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About The Epic

The Epic is the quarterly newsletter of the ANU Mountaineering Club.

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Contributions: YOUR contributions are the essence of the Epic! We love to receive your contributions, especially with pictures! All care/no responsibility is taken. Please try to limit your contributions to 600 words, and follow these guidelines:

• The preferred format for the contributions is an unformatted text file(.txt)
• If sending pictures, send us the highest resolution version you have
• Please send your pictures as attachments and not embedded in a document
• Avoid sending Word files or other proprietary formats

Thank you!
Welcome to the ANUMC in 2008! Whether you are a new member or a life member, you are part of one of the special clubs at the ANU. Having been getting out in the outdoors since 1967, the club continues to be one of the most active clubs on campus and one of the most active outdoors clubs in Canberra, running over 100 trips a year. It is not just the number of trips however that makes the ANUMC special. We offer trips for all levels of experience, from easy day walks in Namadgi to 3 week mountaineering expeditions in New Zealand and everything in between. The club is also run by an extremely dedicated and competent team of volunteers. Some of them have been associated with the club for upwards of 20 years, and all of them strive to keep the club moving forward and care passionately about its success.

Keep an eye out in 2008 for the big club weekends. Along with the usual circus of activities taking place on any normal weekend, the club runs 4 weekends a year aimed at getting as many members as possible out together. The Huge Days Out is on the first weekend of semester one and is a great chance to see all your fellow ANUMCers after the summer and get a gentle start back into 2008. Before you can catch your breath, the Bluies Extravaganza is on the weekend after when the entire club packs up and heads up to the Blue Mountains for a weekend climbing, walking and canyoning. As the weather cools and the snow (hopefully) falls, we head up to the alps on the first weekend of semester 2 to have Huge Days Out again, but this time in the snow. Finally, just when the fluff is falling and you are thinking about exams, put down the books, pack up your tux and grog, don your boots and head off to Cocktails on the Castle. Yes, it is what it seems; a cocktail party on top of a mountain in the middle of the Budawangs- why not?

All members should note that the club’s website is in the process of transition, all of which is being handled by the club’s web guru, John Pillans. We have to move onto a new host server which is creating a few annoying but necessary headaches. There will be inevitable hiccups during the move and I ask that everyone is patient and sympathetic while we overhaul this vital piece of club infrastructure. If that awesome trip you submitted gets zapped into cyberspace, don’t panic, realise that it is all part of the move and there will be a solution somewhere. Everything will eventually get back to normal.

The club has also recently started an Expedition fund. The ANUMC has a long tradition of highly adventurous trips. The 1970’s saw Himalayan mountaineering expeditions involving former ANUMC members and Australian mountaineering legends Tim McCartney Snape and Lincoln Hall and in recent years, ANUMC members have been involved in Alaskan mountaineering expeditions. The club is very keen that these highly adventurous trips remain part of its activities into the future. To that end, members are now able to apply for an expedition grant where the club will donate a sum of money to feasible expeditions to not only
help with costs but aid them in obtaining other sponsorship. There will be two awards this year, one at the start of the year and one at the AGM (late October.) So if you have ever wanted to kayak to Antarctica or unicycle selected plateaus of north western Mongolia, this is your chance. Get thinking and get applying!

I hope all members have a fantastic year with the ANUMC in 2008. To be part of the ANUMC is to be part of something special and it is much more than just a student outdoors club. It a group of people that not only share a common love of the outdoors, but who have spent significant parts of their life contributing to the development and success of the club and who care deeply about its success. Come take a look.

Yours in the outdoors
Jack Chenoweth
ANUMC President.

Who’s who

President - Jack Chenoweth
Jack joined the club in 2005 and entered primarily as a bushwalker and skier. Having now added climbing to that repertoire he continues to try to get out there as much as possible despite the difficulties of trying to combine this with a career as a violinist. He has been a gear store officer and a General Officer and is now trying his hand at the Presidency. He still maintains that snowshoeing is the (very) poor man’s skiing.

Vice-president - Rhonda Mann
Rhonda joined ANUMC in 2003, belatedly in her final undergrad year at ANU. With the club, she has enjoyed numerous bushwalks, kayaking trips, snow expeditions, and occasionally hanging around a cliff on ropes. Her aims for this year include increasing confidence on skis and at height, not necessarily at the same time.

Treasurer - Sam Margerison
When he’s not making grant applications, stocktaking or doing the club accounts, Sam can be found bushwalking, canyoning, climbing, mountain biking, in fact pretty much any of the club activities. Sam joined the club in 1998, has been the treasurer for the last three years, and still hasn’t run away to the Cayman Islands with the money.

Secretary - Laura Munsie
Laura joined the club in 2006 and is a very keen and active bushwalker. She spends her days behind a desk as a Public Servant, but what she really enjoys doing is getting outdoors, hauling a huge (or ultra light) pack for some kilometres, and then setting up camp and enjoying fine back-country cuisine and the excellent company of her fellow ANUMCers.
Social Officer - Andrew Peters
Hearing mysterious tales of a long lost city on the Molonglo River, Andrew came to city called 'Canberra' to study Arts/Law in 2004. He immediately joined the ANUMC, and hasn't left since. Already a bushwalking devotee, he has since expanded his range of activities to include cross-country skiing, rockclimbing, and mountaineering. In between study and work, Andrew also finds time to arrange social happenings for the club.

General Officer - Steve Lade
Steve moved to Canberra and joined the ANUMC in late 2006. Last year he joined and led some bushwalks and made as much use of the snow for cross-country skiing as possible. Steve also does a little rock-climbing, cycle touring, rogaining and, very recently, adventure racing. This year he urges us to go wild!

Bushwalking Officer - Mika Kontiainen
Mika joined the ANUMC in 1996 and has been hooked ever since. Having tried everything on offer, he has settled into bushwalking and snowshoeing (and photography) as his preferred activities. A former member of the Executive and a prolific trip leader, he was made a life member of the Club in 2005 after leading his 100th Club trip. Don't be shy, he is looking forward to seeing you on his walks.

Canyoning Officer - Fiona Jinman
Fiona has been an active member of the Club for a number of years and one of the friendly gearstore team for 2 years. Fiona is an enthusiastic canyoner and climber, gleefully frolicks in the snow during winter months and has been known to bushwalk, paddle and potter around on a mountain bike. During the week, Fiona can be found at the ANU walls or as a surprise guest-star in the gearstore.

