

St Alban's College



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Web Page <http://www.stalbanscollege.com>

Garry Townsend Form III Journey coordinator
Cell 082 321 5430

30 May 2012

Dear Ryk

Thank you – Buffalo Gorge is great!

We have now completed 8 St Alban's College Journeys and have used your farm as our adventure and solo base each time.

There is no doubt that the time we spend on your farm is one of the highlights of the Journey for the boys and staff alike. The beautiful surroundings are part of the reason, but even more so are the incredible opportunities you make possible for our boys. The abseiling point must be one of the most spectacular anywhere, and the horse-riding experience is a first for many of our boys. Added to this, your own unique brand of hospitality and entertainment make any visit to Buffalo Gorge something to remember!

We appreciate the way you go out of your way to accommodate our needs – and wants – and that you do so with enthusiasm. You have improved the service you offer and the quality of the facilities every year and have put in a lot of time and effort for our direct benefit – thank you!

Thank you and God bless

Garry

Journey Co-ordinator

St Alban's College



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Kean Broom Form III Journey coordinator
Cell 082 3744852

20 May 2011

Dear Ryk

Buffalo Gorge remains a highlight of our Form 3 Journey

The time we spent at Buffalo Gorge this year has again been wonderfully refreshing, challenging, and full of fun!

In addition to the horse riding, which you run with much energy and a great sense of fun, we were impressed with the addition of the rock climbing component that is now available at the abseiling site. Both the climb and the abseil allow spectacular views over the Avontuur Valley. The company that ran the climbing and abseiling was very professional and efficient and our staff and boys felt safe under their guidance.

We always enjoy the natural beauty of the surroundings and the quiet evenings around the campfire at the end of a busy day.

Thank you for the time and energy you put into making sure that our time at Buffalo Gorge is always so memorable.

Thank you and God bless

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kean'.

Journey Co-ordinator

FUTURE ACHIEVERS ACADEMY

Suite MW 196
Private Bag X1838
Middelburg
1050

Buffalo Gorge
Eco-Adventure Campsite
Middelburg
1050

10 August 2010

Dear Ryk

FUTURE ACHIEVERS ACADEMY Grade 3 Camp June 2010

We would like to thank you for the true camping experience you exposed the learners to at Buffalo Gorge.

The learners enjoyed first time activities: Sleeping in tents, making their own fire to get hot water for shower-hour, sitting around the fire learning about the area, horse riding, abseiling, rock climbing and campfire concert; this was a great experience for all of them.

I am very sure that our next group of Grade 3 learners will return to Buffalo Gorge as we hope you will be able to accommodate us in your bucolic outdoor and friendly style.

We will be happy to recommend your venue to those schools looking for a rustic and unique outdoor experience.

Many thanks for making your beautiful farm available to us.

Kind Regards

Marie Botma
Principal

St Alban's College



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Kean Broom Form III Journey coordinator
Cell 082 3744852

22 July 2010

Dear Ryk

Another successful Journey at Buffalo Gorge

It's hard to believe that we have been using Buffalo Gorge as a base camp for our Journey Solo and activity day for six years already – how time flies!

The boys and staff have a wonderful time each year, and the improvements you make to the camping area and general facilities are noticeable every time. As for the horse riding, your unique style and great sense of humour remain a talking point at our school for months after our visit!

It is so refreshing to sit around the fire under the bamboos in the evenings as the sun goes down – it really recharges one's soul. I know many of us are very reluctant to leave when it is time to move on.

Thanks again for all the effort you put into making our stay so enjoyable. We will be back to visit you in 2011, without a doubt!

Thank you and God bless

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kean'.

Journey Co-ordinator



Witbank High School

Tel. School: (013) 656 6444
Fax: (013) 656 6444
E-mail: witbankhighs@mweb.co.za

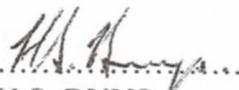
Beatty avenue
P.O. Box 909
WITBANK
1035

2009-08-12

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Witbank High School made use of Eco Adventure at Buffalo Gorge north-east of Middelburg Mpumalanga, as part of the leadership training for their Student Executive Council members 2009.

