one small group of people actually doing any work on the road. We shopped at Spar in Fourisburg and then there was another section of potholed road for quite a while. We filled up with fuel at Fourisburg and found that we'd been averaging only just over 7km/litre – with the trailer it was around 10km/litre.

It was a sunny day and the scenery along the route was lovely with the Maloti (Drakensberg) mountains to our south, lovely green fields and roadside flowers. However as we got closed to the

N1 and the mountains disappeared we noticed that the fields were very dry so this area appears to have had very little rain – unlike KZN which has had more than usual in November.

We've stayed at The River of Joy campsite a couple of times before – it's a good stop-over near Bloem, although a little too close to the N1, however it didn't stop us having a good night's sleep.

Nothing moved on the shelves so my sort-out yesterday worked!

Thursday November 29th

We were away by 8.30am and made our way to Mokala National Park stopping at a Pick n Pay on the outskirts of Bloem for provisions. It was very hot in the morning and the land looked very dry. We arrived at the park gates before 3pm and then made our way to the reception office 6km inside the Park where we asked to camp for a couple of nights – we'd not stayed here before so didn't want to commit ourselves to longer until we'd seen the campsite. We carried on the Motswedi Campsite, a further 5km into the Park and discovered a lovely spot with only 6 sites all overlooking a small pumped waterhole. Each site has its own shower, toilet and kitchen area which has a sink, double gas stove and gas fridge! The water is heated by a solar geyser and the lights by solar panels.

Once we'd set up camp Kevin got out our solar panel and set it up to run the battery and fridge in the caravan, the first opportunity that we've had to test it properly. Despite it having clouded over since the morning it was still getting enough power to run everything.

It didn't take us long to decide to stay here for 4 nights rather than just a couple. It seems ages since we've been in the bush and this is one of the nicest Park sites in South Africa. During the afternoon the waterhole was constantly visited by warthog plus some tsessebe, a buffalo, several wildebeest and a mongoose. There's a low electric fence (about 40cm high) around the site which is probably to keep the rhino and buffalo away – there are no predators or elephants in the Park.

It was windy during most of the afternoon but not cold so we didn't need the sides of the awning up. In the evening I saw a couple of spring hares and later on a porcupine wandered around for some time, totally ignoring us and passing by less than 3m from us.

Friday November 30th

Overcast with quite a cool wind in the early morning so while I sat outside watching the waterhole Kevin read inside the van. Once again there were lots of warthog coming to drink plus a big group of wildebeest and some tsessebe. There were lots of birds around all the time so even when there were no animals I was quite happy birdwatching.

Late morning we drove to reception where I was able to re-new our Wildcard at the South African rate and booked us in for another couple of nights. After lunch back at our site we spend a quiet afternoon there. Apart from a couple of very short-lived spots of rain it was warm and cloudy with sunny periods.

Sadly no porcupine visit this evening – of course as I had my camera and flash ready!!

Soon after we went to bed it started raining so we got up and put up the flysheet that goes over the bed – just as well as it poured down for ages. However we forgot to lower one side of the awning so

when Kevin got up in the night it had a huge pool of water in the middle and the poles at either side had moved. We sorted it as best we could and went back to bed.

Saturday December 1st

Cold, wet and windy for most of the day. It was great to be able to stay in the caravan most of the morning, then when it cleared up for a bit went for a drive out. The tracks weren't too bad considering the amount of rain we'd had overnight, there were just a few muddy puddles. We stopped at the bird hide but it soon started to rain so we returned to the campsite. In one of the afternoon dry spells we put up one side of the awning to give us some protection from the wind and were then able to sit outside.

Sunday December 2nd

There was more rain during the night but it was a little brighter during the morning. Kevin set up the solar panel and it was giving some power despite heavy cloud cover. I wandered around the campsite (keeping inside the electric fence) looking out for birds plus I saw a family of striped mice with one very tiny baby – only a few cm long. We've not seen any animals at the waterhole of course as there's plenty of water all over the park.

Before lunch we drove out for an hour or so. We saw quite a few animals including several groups of tsessebe, one lot had a couple of very young calves, and later we saw a warthog family with 1 little piglet.

