

# TRAVEL

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Houston, we have a hunger **H4**

VANCOUVER SUN SATURDAY, JULY 14, 2018

SECTION H

# MY MANDELA JOURNEY

With new app, visitors to South Africa can retrace Madiba's life on centenary of his birth



**GLEN PETRIE**

**SOUTH AFRICA** Disguised as a chauffeur, the most wanted man in South Africa drove a lonely country road outside Durban and was overtaken by a car, which forced him to stop. Two more cars boxed him in at the rear.

"I knew in that instant my life on the run was over," wrote Nelson Mandela in his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*. The security police arrested him on the spot and he disappeared — jailed for 27 years.

Recently, I stood at that same roadside spot and surveyed a scene of innocent peace: swifts swooping over rolling farmland, cows grazing, an occasional car driving past. And in a green field, a peculiar installation of 50 steel poles with jagged edges, all about nine metres tall, stood like the blackened trunks of trees after a fire.

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the app features 100 significant Mandela sites around the country, offering a sort of Mandela pilgrimage for visitors. (Mandela was often called by his clan name, Madiba, an honorific.)

Seeing first-hand the places I had read about in *Long Walk to Freedom* brought the story alive for me, and made me feel closer to the man. Many sites are in Cape Town and Johannesburg, though the place his story begins is a little out of the way.

### QUNU

As in Mandela's day, you still see young kids tending sheep in the fields around Mvezo, the rural village where he was born, and in Qunu, where he grew up. Many people here still live in rondavels, round clay huts with thatch roofs, such as the one Mandela lived in.

Coming here is like stepping back in time, and one can't help but wonder what forces and fates led a boy from such humble beginnings to the status of renowned statesman. A museum complex with structures in both villages and the nearby town of Mthatha helps explain exactly that. When his father died, Nelson came under the wing of the local regent and gained exposure to the tribal system of consensus-building.

"It was democracy in its purest form," he observed. "Everyone was heard, chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, shop keeper and farmer, landowner and labourer."

SEE MANDELA ON **H2**

The Shadow Boxer sculpture of Mandela stands outside Johannesburg's Magistrates Court, where he fought to defend the rights of black clients against the Apartheid system. **GLEN PETRIE**

At left, the Nelson Mandela Museum in Mvezo retraces his time living in the village where he was born.

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Tourists take pictures of Robben Island, South Africa's version of Alcatraz, where Mandela served most of his prison sentence. GLEN PETRIE

# HISTORY COMES ALIVE

## MANDELA FROM HI

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## JOHANNESBURG

Standing outside the restored Chancellor House, where Mandela opened the country's first black law firm with his friend O.R. Tambo, I had only to turn on my heel to face the foreboding facade of Magistrates Court. In between stands a six-metre tall sculpture of Mandela in fighting form. Designed by the same Cianfraneli of the Capture Site sculpture, Shadow Boxing is positioned so that the afternoon sun casts Mandela's long shadow onto the courthouse.

Somehow, without a penny, Mandela had managed to study at the only university in South Africa that accepted blacks and was given the lucky break of articling at a law firm. But it was in Johannesburg that he also encountered racial segregation and suppression for the first time. The flame of his social justice fight was lit, and he fought within the law and outside it.

I went with a guide to see his home, now a museum, in Soweto. Short for South Western Township, a city within a city created by the forced removal of blacks from white neighbourhoods.

"You know what township means?" quipped my guide. "Shipped out of town."

I toured the modest bungalow he shared with his first wife, Evelyn, and later with his second wife, Winnie. Yet Mandela wouldn't get to spend much time in his first house, as his activism with the African National Congress consumed all his time and energy (leading to his divorce from Evelyn), and ultimately led to his imprisonment.

And so my tour of his life took a dark turn. At Constitution Hill, a museum complex that is Johannesburg's most compelling visitor site after the Apartheid Museum, I walked through the notorious Number Four Prison, where blacks were held in sub-human conditions, often for no reason at all.

Non-blacks who agitated for human rights were also detained here, including the young Indian lawyer Mahatma Gandhi.



Women in Qunu stand outside a traditional rondavel house, a round clay hut like the one Mandela lived in. SOUTH AFRICA TOURISM

Built into what began as a fort, Constitution Hill has been reinvented not only as a museum, but the site of South Africa's Constitutional Court, the highest in the land. It's open to the public. Inside I picked up a free copy of South African Constitution, signed into law by President Mandela in 1994 and regarded as one of the most progressive in the world.

Mandela would pass through Number Four Prison only briefly before serving most of his life sentence at South Africa's version of Alcatraz.

## CAPE TOWN

My first impression of Robben Island as I stepped from the ferry was how lovely it seemed. Waves lapped the shores, penguins scurried into sandy burrows, and the signature icon of Cape Town's Table Mountain could clearly be seen across 11 kilometres of water. Tourists scrambled to take selfies against the scenic backdrop.

