



The view from the guesthouse on Long Beach

CAPE TOWN



Penguin on Boulders Beach, Cape Town

Out on a limb, at the tip of Africa, Cape Town is one of the world's most beautiful cities. Relaxed and picturesque, much of its splendour comes from its backdrop, the 1,086m Table Mountain. Above, its flat top is often covered by a 'tablecloth' of cloud, which pours over the edge like dry ice from a stage. The ocean is always blue and the sky always crystal clear. Or at least that's how it seems – for Cape Town is naturally enchanting.

As befits one of the crossroads of Africa, this is a very cosmopolitan city. It's African and yet European. Arts and the theatre will not disappoint, whilst its restaurants are some of the best anywhere. Whether on a small wine estate or in a restaurant by the harbour, this is a city where you can dine in style.

There are white sandy beaches, winding coastal drives, the famous prison on Robben Island, the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, the Waterfront, and much more. From Cape Town's wide variety of accommodation, we've carefully selected a few hotels and guesthouses in key areas.

The **Bishops' Court Guest House** is an exclusive, high-quality spot at the foot of Table Mountain. It's a stone's throw away from the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens,

though has its own chauffeur-driven car available for hire. It's a very friendly and personal place to stay, with just five luxurious en-suite rooms, and a beautifully kept garden complete with pool and tennis court.

Not far away, the **Vineyard Hotel & Spa** looks onto extensive gardens with Table Mountain behind. Although large, it retains a strong reputation for personal service. The Vineyard's 175 rooms are well equipped and regularly refurbished and updated. It's a comfortable, peaceful and very professional hotel, in a convenient leafy location – with two restaurants and a first-class fitness centre.

Also close to Kirstenbosch, **Cellars-Hohenort** is a delightful *Relais & Châteaux* property with 53 luxurious rooms, two swimming pools and a small spa – all set within stunning gardens. It has two excellent restaurants, one Cape-Malay, and the other serving more modern creations in very chic surroundings. Both have excellent food and service.

In the heart of the Constantia Valley, **Constantia Uitsig** has only 16 individual cottages on a working vineyard. Despite being on the edge of Cape Town, it's a relaxed and surprisingly rural location. There

are three restaurants here – one taking reservations from Capetonians months in advance – as well as a recently added spa.

The **Long Beach** is situated on Long Beach, one of the Cape Peninsula's best Atlantic beaches. It has six luxurious rooms all decorated in soft neutral tones reflecting its beautiful beach setting. Relax on the pool deck with stunning sea and mountain views, or step onto the beach for a brisk walk. Horse-riding on the beach is possible from nearby stables.

On the chic palm-lined avenue beside the beautiful beach at Camps Bay, the **Bay Hotel** feels as if it should be in southern California. It's stylish, modern and sophisticated, with acres of cool white marble and a confident air of quality. The Bay's rooms are beautiful, and it has four outdoor swimming pools and a couple of restaurants. If you want somewhere smart, next to the ocean, then stay at The Bay.

For a more tranquil stay in Camps Bay, try the Bay's sister-property, **Camps Bay Retreat**. Set only five minutes' walk from the seafront, but in a lightly forested, tiny private reserve, you can stay at either the elegant Earls Dyke Manor or the contemporary Deck House.

In the last decade, the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront has become a vibrant draw for Cape Town visitors, with shops, restaurants and nightlife beside the ocean. Here the recently refurbished **Cape Grace** has 121 luxurious rooms, all with great views of the harbour or Table Mountain.

Beside the Waterfront, in a spectacular ocean-side position, the **Radisson Hotel Waterfront** is slightly more moderately priced, with 177 rooms with a contemporary nautical design centred on a high glass atrium. Breakfast outdoors, beside the sea, is a real joy here!

Finally, the **Mount Nelson Hotel**, or 'Nellie' as locals call it, is a real institution. This is Cape Town's oldest and most famous hotel: a place to be seen, near to the heart of the city. If you like stylish grandeur and old-world charm, then it has the best address in town!



Colourful beach huts on St James' beach, Cape Town



The Marine Hotel in Hermanus overlooks Walker Bay from the cliff tops

WINE REGION

The Cape's main wine-producing region spreads around the small towns of Stellenbosch, Paarl and Franschhoek. There are other grape-growing areas in South Africa, but none so old and few so beautiful.

