



DRIVE DETAILS

- **Day 1: Cape Town to Franschhoek**
Multiple mountain passes to Franschhoek
Motor Museum
- **Day 2: Franschhoek to Cape Town**
Whale watching at Hermanus by the harbour and the Marine Drive area
- **Day 3: Cape Town to Simon's Town**
Table Top Mountain
- **Day 4: Simon's Town to Cape Town**
Penguins at Boulder Colony, Cape of Good Hope



The Du Toitskloof pass is a driver's paradise. The winding roads enhance the pleasure of driving. It's also fun to spot a truck going flat out around the corners



On the road in South Africa

The rainbow nation is usually associated with national parks, but we discover there is a lot

Say South Africa and the first thing that comes to the mind are images of exotic game reserve, spotting the 'Big Five' and spending the night in a luxury tent besides a campfire. However, there's a very different side to this continent. South Africa is also about its exotic coastline and we travel in two Mahindra

XUV500 across the breathtaking country to experience the other side of Africa.

Day 1

We land at the Cape Town airport where we meet our guides for the next few days. They tell us that we are ready to roll and guide us to our waiting XUVs. The weather is nice and the sun

is just about showering enough warmth to avoid a jacket. We get into our cars and begin our drive to Franschhoek – the wine valley of South Africa. This area is considered to be the food and beverage capital of the country. Very well! As we drive out of the airport we pass over a smooth patch of tarmac and bordering this beautiful highway are small

shanty towns. Traffic is sparse, but speed limits are strictly enforced so it takes a while before we turn off the highway and head out towards the hills. Since we were running slightly behind schedule we head towards the Franschhoek Motor Museum nestling in the hills. However, a treat lies on the way. The road is strewn with wineries, which look

more than the Big Five of the animal kingdom

very inviting. More so, because each one of them has a board outside the premises inviting all to come in for some tasting. We pass through the Helshoogte Pass, which is yet another pristine stretch of tarmac. After a short break at the motor museum we start climbing the mountain roads of South Africa. The road starts winding and the nip in the air is now pretty evident. Within no time we are on

the way to Du Toitskloof Pass. While there is a brand new road around, the old road we are on is much more fun to drive. The road that winds through the mountains is truly well kept. So much so that we take turns to enjoy the handling characteristics of the XUV to the fullest. But a note of caution: one has to be a bit careful of the lorries travelling on this road. The drivers tend to get carried

THE FRANSCHHOEK MOTOR MUSEUM

is nestled between hills and a very inviting place for tourists. The lobby houses a small restaurant offering local delicacies and tastefully decorated using automobile memorabilia. However, the real treat lies in the grounds behind the lobby. Four large barns house one of the most exotic collection of motor cars in the world. Right from the Enzo Ferrari to a Ford Mustang GT350, it's got them all. Moreover, the cars are well kept and a little history is also available on spot thanks to placards. Last but not the least, the museum also houses a few rare bikes. Apart from drooling over the cars and tasting local delicacies, one can also buy some good local wine at the museum.



The South African coastline greets travellers with spectacular views and pristine tarmac



WHALE WATCHING AT HERMANUS

This part of the South African coast is frequented by Southern Right Whales. Pods arrive by the dozens and one can quite clearly make out the large heads dotted covered with wart-like bumps called callosities. These differ in size and position and are often used to identify individuals.



