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GeoSci 10  
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Extra Credit #1: A trip to South Africa; supporting Argentina

In the summer of 2010, my family and I visited South Africa to support the Argentinian national soccer team. We arrived in Johannesburg in early June and departed back to the states from Cape Town two weeks later. Although soccer is what brought me to Africa, I spent most of my time there traveling and learning about the country culturally and geographically. Throughout my travels, I got to see geographic landmarks, national parks, wildlife, landscapes, and local people. During this V-Trip I will take briefly take you through some geographically significant milestones from my travels to Africa.



Within the first 24 hours of arriving in Johannesburg, we visited Kruger national park. From our hotel, the drive was 3-4 hours so I was fortunate enough to see some of the beautiful landscape that South Africa has to offer. This is a picture that I took of the landscape in the middle of our drive to the national park. As you can see there isn't a lot of mountains in this area, but South Africa is home to some of the most beautiful mountains, which I didn't see near Johannesburg but near Cape Town. I will talk about those mountains later. This picture makes me recall an important fact about Johannesburg: The city itself is the largest in the world that is not on a navigable body of water- this region of the country is very dry. The tree depicted in the picture is more likely to retain water over long periods of drought, so that it can survive.



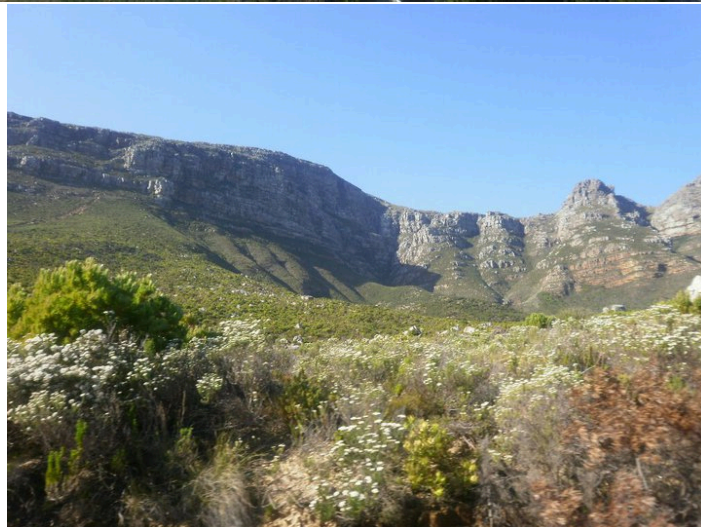
The following two pictures were taken inside of Krueger National Park that day. There, I got to pet baby lions, take a tour that showed us a pride of lions sunbathing, and meet Meerkats. I got to witness the biodiversity of South Africa by visiting a national park that preserves biodiversity above all else.

The different kinds of animals I got to see in person, and in their natural habitats, is something that I would never have been able to witness if I had never gone to Africa.



This is a picture taken of me on the back of a jeep tour through the national park. The tour that I took was through a large land reserve within Kruger national park and our tour guide had to track the animals that we wanted to see because they are practically free to roam as they please. As you can see, the jeep was very close to the family of elephants, but far enough so that we weren't in danger. I learned to respect the beauty of these animals and I also learned not to take them for granted. Poachers often hunt elephants for their tusks, and seeing them in a safe land reserve, gave me hope that my kids and grandkids could one day see a real life elephant without the worry of extinction.





This picture was taken a week later, once we had flown to Cape Town. This picture was taken on the top of Table Top Mountain, in Cape Town. The mountain gets its name because it resembles a tabletop since it is so flat along the top. The mountain gets its shape because nearly horizontal layers of sandstone were exposed to wind and water erosion. To get to the top we took a gondola, and a funny story about this picture is that we actually purchased our soccer game tickets while we were on top of the mountain from a scalper. I remember it being very windy on top of the mountain, and when I further researched the winds I discovered that when they are blowing southwest, a unique cloud (tablecloth) forms upon the plateau of the mountain. This cloud causes lush plateau vegetation to grow on the mountain as you can see in this picture. During my time in South Africa, my visit to this landmark was my favorite because of that breathtaking view you can see above.



This is a picture of me in front of the Cape Town Stadium that was built specifically for the World Cup that I went to see. Table Top Mountain would be behind my dad (who is taking the picture of me). I like this picture because it was the main reason why I went to South Africa; to see Argentina and Germany face off to see who would advance to the semi-finals. Unfortunately Argentina lost 4-0 and the end of our trip to South Africa had begun. The game day weather was chilly, and most people as you can see were wearing multiple layers of clothes. This is a misconception because people usually think Africa is always hot during the day, but this is not true. Watching Shark Week always made me want to go cage diving with great white sharks since Cape Town is the great white capital of the world. Cape Town is a biodiversity hotspot, meaning that The Cape Floristic Region has some of the highest levels of biodiversity in the entire world.



This is a picture from our last night in Africa. We stayed at a homestay somewhere between Cape Town and Johannesburg. We celebrated our spectacular trip by making a traditional South African BBQ with our own Argentine twist. We grilled Kudu (a moose-like mammal that is abundant in South Africa), and drank red wine in the middle of the Free State Region of South Africa. We had to be cautious of our leftovers and garbage because of wild animals in the area, and the windows of our residence were barred for security.

In sum, it was hard to summarize such an amazing and extensive trip to this beautiful country in just one V-Trip, but it did bring back great memories that I made there. It was easy to relate the pictures that I took to Geo-sci 10 because I was exposed to some of the world's most beautiful geography on Table Top Mountain, and to some of the world's greatest biodiversity in Krueger national park. I also have hundreds of more pictures and stories that I can share if you would like, but I couldn't fit them all for the sake of length of this assignment.