

Tuesday, February 21, 2017 VICTORIA FALLS

Friendship Force has undergone a few changes since we were first assigned our exchange to the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, over a year ago. Today, the journey begins. Three of us stayed overnight at JFK Airport. We continued on flight SA 204 at 10:30 AM from JFK to Johannesburg and then onto Livingstone in Zambia.

Gwendolyn T. Deas

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

After 20 hours of travel, we were picked up in Livingstone and rushed off for the 20-minute ride to a



lovely resort named Avani. The resort was on a nature reserve at the foot of one of the entrances to Victoria Falls. We checked in, took showers, and met the transportation to our riverboat sunset cruise on the Zambezi River.

Lady Livingstone, the riverboat, was a wonderful introduction to Africa. Our guide, Fredrick, was a seasoned guide that seemed to

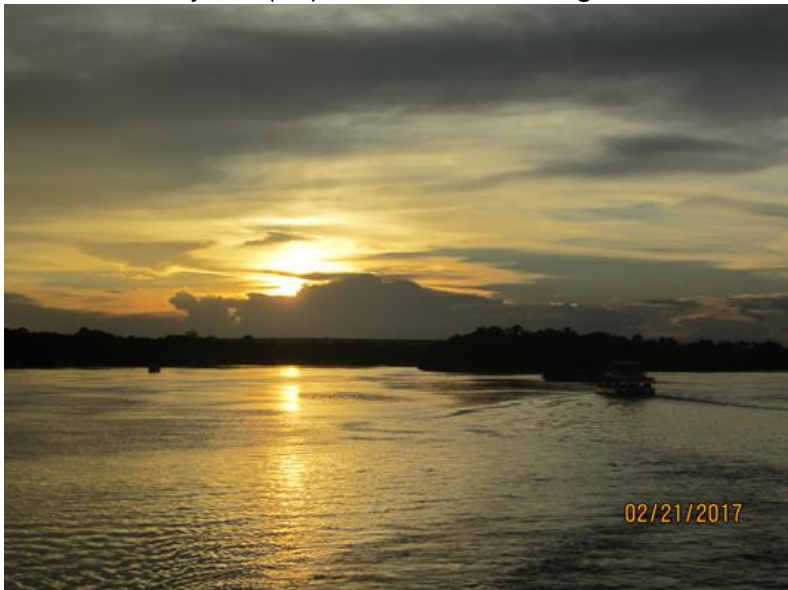
have a personal relationship with every bird and hippopotamus on the river. Included on this tour were wine, beer, cocktails and a variety of very filling appetizers. As a result, we did not eat dinner when we returned to the resort. The evening came to an end as the sun set over the river. As we drove onto the resort property, giraffes were so close we could reach out and touch them. Little did we know that our resort wasn't only on a nature reserve, but right in the middle of their feeding grounds.



Thirty-six (36) hours after leaving JFK and cruising the Zambian River, our bodies told us it

was finally time to retire for the day. We all went to bed really feeling that we had not only arrived in South Africa, but had received a proper greeting from the animals of South Africa as well.

Gwendolyn T. Deas



Thursday, February 23, 2017

ZAMBIA- VICTORIA FALLS HIKING DAY

Our 2nd day began at 7 AM. Up, dressed, gathering the bits of myself then off to a leisurely breakfast with Gwen and Gloria. We were picked up by Tawanda Chibwe our driver and Emanuel our guide. As we drove to Victoria Falls we encountered 4 Giraffes and 5 zebras including a baby zebra. They were so beautiful and graceful beyond words. We stopped for pictures.



We arrived at Victoria Falls in a downpour of rain. We put on raincoats (which I later

learned we were going to need as we walked pass Rainbow Falls) and stopped to get an overview of the Falls.

We walked out to one point where there was a brief view of the Falls, yet it was very close. I was grateful that I had bought my cane with the seat on it. There many opportunities for photos. Our driver/guide told us that the

Falls were not at full capacity yet. That would occur in April. We met two men from another part of Zambia who were being as much tourists as we were. We walked so much that I was able to get 5,000 steps before 11 AM. The guided tour was over at 11am. I stopped at some vendors as I was in search of magnets. All the magnets were handmade. I bought one which had Victoria Falls Zambia on it and a wooden rhino. The vendor wanted \$22 for both. Gloria got price down to \$11. I think the rhino was worth that alone.

We returned to Avani Resort. Robbie was very tired and took a nap. Gwen Deas took a cab

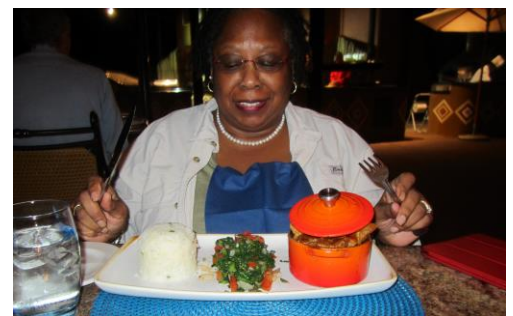
into the town of Livingstone for \$20 r/t to go to the Livingstone Museum. The museum cost \$5 to get in. She reported that she was very glad that she went. The museum told the history of Livingstone from the 1500s until the present time. Gloria spent time trying to upload her photos to her laptop then she took a nap.

Robbie had an adventure. She lost her eyeglasses. After searching all her belongings, she went to front desk then over to the tour desk and after a phone call to the tour company it was discovered that her eyeglasses and cover for cane had been found and in a white envelope in the tour desk drawer at the



resort. Gwen stopped at pool side for lunch and met a couple from England who live near Stonehenge. The wife (Chris) was very interesting. She had lived many places including Australia where she was a flight attendant which she called "trolley dollies". The husband, David was quieter but probably just as interesting.

Dinner was by the pool bar. Robbie had braised oxtail with white rice and vegetables. Gloria had a hamburger with fries of all things. Lol. There were 6 Impalas walking about the lawn of the resort. We retired to our rooms as we had an earlier morning to Chobe National Park in Botswana. *Robbie Thornton-Peek*



Friday, February 24, 2017

CHOBE NATIONAL PARK, BOTSWANA

Day 3 started at 5:30 AM. Up, dressed, to breakfast of oatmeal, chicken sausage, mango juice, butter scones, croissant and decaf coffee with cream. Gloria told both of us about the monkeys who come into the dining room and steal food. Shortly thereafter a monkey ran into the dining room and stole Gwen's waffle and pineapple. Gwen let such a squeal. Then off to catch the van which drove us about 90 minutes to the border of Zambia and Botswana.

Our passports were stamped then we got on a small boat driven by man named Brooks. We crossed the great Zambezi River to Botswana where our passports were stamped. Robbie of course, had to use the toilet. We had to step in a chemical which cleansed our shoes/boots of foot and mouth disease. Our passports were checked again to see if we had traveled to any countries which had yellow fever. Then we were off again for about a 15 minutes' drive. We traveled with people from Germany and a couple from French part of Switzerland.

Our bus stopped at German-African restaurant for coffee and tea, scones and fruit. There was also a gift shop there where I bought two bottle cap magnets and a bracelet for Tracy.

We got on a pontoon boat on the Chobe River which divides Botswana and Namibia. Our captain/guide was David on the lower level and Richard on the upper deck. We passed many guest lodges on the river. We saw a Namibian water taxi. We pulled into shore and saw a mother wart hog and two babies. It is one of the Ugly Five.

THE UGLY FIVE ARE: Wart hog ✓ Wildebeest ✓ baboon ✓ hyena ✓ marabou stork ✓

Sedudu Island is in the middle of the river and was given to Botswana as it has the deepest water and fastest current. No one lives on the island which flies the Botswana flag.



Saw a fish eagle. They live for about 20 years. They take a mate between the age of 5-6 years old and mate for life. If one dies the other never mates again. The fish eagle was in a hard wood tree which was used to make furniture called Jackal Berry or the African Ebony. We saw a water monitor lizard. This lizard can grow up to 2 meters long. How many feet is that? There was another African fish eagle and it was male as it was smaller and more colorful than the female. Male also has a higher pitched voice. As we watched



the male called to his mate and she flew to him. They had a short conversation as in " I'm here, what do you want?"

We saw Egyptian Geese and many impalas nicknamed "The McDonald's of the bush" because they are fast food for the predators. There were two crocodiles in the water called Nile crocodile. The grow of 6-7 meters and can live up to 100 years old. Saw woolly caper bush, a tree which is used for medicinal purposes by humans, elephants and impala for upset stomach and abortion.

