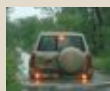


John Murray



Quickie: Sutherland and Tankwa

So have you been to the **coldest place** in South Africa?

Jacques and I were having this discussion over a BnC. No and no, we answer 🙄. So, Sutherland appeared on the list of places to experience and just had to be ticked off. We sent out a few mails and all of a sudden a mini-trip was born. We chose the weekend 1 – 3 August because we were told it would still be super cold. Little did we know how much excitement lay ahead.



Photo: bonnet – got down to -5 °C

Drivers - Vehicles:

1. Jacques Dowd – Cruiser
2. John Murray – Patrol
3. Gert van Rooyen – Jeep Cherokee
4. Gary Dobkins – Disc 2
5. Garth De Nobrega – Colt bakkie 2.8
6. Wernich Stipp – Q7

What a mixed bag!

We left Cape Town at different times on Friday due to work commitments and ended up leaving/arriving in 3 groups. The trip there was uneventful as we took the quickest route via the N1.

Because of the size of the group and certain diverse preferences we ended up booking at different places. We settled in as follows:

- **White House:** Dowds, De Nobs and Stipps
- **Galileo:** Dobkins'
- **Roikloof:** Murrays and van Rooyens



Photo: Donkeys: Note the frosted backs.

Well, the most action by far was at the White House, 'maar ons praat nie uit nie' – I'll leave JD to explain that one – eish 😊

Rooikloof guest farm has 2 houses. We booked the smaller one called Renosterbos. This is an awesome spot, pricey, but if you have kids it's wonderful – real farm atmosphere with donkeys, poultry, streams and waterfalls all around your cottage. The cottage itself is stylefully decorated with a great fireplace and braai.



Photo: Entrance to Rooikloof

Friday evening 8:00pm: we all got together at Jurg's for our first stargazing experience. At this stage it was 2degC and I knew we would get on well with Jurg when we saw the welcome drinks, Obies. After an informative, indoor presentation we headed for his outdoor telescopes and soaked up the stunning night sky's of Sutherland – Wow. We saw Jupiter and a few others, but the longer we spent, the colder it got and eventually the wives and kids took cover in the adjacent vehicles. By the time we finished the start gazing it was below 0 and rushed back to the warmth of our cottages.

Saturday morning we headed off to a visit to the SALT, which wasn't as impressive as I expected. The kids kept asking where the telescope was, because all you could see were a bunch of mirrors. A guide however, explained how it worked – mmm, but, I'm still lost.

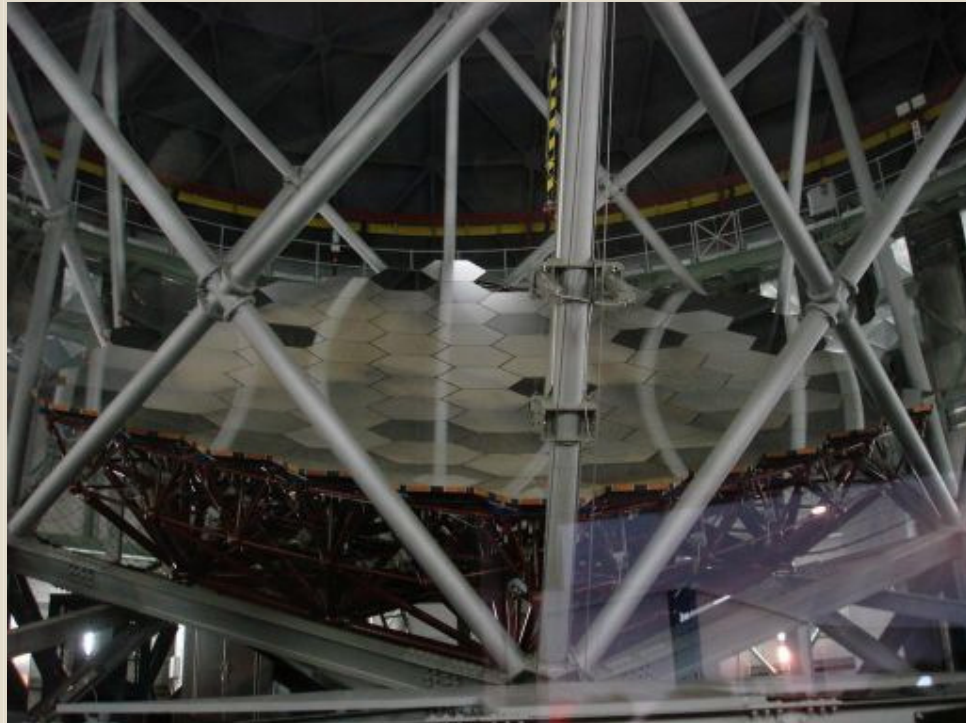


Photo: SALT Mirrors



Photo: Many other conventional Telescopes

Saturday avie, everyone joined us for a braai at Rooikloof. As the time crept closer to the big, CC kick-off, the manne were deciding when exactly to tell their wives they were going to slip away for the rugby – eish anyway, that backfired and only Jacques and Gary managed to slip away – and that my friends is a chapter on its own. What goes in Sutherland, stays there! Right, back to the rugby – the rest of us ended up listening on the radio. The Lions won 27-13 - John is a happy camper. We ended off the evening with a sensational braai under starlit sky's! The minimum temperature is - 5degC. The next morning hose pipes and dams are frozen!

Sunday: We decide to head back to Cape Town along the lesser travelled roads. Ours first stop was a bit of a detour and we head to a viewpoint along a farm road to Blesfontein. This is truly spectacular and well worth a visit.



Photo: View Point at Blesfontein

Once there, T4A tells us about the proximity of a star tree. We find this unimpressive tree growing in a fenced off area and all postulate about the significance. JD later Google's it and finds out what it's all about. Hopefully he'll comment here. The last 50m or so is quite rocky and I cringe at the thought of the Q7 losing Tupperware, but he survives – with a few scratched and bent panels, nothing more. Whilst driving back I take the lead and we drive through some marshy areas. I almost arrive back where we started, when JD reports that the Q7 is stuck. I turn around and find the Q7 in the middle of the marshy area. Slightly off the road, and he's sucked in.



Photo: The ladies decide to make the best of it.



Photo: Q7 sucks like a leach.

Jacques is still on the other side of the marsh on higher ground. I attempt to snatch the Q7 forwards, but it doesn't budge. A second attempt with more speed and as the kinetic force builds up I feel the Patrol going down and not forward. Back wheels are 'vas'.



Photo: John to the rescue, but eventually also needs assistance

The Jeep then snatches me out. We then decide to winch the Q7 backwards, but the winch doesn't appear strong enough. After several attempts JD attaches a second snatch and on the 4th or 5th try the Q7 finally lifts out of the quagmire and heads back the way we come.



Photo: The Q7 is free at last and has to take the long road back.

JD deflates his tyres and guns it through the marshy road, no problem. We have beers, celebrate and wait for the Q7.

Next we head down the Ouberg Pass, which has spectacular views – even more spectacular are my wife’s, blood-drained knuckles as we descend towards the Tankwa.



Photo: View from the top of Ouberg Pass

We are greeted in the Tankwa by carpets of yellow and orange flowers. Quite magnificent!



Photo: Crossing the Tankwa River



Photo: Please close the gate!



Photo: Ané and flowers



Photo: John and Lize



Photo: Spectacular fields of flowers.

We finally head to Ceres for a bite and then back home. **I can highly recommend this trip!**

Some more photos at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jhemurray/sets/72157606533747378/>