

Summitting for a good cause

Trekking for Mandela will yield positive results, Kevin Ritchie writes

ESTHER Masinga is off to Everest in 2020. She'll do it because she's put her mind to it, just like she told Sibusiso Vilane she wanted to go to Everest base camp with him this year.

Vilane, who is still on the mountain preparing for this third summit on Saturday May 19 – this time without oxygen – met the 45-year-old maths and science teacher from Rustenburg on the annual Trek4Mandela to summit Kilimanjaro last year.

He told her that he was putting together a team of climbers to travel with him to base camp. She leapt at the chance, but he told her he would insist on making sure she trained.

"I got the e-mail in November last year," she laughs, "I didn't hesitate, I said yes. I used my own salary, because it's not easy raising funds for something like this if you are a woman."

They started the trek to base camp, which is 5384m above sea level, on April 6, arriving there on April 14. The next day, four of the seven climbers who had accompanied Vilane summited the nearby Kala Patthar. The peak, whose name means black rock in Hindi, stands at 5643m. It was a particularly difficult climb.

"From Lobuche, the last overnight stop on the way to base camp itself, it was uncompromising terrain, it was tough, but not as tough as climbing Kili. Summiting Kala Patthar, though, was like going from Kibo Hut to Uhuru Peak on Kilimanjaro – very tough, very torturous, very difficult."

Kala Patthar famously offers the best close-up views of Everest, Nuptse, Changtse



Esther Masinga (right) and Sibusiso Vilane pose with a South African flag inscribed 'Rest in Peace, Winnie Mandela' on April 15, after summiting Kala Patthar in the Himalayas. Everest looms behind them.

and the Khumbu glacier.

"I felt so excited. We didn't stay long, because it was cold and windy... everything is frozen. We were on the summit for about 20 minutes taking pictures and then made our way down."

It was on the descent that her climbing partner, Mrs South Africa Nicole Capper, developed altitude sickness and had to be airlifted off the mountain. She has since made a full recovery.

"I was lucky," says Masinga, "just like Kili, the altitude doesn't seem to affect me."

She and Capper had revelled in seeing snow for the first time.

"On our way up to base camp, as we left the tree line, we started playing in the snow, making snowballs and throwing them at each other. It was the first time I'd ever seen snow, ever touched it. We were like kids. The other climbers just

looked on and laughed, they'd all seen snow before."

After a night in base camp, it took four days to complete the descent and then fly home.

Now, her next challenge is Kilimanjaro itself on July 18, the 100th anniversary of Madiba's birthday. Kilimanjaro is the world and the highest free-standing peak in the world and the highest mountain in Africa at 5895m – 500m higher than Everest base camp.

"I'd like to do the double summit like Sibusiso did last year, for no other reason that I'm a woman, we're disadvantaged and I want to show the kids back home that we can do exactly what men can do," she laughs.

She's the head of the maths and science department at Matetenene Secondary School in Rustenburg, married with



Esther Masinga and Nicole Capper, the reigning Mrs South Africa, pose for a picture in the freezing air after summiting Kala Patthar in the Himalayas.



three children, the oldest of whom is studying law at the University of Pretoria.

In between raising a family and working, Masinga has been studying continuously from her first degree at the University of North West to a B Ed (Hons) from the University of Johannesburg, to the University of Pretoria for her Master's, qualifying too as a provincial maths examiner for the North West.

"I've been climbing since 1996, I've travelled all over the country doing hikes and trails. In September 2016, I did the Fish River Canyon in Namibia – it's the largest canyon in Africa – and I've hiked in Mozambique and Swaziland too."

In 2015, she summited the highest peak in South Africa, Mafadi, which is 3420m high, on the border of South Africa and Lesotho.

"I love it, hiking gets me in touch with nature. It's my passion, I'm adventurous, I do mountaineering, hill walking or rock climbing whenever I'm free. It gives me peace of mind,

it makes me strong."

Last year she summited Kilimanjaro on her first attempt – not everyone does.

"I reached the peak, it was hard, challenging, but through my experience and through my training I was able to do it – which is why I want to try the double summit this year."

For Masinga it's not just about the personal challenge but also inspiring the children that she teaches – and making a difference to their lives. When she climbed to Everest base camp, she did so to raise funds to buy school shoes for her pupils.

"I teach in a very deprived area, it's a poverty-stricken area – all we can do as teachers is to show that we love them. We still use pit toilets; the children don't have uniforms. One boy comes to school in torn trousers with no underwear, with his backside visible, but no one laughs at him because everyone understands being poor."

