

Special Feature

Oh to be in England..!

What luck to be in South Africa for the Rugby World Cup Final. Not! My stepson, Stephen, had invited us to stay at his sumptuous house in Johannesburg and we were thrilled to see Africa for this first time.

We met the most wonderful people and relished their warm enthusiasm for life...but more especially for their rugby!



Squash you then Thrash you

However, it was not a comfortable flight to say the least. The airline promised maximum leg room, but, people in the Emirates must have short thighs. A burly South African in front of me insisted on ramming his seat right back, making it impossible to watch the in-flight entertainment, read or nod off. I went for a good old-fashioned winge to the cabin staff: "I know what you are doing" I told them, "You're keeping us Brits awake so we can't support our lads in the Final tonight!" When I reappeared, one of the crew, a young Thai lady, with a gracious nod of her head, presented me with a rose made from a paper napkin. I gave all the cabin crew a big smile just before they said in unison: "But we are still going to thrash you tonight!"

South Africans mean business when they talk rugby! As we disembarked two of the staff smiled thinly and said; "Good luck in the rugby, guys." We just knew they didn't mean it. The arrivals lounge was a sea of green and gold Springbok shirts and the air was charged with expectation. Then we spotted Stephen waiting for us and resolutely standing out

from the crowd in an England shirt. This was bravery at its British Best. Jet lag and the excitement of the trip caught up with us quickly and I struggled during the match as the desire to sleep overcame me, but I soldiered on and

I'm not even a follower of rugby. My husband, Paul and our two sons were leaping up and down and Stephen managed a full three feet in the air when England scored 'that try'. I simply had to go to bed though I could hear the dying minutes on the TV downstairs.

The Mighty Springbok

Then, through the warm, starry night came the sound of fireworks, as brilliant showers of coloured fire lit up the sky. The next day, we made our first foray into the city proper with a visit to a Sunday market. The noise and vibrancy of the place swept us away but, let me tell you, not one stall holder, shop keeper or parking attendant missed the chance to say, "Shame about last night" with thinly disguised self-satisfaction. Even on our exciting safari with expert overviews of elephant, lions, zebra and hippo, our driver, Shaun, mentioned more than once the 'mighty Springbok' just to rub it in, even when there were none to be seen. Being ribbed was fast becoming a way of life for us. For anyone contemplating a trip to South Africa my advice is 'go' and revel in the life and colour of this rainbow nation. Only next time, I'm not going if we are likely to be beaten by the Boks!

Jan Harvey