

ROBERTSON CRUISER

ESCAPE THE CITY AND MEANDER ALONG THE ROBERTSON WINE ROUTE FOR A DIVERSE RANGE OF WINE EXPERIENCES WITH LAID-BACK COUNTRY CHARM

Words *Cassidy Nydabl*

A mere two-hour drive outside the bustling city of Cape Town, the Robertson Wine Valley wanders its way between the Langeberg and Rivieronsderend mountain ranges, mimicking the curve of the Breede River. It's the perfect location for a quick stop-in while doing a road trip along Route 62, or as a destination in itself – the wineries, scenery and quirky country spots on offer will charm you.

ROOIBERG WINERY

It's hard to miss Rooiberg Winery on a Robertson Wine Valley exploration: The enormous red chair (the biggest in Africa, as it is boasted) sits stately at the entrance, welcoming wine tasters with a crimson greeting. Now celebrating 50 years, Rooiberg is a culmination of what was once a group of eleven wine farms alongside three separate rivers – the result is an estate with an extraordinary diversity in terroir, which gives rise to a wide range of wine styles. Proudly

sustainable, and practising fair trade and ethical labour policies, Rooiberg prides itself in being an innovating winery. Be sure to arrive hungry, as the display of freshly baked pastries and breads at the Bodega de Vinho, the resident restaurant, along with the home-made preserves at its farm stall, make for a scrumptious snack.

Must try: Rooiberg Pinotage Reserve 2016 (R110)

Trading hours for wine tasting and restaurant:

Monday – Friday: 8 am – 5 pm

Saturdays: 9 am – 4 pm

Sundays: Closed

ZANDVLIET WINE ESTATE

Think of Zandvliet, and Shiraz should immediately come to mind. One of the very first wineries in South Africa to bottle this cultivar in the 1870s, Zandvliet now produces some of the best versions to sip on. The magic of the estate is found in the *kalkveld* soil, with its firm acidity,

concentrated flavours and mineral traces that are coaxed from grape to bottle. Savour a taste of its offerings in the estate's plush new tasting room, the aptly named Kalkveld Lounge, which is part of greater renovations to the historic Cape Dutch-style homestead. Zandvliet also offers you a chance to try your hand at creating your own unique wine blend to take home, and a ClemenGold-paired tasting.

Must try: Zandvliet Kalkveld Shiraz 2015 (R215)

Trading hours for wine tasting:

Monday – Friday: 9 am – 5 pm

Saturdays: 10 am – 5 pm

Sundays: Closed

MONT BLOIS WYNLANDGOED

The Mont Blois Wine Estate and the Bruwer family who run it go back a long way – six generations, to be exact. The estate has been in the family since 1869, passed on from one passionate Bruwer winemaker to the next. Ernst Bruwer,

the current owner, and his wife, Nina-Mari, met while studying viticulture and oenology, and are both invested in making site-specific wines that do the Mont Blois family history proud. Nina-Mari has established herself firmly as the resident winemaker par excellence, and produces an exquisite selection of Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc and Muscadel.

Must try: Mont Blois Groot Steen Chenin Blanc 2016 (R295)

Trading hours for wine tasting:
By appointment only

JAN HARMSGAT

This country house and wine estate has all the assets that make the Robertson wine route so charming: A lustrous history, a stately Overberg-style house with understated elegance and old-school comfort, and a unique, natural approach to winemaking. Jan Harmsgat, named after the first owner of the estate, boasts accommodation in the original homestead, a fine-dining restaurant and a tasting room offering single-block JHG wines, now in their fourth vintage. Their winemaking philosophy is natural and very forward-thinking: Each wine is made from grapes harvested within its six-square hectare units, proudly displaying its unique terroir. Whether you're staying at the guest house or just dropping in for a taste, be sure to make time for a tour through the backlands, and a sunset picnic and wine tasting under the pecan-nut trees.

