

Biking South Africa 2004\2005

Thursday, December 23, 2004

I finished packing for my trip to Africa around 10:00 PM. My friend Duff came over a little after midnight so he could give me a ride to the airport early the next morning.

Day 0, Friday, December 24, 2004

Duff and I stayed up most of the night watching TV and he gave me a ride to the airport around 6:00AM. My flight to Cape Town, South Africa left Portland at 8:00 AM. I first flew to New York and slept for most of that flight. I had a five and a half hour lay over. I was told I would not have enough time to leave the airport. After walking around the airport for 2 hours I found out it would have taken about an hour to bus into downtown New York. I figure I could have spent 2 hours on the bus and an hour in town instead of walking around the airport. Oh well, maybe next time. While at the New York Airport I exchanged \$26.90 US for \$10.00 UK LBs (the fees to exchange the money was about \$6.50). My flight for London left New York at 9:25 PM and I slept for part of that flight.

Day 1, Saturday, December 25, 2004

I arrived in London around 9:00 AM on Christmas day. I had an 8-hour layover and wanted to go downtown. As I was going through Customs the guy before me was from my flight and the Custom's lady asked if I was with him. She said he was also going into town and was flying to Cape Town in 8 hours. After exiting customs, I caught up to the other guy and asked him how he planned on getting into downtown London. The trains where not running since it was Christmas Day and we found out that there was a bus that headed to Paddington station in downtown London every 15 minutes. The cost was 10 pounds each way. The other guy needed to go somewhere specific (he had family in London) and not downtown. He asked about taking a Taxi and found it would cost about 100 pounds each way and that was way too expensive. Since I wanted to head to town, I ended up taking the bus. When I boarded the plane that evening I talked to the other guy and he told me he found someone to give him a ride. When the bus dropped me off in downtown London, I walked to Buckingham palace and then to Big Ben. I walked along the Thames River almost all the way to London Bridge. It took about 1.5 hours to quickly walk back to the bus terminal. On the way back I arrived at St. James Palace in time to see the changing of the Guards. Back at the airport I was the first person to check in for the flight to Cape Town. At that point, I became concerned that the flight might get canceled. It turned out that the plane was mostly empty; I heard there were only 83 people on the large plane. At the London airport I decided to read my South Africa Travel book. I only had about ½ hour before boarding time and realized I left my travel book in the plane I took from New York to London. I went to the airport bookstore to see if I could find a new

South Africa travel book, but had no luck. On the 12-hour flight to Cape Town I slept for 7 hours.

Day 2, Sunday, December 26, 2004

I arrived in Cape Town around 7:00 AM about 37 hours after leaving Portland, Oregon. At the airport I was thinking about getting a rental car for a day and driving around Cape Town. I was interested in seeing the African Penguins in Simon's town. Since I didn't think I had enough time to get all the way to Durban I took off immediately on my bike. Also, I had read that since it was summer vacation in South Africa, I would probably not be able to put my bike on the bus. As I assembled and loaded gear on my bike, several people asked about my journey. That's pretty normal; one man insisted that he knew me. I heard that might be a method people use to con you out of money or rob you. I told that man that he did not know me and ignored him until he left me alone. After loading my bike, I immediately started biking east. About 8 miles after leaving the Cape Town airport I took my first GPS reading (meant to take one at the airport). It was an easy flat ride from Cape Town to Somerset West then there was a big hill that took about 2 hours to climb. I pushed my bike part of the way up the hill, when I was younger, I never walked my bike, now I'm old and have no pride. At the top of the big hill, I stopped at the view point and started talking to a man that was waiting for his girlfriend. I was low on water and asked the man for water. When his girlfriend arrived, we all talked. I was telling them I was from Canada and they asked where in Canada. I ended up telling them I was currently living in the USA in Portland, Oregon. In the past, I found it was better to tell people I was from Canada, a lot of people in the world do not like the USA. In South Africa, I started out telling people I was from Canada, but people asked me where in Canada and I found it didn't matter when I mentioned I was living in the USA. After a while I just started telling people I was from North America and people said oh you're American. In some cases, people asked me where in America and when I said the USA people seemed interested. In one case a lady asked who I voted for and I told her the other guy. Good thing I said that the lady really did not like our current president, George Bush. I try to avoid topics related to religion and politics. Oh well, I guess I got off on a tangent. The person that I met on top of the hill gave me his water and then took my photo with the coast that leads to Cape Town in the background. His girlfriend was also in the photo. I talked with the couple before they took their hike and told them I planned on biking N2 towards Durban. They suggested that I take the coastal route to Hermanus and camp there for the night. I didn't have enough time to bike all the way to Durban and decided to take their advice since I would already need to find alternate transportation. It turned out I missed the turn to Hermanus and continued on route N2. The ride east of Somerset West was hilly, but I did have some tail winds. In general, I realized I had not trained enough for this bike ride. I stopped at Vrugtestar store and bought some supplies. I ended up sleeping in a ditch near the

road. It was warm, dry and I was concerned with leaving camp before anyone found me. Therefore, I did not set up my tent and slept close to the road. Not a great camping spot, but it did the job. (Daily miles 72.00 miles)

Day 3, Monday, December 27, 2004

I left camp early in the morning and ran out of water. I ended up needing to ask people for water. The ride was hot and a little boring. Since I didn't think I would be able to ride all the way to Durban in time to get my rental car I decided to try hitch hiking. As I biked, I kept sticking my thumb out like I was hitch hiking, but I still continued biking and was not looking at the people passing me. Not a very effective way to hitch hike. A car packed with people and gear stopped at a rest stop near the road. They may have stopped to offer me a ride. I didn't go over to ask because they parked on the other side of the highway and I was headed downhill. Also, it was still early in the day, they didn't appear to have very much room and I figured I would be able to eventually get a ride. Well, I tried hitch hiking most of the day and never got a ride. That one car was the only maybe ride all day. I stopped at Riversonderend for lunch; I had chicken, fries and a coke. I also stopped for groceries a little east of Swellendam. It started getting close to the end of the day when I arrived at a store in Heidelberg. I noticed a bus in front of the store and asked where the bus station was located. They told me the bus stopped in front of the store. I also asked about taking bikes on the bus and the bus driver seemed to think it should not be a problem. His bus was headed west and I wanted to go east. It seemed like the people in the store didn't know anything about the bus. There were a lot of very poor people walking around the store and a couple of times people asked me for stuff. I think they wanted money. One guy was saying something about his wife. He was waiting for an answer and I ignored him until he left me alone. I also met a nice man from Cape Town that was driving a truck. He ended up giving me his address and phone number. He told me if I ever returned to Cape Town I could stay at his place for free. I asked people at the gas station and store when the bus arrived that headed east. I was told it left at 10:00 PM from one person and 11:00 PM from another person. I prepared my bike for the bus and fell asleep next to the road at the bus stop. When a bus arrived, an African man woke me to tell me the bus was there. It turned out the bus did not have any room for me and my bike. The African man that woke me up told me the bus driver said his bus was full and that another bus should show up shortly. I noticed another bus go by without stopping. I was concerned with making it to Durban on time and felt I would need to take at least a short bus ride or hitch a ride part of the way. I continued waiting and dozed off again. The same African man woke me up when the next bus arrived and that bus was able to squeeze me in with my bike and gear. I took the bus to George and sat next to a lady that was headed back to her home in Mossel Bay. She was on my left side and since I cannot hear in my left ear it was difficult for me to hear her. I ended up taking the bus to George and arrived at the George bus terminal around 2:00 AM. Another

bus was there that was broken down. The driver from the other bus was interested in my trip. He watched me assemble my bike and load it with gear. I asked him about the campground and he was not familiar with it. I was told it was by the bridge that left town and mentioned that to the bus driver and he told me how to get to the bridge. I biked over the bridge and stopped at a gas station/store to find out about the campground. At first the 4 people working at the store didn't know about the campground. Then one of the people remembered seeing a campground and gave me very good instructions, but I still biked past it. I was trying to figure out where it was and stopped to look at my map. As I was looking at my map a person in a car asked me where I was headed, he told me where the campground was and also told me not to continue biking in the direction I was headed. He said it was dangerous down that road. I then turned back and was able to find the campground. I arrived at the campground around 3:00 AM and they charging an outrageous \$200 Ran (\$40.00 US) for one night. I thought about continuing, but was tired and decided to pay the high price for tent camping. I asked about the high cost and they said it was the high season price. (Daily miles 99.90 miles)

