

The Business Life/Travel & Food



Food: Five of the best London bar menus
www.bdlive.co.za/life

Wild horses will keep you at Kleinmond

For a getaway or an add-on to an Overstrand trip, Kleinmond has more to offer than a tacky main road , writes Rebecca Webber

SOME rural towns feature such unexpectedly quaint main roads that motorists who meant to drive straight through are so charmed that they simply have to stop and stroll through the streets. Kleinmond is not one of them.

After driving for an hour and a half from Cape Town along the cliff-and-sea views of Clarence Drive, and past better-known villages such as Rooi Els and Betty's Bay, the small beach town of Kleinmond disappoints at first. Main Road is bedraggled, with squat Bellville-by-the-Sea architecture. The town is a long, skinny one running between a mountainous nature reserve and the ocean. With neither robots nor chain restaurants, it is easy to see why most people push through but, as I found, there's an inverse relationship between the town's plain built environment and its remarkable natural wonders.

The so-called wild horses of Kleinmond — they're actually feral, having descended from domesticated animals some generations back — were top of my list. We turned off the R44 onto a dirt road leading to Rooisands nature reserve, passing by a private rancher offering rides on tame horses.

I was prepared to come back at different times of day to ensure a glimpse of the wild horses, but there they were, about six of them, free-ranging about the wetland.

We had already spotted an embarrassment of flamingos. When the horses had all moseyed on, we saw the birds before us anew, and crossed a boardwalk between the river and

the vlei. Just past the wooden walkway, we found a bird hide: secluded, with benches, and large enough for the serious-looking bird-watchers already there to silently spy on birds in protected, shady comfort.

Back on the tarred road, we stopped for what turned out to be the best cappuccino in town at the historic Lamloch Estate's Art Café. It's a bit far out by Kleinmond standards — that is, too far to walk from town — but perfect post-Rooisands with its beamed-ceiling and contemporary paintings.

Next we went to the town's namesake. "Klein mond", or small mouth, refers to the mouth of the Little Bot River. The Bot River Vlei is the Western Cape's second-largest blind estuary, meaning it is not permanently connected directly to the ocean. Supposedly, it opens annually, but the lagoon had been closed for several years, turning the water murky and stinky.

Townfolk debated creating a canal. Finally, a few months ago, heavy rains and wind tumbled down the sandbanks, opening a free flow of water. In that first week, a seal swam in from the ocean day after day to fish from the well-stocked former lagoon.

Only one building stands on the blue-flagged main beach, with public facilities on the ground floor. Sandown Blues upstairs has unparalleled views. Manager Tronell Jordaan told me customers sometimes ask her to turn on music while they nurse their sundowners.

"There is your music," Jordaan said, spreading her arm out to the crashing surf. "Why spoil it with the radio?"

For lunch, we enjoyed fresh hake and chips against the backdrop of the mountain, river, and sounds of the sea.

At the other end of town is the Kogelberg Nature Reserve. I drove very, very slowly along the 3km Jeep-track ride from the entrance, but a better choice for mountain bikers is to park in town and ride in for a quicker and easier trip. Either way, the ride has a pristine view of wild flowers transforming the landscape into a pointillist rendition of mountains and valleys. The Kogelberg's highest peak is 200m higher than Table Mountain.

Not many nature reserves allow mountain bikers, especially one this beautiful or so close to town. Zibele Blekiwe, a nature conservator at the reserve, told me that although they cap the number of day-trippers at 30, they rarely hit that many in a week. We did see a few other human beings, but no leopards, even though a few roam the area.

As a tourist, you will inevitably be steered, as we were, towards Harbour Road: a string of eateries, a store selling wooden cats, and another with dried fruits and nuts. The best of the bunch is the Potter's Garden, which sells ceramics, and its adjacent courtyard restaurant.

Kleinmond's tourism office is next door and was helpful in suggesting hiking trails and where to see fynbos (pretty much everywhere).

Around the corner is Vic's Trading, a mostly used-furniture store with a decent selection of books in the back room. I picked up a hard-to-find nonfiction



HORSEPLAY: The gorgeous coastal walk at Kleinmond, above; the village's famous feral horses frolic, as they do, below. Pictures: STEPHEN COETZEE

John Steinbeck book after browsing the Jughead comics. A handful of other used bookshops are peppered about town; Oupa se Boeke on 2nd Street had the best selection of English classics and Afrikaans fiction.

Despite its pink-and-white striped awning, passersby like us don't always notice Angie's Pudding & Pie on Main Road. The Kenyan-born baker insists she had no natural talent in the kitchen and began baking decades ago as a way to raise funds for her ill son.

I was highly impressed with the gluten-free pumpkin breads and tart selection — they are made to order — and my wheat-eating companions agreed that

“An inverse relationship exists between the town's plain built environment and its remarkable natural wonders

the lemon meringue and melktert lost nothing in gluten-free translation. If you are keen for brioche, look for the "orange muffins", renamed to roll off everybody's tongue.

