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Singletree



**Zac, Emily,  
and Luna  
McColley**

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**ICE DAM**  
Ice dam formed at the roof edge  
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**JOINT TENANCY**  
A legal term for when two or  
more people own equal shares of  
the same piece of property.



**LISTING PRICE**  
A list price is the price of a  
home for sale set by the a seller  
and listing agent.



**WALK-THROUGH**  
The final inspection of a home  
by a buyer before finalizing a  
deal to purchase the home.



**YIELD**  
The interest or return earned by  
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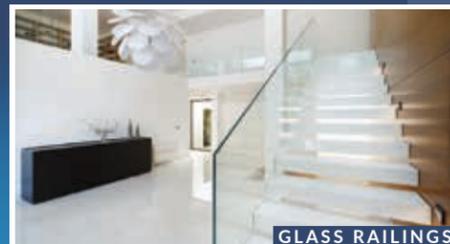
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**NOTE:** When community events take place, photographers may be present to take photos for that event, and they may be used in the publication.



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# Hello, Singletree Residents!

Happy February! I am thrilled to wish Zac and Emily McColley a very Happy Valentine's Day! Relatively new to the neighborhood, the couple met the old-fashioned way: as a weekend warrior visiting from Denver, Emily frequently ran across her brother's best friend ... and the rest, as they say, is history!

In this issue, we travel afar. In his own words, Chris Aubel found himself "in the grips of an obsession" in 2019. His frequent trips skinning up Arrowhead, Beaver Creek and Meadow Mountain ultimately led him to the ambitious pursuit of competing in the Patrouille des Glaciers, or "PDG", in Switzerland. While the pandemic delayed his initial attempt, 2022 proved to be the year to make his quest a reality.

Venturing to the other side of the world, Rohn Robbins shares his journey with his wife, Debbie, and son, Ascher, to South Africa to experience a complicated land of contrasts. "Western, modern, prosperous, primitive, united, divided, poor, struggling, friendly, beautiful,

inspiring, and ennobling" are just a few of the adjectives Rohn uses to describe their adventure.

On the home front, atop Foal Circle, we get a sneak peek into a refreshing update for the home of Lou Weinberg and Patty Truglia; with guidance and expertise provided by interior designer and *Stroll Singletree* Sponsor Addie Pecord of LA Studio & Co., the new owners were able to create a home that now reflects their personal lifestyle. And we meet Winter Shikverg, a Doodle who embodies the characteristics of dogs, cats, and humans!



Wishing you a wonderful wintery February ... and a few quiet moments to enjoy this issue of your Singletree magazine!

*Holly Proctor*

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# FEBRUARY CONTRIBUTORS



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Zac and Emily McColley  
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House & Home



Lou Weinberg and Patty Truglia  
House & Home



Chris Aubel  
Athlete Spotlight



Keena, Annika, and Winter Shikverg  
Precious Pets



Kimmy and Winter Shikverg  
Precious Pets



Rohn Robbins  
Travel Tales

## CALLING ALL SENIORS!

We look forward to recognizing the CLASS OF 2023 high school graduates in the May issue of *Stroll Singletree*. For additional information regarding participating in this year's graduation feature, please forward the names of any graduating seniors to [holly.proctor@n2co.com](mailto:holly.proctor@n2co.com); the deadline for all submittals will be **FRIDAY, MARCH 10**.

Your personal Singletree publication is BY YOU and FOR YOU. It is not possible without YOUR stories and photos! Our Singletree residents look forward to getting to know the families, kids, pets, athletes, travelers, and volunteers in the community every month. Email [holly.proctor@n2co.com](mailto:holly.proctor@n2co.com) to contribute to an upcoming issue of your neighborhood magazine.



# Welcome, New Sponsors

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## SWEET MUSTACHE

Ana Paez and Amaya Laws realized their dream come true when they opened Sweet Mustache in April 2022. Having met in culinary school in Chile in 1996, the pair moved to the valley in 2002 and soon realized they shared the vision of opening a pastry shop together. While shops like Sweet Mustache are very common in Chile, there are no such shops in the valley. Ana is quick to explain, "We had the idea to copycat what we had in our country." So when the right opportunity presented itself, Ana recalls, "We had the money to invest, we found the location to rent, and we said, 'Let's do it!'"

Walking into Sweet Mustache is an extraordinary sensory experience that quickly transports a visitor to Europe ... or Chile. The pastry case is front and center and features fresh French pastries, cookies, cream puffs, fruit tarts, custom cakes and more. Not only are they delicious, but many items are also truly inspired works of art. Everything is baked from scratch at the shop each day. In sharing the work entailed in delivering a vast array of daily offerings, Ana says, "We come in early in the morning. We crack the eggs. We peel the carrots. We do it all by hand."

Sweet Mustache also sells ice cream and candy, which has proven to be a big draw for local kids. Ana shares her vision by saying, "We wanted to fill a need the town was missing. Our kids were always asking when they could have ice cream and candies in town". The shop offers a unique twist to go with the ice cream: be sure to try the bubble waffles!



Sweet Mustache is located at **407 Broadway Street** in Eagle. To reach Ana or Amaya, please call **970-432-1522**.



A resident of the neighborhood since 1995, Happy is your "in-house" expert. So if you are considering selling your Singletree home this year and looking to purchase within the neighborhood or anywhere else in the Valley, please call her. She would love to help!

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## Singletree Real Estate Activity

Status	Short Address	Property Subtype	Beds	Baths	Finished Square Feet	Furnished	Listing Price	List Price/SqFt	Agent Days On Market	Sold Price	Sold Price/SqFt	Sold Date
Active	170 Mesquite Drive	Single Family	5	6	5,616	Partially	\$3,995,000	\$711	164			
Active	81 Lariat Road A	Duplex	4	3	2,257	Unfurnished	\$1,395,000	\$618	131			
Active	151 Howard Drive	Single Family	4	4	3,166	Unfurnished	\$2,750,000	\$869	110			
Active	110 Charolais Circle	Duplex	3	3	2,120	Unfurnished	\$1,500,000	\$708	67			
Active	81 Lariat Road B	Duplex	4	3	2,005	Unfurnished	\$1,500,000	\$748	12			
Closed	141 Corral Road B	Duplex	5	6	5,457	Unfurnished	\$2,750,000	\$504	256	\$2,675,000	\$490	11/22/22
Closed	30 Buckboard Road	Single Family	5	7	3824	Partially	\$2,325,000	\$608	144	\$1,800,000	\$471	12/2/22

\*Properties Active, Under Contract, and Sold 11.12.22-12.12.22



## GREG PASCO RENEWAL BY ANDERSEN

Greg Pasco here, your local Renewal by Andersen Project Consultant. Growing up in Chicago and vacationing in Colorado as a kid, I had to pack my bags and move here to explore all Colorado has to offer. It has been 28 years now, and I still consider that the best decision of my life! For the bulk of my life, I have always been in some form of construction. Building/creating things has always brought me satisfaction.

