

The "Indigenous" Tour (Part 1)

07/11/08 Left home, arrived at Purple Parking, then met up with some travelling ABs at the airport and also the Bloomfield's, who were there to see us off. Checked in and then adjourned to the Bar. Surprisingly **German, Sandhu and Balbir** already there and ensconced providing home-made Samosas. Then off through to the Departure Lounge for a further drink. Some people were lucky to find their way to the Airport (no names, well not yet, but it is their first tour) !! Then onto flight, reasonable meal, reasonable take-off and landing. On leaving the plane we all got onto the airport bus. Unfortunately there were no seats left and only overhead rings to hold. **Mike** lifted **Chris** up to the rings. She then went through a faultless display including the infamous Crucifix for a total score of 9.65.

08/11/08 Arrived at the Vineyard Hotel, Cape Town – very plush. After checking in, it was time for a beer and lunch. Whilst sitting waiting for lunch with **Sean and Wendy**, we were joined by **Tim**, who stated that earlier he was drinking tea wearing just a towel and had seen **Sandie** at the window with her top off !! Apparently she was doing her "**John Beale**" impression with her hands behind her head.

Whilst having an enjoyable "Spag Bol" it came to our notice that **Heather and Gordon** were in the next room to **Sean and Wendy**. "How do you know that" said

Heather, "Can you hear us !!!". Whilst sitting in the garden it was noted that mummy and daddy tortoise were out and about. **Gordon** was there quick as a flash as the "tortoises" decided to "frolic" in the garden. There is photographic evidence.



After lunch did a quick visit into the Cavendish Centre, basically a quick look around for any restaurants and to get some water. Returned back to the Vineyard to watch Wales v South Africa playing Rugby (Wales came second), then time for a shower before **Heather and Gordon, Phil and Sandie, Russell and Angela and Arthur** decide to visit Ocean Basket, basically a fish restaurant. Mixed Platter for one – **Gordon**. Two bottles of wine and a beer – total approximately 120 Rand each. Other ABs visited the same establishment and were told to keep the noise down – perhaps we should stop enjoying ourselves. It was clear that on our return to the Vineyard that some people had imbibed a little. **Wendy** relived her youth about her favourite character "Spotty Dog" and questioned **Tim** re the afternoon, which he then denied. After good late service in the Bar from Winston, ABs retired to their rooms, bed turned down and chocolates. By the way **Heather and Sandie** there was a separate shower in the corner of the bathroom.

09/11/08 Left Hotel at 9.30 for a re-arranged game versus Western Province. Stuck at the "Robots" waiting for a long group of walkers. Went through an estate then came back to the ground. A game of 4 fifteen minute periods took place (see Official Match Reports) - Won 1-0. This was followed by a quick dip in the outdoor pool (v cold), then a BarBQ. This unfortunately may have led to **Karen** suffering. Three selections for Man of the Match were **Phil** by the Umpires and the Opposition, **Paddy** by the Supporters and **German** by **Sean**. The winner on the "Clapometer" was **Paddy**. **Sean** then awarded the "**Gold Medal**" to **German** for his Samosas at the Airport.

Back to the Hotel for a few beers, then it was off on the Shuttle Bus to the Waterfront. We strolled around then found the Paulaner Restaurant where **Sandie** had ostrich and **Tim** tested 3 Beers called a Trio. Then back to the Vineyard, **John Peirce (JP)** and **Phil** stayed up for a few ports. **Ailsa** stayed up for a while and then left her cardigan, never to be seen again.

10/11/08 Left Hotel at 9.45 for Cape Point and then off to Cape of Good Hope. En route we stopped to have a look at the ostriches. A quick display by the male was followed by a quick "fumble" (see picture right). Up a funicular then a climb to the lighthouse at the top, giving breathtaking views for 360 degrees.

Then back on the bus to the Seaforth Restaurant. Cutlery to be used as per usual, start from the outside and work inwards, or just use your dessert spoon for the soup, **Sandie**, who then said "You Dozy Mare", bringing it to our attention.



