

South Africa and Namibia

6. November - 22. November 2010

1 - Prologue

Why are we so fascinated about Africa that we go third time?

It is the magic of this large continent with its dark population. Africa is the cradle of man. Africa has tribes that are trying still to live in accordance with their old culture. Musicality and rhythm are floating in the African blood. There is hectic life in the big cities and both tranquility and drama in the wild. The continent has beautiful sceneries comprising cultivated areas, deserts and arid land, open savannas, mountainous areas, gorges, primeval forests and jungles as well as an extraordinary wildlife.

Namibia was the main aim of our journey this time. Originally, two countries were in question namely, South Africa and Namibia. We have heard from many people that South Africa is beautiful, and we had almost decided to go there. However, my nephew had been visiting Namibia and was very enthusiastic about the country, so after having talked with him about the country we decided for Namibia. That we did not regret.

2 - Short information about Namibia

Namibia was under German rule from 1884 – 1915 under the name German Southwest Africa. In 1920 she became a mandate governed by South Africa under the League of Nations and 1949 a trust territory under United Nations. South Africa tried to annex Namibia and the resistance movements SWANU and SWAPO emerged. In 1990 Namibia became independent.

Namibia is 1.5 times the size of France and has only 1.8 millions inhabitants according to the latest official statistic. It is expected to increase to about 2.3 millions in 2015. Approximately, 250.000 live in Windhoek today. Totally, about 33 % of the population lives in urban areas.

Geographically, Namibia can roughly be divided into three regions. Along the Atlantic coast stretching inland is the Namib Desert. Behind the desert is a plateau reaching heights of about 2.500 meters. East of the plateau is the Kalahari Desert. The main part of Kalahari is in Botswana, but also in South Arica Kalahari is part of the territory. To the northeast though, are green savannas and areas with forest.

Along the cost runs the cold Benguela Current influencing the climate along the cost. Generally, the climate is dry with little rainfall, although also Namibia has a rainy season.

3 - Planning the tour

We went to see our usual travel agent that had in their program a Namibian adventure tour. The tour started in Cape Town and ended in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. Our agent booked the tour with Nomad Adventure Tours and additionally arranged a three night stay in Cape Town. The stay included an excursion to the Cape Peninsula and a visit to town ships in Cape Town.

In the beginning, we did not pay much attention to the term adventure tour. We had the impression that we were to drive around a big part of Namibia and to stay in reasonable hotels or lodges.

Later we looked up Nomad's web site. We studied closely Nomad's general information about their tours and their vehicles.

From Nomad's general information about their tours, we quote: "An adventure tour is a journey along a suggested route, which is aimed at the more adventurous and budget conscious traveler. It is off the beaten track, and many of the areas visited do not have the infrastructure that the package tourist may require. The route taken may also change from time to time due to unforeseen circumstances.

The nature of an adventure tour tends to attract a certain age group, and on our Accommodated tours we welcome anyone with the right attitude! However, if you are older than 65 you will need to provide us with a letter from your GP to say that you are fitted enough to handle the extremities of Africa.

Suitability for our trips is not just about fitness it is about being able to take the rough with the smooth - whether you're up to your elbows in mud rescuing your sinking truck, climbing the nearest tree in an attempt to escape from charging buffaloes or searching for the only bush in the desert to be squatting behind - expect the unexpected!"

We understood that lunch would be prepared en route, but it was not really clear if the crew on the accommodated tours would prepare the evening meal as well.

The vehicles are truck chassis that is provided with a cabin after Nomad's specifications. The cabin is equipped with individual seats, slide down windows, overhead luggage rack, personal luggage lockers and a safe for money and documents. However, the trucks have no Air-conditioning and no toilets, as Nomad states; the tours are adventurous tours on a low cost level. Besides, the cabin is fitted up with chairs and tables, a camp kitchen containing gas stove, freezer, cooking grill, water tank, food racks, food preparation and washing up facilities and cooler box. For emergency situations the truck provides both repair tools as well as a first aid kit.

After having read this, we started to doubt our wisdom in having bought the tour. However, we are no cowards. Besides, we had reached the point of no return, so off we went to South Africa and Namibia.

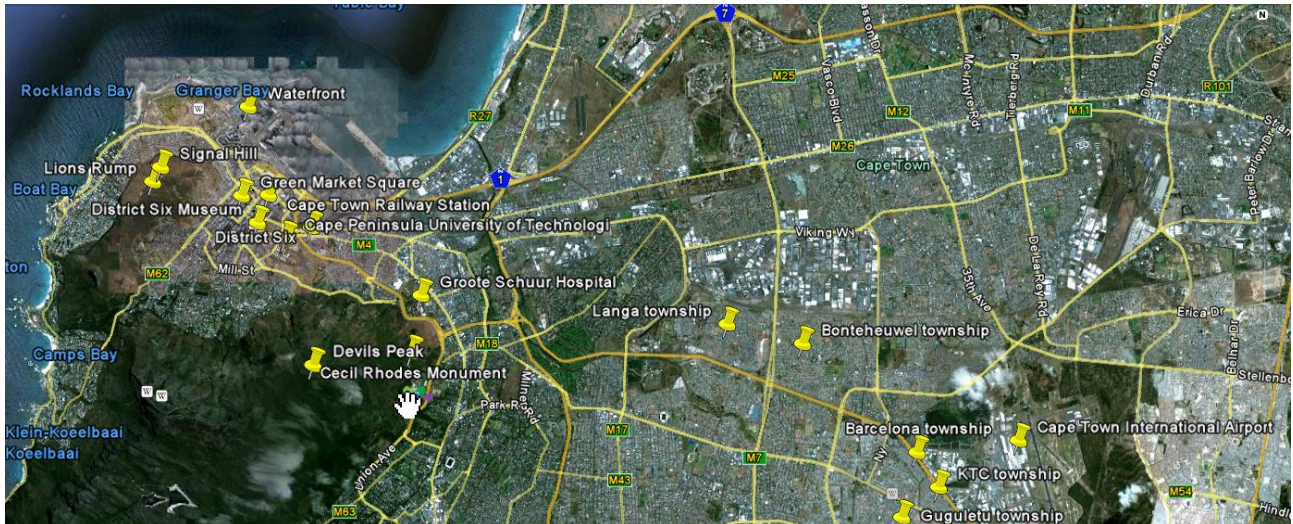
4 - On our way

To get to South Africa, we first had to fly to London and from London straight to Cape Town. We departed from Copenhagen Airport at 15:50 and landed in Heathrow Airport at 16:55 local time. We had three hours in Heathrow before departure to Cape Town. However, time passed quickly. First it took a quarter of an hour by bus to drive from the arrival terminal to the departure terminal and then came all the walking to and from the bus.

The flight from London to Cape Town takes about 12 hours, and the distance is about 9.000 km. We departed from London at 20:15 and arrived the following day in Cape Town at 10:10 local time, 15 minutes before scheduled time.

At the airport, we met an employee from Atlas Tours, who brought us to our hotel. He looked as if he were of Indian decent. We believe that he was what they, during the apartheid system called an Indian person. However, he might also have been Coloured as the definition was very unclear. South Africans still seem to use this terminology but not for discrimination purposes.

The sites we saw from the airport to our hotel:



On the way to our hotel the driver acted as a guide telling about sights we passed. Leaving the airport we had on our left hand an industrial area and behind that several townships. As we approached and entered the motorway towards Cape Town, we had on our left hand side the Barcelona township. Shortly after, we passed on our right hand side first the Bonteheuwel township and then the Langa township. The motorway leading towards Cape Town is called Settlers Way.

The driver told us about the high rate of unemployment in the townships. This was mainly due to migrants from other African countries, especially from Zimbabwe and Somalia. The migrants offered to work at a much lower pay than the locals causing unemployment in the local population. We cannot judge if that is correct, but it is a fact that riots against migrants have taken place in South Africa because of this argument.

At the end of Settlers Way there was a road junction dividing the motorway into two new motorways, a southern and a northern. We took the road leading north. From this area, we could see the Cecil Rhodes memorial in the mountains as well as the mountain peak Devils Peak. Shortly after, we passed the Groote Schuur Hospital where Christiaan Barnard on December 3, 1967 made the first heart transplant of the world. The driver pointed out the tower where Christian Barnard had his clinic in which the transplant took place. Christiaan Barnard died on September 2, 2001.

During our driving, we had the view to Table Mountain. Our driver pointed out a rock formation that looked like a V. Behind that area was the main view platform. If the weather is cloudy Signal Hill, which we also could see from the car, is used as the view platform. In front of Signal Hill from our side ran a ridge called Lions Rump because of its resemblance to that part of the lion.

Later we passed District Six. From that area, we also had a view to the Cape Peninsula University of Technology on our left hand side. According to our driver, many international students attend the university.

A short while later, we passed Cape Town Central Station and entered Adderly Street, well known in South Africa for its Christmas light decorations. People are coming from afar to enjoy it and workers were already busy with putting up the decorations. However, the decorations are not switched on until December 23.

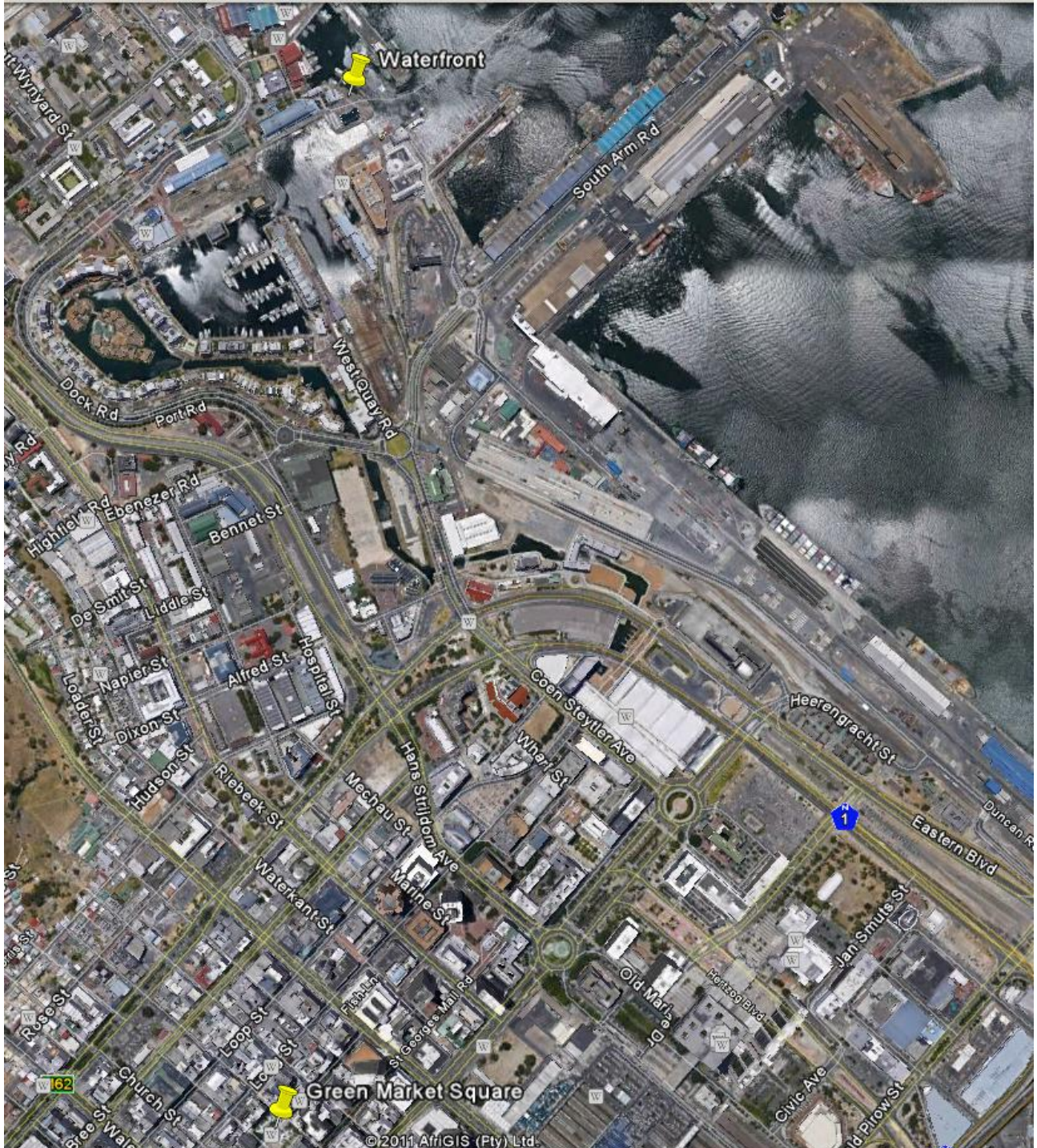
Then, suddenly we were at our hotel, Inn on the Square. We got our luggage, said good bye to the driver and went to the reception. We presented ourselves, but they could not find us in their booking system. The employee at the reception asked us to sit down to wait for her manager to handle the problem. After half an hour, we finally got a room. The room itself was quite nice although Mira missed some light for her beauty work. The view from the room was like into a shaft. On three sides, it was a shaft while the fourth side was another building very close to our, so you really felt it was a complete shaft. If we were to be there more than the three nights we had planned, we would have asked for a room with a more exciting view.