A small accident in 2008 (don't fall off a

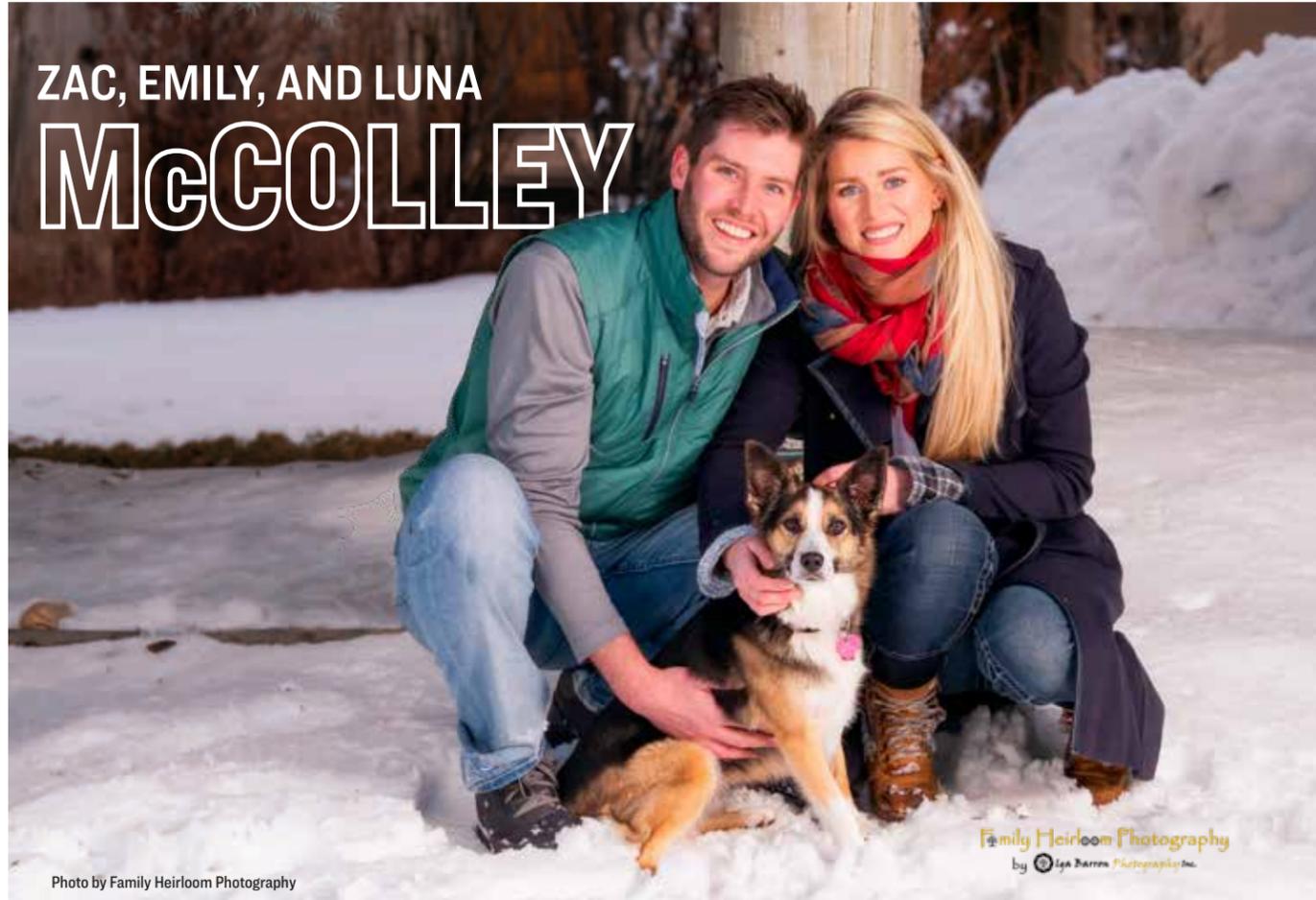
roof!) made me consider a career change. I jumped into the replacement window industry. Starting with a reputable local installer, I spent four years learning the industry. During that four years, the company I worked for kept switching window manufacturing companies, and it ended up leaving my clients in limbo. I'd had enough. I went to the Home and Garden Show in Denver and went to every single window booth they had. That is where I found Renewal by Andersen. I loved the Fibrex product and the fact that they manufacture, install and service their own product. The whole system made sense to me.

After two years of banging on their door to let me in, I finally joined the team in 2014. Second best decision of my life! Everything about this company has been outstanding. The Fibrex material works phenomenally in the crazy Colorado weather, and the team behind it is second to none. If you need help with windows and doors, I would enjoy showing you the possibilities. For a free window and door inspection and a replacement quote, call me directly at **303-883-3849**. I answer the phone, and I show up at your door. If you prefer email, you can reach me at [gpasco@renewalcolorado.com](mailto:gpasco@renewalcolorado.com).



If you have worked with a professional and reliable business that you would recommend to your Singletree neighbors, please email your referrals to [holly.proctor@n2co.com](mailto:holly.proctor@n2co.com). We would love to introduce your favorite businesses to other residents in your community!

# ZAC, EMILY, AND LUNA McCOLLEY



Zac grew up outside of Denver and attended Colorado Academy from kindergarten through high school years. He continued his education at California Lutheran University, where he played on the golf team. After four years, he returned to Vail in 2012 to pursue a life in his favorite place to ski, golf, and hike. He and his wife, Emily, are now fortunate to call this spectacular Vail Valley and Singletree community home. Zac is currently a seven-year licensed real estate broker with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services in Vail Village. Before beginning a career in real estate, he served and bartended at the Ore House, Sweet Basil, and Mountain Standard, where many coworkers turned into lifelong friends.

Emily grew up in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, about 45 minutes northeast of Cleveland. She attended Mount Union, where she played college volleyball. She moved to Denver in 2008 and worked for the client division of

AllianceBernstein, Bernstein Global Wealth Management for more than five years, then for a small commercial real estate company for a couple of years. As a weekend warrior for about seven years and taking full advantage of her older brother conveniently living in Vail, she frequently crossed paths with Zac, one of her brother's best friends ... and the rest is history.

Emily moved to the valley in 2014, and in 2020, she and Zac had a small wedding in Maine before purchasing their home in Singletree that same year. They live here with their mini Australian Shepherd/Border Collie, Luna. She will be 5 in February, and the three of them have enjoyed many amazing adventures together. From weekend camping to skinning up Arrowhead, hiking 14'ers, river floats and all their travels — short or far (as Luna is a seasoned flyer) — the three McColleys are inseparable.

Zac's mom was the first of the family to establish roots in Vail, having

moved from New Hampshire after college to become a ski instructor and then, years later, working in real estate with Slifer. She met Gene, her husband, in Denver through a mutual friend. Zac and Emily are grateful to have them just up the street in Singletree as snowbirds half the year.

