

EPISODE V - Africa

Cape Town, South Africa

Gray skies and rough seas for a week as we head for the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Town, traveling at a slow 16.2 kts to compensate for heavy seas on a course of 265°. We're seeing more ships on parallel course than at any time on the entire voyage. Oil tankers going south hull down and fully loaded, and north riding high and empty. EVERYONE is avoiding the Red Sea and Suez Canal because of the Houthi pirates and Iran. I wonder how much that costs us all in increased fuel costs? We arrived in Cape Town harbor early in the morning and were treated to a dawn view of the city and famous Table Mountain. All the Castaways are gathering early to go on a Safari ... albeit a small, short one, a 1-day safari. The weather turned out nice and we were all packed into a big tourist coach with the rest of the passengers. Although not our preferred mode of excursion, it's the only game in town in 'cruise life'. At least in Cape Town we have TWO days in port Oh frabjuous joy! The drive was beautiful through mountainous country with miles of vineyards and other agriculture. We were also exposed to the townships where the bulk of Blacks live.



The woe of cruise stops, how can one get even a snapshot of a huge, vibrant, multi-cultural environment in a day?

Arriving at the 'wildlife' park (the BIG FIVE, guaranteed!). We're greeted with a glass of light local wine and buffet lunch of local food. Then we load up into the many open air 'safari trucks' and head out into a mini wild world Or a large open-air zoo, depending on how you look at it. Great for taking pictures, not so great for actually experiencing life on the veldt. We saw, in no particular order, giraffe (1), rhino (2), wildebeest, lion(3), zebra, guinea fowl, ostrich, impala, Cape buffalo(4), elephant (5). This is a type of refuge for animals and monitored somewhat for health and environment. Animals come from all over which is great so that they can be preserved 'in the wild' as long as possible. They are allowed to live their life as predator or prey, with no constraints.



Rhino tomfoolery and gearing up for our wildlife experience. Not glamping in the interior but great fun, nonetheless.



The Cape buffalo is the most dangerous animal, nasty temper, thick skull, rhino horns are cut off to foil poacher



Predator



Prey



mixed bag



HI!



I think the elephants were to species that our gang wanted to see the most, and there they were.

By the time we got back to the ship we were all whopped, between the rough off-road ride in the trucks (we wondered how long tires last) and six hours on a bus, we all had an early evening to ready us for the next day.

Day two - we booked a van for just the Castaways and set off to see what we could see in a day on our own. A universal goal was the cape penguins, the south point of the cape (where you can see the Atlantic, Indian, and Antarctic oceans at the same time), and the top of Table Mountain. Our driver was fluent in four languages, fortunately including English.

We went penguin hunting to Hout Bay Wildlife sanctuary - penguins nesting in the sand, taking turns with mate to sit on the egg, others bobbing in and out of the sea and having a lovely time, hopefully returning with a belly full of half-digested fish to regurgitate to feed their chick.



Penguin colony (they're not very bright, and they're kinda smelly so I wouldn't get close enough to get bit



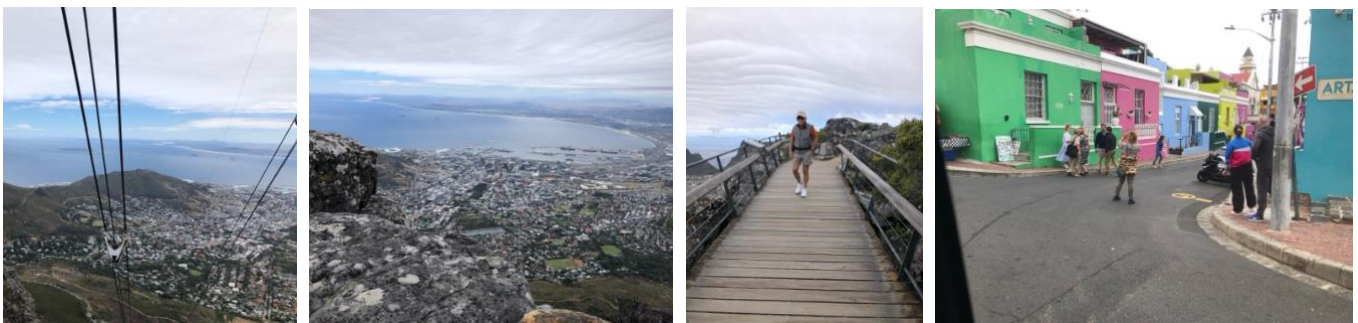
Penguins on parade, a hyrax (kinda like Quakkas, but not as cute), and a whalebone gate arch.

