

South Africa

Dec. 28, 2017 - February 5, 2018

svJacaranda

We spent 5 weeks exploring South Africa; the first two were urban explorations of Johannesburg and Capetown; we took the 26+ hour overnight Premier Classe train to get from the former to the latter. The last three weeks were a road trip/safari adventure, exploring many of the country's National Parks (and using their accommodations) and going into Swaziland. See the **Itinerary** below. We rented a car from Cape Town and drove eastward along the Whale Coast and Garden Route; then flew British Airways from Port Elizabeth to Durban. In Durban we rented another car and drove through fantastic KwaZuluNatal, up through Swaziland, to Kruger National Park. We safari-ed in Kruger for about 1 week, staying in 5 different Park Rest Camps with self-catering cabins and doing extensive self-drives; we did several sunrise and night guided tours with park rangers. Afterwards we drove to Blyde River Canyon, staying in Graskop. We ended with a wild goose chase to find the Ndebele cultural villages in the Mpulunga area, staying in Witbank, before driving to the Joburg airport for our flight back to LA.

Getting There

We flew on Virgin Atlantic from Los Angeles to Johannesburg through London (3 hour layover). We booked Economy Plus to give us extra space and more comfort on the long flight (well worth the extra money). Tickets were \$1730.36 each.

Currency

South African Rand - \$1= 12.3 rand (and dropping; when we started planning in early Dec. it was 13 and by mid Feb. was 11.64)

Swaziland - Uses the emalangeni but you can use Rand at the same exchange rate as South Africa

Phone

Phone company Vodacom

Had a cheap Samsung smart phone we bought in the US.

Bought a Sim card at OR Tambo airport in Joburg and bought data and voice at the same time.

Transportation

Train

Rental Cars from Avis

Plane - British Airways

Uber is best way to get around cities.
Joburg - Driver from the hotel met us at the airport
Hallmark Hotel had a shuttle

Health

Malaria is a concern in Kruger and other parts of South Africa
We took a medication we bought in South Africa called Malanil and began dosage a day before we arrived in Kruger, continuing the course daily up until one week afterwards.

Planning

Used services of SANParks central office (Burg Street) for most parks and Kruger. On Jan. 8

Had to go to a different office for parks in KwaZulu Natal. (Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife at And A Waterfront office). Website: kznwildlife.com; Online bookings; bookings.kznwildlife.com

WildCard

Johannesburg

Hotels

Lucky Bean BandB (Melville)
129 1st Ave., Melville
www.luckybeanguesthouse.co.za
R3372 for 3 nights (R1124/night)
Koi Pond Queen Suite (Bed and breakfast)
Conrad and his wife Natasha were great!
Terrific breakfast
Nice room (open plan) opening on to a small garden.

Hallmark House Hotel (Downtown Johannesburg - Mabegong Precinct)
R1585.24 for 2 nights or \$135.20. (\$68/night)
Dinner \$37

Melville (Suburb)

The Countess (dinner \$24) - good food and cool steampunk decor
Luck Bean Restaurant - we were scheduled for new Year's Eve dinner with a great menu but we came down with the flu and did not get to eat here. Damn!
27 Boxes - Cool shopping area which is an agglomeration of 27 shipping containers.

Parkview (Suburb)

Art Africa - African craft store - 67 Tyrone Ave.

artafrika@yebo.co.za

(011) 486 2052/ 3193

Tyrone Pharmacy (Cheryl) and Doctor clinic

54 Tyrone Ave.

Tel. 011 646 3818

Epharm.tyrone@telkomsa.net

www.tyronepharmacy.co.za

Tours

Township Tour: Soweto

Cecile was our guide. R600

Fankomo Travel and Tours

www.fankomotours.co.za

Free Walking Tours:

joburgguides@gmail.com

City Centre and Braamfontein tours

Hillbrow/Berea and Yeoville/Bellevue Walks

www.dlalanje.org

info@dlalanje.org

Premier Classe Train

Deluxe Train travel on a Budget

Cost: R3120 or \$235. We paid 3590 rand/person (US\$292) which includes a processing fee for an agent who booked the tickets for us. We had a sleeper car from Johannesburg to Cape Town.

The overnight trip is supposed to be 26 hours but it is often notoriously late. Our trip was 5 hours late getting into Cape Town. Also the air conditioning does not work when it is really hot over 26 degrees C!! One passenger knew this and brought a fan.

The sleeper is comfortable; the toilet and shower are shared and are at the end of the car. Lounge car and dining cars are very nice. Meals and afternoon tea are included (drinks are not). The food is mediocre but good (better than airplane food). We were assigned a table to share our meals with another couple. Tourists use this train but so do many South Africans (black and white).