The hotel was a big building situated on Greenmarket Square in the central business district. On the square there has previously been a slave market, a fruit and vegetable market and a popular car park. To day the square houses a market selling African arts and crafts. The stall holders are coming from different countries in Africa. We later talked to one woman from Uganda and one from Zimbabwe. The market also attracts street musicians and entertainers. Sitting outside one stall, we, at one time met a man and his small son. The father was teaching the son to play a bongo drum, and we asked the child to play the drum for us. However, he was bashful with us and did not want to play. Around the square are several restaurants and coffee shops.

5 - Cape Town and Cape Peninsula

5.1 – Waterfront

Waterfront and our hotel:



We had previously decided that we would see Waterfront on our first day in Cape Town. The weather was beautiful with the sun shining from a blue sky. This was perfect weather for a visit to this area. After we got ourselves installed, we went to the reception to ask if it was possible to

walk to Waterfront within a reasonable time. They confirmed that it was feasible, although they looked at us a little astonished. They drew the route on a city map for us, and we left for waterfront.

Greenmarket Square, where the hotel is located, is close to Long Street, a well known shopping street. We walked down Long Street to Waterkant Street. It was Sunday and really very deserted. At Waterkant Street, we turned left, passed a big street by a bridge and came to the most picturesque quarter. It was a quiet area with street houses painted in bright colours, very beautiful. We were almost all alone, and it was very nice and relaxing to walk there. The rest of the walk was less exiting. At the end of Waterkant, we turned right down Highfield Street and continued down Ebenezer Street. We had to cross two big roads and walked a little to and fro to find the right direction to Waterfront.

Waterfront is what we would call a leisure area. It is situated in the harbour area with an active harbour as neighbour. It is full of shops, restaurants, open areas where you can sit down and a lot of street entertainment. We entered the area at the Clock Tower Square. To continue, we passed a swing bridge over the entrance to the inner basins. The whole area was full of people and all shops and restaurants were open. After a short walk, we came to a square where five men in pink polo-shirts were singing and playing opera. The one was a tenor singing different arias. He was backed with African rhythms by the four others, three on xylophones and one on bongo drums. It was very interesting and it sounded really beautiful. Further on acrobats were performing on another square. Everywhere people were sitting enjoying the sunshine, a meal, a drink, the view or the performances in the streets. If not sitting, people strolled through the area to do some shopping, looking for refreshments, or just moving about.

We turned back towards the Clock Tower. We were a little hungry and looked for somewhere to eat lunch. We found a restaurant at the Clock Tower Square. In their menu, they had pancakes and that sounded very good to us. We sat down, found the pancakes that we would like and then disaster came. It was a halal restaurant, and spirit was non existent; I could not get a decent glass of wine or beer. However, I managed with a glass of cold mineral water, and the pancakes were delicious. We finished with a cup of coffee.

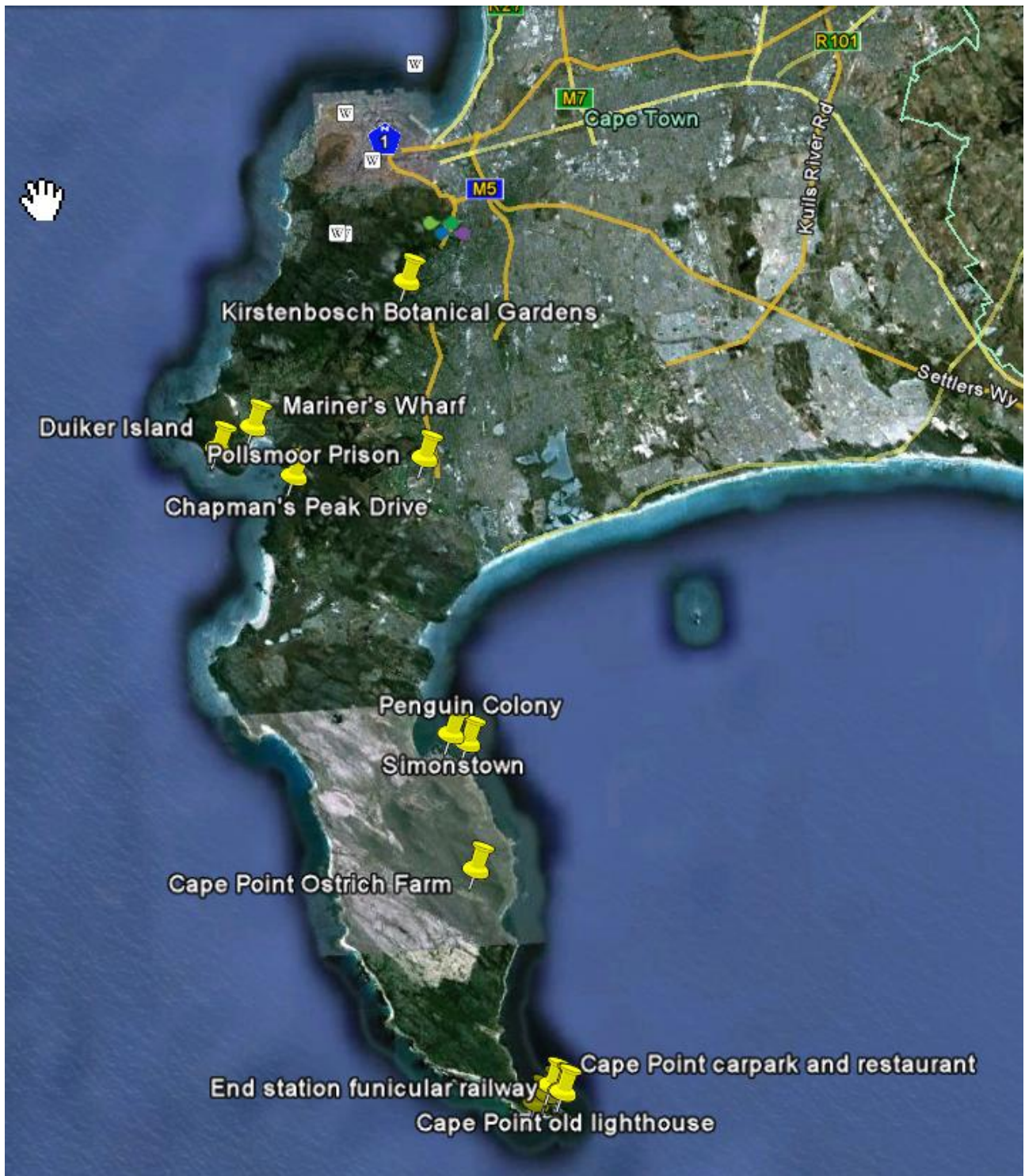
We just wanted to make another round to look at shops and the life before going back to the hotel. On this round, we met musicians playing original South African music. They had painted faces as indigenous people used, we believe.

Then it was time to return. We walked back the same way we came. However, Ebenezer Street was closed with a big gate, so we thought it was not the street we came by as there was no gate then. We walked about ten minutes further out of the street we were in and realized that it must have been the street with the gate that we came by. Back we walked and found a small gate open for pedestrians, and we returned to the hotel without any other problems. When we came back to the hotel, we went to our room to have a shower and to relax. Afterwards we went to the hotel's restaurant where we had a very tasty dinner. We got kudu carpaccio for starter and springbok steak as the main meal. We finished with coffee. The restaurant was very nice with pleasant atmosphere, and we talked a lot with our waiter.

After coffee, it was time to go to bed. It was 33 hours ago we had left our home in Copenhagen, and we were a bit tired. Besides, we had to be ready next morning at 8:15 in the reception for our full day Cape Peninsula tour. When we left for our room, we asked the reception to wake us up at 6:30.

5.2 - Cape Peninsula tour

Cape Peninsula and the sites of the tour:



We had a pleasant night and were ready in the morning at 8:15 for the excursion. However, this was not obvious. The reception did not call us to wake us up. Just in case I had also set the alarm clock on my cell phone to 6:30 but was not aware that the phone did not change the time to South African time zone, so we woke up an hour late.

The tour bus which was actually a minibus arrived in time. We were two couples from the hotel, and one couple was already in the bus. The guide told us that we were going to fetch another couple, and then the participants would be full. When we were all there we presented ourselves. The couple already in the bus was English, the second couple from the hotel was Swiss and the last couple was American.

Our guide who was a white man presented himself. As far as I remember he was of Australian descent. He began with excusing that he was a bit absentminded, but he was expecting an important telephone call that in case it came would make him leave us at once. His wife was expecting to give birth this particular day. Of course, he joked about leaving us. This was his way of giving information. He mixed facts with anecdotes and jokes making the tour informative as well as entertaining. He was quite a good guide.

Leaving the central part of Cape Town, we passed Waterfront and continued along the Atlantic Seaboard which runs from Waterfront to Hout Bay on the western side of Cape Peninsula. The stretch is also called Cape Town's Riviera. It is an area with beautiful beaches and lots of shops and entertainments. It is a popular place among international celebrities, and the area has some of the most expensive properties in South Africa. We drove past the Cape Town suburbs of Sea Point, Bantry Bay, Clifton, Camps Bay and Bakoven. From Camps Bay, Bakoven and farther down Victoria Drive towards Hout Bay you have a beautiful view to the peaks of the Twelve Apostles.

In Hout Bay, we went to Mariner's Wharf where we had half an hour on our own hand. The wharf is the first harbourfront emporium in Africa. On the wharf were several stalls selling African handy craft. There was also a big shop selling similar products and where you could exchange money. The wharf had more restaurants as well. Unfortunately, it was raining quite heavily, and it was not very pleasant to walk around.

The tour included an optional visit to Duiker Island that houses a big Cape fur seal colony. The starting point of the boat tour was Mariner's Wharf. However, due to the weather all participants had earlier on the tour declined to join that excursion.

Because of the weather condition, our guide decided with our consent to change the order of the remaining tour. First we would go to Cape of Good Hope and then have lunch at Cape Point. During the drive, we would visit an ostrich farm which was not part of the original itinerary. We continued south on Chapman's Peak Drive. The road is winding its way through 114 curves to Noordhoek. There were beautiful views over the sea and to Chapman's Peak. We continued across the Cape Peninsula, passed Sun Valley to Fish Hoek at the east coast of the peninsula. Further south along the east coast we passed Glencairn and shortly before Simons Town, we turned inland on a serpentine road. We had a beautiful view over Simon's Town. The town is an important naval base. However, the base has lost its regional importance along with the weakening of South Africa's economy and the following loss of power. The decline started when United Nations imposed economic sanctions against South Africa during the apartheid time.

