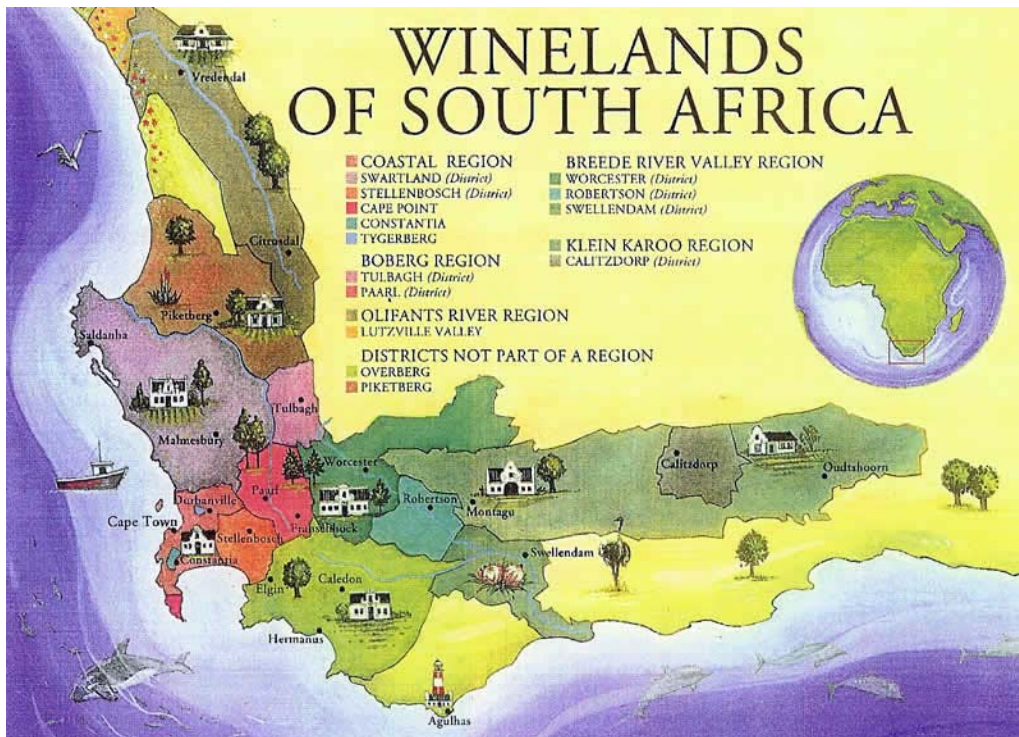




South African Wine Tour 2005



Index

Sunday, March 27 - Sun City - Marg Chapman.....	4
Sunday, March 27 - Sun City - Gerry Komuves (a second viewpoint).....	5
Monday, March 28 - Oggie's Camp, Pilanesberg - Eleanor Cosman.....	6
Tuesday, March 29 - Oggie's Camp, Pilanesberg - Bob Weir.....	7
Wednesday, March 30 - Kruger Park - Beverly Betts.....	9
Thursday, March 31 - Kruger Park - Deric Humble.....	12
Friday, April 1 - Capetown - Marie Komanecki.....	13
Saturday, April 2 - Capetown - Terry Betts (really Beverly).....	14
Sunday, April 3 - Capetown - Joyce Monro.....	18
Sunday, April 3 continued - Extra donation from Keith Pankhurst.....	19
Monday, April 4 - Capetown - Joyce Curry.....	20
Tuesday, April 5 - Stellenbosch - Bill Winter.....	21
Wednesday, April 6 - Stellenbosch - Bobby Hegney.....	22
Thursday, April 7 - Ceres - Alec Monro.....	24
Friday, April 8 - Nuy Valley - Mara Komuves.....	25
Saturday, April 9 - Gordons Bay - Mike Chapelle.....	28
Sunday April 10 - Montagu - Mike Chapelle.....	29
Monday, April 11 - Calitzdorp - Keith Pankhurst.....	30
Tuesday April 12 - Oudtshoorn - Evelyn Truty.....	31
Wednesday April 13 - Kynsna - Leon Meslin:.....	32
Thursday April 14 - Knysna - Bruce Chapman.....	33
Friday April 15 - Addo Game Reserve - Jim Parker.....	34
Saturday, April 16 - Mossel Bay - Nancy Parker.....	35
Sunday, April 17 - Toronto - Mike Chapelle.....	35

2005 Tour Group

Eleanor Cosman ...Tour Leader

Terry & Beverly Betts

Mike & Diane Chapelle

Bruce & Marg Chapman

Deric Humble & Marie Komanecki

Gerry & Mara Komuves

Alec & Joyce Monro

Keith Pankhurst

Jim & Nancy Parker

Leon Meslin & Evelyn Truty

Bob Weir & Joyce Curry

Bill Winter & Bobby Hagney



March 25 and Saturday March 26 – Toronto - Diane Chapelle

Friday,

We began the first leg of our journey to South Africa and everything went smoothly to La Guardia airport. We boarded a bus and enjoyed a tour of the heavy traffic of New York while we were transferred to JFK. Things had gone well and everyone had sailed smoothly through security until it came my turn. What can I say.. lights flashed, the buzzer beeped and I found myself being searched with shoes off and in an increasing state of undress. I dealt with questions about knives or anything unusual. I turned to find 42 eyes trained on me by my travelling companions who were killing themselves laughing at my predicament. I started to laugh as did the security guard who finally concluded that the sequins on my jeans were the culprit, and let me go.

The flight went well through Dakar (Senegal) where about half the population of our plane disembarked. They tended to be a mixture of men in western suits and men in traditional flowing robes. Looking out the window on take-off Dakar appeared to have a beautiful shoreline and large groupings of long canoes were setting out with their nets for the day's fishing.

A few hours out of Dakar many passengers were startled by the sounds of loud clanging coming from the inner body of our aircraft. It was finally dealt with and at flight's end the pilot announced that the difficulty had been an oil filter problem which necessitated shutting down one engine. Rather exciting news to say the least.

Ah yes the wine. The white wine served on the flight was terrible however the day was saved by the excellent red: Rail Road Red by Graham Beck (cab/shiraz) and a 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ star rating by Platter.

We finally arrived at the beautiful Jo'burg airport where we boarded a bus to Sun City Resort. We checked in to our rooms in the Cabanas hotel and ended the night at the restaurant dining at the Pub and the Buffet.

Sunday, March 27 – Sun City - Marg Chapman

We began our day at the unholy hour of 6:30am with Deric and Marie, embarking on a game drive in Pilanesberg National Park. The early start was well worth it for we enjoyed sighting: A Marabou Stork, Baboon, Hippos, Tsessebe, Giraffe, Zebra, Warthog, Hartebeest, Ostrich, White Rhinos, Buffalo, Guinea Fowl, various antelope and a partrich in a pear tree.....

A rare treat was the sighting of a pack of 14 wild dogs. It is extremely rare to see the dogs which are almost extinct.

The four of us breakfasted late in the Palm Terrace back at the Cabanas in Sun City.

After breakfast and a short rest we set out to explore what Sun City had to offer. We wandered through the Sun City Hotel and Casino and the neighbouring Cascades Hotel.

We Made our way past the giant carved Elephants and Lions (a piece inspired by the book King Solomon's Mines) to the Valley of Waves. The Valley of Waves is a man-made lake which sends out a large wave every 5 minutes to waiting swimmers. This being the week of school break, the Valley was filled with families and young sun worshippers. At the far grounds of Sun City sits the majestic Palace Hotel, looking down on the rest of the complex from the heights of a cliff. We were not alone for Terry and Bev were discovered having a drink in the Tusk Lounge while Mike, Diane, Mara and Jerry had tea in the Crystal Court.

We ended the day with Sundowners at the Vista Bar and later a dinner at the Peninsula Restaurant in the Cascades Hotel. Beautiful venue - lovely open air dancing.

Sunday, March 27 – Sun City – Gerry Komuves (a second viewpoint)

Our "at leisure" day to refresh ourselves. Several people got an early start in the wild game search by doing a morning drive at nearby Pilanesberg. They were rewarded for their sleep-sacrifice with some excellent sightings. The rest of us enjoyed a leisurely excellent breakfast and explored the resort's many attractions.

