

South-Africa

From October 3 to 24 we made a trip through South-Africa.
Some highlights of this beautiful journey:

The Kruger Park



It is one of the most famous wildlife parks in the world. The park runs for 350 km along the Mozambique border and has an average width of 60 km.



There are about 2000 km of roads in the park. Here you can see the so-called 'Big Five': the lion, the leopard, the elephant, the buffalo and the rhinoceros.



We really saw a lot of interesting animals such as zebra's, wild pigs, gnu's, giraffes, baboons and a lot lot of antelopes species like graceful impala's, kudu's and springboks.



We haven't seen the lion and the leopard (maybe it was too hot !) but we saw many herds of buffalo's also hippo's and crocodiles and of course the biggest of the animals : the elephant.

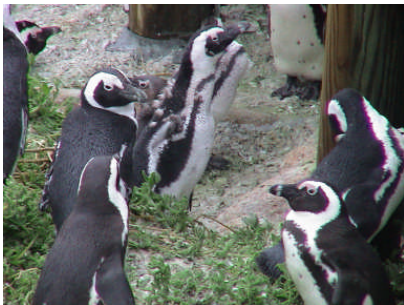
The marine life



It was impressive to watch whales from the rocky cliffs of Walker Bay in Hermanus. From august to december the Southern Right whales visit the coastline to mate and calve in this calm bay.



We saw two of them: mother whale and her baby. Its a magnificent sight when those sea-mammals roll and splash so close to the shore. We could hear them breathe and sniff.



We also visited Boulders Island where a colony of African penguins nestled.



And in the village Houtbay we took the boat to another Island with a large group of seals.

When we went for a walk along the coast of Plettenberg Bay have seen dolphins jumping up the waves.

Kwa Zulu Natal



The Zulu traditional village Shakaland is a must-visit. Although it is a tourist attraction, we learned many things about the Zulu-nation, its people and their customs. (like their belief in the ancetorial spirits.)

We enjoyed a tasty meal with Zulu traditional food: grilled meat, fish, wild pumpkins, wild spinach...



After dinner we have been entertained by Zulu-dancing. Only the unmarried girls and young boys are allowed to dance.



We stayed the night in a traditional bee-hive hut (Zulu kraal) with all modern conveniences.

The Ndebele



In Botshabelo there is an open air museum where we can see the evolution in their way of life.

First they live in round bee-hive huts.



Later they build rectangular houses decorated with geometric motives.



This sense for colours you can find also in the clothing's of the women.

The rings around the neck and the legs are a status symbol: the more, the richer.

The Great Karoo



In the Great Karoo (that's a semi desert) we have the opportunity to visit a township: Umasizakhe. (near Graaff-Reinet)



We saw miserable settlements made of zinc plates. For us, Western people, it's unimaginable to live in such a slum area. But the people there were very friendly and they were proud to show us their homes. Inside there was a little living room with a small TV and also a nice sleeping room. Granny offered us a cup of tea (Red Bush Tea of course) and toasted bread.



But there are also small stone houses. Under Nelson Mandela an action was started to clear the worst slum dwellings and the habitants get a new small stone house : a Mandela house.

In South-Africa there are hundred thousands Mandela houses. But that's not enough for the increase of black people and illegal immigrants.



In the township we also visited a pre-school: Nomzamo. It was very touching to hear those kids singing the national anthem of South-Africa.

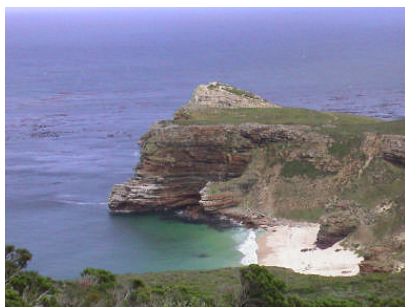


Education is not gratis. The parents had to pay for the education of their children. so we saw several children playing in the streets instead of going to school.