Climbing Wall Officer - Andrew Gough
Andrew has been a member of the ANUMC since 1995. He has been sighted on trips for rock climbing, bush walking, kayaking, skiing, canyoning, mountain biking, and most recently mountaineering. He can often be found at the climbing wall on club nights.

Climbing Wall Officer - Finn Lattimore
Finn joined the ANUMC in 2004. She enjoys rock climbing and canyoning and would like to get into more kayaking, bushwalking and skiing if only there were time for everything. She can be found at the climbing wall on most club sessions.
Climbing Wall Officer - Helen Lindsay
Helen moved to Canberra three years ago and is now a PhD student at the John Curtin School of Medical Research. She enjoys rock climbing, mountain biking and knitting patterns. Helen can usually be found at the climbing wall on Monday nights and is planning to start a lunchtime climbing wall session soon. She hopes to one day climb her age and will continue turning 21 until she can do so.

Cross-Country Skiing Officer - Garrick Larkin
Garrick joined the ANUMC in 2000 as a first year and took up XC skiing because it is so cheap compared to downhill. Garrick is also involved in a range of other outdoors activities especially bushwalking, sailing and kayaking.

Kayaking Officer - Dave Boland
Dave has been paddling for about 5 years, and spends far too much time frowning at the radar on the BoM website. When not trying to predict river flows from the rainfall data, he can often be found splashing around in the lake or ocean, dangling halfway up a cliff, or falling down a snowy slope.

Mountainbiking Officer - Nerida Rixon
Nerida is slightly obsessed with mountain biking and combines her passion for biking and cooking in the small space which is her house. Holding dinner parties for more than three people means at least one person has to sit on a bicycle. Her attention seeking behaviour results in faddy behaviour such as learning to ride a unicycle for a recent christmas party.

Mountaineering Officer - Charles Jenkins
Charles has been climbing mountains of various sizes on various continents for a long time. Currently he has to satisfy himself with climbing up to Mt Stromlo every day, to earn a crust. While living in the UK in recent years, he made an annual summer pilgrimage to the Northern Alps and has 14 4000-m summits ticked. Not a big list, but enough to whet the appetite for a trip or two to NZ.

Rock Climbing Officer - David Price
David did Software Engineering at the ANU and now works for a software company in Civic. He enjoys rock climbing, cycling, canyoning, bushwalking and many other outdoor activities. He can be found at the climbing wall most club nights.
Rogaining Officer - Felix Schill
Felix came to Australia almost 5 years ago to join the Mountaineering Club (and also to do a PhD in computer science). He enjoys running, bushwalking, climbing and canyoning, and most other outdoor activities too. He is a competitive rogainer, the sport of long distance cross country navigation. He will happily help you putting together a rogaining team. Felix also organises the weekly cross running group. When he is not running around in Canberra's forests, he can often be found hanging around at the climbing wall.

Sea Kayaking Officer - Andrew Collins
Andrew completed an Arts degree and legal workshop at ANU. He's been active in the outdoors forever, and started paddling rivers as a teenager. He has been sea kayaking for several years now. He recently became father to a beautiful baby girl. While juggling climbing, caving, scuba, skiing, caving and canyoning trips, he still finds time to teach sea kayaking skills to other club members.

Gear Store Officer - Matt May
Matt was exile from Sydney for being too grumpy. Since then he has spent an unhealthy amount of his life living, studying and working at the ANU. A keen bushwalker and skier, among other things, he is now working on improving his spectacularly awful telemarking style and is trying hard to avoid swimming in Sullivan's Creek again.

Gear Store Officer - Kylie Mulligan
A graduate of the Narrabundah college outdoor Ed program, Kylie is an interesting specimen. On the suggestion of her physiotherapist, she stopped incurring the same old boring injuries on the sports field and started incurring the same old boring injuries walking up mountains. She can, from time to time, be found in the gear store, helping all you lovely adventurers find the right gear for the trip.

Database and Mailing Lists Officer - Sonia Graham
Sonia joined the club in 2004 after moving to Canberra from Sydney to work for CSIRO. She loves any outdoor or underground activities which involve abseiling or getting soaked. Sonia is the person to contact about club email lists and mailing addresses.
Epic Editor - Tiago Pereira
Tiago came to Australia in 2006 for his PhD in Astrophysics and quickly joined the club. In his first year in the club he was very active, trying a little bit of the many exciting activities the club has to offer. Commonly seen at the climbing wall, lately he has been more focused in improving his skiing skills, always counting the days to the next ski trip! With the recent arrival of his baby daughter, Tiago is taking a break from too many weekends on club trips.

Epic Editor - Sam Keech-Marx
Sam is a keen bushwalker and also enjoys cooking gourmet outdoor cuisine, wearing purple and taking photos of people in silly poses. She has been on the committee/exec since 2002 in various roles, and now looks forward to receiving many photos and tales of outdoor exploits for inclusion in The Epic.

Epic Editor - Bronwen Davies
Bronwen’s been a member since 2002. She originally joined the club for bushwalking but has since had a go at almost everything and developed a real passion for rock climbing, despite being scared of heights. She grew up in Canberra, spending holidays in Kosciuszko NP. Now working full-time in the public service, she hangs out for weekends to get away from it all. Bronwen was Bushwalking Officer in 2003/2004 and has been an Epic editor for a few years, but she still dusts off the boots and leads the odd bushwalking trip.

Photographs on the front cover and on pages 24 and 25 are courtesy of John Pillans.
About the ANU Mountaineering Club

The ANUMC is one of the most active outdoor clubs in Canberra. Club members organize many trips, including bushwalking, canyoning, rock climbing, cross country skiing, mountain biking, kayaking and many more! You can find more about the club in our web page, where you can also sign up for trips using the online trip calendar!

Visit http://anumc.anu.edu.au for more info!

Club Memberships:

$30 for students; $50 for non-students (+ SRA Membership Fee)
Welcome to this first edition of The Coyote and Cougar Courier from Canmore near Calgary in Canada.

I moved here for the next few months in order to regain fitness in Nordic Skiing, do some races, some iceclimbing, some mountaineering and eventually rockclimbing as spring unfolds. Noooooo, no canyoning. Canmore boasts a lot of facilities for the outdoor minded person. It is considered as the alpine capital of Canada and the Alpine Club of Canada has its headquarters here. Similar to many mountain communities, the locals prefer to live and play here. This makes a pleasant contrast to many cities where the inhabitants grumble that they would prefer to live somewhere else.