Day 4, Tuesday, December 28, 2004

I woke up early in the morning walked around the campground, took a shower and reorganized my stuff before packing my gear. At the campground, I saw black and white birds that sounded like crows, it turns out they were African Pied Crow. I biked to McDonald's for breakfast and arrived as they opened for business (I think it was 8:00 AM). East of George I entered the Garden Route. This part of the trip was lush than the previous semi-desert environments. It was a pleasant riding environment; I stopped for supplies in both Knysna and Crags. I saw a sign for an elephant farm near the road and decided to check it out. I arrived at the farm at 4:45 PM and was told that the last trip to the Elephants left at 4:30 PM. I asked if I could look out the back door at the farm and was told no. They said I could return the next day at 8:00 AM, but I said I was on a schedule and wouldn't be able to make it. It would have cost \$270 RAN for the elephant tour. I was willing to pay it, but later I was glad I was too late (Addo was a much better deal). It was a tough day of biking with 2 big hills. The first big hill was through a very poor region and seemed like it was not a safe place for a white man on a bike. Theft is supposedly high in South Africa and that hill seemed like the type of spot I would not want to be at night. During the day it's safer and I didn't have any problems. I ended up camping near the road just beyond the turn off to Nature Valley; I was very close to the start of the toll highway. If I would have had a little more time, I would have cycled to Natures Valley and camped there. The spot where I camped looked like a farm dump; there were piles of cut grass and broken plastic chairs. In order to be sure no one found me I pushed through the brush/grass to a safe, tough spot to set up my tent. Probably not a great place to camp; there are lots of dangerous snakes and ticks in South Africa. The place I camped seemed like a great

place for snakes. A few hours earlier I found a B & B that catered to backpackers, I was thinking about stopping to see if they had room for me, but didn't due to my limited time in South Africa. It probably would have been a nice place to stay; it was on top of a hill a long distance from any towns. (Daily miles 76.22 miles)

Day 5, Wednesday, December 29, 2004

I left camp at 6:15 AM; I wanted to make sure to leave before anyone found me. The ride was very nice along N2 and there were several impressive bridges, most of them build between 1982 and 1986. One of the bridges had a sign claiming it was the highest road bridge in the Southern Hemisphere and the largest single span concrete bridge in the world. The bridge is 216 meters high and has the highest bungee jump platform in the world. The bungee-jump is only 160 meters. I was there at 7:00 AM and the bungee jumping didn't start until 9:00 AM. I believe the bridge is at the border between the Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces of South Africa. I didn't have the opportunity to watch anyone bungee jumping, but did see 2 people jump off the bridge with parachutes. It was interesting because the base of the canyon was a lush thick forest. The people parachuting had to land in the river to avoid hitting trees. This part of my trip was through lush forests and I stopped for a hike at big tree. It cost \$6.00 RAN to hike the trail, it was a nice short hike and well worth the stop. It was nice to get off the bike and walk a little. I stopped at a service station with gift shops and a café. It was a very crowded spot and I spent at least an hour there. It was a great day for biking and I covered a little over 100 miles. When I was taking a break at a rest stop a couple (Thabo and Annalise) pulled up with their kids and the lady (Annalise) asked if she could get a photo of my bike. I said of course and asked if she wanted me in the photo. I also took a photo of her next to my bike. Then Annalise asked if I needed a ride and I didn't really need a ride, but I think it's a good way to meet local people when I travel. I told her that I had nothing against a ride and I would take a ride if they could drop me off somewhere affordable to stay. Then Annalise offered to have me stay at their place. I don't like to take advantage of people, but do like having the opportunity to meet local people. I told Annalise I would stay if it was not at all a problem. It seemed OK so I went with them. They first stopped at one of their friends' houses and dropped off their children. Then we went to their place, I took a shower and then they drove me to the waterfront in Port Elizabeth for dinner. They showed me the craft shops and then we ate dinner. I treating them to dinner, that night Annalise even cleaned my laundry. It was very nice of the couple to take me in for the night and I think they also enjoyed meeting someone from America. Annalise worked for a radio station and tried to set up an interview for me with her radio station. It turned out the radio host had a full day and would not be able to fit me into his program. That was too bad, it sounded like a fun thing to do. Thabo was an attorney and he was doing a lot of work on their house. He told me he paid locals to do the work; it was too expensive to have a contractor work on his house. I asked if he

was worried about theft from his local workers and he told me he was very fortunate to have a local lady that help make sure the workers were honest. Thabo and Annalise thought I should not travel the highway from East London to Port Shepstone (I thought they called it the trans highland route). They said that area had big hills and lots of poverty. They said people traveling in that area have been killed for their cell phones and that it was very common to be mugged or robbed if you're not careful on that section of the road. They also told me that the areas with the poor African blacks are referred to as locations (It sounded similar to what we call reservations in North America). Thabo also mentioned that some people believed that AIDS could be cured by having sex with young children, which meant a lot of young kids were being raped. Sounded horrible! Thabo also told me how the parents of male Africans had to give cows to the bride's parents when their son marries. He said if the girl was the chief's daughter the boy's parents might need to give 30 cows. If the girl was from normal family, it may only require one cow from the man's parents. That night was a very comfortable night in Thabo and Annalise's upstairs room in Port Elizabeth (Daily miles 102.27 miles)

Day 6, Thursday, December 30, 2004

I was very comfortable and slept until 7:00 AM. Annalise cooked me an excellent breakfast then Thabo push started her VW bug and she went to work. I took some photo of Thabo's house and his swimming pool. He had a very nice place. Shortly after Annalise left for work Thabo got a phone call from her saying the car stalled. We packed my stuff in his SUV and headed out to rescue Annalise. She was able to get her car running and Thabo gave me a ride to a starting point for my biking. He wanted to get me past the poverty areas before dropping me off. The parts we drove by seemed like areas where I could have biked, but would not have wanted to stop. I was glad that Thabo drove me past the bad neighborhoods. Thabo dropped me off about 40 km from Addo Elephant national park (near the intersection of R334 and R335). I loaded my bike and after biking 3.9 miles I remembered I didn't take a GPS reading and then took one. On my ride to Addo I saw a couple of touring cyclists and stopped to talk with them. They were from Czechoslovakia and were on a 3 year around the world bike ride. I talked to them about the road to Port Shepstone and they said they avoided that area. They mentioned that they had heard that the Western Cape was safer for white people than the Eastern Cape. They also told me that they went to Addo and did not take a game ride. They said they talked with people at Addo that had not seen any game in the park. They told me that I was the first touring cyclist they had seen in South Africa. I couple of days earlier I saw a couple of people that looked like they were touring and I was told from a person in Cape Town that he had seen 3 other groups of people bicycle touring that month. I biked to the town of Addo and had a Hawaiian chicken sandwich for lunch at a fast-food restaurant. The man running the restaurant was probably the only white man with a business in the small

town. He was very friendly and was interested in my travel stories. He filled up my water bottle with cold water and I biked away. I made it to Addo Elephant Park in time to reserve a 3:00 PM game drive. They didn't have any room on the evening or night drives. I set up my camp and took the 3:00 PM game drive. I saw elephant, buffalo, zebra, kudu, warthog, eland and ostrich on the game drive. Back at camp I walked to the pool and found a large tortoise near the pool. I went to the campground water hole and saw about 20 water buffalo going to the water at dusk. I met a man as I was watching the buffalo and he told me about an elephant that attacked a lady at a golf course near Kruger National Park. Supposedly the Elephant attacked because the lady took a photo with a flash and that made the elephant angry. We talked about my biking trip and he recommended that I took a bus from East London to Port Shepstone. He said it was very hilly and might not be really safe. It started out as a very nice night with lots of stars, a few hours after I fell asleep it turned to a light rain. When I opened my tent to close the rain flap mosquitoes must have entered my tent. I ended out getting a few bug bites later that night. (Daily miles 27.78 miles)

