

On tour for Madiba

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A totally new world was awaiting as I joined a group of people for the Nelson Mandela birthday celebration tour hosted by the Parktown & Westcliff Heritage Trust.

This trip began at Sunnyside Park Hotel in Parktown. We were ferried by bus to Mandela's first dwelling, an outside room he rented at 13 shillings and fourpence a month in Alexandra.

Our guide David Forrest said, "This is where Mandela lived when he worked in the city centre as an articulated clerk for the law firm, Witkin, Sidelsky and Eidelman. He also studied and completed his BA degree by correspondence from here."

Our next destination was another historic site in South Africa's history, the Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia.

Starting by watching a 15 minute film, we were brought up to speed with the happenings that took place on the little farm.

This modern day exhibition is equipped with the technology that allows visitors to learn and understand the history of the farm and the Rivonia trial.

We headed for the Johannesburg Fort on the Constitutional Hill. In 1956, 156 people opposed to apartheid, including Mandela, were incarcerated for the Treason Trial.

Mandela was again taken there in 1963 after his arrest near Howich while returning from Durban. He stayed in the hospital section.

He was told that it would be more comfortable for him as it had a bed (at that time black prisoners slept on the floor on mats), table and chair.

The real reason for this was that this was the most secure part of the prison.

After the walk around the Fort, we were all lined up in pairs, while walking towards the tables for a 'prisoners lunch' before heading to Vilakazi Street in Orlando West, Soweto.

Mandela owned a home there. He stayed after being freed from jail.

Forrest said: "This is the only street in the world that can boast to have had two Noble Peace prize winners as it's residents in Madiba and Archbishop Desmond Tutu."

We then headed to the Mandela Children Fund offices in Houghton, where a card signed by all those who were on the bus, congratulating Mandela on his 90th birthday, was delivered.

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**A lesson to remember...
Nicholas Wolpe gives tourists
a full story on what happened
on Lilliesleaf Farm farm.**

