

4/8/13 -Day 92-Cape Town, South Africa Tour of Town and Table Mountain:

Yesterday we had arrived back at the Amsterdam from the Safari at the Naledi Game Lodge. The location of Cape Town on the Southern Coast of the Republic of South Africa is shown in the map on the right. Cape Town got its name from the famous Cape of Good Hope that is located on the southern tip of Africa and is just a few miles south of Cape Town. We had missed nearly all of the first day that the Amsterdam was in Cape Town but it was going to be docked here for two more days and we had planned for sight seeing. Unfortunately this morning it was a rainy and misty but we decided to make the most of it.



We left the ship at 9am and walked along the dock where we could see a lot of activity in loading of fresh provisions on board the Amsterdam, as shown on the left. We walked

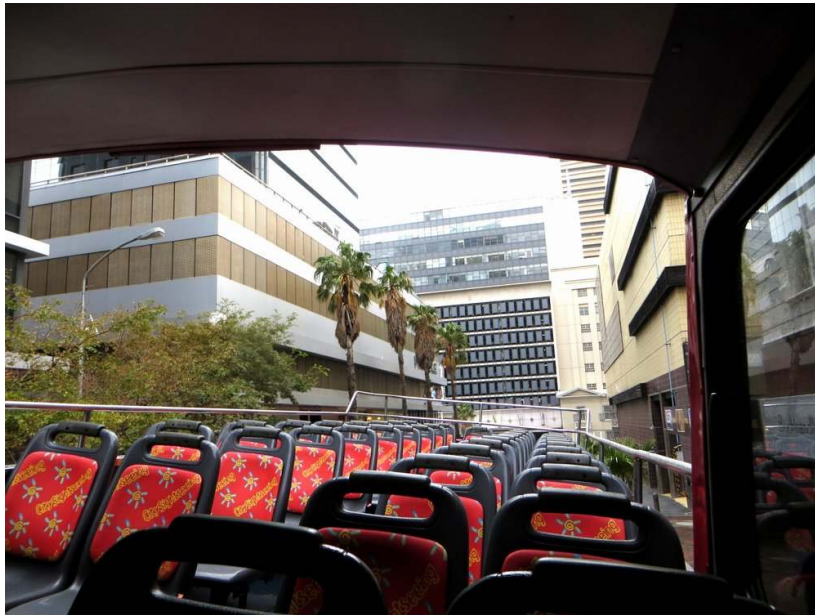
through a warehouse building to the parking lot where a free shuttle bus was located.



The shuttle bus was headed to the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront Mall but the bus driver let us off early at the Aquarium location. Near the Aquarium there was a kiosk selling tickets for the Cape Town Hop-On Hop-Off (HOHO) bus which is one of our favorite means of seeing a new city. We got tickets for the two of us (300R = \$33 USD) that would cover as many HOHO cycles as we could carry out in the day. We then set out to tour Cape Town on the red route offered by the bus company. A map showing the route in black ink that we took around Cape Town is shown below. Some of the highlights along the route are indicated on the map. The pictures shown in today's journal entry were taken in sequence as we made the circuit shown on the map so the approximate location of any single photo can be estimated from that information.



We completed the entire red route with intermittent rain and dark conditions not very good for photos. The biggest disappointment was that clouds shrouded Table Mountain and the cable car was not operating so we didn't get up on Table Mountain. It turned out that the afternoon was sunny and bright so we took our HOHO bus tickets and boarded the red route bus again for a second tour around Cape Town, this time with a cable car ride to the top of Table Mountain. As a result of our two trips around the HOHO red route we had photos from both tours and we interspersed them in the journal entry for today.



