



STAR-ADVERTISER

The southern tip of the African continent offers culture, food and more to lure one ashore

By Julie L. Kessler Special to the Star-Advertiser

n 1580 English sea captain Sir Francis Drake described

n 1580 English sea captain Sir Francis Drake described the Cape of Good Hope as "the fairest Cape in the whole circumference of the earth." Today this is still true. There are many ways to explore South Africa, but when I learned Silversea Cruises had an all-inclusive 10-day voyage covering South Africa and Mozambique, it was time to board with far more luxury than Drake could have

Before we set sail, my sightseeing began in Cape Town. To get there I had used Audiey Travel, which provided seamless local arrangements with excellent guides. One can easily spend 10 days in the city. There are the natural wonders of Table Mountain to explore, breathtaking vistas of Chapman's Peak, ostrich farms, Chacma baboons, bonteboks (an antelope species) and leopard tortoises to see along the peninsula to the Cape of Good Hope. A conservancy at Table Mountain National Park also has more than 500 species of proteas, including the king protea, the national flower. Visitors can see jackass penguins at Boulders Beach in Simon's Town. Kalk Bay, an eclectic beach town, is full of antique and vintage clothing shops, galleries and cafes to enjoy.

Please see CRUISING, D4

Above, Table Mountain is Cape Town, South Africa's most enduring tourist attraction. Tuxedo-wearing South African jackass penguins are in full force along Boulders Beach in Simon's Town, near Cape Town,





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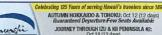
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### Synagogue, a 1905 Cape Dutch-style architectural masterpiece. Next door is the Jewish Museum documenting Jewish contributions to South African society, including the Jewish law firm that hired thenyoung law clerk Nelson Mandela and later played a vital role in his and the nation's 709 feet. struggle to freedom. Nearby

is Bo-Kaap, an Islamic suburb, where Cape Malay peoples take pride in their homes by painting them in bright candy colors. When I was in need of re-

CRUISING

In Cape Town's heart is District Six Museum. Housed

Continued from D1

in a former Methodist Church, its sobering exhibi-tion documents the 1970s

forced removals of non-

whites under apartheid and

the Group Areas Act. A short

stroll through The Compa-ny's Garden with the Iziko

Slave Lodge and St. George's Cathedral is the South Afri-

can National Gallery. Out

front, a massive Casspir ar-

mored vehicle — a symbol of oppression — is covered entirely in multicolored

beads. I was lucky to catch

an impressive women's art

enormous, intricate tapes-

exhibition, including several

Paces away is the Great

charging, nothing beat cocktails - called "sundowners" - at Seapoint along the water, or seafood delicacies at Baia, one of the numerous eateries at Victoria & Albert Waterfront, a beautiful, still-functioning harbor situ-ated between the Atlantic

and Table Mountain. No trip to Cape Town would be complete without visiting a few vinevards. I joined Wine Flies for a fabu lous full-day excursion with five other oenophiles to nearby scenic Stellenbosch, stopping at five vineyards for "fizzy therapy" of Cham-pagnes, wine tastings and pairings with cheeses, choc-olates and lunch.

While I could've stayed another week exploring Cape Town, it was time to depart. Boarding Silversea's Silver Cloud, I was immediately handed a glass of wine — a perfect beginning, reminding me that while people might be separated by water, they are certainly united by wine.

The Silver Cloud boasts 290 beautifully appointed suites with granite bathrooms containing Bulgari amenities, plush towels and linens, separate sitting ar-eas, stocked minibars and

large walk-in closets. Each stateroom is assigned a per-sonal butler whose mission is to make one's onboard stay picture-perfect. There's also speedy 24/7 room service and several bars and top-notch restaurants. To ward off weight gain from the delectable cuisine, there are exercise classes in a fully equipped gym overlooking the sea. There's also a spa, salon, library, card room, ca-sino, boutiques, an enrichment lecture series and the talented Voices of Silversea providing nightly entertainment. On my trip, 220 staterooms were occupied with mainly European, Australian and South American passengers. A better way to traverse the cape would be difficult to imagine.

