

MIND CHANGE IN SIMON'S TOWN
28-31 MARCH 2009

What is the good of having a mind if you can't change it?

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A business meeting in Cape Town on Monday, 30 March – Hein asked me if I wanted to go down to Cape Town for the weekend. I was quite keen, but told him I'm so tired of Bloubergstrand, can't we go somewhere else?

Somewhere ... maybe Simon's Town? Google gave me quite a few options – we opted for Simonsview. 4 Self-catering units just outside Simon's Town. Not a big sun-on-my-face-lover, I normally ask for a patio. Or I thought I did ... And for R500/night per self-catering unit, it sounded perfect.

Waking at 4am Saturday morning, we quickly gulped down a coffee while packing. Left at 5am for the airport. Walking to the counters, we saw Marius Weyers, a well-known Afrikaans actor. Eating breakfast in the Wimpy, I saw Rina Hugo. And when seated on the airplane, Francois Pienaar came down the aisle – and were somewhere behind us in economy class. I nearly asked him for a Lays chip.

A very friendly guy sat next to me. Very talkative and told me he works on oil rigs and is now on his way home for 4 weeks. They work 4 weeks, then 4 weeks off – all expenses paid. With a house in Pinelands, a stay-at-home wife, 2 kids and garages boasting a yellow Hummer (with a monthly petrol bill of R11 000), a GT40, a Cobra and his new toy to be picked up – a Harley Davidson, he sure seemed well-paid.

Talking non-stop Afrikaans with quite a few strong words in-between, the travel time was pleasantly short. Oh, and he's also the nephew of 'Charmaine' from 7de Laan (the local Afrikaans soapie). She's the coffee shop owner/manageress.

Landing at 9am, Hein went off to Avis and luckily our bag was 2nd on the conveyor belt. Simon's Town, here we come!! It was overcast and while driving through Constantia, a few drops dirtied the windscreen.

The sun was shining on Simon's Town's sea – we find the self-catering unit and the weekend screeched to a sudden stop – our unit, although lovely furnished, had no patio. No shade whatsoever, except a sun umbrella. Some mis-communication over the phone and the thing was – we've already paid for 3 nights in full. We also thought it appropriate to be out of town – the yearly Navy Festival was in full swing and we thought the town might be too noisy.

Driving into Simon's Town for a cold one traffic was slow. People were streaming off the train and hurrying towards the activities. Phoning around trying to find another self-catering unit with a shaded patio, we saw a place called The British Hotel self-catering apartments. But at R2000/night we opted out.



Luckily we found a parking spot and walked to The Central Hotel – b&b, situated right on the main street. Hein spoke to Malinda – a friendly Afrikaans lady. She offered us the Honeymoon Suite for R600/night. Being a bit wary now, we asked for a look-around.

What a lovely room – real old wooden floors, a 4-poster bed, old-fashioned furniture and chaise lounges. Also a small fridge and a wonderful shaded balcony overlooking the harbour.

And that's when we changed our minds – from self-catering to bed-and-breakfast.

Driving back to pick up our bags was a slight mistake – when we came back, parking was non-existent. But Malinda assured us that over such a weekend, the traffic cops won't give tickets – we trusted her. Phoning Simonsview's owner, we cancelled the weekend with them and managed to be partly refunded. *Tip for the future: if you're not 100% sure of the accommodation, only pay the deposit and the rest on arrival.*



After unpacking and changing into 'walking clothes' (which means shorts for Hein and flip-flops for me), we walked to Bertha's (photo left) for lunch. It's a big restaurant right on the harbour's front (photo centre). There's a small beach in front of the restaurant (photo right), but with high tide, it's all covered with water. My calamari burger was yummy – the calamari steak so tender. Hein ordered fish and chips but wasn't so impressed AND it cost more than mine!!

Halfway through our meal, 5 coloured guys rocked up with music instruments (photo below left) and played some lovely songs. We were sitting next to the sea, the sun was shining, we didn't have to drive anywhere ... what perfect bliss.



Walking down the quay, Hein took photos of the small boats and these moss-covered steps.

