

## 2011 MADAGASCAR TO MOZAMBIQUE

Saturday, Jan 29, 2011. I am leaving Atlanta's cold weather behind!

Martha was waiting for me at the airport and we boarded the plane for Johannesburg. Wonder of wonders we have flat beds for the almost 15-hour non-stop flight! It is also somewhat high-tech but I'll figure it out I am sure. The one bad feature is that you are in a sort of cubicle so talking with your neighbor is a bit difficult. Unlike first class on Qantas and British Air they do not supply pajamas and no sheet is forthcoming, but I shall manage quite well. After dinner I laid my seat flat for sleeping. It is narrow but ever so much better than the usual business class.

Sunday, January 30. I woke at 4:30 AM Atlanta time and started this journal. Then I watched 'The Bucket List' on the seat TV. I had seen it a long time ago but enjoyed the reprise. The TV screen is about twice what the old screens were. They kept the cabin lights dim so I was able to do some more sleeping and we finally got to Jo'burg about 6. A man was waiting for us and we were taken by Mercedes to the Piermont Metcourt Hotel.

There is a whole complex of hotels, convention center and casino under the Piermont umbrella. The Metcourt seems to be the discount hotel. Our room is perhaps 10 X 10 with 10 foot ceiling. It is cozy but adequate for the short time we will be here. I do not understand however why they did the bathroom the way they did. To save money, I suppose, there is not a wall between the bedroom and bathroom, just a curtain. This means you cannot leave a light on in the bathroom. Then to further save money there is one door that serves to close off the commode as well as the shower. It works on a sort of pivot.

We set out to explore and were told there were lots of restaurants in the building across the street. And so there were but we must have walked a half mile through the huge convention complex (all deserted) and finally through the huge casino where there were plenty of people throwing their money away, to find the restaurant court.

We opted for the Tribes African restaurant and were ushered into an atmospheric room with bamboo walls reminding one of a safari compound. African drums and other artifacts added to the décor. I ordered lamb chops, Martha had impala. We had no idea of the cost at the time since we have not changed any money but later learned the rate is about 7 rand to the dollar. Our meal cost \$46.66 according to the charge to my credit card.

We found a shorter way back to the hotel avoiding the casino. I lay down on the bed and immediately went to sleep. However I am happy I managed to stay up until 9. There is a seven-hour time change from Atlanta.

Monday, January 31. At 3 AM we were both awake and played on our computers for a time. We left the hotel at 8 for the 3-hour flight to Antananarivo, or Tana as it is more commonly called, the capitol of Madagascar.

Tana doesn't seem to have changed a bit since I was here 10 years ago with Betty Baxter. The main highway from the airport is jammed with cars and hand-pulled carts and bullock-drawn carts and many people walking. The view is full of small shops and rice paddies. There was a coup a couple of years ago but the new government has not done a thing to improve the lives of the people. In fact President Marc Ravalomanana's election has not been recognized.

We were taken to the fancy Carlton Hotel, with marble everywhere. I am still struggling to get onto African time. I sleep like a log at night and then can sleep all day as well given the chance. After napping the afternoon away, Martha and I got dressed and went down to meet the group. They all seem very nice. We ate with Julian and Lois Brodsky, from Cherry Hill, NJ, Anne Davis from San Francisco, and Claire Bateman from Northampton, MA.

Tuesday, February 1. We are still traveling! We were taken to the airport for the 20-minute flight to Taomasina or Tamatave as the English called it. It is on the east coast of Madagascar.

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There was a lot of time to kill before we could board the Corinthian 11. They gave us a city tour. Madagascar is 1000 miles long. We learn that there are 18 tribes in Madagascar. There is very little inter-marriage between them. However, they all consider themselves Malagasy and speak one common language.

Toamasina<sup>1</sup> is one of Madagascar's largest ports from which they export the spices (cloves and vanilla among others) grown on the island. That and the fishing industry make it a prosperous town. The spacious harbor is protected by a coral reef.

The main transportation seems to be in pedicabs, called pushy pushy because they sometimes need help pushing uphill.