The Canmore Nordic Center has great facilities however I find it a bit small in the amount and variety of trails available. This is heresy if you speak to the locals however on a world scale, next time I would go elsewhere. Ramsau am Dachstein in Austria is still my benchmark and yet to find something similar for my tastes, needs and budget. There are basically four outgoing parallel trails around 5.5 km each way and then a myriad of short loops around the stadium for the Olympic/World Cup events. Consider it as four loops starting from Perisher Village going to Spencer’s Creek and return. After doing it a few times it just becomes routine and training instead of fun. Interestingly Canmore is in a bit of a snow shadow. “If it wasn’t for snowmaking we would not be able to ski”. If the Snowy Mountains received as much snow as here, we would not even consider skiing. The advantage is that it is cold and
dry. Hence it does not melt and just sublimates. None of those dripping icicles off the roofs ready to spear you in the head, black ice on the pavements to slip you or skiing in slushy conditions. In the eight weeks that I have been here, it snowed twice around 15 cm of dry snow. This is equivalent to about 5cm of fresh snow back home. This low snowfalls needs heavy packing of the snow to work harden it and thus make it more resistant to wear and melt. For those members who have been ski touring, you might recall seeing the raised parallel ski tracks in a windswept plain. The same mechanism is displayed. You just do not want to fall on such hard snow. When roller blade training in Canberra and fell on the black snow, I consoled myself with “once you are on real snow it will be soft landings”. Wroooong. You just bounce and then lie there incapacitated for a while whilst shock hormones are flowing through the body. Eventually you recover and get moving again trying very hard to balance well so that you don’t bounce again.

I am presently training for a few races near Ottawa. The first race is called “Coureur des Bois” and will be hardest race I have entered. Consider it as a Kiandra to Perisher back to back carrying your overnight gear and sleeping out at <-20C. 2x80km. With those temperatures it will be very tough and presently I am very apprehensive about it because I do not have the confidence yet to know that I will be OK and will not disgrace myself with piking out halfway. The second series of races is the following w/e. They are called “The Gatineau” and are 55km classic on Sat and 55km skating on Sun. To start the whole process, there is a Lake Louise to Banff loppet (65km) on the 27th of January. As the organisers say, “due to the cold temperatures it is advisable to wear a face mask for the first sections of the race”.

So how do you train for such events? You do your usual easy + medium + hard days during the week. If needed, you cancel the easy days and recover instead, however the hard days must be done. A typical hard day would involve 1000+m of vertical ascent as well as 50+km of skiing. Naturally being an overnight race means ..... you must carry an overnight pack. Touring with a pack to and from Jagungal is good fun, however skiing with an overnight pack on skinny racing skis on concrete snow is no fun. Extra training also enforced because Canada is dependent on “the car”. It is only a five minute drive to the nordic centre, however I have to walk. It takes one hour each way if you take the shortcut through the forest and snow covered trails. So it really becomes a chore after a while just to go training.

I joined the Alpine Club of Canada in order to be able to participate in activities. The club has a very active and impressive trip list. Their monthly social meetings are well attended. I have tried many times to participate in trips however I have only managed to go on one trip so far. One cannot help but draw the conclusion that the ANUMC is a club and the local section of the ACCClub is a clique. A club is out to share knowledge and experiences amongst its members. A clique is a gathering of people who are out for their own interests and find it hard to take newcomers. The ACCmembers are probably extremely knowledgeable, experienced people however newcomers without cars are left out in the cold. Most trips that I registered for are already booked out or “meet at the trailhead”. Pre trip planning, organising transport, expected costs, maps, gear needed, expected conditions, safety officer, overdue callout time are not part of the trip planning. It makes a person appreciate what a great structure is in place at the ANUMC, that we take for granted. The one trip I managed to participate in, was in my opinion, disdained by the locals as being too easy – something they would do in the afternoon by themselves. There were four participants: local leader, two Japanese
ladies new to backcountry skiing and me. The ski was the equivalent to walking around Black Mountain. Coyotes and Cougars? This area teems with wildlife. Apparently there is a local bear in town that no one knows about. Bears are excellent at adapting to their environment and this one has learned to keep out of the way. Only the local “Conservation Officers” (i.e. park rangers) know of its existence. I have seen coyotes and deer on the ski trails. During Xmas festivities coyotes nipped three children playing on the outdoor ice skating rink. Occasionally there are reports of fresh deer kill by cougars in the neighbourhood. So how do you train for an overnight race? By bivouacking out in the woods of course! You can understand my enthusiasm about solo bivvying out in the woods at night with a wild imagination including scenes of me being someone’s dinner in the middle of the night. The beast would have obviously been attracted by my ski training aroma overlayed by killed 650+ loft goose down. After search-
ing for a couple of weeks, I found a hydro electric hut surrounded by a two metre link fence and barbed wire. THAAAT should keep the beasts out. A strange twist of fate where the humans are in cages watching the animals outside. With ingenuity that would make ANUMC members proud, I pinched a piece of carpet, laid it over the barbed wire and found my training resting nest for the night. Aaaaah but all good plans come apart. My reconnaissance of the area did not encounter the intermittent diesel motor that turned on and off all night. Ooooh well.

Enjoy the second half of the canyoning season and the start of the great bushwalking and climbing season.

Nic Bendeli
This trip began inauspiciously, in particular for its magnificent and experienced leader, yours truly, who forgot to reattach his sleeping mat to his pack after removing it to make the pack fit in the car. (Bark, it turns out, is a reasonable substitute for insulation.) The sort of mistake one makes only once. Apart from that, the first day, humid and warm, passed uneventfully, with a combination of dirt roads and foot tracks after leaving Orroral Gate. Fiona, Laura, Anton and I arrived at our first night’s camp, the intersection of the Mt. Franklin Fire Trail and McKeahnie Creek, quite early and began a leisurely dinner.

The relaxed dinner became rather more hurried when the thunderstorms arrived, and the heavy rain began. We had pitched our tents on a nice patch of grass, but which lay below the end of another fire trail, with the result that a small river was soon running under our tents. Anton and Laura immediately deployed their trusty toilet trowels and enthusiastically engineered a system of channels to direct the water around our tents. Thanks guys, otherwise we may have had a wet night!

Off-track was of the order the next day. Though the rain had stopped before we began walking, the wet undergrowth had Fiona liken the first section to walking through a car wash. After some at times difficult walking* we reached Bimberi Gap to watch a brumby disappear off the other side. We ticked off Bimberi Peak, though could see nothing due to the low cloud, then continued to Oldfields Hut. The shelter was most welcome, since the heavy rain descended again a few minutes from the hut.