Saw aging male Cape buffalo who separate themselves from the herd at about 19-22 years old to prevent competition among the young males. The older females stay with the herd as they are more active than the older males. If an older male is attacked, other older Cape buffalo come to his defense.



THE BIG FIVE ARE:

elephant ✓ Lion ✓ leopard ✓ rhino ✓ Cape buffalo ✓



At about 12 noon we docked at the Chobe Safari Lodge for lunch. There was salad, spaghetti with tomato and onion sauce, chicken soup, pork and desserts of ice cream, apple tart, cake of some kind and fresh fruit. We met a couple from Arkansas. They live near the Oklahoma state line. The wife travels a lot.

At 1:30 PM our land driver Kimble came to collect us. Gwen, Gloria, Emanuel (Baby Boy), the couple from Switzerland and me. Sable antelopes, impala, hippopotamus and a young elephant were seen in the Chobe National Park as well as a bee-eater. Bees are the main staple food for the bee eater.

The hippopotami were young, maybe 4-5 months old.



They were playing with each other, opening their mouths wide. Saw a termite mound with a woolly caper bush.

We returned to our resort very happy though We didn't clearly see any giraffes after 6 PM. We were greeted by many zebras walking by



the pool and on the lawn. Got pictures of Robbie and Gloria with the zebra behind each of them.

We rested and the three of us met for dinner by the pool at 7:30pm. Robbie had braised oxtails again. Gloria had pizza. To bed by 11:30 PM as we decided to go to Zimbabwe next morning before going to airport. *Gloria Thornton-Peek*

Saturday February 25, 2017- TRAVEL DAY FROM LIVINGSTONE, ZAMBIA TO JOHANNESBURG REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

We were up by 6 AM to meet taxi by 6:30 AM. We were driven to the Zambia border where we



got our passports stamped then into no man's land across a bridge to the Zimbabwe border where our passports were stamped again. We walked in a short distant to the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. We took pictures of the gate and a monkey eating a corn cob. Then we did the reverse. On return to Avani we had a nice leisurely breakfast, finished packing, took showers and were driven to the airport by Twanda and Emanuel AKA Baby Boy who was all dressed up in a suit at 10:30 AM. We were driven to the Royal Livingstone to pick up a couple who hadn't even checked out yet. Left Royal Livingstone at 11 AM.

We arrived at the airport by 11:30 AM and our flight left for Johannesburg shortly after 1 PM arriving before 2:30 PM after an uneventful flight. We were picked up by a Gate 1 representative and taken to the Crowne Plaza Rosebank. Our registration was already taken care and we were taken to a table with our names and room key. We went to our rooms, 204 for Gwen and 508 for Gloria and Robbie.

Gloria went to gym to workout, Gwen hooked up with fellow FFIs and went to nearby mall for dinner and Robbie stayed in the room in her PJs resting for the early morning rising.

Robbie Thornton-Peek

GATE 1 TRAVEL TOUR

Saturday, February 25, 2017

Those joining the Gate 1 tour arrived in Johannesburg, South Africa today. Born a gold mining town, it's often called "Gauteng - the City of Gold." They were transferred to the hotel and had time to rest, relax and acclimate to the new time zone after long flights.

Sunday, February 26, 2017 JOHANNESBURG

It was the first day after our arrival to South Africa. We stayed in the hotel Crowne Plaza in Johannesburg located in the green and well-maintained area. On Sunday, we started our 18 Day Kaleidoscope Tour of South Africa organized by Gate 1 Travel. Johannesburg is a diverse city today, but we focused on what makes Johannesburg historically significant and also see the places where



the revolutionary movement against apartheid started. The architecture and structure of Soweto gave us a picture of how segregated was the society that time and how the black residents were impoverished, isolated and without any perspective. Still, when I compare it to what I saw later on in some truly impoverished areas of the country I would consider it today a well maintained and well-established compact community. But without talking to the residents directly there is no way to be sure what their feelings are today. It was the first time after listening to local guides that I realized that apartheid brought so much injustice and human rights

violations that consequently people's resentment must have changed into a strong political opposition movement.

Johannesburg played a significant role in overthrowing the apartheid. We drove from the narrow streets and "so called match boxes" of the Soweto to a Catholic



Church, Regina Mundi that even today has the structural wounds that the church sustained during the uprising in 1976. There was a lovely service in the morning and the local guide proudly displayed to me all the signatures of several

American presidents who visited this place. The church has an architectural modesty and you could sense the pride of the



locals to be a member of it. Every place we visited had been connected with tragedies of a brutal government confrontation. The police confrontation with the innocent children had been also commemorated in a beautiful monument. We managed to see a Mandela's original residence before we departed for the lunch. It seems that all



the historical places are also a major employer for many blacks of the city. Johannesburg has a high unemployment. In front of the Mandela's residence the group of young men danced with enormous flexibility and skills to entertain visitors and also earn some money. We seldom saw white people in that area.

Our Gate 1 Travel guide for the entire trip was Colleen, a South African lady with British background who often let the local guides provide more specific details about historical places. She brought us to a small restaurant Chez



Alina for a lunch. We had a simple but delicious food with no shortage of a musical entertainment that was delightful.

The most impressive sight was for me the Apartheid Museum. It was architecturally interesting, surrounded by a high wall made out of rocks brought from the gold mines. This enclosure gave the museum a strange emotional dimension of the camp. There were also containers with colorful sticks of the South African flag that had been used to select significant Mandela's statements. The museum

had a very comprehensive and objective display of the South

African history. I would need several hours or return another day to absorb all the facts on the display. Unfortunately, I had to get a cup of coffee to get through it in a very short time. I liked the display, the authenticity of the pictures, and the objectivity of the statements. For the first time I saw white people,

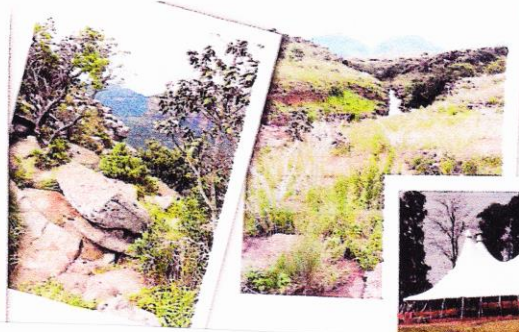
natives, speaking Afrikaans that had been fully engaged in this museum. If I ever go back to Johannesburg I would go back to this museum.

This evening we had a welcome dinner party in our hotel and opportunity to get acquainted with other fellow travelers. *Yarka Bloomberg*

Editor's note: The website for the Apartheid Museum <http://www.apartheidmuseum.org/> has quite a bit of information if you click on **permanent exhibition, other exhibitions, or resources**

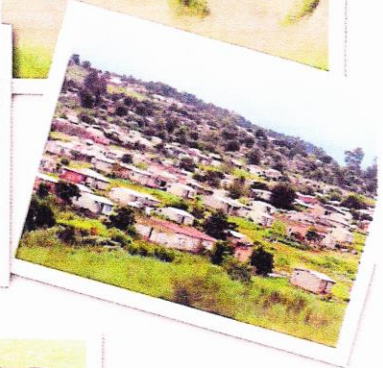


Monday, February 27, 2017



Leaving Johannesburg today headed toward White River.

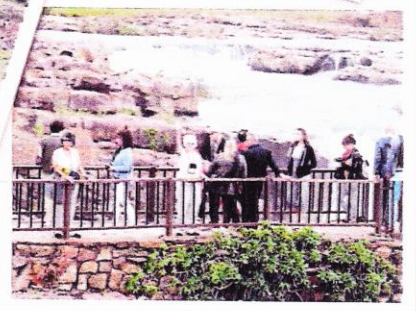
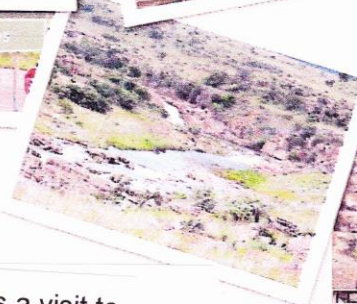
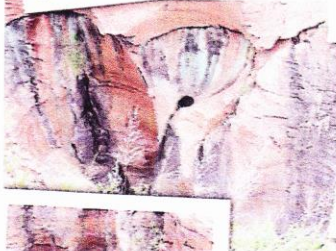
I enjoyed the ever-changing scenery. I was surprised how mountainous South Africa is. We saw scattered houses and other interesting buildings begging to be explored.



During one "relief" stop we got our first glimpse of African wildlife. These animals were in a private collection. The bird was not in the collection.



