

# CAPE TOWN

by: DERICK McGROARTY

Derick McGroarty considers Cape Town's attractions.



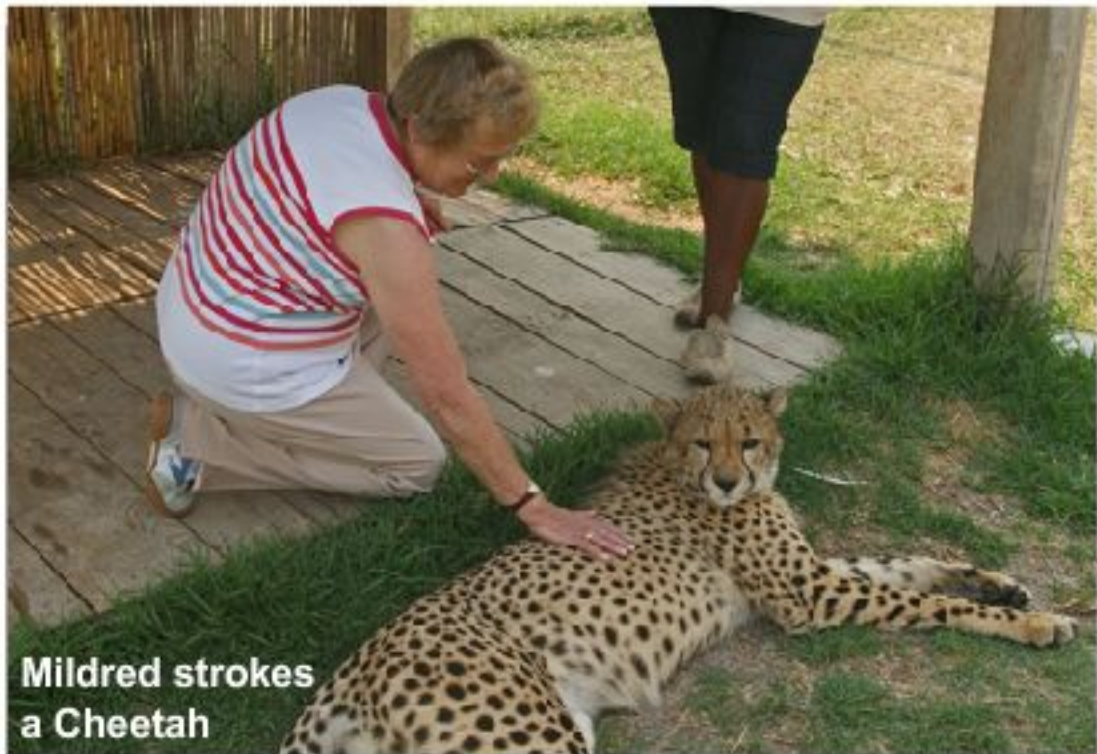
The profile of Table Mountain, an immediate recognisable icon of Cape Town, rises 1,068 metres above the Waterfront. Dominating the scene it is for most visitors the first choice visit by Cable Car to the top. Choose a clear day if possible – some days cloud forms a “table cloth” drifting and dispersing over the edge. The 10 minute ride is breathtaking. At the top explore diverse pathways in the nature reserve and the splendid views from the edge. There is a choice of menus and wines in the restaurant to toast and enjoy the view below.

Although first discovered 500 years ago, in Cape Town the oldest European building is the Castle of Good Hope (circa 1679) now very much a cultural centre with special events, a military museum, a restaurant and shop. Tours trace the history and there is a simple but colourful ceremony at noon when the mid day gun is fired. There is a fine display of furniture, paintings and other artefacts in what was once the Governor's residence.

By the 19th century there were major developments in the docks, railways and banks, to deal with the discovery of gold with impressive public buildings. Near the castle the opulent City Hall, built in 1905, has played a more recent part in African history. Nelson Mandela made his freedom speech to vast crowds from the balcony. Tours of Robben Island where he was imprisoned for 18 years are popular. Ferry tickets are available at the Waterfront.

## Cecil Rhodes Memorial Cape Town





### **Mildred strokes a Cheetah**

A variety of architectural styles – a high view point for perfect viewing. A ticket lasts 24 hours and it is a hop – on, hop-off system with 17 stops. View places of interest and pick up the next bus. I found it relaxed, enjoyable and convenient. The Red Route is ideal for the city attractions and to visit Table Mountain, whilst the longer Blue Route offers a free Township walking tour, the Kirstenbosch Gardens, Houts Bay and dramatic scenery .

The Big Bus Tour operates two routes including the city centre by open –top double deck buses

Whilst the city centre has a longer history, the V&A Waterfront has become the better known, with many hotels spreading from the water line up the slope of the scenic drop-back of Table Mountain. I stayed a few days at the 5 star Table Bay Hotel. A luxury hotel in a prominent commanding position with immediate access to the Waterfront. Rooms are spacious and well equipped with large bathrooms and many splendid views of the mountains and harbour. From my balcony there was a picture postcard view of the waterfront and Table Mountain. There is a good selection of restaurants and an airy relaxed atmosphere. The breakfast buffet seems to stretch to infinity with items to tempt all palates.



**Cable Car Table Mountain**



Open top bus

On the Waterfront vibrant attractions include boat tours, museums, shops, cafes and restaurants, and a lively night life. Jazz bands and individual performers entertain the crowds. Prominent is the Two Oceans Aquarium; vast tanks allow close views of diverse fish from both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Allow at least 2-3 hours. Popular with families there is a café where I watched basking seals enjoying the summer sunshine. Waterfront Boats offer a wide range of trips from short trips round the bay to whole day sailings. I took the "Sunset Cruise" in a fully rigged sailing ship. With a glass of champagne I saw the sunset on the harbour and although out of season had close encounters with several whales and returned with good views of the lit up waterfront.