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of horrors for political prisoners incarcerated and tortured there, including Mandela for 18 years. His two-by-three metre cell is now one of the top tourist draws in South Africa. It was here he started to secretly pen Long Walk to Freedom, hiding the pages in the small prison garden where he toiled.

Visitors are guided by former prisoners, some of whom have returned to live on the island.

"When I was released from this prison," says Dumisani Mwandla, "I couldn't talk about my experiences behind bars. But since I started working here, I opened up ... It's like the best therapy that I've ever had."

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My tour group was led around the facility by Sparks Miliwana, and hairs tingled on the back of my neck as he explained years of starvation, beatings, cold, dog attacks, and solitary confinement. That Mandela would emerge from such treatment without bitterness is a cause for wonder.

Back in Cape Town, I teamed with Garth Angus, founder of Footsteps to Freedom personalized walking tours and an authority on Mandela. Together we passed the sites of many key Mandela moments, such as City Hall, where he first addressed crowds as a free man, and the whitewashed De Tuynhus, the office of the president. It was there the first crack in Apartheid appeared.

Then President Botha, an irascible dictator known as "the big crocodile" who had presided over some of the worst Apartheid atrocities, had Mandela brought in from prison for a secret meeting, a tentative step under international pressure to invite the black population into the political process.

Visitors can get no closer than the gates, so I could only imagine the room where the opponents met, and Botha pouring Mandela's tea, a simple gesture of astounding symbolism. Botha's successor, F.W. de Klerk, continued the dialogue, though it's doubtless either could have known that just four years later Mandela would occupy De Tuynhus as South Africa's first democratically elected — and first black — president.

To follow Mandela's life to its conclusion, at age 95, would mean a trip back to Qunu, where he was laid to rest.

## BRIEFS

### New Zealand farmers have beef with airline

New Zealand's livestock sector has a beef with the country's flagship carrier. Air New Zealand has announced it will be serving a meatless hamburger to business class passengers on its Los Angeles-Auckland service. The plant-based Impossible Burger is the creation of Silicon Valley startup Impossible Foods and is sold in about 2,500 restaurants across the U.S. But the sandwich has caused a rift in New Zealand, which has long prided itself on its beef products. The country's acting prime minister, Winston Peters, urged the airline to review its decision, calling it a "slap in the face." A spokesman for Air New Zealand said it would not be ditching its "tried and true" beef and lamb burgers, but it wanted to offer more choice to flyers.

### Partiers 'wrecking' secret mountainside

A sheep farmer who put up thousands of dollars to create a secret infinity pool at a Welsh mountain beauty spot fears he's created a monster after reports of the hidden gem went viral. The pool was until recently only known to walkers and locals in the Snowdonia region of northwest Wales. But since word got out online, it's been used by all-night partygoers who are "wrecking" the pool and leaving mounds of garbage in their wake. "I've got no objection to people going there," farmer Wyn Mostyn Jones told the Daily Post, "but since the location has gone viral, there are thousands of people going there just to take a picture. It's the mess they leave behind — it's disgraceful. ... It cost me a fortune of my own money and people are going there and wrecking it." Jones estimates he's spent 400,000 pounds (\$700,000) on the project.

### Chocolate, beer and bacon on Irish tour

Promoters of a new "salty, malty and sweet" tour in Ireland are counting on our love of chocolate, bacon and beer to draw visitors to the country's "Ancient East." The excursion, organized by Gallivanting Tours, will take participants on an exclusive jaunt around the culinary hot spots of Wexford, reports the Irish Independent. The daylong tours cost 180 euros (\$275) per person and include lunch and "all sorts of goodies."

### 500-year-old sword likely used in battle

Norwegian divers have discovered a 500-year-old sword that may have been used in battle or for beheading foes, broadcaster NRK reports. The sword was found in Mjøsa, Norway's largest lake, and has been pegged as belonging to a powerful figure in the 1500s who may have used it to wage war. The artifact will eventually be transferred to the Norwegian Maritime Museum in Oslo.

Compiled by Andre Ramshaw, Postmedia News

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Robben Island, "the Alcatraz of Cape Town," with Table Mountain in the background. Nelson Mandela spent 18 of the 27 years he was imprisoned on the island. — GLEN PETRIE

## RETRACE MANDELA'S LIFE

Tourists follow pilgrimage of South Africa's anti-apartheid leader **PAGE B14-15**



"The Shadow Boxer" sculpture of legendary activist Nelson Mandela stands outside Johannesburg's Magistrates Court, where he fought to defend the rights of black clients against the Apartheid system. GLEN PETRIE

# My Mandela Journey

Travellers to South Africa can retrace activist's pilgrimage

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To follow Mandela's life to its conclusion, at age 95, would mean a trip back to Qunu, where he was laid to rest. "When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country," he famously wrote, "he can rest in peace."



The Nelson Mandela Museum in Mvezo retraces his life story in the village he was born. This tourist trip takes you to many landmarks of his life. — SOUTH AFRICA TOURISM



The scenic view from atop Table Mountain, Cape Town, which can be seen along a stretch of water. — GLEN PETRIE

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