

# Worlds apart

New political tours of South Africa aim to deepen understanding

GAVIN BELL

WENDY Appelbaum's home is a mansion on a mountaintop overlooking her own vineyards in the mesmerising beauty of the Stellenbosch valley near Cape Town.

As she surveys a patchwork of vines ripening in the sun beneath the jagged crowns of the Hottentots Holland mountains, a yellow-billed kite glides silently below her. "I love South Africa," she says. "This is the most beautiful place in the world. God made this country, we just rent it."

Fobian Mazibuko lives in an equally spectacular setting a few kilometres away in Hout Bay, where rugged mountains frame the blue waters of the south Atlantic. But her home is a two-room shack of plywood and corrugated iron in a squatter camp and her view is restricted to a tightly packed warren of similar makeshift dwellings.

Fobian lives in one room with her husband, a Zulu fisherman, and their three children, and scrapes a living from the other room she has converted into a shebeen, or unlicensed drinking den. "I cannot live always like this," she says. "I don't want to die here, or for my children to live always here."

Both Wendy and Fobian are feisty women, strong characters making the most of what they have, both aspiring to narrow the chasm between rich and poor in their beloved country. Wendy supports her philanthropic husband in channelling funds to development projects in health, education, agriculture and small-business development. There is little Fobian can do to improve the lot of the black majority, because social and economic progress is hampered by a government widely regarded as corrupt and incompetent.

Few tourists meet Wendy and Fobian, but a small group recently visited both as part of an innovative approach to providing a much deeper understanding of the challenges facing South Africa. The idea is the brainchild of Nicholas Wood, a former Balkans correspondent of *The New York Times* who organises political tours of countries riven by conflicts.

"The aim is to give people an understanding of complex political and economic issues by finding out what's happening on the ground," he says. "As a journalist I had privileged access to people and places in the news. These tours offer the same kind of access to anyone with an inquiring mind."

The South Africa tour begins in KwaZulu-Natal with a briefing by local newspaper editors, meetings with district councillors and a visit to a rural school. In Johannesburg, the group meets a leader of the main opposition party and the chief executive of a development think tank, before touring the sprawling township of Soweto. It visits the stock exchange and then plumbs the depths of a uranium mine to find out about violent clashes in the mining industry.

In Cape Town, a meeting is arranged with Helen Zille, leader of the Democratic Alliance and Premier of the Western Cape, the only province not controlled by the African National Congress.

In the inner sanctum of provincial power, we learn about the cut and thrust of South African politics and the dangers of concentrating too much power in too few hands. Fielding questions from the tour group, Zille stresses the need to build powerful institutions to counter political patronage and to maintain an independent judiciary, media and business sector.

In a tour of the nearby parliament, we encounter ghosts of the past. In an obscure corridor there is a large flag of apartheid-era South Africa in a framed glass case, bearing emblems of Natal, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Boer Republic. A sign of changing times is that our two young white guides are asked what the emblems signify, and they have no idea.

Tour leader Peter Sullivan, former editor of *The Star*



PICTURES: ALAMY (ABOVE AND BELOW)

newspaper in Johannesburg, conjures another ghost in the chamber of the national assembly. He recalls a comment by Helen Suzman, the veteran anti-apartheid activist, when then president PW Botha announced an extension of detention orders without trial from 90 to 180 days. "I see a shiver going around these benches looking for a spine to go up," she said.

There is time to savour the extravagant beauty of the Western Cape in a drive to the fishing port of Hout Bay and traditional fish and chips in an open-air snack bar by the sea. But above us, surging up a nearby hill, stands a reminder of the enormous social problems that bedevil the country.

The settlement of Imizamo Yethu ("people have gathered" in the Xhosa language) was planned in 1991 to accommodate 500 families. Its nucleus of matchbox houses is now engulfed by a sea of shacks that are crammed with an estimated 40,000 people. Our local guide states the obvious when he tells us that the biggest challenges are the lack of sanitation and water.

This is where we meet Fobian Mazibuko and her husband Themba. In their one-room living quarters there is a double bed, a few sticks of furniture, a television and not much else, but it is as clean and tidy as they can make it.

Fobian is a larger-than-life character who laughs easily

Clockwise from below, Nicholas Wood, founder of Political Tours; children passing a Nelson Mandela wall mural; Cape Dutch Manor House and vineyard; Camps Bay and Table Mountain on the Cape Peninsula; shacks in Imizamo Yethu township



despite the shackles of poverty. "Everybody wants a house, but we can do nothing," she says. "We must stand together. My dream is houses for everyone."

Themba is a slight, shy figure, softly spoken. He says: "We have no toilet or running water. I don't feel good. When it rains it is a big problem."

Fobian's dream has come true for some of her neighbours, thanks to an Irish pub tycoon who spent his honeymoon in a nearby resort. We are told that over three years an international charity built five modern houses in the settlement. In the same period the tycoon brought workers from Ireland and built 455. Our guide tells us: "[The Irishman] was impressed by the resilience of the people. He saw they were poor but they smiled."

