

ELENA KALUGINA
ADRIAN RUCHINI

We embrace the world



Elena Kalugina

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«Издательские решения»

Kalugina E.

We embrace the world / E. Kalugina — «Издательские решения»,

ISBN 978-5-00-532718-5

This book was born out of a diary we kept during a thirty-six-day trip around the world. To get to all the places that we dreamed of, we had to get on 19 flights, passing 65 thousand kilometers, 7 thousand kilometers driven by car and 360 kilometers travelled on foot.

ISBN 978-5-00-532718-5

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ISBN 978-5-0053-2718-5

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WE EMBRACE THE WORLD

Introduction

We are writing this book for our friends, as we have a lot of them, ourselves and for you – the person who is holding this book in the hands. So, do not be surprised if I will refer to «you». It was born out of a diary we kept during a thirty-six-day trip around the world. To get to all the places that we dreamed of, we had to get on 19 flights, passing 65 thousand kilometres, 7 thousand kilometres driven by car and 360 kilometres travelled on foot. We have been waiting for this adventure for a long time and with such impatience that, in order not to forget anything, we recorded in the plane while flying, all our impressions and thoughts from what we saw in each country.

In embracing the world, we decided to connect our travel with a pleasant and unusual particularity of our trip and this was that Adrian, as a member of the Rotary Club of Slovenia, with the great help of the Governor of District 1912 Janez Lipeč, who has supported the initiative allowing us to bring the message of Rotary and of Slovenia too, organized meetings with the oldest clubs on each continent, and this fact enhanced the whole trip very much, making it even more intense and interesting, bringing us the possibility to meet amazing people.

This book will not have a steeply wrapped plot or deep emotional experiences, at least we think so. But here you will find sincere impressions about the crazy experience and feelings that are difficult to get, being an ordinary tourist, about the countries and cities in which we were, about the people we met, about the food we ate, about transport, strange traditions and much more, we will not bore you with long lists.

It gives us great pleasure to write this book, because it is like we are going through every minute of this travel again and again.



1

So, We... and who are we? Our names are Elena and Adrian, sometimes we think that we have always been together, that we have known each other since ever. We almost never stay apart and do everything together, so we write the book together, because our voices sound in unison. So do not be surprised that there is no «I» here, but only «We».

You want to know what we think about life? Life is beautiful if you know why you live. After all, when you are born, you already know that you will die, and it would seem that you have no hope. Why you have to live if you have to die anyway? If you are not able to find the answer to this question, you can drag your legs in a sad existence in anticipation of the death, but you know that the meaning of life is in the other thing, in the OTHER! So, what is the purpose of life? In life...in love. In love, no matter how banal it sounds.

There is still «something» that gives meaning to life – a child. He or she your continuation. He or she is your chance for immortality. This is our simple philosophy, which we believe in, and which gives us energy and happiness.

In this book, we want to talk about the journey of a dream, our dream, which hasn't happened suddenly but was pre-planned and prepared for the celebration of our hundred years in sum.

A hundred years for two (40+60), well, isn't it a reason for a crazy holiday 36 days long? We start on Elena's birthday and return for Adri's birthday. Not very much for a round-the-world trip, but enough to immerse yourself in an adventure called We embrace the world – we decided to call our mission in this way.

Such a brave idea might have occurred to Him, of course. When one day he told: «Do you know that in two years we together will arrive to common age of 100 years? Imagine what an anniversary! What do you think about around the world trip? Let's think about which countries we would like to visit.»

In the end, after some thoughts and discussions, an ingenious plan of a trip around the world was drawn up, according to which we will not only see many countries, but also visit some man-made and natural wonders of the world and have lunch at two of the 10 best restaurants of the world.

We spent two years thinking, planning, and anticipating, and now day X has arrived.

We fly from Venice to Istanbul, then we will have a long flight to Cape Town, then India, the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, followed by Thailand, where we will stop in Bangkok, Cambodia with a magnificent Angkor Wat, Vietnam, where we will see Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city and sail on a cruise ship on Halong Bay, Taiwan with a magnificent Taipei, and Hong Kong will be the end of the Asian adventure. The next stage will be New Zealand. American story will include Argentina with Buenos Aires, Lima, Cuzco, Machu Picchu, Miami, New York, Chicago, and Niagara Falls. We still can't believe this is going to happen to us.