Witbank High School combined their own leadership training with the physical challenges and outdoor environment e.g. absailing, bushveld plant identification etc. offered by the capable staff of Echo Adventure Centre. The facilities are quite suitable to take learners out of their comfort zone and concentrate on the tasks and objectives necessary for the training of the leader-learner group.


H S BUYS
PRINCIPAL

Max Stibbe Waldorf School

Camp date: March 2009

Dear Ryk

What an experience. Before class 5 went on camp we were a class that was divided. Since we have come back we are a class that is complete.

Buffalo Gorge offered us a wide range of activities that tested each and every child to the best of their abilities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the various people who were involved and helped to make our camp experience a memorable one.

To Matthew from Vertica Life. You played a great role in helping us to become one class and helped us to see the value of team work. Thank you for helping us to abseil. A lot of the children were very scared and your carefree, happy personality allowed the children to relax and put a lot of faith into you. To this day they still talk about you and wonder how your adventure is going.

To Gideon- thank you for taking us on the best nature walk ever. The children learnt a lot and still talk about the fascinating plants they saw. The "lion-hunt" song is still a favourite and is sung to whoever wants to hear it.

To Hildegard- Thank you for the wonderful food. Your kind, motherly attitude really helped the girls to feel at home, especially those that were homesick.

Finally to Ryk- you made our first camp experience a memorable one. The biggest highlight for the children was when you took us horse riding and for many, including myself, it was the first time.

Camps are the one opportunity that allows the child to be outdoors and experience something that cannot be experienced by watching TV. Buffalo Gorge definitely allowed for that experience to happen, and when you return with sleepy bodies but happy hearts then camp was a success.

Thank you to everyone who helped to make this camp experience one that we will never forget.

Yours sincerely

Hayley Davis and the 15 children from class 5

Max Stibbe Waldorf School

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V I K E L W A

9 July – 11 July 2008

CHALLENGE IN PURE NATURE (ADVENTURE & FUN CAMP)

The Behavior Achievers from Vikelwa School, near Ogies, enjoyed nature in the true sense. The group of 15 boys spent an exciting weekend at Buffalo Gorge where they went horse back riding, discovered unknown aspects of nature and even did ABSEILING. For all the boys the abseiling was a first and a huge challenge in overcoming their fears. Many said they will abseil again but some said: "Never again." Their favorite activity was horse riding.

In between the major activities, they had the opportunity to keep themselves busy with darts, table tennis and several other games available at the camp.

The boys stayed in tents and took the responsibility of making the camp fire, (Boesman se TV) braaiing and washing dishes. The teachers who accompanied the learners were continuously involved in what was offered.

The venue offers freshness to the ones that love experiencing nature for what it really is; no frills and fanciness.

Max Nel (Hoof) 082 898 1049

Noelien van Rensburg (VLR-Voog)

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Kean Broom Form III Journey coordinator
Cell 082 3744852



10 May 2008

Dear Ryk

Another wonderful experience at Buffalo Gorge

This has been the fourth year in a row that you have hosted important sections of our Form 3 Journey. Once again we have really appreciated the effort you made to ensure that our time on your farm was truly unforgettable. The boys are privileged to experience the wild beauty of nature during their 36-hour solo up on the ridge. It is a time that many of them reflect on long after they have returned home.

The horse riding is also a huge highlight for many, and your entertaining lecture at the start never fails to draw shrieks of laughter and set a good tone for the ride to follow! Your horses are always in great condition and the ride through your farm is made even more worthwhile by the beautiful scenery.

For those who have never abseiled, to start with the 50m abseil at your spectacular abseil site is a daunting challenge – but one that always brings out the best in the boys.

Ryk, thank you again for hosting us and making us feel so at home. We will definitely see you next year again!

Kind regards

Kean Broom
Journey Co-ordinator

Buffalo Gorge
Adrenaline Wilderness Excursion
Middelburg
27 May 2008

Dear Ryk

Max Stibbe Waldorf School Class 7, 2007 Camp

When dealing with a class of grade 7 boys and girls with diverse backgrounds and likes and dislikes it is very important to find a campsite that will cater for all their needs.

We wanted a place that would excite our need for adventure, that would challenge us physically and mentally but not be too rigid in terms of timetable or activities – where children could still enjoy “real” camping. We found all this, and more, at Buffalo Gorge.