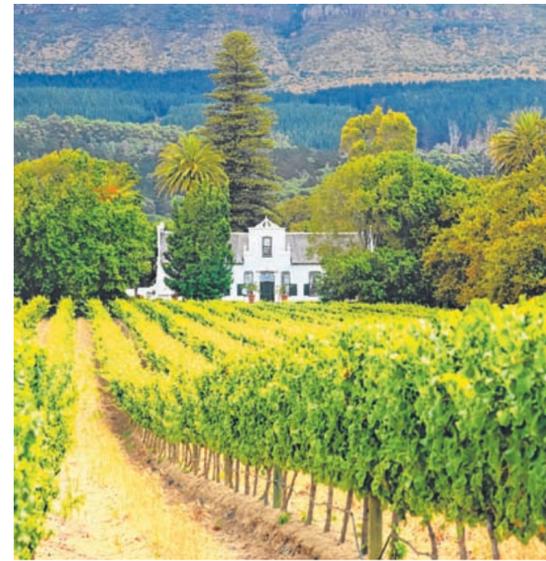
That evening a prominent white businessman and political consultant paints a gloomy picture over dinner on a wine farm. Corruption is rife, local administrations are collapsing and an incompetent government and its cronies draw fat salaries amid a sea of poverty.

The sentiment is familiar to seasoned observers of a Jekyll-and-Hyde society that swings daily between optimism and despair. Almost two decades after the collapse of apartheid, Nelson Mandela's vision of an equitable multiracial society remains a mirage for most South Africans.

On the last day we are invited to DeMorgenzen, the Appelbaum vineyard, to discuss labour unrest in the winelands. We are joined by Andre, a wine farmer who is honest about shortcomings on both sides.

He freely admits the wine industry is introspective and egotistical, but says the ANC is trying to wrest control of the Western Cape from the Democratic Alliance through local agitators by making it ungovernable. He tells the story of a young farmer who had been warned that an angry mob was coming to burn his farm. The man sent his family away and stood at the entrance to his farm and waited.

When the mob arrived brandishing clubs, he said to



PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES (ABOVE AND BELOW)



their leader: "I am here to listen. Tell me why you are angry." He listened patiently to the litany of complaints and then asked if he might address the crowd. He told them of his family and their struggle to make a living, how they tried to be fair employers, and then invited them to tour the farm to see for themselves the decent living conditions of his workers. The mob's anger evaporated and the men who came to burn a farm ended up hugging the farmer.

Andre concludes: "Real change only comes between individuals. We have to get to know each other."

## Checklist

Political Tours is offering the following trips this year: From Moscow to Kazan: Examining Russia's internal and foreign policies, human rights, and conflicting views of Putin's leadership in meetings with pro-Putin and opposition activists (May 25-June 2); Northern Ireland: Analysing causes of the conflict and enduring challenges in meetings with politicians, community leaders, former paramilitaries and citizens in loyalist and nationalist communities (July 20-28); Greece & the euro: From Samost to Athens and Corinth, discussing lessons to be learned from the Greek sovereign debt crisis and the future of the eurozone with community leaders, economists, trade unionists and business people (June 22-30); Georgia: An in-depth tour to examine fallout from the 2008 war with Russia and prospects for Mikheil Saakashvili's vision of free-market reform (October 5-13). More: [politicaltours.com](http://politicaltours.com).

## A novel experience

Orhan Pamuk's museum in Istanbul enshrines the narrative of a remarkable book

SUSANNA SMITH

AS I walk up a hill to the Museum of Innocence in the Cukurcuma district in Istanbul, I imagine a forlorn soul obsessively searching these streets for the woman he loves.

The Museum of Innocence, which opened last year, is Nobel prize-winning author Orhan Pamuk's monument to a love affair and the subject of his 2008 novel of the same name, in which the sensitive protagonist, Kemal Basmaci, takes readers on a literary tour of Istanbul via his search for the object of his affections, his distant relative Fusun Keskin.

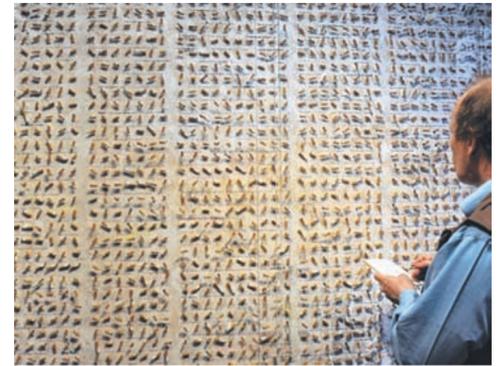
Pamuk developed the idea for the museum and the novel in parallel, blurring the lines between literary and physical space. He started collecting items for the museum in the 1990s, searching junk shops and friends' homes for curios that inspired stories or fitted existing ideas.

In the book, during his more than 30-year obsession with Fusun, Kemal hoards everything he can to remind himself of her — ornaments, cigarette butts, hairpins — and these items, along with many re-creations of Istanbul life in the 70s and 80s, form the basis of the collection, which is presented in 83 dioramas, one for each chapter of the novel.

