

4/4/13 -Day 88-Durban, South Africa-Travel to Naledi BushCamp: At about 7am the Amsterdam arrived at the entrance to the harbor at Durban, South Africa. The new soccer (football) stadium made a distinctive statement on the city waterfront as shown below.



Further into the harbor a large automobile carrier could be seen either loading or unloading new cars, as shown on the right. We learned later that South African factories are producing new Toyota, Ford, BMW and other makes of new cars for domestic and export purposes.



The location of Durban on the South Africa coast is shown in the map on the left. Also shown is the location of Johannesburg and the Naledi BushCamp that we were to visit today.



The Amsterdam tied up at Shed N – Passenger Terminal, as shown on the left. The sun was shining and reflection from the ship's windows produced the bright splashes of light seen in the photo of the terminal building. Preparation was quickly made for passengers to leave the ship.

This was a big day for us because we had made arrangements for travel from Durban to the Naledi BushCamp in the Balule Nature Reserve of South Africa. In July 2012 Tom Nale had posted a notice on the Cruise Critic message board that he was looking for people who might want to join him and his wife, Jean, on a Safari in South Africa while both families were on the 2013 World Voyage. He had done research on potential safari lodges and identified the Naledi Game Lodge in the Balule Nature Reserve as the best one available. We contacted Tom and after exchange of emails we arranged to join him and Jean in Durban and start a three night four day safari adventure together at the BushCamp compound of Naledi Game Lodges. After boarding the Amsterdam in Fort Lauderdale on January 5, 2013 we met Tom and Jean and we all were eager to start our safari today. The plan was to fly from Durban to Johannesburg where we would board a shuttle provided by Naledi Game Lodges and drive to the BushCamp compound this afternoon. We all left the Amsterdam about 7:30am and checked through the South African immigration station before catching a taxi to the King Shaka International Airport at Durban.

The taxi ride to the airport was uneventful as we sped along a modern freeway that had remarkably low traffic volume. We had been a little concerned that highway gridlock might jeopardize early check-in for our South African Airways flight reservations at set for 9:50am. That was not a problem as we did a little sight seeing along the way. We got a close up photo of the gleaming white football stadium, shown on the right.



We also got an unexpected shot of a large gambling casino on a hill some distance from the freeway, as shown on the right.

We arrived at the King Shaka Airport and after settling the taxi fare (450R, ~\$50 USD) we proceeded to the check-in counter which, like the



freeway, was uncrowded, as shown on the left. The check-in went smoothly and we had plenty of time for the security check and casually strolling to our gate.

Along the way to our gate Tom pointed out a large sign on the wall, shown on the right, asking for conservation of electricity. He said that efforts by South African government to encourage aluminum production, with associated high electricity consumption had resulted in a shortage of electricity for other uses. Perhaps the conservation campaign is working because we didn't observe any shortage of electricity while we were in South Africa.



We boarded our South African Airways flight and had a comfortable 1 hour flight to Johannesburg. At Johannesburg we reclaimed our checked bag and went out to where ground transportation was available. Our driver, Dobby, was waiting for us with his van. Orlin took this picture on the right with Dobby holding his Naledi sign that helped us find him in the airport. We were now set to leave on the drive to Naledi BushCamp.



Dobby Tom Jean Barbara

Dobby took us quickly out of the Johannesburg Airport and through the outskirts of Johannesburg. As we went along he gave a brief explanation of what we were seeing. In one section of Johannesburg he said that the buildings were limited in height to 4 stories. The reason for the limitation was that gold mine tunnels in the reef below the properties limited the ability to carry the weight of buildings taller than 4 stories. There were several places that could best be described as shanty towns, as shown on the right. Dobby said that the government had build low coast housing for the people of shanty town but as soon as the current occupants moved out, new people moved in to take over the shacks.



Most of the housing we saw was pretty standard suburban type of dwellings like those shown here.



We passed a couple coal fired electrical generating stations with their huge cooling towers, as shown below.



Dobby said that the power stations were located near coal mines so that the coal didn't have to be transported very far.





There was also plenty of beautiful open land to view as we went along.

After about 3 hours we made a rest stop at a gas station/convenience store that had a wonderful attraction in the form of a fenced in group of zebras, rhinoceros, cape buffalo



and ostriches. This was our first sight of these animals and gave us sort of a preview of what we might see later on our safari rides.

The zebra and ostriches were the first ones to catch our eye. Some of the animals are shown in the photos below.





There was a nice herd of cape buffalo and rhinoceros, as shown in the photos below.



Some of the rhinoceros had their nose horn cut off. Dobby said this was to prevent injury to other animals but also to discourage potential poachers who might kill the rhino and take its horn for big profits in the illicit rhinoceros horn medicinal industry.

However, the rhino on the far right in this picture appears to have escaped the horn cutting process so far.



Seeing the animals was a thrill but we also had other business to attend to. We used this opportunity to take a photo of the gas pump indication for the price of gasoline on this highway in South Africa. As shown on the right, the price of regular gas (93 octane) today was 13.07 Rand per liter. At the current exchange rate of 9.2 Rand per USD that price is equivalent to \$1.42 USD per liter. Assuming 4 liters per gallon that works out to \$5.68 USD per gallon, a bit higher than the price of gas in the US.



