

go! West Coast

2024

PATERNOSTER

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HONDEKLIP BAY

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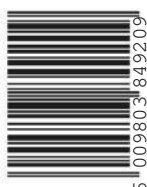
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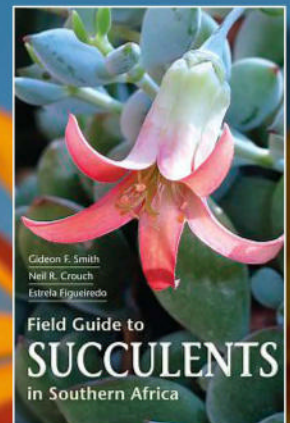
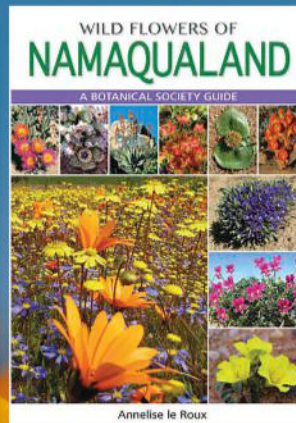
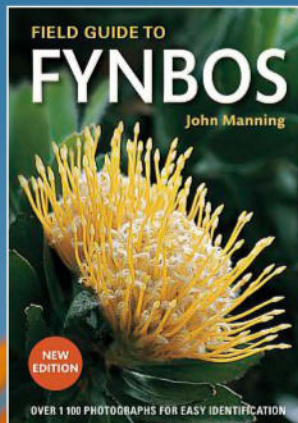
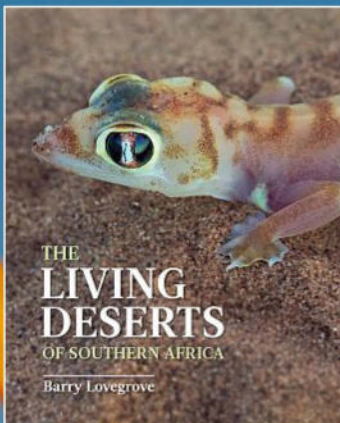
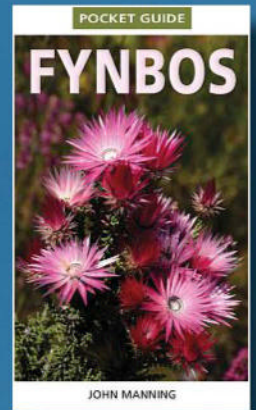
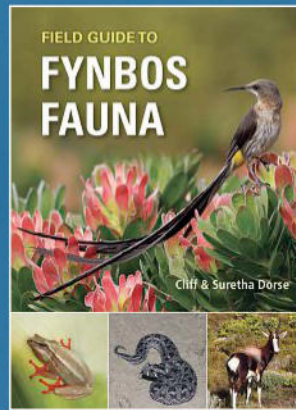
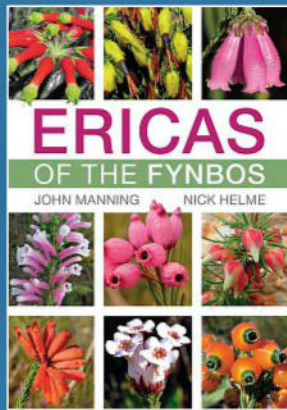
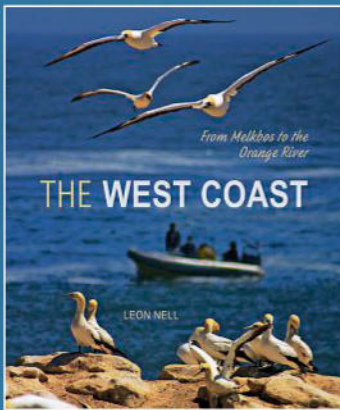
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*Visit these **10 lighthouses** – Dreamy photos of **Velddrif** –
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Cape gannets, Bird Island,
Lambert's Bay



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covers the Cape West Coast (including Darling, Hopefield and the West Coast National Park), Namaqualand and the Nieuwoudtville district.

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under threat of expanding mining operations. Toast Coetzer spoke to Mike Schlebach and Miles Masterson about the challenges ahead.

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A campsite where the waves break at your feet – Evan Naudé shares a secret spot where the sunset lingers extra long in your wine glass.



COVER PICTURE
BASSON VAN ZYL

Instagram: @basson_vanzyl

A fishing boat rests on the beach at Langebaan.

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TOAST COETZER

MENRAD HOLM

There are places that you long for, months or years after a visit, without really knowing why. The West Coast is such a place. As you leave the comforts of Cape Town behind and drive north, the towns gradually become smaller and the distances between them become bigger. (Drive from Kleinsee to Hondeklip Bay if you need to zone out...)

It's not an "easy" destination, which is good news if you prefer to flee the crowds when on holiday. The icy Benguela Current and persistent wind ensure that the West Coast doesn't have the balmy appeal of South Africa's eastern coastline. You enter the water in a wetsuit to go surfing, and you'll certainly be using all the pegs in the bag to hold down your tent.

Order a plate of snoek and sweet potatoes, local oysters or a crayfish tail at a seaside restaurant. Sit back and listen to the locals at the next table. West Coast people are no-nonsense – they take the day as it comes and deal with it as needs be. Interactions will be straightforward and sincere. *Plat op die aarde mense*, as they say.

Yup, the West Coast has a "slow-burn" appeal – it takes a while to grab hold of you. The landscapes are sparse and sometimes lonely, but they'll speak to you if you approach without preconceived ideas. Soon enough, the granite boulders around Tietiesbaai or the easy blue of the Langebaan Lagoon will lure you in. Have you ever been to Strandfontein and seen its hidden coastal cliffs, like castle turrets in the salty spray?

This is the first edition of *go! West Coast* and we're celebrating the region and its people. If you're unfamiliar with the area, turn straight to pages 95 – 116 where we list some of our own, and our readers', favourite places and activities. This will serve as a good blueprint to plan a road trip.

The interior adjacent to the West Coast – from Darling up into Namaqualand – is famous for early spring (or late winter) flower displays. On page 38 Evan Naudé (a West Coast boy himself; he grew up in Vredenburg) describes the best flower touring routes. Evan also traces the Olifants River (p 16) to its mouth, via towns like Citrusdal, Clanwilliam and Vredendal; and he visits Paternoster (p 68) to meet the people who help to make it the quintessential West Coast fishing village.

Chris Marais delves into the history of Hondeklip Bay (p 52), Callum Evans goes searching for humpback whales off Yzerfontein (p 88), Basson van Zyl shares photos of his beloved Velddrif (p 60) and Rey Janse van Rensburg recalls many a happy December holiday spent at places like McDougall's Bay (p 12).

Where are *your* favourite places on the West Coast? Drop us an e-mail and let us know! Happy travels.

TOAST

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FLOWER SEASON (P 38)

EVAN NAUDÉ



PATERNOSTER (P 68)

EVAN NAUDÉ



WHALE WATCHING NEAR YZERFONTEIN (P 88)

CALLUM EVANS

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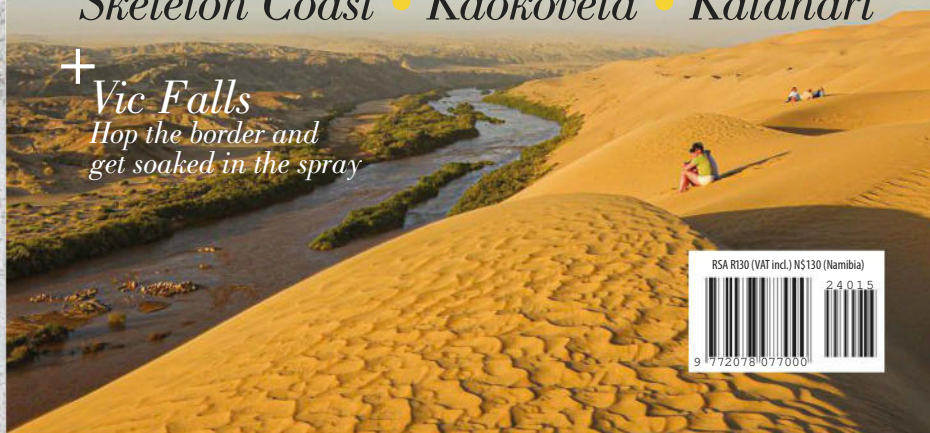
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VREDENDAL

Tourist attractions in Vredendal, Western Cape offer a diverse range of experiences, blending natural beauty with cultural heritage. Here are some notable attractions:



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West Coast Flowers

Wild flowers bloom between August and September each year. Some routes include R363 (Klawer & Vredendal) and R27 (Vredendal & Vanrhynsdorp).



Hiking Trails

Discover the rich tapestry of history and nature of Vredendal by visiting any of these trails: the Sevilla Rock Art Trail, Swart Tobie Trail and Matzikama Eco-Park.



Boutique Wineries

Experience the essence of South African wine culture with a visit to Cape Rock Wines, Teubes Family Wines and Sir Lambert Wines, where each bottle tells a story.



West Coast Beaches

Explore the coastal beauty where pristine beaches like Strandfontein invite you to unwind and soak in the refreshing sea breeze during the late afternoons.



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CHECK THIS!

Silence, stones and rare, desert-adapted flora are the main attractions of the Richtersveld. If you have a 4x4, plan a road trip through this rugged region. Start at one of the campsites on the Orange River near Vioolsdrif, then head towards the small towns of Eksteenfontein and Lekkersing before entering the |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park at Sendelingsdrift.

Give yourself at least three days to explore the park before turning towards Alexander Bay for a glimpse of the final stretch of our western coastline.

This photo was taken near the Kokerboomkloof campsite in the |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (📍 sanparks.org).

PICTURE **TOAST COETZER**







West Coast Mardi Gras

When you live in Namaqualand, you spend your seaside holidays on the West Coast. Tour guide **Rey Janse van Rensburg** from Springbok remembers holidays in McDougall's Bay, Lambert's Bay and a remote place called Brazil.

ILLUSTRATIONS **AIMEE LINDEQUE**

As a born *Namakwalander*, the cold Atlantic Ocean is synonymous with holidays, especially Christmas holidays. Port Nolloth is 145 km from Springbok and you can drive there on a tar road now, but 60 years ago, when I was a child, it was a mission to get there on dirt tracks. McDougall's Bay, just south of Port Nolloth, was our family's destination

of choice for the summer holidays.

My parents would load me and my brother into our old Kombi and we'd make the trek to the seaside, past all the landmarks: Okiep, Steinkopf, Klipfontein (where there used to be a hotel that served the steam locomotives that transported copper), down Anenous Pass, Xnoasies, Grasvlakte and finally to McDougall's.

We'd catch crayfish near the little island opposite the campsite, or in the gullies to the south. Lots of our

friends from Springbok also made the trek, like my former primary school teacher Hester Uys and her husband Theunis; and Dr Bakker, who had nursed my hand back to health when I was two years old and burnt it badly with boiling water.

Then there were the guys who always got into trouble, like Boetie Gerhard (the fastest man on four wheels in his V8 Ford Fairmont), Jan Clutch (known for his daredevil antics at the Springbok racetrack where he'd drive through a wall of

fire with his wife on the bonnet), Anton Tanneman (the dentist, of course), and Collin Wasgoedpennetjie – he and his dad owned the dry cleaners in town.

One year, in the late 1970s, Wasgoedpennetjie and his friends travelled to McDougall's where he kept an unlicensed caravan under an awning near the campsite. (No permanent structures were allowed to be built in those days because of the diamond-mining activity in the area.)

When they arrived, they found that the Ford Cortina MK II they were in had a standard tow hitch, which wasn't compatible with the caravan's smaller, old-fashioned coupler. No problem, said Wasgoedpennetjie, he'd sit on the frame near the coupling, which should keep the caravan in place for the roughly 500m they had to drive. Just go slow!

With a Los Bravos cassette in the four-track, they set off, but soon the caravan was forgotten, the driver was in second gear and the Cortina was picking up speed. Wasgoedpennetjie screamed from his perch, but Los Bravos was louder:

"Black is black

I want my baby back..."

The Cortina hopped over a speed bump as they entered the campsite and the caravan unhitched.

"It's grey, it's grey

Since she went away oh, oh..."

The caravan, supported only by its jockey wheel in front and with Wasgoedpennetjie still balanced on the frame, rolled through the campsite, straight towards another caravan. The coupling pierced the other caravan and a Cadac gas bottle pinned Wasgoedpennetjie against the side.

"Hoe de donner kry jy dit reg?

Where's your vehicle?!" the owner of the other caravan exclaimed.

Wasgoedpennetjie pointed sheepishly to where his friends were unpacking the Cortina...

Later, when my wife Elsabé and

I had our daughters, Lindey and Christal, we introduced them to the pleasures of a West Coast holiday at McDougall's Bay. They were with me when I towed Wasgoedpennetjie's Nissan Skyline out of the ocean after he overestimated his driving skills...

Vehicles often ended up in the ocean for some reason. Boetie Gerhard's Ford Fairmont also slid into the waves one time when he was pulling his motorboat out. He knew his dad would be furious, so he drove it into Doornpoort Dam in Springbok to "freshen it up" before he returned home.

By 1999, we'd traded McDougall's for the municipal caravan park in Lambert's Bay. One perk of having daughters is there are always aspiring boyfriends to help unpack your vehicle. Thanks to Lindey and Christal, our camp was usually set up in a jiffy. (Side note: People always wondered how they turned out so beautiful with me as their father...)

We'd take our Siamese cat Didi along, but she couldn't be released from the bakkie like a dog when we arrived – she had to wait until we were all set up otherwise she'd run off.

One time, we left Didi in the bakkie while we unpacked and pitched our tent. I saw a woman in a nearby campsite soothing a crying baby in her arms. In between cooing at the infant, she'd shoot murderous glances our way whenever we smacked a tent pole in with a clang.

The baby finally fell asleep, but just as the mother turned around to put it down, the bakkie's hooter went off at top volume. I ran over to investigate and found Didi leaning on the steering wheel with her front paws! I got her off but the damage was done: The screaming resumed, echoing around the campsite like an air-raid siren.

There was always entertainment for young and old. One of the "streets" in the caravan park was

called Sewende Laan. It would be cordoned off for a night in the lead-up to Christmas and we'd have a concert, make music and *kuier*. We'd braai and have potjiekos competitions, and the kids competed to see who would be crowned Mej Skulpie or Mnr Krappie. There was a pageant for the adults too, for the coveted title of Mnr or Mej Lambertsbaai.

On New Year's Eve, a brass band from Graafwater – their members dressed in blazers, ties and shiny shoes – went around the camp and played requests.

After a decade of going to Lambert's Bay – and so many wonderful times at nearby Muisboskerm, Malkoppa, Bosduifklip and Isabella's – we moved to a more remote spot in 2012.

To reach our new holiday destination, we drive straight to the sea from Springbok, via Spektakel Pass and Komaggas, to a desolate stretch of coast called Brazil, also known as Jakkalsbaai. It's government land and there are absolutely no facilities. This suits me fine. You have to bring everything you'll need: camping gear, drinking and washing water, a power source, a toilet, firewood, food – a truckload of stuff.

To some people, spending 20 days in a place like Brazil would be hell. But not for us. You have to take initiative and entertain yourself – something that children and many adults struggle with, especially now that we live in a time of Connected Everything. Brazil doesn't have Wi-Fi. It doesn't even have cellphone reception, except if you know where Signal Hill is...

To get to Brazil, you turn off the tar between Kleinsee and Koinaas. You have to stay alert because there's a confusing labyrinth of sandy roads, and they're in a poor condition. Outside of holiday season, only miners, kelp harvesters and

security personnel come here. The corrugations have caused many broken caravans, flat tyres and other problems. People with fancy 4x4s don't want to tackle these rugged roads and they usually turn around. This keeps Brazil from being overcrowded over the holidays.

There aren't any marked stands, but we always camp on a sandy spot on the right as you enter Brazil, above the high-water mark. Open your tent in the morning and you're a few steps from the ocean.

Adri and Linkie from the farm Hoogerus in Bushmanland camp on the stand next to us, then Robert and Leoni from Koringhuis near the Wildeperdehoek Pass, then Dawie and Estelle from Springbok. Then there are the "Webbe" – they're actually the Wepeners, but we all call them the Webbe. They're a big family – the kids are married and spread all over, but they all return to Brazil every year. Hanlie and Pieter Wepener are considered the mayors of Brazil because Pieter has been camping here for many years.

Further south down the beach you'll find Tjoep and Estelle from Upington, and Veronica and Willempie van Dyk, owners of Die Houthoop Guest Farm nearby. Willempie is a local – he's the one who'll tell you when the conditions are right for crayfish or angling.

Since I'm on the first stand as you enter this temporary village of tents, I'm usually the first person someone approaches for help when they stumble over the dunes. Often, by that time, their vehicle (and their friends) has been stuck in thick sand for hours. I bring all the recovery gear and I'm happy to help.

Christmas is festive in Brazil. Father Christmas shows up on Christmas Eve, sometimes without his reindeer... One year I made him sit on the bull bar of my Land Cruiser, drove



over a dune and into the camp, and announced his arrival with the hooter. Children and adults cheered – there were wide smiles and camera flashes all around. Everyone got a present.

On Christmas Day, there's a church service at Grootmis near Kleinsee, but our camp service is more popular. The children all get roles in the Nativity play. With no costumes, they have to get creative: They use towels for angel wings, kitchen cloths for head scarves and old shoeboxes for the gifts brought by the Three Wise Men.

The Three Wise Men are supposed to follow a star made from driftwood and covered in foil, but they've also been known to use a GPS... The base of the manger is a milk crate and the top a hinged braai grid. The shepherd, played by JJ Archer (Robert and Leoni's son), reads from the Bible and his sister Jumari leads the angels in their rendition of "Silent Night". Angel wings fold around the newborn baby Jesus to keep him safe, and the audience claps and cheers when the actors take their bow.

It's a special thing, our little concert on the plains of the West Coast, set against the sound of the waves.

We build communal fires on New Year's Eve. Farmers donate sheep and Willempie brings a spit braai. The party starts early in the day – almost all the campers prepare some kind of dish. Us Janse van Rensburgs serve *potbrood* with home-made jams, dates and cheese. Someone will braai *pofadders* (minced lamb liver wrapped in caul fat) and *skilpadjies*; there will be vetkoek and crayfish, snoek, mullet, mussels and oysters. Some people show off with olives, rollmops and sushi.

Charl "Willemot" from Grabouw, whose surname is actually Willmot, is Brazil's resident nudist. At midnight on New Year's Eve, he runs through the camp as naked as the day he was born. Charl can make music with anything: He'll shake an empty plastic bag – *shoop-shoop-shoop* – while someone strums a guitar and someone else taps out a rhythm on an empty bucket with a spoon. There's plenty of singing talent, too. A light breeze will carry the words of "Suikerbossie" over the beach, where it mingles with the braai smoke and wafts into the reddening sky.

The party intensifies after sunset. Everyone is welcome and you can eat as much as you want. There's a jar for cash donations and we auction all sorts of items. All the funds raised are donated to Huis Namakwaland, the old-age home in Springbok.

We also use the time to make plans for next year's party. Will we have a parade? Maybe a type of Mardi Gras? After all, our Brazil is right across the ocean from the real Brazil.

Ja, why not, a West Coast Mardi Gras!

This column is dedicated to the late Pieter Wepener (1963 – 2024).

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River of life

Cascading through the mountains of the Groot Winterhoek and the Cederberg, widening as it feeds the orchards of Citrusdal and the vineyards of Klawer, the Olifants River eventually flows around the feet of flamingos at Papendorp on the West Coast. Here's your guide to one of the prettiest parts of South Africa.

WORDS & PICTURES **EVAN NAUDÉ**

The Olifants River originates in the Witzenberg and its lifegiving properties are evident where it reaches Citrusdal: Large citrus orchards line the valley all the way to Clanwilliam.



OLIFANTS RIVER

Cruising north on the N7 is easy when you have a Wimpy coffee in your cup holder and your favourite playlist on repeat. From Cape Town, you can reach Piekenierskloof Pass beyond Piketberg in two hours. This wasn't the case in the time of pack donkeys and ox-wagons – it took weeks to reach this point.

In 1660, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) sent Jan Danckaert from the Cape to scout a route to Namaqualand. Khoi guides took him over a mountain range. From the top, he beheld a river valley where herds of elephants roamed. Fittingly, he called the river the Olifants, and the mountain range he'd just crossed became known as the Olifantsrivierberg.

In 1864, a tollhouse was erected at the top of the pass that Danckaert had used and the VOC sent a commando of pikemen (soldiers who traditionally fought with a shield and a type of spear called a pike) to be stationed on the pass to protect the growing European colony. Piekenierskloof Pass ("pikeman's" kloof) was named after them.

The current tar pass was completed in 1958. Before that, for at least a hundred years, travellers used a dirt road called Grey's Pass, named after Sir George Grey who was then governor of the Cape colony. You can still see a part of this pass from the picnic site halfway up Piekenierskloof Pass on the Citrusdal side.

Grey's Pass was Thomas Bain's first official road construction project. The cottage where the master engineer and his wife Johanna lived during the construction of the pass is still on Modderfontein, a guest farm on the Citrusdal side of the pass. In

1725, Modderfontein was the first VOC farm in the area and almost developed into a town of its own, with its own post office, blacksmith workshop and general dealer. These days, it's a citrus, rooibos and buchu farm – visitors can stay in one of Modderfontein's historical buildings.

I pull off the N7 near Modderfontein to take a photo of the valley. It's November and the rest of the West Coast is as dry as driftwood, but here it's lush and green. There are citrus trees wherever I look. A dark green strip in the middle of the valley marks the course of the Olifants River.

The river is 285 km long. It originates in the Witzenberg above Ceres, about 65 km from where I'm standing as the jackal buzzard flies. It carves a narrow course through the Groot Winterhoek Wilderness Area, where only baboons can reach its rock pools. By the time it reaches Citrusdal, it's wide and strong. From there, it stays roughly parallel to the N7, past Clanwilliam, before it goes underneath the N7 near Klawer on its way to the coast. It passes Vredendal and Lutzville and empties into the Atlantic Ocean at Papendorp.

My travel plan is simple: Follow the river as far as possible – and see what the region has to offer.

Storytellers and mermaids

I turn off the N7 and cross a low-water bridge over the river to Citrusdal. The Olifants can be mercurial: In June 2023, heavy winter rains caused the river to come down in spate. It washed this bridge away, cutting off the town for almost three days. The flooding was extensive.

In Citrusdal, I follow Voortrekker Street north out of town, past greenhouse tunnels and packhouses. The tar road becomes dirt after 18 km, and the Cederberg mountains loom on my right.

Cars and trucks flash past on the N7 on the opposite side of the river, but it's only me and my Suzuki Grand Vitara on this side. I reach a crossroads a little further on. You can turn left here back to the N7, over another low-water bridge, or you can go right up Nieuwoudt's Pass to Algeria in the Cederberg. You can also carry on straight, as I do, following the river.

The closer I get to Clanwilliam, the wider the river becomes. Eventually I pass Clanwilliam Dam and enter the town along Ou Kaapse Road. When I reach the end of the main road, the town museum (a former jail) is on the right. This is where I meet tour guide Herschil Pieterse.

"Clanwilliam is one of the oldest towns in South Africa," he says. "It was first called Jan Disselsvlei, but it was renamed in 1814 by Sir John Cradock after his father-in-law, the earl of Clanwilliam. So, Clanwilliam is a little Irish!"

As we walk through the museum, Herschil gives me a rundown of Clanwilliam's famous residents and exports. The Afrikaans author, medical doctor, painter and foodie, C Louis Leipoldt, might have been born in Worcester but his father was a dominee at the Dutch Reformed church in Clanwilliam. Leipoldt loved the area dearly and his ashes were buried next to the Pakhuis Pass outside town.

"His grandfather, Johan Gottlieb Leipoldt, was the founder of Wuppertal and he started the shoe factory there in 1834," Herschil says.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: The Olifants River is a crucial water source for the wineries of Klawer, Vredendal and Lutzville. The grave of Afrikaans poet C Louis Leipoldt can be found at the top of Pakhuis Pass near Clanwilliam. Herschil Pieterse is a passionate and knowledgeable guide at the Clanwilliam Museum. A 237 km-long canal system was built in 1923 to supply water to the farms of the Vredendal area.



OLIFANTS RIVER

"The business is in Clanwilliam now – it's called Strassbergers."

If you grow up in Clanwilliam, the Olifants River is part of your life. "We played in the river when it was hot – and sometimes almost drowned!" Herschil jokes. "Maybe that's why there are so many myths about it. We were told about a mermaid, the *waternooientjie*, that lured men to the water. If she called you, you must never answer. Those stories are how the *ou mense* protected us."

Wine by the papsak

I spend the night in Clanwilliam and carry on north the next morning, following the gravel R363 to Klawer along the eastern bank of the river. You could also take the N7, which follows the western bank. Both roads meet up just before town.

Colloquially known as the "Kanaalpad", the R363 takes you past Bulshoek Dam. This dam, and a 237 km-long canal system completed in 1923, was essential for the development of the agriculture industry around Klawer, Vredendal and Lutzville. The canals have more than a thousand sluices and hundreds of farmers use the water to irrigate about 95 km² of land. The Clanwilliam Dam was built in 1935 to supply even more water to the region.

At the Bulshoek Dam Holiday Resort, I meet up with manager René von Reizig who tells me about last year's flood. "I woke up and saw water everywhere!" she says. "Someone had to come pick me up in a 4x4 – fortunately my car wasn't here or it would have washed away. The river rose and rose and the water flowed through the house. It only receded three days later. There was no grass left in our campsite.

But look how lush it is now..."

Onward to Klawer, which is named after the clover plant and developed around a railway station. Even though a train hasn't travelled this way for quite some time, Klawer is still a popular pit stop thanks to the Engen filling station and Wimpy (another coffee?) on the N7.

The R363 turns towards the sea here. The landscape is flatter and the citrus orchards have been replaced by vineyards. Yup, Klawer, Vredendal and Lutzville might not be in the same WhatsApp group as Franschhoek, Stellenbosch and Wellington, but their vineyards also produce millions of litres of wine every year.

The biggest wine producer in the area is Namaqua Wines in Vredendal. I talk to Rudi de Wet, one of Namaqua's three winemakers. "We're 22 km from the ocean so we get an afternoon breeze that cools the grapes after the day's heat," he says as he leads me into his workplace. "This is where we make white wine. Some of the tanks in my section are 100 000 litres. We export in bulk – in big *papsak*-like bags that hold 24 000 litres each. We put the bag into a shipping container, close one door and fill it directly from the wine tanks. We export to Canada, Japan, the USA, France, Denmark... They bottle the wine on their side."

We also walk past much bigger tanks. "These are the million-litre tanks," Rudi says. Then he shows me the machine that puts the smaller *papsakke* into boxes. "Our focus is boxed wine – we package up to 7,5 million litres a month..."

All the numbers make my head spin (*Maybe it's the wine fumes?* – Ed.) and I say a dizzy goodbye to Rudi.

Who drinks all that wine?

Further along the R362, I stop at 1st Principles, a small distillery that produces the rooibos-flavoured gin, brandy and vodka that you'll find in the region's farm stalls. This is where I meet Anya Roux.

"My dad Joubert started the distillery and created all the recipes," she says. "This old copper kettle was used as a planter in my grandmother's garden before we restored it."

Her dogs, Rollo and Moenie ("*Moenie stout wees nie!*") follow hot on our heels as Anya guides me through the distillery. We stop at a shelf with jars of liquid in different colours.

"These are tinctures," she says. "We use them to see how the different flavours interact; the process is almost like cooking. It's important to train your senses to understand how the flavours work."

Anya gives me two dinky 50 ml bottles of vodka and gin to taste later. As I leave town, I wonder what Rudi and his 24 000-litre *papsakke* would think of them.

Over the hill

The Olifants flows into the sea at Papendorp, about 6 km north of the holiday town of Strandfontein. The estuary is home to more than 200 bird species, like flamingo, African marsh-harrier, African oystercatcher and swift tern.

When I arrive in Papendorp, there's a pink splash of flamingos in the river. Fishing boats rest on the shore and channels wind through the salt marshes.

Papendorp only has a handful of houses, but their view is amazing. I take a walk through the settlement and meet Aletta Goliath, who is leaning on her garden gate. She

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Follow the "Kanaalpad" (R363) between Clanwilliam and Klawer for a scenic alternative to the N7. Rudi de Wet produces wine in bulk for Namaqua Wines in Vredendal. Completed in 1923, Bulshoek Dam's impressive sandstone arches are still holding up today. At 1st Principles distillery in Vredendal, Anya Roux creates unique gin and vodka flavours using local ingredients like rooibos tea.



OLIFANTS RIVER

IN OTHER WORDS



Bobby van der Merwe & Annette Bothma, Fish Hoek

Bobby: "We've been coming to The Baths in Citrusdal year after year. The water definitely has healing properties. I struggle with arthritis and it works wonders for me."



René von Reizig, Bulshoek Dam

"I'm originally from Klerksdorp, but I've been at Bulshoek for eight months now. The Olifants River is medicine for my soul. We have 95 bird species here and I love listening to their calls, along with the frogs and other sounds of nature."



Monika de Jager, Vredendal tourism

"The wines produced by local cellars offer wonderful value for money. The walk along the coast between Papendorp and Strandfontein is very scenic, especially during the hot summer months. And don't miss the rooibos tea tours at Skimmelberg and Carmiën – it's a unique activity that you can't do anywhere else."

points across the river. "During apartheid, people were separated. The white people lived on that side, which was Papendorp. This side was Viswater. Many years ago, there was a flood that washed everything away and now it's all Papendorp."

It's not hard to imagine the origin of the name "Viswater". The estuary is a traditional fishing place for people from the surrounding settlements of Olifantsdrift, Nuwepos, Ebenhaeser and Papendorp.

"Our parents raised us on the river," Aletta says. "My dad fished for money, but you can no longer make a living from fishing because of things like climate change. People moved over the hill to find other jobs."

People still fish – mostly mullet and the occasional springer – and Aletta says there are plans to have the estuary declared a conservation area, and to establish a co-op for the subsistence fishermen.

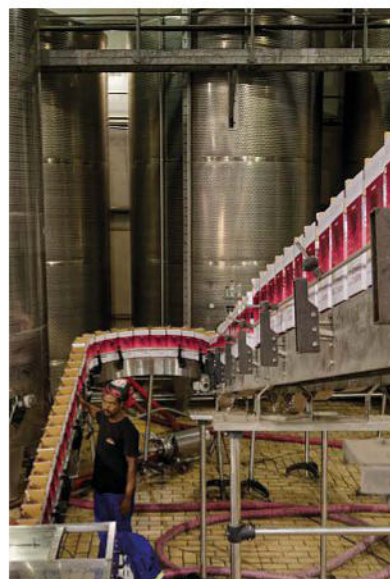
"Fishing is part of our tradition. You have to eat fish two or three times a week because that's how you grew up. And now, after a 20-year struggle, our people finally have long-term fishing rights, not just temporary permits."

I ask Aletta if she's ever considered looking for greener pastures. "I will always stay in Papendorp," she says. "We know each other here."

I pull over at the viewpoint overlooking the estuary and wonder what the Olifants River would tell me if it could talk. I would ask it about the time of the elephants, the *waternooientjies*, and where the best rock pools are hidden. I would thank it on behalf of all humanity for its lifegiving waters that make it one of the jewels of the West Coast.

From the top: Aletta Goliath looks out over the Olifants River estuary at Papendorp, the quaint fishing village where she grew up. The estuary, colloquially known as Viswater, has been a source of income for the surrounding communities for generations. South of the river mouth, you'll find the moody cliffs of Strandfontein's beaches.





