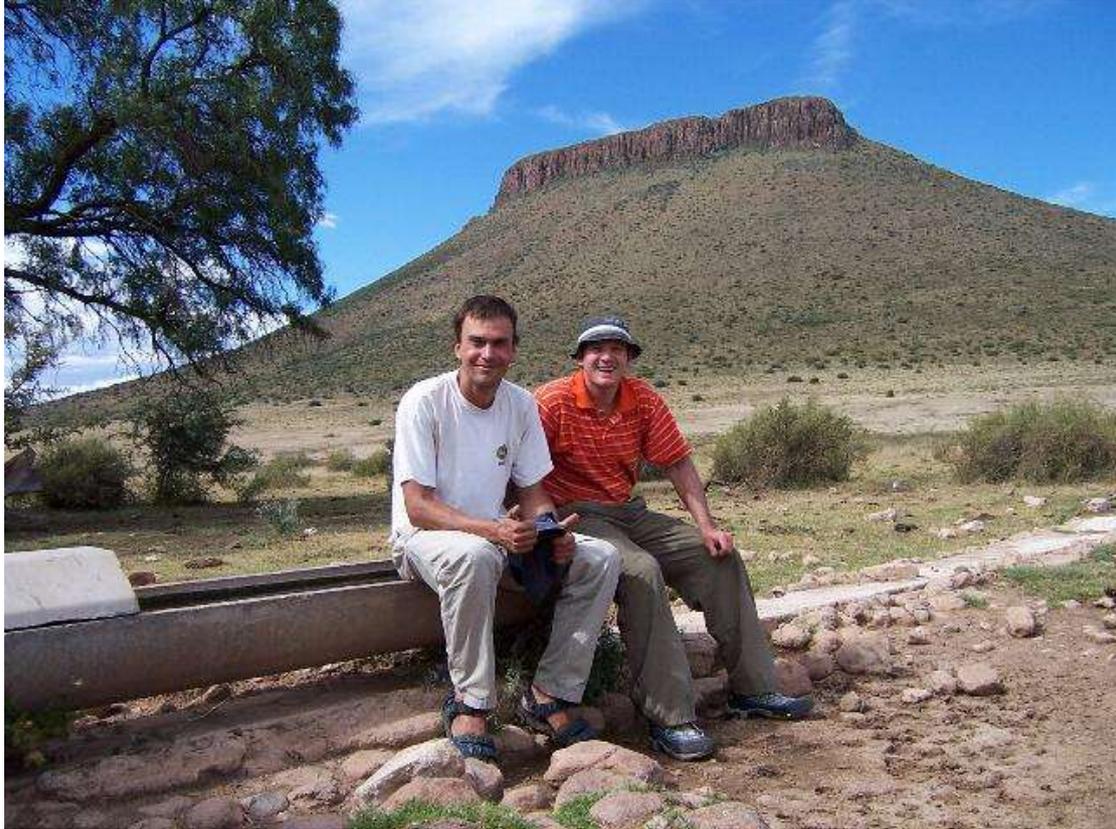


TAFELBERG



Route Guide for Rock Climbing
Tafelberg
Middelburg
Eastern Cape

By Gareth Frost

INTRODUCTION

I first really noticed this particular rock outcrop while travelling down to Port Elizabeth for business. Having climbed at Mary and opened routes at the Shire, both near Tarkastad, I knew this sort of mountain feature produced some pretty nice climbing. It was only in December 2005 that I managed to arrange a time to explore this spot. My wife and I stopped off for a couple of days to visit Mike and his family in Nieu Bethesda where Mike and I were able to get out for a day to climb Tafelberg.

The owner of Tafelberg was very kind to allow us onto his property and also made arrangements with his neighbours whose land we had to cross to get to the mountain. After our days climbing he invited us in for a glass of lemonade and some friendly conversation.

The main house of Tafelberg Hall is quite historic as it was build for the Stuben's family, one of the early mining magnates from Johannesburg, in 1900 by Sir Thomas Banes. His most famous works in South Africa include the Union Buildings and St John's College.