Day three, we turned around
and passed through Murrays Gap and took the opportunity for a side trip to Mt. Murray. At the top we found the magnificent view we missed the previous day on Bimberi Peak and even walked through some snow from the previous night. The weather had cleared and the day was rapidly warming, so the chance to cool our feet on the crossing of the Cotter River was welcome.

I missed the turnoff onto the Australian Alps Walking Track, because the continuation of the dirt road we were on was not marked on my map, but we didn't get far before I realised my mistake. This final section on the AAWT, broken by overnight camp at Pond Creek Flats, was spectacular, now that we had settled into a walking rhythm and could enjoy the wonderful wild flowers by the track. We also spotted a nice rock shelter off the track just below Cotter Gap.

This walk was remarkable for its variety. At first the weather was hot and humid, then thunderstorms and heavy rain, and even snow, then hot and dry. For walking, we had fire trails, foot pads, easy off-track and hard scrub-bashing. And in vegetation we had a range from alpine meadows through wet watercourses and dry open forest, together with some spectacular wild flowers. Combined with great company, this made for a most enjoyable walk!

above 1500m, we eventually began to contour, ending up just above the intersection of the watercourse and the gully 1.0 km from Bimberi Gap. We kept our altitude, but the walking became difficult, first through large boulders and then swamp. When we did eventually drop into the watercourse it was much easier, so it may have been better to drop down at this 1.0 km point and climb back up if it wasn't better. From Bimberi Gap, a nice footpad led easily up through the trees and boulders, petering out near Bimberi Peak. To reach Oldfields Hut, after dropping off the saddle a little we took a bearing for the 1484m peak at the western end of the clearing below Murray's Gap. The walking here was much easier, the regrowth consisting of mainly gum trees.

*Notes for walking McKeahnie Creek through Bimberi Gap: From the intersection with the Mt. Franklin Fire Trail we took a bearing direct for Bimberi Gap. After climbing a short spur, which helped us clear the watercourse, we continued climbing up along the side of the hill on bearing. Walking was easy, though undergrowth may thicken in coming years. Rather than deal with the steep terrain

Steven Lade
Mongolia is not your average backpacking country - independent travel is simply not feasible. There is no sealed road network, there are very few towns, with even fewer hotels, and barely anyone speaks anything other than Mongolian, which is one of the hardest languages to learn. So it makes sense to go on a tour, with 4WD and driver, guide and cook. And off we went, Millie & I, Josh & Amy (and later Fulvio & Ollie, two randoms who turned out to be excellent company).

We started off in Ulaan Baatar (UB for the lazy), the capital which houses 1 million of the country’s 2.5 million. The city is somewhat typical of many third world cities, but not quite as cramped and with a Soviet feel and a unique Mongolian edge. It’s pretty rough and ready, with construction sites where it’s hard to tell if the buildings are being put up or being pulled down. Soviet-era edifices and tenement blocks loom around every corner. On the outskirts is "subgeria", where the nomads have migrated to the city and live on a small fenced block, with a ger (yurt) as their home, but with a shiny car to offset it. UB is growing, thanks to money from minerals (and all the nasty side-effects ...), and has the fastest growing population of Mormons in the world, as shown by the hideous black monstrousity that is their church. Our guide told us that most join in order to learn English.

After sampling the surprisingly excellent cuisine of the city’s restaurants, we jam into a van and head off into the countryside, excited by the potential
The first remarkable thing is the roads. Despite there being a partially sealed road out from UB, our driver chooses not to drive on it - it's far too bumpy and is occasionally rent apart by great rifts where they haven't quite got around to finishing construction. The wonderful thing about Mongolia is that no one owns the land - it is one of the great exceptions to the tragedy of the commons. There are no fences, no trees, and the terrain is such that with a decent vehicle you can very nearly drive wherever you please. So the roads have grown organically, being used until they become too bumpy and another one develops nearby. In some places we would be on what was like an eight lane dirt highway. But there were no other vehicles for tens of kilometres.

Mongolia is the size of Queensland. Apart from UB, most of the cities are pretty small (< 30.000), as nearly half the population are nomads. Despite the vast distances and the sparse population density, we never felt like we were in a remote wilderness. We were never from a ger or two, and could usually see the inevitable herd of goats, or yaks, or camels, off in the distance. Mongolia is one of the few places I've returned from and thought that Australia felt small by comparison.

At first glance the place looks quite fertile, with green grasslands as far as the eye can see (which is a long way in Mongolia). But up close we discover that this is a summer-time illusion. The soil is thin and rocky so that the grass grows sparsely. In winter, when temperatures can be 60 degrees lower (-30!), there is snow and ice over everything (but not much, as even then it is dry). Mongolians have virtually no plant agriculture, despite serious efforts in the last century to develop it. But the sheer number of livestock makes up for it, and their diet reflects it.

We sampled most of their cuisine, though thankfully didn't have to subsist on it (our cook provided much more westernised fare, and it was excellent!). Obviously there is a lot of meat, but there is even more dairy. Sheep/goats milk and yoghurt, yaks butter, fermented mares milk (like slightly fizzy milk with a sharp tangy flavour) from which they distil a kind of vodka (which tastes like alcoholic horse sweat), salty tea, and sharp cheeses/curd. Occasionally some potato or flour sneaks in, but hardly any herbs or spices. This was a bit of a shock to Millie, a vegetarian, and myself, who swears off most dairy. But we managed, as being a foreigner is always an excuse!

About half our time was spent hiking, which was good as a whole month in a jeep would have been maddening. We did it the easy way, with the vans or horsemen or a camel carrying our packs. A single camel can carry up to 250kg, more than...
what three horses can! The navigational ability of our guide was dubious, and the horsemen's concept of distance was wildly variable, but the walking was easy and safe and starkly beautiful. Our many support staff had a maddening tendency to choose the hottest spot for lunch, and look on in bemusement as we sought relief in the shade. They sat fully clothed in the sun, as if storing up heat for the next winter. Nearly every night we camped, wherever looked appealing in the vast land that is owned by no one.

