



NEWSLETTER

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Our last newsletter was almost 16 months ago, a time frame that not-so-surprisingly corresponds with the age of our little Henry Humphrys.

Although it's an overused cliché, we really don't seem to have enough hours in the day anymore (we hear a resounding call of agreement from all you other parents). It has been an absolute joy watching Henry (Crumb) steadily grow from "blob" to baby, and onwards to the rampaging toddler that he now is. The general consensus is that he is a mini-me of Crusty, although Crusty is the first to point out that it is also agreed that Crumb is very cute, and that the correlation between cute and Crusty could definitely be argued against. What can't be argued, is that our boy is thriving in the healthy and loving environment in which we have strived to surround him. Cape Town is probably the most cosmopolitan and "Western-like" city in all of Africa, and this offers us some advantages in child-rearing when compared to the rest of the continent. Although we already lived a fairly healthy lifestyle "pre-Crumb", since his arrival we have re-assessed all facets of our daily living, and have endeavoured to live as wholesome and natural as possible. Living in Cape Town affords us access to relative luxuries such as organic produce, holistic health care, chemical-free products, and plenty of mountain and beach for Crumb to discover, and we definitely believe that all of these factors have greatly influenced his healthy growth. He has a real sense of fun and humour about him, is also very sensitive and loving, and is generally just great to be around...something which has been mentioned by others, and not just his biased parents. We plan to explore some of southern Africa with him during this year to add to the jet-setter status he earned after we travelled around Australia for 2 months over the past Xmas/New Year season.

In April of this year, South Africa held only its fourth **free and democratic national election**, and although the ruling ANC party again dominated the votes, two other political parties - the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Congress of the People (COPE) - managed to garner enough votes to deny the ANC a constitution-changing two-thirds majority in the parliament. The DA even won the majority vote in our own Western Cape province, taking provincial power away from the ANC for the first time. We feel this shows a real growth in the country's democratic credentials, and is truly commendable given the first democratic election was only 15 years ago. That first election was preceded by horrific violence between supporters of rival, tribal-based political parties - although it is argued that a lot of this violence was fuelled by the outgoing Apartheid government - but this latest election was overwhelmingly peaceful and considered "free and fair". Over 23 million South Africans registered to vote, equating to almost an **80% turnout** on election day...an amazing figure considering it is not compulsory to vote, even when registered.. After a year of unsettling political problems, which we mentioned in our last newsletter, we feel South Africa is now poised to rise onwards and upwards.

While we were in **Australia**, we were asked a couple of times if we were considering returning to Oz, now that we have Crumb. We are often asked the same question here by disbelieving South Africans, who view the shores of Australia as an almost mythical land of milk and honey, and can't fathom why we have come in the opposite direction. Our answer has always been non-committal, as who knows what the future holds? We accept that the public education available in Australia far outperforms that in South Africa, but we are also mindful of the fantastic "life" education available here. When considering the positives and negatives of living in the developing world, compared to the developed world, we find it often pays to look beyond the headlines. This is especially so here in South Africa, where the news coverage invariably focuses on the daily horrors of crime, rape, abuse and corruption, and tends to influence any discussions regarding our future plans here.

We recently sought to uncover some of the good news about South Africa, and thought you may be interested to see what we found:

- South Africa is still enjoying the longest period of economic upswing in its history, and this looks set to continue despite the global financial crisis. The country's economy is fairly well insulated against the global slowdown, and should continue to grow as a result of an increase in Government spending, thanks in no small part to the infrastructure projects relating to the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

- The country's financial system is fundamentally sound, well capitalised and well regulated, according to the International Monetary Fund. According to the World Economic Forum, South Africa's banks are considered to be in a sounder financial position than those in Switzerland, Germany, and not surprisingly the United States and Britain.

- Preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup have made considerable progress and the tournament is providing South Africa with a timely economic boost. According to one survey, the World Cup is set to contribute R55 billion (AU\$9.2 billion, US\$6.9 billion, £4 billion) to the economy, while creating 415,000 new jobs. One of the key legacies of the World Cup will be in infrastructure development, particularly in transport. South Africa is investing R170 billion in developing public transport for the 2010 World Cup and beyond.

- Between 2001 and 2007, the number of previously disadvantaged South Africans who have joined the "new" black middle class has increased by 50% to 9 million. The number of property owners considered previously disadvantaged has increased by more than 60% in the past 10 years.

- Since 1996, the percentage of South Africans with access to electricity increased from 58% to 80%. Similarly, those with access to water increased from 62% to 88%, and sanitation from 52% to 73%. It must be remembered that for 50 years up to 1994, the Apartheid government deliberately and systematically denied these basic services to the majority of South Africans.

- in our last newsletter, we mentioned that electricity supply was a major issue at the beginning of 2008. After a few chaotic months of controlled power cuts, load shedding was suspended in May. The state provider Eskom, has now committed to accelerate the implementation of its capacity programmes and will invest R150 billion over the next five years in upgrading the country's power supply infrastructure. Although this will unfortunately take shape mainly in the construction of more fossil-fuel burning power stations, South Africa's first wind farm has begun operation near Darling, on the windy West Coast north of Cape Town.

- It has recently been announced that South Africa's Aids epidemic and HIV prevalence rate is stabilising, albeit at a rate that is one of the highest in the world.

Some other notable recent South African achievements include:

- Technology entrepreneur Elon Musk launched the first privately developed rocket to orbit the Earth.

- Alex Harris and Sibusiso Vilane made history in 2008 when they became the first team to walk unsupported and unassisted to the South Pole.

