

travel

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Foodie Western Cape

South Africa's main attraction? Fine food and tasty tipples. Come hungry!

Silky Syrahs, slap-up seafood feasts and endless fruit-and-veg-stuffed farms — you can't help but eat well in Cape Town and its surrounding wine regions. Start in the city for refined restaurant eats, then move to the countryside to drain some of the southern hemisphere's finest vintages. We hope you packed your stretchy trousers... **By Alicia Miller**



SEE & DO

● Start your tour of the Western Cape with a visit to the Company's Garden, a leafy sliver in the centre of Cape Town. It's a **prime spot for views of Table Mountain**. It's also where 17th-century settlers grew crops (to fill ships stopping at the Cape). And it still houses the country's oldest pear tree — 365 years young. Wander through the lawns, study the war memorials and watch squirrels darting around.

● Across from the Garden, pinky Belmond Mount Nelson hotel has a whiff of the old world about it — Winston Churchill once stayed and the Queen celebrated a birthday here. Its afternoon tea, taken in a fern-lined room, is rightly popular, but **go the extra foodie mile with a tutored cuppa-tasting**. A dedicated tea sommelier leads you through a flight, ranging from hill-grown rooibos to herbal fynbos, (belmond.com; £21, including nibbles).

● There's a Disneyland-like appeal to Cape Town's V&A waterfront — old warehouses converted to artsy malls, contemporary museums (Zeitz Mocaa is bonkers: zeitzmocaa.museum; £11) and street entertainers galore. The best bit is the V&A Food Market (waterfrontfoodmarket.com), a vintage brick emporium serving up South African specialities. **Fill your boots with liquor-laced fudge and beef stew with samp** (broken corn).

● Half an hour south of Cape Town, the lush Constantia region beckons.

EDITOR'S INSIGHT
You can't book seats in Delaire's wine lounge, and it gets busy, so visit in the morning (it opens at 10am), or put your name on the waiting list and have a lazy lunch in the restaurant

Vine line: the Franschhoek Valley is one of the leading wine-growing regions in South Africa; below, harvesting lemons in the Babylonstoren Estate; Cape Town's V&A Waterfront

Dozens of pretty wineries dot the hills, including the 17th-century Steenberg Farm (steenbergfarm.com; tastings from £3), with its water views and terrace. But the must-do is Klein Constantia (kleinconstantia.com; tastings from £5), producer of the world-famous Vin de Constance dessert wine — a **citrusy nectar best sunk with a cheese plate in its bistro**.

● Carry on an hour's drive east, and you'll find yourself in the shadow of Stellenbosch Mountain, with its vineyard-carpeted valley. Housed in regal Cape Dutch-style farmhouses are some of South Africa's finest wine producers, including swanky Delaire Graff (delaire.co.za), set on a garden-wrapped hill. **Abstract art and sculptures fill its lobby, restaurant and wine lounge**. Grab a window seat at the latter and sip some of the Cape's smoothest Syrahs and ziestest Chardonnays (tastings from £3).

● The rambling Babylonstoren Estate, northeast of Stellenbosch, is a Cape foodie dream: historic whitewashed farmhouse cottages (see Where to Stay), field-to-fork restaurant and lush garden (babylonstoren.com; £1). **Wander along the rows of plums and prickly pears**, but save time for the farm shop, stacked to the rafters with handmade cheeses and cured meats. Sign up in advance for a workshop on growing mushrooms, making cheese or baking bread (about £40).

● Quaint Franschhoek town, lined with roses, is just a half hour away. Head to Black Elephant Vintners for a two-hour music-and-wine pairing in the winery owner's home (£20; bevintners.co.za). Book ahead and rock'n'roll Kevin talks you through the tipples without any jargon; you'll **sip a plummy Syrah while listening to Purple Rain, and down a zippy rosé to Bruno Mars**.

