

South Africa

May 14, 2010



Johannesburg

Our flight was uneventful, as it should be and we arrived with luggage (something we no longer take for granted), took a cab to our hotel and settled in for the night after the 18 hour flight.

The next day was on our own as we preceded our group by one day. We like it that way because we can better get over the jet lag. Our guide had recommended the Gold Reef City theme park which includes one of the deepest gold mines in the world and the Apartheid Museum. Indeed Johannesburg is special because of its gold and political activities so the park has both in one place.

No photos may be taken in the museum but it was very well laid out, designed so that you start at one end and make a circle to return, seeing each exhibit as you go. It laid out the foundation for apartheid, a message similar to Hitler's which had preceded it by only a few years. The message was white supremacy and the dilution of the blood by intermarriage led to a decline in the civilization. Accordingly, to prevent dilution, the races would be kept separate. In 1951, all were issued identification cards indicating their race, as best determined by the poll worker. There were separate facilities for each race, much as in the southern United States at that time. Passes were used to keep the population under control and to provide a steady workforce for the gold mines.

Finally as a result of world economic pressure leading to economic bankruptcy, mounting uprisings and the brink of civil war the government relented, released Mandela from prison and via negotiations dismantled the discrimination laws of Apartheid.



We next visited the theme park where we saw gold being poured. They open the doors on this furnace and a small bucket of gold is placed on the table.

The two men then pour the liquid gold into an ingot.





The ingot is then dumped out and the gold bar is placed on the table for the crowd.



We then visited the gold mine. Though this very deep, 10,000 foot mine was used until recently for gold production, we only go to level 5, a 1,000 foot descent. We are equipped with hard hats and lights, both of which were very useful as we traveled through the low tunnels which were partially lit.



They used to use dynamite to open the mines. It would take eight hours for a man to use a chisel and hammer to make the one yard hole for the charge. More recently it took one hour to use a jackhammer.



The mine shafts were held up by timbers but the ceiling was often not six feet high. The coal was taken out in rail cars, first by men pushing one ton of rock in a car and later with burros, finally with little engines like this.



May 15, 2010



We visited the outskirts of Johannesburg today to see the “townships,” Soweto which stands for southwest townships, is known for its diversity from shanties to the house of the former first lady, Woody Mandela. Our first stop was the Regina Mundi Church, “Queen of the World” which had been involved in the

concealment of Apartheid protesters. It is now active in the HIV and child/women protection movements.



The stain glass windows show the struggles to end the oppression.



This monument stands where the people negotiated the 27 basic rights under the new constitution. Inside is a stone table in which the rights are listed.



After a home cooked lunch, we went to Constitution Hill where the jail was that housed Mandela, Ghandi and many other prisoners of Johannesburg. Many of them were blacks who violated the pass rules. That is they were in the city when their pass did not allow them to be there. The prison was very crowded filled with three times the number for which it was designed. The prisoners were humiliated by having to strip naked outside in front of other prisoners and then jump around clapping their hands over their heads and clicking their tongues. The prisoners were segregated by race and the blacks were fed the least. All were required to do forced labor, had showers less than once a month and ate from dirty tin trays on the floor in front of the toilets. Apparently even this was ineffective as many refused to obey and were incarcerated over and over.



The flash does not do this photo justice as the inside of the communal cell was very dark. There are just two windows at the top of the cell.



The Constitution Hill portrays the stark conditions of the past with the prospects for a better present by having the highest constitutional court housed right next to the atrocities of the past. Inside the doors have the 10 rights listed in each of the 11 official languages of South Africa.



May 16, 2010 – Sunday

As this is Sunday, businesses are not generally open. Thus we visited a monument erected to commemorate the Boer Trek from Cape Town on the South coast to the highlands in central South Africa. In the center, shown on right, is a statue of a Boer lady with her two children. The women shouldered the burden of caring for the house and the children as well as defending the homestead while the men were away.



Inside were freezes of life on the Trek



We continued further to the diamond mine. At the Cullinan Diamond mine, the rock is blasted out by implosion. The blasts in the center are detonated first,



then those toward the edges and finally the outer edges. This minimizes the scattering of the rock and brings the rock down in pieces. The loader to the right is used to remove the rock from the mine.

