

### Wednesday November 19

Albert had persuaded us that we could have a late (8am) breakfast before taking a tour to visit a canyon about an hour's drive from the lodge. The drive there was across the open desert with its sightings



of the red dunes and various wildlife. We also stopped at a small monument which declared this area a UNESCO World heritage Site—interestingly inscribed just last year in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, a place we visited a few years back.

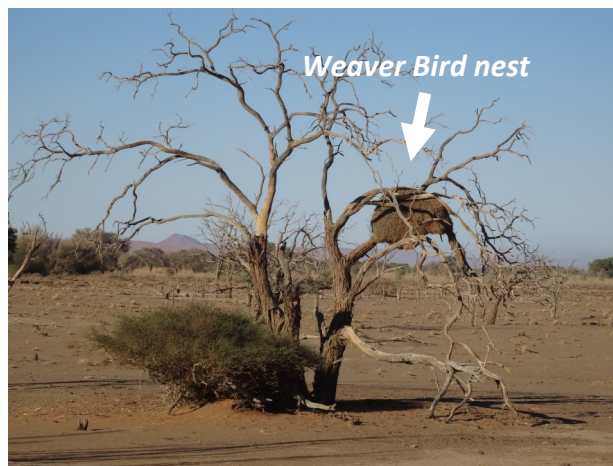


The canyon itself fell about 150 feet from the current land level.

The stretch of canyon that we could enter was only a few hundred yards long but it was interesting to walk down and see the strata that had been cut through by water over the millennia. The river that caused this erosion is now essentially dry but very infrequent rainfalls do bring water to the lower levels and we did find a small area (no bigger than a puddle) where there was some standing water. As Albert pointed out, this would be no place to be trapped if and when a heavy downpour occurred and it reminded me of similar situations that have caught many off guard in Zion Canyon in Utah







We were back at the lodge in time to clean up and vacate the room, have a final meal on the deck and then drive to the air-



strip for our return flight to Windhoek. This time we were taken in a 12 passenger Cessna Citation turbo prop plane – substantially larger than the two previous ones we had used over the last days. Again we were warned that it would be a turbulent ride (due to temperatures touching 100F causing unstable air masses over the desert, but, after a few bumps on takeoff, the ride was generally quite good.



We landed in Windhoek with about two hours to kill before our commercial Air Namibia flight back to Cape Town. We were given a good meal and plenty of wine on this leg so, once we had been picked up by Jerome and back at the house, we settled for a cup of tea and a few cookies before retiring after a fantastic trip to Namibia.

*Namibia is a country in southern Africa whose western border is the Atlantic Ocean. It shares land borders with Angola and Zambia to the north, Botswana to the east and South Africa to the south and east. It gained independence from South Africa in 1990, following the Namibian War of Independence. Its capital and largest city is Windhoek.*

*Most of the territory became a German Imperial protectorate in 1884 and remained a German colony until the end of World War I. In 1920, the League of Nations mandated the country to South Africa, which imposed its laws and, from 1948, its apartheid policy.*

*Uprisings and demands by African leaders led the UN to assume direct responsibility over the territory. It recognized the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) as the official representative of the Namibian people in 1973. Namibia, however, remained under South African administration during this time as South-West Africa and obtained full independence from South Africa only in 1990.*

*Namibia has a population of 2.1 million people (in a land not much bigger than the State of Texas) and a stable multi-party parliamentary democracy. Agriculture, herding, tourism and the mining industry – including mining for gem diamonds, uranium, gold, silver, and base metals – form the basis of Namibia's economy. Given the presence of the arid Namib Desert (from which it derives its name), it is one of the least densely populated countries in the world. Namibia enjoys high political, economic and social stability. The Namib Desert, considered to be the oldest desert in the world.*

*Since independence Namibia has successfully completed the transition from white minority apartheid rule to parliamentary democracy. Multiparty democracy was introduced and has been maintained, with local, regional and national elections held regularly. Several registered political parties are active and represented in the National Assembly, although the SWAPO Party has won every election since independence.*



## Thursday November 20

We had a very leisurely morning sitting on the deck at the Bantry Bay house before packing and setting out on our twelve day driving trip of South Africa. We had only a short drive today (less than 2 hours) to the Ocean resort town of Hermanus.



