



## 13 PEAKS – 5-8 Jan 2024

My Motto for 2024 is Make Magic Happen!

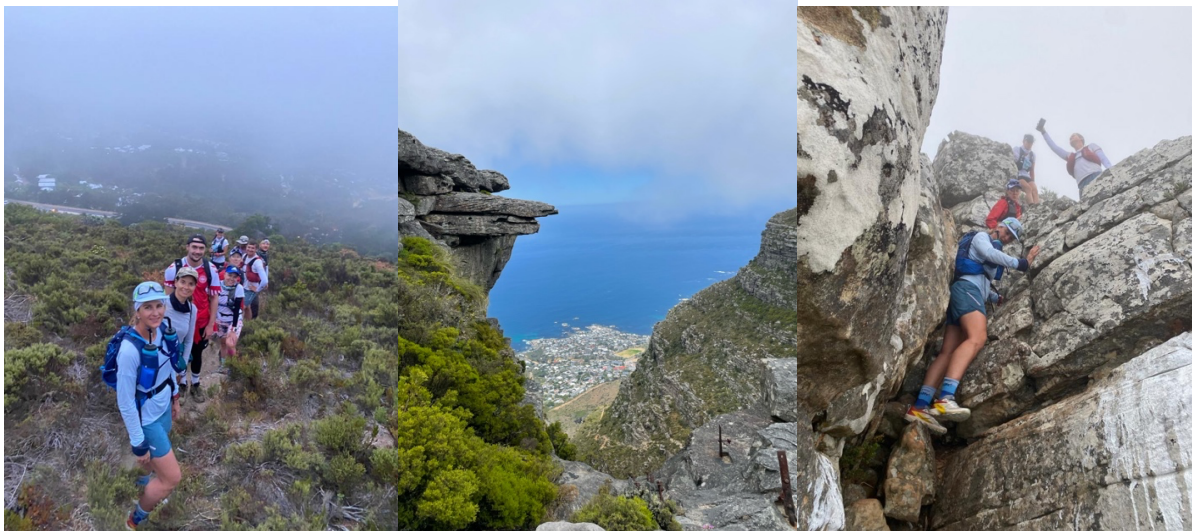
And what better way to make magic and find magic, than by being in the mountains (I'm a mountain person, not so much a sea person)

As most people can attest, I'm not very good at planning in advance; can hardly keep up with what is happening tomorrow.

However I do take clues from the universe and if opportunities present themselves, I tend to grab them.

A random Insta feed in December, from Nyati-X adventures, saying they had a space available for the 4-day 13 Peaks Challenge, which they were guiding, didn't require much further thought from me.

I immediately signed up.

