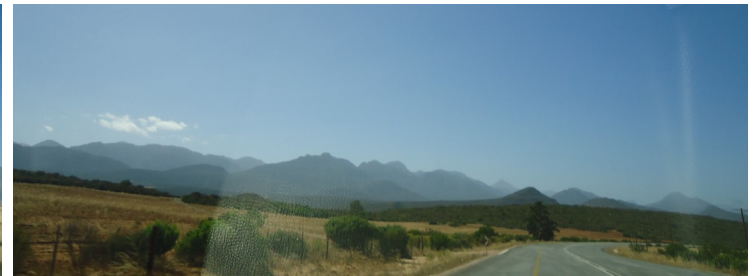


Sunday November 13

We decided against breakfast in Clanwilliam so we had a cup of tea on our balcony before packing and heading south soon after 9am.

We followed the N7 for about 200Km to Malmesbury and then left it to follow the R45 all the way to Franschhoek. The drive was very pleasant through huge grain farms and vineyards as well as a number of citrus tree plantations. As we approached Franschhoek, the mountains to the south and west were very impressive and a number had vineyards climbing half way up the slopes.



The drive to Franschhoek

Franschhoek is a very popular tourist town and has lots of wine estates, good restaurants and boutique shops. We had a very late breakfast at a small outdoor café and strolled the main street for a while before returning to the hotel and making plans for dinner!

We found the French Connection, which looked very nice but they couldn't take us until 8:45. However, with the number of restaurants closed on Sunday evenings, we decided to go for it. By the time we left the hotel at 8:15 it was quite cool and there was a strong wind blowing so we were pleased that we had asked for an inside table. When we arrived (about 15 minutes early) our table was not ready so we were invited to sit outside until it was. We were given a blanket each and seated under a heater so, after ordering our wine, we said that we thought we could stay at this outside location. It turned out to be quite comfortable – with just one or two wind gusts that were a little chilling – and the meal was once again very good. It was well after ten when we started our short walk back to the hotel after an interesting and enjoyable meal.

Monday November 14

We were up before nine and strolled into town to find a place for breakfast and walk up and down the main street as far as the Huguenot Monument. We actually completed our sightseeing before sitting down at an outside café for breakfast. It had been cool enough for sweaters first thing but by the time we were eating it

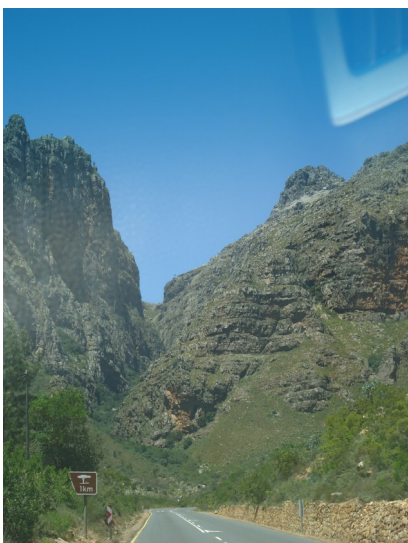
was well into the sixties and very pleasant.



After that we walked back to the hotel and picked up the car for our driving tour. We decided on a circular route that took us north to Paarl and then east to Worcester, before returning to Franschhoek via Villiersdorp. On a perfectly clear day with sunny skies

(and a brisk wind) we couldn't have had a more scenic journey in South Africa or virtually anywhere else in the world, we felt. We crossed two major mountain passes (only about 2500 feet but spectacular) and saw an ever-changing landscape. First we would be driving with vineyards on either side, then golden





grain fields, then fruit farms, maybe a few cows, or goats and sheep, a few well-kept farm houses – and, of course, mountains visible in every direction throughout.

We avoided the motorway (one of the very few true expressways in South Africa) and took the much quieter and more picturesque routes, stopping every few minutes it seemed for the “perfect” photograph.

We stopped in **Worcester**, which is a charming town not unlike



Stellenbosch – with its central grassy area and immaculate white-painted buildings – and soon came across a coffee shop. We parked outside (indicating to the hovering boy that we wanted him to keep an eye on the car – a trick we learned on our first visit here) and then were “buzzed” into the restaurant via a locked gate. This again is not uncommon in South Africa as unemployment is exceptionally high and petty crime correspondingly prevalent.

Once inside, however, we were in a different world and enjoyed our tea and scones in a courtyard garden with every refinement of service that might be expected in the finer places of England, for example, but probably not common in most other places in the world. We both commented that “this” South Africa is very civilized and provides excellent service, while five yards away there may be examples of extreme poverty. Not that the town was dirty or unkempt but just based on the number of people on the streets who clearly had nothing more lucrative to do than watch a car for a \$1.50 tip, or seek some other menial and low-paying job. The country still has a lot of work to do to move from “Developing” in many of its areas but we sense some advancement each time we visit. Certainly everybody – almost without exception – is very friendly and gives the appearance of being happy, or at least accepting of, their lot.