We continued to drive north and gradually the foothills of the Drakenberg Mountains began to appear, as shown on the right. We were on Route R36 which was a modern well paved highway that made for a pleasant ride through the mountains. Some scenes are shown below.



These photos are a bit fuzzy because they were taken on-the-fly.



After a couple hours we made another rest stop at a convenience store/gas station combination. The rest rooms were not the best we have seen but compared with facilities you might find along any highway in the US they seemed fine. However, the management of the store had apparently been harassed by some of the users so they had posted a rather pointed sign, as shown below. We got a grin out of it.



We traveled on towards our goal of Naledi BushCamp which was about 15 miles north of the town called Hoedspruit. In passing through Hoedspruit we saw a sign that told us we had arrived in the right place to see the animals of Africa. Although we weren't looking to buy a home today the huge lion in the Jordan Properties road sign got our adrenalin flowing. We couldn't stop thinking of the marvelous animals we would be seeing in the next couple days.



Dobby drove on and soon we turned in to the guard station of the Balule Nature Reserve. Dobby went through the paperwork needed for us to proceed on to the Naledi BushCamp. Rather tight security is maintained on access to the Reserve to minimize the threat of poaching the valuable animals by organized crime groups. On the way from the guard station to the BushCamp our van passed a herd of impala, as shown on the right. This was our first view of African impala and a close up view like this seemed to us like a good omen for things to come in the next couple days.



After a 6 hour drive from the Johannesburg Airport we arrived at the reception desk of the Naledi BushCamp. They were expecting us and a gracious lady with the nickname of TK checked us in. TK then took us to meet an associate named Phindile. Phindile explained that the owner, Kjell (pronounced Kell) Bismeyer was guiding the evening game drive and would be back about 8:30pm and then dinner would be served. She then showed us to our room. Some features of our room are shown in the photos below.



The front door to our safari suite.

Our king sized bed with netting for mosquito season (which this wasn't).



outside shower in an enclosed courtyard open to the sky. A very nice touch.

Our bathroom with a glass enclosed shower.

Through the sliding glass door on the left of the shower there was also an



Phindile then gave us a tour of the main lodge.

Phindile fixed us a drink at the bar shown on the right.



Next to the bar was a large table where breakfast, such as that shown below, was served after every morning game drive.

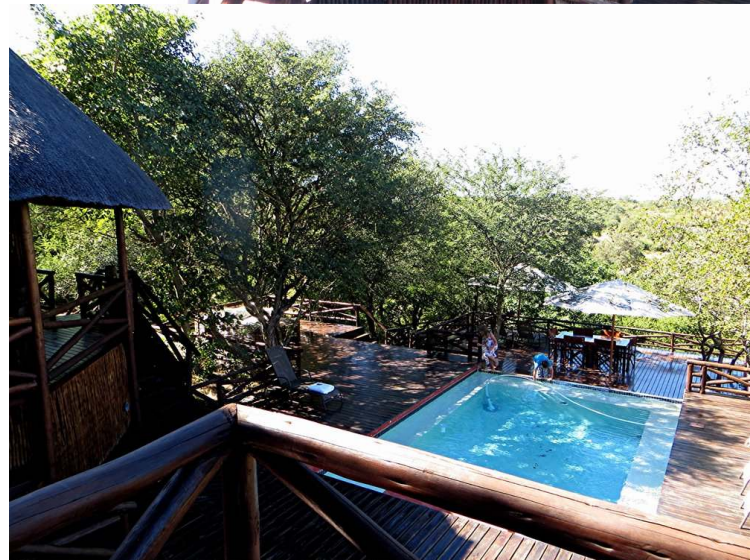


Then we walked out onto the deck where we could view the thatch roofed room, shown below, where the evening dinner was usually served.



The swimming pool and sunning deck, shown on the right, was also part of the grounds surrounding the main lodge and overlooking a streambed in the valley below.

About 8:30pm Kjell returned from the evening game drive that he had guided with the other guests staying at BushCamp. The other guests were a young European family from Luxembourg consisting of Charles and Muriel along with their grade school age children,



Louie and Marie. We were encouraged by their report of seeing lions up close during their 4 hour drive through the bush. Later, after the fearless game viewers had a chance to freshen up a bit we had dinner. During the meal the conversation revealed that Charles

and Muriel were having a great time. In addition, from his tone of voice and body language it was obvious that Kjell was a man who was very happy with what he was doing. Kjell took a picture of our group during the dinner, as shown below. Charles and Muriel's kids had already turned in for the night.



Jean Tom Charles

Muriel Barbara Orlin

Here on the right is a picture we took the next day of Kjell Bismeyer, the owner of Naledi Game Lodges and tonight's game drive guide.

After dinner we were more eager than ever to get on with our safari adventure. However, it had been a long day of travel so we decided it was time to say good night to our fellow safari friends and turn in for the night.

Tomorrow Kjell will give us a wake-up call at 5am and we, along with the 6 other people at BushCamp, will be on a game drive by 5:30 am. Plans put in motion last July were finally paying off.

