

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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High Tea at The Nelly - August 10, 2025

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SUMMARY

Another good breakfast at our B&B and another walk to the hop on hop off bus. We take a different (better) route this time. First stop is the beautiful Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, which we toured. We next hopped off in the Constantia wine region, the oldest in South Africa. The weather had turned really nice so we had a glass of wine outside at a little restaurant with a great view. Oddly, they also sold used clothing. We Ubered to the Mont Nelson Hotel and enjoyed their garden for a while before our tea reservation. High tea at "The Nellie" was amazing and took two hours. We had a great waitress which made the

experience even better. Wisely, we had not made plans for dinner and happily spent the evening digesting all treat we'd been served. - Karen

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DETAIL

Yesterday was a bit of a rain-out, what with the clouds and rain. We had fun, but we got a three day pass for the hop on-hop off bus (US\$5 more than the two day pass) so we're golden to redo any parts of the tour. Emerging from our BnB the sky is blue and there's sunshine. We can see the tops of the mountains around us. Looks like a good day. The only thing on our dance card for the day is High Tea at the Mont Nelson (or The Nelly, as the locals call it).

Our bus ride yesterday was on the Red Line route that goes around the city. The Blue Line route, the one we'll be doing today, also visits the Botanical Garden (the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden) and then a close in (but good) wine region: Constantia. On the drive to the garden we pass a big hillside leading up towards Table Mountain. We're told there are zebras here that are only striped on the front half of their bodies. The back half is just sort of a cream color. Interesting, but we never see one.

At a busy intersection we see lots of people selling stuff: paper towels, beaded art, and on and on. When the light is red, they swarm all of the cars and trucks and then quickly get back to the curb when the light turns green.

The bus stops in front of the gardens and we (and others) get off. There'll be a bus every 30 minutes. Tickets bought, we head in, past the display of bonsai trees, one of which is almost the same age as I. We walk up the trail, green lawns and flowers all around. Southern hemisphere springtime is fast approaching. With the towering mountains rising in the distance it really looks like we're in the Hawaiian Islands. A profusion of Bird of Paradise flowers only adds to the illusion.

Up and up we walk, past more flowers, and past turn offs to go see other parts of the garden. Our thinking is to go all the way up and then the rest of our visit will be all downhill. Puffing, I think this botanical garden has the most extreme elevation change I've ever visited.

We see a lot of historical buildings and gardens. The oldest "so-and-so", and some garden or trees from the "XYZ" timeframe. There's a tree-tops walk which we take. You start at ground level and as you walk out you're soon above the tree tops. It provides a great views off into the distance. A sign at the entrance says the structure is designed to sway some, and it does. Beyond the walkway we see more impressive trees. A few are over 50' tall and look familiar. I read the plaque: Aloe Vera. Wow, ours were never that big!

Treed and flowered out, we head back to the front and quickly catch another bus. We drive on, hearing about the hazard of the baboons in the area. They're fun to look at but dangerous wild animals and a real headache for local home owners. They're apparently really good at breaking into homes, cars, garages, etc. Smart creatures.

As we get closer to the Constantia wine region the houses get really nice (and big) and the narration tells us the ridiculous amounts it costs to live here. The area's climate is very favorable to grapes and so, of course, we also see lots of eucalyptus. At one of the Constantia wineries we hop off the bus and grab a couple of glasses of wine. The food looks good but High Tea is coming soon and isn't cheap. We park ourselves out back, admire the view and sip our wine. There are quite a few other people here, and families and dogs. All are friendly, and the wine — as always — is very tasty (and inexpensive!)

Our watches eventually remind us we must head to the front and hail an Uber for our ride to the Mont Nelson. Arriving there we're greeted by porters in mourning coats, white gloves, and top hats. They open your car door, transport your luggage to your suite, hail cabs and the like. The hotel is part of the Belmond chain, so Tricia and Don stayed here on their way to the safaris. They tell us it is extremely nice. We're early, so we check in and relax out back in their lovely garden.