- Cape Town mayor Helen Zille won the World Mayor Award in 2008, and Jacob Zuma (South Africa's newly elected president) and Oscar Pistorius (the world's fastest paralympian who aims to compete in the 2012 Summer Olympic Games) were named among Time Magazine's Most Influential People for 2008. Paralympic swimming star Natalie du Toit also made history in 2008, by becoming the first amputee to compete in the able-bodied Olympic Games.

- South African surgeons carried out the world's first organ transplants from one HIV-positive person to another.

- Lewis Gordon Pugh completed the first long distance swim in the North Pole, in order to draw attention to the effects of climate change.

- Mining entrepreneur Bridgette Radebe won the International Business Person of the Year Award, architect Kevin Fellingham won House of the Year award, and telecommunications innovator Rael Lissoos was named Social Entrepreneur of the Year.

- South African astronaut Mark Shuttleworth's Ubuntu computer operating system beat Windows Vista and Mac OS X at an international hacking contest.

-The University of Cape Town was named as one of the "Top 200 Universities in the World", an African Leadership Academy was opened in Johannesburg, and four South African business schools were voted amongst the world's best.

- South Africa has been named as one of the developing world's "Ten Best Ethical Travel Destinations"; was recently ranked second in a list of "Top Ten World Travel Destinations" by one of the United States' most popular online travel guides; and is the most popular destination among British gap year travellers. Cape Town in particular, was bestowed 2008 "Best World City" ahead of San Francisco, Sydney and Vancouver by the readers of the U.K.'s Daily Telegraph; was also named as one of the world's most iconic cities by National Geographic; and claimed the third top spot on the first ever "World Edition Monopoly" board.

Crusty recently attended a gathering of Aussies living in Cape Town, who were invited to an evening with the **Australian High Commissioner** to South Africa, Ann Harrap. The High Commissioner herself admitted that the gathering would normally have been called "a piss up", but as the drinks bill was being paid for by the Australian government, she deferred to calling it an "information evening". Ann spoke of the High Commission's desire to become more actively involved in southern Africa, and noted that the Australian government was preparing to increase from 80 to 2000, the number of bursaries offered to African students to study in Australia. An interesting question was put to the High Commissioner, to clarify the difference between a High Commission and an Embassy. Quite simply, a High Commission is within a country of the Commonwealth, whereas an embassy is not. South Africa re-entered the Commonwealth in 1994, so the then Australian Embassy changed all of its stationary, and the Ambassador became a High Commissioner. During the evening, Crusty put forward an invitation for all those attending to form an Aussie - South Africa social club of sorts, and the proceeding enthusiasm augurs well for this project that Crusty has harboured for a few years. Now that the Aussie Socceroos have officially qualified for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, both the High Commission and ourselves are expecting a steady flow of enquiries, with the social club perhaps also becoming involved. We'll keep you informed of the social club's progress.

Coinciding with the **2010 FIFA World Cup**, Compass Odyssey is offering two **“South Africa & Swaziland World Cup Safaris”**. As many supporters (especially Australians) will be basing themselves in Durban, one safari travels from Johannesburg and arrives in Durban the day prior to the commencement of the tournament, whilst the other safari departs Durban after the completion of the Group Matches and makes its way in reverse to Johannesburg. Both safaris will offer plenty of wildlife viewing, including stays in Swaziland’s Hlane Royal National Park, and South Africa’s famous Kruger National Park. The itineraries for our **“South Africa & Swaziland World Cup Safaris”** can be viewed on our website – **www.compassodyssey.net**. Our website also features an **“Exploratory Safari”** later this year, through the southern African countries of **Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia**. This is the safari which we mentioned earlier, where Crumb will join his Mum and Dad on safari for 3 weeks as we do some reconnaissance through these countries for future safaris. As we aren’t totally experienced with the exact route we will be following, we are offering the safari at a very reduced cost to anyone that would like to hop on-board with us. We already have nine fellow travellers who have booked with us, and welcome you to browse the itinerary on our website. As you may or may not be aware, we also operate safaris through Morocco. Crusty was recently in Morocco, for six weeks of guiding and guidebook updating. Our **inaugural Compass Odyssey Morocco Safari** was booked exclusively by a group of Americans, who were thoroughly “won over” by the country and its people, and also its Islamic faith. As they freely admitted, their only previous exposure to Islam was via the terrorism news images on CNN, and for them to see and experience the very gentle, sincere, and humble side of Islam was the major highlight for Crusty. After the safari, he travelled around the country doing field research for the 2nd edition of his Frommer’s Morocco guidebook, due to be published later this year. We encourage anyone interested in southern Africa or Morocco to browse our **“Travel & Tours”** division on our website, where we feature general information about these countries, as well as image galleries.

Many South Africans still require a hand-up (not a hand-out) to rise above their poverty-stricken problems. We would like to publicise a great initiative called **“Greater Good South Africa” (GGSA)**, which brings worthy causes and committed givers together in meaningful and innovative ways to end poverty in South Africa. Through GGSA, anyone can find, connect, give to, and monitor thousands of causes that need support. The next time you’re stuck for a gift idea, visit GGSA’s on-line gift site (www.gifts4good.co.za). You’ll see that on offer are alternative, carefully selected gifts such as fruit trees for a community orchard, supplying books to an early childhood development centre, paying for the services of a community vet for a day, or even a birth certificate for an orphaned child. Most South Africans feel that the country will weather the global financial crisis, thanks largely to industries such as construction and tourism. However everyone agrees that there is always more to be done to help the previously disadvantaged, who are the hardest hit when prices rise, jobs are lost, and the purse-strings start to be tightened...something for us to remember and consider as we expose our little boy to the big world.

