



Rim of Africa

A 650km trail in the mountains

FIONA AYERST EMBARKED ON AN ADVENTUROUS NEW TRAIL IN SOUTH AFRICA BEING HAILED AS NO ORDINARY EXPERIENCE. HAVING WALKED THE 130KM STAGE ONE AND TWO PHASES IN 12 DAYS, FIONA CONFIRMS IT'S AN EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE.

THE INTENSITY AND MAGNITUDE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TRAIL WAS LIFE-ALTERING. It's long been the dream of mountain folk in the Cape to create a contiguous trail through the Cape's mountains. Founders Ivan Groenhof and Galeo Saintz, together with supporters scouted potential routes and engaged with Cape Nature and landowners over three years to realise this dream – the Rim of Africa.

The first trail took place in 2009 when stage one was opened. I recently took part in this stage one and two trail which is a 12 day walk stretching 130 kilometers starting at Pakhuis in the Cederberg. I had no idea what to expect.

It's not every day that one decides to walk 130 kms and the prospect was daunting.

The entire walk stretches 650 km and takes around 44 days to complete if done in one go. A trail of this length, traversing up and down mountain ranges, is best done in stages. The entire trail stretches from the greater Cederberg wilderness area on the Cape's West Coast to the Outeniqua Mountains in the Garden Route, traversing more than 650km of mountain paths. The route takes in the Cederberg, Skurweberg, Hexrivier, Keeromberg, Langeberg and the Outeniqua representing a flagship hiking product of international significance, attracting hikers from around the world. It's put South Africa on the map as a destination for mega-distance trails.

The guides and founders of the trail aim to create meaningful mountain corridors across the Cape's bounteous

mountains by ensuring the experience of each hiker is enhanced. Walking the Rim of Africa is not just slogging backpacks through wild mountain country – instead, it's a facilitated walking experience that touches on the numerous dynamics at play in the landscape.

Guides encourage hikers to take part in optional extras one wouldn't expect to find on an ordinary trail. These include waking up to the delightful sound of a penny whistle; poetry readings with superb original pieces by guide Johann Lanz; silent times; group warm-ups and multiple chances to share with each other the day's experiences and thoughts. The catering is worth mentioning too as Lolla Odendal, one of the guides, is an experienced outdoor caterer and whips up delicious spreads. Bang, went any thoughts of weight-loss on the walk.