### *The drive to Hermanus over Sir Lowry's Pass*

We checked into our seafront hotel around 3:30 pm and shortly afterwards went for a short walk around the very attractive small town. We made dinner reservations for both tonight and tomorrow night at restaurants within walking distance.



We then spent a couple of hours in the room watching the ocean surf splash against the rocks just below our window and we were fortunate to see several whales. This area is famous for its whale watching as the Right Whale makes its way from Ant-



arctica to its breeding grounds further up the South African coast. We are at the tail end of the prime whale-watching season so we felt lucky to see some quite close in and many spouts both here and further out to sea. We plan to take a walk on the cliff side tomorrow and see if we can catch more views.

We had a very good Italian meal at a restaurant just a couple of minutes' walk from the hotel and retired about 10pm.

### *Sunset over the Atlantic Ocean*

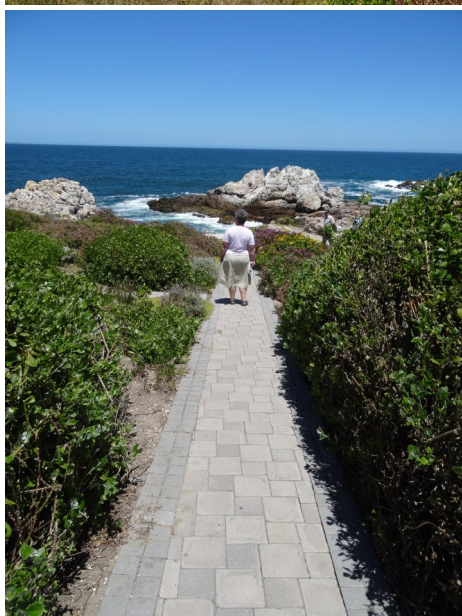


## Friday November 21

We spent the entire day in Hermanus and never got in the car. It was a beautiful sunny day with temperatures in the low seventies so it was perfect for walking into the shopping area as well as on the cliff walk. The latter stretches for about seven miles along Walker Bay and is maybe 20 to 50 feet above the water in most places. It is very nicely landscaped in places and full of natural flora in others. It is also an ideal area for whale watching and we were fortunate to see a number out in the bay. Mostly we recognized them by their V-shaped spouting but in some cases we could see the giant black bodies in the water. I even saw the tail fins extending out of the water on one occasion when I was using the binoculars at just the right time.



*Some English towns have their Town Crier.....*







## ***Picturesque Hermanus***

In addition to the 2-3 mile walk that we did, we also spent a little time buying African souvenirs in a local market and had a light lunch sitting outside overlooking the bay. Certainly this must be one of the most beautiful places in South Africa (and even beyond) and we wondered how we had managed to bypass it on our previous two visits. We won't make that mistake again.

Tonight we walked to another cliff top hotel about 15 minutes from ours where there are two recommended restaurants. We ate at the Pavilion and had the six course tasting menu with wine pairings. It was excellent and once again the service was as good as the food.

The end to the evening was not quite so good. When we were walking back on the harbor road and had almost reached the hotel, someone rushed by and snatched Molly's purse. He was around the corner and up a dark street before we knew it. We actually followed his route because Molly realized there was no cash or credit cards in the purse (total value, purse and contents, less than \$20) and we thought he might simply drop it when he had had a chance to look inside. However, we didn't see him or the purse again. We talked with several people on the streets and they seemed eager to help but we soon chalked this one up to experience. It could have been a lot worse.

### **Saturday November 22**

After breakfast we checked out of our hotel and started the 320 Km drive to our next destination at Mossel Bay. Leaving Hermanus we climbed from the water and inland to follow the N2 main road east all the way to Mossel Bay. After the hill near the coast, we were on an essentially flat plain (some undulations) which was rich farmland – grains, cattle, sheep (with lambs) and some ostrich – all with a northerly backdrop of the mountains of the Little Karoo. We will be traveling on the other side of these mountains as we head back to Cape Town next week.

We made our first stop at a small town where we spotted a bakery that also had a small café with indoor and outdoor seating; great for morning coffee with a pastry! Our only other stop was at the Acare Aloe factory and shop – which also has a café. We had coffee again and then visited the shop with its wide selection of creams, ointments and lotions containing the local aloe, similar to aloe vera but claiming even better therapeutic ingredients. We made our purchases, so we will see.....