2

On a birthday, the best time is in the morning: you wake up in anticipation of gifts, calls, messages. March 10. The first anniversary has come.

There will not be a long celebration (by the way, they say that celebrating forty years is a bad omen), there is only time to collect our small suitcases and fly towards adventures.

Yes, this will not be an easy task, because we decided to travel only with hand luggage. This is very practical thing, just imagine what will happen if we lose a suitcase on one of the 19 flights! Where can we find it later? In Bangkok? In Auckland? In this case it will definitely be an adventure with a negative sense, and we do not want that.

Especially for women travellers. So, I take two pairs of ballerina shoes, a pair of pumps, a pair of sneakers, another pair of sports footwear and sandals. That is all from the shoes. Several dresses that are easy to dry (we will have to wash almost every day), trousers, skirts, leggings, tops, cashmere sweater and jacket. All this fit in a small suitcase. iPad, chargers and cosmetics will fly in the ladies' handbag, as it has an impressive size.

The preparation, by the way, was also from the psychological point of view. It is very important to «not get lost» in time zones, and they will change frequently and in different directions. So, we decided that when we'll arrive in a new country and in a new time zone, we'll start living in a new time, without losing precious hours for acclimatization and adaptation, and we will have a rest in the plane during flights.

Our favourite pasta with broccoli and a little wine on the road, and here we are ready and prepared to start.

Venice sees us off with warm March weather. We are ready to make the first flight to Istanbul. How great, it is just the beginning! A business class chair and a champagne as a greeting is a great continuation of a birthday party. A smiling flight attendant holds out a menu. Turkish Airlines is one of our favorite airlines. It's so delicious to eat and drink here. Yes, you need to be very careful with food, we do not want to go home fat after thirty-five days of gluttony.

At midnight Istanbul airport is full of people. Someone is asleep, someone is waiting for the landing and go to gate announcements, other are running with suitcases to the exit. By the way, this

is the last month of operation of the old Ataturk airport, the new one is already built and was waiting for it to work at full capacity.

The birthday is almost over, a pleasant fatigue is already creeping up. We are not in a hurry; we go to the business class lounge to wait for our flight to Cape Town. This will be one of our longest flights. Tomorrow, or almost today, we will be in Africa, at the very end of it, right across from Antarctica. We will see the ocean, Table Mountain, and penguins! Oh, tomorrow would be incredible!

The waiting time for the flight passed quickly with the company of baklava and Turkish tea. We take our suitcases and go to board our Turkish Airlines plane; this is the second and last flight with them. We deliberately write down the names of all airlines in order to compare their service. So, Turkish Airlines is very good. The flight was long, but comfortable and we had a great night: we ate, read, and slept. It was such a night resort in the air.

3

When the captain announced the start of the descent, we opened the window and saw it. This was Africa: terra-cotta hilly landscape and endless space. South Africa, of course, is not a typical example of African continent. Maybe one day we will fly to Botswana or Namibia, but in the meantime we have Cape Town, and we expect a lot from these five days.

Do you know what is the first and very important moment of getting to know a new country? The first breath of air you take when you get out off the plane or step out of the airport. That first breath can tell you a lot about where you have landed. You immediately feel the temperature, humidity, freshness or pollution, the smell of plants or emissions, the smell of morning or evening.

Cape Town meets us with the warm and wet breath of the ocean. First of all, we go to the car rental office, take our right-handed car with a manual transmission and drive to the hotel. In order to diversify the experience as much as possible, we decide not to stay in the same hotel for more than two days, changing the place, the view from the window and the area looks like an interesting idea.

The first hotel is located close the ocean. This is a fairly large building with a beautiful view of Table Mountain, we have chosen it for this, the amazing location and view of. It is the mountain, that has become the highlight of the first day. There is only one thought in the head, which, by the way, will be almost constant during our stay in Cape Town: «Oh my God, what a beauty!». We walk along a beach with light grey sand, a soft wind blows in our faces, and the mountain is covered with a huge cloud like a white hat. In this incredible place, you feel the power of the ocean, nature and Africa. There is a different energy here compared to Europe, it is powerfully sparkle, you feel it almost physically.