Sandie then said to **Tim** that she could do with an early night, whilst acquiring sugar for late night coffees, back at the Hotel. **Ailsa and Sandie** started the "Rosé Wine Lunch Time Club" which surprisingly became a 24 hour Club. Also at the same meal, Soup, Kingclip and Treacle Sponge and custard, it was noticed that a certain person, **Chris**, decided to have custard on a certain part of her body, which she accentuated when she decided to try and clean it up making it wetter than the other one! After the meal off to the Penguin Colony to "pick-up a Penguin". On the way back **Gordon** said "I'm bringing up the rear not coming up the rear". On the way back we visited the other side of Table Mountain with spectacular views before returning to the Hotel.

Off later that night to Ocean Basket for fish again. **Paddy and Anne, Dudley and Ann, Rod and Karen, Gordon and Heather, Phil and Sandie** had just the 6 bottles of wine. **Heather and Sandie** had fish on a skewer, but not quite as one would expect. Towards the end of the meal **Heather** called the Manager over and told him that they had recommended the restaurant to 21 people and they had all turned up last night, plus the group tonight. The Manager asked whether she was here with her husband and she pointed to **Gordon**, so he said that their meal was complimentary.



11/11/08 Today we were supposed to be going up Table Mountain but unfortunately the tablecloth was on, the wind was over 50 kms per hour so the Cable car was closed. So onto the bus for the view of Lion's Head. This was the cliff where the wind was a lot stronger on one side. ABs answer to Da Vinci, **Sean** wondered whether he could fly. Asking **Dudley** for his top, he tied the sleeves together and jumping in the air he attempted (failed) to become the first Welshman in space. We then travelled to the Waterfront for free time prior to the evening's game. Decided to visit the Aquarium where you could have your picture taken in the middle of fish, then off to Paulaner Restaurant for a typical South African meal – Frankfurter, Kartoffel Salat and Sauerkraut ! This was the time when the maracas were acquired for the AB WAG's, for tonight's game against Pinelands (Lost 2-1 after leading with a Mukeesh goal). Three selections for Man of the Match were **Tim** by the Supporters and the Umpires, **Phil** by the Opposition and **Russell** by **Sean**. The winner on the "Clapometer" was **Russell**. **Sean** then awarded the "Gold Medal" on behalf of **German** to **Phil** for 3 bad passes during the game. As there was no food it was back to the Hotel for a quick bite, courtesy of cancelled visits. This turned into

a Port Evening, due to **JP**, and later a new term - "an assortment of Halls" from **Tim** was born.

12/11/08 More rain and Table Mountain still closed, Botanical Gardens closed, but all invited to a talk on flora and fauna during a coffee break. Some found the waterfall and others had a quick walk in the rain. Then back on the coach to Hermanus for lunch in the Bietangs Cave – Bluefish and Rice (fish for a change). During a break saw our first whales of the Tour, and as **Wendy** said "It doesn't matter how big it is if it's your first one! Or as **Gordon** said (or was it to **Heather**) "We got what we came for!" Still wet and raining as we then went off to 45 Marine Drive Apartments. Sharing were the **Boulters, Halls and Heywoods**. One double bed and 2 twins so tallest in the double – The **Heywoods**. First things first, urgent supermarket shop for beers and tonics. Later in the afternoon around 4 pm the whales were seen in the bay opposite the Apartments. In the evening we decided to go to another Ocean Basket (for a change). On this occasion **Gordon** prepared an oyster for **Sandie** to try for the first time. **Mike** had problems and asked for a fork – as his left hand was sticky!

13/11/08 More rain. We all walked to a nearby café with quaint wooden furniture for breakfast. Afterwards time for a walk along the cliffs. Yet again 2 whales were frolicking in the bay opposite our Apartments then as they moved off round the bay we followed them. After beers in a cliff bar we decided we ought to be back near the Apartments around 4 pm in case they returned to the bay. Strangely enough they were there and it appeared to be a mother and calf. They spent about half an hour giving a display of breaching etcetera. Had a few pre meal beers before going out to The Fishermans Cottage. Long delay waiting for our main course but when it arrived it was good. An enjoyable free day ended with late night final drink.