Day 7, Friday, December 31, 2004

I woke up around 5:30 AM and it was very rainy. I asked about getting on the morning game ride and they said there was room. Some other people waiting for the game drive cancelled because they heard it would probably not be very good with the rain. I decided not to go on the game ride and went back to my wet campsite. As I was packing up my gear the lady camped near me invited me over for coffee and stale bread. I took the cup of coffee and bread. I ended up talking with her husband about riding from East London to Port Shepstone. He told me not to worry about the people in that area, he said the people would not bother me as long as I didn't stop. Sounded contradictory, their nice, but don't stop! The couple left with another couple for a game drive. The funny thing is they left me along at their campsite. It seems like in the US people would not trust a stranger enough to leave them unattended at their campsite. After I finished my coffee and bread, I finished packing my gear. I started biking east around 7:30 AM. It was very wet and I saw lots of large centipedes crossing the road. On the way to Paterson, I saw an abundant train, so I stopped and set up my tripod to take an automatic photo. As I was taking my photo a passenger train went by and the conductor and passengers gave me a funny look. When I arrived in Paterson the store looked like a bad place to stop, a lot of poor people hanging around the outside of the store. I continued biking straight on the road through town. One of my maps (Globetrotter travel map) did not show a short cut road to N2 and the other map (Lonely Planet, South Africa, Road Atlas) showed a paved shortcut to N2. It turned out the shortcut to N2 was on a dirt road. If I would have known it was dirt, I probably would have gone the long way. It was not much shorter. The whole day was very wet and miserable for biking. It was New Years Eve and I wanted to have a beer at a bar. I arrived in Grahamstown around 6:00 PM and found a large campground

with only a few campers. It didn't look like a good place for New Years so I biked to town to see if I could find a place to stay. It was a very neat historic town with a lot of poor people and not much action. I think it was just the wrong season, the man at the campground said people were at the coast. My guess is it would be a big tourist attraction at the correct time of year. Grahamstown has lots of neat museums and old buildings. I stopped at one hotel and they said they didn't have room for me. They suggested another hotel and that hotel didn't look like a safe place for me so I decided to stay at the campground. Before returning to the campground, I stopped at a store and bought supplies. It was the first good place I had seen all day for buying stuff. Earlier that day I finished all the breakfast bars and wheat thins that I brought with me from Portland. Even though I was very hungry the burger I bought at the store was not very taste. Since it was wet and cold, I hadn't used up much water that day. I was very wet and wanted to stay indoors, so I rented a rondavel (Round building - yurt like building) at the campground that night. (Daily miles 65.14 miles)

Day 8, Saturday, January 1, 2005

It was a very rainy night and I was glad that I rented a rondavel (yurt) for the night. I woke up at 5:30 AM and biked into town to take photos of all the neat old buildings. I didn't want to take photos the previous day because I didn't want people seeing me take photos. Not too many people around in the morning. I also got some money from the ATM and then biked back to the campsite. It was still wet and cool, but not rainy. I started biking and it became windy and rainy, at first it did not seem as bad as the previous day. A little before Peddie I stopped to take a photo of a plant and a young kid across the street saw me and tried to sell me some prickly pears (cactus fruit). I was not interested and he seemed mad that I did not buy any. I didn't find a store until I biked about 50 miles. The store was in Peddie, so I bought supplies. I saw some big piles of dirt east of Peddie and took a closer look, they were huge ant hills. I continued biking and it seemed like a scary area for a white traveler. Everyone was black except me. In one town (might have been Chalumna) a girl jumped towards me like she was planning on pushing me over. She stopped just shy of making contact. She started yelling and laughing at me as I left. She wasn't very old, probably about 16 and was with a couple of her friends. I think she was just showing off to her friends. In that same town a man pushing a wheel barrel up a hill saw me and started yelling something as he turned and headed my direction. In both cases I just continued to bike and ignored the people. I went through that town quickly without looking back. Other times people said things to me as I passed, but I could not understand them and simply lifted my shoulders in misunderstanding. Those people looked friendly. They may have just been curious about my trip. It was a very wet day, on the downhill my brakes were not working well; I was going about 23 mph with my brakes fully engaged. I continued and was looking for a place to stay. I was hoping to find a hotel, but I had not seen anything all day. At one point I saw a sign for a hotel, but no road

and it looked closed. I had passed a road about 300 feet before seeing the hotel, but didn't feel like backtracking for a hotel that looked closed. I also thought I was getting close to the coast and assumed I would see more hotels. Well, I kept biking and it started getting dark. As I was biking down a big hill a car passed and I could see a person in the light on the other side of the road going up the hill. When I arrived where I thought the person was on the other side of the road, I could see him near me on my side of the road. He had quietly crossed the road and was headed towards me. I said hi and he never said a word. At that point he started going quickly towards me. Luckily, I was going downhill and was able to get away. This person made me very nervous because he was totally quiet and definitely going towards me. It was dark and wet, I'm pretty sure he wanted to take my bike so he could ride it home. We were a long distance from a town. At that point I was scared, wet and just wanted a place to stay. It was dark and I found a place that I may have been able to set up my tent. It seemed too wet, so I decided to continue and was trying to hitch hike. An African teacher in a Toyota mini-van pulled over and asked if my bike was broken. I told him no and asked if there were any nearby hotels, he said not close and asked if I needed a ride. He was in one of the Toyota vans that I often saw packed with 15 to 20 Africans. Those Toyota vans were used as mini busses and normally charged for rides. I was definitely willing to pay, but the man would not take my money. He gave me a ride to a hotel that was near the airport in East London. The hotel did not have any vacancies. I then biked to another hotel, the Orange Grove Hotel and found a room. I was very wet and cold! It was 8:00 PM and the restaurant and bar at the hotel had just closed. However, I was able to slip an order in for a meal before everyone left. A local lady in the bar was asking me about my trip, she talked a lot. Like other people she told me I should not bike from East London to Port Shepstone, I figured after that day's experience she was right and I decided to take a bus the next day. (Daily miles 90.13 miles)

Day 9, Sunday, January 2, 2005

I woke up around 6:00 AM and wrote some notes in my journal. Then I walked around the hotel, I was locked in. I looked out one door and there was a big German Shepard. The dog saw me and started barking. I packed my gear and was ready to leave the hotel around 6:30 AM. I went to the front desk as another person was trying to leave and as some of the hotel help entered. Me and the other man left our room keys with the motel help. I biked to downtown East London and there was broken glass all over the place. There was even glass in the nice beach front area, in East London I was definitely a minority. I was worried about getting a flat, but luckily did not get one. I wanted to see about taking a bus to Port Shepstone and went to the visitor center to find out about the bus station. The visitor center didn't open until 9:00 AM, so I had to wait about ½ hour until it opened. They pointed out the nearby bus terminal and I went over there. I went to 2 different bus companies and they both told