Sleeper Compartment 6B

We booked our trip tickets through: Tertius Bester at New Fusion Trading (30 Prosperity Park, Cape Town): info@newfusion.co.za. He was great!

Tel.: 27 61 463 1089

Cell: 27 82 555 0432

The world famous luxury Blue Train is from R10120/person (\$1300 per person).

Great website that explains the options of train travel in South Africa: <https://www.seat61.com/SouthAfrica.htm>

Cape Town

Nine Flowers Guest House (Gardens area)

\$970 for 6 nights or \$162/night)

\$55 for breakfast (special rate) and guide book

Mathias & Marrin Schaffner

Hatfield Street 133-135, Gardens

8001 Cape Town

www.nineflowers.com

info@nineflowers.com

Cell: 076/4540770

Room: Lion's Head self-catering

Located in the house next door; was an experiment with the neighbor

Inadequate kitchen, awkward roof deck, uncomfortable living room; a few glitches.

R680 charge - breakfast and guidebook?

Mathias is the ultimate host and made the glitches good for us (comped us Hop-on-Hop Off bus passes for 2 days and we ate breakfast in the dining room for half price). We would stay here again. The breakfasts are really really special.

We liked the location and were able to walk to a lot of places easily, even to the Vanda Waterfront.

Restaurants

Societi - Dinner \$29. Very nice

Sea Breeze - Dinner \$45. Highly touted but didn't live up to its reputation. Wouldn't go back.

Maria's - Good Greek fare within walking distance of the Hotel - dinner for \$35

Willoughby's - V and A Waterfront

Nonna Lina - Italian restaurant near the hotel. Food was awful and we waited an hour (dinner \$29). Not recommended. We heard it is known for its pizza so maybe if you stick with that? We wouldn't go back.

Hop on Hop off Bus (Jan.8) - R200 for the one day Classic/adult; R300 for two days Premium/adult

Table Mountain Cable Car (Jan. 8) R305 each
Green market Square
Company's Gardens
Camps Bay

Tours:

Bo Kaap Neighborhood (Jan. 8)
With the Hop On /Off Bus from the Tourist Office

Townships: Langa and Khayelitsha with iMzu Tours
Mzukisi Lembeni

www.imzutours.co.za
info@imzutours.co.za
+27 (0)73 507 3622.

Sunday Morning Gospel Tour with lunch at iMzu's mother's in Khayelitsha - R550 plus R125 for lunch

Sisi's Bed and Breakfast (Mzu's mother)

Shopping

Greenmarket Square - Craft stalls in the square.

African Tribes - 7 Market House, Greenmarket Square. Marcello has been the owner for many years. Good quality crafts. africantribesonline.business.site. info@africantribesonline.co.za

Facebook: African Tribes (Cape Town)

Near greenmarket Sq.Mohair and ostrich leather goods

V and A Waterfront

To do next time:

Stellenbosch

So. African Museum

Silo Museum

Planning - made reservations on January 8 with the help of SAN Parks (Shumera Williams) at Central office in Cape Town (Burg Street)

Whale Coast and Garden Route

Car Rental: Cape Town to Port Elizabeth

Avis Rent-a-Car for 5 days = \$272.20

Agulhas National Park

Agulhas Rest Camp self-catering chalet (CH2DN Chalet)

2.5 hours drive from Cape Town

Southernmost Tip of Africa

R1420 (R1434.20 total with community fund). or \$116/night

Tsitsikamma

Storms River Rest Camp

Forest Hut(FH2S Forest Hut) (#19) - \$66/night

(very small cabin with refrigerator; cooking facilities in communal kitchen with hot plate)

A Forest Cabin would have been better (like #24,25,26)

Storms River Mouth Trail with Suspension Bridges (1 km; 1 hour); didn't do the Waterfall Trail (3km; 3-4 hours)

Blue duiker

R1636.20 for two nights

Addo Elephant National Park

Addo Main Camp

Chalet - CH2/4 #14 - 2 nights 1/14-1/16

Air conditioned, kitchen, lounge with 2 single beds&1 double sleeper couch.

Chalet overlooked the elephant trail between the hide and the waterholes; could sit on patio and watch the elephants.

Accom. Charge 3260 for two nights; community fund 32.60 = Total 3292.60 (\$133/night)

Check- in - 2pm; check out 10 a.m.

Gwarrie Pan was favorite place.