March in the southern hemisphere is the first month of autumn, fantastic time, the temperature is optimally pleasant, but the water in the ocean is already cold, no one bathes, so our plans for bathing and sunbathing are not destined to come true. But for happiness, it is enough to see all this, touch the water, breathe in the breeze, yes, this place is amazing.

The walk along the beach is almost in a hurry, as we have to meet the first Rotary Club today. They are waiting for us in the Newlands area, which is also the name of the club. We've just arrived, we haven't seen much, and we have to go to a meeting with people we don't know instead of starting a beautiful tour. But it will be a great positive surprise.

A meeting with our future friends is appointed at the cricket club, where they meet weekly. The British have left a huge heritage in South Africa: language, traditions, favourite sports. Anglo-Saxon influence is felt everywhere here. Such a number of cricket clubs can only be found in Britain itself. All of them are in excellent condition and they are preserved very well.

There are always a lot of people here, especially in the evening, you can do some sport, play games, meet friends, drink a glass of beer or some wine. We are very warmly welcomed by members of the Rotary Club Newlands. It has been an extremely difficult day for them today, one of the most important of the year. To raise funds for their charity projects, they organize an annual 109-kilometer ride for cyclists around Table Mountain. It is easy to imagine that the mind-blowing views and the opportunity to get a unique experience attract a large number of cycling enthusiasts. This year there were 25 thousand of them from all over the world. To organize an event of this scale, 5 thousand members of all Rotary Clubs of the District have joined forces.

The people of the Republic of South Africa are excellent speakers. When we sit and listen to these people sharing their experiences with a great sense of humour, we do not think that we would prefer sightseeing to meeting them.



When all the stories are over, the floor is given to us as the invited guests. Everyone is listening with interest to the story of how an Italo-Slovenian and a Russian have come together on a trip around the world, becoming ambassadors of Rotary Slovenia and Northern Macedonia and of Slovenia beauties itself with the motto of «**I FEEL SLOVENIA**. We talk about Slovenia (by the way, few people even know where this country is located, so we have put a map of Slovenia with neighbour countries on our business cards), we show a small video of its beauty and seems that we have surprised them a lot.

Today marks the beginning of a bunch of friendships that we are going to make during our trip. So, let us introduce Janie, Janey, and Geraldine. Yes, it's not easy to remember, but all the ladies are completely different and beautiful.

Janie is the President of the Club, a strict, highly organized blonde. Snaps problems like nuts and perfectly organizes people into effective teams. «You are our guests, so if you don't mind, we will help you with your free time,» Janie said. There was no point in refusing her, and why? Cape Town is one of the most beautiful, but also one of the most unsafe cities in the world. Being close to the locals and spending time with them means protecting yourself from a lot of problems and it means the possibility to spend time with rotarian friends and to share our experiences.

In general, this topic is quite sensitive. Cape Town could be called a city of contrasts. On one hand, you see in South Africa the terrible poverty of black population, on the other hand the wealth of the white population, whose life is also not a fairy tale. They have to protect their beautiful rich houses with barbed wire stretched along the perimeter of the yard, which carries an electric current. Looking at these «bastions», you can assume the level of danger and violence that reigns around. When night falls on the city, it becomes scary and deserted, everyone hurries to leave the street, white people move only in cars or stay at home.

Do you know what is the most unpleasant thing? That both white and black populations live in one of the most beautiful places on the Earth, but they have difficulties to enjoy it, because you either have to look carefully around you, or spend all day looking for a penny for bread.

If we haven't really scared you too much yet, and you still want to read our stories, we will continue.

Let us introduce our next friend, Geraldine. A lively pensioner, full of energy, knowledge and desire to help people. She has invited us tomorrow to go with her and another couple from the

Netherlands, a husband and wife also from a Rotary Club, to see their main project, which they plan to conduct for 10 years and money for which they have collected all over the world. «Would you like to see what we are doing for preschool education? Come with us tomorrow and we'll show you.» This is far away from entertaining program, but we are on our trip to see the real life, as we are and want to be travellers not tourists, of course, and these are the things you will never see in a guided tour, even more you will never do them alone; of course we agreed.