It was only another 45 minutes to the Protea Hotel in Mossel Bay. Protea is a large chain of hotels in South Africa that appear to have been taken over by Marriott, although not yet offering rewards points, etc. However, the Marriott name (and our Platinum Elite status) counted for something as we were upgraded to a three floor suite. Our room had good views over the bay and of the harbor, which appears to be home to some rather large ocean going vessels. The views to the less commercial side were very nice and we were told that the hotel restaurant not only faced that direction but was “the best in town”. We made a reservation for tonight.

Although it had been a very nice day – sunny with some haze – the weather was clearly changing and there was rain forecast for the next two days. However, for dinner tonight it was dry and mild enough for us to sit outside and enjoy another leisurely meal, at a very reasonable price.

### Sunday November 23

We woke up to a very cloudy view – we could barely see the harbor – and there was a little drizzle as we walked across a short open stretch to the restaurant for breakfast. As we ate the rain picked up a little (not a heavy downpour, just a continuing heavy drizzle) so we decided to visit the nearby Dias Museum complex. This is primarily a museum dedicated to the Portuguese explorations of this part of Africa in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and is named for Bartholomew Dias who first set foot in Mossel Bay after rounding the Cape. He paved the way for Vasco de Gama to follow the same route and eventually reach India, thereby creating the first sea route between Europe and the spice and silk riches of the Far East which in turn avoided the many taxes that were levied on the old cross-country routes.

The museum has a full scale replica of Dias’ ship as the centerpiece. In fact, the ship was built specifically for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dias’ voyage and was sailed from Portugal to Mossel Bay in 1988. Part of the museum shows a series of photographs taken at the time and it was clearly a huge celebration at which the whole population of the area must have turned out.



The museum also contains many maps and pictures of the Voyages of Discovery and



very openly declares Portugal (not Spain!) as the more important country in opening up (and colonizing) Africa and India. Spain was obviously a player, however, and there were a number of “debates” over sovereignty of the new lands, one of which divided South America between the two in roughly equal parts, giving Brazil to Portugal.

Hence that is the only

South American country to have Portuguese as its language, not Spanish.





The Maritime Museum (which is the major focus of the complex) is extremely well done and there is a wealth of information, not only on the voyages but on the history of Africa before and since colonization. In fact, one of the rooms contains many mid-20<sup>th</sup> century pieces and seems just a little out of place. Perhaps they are still collecting items for a more coherent exhibit.

From the Maritime building we walked to another which contained many aquariums and other exhibits of the fish and sea life of this area and which contains thousands of shells in a very comprehensive exhibition. Finally, in outside areas of the complex there are reconstructed homes that were originally built in the early 1800s by a Scot (Munro), a small cemetery containing the remains of Malay Muslims (presumably part of the “reverse flow” of population from the East and the “Tree Post Office”. This latter is supposedly where one of the early explorers hid a boot containing a letter and other items associated with the voyages east and was later found by another traveler. Apparently the items provided interesting and/or important information on the explorations.



We returned to the hotel after three hours in the museum complex – and, after drying out, promptly fell asleep. We did wake in time for a late afternoon coffee and a drive around Mossel Bay and even made a reservation for dinner at restaurant below the Cape Blaize lighthouse – another famous landmark of the area.

*The Post Office Tree  
and  
Monument to Bartholemeu Dias*



*A rather damp Mossel Bay*

Then something unusual happened. About 6pm all the power in our room(s) went off. For a while we wondered if it was just us but it soon became obvious that the whole hotel was out. I walked along a candle-lit corridor to the reception desk where I was told that it was the whole TOWN that was out and it would be 8pm before power was restored. They seemed so blasé about it that it seemed obvious it was a reasonably common occurrence. In fact, about 6:45 a very loud generator was powered up and we had lighting around the hotel in some places. We were assured, however, that we would be able to get the car out through the electrically operated security gate and that, since most places cooked with gas, our restaurant reservation would still be OK.