When we boarded the HOHO bus the first time we went immediately to the upper deck that was partially covered. At the moment it wasn't raining but not surprisingly the uncovered section of seating was completely empty, as shown on the left. Actually there were only 4 or 5 passengers on the bus this morning so covered or open seat selection was no problem. The uncovered seats

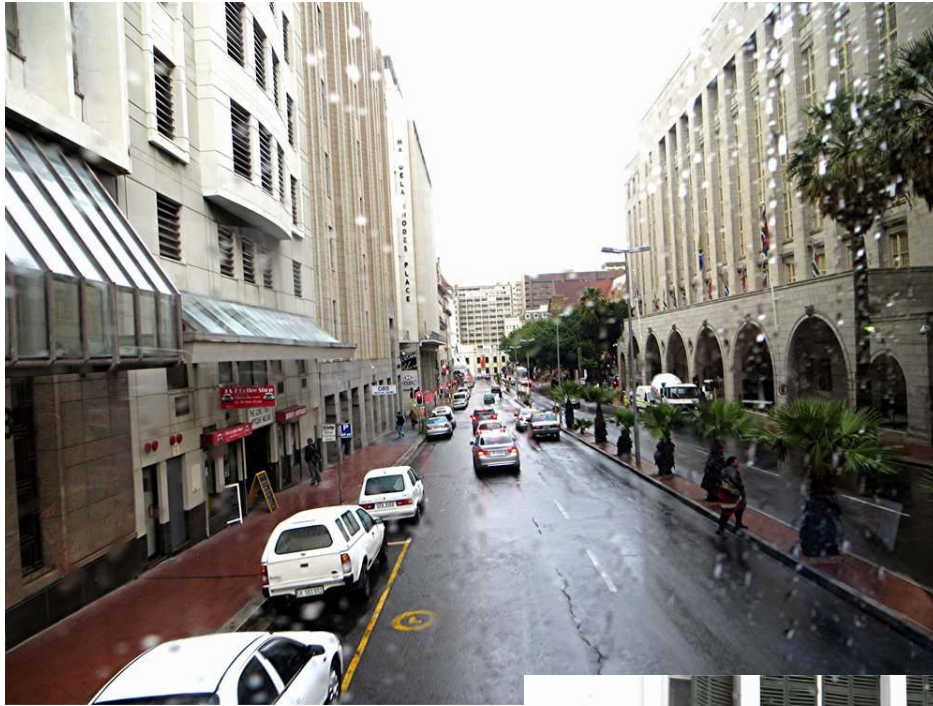
provided the best unobstructed view of the passing scene so we alternately moved between covered and uncovered seats, depending on the weather and the passing sights. During our sunny afternoon tour it was still uncrowded and we stayed in the uncovered section. Some of the photos we took on both tours are shown below.



This is how Table Mountain looks when shrouded with the famous "table cloth" of clouds that frequently visit. The cable car ride to the top is usually shut down under these conditions.

This is the view of Table Mountain from Victoria and Alfred Waterfront Mall, when the cloud cover is removed, like it was this afternoon. The mountain called Devil's Peak is on the left of Table Mountain in this view.





Here on the left is a typical Cape Town street scene on this rainy morning.

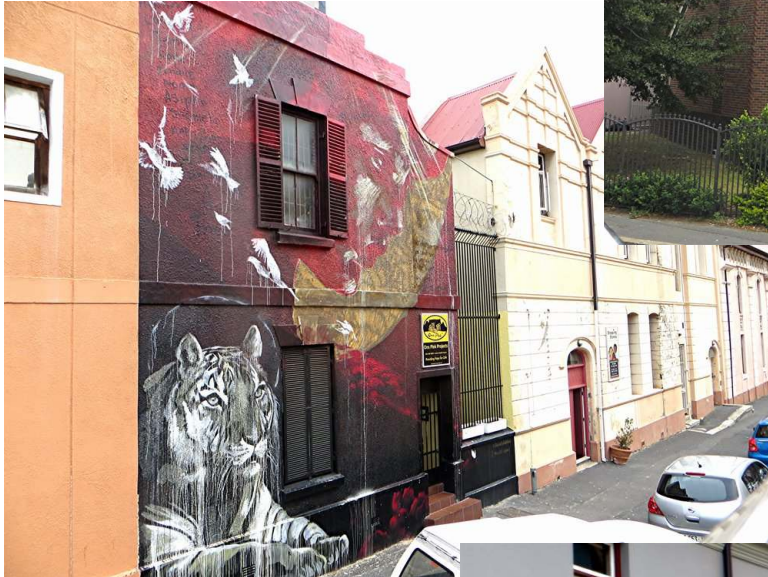




The convention center on the right.