For the next evening we have accepted the invitation of Janey (not to be confused with Janie) to go to Table Mountain to admire the sunset, and the following day we are meeting with Janie (one more, do not be confused, seems that this name is very popular in South Africa) to see the surroundings of Cape Town. It is good that we have not planned anything in advance, besides we are very flexible as travellers and easily adapt to changing circumstances.

Yes, we have been also advised a new hotel, tomorrow, probably, we will change our place of stay.

4

Magic morning. Clouds have descended on the ocean, a warm wet wind is blowing, everything is in noble white and silver shades: water, sky, mountain, horizon. After breakfast, we go out on the terrace to breathe the air that the wind is bringing from the ocean. The picture is so fascinating, it is possible to stand here all the day, thinking and admiring the beauty, but let's go, Geraldine is waiting for us.

We're going to meet her in a Cape Town suburb called Langa. Only black people live there, and white people can only be safely accompanied by those who are known and trusted here. Rotary members belong to this limited circle. As we said, they are engaged in pre-school education project.

For better understanding what we want to tell you, think about this: in South Africa, 75 percent of the population is illiterate, the level of education (we are talking about black people) is so low that after the end of primary school, 85 percent of students can neither read nor write, and only a very small number of citizens pay taxes to the state. It is not surprising that in areas, where the poorest population lives, there is nothing, no public services, no social protection. . . nothing. It is easy to guess, which future awaits kids running around with barefoot in the trash and chasing dogs with sticks, or rather, that they could have no future, because they are almost doomed.

Trying to somehow fix the situation in this country, caring for people, the Rotarians decided to start from the beginning, namely the infant schools. To give to these children knowledge, skills, education and culture means to give them hope and a future, and at the same time it means to take care of their country and their children and grandchildren and how they will live here in the future.

The small infant day-care centre where we have been brought consists of one room, in the centre of which there is a large rectangular table. Children of three or four years old are sitting around it and collecting large puzzles that lack parts. We can't take our eyes off the babies: huge black eyes, plump lips, curly hair, disarming sincere smiles, they look like live dolls, extremely charming children.

Their teachers are two tall black women: they ask the children to sing a song. We feel awkward, on one hand, we see the poverty and a little affectation of the situation. On the other hand, we understand that these ten kids are lucky. They are lucky to be here, to collect this broken puzzle, and not to run on the street without supervision. They also will have their lunch and, Oh, my God, they will even sleep after it, also if on the floor all together. But to understand all this, you need to see a lot.

Then we visit another infant school, a larger one. It consists of three small rooms, each of it has at least 15 children, in the farthest chamber, one-year-old babies are sleeping, as usually, on the floor on spread blankets, not noticing the screams and noise from the neighbouring rooms.



We drive around Langa for a few hours. To be honest, this was one of those days that can change the perception of life and our attitude to many things, to those that we have and to those with which we can change this world for the better.

It has been really impressive what we have seen, the tough action of local rotarian friends with the help of all five continents, yes, because all the continents are part of the project and here also a similarity to our experience, connecting the world. And, at the end of the tour, one more surprise. The invitation from one of our new friends, Chris, to his house for a cup of coffee and sharing of our feelings.

Chris's house is bright and spacious, in the British style, with a large well-kept garden. We wait until he turns off the alarm and all the security measures at home, unlocks all the locks and bolts, and here we are, inside. Large spacious rooms, photos of children on the walls, a lot of books and paintings, very cosy and quiet while you are inside. We talk for a long time, having coffee and cookies.

These people are really very nice, we are lucky to get to know the country with their help. In fact, who can show better the beauty of the place than the person, who has lived here all his life and who wants to transmit with their hospitality all the love for this unusual city. And it is really incredible! We are falling in love with Cape Town more and more.

