

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 crystal clear. Or at least that's how it seems – for Cape Town is enchanting.

African and yet European, it is a very cosmopolitan city. Arts and the theatre are an attraction, whilst its restaurants include some of the world's best. Whether on a small wine estate or in a restaurant by the harbour, this is a city where you can dine in style.

THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS

The **Bishopscourt** 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 a chauffeur-driven car available for hire. It's a 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 focus on personal service. The Vineyard's 207 rooms are well equipped and regularly refurbished. It's a comfortable, peaceful and professional hotel, in a convenient leafy location – with two award-winning restaurants, a first-class fitness centre and an 'Angsana' Spa.

Also close to Kirstenbosch, **Cellars-Hohenort** is a delightful Relais & Châteaux property with 52 luxurious rooms and suites, two swimming pools and a spa – all set within stunning gardens. It has two excellent restaurants, both with great service.

In the heart of the **Constantia Valley**, **Constantia Uitsig Country Hotel and Spa** has 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 internationally acclaimed restaurants here – one taking reservations months in advance.

The Constantia is a high-quality guesthouse with nine luxurious rooms, close to some of Constantia's best wine estates. It has a small swimming pool located in manicured gardens with views of the Constantiaberg Mountains.



Hartlaub's gulls are common in the Cape

THE ATLANTIC COAST

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



Rotating cable car at Table Mountain



The penguin colony at Boulders Beach

deck with stunning sea and mountain views, or step onto the beach for a brisk walk. Horseriding 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 an air of quality. The rooms are beautiful, and it has four outdoor swimming pools and a selection of restaurants and bars. If you want somewhere smart, next to the ocean, then this is the place to stay.

Walk five minutes up from the beach, through four acres of lush private reserve, to reach the Bay Hotel's sister property, **Camps Bay Retreat**. This tranquil spot is divided into the elegant, historical Earls Dyke Manor or the contemporary Deck House; it has a spa, a restaurant and two swimming pools.

WATERFRONT & CITY

In the last decade, the V&A Waterfront has become a vibrant draw for Cape Town visitors, with shops, craft markets, restaurants and nightlife. On its own private quay, **Cape Grace's** 120 rooms and suites exude style, and offer great views of the harbour or yacht marina with Table Mountain in the background.

In the heart of the V&A Waterfront is the **Victoria & Alfred Hotel**. It has 94 en-suite rooms, some with views either over the working harbour or towards Table Mountain. Numerous shops, restaurants and craft markets are on the doorstep.

Beside the Waterfront, in a spectacular ocean-side position, the **Radisson Blu Hotel Waterfront** is 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!

On the lower slopes of Table Mountain overlooking the city of Cape Town is **Acorn House**. This delightful, yet affordable guesthouse has nine rooms and a swimming pool.

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 certainly has the best address in town!



View over vineyards from Grande Roche, to the town of Paarl - a scene typical of this area

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 simply 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 hotel in South Africa, dating back to 1802 (remains of a 1687 church lie beneath). Despite some ongoing refurbishments, the hotel retains a very established, solid feel – and its cobbled courtyard leads to '1802', one of the Cape's best restaurants.

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

Nearby, **Rusthof Country House** occupies a restored old Cape Dutch building and is run by a helpful team. Its eight individual rooms mix various patterned fabrics and antiques, whilst the traditional surroundings of the kitchen provide the venue for **Ryan's Kitchen**, a restaurant serving contemporary South African cuisine.

The Franschhoek is an exceedingly comfortable, stylish guesthouse within walking distance of Franschhoek's many restaurants and boutiques. It has six large, tastefully decorated rooms and suites, and a small swimming pool. Ask for a picnic basket to take a delicious lunch out for the day.

Babylonstoren is a rural working farm between Franschhoek and Paarl; its renovated formal gardens, orchards and vineyards stand in the shadow of the Drakenstein Mountains. Fourteen luxury thatched cottages combine traditional Cape Dutch exteriors with very modern interiors, some including a separate living room with open fireplace. The old manor house dates back to 1690, and its five bedrooms are ideal for families. The farm has a very good restaurant, too, focusing on home-grown produce.

Other favourites include the **Lanzerac Hotel** in Stellenbosch, and the **Grande Roche** in Paarl. There are many other places to stay in the Wine Region; please call us for our ideas.



Flowering protea