14/11/08 More rain greets us as we prepare to move to our next destination and to our surprise the whales returned to say their goodbyes. Back on the bus, after an hour or so, stop for coffee and light breakfast, then back on coach before another stop at Alcare for lotions and remedies, before ending up for lunch at Pomodoro's Restaurant in Wilderness. Started with salad followed by Chicken or Fish, then pears in red wine, coffee. After lunch it was back on the coach and off to the next Hotel - Beacon Island. Nice position, all alone on the beach but no Menus in the room, so went to Reception to sort out. Whilst downstairs a tour of the Complex found Spa downstairs, **Russell** pretending to be Hotel Tour Rep (convincing), Indoor Pool and Table Tennis tables. Back upstairs problem with the window which wouldn't lock, but Maintenance sorted it so window wouldn't open but likewise couldn't open from outside.

Decided to eat in tonight along with **Heather and Gordon and Ailsa**. Very pleasant waitress Celia served us and she persuaded us to move to the Bar at the end of our light meal. Bar was closing but persuaded the live music to continue for 1 more session. Got a few more ABs out of the restaurant, but couldn't persuade the Bar to stay open after just 1 round.

Russell went upstairs and fetched a bottle of port – great decision.

15/11/08 More rain ? No its sunny !! Breakfast in the Hotel, 2 gull chicks just outside the window on the cliff. Went for a walk along the beach, then off to Spar (might need some port later), then into small café for a light lunch. Later back at the Hotel for the World Masters Table Tennis Final in which **JP** thrashed **Phil** by 5 games to 1. In the evening a few of went over to Moby Dicks for a meal. Ended up with several tables totalling 29 ABs in all, spread throughout the restaurant. When we returned to the Hotel time for a quick Beer, then yes you've guessed it, the Bar was closed. Upstairs to fetch bottle of Rosé. Basically a quiet rest day.



The "Indigenous" Tour (Part 2)

16/11/08 Overslept, up late for trip to Knysna for a game v Wanderers on grass. Lost 4-2 but should have been 4 nil up at half time. An enjoyable game played in good spirit, even their players got the Umpire. After a typical Braai of sausages, spare ribs, lamb chops and salad it was upstairs for the usual after match speeches. Four selections for Man of the Match were **Dudley** by the Supporters, **Phil** by the Umpires, **Mukeesh** by the Opposition and **Tony** by **Sean**. The winner on the "Clapometer" was **Dudley**. **Phil** then proceeded to mention half of the ABs who were in the frame but he eventually awarded the "**Gold Medal**" to **John Butler**. After our goodbyes it was back to the Hotel. Off again for a light meal to Moby Dicks, **Phil and Sandie** joined by **Mukeesh and Neeru, Rod and Karen, Heather and Gordon, JP and Tim**. **Mukeesh and Neeru** having oysters and both offered one to **Sandie** which she accepted. They prepared them first and **Sandie** having only recently tried oyster did say that they tasted different to the one previously. As long as she doesn't have six! Strangely enough on our return to the Hotel, the Bar was closed, just a few **Heather and Gordon, JP and Phil** decided to have a quick bottle of Port before bed.

17/11/08 Checking out of Beacon Island – some people not too unhappy about this as Hotel more Time-Share than Hotel (couldn't put meals on Hotel Room !). En route stopped at the Worlds Highest Bungy Jump, **Phil** couldn't be persuaded to have a go, he even had trouble looking at the bridge and trying to work out how they got to the top. Found out that they walked along a parapet.



Then back onto the coach and off to the Beach Hotel at Port Elizabeth. Quick check-in, then into the Restaurant for a late buffet lunch – and very nice too – vegetable lasagna, lamb casserole and fish. Soon after it was off to play Eastern Province Masters at a school, which we lost 1-0, then followed by a visit to Pirates Hockey Club for nibbles and beers. Man of the Match was **Mukeesh**. Other awards included "Voice" from the opposition which went to **Sandie**, who had to drink a green peppermint liquid without using her hands; **Arthur** for being "Old Fart" and **Phil** for "Mouth of the Match". All were given Eastern Province Caps. **John Butler** then proceeded to award the "**Gold Medal**" to **Tim**.

It was then back to the Bar for a few beers or perhaps "just the one Mrs Wembley". **JP, Tim, Phil and Sandie, Gordon and Heather and John Butler**. The Bar as usual closed after the 1 drink but the staff were very helpful and allowed us several beers and tonics and a bucketful of ice. **JP** went and fetched the gin as we settled down to a nice relaxing finish to the evening. **Dudley** called on the way up and decided to join us, before we called it a day just after 12.45.