We went by Red Hill Road and Plateau Road to about 1 km before Cape Point Road. Here we made a stop at Cape Point Ostrich Farm. We did not have a guided tour around the farm, but we had some refreshments, and we visited their leather shop and egg shop. The ostrich leather is one of the most durable leather sorts we have. The surface of the leather is full of protruding small round marks where the feathers were fixed to the skin making the surface look very special. The products from the leather are very exclusive and expensive.

From the ostrich farm, we went to the Cape Point Road and turned right, down the road. Farther down we left the road to continue to Cape of Good Hope. When we reached the vantage point, a few cars and people were there. They left shortly after and we were the only ones left. The promontory itself was not very imposing but the feeling of standing at the world famous cape was awe-inspiring. Cape of Good Hope is the most south-westerly point of Africa. It is often assumed that the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean are meeting there but that is not so. The two oceans join at Cape Agulhas the southernmost point of Africa. Cape of Good Hope is the meeting point of the warm Agulhas Current from the Indian Ocean and the cold Benguela Current from the Atlantic Ocean.

When we left, we passed two bonteboks and three ostriches. Later, we saw from the distance five busses approaching the cape. It was very fortunate that we were there before the busses arrived and had it all for ourselves. We came back to Cape Point Road and continued to Cape Point. Cape Point has two peaks. The highest, where the old lighthouse is situated, is 238 meters high. From the car park, a funicular railway runs to a view point close to the lighthouse. When we arrived, the funicular did not work why we had to walk to the view point. We did not walk to the old lighthouse, but we had a good view to it. We also had a perfect view to the lower peak and could just discern the new lighthouse out at the end. There was a big cormorant colony on the peak with their nests on the shelves of the perpendicular rock wall. We could as well see the reefs where ships, which approached Cape Point too closely, suffered shipwreck. The views from the view point were magnificent and the looming dark clouds intensified the feelings of the strength of the nature in this part of the world. On the way down from the lighthouse, we saw a rock hyrax walking around without paying any attention to us.

Earlier on the tour our guide had booked a table for lunch at the car park restaurant. When we came to our table, the English couple and the American couple were already there. We sat down with them, but they were occupied with their own conversation, and they paid no attention to us. The American couple left first, and then we had a chat with the Englishmen. They told us they came from Sussex and had previously been in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. The Swiss couple did not come to the restaurant.

After lunch, we departed for the penguin colony at Boulders. Before we finally left the Cape of Good Hope area, we spotted three eland antelopes and saw two endangered small tortoise at the roadside. We drove back to Plateau Road and continued down to Smithwinkel Bay and followed the coast to Boulders. When we arrived at Boulders the weather cleared up, and we saw the sun for the first time that day. From the penguin area, we had some fantastic views over the sea along the coast line and to the city itself.

The penguin species at Boulders is the African Penguin previously called the Jackass Penguin. The species is endangered with a population of about 150.000 at the beginning of the millennium. The Boulder's colony started in 1982 with only two breeding pairs and comprises today about 3.000 individuals.

A board walk was leading to the penguin colony at Foxy Beach. Along the boardwalk, bush was growing giving shelter to the birds. The colony is situated in a residential area and this causes some problems as the penguins are invading the gardens during the night.

After the penguin colony, there remained only a visit at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. We passed Simons Town towards Fish Hoek. At Glencairn, we left the coast and went in the direction of Sun Valley and Sunnydale. There we turned north and on the way we looked down

upon and passed the Pollsmoor Prison. Pollsmore is a maximum security prison, and some of the most dangerous criminals are imprisoned here. In March 1982 Nelson Mandela and other high ranked leaders of ANC were transferred from Robben Island to Pollsmore.

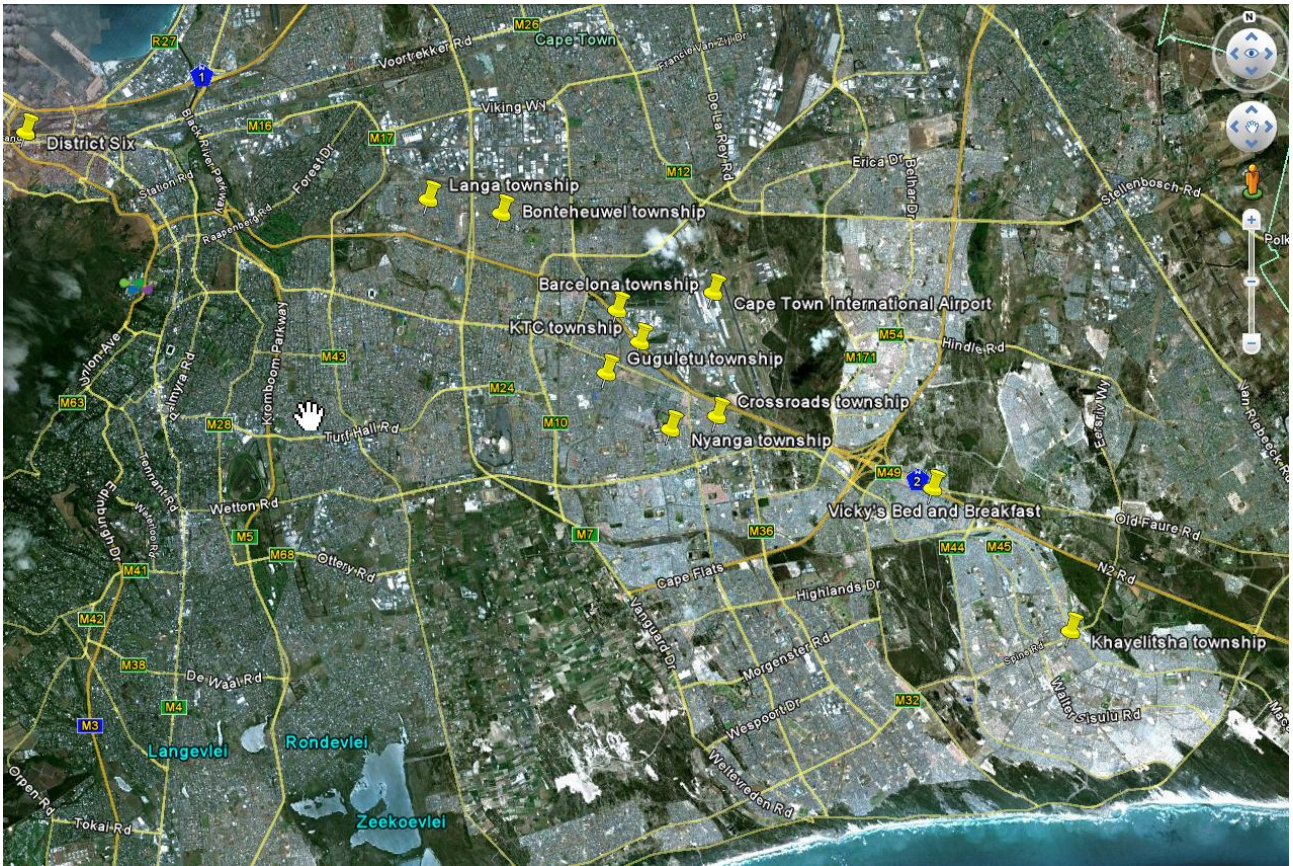
We reached Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens where we made a stop of about an hour. Kirstenbosch is lying at the eastern foot of Table Mountain. The garden grows mainly South African indigenous plants. When we arrived at Kirstenbosch the weather looked threatening. Dark clouds were hanging low, covering the mountain peaks. We managed to walk around for about 20 minutes in only drizzle. The surroundings was beautiful and we can imagine how it would look like in sunshine and with blue sky. After the 20 minutes, we felt it would be better to go inside to have a cup of coffee in the coffee bar. We had only just got our coffee when it started pouring down with rain. While we were sitting at our table, the American couple came and asked if they may join us. They told us that they lived in Florida quite at the end of the bay. Among other arrangements, their holiday in South Africa included a tour with Rovos Rail. Rovos Rail is a very luxurious train traveling through the southern Africa.

This was the end of our tour except the return to our respective hotels. When we reached our hotel, we went to our room to refresh ourselves and to relax. The evening before, we saw on the Green Market Square where our hotel is, a restaurant with outdoor service and nice music. We decided that we would have dinner there the following evening. However, when we came down to eat, we realized that it was cold and unpleasant outside, so we went to our hotel restaurant to dine.

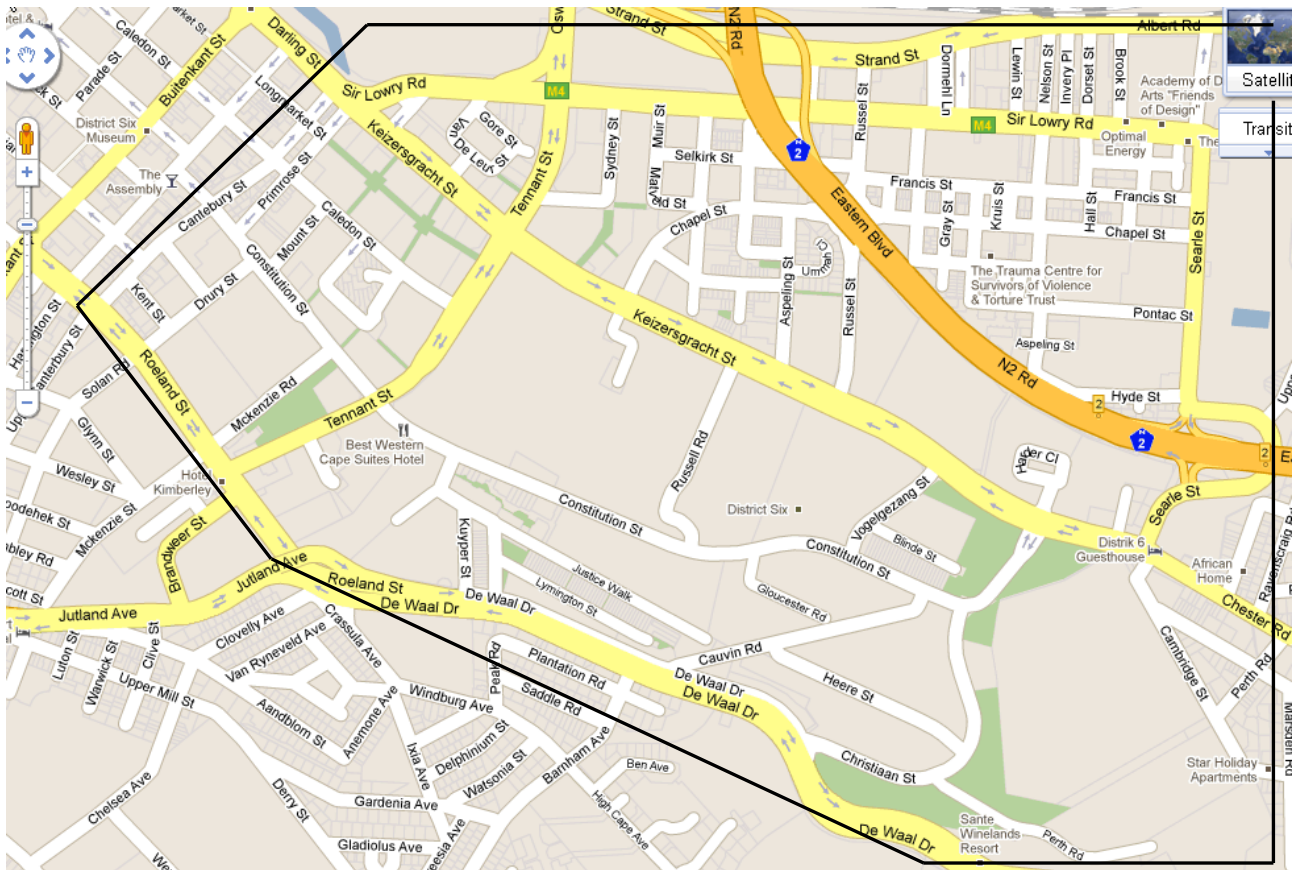
The reason that the hotel did not wake us up in the morning was that the receptionist had written a room number which did not exist. We had better luck next morning, and we were ready without being in a rush at 8:30.