From Worcester we returned on a more southerly route which for the last 15 kilometers took us up Franschhoek Pass (another 2500 feet) and, at its summit, presented us with the most fantastic view over the town of Franschhoek



and its wide and fertile valley. Whether this was the most spectacular scene of the drive is difficult to say – there were so many – but it provided a dramatic end to our day as well as a steep and thrilling drive down the switchbacks

to our hotel.

Tonight we made a reservation at Allora, one of a number of Italian restaurants in the town. Again we walked the short distance from the hotel and had a typical Italian meal in very pleasant surroundings. Some-

what surprisingly the restaurant was packed on this Monday evening and several parties without reservations were turned away or asked to come back after 9pm. A number of them did!

Tuesday November 15

We had breakfast in town again on a very warm morning with a forecast high in the mid-nineties. In addition, the wind had dropped completely so by the time we were ready to check out of the hotel it was already beginning to feel very hot.

We drove straight back to Cape Town via Stellenbosch and once again admired the fantastic scenery. The drive was easy until we reached the outskirts of Cape Town where road works and normally heavy traffic reduced our pace to a crawl. We arrived at the villa at a little before 1pm and, after unpacking, settled down to a lazy afternoon on the deck overlooking the ocean. Pat was there to greet us and, after catching up on the news and our itinerary for the next few days, insisted on us having a bottle of chilled Chenin Blanc to relax with. Later in the afternoon, Natasha came and made us another excellent fish dinner to complete our day.

Wednesday November 16

Today we were expecting Jay and Gordon to join us in Cape Town before they began their tour of Namibia. We had received a text last evening to say that they had safely arrived in Johannesburg where they would spend the night before a morning flight to Cape Town. Jerome was to pick them up at the airport shortly after noon so we had several hours to relax at the villa before their arrival.

I went for a two mile walk – down to the sea shore in Bantry Bay, along the walking path above the beach, and up a series of steps (almost 300 of them) back to Kloof Road and the villa. It was a pleasant walk despite the tough ascent.

A little before 2pm Jay and Gordon arrived, settled in their room and then joined us on the deck where Pat served us the “snack” that Natasha had prepared earlier. It consisted of three huge platters of cold cuts, cheeses and fruits with a selection of crackers – and, of course, several bottles of wine. We spent the rest of the afternoon simply chatting, catching up on our respective lives and reminiscing about previous vacations around the world.

At eight we had dinner prepared by Natasha and watched the sunset until we retired around 10pm.

Thursday November 17

We had breakfast on the deck around nine and left for the V&A



Waterfront about 11. We spent about 2 ½ hours there, doing some window shopping, having a light lunch and generally admiring the area as we people-watched. We





drove back to the villa mid-afternoon, had a glass of wine and then got ready for a 6pm pick-up by Jerome.

We had dinner reservations at the Vineyard Hotel (Myoga Restaurant) for 8pm but he took us “the long way round” to avoid Cape Town traffic and to see the stunning views over the ocean at Houts Bay and the equally magnificent mountains as we turned inland.

We arrived at the hotel about 6:45 and had “sundowners” on the patio (with a cool breeze blowing) before going inside for a very enjoyable dinner. Jerome picked us up again at 10:30 and returned us to the villa for a nightcap before retiring around midnight. It had been another beautiful sunny day and a great one to spend with friends in a marvelous location.



Friday November 18

We had breakfast outside once again and then drove to Stellenbosch. We spent almost three hours in this very nice small town (the second

town in South Africa after Cape Town), mostly following the route described in a brochure that we picked up at the Tourist Information Center. This gave a little detail on the architecture and history of each building which we always find adds a lot to any walking tour.

We also found time for a snack at a sidewalk café and did a little shopping at the souvenir market on the Braak (the large green area that forms the center of the town). In all it was a very pleasant way to spend a few hours and we found that the traffic wasn't too bad getting there or back.





Stellenbosch and back home for time on the patio.

Tonight we were picked up by Jerome again at 6:30 and taken to the Greenhouse Restaurant. There was a choice between two tasting menus and we all chose the "Spring" five-course meal, which was excellent, as was the service. We were there over three hours and every aspect of the restaurant was first class



Saturday November 19

Today was our time for wine tasting! Jerome picked us up at ten and we drove past Stellenbosch and part way towards Franschhoek for our initial tasting at the Delaire Graaf Estate. This estate has fantastic views over the valley and the estate vineyards and an absolutely beautiful driveway from the road alongside which are some very colorful plantings.