The sixteen man tent allowed the girls to feel safe and a bit more pampered than the boys who slept in their own tents and liked to “rough it”. The facilities in the kitchen proved adequate but groups need to come prepared with all their own utensils – which we did not do. We especially loved the outdoor cooking and learning to prepare food on an open fire. We enjoyed collecting our own wood and sitting around the fire at night.

I was amazed at the expertise with which even the most inexperienced rider was encouraged to go horse riding. This experience is something they will always remember – and brag about!

The instructors for archery, abseiling and rock climbing were not only extremely professional and safety conscious, they also had an understanding and a love for children.

The children enjoyed the hike and the picnic. The view from the 50m abseiling point is something we city slickers only experience in magazines or movies. What a profound moment!

I think you have a special knack when dealing with groups to ascertain how much guidance they would need. Your enthusiasm for God’s creation was contagious – and more inspiring than any formal “lesson” on nature could ever be.

We liked the unpretentious, non-lecturing, sheer enjoyment of nature where we could climb the mountain and watch the sunrise – for the thrill of it.

Thank you once again for an enjoyable experience that enriched our lives. I can truly recommend your campsite to anybody who wants to experience nature at its best. I somehow wish that you would not lose this natural approach and become too sophisticated. We still need places like yours.

Yours faithfully

Marguerite de Clercq
Principal

St Alban's College

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Dave Goodwin 2005 Journey coordinator
Cell 083 440 5430



2005

Dear Ryk

As you know our Grade 10 boys were in the bush for 23 days and their program included mountain biking, river rafting and hiking through some of the most beautiful and dramatic scenery in Mupumalanga. But it was their day at Buffalo Gorge that so many mentioned as the highlight of the whole Journey for them.

For many of the boys riding a horse was a new and exhilarating experience and they felt confident enough to even gallop at times because of the care and professionalism of your staff and family. Despite the poor weather, that all 106 boys were able to ride and to abseil down the magnificent 50m cliff over the six days was because of your flexibility and planning and this was really appreciated.

I have no doubt that St Alban's plans to return to Buffalo Gorge next year and we hope you will be able to accommodate us in your typically rustic and hospitable style. For other schools looking for a venue to run leadership or other outdoor experiences, I would be happy to recommend your beautiful farm and the unique experience of riding a horse.

Many thanks for all that you did.

Sincerely

Dave Goodwin
2005 "Journey" Coordinator
083 440 5430

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V I K E L W A

REPORT

RCL – LEADERS CAMP

7 – 9 March 2008

It is customary to train the new RCL-members at the beginning of the year. The current group had the challenge of working together as a group for they are very different in many ways. During the training camp at Buffalo Gorge, they were dependent on each other and successfully breached the gap and their differences. They were bunking together in a large tent and were involved in the preparing of meals. Over and above that, the horse riding exercise leveled the playing ground (including that of the teacher) for they were not familiar with saddle sitting. Mastering the skill of staying in the saddle, gave them the feeling of camaraderie.

During their more theoretical session through discussions, they got to understand their differences; also that of the other learners. The "star gazing" had them in ore. Afterwards they had a problem solving exercise where they were challenged and forced to work together. They were occupants of a stranded space shuttle who had to survive or die. They made it!!!

With the treasure hunt (of and about trees) they once again had to communicate thoroughly. Once again they proved themselves and came out to of the log. They had to solve 5 challenges but went on taking on 6. Out of the six, they got 5 correct. Through this commitment and devotion, they earned/won a reference book for the school which was handed over by the facilitators.

I am positive and hopeful that this is and was a worthy and successful excursion and that the School in its whole will benefit from this.



Last note: The School is invited to do "Community service" at the Gorge to assist in eradicating alien plants. It is a great learning opportunity for those that will have interest in learning more and working hard/ Accommodation will then be free. Unfortunately the learners will not earn money but they will definitely gain a lot of knowledge and satisfaction.

Thanks to the SMT and SGB for availing the funds and enabling the training. It was a life time experience that will for ever have an impact on the learners.

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Noelien van Rensburg (VLR-Voog)

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VIKELWA

Vikelwa Skool
Ogies
1023
Februarie 2008

Wyd lê die eindlose vlaktes

Is daar 'n lekker Afrikaanse woord vir "rustic"? Dié wat in die woordeboek voorkom, laat nie reg geskied aan die belewenis by Buffalo Gorge nie.