5.3 - Township tour

The Townships of Cape Town:



District Six lies approximaly within the lines drawn on the map:



While we were waiting in the reception, the Swiss couple from the day before appeared. We started to talk with them, and they told us that they had been traveling around in Namibia before they came here. They found Namibia beautiful and the accommodations very good. This morning, they were going on a full day excursion to the Cape Winelands.

The excursion vehicle which again was a minibus arrived sharp at 8:30. The guide was a black man, who at one time told us, that his indigenous language was Xhosa. Xhosa is the second spoken language in South Africa. Most of the Xhosa speaking people live in Eastern Cape. Xhosa is a so called click language where the click sounds are made with the tongue. The sound of the language is quite interesting.

We left to fetch the other passengers and continued to see District Six and The District Six Museum. District Six was originally an area with a population of different races but white. In 1901 all black inhabitants were relocated, and in 1965 the authorities declared the district an area for only white people. At that time about 60.000 people, making one tenth of the entire population of Cape Town, was living there. At the end of 1982 all 60.000 inhabitants had been relocated to the area Cape Flats and their houses demolished. Cape Flats is a level and sandy area situated southeast of central Cape Town.

To day District Six is still lying with empty sites where the destroyed houses once were. Since ten years, a process has been established, enabling the relocated residents to apply for compensation for their losses. However, the burden of proof is difficult and so far only about 20 families have received compensation. Thus, a final solution lies far ahead.

The apartheid system grouped the population into racial classes with different rights. These classes were: White, Asiatic, Coloured and Black. White is people of pure European descent; Asiatic is Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese and others; Coloured is people of mixed races, Malays, Koreans and others; Black is black African people.

In the museum, there was a small bookshop offering some 60 titles about District Six, forced removals and apartheid as well as a selection of postcards and souvenirs. Among the titles was a book written by the staff member Noor Ibrahim. The title is Noor's Story – My Life in District Six. The book is about his life during the years in the district, his family, his friends, the people of the area, the institutions and the disaster when his home was demolished. When we were there mr. Noor was in the bookshop. We bought a copy of his book which he dedicated to us. It has been quite interesting reading his book. It gives a very good impression of how life was at that time and how apartheid destroyed well functioning societies.

When we had finished at the museum, we went for the townships. Contrary to yesterday, where we saw some of the most expensive and luxurious places, to day we would see the completely opposite places. We had a secrete doubt about the decency to entertain ourselves by looking at these people's poverty and their miserable homes. However, as the owner of a bed and breakfast that we visited said: "We know that you do not come to see the poverty of the people. You come to see all the qualities of the societies, the efforts done to improve the situation and how people are coping with everyday life."

We also learned that not all homes are shacks. We saw several small neat and well kept houses. Our guide told us, that after living a certain number of years at a plot, people earn the right to the plot. Once they have earned the right, they start building the house. Passing such a house our guide pointed at it saying that he lived there with his mother and aunt. Yesterday our guide told us that he was living in a rented flat in one the seaside suburbs. What a difference between the possibilities of two people with the same job but different skin colour.

The first visit in a township was to a centre where they educated unemployed inhabitants. We saw a workshop where the participants learnt to make pottery and to decorate it. We also met a painter who exhibited his works and who was a teacher in the centre. In addition there were several other activities that we did not see. To sustain the work we made a contribution to the centre.

For the next visit, we met a local man who was to act as a guide for us. He took us to an elderly woman in a building with several rooms or flats. She was living in one small room with eight other family members. The room made it up for both living and sleeping room. The room looked shabby, but there was both a telephone, television and a fridge. Anyway, why would they not have those basic facilities that we take for granted? As a compensation for the inconvenience and the photos we took, we paid her a little money.

He then brought us to another part of the building where he lived with other families. He was well articulated and well dressed and the contrast of his appearance and the look of the rooms was really great. In general, African people, also those in the townships, look quite well dressed.

We continued with him to a day nursery that was supported by the touring company. We went to a big room where several of the bigger children were to sing and dance for us. One small boy was standing with his back against a wall. He beat the wall with the palms of his hands making the rhythm for the children who sang and danced. The drum beat was spell-binding, the song swinging and the dance sensual; this was really black Africa.

In Gugulethu, we first went to see the Gugulethu Seven Memorial. The memorial is raised to commemorate the killing of seven young black activists from the township. They were killed by South African police on March 3, 1986. During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the policemen, who carried out the murders, stated that they suspected that the activists would attack a police car. The commission granted them later amnesty.

Further we saw the Amy Biehl Memorial. The monument was unveiled on August 25, 2010. Amy Biehl was a young American graduate, who began a 10 month study at the University of Western Cape in 1992. She was working within the human rights for non white South Africans. When she on August 25, 1993 was driving three colleagues home to Gugulethu, a black mob attacked her car. They dragged her out of the car and stabbed her to death. Four young men of the mob were convicted of the murder and imprisoned. They later asked for pardon at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Amy Biehl's parents supported the pardon with the words: "The most important vehicle of reconciliation is open and honest dialogue...we are here to reconcile a human life who was taken without an opportunity for dialogue. When we are finished with this process we must move forward with linked arms." The four men were granted amnesty in 1998 and released from prison. In 1997 Amy Biehl's parents established the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust. The trust works for the children in the townships through after school programs. Two of four convicted men work at present in the trust.

In Khayelitsha township, we visited Vicky's Bed and Breakfast. It was the first Bed and Breakfast in Khayelitsha. It is built of corrugated iron and wood by Vicky and her husband themselves. The inside of the house was neat and clean, and as far as the interior is concerned, we would not hesitate to stay there.

When we left the last township we visited, we passed some open areas. Some of them had several plastic tents standing used for circumcising boys. When the circumcision of a boy was over the tent was set afire. The boy would leave the place without looking back. Later we saw black smoke ascending from such fires.

We visited or drove through the following townships; Langa, Bonteheuwel, Gugulethu, Nynga, Crossroads and Khayelitsha. We did not feel like intruders in a world that did not belong to us. We heard about and saw positive projects and people we met had an open minded approach to us. Maybe they see us as good ambassadors for their course, when we return to our countries and tell about everything we have seen. We know that unemployment is high, the level of training and education low and crime rate high. However, it was altogether a good experience, that also causes reflection.

5.4 – Afternoon walk

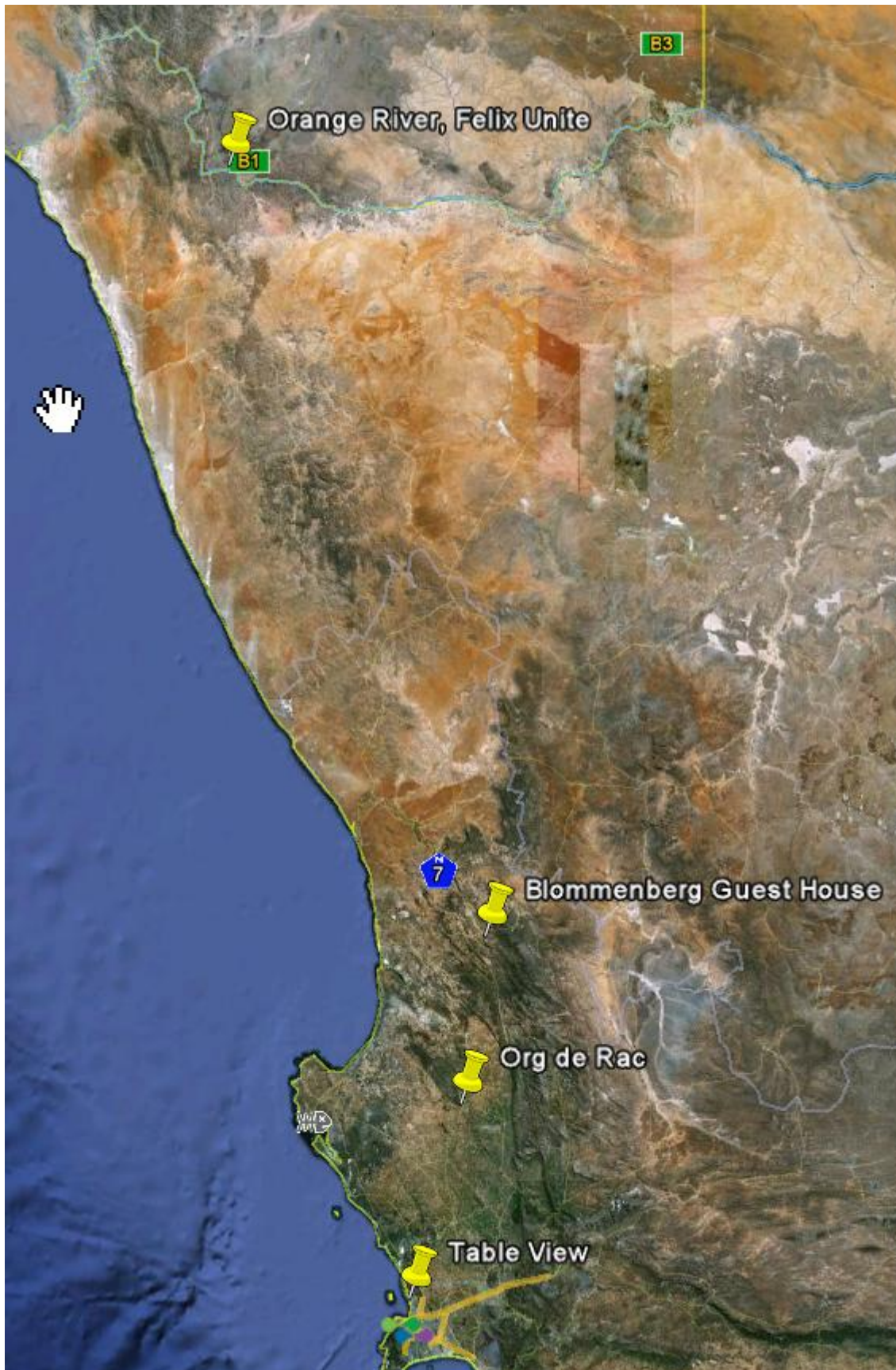
We had lunch at the open air restaurant that we missed the evening before. Then we went for a walk in the nearby shopping streets. The weather had cleared, and the sun was shining from an almost blue sky. We strolled around a couple of hours looking at shops and taking photos.

The rest of the afternoon we were relaxing and packing our suitcases and bags. In the evening, we again had dinner in the hotel restaurant. We had come to like the restaurant and our waiter.

6 – The Namibia adventure tour

6.1 – Out of South Africa

The route out of South Africa:



6.1.1 – Registration at Nomad and introduction of the participants

In the morning, we had to meet at Nomad Tours Office at 7:40. Departure was expected to be at 9:00. The Nomad office was just across Green Market Square, so we had no problems with meeting the deadlines. There was a hectic activity at the office. We all had to register and to fill in papers. That alone took more than the estimated time and when we finally thought that everybody was ready, we still missed two persons who had not turned up. They appeared to be an elderly German couple that lived at the same hotel as we did. We are not sure why they were late; anyway, about ten o'clock we were ready to set out on the adventure tour.

We were 15 participants and three crew members. The participants were: Wendy and Peter, an English couple of our age; Anne and Sibyl, two young German women in the beginning of their thirtieth; Andrea and Christoph, a young German couple also in the beginning of their thirtieth; Anica and Wolfgang, a middle-aged German couple; Monika and Bernhard, a middle-aged German speaking Swiss couple; Wolfgang, a German man of 74 years; Irene and Werner, the German couple being late, in their late seventieth; Mira and me. This makes in round figures 75% of the participants were German or German speaking. We later learned that the tour was announced as a German tour. We have nothing against German speaking people but when so many people speaking the same language are together they tend to speak their own language. However, we think that we fairly quickly started to act as one group.