The township has also a library and a cultural centre.

Natural parks



South-Africa has a large number of national parks and nature reserves: Blyde River canyon, Golden gate, Valley of desolation, Tsitsikama, Cape of Good Hope.

It was a wonderful experience to walk from Cape Point tot the Cape Good Hope and to see the places where the explorer Barthelomeu Dias arrived in 1488.



A walk over the canyon on the Suspension Bridge (over the Stormsriver) mouth brought some suspense to many of our companions.



After an evening walk on the dolerite stone cliffs of the Valley of Desolation we enjoyed a breathtaking sunset.



The Brandwag is a sandstone rock in the Golden Gate National Park. We climbed over the yellow-red rock and we make a dangerous descent.



We admired marvellous panoramas at Blyde River Canyon with the three Rondavels, Gods Window and at the confluence of Blyde River and Treur River: the Potholes.



Plants and flowers



In the spring many wonderful plants and flowers bloom in South-Africa: Strelitzia, African lily's, the aloe species, the beautiful Jacaranda trees with lila flowering...



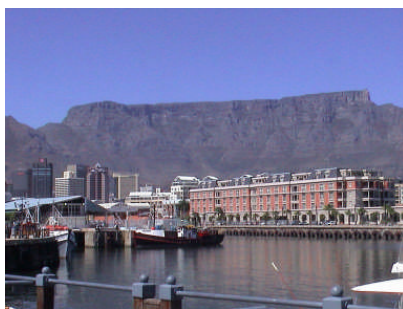
But the Protea family is the most well-known. There are over 120 species. The Kingsprotea or Sugar bush ('Suikerbossie' in the Afrikaans) is the national flower of South-Africa.



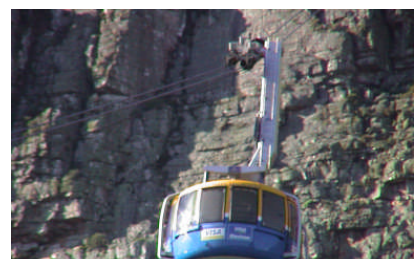
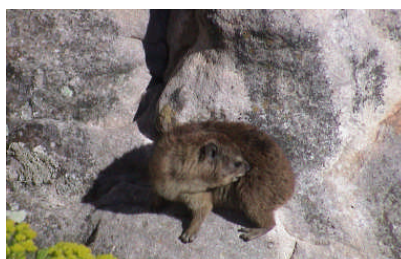
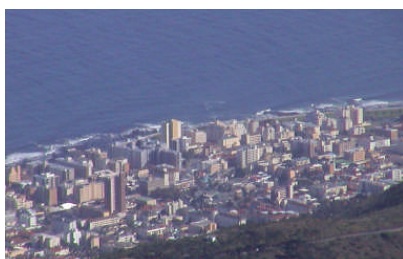
To visit the Kirstenbosch Garden is a must.



Cape Town



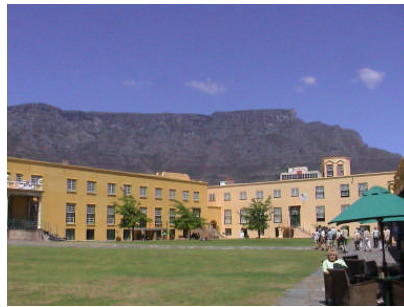
Cape with its Tablemountain: 1084 metres above sea level. A trip to the Tablemountain is one of the tourist highlights of cape Town. It can only be done when the mountain is not covered with the table-cloth(the clouds). A cable car took us in 4 minutes to the top. The panoramic view were marvellous indeed. From there we could see Robben Island where nelson Mandela has been prisoner for 18 years.



We walked through the Kompanjie garden with his Nile geese and squirrels and we admired the President's residence, the parliament, the second townhall.



A little bit further there is a castle 'The Good Hope'.



The Malay Quarter in Bo-Kaap.