18/11/08 Down for a nice breakfast, then off into Port Elizabeth with **Rod and Karen**, approx 20 minutes according to the Receptionist, but in the end took about 1 hour and 10 minutes. Bought 2 holdalls for the internal flight (massive price of 60 Rand = £4), then taxi back to the Hotel, lunch in the Boardwalk Centre, quick walk round to follow, then it was off to play Eastern Province Masters again. ABs were 2-0 up, but finally drew 2-2, but ended with a Tour injury to **Phil**. Taxi for **Phil** back to the Hotel and he crawled up the Beach Hotel steps into the Bar, and there he stayed. Back at the Pirates Hockey Club there were just two selections for Man of the Match **German** by the Umpires and **Sean, Tim** by the Opposition and Supporters. The winner on the "Clapometer" was **German**. **Sean** persuaded **Bob** and one of the Opposition to do a Nelson and Hardy sketch. **Tim** then proceeded to award the "**Gold Medal**" to **Bob**. Back at the Hotel **Phil** was still in the Bar and others joined him for a few more. Later had Room Service with pancake rolls followed by chicken roulade and a few glasses of rosé.

19/11/08 Up about 9 and for 38 people it was off on the coach for the Township Tour and an extra visit to a Cheetah Sanctuary. For **Sean and Phil** it was off to the Docs. Our taxi driver said it was his first day as a taxi-driver, as he dropped us off. First call showed that **Sean** has a broken finger but needs to go to the Hospital for an x-ray and **Phil** has torn the calf muscle. So it was time to call for a further taxi – but one would be here in 0 minutes, yes same driver as his He knew where the Hospital was sister was a Matron there, but he waiting.



Still didn't really know the way. Anyway once there, very quick x-ray then back to the Medical Centre with the x-rays – finger definitely broken, should be out for 4 – 5 weeks. Into the Wimpy for a quick beer before getting taxi back to the Hotel. Our 3rd taxi driver asked whether OK or not. Told him that one of us had a torn calf muscle and the other a broken finger. He said "as long as your dick is alright, then life is fine". Strange comment from someone you have never met before. Into the Boardwalk Centre for lunch and a few beers. Later in the afternoon the rest of the party returned.

In the evening we had a very pleasant meal with **Gordon and Heather** – nice piece of beef and curry. After it was into the Bar for a few drinks and yet again Bar closing early, but staff were helpful. Time for **Mukeesh** to get the vodka out, stocked up on coke for a little bevvy.

20/11/08 Up about 8.30 for a 9.30 leave from the Beach Hotel and off for a quick tour of Port Elizabeth, followed by lunch at Port Alfred. This was a very disappointing and slowly served meal. Some people having second cups of coffee with others still waiting for main course! Menu was garlic and cheese bread along with salad, breaded mushrooms and chips, followed by chicken schnitzel or spaghetti bolognese, ice cream, then coffee. Then it was off to Shamwari, shame we didn't go earlier as could have had lunch there.

Once we arrived it was time for afternoon tea. **Mike and Chris, and Phil and Sandie** were staying at Riverdene whilst the rest of the party were in Long Lee Manor. We were greeted by a pair of lesser striped swallows flying in and out of the Lounge and settling on the beams



It was off for an early evening safari drive with our Ranger, Konrad in the Toyota Landcruiser. We were lucky on this first trip to see leopard and her cub, plus kudu, springbok, zebra, impala and elephants. Whilst out it was time for the Gin & Tonic - Sundowners in the Bush with other ABs.

It was then back in the vehicle and as dusk began to descend we saw helmet crested guinea fowl, a black shouldered kite, scrub hares, vervet monkeys by the river, bushbucks, glossy starlings and several elephants. Back at Riverdene, time to change before dinner, when we became guests of Konrad. Nice wine list and choice of food but decided on kudu. Liqueurs to follow – **Mike** decided to have a special Brandy costing 32 Rand extra! while **Chris and Sandie** had the usual Amarula. It was soon time for bed as tomorrow was to be an early start – 4.45 alarm call.

21/11/08 Up about 4.50 am, a quick coffee before we were off with Konrad in search of more animals in their natural habitat. Initially it was back to the spot where the leopard

was the day before and sure enough she was back with her cub, as she had recently caught an ostrich, so it was still time for her early breakfast.