From the beginning and until they left the tour we spent most time with Wendy and Peter. They had been living two years in Johannesburg working in a township. They were volunteers sent out through the Mission, an inter-church organization working with developing countries as far as we understood. We have deep respect for people who devote themselves to help others and do it on their own expense. They would be leaving South Africa after the holiday, and the tour was their farewell to Africa. We enjoyed very much the time with Wendy and Peter, and were very sorry when they left in Swakopmund to return to Johannesburg to prepare their return to England. Before they left England, they were both retired, and they would now continue that life. We agreed with Peter and Wendy to stay in touch after our return.

We also got a closer relationship with Anne and Sibyl. They were nurses both as well as colleagues and friends from Freiburg. They were pleasant young women always laughing and joking. Anne was very spontaneous and they were both open individuals. They were also sleepy persons; they slept a lot in the truck. It is always sad to say goodbye to somebody you have come to like. On a journey like this that moment is inevitable. In Windhoek the tour ended for us, and the moment to say goodbye had come. Anne and Sibyl continued the tour to Victoria Falls.

Andrea and Christoph had lately bought a Nikon dslr camera. That was a perfect subject for making an acquaintance. I helped Andrea with some photo accessories to clean the lenses. We had a pleasant time in their company. They also left the tour in Windhoek, and we spent the last night in the same hotel. The following day we had breakfast together and were sitting talking until their taxi came to take them to the airport. We went to the taxi with them to say goodbye. They were flying to Cape Town where a rented car was waiting for them. They would be driving around in South Africa one week before their return to Cologne.

Wolfgang who was on his own on the journey had been living forty years in Australia. He was married with a Japanese woman. During his life, he had worked in many different jobs around the world. Africa was the last part of the world he had not seen. He had asked his wife to join him on this journey, but she had had no wish to do so. When we talked with him, he started in English but switched to German without realizing. He was an interesting man to talk with, with

his long life experience. It is amazing that a man of his age travel that far on his own. First of all, the journey from Australia to South Africa is quite a distance. Then he was joining the tour all the way from Cape Town to Victoria Falls.

Anica and Wolfgang came from Cologne. Wolfgang spoke English and he was working in the insurance business. Anica did not speak English, and we had no real contact with her. They joined the tour to the end at Victoria Falls.

The Swiss couple Monika and Bernhard got off at Windhoek. Monika was working in a travel agency and spoke well English. Bernhard was an engine driver, and he had only little knowledge of English. However, he tried hard to make himself understood, and we did talk to him a little.

The last participants were Irene and Werner. They were only speaking German, and we had no real contact with them. Irene was using a walking stick and although Werner was using no kind of aids, Irene seemed to be the most agile of them. They were also continuing to Victoria Falls, and again we were impressed that people of their age undertake such a long and trying journey.

The crew members were: Johannes, the driver and leader of the tour; Erroy, our cook; Guenter, German translator and assistant. Johannes descended from Zimbabwe; Erroy was a Cape Coloured with white ancestors; Guenter was German.

6.1.2 – Out of South Africa, Cape Town to Clanwilliam

We found our luggage, went to the truck and got it into the luggage lockers. In the meantime, Mira found seats for us. When everybody had got a seat Johannes made a small introduction. All Nomad's trucks had names after famous singers; the name of ours was Marley after Bob Marley. We were not supposed to call it truck, lorry or bus, only Marley counted. If we broke the rule, we had to pay a penalty which Nomad then spent on charity.

The passenger cabin was four steps up from the ground and a level higher than the driver's cabin. At the front of the passenger cabin above the roof of the driver's cabin were two windows facing the driving direction. Below the windows was an opening to the driver's cabin, enabling us to communicate with the guides in the cabin. In front of the opening was a small table and after that a cooler box for our bottles with drinking water and other drinks. On both sides of this equipment were two seats. The rest of the seats was facing the driving direction with two seats on each side of a central gangway. Totally there were twenty-four seats.

First sight to visit was the Table View. However, before enjoying the view to Table Mountain, we went to a nearby shopping centre where Erroy and Guenter had to buy in supplies for the day. Johannes advised us to buy drinking water for the journey and drinks for the dinner. That way we learned that the crew would prepare both lunch and supper. We bought as advised as well as some fruits, sweets and biscuits. We also exchanged money for the whole tour.

At Table View, we had on our left hand side a beautiful view to Cape Town and Table Mountain. Straight ahead we had a view to Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for eighteen years.

We continued north to the region Swartland. The region has taken its name from the endemic Rhinoceros Bush. Especially during the rainy season the bush appears dark when looked at from the distance. We experienced the landscape as a beautiful undulating yellow landscape with green patches of wine fields. In the vicinity, the Swartruggens dark mountain ridge completed

the scenery. In this land close to the Piketberg Mountains the organic wine estate Org de Rac was situated. The view from the estate was fantastic with the Piketberg and Swartruggens mountain ranges as pronounced features in this undulating patchwork of yellow and green.

At Org de Rac, we had both a wine tasting and a guided tour around their production facilities and wine cellars. They had four wines at the wine estate namely, Merlot Rosé, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. We tasted them all and two of them were blind tasting. At the end the vineyard gave us one bottle each after our own choice. In addition to the wine growing, they were also growing lavender, rosemary and olives. Before we left, we had lunch at the terrace outside the production building.

The destination of the day was Clanwilliam. Clanwilliam is a small city of about 6.000 inhabitants and one of the ten oldest in South Africa. It is situated about 250 kilometers north of Cape Town between the Oliphant River Valley to the east and the Cederberg Mountains to the west.

Half way to Clanwilliam, we made a photo stop high above the plains. We had a fantastic view over these plains clad in yellow and green framed by dark mountain ranges.

In Clanwilliam, we stayed in Blommenberg Guest House run by a married couple on a hobby basis. It was a very neat and tidy place with most of the rooms circling a cosy and lush atrium garden. In the garden were a small swimming pool and a terrace with café tables and chairs. At the end of the garden was a roofed area for dining and adjacent kitchen facilities. Our room was inviting and very comfortable with all necessary facilities.

Dining together appeared to be a very enjoyable event with a pleasant atmosphere. It opened for the opportunity to get to know each other and throughout the tour, we enjoyed it very much.

6.1.2 – Out of South Africa, Clanwilliam to Orange River

We had breakfast at 7:00 and at 7:30 we were ready to leave. The first hour we were driving through similar landscapes as yesterday, and then it changed to a more barren environment.

At noon, we had lunch and Johannes demonstrated all the facilities of Marley. In addition to what we have already mentioned under “Planning the tour” Marley was equipped with sunblind, two fuel tanks and two batteries.

We had yet three to three and half hours to go through Namaqualand to reach our destination. In Springbok, we made a stop to provision and to pay a visit. Close to the Namibian border we made another stop to prepare papers for the passport and border control. The landscape looked scorched with a light brown colour. Dark rocky hills or small mountains were scattered over the desolate plateau. The road was straight until it disappeared in the horizon. Farther down the road the colour of the plateau changed to yellow and the hills or mountains to light brown.

When we were ready, we continued to the border. We had done our homework well, and we passed the border quickly and without problems. Not long after we came to our accommodation in Felix Unite at Orange River.

6.2 – Namibia



6.2.1 - General impressions from and thoughts about the Namibian adventure tour

Namibia is so different from what we have ever seen. The infinity of the country and the vast horizons made us feel that we were moving within eternity. We drove long distances without seeing human life or activities except the small wire fences bounding the huge farms.

The colours of the mountains varying from red, mauve, brown, yellow to black many with layers of different colour made the views spectacular. Several of the mountains looked as if giants had thrown rock on rock to build the mountain.

The prevailing red and orange colour of the sand in the deserts created magnificent sceneries. Even so, there were big flat endless areas with white sand and mirages appearing in the shimmering air.

We drove by turns through National Parks and areas with private land. We did not see dense populations of animals but throughout the tour we saw as the most common springbok, oryx, kudu and ostrich.

Namibia is really a fascinating and exiting country to visit with lots of memorable experiences.

Although we in the beginning were hesitant as to a tour based on travelling in a truck catering for ourselves, it appeared to be great. We felt a little like being pioneers, though comfortable ones. We were not sleeping in tents but in convenient rooms. We were not sitting around the camp fire preparing and eating our own meal. We were mainly sitting on fixed wooden benches at fixed plank tables or on camping chairs at camping tables. We were eating from metal plates and drinking our box wine from metal mugs. We had Erroy, who was a great cook, and he made very tasty meals throughout the tour. This way of travelling got us all together, and it was a very positive experience.

Johannes was an indefatigable driver and guide, and he worked hard to make the tour a success for everybody. He was very attentive as to make a stop every two to three hours that we could stretch our legs, go to the toilet or eventually buy in supplies.

Guenter was always in a good mood, very polite and made us feel comfortable.

6.2.2 – Namibia, Felix Unite, Orange River

Our accommodation consisted of several chalets lying on the slopes of the Orange River. Orange River forms the border between South Africa and Namibia. The native name for the river is Gariab and the name orange was given the river in honour of William of Orange. We had a fantastic view over the river. Looking left the mountains had a beautiful red colour and looking right the colours were yellow and black.

The interior of the chalets created a very pleasant atmosphere. They had all necessary equipment, and they were very comfortable.

In the evening, the wind was rising and when we were eating it felt too cold to stay longer time. So, quickly we left the table and went to our rooms. Wendy and Peter came to our room to have coffee and some sweets before we turned in.

Next morning we had the possibility of being active with canoe paddling on Orange River. If we wanted less demanding activities we could just relax, or walk along the river. We chose to walk together with Wendy and Peter. However, we did not put the right footwear for a walk on rocks and after a short walk we returned to have coffee at the restaurant. After the return of the canoe paddlers and lunch, we left for Ai-Ais.

6.2.3 – Namibia, Felix Unite to Ai-Ais

Ai-Ais is situated at the southern part of Fish River Canyon at a sulphurous hot spring. Ai-Ais means “burning water” in Nama language. The temperature of the water is about 60 centigrades

where it wells. We were staying at Ai-Ais Hot Spring Resort. It had been renovated in 2009 and was a very luxurious accommodation. We had a beautiful bathroom, a sleeping room and a sitting room as well as a big terrace facing the mountains. The entrance to the room was from a wooden footbridge or balcony on the first floor level of the indoor thermal pool. The indoor pool area looked very fashionable all in stone with pools at different levels and equipped with deck chairs. The resort also provided an outdoor pool with the thermal water.

The distance to Ai-Ais was one of the shorter of the tour, and we were already there about half past three. On the way we made a photo stop about an hour before Ai-Ais. The colour of the surrounding arid land was brown and some part had an interesting pattern. The mountains at the end of the plateau were mauve and several of them had a completely flat top. It was a fascinating scenery worth a photo. The last part of the route to Ai-Ais ran through a ravine with yellow and black mountains rising on both sides of the road.

The Ai-Ais Hot Spring Resort was situated beautifully. A river was running along the resort on the front side with a backdrop of mixed red and grey mountains. The back side was lying at the foot of the mountains.

Troops of baboons were roaming the area, and Johannes warned us against approaching them.

Having installed ourselves, half of our fellow travellers went to have a healthy swim in the sulfurous hot water. The other half, to which I belonged, sat down to chat and relax with a cold beer or two.

The resort encompassed a camping area, where we parked Marley and had our dinner. After dinner Wendy and Peter came to our room to have coffee. As the hotel was fully booked, our crew was outside sleeping on the roof of Marley, well away from the baboons.

6.2.4 – Namibia, Ai-Ais to Stampriet

On the way to Stampriet, we would visit two sights namely, Fish River Canyon and Kokerboom Forest.