The first stop was the Catholic Cathedral with its blue and white décor and festooned like a maypole with ribbons. The church is about 60 years old. The next stop was the railway station but it was very hot and humid and I stayed in the van. Ditto with the canning factory and the plastic bag plant. From the comments no one seemed to feel they were worth the effort. We just want to get to the ship but it isn't ready for us.

Finally we were taken to a restaurant for lunch. It was open-air but reasonably cool in the shade. A large buffet lunch was served. I tried the goose, which was very good. However, my chocolate éclair was awful. In fact I believe it is why I had to take Cipro<sup>2</sup> for the next two days. A lot of people were sick after that lunch.

It was so wonderful to finally reach the lovely air-conditioned Corinthian 2. John Frick, the cruise director was there to greet us. He was on the Corinthian 2 when we went to Libya. We unpacked and then went to hear John give his embarkation talk. There is a choice of excursions tomorrow. One is all day, very strenuous, with hours of bad roads to travel. The other is only 3/4 of an hour away, and only half bad roads to visit Ivoloïna. I opted for the shorter excursion. Martha will bring me back pictures of the other to the Pangalanes Channel<sup>3</sup>, created by the French to provide an inland waterway.

Before dinner Hillary Bradt gave an introduction to Madagascar, with slides.

Dinner was followed by a troupe of native dancers. The leader had made his instruments and the costuming was colorful. Most of the cast was his family. Hit of the show was his two-year old granddaughter who appeared in costume in one of the dances.

Wednesday, February 2. Martha's tour left early. I enjoyed a more leisurely breakfast and left at 8 for Ivoloïna<sup>4</sup>. Started as a botanical park, it was nearly destroyed by a cyclone in 1986. With help from Duke University's Primate Center, it reopened in 1990 as a zoological park and conservation center. Its purpose is to stimulate interest and awareness of conservation and also to breed some of the endangered species of Madagascar fauna.

In one area they were breeding reticulated tortoises<sup>5</sup>. There were a number of caged lemurs. The first exhibit was the bamboo or gentle lemurs<sup>6</sup>. We also saw the blue-eyed lemur<sup>7</sup>, the only blue-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toamasina>

<sup>2</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciprofloxacin>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.travelmadagascar.org/CITIES/Pangalanes-Canal.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.savethelémur.org/ivoloïna-main.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tortoise>

<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamboo\\_lemur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamboo_lemur)

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eyed primate in the world except for human beings. At the Aye-Aye<sup>8</sup> cage, the occupant was sleeping (being nocturnal) and we could not see him. There were also black and white ruffed lemurs<sup>9</sup>. However there were none of my favorite Sifaka lemurs<sup>10</sup>.

Much as I dislike seeing animals in cages, at least this was a way to see a number of varieties close-up. These caged animals are all rescue animals for one reason or another. It would be almost impossible to turn them back into the wild. A few of the lemurs are being bred to help preserve the species.

Loose in the park were some other lemurs. Some had been pets and the owners turned them loose when they tired of them. The park cares for them as well.

We saw one caged hawk that has a memorable sex life. According to Hilary his penis is the size of a golf ball. There was also an enclosure where some of the colorful tiger chameleons could be seen. Madagascar has more varieties of chameleons than anyplace else on earth.

It had become very hot and humid so I did not join the group that walked around the lake. Instead Pat Colagiuri and Ann Davis and I went to the refreshment area and enjoyed cokes in a shaded area. Pat's son, Matt, a photographer, took the walk and said it was not very interesting. While we waited two geckos entertained us with a standoff. They looked a bit like two cats arching themselves. Their color turned from red to yellow as well.

Then we were loaded back into the vans for the bumpy ride back to the ship. I did not take the afternoon excursion. Instead I had a massage. It wasn't the best I have ever had due mostly to the fact that the table was so narrow my arms had no place to go except dangle and I did not like this sensation.

I also realized I had not seen my I-phone since Antananarivo and searched every nook and cranny in the cabin with no success. Martha also could not find it. She went on line and at least we got the service turned off. John also called the hotel so perhaps it will turn up later but I rather doubt it.

We went to dinner and were seated with Claire, Matt and his mother, Pat and a strange little man who when asked his name said I could call him "cute". His real name is Harold "Harry" Thau. I suspect he is senile for he added absolutely nothing to the conversation. He is someone to avoid in the future.