Good interpretive center and underground hide at the main reception

Did 3 game drives: afternoon, then sunrise and night drives

KwaZuluNatal

Flight from Port Elizabeth to Durban

British Airways

US\$197.41 for the both of us

One hour and fifteen minute flight

Car Rental: Durban to Johannesburg

Avis Rent-a-Car for 19 days = US \$756.44 (11,200 deposit of which 9200 is rental)

Ask for receipt when turn the car in and make sure we are not charged an extra day.

Took full coverage insurance which was great because we had a stone hit the windshield and crack it.

Eshowe

Chase Guesthouse - beautiful and fantastic breakfast!

Jane and Jonathan Chennells - great hosts

PO Box 45

Eshowe 3815

Tel. 035/4745491

Cell: 083 265 9629

Email: thechase@netactive.co.za or chaseoffice@netactive.co.za

www.thechase.co.za

Garden Cottage BandB

1050 rand (cash only) (US\$85) - for 1 night and breakfast

“Traditional sugar farm homestead in a beautiful garden bordering Eshowe, offering country hospitality, farm breakfasts and personal service.”

Hotel Shakaland -

Hotel and Zulu dance show/dinner

It sounded too Disneyfied so we only visited for the show and dinner (\$71 for the two of us)

The show and dancing was interesting but we would not recommend the dinner.

Fort Nongqayi Museum Village - entrance fee includes a guide.

www.eshowemuseums.org.za

7 attractions including a restaurant and craft store.

Vukani Zulu Cultural Museum (Zama is curator)

vukanimuseum@lantic.net

www.vukanimuseum.org.za

Zululand: Eshowe, Mtunzini, Gingindlovu

visitzululand.co.za

St. Lucia/iSimangaliso Wetland Park

St. Lucia was a really nice town that exists because of its catering to tourists.

St. Lucia Wetlands Guest House

20 Kingfisher St.

Tel. 27 (0) 35 590 1098

www.stluciwetlands.com

wetlands@iafrica.com

Pool, beautiful room, excellent breakfast.

Colin was a great host and helped with area attractions and advice.

Restaurants

Ocean Basket - a chain but good food with a balcony sitting area. Dinner \$34

St. Lucia Coffee Shop - lunch. Better to go next door.

Deep Sea Angling Club Restaurant - recommended by Colin but we didn't eat there.

River boat cruise - Shaka Barker Tours on the St. Lucia Estuary

R300/person to be picked up at the BandB (R240 if you go to their dock)

Craft Market on McKenzie Street

Drove up the East Shore to Cape Vidal (35 km)

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park

Beware: Google maps routed us to the old closed entrance gate down a long dirt road through local communities instead of keeping us on the main road to the new gate. Two other couples we met did the same thing. We lost an hour by the time we reached the proper entrance the Nyalazi Gate.

Hilltop Camp - #37

Unit type: HCN SPA2 - Number 37

2 bedroom non-self catering chalet

Meal plan: BandB

R1560/night for 2 nights= 3120

Looked at Mthwazi Lodge - home of original park superintendent

Swaziland

Mkhaya Private Game Reserve

PO Box 311. Malkerns M204

www.biggameparks.org

reservations@biggameparks.org

Tel. 268 2528-3943/4

Stayed in Room 4 - which was huge for a group - had 5 beds.

Accommodation - R5290/night (US\$394/night) - Total R15870 for 3 nights (US\$1183) (13.4 exch rate); includes meals and game drives

Bed levy - R7.50/night (\$US0.61/night) total 22.50 US\$1.80)

Drinks - R184 (US\$15)

GRAND TOTAL: US\$1306 or \$436/day

Phophonyane Falls Ecolodge and Nature Reserve

PO Box 199, pigs Peak H108

Tel: 268 2431 3429
lungile@phophonyane.co.sz
www.phophonyane.co.sz
Beehive House #2
Accommodation R4421 is the rate plus 14%tax= 5040
Bed Levy 7.50/night.
Conservation Fee 70
Food - \$204 for two dinners (about \$50.00 each)

Kruger National Park

Booking made in Cape Town on Jan. 8 through Central Reservations desk
(Shumera Williams)

Crocodile Bridge

Berg-en-dahl

Lower Sabie Rest Camp

R1650 or \$134/night

Skukuza

R1400 or \$113/night

Satara

R1455 or \$118/night

Blyde River Canyon

Forever Resort @ Blyde River Canyon

Lunch - \$10

Graskop

Daan's @ Graskop

Corner of Bloed River and Monument Road

Tel. 0137671355

Budget room - US\$50/night

daansplace.com

topazsky.trade@gmail.com

Restaurants

Canimambo Portuguese dinner - \$22
Harrie's Pancake House - lunch \$22
Glass House Dinner - \$22. Very nice.

