

A VISIT TO CAPE TOWN

. . . One of My Favourite Cities

by David Skillan

It's a long way to Cape Town, where I once lived for a little over a year, but the journey is well worth it. Every year I go back to this exceptionally beautiful place, usually in February or March, when it is sunny and hot—unlike July and August, when it is winter in the Southern Hemisphere and can be very wet and cold as the famous southeasters blow.

After a typically sumptuous South African breakfast at the hotel (I can't get enough of the tropical fruits—fresh mango, watermelon, and pineapple), I either walk or take a shuttle or local bus, depending on where we are staying, to the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront. There I gaze at the bustling harbour and Table Mountain (pictured below at left), if it's not covered in cloud, and watch the Cape Coloured musicians performing their lively tunes and antics. Then I hop onto a red double-decker bus for a tour of the city and the most popular beaches before it gets too hot. One can get on and off the bus at such interesting stops as the National Museum, the Planetarium, the Castle, Table Mountain Cableway, and St. George's Cathedral, where Archbishop Desmond Tutu still delivers the occasional sermon.



Back at the waterfront, I buy a ticket into the renowned Two Oceans Aquarium, to observe sharks, penguins, stingrays, and the amazing variety of other weird and wonderful marine life found in the southern waters of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Then it's a stroll through the nearby Red Shed, to admire the original merchandise and artwork that is produced in South Africa.



When it's time for lunch, I go next door to the Cape Town Fish Market, which offers a choice of fresh seafood, sushi, or fish and chips—I usually order the catch of the day— together with an ice-cold Lion or Castle lager. Or I may choose to sit outside at one of the many harbour-facing restaurants and share my meal with squawking seagulls.

Next stop is Marcel's, for a strawberry-, banana-, or toffee-flavored treat—the most delicious frozen yogurt you will find anywhere. It's then time to purchase a ticket for a launch tour of the harbour, a rewarding way to take in the endlessly fascinating parade of fishing boats, ferries, and yachts, with plenty of up-close-and-personal sightings of Cape fur seals and dolphins. Once I even got to go on board a South

African navy submarine. Other interesting excursions worth considering include Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and a trip by catamaran to Robben Island, site of the prison where Nelson Mandela spent many years.

Back on shore, I usually mooch around the stylish and trendy shops, boutiques, and stores to see what's new. Or I may take a walk down Adderley Street, the downtown area's main road, or through Green Market Square to admire the handicrafts. Then I return to the hotel to shower and change before heading out again to a nearby restaurant for dinner. As Cape Town is very cosmopolitan, there is a huge selection of good, reasonably-priced local, international, and ethnic restaurants. Or I may decide to stay in and relax at the hotel with a glass or two of fine South African wine and a plate of cheese and crackers.

Then it's early to bed, to be ready for another full and exciting day



For information about David Skillan's regular safaris in South Africa and Zambia, please visit www.skillansafaris.com/david-skillan-tours.html.