

CLIMBING MOUNT SIBU SHOULD BE ON EVERYONE'S BUCKET LIST

Hundreds of people flocked to Masoma Village, 43 km from Tzaneen to participate in the annual fun walk to the summit of Mount Sibu on Reconciliation Day. The climb up Mount Sibu is on its 13th year and it is an experience that most people in Masoma Village and areas such as Makhubidung, Shiluvane, and Mogapeng look forward to every year.

Participants, led by Mayor Maripe Mangena began their journey next to Masoma Dam where they received free t-shirts, mostly early birds. They then had to cross a river and navigate 3km of rocks and bushes up Mount Sibu. This event is not just a test of physical fitness, it drives social cohesion, and creates new networks. It is a test of endurance and will.

At the summit of the mountain is a place they call the "kitchen", this is where people get to eat and drink whatever they have brought along. At the "kitchen" participants register their names with the organizers and after a short address by the organizers, participants can go back. It is at the "Kitchen" where the "tough ones" proceed for a further 7km downhill to the gates of Lekgalametse Nature Reserve. The tough ones don't make it back until five hours later.

On arrival at the assembly point, a sport field adjacent Masoma Dam, one is met with loud music and smoke from braais. This is where the after party takes place and those whose' legs can still carry them indulge in food and alcoholic beverages while listening to their favorite music. They are joined by other community members and its fun all the way.

I personally have never hiked in my entire life, but I have always had some form of adoration for those who did. Climbing mount Sibu was my first real taste of physical endurance, not only did I have to carry myself over 3km uphill, I had to balance it with my fear of heights.

I was sweating and panting like dog, I felt like quitting as did many but I was encouraged by the children and gogos. I felt like a quitter, I was not about to be outshined by kids and gogos. Looking up the mountain can be so intimidating but in the end I made it to the summit and eventually downhill to where we had parked our cars.

The turnout was overwhelming, but my concern is the lack of sponsors and hiking enthusiasts. Hopefully 2020 will be different.

If you have never participated in this mountain climb, please add it to your bucket list. It should be on your to do list or your new year's resolutions. Besides the muscle spasms and cramps everything else is a worthy experience to be repeated.

By Neville Ndlala