

DURBAN

We arrive in the South African port of Durban at 7am, after a very "interesting" night. We were woken in the early hours by some loud bangs as the ship lurched wildly about, and objects were flung around the cabin. Two glasses smashed onto the floor in the bathroom, and everything on the dressing table fell onto the floor. Apparently, we had sailed suddenly into a storm force 9-10.



The port pilot was winched down onto the Van Gogh from a helicopter at 6.45am, which caused some interest from passengers. Some of our computer members took some excellent photos of this event.



We have a tour booked for today, which will take us out of the city, and into Zulu country. After passing through the depressingly dirty city of Durban, our tour bus travels along smooth tarmac dual carriageways, into the neat suburbs. There are smart villages here, with well cared for houses and gardens, and English style pubs with unusual names, such as the Donkey and Whistle.



The village that we are visiting is called Phe Zulu, and is a recreation of a typical Zulu village, with beehive huts made of woven grasses. We are treated to a

selection of traditional dances and music, performed by men and women wearing Zulu costumes, and with painted faces. One of the members of the dance troupe carries her baby with her, and we are amazed that the baby seems oblivious to the sound of the loud drum only feet from her.

After the performance, we are served with tea, coffee and scones, on a terrace overlooking the "Valley of a Thousand Hills". From this high mountain lookout, the houses, perched on top of the many hills on the valley floor, look like little "Liliput" houses. The whole valley is a multicoloured posy of red, purple, yellow and green.



Suitably fed and watered, we are then taken to the Crocodile Park nearby. The animals on show here are very quiet today, mostly just lying around on the ground. It is quite a cool day here up in the mountains, and the crocodiles need a bit of warmth in order to move around. It is a good chance to see the crocs up close; in fact we are only feet away from some of them, and we can see the pattern of their skin, and the size of their teeth!



As we leave the village on our tour buses, the young "warriors" are making their way home; They are dressed in western clothes, such as jeans and T-shirts, and most of them are talking into their mobile phones! Many passengers think this is strange, and assume that the performers live in the Phe Zulu village. To us, it is just nice to think that the young people are keeping their traditions alive.

This has been a really good tour, and we have seen how beautiful this part of South Africa is. Our next port of call is Cape Town, in 3 days time, so watch this space!