me their bus to Port Shepstone were full. They also both told me I could wait until the bus showed up and see if the bus driver could get me on the bus. I tied up my bike and gear in preparation for a possible bus ride. I didn't think there was much hope; people kept coming into the bus station. When the Greyhound bus arrived, there were several people on standby. I told the bus driver I was on stand by and he mentioned they were running an extra bus. Both buses looked packed, so I just stayed near the first bus. The bus driver ended up taking me with my bike on that bus. As I was looking for a seat a lady, Anel from Durban welcomed me to sit next to her. Anel was very friendly and talked a lot during our bus ride. Anel was originally from East London and was returning to Durban after visiting her parents in East London for Christmas and New Years. She told me she worked with managers and trained people of different races to work together. Anel enjoyed her work and liked how much progress she had seen with black and white co-workers. Not too long-ago South Africa still had segregated schools and things have really improved in the past 10 years. Anel told me that one in three pregnant women in South Africa had HIV, which sounds really bad. As we drove towards Durban Anel pointed out things on the way. In the town of Umtata, she pointed out a big house and told me she thought it was Nelson Mandel's house. I was looking out the bus as we traveled and Umtata seemed like the first safe place I had seen to stop for supplies if I would have ridden my bike over the pass. It would have been a long ride to Umtata. The only other place that looked like a good stop on the way to Port Shepston was the town of Kokstad. At one point on the bus trip, I heard a big thump. I thought the bus had gotten a flat. Someone in the bus said it was a pothole. Later the bus driver stops and the story was that the bus had hit a sheep on the side of the road. As we bused over the pass I saw 4 accidents on the side of the road, those were the only accidents I saw while I was in South Africa. The bus was 95-100% full all the time, we would come to a town, people would get off the bus and new people would get on. For most of the bus trip all the seats in the bus were full. We arrived in Port Shepstone a little after 9:00 PM. It was very rainy; I assembled and packed my bike under the canopy of a gas station. The people that worked at the gas station watched me prepare my bike and commented on my journey. I asked someone where I could find a nearby motel and they said there was a B & B across the street. I could not find it and went back to the station to ask another person. They told me a motel was a short distance down the coastal road. I asked a second person and that person also pointed to the road that went up the coast. The first motel was a few miles away, I arrived there a little after 10:00 PM and there was no receptionist. Some people in the hotel heard me and came out of their room. I asked them about checking into a room and they pointed to the empty reception office. I couldn't figure out how to see if they had any rooms, so I biked to a nearby bar. I was soaking wet and walked into the bar to see if they could tell me where I could find a nearby hotel. They pointed to the one I just checked out and when I told them no one was at the reception desk the bar tender gave me complex directions to 2 different backpacker hostels. A

man, Kevin, overheard me looking for a place to stay and told me I could stay at his place for 100 RAN. Kevin was very nice. He gave me a beer and a few slices of pizza and later he told me I could stay at his place for 50 RAN. The bar tender told me they called the backpacker hostel and it was full. He told me I could trust Kevin and it might be my best option. It turned out that Kevin had a VW bug and lived a long distance from the bar. He would not be able to get my bike in his car, the man that owned the bar said I could leave my stuff at the bar and get it the next day. I wanted to leave early the next day to bike to Port Edwards. The bar tender said I would need to wait until at least 9:00 AM to get my bike. I didn't really want to wait that long. Another man, Adrian, that was at the bar overheard everything and told me I could stay at his father's spare room for free and that he would be able to get my bike and stuff in his car. I had a beer with Adrian and offered to buy him a beer, but he was done drinking for the night. I went with Adrian to his father's place and we ended up passing Kevin on the side of the road. Kevin's VW stalled in the rain and he was waiting for his friends to get a tow rope. We continued to Adrian's father's house and he gave me a very nice place to stay with a private Kitchen and bathroom. It was a little hot with a few mosquitoes, but still a great place to stay. Adrian's dad had a couple of dogs and I did not get the chance to see them that night. The next morning, I had to get past the dogs to go for my bike ride. (Daily miles 9.38 miles)

Day 10, Monday, January 3, 2005

I woke up at 6:00 AM and started biking at 7:00 AM. I had to get past the guard dogs. Adrian told me not to worry about the dogs; he said they would be more scared of me than I should be of them. The way he was talking I was expecting the dogs to be small dogs and didn't know what kind of dogs to expect. I was surprised when I left my room to find big German Shepard growling at me. I kept my bike between me and the dogs as I left Adrian's father's yard. I left all my stuff in the room I asked Adrian the previous night if I stayed for two nights and he said that would be fine. I explained to him my plan was to bike to Port Edwards and then back to Port Shepstone. After getting past his dogs, I started biking to Port Edward. As I was biking I saw a monkey dart across the road with a baby monkey on its stomach. It was a very nice ride and I stopped at Riverbend Crocodile farm (Southbroom). The crocodiles were huge and there was an interesting snake exhibit. I was surprised at the number of very dangerous snakes in the region. After seeing all the venomous local snakes, I felt lucky that I did not run into one of them while camping or walking through brush on the side of the road. The only snake I saw roaming in South Africa was one crossing the road when I went to Kruger National Park. After checking out the farm I continued biking toward Port Edwards. It was a hot humid day, but at least it was not raining. I biked to Port Edwards and stopped at the beach. It was a nice beach and cost to park a car. Bikes were free, it seemed funny there was a large row of beach front homes where the people could see the ocean through a barb wire fence. I did not see

any gates for the people in the beach front home to get access to the ocean. After the beach I continued biking south for another 5 miles to a big river. On the way back north, I stopped for lunch at the Kentucky Fried Chicken in Port Edwards, I paid for a 3-piece chicken meal, but was only given 2 pieces of chicken. After 3:00 PM it rained on and off, mostly on. Just before I arrived in Port Shepstone, I saw some lightning and heard the bang about one second later. I guess that means the lightning was about a mile away. About 2 minutes later it started pouring, I immediately got soaked. I saw the gas station that the bus dropped me off the previous day and ducked out from the rain behind it under a canopy. There was another man under the canopy and we talked. He asked which state I was from; I guess my accent gave me away. He showed me his sign that said "please help with food". We talked and he told me he was homeless and I asked him how well that worked there. He said sometimes people give him sandwiches or other food. He didn't ask me for anything and he didn't really seem like a bum. When the rain slowed down the man went back to the road with his sign to try to get food. I ended out getting a major stomach ache that evening and had a short case of the runs. It may have been the Crocodile sandwich I ate at Riverbend crocodile farm. When I got back to Adrian's place I met his sister, Donna and father. They all seemed interested in learning about my bike ride and America. Adrian fed me chicken, salad and 2 beers. I told him I didn't need anything, but he insisted. Adrian's father told me he had been to America a couple of times. His father told me he went to Orlando one time and could not find Disney world, he thought I was from Orlando because my card said I was from Hillsboro, OR. He thought to OR stood for Orlando. I was talking to Adrian about the way I had not seen very many accidents and he told me that 1000s of people died every year in accidents, a lot of them in the overcrowded Toyota vans. I noticed a lot of those vans packed with people crawling up roads and they didn't look very safe. He told me they were mini-busses and the drivers often drove back and forth over passes several times per day picking up passengers. It was like the van the teacher had when he gave me a ride to East London. Normally they charge for a ride, but the man that gave me a ride to East London would not take money when I offered it to him. We also talked about the crime and drugs in Johannesburg. Adrian lived in Johannesburg, but was not currently working. He was involved in TV entertainment. He told me that people traveling in the poor parts of South Africa have been killed for their cell phones. We sat on his father's back porch until after 10:00 PM talking. There were several Gecko lizards on the wall of his father's house gathered around the light. It was a very rainy evening and it seemed like Adrian's dogs started getting used to me. They came up to me sniffed me and eventually let me pet them. There were a lot of neat sounding frogs in his yard and in the mornings, I heard noises that sounded like monkeys. (Daily miles 74.66 miles)