So, shortly after seven we left for the Lighthouse Restaurant only to be told on arrival that they could not cook because the extractor fans were not operable. Apologies all round but we

had to return to our hotel and eat again in the restaurant there. We had a good meal, mostly in semi-darkness, but right on 8pm the power came back and we could see what we were eating. We finished the meal in full light and returned to the room about 8:45. Everything was normal!

### Monday November 24

It was much brighter, although still overcast, as we had breakfast and then checked out of the hotel in Mossel Bay. Today was another driving day, although it was only a short drive to our next stop in Wilderness.

We actually drove beyond Wilderness along the Garden Route as far as Knysna. The Garden Route keeps generally close to the ocean but goes inland – and quite high – from time to time. Hence, there are some magnificent views of the water, and



the beaches, as well as a great deal of greenery. The whole area is lush with trees and other greenery which gives this stretch of road its name and provides a vivid contrast to the sea views.

In Knysna we first visited their version of the Cape Town Waterfront complex – but on a far smaller scale. There are many restaurants and cafes and several boutique and souvenir shops and the whole area is a series of boardwalks along the lagoon (that is a feature of the town) and a small canal. It was very pleasant strolling the area and enjoying a light lunch sitting outside under what by now were essentially clear blue skies.



*The Garden Route overlooking Wilderness*



### ***Knysna Waterfront; proud of its latitude of 34 South. Los Angeles is at 34 North***

We also stopped in the center of town at a small market which sells African crafts. I recall doing quite a bit of souvenir shopping there on our first visit but we were not tempted by the goods available today. However, Molly was able to replace the purse that was snatched in Hermanus a few days ago so we didn't come away completely empty handed.

We checked into our hotel, The Palms, around 3:30. We had stayed here twice before and enjoyed both visits, in part because of their excellent restaurant. Unfortunately, we were told that they no longer do evening meals (although they are considering opening again) but the rooms are as good as we remembered. Each is a small thatched cottage and this time we were shown to a large upstairs room. We had always been on the ground level previously; in fact, we didn't even know there were upstairs





rooms. The whole area is surrounded by beautiful greenery and small water features so it gives the feel of a little home in the jungle.



### *The Palms Guest House.*

*The thatched roof of our room..... And even a thatched roof bathroom!*

There are still some good restaurants in the village and our hostess spent some time trying to get us into one that had a tempting tasting menu. She was unable to get us in tonight (but we are set for tomorrow) so she suggested a café in the village called Flava. It was only a few minutes' walk from our room and indeed was more a locals' café than a restaurant. However the food and service were excellent and we had a three course meal, a bottle of wine and espresso and walked out for \$50, including tip!

### **Tuesday November 25**

We had breakfast sitting outside at the Palms. This was served to all the guests by the hostess and included fruit, cereal, "Full English" and tea/coffee. It was a little overcast but certainly warm enough for outdoor dining.

We then spent the rest of the day on the Garden Route between Wilderness and Plettenberg Bay, a distance of about 50 miles through magnificent scenery of dense forest, more open farmland and, of course, superb ocean views.

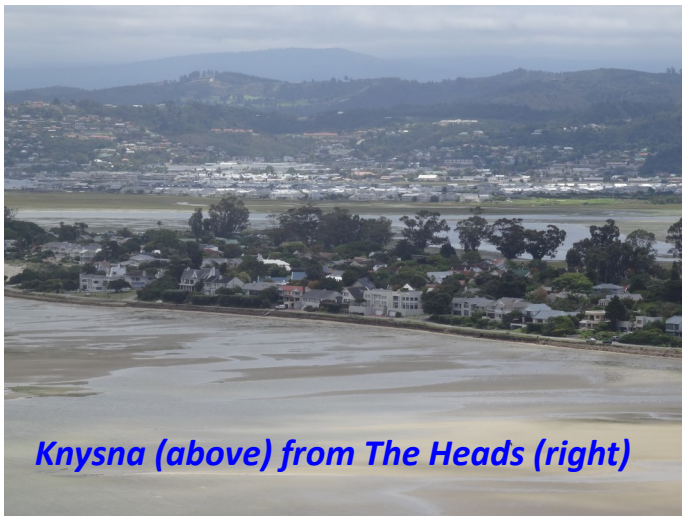
We made three stops before reaching Plettenberg Bay. The first was at a small village on one of the many lagoons that reach inland from the Indian Ocean. The village is called Sedgfield and has formally adopted the name of "Slow Town" to maintain its feel and its desire to remain unspoiled by tourism.