We couldn't get a table outside but got the next-best thing right at the door so we still had the views while we took the five samples tasting. Again, the staff were very pleasant and did an excellent job of describing the wines, the type of grape and the ageing process – as well as suggesting ways to take each drink: with red meat, fish, as a refresher on a hot afternoon, or with breakfast! As novices, we could almost have been told anything and would have accepted it, but the patter certainly added to the enjoyment of the experience.

Then we went to an estate almost across the road – with similarly great views – where we had a wonderful lunch sitting outside on the patio. Surprisingly only one of us had wine (!) but we all enjoyed the food and the great service.



Finally, we went to the Ernie Els Estate on the way back to Stellenbosch for another five-sample wine tasting. In addition to magnificent views once again – and some fine wines – this estate had the added attraction of being owned by a world-famous golfer and there was a trophy room with many of his accomplishments and some good photographs of him with his family, other world-class golfers and in some of his major tournaments.



Following this final estate visit, Jerome took us back to Cape Town where we relaxed with a drink (!) until dinner which Natasha had prepared. All her meals had been excellent but the beef fillet she prepared to-night was fantastic; I believe it was the best beef I have ever tasted.

Part way through the meal there was an electrical issue at the villa which caused occasional loss of lighting and other malfunctions. None of this detracted from the enjoyment of the meal (especially as dessert had already been prepared and the wine was still cool) and it was a great way to complete this trip to Cape Town with our friends.



***Memories of Cape Town: The iconic mountain
and pre-dinner amuse bouch on the patio.***

Sunday November 20

We had breakfast at the villa and at 10am Jerome arrived to take Jay and Gordon to the airport for their next adventure in Namibia. Molly and I packed and relaxed until a little before noon and then began our drive to Hermanus – our first stop on the Garden Route. Shortly after leaving suburban Cape Town we climbed about 1400 feet to get some great views from Sir Lowry's Pass of the ocean and surrounding hills.



Cape Town to Hermanus



Hermanus

We arrived at our very nice boutique hotel before 2pm, checked in and took a brief stroll on the ocean front before returning to the hotel. We had dinner at its restaurant (actually operated by an outside company with a well-respected chef) and had another excellent meal.

Monday November 21

After breakfast at the hotel, we set off for the southernmost point in Africa, L'Agulhas, about 60 miles from Hermanus. We left in a light drizzle and went through some heavier showers as we drove east along the road nearest to the coast. We caught only occasional glimpses of the ocean and the mountains were shrouded in mist so we weren't anticipating a long stay at our destination. However, after about 30 minutes the roads dried and the skies cleared and we even saw the sun from time to time.

About 30 miles of our route was on unpaved roads so we were pleased that we didn't experience any more rain as we could imagine how difficult the driving would be if there was mud on these roads. We needn't have worried, however, as the skies were clear and bright as we approached Cape Agulhas and by the time we got out of the car to walk the final 200 yards it was very pleasant and mild.



At just over 34 degrees south, Agulhas is the most southerly point on the African Continent and it forms the boundary between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. This is NOT at the Cape of Good Hope (south of Cape Town) as we and many others believed; here is the "junction", about 100 miles east and perhaps another 50 miles south of Good Hope.



The most southerly point in Africa

We spent a very pleasant 45 minutes at the site; having our pictures taken and watching the dozens of other visitors doing the same – many including somewhat daring acrobatics on the stone monument. The oceans all around here are very treacherous but the 75 miles stretch be-

tween here and Infanta has seen many shipwrecks over the years, despite a very prominent and quite beautiful lighthouse that has stood here since 1894. Today the weather seemed relatively calm – no strong winds where we were – but there were still some very significant breakers washing ashore from both oceans!

We left the Cape and headed north (on paved roads) until we found a coffee shop for lunch in Bredasdorp. By now it was warm enough to sit outside to enjoy our drink and a scone.

After lunch, we continued north before turning west to head back to Hermanus. The return route was quite different from our outward journey in that we climbed quite significantly (perhaps to 2000 feet) and were once again virtually surrounded by magnificent mountains. We passed many huge grain fields and several vineyards before descending back to sea level and our hotel in Hermanus.



Above: The route back to Hermanus

Left: The view from our hotel room

Tonight we ate at a local tapas restaurant, about 15 minutes' walk from the hotel. As usual with this type of meal, we were very satisfied and certainly had no complaints at the \$40 price tag. We felt safe walking back in the dark despite having suffered a robbery here two years ago. (Molly had her \$3 purse snatched and lost it and a few Kleenex, so not much to worry about – except the experience itself!)