Day 11, Tuesday, January 4, 2005

I left Adrian's place at 7:05 AM and started biking north. I stopped for Breakfast at Whimpey's in Hibberdene, as I was eating and waiting for Breakfast, I watched a young man washing the windows. I could not believe how slow he was working; it took him about 45 minutes to clean each small window. He continued to work the same spots over and over. I don't think the person was lazy, I just think he was milking the job. In South Africa it seemed like people kept busy at work, but they were not real productive. I don't think people were paid much either. I stopped at a view point and dropped one of my gloves. One of the people cleaning the side of the road handed me my glove. He was working with two other people cleaning the road side. It seemed like they were not getting much work done, I imagine they worked for the government. I told the workers that I was biking to Durban and they seemed surprised that I would bike that far (it was not much further). I stopped at a gas station in the town of Scottburgh and a young lady that worked at the station wanted one of the cokes I just purchased in the gas station store. It kind of made me mad that an employee of the service station would ask one of their customers for something they just purchased in their store. I imagine the people whom owned the gas station would not have approved. At the gas station I also bought what I thought was a 1.5-liter bottle of water. I put the water in my camel back and as I biked, I found out it was a sweet carbonated drink. I really wanted water, so I was not very happy with the drink. At one point, I saw a monkey run across the road and later in the day I saw a 3-foot lizard run into a sewage drain. If I would have been paying more attention, I would have been able to stop and take a photo of the lizard before I scared it into the sewage drain. I stopped to eat lunch at the ruins of an old picnic table. I had to go through some tall grass and lots of seeds stuck to my cloths. It took a long time to get the seeds off; I still had some of the seeds on my clothes when I returned to Portland, Oregon a couple of weeks later. I biked most of the way to Durban on the road (R102) that paralleled the main highway, N2. It seemed like this area the Africans had more money and were happier. At one point, I noticed a white man carrying a duffle bag as he walked down the road. The funny thing is he looked really out of place because everyone else that was walking along the road was black. Up to this point the white people I saw were limited to a few bikers and runners near resort areas. I realized that I must have looked really out of place being the only white person biking along the roads in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Most of the African were friendly and waved. However, I often had African give me a look like they were angry with the treatment they received from some whites and they glared at me like I was one of the bad guys. I biked through the Toyota manufacturing area on the way to the Durban Airport and got my first flat of the trip. It was not a bad place for a flat, there was a tree to fix it and most of people walking the street were Toyota plant workers and left me alone. One guy asked me if I had a flat and then asked where I was from. I told him I was from America and he did not ask where in America. On this trip I kept

telling people I was from America. Most people did not question me after that; I do not like to tell people I am from the USA. A lot of people in the world do not like people from the US because our country has some unpopular policies. On other trips, like when I went to China, I told people I was from Canada. When I first went to South Africa, I told people I was from Canada and found people did not care that I was from the USA. As I was fixing my flat tire, I broke my odometer cable. I tried fixing it that night, but was not able to fix the sensor. I then biked the last few miles to the airport to see if I could pick up my Hertz rental car early. They told me they did not have any cars available at that time and they would have one the next day. I mentioned I wanted to see if any of the other places had cars and that seemed OK. Hertz tried really hard to get me a car and another customer told me that Hertz had the best deal on rental cars in Durban. I asked Hertz about affordable hotels near the airport and they gave me detailed verbal directions to the Island hotel. They told me I would pass the Hertz Depoe on the way to the hotel and I could talk to a man named Jeff in the morning at the Depoe to find out if my car was ready. I decided to wait and get the car the following day from Hertz. I then biked towards where they told me to go for the island hotel. I didn't have written directions, but it seemed clear which way they told me to go. They also said someone from Hertz would be headed toward the depot and would make sure I was going the correct direction. Well, I never saw the person from Hertz and I didn't see the Hertz depot. From the directions I thought I needed to go up this hill and part way up the hill I could see a hotel on another road. I then biked down to the hotel and found out it was the Island Hotel. The hotel was run down; people were loitering in the park area in front of the hotel. Since the price was right, I stayed there for the night. The hotel was not on secured land like most places I had seen, but there was a security man occasionally sitting at a table near the rooms. The price of the room was 171 RAN according to the price list, but the man only charged me 150 RAN. I'm not sure why it was discounted. That evening I had dinner at the restaurant in the hotel and a beer at the bar. I talked for a little while to the man that owned the hotel and he told me his daughter lived in San Diego, California. He also mentioned that he had made a few trips to North America. There was a broken air conditioner in my room. I was able to get it running with my bike tools, just a loose wire and broken switch. I tried fixing my bike odometer by cutting the Cadence sensor off the bike and connecting its wire to the broken odometer wire. It didn't work, well I had to estimate my miles for the rest of my trip. Since I picked up the rental car the next day I did not bike much more. There were mosquitoes in my room at the Island hotel, I was having trouble getting to sleep, so I took a sleeping pill and had a great night's rest. (Daily miles 71.31 miles)

Day 12, Wednesday, January 5, 2005

I woke up at 6:45 AM and biked to the beach. There were tons of medium sized crabs running around on the rocks. I then biked back to Island hotel, packed my gear and

biked towards the airport. I left my gear at the hotel; I figured I could get it with the rental car. On the way to the airport, I found the Hertz depot and asked for Jeff. I was told that I would need to go next door and talk to the supervisor. I could not find the supervisor and then biked to the airport. I ended up finding Jeff at the airport Hertz office. They didn't have a car and then found one that they said I would have to turn in the next day. I told them I would rather not have a car that needed to be turned the next day. Apparently, the car they wanted to give me was one that had too many miles and was ready to be taken out of service. They told me if I came back at noon, they should have another car. I then biked back to the hotel and since I had plenty of time, I biked up a hill towards Daytona Beach. I didn't find the beach, but did see some very nice homes that overlooked the ocean and a bunch of monkeys hanging out in front of some apartment. I biked back to the hotel and took a shower. I also cleaned my shorts and packed all my gear on my bike. I ended up leaving the hotel around 10:00 AM. As I was checking out of the hotel, I talked with the hotel owner for a few minutes about North America. There was a monkey in the tree at the front of the hotel eating bread that someone from the hotel left out. I biked back to the airport to see if they had my rental car yet and they still didn't have one. I was a little early and they still felt they should have one by noon. I stored my bike and gear at the Hertz office and walked over to the airport. I bought lunch, filled out and mailed a bunch of postcards. I then went back to the Hertz rental car and they told me they did not have a car like the one I ordered. However, they had a standard transmission car and wanted to know if I could drive that type of car. I told them I thought I shouldn't have any problems. They questioned the "I thought" and I explained that I drove a standard car, but the steering wheel and shifter are on the opposite side of the car in North America. I ended up renting the standard transmission car and headed north. I refused the insurance that came with the car because I have it with my master card. However, since I was in South Africa refusing the insurance required a very large deposit; the deposit was 11,500 RAN deposit or 93 RAN/day for the insurance. I was planning to learn to drive the right-hand steering car for a while on the open highway. Well, I left the airport on the highway and somehow ended up driving through downtown Durban. Lots of traffic and light, I was a little nervous but didn't have any problems. I stopped at a shopping center north of Durban in a rural area. It was a large shopping center a long distance from a town and I ended up buying groceries and a souvenir. The lady at the gift shop told me the statue I bought was hand made in South Africa, but it turned out to be a plastic statue. Next stop was Crocodile Valley; I arrived a little after they fed the crocodiles. Bummer!!! However, I was there in time for them to feed the snakes. I watched them try to feed a boa constrictor a dead chicken; the snake would not eat the chicken. They went to feed some of the smaller snake and I decided I was more interested in seeing the crocodiles. I hiked to Crocodile Lake and then hiked the forest loop trail. It was a very nice trail with monkeys and birds in the woods near small ponds. There were more large crocodiles at Riversbend crocodile farm (the one I

visited near Port Shepstone), but Crocodile Valley had a much nicer and larger piece of property. After the crocodile farm I drove to Richards Bay to camp, I thought there was a game reserve in Richards Bay, but I was told at the campground the nearest game park was about an hour north at St. Lucia. The campground was secure and I was told there were only three tent spaces available (E3, E26 and E33). I went looking for the campsites and had a tough time finding all three of the available sites. One site was squeezed between two other campers and the other sites were near empty sites. The third site I never found. The funny thing is there were hundreds of empty camp sites; I'm not sure why I was only allowed to choose from three of them. Some of the empty sites were probably in areas that were not being used and other empty sites may have been for trailers or RVs. I picked one of the sites and went back to the office to let them know which site I selected. There are no large RVs in South Africa, but I did see a couple of very small RVs (slight larger than a van). The campground was surrounded by a big barb wire fence and there was a guard near a gate used to reach the beach and another guard near the main entrance gate. Not such a neat environment for camping, although the grounds were large with a swimming pool and store. I guess everything you need! Since it was dark, I figured it was probably not a good idea to go to the beach. I talked to the beach fence guard and he said there were only a couple of people on the beach. I figured he meant only a couple campers and assumed there would also be locals walking the beach. The next morning, I went to the beach and realized the whole beach was probably secure and no locals roamed the beach. It would have been fine going to the beach that night. (Daily miles 15 miles)