Next we had coffee in Knysna – at a very pleasant coffee shop right on the main street – and then drove to The Heads, a little way out of the





town. Here the neck of the Knysna lagoon meets the ocean and forms a narrow and turbulent stretch of waterway between high cliffs. We saw whale watching boats leaving for the sea just outside the lagoon and even spotted a few spouts from our high vantage point.



*Knysna (above) from The Heads (right)*



Finally, we headed to the town of Plettenberg Bay (where we have stayed twice in the past) and which is the “rich and famous” spot on the Garden Route. We strolled along the main shopping street, had afternoon tea in a shaded courtyard and then drove to the ocean front and watched the surf for a while.



*The idyllic Indian Ocean at Plettenberg Bay*

*And the less romantic shanty town (“Township”) not far away.*

*In South Africa, the term township usually refers to the (often underdeveloped) urban living areas that, from the late 19th century until the end of Apartheid, were reserved for non-whites (black Africans, Coloreds and Indians). Townships were usually built on the periphery of towns and cities.*

*During the Apartheid Era black people were evicted from properties that were in areas designated as "white only" and forced to move into segregated townships. Separate townships were established for each of the three designated non-white race groups (black people, coloreds and Indians).*



By this time it was getting close to 3pm, so we decided to head back to Wilderness. We had seen a stretch of road work on the way out which warned of long delays so we wanted to get through that in plenty of time for our 7pm dinner reservation. It turned out that we didn't have too long a wait and, even with a "routine traffic stop" (license and registration check by a very polite police officer), we were back in our room before 4:30.

This gave us time to rest and clean up before the short drive to Serendipity, the highly recommended tasting menu restaurant. This really was an excellent meal with superb, friendly service. Each course was described in great detail by the chef and each wine pairing similarly presented. The venue was also very pleasant – overlooking the lagoon in a small (four table) room. We had a great meal and a nice chat with a couple from England and one from Germany.

So, we ended our few days on the Garden Route and tomorrow are headed inland to the Little Karroo.

*The Garden Route is a stretch of the south-eastern coast of South Africa. It extends from Mossel Bay in the Western Cape to the Storms River in the Eastern Cape. The name comes from the verdant and ecologically diverse vegetation encountered here and the numerous lagoons and lakes dotted along the coast.*

*It has an oceanic climate, with mild to warm summers, and mild to cool winters. It has the mildest climate in South Africa and the second mildest climate in the world, after Hawaii, according to the Guinness Book of Records. Temperatures rarely fall below 10°C in winter and rarely climb beyond 28°C in summer. Rain occurs year-round, with a slight peak in the spring months, brought by the humid sea-winds from the Indian Ocean rising and releasing their precipitation along the Outeniqua and Tsitsikamma Mountains just inland of the coast.*

*The Route is sandwiched between these mountains and the Indian Ocean. The Outeniqua and Tsitsikamma indigenous forests are a unique mixture of Cape Fynbos and Temperate Forest and offer hiking trails and eco-tourism activities. Nearly 300 species of bird life are to be found in a variety of habitats ranging from fynbos to forest to wetlands.*

*Ten nature reserves embrace the varied ecosystems of the area as well as unique marine reserves, home to soft coral reefs, dolphins, seals and a host of other marine life. Various bays along the Garden Route are nurseries to the endangered Southern Right Whale which come there to calve in the winter and spring (July to December).*

### Wednesday November 26

It was once again very pleasant having breakfast at the Palms before we packed and set off for our next destination, Oudtshoorn, in the Little Karroo.

*The Karoo from a Khoikhoi word, possibly garo "desert" is a semi-desert natural region of South Africa. There is no exact definition of what constitutes the Karoo, and therefore its true extent. The Karoo is partly defined by its topography, geology, and climate, and above all, by its low rainfall, arid air, cloudless skies, and extremes of heat and cold.*

*The Little Karoo is separated from the Great Karoo by the Swartberg Mountain range. Geographically, it is a 290 km long valley, only 40–60 km wide, formed by two parallel Cape Fold Mountain ranges, the Swartberg to the north, and the continuous Langeberg-Outeniqua range to the south. The northern strip of the valley, within 10–20 km from the foot of the Swartberg mountains is most un-karoo-like, in that it is a well watered area both from the rain, and the many streams that cascade down the mountain, or through narrow defiles in the Swartberg from the Great Karoo.*



It was only a 1 ½ hour drive over the coastal range to the southern end of the Little Karoo, so we were at our hotel before noon.