We visited Karakorum, the capital built by Chinggis Khan in the 13th century. But little is left, not even of the monastery built from its remains, which was largely destroyed in the Communist purges of the 1930s. We saw incredibly fine Buddhist tapestries and paintings. A ger covered in the furs of the snow leopard. A herd of the wild Strezleki horse, only recently reintroduced into the wild. We chased a wild sheep in our Russian van, hitting a top speed on 60km/h! We enjoyed the traditional music of the horse head fiddle, were amazed by throat singing and cringed at contortionists. We hit our heads on the roof of the van when the driver hit a bump too fast. We laughed at Josh's hair growing progressively crazier. A Mongolian hamster made itself home in Millie's sandal - while she was wearing it! Then she "Meeeh"ed to a herd of goat, and they replied - three times in a row! We scrambled on a glacier, and climbed a 4000m peak where we gazed over into Russia and China! We sat on our foldable chairs at our foldable dining table, drinking kiwi juice in the midst of the expansive Mongolian grasslands. We ate a traditional meal of goat, and my beard stank of animal fat for days. We sat in the gers of the nomads, and tried to stomach their offerings of mare's milk and cheese to avoid offence. We took photos of children who excitedly gathered around to look at the result on the LCD. Then we did it again, and again, and again ... before they broke into song, and we gave a rendition of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" in return. We a laughed at the yaklets (baby yaks) as they bounded by the road. We fell about in hysterics when Josh mistook the salt as parmesan cheese and poured it all over his dinner ... but ate it anyway. We investigated caves once full of 15000 year old paintings, but now destroyed by vandals. Around a campfire under the stars, we traded songs with Mongolian horsemen, and sipped vodka in some semblance of understanding!

So there are some of our experiences. Without living there, it is impossible to really get a feel for the place and the people. But it intrigues. Their culture, their history and their way of life is so different to our own that you can't help but want to try and untangle the mystery. But home is nice, and home will do, and the smell of the bush is oh so pleasing to me.

Garth Coghlan
It was a motley group that arrived at Goorooyarroo nature reserve on Sunday afternoon, with Japan, Poland, Perth, Sydney and Melbourne represented. The weather promised an excellent walk - that, and a string of kangaroos bounding across the path a hundred meters in from the carpark.

The Goorooyarroo track meanders through grassland slowly returning to open woods, and makes for a pleasant stroll given a light breeze, benign sun and good company. A hillside picnic with homecooked specialties also helps. But the landscape really gets interesting once you cross into the Yellow Box-Red Gum woodlands of Mulligan’s Flat. Here the native flora grows thick on either side of the path, with old watering holes acting as magnets for the local wildlife. The area’s abundance of birds should reward walkers more observant than the author, who spotted one flight of rosellas and a cockatoo colony advertising its presence. Head off the trail to see wild flowers, kangaroos and the open flats glowing in the evening sun.

All told it was an enjoyable afternoon, and a great introduction to local bushwalking for the author. Many thanks to Kat Fitzsimmons for organising and leading the outing.

John Lee
Most mountain bikers in Canberra limit their riding and exploration to the established bike meccas at Mt. Stromlo, Mt. Majura and Sparrow Hill, indulging in some great single-track. However, look a little further towards those looming mountains on Canberra’s western horizon, and a new playground can be found for epic cross-country.

The Mt. Coree ride I led in September is fairly well known – much of it was used in the 2005 Brindabella Epic, and the ride was rated in Australia’s Top 10 MTB day rides by Australian Mountain Biking Magazine. The full version of the ride is around 80km with 4000m vertical climbing, and usually takes almost a full day.

Setting out from Uriarra Homestead, we enjoyed perfect spring conditions, with mild temperatures, clear blue skies and a nice little breeze. The first landscape that greeted our eyes was hardly idyllic though, as we slowly traversed the near apocalyptic wasteland that the 2003 bushfires made of the Uriarra forest plantations. The Tidbinbilla ranges loomed as a backdrop though, a nice reminder that the ride would soon leave the desolation behind.

As we reached our first break at the Namadgi National Park gate, the road was starting to kick up and some legs were tiring a little. Chris’ chain provided a consistent squeaking for musical accompaniment that became increasingly annoying as the gradient kicked up on the Warks Road climb. Here Ben, Anton and Chris proceeded to climb towards the horizon (none wanting to get dropped as opposed to actual racing), while Ed and Yves hung back, (ostensibly) to enjoy the views that opened up as the road kicked up.

By the top of the climb, we were thoroughly immersed in the regenerating forests of the Brindabella ranges, and enjoyed a pleasant flatter section as we headed for Bendora road. The next climb was a

MT COREE: MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE BRINDABELLAS
The summit offered a magical panorama, with Canberra visible on the distant horizon, and ranges stretching out in all other directions. We also discovered that the morning’s pleasant breeze was whipping over the craggy summit as a freezing blast. Taking shelter behind the bigger rocks, we lunched and then took silly photos.

Having done so much climbing, we eagerly anticipated the prospect of 30km of descent. Hooning down the summit road, rocks flew and excited riders completely missed hairpins. Remarkably, both bikes and riders remained entirely intact.

The remainder of the ride took us down Two Sticks Road, skirting the Brindabella and Blue Ranges down towards Uriarra again. This road is quite possibly the best cross country descent in Australia, featuring epic views, rugged and rocky double track, varied landscapes and plenty of fast corners. As the forests thinned and we entered farmland, the road smoothed out and we all hit 70km/h cruising down the gravel incline.

The ride was enjoyed by all and was truly befitting of the word “epic”. It had taken 6 hours, but everyone came out smiling. It bodes well for a great year of mountain biking in 2008!

Edward McDonald
It was the Friday before Christmas, and an intrepid team (Dave, Sam, Helen, Gabriella, Felix and Julian), led by the fabulous Fiona headed north and east from Canberra. Fortified by a feed at a great pizzeria in the greengrocers at Goulburn, the party reached Mt. Wilson safely only to be greeted by steady rain. A quick pitching of tents was followed by some well earned sleep. Next morning we awoke to slightly clearer skies, although due to leaking tents, some gear got wetter than it did later during the canyoning! As a result of an injured ankle and knee from a previous canyon, Fi made for the warmth of the Mt. Vic pub, while the rest of the party headed down through the bush to Dalpura Creek. Wetsuits were donned and the familiar cries of agony at the freezing cold water were heard as the team jumped in the creek. Dalpura Canyon was spectacular, especially the waterfall abseil, which gave everyone a good shower and cleaned the mud off backpacks. The party was rewarded with a great view over the Grose Valley at the end of the canyon, as well as the obligatory walk up back up the hill to the car. This was achieved with only a
small degree of geographical embarrassment, a fine soaking by a thunderstorm which had fortunately held off while in the canyon, and a couple of bull ant bites.

