

PATERNOSTER WOMEN DID IT - Almost 130 km and R 6847.50 later



Getting from Elands Bay to Paternoster is only about 100 kilometres. Walking that distance along the shore line is a different story. The challenge was there: Hedwig Slabbig and Sandelé Wilkinson started organising already in the past winter the four part fun walk mainly along the beach in aim to raise funds for the Paternoster Heritage Festival on 24 September 2009 for the Paternoster Children Fund.

The longest and hardest first part of 34 kilometres from Elands Bay to Draaihoek took place on 15 August. It was exciting leaving Paternoster in the dark, childhood reminiscences of going on holiday early in the morning. Hedwig (55) and Sandelé (50) were joined by Joan Niewoudt (57) and Marion Lubitz (45), all from Paternoster, and started walking at Bobbejaanskop at about 7:30 with the sun still behind the mountain, the air fresh and crisp, isolated, just the group and a spectacular feeling of freedom on this clean white beach, high dunes, soft sand and crashing waves. The going was heavy in the soft sand and the crazy ladies (what they have been called after the walk) got caught a few times in the breaking waves as the tide was coming in. The territory was unfamiliar for all of them, a real adventure with a few whales just behind the breakers for entertainment along the way. Even two light aircraft tipped their wings and buzzed them along the way.

The Ladies had to walk stretches on dirt road, through a farm with masses of pretty flowers and a bit of tar road, as it was impossible to stay on the soft sand. Friendly people drove by, stopped and donated money. Paternoster Heritage Festival Committee would like to sincerely thank all those generous people who stopped and chatted and supported the exhausted women, even the children donated some of their pocket money.

Making sure the walkers didn't miss the table and chairs on the dune at Draaihoek Lodge they used Ian Wilkinson's (who was always nearby as a standby emergency unit) handheld GPS with all the co-ordinates, ETE (estimated time en-route), distance and average speed to let them know exactly how far to still go. What a relief to spot eventually the famous dune at Draaihoek Lodge.

The second leg on 20 August started at Rocherpan again early in the morning. Rewarded with a stunning sunrise the grown group started motivated to tackle the long way to Laaipek. However, the organizers said this time it would be "only" about 21.6 kilometres. The tide was right and the women could walk all the way along the beach which was much easier than the first time. The day flew passed as everybody was enjoying chatting along, spotting whales, watching sea gulls or just soaking in the remoteness of this stretch of beach. Back to civilisation at Dwarskersbos the welcoming coffee went down well. The group got some money donated along the way before taking off to the beach again marching for Soverby Lapa for a little brunch. By then Laaipek was already in sight and the Ladies started for their last bit with Sunset Villas Restaurant in their minds. At the end it turned out to be "only" 29 km.

The third leg took place on Saturday, 05 September. Motivated again, the women started early in Velddrift and walked all the way along the multiple interesting bays of St Helena Bay. Highlight was the sight of the lighthouse in Shelley Point. From there it was only a stone throw away to Shelley Point Lodge and Spa where the "Crazy Ladies" were welcomed with a drink.

The last walk, which was supposed to be the shortest one, took place last Saturday. The ladies got a nice setup at Oystercatcher Lodge at Shelley Point. Sue and Luc, the owners, made sure that all ladies walked off well fed. The group walked again all the way along the shore along with dolphins and whales, passed Groot Paternoster at the high water mark and eventually ended up at the finishing line at Voorstrand Restaurant. The crazy group of approx. 12 participants was welcomed by the patronage of the restaurant. The donation tin was sent around again. It was then that everybody got really excited. The count was on R 6847.50 which will go completely toward the Paternoster Children Fund. This was far beyond any expectations before the walk. The aim is to take out the children for an educational day to Cape Town.

The organisers would like to give a special word of "Thank you's" to Draaihoek Lodge, Oystercatcher Lodge, Shelley Point Lodge and Spa, Voorstrandt Restaurant and all other kind donators for their support. Sandelé Wilkinson and Hedwig Slabbig comment: "We'll do it again! Hopefully next year even more women will take part as this was not only for the own health but also for fun and charity!"