Janey has recommended a charming hotel close to them. We go to have a look at it and immediately understand why she has recommended it. A colonial-style mansion furnished with antiques, high ceilings that fill the space with air, a huge tropical garden with a river and small lakes, where huge beautiful wild birds walk, squirrels run. The queens of this garden are eight huge turtles who live here. They can do everything, even come inside the hotel in the evening, and choose a secluded corner in the flowers and sleep peacefully. This lost paradise is situated right under Table Mountain, so you can imagine the view from the window.

We have been lucky to find one spare room, all the other rooms are already occupied by guests... well, to be honest, this is not exactly a «room», but a huge suite, very beautiful, in noble shades of gray and white, with an interior designed with excellent taste and windows overlooking the garden. The room is so excellent that we don't want to leave it, but we still have a lot to see, and Janie will show us the best place from where you can watch the sunset.

As we do not want to lose a minute, we go out of town, before meeting Janie, to meet the wind and the ocean. The road is so beautiful, that sometimes it seems that you are asleep, and all what happens to you is a dream. The feeling of happiness does not leave us for a second. From one side you see the ocean, from the other rocks. We pass white beaches, cliffs, mountains, a whale is waiting for us and, from one of the cliffs that has an incredible view of the bay, here it is! A whale! It is floating, rising from time to time, from its home place, the sea. There's always a thought in the head: «Thank you! Thank you for this!». We haven't experienced such excitement and such strong emotions for a long time.

In one of the most beautiful places Adri has stopped the car and we go out to admire the view. The man sitting on the bench, hearing us speak Italian, asks with joy: «Are you from Italy? I'm Italian too!». We fall into talk, and he tells us that he has been living here in the suburbs of Cape Town for 20 years, having left Vicenza in the North of Italy. When we ask him if he is afraid to live here, he answers simply and clearly: «I know that South Africa is not going through the best times. Every afternoon when I return home from my office in Cape Town, I stop here, sit on the bench, look at the ocean, and think about how happy I am to see all this. Will I ever be able to leave it? I think I will not. There is no place in the world more beautiful than this,» said a man who was born and raised in Italy, but whose heart was rooted in South Africa. We are impressed by his sincerity and his words, and, by the way, we almost agree with him.

The white sandy beach, arched like a crescent moon and washed by bright blue waves, is located below the mountain, and it is incredibly beautiful. Adri turns the car around, and we search for the descent, passing small towns, groves of large trees of exotic species, and open desert spaces. Meanwhile, the weather turns from sunny and warm to cloudy and windy. This is a normal phenomenon here: four seasons live in one day.

Finally, we arrive at a magical place. The beach is much wider and longer than it looked from above. Dark grey clouds are floating low over the waves and sand. We are here alone, leaving fresh tracks in the wet sand. Adri is ahead as usual, fresh salty wind is blowing in our faces. We want to be silent and listen to the nature. How many sounds are concentrated in this place: the sound of waves, the twittering of birds, the whisper of sand, the rustle of wind. Raincoats help to protect ourselves

from the wind. We are part of this landscape, this moment, this happiness. It's a wonderful sensation, but let's go back to the city, Janey is waiting for us.

We leave our car in the city center, jump into Janey's Mercedes, and she drives us up the magnificent road from the foot of Table Mountain to an observation point almost on the top. In one beautiful place, where a magnificent panorama of Cape Town opens, we stop, get out of the car and freeze up with delight. The rays of the setting sun paint the mountain and part of the city in red and orange, on the horizon, the ocean gently bends around the borders of the land, making the space infinite. It seems that you are in the best place on earth, but Janey, breaking the idyll. «Do you see this beautiful road that runs through the Park at the foot of the mountain? Once this picturesque place was a favorite route for all local cyclists and hikers. Now everyone who gets there out of ignorance, runs the risk of being robbed. I don't really want to talk about it, but it's true.» It becomes very sad thinking how easily paradise turns into hell, but it's nice that the locals tell everything honestly about their life, and this makes you feel even more of their pain.

«I know that you only travel with hand luggage, and that you don't have a single extra inch in your suitcase, but I really want to give you this book about my city, the most beautiful city on Earth, as a keepsake. » – Janey pulls out of the car a huge book, illustrated with picturesque photos, called «7 days in Cape Town». – «You can leave it at the airport or some other place later, but now, please, take it.» Well, tell us, how could we leave this book after these words? And, the book at the end has arrived back to Slovenia after visiting all the world.