Around 3pm blue skies arrived so we went out on another drive, this time around the Matopi loop where we saw plenty of animals, a couple of groups of giraffe and lots of springbok, tsessebe and wildebeest. We then had to stop for 15 minutes to allow a large herd of buffalo – at least 50 of them – to cross the road in front of us. One of the old boys walked towards us and then stood and watched us for a while (wanting his photo to be taken?!) before heading off with the others. As we drove back towards the camp we saw a big change in the weather with ominous black clouds approaching so as soon as we arrived at our site, and knowing that we wanted to leave early tomorrow, we took down the side and top awning, packed away everything and then moved the van next to the ablutions block – just in time as it then proceeded to pour down for the best part of 2 hours. We started off sheltering in the kitchen section but the wind was blowing the rain into it so we ended up sitting in the shower area which was big enough for our chairs, a table and the braai! - In fact it was nice and cosy in there! Of course I had to go into the caravan a few times to get the food and ended up going back and forth barefoot through the muddy puddles and then washing my feet in a bowl of water rather than get my shoes filthy.

Western Cape. Karoo National Park.

Monday December 3rd

We woke to a cloudless sky! We packed all the rest of our things away and left just after 8am. We drove back to the N12 and followed it all the way to where it joins the N1. There was very little traffic but, unfortunately, lots of roadworks so we often had to wait ages before we could proceed however at least we didn't have any rain, it was sunny all morning and then clouded over a bit in the afternoon. We arrived at Karoo National Park around 3.30pm so quite a long days travelling for us. Once we'd booked in at reception (for 4 nights) we drove to the campsite, picked a site and set up

the caravan and awning. No sooner had we arrived than we saw a couple of large leopard tortoises munching the green watered grass on the campsite. There were also plenty of friendly birds, in particular cape robin-chats, house sparrows, cape sparrows and laughing doves – all were obviously well used to being fed by campers.

The weather stayed fine so it was nice to be able to sit outside all evening!

Tuesday December 4th

It was overcast when we got up but had cleared up by 9am. We drove back into Beauford West to do some shopping. We went to a couple of pharmacists as Kevin's ear has been infected for the last 10 days (after his playing in the waves at Ballito) but neither of them would give him any antibiotics without a doctor's prescription. After lunch back at the campsite we drove to reception and asked where there was a doctor he could visit and he then phoned for an appointment. They were fully booked until Thursday but eventually said that he could go in at 5.15 and wait. Before going back to Beauford West we drove around the loop road to the west of the lodge and stopped for a look at the picnic site at Bulkraal. It looked lovely and even had a good sized swimming pool but unfortunately there was a group of local people who had music blaring and looked to be drinking despite notices saying not to take bottles or alcohol into the pool area – shame.

Kevin got a prescription for antibiotics and ear drops (which he hates) and so we went to the chemist to pick them up – the doctor had phoned it through so it didn't take long and we were back at our site by 6.30pm. No sooner had we got the braai going then it started to rain but, luckily, it only lasted half an hour or so.

Wednesday December 5th

Once again it was overcast early on but again cleared up later, although there was still a cool wind, so we went out for a drive up the Klipspringer Pass and then along to the Doornhoek Picnic Site, which took us a couple of hours. We didn't see many animals until we started to follow the river down towards Doornhoek and then started to see oryx, ostrich, mountain zebra and springbok. We got out a couple of times to study the ground, no sign of lion at all but we did see the tracks left by a large snake (python?) and some black rhino dung as well as antelope and zebra spoor. The vegetation here is very different to Mokala, mostly its scrubby grasses and low bushes with occasional acacia tree lines following the seasonal rivers.

We had intended to follow one or two of the 4x4 tracks but when we got to the turn-off it was blocked off, which was a pity, so we arrived back at the campsite before lunch.

Thursday December 6th

We spent the morning at the campsite. As on the previous days it was cloudy to start with but then then skies cleared around 9am. After an early lunch we drove to the main camp area and had a walk along the fossil trail which was very interesting with information about the dinosaur age, the creation of the landscape and several fossilised dinosaur skulls and bones. We then drove into Beauford West to do a bit of shopping (saves having to do it tomorrow) and then spent the rest of the afternoon at the campsite.

