

SOUTH AFRICAN

MAY
2019

COUNTRY LIFE

REAL HEART OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

*The Oberholzer is
King of the Road*

*Hamburg hits
high notes*

Field to Fork at
FERMIER

*Wild &
Wonderful
Wilderness*

*DIY
Chicken Coop*

*Artland
DOCH*

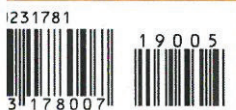
The Comeback
Kombi

*Living in
Wellington*

Cowboys in the Karoo

*Fabulous
Farmstays*

The Wild West comes to Graaff-Reinet



(incl VAT)
subscriptions R34-78 (excl tax)

Farm Stays

For a city dweller, the greatest escape is to the rustic charm of a remote farm

1 Western Cape Fynbos Cottages at Babylonstoren Franschhoek

Visiting Babylonstoren's wonderful garden is one of my favourite treats. So when their Fynbos Cottages opened late last year I couldn't resist the chance to overnight at the historic wine farm. The luxury cottages are in the lee of the mountain, surrounded by vineyards and orchards. We were driven up through the vineyards in a golf buggy and handed the keys, along with bikes on which to explore the estate. The core ethos of Babylonstoren – simplicity and abundance – is evident at every turn. Everything is doled out in generous portions, including the warm welcomes. The elegant Cape Dutch style cottages are vast, with high ceilings and plenty of outdoor space for lazing around – including a magnificently landscaped pool area, complete with a lounge and

bar for the exclusive use of Fynbos Cottage guests. We stayed in a cottage with two bedrooms linked by a light, airy living area, with expansive views over the vineyards, dam and mountains. The attention to detail is extraordinary. The decor and furnishings are chic but unpretentious with four-poster beds, fireplaces and beautiful, deep, stand-alone baths. The kitchen was well-stocked with niceties – Nespresso pods, a tin of Babylonstoren's own olive oil, salt, pepper, rusks, etc. Breakfast at the farm's signature restaurant Babel (which offers farm-to-fork dining) is included, and if you choose to self-cater, you can harvest leaves and fruits from the garden – while enjoying the resident Dikkops and other wild birds that come out after the daytrippers have left – to supplement fresh produce bought at the Farm Shop. This is not your average farm stay. Spoil yourself. – *Fiona McIntosh*
021 863 3852, reservations@babylonstoren.com, www.babylonstoren.com

2 KwaZulu-Natal Sneezeewood Farm Dundee

This B&B with a self-catering cottage is on a working farm only five kilometres outside Dundee, in the heart of the northern KwaZulu-Natal battlefields. On the farm you'll find pastures under cultivation and some sheep and dairy cows, all with names. Guests who bring rain are always welcome (we were exceptionally welcomed). We took a stroll to the dam, had a chat with some friendly cattle, and were joined by three lambs on our jog back to our cottage when the rain started falling. We stayed in a two-bedroom, self-catering cottage that sleeps four, with two bathrooms, one en suite, and a sitting room with TV, a dining-room and a braai area. Because of



the rain we decided not to braai, but we cooked up a storm in the fully equipped kitchen. There was a great selection of books in the cottage. And you don't have to be an historian to visit Dundee. The site of the Battle of Blood River and Talana Museum are on Sneezeewood's doorstep, and visits there are as enriching for families with children, as for historians. – *Riaan Hattingh*
082 611 3560, info@sneezeewood.co.za, www.sneezeewood.co.za



3 Northern Cape Jakhalsdans Farm Loxton

How many movies do you know of that were named after Karoo farmstays? The correct answer is precisely one – *Jakhalsdans*. Whose farmgate sign was created by Honiball, one of South Africa's most famous illustrators? The answer would be the same. This is a remarkable working sheep and game farm, only a short drive from the lovely town of Loxton. It is also an exceptionally elegant farmstead, with comfortable luxury accommodation at the Ou Opstal (Old Farmhouse) and the Skeerders Huis (Shearers Cottage). Both have self-catering kitchens and braai places, but if you're feeling lazy, beautiful host Linda van der Westhuizen can organise meals. The other option is the Langhuis, a little more rustic and perfect for groups. It is usually used by hunters in the winter months. There is plenty to do – there are horses available for experienced riders, as well as game watching and even water-skiing (an unusual Karoo occupation) when the rains have been good and the dam is full. It is a beautiful farm to explore on foot or mountain bike, probably accompanied by the farm dogs. – *Julienne du Toit*
082 875 3339, info@jakhalsdans.co.za, www.jakhalsdans.co.za