Day 13, Thursday, January 6, 2005

I woke up early and when I opened the car truck the alarm went off. Then I went to the restroom and thought I had disarmed the car alarm. Well, I opened the car and the alarm went off again. I felt bad having the alarm go off in the middle of the campground 2 times at such an early hour in the morning. I'm sure the other campers did not appreciate my alarm, oops sorry! Then I went to the beach and walked around. The beach was long and empty. I only saw a couple of people fishing and a couple of people walking the beach. I walked a long distance and didn't see anyone on the beach away from the campground fence. I think the beach was surrounded by security fences for miles. I went for a quick swim in the ocean, the water was very nice. As I walked on the beach, I was looking for shells and didn't see any. All I found to take home was a rock. I packed up camp and drove to McDonalds for breakfast in Richards Bay. As I was driving north, I saw a Zulu arts flea market next to the road. I stopped and the art was reasonable priced, so I bought some stuff. I continued to drive towards Swaziland. In order to go into Swaziland, I had to show my passport to leave South Africa and then I had to show it again at another office to enter Swaziland. It cost \$5.00 RAN to enter Swaziland and they checked my trunk. There were a lot of neat huts in Swaziland, it reminded me of Zimbabwe. I did not see any white people near

the roads until I reached Ezulwini. Ever since I left East London there were about 10,000 blacks to every one white in rural areas walking along the roads. Whenever I saw a white person in the rural areas they seemed way out of place, that's the way I must have looked as I biked through some of the rural areas. As I was looking for a place to stay, I noticed a police officer writing a ticket near the casino. I wanted to find a campground. The first time I drove through town I didn't find a place to stay. I found another art flea market. It was not far from the casino and none of the items had prices. A couple of times I asked for prices and found the prices much higher than the art flea market I visited earlier that day. I didn't buy anything. I ended up calling Peter from the campground, the man I was e-mailing to find out information about South Africa. Then I went back to town and stopped to see how much it cost to stay in this bed and breakfast. They said it was \$300.00 RAN per night; I didn't like the price so I asked them how to get to the campground. They gave me directions and when I drove back by the spot where I saw the police giving a ticket, I was not sure what the speed limit was, but I knew I was at the same part of the road with the police. Therefore, I drove about 50 KPH which I believe was slower than I needed to go. The police officer was clocking me and gave me a funny look, probably because I was going too slowly. I then found a fortified campground (surrounded by walls with barb wire fencing on top) and noticed they had rooms for rent. I asked how much it cost for a room and they said 550.00 RAN. That was very expensive, probably because it was very close to the casino. I then asked about camping and it was only 50.00 RAN for camping. So of course, I went for the camping, there was only one other couple camping. They had about 10 camp sites. After setting up camp I biked to the hot springs, it cost \$10.00 RAN to enter and didn't seem worth my time. Therefore, I didn't pay to visit it. Then I biked to the casino. The man at the door asked if I was there for the casino and pointed me in the direction to get tokens (a card). I assume I had to spend some money to see the casino, so I paid the \$20.00 RAN minimum for a gambling card. The casino was very big and fancy; I don't know where the money came from to support the casino. I walked around and checked out the hotel, restaurant and swimming pool. Next, I gambled away my 20.00 RAN. I mostly placed the 0.10 RAN machine and it took a while to lose my money. I was getting tired of gambling, so I increased my bet. Once the money was gone, I biked back to the campground in the dark. A couple of time people yelled things out of their car as I was biking the short distance back to my campsite. It seemed like a poor area. I was glad to make it back to the secure campground with my bike. I had a couple of beers at the campground while I wrote notes in my journal and filed out postcards. Throughout the day I wanted to take photos of huts and people, but I didn't want people to know I was taking their photo or know I had a camera. (Daily miles 4 miles)

Day 14, Friday, January 7, 2005

In the morning I packed up and started driving north. My first stop was at Piggs Peak

where I bought some supplies. Going back into South Africa from Swaziland required two passport checks, but no money. I drove past Malelane gate (entrance to Kruger National Park) and stopped at the nearby town to get supplies and gas. When I bought groceries, they asked if I wanted a bag, I decided to say yes. When I checked my receipt, I noticed I was charged for the bag, I noticed that another time in my trip. I then drove back to Malelane gate to see if I could go into the park a day early. I had reservations for the two following nights. I was able to get camping at Letaba. I wanted to camp at the northern end of the park (Punda Maria rest camp), but they said I didn't have time to drive to that part of the park. It was only about 11:30 AM and I figured I had plenty of time to drive the 226 kilometers to Letaba. They mentioned the speed limit was only 50 kilometers per hour and I felt I would not need to push hard to arrive at the campground gates before they closed at 6:30 PM. I started driving towards Letaba and considered stopping to take a photo of some impala a distance from the road, but didn't stop because I figured I would see more, well I went a long distance before seeing anything else. Then I saw a Rhino off in the distance, but there were too many cars stopped checking it out. I finally found a spot where I could barely see the Rhino off in the distance. I got my camera with Telephoto lens out to take a photo and the Rhino sat down next to a tree. I took a photo, but it looked like a grey spot next to a tree. If I would have taken the photo 10 seconds earlier it would have been standing and you would have been able to tell it was a photo of a rhino. That was the only Rhino I saw in my four days at Kruger national Park. However, I didn't miss anything with the impalas, because I saw thousands of them and they are the most common animal in the park. I kept stopping to take photos and thought I was supposed to be at the camp gate around 5:30 PM. I wasn't paying close attention when I was told I needed to be at the campground gate by 6:30 PM. I noticed several people passing me and figured I could drive 60 KPM instead of 50 KPM without worrying. It was hard watching my speed and looking for wildlife. At one point I man entered the road and waved me over. He was hiding behind a tree with a radar gun. He told me I was going 70 KPM, if I was that was my maximum speed. I don't think I was going that fast, but I was not looking at my speedometer when he waved me over. He showed me the radar and it did say 70 KPM. He wrote me a ticket for the full 70 KPH. He showed me the fees and the fee for 70 KPH was two times more expensive than 69 KPH. I told him he could have at least written me up for 69 KPH, the man was not very nice. He just went on to tell me how I would have to pay the fee before I could leave Kruger National Park. He said if I tried to leave without paying, they would force me to pay at the exit gate. His suggestion was to pay at the campground. I continued driving to Letaba rest camp. On the way to the campground, I asked someone about the gates closing and found out they did not close until 6:30PM, so I had plenty of time. I continued driving to Letaba rest camp and arrived there a little before 6:30 PM. I checked in for camping and went to the gift shop. That day I saw a

lot of wildlife, giraffes, elephants, warthogs, zebra and more. Even though I saw a lot of wildlife I believe that I saw more wildlife per hour at Addo Elephant Park.

