



A Review of MSC Splendida



Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town



Mielie Pap Tert



Bush Wedding



Voting from Abroad



Featured SA Store Brosna Meats Ireland



Motorcycling in Uganda

SA STORE



TRAVEL



FOOD



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FOOD

**Mielie Pap Tert
& Souskluitjies**



**MOTORCYCLE
ZONE**



Two Oceans AQUARIUM
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As with all our magazines, we don't use page numbers. You can click on the article to go straight there. To come back here just Click on the SA Heart! Use tabs to get to your favourite spot and to return to see what you might have missed! Remember the music, clicks for videos and audio, websites etc are all there



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IRELAND



TRAVEL



Voting Month

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The South African Shop

CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND CUISINE: BRINGING THE TASTE OF HOME TO IRELAND

In the heart of Ireland, The South African Shop stands dedicated to bringing the taste of home to South Africans living abroad. As we reflect on our journey, from humble beginnings to a thriving business, we invite you to delve into the story of our shop.

A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE AND GROWTH

Our journey began in 2013, with a vision to bridge the gap between South Africa and Ireland through the shared love of food and culture. We faced numerous challenges along the way, from sourcing authentic ingredients to navigating the complexities of entrepreneurship in a foreign country. However, fuelled by passion and determination, we expanded and opened Brosna Meats in 2017 to meet the growing demand for traditional South African meat products.



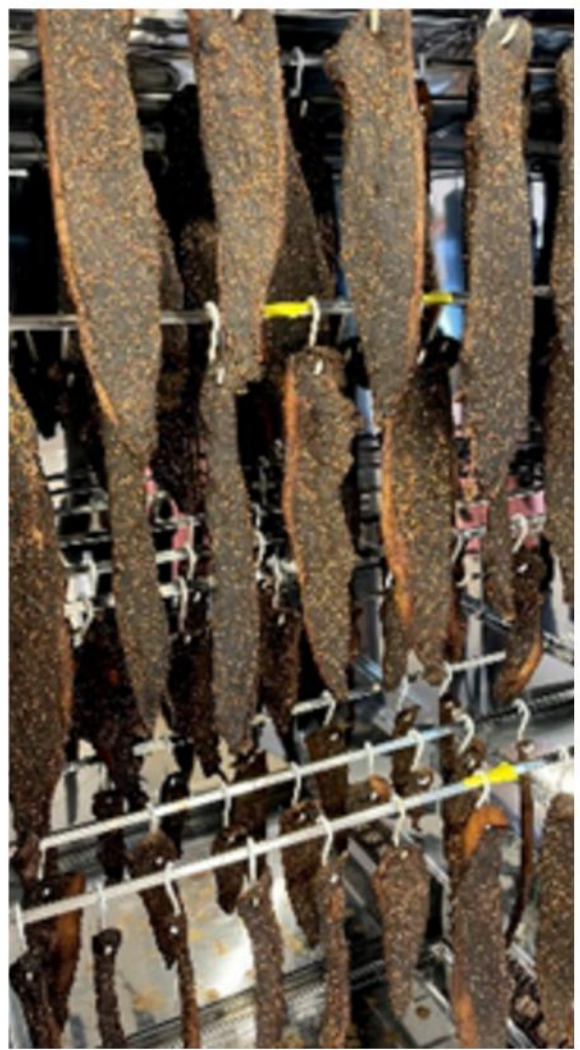


Over the years, we've continually evolved, particularly with the expansion of our online platform which has enabled us to reach South Africans far and wide, delivering the taste of home directly to their doorsteps. In 2022, we moved into our new premises, where we have been able to offer our customers so much more. Today, as we reflect on our journey, we are filled with gratitude for the unwavering support of our customers. In 2023, we marked a significant milestone: decade of serving the South African community in Ireland!

FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING

In a country where one in five people were born abroad according to the CSO Census 2022, there is a need for cultural connection and community. Our shop serves as a gathering place, a sanctuary where South Africans can come together. There is a sense of belonging experienced by our customers as they reminisce over childhood favourites, share stories of home, and create new friendships.





CRAFTING AUTHENTIC SOUTH AFRICAN MEATS

At the heart of our shop lies a commitment to authenticity and quality when it comes to our beloved South African meat products, where we use high-quality Irish meat to create our Biltong, Boerewors and Droewors. Every step is infused with passion. It's a labour of love that we are proud to share with our customers.

The South African Shop & Brosna Meats is more than just a business. As we continue to grow and evolve, our commitment to bringing the taste of home to South Africans in Ireland remains. Join us in celebrating the flavours, traditions, and stories that unite us across continents, and discover the magic of South African cuisine in the heart of Ireland.



EXPERIENCE THE *Perfect*
BITE!

**MIELIE PAP
TERT**

**SINDY
SAUNDERS
AUSTRALIA**



SOUSKLUITJIES

MIELIE PAP TART BAKED WITH BACON, MUSHROOMS AND CHEESE

**Traditional South African
mielie pap tart baked
with bacon, mushrooms
and herbs. A warm and
flavourful meal that is
quick and easy to make.**



A mielie pap tart, or paptert, infused with the mouth watering flavours of bacon and mushroom, enhanced with thyme and perfected with the grated mozzarella cheese melted amongst it all. This recipe will produce nothing short of total deliciousness. Don't make too much, because you will eat it all.

What is Mielie Pap?

The base of this recipe is a type of maize flour porridge that is made across Africa. Called mielie pap in South Africa, it has an array of names across the rest of Africa as well as a variety of ways in which to cook it. You can make a soft creamy porridge with it, a stiff pap or even a flaky textured grain like meal. You can eat it in many different ways with many things. As well as being tasty and affordable, it is an incredibly versatile food.

Easy but still Rewarding

This recipe takes just over an hour of which only 10min is actual hands on time. But will nonetheless leave you with a warm, flavourful meal that could be just what was needed to satisfy your body and mind. It's comfort food that doesn't need to be coated in chocolate. (Although I have absolutely nothing against anything coated in chocolate!).

You can adjust according to what is available, so if you are desperate for a Mielie Pap Tart also known as paptert and don't have any thyme, try something else like rosemary or oregano. Swop the mushrooms for sun dried tomatoes or add garlic or chilli. The options are almost endless

INGREDIENTS

750 ml Maize Meal
250 ml Milk
500 ml Water
60 ml Olive Oil
820 g Sweet Corn
2 cups Cheese grated
1/2 Small Onion cut into thin wedges
200 g Button Mushrooms thinly sliced
10-12 sprigs Fresh Thyme
150 g Bacon Strips chopped
Salt and Black Pepper to taste



INSTRUCTIONS

- Stir in flour Maize Meal, milk, water, oil and sweet corn in a bowl and mix well.
- Add half of this mixture in the prepared oven dish, sprinkle with salt and pepper.
- Sprinkle one cup of grated cheese over this mixture.
- Add the remaining mixture on top of the cheese. Sprinkle onion and mushrooms all over mixture, but do not stir.
- Sprinkle with thyme and season.
- Use the remaining cheese and sprinkle all over.
- Add the cut bacon to the mixture and Season.
- Place in a prepared ovenproof dish in the oven for an hour on 180°C.





·SOUSKLUITJIES· CINNAMON DUMPLINGS

**Traditional South African
Souskluitjies,
Cinnamon
Dumplings.
Souskluitjies was a
popular dish in
South Africa up to
the first half of the
20th century.**

The ingredients were relatively basic and the recipe could be altered to meet the budget (e.g. adding eggs or not; cooking the dumplings in milk or water). This is a very traditional and old fashioned dessert.

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
pinch salt
3/4 cup butter
2 eggs
2 tablespoons sugar
water
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 stick cinnamon
sugar and cinnamon mixed in a bowl
1/2 cup melted butter



METHOD

- Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt together.
- Using your fingertips, lightly rub the butter into the flour until it has the consistency of crumbs.
- Beat the Eggs and sugar until light and fluffy.
- Fold the beaten egg mixture lightly in the flour with a wooden spoon.
- In a medium stainless saucepan, add water, +- 5cm deep, salt, and cinnamon, and bring water to boiling point.
- Spoon the dough into the boiling water using two tablespoons, about $\frac{3}{4}$, just to make it easier. Do not do it all at once. Cover and simmer on low heat for 12 minutes, ensuring the mixture does not boil over. Just regulate the temperature so that it is simmering at a slow heat, without peeping too often (do not worry, it will be fine!). Repeat until all the mixture is used.
- Remove the dumplings with a slotted spoon and arrange them in a serving dish. Sprinkle generously with cinnamon sugar (you will need more than you think because the batter is not sweetened) and drizzle with the butter.
- Repeat the process until you have used all the dough.
- Serve warm or cold.



**SOUTH AFRICAN
ENTREPRENEURS**



SOUTH AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURS

World Wide

South Africans have never been afraid of hard work and are welcomed around the world. Here we cover some of our wonderful entrepreneurs locally and abroad.