DO THIS

Know your rooibos

Do a tour at Carmién Tea (pictured above) and learn how your brew is made. You'll visit a tea plantation, the factory, and the tour will end with a tea tasting at De Tol farm stall.

Tours: Wednesday and Friday from 10 am to noon – tours only offered from January to April. It costs R180 per person; max 10 people. Booking is essential.

Where? Bergendal Farm, Paleisheuwel Road and De Tol farm stall, Piekenierskloof Pass, N7.

Contact: detol@carmienteat.co.za

Pay your respects to the poet

Follow Pakhuis Pass out of Clanwilliam and look out for a rock overhang on the left, covered in San paintings. This is where C Louis Leipoldt is buried and it's one of the most beautiful final resting places you'll ever see. Free to visit.

Where? About 17 km outside Clanwilliam.

Buy a pair of vellies

You don't get more experienced shoemakers than those at Strassbergers in Clanwilliam. Choose a pair of velskoen from more than 40 styles, or order a custom-made pair.

Opening times: Monday to Thursday from 8 am to 5 pm; Friday from 8 am to 3 pm; Saturday from 8 am to 11 am.

Where? Ou Kaapse Road, on the southern side of Clanwilliam.

Contact: [027 482 1461](tel:0274821461)

strassbergers.co.za

Visit South Africa's biggest wine cellar

See how wine is produced at Namaqua Wines (pictured above). Winemaker Rudi de Wet will personally walk you through the process from vine to bottle. Set aside two hours.

Tours: They're free, but you have to book beforehand.

Opening times: Monday to Thursday from 8 am to 5 pm; Friday from 8 am to 1 pm.

Where? 17 Circle Road, Vredendal

Contact: [027 213 1080](tel:0272131080) (Lynn de Beer)

Taste rooibos gin

Do a tour of the 1st Principles distillery and taste four kinds of gin (classic dry, rooibos, honeybush and cocktail) and two sundowners. R200 per person. Book at least a day in advance and make sure you have a designated driver to get home...

Opening times: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 9 am to 5 pm; Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.

Where? About 4 km west of Vredendal, next to the R362.

Contact: [076 132 5614](tel:0761325614) (WhatsApp)

[027 213 2431](tel:0272132431)

info@1stdistilleries.co.za

OLIFANTS RIVER



EAT HERE

De Tol

Pop in at this farm stall for home-made roosterkoek, sandwiches and pancakes. Taste six Piekenierskloof wines in the historical cellar (R60 per person) or a selection of Carmién rooibos teas or gins (R70 per person).

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 5 pm; Sunday until 3 pm.

Where? At the top of Piekenierskloof Pass, N7.

Contact: 067 410 3315
detol.co.za

Kardoesie

Kardoesie has a farm stall, restaurant and a kids' play area. There's a lunch special every Sunday with treats like *waterblommetjebredie*, *bobotie*, oxtail, pumpkin fritters and malva pudding (about R120 per person).

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 5 pm; Sunday from noon to 5 pm.

Where? At the top of Piekenierskloof Pass, N7.

Contact: 063 680 4683
kardoesie-n7.co.za

Oppl Hoek

This coffee shop in Citrusdal has a cool stoep and shade trees – just what you need on a hot day. Breakfast options from R60 (eggs and bacon on toast); light meals like toasted sandwiches (from R30); fresh salads (from R55) and hamburgers (from R75).

Opening times: Monday to Friday from 7.30 am to 4.30 pm; Saturday from 8 am to 1 pm.

Where? 19 Loop Street, Citrusdal
Contact: 022 100 0963

Velskoendraai

Buy home-made rusks, jams,

tea, beauty products and fresh vegetables at the farm stall. Or sit down in the restaurant for breakfast, roosterkoek, pizza, burgers, pies and favourites like *waterblommetjebredie* and *bobotie*.

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 5 pm; Sunday from 10 am to 3 pm.

Where? On the outskirts of Clanwilliam, as you enter from the N7.

Contact: 083 460 3773
velskoendraai.co.za

N7 on Wine & Farm Stall

On the shelves of this farm stall/wine shop you'll find a selection of wines from the Olifants River Valley. Once you've selected a bottle (or box), stock up on biltong for padkos and a jar of preserved peaches for dessert.

Opening times: Monday to Thursday from 8 am to 5 pm; Friday from 8 am to 6 pm; Saturday from 8 am to 4 pm; Sunday from 9 am to 4 pm.

Where? Next to the N7 outside Klawer (at the Engen 1-Stop).

Contact: 027 216 1141

Die Keldery

This is the restaurant at the Namaqua Wines Spruitdrift tasting room. They serve pizzas, toasted sandwiches, steak and burgers. Taste five wines with biltong or chocolate pairings. There's also a bar and wine shop.

Opening times: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm; Thursday and Friday from 9 am to 10 pm.

Where? Next to the R363, 7 km south of Vredendal.

Contact: 027 213 3699
diekeldery.com



OPPL HOEK



DIE KELDERY



DE TOL



STAY HERE

Piekenierskloof

Mountain Resort

Self-catering chalets for up to six people from R3 890 per night. The chalets have an equipped kitchen, a living area with a fireplace, and a veranda with braai facilities. Hotel rooms (for two to four people) from R2 080 per night.

The resort has a restaurant (day visitors welcome), a playground for the kids, indoor and outdoor swimming pools and a spa. There's also a zipline, a putt-putt course and hiking trails.

Where? Next to the N7, near the top of Piekenierskloof Pass.

Contact: 022 921 3574
piekenierskloof.co.za

Modderfontein

The 20 renovated buildings in The Old Village on Modderfontein farm were part of the first settlement in the region. The self-catering units are called Church House

(sleeps two), Smitswinkel (four), Postmaster's House (five) and Rooibos Cottage (four). Rates from R450 per person sharing.

There's also a restaurant – stop here for lunch. It's open from Tuesday to Saturday, 9 am to 2 pm, and from 5.30 pm for dinner. The Sunday buffet is served at 11.30 am.

Where? Next to the N7 on the Citrusdal side of Piekenierskloof.

Contact: 022 921 3963
theoldvillage.co.za

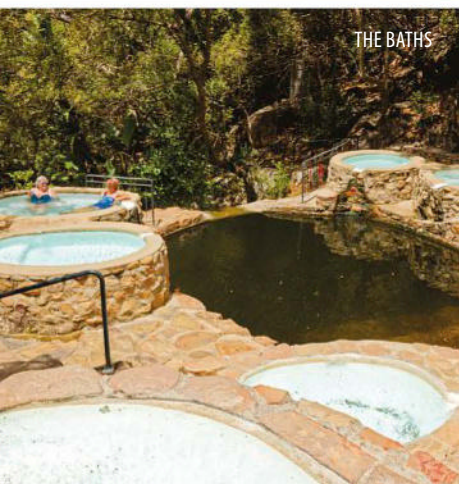
The Baths

Camping from R190 per person; self-catering chalet from R1 600 per night for two people; apartments from R1 400 per night for two. Some of the chalets have their own hot tubs. Facilities include hot mineral spring baths, a heated swimming pool, a tennis court, a playground for children, a kiosk and a restaurant. No day visitors.





PIEKENIERSKLOOF MOUNTAIN RESORT



THE BATHS



RONDEBERG HOLIDAY RESORT



MODDERFONTEIN



BULSHOEK DAM HOLIDAY RESORT

Where? About 18 km south of Citrusdal along tar roads.

Contact: 022 921 8026

thebaths.co.za

Wolfkop

This private reserve (4,5 km²) has five separate camps next to the Olifants River. Each camp has a number of glamping units: a deck with three dome tents (two people per tent) under a stretch tent. There's a communal living area with couches and tables, a braai and a kitchen. Shared ablutions. Each camp sleeps up to six people; rates from R3 000 per night.

There are also nine self-catering houses higher up the mountain. Each has a kitchen, a braai and a swimming pool or hot tub. The units sleep two to ten people; rates from R690 per person sharing.

Where? About 6 km south of Citrusdal along a dirt road.

Contact: 083 260 5071

wolfkopnaturereserve.co.za

wolfkopcampingvillages.co.za

Kliphuis

Pitch your tent in the campsite (max six people per stand; rates from R150 per person sharing) or stay in a self-catering cottage (sleeps up to six people; rates from R255 per person). The campsite doesn't have electricity, but the cottages have solar power and a gas stove and fridge. Easy access to Rocklands – a world-famous rock-climbing spot in the Cederberg – and local hiking trails.

Where? On the Pakhuis Pass, about 18 km on tar from Clanwilliam.

Contact: 087 087 8250

capenature.co.za

Bulshoek Dam Holiday Resort

The resort is near the inflow of the dam where it still looks like a river. Camp on a big lawn on the banks; rates from R100 per person (power points and braai facilities).

There are also three self-catering units (each sleeps up to eight) from R650 per night; and two bigger stone cottages (each sleeps up to 12) from R280 per person sharing.

Where? About 18 km north of Clanwilliam along the R363 (the tar turns into a dirt road).

Contact: 082 085 1091

bulshoekdamresort@gmail.com

Rondeberg Holiday Resort

On Bulshoek Dam. The camping stands have power points and braai facilities, but bring your own grid. Rates from R320 per night for up to six people. There are also six private stands with their own

bathrooms and kitchens (from R500 per night) and four luxury stands (from R800 per night) that include a four-person bedroom.

Self-catering chalets from R1 050 per night (for up to eight people); house on the waterfront from R2 750 per night (up to 10 people); stone cottage from R750 per night (sleeps two).

Where? About 22 km north of Clanwilliam on the N7.

Contact: 021 100 3689

rondeberg.com

Raisin Rest

This self-catering unit on Lushof farm sleeps two adults and one child. The open-plan living area has a well-quipped kitchen, TV and Wi-Fi, and there's a braai room. Rates from R1 000 per night.

Where? About 5 km south of Vredendal on the R363 tar road.

Contact: 082 965 1897



Shielded by a modern breakwater today, the natural harbour at Lambert's Bay made it an obvious choice for a trading post along the West Coast in the 1800s. The town, which only became a formal municipality in 1969, was named after Sir Robert Lambert, a British naval commander at the Cape.



Let everyone come home

For a town whose children are scattered across the globe, the Lambert's Bay Kuernaweek is a call to come home. **Toast Coetzer** had a braai and a *sokkie* with the people of this West Coast town.

PICTURES **MENRAD HOLM & TOAST COETZER**

LAMBERT'S BAY

Pancakes are being fried, rolled and sold by the stack. A mince jaffle is yours if you want one. Cooler boxes are being clipped open, chairs are pulled closer, and every now and then the lights of a vehicle sweep over Malkoppaan as more people arrive. Under the stretch tent on the lawn, someone is testing mood lighting for the dance later.

It's a Friday evening in March and there's an intimate atmosphere at the Lambert's Bay Kuernaweek. Ian Turner of the Muisbosskerm open-air restaurant, which is across the road, is the braai master. He's manning two grids at once. A caravan churns out *slaptjips* in Styrofoam containers. People arrive in a steady stream: Young ones chase after their dogs; old ones walk slowly and greet each other with long handshakes, then step back to get a better look at their friend or distant relative.

I sit down to talk to Jan Engelbrecht, one of the main drivers behind the gathering.

"We first called it the Kuierfees," he says in Afrikaans with a light burr in his voice that's unique to the region. "We wanted to create a festival for everyone with a connection to the town – whether you went to school here, worked here or were born here. But when you call something a *fees*, you create the expectation that there will be musicians and certain kinds of shows, and that wasn't the point. So, we went with Lambert's Bay Kuernaweek. It has more of a reunion ring to it."

Jan is one of many "Engelbrêe" in the district. Along with the Louws from Wa-Drif and the Burgers of Steenbokfontein, the

Engelbrechts were one of the first families to settle here.

"I'm a sixth-generation Engelbrecht," he says. "Our family Bible is with Joos Engelbrecht on Kookfontein, the old family farm. The *oumense* gave everyone the same initials, like JA or SA, so we all got nicknames like Joos Jan or Sybrand Hardevet... My grandfather was Jan Trippens because he speculated with cattle. My father was Sybrand Tiekie. I became Jan Kreef because I hailed from the seaside – and my brother was Gert Mossel!"

After school, Jan worked all over – East and West Africa, South America, even Mexico – before he returned to Lambert's Bay. Such wanderings are standard for people from Lambert's Bay, he says.

"The town's golden era was from the 1950s to the 1970s, when the fish factory was booming. People came from elsewhere to work here, like the German families Zieg and Vetulski – they were technical workers who looked after the Deutz engines on the boats.

"The factory produced fish meal and tinned crayfish tails and there were trawlers that caught anchovies and sardines. But our pelagic resources dwindled over time. The factory struggled and eventually was repurposed for potatoes. Agriculture in the Sandveld was picking up at the time.

"Many people moved elsewhere in South Africa or they went overseas to look for work. The Lambert's Bay Kuernaweek is designed to draw them back here."

The weekend's festivities kick off tonight; tomorrow there will be a church bazaar, a float parade and a dinner party at the Sir Lambert estate outside town. There will also

be a dance where Hugo Louw and his band will play. The weekend will end with a service at the Dutch Reformed church on Sunday morning.

The Kuernaweek also raises funds – this year for the Sandveld Museum and the Somerkoelte old-age home.

Some of the floats for tomorrow's parade are being decorated and completed here at Malkoppaan tonight. Two people are glueing scales to a float that looks like a kabeljou. The scales are made from old CDs and will shimmer like a fish when they catch the light tomorrow.

Jan remembers the harvest festivals held in town when he was a child. The *predikant* would bless the fishermen and their boats in the harbour before they set out for the first day of the fishing season. A float parade would follow through the streets. The Kuernaweek wants to revive this tradition.

"Back then, people built great floats that celebrated the origin of the town," he says. "We wanted to do something similar. Our theme for 2024 is Land & Sea. Each float will depict something like the fishing industry, our agricultural heritage or even the restaurant industry – I believe mussels are being used for that."

On Saturday morning, the action starts in the hall of the Dutch Reformed church. There are so many vehicles parked outside it looks like a rugby stadium. Children run around the garden looking for Easter eggs. Inside, the hall smells of... bazaar: jelly and custard on the pudding table to the right, pancakes from the kitchen on the left, jaffles and the spices of the curry-and-rice table.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: The bazaar is in full swing in the Dutch Reformed church hall. Fishing boats lie at anchor in the Lambert's Bay harbour. Toast (far right) chats to Kuernaweek attendees at the braai fire at Malkoppaan. Benetta and Jan Engelbrecht "ride" a wave crafted from plastic bottles. A church bazaar requires many hands: Coralee Burger is one of the people who helped flip more than 500 pancakes at the event. Rousseau Theron and Christen Eshmade in front of a float they were working on.



LAMBERT'S BAY

It's a coincidence that the church bazaar falls on this weekend, but it fits right in with the Kuernaweek. Gathered here is a community that supports and helps each other through difficult times, but one that also shares in the joys of life.

A bazaar like this one is a high-impact event. It's like T20 cricket – only sixes are being hit. An auction takes place on the stage; cakes fly off the baked goods table (I hand over R60 for a peppermint crisp tart); and the bazaar pudding changes hands so quickly it looks like a gambling table. You can buy a portion of curry and rice for R45. Not to mention the pancake prices that go down the more you buy: R10 each for the first five, R8 each if you order between six and fifteen, and only R7 each for an order of sixteen or more.

My cellphone pings with a message from Jan – the float parade is about to start. Menrad Holm is a photographer documenting the weekend with me – he and

I climb into my car and we drive a few blocks to the starting point. We follow the colourful convoy through town to the amphitheatre that overlooks the harbour below Voortrekker Street. The floats are parked in a semicircle in front of the cement steps where a few hundred people are gathered. Soon dust starts to rise as the Betjies of Betjiesfontein dance the riel. The spectators join in, and afterwards some of the vegetables on an agriculture float are handed out to the underprivileged residents of the town.

Jan stands next to his wife Benetta and can't stop smiling. "I'm very, very happy here," he told me last night. Now I can see why.

The date for the 2025 Lambert's Bay Kuernaweek hasn't been set yet – follow the Facebook page "What's on in Lambertsbaai" for more information.



Clockwise, from top right: The Betjies of Betjiesfontein show their riel dance skills. A parade of floats celebrated, among other things, the town's seafood and restaurant culture and local agricultural produce. Gert Valentyn plays guitar for the Lambertsbaai-orkes. From the parking lot, you can walk along the harbour wall to Bird Island.



IN OTHER WORDS



Brandon Bezuidenhout, fisherman

"Life by the sea is a different kind of life. When you arrive in the morning and you watch the water, it soothes your soul and mind. You don't think about your problems, you're only focused on what you have to do on the water that day.

"If you're the captain of the boat, you have your crew with you – we're usually three guys if we catch crayfish – and you have to make sure everything is in order. Even if you return empty-handed, your soul feels good!"



Roberto Lane, car guard

"There used to be crayfish all over town, but our quotas have been limited. Most people now work at the potato factory, although potatoes don't need as many hands as fish do. The process is more mechanised.

"I look after vehicles in front of Isabella's restaurant in the harbour. The Cape gannets at Bird Island still attract a lot of people.

"Lambert's Bay is small, but we make it work, even if we struggle sometimes. Here you know your neighbours. It's not like the Cape – my uncle says there you can live next to someone for 15 years and not know them!"



Marieta Bean, retired

"I was born here but I worked as a teacher in places like Sishen and Thabazimbi for most of my life. My husband and I are retired and we live with my mother, who is 95 years old. I realised I had to come back to my roots.

"It's wonderful to attend the Lambert's Bay Kuieraweek and see my friends from years ago – they have just as many wrinkles as I do! Many of them also moved back here to retire. Everyone knows everyone. And we talk about each other, but it's not gossip – we're just interested in each other's lives..."



Jeanette Tredoux, housewife

"I live in Velddrif but I was born and raised in Lambert's Bay. My family still farms with sheep, cattle and crops on Fonteintjie along the Vredendal dirt road. I think I'm the seventh generation – I'm also an Engelbrecht.

"My husband Pieter and I also farmed, but now he works on a farm in the US. That's how life goes – you can't let it get you down.

"Pieter and I got married in the Dutch Reformed church here in 2002. When I visit Lambert's Bay, it feels like home."

LAMBERT'S BAY



MENRAD HOLM



WE STAYED HERE

From the stoep at Kookfontein Guest Farm, you look out over their vineyards – ask about their wines. You might see a duiker early in the morning. The rooms have a spacious living area and self-catering kitchen, and there's a sheltered backyard.

Rates: R900 per night for two people, or R1 100 per night for two adults and a child.

Where? About 5 km east of Lambert's Bay.

Contact: 📞 082 456 4299; 📧 theunettevh@gmail.com

Thanks to Kookfontein for their hospitality – Toast stayed here for free for the weekend.



Dillon Friesley, CapeNature researcher

"I've been working on Bird Island for two years – it's a real privilege. We monitor the impact of seal predation on the young Cape gannets. We patrol the island two or three times a day to keep the seals away.

"We also count the birds so we know whether the colony is growing or shrinking – it has been stable for the last few years. There were 8 500 breeding pairs in 2023, so about 17 000 birds. So far, for 2024, there are more than 8 000 chicks; there might be 9 000 this year."



Jan Engelbrecht, tour operator

"My mother once told me: 'You're like a Sandveld tortoise. You were born here under a skilpadbos and then you grew up and wandered far and wide. When you're old, you'll return to rest your head in the shadow of the skilpadbos. And that's basically how my life turned out."



Hetta Saunderson, business owner

"Lambert's Bay doesn't have a Spur or any other big-brand restaurants, but we have unique places to eat like Alle Dingen. Their blikbordetes (meals served on tin plates) are so popular that people head there on Mondays to see which dishes owner Heidi Boonzaaier has planned for the week – she writes them on a blackboard.

"Then there's the Mad Hatter Coffee Shop, where Bertina Engelbrecht bakes the best cakes. Roestyd Restaurant has a tasting section for wines from the district, and the well-known Isabella's in the harbour has been spruced up and is now more modern.

"Muisboskerm and Bosduifklip are both excellent open-air restaurants. Few towns have so many quality restaurants!"



Bunny Redelinghuys, guesthouse owner

"My real name is Maans, short for Hermanus. Bunny is my nickname. Everyone in Lambert's Bay has a nickname. My wife Ronel and I own a guesthouse called @TheBay Guest Villa.

"I'm of the nomadic sort. I was born and raised here, then I went off to university and worked as a facility manager for the City of Cape Town until recently. The climate is what made me return to Lambert's Bay – it's milder and cooler, but it's the same every day. I have a small garden and I never have to water it – the morning fog keeps the clivias and other plants going. Lambert's Bay is good for my soul in the same way."

Alle Dingen 📞 083 776 6905

Mad Hatter 📞 027 432 1673

Roestyd 📞 roestyd.co.za

Isabella's 📞 isabellas-restaurant.co.za

Muisboskerm 📞 muisboskerm.co.za

Bosduifklip 📞 bosduifklip.co.za



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www.swartlandtourism.co.za

The last laugh

George Moyes was a legendary figure on the West Coast – a diamond diver, vagabond and Port Nolloth’s storyteller extraordinaire. **Willem van der Berg** ran into him shortly before he passed away in September 2022.

One Sunday in September 2022, my friend Japie Kruger and I were on our way to the Richtersveld. We were in the

Port Nolloth Spar when a scruffy man started heading our way. He wore sunglasses, dirty clothes and grey stubble on his chin. I avoided eye contact and started preparing myself for his long spiel about why we should give him money.

Instead, he reached past me and grabbed a newspaper.

“*Heerlikheid*, the more you pay, the thinner it gets,” he said.

I recognised his voice: George Moyes, a legendary diamond diver whom I’d met on a previous visit to this remote town on the Namaqualand coast. It seemed life hadn’t been kind to George during the intervening years.

“George, how are you?”

The big sunglasses turned my way.

“Do I know you, *meneer*?”

I reminded him about the time we met and about all the stories of the diamond-diving industry he’d told me. His face lit up.

“*Menere*, come by later,” he said.

“I’m not at the museum any more – I have my own place. Opposite the tyre shop.”

He tapped me playfully with his thin, expensive newspaper.

“Don’t wait too long!”

Japie and I were in a hurry to set up camp in the wilderness and at first we drove past the faded building. But then I saw a cardboard sign on the gate: “George Diamond Diver”. I turned the car around.

“*Aaah, menere*, you came!” George said, beaming.

The walls inside were covered in photos, diamond stories and other interesting newspaper snippets. When George started talking, he took us deep into the cold ocean, under the rocks where diamonds lay in heaps.

“My bruh, it was not unusual to find a thousand carats in one cubic metre of gravel. In two hours of diving. I tell you, in my career – 40 years of diving – millions of carats. I should have been as rich as Donald Trump. But I’ll tell you what happened later.”

He pointed to a story on the wall, started a new story, then dove headlong into the West Coast waters again. His speech was peppered with curse words and he switched seamlessly between English and Afrikaans. Listening to some of his stories felt like drowning, but I also knew we’d hit the jackpot soon.

“When you’re underwater and you see a pothole with diamonds, you have to get the *donnerse* pipe close to it. Hey, that thing is heavy, bruh. If you get in its way, it will crush you.

You tug on the rope twice to let the guys on the boat know they should clutch the pipe and stop the pump. Then you straddle that pipe like a horse. And when they engage the pipe, you ride it over to the pothole like an anaconda.”

He pointed at a photograph with a crooked finger. “Do you see that stone? R18 million, my bruh. But you could hold it in your hand. I could have swallowed the damn thing. That amount in gold would be four bars of 12,7kg each. You can’t walk around with a gold bar in your pocket like James Bond. But you can hide a diamond in the sole of your shoe. That’s why everyone came here.

“You see, Port Nolloth is the *smokkelhuis* of the world. The clergy, the *blêrrie* mayor – they were all caught with diamonds. You’re always looking over your shoulder; you can’t trust anybody. Not even the police. They steal more than the civilians.”

We laughed and George changed the topic. “My father couldn’t speak a word of Afrikaans and my mother couldn’t speak English. But they made four of us. Shows you the power of love, neh?”

He said his surname comes from Moses in the Bible. “He’s my grandfather’s great-great-great-grandfather. He spoke to God. It makes you feel important, hey.”

George’s three siblings became



George Moyes, Port Nolloth, September 2022

PROFILE

prominent people. His brother was a judge and his two sisters were both orchestra musicians. But he was a *laaitie* from the Free State who wanted to dive in the sea.

"My father had a *moerse* library in Senekal. We were never allowed in. The great authors of the world, bruh."

After his father passed away, George could finally go into the library.

"There was a book by Hans Hass, *Under the Red Sea*. The guy inside had a red diving helmet." He gave a long sigh and suddenly he was eight years old again, reading that book in a dusty room, in a dusty town with no ocean in sight.

After an interlude, during which he played his harmonica for us, he carried on with the story. He joined the navy, and that's how he became a diver and ended up in Port Nolloth.

"This place is a lot like Senekal. The only difference is the sea. It makes me very happy. You just have to go down there. If you're a little depressed, go for a walk on the beach. You'll feel better. When you put your head under the water, it feels like your brain cells might freeze. When you get out of the sea, *heey*, you feel wide awake! After two hours of diving... *Sjô*. I can't explain... I don't know how to say it. The feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. And the diamonds, obviously. You come up with 200 diamonds in your pan... *Aaahhh*! It's human nature: When there's money, you smile."

"*Kom kyk hier, kom kyk hier*," he said. He showed us a picture of a pigeon and it was hard to tell where he was flying off to now.

"Oom Gert Engelbrecht, a poor *Afrikaanse boer* in the Richtersveld. It's a tough place to farm – there's no water. He had a few goats. He

always prayed to God for help. One day he was in the veld. *Moedeloos*. He looked up and saw something approaching like a German Stuka bomber. A homing pigeon crashed into a water trough. Oom Gert saw that it was going to drown. He ran over and helped the pigeon out of the water. The thing was tired. And it was heavy, *jong*. There were two bags tied to its legs and one to its back. But Oom Gert didn't care – he took off all the bags to make the pigeon more comfortable. The pigeon drank a little water, ate a few crumbs and flew off. Free of the weight. It was 186 carats, bruh. God sent those diamonds straight from heaven.

"Oom Gert's wife wondered where he was – he disappeared for two days. Then he came back with a Land Rover and a trailer and some goats. That's how quickly your life can change here, *menere*."

There's a loud bang as a tyre is seated in the shop across the road. George nearly jumps out of his skin, as if someone has just caught him with a *smokkel* pigeon.

"Now I'm going to show you something, but if you tell anyone I'll deny it ever happened."

Two small stones sparkled in his hand. The kind of sparkle that makes you forget to breathe.

"This is five carats. I want R100 000 for them, R100 000, *ou seun*. Are you interested?"

Japie was closest. "I'm interested," he said.

My stomach felt funny.

"But I don't have that kind of money."

The stones disappeared.

"*Hoor hierso*, the stones I just showed you are fakes. Only diamonds can cut diamonds. Diamonds cut glass. Diamonds

taste different to glass. Diamonds don't get wet. Diamonds have no shadow. If you slowly tighten a pair of pliers around a diamond, the diamond will cut into the metal. But you can shatter a diamond into a thousand pieces with a hammer."

Were they fake, or did George actually show us the real thing? We didn't test the stones in any of the ways he described. And he looked pretty disappointed that we didn't buy them.

"I can see you're not interested..."

We tried to reassure him that we were interested – in everything he had to say – but he was off again, pointing at another wall.

"*Kyk daar*, you pull stones out from under other stones. Look at the big rocks we worked with. And we went down there with that *blêrrie* pipe..."

There wasn't enough oxygen in George's own pipes and he started to cough.

We waited while he got his breath back.

"Do you know what a cat looks like when a train runs it over? That's what a diver crushed by those stones looks like, bruh. The only thing holding him together is his wetsuit. *Kyk daar*, Willie Strydom, dead under a rock. Now you have to go tell his wife... Willie is not coming back."

The tears behind his sunglasses were for Willie. And all the other divers. And for the cold depths that were so close he could see them, but so far away he no longer felt them.

"Do you know how lekker it is to talk to you guys?" George said as we perused photos of him when he was young. His body tanned and defined. His hair long and as bright as the sun.

"I still have the whips I used back

then to keep the girls at bay. *Baie mense sê ek praat kak*. But let me tell you – cherish youth, hey.”

George dived into the ice-blue water to sift through the gravel one last time. But a big rock rested on top of his diamond-filled pothole and he came up empty. For the first time that afternoon, he had no words.

To break the silence, I asked him why the divers aren’t rich when they bring millions of rands to the surface?

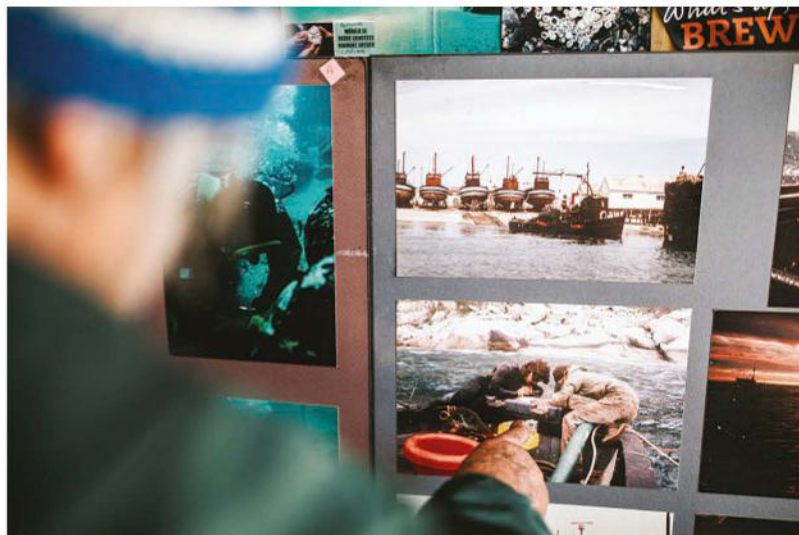
“You don’t get a salary here, *meneer*. If you don’t find the product, you don’t get anything. If the sea is choppy and the water is murky, you sit at home. I worked for one rand a carat. We’d be paid R80 000 in cash. *Heeeei*, I’d go to Springbok and buy a second-hand Land Rover. One time, cash. An ox, a sheep, a box of cabernet sauvignon, I’m ready for a jol. You only work four days a month, *bru*. That’s the problem. The boredom kills you.”

Maybe his stories are worth something? George asked us if we’d mind making a small donation – just R20. I gave him a R100 note and watched as he gripped it through the lining of his jacket pocket.

The diamonds were no longer within his reach. The sea was rough forever more. He had made peace with it and he laughed again because Donald Trump would never see as many diamonds as he’d once held in his hand.

“Life, hey, life is a joke. If I start to cry, I’ll be a goner. So, I’m just going to laugh about it all.”

George Moyses passed away two weeks after his interview with Willem. We’d like to dedicate this article to George and to a life well lived. This interview also appeared in issue #186 of go! in a condensed form.



Coast of colour

Much of the West Coast seems dull and muted, but if there's rainfall at the right time, those brown plains are transformed into one of the most colourful wildflower spectacles on earth. Here's your region-by-region guide.

BY EVAN NAUDÉ

A FIELD OF BULBINELLA, NIEUWOUDTVILLE



Summer on the West Coast can be a drab affair: The wheatfields are bare and everything is dusty. The green returns in winter, when rain starts to fall, and in springtime the landscape comes alive with daisies, sporrie, vygies and dozens of other flower species. If you want to see the West Coast at its most beautiful, early spring is the best time to visit.