Fish River Canyon is the second largest in the world only surpassed by Grand Canyon in USA. The canyon is about 160 kilometers long, 27 kilometers wide at the widest and 550 meters deep where it is deepest. It was formed about 500 million years ago partly by water erosion and partly by movements in the crust of the earth. The dry riverbed fills with water during the rain season.

The Fish River main viewpoint was about 80 kilometers from Ai.Ais, and we reached it in an hour and a half. The landscape surrounding the canyon in this area was an arid flat plateau, and we had no indication that the plateau would fall 500 meters down to the bottom of the canyon. Safe behind the railing at the viewpoint feeling the giddy height we had a stunning view over the canyon. The riverbed of Fish River was winding its way through the rocks and right in front of us was the 180 degrees Hell's Bend. The colour of the canyon was a mix of yellow to brown shades creating patterns like a patchwork.

After having done some strolling and our photo work, we left the canyon. We drove north and entered the Kalahari Desert. Kalahari is not a real desert as the rainfall is too high but a semi arid land covered with trees and bushes. However, in Namibia it is fundamentally a desert as the ground consists of porous sandy soil not able to retain the water. In some places, the annual precipitation can reach 250 mm.

Shortly after the town Keetmanshoop, we came to Kokerboom Forest. When we entered the area, there was a sign showing that to walk the forest was on our own responsibility. The reason for this drastic warning was that snakes were common in the area.

The kokerboom tree or quiver tree as it is called in English belongs to the *aloe dichotoma* species. The name quiver tree derives from the Bushmen's use of the tree to make quivers for their arrows. It is a succulent which grows like a tree and can reach a height of 8 meters. The leaves are grey-green and sitting in a rosette at the end of a silvery branch. The branches are growing from the top of the yellow trunk forming a crown like a ball. The flowers are bright yellow and blossom in July. The tree is normally solitary. However, in the small town of Kenhardt in the Northern Cape there is a kokerboom forest of 700 trees and in Namibia the one at Keetmanshoop of 250 trees.

We saw several of the solitary trees standing en route. However, we passed them so fast that we did not get a close look at them. At Kokerboom Forest, we really got the opportunity to look at them. In the afternoon sunshine, they were standing there as clad in gold and silver. The rosette leaves were not green but yellow and looked like a golden crown on the silver branches aloft the golden trunk.

As the day's stretch was the longest on the tour, we still had a long way to drive. We headed north towards Mariental. Shortly after Mariental, we turned east towards Stampriet where we arrived at Stampriet Historical Guesthouse at half past six. The guesthouse looked inviting with a garden with lush lawn, trees and flowers. At the end of the garden there was a big terrace under shady palms. The terrace had stone grill, tables and chairs for dinner.

The guesthouse had a big collection of antiques, which decorated as well the rooms as the restaurant and bar areas. At our arrival, the landlady introduced the house and asked us to take special care of the antiques as they were fragile. This was, in fact, annoying as the rooms were small and the antique furniture took too much space with very little room left for our luggage.

The evening was beautiful and the temperature was pleasant. We enjoyed a splendid meal at the terrace under the big palm trees.

6.2.5 – Namibia, Stampriet to Hammerstein Lodge

We left Stampriet about 8 o'clock and headed towards Intu Afrika, Kalahari Private Game Reserve. At the game reserve, we were to meet a group of Bushmen to demonstrate their lives and traditions. The Bushmen or San people, as they are called in Namibia and South Africa, is the indigenous population in Southern Africa. Migration of other African tribes and the white colonization forced the Bushmen out of their territories. To day, they are not able to live their traditional life as hunters and gatherers.

On the land of the game reserve lies a Bushmen's village. The Bushmen are working with different activities such as information about their traditions, game guiding, camp site supervision and handicrafts. These activities generate income that supports their life in the village. This Bushmen society is the result of a project between Intu Afrika and two South African anthropologists. In 1996 they invited 40 Bushmen to establish a self-supporting community in Kalahari Game Reserve.

The visit to the Bushmen was optional, and we were six who chose it. The six participants were Wendy and Peter, Wolfgang from Australia, Guenter and us. Two safari jeeps came to take us to the lodge. Together with us were some of the other participants who would stay at the bar terrace to have a beer or whatever and wait for our return.

We met four Bushmen but none of them spoke English. So, we also met an interpreter who translated to English. The Bushman language is a language using click sounds. It is very interesting to listen to the language because these sounds are so peculiar for us.

The Bushmen were aged from 22 to 39 years. They were all slim, agile and very fit and looked younger than they were. They showed us how they stored water in woodpecker holes, how they decoyed an anteater to a termitary to kill it, how they killed a prey with bow and their poisoned arrows and how they celebrated a kill. They also showed us how they were eating different parts from a bush or tree. From one specific tree one part would give constipation, and another part would work like a laxative.

After one hour, we finished and went back to the others at the terrace. We drove back to Marley and had lunch. We then continued through Kalahari to our accommodation just outside the Namib-Naukluft Park. Approaching Namib-Naukluft the scenery changed from flat open land to be more mountainous and the sky became more and more overcast. Half an hour before Hammerstein Lodge, we made a stop. The surrounding plateau and the mountains were all in red shades.

Johannes called us to a tree with a pile of woven hay or dried grass fastened to the branches. This was a colony of weavers and seen from beneath we could see all the holes to the nests. It looked like a bit of an engineering work. We had seen a lot of these colonies around, but it was first time we took a close look at one. Johannes told us that it does happen that these nests after rain showers and subsequent sunshine are set afire. This happens because the raindrops work as burning-glass.

We arrived at Hammerstein Lodge at half past six. The room was big and we had what we needed. However, it was not exciting and had no atmosphere.

Our dinner was in a boma that was set up on the ground. It was Monika's birthday and we met half an hour before to celebrate her with a drink and a toast. Just before the dinner the staff of the lodge entered the boma singing, and they continued to sing to celebrate Monika. The rhythm was very exciting and everybody enjoyed. After several songs, they retreated. The menu was a special birthday creation and consisted of lamb chops and chicken. After dinner, we stayed to chat with Wendy, Peter, Anne, Sibyl and later Guenter, and Erroy joined us.

6.2.6 – Namibia, Hammerstein Lodge

The program of the day was to visit the sand dunes at Sossusvlei and the Sesriem Canyon. We had to get up already at half past four as Sossusvlei looks most beautiful at sunrise and the temperature is more bearable at that time of the day. During the day, the temperature can reach as high as 50 centigrade.

The name Sossusvlei derives from two words. Vlei is the Afrikaans word for a shallow water filled area. In this context, it can rather be described as a dry salt or clay pan occasionally flooded. The other word sossus is the Nama word for dead end. Originally, Sossusvlei is then the pan where the dunes create the tube of a funnel, close the pan and Tsauchab riverbed runs. In

seasons with very high precipitation where the river flows this far it prevents the water to run further. Today the name covers the whole plain of the Tsauchab River and the entire area of the dunes.

Sossusvlei:



All rivers that run from interior Namibia towards the coast between Orange River and Kuiseb River are ephemeral rivers. They do not reach the sea and terminate all at a vlei or by the dunes.

On the last part of the road to Sossusvlei the dunes were close and rising high on both sides of the road. This part was the original Sossusvlei. We passed on this stretch Dune 45, which is very popular to climb. On the narrow pan on each side of the road we saw many oryx. We also spotted a bat eared fox with a prey in its mouth. A crow was chasing the fox to catch the prey. At the end of the road, we left Marley and went by open jeeps 10 to 20 minutes into the dunes. Here we met a guide who took us on a hike further into the dunes.

The sand dunes are the most spectacular sight we have ever experienced. The dunes can be as high as 300 to 400 meters and the colour is orange to red. We did not have the luck to see them with the clear morning sky as background. The weather was cloudy with dark grey clouds hanging over the dunes. Nevertheless, the grey colour did make an impressive background to the dunes whose colours stood out against the clouds.

Between the dunes were several hollows with a white-beige parched bottom. Some of them resembled a terrace covered with flagstones. One of the hollows was Dead Vlei. Dead Vlei lies between some of the highest sand dunes in Sossusvlei and the length is 1.3 kilometers. It was once filled with water from the flooding Tsauchab River which made it possible for trees to grow. Later drought dried it out as the increasing sand dunes prevented fresh water from flowing in. The trees died and to day they stand as black silhouettes. They are believed to be about 900 years old. It was a very impressive sight to see all the black trees on the white ground, with the red dunes as a backdrop.

Our guide took us through the dunes to Dead Vlei and back again. He was walking bare-footed, and we asked him how it was possible in such hot sand. He answered that it was not a problem to walk on the sand, but standing still was, but then he just dug his feet into the sand.

On the way through the dunes our guide showed us and told us about various topics. The dunes are not migrating dunes. The only part of the dunes which move is the top of the dunes depending on the season and the prevailing wind. We saw how one drop of water makes a dormant desert flower to open its petals and spread its seeds. He found different beetles in the sand; he caught a lizard in a bush and told about their lives in the desert. He found tracks in the sand of a wild cat. He told about the San people who once lived there and how they had been ousted by the Nama people. San people could distinguish and recognize the footprints of their fellow Bushmen. They were also able to see whether it was a young or an old person who had been resting in the sand.

While we stayed at Dead Vlei, we saw that sand started drifting at the far end of the vlei. It came quickly closer and soon grains of sand filled the air. We had to pack our photo equipment and turn our face towards the starting point. The sand drifting developed into a real sandstorm. The sand beat our faces, and it was impossible to see ahead. Everybody but the guide was protecting their faces and eyes with their hands, caps or scarves. When we came to the starting point the jeeps were not yet there. We did not wonder considering the weather. However, the jeeps arrived and we entered the vehicles. They were still open jeeps so when we started driving, we felt the sandstorm even worse. How the driver without glasses to protect his eyes found his way through the storm is a mystery to us. Anyhow, suddenly Marley was there.

We got quickly on board Marley and drove off. To look out of the windows, was as to look into a heavy snowstorm. After a few kilometers Johannes stopped Marley at a passing place, to wait for an improvement of the weather condition. When the visibility improved, we continued to Dune 45, but now it started a little to rain. Only four of the younger of us wanted to climb Dune 45. The rest of us took the opportunity to get rid of the sand in our hair, clothes and shoes.

We quickly finished lunch in Marley, as it was still blowing hard and impossible to sit outside. When we were ready we continued to Sesriem Canyon. The canyon is much smaller than Fish River Canyon. It is formed by Tsauchab River in sedimentary rock. It is about one kilometer long, 30 meters deep at the most and two meters wide at the narrowest place. There was an easy path to the bottom of the canyon. We took the path and had a walk through the canyon. It was very interesting to see all the layers of sediments and the shapes of the rock that the river had carved. When I, at a narrow place looked up for the sky, a head with a big nose, eye pits and an open mouth was looming over me.

When we were ready to go, we left Sesriem Canyon and headed home. It was still blowing with occasional showers. We were back at three o'clock. The wind continued the rest of the day, and it was pretty cold. Because of this, we had our dinner inside. After dinner, we had coffee with Wendy and Peter and later Andrea, Christoph, Anne and Sibyl joined us.

6.2.7 –Hammerstein Lodge to Swakopmund

We left Hammerstein Lodge by the same way as we were driving on the first part of the excursion to Sossusvlei. The plains were all yellow from scorched grasses and small plants, although the soil was red. Mountains in mauve and red shades ran along the edge of the plains and in front of Marley. After about two and half hours drive, we reached the village Solitaire. In Solitaire was a renowned baker, making famous “apfelstrudel”. Of course, the two persons with

a sweet tooth, Mira and Peter had to share an apple crumple. An hour and a quarter after Solitaire, we came to the Gaub Canyon and Pass. We entered an area with serpentine roads, steep mountainsides and deep abysses. At the bottom of the canyon, we saw a troop of baboons. The vegetation of the plains after Gaub Pass was sparse and the colour changed to brownish. We made a stop at Tropic of Capricorn where we made a family photo and enjoyed the views to mountains of different colours. We continued to the Keuseb Canyon and Pass. Before we drove down the canyon to cross the river, we had a photo stop. From there, we had a fantastic view over the canyon and the surrounding area. There was hardly any vegetation and the landscape looked desolate and harsh. To cross the pass and the river we had to do some climbing up and down steep winding roads.