Although the hike up and down took us by surprise, we nevertheless enjoyed a good days climbing.

DIRECTIONS

Travel southwards on the N9 highway between Middelburg and Cradock. Tafelberg can be seen quite clearly after 15Km or so next to the road on the Eastern side. About 25Km from Middelburg a farm road on the southern side of Tafelberg, marked "Tafelberg Hall", appears on the left which gives access to the mountain and the farm house.

Car park: This can be found at a wind mill and water tank a few hundred meters from the farm road on the South Western side of the mountain.

Coordinates: 31d39m38.2s S; 25d09m23.2s E (WGS84)

Approach: Walk directly up to the West face of the mountain from the water tank, following a trail at first and then just any route up the slope to the cliff band (45-60 minutes).

Contact: William Asher at Tafelberg Hall – 049 8421413

ACCOMMODATION

There are a few guest houses and B&B's in Middelburg but it should also be possible to arrange a stay at Tafelberg Hall.

WEATHER

Hot in the summer with scattered thunder showers and cold in the winter with the possibility of snow. Ensure ample water supply for summer time climbing.

ETHICS

Only trad routes have been opened on this crag so far but there is plenty of scope for sport routes. The possibility of bolting lines here would first have to be cleared with the land owner. Personally I would like to see more trad lines opened first before any bolting takes place.

THE CRAG

The rock is good quality with many direct lines following corner and crack systems. This is typical of this area where the rock is predominantly Dolerite (iron stone). Because this crag is west facing it tends to have little vegetation. As with all trad areas, be careful of loose rock.

INDEX TO ROUTES (West face)

The climbs appear in this guide from right to left as if the crag was looked up at from below.

CODE	ROUTE NAME	GRADE	KEY
SWA	SOUTH WEST ARETE	13	*
NFB	NO FRIENDS OF BUSH	18	☺

KEY:

- * Good to excellent quality climbing.
- ☺ Average to good quality climbing.
- ☹ Poor to average quality climbing or routes with inadequate protection.

DESCENT ROUTE

From the top of the climbs walk in an Easterly direction following the cliff edge to a ramp on the Southern side of the mountain that can be easily descended to the base of the cliff.

ROUTE DESCRIPTIONS

SWA	SOUTH WEST ARETE	13	*
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APPROACH

About 30m to the left of the right hand arête of the cliff band, several easy looking lines in grey coloured rock can be seen. One of which has a distinctive chimney of brown rock about half way up the face. High above the chimney is a sharp arête with a boulder on top. Start to the left of the chimney below a ramp that leads up to a large chock stone.

Coordinates: 31d39m06.4s S; 25d09m54.6s E (WGS84).

1. 40m (13)
Climb the ramp to the chock stone. Climb up, over the chock and into the chimney. Climb the chimney to a ledge and into a another chimney. Continue up exiting leftwards to a ledge with a tree and belay.
2. 50m (13)
Move leftwards on the ledge to gain a chimney. Climb up to the boulders blocking the exit of the chimney. Pull up through the boulders and onto a ledge. Continue directly up following the break passing another ledge to the top of the crag.

FA: M. Sporan, G. Frost

2006/01/03

NFB	NO FRIENDS OF BUSH	18	☺
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APPROACH

About 100m to the left of the right hand arête of the cliff band, a clump of whitish boulders is propped up against the face. To the right of these boulders a prominent, vertical crack in the broken face can be seen. Start just to the right of the crack.

Coordinates: 31d39m04.5s S; 25d09m53.2s E (WGS84).

1. 40m (18)
Climb up just to the right of the crack then move leftwards into the crack. Climb the crack for a few meters then move leftwards on a ledge to a broken face around the arête. Climb up the face then move rightwards back into the crack. Continue up the crack to below a small overhang. Traverse leftwards to a break then climb up to below a short open book. Climb the open book to a ledge. Continue up diagonally rightwards to another ledge below a shallow chimney.
2. 35m (16)
Climb up the shallow chimney to an overhang then exit leftwards. Climb up following the recess of broken rock to the top of the crag.

FA: G. Frost, M. Sporan

2006/01/03

CRAG PHOTOS