Good planning is essential for a successful flower tour. You'll have to drive a lot to reach the flowers. It's a proper road trip, even if you're only doing a one-day route. Pack padkos, a picnic basket, your flower guide and a camera with a macro lens (your cellphone will also work). Pull over at farm stalls – many are only open in the flower season – and book a night or two on a guest farm. Attend a wildflower show, visit a town museum, drive a back road and pose among the flowers to send photos to your loved ones overseas. This treasure hunt for the best flower spots is a fun way to discover new places, people and things.

You can see wildflowers almost everywhere along the coast from Cape Town to the Richtersveld, but there are three regions that stand out: the Cape West Coast, Namaqualand and the Bokkeveld plateau.

POSTBERG, WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK

CAPE WEST COAST

If you're in Cape Town and you've never seen the spring flowers, this region offers the perfect introduction. You can see flowers about an hour's drive from the city; on a day outing you can easily visit four or five different places. The roads are in a good condition and you'll mostly travel on tar.

Take note: It's sometimes better not to take shortcuts on dirt around here – the region's corrugations are of export quality!

BLAAUWBERG NATURE RESERVE

This reserve next to Otto du Plessis Drive (M14) between Bloubergstrand and Melkbosstrand is the closest place to the city where you can take photos of wildflowers – with Table Mountain in the background! There's a picnic area with braai facilities and you can walk to the beach.

Entrance fee: R28 per adult; R20 per child.

TINIE VERSFELD NATURE RESERVE

Drive north along the R27 to the Yzerfontein turn-off (78 km from Cape Town) and turn east onto the R315 to Darling. Look for the 20-hectare Tinie Versfeld Nature Reserve after 3 km. Park next to the road and walk the 1 km trail through the flowers.

Entrance fee: Free.

DARLING

Darling is 12 km beyond Tinie Versfeld. There are usually good flowers in the Groenekloof Nature Reserve next to the SPCA office just before you enter the town, or in the Darling Renosterveld Reserve opposite the primary school in Kalkoentjie Street. Both these little reserves protect the critically endangered Swartland granite renosterveld.

If you'd rather drive around and look at flowers, drive through Darling and follow the R307 south-east. There are dirt-road routes at Oudepost farm (3 km from Darling), Waylands Wildflower Reserve (6 km from Darling) and Contreberg wine farm (10 km from Darling).

Entrance fee: All these reserves are free to visit.



CALLUM EVANS



MARTINETTE LOUW

TINIE VERSFELD NATURE RESERVE

WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK

Enter the park at the gate on the R27 (about 88 km from Cape Town) and head to the Postberg section, 25 km away, at the furthest tip of the peninsula. Postberg is private land and only open to the public in August and September when the old grazing fields explode into colour. There's a circular route of about 10 km that you can drive, but it's even better to head into the veld on foot.

Another option is to book your spot on the two-day Postberg hiking trail (26 km) from June onwards, by calling the park's Geelbek office (022 707 9902/3). You sleep in your own tent at Plankiesbaai. It costs R176 per person, excluding the SANParks conservation fee (free with a Wild card).

The Seeberg viewpoint is close to the West Coast National Park's northern gate near Langebaan. Here, you'll find another splash of flowers and a great view of the lagoon.

Entrance fee: In August and September it costs R110 per adult; R55 per child under 12; free with a Wild card. Rest of the year: R74 per adult; R37 per child under 12; free with a Wild card. Visitor numbers are controlled during flower season – if the park is your only destination for the day, try to get there when the gate opens at 7 am and choose a sunny day if possible!

Contact: sanparks.org



RONEL STEYN

SEEBERG VIEWPOINT, WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK



JAC KRITZINGER

JACOBSBAAI

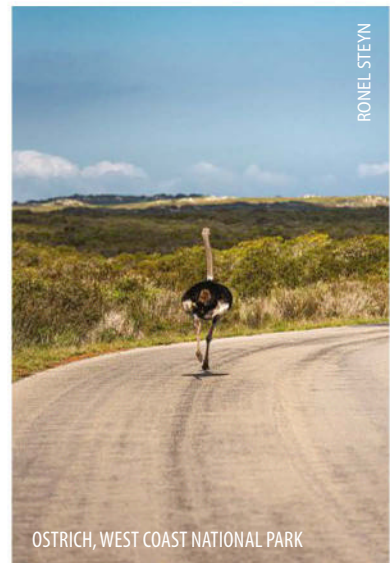
If you have two days to explore, visit the holiday village of Jacobsbaai north of Saldanha. Flowers grow among the stylish white beach houses and in the veld – very chic!

PATERNOSTER

You'll see some flowers as you drive into Paternoster on the R399 from Vredenburg, but the best place to take photos is in the nearby Cape Columbine Nature Reserve. Turn left at the first four-way stop in the village and exit west on St Augustine Road.

Explore the dirt roads around the lighthouse and around Tietiesbaai further south. There are often fields of white and yellow daisies around the lighthouse.

Entrance fee: R31 per adult; R22 per child under 18.



RONEL STEYN

OSTRICH, WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK

OTHER DESTINATIONS

You'll often find wildflowers in unexpected places. Follow your nose up the coast, past Velddrif and Dwarskersbos, to Elands Bay. Turn around at Lambert's Bay and follow the R364 back to the N7 to return to Cape Town. You can do the drive in a day.

For a shorter route, return to Cape Town from Paternoster via Hopefield on the R45. You'll join the N7 again near Malmesbury.

MORE INFO

- Follow "Darling Wildflower Society" on Facebook for the latest updates from the region.
- Visit westcoastway.co.za for more West Coast routes to drive during flower season and the rest of the year.



BASSON VAN ZYL

POSTBERG, WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK



CALLUM EVANS

KING KALKOENTJIE



TOAST COETZER

DO THIS!



HIKE IN FIELDS OF WILDFLOWERS

The Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve has four slackpacking trails that are especially scenic during flower season. The trails are all about two-and-a-half days long; they're in the vicinity of Paternoster, Darling, Yzerfontein, Jacobsbaai and the West Coast National Park.

Cost: Price on request. Packages can be customised according to the size of your group and your food and accommodation preferences.

Contact: 076 696 5354; cwcb.co.za



DARLING WILDFLOWER SHOW

Come see exhibitions of flower species found in renosterveld, wetlands, sandveld and strandveld.

When? 20 – 22 September 2024

Where? Darling Museum, corner of Pastorie and Hill streets.

Entrance fee: R80 per adult; R60 per

child aged 13 – 18; R60 per pensioner; free for kids under 12.

Contact: 068 151 5692; "Darling Museum" on Facebook



HOPEFIELD FYNBOS SHOW

This show had a humble start in 1989 when Fiona Kotze decided to celebrate the region's plants. Now it attracts up to 20 000 people annually and the town's residents all lend a helping hand.

More than 500 fynbos species are found in the area and many of them are displayed at the show. The weekend programme also includes music, a classic car show, tractor rides and sheep shearing demonstrations.

When? 29 August – 1 September 2024

Where? Fiona Kotze Hall, Hopefield showground

Entrance fee: Day pass from R50 per adult; weekend pass R180; pensioners and children under 18 get a discount.

Contact: 063 406 0421

hopefieldfynboskou.co.za



West Coast National Park

When the park gate closes at night and the day visitors go home, you feel surprisingly isolated if you overnight in one of the park's self-catering cottages.

You suddenly have the whole place to yourself – bliss!

Rates: Steytler Cottage sleeps two and costs R1 850 per night; Van Breda, Abrahamskraal and Jo-Anne's Beach Cottage all sleep four each – R2 473 per night. These are the peak-season rates from 1 August to 13 October 2024.

Contact: ☎ 012 428 9111

📍 sanparks.org

Darling Lodge Guest House

See the flowers in style – spend a night in this beautiful Victorian house in Darling. Owners Stephan Moser and Oliver Studer clearly have an eye for detail. You can see their thoughtful touches everywhere, from the elegant rooms to the healthy breakfast options.

There are nine rooms – three are in the original house and the others are elsewhere on the property. The guesthouse has Wi-Fi, a swimming pool and a beautiful garden where you can relax in the shade of pepper trees. Some of the rooms are named after local artists like Danene Esler, Sandy Esau and Nicolaas Maritz – there are also artworks on display.

Darling Lodge Guest House is part of the Cape Country Routes group. Visit 📍 capecountryroutes.com for more information about their other places to stay.

Rate: B&B from R1 080 per night for two adults (no children under 12).

Where? 22 Pastorie Street

Contact: ☎ 022 492 3062

📍 darlinglodge.co.za

PATERNOSTER

There are lots of self-catering places in Paternoster, but book well in advance if you want to visit on a weekend, during the holidays or during flower season.

Strandloperkje

These two self-catering units (one is wheelchair-friendly) are right on the beach and each sleeps two people.

Rates: From R1 300 per night.

Talk to owner Emil Visagie about a discount if you want to book for three nights or longer. He also has an extra room (not self-catering) in his house – R1 000 per night for two people.

Where? 1 Strandloper Street

Contact: ☎ 072 204 7124

📍 paternosterabsolut@gmail.com

Jongnooientjiesfontein

A cosy loft room suitable for a couple.

Rate: From R850 per night, self-catering.

Where? 4 Pikkewyn Street

Contact: ☎ 082 686 7584

📍 elmarie1.els@gmail.com

Potters' Rest

Two self-catering units – the room on the top floor sleeps two people and the room on the bottom floor sleeps four. The units can be booked together or separately.

Rates: From R1 100 per night for two people; from R1 450 per night for four.

Where? 22 Mosselbank Street

Contact: ☎ 082 898 3028

📍 pottersrestpaternoster@gmail.com



ABRAHAMSRAAL, WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK

RONEL STEYN



STRANDLOPERTJIE, PATERNOSTER

SUPPLIED



DARLING LODGE GUEST HOUSE

TOAST COETZER



WILDEPERDEHOEK PASS

NAMAQUALAND

The “Namaqualand” flower region is a vast expanse – from Garies next to the N7 to Hondeklip Bay on the coast and north to the Richtersveld. Springbok and Kamieskroon are key towns, and the Namaqua National Park brings the whole region together, with its spectacular granite koppies inland and its wild coastline. You’ll have to drive long distances, so make sure you’re not in a hurry. Set aside at least a week!

SPRINGBOK

Springbok is the capital of Namaqualand – it’s about 550 km from Cape Town along the N7. There are lots of accommodation options in town, plus supermarkets and restaurants – all things you won’t find in the smaller Namaqualand villages. It’s a good base to do outings into the surrounding districts and reserves.

For a day outing to the sea, drive to Kleinsee via Spektakel Pass (R355). Then head north to Port Nolloth for fish and chips before returning to Springbok along the R382. You can also turn south at Kleinsee and travel to Koinaas and return to Springbok via the Wildeperdehoek Pass (it’s a dirt road).

Chat to the locals about where the flowers might be best – they know the region well and where the rain has fallen. Decide at dinner time where you want to go the next day based on their recommendations.

NAMAQUA NATIONAL PARK

This 1 410 km² park is divided into two sections: interior and coastal. The park’s main entrance is at Skilpad rest camp, 20 km west of Kamieskroon and 70 km south of Springbok. The sea of orange daisies you can see at Skilpad has featured on many tourism brochures and websites.

If you base yourself in Kamieskroon, you can see flowers in the park and you’ll have easy access to the rest of the district. A popular route is the loop between Kamieskroon, Leliefontein and Garies. You get great views of the Kamiesberg along this route; in the past, it has even snowed in Leliefontein during flower season!

Skilpad rest camp has a 5 km flower route that you can drive, which skirts old agricultural fields covered in daisies. On old fields like this, where the soil was disturbed in the past, you normally find one or two flower



SKILPAD HIKING TRAIL, NAMAQUA NATIONAL PARK

species growing in dense concentrations.

The 5 km Skilpad Hiking Trail traverses the same area as the vehicle route, and the 3 km Korhaan Hiking Trail leads you through the veld behind the reception office.

You need a vehicle with high ground clearance to explore the rest of the park; the coastal section is 4x4 only. Both sections have wildflowers in a more natural distribution. The fields might not be as dense, but they're more diverse and colourful thanks to a greater variety of species. Look for the red flowers of the cancer bush alongside blue sporrie and pink *ramhorinkies*.

A dirt road leads you from Skilpad to Soebatsfontein. Along the way you'll see quiver trees and the ruins of old farmsteads.

From Soebatsfontein, you can drive north-east to the Wildeperdehoek Pass. This is a historical route that was used to transport copper to Hondeklip Bay. It feels like you're on the roof of Namaqualand.



GOEGAP NATURE RESERVE

The coastal section of the park has beaches, river mouths, caves and seal colonies. The wildflowers here are adapted to windy conditions – they grow lower to the ground. This is also where you'll see vast swathes of bright pink West Coast sour fig flowers, and purple and yellow vygies.

Entrance fee: R55 per adult; R27 per child under 12; free with a Wild card.

Contact: 📞 sanparks.org

GOEGAP NATURE RESERVE

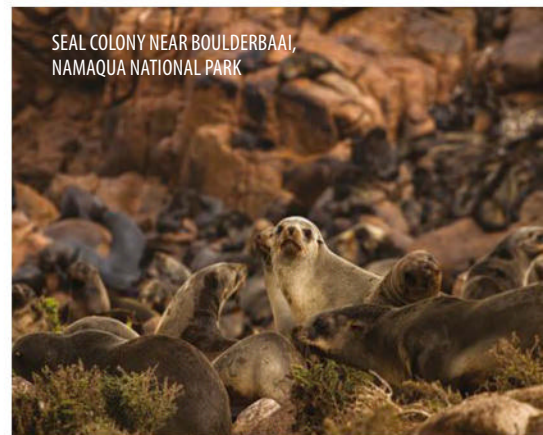
The turn-off to the reserve gate is 6 km east of Springbok on the R355. Drive past the airport – you'll see the gate after 2,5 km.

Goegap has four easy hiking trails from 4 – 12 km, and a 22 km overnight trail (R400 for the first two people; R50 per extra person; maximum eight people). The Hester Malan Succulent Garden is at the entrance and it has a collection of succulents found in the reserve.

You can drive the 13 km circular route in any vehicle, but there's also a 4x4 trail (60 km; R315 per vehicle; maximum six vehicles) if you want to put your Jimny to the test.

Entrance fee: R40 per adult; free for kids under 6.

Contact: 📞 027 718 9906; 📞 076 832 2591 (WhatsApp); 📧 goegapnr@gmail.com



SEAL COLONY NEAR BOULDERBAAI, NAMAQUA NATIONAL PARK



HESTER MALAN SUCCULENT GARDEN, GOEGAP NATURE RESERVE

FLOWER SEASON



DO
THIS!



WALK IN THE FLOWERS

Hike in the Schaap River Canyon on Nigramoep Guest Farm, 60 km north of Springbok. Turn to page 106 for more information.



DRIVE A 4X4 ROUTE

The Caracal 4x4 Eco Route connects the interior section of Namaqua National Park with the coastal section. Turn to page 114 for more information.

SCHAAP RIVER CANYON TRAIL, NIGRAMOEP GUEST FARM



Namaqua National Park

Skilpad rest camp has four self-catering chalets on the edge of the Kamiesberg plateau with lovely views. Each chalet sleeps up to four people – there are two single beds for adults and a sleeper couch for kids.

You can also camp in the coastal section of the park.

There are 11 campsites:

Groenriviermond, Delwerskamp, Kwass se Baai, Moonbay, Varswater, Bamboeskamp, Skuinsklip, Seeduiker, Koringkorrelbaai, Skuinsbaai Noord and Boulderbaai.

The campsites are spread over a 50 km area, next to the sea. Each has a pit toilet and a braai – you have to bring everything else you'll need.

Rates: Chalets at Skilpad from R735 per person sharing during flower season – see the website for a full price list. Camping from R201 per stand for up to six people.

Contact: 012 428 9111

sanparks.org

Namaqua Flower Beach Camp

Camp in luxury on the coast, in an actual bed with an electric blanket and your own bathroom. Namaqua Flower Beach Camp is only in operation during flower season. This year, the dates are 8 August to 9 September. There's a cash bar and a living area where you can hang out during the day.

Rate: R3 839 per person sharing. Breakfast, dinner and afternoon tea included.

Where? Near the Groen River gate in the coastal section of Namaqua National Park.

Contact: 083 652 5489

flowercamps.co.za

Goegap Nature Reserve

The accommodation in this reserve is budget-friendly – just remember there's no electricity. The campsite has nine stands with communal ablutions. The four Bush Huts are basic single-room units; each has four single beds, a basin and a braai (bring your own bedding and kitchenware), with communal bathrooms. The two self-catering chalets each have three rooms, two bathrooms, a braai and an equipped kitchen.

Rates: Camping R160 per night for two people, R50 per extra person; maximum six people per stand. Bush Huts R280 per night for two people; plus R50 per extra person. Self-catering-chalets R1 000 per night for the first two people; plus R100 per extra person; maximum six people per unit.

Contact: 027 718 9906
076 832 2591 (WhatsApp)
goegapnr@gmail.com

Sperrgebiet Lodge

Each campsite has a braai, an awning, solar power and enough space for a caravan. Or sleep in one of six self-catering chalets – one sleeps four; the others sleep two each.

Rates: Camping R350 per stand for the first four people, plus R50 per extra person; maximum six people. Chalets from R500 per person sharing.

Where? 10 km south of Springbok via the N7.

Contact: 071 680 8494
sperrgebietlodge.co.za

Springbok Lodge

This landmark in the middle of Springbok is the unofficial "embassy" of Namaqualand. You can have a meal, buy wildflower guides in their excellent book section, or stay in one of their guesthouses like Huis Kallie Fischer, Die Ankerhuis and

Captain's Cabin. All the units are old houses within walking distance of the reception office in the main building.

Rates: From R1 000 per night for two people (self-catering – meals are available at the restaurant).

Where? 37 Voortrekker Street

Contact: 027 712 1321
springboklodge.co.za

Namastat Lodge

This lodge in the south of Springbok has nine campsites and 30 bungalows overlooking the granite koppies. The camping stands have power, water and braai facilities; each bungalow has a double bed with bedding, basic kitchenware and a small fridge. Ablution facilities, kitchens and sinks are shared with the campers.

Rates: Camping R250 per night for two people; plus R50 per extra person; maximum four people. Bungalows R550 per night for two people.

Where? Follow Voortrekker Street for about 3 km south out of town – the turn-off is on the right.

Contact: 027 718 1832
namastatlodge.co.za

Pedroskloof Guest Farm

This guest farm is in the Kamiesberg and offers hiking, 4x4 and mountain-bike trails. The campsite has 21 stands with power and a shared ablution block. Some of the rooms are self-catering, but you should leave the cooking to Sulene Archer and her team. Sit down in the Taaibos farm restaurant for *plaaskos* like chicken pie, home-made bread and sheep's tails...

Rates: Camping R180 per person; other accommodation from R480 per person.

Where? 25 km east of Kamieskroon along a dirt road.

Contact: 027 330 5003
082 785 7242 (WhatsApp)
pedroskloof.co.za



SKUINSBAAI NOORD, NAMAQUA NATIONAL PARK



GOEGAP NATURE RESERVE



SPERRGEBIET LODGE



PEDROSKLOOF GUEST FARM



DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH,
NIEUWOUDTVILLE

BOKKEVELD

There's more to the flower season than daisies! The Bokkeveld region is for the connoisseur – the flowers that bloom here are totally different. The climate and soil types of the escarpment support unique flower species and a variety of bulbs.

NIEUWOUDTVILLE

When it comes to flowering bulbs, the Nieuwoudtville district is the undisputed champion. You can see beautiful species like harlequin evening flower, *rooikatstert* and *perskussing*, which are endemic to the region. Of the 1 000+ flower species that occur along the West Coast and in Namaqualand, 80 are only found on the Bokkeveld plateau.

In Namaqualand, you can admire vast fields of flowers. Here, it pays dividends to get down on your knees and study the flowers up close. Each is unique and spectacular: *satynblom*, *ruitertjie*, snapdragons, *blou-uitjie*, *spinnekopblom*...

From Cape Town, follow the N7 to Vanrhynsdorp (300 km). Drive through town and continue along the R27 across the **Knersvlakte** to Vanrhyns Pass. Although the Knersvlakte looks like a sun-blasted expanse of nothingness, it's a succulent hotspot. The dusty plains pop with small bursts of colour in spring.

It's about 8 km from the top of the pass to Nieuwoudtville. Stop at the **Dutch Reformed church** and take a photo of this heritage building surrounded by flowers. It dates from 1897 and has seen a few seasons! Pop into the church hall next door for handmade gifts and pancakes.

The tourism office is in the same building as the church hall. Ask where the flowers are best and which dirt roads might be in a bad state. Then plan your next few days around Nieuwoudtville.

Nieuwoudtville Wildflower Reserve is right next to the R27 (2 km east of town) and has a short flower route (1 km). Then head to **Willemsrivier Trekpad**, a guest farm 4 km from town. It has two short (and free!) flower routes where you can see beautiful bulbinellas in bloom.

There's a botanical garden and two flower



NIEUWOUDTVILLE WATERFALL



GANNABOS QUIVER TREE FOREST

routes on guest farms that are open to the public – all accessed via the Oorlogskloof road south of town.

First, you'll come across the 60 km² **Hantam National Botanical Garden** (R50 per person) about 2 km outside town. There are nine short hiking trails that range from 450 m to 8,2 km. In flower season, you can do a guided hike (R80 per person) or "game" drive (R180 per person; two hours) to find out more about the flowers and the landscape. The garden is open daily from 8 am to 5 pm during August, September and October.

The turn-off to **Boereplaas** is about 12 km south of town. This guest farm has a 7 km flower route (look for *rooikatstert*) and a farm stall that sells soup and roosterkoek in season. You can also ride your mountain bike (10 km or 40 km) and walk a short 1 km trail. Open daily from 10 am to 4 pm in flower season.

A stone's throw down the road, you'll see other vehicles pull over at the **Matjiesfontein Farm Stall**. There's *boerekos* on offer, and home-made farm products on the shelves. Stock up before you drive the flower route (about 7 km; R25 per person) – it's the most popular route in the district and you'll struggle to find a better place to have a picnic.

Go north the next day. Take the tar road towards Loeriesfontein and stop at the **Nieuwoudtville Waterfall** about 6 km outside town – it's right next to the road.

After you've admired the waterfall, drive about 15 km and turn right onto a dirt road to Gannabos. You'll reach the **Gannabos Quiver Tree Forest** 5 km later. Open in August and September from 8 am to 5 pm; R50 per person.

The 42 km **Rondekop circular route** starts here. Follow the dirt road past the quiver trees and it will eventually bring you back to the R27 tar road about 7 km east of Nieuwoudtville.

BIEDOUW VALLEY

Don't head home across the Knersvlakte – rather take the Moedverloor Road (also known as the Rooibos Heritage Route) south of Nieuwoudtville. Exit town on the Oorlogskloof road and drive 22 km until a fork. Keep right. This is the Moedverloor Road and it will deliver you to the R364 after about 83 km. Turn right here and you'll reach the Pakhuis Pass and Clanwilliam.

Before the pass, you can also detour left into the Biedouw Valley, which is often a riot of colour in spring.



ARCTOTIS



CLANWILLIAM WILDFLOWER SHOW

This show has been around for so long that the church at the end of Hoof Street is known as the "Blommekerk". The exhibition inside the church includes bulbinellas, quiver trees, proteas and a variety of other plants found in the Cederberg and the Sandveld.

When? 23 August – 3 September 2024

Entrance fee: About R70 per person (discounts for school-going children and pensioners).

Opening times: Daily from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm.

Contact: 027 482 2024

clanwilliamwildflowershow.co.za



DO
THIS!



HIKE IN OORLOGSKLOOF

Tackle the five-day Rock Pigeon hiking trail (52 km) in the Oorlogskloof Nature Reserve about 10 km from Nieuwoudtville. You sleep in huts and you have to carry all your food, water and gear. There are also shorter day hikes available.

Cost: R760 per person (conservation fee included).

Contact: ☎ 027 218 1159

SOPHIA VAN TAAK



Papkuilsfontein

Stay in one of three restored farm houses (for two to six people) in a veld full of yellow bulbinellas. Each of the four campsites has its own bathroom – maximum eight people per stand. There are hiking and mountain-bike trails on the farm, plus a flower route that is only open to overnight guests.

Rates: Camping R300 per person; rooms from R800 per person sharing.

Where? 23 km south of Nieuwoudtville.

Contact: ☎ 072 555 1416

📧 papkuilsfontein.com

Willemsrivier Trekpad

This historical farm has eight self-catering units that sleep up to six people each. You can also camp among the flowers in the veld – there are 10 stands. Bring everything you'll need because there are no facilities except for a water point. You can hike and cycle on the farm; the kids will enjoy the small museum and tractor collection.

Rates: Camping R300 per stand (one vehicle per stand); rooms from R500 per person sharing, self-catering.

Where? 4 km north of Nieuwoudtville.

Contact: ☎ 083 450 5939

📧 willemsrivier.com

Kuboesberg Game Farm

This game farm has four self-catering cottages (each sleeps up to four) and two remote campsites. Kudu Camp is for tents only; Boesmanskloof Camp has wooden huts with beds (bring your own bedding). There are antelope like eland on the farm – look for them as you walk around on the farm roads. (You can also ride your bike.)

Rates: Camping R250 per person; cottages R375 per person (minimum two-night stay).

Where? 39 km north of Nieuwoudtville.

Contact: ☎ 083 285 2083

📧 carlv@telkomsa.net

Enjo Nature Farm

Come see the wildflowers of the Cederberg and spend a day or three at this guest farm on the banks of the Biedouw River. You can walk in the veld, ride your mountain bike and swim in the river or in the farm dam. There are several self-catering chalets and a campsite on the riverbank. Enjo is pet-friendly.

Rates: Camping from R140 per person; self-catering unit from R900 per person.

Where? Biedouw Valley, 64 km east of Clanwilliam.

Contact: ☎ 027 470 0055

📧 soulcountry.info

FLOWER SEASON



PAPKUILSFONTEIN



WILLEMSRIVIER TREKPAD



KUBOESBERG GAME FARM

CYRIL KLOPPER



MATJIESFONTEIN FLOWER ROUTE



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Best time to visit? The flowers are usually at their best from mid-August to mid-September, but the amount and timing of rain will lengthen or shorten the season. Hope for winter rain in the right places for a good flower year – and book your accommodation long in advance!

How to see the flowers: You need sunshine – the flowers don't open on overcast days. The best time is between 11 am and 3 pm when the sun is at its zenith. The flowers turn towards the sun, so plan your route so the sun is behind you. Add a few extra days to your itinerary to allow for poor weather conditions.

Vehicle? You can see flowers in your Hyundai i20, but you'll be restricted to tar roads and dirt roads in good condition. It would be preferable to drive a vehicle with high ground clearance, especially in Namaqualand and the Bokkeveld. You need a 4x4 to visit the coastal section of the Namaqua National Park.

Find out more:

- Namaqua West Coast tourism office
☎ 027 201 3376
- Nieuwoudtville tourism office ☎ 027 218 1336
- Darling tourism office ☎ 022 492 3361
- Clanwilliam tourism office ☎ 027 482 2024

Visitors and their sausage dog catch the late afternoon breeze in front of the old rock lobster factory in Hondeklip Bay while the *Crazy Diamond*, a diamond-diving boat, floats nearby.

Wrecked in Dog Stone Bay

Who can resist a seafaring story? Who can resist a three-day beach party? Come along for a historic dive into the rowdy and sometimes tragic past of Hondeklip Bay.

WORDS & PICTURES **CHRIS MARAIS**





The easy joke is to say that Hondeklip Bay has gone to the dogs. You could even call it a one-seahorse town. But it remains an intriguing place, the permanent roost of artists, diamond divers and big-city runaways – with a fair dollop of rowdy romance.

Hondeklip Bay is also the final resting place of a host of mariners whose vessels came to grief on its rocky shores. When the lighthouse lantern flashes through the fog (three times every 15 seconds) it's easy to imagine the ghosts of those mariners rising from the Atlantic for one last brandy-fuelled beach party.

Drive into this beautifully tumbledown settlement and you'll soon see the canine connections on the signage: Dog Stone Cottage; Honnehokke Resort; Honde Hemel; Honne-Pondokkies; Woef se Moer; K9 Pottery... Every conceivable hospitality spot is named after a dog that in turn was once named after a stone that may have looked like a dog.

Apparently, the big boulder currently covered in Aids-awareness graffiti near the local police station used to be a little more dog-shaped. Back in 1846, Hondeklip Bay consisted of a trading store owned by a retired ship's captain called Thomas Grace. He looked up at the granite boulder on the rise, had a lightbulb moment and declared the site Hondeklip Bay.

Then some cheeky passerby came along and painted it red. Years went by, the paint faded into the cracks and a prospecting genius proclaimed the red crack-lines to be traces of copper. He knocked off the dog's ear and mailed it to his bosses who showed it to prospective shareholders as proof of copper riches in the area. However, the real McCoy was to be found more than 100 km inland – in the Springbokfontein-Okiep district.

The Cape Copper Mining Company began transporting copper from mines in the interior to Hondeklip Bay, where it was shipped out. The copper transport riders and some local residents became infamous for their hard-drinking exploits and general unruliness.

HONDEKLIP BAY

Drunk and disorderly

In John M Smalberger's 1975 book, *A History of Copper Mining in Namaqualand*, he quotes the newly appointed mine manager at Concordia, John Blades Currey, when he first visited Hondeklip Bay:

"Of all the dismal places that I have seen," Currey wrote, "Hondeklip Bay as it was in 1855 is the worst, consisting as it did of black wooden buildings standing irregularly in a desert of white sand, the blinding glare from which was insufferable.

"There was no vegetation; there was no water save such as was brought over sea from Cape Town and as vessels arrived irregularly, the supply often ran short. In any case, it had to be carefully husbanded and was barely drinkable even after being boiled and filtered.

"For the prevention of drunkenness there was no inn, public house or canteen, and the smallest thing in the way of alcoholic refreshment that could be bought was a 16-gallon cask of Cape brandy; and as 'Man, being reasonable, must get drunk', the wagon drivers who brought the copper ore down used to club together to buy one which they would roll out along the beach and then, like the walrus and the carpenter sitting down on a rock conveniently low but without any oysters they would drink it out in a few days, getting some bread and meat from one of the general stores."

According to Currey, maintaining a semblance of law and order was the task of one Charles Stuart Pillans, "an excellent officer and fortunately of Herculean strength" who "administered a sound if rude justice, for he often had to drag the offender to the lockup with his own hands and be prosecutor, witness and judge in his own person next morning".

Considering that a 16-gallon cask

translates to about 80 bottles of brandy, it seems that Mr Pillans certainly had his hands full whenever there was a beach party.

West Coast rock lobster

I visited Hondeklip Bay in October 2023 with my wife, Julianne du Toit. One afternoon, we went for a walk around the bay area. We started at the ruins of the old lobster processing factory on the south side. You can see by the remains of the tiles on the walls that this was once a well-built enterprise. Now it's a series of large rooms with their roof beams in various stages of disrepair. Our shoes crunched sand, stone and bits of asbestos roofing. Pigeons and wagtails patrolled the floor in the hope of finding something edible.

We remembered our first visit to Hondeklip Bay back in 2005, when we met the night guard at the factory building. His name was Ivan Don and by day he was a fisherman who went out in a rowboat hoping for "hotnotsvis, harders and a bit of snoek". We asked him one too many questions about local fishing quotas and he suddenly developed a thousand-yard stare in the general direction of the ocean. Even after assuring him that we were not Fisheries inspectors, Ivan Don remained unresponsive. The brief connection had been broken.

After just more than 50 years of operation, the West Coast rock lobster population diminished, and the factory closed.