We then found the lion and his wife having a quiet rest. Then it was time for Mr Lion to do his duty, then 15 minutes later time to do it again. We then moved off to see more kudu, impala and springbok; then 2 white rhino, mother and child.

We later spotted a herd of elephants with the female from the previous day, with a bit missing from her ear. Then as Konrad stopped to pick up a cap on the road, a warthog came bolting out of a hole by the

back wheel and disappeared into the distance. As we drove along, a brown hyena ambled past with a leg of kudu in its mouth, off to feed its cubs. We then saw a hoopoe, 2 secretary birds, monitor lizard, more vervet monkeys and an eagle owl, followed by six hippos enjoying themselves in the water, before it was time for a sun-up break coffee or was it beer. Some people were seen walking off into the distance and a lesser spotted peeing **Heywood** was seen behind the bushes, then a greater crested **Maher** before we returned for breakfast. On the way back we also saw a jackal buzzard, goshawk and cape turtle doves. We all had a break then and a relaxing walk around before we were plied with lunch, far too much food again. Saw glossy starlings walking along the pool and others bathing including a Malachite Sunbird.



On the evening drive we saw Egyptian geese, weavers building nests (similar to at the Marine Drive apartments), serval stalking red hartebeest, and giraffes in the distance. We then slowed to a point where fires had been purposely started, to allow a leopard tortoise to cross the road. Further up we saw a tortoise that didn't quite make it. We then came upon the dung of the rhino and the explanation of how one knows if the branches are at a 45° angle then it belongs to the white, (also known as the square mouthed rhino,) or the black (also known as the hook lipped rhino). A little further on there was a white rhino and her calf, and minutes later black rhino and her calf basking and rolling over and having a siesta.

The "Indigenous" Tour (Part 3)



Then we saw further hoopoe, fork-tailed drongo, before stopping for the proverbial "Sundowners". This time certain people had a second, just for luck. On the way back we saw more zebra, warthog, giraffes and kudu all very close to each other. Then we saw a jackal on its way home after probably a tiring day.



It was time for a quick sherry, followed by a shower before the **Heywoods** and the **Halls** got back on the ranger vehicle to join the rest of the ABs at Long Lee Manor. A buffet meal was enjoyed by all, but it was noticeable how early people went to bed for another early start. On our return to Riverdene we found the Bar was closed so we also retired for the night.

22/11/08 Up at 4.30 for yet another early start (how is **Phil** getting up ??).

This time we set ourselves the challenge of trying to find the lioness with her cubs, but this was to no avail. We found the lion all on his own, bellowing for the rest of the pride but no response. He eventually just wandered off. We then saw 3 white rhinos closely followed by a large male who was spaying his territory.

Then Konrad spied in the distance a "cat". We all looked but saw nothing, and even when we got closer Konrad was still the only one to spot the cheetah. As we got closer it was seen lying quite relaxed, but slowly and surely she awoke and by the time we came to leave, was sitting up quite awake. Nearby was a mongoose who appeared to be a trifle nervous.



We moved on, because of time and on the way back we saw some buck onyx, a herd of elephants, an eagle owl, then zebras. On our return to the Lodge for departure we heard that the cheetah had just obtained "breakfast" – in a way sad that we had missed it but also happy that we had missed it. We checked out thanking our personal Rangers and saying our goodbyes to a splendid short stay – the high spot of the whole Tour.

Off we went to the airport, time for the **Mahers** to leave the party – quick goodbyes said, but not before another of the party came down with the "Tour Virus". Dehydration powder was prescribed but just before landing it failed ! We arrived at our next hotel – the Riverside Hotel in Durban, at approximately midday. Upstairs in the room no room directory (as suggested on the Hotel TV) and the patio door was loose as I found out when it came off in my hand. All this was reported, as others were also missing Room Directories.

It was time for a lunchtime drink, so we joined **JP** in the restaurant, sitting next to **Lionel and Pat, Ailsa and Arthur**. So he bought me a drink, after a short wait, then the problems started. Could they organise the bill and what was on whose bill just got worse. George, one of the Managers eventually sorted it out. Then Heather had to wait for her change after the waiter had taken the money and then just disappeared. Twenty minutes later after asking a waitress it was resolved, but not before having to ask what the bill actually was. Back to the room and when I put the Air Conditioning on – all the electric stopped. It was mended and blamed on the "Trip Switch". Later tried again and – yes – failed again.