In June, Emily and Zac purchased a local property management company that has served the valley for more than 20 years. Working with families in Singletree, Beaver Creek, Bachelor Gulch, Arrowhead, and Cordillera, their team works diligently to protect and enhance their clients' real estate investments and to offer a wide variety of concierge and specialized services. They have been quite busy the last year and look forward to having more time for golf and pickleball in the years to come. While Emily and Zac have yet to take their honeymoon, they look forward to backpacking in Spain and Italy sometime in the near future before starting their family, God willing.



# 191 FOAL CIRCLE: COMFORTABLY CHIC WITH ROOM TO PARTY

CONTRIBUTED BY LOU WEINBERG AND PATTY TRUGLIA, SINGLETREE RESIDENTS

CONTRIBUTED BY ADDIE PECORD, STROLL SINGLETREE SPONSOR

ARTICLE COMPILED BY ALLIE DECENT, SINGLETREE RESIDENT



Singletree has entered a renaissance of rebuilding, a burst of fresh lift in our neighborhood during this decade of the Rocking '20s. New neighbors abound, and houses are getting lifted and toned or experiencing a total overhaul to accompany the tastes of this century. Patty Truglia and Lou Weinberg, the new owners of 191 Foal Circle, are happy to share their renovation project recently completed with the expert help of Addie Pecord of LA Studio & Co.

"We looked at 23 houses," Lou says with authority, "and this was number 23." "We just knew the second we walked in," Patty chimes in. "When you know, you know." As if the palatial entryway wasn't enough of a statement, the soaring 30-foot ceilings and modern Repose Gray walls are balanced nicely with the original tree trunk-sized dark wood beams, so very classically laid out in this architecturally Pueblo single-family home.

As a home laid out perfectly for entertaining, carefully curated art pieces provide splashes of color and hints of the fascinating personalities that inhabit the dwelling. "I'd say our taste is comfy chic," says Patty, "houses are for enjoying, and we love to entertain and play host for our family and friends." Since they moved here in December 2020, they've enjoyed a rotating door of guests with their four adult children, siblings, nieces, nephews, and friends coming to visit and ski. "The original owners, David and Liz Stern, designed and built an amazing house, says Lou. "All we did was give it a facelift."

Once they found their dream house, they went to Inside Out in Edwards, searching for a chair to complement their Grateful Dead mixed media collage next to the fireplace. The owner, Sara Border, referred the couple to Addie to help with their design and remodel needs. "As soon as we met her, we just clicked," says Lou. "She understood our eclectic sense of style, and she took the time to ask us questions to really understand what we wanted to achieve."

"We created a plan to update the home to be fresh and functional without compromising the style of the home, and we chose finishes that would still provide flow with the rest of the space," Addie explains. "We made some minor shifts to utilize the house how they wanted it to be, like switching the desk space in the kitchen to a coffee and wine bar, which better suits their lifestyle for socializing and entertainment. She continues, "Lou and Patty were very specific in having pieces that speak to their lifestyle. They didn't give me a lot of details as to what they specifically wanted per se, but I got to know them during our meetings, and then I was able to share inspiration photos and ideas that I thought spoke to their likes and style."

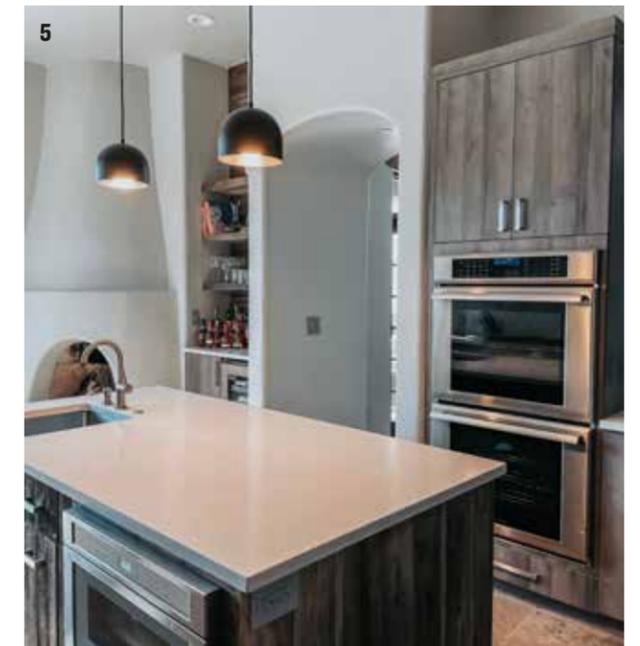
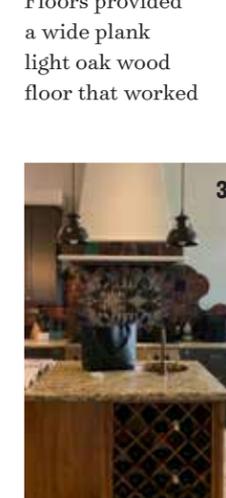
By far, the greatest changes took place in the kitchen; although the underlying footprint remained the same, the overall look and feel were tremendously improved. The cabinets are now a textured gray, and the island and bar stand out as an accent wrapped in locally sourced barn wood. The new fresh quartz countertops, sleek modern hood vent and updated backsplash all lend to a more contemporary design that serves as a showpiece for the

home. The existing kitchen fireplace was left untouched, leaving a touch of coziness within this new space.

"Have you seen my pantry?" cries Patty, as she runs around the island to open the 9-foot-tall door into storage space the size of a New York apartment. The pantry, which provides an immense amount of storage, was previously existing in the home. "Liz really knew what she was doing when she built this house," Lou observes. Coincidentally, Lou and Liz grew up a mile away from each other and went to the same high school in New York. It must've been karma!

Like all home renovations, once you get started, you inevitably add to the project. Addie points to the big picture windows in the living area. "The windows were never part of the original scope, but as you see your space changing, becoming fresh and new, you just continue to make improvements. The new wood floors were not part of the original scope either, but after a few attempts to refinish the existing floors, the outcome was still not quite right. Creative

Floors provided a wide plank light oak wood floor that worked

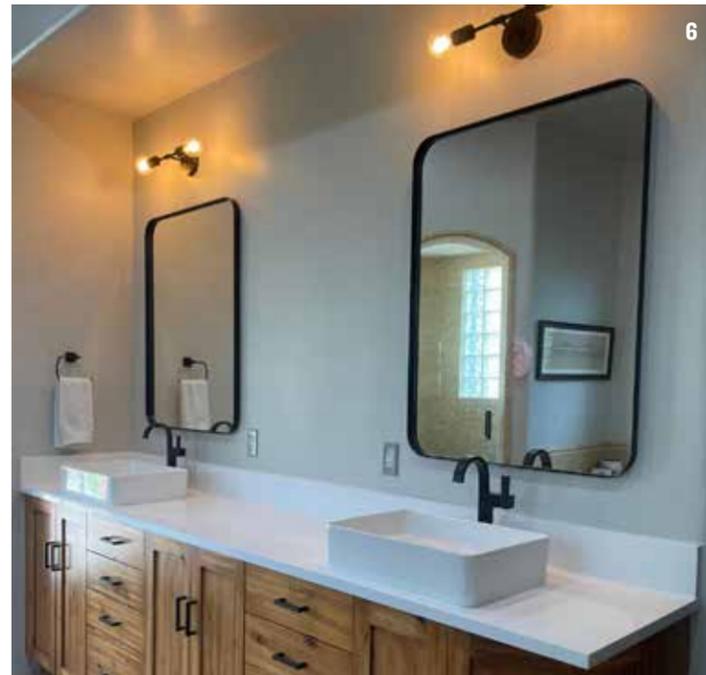


perfectly with the masterfully laid stonework throughout the first floor.” Lou adds, “We kept the original wood floor in the two other rooms because it’s beautiful wood, and it’s unnecessary to remove what works.”