A rendezvous with Fi, the fearless armchair leader at an old ANUMC favourite, the Mt. Vic pub, gave the canyoners a chance to recharge with coffees and wedges. Even then, a massive multi course dinner was cooked up back at Mt. Wilson!

The Sunday canyon chosen was the Grand Canyon. After an impromptu explanation of rope threading and abseiling to a group of canyoning virgins from Sydney, the team began the canyon with a 12 metre abseil from some handily placed bolts into the ferny dampness of the canyon. Just about every piece of driftwood in the Blue Mountains appeared to have found its way into the gorge, which made for exciting travel. The contrast of the light filtering through the ferns overhead with the gloom of the canyon itself was beautiful. This canyon also featured a decent swim, which made the company glad of their wet suits.

All too soon, the end of the canyon was reached. Although I'm told that the glow worms in the Grand Canyon make a trip by night a completely different adventure.

The pace back up the hill to Evans Lookout was quickened to allow Helen to make her train home for Christmas at Blackheath, which was achieved with seconds to spare! A repeat of Felix's tale of his dad dropping him off for a train, requiring skipping a few stations and some 140+ km per hour driving, was luckily not necessary.

Despite Felix's protests about over-hyped tourist attractions, a quick side trip was made to the Three Sisters to give Julian a chance to get a photo, and have a quick lunch, before the drive back to the 'berra. The drive was enlivened by an interesting and seriously random discussion about autobahns, mediaeval weaponry, rules about armed combat in the Middle Ages, and modern German laws on crossbows. Mind you I suppose it wasn't that random given that 75% of the people in the car were German! Thanks to Fi for organising an excellent weekend of canyons to kick off the season, despite her injuries which prevented her from actually canyoning! We look forward to seeing you on the sharp end of a rope again soon Fi.

Sam Margerison
Organised by John P, with eyes turning gleefully towards the paradise that is the Blue Mountains, Deciana, Gabriela and Fiona J. headed up on the Friday fuelled with kebabs and good cheer for the weekend ahead.

Winding our way into the mountains, mist then rain greeted us. Mt Wilson was shrouded in fog as we picked our way carefully to the campground. By headlights and head torches, tents were quickly erected ... well, except for Fiona who opted for the delights of the back of Snowball, the trusty and comfy Subaru!

Morning greeted us with more fog and rain, but we were all lured out of snuggly sleeping bags by the aroma of cooking bacon, sundried tomato, mushroom, parsley, parmesan omelettes, cooked to perfection on the camp stove. With happy bellies, we roused ourselves and, joined by Yi, struck out for the Mt Wilson fire station and the start of the canyon of choice: Du Faur (also known as Clatterteeth Canyon).

A good choice for the conditions with heavy rain in area and high water. An easy day out, the walk in was a delight through forest twinkling with morning rain and a smorgasbord of eucalypt and ferny aromas. Leaving the fire trail, we headed to the start of the canyon. A tricky, slippery downclimb is required, however, there is a good handline thoughtfully left in place to assist. All negotiated with elegance, and we pressed onward to the river.

John’s floatation device of choice: inner tube. Yi: lilo. Deciana, Fi and Gabriela chose to bloat'n'float drybags in backpacks. The water was pumping through the entry, but with careful and controlled movements, we all passed into Du Faur with no mishap. Somewhat clogged with debris from recent rains,
attentiveness and care was the order of the day with some thoughtful route-picking occasionally required.

However, as always, the canyon was superb and did not disappoint. All spruced up after the rain, the walls and ferns were gleaming, and several small waterfalls had sprung into life. The award for the loudest scream goes to Fi, induced by Sven unexpectedly pouncing out of a darkened cavern - hilarious! Leaving the canyon (with the usual sigh) at the junction with Joe’s Canyon, soaked but happy, we all made our way back to the cars and campground … via the magnificent coffee shop which to our heartfelt thanks stayed open and served a banquet of cakes, blueberries and icecream along with a round of steaming hot tea and warming coffee. Satisfied. Happy. Warm. We returned to the campground for the next endurance feat of the weekend: dinner!

Gourmet all the way, as is the tradition. Entrées of cheeses and salmon were gobbled up quickly followed by Massoman curry and stir fry. Dessert was a stroke of genius courtesy of our resident Chef John - cake, cream, sprinkles and flambé - accompanied by a selection of seasonal fruits. Ooo la la.

Next day, a lazy breakfast of … pancakes a la Pillans. Groaning under the weight of the gourmet-banquet laden passengers, Snowball the Subaru struggled back to Canberra. A great time was had by all. Three cheers and thanks to our Sydney friends for their guidance and laughs down Du Fairs and around camp.

**Fiona Jinman**
A jovial group of eight lively souls delighted in the opportunity to bag the first canyon of the season - perfect for dusting off the volleys, rock-hopping skills and warming up in a leisurely way. Fiona J., Dave, Finn, Sam, Hannah, Steph G., Fiona B. and El Presidente, Jack were all bright-eyed and brimming with enthusiasm!

Tuross is a delightful, non-technical canyon around 2 hours drive from Canberra. After an early(ish!) start from Canberra we headed to Cooma - the siren song of bakery goodness lured us temporarily into town, before heading through the rolling hills of Numerella to Countegany and onwards on dusty forest roads before reaching out destination: Tuross.

The weather was perfect - warm but overcast. We set off from the carpark along the meandering track, a little bush-bashing and we arrived at the entry point for our trip down Tuross. Putting on wetsuits is one of the least elegant aspects of canyoning: second only to getting them off again at the end! As usual, the fashion was ... colourful, bold, and largely uncoordinated with spectacular clashes. Jack’s Nordic painted volleys were a highlight - particularly when paired with a retro red/blue wet-tie topped with red helmet.

The canyon is cupped between high granite walls open to the sky. The water was clear and the canyon flushed from recent rains. The three long 50m+ swims were tackled in a variety of innovative floating positions - backward human rowboat was favoured by the two Fis; Hannah pioneered deep water running. Some soloing overhangs and wall scurrying was a temptation too great for the climbers among us. Finn busted some speccy overhangs and, in cahoots with Sam and Dave, traversed some tricksy lines ending in gleeful splashes. From water fights to serenely taking in the scenery with due reverence, we made our way through.

Dave's (aka Rubber Man) successful squeeze through a notch that ought not to be tried by anyone greater in size than the average 8 year old was an hilarious highlight ... do not attempt unless you happen to be 1) determined; and 2) highly bendy!

As always on making the waterfall, an expression of awe was compulsory. It’s a perfect spot to stop for a leisurely lunch, warm up and gaze in wonder at the spectacular terrain down river. Sam, Dave, Finn and Jack girded up courage and over the waterfall they all went, abseiling with panache and style. What goes down ... must come up again - and in the case of this particular abseil, down again to the start! A tricky, scrambling undertaking, not for the faint-hearted nor inexperienced. Not one, but two, Fi’s carefully picked the indistinct route (with a little creative gardening along the way!) to rendezvous with our intrepid group at the junction topside before descending to the lunch spot. Hannah and Steph wound up their blissfully decadent poolside luncheon and we all headed up the ridge to rejoin the track back to the cars.

Happy, relaxed and appetites satiated by the delights offered by the Food Factory in Cooma, so ended a fabulous day and our first canyon for the season. Three cheers to a great group and a fabulous day in outdoors.

Fiona Jinman
Storm clouds were looming, yet undeterred, Dave, Gabriela and Fi met up at the gearstore for the inaugural abseiling instructional near Parks Way. A gentle boulder face for a safe and controlled introduction to abseiling. Starting at the gearstore with a familiarisation with various tricky bits’n’pieces used for abseiling, we headed outdoors to put the theory into practice. Canyoning Guru Nic's A to E of safety lives on - Gabriela tackled each aspect with aplomb and gritty determination, eventually successfully descending the wall multiple times with increasing skill and elegance. Well done!!

Members run these introductions on occasion throughout the year in preparation for canyons where abseiling is required. The idea is to provide you with a taste of what it's like outdoors and to familiarise you with the essential safety checklist. We are not qualified instructors: tips and hints in this 'how to' session are based on members’ knowledge and experience gained in canyons, climbing and other activities. In a safe, non-threatening environment, it enables you to get comfy with the basics - and gives us an opportunity to fill you in on the expectations of you from your fellow climbers/canyoners to keep us all safe and happy venturing into the great outdoors on our many wonderful trips. Building your skills to eventually become proficient, that's up to you!

Fiona Jinman
In May last year, a group of club MTBers headed out on a ride to sampling some of Namadgi's best bike trails. The plan was to ride Smokers Trail, cruise down into the Orroral Valley, then head up the Orroral Ridge via the Link Track to the Tower Rocks carpark. From there it was to be a massive fang down the hill to the Namadgi visitor centre.

At the Smoker's Gap carpark, we hit the trails, the crisp and cool May conditions perfect. The first few kms undulated gently, allowing for a pleasant warm up and some mucking around. Yves was content to ride on one wheel, demonstrating his ability to 'chuck a mono'. The rest of us stuck to two wheels, bunny hopping the odd obstacle. Soon enough we hit the section leading down into Orroral valley. Breaks in the trees gave us views over the valley and a couple of notable peaks. From here, the trail wound around and down a longish ridge for a good few kms. This is where MTB beats walking hands down. We flew down, whooping with glee. A couple of waterbars provided handy launch points, where one could take to the air for a brief period of silence before the tyres bit the dirt again. To top it off, the last section led steeply down to a small creek, which provided a couple of amusing splashdown crossings. Stylemaster Yves again demonstrated that the mono was the way to go, carving through the water with his back wheel. Yves, we dare you to get a mountain unicycle...

From here the trail became flatter and we reverted to touring mode again. We headed in a south-westerly direction around the top of the Orroral Valley, noting an alternate route up Mt. McKeahnie and a couple of promising camp sites. The uphill started soon enough as we headed toward the Cotter Hut road. Here, one unnamed rider attempted a mono on a loose section of track - the resulting stack providing amusement for those behind. At the top it was time for a sugar stop, and a bit of a break. I swear the ANUMC must be responsible for keeping the confectionery companies in the black!

Heading off again, we hit another descent. Tailing Yves, I watched as he launched off a waterbar, getting some huge air time. That was enough to stop and do a bit of a photo shoot to record some of the fun we were having. Tomfoolery over, we
scooted down towards the link road. A couple of kms down there was another creek. As we splashed through it (and hit the resulting wall of water spray), Yves’ mono technique made a lot more sense...

From the link road, things got a lot steeper. Low gear allowed slow progress on the super steep bits. There were solid attempts, but no-one was quite able to pedal the steepest section. With a lot of puffing, we got to a flatter section and were able to ride from there. We stopped once or twice to admire the views of the valley and the Orroral Tor climbing area. Eventually we reached Tower Rocks and slobbed out for lunch.

Once we’d recovered, we got to enjoy the second major descent for the day, rolling down the Apollo road. The dirt part was a bit on the sketchy side, with the odd ‘interesting’ corner. Soon we hit the bitumen and with the benefit of more traction, made a really speedy descent to the Naas road. This beat a car ‘assisted’ descent hands down, with the wind and trees whooshing by. From the Naas road it was a less fun 10km road slog to the visitor centre. We finished off by zipping in on the gravel path, scaring a few ducks, and arriving sweatily at the front door. From there it was a matter of completing the car shuffle. One thing is for sure, an ancient Kombi van works wonders for dragging people and multiple disassembled bikes around!

Thanks guys for the fun trip...

Ben Davies
Ten participants and 33 hours was what it took to complete the inaugural Canberra-Kosciuszko challenge. To the brain child of ANUMC Social Officer Andrew Peters, the concept was simple: to travel by relay between the ANU and the summit of Mt Kosciusko by a combination of mountain biking and walking. Participants in this juncture experienced an intoxicating mix of remote alpine environments and very substantial levels of fatigue.

Held over the weekend of 20 and 21 October 2007, the route was relatively simple. Following the Australian Alps Walking Track as closely as possible, the route started with a cycle from Old Parliament House to Orroral Valley. From Orroral Valley, participants continued on to Tantangara Dam and then Kiandra. This was followed by an epic mountain bike from Kiandra to Guthega which was concluded by a relatively short jaunt from Guthega to the summit via Charlottes Pass.

With teams organized and support crews ready, the gallant Team One of Paul Lloyd, David Price and Horst Punzmann were inbuilt with a quiet confidence, (possibly attributable to naivety?) when they arrived at Old Parliament House at 6am on Saturday morning. After cycling 75km to Orroral Valley, they dropped their bikes, donned their running shoes and set off on a 40km trek to Tantagara Dam. The day was hot and the trek through the Cotter Valley, over Murray’s Gap and down passed Oldfields Hut certainly proved pretty tough. Eventually, 10 hours after leaving Canberra, Team 1 arrived at 4.30 at their finish point, Pocket Saddle Road, just north of Tantangara Dam.