Tell us about you!

editor@flipmagz.co.za



exporting home abroad



OUR STORY OVER THE YEARS



Ever wondered how it all began? How Audrey and her tireless team of staff get your orders to you on time? Here is some of the background to one of South Africa's most impressive Entrepreneurs.

1997 - Founded

Sapro was founded by Brian McMillan and an associate.

1998 - Expanding the family business

Brian's daughter Audrey joined the company, initially renting space from a freight agents warehouse, supplying exclusively to the UK market. Together they grew SAPRO to an impressive international exporting concern with a large global footprint.

2007 - Moved into own offices

Moved into our own offices and started renting space from our freight agents.

2009 - Packing containers out of Cape Town

Started packing containers out of Cape Town focusing more on liquor from that region.

2016 - Opened Cape Town office

2017 - Extending our reach into Africa

Extended our reach into Africa, specifically Malawi and Kenya

2019 - Moved to own Johannesburg premises

Moved from our freight agents warehouse to our own warehouse in August 2019

A red ink splat graphic with several smaller dots around it, containing the text 'Catch all the podcasts here!' in white.

**Catch all the
podcasts
here!**

2019 - IWECA Award

Audrey receives IWECA (International Women's Entrepreneurial Challenge) award

Sapro International is a 26-year-old South African owned and operated company and one of SA's largest exporters of FMCG goods. We export over 8 500 quality, uniquely South African goods to customers all over the world.

Our passion is to provide the highest level of service, not only in terms of product offering and competitive pricing but also with our "hands-on" approach when it comes to shipping goods to wholesalers and retailers abroad. Our clients, the majority of whom have been with us since we opened, cater principally to the expatriate South African community.

Sapro has 30 full time employees and additional flexi staff who come in on an ad hoc basis. Our low staff turnover is testament to our philosophy of honesty, loyalty and integrity.

We export between 4-8 containers a week to more than 22 countries. We are proud pioneers and leaders in this industry.



South Africans are known for their travels around the world. Some of them leave home for good. But that doesn't mean they leave home behind. They take it with them, wherever they go. And Audrey McMillan, CEO of SAPRO, talks to Geniene Preston about this crazy little thing called home.

Hugo van Rooyen, General Manager, has been with SAPRO for 17 years and for him it is more than a job, its a passion. His commitment to the company together with his relationships with local suppliers, makes every day a pleasure to come to work.

We talk to him about what makes the business so successful in today's tough economic times.



Victor Lebeko has been a waterhouse manager for many years and as such works hard at making sure that the international South African stores are stocked with the correct goods. That all stock leaves the warehouse correctly labelled and pallets are packed properly so that goods arrive safely and maintains the SAPRO high standards.



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*Say "I do" with
us because "we do"*

Weddings

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WEDDINGS IN THE WILD

The journey from "I
will" to "I do" is
fraught with
indecision

*When planning a beautiful outdoor
wedding, there are a few crucial
mistakes that could ruin your entire
ceremony*



Outdoor weddings in the summer are hands down the best. You can't beat the warm weather, sunshine, refreshing summer cocktails, scenic backdrops—we could go on forever, but we'll stop there.

However, if you're planning an outdoor summer wedding of your very own, there are a few things you should keep in mind before you go walking down the aisle. For starters, your gorgeous buttercream frosted cake is definitely going to melt if you just leave it sitting out in the hot sun. And regardless of how adamant you are about having all of your wedding festivities outside, mother nature may not always agree with your plan—sorry to break it to you.

It's time to start thinking about a backup plan. These are just a few super common mistakes that brides make when planning their outdoor weddings. Plan B is also listed!



1. Not coming up with a plan B.

We know that you don't necessarily want an indoor wedding, but sometimes you don't get to have absolutely everything exactly the way you want it. Mother nature is very unpredictable, after all. It's best to come up with a backup plan, just incase. Having a solution for inclement weather will save you a lot of wedding day stress. Otherwise, you might be reciting your vows in the rain.

2. Getting a cake with regular icing.

Fondant has a time and a place, and it's certainly at summer weddings. If you're planning on having your wedding on a hot summer day, we highly advise against getting your wedding cake made with regular icing. Your beautiful dream cake won't look too dreamy as it melts all over the table. Fondant will hold up in the heat, unlike other creamier frostings, saving yourself a gigantic, sticky mess.



3. Not providing chair covers.

Have you ever sat in a chair without a cushion that's been sitting out in the sun for hours? Okay then, you know it's not a very pleasant feeling. Save your guests from potentially burning the back of their legs on your hot chairs by putting simple chair covers on them. You'll be doing your guests a huge favor providing chair covers, cushions or basically anything else that will prevent the scorching hot chair from coming into contact with their skin. Plus, no one likes sitting on plastic in the heat and having the backs of their legs stick to the chair when they try to get up

4. Having no SPF on hand for guests.

Drinking alcohol and sitting out in the sun is a recipe for a massive sunburn. You definitely don't want that to be what your guests take home with them to remember your nuptials by! Provide SPF for guests, as it's probably something they didn't even think of bringing to your wedding, or even if they did, they'll need to reapply at some point. We love the idea of mini custom SPF ³ bottles as wedding favors.



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5. Serving the wrong foods

Be very wary of the foods choices you provide your guests with at your summer wedding. Many dishes will either melt or spoil in hot warm temperatures. It's best to avoid items like cheese, dairy, spreads, and anything else that must be served cold—unless of course, you can leave it inside. Having an indoor eating portion for your summer wedding is always a good idea, if possible. If you want your dinner course to be served outdoors too, opt for menu items that will look and taste awesome. Melted cheese is not a chic look, FYI.



6. Letting bugs eat your guests alive.

If you're getting married outdoors in the heat of summer, bug spray is a definite must. I got eaten alive by mosquitoes at a wedding once and decided to ultimately leave the reception early because the bites were so unpleasant. The last thing you want is for people to bail out on your special day early because they're having a horrible time. Place a few bottles of bug spray in the bathrooms and around common areas at your wedding venue. If you don't want the unpleasant smell of bug spray in the air, try this Burt's Bees All Natural Herbal Insect Repellent



7. Wearing the wrong dress type

Both you and your maids are going to sweat like crazy at your summer wedding—it's inevitable. You will be miserable if you choose dresses for yourself and your bridal party that are made of thick, heavier fabric. It's summer, so opt for lightweight fabrics and shorter styles. Don't let anything hold you back from dancing the night away. No one, including yourself, wants to look like a hot mess the entire day.



WEDDING *planning* - Plan B (Be Prepared!)



We know you're super excited to say "I do" but waiting a couple of extra hours will literally save you and all of your guests. If you're having a 1 pm ceremony, during the hottest part of the day, you and your guests are going to fry. It's best to start your festivities around sunset when temperatures have cooled down a bit. Plus, sunset wedding photos are also absolutely stunning.

We know you're super excited to say "I do" but waiting a couple of extra hours will literally save you and all of your guests. If you're having a 1 pm ceremony, during the hottest part of the day, you and your guests are going to fry. It's best to start your festivities around sunset when temperatures have cooled down a bit. Plus, sunset wedding photos are also absolutely stunning

3. Be Prepared for a bad hair day!

Have the hair stylist and makeup artist create rain proof versions of looks.

Experienced artists know that bad weather happens. Luckily there are lots of ways to make sure mascara stays put, cry-proof the look, and generally avoid common disasters with wedding day makeup.

There are so many ways to weatherproof a wedding hairstyle! As with most things event and style related, you'll want to make sure you test drive every new concept, even if it's just the day before.

4. Broadcast weather info - Tell guests what the plan is.

Communication with your guests is very important/ Even if you don't plan to check in attendees at your event, you'll definitely want to use free event planning software to create your guest list and collect contact information into one organized platform. nAssign someone from the wedding party to check for road closures and optional ways to get to the venue.

In addition to mass texting, calling, and/or emailing everyone, you should add weather updates to your event website and (if you have enough advanced notice) put one to two sentence weather-related reminders on the wedding invitations, themselves.



When discussing how to deal with wedding day rain effectively, you'll have to consider details like guest transportation. If the venue allows it, try asking the valet to stand as close to the entrance (or at the very least, an awning) as possible.

5. Hand out color-coordinated blankets, umbrellas, or shawls as guest gifts.

Personalized wedding favors that are monogrammed or have engagement photos printed on them add an extra special touch to these everyday items. You can even add some affordable photo stickers to the strings and wrapping attached to these items.

6. Adjust your event diagram.

Switching venues, adding tents, or moving the party inside will require you to rethink your event diagram and seating chart. Having an electronic version of your plans laid out in your event software makes it easy to tweak your layouts and update your wedding vendors in real time.