In addition to the updates on the main floor, the main bathroom received a facelift of its own. What originally was dark red poured concrete countertops are now clean and crisp white quartz countertops with vessel sinks. Patty and Lou did not want to change anything in the home that still worked well in the space, so new cabinet hardware, lighting and mirrors were all that were needed to achieve a true transformation. And finally, the somewhat dated carpet upstairs was replaced by a fresh new wool boucle carpet

to provide the perfect texture and a cozy feel for the three bedrooms there.

“We were looking for a home with a great view and a great vibe and flow,” Lou recalls. Having found exactly what they were seeking, and after living in the home for a few months, they developed a list of things that would reflect their personal sense of style. The renovation began in August of 2021 and was completed in December of that same year. Lou and Patty wholeheartedly agree, “It’s a party house for two people who are 63 going on 18.” Now with all the renovations and updates complete, their home truly reflects their mutual love of the mountains and the lifestyle that brought them out west together.



6

1. The statement chair that started it all!
2. The new wine and coffee bar built for entertaining
3. The kitchen before the transformation
4. A new fresh look for the kitchen
5. Entering a warm and welcoming kitchen
6. Simple touches to update the main bathroom
7. The once-dark and heavy main bathroom



7



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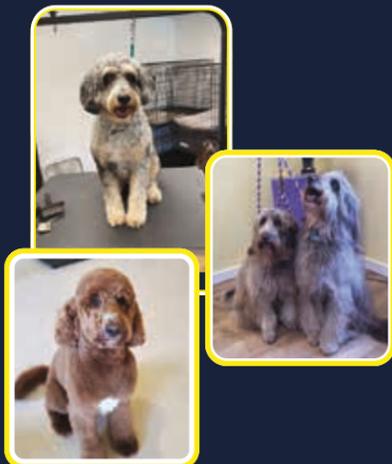


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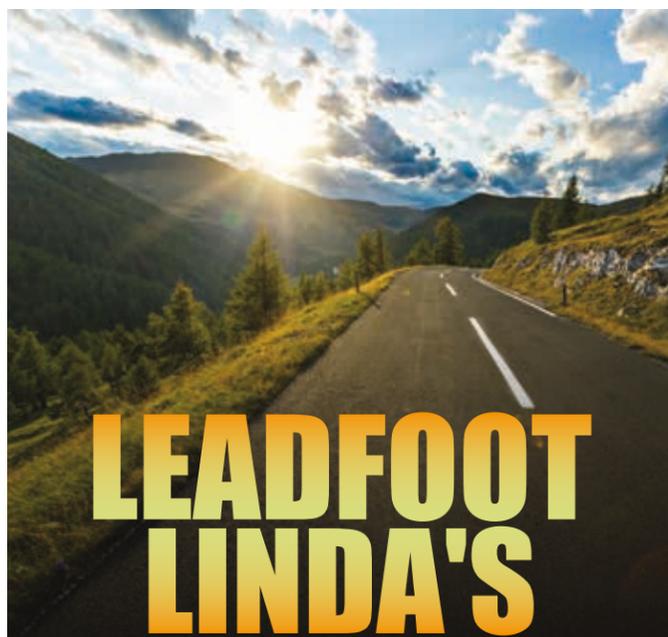
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# Worth the Wait ... Chris Aubel Conquers the Patrouille des Glaciers

CONTRIBUTED BY CHRIS AUBEL, SINGLETREE RESIDENT

In 2019, Chris Aubel found himself in the grips of an obsession. Driven from his bed by a giddy expectation, he would gather up his AT gear and skin up Arrowhead, Beaver Creek and Meadow Mountain, each outing a small victory. Chris was inspired by the morning serenity and soon had company on his “ups” with Edgard Cabanillas, a friend and fellow Rotarian in the Vail Rotary Club. After a morning meeting, or perhaps it was on

one of their skin-ups, Edgard suggested they take it to a higher level. “Let’s race the PDG!” he said to Chris.

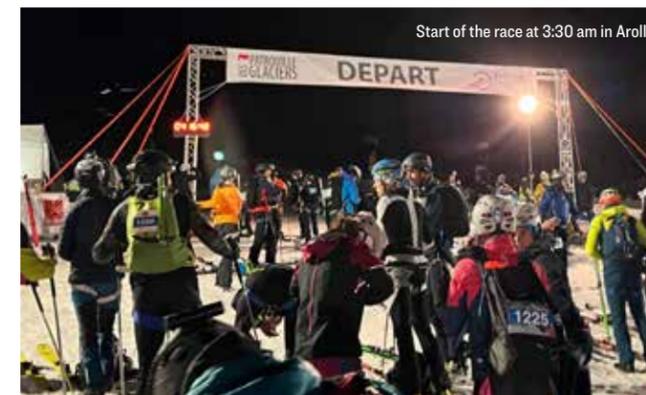
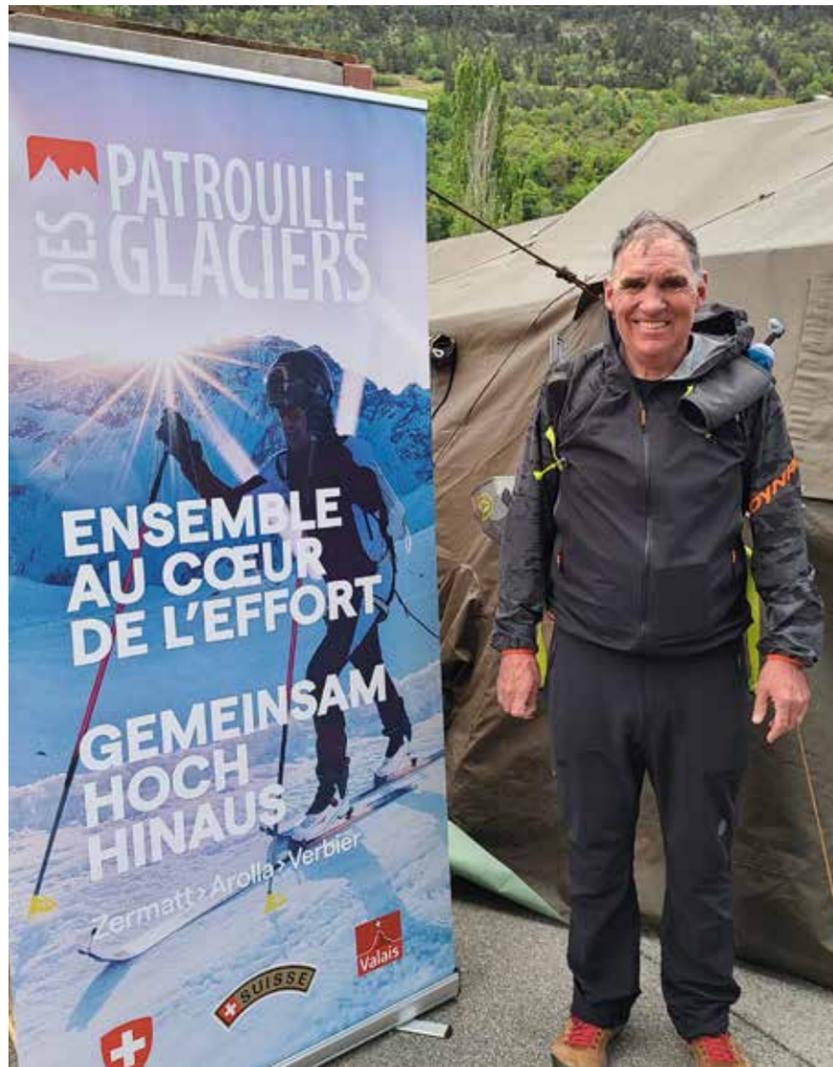
The Patrouille des Glaciers, or “PDG,” in Switzerland is the “Grandpere” of all ski mountaineering races. “It’s the biggest, baddest ski-mo race out there.” Chris said he remembers thinking at the time, “We aren’t getting any younger. I’m in”. Since the race only happens every two years, there was no time to waste; they