Martha had promised no folderol over my birthday but all of a sudden in trouped the staff singing and bearing a cake with a giant firework on top of it. It could not have been more conspicuous if it tried. Martha denied any part of it and then John explained that knew everyone's birthday for he had our passports. The cake was chocolate, the ice cream was pistachio so I gave in and enjoyed it.

Thursday, February 3. During the night we sailed from Taomasina and in the morning were anchored off of Ile Saint-Marie or Nosy Boraha<sup>11</sup>. This island is the second largest in

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.google.com/images?oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&q=blue+eyed+lemur&um=1&ie=UTF-8&source=univ&sa=X&ei=zCJ6TeKXBJs00QH33pTXAw&ved=0CEMQsAQ&biw=1065&bih=934>

<sup>8</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aye-aye>

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruffed\\_lemur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruffed_lemur)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.google.com/images?q=sifaka+lemur&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1&ie=UTF-8&source=univ&sa=X&ei=1SN6TYO7LZCP0QGD7u3ZAw&ved=0CEIQsAQ&biw=1065&bih=934>

<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%8Ele\\_Sainte-Marie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%8Ele_Sainte-Marie)

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Madagascar and its main industries are tourism and fishing. The tourists come mainly from France and other European countries with Americans bringing up the rear.

Before we went ashore John gave a comprehensive talk on how to behave in a zodiac.

We landed on the beach at the Princesse Bora Lodge<sup>12</sup> and were led to the waiting vehicles. We were lucky and were assigned a modern van. I was glad we were not in the pickup with a roof over the truck bed. Fano was our guide.

Fano tells us that half the population still practice their animist religion and 40% are Christian and 10 % Muslim. These are different statistics from what was told us before. Most of the Muslims live in the northern part of Madagascar. The island was once the center for pirates in the Indian Ocean.

We drove to the Christian church in Madagascar at Baie des Forbans. It was given to the island by Princess Eugenie of France in 1838 and is the oldest church in Madagascar. It was modestly decorated inside with wooden carvings for the Stations of the Cross about the walls. Many floral offerings were around the altar.

Behind the church was an old and somewhat overgrown cemetery. Captain William Kidd and other pirates are buried here although they did not point out the graves. Every seven years the bones are dug up and rewrapped in a service called Famadihana or turning the bones<sup>13</sup>. It is a festive time for the descendants..

We drove along the coast pausing to watch a fishing operation where a dozen or more people were in the water with leafy branches in their hands to guide the fish into the huge circular net they were holding.

We were taken to see the clove oil factory. The cloves are distilled to extract the oil. The oil is worth about \$12 and kilo. Two men can make about \$30 a day doing this. The oil is an essential oil and sold for use in homeopathic remedies.

At last we were taken to the main town on the island and given a half hour to walk and shop. Aside from tourist goods there were stalls selling clothing, and household goods. It was very hot and I was happy to get back to the van. Martha bought a lovely metal candlestick shaped like a baobab tree.

Back at the resort we were served a delicious lunch of fish kebabs with assorted salads: real hearts of palm, fruit and pasta salads. Desert was fresh fruit and Martha and I split a banana and pineapple. We also drank a liter or more of water to replace the fluid lost in the heat!

Martha stayed to snorkel but I caught the first zodiac back to the ship. I showered and washed my hair before taking a much-needed nap.

Tonight we had the Captain's dinner and got to meet Captain Adam Boczek who introduced his staff. I sat next to Harriet McGuire during cocktails. She is very interesting since her husband was in the diplomatic corps. At one time he was ambassador to Mozambique.

At dinner we shared a table with Clare and Sarah, two English ladies. Claire Bateman and Madeleine Irell. Sarah once had donkeys and she and Martha had a spirited conversation.

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQZ\\_XuCbKhs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQZ_XuCbKhs)

<sup>13</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Famadihana>

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Friday, February 4. The ship moved a short distance to Ile aux Nattes. This small island has no wheeled vehicles. Snorkeling was offered. However, I woke up hoarse and after looking at the tropical showers decided not to go ashore and had a leisurely morning reading.