You can even create and save multiple versions ahead of time, so you'll have your plans A, B, and C ready to go no matter what. Another reason why digital tools like these are handy? You can get vendors and key stakeholders (like mothers-in-law and day-of coordinators) to weigh in on the plausibility of each plan, so there are no real surprises at the event no matter what happens.

7. Plan to serve hot chocolate, tea, and spiked cider

These welcome additions to cold-weather wedding menus can provide a classy and fun upgrade to any outdoor venues. For example, Martha Stewart has some elegant suggestions for how to serve hot chocolate at your wedding. You can even enlist the bartenders to create some delicious signature hot cocktails.

Consider getting the bridesmaids matching rain boots.

Here are some expert advocates and outdoor venue event inspo for the dress and boot combo look:

- This preppy Irish wedding featured on The Knot shows how cute a pair of Hunter boots can look with J. Crew dresses and cardigans.
- Etsy is simply bursting with wedding rain boots for sale, offering plenty of colorful monogrammed and bow-tied looks to fit any event theme.
- And who could pass up the opportunity to sport one of the many wedding-worthy rain boots featured on Brides.com?

Plus, imagine how fun and unique your photos will be!



9. Add rainy day shots to the photography wishlist.

Professional photographers should already know how to make rainy day wedding photos pop. But it doesn't hurt to have some shots of your own in mind ahead of time! Clear plastic umbrellas and color coordinated storm jackets make for nice photo accessories.

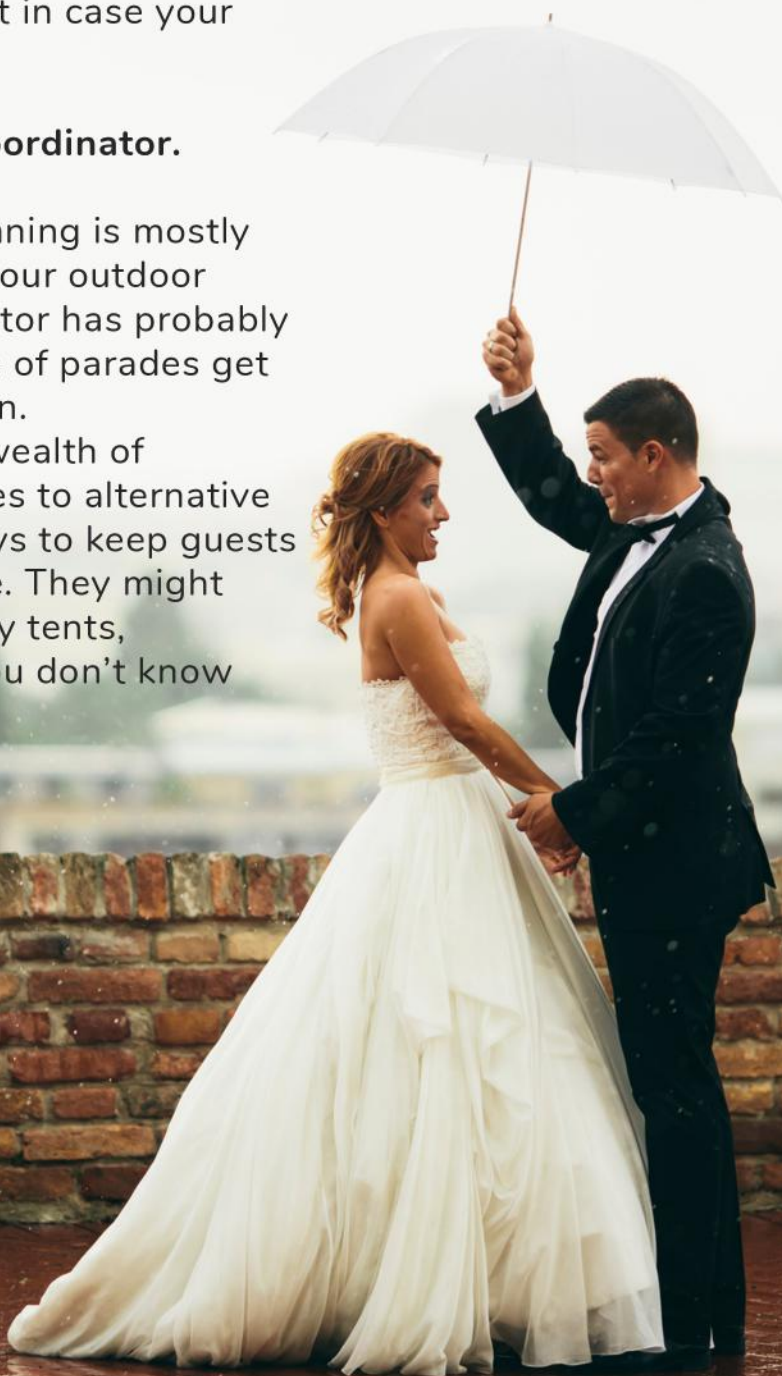
These tips for shooting weddings in the rain also advise you to sneak away for photo ops whenever the rain slows down and to rank the photos by order of importance, marking which ones are the absolute must-haves just in case your time is really limited.



10. Talk to the venue coordinator.

Even if the wedding planning is mostly DIY, you are not alone. Your outdoor wedding venue coordinator has probably seen his or her fair share of parades get rained on at their location.

As a result, they'll be a wealth of knowledge when it comes to alternative options and creative ways to keep guests dry at their unique space. They might even offer complimentary tents, umbrellas, or heaters. You don't know until you ask!



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The long and winding Road to **NOTTIES HOTEL**

Travelling from Johannesburg to Durban can be a long journey with family, young children or elderly parents. I always believe that the journey begins when you drive out of your driveway. Stopping in the Midlands is a great way to get in early, have a great dinner and good sleep before heading to the final destination or even better, spend a day or two in the Midlands, soaking in the clean fresh mountain air and visiting some great spots, while unwinding.

Myself and my husband Keith are always keen to get away for a few days and this was no exception. Leaving Johannesburg around 9, and after the dreaded notorious traffic jams, we aimed to be in the Midlands about 3pm. This always gives us ample time for stops along the way and to enjoy our great car picnic that I always pack. Made up of fresh rolls, "moer" coffee and lets not forget a snack basket of wine gums and a Lunch Bar.





Travelling from Johannesburg to Durban can be a long journey with family, young children or elderly parents. I always believe that the journey begins when you drive out of your driveway. Stopping in the Midlands is a great way to get in early, Our favourite stop is always the popular Notties Hotel which celebrated its centenary anniversary a few years ago, securing its place solidly in the history books as one of the Midlands' most popular hotels.

Keith and I arrived at about 3pm and warmed up in our recently restored room which was beautifully furnished and kindly warmed up by the wonderful reception staff. So despite the cold outside, it was very warm inside. The hotel was gearing up for the annual fishing competition and fisherman from around the country were arriving and gathering in groups. Clive, the owner, spent a few minutes filling me in about the hotel in general, it's history and its ongoing upgrades. We freshened up and joined the noisy crowd in the "infamous" Notties Hotel bar where many a Springbok Rugby Match or Protea ODI was won and lost. A warm and cosy bar is all you ask for when beginning the process of winding down. Soon it was time for dinner and what an awesome menu to choose from. Linda, Clive's wife, is a world renown chef, so the food is always fresh and delightful.

Just like the menu itself. And we decided on the Guinness Pie. Well what a huge pie that was. But it was hot, filled to the brim with gravy and chunks of beef served with a side order of chips (we could also choose mash or vegetables) and barely able to move after that delicious meal.



A quick night cap in the bar and it was off to our warm room and a great big, comfortable bed. Never mind the bath. I have a shower at home, so make it a point of soaking in a bath when I travel and this one was specially built for me.

The next morning, it was time to rise and shine and have breakfast among the fishermen. It was like having the cat among the pigeons as we could hear stories all around us about the one that got away. The Midlands is a perfect spot for fishing and Clive told us a little about the trout in the area. They are not indigenous to the area but were brought across by the ships when the settlers came over in the 1800's. Quite an interesting story actually. I always thought they were bred here but this story certainly changed my thinking. Sadly we had to take our leave after breakfast but we will be back to stay a few days as we missed the action in the bar that night when the fishermen returned, and the rugby game the next day with the local farmers. But we are due to travel back in August for women's month!

The hospitality at the Notties Hotel is as warm as our room was and the pricing is competitive. So don't call booking agents, call the front desk directly and enjoy the direct discounts offered by the hotel itself. See you at Notties!

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The history of Notties Hotel

History at Notties Hotel
Legend has it that there has been an inn situated here since 1854. While the actual building we know today is not as old, there could certainly have been on this site a “Notties” inn or a tavern for the soldiers stationed at Fort Nottingham, who were supposed to protect the area from Bushmen who were stealing local livestock. Situated at the crossroads where the road to the interior met the road to Fort Nottingham, it would have served the horse-drawn coaches that travelled the area before the railway line was constructed.