Went back to Reception – still no Room Directory as being re-printed (not good enough suggest you find one), electrics still dubious – so asked for Manager and Dinesh arrived to assist. Said would give him half an hour to get it all sorted – and on my return, surprisingly a Directory had been found, along with an apology and a promise of a "Big Surprise". I also explained that it was difficult to work out who were staff by their clothes, especially when Restaurant Manager in a T shirt and Bermuda Shorts. Off to the Bar need a drink, and a stress free cigarette to watch South Africa playing England at Rugby.



Joined by other ABs in the Bar as I met a South African called Sean, who had a Scottish father-in-law. A few bevvys were had in the aftermath of an absolute thrashing by the Springboks. A quiet evening was had, whilst the virus was put to bed.

23/11/08 Up eventually, the one-legged invalid feeling a tad better, so time for a bath and a shave before facing another day. Air conditioning turned the electricity off again, maintenance called, need a man with a toolbox this time. Time for a cheese and tomato toastie and a beer for lunch.



Hockey today versus Pinetown Pastors has been brought forward to a 2 pm departure. Unfortunately lost 1-0. Evening at the Club was a semi outdoor BBQ. Three selections for Man of the Match were **Russell** by the Supporters, **Tim** by the Umpires and the Opposition and **Tony** by **Sean**. The winner on the "Clapometer" was **Russell**. Would we get the 2 Match Reports at the same time? Apparently not as, **Russell** said the first one was still in the post. It was time for the handing over of the "**Gold Medal**" by **Bob** to **Dudley**. As usual it had to be different as **Bob and Sandra** came up with an "ABBA Duet".

Once back it was drinks in the outside Bar, but as usual the Bar was due to be closed and this was frustrating again. On this occasion **Mukeesh** asked for a few more drinks and this worked until 12, but then the staff wanted to close, and at this point everything became a tad fractious. We moved to the outside area and a compromise took place for final drinks before people retired at 1 am.

24/11/08 Up about 10'ish, crippled but still trying to get from A to B asap. Time to go out to Pick'n'Pay to buy some wine and a rucksack. Whilst there, had a quick visit to the Café for a quick snack, then back to the Hotel for a Beer. Noticed that ants were at the Patio door so reported it to Reception and still awaiting their further action. Then later it was off to the hockey for a match versus Munies at the same School ground. Slight delay before the pitch was watered, and a 4-2 defeat. Goals from **Russell** and **JP** saw ABs level but 2 late goals decided the game. It was then off to the Bar for a BBQ, where the lamb was very tender. The choices for Man of the Match were **Russell** by the Umpires, **Mukeesh** by the Opposition, **Tony** by the Supporters and **Rod** by **Sean**. The winner on the "Clapometer" was **Tony**. **Phil** and their Umpire seemed to have a difference of opinion, which they resolved at the Bar over a couple of drinks. **Dudley's** choice for the "**Gold Medal**" was **Balbir** for "ringing the Bell" prior to last orders at the Clubhouse the previous night. There was also an award for **Sandie** – "**Voice of the Supporters**" and prior to receiving it she had to "neck" a drink – a G & T. Afterwards it was back to the Hotel, same rules as the day before – drinks until 12, when the Bar will be closed, then a last drink before bed.

25/11/08 Up slowly this morning and now we have ants running up and down the curtains, still no sign of any action by the Hotel staff. The depart time for the Hockey has been changed to 4.30 this afternoon, so time for **Sandie** to have a manicure next door. Later it was time for lunch, a stir-fry and a salad with a small beer. Prior to departure it was time to have another "discussion" with Management at the Hotel, wondering if they had an answer to the animal invasion.

It was then time to board the coach for a trip to Pietermaritzburg for the final game against KZN Masters, probably the best opposition of all. We lost 6-2 with goal scorers **Sean** and **Tim**. After the game it was back to a very narrow Clubhouse and unfortunately in the beginning – no beer, but on the wall was a picture of the previous match between these 2 sides back in 1997. There were two selections for Man of the Match, **Lionel** by the Umpires, and **Rod** by the Opposition, the Supporters and **Sean**. The winner on the "Clapometer" was **Rod**.