This former overgrazed farmland in the crater of an extinct volcano has been transformed into an exotic fantasy. Tropical jungle now covers the area and computer generated waves wash onto pristine, man-made beaches. Five complexes comprise the accommodation facilities, from the Cabanas, which we enjoyed, to the ultra-luxurious Palace of the Lost City. The Cabanas featured: a lake for water sports (including para-sailing), a huge swimming pool which many of us enjoyed as our first winter get-away and a delightful aviary including a large collection of raptors.

At the centre the Bridge of Time presented an impressive Elephant Walk leading to the Palace which many of us toured individually in the afternoon. The exotic architecture and stunning view from the tower truly underlined the opulence of the resort's ambitious effort - a place where the visitor wants for nothing. Those of us who enjoyed the High Tea in the Palace were treated to an atmosphere truly reminiscent of the colonial ruling elite.

The evening's buffet dinner brought us together in a collective of convivial conversation about our anticipated experience in the wild, well lubricated by a copious variety of S. African wines. After a totally relaxing day we were ready to see the real Africa.

Monday, March 28 – Oggie's Camp, Pilanesberg - Eleanor Cosman

Monday dawned as any other day does in the Highveld. Hot and cloudless with a clear blue sky. After a wonderful breakfast we checked out of Sun City and boarded a jeep for a 2 hour tour of Pilanesberg Game Park.

Our driver, Roger, while telling us to "keep quiet" when we saw game, had a very loud voice when describing the game so I think it was a "no win" quiet zone. He did have a wonderful smile. We saw a fair amount of game and returned to the hotel for a quick "pit stop" and then on to Oggie's Camp in the heart of Pilanesberg. This was the first time that people other than rangers were allowed into the area as Tom and Oggie, the owners, had only been granted the concession a few weeks before. So we were literally the "pilot group".

Accommodation was basic but comfortable and the general living quarters consisted of a huge firepit and communal bathing pool. The toilet-without -the -door presented a problem quickly solved by hanging a pink hanger on a rope if occupied.

I did feel as though the group felt abandoned in "darkest Africa" when I left them to go purchase beer with Tom. However, on return and a few beers later they visibly relaxed and looked forward to the rest of the day's adventure.

The evening game ride was split into 2 groups and I was fortunate to stay at camp as the first group went. Approaching my tent I heard Mike say "elephant" and right in front of our tent on the river bank was a majestic elephant drinking and washing himself - totally oblivious to the world. We must have watched him for a good 20 minutes. What a treat!

Another highlight of the day was the drumming lessons which they had organized for us. Our drummer (from Zimbabwe?) was excellent at getting us to participate and feel the rhythm. Between the drumming and the wine everyone was very relaxed by the time they served a very tasty chicken stew with rice for supper - followed by traditional Malva pudding with cream.

By 11:30 all were in bed, either sound asleep or tossing and turning as their bodies felt the strangeness of the rocks under the 4 inch mattress -rather like the princess and the pea.

Tuesday, March 29 – Oggie's Camp, Pilanesberg - Bob Weir

The 6:30 alarm sounded, but most tent occupants in our group were already up or stirring. Joyce Curry was the only one of our tour group to take a shower. We all figured that the water would be cool, maybe cold, and modesty was, perhaps, an issue. Joyce announced to anyone who would listen that the shower was wonderful, and that the water was HOT.

We assembled for breakfast and learned that it had been raining in Botswana for two days, and that the rain was going to continue. In addition, many of the roads, being mud, could be impassable or, if we did reach our destination, we might not be able to get out. Further, no-one was looking forward to camping in the rain. A few telephone calls later and we were booked into a camp at Kruger National Park. Yea!!!!

We polished off our breakfast of eggs, mushrooms, and tomatoes, gathered our gear and, furtively looking left and right, walked, in a tightly-knit group, out of the compound to the waiting bus. It was a beautiful bus, but no toilet! Tom was the driver. It was an eight-hour drive to Kruger. Time was of the essence, so stops were brief. We had to arrive by 6 p.m., after which the Park Gate would close for the night. We took the toll road, which was great, but the frequent tolls along the way were each quite expensive.

Driving from the Pilanesberg Park area across the country provided a dramatic change in scenery: scrubby bush; vast farmlands dotted with occasional mines, mostly coal; a couple of coal-fired electrical generating plants; fields of corn; grasslands with cattle. Then we entered into bad-lands with hills, rocky out-crops, by-the-highway streams, and all overflowing with acacia trees and flamboya, a beautiful pink blossom tree. We saw fruit trees, bougainvillia, yellow chestnut, cactus, palm trees, and pink cannas.

For nature's call, we stopped briefly in Pretoria, at Shop-Rite, and at a Shell service station. Reached Nelspruit, less than an hour from the Park, and phoned ahead to secure our accommodation. Arrived at the Park Gate at exactly 6 p.m.

In order to save each of us 100 Rand, we presented ourselves as a Deaf and Dumb Tour Group from Cape Town. (Some of us did not have to act the part as much as others!) One of the Park officials hitched a ride with us from the Gate to the Camp compound. As a result, we, being the deaf and dumb, could not speak (let alone hear if spoken to).

Leaving the Gate, the first encounter we came across inside the Park was a herd of Cape buffalo on the road. (The Cape buffalo is one of the Big 5, the others being the lion, leopard, elephant, and rhinoceros.)

A few kilometres further along at the side of the road was a dead giraffe and three lionesses feeding. The giraffe had fallen in such a way that its neck was caught in the crutch of a tree, and the lionesses were not strong enough to drag it away into the bush. It looked like it was a young giraffe that likely had been chased down the road by the lionesses and then lost its footing when it veered off the road towards the bush.

Despite this incredible scene, not a word was uttered by the deaf and dumb. The only sound we could not hear was Eleanor, our fearless Leader, exclaiming profusely and exhilaratingly, in Afrikaans, "Look at the lions! Look at the lions!". The deaf and dumb, not hearing, but easily understanding our "native tongue" through obvious lip-reading, strained our collective necks to see the action.

Some of the dumber were looking out the wrong side of the bus and had to be turned around. Other dumbos wanted to get out to pet the big putty-kats. The Park official gamely barred their way.

Once at the Camp gate, the official was let off. Immediately after, the cacophony of clucking tongues inside the bus was raucous.

At the Camp we were assigned to our respective cabins, which we had to find in the dark. Some of the "dumb" were still having trouble, but eventually we were all esconced in our units. Diane and Mike Chapelle, together with Joyce Curry went to a Park restaurant for a buffet while the rest of us assembled our chairs in a semi-circle, like a Council Ring, outside of Hut 39, home of Tom and Harry, our cooks (as well as tour guide and bus-driver). They were ably assisted by Tabu and Reech. We promptly consumed litres of red and white wine, the occasional beer, and some had hard stuff. Our rather late 10 pm dinner consisted of sausage, mashed maize called "bap", and steak. We were getting up around 4 a.m. to go game-watching, so most headed off to "sleepy-times" right after dinner.

Wednesday, March 30 – Kruger Park - Beverly Betts

Everyone decided to go on the sunrise safari. It was very quiet as we started out in the dark. The truck had two spotlights attached to the roof near the front. There were also two handheld spotlights; one at the front and the other near the back. We asked to go back to the giraffe kill. We were fortunate to see the two lionesses and to my delight we saw two cubs. We watched as they played together on the road. One lioness was chowing down on the giraffe. As we watched she obviously got something caught in her throat and she began to try to dislodge it. It was like she was trying to cough up a hairball.

The second lioness decided to lie in the middle of the road watching us with her eyes slit like she was bored. The cubs were around one of the lioness and then slowly made their way down the road playing all the while.

I found that I was glad that I had brought my turtleneck and jacket as it was fairly cool and took awhile to see any animals. The first big game we saw looked like two brown boulders. Roger, our safari guide, was amazing. He pointed out the two "boulders" and it turned out to be two white Rhinos lying down face to face. It turned out to be a mother and her baby. They seemed unconcerned that we were so close and they began grazing totally ignoring us.

Roger told us that you could tell it was a white Rhino because they are grazers. The black Rhinos differ in that they graze on leaves which mean you can take better pictures of them since they are more visable.

The next animals we saw were a family of baboons and a small herd of Impalas. It was hard to figure out what we should be concentrating on. Should we be watching the baby baboons hanging out on sloped rocks, overbalancing themselves with some antics and then falling down? Or should we watch them play in the tree, leaping from branch to branch and then trying to leap to a boulder? Or should we watch the Impalas play fight with each, other locking their horns and then running away?