Day 15, Saturday, January 8, 2005

The camp ground gates open at 4:30 AM. I wanted to get started early and woke up at 4:45 AM. I left the gates by 5:00 AM and not far from the campground I saw some hippopotamuses. It was dusky and I was trying to take photos with the lack of light. This was the first time I had taken photos with my digital camera in limited light. More hypos walked to the river and I tried different photo modes. Then even more hypos went to the river. They were about 150 feet away so I needed my zoom lens. I saw about 10 to 15 hypos go to the river and none of my photos looked worth keeping. Later that morning I found out that there was a night mode on the digital camera and tried taking similar photos with my camera and they seemed to come out fine. I continued driving north and for some reason was in a hurry, not speeding. I saw a car parked on the road observing something and I drove past. The lady gave me a funny look and pointed at a lion sitting under a tree. I would have never seen the lion if she would not have pointed it out. I backed up and her husband said there were two lions. They had the perfect viewing point. I backed up and drove forward to try getting photos. I was able to get some good photos of one of the lions before it laid it head down to take a nap. The other lion started to move, but I did not get a good photo of that one before it went to sleep. By that time a few other cars had pulled up and it was not easy to see the lions. I was split between staying there and waiting to see if the lions moved again or continuing north. It seemed like the lions were not going to move, so I continued driving north. As I drove through the park, I stopped at all the rest camps to look at the gift shops and occasionally buy stuff. It seemed like as I went further north there was less wildlife, maybe it was due to the time of day. I arrived in Punda Maria rest camp and asked the people if it was faster to drive outside the park to get back to Letaba rest camp. I was interested in getting out of the park for a short time and seeing rural South Africa again. The man at Punda Maria kept insisting that I was better off going back through the park. The other way was further and no wildlife. I couldn't figure out if it was faster or not, so I decided to drive back to Letaba through the park again. I should have just gone the other way for a change in scenery! It took me about 7 hours to get to Punda Maria from Letaba, it was only 176 kilometers, but all the photo stops, gift shop stops and 50 KPM speed limit made for a long drive. On the way back to Letaba, I only stopped at one rest camp and took a few side roads. In the morning when I headed north, I saw a fire in the horizon, it was probably 5 or 6 miles to the east. On the way back to Letaba the fire had spread to the Kruger national park road. I had to drive down the road with flames on both sides of the road, I felt a little nervous since I was in a car full of flammable fuel. Most of the fire was just grass and little flames, so I was able to make it through that portion of the road without any problem. It seemed funny because no one was trying to put the fire

out, I guess they just let fires run their course. The fire may have been set by hunters in Mozambique. Just my theory, since when I visited Zimbabwe a few years ago I was told that fires are often started by hunters. I arrived back at camp around 6:00 PM a half hour before the camp gates closed. If you do not make it back to the camp by 6:30 PM they close the gates and you could get fined for being out past 6:30 PM. I'm not sure how you get in the gates if they're closed. I had a great time driving through the park; I saw elephants, giraffe, lions, hypos, Buffalo and much more, at this point I have seen four out of the big five (the big five are Lion, Buffalo, Rhino, Elephant and Leopard). I paid my speeding ticket and found out that I had to be at the office at 3:40 AM the next day for my game walk. I wasn't sure how I would be able to get up that early, I did not have an alarm clock. I went to the store to look for a clock, but they didn't have one for sale. I ended up sleeping next to my bike odometer which has a clock and waking up periodically to look at the time using a flash light. I was able to get a full night of sleep, even though I had to be half awake! Before leaving for South Africa I made my reservations for camping and activities at Kruger National Park. It turns out the campgrounds had plenty of room, but the activities and cabins were not so easy to book at the last minute. That evening I went on a night game drive where I saw African hare (rabbit), big owl and a Jackal. There are two kinds of Jackal and this was the rare type. It was running all over the place and I never really got a good look at it. We also saw an elephant on the road that smelled gamey. The game driver said the smell was from a male elephant that was horny and could be aggressive. The elephant was walking directly towards our vehicle. The driver kept revving the engine and the elephant backed off. Then the elephant started towards us again and the driver revved the engine up to try scaring the elephant off. The elephant finally left and the driver said the elephants will normally leave their big game trucks alone, but may attach if you were in a small car, like the one I rented. On the game drive I sat next to a nice man from London, he was there visiting relatives in Johannesburg. The man from England had relatives on the game drive from Australia, Victoria BC Canada and South Africa. Probably more than half the people on the game drive were part of this same family reunion. He said they were staying in the park for over a week.

Day 16, Sunday, January 9, 2005

I woke up at 3:15 AM, I thought it was 3:45 AM. I never verified the time on my bike odometer, I thought it was only off by an hour, but it was off by 1.5 hours. Oh well, I got up early enough to get stuff organized and write in my journal before my game walk. Since I didn't have an alarm and I kept waking up to check the time I probably didn't get much sleep. The game walk was with three other people and two armed guides. The other people on the walk where a father (from Johannesburg) and his two children (they lived on a farm near Kruger National Park with their mother). The walk was slow, but we went a long distance and didn't see much wildlife. However, we did see a lot of buffalo. At one point the buffalo were looking at us and walking towards

us. Then they would turn and move away and then come back towards us. The guide said they were protecting their domain. But since they were not sure about us they kept leaving and finally left for good. We did not see any other large game, but did see a couple neat spiders. After the game walk, I asked one of the armed guides if they ever needed to use their rifle. She said she never needed it, but there were a couple times when other guides had to use their rifles. She told me one time I rhino charged a man and ended up dragging him by the belt. She said the guard had to use the rifle, I'm not sure if that meant the rhino was shot. She told me another time a group got in the middle of a herd of elephants and the guide had to use his rifle, not sure if an elephant was shot or it was just used to spook the animals. After the walk I packed up camp and saw an elephant eating brush outside the campground. It looked like the perfect photo for the Oregonian. As I was taking the photo a man at the campground asked me if I got a good photo and I told him it looked OK. Then I ended up talking with him for a while. We talked a lot about issues in South Africa. He told me that things were not easy for white men over 50 looking for work. He told me his brother had a psychology and management degree and was not able to find in good job for the past 5 years. His brother had been surviving on miscellaneous low paying jobs. The man also told me the unemployment rate was 60 % (later I was told it was only 40%). The man also told me that 15 years ago things were a lot safer in South Africa. In those days he could go to the beach without worrying. Now if he goes to the beach, he needs to take a few friends in case there is trouble. He thought the increase in crime was due to freedom fighters that migrated from Zimbabwe. He said most of the people that were bad are 14 to 18 years old. He told me about an instance were a group of people with the youngest person being 14 drug a farmer till he died. That sounded like some of the stories I heard about how the African killed a lot of the farmers in Zimbabwe. The man went on to tell me how he used to bike, but now people got killed for their bikes. He also commented on the fact that schools had recently been desegregated. He said that since the schools have been designated crime in school had increased and that some of the African customs did not agree with the white customs. He said that black men touch white women on the breast and buns in schools then claim the behavior is part of their culture. If a white person does the same thing it is called molesting. The man also commented on that black people could come into his neighborhood and if he touched them, he would get in trouble. However, if he went in their area and was murdered people would wonder why he was there and not do anything. We also talked about the wildlife in Kruger National Park and he told me he saw 7 lions the previous day. One of the lions was on a bridge and was so close to his car that he could have touched it. He said for safety he rolled his window up as the lion passed very close to his car. After talking with this man, I headed south. I stop at a view point and ran into people from Victoria, BC, Canada. They were on the night game drive the previous night and remembered me. At first, I didn't remember them then I recalled that they were sitting behind me on the game drive. As we talked, I saw

a hypo from the hill, but it was too far away to get a photo. My next stop was at Olifants rest camp. It seemed to be the nicest rest camp at Kruger National Park; it has a great spot to view wildlife. The drive south was nice I saw several elephants, giraffes, monkey, Hypos, impala and other wildlife. At one point, I saw a lizard crossing the road; it walked in a step-by-step method. I assume its slow motion was so I would not notice it. When I arrived at Skukuza rest camp I checked in and found out I needed to get up at 3:45 AM again. I then went to the gift shop to buy stuff and I also got an empty box to pack my gear in for my flight home.