After lunch we sailed for Fort Dauphin. The wind was really honking and Corinthian 2 only has a draft of 12 feet and a lot of super structure. Thus despite the bow thrusters she rocks and rolls in any kind of sea and wind. A lot of people disappeared into their cabins for the day and a half trip to Fort Dauphin. The ship was so unstable I needed a helping hand just to cross the lobby and in the lounge fell into the first chair I came to.

Christopher Raxworthy,<sup>14</sup> herpetologist and Curator of the reptile wing of the American Museum of Natural History, gave an entertaining lecture on his research in Madagascar. Before dinner Hilary Bradt<sup>15</sup> talked about the wildlife of Madagascar.

Saturday, February 5. We made it down for breakfast and then went to hear Lynnath Beckley<sup>16</sup> talk about the fishes of Madagascar. Apparently there is a current that cuts through Indonesia so many of the Pacific Ocean fishes can be found here. Lynnath is an Associate Professor in Marine Science at Murdoch University, Perth Australia.

I made the mistake of lying down for a short nap and didn't wake up for three hours so I missed Christopher's second lecture and almost lunch itself. The restaurant was very sparsely populated but Ariel and his staff managed to escort me to a table and fill a plate from the buffet. Martha skipped lunch but I shared the table with Rusty and Ian both of whom wanted to talk about seasick remedies. I am so lucky I don't get seasick<sup>17</sup>.

After lunch I took another nap but did wake up in time to hear Hilary's talk on Madagascar customs. She spoke about burial customs or Famadihana. The family tomb is decorated to show events in a man's life, or perhaps his profession. After six or 7 years, after the body has desiccated, they have a celebration called turning the bones. The body is unwrapped and rewrapped in fresh linens. It is told of events that have happened in the family and sometimes even paraded through the village to show off improvements. Hillary has been to a couple of these ceremonies and say they are happy affairs and accompanied but a feast where a Zebu<sup>18</sup> (the local cattle) is cooked.

John then talked about the next two days. There is one strenuous option and then a less strenuous one and guests can take either or both. We signed up for the strenuous one but after reading about how hot it will be and the complete lack of bathrooms, to say nothing of the 2 hours of bad roads each way I had second thoughts and decided not to go.

Before dinner Lynnath and Saskia gave an interesting spice talk. They passed around various spices. Vanilla was introduced in 1841. It is quite a long process to turn the vines into vanilla, which is why vanilla is relatively expensive. Then they discussed cloves and peppers and peppercorns in particular. Nutmeg is another Madagascar spice with mace also being derived from the shell. Cinnamon, turmeric, and other spices were discussed with the audience offering recipes and suggested uses for them

Martha and I decided to try room service for dinner. While the food is delicious, three course meals can be over-lengthy and tempt you to eat too much. I really enjoyed a chicken sandwich and potato chips washed down with the free wine that is served with every dinner.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.amnh.org/science/divisions/vertzoo/bio.php?scientist=raxworthy>

<sup>15</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilary\\_Bradt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilary_Bradt)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.amsa.asn.au/about/councillor\\_profiles/beckley\\_lynnath.php](http://www.amsa.asn.au/about/councillor_profiles/beckley_lynnath.php)

<sup>17</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seasickness>

<sup>18</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zebu>

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Sunday, February 6. We docked about 7 in the artificial harbor built by the World Bank for Rio Tinto<sup>19</sup> that opened in 2009. Rio Tinto is mining titanium from the huge sand dunes along the coast.

Taking the easy excursion, we were loaded into mini-buses. Mamy was our guide. It was only about 7 miles to the park but it took some time to cover since after we left the main road there was nothing but a dirt track that went through a large village of native shacks with children waving. The heavens had opened and the rain didn't help.

Our goal was the Nahampoana Reserve, a botanical park, where we are promised lemurs in the wild. Costumed warriors met us at the entrance with a fierce dance. I am always amazed at how African dancers use their feet.

We set out on our hike through the preserve. First we stopped where you could see Sifaka lemurs high above in the trees huddled against the rain. I was disappointed for Martha that she did not get a better look at my favorite lemur. They walk with a series of leaps that is very entertaining.<sup>20</sup> The men did find some tortoises to show us.