As we headed back to camp we saw various waterbucks, more impalas and in the distance (where we needed binoculars to see) were two male lions lying on a large rock sunning themselves. Later that day we would find ourselves on the same rock looking out at the landscape and taking pictures (no lions).

We came back to camp to enjoy a quick breakfast of bacon, eggs, coffee, and for some of us Bailey's. It sure helped a cup of instant coffee become palatable. Of course, you could wander up to the coffee house/restaurant and buy really good coffee.

Before noon we began our second tour of the day in the big bus. We all saw so much in the bus that we wondered why we got up so early and paid for the truck. The highlight of the tour included seeing about six hippos in a river and then suddenly a crocodile arise from under the water to the left of the hippos. The crocodile ignored the hippos and swam sedately past them. I don't think a crock will often try to take a bite out of a hippo; it's perhaps little too big.

We stopped off at a large store that had loads of wine and beer to choose from and lots of great knickknacks. Everyone bought whatever souvenirs they wanted and off we were for our lunch. At the store many of us helped ourselves to a cool beer.

We stopped off for lunch at a wonderful picnic area. It was beautifully manicured complete with swimming pool. After visiting the souvenir store and discovering chilled wine and beer we walked down a hill and found a nice picnic area mostly shaded.

We enjoyed bread, cheese, onion and tomato sandwiches and the guys B-B-Qed some thin lamb sausages. For entertainment we saw a couple of hippos walking along the other side of the river however they were too far to get a good picture.

After lunch we continued on our tour and were able to see another elephant about five feet away from the road chowing down on some obviously tasty grass. He didn't seem to care how close we were and so didn't pay us any attention.

In Kruger National Park we saw the largest herds of Impalas, zebras and finally in the distance we saw a huge giraffe.

Before our tour ended we took one more look at the giraffe kill and saw not much had changed since morning.

When we got back to camp around 4pm the clouds began to darken. Many people wanted to have a swim before dinner. The quicker ones were successful; however, by the time Terry and I got there we started to hear thunder which convinced Terry that a dip might not be a good idea so we made our way back and met up with Eleanor. She mentioned that she wanted to stop by the shop so we joined her there. I was happy because I found two spoons for our nonexistent yet growing collector spoon collection for my stepmother and myself.

It started to rain while we were in the store. We waited for about 15 minutes and then began to discuss what we should do. I mentioned that there was a bar just across the grassy knoll. We all decided it was a fabulous idea and we ran as quickly as we could over there. Then we discovered that the bar wasn't going to open for another half hour. Eleanor in her lovely assertive and persuasive manner convinced the manager to seat us. We requested and were given a glass of red wine. When Eleanor asked what type of wine it was, the manager confidently told us it was "red wine". Okay, dokay.

We watched the rain pour down and discovered how well the camp was constructed to move the water away from the cottages. All the roads were constructed of bricks. At the edge of the road the bricks were angled making an excellent barrier from the water but also an excellent obstruction to trip on when going to the "loo" at night.

After the rain stopped or shall I say slowed down and we made our way back to the huts. I stopped off to pick up our rain gear and went to Tom's hut. Everyone started to trickle in by 7ish with stories of how they spent their "rained in" time. Some napped, some showered, some read, and some wouldn't tell us what they did. Hmmm, makes one wonder.

We enjoyed a dinner of lamb stew and rice with a cream mushroom sauce. While dinner was getting ready I took a nice shower. I found a frog hanging out on top of the door. I made him move so he wouldn't get squished.

As the evening was winding down Eleanor and I decided to have a nightcap outside since the night was so beautiful. Terry wandered by and we invited him over. Diane came to visit having walked into the wrong hut and unfortunately disturbed a couple who were shall I say, enjoying each other. She came back and was barely able to tell us what she had done as she was laughing so hard.

Everyone soon went to bed after that.

Thursday, March 31 – Kruger Park - Deric Humble

A small group of our number was up again at the crack of dawn to once again venture out into the Kruger wilderness. We went to the giraffe kill sight where we found 2 adult male lions and 3 females accompanied by 3 cubs. The large male (which was named Duncan, no doubt after the wild lions found in abundance in Scotland...?) grabbed a large part of the carcass and dragged it into the bush. One adult female was obviously calling for a missing cub which the guide speculated might be dead. One of the females showed interest in a younger male, "Roger"

(Editors Note: "This personification of large ferocious wild felines indicates a deep seated neurosis demonstrated by an obsession with dominant uninhibited sexuality coupled with a secret desire to dine on giraffe." Being a trained psychotherapist, I can't help the analysis. Better lock up your house cat).

The interest in Roger elicited an immediate reaction from the dominant Duncan which led to frightening roaring and raging in the bush (accompanied by the sound of bag-pipes).

The female, no one's fool, took off down the road with Duncan and Roger in hot pursuit. Duncan showed his dominance and a supreme lack of good breeding by spraying the roadway as he went.

The rest of the drive was less eventful. However, we were able to see beautiful Kudus, Hippos; Water Buck but alas no leopard.

Upon return to camp we shared our lion experience with our envious fellows. We then boarded the bus for Jo'burg and our flight to Cape Town. Enroute we stopped to buy mangos and bananas and later at a highway stop where most of our number dined on meat pies of unknown origin.

Our flight left promptly at 4:00pm, arriving in the Cape by 6:00pm. We were picked up by Wayne, our driver for the next week and taken to our guest houses. We left in our bus for the waterfront where we dined at Cantina Tequila. We had a sumptuous Mexican buffet which had everyone talking and running. It took forever and much negotiation on the part of Eleanor but finally the bill was settled. The jury is out on the Cantina Tequila. Took bus home at 11:30.

Friday, April 1 – Capetown - Marie Komanecki

Deric and I had complimentary room service for breakfast.

Menu: Morning Glories, Eggs Benedict, Belgian Waffles, and bottomless cup cappucinos.

Didn't everyone get this??

APRIL FOOL

Drove through False Bay and onto Steenberg in the region of Constantia.

There we were met by our host and winemaker, John Loubser.

This is one of the Cape's oldest and smallest viticultural areas. It is renowned for its quality white and desert wines. It also produces some reds of distinction.

Under South Africa's Wine of Origin system, Constantia is a Ward. This valley is framed by a near-continuous slope stretching from the back of Table Mountain through the Vlakkenberg and the Constantiaberg ranges. The southeastern wind zips off the Atlantic Ocean at False Bay providing a cooling and drying effect. The soils are mostly derived from granite and the base of the sandstone of the upper mountain formations. Sandier, alluvial soils are found in some of the valley areas. The average rainfall is approx. 1000mm.

The original Constantia Farm was divided into Groot (big) and Klein (small) Constantia. Steenberg's vineyards were established in 1682. The farm consists of 62 hectares. Steen means stone.

Sauvignon Blanc is their specialty. 2005 is a warm vintage and thus won't be as good as 2004. 2005 wines will taste more tropical and less green. Outstanding wines were:

-2004 Sauvignon Blanc - Loire Clone and 2002 Catharina named after the original owner who was married a mere 5 times.

Groot Constantia was established in 1685. Winemaker Boela Gerber welcomed us. 2005 was a good year for whites and an excellent year for reds.

They have 175 hectares with 9 different soils, enabling them to plant each varietal in its own soil. The cool ocean breezes moderate temperatures so they can harvest later with higher alcohol levels.

We sampled many of their wines, notably Muscat de Frontignan which was made in the style of 1700.

We continue to Cape Point where we enter the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. Most go up the funicular to the light house to view the conjuncture of two oceans, the Atlantic and the Indian, and the spectacular view from the top. However, Diane and Eleanor chose to walk up. We have been warned about marauding bands of baboons in the area. As they approach the summit, Diane is attacked by a male baboon about the same size as her. It jumps her from behind. Diane desperately screams for help and struggles to get away. Eleanor is stunned and unable to help, nor is anyone else willing to intervene. Worst still, Eleanor gets no photos! In desperation, Diane is forced to concede her coat and finally her purse. The baboon now focuses his attention on the purse. Incredibly, it opens each of the zippered compartments, extracts and examines the content, wolfs down the edible items, chocolate and gum, and turfs everything else aside. It actually removes the individual portions of gum from its bubble pack and gobbles it down. It bites its way into plastic bottles of prescription medicine and as far as we can tell, it will have the lowest cholesterol levels of any baboon on the Cape. For that matter, it's not likely to suffer from osteoporosis either. When the animal has cleared the bag, Diane is able to recover her stuff, including passports and tickets home. In recounting her Perils of Diane story, Diane is able to give a detailed description of the offending baboon, identifiable by the extraordinary "size" of its phallus.

