

Day 17 - Monday 4th August

We enjoyed our breakfasts al-fresco, overlooking the river with hippos and crocodile awakening beneath us. We also had our first 'Happy Birthday' rendition in a while, as Jade turned 16 today! After saying goodbye to Kruger, we had a short trip to the border and were quickly into Swaziland, where we were greeted by rolling hills and beautiful scenery.

We arrived mid afternoon to Malalotja Lodge, beautiful lodgings up in the mountains and a little bit cooler than our previous stops. In the evening we did some preparation for a 'Giraffes can't dance', a dramatic rendition of a children's book which we had been preparing for performance at the school we will visit in a couple of days' time. It involved singing, dancing and poetry and stars all the JOLters - not least 4 giraffes - Rich, Jack, Yasser, and Joe!

Dinner was followed again by a massive desert of sticky toffee pudding, and then we were treated to birthday cake too - we certainly didn't go to bed hungry!



Day 18 - Tuesday 5th August

Today was one of the most anticipated days of the trip - some with excitement and others with no small amount of trepidation - the zip line canopy tour! After breakfast, we headed further into the mountains and split into 3 groups for a safety briefing. We learnt nervously of the series of 10 cables that would send us whizzing from platform to platform high in the air. Soon we were off, flying through the trees and facing our fears!



Christine won the award for best innovation with her rendition of 'I believe I can fly' performed whilst 'cycling' elegantly across the longest zip, Beth managed to lose a shoe never to be seen again, and Toby worked phenomenally hard to make it up an

exceptionally steep ascent on the return leg. Shaun excelled himself in overcoming his fear of heights to complete the course and win the days bravery award.

After the adrenaline rush of the morning's activity, we had a tough uphill trek back to the beginning of the trail, requiring us all to pull together as a group. Once we had recovered, we had a 2 hour transition to Sondzela backpackers where warthogs and springbok roamed freely around the camp as we ate a hearty supper around the campfire.



Day 19 - Wednesday 6th August

After breakfast around the fire, we set off on the Hippo trail from our base at Sondzela camp. The 10km hike through difficult terrain was a real stretch for the group, and required a lot of teamwork. Everybody pulled together very impressively, rotating JOLters at the front and back of the group to ensure we all kept together, as well as giving assistance to those who needed it. We were lucky to see impala, warthogs and hippos on the walk whilst the sun shone overhead.

On our return, we had further time to practice our giraffe performance for tomorrow including a full dress rehearsal! We were very much ready for our delicious dinner around the fire again in the evening, serenaded by an amazing group of touch singers who seemed to be performing entirely for our benefit! Exhausted after the exertion of the day's walk, we soon collapsed in bed for an early night.



Day 20 - Thursday 7th August



Another day that many of us had been looking forward to - our visit to a local school was upon us! Feeling nervous in the minibuses, we all rehearsed our lines ready for our impending performance! We couldn't believe it when hundreds and hundreds of children poured out of their classrooms and sat on the embankment eager to see what we had to offer! The dramatisation was a 'roaring' success, and we were particularly impressed with Jack who overcame some serious pre-event nerves to step up as Gerald the giraffe, and Joe whose dancing skills would have put Beyoncé to shame!

After rapturous applause, we swapped places and were treated to a stunning choral performance from two different groups from within the school - we could have listened all day! We

were then challenged to football and netball matches, and were thoroughly outplayed at both - we might have to do training sessions at the prep weekend next year! A strong performance was put in by Beth however, who scored her first wheelchair netball goal, and Xavier, whose showed some slick skills on the football pitch.

Afterwards we had time to relax with the children and teach them some English songs and games. Sarah and Lizzie were particularly popular with the kids and we were worried we wouldn't be able to drag them away!



We had a relaxing afternoon with the opportunity for some shopping and using the internet before heading back to Sondzela's. The Star award was awarded to the whole group for their efforts at Bethany Primary School.