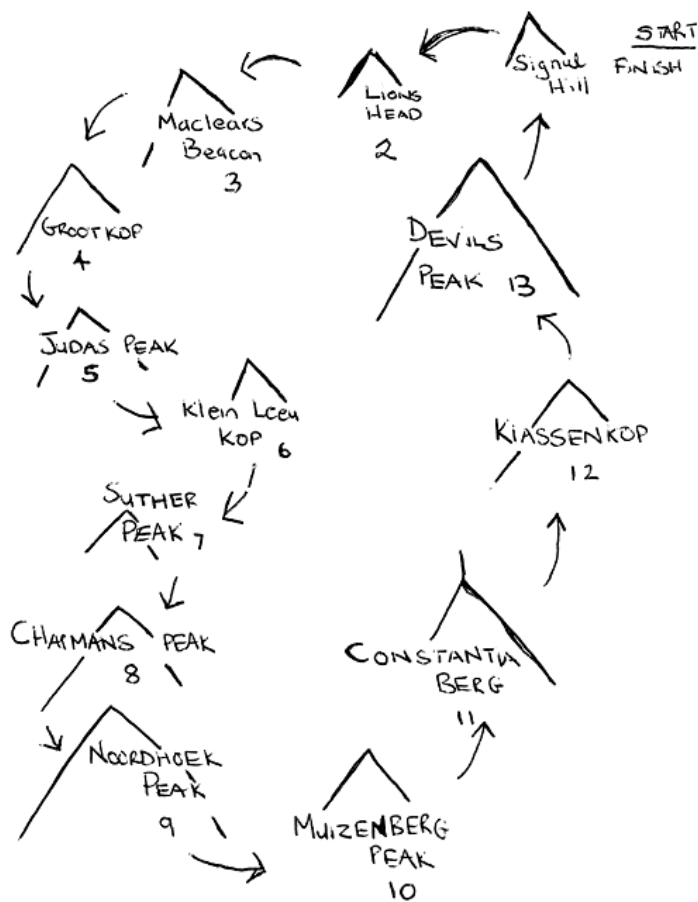


So, what is the 13 Peaks Challenge (the non-runners on the group had a mild heart attack when they had to discover first-hand what it was about)

13 Peaks is a challenge designed by "The" Ryan Sands. The South African Trail running hero. If you are a runner, road, or trail, you will surely know this iconic name.

You will also surely know that The Challenge is not called a challenge, for nothing.

<https://13peaks.co.za/the-challenge/>



I live in the concrete jungle of Johannesburg and as a trail runner, we are not privileged to have the mountain, the sea nor forests on our doorstep. Although one plus is that we do have the altitude.

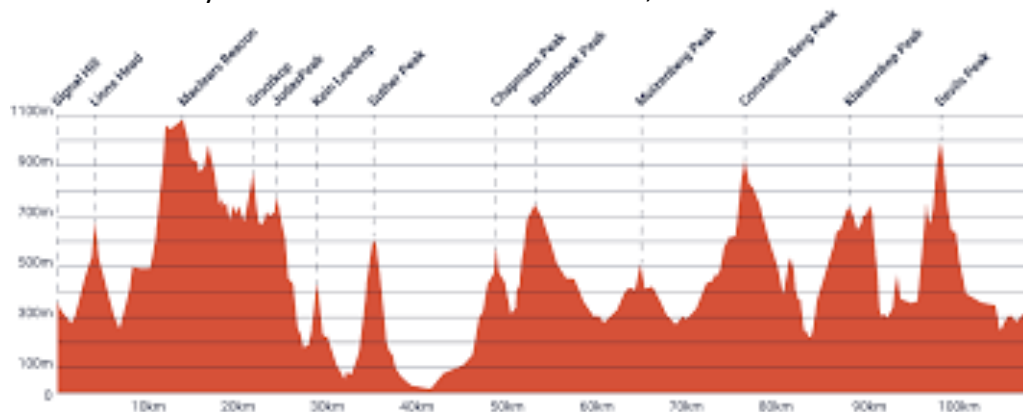
I've visited the Mother City many a time for work (and once to cycle the Cape Town Cycle tour, which is another story)

But I haven't had the chance to really experience CT or its beloved Table Mountain

As an "all or nothing" person, I thought to myself, what better way to explore and know the Magical Mountain than by traversing it by foot for 4 glorious days.

And now I can safely say that I have gone where I doubt many locals have even gone.

I also know why most of the best SA trail runners, reside in CT!



13 Peaks Challenge – Juliana Ambrosi



For most avid trail runners, 13 Peaks is on their bucket list (if it isn't, it should be) It also should be on every local Capetonians list of things to accomplish. But if you don't reside in the Western Cape, and you don't know the area or have contacts to assist you on the adventure, it can be quite a logistical nightmare. Hence, I was very happy to use Nyati-X to help me achieve this goal. And such a relief to have Dean, our guide who has run the route many a time and knows the mountain like the back of his hand to navigate us. I am notorious at getting lost! And I find navigating very stressful.

I must say something about – the Weather – Wow. The Mountain is a whole eco system on its own. Every kind of weather experienced. And on many of the summits, it was clear and in minutes the mist rolled in, and we couldn't see a thing!

The hot / the cold, the should I wear my jacket, the shouldn't I, prevailed for the whole 4 days. (oh, and yes, every pic I have seen on social media of people tagging themselves at the Trig Beacons, it looks freezing, and now I understand why!)

I loved the mist rolling across the mountain in waves. In my head at times, I was picturing what you see in the Arctic on the Tundra – that's what it felt like – surreal.