And now back to Cape Town.

Saturday, April 2 – Capetown - Terry Betts (really Beverly)

We were on our way at 8:30am to our first winery of the day. It, at one time, was called Tygerberg. It was called that because of the grass on the hills, from a distance the grass looked like spots and because the Dutch didn't know the difference between a tiger and a leopard so the name stuck. It was then renamed Altydedachtl (<http://www.altydgedacht.co.za/>) and is one of the more historic wineries, that includes grain and stock farms established on the Tygerberg hills founded in the days of the Dutch East India Company.

In 1698 the first owner of the estate was Elsje van Suurwaarde whose husband, like all Dutch East India Company officials was not permitted to own land. She gave her name to the Elsieskraal River and the suburb of Elsies River. After Elsjes' death, the farm passed through the hands of many owners.

In 1816 the Liesching family housed Napoleon's secretary, Count de las Cases for three months on the estate, while he awaited a ship to return to Europe. The English authorities apparently feared a plot to rescue Napoleon from St. Helena.

His diary describes, "being removed to the very extremity of the civilised world" in "the desert of the Tygerberg", where he nevertheless enjoyed the agreeable company of his hosts.

Altydgedacht has been owned by the Parker family since 1852. George Francis Parker, then aged 19, arrived at the Cape with his parents and two brothers in 1819, with one of the many groups of settlers sent by the English government to the Cape and the Australian colonies.

George remained at the Cape to become a merchant and later, in 1852, to acquire the farm, while the rest of the family settled in Australia.

Five generations have maintained and developed Altydgedacht. George's great, great grandsons, John and Oliver, continue the unbroken family tradition.

The earliest homestead has been replaced but the original white washed 'ringmuur', 'slavebell' and outbuildings still remain. The cellar, dating from the early 1700's is the one of the oldest functioning wine cellars left in the country.

Altydgedacht is situated only 15 km away from the Atlantic Ocean and falls into one of the coolest wine-growing regions of South Africa.

The white cultivars produced are Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Gewurztraminer, Hanepoot, Sauvignon Blanc, Weisser Reisling, S.A. Riesling and Viognier. The red cultivars are Barbera, Cabernet Sauvignon Cabernet Franc, Gamay, Merlot, Shiraz and Pinotage. Viognier and Cabernet Franc are the most recent cultivars to be introduced.

They are currently working on conserving the indigenous shrub called "fynbos". The farmers in the area are working together to join the fynbos. Only 15% still covers the country.

Among the wines we tasted we tried a dry Gewurztraminer which I didn't know was possible. It was delicious. They also produced something called "Chatelaine" in respect for the strength of the role women had played in the running of the farm and was a blending of three grapes.

Our next stop was about five minutes up the road to a winery called Wyne Wines at Bloemendal Landgoed Wine Estate. We had some amazing wines: three whites and three reds, along with a wonderful selection of cheeses. There were also jalapenos stuffed with white cheese and herbs (yum), green olives, and pickled beets with cloves and cinnamon and red peppers. This stop was beautiful. There was a large garden in front of the restaurant with weeping willows and various red blossoms.

Our last stop of the day was at Durbanville Hills (<http://www.durbanvillehills.co.za>). It's the youngest producing cellar in the Durbanville Wine Valley, the most modern and also the largest. It's located in the first valley from Cape Town, among the hills of Durbanville. All the grapes are hand picked and hand sorted.

The vineyards overlook Table Mountain, Table Bay and Robben Island. They lie within one of the Cape's cooler growing regions and temperatures are subdued by Atlantic breezes.

Its history is interesting. The area used to be a farm called Rooseboom. It so impressed Governor of the Cape, Simon van der Stel, in 1685 that he noted it for posterity.

At the time of his trip through the Durbanville area on his way to Namaqualand the first farmers had been in the region for over 20 years, having been given farms by the government around the spring and the pan in the area. The spring became a popular resting place during the early 18th century. Travellers would stop there to replenish water and food supplies, creating a demand for fresh meat and a market for cattle farmers. Some cattle farming were supplemented with wheat production.

The names of the three wines in the cellar's single vineyard range are closely linked to the history of the area.

The name of the Durbanville hills is not Durbanville Hills but the Tygerberg "Leopard Mountain". It all began when the early Cape Settlers in the mid-1600s called the hill Bevlekte Luipaartsberg (Spotted Leopard Mountain) because they were reminded of Leopard skin by the striped effect of the patchwork in shrubs covering the hills. As Tijger is the Dutch word for leopard the name later changed to Tygerberg.

The Rhinofields range is named for the renosterveld, a biome of endangered indigenous Cape vegetation growing in the area and so named because rhinoceroses (Afrikaans: "renosters") were often encountered in the vegetation. Renosterveld forms part of the West Coast lowland fynbos biome, identified as one of South Africa's top three priority biomes by the World Wildlife Fund. As this is fast disappearing, the winery actively contributes to its preservation.

The building was very modern with a boxy style. We walked into the building and wandered around until we saw some bottles and glasses. This was the tasting area we presumed since no one was around to talk to. The bottles were just out there to help yourself. We were encouraged to go upstairs past the beautiful restaurant to a large outdoor balcony. The landscape seemed quite harsh and I was surprised that anything could grow there. But grapes are masochistic and they like harsh soil.

As we were coming back to our B & B we stopped off at a beach to watch kites surfers. It was quite windy and fun to watch the guys almost flying. The white sand felt like velvet. Unfortunately, we couldn't stay long.

When we arrived our B & B Terry decided to get into the hot tub. Nancy and Jim kept him company. I on the other hand decided to have a nap. Fortunately, I was awoken by Mike yelling to Diane that we had four minutes to get to the bus. Thanks goodness that happened and I've never gotten ready so quickly in my life.

We went to a jazz bar call Marco's African Place for dinner. We were allowed to bring our own wine and just had to pay for corkage. We started with iceberg salad with shoestring carrots, red peppers, tomatoes and onions. It was just like something you would find at home in Canada. Happily, our meal changed to more exotic foods after that. We were served small portions of Ostrich, Waterbuck, and Udo. The Ostrich was better than Filet Mignon. Longos at home carries it and I think I'll begin to buy it instead of beef. Joyce enjoyed one of the thickest fish dishes I've ever since. Along with the meat we were served beans and rice.

For dessert we enjoyed ice cream and a chocolate cake with dates.

Our evening entertainment was a lot of fun. We enjoyed a wonderful jazz band. Their first set was very North American but after it seemed to be more African. I noticed there were pictures of Louie Armstrong. The décor was of tablecloths with a zebra or leopard design. On the walls were long African prints.

We got back to our B & B's around 11pm and when we turned on the TV we found out the Pope had died at 19:37GMT.

Sunday, April 3 – Capetown - Joyce Monro

We awoke to a beautiful South African day and more importantly - no wind!

There was some difficulty getting the group on the bus. The Brenwin cook was very slow and in fact Alec and I left without our eggs!

Even so, we were at the ticket level of Table Mountain at 9:28a.m. and by 10:00 had reached the top. What a view! And what a wonderful layout. Trails circling the summit with excellent view points; informative plaques telling the historical and natural history, many examples of the local Finbos, birds, and of course, Dassie (Rock Hyrax). For an added thrill one could even go repelling on the back side of the mountain. Unfortunately there was also the inevitable idiot talking on his cell at high volume, describing his impressions.

By the time we came down at 11:00 the line up for tickets stretched so far around that the end was not in sight. At this point several of the group returned to Cape Town to take in the market and the waterfront etc. The remainder boarded the bus and headed for Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain. The developed garden displays Southern African plants, including many rare and endangered species. There is also a large nature reserve.

After a brief orientation and exhortations to be on time for lunch, we dispersed to experience the gardens. Alec took many photos and I made sure that I noted the correct botanical names. We also found several interesting birds - The Lesser Doublecollered Sunbird and the Olive Thrush, to add to our list. All through the gardens were interesting signs including an explanation of the way the Fynbos flowers - "No fire = no Fynbos". The seeds are stimulated by heat and/or smoke and the Fire Lily (a bulb), flowers immediately after a fire.

Then it was off to the Silvertree for lunch.