In sy liedjie Victoriabaai, sing Lucas Maree dat hy sy "siel oopknoop" daar. Met 'n besoek aan Buffalo Gorge is hierdie woorde in volle begrip!

Vikelwa Skool, Ogies se Verteenwoordigende Leerlingraad het 'n naweek gaan siel oopknoop en leer. Dit was net wat die dokter sou voorskryf. Die seuns het interaksie met mekaar, mens en die natuur gehad.

Daar is groot-ogig met 'n gelag en plesierigheid aan perdesaals vas geklou. Perdry vra voorwaar intense konsentrasie en dissipline. Die buitenste ruim is besoek deur sterre kyk en 'n uitdagende groepsaktiwiteit daarna.

'n Boom is ook nie sommer net 'n boom nie! Daar is vinnig meer geleer en die seuns is bewus gemaak van die noodsaaklikheid van "boom-bewaring". Flink het hulle bome kon identifiseer.

Buffalo Gorge se eenaar en fasiliteerders plant die bewarings- en natuur-saadjie by die volwassenes van die toekoms. Die Leerlingraad is só begeesterd dat hul wil terug keer om vrywillige veldherwinning te doen.



Uitsig vanaf die 50 m "abseiling"rots

Max Nel (Hoof)
Noelien van Rensburg (VLR-Voog)
013 643 3019

INKWENKWEZI ADVENTURE CAMPS
CHILDHOOD CONSERVATION 

ATTENTION: Ryk Diepraam

Buffalo Gorge
013 245 1049

Via Email: info@hhashi.co.za

1 February 2007

Dear Ryk

I would just like to thank you so much for the wonderful stay that we had at Buffalo Gorge in December.

Our group of 11 children, aged 9 – 12, all thoroughly enjoyed their night at the camp as well as enjoying an abseil, hike, and some refreshing time in the “Bos Jacuzzi”. Out of all the activities that we did during the duration of the 5 day camp, feedback from the children indicated that the most liked activity was the horse ride that we did with you. Besides horse riding being a new activity for most of the children, the outride itself was indeed new for everybody and as mentioned, was a truly memorable experience. Your horses are wonderful, well cared for and responsive and certainly not like a lot of horses that simply just plod along a route without even blinking or responding to the rider, making the general riding experience either boring or terrifying depending on the kind of horse you get.

I wish you all the best for 2007 and for the ventures you intend to take on, and trust that we will enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship as we continue to do business in the future.

Kind regards,

SONJA PARNELL

GEREFORMEERDE SKOOL JOHANNES CALVYN BETHAL	
Telefoon: (017) 647-5132 Sel: 082 566 7005 E-pos: calvynskoolbethal@absamail.com	
	Posbus 1294 BETHAL 2310

13 Maart 2006

VIR AANDAG: RYK DIEPRAAM

Buffalo Gorge
Posbus 1644
MIDDELBURG
1050

Beste Ryk

INSAKE: SKOOLKAMP GEHOU VANAF 7 TOT 10 MAAR 2006

Ontvan met hierdie skrywe net weer ons opregte dank en waardering vir 'n wonderlike paar dae wat ons by buffalo Gorge kon deurbring. Dit was vir iedereen van ons 'n onvergeetlike paar dae.

Die geleentheid wat die leerlinge kon hê om so in die ongerepte natuur te kamp en te leef, te ondersoek en te leer was 'n lewenslange ervaring. Ons kon geniet van die bome en plante, maar ook die oggend se stap en identifisering van die voëllewe was besondere geleenthede. Wat 'n wye verskeidenheid bome en voëls kon ons nie aantref nie! Die natuurlike kamposet, kristalhelder fonteinwater, uitdagende staproetes, die "bos-jaccuzzi" en kampvuur onder die sterrehemel saans, he tons tydjie 'n onvergeetlike ondervinding maak! Die hoogtepunt was natuurlik die ABSAILING, onder leiding van die uiterse bekwame Mark Gunn. Sy kennis van die veld en die sterre was ook 'n bonus om van te kon geniet.