The campsite really filled up during the afternoon and evening with most pitches being used – either the private schools must have broken up early or kids were missing the last couple of days of school

to try and beat the rush which is likely to start tomorrow when the schools break up for their 6 week summer holiday.

Western Cape. Limietberg National Park.

Friday December 7th

Up early to be greeted by blue skies. Away by 7.30am and continued south-west along the N1 until just after Touws River where we turned off to take the route via Ceres through the mountains which was very scenic. Ceres is one of the main fruit growing areas and we saw plenty of orchards in the area. We were now into the winter rainfall area so it was much greener, many of the plants and bushes had already flowered but after the very dry karoo it was still very attractive with many shades of green and colourful seed heads.

We arrived at the Twedie Tol campsite at Limietberg National Park around 1pm having made good time and were given site number 13 which is quite large with quite a bit of shade and a view across the river to the hillside beyond. During the afternoon loads of cars arrived with loads of kids. At first we thought that it was a school group but noticed that the kids were of mixed ages so decided that it must be a church group – which, on chatting to a few of the adults later on, was what it turned out to be, they said that they had 60 kids with them (from Cape Town) and that most of them hadn't camped before..... It took some of the ones near us ages to work out how to put their tents up but eventually they got them up.

Saturday December 8th

By 8am day visitors had started to arrive so we didn't bother going down to the river pools and picnic area but spent the day at our site. During the night the awning had come down, one of the poles had split apart, partly our fault for not putting extra guy ropes out when the wind started up during the evening. We put it up again and made sure that everything was firmly fixed as it remained windy all day.

There are plenty of birds around the site, in particular cape white eyes and cape canaries. The canaries were very vocal during the morning and late afternoon. There's a family of cape spurfowl – mum with 3 chicks – who appear out of the lush undergrowth near the river from time to time.

Sunday December 9th

After breakfast we went for a walk following the path next to the river upstream, passing several inviting pools and waterfalls. We then followed another track up and across the hillside back to the campsite, it took us a couple of hours altogether. By the time we got back the large church group had left so it was nice and quiet – mind you there were plenty of day visitors down by the river.

Western Cape. Bonnievale River Lodge

Monday December 10th

No rush to pack away as we only had 170km to travel today so we took our time but were still away before 10am. We stopped in a new shopping mall on the outskirts of Worcester for provisions and then headed to Bonnievale River Lodge. From Worcester we travelled along the Breede River Valley which is one of the cape wineland areas so there were plenty of vineyards but also orchards. Many

of the vineyards had trees and plants growing alongside the roadsides – jacaranda trees, roses, cannas, bougainvillea and palm trees were much in evidence.

Fairly quiet at the campsite with only 4 other groups. We had a pitch away from the river with a deck overlooking the site below – they don't allow cars and 'vans on the area near the river.

Late afternoon a vehicle arrived towing a trailer/caravan – we weren't sure which but it turned out to be a caravan which these guys (from Hluhluwe) had picked up that afternoon from a place in Worcester. We really liked the look of it so Dave showed us the kitchen area and easy to erect awning – we were impressed and decided that we might have to investigate further!!

Tuesday December 11th

We spent the morning at the campsite and after a swim in the pool (set in the middle of their vineyards) and lunch set off to explore the local area mostly travelling on back roads. The scenery in this area is very varied with mountains and valleys looking very different. Many of the valleys, where there's access to water, consist of vineyards, orchards and some cattle and sheep farms but the uplands are very dry with vegetation similar to the karoo.

Wednesday December 12th

Kevin's ear is still blocked up (but fortunately he's not in pain) so decided that he needed to visit a doctor again. He phoned the surgery in Bonnievale and got an appointment for 11.30am. The doctor suggested that he should see an ENT doctor in Worcester and made an appointment for him at 4.15pm. Worcester is about 75km from Bonnievale so we decided to visit the BushLapa shop before going to the doctor. After driving to Robertson we took the gravel roads to Worcester and found the BushLapa place. Andre showed us some photos and then took us round the factory where they make the caravans. He said that once the chassis is complete they move them on to another place on the other side of Worcester and said that he'd take us there after we'd been to the doctor.