Sage dusted pita served with sweet potato soup; followed by a chicken and leek pie on a bed of basmati rice accompanied by a mélange of stir-fried vegetables. This we "washed down" with a Dutoitskloof Sauvignon Blanc. Very Tasty. For those who like their Pudd, we next have a very tasty Malva Pudding with toffee sauce and cream, garnished with petals of fruit caulis rimmed in chocolate.

We departed at 2:15 and drove to the Ferry Docks for that 6 more of the group could make the trip to Robben Island. Those of us left on the bus returned to the guest house(s) and spent the remainder of the day at the market, at the waterfront, having tea at the Mount Nelson and finally having a Braai at the house.

Alec and I walked over to the market and bought a batik tablecloth from a Zimbabwean artist (with a bright pink finger to show that he had voted). Next, to the waterfront, to find an ATM and to take photos; and back to Brenwin to start the packing process, have a shower and ready ourselves for an evening with one of Alec's second cousins (this past year has been a major discovery of Monro family connections).

Alex(andra) Monro was born and brought up in Edinburgh, came out to South Africa on a holiday, fell in love, and now lives here with husband and (only son) Scott, and daughter Ashley. The household also includes two sheep dogs, 2 ducks, and four cats. One of the cats has periodic fits, and another, Harley, is a vegetarian and begs for cucumber!

This is an artistic off-the-wall, laid back family living in a house that is a riot of colour, art, animals and other stuff. Absolutely delightful!

Alex was so excited to meet Alec and to find out about some of her other 2nd cousins that she had probably not met in 40 years. Fortunately we had photos. We have also picked up a few family stories in the past year, so were able to share those as well. We had a really fun evening and will be keeping in touch by e-mail.

Sunday, April 3 continued - Extra donation from Keith Pankhurst

About 4:00pm I strolled up to the Mount Nelson Hotel for afternoon tea. Along treed avenue led to a beautiful old pink Victorian hotel with extensive manicured lawns and gardens
Tea was served off the main lobby in any one of three areas:

The inner lounge contained comfy sofas and wing back chair, a grand piano and player, and a large buffet table with crust less sandwiches, thirty assorted desserts, bowls of fresh blueberries and kumquats and fresh whipped cream, also scones and jams

Beyond was a terrace. One could choose any area to sit, and return as often as desired to the buffet table. A waitress brought a pot of the tea selected. I chose basic orange pekoe, and kicked myself that I had had such a large lunch shortly before.

The tea was 110 rand, which I considered a bargain considering the quality and variety of offerings available.

Afterwards I toured the gardens, saw a wedding reception in progress and took a taxi home

Monday, April 4 – Capetown - Joyce Curry

After an early rising we had breakfasted and checked out of the Brenwin. We headed off at 9:00am to the Stellenbosch area. Our first stop was the Warwick Estate. Michael Ratcliffe, owner, is the first South African born of his family as the previous generations were all Canadian born. We were met by Ronald who piled us into an open truck and then ferried us up to the hilltop of the vineyard. The Klapsmat Mountain was behind us and the Simons Mountain range was in front. The view was spectacular and the day, sunny and hot. We decided to enjoy the walk down to the villa where Michael conducted the wine tasting. There were some excellent wines and Louis the winemaker did an excellent job introducing them. Of particular interest was the 'wedding cup', one of the family's many collector items. Seems that this particular cup was made in Germany and is worth about \$20,000 in its original form. The winery was taking a few orders for copies. The genius of the cup is the due to its moveable parts both bride and groom could drink from it at the same time. Really beautiful. We lunch at Kronhoek, a picturesque setting for the guest-house farm. Duimpie Bayly, a renounced South African wine connoisseur, who has been in the wine business since 1962 lead a tasting of the top 10 pinotage of 2004. Bob was in heaven as to him, Pinotage is nectar. Keith is so right in his comment that Pinotage must be opened an hour before tasting. The traditional pinotage has a bit of a petrol bouquet and for me a far too weird taste. I was delighted to hear Duimpie say that the winemakers are tending to a more fruity taste in order to reach a wider audience.

Louise put on a lovely curry lunch. We hated to go but piled into the bus and went on to our inn. D'Ouwe Werf (meaning "Old Church") was a beautiful Inn. We were in the newer wing with gigantic large rooms which the hotel was selling off as time-share units.

We were then bussed back to Cape Town for a tasting of Chenin Blanc held at the Nose Restaurant, led by Ken Forrester. This was part of a 6 week wine course offered by the restaurant. My table mate was newly into wine appreciation and had been given the course by his wife as a gift. He was quite impressed by the attendance of the Canadian winos.

Poor Wayne! He drove us back to Stellenbosch for the night and was due to pick us up again for a very early morning.

Tuesday, April 5 – Stellenbosch - Bill Winter

With profound apologies to G. Chaucer * and all those who abhor anachronisms.

"Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
the droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendered is the flour;
Than richtly dream winemakers of vendanges
And longen folk to goon on pinotages"

* I'm sure you know, Chaucer belonged to a family of wine merchants.

At 0900 we embark by bus to Landskroon ("Crown of the Land"). It is truly a beautiful countryside. The proprietors are Paul and Hugo Devilliers, scions of an old Dutch family (Huguenots?) that arrived in South Africa in the late 1600's. After the ritual reading from the Platter Bible (p.335) we are treated to an interesting talk by Wayne, our excellent bus driver about the local Paarl Monument, designed as a parabolic curve in celebration of the exponential growth of the Afrikaans language. We enjoyed a thorough tour of the winery by the proprietor. For some reason I was struck by the variety of vats ranging from old cement containers, through 1950's German fiberglass to modern stainless steel. Finally the tasting: Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Shiraz, Cab Sauvignon and their flagship Port. The wines were tasty but tended to fade early.

Next we visited Franschoek (why all the double consonants?) - "French Hook". This is a beautiful South Africa town settled in 1688 by French Huguenots. Originally, it was an elephant "corner". Apparently elephants were the original road surveyors - elephant trails provided the first tracks for settlers because their migratory routes produced the most passable paths (thanks again Wayne). Franschoek boasts a beautiful monument to the Huguenot quest for a freedom of religion.

A picnic lunch in Boschendal - in the park under the trees. Very civilized. Unfortunately there was no time to visit the museum with its Cecil Rhodes memorabilia.

It is now afternoon and the intrepid oenophiles disembark at Thelma, a winery that teamed up with its neighbour, Tokara to conduct a tasting. It was a quick guzzle with only one glass provided per person. It could have been worse - one glass per group. We had no time to sample a wine before the next arrived. However, it was a tastefully designed tasting centre replete with lovely wooden tables, sculpture, folk-art, wall hangings and a massive, impressive metal door (constructed from the hull of a ship) to a wine library.

One more winery to go - Sonop - a space age organic enterprise. We are behind schedule. A minor revolt breaks out among some of the oenonauts. We are tired of rowing through rivers of wine. Let us repair to lovely Stellenbosch and savour her charms. No way! In true Geo. Bush fashion, Eleanor insists. They are waiting for us. She's right of course. Annette our hostess is cordial, enthusiastic and informative. Who can quarrel with a Swiss-owned establishment that eschews chemicals in favour of 150 geese to control pests? Would they like to take some Canada geese?

Consummatum est! Now back to Stellenbosch and bed to sleep (off all the wine we have been fed).

Wednesday, April 6 – Stellenbosch - Bobby Hegney

We left Stellenbosch on a rather cloudy day for our trip to the "Strandloper" open air Sea food restaurant in Langebaan. Hoping to enjoy a day swimming at the beach, most were dressed accordingly. Unfortunately during our "pit stop" we realized that it was too chilly for that. The stop was made at a very interesting place that had a wine shop, a gift shop and a "pay" ladies toilet!! One of our enterprising ladies paid the fee and then propped the door open for the rest of us.

The scenery as usual was spectacular. One part passed through long roads lined with Eucalyptus trees. As usual our driver was a fountain of information on the areas that we drove through. Some of his interesting facts were about the Merino

sheep that had been given to South Africa by the King of Spain. It is now the largest breed of sheep in South Africa. We also learned that the school teachers had problems with their pupils on "Crack".

We sat on wooden benches under thatched roofs at the restaurant which was good as it had started to rain lightly by then. The restaurant quickly filled up with members of the public and feast began. The food was cooked on a large fire and brought to long tables where you helped yourself. There were about 10 courses of all kinds of fish, bread and desert. It was washed down with excellent wines that had been brought by Paul, the owner of "Lammershoek" wines, and his wife Anna.

