



Horn of Plenty

Combining Cape Town and the winelands makes for the perfect South African sojourn, says Laura Ivill

Voted one of the new Seven Wonders of Nature, Table Mountain is unsurpassed as the icon of Cape Town. At the southern tip of Africa, this natural sandstone formation, 1,086 metres high, is visible almost everywhere you go. Together with Signal Hill and the Lion's Head, these natural monuments appear to cradle the metropolis, embracing and protecting the city, just as Christ does over Rio. So comforting a landmark is this 'bowl' that many Capetonians won't live anywhere else. Or is it the handsome pleasure of driving from the mountains to the beach in just 20 minutes that they refuse to give up?

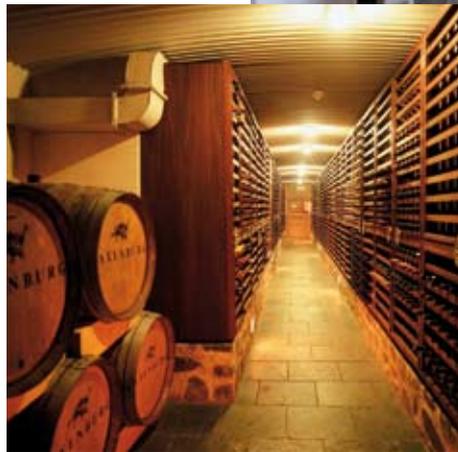
Capetonians like a laid-back lifestyle – they shop, they surf, they hang out after work and they seem to be eager to bring their nation together from the bottom up, even if their Government is still mired in corruption and political fiefdoms. Grassroots projects in the townships are enhancing the prospects of the black communities, who have taken up the challenge of helping themselves out of poverty.

Today, the city's unique history makes it one of the most multicultural places in the world, and it's still comfortably low-rise. In 1990, Nelson Mandela made his first public speech here after being released from Robben Island, marking the end of apartheid. Having hosted the Fifa World Cup in 2010, the city has clearly emerged from decades of political unrest to take on a new international vibe.

As a visitor, there are opportunities to get under the skin of this emerging nation, if you chose a reputable guide, as well as enjoying the abundance of local wines, world-class food, sunshine, white-sand



PERFECT POSITION
Cape Grace is the perfect location from which to enjoy the many elements Cape Town has to offer



beaches, arts and crafts shopping, outdoor sports, spas or a round of golf, and all with a sense of style.

It couldn't be easier to combine a city break with a week in wine country. Hire a car, and in half an hour or so from the airport, you will be rocking up to the vineyards and wine-estate towns of Stellenbosch and Franschhoek. Cellar doors welcome you with a tasting glass and fresh farm food, a stylish

room and arts and crafts galleries to explore. So leave room in your suitcase for goodies to take back home.

CAPE TOWN

WHAT TO DO A cable car runs to the top of Table Mountain, although it is weather dependent (R195 return but save 10 per cent when you book online). Robben Island Museum is where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned (it's busy, so book before you leave the UK – R220 return). In the centre of the historic district is Company's Garden, an oasis

FOOD & TRAVEL / *Escape*

of trees, lawns and roses, and the city's Kirstenbosch botanical garden, further off, is one of the most resplendent in Africa (R40). For an unforgettable and fascinating entry into the townships, you need a reputable guide, and they don't come any better than James Fernie of Uthando (half-day tours from R690; uthandosa.org). Bascule bar and restaurant on the harbourside is where the locals go, and has 430 bottles of whisky. An hour's tasting costs from R175. Outside the bar, the 56ft motoryacht Spirit of the Cape is berthed. A two-hour round trip by sea to the white beach of Clifton Bay is a glamorous and exhilarating way to see the coast (R12,000 for the yacht for up to 12 guests, booking: re nec@capegrace.com).

WHERE TO EAT HQ is a concept restaurant serving only sirloin steak, chips and salad, and with live music most nights it's a hot spot for trendies. Next door, Caveau Wine Bar and Deli is the go-to place for an early evening drink. The Old Biscuit Mill is the place to be seen for Saturday brunch while browsing the organic food market and vintage stalls. For a weekday buffet, a real find is Sheila's restaurant Le Lapa, in the Langa township, which has the best marumba band in the city (book on + 27 21 694 2681).

WHERE TO SHOP Cape Town has African crafts galore – jewellery, bags, pewterware, art, handmade bowls and more. At both the Waterfront Craft Market (waterfront.co.za) and the central Greenmarket Square you're expected to haggle, and many goods are produced in the townships. If you're after fine jewellery in platinum, tanzanite or diamonds, Platandia is building a reputation for honesty, and when you buy in South Africa, you claim VAT back at the airport (platandia.com).

WHERE TO STAY Cape Grace (capegrace.com) on the waterfront has a stunning location with views over the marina on both sides and balconies facing Table Mountain. It not only has an extensive collection of Cape antiques from 1700-1900, but the interior design includes specially commissioned chandelier artworks, handmade lamps and handpainted murals and curtains.



CHIC RETREAT

Stay at the whitewashed haven of Babylonstoren and its eight acre kitchen garden



THE CAPE WINELANDS

WHAT TO DO When touring the rural wine estates of the Western Cape, stop at Glen Carlou (glencarlou.co.za) in the Paarl Valley, famed for its Chardonnay and private contemporary art collection, one of the largest in the world. Vrede en Lust (vnl.co.za) is known for its Bordeaux blend and Vionier, and offers a tasting menu paired with its wines.

WHERE TO EAT Babel restaurant at Babylonstoren farm, the region's hottest new opening, is a 35-minute drive from the airport. It serves light, fresh, organic dishes for breakfast and lunch, and rich, simple dishes for weekend suppers, and is conceived by one of South Africa's most renowned chefs, Maranda Engelbrecht. Eggs come freshly laid from the farm's hens and dishes use colourful combinations of fruit and vegetables from the eight-acre kitchen garden. In the quaint town of Franschhoek is Le Quartier Français, a villa hotel set in landscaped gardens. Choose either The Tasting Room fine-dining restaurant, or The Common Room that specialises in Afrikaans-influenced tapas (lequartier.co.za).

WHERE TO SHOP In Franschhoek, Bordeaux Street Gallery has a wide range of paintings and sculptures, and porcelain by David Walters. It also sells online (southafricanartists.com). In Stellenbosch, Africa Silks offers handcrafted silks and artwork (africasilks.com).

WHERE TO STAY Babylonstoren is a chic, whitewashed farmstead with ocre soil and the aroma of herbs. It's an arable farm producing hundreds of varieties of fruit and vegetables, and owned and run by former editor of *Elle Decoration* South Africa, Karen Roos, and her husband, media mogul, Koos Bekker. The 14 detached suites, reconstructed on the footprints of the old farm buildings, have high ceilings, log fireplaces and fully equipped glass-panelled kitchens with views over the gardens and the encircling mountains. Daily tours of the kitchen garden will take you on an edible journey through the soft-fruit garden, scented garden, thyme and camomile lawns, the citrus garden and more. ♦

Carrier (0161 492 1353; carrier.co.uk) offers 8 nights for the price of 6 from £1,970 pp (save £600 per couple) including 4 nights at Cape Grace and 4 nights at Babylonstoren, including flights with Virgin Atlantic, private transfers and 5 day car hire. In addition, a complimentary wine or whisky tasting session with the Sommelier at Cape Grace. Valid until 22 December 2012.