

Eggs-citing, Eggs-traordinary Eggs-cursion April 2011

Yip, we went away for Easter – and I gorged on chocolates and chocolates. Eggs-tremely naughty but oh so yum!

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On 19 April I turned 45 – and on 20 April Hein turned 45. Celebrating at a farm close-by (it's a coffee shop/restaurant (www.lemonrosefarm.co.za) with a farm feel – chickens and chicks run around your legs, bunnies hop around, a pony, an ostrich and a pig – peaceful, quiet, child-friendly and fun, we started off our birthday week with a bang!

This year we asked everyone not to bring us any personal gifts – but instead to buy something small (knee blanket, chocolates, socks, scarves, flower) for an old age home close to us. The response was overwhelming and the matron hugged me when I delivered all these precious goodies for her sick patients. *I think it's an amazing way to contribute to charity.*

At the beginning of April, we decided to book somewhere for the Easter weekend. I started to phone around, but most places were already fully booked. I really liked the one place – Hanlin Lodge, outside Nylstroom (Modimolle), but they were full. They had chalets right on a dam.

Searching in 4 Provinces was tiring, so I gave it up for a while. When I checked my email, I was thrilled to hear that Hanlin Lodge indeed had an opening for us! I was on my way to respond to the mail, when I decided to phone instead. Retha said that instead of the honeymoon chalet, she now also had a 2 bedroom chalet open. For the same price of R280/pp/night – I immediately said yes.



On Tuesday 19 April, I decided not to go to gym and received phone calls, emails, facebook messages and sms's all morning. We made no plans to go out for dinner. But at 6pm, Hein said he wanted a steak. I phoned one of our absolute favourite dining

spots, Thomas Maxwell (www.thomasmxwell.co.za) in Benmore Gardens. It's a French Bistro with the most divine food, amazing ambience and is truly a buzzing spot for adults. Hein's steak was sooo good, he swooned over it. And instead of mints when you get the bill, they bring you cupcakes. Hmmm.

Wednesday night we dined out with one of Hein's work colleagues, Cheryl – she's moving to Spain for work with her hubby. We went to Kong Roast (no website) in the Buzz Centre, Fourways. Canapés of delightful Samoosas, spring rolls, rice paper wraps and dipping sauces were plentiful. A Mojito or Strawberry Daiquiri welcome drink were available. For our group, they have set up a buffet table – yummmmy noodles, rice, seafood curry, chicken green curry & beef satay curry. Hmmm – we ate with chopsticks and it was delicious. Fruit kebabs and a cheese platter were presented with coffee, tea or cappuccino's. It was a lovely evening and also a nice way to celebrate Hein's birthday – we only went to bed after 12.

Thursday, 21 April 2011

After the 2 cat-kids woke us by chasing each other over the bed, Hein made coffee and we realised it was after 8. I slowly started to pack our clothes, our coffee machine and kitchen stuff and we left the house by 10h30. (hmm, to pack slowly is maybe not such a good idea for me –

you'll see why later) Hein drove to a station for fuel, I had more coffee and by 11am we were on our way. The previous day I've bought some yummys at Woolworths - mini curry mince vetkoek, spinach & feta potato bites & beef kebabs – driving out of Joburg we munched our way through that.

The highway was open and just after 1pm we arrived at Hanlin lodge – skidding through the red



mud. Trying to phone Ansie, the manageress, we realised there's absolutely no cell reception. Although we were an hour early, we looked around and found the chalet was ready.



There are only 4 chalets, housing 20 people. The lodge caters for weddings & functions up to 150 people and has its own small chapel.

Oh my gosh!!!! The chalet has 3 levels – the main level has an open-plan lounge-dining room-kitchen. Beautiful furniture, lovely wooden table & chairs, no TV and no cellphone reception. The kitchen has a convection microwave, a 2 plate stove, kettle, toaster, fridge and the normal pots, pans & utensils.

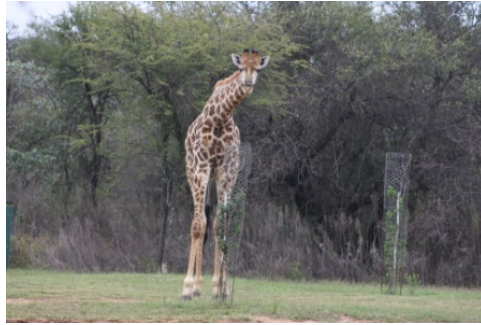
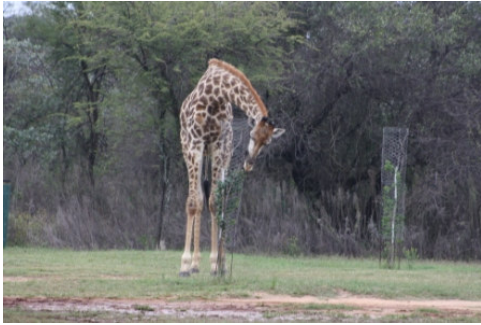


Downstairs is a bedroom with 2 single beds, walking out onto the grass. It has an adjacent bathroom with bath, toilet & sink.

