

4/9/13 - Day 93 – Cape Town South Africa – Ostrich Farm – Wine Tasting: Today the main thing on our agenda was a Holland America tour to an area several miles north of Cape Town where we would tour an ostrich farm and then have some wine tasting at a nearby winery. A map of the southern tip of Africa including the area around Cape Town is shown below. The famous Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned is



marked with a small red cross. Many people make the journey there to see the shrine that has now been dedicated to Mandela. Because of limited time and too rough sea conditions we did not visit Robben Island while in Cape Town. The map also shows the Cape of Good Hope at the end of a peninsula extending south from Cape Town. Many people took tours from the ship to this famous point of land while we were in Cape Town. We were surprised by the fact that the Cape of Good Hope is not actually the most extreme southern tip of the African Continent. Based on the map it appears that Cape Agulhas actually has the honor of being the southern most tip of Africa. This looks like a good “trick” Trivia question/answer.

We met our tour group at 9am and left the Amsterdam aboard a comfortable large tour bus. Our tour guide's name was Carol and she did a good job of filling us in on some South African background and the passing countryside. Some of the houses and countryside we saw as we motored northward from Cape Town are shown below.





There were shanty towns along the way.



At one point Carol had the bus stop and we got out for a nice view of Table Mountain southward across Table Bay. Cape Town was nestled at the foot of Table Mountain.



From that same location we were able to see Robben Island where Nelson Mandela had been a political prisoner, as shown below. The word “Robben” is the Africans word for a seals that are found on the island. Carol also pointed out the remains of a ship that was wrecked on the beach a few years ago and ended up in the photo just beyond the surf line.





We turned away from the beach and drove inland until we came to the West Coast Ostrich Show Ranch. The term "Show Ranch" distinguishes this ranch from those that may raise ostriches for their meat, which is claimed to be tasty.

We drove in to the ranch and Carol introduced us to our Ostrich Tour Guide, named Herman. Herman took us on a brief tour of a small museum about ostriches. As we passed



through the building we noticed a man using a grinding tool, as shown on the left, to carve away the surface of an ostrich egg to produce one of the many souvenir items we were to see later.

Herman then took us to a pen where the ostriches came up to the fence and interacted with us tourists, as shown in the pictures below.



A microsecond before this picture on the right the friendly ostrich had made a quick pass at Barbara's hand full of corn. The ostrich and Herman appear to be enjoying the show.



Things are a little more under control in this picture on the left.



Our friend, Roy, was having some luck in attracting this little ostrich to try the food he has to offer.

These ostriches on the right had a genetic defect that put them in the category of albino. Herman said one of them was nearly blind as a result of the genetic defect. That bird was able to find food and eat when it was in a trough or handed to him.



We saw some baby ostriches which are shown below. We had heard that typically these ranches attempt to hatch all the ostrich eggs that are laid.

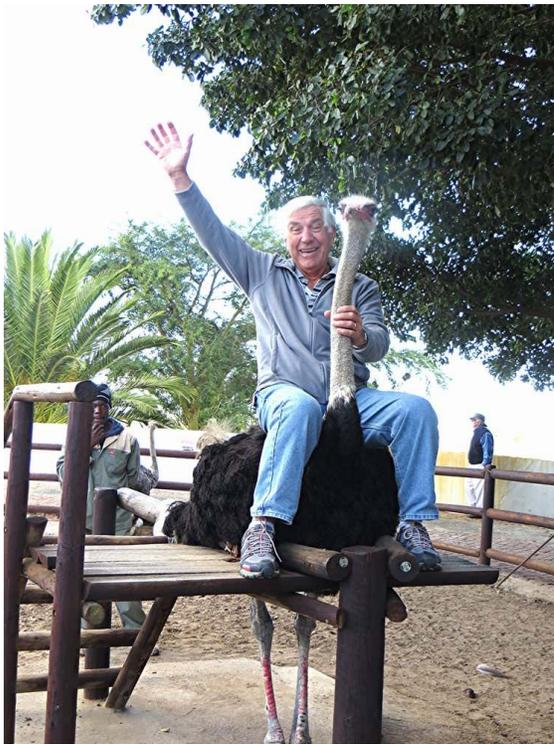
However, some inevitably do not hatch and those are the source of the whole ostrich eggs that we find in souvenir shops.



