**Capetown to Johannesburg to Atlanta to LAX**

After visiting South Africa, it was time to come back home. The end of the trip was in Capetown and we decided to take the train from Capetown to Johannesburg and then Delta Airlines from Johannesburg through Atlanta to LAX. It seemed reasonable at the time, and it still seems reasonable, but this particular trip had some surprisingly undesirable features.

We had a great stay at the Enchanted Guest House in Capetown. The manager was friendly; he took Emily on a climb up and down Table Mountain and drove us around town. We got up early for the breakfast, but the kitchen was slow to get the food to us. We ate fast and the manager took us to the Capetown Train station, showed us where to get tickets, and to the gate. We then had to haul the luggage about twenty car lengths to our compartment, 8F. It was a nice double compartment in tourist class with two bench seats facing each other and two pull down sky beds that were not used. The train left promptly at 10:00 AM and was due in Johannesburg at 12:15 PM the next day. The plane was scheduled to leave the airport at 8:50 PM, so there was time to allow for the usual train lateness.

The first thing that we noticed was that it was a hot day (about 35 degC) and the windows in the corridor were open. The compartment was just bearably hot; the air conditioning did not work. The power plug for recharging electronics also did not work. We opened the windows to get some breeze and slightly cooler air. There were signs everywhere saying “No Smoking”, but it appeared that staff was smoking somewhere and their exhaust filtered into the open windows…UGH. The dining car did have operational air conditioning, but security people occupied most of the seats. There was a scenic ride with several stops to Beaufort West. Shortly thereafter, the train stopped at 6 PM for three hours. I began to doubt that we would make it in time for the plane. The cause was a train failure in front of us on the single track which needed rescue engines. We finally got moving again at 9:30 PM. The train had frequent stops, even in the middle of nowhere. During stops, the air became sweltering for sleeping on the two single beds. The next day was even hotter and had more stops. The dining car ran out of food and drinks. We later found out that we had both contracted diarrhea from the dining car. Arrival at the Johannesburg train station was an unwelcome 6:15 PM the next day, 6 hours late.

The way out of the train tracks was a stairway up three flights as the escalator was not working. Fortunately, Emily met us at the top with a cab driver who took us the two blocks to his cab. The cab rushed down the street, onto a highway that was not too crowded and got us to the airport at 7:15 PM. We had to wait 15 minutes to check the luggage. Then there was the 25 minute security line (no TSA Pre-Check here), and the 20 minute line to get passports stamped to leave South Africa. The loudspeaker announced final boarding for the flight to Atlanta. I take another 10 minutes to run to the gate, and then there was an additional check and pat down. I arrive at the gate and try to hold up the boarding process. Meanwhile, Chris is procuring something to drink for us, and Emily is buying stuff at duty-free. We are the last to board the airplane, a 777LR that has the range to make the 17 hour flight.

Child: Oh no, I am seated next to a very loud 7 year-old that has a hearing difficulty and is somewhat autistic. He is active and kicks me for the entire flight since his feet are on the seat. He watches inane cartoons and laughs too loudly. He even puts his pillow on my side and tries to sleep on me. Meanwhile, Chris has decided that it is better to have her own window seat, even though this is an overnight flight with zero visibility, since she likes to use the overhead light which I object to.

Customs: It is finally Atlanta, we have to go through USA Customs, a long line, then pick up luggage and go through luggage screening again. Emily has a two identical bottle package in her carry-on, one of which is declared by the customs officer to have explosives. She can’t carry it on but she can check it. She wraps it in coats and puts it into Chris backpack, which she then checks. This is not logical, but it is TSA, so conform. We rush off to make the plane, which is the same one we already were on. It seems to have taken more time to clean, so it leaves one hour late. We pick up our now six pieces of luggage at LAX. Summary: 32 hour hot train ride; 1 hour taxi, 26 hour airplane trip; bus; car; home.