Upstairs is the main bedroom with king-size bed, en-suite bathroom with shower, toilet & sink and a small balcony looking out over the trees. From the lounge, you walk onto this lovely balcony with a roof, pub table & seats that's right on the dam. It's just soooo peaceful!!

The braai is on the side of the house, amidst all the muddy grass. I quickly unpacked everything, made some coffee and Hein cracked open a beer.

After munching on left-over 'road trip snacks', we closed the bedroom curtains and snoozed. When I heard a knock on the door, it was 16h30 and then Hein realised I didn't pack the toothpaste! Of all things!!! This must be a first – poor Hein had to drive 30 km to Nylstroom (Modimolle) to buy some. I grabbed his laptop and started to write my review. We also found out the upstairs toilet doesn't flush properly. And the fridge door have trouble to close



While Hein was out, I looked out of the front door and saw a giraffe between the trees. With the camera, I walked down the outside steps and a whole crowd of buck scattered away, amongst them a young one. I sat down and waited patiently. Eventually, the giraffe wandered over to the trees close to the chalet. But when Hein drove in, galloped away very quickly.

Besides the much-needed toothpaste, Hein also bought choc raisins and choc shortbread balls. Oh well, this weekend we'll just indulge and worry about exercise and diets next week.

Armed with Jefferey Deaver's 'The Burning Wire' and me with 2010 magazines found in the lounge, we sat in bed and read. When we got hungry, we heated up some Lamb Biryani (Woolworths), switched off the downstairs' lights and went back to reading in bed.

Earlier Ansie mentioned that she expected people in the next chalet. Hein and I 'worried' a bit, cause the tarmac road is chock-and-block full of potholes – even in daylight a nightmare to drive, at night it must be hell. Eventually we fell asleep and I woke up briefly when the neighbours arrived.

Friday, 22 April 2011

After a lovely night's sleep, we awoke, made coffee and sat on the front patio overlooking the dam. It was quite misty and we saw a crane bird on the opposite side. Spider webs were everywhere and the air was crisp and fresh. Numerous birds were chirping away and our next-



door neighbour tried to fish. The funny thing about these chalets – they're wooden with wooden floors – so sound travel thru the walls and you can hear your neighbours walk around. And hear the kids talk very loudly – and the parents shouting at the kids

Hein lit the braai with left-over wood, cracked open his first beer and I made a tomato relish. It was pure bliss. The neighbours left early so we were all alone – the quiet was priceless! I took off my flip-flops and squelched thru the mud to photograph some spider webs. No other animals were seen.

With the smell of beef & mustard sausages curling thru the air, I was ravenous and ready for breakfast. After the buns were lightly toasted on the grid, we had our breakfast on the patio. Yum!!

I made us some coffee and we went back to bed – to read. I just LOVE magazines – old, new – it doesn't matter. I've found some interesting tidbits and promptly noted them down. Hein read a few pages, and then Ansie walked past to open the other chalets.



Since we nearly booked the Bird's Nest (or honeymoon suite – pic left) I said I'll go with her. I'm so glad I did, cause it wouldn't have suited us. *(If you arrange a wedding, you get the suite free for the night).* It's all open-plan chalet. A small patio overlooking the dam, then you walk into the chalet, the big bed is on your right, left is a chair and mirror. A few steps in is the tiny kitchen and through 'bar doors' is the toilet, a big corner bath overlooking the bushes and an outside shower. Perfect for 1 night, but too small for our self-catering needs.

At the lodge's office I bought 2 bags of wood, had another chat with Ansie and walked back. Paging thru a few magazines, I then closed the curtains and curled up next to Hein. Unfortunately it takes me ages to fall to sleep (unlike Hein who nods off instantly) and when I did eventually sleep, we both woke up by creaking noises and a slamming door. Kids could be heard and we figured our neighbours were back.