We came to the event that had been much anticipated by us tourists. That was the photo opportunity of sitting on an ostrich. Some of us had the fantasy that the bird would be strolling around the yard with one of our lighter companions serving as a jockey. That was not to happen. Instead there was a carefully orchestrated process in which a large ostrich was placed in a wooden stanchion which provided a platform for the tourist rider and some restraint for the ostrich. A blindfold was placed over the head of the ostrich and then one of the tourists would climb up on the platform and straddle the ostrich. The blindfold was then removed from the ostrich and the show was on. Barbara gave it a try as shown in the photo on the right.



The ostrich grunted when Orlin sat down but he managed to keep standing.



Our friend, Gayle, then decided to give the ostrich riding a try.



After riding the ostriches we visited the gift shop which was well stocked with items related to the ostrich, as shown on the right. We found a nice ostrich egg that had some decorative images carved onto the shell. The clerk wrapped it carefully and we hoped that it was going to be possible to get this delicate egg shell home in one piece.



There were some fancy fans made with ostrich feathers of different colors. Barbara was attracted to the reddish colored fan, shown on the left.

After our visit at the ostrich ranch we boarded our bus again and drove a short distance through wheat fields and



vineyards, as shown here. Carol said that this region was known as the breadbasket of South Africa.



We eventually came to the Durbanville Hills Winery and parked next to the large building, shown on the left, where we would take a tour of the facility and partake of wine tasting.

First we met with a guide in one of the large tasting rooms, as shown on the right. Our group was divided into smaller teams of about 8 people and we started our tour under the guidance of an attractive young lady who seemed to know everything about the winery.



Our guide showed us huge rooms full of stainless steel tanks each one holding more than 100,000 liters of wine per tank.



One operation we saw was particularly interesting. Our guide said that juice from red grapes is clear and does not have a red color. In order to get a wine with a red color the grape skins have to be stored for a while with the juice. Accordingly, grape juice and the red skins were stored together for a period of time in the large tanks in this room. The men shown in the picture on the right were draining a tank filled with grape juice and red grape skins that had been stored together. They were pumping the mixture into the cylindrical machine on the left in the picture. Inside that machine the juice skins mixture was processed through a sieve that held back the skins and let the red grape juice pass through. The red grape juice was then prepared for the process of making red wine.



After the tour of the wine making process we were led back into the spacious wine tasting room. We sat at long tables tastefully furnished with plates, bread and condiments suitable for stylish wine tasting. A list of 6 wines was provided and then a waiter came by and

poured a sample of the six wines into our glasses. We all sipped and did our best to draw a conclusion about the merits of what we were drinking. It was a pleasant time as we exchanged comments with our fellow wine tasters. The waiters kept bringing snack items and we sampled them all until we had really made a lunch out of the wine tasting visit.



After finishing our wine tasting we spent some time wandering around the verandas of the building. They provided an awesome view of the countryside, including Table Mountain in the distance, as shown on the right.



We had often heard that South Africa was becoming a major supplier of wine for the world. Now we were seeing the vineyards and tasting the wine that we had heard about.

Soon Carol gathered up all of her tour group and we got back on our bus. We retraced our route back into

Cape Town and the Amsterdam.

There wasn't enough free time left to go back in to Cape Town for a last look so we just spent some time around the Amsterdam and getting ready for dinner. It was almost dinner time when the Captain got on the PA system and said a photo opportunity was coming up for those interested. The Queen Mary II was going to be steaming into the harbor and docking not very far from the Amsterdam. We went up on deck and took some pictures of the grand lady when she glided into the harbor, as shown on the right.



We then went to dinner and while there the Amsterdam got underway for our next port of call. When we had left the inner harbor there opened up such a grand view of Cape Town, Table Mountain and the Queen Mary II that we had to stop eating and take a picture through the back window of the dining room, as shown on the right. Our understanding is that most frequently the top of Table Mountain is shrouded in clouds so we felt lucky that today all was clear and we got a beautiful photo.



We were bound for Walvis Bay, Namibia where we would arrive on Thursday, after a day at sea. So far we have loved every minute in South Africa and we were looking forward to seeing what Namibia had to offer.