The doctor said that Kevin had a fungal infection in his ear. He cleaned out both ears (loads of gunk according to Kev) and then put some stuff in his right ear to, hopefully, clear the infection .

At the BushLapa showroom Andre showed us some nearly completed 'vans – they make them to order. We were very impressed with them and he said that they would take out 'van in part exchange but that if we ordered now we wouldn't be able to pick up the 'van until early April. We took away price etc details and said we'd contact him tomorrow – they close for Christmas on Friday.

Thursday December 13th

Apart from doing some shopping in Bonnievale we had a quiet day at the campsite. We contacted Andre and arranged to go back to see his boss, Jannie, in the middle of January after our time in the Cederberg.

Western Cape. Bontebok National Park

Friday December 14th

Less than 80km to travel today to Bontebok Park on the outskirts of Swellendam so took our time packing up. Monday is a bank holiday in South Africa so we're expecting Bontebok to be busy. We arrived around midday and there was only 1 other couple already setting up. There's very little shade at the campsite so we picked one with a good sized acacia tree and set up camp, however later in the afternoon we decided to move as that site was very central and we thought that it might be quieter at one of the places around the edge of the site. We hadn't put the awning up so it didn't take us long to move and late on were glad that we had as there were lots of kids on bikes whizzing around the circular track – our previous site was one of the ones in the centre of the 'track'.

Saturday December 15th

We spent the day at the campsite. It was overcast most of the day but not cold. We had reasonable internet access so I managed to send loads of emails with our Christmas 'newsletter'. In the afternoon we went for a walk along one of the trails from the campsite. We could hear lots of birds but didn't see many in the thick undergrowth and when we got back went for a swim in the river. There are a few nice sites near the river but they don't have electric and when I booked we didn't have the solar panel so I'd booked one of the ones with electric.

Sunday December 16th

A beautiful sunny day (into the mid 30s). We drove along one of the loop roads in the Park with lovely views of the mountains to the North. We then went into Swellendam to do some shopping. We shopped at Spar and then discovered a new shopping mall with a big Checkers supermarket – no wonder the Spar shop had been so empty. After lunch we had a lazy afternoon at our site, under the awning, reading the Sunday papers. Despite the high temperatures we were fine as there was a cool breeze blowing. Later we went for a swim in the river which wasn't too busy considering the amount of families staying.

We chatted to the people camping next to us (Paul and Margaret) and discovered that they had lived in Hemel (and now live in Gordon's Bay) and that they had friends from the UK (Chipperfield) who were staying in one of the chalets! In the evening they invited us round for a drink at their chalet and we had a good chat. The UK lady worked in Tring and her kids went to Tring School – small world!

Western Cape. Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve.

Monday December 17th

No rush to leave as we only had just over 40km to travel today. We left around 11am, drove into Swellendam for a few more provisions and arrived at Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve before 1pm. The guy at reception said that they had a problem with the water, that there was no hot water and that the toilet cisterns weren't filling but that we could use the toilet at the office so we said OK. We were supposed to have site 7 but the people had left their car there plugged into the electric and, presumably gone for a walk so we said we'd be happy to have site 4 instead. I had to back the caravan along the track to the site as there was no way we'd be able to turn around once there.

There are loads of bees around as many of the trees on the campsite are in flower. Although only a short distance from Bontebok this area is much greener as it's in the foothills of the mountains and in the overlap between the summer and winter rainfall areas.

The guy in the office said that the water is OK to drink but we didn't fancy it as it's VERY brown – not dirty but just from the local rivers. We had cold showers and they were fine – you don't really notice the colour of the water!

Late afternoon we had a walk down to one of the bird hides which overlooks the forest. To see anything you really need to be prepared to sit and watch for an hour or two so we just had a quick look around and then walked back to the campsite. There are only a dozen or so sites here and it's lovely and quiet – no traffic just the sound of the bees!