It wasn't long before we spotted the price of gasoline posted at a Shell Service Station. They were selling unleaded regular gas for 12.83 Rand/liter. At the current exchange rate that is equivalent to about \$1.40 USD per liter. Assuming 4 liters per gallon that price per liter works out to \$5.60 USD per gallon, just a tad higher than in most cities of the US.



On a HOHO bus a running commentary is provided by way of a recording that is triggered when you approach a site of interest. A set of ear phones (buds) are provided with the bus ticket and you can select the language you want to hear. As we approached District 6 (shown on the map above) we got this photo on the right and were



told about how the apartheid rule in South Africa had segregated the races and district six was essentially a shanty town where only dark skinned people lived. Then there was the change of government in 1994 and the races were no longer officially segregated. However, the Cape Town government didn't like the unsightly shanty town that remained in District Six. There was an agreement

reached where the shanty town would be torn down and the government would build low cost housing for the service workers and other low paid laborers that had owned property and lived in District Six. The shanty town was torn down and the people evacuated but the low cost housing was never built. The HOHO bus drove by several vacant fields in District Six, shown here, where the shanty town used to be. Presumably the folks who used to live here have found other accommodations but the impression was left that their lot in life became worse as a result of this action.



It appeared that there was some effort to keep this issue alive but no details were given.

The Castle of Good Hope is shown on the right. Table Mountain is shown on the right in the background and completely free of clouds on this sunny afternoon. Devil's Peak is also in the background on the left of Table Mountain.



Gold mining has played a major role in the economy of South Africa over the years. A museum dedicated to the subject of gold is located in Cape Town and the gold colored front of the building is shown on the left.

Photos of some typical buildings are shown below.



The mountain peak in the background of this photo on the left is Lions Head.

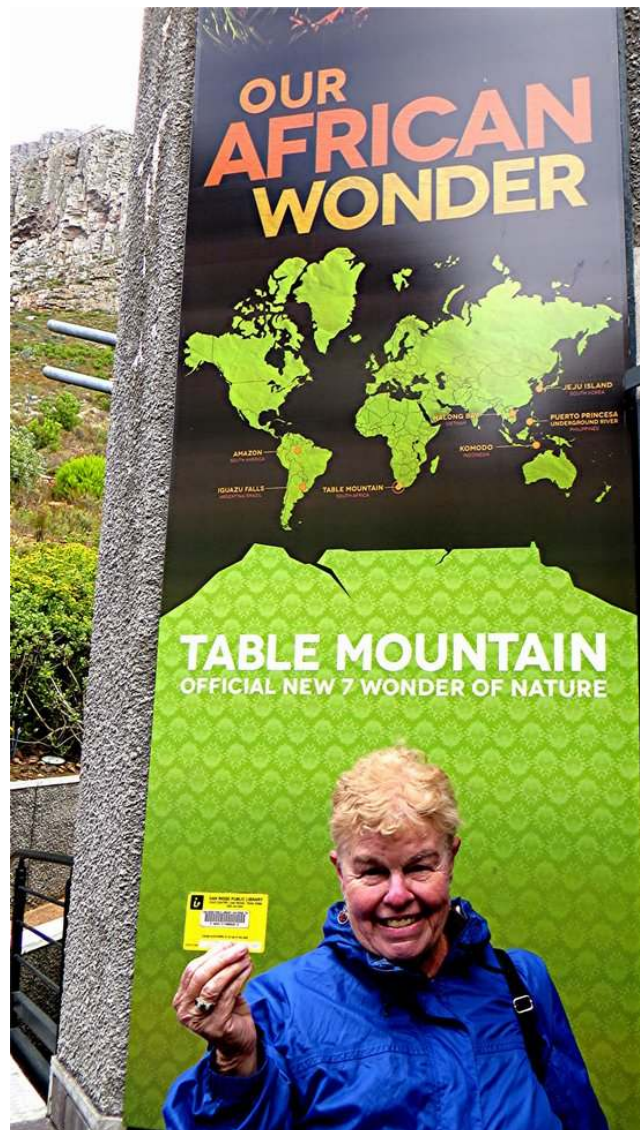
As shown in the map above, the HOHO bus route leaves the circular route around Cape Town and winds its way up the slope of Table Mountain to the lower terminal of the cable car that takes people on up to the top of Table Mountain.

