

SO GOOD..



CHOC'S AWAY:
Andrea about to indulge in four-seater luxury



GUIDE:
Godfrey on safari



STRUGGLE:
Soweto mum at work

GETTING THERE..

back to reality, I headed to The Grace in Rosebank where I would rest my head for a few days.

The Grace is a luxury hotel in an upmarket area which stands out with its wonderful tea lounge, where guests can help themselves to delicious cakes and pastries in the afternoon.

My main aim in Johannesburg city though was to explore Soweto – the South Western Townships in which black South Africans were housed during apartheid and where thousands of people still live in abject poverty.

An organised tour is most certainly the recommended way to get about Soweto, and I went with Fhulufhelo Tours and was charmed by the knowledge of tour manager Elvis.

To describe the Soweto tour as an eye-open-

ANDREA travelled to the Madikwe Game Reserve and stayed at the luxury Buffalo Ridge Lodge, South Africa's first community lodge. Prices start from £150 pp per night, including accommodation on a full board basis and twice daily game drives. Return flight transfers start from £195pp. Contact the Madikwe Collection on reservations@madikwecollection.com or www.madikwecollection.co.za. The Grace in Rosebank visit www.thegrace.co.za or email graceres@thegrace.co.za. For Soweto visit www.fhulufhelotours.net or contact Elvis Mugondo on +27 11 501 1005.

er is an understatement – it is an absolute must-see for any visitor to Jo'burg.

An estimated four million people live in the city (though the official figure is 1.3 million) and while many high-profile residents live in affluent housing in the township (Winnie Mandela still lives in Soweto), the squatter camps will soon put into perspective any of your poverty-gripes back at home.

The shanty town is grossly overcrowded; people share block toilets and families of eight may live with no amenities under one tin or plastic-sheeting shack the size of a garden shed. But going on a tour means you can get to speak to the people living in these conditions, and find out what life is like for them.

The sights are rich and plentiful, of course,

with such a history. On Vilakazi Street you'll find Nelson Mandela's former home, now a museum, as well as Desmond Tutu's house.

Close by is the site where 13-year-old Hector Pieterson was shot dead on June 16, 1976 during the student uprising, and his memorial and museum, will stir the emotions of the toughest heart.

After eating a typical lunch in a Soweto restaurant, I wished I'd had longer to spend in the township. For all its deprivation and violent history the city has a real welcoming buzz and vibrancy.

And after the glorious and pampered luxury of Madikwe and The Grace, it was a bump right back down to earth.

Still, the isolation and awe-inspiring landscape of Madikwe, contrasting with the hectic, emotional and bustling atmosphere of Soweto, remarkably enriched the experience of coming to this northern part of South Africa. Johannesburg and its surrounds gets fewer

visitors than Cape Town, but it has so much to offer, and puts into context everything about the country's history – as well as exemplifies South Africa's outstanding natural beauty.

I have to say I'm glad the 10-hour flight home was on a Boeing, and not a four-seater.