

FINDING MY HAPPY PLACE AT THE VREDEFORT DOME

by Margaret Rose



I'll show you sites that will blow your mind," he said as we loaded the Bakkie with our belongings, including the half eaten cake left over from the previous evening. I couldn't believe that I had agreed to the outing when I had so much work to do, and deadlines to meet. The truth is, I was feeling so drained and didn't have the energy to face another spreadsheet or read another mail. Besides, 'Bundu Bashing' sounded like so much more fun to me!

My sister, Renee, and I hopped onto the back of the Bakkie while our Guide, a member of the "Friends of the Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site", and my brother-in-law, Mike, slipped into the front seat. Ready for the adventure, we set off on our expedition through the bush at the Vredefort Dome, near Parys. As the Bakkie bounced along over the rough terrain we clung to the roll-bar, ducking to avoid overhanging branches and spider webs that draped from tree to tree. I was baffled by the tapestry of these tiny eight-legged creatures.

After a while we stopped underneath a canopy of trees, where we enjoyed a cool breeze, while taking in the fresh smell of damp earth and leaves. The trees were alive with inquisitive chirping feathered friends who accompanied us as we sat quietly enjoying the peaceful environment. I had found my happy place, feeling so relaxed and detached from stress and worries.

Hugging the roll-bar again, we ventured towards a troupe of baboons who were lazing in the sunshine. They didn't have any thoughts of entertaining us, and quickly climbed further up the mountain area as we approached them. Mothers with babies clinging to their backs like little Koala bears, quickly disappeared through the trees. We could hear them barking in the distance as we continued driving.

Our Guide led us on foot as we made our way along a short path towards a hidden treasure of the Vredefort Dome. Once at the top of the rocks, we stood in awe at the endless panoramic view of the grassy mountain range and valley below. The untouched landscape of trees and foliage stretched far into the distance and I was consumed by the awesome view and incredible stillness that surrounded us.

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(more follows)

The day came to a slowdown and the sun finally tucked itself away. Star gazing would be for another time when the nights are warmer. Another adventure to look forward to! Our expedition came to an end as we started our journey back towards the cabin, where we enjoyed a tasty cup of java and the juicy cake.

The drive was therapeutic and helped me to unwind. I felt relaxed and spontaneous. Besides the beauty, there is just something about the wilderness - the smells, fauna and flora, and fresh air that seems to revive the soul. Although it had only been a few hours, I felt as if I had taken a weekend's break. I returned home feeling energized and focused. With a bowl of popcorn at my side, I was ready to meet those deadlines!

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