

BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

ONE LOOKS AT GOING UP, THE OTHER AT GOING OVER.
 JUSTIN FOX REVIEWS A BOOK YOU CAN'T PASS UP

TAKE A DRIVE

LONG TOM PASS, LOWVELD

One of the highest and most impressive roads in the country, Long Tom Pass meanders for 56 kilometres from Mashishing to Sabie, following the old Voortrekker pass that the staffie of *Jock of the Bushveld* used to travel. Along the way, look out for damage done by artillery shells during the Anglo-Boer War, stop at Misty Mountain Resort for a bite and take in the views at the Long Tom monument, a replica of the artillery piece used by the Boers.

SOUTH AFRICA'S FINEST PASSES

Former *Getaway* staff member Marion Whitehead has spent a considerable amount of time charting the passes and poorts of the Western Cape, which produced a fine book and a series of articles. Marion is at it again with her next offering, *Passes & Poorts South Africa*. The latest book is a detailed guide to more than 40 of the country's most scenic passes and poorts, and includes information on activities, places to stay, and flora and fauna.

I met Marion for a glass of red wine and quizzed her about the book and why mountains attract her so much.

'Mountains are the ultimate wilderness. They lift our spirits and broaden our horizons in more than just the obvious ways,' she said. 'And maybe the need to seek out high places is embedded in our genes from our hunter-gatherer days when it was easier to spot prey – and find safe refuges from being preyed upon.'

I wanted to know which were her favourite passes in the book. 'My collection would have to include Sani Pass as the most challenging (do it now before it's reconstructed),' she said. 'Also Barberton's multiple passes for the greatest variety, Eastern Cape Highlands passes for the sheer amount of thin air and the Garden Route's pioneer 4x4 passes for the most stunning scenery.'

I also asked what travel book she would recommend (see alongside). *Passes & Poorts South Africa* by Marion Whitehead (R250, Jacana 2014).

MARION'S RECOMMENDATION

BRIDGES OF THE EASTERN CAPE

Good marksmanship saved the iron lattice-girder bridge over the Orange River at Aliwal North from being swept away by flood waters when it was being constructed in 1880. Two of its iron piers had not yet been filled with stabilising concrete and were in danger of toppling over. So the engineer in charge, Joseph Newey, fired his rifle from the bank and hit the same spot five or six times to punch holes in the metal and let the water in to equalise the pressure. When the flood receded, only one pier was out of alignment by less than a centimetre.

Anecdotes such as this add zing to Dennis Walters' glossy coffee-table book, *Bridging the Eastern Cape: The Life and Work of Joseph Newey*. It's the fascinating story of an ingenious English civil engineer who was involved in building more than 70 bridges in the Eastern Cape in the latter part of the 19th century. Most were iron lattice-girder bridges that look like they've been riveted together from supersized Meccano sets, but his most charming bridges are undoubtedly the rustic stone ones.

Newey went on to become a district inspector for the Public Works Department and made a huge contribution to developing the infrastructure of the province. His achievements have gone unrecognised until East London engineer Dennis Walters published this very readable book.

Bridging the Eastern Cape: The Life and Work of Joseph Newey by Dennis Walters (R390, Coral Tree Press 2014). Available only from info@easterncapebridges.co.za.