● Around the corner, at romantic clifftop Mont Rochelle hotel (see Where to Stay), it's time for your sundowner — a grape-infused facial (virginlimitededition.com; £84). Said to slow ageing, **grape stem cells are smothered on your skin in a serenity-inducing treatment**. Afterwards, float out onto the terrace, surrounded by vines... and order another Syrah. >



CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | FOODIE WESTERN CAPE

EAT

● Stellenbosch cheap eat

NY SLICE PIZZA (Slices about £2)

Because: Beloved of the local students, this good-as-Manhattan pizza spot in Stellenbosch town has cut-price slices in a region of posh eateries. **Travel's tip:** Two slices each is about right, so no need to buy a whole pie. 31 Bird St, Stellenbosch; 00 27 21 426 4141, nyslicepizza.com.

● Beers in wine country

TUK TUK MICROBREWERY

(Mains about £6)

Because: Snag a seat on this sunny Franschoek town terrace, munch through Baja fish or pork-belly tacos, and drink a flight of house-brewed beers — the perfect palate-cleanser after a slew of wine-tastings. **Travel's tip:** Be sure to pop inside to see — and smell — the brewery in action. 14 Huguenot St, Franschoek; 00 27 21 492 2207, tuktukbrew.com.

● Sceney seaside seafood

THE BUNGALOW (Mains about £15)

Because: From birthday parties to romantic tête-à-têtes, this seafood spot in chi-chi seaside suburb Clifton is Cape Town's go-to celebration spot. **Travel's tip:** Insist on a table outdoors — you're here for the buzzy alfresco vibe. 3 Victoria Rd, Cape Town; 00 27 21 438 2018, thebungalow.co.za.

● Trendy downtown dining

THE SHORTMARKET CLUB

(Mains about £17)

Because: Can't get in to Cape Town's acclaimed Test Kitchen? Then feast on springbok and nectarine at its cool downtown sibling. **Travel's tip:** You can just turn up, but if you want a cosy booth, book ahead. 88 Shortmarket St, Cape Town; 00 27 21 447 2874, theshortmarketclub.co.za.

● Gourmet stalwart

LA COLOMBE (Tasting menus from £60)

Because: If you do one blowout meal in the Cape, make it at this forward-thinking restaurant, cloaked in forest in the Constantia wine region. **Travel's tip:** Ask for a window seat and upgrade to the Gourmand tasting menu, well worth it at £138pp with wine. Silvermist Wine Estate, Main Rd, Constantia; 00 27 21 794 2390, lacolombe.co.za.

SUNSET SWAP
If you can't get a prime seat, try snagging a spot one floor up at bohemian sister bar Chinchilla (chinchilla.rooftop.co.za)

SNEAKY SHORTCUT
Have drinks at upstairs bar Outrage of Modesty (see above right) beforehand, and they'll let you use a secret doorway that connects you direct to the heart of the dining room

DRINK & SHOP

● Beachside bar

BILBOA

Because: When the sun sets, this Cape Town bar on Camps Bay's sands gives you front-row seats. **Travel's tip:** If you want sunset-facing seats, book ahead. Shop 120, 1st floor, The Promenade, Victoria Rd, Cape Town; bilboa.co.za.

● Speakeasy-style bar

OUTRAGE OF MODESTY

Because: This drinking den has some of Cape Town's finest cocktails; try the Devil's Tongue, with pink gin, raspberries, lime and chilli. **Travel's tip:** Sit at the bar and chat to the resident cocktail whizz, Noreen Dunzo. 88 Shortmarket St, Cape Town; anoutrage.com.

● One-stop vino shop

LOVE WINE STUDIO

Because: You'll never get to all of the region's vineyards, so come to this shop in Stellenbosch town to taste and buy tipples from many of the local producers. **Travel's tip:** Tasting flights (£3) change daily, so ask what's on before they pop the cork. 3C Andringa St, Stellenbosch.



ASK THE LOCAL

Dr Gemma Oberth is a consultant at the University of Cape Town

To eat well on a budget, visit Cape Town in winter, when there are 2-for-1 deals even in the nicest restaurants. Or book ahead at Chef's Warehouse at Beau Constantia, where you get a 10-course meal for less than £25 (beauconstantia.com). Most locals say their favourite national dish is Bunny Chow (bread loaf stuffed with curry), but I prefer apricotty malva pudding (make sure it's served with custard, notice cream, or it isn't right!). My top wine region is Hemel-en-Aarde; lunch at Creation Wines (creationwines.com; five courses with wine £33), then pop across the road to Ataraxia (ataraxiawines.co.za), a tasting room in a tiny chapel.