Leisurely we walked back to our suite for a much-needed nap.

The Sharks rugby game was on at 5pm. I had a lovely bath (I rarely bath at home, but enjoy it when away for a weekend/holiday), grabbed my book and we strolled off, looking for a nice pub. Somewhere comfortable and cosy. The first pub was made of beautiful sandstone bricks – although the inside was sparsely furnished with metal chairs. The next hotel/pub was only showing the soccer game. Retracing our steps, we found an Italian restaurant, Café Pescado. Grabbing a table, Hein watched the game while I read my book 'Travels with Fortune, by Christina Dodwell - *Christina was born in Nigeria, West Africa, and educated in England. Her life of remarkable adventure began by chance in 1975, when she made a 20,000-mile journey round Africa by horse, camel and dug-out canoe.*

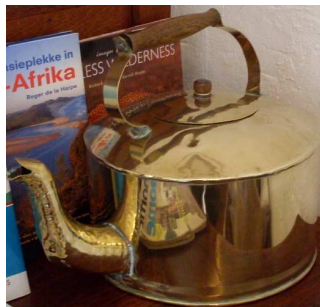
What a courageous woman! While reading, the Sharks played quite good, won and we shared a small focaccia pizza. At the suite, we sat on the balcony watching and listening to the local dialect. The buzz was unbelievable – I wouldn't want it every day, but for a once-in-a-while-experience, absolutely recommendable.

For dinner we decided to stroll down to The Salty Dog – a fish-and-chips shop. Fishcakes and coleslaw for me, Russian and chips for Hein. Real slap chips with vinegar and salt. The evening was balmy and calm. It was just such a novelty walking anywhere at night. Hein moved our car to a legal parking spot.

Sitting on the balcony, eating our take-aways, we watched a few miserable attempts at fireworks. Apparently it's usually quite a good show, but not that night. Watching a guy trying to parallel park, we were in stitches. Clearly some booze played a part – he was nearly in, then decided to go forward – missed the Golf in front of him with centimetres. Not feeling good, he drove out into the road – then reversed again into the spot. It probably took him 10-15 minutes. And all that effort only to draw money at the ATM.

With Earth Hour scheduled for 20h30, we obeyed and went to sleep. Although cars were still driving around and the odd pedestrian loudly chatted to the guy on the opposite pavement, we had a wonderful night's sleep.

At 7am Sunday morning, we awoke – I had some tea (there was no real coffee in the room), Hein had coffee and then we lazed around and read till 9 for breakfast.



The breakfast room is decorated in gold with lovely copper kettles and rose teacups. Malinda offered us mince on toast with an egg, cheese and tomato. This sign (photo left) caught my eye and I just smiled. While having some lovely filter coffee, we could see the sailboats and army ships in the harbour (photo above). Also loads of white horses on the sea. (The waves when the wind is blowing.)

Armed with a red peak hat, we strolled through the army ships, took photos (photo right) and at some places, seriously struggle to stay upright in the wind.

Tours were done on the boats, but we were a bit too early and didn't want to hang around.

Spotting a tea garden inside a huge building, we escaped the sun and wind. After walking around battling the wind, our throats were very dry.

Lovely filter coffee was served and little cakes – 3 for R7,50! (Photo right). What a bargain! We only had 3 small(!) ones – so that I could take photos for this review, of course. They were a custard slice, a coconut cupcake and a small doughnut. Absolutely delightful.





Cannons were parked inside the building (photo left), Hein took some photos and then went outside for the cannon show. Each team had to dismantle the whole cannon, lift it over to the other side (photo centre) and re-assemble it again.

The shots were so loud, I felt like crawling under the table! Hein said one of the kids at the cannon show did actually fall down with fright.

People were everywhere and parking was almost non-existent. Crafters were pitching their wares, candy floss were selling like hot cakes, hmmm, or like hot sugar?