The "Indigenous" Tour (Part 4)

Bob then introduced the ABs answer to the Spice Girls, or was it the Sugababes or Girls Aloud. No, it was the find of the year – unlucky losers of the Z Factor Final, SCAM – **Sandra, Chris, Audrey and Margaret**, who sang to the audience and then Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star to **Balbir**.

We were then treated to a "Gold Medal" report given by **Sean**, on behalf of **Balbir**, in which he inferred several people were in the frame; **German, Sandhu** in pyjamas, **Gordon, Mukeesh and Arthur**

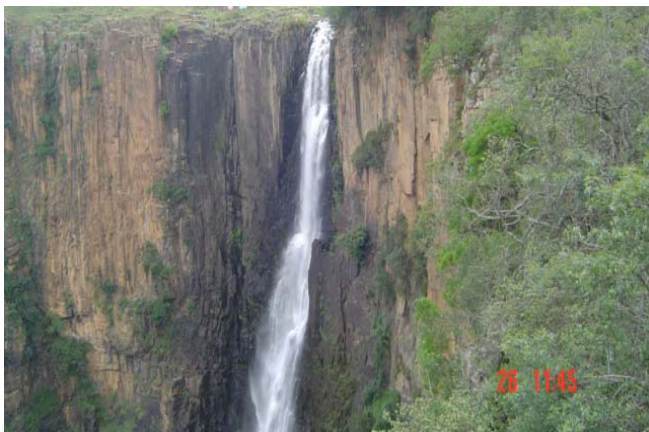
for the Beer under the arm, but in the end the choice was **Mike Heywood**, because he was the only forward not to score (don't forget **JP** had a very difficult chance !!!

The opposition then also entertained with a few songs followed by an encore from their lead singer, Desi before we moved further into the Clubhouse for a hot buffet BBQ, plus a lamb curry which was very tender. Because of the distance we were not back til midnight and the Bar was closed so JP and Phil went next door to Hops for a cheaper and also draught Beer at 14 Rand a pint !! Guess what they decided to close early at 1 am as they were quiet. Back in the room my "Great Surprise" seems to have arrived – a Bottle of Wine and 4 types of Melon. Lucky me.

26/11/08 Up at 9.15 and time to check-out, but first of all time to have a discussion with Management and Dinesh in particular. He asked if I liked my "Great Surprise", and I said that wasn't exactly what I was expecting and to be honest not sufficient. Starting at 9:40 and involving yet another member of Management who didn't appear to be too interested, the problem was still not resolved. **Sandie** came down and even asked whether the staff had ever heard of "Ant Powder" and apparently they had. "Well why don't you use some then, as the ants are now everywhere and even in the bed" – still no response. Don't you feel sorry for the next people to stay there !

Eventually it was suggested that I speak to Laura, who immediately approached the General Manager. He spoke with his staff and within a couple of minutes the situation was resolved and it was agreed that I would pay for the Manicure only and the rest of the Bill was cancelled.

En route we stopped at Howick Falls, where we could take pictures (well **Sandie** could) and purchase several local crafts and gifts.



Back on the coach it was then off to Granny Mouse Estate for lunch – fillet of beef or kingclip, followed by crème brulée or cheesecake - in some splendid grounds. The "Rosé

Club" was swiftly reconvened and was soon up and running. All in all a very enjoyable meal was followed by a quick tour of their Wine Cellar.

We then continued on and en route we stopped at a spot, famous for where Nelson Mandela was captured. Later on we arrived at our final Hotel the Drakensburg Sun Hotel at about 5 pm. Cold mint water was available at our Reception, and we all checked in. A quick Tour showed very pleasant surroundings, so time for a pre-meal Beer. A group of 8 had a very enjoyable evening with just a small gathering of the "Rosé Club", the men decided to try a few of the local red wines, with variable grape varieties. A few of the people enjoyed trout cooked specially for them. The others just enjoyed the many choices on offer at the hot and cold sections. After it was time for several ABs to adjourn to the Bar for a few drinks followed by the occasional glass of port (one for the road), prior to retiring.



27/11/08 Up for breakfast, traditional boiled eggs, orange juice and coffee. Some off on a shopping trip, whilst the disabled stayed behind within the conviviality of the Hotel environment. A decision to have a Golf Tournament was discussed by **Tony** and **Phil** for the following day.