In a multi cultural society all religions are respected and intermix freely throughout Cape Town. On the slopes of Signal Hill the Bo-Knap area is home to a large Muslim community. The colourful "cube houses" and narrow streets make it a quite different place. The many Mosques include

Africa's first official mosque the Anwal. The Bo-Knap Museum, once the home of a wealthy Muslim family tells the history in an attractive setting. The best way to see this or any "Homestead" is on a guided tour. Elle Tours offer comprehensive tours and there are many organised walking tours.



Shopping Mall

## Table Mountain Cape Town

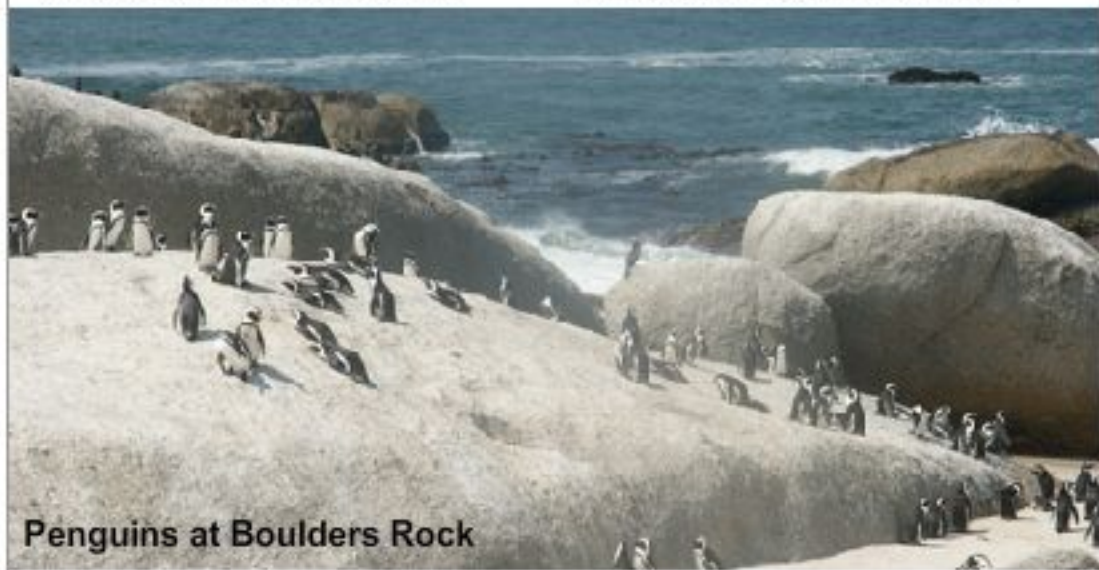


In 1480 the Cape attracted Portuguese navigator Bartolomeu Dias Who became the first European to land in South Africa. Ten years later Vasco da Gama also sailed round the Cape but continued on to India founding the Spice Route. A stone replica of his original cross stands tall on the hillside. A half day excursion to the Peninsula is possible if time is limited. Elle Tours can arrange this and any other requirements such as city tours, wine tours, Robben Island, etc.and transfers if required. I used this small tour operator throughout and was impressed with the personal service given by the owner, Gavin. I indulged in the full day private car which allows individual wishes to be met. I included the spectacularly situated huge Rhodes Memorial (not available on set tours) and continued on to the Peninsula visiting the Kirstenbosch Gardens, the Naval base of Simons Town and the attractive fishing port of Houts Bay where there are local boats to see the

seals. The scenic drive to Cape Point gives spectacular views. These were even more so after taking the funicular to view the sea pounding the Cape of Good Hope from a 700 metre high platform above. At the sea point marked "Cape of Good Hope" there were wild ostriches and baboons. On the return we stopped at Boulders taking a board walk to view penguins in their natural setting. It ended with wine tasting in the Constantia Valley with its 300 year history. Wines from the area are reputed to have been enjoyed by Napoleon and Queen Victoria. A memorable day!

There are hundreds of producers of fine wines throughout the Cape. Elle Tours can arrange viewing the attractive countryside around Stellenbosch and allow sampling quality wines, cheese and preserves. It can be combined with an opportunity to stroke cheetahs. At the cheetah encounter my wife, Mildred, was thrilled to actually stroke one of these large cats.

I spent a few days at Camps Bay, a modern lively seaside holiday resort with bars, cafes and restaurants, a fine sandy beach and many activities including sky diving from the



**Penguins at Boulders Rock**



mountains behind the resort.

The Bay Hotel on the sea front offers every facility and one of the best breakfasts I have ever enjoyed. Each is individually prepared by chef with a choice beyond eggs and bacon to ostrich steaks, kippers and devilled kidneys. In the evening after watching the sun set from our balcony there was a seaview setting at Tides restaurant for a romantic a la carte meal.

Flights with Virgin Atlantic were comfortable and on time. Service on board was excellent throughout but for such a long flight Premium Economy offers more space and attention at a reasonable supplement.

Good hotels, scenic beauty, warm people, natural attractions and breathtaking views all come together to make Cape Town an attractive destination.

## Contacts

Cape Town Tourism  
[www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net)

ElleTours  
[www.elletours.com](http://www.elletours.com)

Big Bus Tours  
[www.citysightseeing.co.za](http://www.citysightseeing.co.za)

Waterfront Boats  
[www.waterfrontboats.co.za](http://www.waterfrontboats.co.za)

Table Bay Hotel  
[www.suninternational.com](http://www.suninternational.com)

Bay Hotel  
[www.thebayhotel.com](http://www.thebayhotel.com)

Cable Car  
[www.tablemountain.net](http://www.tablemountain.net)



View from Big Bus Tour



Table Bay Hotel Cape Town