gained an entry spot for their team, named it the “The Vail Mountaineers,” kept training and awaited the 2020 PDG. Insert pandemic here — flash forward to 2022.

As Chris and Edgard recount the adventure they, after a long wait, had completed, Edgard harkens back to those early mornings in 2019. “I thought I needed to concentrate on the up hilling, so that’s mostly what we did. Really though, the PDG is a full-on mountaineering race. You’re skinning, you’re boot packing, you’re down hilling, so it takes a lot of skiing skills to do it. It also takes a good amount of planning and financial wherewithal. We’re so happy we were able to get back there and get it done.”

The history of PDG begins in the early 1940s before the second World War. Patrouille des Glaciers loosely translates to “Patrol of the Mountains.” Originally it was a training course on a system of trails designed to develop Swiss military skills and knowledge in order to defend the country’s mountainous borders if all roads were cut off by the enemy. Today’s PDG is an accredited ski mountaineering race with over 1500 teams competing in an expanded, four-race format. Military and police teams still participate (in fact, after the war up until the early ‘80s, no civilians competed in the PDG), but now the PDG hosts qualified competitors from all over the world.

Traditionally, few American teams have gained entry. On the recommendation of one of Edgard’s Swiss friends, they arranged to hire a guide, a usual practice that helps to secure a team spot, especially for non-Swiss competitors. It also increases the likelihood of finishing since getting lost in unfamiliar terrain can be a danger. “We were fortunate



to have Mario as our guide because even though he had never done the race, he was familiar with the area,” Edgard said.

Now a team of three, Chris, Edgard and Mario trained for a day together at Verbier ski resort and another day on an early section of their course. Chris and Edgard’s anticipation peaked as a storm rolled in and blanketed parts of the racecourse with fresh snow, thereby threatening avalanche danger and, yet again, the viability of their race. Some preliminary races were postponed, and the “Vail Mountaineers” began to think the entire PDG might be canceled. Fortunately, owing to the highly organized event staff, the avalanche danger was mitigated, and the race was on.

It’s a long day, no matter which race you run. Course Z from Zermatt to Verbier is 53 km (33 miles). Racers for this course start in the

late evening, and then the rest go off in stages after that. “Our race was Course A from Arolla to Verbier,” Chris explains. Arolla is about the halfway point between Zermatt and Verbier. “The most screwed up thing was the start time,” Edgard said. “We left our hotel at 11 p.m. and were bused to the start for our heat at 3 a.m. Our gear had been inspected a few days earlier, so they checked our stamps and then we were off. After just a little while, the Zermatt folks started passing us. It’s pretty incredible how fast they can go, but we kept to our plan and set our own pace.”

Even with the new snow, the race had challenging conditions. Race times were slower overall than in 2018, the last time the race was held. In fact, about 20% of participants were not able to complete their races this year. Course A is 29.6 km long, with the more treacherous parts being

some downhill sections and difficult conditions, including the scorching, high-altitude sun. Applying their skills and witnessing some amazing scenery, Edgard, Chris and Mario reached the highest point, Mt. Rosablanche (3,160 meters i.e.10,367 feet), a little more than halfway through their race and then descended toward the finish in Verbier from there.

Under a sunny spring sky and over another round at Loaded Joes, Edgard reflects on their grand adventure. “We didn’t break any records, but we sure had a blast,” he said. Chris chimes in, “We’re keeping our time a team secret! Let’s just say it took the better part of a full day, and we didn’t finish last.”

Edgard takes a moment to share how they were supported by friends and family. His friend, Lindsay Broach’s father, Dudley Broach, was a particularly enthusiastic champion who unfortunately passed away after

the race from a battle with cancer. "Dudley loved Vail and thought what we accomplished was amazing," he said. Chris agrees and brightens at a memory of the race. "So, we're coming into the finish area, and we hear 'Vail Mountaineers! Vail Mountaineers!' It turns out Vail locals Fred and Chrissy Rumsford happened to be in Verbier and came out to cheer us on. They must have seen our team's name on the roster." Chris said with a laugh, "Next time, and there WILL be a next time, we'll have an even bigger cheering section!"



The top of Verbier



The race finish in Verbier



The Vail Mountaineers celebrating their accomplishment at the W Hotel



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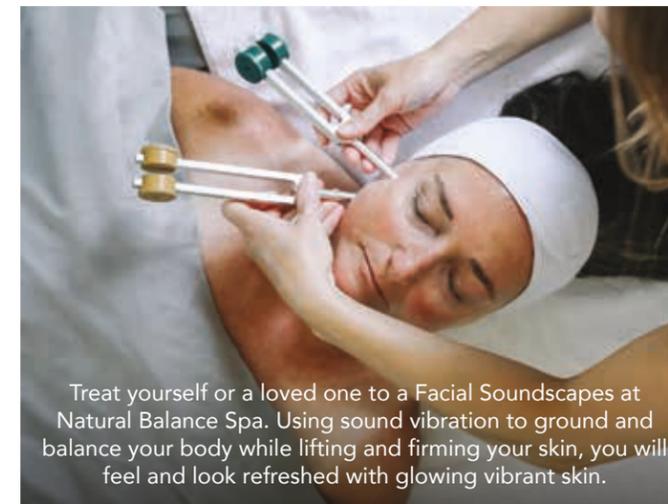
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# OUR BEST FRIEND, WINTER

CONTRIBUTED BY KEENA, ANNIKA, KIMMY, AND WINTER SHIKVERG, SINGLETREE RESIDENTS AND PET



Winter is not only a dog but a best friend. Winter, a Labradoodle, is the true embodiment of pure joy, galloping through life with a smile on his face. We got Winter when our daughters, Annika and Keena, were 8 and 5 years old, and we were living in Castle Rock at the time. When we first went to meet Winter, we intended to bring home his sister. But the minute we saw just the nose of a little guy sticking out from under a dresser in the living room, we knew that it was our dog. Winter was so small. The car ride home was a whole series of new experiences for him, from loud girls in the back seat to the motion of the car driving around turns. We brought him into the house and let him run around in his new backyard. He was home. He was with his new family.

