

Squiz the World goes to... South Africa

Each week, we give the world globe a spin, and see where we land. Then we take the kids of Australia on an audio excursion to visit that country and its people.

I'm Amanda Bower, and today on Squiz the World we're visiting South Africa, on April 27, 1994, South Africa held its first democratic election, when anyone could vote, regardless of their race, and all voters were treated equally. That's right, less than 30 years ago, more than 80% of all the people in South Africa were not allowed to vote because of the colour of their skin. (FX)

Let's find out how much has changed in the southernmost country of the African continent. Strap yourselves into the Squiz Kids Super Fast Supersonic Jetliner as we take off and take a squiz at South Africa ...

Just the Facts

If you said you were going to visit the capital of South Africa, you'd have to be more specific. It has three! You'd go to Pretoria to visit government departments and ministers... Cape Town if you wanted to see laws being made in Parliament... and Bloemfontein if you wanted to go where all the courts were.

Of course, if you wanted to go to South Africa's biggest city, you'd need to head to Johannesburg - which is home to more than 10 million people. That's one sixth of the whole population... which, if you're not fast at fractions ...yet.... means that South Africa's population is about 60 million.

About 80% of South Africa's citizens are black... and until those democratic elections in April 1994, South Africa operated under a system called apartheid that was set up by a small minority of white people who wanted to hold all the power in South Africa.

Apartheid means separateness... and white people kept black people apart from them, so that not only could they not vote... they couldn't live where they wanted, they couldn't work where they wanted, they couldn't send their kids to the schools they wanted... they couldn't even swim at certain beaches, or drink out of bubblers that white people used.

Most of the rest of the world tried to change this by placing sanctions on South Africa - similar to what many countries are doing to Russia now, during the war with Ukraine. You couldn't buy things made in South Africa or do business in South Africa, and South African athletes weren't allowed to compete overseas in international competitions, so we didn't play them in rugby or cricket for years... (FX)

Happily, much has changed since apartheid was dismantled - that means taken apart - and those elections were held in 1994. There has been a black president ever since, and

each Freedom Day, South Africans reflect on how far their country has come—as well as how much further it has to go to undo the inequalities that occurred over so many decades. (Pause for FX)

Here's one way that South Africa has become much more inclusive - the new National Anthem is sung in FIVE languages! Remember, speaking a few words of someone's language is a great way to show respect. So, let's...

Learn the Lingo

"Perhaps not surprisingly for a country that was once a British colony, English is one of the official languages in South Africa. Another one is a language called Afrikaans, which is very similar to Dutch... because South Africa was once a Dutch colony, too!

Squiz Kid Neil, who was born in South Africa but now lives in Sydney, is here to teach us how to say good morning in Afrikaans.

goeie more

Go on, you give it a try! goeie more.

Thanks, Neil! Hey, how do you say thanks?

Dankie"

Now, I bet that you have questions about the nine other official South African languages... they're all indigenous, and the national anthem starts off in the language of Xhosa. We are SO lucky to have received a message from South Africa from Zizo, who speaks Xhosa! Let's have a listen

Well, we would LOVE to have you visit, Zizo! Now that we can communicate a little bit, it's....

Time for School

Look, I don't blame you for asking, but I wish I didn't have to go into what a pit latrine is. It's a hole in the ground that you poo and wee into. The poo and wee just collects in the hole, so it can be pretty stinky. That's what one in five South African public schools have. (FX)

Of course, there are also some amazing schools, with well-stocked libraries, computers for each kid, and proper access to toilets and clean water. You can imagine how much

easier it is for those kids to learn, can't you? And sadly, most of those bad schools are in areas where mostly black kids live; and the good schools where mostly white kids live.

So South Africa is still trying to fix a system that was very broken during apartheid.

Okay, let's do something fun. When people visit Australia, there are things they find AMAZING that we might take for granted. Like kangaroos, koalas, echidnas and more. And when it comes to animals, South Africa is pretty astonishing...

Believe it or Not

Many people visit South Africa to go on safari... a word that means to observe animals. If you're really lucky, you'll be able to spot the "Big Five" - (FX) elephant, (FX) buffalo, (FX)leopard, (FX) lion and (FX) rhino. More than a hundred years ago, those five were considered the hardest animals to hunt on foot. And while hunting is still allowed in South Africa, I think I'll stick to shooting things through a camera lens! (FX)

Kruger National Park, in north east South Africa, is one of the biggest in the world, and it does not allow hunting. It has more than 140 types of large mammals ... the big five, plus springbok - the national animal of South Africa... zebra, antelope, cheetahs, African wild dogs, hyenas... the whole cast of the Lion King!!

I've popped a great video into your episode notes that gives you a sense of what it's like to go on safari in Kruger... as well as three sample stories from a book called "101 Kruger Tales". One of my favourites is about a local man who decided to take a shortcut through Kruger on his bike. He was chased by a lion, scrambled into a tree, because lions can't climb trees. The clever lion decided to just wait at the bottom of the tree until the man came down. Night fell... the man fell asleep... and he fell OUT of the tree! Lucky for him, he landed right on top of the sleeping lion, which got such a fright that it ran away. The lucky man got out of the park as quick as lightning!

Okay, that was an epic journey through a national park, and now I'm starving! I think it might be...

Dinner Time

One of the most common dishes in South Africa is Mealiepaap, which is a kind of corn porridge, often served with a tomato stew and a special kind of beef sausage called Boerewors on top.

Maybe it's because it might be hard for you to find the sausage, or it's because I'm in a sweet mood, but I thought today, we might skip to dessert... and I'm told the most famous South African dessert is milk tart, or melktert in Afrikaans. It's got a sweet pastry crust that's really easy to make, and the filling is a bit like cheesecake, but fluffier. Best of all, it doesn't need any special ingredients! Let's get cooking!

The S'Quiz

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1 How many capital cities does South Africa have?

Question 2 What was the name of the system that kept white people in power for so long in South Africa?

Question 3 How many of the Big Five animals can you name? (You might want to hit pause for this one)

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for staying curious about the world, and joining me on this incredible trip to South Africa.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day. Over and out.