If the jetty could talk

Winter, 1866. The jetty at Hondeklip Bay at high tide. Roped to its railing is a ship's captain with a death wish. He waits for the right wave and flings himself into the sea, one end of the

rope tied to his waist and the other to the jetty. Hours later, his lifeless body is found bobbing in the water around the pier.

A young captain called Johan Daniel Stephan had brought the *Jonquille* into Hondeklip Bay, where it lay at anchor. He was familiar with the bay, so it was a great mystery to everyone when the ship ran aground on a reef soon after. No lives were lost, some of the cargo was recovered and the rest was insured. It seemed a small matter – something that happens practically every day along the unpredictable West Coast.

On August 4, 1866, the *Argus* newspaper in Cape Town reported:

"Readers will remember that, a few days since, we reported the wreck of the schooner Jonquille at the mouth of Hondeklip Bay. We now regret having to add that Captain Stephan, her late commander, died by his own hand on Thursday last. We are not aware of the precise cause, which led the unfortunate man to terminate his existence, nor are we aware that any censure had been passed upon him for the loss of his vessel, but it would appear that the fact must have weighed upon his mind and led him to the commission of this rash act."

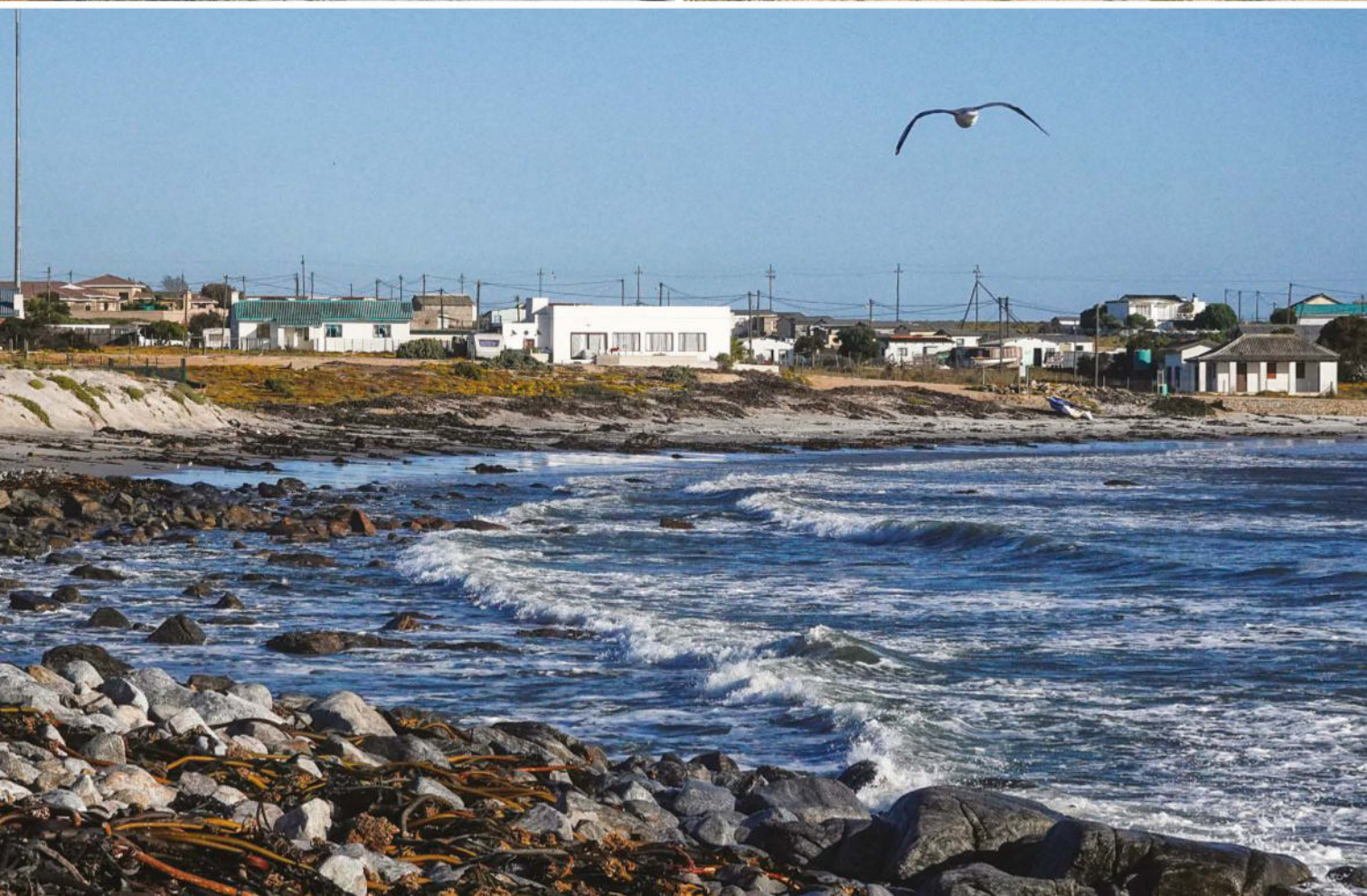
Letters between Captain Stephan and his father – the head of the shipping company – were found:

"Dear Father,

I had sooner expected my death than that I should lose the schooner, and as I was so certain I have been sadly disappointed. I am the lost son, and you will see me no more... believe me, I am sorry, but my time has come, and I shall go where the schooner has gone."

Captain Stephan's father received the letter and replied:

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Hondeklip Bay in the early morning, with the old rock lobster factory in the background. This way to Hondeklip Bay (and Garies). This seaside village still has a higgledy-piggledy feel, unspoilt by development.



HONDEKLIP BAY

"Dear Son,

Come on by the first opportunity direct to Cape Town. Be not much concerned about the loss sustained, as long as your brother and yourself have retained your health. What gladdens me most is that you and the crew have been saved. You will continue as ever, like all the others, one of my beloved children."

By the time his father wrote this letter, his son has been dead for two days. Much later, it emerged that one of the flukes on the *Jonquille's* main anchor had inexplicably snapped, leaving the vessel free to run onto the reef. It wasn't Stephan's fault at all.

Shipwrecks and meerkat spies

Just past the blackened old jetty, now resembling a castle turret and populated by a clutch of cormorants, a small craft called *Crazy Diamond* bobs, festooned with yet more cormorants looking for a suitable fishing platform. The boat belongs to Rocky Dreyer. According to our "diamond spy" in town, he's one of the original divers along this part of the coast.

"But you should have met the late Louis Lewis," our spy adds in a text message. "He was the first."

This alerts us to Tinus Bruwer, author of *Hondeklipbaai: Van Toeka tot Nou*, who writes: "Louis was an experienced diver when he arrived in the Seventies, and pioneered small-boat mining. It all began here, in Hondeklip Bay. He bought a boat called *Facet* but on August 1, 2003, he had to watch while the *Jahleel*, a large steel-hulled diamond boat, broke away from its anchors and destroyed *Facet* at its mooring."

Looking past *Crazy Diamond*, you can see the nose of a wrecked boat jutting up out of the waves that pound the rocks. That's the *Jahleel*.

She'd been turned away from the tricky entrance to Port Nolloth further north, so her crew brought her down to Hondeklip Bay. Here, the captain was again warned not to linger, but he dropped anchor anyway. Sure as nuts, a huge storm broke, turned the waves into pure kinetic energy and sundered the *Jahleel* from its anchorage.

About 3 km south of Hondeklip Bay lie the gaunt metal remains of yet another vessel – the *Aristea*, a fishing trawler and World War II minesweeper that foundered on the rocks in July 1945 on a moonless night. One person drowned. Another had his fingers badly injured. There may have been booze involved.

The salty air and water have had their way with the metal hulk: Its beams, rivets and mainframe are very rusted. As we poke around, Julianne and I have a nagging feeling we're being watched. A rock pigeon with red-ringed eyes sticks its head out of one of the portholes. It stares at us for a while then flies off.

Yet the creepy feeling of being watched remains. But there's no one here.

I continue taking photos of the strandveld around the wreck. Suddenly, while framing a faraway salt-encrusted dune plant, three meerkat heads come into focus! They look anxious, frozen into place. Mom and Dad Meerkat eye me with caution while their baby sinks down into the den.

The chill has passed. We retreat and so do the suricates.

The graveyards

The next morning, we go looking for the grave of Johan Daniel Stephan, the young captain who took his life at the jetty. Along the way, we pass through the village. One of the welcome quirks of Hondeklip Bay is

that rich and poor seem to live cheek by jowl.

Near the police station and the alleged "dog rock", we come across a well-tended graveyard. The nearest and dearest of the departed have taken trouble to decorate the graves with shells and plastic flowers.

But where are the old graves? I ask some men standing outside the cop shop and they point us in the direction of "*die Engelse grafstene*" – the English gravestones.

Picture the scene: It's a gunmetal-gloomy day and the rough sea is being mercilessly driven onto the rocks by the spring tide. You can hear the waves crashing below. And here are the gravestones on the edge of a bleak hill, like a collection of broken teeth. Most have no names; a few carrying faint inscriptions. Lichen has claimed several, others are simply covered in very old, very bleached, seashells.

One reads: "Capt. Kenneth Devenish Parsons, who perished with all hands on his ship *Tegwani* on 26 June 1947, in his 36th year." The *Tegwani* had been on its way out of Hondeklip Bay, laden with 12 tonnes of tinned lobster, when it struck the rocks.

Another, etched into ebony-coloured stone: "Sacred to the memory of John Summerton, who departed this life on board the *Maria Smith* in this bay on 10th of January 1858 aged 28 years and 22 days." He was a customs official.

Also: "Bertrand Person, Mate S.S. *Luna*, late of Sweden. Evert Erikssen, A.B.S.S. *Luna*, late of Sweden. Who were drowned through capsizing of a boat in the bay during a severe gale on 23rd July 1915."

Regarding the *Luna*, local author Tinus Bruwer adds some extra sauce to the story: Apparently the third man to die with Person and Erikssen that day was a certain James Coburn, the bay pilot. This guy had a terrible

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Chris photographs the wreck of the *Aristea*, just south of the village. This hill is the final resting place of some of the mariners. One of the poignant English gravestones is of Kenneth Devenish Parsons, captain of the *Tegwani*. A curious meerkat family keeps a beady eye on proceedings near the *Aristea*.



JULIENNE DU TOIT



HONDEKLIP BAY



NINETTE HOUGH, K9 POTTERY

VISIT K9 POTTERY

Attie Hough of the Honnehokke directed us a little way up the road to a flat building with a large green JoJo tank. This was where his ex-wife Elize, a potter, lived and worked.

We knocked on the door at K9 Pottery and heard some wild screeching in response. Then a gentle voice said: "Hold on, I just have to put the parrots away."

Attie's daughter opened the door, a delightful young woman called Ninette, who runs K9 Pottery with her mom.

We never saw the parrots – African greys, apparently – but we could certainly hear them. "They're absolute hooligans. Like toddlers on steroids," Ninette said.

Elize was away, walking the Namaqualand Camino which starts in Hondeklip Bay. Ninette told us that she loves living here, but she also admitted to being a hermit. During the 2020 lockdown, she and her mom made what they call "Pot Rocks" – a piece of pottery in the shape of a rock. They specified that the rocks are "for protest use only". Of course I had to buy one.

Ninette's most reliable seller is a little rowboat with an unvarnished underside, so you can plant succulents in it. We bought one named *Aristea*.

More info: ☎ 074 135 7548 (Ninette);

✉ ninihough@hondeklip.co.za

reputation for fraud, housebreaking, theft, extremely reckless nautical behaviour and general drunkenness. We search in vain for Coburn's name, until we notice the jagged top part of the *Luna* stone and realise a piece of it must have been removed, either by nature or human hands...

We fail to locate Stephan's stone. The gloom of the day and the atmosphere around the "*Engelse grafstene*" drive us down to the bay, in search of a lunchtime beer and some local cheer.

Afternoon delight

It all begins with a delicious plate of fish and chips at Sam's Restaurant on the beachfront. The affable Sam Cloete used to work on the local diamond mines for De Beers and Trans Hex. He comes from nearby Kamieskroon, where he learnt the basics of hospitality from famous hotelier-photographer Colla Swart at the Kamieskroon Hotel.

Afterwards, while strolling on the beach, we meet Glasston Diergaardt who sells art in a bottle. Some time ago, the jobless young man noticed the different-coloured sea sands around Hondeklip Bay and decided to arrange them in bottles, for the tourist trade. You can pay him what you want for such a bottle. Ours has pride of place in the kitchen at home, above the microwave oven.

It's time for that cheering beer, so we make for the outside porch at Dop en Kreef, a great little hangout next to Sam's. We find a table near a group of really thirsty visitors. They seem to have made it their day's mission to work through all the exotic cocktails on the drinks menu: Singapore Sling, Pink Silky Panties, Saltwater Sunset... Not to be outdone, their kids are working through ice-cream cocktails like Death by Chocolate, Rumpy Stumpy and Koekie Monster.

The owner of Dop en Kreef, according to info on the menu, is Lohana Viviers, who inherited the

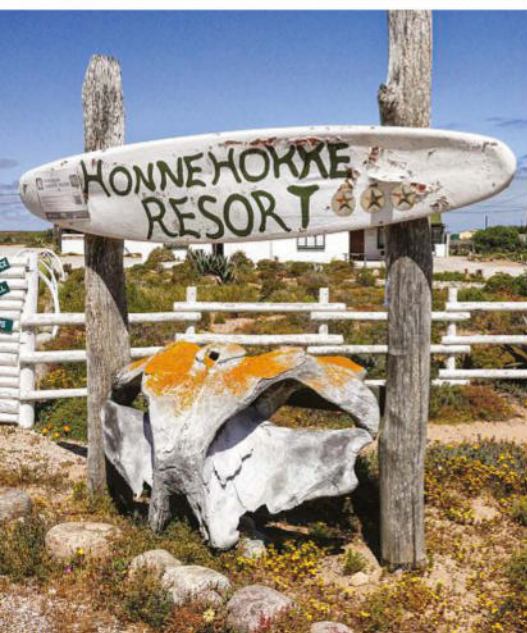
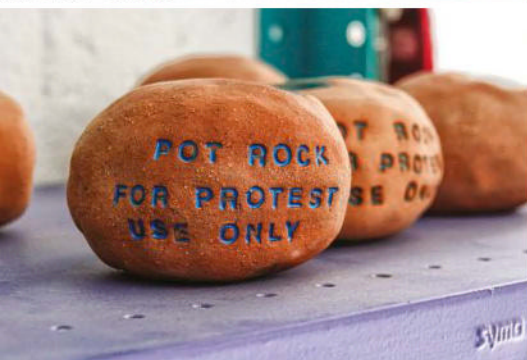


building from her father as a student. She says she remembers jumping off the jetty as a child when the parents weren't paying attention. Lohana lived in Cape Town and used to come here to help out during the season. Now she's divorced and runs the show full-time.

Beer follows beer, afternoon segues into evening, and soon we're all gazing with glazed eyes at the old lobster processing factory, the newly named Castle Cormorant, the bobbing diamond boat, the wreck of the *Jahleel* and the flashing lighthouse on the hill. It all looks perfectly composed.

Maybe a three-day beach party at Hondeklip Bay, with a gang of friends and a cask of Cape brandy, doesn't sound so horrible after all.

This article is an edited excerpt from the forthcoming book, Karoo Roads IV – In Faraway Places by Julianne du Toit and Chris Marais. More details: ✉ karoospace.co.za



Clockwise from far left: Glasston Diergaardt will sell you Hondeklip Bay in a bottle. Sam Cloete is your man for fabulous fish and chips at Sam's Restaurant. A sea shanty with a nautical theme. Chris and Julienne stayed at Honnehokke Resort. Some pottery humour from the K9 team.



EAT HERE

Rooi Spinnekop serves seafood ("rooi spinnekop" is local slang for crayfish) and sometimes Namaqualand specials like offal or lamb. It's open daily in season (August, September, October and December) from 9 am to 8 pm. For the rest of the year, it's open every day except Sunday. Out-of-season hours are 9 am to 3 pm, and 6 pm to 8 pm. It's best to phone ahead and book a table for dinner.

📞 083 983 0274

Dop en Kreef is known for seafood, especially mussels. During flower season (August and September) and school holidays, the restaurant is open from 11 am to 9 pm (except Sundays, when it closes at 5 pm). For the rest of the year, the kitchen opens at noon until 6 pm, except for Sundays, when it closes at 3 pm. The restaurant is closed on Tuesdays out of season. Phone to make a reservation for dinner.

📞 083 281 8327

Sam's Restaurant serves fish and chips. It opens at 9 am and closes at 4 pm every day except Sundays. 📞 071 797 9435

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Hondeklip Bay can only be reached via dirt roads. The nearest town with fuel is Koningnaas, about 25 km away, and the nearest "big" town is Garies, about 90 km away on the N7. Bring enough cash, fuel and groceries (if you're self-catering).

STAY HERE

Honnehokke Resort has five comfortable, well-appointed self-catering chalets. Rates from R1 000 per night for two people sharing. A bigger chalet for two couples sharing, or a family of four, costs R1 600 per night. 📞 082 564 5471
✉ honnehokke.chalets@gmail.com

Die Baai se Bek has a self-catering studio close to the sea that sleeps two, with a sleeper couch for young children if needed: R750 per night. There's also a bigger self-catering house that can sleep six: R1 200 per night (or R800 for a couple). Both have braai facilities and are pet-friendly. 📞 082 447 9257; ✉ diebaaisebek@gmail.com

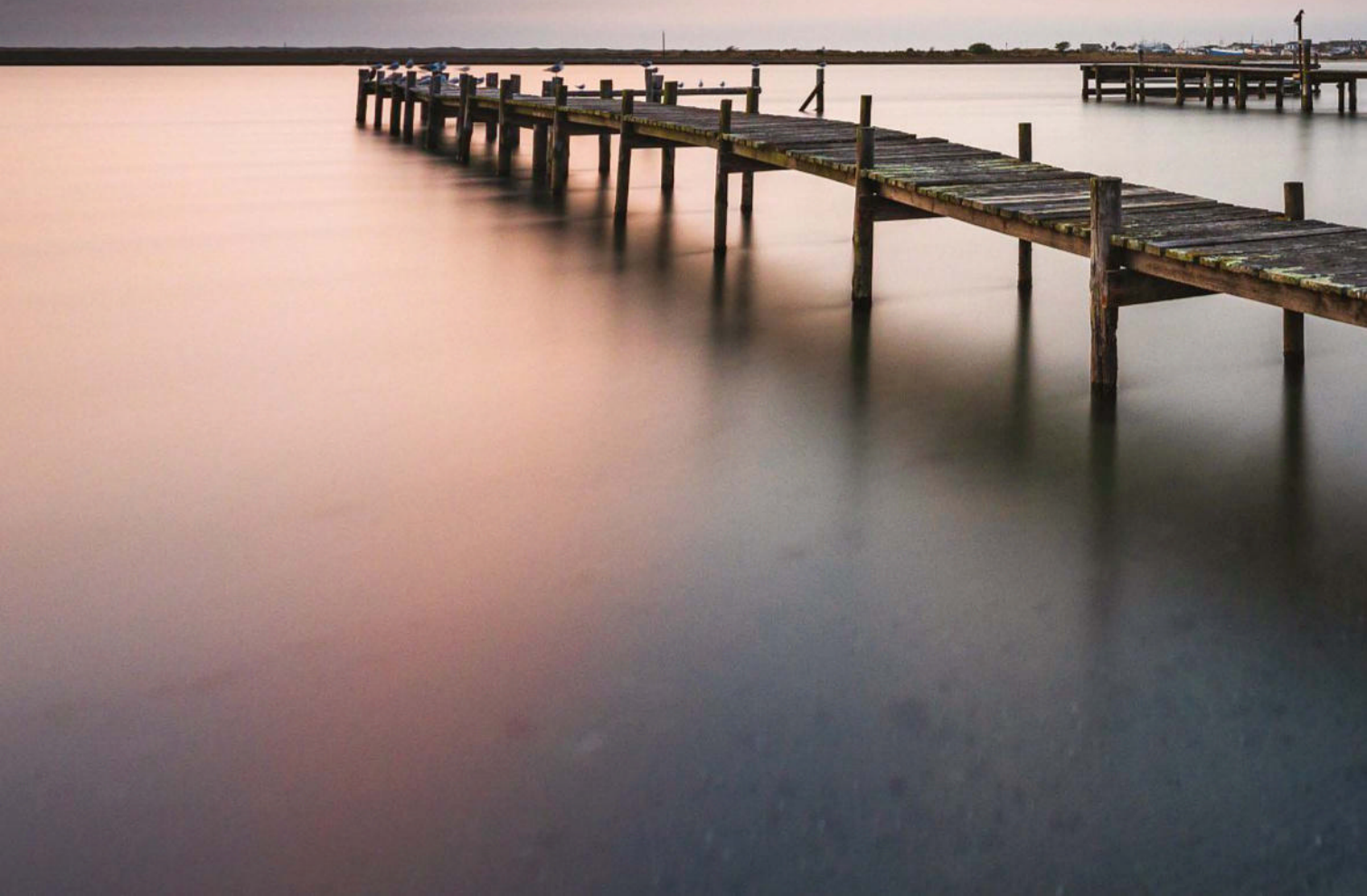
Honne-Pondokkies offers seven comfortable self-catering thatched chalets that sleep four each, not far from the sea. Rates from R850 for two, plus R200 per extra person. There are also 10 campsites that accommodate four people each: R400 per night. 📞 083 321 1600; ✉ md2swanepoel@gmail.com

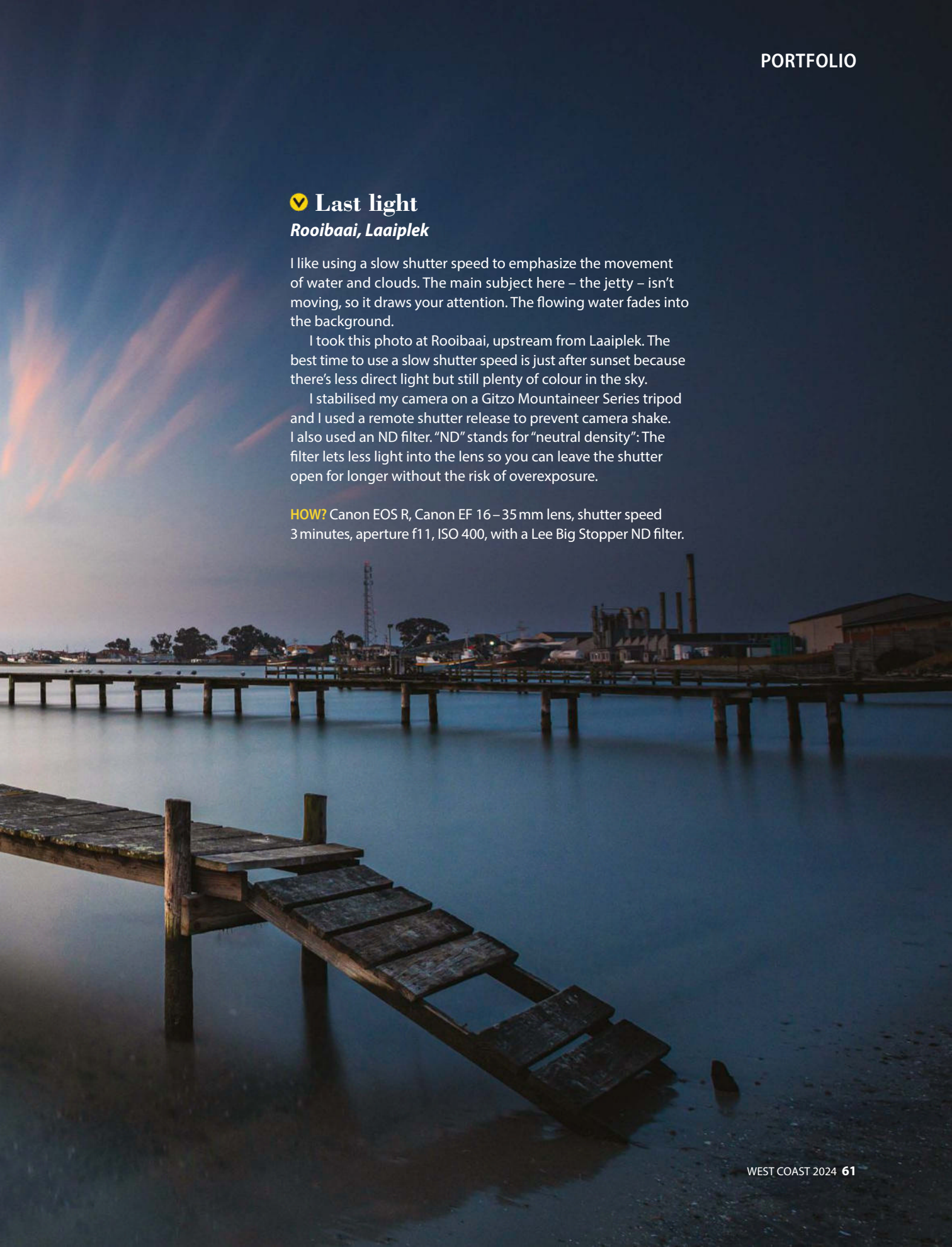
Honne-Hemel Oubaas is a holiday home with three bedrooms (sleeps six), two bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen, a fireplace and DSTV: R1 450 per night. 📞 082 960 7734; ✉ liaviviers@gmail.com

Rooi Spinnekop Accommodation (formerly Skulpieskraal) offers four tents under shade netting for R500 per night (each sleeps three people). There are also two twin-sleeper chalets (R750 per night) and two campsites (R250 per night). In addition, there's a large self-catering "flat" that sleeps six (R1 100 per night). 📞 082 828 3830
✉ info@rooispinnekop.co.za

Find peace in Velddrif

Vredenburg-based landscape photographer **Basson van Zyl** doesn't have to travel far for inspiration. Nearby Velddrif – with its combination of harbour scenes at Laaipelek and Berg River scenes around Bokkomlaan – is one of his favourite places.





✓ Last light

Rooibaai, Laaiplek

I like using a slow shutter speed to emphasize the movement of water and clouds. The main subject here – the jetty – isn't moving, so it draws your attention. The flowing water fades into the background.

I took this photo at Rooibaai, upstream from Laaiplek. The best time to use a slow shutter speed is just after sunset because there's less direct light but still plenty of colour in the sky.

I stabilised my camera on a Gitzo Mountaineer Series tripod and I used a remote shutter release to prevent camera shake. I also used an ND filter. "ND" stands for "neutral density": The filter lets less light into the lens so you can leave the shutter open for longer without the risk of overexposure.

HOW? Canon EOS R, Canon EF 16–35 mm lens, shutter speed 3 minutes, aperture f11, ISO 400, with a Lee Big Stopper ND filter.

➤ Moored *Rooibaai, Laaiplek*

I started experimenting with drone photography at the start of 2024. It's wonderful to capture a landscape you've been photographing for a decade from another perspective. You can also create interesting effects with shadows and take more abstract photos.

The colourful fishing boat was a perfect focal point. I took the photo just before sunset – the light was beautifully soft and accentuated the colours in the shot.

HOW? DJI Mini 3 Pro, shutter speed 1/60 second, aperture f1.7, ISO 100.





◀ In flight *Berg River*

The use of drones is not allowed in most nature reserves because they can disturb birds and other animals. This was outside a nature reserve, along the Berg River, but I still studied the area beforehand to decide on the best place to launch my drone where it would cause the least disturbance. I also try to get it to 50 m as quickly as possible, so as not to bother low-flying birds like these greater flamingos.

HOW? DJI Mini 3 Pro, shutter speed 1/2500 second, f1.7, ISO 100.



An aerial photograph of salt pans in the Velddrif area. The image shows a complex, organic pattern of salt deposits in various colors including white, orange, red, and brown, separated by darker, more textured areas. The overall effect is a mosaic-like appearance.

 Salt mosaic
Berg River

From the air, you can truly appreciate the colours and textures of the salt pans in the Velddrif area. This photo has an abstract quality – it almost looks like a topographical map. I love abstract photos because everyone sees and interprets the image differently.

HOW? DJI Mini 3 Pro, shutter speed 1/320 second, aperture f1.7, ISO 110.

📍 **Walk this way**
Bokkomlaan, Velddrif

Bokkomlaan is an iconic place in Velddrif. The little street always attracts tourists, whether they're looking for something authentic like a salted *bokkom*, or a scenic view of the Berg River.

I took this photo just before sunset when the last light illuminated the grass in the foreground. With landscape photography, it's important to use something to lead your eye through the frame – like the boardwalk here.

I mounted my camera on a tripod and used a remote shutter release. I also had a graduated ND filter on my lens. The filter fades from dark to clear, which allows you to naturally darken or lighten the sky or the foreground to balance the exposure.

HOW? Canon EOS 6D, Canon EF 16–35 mm lens, shutter speed 13 seconds, aperture f14, ISO 100, with a Nisi 0.6 graduated ND filter.



All roads lead to Paternoster

There are lots of picturesque towns on the West Coast, but few will steal your heart like Paternoster will. Meet some of the charismatic people who have answered the call and made a home here.

WORDS & PICTURES **EVAN NAUDÉ**



I grew up in Vredenburg. After church on Sundays, our family would often drive to Paternoster “to have a look around”. From Vredenburg, the R399 cuts through undulating hills for 15 km, straight to the coast. When you crest the last hill, you see the dark blue Atlantic fringed with a line of bright white houses. This little piece of paradise is Paternoster, everybody’s favourite West Coast holiday town.

We’d walk down to where the fishermen sold their catch on the beach and afterwards, we’d go to the Voorstrandt Restaurant for fish and chips. In spring, we’d go see the wildflowers around the Cape Columbine Lighthouse and we’d dip our toes into the freezing sea at Tietesbaai. Before we returned to Vredenburg, we’d buy ice cream at the café and eat it on the rocks while we scanned the water for whales.

Now, 25 years later, I still take my parents for a meal in Paternoster when I visit from Cape Town. Paternoster is full of restaurants, coffee shops, art galleries and bric-a-brac shops; the collection of signs to all these places at the first four-way stop keeps growing.

But if you visit in winter or in the middle of the week, it still feels like a quiet fishing village. I went back on a weekend in March 2024. The parking bays in front of the restaurants were full of cars with Cape Town number plates; children and dogs played on the beach; and tourists ambled through art exhibitions and curio shops in the Paternoster Waterfront.

To really feel the pulse of the place, you have to talk to its people. Whether they were born in Paternoster or moved from elsewhere, the ones I met are all here to stay. Let’s introduce you to some Paternoster locals.



Despite its popularity, Paternoster has managed to hold on to its small-town character. Fishing is still the town's beating heart, but now the streets are also lined with dozens of restaurants, art galleries and guesthouses.

PATERNOSTER



VOORSTRANDT RESTAURANT



Hedwig Slabig Owner, Voorstrandt Restaurant

I'm from Hout Bay. As a child, we often holidayed in Velddrif or Saldanha. When I was with my ex-husband, Jan, we also regularly visited the West Coast. We got tired of Cape Town in 1993 and moved here.

We borrowed a caravan from friends and lived on a smallholding for two years. Back then there was still a dirt road from Vredenburg to Paternoster. Aside from the hotel, nothing much happened here. I wanted to open a shop to sell products from the West Coast, so we bought Die Winkel op Paternoster. Many people know it as "Oep ve Koep".

Die Winkel op Paternoster always had a blackboard outside on which we wrote "Oep" to show we're open. Johan Carosini from the hotel came by one day, asked for a piece of chalk and wiped the board clean.