The picture on the right shows how Cape Town houses have been built on the slopes of Table Mountain up to a line established by the city laws. The Cape Town residents were concerned that their famous mountain would soon be covered with houses so they set a limit



that specifies the maximum altitude for construction of any home. The HOHO recorded program gave some information about the three structures on the far left that protrude up above the limiting altitude. It turns out the owners of the buildings discovered a loophole in the law. The foundation for the buildings is within the limit of the law but there was no limit on how tall a building could be. They proceeded to lay the foundations well within the altitude limit but then built the tall structures with enhanced views. The city passed new laws to prevent future buildings like this but people in these three structures continue to enjoy their enhanced view and inflated apartment prices. The behavior of the builder is known in some circles as “architectural terrorism”.

On our second HOHO tour in the sunny afternoon we found the Table Mountain cable car facility running. We purchased tickets for the two of us (410R = \$45 USD) and got ready to take our place in the cable car. First, however, we had to formally document the visit of Barbara’s library card to this wonderful part of Africa. Some of the publicity artwork in the lobby provided the backdrop and we took the photo shown on the right



The cable car was circular in shape. The photo below shows one of the cable cars up close.



We hustled into the first available cable car. There were just a few people and plenty of room in the car, probably because of the bad weather this morning. Anyway, we found what we thought would be the optimum location for viewing the scene below and taking pictures as the cable car ascended Table Mountain.

It turned out that our well calculated plan to maximize our enjoyment, perhaps at the expense of others was frustrated by some clever

engineering on the cable car. After we had loaded and the doors were closed the car

operator requested that we not hang on to the railing that circled the car at about chest level. He explained that the floor we were standing on would rotate clockwise while the car was ascending. This was done in order to give everyone a good view. As the car glided up the mountain the floor did rotate clockwise and carried us around in a full circle during the ride. The picture on the right shows the floor with the separation between the stationary outer wall and the inner floor that was rotating clockwise.

Because the car was uncrowded it would have been possible to slowly slide in a counterclockwise direction and stay in one place but no one did this. This was a nice demonstration of how technology can work to reduce the annoying situation where you get stuck with a bad location without a view in a ride that is supposed to give you a good view of everything below.





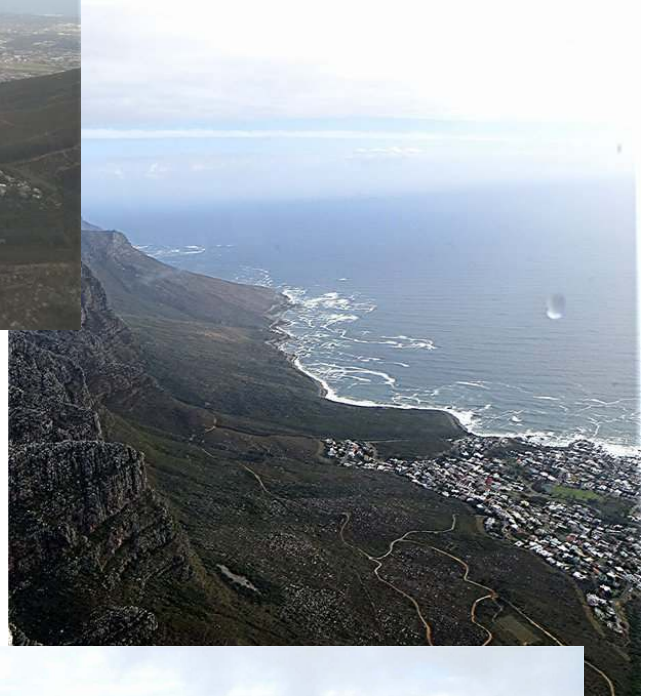
Of course, our camera was clicking away as our car rose up on the cable. The view below shows the outskirts of Cape Town with particular emphasis on the three tall buildings near the middle, representing architectural terrorism. Actually, we didn't think they looked so bad. They are probably in a category much like the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Many people thought they were an eyesore and objected to them until they were knocked down. Then the conventional wisdom was that they were a good iconic addition to the New York skyline.