We walked on and the walk got more and more difficult with lots of roots. I was so lucky to have Martha there with a strong arm to offer me over the hard spots. It was raining pretty hard and the parkas that Travel Dynamics gave us kept our tops dry but did little for the legs and feet. They found some more lemurs, also high in the trees above us, and at one point we were showed a boa on a stick and a leopard chameleon.

I was very happy when we turned back to the bus. After running the gauntlet of the children hawkers it was good to get out of the wet parka, I bought a carving of a funeral totem and a wooden box. This part of Madagascar is so poor I felt I should do something for the economy.

We were supposed to have a picnic at the Reserve but the rain moved our lunch to the Talinsu Restaurant where a nice lunch was served. I had a deviled crab and some lasagna from the buffet.

More touring of the town was offered but most of us came back to the ship where it felt great to get out of the wet clothing.

Monday, February 7. Martha went on the long tour. I went on the city tour of Fort Dauphin. First we went to Second Galleon Bay for a view of the wonderful surf. We went on to another Bay and here we found people swimming. There was also a fishing pirogue<sup>21</sup>. The fishermen had caught a lot of fish in their net and people were picking the fish out of it.

We then went into downtown Fort Dauphin and some went to buy stamps at the post office. We walked to the modern Lutheran stone church. Fort Dauphin was headquarters for the American Lutheran Missionaries who started coming to Madagascar in 1888. Inside we saw the same festoons we had seen before. It was explained that they represented the changing of the church calendar in the same way the altar cloths work in our churches.

We went on to the market. Lyn had been asked to buy avocados for the ship so we had a purpose. The market was like so many in the third world with stands of fruits, vegetable and meat. I am always grateful I do not have to buy my meat at a fly-strewn un-refrigerated meat counter.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.riotinto.com/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2LCMhSxjWE>

<sup>21</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirogue>

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Our last stop was Rio Tinto headquarters. Here they had a map of their mining operation. We were also told how they extract the titanium from the sand. The ore is sent to Canada for refining and then used in paint and other industrial devices. I was amazed at how heavy the ore was.

Back on board I had lunch and washed my hair before lying down for a nap. Martha appeared about 4 to tell me of her trip to the spiny forest. It sounded like a difficult drive and a hot walk. I was glad I did not attempt it. We set sail and soon were rocking and rolling out to sea.

Tuesday, February 8. Lynnath and Lyn gave an entertaining talk about the Coelacanth<sup>22</sup>. This fish was only known through fossils until in 1938 a five-foot long strange blue fish was caught near East London, South Africa. Museum curator, Marjorie Courtney Latimer had the fish stuffed and a local chemistry professor, John Leonard Brierly Smith, confirmed it was a coelacanth. It was named the Latermeria (after Margery) Chalumnae (for the river). Rewards were posted for more coelacanths but it wasn't until 1952 that another was found in the Comoros Islands.

Chris then gave a talk on climate change and how it affected the frogs<sup>23</sup>. Over a ten-year span they moved further north on the mountain. Frogs near the top had no place to go and the time was too short for them to adapt so they died. A two to three degrees temperature rise had made the animals move a sixty-seven meter upslope. With more global warming more species will go extinct.

After lunch we anchored off Nosy Ve<sup>24</sup>, a tiny uninhabited island where the red-billed tropic bird<sup>25</sup> nests. The French landed here in 1888, prior to conquering Madagascar.

My excursion was fraught with difficulties! First the Zodiac broke down. Another came alongside and we transferred from our zodiac to another, a not so easy task to accomplish.

Once ashore it was hard to imagine this as an deserted island since it seemed an entire village was there to greet us bringing with them, of course, the souvenir wares.

I set out down the beach to see the tropic birds. I walked and walked and the birds were still beyond my reach. I could see the birds flying overhead. I sat on my stool and pondered what to do. Three young women appeared with wares to sell and we talked in broken French. Along came some natives with a pontooned pirogue and offered to take me back to the zodiacs. I did not have any ariari (the local money but we settled on a price of \$5. I can remember when it was one dollar for almost everything but inflation has come and now everything is \$5. I climbed aboard and was paddled back to the landing site. They I realized I only had \$4 and had to borrow \$1 from one of the other passengers. I caught the zodiac back to the ship and soon was enjoying a wonderful shower.