"You can't spell," he said and wrote "Oep", like the people here pronounce it. Jan added the words "ve Koep" and that's where the "Oep ve Koep" nickname was born. We sold Die Winkel op Paternoster after a while and since 2023 it's been owned by Kobus van der Merwe of Wolfgat Restaurant – it's now called Dispens.

Jan and I rented the house that's now

the Voorstrandt Restaurant. Later we had the option to buy the house and decided to turn it into a restaurant. It's one of only a few buildings in the village that isn't painted white. It has the original red and green corrugated-iron walls and has always been that colour – the building dates from the 1930s. There are one or two of these buildings in the village and apparently they were build-it-yourself kits from Ireland.

Paternoster has more than 20 restaurants, but I like the competition – I think it's good for us all. Because I've lived here for so long, people often ask whether I think it's bad that there's so much development. I always say no – all that matters to me is that when a person visits for the first time, they can feel the magic of Paternoster.

Weskussers, but especially the people of Paternoster, love a good *veldkoolbredie*. It's unique to the region. *Veldkool* is an indigenous plant and looks like asparagus. It tastes like a cross between a *waterblommetjie* and a green bean. You prepare it with potatoes and pieces of fatty meat – but don't add water! You just let it *smoor*; it has to have a shine to it. If you add water, you have a stew – then it's an English dish!

Dispens

Opening times: Daily from 9 am to 4 pm (closed on Tuesdays); Sunday from 9 am to 3 pm.

Where? Dispens (the sign on the building still reads "Die Winkel op Paternoster") is on the corner of St Augustine Road and the R399.

Contact: ☎ 064 041 6914; "Dispens" on Facebook

For more information about the Voorstrandt Restaurant, turn to page 75.

Roske Walters

Waitress, Paternoster Hotel

The Walters family is a Paternoster family. I grew up in a fisherman's cottage. In those years, the men of the family usually worked for Paternoster Fishery.

When I was little, many families lived together in one big house. My mother lived in the house with her five kids, plus her sister and her three kids, and her other sister with her four kids. It was a massive house! And we were born at home – my mom didn't go to a hospital. There was one nurse in Paternoster back then and she assisted with all the births.

Our house was only a few metres from the beach, before there were streets. There were only the farming areas of Kliprug, Vaalplaas and Kraaifontein here. We lived in Vaalplaas, near where the Voorstrandt Restaurant is now. Later, when the fisheries closed in the late 1990s, every family received a municipal house. We all went to school at St Augustine's Primary and every day a bunch of children walked up the hill to the school.

I've been working at the Paternoster Hotel for 18 years now. I've done everything: I've been a waitress and receptionist and worked in the bar and the shell shop. I'm even the bouncer sometimes! The hotel was the only community building in the village for a long time. It has been a school, a jail and a church.

You'll still see fishermen on the dune opposite the hotel. They call it their *sitkamer* because they can see the mullet in the sea from there. They signal to the boats where they should put out their nets.

The Panty Bar is well known and attracts lots of visitors. It started sometime in the 1970s when a honeymoon couple came by and the bride hung her underwear from the ceiling. Now there are more than a thousand panties! Once the dominee walked in by accident and told us to take down the panties. We did, but when he left we hung them up again.

The tradition of *onse mense* is to eat fish for dinner on Mondays. Nothing else – just fish. And if you don't have any, someone will give you some. On Saturday nights we have soup. And for Easter we make *kerrievis* and hot cross buns. When you walk through the



TOAST COETZER

streets on the evening before Good Friday, your eyes burn from all the curry in the air.

I have no problem with the village growing. We all benefit from it and it brings more work for the people of Paternoster.

Opening times: The restaurant is open Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 10.30 am (breakfast) and from 11 am to 8.30 pm (lunch and dinner); Sunday from 8 am to 10.30 am and 11 am to 4 pm. Times change during peak season and on public holidays.

Accommodation: Hotel rooms from R650 per person sharing, breakfast included. All rooms are en suite and sleep two to three people.

Where? 58 St Augustine Road

Contact: ☎ 022 752 2703

🌐 paternosterhotel.co.za



Jan Malan

Owner, Die Koelkamers Teater

We opened Die Koelkamers Teater in 2021. It was once the refrigeration facility at the old crayfish factory. “Koelkamer” means cold room. We converted the space into a theatre.

My partner Greg Meyer and I have been coming to Paternoster from Johannesburg for 20 years – we’ve owned a holiday house here since 2004. We had a production company in Joburg that did fashion and other shows. It was difficult work that eventually became repetitive. Then Covid happened and suddenly we couldn’t work any more. We decided we weren’t going to spend lockdown in Joburg; we’d much rather be in Paternoster. And I never went back – it’s the weirdest thing that has happened in my life!

Theatre has always been our hobby. Before we knew it, Die Koelkamers was born. We had no funds – we couldn’t even afford theatre seats. So, we used chairs and couches sponsored by the community. Even our piano was a donation!

Although the setting is informal, the quality of the productions is on par with what you’ll see at a big festival like the KKNK.

The cushions on our couches feature the faces of well-known artists. You have to perform here three times before your face can go on a cushion. Look around and you’ll see big names like Dan Patlansky, Karen Zoid, Amanda Strydom, Frank Opperman, Coenie de Villiers, Valiant Swart and Pieter-Dirk Uys.

We attract locals to our shows, but also people from neighbouring towns like Vredenburg, Saldanha, Langebaan and Velddrif – and from Cape Town and overseas.

Paternoster feels like a different world. It’s what brought me here. When I think of Paternoster, I think of the words of the Lize Beekman song “Weskus Makietie”: *Ekke wag vir jou op Paternoster, waar ’n stukkie hemel hou. Kies enige manier, maar kom net hier.*

Opening times: Check the schedule on the website. Or if you’re in town, pop in and have a look around, get information about shows and book tickets.

Where? 1 Kreefte Street

Contact: ☎ 082 554 0775

📍 diekoelkamers.com

Wayne Brown

Lighthouse keeper, Cape Columbine

I was born in Paternoster in 1973. My grandfather was a skipper on a crayfish boat; we were dependent on the ocean. I went to primary school here and finished high school in Vredenburg. After I completed my matric in 1992, my first permanent job was at an abalone farm in Jacobsbaai. I worked in the lab there for five years. But my passion has always been to be a lighthouse keeper.

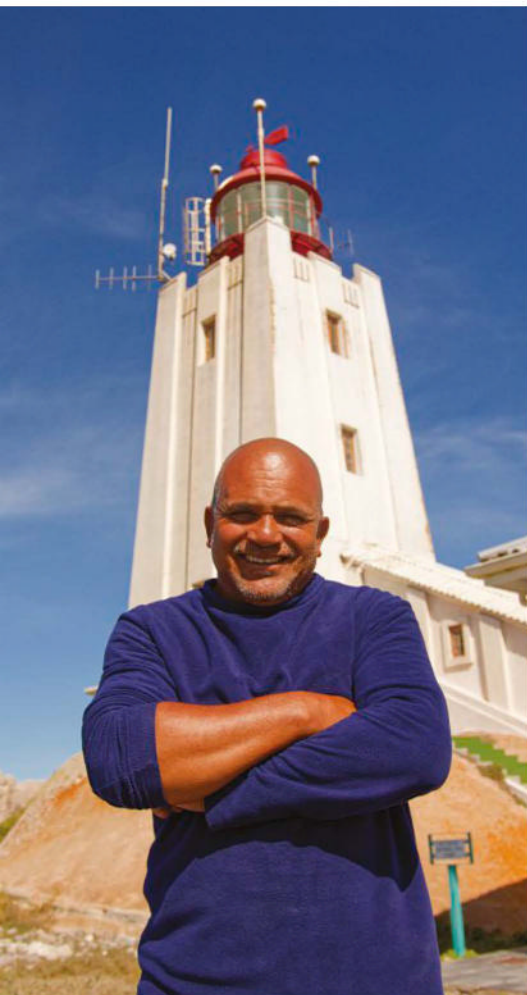
The Cape Columbine Lighthouse and I have walked a long road together. My stepfather was a general worker here and we lived in a house on the premises. I was always fascinated by the clothing the lighthouse keepers wore in those days – the white uniform with lapels and a cap. I watched them work, but never realised what they did or what a lighthouse really was. When I was a child I thought it was just a light that moved in a circle!

Eventually the former lighthouse keeper, Japie Greeff, sent word that there was an opportunity to work at the lighthouse. I was hired as a cleaner in 2004, but started the necessary courses in 2005 to become a lighthouse keeper.

Japie passed away in 2020 and I took over. He was my mentor and a father figure.

In the old days they used paraffin for the light, but we use electricity. We have a back-up generator for when there’s loadshedding. There aren’t many countries with lighthouse keepers left. There are 45 lighthouses along our coastline, but only 11 are manned. This is one of them.

I know many of the local skippers and communicate with them using the VHF radio. I’m always happy to see them come home at night.



There haven't been many incidents during my 20 years here. Once, two fishermen – a father and son – got lost in the fog. The search went on for four days before they were found. My role was to relay information on the radio. That's when I realised how important my job is.

I'm the first Paternoster local to be a lighthouse keeper. I know Paternoster's people and they know me. When I see the light come on at night and start sweeping over the sea, I say to myself: "Wayne, you can go to sleep now. Everything is okay."

What else? Cape Columbine is one of only a few lighthouses open to the public. Turn to page 76 for more information about the lighthouses of the West Coast.

Where? 4 km south-west of Paternoster.

Dianne Heesom-Green *Artist & owner, Stone Fish Studio and Gallery*

I was a ceramic artist and teacher in Cape Town before I moved to Paternoster 25 years ago. It was shortly after many of the people here lost their fishing quotas. I helped to create alternative job opportunities because suddenly people who caught crayfish for decades could no longer do so.

I opened a ceramic studio and called it Stone Fish – it was a little tongue in cheek because the fishing industry was sinking like a fish made of stone! I wanted to raise awareness for the residents, who went from being fishermen to "poachers" overnight.

The road to the village was tarred in 2000 and tourism picked up. We needed the tourists to create more job opportunities. Over time, tourism filled the void left by the fishing industry.

I sometimes feel nostalgic for the old days. It was a lekker time when everyone knew each other. We gathered at the Voorstrandt Restaurant on Fridays and drank sherry from wine glasses. Teenagers learnt how to drive on the dirt streets, people shared food from house to house, and on weekends you saw women with curlers in their hair preparing for the Sunday church service. It was a simple and pure life.

People don't know how beautiful winter in Paternoster can be – we have clear, wind-still days and the sea feels warmer. When you tire of the dark clouds and rain in Cape Town, get in your car and come here!

What else? Stone Fish Studio and Gallery showcases the work of artists from all over the West Coast. Dianne also hosts a ceramic workshop on Saturday mornings. Booking is essential. It's for groups of two to six people – R550 per person.

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 4 pm; Sunday from 10 am to 2 pm.

Where? 57 St Augustine Road

Contact: 082 824 8917

dheesomgreen@gmail.com
"Stone Fish Studio and Gallery Paternoster" on Facebook





Byron Thomson & Lazarus Ruraka

Manager & head brewer, Paternoster Brewery

Byron: We were living in Durban when one day my wife said she wanted to open a wedding venue in Paternoster. Where's that? I asked. On the opposite side of the country, I soon found out! We sold our flat and one of our cars, packed the sausage dog in the other car, and off we went – that was 10 years ago.

I worked as a waiter, a cook, a bedmaker and a barman before I became the manager at Blikkie Pizzeria and Gaatjie Restaurant. After a stint at West Coast Distillers in Langebaan, I joined Paternoster Brewery last year.

Lazarus: I'm originally from Mozambique. I moved to Cape Town in 2010, where I worked as a barman at a brewery in

Woodstock. I was curious about the beer-brewing process and I asked my boss plenty of questions until he gave in and showed me one day.

I started to brew beer on my own two weeks later, but it took a while to master the finer details. When the brewery opened in Paternoster, I was asked if I would brew here.

Byron: The business is still small. We want to establish ourselves in Paternoster before we expand. We already supply to local restaurants, and we've had people from Vredenburg, Cape Town and even as far as Namibia ask for our beer. We also brew a lager for the Paternoster Hotel – the Panty Bar Lager. We'll make a unique beer every now and again – Lazarus is our beer guru.

Lazarus: I actually just add sugar to the yeast. The yeast consumes the sugar and turns it into alcohol – I'm a beer cook basically! Our flagship is a pilsner. We also make a lager, a weiss, a porter and an IPA. Every once in a while we make a speciality like a brut IPA or a raspberry weiss. These beers aren't bottled yet, you can only taste them on tap.

What else? Taste seven beers (from R13 per 100 ml glass); eat oysters, prawns and fish and chips; or buy your own brewing kit at Paternoster Brewery.

Opening times: Tuesday to Saturday from 11 am to 6 pm; Sunday from 11 am to 3 pm. The brewery is closed for winter until 1 August 2024.

Where? 2 Seemeeu Crescent, Pelgrimsrust (The new development on the left as you approach the village on the R399.)

Contact: 063 952 3383

paternosterbrew.co.za



STAY HERE

Paternoster has an abundance of places to stay – the handful we list here are some of the best known, but there are lots of self-catering houses in the village, some a pebble's throw from the beach.

Visit the local letting agent,

Stay in Paternoster, at 87 St Augustine Road for more information.

📞 022 752 2048; 📞 083 204 1051

📧 stayinpaternoster.co.za

Sea Shack

Sea Shack is in the Cape Columbine Nature Reserve – you sleep right on the beach. There are five Beachfront Shacks (each with a double bed), five Garden Shacks (some have two single beds; others a double bed), three tents (basically a small A-frame cabin in the shape of a tent; with two single camping beds) and the SpongeBob family unit, which is suitable for a couple with two small children. The accommodation is self-catering – you share a kitchen, braai and living area with other guests.

Rates: The Beachfront Shacks and Garden Shacks cost R980 per night. Tents R630 per night. SpongeBob family unit R1 100 per night. These rates increase in peak season.

Where? Cape Columbine Nature Reserve, about 4 km from Paternoster.

Contact: 📞 079 820 6824

📧 seashack.co.za

Tietiesbaai

Tietiesbaai is probably the most popular campsite on the West Coast. It has 60 stands – some are next to a quiet bay with a beach; others are among the

rocks. There are waterpoints and ablution blocks, but no power. Bring your own braai drum and grid.

Rates: R213 per night for a stand for up to six people. Day visitors pay R31 per adult and R22 per child under 12.

Where? Cape Columbine Nature Reserve

Contact: 📞 022 752 2718

📧 ronnie.martins@sbm.gov.za

Gonana Guesthouse

Swedish owner Jonas Sandström and his team try to run Gonana as sustainably as possible. They have several stylish guesthouses and rooms, including two self-catering houses (Aloe and Acacia) about 150 m from the beach in Bekbaai; three self-catering studios; and Coral Villa, a restored fisherman's cottage with three bedrooms (sleeps six).

Rates: These rates are valid until 30 September and will increase thereafter. The rates listed are for weekdays – it's more expensive on weekends. Rooms in the guesthouse from R2 200 per night for two people (breakfast included); self-catering houses from R2 050 per night (for the Aloe unit that sleeps three people – you can add a fourth person for R300 per night); self-catering studios from R1 550 per night for two people (you can add a third person for R300 per night). Pets are welcome – enquire when you book. The self-catering Coral Villa costs R1 850 per night for two people (the villa sleeps up to eight people at R300 per extra person).

Where? 42 Sonkwas Road

Contact: 📞 079 424 7467

📧 gonanaguesthouse.com



GONANA GUESTHOUSE



TIETIESBAAI



SEA SHACK



EAT HERE

Voorstrandt Restaurant

Look for the building with the corrugated-iron walls and the red roof right on the beach. Stop by for dishes like a prawn and calamari combo (R210), seafood curry (R177), burgers (from R110) or steak (from R220).

Opening times: From 11 am in summer and from noon in winter – the last orders for dinner are taken by 8 pm.

Where? Strandloper Street, on the sea.

Contact: 📞 022 752 2038

📧 voorstrandt.com

Leeto

At the chic and modern Leeto, chef Garth Almazan and his team prepare a range of special dishes. You can have oysters (R32 per oyster) or beef carpaccio (R130) for an appetiser and sustainable

fish (R295) or West Coast seafood linguini (R315) for your main.

Opening times: Daily from noon to 2 pm (lunch) and from 6 pm to 9 pm (dinner). The restaurant is closed for winter until 1 August 2024.

Where? Patterson Slot (on the north-western tip of the village)

Contact: 📞 060 927 0403

📧 leetorestaurant.com

Cathy's Kitchen

Start your day with a croissant (from R25), omelette (from R65), or pancake with a bobotie filling (R95), and an espresso (R25).

Opening times: Daily from 8.30 am to 1 pm; closed on Wednesdays.

Where? 1 Seeduiker Street

Contact: 📞 066 253 4881

"Cathy's Kitchen Paternoster" on Facebook

To the lighthouse!

A lighthouse is not just something from a storybook – they're vital beacons for ships along our unpredictable coastline. Visit one of these 10 lighthouses between Port Nolloth and Cape Town as you explore the West Coast.

WORDS & PICTURES **CYRIL KLOPPER**

South Africa's West Coast is treacherous for ships to navigate – even today with modern navigational aids and storm-warning systems. I'm at the mouth of the Orange River in Alexander Bay and a cold wind cuts through my jacket. I watch an excavator on the beach as it tears through the last remaining mining buildings that are being demolished. Trucks remove the rubble.

I shiver, rub my hands together and return to the warmth of my vehicle. My plan is to drive back to Cape Town along the coast and visit every lighthouse I can find. Alexander Bay doesn't have one, but if you want to say you've explored every inch of the West Coast, this is where you should start.

I turn away from the sea and drive south on the R382 tar road to Port Nolloth, which does have a lighthouse, even though it's basically a light bulb on top of a frame. Further south is the small lighthouse in Hondeklip Bay, and if you carry on to the campsite at the mouth of the Groen River, the lighthouse there will flash over your tent every five seconds.

Every lighthouse has a unique identity. Not only do they look different, but they also send out different flash signals (called their "light characteristic") so that people at sea can tell them apart.

In Doringbaai you can eat abalone at the Jetty Restaurant at Fryer's Cove after you've had a look at the lighthouse, which towers over the harbour buildings.

There are no less than six lighthouses between St Helena Bay and Saldanha – the most dangerous stretch on the West Coast according to the fishermen who make a living here. But only three of them are easy to access: Stompneus Point, Cape St Martin and Cape Columbine. The other three are best seen from a boat. (North Head and South Head are inside military bases at Saldanha, and the Seal Island Beacon is about 2 km from the coast near Paternoster.)

My lighthouse-to-lighthouse tour will end in Cape Town, about 600 km from Alexander Bay as the seagull flies.





HONDEKLIP BAY

The first lighthouse in this village was built in 1956 and initially painted black with a white and red daymark. The current lighthouse was built in 2009 – it stands watch over the rusted wreck of the *Jahleel*, a diamond boat that ran aground in 2003.

The lighthouse is on a high dune about a kilometre north of the village. You can drive up to it, but a fence will prevent you from getting closer than 10 m.



Light characteristic: 3 short flashes every 15 seconds

Nominal range: 16 nautical miles (29 km)

Focal plane: 17 m

Tower height: 11 m

Daymark: White tower with a single red band and a red lantern room.

Manned: No

GPS: S30.30888 E17.26982



LIGHTHOUSES



< PORT NOLLOTH

Port Nolloth was named after commander Matthew Stainton Nolloth, who mapped the West Coast in 1854 from aboard the HMS *Frolic*. Port Nolloth's first light beacon was installed by the Cape Copper Mining Company in 1870, but the fog over the ocean was so dense that ships often couldn't see it.

A proper lighthouse with a stronger lantern (and a foghorn) was constructed by the government in 1909. Seventy years later, in 1979, it was replaced by the current galvanised-steel skeleton tower – this time without a foghorn, something the residents were very grateful for.

The beacon is between Main Road and Beach Road, about 5 m from the pavement, so you can see it clearly, but a gate and fence prevent you from going closer.



Light characteristic: 4 short flashes every 24 seconds

Nominal range: 19 nautical miles (35 km)

Focal plane: 17 m

Tower height: 11 m

Daymark: 8 black and 7 white stripes on an upside-down triangle.

Manned: No

GPS: S29.24985 E16.86863





◀ GROEN RIVER MOUTH

The Groen River is not named for the colour of its water, but rather for the lush vegetation along its banks. It's the southern border of the Namaqua National Park – the river mouth is about 70 km from Garies.

The lighthouse is 2 km south of the river mouth. A sandy road runs right past it, but a fence and locked gate keep you from getting within 5 m. It was built in 1988 and inherited its lantern room, light and Fresnel lens (the fluted lens used for lighthouses) from the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse when its optic instruments were upgraded that same year.

A steamer called *Namaqua* ran onto the rocks nearby in 1876 – it had 116 tonnes of copper ore in its cargo hold. This shipwreck, one of many along this part of the coastline, has rusted away and there's not much left to see.



Light characteristic: 1 flash every 5 seconds

Nominal range: 26 nautical miles (48 km)

Focal plane: 27,3 m

Tower height: 17,2 m

Daymark: Yellow tower with a black horizontal band and a yellow lantern room.

Manned: No

GPS: S30.86472 E17.57933

▲ DORINGBAAI

The original lighthouse at Doringbaai was a 21 m-tall steel structure. It was built in 1963 and destroyed during a gale 28 years later, in 1991. A second lighthouse – this time concrete – was inaugurated by Duke Davidson, then chief executive of Portnet, on 1 September 1993.

You can park your vehicle at the Fryer's Cove wine cellar (Jetty Restaurant) in the harbour and walk to the lighthouse. There's a high fence around it and it's closed to the public.

During my visit, workers were doing maintenance work and we were allowed to climb to the top – a rare privilege.



Light characteristic: 2 flashes every 10 seconds

Nominal range: 25 nautical miles (46 km)

Focal plane: 36 m

Tower height: 24 m

Daymark: White tower with the top third painted black and a white lantern room.

Manned: No

GPS: S31.81651 E18.23172



LIGHTHOUSES



▲ STOMPNEUS POINT

St Helena Bay's most famous visitor is the seafarer Vasco da Gama, who arrived here on 7 November 1497. He named the bay "Bahia de Santa Helena" in honour of a Catholic saint.

St Helena Bay is one of the main fishing villages on the West Coast. The rocky promontory at the western end of the bay is known as Stompneus Point and that is where you'll find this light beacon. (Not technically a fully fledged lighthouse.) The first beacon was built from wood in 1934. In 2001, it was replaced by a brick building.

The beacon is inside the grounds of the Shelley Point residential development – you're only allowed in if you're invited by a homeowner, although you can get a closer squiz with your binoculars from the Vasco da Gama Monument next to the Lucky Star fish factory in St Helena Bay (GPS: S32.72844 E17.98200).



Light characteristic: 1 flash every 3 seconds

Nominal range: 10 nautical miles (18,5 km)

Focal plane: 12 m

Tower height: 8 m

Daymark: White structure with a green dome over the lantern room.

Manned: No

GPS: S32.70409 E17.98122



▲ CAPE ST MARTIN

The Cape St Martin Beacon in Britannia Bay is only 6 km west of the Stompneus Point Beacon. The village of Britannia Bay was named after the sailing ship *Britannia* that hit a reef here in 1826. Captain William Bouchier beached his ship – which was carrying cognac, pickled fish and crockery – to make it easier to evacuate the passengers safely.

A local farmer called Martin Melck (an ancestor of Julian Melck, the owner of the historical farm Kersefontein next to the Berg River) bought the wreck and made good money by stripping it of copper.

The beacon dates from 1977 and it's on private land behind an abalone farm. The closest you can get is about 300 m. Bring your zoom lens or walk along the beach and around the fence at low tide.



Light characteristic: 1 white flash and 1 red flash every 10 seconds

Nominal range: 21 nautical miles (39 km)

Focal plane: 18 m

Tower height: 10 m

Daymark: Grey (unpainted metal) triangle on a skeletal tower.

Manned: No

GPS: S32.71489 E17.92130



▲ CAPE COLUMBINE

The Cape Columbine Lighthouse is in the nature reserve of the same name about 4 km down the coast from Paternoster. It's a pretty lighthouse and a national monument, perched on an outcrop called Castle Rock, where it warns fishermen about the dangerous currents that swirl around the headland.

It was named after the *Columbine*, a barque that sank here in 1829. Many other ships have perished in the waters around Cape Columbine, including the *Ismore* (1899), *SS Lisboa* (1910) and *SS Malmesbury* (1930). Yet despite the obvious dangers, the lighthouse was only built in 1936.

It's the only lighthouse on the West Coast that's manned (the current lighthouse keeper is Wayne Brown) and it's also open to the public. You can visit from Monday to Friday, 10 am to 3 pm. Entrance costs R20 per adult and R10 per child.

You can also stay right next to the lighthouse in one of two self-catering three-bedroom houses (from R2 000 per night for six people) or in a single-bedroom house (from R1 000 per night for two people). ☎ 021 449 2400; 📧 lighthouses.tourism@transnet.net



Light characteristic: 1 flash every 15 seconds

Nominal range: 30 nautical miles (55,5 km)

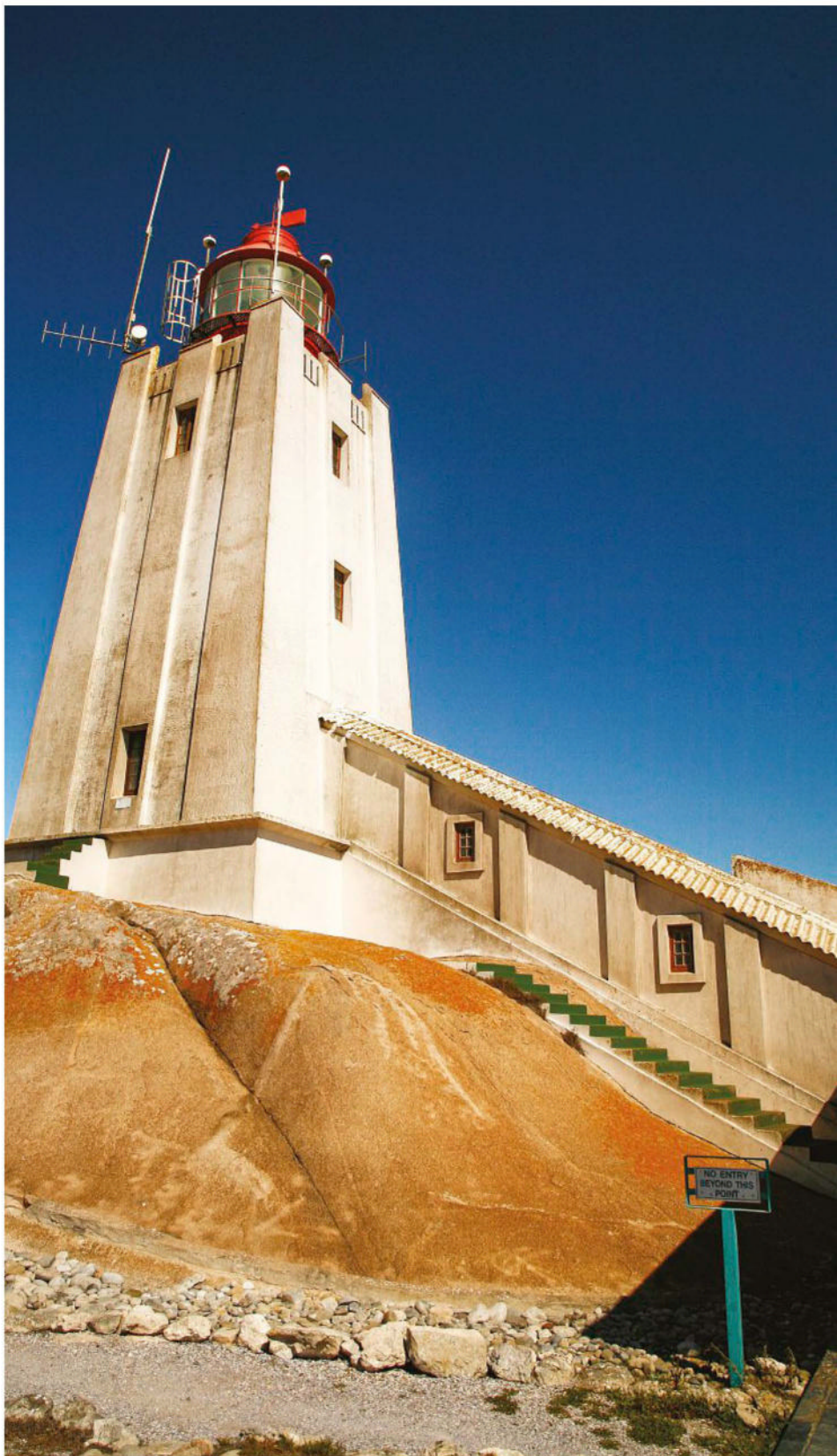
Focal plane: 80 m

Tower height: 15 m

Daymark: White tower with a red lantern room.

Manned: Yes

GPS: S32.82768 E17.85564





➤ SOUTH HEAD

South Head Lighthouse is at the southern end of Saldanha Bay, near Jutten Island. It's the sister lighthouse of North Head and was also built in 1969 when the export harbour was developed.

South Head is also on military land – it's controlled by the 4 Special Forces Regiment. If you thought the navy were picky about who they let through their gates, you haven't seen the recces' security! But where there's a will, there's a way: I took this photo from Jutten Island when I participated in the 2019 SANParks bird census.

Like North Head, the best way to see South Head is from a boat. Triple J Fishing Charters (see sidebar) is not the only operator that offers cruises in Saldanha Bay, but they're willing to adjust the route to your needs.

▲ NORTH HEAD

Saldanha's first lighthouse had a gas lantern and was built in 1939. When plans were announced for a new harbour to export iron ore, the old lighthouse was replaced in 1969.

The current North Head Lighthouse was built in 2009. It's at the northern end of Saldanha Bay, opposite Malgas Island. It's inside the SA Military Academy on the Saldanha naval base – you can't drive in to have a look.

If you want to get close, you can go on a fishing trip with an operator like Triple J Fishing Charters and see the lighthouse by boat (see sidebar).

This photo of North Head was taken from Malgas Island. Only SANParks rangers and Honorary Rangers are allowed onto the island when bird censuses are done during the breeding season. I was lucky enough to participate in one such census in 2017.



Light characteristic: 4 flashes every 30 seconds

Nominal range: 24 nautical miles (44,5 km)

Focal plane: 34 m

Tower height: 23 m

Daymark: The bottom half of the lighthouse is white and the top half is yellow.

Manned: No

GPS: S33.10575 E17.95462



SUPPLIED



BOAT CRUISES

Skipper Pieter van der Spuy is the owner of Triple J Fishing Charters. For R2 000, he can take a maximum of six guests past the North Head and South Head lighthouses. You'll also see Malgas Island and Jutten Island.

Fishermen can go on a day-long snoek expedition: R4 000 for six people.

Contact: ☎ 082 394 6619

📍 triplejfishingcharters.co.za



Light characteristic: 3 flashes every 20 seconds

Nominal range: 23 nautical miles (42,5 km)

Focal plane: 33 m

Tower height: 21 m

Daymark: Black and white spirals on the tower and a white lantern room.

Manned: No

GPS: S33.05046 E17.91074





◀ MILNERTON

This lighthouse is on Woodbridge Island, an upmarket estate in the suburb of Milnerton. The lighthouse itself is outside the security fence. You can lean against it for a photo, but the door is locked.

The lighthouse was built in 1960 to support the Green Point Lighthouse closer to Cape Town. There's a third lighthouse in Table Bay, on Robben Island.