The first recorded facts about the hotel we know today indicate that the land for the Notties Hotel was bought by George Orwin in 1889, following the death of landowner James Ellis and his sister Janet King, the land being sold by the family to pay off the siblings' estates. The price received for the land, the princely sum of 125 pounds per acre, was extremely high for the time. Presumably it was the favourable location that drove the price so high. Orwin erected the Railway Hotel, as it was first named, to serve the station that was built at the tiny Nottingham Road settlement. The railway changed the lives of the Midlands' settlers forever.

There was a daily postal system, and almost anything they needed could now be ordered from Durban or Pietermaritzburg. Produce from the area could be quickly sent to the city centres for sale, and travel between the coast and the interior was a matter of hours rather than weeks or days. The railway also led to the development of the Midlands as a viable area for settlement. The Nottingham Road Hotel was always the local's favourite haunt, whether for a social drink in the pub or for supposedly more serious matters such as meetings of the Nottingham Road Farmers' Association. Apparently the farmers often only arrived home safely because their faithful horses knew the way back to their stables! The system worked smoothly until a prankster swopped the horses between the different traps and carts, so that drink-befuddled farmers were taken off in completely the wrong direction! Often the locals would decide to stay over at the hotel, especially if the weather was bad



One farmer, Christopher Groom, trying to reach the hotel to shelter from a storm, was unable to reach the hotel in time and was struck by a bolt of lightning just outside (where the first tennis courts were located). He and his dead horse were discovered some time later when the storm had passed over, the unconscious man quite unaware of his narrow escape. A hole straight through his saddle showed where the bolt of lightning had struck.

Like all hotels with a history, Notties Hotel is reputed to be haunted. In the past, guests and staff have reported that the spirit of a woman roams the hotel (especially room 10) and its grounds. This house-proud, gentle ghost apparently moves flower arrangements, tidies away clothes and straightens bedding. Legend has it that she is 'Charlotte', a lady of loose morals or a chamber maid depending on the source of the tale, who apparently threw herself to her death over the balcony outside her room after being jilted.

Or was she pushed ?...





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What is so great
about cruising?

Discovering
#cruiselifelife aboard
MSC Splendida

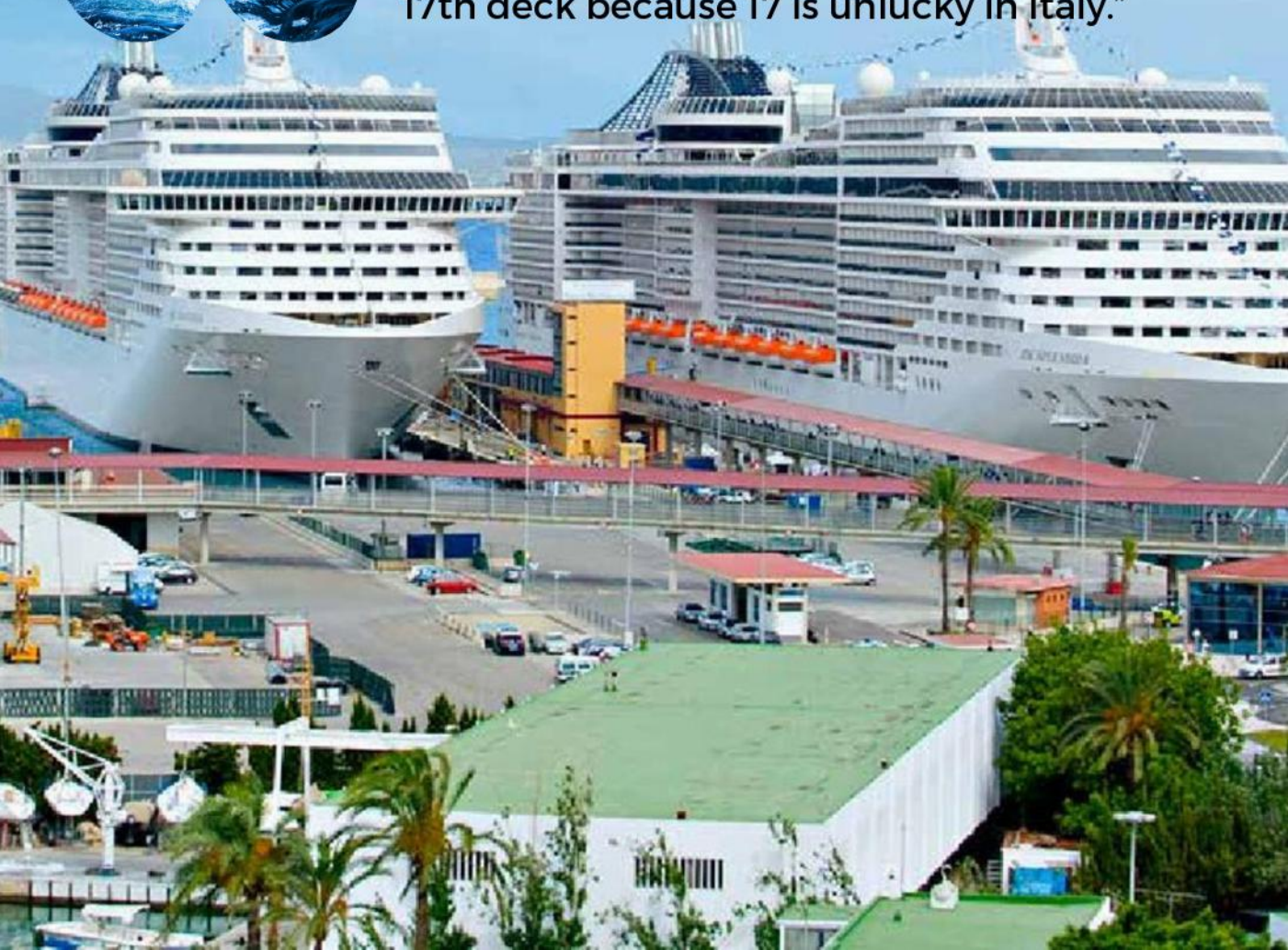


Jennifer van Rooyen was a
guest of MSC Cruises

If you have never been on a cruise, you may be wondering if they live up to the hype. Who are these people who choose to return to the cruise life year after year, and why? I've always been equal parts intrigued and wary about cruises. But here I was, a first-time cruiser with my passport in hand, about to discover the answer to my ultimate travel question: What is so great about cruising?



“Interestingly, my cabin was on the 13th deck – an unlucky number so many hotels and resorts don’t even have a 13th floor – but this is an Italian ship. And, strangely, there is no 17th deck because 17 is unlucky in Italy.”



Arriving at the newly built Nelson Mandela Cruise Terminal in Durban, I was met by a scene that seemed overwhelmingly chaotic. But after taking in the surroundings, it was clear that this was organised chaos. At 98% capacity, there were over 4200 passengers who needed to get onto the ship in one afternoon – and not just get on the ship but also pass through customs. The cruise terminal functions just like an airport, and it is certainly as busy as one.

I am not sure how long the queue to get onto the ship would usually be – I had priority boarding, which is just one of the many add-ons with which you can customise your cruising experience. Cruising with MSC is all about tailor-making your experience to suit your budget but, whether you decide to go basic or full-luxury, you have all the amenities, food and activities you could possibly want. Or indeed have time to experience.

The South African cruising season is incredibly fast-paced, with most cruises only lasting three or four nights. What this means is that you will need to practice the three P's: Pace yourself, Prioritise and Plan. There is no way that you are going to see everything, taste everything and get to do everything. As a first-time cruiser, it took me a while to realise this, so there were things I just didn't have time to do – like origami lessons at the Dim Sum Bar or the Tobago water slide. There were so many events going on at any given time – from quizzes to karaoke, and everything in between – that most were left undiscovered by me. Until next time, of course.





Your daily planner, which is delivered to your room each evening, along with the handy MSCforMe app, will help you plan your day. You can add events to your daily itinerary on the app, which will work even if you haven't bought the WIFI package.

Unfortunately, you can't add your own personal to-do list, like sample the ice cream, or find a sun-bed to relax on while sipping a cocktail.

Unfortunately, we never did make it to Portuguese Island as planned. The island doesn't have a dock so you have to be ferried over in smaller boats, weather permitting. And, sadly, weather did not permit! So we all had to replan our agenda for the second day because the water was too wild for the small boats. But, on the suburb-sized MSC Splendida, the huge waves were hardly noticeable so I had fun exploring the ship and finding interesting lounges, quirky sculptures and other interesting sights and sounds.

And, seeing as I had time on my hands, I added a massage to my agenda for the day. The therapy rooms have fantastic views but I was face down on the massage bed, so I didn't get a lot of time to take them in. Another fabulous and somewhat unexpected view is from the gym, which is right at the front of the ship and offers views you won't otherwise get to see.