Wednesday, February 9. We left the ship at Toliary and boarded mini buses for the trip to Isalo National Park<sup>26</sup>. I lucked into a front row seat so could see the amazing variety of scenes from the dusty villages to the rolling fields of grass.

Our first stop was at the Arboretum d'Antsokay<sup>27</sup>. I set out with the group but soon realized it would be a very warm walk and turned back to the shop. Here I found Pat shopping in the small boutique. She was buying gifts for everyone she knew. I found a blouse with ring-tailed lemurs

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<sup>22</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coelacanth>

<sup>23</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_warming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming)

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.madacamp.com/Nosy\\_Ve](http://www.madacamp.com/Nosy_Ve)

<sup>25</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-billed\\_Tropicbird](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-billed_Tropicbird)

<sup>26</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isalo\\_National\\_Park](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isalo_National_Park)

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.bgci.org/garden.php?id=2502>

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on it. It was relatively cool in the shade. Then we all queued up at the two toilets before boarding the buses once again.

At least there was air-conditioning on the bus. We drove and drove, making one more necessary stop in the bushes before we reached our lunch stop. I had a sort of beef roll-up and cookies, but did not care for the trail mix.

The hikers left for their walk and I joined the group going on to the lodge. Tish and I shared the front seat, which was a bit cozy. However the view was worth it. We came into an area where gems have been found and a gold rush started. Whole frontier towns sprang up.

Beyond this the terrain became even more interesting with wonderful limestone outcroppings that the wind had eroded into amazing shapes. One sculpture is called the Queen of Isola and imagination could give names to many others.

At last we reached the Satrana Lodge<sup>28</sup> where we had a cooling welcome pineapple drink before being ushered down to our tented cabins. It was hot and I fell on the bed and slept until Martha came. She opened the flaps of the cabin and the cool air was a welcome relief. We sat for a time in the funny gliders on our deck and enjoyed the breeze before climbing back up to main lodge.

John had rum punch and beer for us (I bought a gin and tonic) while we listened to a native Bara<sup>29</sup> (the local tribe) band and watched a dancer perform. African dancing is all about the feet and the man gave a great performance.

Then we went into dinner. John had told us not to expect the same service as on the boat so we were prepared. The meal sort of came out in fits and starts. I had almost finished my "tuna" before Martha's chicken "stir-fry" arrived. The quotes show that that was what they called it but not what we got.

Thursday, February 10. There was a choice of excursions. Martha opted for the long hike and was rewarded by seeing a troop of ring-tailed lemurs and a refreshing swim at a waterfall.

I took the four-by-four drive into Isola park. In our car were Pat and Dick and Ann. Dick sat in front and we three women sat in back on what was not much more than a jump seat. In the back of the truck was Roland the guide for all five four-by-fours so at least we had some commentary during the drive.

Our first stop was at a botanical area where we were shown the aloe and the Elephants foot. There was also a tiny yellow flower identified as an orchid.

We drove further into the park admiring the rock formations for which the park is known, and even flushing some guineas with their bright green necks. There is a fady (taboo) about killing them. Parking in some shade Roland then talked about the other features of the park and how the algae causes the coloration of the rock. The trees are "fireproof" and can survive the fires that sometimes sweep the area. Traditionally a man must go steal a zebu (oxen) to prove his courage. That doesn't really happen much anymore but there are cattle rustlers and they set fires behind them to cover their tracks. A man's worth is in how many zebu he has. It was an interesting two hours.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Satrana-Lodge-Isalo-Madagascar/171784490988?v=photos>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.madagascar-library.com/c/Culture/Malagasy/Tribes/Bara.html>



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Back at the lodge we had a leisurely lunch before boarding our buses for the four-hour trip back to the port. It rained part of the way and we made a somewhat damp necessity bush stop. I read a book on my I-pad to pass the time. When we reached the zodiacs, it was a bumpy ride back to the ship. The storm had made the water quite rough.

Oh the luxury of air-conditioning and hot showers! I was exhausted and ordered room service. We headed out into the Mozambique Channel and were soon rocking and rolling our way to South Africa.

