

## Fishing Weekend in Pietermaritzburg 23 to 26 September 2010

... though we ended up not even fishing at all.

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### Thursday, 23 September 2010

Hauling out the crates from the Wendy house, I started to pack for our fishing weekend. Although it was mostly picnic things and clothes, I decided to skip my Tai Chi class and concentrate on remembering all the bits and pieces.

Hein had a meeting, but we managed to leave home around 11h30. A few kilometers from home, we realised we forgot the GPS. At the Beyers Naude McDonalds we pulled in for diesel and lunch. I had a chicken foldover (yummy!!!), Hein had 2 Cheese Burgers, chips and a flat Coke. Tsk, tsk, I should have remembered to buy him a bottle Coke instead.

The N3 was quite busy, until we realised the schools closed for the short holiday. At Moirivier, we turned off to the Kamberg valley, to visit friends.

Years ago, we had a lovely holiday at a beautiful thatched house in the mountains. Secluded, no TV, no cellphone reception. Attie and Evol (love spelled in reverse) stayed close by and we had a few beers. Just a few months ago, they moved into their newly built bigger house, so we thought to stop for a cuppa. It was 5pm when we arrived in the Kamberg Valley.



The fields and mountains were a bit green (top left), although they haven't had any rains yet. We saw these lovely little flowers next to the road (top centre). Evol showed me the house; we had some cold drinks and fruitcake. (I made this fruitcake with Archers Peach Schnapps and undiluted Oros.)

At 6pm, we said goodbye and drove to Pietermaritzburg in fast-approaching darkness. The moon was a big yellow ball (top right). Some of the smaller roads were a bit scary when you encounter trucks, but we arrived safely at Hein's parents around 7h30pm. After quickly unpacking the car, I unpacked our clothes and we had pasta and mince for dinner while catching up on family news.

### Friday, 24 September 2010

After a good night's sleep, Hein and I woke up late – well, we thought it was, until we checked the time. 6 am. Brushed our teeth, splashed our faces and started the coffee machine. Hein took our Golf for a much-needed wash.

Looking out to the garden, it was sad to see it in such a sorry state. The grass was yellow and brittle, some of the trees have died and others are clinging on for dear life.

The bougainvillea and tree orchids were thriving though.



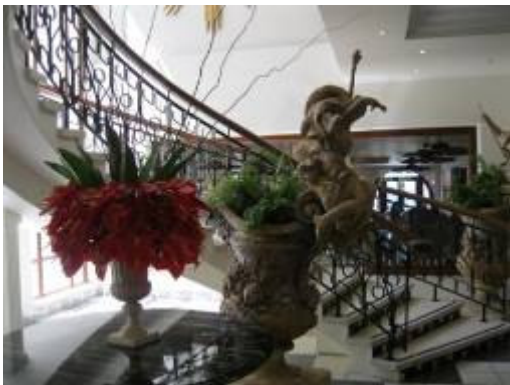
When we are in Pietermaritzburg, we usually try to have breakfast or lunch next to the ocean. One of our favourite spots is The Oyster Box Hotel, Umhlanga. Although we didn't visit for a while, because they had renovated the whole hotel.

Earlier in the week I phoned them to book for breakfast. Their buffet breakfast is R195 per person. When I enquired about a la carte lunch on the terrace, they suggested their Curry Buffet, also R195 per person. And flash bulbs exploded in my head ... just a few days ago I read a review by Brian Berkman, a well-known Cape Town restaurant critic. Commenting on his review, he urged me to try the Curry Buffet ... so I booked a table for 4 on Heritage Day.



Arriving at Umhlanga just before 12, we approached The Oyster Box Hotel ([www.oysterboxhotel.com](http://www.oysterboxhotel.com)) and were greeted by this friendly gentleman. And then we stepped inside ...

Wow! I would describe it as Colonial décor. Big chairs, gilded mirrors, bowls of fresh apples (top right), impressive chandeliers (bottom centre); Anthurium flower arrangements (bottom left) and a couch for 6 people (bottom right).



(Right) This is part of the floor – and also the glass ceiling of the wine cellar and private dinner room below.



The interesting fact is that, although the décor is opulent and grand, the atmosphere is very relaxed.

Residents are dressed in shorts and minis, children are having lunch with their parents and on the terrace

(left), the resident cat is strolling amongst the tables, hoping for some tidbits. The wind was blowing, so we moved to an inside table.





White-painted chairs and benches with green and blue furnishings, exquisite ceiling tiles paired with a brass chandelier and paper 'tablecloths' completed the décor. Understated, ocean chic.



The Curry Buffet. Oh wow!!! On the left were bowls with: Chicken & Shrimp Curry, Fish Curry, Butter Chicken, Lamb Vindaloo (not hot at all) and Basmati Rice. In the Centre were Butter Naan and Garlic Naan Breads and Poppadums. Also small bowls filled with coconut shavings, peanuts, chutney, mint yoghurt, peanuts, etc. On the right were bowls of: Flavoured Rice, Vegetable Korma, Cauliflower Curry, Lentil Curry and Biryani.

