

# South Africa: The country where sounds in nature echo the songs of its people

Account from Arya Assar, an English medical student in Durban.

Situated on the southernmost tip of a vast continent, South Africa's beautiful cities are matched by magical wildlife. Here one can find scenic coasts stretching from the cold Atlantic to the warm Indian Ocean. Alongside the amazing nature in SA, the people are fantastically friendly, always smiling and well-mannered. I was lucky enough to visit the Rainbow Nation this Summer. I spent some time travelling, including a road-trip along the aforementioned coast along the garden route covering more than 2000km in a Mini Cooper with my best friend.

However, the main reason I was in SA was a surgical internship at King Edward VIII Hospital (KEH). Most importantly, I would like to thank Dr C Kindra in ARV Paediatrics for hosting me in Durban, her help and kindness. I would like to take this opportunity to also thank Dr S Mahoney, Dr M Shersingh and the registrars for their invaluable teaching. KEH is a large public hospital in the heart of Durban and with the help of Nontobeko Ndlela, I was placed there.

KEH is an excellent hospital in the process of modernisation with many wards already specified to a high standard and others following suit shortly. Many aspects of the hospital from the inner workings to the architecture- as with most of South Africa- have a very strong British influence. This was welcoming, despite being so far away- I instantly felt at home. Although, the range of patients I clerked was the polar opposite to anything I have ever encountered in tame Europe. KEH has many departments from Paediatrics and Haematology to A&E. Luckily, I had the opportunity to attend grand rounds at a few departments as well as access to surgical theatre and wards, seeing internists at work and Paediatricians dealing with their routine work, complicated by the burden of TB and HIV/AIDS on the health care system.

During my stay in SA, I was based in Emergency and Trauma- manning the theatres there. This was a daunting task- when the registrar said, "Arya, another RTC, gunshot wound and stabbing.. Theatre 2! Go and sort them out please!" With hesitation, I agreed. Under immense pressure, I applied my surgical knowledge to challenging wounds, belonging to even more challenging and frequently inebriated patients.

I came to South Africa, to learn new things in surgery and medicine in general, and for hands-on experience during my Summer break. Those hopes have been met and expectations surpassed. Instead I have been challenged elsewhere, in aspects unexpected. Dr Mahoney suggested I should do nightshifts, again, I agreed because weekday evenings were generally free. Nightshifts really pushed me mentally and physically, further than I probably wanted. However the experience I gained will (I hope) ease my transition into working life, as an F1/ junior house officer.

Amongst the chaos, one could feel a paradoxical harmony. This harmony could be seen where staff here, speaking South Africa's eleven official languages converge, working together to improve the health of a nation. Therefore, I would recommend anyone to visit South Africa, but especially medical students in their clinical years, to take an internship at King Edward Hospital. KEH is a place of sanctuary for the sick around the Kwa-Zulu Natal province. On my return, I hope to start my sixth and final year. I hope my surgical internship at King Edward's, Durban has helped me become a better student of medicine and surgery.

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