Having descended from Kuiseb Pass, we came to a part of Namib Desert that was completely flat and white. Wherever we looked, we saw sand, and we could hardly distinguish the road from the desert. The air was hot and at a time we saw a mirage of breaking waves and a beach. It was certainly a mirage as we were too far from the sea to have that view. Jutting out from the flat landscape suddenly a rock or a sandstone formation appeared. The name was Vogelfeder Berg, and though it did not have the height of a mountain it was high enough to have an incredible view over the desert. We continued to Walvis Bay at the Atlantic Ocean. The town has 44.000 inhabitants and is among the biggest in Namibia. It has an important big natural deepwater harbour. Our aim was to see flamingoes. We came to a lovely sea promenade with green lawns and palm trees. On the land side of the promenade were very nice houses and on the water side the flamingos were foraging. The view over the sea to the city and Pelican Point Peninsula was beautiful. We had time to enjoy the place as we were having lunch there.

We then continued along the sea to Swakopmund, where we would stay two nights. Johannes made a short round in the town and continued to a centre offering different adventure sport and excursions. We had a presentation of the possibilities but nobody signed up for anything except Irene and Werner. They signed up for a boat tour to watch dolphins. When everybody was ready we went to the Dunedin Star Guest House. The crew would be sleeping in a nearby accommodation. Our room had a fair size, was clean had the necessary facilities. Looking around for a bathroom we did not see it in the first place. However, a closer look revealed the bathroom behind two cupboard doors that did not leave much for the fantasy when we paid a visit. Outside were some nice court yards with bushes and flowers. There were several places with garden furniture but some a bit rickety.

This was the hardest route so far with bumpy roads that really gave us a shake-up. After arrival, we had only time for doing some unpacking, having a shower and enjoying a cool beer with Wendy and Peter in one of the court yards.

It was the last evening for Wendy and Peter, who would return to Johannesburg the following afternoon. The evening was without planned common dinner and on our own account. However, Johannes suggested that we went together to a good restaurant to eat some local food and to take the opportunity to say good-bye to Wendy and Peter. Nobody objected and at the planned time we met outside our hotel and walked together to the restaurant. We believe that all thought the same as we did when we saw that the restaurant was a pizzeria: how can this be a good restaurant with local food? Nevertheless, they had very delicious meals of venison so our fear was groundless.

6.2.8 –Swakopmund

Swakopmund has 42.000 inhabitants and is a town very German like with many examples of German architecture left. It is a holiday resort with pleasant temperatures during the summer season and nice beaches. However, the water seldom reaches higher temperatures than 15 centigrade because of the cold Benguela Current. The meeting of the cold Atlantic Ocean and the warm Namib Desert causes often fog to occur. For people who want action, there are a variety of extreme sport and adventure offers. Less active people can just stroll through the town enjoying the many shops, coffee shops, cafés and restaurants.

So we did with Wendy and Peter after having had breakfast together. We walked to the city centre to do some shopping and to enjoy the café life. At about noon we returned to our hotel; Wendy and Peter to leave for the airport and we to see them off. After our farewell, we returned to the centre to continue our shopping and to have lunch. Walking about in a small shopping centre, suddenly a couple of Himba women appeared in their traditional outfit with bared breasts. It looked somewhat out of place, although indigenous people's right to live according to their traditions is unquestionable.

Seven new participant were to join the group in Swakopmund. Six of them joined our common dinner which we had inside at the accommodation of our crew.

The new participants were: Christian and Stefanie, a young German couple on their honeymoon; Nina and Corinna, two young German women, one of them, a journalist and the other a medical doctor; Henriette, a South African woman going to visit friends; Carola and her husband, a German couple. It gave rise to criticism that the number of participants increased to 20, as Nomad states that accommodated tours operates with a maximum of 18. However, it worked fine and the newcomers integrated very well in the old group.

6.2.9 –Swakopmund to Khorixas

We continued our voyage towards the north along the coast. Half the way to Henties Bay, we passed the small town Wlotzkas Baken. According to Johannes many migrant fishermen from other African Countries had settled down in the town. After about 20 minutes drive, we encountered a shipwreck on the shore. At Henties Bay, we made a stop at a place with some small rocks etched into strange shapes by the wind. From the place, we had a very good view over the town and the sea. Henties Bay is a small town in Damaraland and a well known holiday resort with long beaches.

We left Henties Bay and drove inland towards Khorixas. This was also a farewell to the white sandy desert. We entered a flat area of gravel with sparse vegetation. The predominant colour shades of the landscape were brownish and reddish. The dominant feature of the landscape was the Brandberg Mountain. It was visible a long way before and after we actually passed it. Brandberg is the highest mountain in Namibia with 2.573 meters. Both the German name and the Damara name Dâures reflect the beautiful red colour of the mountain which may be emphasized by the glow of a setting sun.

Two hours after we left the coast we stopped at a road junction where people were selling stones and minerals from the mountains. With Brandberg as a backdrop, they had set up stalls and stone mounds where they presented their goods. We continued another hour before we had a lunch break. During the break, a small group of people came wandering and settled down not far from

us. After we finished our lunch, Guenter collected the remaining food and gave it to the group of people.

Further on we stopped at a group of Herero women. They were selling their handicraft from small stalls they had raised. The Herero women's clothes are Victorian style dresses, which cover them from the neck to ankle and the headgear resembles the horns of a cow. This fashion of costumes has been adopted as a result of the influence of German missionaries. The garment is very colourful. Today there are in Namibia about 100.000 Herero, who are living from breeding cattle. During the 19th century, they had armed conflicts with incoming Nama people. In 1907 they were close to extinction with a population decreased from estimated 80.000 in 1904 to 15.000. This was due to a bloody colonial war between the Germans and the Herero people.

We continued to Khorixas close to where our lodge would be. Khorixas was before the independence the capital of Damaraland but has lost its importance to Opuvo, the capital of the Kunene region.

The lodge consisted of a camping area and several small bungalows with two accommodations in each. Besides, there was a swimming pool, restaurant and a bar. Our room was nicely furnished and equipped with all necessary facilities.

6.2.10 – Khorixas to Etosha

First stop was Kamanjab, a small Damara village close to Kaokoland, the home region of the Himba. We were to visit a nearby Himba village. To come to Kamanjab, we passed through an area with low soft shaped mountains. Although dry, the plains had a semi dense growth of bushes and small trees of which the vast majority was green.

The Himba and the Herero are originally one people. In the 16th century, they migrated to kaokoland from Angola. The Himba stayed in the region, whereas the Herero migrated farther down to the central part of Namibia. The Himba is living as nomads moving about with their herds of goats and cattle for grazing and water. There are about 20.000 to 50.000 Himba living in Namibia.

To visit the village we had to bring a present to the Himba as an appreciation of or a payment for their good will to let us into their settlement, to explain us about their traditions and letting us take as many photos as we liked. We collected money for the present in Marley. Johannes suggested that we bought everyday necessities which they would appreciate. We appointed some of the participants to buy the present when we arrived in Kamanjab.

The village we were to visit was located on the land of a big private ranch. The owner supported the village that their children would receive education. In the village we only saw one man; the rest was women and children. We had two guides, a man and a woman, to show us around and to introduce us to the Himba life.

As is the case with all Himba villages a fence of wood surrounded the village we visited. In the centre of the village was another fence making a circular enclosure for the livestock. The village had one entrance and farthest away from that was the main hut of the chief. In front of the entrance between the livestock enclosure and the hut was the sacred fire. The fire represents the spirits of the ancestors, and it burns incessantly. All the other huts turned their entrance away from the fire. No person may cross the invisible line between the fire and the hut without

permission. Normally, visitors must pass round at the back of the hut, but we got permission to cross the invisible line.

The huts were round with conical roof. The walls were from mud, plastered on a framework of branches and the roof from some kind of rush. The chief's hut was somewhat different as the roof was made the same way as the walls and the shape was rounded.

Traditionally, both men and women are topless. Women wear miniskirts and men loincloths both made of goat skin. On their legs women wear beaded anklets to protect against snake bites. The women are famous for their reddish complexion. They get the colour from smearing their skin with a mixture of ochre and butter fat. They do this as a protection against the sun. To clean or to perfume themselves, they use the smoke from burning aromatic plants and resins.

When children reach the age of 10 to 12 years they have their four bottom incisor teeth knocked out. Both girls and boys are circumcised before they reach puberty. Small children have their heads shaved. When they get older girls have two hair plaits falling down the face while boys have one falling down the neck. At puberty the girls' have their hair arranged with many small plaits covered with the red substance used for the skin. The boys increase the number of plaits to two. When married, women wear a crown shaped headdress from skin and men cover their head with a cap.

Inside the chief's hut, we had a demonstration of the women's body care and of different utensils. A nice-looking younger woman was sitting inside the hut. However young the shape of her breast indicated that she had already nursed several babies. Her expression was serious and somewhat inscrutable or proud. It might also have been a defense against curious eyes.

She showed the jar in which they keep the ochre ointment that they apply to their skin. She also demonstrated how they kindle the glow in the material which produces the smoke used for cleaning and scenting their body. She covered the part of her body, which she wanted to expose to the smoke with an animal skin and accumulated the smoke under the skin.

Himba people sleep on the floor of the hut and wrap themselves in blankets. They put their head or neck on a wooden neck support not to spoil their hairdo. Our guide demonstrated how they use such a support. I would rather continue with my pillow.

Cultures are developing over the years, and it is not a disaster if the Himba culture adapts itself to changes. However, it is difficult to see how a culture encompassing 20.000 – 50.000 individuals will be able to resist the impact that the 21. century will have on them. The bad outcome of the situation would be that modern life will obliterate not the genetic Himba but the Himba culture. The good outcome would be that the Himba takes the best from the two cultures and combines it into a modern vivid Himba culture.

After about one and half hours, we left the Himba village. We continued east and then north towards Etosha National Park.

In 1907 the Governor of German South West Africa established a game park covering an area of 99.526 square kilometers. This park included the area of today's Etosha National Park. In 1970 Etosha National Park found its present size of 22.270 square km. Included in this area is Etosha Pan, which covers 4.590 square kilometers. The length of the pan is 120 km and 72 km wide. Originally, Etosha Pan was a natron lake which later dried up. Only during heavy rains the lake fills up but only for a short time. There are a few smaller pans, which add up to 550 square km.

Etosha is one of the biggest game parks in Africa. It has a big variety of mammals, birds, reptiles and some amphibians. Among the mammals is a population of black rhinos and the endemic black-faced impala. Unfortunately, we did not see the black rhino.

Spread across the park are Water holes; some are natural and some are artificially made supplied with water from boreholes. They attract numerous animals, as well herbivores and predators as birds. The water holes are strategically placed at the roads making a successful outcome of a game drive very likely. The gravel roads are broad with a speed limit of 60 km per hour. It is not allowed to drive outside the roads.

We came into the park via Anderson Gate where we made a stop for lunch. Before we arrived at Okaukuejo our first accommodation in Etosha, we made a three-hour game drive. Although game drives were not the main purpose of our Namibian holiday, we looked forward to being on safari again. In Kenya, we had been only our guide and us in the car. We had been driving in a 4w Toyota Land Cruiser and could drive on more or less impassable roads and wheel tracks. We had so to speak been off the beaten track and felt that we were the only human beings in the world. We knew this time would be different driving in Marley in the company with a big group keeping to the beaten track. Anyhow, we looked forward to a different experience.

Right from the beginning we met impala and springbok. A little later we encountered our first giraffe towering majestically above the land. We are fascinated every time we meet this huge gracious animal floating the ground when moving.