Hooded Bishop



The highlight of the day was a visit to Bourke's Luck Potholes, a series of waterfalls and distinctive rock formations. These were amazing and I could have visited them every day.
Sara Donaldson

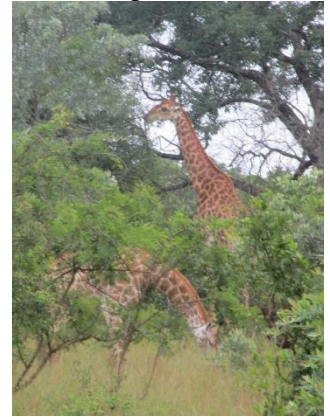
Tuesday, February 28, 2017 KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Who cared that our wake-up call was at 4:00 AM? We were going into Kruger National Park today! In 1926, Kruger became South Africa's first national park. It is 7523 square miles large. Oh, what an experience!!

After coffee in the lobby of our beautiful hotel in White River, the Pine Lake Inn, we grabbed our breakfast packs and off we went. It wasn't long before we arrived at Kruger where, after a final bathroom stop (one must never miss the opportunity), we all loaded into our 10-passenger, open-sided trucks. At first, it was quite chilly but as the day progressed, beautiful. This area of the country, which had been in draught, was now receiving some rain.



As dawn was breaking, we started seeing the wildlife in this beautiful bush country. I was surprised at how desensitized the animals were to vehicles and people. They grazed quite close to the roads and we were all snapping photos like mad. Our guide/driver was in contact with other vans so we moved from place to place for a 'spotting' as best we could.



After a full day, including a patio lunch stop, we all went back to our hotel. Our buffet dinner at Pike Lake Inn allowed us to relax and exchange stories of what we saw and felt. We needed to have an early night, however, because 3/1 was day 2 at Kruger and another 4:00 AM wake-up call.

Jackie Herriman, FF of NE Ohio



Wednesday, March 1, 2017 World Friendship Day

This day marked Day 6 of our Gate 1 Pre-Exchange Tour. This special day was also Day 2 of our Kruger Park Exploration and Game Drive. The day for Friendship started out early with a wakeup call at 4:15 AM. In the darkness we gathered downstairs in the hotel lobby with our Friendship Force tee shirts on underneath our safari/warmth clothes. We arrived at the Park's gates in the dark to board the open-air vehicles as the African Dawn was breaking.

Today we went in a southerly direction with the sun rising orange and bright and quickly. Upon entering the park there he was!!!! Sitting in the middle of the road, almost as being dispatched to greet us personally; was the "Lion King" himself. What a thrill for us to see him in the early dawn! As on cue, he stood up and nonchalantly looked around, and then sauntered off the road, into the bushes.

After that thrill, the rest of the drive seemed uneventful, until we got to the wetlands. Little brown blobs in the river, floating and slowly moving turned out to be hippos!!! My binoculars really helped zero in on them.

Circling back to the Skukuza Rest Camp for our boxed lunch time, I sat out along the river and enjoyed the scenery with the bridge in the distance. Little did we know that a few days later, the rains from the tropical system would inundate the park, washing out roads and damaging the bridges. We were so lucky.





After lunch, another drive commenced. Again, sightings of zebras and elephants and giraffes were had. N.J. Friendship Force with Big Five. By midafternoon we were on our way back to the hotel for swimming and relaxation and dinner. (And for me a chance to rest, and try to let go of my cough and cold.) I almost did not go that early, early morning, feeling so bad, but was glad I did. World Friendship Day with the African animals!!!
Mary Karen Horvath

Thursday, March 2, 2017 SWAZILAND

Today we start out for Swaziland, an independent kingdom within the borders of Africa, The lovely scenery on the drive was



so interesting seeing all the agriculture crops. I saw sugar cane, pineapple, tree farms, citrus fruit trees and corn. At the Swaziland border we



disembarked from the bus, presented our passports for stamps then walked across border to continue our journey. The weather was hot at the border and of course we were blessed with beautiful sunshine all the way. We visited a glass factory where glass blowers used all recycled glass collected by children to make African animals. We also visited a Swazi candle factory.



At this place along the way was the opportunity for shopping. I bought an extra bag for all the goodies I planned on buying. After lunch we continued on our way to the hotel where we were served a scrumptious dinner. After the long ride I was ready for a good night's rest. *Ann Lungo*



Friday, March 3, 2017

Before we left our hotel for our drive to Hluhluwe, a small town in northern KwaZulu-Natal, Gwen and I had a fellow traveler take our photo with the hotel's most impressive wooden man, complete with his weapon.



We viewed many interesting sights as we traveled; one of these was a national hotel/convention center currently under construction. Noted both here and elsewhere, workers tended to wear uniforms; the porters wore bright red Swaziland costumes.

Eucalyptus trees were plentiful; their wood is very hard and thus the choice for telephone poles; they are not good for fuel because they burn very hot and often explode. Vendors can sell their wares almost everywhere; this is allowed because of the high rate of official unemployment. Goats and cattle often roam freely, although their owners know their own cattle; cattle

cannot be branded but they can be tagged; cattle rustling is not taken lightly - "cattle equal wealth." Cattle are generally not used for food except for celebrations.

In Swaziland, as well as in South Africa, highways are quite modern and the countryside is lovely. We saw many miles of sugarcane as we neared the border of South Africa and land-locked Swaziland. Plants dry out and are burned at the bottom of the stalks; snakes and rats lurk among the stalks. Flat land and red soil dominate where sugarcane is cultivated. No irrigation was noted here. We saw great tracts of very tall trees with very straight trunks; these are owned by timber companies.

We saw many "round houses" with grass roofs; the roofs are not waterproof. Some of us later had the opportunity to stay in authentic round houses with thatched roofs. Subsistence farming is common and the crops include beets, cabbage, spinach, and corn; most of the corn did not mature due to the lack of rain.



We continued our ride following lunch. In late afternoon we visited a local crafts shop prior to our cruise on the tidal St. Lucia Estuary, home to crocodiles, hippos, sea turtles, and other wild animals. The crafts shop had a wonderful display of woven baskets, carved animals, and especially the tile map of the local area. The outside most unique "wild" statuary provided a great photo



opportunity. We boarded the catamaran for our two-hour cruise where we were able to see an amazing array of hippos enjoying their life in the water; some of them were playing by opening their mouths widely; others could barely be seen except for their eyes and ears. On both sides were mangrove trees and high grasses, features of wetlands. We returned to the hotel



for another nice dinner. Marie Peak



Saturday, March 4, 2017 HLUHLUWE-IMFOLOZI PARK

This morning travel to Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, the oldest game park in South Africa, established in 1895. As the home of Operation Rhino in the 1950s, the park became world renowned for its white rhino conservation. On this morning's game drive, you may have a chance to see Africa's 'Big Five' (lion, elephant, leopard, buffalo and rhinoceros). Afterwards, visit a Zulu village where you will have an opportunity to observe their dancing, local culture and experience a traditional lunch

Up out of bed at 4:45 AM. Washed up and dressed by 5:15 AM. Walked up for coffee and internet. Wheels up at 5:55 AM, 5 minutes ahead of time. Our driver's name is Thoba, a Zulu name meaning patience. Said he's very patient. We arrived at the park at 6:53 AM. This park started in 1885, is the oldest in South Africa and the second oldest in the world after Yellowstone USA. Park is 96,000 hectares, smaller than Kruger.

Lions were reported seen in another area. Road very bumpy. There was a lot of rain in park last night. Many puddles of water and muddy roads. Saw three white rhinos. Got many pictures. Watched them cross the road. Can live up to 40 years. Males can be 1.3 tons, females 1 ton.



Saw three female Lions walking down the road and into the bush then crossing the road in back of our vehicle. Chain of command - males eat first then

females, finally the cubs. The males without a pride have to hunt for themselves.

Saw Cape buffalo. In drought, they are first to die. Too many to count on both sides of vehicle and walking down the dirt road. Some of them very curious. Staring at us. Some became spooked by noisy people and run away. Cape buffalo observed rolling in the mud to kill the parasites on them and to protect their skin from the sun. Saw four giraffe, three female and a baby on the side of a hill. Give birth standing. Babies horns are crossed at birth. Heart are up to 12 grams. Came be killed easily by



lions while drinking water. They'd rather not drink than be killed. Giraffes a very graceful delicate gait. Driver said looks like women in high heels. Funny.

Saw helmeted guinea fowl sitting in the middle of the road. Blue headed ones are



adults, ones without blue heads are babies. Saw nyala crossing the road and in the bush, males, females and babies. Nyala are stripped and look like Kudu from a distance. Males have yellow feet and legs.