Some people decided to have a practice round on the "Qolf" course. This was a slightly different version of golf with no holes. The idea was to putt under the arch or chip through a hole above the arch. Confused, yes, so we were at first, but **Mukeesh**, **John Butler** and **Phil** still gave it a go. On the last hole **John** was leading but with a tad of gamesmanship, he managed to "fluff" his drive and allowed **Mukeesh** to draw level and create a tie, which still left **Phil** paying at the Bar. This was when we saw a different way of tackling the hole.



The beer seemed to change people's view of the game and what exactly happened, but the entertainment was enjoyed by all three.

Following the shopping, the party felt it was necessary for a Gin and Tonic prior to changing for dinner. People came down in dribs and drabs but the entrance which surpassed all, was when **Tim** arrived. He had suddenly acquired the status of **Tim Singh**. He suddenly became the most photographed member of the ABs.



Another enjoyable meal was had by all as we yet again enjoyed a few varieties of grape before adjourning to the Bar. In progress at the time was a "Men v Women" Quiz. A few of the ABs deigned

to assist and the Men won on the very last question. First prize was a bottle of "champagne", whilst the ABs moved on to the port. Again **JP** was involved in these transactions and for some reason the measures appeared to distinctly vary – fortunately to

our benefit. A relatively quiet day was had by all, apart from the usual intrepid explorers off on a hike.

28/11/08 For several ABs , 20 in total, this was the big day – The Drakensburg Sun Golf Tournament. The timings and partners were already on the easel in the Foyer. Fortunately Tournament Director, **Tony** was on the first tee and at the helm as **German** was slightly late and pairings had to be altered “on the Hoof”. A few wayward shots, over the fence, on the road, in the water, kept players laughter ringing round the course and people stayed after they had finished to watch the next game. Some even helped and when the ball disappeared a tad further than they wanted then **Mukeesh** was on hand to assist. Deep down in the undergrowth he found more than went in. The Male winner was **Rod**, the Female was **Margaret** and the Pairs were **Rod and Arthur** and Wooden Spoon winners were **Sandie and Sandhu**, that well-known Insurance Company. A calm round was followed by a delightful lunch and a few beers.



During lunch it was then decided that we would have a game of Bowls and 16 players agreed it was a good idea. Foursomes were decided again by Tournament Director **Tony**, but Pairings were decided by the individuals on each rink and on Rink 2 the Girls decided to take on the Boys, but came second. But all in all, everyone had an enjoyable afternoon. Back up the hill to the Hotel and time for a beer before changing for the “End of Tour” Dinner.

Down for pre-Dinner drinks and a Buffet Meal. Skipper **Sean** was the Toastmaster of the Evening as the Golf Awards were handed out after **Tony** and **Phil** had dug deep into their Companies profits to purchase several costly prizes. **Mike Heywood** also passed on the “**Gold Medal**”, but not as people expected, but to **Sandie** for her commitment to the Tour in organising the “Singing and Chanting Wags” and general support of the team. Pictures of the Last Night to be added separately.

29/11/08 Up for most of the ABs was a sedate breakfast prior to a 9.45 checkout, but for two intrepid explorers **Russell and Angela** there was still time for a very early start and an helicopter ride. We then all boarded the coach for Johannesburg, stopping en route for coffee. We eventually arrived mid-afternoon at Aurelia’s Restaurant in D’Oreale Grande Hotel at Emperor’s Palace. It was a beautiful setting and very impressive on the eye. The shame was that the décor and environment was not kept up to the same standard as the staff. Fifteen minutes for a jug of water and then had to be fetched by somebody else (not my job apparently!!).

It was an impressive menu – Fish croquettes (one person had 2 pieces of fish, 1 very salty and 1 was fine) or Gazpacho soup (which was cold !); Line Fish (not totally cooked), Ricotta or Chicken Supreme, Crème Brulée or warm Chocolate Decadence. Sounds appetising but unfortunately was a tad disappointing. Even more so when a waiter said “Chef is trying this out before serving tonight” – Oh to be a guinea pig.

There was then a small matter of a flight back to sunny England. Flight meals were not of the best quality but all in all the flight passed without incident. Back at Heathrow all disembarked and with luggage, time for quick and sad good-byes before we meet again.

Abiding memories – without a shadow of doubt the highlight was the Shamwari Game Reserve. Others that will also remain – frolicking whales in the bay at Hermanus.