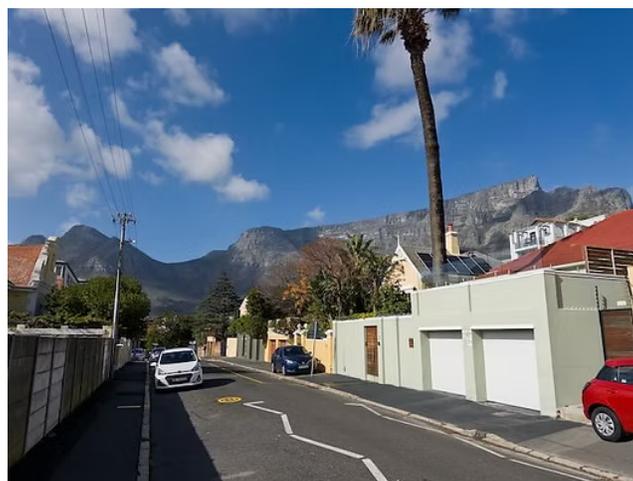
Finally at our table, we're offered a glass (or two) of pink bubbly and towering trays of food. A sommelier (for tea) comes and helps us pick out just the right one for each of us. He's fun, but very serious and knowledgeable. The teas are delicious, many layers of flavor. My second one is some Tibetan Plateau Snow Mountain Chrysanthemum something-or-other. There's a savory course, followed by scones (with clotted cream and jam), followed by a sweets course. It's all really too much. After all that, you get up and go for dessert, at the dessert table. Say what?? Thankfully you're given a little to-go doggie box into which you put your desserts (for later). Whew, cooler heads finally prevail.

More than two hours after we arrive, another Uber shows up to take us home. For dinner we... (just kidding we didn't have any dinner... high tea was more than enough). A good day, indeed.

Photos



Another awesome breakfast at our Bed and Breakfast. This time we add Avocado Toast, which is somehow a bit too 'on the nose', no flourishes of added tastes.



Outside we finally see blue skies and the actual top of Table Mountain. It looks like it'll be a lovely day.



Walking again to the Hop on-Hop off bus we take the correct route this time and are rewarded with funner business to walk past.



Having hopped on, we head towards the Botanical Garden. On this hillside behind Karen there are (we're told) zebras that are only striped on the front half.



Passing an old windmill we're reminded that the first settlers here (OK, invaders) were the Dutch. So many of the names around here are patently from the Netherlands region.



Stopping at a red light is like going to a Walmart, everything is for sale, here especially things for tourists. Small beaded African animal heads are big here (understandably).



At the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens they kindly put out a display showing flowers currently in bloom. These include the many varieties of Protea, the national flower.



Up in the tree tops, on the Tree Tops Walkway. It's built to move a bit, and it does.



So many amazing trees here. Some we recognize, many we don't. They all seem to love the moderate climate here.



Flowers, too, fell into two camps: Those we know and those (like these here) that we don't think we've ever seen.



As we walk around we see the mountains rising up on two sides. Somehow the nearby rocky mountains and steep cliffs remind me of Hawaii.



We don't see all of the Botanical Gardens, but rather pass tempting arms (like this allée of trees) leading off to who knows where.



We, by contrast, head off for yummy local wine, not surprisingly. In the Constantia wine region, named for someone's daughter, wife, or girlfriend. This is left as an exercise for the reader.



As we sip our view is of vines, green, and more of Cape Town's many neighborhoods.



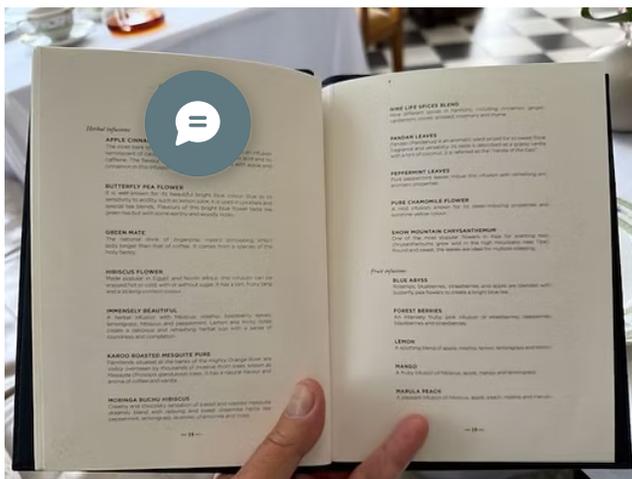
FARNSNIENTE



Well before our reservation time we show up at the Mont Nelson for High Tea. They welcome us and then shuffle us out to sit in the back yard gardens until our time.



On a bench we can look back and see all of the Mont Nelson. It does look rather regal.



At our table we're offered the drinks (tea) list. This is chapter seven (pages 18 and 19). Needless to say, we needed the sommelier to help us pick a tea to our liking.



First course, the savories. Very tasty and expertly constructed.



A bit of a breather before the sweets course... two types of scones (with butter, clotted cream, and/or jam). All still with tea.



The yummy desserts course. Impressive and tasty. After that? The desserts table (thankfully with included doggie bag, er box.)



On the Uber drive back to our B and B Table Mountain remains clear. Not uncommon here is a thin layer of clouds that forms on the top and then flows down the sides. It's call "the table cloth". Such fun!

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