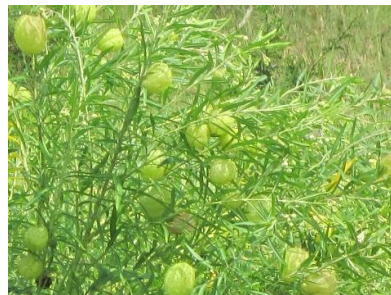


Looks like they have on knee socks. Males are larger with horns and look similar to goats. females don't have horns.

Arrived at picnic area at 8:48 AM for breakfast and rest stop on the uMhluhlume River. Waters flowing rapidly. Driver amazed to see the water. There has been a drought for four years. Only fruit. Peanuts. Candy bar, juice, chips. After breakfast, back in the vehicle at 9:20 AM for more game driving.



Stopped to observe more white rhinos on a hill. Black rhinos are hard to find as they are solitary. If see two together, they are either breeding or mother and child. They are born with a "sore" on their right OR left shoulder. It's very painful especially in winter when the trees lose their leaves. Apparently, there are juices in some of the trees leaves which slows the pain. The pain makes them more aggressive than the white rhinos. Saw milk weed with yellow balls on them. The juice from ball is poisonous and irritating to the skin. Saw Burchell's zebra which are black, white and brown. There are zebra which are just black and white called Cape Zebra.



Returned to bus area at 10:17 AM and then on our way to a Zulu Village for entertainment then lunch. We arrived at Zulu Village. Got a lesson in the Zulu language from an elder. Then Isaac, our guide, called us by males, married women and finally unmarried women. We walked down a long winding path. We had to ask to come into the village in Zulu. We were answered in Zulu and a man came and remove



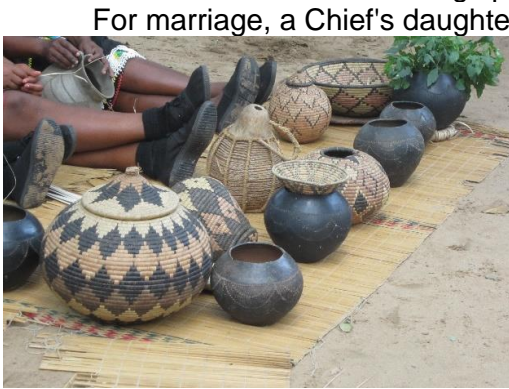
crossed poles to let us in. Next, we



crossed poles to let us in. Next, we



were shown men who were making spears.



For marriage, a Chief's daughter is worth 48 cows. A man can have as many wives as he can afford. Next, we were shown how to make shields there were fighting shields(hard), wedding shield, dancing shield((soft). Next, we saw three women who make clay pots for water. One woman was putting a design on clay pot. The design was rough to prevent pot from slipping out of a wet hand. Before clay, pots were made from the reed of the palm tree. To make woven basket water tight, it's put in water overnight.

There were four unmarried women, three wore maroon colored cloth, other was in black with a band around her head, she was engaged. Was told that unmarried women wear colored beaded skirts and exposed breasts. As she walks, she shakes her beaded skirt to attract a husband.



Two married ladies were wearing beautiful red hats. Once a woman is married she can no longer carry baskets on her head, first because the shape of the hat doesn't allow it and because she's married. The unmarried woman put a woven ring on their heads then sit the basket on the ring.

In old days couldn't divorce. If wife does something wrong 3x, she's sent back to her parents to be taught how to be married. If she still does wrong husband can send her back to parents, keep the children and he gets cattle back. If husband is wrong he loses wife, cattle and children.



Went next to see woman who throws bones and a medicine man. They are greeted differently than the spear makers, the shield maker, the basket makers and the bead maker.

We next sat on benches and there was a ceremony of the sharing of the beer called Umqombothi, made from maize. A young warrior went to each person and offered them a sip of beer. Coach actually drank it.



After the beer ceremony, the singing and dancing began. The warriors came in with their war shields singing. They kicked their feet way up over their heads. *Robbie*



Sunday, March 5, 2017

TRAVEL DAY FROM PROTEA HOTEL TO DURBIN AIRPORT TO PORT ELIZABETH, FLIGHT SA1340

Awake at 4:45 AM. Wake call at 6:30 AM. Up to breakfast and to use internet. Wheels up at 8 AM for our drive to Durbin's King Shaka Airport. Flight SA1340 at 1:35 PM.

At 9:04 AM we got our first view of the Indian Ocean. There are lots of killer sharks as the water is very warm. The warmer the water, the deadlier the shark.

There is a sardine run. People go down to the shore with buckets and just scoop up the sardines. Fishing is a big industry in South Africa. There are very good fish to eat.

At 9:40 AM stopped for a toilet/coffee/snack break. Arrived at airport 40 miles north of Durban at 10:30 AM. We said goodbye to our driver. On arrival, we went in many different ways, some to get Rands, others to eat or both.

Port Elizabeth was settled 1820 by Sir Rufane Donkin. He named it in honor of his late wife Elizabeth who died in India two years before. We are now in the Eastern Cape. Very industrial city. Many manufacturers all associated with car making. Known as the Friendly City or the Windy City.

Our new driver is Miles. Has worked with Colleen for 25 years. Passed a mosque which was built in 1894. Biggest export are cars.

South Africa had freedom of religion though not of speech. Saw police building where Steven Biko was beaten and then transported to Pretoria. When arrived in Pretoria he was dead. Building will become a museum. Saw Fort Fredrick high on a hill.

Drove pass St. Augustine Catholic Church where Colleen was married in 1976. Passed opera house built in 1920. Very hilly.

Open park area is known as Donkin Park. The pyramid was built in honor of his



wife. Area is used for Guy Fawkes Day on November 6. Saw many houses which national registry house from the 1800s. Houses painted all sorts of bright colors. Houses are in an area called "The Hill". Lots of Nigerians. Statue of horse and soldier. Only memorial to the horses who suffered in the second Boer War 1898-1902.



The Xhosa is a tribe from this area and is the tribe which Nelson Mandela was from. Palm trees are not native to South Africa. The town has two main streets. The Campanile building has 204 steps to the observation room. Area we drove through was once for the colored people. In the 1960s they were moved out and declared for whites only. Port Elizabeth is the largest after Pretoria. Start of Port Elizabeth beach front, very expensive. Area known as Humewood. Poorest state in South Africa. Lots of poor people,



many were laid off from motor industry. Liquor store called "bottle shop".

Arrived at the Garden Court at 4:37 PM. None of the room keys worked. We all ended up back in lobby to get keys properly activated. One of two keys still didn't work. Rested. Finally watched tv for first time since being on the African continent.





At 6 PM we went to lobby to meet Gwen, Mary, Marie for dinner at the Ocean Basket, about one block away on same side of street as hotel. On the way to the Ocean Basket, Gwen and Robbie went onto the beach to put their feet onto the Indian Ocean. Gwen's feet got wet be accident, Robbie's were on purpose. Robbie went up the wrong steps to a different restaurant. Lol. Coach went looking for her.

Robbie Thornton-Peek



Monday, March 6, 2017 GARDEN ROUTE TO KNYSNA VIA TSITSIKAMMA NATIONAL PARK

Today, journey along South Africa's picturesque Garden Route via Tsitsikamma National Park in the Western Cape Province to Knysna, a natural paradise of lush, indigenous forests, tranquil lakes and golden beaches. Nestled on the banks of a breathtakingly pretty lagoon, Knysna is a protected marine reserve, home to the extraordinary seahorse and over 200 species of fish. The area around Knysna is a veritable Garden of Eden and paradise for nature lovers. This is home to the brilliantly colored and elusive Knysna Loerie, a plethora of forest birds, dolphins and visiting whales

Up at 5:30 AM, took photos of sunrise over the Indian Ocean, posted to Facebook. Wake call at 6:30 AM. Down to a lovely breakfast. On bus by 7:50 AM.

Miles, the driver, is person of color and the first to ever be employed by a touring company. Father of Indian heritage and mother of French heritage; therefore, he's colored. He very proud to be colored.

Eastern Cape is the poorest province because it has no minerals, so they produce cars and related materials. Saw a soccer stadium built for 2010 World Cup. Dolos are concrete blocks in a T shape to prevent the waves from coming onto the road. Areas have large salt beds called salt pans. Knysna mean "the place where the forest meets the ocean". This where Colleen lives on a farm in the country and need a 4x4 to get to.