Must try: JHG Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 (R900 for a case of six bottles)

Trading hours for restaurant (booking essential):
Monday – Sunday: 8 am – 9 pm

EXCELSIOR WINE ESTATE

Good wine is made in the vineyards. At least, that's the philosophy at Excelsior Wine Estate. A wine estate, tasting facility, four-star guest manor, conference centre and deli, this fifth-generation estate is a must-stop along the route. Excelsior is one of the oldest wine farms in the area, and specialises in full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignons that are produced from strict vineyard practices that ensure a well-ripened harvest. Until now, the estate



Excelsior Wine Estate



Zandvliet Wine Estate



Rooiberg Winery



Jan Harmsgat

WINE

has been exporting 80% of their wines to the thirsty US market, but are focusing more and more on showing local wine tasters what they have to offer. When on a visit, be sure to stop off at their deli, Graze, to pick up a freshly baked *roosterbrood* sandwich (or two), with your choice of fillings, to nibble on the expansive lawn overlooking the farm's dam. A well-positioned jungle gym will keep the little ones entertained.

Must try: Excelsior Evanthius Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 (R156)

Trading hours for wine tasting:

Monday – Friday: 10 am – 4 pm

Saturdays: 10 am – 3 pm

Sundays: Closed

ESONA

A visit to Esona begins by following a snaking path through the vineyards – an apt entrance to a boutique estate that bases their winemaking on celebrating the subtle but distinct differences in each single-block vineyard. Guests are treated to a 'Taste the Difference' wine tasting: Two vintages each of three single-vineyard cultivars, paired with chocolate and music, and served in grape-specific Riedel glasses. The tasting is carefully curated and hosted in a dramatic, candlelit Old Cellar, or *kuip* (100-year-old underground fermentation tank), enticing the tasters to experience the rich history of the estate for themselves. Each tasting guide has been expertly trained, and their passion for the wine is palpable (and infectious). Caryl's Deli upstairs offers a delicious range of snacking boards and sandwiches.

Must try: Esona Frankly My Dear Blanc de Noir (R75)

Trading hours for wine tasting:

Monday – Friday: 9 am – 5 pm

Saturdays and public holidays:

10 am – 4 pm

PAUL RENÉ MCC

A chic brand of bubbly that is made with care and consideration, the location for Paul René MCC perfectly depicts the brand. At a tasting, you'll find yourself sitting in the garden overlooking the picturesque Langeberg Mountains, sipping on vintage MCC brut. The effervescent wine is the passion of Henk van Niekerk and his wife Monica, who have combined their creative skills to thoughtfully develop every aspect of the trend-setting brand. Each bottle of bubbly is fermented for no less than 20 months on the lees, resulting in a vibrant mousse with apricot and green-apple freshness, and a deliciously dry finish.

Must try: Paul René Brut (R185)

Trading hours for wine tasting:

Monday – Friday: 8 am – 5 pm

Saturdays and Sundays:

By appointment only

VAN LOVEREN

Truly a full-day experience for the whole family, Van Loveren (and its brother brand, the much-loved Four Cousins) is run by the four Retief cousins: Hennie, Bussell, Neil and Phillip. The lush gardens are dotted with grand trees, each planted to commemorate a historical, political or family moment in time. Their garden tour is a fascinating walk through the gardens, uncovering these personal and chronicled stories. The estate also offers a cellar tour, uncovering the workings of the winery, mountain-bike and hiking trails and a range of interesting pairings, from cheese to nougat with your wine under the trees. Little ones can join in too and will love the kids' tasting with Papillon grape juice.

Must try: Van Loveren Family Vineyards Christina Van Loveren Sauvignon Blanc 2017 (R115)

Trading hours for wine tasting:

Monday – Friday: 8:30 am – 5 pm

Saturdays and public holidays:

9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Sundays: 11 am – 3 pm



Mont blois



Van Loveren

WIN
R5 000
IN CASH

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