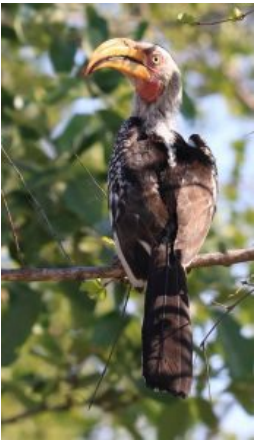


Almost home... and I'm not going to be flying like an eagle tomorrow on the bike!



It's a great relief to be typing this on the final flight home, London to SF, sitting comfortably on a 787 with an empty middle seat next to me and decent food, after two Lufthansa flights that featured the classic rubber chicken and, for the longer of the two flights, filled to capacity.

The "day" started Tuesday, leaving for the Cape Town (South Africa) airport about 3pm to catch an 11-hour 6:15pm flight to Frankfurt. Really uncomfortable flight so didn't sleep much at all. Had to prop my head on my hand, which sat on the arm rest, and of course I'd slip off shortly after falling asleep. And as mentioned, the "food" was terrible. Even by airline standards. Before it got too dark I started watching the latest "Alien" movie, which really wasn't as suspenseful/scary as I'd expected. Don't think anything will come close to how I felt



I think this big cat has the right idea!

watching the first one in the series, so many years ago (just looked it up, yikes, 1979!). The layover in Frankfurt was less than two hours, at 5am, so you have a tough time figuring out if you want coffee or just stay in the semi-zombie state for another few hours until after the short flight to London. My memory's a bit foggy so I assume I didn't go for the coffee.

London (Heathrow) everything started to get better. The lounge has good food offerings, and, most important, showers! Unlike the showers at CDG (Paris), I've never had to wait for one at Heathrow. The final flight home was on the best plane (787) with the best food (still airline food, but much better than any of the other flights), best seats (still in coach but at least it's E+ with a bit more legroom) and it just feels good knowing we're heading home.

How many flights on this trip?

Getting there-

SFO-LHR (London)

LHR-JNB (Johannesburg)

JNB-CPT (Cape Town)

Trip to Kruger National Park (mini-Safari)

CPT-Nelspruit

JNB-CPT

Heading home-

CPT-FRA (Frankfurt)

FRA-LHR

LHR-SFO

That's not really that bad, just 8 flights total

Activities?

Guided wine tour

Guided Cape Point & Boulders Penguin visit

Table Mountain & car rental/learning to drive on the wrong side of the road

Long drive to Cape Agulhas with stop on the way to see Betty's Bay penguins

Fly to Kruger park for Safari and return late next night

Notice there's no bike riding in there. Not really much time for it. But pretty sure I got just about all the boxes checked on my wife's list. The original plan didn't involve the overnight Safari, but Karen made it clear just a few days prior to leaving that she'd be pretty disappointed if she didn't have a real animal experience. Guess at 61 she doesn't expect to be getting that from me???!!! I'd actually engineered some downtime into the original itinerary but guess that will have to wait another year or two or three.

Bringing along my super-long "Africa" lens definitely turned out to be a good thing. I was originally going to leave it at home, after hearing from many that you don't need a really long zoom lens for Kruger because the animals are very close to the road, but temps were in the mid-90s so animals were much less visible than normal. Elephants and Giraffes, sure, they were up close & personal. But Lions, Leopards and Cheetahs, nope, they were not easy to find!