### ***The Coastal Range driving to the Little Karoo***

We hadn't expected to be able to check in so early, and indeed we couldn't, so we decided to take the scenic drive to Prince Albert, about 70Km away. We had been before and Prince Albert itself doesn't have a great deal to offer but the drive there over the Swartberg Pass is spectacular.

About 25 miles of the drive are on an unpaved road, originally built by a Scot in the

mid-1800s. It is an amazing feat of engineering and provides amazing views over the mountains and the Little Karoo valley.



***The spectacular Swartberg Pass runs through the Swartberg mountain range (black mountain in English) which runs roughly east-west along the northern edge of the semi-arid area of the Little Karoo in the Western Cape province of South Africa.***

***The Swartberg is amongst the best exposed fold mountain chains in the world, and the pass slices through magnificently scenic geological formations. To the north of the range lies the other large semi-arid area in South Africa, the Great Karoo. Much of the Swartberg is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.***

***It was built using convict labor by Scotsman, Thomas Bain and opened on 10 January 1888. The dry stone work supporting some of its picturesque hairpin bends is particularly noteworthy.***

***The pass runs between Oudtshoorn in the south and Prince Albert in the north. The pass is not tarred and can be a little treacherous after rain, but offers spectacular views over the Little Karoo to the south and the Great Karoo to the north. The plant life along the pass is very interesting, many hundreds of species being found on the Swartberg.***

***The pass is especially famous due to the spectacular geology that is exposed at its Northern end. The contortions in the rock display astonishing anticlines and synclines, and the vivid coloration of the surrounding Quartzite is remarkable. At the Northern end of the pass seven hundred meter high quartzite cliffs of the upper Table Mountain Group can be seen, and these are often tilted through 90 degrees (sometimes even more).***

The summit of the pass is at about 5000 feet and some of the surrounding peaks are probably of the order of 7000-8000 feet and the views are fantastic as the road winds its way up and down in hundreds of zig-zag loops. A good deal of the road was built by simply (!) building a wall (up to 20 feet high in places) along a stretch of Cliffside and then filling that with rubble and dirt until a reasonably flat surface was formed. This was the road then – and it is essentially the same today. It would appear



that it will remain in its present state since we noticed that the Pass is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site so presumably changes will be hard to come by.





It is probably one of the best – and most thrilling – drives that we have ever taken and, while the ride up the southern slope is exciting, things get really thrilling on the downward slopes to Prince Albert



***Fantastic scenery over the Swartberg Pass***

***and on the return to Outdshoorn***

Once at our destination of Prince Albert we had a light lunch and then returned to Outdshoorn via the longer (100km) main road, which in itself is an impressive ride through the mountains. The passes are not as high as the Swartberg Pass and because of that, much of the road is cut through the huge cliff walls so giving the sense of driving through a deep gorge. It really was a wonderful way to spend the afternoon and we were still checked in our hotel before 4:30.

We made a dinner reservation at Jemima's about ½ mile from the hotel. We recall having eaten there on our last visit but couldn't remember much about it except that it was enjoyable. In fact it was extremely enjoyable with typical South African excellent food and service – all dining outside on a balmy evening.





### Thursday November 27 (Thanksgiving Day)

We drove into town and found a small café for breakfast; once again it was warm enough to sit outside and watch the world go by. Following that we went to the C.P. Nel Museum which we thought was simply a history of the ostrich farming industry here but it turned out to be so much more. There were several rooms dedicated to the ostrich, its farming and the boom period (early 20<sup>th</sup> century) which gave rise to the many magnificent homes in the town and the current status (still thriving but now more for the meat) – but there were about eight additional rooms on the town and its three hundred year history.