Then we go to another place, to another mountain, the sun has not quite set yet. There we find a lot of people, mostly young, sitting on the grass. A few guys are playing guitar, adding a note of romance to an already magical evening. Wild Guinea fowl walk around, beautiful big birds that resemble chickens. «There are so many of them here, they are cute, but very stupid and noisy, especially when they fly to sleep on the fir tree near my house, and then fall off it in their sleep and start shouting at the whole area,» Janey says with a laugh.

The sun has disappeared, and the magic day is ending. We thank our companion for the unique experience and the book, for the advice on where to go and what to see tomorrow and we move to our hotel. By the way, it has two restaurants, one of which we are going to try today, so the second day in Cape Town is still going on, not finished yet and we are very happy of this.

We decide not to change our clothes and go to dinner in what we are wearing, because it is already quite late after such an intense day. Dinner in the garden with the surround of such a luxurious nature is a worthy end to this unusual and eventful day. We have to say that also the food here is at top level. The cuisine is mixed European, the ingredients are excellent, all that we have tried: bread, cheese, fish and meat – everything is local and has an excellent quality, and the wine...the wine of South Africa, this will be a separate story. Our plans, in fact, include a visit to a winery. But this will be later. In the meantime, good African night, we need to think about a lot of what we have seen today.

5

«We will be very grateful if you will not use the bath. Cape Town has a freshwater crisis" informs a card in the beak of a cute duckling at the bottom of our large and beautiful bath, which stands in the middle of a huge bathroom. „Well, a crisis is very dangerous thing, if we are so politely asked, we can also stay without a bath, we can use a shower.“» In the shower there is a bucket that stands in the middle, at the bottom of the bucket is another card. «Well, no, if there is a request not to use the shower, it would be difficult to do» the thought arrived. However, the second message contains other information: «When taking a shower, please do not remove the bucket, we will be able to reuse all the water you collect.» Wow seems it is a really difficult situation. And then for some time we thought about how they are going to use this dirty water.

We often hear that water is a very important vital resource, that it should be protected, but for the first time in our lives, we were faced with the problem of water shortage so obviously. It always seems that everything bad, including environmental problems, is somewhere far away, not here, that there will be enough for our century, and then it will be as it will be. However, life also teaches us these lessons. Travel in this sense is an indispensable point of self-education and self-development. We are sure that after the round-the-world trip, we will come back home completely different.

We have a quick breakfast, although it's not easy. Our hotel and the food in it are so good that it is possible to take your time to spend the whole day here, but we are in a hurry, we only have four days in Africa. Today's program is busy, the first place where we go is unique, as many other things, and many places here. This is Cape Agulhas, where the two oceans merge: Atlantic and Indian. Janey advised us to visit this place yesterday.

Adri is driving our rental car. The manual transmission and left-hand drive make driving a car a constant exercise for the brain. Cape Town delights in a of green scenery, but as soon as you leave the city, the picture changes completely: you see the sun damaged fields with cut grass, with flocks of sheep, hills, vineyards, then coastal village with light-colored houses. It is impossible not to stop in one of such villages on the coast of the Indian ocean. We are walking along a wooden deck that protects white sand. On the right there is azure Indian ocean, where boats and yachts are rocking. By the way, it differs from the Atlantic Ocean in color, transparency, and temperature. On the left snow-white villas, not large, but cosy, built with taste and surrounded by flowers. We breath the ocean and store in our memory every second... Even if this would be the last trip of our life, the impressions are enough to live with the memories till a very old age.

We have to write everything down in a diary every day, to keep it in memories.