The Cape of Good Hope nature conservation area stretches for miles at the Very tip of the continent. A long climb takes one to the light house top (34°, 2', 24") to see this point of the earth's land mass around which ships must sail. We were able to see the Atlantic, Indian, & Antarctic Oceans from this single vantage point. Many, Many, Many steps up and down. A clear day and not too much wind. Smit declined the hike and shopped for earrings instead.



Saw a surfer hike up from the beach, all I could think about was 'great white!' 'Smit consoling 'Berta after her hike to the lighthouse, and the 'alien' cloud forms ... hiding the mother ship?

On the drive back to the ship, lenticular clouds moved in to form an "alien spaceship" in our vehicle's front window. We headed back into the city to go to the top of Table Mountain, along with several hundred other visitors, mostly local. We all stretched in a queue 100 meters long. It appeared to be impossible that we would make it by dark, but the gondolas hold so many people it moved quickly. The gondolas had one feature none of us had ever seen, it rotated as it traveled, so everyone got a glimpse of the entire vista ... unless you were stuck in the middle in which case you got an unending vista of some huge bloke's back.



Cape Town is BIG, and the best view is from the top of Table Mountain. Then back down to the Moorish Quarter

The top is a maze of pathways, stairs, lookouts, and hideaways amongst the rock formations, but it was so cold and blustery none of us lasted long. As we returned to the ship, our driver took us to the 'Moorish Quarter, a neighborhood of colorful houses with an even more colorful history. In the early apartheid days, the Muslims were categorized as 'colored' (The range was Whites, Coloreds, Blacks, and all were strictly separated by the white Afrikaners.) and they were forced to wear white robes with no ornamentation. So, to celebrate some joy in their lives they started painting their houses in bright pastel colors and continue to this day. It all looks rather like a 'Barbie' version of an old style town. Back to the ship and we enter the South Atlantic and start the long run up the west coast of Africa to Europe and Civitavecchia, Rome where this all began.

Namibia

Three days at sea put us into Walvis (whale) Bay – This was the smallest, dirtiest, most primitive harbor yet. Other than an almost endless line of vendors selling identical folk art and crafts, the town is strictly business, with nothing of interest. 50 km to Swakopmund (dirty river mouth) across miles of sand dunes to reach it. Caters to tourists and more affluent locals of all 'races'. SO, what shall we do?



OOOOH, that looks like fun!



SKYDIVING! Yes, a full complement of able-bodied but insane Castaways are jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. These dessert rat flyers were professional, organized, friendly and able to handle the broad spectrum of ages that we all were. We were outfitted, paired with an instructor, assigned by weight and balance, along with a videographer. We received instruction as to how to sit, (3 couples + videographer & pilot, of course) 2 flights: We signed all the papers, smiled for the camera, and crawled into the craft at our assigned positions (sitting on the lap of your coach).



'Berta in free-fall, 15,000' to go!



Smitty somersault exit – GERONIMO!

We flew up to altitude, taking into consideration the clouds and wind developing, pilot and head coach discussed various options, up to 15,000 feet altitude. Got tightened up, and then READY!?!?!The door slid open, Smitty went first. GERONIMO! Sommersault exit and straight drop for 65 sec or so, exit almost violent, lots of noise, spins, chute opens and pulls you to a stop and then it becomes quiet. "We did steep turns, spins, & then settled down to a quiet descent and perfect stand-up landing on sand next to runway tuck & roll, hands out, look-at-the-camera, and enjoy the ride. Kapalili was next. Oooched across the floor in the lap of her partner/coach to door opening, head back, knees tucked, breathe, arms out, breathe, roll forward and the rest happened. The videographer was flying backward, OMG, she was trying to communicate in air-language to do something with my hands, so I did. I could hear my coach all the time: relax, enjoy the ride, comfy? want faster? NO, slow and easy works. And, before you know it, we had sailed through the clouds where the angels live, saw a bit of heaven with a pilot's rainbow (full circle), and noticed my humans on the ground below. With the wind building, my command was "knees up", we targeted in for an easy sandy "butt" landing. Whoa! A great experience. All the crew were so personal, curious

about us, why we jumped, what we do, etc. Commented on our age and how we fit right in. Even though they do this almost intimate “dance” hundreds of times a year, it felt like chatting with ol’ mates. Cold beer after (traditional) and a wonderful surprise Bucketlist punched. Ground Rush Adventures, Sky Dive Swakopmund, Namibia’s Adrenalin Oasis. Tel: +264 64 402 841, Bookings: +264811245267 www.skydiveswakop.com...just in case you are in the neighborhood. So, what do we do for excitement now?