***C.P. Nel Museum in the  
former Boys' School***



***Above: Photograph of Swartberg Pass  
before the automobile.***

***Otherwise, it hasn't changed much!***

The exhibits were plentiful and well described and – as we have often found in our travels – the size of the town bore little resemblance to the quantity and quality of the items collected for display. We were once again brought up short by the 20<sup>th</sup> century rooms full of things we recognized; it's always a little difficult to be familiar with items that are now museum pieces.

There was of course reference to the Boer War and to South Africa's participation in both World Wars and we were surprised to see that a good number of Polish refugees ended up here as a final stop after fleeing their homeland as the Russians advanced.

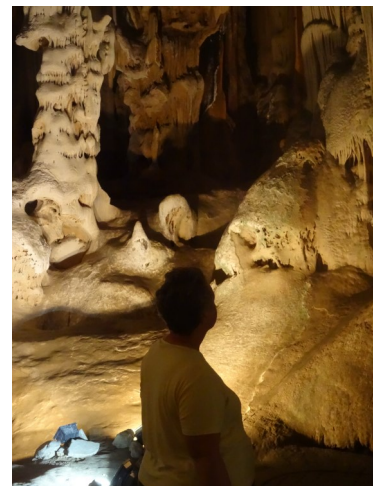
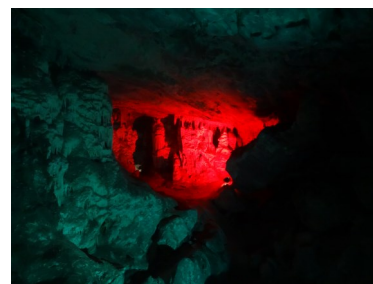
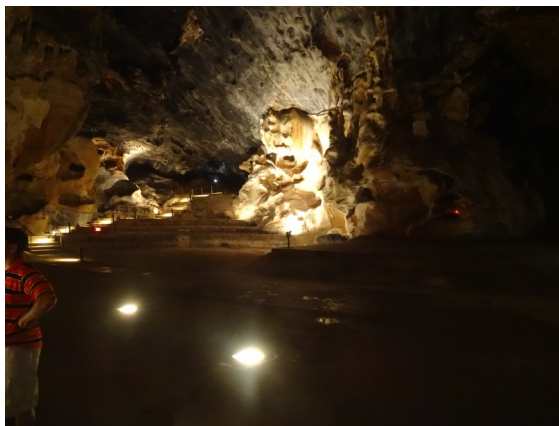
All in all it was a very pleasant way to spend a couple of hours and brought us nicely to coffee break time in the very pleasant downtown area of Outdshoorn.



For the afternoon the plan was to visit the Congo Caves (about 20 miles north and one of the top attractions in South Africa) and then a nearby Ostrich Farm. The caves had magnificent examples of stalactites and stalagmites (estimated age up to 1.5



million years) in enormous caverns – the largest of which was several hundred feet across and had been used as a theatre until the 1990s. The guide was very good at describing what we were seeing and adjusted lighting (from colored to bright to none!) to give us a sense of what the early explorers found as well as a chance to take some great photos. As Molly said, we have no need to visit caves ever again as these surely can't be beat.



## *Cango Caves*

We then drove just a little way back towards town and had just paid for our ostrich farm tour when a thunderstorm came by. Since most of the tour is conducted outside we were encouraged to try again tomorrow morning, which we readily agreed to as we are in no rush to get to our next destination.



We drove home through some very heavy rain and rested in our room until dinner - tonight at the Queen's Hotel, where we had stayed (and eaten) on our last visit to Oudtshoorn six years ago. We both felt that the restaurant décor had changed from the dark wood paneling that we remembered but the food was good and the prices very reasonable.

### Friday November 28

We went back to the Queen's Hotel for breakfast, this time sitting in the sidewalk café. The service was very leisurely but it was pleasant sitting in the warm sunshine.

We then drove the 15 miles north to the Ostrich Farm that we had been rained out on yesterday. We arrived just in time for the 45 minute tour and were introduced to our guide. She first gave us a little history of ostrich farming in this area and, in particular, about this farm. This is not a commercial farm and is strictly for visiting tourists, so none of the animals are slaughtered for their meat or hides. We did learn, however, why ostrich skin is so expensive – apparently it takes six months to cure a hide before the dyeing and finishing process can begin.



