

Travel

Goodbye Dubai - now I'm a Cape crusader!

FRIENDS have been raving about Cape Town for so long now that finally I thought it was about time I paid a visit. In recent years, my winter holiday destination of choice has been Dubai, travelling with my seven-year old daughter Betsy. It's only a seven-hour flight, so it's manageable with a young child.

This time I wouldn't be travelling with Betsy, so I wasn't worried about the longer, 11-hour direct flight to Cape Town.

Actually the journey proved easy - it's a night flight from the UK, and there's hardly any time difference (they're just an hour ahead), so there was no dreaded jet-lag.

The trip with my boyfriend Eddie was for eight days, which I thought was probably not long enough to do all the things we wanted to do.

So to maximise the time, we put our arrangements in the hands of a travel company which offers a concierge service - you tell them how much time you have, what you really want to do, and they

By **Denise van Outen**

organise it and try to get the best possible price for you.

We said we wanted to see great places during some sightseeing trips and visit top restaurants, and the holiday also had to include golf, as Eddie and I are keen players.

They suggested we start with a three-night safari at the Sabi Sabi game reserve, situated on the edge of Kruger National Park.

We couldn't wait to take a game drive through the bushveld. The Earth Lodge in the reserve was wonderful. I expected we might have to rough it on a safari, but the place was luxurious, serving great food and excellent wine (it had the most amazing cellar - one evening we had a private dinner and sampled lots of fine wines).

One of the highlights for me was a sunset picnic during one of our game drives. We had gin and tonics and some nibbles while sitting on top of our 4x4 as we watched the sun go down. It was a magical

HEART-WARMING:
The fire pit at Earth Lodge



experience, and Eddie and I were both blown away by it.

To see the wildlife you have to get up early, and the close encounter we had with a leopard, who was strolling behind the vehicle at one

point, was fascinating. It wasn't frightening at all, rather a great feeling that we were in the middle of a huge adventure.

Back at the lodge, it was great talking to the other people who

had been out on walks and drives. It was a chance for all of us to share our experiences.

After the safari, our next stop was Cape Town, which is one of Africa's most fashionable cities. We stayed at the Cape Grace Hotel and our room had a fabulous view of Table Mountain. The Cape Grace had the feel of an old-school grand hotel and occupies a brilliant location near the busy V&A Waterfront, which has lots of shops and restaurants.

The great thing about South Africa for British travellers at the moment is the exchange rate. While sterling is struggling against the euro and dollar these days, you can get about 17 rands to the pound, and prices are very reasonable.



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