Light characteristic: 3 flashes every 20 seconds

Nominal range: 25 nautical miles (46 km)

Focal plane: 28 m

Tower height: 21 m

Daymark: White tower with a red lantern room.

Manned: No

GPS: S33.88164 E18.48791

OTHER LIGHTHOUSES AROUND FALSE BAY AND THE CAPE PENINSULA

- **Green Point:** 16 m high; built in 1824
- **Robben Island:** 18 m high; built in 1865
- **Dassen Island:** 28 m high; built in 1893
- **Slangkop Point (Kommetjie):** 33 m high; built in 1919
- **Cape Point (new):** 9 m high; built in 1919
- **Cape Point (old):** 9 m high; built in 1860
- **Roman Rock (Simon's Town):** 14 m high; built in 1861
- **Hangklip (Pringle Bay):** 22 m high; built in 1960

Visit lighthoussouthafrica.com for information on other lighthouses on our coastline.

The secret is out

For decades, large sections of the West Coast close to the Orange River have been mined – mostly for diamonds. In recent years, however, mining activities have been spreading south to the Olifants River estuary and beyond. Surfers **Mike Schlebach** and **Miles Masterson** are two of the driving forces behind Protect the West Coast, an organisation that aims to keep mining companies in check.

INTERVIEW TOAST COETZER

Imagine going down to the beach where you enjoy your daily swim or surf and find “No Entry” signs everywhere, and that the beach has been cordoned off as a “Mining Area”.

A couple of years ago, Protect the West Coast staged just such an activist intervention on 10 of Cape Town’s most popular beaches. The idea was to bring the crisis facing much of the West Coast home to Capetonians who might never venture beyond Paternoster – to show them what impact mining activities are having on previously pristine sections of coastline further north.

Mike Schlebach experienced this shock firsthand one day in September 2020 when he was on a solo surfing trip north of the Olifants River estuary. Here, obscured for years by surfer folklore, a legendary wave rolls out. Mike had surfed it many times in his life, once even with the world-famous Kelly Slater.

And now what? A security gate blocked his path and a guard told him it was a mining area and he had no business there. To be clear, Mike didn’t intend to enter the mine itself – he wanted to reach a beach between two mines that should technically be free to public access.

That moment was a catalyst that

made Mike one of the founders of Protect the West Coast (PTWC). Along with his co-founders Camila Budden and Khaya Pullen, the not-for-profit organisation has taken up the battle against sometimes illegal and irresponsible mining activities along the West Coast.

One sunny autumn day, I meet Mike in a coffee shop in Hout Bay. He’s travelled up the coast from his home in Kommetjie. Miles Masterson is also here, another of the driving forces at PTWC. Miles is a Hout Bay local. Both Mike and Miles would be easy to pick out in a line-up: They look like surfers, with crow’s feet in the corners of their eyes – proof of many a day spent sizing up a point break somewhere.

“The first time I went up the West Coast was on a surf trip to Elands Bay for my 13th birthday,” Mike tells me as a waitress comes over to take our orders. They get lattes, I order a juice. “My mom drove us up there – she let us bunch of kids run amok in the Elands Bay campsite.”

“I went to Elands Bay when I was 12, I beat Mike by a year,” Miles pipes up, laughing. “I was a competitive surfer and I had lots of older friends who had cars, so I would tag along with them. I was born in Namibia and I feel a personal connection to that kind of landscape. When you

fall in love with a place like the West Coast, you fall in love hard.”

Mike agrees: “Besides being a prolific surf area, it’s simply one of the last places in South Africa where you can go and lose yourself. There’s free camping, there are areas up there where you don’t see people for days... It’s pretty wild, rough and rugged. It’s not for everybody, but it’s a place that I really hold dear.”

The men know each other from the local surfing scene. Mike (47) is an entrepreneur and runs two companies, one of which makes consumer products like bags from industry waste products. Miles (53) is a freelance copywriter and journalist, and was the founding editor of skateboarding magazine *Blunt* back in the late 1990s.

Joining the PTWC team came at the perfect time for Miles. He recalls how he was influenced during his younger years by the work of the Surfrider Foundation, an international surfer-run organisation promoting environmental causes. He briefly interned for them in Australia in 1993, at a time when he was also working for a surfing magazine in the UK, where he was exposed to environmental activism via an organisation called Surfers Against Sewage.

MIKE SCHLEBACH; JACQUE SMIT/PTWC; TOAST COETZER



Top left: This awareness campaign was run by Protect the West Coast (PTWC) – imagine if you arrived at the beach one day, only to find it cordoned off. The aerial photos (taken in May 2024) show the effects of various mining activities along the West Coast. Bottom right: Mike Schleich and Miles Masterson from PTWC.

PROTECT THE WEST COAST

"I always had this feeling that I needed to do something – to get involved with some relevant environmental cause," Miles says, sipping his latté. "I knew Mike from when I covered big wave surfing at Dungeons here in Hout Bay during the Big Wave Africa competition – he was a participant. We ended up on a phone call and I said, I'm in, this is what I've been waiting for."

The PTWC team now consists of an executive committee of eight people and five advisers. The advisers include people like Professor Merle Sowman from the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences at the University of Cape Town; Nama community leader Martinus Fredericks; and Kruschen Govender, a circular economy and education professional.

While the first couple of years of PTWC activity focused on creating awareness, 2023 saw them actively taking a mining company (Trans Hex) to court for the first time.

This mobilisation is urgently needed, Mike says. "At the time when I did that solo trip to the Olifants River area, a few people in the surfing community were grumbling about this Australian mining company called MRC – Mineral Commodities – and the activities of their mine called Tormin. But that was just a drop in the ocean of what was really happening.

"If you go north of Hondeklip Bay towards Alexander Bay, the place looks like the moon – this is the stretch where De Beers extracted all their billions of dollars' worth of diamonds. De Beers, Trans Hex and Alexkor have been mining that place for the better part of 100 years.

"The big problem now is that the area north of Hondeklip Bay has been pretty much mined out, so they're looking further south. It's hard to tell because there is no central database, but we estimate that there

are about 65 mining and prospecting applications up and down the coast – this includes offshore and inland operations. Coupled with that, there are 40 to 50 existing beach mining activities. It's a sorry state of affairs."

The miners are mainly looking for heavy minerals, which include zircon, ilmenite, rutile, magnetite and garnet, although some prospecting applications also include diamonds, Mike says.

"They've basically been operating with no oversight or publicity. But that's changing. The place is getting more populated and everyone has a mobile phone. Once people find out what's going on up there, they get incensed. Protect the West Coast is showing people in these small communities that they're not alone. We've provided some glue; a network holding everyone together. We've worked on galvanizing community support, and we've ultimately given the West Coast communities a voice."

Indeed, it's not just surfers who are concerned about the threat that unchecked mining could hold. Whether you're a 4x4 enthusiast who enjoys camping in an unspoilt landscape, or a subsistence fisherman who relies on a healthy ecosystem to put food on the table, PTWC aims to be a central place where all concerned parties can work together.

At the time of writing, PTWC was in the final stages of developing an online public participation portal called "Ripl" (as in, creating a ripple effect), which allows access to information about new mining licences and easier ways to provide feedback through the relevant official channels.

"You sign up for the portal and when a new application comes up, you'll get a SMS to say that this is what's happening," Mike explains. "Then the portal will talk you through how you can appeal and comment. I'm excited to roll it out through the schools and empower

the youth, get them involved to have a say in their future. It's not good news for the mining companies... They always say they value public participation, well now they'll get public participation!"

Besides the obvious effect that destructive mining can have on a sensitive environment, the effect it can have on communities can be equally devastating.

"The mining companies are taking enormous amounts of wealth out of the ground and leaving a mess behind," Miles says, getting worked up now, his empty coffee cup long forgotten. "We don't want to paint all mining companies with the same brush – there is a place for mining in the West Coast economy – but in many cases it's hugely exploitative. That has to change. We want to prevent illegal mining. Rehabilitation is a big issue too; sometimes they don't restore these sites to their former state."

Mike: "The Department of Mineral Resources and Energy is approving mining activities ad hoc; they don't have a clear view of where all the operations are happening. They're all next to each other. Eventually you might have one big mining pit from Elands Bay to the Orange River! What we've been calling for – what Merle Sowman has been doing for years – is something called an SEA, a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

"Such a mandate would provide the government with an overview of how best to utilise the West Coast from an environmental, social and economic perspective – what's sustainable in the long term, in other words. Once an SEA has been commissioned, the government will know which areas are good for tourism, which are suited to mining, and where the most biodiverse areas and heritage sites are. Without an SEA, these guys are just flying blind."

Miles: "The mining industry on the West Coast has always

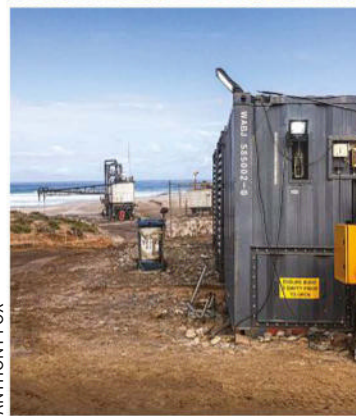
maintained that their communities need them; that they're providing employment and a degree of infrastructure the government doesn't provide. The idea is that they're the saviours, but often, only a handful of people in the community will benefit.

"It's slowly dawning on these communities that it seems the mining guys are taking more than they give. They're supposed to have a social labour plan, they're supposed to give back, but it's never been monitored or policed. That's part of the reason why the so-called mining-affected communities are so disgruntled – they're waking up to the fact that they're vulnerable to exploitation.

"But the tide has turned. There was a protest in March 2024 where people from the Richtersveld, Hondeklip Bay and elsewhere in Namaqualand marched in Springbok. The people are *gatvol*. They're realising there are alternatives to mining – sustainable alternatives like algae farming, kelp farming and fish farms if done properly. And tourism – eco and adventure tourism. These are long-term, non-extractive sustainable industries that provide great employment. I think people in these communities are starting to see that we have the numbers, and we can start fighting back."

It is their love for the West Coast that drives Mike and Miles to fight for its preservation.

"Where I live in Kommetjie – that's technically part of the West Coast too," Mike says. "The view never gets old, no matter how many times I surf there. You see Hout Bay, the back of Table Mountain, the bay at Noordhoek... It's like watching a movie. When you're in the sea on the West Coast, you feel like you're part of the ocean. I've seen a great white shark at Farmer Burgers – a surf spot near Lambert's Bay – and



ANTHONY FOX

plenty of seals. You experience things that nobody else gets to. It's food for the soul.

"My kids are five and seven now; I hope they'll also take up surfing one day. I can think of nothing better than my kids going surfing in the area I helped preserve, and they get to enjoy it, too."

Miles regularly spends weekends in St Helena Bay with family who live there. "Every time I surf in Britannia Bay, there's a pod of Heaviside's dolphins that come to say hi – like they're my buddies. I surf up there a lot by myself, which isn't always ideal, but then these dolphins pull in and suddenly you're not alone any more.

"Surfers often don't like to share the locations of the best surf spots, but you know what, we should rather share this information and work together to preserve it, otherwise it might be destroyed – and then nobody can enjoy it."

Clockwise from the top: Legendary surf spots like this one north of Groen River are often situated in pristine wilderness areas – the very places threatened by mining along the West Coast. The original Tormin Mine in Brand se Baai, from a file photograph dating to 2016, and another Tormin Mine at Skaapvlei near Lutzville, photographed in 2021.

GET INVOLVED

Whether you want to donate to the cause (PTWC is currently seeking financial support for their Ripl feedback portal, for example), offer your services as a volunteer, or if you simply want to arm yourself with knowledge, check out protectthewestcoast.org

Watch the film: PTWC commissioned a documentary film called *Ours, Not Mine*. Search for it on YouTube.

Run for a cause: Run West is a fundraising event that will take place at Doringbaai on 22 September 2024. There's a 10 km and a 21 km route. It's a great event and a good introduction to that part of the coastline if you've never been there. runwest.co.za

Welcome to Blow City!

One of South Africa's biggest – but least known – wildlife spectacles happens annually off the coast of Yzerfontein, when super-pods of humpback whales gather to feed and fly their flukes against the backdrop of Table Mountain.

WORDS & PICTURES **CALLUM EVANS**





A humpback whale displays lobtailing – a form of communication, which involves slapping its tail against the water's surface.

WHALE WATCHING

Golden light illuminates the spray coming off the waves crashing onto Sixteen Mile Beach. I'm

on a rubber duck with some other tourists and the crew from Whale Expedition SA. It's just after 8 am on a perfect January morning, off the coast of Yzerfontein.

Since 2011, large numbers of humpback whales have been seen off the West Coast where they come to feed between November and April. In some cases, so-called super-pods of up to 200 animals have been observed.

After waking up in a guesthouse in town, I clocked in at the Whale Expedition SA base at about 6.30 am for breakfast. Other guests soon joined. Once everyone was settled in, the head guide, Jacques Buys, briefed us about the experience that lay ahead. During a slideshow, we also learnt about the natural history of the humpback whale, with a specific focus on the super-groups.

The movements of the whales are hard to predict and there's a chance we won't find them. "It's a high-risk outing, but with high rewards," said skipper Ash Appleby.

Afterwards, we got kitted up in waterproof jackets and pants that made me feel like we were going looking for whales in Norway, not South Africa. But lest we forget: The sea is cold around here! After the safety briefing, we drove down to the harbour and climbed onto a modified rigid inflatable, or RIB, called the *Meganova*.

As soon as we were out of the harbour, the richness of the wildlife became apparent. Flocks of terns of various species mullied about before dive-bombing the water, pursuing hidden shoals of fish. Lines of Cape cormorants flew past and Cape fur seals were everywhere.

Approaching Dassen Island, the sheer number of birds blew me away. The wooden jetty and white sand beaches were packed with more terns (common, greater crested and sandwich), alongside Hartlaub's gulls, crowned cormorants, sanderlings and lots of African oystercatchers.

At random times, all the terns would take off together, looking like a snowstorm against the blue sky. On the rocks close by, African penguins gathered in groups. Dassen Island has one of the largest remaining breeding colonies of these endangered birds. It's also one of only two places in South Africa where great white pelicans breed. (The other is Lake St Lucia in KZN.) We got close enough to see these massive birds with their chicks, and we got a sighting of several pelicans flying overhead in the classic V formation.

Once the *Meganova* had turned away from the island and begun heading south, we started to see more of the local marine megafauna. The first surprise was an ocean sunfish, also called a mola mola, swimming slowly at the surface. Sunfish are the largest bony fish – they can weigh more than two tonnes and measure 3,3 m from fin tip to fin tip. (Because of its oddball shape, you measure a sunfish's "height" rather than its length.) They get their name because of their habit of "sunbathing" at the ocean's surface.

A few minutes later, a pod of Heaviside's dolphins – endemic to the coasts of South Africa and Namibia – came to investigate our boat and swam with us for a good 20 minutes. They repeatedly swam right under us, giving us an amazing close-up look at their beautiful black and white markings. At one point, they were joined by a pod of dusky dolphins and the two species briefly mingled behind the boat before going their separate ways.

While we were looking at the dolphins, the first two humpbacks of the day surfaced nearby. We watched them for a while before they dived again, their enormous backs rising above the water in an arch as they descended. When their tails went up in the air, Jacques and I had our cameras ready to get that iconic shot.

Scientists use photos of a whale's tail or its flukes to identify the individual. By uploading the images to various databases, the Whale Expedition team can keep track of which whales are returning visitors and where they're coming from.

Now skipper Ash pointed the boat out to sea in search of the super-pods. We started to put in some hard nautical miles as we scanned the horizon for tell-tale spouts. The outline of Table Mountain was visible in the distance through the haze, getting steadily clearer the further south we went.

We passed more sunfish, pods of fur seals and even a raft of about 70 penguins. They were curious, which was unusual as penguins normally dive when a boat approaches. Cape gannets, sooty shearwaters

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Jacques Buys, head guide at Whale Expedition SA, briefs guests before the outing. Dassen Island is home to one of the most important breeding colonies of African penguin. A sunfish warms up at the ocean's surface. The expedition rubber duck is backed into the water at the Yzerfontein harbour where the tour starts. You'll see a variety of birds and marine life at sea – it's hard to know where to look! Great white pelicans with their chicks on Dassen Island.



WHALE WATCHING



HUMPBACK WHALES 101

The big gatherings of humpback whales on the West Coast are a relatively new phenomenon. Marine biologists think it might be due to a change in the strength of the cold Benguela Current, which seems to be flowing slightly slower on average than in the past. This has created the right conditions for large numbers of krill to thrive. Krill is the main food source of the whales.

The super-pod gatherings occur in summer due to the constant sunlight, which triggers phytoplankton blooms that in turn kick-start the entire oceanic food web. The abundance of food attracted by the bloom draws in the humpbacks from every corner of the southern hemisphere.

Another reason for the whale gatherings could simply be that their numbers are finally recovering to something resembling what they once were before the time of industrialised whaling. A couple of centuries ago, these gatherings were the norm. We're only now beginning to see them again.

The humpback whales in our part of the world typically migrate between the Southern Ocean, where they spend their summers, to more tropical waters in winter – off the coasts of Mozambique, West Africa and Australia – where they mate and give birth. But when the West Coast offers plenty of food, many whales prefer to linger here and feed while conditions are favourable.

and European storm petrels flew alongside us.

Then Jacques and Ash spotted a cluster of blows in the distance, about 3 km away and backlit by the sun. They have a name for this sort of thing: Blow City. That's when I knew we'd found a super-pod!

Soon we were surrounded by humpbacks. There were at least 100 of them! The noise they made as they exhaled was constant, even if the smell of their breath left a little to be desired... Hundreds of Sabine's gulls flew in a white cloud just above the whales and the odd fur seal and sunfish swam among them, too.

It was hard to decide where to point my camera. At one point, I had three whale tails rising in my viewfinder at the same time, with the peaks of the Twelve Apostles in the background.

A couple of the whales breached quite close to the *Meganova*. As if this wasn't crazy enough, we could see more clusters blowing in the distance. Unbelievably, there were more super-pods nearby.

We spent more than two hours with the whales. I didn't want to leave – it was such a humbling experience. But it was now past midday and we had to return to Yzerfontein.

It was quite a trip back as we'd covered about 50 nautical miles (93 km) to find the whales.

For a final flourish, we came across three whales slapping their tails hard against the surface of the ocean. It sounded like thunderclaps. It's a type of behaviour called lobtailing and apparently the whales use it to communicate with each other.

It was a fitting farewell to a truly special day at sea!



Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Pelicans and penguins breed on Dassen Island. Large numbers of Cape fur seals feed off the West Coast. The Whale Expedition SA crew – from left to right is Ash Appleby, Jacques Buys and Vian Vorster – with Callum Evans. Three humpback whales dive in synchrony, with the Twelve Apostles in the background.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Whale Expedition SA is a division of Southern Right Charters. Their base is at 28 Lutie Katz Road, Yzerfontein and guests must arrive by 6.30 am on the day of departure. The boat leaves the harbour at around 7.30 am. Trips can be up to six hours long, depending on what you see. The boat usually returns at 1.30 pm and guests leave the centre after lunch at 3 pm. (We had boerewors and *krummelpap* with tomato relish.)

Whale-watching season:

November to March, but this depends on whether or not there are good numbers of whales around.

Cost: R4 500 per person. The maximum group size is 10. No children under 12, unless a private charter is booked – in other words, if you book the whole boat.

Contact: 082 353 0550

📧 whaleexpedition.co.za

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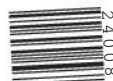
Facilities



10 Regional maps



Contact details



In our *Resort Guide 2024*, we've compiled all the information you need on more than 160 camping destinations to plan all your getaways for the year. It's never been easier.

The best of the west

The attractions along the West Coast are not always served on a platter. Sometimes you have to dig a bit deeper until you find that special place that's perfect for you. We asked our journalists and readers to share their favourite family outings, restaurants, birdwatching spots, hiking trails, places to stay, campsites, and routes to drive or ride. Use this guide to plan your next West Coast holiday – and let us know about *your* favourite places, too!



CYRIL KLOPPER

CONTRIBUTORS: Cyril Kloppe, Esma Marnewick, Evan Naudé, Willem van der Berg, Noël Cloete, Kyra Tarr, Basson van Zyl and Toast Coetzer.

MALKOPBAAI, GROEN RIVER MOUTH



Oranjemund
Alexander Bay

Port Nolloth
McDougall's Bay

- Town
- Place
- Campsite
- Peak
- Mountain pass
- Lighthouse
- River
- Gravel road
- Tar road
- National road



Atlantic
Ocean

THE WEST COAST
and adjacent interior

NAMIBIA

RSA

Northern Cape

Western Cape

Namaqualand

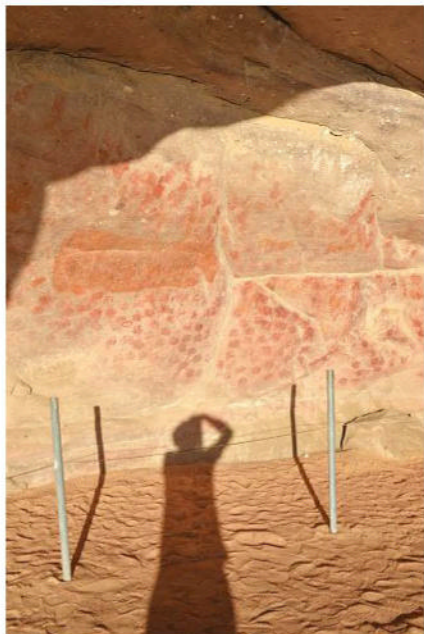
Bushmanland

Knersvlakte

Tankwa Karoo



FAMILY OUTINGS



Rock paintings, Elands Bay

In Elands Bay Cave at Baboon Point, you can really get a sense of time. When you stand in the cave and look west over the Atlantic Ocean, you're doing something that our ancestors did 20 000 years ago. Need proof? Just turn to the 200-odd handprints on the walls of the cave. The people who made those paintings centuries ago also stood here, wondered about the world and ate seafood platters – look at all the mussel shells below the cave!

There are also paintings of fat-tailed sheep, eland and other antelope, but some are faded and hard to make out. The best time to visit is late in the afternoon when the light hits the rock walls.

Remember: Don't touch the paintings because you'll damage them. Teach your kids how to treat places like this with respect. If there's litter lying around, pick it up and throw it away in Elands Bay.

Cost: Free.

Where? Drive from Elands Bay North (where the hotel and shops are) to Elands Bay South and follow the road past the old fish factory. When the dirt roads curls around Baboon Point, look for the turn-off to the left. You'll see the ruins of a radar station dating from World War II on the slope. Park there and follow the short but steep path to the cave.

– Toast Coetzer



West Coast Fossil Park, Vredenburg

Ever wondered how the Langebaan Lagoon was formed? About 5 million years ago, the mouth of the ancient Berg River (which empties into the ocean at Velddrif) was roughly where the lagoon is now.

The climate was wetter and hotter – a little like KwaZulu-Natal's – and large mammals occurred here, like the sivathere (a short-necked, long-horned giraffe that was about three times the size of an eland); the only bear species in Africa; a different species of elephant than the one we know today; and sabre-toothed cats! (Not all the animals were so unusual – there were also dassies and steenbok...)

When a catastrophic flood took place, many of these animals drowned and were buried beneath sediment, where their bones eventually became fossilised. These bones were discovered in 1976 when workers of a phosphate mine uncovered them – the West Coast Fossil Park is now on this site. Over the years, palaeontologists have identified the remains of nearly 300 animals and birds.

The park preserves this unique prehistory of the West Coast. It's a wonderful place to bring your kids – there are even activities geared towards them, like the Mini Lab and Mock Dig where they'll learn more about how fossils are excavated. The restaurant also has a special kids' menu with dishes like a cheese griller with chips (R50) and a toasted cheese sandwich with chips (R35).

You can walk around the museum on your own and visit the dig site with a guide – it's a must-do! There are also hiking and cycling trails if you want to stretch your legs.

Cost: Entry to the museum is R50 per adult; R30 per child aged 6–17; free for children under 6. Guided tours R100 per adult; R50 per child aged 6–17. Discounts for pensioners and students.

Where? About 14 km south-east of Vredenburg, next to the R45.

Opening times: Tuesday to Sunday from 9 am to 3 pm. Guided tours depart on weekdays at 11 am, 12.30 pm and 2 pm; and on weekends at 10 am, 11 am, 12 pm and 1 pm.

Contact: ☎ 022 766 1606; 🌐 fossilpark.org.za

– Toast Coetzer

THE BEST OF THE WEST



!Kwa ttu San Heritage Centre, Yzerfontein

I like words that start with an exclamation mark. You pronounce !Kwa ttu with a loud click before the word. In 1999, Swiss anthropologist Irene Staehelin bought the wheat farm where !Kwa ttu is located and systematically – with the co-operation of several San groups in southern Africa – developed it into a heritage centre. It opened to tourists in 2006.

The centre has three buildings that house different exhibitions and experiences: First People (where you learn more about the earliest people that lived along our coastline); Encounters (about the San's clashes with colonial powers); and Way of the San (where you learn how they made fires and hunted). Tours on offer include tea tasting (where you get to know veld plants and their uses) and tracking.

The exhibitions are nothing like those of old museums. They're interactive to appeal to children, too. The fascinating world of the San comes to life in front of your eyes. The guides (all of San descent) are very knowledgeable and the extra fee for a guided tour is worth it.

!Kwa ttu can't be "done" in one morning. Experience one of the guided tours and relax in the excellent restaurant. Next time you can do one of the other tours.

The centre also has accommodation if you want to make a weekend of it. Both the six Hilltop Huisies and the six new Fynbos Cabins cost R2 200 per night (two adults and one child) and the bigger Bush House costs R3 500 per night (four people). The rates include breakfast, but the units are also equipped for a self-catering stay. You can have lunch in the restaurant and order dinner, which will be delivered to your unit in a picnic basket. The restaurant also has a kids' menu with dishes like chicken strips with chips (R75) and mac and cheese (R58).

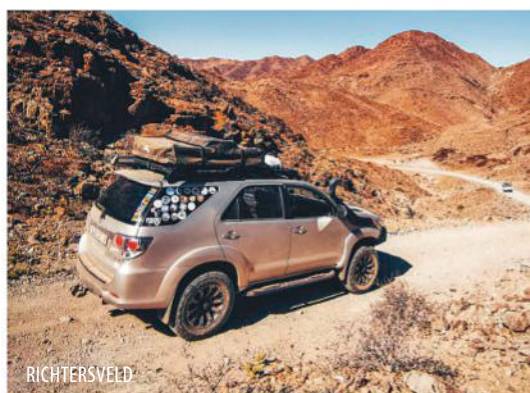
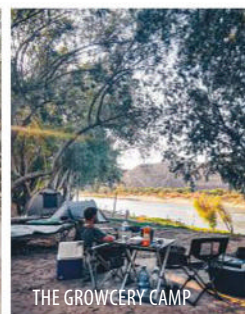
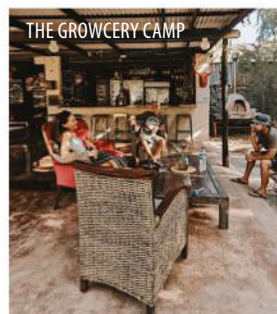
Cost: R100 per adult; R50 for school-going children and pensioners – this gives you access to the exhibitions. Guided tour R210 per person (about 45 minutes); game drive (you can see game like eland and zebra) R320 per person.

Where? 14 km south-east of Yzerfontein, next to the R27.

Opening times: Daily from 9 am to 4 pm.

Contact: ☎ 022 492 2998; 🌐 khwattu.org

– Toast Coetzer





Thali Thali Game Lodge, Langebaan

As a parent, sometimes it's fun to just sit in a game-viewing vehicle and let the guide take care of the driving – and answer all your children's questions...

I live in Vredenburg and Thali Thali is a 20-minute drive away. You can see eland, bontebok, buffalo and "imported" species like reindeer and emu. The habitat is mostly Saldanha flats strandveld.

You can't go around in your own vehicle; the guided game drives depart at 10 am and 3.30 pm every day. A game drive takes about 90 minutes.

The lodge also offers archery lessons – you can bring your own bow or hire one. The restaurant has a splash pool and a playground for the kids.

If you want to stay over, there are more than enough options. Old farmworkers' cottages have been turned into self-catering chalets and there are also glamping tents and a farmhouse called Ouma se Huis that sleeps nine people.

Cost: Game drive R300 per adult; R150 per child under 13; free for children under 5. Archery lesson R150 per person. Bow hire R150 per person. Self-catering accommodation from R700 per adult sharing (with breakfast); discounts for children 12 and under.

Where? 1 km east of Langebaan, next to the R27.

Opening times: Restaurant: Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 9 pm; Sunday from 9 am to 5 pm.

Contact: 📞 082 372 8637 (Thali Thali); 📞 083 275 2825 (archery); 🌐 thalithali.co.za

– Basson van Zyl



SUPPLIED

Paddle on the Orange River, Vioolsdrif

I've paddled the river with guides from Orange River Rafting Lodge before, but The Growcery Camp (where I camped most recently), also offers excursions.

If you'd rather explore the Richtersveld from the comfort of your 4x4, drive to nearby Nababiep Nature Reserve. Just past The Growcery Camp, the road turns away from the river to the unmanned reserve gate (entrance is free). Drive onwards to Eksteenfontein and back for a solid day outing.

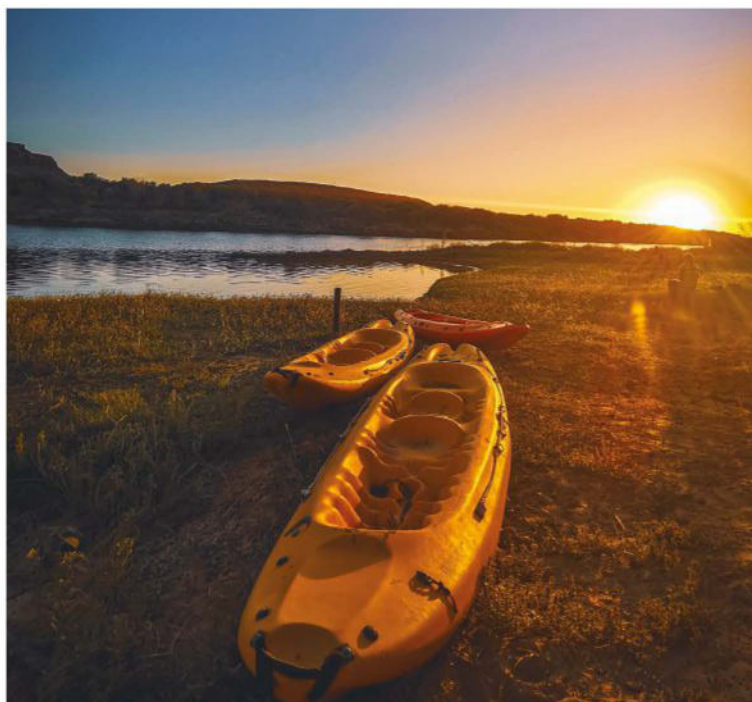
Cost: At Orange River Rafting Lodge, a half-day river rafting trip costs R550 per person (with lunch). Camping from R450 per stand for the first two people; plus R75 per extra person. Cabins from R1 100 per night for two people.

The Growcery Camp: R650 per person for a half-day paddling trip (with lunch). Camping costs from R220 per person and their basic "Chic Shack" units from R280 per person, or R370 per person, with breakfast.

Where? Orange River Rafting Lodge 10 km from Vioolsdrif; The Growcery Camp 20 km from Vioolsdrif.