4 Western Cape Numbi Valley Permaculture Farm De Rust

There's snow on the Swartberg mountains and I'm stargazing from a hot tub in the garden, warmer than toast on one of the coldest nights of the year in these parts. The fire-bath is screened from the lush food garden by a boma of reeds cut from the nearby river. This is a farm stay with a difference. Supper was a stir-fry of veggies grown organically between the more than 60 different varieties of fruit trees in this permaculture paradise coaxed with love from Klein Karoo soil. Kath and Ross Eybers know how to make guests comfortable at this off-the-grid, 70-hectare farm tucked between hills resembling breasts – hence the Zulu slang name *Numbi*. They built their cob house almost entirely from local materials. Many visitors booking into the two-bedroom, self-catering cottage are looking for a way to live sustainably in the country, and Ross and Kath are generous with sharing their knowledge. There are hikes and mountain-biking routes in the valley for the energetic, or just lie in the hammock beside the freshwater plunge pool. Harvest baskets of fresh veggies from the garden and enjoy a pizza evening at the fire pit. Permaculture farm tours focusing on off-the-grid, green living are available by appointment. And Kath offers trigger-point massages and hatha yoga classes. – *Marion Whitehead*
072 191 8672, numbivalley@gmail.com, <http://numbivalley.webs.com>





5 Free State Koefontein Farm – The Stables Memel

The Stables at Langberg is on a working cattle farm named Koefontein near the Free State town of Memel. The accommodation is an old, converted stable. But don't let the fact that horses stayed there before you scare you away – it is comfortable, rustic and tasteful. If you want to do more than take in the Free State surrounds from your chair in front of the fireplace, there's a number of activities on the farm, including trout and bass fishing in a series of small dams.

If being active gets you going then take a walk to explore bushman paintings in the sandstone caves overlooking the farmhouse, or take a hike or a trail run over the koppies. The farm also has a two-day circular hiking trail that covers 14 kilometres on day one, and an easy eight kilometres on day two. Expect rolling hills and strange sandstone rock formations on the hike. The accommodation is great but, of course, the best part is the outdoor braai area, where you can relax and enjoy evenings next to an open fire, under clear Free State skies. – *Gerhard Uys*

www.footprint.co.za/langberg.htm



6 Limpopo Granny Dot's Country Spot Tzaneen

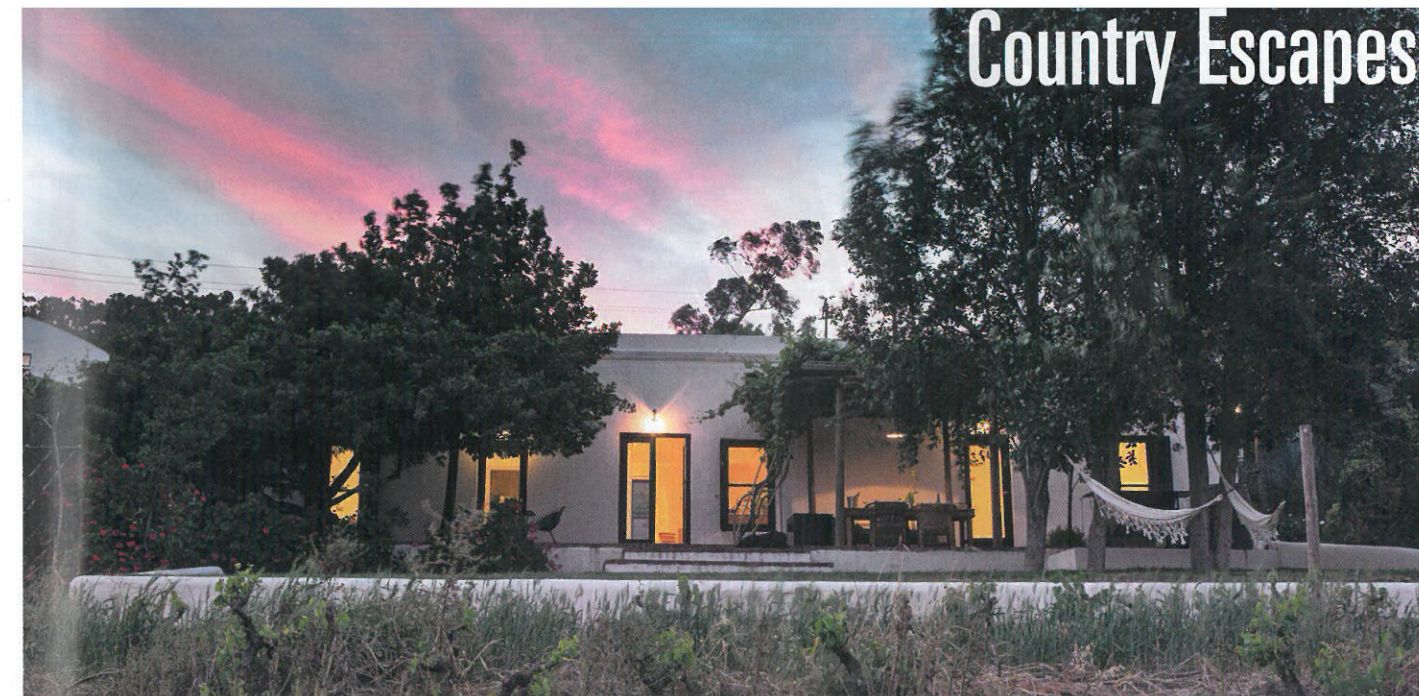
What a spot for a break. Think of a gorgeous, 20-minute drive out of Tzaneen through the farming area and Agatha Forest Reserve, and a charming bed and breakfast in the tropical gardens of an avo farm. The accommodation is superb but it really is the surroundings that take the cake. The farm is on a hill and all the units have a veranda with views of the mountains, valley, neighbouring farms and indigenous forests. We had a luxury unit with a small lounge and kitchen area, and were able to self-cater (but were unable to forego the delicious breakfasts in the dining room). We also had braai facilities, and the best view of the Wolkberg mountains. It was a lovely, overcast weekend with lots of mist over the mountains, great weather for walking the network of farm roads (we should have taken bicycles). There's quite a bit of wildlife on the farm, including antelope, samango monkeys, bushpig, and even small cats like civet. It wasn't warm enough to use the pool, but we certainly made good use of the fireplace, and the fire in the boma. – *Riaan Hattingh*

