

From wild animal & slightly-scary Africa to... Sydney? That's what Cape Town feels like



All those photos of wild animals and a bit of a nervous feeling later on when in Johannesburg, where a shortage of barbed wire might spark panic... that's all behind us as we wind down this trip and head for home in just a couple of days. And for all the world it seems like we're heading home from Sydney Australia 'cuz that's exactly what Cape Town feels like, only thankfully Cape Town is a whole lot less expensive. But without the stories of relocations of, by their descriptions, Blacks, Coloreds and Indians, you wouldn't be in any way challenged in your thinking.

Despite the legal elimination of Apartheid, economic segregation accomplishes very similar things. The well-off, primarily white skinned people, are served by, as we'd say in the US, people of color. Things are obviously better off than before; upward mobility is no longer illegal. But it's a bit frightening in Johannesburg and areas nearby, to see nearly every "nice" house surrounded not just by barbed-wire fences, but electrified as well. Cape Town has none of that; it's almost as if you're in a different country. The "wharf" area we're staying in is a dead-ringer for San Francisco's Pier 39 (but fortunately, less expensive). You only get exposed to the rest of the story when on a group tour, because your tour guide is frequently not white and has some interesting stories to tell.

Having seen quite a bit of South Africa while on the train from Johannesburg to Cape Town, I can tell you it's very much like the US in terms of terrain and weather. It's hard to believe this place isn't totally rocking, but obviously it hasn't figured out how to deal with massive differences in living standards and the scary fact that the haves & have nots remain largely determined by the color of their skin.

And that brings up something that was bothering me greatly at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg (an absolute must-see). Can we be proud and even prideful of our own culture without being prisoners of our own skin color? I don't know. --Mike--