Cape Agulhas – Indian Ocean meets Atlantic Ocean

Well, here we are...Cape Agulhas. This is one of the most magical places we have ever seen. It seems to us that thanks to our endless travels, we have learned to feel the energy of the place. What does it mean? Imagine the raging foamy waves of merging oceans, if you get closer, small drops of water fall on your skin, leaving a fresh smell of salt. Now imagine huge rocks covered with light green and orange moss, so coarse and thin that it can only be found high up in the mountains, and here it grows at sea level. Some stones are rounded, some are sharp, like mini rocks, creating the effect of moving up. Low shrubs, grasses, and flowers grow on the ground. At the highest point there is a red lighthouse. Opposite the ocean on the hilly coast there are white houses where happy people live. This is a picture, from a dream of a white house on the ocean coast in a village far away from everyone and from everywhere, where you can listen and hear the sound of the ocean, look at it and say every day: «Thank God for this day!».

On the way back, we stop at Whale Bay. We have not seen sea giants there, but we took with us in our minds incredible landscapes and impressions, because this is the only thing that you can take with you after death, this is our main asset: places we visited and meetings that enriched us.

We have climbed the highest hill and we are looking around, slowly and silently: the semi-circular bay is framed by sharp stones covered with multi-coloured moss. The colour of the water changes depending on the depth and the presence of rocks, from emerald green to deep blue. This unearthly beauty requires respect for itself, it does not tolerate fuss and noise. You cannot come here just for five days, or rather, if you come for a short time, then till you come back, this place will always call you. (By the way, we haven't swum in the ocean yet. March in the southern hemisphere is the first month of autumn, and if the air temperature is high enough, the water is already cold). This time of the year the beaches are empty. It is not even the temperature, we are too busy to waste time on the beach.

We are going to a new meeting, a very unusual and long-awaited one. We are a bit in a hurry, because the road was not short, and those to whom we are going can fall asleep. Yes, here they are, coming home from work: a dozen of penguins are crossing the street in a neat row, arranged in pairs.

Not far from Cape Town, there is Simon's town where a colony of penguins lives. People and penguins are so used to cohabiting in one location that now they have no idea how it can be different.

Not very big black-and-white birds swaying parade on the streets. On the shore there is their part of the city. There they dig their own burrows, lay their eggs, and live their own family life. They are used to the general attention of tourists, they do not pay attention to people with cameras, and even more, they are not afraid of them, but they do not let them get too close, they demand respect for private life. Another dream comes true.

In the evening, we have dinner in our magnificent hotel, or rather in the restaurant at the hotel. The tasting menu offers dishes divided by elements and prepared with local ingredients, and of course the wine is very good. We must say that South Africa has become a gastronomic discovery for us. In short, the cuisine here is international, mixed. There is no bright national flavour here or old culinary traditions, but what local restaurants offer is a very high-quality mix, the cuisine of Cape Town is cosmopolitan, but most importantly, the ingredients they use, whether it's fish, meat, vegetables or cheese, everything is the top, everything is delicious!

Time to go to bed and prepare for our last day in Cape Town. We are moving to a new hotel, it is a pity, of course, to leave a beautiful palace with a vineyard, but new experiences and impressions call us.

This time we chose a small boutique hotel in the city centre with a huge, stylish room and a private garden with roses and lavender. It seems that this place will be a worthy completion of the African part of the world tour. But first of all, meeting with Jane, a former head of human resources at a large company, who is now a writer and speaker.

By the way, we have hardly seen the centre of Cape Town, we drive around all the time, so we asked Jane to show us the city, to which she replied: «What's there so special to watch? All the most beautiful things in Cape Town are outside the city. But if you insist, of course, I will give you a quick tour, because in addition to the city centre, I want to show you a lot of interesting places.»

To be honest, Jane was right. Compared to what we've already seen here in South Africa, the city itself, doesn't stop breathing from an emotional explosion, but we would definitely call it interesting and cute. What we remember most about the centre are the Victorian-style houses with carved wooden multicoloured balconies.

But Jane couldn't wait to accompany us to her favourite vineyard, Cape Point Vineyard Estate on a hill near the city. The grape is almost mature, and the juice-filled bunches hung picturesquely from the large bushes. At the beginning of each row there is a rose bush. All the roses are yellow and suit perfectly the green of the grass and grape leaves. And the prosperity of roses indicates the health of the vineyard. What a beauty! We drive slowly along the road past the vineyards towards a large stylish building made of wood and glass. This is a winery and a restaurant. In front of the building there is a small artificial pond, the restaurant is located on the terrace, which offers a breathtaking view of the white sand beach and the emerald ocean below the hill. How can you make bad wine in a place like this?