Day 17, Monday, January 10, 2005

I woke up at 3:30 AM and went on a great morning game drive. I saw lion, hypos and a leopard. Most people don't get a chance to see all of the big five (lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard) while at Kruger National Park, but now that I saw the leopard that makes the big five for me. Most of the people I talked with did not see a rhino or a leopard. The only rhino I saw was on the first day I arrived in the park and it was too far away for a good photo. Now on the last day I saw my only leopard and it was moving too fast to get a good photo with my digital camera. I should have tried the fast shutter speed; one of my photos may have been good with the faster shutter speed. When the animals are darting all around you don't have time to figure out which mode will take a good photo. Back at camp I finished packing for the big drive to Johannesburg. Skukuza is the largest rest camp at Kruger National Park, so I spent time walking around before I left. I saw some neat skink lizards and checked out the library museum. There was a lion skin with a small knife on the wall at the library. The lion was killed by a ranger using the small knife. The story of the lion attack was the ranger killed the lion was on a sheet of paper near the lion skin. The lion had jumped on the ranger's horse and drug the ranger away. The ranger played dead and when the chance occurred, he stabbed the lion in the heart. Then he killed the lion by slicing his throat. The ranger was hurt and had to put his arm in a tourniquet. To top things off he was not rescued until a couple of days later. I ended up leaving Skukuza rest camp a little after 9:00 AM. On the drive south I stopped at Nkuhlu picnic ground where I watched three monkeys playing, I took a neat video of the monkeys with my camera. It seemed like the southern part of Kruger National Park had less big game (elephants and giraffes), but plenty of smaller game like zebra, impala, warthogs, neat birds, lizards and more. I was planning on getting to the Johannesburg airport by 7:00 PM, so I could meet up with Peter, a person I had been e-mailing before my trip to South Africa. Peter was a great source of information and very willing to help. I still needed a bike box and had to box my gear. I found a box for my gear at the Southern gate of Kruger National Park, Crocodile Bridge. I also needed to get tape and a magic marker for packing my gear in the boxes for the flight home. I had a tough time finding tape and a magic marker. I was also trying to find out how I would need to pack my bike for my KLM flight back to North America. I had to call information to

get the KLM number then I called the KLM number and was told I would need to call shipping at Johannesburg airport. They gave me the number for shipping and I tried calling the number a few times, but had no luck. I think they gave me the wrong country code for South Africa. I wasted a lot of time trying to figure out the bike regulations and had no luck so I continued driving towards the airport. I found a tick in my car as I was driving to Johannesburg. I stopped at a gas station to try calling Peter, but didn't know how to use the phone. I could hear him answer the phone, but didn't know that I needed to push the talk button for him to hear me. I tried a second phone thinking something was wrong with the phone and it was the same story I could hear him, but he couldn't hear me. I finally noticed the talk button and tried again. This time Peter didn't answer, I figure he was annoyed by getting two phone calls without anyone talking. I left him a message and continued driving to the airport. Good thing I was planning on meeting Peter, it took me a lot longer to get to the airport than expected. I finally arrived at the airport around 8:00 PM without a bike box and not knowing if they would take my bike without a box. I was able to check my bike having tied it up and not having a box. The guy who was seeing that my bike got on the plane told me he was making sure my bike made it on the plane; I ended up giving him a small tip for his help, I kept thinking I should have given him a bigger tip. I wanted to make sure my bike made it home. I then gave Peter a call to tell him I was late and wished we could have met. We talked for a few minutes and I told him if he needed any information on his planned North America trip to get in touch with me. He told me to send him an e-mail when I get back home. Actually, it was a good thing I tried to get back in time to meet with Peter. Otherwise, I might have been too late for my flight home. I talked to someone that told me it was 4 hours from Kruger back to Johannesburg and it took me a lot longer than that to get back. By the time I was at the flight departure area all the gift shops were closing. I was hoping to spend the rest of my South African money at the gift shops. Too bad I got more money earlier that day when I needed gas money. I went to the restroom and the guy working the restroom was very cheerful. He rushed to turn on the water and give me paper towels when I needed to dry my hands. I think he wanted a tip, but I didn't give him one, mostly because I really didn't need any help while I was in the restroom. He seemed a little annoying. On the flight to Amsterdam, I sat next to a lady from South Africa that was on her way to visit her daughter somewhere in Europe. She was very friendly and talked a lot during the flight. I cannot hear in one ear and the lady was on my bad side. Between her low voice and South African accent, I had a tough time understanding her. The funny thing is at one point we talked about her 5 hours lay over and she mentioned wanting to see the Red-Light district in Amsterdam. It's definitely interesting to see, the ladies are in their underwear in small glass rooms that line that portion of town.

Day 18, Tuesday, January 11, 2005

My flight arrived a little early in Amsterdam. That was probably a good thing since the boarding time was 9:10 AM and my arrival time was supposed to be 9:40 AM. The flight's departure time was 10:40 AM and it seemed funny that my itinerary said boarding was 9:10 AM, that's 1.5 hours before departure. I figured there must have been a mistake, but when I arrived at the gate, I realized the extra time was needed to put everyone through an additional security screening before entering the plane to the USA. The security line to get onto the plane was long and moving very slowly. When I went through security, they wanted to take a closer look at my Ostrich Eggs. In the x-ray they looked like round objects. When I showed them to the security guard he was impressed and showed it to some of the other guards. The eggs are very nicely painted and they were expensive. I ended up sitting next to a kid that was working on his masters in Bio-Med engineering in Madison Wisconsin. He received his BSEE at a school in Massachusetts. I asked him if his BSEE was from MIT. He said no and named another school, not sure what school. It turned out the boy was brought up in Zambia. Since I had a BSEE and started out working on a Bio-Medical Engineering degree we ended up talking a lot about engineering. Also, since I have been just over the border of Zambia we talked about Africa. I told him about the bridge I went to in South Africa that claimed to have the highest bungee jump in the world. The bridge was 216 meters high. I told him that I once bungee jumped off the bridge near Victoria Falls over the river between Zimbabwe and Zambia. I told him I thought it was the highest bungee jumping bridge and he told me that he had also bungee jump from that bridge and he believed that it was the highest bungee jumping bridge in the world. That bridge was 111 meters and since that's less than 216 meters it seems like the one in South Africa must be higher. In Chicago I had a lot of trouble with United Airlines. When I went to recheck my baggage, they would not take my bike and were not very friendly about it. The bike was nicely packaged, just not in a box. They told me that KLM should have boxed my bike and told me to ask them for a box. I then went to the KLM check in area and the lady was surprised that they would not take my bike. The lady at KLM was very friendly and called her front desk to see about getting me a box then she called another airline to see about a box. She had no luck; I then went back to United and told them I could not get a box. Then they found out that I could get a box at the domestic check in area. United also told me that there was a charge for shipping the bike. They told me if I had paid for shipping from another airline, they would still charge me again on United Airlines. There has only been two times in the past that I have been charged to ship my bike on an international flight. Also, one time in the past I took multiple airlines and more than one of the airlines had a charge for the bike, I was only charged with respect to the most expensive airlines. I went to the domestic area and the United Airlines man there was very friendly. He told me there was an \$80.00 charge for shipping the bike and \$10.90 for the empty box. I told him about the run around that I received for United international

and he tried to get a waiver on shipping me bike. He was not successful, but he was much nicer than the people in the United Airlines international check in area. The lady at United International also told me that I was only allowed one box, I had two boxes. When I originally checked my luggage on KLM, I was told I could have two boxes and my bike as long as the combined weight did not exceed their maximum weight. In order to avoid an additional charge at the United International check in, I used my strap tape to tape my two boxes together before shipping them. In the process of attaching the two boxes I took my wire cutters out of my bike toolbox and forgot to put them back. Well, I ended up losing my wire cutters when I went through security at the Chicago domestic gate. Last summer I took a flight to Alaska with my bike and was charged \$50.00 on Alaska airlines. On that flight I booked a round trip flight but only flew one way. It was cheaper that way. Well now when I fly in the US and do not use my frequent flier number the airlines make me go through the extra security. My ticket gets stamped with an SSSS when I need to go through extra security. I had about two hours between flights; it took about an hour to get through United Airline's poor international customer service. The funny thing is I only saved about \$40.00 making one leg of my flight on United, big mistake. I think in the future I will try to avoid United Airlines! I was very tired and had only one more flight before I returned to Portland. I knew if I went to sleep on the plane I would be out of track when I returned so I struggled to stay awake. When I arrived in Portland, Andrea was not at the airport to pick me up. I called her and she informed me that I gave her the wrong date for my return trip. She e-mailed me while I was in Africa to make sure of the date, but I didn't check my e-mail while I was in Africa. Well, I told her I would take the max, but she insisted on going to the airport and picking me up. I would have been OK on the max, but did prefer getting a ride. About an hour latter Andrea picked me up and we got a bite to eat. We ended up going to sleep around midnight and the following day I went to work at 8:00 AM. I was a little tired for a few days, but I really was not affected by the jet lag.