Drove over Van Stadens Bridge where many people jumped off of after the sanctions from the west in 70s and 80s. Saw Jeffrey's Bay, started as fishing village. Colleen lived here as child. Has maybe 20 houses. Great surfing. Wanted to build a nuclear plant. Was overruled and wind farms were built instead.



Saw Long Gorge mountain area where apples were first grown and transported by railway. Rail transportation not big in here. Only a few tourist trains. Things (food, etc.) are transported by roadway. It's much cheaper and safer to fly. Much road repair causing several stops.

Colleen told us that Kruger Park is flooded, even the paved roads have been washed away. We were very fortunate to be a to see it before the heavy rains came.



We are driving through the garden area. Colleen pointed out many different plants and flowers none of which will be recorded here. Ok, there was heather, which was dying as summer here is coming to an end. Heather grows up to 12 feet in this area. Passed thru tree lined roadway where the indigenous trees started. The national tree is the yellowwood, one of the hardwoods. Blackwood and ironwood are very expensive.

Storms River's Bridge was built in 1969. Designed by an Italian who never even came to RSA. There were 6 bridges built to allow trucks to cross the mountains. We were advised NOT to cross over the roadway as the cars are traveling over 65 mph. There a walkway under the roadway.



At 10 AM we had a rest stop at Storms River Bridge to take pictures of the river gorge from both sides of bridge. Coach was very, very brave. She walked a third of the way across Storms' Bridge. So very brave. Back on bus.

Going to a marine park, oldest since 1969. Arrived at 11 AM and had 90 minutes to walk the path. Coach went with Gwen and Marie. She reported that to climb all the stairs one needs to spend at least



two months getting into shape. Gwen reported that coach walked across the suspension bridge. There were cabins to rent inexpensively, per Colleen. There also campers in caravans.

Drove very slowly across the highest bungee jumping bridge in the world at 700 feet called the Bloukrans bridge at 12:59 PM. As we crossed the bridge, we left the Eastern Cape into the Western Cape.

We arrived at Plettenberg Bay which is where the very rich have holiday houses. These houses are empty 9 months of the year. They fly into an airport in George. There is a high Jewish population. We stopped for a photo opportunity, view of beautiful large houses and the Indian Ocean with its beaches. There are lots of golf courses in the area. 1:30 PM off the bus on Plettenberg Bay. Went with coach and Gwen to a pharmacy. Walked through the alley to check out the



food. Settled on a restaurant called "The Table". Had penne with prawns and squid with red sauce. Dined with Gwen, Mary and Marie. Coach went back to the Alley.

Stopped for photos on a hill overlooking what was once a guard house of some kind and was turned into a hotel. The surgeon who did the first open heart surgery had a summer home near the hotel. We finally arrived at the Premier Hotel in Pinetown.

No wake call for tomorrow. Breakfast starts at 6:30 AM. *Robbie Thornton-Peek*

Tuesday, March 7, 2017 - FEATHERBED NATURE RESERVE

In Knysna, a visit to the remarkable Featherbed Nature Reserve, accessible only by ferry. At the entrance, view the legendary Knysna "Heads," two enormous sandstone cliffs that stand like sentries at the entrance to the Knysna Lagoon from the sea. This South African Natural Heritage site is home to the Blue Duiker, one of the smallest and most endangered of the antelope species; learn more about the breeding program that has been instituted to save the species. On this eco-adventure,



you'll travel by 4x4 wheel vehicle through the forest stopping at spectacular viewpoints with a guided walking tour through the milkwood forests onto the sheer sandstone cliffs.

Enjoy a buffet lunch before returning to Knysna for leisure time.



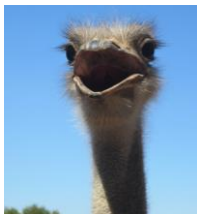
Wednesday, March 8, 2017

Today we experienced a very scenic drive through the Outeniqua Mountains north of the coastal town George. It was a truly scenic drive with several view spots we enjoyed. One view spot



we reached by crossing the road under the bridge because the traffic was heavy and dangerous. The depth of the narrow gorge from underneath was overwhelming. Then we arrived to Oudtshoorn, the capital of the ostrich farms. The temperature was very high, but the air was dry. It seems to be an ideal weather for ostriches.

They could adapt to any temperatures, be two weeks without water and run 70-80 km per hour. There were around 300 ostrich farms long time ago and some farmers added to their farms angora goats. Male ostriches supplied the fashion industry with their feathers, but the export has been steadily decreasing. The female ones were gray and without any feather beauty. We could taste the ostrich meat for



the lunch, look at the ostrich feathers in the farm's museum, see the incubator with huge eggs and purchase goods from the ostrich leather. We could even feed the ostriches. Nobody was attacked and everybody took Colleen's advice seriously: do not run away and if the ostrich gets you, let the bird as heavy as the



bird is sit on you until he gets bored and goes away. Fortunately, nobody was subjected to this experience.

Next destination was the Cango Caves. These caverns were huge, the limestone had dramatic formations and names of the formations were imaginative. We



have been warned about humidity and heat, but everything was manageable including the walking paths protected by railings and lights. We had an English speaking guide who was witty and knowledgeable as well. You could explore additional caverns where you would have to be more adventurous and crawl or slide on some of your body parts. We thought what we saw was spectacular enough. Some of us after Cango Caves



decided to go to Cango Wildlife Ranch. There we had the possibility to get to the lions and cheetahs as close as possible and see other unusual species. The management of the ranch truly cared about the wild animals.



While driving toward town George we saw fields of hops, lovely towns, the old houses with the thatched roofs, round and ornate architecture and all were painted white.



Every bathroom stop was also an opportunity to explore the local market with local craft, food and goods. The place like Dolphin Point is also where the natives Afrikaans or some wealthy foreigners buy properties for having a retreat or spend vacations. Making the place more interesting and having wealthy clientele, many artists established their studios there.

We stayed this evening in Protea Hotel Riempe Estate Outdtshoorn. It was a lovely hotel with individual rooms under thatched roofs. The dinner was a real barbecue with entertainment of the local high school kids. They were singing in their native language and performed beautiful dances native to this region.



Yarka Bloomberg

Thursday, March 9, 2017

Another day of traveling the "Garden Route" on our way to Cape Town.

Lunch in Swellendam was in a private home converted to a restaurant.

A young lady, who was one of the servers entertained us by singing their national anthem.

I saw many similarities with farm land in other countries. A travel trailer, a cricket practice and an apple orchard were among a few of the pictures I captured from the bus window,



As we approached Cape Town, we saw the "shacks" built by the myriad immigrants fleeing areas of conflict in northern parts of Africa. We also saw new government housing built as they try to keep up with the flow.



Dinner was on our own. We went to V&A Waterfront. I had a delicious sole. After a brief walk-around it was "home" to bed. *Sara Donaldson*



Friday, March 10, 2017 CAPE TOWN

The discovery of Cape Town begins with a drive past the Castle of Good Hope built by the Dutch East India Company, the splendid baroque City Hall, and the Grand Parade. View St. George's Cathedral, the Anglican Diocese of Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Pass the Company Gardens and the Malay Quarter where thousands of slaves were brought in the early 18th century from Java, Ceylon and other Far Eastern regions. The route then leads to Kloof Nek and the magnificent Table Mountain. Ascend to the top (weather permitting) by means of a cable car. At the summit, see wildflowers and the famous silver tree, and marvel at a birds-eye view of the city and its beaches. Explore Cape Town this afternoon on your own, perhaps visit the seaside Victoria & Alfred Waterfront complex with its endless shopping, cafes, and restaurants. Later, you're invited to a home hosted dinner. You'll be welcomed by a local family in their home to share a delicious dinner coupled with world-famous South African wines and delightful conversation.

Today, we're in Cape Town and our first stop on this busy day is to Table Mountain. Fortunately, the air was calm, as windy conditions would have prevented us from visiting. The cable car ride to the top was beautiful, as was the view from the top.



View of Cape Town from top of Table Mountain. To left is Signal Hill. Out in the Atlantic is Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was held for 18 of his 27 years in prison.

Once back down in Cape Town, we went to several beautiful neighborhoods. While strolling, we saw St. George's Cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, the National Library of South Africa and Company's Garden. We went to a Muslim neighborhood and saw the most colorful houses! When we got back into the coach, Colleen Brewster, Gate1 Tour Manager and driver Miles Away, had brought us a delicious local treat – samosas.

