

What Will Make the 2022 WMH World Cup in Cape Town So Special?

Those of us, who have played in Masters Hockey tournaments for a number of years, can testify that Masters Hockey tournaments are very special in one way or another. Even if your team loses every match and you are frustrated by the seeming lack of success, there is a magic about competing or participating as a player, or an official, or a manager, or a coach or a physio, or as a spectator. It is very difficult to quantify the impact of all the memories which have fully stimulated our emotions. It is only when you try to describe some of your experiences that you realise just how much happened and how the sensory overloads render recalling all the important little details a challenge! The impact does not lessen over the years and the memories are nearly always positive!

You are enveloped by a buzz, a camaraderie and an indescribable atmosphere that permeates your very being. When you watch hockey being played in so many different styles and approaches by so many colourful characters from all over the world, there is an overwhelming feeling of being part of something magical. Being part of the Hockey Family is not dissimilar to being with your own family back home. The time-gap between World Cups just disappears when friends you haven't seen for a few years greet you with a warmth and sincerity that induce hugs, handshakes and smiles, which take your breath away.

One of the things I love most is observing interactions that always surprise me, even though it shouldn't after all these years. Masters Hockey compatriots, with no common spoken language, successfully engage in conversations using gestures, smiles, signs and the odd word they have picked up, and they understand everything!

So, what else can we expect from Cape Town, apart from the joys and excitement of participating in one of the first ever WMH Masters Hockey World Cup tournaments and competing against the best players in the world at any particular Masters age group? Well, each host country offers completely different cultural and geographical opportunities and unforgettable memories, both on and off the field of play – read on.

Cape Town – South Africa

South Africa is a fascinating country and home to more than 35 different languages of which only 11 are officially recognised. English is taught in all the schools and is spoken and understood by the majority of the 60 million population. Most of the younger generations speak both English and Afrikaans (old Dutch with an African flavour). Interestingly, English is the mother tongue of only 8.9% of the population, whilst Afrikaans is the mother tongue of 13.5%. IsiZulu and IsiXhosa are the mother tongues of 22.7% and 16% of the population. The mathematicians amongst you will have quickly realised that this only accounts for 61.1% or 36.66 million people, which still leaves 23.34 million speaking at least one of the other 31 languages! Thankfully, the majority of South Africans are at least bilingual! In and around Cape Town you may well hear more than just the 11 official languages, but English and Afrikaans dominate and nearly everyone will understand and speak both fluently. Those of you relying on English to verbally communicate, will find the South African accent an interesting challenge. Dutch speakers will understand most of the Afrikaans they hear, however it is a blend of 17th century Dutch, the indigenous South African languages, English and other European and Asian languages!

Now that you appreciate the linguistic diversity of the people, let's consider the geographical diversity of South Africa. The golden beaches of the Atlantic & Indian Ocean seaboard, the Drakensberg (Dragon Mountains), arid desert, nature reserves teeming with wild animals, majestic canyons and gorges, magnificent waterfalls and rolling farmland are just a snapshot of a vast array of mind-blowing vistas South Africa has to offer. The trouble is that South Africa is a huge country and even fitting in visits to just a few of the attractions on offer will take a lot of time, money and planning. The good news is that you can get a taste of a number of similar vistas in and around Cape Town and these will be at a more reasonable cost and avoid hours of travelling. Some of the most popular are Table Mountain, (cable car or walks), the local beaches, the Cape Point penguins, The V&A Waterfront, the Botanical Gardens, the Winelands, Robben Island and the city restaurants and cafes.

There has been a lot of negative Social Media comments about tourist safety in South Africa, but when these are studied, most are past events, very few of them apply to the Cape Town area and many are overly exaggerated. The Cape Town area is a good example of a vibrant modern city with a proud history and it attracts huge numbers of tourists from all corners of the world. However, like any popular tourist area, there are those who will seek to profit illegally from the unwary visitor. To avoid being a victim of these sad individuals, take sensible precautions when moving around and it is probably best to travel in groups then venture out alone. If you plan to visit more distant parts of South Africa, it is advisable to only use packages offered by professional travel companies. There are some very poor areas in South Africa which are way behind the Cape Town area in terms of facilities and development.

Medical care in Cape Town is of a high standard. The South African virologists were the first to identify the Omicron variant and this led to some very unfair headlines across the rest of the world. In fact, the infection rates turned out to be not much different to every other country affected by Omicron and hospitals coped without any significant rises in death rates. Now, Cape Town is reducing Covid lockdown rules in line with everyone else and it is likely that soon wearing masks and social distancing will be advisory rather than compulsory.

The weather in October is generally very good, with very little rain and average temperatures range from 10 - 21°C. The exchange rate of other currencies against the Rand means that enjoying oneself will not be quite as expensive as it would have been in 2020! The standard of accommodation on offer is also very good value for money. So, enjoy the atmosphere, immerse yourself in the wonders of South Africa, but don't forget the hockey! The hockey facilities are in ideal and very scenic locations, they are of very high quality and will enhance the standard of the tournament. WMH and our South African Master's partners are fully confident that the Cape Town tournament will match all our expectations and live long in our memories!

Glenn Paton
WMH President