

Komatsu/Y Care Tsodilo Hills Walk 2010

Thursday 27 – Monday 31 May 2010

Walk location

In the area of Tsodilo Hills and Shakawe.

Introduction – Tsodilo Hills

In the flat barren landscape of the western Kalahari, some 50km west of the village of Sepupa on the banks of Panhandle, the sheer quartzite cliff-faces of the four Tsodilo Hills rise majestically above the surrounding savannah. The four hills form a line and are referred to by the San people as "*The Male*" - the largest hill which reaches a height of 410 metres above the surrounding plain; "*The Female*" - a smaller hill, about 300m, but has an overall area of almost three times that of The Male; and the next in size of 40m is referred to as "*The Child*" and lies about 2km away from The Female. Beyond these three is a much smaller unnamed knoll, located 2.2km northwest of The Child, which legend has it was The Male Hill's first wife who was discarded when he met and married the taller Female Hill.

The enigmatic and spiritual quality of the hills was noted by the famous author Sir Laurens van der Post in his book "*The Lost World of the Kalahari*" (see usefull books and readings). It was here that Sir Laurens's cameras inexplicably jammed, his tape recorders ceased functioning and his party was attacked by swarms of bees three mornings running. When he learned from his guide that two of his party had disturbed the Tsodilo spirits by ignoring long-established protocol and killing a warthog and a steenbok while approaching the sacred hills, van der Post buried a note of apology beneath the panel of paintings that now bears his name and it was apparently accepted.

Tsodilo is a place of special significance to the San who have been living here for thousands of years. They believe the hills are a resting place for the spirits of the deceased and that their various gods live in caverns within the Female Hill, from where they rule the world. The most sacred place is near the top of the Male Hill; legend has it that the first spirit knelt here to pray after creating the world. This was when the rocks were still soft and the San believe you can still see the impression of his knees in the gray rock. It is believed that these gods will cause misfortune if anyone hunts or causes death near the hills. The Harnbukushu, who also live in the area, believe the hills are where God lowered man to earth.

Archaeological studies have revealed that this area has been occupied by humans for at least 100,000 years. There are paintings on all the hills that cover 9 km² of rock in a 22 km² area. The best sites are at the north end of the Female hill.

The fact that Tsodilo is totally removed from all other rock art sites in southern Africa adds to its aura of mystery and magic. The nearest known site is 250 km away. What is more, the paintings at Tsodilo are generally unlike others in the southern African region in both style and the incidence of certain images. Many are isolated figures and over half depict wild and domestic animals, particularly the eland. Some are scenes, but few seem to tell a story. Many are outlined schematic designs and geometrical patterns. It is almost certain that most were painted by the Bushmen.

The schematic patterns may also have meanings - perhaps to do with creating rain to bring health and prosperity to all living things. Even the painting sites chosen on the hills

would seem to point to their spiritual and religious significance. Many are on high, inaccessible cliffs, with commanding views over the landscape. This could indicate an authority and control over the sky and earth, or protection for those living on earth. It would seem that little or nothing about the paintings was haphazard.

Archaeological research at the hills has recently challenged previously held ideas about human migrations to southern Africa.

Scientists have identified the shorelines of a small lake. Among the rare artefacts found there are some animal bone fish hooks dating back more than 20,000 years. Other archaeological discoveries include the location of mines among the hills. There is evidence that between AD 800 and 1,100 the people at Tsodilo were engaged in mining black hematite, and possibly mica, and trading it through the extensive trade networks of Africa.

The Tsodilo Hills is one of the most historically significant rock art sites in the world with 500 individual sites charting thousands of years of human habitation. There is a small San encampment nearby as well as a village near the Male Hill inhabited by the Hambukushu people. Guides are available at these settlements.

Start & Finish

The walk will start at Shakawe Fishing Camp and finish at Tsodilo Hills.

Day Schedule

Day 1 – Thu	Transport from Gaborone to Shakawe Fishing Camp
Day 2 – Fri	Boat trip on the river to the east side of the river. Visit to Bana Ba Metsi School. Walk along the river. Camp at Shakawe Fishing Camp.
Day 3 – Sat	Walking to Tsodilo Hills. Camp at Tsodilo Hills.
Day 4 – Sun	Walking around in the area of Tsodilo Hills with local guides. Camp at Tsodilo Hills.
Day 5 – Mon	Transport from Tsodilo Hills to Gaborone.

Transport

- There will be organised bus transport for walkers and equipment from Gaborone to start/finish point and back to Gaborone after the walk.
- The bus transport is exclusive of the participation fee.
- Support vehicles will transport your tent, sleeping bag and belongings for the duration of the walk.

Departure from Gaborone	Thu May 27, 06.00 (SHARP!), Shell f/station, Sebele, along A1 to F/town
Arrival to starting point	May 27, 18.00
Departure from the walk	May 31, 07.00
Arrival to Gaborone	May 31, 19.00

Food & Drinks

Y Care will provide all meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner), incl. for vegetarians and adequate supply of water. If you have any special dietary needs, please provide these for yourself.

Pre Walk Training

We will cover 30-40 km per day on the walks. This requires that all walkers to be in a good physical condition. Therefore, pre-walk training is strongly recommended.

As soon as possible, you should get out at least once or twice a week, walking for an hour or more. We advice you to make 1-2 walks per month of each 30-40 km from the month of February. This is to get the experience; feeling of a longer walk and to build up the endurance.

Equipment

Walkers provide their own tents, sleeping bags, camping chairs and walking sticks. Make sure your tent is complete with all its parts and that you are familiar of how to put it up. It is important to break in or try out new equipment before the walk. This includes new walking shoes. Please, label all your belongings with your name.

Packing List

A list of the equipment, clothes and other stuff you need, can be downloaded from our website. Please contact us to receive it by email or fax.

All your belongings should be packed in a durable and reasonable sized bag. Please don't bring valuables as during the walk and transportation items may get lost. Y Care is not responsible for lost or damaged property.

Sponsorship/Participation Fee

P6,500.00 per person + transport.

Reservation

To make reservation for the walk, the participation fee has to be paid before **May 1st 2010**.

Payments

Payment can be done by cheque to Y CARE CHARITABLE TRUST. For payment as deposit/transfer, please contact us for our bank details.

Important when deposit or transfer, please:

- state on the transfer/deposit slip your name & walk,
- send us a copy of your deposit/transfer slip to fax (+267 3932242) or email (ycare@it.bw)

Application & Indemnity Form

Before you can start on the walk, you must have completed and signed an Indemnity Form and an Application Form.

The forms are available on www.ycare.org.bw or please contact us to receive them by email or fax. Signed forms can be emailed, faxed or sent by mail to Y Care.

Medical Support

During the walk, there will be a trained medical support to take care of any medical emergencies. If you have any medical conditions, please advise Y Care prior to commencement of the walk.

Briefing/Information Meeting

All walkers will be invited to a briefing meeting in Gaborone. At this meeting, various areas of the walks will be emphasised (routes, equipment, training, expectations, preparations, etc.) It's a good opportunity to get direct answers and information from the organisers and support staff! Announcements about date, time and venue for the meeting will be sent out by email.

More Information

Contact person/coordinator: Stellan Bengtsson.

You can find him on email: ycare@it.bw, cell: 71784212, phone: 393 2253, fax: 393 2242. Skype: stellanb.

On Y Care's website www.ycare.org.bw you can find more info about Y Care, the walks, sponsors, beneficiaries, forms, maps, etc.