

## 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 best viewing months are between July and November.

Other activities available locally include sea kayaking, canoeing on nearby lagoons, horseriding, 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, close to the old harbour, are three reliable choices. **The Marine** is another Relais & Châteaux property: a classic hotel, perched on the cliffs, with two restaurants, a spa and a heated pool. The owner has individually decorated all of the hotel's 42 luxury rooms and suites.

The Provençal-style **Auberge Burgundy** has 18 comfortable bedrooms, some arranged around a swimming pool on the roof, and a courtyard garden, complete with fountain and fig trees. Next door, the much more modern **Harbour House Hotel** has 18 smart, contemporary rooms and lovely space around its pool, although it currently lacks any lounge area.

**Ocean Eleven** stands beside the cliff path overlooking Walker Bay, on the edge of

Hermanus. It is a very high-quality guesthouse with ten lovely, airy rooms – all with wood floors, high ceilings and smart, contemporary, en-suite bathrooms. Outside you can often see whales from the sunloungers beside the pool, which overlooks Walker Bay. Also on the cliffs, just four houses away, the **Auberge Provence** is built in the style of a grand Provençal farmhouse. It has five large en-suite rooms, all with sea views and some with their own plunge pool or Jacuzzi.

On the edge 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 contemporary feel, 11 beautifully designed and furnished rooms, and impressive levels of friendly service.



*Whale-watching near Hermanus*

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 a total of 27 superbly designed suites. Standards of food, accommodation and service are very high, but to dwell on their comforts is to miss the point: a visit to Grootbos is all about getting to know 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 horseriding to beachcombing, 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 and adults.



*Overlooking Walker Bay from nearby cliff tops*