After that we have been driving for a long time in the «Mercedes» (all successful people there have a Mercedes. It is a joke), and pass the places where we had already been the day before. Today they seem very different, but no less beautiful. The road we are driving on looks like a classic picture of a car ad: a winding, not very wide strip on one side that opens up a view on the ocean, on the other side there are the mountains, the sun-drenched sky, lapping azure waves – and it's all yours. Even the strongest wind, blowing you off and ruffling your hair, is also for you, take it!

It is a little bit sad to leave Jane, because we know that we might never see each other again, because we live at different poles of the Earth, although... It would be interesting to meet again with

this amazing woman who, after retirement, began writing motivational books and publicly speaking around the world, helping people to overcome various difficulties. Who knows, maybe we'll see each other somewhere in neutral territory.

The visit to the winery has impressed us so much that we decide to visit a couple more, this time with a tasting. The winery is chosen by Adri, as he knows a lot about wine and his choice is always perfect. The vineyards are spread out under the Table Mountain, you drive along the road between endless rows of bushes, and then suddenly in front of you there is an open space covered with green grass, on which stands the Villa – this is the winery, Morgenster Estate. On the terrace, covered with grapes with red, yellow and green leaves, there is wrought-iron furniture, painted with white paint. Several olive trees are covered with dark fruit. It seems that you are not in the South of Africa, but in the South of Europe, everything is so familiar and understandable.

«What an amazing place! What are you going to surprise us with?» – we ask the girl at the bar. «Try our wine and olive oil tasting. I'm sure you'll like it.» We haven't resisted for a long time and haven't regretted it. The girl tells us that the owner of the winery was an Italian, who had been doing his favourite thing all his life and invested all his knowledge and money in this successful business. He recently died, and now the business has passed into the hands of his daughter, and she flies once a month from Italy to check on how things are going. We are sitting on the terrace, enjoying the gentle wind and tasting the wines, and they are really great, soaked up all the sun, the air and the terrain of South Africa. And also oil is worth telling about it. Actually, for us, there is no better food in the world than a piece of nice bread with olive oil on top, so sharp that you feel it even in the throat, and then a sip of good wine. It is awesome. So, we have definitely appreciated the oil. For sure. And, what about these small tasty olives accompanying the wine, oil and homemade bread. Wow, it is our perfect lunch. We are in an unforgettable place, completed with fine wine and olive oil. What more could you ask for? Meanwhile, the day is running, and there are still a lot of things to do.

Returning to the city, we notice beautiful statuettes with African motifs displayed along the road. We stop because they are worth a better look. Giraffes, zebras, rhinos and other animals and human figures made of stone and wood, made by local craftsmen. We like all of them, but we can't buy anything, our suitcases are small, and we still have a month to travel. Well, how beautiful are these two giraffes carved in stone. They have woven their necks into the shape of heart and are asking us to take them away. Oh, no matter, we will find some space for them, and the seller has already agreed to reduce the price. Well, giraffes, now you are ours.

Back to the city, we go to the central promenade along the ocean to see off the sun, because it is our last evening in Cape Town.

We are sitting. We are looking at the ocean. The sun is slowly approaching the horizon. Hundreds of people are running along the embankment, they are participating in some kind of charity marathon. We like to just sit here and stare at everyone and talk, some moments of tranquillity are also useful. There is a lot of space and people around. The wind that blows from the ocean begins to increase its force and pleasantly blows on us with coolness protecting us from the heat. We are so happy that we lose track of time and do not notice that the sun has already begun to disappear from the horizon, colouring the water in a bright orange colour. Ten or fifteen minutes later, the huge fireball disappeared into the water. Along with it, people on the street began to disappear. Enjoying the changing colour of the water and sky, we slowly walk along the embankment towards our hotel, not noticing that the streets are already completely empty. Night falls on the city, and it becomes empty and unfriendly. Here and there you can see a black figure glimpsed in the dark, ah, yes, intelligent people warned us that walking in the darkness in Cape Town is dangerous. We are walking with long, fast steps. Our hotel is close.

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