Winter is what you may call a mix of a human, cat, and dog, which is something we have come to realize over the last ten years we have had him. He will not chase balls when we throw them at the dog park but instead play with the other dog owners. He will not go swimming because he is scared of the water, and instead of jumping in the lake, he will sunbathe on the beach. He will chase the deer on the mountainside or bark up a tree at squirrels but give up after 10 seconds because it's all a game to him. He will return proudly to tell us he had fun playing with the animals. He loves playing volleyball with us in the backyard, chasing after the ball but not doing anything with it. And rubbing against the couch while we are watching tv is his favorite pastime.

Winter will lie in our beds and snuggle up under the covers, snoring loudly, because he knows he feels safe and comfortable in the warm embrace of our goodnight hugs. He will tell us stories and complain to us when we leave him home all day to go skiing. Winter brings the most joy to our household. He comforts us when we are sad and makes us laugh when he plays with his toys. Winter is a key part of our family, and we love him unconditionally.





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# SOUTH AFRICA

CONTRIBUTED BY ROHN K. ROBBINS, SINGLETREE RESIDENT

## IT'S COMPLICATED.

From its stunning natural beauty to its painful history of apartheid, modern South Africa is a land of contrasts. Western, modern, prosperous, primitive, united, divided, poor, struggling, friendly, beautiful, inspiring, and ennobling are all adjectives that can be equally applied.

From the buzz and hustle of Johannesburg and Cape Town to the still and utter quiet of the bush, South Africa is a nation of stark and stirring conflict. It is a land rich in natural resources that have bestowed both a blessing and a curse. Gold and diamonds brought it riches and also imposed upon its subjugated people the cruel enigma of apartheid, the soulless kissing cousin of our own Southern slavery.

Only in the 1990s did the people throw off the chaffing yoke of the Boer/Afrikaner version of Jim Crow (but worse, as there was not even the pretense of equality), and only since has the nation begun to find its true footing and its rightful place among free and respected nations.

Modern South Africa, at the very end of the massive African continent, is a primeval land and ancient people who, into the 21st century, still proudly fly the flags of their ancestral tribes — Xhosa, Pedi, Zulu, and a host of others—

and among its 60 million people boasts 11 official tongues. It is defined by the twin pillars of its natural beauty and abundance, its legacy of oppression, and its emergence from beneath the boot of tyranny.

To celebrate and boast the revolution that led to freedom, the heroes of the struggle to self-rule — especially Mandela — are everywhere. In Johannesburg, one arrives at O.R. Tambo Airport, named in memory of the founding father of the country's liberation. Everywhere one goes, there are roads, bridges, squares, public buildings, monuments, plaques, and endless praise in honor of the martyrs; Tambo, Biko, Sisulu, Gandhi, but mostly Mandela. At Cape Town City Hall, where Mandela first spoke after his release from prison, there stands a life-sized statue of him, with raised hand, on the very spot where, before a crowd of thousands, he declared his people would, at last, be free.

## IT'S A LONG, LONG WAY FROM COLORADO.

While it may be a long way to Tipperary, it's much, much farther to South Africa. First to Newark, and then a second, 15-plus hour flight lands you in Johannesburg, the nation's largest city, which numbers well over 5

million bustling inhabitants. Minivans, the prime mode of “public” transportation, buzz everywhere, like bees about a hive.

One other thing ... Perhaps it's from watching too many Tarzan movies or other Hollywood caricatures of Africa but, um ... in South Africa, far from the equator, they have a thing called winter. It is not always the blazing loincloth heat that one associates with that fascinating and diverse continent. We arrived at the end of winter/cusp of spring, where, especially at night, a coat would have to fight the chill. In one of the game camps in which we stayed, all that stood between the 37-degree night air and us was the thin canvass of the “glam tent” in which we slept and the comforter and blankets that we piled high. The morning game drives were, well ... cold, at least until the African sun blazed in a brilliant sky.

Deb, our older son, Ascher, and I arrived in Johannesburg at dark to meet with our guide, Leonard, a modern college-educated soft-spoken Pedi tribesman, and our traveling companions; Patricia, a smart and vibrant Brazilian-born attorney licensed in both Brazil and the U.S. who lives and works in New York, and Helton (pronounced with silent “H”), a Brazilian-born engineer living in Miami, whose enthusiasm for nearly everything was unbounded and who harbored an uninhibited zest to be fully invested in every moment. Both added immeasurably to our South African experience. Leonard whisked us to our ultramodern hotel, and after a truly delicious dinner with our friends and guide, jet lag beckoned us to bed.