Two of the more hardy members of our group namely Bob and Mike decide to brave the VERY cold water and went in for a long swim. They came out rather cold but were soon warmed up by the plentiful food and drink. A few went in paddling and some collected beautiful shells. We went for a walk along the rocks and I climbed up a steep hill and saw the town of Mykonos in the distance. Not much like the Mykonos in Greece!!!

After several hours we left the Restaurant and headed for a very interesting wine tasting in Klovenberg. On the wall was a picture of the owner, his wife and 4 boys. They were all very blonde. The boys looked cute with wine stains on their legs. The wife had a business selling different creams made from Olive oil also dips. As we left the boys were skateboarding. It was strange to hear them talk to each other in Afrikaans.

By the time we left the Winery it was dark. We finally reached our Hotel in Ceres. Did not think that we could eat any more but were glad that we did go to the restaurant. They put on a terrific buffet including a very tasty Karoo Lamb dish.

Thursday, April 7 – Ceres - Alec Monro

Departed our hotel in Ceres at 8:30am.

A short stay and after much needed sleep, discovered the beautiful garden and pool - could only imagine a few laps. The hotel is actually in the town - now that we can see daylight, and surrounded by mountains.

After a stop at a pharmacy for drug restocking we left town on R 46/43 and climbed through the Michell Pass in the Altzenberg Range with peaks up to 7000 ft. The rock strewn slopes were spectacular. We turned left on R 43 just before the spectacular Bain Cliffe pass that goes through to Paarl. (Bain Sr. and Jr. not related to the artist Thomas Bains). We ran on to Worcester with the jagged Hexrivier Range (highest peak is 2032 m.) to the left. Worcester is an attractive low rise town with treed street, parks and academic campuses.

Out again on rural road to Rawsonville - 9:43 flat tire - aka - lost? We found our way and arrived 10:00am. at Daschbosch in Breedekloof Valley.

Our visit began by us being treated to a presentation on wine and tourism in the region. The aim is to become a "world class destination for wine and tourism".

The strategy is also about HR development. They are giving 20 bursaries to black students in different disciplines for the wine industry. Selection is based on a combination of academics, poverty and regional demographics.

This region also aims to develop its outdoor activities and adventures. Breedekloof indeed aims to be more than just a wine route. Stay tuned: www.breedekloof.com.

Daschbosch tasting: The tasting started with a surprising Sauvignon Blanc, followed by a crisp, lightly oaked Chardonnay. The Chard, and the Ruby Cabernet showed a "cautious" use of oak chips and staves. The Nectar de Provision was a nice Pineau de Charentes look alike.

Our guide, Ferdinand Appel, a financial guy had an abundance of information and really gave an excellent overview. The cellars have been upgraded continuously. Tankage is virtually all 39000 epoxy like concrete. I noticed a brand new reverse osmosis unit.

A parade of trucks was moving out wine to others who use it for blending. Total production is approx. 12 million litres. 55% is exported through L & G. Most ends up as Sainsbury and Tesco House labels. The full co-operative of 20 farms employs about 400 men (thus supporting about 2000 people). There are 15 co-op wineries in Breedekloof area. The bursary program criterion are quite explicit, according to Ferdinand - students are black (preferably female) and from the winery farm employees families.

On to Goudini: Tasted 10 wines - well priced with some outstanding quality. 95% of production is sold as blending wines to distil, KWV etc.

Lunch:

Who needs food after 10 wines. Really tasty.

Smoked fish pate, Brown seed bread, Soup of Pond lily waterblommets, babootie and condiments, Rice/veg, Custard tarts in phyllo with deep fried syrup soaked twists.

Part of the group went on the winery tour.

En route to the next visit Wayne gave an in-depth talk on the toxicology of different snake (slang) venoms. Welcome to Slanghoek (snake corner). The gem and rolling snake story told by GM Pieter Carstens of Slanghoek Winery added to the colour. Pieter greeted us with the comment that he only found out about our visit an hour earlier. Being short on time he gave a concise and information packed talk in the cellar.

We then retired to the tasting room and were joined by the head winemaker. We tasted 6 wines : sauvignon blanc, chardonnay, pinotage, merlot, ruby cabernet port.

For a winery representing 30 million litres these wines, representing less than 5% of production were very good. The winemaking team failed the Ruby Cabernet test.

After hasty farewells we drove back through the spectacular valley on to Worcester and through to Nuy. The plain was surrounded by scenic mountains.

Shortly after 5:00pm we arrived at Nuy Valley Guest Farm. After settling into a charming selection of rooms in the homestead we had a tasting out on the lawn, of the owner's son's first vintages. The tasting was conducted by the irrepressible Erica and was accompanied by delicious lamb sausages. The tasting was followed by a buffet dinner featuring oxtail stew and delicious potatoes. We were ably assisted in consuming the meal by "Viller" the poodle.

Friday, April 8 – Nuy Valley - Mara Komuves

Our morning began with some early bird-watching at the marsh situated on the Nuy Valley Guest House property. Our final tasting day for those of us on the 2 week trip took us to the Walker Bay wine region. This area, located southeast of Cape Town, is the coolest wine growing region in the Cape and is recognized for its pinots, chardonnays, pinotage and sauvignon blancs.

As we drove south through the Breede River Valley the spectacular mountain scenery gave way to lush rolling hills dotted with farms, vineyards and orchards (apricots, pears, plums apples).

Our first stop was Bouchard Finlayson, noted for its Burgundian inspired pinots and chardonnays. The vineyard is located near the old fishing village of Hermanus, one of the best whale watching spots in the world. All grapes are handpicked and selection is done in the field. The Pinot Noir is made exclusively from their own grapes, while purchased grapes are used in some of the chardonnays. Winemaker and co-owner, Peter Finlayson, led us through a tasting of 7 wines.

Blanc de Mer 2004 - a blend of Riesling, pinot blanc, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc

Sauvignon Blanc 2004 - clay soil and earlier picking contribute to a flavour which is more tropical than grassy

Sans Barrique Chardonnay 2004 - unoaked, crisp tropical fruit (4 star rating in the 2005 Platter Guide)

Crocodiles's Lair 2003 - a chardonnay chosen by British Airways for its First Class service (4 star rating in Platter)

Missionvale Chardonnay 2004 - the white flagship from estate grapes with greater selection (4 star rating in Platter)

Hannibal 2002 - predominantly sangiovese with small amounts of pinot, nebbiolo, mourvedre, barbera and syrah (Peter's favourite and 4 star rating in Platter)

Galpin Peak Pinot Noir 2002 - 4 1/2 star rating in Platter

Our next stop was Hamilton Russell. Located 3 km from the sea, it is the most southerly vineyard in S. Africa. The cooler maritime climate and the clay-rich soil are crucial to producing the internationally acclaimed pinots and chardonnays that Hamilton Russell specializes. All wines are made from estate grapes. Owner Anthony Hamilton Russell led us through a tasting of 8 wines.

Hamilton Russell Chardonnay 2004 - also our welcome wine which we sipped on the terrace prior to the tasting

Hamilton Russell Chardonnay 2003 - 5 star rating in Platter

Southern Right 2004 Sauvignon Blanc - from a neighbouring vineyard owned by Hamilton Russell and voted one of the 12 Best Value S. African wines by the Wine Spectator

A tank sample of 2005 Southern Right Sauvignon Blanc

Southern Right Pinotage 2002 - rated as one of the Top Ten Red Wines in S. Africa by the Editor of Decanter Magazine a.k.a "the pinotage that pinotage haters like".

Ashbourne 2001 - a 100% Pinotage that has been described as the most French wine in S. Africa

Hamilton Russell Pinot Noir 2003 - 5 star rating in Platter

Hamilton Russell Pinot Noir 2004

We were then invited to Anthony's home for lunch. Set high atop a hill overlooking vineyards and olive groves (they have produced olive oil since 1995), we enjoyed a delicious lunch on the balcony. More wine! including a late harvest Chenin Blanc with dessert and a parting gift of fynbos honey.

As the fog rolled in, we climbed back onto the bus at 4 p.m. for our descent to Hermanus. As we neared the coast the fog lifted. We began a spectacular coastal drive with sheer cliffs of the mountains to our right plunging into the Atlantic Ocean below us, stopping to take photos of a magnificent rainbow and crashing waves around Cape Hanglip, a high wedge of rock, often mistaken for Cape Point.

