The 100 mile (160km) race returned to the Addo Elephant Trail Run this year after an absence of six years. It was last run in 2009, together with the 44km and 76km trail runs. This year’s three ultra-distance trail runs were held over the weekend of 26 to 28 February, arranged by Free Spirit Adventures, who took over the events from former organisers, Extreme Marathons, last year.

The 100 mile event attached an international field of 39 runners, of whom 37 lined up for the start at 2PM on Friday 26 February. The atmosphere was electric as friends and family, as well as athletes in the other two distances lined the car park at Addo Elephant National Park’s Main Camp to see them off.

The gruelling race saw the runners cover 161km through some of the most remote wilderness areas of the Park, with a total elevation gain of over 5 600m. There were sightings of eland, aardvark and even signs of a fresh kill to keep the runners engaged with this magnificent environment over the 37 hours allowed for the event. A total of 26 of the 37 runners that started made it to the finish line before the final cut-off at 3AM on the Sunday morning.

This year also saw the introduction of state-of-the-art live GPS tracking of the athletes using SPOT Gen 3 GPS trackers. This allowed the race organisers, as well as friends and family around the world to track their progress in real time as the race unfolded, while adding a new level of safety to the athletes as they moved through the remote wilderness areas of the Park.

The 76km and 44km events both set off in the early hours of the Saturday morning. Some of these runners were lucky enough to meet up with a 100 miler and offer them some encouragement as they all moved to the finish at the Zuurberg Mountain Inn.

In the 76km race, reigning champion Nic de Beer from Cape Town took the men’s lead for the third year in a row, while Gauteng runner Nicky Booyens claimed first in the ladies race and was third overall. The 44km winner was local runner Mvuyisi Gcogco, while the ladies’ race was won by favourite Kerry-Ann Marshall from Cape Town who was fifth overall.

The PPC 5km fun run attracted 50 runners keen to try out the sport of trail running, all of whom enjoyed their part in the overall experience of the race.

The inaugural finish of the 100 mile event showcased the true camaraderie and sportsmanship that is found in ultra-trail running. Tom Adams (UK) and Bennie Roux (SA) made a conscious decision to cross the line together, having supported one another through much of the race – seen in the pic above. They finished in a time of 21h45, with PE-based runner Chris Darke in third place in a time of 22h24. Well-known South African endurance athlete Linda Doke took first in the ladies’ race in 29h25, with Kim van Kets taking second in 33h34.

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Back to his roots

Tsitsikamma to Addo Elephant and back to Tsitsikamma - this is the route Lee-Marque Jansen’s career has taken him to date - as he returned to his original park on 1 March. We wish Addo’s former Receptionist well in his new position in the Garden Route.

Proof that SMME’s benefit from BSP

SMME in Karoo National Park’s BSP programme, Elizar van Wyk, is a true example of how hard work and determination pays off and that the programme does indeed work!

Elizar lives his life motto of “Some of the world’s most successful business leaders and entrepreneurs credit their success to the good habits that they have cultivated over the years - everything from waking up early in the morning, to exercise and work hard!”

Whatever Elizar credits his success to, it seems to be working. He’s been a part of the projects for a number of years now, and was recently able to buy a brand new bakkie. Celebrating his success with him here is BSP field guard, Amigo Arries.

Karoo National Park

- My wife and I recently visited your resort and we were extremely impressed with the excellent condition of the property.
- We stayed in Unit 26, which was very clean and tidy. Congratulations to you and your staff for such a well-managed park - probably one of the best we have been to.
- Your Reception staff was friendly, welcoming and helpful. We also had the opportunity of meeting your housekeeping manager. All in all, it was a pleasure to stay at the Karoo National Park.
- The staff at the Karoo reception, shop and restaurant should be giving lessons to the rest of SANParks staff. They are cheery and welcoming, clean and well-mannered.

Addo’s Technical Team dressed to the Tee

Llewellyn Meek and his technically inclined colleagues showing off their new uniform. Good thing they remembered to take the pic before getting down and dirty in their day-to-day activities.