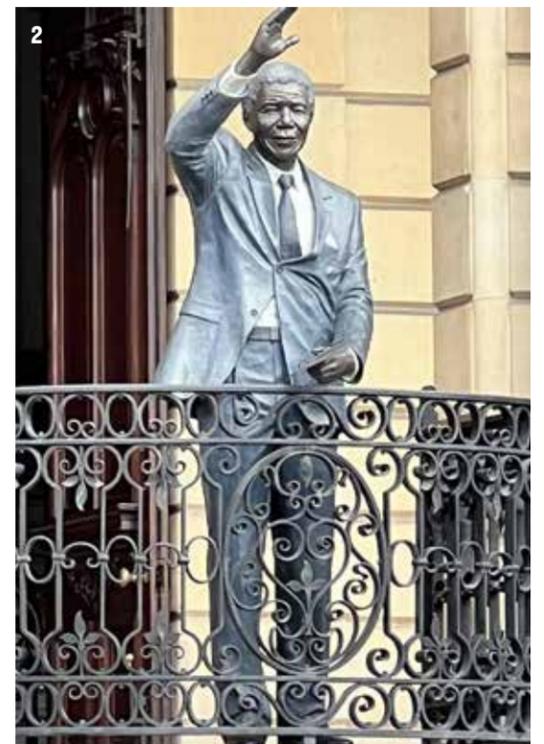
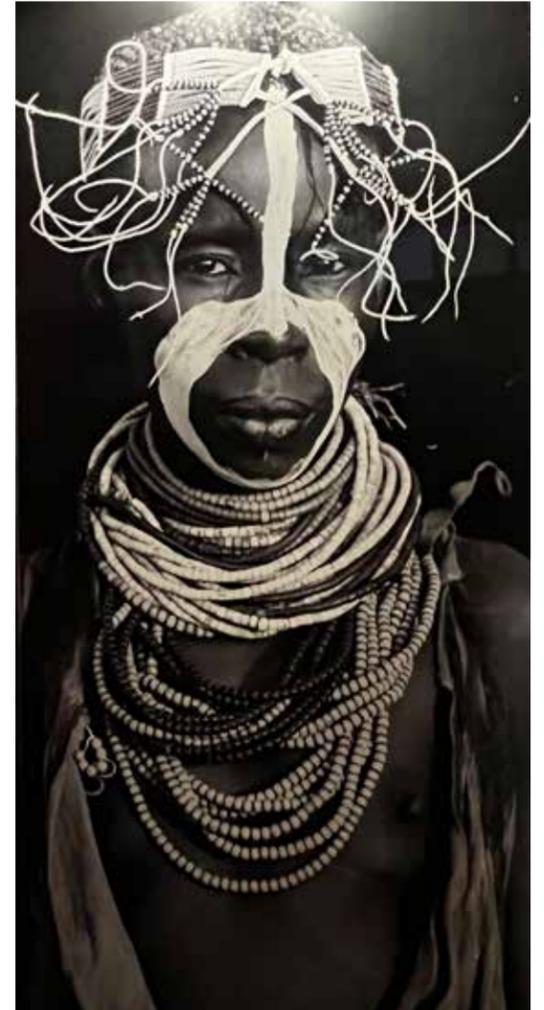
The highlights of Johannesburg were the somber and inspiring Apartheid Museum, where the history of that heartless legacy, the struggle to upend it, and its ultimate demise are laid out in expansive and excruciating detail. Having visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and the 9/11 museum in NYC, it was, in its way, resonant with all — part of the brotherhood of suffering and, ultimately, triumph.

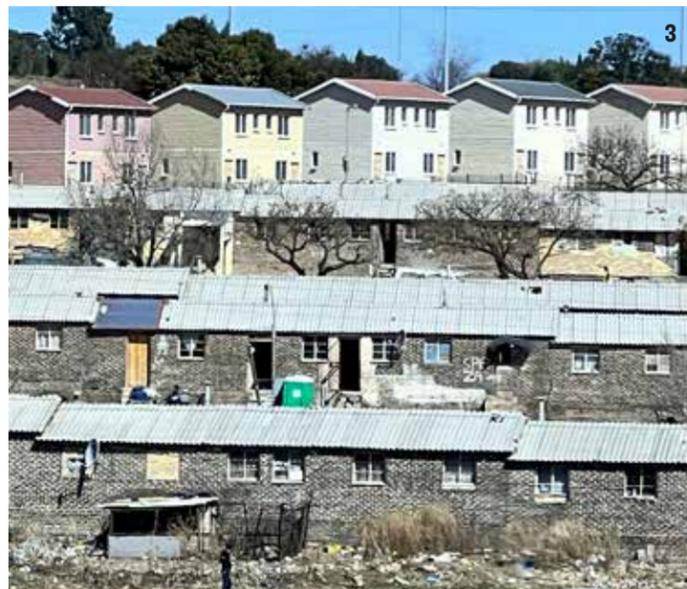
We were anxious to visit Soweto, the township to which Black people who labored for white owners under apartheid were relocated. Not far from Johannesburg proper, it is a massive, jumbled settlement of a million-plus with neat, modest homes with pride of ownership, despondent slums, expansive fields of tumbling, untamed trash, vibrant shops and restaurants, and an overarching sense of restlessness. More than anywhere else, Soweto, which rose up against apartheid, was the beating heart of sacrifice and protest. We visited the Desmond Tutu and Mandela homes — not more than a block or so from one other on the same street — where the two eventual Noble Prize winners once resided. Lunch was at Akhuzumi, where, if there were white faces other than ours, we did not see them. There, we sampled traditional dishes, including chakalaka, pap and malva pudding.

## THE TRULY WILD LIFE!

From Johannesburg, we were off to Karongwe, the first game camp of our trip. Perhaps you've heard the term “glamping”? Yeah, canvass tents and such, but glamping has about as much to do with dome tents on the Eiger as Pop-Tarts have to do with breakfast. The Chisomo camp consisted of a beautiful dining hall—open on all sides to the sweeping bush views—where all meals were provided, a couple of small administrative huts, and two dozen or so well-spaced tents.

Um ... tents? Well, yeah, but each was set up on high stilts, had a spacious deck before it, hardwood flooring, electricity, running water, a generous canopied bed, and bath with shower but ... alas, no heat. Each was roughly the dimensions of an ample main bedroom.





Throughout the camp wandered kudu, nyala, warthogs, vervet monkeys, and the occasional elephant and leopard. If you were out after dark, a guide would shepherd you safely home. At night, the sounds of animals grunting, yelping, snuffling, and calling were a soft lullaby to deep and chilly sleep.

The game drives are both a spectacle and spectacular. Open to the air — and presumably, to the animals had they wished to ingratiate themselves with us — one ruts along to the unfolding diorama of lions, cape buffalo, elephants, hippos, giraffes, leopards, cheetahs, a honey badger who just didn't give a rip, and a seemingly limitless menagerie so diverse and near that, if one wished to sacrifice a limb, one could easily reach out and, however briefly, touch.

Two game drives a day, at dawn and late afternoon into early night, are primordial and thrilling. One of the highlights was a cheetah hunt which ended happily for the cheetahs and for us (but not so happily for the main course) in a kudu feast nearly at our feet.

Another high point was a bush walk where, sans even the scant protection of the Land Cruiser, off we headed into the bush with an armed escort and naturalist guide. One night, after an African sunset (for my money, unparalleled by any sunset in the world), a pride of lions led us lazily home, strolling nonchalantly by our slowly rolling ride.

Following several glorious days and chilly nights at Karonwge, we set off for Kruger National Park, a massive game park northeast of the capital of Pretoria. To get there, we followed the "Panorama Route," a remarkable treat of natural geographic wonders, including Blyde Canyon, the world's third largest canyon, featuring the massive Three Rondavels, three round, grass-covered mountain tops that resemble the traditional round oval ("rondavels") African homes; Bourke's Luck Potholes, cylindrical kettles or potholes eroded into the stone by the tumbling Treur and Blyde Rivers; God's Window with its endless views (on a clear day, you can see nearly 200 miles to Mozambique); Graskop Gorge with its fascinating flora; and Lisbon Falls. Near dusk, we settled into Kruger Gate Lodge, hard on the Sabi River.

Not to be missed is the boma, a bacchanal of food and flames. Technically, a livestock enclosure or *kraal*, it consists of tall stockades in the center of which is a raging bonfire, around which one dines in the open air.