We arrived at the oceanfront Villa Via Hotel in Gordon's Bay to the welcome news that we had all been upgraded to suites. A perfect end to a perfect day.

Saturday, April 9 – Gordons Bay - Mike Chapelle

It is another bright and sunny day at the Cape. Gale force winds at the front of the Villa Via Hotel in Gordon Bay, but only a light breeze on the protected canal side of the hotel. Today the "Two Weekers" head for home.

As usual, we get away late again, but not before collecting our boxed breakfasts.

First stop is Delhiem in Stellenbosch. We are greeted by Nora Sperling-Thiel, daughter of Spatz Sperling, and her family. Instead of the usual wine tasting, we pile into four by fours with our boxes and are driven half way up the mountain behind the winery. Here we unload and are invited to join Nara's family in scaling the remaining heights where the boxed breakfast can be enjoyed in conjunction with the spectacular view all the way to Capetown's Table Mountain. While not all participants made the summit, many did. A few of us, the vertically challenged, trekked back to the winery, enjoying the morning hike (down hill).

All are treated to a superb tasting of Delhiem's treasures, including a special Sperling & Sperling Rose formulated in collaboration with Ann Sperling (assumed to be a distant relation) of Niagara's Malivoire Estate Winery.

For our next stop, we arrive at Lanzerac in Stellenbosch for lunch. The hotel is a 5 Star, historical Cape Dutch manor house, featuring beautiful period furniture and pretty gardens. Another opportunity to savour our favorite meal, babootie. Fortunately, it is out of stock. None the less, the lunch is memorable and set in a fitting venue for our farewell lunch.

Those staying on transfer to the new bus, while our departing comrades head for the airport and home with Wayne (driver) in OUR spacious, air-conditioned sceneacruiser. We carry on to Montagu in our "speed cruiser" with our new driver Nico. Fucuckta (a Yiddish term whose meaning is evident in context) bus! Too small, too hot, the wine cooler doesn't work even when the power is on. I would have sworn that it was too small to hold us, all of our baggage as well as our burgeoning wine collections. Fortunately, I am wrong, but only barely.

First order or business for we who can't even manage to board the bus at a prescribed time each morning, concoct a comprehensive algorithm to allocate seating on a daily basis so as to share the choice window positions.

As we climb the Franschoek Pass on route to Montagu, there is a loud, ominous "woosh" sound! We stop, check for a flat tire. Nothing there. Drive on with only all senses on alert. Then it dawns on Nico, no power, 60 km/hr top speed, blowing smoke like crazy, the Turbo Charger has blown. We'll never make it over the pass. We stop at a very scenic spot on the pass while the driver attempts repairs. We are strafed by a small airplane not 50 feet below us and about 200 feet from the road whose edge drops sharply about 1000 feet into a valley.

The Turbo Charger hose, it appears, was recently replaced, and the mechanic had failed to secure its clamp. Once it cooled and the clamp tightened, we were off to Montagu, at full speed.

As we wind through the Overberg Pass, we are treated to a spectacular display of baboons. They appear unaware that we have Diane's purse (see Cape Point notes) and we are not accosted.

We arrive at the Montagu Country Inn. It's a very nice place, well appointed and quite charming. We luck out and get the Presidential Suite. I can't understand South African bedding arrangements. It's always two single beds pushed together with separate sheets and blankets.

If this is typical of all South African sleeping accommodations, then the South African nation is doomed to extinction... No sex. With the standard setup, there is no way to get at your partner.

Sunday April 10 – Montagu - Mike Chapelle

Next morning, learning that Graham Beck is unexpectedly closed, Nico arranges a visit the Joubert-Tradaux Private Cellar in Barrydale. We meet Meyer and his beautiful wife Biata, the owners and wine makers. I have noticed that all winemaker's wives are gorgeous. It must be something they drink. Coincidentally, Fred, the owner and winemaker at Viljoensdrift is visiting and agrees to showcase his wines as well. Their wines are amazing! We all agree that we have struck gold and Graham Beck is forgotten. This has to be one of the highlights of our winery visits. The graciousness and hospital of our hosts and their families is extraordinary.

We take the opportunity to contact Eleanor and recommend her to Fred who has no Canadian representation. We learn later that Eleanor visits Fred the following week, confirms our findings, and initiates discussions. Fred takes Eleanor up in his airplane and gives her a grand tour of the countryside.

We stop for lunch at Clarke of the Karoo in Barrydale. Mike Clarke runs the diner, but also owns a wine cellar up the street. His food is excellent, his wine list impressive. A good time is had by all. As we eat lunch, we are entertained by a neighbour who can be seen in her back garden practicing carrying traditional baskets on her head. Quite a talent!

Our final destination is Calitzdorp, the Port capital of South Africa. We arrive at The Port-Wine Guest House, for the first time, before dark, a goal to which we have long aspired. Two hours early for dinner. Perfect! Evelyn has been looking forward all day to the advertised "SPA". Unfortunately, the spa turns out to be in Barrydale, some half an hour away. We quickly come to the realization that in these rustic settings there is nothing for it but to break out the bottles and sample the grapes, and we do.

I check my travel insurance to confirm that liver damage is covered by the policy.

Monday, April 11 - Calitzdorp - Keith Pankhurst

Day started rainy, humid

Another great breakfast in the charming Port-Wine Guest House Calitzdorp, a very attractive Small town with a rural feel to it. Typical Cape Dutch homes. The guest house itself is beautifully appointed with old furniture, some pieces massive and Victorian looking.

Off to de krans for a 9:30 tasting. Some walked over, sky partly clearing for us. Large array of wines to try. The ports and sweet wines seemed to be especially good. Many of us strolled over next to Boplass Winery. Again, a wide range of wines to taste, including a very interesting Chardonnay - based sweet late harvest

Short drive to Oudtshoorn, weather improving, a quick tour of parts of the town, noting the elegant old "feather palaces", the Victorian mansions of families made rich by the ostrich feather farming.

To cango Wildlife Ranch, seeing crocodiles, alligators, and the big cats. . Alec and Mike had pictures taken with cheetah, white tiger. Lunch there, crocodile appetizers! and babootie!

Back to Oudtshoorn for shopping and sightseeing.

Then to ostrich Farm where Keith rekindled his romance with Linda the Ostrich.

On the last tour, Linda picked a single food pellet from Keith's lips. This trip, she did it again. We all hope this is not the start of a serious relationship.

Bruce, Mike and Jim received Ostrich neck massages. That's where they turn their backs to the birds, hold a pail of food pellets under their chins and a pack of Ostriches peck away at the goodies over their shoulders.

Marg Chapman, good sport that she is, concedes to ride an ostrich.

Brief Boplass wine sipping afterward, then check into the lovely oue Werf farm guest house , pre dinner wines on patio, and off to Godfather Restaurant for ostrich/ crocodile dinner.

Late home to bed.

Tuesday April 12 – Oudtshoorn - Evelyn Truty

We awake to the patter of rain on our charming bungalows in the meadows. We stop to view the friendly ostrich and one springbok (who thinks he is an ostrich)

Our breakfast awaits us in the open dining room where we enjoy fresh fruit, and a hot breakfast as the swallows fly above us to their nest in the dining room.

We say our fairwell to Emily and King George (the B & B's home ostriches) and the prancing springbok, and load our luggage once again in the rain. We say our goodbye's to our gracious hostess Annelie

On our way out we take a brief tour of Oudtshoorn and stop to photograph the lovely Ostrich palaces and drive by Nico's (our driver) family home.

On the outskirts of town we stop off at Kango Wines where we sample a full range of dry and sweet wines and the delicious red muscadel (a personal favourite of Nelson Mandela). We can't get away without Diane buying a bright orange bottle of passion fruit liquor, which she gets very little takers for throughout the rest of the trip.(I do think it gets left behind for Nico)

We then head back to another winery/distillery Grudheim where we meet the lovely family run disterillery owners who treat us to 30 plus wines, liqueurs, and spirits. A good time shared by all.

Our journey then leads us on through 4 passes (unfortunately in the rain and cloud) on our route to George. We stop for a photo op at the Quteniqua Pass in pouring rain where a few brave souls go out to try and see a view, but all we get is cloud and mist.

Lunch takes us to a stop in Wilderness for wild oysters (big ones).

An unexpected stop on the tracks to see the famous steam train that runs between George and Knysna. Gorgeous scenery is somewhat clouded by the weather. Hope to see better views on the way back.