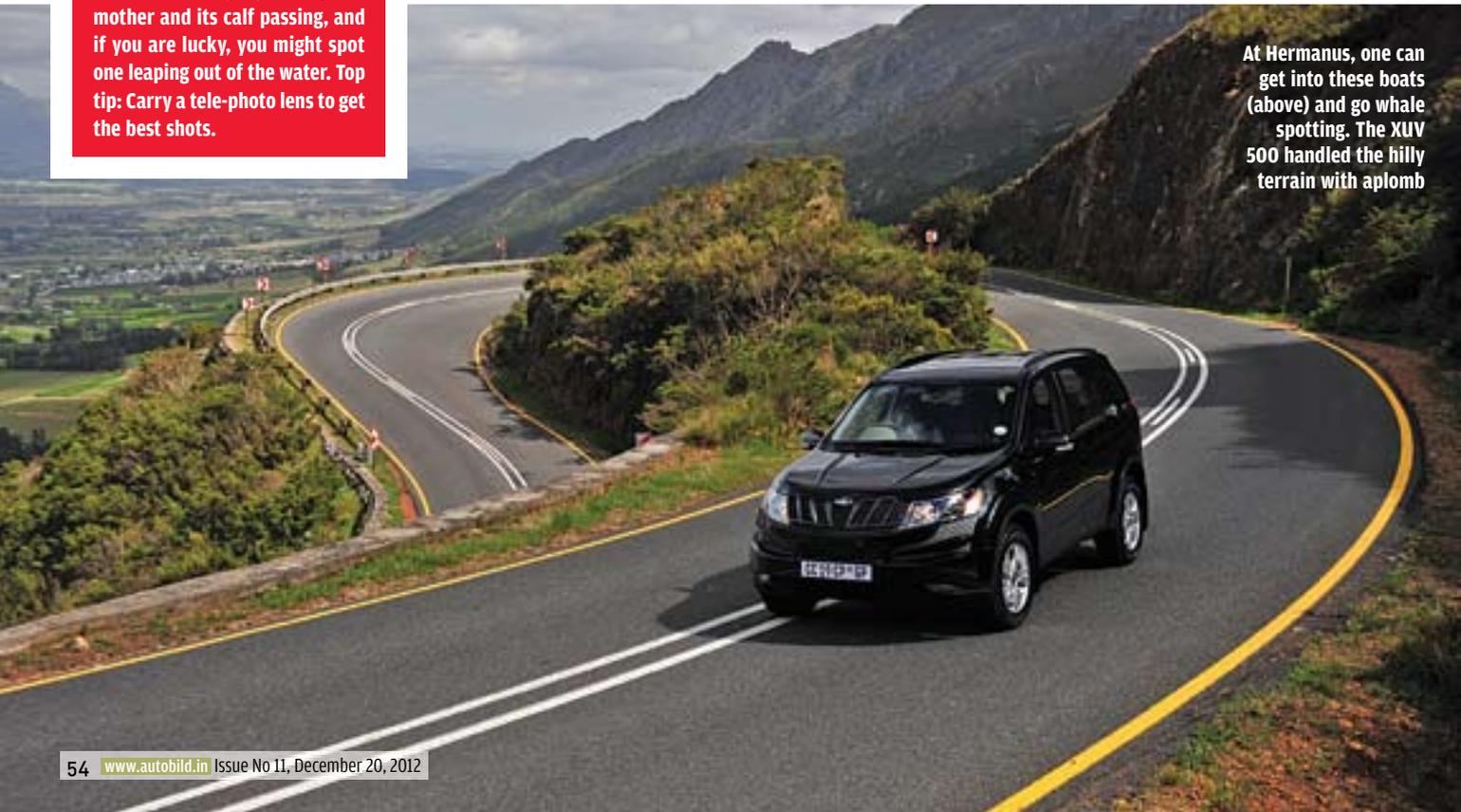
It is an amazing sight to spot a mother and its calf passing, and if you are lucky, you might spot one leaping out of the water. Top tip: Carry a tele-photo lens to get the best shots.



away and drive fast. Nonetheless, it's great fun to see these behemoths cut corners. As the sun goes down we park at one of the numerous resting areas and breathe in the fresh mountain air.