Compliments received

Addo Elephant National Park

- I would like to thank Nomonde who serviced our cottage 47 at Addo. She always had a smile on her face and was so polite and nice. The unit was spotless.
- We attended a night game drive and I would like to leave a good word for the guide (he called himself Calvin Klein). We enjoyed especially his humour (unforgettable gags) and engagement to deliver as much as the evening situation in the Park offered. I believe you will keep this guy around.
Nature at its best at Valley by Moonlight

Wind, perfect cloud cover still allowing for a beautiful sunset and a magnificent rainbow over the Nqweba Dam were Mother Nature’s way of welcoming Camdeboo National Park’s guests to their Valley by Moonlight evening recently.

Most of the participants this year were from Gauteng, says the Park’s Senior People and Conservation Officer, Rosemary Scheepers. The gathered guests and staff enjoyed a delightful evening taking in the beauty of the Karoo around the braai, before tucking into a hearty supper.

A yellow wagtail seen in the Darlington section of Addo Elephant National Park.

Rare sighting of the month

Camdeboo celebrates water week

Camdeboo National Park celebrated Water Week from 7 to 10 March with Grade 5 learners from six local primary schools: Lingcom, Kroonvale, Isibane, Graaff-Reinet, Narsingstraat and Adendorp Primary Schools. A total of 479 learners participated in the celebrations.

The visits to the schools included a talk on the importance of water, where water comes from and why water must be saved and protected. As always, Water Week celebrations are never complete without a special visit from Sponsie! His excitable behaviour and dancing is always guaranteed to teach the learners new and exciting ways of saving water and about how precious water is.

Fire fighter training in Camdeboo

Nine staff members from Camdeboo National Park participated in basic fire fighting training at the end of February. The training was provided by the company Practical Training Solutions, to members of the Park’s People & Conservation, Tourism and Conservation Departments. Not only was the training exceptionally educational, but enjoyable too.
**Addo in National Geographic**

National Geographic Traveller UK magazine will feature a special spread on Addo Elephant National Park in their upcoming May edition. Photojournalist, Richard James Taylor, spent some time getting to know the Park quite extensively at the beginning of the year.

In a letter recently, Richard wrote, “I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all of your kind assistance during my stay at Addo. With your help we have really been able to put together a fantastic article for the magazine. I would also like to say thank you to Michael - it was a pleasure to spend time with someone so knowledgeable and with such obvious dedication to his work. This experience was without doubt the highlight of my trip to South Africa”.

“I have attached a picture comprising a few of the images shot during my stay. I hope you like them,” concluded Richard.

**Fire in the Karoo**

Thunder and lightning is believed to have been the cause of this fire which broke out in Karoo National Park on Friday 11 March.

**Letter from abroad**

Manfred Schmid
Nordseestrasse 3
80805 München
Germany

To the
Management of Karoo National Park

16.02.2016

Dear Sir,
during our stay at your rest-camp from 27th to 29th of February we had a most memorable experience, as well as one your road-workers must have had.

We think his name was Mick and he was preparing the road with a big tractor and a drag-rape, when all of a sudden he found himself trapped in front of a bridge between 2 lions on either side. Due to the drag-rape he could not back up and we was too close to the bridge to turn around. Besides there were 2 more lions just nearby.

He must have been feeling very uncomfortable up there in his open cockpit. At last he was successful chasing the lioness with the front bucket to the other side of the road and crossed the bridge. Right away the lions started to follow him, but picking up speed he developed so much dust and sand into the air that finally she gave up.

We afterwards drove up to him and showed him the pictures we have shot, he was still very excited.

Therefore we would be very grateful if you could pass on the included photos to him.

Thank you for your kind cooperation
Best regards
Heike Jahnke and Manfred Schmid

Nico

**Rights and Responsibilities Training**

Labour Relations hosted line managers from the Frontier Region’s four parks at an “Employees Rights and Responsibilities and Managing Discipline in the Workplace” workshop recently. The training at Addo Elephant National Park was conducted by Labour Relations Manager, Mandisa Mali.

Besides theoretical training, the attendees also did some practical exercises. During one of these, Mandisa broke the room into groups, and the members then had to deliberate on a discipline scenario, whereafter they had to elect a spokesperson to give feedback to the wider group on their plan of action.