Contact: 📞 027 761 8777; 🌐 orangeriverraftinglodge.co.za
📞 084 604 2756; 🌐 thegrowcery.co.za

– Noël Cloete





Muisbosskerm, Lambert's Bay

Best tip for a visit to Muisbosskerm? Start slowly. There are *lots* of delicious seafood dishes that appear one after the other.

Muisbosskerm was built next to the sea just outside Lambert's Bay in 1986 by the Turner family of the farm Malkoppan. It was the first open-air seafood restaurant of its kind in the country and little has changed in the *muisbos*-walled architecture. (It burnt down partially in 2023, but has been rebuilt.) You sit with your toes in the sand, a sea breeze in your hair and eat from a tin plate with mussel shells as cutlery.

Lunch and dinner are offered in buffet style and last two to three hours. You can load your plate with fresh bread, sweet potato and mullet; then they bring out the hake, yellowtail, smoked snoek and calamari... They also braai crayfish and make stews and paella. Someone comes past with an eisbein... By the end you feel too full to have a koeksister and coffee, but you find a way.

Cost: R390 per person (if you want a crayfish tail, it costs extra).

Where? 5 km south of Lambert's Bay on the Elands Bay road.

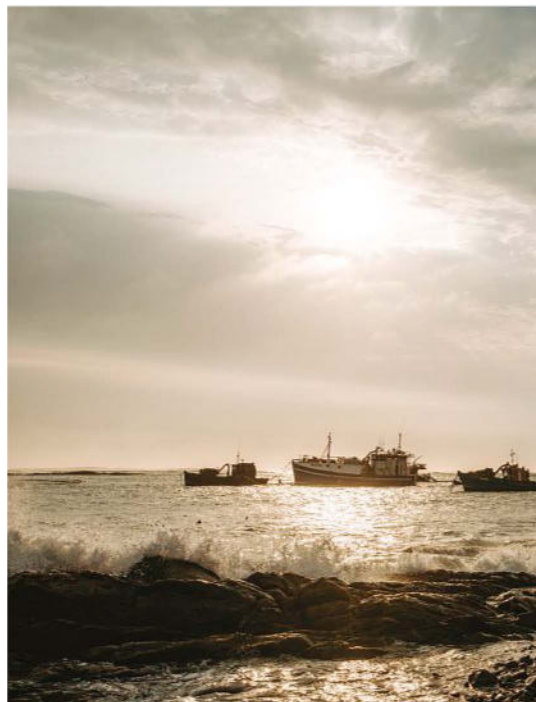
Opening times: The restaurant is only open per reservation of at least 20 people. Lunch is served at 12.30 pm and dinner at 6.30 pm. Book in advance.

Contact: ☎ 027 432 1017; 📧 muisbosskerm.co.za

– Evan Naudé



RESTAURANTS



Port Fisheries, Port Nolloth

This place can be summed up in one sentence: the best fish and chips on the West Coast. But that's a big statement, so let me explain.

Close your eyes and think of *regte, egte* fish and chips. Can you smell the batter and vinegar? Are you sitting at a table with a plastic tablecloth? Does your arm stick to it when you lean forward? Don't worry, it's not that bad, and you know why we're here...

There it is – you can go pick it up at the counter. Aah, lovely, the paper parcel is warm in your hands. Open it! Open it! *O, heerlikheid*, look how beautiful the fried fish and chips look. Crisp on the outside, soft on the inside. Taste it. Yes, *there* it is: the perfect combination of salt, vinegar, oil, sea, heat, crispiness, blue sky, fish and freedom.

Where? Main Road, behind Waarheid Butchery.

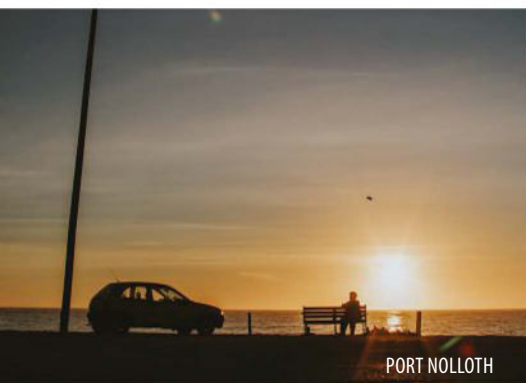
Opening times: Monday to Friday from 9.30 am to 5.30 pm; Saturday from 9.30 am to 3 pm.

Contact: ☎ 027 851 7733

– Willem van der Berg



PORT NOLLOTH



PORT NOLLOTH



Klein Oqis Restaurant, Koingnaas

You might wonder how to pronounce this restaurant's name, but owner Drew Cloete (pictured) kneads it with his thick Namaqualand accent until it rises like two fresh roosterkoek.

"No, man. It's a Namaqualand saying. Like, look at those two *outjies*. You see, like guys, *outjies*, you know?"

Drew grew up in Nababeep and his grandmother, Rosina Cloete, taught him how to cook. "Traditional home-cooked food was her thing. She taught me about *vaalvleis*, offal, roosterkoek and *doodgooi*. You know *doodgooi*?"

I shake my head.

"You put chops in a pot with onions and Worcestershire sauce and dough on top. Then you just add salt and pepper – it makes the meat burst with flavour."

Klein Oqis is known for its roosterkoek and hamburgers. "People drive from Hondeklip Bay to buy food here," he says.

Spend a little time with Drew and you'll see why. He exudes love, patience and generosity in a way you haven't seen in a long time. On the telephone, he invites someone: "Come make a turn. We'll sort you out."

A staff member places someone's order on the counter. "No, add a cooldrink, he hasn't been here in a while," Drew says.

This is more than a place to eat – it feels like home.

Where? Grosvenor Street, Koingnaas

Opening times: Daily from 10 am to 8 pm.

Contact: ☎ 073 326 8671

– Willem van der Berg

THE BEST OF THE WEST



Jetty Restaurant, Doringbaai

There are places where you can eat seafood without seeing the sea. But that's not the case at Jetty Restaurant in Doringbaai – you basically sit in the sea!

The Fryer's Cove wine estate shares the premises with Jetty Restaurant (Fryer's Cove owns 30% of the restaurant; the other 70% belongs to the community of Doringbaai) – you walk through the tasting room to reach the restaurant. Make sure to buy a bottle or two of their award-winning wines before you leave.

If it's windy, you can find shelter inside, but sit outside if the weather allows – with the sea breeze tickling your cheeks, the oysters (R25 each) taste extra fresh. Have you ever had abalone? Try the abalone risotto (R140) – it's farmed in the Doringbaai harbour. Very hungry? The seafood platter (R295) has hake, mussels, two prawns and calamari plus chips or a salad.

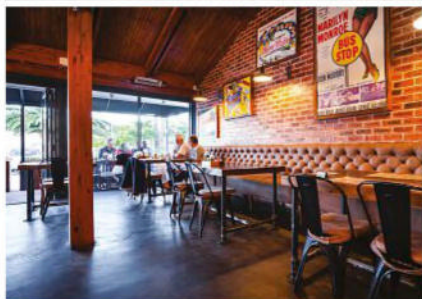
Where? In the Doringbaai harbour.

Opening times: Daily from 10 am to 6 pm.

Contact: ☎ 076 290 4372

📍 fryerscove.co.za

– Toast Coetzer



Charlie's Brewhouse & Restaurant, Velddrif

This is my number-one stop in Velddrif when I visit the West Coast. It's in the Port Owen Marina, in a dead-end street and away from the bustle of the village.

I usually order the oyster special – six oysters (R160) served with a glass of sparkling wine – and Charlie's Pizza (R175) with steak and caramelised onion. Or you can start your meal with smoked snoek pâté and bakkem melba toast (R80) followed by eisbein (R250) for mains. You only live once, right?

They also brew really good beer – try the Sandveld Lager (my favourite), Boathouse Crystal Weiss or Cormorant Bourbon Stout.

Where? 1 Marina Centre, Port Owen Drive

Opening times: Daily from 8 am to 10 pm.

Contact: ☎ 022 783 0448

📍 charliesbrew.co.za

– Noël Cloete

SUPPLIED

SUPPLIED



Mondvol coffee shop, Paternoster

As you approach Paternoster on the R399 from Vredenburg, you'll see a new development on the left before you reach the village. This area is known as Pelgrimsrust and it's where you'll see the sign to Mondvol coffee shop – take the turn-off!

Alexander and Charmaine Pieters (pictured above) opened Mondvol in December 2016. It's a peaceful place with a big stoep. The fynbos garden has enough space for the kids to run around.

I like their cheesecake (R55) and the Mondvol breakfast (R138), and my kids love the flapjacks with bacon and berries (R128). Their coffee is the cherry on top!

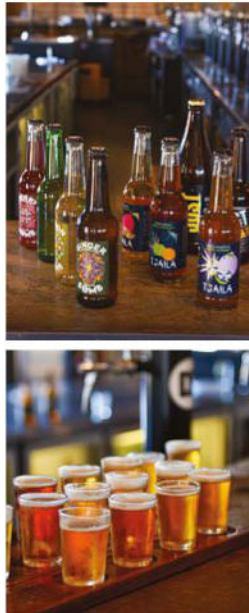
Where? 15 Seemeeu Crescent, Pelgrimsrust, Paternoster

Opening times: Wednesday to Saturday from 9am to 4 pm; Sunday from 9am to 2 pm.

Contact: 073 939 0186

info@mondvol.co.za

– Basson van Zyl



TOAST COETZER

Darling Brew, Darling

Nothing about the outside of this brewery gives away the modern and innovative place that awaits inside. First, you'll walk through their shop where they sell all kinds of beer-related things. The beers themselves, obviously: weiss, pale ale and IPA with the coolest names like Pixie Dust, Rogue Pony and Warlord. They also have other interesting drinks like Apple Bomb Cider and Tjaila Beer Shandy (the Groovy Grapefruit is my favourite). Or you can buy a Darling Brew cap or chutney-flavoured chips made from spent beer grains.

But wait, you're actually here for lunch. The restaurant is on the top floor and overlooks the silver tanks in the brewery (families with children can sit outside near the jungle gym). The burgers are big with a home-made brioche instead of a bun. They try to source all their ingredients locally.

You can also taste beer or go on a tour to see how it's made. Remember to buy a six-pack before you leave – it will make a great gift for Mother's or Father's Day.

Where? 48 Caledon Street

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 5 pm; until 4 pm on Sundays.

Contact: 076 092 8313; darlingbrew.co.za

– Esma Marnewick



West Coast National Park

The West Coast National Park has four bird hides. There are two at Geelbek, one at the Abrahamskraal waterhole, and one near the lagoon below the Seeberg viewpoint.

Some of the species you can see here include curlew sandpiper, sanderling and red knot – the latter arrives in Langebaan every spring after flying about 15 000 km from Russia. Spring is the season for migratory species; you'll also see waders like common greenshank and whimbrel. There are also sometimes African fish-eagles around the lagoon.

It's best to visit the hides on an incoming tide because the birds are more active in the intertidal zone.

Elsewhere in the reserve, look for African harrier-hawk, southern black korhaan, grey-winged francolin, Cape spurfowl, black harrier and bokmakierie.

Contact: 📞 sanparks.org

– Basson van Zyl



GREATER FLAMINGO



CAPE GANNET

Bird Island, Lambert's Bay

See that little island just outside the Lambert's Bay harbour? All those white birds are not seagulls – *they're* circling above you, waiting for leftover chips. No, that's a colony of more than 20 000 Cape gannets. The whole island is a CapeNature reserve. It's one of only six places where Cape gannets breed and the only breeding site open to the public.

The blue-eyed birds can fly up to 100 km per day in search of fish. And when they return to the island, they have to look carefully to find their nests because they all live on top of each other. Their nests are built on the ground with guano and the female gannet lays only one egg that will hatch in August or September – the best time to visit the island.

Bring your binoculars or a long lens for your camera and sit out of the wind in the bird hide. There's also a small museum on the island.

Entrance fee: R40 per adult; R20 per child under 12.

Opening times: Daily from 8 am to 6 pm.

Contact: 📞 087 087 3951; 🌐 capenature.co.za

– Evan Naudé



BLACK-WINGED STILT

Bokkomlaan, Velddrif

Velddrif is one of the most popular bird-watching spots in South Africa. More than 250 species – especially waterbirds – have been seen along the course of the Berg River, from the estuary at Laaipelek to the salt pans on the floodplain upstream. You can see different birds in a range of habitats, including beaches, mudflats, reedbeds and strandveld.

The area next to Bokkomlaan is one of the best places. I often see pelicans, egrets and herons, as well as pied kingfisher and malachite kingfisher. At sunset, it's special to watch thousands of Cape cormorants flying upriver to roost.

There are lots of places to stay in and around Velddrif. Kuifkopvisvanger (📞 kuifkopvisvanger.co.za), Knor Varkie (📞 knorvarkie.co.za), Happy Campers (📞 076 430 1274) and Kliphoek River Resort (📞 kliphoek.com) are all upstream from Velddrif next to the Berg River; all offer camping and self-catering accommodation.

Next to the sea, you can stay at the Stywelyne caravan park (📞 stywelyne@bergmun.org.za) in Laaipelek, or camp at the Dwarskersbos caravan park (📞 dwarskersbos@bergmun.org.za) up the coast.

– Basson van Zyl



Rocherpan Nature Reserve, Velddrif

Rocherpan is small but it has a lot to boast about. It includes a marine conservation area offshore (look for whales in winter) and the wetland behind the dunes is rich in birdlife.

It's not a natural pan. In 1839, a farmer called Pierre Rocher arrived here in search of summer grazing for his cattle. He and his workers closed the mouth of the Papkuils River and diverted the stream behind the dunes so his animals could have a place to drink. Over time, the new water source also became a habitat for waterbirds. There are three bird hides on the edge of the pan; in winter you have a good chance of seeing flamingos and pelicans. Up to 183 species have been recorded here, of which 70 are waterbirds. Look for oystercatcher and swift tern on the beach, and the rare black harrier elsewhere in the reserve.

There's a picnic site with braai facilities near one of the bird hides and there's a second picnic site next to the sea. You can explore the jeep tracks in the reserve on your mountain bike or hike one of two trails (7 km and 9 km). The reserve has eight self-catering units (from R600 per person sharing) and a swimming pool.

Rocherpan is seasonal. It's usually dry between March and June, so that's not the best time to see birds.

Entrance fee: R50 per adult; R30 per child under 12.

Where? About 25 km north of Velddrif next to the R27.

Contact: 📞 087 087 8250; 📧 capenature.co.za

– Evan Naudé



HIKING TRAILS



Goegap Nature Reserve, Springbok

The two-day Hartmann's T Kou Trail (22 km) in Goegap Nature Reserve near Springbok takes you through some of the most scenic sections of the reserve. There are hidden kloofs, sandy plains, klipspringers and many, many quiver trees. The overnight hut is well equipped, the beds have bedding, and the staff will even drop off some of your supplies if you ask.

If your time is limited, do one of the day hikes. The Ian Meyer Trail has three options (5 km, 6 km or 7,5 km) and starts at the campsite. The Agterlos Trail begins at the Hester Malan Succulent Garden – you can hike 4 km or 6 km. The latter two trails go up a steep hill, so don't let the short distances fool you. The views over the vast plains make it worthwhile.

Cost: You don't pay for the Hartmann's T Kou Trail, but for the accommodation in Witsand bush camp. It costs R400 per night for the first two people, plus R50 per extra person (maximum eight people). Day visitors R40 per person.

Where? Goegap is 15 km south-east of Springbok.

Contact: ☎ 027 718 9906

✉ goegapnr@gmail.com

"Goegap Nature Reserve" on Facebook

– Willem van der Berg



Schaap River Canyon, Springbok

Nigramoep means "place of black water" in Nama. "It's a farm but it once had two shops, its own mail bag and petrol station, and a small school. There was also a copper mine," says Suzette Louw, who lives here with her in-laws, the Kotzes.

Suzette offers hiking tours year-round in the Schaap River Canyon, which winds through the property. The landscape is most scenic during flower season when the floor of the canyon is covered in *bokhorings* and *kantblommetjies*.

One of the most popular options is the guided four-day slackpacking hike during flower season. You hike about 75 km in total and sleep in bush camps in the canyon – with hot showers and a dinner table! They also have self-catering units (from R900 per night for two people) if you want to stay over without hiking.

Cost: R7 475 per person for the four-day slackpacking trail (minimum 15 people per group, maximum 20).

Where? Follow the N7 north of Springbok for 24 km, turn left and drive through Bulletrap – follow this dirt road for 30 km to Nigramoep.

Contact: ☎ 082 687 3852 (WhatsApp); ✉ nigramoep.co.za

– Evan Naudé

Shoreline of the San

On this five-day slackpacking trail, you hike 50 km along the beach between Elands Bay and Strandfontein. The trail was developed by Anette Grobler, a former army major who has climbed Kilimanjaro, participated in international swimming competitions, and was the first person to walk the entire 570 km of the Skeleton Coast in Namibia on her own.

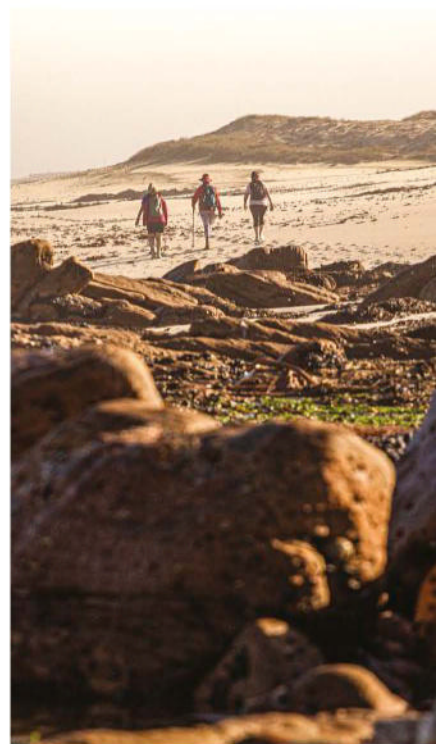
But you don't have to be as tough as Anette to complete this West Coast trail. The longest daily distance is 17 km – you walk between two and five hours every day. Hikers carry a small 25- to 30-litre backpack with a water bottle, jacket and padkos. You sleep in guesthouses in Elands Bay, Lambert's Bay and Doringbaai.

Highlights along the way include pristine beaches you can only reach on foot, lunch at the Muisbosskerm open-air restaurant, and a wine tasting in Doringbaai at the country's only wine cellar in a harbour, Fryer's Cove.

Cost: R8 400 per person sharing; R10 800 single supplement. Groups should have a minimum of 14 people and a maximum of 26.

Contact: ✉ silentsteps.co.za

– Evan Naudé





PLACES TO STAY

Die Houthoop, Kleinsee

Namaqualand and the West Coast gather around the same fire here. The sea is just over the hill and on the plain, the sheep farm swaps its dusty overalls for a colourful holiday shirt during flower season.

People in Namaqualand love a good *kuier*. The communal braai facilities at this guest farm are nice and big and you can tell stories until late.

Book a delicious seafood meal (R270 per person) that includes mussel soup, pot bread, paella and three types of fish. There's a 4x4 route in the dunes if you want some excitement.

The 10 camping stands and 24 huts are basic, but there's power and the communal ablutions are clean. If you like to have your own bathroom, stay in a self-catering unit or in one of the en suite rooms.

Rates: Camping R120 per person; huts R230 per person sharing; self-catering units from R400 per person.

Where? About 15 km south-east of Kleinsee and 6 km from the tar road to Koingnaas. The dirt road to the farm is in a good condition and can be driven in any vehicle.

Contact: 📞 078 598 7227

🌐 houthoop.co.za

– Willem van der Berg



Jackie Moolman of Die Houthoop, with Snowy the cat and Sökkies the sheepdog.

Voetbaai Cottages, McDougall's Bay

These two self-catering cottages are right on the beach. Some mornings, you'll watch fishermen launching their *bakkies* (small boats). If they're lucky at sea, you can buy a fresh snoek from them later. There's a sheltered braai at the cottages where you can cook your fish over the coals.

But first take a stroll along the beach. Or sit on the deck and watch the sun slip into the water.

Rate: From R525 per person sharing.

Where? Voetbaai Street, McDougall's Bay

Contact: 📞 082 578 3387; 🌐 voetbaai.com

– Willem van der Berg



THE BEST OF THE WEST

Kraalbaai House Boats, West Coast National Park

Sleep on the water in Kraalbaai! Once all the day visitors have gone home, you can sip a beer on deck while the sun sets over Postberg.

There are five houseboats. The smallest, *Eden*, sleeps four people and the biggest, *Nirvana*, sleeps up to 24 people – perfect for a big birthday party or an event where you want all your friends under one roof.

Rates: From R3 700 per night, plus the park's conservation fee of R74 per adult per day; half-price for children under 12; free with a Wild card (R110/R55 in flower season). All the boats have self-catering facilities.

Where? Kraalbaai, West Coast National Park; about 21 km from the R27 gate and about 31 km from the Langebaan gate.

Contact: 📞 076 017 4788

📍 kraalbaikb.com

– Toast Coetzer



West Coast Luxury Tents

These tents are at Fork West, a beachfront potato farm between Dwarskersbos and Elands Bay. Come here if you want to escape life's frantic pace. The safari tents – Fork South, Middle Fork, Fork North and The Palace – are pitched on wooden decks behind fynbos-covered dunes that lead directly to a *looong* empty beach.

Each of the tents has an en suite bedroom, a kitchenette, a small deck and a private outdoor braai area. Middle Fork and Fork North sleep two on double beds, Fork South sleeps four (double bed and two single beds) and The Palace comprises three tents (each sleeping two) set up in a configuration suited to groups, with a communal lapa.

The highlight is undoubtedly the private beach – you can walk all morning without seeing another soul. It's also pet-friendly.

Rate: From R1 300 per night.

Where? About 27 km south of Elands Bay.

Contact: 📞 067 336 6862 (Theresa)

📍 westcoastluxurytents.co.za

– Kyra Tarr



Kersefontein Guest Farm, Hopefield

It's difficult to imagine a time when the West Coast had no tar roads, no wind farms and no busy holiday towns. But when you visit Kersefontein, it's as if you've stepped back a few centuries. It's one of the oldest farms in the Cape, acquired by the Melck family in 1770. Julian Melck (pictured, below right) is still your host! He grew up in the house and now farms with sheep, cattle and wheat.

He also farms with history because every conversation with Julian soon turns to one of Kersefontein's legendary anecdotes, like the fact that the last hippo in the Berg River was shot here, right in front of the farmhouse, in 1869. The skull is in the hallway and the rifle is mounted to the wall!

Kersefontein sees many tourists, but farm life continues undisturbed. Koekoek chickens greet you at your room door. Lean over a wall next to the storehouse and a drove of pigs will grunt at you in excitement.

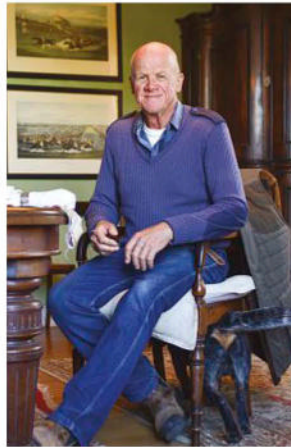
Julian is generous with his time: His company is one of the reasons guests return again and again. Dinner, at R570 per person, is served in the old dining room. Julian will join you at a table so long you'll have to WhatsApp the guests at the other end to pass you the salt. You'll remember this meal and Julian's stories for years to come.

Rate: From R1 080 per person sharing, breakfast included.

Where? 18 km north of Hopefield

Contact: ☎ 083 454 1025; 🌐 kersefontein.co.za

– Toast Coetzer



Swartriet, Jacobsbaai

There are so many great weekend places in and around Cape Town that I seldom return to the same place twice, but I've been to Swartriet many times: with my husband and kids, with friends and their kids... Everything about Swartriet screams "holiday". Sandy feet are still allowed in these chalets, and a wet towel on the stoep won't detract from the decor.

There are 29 units – the front row overlooks a 2,5 km-long private beach. You can walk to Jacobsbaai or in the other direction, all the way to Tietiesbaai – it's about 17 km along the coast. The water is cold, but it's a nice swimming beach nonetheless.

The chalets sleep six, eight or ten people and they haven't changed much over the years – they have everything you need, but they're nothing fancy. New additions include a dishwasher and fireplace in one of the units.

Rate: From R1 100 per night for six people.

Where? About 90 km north of Cape Town, just north of Jacobsbaai.

Contact: ☎ 082 402 0120; 🌐 swartriet.com

– Esma Marnewick



Strandfontein Holiday Resort

Unlike most other villages on the West Coast, Strandfontein doesn't have an industry or a harbour. According to the previous census, it's home to only 431 people, but this sleepy village perks up over weekends and during school holidays.

The caravan park is managed by the Matzikama Municipality and it's divided into four zones: A Block, T Block, Skulpiesweg and Perdeskoen. A Block is a small terrace with 52 stands about 15 m above sea level. Stands #28–52 have an unobstructed view of the sea. Stands #1–27 are against a dirt wall, but each has a private bathroom. (The others share a communal ablution block.) T Block has 20 stands and one communal ablution block. Stands #5–8 have a sea view and the others overlook holiday houses. Skulpiesweg has 14 stands and it's where you stay when all the other stands are booked – it's not the best place to camp in Strandfontein.

Perdeskoen is the biggest of the four, with 66 spacious stands. You can't see the sea from here, but it's the most popular because it has a great atmosphere. The people who camp here have known each other for years and book their spot long in advance so they can be next to their favourite neighbours.

Rate: From R240 per stand (four people). Book online

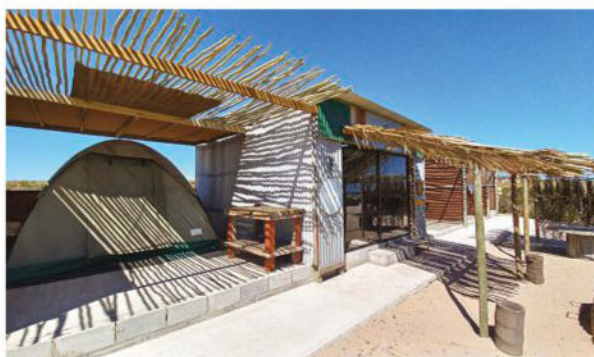
📞 nightsbridge.com

Where? Strandfontein is 8 km north of Doringbaai.

Contact: 📞 027 201 3237/3401; 📧 ivanwyk@matzikamamun.co.za

🌐 westerncape.gov.za

– Cyril Klopper



Zeven Puts Private Nature Reserve, Lambert's Bay

The Engelbrecht family and CapeNature have protected this stretch of coastline so you can experience and appreciate the West Coast as it should be. There's a campsite (4x4 only) right by the sea – you're so close the waves might splash foam into your wine glass! There are no facilities except two flush toilets. You have to bring everything else, including firewood. Only 20 vehicles are allowed here at a time.

The tented camp sleeps 10 people and has flush toilets and showers. You have to bring your own bedding, but the kitchen is well equipped and there's a sheltered living area where you can braai.

Zeven Puts is closed in the winter months from May to the end of August. No pets.

Rate: Contact Jan Engelbrecht for rates and reserve regulations.

Where? About 20 minutes' drive north of Lambert's Bay – you'll receive detailed directions when you book.

Contact: 📞 082 570 3364 (Jan)

– Toast Coetzer



Dwarskersbos Caravan Park

The campsite in Dwarskersbos is always popular – you have to book at least a year in advance if you want to camp here during the summer holidays. There are 121 stands that share four ablution blocks. Stands #1 – 10 are closest to the sea; there's only wire netting between you and the beach. But they're also the smallest, with just enough space for one caravan and your vehicle.

Each stand has its own braai, power point, tap and rubbish bin. You camp on hard sand, but there are trees for shade. The road inside the resort is tarred and there are streetlights at night so you won't trip over tree roots or tent pegs on the way to the bathroom.

There are also 12 chalets and five rondavels if you don't want to stay in a tent or caravan. The See Kaia Restaurant is right next to the entrance gate if you want a cooked meal.

Rate: Camping from R120 per stand per night (four people) depending on the season.

Where? Dwarskersbos is about 170 km north of Cape Town.

Contact: ☎ 022 754 0110 (office)

☎ 083 272 4132 (Bianca)

✉ dwarskersbos@bergmun.org.za

– Cyril Kloppe



McDougall's Bay Caravan Park

McDougall's Bay is a "suburb" of Port Nolloth. This is the northernmost campsite on the West Coast. It has 93 stands, laid out in two rows. One row is on the beach and the other backs up against a row of chalets. Every two stands share a rubbish bin and there's a "fence" of trees for some privacy and wind protection. Each stand has its own braai and power point. Taps are planted randomly in the campsite, but you're always close to one.

The caravan park is fenced and a security guard patrols at night, but you still shouldn't leave expensive gear like laptops and cameras out in the open when you go for a swim.

Stands #6 – 22 are on the beach with an unparalleled view of the sea. Management warns that water sometimes floods these stands at high tide. Stands #23 – 38 are further away, near the chalets. These are safer! There are five ablution blocks. Some are worn out; others are better. The resort feels old and deserted in low season, but comes alive during summer school holidays. **Rates:** Camping from R200 per stand (for four people); 30% discount for pensioners. Chalets (each sleeps four people) from R750 per night depending on the season.

Where? McDougall's Bay is 4 km south of Port Nolloth.

Contact: ☎ 027 851 1110 (office)

✉ caravanpark@richtersveld.gov.za

– Cyril Kloppe



Jackal Creek, Lambert's Bay

This is a holiday farm and a popular *kuierplek*. The bar is managed by Lambert's Bay legend Cornell Gelderbloem. When he's not behind the counter, he's handing out orders on a building site or entertaining an audience from the Jackal Creek music stage. He's also a braai master – people come from far and wide for his spit braai.

There's a campsite on Jackal Creek called Panorama Park, with 15 stands. Five stands are near the entrance (and Cornell's bar); the other 10 are under overhangs with a view of the Jakkals River, the Xamarin golf course and the Kookfontein vineyards on the opposite bank. Some of these stands are inside the overhangs and have stone walls to keep out the wind and cold.

Rates: Camping R350 per vehicle (four people); unit for two people R500 per night. Pensioners get a discount depending on the length of their stay.

Where? About 5 km east of Lambert's Bay.

Contact: ☎ 076 311 2204 (Cornell)

☎ 076 186 8041 (Una)

"Jackal Creek Weskus" on Facebook

– Cyril Kloppe



Kruistementvlei, Piket-Bo-Berg

On top of Piketberg, only two hours from Cape Town at the end of a winding road, you'll find this hidden-away campsite. But just because it's remote doesn't mean you won't have access to creature comforts. Someone clearly loves this place – it has a kitchen boma with a sink, a two-plate gas stove and a kettle, and enough tin plates and mugs for 20 people. There's no power, but a donkey boiler provides hot water and there's a compost toilet.

The adults can relax while the kids can play hide-and-seek. And when you feel hot and sweaty, walk through the fynbos to the farm dam. Let the kids splash around in the water while you watch the sunset and plan your next visit.

Rates: The campsite is for the exclusive use of one group. It costs R800 per night, plus R100 per person (minimum 8 people; maximum 15). Other accommodation from R800 per night for two people.

Where? Kruistementvlei is about 20 km north-west of Piketberg – follow the R366 out of town and look for the turn-off to Piket-Bo-Berg on the left.

Contact: 📞 065 584 2682; 🌐 ksvfarm.co.za

– Esma Marnewick



Skuinsbaai Noord, Namaqua National Park

Imagine you've been shipwrecked on a deserted stretch of coast. Fortunately, you have shelter and a long drop. You get to know the rhythm of the place: cormorants fly past early in the morning; seals and dolphins play in the waves; and when you go for a walk in the late afternoon, meerkats watch you from their burrows in the veld. This is what it feels like to camp at Skuinsbaai Noord.