Each copy of *The Museum of Innocence* includes an entry ticket to the museum in its final chapter and on arrival mine is duly stamped and I leave the streets of Istanbul to enter Pamuk's world.

The first items that catch my eye are the 4213 cigarette butts collated, annotated and pinned to the wall of the foyer. These are what remains of cigarettes smoked by Fusun between 1976 and 1984 and collected by Kemal at the height of his obsession with her. Nine square frames are mounted on the same wall and show looped videos of Fusun's hands animatedly smoking and stubbing out cigarettes.

I take the stairs to the first level, passing a display case titled "the happiest moment of my life" and containing a gold earring in the shape of a butterfly with the letter F in its centre. It was lost by Fusun during the first encounter of her affair with Kemal.



PICTURES: AFP

Istanbul's Museum of Innocence, below and bottom, includes the 4213 cigarette butts the novel's protagonist collected, above



his tale to the novelist Orhan Pamuk (who makes a postmodern cameo appearance in the book), while surveying his life and the museum around him. Pamuk's notes, sketches and corrections are displayed. One wall is emblazoned with the closing words of the novel and Kemal's message to the world: "Let everyone know, I lived a very happy life." Aside from enshrining a heart-wrenching love story, the Museum of Innocence provides a window into the daily life of Istanbul during a time of great cultural change; Pamuk has referred to himself as "the anthropologist of my own experience".

## Checklist

The Museum of Innocence is at Cukurcuma Caddesi, Dalig Cikmazi, 2, 34425, Beyoglu, Istanbul. Open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 6pm; Friday, 10am to 8pm. Guided tours are available; entry is about \$14, but if you have purchased the novel, the included ticket gets you in. More: [masumiyetmuzesi.org](http://masumiyetmuzesi.org).

As I view the exhibits, my connection with the novel is immediate. The sights, sounds and imagery of Istanbul are frozen in time and each display brings to life scenes from the novel, until the museum and the narrative become extensions of each other.

I climb the stairs to the attic bedroom where Kemal lay narrating

## Up in the air with baby on board

### THE FAMILY TOURIST

LOUISE STEWART

THE moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it. — JM Barrie, *Peter Pan*

I DOUBT Barrie was referring to airline travel with a baby, but he may as well have been. Until now, I've looked at ankle-biters in departure lounges with a mixture of sympathy for the parents and fear that I'll be the poor sod stuck in the next seat.

How many horror stories have you heard about being on a long-haul with a screaming baby? Indeed, talk around our table on Mother's Day last Sunday was of seats being kicked from behind by bratty bairns for six hours and parents letting toddlers run up and down the aisle, squealing in the face of passengers attempting to sleep.

But to Albury, by air, partner Jon, six-month-old Florence and I must go. It's a mere 55-minute flight, but as we scan our boarding passes at the gate, I must focus. It's lift-off for Operation Baby on Board.

All the advice we've received suggests feeding the infant during take-off and landing. The sucking action apparently helps regulate their little ears to the difference in air pressure. I still haven't mastered the skill of the

public breastfeed. Well, you try surreptitiously unbuttoning a blouse and unhooking a bra with one hand, while wrestling 8kg of wriggle power in the other. It's a lot harder than it looks. No, it's exactly as it looks. Please... just don't look.

As we board the Dash-8 in a flurry of terry towelling cloths and the ever-present Sophie the squeaking giraffe, I make a grab for the window seat. Neither Jon nor I are great flyers, so the ability to monitor the structural soundness of the wing throughout the flight is a luxury we both prize.

When I explain my need to sit by the window is actually based on the need for privacy to nourish our daughter and avoid a screaming scene, Jon concedes. Checkmate. As the allegedly secure propellers

begin to spin, I lay Florence across my lap and unbutton my top. Glancing around, I expect to be met with raised eyebrows, small smiles or, creepily, both. Nope, nothing. With her head resting on a tiny pillow on one armrest, her legs lolling over the other, Florence's little cheeks begin to move in and out. She doesn't notice the take-off and is asleep in 10 minutes.

While the social debate around breastfeeding in public still fills column inches on the ground, in the air the anti-boobs brigade seems to be conspicuously absent. Perhaps no matter how offended someone might be by the sight of a nurturing breast, the prospect of a scream-free flight trumps it every time.

And there's the thing. While horror stories do happen, we shouldn't be

shackled by our babies. Most people are OK about kids on board and if they are bothered, it's usually by parents who don't try to keep them in line. On a recent flight to north Queensland, the screams of a toddler in the row behind me went unremarked by other passengers as it was obvious his parents were doing everything they could think of to calm the poor mite.

Florence wakes with 20 minutes to go and is placidly fascinated by the shifting shadows and sunlight. When the call comes from the flight deck for the cabin crew to prepare for landing, I lay her down again and begin to feed. The plane descends and bounces along the runway. It's been a peep-free flight. If we could only manage to keep it up for another 23 hours, we would be in Europe.