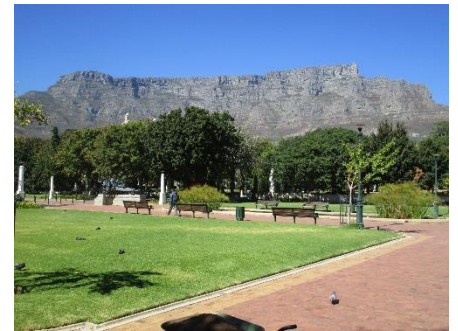


Table Mountain as seen from Company's Garden

Our evening was to me, one of the highlights of the trip. The 38 of us were divided into two groups and taken to private homes for home dinner hosting. Our group was very warmly welcomed by Virginia, her husband, son and



girlfriend, mother-in-law, niece and neighbors. They told us to ask them ANYTHING about themselves, their country, government, history and hopes for the future. We did, with a little about things in the U.S. thrown in. What a delightful evening with wonderful people!
Jackie Herriman

A 'colored' family of 3 generations (Virginia with niece Emma) and neighbors welcomed us for a home-hosted meal.

Saturday, March 11, 2017

Left hotel 8:00 AM this morning for a full day drive along the Cape Peninsula Atlantic Ocean.



The road is very narrow and high up on the cliff. Beautiful views of bays, seaweed, expensive homes, and sandy beaches. At Camps Bay we stopped for photos of the beach and the Twelve Apostles mountain range. At Hout Bay (wood bay) we visited a fishing village and the water was very calm. Over Chapman's Peak Drive looking down on blue water and black water the view was majestic. The



road winds around the side of the mountain with walls reinforced for falling rocks. We didn't see any great white sharks but I saw people horseback riding on Long Beach.

Driving inland we went through a nature preserve World Heritage site and saw big family of baboons in road and antelopes. We arrived at Cape of Good Hope Nature preserve at Cape Point, the Southern Most Point of Africa. We all bailed out of bus to have our pictures taken standing behind the sign. Lots of fun in the blowing wind on a beautiful day in Africa. The lighthouse was stationed high on the hill built to warn ships sailing near the Cape of Storms. I saw the rock where a ship hit and sank many years ago. In 1497 the first explorer set foot on this land.



We had a great lunch of yellowtail fish, salad, potatoes, rolls and ice cream.

At Boulder Beach we walked over a mile to see the African penguins on a sunny breezy day.



Continuing our day's journey we ended the day at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens the first garden to be included within a natural World Heritage Site. After a very long day of

sightseeing we were transported back to our hotel in Cape Town for relaxing and dinner before bed.

Ann Lungo



Sunday, March 12, 2017

No early rise today. Down to breakfast at 8:30 AM. Was informed that due to severe winds the Cape Town Cycling Tour was canceled. Felt really sad for all the cyclists who'd traveled long distances at great expense to have race cancelled; however, it would have been unsafe to ride through the mountains on roads close to the cliff. They would have been blown completely away to their deaths.

Down to lobby area with Coach to get online and Coach to upload photos to laptop. Had a delicious buffet lunch served at the bar in the lobby.

At 6 PM went hotel restaurant for farewell dinner with the Gate 1 guide. It was nice. We took a group picture of the FFI people on the tour. To room by 9 PM, packed and to bed. The end of a wonderful 18 Day Kaleidoscope of South Africa which really was only 16 days because the 1st and last day were for traveling. Would love travel with Gate 1 again.

Things I learned; since we're in the Southern Hemisphere, it is summer here and is called the rainy season though there hasn't been much rain. *Robbie Thornton-Peek*

Since this is a free day, there is little to report. As usual, it began with an English breakfast bountiful. The bike race was cancelled so Mary K and I took a taxi to the South African Museum. It was very well done with ancient to more modern history of rocks, animals extinct and very much alive, etc. There was a section on the history and contributions of Madiba, more commonly known as Nelson Mandela. Then we went to a café for a break before returning to the hotel.



Our farewell dinner, held at the hotel, featured food choices and much wine / beer. The next day the Friendship Force members departed the hotel to meet the Friendship of Cape of Good Hope club. The other members of the tour went various directions. *Marie Peak*



CAPE OF GOOD HOPE EXCHANGE

Monday, March 13, 2017

We spent 2 hours at the Airport picking up the rest of the ambassadors. After everyone was accounted for we boarded the bus and headed to Norman & Liz Van der Vent for a great Welcome lunch. After lunch we had lots of time to chit-chat and meet everyone.



Because we had arrived earlier the day before we did not have jet lag, or need to settle in with our hosts, Frank and Anita Jason. They took us on a tour of the area. We stopped in the Strand on False Bay part of the Indian Ocean. We took our shoes off and waded in the water. The water was very cold but refreshing.

Before we left the area, we stopped for fish & chips Take-away and returned to their home around 7.00 PM. It's always exciting to meet new people. *Fran Stephenson*

Tuesday, March 14, 2017 SUNRISE SPECIAL CARE CENTRE- STELLENBOSCH - FAIRVIEW ESTATE

Around 9.00 AM we left Norman and Liz's home by bus under the guidance of our guide Jeremy Howard who along the way pointed out several interesting things. We traveled through Cape Flats which is the area of first settlement between the two mountain ranges.

We arrived at our first destination Sunrise Special Care Centre (note: English & Canadian way of spelling CENTRE) This is a daycare centre which cares for children with severe and profound intellectual handicaps. It can handle up to 30 children but at this time had 25. The children are stimulated in many ways and with loving care. They have a beautiful garden which was required as traffic in the area made walking the children dangerous. At the end of the tour we planted a tree in their garden and made a donation. It was an inspiring visit.



Back on the bus we headed to the town of Stellenbosch where Jeremy led a walking tour for the ambitious ones. We had several hours there to shop and eat – we decided to eat at the Armory, a pub near where the bus was parked.



At 2.00 PM we headed off to Fairview Vineyards where many of us sampled Wine and Cheese. Our hostess, Shereen guided us through the meeting of cheese and wine. Wine, Cheese, Wine was the order of sampling. I think everyone enjoyed the experience, I certainly did.

We returned back to Norman & Liz's, through the country and suburbs, to rejoin our individual hosts and prepare for Wednesday's outing. *Neil Stephenson*



Wednesday, March 15, 2017 TEA FACTORY, SEAL ISLAND & NEWLANDS BREWERY

Met bus at 8:30 AM. We drove through areas which the normal tourists do not usually get to see. Plumstead was an area we drove through. We went west. There are nine provinces. Western Cape is the southwestern most province. Constantia was a white only area. There were forced removals of colored people from this area; however, there is a large Muslim cemetery here. Some people are moving back to area. The area is called the leafy suburb and there are many such areas in South Africa.

We arrived at the Tea Bag Factory at 9:20 AM. It was totally breathtaking the things which the women and one man, Russell, make from old tea bags. We purchased a set of 6 coasters in a box, a 6x12 painting of a woman made from special paper which had actual tea in the paper, and 3 cards about a woman is like a tea bag, etc. for a cost of R895 (about \$69).



We arrived in Hout Bay at 10:45 AM to sail on the Calypso boat out to Seal Island. There were seals in the bay near the dock swimming, washing their faces, just playing around. As we left the dock observed many seals lying on a long rubber thing sunning themselves. Within moments it became much cooler. Rose was glad I hadn't allowed her to give back the coat lent to her.



As we got out into the waters, the boat began to rock from side to side, suddenly understood why Jack didn't come with us. It was very rocky. Just as it got the rockiest we arrived at Seal Island.

The male seals are larger than the female seals. The seals lay on their backs and put their flippers into the air. The sun on the flippers warms the blood which circulates throughout the seals body. Took several photos of the seals, of someone snorkeling with the seals and of Coach and me.



Returned to shore at 12 noon. We were directed to walk between the buildings to get where the food was. Arrived at Mariner's Wharf where we were given a box with fish and chips and a juice drink to have on the bus on our way to Newlands Brewery.

At 1 PM we lined up to sign in and were given two beer bottle caps to receive our drinks later. Newlands Dating back to 1820, Newlands is the oldest operating brewery in Africa. On the tour, you get a little bit of beer history, lots of info on modern-day brewing methods, and basically, you'll follow the story of beer from its base ingredients to that golden liquid many people enjoy at the end of a long, hard day. At 2:45



PM, when we were getting on the bus I learned the tour was cut short because Anheuser-Busch had purchased this beer brewery and the big shots were here.



We were told by the guide that there had been 42 sites of removals. There area where I took a photo of Honda sign was one of those areas. We returned to Lotus Park by 3:15. Stopped at a store for EET-SUM-MOR biscuits. Then home. We went to rest for

a few hours. *Robbie Thornton-Peek*

Thursday, March 16, 2017

Since this was my first time serving as an Ambassador of Friendship Force, I did not know what to expect. After traveling for 37 hours from New Jersey to Cape Town, on airplanes and spending time in airports, I immediately forgot about how tired I was, when I was welcomed at the Cape Town Airport with open arms. I could feel the warmth, the love and friendship the Cape Town Ambassadors were offering me.