Tuesday December 18th

We had a lovely sunny day with lovely views over the mountains to the north. In the morning we had a walk along one of the forest trails. We were out for 2 ¼ hours and didn't see another soul. We heard plenty of birds (but didn't see many because of the thick forest) and heard baboons a couple of times – and once caught a glimpse of some through the trees. It was nice and cool walking through the forest, taking our time and enjoying the trees and plants. We saw some weird looking fungus and a star-shaped plant which looked like it might be an insectivorous plant.

We had a quiet afternoon at our site. There were a couple of guys painting the ablutions block (which is a bit tired looking inside as well) and they carried on working until after 8pm by which time they were working by the light on the side of the building!

Wednesday December 19th

Once again we went for a walk in the morning, this time for around 3 hours with lots of up and downhill sections as we crossed valleys and hills. There was more cloud around today but still a lovely walk, once again mostly along forest tracks which are, for the most part, well-marked and maintained. We saw some of the star-faced plants again and noticed that they were fungi.

Another well-earned quiet afternoon at our site.

Western Cape. Wagendrift Lodge.

Thursday December 20th

We headed north again today. When we got up there was low cloud over the surrounding hills but as we made our way along the Tradouw Pass the sky became brighter and we had good views along the Pass. Once over into the next big valley the vegetation had changed to karoo scrub, very different to that to the south of the mountains. We stopped at the Spar in Ladismith for provisions, not as much choice as we'd like but we managed to get enough to see us through the next week. We then took the more scenic route to Wagendrift Lodge along the gravel Seweweekspoort Pass road which followed a narrow river valley through the mountains.

At Wagendrift we were met by Maxine, one of the workers who directed us to the campsite (she had no English and we have no Afrikaans). There was a building near the site I went to see if anyone was about. It turned out to be a guest lodge but the couple there said that they were staying at the

campsite but that we could use the pool if no-one was at the lodge, they also warned me that there were lots of mosquitoes around the campsite because the river had water in it (it depends on what water is released from a dam upstream).

We drove onto the campsite which turned out to have lots of small sites, mostly under acacia trees. We walked around for a while and eventually picked one which we could drive the caravan into with enough room to open the top. Once we'd set up camp we were ready for a swim as the temperature was in the 30s. We chatted to the other couple, who we'd noticed at Bontebok in their home-made camper and they said they'd then stayed near Grootvadersbosch and done some walking there. It was very pleasant sitting up at the lodge with a shaded veranda and the pool to cool off in plus a nice breeze from time to time.

After a shower and washing our clothes (the cold water was actually rather warm!) we sprayed mozzie stuff on us and put coils in the 'van and outside while we lit the fire for our tea. We didn't eat until getting on for 7.30pm by which time the mozzies were out in force so we ate up as quickly as possible and retreated into the van, leaving the washing up for the morning.

Friday December 21st

Mum's 90th birthday – a pity that we've no phone signal so can't ring her.

After breakfast we set off for a walk. We'd taken a photo of the 'map' outside the lodge so we had some idea of where to go as nothing was marked on our GPS. The first part followed the river downstream and included having to cross the river a couple of times. There were several animal tracks along the sandy path, mostly mall buck. The second time I ended up chasing my hat downstream as I lost it when I was handing the camera over to Kev so I my boots and socks were sopping wet. As soon as we were near the river mozzies appeared so we didn't spent too much time there but at least, from time to time, there was some shade from the acacia trees – it was already very hot by 9am. We heard a saw some baboons along the top of the opposite hillside. The second part of the walk was upstream along a mainly dry narrow riverbed, once again following a vehicle track with karoo scrub and occasional small trees. Eventually we came out into a wider valley but then had a long trudge back to the campsite along a very hot, boring track – by now Kevin's watch was indicating temperatures in the low 40s! Altogether we covered 13km in 3 ¾ hours. The only people that we saw were one of the workers and his son who were looking out for their sheep. Luckily there were still no people at the lodge so we had a swim before a late lunch and then spent the afternoon up by the pool. We've been told that people are due to arrive tomorrow afternoon. During the afternoon the clouds built up and we could see lightening and hear thunder rumbling but we didn't get any rain.

We ate earlier in the evening so that we could retreat to the 'van before the mozzies came out in force!