Day 2

The second day begins with more promise of seeing some spectacular views and even better roads. We take the N2 towards Hermanus and in a short while land at a private property called Dassiesfontein. It looks like any other old barn, but as we step inside, this facility turns into a treasure trove. From rustic old fireplaces to cutlery to scale models, Dassiesfontein has everything. What adds to the experience is that it also has a restaurant, which is a must visit for any traveller. After brief stop we once again head out, this time for Hermanus. This coastal town is a paradise for whale lovers. Thanks to the conditions whale pods



At Hermanus, one can get into these boats (above) and go whale spotting. The XUV 500 handled the hilly terrain with aplomb



This Great Dane was called '**JUST NUISANCE**' and belonged to a local. The dog took fancy to sailors who frequented the United Services Institute. He started following them around to the naval base and dockyards and eventually onto the ships moored alongside. The HMS Neptune being one of his favourite vessels. His favourite spot was to lie on the deck on the brow at the top of the gangplank. The sailors would say, "You're just a nuisance, why do you have to lie here of all places?" – that's how he got his name.



THE TABLE TOP MOUNTAIN has recently won the accolade of being one of the seven wonders of nature. Located around Cape Town, this magnificent place can be accessed by a cable car or the more fitter being can also take up the challenge of trekking up to the top which is at 3,558 feet. The main feature of Table Mountain is the level plateau approximately three kilometres from side to side, surrounded by impressive cliffs

arrive in flocks and viewing these gentle giants is an amazing experience. We first stop by the harbour where numerous whale safari companies offer boat tours. The boats get really close to the whales and most of the time they are packed with tourists. Since its lunch time we enter one of the many restaurants dotting the coastline and as we enjoy the local delicacies. It's fun to see the whales go about their business, while we tucked into our lunch. For a closer look at the whales we drive to the Marine Drive area. Dotted with shops, one can view the whales from a close proximity. After our fare share of photography, we head



The Table Top Mountain can be spotted miles away from the actual location. This sign (left) put up at Cape Town harbour front shows distances to cities worldwide

out towards Cape Town.

Day 3

Cape Town comes as a rather surprising place. It offers the famous wharf side area, which is filled with

hundreds of shops and fine dining restaurants. But we are beginning with the Table Top Mountain, which has recently been included among the wonders of the world. Access to the top is via a cable car and once

on the top, it offers an amazing view. One can see Robben Island from there on a clear day. A small souvenir shop offers travellers local collectibles and a visit to the cafe is a must. Spotting exotic birds is also a common activity over here. No wonder, it doesn't matter how much time you spend here it's never enough. With time running out we move on towards Simon's Town.

Day 4

The fourth day begins with amazement in Simon's Town. As I open the window of my hotel room, I am shocked to see a naval submarine right outside being tugged into the harbour. It's not something that you see every other day.





Simon's Town further greets us with 'Nuisance' (read box) and then a little toy museum loaded with an huge collection of figurines, toy trains and scale models. One can shop here to heart's content apart from buying Ostrich eggs – a local favourite. Before you faint let me tell you that these eggs are beautifully decorated and is a must buy. We then move towards Boulder's Colony, which is home for the African penguin previously know as Jackass Penguins. From there our next destination is Cape of Good Hope, which lies inside the Table Mountain National Park. The Park is another beautiful place for ostrich sighting and a wide variety of flora and fauna.

Rahul Ghosh

PENGUINS AT BOULDER'S COLONY

Penguins are generally associated with cold water and icy climes. But in 1983



a pair of African penguins were spotted on Foxy Beach at Boulders and in 1985 they began to lay eggs. Since then the colony has grown rapidly. By 1997 there were 2350 adult birds. Such a quick growth of the colony was the result of immigration, particularly from Dyer Island, as well as by reproduction.



The Table Mountain National Park is a haven for spotting wildlife including ostrich

Contrary to popular perception, the **CAPE OF GOOD HOPE** is not actually the southern most tip of Africa. It is located inside the Table Mountain National Park, which in itself is a spectacle. Frequent sighting of ostrich attract tourists. The place has a rich repertoire of legends. Once such legend is that of the 'Flying Dutchman', which according to popular belief is ghostly ship that is doomed to sail forever.