There are four pools on board but it seemed that practically everyone had decided this was the place to be, so it looked a bit like Camps Bay Beach on Boxing Day – except with a free buffet and staff on hand to wait on you hand and foot. So I decided to give it a miss. This is, I was later be told by an experienced cruiser, pretty much par for the course on big cruise boats. Evidently, there is a certain type of cruiser who want to do nothing but lie on a sunbed next to the pool, and they will be there early in the morning to grab a good spot.

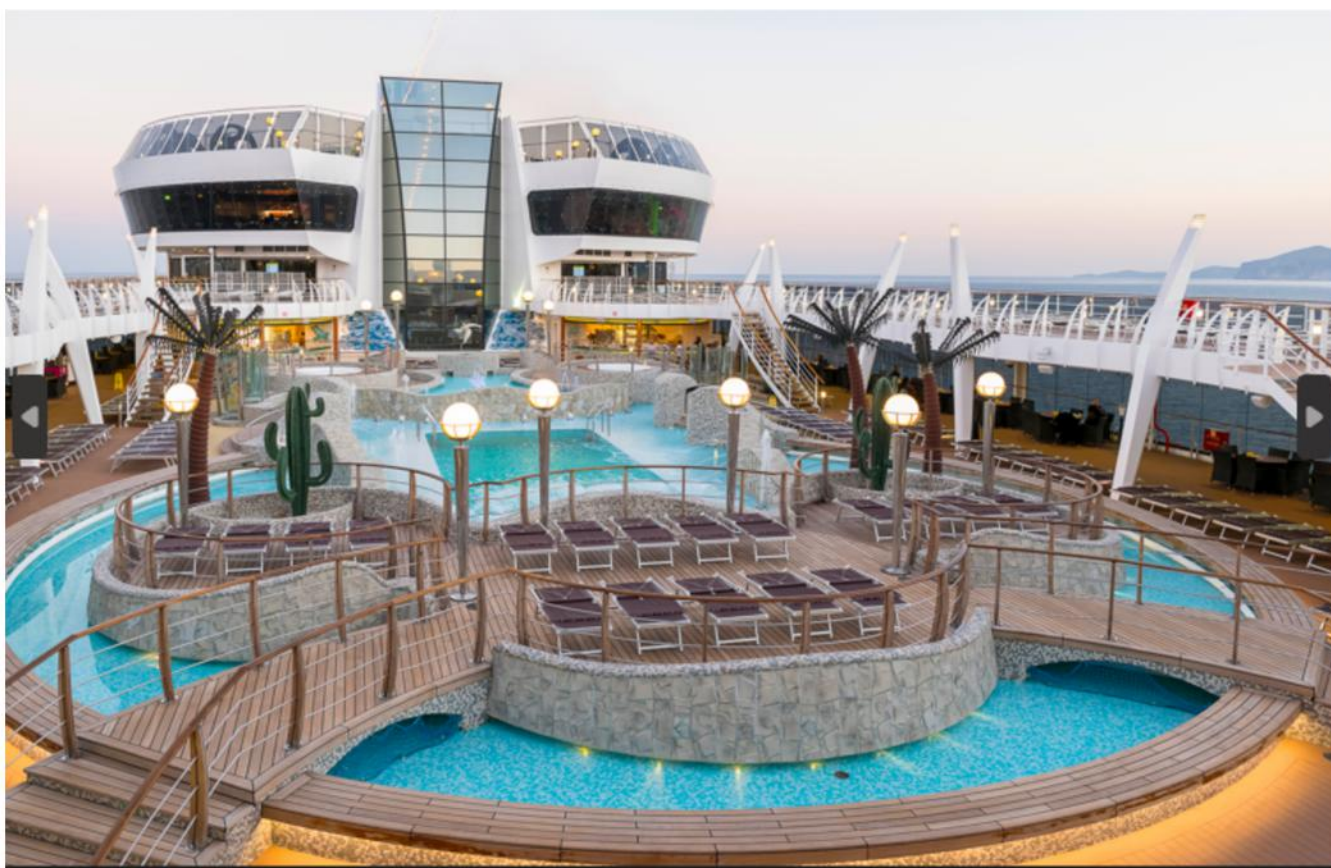
This is another reason that tailor-making your package is a good idea. If you want a more private sunbathing experience, you can opt for the Aurea package, which includes access to a private deck. Or, if you plan on one day of suntanning, you can buy access to the Aurea deck for a day.

Another advantage of the Fantasia and Aurea packages is that you can choose to have room service rather than braving the daily buffet rush. I also had a private balcony - albeit a tiny one only big enough for two deckchairs and a small table but it was great. Early morning croissants and coffee gazing out over the Indian Ocean was a definite highlight. I could have spent all day sitting there in my own private little paradise, sipping on wine and reading.



In fact, I did spend a lot of time doing just that. There is something very Zen-like about not knowing where in the world you are – no landmarks except for the endless ocean and the rhythmic swaying of the water beneath the hull reminding you that you are not on solid land. This is really a good option if you just need time out with no responsibilities, no interruptions and no hassles. But on my third (and last day) I realised that I had left much unexplored.

Probably the worst aspect of cruising, I thought, is finding your way around. It's not as simple as finding the nearest elevator and going to the deck you want. Sometimes you have to navigate your way down the corridors to find the elevator closest to where you want to end up. This took a little getting used to, and it can be a tad frustrating. On more than one occasion, I walked in a complete circle only to end up back where I had started and I found myself wishing the MSC app came with a handy navigator.



Anyhow – it helped me to get in my 10,000 steps, and, I discovered later, this is normal on big cruise ships. Getting lost on board is half the adventure, I was told.

One problem you won't have on board is going hungry.

All packages include meals in the buffet and their two restaurants. On top of that, they also have two speciality fine dining restaurants. I tried a bit of everything, and it was all fantastic. But my favourite dining experience was grabbing a slice (or two) of fresh, hand-made pizza at the Pizzeria at 11pm. It paired quite nicely with a glass of Chardonnay, or maybe the sea air was making everything pair well.

My last day ended up being quite a whirlwind as I tried to squeeze in everything that I had so far missed. It was only then that I met the ship's amusement manager, Felipe Nerves, whose passion for his job was evident as he tirelessly juggled the virtual games arcade, 4D cinema, MSC Formula Racer, and all the guests lining up waiting. The 4D cinema was another one of my highlights, and Felipe's recommendations for this were spot-on. This is not for the faint-hearted and, like a roller coaster, should be avoided if you are pregnant or have a heart condition. But it certainly will get the adrenaline pumping, and the thrill of the cinema might be the most fun that I had onboard.

I also finally made it to the theatre show on the last night of the cruise, and it truly made me sorry that I had missed the previous two nights.

The combination of singing, acrobatics and dancing was exceptional, and a delightful way to end my trip.



A large MSC cruise ship is shown from a high angle, sailing on a deep blue ocean. The ship is white with multiple decks and orange lifeboats. In the background, there are blue mountains under a clear sky. The ship is moving towards the left, leaving a white wake.

So, what is it that's so great about cruising? This was the question that I had set out to answer, and after three nights onboard, I am no wiser. I asked some of the other guests, quite a few of whom were returning for their third or fourth cruise, and they all had a different answer.

It isn't a boutique experience. The most popular amenities and events can be crowded, but that doesn't mean the MSC Splendida isn't stylish. From the Swarovski staircases to the art pieces adorning the decks - and a lounge for every mood - MSC Splendida has an elegance that will entrance you. But is elegance enough of a drawcard? What is the real attraction?

Well, it's different for everyone and a cruise is what you make of it. If you want a non-stop entertainment party, you can have that. If you want to be pampered at a spa and fed great food, you can have that. If you want a romantic getaway with your favourite person, you can have that. And, if you want a quiet getaway, you can have that too. And that's what I loved about my cruise.

For me, it's about the escape. It's not just about being away from home. It is about being away from everything that seems remotely like real life. My time Zenning out on my own private little balcony with only the ocean and the odd seagull refreshed and rejuvenated me. I think I should do this four or five times a year as a mental health retreat.

Five HOT TIPS for first-time cruisers from Khulani Khumalo, events coordinator, and Kevin Crawford, cruise director:

- Everything you could possibly need can be bought onboard – except your passport, so your trip will not be ruined by forgetting to pack your hair straightener or charging cable. But be warned, the onboard currency is US dollars.
- There is no wrong way to have a cruise but don't be tempted to pre-purchase too many add-ons. Once you get on board, you will discover so much to do, that your packages might get in the way of experiencing what the cruise has to offer.
- Since your cruise card is used as on-board currency, it can be a good idea to put a limit on your children's cards to avoid unnecessary surprises at check-out.
- Different lounges and different areas will feature different types of entertainment and music at any given time to cater for as many tastes as possible. So be sure to check out the different lounges and find a spot you like. There are plenty of options onboard.
- Remember to read your daily programme – it is not just filled with all the events that are happening but is full of tips and additional information that you may need. and additional information that you will need.