Although the wine ranks amongst the world's best, you don't need to be a connoisseur to drop in for a casual tasting. Welcoming cellar-masters may be exceptions in Europe, but here they are still the rule. Spend a day touring the vineyards, have lunch on an estate, or take a picnic.

Set on one of South Africa's oldest and best-preserved streets, in the middle of Stellenbosch, **D'Ouwe Werf** is a national monument and said to be the oldest inn in South Africa, dating back to 1802 (remains of a 1687 church lie beneath). The hotel has a very established, solid feel and its cobbled courtyard leads to one of the Cape's best restaurants.

For those seeking a very exclusive spot surrounded by vineyards, consider the top-end **Le Quartier Français** in Franschhoek. Open log fires, sumptuous rooms and a famous restaurant ensure a comfortable stay here. The town itself has a diverse array of art galleries, coffee shops and restaurants.

Very close by, **Rusthof Country House** occupies a restored old Cape Dutch building, and has eight rooms, all different, dotted with antiques. Helpful owners and open breakfast kitchen make this friendly guest house a favourite.

Roggeland Country House is a small Cape Dutch homestead just outside Paarl with high ceilings, old wooden floors, and whitewashed walls. It is family-run with food as its *raison d'être*. The *menu de dégustation* is a showcase for many regional dishes and wines. Dinner is always included at Roggeland: a sumptuous affair that often lasts all evening.

There are many places to stay in the Wine Region, so please call us for our ideas. Other favourites include the **Lanzerac Hotel** and **River Manor** in Stellenbosch, and the larger, restored **Franschhoek Country House**, in Franschhoek.



Rolling vineyards near Stellenbosch

HERMANUS

A few hours' drive from Cape Town or the Wine Region, Hermanus is one of the world's prime whale-watching spots. Between about May and December, Southern right whales migrate here from the Antarctic, to mate, calve and rear their young in sheltered bays. They can be easily seen from the cliff-tops; the prime viewing months are between July and November.

Other activities available locally include sea-kayaking, canoeing on nearby lagoons, horse-riding, and shark cage-diving. We'd recommend that you visit Hermanus for its wild and beautiful coastline and fynbos flora, as well as the whale-watching.

In the centre of Hermanus, beside the old harbour, the **Auberge Burgundy** is a quaint Provençal-style guesthouse with a small courtyard garden, complete with fountain and fig trees. It has 18 smart, comfortable bedrooms, some arranged around a rooftop swimming pool.

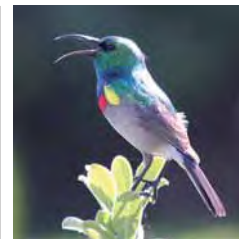
The **Marine** is a classic old hotel, perched on the cliffs. The whales are within sight of the veranda, yet it's almost in the centre of Hermanus. The Marine has two restaurants, a small spa and a pool – and is another **Relais & Châteaux** property. The owner has individually chosen the fabrics in all of the hotel's 43 rooms.

Ocean Eleven stands beside the cliff path, overlooking the ocean, on the edge of Hermanus. It's a high-quality guest house with 10 lovely, airy rooms – all with teak floors, high ceilings and smart, contemporary, en-suite bathrooms. Outside are a pool and loungers, all overlooking Walker Bay.

On the outskirts of Hermanus, **Birkenhead House** is a special place: elegant and sophisticated. It's perched on cliffs above a small beach on Walker Bay, with great views. It has a Mediterranean feel, 11 beautifully designed and furnished rooms, and impressive levels of friendly service.

Just 40 minutes' drive east of Hermanus, **Grootbos Private Nature Reserve** is a destination in its own right, and a real gem. There are two luxurious lodges here, Forest Lodge and Garden Lodge, with 27 superbly designed suites between them. Standards of food, accommodation and service are very high, but to dwell on their comforts is to miss the point. Grootbos focuses on its environment: the unique fynbos ecosystem and local marine life.

Your stay at either lodge includes walks and drives to explore the reserve with expert guides, and activities from horse-riding to beach-combing, whale-watching and even shark-diving are possible. There's a lot to see, learn and get involved with here, and Grootbos has a first-class programme of engaging, educational activities for children.



Lesser double-collared sunbird



Whale-watching near Hermanus