We arrive late afternoon at our Abalone Lodge on the outskirts of Knysna. A charming Swiss style village. Rest and then in the bus for a free evening of our choice in Knysna. Funny how we all end up in the same restaurant where we had a fabulous dinner of fresh fish and seafood. Great evening had by all.

Wednesday April 13 – Knysna - Leon Meslin:

Awaken to sunshine in Knysna. Continental breakfast brought to our door in a picnic basket; quite a relief after so many heavy English breakfasts. How great not to have to repack today. On the bus at 9:30 for the short trip to the waterfront and a free day in tourist shoppers' paradise. Everyone wants to go on a boat to experience the Knysna lagoon and Indian Ocean. We all opt for the catamaran but it can only take 10 and there are 11 of us. Evelyn and Leon choose to take the later cruise at 1:00 and everyone else goes at 11:00. Both cruises are great but due to calmer waters, only the later one gets to go through the Knysna Heads and into the Ocean. After shopping and cruising, we reassemble back at the bus at 3:30 for short trip back to hotel, quick change (and shower) and then back on the bus with drinks and snacks. Following a $\frac{1}{2}$ hour drive, we reach the top of the Heads—one of the most spectacular views of the tour, seeing the rocks, waves, and town from atop sheer cliffs (don't look down)—really breathtaking. The bus now takes us down to Brenton-on-Sea and the beach by the Ocean for sundowners, more snacks, wading in the Ocean, and pictures of the pounding surf and sunset—truly magnificent. Back to the bus for a return to the waterfront and dinner at 34 Degrees South, a combination wine store (first rate), deli, and seafood restaurant. Along with a great yellowtail dinner (plus oysters, of course) we have the usual great Chenins, Sauvignons, and Chardonnays (ah, the joys of being driven). Finally, it's back to the Lodge for bed with the dim realization that you can have a great day even if you don't get to a single winery.

Thursday April 14 – Knysna - Bruce Chapman

We departed the Abalone Lodge in Knysna at 9:00am in full sun. Our bus stopped to fill up on diesel fuel at Caltex Station. I noted the price to be \$5.07 rand/litre or \$177.80 rand for 35.07 litres (* only a man would notice this piece of trivia - comment by editor). Nico soaped and cleaned the windows - left to right ("now really Bruce!")

We stopped at Plettenberg Bay to admire the view. We were treated to sights of Dolphin, squid fishing and generally beautiful scenery. This was followed by a drive through dairy farming country and a deep gorge with indigenous forest.

On to the Western Cape 120,000sq. Kilometers. We stopped at Bloukrans Bridge and the WORLD'S HIGHEST BUNGY JUMP. It is a drop of 700feet or 216 meters of pure adrenalin in Blaauwkrantz. One must be a minimum of 14 years old to try it and the oldest jumper so far was 88 years old.

Jim Parker, Our BRAVE soul decided to take the plunge. His cheerleaders, Leon, Mike, Nico (our bus driver), Alex and Marg accompanied Jim to the bridge for his jump. It was extremely exciting (especially for Jim) and we celebrated with beers afterwards. It must be said as well that getting to the bridge's central span via the wire mesh walkway was pretty nerve racking on its own.

Check out this web site for video clips of both the walkway and the jump. Also check on the first two entries in their 360° Image Gallery .

http://www.faceadrenalin.com/bloukrans_river_bridge.htm

For lunch we stopped at the Storms River service centre where Nico rescued an Isuzu runaway truck without a driver. We then dropped Alec and Joyce at Humansdorp to meet their friends.

We arrived at Addo National Park at 5:30pm where we were met by Tertius and Lynn. We were looking forward to a game drive departing at 7:00pm however it could only accommodate 7 of us. After the drawing of straws, Keith, Tertius and Nico were left behind. They were the lucky ones! Not only did we fail to see any major animals - a couple of Kudus - the driver went off the mainroad and we got stuck up to the axels in mud. He radioed back to the park headquarters but at first was unable to reach anyone. Eventually someone came to tow us out but this involved at least 30 minutes work and we all had to get out in the deep mud.

We were to dine at a restaurant outside the park and we accompany our rescuer to the restaurant. Nico had menus and called in our orders at it was 9:00pm and the kitchen was closing. An ordeal indeed!

We stayed in Forest cabins where each cabin had 4 single beds, an equipped kitchen and a picnic table and fridge on the porch. Long day.

Friday April 15 – Addo Game Reserve - Jim Parker

At Addo Game Reserve we started our game ride in our own bus at 6:30 a.m. There was a clear sky and a cool early morning temperature. By 6:45 we had spotted a herd of Kudus. At 7:10 we spotted more kudus. At 7:15 we spotted 2 ostriches and 2 wildebeests. At 8:40 a.m. we spotted hartbeests, two of which were frolicking head to head, putting on quite a show! Then we spotted 3 zebras, 2 warthogs, monkeys and 1 jackal. We returned to have our breakfast before leaving for our return to Cape Town. At breakfast, a game reserve employee came to apologize for our unfortunate experience the previous evening's evening game drive. The apology, though seemingly sincere, did not leave us feeling any better about the serious errors that had been made, and the potential dangerous situation in which it placed us, although it left us with a good story to tell all our friends and acquaintances and anyone else who would listen.

We left Addo at 11:10 a.m. The temperature that had started out cool was by then, decidedly hot. We made good progress until just before Jeffrey's Bay. The turbo charger duct became unattached at the other end than before. We had to find a spot to stop to let the engine cool so Nico could make the necessary repairs. Nico took us to a lovely spot on the beach where we were able to walk, eat, drink and make a pit stop before we leaving approximately 50 minutes later.

We then drove straight to Mossel Bay. We arrived at the Point Hotel about 5:30 p.m. and had time to rest and recharge our batteries before going to dinner at Jazzberry's. Upon arrival, coincidentally, we met Jerry and Mara. They were on an evening walk when they saw those famous Hilton Ross buses. On spec they came over just as we were disembarking. We invited them to dine with us and we were able to hear about their trip subsequent to their leaving us. According to Mara, our hotel was the closest hotel to the ocean in all South Africa! All our rooms had balconies and faced onto the ocean, giving us a great view of the waves breaking over the photogenic, rocky shore.

Dinner was especially lovely with a very attentive hostess who offered us 2 bottles of wine (one white and one red) that her supplier Durham Hills had given to her especially for our dinner. On top of that she gave a bottle of bus wine to us and another to Nico. We were so sorry that Evelyn (who was recovering from a bout of the flu) was unable to stay for the meal. As well, Bruce had caught the bug now so he was not able to come. Flu bug hits again!

Saturday, April 16 – Mossel Bay - Nancy Parker

In the morning while we were having our breakfast, two groups of dolphins passed by, putting on quite a show for us by leaping into the air as they swam. After breakfast, some of us hiked in one direction along the shore on a rugged path, and others went the other way and watched surfers catching the big ones as they rolled in. We departed from the Point Hotel at 10:59, the only time in the trip we ever left before the scheduled time, certainly while we were with Mico.

Evelyn was her old self on the bus, having recovered from the 24-hour bug that was going around. Bruce, who got it the previous afternoon, was quiet on the trip, but on the mend.

We ordered a quick lunch from BJ's, the snack bar at a Caltex gas station and ate at picnic tables just outside. We started our goodbyes with Champaign donated by Leon and Evelyn. We presented Nico with a gift of Ice Wine and the Grappa we had received earlier in the trip, along with a gift in an envelope.

The N2 highway back to Cape Town was washed out in one spot by the storms of the previous few days, so we had a slight detour that might have added about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour to our trip. The long trip was made more bearable by the remnants of the bus wine. Also Nico entertained us with his commentary, which included his views on many issues including the origins of apartheid.

We arrived at the Cape Town airport at 4:10 p.m. Leon and Evelyn were dropped off and met family, Marg and Bruce were dropped off at the Domestic Terminal for a flight to Johannesburg, and Nancy & Jim, Diane & Mike, Eleanor and Keith were dropped off at the International Terminal for a flight to Heathrow and home.

Sunday, April 17 – Toronto – Mike Chapelle

We arrive home safe and sound around noon. Most importantly our precious cargo of wines, clear customs and from all accounts the group's cache arrived wholly intact.

After an emotional reunion with those we left behind when we embarked on this journey, we come to the realization that we'd rather be in South Africa.

So ends the South African Wine Society's 2005 Tour of South Africa.