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**W**ITH an unending wish-list of exotic rides on our vast planet and having ticked off Europe and India in 2010, my wife Farzana Zainab and I were constantly asked “where next?” Invariably we replied, Africa?

Of course, riding two-up with a heavy bike it was necessary that we stayed on tarmac roads, cared well for our personal and road safety, needed good infrastructure, combination of scenery-mountain passes-wildlife-seashore, nice rental bike, great food, affordable accommodation etc. So we finally zeroed into the rainbow nation, yes the amazing South Africa! After all, it was the best bet in terms of convenience, accessibility and diversity. This country has 11 national languages, over 72 dialects and a geographical orientation about as diverse as its people. It is quite simply a world within one border. However, with a limited eight-day window, we decided on doing a long loop starting and ending the trip in Cape Town.

We arrive from Bangalore to Cape Town to our simple accommodation at the friendly, clean, reasonably priced and centrally located ‘17 on Loader’ Bed and Breakfast that is close to the V and A Waterfront area in Cape Town, where the bike rental is also located at the BMW Pavilion.

We unpack and start segregating the things for the trip and things to be left back for safe keeping in the B and B (where we will stay for another two nights after the bike trip).

## Cape Town to Paarl

After catching a good night’s sleep, I head off to MotoBerlin Rentals to pick up my bike — a clean and shiny BMW R1200RT. I quickly go through the formalities and also pair the GPS to my Bluetooth Intercom headset. I head to our lodge, where my wife is waiting to load our essentials into the three hard cases and one tank bag.

We gear up and take the M6 highway passing spectacular vistas of the beautiful blue waters of the Atlantic Ocean on the right and the iconic Table Mountain, Signal Hill and Lions head on the left. Mile to mile the view only got better. We pass Three Anchor Bay, Sea Point, Bantry Bay, Camps Bay, Hout Bay.

A few more kms of riding, we reach the start of the spectacular Chapmans Peak Drive. This beautiful drive has unending long sweeps, turns, climbs, descends, all with the sheer drops to the massive Atlantic Ocean on the right and towering mountains rising above you on the left is a dream ride for any biker. At one of the viewpoints here we decide to stop for some photos and to our pleasant surprise, with a crew of about 15-20, a Bollywood movie ‘Cocktail’ is being shot at the edge of a cliff and the hero is Saif Ali Khan.

We pass False Bay with its beautiful white sandy beaches in twilight and after a while turning inland its pitch dark and its getting a little cold as well, but we continue to ride the highway in the dark to reach our destination.



Haroon Rafeeq and his wife on their trip.



## Paarl to Aquila

We wake up to a bright, warm and sunny morning in Paarl. This place is the third oldest European settlement in South Africa and is renowned for its scenic beauty and fruit-growing heritage.

After breakfast, we pack up and hit the road. Along the way we pass the Victor Verster Correctional Center, which is where the legendary Nelson Mandela in 1991 walked a free man from his 27 years of imprisonment (in fact he spent the last three years of imprisonment here).

We continue on R303 road toward Wellington and then tackle the picturesque 30 km long Bainskloof Pass with an unending, mind stimulating series of twists in the mountains. After its summit, there is a river on the right in the deep gorge below and it provides for some stunning views.

The Aquila Safari is a private game reserve located in a 7,500 hectare area of the Southern Karoo region with the Big-5 of Africa (Lion, Elephant, Wild Buffalo, Leopard and Rhino) as well as a variety of other wild animals and birds.

## Aquila to Oudtshoorn

With sunrise in this part of the world at 4:30 a.m., its bright by 5:00 a.m. With the chirping of birds and our own friendly resident peacock visiting our chalet, it was hard to sleep further.

We soon pack-up, load the bike and get ready for a long day

of riding through the vast and barren little Karoo. It is here that we encounter a brief disruption of our ride. With the GPS acting up, we had to do a extra 140 kms after taking a wrong route at the start. But we quickly got our directions and were on our way. With temperatures at 40 degree Celsius and with harrowing cross winds, we continue crossing the Huisrivier Pass with its long sweeps, moderate twists, chocolate colored road sections till we arrive into the town of Carlitzdorp. We stayed here for the next two nights as we planned to take a break to explore the Oudtshoorn, which is one of the biggest towns in the little Karoo region. Total distance traveled today 492 kms.

## Oudtshoorn to Knysna

We are on the N12 high way back to Oudtshoorn where the same highway turns left and heads down south toward the beautiful and intimidating Outeniqua Mountains. After some great sight seeing at the Knysna heights we head back to the hotel and finally call it a day. Total distance traveled 223 kms

## Knysna to Barrydale

We wake up to a bright sunny morning in Knysna and head back in the west-bound direction on the N2 highway with the beautiful serene lake on our left. Once out of Knysna, we soon cross the town of Wilderness and continue on the N2. The Indian Ocean is accompanying us on our left, while beautiful mountains flank us on the right side.

After tackling the Tradouws pass and a few kms further

down, the R324 road terminates at the T-junction with the famed Route 62. We turn right and a km later arrive at the quaint and charming town of Barrydale that we had simply ridden through on day three of our ride.

## Barrydale to Arniston

After a nice English breakfast, the curio shop next door catches my wife’s attention, which I don’t mind because her shopping is always restricted to a few small mementos that are neither heavy on the pocket nor large for our luggage cases, while she is also relatively satisfied with the ‘shopping experience’ that women always love... We soon pack-up and get on the road leaving the wonderful Barrydale behind and heading back thru the R324 crossing once again the Tradouws Pass. We continue passing the village of Suurbraak and head toward the N2 highway that will take us thru the vast Overberg region or the bread basket of South Africa due to its large grain production. On the N2 after we go past Swellendam and chug some more kms before we take a left turn onto the R317 road that carries us to the town of Bredasdorp.

As we are closing in on the Cape Agulhas, we are welcomed by neat and unending rows of beautiful beach homes that are lined all the way until the lighthouse. We get off the tarmac and ride a few hundred meters of loose gravel and get as close to the sea and stop the bike there. However, the last 300 odd meters to the tip of the Cape have to be done on foot. Arriving there it’s a special feeling to even simply think we are now at the bottom-most tip of this huge continent. On a personal note the breathtaking scenery at Cape Agulhas cannot be truly captured on camera nor explained in words. It needs to be experienced.

We visit the nearby Cape Agulhas lighthouse which was built in 1849. When we arrive at the rooftop, the view of the 360 degrees scenery around was priceless.

## Cape Town city tour

Early morning after our regular English breakfast, I took our trusty bike and headed to MotoBerlin to return it with the customary element of sadness as I am parting company with the third and trusty member of our unforgettable riding adventure in South Africa over the past eight days.

The tour takes us through Camps Bay, Sea Point, St. George’s Cathedral, South African Museum, Castle of Good Hope, Greenmarket Square and finally to the popular tourist destination of — The V and A Waterfront, where we also visit the Two Oceans Aquarium that presents the underwater sea life from the Indian Ocean and Atlantic Ocean, which is an awesome treat.

I hope we can go back some time to see the real Africa on a wilder and much larger adventure on two-wheels ... and here is signing off from Sud Africa as they would locally say in Afrikaans — “Totsiens and hoop om julle gou weer te sien” — Goodbye and hope to see you again.

For more on Haroon and Farzana’s motorcycle touring and interests, please visit their new website at [www.rideforpassion.com](http://www.rideforpassion.com)

# Biking adventures through

# SOUTH AFRICA

Haroon Rafeeq and his wife with their BMW motorcycle.