Saturday December 22nd

It was even hotter today so we stayed in the shade at the camp/lodge all day. We had a swim in the morning and then a couple of hours by the pool in the afternoon. Mozzies weren't a problem during the day but there were a lot of flies about. We've decided to move on tomorrow, we weren't due to leave until Monday but if's there's nowhere to cool off it would be way too hot – we can't even have a cool shower as the 'cold' water is hot!

Once again the clouds built up in the afternoon, but still no rain here.

In the evening we packed up most of our things so we could get away early in the morning.

Western Cape. Beaverlac.

Sunday December 23rd

We headed north again and tried to find a campsite in Ceres but one looked to be in a bad location and the other was fully booked so we carried on to Beaverlac where I knew we could camp as they don't take bookings. We stopped in Porterville to do some shopping and then set off up the mountain following a twisty tar road to the top of the Pass. We saw a guy parascending and near the top a platform where they could take off. We then had to negotiate a narrow rocky track down to Beaverlac which was quite busy but we found a nice spot under some shady pine trees.

After setting up the 'van we walked to the swimming pool in the nearby river, a couple of hundred metres from the campsite, where there's a big, deep pool – very hot again today so we were able to cool off.

The back offside tyre was a little flat and when Kev had a look he thought that the valve was leaking. He put some more air in and said that we'd try and get it looked at tomorrow.

Western Cape. Enjo Nature Farm.

Monday December 24th

During the night we had some rain and it was drizzling on and off while we were packing up. We managed to get back up the rocky track OK mostly in second gear in low range after we'd let some air out of the tyres on the bakkie and the 'van.

We drove back to Porterville where we found a tyre place. They took the tyre off and checked it and agreed that it was the valve, which they then replaced. It only took half an hour and we were on our way soon after 8,30am.

While driving north the rain got worse but, luckily, there wasn't too much traffic. We managed to find some roadside parking in Clanwilliam and did some shopping at Spar – very busy there – before heading east to Enjo Nature Farm in the Biedouw Valley. By the time we arrived at the farm the rain had eased a bit so we were able to set up camp under a shady acacia tree. There are only 3 campsites and a few cottages here so lovely and quiet!

After the last few scorching days it seemed strange to be wearing a fleece and sitting in the 'van all afternoon! By late afternoon the sky started to clear so we were able to light a fire and eat outside.

Tuesday December 25th

A perfect day. Lovely weather, superb food and very peaceful, just the sound of bees, cicadas and birds!

Kevin tried to fly his remote controlled helicopter but decided that it must be one to be used inside as the sunlight was interfering with the controls plus the light breeze was blowing it about.

We had a 3 course lunch over a couple of hours. Our starter was pate on toast with gherkins. We then had ostrich steaks with roast potatoes, butternut, carrots and courgettes with red wine gravy. This was followed by Christmas pudding – actually beer bread with extra sugar, dried fruit, nuts and cherries – with custard and brandy butter, all washed down with a bottle of sparkling wine. Apart from the toast everything was cooked on the braai.

Late afternoon we walked up to the swimming pool and spent an hour or so there. The pool is a big concrete circular reservoir with some chairs under shady trees. To start with we were the only people there but later a few others arrived.

We stayed up late to watch the stars come out, a lovely end to the day. Being in the West of South Africa sunset is not until around 8pm which seems quite late to us now.

Wednesday December 26th

It was very hot today. We stayed around campsite all day. We had a short walk out to look at the labyrinth they'd created in one of the old sheep kraals and then a swim in the pool in the morning. In the afternoon we spent a couple of hours under the shady trees by the pool. Kevin tried out his helicopter in the 'games' room and was much more successful.

We asked if we could stay until next Monday (we'd originally intended leaving on Monday and going back to Beaverlac) and, luckily, were told that we could as they'd had a late cancellation. We bought a guide book about the area which has information about the local farms, mountain passes and villages.

Thursday December 27th

It was windy during the night so I got up to take in the washing and Kevin checked the awning. We woke to grey skies, the hills covered in clouds and a cold wind blowing so we put up one side of the awning so that we could sit outside. The games room was taken over by a couple of families with 5 or 6 kids who had arrived at the campsite late yesterday so Kev wasn't able to practise flying.