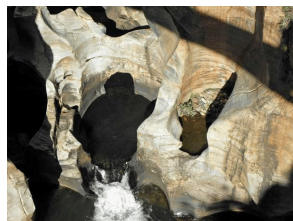
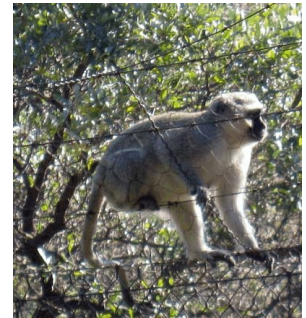
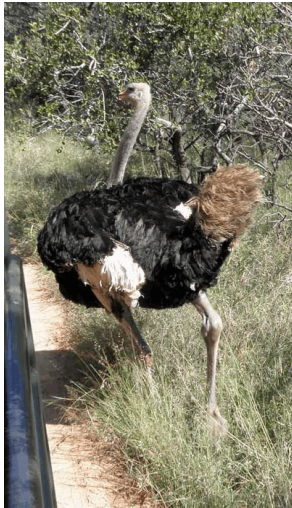
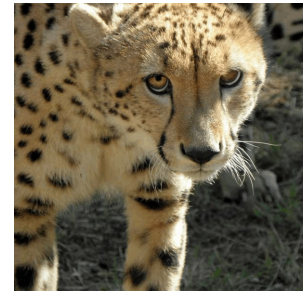
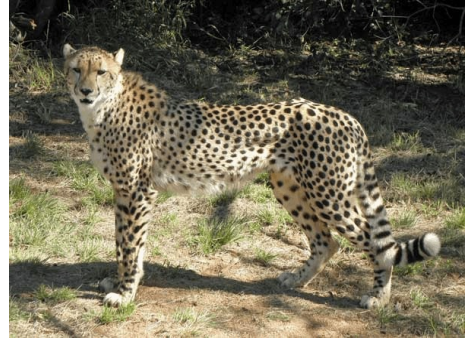


The rock is then sent up conveyors to three sets of crushers. Then the pulverized pieces are sifted and sorted by machines that select based on the rock's density. Finally, workers sort the final pieces.

May 17, 2010 – Monday

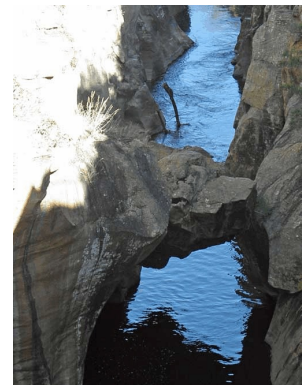


We drove from Johannesburg to Pilgrim's Rest stopping at a preserve for Cheetahs and other wild animals such as ostrich, Caracal, vultures, monkeys and wild dogs.



May 18, 2010 – Tuesday

We visited a few scenic views of nature today. We began at the Bourkes Luck "potholes" in the Blyde River Canyon. These are areas of rock that the eroding water carved out of





the sandstone in a circular formation due to the eddying of the water with its stone particles. This is renowned as the third largest canyon in the world, albeit there is a big gap between number two and this number three. This is also known as the largest green canyon on earth.



This is our group in front of the Three Rondavels, these refer to the tribal name for a house which was circular, made of clay with a thatched roof. You will note three such structures in the upper left of the picture.

While in the park, hiking along the river, seeing sights of waterfalls, creeks, caves and vegetation reminded Jim of his scout experiences in New Jersey.



This area known as “God’s Window” gives an overlook of the forest lands below.





Within this area is a rainforest, resulting from the moist air rising and losing its condensation as it approaches the highest altitudes.



On the way back, we stopped in a grocery store and saw these humongous cabbages and thought of our friend, Bill. You will note that the cabbage is much larger than my head. We also picked up some batteries and pastries.

May 19, 2010 – Wednesday

And now for the drum roll, please, Kruger National Wildlife Reserve!





Tortoise



Impala



Crocodile



Baboon



Lilac-breasted Roller



White Rhinoceros



Millipede



Camelion



May 20, 2010 –
Thursday



These are different lions we saw, there were five males in the group.

The blue eye is defective





May 21, 2010 – Friday

Swaziland



Women must wear skirts to visit the chief.



The Chief of the village



They demonstrate the dance



Everyone is dancing



Women carry baskets on their heads



Women grind the corn



Sleep on straw mat, covered by skins using a block for pillow



This is a 4th grade class



The class is taught in English



We visited a home of a student, her husband is a policeman.



The home was built a few weeks ago but is not yet finished.



The front door is a masterpiece.



The family room has a tv with dvd player. The family is ready to watch the World Cup soccer games.