On some of the more regularly used routes, I was astounded by the choice of so called, active wear. Some of which included, handbags with gold chains, Socks with no shoes, Slip slops! People with no water and as we were coming down from Devils Peak, a few people were going up, and asked us, if there were shops at the top, and somewhere to eat!





I must also state, that not all KMs are created equal and a KM on the mountain may take a very long time – much longer than you would anticipate – even if you are a seasoned trail runner.

We were asked by some people, how far to the next Peak, and answered 1.5Km – They were quite relieved, but I told our guide we should've told them that the peak was probably 2hrs away for them at least.

A Km is not necessarily a Km.

We started as a group of 9 and finished as 4. Anything is achievable, but this does require a certain level of fitness – especially if you are going to complete it consecutively over a few days.

I suspect fitness is also a relative term. You may go to gym for an hour every day and think you are fit.

To a large part, the challenge also showcased people's tenacity – how much grit do you have, to push through even if you finding it tough

Maybe as runners we love to feel the pain or take pleasure in the pain. But not all appreciate that mind set.

I think to comprehend elevation, especially over 6000m of elevation, if you don't live near a mountain or haven't really known what different levels of elevation feel like, 6000m can really feel like a shocker!

Even to me!

I felt like I was climbing stairs for 6hrs a day.

I want to go back and do the 48hr Challenge. Compressing it into a shorter period will be harder in one way for sure – meaning the going will be a lot faster

However, slogging it out over 4 days was a different hard. I also had a full pack and was testing kit out in preparation for my April adventure.

The cumulative time on one's legs- long days, 3;30am wake ups. Managing all the elements and your food etc. has a different effect on one's body.

I love the different experiments, challenges and events that test my body, and I can gauge and see how I react.

And make no mistake, 13 Peaks, as everyone in our collective group admitted ,was a substantial challenge indeed. Definitely not your average 'walk in the park.'

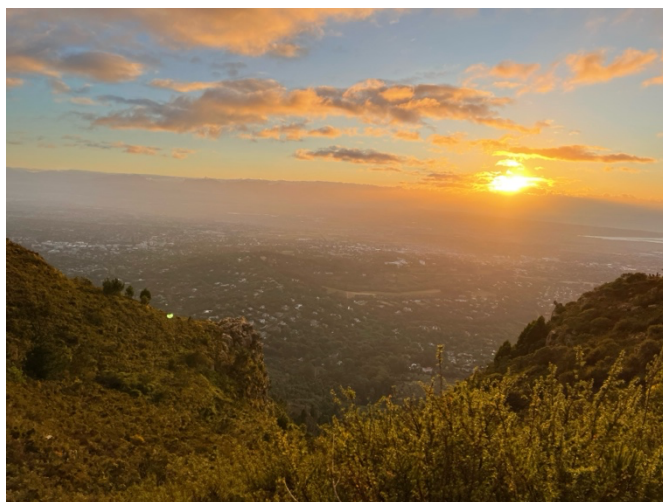
13 Peaks Challenge – Juliana Ambrosi



Back to the actual Mountain. How do 4 days pass so quickly.  
Friday and we were doing our first day and then before we knew it, it was our last and what happened in between?

All I can say is ..... Magic happened.

Movement is Medicine. It is also Meditative.  
The Miles rolled past.  
We saw views that blinded our eyes.  
We scrambled rocks.  
We climbed Peaks.  
We climbed up and up and up and then down again.  
We saw beautiful Fauna and Flora – The Proteas  
We experienced hot and cold and wind and a bit of rain and wind and heat and sun and mist.  
We saw a magnificent sunrise as it come up over the city whilst we were on the mountain looking down.  
We conquered our fear of heights.  
We pushed past the tough moments.  
We took pictures.  
We made friends.  
We emerged stronger.



But most of all we made memories.

13 Peaks Conquered, 110Km Covered, 6500m elevation climbed.

What a way to start a New Year – with a full heart and a body a little battered, ready to roll into new beginnings and new adventures .

I think I can now say that I do know a little bit of what the Mountain and the Mother City have to offer!