Friday December 28th

It was cloudy to start with but with sunny patches and less wind so we decided to drive to Wupperthal, a small Moravian Church community hidden away in a valley to the south which is well-known for the shoes that are made there. It was an interesting drive over the pass and down into the valley which looked wonderfully green amongst the dry mountainsides and we had lovely views of the Cederberg mountains to the West. A couple of years ago we'd visited Elim, another Moravian Church community, and had expected a similar set-up in Wuppertal with locals offering guided tours but were disappointed to find nothing there. The 'tourist information' office didn't have any leaflets or information and the shoe factory was in a run-down building which badly needed a coat of paint. Kevin had hoped to buy a pair of veldshoes but decided that the ones he'd bought near 'Maritzburg were better quality.

We were back at the campsite in time for a late lunch and spent the afternoon at the pool and campsite as the sun had come out.

There was a car parked by the small ablutions block when a girl who'd been up by the pool went to it we decided that she must be the German girl that Andrea had told us has booked in for 1 night and

was going to sleep in her car so I went to speak to her and tell her that she could park her car in the shade under the tree behind our caravan. We then found that the only food she had was a packet of nuts and raisins so as we were having a potjie we asked her to join us for a meal later on. Her name is Sandra and she's spending 5 weeks in South Africa, today she's driven from Uppington which is over 500km and tomorrow she's going to Cape Town. Usually she stays at backpacker's accommodation.

Saturday December 29th

We woke to blue skies and after a quick breakfast set off to visit the Sevilla Rock Art Trail which entailed driving 30km back to the main tar road and then another 5 km or so towards Clanwilliam. When we'd driven over the Pass on Monday we couldn't see much because of the low cloud and rain but today had lovely views across the hills and mountains. We'd done the trail about 10 years ago, the last time that we'd stayed in the Cederberg area. We got a small self-guided trail guide from The Traveller's Rest (as the trail 'office' and tearoom wasn't open yet) and set off just before 9am. The painting here are just as good as the ones that we've seen in Botswana and Namibia – well worth a visit – and only R30 per person.

We then drove to Clanwilliam to do some shopping. We bought wings and samosas for lunch and drove back up the Pakhuis Pass using the guide book to look out for points of interest and then stopped at a small layby at the top of the Pass where there were a few trees so that we could sit in the shade and enjoy our lunch with great views all around.

We got back to the campsite around 3pm and went for a swim to cool off. After a shower we washed our clothes, hung them out on the line at 5pm and by 6.30pm everything as dry!

Sunday December 30th

We had a quiet day at the campsite. In the morning we washed the sheets, pillowcases and towels which soon dried in the sunshine. The pool was quite busy today with several couples and families taking the opportunity to cool off. Lots of the people staying at the campsites and cottages here have dogs with them, they're not allowed to swim in the pool but there's a dam a short walk along the track where they can swim.

As on previous evening we sat out enjoying the star-filled sky.

Western Cape. Cederberg. Algeria Campsite.

Monday December 31st

We packed away at our leisure and then had a walk down to the dam before heading back to Clanwilliam and then on up into the Cederberg, taking the gravel road rather than the longer (but probably quicker) tar road. The gravel road wound up the valley and from time to time there were farms with orchards in the valley, some with campsites.

At Algeria we found our site, number 23, which is at the end of the track and nice and quiet with stunning views of the surrounding mountains. Mind you apart from a couple of young oak trees the site is quite exposed so let's hope that it's not too windy. After setting up camps and having some lunch we had a walk around the site. There are 48 camping spots and most of them are quite large with good shade – when I booked back in July there were only a couple of free places. You're

allowed up to 6 people and 3 tents per site and the majority seemed to be filled to bursting point with family groups. There's a river running through the site with a large pool for swimming and cooling off – most of the families seemed to have set up umbrellas on the grass next to the river.

We stayed up quite late for us – after 9.30pm – and celebrated the New Year a little early with a bottle of sparkling wine.

The rest of this trip will be in the Western Cape 2013 trip report which I'll be uploading later.