Wees verseker dat ons heerlike gekuier het en beslis weer 'n skoolkamp te BUFFALO GORGE sal wil reel.

Tot ons weer sien – sien vir jou en alles wat jy aanpak!

Gerda Nel
SKOOLHOOF

** Johannes Calvyn Bethal het Buffalo Gorge ook dan in 2007 besoek.*

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Kean Broom Form III Journey coordinator
Cell 082 3744852



May 2006

Dear Ryk

ABSEILING IS FUN
(so we are told!!)

Buffalo Gorge, just outside Middelburg, was the host to 120 children from St. Alban's College in Pretoria recently. The children, all from Grade 10, were on a hike from the school in Pretoria to Machadadorp – a distance of some 380km, taking 24 days to complete the journey. This is the second year in which the Grade 10 boys have done this long journey, and it is to become an annual event.

While at Buffalo Gorge they participated in horse riding, spent 30 hours alone in the bush and also abseiled down a 50m cliff. We met up with them at the abseiling where Mark Gunn gave them a course on fitting the harness, as well as the safety precautions. Despite us being told that looking over the cliff was a "Freaky experience" the boys had no hesitation in strapping on the harness, and with a smile, disappearing from view!

On 27 May 2006 Buffalo Gorge will be holding a tree and bird identification weekend with experts in both fields there to answer questions.

Kind regards

Kean Broom
Journey Co-ordinator



PONY POWER

Rider Safety
Certification

Tuition
Fun

Creature Comfort
Competition

(December 1999)

CAMPING AT BUFFALO GORGE www.hhashi.co.za

Report from Witbank Branch

Annetjie Meerkotter (DC of Witbank Branch) writes: What a wonderful time we had with Ryk Diepraam on his farm Buffelskloof outside Middelburg. This is an experience our members will always remember and they keep on nagging "When are we going again?"

The camp started on Friday 3rd December. We departed from Ruitershof with two heavily loaded double cab bakkies. Arriving at the campsite everybody helped to put up tents and offload everything. After an hour everybody could go for a short walk on one of the 5 marked trails. There was a storm coming and halfway on the walk the rain started pouring down. We all ran back to the camp and into the kitchen tent. We looked at each other. A lot of wet chickens! We burst out laughing. There were a few holes in the kitchen tent and we put buckets where it was leaking. Gone was the braai as it kept on pouring outside but inside we had a bundle of optimistic youngsters. They started making music and began to sing and dance. This was a good opportunity to meet the outsiders from Middelburg who joined our camp. Soon everybody knew each other and was friends. After hotdogs and the rain stopped, Ryk made a big fire and now the party really started. They were singing and dancing on the tree trucks (that was supposed to be our chairs). That dancing, happy circle will always stay in my mind! The spirit was fantastic! The next morning after breakfast we all went on a long adventurous outride into the hills and through the rivers. Ryk taught us the names of trees and wild fruit. After many outride, swimming, rails and lessons to beginners, the parents came for a "Bring and Braai" on the Sunday afternoon. They joined us on an outride and the youngsters could show their parents what they had learnt. On Monday morning we got ready for the walk where we did the abseiling. Most of us had mixed feelings – scared but excited. After getting the information they started going down one by one. I was just sitting there watching and praying that no one would get hurt. They asked me if I am also going down. "I will first give everybody a chance and if there is time left, I will go" what I actually meant was; "I am very scared but if everybody goes down, I am also forced to do so!!" The instructor was very good and even encouraged my daughter, who is scared of heights to go down. Now I had no choice! Very bravely and without showing my feelings, I started off. What an experience! I will definitely try it again!

How wonderful it was to watch these youngsters changing from "ladies" being scared of spiders and "goggas" trying to look beautiful and clean, into "nature kids", playing in the mud, forgetting being clean and beautiful and on Tuesday morning even helped to catch Mopani worms so that Ryk could braai them for us, most of our members now know what Mopani worms look like and where to find them. They know trees like "Lekker-breek, Vaalboom, Kiepersos, Deurmekaarboom, Haakdoring" and their favourite "Perdepisbos". It is a pity that the other clubs could not join us, we are definitely going again even if it is only for one day. Contact Ryk Diepraam at (013) 245 1049 if your club or other people want to go and have the adventure of your life!

A. Meerkotter
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082 739 4167