Just Nuisance Memorial - The Unique Tale of a Unique Hound

Visitors to Simon's Town in the Western Cape of South Africa may be surprised to see an impressive statue of a dog near the Simon's Town Naval Base. This is the **Just Nuisance Memorial**, a memorial dedicated to a member of the Royal Navy – Able Seaman Just Nuisance, the dog.

Just Nuisance the Great Dane was born in Rondebosch of [Cape Town](#) on 1 April 1937 (not the exact day). Benjamin Chaney bought the Great Dane puppy and then moved to Simon's Town so as to run the USI (United Services Institute). Sailors from the Royal Navy would often visit the USI and quickly took to the dog offering him treats, taking him for walks and giving him plenty of attention.

The Great Dane believed that every matelot was his friend and treated them as such. He began following the matelots around wherever they went whether it be the naval base, dockyards or even ships. The dog loved to lie on the deck just at the top of the gangplank, often getting in the way. That is how he got the name **Just Nuisance**. **Just Nuisance** also became quickly known on South Africa's train system as he would join the sailors as they travelled to various destinations. Several times he was dropped off at a station on discovery, but the clever dog he was, **Just Nuisance** would simply wait for the next train to come along. Eventually they threatened to have him put down, however a vast number of sailors strongly objected to this.

To solve this problem **Just Nuisance** the Great Dane was enlisted into the Royal Navy on 25 August 1939. He was registered with the Christian name of "Just", his trade was "Bone Crusher" and the Religious Denomination assigned to him was "Scrounger". As a full fledged member of the Navy **Just Nuisance** received the same benefits including a sailor's bed and seaman's hat. Later on he received a promotion from "Ordinary Seaman" to "Able Seaman". **Just Nuisance** did much good for the morale of the Royal Navy seamen as well as stopping fights between men and assisting drunk sailors back to the base.

Sadly Just Nuisance was involved in a motor accident which resulted in a thrombosis causing paralysis. He was therefore discharged from the Royal Navy on 1 January 1944. On 1 April 1944 Just Nuisance was taken to the Simon's Town Naval Hospital where he was put down. He was laid to rest at Klaver Camp with the full military honors with a firing party from the Royal Marines and a Bugler.

We decided on a light lunch. The main road of Simon's Town has quite a few delightful shops. There are art galleries, antique shops and a 'one stop convenience shop'. It's easy to stock up with all your basics – the one shop even sells coffee plungers and Illy coffee! The bakeries and deli's are not to be ignored. Fresh breads, cakes, light lunches, decorative houseware ...

We bought a fresh baguette, some tinned Wildebeest pate (it was really tasty and although a bit pricey, well worth it. Other flavours are crocodile, kudu and ostrich), smoked salmon pate and nougat. Left-over coleslaw and soft drinks completed our 'balcony lunch'. Hein tried the nougat, but was quite disgusted when he discovered it has softened in the heat – after a few hours in the fridge, it tasted like nougat again.

After a short nap, we had a drink on the balcony and watched sunburnt people and irritable children slowly making their way back to the train station. The train arrived a few times during the day – this eliminates the need to drive a car. The Navy girls and boys were all seen hurrying from the train station – neatly dressed. Hein nearly had a fit when some of them carried their bags in their right hand – it was a Navy/Military offence, he said. The right hand is for saluting. We even saw a Navy guy in a wheelchair.



We tried the Harbourview Café for dinner. Also looking out over the harbour (photos above), I had a mussels on white wine & creamy rice and Hein some flavoursome Springbok curry. With coffee, I tried the Banoffee cheesecake. Yes, your eyes haven't deceived you – it's actually spelled like that and I've googled it and found tons of recipes. The name is a mixture of banana and toffee. Chante kindly gave me the recipe and although I've not tried it, it sounded quite easy.



First, a crust of biscuit crumbs mixed with melted margarine/butter. Then a thinnish layer of caramel condensed milk. Then a layer of sliced bananas (dipped into lemon juice). Then apparently you whip cream cheese and fresh cream together for the topping. Put it into the fridge and when you serve, drizzle some toffee sauce on top. It was not too sweet, not too rich (well, not for me anyway).