Reaching Everest's base camp will make a difference for him and others like him. Carina4Girls, under whose auspices Trek4Mandela is held, will make a difference to schoolgirls who might otherwise have to miss up to a fifth of their high school careers because of the taboos still associated with menstruation and the shame of not having access to feminine hygiene products.

Last year, she set herself a target of collecting enough sanitary pads to support 1500 girls. She ended up supporting 2268.

"I collected 9072 pads in 2017, I'm going up the mountain again this year to get even more. We have to invest in our children. I'm passionate about them, I'll do anything to make

sure they have the basics to make the most of their lives.

When she gets back though, she will barely have time to clean her hiking boots and air them before hitting the trails under Vilane's guidance.

Vilane has already summited Everest from the north and the south. He's about to try to get to the top this time – through the death zone of only 30% of the oxygen that there is at sea level – without using bottled oxygen, just like Reinhold Meissner did for the first time in 1978. His next challenge will be to lead an all-African party of climbers to Everest in 2020, but with an added difference – all the training will be done in Africa.

As he explained in an earlier interview, his dream is to

take mountaineers to Africa's seven summits which all lie in east Africa, mimicking the international mountaineering checklist of the world's seven summits.

"I was joking about taking a 7SummitsAfrica team to climb Everest with some friends, who immediately said 'we can make it happen'. We had our first meeting in January to discuss and plan the project.

"We want to promote Africa. Africa has all the resources needed to train climbers for Everest. I was climbing in Uganda and I thought the glacier I was on was just like the Alps (in Europe)."

The technical challenges are there too.

"Mt Kenya was one of my toughest mountains to climb,"

he says, "in fact I would like to do K2 (the world's second highest peak) because of the technical skills I have learnt over the years, which ultimately helped me successfully summit Mt Kenya."

For Masinga, Everest will be the achievement of a much-loved dream.

"I have agreed, I will go with him to Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Mount Kenya."

The next time she's at base camp, it will be passing through on the way to the top of the world.

● If you would like to help Esther Masinga make a difference to her pupils' lives, please call her at 082 475 7959 or e-mail her at massingas@yahoo.com

Subscribe and save
Plus you get KZN's best-read newspaper delivered to your door
Call our hotline now! 080 020 4711

Consulate General of India Durban

Consulate General of India, Durban invites applications for the Post of Messenger in the pay scale of Rand 7000-210-10150-305-13200-396-17160

Minimum qualification: Good knowledge of English and Zulu and good communication skills.
Age Limit: 20-25 years.

Interested candidates may please send their CV's along with a latest photograph by the 7th May 2018 to:

Head of Chancery
Consulate General of India Durban
(P.O.Box 3276, Durban 4000)
Or email to:
Email: ga@cgidbn.com

education
Department: Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU NATAL

MEC for Education
Mthandeni Dlungwana

2018/2019 EDUCATION BUDGET SPEECH

The MEC for Education in KwaZulu-Natal, Mthandeni Dlungwana, is going to deliver the 2018/2019 budget speech at the KZN Legislature on the 3rd of May 2018. The Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal has the biggest share of the KZN provincial budget. The MEC is going to highlight how the 2018/2019 budget is going to fund programmes like Curriculum Delivery, LTSM Delivery, National School Nutrition Programme, Learner Transport, School Infrastructure and various other programmes.

...Championing Quality Education – Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

Kzndoe @dbe_kzn Kzn_education Kzndoe

Kzn Department of education, Communication and Publication
www.kzneducation.gov.za

0860 109 500

ONESTOP
TRAVEL & TOURS
your one stop travel shop

081 284 7845 | @onestoptours1 | One Stop Travel & Tours

HEAD OFFICE: 031 271 2800 GATEWAY MALL 031 584 7471
OVERPORT DRIVE 031 271 2801 PIETERMARITZBURG 033 387 2810
DURBAN CENTRAL 031 309 8744 MIDDELBURG 033 267 0770
PHOENIX PLAZA 031 500 2608 FORDSBURG 011 878 1086
CHATS WORTH 1 031 401 4800 LENASIA 011 852 5919
CHATS WORTH 2 031 401 2819 PORT SHEPSTONE 033 150 0001
WESTWOOD MALL 031 266 8700 STANGER 032 940 2790
MAHATMA GANDHI RD 031 368 2867 MUSGRAVE CENTRE 031 941 3994