After arriving an optimistic 3 hours earlier at the change over point, Team 2 of Nick Brown and Seb Dunne were certainly raring to go. After an extended spell sitting in the grass at the end of the road, punctuated by a flat tyre necessitating a trip to Adaminaby, they were off at the first hail of the radio from Team 1. Saddling up the mountain bikes, they scooted up the road, collected the mandatory EPIRB baton and set off for Kiandra.

Cycling via Blue Waterholes, along the Mosquito Creek Fire Trail and through to the Snowy Mountains Hwy, the going was extremely quick. The trails were dry and the guys made
great progress through northern end of the national park, knocking off the 55km in a brisk 3 hours. In the meantime, the support crew had moved to Kiandra ready for the change over for stage 3. After arriving at Kiandra at 7.30pm, Nick and Seb were upbeat about being back on schedule. A quick 40 minute change, involving substantial eating, meant that Team 3 comprising Bart Schneemann and Seb Dunne (again!) departed at 8.30pm for the overnight 88km mountain bike to Guthega.

Not the most conventional thing to do on a Saturday night, this was probably the toughest leg of the trip. From Kiandra, the guys rode progressively south, past Tabletop Mountain, through the Jagungal wilderness and along the Grey Mare and Valentine fire trails to Schlink Pass and then down to Guthega. The weather was fantastic; still, clear and very
mild and the guys made excellent progress. Despite the fatigue hitting them hard at about 2am, they continued their pace and arrived at Island Bend at an astoundingly early 7.30am on Sunday morning, then settling down for breakfast and a long overdue sleep.

In the meantime Team 4, comprising Kylie Mulligan, Myall Hingee and ANUMC Treasurer Sam Margerison prepared to depart for the summit. Although this was the shortest leg of the trip, with 1000 meters of altitude to climb, it was never going to be easy. From Island Bend they rode up to the Link Road, across to Smiggens Holes and up the road to Charlotte’s Pass. Continuing past Charlotte’s Pass on the bikes till they reached the snow line, they donned the walking shoes to make their way up to the summit. Arriving at 3.30pm on Sunday afternoon, the final leg took 6 hours to give a total time for the challenge of 33 hours, almost exactly on the predicted schedule. This was followed by a quick trip back to Charlotte’s and a celebratory bottle of bubbly, suitably chilled after sitting in a snow drift for 5 hours.

Overall, the challenge was a great success and continued the ANUMC tradition of running trips that are adventurous, boundary pushing and slightly from left field. There is an intention to run it again this year, probably with a few modifications and it has the potential to become a fantastic tradition and one of the key events of the ANUMC year. On behalf on my fellow trip organiser, Andrew Peters and myself, we urge you to consider participating in this fantastic event. It’s adventurous and different and well worth the effort.

Jack Chenoweth
After several attempts and thanks to Nic Bendeli’s efforts we (that is, Nic, Fi, Finn, Helen, Dave, Sam and me) finally got a group together, and the park ranger’s permission to abseil down the Big Hole. The trip was going to be the final session of Nic’s rope skills course. In the months before we learned how to abseil past a knot, prussik up and down, do assisted abseils, rescue “injured” people and set up hauling systems. Now we would be able to put it all into practice at a spectacular location.

The Big Hole near Marble Arch in Deua National Park is a vertical 90 metre deep hole in the ground, and about 30 metres diameter across. After a short walk in we started setting up the ropes - one to abseil down, and another one on the opposite side to prussik back up. That way we wouldn’t get in each other’s way, and we would also minimise exposure to falling rocks. The cliffs were the most crumbly we’d ever seen - many rocks were merely piled up vertically on the sides, and only held by a bit of soil. The 90 metre drop required us to tie two 60m ropes together (of course with a double fisherman). This meant that we had to cross a knot on the way down, and also on the way up.

After everything was set up, Dave went down first. He first went down to a ledge, that we estimated to fairly close to the bottom. It later turned out that...
the ledge was about half way down - it was still another 40 metres from the ledge! While we were watching the tiny speck at the bottom of the hole that was Dave, Sam started going down as well, while Dave was starting his way back up again. While we were waiting our turns, we watched the little fluffy eagle hatchlings cuddling up on a ledge on one of the walls.

Finally it was my turn. I packed the camera, checked my harness and gear, made sure I had all the prussik loops and biners to come back up, and clipped into the rope. As I was slowly going down, I noticed again how loose the rock is, and hoped that none of these boulders would fall onto my head. We had already seen a rockfall happening as Sam was prussiking up earlier. He didn’t get hit, but the loud bang as the rock hit the bottom gave us the shivers. The way down went smoothly, and I stopped every 10 metres or so to look around and take a photo. After about 50 metres I reached the knot, and set up my prussiks to cross it. I could see Finn walking around below me - still an awfully long way away! From the top it looked like the knot was almost all the way down - now it looked more like half way... But shortly afterwards I was safe on the ground as well, and had some time to explore while Finn and Fi were prussiking up.

When the rope was free, I set up my prussiks for the ascent. It took me at least 5 minutes of frantic prussiking just to take in the stretch in the rope. But finally I left the ground, and slowly but steadily started my way up. After another 5 minutes I took a break and assessed the situation. I was already quite exhausted after 10 minutes of effort, and I was about 10 metres high. And still 80 metres to go!! What had I gotten myself into... But there was no other way out, so I kept going. After a while that seemed like forever I got closer to the ledge, and reached the point where the rope wasn’t hanging freely any more. I
thought that being on the rock would make it easier, but the opposite was the case. The combination of crumbly rock and stretchy rope forced me to be extremely careful and smooth while pushing up, to avoid tripping off loose rock above me. Finally I reached the ledge, crossed the knot, and climbed on. When I got closer to the top, the rest of the party decided to set up a hauling system for practice. At the same time the weather was getting worse, and as I didn't like the prospects of dangling off a rope in a rainstorm, I slowly kept going. Nevertheless, the hauling system was ready just in time to pull me up the last 5-10 metres, and we quickly packed up while the rain set in. On the trip home we exchanged stories of the experience, and compared our blistered hands. It was a great day out, and despite the hardships of getting back up, we have already discussed plans for another trip down.

Felix Schill