

## The Ski Club of South Africa (Matroosberg)

2015 : Matroosberg (2,249m) : **Mountain Safety Rules** : 2015

Welcome to the Ski Club of South Africa. In order for you and family to fully enjoy the club and all it offers, and minimise risk to your lives while up on the mountain, please take 5 minutes to read this leaflet (put together by those who have been going up the mountain for many years). Due to its altitude (2,249m) the environment on Matroosberg can offer potential to harm (i.e: the altitude, the rapidly changing extremes of weather, the presence of ice ... something with which most South Africans are not familiar ...the mechanical Ski Lift equipment, etc ... and all of these combined with the activities of skiing and/or snowboarding, and, of course, an over indulgence of alcohol). If you add all of these together it could mean that you might have to need to be prepared for emergencies.

### Some General Rules

#### Always:

- Keep an eye on the weather – it can change *very* quickly.
- Always keep your party together. Splitting the group, or heading off by oneself, is never a good idea.
- Stick to the paths and tracks – in poor visibility getting disorientated is very easy, even for experienced people in familiar areas.

#### Never:

- Set off in the dark or bad weather.
- Eat snow for water – your body uses more water melting the snow than is gained by drinking it.
- Walk alone.

#### Equipment to have with you:

- **Cellphone** with emergency numbers (see below). It's a good idea to turn your phone off to conserve the battery – just in case. Do you really want to be called whilst you are on Matroosberg ... anyway? Also, if you are lost, the tower it receives can help you (De Doorns – South side of the mountain, Prince Albert/Ceres – North side/Main Gulley, etc).
- **Emergency numbers:** Metro Rescue **021 945 3378**. Duty Officers contact numbers are on the Main Hut wall
- **Warm clothing** and at least a **waterproof jacket** – even when the weather is predicted to be fair
- **Whistle** - for drawing attention.
- **Compass** – will be useful in low visibility conditions. A GPS is also useful in the hands of a skilled operator.
- **Chocolate** or other high energy snack.

#### Places on Matroosberg which may be dangerous. (Please see the map in the Main Hut):

The path ... from the Ski Club road and car park ... up to the Main Hut is relatively safe, but there are a few places where getting lost (especially in the dark) can lead to difficulties.

- Once you cross the stream at the waterfall (on the way up), the path runs over rocks, and can be hard to follow (especially in the snow). If this happens, keep the electricity poles to your right hand side. This will help you follow the correct line.
- Also, along this section, the path can (in winter) be wet or frozen, and therefore slippery. Watch out! A twisted ankle (or worse) will make an unpleasant day for you and your party.
- Soon after this, you will come over a rise and see a small hut. This is a private hut and is not on the main path. The path to the Ski Club's Main Hut goes up and to the right, before turning right and heading straight uphill towards a cliff. There is a gap in the cliff known as the 'Chimney'.
- Above the Chimney, the path (when covered with snow) may also be tricky to follow. Do not follow the cliff edge, but aim for the tree tops (partially hidden behind the ridge). The Main Hut is situated there.
- Between the Main Hut and the Ski Equipment Hut is a large, flat rock slab. This can be very icy in winter. If there is deep snow, it can form a crust, which if you break through, can be tricky to get out of ... or you could hurt yourself falling. Stick to the path.
- Just before the Ski Equipment Hut there is a small stream with a bridge over it. Take care – it can be slippery and wobbly. Using it is still better than trying to cross elsewhere. Do not leave then path.

### Other dangerous areas are:

- **Groothoekkloof** – near the 4x4 track parking area and Conical Peak. Avoid going anywhere near the edge here. Snow and ice can be difficult to read. What looks like soft snow, can become hard and slippery without warning. *Slipping here can have dire consequences.* Rather take in the view from a very safe distance.
- **Groothoekkloof** – near Matroosberg peak and the Ski Club Peak Hut. The same cautions (as above) apply, but the additional danger, here, is that, in low visibility, you may come upon the cliff edge without warning. Avoid this area, unless you are very familiar with the mountain.
- The Matroosberg peak area ... while not dangerous in itself ... lends itself to people easily getting lost and disorientated (especially in low visibility). This can (and has) happened to very experienced mountaineers. Keep to the track at all times. If you are caught in bad weather – descend. Do not, under any circumstances, take a ‘short cut’. At the first sign of the weather turning, start heading down the mountain.
- The 4 x4 track is not dangerous ... but it is a much longer route than the foot path, and (if no vehicles have driven through) will be more likely to have deeper snow. So it is not the quickest way down. Provided there is already a trail cut through the snow ... follow the normal footpath track ... this is the quickest way down.
- There is no other easy or quick way off the mountain in order to get help. Always choose only the path down to ‘Erfdeel’ farm (or, if absolutely necessary, use the 4x4 track).
- If carrying a stretcher... and if it’s not snowed in ... the 4x4 track is the easiest (but not the shortest) route.