Every day was an adventure. Thursday March 16th was an especially memorable day. It

started with a visit to the inner city of Cape Town, where we were greeted by the Executive Deputy Mayor Ian Douglas Nelson at the Municipal Building. The Deputy Mayor was filling in for the Mayor, Ms. Patricia De Lille, because she was detained in Chicago due to a major snow storm. The Deputy Mayor talked to us about the history of Cape Town, as well as about current issues. It was very interesting and informative, and he was also available to answer some of our questions.

From there we proceeded to the Parliament Building, where we had lunch in the cafeteria. This is the Western Cape Provincial



Parliament, one of 9 Provincial Parliaments. The Legislature of the Parliament for the National



Council of South Africa is in Pretoria, the Capital. The Legislature was not in session on that day, but we were able to sit in the chamber where they meet when they are in session.



It reminded me of going to Washington DC to see Congress or the Senate in session, only to find out that after

spending much time going through security, the Senate had just concluded and the Senators went home. So all we saw was the empty chamber. I found both the Municipal Building and the Parliament very modern and impressive.

Next on the agenda was a visit to the District 6 Museum. Of course, we all know about the injustices dealt to people, both in the past, and some still to this day, in Africa and other parts of the world. But when confronted with it by sight and sound, it just makes me hang my head in



shame, and to question the audacity of the ones responsible for it. I find it hard to comprehend how some people can be so blind and have the superior attitude, that the color of one's skin, their religious beliefs, their customs and traditions, make people less worthy of respect and basic human rights.



After that we finished the day with a more pleasant event. We visited Table Mountain. I learned a few things about this iconic sight.

I learned that it is not just a mountain by itself, but one of a mountain chain. And that it is older than the Alps, the Andes, the Rocky Mountains, and the Himalayas.

Just like any visitor to Cape Town should do, I went up in the cable car to see the stunning and spectacular views of the city and the surrounding areas from the top.



Last but not least, I want to say that my hosts, Norman and Elizabeth van der Vent, were the most gracious, wonderful people anyone could want for a host and hostess. They are beautiful people, with a heart as big as all of Africa. I love them dearly, and I shall never forget them.

Hildy Masterson

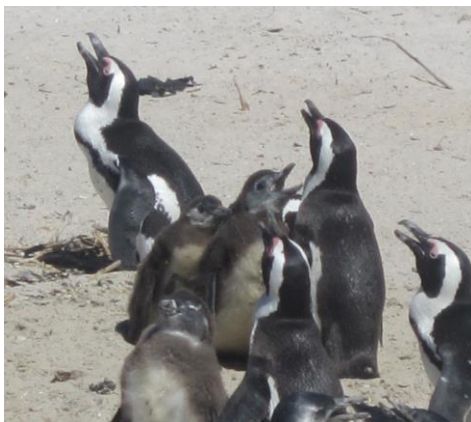


Friday, March 17, 2017

Cape of Good Hope; Cape Point; Penguins.



What a fun morning we had going to our exchange club's namesake - the Cape of Good Hope! I believe each of us got a photo of the longitude and latitude sign. My photo was with my host Norman Van der Vent! The Cape of Good Hope is the mountain on the left in the photo. Our next stop was at Cape Point where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet. Several of our group walked up to the lighthouse. When we were back on the bus, Robbie took the microphone and told us of a



baboon encounter she witnessed up at the lighthouse. A woman had snacks, which she didn't consider to be "food", in her purse. Of course, a baboon considered the snacks food and tried to take her purse! A tug of war ensued until someone told her to let go - the baboon only wanted the snacks and the war ended with a win-win. The woman got her purse back and the baboon got his snack. I think we all learned from hearing Robbie's experience! *Rose Bennett*



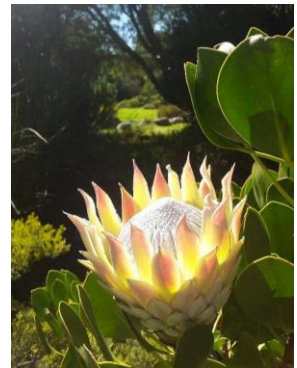
Saturday, March 18, 2017

It was scheduled for today a free day to spend with our hosts. Some of us invited our host to have a lunch together. I intended to do this, but a surprise was reserved for me: My free day finished after the breakfast.

It happened that the South African couple, who hosted Fran and Neil, invited me to go with them to visit the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. My host recommended



me to accept it and we went. I appreciated getting to know Fran and Neil better in this opportunity. I liked very much to see native and rare plants during all the time we spent there. It was nice to be in the nature, feel the smell of plants and flowers, look at the sky, feel the sun on my face and the incredible beauty of that place. It was one of the best places that I visited in



Cape Town.

At night we had a farewell party. Hosts and guests had a nice dinner. Traditional compliments between the clubs occurred. Good music took hosts and guests to dance. Wanda and Tina gave a show in the dancing floor. Rose, Mary, Gwen, Joanne danced too all time. Later Gloria went to dance. They were very funny and happy. Robbie took pictures during all time. She didn't lose any opportunity to register those special moments. This farewell party showed it's possible people from different countries, cultures, sex, color, education, social position can stay together, in friendship, in peace and happiness. It would be wonderful if the same happened between peoples of all countries. Thank you my friends, Americans, Canadian and South African. Thank you for this opportunity to be with you in South Africa. *Norma Alice Rodrigues*



Sunday, March 19, 2017 ROBBERN ISLAND

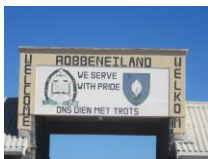
This is the last day of our trip to South Africa and our long-awaited trip to Robben Island. We got up early and ate breakfast as usual. We took our last trip to the bus then our long ride back in time to Robben Island.

The island is in Table Bay off the coast of Bloubergstrand, Cape Town, South Africa. Nelson Mandela was imprisoned there for 18 of the 27 years he served behind bars before the Apartheid.

We took a ferry from the Nelson Mandela Gateway at the V & A Waterfront. The tour takes 3.5 hours including the ferry trip to and from the Island. We disembarked at Murray's Bay Harbour situated on the east coast of the Island and took a short walk to buses that transported us to all the historical sites around the Island. The Tour guides inside the prison are former political prisoners.



Between the 17th century and the 20th century, Robben Island was used as a prison, a hospital for socially unacceptable groups, and a military base. Its buildings, and in particular those of the late 20th century, were used as a maximum security prison for the isolation of political prisoners. The maximum security prison for political prisoners closed in 1991. The medium security prison for criminal prisoners was closed five years later in 1996. The Island is accessible to visitors through tours guided by former political prisoners. The tour includes the island graveyard, the disused lime quarry, Robert





Sobukwe's house, the Bluestone quarry, the army & navy bunkers, and the maximum-security prison including Nelson Mandela's cell.

Presently, the workers and their families live and the children go to school on the island. The facilities seem to be very nice and the families that live there are proud of the educational advantages on the island. *Gwen Deas*



Monday, March 20, 2017

This morning started like most morning over the last month. I showered, finished packing, ate breakfast and met the bus to take us to the Cape Town Airport. This was our last trip in South Africa. It is hard to believe that one (1) month ago, we started on the journey and now, it was over. While we sat in the airport four hours waiting for our flight, we reminisced over the last month. We ate lunch and before we knew it, it was time to get the airplane to Johannesburg, then onto JFK.

The journey to Cape of Good Hope included seven (7) members from the FF of Southern New Jersey, two (2) members of FF of the National Capital Area, two (2) members from FF of Northeast Ohio, two members (2) from FF of the Eastern Washington / Northern Idaho, two (2) members of FF of Greater Hamilton-Burlington in Canada, one (1) member from Florida, and one (1) member from Brazil.

Three (3) started together and then they were joined by eight (8) more members as all eleven (11) of them joined a GATE 1 TRAVEL TOUR for a eighteen (18) day tour of South Africa. On March 13th, seven (7) more members joined the group. The ambassadors from seven (7) clubs and three (3) countries made for an international group and illustrated the diversity of the Friendship Force. This international club-to-club journey seemed more like a global exchange and looks like what the future club-to-club journeys will look and feel like in the future. *Gwendolyn T. Deas*

Post Exchange Experiences

Monday, March 20, 2017

Mary Horvath

Journal Entry for Additional Stay on March 20, 2017 In Stellenbosch, South Africa

After ending the exchange and saying good bye to all my Friendship Force members and our Cape of Good Hope Hosts, I was picked up at the airport info desk by a Jenman tours driver. I had my own van and driver for transportation to the wine country and the beautiful town of Stellenbosch. (I had visited briefly on a day of the exchange with a short walking tour and lunch. But I was most anxious to visit/return for 2 nights on my own).