As you can see on the photo, the cream cheese & cream topping is very white – not off-white. I will make this pie over the weekend and will then give you an update on the precise ingredients and procedures. Hold thumbs!!

I finished my book in bed, while Hein was watching TV.

Waking at 05h30 on Monday morning, we left at 06h30 for the airport to pick up a business associate. The weather was a bit nasty, so I wrapped myself in my Pashmina. Pashmina is a large scarf, usually made of wool or silk. A handy travel tip – folding up small, keep a Pashmina in your hand luggage or handbag. If a bit chilly, wrap it around your legs or arms to ward off most of the cold.

We were a bit early for the plane, so had breakfast there. With the meeting just outside Durbanville, Hein dropped me at the Tygervalley mall. Forcing down a horrible cup of Lipton's Earl Grey tea, I paged through the You and the People magazines, catching up on gossip. After 3 hours, we left again for the airport to drop off the guy. We were already on our way back to Simon's Town, when we had to turn back – he left his car keys in our car. Grrrr.

We had a lovely leisurely afternoon driving back through Muizenberg though.



Trying another restaurant, The Seaforth, we drove there, parked at the back and were told by the manager that in future we should park up front - although we didn't see any signs proclaiming it to be private property.

This restaurant was right on the sea (photo left taken from our table). And in the distance on the rocks, you could see small penguins walking up and down.

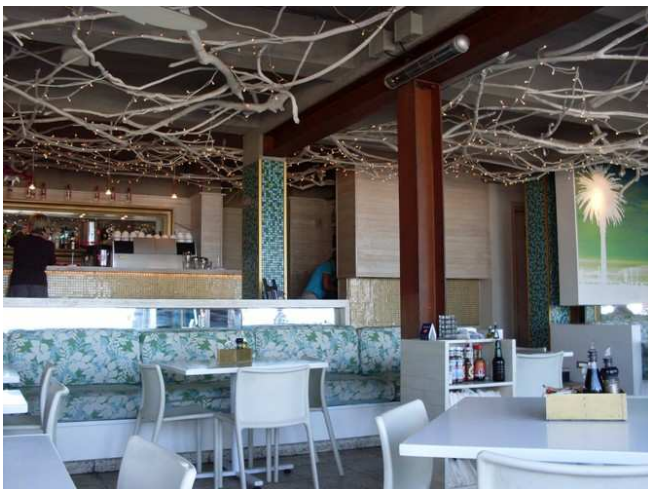
Starters were spring rolls and Portuguese sardines. Now I've had sardines quite a few times before, but these were soft as butter – well, room temperature butter, not fridge butter! Hein had pork belly with veggies, I had linguine pasta with tomatoes, parmesan, spinach & feta. Very

flavourful. Coffee and ice cream with chocolate sauce.

On our way to our car, we saw small penguins walking around. I managed to take a pic of this one. They're quite tame.

Tuesday morning, our last morning! We've decided to have breakfast in Hout Bay. Unfortunately Chapmans Peak was closed, so we had to take a detour. It was chilly, but the drive was beautiful. At one stage, I really didn't know where we were or where we were going.

Arriving at Hout Bay, the restaurant on top of Snoekies, The Wharfside Grill, had a bright fluorescent sign stating they're open. However, when we walked inside, the manager informed us they were closed for breakfast. Some hoo-ha and the other – I walked to the bathrooms and stomped off to where Hein was waiting in the car.



Driving back towards Clifton, we stopped at Camps Bay. With a huge Illy coffee sign, we decided on the Sandbar for breakfast. What a charming little place. The most divine ceiling décor (white painted

branches) and the weather was perfect – no wind, not chilly at all.

Hein had the usual English breakfast option. I had a fresh ciabatta with spinach, tomato salsa and poached egg. And heavenly Americano coffees!!!

We stopped next to the sea and watched an elderly lady on a bench, basking her face in the sun while chatting to a neatly dressed gentleman.

Sadly we waved goodbye to the ocean and headed to the airport. By changing our minds from self-catering to b&b, we spent an amazing weekend amidst the hustle and buzz of a quaint seaside town.