Every



Drop



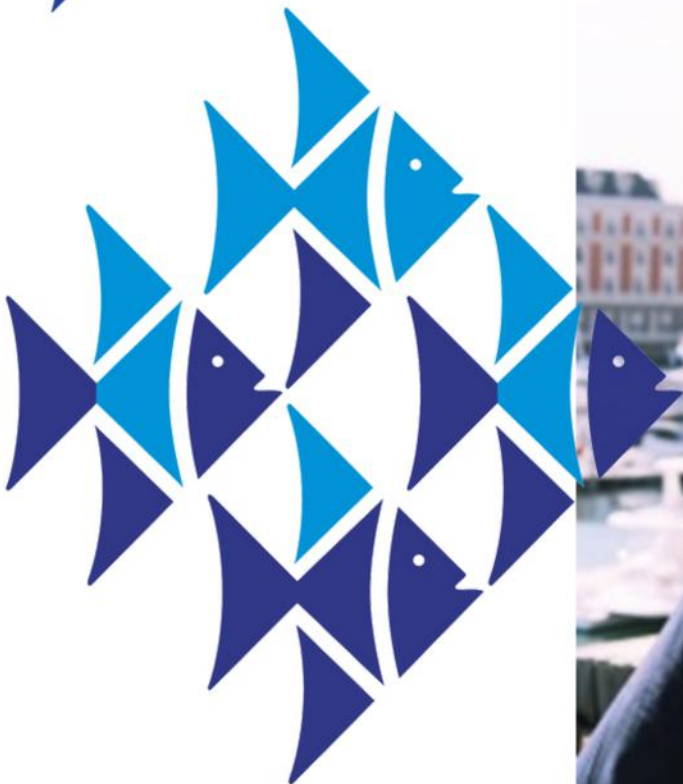
Counts

Recently Geniene Preston of Urban Edge Radio on her Live, Love, Listen show had a really interesting conversation with Helen Lockhart, the Conservation and Sustainability Manager. They must be doing something right there – they recently had a visit from an esteemed scientist – but more on that later!

The Two Oceans Aquarium, named for the Indian and Atlantic oceans off the shores of Southern Africa, was opened in 1995 and since then has lived their mission which includes conservation, education, and research ... and as Helen says “this is basically our reason for being , it’s what we focus on.”

“We showcase, marine life from off our coasts, [and] a lot of that marine life is endemic, meaning it's found nowhere else in the world, which makes it really, really special.” Besides “we also have (which no other aquarium in Africa has), a living kelp forest exhibit ... in fact, there are only a handful of such living kelp forest exhibits on display in the world.”

Kelp, also known as Sea Bamboo, is a green seaweed looking plant which “grows very, very fast, is found in the Atlantic Ocean off our Cape coast and is home to a myriad of wonderful creatures, shy sharks, octopus and includes a rich marine life. In fact, if anyone has watched the award-winning documentary ‘My Octopus Teacher’, they will have seen what a kelp forest looks like.”



At Two Oceans Aquarium, extensive education programs are run, one, focusing on the marine world and marine life particularly found in our waters, two, for a wide audience from early childhood development programs to adult educational events and three, “we run conservation projects, the flagship being our turtle conservation centre which is about rescue, rehabilitation and the subsequent release of the turtles back into the ocean.

About our Turtles:

Turtles in the Cape? Yes, there are, they're not just overseas as we so often see them. They're also found way up the coast in St Lucia, where you can see the hatchlings scurrying to the sea. The turtles found in the Cape come from the KwaZulu Natal coast. Once in the sea, they get caught up in the powerful east coast Agulhas current running in a southerly direction. When you add the strong winds, “a lot of the hatchlings, the little guys, get pushed ashore, onto the beaches and are stranded ... and that's when we come in and rescue them.” These baby turtles are found all along the coast and around the southern Cape as far as Muizenberg and Camps Bay.

To help with this there is the Turtle Rescue Network which consists of organizations and individuals dotted all along the coastline, which remain on standby to receive stranded turtles from members of the network. Something else to think about is that turtles are warm water creatures and don't so well in the cold waters of the Cape coast. Of the seven species that exist, there are two main ones that nest on the Cape shores and these are the Loggerhead turtle and the Leatherbacks.



All seven turtle species are endangered and “the conservation work of the Aquarium also means that we’ve got a number of sub adult Green Sea Turtles with us in rehabilitation at the moment, and we’ve also had some Hawksbill Sea Turtles and Olive Ridley Sea Turtles as well.”

About our Penguins

The African penguin campaign was initiated because the African penguin is in serious trouble. “Numbers have plummeted from something like a million pairs in the early 19th century to fewer than 10,000 pairs now.”

Penguins are to be found on Boulders Beach near Simon's Town and also on . Stoney Point in Betty's Bay. The Aquarium “is involved with this campaign basically to raise public awareness of the plight of the African penguin and to encourage people to become aware of the multiple issues impacting on the penguin population.”

These impacts include food scarcity, the affects of climate change, as well as natural predators but, in recent years, and because penguins are now to be found on the mainland, trouble comes from dogs, cars, and the general public too. Nearing the end of April, the Aquarium will be holding an exciting and informative dry exhibit which will focus on African penguins. It will also include information about how oceanic plastic pollution, is affecting all sea creatures including penguins. Remember the movie ‘Happy Feet?’



About Children's Activities

While children can visit the Aquarium in Cape Town (and they do), currently there are no online clubs or programs for children which can cover the country and get children involved in wild-life preservation ... but there is a lot to be said about starting something like this and for obvious reasons. Perhaps a Penguin Club or a Turtle Club? Both characters appeal to children!

There are no children's clubs just yet, "what the Aquarium does have for Grades 10-12, is a Marine Sciences Program set up for those interested in pursuing careers in marine biology or in oceanography. Learners can do this as an additional subject at school or online, so wherever a child is living, on or away from the coast, it's possible to prepare to study for various careers in ocean sciences."

About our Seahorses

'The Knysna seahorse is truly a national treasure.' South Africa is very fortunate to have this endemic species found nowhere else in the world. These beautiful little animals only live in the Knysna estuary, which is one of the most heavily used water bodies in the country. This has led to a decline in the health of the estuary ecosystem and because of habitat loss, overfishing, pollution, and warming sea temperatures they are highly endangered.



THE AQUARIUM DOES HAVE FOR GRADES 10-12, IS A MARINE SCIENCES PROGRAM SET UP FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN PURSUING CAREERS IN MARINE BIOLOGY OR IN OCEANOGRAPHY



About Shark Diving

In the False Bay area, they have cage shark diving where sharks are enticed to come to a person in a cage underwater, something not for the faint-hearted!

“Is that a practice that the Aquarium encourages?”

“We actually work closely with two reputable organizations - Marine Dynamics in St Francis Bay and Apex Shark Expeditions in False Bay. They both run very good education programmes and initiatives for the public, and are also involved in important research ... so the shark diving, as an entertainment side for people, has a meaningful purpose. It seems though, that if one is interested in diving with sharks, it's best to use a reputable organization.

And then there are the Shark spotters, people who actually sit up on the mountain peaks overlooking the bay or along Boyes Drive to report on the presence of sharks. These services, which keep people safe and aware and educated, are run by the city of Cape Town and the Save Our Seas Foundation. The Shark Foundation in Durban also does a lot of good work in educating people about sharks. It follows that education and knowledge is key to understanding the role we all play in caring for the ocean.





Perlemoen and poaching

is an issue is significant, no matter where or how it is done or with what animal or creature. Take perlemoen for example. Rhino horn. The problem is that there are several parties who are invested in poaching which makes it difficult to blame the poacher. It's the person arranging or paying for the demand, and the demand itself for the product that needs to be stopped.

About Dr. Sylvia Earl and Hope Spots and 'Taking action now!' We hosted Dr. Sylvia Earl, the famous American marine biologist, oceanographer, explorer, author, and lecturer... "she's an incredible woman! She is 88 years old and still diving, fit and very active. She cleared the way for so many women to get into the marine environment in terms of diving, research and oceanography."

Further, "she has an organization called Mission Blue which works with communities around the world to form something she calls Hope Spots. These Hope Spots, while not legally protected, are nevertheless areas where communities can come together to care for and protect marine life.

"So, together with a local organization called Cape Rad, Two Oceans Aquarium was nominated as a co-champion for the False Bay Hope Spot which means we get to work with many other and different organizations in the area who are already doing good work raising awareness about matters affecting the Bay and the life it supports. Besides, we get a chance to create an ocean-mindful community here.