It was only after 11 - I made some coffee while we both munched away on the chocolate balls. Sitting outside on the patio, we were amazed how people didn't realise how sound travel in the bushveld. I decided to shower – well, there may be a shower, but the water was gone. We realised that there's no water pressure to the top level – and that's why the toilet also didn't work. Man that makes me mad as a bull! Flippen hell – we don't stay here for free! How on earth can you not know about the pressure problem? How can the previous guests not have complained about it? Or did they and the management just ignore it? I was livid!

Eventually I bathed in 2 cm level water. Washing wasn't easy. But I was clean – sort of. The rest of the day passed quietly – we read our books (Hein was still busy with his Jefferey Deaver – I read Bones to Ashes, Kathy Reichs – very good), had coffee and then Hein spotted this head in the water (right) – a turtle. We had an afternoon nap and just chill.



Early evening Hein started the fire. The little boy next door came running, asking if we had firelighters for them. When his grandpa told him to carry the charcoal from their car to the chalet, he was cradling the bag

and singing 'la la baby, sleep now'. Hein and I giggled. Later they caught a water turtle with a hook and had to release the poor animal.

We sat outside at the braai, I was ready with my camera and eventually some buck were seen, but they fled when I tried to click them. Also the light wasn't that good. The wood was nice and dry and burnt easily.

Steak, sausage & chicken drumsticks were on the menu – I parboiled the chicken, cause some of them were still frozen. Woolworths has these small packets of vegetables, so I microwaved them and we enjoyed our dinner at the dinner table.

When Woolworths started to unpack their Easter goodies, I bought a bunny with a pink fuzzy tail. After dinner, I started to munch on the bunny with some yummy coffee on the side. We read in the lounge but went upstairs when it got a bit chilly. I finished my book long after Hein fell asleep – but didn't realise he woke up later and read his book till 3am.

Saturday, 23 April 2011

Waking up in the bush is just so amazing! I opened the bedroom balcony's doors wide and snoozed on. After a while, we got up, made coffee and sat on the patio. I grabbed the rest of the choc bunny and ate it all. Our other neighbour was trying to fish, but we had a giggle – he would sit for 5 minutes on a spot, and then moved on to the next one. Dude, fishing isn't like that!

Making our 2nd cup of coffee, we decided to have egg burgers for breakfast. Hein fried the eggs and chicken Viennas, I cut the buns, spread tomato relish and grated the cheese. On the patio, we sat munching away – watching the bush and occasional bird.

Hein wanted to finish his book, and then we would go for a drive to Nylstroom. I wanted to see if they have a 2nd hand book dealer or maybe a nice shop – I still need a nice brown handbag.

The cleaning staff was coming in, so I didn't have to worry about dishes, etc. Nylstroom (Modimolle) is about 30 km away from the lodge – but the potholes!!!! Scary. A big Pick 'n Pay, Wimpy, Pep Stores, Checkers and quite a few biltong shops are on the main road. I had a look in the Pep Stores (they sometimes have lovely winter pj's), but didn't see anything there. On my way to the Checkers, I saw this stationery/bookshop and promptly went inside. Quite a nice selection of books – I bought an Afrikaans murder book (Boheem – Chanette Paul) a Robin Cook, an armchair travel book and a 'mammal' guide. Hein and I never know the difference between the different buck species – so now we have no more excuses.

The shops were very busy, so after paying we drove to the Pick 'n Pay. Illy coffee beans, coffee filter and water were on the list. And then we drove back. Halfway Hein stopped for some wood, but they looked very wet. At a curio shop, 'ietsi van als' (something of everything) we had a browse, but nothing grabbed my attention.

Back at the chalet, I realised the chalet wasn't serviced. Hein bought wood from Ansie and she said the staff aren't allowed in when the guests are out. I quickly washed the dishes and then made us some coffee. Homemade rusks were in a tin, so I had those for lunch. Yummy! Left-over sausage on buns with tomato relish was Hein's choice.



I started to read the Chanette Paul book and was soon immersed in the story. Hein went for a walk with the camera and came back just as it started to rain. He saw a few buck, also this baby (left) – no giraffes. Tsk tsk! He did hear 'warthogs' and were a bit apprehensive about them storming him – when he looked around for an escape, he couldn't see any trees to climb.

Late afternoon we started the fire. Talked about business opportunities lurking around the corner for Hein when Ansie

came to say hi. And told us that when all the other chalets complained about the loss of water upstairs, the electrician came out and found something tripped with the heavy rains they had. At least we can shower now.

After 2 bags of wood, the coals were ready for dinner. I bought some 'sticky marinated pork rib burgers' – pieces of deboned pork rib, parcooked. Hein grilled them together with some lamb sausage and we stacked them on buns with tomato relish, mustard and Habanero sauce. It was yummy!!!!!!!