Cape Verde

Mindelo. We are now on a volcanic island with African & Creole cultures. The language is Creole/Portuguese. We walked the 1.5 km into the small town. “No obrigado = no thank you” to the hawkers along the way. 1868-1874 the peoples’ palace was remodeled and ever since, the town has been making way for the ever increasing tourists. The buildings are all whitewash concrete. The claim to fame is the birth and life of Cesaria Evora, who single handedly put the country on the map with her soulful songs based on the past of Cape Verde.



Images of Cesari are everywhere in what is otherwise a typical African coastal town attempting to cash in on tourism

There are some nice beaches but the wind is chilly & strong and, therefore, SANDBLASTING. So, into the café shops to hang out and observe local customs, peruse the fish market to see what’s what. We end up drinking Sangria to the background music of disco (not too loud, pleasing, with all the other cocophany of the street, which was only 2 feet from the curb and then 2 feet to our table. People smoke but they are in the minority. That being said, I saw 4 tobacco shops within a 30 min walk. With so much wind, we anticipated seeing many more seagulls.

Tenerife, Canary Islands

This place is clean, austere, old, and well developed. Walking in from the cruise ship piers one passes through an entire outdoor mall of high-end shops, similar to the forced exits through the duty-free shops at international airports. Two blocks from the deep water “harbor” there is a larger “harbor” for yachts. The island is surrounded by shallow reef and is famous for its diving. There are many cyclists and runners. The women are beautiful and the kupuna here are sun-dried out and dessicated. In the older part of town there are many narrow



We weren’t the only game in town. The city is an eclectic mix of modern and colonial Spanish architecture.

darkened doorways and crooked lanes, while in the modern shopping district, elegant (read, ‘expensive’) name-brands for every purse, jewelry, dress wear, and shoes can be found. We went looking for the day-to-day things like

socks, hair spray, wine and cork screws. Sangria is the drink of choice here so, of course, we must sample some. NOTE: As we write this there is a major public outcry condemning overbuilding and too much focus on tourism. 10,000 people gathered in protest, including many entering into hunger strikes in an effort to stop pending large development.

Agadir, Morocco

We worked with "family" to coordinate a tour in this part of their world, us having toured Morocco in 2019 with our daughter Justine and SIL Steven. And so, Amnay, brother of Abdu was in charge of this group of seven Castaways and arguing with the port-pier taxi hoodlums. Two vehicles, two drivers and one guide. There was a long drive south to enter the Medina of Tiznit, a mud brick fortress that served rulers as a palace, and the villagers as caravanserais and sanctuary in times of siege.



With our 'family guide' Amnay, entering the medina. Then ride a camel to lunch in a traditional restaurant?

We visited shops in the casbah, fabrics and silver jewelry making, so of course we had to purchase some earrings. Then we rode on further south where we had a "taste" of 4-wheel dune riding, camel riding, and after a rugged drive through an isolated village, an authentic meal in the traditional cuisine of Tajine. We saw how they channel water to a village for multiple uses, and after a drive up into adjacent hills, the main dam that has been built to supply the growing population and blossoming tourist industry. There is a giant Arabic symbol on the face of the dam to be seen from the air, that translates to GOD KING COUNTRY, an appellation seen on buildings all over the nation.

On the way back to port we stopped at an argan oil outlet where almost everyone (certainly all the women of our gang) stocked up on the unique and valuable oil. Smitty was disappointed because after checking every ice cream freezer we came across, he found NONE of his sought-after pasticcio/dark chocolate ice cream bars. Nevertheless, it was such an educational day and fun, and we were gone so long we were the last ones to get aboard to set sail. Aloha to new friends and tour-guide family.

Farewell to Africa, on our way ... next stop Back to Europe

Our last few days at sea in the Atlantic we're heading to Lisbon, Portugal, and then ports beyond on our way to completion of unexpected voyage around the world in Civitavecchia, Italy. We had one last everyone together farewell dinner in the ship's steakhouse before going our separate ways (for now), hosted by Teri and Greg Morrow.



A fond aloha, shipmates, our 'Istanbul Castaways' – fair winds and following seas to you all, wherever you may sail!