We were passing open dry and stony gravel plains, grass land and areas with scattered vegetation of dry looking shrub dotted with vigorous green trees. Thickets of thorn brush and woodland replaced the open areas. It was strange to see how barren and parched land suddenly changed into luxuriant forest.

Once we passed a thicket of thorn brush, Johannes suddenly stopped Marley. He had spotted a white rhino in the thicket. It was very difficult to catch sight of the rhino, but finally we succeeded in discerning the animal. I even managed to get a quite good photo of the rhino.

In fact, Johannes was quite good at spotting animals. Another time he spotted two lions lying on the ground under some trees. It was difficult to see them properly with the naked eye but in the binocular we saw two male lions sleeping side by side in the shade of the trees.

Apart from the ostrich that you can hardly avoid spotting, we saw several other birds. One of them was the secretary bird. It has long legs and is about 125 - 150 cm long. It is a terrestrial bird of prey hunting on foot. Its prey is snakes, other reptiles, amphibians, tortoises, small mammals and birds. It can fly but chooses to do so only under hard pressure. The bird has got its name from the crest of long feathers, which resemble the quill pens that clerks formerly used to put behind their ears.

We saw several other animals, but we did not mention all. At the end of our account of our Etosha experiences will list all the animals, we saw including those we did not write about.

Our arrival to Okaukuejo Camp ended the game drive. We got ourselves installed in a very nice room. On the bed towels arranged like swans were lying. After refreshing ourselves, we went to the waterhole of the lodge to watch the animals. However, after a short while we returned to the bar to have a drink. Sitting there the sun set, and we had the most beautiful view to a red sky through the silhouette of a network of branches and twigs.

After dinner, everybody went to the waterhole to look for rhinos, which were likely to appear at evening and night. While we stayed there a rhino did come, but it was very difficult to distinguish. We left shortly after and went to our room for an early night.

6.2.11 – Etosha

The day started with a three hour early morning game drive. At that time of the day, the colours are softer and warmer than during the day. Therefore, our experience of the scenery was different from the day before.

So far, we had seen no elephants but Johannes spotted one standing alone on the edge of our field of vision. With binocular we got a clear picture of the elephant. However, we did not get any closer, and the elephant disappeared out of sight.

Later we encountered a black-backed jackal with puppies at its den. As most animal young ones, they were very sweet tumbling around with each other. However, do not get it wrong, they are wild animals.

At a waterhole, we experienced a group of five lions; three lionesses and two lions. They came walking in from a kill, the males with the mane red from the blood of the prey. They drank water for some time and then walked away. First the lionesses left and afterwards the one lion followed. For a short while he was standing with his side turned to us. His belly was hanging low weighed down by a heavy load of food. The last male lay for a longer time in a posture with the head high, watching the others leaving. He looked like a king watching his subjects.

We returned to Okaukuejoe Camp, where we had breakfast. After breakfast most of us went to the waterhole to watch the life there a last time before we were moving on to Halali Camp. There were quite a lot of animals, and we stayed at the waterhole a while to look at them and to take some photos.

The tour to Halali was arranged as a game drive. We were driving through the same type of landscapes as the day before. For the first time on all the game drives, we have participated in we saw young ones of an ostrich. They were downy and the colour was beige with black stripes on the body and black spots on the neck. They were rather cute walking like small ballet dancers.

Close to the ostriches at a waterhole there were quite many animals, including several black-backed jackals. They were circling around a carcass of a springbok and one of them was trying to find some left-over tidbits.

At the next waterhole, a giraffe was standing drinking. When drinking, they spread their front legs and bent them until the head reaches the water. It is an awkward position, and it makes them vulnerable to predators. In the neighbourhood we saw several helmeted guineafowl. They are beautiful birds with their pearl like pattern of the body and the strong blue colour of neck and head and the red colour of the crown.

Later we met our most favourite African animal, the warthog which we call Charley from our first visit to Kenya. At the animal orphanage at the Mount Kenya Wildlife Conservancy, we met Charley, an orphaned warthog who followed us like a dog and liked to be scratched on his back and behind his ears.

While we were driving along some woodland, I suddenly caught sight of a big kudu with impressive horns, standing at the edge of the forest. I thought that Johannes would stop Marley, but he just continued. When we came to Halali, I asked him if he saw the kudu. He answered that he had seen it, but he was driving too fast to stop. It was a male in his prime with horns developed to three spirals. According to Johannes, it takes two years to develop one spiral.

Our room in Halali Camp was big and comfortable. The area was full of trees and in one the trees outside our room, we saw a squirrel sitting. In another one a little farther away our companions spotted an African scops-owl. It sat quietly on a small branch leaning against the mother bough. The owl was almost invisible as its appearance very much resembled the bough. It is the smallest owl in its the habitat with a length of only 15 – 17 cm.

We had another game drive late in the afternoon. The sky was overcast with fantastic cloud formations. The main experience on this game drive was not the game but the scenery. Heavy clouds were hanging over the landscape. The sun was shining through the clouds creating lines of rays and rain reaching from the clouds to the ground. The pan looked like a real sea or a big lake with small ripples on the surface. A minor growth standing where sky met ground resembled a far away island. We drove into the pan at Etosha Lookout. We got out of Marley, and Johannes drove away; we believe to turn Marley. At that moment, we felt like Jesus; we walked on water. We returned to Halali in the most beautiful sunset with the sun wedged between the ground, and the clouds coloured beautifully red by the sun.

After dinner, our younger fellow travelers asked us to come to sit down with them, to have a beer. It was our last evening on tour, and we all felt a little sad that the fellowship had come to be broken up. Next evening would be a farewell evening after which we would split up. Some would continue the tour. Andrea, Christoph, Monika, Bernhard and we would leave and new ones would join in. In the morning, we would have to pack Marley at 5:50 so we left the company in due time.

At breakfast Guenter told that his camera had been stolen. While the group or some of the group had been sitting outside Marley the evening before, somebody had sneaked in and stolen it. Marley and Guenter's bags had not been rummaged; the thief went straight for his camera. This just shows that you always have to watch out for your belongings, when you are on the road.

We left about seven o'clock. First part of the tour was a last game drive. At one time we saw a spotted hyena making a show of hunting some springboks. Shortly after Johannes spotted at a far distance some lions that it was hard for us to see. In our binoculars, we could see three lions lying in the grass. Later Johannes spotted yet another lion. It was busy with a carcass. We continued to a nearby waterhole and not long time after we could see the lion come walking. We were sure that it was the same lion as it was red in blood around its mouth. A little later a younger lion joined the first one.

We had so far only seen one elephant, and that was on a great distance. As everybody wished to see elephants, they started to shout: "We want elephants", and what happened? Shortly before the game drive was over, two elephants were standing at the roadside.

Before we leave Etosha, we will list the animals we saw these three days:

Mammals: lion, spotted hyena, black-backed jackal, giraffe, plains zebra, blue wildebeest, springbok, impala, greater kudu, oryx, white rhino, elephant, steenbok, warthog and squirrel.

Birds: ostrich, yellow-billed kite, gabar goshawk, pale chanting goshawk, kori bustard, secretary bird, helmeted guineafowl, spurvinged goose and African scops-owl.

We left Etosha through Anderson Gate and continued towards Windhoek. In a small town not so far from Windhoek, we made a stop at a craft market. It was a big market with stall by stall but there was hardly any customers. The people from the stalls were very eager to sell and approached you constantly with offers. It was rather annoying but you can hardly blame them sitting there the whole day without selling anything. We bought a small hippo made from soapstone.

We arrived at Windhoek late afternoon. Everybody was tired and when Johannes suggested the planned short tour around the city nobody really wanted it. We wanted straight to our hotel. We were staying at three different hotels. Andrea, Christoph and we stayed at Casa Piccolo. Casa Piccolo was a very nice and cosy bed and breakfast hotel. The buildings had a deep yellow colour, and all rooms faced a lovely atrium garden with trees, terraces, green lawn and a swimming pool. Our room was big and comfortable.

Although split up, we had arranged that we would all, including the newcomers, dine together in a restaurant in town. Marley came around to pick us up. The place was Joe's Beerhouse not very far from our hotel. It was a big restaurant completely full with guests. The design of the restaurant pretended to be original African, but it appeared a little false. However, the atmosphere was good although a bit noisy. The menu had a big choice, and we chose Bushman Sosatie (kebab). It was a spit with pieces of ostrich, crocodile, zebra, kudu and chicken, served with salad and pap, a traditional porridge from maize.

The only one who did not join the dinner was Guenter. On the way to Windhoek, we heard that he would not continue the tour but return to Cape Town after a couple of days in Windhoek. However, we expected that he would join us for dinner. Nevertheless, when Marley came to fetch us Johannes informed us that Guenter had been called back to Cape Town as soon as possible for urgent matters. He was busy with arranging his return, but Johannes hoped that he would be able to join us later. This he did not.

When we had finished, Marley brought us back to our hotel. We said goodbye to everybody and felt sorry that it was all over now. We arranged with Andrea and Christoph that we would have breakfast together and then see them off at the taxi.

In the morning, we met with Andrea and Christoph and when the taxi came, we said goodbye to them. We then had about half a day at our own disposal. During the morning Mira began to feel a little sick. However, she insisted to go to see Windhoek in the time we had left. We had only been a few minutes in the town when she felt really sick with nausea and diarrhea. We had to return to the hotel where we were waiting to see if she would feel better. Five minutes before the taxi that would take us to the airport arrived, we decided that it would not work to commence on such a long journey. So, when the taxi arrived, we asked him to take us to a medical clinic for treatment. This was in any case necessary to get the insurance to pay the extra costs.

At the clinic, they treated Mira with drip and injection against nausea. In the meantime, I was in contact with SOS International and our travel agency. After three hours, they discharged her

with a bag of medicine. The owner of the hotel came by car to take us back to the hotel. She was very helpful and helped us in all aspects. Apart from the circumstances, we enjoyed very much the stay. First night she had a vacant room, but second night all was occupied, so she got us a room in another hotel. Next morning, after thirteen hours of sleep Mira felt, if not fresh, then ok.

We said goodbye to Casa Piccolo and the owner and went by taxi to the new bed and breakfast accommodation that she had arranged for us. It was in the same area as Casa Piccolo so it was very easy to come there. Maison Ambre which was the name of the guesthouse had five rooms, and the atmosphere was very family like and the landlady most pleasant. They served both lunch and evening meal for us although it was not part of their normal service. They had two dogs, one border collie and one street dog from the SPCA. The border collie was most of the time lying at our terrace close to us.

Next day we had to leave in the afternoon, and the landlady gave us the room until then. The taxi came at three o'clock and took us to Windhoek Airport. From Windhoek, we flew to Johannesburg. We had only a short waiting time there before we continued to Frankfurt. In Frankfurt the waiting time was three hours to get the plane to Copenhagen. 23 hours after we left Maison Ambre, we arrived at our house in snow and minus degrees.

6.3 - Epilogue

Throughout the holiday, I made notes for every day about our experiences and the information we got from Johannes and other guides we met. On the adventure tour, we had little time left for ourselves, and it was sometimes hard to manage. On board the tour busses or Marley it was impossible to write so I was dependent on our memories when I later made my notes.

Johannes was so kind to mark our route on the adventure tour on maps we brought from home.

By Google Earth and the map with our adventure route, I got a perfect survey of events and places we visited or passed. The internet helped me to recall information that I had forgotten and provided other information of interest for the descriptions. This in turn helped me to sort our photos and to add the correct notes in the caption. All this made it possible for me to write a complete and coherent story.

We made the acquaintance of many persons who we will never forget. First and foremost is the fellowship of Marley, which includes the participants as well as the crew. Some we will lose contact with and never see again. Others we will hopefully keep in touch with and maybe even meet sometimes.

We also met hotel staff and owners, employees in museums, guides on different sights, people on our excursions in South Africa, all people who showed an interest in us.

Common for all the acquaintances we made is that they contributed to make this holiday an unforgettable holiday.

We have been driving 5.200 km with Marley and flying approximately 19.000 km.

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