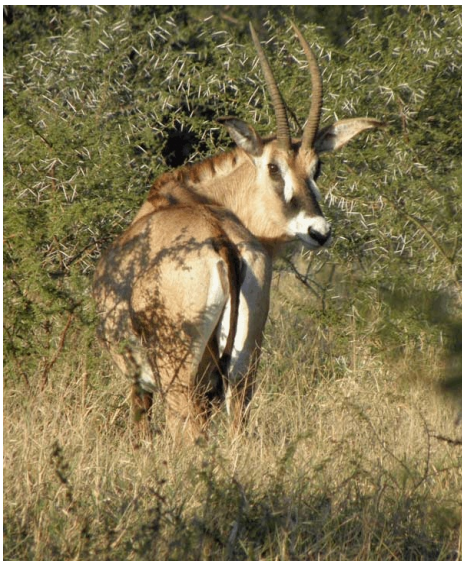
In the game reserve in Swaziland



Sugar cane is a principal crop



Warthog



Roan

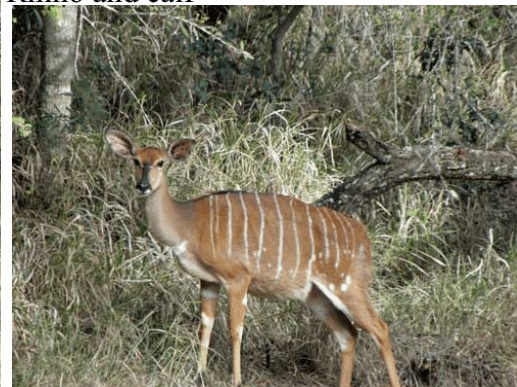
May 22, 2010 – Saturday



Rhino and calf



Cape buffalo



Nyala



Our room for the two nights



Hippos are generally seen in the water, they come out at night to eat the grass. 70% of the people killed by animals are killed by hippos.

May 23, 2010 – Sunday



Our hotel room



We are guests of the chief and his wife

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May 24, 2010 – Monday



They demonstrate the ceremonial dances



We could go for a horse ride



The view of the countryside on horse



We had a plowing demonstration



There was a Zulu demonstration of how to make spears.



The ladies demonstrate food preparation

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Durbin's Indian Ocean beach



Sand sculpture



May 26, 2010 – Wednesday

Lesotho



These mountains separate the Kingdom of Lesotho from South Africa. The range is very steep. 75% of the land of Lesotho is the highlands but much of the gross national product occurs in the cities in the lowlands. Here in the mountains the people are shepherds and they build huts.





Hyrax or Dassie



Klip Springer



We kicked the ball around while waiting for immigration.



Rock kestrel



Sheep doing what they do best



The shepherd with dog



We visited this typical mountain home, her husband, built it from rocks and thatching grass. The roof is supported by tree poles brought from South Africa as no trees grow in the highlands.



Everything was arranged neatly for her special guests



The cook pot sits on a flat rock that radiates heat throughout the hut. The thatch roof releases the smoke without letting the rain and snow in.



We drank beer and ate her freshly baked bread.



**May 27, 2010 – Thursday
Cape Town**

We spent the day traveling by bus and plane, arriving in Cape Town late that afternoon.

One of the wonderful OAT traditions is the home hosted dinner. Here Reggie and Hazel serve us traditional South African food while we sit around the table at their home.

May 28, 2010 – Friday, Cape Town



Table Mountain, the backdrop of downtown Cape Town.



View of the city from the top of the mountain.



We rode up the mountain in the cable car whose floor rotates as the car rises and descends the mountain.



Rock hyrax, an unusual animal, neither a rodent nor a rabbit. He eats the leaves of the plants on the mountain.



Every day, precisely at noon, they shoot off one of these cannons from the top of the hill.

May 29, 2010 – Saturday



We explored the Sea Port area of Cape Town, near the hotel, on our own today. The beach is rocky with cold water and foam. Seagulls fly over the beach and drink fresh water from the puddles in the parking lot.



That afternoon we went on a tour of Stellenbosch, South Africa's famous wine county.



The vineyards grow well in the foothills of the mountains where the air is chilled by the ocean breezes.



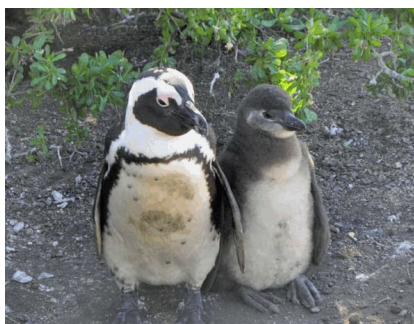
This is the winery of Ensis a famous golfer shown here with his partner to the left and two of the winery operators on the right. That evening we went to dinner with our new friends, Tim and Trish. Tim is the brother of our friend, Gail in Vero Beach.

May 30, 2010 – Sunday



Our final day was on tour of the South African peninsula, the Cape of Good Hope. The point on the end is indeed the cape. We look very cold because the icy current from Antarctica chills the

Cape and the wind as the warmer water on the east



meets the cooler water on the east increases the wind chill factor to about 40 ° F.

The African penguins live on the west side of False Bay on the west coast of the cape. This mother and chick are unconcerned about our photos.



Though there appear to be many penguins on the beach, the colony has diminished to 10% of its previous size due to reductions in its habitat and movement of its food supply further north.

That evening our farewell dinner was from the top of a pinnacle, much like the Seattle space needle.