“And this then, through the False Bay Hope spot, leads to ways of getting involved with research, and extending the work already being done with the legally protected Table Mountain National Park.

“It was so very exciting to be in Dr Earl’s presence. She’s very inspirational and very clear about conservation and what needs to be done to protect the sea. When you see a fish, she said, you want to ask it, who are you? Where did you come from? What message do you have for us humans?

She advocates taking a step back, appreciating animals as separate beings, pausing and taking a moment to reflect on what is before you.

It was a very powerful message to add to her thoughts on having enough knowledge ... what we have to do now, is take action.

We can keep looking for more knowledge, and yes, the ocean is vastly unexplored, but at the same time, we know enough now to take action and that’s what we have to do if we’re going to protect our oceans.



About Prince William's environmental prize

The fourth annual 'Earthshot Prize' ceremony, 2024, is scheduled to be held in Cape Town this November. There are five winners from 15 finalists across five categories including:

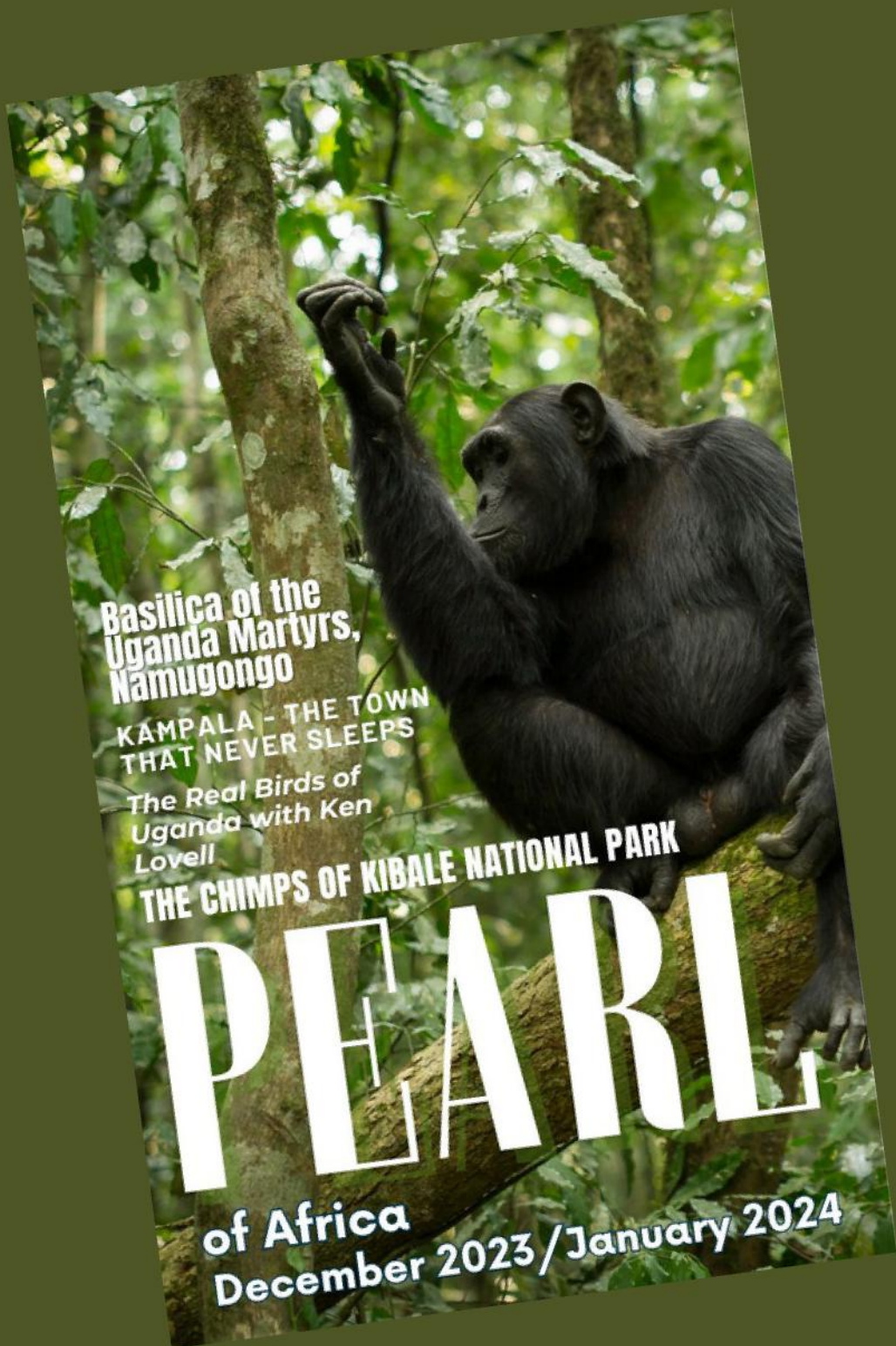
- ☒ Protect & Restore Nature,
- ☒ Clean Our Air,
- ☒ Revive Our Oceans,
- ☒ Build A Waste-Free World and
- ☒ Fix Our Climate.

“Let’s hope he comes to see the Aquarium, especially because reviving the oceans is one of the competition categories! “

Want to find out more about the Two Oceans Aquarium at the V&A? Visit www.aquarium.co.za

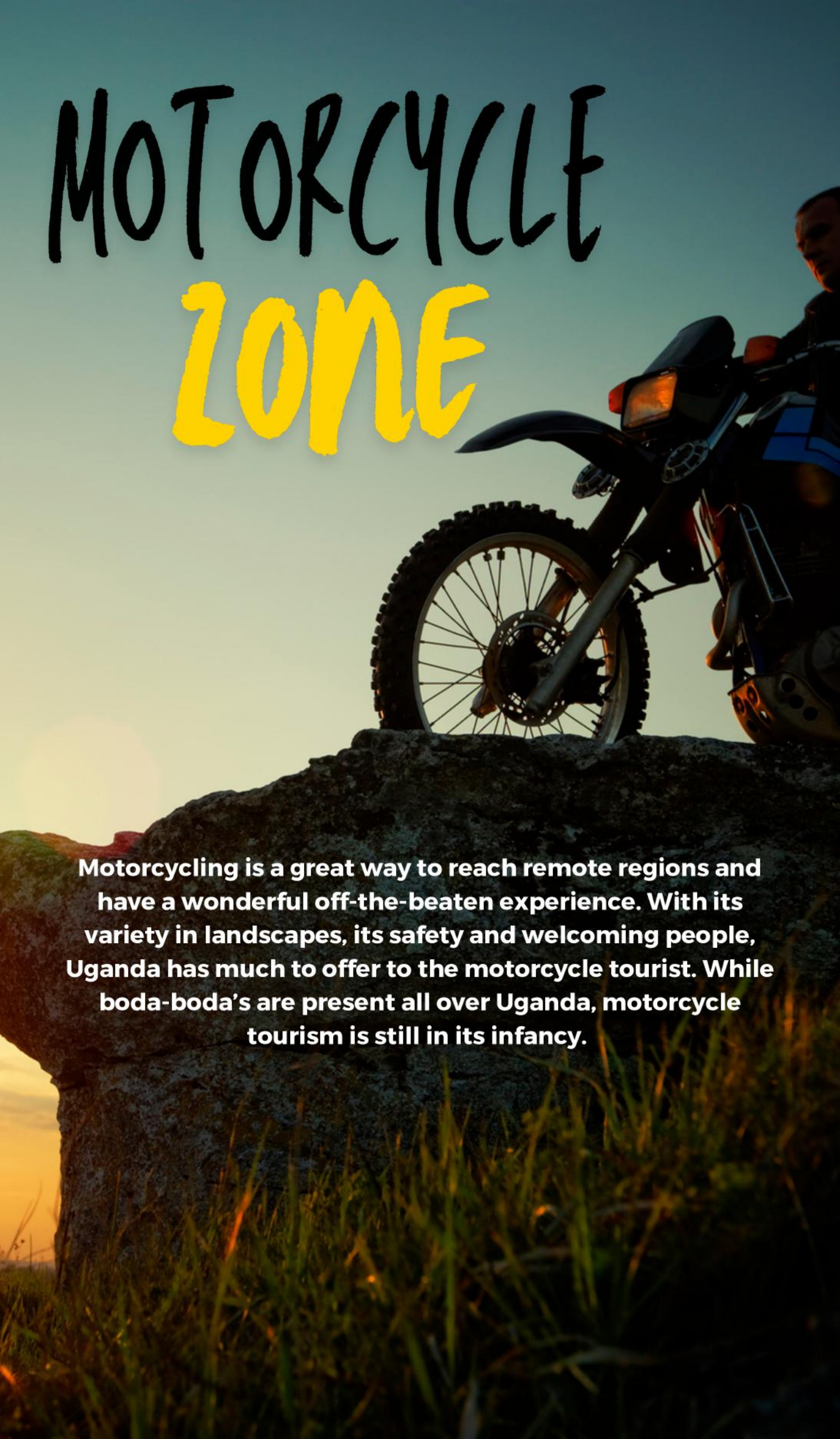


Without people like Helen, we wouldn't have a planet and ... we're just very grateful ... for all the work that you do to save our planet now ... people may not be here to see [what the future holds] ... but our children will be, because, as we know, they are the ones who benefit in the long run!”