Where to start ... at the table, we had more bread and 2 sets of cutlery next to our plates. As soon as you've finished with one plate, they remove it. When all your cutlery is gone, they just bring you new ones. I had tiny portions of each dish. Everything was heaven! Most of the curries were mild, but the flavours ... worth the experience!

It's actually a very nice dinner party idea. Each couple can bring along a curry dish with some of the condiments. And with dishes like veg curry, lentil curry and cauliflower curry the costs will be minimal.



Tempted by the desserts, I had the Espresso Mousse with Chocolate Meringue and Granadilla Pulp (left). It was ok-ish. My in-laws had Malva Pudding with Ginger and Pineapple (centre). They said it was lovely and just the right size, not too much. Hein had Apple Crumble with Ice Cream, but it was very disappointing. The inside was very dry and filled with cinnamon and only a few slices of apple. I do hope they improve on that recipe.

On paying the bill, the waiter informed us of the Sweets Trolley at the door. Jars filled with all kinds of sweets, eg: sugared almonds, apricots, mints, choc éclairs, etc.

Being Heritage Day – or National Braai Day – we dropped my in-laws at home and decided to buy something for the coals. With the idea of a picnic fishing the next day, we drove to Hein's friends, Vicus (centre), Karen & Luke (left), their son, to finalise our plans for.



With cold beer and drinks on the patio, we watched anxiously as the sky darkened in anticipation of a much-needed rainfall. Listening to old music favourites, the beers stayed cold and in the end Vicus started their Electric Braai and grilled steak and ribs. Karen buttered buns and made a lovely green salad (Vicus is absolutely crazy over salad). Unforeseen boat problems made us cancel our fishing trip the next day. On our way home, tiny drops of rain fell on the windscreen.

### **Saturday, 25 September 2010**

When we woke up after 7, it was wet outside. A light drizzle fed the thirsty ground.



While we watched this little bird having his breakfast, Hein decided to braai sausage on our mini-braai. It literally only needs about 6 briquettes and can easily fit a whole packet of sausage on it. Although the Spar's buns were a day old, we toasted them on the fire and enjoyed them with tomato sauce and mustard.



Always keen for a drive, we explored the Midlands Meander. At Dargle, we found a pizzeria and had lovely Tiramisu in coffee cups (top left). Onward to Groundcover, a leather shop, then a browse at the Piggly Wiggly Shop. Bought some lovely Lemon & Lime Honey and Coffee & Ginger Chews. On our way to Karkloof Canopy Tours, we saw these pile of logs and I took some close-ups.

Although our Golf 6 handled well on the dirt roads, her belly is a bit low for 'bundu-bashing', so we decided to head back to Pietermaritzburg.

Without the GPS, we just followed our noses, hoping to arrive back at Howick. Stopping at a local, he informed us that we were on our way to Greytown, not Howick. Oops – better make sure that the GPS is on my checklist next time! U-turn, dirt road and finally we arrived in Howick. My poor car ... dirt was packed on the boot and her tyres were nearly white with dust.

At the Red Fox, Howick, we decided to have a light snack.

For dinner, Hein had a whole chicken in the Weber, he had corn on the cob on the coals and his mom made pumpkin and beans. I made a quick and easy Corn Bread. And forgot to take a photo.

### **Corn Bread**

500g self raising flour  
1 x 410g tin evaporated milk  
1 x 410g tin sweetcorn  
2 tsp salt

*Preheat oven to 180 oC. Sieve the self raising flour and salt. Add the evaporated milk and sweetcorn, mix thoroughly, spoon into greased bread pan and bake for ± 60 min.*

### **Sunday, 26 September 2010**

Woke very late, had a look on the clock and was surprised to find the time 6h00. So much for a lie-in.

After nice strong coffee outside on the patio, I started to pack and had a shower. Deciding to have breakfast on the road, we left Pietermaritzburg at 07h30.

Rawdons Country Hotel & Fly Fishing Estate ([www.rawdons.co.za](http://www.rawdons.co.za)) was our choice for breakfast.



A beautiful thatched hotel in the Midlands Meander. In the dining room, they have a selection of cereals, yoghurts, stewed dried fruit, muffins, croissants, cheeses, cold meats, juice, coffee and tea. I had this 'cake bread' (top centre) with cumin cheese and preserved green figs. And a few bites of this delightful coconut jam slice.



Hein had smoked Haddock, poached eggs with cheese sauce and I had an omelette with mushrooms, ham and cheese. Speculating about the bill, I guessed the breakfast to be R180/person. To our shocked surprise, we only paid R150 – for both of us! Worth a visit.

Although the road was quite busy back to Gauteng, we arrived back home around 2pm.

With the car and crates unpacked, we flopped down on the couch and relaxed.