

# Adventure across the globe for a Sisters resident

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Correspondent

Ever since Sisters resident Mary Fowler can remember she has had a fascination with Africa.

The second largest continent in the world is teeming with cultural diversity, abundant wildlife, friendly people, beautiful sunsets and sunrises, a stunning coastline, and sweeping savannas.

"When I was a little girl I loved looking at my grandfather's *National Geographic* magazines that he kept on the bottom of his bookcase for my little hands to reach. I was mesmerized with faraway places and exotic cultures like Africa," Fowler told *The Nugget*.

Fowler recently returned from a one-month cruise that began in Cape Town, a port city on Africa's southwest coast, and concluded in Singapore, located in southern Malaysia.

This was her second adventure to Africa. In 2015 she accompanied her sister Paula and brother-in-law to the west coast of Africa from Lisbon to Cape Town, which she describes as "life-changing."

"I was turned upside down. I couldn't have fathomed that any place could be so very poor and rich all on the same street. With music and industry, construction and cooking, cars, busses, bicycles and people brightly dressed in fantastic colors and designs, with flowers, animals and garbage all mixed together in the most mind-boggling stew," Fowler said.

"If I had to give it one

word it would be 'energy.' Nothing had prepared me for the sheer excitement and exuberance of this continent."

Fowler left with Paula and Rick in January and picked up the cruise ship *Nautica* after flying from Seattle to Cape Town.

"The African people are so welcoming. They went out of their way to make us feel comfortable. The guides would come into the city from a couple of hours away and drive us around all day," Fowler said.

But it could get a little scary with more than just vehicles on the roads.

"There were donkeys, kids and goat carts all making their way to the street markets," she said.

South Africa's markets sell everything from traditional foods to jewelry, sculpture, and clothing.

"It seemed that everything is done on the streets. It's where their whole world takes place."

The tribal aspect of life and beliefs are still hugely strong, and the people of Africa dress beautifully and quite modestly.

"The African women are amazing," said Fowler. "She is the boss, the workhorse, the creativity, the muscle; she is everything," Fowler reflected.

One of the highlights for Fowler involved going into the bush with a guide off the tropical island of Madagascar.

"It was amazing, and we saw a variety of lemurs, chameleons and lots of huge boa constrictors on Nosy Be (which means "Big Island" in Malagasy), which is an island off the northwest coast of

Madagascar."

Madagascar is the only place in the world where you will find lemurs, evolving in isolation from other primate species. There are over 100 species of lemur, and most are classified as rare, vulnerable, or endangered.

"We bought solar lights, Luci inflatable solar lights, which can be used everywhere after dusk because there's no electricity in most places," Fowler said. "We donated them to two clinics and women and children."

Another highlight was one of the fabric shops in historic Old Town Mombasa, Kenya.

"It was incredible," Fowler said. "Mombasa is a fabric town with beautiful cotton fabrics, and I brought some home with me."

During the long ocean ride across the Indian Ocean from Mombasa to Colombo, Sri Lanka, the passengers prepared for pirates.

"We had many drills," Fowler said. "That actual ship had a pirate attack in the past."

They docked in Colombo, Sri Lanka, which is an island nation south of India in the Indian Ocean. It has diverse landscapes and is famed for its ancient Buddhist temples.

"I was wearing orange until I found out that it's the color worn by the monks," Fowler said laughing. "And you needed to dress very modest to go along with the dress code... There were massive statues of Buddha.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Mary Fowler in Singapore, part of a lengthy trip to the far side of the world.

The Big Buddha Temple in Amphoe Muang Phuket, Malaysia was awe-inspiring."

The whole body is constructed with reinforced concrete layered with Burmese white jade marble that shines in the sun, making it a natural symbol of hope.

"The fact that when we arrived in Sri Lanka during the Chinese New Year made it even more exciting. Because it is like their Christmas, everyone was celebrating and there were street fairs," Fowler said.

The last stop on their tour was Singapore, a city of contrasts. The culture of Singapore is a combination of Asian and European cultures. It has been Southeast

Asia's most modern city for over a century. It's a blend of Malay, Chinese, Arab, Indian and English cultures and religions.

"When we docked in Singapore I thought I was on another planet. It was like Disneyland. With a concert hall shaped like a durian (a fruit) and an ArtScience Museum shaped like a robotic hand, it was amazing to look at," Fowler recounted.

Fowler, owner of Sisters Motor Lodge, arrived back home in Sisters on February 5. Next year Fowler will go on another adventure when she visits her daughter Brighton who teaches at the Yangon international school in Yangon, Myanmar.

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