EXPLORE
UGANDA
THE PEARL OF AFRICA

MOTORCYCLE ZONE

A photograph of a motorcycle parked on a large, dark rock. The motorcycle is a dual-sport or adventure bike, with a black and blue color scheme. The front wheel is prominent, showing a knobby tire. The background is a soft, hazy sunset sky with warm orange and yellow tones. The overall mood is adventurous and scenic.

Motorcycling is a great way to reach remote regions and have a wonderful off-the-beaten experience. With its variety in landscapes, its safety and welcoming people, Uganda has much to offer to the motorcycle tourist. While boda-boda's are present all over Uganda, motorcycle tourism is still in its infancy.



This pillar serves to further develop the motorcycle tourism industry. It includes a market research on the potential for motorcycle tourism, as well as training for motorcycle guides and mechanics. The initiator of the pillar is UG-Motobike, a Dutch-Ugandan motorcycle company based in Kampala. It offers motorcycle activities and rents out motorcycles that are more powerful than boda-boda's but small enough to go off-road.

Do's and Don't's of Motorcycling in Uganda

Make sure that you always carry cash, a fully-charged mobile phone and sufficient clean water during your motorbike safari.

When you fill up your KIBO, make sure you know the location of the next petrol station. Plan your motorbike safari well.

Don't forget to wear sunscreen! The weather is hot in Uganda and being a bike rider does not protect you from the sun's rays

Due to the hot weather, you are at continuous risk of dehydration. Make sure you drink enough fluids during your motorbike safari.

Always clean up after yourself and don't leave any rubbish behind, be nice to Uganda's nature!

Put on long sleeves and pants when sunset starts, to reduce the change of mosquito bites.

Put on mosquito spray when sunset starts.



Ugandan Be Kidding Me

The Ugandan

Motorcycling Experience



Doug Loynes is a teacher and writer from Manchester, England.

When I told friends and family about my plan to hire a motorcycle in Uganda and attempt a full circumnavigation of Lake Victoria, they rattled off every cliché about overlanding in Africa in a vain attempt to dissuade me. “The drivers are crazy!” “The roads are a disaster!” “The traffic police are corrupt!” But when I was lying face-down in a rutted road in the middle of a jungle, the taste of baked dirt in my mouth and the battered corpse of my 250cc Honda splayed out ahead of me, the only words of warning I recalled were those from Grace, the smiling hostel receptionist who had bid me farewell before my ride into Murchison Falls National Park that morning, “Be careful out there. There are lions in the park, you know.



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My East African odyssey began in Kampala, Uganda's capital, with its chaos of noisy boda bodas (motorcycles), bustling city folk, and faded shop fronts with their wares spilling out onto the narrow sidewalk. I collected my motorbike—a characterful 1980's Honda dual-sport with a sticky ignition and a suspect kick starter—and tentatively peeled into the madness of the road.

While I crawled along with the matatus, the lumbering white mini-bus vans that ferry Kampala's working population around the city along ever-transient transport routes, all around me the motoboys on their boda bodas rattled past, ducking and weaving through gaps in the traffic that were scarcely there. When I eventually mustered a grain of courage and began to plot my own route through the horde of vehicles, I did so with all the grace of a guinea fowl trying to avoid being trampled in an elephant stampede.

As I found my rhythm, I began to see that within this chaos there was order. Amidst the madness there was a hierarchy, a pecking order in which, paradoxically, the larger vehicles submitted to the smaller ones and where motorcyclists ruled the roads. In Europe or the U.S., where the rules of the road are so rigidly codified and where car drivers cruise along on autopilot, any mistake made by a motorcyclist—a corner taken fractionally too wide, a mistimed turn into traffic—can prove fatal. In Kampala's streets, traffic "laws" are a more fluid concept. As a result, the drivers of the matatus, the trucks, and anything else that could cause serious harm to a motorcyclist, have been hard-wired to anticipate the erratic driving patterns of the boda bodas, making the streets, seemingly counter-intuitively, an arguably safer place to ride. Buoyed by this revelation, I pushed northward.





Lake Victoria lies to the south of Kampala, but first I had planned to travel 200 kilometers to Masindi, the former capital of one of East Africa's greatest kingdoms and the gateway to the Murchison Falls National Park. It was on the surprisingly beautifully tarmacked but uninspiringly named Kampala-Masindi Highway where the Honda and I suffered our first disagreement. As I shifted to fifth to open her up on a particularly inviting stretch of highway, she sputtered in protest and then ground to a complete standstill. I pulled her over to the side of the road, where I was soon approached by a gang of men.

Any anxieties I might have had were quickly assuaged when the youngest, a boy no older than 10, was sent scurrying back into the bush and returned with a replacement carburetor. They insisted on swapping it out for me, and in return accepted a tiny sum of cash as payment for the spare part but nothing further for their time. The 10-year old then sympathetically watched me stomp several times with increasing vigor on the Honda's kick starter to no avail before stepping in with his bare feet to get her going for me in a scene that resembled an East African reimagining of King Arthur's sword-in-the-stone moment.

I did not expect the same generosity when, an hour later, a roadside police official motioned for me to pull over. Conditioned by the tales on countless internet forums, my brain immediately searched for a happy middle ground between a cash bribe that wouldn't be so high as to make too sizable a dent in my Tusker Lager budget, nor so low as to risk offending and making an enemy of the official.

“Where are you from?” he barked, as I reached for my wallet.

“England. Manchester,” I replied.

The official paused.

“Manchester United or Manchester City?”

“United.”

His mouth turned upwards in a beaming smile, and he clasped me by the shoulder. “My good man!” For fifteen minutes we spoke of the declining fortunes of Manchester United football club before he asked what I liked most about Uganda so far. I told him that I had been surprised by the kindness of its people, and with that he smiled once more, lent his size 12 boot to the Honda’s kick starter and waved me on my way.

Three times on the Kampala-Masindi Highway I was pulled over in this way. Three times the officials wanted nothing more from me than to hear my thoughts on their country and to know which football team I supported back home. All rejoiced upon hearing that I was a Manchester United fan and wished me good fortunes on the rest of my trip. Likewise, every time the Honda needed resurrecting—which was frequently—the villagers who came out to lend their support did so not out of expectation of any financial compensation but mainly out of kindness, possibly out of curiosity and certainly out of pity for the incompetent, scruffy muzungu and his knackered old bike.



Having been charmed by the generosity of the people in this country, it came as a huge relief that it was a Ugandan who reached me in Murchison Falls before the lions did. A park ranger sporting a magnificent moustache helped conceal the Honda in a ditch and offered to call a friend of his who worked as a mechanic in the park to collect the bike. He then gave me a ride to a nearby campsite and reluctantly accepted my offer to buy him a beer as a token of my gratitude, but insisted on paying for the next round.

The next day, when I went to collect my bike from the mechanic, I was amazed to see the Honda had been restored. Even the handlebar, which had been hopelessly bent out of shape, was now perfectly aligned. The only telltale signs of any maltreatment were the gnawed ends of the rubber handlebar grips. "The baboons beat us to it," the mechanic smiled. "They were trying to ride the thing out of there." I slotted the key into the Honda's ignition and pushed down hard on the kick starter and for the first time since I had picked her up in Kampala, she roared into life on the first attempt.

As I rode deeper into the heart of the park, I reflected on the disconnect between my experience of Uganda and the "Africa" I was warned about. Too often, the story about Africa is still framed in terms of stereotypes which suggest the whole of the continent is stricken by famine, war, desperate infrastructure, poverty, and corruption. The reality, of course, is that there is no single story which represents Africa. African countries like Uganda, much like countries everywhere else in the world, are engaged in their own share of successes and setbacks and cannot be understood in terms of a single narrative which applies to the whole continent. Certainly, for some overlanders it may have been that extortion at the hands of corrupt police officials was a reality of their African experience. However, I can only assume that in Uganda such treatment is reserved exclusively for Manchester City fans



Doug Loynes is a teacher and writer from Manchester, England. He owes his passion for motorcycling to the eight-year-old bully in Bali who goaded him into returning his "hairdresser's" rental scooter and exchanging it for a Kawasaki dirt bike. Since then, he's journeyed the world seeking stories at the intersection of adventure travel and culture which place the local at the heart of the feature. **Doug** now lives in Sao Paulo and likes to spend his weekends on two wheels in the Brazilian backcountry. Follow him on Instagram [@Instdougramm](#).

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