015 307 5149, grannydotscountryspot2u@gmail.com, www.grannydots.co.za

7 Eastern Cape Allendale Farm Graaff-Reinet

You can immediately see that Allendale, a working sheep farm north of Graaff-Reinet, is a favourite for families with children. Not surprisingly, hosts Brenda and Graham Murray are parents of three themselves, and young Cara loves to greet the guests. Accommodation is close to the farmhouse and sleeps up to five (parents, of course, get the double bed). There is even a cot for babies. In the living room, which doubles as an extra or children's bedroom, there are all kinds of board games. Adjoining it is a neat self-cater kitchen and en-suite bathroom (accessible from both rooms). But you'll probably spend most time out in the courtyard, a perfect place to *stoepsit* and braai, with privacy ensured by a two-sided wooden wall. If you'd prefer not to cook, Brenda will happily make supper or breakfast, but it's essential to order well in advance. She can also tell you which are the best routes for walking and running, or about great picnic spots in the nearby ghost poplar forest. Graaff-Reinet and Nieu-Bethesda are both about 30 minutes away. – *Julienne du Toit*

084 682 9235, allendale.frm@gmail.com, www.allendalefarm.wordpress.com



8 Western Cape Winemaker's Cottage Swartland

After much deliberation over a venue at which to celebrate a special occasion, we were delighted to discover that AA Badenhorst, renowned for its fine wines, offered self-catering accommodation on its century-old Kalmoesfontein farm between Malmesbury and Wellington. We booked the Winemaker's Cottage, set between old vineyards and a veggie garden – and as novice followers of the Greek god Bacchus, the four of us spent a happy getaway here. Elegant, yet understated,

our two en suite bedrooms and the tranquil nights made for restful sleep after the day's activities. We soaked up the sunshine and the panoramic vistas of the Swartland, enjoyed the private dam and tasted wines. We needed neither the underfloor heating nor the generous fireplace, but were grateful for the air con. Our evenings were spent on the large stoep, braaiing under a starlit sky. We were happy to share the experience with friends, but for those who prefer private time there's The Silo that sleeps two. Expect unpretentious style and welcoming local hospitality in a peaceful, relaxed environment. – *Olivia Schaffer*

www.aabadenhorst.com/accommodation

9 Mpumalanga Evergreen Adventure Estate – Bush Camp Amsterdam

Evergreen is set in the rolling Skurwerandjies hills of Mpumalanga, and sits on the edge of an indigenous forest. Located on the Swaziland border near the tiny farming town of Amsterdam, this farm also boasts a massive pine-tree plantation. Blesbuck roam the clearings, and lazily eye hikers who explore these koppies. Staying in the carefully designed, yet minimalist, wood-and-stone cottages at the Bush Camp feels akin to some serious glamping. Of course, the only part that is anything like camping is the donkey boiler that keeps water piping hot all day long. In the centre of the camp is a huge kitchen, that can easily accommodate 42 people, and a massive outside open fire pit where you can wine the night away next to a bonfire – being in a plantation there is always wood aplenty. Those keen on being active can take a leisurely walk to the small dam (and maybe somersault into the water) or take a drive up to a marked lookout point for a sunset picnic. Once you get to know the boundaries of the farm you can pick a direction and explore on foot. You can also stay in the apartment units, but the Bush Camp is the real breakaway spot that will bring you back for more. Evergreen is also a wedding and function venue. – *Gerhard Uys*

www.evergreenestate.co.za