On the tour we saw several dozen ostrich of all ages and met "Bonnie and Clyde" and "Adam and Eve", both couples having been mates for many years. We saw a good number of their young. We also were al-



lowed to feed a bird (simply holding a piece of food in the palm of the hand) and several tourists got back massages, neck rubs and even a kiss from an ostrich. A brave two also got to take an ostrich ride – a difficult task even for the two "professional" jockeys in the ring.

Overall it was a very pleasant visit (it had not been at the top of my list!) and we learned something more about the birds and their habits. An ostrich egg, for example, is very strong (see photo left) and can stand a weight of up to 100Kg (over 200 pounds); each of us got a chance to stand on a small group of eggs. The male and female take twelve hour shifts sitting on the eggs for 14 days until they hatch. And they only do this once there is a batch of fifteen eggs to hatch – which takes a while since the female lays one egg every two days. Interestingly, all fifteen hatch at one time!



Shortly before noon we started our onward journey from Outdshoorn to Montagu, about 150 miles west along Route 62. This route basically follows the wide valley that is the Little Karoo, with the coastal range to the south and the mountains reaching to the Great Karoo to the north. For much of today's drive it was desert-like, much like many parts of Nevada in the US West, but the mountains on both sides added a lot of variety. We climbed a couple of passes but only to an elevation of about 2000 feet. The views in all directions were spectacular and we were once again struck by just how varied the landscape can be in such a relatively small area of this country.



*Route 62 is a tourist route in South Africa that meanders between Cape Town, Outdshoorn, the Garden Route, and Port Elizabeth, offering the scenic alternative to the major N2 highway. Also known as the **Wine Route**, Route 62 leads through the wine-growing areas of Wellington, Tulbagh, Worcester, Robertson and the Klein Karoo and is thus one of the longest wine routes in the world. Route 62 spans a distance of 850 km from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth.*

We stopped for lunch at a small tea room and sat in their courtyard and then covered the remaining 100 miles or so of the journey. Actually, we did stop for a 45 minute nap on the way as my eyes were beginning to glaze over.

The final 50 miles were in much greener and more cultivated land and we saw many fruit trees, fields of crops – and vines! We were now in the Western Cape Wine Route in which we will stay until we reach Cape Town. This route is supposedly the longest stretch of vineyards anywhere in the world and it seems that all of them do tastings and many provide meals. We will get more up close tomorrow!

We arrived in the small town of Montagu in the late afternoon and found our Guest House (run by a couple originally from Manchester, England!) and were given instructions on where to eat, where to visit during our stay and much more that didn't fully register. In any event, our suite was enormous – a huge sitting area with deck, a large bedroom and a bathroom with shower and bath. Very comfortable!





Tonight we ate at the Olde Tavern, just 2 minutes' walk from our room. We sat outside on the stoop and had a very pleasant meal watching the evening world go by.

### Saturday November 29

We met two other couples from England at breakfast in the guest house and then we strolled up to the church at the top of the street where a small market was in full swing. There were various foodstuffs and crafts, as well as a fair amount of "antiques" and we were very restrained in our purchases. However, as a result of prior souvenir shopping expeditions, we felt obliged to buy a duffel bag for our journey home. We found a suitable one at down-market discount store, one of several shops on the main street owned by Chinese.



**Montagu** is fundamentally two towns – the White area where our guest house is and the Black area just a couple of blocks away on the main road. It is quite surprising how the two are so precisely separated; the homes don't look that different (perhaps a little larger in the White section) but the color on the street is totally different. This picture is perhaps a little over-emphasized on Saturdays (today) as that is the day when the local farmers and rural township dwellers come to town to do their shopping so the streets are filled with Blacks. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that we were the only Whites in that part of town – but there was absolutely no concern on our part and the locals were extremely friendly and helpful.



We then spent the rest of our day on the Wine Route. We followed a map provided to us by our host on which were marked most of the wineries (at



least those with sampling potential) as well as other points of interest and places to eat.

We had a delightful four hours plus following a 60 (approximately) mile circular route. Most of it was on paved roads but we went on a 15 mile section of gravel road. All of it had absolutely stunning scenery: a marvelous ever-changing combination of desert scrub, fruit tree plantations and vineyards – all with steeply rising gray mountains as a backdrop.