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USEFUL TIPS WITH "LINKS" FOR SOUTH AFRICA



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My trip to South Africa

I took a short trip with my husband to South Africa in March 2012 because my son was staying there for some time to visit a friend. It was a good chance for us to fly there; we thought he would be able to help us. We waited until the hot weather was over. I think the country is such a beautiful place to visit. There are different kinds of vegetation, green areas, many different sorts of trees and botanical gardens, vineyards, scenic highlands, mountains, natural reserves, and animals as well as enormous gorgeous coasts. We took many pictures and I decided to write this travel guide for others, who are unfamiliar with this country.

We flew on March 16, 2012 from Germany to South Africa with South African Airlines. We did not want to change planes on the way, so we took a direct flight from Munich, Germany to Johannesburg, South Africa. That flight takes 11 hours, and it depends from where you fly, but if possible, *try not to change planes because the waiting time will add to the flight time.* There are less expensive flights, but they usually take three to four hours more with the additional stop.

Here I found a lot of useful information for my trip. <http://www.suedafrikaurlaub.net/>, but if you don't speak German you can look at <http://www.southafrica.com/>

Someone told me the next address is good for everything one ever needs to know about anywhere:

<http://www.tripadviser.com/>

But I feel a lot of information does not help others as much as personal experiences, as I have written here for the readers.

You sit all those hours in a tight seat. Either the seats in airplanes are getting smaller or I'm getting fatter. OK. I gained weight since our last flight over 10 years ago, but I heard the seats are getting smaller. We left at about 9 P.M. so that we could sleep on the way. Did I say something about sleeping? That was impossible. If I had enough money to fly business class, I'm sure the seats would have been more comfortable and I would have been able to fall asleep.

You are not allowed to lie on the floor of the plane, but that is what I would have liked to do. My husband was sitting next to me by the window, and his back hurt. My backside hurt, and it was so uncomfortable. They had ear plugs to listen to music or see a film. My husband knew how to use the screen in front of us, but I was having difficulty. He found a film in German, but I wanted to watch one in English. I used to live in New York and went to school there, so I can understand the language well. I also teach English in evening courses in Germany.

By the time my equipment finally functioned it was already late. I watched the film "Transformers," but just a short version, and afterwards I did not want to start another one. It was too difficult to get one going, so I gave up. (The problem may be that I was too impatient and pushed too many buttons, because it took so long until something showed up on the screen.)

On the morning of March 17, 2012, we landed in Johannesburg and walked through the airport. Someone asked my husband something and even though I did not hear him, I knew what he wanted. I said my husband doesn't speak English and we do not need a taxi. Outside at least three taxi drivers were hoping to get us to ride with them, but I repeated that my son is picking us up. We had not waited long when he arrived. Our two big suitcases didn't fit in the trunk, so one had to be placed next to me on the back seat. *My son told us never to leave any bags or*

things on the back seat because someone could break through the window and take it even while you are in the car. That sounds dangerous, I thought. *When you leave the car, everything must be placed into the trunk.* So we listened to our son and always packed everything up when leaving the car.

I had also read on the Internet some advice about what you should not do in South Africa if you don't want to be recognized as a tourist. I had planned to use a fanny pack to carry important things with me. That was something one should not do, according to these security rules. *This is apparently a sign for thieves that you have a lot of money with you, and they cut the bag from your body.* After reading this, I decided to take a backpack.

At home I spent weeks on the Internet to find out about things to see and accommodations in South Africa. I searched for German B&Bs, because I am German, but of course they also speak English. I booked them in advance so that we would not have to look for any accommodations while on route. *In South Africa I saw some Information Centers like we have in Germany, but not all over, so it is better if you know in advance where you will spend the night.* Some places were inexpensive, and with some I asked for a reduction in price since it was off-season and they still had availability. I did that all the time and was able to save some money (about 50 Euros). If you do not go to South Africa in the summer, which is in December, January and February, you will find vacant rooms all over. I heard you can find easily places to sleep without having to book in advance and you can haggle the price down, but then you don't know what you are going to get. If you have seen the pictures in the Internet in advance you will have some idea, but there are not always pictures, and some can be misleading.

It took an hour from the airport in Johannesburg to North Pretoria. After a short rest in the afternoon, we drove

around a bit. We went to the Voortrekker Monument where we had a good view of the area.

<http://www.voortrekkermon.org.za>

It was very windy up there. Then we visited the Parliament Building, where they had a striking huge green park with colorful flowers. There was a bride with guests drinking champagne and taking pictures. It was such a gorgeous, sunny day, and with the beautiful scenery all around, they had chosen a good place for their pictures. We bought some wooden figures at vendors on the sidewalk opposite the building. In South Africa you can find such vendors selling souvenirs on the streets and other places those tourists frequent.

Before flying to Cape Town we stayed a couple of days in North Pretoria with our son. He was spending some time there and booked the flights for us from Johannesburg to Cape Town and back from Port Elisabeth. It was his idea to drive only one way, so we had to find a car rental that would also accommodate this wish. It cost us a little extra, but we saved time. He booked a small hut for us where he was staying in “Thabela Afrika – The guesthouse for the discerning businessman and holiday maker” in Akasia, Pretoria. <http://www.thabela.co.za>

