

Unforgettable Memories By Olivia Folgosa – 1 January 2014

It is the first day of the new year 2014. Many things happened in the last year which many of us would love to keep as unforgettable impressions of people and places that are true remembrances of good times.

Around this time last year, I was on a journey through my home country, South Africa, spending Christmas in Johannesburg, taking a bus down to my childhood favourite holiday city, Durban, for a few days, driving on the way to Cape Town from Durban, visiting friends and spending a night in Gonubie, near East London, Knysna, a beautiful lagoon, Agulhas, the southern most point of Africa, Boulder's Beach in Simon's Town, where we were amazed to see so many cute little penguins protected in one nature reserve, also seeing a dassie (*Klippschliefer*) for the first time in my life. Even though South Africa's fascinating nature and landscape is one of a kind, another very important reason for my trip was to visit as many of my family members and friends as possible, while introducing them to my fiancé and vice versa, showing him my favourite places and letting him try the best mixture of food I have ever had.

Just on arrival he was a bit surprised at how friendly we were addressed and how open-minded and generous people were – whether we knew them or not. Some might think that is all due to the fantastic weather which does, obviously, change from inland to coastal regions and north to south. Actually, I personally think that it is the country in general and the growing acceptance and tolerance of differences because yes, South Africa has been through terrible times of the Boer War and the inhumane laws of apartheid, but these are times which it has overcome. Of course, this was only possible through the strength and character of a certain person, who was urgently taken to hospital at the time we were in Cape Town.

It is Nelson Mandela, the dignified former leader of my country, who passed away at the impressive age of 95 on 5 December 2013. In due respect, Madiba, Mandela's Xhosa clan name, has always been a very inspiring role model for me. His compassion for justice, his humility and his general caring for all people, equally taking time to listen and to talk, have often helped me make decisions. As a real hero, his wisdom has given many people more justified opportunities and ideas and I hope that everybody will follow in his footsteps, aiming at achieving freedom not only for his people but for all.

Mandela's ambitious achievements and, at the same time, truly good humour should always be remembered as a memory to be unforgettable and followed for the next generations to build South Africa into the country of paradise and freedom for all.