About noontime, as my room was ready, I dropped off all of my stuff and headed out for a walking tour of this lovely, historic town. Stellenbosch is one of the oldest in South Africa, having been founded as an outpost for farming and vineyards by Simon van der Stel in 1679. It also became one

of the oldest university towns on the African continent, with the Dutch/Afrikaner College established 1880, Stellenbosch University.

After lunch of a chicken wrap and berry smoothie, sitting outside on an alleyway, under big old oak trees, I headed for a walk around town. One of my stops was the historical museum complex which consisted of 3 houses and gardens, with docents in period dress. Here I got to appreciate the Dutch/Veld White Wash architecture and the striking stinkwood furniture of South Africans' colonial times.

The afternoon got hot, almost 40* Celsius, so I then slowly walked the town and enjoyed the sights, buildings and stores. Then I heard music, and turned a corner to see 5 little girls dancing and drumming, and singing at sunset. It was wonderful to hear the vital music of the Bantu tribes and feel the history of this town.

That night I had dinner at The Hussar Grill, (great steak and wine and atmosphere), and did an evening stroll, after a rain squall had gone through.

(Yes, the area's FIRST rain in a long long time; after I had left my umbrella for my host, with a note hoping it would bring him rain for his garden!!).

I returned to The Stellenbosch Hotel (great booking by Jenman Tours), which was the historic house and carriage building built by the medical doctor Jan Cats and teacher Jan Swart, first in 1740, and rebuilt in 1803 after the city fire. I finally had a brass bed and Wi-Fi. For the next day ahead were plans for the Toy Museum and a half day wine tasting/history tour.



Tuesday, March 21, 2017

The 2nd day of my post Tour Exchange began after my night at the historic Stellenbosch Inn. I now had gotten my 1/2 day wine tour changed from the "Eazy Rider" one to the smaller group run by Afrivista Tours, (a van of 10 people, much better).

But before I set off on my "wine day", I headed off to the Stellenbosch Toy Museum. This small museum was located in the Rhenish Parsonage across from the town green.

After looking around for the Lissi Dolls (my maiden name), I found a treasure trove of dolls and playthings, including tribal, Cupie, and even a Shirley Temple doll. The curator, Lorenzo Marcus Hendrichs, told me his ties to the museum. (How as a child, his mother, the curator, would bring him for the day. He went on to study history and business, and now has inherited, as his passion, the overseeing of this museum.) He even went downstairs to the archives, to bring up and show me, a life size Shirley Temple Paper Doll set, complete with different dresses.



Then the Van pulled up for the "Vines". Upon opening the door, 9 other people said Hello (I was the Grandma, to a bunch of

20-30 year olds!). A fun afternoon ensued. (They had one winery under their belt already.) In addition, we visited the Thelema, and Camberley Winery. Here we tasted wine from a pitcher that he had just mixed 3 days before! We also had a wonderful lunch outside on the terrace at Le Pommier in the countryside. (I had true chicken pot pie.) The tour was great, with much emphasis on the historic bent of wine and the countryside. (The guide even wrote down a couple of books that I need to read for South African History!)



But it was hot again –

almost 90⁰, so as the day ended, I went out to dinner for a light meal of pizza and beer, in the very noisy Armory Restaurant. My night and stay was topped off by a last stop: in the Boutique Hotel – Coopmanhuijs Hotel. I had a cup of coffee and a Sambuca liquor in the sitting room, where I pulled a book off the shelf next to my table, “Nelson Mandela: Letters to Myself”. A wonderful way to end my stay. *Mary Karen Horvath*



Wednesday, March 20, 2017 – Sunday, March 26

My Journey to South Africa Part 2

After the end of our home stay in Cape Town, Rose Bennett and I continued our journey in Africa.

We flew to Johannesburg where we spent 2 days. This did not give us much time to sight see, but we did take 2 tours. One to Soweto, and one to the Apartheid Museum. Just like visiting District 6 in Cape Town, the sight of Soweto upset me. Living conditions there seem to be improving, but there is still a long way to go.

Leaving Johannesburg we flew further North to Livingstone, Zambia. We had made arrangements to be picked up at the airport and brought to the hotel. Now I understand why being picked up at LVI Airport was more expensive than being picked up at Victoria Falls Airport, even though the difference in distance is only about 3 km. Our hotel, A'Zambezi River Lodge, is in Zimbabwe. To get there from Livingston Airport, you have to cross the border into Zimbabwe. We were driven from the airport to the border, where we had to fill out some forms, and pay \$50.00 for a visa. From



there we had to walk across the border carrying our bags. On the other side we were picked up by a different vehicle with a different driver and continued to our hotel. I suppose that was the reason we had to pay more money for the transport. It was to pay for 2 vehicles and 2 drivers.

The first evening we took a River Cruise on the Zambezi River. Our hotel was actually on the banks of the river. The cruise was lovely. We spotted some rhinoceros, and some crocodiles in the water, and at least one or two elephants on the opposite shore of the river. The sunset was beautiful, and the snacks including wine and beer, made it a very pleasant evening.

The next morning we were picked up bright and early at 7:00 AM. We crossed another border into Botswana for an all-day Safari in Chobe National Park.



The Safari was in two parts: The morning portion on the water, the Chobe River, and then after a very nice lunch, a land portion in a jeep. We saw many animals, not just a few here and there, but groups of more than a dozen. Elephants, giraffes, zebras, impalas, water buffalo, warthogs, baboons and more. A fantastic experience. I wish I could do it again.



On our last day in Zimbabwe ended with a dinner and drum show at a local restaurant called "Boma". It was a buffet offering many exotic dishes like ostrich, crocodile, impala stew, warthog steak plus more. They even offered mopani worms. If you ate a worm, they gave you a certificate. I said no, thank you.

The show consisted of singing, dancing and playing the drums. They passed out some drums for the audience participation. It was a lot of fun.

All in all, my trip to Africa was one of the best. Even some of the long layovers in Frankfurt and in London, did not diminish my good feelings. I just considered it a minor inconvenience.

Hildy Masterson

Thursday, March 23, 2017 – March 26, 2017

Hildy and I took a guided tour to Victoria Falls (water that thunders). The two massive falls are separated by Cataract Island. It was very humid and then it rained. Still the falls are magnificent!



The next day I went to ride and interact with elephants.



The preserve had taken in thirteen orphaned elephants, raised them, released them, but five kept coming "home"! The preserve could not keep feeding them, so they decided to have the elephants earn their keep by training them to give rides. The ride was very awkward, but interacting and feeding them afterwards was a great experience! I bought my elephant Deka's footprint as it was a money-making idea for their nonprofit and just a cool "painting"!



Early that afternoon, I petted and walked with lions. They were Lala and Layla, 16-month-old twins. They were being raised, like the elephants, to return to the wild, but as a



pride. On both animal experiences, guides, one with a rifle, and a cameraman came with us. My last adventure was to become a "Flying Fox". I was harnessed to a wire and flew like Superwoman over a deep crevasse around the bend from the falls. All in all, from the fabulous personal home stay with Liz and Norman, to the fun informational, personal tours of Cape Town, and then on to Victoria Falls and safaris, this Friendship Force exchange was just a beautiful experience! I must say that the highlight was not the tours, but meeting and making friends with Liz and Norman, my new forever friends!



We went to the "famous" BOMA Restaurant tonight for dinner. Before we entered, everyone got a differently designed scarf tied around them and their face got a couple lines painted high on the cheek. Dancers shook their booties to drums, then next big and medium sized drums came out and really got the place going. Then small drums were given to patrons and they beat along with the group smiling and having fun. I got a photo with the tallest drummer and all their drums matched their outfits!



My plate starting at 12:00 - peanut butter rice, fried worms, emu meatball, warthog, and impala stew! (Emu and impala were my faves) A lamb on a giant rack over a fire in front of our table was stretched out and looked like a lamb rug with no skin on it. Piece after piece was cut away and soon it was only a lamb skeleton- 🤪🤪, but I got some, too, so I share the blame! Our last day is tomorrow- to Victoria Falls, FINALLY!!

Sunday, March 26, 2017

The warthogs are coming to Sunday service! One is even kneeling to pray, er, eat.

Rose Bennett

