The Forbes, Manuels and Pietersen's expedition from Robertson to Plettenberg Bay 27-30 April 2026

Monday, 27 April 2026, we left Silwerstrand camping resort in Robertson after spending a lovely weekend with our TORC L15 family. After topping up fuel in Montagu and bumping into some TORC L21 friends, we proceeded along the R62, with our first stop at Diesel & Crème in Barrydale, to show our companions, that's Gregory and Ursula Forbes and Michael and Nolene Manuel, just how scenic this part of beautiful countryside is enjoyed before we made our lunch break stop at the infamous Ronnies Sex Shop, close to Warmwaterberg. Here lots of pics were taken before we headed towards our two-night stopover at Kleinplaas Resort in Outshoorn.

After we were setup and sorted, we were ready to hit the blankets as the overnight temperature dropped to approximately 3^0C. Soup and whatever else was cooked sorted our supper for the night and all enjoyed an early night escape from a possible bon-fire for a well- deserved good night's rest.

The next day everyone ventured off exploring the town while some of us visited the famous Karoo Emporium for good ostrich steaks and fillets. Later that evening, we all met at "Nostalgie", rated as one of the top restaurants in CZ (*Outshoorn's registration*) bosting with their special Karoo Cuizine, to celebrate Desireé's birthday. What an eloquent celebration with special friends at this cozy venue. However, the cold got the better of us once again, and after we returned to the camp, we unanimously decided to hit the sack as we were prepared for the next day's adventure, "a trip to hell!"

By 09h00 on Wednesday morning, we were ready and packed for the road ahead. After arranging to park our caravans at Kleinplaas, we were on the road, with our next fuel fill up in De Rust. Thereafter, we meandered through the *picturesque* Meiringspoort mountain pass, stopping off and enjoying God's wonderful creation.

Soon we arrived in Prince Albert after driving along the R407 absorbing the landscape that becomes Indescribable when trying to explain its beauty. Upon arrival, Michael requested a few minutes to attend to work related matters, because soon, we were going off the grid on one of our best excursions thus far. "A trip to hell!"

It's early afternoon, we're at the start of the Swartberg pass and all tyres are deflated to 1,5 bars, using the "Indiflate", (*a dedicated inflator/deflator equalizing dual tyre pressure simultaneously*), which speeds up the process, just before we are captured by this magnificent mountain pass as we make our way to the T-junction, leading us into Gamkaskloof. The sharp hairpin bends and the tight squeezes made for passing vehicles, compliments the big talk everyone makes about the beautiful mountain formation experienced from these heights, not to mention the drone footage captured. It's approximately 14h15, and we see the sign that says, "Dangerous Road for 48km!

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Use at own risk!" By now, all myths of how treacherous this road may be is overtaken by what we're about to experience. Each vehicles' travel party, connected via two-way radios, encourage each other as we share information about approaching vehicles, to spotting wild animals and cautiously navigating the road's condition. And suddenly, after travelling for more than 2hrs, and approximately 30km, the descent is in full view! We obviously alight from our vehicles to capture this stunning view as we prepared to navigate the road ahead, with caution and great care. Those with 4x4, engage in low range, which makes the adventure more interesting, entertaining and safer. The same cannot be said by some of the co-drivers. However, we managed to get to Fontein Gasteplaas just after 17h00, making the total journey just over 3hrs in total.

By now, signs of exhaustion and satisfaction are mixed and the Manuels and Pietersens head on to their camp site while the Forbes opted for a stay at Hendrik se huisie. As soon as our camp was setup, we gathered round the fire and prepare our respective meals, waiting in anticipation for the Forbes to arrive. We later heard that they got lost trying to find us and retreated to their huisie for well deserved comfort. The days activities were partially discussed at the fire, with some emphasis on the post-traumatic trauma endured by the drive to our destination. We enjoyed a beautiful evening under the milky way, imagining what it would have been like if it were not full-moon. But this part of the kloof just provides the adventurer with its majestic natural environment that only true nature-lovers will appreciate. Would I consider returning to this paradise? Definitely, if the opportunity presents itself.

After a wonderful night's rest, we were up just before sunrise, absorbing what this new day had installed and appreciating the sounds of nature. Breakfast was prepared while a small fire managed to take the nip out of the chill before packing up camp preparing to meet the Forbes at the reception area. Its 09h00 and were set for the ascent out of the kloof and on to Oudtshoorn where we planned to fetch our caravans and continue on to Plettenberg bay for the next long weekend.

But before we left, we are informed of the kloof's history by its present host, Marinette Joubert and how her husband, Piet's family, also known as the boer farmers, wondered into the valley during the 1830's. It is noted that this valley was inhabited by early bushman, or so the history is told, who lost so much territory to forced colonial ownership! Interesting how Marinette and Piet, together with their son and daughter and assisted with the staff, mainly from Prince Albert, manage a simple, but tough life-style, economically dependent on tourist like ourselves, who venture these crazy adventure expeditions, just to relish on memories made of exploring our beautiful country. This session around the restaurant area, did not go by without capturing as many photos as was humanly possible, bearing in mind we had at least 6hrs of travel time to our next destination.

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By 10h00, and we were ready to exit the kloof via the steep and winding pass through this spectacular mountain pass, or should I say, exited a part of God's creation that is only experienced by a few adventure seeking explorers. The journey out was completed in 3hrs, which included a mid-morning tea-break, soaking in natures beauty once more as we nourished our pallets with sweet treats and whatever hot beverage could be enjoyed. Another photo sessions was held as our happy co-drivers were pleased to have exited, hoping to continue on flat asphalt roads to Plettenberg Bay.

In Outdtshoorn, we collected our caravans while some topped-up on other needy supplies. At the fuel station, we were advised to proceed via the R62 to Avontuur, then via the Prince Alfred Pass through De Vlugt in order to avoid the N2 weekend mayhem. This route, chosen by the drivers, without in depth research, was enjoyed by certain team companions. The expressions made by some occupants as we left the tarred R62 would be better described in secrecy. This route, an historic 68,5km gravel road, meanders through the beautiful Outeniqua mountains along the R339. Another one of Thomas Bain's masterpiece, being the longest publicly accessible gravel pass in South Africa.

After another adventurous expedition through Price Alberts Pass, a quick stop at Angies G Spot to collect stickers they were out of stock on a previous occasion, we arrived safely in the dark at Plettenberg Forever Resort, where we were welcomed by our fellow club members as the inaugural "East meets West" outspan began. What an eventful weekend lay ahead with lots of fun to be enjoyed. It should also be noted that the following week, the entire Meiringspoort, Swartberg Pass, Gamkas kloof as well as the Plett forever resort experienced torrential rains which led to major infrastructural damage. All of the above remained closed at the time of writing this article. We remain grateful to God Almighty, for affording us this amazing opportunity to experience His beauty, in the flesh. We remain thankful to all who kept us in prayer as we travelled, and look forward to our next adventure.

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