Port Elizabeth Our first stop was Port Elizabeth, known alternately as PE and "Windy City." Interesting trivia about the city includes its status as the world's mohair capital it generates, with Lesotho, 70 percent of world production - and the site of the world's highest commercial natural bungee jump at

Passing the occasional KFC en route, our guide, Xolani, dubbed them "U.S. embassies.

Xolani also mentioned that there is a beauty parlor for every four women in the city, and indeed we passed several shipping containers carefully converted into thriving street-side salons.

Port Elizabeth's history also has a dark side. It's where anti-apartheid activist Stephen Biko was tortured and beaten into a coma while in police custody in Room 619 of the Sanlam Building in 1977. Biko's story, documented by journalist Donald Woods, was made into the 1987 film "Cry Freedom," starring Denzel Washington.

Amid this backdrop, I took an excursion to the northern townships, passing Korsten, with its mostly Somali and Malawi population, and the depressed settle-ments of Helenvale, Mission vale, KwaZakhele and Ramaphosa. The poverty of the residents - most have no running water or electricity - was in stark contrast with the relative prosperity of the rest of Port Elizabeth.

Arriving in New Brighton, PE's first official black resi-dential township, we alighted at Charles Duna Lower Primary School with 1,000 uniformed students, 28 teachers and two German volunteers. Principal Nom-bulelo Sume, who studied at Duna as a child, told us.

Photos clockwise from top: A pod of hippos relaxes in an estuary in St. Lucia Nature Reserve near

Richard's Bay, South

Africa. Yellow protea plants grow wild at Table Mountain National Park, above the city of Cape Town. Thou-sands of tourists annually visit the park. where a great many types of flowers spe-cies can be found, including the king protea, the national

flower of South Af-The Gustav Eiffel-designed train station in Maputo, Mozambique, was in 2016 listed by Time maga zine as the third most beautiful in the

world A trilogy of Valrhona chocolate lava cakes and petits fours make an incredible ending to an exquisite meal prepared by Silver-sea's Le Champagne chef Rodolfo Camba.

"The school first obtained electricity in 2005 and water only in 2014." She also pointed out a nearby patch of land that was once used to bury students who died during the height of the

country's AIDS epidemic. Now the school is cultivating a vegetable garden to help feed today's students. she sald. Sume's accomplishments with such limited resources were impressive.

Maputo, Mozambique Following a day at sea, we arrived in Maputo, which is Mozambique's capital and largest city — the only port outside South Africa on the

The first European to discover Mozambique was Por-tuguese explorer Vasco de Gama in 1498, who was searching for a passage to India. The discovery opened the country to outside trade and eventually four centuries of colonization by Portugal. Mozambique gained its inde-pendence in 1975. Nearly overnight 250,000 ethnic Porruguese departed, and in a short time a government based on Marxist principl was installed under socialist

Was installed under socialist President Samora Machel. A brutal 15-year civil war commenced in 1977; then in 1986 Machel's plane crashed near the South African border, sprouting numerous conspiracy theories. Mo-zambique's Soviet minders soon departed. Machel's second wife, Graca, would became Nelson Mandela's



PHOTOS BY JULIE L. KESSLER / SPECIAL TO THE STAR-ADVERTISER



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third wife in 1998, the only woman to be the first lady of two different countries.

Since 1992, multiparty democracy has stabilized the region. Today, older Soviet-style block buildings are Juxtaposed by palm-lined streets boasting a vibrant cafe and restaurant culture amid once grand colonial villas reflecting its European history. Most impressive is the Gustav Eiffel-designed train station, listed by Time magazine in 2006 as the third most beautiful station in the world after Paris' Gare du Nord and London's St. Pancras.

Although Western visitors won't find a McDonald's restaurant in Maputo, the city has its own version of fast food at roadside vendors selling rat-kebab snacks. Despite my usual culinary adventurousness, I couldn't bring myself to sample one. Albert Camus' 1947 novel, "The Plague," kept coming to mind. Instead, I later dined on

board at the world's only vessel-listed Relais & Cha-teaux restaurant, Le Cham-pagne. Chef Rodolfo Camba prepared scallops with hazelnut sauce, porcini mush room cappuccino and New Zealand rack of lamb.