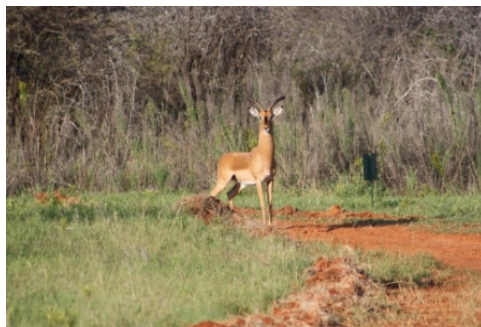
With a full tummy, I sat on the couch with my book. Hein watched some comedy on his laptop and would call me over for some laughs. I bought some 3-in-1 Frisco sachets that morning, but it was horribly weak. Hein made me some real coffee, decaf for him and we had some French nougat. Then off to bed.



Sunday, 24 April 2011

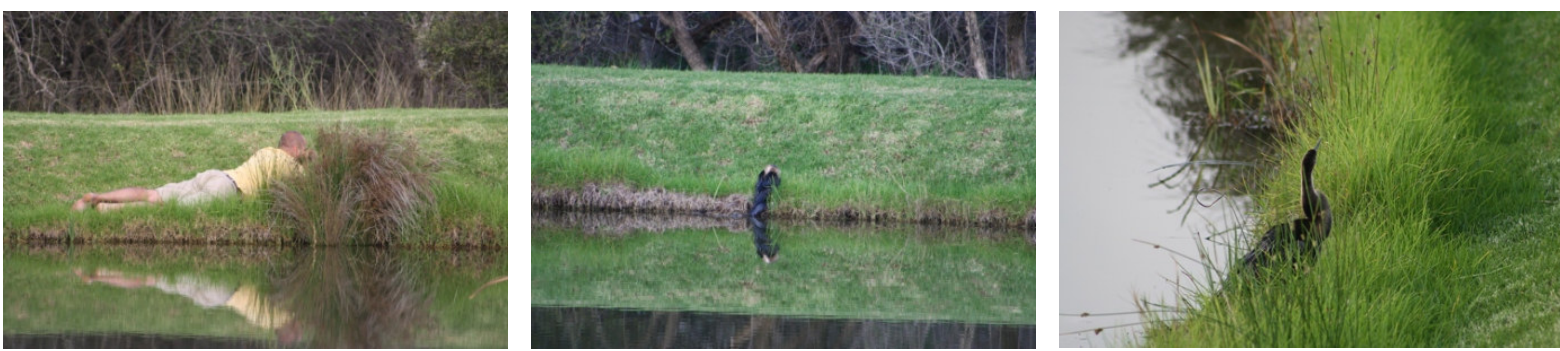
I woke up, opened the balcony doors and we snoozed for another hour. Making coffee, we decided to sit on the balcony for a change – and wow – what a difference that was. All natural bushes and trees – no people, no man-made dam – just nature. Aaaaaaaaaahhh!!!! If only some buck or giraffes would have walked by It was so nice, we decided on another cuppa.

After Weetbix for breakfast, we decided to go for a walk - we only saw buck – no giraffes. Hein took some amazing photos though.



For lunch we decided to braai deboned chicken and sausages. Once again, I sat ready with my camera, but no animals came close. Later the afternoon, Hein went for another walk. At one stage, a buck rounded the bend, saw Hein and stopped dead in his tracks. Then took flight.

While reading on the patio, we saw our 'fisherman' suddenly crouch down and crawl closer to some object – we were very curious. Hein tried to make out what it was – walked closer and then we saw it – just a duck.



With our noses in our books and the neighbours quiet, we enjoyed the afternoon outside. When the hunger pangs started up later, I decided to make soup. I cut up the left-over chicken & sausages, cut the mini broccoli, corn & mangetout in smaller pieces. Fried onion, then added the chicken, sausage & vegetables. Added Provencal rub, boiling water & a sachet of tomato paste. After the soup simmered for a long time, I made cheese sandwiches and boy oh boy! That soup was absolutely delicious!!!!!! With full tummies, we read in bed till late.

Monday, 25 April 2011

Woke up early, opened the balcony door, made coffee and packed up. Hein took a last photo of the dam, packed up the bags and at 7am we closed the chalet door and drove off.

On our way to the gate, we saw lots of buck – it does appear that they're not so scared of slow vehicles.

At a 1-stop, we had breakfast in a Wimpy and by 10am we were back home.

What a wonderfully relaxed weekend – superb accommodation, beautiful views