Friday, February 11. At Sea. We had the excitement of a whale sighting and everyone was out on deck to watch him spout. However, it was not a very sociable whale. We circled and chased it for a time but no one seemed able to positively identify it.

Lynnath gave an interesting lecture on the oceanography of the Indian Ocean.

In the afternoon, Janice Booth offered a talk on the Folklore of Madagascar. She talked of the fady (superstitions) about the days of the week. It would seem there is no day without some sort of fady

We learned that shortly after we left Fort Dauphin, suspected pirate activity had been seen nearby. Darn those pirates anyway.

It was nice to have a day at leisure.

Saturday, February 12. At sea. Lynnath talked about Coral Reefs and how they form. Many of the reefs in the world are in trouble because the ocean temperatures are rising and they bleach out. The good news is that they seem to recover fairly quickly if the water cools.

Chris gave a re-cap of the reptiles of Madagascar. His enthusiasm for all things that creep and crawl is amazing. He had some great pictures of chameleons, geckos and spinks that he had seen on our trip and even a snake or two.

In the afternoon Hillary talked on Extreme Travel and eccentric publishing. She has hiked and camped in many exotic parts of the world and from this has evolved a UK-based publishing company. I really would like to read some of her travel guides and will look for some when I return. The book I am presently reading, "Cutting for Stone", is all about Ethiopia and has ticked my interest. Maybe after I get my pacemaker installed I will be able to handle the heat better and can try another tropical trip.

Lynn and Lynnath gave an introduction to Zululand and Southern Mozambique. When Mary and I were here so many years ago, we met the prince of Zululand. He had just graduated from Travel School and wanted to meet some tourists. His dream was to open some of the king's hunting lodges to tourists. Tomorrow we will visit King Shaka's favorite hunting ground, now a National Park.

Sunday, February 13. We came into Richards Bay<sup>30</sup>. A small fishing village was transformed into a major port in 1976 by dredging. It is the second largest port in South Africa after Durban and its coal terminal is the largest in the world. Most of South Africa's aluminum is produced near here as well as titanium, zirconium and other minerals. Paper is also manufactured here.

Proper buses awaited us on the dock. Michelle was our local guide for the hour and a half drive to Hluhluwe (pronounced Schlushlooi)<sup>31</sup>. We passed numerous tree plantations, which gave way to pineapple fields.

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<sup>30</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richards\\_Bay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richards_Bay)

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.kznwildlife.com/index.php?/Hluhluwe-Game-Re>

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At the park we were loaded 8 to a safari wagon and our guide Pinky started off. We had been warned that we might not see very much for the rainy season has made the grass grow tall and made the animals hard to spot. However we were in luck. We saw many elephant and some close up. There were herds of giraffe and zebra. We saw Warthogs and Nyala and Impala, even a white rhino in the distance. And then there were many small bird varieties and two black egrets and their nest. There were weaverbird colonies with the colorful yellow birds clinging upside down to feed their young. We also saw an interesting frog's nest clinging to the grass above the pond where the pollywogs will grow. Because of the rainy season we did not have the usual dust and all had a great time,

Back on the ship we showered and prepared for the Captains Farewell dinner. John showed a slideshow in the lounge that covered the highlights of the trip. At dinner we sat with Pat Neuman and Gillian. Pat is a retired surgeon. Gillian is a Botanist who has retired from teaching at the University of South Carolina.

Monday, February 14. We had a half-day hugging the coast up to Maputo<sup>32</sup>, the capital of Mozambique. It was actually longer than that because of some problem leaving Fort William. We didn't get to Maputo until 4. It is so sad that the main reason I booked the trip was to see Mozambique<sup>33</sup> and all I am going to get is a glimpse.

Our city tour took us to the Natural History Museum<sup>34</sup>. Pride of the museum is a collection of elephant fetuses collected when a herd of elephants was slaughtered. The main exhibit is a diorama of stuffed animals. The taxidermist was quite graphic when he showed them killing one another.

I checked out the rest of the museum and found a room of reptiles (which Chris Raxworthy was examining), ethnographic exhibits and even a stuffed coelacanth. I was happy to finally see this famous fish.