Early morning, just as the brilliant African sun was rising, found us in the park where we were treated to a full-day game drive with enormous herds of elephants and giraffes, a massive troop of baboons, hippos, zebras, eland, wildebeest, and more. Along the way back to Johannesburg for our flight to Cape Town, we stopped for fuel and food at a rest stop, which, from large windows in the restaurant and restrooms, you could enjoy a crash of grazing rhinos, a zeal of zebras, herds of kudu, and impala. There, we were met by our new guide, Nathi, a college-educated Xhosa tribesman.



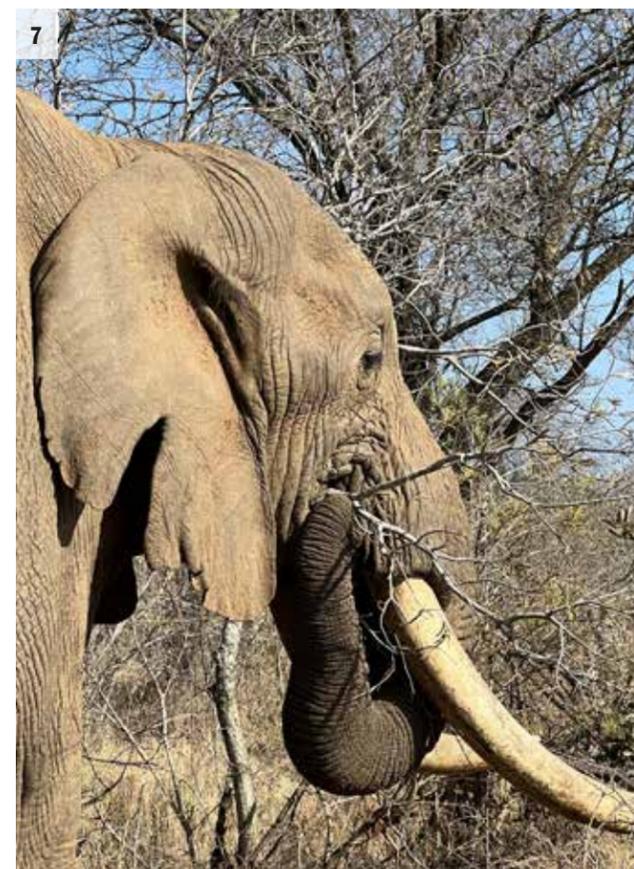
### BEAUTIFUL CAPE TOWN AND ENVIRONS

Cape Town is magnificent. Its natural beauty is astounding. Patricia and Helton, our Brazilian travel partners, swore it put Rio thoroughly to shame. With a rugged coastline, towering metamorphic rock, coves, kays, islands, chic architecture, hip eateries, and a dazzling waterfront, there is little not to like. But like much else in South Africa, there is both yin and yang. Especially near downtown, homeless camps are abundant, the beggars are aggressive, and one need not be a practicing addiction medicine specialist to see that drug abuse is rampant. Wedged between the colonial and modern buildings are ramshackle street markets that both clash with and give color to the hip and vibrant scene.

Along the way to the Cape of Good Hope and the Horn of Africa, we boated out to Seal Island, off Hout Bay, a watery bachelor pad of sorts, for scores and scores of not-yet-mating-ready seals, and Chapman's Peak with its stunning coastal views.

For years, the cape where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans violently collide defeated the most intrepid of explorers, those seeking a sea route from Europe to the port of Goa and the lucrative spice trade of India. When in 1497, it, at last, was rounded, it planted the first seeds of colonial establishment. In 1652, the Dutch East India Company arrived and planted the first flag that would give rise to the Boers, who became the Afrikaners who subjugated and oppressed the indigenous people, ultimately leading to apartheid. Despite that hoary history, The Cape is a feast for eyes and ears as the ragged shoreline thrusts into the battling seas.

Also not to be missed is Simon's Town and nearby Boulders Beach, where JACKASS Penguins, in their braying multitudes, close enough to touch, found their rookeries. Robben Island, a 45-minute ferry ride from the Cape Town waterfront, is where Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years in prison and where tours are conducted by former political internees. It is worth a visit, as are the magnificent botanic gardens, the Two Oceans Aquarium, and the colorful Bokap, the former center of Malay life and culture.





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Along a day's drive, holding up his left hand, Nathi shared the Khoisan tribal custom, as a rite of tribal membership, of amputating — absent anesthesia — the last joint of the left pinky finger and went on to describe, with clearly remembered pain, the ritual circumcision (again without anesthetics) which is the second rite of passage for male Xhosa on the event of their 18th birthday. A bar mitsvah as a rite of passage never sounded so good! It is worth noting that the Xhosa's native tongue is among the IsiXhosa languages, a line punctuated by odd wooden-sounding clicks in place of certain consonants.

We followed up a full day with a delicious dinner, drum and dance performance at Gold with lavish costumes and song, banging on *djembe*, and a host of indigenous foods and drinks from all over the continent. Put Gold on your itinerary! On the subject of food and drink, throughout the country, it is abundant, excellent, and by U.S. standards, shockingly cheap.

On our last day in South Africa, we drove out to the wine country north of Cape Town to the town of Stellenbosch and lunched, with chocolate and wine pairings, at the Lanzerac Wine Estate. Quaint and colonial, to arrive, we drove past miles and endless miles of shantytowns where life is meager, rough and cruel. Stellenbosch, in contrast, is pastoral in the fullness of that word. It is as reserved as well ... a thirsty sip of wine. Just as easily, we could have been transported to Provence, Rioja, Napa, or Salta.

**IT'S COMPLICATED.**

Breathtaking in its beauty, the abundance of its wildlife and its mineral riches, South Africa, with its brutal, heartless history, is a land of dizzying, polar conflicts. It is hip and modern, crushingly poor, sophisticated, primitive, unequal, striving, egalitarian, friendly, and utterly unique. It is Western and fiercely African. It is old, new, and determined for a brighter future.

South Africa is a feast for the senses. There is no air, no sky, no land, like that at the end of the continent, at the very tip of the African world.

1. Rohn, Ascher and Debbie Robbins: Going to the ends of the earth - the Cape of Good Hope
2. The statue of Nelson Mandela at Cape Town City Hall
3. Soweto
4. Soweto
5. Ascher crossing paths with a warthog at the Chisomo camp in Karonwge
6. Ascher and Debbie about to head into the bush
7. An elephant has lunch
8. A coalition of cheetahs enjoy an evening repast of fresh kudu
9. The bush walk
10. Green Market Square in Cape Town
11. The Potholes
12. Ascher, Patricia, and Helton painted up and ready to party



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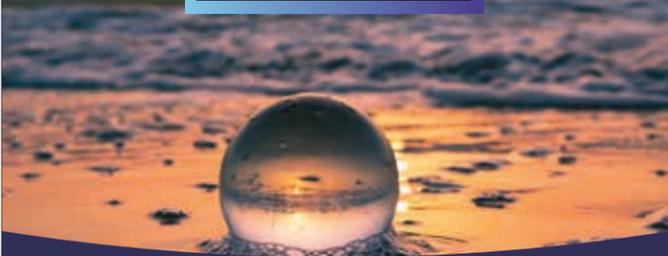
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