

Nine of Cups – 45' Liberty Cutter – 7' draft – December 2006  
Subject area: **Cape Town, South Africa**

After a 34-day South Atlantic crossing from Piriapolis, Uruguay including a 2-day stopover at Tristan da Cunha, we arrived in Cape Town's Table Bay early on 21 December, a sunny, calm morning after a tumultuous previous 18-hours. The Twelve Apostles appeared from 30 miles or more out and as we swung into Table Bay, Table Mountain appeared in all its morning splendor. It was indeed breathtaking!

We hailed Port Control and then the Royal Cape Yacht Club (RCYC). Port Control was quick to answer with a pleasant morning hello, but the RCYC never did answer our hail though we tried several different channels. In the end, Port Control telephoned them and told them we were heading in. In retrospect, it wasn't necessary as it seems yachts come and go there, morning and night, and just pull into any available slip. The RCYC is a pleasant, secure yacht club/marina with lots of amenities including free (albeit very, very slow) internet in the club office (no WiFi yet), a chandlery on site and a very active membership.

We might add here that the view of Table Mountain from the yacht club, with and without the "table cloth" (the local name for the cloud cover that forms on the mountain), is stupendous. The other item of note is that the wind whistles...make that howls...through the yacht club at 40, 50, 60+ knots on a fairly regular basis. Known as the "Cape Doctor" (it blows away all that's bad in the air), this summertime southeasterly blow is relentless and keeps you hopping for fear of line chafing, topsides rubbing against the pontoons and runaway laundry. Never have we had such heeling while in a marina! Winter time brings similar strength winds, we're told, but from the north/northwest.

We had planned to move to Simon's Town, but they were full and besides we enjoyed the "in-city" convenience of Cape Town and ended up staying at RCYC for our two month stay. The downtown area is walking distance from the yacht club although many warned that it was not advisable to walk alone or at night. We had no problems during the day, but violent crime is a fact in Cape Town so we were always wary. We took taxis in the evenings and finally ended up renting a car. Car rentals are reasonably priced and easy; several car companies deliver and pick up at the yacht club which has secure parking. We did all the in-city touristy things on foot then used the car for errands and out of town attractions such as the Cape Point Nature Reserve (lots of baboons and outstanding scenery), Boulders Beach (swim with the African penguins) and tasting our way through the Winelands (need we say more?).

With "Cups" secure at the yacht club and cruiser friends to look after Jelly, the sea cat, we took a two week car trip along the famed Garden Route to Cape Agulhas (where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans officially meet), into the central Karoo area (read that hot and lots of ostriches) and then into the Eastern Cape to visit Addo Elephant National Park. We took in lots of other smaller national parks along the way and, without dedicating pages to the topic, we can only say that we enjoyed each and every one of them. The diversity and sheer abundance of animal life and flora was overwhelming.

Once back in Cape Town, we had the travel bug, but didn't have time for Kruger or parks further east in the Zulu-Natal area. Upon the advice of a South African friend, we opted to travel into Namibia by car to Etosha National Park. It was low season for tourists, so we rarely had to compete for animal viewing time with anyone. We saw hundreds and hundreds of animals...lion, elephant, giraffe, cape buffalo, all the boks (antelope-type critters), zebra. We drove to the Skeleton Coast (graveyard for hundreds of ships) and spent time in Swakopmund, but preferred the small town atmosphere of Walvis Bay. We visited the small yacht club there and received a hearty welcome and invitation to sail there. Maybe next trip?

From Walvis, we traveled across the Namib Desert (oldest desert in the world) to Sossuvlei (highest sand dunes in the world) and reluctantly headed back to South Africa. Five thousand kilometers in two weeks...a bit faster than Nine of Cups even on our best days!

We had previously thought to stay longer in South Africa, but ongoing business and personal issues in the U.S. required attention. Though nothing goes to wind like a 747, we're told, we opted to sail Cups home for the northern hemisphere's summer making a second crossing of the Atlantic in one year. We left with regret after only two months with a promise to return. We could, and many have, spent a year or more exploring this rich, diverse country and its neighbors. We shall return!

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