Our tour continued and the guide pointed out the wonderful architecture of Pancho Gueddes. He studied under and took his inspiration from Antoni Gaudi<sup>35</sup> and we stopped to see his Holy Family Church where everything is asymmetrical. Unfortunately we could not see the interior.

What was amazing about Maputo was that there is wonderful architecture ranging from Art Deco<sup>36</sup> to the original Portuguese style buildings. They make the ugly boxy buildings built by the communist regime seem even more tasteless.

Maputo has an elegant residential district where the diplomats live. There are also very poor sections where the indigenous people live. It is a dirty city with trash along the roads. Long queues are seen waiting for the paucity of buses. There are traffic jams at commuting hour for everyone seems to be in a car trying to get home.

One church was designed by Pancho Gueddes to look like a lemon squeezer<sup>37</sup>. President Mandela married Grassa Michelle, who was formerly married to the prime minister of Mozambique. He was here for a time and his house was pointed out but no pictures were

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<sup>32</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maputo>

<sup>33</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambique>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.guedes.info/>

<sup>35</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoni\\_Gaud%C3%AD](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoni_Gaud%C3%AD)

<sup>36</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art\\_Deco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Deco)

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/husar/940866071/>

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allowed. Another house, designed by Gustave Eiffel<sup>38</sup> (of Eiffel Tower fame) was interesting because it was made of iron<sup>39</sup>. People inside were nearly cooked before air-conditioning was installed. At the end we were shown the handsome railway station<sup>40</sup>. Gustave Eiffel designed the cupola.

It was a whirlwind tour and all too soon we were back on the ship. A troupe of native dancers came aboard to entertain us. Their high energy and costuming were fun to watch. One even got Martha up to dance!

Our last dinner on board was with Pat Neuman and Gillian.

Tuesday, February 15. Since our plane doesn't leave until four so John arranged a tour for us, with lunch. We went to the sculptor, Alberto Chissano's<sup>41</sup> home and viewed the neighboring Museu Galeria Chissano. His charming daughter, Sidalia, showed us around. I am not really into modern art but the carvings were most attractive and I was tempted to buy one. However, the cost was \$650 and I did not have enough money left to do so.

The house itself is a museum of the artist's works. He was a black man with no formal training but he worked in an artist gallery and was tempted to try his own hand at carving. They are emotional carvings representing important events in his life.

Lunch was interesting with native dishes. One was a sort of grits porridge and there was also an interesting salsa and huge fried potato slices.

Then it was off to the airport. To my displeasure we had been booked in coach for the flight to Johannesburg. Not only that but were put in the back row in seats that would not recline. The man in front of me rolled his seat back and hit my knee. At Jo' burg someone commandeered my chair before I was able to get off and we had to wait for another. It was not much fun. Then the chair pusher didn't seem to know what lounge to take us to. After a tour of lounges we finally made it to Air France and had a nice visit with Matt and his mother Pat before being collected to go to the plane to Atlanta.

It is 17 hours from Jo'burg to Atlanta. I slept much of the way but did watch two films. "Citation" and "The Social Network". The latter is all about Facebook and the unpopular nerd, Mark Zuckerberg<sup>42</sup>, who created it.

I took off my earrings and put them in the small amenity bag that Delta gave out. When I woke up the bag was gone. We tore the seat apart and also the neighboring ones without success. Everyone in my section of the plane helped with the search and it finally turned up about 4 seats behind me.

So all in all, it was not the greatest trip I have ever had. The trip I bought was not so strenuous. We were to go around the north end of Madagascar and island hop to Mozambique. The pirates disturbed that plan. Travel Dynamics did the best they could with the new itinerary but the new stops were more strenuous than I could handle. I was really disappointed to not see more of Mozambique.

You win a few and you lose a few.

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<sup>38</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave\\_Eiffel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Eiffel)

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.mozambique-direct.com/activity/visit-the-iron-house-in-maputo>

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.galenfrysinger.com/mozambique\\_railway\\_station.htm](http://www.galenfrysinger.com/mozambique_railway_station.htm)

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.artfact.com/artist/chissano-alberto-cfwxh3m2ht>

<sup>42</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark\\_Zuckerberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Zuckerberg)

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