### Other dangers:

- **Hypothermia** – the cooling of the body’s core temperature. It can happen in good conditions, if you are underdressed. Early symptoms are shivering, goose bumps, loss of hand co-ordination and shallow breathing. Advanced symptoms are apparent lack of co-ordination, blue lips, ears and fingers, and irrational behavior. A person in advanced stages may think they are recovering. To treat a patient, first insulate with blankets or jackets *and* then force them to drink warm, sweet liquids. The body needs the energy to warm up. Call an emergency number for more assistance.
- **Snakes** – not a problem in winter, but can be found in summer. Most will make their presence known, at which point, you should avoid them. The exception is the puff adder – it just lies there and waits to get stepped on. If you are bitten, remain calm, and try to remember what the snake looks like. Identifying the snake could save your life.
- **Scorpions** – found mostly under rocks. If you have to move a stone: flip it, then check it. Avoid putting your fingers in cracks. Check your boots before putting them on.
- **Rock falls** – most dangerous if you are on the lower section of the path in the early evening. If ... in the unlikely event you are caught in a rockfall ... run uphill (on the opposite side of the valley) and try to find a boulder behind which to shelter.

### First Aid on the Mountain

- There are basic First Aid kits in the Main Hut. Please ensure you know where they are and what they contain. There is one kit with Medicines for minor ailments, one kit for Dressings for burns and major wounds and there is one special kit for Doctors or Paramedics only (please, if you remove anything from the kits, leave a clear note to this effect and inform the Duty Officer).
- There is a Stretcher in the kitchen, and Neck Braces under the seats with the First Aid Kits and, if at all in doubt (and if the patient is unconscious or unable/unwilling to move) please use these!
- Monitor Vital Signs and evacuate the casualty as soon as possible.
- In a serious (or life-threatening) situation ... and if the weather allows helicopter evacuation... call Metro on **021 945 3378** and explain the situation to them ... and advise that a helicopter is required.
- The Ski Club will, from time to time, offer Training on Mountain First Aid and Evacuation. Please try your best to attend these sessions. If you are a Docto... or have any First Aid training ... please do advise the Safety Officer on the Ski Club Committee.
- If in doubt (and in an Emergency) the current Health & Safety Officer for the Ski Club is **Dr Clare Davies** (and you can call her on **082-305-5155**).
- For any/all major Trauma cases please call Metro on **021 945 3378** (or use whichever Emergency line your Cellphone provider offers, e.g. 112).

## Hut Safety and Orientation

- Please familiarise yourself with the whereabouts of Fire Extinguishers and the Fire Blanket
- In the Dressings First Aid box is a large Burnshield Dressing for major burns. Please familiarise yourself with it as it is the only dressing to be used as a First Aid response to serious burns .
- Butane/Propane Gas Stoves are **not** allowed in the hut. Please use only paraffin, etc stoves.
- Please familiarise yourself with the Secret/Emergency Entrance (for emergency use only ) into the Main Hut (i.e. under the floor of the Hut, entrance near back door, which can be used to enter the hut should you have problems with the lock/key on the front door).
- "Lights out" is determined by the Duty Officer. Over skiing weekends it is generally 10:00 pm (22h00).
- No smoking in hut. Also ... please don't burn plastic in the Stove in the Hut.
- Always clean your own kitchen area after preparing any food ... and always carry ALL your rubbish back down Matroosberg (to be disposed of at home !!!).
- No eating or drinking is allowed in the bunks.
- Please remember to divert the Hut water supply when leaving. The valve is situated out from the back door of the Hut ... approximately 5.0 metres on the left hand side of the path ... towards the Ski Equipment Hut.