Richards Bay Founded in 1879 by Commodore Frederick Richards, the bay was a 200-person outpost on the Mhlathuze River that was used as a makeshift harbor during the Anglo-Zulu War. Today ur-ban Richards Bay has about 50,000 inhabitants and is a major deep-water harbor of KwaZulu-Natal province. The bay is considered the gateway to the area's cultural heart, Zululand.

We headed northeast to St. Lucia Nature Reserve,

St. Lucia Nature Reserve. South Africa's first of eight World Heritage Sites and a naturalist's nitvana. Its 53-mile estuary boasts more than 1,000 crocodiles and 800 hippos. During a pleas-ant two-hour boat ride, there were plenty of hippo pods, including several ba-bes wading alongside probies wading alongside protective mothers, a few resting crocodiles, colorful pied and giant kingfisher birds, and enormous water

An hour northwest amid rolling, verdant hills with homesteads, farms and live stock brought us to Esho-we's Shakaland, a living monument to Zulu culture and the site of the 1986 "Shaka Zulu" television miniseries. The name King Shaka, a great Zulu monare known as the black Napoonarch

leon, today graces nearby Durban International Air-port and is still revered by Zulus, who form the largest

ethnic group in South Afri-ca's melting pot.

Despite sweltering heat, learning of Shaka's early family life, military prowess and contributions to the Zulu nation's history that united the northern Nguni in their wars against Europeans and Boers was a high-light of the visit.

### Durban

The busiest container port in South Africa, it was Durban where Mahatma Gandhi, then a young lawyer, arrived to practice law in 1893, working for the city's wealthy Indian residents. To-day Durban has the largest Indian population of any city outside India.

Durban's indoor Victoria Street Market has a vivid array of Indian spices along with excellent selections of African crafts. Main and King streets, where Dutch and British colonial and art deco architecture is resplen-dent, also displays a vibrant outdoor market culture.

Nearby are Durban's lovely Botanical Garden and the Indian Ocean's Golden Mile - actually four miles — starting at Blue Lagoon Beach and ending at uShaka Marine World, offering beautiful beaches, wide board-walks, cafes, restaurants and shops.
I arrived back on board in

noon tea with scones so de licious that, gastronomically, I saluted Britain's greatest social convention

### **East London**

Built around the Buffalo River's mouth, East Londor is South Africa's only river port. While there's not port. While there's not much to see in town, in nearby Nahoon River Ma-rine Reserve, I paddled a kayak alongside beautiful waterfront homes amid kingfishers, Cape cormo-rants, ringed plovers and

gray herons. South Africa's intense natural beauty, rich eco-diversity and vibrant polyglot of African, European and Asian cultures, languages and ar-chitecture make cruising the Cape unforgettable. Satiated by the divine Silversea expe-rience, when I boarded my onward flight. I thought of another Sir Francis Drake statement: "It's not that life ashore is distasteful. But life

Julie L. Kessler is a travel writer, attorney and legal col-umnist based in Los Angeles.

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- trips from Honolulu to Cape Town on Delta, United, KLM and Lufthansa start at
- \$1,834. Telephones: The telephone code for South Africa is 27; the code for Cape Town is 21.

### PRE-CRUISE

- Where to stay: Table Bay Hotel, Quay 6, Vic-toria & Alfred Waterfront, Cape Town. Full-service luxury ho tel with spa and sev-eral restaurants perfectly located next to the V&A Waterfront and opened in 1997 by former President Nel-son Mandela. Doubles start at \$240, including free WI-FI. sun international.com, 27-21-406-5000
- 21-406-5000 > Where to eat: Bala Seafood Restaurant, 6262 Victoria Wharf, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town. Excellent seafood in lovely dining room with floor-to-ceiling windows provides glorious harbor sunset views. baia restaurant.co.za, 27-21-421-0935

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day excursion to several wineries in Cape Town's Stellenbosch region, I Joined Wine Flies and vis-ited Villiera, Remhoogte, Middelylei, Lovane and Annandale wine estates. I tasted 25 wines and spar-klings, enjoyed pairings and lunch with a fun and hysterically funny guide hysterically lunny guide who knows more about wine than most mere mortals, explaining per-haps why he goes by the moniker "Sir Legend." winefiles.co.za, 27-21-462-8011 >> To learn more; south africa.net

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