STAY

● Homely guesthouse

WELGELEGEN (Doubles from £99, B&B)

Because: In the leafy, upmarket Gardens neighbourhood in the shadow of Table Mountain, this friendly guesthouse has old-world charm, with the trendy Kloof Street restaurants just a meander away. **Travel's tip:** It's a creaky old house, so sound carries. Prepare to be hush-hush at night and pack earplugs. 6 Stephen St, Cape Town; welgelegen.co.za.

● Portside steal

QUEEN VICTORIA (Doubles from £175, B&B)

Because: The dramatic purple and chandelier-bedecked interior is a touch faded in places, but with rooms at this price — in a million-dollar location by the Waterfront — who's complaining? **Travel's tip:** On a raised level above a car park, it's hard to find. Look for the steps off Dock Road, across from the V&A Food Market. Portwood Close, Cape Town; newmarkhotels.com.

● Stellenbosch stay

THE QUARTERS (Sleeps four from £195, self-catering)

Because: On the ancient, hill-coddled grounds of the low-key Meerlust wine estate, this cottage (the former slave quarters of an 18th-century manor house) feels miles from anywhere. **Travel's tip:** Stellenbosch Vineyards are just a four-minute drive down the road. 33 Baden Powell Drive, Stellenbosch; www.meerlust.co.za.

● Rooms with a view

MONT ROCHELLE (Doubles from £282, B&B)

Because: Richard Branson's whitewashed Franschoek pad (he stays when he's in town) has sweeping views over the valley, as well as a swimming pool, croquet lawn, free minibar and an excellent gastro restaurant. **Travel's tip:** Don't forget to claim your wine-tasting (included in the rate); ask to do it in the restaurant as a warm-up before dinner. Dassenberg Rd, Franschoek; virginlimitededition.com/en/mont-rochelle.



TIPPLE TIP
Be sure to hang around your room around sunset — that's when housekeeping staff come by handing out free glasses of wine

Eating out: clockwise from top left, alfresco dining at Richard Branson's Mont Rochelle; cocktail-mixing at Outrage of Modesty bar; the stylish Babylonstoren; faded grandeur at the Queen Victoria; fine dining at La Colombe

● Farm fantasy

BABYLONSTOREN (Doubles from £432, B&B)

Because: If Daylesford did South Africa, this would be it: idyllic farm shop, massive gardens with roaming chickens, posh produce in an airy restaurant, serene spa and whitewashed former storehouses turned into gorgeous suites. **Travel's tip:** Max out on the free tours and workshops open only to residents — the morning farm tour walks you up a 160m peak to epic views. Klapmuts Simondium Rd, Franschoek; babylonstoren.com.

● Blingy blowout

ONE & ONLY CAPE TOWN (Doubles from £572, B&B)

Because: Right on the V&A Waterfront with a laze-all-day pool (plus restaurants by Nobu and local celeb chef Reuben Riffel), this may be the city's most luxurious address. **Travel's tip:** Even if you don't stay, try the spa — body scrubs start at just £36. Dock Rd, Cape Town; oneandonlyresorts.com.

GET ME THERE GO INDEPENDENT

Thomas Cook Airlines flies to Cape Town from Gatwick from £250 one-way. Or try BA or South African Airways.

GO PACKAGED

Rainbow Tours (rainbowtours.co.uk) has a week in Cape Town and the Winelands, from £3,055pp, B&B, including three nights at One & Only Cape Town, four at Mont Rochelle, return flights and car hire. Or try Western & Oriental (westernoriental.com) or Thomas Cook (thomascook.com).

GET AROUND

Much of Cape Town's centre is walkable, but stick to well-lit main roads at night. Taxis are cheap (from central Cape Town, beachy Clifton can take 20 minutes, but costs less than £10), or use Uber (uber.com) for reliable rides. For the Winelands it's best to hire a car; drivesouthafrica.co.za has a week from £87.

FURTHER INFORMATION

See capetown.travel