Experience One of Our Amazing Group Tours

<p>Golden Triangle & Mumbai</p> <p>Budget FROM R10 950 PPS</p> <p>DEPART: 12 MAY 18 RETURN: 23 MAY 18</p> <p>air mauritius</p> <p>ONE FREE NIGHT IN MAURITIUS INCLUDES: RETURN AIRFARES FROM DUR WITH TAXES, ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, TRANSFERS & TOURS.</p>	<p>South India</p> <p>Budget FROM R12 500 PPS</p> <p>DEPART: 15 MAY 18 RETURN: 24 MAY 18</p> <p>air mauritius</p> <p>ONE FREE NIGHT IN MAURITIUS INCLUDES: RETURN AIRFARES FROM DUR WITH TAXES, ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, TRANSFERS & TOURS.</p>
<p>South India</p> <p>Budget FROM R12 500 PPS</p> <p>DEPART: 22 MAY 18 RETURN: 31 MAY 18</p> <p>air mauritius</p> <p>ONE FREE NIGHT IN MAURITIUS INCLUDES: RETURN AIRFARES FROM DUR WITH TAXES, ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, TRANSFERS & TOURS.</p>	<p>Golden Triangle & Mumbai</p> <p>Budget FROM R11 999 PPS</p> <p>DEPART: 23 MAY 18 RETURN: 02 JUN 18</p> <p>air mauritius</p> <p>ONE FREE NIGHT IN MAURITIUS INCLUDES: RETURN AIRFARES FROM DUR WITH TAXES, ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, TRANSFERS & TOURS.</p>
<p>Mauritius School Holidays</p> <p>FROM R14 999 PPS BONUS 3 FREE TOURS INCLUDED</p> <p>DEP: 27 JUN 18 - RET: 04 JUL 18 DEP: 30 JUN 18 - RET: 07 JUL 18</p> <p>air mauritius</p> <p>PRICE INCLUDES: RETURN AIRFARES FROM DUR WITH TAXES, ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, DINNER & TRANSFERS.</p>	<p>Mauritius December Group</p> <p>FROM R16 800 PPS BONUS 3 FREE TOURS INCLUDED</p> <p>Contact us for dates</p> <p>air mauritius</p> <p>PRICE INCLUDES: RETURN AIRFARES FROM DUR WITH TAXES, ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, DINNER & TRANSFERS.</p>
<p>Turkey Group Tour</p> <p>FROM R15 999 PPS</p> <p>DEPART: 29 SEPTEMBER 18 RETURN: 09 OCTOBER 18</p> <p>TURKISH AIRLINES</p> <p>VISITING: ISTANBUL ANKARA CAPPADOCIA INCLUDES RETURN AIRFARE FROM DUR WITH TAXES, ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, SELECTED LUNCHES & DINNERS, RETURN TRANSFERS, TOUR AS PER ITINERARY.</p>	<p>Christmas in Turkey</p> <p>FROM R17 999 PPS</p> <p>DEPART: 17 DECEMBER 18 RETURN: 27 DECEMBER 18</p> <p>TURKISH AIRLINES</p> <p>VISITING: ISTANBUL ANKARA CAPPADOCIA INCLUDES RETURN AIRFARE FROM DUR WITH TAXES, ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, SELECTED LUNCHES & DINNERS, RETURN TRANSFERS, TOUR AS PER ITINERARY.</p>
<p>December Umrah Special</p> <p>FROM R17 499 PPS</p> <p>First 10 Days in Ramadan DEPART: 16 MAY 18 - RETURN: 27 MAY 18</p> <p>Meals Specified</p> <p>PRICE INCLUDES: RETURN AIRFARES FROM DUR, 10 NIGHTS ACCOM & SAUDI VISA (NON REAPPEAL).</p>	<p>December Far East Group</p> <p>FROM R28 900 PPS BONUS 3 FREE TOURS INCLUDED</p> <p>DEPART: 24 DECEMBER 18 RETURN: 07 JANUARY 19</p> <p>QATAR AIRWAYS</p> <p>Visiting: Kuala Lumpur - Phuket - Bangkok PRICE INCLUDES: RETURN AIRFARES FROM DUR WITH TAXES, 15 NIGHTS ACCOM WITH BREAKFAST, TRANSFERS</p>

*All prices quoted per person sharing and includes applicable taxes, at time of printing. Single supplement available on request. *Subject to availability and high season surcharges. *Rates are subject to change without prior notice, due to airfare increases, currency fluctuations & availability, packages exclude entrance fees *T.&C.E. We act as agents to all airlines & tour operators. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY