

# Western Cape



As the image of Table Mountain begins to fade, the Western Cape comes into focus, proving there's much, much more to this part of the yard than that famous chunk of rock and the city that clutches to it. One of the world's premier destinations, it's hard to describe without using clichés or superlatives. Here you can dive with sharks, jump out of an aeroplane, surf some of Southern Africa's best breaks, cruise with whales, eat fresh crayfish at a beachside barbecue, stand at the southernmost tip of Africa and sample some of the world's finest wines.

The uniqueness of this part of the country has many Westerners calling it 'not really Africa'. This seems to be a reference to its First World amenities – classy hotels, top-notch restaurants, designer stores and modern shopping malls – or the distinct lack of chaos and cholera. Either way, it's an insult to both the continent and to a province in whose history are centuries of mixing between indigenous Khoesaaan, migrating Bantu tribes, colonising Europeans and 'imported' Indonesian slaves. Indeed, this is Africa in all its forms, and amid the tourism-brochure beauty it's easy to forget a major portion of the population still lives in abject poverty.

This is the country's most visited province, particularly along the Garden Route, but it's still a magical place, with ample opportunities to flee the crowds. Try heading up the desolate West Coast, cruising the sun-drenched Karoo, or hiking through a mountain pass in the Cederberg. Whichever way you go, however, in the Western Cape there's no escaping the splendour.

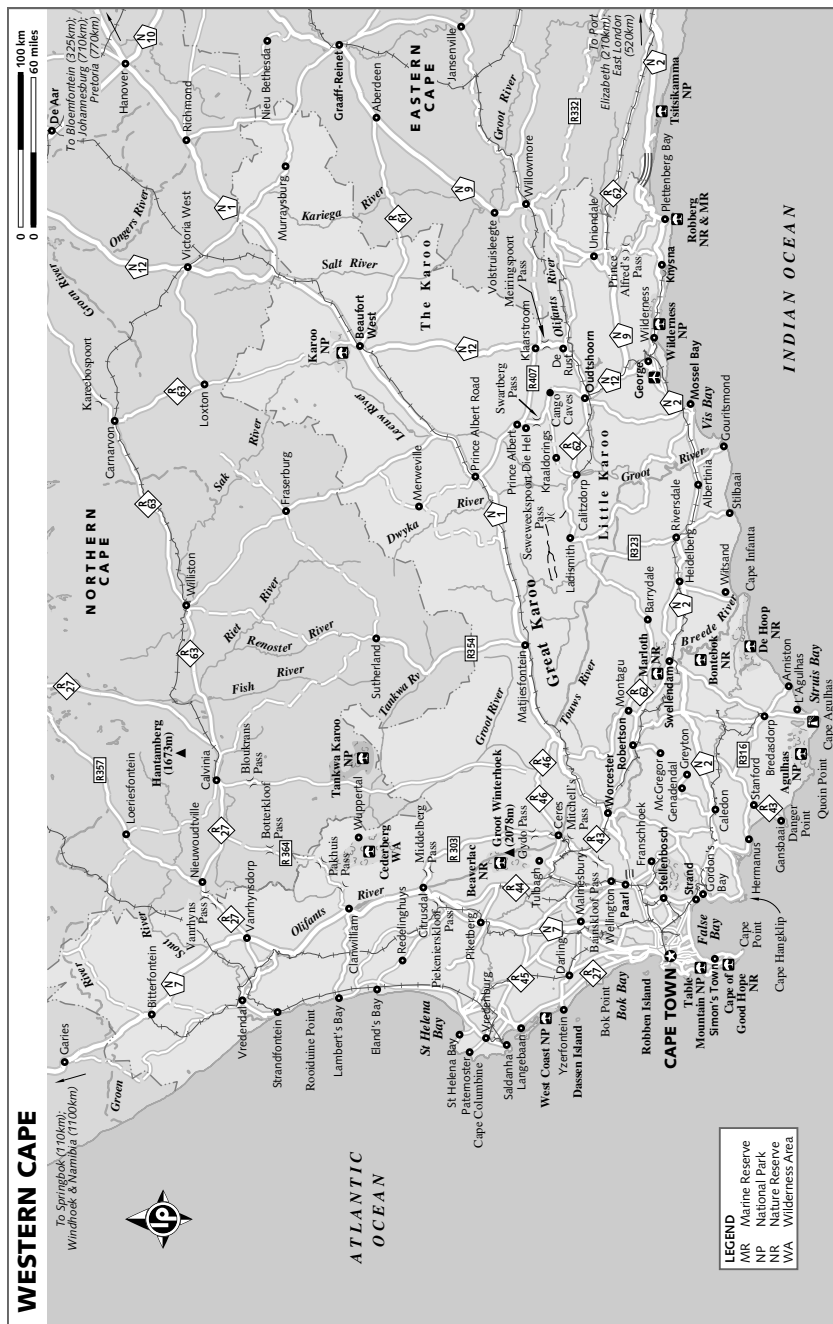
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Soaring in a hot-air balloon above the dramatic mountain ranges and centuries-old vineyards of the **Cape Winlands** (p184)
- Getting a tan or an adrenaline rush on the bold, beautiful **Garden Route** (p211)
- Hiking past bizarre sandstone formations with San rock art in the rugged and desolate **Cederberg Wilderness Area** (p235)
- Enjoying scenery to soothe the soul in the **Overberg** (p186) – a wonderful area to spot whales
- Marvelling in the silence, space and hospitality of the **Karoo** (p227), at the semidesert oasis **Oudtshoorn** (p207), at quaint **Prince Albert** (p228) or along the remarkable **Swartberg Pass** (p228)
- Having a beachside lobster braai (open barbecue) or viewing flower-carpeted hills along the **West Coast** (p231)



■ POPULATION: 5.2 MILLION

■ AREA: 129,370 SQ KM



## HISTORY

The Khoesaa peoples populated the area long before the arrival of Bantu Africans and Europeans. Today very few have survived, and their traditional cultures and languages have been almost completely lost. There is a large population of so-called 'coloureds', though, with origins as diverse as Khoesaa (indigenous) and Indonesian (slavery); the majority are Christian and Afrikaans-speaking. In the last couple of centuries, many blacks (in particular the Xhosa from the Eastern Cape) have gravitated here in search of work.

## CLIMATE

The Western Cape has dry, sunny summers (October to March) where average temperatures are warm to hot but in some regions can reach 38°C. It is often windy, however, and the southeasterly 'Cape Doctor', which buffets the Cape, can reach gale force and cool things down. Winters (June to August) can be cold, with average minimum temperatures around 5°C, and maximums around 17°C. There is occasional snow on the higher peaks. The coast north from the Cape becomes progressively drier and hotter. Along the southern coast the weather is temperate.

## NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES

The Western Cape parks do not offer Big Five wildlife-viewing opportunities, but nevertheless they are wonderful wilderness retreats. The West Coast National Park (p232) protects wetlands of international significance and is an important home to seabird breeding colonies.

The Cederberg Wilderness Area (p235) is rugged and mountainous, offering excellent opportunities for hiking and wildlife-spotting including baboons, rheboks, klip-springers and grysboks, and predators such as caracals, Cape foxes, honey badgers and leopards.

Covering 36,000 hectares on land and 5km out to sea, De Hoop Nature Reserve (p193) is one of **Cape Nature Conservation's** (☎ 021-426 0723; www.capenature.org.za) best reserves. It includes a scenic coastline with stretches of beach, dunes and rocky cliffs, plus a freshwater lake and Potberg Mountain.

Bontebok National Park (p196) is home to the endangered bontebok, and is known

for its wildflowers in late winter and early spring.

The Karoo National Park (p230) covers 33,000 hectares of impressive Karoo landscapes and representative flora. The plains carry a variety of short shrubs with well-wooded dry watercourses and mountain grasslands at higher elevations.

Wilderness National Park (p219) is bordered by the ocean to the south and the Outeniqua Range to the north and covers a unique system of lakes, rivers, wetlands and estuaries. There are opportunities for canoeing, fishing and hiking.

## LANGUAGE

The Western Cape is one of only two provinces in South Africa (the other is the Northern Cape) where the majority of the population (55%) is classified as coloured. Most coloureds speak Afrikaans as a first language, the most widely spoken of the province. English is spoken and/or understood everywhere.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

The Western Cape is easily accessible by bus, plane and car. From Johannesburg (Jo'burg) there are daily bus services and flights to Cape Town, where you can pick up public transport around the province or hire a vehicle. The province is easy to negotiate – roads are good and distances are not too long. **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) offers a hop-on/hop-off shuttle service (with no time limit) through most of the province (R810), or you can book a direct ticket (R300 to R350). The exception is the west coast, where public transport is almost nonexistent.

## WINELANDS

The Boland, stretching inland and upwards from Cape Town, is not the only wine-growing region in South Africa, but it's certainly the most famous. Its name means 'Upland', a reference to the dramatic mountain ranges that shoot up to more than 1500m, on whose fertile slopes the vineyards form a patchwork. The Franschhoek and Bainskloof Passes that crisscross the region are among the country's most spectacular.

**CAPE WINERIES** *Simon Richmond*

It was Stellenbosch in the 1970s that first promoted a 'wine route', an idea that has since been enthusiastically taken up by 16 other parts of the country. Stellenbosch's wine route remains the largest, covering around 100 wineries; if you lump in the nearby areas of Franschhoek, Helderberg and Paarl, you're looking at more than 200 wineries within a day's drive of Cape Town.

Several wineries are capitalising on the industry's popularity by adding on restaurants, accommodation and other attractions. Of these, we've selected some of the more notable ones, as well as vineyards that are renowned for their fine wines; you'll find them listed in the sections on Cape Town (p119), Stellenbosch (p173), Franschhoek (p179), Paarl (p184), Tulbagh (p197) and Robertson (p200). For more information, the annual John Platter's *South African Wine Guide* is the place to look.

**History**

Today, praise be the Lord, wine was pressed for the first time from Cape grapes.

*Jan Van Riebeeck, 2 February 1659*

Although the founder of the Cape Colony, Jan Van Riebeeck, had planted vines and made wine himself, it was not until the arrival of Governor Simon Van Der Stel in 1679 that wine making began in earnest. Van Der Stel created Groot Constantia (p119), the superb estate on the flanks of Table Mountain, and passed on his wine-making skills to the burghers settling around Stellenbosch.

Between 1688 and 1690, some 200 Huguenots arrived in the country. They were granted land in the region, particularly around Franschhoek, and although only a few had wine-making experience, they gave the nascent industry impetus.

For a long time, Cape wines other than those produced at Groot Constantia were not in great demand and most grapes ended up in brandy. But the industry received a boost in the early 19th century as war between Britain and France meant more South African wine was imported into the UK.

Apartheid-era sanctions and the power of the Kooperatiewe Wijnbouwers Vereeniging (KWV; the cooperative formed in 1918 to control minimum prices, production areas and quota limits) didn't exactly encourage innovation, and hampered the industry. However, since 1992 KWV, now a private company, has lost much of its former influence.

Many new and progressive wine makers are leading South Africa's re-emergence onto the world market. New wine-producing areas are being established away from the hotter inland areas, in particular in the cooler coastal areas east of Cape Town around Mossel Bay, Walker Bay and Elgin.

With its centuries-long history of colonial settlement, there's a distinctly European feel to the Boland, particularly in French-themed culinary hotspot Franschhoek ('French corner'). Lively student-town Stellenbosch offers the most activities, while Paarl is a busy commercial centre with excellent estates.

It is possible to see these towns on day trips from Cape Town. Stellenbosch and Paarl are accessible by train, and Franschhoek is the easiest to get around if you don't have a car. To do justice to the region and to visit the many wineries, you'll need to stay over and get yourself some wheels – bicycle wheels will do, if you're not too ambitious, but if you plan to pack in a lot of wineries, a car is essential.

**STELLENBOSCH & AROUND**

☎ 021 / pop 220,000

South Africa's second-oldest European settlement, established on the banks of the Eerste River by Governor van der Stel in 1679, Stellenbosch wears many faces. At times it's a rowdy joint, as Stellenbosch University students celebrate one or other form of freedom in a series of music festivals (the Afrikaans-language University of Stellenbosch, established in 1918, continues to play an important role in Afrikaner politics and culture). At others it's a stately monument to colonial splendour, its quiet oak-lined streets featuring some of the world's finest examples of Cape Dutch, Georgian and Victorian architecture. But most times it's just plain busy, as Capetonians, wine-farm workers

and tourists descend on its interesting museums, buzzing markets, quality hotels and varied eating and nightlife options.

Black empowerment in the wine industry is happening too. **Thabani** (☎ 021-882 8790; www.thabani.co.za) in Stellenbosch is South Africa's first wholly black-owned wine company, although it's not open to the public. It hit the big time in the USA when promoted by talk-show host Oprah Winfrey, and students of the wine-maker Jabulani Ntshangase are now being hired by big vineyards, including KWV.

The **Fair Valley Workers Association** (Map p181; ☎ 021-863 2450) is a 17-hectare workers' farm next to Fairview estate near Paarl. It's still developing its own vineyards but has already produced six seasons of Chenin Blanc (sold through the UK wine chain Oddbins) made with grapes bought in from Fairview, as well as a Sauvignon Blanc and a pinotage (a cross between Pinot Noir and Hermitage or Shiraz, which produces a very bold wine).

Also worth checking out is **Thandi** (☎ 844 0605; www.duver.co.za; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) from the Elgin area, available at Tesco in the UK.

All this has to be balanced against the facts of a black and coloured workforce of some 350,000 toiling for minimum wages in vineyards owned by 4500 whites. The infamous dop system, whereby the wages of labourers were paid partly in wine, is now officially illegal, but its social and physiological consequences have been disastrous.

**Wines**

The most common white cultivar is Chenin Blanc, or steen. In the last decade or so, more fashionable varieties such as Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc have been planted on a wide scale. Table whites, especially Chardonnay, once tended to be heavily oaked and high in alcohol, but lighter, fruitier whites are now in the ascendency. For good Sauvignon Blancs look to wineries in the cooler wine-growing regions of Constantia, Elgin and Hermanus.

Older, more-robust red varieties such as Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and the Cape's own pinotage are being challenged by lighter blends of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz and Cabernet Franc, making a style closer to Bordeaux styles.

The Worcester region is the country's leading producer of fortified wines, including port, brandy and South Africa's own hanepoot. This dessert wine is made from the Mediterranean grape variety known as muscat of Alexandria to produce a strong, sweet and suitably high-alcohol tippie for the domestic market. In Worcester you'll also find the KWV Brandy Cellar, the largest in the world and the final stop on the Brandy Route, which runs from Van Ryn Brandy Cellar (p174) at Vlotenburg, 8km southwest of Stellenbosch. For more information contact the **South African Brandy Foundation** (☎ 021-886 6381; www.sabrandy.co.za).

and tourists descend on its interesting museums, buzzing markets, quality hotels and varied eating and nightlife options.

**Orientation**

The train station is a short walk west of the centre. The train line effectively forms the western boundary of the town and the Eerste River the southern. Dorp St, which runs roughly parallel to the river, is the old town's main street. The commercial centre lies between Dorp St and the university to the east of the Braak, the old town square.

**Information**

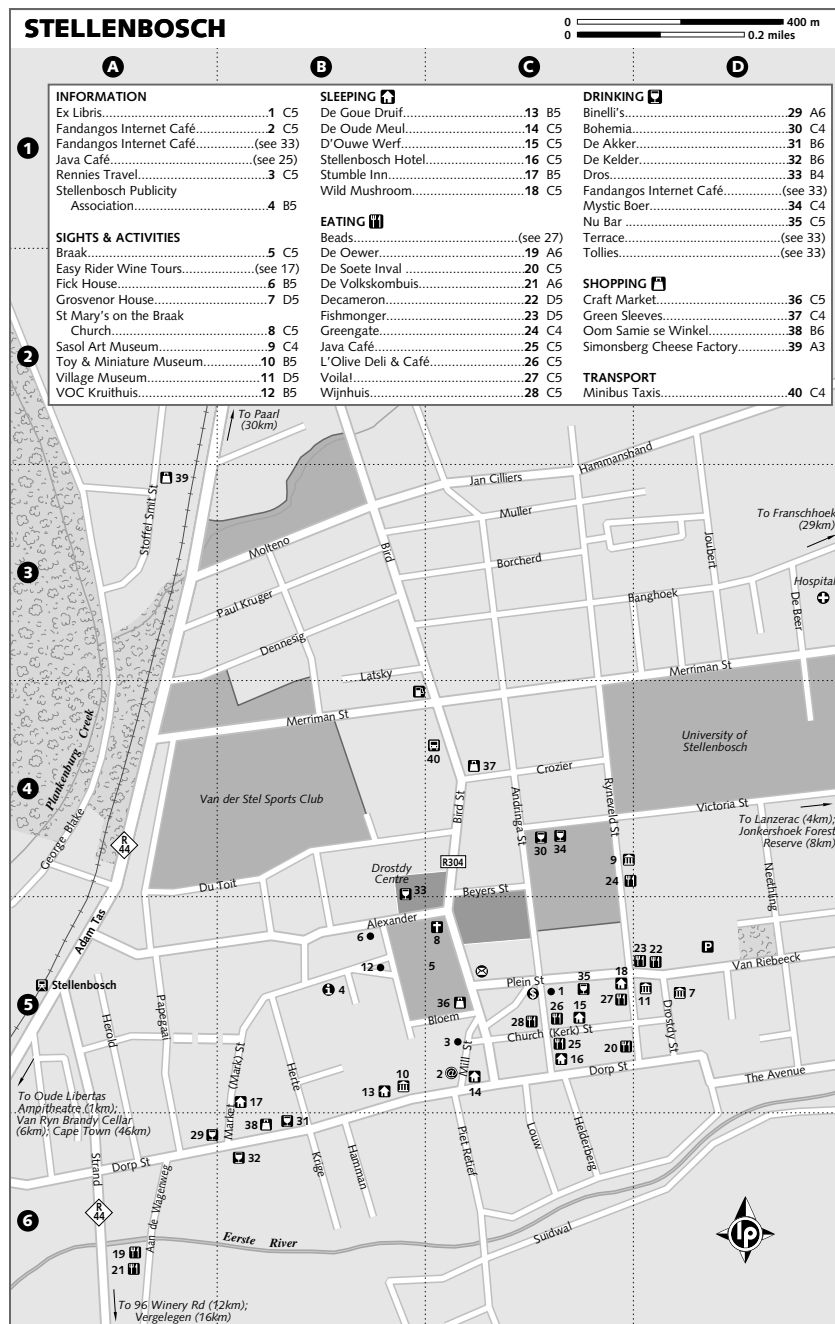
**Ex Libris** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 6871; 18 Andringa St) Offers a solid collection of titles, including rarer South African publications.

**Fandangos Internet Café** (Map p172; per hr R30) Mill St (☎ 021-887 4628); Drostyd Centre (☎ 021-887 7501; Bird St)

**Java Café** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 6261; cnr Church & Andringa Sts; per hr R18) Stellenbosch's cheapest Internet access.

**Rennies Travel** (Map p172; Mill St) A block from Dorp St, with a Thomas Cook foreign-exchange office.

**Stellenbosch Publicity Association** (Map p172; ☎ 021-883 3584; www.tourismstellenbosch.co.za; 36 Market St; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) The staff here are extremely helpful. Pick up the excellent brochure *Discover Stellenbosch on Foot* (R3), with a walking-tour map and information on many of the historic buildings (also available in French and German). Also useful is the free brochure *Stellenbosch Wine Routes*, which gives information about opening times and tastings at many nearby wineries.



## Sights & Activities

If you've had all the wine you can take, Stellenbosch's many museums are worth a visit. If you need to sober up first, explore the town yourself or take a **guided walk** (R50 per person), with a minimum of three people, from the Stellenbosch Publicity Association, daily at 10am and 3pm.

## VILLAGE MUSEUM

A group of exquisitely restored and period-furnished houses dating from 1709 to 1850 make up this **museum** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 2902; 18 Ryneveld St; adult/child R15/10; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), which occupies the entire city block bounded by Ryneveld, Plein, Drostdy and Church Sts and is a must-see. Also included are charming gardens and, on the other side of Drostdy St, stately **Grosvenor House**.

## SASOL ART MUSEUM

Featuring one of the country's best selections of local art, both famous and emerging, this **museum** (Map p172; ☎ 021-808 3693; 52 Ryneveld St; adult/child R9/5; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) also contains an irreplaceable collection of African anthropological treasures, housed here as part of an assemblage by the Anthropology section of the University of Stellenbosch. The exhibition displays at once the different ecological, social and cultural contexts of the human experience in Africa, and is not to be missed.

## TOY & MINIATURE MUSEUM

This delightfully surprising **museum** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 9433; 116 Dorp St; adult/child R10/5; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), based in Voorgelegen House, features a remarkable collection of amazingly detailed toys ranging from railway sets to doll's houses – ask a guide to point out some of the best pieces.

## BRAAK

At the north end of the **Braak** (Map p172; Town Sq), an open stretch of grass, you'll find the neo-Gothic **St Mary's on the Braak Church**, completed in 1852. To the west is the **VOC Kruithuis** (Powder House; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-1pm Mon-Fri), which was built in 1777 to store the town's weapons and gunpowder and now houses a small military museum. On the northwest corner is **Fick House**, also known as the Burgerhuis, a fine example of Cape Dutch style from the late 18th century. Most

of this building is now occupied by Historical Homes of South Africa, established to preserve important architecture.

## JONKERSHOEK FOREST RESERVE

This small **forest reserve** (Map p175; ☎ 021-866 1560; admission car/bicycle R10/5) is around 8km southeast of town along the WR4 and set within a timber plantation. Here you'll find walking and biking trails.

## WINERIES

There are too many good wineries in the Stellenbosch area to list all of them, so it's sometimes best to drive around and stop on a whim. We do, however, recommend a visit to **Blaauwklippen** (Map p175; ☎ 021-880 0133; www.blaauwklippen.com; tastings R25; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun), a rustic 300-year-old estate with several fine Cape Dutch buildings, known for its red wines, particularly its Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel.

Try to make it to **Neethlingshof** (Map p175; ☎ 021-883 8988; www.neethlingshof.co.za; tastings R20; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun), where a beautiful tree-lined approach leads to a charming estate with a rose garden and tea room. There are cellar and vineyard tours, and their pinotage (a cross between Pinot Noir and Hermitage or Shiraz) and Cabernet Sauvignon have won several awards.

Also unmissable is **Delaire** (Map p175; ☎ 021-885 1756; www.delairewinery.co.za; tastings R10; ☎ 10am-5pm), known as the 'vineyard in the sky' because of its high-altitude location at the top of the Helshoogte Pass on Rte 310 towards Franschhoek. Naturally, the views are stunning and it's a friendly place with wheelchair access to the restaurant and picnics available from October to April (bookings essential). Try its Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, the latter well cultivated at **Hartenberg** (Map p175; ☎ 021-882 2541; www.hartenbergestate.com; tastings free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat), thanks to a favourable microclimate. It also produces a top Cabernet and Shiraz. Lunch is available from noon to 2pm (bookings essential).

There are some old stalwarts. **Lanzerac** (Map p175; ☎ 021-886 5641; www.lanzeracwines.co.za; Jonkershoek Valley; tastings R16; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) produces a very good Merlot and quaffable Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, and you'll also find Stellenbosch's most luxurious hotel

(see p176) here. **L'Avenir** (Map p175; ☎ 021-889 5001; [www.lavenir.co.za](http://www.lavenir.co.za); tastings R10-20; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat), where a visit is not about facilities (there is no restaurant) but about the simply splendid wine: the Chenin Blanc is divine and its pinotage has won more awards for this cultivar than any other in the country.

Back towards Cape Town is the magnificent setting of **Spier** (Map p175; ☎ 021-809 1100; [www.spier.co.za](http://www.spier.co.za); tastings R12; 🕒 9am-5pm), which has something for everyone. This mega-estate offers steam-train trips from Cape Town (call ☎ 419 5222 for information), horse riding, a cheetah centre, performing-arts centres, beautifully restored Cape Dutch buildings and several restaurants, including the spectacular Moyo (see p177). The wines produced here are nothing to shout about, but in the tasting you can try lots of other vineyards' wines. Check out the annual **arts festival** that runs from January to March – it's as good a reason as any for coming here. If you want to stay over there's a good Cape Malay-style hotel, the Village at Spier (see p176).

For lovers of the burnt stuff, there's **Van Ryn Brandy Cellar** (Map p175; ☎ 021-881 3875; [www.distell.co.za](http://www.distell.co.za); Vlothenburg; tastings R15; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1.30pm Sat) on the **Western Cape Brandy Route** ([www.sabrandy.co.za](http://www.sabrandy.co.za)). It generally runs three tours a day, including a tasting. In its boardroom you can view fine South African art.

## HELDERBERG

This area around Somerset West, 20km south of Stellenbosch, has some 20 wineries, including **Vergelegen** (Map p175; ☎ 021-847 1334; [www.vergelegen.co.za](http://www.vergelegen.co.za); Lourensford Rd, Somerset West; admission R10, tastings R2.50-10; 🕒 9.30am-4pm), arguably the most beautiful estate in the Cape. Simon van der Stel's son Willem first planted vines here in 1700. The buildings and elegant grounds have ravishing mountain views and a 'stately home' feel to them. On the dining front you can choose from the casual Rose Terrace overlooking the Rose Garden, the upmarket Lady Phillips Restaurant, or a picnic hamper (R110 per person) – bookings are essential for the last two options, and they are not available between April and September.

## Tours

**Easy Rider Wine Tours** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 4651; [www.jump.to/stumble](http://www.jump.to/stumble); 12MarketSt) is a popular, long-

established company offering good value for a full-day trip at R250 including lunch and all tastings. The wineries it visits sometimes change, but on the schedule at the time of research were Boschendal, Delaire, Fairview and Simonsig.

**Wine Walks** (Map p175; ☎ 083-631 5944; [www.winewalks.co.za](http://www.winewalks.co.za)) local expert Annelee Steyn takes visitors on an 8km walking tour of wineries in the Simonsberg area. The walk (R395) includes a picnic lunch and tastings; phone for bookings, and to ask about group discounts.

## Festivals & Events

**Oude Libertas Amphitheatre** (Map p175; ☎ 021-809 7380; [www.oudelibrertas.co.za](http://www.oudelibrertas.co.za)) and the Spier wine estate (see left) both hold **performing-arts festivals** between January and March.

**Rag Week** If you're into live music, try to catch early February's Rag Week where local band members vie for the attention of freshmen here to celebrate their recent student status.

**Wine Festival** ([www.wineroute.co.za](http://www.wineroute.co.za)) This event in early August offers visitors the chance to sample up to 400 different drops in one spot as well as attend talks and tutorials on wine.

**Stellenbosch Festival** ([www.stellenboschfestival.co.za](http://www.stellenboschfestival.co.za)) Runs for two weeks at the end of September, celebrates music and the arts in various events around the town including a street carnival.

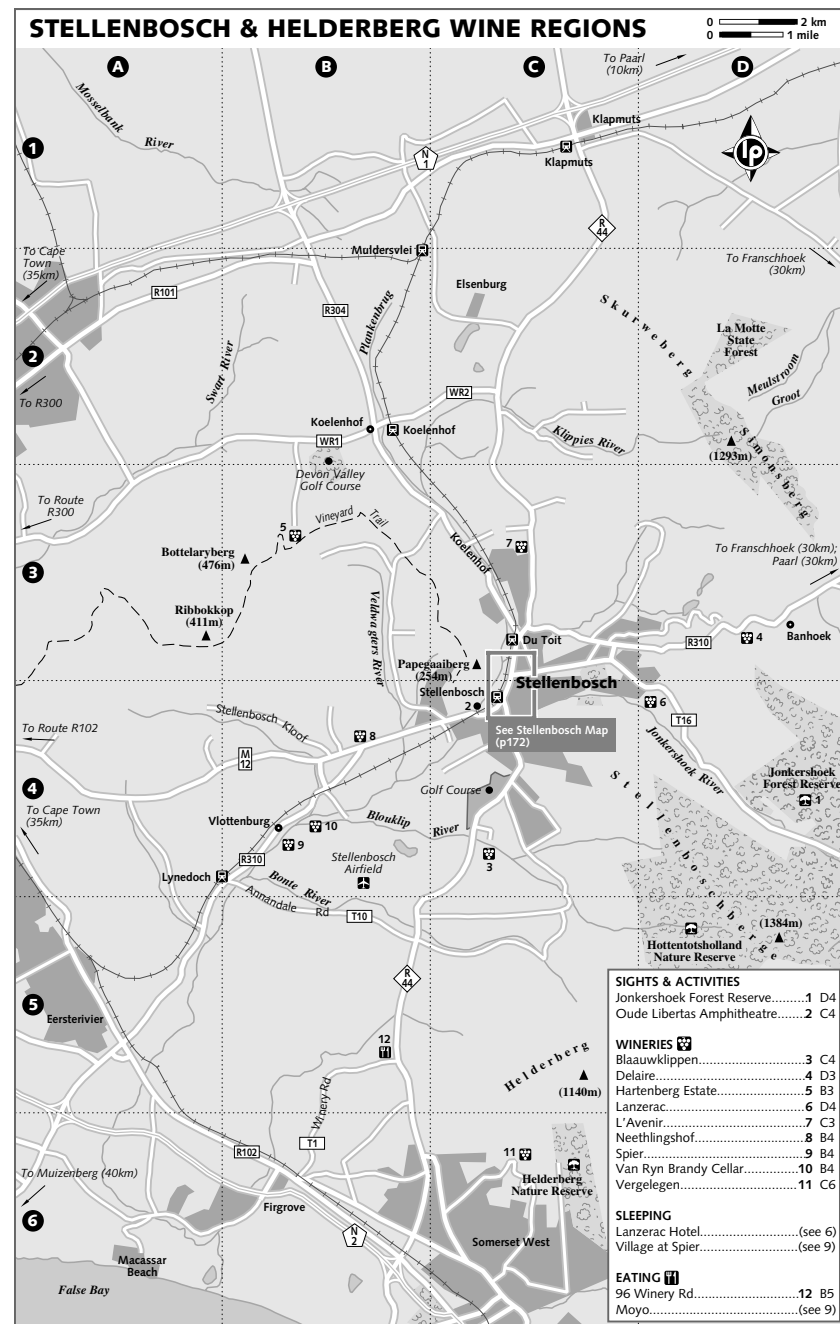
**Van der Stel Festival** Held at the end of September and early October, this festival combines with the Stellenbosch and Wine Festivals.

## Sleeping

There's plenty of accommodation in Stellenbosch; contact the Stellenbosch Publicity Association if you find the recommendations listed here are booked up.

## BUDGET

**Stumble Inn** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 4049; [www.jump.to/stumble](http://www.jump.to/stumble); 12 Market St; camp sites per person R40, dm R60, d with shared bathroom R160; 🕒 ) With a lively and welcoming atmosphere, this place is split over two old houses, one with a small pool and the other with a pleasant garden, which now offers self-catering apartments for R250. The owners, travellers and wine-lovers themselves, are a good source of information and offer wine discounts for longer stayers. They also run Easy Rider Wine Tours and rent bicycles for R50 per day.



**De Oude Meul** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 7085; www.deoudemeul.snowball.co.za; 10A Mill St; s/d incl breakfast R375/550; 🍷) Above an antiques shop in the centre of town, the accommodation here is very good and reasonable for the price (which is lower in winter). Some rooms have balconies.

## MIDRANGE

**Stellenbosch Hotel** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 3644; www.stellenbosch.co.za/hotel; 162 Dorp St; s/d incl breakfast from R425/700; 🍷) A comfortable country-style hotel with a variety of rooms, including those with self-catering facilities and others with four-poster beds. A section dating from 1743 houses the Jan Cats Brasserie, a good spot for a drink.

**Wild Mushroom** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 9880; 15 Ryneveld St; s/d incl breakfast R450/780; 🍷) Slap-bang in the middle of Stellenbosch's trendy restaurant zone, yet surprisingly quiet, this chic multilevel guesthouse offers plush accommodation, all in very stylish shades of brown. There is also a self-catering option available.

**De Goue Druif** (Map p172; ☎ 021-883 3555; http://gouedruif.hypermart.net; 110 Dorp St; s/d incl breakfast R650/700; 🍷 🍷) In a Cape Dutch building dating back to 1792, this 'Golden Grape' is a charming guesthouse run by a Belgian couple. There is also a small gym and sauna on offer.

## TOP END

**D'Ouwe Werf** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 4608; www.ouweverf.com; 30 Church St; s/d incl breakfast R900/990; 🍷 🍷) This is an appealing, old-style hotel (dating back to 1802) with a good restaurant. It's worth dropping by its shady courtyard for lunch. The more expensive luxury rooms are furnished with antiques and brass beds.

**Village at Spier** (Map p175; ☎ 021-809 1100; www.spier.co.za; Vlootenburg; d/ste incl breakfast R1450/2500; 🍷 🍷) Forgo the usual Cape Dutch style in favour of a design copying the brightly painted houses found in Cape Town's Bo-Kaap. Rooms are large, well appointed and part of the Spier wine estate.

**Lanzerac Hotel** (Map p175; ☎ 021-887 1132; www.lanzerac.co.za; Jonkershoek Valley; s/d/ste incl breakfast R1700/2960/4140; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This unashamedly opulent place consists of a 300-year-old manor house and winery. Some suites have private pools.

## Eating

Stellenbosch is a *bon vivant's* paradise, with a plethora of restaurants and bars. The surrounding winelands are equally well stocked.

## RESTAURANTS

**Beads** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 8734; cnr Church & Ryneveld Sts; mains R30-80; 🍷) breakfast, lunch & dinner) This trendy à la carte restaurant is frequented by Stellenbosch's beautiful people. In front of it is the bustling deli Voila!, where you can create your own meal.

**Decameron** (Map p172; ☎ 021-883 3331; 50 Plein St; mains R40-60; 🍷) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Locals are divided about whether or not cheesily designed Decameron is the town's best Italian restaurant. Arguments are commonly settled over a pizza in the outdoor seating area on a balmy summer evening.

**De Soete Inval** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 4842; 5 Ryneveld St; mains R50; 🍷) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Known primarily for its choice of 40 different pancakes, this cheerful place also does a fine Indonesian *rijstafel* (rice with many dishes), with six dishes for R75 or a half portion for R50.

**Fishmonger** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 7835; cnr Ryneveld & Plein Sts; mains R50; 🍷) lunch & dinner) The choice for seafood. It's a snazzily designed place with a relaxed vibe. A platter goes for a reasonable R79.

**Wijnhuis** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 5844; cnr Church & Andringa Sts; mains R50-100; 🍷) lunch & dinner) One of the town's more pricey options, but well worth it. There's an extensive menu and a wine list stretching to 350 different labels. Around 20 wines are available by the glass and it does tastings. Try to get a seat in the outdoor section.

**De Oewer** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 5431; Aan de Wagenweg; mains R70; 🍷) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Next to De Volkskombuis, De Oewer has an open-air section shaded by oak trees beside the river. It offers lighter meals with a more Mediterranean emphasis.

**96 Winery Rd** (Map p175; ☎ 021-842 2945; Zandberg Farm, Winery Rd; mains R70; 🍷) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Off Rte 44 between Stellenbosch and Somerset West, this is one of the most respected restaurants in the area, known for its dry aged beef. It has a relaxed style and a belief in simply cooked, real food.

**De Volkskombuis** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 2121; Aan de Wagenweg; mains R75; 🍷) lunch & dinner Mon-

Sat, lunch Sun) A local favourite that's open 365 days a year, this no-frills, atmospheric place specialises in traditional Cape Malay cuisine and features a terrace with views of the Stellenbosch mountain range. Booking is advisable.

**Moyo** (Map p175; ☎ 021-809 1100; Spier Estate, Vlootenburg; buffet R180; 🍷) lunch & dinner) The mandatory face painting is a bit much, but this tourist-pleasing place brings a fantasy vision of Africa to the middle of the Spier wine estate, and guests love it. It's a lot of fun, with roving musicians and dancers and alfresco dining in tents and up in the trees (you're given a blanket in winter).

## CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

**Java Café** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 6261; cnr Church & Andringa Sts; snacks from R15; 🍷) 8.30am-11pm) A good range of drinks and snacks are available at this stylish café with pavement tables. It also offers Stellenbosch's cheapest Internet access (R18 per hour) and is a wi-fi hotspot.

**Greengate** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 6111; 44 Ryneveld St; snacks from R20; 🍷) 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) An organic and farm-food deli that looks good and smells terrific. It sells nuts, fruits and organic vegetables, offers a pay-by-weight buffet at R90/kg and a daily changing menu.

**L'Olive Deli & Café** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 8985; Shop 1, Oude Hoek, Andringa St; snacks from R25; 🍷) 8am-6pm Mon-Sat) This is a stylish deli offering a range of delicious snacks built around the eponymous fruit, of which it offers several varieties.

## Drinking

Stellenbosch's nightlife scene is geared largely towards the interests of the university students, but there are alternatives if you ask around. It's safe to walk around the centre at night, so a pub crawl could certainly be on the cards (if you're staying at the Stumble Inn one will probably be organised for you).

**Nu Bar** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 8998; 51 Plein St) This place has a nightclub feel, with a small dance floor beyond the long bar where the DJ pumps out hip-hop and house.

**Mystic Boer** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 8870; 3 Victoria St) Cool Afrikaans kids hang out here in surroundings perhaps best described as post-transformation era retro-Boer chic.

**Fandangos Internet café** (Map p172; ☎ 021-887 7501; Drosty Centre, Bird St) If you're looking for a slightly more sophisticated option try this cocktail bar and Internet café in the Drosty Centre.

**Binelli's** (Map p172; ☎ 021-886 9009; Black Horse Centre, cnr Dorp & Market Sts) Binelli's represents more than any other place the changing face of Stellenbosch: it's a supremely slick, New York-styled 'event bar', offering a selection of coffees, tapas and cocktails using only high-grade ingredients.

Classic student watering holes: **Bohemia** (Map p172; ☎ 021-882 8375; cnr Andringa & Victoria Sts) Offers live music every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday and hubbly-bubbly (R25) with a range of different tobaccos.

**De Akker** (Map p172; ☎ 021-883 3512; 90 Dorp St) Pub meals from under R30 and an upstairs cellar for live music.

**De Kelder** (Map p172; ☎ 021-883 3797; 63 Dorp St) A reasonably pleasant restaurant, bar and beer garden popular with German backpackers.

**Dros** (☎ 021-886 4856), the **Terrace** (☎ 021-887 194) and Tollies, clustered together in the Drosty Centre complex (Map p172), just off Bird St and north of the Braak, are among the liveliest bars; you can eat at all of them, but that's not what most patrons have in mind.

## Shopping

**Oom Samie se Winkel** (Uncle Sammy's Shop; Map p172; ☎ 021-887 0797; 84 Dorp St; 🍷) 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) This place was on the Stellenbosch map before Stellenbosch was on the map. It's an unashamedly touristy general dealer but still worth visiting for its curious range of goods – from high kitsch to genuine antiques and everything in between.

**Green Sleeves** (Map p172; ☎ 021-883 8374; 2 Crozier St; 🍷) 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Green Sleeves features a charming selection of retro, funky and vintage clothing; next door is a sister shop offering similar styles in furniture and homeware.

The town offers other excellent shopping opportunities, from the **craft market** (Map p172; 🍷) 9am-5pm) near the Braak, to the **Simonsberg Cheese Factory** (Map p172; ☎ 021-809 1017; 9 Stoffel Smit St; 🍷) 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat), which has free tastings and inexpensive cheese.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Long-distance bus services charge high prices for the short sector to Cape Town and do not take bookings. You're better off using **Backpacker Bus** (☎ 021-447 4991; www.backpackerbus.co.za), which charges R140 to R220 one way and will pick you up from where you are staying.

### MINIBUS TAXI

A minibus taxi ride to Paarl is about R30 (45 minutes), but you may have to change taxis en route at Pniel. They leave from the stand on Bird St.

### TRAIN

Metro trains run the 46km between Cape Town and Stellenbosch (1st/economy class R12/7.50, about one hour). Note there are no 2nd-class tickets. For inquiries, call **Metrarail** (☎ 0800 656 463). To be safe, travel in the middle of the day.

## Getting Around

Stellenbosch is navigable on foot and, being largely flat, this is good cycling territory. Bicycles can be hired from the Stumble Inn (p174), the Publicity Association (p171) and Fandangos (p171) in the Drostyd Centre for R20 per hour or R90 for the day.

For local trips in a private taxi call **Daksi Cab** (☎ 082-854 1541).

## FRANSCHHOEK

☎ 021 / pop 13,000

Franschhoek bills itself as the country's gastronomic capital. The toughest decision you'll face in Franschhoek is where to eat. And with a clutch of art galleries, wine farms and stylish guesthouses thrown in, there's a sense here that this is all too good to be true. It certainly has one of the loveliest settings in the Cape, and if it all feels a bit too much like a theme park this a good base from which to visit both Stellenbosch and Paarl, as long as you have transport.

## Orientation & Information

The town is clustered around Huguenot St. At the southern end it reaches a T-junction at Huguenot Memorial Park. Continue northeast along Rte 45 for the spectacular Franschhoek Pass.

**Franschhoek Photolab** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 4911; Huguenot St; per hr R30) There's Internet access here.

**Franschhoek Wine Valley Tourism** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 3603; www.franschhoek.org.za; Huguenot St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) This office is to the left on the main street shortly after you enter the town. Staff here can provide you with a map of the area's scenic walks and issue permits (R10) for walks in nearby forestry areas, as well as book accommodation.

## Sights & Activities

### HUGUENOT MEMORIAL MUSEUM

This engrossing **museum** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 2532; Lambrecht St; adult/child R5/2; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) celebrates South Africa's Huguenots and houses the genealogical records of their descendants. Some of the names of the original settlers, such as Malan, de Villiers, Malherbe and Roux, are among the most famous Afrikaner dynasties in the country. Behind the main complex is a pleasant café, in front is the **Huguenot Monument** (adult/child R5/1; ☎ 9am-5pm), opened in 1948, and across the road is the **annexe**, which offers displays on the Anglo-Boer War and natural history, and a souvenir shop.

### MONT ROCHELLE EQUESTRIAN CENTRE

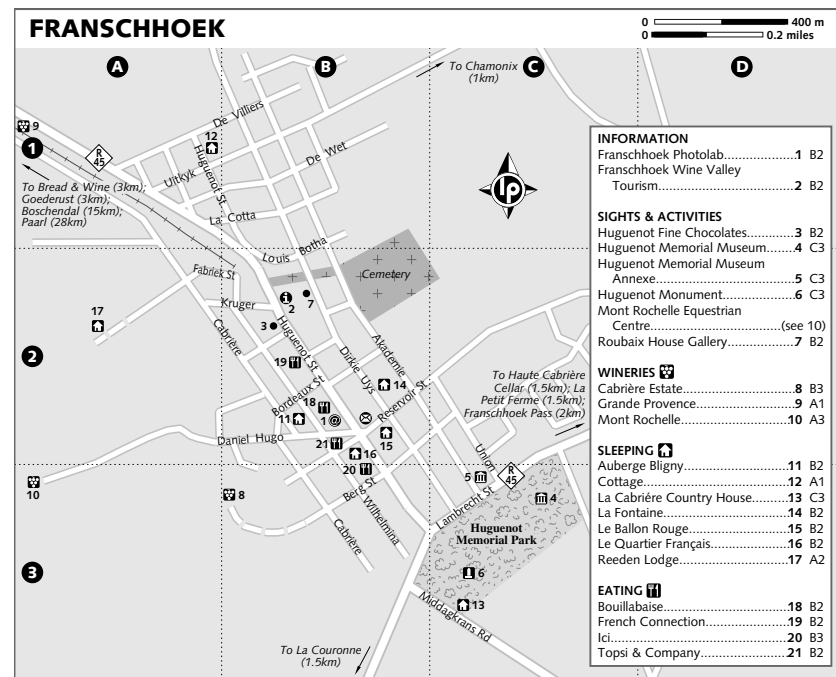
For details about a horseback tour of the wine estates around town contact the **equestrian centre** (☎ 083-300 4368; fax 021-876 2363; per hr R90). It's based in the Mont Rochelle Wine Estate.

### ARTS & CRAFTS

Franschhoek boasts many fine galleries, most along Huguenot St. You can watch David Walters, one of South Africa's most distinguished potters, at work at the **Roubaix House Gallery** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 4304; 24 Dirkie Uys St; ☎ 10am-6pm), in the beautifully restored home of Franschhoek's first teacher behind the tourist info office. There are also exhibits of work by other artists.

### HUGUENOT FINE CHOCOLATES

An empowerment programme helped give the two local coloured guys who run this Belgian-style **chocolate shop** (Map p179 ☎ 021-876 4096; 62 Huguenot St) a leg up and now people are raving about their confections. Call them a day in advance to arrange a tour and chocolate-making demonstration including tasting of samples (R12).



## WINERIES

Many of Franschhoek's wineries are within walking distance of the town centre, but you'll need transport to reach famous **Boschendal** (Map p181; ☎ 021-870 4210; www.boschendal.com; Pniel Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm), the classic Winelands estate, with lovely architecture, food and wine. The vineyard and cellar tours (R20 per person) are well worth it; booking is essential. Note the Taphuis wine-tasting area (where tastings cost R15 or R22 for a formal tasting with a guide) is at the opposite end of the estate from the **Groote Drakenstein manor house** (admission R10) and restaurants. The blow-out buffet lunch (R195) in the main restaurant is mainly a group affair; far nicer, especially in fine weather, is **Le Café** (☎ 021-870 4274), where you can have a snack or something more substantial. Also very popular are 'Le Pique Nique' hampers (R95 per person), served under parasols on the lawn from mid-October to the end of April. There's a minimum of two people and you'll need to book. Its reds, including Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, get top marks.

Back in town, **Cabrière Estate** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 8500; www.cabriere.co.za; Berg St; tastings with/without cellar tour R25/20; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-3.30pm Sat, tours 11am & 3pm Mon-Fri, 11am Sat) offers tastings that include a couple of sparkling wines and one of the vineyard's excellent range of white, red and dessert wines and brandies. No wonder it's so popular. At the Saturday session, stand by for the proprietor's party trick of slicing open a bottle of bubbly with a sabre.

Off Main Rd is **Grande Provence** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 8600; www.grandeprovence.co.za; Main Rd; tastings free; ☎ 10am-6pm), a beautifully revamped, 18th-century manor house that is home to a stylish restaurant and a splendid gallery showcasing the best local artists. In the tasting room you can try its very easy-drinking Angel's Tears blends or the more upmarket Grande Provence wines.

Up the hill to the west of town is **Chamonix** (Map p181; ☎ 021-876 2494; www.chamonix.co.za; Uitkyk St; tastings R15; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm), which has cellar tours at 11am and 3pm by appointment. The tasting room is in a converted blacksmith's; there's also a range of schnapps

and mineral water to sample. The pretty restaurant, **La Maison de Chamonix** (mains R70-90; ☺ lunch Mon-Sun, dinner Fri & Sat), has a reasonably priced menu. There are also self-catering cottages amid the vineyards.

**Mont Rochelle** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 3000; montrochelle@wine.co.za; Daniel Hugo St; tastings R15; ☺ tastings 10am-6pm, tours 11am, 12.30pm & 3pm Mon-Fri), another vineyard in a beautiful location, Mont Rochelle offers great wines. It's one of the handful of vineyards owned by a black businessman – Miko Rwayibare from the Congo. You can combine your wine tasting with a cheese tasting for an extra R10, and cellar tours (R10) are by appointment.

North of Franschoek, it's worth a visit to **Vrede and Lust** (Map p181; ☎ 021-874 1611; www.vnl.co.za; tastings R15; ☺ 10am-5pm), an estate growing in reputation thanks to its solid reds but, with such a beautiful setting and lavishly appointed main building, you won't care too much about the vino.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Chamonix Guest Cottages** (Map p181; ☎ 021-876 2494; www.chamonix.co.za; Uitkyk St; cottages per person from R200) Pleasant cottages sleeping up to four are set in the middle of the vineyards, a 10-minute walk uphill north of Huguenot St. There are considerable winter discounts (May to October).

**Cottage** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 2392; thecottage55@iafrica.com; 55 Huguenot St; s/d R260/350) There is just one cottage sleeping two, or four at a pinch, but it's a beauty. It's private, quiet, just a few minutes' walk from the village centre and now has self-catering facilities.

**Reeden Lodge** (Map p179 ☎ 021-876 3174; www.reedenlodge.co.za; off Cabrière St; cottages from R400; ☎ ☺) A terrific option for families, with well-equipped, self-catering cottages sleeping up to eight people, situated on a farm about 10 minutes' walk from town. Parents will love the peace and quiet and their kids the sheep, tree house and open space.

### MIDRANGE

**Le Ballon Rouge** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 2651; www.ballon-rouge.co.za; 7 Reservoir St East; s/d incl breakfast R500/650; ☎ ☺ ☺) A small guesthouse with good-quality rooms and stylish suites (with underfloor heating and stunning bathrooms) all opening on to a patio. It also has a popular restaurant.

**La Fontaine** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 2112; www.lafontainefranschoek.co.za; 21 Dirkie Llys St; s/d incl breakfast R600/750; ☎ ☺) Offering a quieter accommodation alternative off the town's main drag, this is a stylishly appointed family home featuring twelve spacious rooms with wooden floors and mountain views.

**Auberge Bligny** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 3767; www.bligny.co.za; 28 Van Wyk St; d from R650; ☎ ☺) Charming décor and heavy-set furniture define this guesthouse in a Victorian homestead. Largely European travellers return regularly for its nine pleasant rooms and shady garden.

### TOP END

**La Cabrière Country House** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 4780; www.lacabriere.co.za; Middagkrans Rd; d incl breakfast R1050; ☎ ☺ ☺) A modern boutique guesthouse that's a refreshing break from all that Cape Dutch architecture. There are four sumptuously decorated rooms, very personal service and sweeping views to the mountains.

**La Couronne** (Map p181; ☎ 021-876 2110; www.lacouronnehotel.co.za; Robertsvllei Rd; d incl breakfast from R1970; ☎ ☺ ☺) A boutique hotel-and-restaurant partly built into the hills, this place offers gilt-edged luxury and magnificent views across the valley.

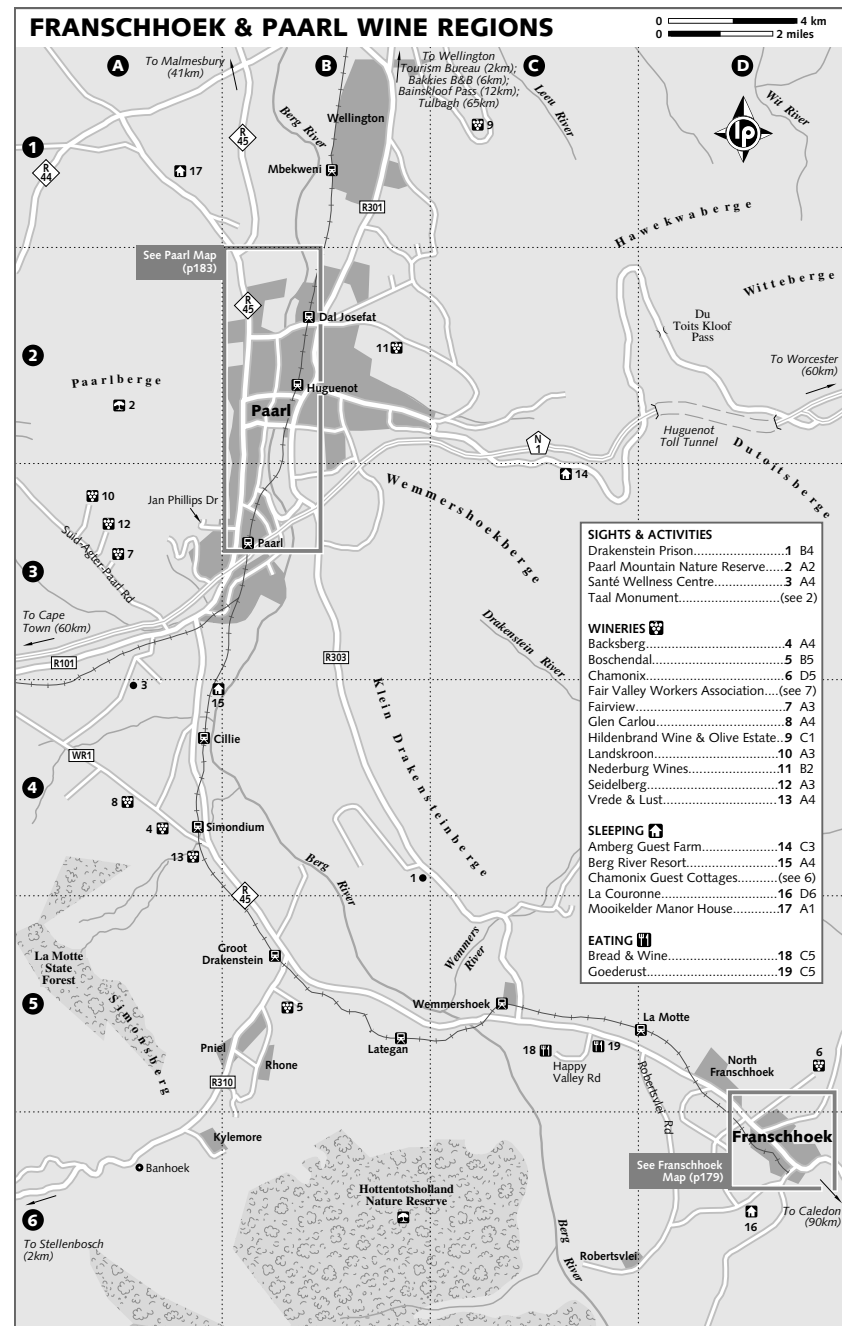
**Le Quartier Français** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 2151; www.lequartier.co.za; 16 Huguenot St; d from R2350; ☎ ☺ ☺) This is one of the best places to stay in the Winelands. Set around a leafy courtyard and pool, guest rooms are very large with fireplaces, huge beds and stylish décor. There's also a fine restaurant, called Ici, here.

## Eating

Franschoek's compactness means it's possible to stroll around and let your nose tell you where to eat. The following places are well established, however, so advance booking is best.

**Goederust** (Map p181; ☎ 021-876 3687; Main Rd, La Motte; mains R30-40; ☺ breakfast & lunch) A new take on Cape farm-kitchen food is served in this charming old-fashioned farm-restaurant set in a pleasant garden. The spicy calamari salad (R40) is a knockout, as are the filled pancakes. Come on Sunday for a spit-lamb buffet (bookings essential).

**French Connection** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 4056; 48 Huguenot St; mains R50; ☺ lunch & dinner)





No-nonsense bistro-style food using only fresh ingredients is dished up at this deservedly popular place. Chequered red tablecloths give it that *mais oui* factor.

**Ici** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 2151; 16 Huguenot St; mains R50-R280; ☺ lunch & dinner) The restaurant of Le Quartier Français, this Franschoek stalwart is now split into two dining options: a stylish bistro offering food such as zebra carpaccio, cape salmon and liquorice and coffee-roasted *blesbok* (highland antelope) loin; and a set-menu restaurant offering a four-course meal (R280). The hotel's bar does lighter meals for around R60.

**Bread & Wine** (Map p181; ☎ 021-876 3692; Moreson Wine Farm, Happy Valley Rd, La Motte; mains R60-80; ☺ lunch Wed-Sun) Hidden away down a dirt road as you approach town along Rte 45, this place is worth searching out. It's known for its breads, pizzas, cured meats and tasty Mediterranean-style cuisine. Try the glazed kingklip with clams and artichoke (R70). It's a winner.

**Topsi & Company** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 2952; 7 Reservoir St; mains R60-85; ☺ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Run by Tropsi Venter, who should be accorded national-treasure status, this place is quirky and very relaxed. Tropsi pops out from her open kitchen to serve the totally delicious food and chat with guests; you must BYO wine.

**Bouillabaise** (Map p179; ☎ 021-876 4430; 38 Huguenot St; mains R70-R110; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon & Wed-Sat, breakfast & lunch Sun) The Franschoek jet set just got an upgrade, with this highly opulent champagne-and-oyster bar featuring blown-glass sculptures, beautiful staff, fresh seafood dishes, an excellent range of bubbles and homemade sorbets such as lime and basil or mint and pear.

**La Petite Ferme** (☎ 021-876 3016; Franschoek Pass Rd; mains R80; ☺ noon-4pm) A must-visit for foodies who hanker for romantic views, boutique wines and smoked, de-boned salmon trout, its delicately flavoured signature dish. There's a helipad should you feel like choppering in from Cape Town and some luxurious rooms if you can't bear to leave.

**Haute Cabrière Cellar** (☎ 021-876 3688; Franschoek Pass Rd; mains R80-90; ☺ lunch daily, dinner Wed-Mon) In a dramatic dining space in a cellar cut into the mountain side, each dish can be had either as a starter or main and all are paired with a Cabrière wine.

## Getting There & Away

Franschoek is 32km east of Stellenbosch and 25km south of Paarl. The best way to reach Franschoek is in your own vehicle. Some visitors choose to cycle here from Stellenbosch, but roads are winding and can be treacherous, with drivers returning from all-day wine-tasting sessions and not looking out for cyclists. Still, it's certainly a scenic ride. Normal out-of-shape souls can take a shared taxi from Stellenbosch (R8) or Paarl station (R9).

## PAARL & AROUND

☎ 021 / pop 165,000

Less touristy and more spread out than Stellenbosch, Paarl is a large commercial centre, surrounded by mountains and vineyards, on the banks of the Berg River. It's not really a town to tour on foot, but there is still quite a lot to see and do including vineyards within the town limits. There are some great walks in the Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve, some excellent Cape Dutch architecture and some significant monuments to Afrikaner culture.

## Orientation & Information

Main St runs 11km along the entire length of the town, parallel to the Berg River and the train line. It's shaded by oaks and jacarandas and is lined with many historic buildings. The busy commercial centre is around Lady Grey St.

**Paarl Tourism** (Map p183; ☎ 021-863 4937; www.paarlonline.com; 86 Main St; ☺ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat & Sun) This office has an excellent supply of information on the whole region, and helpful staff.

## Sights & Activities

Apart from the local wineries there are a few other worthwhile things to do in Paarl.

### PAARL MUSEUM

This **museum** (Map p183 ☎ 021-872 2651; www.mu-seums.org.za/paarlmuseum; 303 Main St; adult/child R5 donation; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) is housed in the Oude Pastorie (Old Parsonage), built in 1714. It has a fascinating collection of Cape Dutch antiques and relics of Huguenot and early Afrikaner culture. There's a bookcase modelled on King Solomon's temple, and display sections on the 'road to reconciliation', the old mosques of the local Muslim community and the Khoesaaan.

### AFRIKAANS LANGUAGE MUSEUM

Paarl is considered the wellspring of the Afrikaans language, a fact covered by this interesting **museum** (Map p183; ☎ 021-872 3441; www.taalmuseum.co.za; 11 Pastorie Ave; adult/child R10/2; ☺ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). It also shows, thanks to a multimedia exhibition, how three continents contributed to the formation of what is a fascinating and often beautiful language. Follow up a visit here with a visit to the somewhat phallic Taal Monument.

### PAARL MOUNTAIN NATURE RESERVE

The three giant granite domes that dominate this popular reserve (Map p181) and loom over the western side of town apparently glisten like pearls if they are caught by the sun after a fall of rain – hence the name 'Paarl'. The reserve has mountain *fynbos* (literally 'fine bush'; primarily proteas, heaths and ericas), a cultivated wildflower garden in the middle that's a nice spot for a picnic, and numerous walks with excellent views over the valley.

Access is from the 11km-long Jan Phillips Dr, which skirts the eastern edge of the reserve. The picnic ground is about 4km from Main St. A map showing walking trails is available from Paarl Tourism.

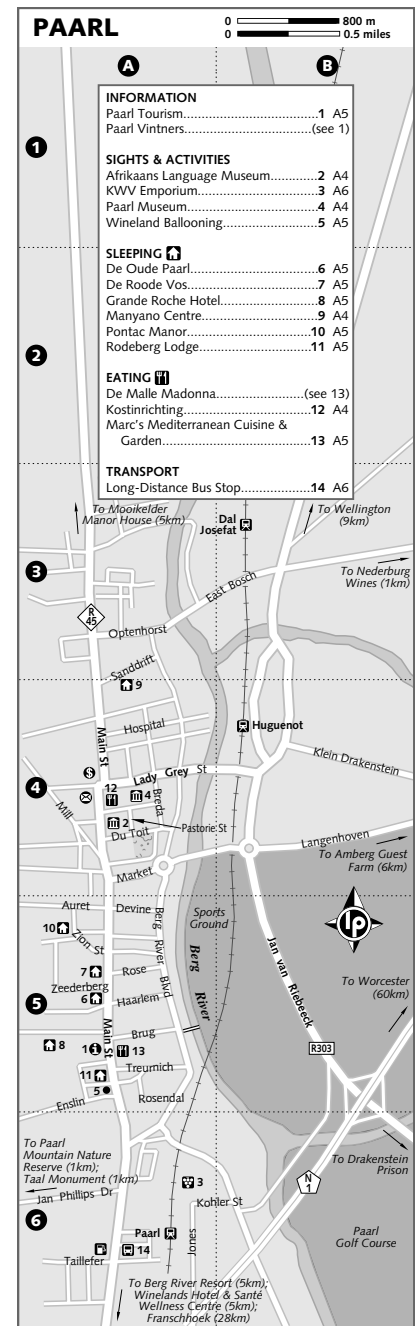
While up this way you could also visit the **Taal Monument** (Map p181; adult/child R10/5; ☺ 8.15am-5pm), a giant needlelike edifice that commemorates the Afrikaans language (*taal* is Afrikaans for 'language'). On a clear day there are stunning views from here as far as Cape Town. There's also an adjoining restaurant and curio shop.

### DRAKENSTEIN PRISON

On 11 February 1990, when Nelson Mandela walked free from incarceration for the first time in more than 27 years, the jail in question was not Robben Island, but here. Then called the Victor Verster, this prison (Map p181) was where Mandela spent his last two years of captivity in the relative comfort of the warders cottage, negotiating the end of apartheid. It's still a working prison so there are no tours, but there is a pretty good à la carte restaurant.

### SANTÉ WELLNESS CENTRE

The chief selling point of this luxurious **spa** (Map p181; ☎ 021-875 8100; www.santewellness.co.za; Klappmuts), around 7km southwest of Paarl,



0 800 m  
0 0.5 miles

## PAARL

**INFORMATION**  
Paarl Tourism.....1 A5  
Paarl Vintners.....(see 1)

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**  
Afrikaans Language Museum.....2 A4  
KWV Emporium.....3 A6  
Paarl Museum.....4 A4  
Wineland Ballooning.....5 A5

**SLEEPING**   
De Oude Paarl.....6 A5  
De Roode Vos.....7 A5  
Grande Roche Hotel.....8 A5  
Maryano Centre.....9 A4  
Pontac Manor.....10 A5  
Rodeberg Lodge.....11 A5

**EATING**   
De Malle Madonna.....(see 13)  
Kostlinrichting.....12 A4  
Marc's Mediterranean Cuisine & Garden.....13 A5

**TRANSPORT**  
Long-Distance Bus Stop.....14 A6

is its vinotherapy regime (R1645 with lunch), which includes a Shiraz body rub, Chardonnay cocoon wrap and Cabernet Sauvignon bath! There are lots of other treatments available as well as both indoor and outdoor pools, and if you simply can't leave you can stay at the sumptuous Wine-lands Hotel.

### WINELAND BALLOONING

You'll need to get up very early in the morning, but a hot-air balloon trip over the Winelands will be unforgettable. Contact **Wineland Ballooning** (Map p183; ☎ 021-863 3192; 64 Main St; per person R1500), which runs trips between November and April but only when the weather conditions are right.

### WELLINGTON

This sedate and reasonably pretty town (Map p181) has a population of around 50,000 and is 10km north of Paarl. The landowner whose property was used by the railway stipulated that all trains must stop in Wellington. This included King George VI's train in 1947, and today Wellington is a stop on the Metrorail route between Paarl and Cape Town and accounts for the brief halt by the *Blue Train* also.

The **Tourism Bureau** (☎ 021-873 4604; www.visitwellington.com; 104 Main St) is next to the Andrew Murray Church. The friendly staff can provide a brochure and map of the wineries in the Wellington area, which are less touristy than Paarl's. A popular one is Hildenbrand Wine & Olive Estate (opposite).

### BAINSKLOOF PASS

This is one of the country's great mountain passes, with a superb caravan park halfway along. Thomas Bain developed the road through the pass between 1848 and 1852. Other than having its surface tarred, the road has not been altered since, and is now a national monument. It's a magical drive, which, if you have the lungs for it, would be even better experienced on a bicycle. Rte 303 runs from Wellington across Bainskloof to meet Rte 43, which runs south to Worcester and north to Ceres.

There are several nearby walks, including the five-hour **Bobbejaans River Walk** to a waterfall. This walk actually starts back at Eerste Tol and you need to buy a permit (R30), which is available from the Cape

Nature Conservation desk at Cape Town Tourism (see p106).

### WINERIES

For information about wineries in the area, contact **Paarl Vintners** (☎ 021-863 4886; 86 Main St).

The first stop on your Paarl wine exploration should probably be **KWV Emporium** (Map p183; ☎ 021-807 3007; www.kwv-international.com; Kohler St; tastings R20; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat), one of the country's best-known wineries because its products are mostly sold overseas. Some KWV port and sherry is available inside South Africa, and its fortified wines, in particular, are among the world's best. Cellar tours are at its complex near the train line. Call for times of cellar tours (R20), which are worth taking if only to see the enormous Cathedral Cellar built in 1930.

Another hugely popular estate on the Suid-Agter-Paarl Rd, off Rte 101 6km south of Paarl, is **Fairview** (Map p181; ☎ 021-863 2450; www.fairview.co.za; tastings R10; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat), a wonderful winery but not the place to come for a calm wine tasting. Peacocks and goats in a tower (apparently goats love to climb) greet you on arrival, and tastings are great value since they cover some 23 wines and a wide range of goat's- and cow's-milk cheeses. You can sample and buy the pinotage and Chenin Blanc of the **Fair Valley Workers Association** (Map p181; ☎ 021-863 2450) here too; see p170 for more information.

If you've made it to Fairview, don't miss **Seidelberg** (Map p181; ☎ 021-863 3495; www.seidelberg.co.za; tastings with/without cellar tour R18/12; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun), next door. Seidelberg offers an escape from the Bacchanalian hordes and, uniquely, features tours and demonstrations of onsite bronze-casting and glassblowing. Its selection of reds is nothing to be ashamed of either.

Next along is **Landskroon** (Map p181; ☎ 021-863 1039; tastings R10; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), an estate representing five generations of the De Villiers family, who have been perfecting their wine-making skills on this pleasant estate. There's a nice terrace overlooking the vines on which you can quaff its impressive Cinsaut and celebrated *jerepipo* (dessert wine).

Further south **Glen Carlou** (Map p181; ☎ 021-875 5528; www.glencarlou.co.za; Simondium Rd, Klapmuts; tastings free; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sun) has

a new gallery and tasting room with panoramic view of Tortoise Hill. Its Shiraz is made with a small percentage of viognier and mourvèdre grapes.

To the northeast, **Hildenbrand Wine & Olive Estate** (☎ 021-873 4115; www.wine-estate-hildenbrand.co.za; tastings R15; s/d incl breakfast R370/560; ☎ winery 10am-4pm; ☎) has a restaurant and good accommodation. You can also taste locally grown olives and buy freshly-pressed olive oil. The estate is in the centre of a large loop road east of Wellington. Follow the signposting off Rte 303 as you approach Wellington from Paarl.

A visit to **Nederburg Wines** (Map p181; ☎ 021-862 3104; www.nederburg.co.za; tastings R10; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, plus 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Dec-Mar) is a must. This is one of South Africa's most well-known labels, a big but professional and welcoming operation featuring a vast range of wines and informative food and wine tasting (R20) that teaches you how best to match wine with food flavours. The picnic lunches cost R90 per person (December to March only, bookings essential) and are very popular. Nederburg is off the N1, 7km east of Paarl.

Further down the road, check out **Backsberg** (Map p181; ☎ 021-875 5141; www.backsberg.co.za; tastings R15; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun), an immensely popular estate thanks to its reliable label and lavish outdoor lunches. Backsberg is around 12km southwest of Paarl along the WR1. Its white wines have won awards, but along with L'Avenir (p174) this is one of the country's best examples of the homegrown pinotage cultivar. The estate is closed in July and August.

### Sleeping BUDGET

**Manyano Centre** (Map p183; ☎ 021-872 2537; manyano@eject.co.za; Sanddrift St; dm with full board R110) An enormous YMCA-style accommodation complex with spartan three-bed dorms; you'll need to bring a sleeping bag. Call in advance, especially on weekends when it fills up with groups. Huguénot train station is closer than the main Paarl station.

**De Roode Vos** (Map p183; ☎ /fax 021-872 5912; 152 Main St; s/d R150/240) This unpretentious guest-house has clean lodgings and is about as cheap as you'll get in central Paarl.

**Berg River Resort** (Map p181; ☎ 021-863 1650; berg@mwweb.co.za; camp sites R155, d chalets R520; ☎)

An attractive municipal campground beside the Berg River, 5km from Paarl on the N45 towards Franschhoek. Facilities include canoes, trampolines and a café.

**Bakkies B&B** (Map p181; ☎ 021-873 5161; www.bakkiesbb.co.za; Bainskloof Rd; s/d R170/280; ☎ ☎ ☎) This place, out on the Bainskloof Rd past Wellington, offers good-value, well-equipped rooms and is an excellent budget base for exploring the area. Lunch and dinner are by arrangement, and a daily breakfast (R40) is offered.

### MIDRANGE

**Rodeberg Lodge** (Map p183; ☎ 021-863 3202; www.rodeberglodge.co.za; 74 Main St; s/d incl breakfast R290/460; ☎ ☎) Good rooms (some with air-con and TV) are sensibly located away from the busy main road, and there's a family room (R200 per person) in the attic. The hosts are friendly and breakfast is taken in the conservatory, opening onto a leafy garden.

**Amberg Guest Farm** (Map p181; ☎ 021-862 0982; amberg@mwweb.co.za; Rte 101; s/d incl breakfast R330/500; ☎) Accommodation is in cottages (one of which is self-catering for R360) with spectacular views. The amiable hosts also run the Swiss-style Amberg Country Kitchen, serving Swiss specialities. It's along Du Toits Kloof Pass.

**Mooikelder Manor House** (Map p181; ☎ 021-869 8787; www.capestay.co.za/mooikelder; Main St, Noorder Paarl; s/d incl breakfast R350/650; ☎ ☎) Around 5km north of the town centre in an elegant homestead once occupied by British empire-builder and former Governor of the Cape Colony Cecil John Rhodes, this is a lovely, quiet spot amid citrus orchards and with plenty of antique atmosphere in the rooms.

### TOP END

**De Oude Paarl** (Map p183; ☎ 021-872 1002; www.deoudepaar.com; 132 Main St; s/d incl breakfast R650/930; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is a new boutique-style hotel; the rooms have antique touches and there's a secluded courtyard at the back. Attached are shops selling a good selection of wine and delectable but pricey Belgian chocolates.

**Pontac Manor** (Map p183; ☎ 021-872 0445; www.pontac.com; 13 Zion St; s/d incl breakfast R1090/1400; ☎ ☎) A small, stylish, Victorian-era hotel that commands a good view of the valley. The rooms are comfortable, there's one

self-catering cottage and a restaurant, which is recommended.

**Grande Roche Hotel** (Map p183; ☎ 021-863 2727; www.granderoche.co.za; Plantasie St; d from R2420; ♿) An unashamedly opulent hotel set in a Cape Dutch manor house, offering mountain views, a heated swimming pool and the award-winning Bosman's Restaurant (mains R140), whose wine list runs to over 50 pages! Various set menus start at R320 for three courses.

**Winelands Hotel** (ste incl breakfast R2670; ♿) This place at the Santé Wellness Centre offers king-sized beds, the latest in audio-visual equipment and decadent bathrooms.

### Eating

Several of the local wineries have restaurants or do picnic lunches and they are among the best places to eat.

**Kostinrichting** (Map p183; ☎ 021-871 1353; 19 Pastorie Ave; mains R30; ♿ lunch Mon-Sat) This place is ideal if you are looking for a pleasant central café. It's in a Victorian building that once was a school, and has an attached crafts shop.

**De Malle Madonna** (Map p183; ☎ 021-863 3925; 127 Main St; mains R40-65; ♿ breakfast & lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Wed & Sun) Marc Chagall is the inspiration for this breezy café-bistro, whose emphasis is on 'Mediterranean comfort food'. There's a sunny patio with views of the mountains, and the *biltong* (dried meat) and glazed-beetroot salad (R41) is a winner.

**Marc's Mediterranean Cuisine & Garden** (Map p183 ☎ 021-863 3980; 129 Main St; mains R60-75; ♿ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat) The current favourite of restaurant reviewers, and with good reason. Patron Marc Friedrich has created a light and bright place with food to match and a Provence-style garden to dine in.

### Getting There & Away BUS

All the major long-distance bus companies offer services going through Paarl, so it's easy to build it into your itinerary. The bus segment between Paarl and Cape Town is R110, so consider taking the cheaper train to Paarl and then linking up with the buses.

The long-distance bus stop (Map p183) is opposite the Engen petrol station on Main St as you enter the town from the N1.

### TRAIN

Metro trains run roughly every hour between Cape Town and Paarl (1st/economy class R14.50/8.50, 1¼ hours, Monday to Friday). Note there is no 2nd class. The services are less frequent on weekends. Take care to travel on trains during the busy part of the day, as robberies have been reported.

You can travel by train from Paarl to Stellenbosch; take a Cape Town-bound train and change at Muldersvlei.

### Getting Around

If you don't have your own transport, your only option for getting around Paarl, apart from walking and cycling, is to call a taxi; try **Paarl Radio Taxis** (☎ 021-872 5671).

## THE OVERBERG

All roads heading east from Cape Town suddenly and unforgivably come against a mountainous barrier, forcing you to hit the lower gears. Once you're up and over the top, you're 'over the mountain', the literal meaning of Overberg.

Roughly the region south and west of the Franschhoek Range, and south of the Wemmershoek and Riviersonderend Ranges, which form a natural barrier with the Breede River Valley, the Overberg is reached from Cape Town via the N2 (quicker) or via Rte 44 from Strand, towards Hermanus around Cape Hangklip.

The latter is a breathtaking coastal drive, in the same class as the Chapman's Peak Dr in Cape Town, and with no toll. The first major stop is Hermanus, a seaside resort famous for the whales that frequent its shores (although it's so famous now that you might choose to do your whale-watching at a less crowded location along the coast).

If you're looking for somewhere quiet to hang out, the miraculously undeveloped fishing village of Gansbaai will fit the bill, as will Arniston and the De Hoop Nature Reserve a little further on. The best all-round base for the area is Swellendam, a historic and attractive town beneath the impressive Langeberg Mountains.

This region's wealth of  *fynbos*  is unmatched; most species flower somewhere in the period between autumn and spring. The climate basically follows the same

### WATCHING WHALES

Between June and November, southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) come to Walker Bay to calve. There can be up to 70 whales in the bay at once. South Africa was a whaling nation until 1976 – this species was hunted to the verge of extinction but its numbers are now recovering. Humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) are also sometimes seen.

Whales often come very close to shore and there are some excellent vantage points from the cliff paths that run from one end of Hermanus to the other. The best places are Castle Rock, Kraal Rock and Sievers Point. There's a telescope on the cliff top above the old harbour.

It's only recently that the people of Hermanus bothered to tell the outside world the whales were regular visitors. They took them for granted. Now, however, the tourism potential has been recognised and just about every business in town has adopted a whale logo. There's a **whale crier** (☎ 073-214 6949), who walks around town blowing on a kelp horn and carrying a blackboard that shows where whales have been recently sighted. A whale festival (p188) is held in September.

Despite all this hoopla, boat-viewing of whales is strictly regulated. No boat-viewing is allowed in the bay and jet skis are banned. There are only two boat-viewing outfits licensed to operate in the seas outside the bay: **Southern Right Charters** (☎ 082-353 0550) and **Hermanus Whale Cruises** (☎ 028-313 2722). They charge around R400 for a one- to two-hour trip.

Although Hermanus is the best-known whale-watching site, whales can be seen all the way from False Bay (Cape Town) to Plettenberg Bay and beyond. The west coast also gets its share.

For those with private transport, there is a large whale-watching car park in a terrific elevated location near the Old Harbour. On windier days, you can watch the whales from the comfort of your vehicle!

pattern as Cape Town – a temperate Mediterranean climate with relatively mild winters and warm summers. Rain falls throughout the year but peaks in August, and it can be very windy in any season.

### KOGEL BAY

☎ 024

The best bit of the drive along Rte 44 from Cape Town is between Gordon's Bay and Kleinmond. The views are stunning. At times it feels as if the road is going to disappear into the sea. On one side is blue-green water, on the other rock-strewn cliffs. The **Kogel Bay Pleasure Resort** (☎ 024-856 1286; fax 024-856 4741; Rte 44; day visitors per person R8, per vehicle R15; camp sites R70) has camp sites and reasonable facilities on a fantastic beach (although it's unsafe for swimming and sometimes windy). Bring all your own food. It's popular with South Africans during school holidays.

### BETTY'S BAY

☎ 028

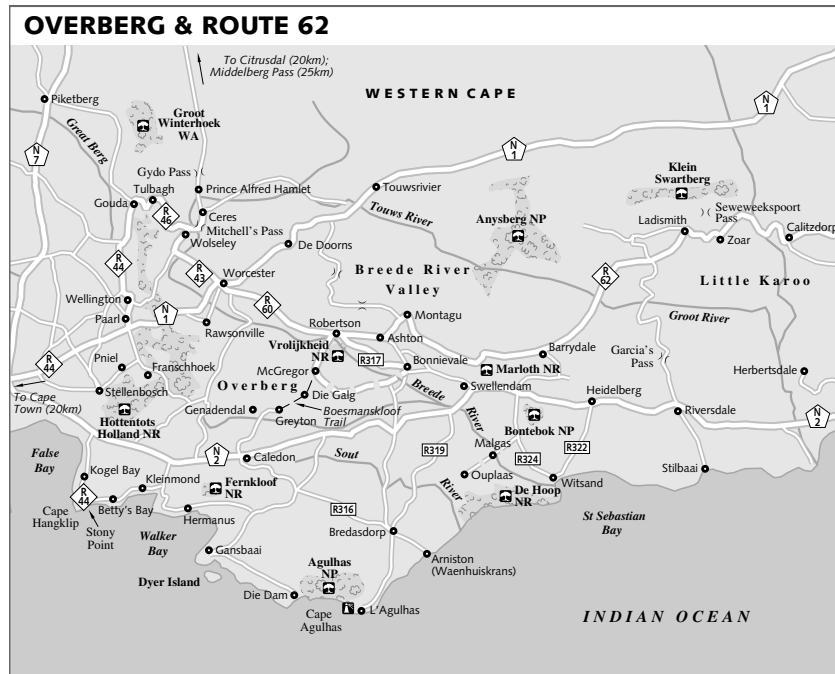
The small, scattered holiday village of Betty's Bay, just to the east of Cape Hangklip, is the next place worth a pause on Rte 44. Here you'll find the **Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens** (☎ 028-272 9311; adult/child R8/4; ♿ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat & Sun, 8am-7pm

Dec-Jan), definitely worth visiting. There are paths exploring the indigenous plant life in the area and, at the entrance, tearooms and a formal garden where you can picnic. Try the Leopard Kloof Trail, which leads through fern forests and up to a waterfall. It's a 3km round trip, and you'll need to pay a key deposit (R30) and get your key and permit (from the main ticket office) before 2pm. Coming from Cape Town, look for the turn-off to the gardens after driving through Betty's Bay. Another worthwhile stop is at **Stony Point**, on Rte 44 coming from Cape Town before you reach Betty's Bay. Take a short stroll to the lookout point for a colony of **African penguins**. It's very picturesque with crashing waves and a sea of black-and-white birds.

### KLEINMOND

☎ 028

Close to a wild and beautiful beach, Kleinmond (on Rte 44) is, thanks to a recent revival, now rather chic. It's a great place to spend an afternoon, eat some fresh seafood and browse through the art gallery and little shops. The area also has some reliable swells for surfers and some good walking. There is no tourist info here; just ask the friendly residents for assistance.



## Sleeping & Eating

Most eating options are on Harbour Rd; just head in the direction of the sea.

**Palmiet Caravan Park** (☎ 028-271 4050; camp sites from R80) Beside the beach on the western side of town, where you can hear the waves breaking from your tent. Follow the signs from Rte 44.

**Fifth Avenue Guesthouse** (☎ 028-271 4254; 5thae.guesthouse@telkomsa.net; 171 Fifth Ave; s & d from R250, cottages from R750; 🏠) It's a bit away from the main drag but offers clean and comfortable rooms at sensible prices. It's also just four blocks from the Kogelberg Nature Reserve, with pleasant walks and bird-watching, but no real facilities.

**Roxy's Pizza Tavern & Pub** (☎ 028-271 5378; 18 Harbour Rd; mains R30-50; 🍷 lunch & dinner) It isn't pretty, but this local favourite does exactly what it says on the tin and, with parties stretching into the wee hours, is Kleinmond's only late-night option.

**Sandpiper** (☎ 028-271 5368; 17 Harbour Rd; mains R30-70; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) A busy place with a Mediterranean-themed menu offering well-cooked food from a beach-facing terrace.

**Alive Alive-0** (☎ 028-271 3774; 35 Harbour Rd; mains R35-150; 🍷 lunch Mon-Sat) An outdoor beach-shack shellfish-bar claiming to be the only restaurant in the country allowed to serve the endangered abalone. The shellfish, known for their aphrodisiac qualities, are fried in garlic butter and served in a wine cream sauce (R140 for 200g).

## HERMANUS

☎ 028 / pop 24,700

Hermanus (pronounced hair-maan-es) was founded as a fishing village, and while it retains vestiges of its heritage, its proximity to Cape Town (122km) has made it a day-tripper's paradise, in part thanks to the fact that it is considered the best land-based whale watching destination in the world.

The town centre, 2km east of the new harbour, is easily negotiated on foot and is well endowed with restaurants and shops, but the town's recent success means it has become highly commercialised and crowded, particularly during the **Hermanus Whale Festival** ([www.whalefestival.co.za](http://www.whalefestival.co.za)) in September and during school holidays in December and January.



There is respite to be found at the appealing beaches, most east of the town centre, and the surrounding rocky hills, vaguely reminiscent of Scotland, offer good walks and a nature reserve protecting some of the prolific *fynbos*.

## Orientation & Information

Route 43 leads you into Hermanus along dead-straight Main Rd, which itself leads southeast towards the town centre clustered just north of the Old Harbour.

**Hermanus Tourism** (☎ 028-312 2629; [www.hermanus.co.za](http://www.hermanus.co.za); Old Station Bldg, Mitchell St; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) East of the town centre, this office has a large supply of information about the area, including walks and drives in the surrounding hills, and can book accommodation.

**Internet City** (☎ 028-312 4683; Waterkant Bldg, Main Rd; per hr R20; 🕒 8am-8pm) Offers reliable and speedy Internet connections.

## Sights & Activities

There is no shortage of outdoor activities in Hermanus, and most places to sleep can arrange anything from sea kayaking to

shark-diving to local wine tastings. Those looking for handicrafts can check out the small **daily market** (Lemmy's Corner, Market Sq) off Main Rd; on Saturday there's a craft market held there, too.

## SHARK-DIVING

Many operators in Hermanus heavily promote this, but most boats actually depart from Gansbaai (see p192), some 53km along the coast (all companies transport you there). There's no doubting the activity's popularity, but it doesn't come without controversy. Operators use bait to attract the sharks to the cage, which means that these killer fish are being trained to associate humans with food. It's not a pleasant scenario, especially if you're a surfer – attacks on whom have increased of late.

With the majority of operators, an internationally recognised diving qualification is required in order to take part in the dive, although some allow snorkellers into the cage. The most highly recommended operators are **Brian McFarlane** (☎ 028-312 2766; [www.sharkcagediving.net](http://www.sharkcagediving.net); trips R800) and **Shark Lady Adventures** (☎ 028-313 3287; [www.sharklady.co.za](http://www.sharklady.co.za); 61 Marine Dr; trips R1000). Ask here about the spherical 'crystal cage' dive (R1700), which gets you even closer to the fish, and is strictly for divers only. Tours generally include breakfast, lunch and diving gear.

## WALKING

The **Cliff Path Walking Trail** meanders from town along the sea to Grotto Beach, a long, narrow surf beach with excellent facilities. The walk takes about 1½ hours and along the way you'll pass Kraaiwater, a good whale-watching lookout, and Langbaai and Voelklip Beaches. The 1400-hectare **Fernkloof Nature Reserve** (Map pp188-9; ☎ 028-313 8100; Fir Ave; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm) is worth a visit if you're interested in *fynbos*. Researchers have identified 1100 species so far. There's a 60km network of hiking trails for all fitness levels.

## SEA KAYAKING

**Walker Bay Adventures** (☎ 028-314 0925; Prawn Flats; kayaking R250, canoeing R350, paragliding R750, boat-based whale-watching adult/child R400/150) runs sea-kayaking tours that give you the opportunity to see whales up close and personal. The company also does lagoon cruises and rents kayaks and boats.

## OLD HARBOUR

The old harbour clings to the cliffs in front of the town centre; here you'll find a small, drab **museum** (☎ 028-312 1475; adult/child R2/1; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun) and a display of old fishing boats. The museum's annexe, in the old schoolhouse on the market square, displays some evocative old photographs of the town and its fishermen.

## Sleeping

Despite a recent mushrooming of accommodation options in Hermanus, you might still find yourself searching in vain for a bed in the holiday season, so take care to book ahead. Hermanus Tourism will help

you or put you on to the many accommodation agencies. Below are some recommended establishments, but by no means all of them.

## BUDGET

**Hermanus Backpackers** (☎ 028-312 4293; moobag@mweb.co.za; 26 Flower St; dm R75, d with shared bathroom R210; 📺) This is a smashing place with clued-up staff, and great décor and facilities, including a reed-roof bar. Free breakfast is served in the morning.

**Moby's Traveller's Lodge** (☎ 028-313 2361; www.mobys.co.za; 9 Mitchell St; dm R85, s/d with shared bathroom R200/260; 📺) Travellers give this place rave reviews, and we can see why – it's a whole lot of fun. You can party the night

away at the big bar or chill out in the awesome rock pool with its own waterfall. There's a daily pub lunch on offer and an Internet café (R30 per hour).

**Zoete Inval Travellers Lodge** (☎ 028-312 1242; www.zoeteinval.co.za; 23 Main Rd; dm R85, d with shared bathroom & breakfast R340) More a guesthouse than a hostel, this is a quiet place with good amenities (including a Jacuzzi) and neatly furnished rooms. Heavy smokers and drinkers should look elsewhere; families are accommodated in four-person doubles.

## MIDRANGE

**Hermanus Esplanade** (☎ 028-312 3610; info@hermanus.us.com; 63 Marine Dr; flats from R250) Some of these cheery, self-catering apartments with colourful furniture overlook the sea; the lowest rates on offer actually cover the whale-watching season from May to October.

**Potting Shed** (☎ 028-312 1712; www.thepottingshedguesthouse.co.za; 28 Albertyn St; s/d incl breakfast from R300/440; 📺) An excellent-value guesthouse that's drawn glowing reader reviews. The neat rooms are comfortable, but the bathrooms are shower-only. There is wheelchair access to all rooms and the pool area.

**Windsor Hotel** (☎ 028-312 3727; www.windsorhotel.co.za; 49 Marine Dr; s/d incl breakfast from R650/900) An old stalwart situated on an oceanside cliff; naturally you'll want one of the more expensive sea-facing rooms that give you the opportunity to view whales without leaving your bed.

**Auberge Burgundy** (☎ 028-313 1202; www.hermanus.co.za/accom/auberge; 16 Harbour Rd; s/d incl breakfast R735/980; 📺) This is a wonderful place, built in the style of a Provençal villa, with fine facilities, wrought-iron balconies and unique art on the walls.

## TOP END

**Marine Hermanus** (☎ 028-313 1000; www.marine-hermanus.co.za; Marine Dr; s/d incl breakfast from R1700/2800; 📺 📺 📺) Right on the sea with immaculate grounds and amenities, this place is as posh as a five-star hotel should be. The staff are very friendly and will work with what you're looking for – sea views or rooms with balconies. The hotel has two restaurants, both sea-facing. One serves nouveau South African cuisine (two/three courses R155/195) and the other light seafood lunches (R95) with a view.

## Eating & Drinking

There's no shortage of places to eat in Hermanus; many of which offer views within whale range.

**Fisherman's Cottage** (☎ 028-312 3642; Lemm's Cnr; mains R22-75; 🕒 lunch & dinner) The emphasis is on good-value seafood at this restaurant in a whitewashed cottage draped with fishing nets.

**Zebra Crossing** (☎ 028-312 3906; 121 Main Rd; mains R35; 🕒 lunch & dinner) This cheesy DJ bar with a funky zebra theme is, we're told, the late-night party spot on weekends, and popular with backpackers. At other times there's an open fire and pool tables.

**Savannah Café** (☎ 028-312 4259; Village Theatres Bldg, Marine Dr; mains from R40; 🕒 breakfast & lunch) Enjoy a 'Whale of a Breakfast' – eggs, juice, coffee, bacon, chips, mushrooms and *boerewors* (spicy traditional sausage), or a sweet pastry while staring at the sea. There's also a decent selection for vegetarians, vegans and diabetics.

**Marimba Café** (☎ 028-312 2148; 9 Royal Lane off Main Rd; mains R45-85; 🕒 dinner) The lively atmosphere matches the eclectic menu at this rather unkempt but recommended restaurant and bar, where you can eat traditional African dishes from around the continent.

**Bientang's Cave** (☎ 028-312 3454; Marine Dr; mains R55; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Nestled in the cliffs beside the water, this really is a seaside cave, a remarkable setting that obscures the fact that the restaurant is only so-so. Access is only via a steep flight of cliffside stairs.

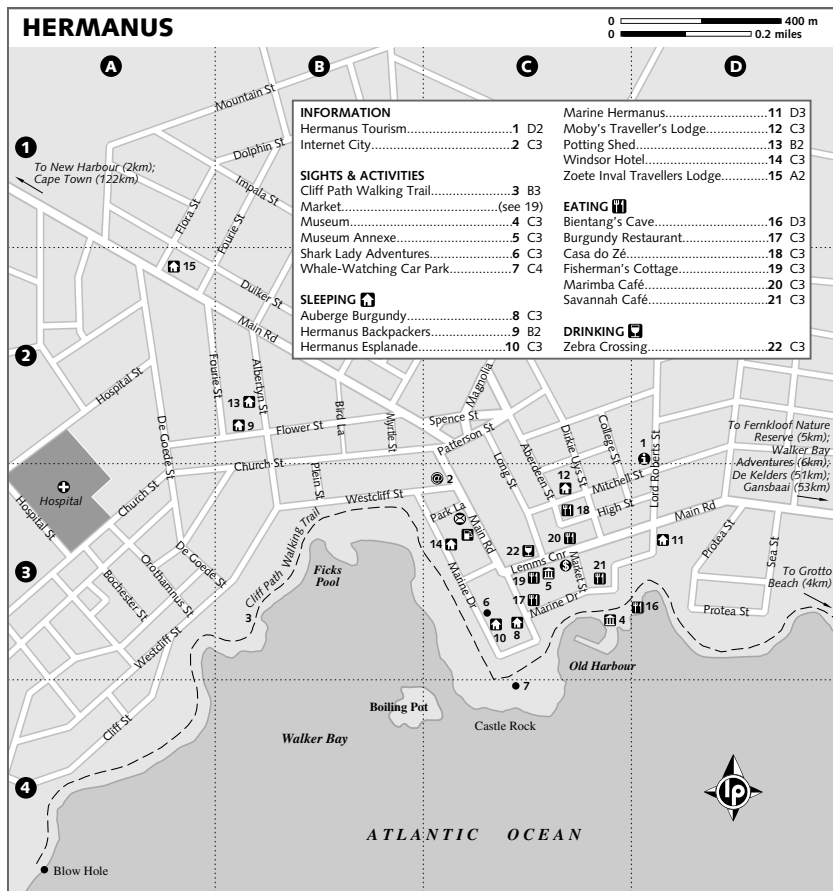
**Casa do Zé** (☎ 028-313 0377; 12 Mitchell St; mains R60; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A quaint Portuguese restaurant specialising in fresh grilled fish and the famous LM (Lourenço Marques) prawns. Try the imported Mozambiquan beer.

**Burgundy Restaurant** (☎ 028-312 2800; Marine Dr; mains R60-95; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Booking is essential at this eatery, one of the most acclaimed and popular in the area. It's in the oldest buildings in town (1875), with a garden and sea views. The menu is mostly seafood with a different vegetarian dish each day.

## Getting There & Away

**Travis Tours** (☎ 072-608 9213) offers daily shuttles to Gansbaai (R50, 30 minutes) and Cape Town (R150, 1½ hours).

All three hostels run a shuttle service (R30 one way, 30 minutes) to the Baz Bus



drop-off point in Botrivier, 50km west of town. Otherwise, there are no regular bus services to Hermanus from Cape Town.

## GANSBAAI

☎ 028 / pop 12,000

Rustic, blissfully undeveloped Gansbaai's star has risen in recent years thanks to shark-diving, but there's more to the town than the fierce marine predators who frequent its shores. It boasts a sparkling unspoilt coastline perfect for those wishing to explore more out-of-the-way Overberg nature spots.

### Orientation & Information

The road from Hermanus leads you 53km past the village of De Kelders straight into Main Rd, which runs parallel to the coastline. Kleinbaai, 7km further east along the coast, is where you'll find most activity. First follow the signs along Main Rd to efficient **Gansbaai Tourism** (☎ 028-384 1439; www.danger-point-peninsula.co.za; cnr Main & Berg Rds; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat).

### Sights & Activities

Gansbaai is the nexus of the Danger Point Peninsula area, which includes Kleinbaai. It's here where you'll find most amenities and activities.

Naturally, **whale-watching** and **shark-diving** are big draws here, but most tour operators are based in Hermanus (see p189). Good places to start asking around Gansbaai are Gansbaai Backpackers or the Great White House.

**Danger Point Lighthouse** (☎ 021-449 2400), dating from 1895, is worth a visit, as is the **Walker Bay Reserve** (☎ 028-384 0111). This offers excellent walks, such as the Duiwelgat and Fynbos Hiking Trails, and bird-watching, along with the Klipgat Caves, site of a recent archaeological discovery of Khoesaaan artefacts.

Contact **iKhaya Laba Thembu** (☎ 072-218 0742) for a trip through the booming township community of Masakhane. Handmade products are on sale and traditional Xhosa food can be ordered and eaten in the shade of milkwood trees.

### Sleeping & Eating

The tourism office has a comprehensive list of places to stay and eat in De Kelders and the Danger Point area.

**Gansbaai Backpackers** (☎ 028-384 0641; gansbaai.backpackers@yahoo.com; 6 Strand St; dm R75, s/d with shared bathroom R140/220) Efficient and friendly, this is a great place to start for either budget accommodation or tour and activity bookings.

**Aire del Mar** (☎ 028-384 2848; info@airedelmar.co.za; 77 Van Dyk St, Kleinbaai; r R200, s/d incl breakfast R350/580; ☎) Offers a good range of prices, including basic self-catering units for backpackers and stylish rooms with panoramic sea views out to Dyer Island. It also serves a filling breakfast (R45).

**Great White House** (☎ 028-384 3273; 5 Geelbek St, Kleinbaai; mains R35-70; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sun Aug-Sep & Dec-Feb.) A multifarious place that dishes up fresh seafood, clothing and curios, helps with tour information and offers three-star accommodation.

**Die Buitestein** (☎ 028-384 0601; 3 Dover St, De Kelders; mains R40; ☎) 10am-2am Mon-Sun) This is a pub, its walls bedecked with *perlemoen* (abalone) shells, that captures the laidback ethos of Gansbaai. Thus it's a perennial favourite with backpackers and local fishermen alike.

### Getting There & Away

Entry and exit to the town is largely limited to private vehicles. When we were there, construction was well under way on a new sealed road between Gansbaai and Elim, part of the exciting Fynbos Rd project that will link Danger Point Peninsula with Cape Agulhas.

**Trevis Tours** (☎ 072-608 9213) has daily shuttles to Hermanus (R50, 30 minutes) and Cape Town (R180, two hours).

## L'AGULHAS

☎ 028

Once described, somewhat cruelly, as 'nothing more than a seagull and a mussel', the settlement of L'Agulhas does unfortunately offer little for the visitor in and of itself, but **Cape Agulhas**, just south of town, is the southernmost point of Africa.

On a stormy day the low, shattered rocks and crashing seas can be atmospheric. Otherwise, there's no real reason to linger longer than it takes to snap a photo and peek at the nearby **lighthouse** (☎ 028-435 6222; adult/child R6/3; ☎) 9am-4.15pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun). Built in 1848, this is the second-oldest lighthouse in South Africa. If you are

peckish, the **tearoom** (☎ 028-435 7506) here isn't bad, serving reasonably priced meals and snacks.

L'Agulhas can be reached by car, or if you don't have wheels, several companies out of Swellendam offer day tours. For more information see p194.

## ARNISTON (WAENHUISKRANS)

☎ 028

One of the Western Cape's gems, Arniston is a charming village in a dramatic, wind-swept setting. It has a bit of an identity crisis – it's named after *both* the vessel wrecked off its treacherous coast in 1815 and the large sea cave capable of housing several ox wagons (Waenhuiskrans means 'ox-wagon crag').

Colourful boats, warm blue-green waters and the backdrop of **Kassiesbaai**, the 200-year-old hamlet of whitewashed cottages that forms the core of the town, make for a pretty picture. South of Kassiesbaai is **Roman Beach** with white sand and gentle waves. It's a good place to bring the children as there are caves, coves and rock pools filled with sea urchins and colourful anemones at both ends. Be careful not to touch the sea urchins, though, as they can cause nasty cuts.

The village has no centralised area nor any real street signs, so finding your way around can sometimes be a challenge. Look for signs leading to the various eating and sleeping establishments.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Southwinds** (☎ 028-445 9303; southwinds@arniston-info.co.za; 12 First Ave; d incl breakfast R550) Just 200m from the sea, this unique place puts rough, whitewashed walls and wooden ceilings together and throws in interesting angles for good measure. All have separate entrances, and there are seaside cottages around the corner. Ask owners Allister and Jane about local tours.

**Die Herberg & South of Africa Backpackers' Resort** (☎ 028-445 9240; www.southofafrica.co.za; s/d R279/390, with shared bathroom R130/210; ☎) This backpackers is in a rather bizarre location, next to a military test site signposted off Rte 316, 2km outside Arniston. It's a modern place with tons of amenities, including a conference centre, gym, large pool, sauna and two full-sized billiard tables. There are

two classes of rooms – cheaper backpacker doubles and more expensive en suite rooms, all with TV. The attached Castaway Restaurant (mains R20 to R50) has something for everyone, including the kids.

**Arniston Hotel** (☎ 028-445 9000; www.arnistonhotel.com; s/d incl breakfast R720/1790; ☎) The Arniston is a breezy luxury hotel facing the sea, with a shipwreck theme – framed descriptions of events surrounding the boat wrecks and items salvaged from the boats themselves make up the décor. Sea-facing rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows. The classy ocean-view restaurant serves lunch (R40) and dinner (R45 to R115) and has an extensive wine list.

**Die Waenhuis** (☎ 028-445 9797; Dupreez St; mains from R40) The only restaurant in town not attached to a hotel, this one is full of character – the walls are covered in graffiti and candles grace the tables. It serves a good range of dishes and is tucked behind the Arniston Centre general store.

## DE HOOP NATURE RESERVE

Covering 36,000 hectares, plus 5km out to sea, is **De Hoop Nature Reserve** (☎ 028-425 5020; bredasdorp@capenature.org.za; admission R20; camp sites R95, 4-person cottages from R325; ☎) 7am-6pm). This is one of Cape Nature Conservation's best reserves, including a scenic coastline with stretches of beach, dunes and rocky cliffs, plus a freshwater lake and Potberg Mountain. Visitors come here to see both mountain and lowveld *fynbos* and a diverse cross section of coastal ecosystems. Fauna includes the Cape mountain zebra, the bontebok and a wealth of birdlife. The coast is an important breeding area for the southern right whale.

Although there are numerous day walks, an overnight mountain-bike trail and good snorkelling along the coast, the reserve's most interesting feature is the five-day **Whale Route** (R700 per person). Covering 55km, it offers excellent opportunities to see whales between June and December. Accommodation is in modern, fully equipped self-catering cottages. The trail needs to be booked in advance, and only group bookings are accepted. You'll need a minimum of six and a maximum of 12 people. The fee includes a shuttle service back to your car at the end of the trip. If you don't feel like carrying your own bags, your group can

pay an extra R1200 (for six people) to have your belongings transported every morning to that night's overnight cottage.

Those just looking to spend the night in the reserve can choose from a variety of sleeping options, including camping (R95) basic cottages (from R325) and a 10-person beach house. Accommodation prices include entrance fees into the reserve.

The reserve is about 260km from Cape Town, and the final 50km from either Bredasdorp or Swellendam is along gravel roads. The only access to the reserve is via Wydgeleë on the Bredasdorp to Malgas road. At Malgas a manually operated *pont* (river ferry) on the Breede River still operates (between dawn and dusk). The village of **Ouplaas**, 15km away, is the nearest place to buy fuel and supplies. If you don't have your own car you can reach the reserve by joining a tour (see right).

## SWELLENDAM

☎ 028 / pop 30,000

Rapidly growing Swellendam, dating back to 1776, offers an unbeatable combination of location, beauty and history that makes it an unmissable destination. Its a disarming town, dotted with old oaks and surrounded by rolling wheat country and mountains, that makes a great base for exploring the Overberg and the Little Karoo. It's also a handy stopover between Cape Town and the Garden Route, and even if you don't have wheels there's the chance to walk in indigenous forest near town.

The town backs up against a spectacular ridge, part of the 1600m Langeberg Range, and is particularly impressive on a cloudy day when the mist rolls in over the mountains. Like Franschhoek, it is becoming a favoured destination of European expats settling in South Africa.

## Information

**IT Solutions** (☎ 028-514 3688; Voortrek St; per hr R40; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) The cheapest Internet connection.

**Swellendam Tourism Bureau** (☎ 028-514 2770; Voortrek St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) In the old mission, or Oefeninghuis, on the main street. Note the twin clocks, one of which is permanently set at 12.15pm. This was the time for the daily service; the illiterate townspeople only had to match the working clock with the painted one to know when their presence was required.

## Sights

The main sight in town is the excellent **Drostdy Museum** (☎ 028-514 1138; 18 Swellengrebel St; adult/child R12/2; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3.45pm Sat & Sun). The centrepiece is the beautiful *drostdy* (residence of an official) itself, which dates from 1746. The museum ticket also covers entrance to the nearby **Old Gaol**, where you'll find part of the original administrative buildings; the **Gaoler's Cottage** and a watermill; and **Mayville**, another residence dating back to 1853, with a formal Victorian garden. Onsite there's an excellent restaurant and shop selling stylish African curios.

Take a picture of the **Dutch Reformed Church** (Voortrek St) in the centre of town; Swellendam residents swear it's the third-most-photographed sight in the Southern Hemisphere!

## Activities

Swellendam has adventures for all ages, budgets and tastes. A good place to sort yourself out is at **Bontebok Tours & Travel** (☎ 028-514-3650; info@bontebok.co.za; 23 Swellengrebel St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun), which seems to arrange just about anything.

Popular day trips include Cape Agulhas (R295), where you will have the option of quad biking for one hour (R200), De Hoop Nature Reserve (R295), day wine trails around Barrydale, Montagu, Ashton and Bonnievale (R295), and mountain-bike hire (R90 per day).

The company also arranges activities near **Buffeljachts Dam**. These include sunset cruises on a double-decker wooden raft on the lake (R60) and abseiling (R200).

For day permits (R15) to walk in **Marloth Nature Reserve** in the Langeberg Range, 3km north of town, contact the **Nature Conservation Department** (☎ 028-514 1410) at the entrance to the reserve.

**Two Feathers Horse Trails** (☎ 082-494 8279; per hr R100) caters to inexperienced as well as experienced riders (but doesn't offer hard hats). Overnight rides into the Langeberg Range cost R1000. Two Feathers is located at the edge of the Marloth Nature Reserve. Advanced booking is essential.

Give **Zephyr Travel** (☎ 082-771 2765) a call (there's no office) for individualised tours that use Swellendam as their base but explore the entire Overberg and beyond.

## Sleeping

There are now more than 100 accommodation options in and around Swellendam. We recommend those listed below, but ask for help at the tourism office.

## BUDGET

**Swellendam Backpackers Adventure Lodge** (☎ 028-514 2648; backpack@telkomsa.net; 5 Lichtenstein St; camp sites per person R40, dm R70, d with shared bathroom R170) Set on a huge plot of land with its own river, 15 horses and Marloth Nature Reserve a stone's throw away, this is an excellent hostel with enthusiastic management. Don't skip one of the homemade dinners (around R40); they are mouthwatering and gigantic. The Baz Bus will drop you right outside.

## MIDRANGE

**Cypress Cottage** (☎ 028-514 3296; www.cypresscotage.info; 3 Voortrek St; s/d R250/500; ☎ ) There are five individually decorated rooms in this 200-year-old house with a gorgeous garden and a refreshing saltwater pool. Try an African-themed room complete with mosquito nets.

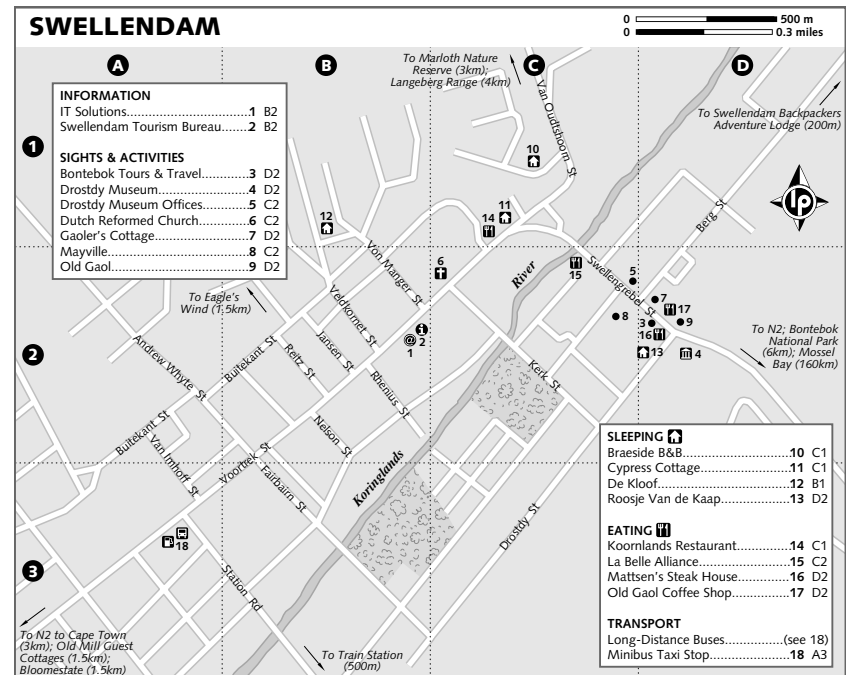
**Roojie Van de Kaap** (☎ 028-514 3001; www.roosjevandekaap.com; 5 Drostdy St; s/d R320/440; ☎ ) Take a swim with a mountain view. This Cape-country inn has 10 cosy rooms and an excellent restaurant (mains R70-R80) serving Cape Malay dishes and wood-fired pizzas; it's open to the public, but booking is essential.

**Braeside B&B** (☎ 028-5143325; www.braeside.co.za; 13 Van Oudtshoorn Rd; s/d incl breakfast R350/500; ☎ ) This quiet, gracious Cape Edwardian home boasts a beautiful garden, fantastic views and knowledgeable, friendly hosts.

**Old Mill Guest Cottages** (☎ 028-514 2790; www.oldmill.co.za; 241 Voortrek St; d incl breakfast from R460) This cute whitewashed cottage complex is behind the antiques/craft shop and has a pleasant café of the same name. Guests choose from a variety of tidy cottages.

## TOP END

**Bloomestate** (☎ 028-514 2984; www.bloomestate.co.za; 276 Voortrek St; s/d incl breakfast R550/1100; ☎ ) A purpose-built, modern guesthouse set on a beautiful 2.5-hectare property, which offers tremendous privacy to go



with the luxury you'd expect. It's a refreshing change from the cottage-cutesy décor more commonly favoured in these parts. All rooms have wireless broadband Internet access.

**De Kloof** (☎ 028-514 1303; www.dekloof.co.za; 8 Weltevrede St; s/d incl breakfast R900/1500; 📞 📺 📺) One of Swellendam's swankiest options, a supremely stylish guesthouse with a surprisingly personal touch. Set in an estate dating back to 1801, it offers a library, cigar room and wonderful views. Honeymooners can head straight to the double-storey suite with waterbed and Jacuzzi, other guests should probably try the free daily wine tastings beforehand.

## Eating

**La Belle Alliance** (☎ 028-514 2252; 1 Swellengrebel St; mains R20-50; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) This appealing tearoom had the honour of serving Nelson Mandela in 1999. In an old Masonic lodge with shaded outdoor tables beside the Koringlands River, it's a good spot for lunch.

**Old Gaol Coffee Shop** (☎ 028-514 3847; Old Gaol Complex, Swellengrebel St; light meals R30; 🍴 lunch) All staff members are shareholders here, and it shows. This is a wonderful little coffee shop, offering delicious snacks, traditional breads, excellent service and high-quality African curios.

**Mattsens' Steak House** (☎ 028-514 2715; 25 Swellengrebel St; mains R30-60; 🍴 lunch & dinner) The pizzas are delicious and, if you're not starving, large enough for two, at this English-style country inn.

**Koorlands Restaurant** (☎ 028-514 3567; 5 Vooortrek St; mains R75; 🍴 dinner) An eclectic menu of mostly African meat – everything from crocodile to ostrich – is served in an intimate candlelit setting. It's generally considered the top eat in town.

## Getting There & Away

All three major bus companies plus the Baz Bus pass through Swellendam on their runs between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, stopping at **Bontebok Tours & Travel** (☎ 028-514-3650; info@bontebok.co.za; 23 Swellengrebel St; 🍴 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun), which is the Intercap, SA Roadlink, **Greyhound** (www.greyhound.co.za), **Translux** (www.translux.co.za) and Baz Bus agent. Bontebok also offers a shuttle to Cape Town (R140). Intercap fares include

Cape Town (R95, 2½ hours, twice daily) and Mossel Bay (R90, two hours).

Minibus taxis depart from Station Rd by the Caltex petrol station. Services include Cape Town (R100, 2½ hours, daily) and Mossel Bay (R80, two hours).

The weekly *Southern Cross* train that runs between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn stops in Swellendam.

## BONTEBOK NATIONAL PARK

Some 6km south of Swellendam is **Bontebok National Park** (☎ 028-514 2735; adult/child R60/30; 🕒 7am-7pm Oct-Apr, 7am-6pm May-Sep), set aside to ensure the preservation of the endangered bontebok, the unusually marked antelope that once roamed the region in large numbers.

The park falls within the coastal  *fynbos*  area and is on the banks of the Breede River, where swimming is possible. It boasts nearly 500 grasses and other plant species; in the late winter and early spring, the veld (grassland) is covered with flowers. In addition to the bonteboks, there are rheboks, grysboks, duikers, red hartebeests and mountain zebras. Birdlife is abundant.

Camp sites (R75) and cottages (double R200) are available.

## ROUTE 62

This area, promoted as the longest wine route in the world while technically encompassing all sorts of topography (and more than one route marker), takes in both the Breede River Valley and the Little Karoo and stretches from the Winelands in the west past Uniondale, in the Little Karoo, to near Humansdorp in the east. It provides an excellent hinterland alternative to the N2 for travel between Cape Town and the Garden Route.

Breathtaking mountain passes and intensively cultivated valleys, perfectly preserved 18th-century towns and vast stretches of semi-arid plains dotted with ostriches provide eye candy, while delectable wine, country cafés, charming B&Bs and even a hot-springs resort enchant the palate and relax the body.

Europeans had settled most of the Breede River Valley by the beginning of the 18th century, but the area did not really take

off until passes were pushed through the mountains a century later. The headwaters of the Breede River (sometimes called the Breë), in the beautiful mountain-ringed Ceres Basin, escape via Mitchell's Pass and flow southeast for 310km before meeting the Indian Ocean at Witsand. Many tributaries join the Breede, and by the time it reaches Robertson it has been transformed from a mountain stream to a substantial river.

The Klein (Little) Karoo is east of the Breede River Valley and bordered in the south by the Outeniqua and Langkloof Ranges and by the Swartberg Range in the north. It is more fertile and better watered than the harsher Great Karoo to the north.

The towns in this region are presented in the order they would be reached driving the route from Cape Town.

## TULBAGH

☎ 023 / pop 18,000

Easy on the eye and ringed by the dramatic Witzenberg Range, Tulbagh – first settled in 1699 – is one of the most complete examples of an 18th- and 19th-century Cape Dutch village in South Africa. Many buildings were substantially rebuilt after an earthquake in 1969, but it doesn't feel in the least bit fake thanks to painstaking restoration. A meander down Church St, lined with trees and flowering bushes, provides a unique brand of stress relief.

## Orientation & Information

Church St, the famous street in which every building has been declared a national monument, runs parallel to the town's main thoroughfare, Van der Stel St.

**Tourist information centre** (☎ 023-230 1348; www.tourismtulbagh.co.za; 4 Church St; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun) Provides information and maps about the area, including the Tulbagh Wine Route.

## Sights & Activities

Wandering down Church St is a pleasant way to spend an afternoon. When you finish, take in a few wine tastings or visit the town's museum.

## OUDE KERK VOLKSMUSEUM

The **Old Church Folk Museum** (☎ 023-230 1041; 1 Church St; adult/child R7/2; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun) is a mildly interesting

museum made up of three buildings. Start at No 4, which has a photographic history of Church St, covering the earthquake and reconstruction; visit the beautiful Oude Kerk itself (1743); then go on to No 22, a reconstructed town dwelling from the 18th century.

## WINERIES

The Tulbagh Valley produces a variety of wines and has a number of cellars to visit, all of which are well signposted. Three standouts are **Twee Jonge Gezellen** (☎ 023-230 0680; tastings free; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat), the second-oldest family-owned wine estate in South Africa and the first to introduce night harvesting, with classic views and buildings along with friendly informed staff; **Drosty Wines** (☎ 023-230 0203; Van der Stel St; museum admission & tastings R12; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat), built in 1806 and almost destroyed in the 1969 earthquake but completely restored; and **Rijk's Private Cellar** (☎ 023-230 1622; www.rijks.co.za; Van der Stel St; tastings R5; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat), which has won several awards for its Sauvignon Blanc, Shiraz and pinotage wines. It is in a lovely location 2km north of town, and there's also a hotel here.

## Sleeping

There are very good sleeping and eating options in Tulbagh. Couples looking for a romantic destination won't be disappointed.

**Tulbagh Country House** (☎ 023-230 1171; 24 Church St; s/d incl breakfast R350/550; 📞) Built in 1809, this authentic Cape Dutch manor house retains the original wood ceilings and a lived-in feel, and its rooms are huge. The owner is a wealth of information about the surrounding region. There are two self-catering cottages from R175 per person.

**De Oude Herberg** (☎ 023-230 0260; www.deoudeherberg.co.za; 6 Church St; s/d incl breakfast R375/550; 📞) A guesthouse since 1885 (although not continuously), this is a very friendly place with traditional country furniture and a lovely patio. Its restaurant (mains R90), which is open to nonguests, boasts a good wine list and an inventive menu; booking ahead for dinner is essential.

**Rijk's Country Hotel** (☎ 023-230 1006; www.rijks.co.za; Van der Stel St; s/d R700/950; 📞) If you yearn to stay on a classy wine estate, this is the hotel for you. Located on the same property



as the Rijk's Private Cellar, this place is picturesque, romantic and overlooks a lake. There's a restaurant on the premises. The hotel is 2km north of the town centre.

## Eating

**Reader's Restaurant** (☎ 023-230 0087; 12 Church St; mains R25-60; 🍴 lunch & dinner) As its name suggests, this is a good place for literature (and feline) lovers, with books, cards and cat sculptures everywhere. The menu changes daily, but you can expect food as varied as tuna with wasabi and ginger butter and the Cape Malay dish, *bobotie* (curried mince with a topping of savoury egg custard, usually served on turmeric-flavoured rice).

**Forties** (☎ 023-230 0940; 40 Church St; mains R40-60; 🍴 dinner Wed-Sun) The hip industrial feel – think exposed walls and peeling plaster – at this lively pub comes in part from authentic earthquake damage. It's an excellent drinking choice and also serves pizza, pasta and steak.

**Plum** (☎ 023-230 8005; 10 Church St; mains R45-60; 🍴 breakfast & lunch Wed-Sun) Light lunches and local delicacies such as springbok sausage are served up in this pleasant garden overlooking Church St.

**Paddagang Restaurant** (☎ 023-230 0242; 23 Church St; mains R50-60; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The town's best-known restaurant, in a beautiful old homestead with a vine-shaded courtyard, also serves snacks and light meals (R20 to R40). For dinner try one of the steaks followed by a mouth-watering dessert. There's a good wine list, but little for vegetarians.

## Getting There & Away

Tulbagh is reached either via Rte 44 from the Bainskloof Pass or off Rte 60 via Worcester, a more scenic route.

Keep going along Van der Stel St (parallel to Church St) past the Old Drostdy Museum and you'll come to a dead end at the head of the valley (overlooked by the rugged mountains of the Groot Winterhoek Wilderness Area).

To get back to Rte 46 (from where you can head east to Ceres or west onto Rte 44 to Piketberg, which is on the N7), go in the opposite direction down Van der Stel St. Halfway up the hill leading away from the town, turn right. There's a small, faded sign to Kaapstad (Cape Town) and Gouda on Rte 46.

## CERES & AROUND

☎ 023 / pop 68,000

Sometimes referred to as the Switzerland of South Africa, Ceres, the most important deciduous fruit- and juice-producing district in South Africa, is set in majestic scenery.

The valley has a very high rainfall, mostly between June and September, and four well-defined seasons. It can get very cold in winter, with temperatures dropping below zero (snow on the mountains) and hot in summer (36°C). It is most beautiful in spring and particularly in autumn, when the fruit trees change colour. The town is perhaps best for a lunch stop in between spending the morning and afternoon exploring the exciting regional mountain passes.

## Orientation & Information

Coming off Mitchell's Pass you'll enter the town along the central Voortrekker St.

The friendly **tourism bureau office** (☎ 023-316 1287; www.ceres.org.za; cnr Owen & Voortrekker Sts; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is in the library. It has information on accommodation, tours and activities in the area.

## Sights & Activities

Ceres was once a famous centre for making horse-drawn vehicles. Consequently, the **Togryers' Museum** (Transport Riders' Museum; ☎ 023-312 2045; 8 Oranje St; adult/child R3/1; 🕒 8.30am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, plus 9am-noon Sat Dec & Jan) has an interesting collection of original buggies, wagons and carriages. Oranje St is one street north of and parallel to Voortrekker St.

For some stupendous scenery don't miss a drive through the **Middelberg and Gydo Passes**. The reds, ochres and purples of the rocky mountains, the blue of the sky, the blossom of the orchards, fresh green pastures, wildflowers, dams and wading birds combine to create a beautiful sight.

About 20km from Ceres you hit a sealed road. If you're coming into Ceres from Citrusdal in the north, you feel as if you've lost altitude, so when you come out on the 1000m Gydo Pass overlooking the Ceres Valley, the world seems to drop away at your feet.

To experience a little history of the region take a drive over the magnificent **Mitchell's Pass**. Completed in 1848, it became the main route onto the South African plateau

to the north, remaining so until the Hex River Pass was opened in 1875.

## Sleeping & Eating

The tourism bureau will help you find quality accommodation and eating options that don't fall under the what-you-see-is-what-you-get franchisee banner.

**Farm Backpackers** (☎ 023-231 1415; White Bridge Farm, cnr Rte 46 & Rte 43; camp sites R25, dm R50, d with shared bathroom R150; 🍷) A rowdy place that markets itself as 'a true South African experience', and we can't argue. Accommodation is on a converted farm, and activities organised here include cooking classes, river tubing, San rock-art visits and everything in between. It even offers a work-exchange programme. It's located 10km south of Ceres on the road to Wolsley, and you can call ahead to be picked up for free from Wolsley train station.

**Die Herberg** (☎ 023-312 2325; 125 Voortrekker St; s/d R200/300) Rooms are simple and clean and come with TV at this comfortable, yet somewhat old-fashioned place. There is a café (meals R15 to R20) serving light meals, while adjoining Witherley's Restaurant (mains R30 to R60) serves reliable fare covering all tastes.

**Four Seasons** (☎ 023-312 1918; 1 Staff St; s/d incl breakfast R290/400; 🍷) A comfortable B&B with a personal touch: each room is cool and comfortable, and cleverly designed to reflect each season; we liked 'winter' best. There is a self-catering option, which knocks R40 off the per person price.

## Getting There & Away

Ceres is on Rte 46, 53km north of Wellington. It's on the western side of a green and fertile bowl that is ringed by the rugged Skurweberg Range, and the passes into the valley are particularly spectacular. As with many destinations, having your own vehicle is best, but there are minibus taxis running between Voortrekker St and Worcester (R20, 35 minutes).

## WORCESTER

☎ 023 / pop 107,000

A service centre for the rich farmland of the Breede River Valley, Worcester is a large and fairly nondescript place that needn't detain you longer than it takes to visit its farm museum and botanic gardens.

Most of the town lies south of the N1. There are some impressive old buildings near and around the edge of Church Sq (off High St). For local information, visit **Breede Valley Tourism** (☎ 023-348 2795; 23 Baring St; 🕒 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat), on the east side of Church Sq.

## Sights & Activities

### KLEINPLASIE FARM MUSEUM

This **farm museum** (☎ 023-342 2225; adult/child R12/5; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-4.30pm Sun) is one of South Africa's best museums, and takes you from a Trekboer's hut to a complete, functioning 18th-century farm complex. It's a 'live' museum, meaning there are people wandering around in period clothes and rolling tobacco, making soap, operating a smithy, milling wheat, spinning wool and so on.

At the museum shop you can sample and buy various flavours of toe-curling *witblitz* (white lightning), a traditional Boer spirit distilled from fruit. To get the full taste, first inhale, then sip and roll the liquor around your mouth before swallowing and exhaling. Next door is the **Kleinplasia Winery**, where you can sample less potent libations.

### KAROO NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN

This outstanding **garden** (☎ 023-347 0785; adult/child R12/6; 🕒 8am-4pm) takes in 140 hectares of semidesert vegetation – with Karoo and *fynbos* elements – and 10 hectares of landscaped garden, where many of the plants have been labelled. This is an ideal opportunity to identify some of the extraordinary indigenous plants. Your entrance ticket is valid for the whole season you're in.

### KWV CELLAR

Not as famous as its counterpart in Paarl (see p184), this cellar and **brandy distillery** (☎ 023-342 0255; cnr Church & Smith Sts; tours adult/child R20/13; 🕒 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) is the largest of its kind in the world under one roof. A must-see for brandy enthusiasts looking to sample the product; hour-long tours in English are held at 2pm.

## Sleeping

**Nekkies** (☎ 023-343 2909; fax 343 2911; chalets from R250) These are smart wooden chalets with good facilities, overlooking the dam. Bikes

are available for hire. Nekkie is 4.5km from Worcester at the Brandvlei Dam.

**Wykeham Lodge B&B** (☎ 023-347 3467; wykeham.lodge@telkomsa.net; 168 Church St; s/d incl breakfast R360/460) This fine guesthouse is in a thatched-roof building dating from 1835. Rooms with wooden beams and floors face onto a quiet courtyard and there's also a large garden.

**Kleinplasië Country Chalets** (☎ 023-347 0091; Kleinplasië Farm Museum; self-catering cottages from R400) These four-person chalets attached to the Kleinplasië Farm Museum are simple yet comfortable enough for a night's stay.

## Eating

**Dros** (☎ 023-347 5131; 29 Baring St; mains R40; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This reliable chain steakhouse is worth a mention thanks to its handy location near the tourist office. The faux cellar interior and smoky scent promise much and deliver; the wines are good and steaks well cooked.

**Kleinplasië Restaurant** (☎ 023-347 5118; Kleinplasië Farm Museum; mains R40-50; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Attached to the Kleinplasië Farm Museum, this place offers traditional Cape Malay/Afrikaner dishes such as *bobotie* and chicken pie; outdoor seating is available.

**St Geran** (☎ 023-342 2800; 48 Church St; mains R55-70; ☎ lunch & dinner) This popular steakhouse in the town centre also does some seafood and chicken dishes, although there is little for vegetarians. There's a kid's menu and large wine list.

## Getting There & Away

All **Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za), **SA Roadlink** (☎ 021-425 0203; www.saroadlink.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 021-505 6363; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) buses stop at the Shell Ultra City petrol station in town. Fares include Cape Town (R140, two hours, daily) and Jo'burg (R375, 17 hours, daily). The corner of Durban and Grey Sts is a good place to look for minibus taxis. Rates include Cape Town (R65, two hours, daily).

The daily *Trans Karoo* train between Cape Town and Jo'burg stops in Worcester; the *Southern Cross* between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn stops at Worcester on Friday evening when heading east, early Monday morning when heading west. The extremely

circuitous *Trans Oranje* to Durban also stops there. For bookings call ☎ 023-348 2203.

## ROBERTSON

☎ 023 / pop 43,500

At the centre of one of the largest wine-growing areas in the country, and also famous for its horse studs, prosperous and unpretentious Robertson offers wonderful surrounding vineyards and more outdoor activities – including hiking, white-water rafting and horse riding – than its better-known Route 62 neighbours.

The helpful **Robertson Tourism Bureau** (☎ 023-626 4437; www.robertsonr62.com; cnr Reitz & Voortrekker Sts; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) can give you loads of information about the wine region, Route 62 and hiking trails that lead you into the mountains above the town.

## Sights & Activities

### WINERIES

The Robertson Wine Valley is worth a visit for its 43 wineries (*all of which offer free tastings!*), its scenery and the general absence of tourist buses. Ask the Tourism Bureau for a map.

**Van Loveren** (☎ 023-615 1505; www.vanloveren.co.za; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat) is one of the Cape's best wine-tasting experiences, taking place in a garden surrounded by trees planted for historical events – good and bad – such as the day of Mandela's release or the Pearl Harbour invasion. Besides spectacular grounds this place has a different take on tastings. You'll pick what wines you want to try and be brought the entire bottle. You can choose as many bottles and pour as much as you like. The wine is good, too – try the Colombar/Chardonnay.

Tastings at **Graham Beck** (☎ 023-626 1214; www.grahambeckwines.co.za; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) are in a striking orange aircraft hangar-like building with huge plate-glass windows overlooking a long pool. The winery comes as a breath of fresh air after all those Cape Dutch estates – as do its eminently drinkable products. Its fizzy wines give French champagne a run for its money and the muscatel is heaven in a glass.

**Robertson Winery** (☎ 023-628 8817; www.robertsonwinery.co.za; Voortrekker St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Thu, 8am-5.30pm Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, 9am-3pm Sun) is more

commercial and lacking in views, but is the region's oldest cellar. It's in a boring modern building smack in the middle of town but produces some decent products. The Sauvignon Blanc, Wide River Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve and semisweet wines are the ones to go for.

## SOEKERSHOF WALKABOUT

Tired of checking out wineries? Take a break and stretch your legs in these fabulous **gardens** (☎ 023-626 4134; Klaas Voogds West; adult/child R40/20; ☎ 8am-4pm Wed-Sun Aug-Jun), where you can wander through numerous mazes filled with indigenous plants and hedges as well as more than 1700 different species of succulents. Guided tours (adult/child R90/20) last about two hours, and there are also full-moon tours (R60). Soekershof is 8km past Robertson on Rte 60 heading towards Ashton. Turn left at the turn-off for Klaas Voogds West.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Robertson Backpackers** (☎ 023-626 1280; www.robertsonbackpackers.co.za; 4 Dordrecht Ave; camp sites per person R40, dm R60, d with shared bathroom R160, cottage from R200; ☎) A terrific place to lay your hat, with spacious dorms and doubles and a cosy Bohemian vibe. There's a big grassy backyard with a fire pit for chilling out at night, and wine and activity tours can be arranged.

**Grand Hotel** (☎ 023-626 3272; fax 626 1158; 68 Barry St; s/d R250/400; ☎) The rooms, a couple with balconies, are of better quality than the foyer would suggest, and there's also an adjoining lodge at R125 per person. The reasonably priced, if old-fashioned, Simone's Grill Room & Restaurant (mains R55) serves a range of chicken, seafood and steak dishes.

**Ballinderry** (☎ 023-626 5365; info@ballinderryguesthouse.com; 8 Le Roux St; s/d incl breakfast R465/780; ☎ ☎) A smart family home has, thanks to the care of hosts Luc and Hilde, been transformed into an impeccably designed luxury guesthouse. A champagne breakfast is served, as is dinner on request, and Dutch, French and German are spoken. Try to get either the downstairs double with garden views, or the separate 'African Room' in the garden.

**Branewynsdraai** (☎ 023-626 3202; 1 Kromhout St; mains R40; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) With a pleas-

ant tea garden and more formal dining room, this restaurant specialises in meaty local dishes, full-bodied wines and kiddies' specials.

**Bourbon Street** (☎ 023-626 5934; 22 Voortrekker Rd; mains R40-70; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A firm favourite with overseas visitors, this stylish deli-restaurant impresses with its fusion cuisine including fresh oysters and tapas. It is divided into casual and formal sections, with accompanying menus.

## Getting There & Away

**SA Roadlink** (☎ 021-425 0203; www.saroadlink.co.za) and **Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za) buses stop at the train station. Routes include Oudtshoorn (R110, three hours, daily), Knysna (R125, five hours), Cape Town (R120, three hours, daily) and Port Elizabeth (R165, 6½ hours, daily).

Minibus taxis running between Cape Town (R45, three hours), Oudtshoorn (R120, three hours) and Montagu (R27, 30 minutes) stop at the **Shell petrol station** (cnr Voortrekker & John Sts). Theoretically there is daily service, but when the buses actually show up is anyone's guess.

## MCGREGOR

☎ 023 / pop 1500

McGregor feels like it fell asleep in another time – the mid-19th century to be precise, from when most of the buildings along its one major thoroughfare, Voortrekker St, date – and never woke up. Many of the vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens surrounding the town's whitewashed thatched-roof cottages have been turned into B&Bs and self-catering units to cope with growing visitor numbers. The village nonetheless remains a place of retreat, and, with the magnificent Riviersonderend Mountains on its doorstep, a base for hiking. It is one end of the highly recommended Boesmansklouf Trail (below) to Greyton.

The **tourism bureau** (☎ 023-625 1954; www.tourismmcmgregor.co.za; Voortrekker St; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) is about half-way along Voortrekker St (there are no street numbers).

## Activities

Some argue the best reason for coming to McGregor is to hike the **Boesmansklouf Trail**

(1-day tour adult/child R20/10, 2-day tour R60/46) to Greyton, roughly 14km through the spectacular  *fynbos* -clad Rivieronderend Mountains. The trail actually starts at Die Galg, about 15km south of McGregor; you'll need your own transport to get here. Many people then hike back to Die Galg. The McGregor to Greyton direction is easier. You must book in advance at all times, but especially for weekends and during the holidays, since only 50 people per day are allowed on the trail.

If you don't fancy the full hike, it's quite possible to do a six-hour round trip to the lovely **Oak Falls** (1-day permit adult/child R20/10), roughly 6km from Die Galg, where you can cool off with a swim in the tannin-stained waters.

The **Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve**, near the Cape Nature Conservation offices on the McGregor Rd, offers day hikes in rugged and strikingly scenic landscapes. There are numerous succulents, dwarf trees and shrubs, as well as animal and bird species. You can choose from a number of trails. Fees (R18) are paid into an honesty box at the entrance to the reserve.

Both the Boesmanskloof Trail and the Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve are administered by **Cape Nature** (☎ 028-435 5020; www.cape.nature.org.za; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri), which has offices about 15km south of Robertson on the McGregor Rd. On weekends you'll have to get a permit from the tourism bureau.

The self-styled 'McGregor Wine Experience' can't compete with the wine routes of its neighbours, but does offer a half-dozen or so decent estates. Start at environmentally friendly **McGregor Wines** (☎ 023-625 1741; www.mcgregorwinery.co.za; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) and explore from there.

## Sleeping & Eating

The tourism bureau has a full list of accommodation around the village but doesn't take bookings. Eating options in McGregor are almost limited to where you sleep.

**Whipstock Farm** (☎ 023-625 1733; www.whipstock.za.net; s/d R295/590) Working fireplaces, amiable dogs, a serene location and fresh farm-stall produce combine to wonderful effect at this guesthouse set in a series of historic buildings. The friendly hosts make breakfast and dinner on request, and can organise transfers to and from the Boesmanskloof

Trail. Follow Voortrekker Rd towards the mountains until it becomes a dirt road; Whipstock is 7km down this road.

**Temenos Retreat** (☎ 023-625 1871; temenos@lando.co.za; cnr Bree St & Voortrekker Rd; s/d R330/495; 🍷) These unique cottages set in spacious gardens are open to all (except children under 12), not just those on retreat. It's a peaceful place, with a decent lap pool, health treatments, nooks for contemplation and a coffee shop. Three-course dinner costs R90.

**McGregor Country Cottages** (☎ 023-625 1816; Voortrekker Rd; d R375; 🍷) Located beside an apricot orchard at the north end of the village is this complex of seven whitewashed, thatched-roofed self-catering cottages, each with its own fireplace. Three of the cottages are wheelchair accessible. The entire place has a quaint farmlike feel with a cosy bar and sitting room and sociable hosts.

**Trossachs** (☎ 023-612 1881; www.trossachs.co.za; s/d incl breakfast R850/1100; 🍷) This is one of the province's most popular wedding venues, where guests stay in thatched, stone cottages with a distinctly Scottish theme – each has its own clan name and accompanying tartan – and splendid views. Look out for the turn-off 10km before McGregor.

**Villagers Coffee Shop** (☎ 023-625 1787; Voortrekker Rd; mains R20; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) A convivial country store offering light meals and a refreshing range of homemade fruit juices.

## Getting There & Away

Apart from hiking in from Greyton, there's only one road in and out of McGregor (the road to Robertson), and you're going to need your own transport.

## GREYTON

☎ 028

Although officially part of the Overberg region, we've included Greyton and the neighbouring village of Genadendal here because of their link to McGregor along the Boesmanskloof Trail.

Much more twee and polished than McGregor, even locals admit that the whitewashed, thatched-roof cottages of Greyton are a bit artificial. As pleasant as the village is, it needs to be seen in conjunction with the old Moravian Mission of neighbouring Genadendal, with its well-preserved historic buildings that couldn't be more authentic.

## Information

**Tourist information office** (☎ 028-254 9414; info@greyton.net; ☎ 10am-noon & 2.30-4.30pm Mon-Sat) There's a small but helpful tourist office on the village's main road.

## Sights & Activities

### GENADENDAL MISSION STATION

Some 7km west of Greyton is **Genadendal**, the oldest mission station in South Africa, founded in 1738 and for a brief time the largest settlement in the colony after Cape Town. Entering the village from Rte 406, head down Main Rd until you arrive at the cluster of national monuments around Church Sq.

The Moravian Church is a handsome, simply decorated building. Opposite you'll find the village's **tourist information centre** (☎ 028-251 8291; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat). There's a café here selling homemade bread and souvenirs, including pottery.

The village's fascinating history is documented in the excellent **Mission Museum** (☎ 028-251 8582; adult/child R8/4; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-3.30pm Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), which is in what was South Africa's first teacher-training college. Elsewhere in this historic precinct is one of the oldest printing presses in the country, still in operation, and a water mill.

### GENADENDAL TRAIL

Greyton comes into its own as a base for hiking in the Rivieronderend Mountains, which rise up in Gothic majesty immediately to the village's north. Apart from the Boesmanskloof Trail there are several shorter walks, as well as the two-day Genadendal Trail for the serious hiker. This is a 25.3km circular route that begins and ends at Genadendal's Moravian Church; for more details pick up the Cape Nature Conservation leaflet at the Greyton tourist information office.

## Sleeping & Eating

For its size, Greyton has a wide range of accommodation and places to eat.

**Guinea Fowl** (☎ 028-254 9550; jp agencies@telkomsa.net; cnr DS Botha & Oak Sts; s/d incl breakfast from R350/500; 🍷) Comfortable and quiet, this guesthouse has a pool for summer, log fire for winter and good breakfasts year-round.

**Post House** (☎ 028-254 9995; fax 254 9920; 24 Main Rd; d incl breakfast from R400) Based in the town's

historic former post house and set around a pretty garden, rooms are named after Beatrix Potter characters (we told you Greyton was a twee place). Its English-style pub, the Ball & Bass, is a wonderfully atmospheric spot for a drink or meal.

**Greyton Lodge** (☎ 028-254 9800; www.greytonlodge.com; 46 Main Rd; s/d incl breakfast R500/700; 🍷) An upmarket, gay-friendly hotel in the old police station. Catch the live crooners in the garden terrace from 5pm on Fridays. There's a pool and a reasonably priced but unadventurous bistro.

**High Hopes B&B** (☎ /fax 028-254 9898; 89 Main Rd; d incl breakfast from R580) Readers love this place, and it's easy to see why: tastefully furnished rooms, lovely gardens with a beautiful koi (carp) pond and a well-stocked library. There's now also a Healing Energy Centre offering massages and other treatments to get you back on track. Convenient for hikers, it's the closest B&B to the start of the Boesmanskloof Trail.

**Rosie's Restaurant** (☎ 028-254 9640; 9 High St; mains from R40; ☎ dinner) The house specialities at this unpretentious place are wood-fired pizzas (which are delicious and huge) and steaks.

**Oak & Vigne Café** (☎ 028-254 9037; DS Botha St; mains R50; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Evidence of the gentrification of Greyton is this trendy deli-art gallery-café, which is a fine place to grab a snack, chill out and watch the world go by.

## Getting There & Away

If you're not hiking in from McGregor, the only way to Greyton is by your own transport. From Cape Town follow the N2 to just before Caledon and then take Rte 406. From Robertson take Rte 317 south to the N2 at Stormsvlei, then head west to Rivieronderend to connect with Rte 406.

## MONTAGU

☎ 023 / pop 9500

Populated by artists, dreamers and other escapees, country hospitality is spread thick in picturesque, invigorating Montagu.

Founded in 1851, it's the first town up the pass from the Breede River Valley – once you pop through the Cogmanskloof near Robertson you are suddenly in a very different world. It's a good place to go if you want to escape the 21st century and

get a brief taste of the Little Karoo, making it the perfect retreat for couples looking for some space; backpackers looking for a party might be happier elsewhere.

There are some 24 restored national monuments, including fine examples of Art Deco architecture, but it's Montagu's splendid range of activities – including hot springs, permit-free meanders and hikes, hearty meals in old-world buildings – that have turned it into such a popular Route 62 destination.

### Orientation & Information

The town is small, so it's easy to get around on foot. Most activity and accommodation is centred on Bath St.

**Printmor** (70 Bath St; per hr R40; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Internet access is available at this place at the Succulent Café.

**Tourism bureau** (☎ 023-614 2471; www.tourismmontagu.co.za; 24 Bath St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Sun) This office is extremely efficient and helpful. It can provide information on accommodation (including a good range of B&Bs and self-catering cottages), hikes and other activities.

Opening hours are slightly shorter between May and October.

### Sights & Activities

Don't be fooled by its size; Montagu has enough to keep you entertained for at least a few days.

#### HOT SPRINGS & LOVER'S WALK TRAIL

Water from the **hot mineral springs** (☎ 023-614 1150; admission R25; ☎ 8am-11pm; P) finds its way into the concrete pools of the Avalon Springs Hotel, about 3km from town. Heated to 43°C, energising and renowned for their healing properties, the pools are a lively place on weekends, when many local families come for a soak.

A great way to get here is to hike along the 2.2km Lover's Walk Trail, which starts at the car park at the end of Barry St. Pick up the *Hiking Trails* leaflet from the tourism bureau. The route leads past Montagu's top rock-climbing spots and can get tricky (and wet). For guidance on climbing and hiking in the area contact **De Bos** (☎ 023-614 2532; sdbrown@mweb.co.za).

#### TRACTOR-TRAILER RIDES

Niel Burger, owner of the Protea Farm at the top of the Langeberg Range, 29km from Montagu, takes fun **tractor-trailer rides** (☎ 023-614 2471; adult/child R60/30; ☎ tours 10am & 2pm Wed & Sat) to the farm, from where you can look way down into the Breede River Valley. Even locals enjoy the three-hour trip, so it must be something special. You can have a delicious lunch of *potjiekos* (traditional pot stew) with homemade bread for R40/10 per adult/child, and stay on at the farm accommodation (four-person cottages R350).

#### MONTAGU MUSEUM & JOUBERT HOUSE

Interesting displays and some good examples of antique furniture can be found at the **Montagu Museum** (☎ 023-614 1950; 41 Long St; adult/child R3/1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-12.30pm Sat & Sun) in the old mission church.

**Joubert House** (☎ 023-614 1774; 25 Long St; adult/child R3/1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-12.30pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun), a short walk away, is the oldest house in Montagu (built in 1853) and has been restored to its Victorian finery.

#### HIKING

The **Bloupoint Trail** is 15.6km long and can be walked in six to eight hours; it traverses ravines and mountain streams, and climbs to 1000m. The flora includes proteas, ericas, aloes, gladioli and watsonias. The **Cogmans-kloof Trail** is 12.1km and can be completed in four to six hours; it's not as steep as the Bloupoint Trail. Both trails start from the car park at the end of Tanner St. To hike either trail costs R18 per person. The tourist bureau handles bookings for overnight cabins near the start of the trails. The huts (per person R60) are fairly basic (wood stoves, showers and toilet facilities), but they are cheap.

#### MOUNTAIN BIKING

Biking is a great way to see the surrounding countryside. To rent a mountain bike, call Ron Brunings or visit him at the **Cottage Café & Bike Hire** (☎ /fax 023-614 1932; 78 Bath St; per hr R20). Ron also runs **Dusty Sprocket Trails** (brunings@lando.co.za), offering 11 guided mountain-bike trails in the area for all skill levels; trails range from 12km to 43km.

#### Sleeping

In town there are some lovely guesthouses, but there are also fine dining and accommodation on the outskirts, particularly in the vicinity of the hot springs.

#### BUDGET

**De Bos** (☎ 023-614 2532; www.debos.co.za; Bath St; camp sites per person R30, dm R45, s/d R120/170; ☎) A genuine farm-stay for backpackers – there's a river, chickens and pecan-nut trees in this 7-hectare property, where colourful old workers' cottages have been converted into self-catering cottages (R200). On weekends there is a two-night minimum stay, except for camping.

**Montagu Caravan Park** (☎ 023-614 3034; Bath St; camp sites per person R40, 4-person cabins/chalets R180/240) This park is in a pleasant location with apricot trees and lots of shade and grass. The chalets come with cooking equipment and TVs, though bedding (R40) is optional. The park is at the far west end of Bath St.

#### MIDRANGE

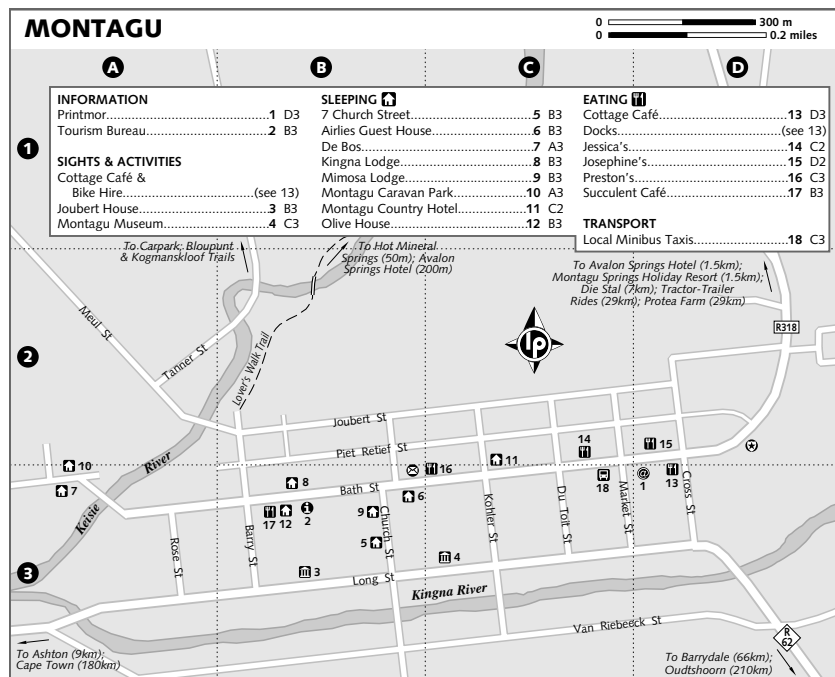
**Olive House** (☎ 023-614 1095; www.theolivehouse.co.za; Bath St; r from R300; ☎) A refreshing change from so much traditional country décor: whitewashed minimalism and stylish artistic flourishes that shouldn't work within this 1854 national monument, but do. Food is served at the adjacent Succulent Café and the whole place can be hired for weddings. Sheer sophistication.

**Montagu Springs Holiday Resort** (☎ 023-614 1050; www.montagusprings.co.za; Warmbronne Hot Springs; 4-person chalets from R380) These self-catering chalets are the cheaper option at the hot-springs resort. Those interested in waterfowl, pigeons and chickens should check out the 'feathered friends' sanctuary where more than 160 types of bird are on display. There are daily feedings.

**Airlies Guest House** (☎ 023-614 2943; www.airlies.co.za; Bath St; s/d incl breakfast R390/590; ☎) Quaint accommodation in a roomy, thatched-roof house with spacious wood-floored rooms looking out on the mountains. The hosts are very obliging and the breakfast is excellent.

#### TOP END

**Kingna Lodge** (☎ 023-614 1066; www.kingnalodge.co.za; 11 Bath St; s/d R400/600; ☎) Tastefully restrained Victoriana is the design choice



at this elegant guesthouse, where the five-course dinners (R150) draw rave reviews. Each room is uniquely decorated and named after a different grape cultivar, but all come with marble bathrooms and fireplaces. Former presidents Nelson Mandela and FW De Klerk each stayed here in 1995. Karoo hospitality exemplified.

**7 Church Street** (☎ 023-614 1186; www.7churchstreet.co.za; 7 Church St; s/d incl breakfast R400/600; ♿) A luxury guesthouse in a charming Karoo building with traditional wrought-iron *broekie-lace* (panty-lace) filigree and a manicured garden. The plush interior doubles as a gallery of the owner's personal art collection.

**Montagu Country Hotel** (☎ 023-614 3125; www.montagucountryhotel.co.za; 27 Bath St; s/d R480/800; ♿) In a large pink building with stunning Art Deco finishes, this pleasant hotel with reasonably decorated rooms offers all the usual facilities, and has a streetside courtyard, a pool, smart restaurant and bar. There is an à la carte lunch from R35.

**Mimosa Lodge** (☎ 023-614 2351; www.mimosa.co.za; Church St; s/d incl breakfast R580/850; ♿) An upper-crust lodge in a restored Edwardian landmark building with manicured gardens, an artful pool complete with a thatched-roof gazebo for shade and a small waterfall. The dinners (R155) are open to nonguests, and are a highlight.

**Avalon Springs Hotel** (☎ 023-614 1150; www.avalonsprings.co.za; Warmbronne Hot Springs; s/d from R625/1050) This old-fashioned hotel and time-share complex draws good reviews, despite the eerie, period horror-movie décor and its mercenary policy of jacking up prices by 25% on weekends (when there's a two-night minimum stay) and at holiday times. As well as the outdoor hot-spring pools, massages, a gym and a 24-hour café are available. Plenty for the kids to do, too.

## Eating

As well as meals in the Montagu Country Hotel, Mimosa Lodge and Kingna Lodge (for these last two you must book in advance), there are a few other options.

**Cottage Café** (☎ 023-614 1932; 78 Bath St; mains R10-30; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Light lunches are served in a grassy garden. The daily specials are usually tasty and good value. Those with a sweet tooth will enjoy the ice cream.

**Docks** (☎ 023-614 3360; 80 Bath St; mains R20-55; ☺ dinner Tue-Fri, breakfast, lunch & dinner Sat & Sun) The perfect place for a post-boozing stomach filler. No-nonsense, good-value food served indoors or on benches around a swimming pool.

**Succulent Café** (20 Bath St; mains R20-60; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Streamlined design, quality coffee, a solid vegetarian menu and fresh ingredients characterise this breezy café loved by local artists, with large pictures of succulents on the walls and breakfast dishes equally juicy. The table layout is cleverly switched according to mealtimes, and there's Internet access (per hour R42), too. It's closed on Monday nights.

**Die Stal** (☎ 082-324 4318; Touwsrivier Rd, off Rte 318; mains R35-65; ☺ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun) A countryside dining experience just 7km north of town on a working citrus farm, this place serves up the creations of local chefs. The menu changes daily, but large country breakfasts are always on offer.

**Preston's** (☎ 023-614 3013; 17 Bath St; breakfast R30, mains R40-70; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) There's a variety of steak and seafood as well as some veg options served in a lovely garden. Those looking for just a drink can head to the attached Thomas Bain Pub.

**Jessica's** (☎ 023-614 1805; 47 Bath St; mains R60-90; ☺ dinner) Named after the family dog, Jessica's serves up inventive bistro dishes, such as butternut ravioli and pan-fried springbok strips, in a cosy atmosphere.

**Josephine's** (☎ 023-614 3939; 63 Bath St; mains R60-90; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) A local favourite, with seasonal menus and plenty of fresh fish specials. We love the burgundy and pumpkin colour theme.

## Getting There & Around

**Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za) buses stop at Ashton, 9km from Montagu, on the run between Cape Town (R120, 2½ hours, daily) and Port Elizabeth (R170, six hours, daily).

Most accommodation establishments offer (prebooked) shuttles from Ashton to Montagu, but you can also jump in one of the minibus taxis (R8) that ply this route. If you're arriving after hours, you may need to hire a car from one of the companies at the bus depot.

**JJ's Transport** (☎ 023-614 3975; per person R30) runs a taxi service between town and the

hot springs. The price includes a glass of wine. Call for bookings.

**Munnik's** (☎ 021-637 1850; per person R70; ☺ Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun) runs a shuttle between Montagu and Cape Town. It'll also take you on to the hot springs for an extra R10.

Local minibus taxis leave from the **OK Supermarket** (Bath St) near the corner of Market St and run to Cape Town (R110, 3½ hours) and Oudtshoorn (R40, 2½ hours).

## CALITZDORP

☎ 044 / pop 9000

Lovers of either port or unexpectedly charming towns shouldn't join the majority of motorists who judge Calitzdorp by its nondescript main street and zoom past on their way to more-fashionable places. Apart from the vineyards, there's a **museum** (cnr Van Riebeeck & Geysers Sts; admission free; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) housing Calitzdorp memorabilia. There's also a **Dutch Reformed Church**, which is a national monument.

The **information centre** (☎ 044-213 3312; cnr Voortrek & Barry Sts; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat), tucked in behind the Shell petrol station, can provide details on accommodation and the local wineries.

The best winery is generally considered to be **Boplaas** (☎ 044-213 3326; www.boplaas.co.za; Zaayman St; tastings wine/wine & port R15/35; ☺ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat), with several international awards under its belt. Follow the signs from Andries Pretorius St off Voortrekker Rd, and call ahead to book a cellar tour. There's also a general **port festival** held in July every odd-numbered year.

If it's too late, or you're too drunk, to leave town, opposite Boplaas is the **Port-Wine Guest House** (☎ 044-213 3131; portwine@omweb.co.za; 7 Queen St; s/d incl breakfast R400/760; ♿), in a beautifully appointed, thatched Cape cottage. It's perfect for a romantic weekend – there are no TVs in the bedrooms (but there are four-poster beds).

There are seven restaurants and 27 other guesthouses in town, all of similar quality, so it's best to ask at the information centre where to stay and eat.

## OUTDSHOORN

☎ 044 / pop 85,000

If you're an ostrich, this is the place to come for work. Otherwise, there's much, much more to the sedate tourist capital of the

Little Karoo than these feckless feathered friends (despite their appearance in some form or another on just about every piece of publicity).

Certainly, that it bills itself as the ostrich capital of the world is no overstatement. These birds have been bred hereabouts since the 1870s, and at the turn of the 20th century fortunes were made from the fashion for ostrich feathers. Oudtshoorn boomed, and the so-called 'feather barons' built the grand houses that lend the town its distinctive atmosphere today.

The town still turns a pretty penny from breeding the birds for meat and leather, and the ostriches also pay their way with tourists – you can buy ostrich eggs, feathers and *biltong* all over town – but more importantly Oudtshoorn is a great base for exploring the different environments of the Little Karoo, the Garden Route (it's 55km to George along the N12) and the Great Karoo.

The nearby Swartberg and Seweweekspoort Passes – two of South Africa's scenic highlights – are geological, floral and engineering masterpieces. Oudtshoorn has a strong Afrikaans feel, tree-lined streets, interesting shops and top-class restaurants.

## Orientation & Information

Oudtshoorn itself is navigable on foot, but as many attractions are some distance from one another, your own transport, or a willingness to take a tour, is recommended. The main commercial street is High (Hoog) St, to the east of Baron van Rheede St, where you'll find most of the restaurants.

If you need to check your email, there's Internet access at Oasis Shanti hostel.

**Oudtshoorn Tourism Bureau** (☎ 044-279 2532; www.oudtshoorn.com; Baron van Rheede St; ☺ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) This helpful bureau is next to the CP Nel Museum. Ask here about the numerous B&Bs in town and about tours of the local sights.

## Sights & Activities

Many of Oudtshoorn's sights are outside of the town limits. Some hostels and B&Bs offer discounts on attractions if you stay the night.

## CP NEL MUSEUM & LE ROUX TOWNHOUSE

Extensive displays about ostriches, as well as Karoo history, make up this large and interesting **museum** (☎ 044-272 7306; 3 Baron van Rheede

St; adult/child R10/3; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat), housed in a striking sandstone building completed in 1906 at the height of ostrich fever. It also features some impressive reconstructed Victorian shops and the interior of an 1896 synagogue transferred here when its original home was demolished.

Included in the ticket price is admission to the **Le Roux Townhouse** (☎ 044-272 3676; cnr Loop & High Sts; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri). This place is decorated in authentic period furniture and is as good an example of a 'feather palace' as you're likely to see.

### CANGO WILDLIFE RANCH & CHEETAHLAND

If you're all ostriched out, head to this **ranch** (☎ 044-272 5593; adult/child R60/45; ☎ 8am-4.30pm).

It's got a bit of a zoolike feel but has a good collection of wildlife and big cats (in rather small enclosures), including cheetahs, which you may pat for an extra R30 (funds go to the Cheetah Conservation Foundation). The ranch is 3km from town on the road out to Prince Albert. Other big cats here include lion, pumas and Bengal white tigers, and there are also crocodiles, alligators and other wild animals.

### MEERKAT MAGIC CONSERVATION PROJECT

Everyone loves a meerkat, but none with as much devotion as Grant McIlrath, the so-called Meerkat Man of Oudtshoorn. On his unique **meerkat experience** (☎ 082-413

6895; www.meerkatmagic.com; minimum donation R400; ☎ sunset & sunrise Oct-Apr, sunrise May-Sep), a pioneering conservation project, you will get to see up close how these curious, highly intelligent creatures communicate and live. It's truly unique in that the subjects, thanks to Grant's many years of building trust with them, are entirely unaffected by your presence while allowing you to enter their environment. If you have only one wildlife encounter in the Western Cape, make it this one. The natural meerkat burrows are at various locations a few kilometres west of Oudtshoorn along Rte 328, but meet-ups and collections are in town. Ask about farm accommodation near the burrows.

### OSTRICH FARMS

There are *four* show farms in town, which offer guided tours of 45 minutes to one hour. There's little to choose between them; we found the staff at the **Oudtshoorn Ostrich Show Farm** (☎ 044-279 1861; Cango Caves Rd; adult/child R40/20; ☎ 8am-5pm) very informative. The **Highgate Ostrich Show Farm** (☎ 044-272 7115; www.highgate.co.za; adult/child R40/20; ☎ 8am-5pm) also gets good reviews. It's 10km from Oudtshoorn en route to Mossel Bay.

### TWO PASSES ROUTE

If you're going to one of the ostrich farms north of town or to the Cango Caves, carry on driving and take the **Swartberg Pass** all the way to Prince Albert, then return to Oudtshoorn via the **Meiringspoort Pass**. Both are engineering masterpieces, and halfway down the latter there is a waterfall and small visitor centre. The road will take you past the town of De Rust and back home – it is a great day's excursion. Ask your accommodation or at the local tourist office for a route map.

### CANGO CAVES

Named after the Khoesaaan word for 'a wet place', the **Cango Caves** (☎ 044-272 7410; www.cangocaves.co.za; admission from R50; ☎ 9am-4pm) are heavily commercialised but impressive. There's a choice of tours on offer. The half-hour tour gives you just a glimpse – it's better to choose a longer tour. The longest tour is the most fun, but involves crawling through tight and damp places so is not recommended for the claustrophobic or unfit. The caves are 30km north of Oudtshoorn.

### MOUNTAIN-BIKE RIDES

If you're looking for a little exercise and a lot of thrill then hop on a mountain bike and ride from the top of Swartberg Pass down into Oudtshoorn. The **Oudtshoorn Adventure Centre** (☎ 044-272 3436; www.backpackersparadise.hostel.com; 148 Baron van Rheede St; tours from R120) at Backpackers Paradise hostel (see below) runs these trips, which depart daily at 8.30am. You'll be driven up and then cycle back to town. Be warned, it's not all downhill and it's a long ride.

### SWIMMING

It's not uncommon for the mercury to hit upwards of 40°C (104°F) in summer. Escape the swelter at the **NA Smit Public Swimming Baths** (☎ 044-203 3119; Park St; adult/child R5/2.65; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun).

### Festivals & Events

Early each April, the enthralling **Klein Karoo Nationale Kunstfees** (Little Karoo National Arts Festival; www.kknk.co.za; cnr Church & Baron van Rheede Sts) dedicates itself to the 'renaissance of Afrikaans' and showcases indigenous artists, poets, thespians and musicians in a riotous week-long festival of creativity. It's South Africa's best-attended festival of its kind.

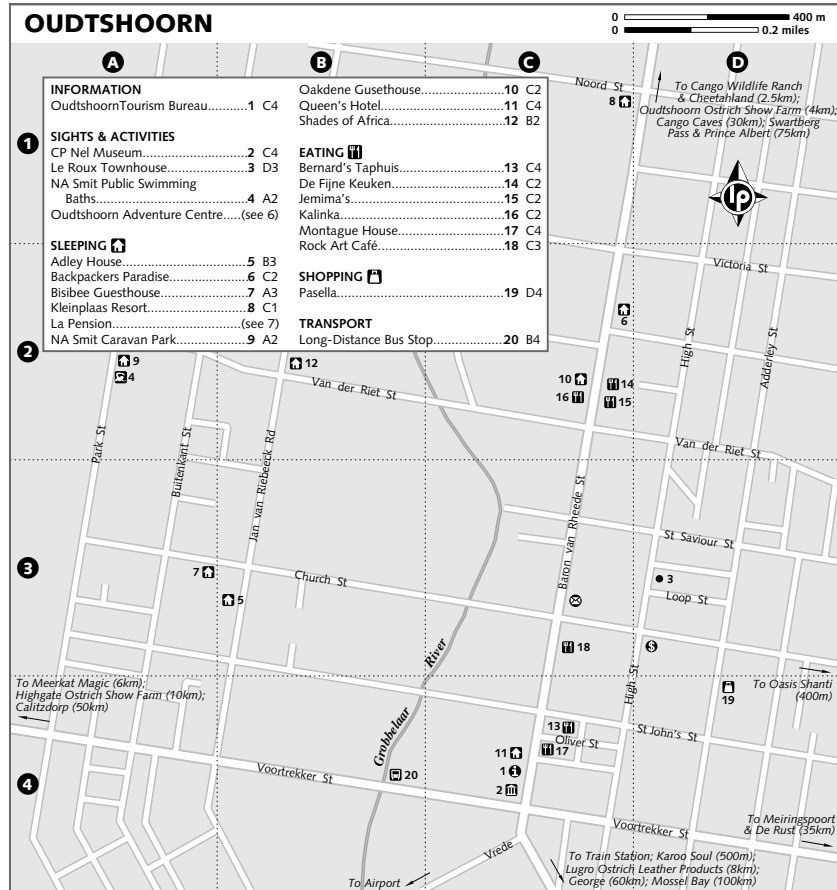
### Sleeping

#### BUDGET

**Oasis Shanti** (☎ 044-279 1163; oasis@mailbox.co.za; 3 Church St; camp sites per person R35, dm R60, d with shared bathroom from R180; ☎) Friendly and well run, this recently refurbished hostel is in a large house with a spacious braai and swimming pool area, and shady camping spots. The lounge has a roaring fireplace to take the chill out of cold nights and there are the requisite ostrich braais.

**Backpackers Paradise** (☎ 044-272 3436; www.backpackersparadise.hostel.com; 148 Baron van Rheede St; camp sites per person R40, dm R65, r from R180, d with bathroom R250; ☎) In a large old house, this excellent hostel has a separate dorm-bed annexe, bar, ostrich braais and free ostrich-egg breakfasts (in season, you'll be given an egg – cook it any way you please). It also offers curios at knock-down prices, discounts to area attractions and an adventure centre that can set you up with a host of activities.

**Karoo Soul** (☎ 044-272 0330; www.karoosoul.com; 170 Langenhoven Rd; camp sites per person R40, dm incl



breakfast R80, d with shared bathroom & breakfast R250; 🚽 🚿) The lack of atmosphere and small kitchen may show this newish place is still finding its feet, but its luxury linens, quietude and comfort are proof that the backpacker has come of age. It's also the only place offering a view of Oudtshoorn. Try to get one of the west-facing doubles for a romantic sundowner from your bed, or ask about the en suite garden cottage (R300).

**NA Smit Caravan Park** (☎ 044-272 2313; fax 279 1915; Park St; camp sites R89, rondavels R200; 🚽 🚿) There's not much shade or grass, but facilities are decent. The kids will love the playground.

**Kleinplaas Resort** (☎ 044-2725811; kleinpls@mweb.co.za; 171 Baron van Rheede St; camp sites R120, 4-person chalets R380; 🚽 🚿) A terrific caravan park, with a restaurant and a big pool.

## MIDRANGE

**Bisbee Guesthouse** (☎ 044-272 4784; bisibee@hotmail.com; 171 Church St; s/d incl breakfast R280/500; 🚽 🚿) One of the first guesthouses in town, this is a spotless but somewhat old-fashioned building once used as a place for departing soldiers to bid adieu to their loved ones.

**La Pension** (☎ 044-279 2445; www.lapension.co.za; 169 Church St; s/d incl breakfast R350/500; 🚽 🚿) A reliable choice with a plainly designed range of rooms, La Pension includes some self-catering units with TV, plus a good-sized pool, sauna and a large, immaculate garden.

**Oakdene Guesthouse** (☎ 044-272 3018; www.oakdene.co.za; 99 Baron van Rheede St; s/d R395/620; 🚽 🚿) Elegant cottage furniture, wooden floors, ostrich eggs, linens with high thread counts and an earthy-coloured paint job make each room special. The lush gardens and excellent pool add to the charm. Electric blankets are provided in winter.

**Shades of Africa** (☎ 044-272 6430; shades@mweb.co.za; 238 Jan van Riebeeck Rd; s/d incl breakfast R400/650; 🚽 🚿) Colourful Afro-chic touches make this contemporary-styled guesthouse, with a small pool, a charming place to stay.

**Adley House** (☎ 044-272 4533; www.adleyhouse.co.za; 209 Jan van Riebeeck Rd; s/d incl breakfast R515/700; 🚽 🚿) Rooms, all with private entrance, in the 1905 'Feather Palace' have bags of charm, though the separate add-on ones less so. There's a couple of pools and a beautiful outdoor braai and bar area.

**Queen's Hotel** (☎ 044-272 2101; www.queenshotel.co.za; 11 Baron van Rheede St; s/d R680/950; 🚽 🚿)

This attractive old-style country hotel with spacious, understated rooms is refreshingly cool inside. It's an expansive place with ivy on the exterior walls and a faux marble entrance hall, yet it has an inviting appeal.

## Eating

As you'd expect, most places serve ostrich in one form or another, but dining options are in general remarkably good.

**Rock Art Café** (☎ 044-279 1927; 62 Baron van Rheede St; breakfast from R20, mains R30-65; 🚽 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) Grab an outdoor bench and choose from a wide range of simple dishes at this often-busy bar, which has live music on Friday or Saturday.

**Montague House** (☎ 044-272 3208; cnr Baron van Rheede & Olivier Sts; mains R30; 🚽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Breakfast is served until 2.30pm and there is a huge number of choices. Otherwise dine on pasta, salads or sandwiches under umbrellas in the large flower garden.

**Bernard's Taphuis** (☎ 044-272 3208; cnr Olivier & Montague Sts; mains R45-80; 🚽 lunch & dinner) This place has a European flair, multiple selections for vegetarians and lots of ostrich dishes.

**Jemima's** (☎ 044-272 0808; 94 Baron van Rheede St; mains from R50; 🚽 dinner Mon-Sun, lunch & dinner Fri) Recognised as one of the country's finest restaurants, Jemima's delights both the palate and the eyes. It's the small touches that make this place so delightful, but the food that ultimately takes centre stage. The Cape Malay dishes are legendary. After your meal try a *swepie*, a mix of brandy and *jerepigo* (dessert wine).

**De Fijne Keuken** (☎ 044-272 6403; 114 Baron van Rheede St; mains R50-70; 🚽 lunch & dinner) The funky atmosphere – bright-coloured walls plastered with old maps of the continent – is just another good mark for this highly recommended restaurant. There's loads of outdoor seating, and the varied menu includes ostrich cooked every way imaginable, and a large selection of pastas.

**Kalinka** (☎ 044-279 2596; 93 Baron van Rheede St; mains R60-85; 🚽 lunch & dinner Mon-Sun, breakfast Sat & Sun only) A stylish bistro with an imaginative menu interspersed with Russian delights thanks to skilful chef Olga's love for Muscovite ingredients. Try the Russian tomato salad (R32).

## Shopping

There's plenty for the shopper in Oudtshoorn, with Baron van Rheede St providing most outlets. Ostrich goods are naturally in demand, particularly ostrich leather. The leather is very pricey because of the low hide yield per bird, so it's worth shopping around here, including at show ranches and in hotels.

**Lugro Ostrich Leather Products** (☎ 044-272 7012; Off George Rd; 🚽 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Considered one of the best-value ostrich-leather purveyors in town, Lugro is independent of local ranches, so offers a shopping experience that avoids the tacky tourist vibe usually accompanying the search for ostrich goods.

**Pasella** (☎ 044-272 6690; 100 Adderley St; 🚽 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) For an alternate shopping experience, make time to get to Pasella, where you'll find a magnificent collection of old-school South African curios, second-hand furniture, bric-a-brac and 'high-class junk'.

## Getting There & Around

**Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) has service to Jo'burg (R320, 1½ hours, daily). Otherwise you can take a **Translux bus** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za) to Mossel Bay (R50, one hour, daily) and from there you can get to multiple destinations (see p216). Buses stop in the Riverside Centre off Voortrekker St.

The Baz Bus stops at George, from where you can arrange a transfer to Oudtshoorn with Backpackers Paradise (R35).

Every Saturday the *Southern Cross* train leaves for Cape Town at 5pm.

Taxis aren't easy to find – try Union St near the Spar supermarket or check with the tourism bureau.

## GARDEN ROUTE

The Garden Route is perhaps the most internationally renowned South African destination after Cape Town and the Kruger National Park, and with good reason. Within a few hundred kilometres, the range of topography, vegetation, wildlife and outdoor activity is breathtaking.

Roughly encompassing the coastline from Mossel Bay in the west to just be-

yond Plettenberg Bay in the east, it caters to all kinds of travellers. Backpackers are taken care of with plenty of hostels, and midrange and top-end folks will be pleased with the range of swanky hotels and charming guesthouses.

You can hike in old-growth forests, quad bike through wildlife reserves, commune with monkeys, chill out on the beach and canoe in the series of extensive lagoons that run behind a barrier of sand dunes and superb white beaches that make up the Garden Route's outer fringes. Inland, the Outeniqua and Tsitsikamma Ranges, which are between 1000m and 1700m high and crossed by some spectacular road passes, split the coast from the semidesert Karoo. The Garden Route also has some of the most significant tracts of indigenous forest in the country, including giant yellowwood trees and many wildflowers. The climate is mild and noticeably wetter than elsewhere; the highest chance of rainfall and grey days is from August to October. The towns most commonly used as bases are Knysna and Plettenberg Bay, though we prefer less crowded Wilderness and Buffalo Bay.

It's worth mentioning that the region's celebrated status has been a mixed blessing. Its popularity has driven up competition, so facilities from restaurants to hotels to activity centres are uniformly top-notch. But in recent years development has spiralled seemingly out of control, and at times you might feel like you're a cog in a huge tourist machine. During the summer and South African school holidays prices soar and places quickly fill up, so it's best to book ahead. All in all, the Garden Route is great, but if you leave South Africa without having seen it, it isn't a disaster. If you leave having seen nothing else, it might be.

## MOSSSEL BAY

☎ 044 / pop 78,000

Once one of the jewels of the Garden Route, Mossel Bay was marred by rampant industrial sprawl in the 1980s, in particular that of the gas/petrol-conversion refinery on its outskirts. Following a clean-up (and an aggressive marketing campaign), the town is enjoying a revival, thanks in large part to its historic and sandstone buildings,

excellent places to stay, plenty of activities, the only north-facing beach in the country and some top surf spots (see p215). Just ignore the town's approach, still showing the scars of its 'boom'.

The first European to visit the bay was the Portuguese explorer Bartholomeu Dias in 1488. Vasco de Gama followed him in 1497. From then on many ships stopped to take on fresh water, and to barter for provisions with the Gouriqua Khoekhoen who lived in the region. A large milkwood tree beside the spring was used as a postal collection point – expeditions heading east would leave mail to be picked up by ships returning home. The spring and the tree still exist, and you can post letters (they receive a special postmark) from a letterbox on the site.

### Orientation & Information

The town lies on the northern slopes of Cape St Blaize. The museum complex, which overlooks the bay, is the best place to start your exploration. Marsh St, which runs through town, has a large concentration of restaurants and pubs. The Point is the place to head for a late-afternoon drink and to watch the surfers try their luck on the breaks. Santos Beach is the town's swimming beach.

**Tourism bureau** (☎ 044-691 2202; Market St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) This office is very friendly and can help with accommodation bookings.

### Sights

**BARTHOLOMEU DIAS MARITIME MUSEUM**  
The highlight of the **museum complex** (☎ 044-691 1067; Market St; admission R6; ☎ Maritime, History & Shell Museums 8.30am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3.45pm Sat & Sun) includes the **spring** where Dias watered the **postal tree**, the 1786 VOC **granary**, a **shell museum** (with some interesting aquarium tanks) and a local **history museum**. The highlight is the replica of the vessel that Dias used on his 1488 voyage of discovery. Its small size brings home the extraordinary skill and courage of the early explorers. The replica was built in Portugal and sailed to Mossel Bay in 1988 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Dias' trip.

### BOTLIERSKOP GAME FARM

This **farm** (☎ 044-696 6055; Little Brak River; admission from R360; s/d with dinner & breakfast R2685/3580; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm) offers the chance to stay on a ranch and view a vast range of wildlife, including lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo, giraffe and blue wildebeest. These are bred for sale to other parks and although they are free to roam, the chances of spotting most breeds are high. The most popular activity is the quad-bike rides (R550), which include a buffet serving South African dishes. There are also three-hour game drives (R360) including a buffet meal. The farm is around 20km east of Mossel Bay along the N2 (take the Little Brak River turn-off and follow the signs towards Sorgfontein). Booking ahead is recommended.

### Activities

Mossel Bay is chock full of activities. There are regular boat trips on both the **Romonza** (☎ 044-690 3101) and the **Seven Seas** (☎ 044-691 3371) to view the seal colony, birds, dolphins and whales that frequent the waters around Seal Island. The trips last one hour and cost around R60. In late winter and spring the **Romonza** also runs special whale-watching trips (R400, two hours).

**Electrodive** (☎ 082-561 1259; George St; gear hire per day R100, shore-/boat-based dives R60-130) is a family-run operation offering a number of diving and snorkelling options. In addition to PADI/NAUI courses, it does an introduction to diving, charter dives, rubber ducking and snorkelling trips. The instructors are top-notch and very patient with beginners. While diving in Mossel Bay offers the opportunity to see quite a lot of coral, fish and other sea creatures, remember these aren't tropical waters and you're not going to have the top-notch visibility.

**Shark Africa** (☎ 044-691 3796; sharkafrica@mweb.co.za; Ochrebaan Sq, Market St; R1200) organises cage dives and snorkelling to view great white sharks.

**Face Adrenalin** (☎ 044-697 7001; www.faceadrenalin.com; R170; ☎ 9am-5pm) offers bungee jumping off Gourits Bridge 35km west of Mossel Bay. Ask about transfers at one of the hostels.

Skydivers can experience awesome views and possibly a beach landing when they

jump with **Tandem Sky Dive** (☎ 082-824 8599; Mossel Bay Airfield; R1500).

Hikers should tackle the **Oystercatcher Trail** (☎ 044-699 1204; forban@mweb.co.za), a three- or five-day trail from Mossel Bay to Dana Bay via Cape St Blaize, including an encounter with wildlife such as the endangered Black Oystercatcher. While at Cape St Blaize, it's worth a stop at the **Lighthouse** and the adjoining **Khoi Village** (☎ 044-691 1031).

If you're interested in seeing how the other three-quarters live, contact **Meet the People** (☎ 083-262 2307; 4-hr tour R400), which offers home visits with traditional meals in nearby Tarka and KwaNonqaba townships – immensely preferable to the zoolike township tours offered in larger cities.

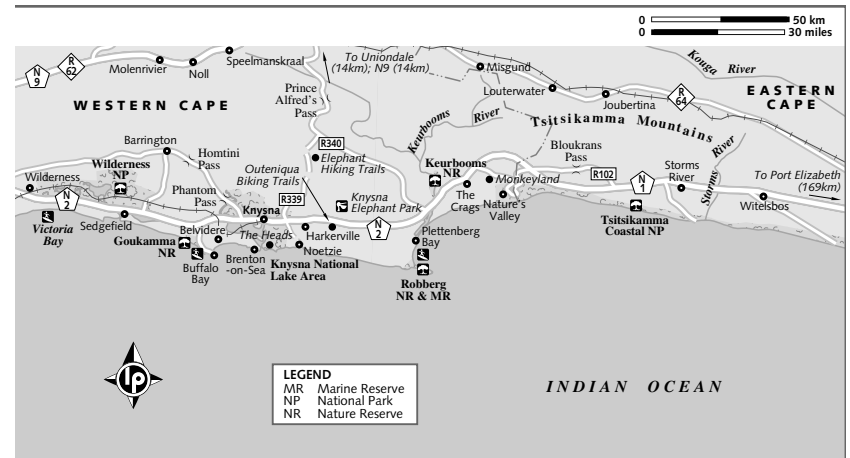
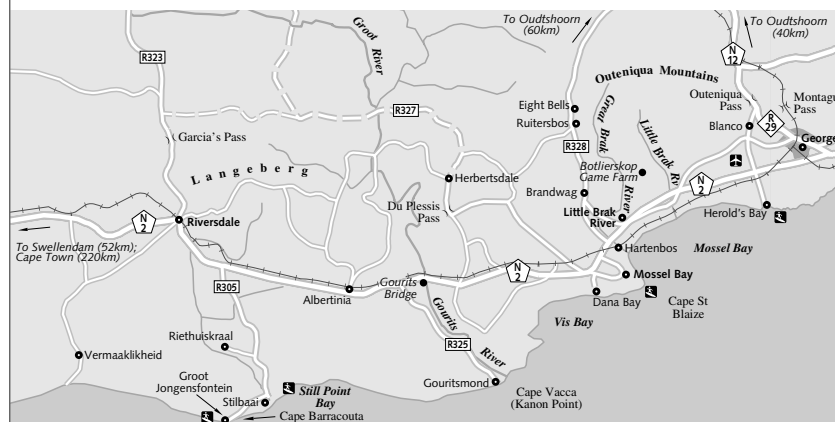
### Sleeping

#### BUDGET

**Mossel Bay Backpackers** (☎ 044-691 3182; www.gardenrouteadventures.com; 1 Marsh St; camp sites per person R55, dm R80, d with shared bathroom R220; ☎ ) Close by the beach at the Point and the bars on Marsh St, this long-established place is reliable and well run. It offers a pool and bar and an impressive new fully equipped kitchen for aspirant chefs.

**Garden Route Backpackers** (☎ 044-690 4640; info@gardenroutebackpackers.co.za; 38 Marsh St; dm with/without linen R75/60) There are only dorms and no kitchen at this clean, airy backpackers, but with the downstairs restaurant (mains R40 to R80), you won't go hungry. It serves Cuban meals and has a cigar lounge.

## GARDEN ROUTE





**Park House Lodge & Travel Centre** (☎ 044-691 1937; www.park-house.co.za; 121 High St; dm R90, d with shared bathroom from R220; 🏠) This place in an 1860s stone mansion is friendly, smartly decorated and has beautiful pond-filled gardens. Doubles are hardly quiet, largely thanks to the shared bathrooms being *between* the rooms, but are clean and comfortable.

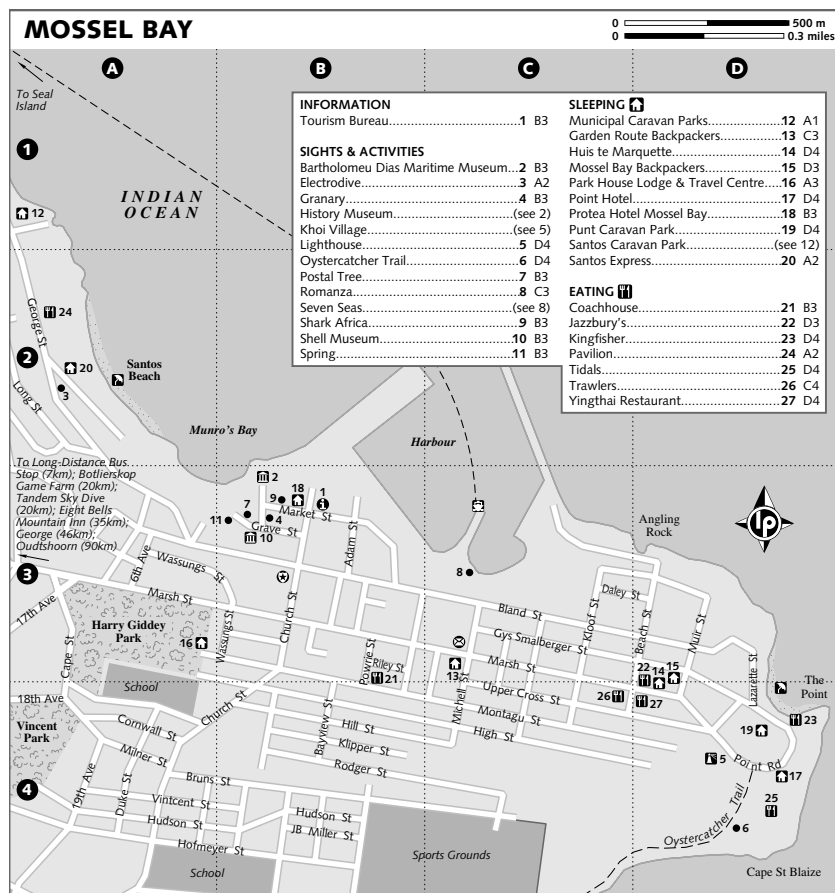
**Santos Express** (☎ 044-691 1995; www.santosexpress.co.za; Santos Beach; dm R75, s/d with shared bathroom & breakfast R105/210) The position of this converted train, right beside the beach, can't be beaten, but the compartments are undeniably cramped. You can choose between cars sleeping two or four. There's an attached bar-restaurant (mains R40 to R60) with a very large menu, overlooking the water.

There are three municipal **caravan parks** (☎ 044-691 2915; camp sites from R55, chalets from R160) in town. Bakke and Santos are next to each other on pretty Santos Beach. The Punt is on the Point and very close to the surf. Prices rise in the high season. All offer sea views.

#### MIDRANGE

**Huis te Marquette** (☎ 044-691 3182; marquette@pixon.co.za; 1 Marsh St; s/d from R360/600; 🏠 ♿) This classy, long-running guesthouse, near the Point, has its more-expensive rooms facing the pool. These come with spa baths. The place is attached to Mossel Bay Backpackers and has a good bar.

**Point Hotel** (☎ 044-691 3512; www.pointhotel.co.za; Point Rd; s/d R550/700) The building is an



#### SURFING ALONG THE GARDEN ROUTE *David Malherbe & Nic Vorster*

As you travel up from Cape Town, the water gets a lot warmer. A spring suit or baggies in summer and autumn, and a good 3/2mm full suit in winter, is all you need. Local surfers are friendly and helpful if you show them the necessary respect. Tidal variations and changing wind directions are extremely important when it comes to the quality of the waves you'll find. There is a fantastic variety of waves.

Recommended breaks are at **Still Point Bay**, a right-point break, best at pushing tide, with sections and lots of cutting back into the juice. It doesn't hold a big swell, 1.5m to 2m is good, otherwise a strong rip; southwesterly wind is perfect offshore. Check out also the right-breaking waves of **Groot Jongensfontein**, 11km west of Stilbaai, and the five excellent, consistent-quality reef and point breaks of the **Mossel Bay Peninsula**. The main spots are Inner & Outer Pool, and Dingdang Reef, a left and right reef that works well on a big southwesterly or easterly direction swell. All these spots work on a west to southwest wind.

One of the rare spots that works on a northeasterly wind is **Herold's Bay**, great for those small onshore days. There is usually a left wedge, coming off the left-hand corner. Another beautiful small bay with a great right-hand break is **Victoria Bay**, the home break of Springbok surfers Leonard Giles, David Pfaff and Sean Holmes. It's worth finding out what's happening at **Buffalo Bay**, as the point can get good waves and works on a southwesterly wind, and **Plettenberg Bay** also offers some rare breaks, but is very fickle. Combine east or west swells with rare northwesterly or northerly winds and you'll surf some classic beach breaks. If you're starting out, ask your accommodation about board and/or wetsuit hire and lessons. Most will have connections with local surf shop and agencies, or have their own equipment.

eyecore but boasts a spectacular location, right above the wave-pounded rocks at the Point. There's a decent restaurant (mains R50 to R70) and the spacious rooms have balconies with ocean views.

#### TOP END

**Protea Hotel Mossel Bay** (☎ 044-691 3738; www.proteahotels.com/mosselbay; Market St; s/d from R690/900; 🏠) One of the more individual of the Protea chain's hotels, this is a characterful refurbishment of the old post-office building. Its restaurant (breakfast/lunch/dinner R40/45/80) has a large seafood, meat and pizza menu. Locals call this the best eat in town. For a sea-facing sunset cocktail try the attached Blue Oyster Bar.

**Eight Bells Mountain Inn** (☎ 044-631 0000; www.eightbells.co.za; s/d R730/1100; 🏠) This place is 35km north of Mossel Bay on Rte 328. It's in a lovely mountain setting at the foot of the Robinson Pass. Rooms are small but tastefully decorated with TVs and safes. There's a tea garden, restaurant and opportunity to hike and ride horses (R90 per hour) on the property.

#### Eating

Marsh St is the party strip in Mossel Bay, take a cruise and see what tickles your fancy.

**Trawlers** (☎ 044-691 3073; 18 Marsh St; mains R25-50; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Fish-net décor and maritime murals dominate this place. It serves inexpensive seafood-combo baskets, burgers and steaks. Looking for just a drink? Check out the long wooden bar. There's also a kids' menu.

**Yingthai Restaurant** (☎ 044-690 8238; 12 Marsh St; mains R40-60; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The rich scent of fusion Asian cuisine bombards your nostrils when you enter. If it's all too much, sit outside on the front porch and try the pork wheels with honey mustard potatoes (R65), the chef's favourite. Ask about the homemade truffles.

**Pavilion** (☎ 044-690 4567; Santos Beach; mains R40-60; 🍷 lunch & dinner) In a 19th-century bathing pavilion (hence the name), this is a fine choice for a beachside meal. The menu offers just about everything.

**Jazzbury's** (☎ 044-691 1923; 11 Marsh St; mains R40-70; 🍷 dinner) Under new management, Jazzbury's has beefed up its traditional African dishes, so now you can try *mopani* worms and Cape Malay food as well as the more common ostrich, beef and seafood creations.

**Kingfisher** (☎ 044-690 6390; Point Rd; mains R45-100; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Locals love the seafood dishes and ocean views dished up here. You

can choose between sushi, seafood platters, fish and salads.

**Coachhouse** (☎ 044-691 1177; cnr Riley & Powrie Sts; mains R60; 🍴 lunch & dinner) The Coachhouse gives friendly service, and serves a range of dishes, including interesting salads and pastas. Eat either indoors or in the candlelit courtyard.

**Tidals** (☎ 044-691 3777; Point Rd) This is a good spot for a sunset drink. It's right on the rocks at The Point, often has live music and draws a young crowd.

### Getting There & Away

Mossel Bay is off the highway, so long-distance buses don't come into town; they drop you at the Voorbaai Shell petrol station, 7km away. The hostels can usually collect you if you give notice, but private taxis (R25) are often waiting for bus passengers who need onward travel. If none is there you can book ahead (☎ 082-673 7314) or during the day take a minibus taxi (R4). The Baz Bus will drop you in town.

**Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 021-505 6363; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) buses stop here on their Cape Town to Port Elizabeth services. Intercape fares from Mossel Bay include Knysna (R110, 1½ hours, twice daily), Plettenberg Bay (R115, 2½ hours, twice daily), Cape Town (R125, 7¼ hours, twice daily) and Port Elizabeth (R110, 5½ hours, twice daily).

## GEORGE

☎ 044 / pop 170,000

George, founded in 1811, is the largest town on the Garden Route yet remains little more than an important commercial centre with little to keep visitors for long. It has some

attractive old buildings, including the tiny St Mark's Cathedral and the more imposing Dutch Reformed Mother Church, but it's 8km from the coast and for most people its chief draw is the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train (see below). Golf enthusiasts, however, may be drawn to stay and take on the world-famous Fancourt Links, 10km outside town.

### Orientation & Information

The N2 turn-off leads into town from the south on York St, a long four-lane avenue, terminating at a T-junction with Courtenay St – head west for Oudtshoorn, east for Wilderness. The main commercial area is on the eastern side of York St around Hi-bernia and Market Sts.

**George Tourism** (☎ 044-801 9295; www.tourismgeorge.co.za; 124 York St; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Has a wealth of information and maps for George and the surrounding area.

### Sights

The starting point and terminus for journeys on the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train is the **Steam Train Museum** (☎ 044-801 8295; admission by donation; 🕒 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat), just off Courtenay St. It's worth visiting in its own right, especially if you're interested in trains. Some 11 locomotives and 15 carriages, as well as many detailed models, have found a retirement home here, including a carriage used by the British royal family in the 1940s.

### Sleeping & Eating

**French Lodge International** (☎ 044-874 0345; www.frenchlodge.co.za; 29 York St; s/d incl breakfast R500/800; 🍴 🍷) French style meets bush-lodge chic at this friendly hotel – possibly the best deal in town. Rooms are in thatched-roof

rondavels with satellite TV and a bathroom with a six-jet Jacuzzi. Décor is African safari motif – giant wooden giraffes stare at you while you sit on hand-carved chairs.

**Fancourt Hotel** (☎ 044-804 0000; www.fancourt.com; Montagu St, Blanco; d from R2700; 🍴 🍷) This is the area's most luxurious place, about 10km from the town centre, and has four 18-hole golf courses (two designed by Gary Player). In 2003 the Links Golf Course was the site of the President's Cup. The hotel and country club has a range of top-notch accommodation options, a health spa and a few restaurants.

**Het Vijfde Seizoen** (☎ 044-870 7320; 3 Maitland St, Blanco; mains R50-70; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Continental European and traditional South African cuisine combine for buffet breakfasts, lunches on the terrace and atmospheric candlelit dinners at this well-appointed eatery just outside George.

**Reel n' Rustic** (☎ 044-884 0707; Courtenay St; mains from R55; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Specialising in Creole and Cajun steaks and seafood, this is one of the best restaurants hereabouts, with another popular branch in nearby Wilderness. It gets busy on weekends, so bookings are advised.

### Getting There & Away

**Kulula** (www.kulula.com) and **Nationwide Airlines** (☎ 0861-737 737; www.flynationwide.co.za) fly to **George airport** (☎ 8044-76 9310), which is about 15km west of town.

Bus services stop in George on their route between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth and on their runs between Jo'burg and the Garden Route. **Greyhound** (☎ 021-505 6363; www.greyhound.co.za) services stop in St Mark's Sq behind the Geronimo Spur steakhouse on the main street, while **Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za), and **Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) stop at the train station 2km south of the tourism office. Intercape fares include Knysna (R95, one hour, twice daily), Mossel Bay (R100, 45 minutes, twice daily), Plettenberg Bay (R95, 1½ hours, twice daily), Port Elizabeth (R125, five hours, twice daily), Cape Town (R110, 6½ hours, twice daily), Bloemfontein (R280, 10 hours, daily) and Jo'burg (R370, 16 hours, daily).

The Baz Bus drops off in town and you can call the hostels in Oudtshoorn for shuttle services there.

The weekly *Southern Cross* train between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn stops here.

## AROUND GEORGE

There are a number of drives around George that make good day trips.

### Montagu & Outeniqua Passes

Leaving George, the Montagu Pass is a quiet dirt road that winds its way through the mountains; it was opened in 1847 and is now a national monument. Take a picnic, because there are some great picnic sites and beautiful *fynbos* to admire along the way, then head back on the Outeniqua Pass, where views are even better, but because it's a main road, it's more difficult to stop when you want to.

### Seven Passes Road

This used to be the main road link, and it's easy to imagine how difficult and dangerous it must have been for the pioneers and their ox wagons. The road is still unsurfaced for quite a way and, thanks to the timber trucks, some parts are rough, so the trip will take two hours. It's a pleasant enough route but most of the countryside is now dominated by pine, gum trees and alien vegetation such as the Port Jackson wattle, leaving only small patches of *fynbos* – if you want spectacular views, stick to the N2.

### Outeniqua Country Hop

The name refers as much to the peripatetic nature of this organised tour as it does to a visit to a farm where the hop is farmed – George is beer country. The route heads up Montagu Pass and past a collection of tourist experiences in the heart of the Outeniqua Mountains, stopping at a series of agricultural and art destinations including strawberry picking and cheese tasting. Contact George Tourism (opposite) for booking information.

### Herold's Bay

☎ 044

On a beautiful stretch of beach that provides consistent swells for surfers (see p215) is the sleepy village of Herold's Bay. It's generally quiet, although it can become very crowded on summer weekends. The town is 16km southwest of George. If you fancy staying the night try **Dutton's Cove**

### OUTENIQUA CHOO-TJOE

The **Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe** (☎ in George 044-801 8264, in Knysna 044-382 1361; www.onlinesources.co.za/chootjoe/booking.htm; adult/child to Knysna return R80/60, one way R70/50), in operation since 1928, chugs at a leisurely pace along the coast and through the country from George to Knysna. It's a fantastic ride with some amazing scenery. Two trains run daily, departing from George at 9.30am and 2pm and leaving Knysna at 9.45am and 2.15pm. Reservations are recommended. You can also pick up the service in Wilderness.

The return trip from George is 7½ hours, so if you have to return to collect your car, consider taking the 9.30am train to Sedgefield (arriving 10.53am), then hopping across the platform onto the waiting train from Knysna (departing 10.58am) to return to George at 12.30pm. You'll still see some beautiful scenery on this section.

(☎ 044-851 0155; [www.duttonscove.co.za](http://www.duttonscove.co.za); 21 Roodiraai Ave; s/d incl breakfast R495/790; 🍷), which provides lovely upmarket accommodation and a restaurant (mains from R50) with a large wine list, or **Dolphin View** (☎ 044-851 0110; [www.gardenroute.co.za/dolphin](http://www.gardenroute.co.za/dolphin); 51 Roodiraai Ave; 2-bedroom cottages from R460), stylishly appointed self-catering apartments on a quiet, scenic patch 1km from the beach.

## Victoria Bay

☎ 044

Victoria Bay is tiny and picturesque, and sits at the foot of steep cliffs, around 8km south of George. It's also a popular surf spot (see p215). If you're set on staying the night, try either the **caravan park** (☎/fax 044-889 0081; camp sites R70) or the self-catering **Sea Breeze Holiday Cottages** (☎ 044-889 0098; [seabreeze@pixie.co.za](mailto:seabreeze@pixie.co.za); cottages from R150).

## WILDERNESS

☎ 044

The name says it all: dense old-growth forests and steep hills run down to a beautiful stretch of coastline of rolling breakers, miles of white sand, bird-rich estuaries and sheltered lagoons. All this has made Wilderness very popular but thankfully it doesn't show – the town does not come across as overproduced. The myriad of holiday homes blend into the verdant green hills, and the town centre is compact and unobtrusive. The only drawback is everything is quite widely scattered, making life very difficult if you don't have a vehicle.

## Information

**Internet café** (☎ 044-877 0951; 5 Wilderness Centre; per hr R60; ☎ 8am-5pm)

**Wilderness Tourism Bureau** (☎ 044-877 0045; Milkwood Village, George Rd; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat, 3-5pm Sun) This office is just off the N2 as you pull into the village. It makes accommodation bookings and takes reservations for the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train (see p216).

## Activities

Wilderness is jam-packed with activities. You can try **Eden Adventures** (☎ 044-877 0179; [www.eden.co.za](http://www.eden.co.za); Wilderness National Park) if you're looking to rent a canoe (R110 per day) or try your hand at abseiling (R235), kloofing (ravage climbing) and canyoning (R235). The company also organises tours of the area.

If you're a beach bum, the beach here is beautiful, but be warned: a strong rip tide means swimming is not advised.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Fairy Knowe Backpackers** (☎ 044-877 1285; [www.redcard.co.uk/fairyknowe](http://www.redcard.co.uk/fairyknowe); Dumbleton Rd; camp sites per person R60, dm R80, d with shared bathroom R240; 🍷) Set in spacious, leafy grounds overlooking the Touws River, this 1874 farmhouse was the first in the area; it has yellowwood floors and some original fittings. The bar and café are in another pretty little building some distance away, so boozers won't keep you awake. It's a great place to relax, but numbers are limited so book ahead. The Baz Bus comes to the door and the steam train stops just along the lane. If you're driving, head into Wilderness town and follow the main road for 2km to the Fairy Knowe turn-off.

**Village B&B** (☎ 044-877 1187; George Rd; s/d incl breakfast R175/300) Without a doubt the best value B&B in town. Host Hester Stassen goes out of her way to ensure guests are looked after. All rooms are three minutes from the beach, and have décor best described as 'African cute'.

**Interlaken** (☎ 044-877 1374; [www.interlaken.co.za](http://www.interlaken.co.za); 713 North St; d with/without breakfast R520/440; 🍷) Rave reviews from readers, and we can't argue: this is a well-run guesthouse offering a choice between B&B doubles or self-catering units, all with magnificent lagoon views. Delicious dinners are served.

**Palms Wilderness Guest House** (☎ 044-877 1420; [www.palms-wilderness.com](http://www.palms-wilderness.com); George Rd; s/d incl breakfast R900/980; 🍷) This is a very good bet, and blends into the surrounding landscape perfectly. Rooms are luxurious, it's a two-minute walk from the beach and there is a black-marble swimming pool. Its restaurant (mains R80) has a fusion menu and comes highly recommended.

**Wilderness Grille** (☎ 044-877 0808; George Rd; mains R25-65; ☎ lunch & dinner) Sit outside among the trees and murals in the garden area. There is an interesting selection of steaks, from blackened sirloin to Cajun, as well as decent pizzas.

**Pomodoro** (☎ 044-877 0808; George Rd; mains R30-70; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) There's nothing particularly authentic about the Italian food here, but it's tasty and filling and the staff are eager to please. The breakfast paninis are a good start to any day.

## WILDERNESS NATIONAL PARK

This **national park** (☎ 044-877 1197; adult/child R60/30; ☎ 8am-5pm Jan-Nov, 8am-7pm Dec) encompasses the area from Wilderness and the Touws River in the west to Sedgefield and the Goukamma Nature Reserve in the east. The southern boundary is the ocean and the northern boundary is the Outeniqua Range. It covers a unique system of lakes, rivers, wetlands and estuaries that are vital for the survival of many species.

There are three types of lake in the park: drowned river valleys (eg Swartvlei); drowned low-lying areas among the dune system (eg Langvlei); and drowned basins that have been formed by wind action (eg Rondevlei). The rich birdlife includes the beautiful Knysna lourie and many species of kingfisher.

There are several nature trails taking in the lakes, the beach and the indigenous forest. The **Kingfisher Trail** is a day walk that traverses the region and includes a boardwalk across the intertidal zone of the Touws River. The lakes offer anglers, canoeists, windsurfers and sailors an ideal venue. Pedal boats and canoes can be hired at Ebb & Flow South camp, where there is also a small shop.

There are two similar **camp**s (camp sites R150, d rondavels with shared bathroom R205, d forest cabins R350) in the park, Ebb & Flow North and Ebb & Flow South. The park is signposted from the N2. It's possible to walk there from Wilderness.

## BUFFALO BAY

☎ 044

Buffalo Bay, 17km west of Knysna is distinctly un-Garden Route: a long, almost deserted surf beach, only a tiny enclave of holiday homes, a beach-shack backpackers and a nature reserve. That's about it, and it's more than enough.

**Wild Side Backpackers** (☎ 044-383 0609; dm R70, d with shared bathroom R180) is one of the best hostels in the country. You won't find a lot of luxury here – it's right on the beach and there's a constant battle to keep the sand out – but there's tons of atmosphere and attitude. Partake in one of their legendary parties or just chill out in the lounge overlooking the ocean. Surf lessons and sunset beach horse rides can be arranged. Meals are available for between R30 and R50.

You can also explore the **Goukamma Nature Reserve** (☎ 044-383 0042; admission R15; ☎ 9am-5pm), which is accessible from the Buffalo Bay road, and protects 14km of rocky coastline, sandstone cliffs, dunes covered with coastal  *fynbos*  and forest, and Groenvlei, a large freshwater lake. Accommodation options are camp sites (R55) or four-person rondavels (R270).

## KNYSNA

☎ 044 / pop 54,000

Perched on the edge of a serene lagoon and surrounded by forests, Knysna (pronounced ny-znah) began as a timber port and shipbuilding centre, thanks to the lagoon and the rich indigenous forests of the area. Continuing the legacy of the timber industry are a number of excellent woodwork and furniture shops and a thriving artistic community.

With its sylvan setting, gay-friendly vibe, good places to stay, eat and drink, and wide range of activities, Knysna has plenty going for it. But if you're after something quiet and undeveloped, you might like to look elsewhere, particularly in season, when the numbers of visitors threaten to overwhelm it and getting around can be hell.

There's an **arts festival** in late September and early October and an **oyster festival** in July, while in May the town confirms its gay-friendly credentials with the **Pink Loerie Festival** ([www.pinkloerie.com](http://www.pinkloerie.com)).

## Orientation & Information

Almost everything of importance is on Main St, which is effectively the N2, or at the bustling Waterfront area.

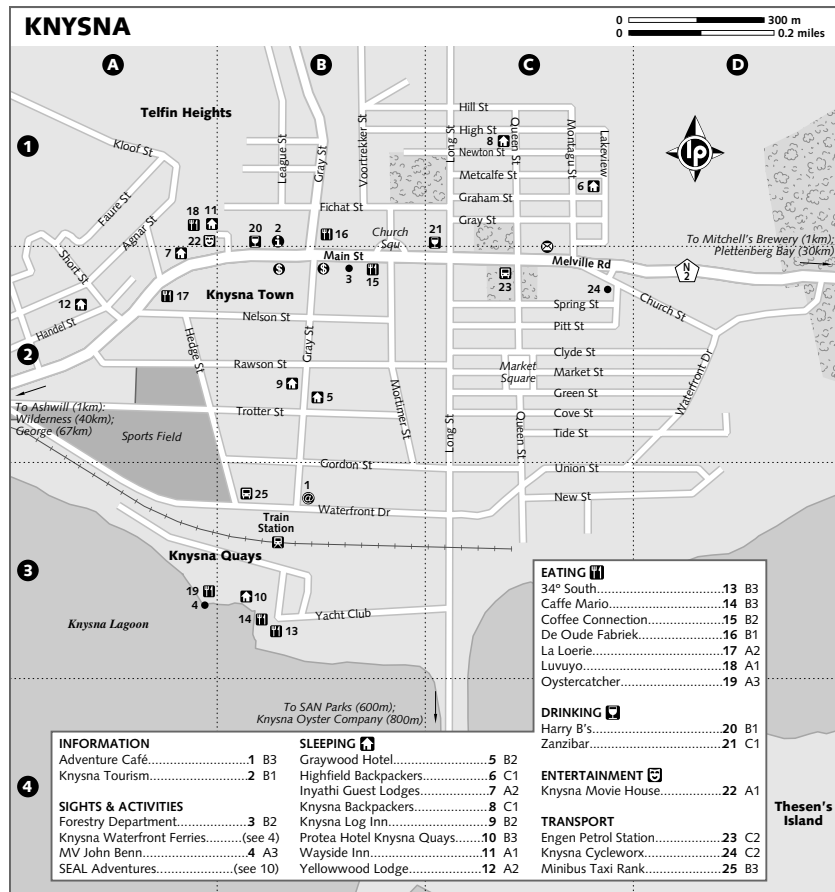
**Adventure Café** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 4959; 1 Gray St; per hr R40; ☎ 9am-7pm) High-speed Internet access.

**Knysna Tourism** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 5510; [www.tourismknysna.co.za](http://www.tourismknysna.co.za); 40 Main St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat year-round, plus 8.30am-1pm Sun Dec-Jan & Jul) This is an excellent information office, with very knowledgeable staff. You can't miss the place – there's an enormous elephant skeleton in the storefront.

## Sights & Activities

### KNYSNA LAGOON

Although regulated by **SAN Parks** (Map p224; ☎ 044-382 2095; [www.sanparks.org](http://www.sanparks.org); Long St, Thesen's Island), Knysna Lagoon, covering 13 sq km, is not a national park or wilderness area. Much



is still privately owned, and the lagoon is used by industry and for recreation. The protected area starts just to the east of Buffalo Bay and follows the coastline to the mouth of the Noetzie River. The lagoon opens up between two sandstone cliffs, known as the Heads – once proclaimed by the British Royal Navy the most dangerous harbour entrance in the world. There are good views from a lookout on the eastern head, and a private nature trail on the western head.

The best way to appreciate the lagoon is to take a cruise. The **MV John Benn** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 1697; www.featherbed.co.za; Waterfront; adult/child R80/35, with lunch R250/110; ☽ departs 10am, 11.30am & 12.30pm) riverboat offers the recommended Featherbed cruise, a four-hour

affair that includes lunch and takes you to the privately owned **Featherbed Nature Reserve** (Map p224), where you'll be driven around. The company also runs cheaper, shorter cruises.

Those searching for romance can take a 2½-hour sunset cruise that includes champagne and oysters. Contact **Knysna Waterfront Ferries** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 5520; www.knysnaferries.co.za; Waterfront; tickets R250; ☽ departs 5pm).

#### MITCHELL'S BREWERY

Drop by **Mitchell's Brewery** (Map p224; ☎ 044-382 4685; Arend St; tastings R20, tours R30; ☽ tours 10.30am Mon-Fri) to the east of town. The beers, which include a draught lager, a bitter, a stout and an ale, can be found all over Western Cape.

#### TOWNSHIP TOURS & HOMESTAYS

Follow Gray St uphill and eventually you'll leave town and emerge on the wooded slopes of the hills behind. On top is the sprawling township of Concordia, best visited on an excellent tour (R200) run by **Eco Afrika Tours** (☎ 082-925 0716) or **The Heads Adventure Centre** (Map p224; ☎ 044-384 0831; the Heads) for R250. Knysna's townships have a different look from others in South Africa: homes are built mostly with timber from the nearby forests. The two-hour tours are led by local guides and take you through the usual township sites – schools, a visit to a tribal witch doctor and a *shebeen* (unlicensed bar) – but then add a twist. You'll also get to visit the Grass Routes neighbourhood, the largest community of Rastafarians in the country.

If you want to stay overnight in either the Rastafarian community or in the township, contact Glendyrr at Knysna Tourism. It just might be the highlight of your Garden Route experience.

#### KNYSNA FOREST TRAILS

There are excellent hikes in the Knysna forests, and you can book walking trails and collect maps and information at the regional office of **SAN Parks** (Map p224; ☎ 044-382 2095; www.sanparks.org; Long St, Thesen's Island). Overnight hikes cost R45 per day including the use of trail huts.

The **Knysna Forestry Department** (Map p220; ☎ 044-302 5606; Main St; 8am-1pm & 1.45pm-4pm Mon-Fri), above Wimpy restaurant, administers the **Harkerville Coastal Trail** (☎ 044-302 5606; per day R80), which is a two-day hike that leads on to the popular Outeniqua Trail. To reach the coastal trail, exit the N2 at Harkerville.

The **Outeniqua Trail** takes a week to walk, although you can also do two- or three-day sections. The trail costs R45 per night to stay in a basic hut. You will need your own bedding.

**Outeniqua Biking Trails** (Map pp212-13; ☎ 044-532 7644) rents bikes (R95 per day) and will give you a map to the surrounding trails. It also can arrange guided trips – to find it exit the N2 at Harkerville.

Other trails through the forests include the four **Elephant Trails**. These day walks cost R20. There are three elephants in the forest, but spotting one is so rare it's become mythical.

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are plenty of other activities on offer in the area; start by making inquiries at **The Heads Adventure Centre** (Map p224; ☎ 044-384 0831; the Heads). Among the possibilities are boat and short-entry scuba dives (R80 to R120) to some of South Africa's best spots. Snorkelling equipment can be rented for R90. Ask the guides to point out the good snorkelling trails. They may even go with you.

Quad-biking trips in the Featherbed Nature Reserve are available with **SEAL Adventures** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 5599; Shop 1, Protea Hotel Knysna Quays; 2½hr trip R280; ☽ departs 11am & 3.30pm). The company also runs an Awesome Foursome adventure trip – quad biking, abseiling, canoeing and cliff-jumping for R400.

There are also bike trails around the area; for more information on biking, and for bike rentals and maps, head to Knysna Cycleworx (p223).

#### Sleeping

Low-season competition between the several backpackers and many guesthouses in town keeps prices down, but in high season expect steep rate hikes (except at the backpackers) and book ahead.

#### BUDGET

**Knysna Backpackers** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 2554; knyback@netactive.co.za; 42 Queen St; dm R70, d with shared bathroom from R180) You'll find mainly dorm beds at this large and spruce Victorian house on the hill a few blocks up from the main street. It tends to be quieter and more relaxing than other places.

**Highfield Backpackers** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 6266; www.highfieldsbackpackers.co.za; 2 Graham St; dm R70, d with/without shared bathroom from R300/200) In a spacious old house, Highfield feels like a B&B. Its focus is on doubles decorated with hardwood floors, brass beds and nice linens. *Potjiekos* (pot stew) dinners are often served.

**Woodbourne Resort** (Map p224; ☎ 044-384 0316; w48@mweb.co.za; George Rex Dr; camp sites R120, chalets from R330) Here you'll find spacious, shaded camping and simple chalets with TVs. It's a quiet place a little way out of town. Rates go up 10% during high season and holidays. Follow the signs to the Heads.

**Ashwill** (Map p224; ☎ 044-382 5920; knyacc@polka.co.za; 146 Old Cape Rd; d with/without shared bathroom from

R250/200) This extremely comfortable, serene backpackers is a bit out of town (20-minute walk) but is neatly tucked in next to a couple of restaurants and an almost private stretch of lagoon. There are no dorms.

### MIDRANGE

**Wayside Inn** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 6011; www.waysideinn.co.za; Pledge Sq; s/d R265/420) Intimate and well managed, the Wayside Inn has nicely decorated rooms and is in a handy location just off Main St by the cinema.

**Yellowwood Lodge** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 5906; www.yellowwoodlodge.co.za; 18 Handel St; s/d from R400/800; ♿ ♿) A traditional and sumptuously decorated guesthouse, Yellowwood boasts a lovely garden setting and views of the lagoon. See if you can grab the one room with air-con.

**Inyathi Guest Lodges** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 7768; www.inyathi-sa.com; 52 Main St; s/d from R435/570) This is the most imaginatively designed guesthouse in Knysna, with a real African flair that avoids the kitsch. Accommodation is in uniquely decorated timber lodges – some with Victorian bathtubs, others with stained-glass windows. Excellent value for money and worth a stay.

**Graywood Hotel** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 5850; reservations@thegraywood.co.za; cnr Gray & Trotter Sts; s/d R475/630; ♿ ♿ ♿) The recently rebranded Graywood can't escape its past, the former Caboose Hotel has rooms about the same size as sleeping compartments. Still, the upgrading is impressive and the furnishings top-notch. Watch out for high-season price hikes.

### TOP END

**Knysna Log Inn** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 5835; www.kli.co.za; 16 Gray St; s/d R855/1040; ♿ ♿) The Knysna Log Inn is said to be the largest log structure in the southern hemisphere. The rooms are comfortable enough, and there's a pool, but the whole place resembles a Disneyland exhibit a little too much.

**Protea Hotel Knysna Quays** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 5005; www.proteahotels.com; Waterfront Dr; s/d R1276/1600; ♿ ♿) Rooms are tastefully decorated at this stylish, posh hotel, which is a better option than the other Protea on Main St. It has a very inviting pool and is just moments away from shopping and eating options at the Waterfront. Lagoon-facing rooms cost more.

**Under Milk Wood** (Map p224; ☎ 044-384 0745; www.proteahotels.com; Waterfront Dr; cottages from R1820; ♿) Named for a nature-loving quote from the Dylan Thomas play of the same name, this is a series of highly impressive self-catering log cabins on the shores of Knysna Lagoon. There are B&B tariffs if you don't feel like cooking, and prices vary according to cabin location.

**Phantom Forest Eco-Reserve** (☎ 044-386 0046; www.phantomforest.com; s/d R2000/2400; ♿ ♿) This 137-hectare private ecoreserve, 6km west of Knysna along the Phantom Pass road, overlooks the lagoon and comprises 14 cleverly designed and elegantly decorated tree houses. Various activities, including conducted nature walks, are available. If nothing else, visit for the award-winning six-course Pan-African dinner (R225) served from 6.30pm to 8.30pm daily; booking is essential.

### Eating

**Oystercatcher** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 9995; Knysna Quays; tapas R35; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Oystercatcher is a relaxed place serving four sizes of farmed oyster, and other seafood tapas dishes in a great waterside setting.

**Knysna Oyster Company** (Map p224; ☎ 044-382 6941; www.mbendi.co.za/koyster; Thesen's Island; mains from R40; ☎ lunch & dinner) This company, opened in 1949, grows its own oysters out in the lagoon; you can take a tour of the processing plant and have a tasting of a cultivated and wild oyster for R20 at its restaurant afterwards. It's touristy, but for good reason.

**Paquita's** (Map p224; ☎ 044-384 0408; the Heads; mains from R40; ☎ lunch & dinner) Seafood, steaks, pizza and pasta are available at this ideally located restaurant and bar next to the Heads right on the water. If you're lucky you may spot whales frolicking only metres away. There's also a Sunday carvery.

**East Head Caffé** (Map p224; ☎ 044-384 0933; the Heads; mains R40-50; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Our favourite breakfast spot. There's an outdoor deck overlooking the lagoon and ocean, and the smoked salmon, eggs and cream cheese breakfast (R38) is scrumptious.

**34° South** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 7268; Waterfront; mains R40-90; ☎ lunch & dinner) Wildly varying reports on this place made us give it a good going over, and all seemed in order. What can't be denied are its outdoor tables

overlooking the water, lavish salads, deli produce and seafood pâtés. And the wine selection is the best in town.

**De Oude Fabriek** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 5723; cnr Main & Gray Sts; mains R45-80; ☎ lunch & dinner) Despite its shopping-centre setting, this restaurant is a convivial spot to sample some interesting South African dishes – game meat, crocodile and Knysna oysters are all on the menu.

**Luvuyo** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 1662; Cinema Complex, 50 Main St; mains R60; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) A gay haunt popular with heteros thanks to its efficient service, good food and regular cabaret acts. It also has the largest vegetarian selection in Knysna.

**La Loerie** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 1616; 57 Main St; mains R60-80; ☎ dinner) Booking is essential at this deservedly popular but small place with copper pots hanging from the ceiling, linen napkins and a French flavour to its menu.

There are plenty of good snack and coffee places along Main St, including the excellent **Coffee Connection** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 2845; ☎ breakfast & lunch), serving 36 types of coffee. In the Knysna Quays centre, the best coffee and snack option is **Caffé Mario** (Map p220; ☎ 044-382 7250; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner).

### Drinking

Head along Main St and check out the local bars, many of which are seasonal.

**Zanzibar** (Map p220; ☎ 382 0386; Main St) This place offers a relaxed vibe, a balcony area for lounging and a theatre where shows are held occasionally.

**Harry B's** (Map p220; ☎ 382 5065; 42 Main St; mains R70-90) Knysna's first residence (1863) now houses a popular restaurant and bar.

### Entertainment

**Knysna Movie House** (Map p220; ☎ 382 7813; 50 Main St; movies R20) If you fancy catching a flick, try this theatre on Main St.

### Getting There & Away

#### BUS

The major bus companies, **Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 021-505 6363; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za), all stop at the **Engen petrol station** (Map p220; Main St); Baz Bus will take you where you want. For travel between nearby towns on the Garden Route, you're better off looking for a minibus taxi

than travelling with the major bus lines, which are very expensive on short sectors.

Intercape destinations include George (R95, one hour, twice daily), Mossel Bay (R110, 1¼ hours, twice daily), Port Elizabeth (R80, 3¼ hours, twice daily), Cape Town (R150, eight hours, twice daily) and Jo'burg (R385, 17 hours, daily).

### MINIBUS TAXI

The main minibus taxi stop (Map p220) is on the corner of Hedge St and Waterfront Dr near Knysna Quays. Routes include Plettenberg Bay (R20, 30 minutes, daily) and Cape Town (R150, 7½ hours, daily). Contact **Georgina Booi** (☎ 044-384 9717), local transport expert and woman-about-town, to find out about route and door-to-door pick-ups.

### TRAIN

The historic *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train runs between Knysna and George daily except Saturday and public holidays. See p216 for details.

### Getting Around

In Knysna there are several car-hire companies dotted along Main Rd. Even if you have a car, the summer traffic jams on the main street (much worse than anything you'll find in Cape Town) will make you look for alternative transport.

**Knysna Cycleworx** (☎ 044-343 1710; 3A Church St; per day R115) is one of several places selling and renting good bicycles.

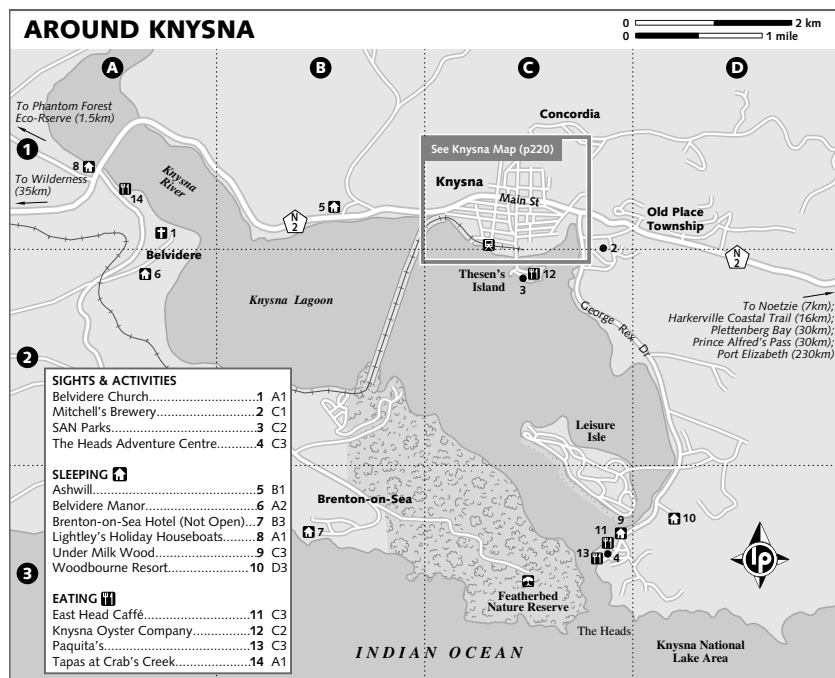
### AROUND KNYSNA Prince Alfred's Pass

The Knysna–Avontour road climbs through the Outeniqua Range via the beautiful Prince Alfred's Pass, regarded by some as better than the Swartberg Pass. Be warned that the road is a bit rough and it's slow going.

Outside Knysna, the road passes pine and eucalypt plantations and indigenous forest (the home of Knysna's elephants). There are few really steep sections but the pass reaches a height of over 1000m, and there are great views to the north before the road winds into the Langkloof Valley.

### Belvidere & Brenton-on-Sea

Belvidere, 10km from Knysna, is so immaculate it's positively creepy. But it's worth a quick look for the beautiful Norman-style



church (Map p224) built in the 1850s by home-sick English expats.

**Belvidere Manor** (Map p224; ☎ 044-387 1055; [www.belvidere.co.za](http://www.belvidere.co.za); Duthie Dr; d incl breakfast R1240) is an undoubtedly impressive collection of luxury guest cottages, some with lagoon views, in a garden setting. There is also a restaurant (mains R90) serving regional dishes such as locally produced cheese, Karoo lamb and ostrich.

For a very different night's sleep check out **Lightley's Holiday Houseboats** (Map p224; ☎ 044-386 0007; [www.houseboats.co.za](http://www.houseboats.co.za); off the N2; 4-berth boats from R800), on the western side of the bridge over the Knysna River, which offers fully equipped houseboats. You can navigate up to 20km upriver from the Heads, but you have to pay extra for fuel. Rates vary drastically depending on the boat and the season.

**Tapas at Crab's Creek** (Map p224; ☎ 044-386-0011; off the N2; mains R40; ☎ lunch & dinner) is a local favourite watering hole, in a chilled-out setting right on the lagoon. There are often afternoon drink specials. Try the very tasty cold seafood meze platter for two (R89).

Another 10km on, the  *fynbos* -covered hills drop to Brenton-on-Sea, overlooking a magnificent 8km beach, stretching from the western head of Knysna Lagoon to Buffalo Bay. The famous **Brenton-on-Sea Hotel** (Map p224; ☎ 044-381 0081) had recently burnt down when we were here; its wonderful sea views alone make it worth calling to check out the rebuilding status. Further on is the Featherbed Nature Reserve (p220).

### Knysna to Plettenberg Bay

Not to be outdone by Belvidere, another romantic English family built holiday homes in a mock-castle style at **Noetzie**, reached by a turn-off along the N2, 10km east of Knysna. The homes are still privately owned, and are not as bad as you might imagine. Noetzie has a lovely surf beach (spacious but dangerous) and a sheltered lagoon running through a forested gorge. It's a steep trail between the car park and the beach.

**Knysna Castles** (☎ 044-375 0100; [www.knysnacastles.com](http://www.knysnacastles.com); d from R1300) is a four-bedroom home. If you're looking for a romantic getaway,

renting one of these cosily decorated Noetzie castles right beside the beach might be just the ticket.

It's extremely unlikely that you will see the last remaining wild elephants that live in Knysna's forests, but you are sure to see them at either **Elephant Sanctuary** (☎ 044-534 8145; [www.elephantsanctuary.co.za](http://www.elephantsanctuary.co.za); tours R40; ☎ 8am-6pm), 15km east of Knysna, or **Knysna Elephant Park** (☎ 044-532 7732; [www.knysnaelephantpark.co.za](http://www.knysnaelephantpark.co.za); tours R50; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm), 22km east of Knysna on the N2. Here, small groups of visitors go on walking tours with the elephants. The tours are hardly authentic wildlife encounters, but kids love them.

Next to the Elephant Sanctuary is the equally fake but highly popular **Monkeyland** (☎ 044-534 8906; [www.monkeyland.co.za](http://www.monkeyland.co.za); adult/child R70/35; ☎ 8am-6pm). Home to more than 200 primates from 14 different species, this 12-hectare sanctuary helps rehabilitate wild monkeys that have been in zoos or private homes. As the critters run free here, you'll soon see why they have a reputation for mischief. The walking safari through a dense forest and across a 120m-long rope bridge is a brilliant way to find out more about them.

### PLETTENBERG BAY

☎ 044 / pop 34,000

Plettenberg Bay, or 'Plett' as it's more commonly known, is a resort town through and through, with mountains, white sand and crystal-blue water making it one of the country's top local tourist spots. As a result, things can get very busy and somewhat overpriced, but the town retains a relaxed, friendly atmosphere and does have very good-value hostels. The scenery to the east in particular is superb, with some of the best coast and indigenous forest in South Africa.

### Orientation & Information

Plettenberg Bay is deceptively large and sprawling. The town centre is on a high promontory overlooking the Keurbooms River lagoon and Beacon Island.

**Computer Shop & Internet Café** (☎ 044-533-6007; First National Bank Bldg, Main St; per hr R30; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) Internet access.

**Plett Tourism** (☎ 044-533 4065; [www.plettenbergbay.co.za](http://www.plettenbergbay.co.za); Melville's Corner Shopping Centre, Main St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar year-round, plus 9am-

1pm Sat April-Oct) This office has a great deal of useful information, ranging from accommodation to a craft trail and walks in the surrounding hills and reserves.

### Activities

Apart from lounging on the beaches or hiking on the Robberg Peninsula (p227) there's a lot to do in Plett; check with Albergo for Backpackers as it can organise most things, often at a discount.

Boat trips to view dolphins and whales in season are available with **Ocean Blue Adventures** (☎ 044-533 5083; [www.oceanadventures.co.za](http://www.oceanadventures.co.za); Milkwood Centre, Hopewood St) and **Ocean Safaris** (☎ 044-533 4963; Milkwood Centre, Hopewood St). Trips cost about R290 for 2½ hours on 12-person boats.

**Equitailing** (☎ 044-533 0599), 11km east of Plett on the N2, offers horse riding through the forest for R110 per hour. **Dolphin Adventures** (☎ 072-751 1798) has sea kayaking (R250, 2½ hours). It doesn't have an office in town, so just phone for a booking.

For skydiving try the recommended **Sky Dive Plettenberg Bay** (☎ 044-533 9048; Plettenberg Airport; tandem jump R1250), which offers outstanding views on the way down. Those wanting to try surfing can take a lesson through the **International Surf School** (☎ 082-636 8431; 3½hr lesson R300), which caters to all levels of surfers. It doesn't have an office, so just phone.

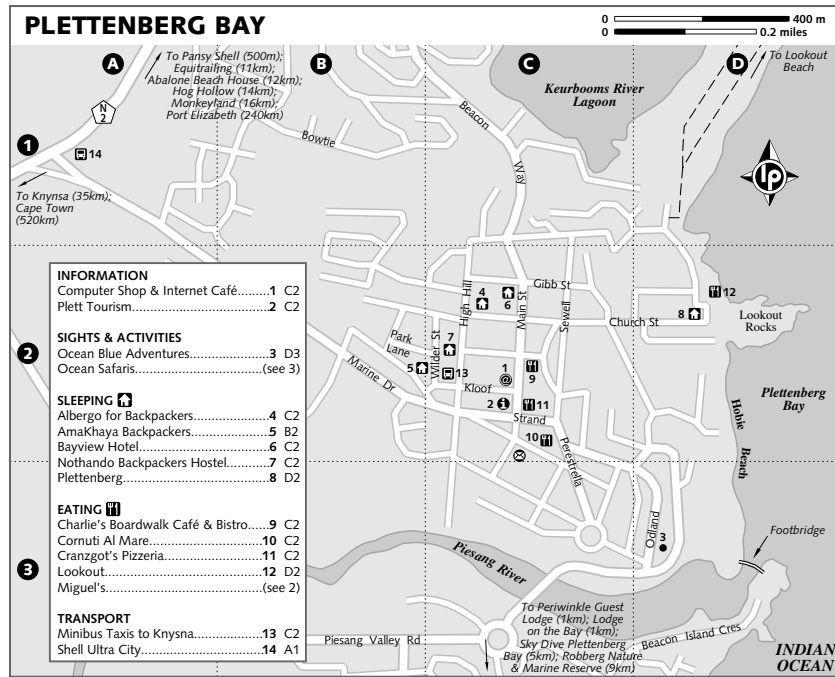
### Sleeping

There is a great deal of holiday accommodation in town and nearby – in low season there are bargains to be found. The tourism bureau has a full list and can tell you about the many camping options, all out of town.

### BUDGET

**Albergo for Backpackers** (☎ 044-533 4434; [www.albergo.co.za](http://www.albergo.co.za); 8 Church St; camp sites per person R50, dm R75, d with shared bathroom R220; ☎) Well run and friendly, Albergo encourages activities in town and in the area and can organise just about anything. Try for the upstairs dorm with huge windows and stellar ocean views from the balcony.

**Nothando Backpackers Hostel** (☎ 044-533 0220; [info@nothando.co.za](mailto:info@nothando.co.za); 5 Wilder St; dm R75, d with/without shared bathroom R230/210) Our choice for best budget option in town, this spotless and spacious, YHA-affiliated, award-winning



hostel is owner-run and it shows. There's a happening bar area with satellite TV, yet you can still find peace and quiet in the large grounds.

**Amakhaya Backpackers** (☎ 044-533 4010; amakhayabackpackers.com; 1 Park Lane; dm R80, s/d with shared bathroom R100/200) The new budget kid on the block. A double-storey family home has been converted into a clean, if somewhat characterless, hostel. The dorms are cramped and military-style, but the private rooms are large and airy. There is one en suite double room (R260).

**Abalone Beach House** (☎ 044-535 9602; beachhouse@global.co.za; 50 Ifafi Properties, Keurboomstrand; d with shared bathroom R180; ☎) It's a hop to the beach from this great hostel run by friendly people. And what a beach! Surf and boogie boards can be hired (R10). To reach the beach house follow the Keurboomstrand signs from the N2 (about 6km east of Plett), then turn into El Remo/Ifafi.

#### MIDRANGE

**Bayview Hotel** (☎ 044-533 1961; fax 533 2059; cnr Main & Gibb Sts; d 760; ☎) Right in the town centre,

this is a small, serviceable and modern three-star hotel with a range of rather plain rooms but a pleasant balcony.

**Periwinkle Guest Lodge** (☎ 044-533 1345; www.periwinkle.co.za; 75 Beachy Head Dr; d incl breakfast from R1150) This bright, colourful beachfront guesthouse offers individually decorated rooms, all with great views – you might even be able to spot whales and dolphins.

#### TOP END

Plett has some shamefully luxurious options. Get out the wallet and take your pick.

**Hog Hollow** (☎ 044-534 8879; www.hog-hollow.com; s/d incl breakfast R1320/1850) Hog Hollow, 18km east of Plett along the N2, provides delightful accommodation in African art-decorated units, which are around an old farmhouse overlooking the forest. Each unit comes with a private wooden deck and hammock. It's possible to walk to Monkeyland (p225) from here. A four-course dinner costs R175.

**Plettenberg** (☎ 044-533 2030; www.plettenberg.com; 40 Church St; s/d from R1600/2650; ☎) The (heated) pool here alone is worth the

stay – it's one that gives the illusion of ending in the sea. Built on a rocky headland with breathtaking vistas, this five-star palace is pure decadence, with fantastic rooms, a spa and a top-class restaurant. Romantics can dine in the Wine Cellar surrounded by vintage bottles.

**Lodge on the Bay** (☎ 044-533 4724; www.thelodge.co.za; 77 Beachy Head Dr; d from R3165; ☎) The highly sophisticated and ultramodern Lodge has just six rooms and very personal service. There's a Japanese day spa on the premises. The place is worth splashing out on.

#### Eating

There are very good restaurants in most of the top-end hotels. Otherwise you can choose from quite a few places in town.

**Charlie's Boardwalk Café & Bistro** (☎ 044-533 1420; 6 Yellowwoods Bldg, Main St; mains R15-50; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) A hang-out for local surfers as well as visitors, this pleasant café offers plenty of snacks and meals at reasonable prices.

**Miguel's** (☎ 044-533 5056; Melville Corner Shopping Centre, Main St; breakfast/dinner R30/80; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) A modern place with an eclectic menu, it's bright and airy with floor-to-ceiling windows and patio seating. It's a good option any time of day.

**Lookout** (☎ 044-533 1379; Lookout Rocks; mains R40; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) With a deck overlooking the beach, this is a great place for a simple meal and perhaps views of dolphins surfing the waves.

**Cranzgot's Pizzeria** (☎ 044-533 1660; 9 Main St; mains R40-60; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) This perennial Plett favourite, established in 1973, serves mouthwatering pizzas, pastas and char-grilled steaks. You might have to wait for a table in the evenings, but there is also a bar. You can take the kids here.

**Cornuti Al Mare** (☎ 044-533 1277; 1 Perestrella St; mains R50-70; ☎) lunch & dinner) A stylishly decked out Italian oyster bar with hearty pizzas and refreshing cocktails served on a sun terrace. Try the homemade spinach and cream cheese ravioli (R45).

**Pansy Shell** (☎ 044-533 6016; Old Nick Shopping Centre; mains R60; ☎) dinner) This formal restaurant gets rave reviews for its steaks, seafood and overall ambience.

#### Getting There & Away

All the major buses stop at the Shell Ultra City on the N2; the Baz Bus will come into

town. **Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) destinations from Plett include George (R95, 1½ hours, three times daily), Port Elizabeth (R80, three hours, twice daily), Cape Town (R160, eight hours, twice daily), Jo'burg (R385, 18 hours, daily), Graaff-Reinet (R195, 5½ hours, daily) and Bloemfontein (R300, 12 hours, daily).

If you're heading to Knysna (R20, 30 minutes) you're better off taking a minibus taxi – services leave from the corner of Kloof and High Sts. Most other long-distance taxis stop at the Shell Ultra City on the highway.

#### ROBBERG NATURE & MARINE RESERVE

This reserve (☎ 044-533 2125; admission R20; ☎) 7am-5pm Feb-Nov, 7am-8pm Dec-Jan), 9km south-east of Plettenberg Bay, protects a 4km-long peninsula with a rugged coastline of cliffs and rocks. There's a great circular walk approximately 11km long, with rich intertidal marine life and coastal-dune fynbos, but it's very rocky and not for the aged or anyone with knee problems! The peninsula acts as a sort of marine speed bump to larger sea life, with mammals and fish spending time here before moving on. To get to the reserve head along Robberg Rd, off Piesang Valley Rd, until you see the signs.

## CENTRAL KAROO

The Karoo is pure magic. It's a vast semi-arid plateau (its name is a Khoesaaan word meaning 'land of thirst') that promises stunning sunsets and starscapes and delivers. Here you'll feel simultaneously dry at the mouth (for the mercury can hit 45°C in summer), slack at the jaw (the landscape is spare, violent and beautiful) and tiny – the horizons have been known to send agoraphobics scrambling for the nearest conurbation.

Perhaps the best thing about the Karoo, though, is the way life moves slowly, and how off the main highways you can drive for hours without seeing another car. If you've had your fill of the Garden Route, head over the Swartberg Pass and unwind here.

The Karoo covers almost one-third of South Africa's total area and is demarcated in the south and west by the coastal mountain ranges, and to the east and north by

### SWARTBERG PASS

Built by the brilliant engineer Thomas Bain, between 1881 and 1888, the Swartberg Pass is arguably the most spectacular in the country. It's 24km long and reaches nearly 1600m in height.

Proteas, watonias and other  *fynbos*  are prolific. After the summit (Die Top) – where there are incredible views over the bleak Karoo and, on the other side, the greenery of the Little Karoo – the road meanders down into a fantastic geology of twisted sedimentary layers. The best picnic sites are on the northern side; the gorge narrows and in spring is full of pelargoniums. There are some quiet spots where you can sunbathe or swim.

Don't be put off by the warning signs at each end of the pass. It's a fairly easy drive as long as you take it very slowly. The road is narrow, there are very long drops and many of the corners are blind.

The hostels in Oudtshoorn will drive you and a bicycle to the top and you can ride back down. This is a huge buzz (although take along plenty of water), but the real beauty of the pass is deeper in, towards Prince Albert.

the mighty Senqu (Orange) River. It's often split into the Great Karoo (north) and the Little Karoo (south), but it doesn't respect provincial boundaries and sprawls into three provinces, so for our purposes it's the Central Karoo here, Eastern Karoo in the Eastern Cape chapter and Upper Karoo in the Northern Cape.

### PRINCE ALBERT & AROUND

☎ 023 / pop 2500

To many urban South Africans, Prince Albert – a charming village dating back to 1762 and dozing at the foot of the Swartberg Pass – represents an idyllic life in the Karoo. If you have your own transport, you can easily visit on a day trip from Oudtshoorn or even from the coast. Alternatively, stay in Prince Albert and make a day trip to Oudtshoorn via the spectacular Swartberg Pass and Meiringspoort, or – if the weather isn't too hot – consider going on a hike.

Despite being surrounded by very harsh country, the town is green and fertile (producing peaches, apricots, grapes and olives), thanks to the run-off from the mountain springs. A system of original water channels runs through town and most houses have a sluice gate, which they are entitled to open for a set period each week.

Contact the helpful **tourist information office** (☎ 023-541 1366; www.patourism.co.za; Church St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) for more information.

### Sights & Activities

Prince Albert's best attractions are actually outside town. It's a good base for explor-

ing the Karoo and hiking on the more than 100km of trails in the Swartberg Nature Reserve. Overnight walks have to be booked through **Cape Nature** (☎ 044-279 1739; Queen's Mall, Baron van Rheede St, Oudtshoorn). For guides, contact the Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg Lodge.

There's a good drive east to **Klaarstroom**, a tiny *dorp* (small town) along the foot of the mountains. The road runs along a valley, beneath the Groot Swartberg Range, which is cut by dramatic gullies, clefts and waterfalls. On Rte 407 between Prince Albert (40km) and Klaarstroom (10km), **Remhoogte Hiking Trail** can be walked in about five hours but there is a camping place on the trail.

**Meiringspoort**, south of Klaarstroom, on the N12 route between Beaufort West and Oudtshoorn, is an extraordinary place, following a river that cuts right through the Swartberg Range. It's not quite in the same class as Swartberg Pass, partly because it's a main road and partly because it's not as deep or as narrow.

On the road up to Prince Albert Road station and at the station itself, keep an eye out for the work of local celebrity **Outa Lappies**, a septuagenarian artist and philosopher who makes 'something out of nothing'. His old homestead is on Rte 407, while his new cottage is opposite the station – it's the one with the tin toy windmills on the fence and a front yard full of junk creations.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg Lodge** (☎ 023-541 1267; www.saxecoburg.co.za; 60 Church St; s/d from R180/360; ☎ ☎) This place offers quality accommodation, and its owners are a great

source of information and offer guided hikes in the area, including a three-day trip to Die Hel that's free as long as you stay at the lodge. Rooms come with satellite TVs and mosquito nets, and are lovely.

**Karoo Lodge** (☎ 023-541 1647; www.karoolodge.co.za; 66 Church St; s/d from R225/450; ☎ ☎) This lodge is an owner-run guesthouse with a large garden and beautiful antique furniture. Hosts George and Elsabe are terrific, and very knowledgeable about the area.

**Swartberg Hotel** (☎ 023-541 1332; www.swartberg.co.za; 70 Church St; s/d incl breakfast R380/553; ☎ ☎) Swartberg is three-star country inn; you can choose from thatched-roof huts or rooms in the main hotel. There are amazing gardens to relax in and the hotel organises area activities. The attached coffee shop (mains R18 to R35) looks out on the main road and is a popular spot for lunch or a home-made dessert. Also attached is the Swartberg Arms (mains R30), popular with locals for an evening pint. It has a large menu of pizzas and burgers as well as a kiddie menu.

**Sampe se Ploasstal** (Church St; ☎ 9am-5pm) This is a simple but good farm-produce stall selling a range of snacks and refreshing home-made ginger beer.

**Karoo Kombuis** (☎ 023-541 1110; Karoo Kitchen; 18 Deurdrift St; mains R60; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) As good a reason to come to Prince Albert as any, this excellent restaurant serves traditional home-cooked dishes with panache. It offers either a three-course dinner (R95) or an à la carte menu. Bring your own drinks.

### Getting There & Away

Most people visit by driving over one of the area's passes from Oudtshoorn, or from the N1 between Cape Town and Jo'burg. However, if you've come for hiking there's no reason not to take a train, which is cheaper than the buses. There is no direct bus or train service to Prince Albert; the closest drop-off point is at the train station on Prince Albert Rd, 45km northwest of Prince Albert, which also serves as the long-distance bus stop. Private taxis cost R50, but most places to stay will pick you up from the train station.

### DIE HEL

In a narrow valley in the Swartberg Range is Die Hel, or Gamkaskloof. The first citizens of Die Hel were early Trekboers, who devel-

oped their own dialect. There was no road into Die Hel until the 1960s, and donkeys carried in the few goods the self-sufficient community needed from Prince Albert. Maybe it's a coincidence, but within 30 years of the roads being built all the farmers had left.

Now the area is part of a nature reserve where there is self-catering **accommodation** (☎ 023-541 1107; www.diehel.com; Gamkaskloof; caravan sites R60, camp sites R70, farmhouse R120). You might want to avoid the campsite; it's beautiful but has suffered from human intervention. When we visited it was crawling with tiny cockroaches (hell indeed!). The owners are aware of this, so it may be a temporary problem.

The dirt road to Die Hel turns off the Swartberg Pass road about 20km from Prince Albert and extends for another 60km or so before hitting a dead end.

### MATJIESFONTEIN

☎ 023

One of the most curious and fascinating places in the Karoo, Matjiesfontein (pronounced mīkeys-fontein) is an almost entirely privately-owned railway siding around a grand hotel that has remained virtually unchanged for 100 years. In its heyday it entertained the likes of Cecil John Rhodes, Lord Randolph Churchill and the Sultan of Zanzibar no less!

The developer of the hotel and surrounding hamlet was one Jimmy Logan, a Scot whose rise through Cape society was so swift that by the age of 36 he not only was a member of parliament, but also ran every railway refreshment room between the Cape and Bulawayo (Zimbabwe). Matjiesfontein was his home base, and the hotel and other accommodation, together with the climate (the crisp air is likened to dry champagne), attracted wealthy people as a health resort.

As well as the attractive old buildings, including a church, courthouse and post office/general store, there's a fascinating **museum** (admission R3; ☎ 8am-5pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, 8.30am-5.30pm Mon, Wed & Fri) in the train station that's a right old jumble sale, containing everything from trophy heads to a collection of commodes.

If you decide to stay, check out the **Lord Milner Hotel** (☎ 023-551 3011; www.matjiesfontein.com; s/d from R310/480; ☎), a classic period



piece with bags of old-world charm. There is a range of comfortable rooms and an atmospheric reception area. Surprisingly, meals in the hotel's dining room (mains R40), with waitresses in lace bobble caps, are reasonably priced and there is silver service to boot. At night have a drink in the Laird's Arms bar.

Matjiesfontein is just off the N1, 240km from Cape Town and 198km from Beaufort West. A night in the hotel would be worth a stopover on the *Trans Karoo* train trip between Jo'burg and Cape Town, though 24 hours here might be a bit long unless you have a good book. Alternatively, take the train from Cape Town (arriving at 2.46pm), stay the night and catch the 8.25am train back again the next day; it's a 5½-hour trip. The *Blue Train* also pauses here for an hour, with travellers being given a tour of town on the double-decker London bus that stands outside the station.

## BEAUFORT WEST

☎ 023 / pop 35,400

A transit town if ever there were one, Beaufort West is not a place to linger but nonetheless has a strange faded charm about it if you know where to look. Established in 1818, it's the oldest and largest town in the Karoo and in summer becomes a sluice gate for the torrent of South Africans heading for the coast – accommodation is booked out and prices rise. The town also serves as a gateway for the nearby Karoo National Park.

**Tourist information** (☎ 023-415 1488; cnr Donkin & Church Sts; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) is on the main street in the old town hall opposite the church with the tall white spire. Next door is the **museum** (☎ 023-415 2308; Donkin St; adult/child R5/1; ☎ 8.30am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat), which has displays on local-lad-made-good Dr Christiaan Barnard, who performed the world's first human heart transplant.

Given the plethora of accommodation options established to shore up all the through traffic (and the fly-by-night nature of many of them), any accommodation listing for Beaufort West has become an exercise in futility.

Inquire at the tourist office or visit the Beaufort West website (www.beaufortwestsa.co.za) for more information. On the other hand, if you have tents and transport, go to the Karoo National Park.

## Getting There & Away

Beaufort West is a junction for many bus services. **Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 021-505 6363; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) stop at the **Total petrol station** (Donkin St) in the centre of town. Minibuses stop at the **BP petrol station** (Donkin St). Destinations include Jo'burg (R240, 12 hours, daily), Cape Town (R225, seven hours, daily) and Bloemfontein (R210, six hours, daily). From these cities you can then connect with buses to other parts of the country.

The *Trans Karoo* stops at the station on Church St on its daily journey between Cape Town and Jo'burg.

## KAROO NATIONAL PARK

Just 5km north of Beaufort West, the **Karoo National Park** (☎ 023-415 2828/9; www.sanparks.org; adult/child R60/30; ☎ 5am-10pm), proclaimed in 1979, covers 33,000 hectares of impressive Karoo landscapes and representative flora and is run by SAN Parks. The plains carry a variety of short shrubs, with well-wooded dry watercourses and mountain grasslands at higher elevations.

The park has 61 species of mammal, the most common of which are dassies (agile, rodent-like mammals, also called hyraxes) and bat-eared foxes. The antelope population is small but some species have been reintroduced and their numbers are growing. These include springboks, kudus, gemsboks, reedbucks, red hartebeests and rheboks. Mountain zebras have also been reintroduced, as has the odd black rhino. There are a great many reptiles and birds.

Facilities include a shop and restaurant. There are two short nature trails and an 11km day walk. There are also vehicle routes and day or overnight 4WD guided trails.

Accommodation is either at pleasant camp sites (R100) or in Cape Dutch-style cottages (R410 per double). The cottages are fully equipped with kitchens, towels and bedding. Two of the cottages have disabled access.

Public transport will take you to Beaufort West (see left), from where you will need to either hike in or catch a taxi from town; however the rest camp is 10km further into the park.

## WEST COAST & SWARTLAND

If you're keen to do the Western Cape the way locals do it, head north of Cape Town and explore the jagged coastline, rugged, desolate mountains and windswept hills of the West Coast and Swartland, a peaceful and undeveloped getaway. You'll come across quiet, whitewashed fishing villages, beautiful lagoons, hidden camping spots in dramatic valleys and a country town serving up a big dish of South African cabaret, all within a few hours from the Cape Peninsula.

To the west is an angler's and surfer's paradise: an untamed coastline of duned beaches and rocky promontories, resort towns and the West Coast National Park, where bird-lovers flock. The coastal area is particularly spectacular in late winter and early spring when the dunes are carpeted with a stupendous array of wildflowers. Moving inland and east, the Cederberg Wilderness Area is tailor-made for hikers, who use this remote area to get lost for a few days. In between the two, and roughly following the N7 north to south, is the Sandveld, an arid, sandy tract of huge moonrises and creeping sunsets and, adjacent, the Swartland (Black Land), an agricultural area of rolling plains whose rich soil enables farmers to produce more than 20% of South Africa's wheat, as well as high-quality wine. Here you'll find the country town of Darling, home of South African entertainment icon Tannie Evita Bezuidenhout.

Most public transport through this area travels from Cape Town north along the N7, either going all the way to Springbok and Namibia or leaving the N7 and heading through Calvinia to Upington. Getting to the coastal towns west of the N7 isn't easy if you don't have a car.

## DARLING

☎ 022

A quiet country town, Darling was best known for its good-quality milk until the actor and satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys, along with his alter ego Evita Bezuidenhout, set up stall here.

It might be best to head first to **tourist information** (☎ 022-492 3361; cnr Hill Rd & Pastorie St; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Thu, 9am-1pm & 2pm-3.30pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun), but as most Capetonians who make the 70km trek north do so to catch the uniquely South African cabaret at **Evita se Perron** (Evita's Platform; ☎ 022-492 2851; www.evita.co.za; tickets R80; ☎ performances 2pm & 8pm Sat, 2pm Sun), this is as good a place as any to start. The shows, featuring Pieter-Dirk Uys' characters, touch on everything from South African politics to history to ecology. Nothing is off limits – including the country's racially charged past. Although the shows include a fair smattering of Afrikaans, there's much for English-speaking audiences to enjoy, and they are often hilarious and thought-provoking.

The splendidly kitsch **restaurant** (mains R20-40; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun) serves traditional Afrikaans food including *botbot*.

Don't forget to ask tourist information or your guesthouse about the underrated **Darling Wine Experience**, the collective name for the four estates in the vicinity.

## Sleeping & Eating

Darling is so close to Cape Town that there's no pressing need to stay overnight, but for lingerers or those heading onward, there are some nice guesthouses.

**Trinity** (☎ 022-492 3430; 19 Long St; s/d incl breakfast from R270/500; ☎) A painstakingly renovated Victorian homestead with cosy country-style bedrooms where you can sample a selection of homemade toiletries. There's also a country-cuisine restaurant (mains R50) that's been voted one of the country's top 100.

**Granary** (☎ 022-492 3155; 5 Long St; s/d incl breakfast from R300/440) A neat guesthouse with lots of light and windows to make the big rooms feel especially spacious. Breakfasts are enough to fill you up for the day. The place welcomes children, though the rooms are up steep wooden steps, so are not for the frail or old.

**Darling Guest Lodge** (☎ 022-492 3062; 22 Pastorie St; s/d incl breakfast R360/540; ☎) An elegant and imaginatively decorated place, one of the first in the area.

**Marmalade Cat** (☎ 022-492 2858; 19 Main Rd; breakfast R30) For an afternoon coffee or all-day breakfast, don't miss this arty café with an Internet connection (R40 per hour). It

also serves sandwiches, delicious cheeses and homemade sweet treats.

### Getting There & Away

Tannie Evita has taken over the old train station, so to get to Darling, it is best to have your own transport. Drive up Rte 27 from Cape Town and look out for the signs. An alternate route back to Cape Town, which is much more scenic and not nearly as busy as Rte 27, is to head east out of the town and turn south down Rte 307. Turn right just before the town of Mamre to rejoin Rte 27. Do not follow Rte 304 past Atlantis.

### WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK

Encompassing the clear, blue waters of the Langebaan Lagoon and home to an enormous number of migratory wading birds is the **West Coast National Park** (☎ 022-772 2144; admission Aug-Oct R30, Nov-Jul R20; 🕒 7am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, 6am-8pm Oct-Mar). The park covers around 18,000 hectares and is made up of a peculiar mix of semi-independent zones, some of which are only leased by the national park authorities.

The park protects wetlands of international significance and important seabird breeding colonies. Wading birds flock here by the thousands in summer. The most numerically dominant species is the curlew sandpiper, which migrates north from the sub-Antarctic in huge flocks. The offshore islands are home to colonies of jackass penguins.

The vegetation is predominantly stunted bushes, sedges and many flowering annuals and succulents. There is some coastal  *fynbos*  vegetation in the east, and the park is famous for its wildflower display, which is usually between August and October. Several animal species can be seen in the part of the park known as the Postberg section, which is open from August to September.

The park is only about 120km from Cape Town, 7km south of Langebaan. The return trip from Langebaan to the northern end of the Postberg section is more than 80km; allow yourself plenty of time. The rainy season is between May and August.

### LANGEBAAAN

☎ 022

A rather unusual and beautiful location overlooking the Langebaan Lagoon has made this seaside resort a favourite holiday

destination with locals. If you're looking for untouched you might be happier elsewhere, but the town does support an excellent hotel, open-air seafood restaurants, phenomenal sunset views, superb sailing and windsurfing on the lagoon and a few good beaches, the best of which is **Langebaan Beach**, in town, a favourite with swimmers. The town is also a good base for exploring the West Coast National Park.

The **Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 022-772 1515; www.langebaaninfo.com; Bree St; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) has information about the area.

### Sights & Activities

#### WEST COAST FOSSIL PARK

The first bear discovered south of the Sahara, lion-sized sabre-toothed cats, three-toed horses and short-necked giraffes are all on display at this **fossil park** (☎ 022-766 1606; www.museums.org.za/wcfp; admission adult/child/pensioner/family R60/12/18/25; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12pm Sat & Sun) on Rte 45 about 16km outside Langebaan. Tours depart daily at 11.30am and take you to the excavation sites. Children can sieve for their own fossils in a special display area.

#### HORSE RIDING

At the **Oliphantskop Farm Inn** (☎ 022-772 2326; per hr R90) you can ride along the beach. The Inn is about 3km from Langebaan on the main road. Follow the signs.

### Sleeping & Eating

Many of the sleeping options double as restaurants.

**Farmhouse** (☎ 022-772 2062; www.thefarmhouse.langebaan.co.za; 5 Egret St; s/d incl breakfast R575/R850; 🍷) This is by far Langebaan's best hotel, on a hill overlooking the bay with lovely sunset views. Rooms are large, with country décor and their own fireplaces. For such a classy place the restaurant is reasonably priced with a creative menu (mains R50 to R80); and a rustic, intimate dining room.

**Oliphantskop Farm Inn** (☎ /fax 022-772 2326; Main Rd; s/d R180/300; 🍷 🚿) An attractive place around 3km from town, across the road from the Mykonos resort complex, Oliphantskop's restaurant has a good reputation with nice ambience – cool and dark with rough, white walls and a wooden ceiling. The menu (mains R50) is meat and

seafood oriented and offers no vegetarian options.

**Club Mykonos** (☎ 0800 226 770; theretha@clubmykonos.co.za; 4-person cabins R1550; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) This is a major resort geared towards families, as there is plenty here to entertain the kids, but its Greek-themed, pseudo-Mediterranean architecture and crowds mean you'll either love it or hate it. There are no fewer than six outdoor swimming pools, a casino, restaurants and an arcade.

**Die Strandloper** (☎ 022-772 2490; buffet R140; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The West Coast life exemplified – a 10-course outdoor fish and seafood braai right on the beach. All food is delicious, but our favourites are the snoek (firm-fleshed migratory fish) and the mussels cooked in white wine. There's also freshly made bread, bottomless *moerkoffie* (freshly ground coffee) and a local crooner who plays West Coast ballads at your table. You can BYO or get drinks from the rustic bar, whose view is sensational. Bookings essential; call for availability out of season.

### Getting There & Away

Langebaan is an hour's drive north of Cape Town, but no public transport runs here. There are minibus taxi services from the commercial hub of Vredenburg (R17, 30 minutes).

### SALDANHA & HOEDJIES BAY

Dominated by an enormous iron-ore pier, navy yards and fish-processing factories, **Saldanha** is at the northern end of the same lagoon as Langebaan. Despite this, the town's bays are pleasant and, because they are sheltered, much warmer than the ocean. **Hoedjies Bay**, near the town centre, is the most popular for swimming. There are some decent accommodation options in town; call the **tourist office** (☎ 022-714 2088; www.capewestcoast.org; Van Riebeeck St; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) for information.

**Schaafsma Charters** (☎ 022-714 4235; www.sailboats.co.za) does boat trips to the harbour and to offshore islands. For those entering their yachtsman stage, they also offer a two-week all-inclusive boat trip (R6000).

### PATERNOSTER

☎ 022

Until relatively recently, Paternoster was the West Coast's last traditional fishing village,

little more than a clutch of simple white-washed homes with green roofs up against the blue sea. Then wealthy Capetonians and foreigners became captivated by its charms and property is now a hot commodity – there are 'sold' signs left and right and new guesthouses are opening every day.

Still, it remains a lovely town to visit, and the surrounding countryside – rolling hills scattered with strange granite outcrops – is attractive. Further north along the coast is the similar village of **St Helena Bay**, with a lovely sheltered stretch of water, but no real beach. Paternoster is 15km from the missable inland town of Vredenburg.

### Sleeping & Eating

Paternoster is rather lacking in street signs; instead look out for individual guesthouse signs. There are many B&Bs, so it may be worth checking out a few places first. During crayfish season (15 November to late December) you will see the tasty crustaceans for sale on the side of the road for between R50 and R70.

**Camping & Caravan Park** (Tietiesbaai; ☎ 022-752 1718; camp sites R30) Beyond Cape Columbine is this superbly located but windy park.

**Paternoster Hotel** (☎ 022-752 2703; paternosterhotel@wol.co.za; s/d R220/440) This rough-edged, lively, quirky country hotel is a popular venue for those interested in fishing. Its graffiti-covered walls and fish and crayfish braais are famous. We warn you, the bar is a feminist's nightmare.

**Cape Columbine** (☎ 021-449 2400; salato@npa.co.za; cottages from R525) Three kilometres past the town, you can stay in neat self-catering cottages next to the lighthouse (admission R12) in the Cape Columbine Nature Reserve, which protects 263 hectares of coastal  *fynbos* .

**Paternoster Lodge** (☎ 022-752 2023; paterlodge@telkomsa.net; s/d R560/700) A slick enterprise, with seven neat minimalist rooms and a breezy restaurant (mains R50 to R70) that's open all day. From the sun deck you can watch the fishermen bringing in their catch.

**Voorstrand Restaurant** (☎ 022-752 2038; Strandloperweg; mains R40-95; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) You can hop from this designer red-and-green-painted beach shack right onto the sand. Specialising in seafood, this is also an excellent spot to watch the sunset over a beer.

## ELAND'S BAY & AROUND

☎ 022

From excellent surf to serene country getaways, the Eland's Bay area is quickly becoming the top West Coast getaway. The town itself is rather nondescript, but its setting couldn't be better: mountains run to the sea past a large lagoon frequented by waterbirds – this is a bird-lover's mecca.

The **Eland Hotel** (☎ 022-972 1640; Hunter St; s/d incl breakfast R250/460) is practically city hall here, acting as meeting point, accommodation and general tourist information for everyone.

Further inland, it's worth a visit to the up-and-coming hamlet of **Redelinghuys**, and further south a stay at **Sandveld Country Cottages** (☎ 022-962 1609; cwjkeham@mweb.co.za; Rte 366; cottages per person R100; (P) (E)), undoubtedly the best accommodation in the region. Here you have your own cottage, garden and view of an exquisite valley. Look for the turn-off 12km south of Redelinghuys along the Aurora road; head 9km down this road.

## LAMBERT'S BAY

☎ 027

The refreshing sea breezes of Lambert's Bay offer respite from the West Coast sun, but the ubiquitous fish-processing factories mean you'd be advised to stay upwind.

The helpful **information centre** (☎ 027-432 1000; Main Rd; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) can tell you about area attractions, but the **Lambert's Bay Hotel** (☎ 027-432 1126; Voortrekker St; s/d incl breakfast from R395/500; (E)) is probably a better base as it can organise other accommodation and tours.

Lambert's Bay is also known for its large **gannet rookery**, but when we visited the birds had upped and left following an ongoing fight with colonising seals. If you are a gannetophile, call ahead to find out if they are back.

From July to January you might also spot some humpback whales off the coast, and Lambert's Bay is home to the heaviside dolphin, an endemic species. Indeed, many tour groups are attracted to the town just for a glimpse of these unusual and exquisite creatures. For boat trips contact **Lambert's Bay Boat Charter** (☎ 082-922 4334). This is also **quad biking** (☎ 083-306 6684; per person R180) country.

## GOOFY-FOOTER

Eland's Bay is a goofy-footer's (surfing with the right foot at the front of the board) paradise, with extremely fast left-point waves working at a range of swell sizes. The bay can hold a very big wave. The main left-point break is virtually in front of the hotel, towards the crayfish factory – it breaks along a rocky shelf in thick kelp, after southwesterly winds on a low and incoming tide. There's a right-beach break and more lefts on Baboon Point, along the gravel road past the crayfish factory.

In March, the **Crayfish Festival** means cheap seafood and plenty of entertainment, but if you can't wait till then, try a seafood buffet at one of the two open-air restaurants just outside town. There's not much to choose between **Muisboskerm** (☎ 027-432 1017; meals R120, crayfish R150) and **Bosduifklip** (☎ 027-432 2735; meals R110); call ahead as opening times vary and bookings are essential.

## OLIFANTS RIVER VALLEY

The scenery changes dramatically at the Piekienierskloof Pass; coming north on the N7 you suddenly overlook the intensively cultivated Olifants River Valley. The elephants that explorer Jan Danckaert came upon in 1660, and which gave their name to the area, are long gone.

Today the river provides irrigation for hectares of grapevines and orange trees, which are beautifully maintained by a huge labour force. The comfortable bungalows of the white farmers are surrounded by green and leafy gardens, masking them from the shanties.

On the valley floor are some acclaimed wineries and co-ops, which specialise in white wine – you can get details of wine routes at tourist information centres. The eastern side is largely bounded by the spectacular Cederberg Range, which is protected by the extensive Cederberg Wilderness Area. Citrusdal and Clanwilliam, to the southwest and northwest of the wilderness area, are the two main towns in the region.

As an alternative to the N7, there's a spectacular partly tarred road (Rte 303) between Citrusdal and Ceres, a great

drive through the Cederberg Wilderness Area from Citrusdal to Clanwilliam, and another memorable route (Rte 364) running between Clanwilliam and Calvinia (in Northern Cape to the northeast).

## CEDERBERG WILDERNESS AREA

Bizarre-shaped, weathered-sandstone formations, San rock art, craggy and rugged mountains and green valleys all make the desolate Cederberg a must-see. The peaks and valleys extend roughly north-south for 100km, between Citrusdal and Vanrhynsdorp. A good proportion is protected by the 71,000-hectare Cederberg Wilderness Area, which is administered by the Porterville offices of **Cape Nature** (☎ 022-931 2088; www.capenature.org.za). The highest peaks are Sneeuberg (2027m) and Tafelberg (1969m). San rock-art paintings (see p237) can be found on the rocks and in some of the area's caves.

The region is famous for its plant life, which is predominantly mountain  *fynbos* . Spring is the best time to see the wildflowers, although there's plenty of interest at other times of the year. The vegetation varies with altitude but includes the Clanwilliam cedar (which gives the region its name) and the rare snowball protea. The Clanwilliam cedar survives only in relatively small numbers, growing between 1000m and 1500m, and the snowball protea (now limited to isolated pockets) grows only above the snow line.

There are small populations of baboons, rheboks, klipspringers and grysboks; and predators such as caracals, Cape foxes, honey badgers and the elusive leopard.

## ROOIBOS TEA

Rooibos, literally 'red bush', is a red-coloured tea with a distinctive aroma. It's made from the leaves of the *Aspalathus linearis* plant, grown in the Cederberg region of Western Cape.

Malay slaves first discovered that the plant could be used to make a beverage, although it was not until the 20th century that a Russian immigrant Benjamin Ginsberg introduced it to the wider community, and it didn't become a cash crop until the 1930s. Despite this, some brands feature trek wagons and other icons of old South Africa.

The drink contains no caffeine and much less tannin than normal tea. This is probably its major health benefit, although it's claimed to have others, due to minute amounts of minerals such as iron, copper and magnesium. It's also a great thirst quencher, drunk straight or with lemon or milk.

Tours of one of the main packing plants, **Rooibos Ltd** (☎ 027-482 2155, www.rooibosLtd.co.za), just outside Clanwilliam, are available at 10am, 11.30am, 2pm and 3.30pm Monday to Friday.

## Orientation & Information

The Cederberg is divided into three excellent hiking areas of around 24,000 hectares. Each area has a network of trails. However, this is a genuine wilderness area with a genuine wilderness ethos. You are *encouraged* to leave the trails, and little information is available on suggested routes. It's up to you to survive on your own. Similarly, you probably won't be given directions to the area's rock art. Work out for yourself where the Khoesaaan were likely to have lived.

There is a buffer zone of conserved land between the wilderness area and the farmland, and here more-intrusive activities such as mountain biking are allowed.

There's no real season for walking; from May to the end of September expect rain and possibly snow. From December to April there's likely to be very little water.

A Cape Nature permit (adult/child R20/10) is required if you want to walk, and the number of visitors per hiking area is limited to 50 people. The maximum group size is 12 and, for safety, the minimum is two adults. To be certain you'll get a permit, apply well in advance. Outside school holidays and weekends you may be able to get one on the spot, but you should definitely phone before arriving to make sure.

The entrance to the Algeria camping ground closes at 4.30pm (9pm on Friday). You won't be allowed in if you arrive late. You can only collect your permit (if you haven't already organised it in Cape Town or had it posted to you) during office hours, so if you're arriving on Friday evening you'll need to make arrangements.

There are no eating places in the area so you will need to bring your own food.

## Sleeping

**Kleinkliphuis** (☎ 027-482 2564; camp sites R25, dm R50, cottages per person R100) One option is this charming place near the Pakhuis Pass on Rte 364, about 15km northeast of Clanwilliam. It's a small country home in attractive grounds, with excellent self-catering huts. From here you can explore the surrounding countryside with ease.

**Algeria** (☎ 027-482 2404; 6-person camp sites R95, d cottages R380) This is the main camping spot in the area, with exceptional grounds in a beautiful, shaded site alongside the Rondergat River, the headwaters of the Olifants River. There are swimming holes and lovely spots to picnic. For those not interested in camping there are fully equipped stone cottages. Rates do not include the park entry fee. If Algeria is full, you can call Cape Nature (☎ 022-931 2088) for other camping areas.

See both Citrusdal and Clanwilliam for places to stay outside the Cederberg Wilderness Area.

## Getting There & Away

The Cederberg Range is about 200km from Cape Town, accessible from Citrusdal, Clanwilliam and the N7.

There are several roads into Algeria camping ground, and they all offer magnificent views. It takes about 45 minutes to get here from Clanwilliam by car, much longer if you give in to normal human emotion and stop every now and again. Algeria is not signposted from Clanwilliam, but you just follow the road above the dam to the south. Algeria is signposted from the N7 and it's only 20 minutes from the main road; there's an amazing collection of plants, including proteas, along the side of the road.

There are some dusty but interesting back roads that run southeast through the hamlet of Cederberg on Rte 303, and on to Ceres. There's a good but tough walk from the camping ground up to the Wolfsberg Crack, a well-known rock formation. Allow at least seven hours to complete the return trip.

Unfortunately, public transport into Algeria is nonexistent.

## CITRUSDAL & AROUND

☎ 022 / pop 9000

The small town of Citrusdal is a good base for exploring the Cederberg. August to September is wildflower season, and the displays can be spectacular. This is also one of the best times for hiking. Although the town itself is quaint, some of the most interesting and beautiful places to stay are in the surrounding mountains. Make sure to explore beyond the town limits – the scenery is stupendous.

The **tourism bureau** (☎ 022-921 3210; www.citrusdal.info; 39 Voortrekker St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) can help you find accommodation in the area and provide information on mountain biking and hiking trails.

## Sleeping

**Beaverlac** (☎ 022-931 2945; Beaverlac Nature Reserve; camp sites R30) Hard to reach but impossible to forget, this is one of the country's best camping spots. A valley hidden beneath pine trees is the base, and there are rock pools for swimming and fascinating terrain for exploring. There's a shop for all basic necessities. Head down Rte 44 south of Citrusdal until the signs to Dasklipspas, 5km north of Porterville. Follow the road for 20km up a magnificent pass and down a poor dirt road, until you see the signs to Beaverlac Nature Reserve. No car radios or parties allowed!

**Gekko Backpackers Lodge** (☎ 022-921 3721; http://home.mweb.co.za/vi/vism; camp sites per person R40, dm R65, d with shared bathroom R170) A friendly low-key place on a large citrus farm, 17.5km from Citrusdal on the N7 towards Clanwilliam. Activities here include tubing on the adjacent river or hiking through the mountains and caves on the enormous property – there are even San rock-art trails on the grounds. Bring your own food, as there is no restaurant, just an honesty bar.

**Baths** (☎ 022-921 8026/7; www.thebaths.co.za; camp sites per person R55, d from R335; ☎) In a glorious location thick with trees and right up against the craggy peaks is this health spa with two outdoor pools. It's a good place to relax for a couple of days. The pools have superb views and are family-friendly. Day visitors (adult/child R45/22.50) are welcome. Prices jump on the weekends. There's also a swanky new restaurant and stylish Victorian-styled four-sleeper chalets

(R550). The place is about 18km from Citrusdal on the same road as the Elephant Leisure Resort. It is well signposted. Booking ahead is essential, and note that in summer (November to February) it can be scorchingly hot here.

**Staalwater** (☎ 022-921 3337; cottage per person R150) A twisty dirt road leading off Rte 303 to Citrusdal climbs past groves of citrus trees and flowering bushes before ending at the whitewashed farm buildings of Staalwater. The self-catering cottage sleeps eight. The property is large, and there are decent walks on the grounds. Staalwater is 12km from town on the way to the Baths.

**Tree Tops** (☎ 022-921 3626; www.citrusdal.info/kar-douw; huts R240) In a poplar forest by the Olifants River, 12km further on from the Baths, the wooden chalets here are on stilts. It's a great place, but you'll need to bring everything with you and book well ahead. Prices go up on weekends.

**Cedarberg Lodge** (☎ 022-921 2221; www.cedarberg-lodge.co.za; Voortrekker St; s/d R250/340; breakfast R40; ☎ ☎) A friendly hotel with large rooms with TVs and an attached restaurant (mains R50) that focuses on meat and seafood.

**Elephant Leisure Resort** (☎ 022-921 2884; d R475; ☎ ☎) There is a private Jacuzzi on the porch of every chalet at this serene spot 9km outside Citrusdal amid the trees and rocks. Accommodation is in either two- or four-person self-catering chalets with tiled floors, cheery walls and spotless bathrooms. There's a hot-springs swimming pool behind the main building.

## Eating

**Uitspan Café** (☎ 022-921 3273; 39 Voortrekker St; mains from R30; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This extremely friendly, bright café located next to the tourism bureau does tasty sandwiches, salads and cakes.

**Patrick's Restaurant** (☎ 022-921 3062; 77 Voortrekker St; mains from R50; ☎ noon-2.30pm Tue-Fri, 7-11pm Mon-Thu, 7pm-midnight Fri & Sat) This is the best, and practically the only, place for dinner in town. It does good steaks and, curiously in a town famed for its oranges, pizza with banana topping.

## Getting There & Around

**Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) buses stop at the petrol station on the N7 highway outside town. Destinations in-

clude Cape Town (R135, three hours) and Springbok (R145, five hours).

There's an excellent scenic road (Rte 303) over Middelburg Pass into the Koue (Cold) Bokkeveld and a beautiful valley on the other side, which is only topped by the Gydo Pass and the view over the Ceres Valley. The back road into the wilderness area is also excellent.

## CLANWILLIAM & AROUND

☎ 027 / pop 37,000

The adjacent dam and some adventurous dirt roads into the Cederberg make the compact town of Clanwilliam a popular weekend resort. Well-preserved examples of Cape Dutch architecture and trees line the main street. The dam is a favourite with water skiers.

The **information centre** (☎ 027-482 2024; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-12.30pm Sun) is at the top end of the main street, across from the old *tronk* (jail in Afrikaans), dating from 1808, which doubles as the town's museum.

While up here, if you have the time, travel out to **Wuppertal** (☎ 027-492 3410). This

## SAN ROCK-ART SITES

The nomadic San, South Africa's indigenous people, inhabited the area north of Clanwilliam for millennia. While as a people they have been decimated and/or assimilated, thankfully the area is still home to some of the finest examples of their rock art in the country. Indeed, archaeologists consider some of the sites the most well-preserved of their kind in the world. It can make for a fascinating exploration and has recently risen to prominence.

Unsurprisingly, several tour operators have sprung up, but they can be pricey. So if you're interested in learning more or visiting sites, contact the highly reputable **Living Landscape Project** (☎ 027-482 1911; chap@lando.co.za; 18 Park St, Clanwilliam; tours R40), which hosts art site visits and runs a community development programme. If you'd like to use other organised tour operators, contact the Clanwilliam information centre (above).

One of the best places to stay north of Clanwilliam (while still visiting rock-art sites) is Oudrif (p238).

Moravian mission station, 74km southeast of Clanwilliam, dates back to 1830 and is reached along a gravel road. The original church and the workshops – where hand-made leather shoes (called *velskoene*) are still made – are worth seeing.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Clanwilliam Dam Municipal Caravan Park & Chalets** (☎ 027-482 8012; camp sites with/without electricity R85/62, 6-person chalets R535) This caravan park overlooks the water-skiing action on the other side of the dam from the N7. Travelers arriving here after weeks in Namibia will be pleased to pitch their tents on the grassy sites, though the water is disappointingly a bit of a diesel-fume and duck-dropping soup. The chalets are very nice but you need to book ahead for school holidays and weekends.

**Strassberger's Hotel** (☎ 027-482 1101; strassberger@lando.co.za; Main St; s/d R260/460; 🍷) This comfortable and popular three-star hotel is basically a converted pub with acceptable rooms. Prices go up in flower season (August to September). Dinner is available from R100.

**Saint du Barrys** (☎ 027-482 1537; 13 Augsburg Dr; s/d incl breakfast R300/500; 🍷 🍷) A 120-year-old banyan tree looms over this pleasant thatch-roofed guesthouse with six en suite, good-sized rooms and a charming garden.

**Bushman's Kloof** (☎ 027-482 2627; www.bushmanskloof.co.za; s/d R3000/3900; 🍷 🍷) This is an upmarket private reserve, 46km east of

Clanwilliam along the Pakhuis Pass, known for its excellent San rock-art sites and extensive animal and birdlife. If you've got the cash, staff can also arrange fly-in safaris from Cape Town.

**Reinhold's** (☎ 027-482 1101; Main St; mains from R50; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sat) This à la carte restaurant is run by the Strassberger's Hotel across the road. It specialises in fish and grills and is the most popular place in town for dinner, so book ahead.

**Olifantshuis** (☎ 027-482 2301; cnr Augsburg Dr & Main St; mains from R40; 🍷 dinner) A delightful garden with a cherub fountain makes this pub-restaurant in a big house a nice place for a drink on a hot night. There is also decent accommodation.

**Oudrif** (☎ 027-482 2397; moondance@49er.co.za; per person with full board week/weekends R375/495) A piece of paradise alongside the Doring River in the foothills of the Cederberg around 60km north of Clanwilliam, here you can really unwind, with an abundance of outdoor activities including river paddling. Accommodation is in stylish straw-bale cottages. It's a great place to stay if you want to see San rock-art sites (p237).

### Getting There & Away

All the buses that go through Citrusdal also go through Clanwilliam. It's about 45 minutes between the two. Minibus taxis running between Springbok (R110, five hours) and Cape Town (R90, three hours) go through Clanwilliam, stopping at the post office.