Shopping

Africa Silks - Louis Trichardt Street
Tel. (013) 767 1665
Email: mari@africasilks.com

Africa Silk Farm
Kowyns pass Road R533
Tel. (013) 767 1950

Witbank (eMalahleni)

Yalla Yalla Boutique Hotel - Bed and Breakfast
5 Culembourg Crescent, Die Heuwel
Cell. 27 82 589 7980
Tel. 27 13 656 5424
info@yallayallaboutiquehotel.com
Allayallaboutiquehotel.com
Petr Room
1250 rand (US\$105.68) for 1 night and breakfast. (exch 11.82)
Marco - staff

Restaurant

In house dinner at Yalla Yalla is extra

Daily Itinerary

12/27 Wed

Homewood suites LAX Airport
6151 West Century Blvd.

855-605-0320

12/28 Thursday

20:40 LAX Virgin Atlantic flight 24 - London

12/29 Friday

LAX- London arrive 12-29 14:50

18:55 Virgin Atlantic Flight 601 JNB

12/30 Saturday

LON-JNB Virgin Atlantic arrives 12-30 07:50

Airport Pickup. Derrick phone 27 83-438-9846

Lucky Bean B&B - Melville, Johannesburg (booking.com)

Total R3372 + dinner

12/31 New Years Eve Dinner Lucky Bean Restaurant (Melville)

1/2 Tuesday

Hallmark Hotel (Mabenang Precinct, downtown Johannesburg) (Agora)

Total R1585.24

1/4 Thursday

Premier Train JNB - CT Departs 10:30

Johannesburg train station boarding 09:30

1/5 Friday

Train Arrival Cape Town 16:15

Nine Flowers Guest House 133 Hatfield Street, Gardens 21-462-1430

Lions Head studio apt.

1/11 Thursday

Depart Nine Flowers Guest House

Car Rental Avis

\$181.70 without liability. We added full liability. 12:00 noon

Cape Agulhas Rest Camp Sanpark

1/12 & 13 Friday/Sat.

Tsitsikamma near Wilderness

Storms River SanPark

1/14 Sunday

Addo Rest Camp San Park

1/15 Monday

Addo Rest Camp Sanpark

1/16 Tuesday

Port Elizabeth

Flight to Durban

BA Flight 6323 13:20 depart arrive 14:35

Avis car rental return 12 noon

Eshowe - 1 hour drive from Durban airport

Chase Guest House- (Jane and Jonathan)

1050R cash

1/17 Wednesday

St Lucia Wetlands Guesthouse

1/18 Thursday

Hluhluwe Park - Hilltop Camp non self-catering

1/20 -Saturday

Swaziland (enter at Golela border crossing)

Mkhaya Private Reserve - Stone Camp 4pm entry to. park

Expedia paid in full

1/23 Tuesday

Phophonyane Lodge

paid in full

1/25 Thursday

Depart Phophonyane to Kruger

Exit Swaziland at

Enter Kruger at Crocodile Bridge Gate

Stayed at Crocodile Bridge Rest Camp

1/26 Friday

Kruger Berg-en-dal Rest Camp

1/27 Saturday

Kruger Skukuza

1/29 Monday

Kruger - Lower Sabie Camp

1/30 Tuesday

Kruger - Satara Camp (B-26)

Sunset Drive

2/1 Thursday

Depart Kruger to Blyde Canyon

Daan's in Graskop

2/3 Saturday

Search for Ndebele

Yalla Yalla Boutique Hotel, Witbank (eMalahleni)

2/4 Sunday

Avis Drop off 12:00 noon

JNB-LHR 21:10 - Flight 602. arrives 6:20

2/5 Monday

Arrive 6:20 London

LHR-LAX 10:10 - Flight 7 arrives 13:25

Global Pass Appointment. 16:00 & 16:15

LAX - SAN 18:30 Flight 3004 arrive 19:21

Reading and Resources

1. Lonely Planet

2. A-Z of South African National Parks (South African national parks - SANParks);

www.sanparks.org; Central reservations: 27-12-428-91

e-mail: reservations@sanparks.org

3. Cape Town - Atlas Obscura

36 hours in Cape Town (NY Times Travel, 2016)

Meditative Train Ride

Johannesburg - 36 Hours in Johannesburg (NY Times Travel 2018)

4. Safari Advice and Sources

Cheetah Outreach

Monkeyland

Bird of Eden