We exited the cable car at the top and walked on the paths provided around the table top, as shown in the photos below.

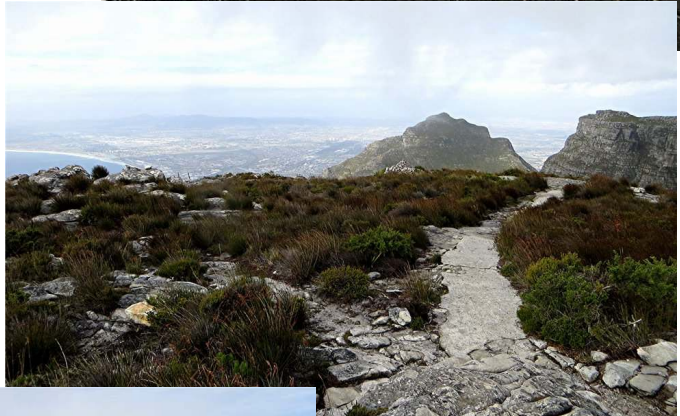
This sign on the right suggests that the wind conditions here on Table Mountain can get severe. Luckily, today it was mild and very comfortable outside on the mountain. We felt very fortunate that the "tablecloth" of clouds had been removed from the "table".



The photos below show views that could be had from the top of Table Mountain.



We took a hike along a trail that circled the area near the cable car station. The path was a combination of native rock and concrete that had been used to fill holes and cracks in the rock.





We even saw the Amsterdam at the dock and took a picture of the ship from Table Mountain, as shown on the left.

Eventually it was time to catch the cable car and go back down the mountain. On the way down we got a thrilling picture of the cables and car in front of us, as shown on the right. Lion's head is the mountain peak in the picture on the left.

Back down on the street level we found a HOHO bus that had just arrived and boarded it to take the rest of the trip around Cape Town.



The bus route winds down the hill into a community called Camps Bay. Some photos of that coastal area and subsequent suburbs are shown in the following pictures.



The picture on the right shows a veterinarian clinic that was doing great business today.



The beaches were beautiful.

The HOHO bus audio message said these trees shown on the right were bent over from the prevailing wind that blows along this coast.



This beach hotel on the left was touted as being especially plush. The name of the hotel was Winchester Mansions. Of course, Barbara, with her maiden name of Winchester was ready to track down the owners in case she is related.

Further along the Sea Point Beach area we noticed some free spirited person gliding across the sky in a micro plane powered by a small motor.



We passed the colorful Green Point lighthouse as we traveled along.



Everyone in Cape Town seems proud of the Cape Town Stadium shown below. It is located on the grounds of Fort Wynyard.



Our HOHO ride ended at the Victoria and Alfred (V&A) Waterfront Mall. We got off the bus and wandered around this large modern mall. We noticed that the Apple Corporation is well represented here with an iStore located in the mall as shown on the right.



We browsed around the mall and then went to some nearby shops called The Red Shed at the V&A Waterfront. We found some craft items that were interesting and picked up a few items as souvenirs of Cape Town.

After checking out the V&A Waterfront stores pretty well we caught the shuttle bus and were taken back to the Amsterdam. It had been a long day starting out with sightseeing in the rain but it turned out well with a treasured trip to the top of Table Mountain. We had dinner and turned in for the night.