All the coastal campsites in the Namaqua National Park are remote, but Skuinsbaai Noord has only two stands. If no one shows up to camp on the other stand, you have the West Coast all to yourself. You need to be completely self-sufficient – bring everything you'll need, including water.

Rates: R201 per stand (maximum six people) plus the conservation fee of R55 per adult and R27 per child; free with a Wild card.

Where? After Boulderbaai, Skuinsbaai Noord is the furthest north of the coastal campsites in Namaqua National Park. You can reach it without a 4x4, but you'll need a 4x4 to explore the rest of the park. Use the entrance (GPS: S30.58459 E17.52082) at the Sarrisam Farm Museum – it's 11 km from there. Skuinsbaai Noord is about 83 km from the main rest camp at Skilpad and about 70 km from Garies.

Contact: 📞 012 428 9111; 🌐 sanparks.org

– Esma Marnewick



Wild camping, Papendorp

The area south of the Olifants River Mouth is great for a quick camp in the veld. It's all municipal land and there are no official campsites – I usually just pick a spot.

Take the Papendorp turn-off on the R362, drive 1,5 km and turn left (Papendorp's houses are on the right). Follow the dirt road towards the sea. You'll pass a salt pan and later you can almost drive right up to the river mouth.

There are no facilities so bring everything you'll need. Also make sure to take all your rubbish away.

Rate: Free.

Where? Papendorp is about 55 km north of Lambert's Bay.

– Noël Cloete

CAMPSITES



Wild West Coast, Redelinghuys

This private campsite – only accessible in a 4x4 – is in the mountains close to the village of Redelinghuys. It's great for bigger groups who want to spend time together and maybe celebrate a special occasion like a birthday. There's a lapa, braai facilities and a splash pool. You can book the place for exclusive use – you need a minimum of six people to do so.

There's an equipped kitchen with a fridge and a gas stove, and accommodation is in three cabins and two tents, sleeping 14 in total. (Bedding is supplied, but bring your own towel and an extra blanket in winter.) If your group is bigger than 14, you can camp (maximum 40 people).

Ask the owner Rehan van Lill if you'd like meals – they can prepare dishes like snoek and sweet potato, paella and potjiekos. They also have a two-day slackpacking hike, the Papkuilsvlei Trail (18 km in total), for groups of 10 to 14 people.

Rates: Camping R150 per person; other accommodation R350 per person. Papkuilsvlei Hiking Trail R850 per person (includes one night's accommodation and dinner).

Where? Follow Voortrekker Street north-west out of Redelinghuys for 1 km. The Wild West Coast reception office is on the first farm you see – Papkuilsvlei.

Contact: 📞 083 567 0265; 🌐 wildwestcoast.co.za

– Noël Cloete

THE BEST OF THE WEST



4x4 ROUTES

Caracal 4x4 Eco Route, Namaqua National Park

If you visit Namaqua National Park in a Suzuki S-Presso, you might think it's not that big – only a small section at the Skilpad gate is accessible to sedans. To explore the park properly, you need a 4x4. The Caracal 4x4 Eco Route (about 200km) is one of the longest off-road routes in the country and it will take you to all the attractions in the park.

The route starts at Skilpad and takes you down the Kamiesberg escarpment towards Soebatsfontein. A little further, the trail heads to the Wildeperdehoek Pass, which was built in the 1800s to transport copper ore from Springbok to Hondeklip Bay. At the bottom of the pass, you drive over expansive plains and past deserted farmsteads before you reach the road to Hondeklip Bay. Cross the road and enter the coastal section of the park that stretches south for 50 km.

Visit the Spoeg River caves and estuary, and drive along the coast to the Groen River Mouth. There are viewpoints and turn-offs to the sea along the way and you'll also see the signs for the coastal campsites. There's soft sand in places, but signs will warn you and recommend the correct tyre pressure.

Finally, you'll reach the Groen River Mouth and its lighthouse. Exit the park here and head inland along a 70 km dirt road to the N7 and Garies. You can also start the route at Groen River and drive in the opposite direction.

Cost: Free. You only have to pay the daily conservation fee of R55 per adult and R27 per child under 12.

Contact: 📞 027 672 1948; 🌐 sanparks.org

– Evan Naudé



Klein-Tafelberg 4x4 Trail, Redelinghuys

The Klein-Tafelberg Training & Adventure Centre – previously known as Klein-Tafelberg 4x4 – was established in 2015, but the trail is based on a much older off-road route used by farmers back in the day.

Elize and Dolf Botha manage the campsite and conference facilities. Dolf will accompany you on the trail.

The first obstacle is called Milkshake Hill. It's a steep climb on a sandy road with some axle twisters. The second obstacle is Fyndraai – it's a shorter version of Milkshake Hill with a tricky corner that will require using your diff lock. Diep Sloot follows – a steep, rocky descent – and then Kurktrekker, a series of steep stone steps. Past the bottom end of the Adoons circular route, you'll arrive at Vulstasie, a campsite with three stands and scenic views of the Sandveld and West Coast.

The Adoons circular route starts near the campsite. According to Dolf, it's a grade 5 trail that most standard 4x4 vehicles won't be able to master.

Keeping to the Klein-Tafelberg route, you'll carry on to Skillie se Draai, Klein-Adoons and Heartbreak Hill, a long, sandy climb that will catch you out if you don't carry enough momentum. The last obstacle is Slang – a sandy road that slithers through fynbos. And then it's an easy drive back to the reception office.

Go have a beer in the 0.8 Bar while your kids swim in the pool. Then it's time to light a fire in the campsite. That's a good day!

Cost: R300 per vehicle for the trail. Camping R350 per night (one vehicle and four people); chalets from R1 250 per night (four people).

Where? 14 km south-west of Redelinghuys.

Contact: 📞 067 106 6549 (WhatsApp only); 🌐 kleintafelberg.co.za

– Cyril Kloppe



Koingnaas 4x4 Route

Koingnaas is north of Hondeklip Bay. If you're ever in the area, make an appointment with Dudley Wessels and head into the dunes. The land belongs to a mining company, but Dudley has permission to lead guided trips.

It's an exceptional piece of sandveld and the dunes will make your stomach somersault a few times. There are also interesting stops along the way, where Dudley will share his vast knowledge of the geology, animals, plants, history and diamond stories of the area.

Cost: R500 per vehicle (minimum four vehicles; if your group consists of three vehicles or fewer, it costs R2 000 for the group).

Where? You meet Dudley at the Koingnaas information centre next to the road that runs past the village. ("Checkpoint Drive" on Google Maps.)

Contact: 📞 083 305 2569

– Willem van der Berg

Atlantis Dune Field

You don't have to drive all the way to Namibia to play in the dunes. These dunes in the Witlands Aquifer Nature Reserve are less than an hour's drive from Cape Town.

If you're inexperienced at sand driving, there are guides who can give you advice or help when you get stuck. Some operators also offer rides – you get the adrenaline rush in someone else's 4x4 without having to worry about your own.

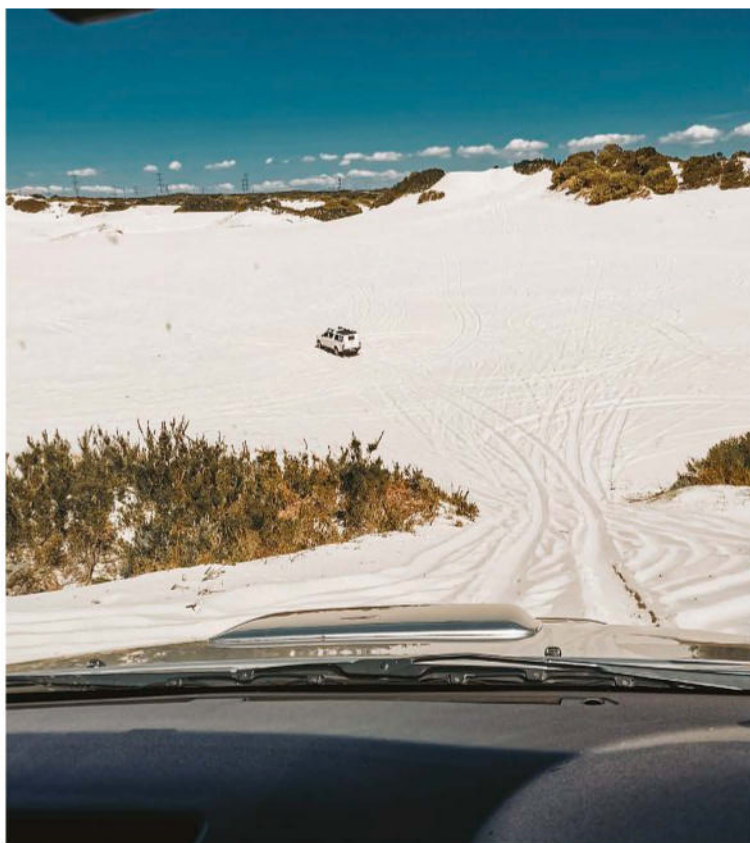
Cost: R205 per vehicle with four adults, plus R50 per extra person. Motorbikes and quad bikes pay R118 and sandboarders pay R68. For more information, send an e-mail to the address below and you'll get an automatic response with PDF attachments. None of the reserve telephones seem to work.

Where? About 14 km north of Melkbosstrand. Follow the R27, turn right onto the R307 to Atlantis and look for the turn-off to the dune field on the left.

Opening times: The permit office is open daily from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm. The reserve is open until 6 pm in winter and 7 pm in summer.

Contact: 📧 witlandsnature.reserve@capetown.gov.za

– Noël Cloete





HORSE RIDING

Drikus Horse Trails, Paternoster

As a child, Ronel Colombo developed a love for horses thanks to her mentor, Drikus Laubscher. After he passed away, Ronel inherited six of his horses and in 2007 she started Drikus Horse Trails in his honour.

The rides are suitable for beginners and more experienced riders. The standard ride (75 minute; 8,5 km) starts at the farmstead and goes to the beach near Paternoster and back. Along the way you might see small game like steenbok and bat-eared foxes. You can also arrange to stop for sundowners during the afternoon ride (3 pm to 5 pm). Morning rides take place from 9 am to 11 am.

Cost: From R450 per person for a standard ride to the beach. Customised options are also available.

Where? 6 km east of Paternoster on the dirt road to Stompneus Bay.

Contact: ☎ 082 748 5596 (Ronel); 🌐 paternosterhorsetrails.co.za

– Noël Cloete



TOAST COETZER

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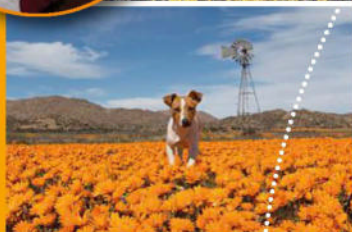
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- Namaqualand Flower
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- Namibia
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Contact information:

- www.namakwatoere.com
- www.namaqualodge.co.za
- facebook.com/namakwatoere
- facebook.com/NamaquaLodgeSA/
- instagram.com/namakwatoere/?hl=en
- +27 27 219 1633 | +27 27 219 1377
- Cell: +27 82 896 6444
- info@namakwatoere.com (Tours)
- info@namaqualodge.co.za (Lodge)
- santa@namakwatoere.com (Lodge & Tours)

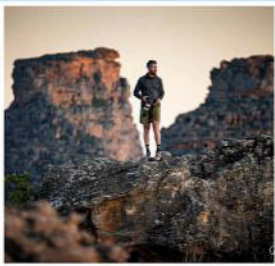


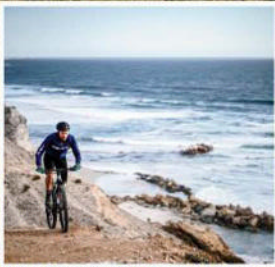


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West Coast off the Beaten Track

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Wamakersvlei Beach Farm is a charming historic fishing village that oozes tranquillity and relaxation. Situated under a two-hour drive from Cape Town along the West Coast, this idyllic nature destination is where you can detach from the world's cares. Couples, families, and friends can indulge in reconnecting with loved ones, enjoying golden moments and creating memories that will last a lifetime.

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**WAMAKERSVLEI BEACH FARM IS
ONE OF THOSE WONDERFUL
PLACES THAT CROSSES YOUR
PATH ONLY ONCE IN A LIFETIME.**

”



Break away to a **7-kilometre secluded beachfront and 400 hectares of fynbos scenery**, home to abundant indigenous birds and wildlife, mesmerising sunsets, and starry nights. Unwind with leisurely walks along miles of untouched beaches, where dolphins frolic in the surf.

Experience unforgettable moments at an exclusive beachside braai while soaking in the breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean.

- Five authentic self-catering cottages
- Group accommodation (30 guests)
- Complimentary Wi-Fi
- Pet-friendly - (3 fenced cottages)
- A safe space to connect with nature (ADT armed response / CCTV)
- Equine-friendly
- Beach walks
- Beach Braai
- Fishing
- Cycling
- Swimming
- Birdwatching
- Fynbos flowers
- Photography
- 4x4 Scenic route

Cottages are nestled on the dunes or tucked away among the fynbos, each offering stunning views that stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the beautiful saltpans and mountains.

Each cottage has indoor and outdoor braai facilities, making Wamakersvlei Beach Farm a perfect destination for both summer and winter getaways. The cottages feature open-plan living areas, and their kitchens are fully equipped with a fridge/freezer, gas hob, microwave, cooking & dining utensils.

In case of load shedding, a backup inverter is available for lighting. Mosseltrap cottage can seat up to 30 guests.

COTTAGES

Mosseltrap - Ocean
Galjoenswaai - Ocean
Naguiltjie - Salt pan
Skilpadkos - Salt pan
Bokmakierie - Salt pan

CONTACT INFO

Marlene **083 527 7967 / 073 583 3551**
Info@wamakersvlei.co.za
www.wamakersvlei.co.za



Creating Golden Moments








Casa Del Mar studio apartments offers luxury self-catering holiday accommodation on a beachfront property in the heart of Dwaraskersbos.

Guests have a choice between the seafront West Studio or the wheelchair-friendly East Studio, both of which can accommodate 2 guests. Both studios have an open-plan design and are luxuriously furnished with a king-size bed or two single beds.

FACILITIES

- Self-catering accommodation
- Wi-Fi/Netflix/Smart TV
- Beach towels
- Beach umbrellas
- Beach chairs
- Outdoor braai
- Beach access
- Security

Contact Marlene
083 527 7967
Casadelmardkb@gmail.com

VELDDRIF



Accommodation options include self-catering chalets as well as spacious campsites with private ablution facilities.

Enjoy fun days along the river and beautiful evenings with stunning views year-round. A feast for the soul of any nature lover, birdwatcher, boating or fishing enthusiast and the perfect space for family and friends to gather.




Contact/WhatsApp no: 076 344 2891
E-mail: kliphoekinfo@kliphoek.co.za ■ www.kliphoek.com

www.elandsbayhotel.co.za



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Bookings: info@elandsbayhotel.co.za




LAMBERT'S BAY



Lambert's Bay Hotel

www.lambertsbayhotel.co.za

Tel: 027 432 1126 • Bookings: reslb@kingsley.co.za








Isabellas Restaurant has proudly graced the harbour of Lamberts Bay for almost 30 years. With a beautiful history of expansion and growth, this family-run restaurant has established itself in the roots of Lamberts Bay and what it has to offer.

Enjoy casual, West Coast-inspired dining in an open, effortlessly styled, harbour environment.

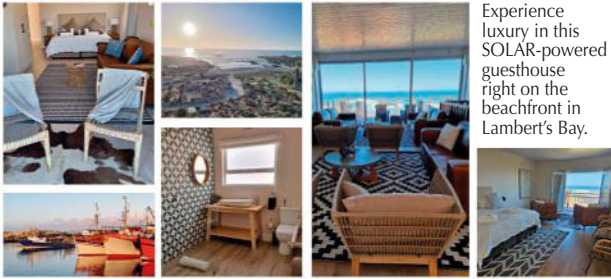
A large variety of oceanfront dining is offered while enjoying good wine, modern cocktails, and fresh ingredients.

Enjoy the friendly West Coast hospitality, beautiful seafront views and relaxing linger-longer atmosphere.

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Accommodation is available and tastings are by appointment.

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Piekenierskloof
WINES

CARMËN
Tea Shop
AT DE TOL FARM DELI

Located on a historic piece of land along the Piekenierskloof Pass, is a white building filled with many stories. The building acted as a supply station and pitstop to many travelers since 1864. Back in the day the beautiful Piekenierskloof Tasting Room was the original winery and the Carmien Tea Shop contained a water-hole for donkeys and horses of travelers. The buildings have been transformed to offer a variety of unique

experiences for the whole family. In keeping with our tradition we offer honest food, exciting tea, food and wine pairings, quality artisanal products and excellent wine and rooibos tea from the surrounding area to visitors. It's the ideal stop en-route to view the West Coast flowers and is home to the annual Rooibos MTB event taking place at the end of July. We look forward to welcoming you at De Tol soon!



DELI & TEA SHOP: 08:00-17:00 DAILY, SUNDAYS 08:00-15:00 • PIEKENIERSKLOOF WINES TASTING ROOM: 10:00-17:00, SUNDAYS 10:00-15:00





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300 km from Cape Town.
The ideal stopover on the N7 route between Cape Town and Namibia, Springbok and Upington. The quiet villages along the West Coast and Namaqualand are accessible from this national and scenic route, making it the perfect stopover after a long drive.
There are five bedrooms: four with double beds, one with two three-quarter beds and a family unit consisting of two connecting rooms suitable for a family of four. Safe parking.

Contact: 079 799 0707 (Chrisna, manager) • Email: bookings@thevineklaver.co.za • www.thevineklaver.co.za



Gateway TO THE OLIFANTS RIVER VALLEY!

KLAWER CELLARS

Just a stone's throw from the N7 route, **Klawer is the perfect stop for those visiting Namaqualand** during flower season. Visitors can purchase **award-winning wines** at our tasting room and indulge in one of our carefully arranged pairings. We also have some **exceptional local products** to take home as gifts or as a sweet reminder of our valley.

PHOTOS KLUG PHOTO

ENJOY OUR KLAWER RANGE AND PREMIUM RANGE VILLA ESPOSTO WINES.

www.klawerwines.co.za
Contact: 027 216 1530

We can't wait to meet you!



FARM LUSHOF, VREDENDAL

Raisin Rest

RAISIN REST IS A LOVELY FARM-STYLED COTTAGE ON FARM LUSHOF LOCATED 5 KM OUTSIDE VREDENDAL.

It could be a great option for a small family wanting to explore the beautiful West Coast. This cottage can comfortably accommodate 2 adults and 1 child at a time.

The cosy open-plan living area features a kitchen equipped. Complementary tea, coffee, sugar, milk, and rusks are provided. Additionally, this cottage has an entertainment area with another dining table and an indoor braai, a great spot to keep warm in the winter. Guests are afforded secure parking. Free Wi-Fi. Pets by arrangement.

Discover the ultimate farm experience

Contact us: 082 965 1897
E-mail: dalenevanheerden01@gmail.com



Honne Pondokkies

HONDEKLIP BAY

Situated approximately 300 meters from the beach. Here visitors are free to meander along a picturesque 14 km shoreline.

Accommodation is provided in a choice of **7 self-catering units** with full sea views from the patios or the camping sites. Each unit has its own braai area and there is also a braai room for the rainy days, selected DSTV channels.

The campsites consist of **10 camping sites**, each with their own braai facilities, a tap with running water, electrical points and lights and 2 communal ablution facilities.

We also have a fully **furnished caravan** called "Brakanjan" with its own private ablution.

A beautiful **swimming pool** and **braai area** is available for the enjoyment of the whole family. Kiddies may enjoy the entertainment at the fun park. All 7 units are **pet-friendly** but at the pet owner's own risk.

Contact MD Swanepoel 083 321 1600
Email: md2swanepoel@gmail.com
www.honnepondokkies.co.za



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Daisy Country lodge is 4 km outside town. We offer a farm atmosphere and magnificent views overlooking the hills and valleys; a veritable oasis in the semi-desert.

- * Buffet breakfast
- * Slippers and gowns in all the rooms
- * Bottle of wine to welcome you
- * Fully stocked mini bar fridge (biscuits/ something sweet)
- * Free bottled water
- * If you wish to order dinner in town and don't want to go back to collect, we will gladly collect on your behalf

SPRINGBOK, NAMAQUALAND
IDEAL OVERNIGHT STAY IN THE NORTHERN CAPE!



Liefeland
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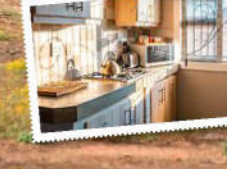
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- Panoramic view across the landscape.
- Cottages are off the grid!
- 5 fully equipped self-catering units, each with carport.
- Freestanding units.
- Dog-friendly

Contact Laetitia 082 806 3252





De Akker Cottages
 ★★☆☆☆ & **AKKERBOOM PADSTAL**

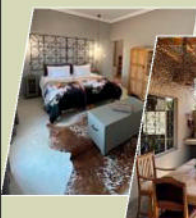
We are situated on a working grape farm between Keimoes and Kakamas and 60 km from Augrabies Falls.

DE AKKER COTTAGES **AKKERBOOM PADSTAL**




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kalahari red dune route



For accommodation:
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+27 82 492 3469

www.kalaharireduneroute.co.za

The Northern Cape is scattered with diverse cultures, rich frontier history, and activities to suit every adrenaline junkie's taste.

The Kalahari Red Dune Route offers a wide range of activities, including desert walks, dune boarding, 4x4 trails, camel dairy & Lost City, game drives, birding expeditions, vulture restaurant, meerkat sanctuary or simply floating in salt pools on a salt pan.

The Route also offers the opportunity to experience regional customs and folklore, sample traditional cuisine, and meet the warm and welcoming people of the Kalahari.

THINGS TO SEE!

KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK

Where the red dunes and scrub fade into infinity and herds of gemsbok, springbok, eland, and blue wildebeest follow the seasons, where imposing camel thorn trees provide shade for huge black mane lions and vantage points for leopards and many raptors...

www.sanparks.org | +27 54 561 2050



KALAHARI TRAILS NR

Home to the Meerkat Rehabilitation Centre. Go on a meerkat experience, Kalahari nocturnal experience, game drives or enjoy a sundowner and dune braai.

info@kalahari-trails.co.za
+27 63 087 7732



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Home to over 300 bird species, this arid landscape offers a birdwatcher's paradise.

brett@kalahariexplore.co.za

+27 79 666 5507



For accommodation:
kokerboomroete@gmail.com
+27 72 731 5180

www.quivertreeroute.co.za

The Quiver Tree Route, formerly known as the Kokerboomroete, is a tourist destination in the Northern Cape. It is a route that stretches from Upington to Riemvasmaak and Kenhardt and offers a variety of activities and attractions for visitors to enjoy.

The route is designed to experience the variety of the Northern Cape's landscapes, cultures, and activities. This includes attractions such as the Augrabies Falls National Park, river rafting on the Orange River, quiver tree forests, hot springs in Riemvasmaak, wine tasting, farm stall hopping and more.

THINGS TO EXPLORE!

AUGRABIES FALLS NATIONAL PARK

Close to Upington, it is situated on the banks of the mighty Orange River. The Khoi called it "Aukoerebis", or "place of great noise," as water's powerful flow is unleashed from its rocky surroundings.

www.sanparks.org | +27 54 452 9205



QUIVER TREE FORESTS & NURSERIES

Discover the mystical Quiver Tree Forests, home to ancient giants that are silent sentinels of time. The route offers nurseries famous for indigenous plants.

kokerboomroete@gmail.com

+27 72 731 5180



RIEMVASMAAK HOT SPRINGS

The name means 'tighten the strap' or 'tied with straps'. Riemvasmaak is popular for the Hot Springs, walking trails, 4x4 trails and camping under the stars.

riemvasmaaktourism@gmail.com

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RIVER RAFTING & FISHING

Want to do some river rafting on the Orange River in the Northern Cape only 14km upstream from the Augrabies Falls? Experienced guides lead our river trips. Khamkirri also offers nature paddling, fly fishing and bird watching.

bookings@khamkirri.co.za

+27 82 423 9590



WINE TASTING

Book a wine tasting at:

• Orange River Tasting Room & Restaurant

Upington: **+27 79 594 1339**

• Die Mas Wine Cellar & Restaurant

Kakamas: **+27 66 378 7034**

+27 54 431 0245

• De Kelder Farm Stall & Wine Tasting

Kakamas: **+27 82 836 0058**



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From revitalising massages and invigorating facials to deluxe manicures and pedicures. Indulge in pure relaxation and rejuvenation at our luxurious spas and beauty salons.





DATES AND RATES

21 – 30 August 2024

R15 950 per adult; half-price for kids under 10

Duration: 10 days, 9 nights

Start: Ganzekraal, about 70 km north of Cape Town

End: Alexander Bay

THE RATE INCLUDES

- Qualified and experienced guide with a support crew and chef.
- Two-way radios in all vehicles.
- Wind shelter, shower and toilet facilities.
- Three meals per day and all cutlery and crockery – we also do the washing up!
- All tents and camping equipment. We set up and break down camp every day.
- Entry fees to parks, plus all tours and activities.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING*

- Your own vehicle (fuel is for your account).
- Mattress, sleeping bag, camping chairs and a camping table.
- Drinks and snacks.
- Travel insurance and medical evacuation insurance (compulsory).
- Water for the three nights of wild camping.
- Your own fishing rods and necessary permits.

*Contact us for the full list.

YOUR VEHICLE

- You need a 4x4 with good ground clearance and high-volume all-terrain tyres. Low-range and a rear differential lock are recommended, but not essential.
- You don't need any experience driving in sand or on rocks – the Bhejane crew can assist as required. Recovery points must be fitted to the front and the rear of the vehicle.
- Pack a compressor and tyre pressure gauge.



Contact 📞 bookings@bhejane.com
or call ☎ 082 724 0442
for a complete itinerary.



West Coast wanderings

Explore the entire West Coast from south to north on this highlights tour with Bhejane 4x4 Adventures. Eat seafood, camp wild and drive through fields of spring flowers.

The West Coast has picturesque coastal villages and rugged, windswept beauty. There are unique ecosystems that are home to abundant wildlife, and local delicacies to try like snoek, bakkems and crayfish.

This tour follows the coastline from Cape Town to the Orange River, revealing hidden gems along the way. Led by an experienced guide, the tour emphasizes safe, environmentally sensitive travel. Our bush chef prepares all meals, including fresh salads and braais. The overnight stops are rustic but your safety and comfort are at all times ensured, making for an unforgettable adventure filled with cultural, historical and natural insights.

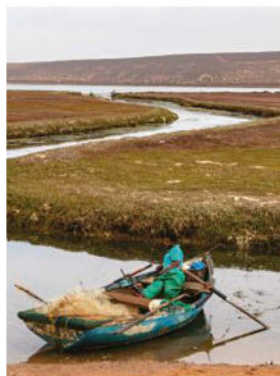
You'll explore iconic places like Paternoster and Hondeklip Bay, and camp close to the sea with the sound of the waves lulling you to sleep. It's no surprise that the tour is in spring... Sunshine permitting, you'll see fields of flowers in the West Coast National Park and further up the coast in Namaqua National Park, where we'll camp wild on a spectacular section of coastline.

Birders will be in their element and history buffs will learn more about the San heritage of the area and the diamond mining that still leaves a legacy up north.

The West Coast is a destination like no other. Come experience the legendary hospitality and special sights that make it such a unique place to visit.

HIGHLIGHTS

West Coast National Park • Paternoster • Lambert's Bay
• Namaqua National Park • Hondeklip Bay • Port Nolloth • Orange River





After a decade in Stellenbosch, **Elzanne Coetzee** said goodbye to busy town life and returned to her parents' West Coast smallholding near Vredenburg.

When I'm not working as a freelance copy editor or helping my mom in her cleaning supply shop, I keep myself busy in my flat. I get lost in a black hole of YouTube videos and *Survivor* South Africa or I lie in my bed and stare at the ceiling for hours.

My flat is on my parents' smallholding at a place called Nieuwe Rust near Vredenburg. Outside, I can hear the clucking of chickens, the quack of ducks and the mooing of cows. I'm hiding. Day in, day out. Did I mention that I'm prone to the blues?

One morning in April, an unexpected but refreshing rain shower washes over town and the sun comes out again. Enough is enough, I say to myself, it's time to stop moping. I decide to drive to Trekoskraal, on the coast about 10km from Nieuwe Rust. I put two cheese-and-tomato sarmies and a flask of coffee in my backpack, put the backpack on the passenger seat of the bakkie and wave to my mom where she waits to close the farm gate behind me.

It's a bumpy ride to the ocean, mostly in first and second gear. I pull over near a footpath and walk down among the flat, green leaves of *kersbos* and *slaaibos*. When last did I visit this place?

It's funny how you suppress a part of yourself when you try to balance the responsibilities of life, eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly and make time to see your friends and family... Here, at Trekoskraal, I feel like myself again. For the first time in a long time, I feel like I can breathe.

I take two deep breaths, filling my lungs with cool ocean air. In through the nose and out through the mouth, just like the meditation videos tell you to do. Seagulls bob in the water, weightless, and my feet pick a path over the big, flat rocks.

I find a sheltered spot and unpack my picnic for one. Waves break nearby. Tears suddenly spring to my eyes. How lucky am I that I get to come to this ocean and these rocks again and again?

I spend a few hours at Trekoskraal. I see one rebellious dassie. I bask in the sun on the rocks with the resident agama lizards. A dead whale has washed onto the beach nearby, its skin like rusty-brown leather. Cormorants, black and silent, swoosh past overhead. They seem to know exactly where they're going.

I decide that I'm in love with this place. On the way home, a buzzard dives low over the veld with a snake in its talons. A brave kestrel follows in its wake. Two black-headed herons watch from the other side of the road.

The next day, I swap my backpack on the passenger seat for Peaches, my parents' fox terrier mix. We have a jol. This time we see lots more dassies. Their chubby little bodies slip into rock crevices when they see the pricked ears of my companion. We see some caracal spoor and track it deep into the veld. We run and play on the wet sand along the water's edge. Peaches even dips her toes in the shallows – a big milestone for a dog that hates getting wet.

The next day it's Maya's turn – the wire-haired terrier. She swims like a fish. I have to hold her back or she'll vanish into the waves. I apologise to the oystercatcher that makes Maya's head spin as it circles angrily above. We cross a hill to the next beach and I take a photo of some blood-red candelabra lilies next to the path.

To live here and now; to take a moment to appreciate your surroundings; to really listen to the sound of the waves... What more do I need to know I'm on the right track? To know that I'm alive?

WEST COAST AT ITS BEST

There's no better place on earth, you'll think to yourself when you unzip your tent and step out onto the beach. You're somewhere north of Strandfontein on an empty stretch of coastline, on a farm called Waterval. There are 60 camping stands here but there are no facilities, so bring everything you'll need and remove all your rubbish afterwards.

To experience this slice of paradise costs only R160 per stand for up to six people. The farm is about 90 km west of Bitterfontein – you'll be given directions when you book. Call this number on weekdays from 8 am to 6 pm ☎ 027 652 8709 or WhatsApp ☎ 063 694 5092.

PICTURE **EVAN NAUDÉ**



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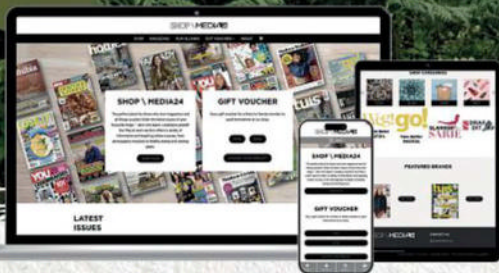
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