



**MINISTRY: ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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04 April 2001

The Manager
Hilton Chalet Tours and Safaris
11 Park lane
HILTON
3245

Dear Sir/Madam

HILTON CHARLET TOURS AND SAFARIS

By direction of Mr M V Moosa, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, please find the attached letter for your information.

Yours sincerely

P.P. D. Makolane
FRANÇOIS ROGERS
DIRECTOR: OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



Department of History

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Minister V. Moosa
Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
120 Plain Street
Cape Town, South Africa, 8001

7 March 2001

Dear Minister Moosa,

I have recently returned from a very interesting and informative tour of KwaZulu-Natal, my first trip to South Africa. I am so pleased with the manner in which the trip was planned and fulfilled that I feel compelled to write to you about it. I am a historian/anthropologist and my requirements for this journey were quite specific. I wanted to become immersed in the ambiance and culture of the region. With this in mind, I was placed through tourist group intermediaries with Hilton Chalet Tours and Safaris (11 Park Lane, Hilton, Natal). Greg Garson, company owner, was in charge. What attracted myself and my two traveling companions to this company was the splendid, detailed itinerary furnished by Mr. Garson from the start. Frankly, the cost strained our budgets a bit, but the itinerary looked so attractive that we decided to proceed. The result proved to be beyond expectations.

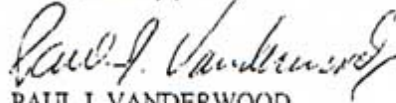
My scholarly interests have taken me to many corners of the world. Normally, I hire a guide and, if necessary, a driver. I have had both fairly-decent and not-so-good luck with this sort of arrangement. But Mr. Garson's endeavor was absolutely top rate from all angles: logistics, innovations, accommodations, personal contacts, expertise, prudence, good humor and all the rest. Greg himself was the driver/guide. Not only was he warmly friendly throughout, but he was as interested in learning from us as we were from him. Greg himself knows a good deal of Natal history and culture, but when my interests ranged somewhat outside of his expertise, he brought in an appropriate consultant. For example, when I expressed a preoccupation with rock art, he arranged to have an anthropologist who specializes in rock art and Zulu culture to join our group. As we moved along and Greg learned more of my scholarly concerns, he sought to address them. He arranged for us to attend a church service because I yearned to hear some African religious singing. Out of the blue (I have no idea how he arranged it), he placed me in the midst of a sangoma's teaching session. Soon after I found myself fascinated by and asking questions in a Zulu muti shop. No doubt about it, Greg got to know his clients and sought to fulfill their interests. One time he pulled me aside and asked, "Is there anything at all I can do to further fulfill the desires of the group?" I replied that we were already extremely content and fairly overwhelmed by all he had done for us.

Without a doubt, this was the best such tour on which I have ever been taken, no doubt because of the operator's attentiveness to our interests. The journey was tailored to meet our

desires and once on the road, enhanced by specifics which unexpectedly became available to our operator/guide. When I mention culture to some such guides, their eyes glaze over and they fall into a deep slumber (like some of my students). But Greg Garson lights up under the challenge. He obviously is one tour operator that not only manages a top notch business but who loves to learn from his work. His is a small tour business that customizes its tours to the varied needs of his clients, but it is not all "business" or "just a business" with Mr. Garson. He himself exudes enthusiasm for the diversity and culture of his homeland. Meanwhile, he takes good care of the nitty-gritty aspects of tourism, so that his clients have both a full day's share of adventure and intellectual pursuit and a good night's rest to get recharged for the next day's experience.

In short, in Greg Garson and his company you have something extraordinarily supportive your stated goals concerning tourism and the environment. You probably receive any number of complaints from tourists and others dealing what they consider to be shortcomings here and there. Well, I thought you would enjoy receiving a letter from some totally satisfied and highly stimulated visitors who someday soon hope to return. Please pass on our well-wishes and strong appreciation to Greg Garson and Hilton Tours for making our initial trip to South Africa such a wonderful (in the true sense of that word) experience.

Sincerely yours,



PAUL J. VANDERWOOD
Professor Emeritus