Throughout the day we saw, if not a steady stream, then a determined trickle of walkers out for their constitutional along the clean streets. Beach Road

itself is a pleasant walk, but there are also several staircases leading down to well-maintained coastal paths along the cliffs. A sign warned about snakes, but all I saw were several dassies and a mongoose against the changing colours of sunset.

Kleinmond already feels a world away from Cape Town, but if you really want to get away, stay at the self-catering eco-huts in the Kogelberg Reserve. There is no TV or cellphone reception. Two-bedroom cabins have access to braai facilities and a pool with fresh river water. Cabins are R800 a unit off-season, R1,600 in peak season. Book through CapeNature.co.za.



Trainspotters get their choo-tjoe on

PENNY HAW

IF VINTAGE trains, planes, tankers, trucks, tractors and ox wagons get your motor running, you might want to head off into the eastern Free State between tomorrow and May 12, where the Sandstone Heritage Trust will hold its Stars Of Sandstone 2013 Steam Heritage Festival on Sandstone Estates, between Ficksburg and Fouriesburg.

Aside from operating as a working farm, Sandstone Estates houses a huge collection of antique steam locomotives (pictured above) and various other modes of transportation and agricultural machinery.

The festival, which attracts followers from the UK, Switzerland, Germany, France and the US, is considered a must-visit for trainspotters, gricers, railfans, train buffs or whatever you call people interested in rail transport.

The "featured train" for this year's event is a superbly restored NG4 steam locomotive, which was built in 1911. Also on display is a Feldbahn military locomotive from Germany.

"Feldbahn" is the German term for the narrow-gauge railway that was originally used for the transportation of agricultural goods, timber and other raw materials. However, Feldbahn locomotives were also widely used by the military during the First World War.

The festival not only gives train buffs the opportunity to see the locomotives in action, they can also learn more about the machines. A presentation on narrow-gauge railways in SA will be given by author and train expert John Middleton, while the chairman of the Friends of the Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe, Fraser Howell, will talk about getting the Choo-Tjoe back on track, and author and railway photographer Jean Dulez will discuss railways in southern Africa during the past 150 years.

But the 2013 Steam Heritage Festival is not limited to trains.

"While the two-foot narrow-gauge railway is at the centre of our activities because it plays quite an important role in the ongoing transportation of items on the farm, it shouldn't be allowed to overshadow many of the other items of interest," says the director of Sandstone Estates, Wilfred Mole.

The festival will also give visitors the opportunity to take a flip over the Free State in a Harvard plane.

There's a large range of military vehicles on display too, including a Sherman tank, Ratels, Buffels, Moffels and a multiple-rocket artillery system known as the "Stalin Organ", which was used by the Soviet forces in the Second World War.

Sandstone Estates is also home to a large range of buses, steam lorries and tractors, among them a beautifully restored John Deere 730 diesel tractor. You can also admire a Model T Ford grain truck. And if, like me, you're even more fascinated by animals than machines, you'll be taken by the magnificent span of Afrikaner oxen that provides the pulling power for a large wooden wagon.

The event organisers have also provided for partners, friends and family who might be more interested in exploring the surroundings than examining the machinery. Excursions to neighbouring farms and villages, including Clarens and Ficksburg, are on offer for the duration of the festival. Camping is on offer on the farm or visitors can book into a guesthouse in the area.

"And what we believe is significant," says Mole, "is that although we have been listed as one of the top five narrow-gauge railways in the world in terms of its quality as a tourist attraction, we do not receive any support from the local, provincial or national authorities despite the fact that we are probably one of the premier tourist attractions in the Free State."

■ www.sandstone-estates.com

Fine Italian dining amid some Durban North gems

REMO'S VILLAGIO
Cnr Lighthouse and Chartwell Drive, Umhlanga Rocks, open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner, (031) 561-7143
★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

CHARTWELL Drive is abuzz with restaurants, and has become the epicentre of much Durban North dining. Besides the many chain eateries, there are also a number of gems — for example, it features some excellent meals in the form of Little Havana, and also some very good Italian at Remo's Villaggio. Remo's Villaggio is an offshoot of the "originale" Remo's in

Mount Edgecombe and on a Monday night (never the restaurant's best friend) I found Villaggio packed while the places around it were doing so-so business.

Initially taking this only as a sign that South Africans love their pasta and pizza, I left after dinner at Remo's assured that it was more than that, because Remo's is a fine restaurant.

The first mark of care was the greeting at the door by an elegantly dressed hostess. There was also a sign that read "no slops after 6pm" but they were struggling to keep that rule, this being the much more laissez-faire KwaZulu-Natal.

Nevertheless, the up-market interior did encourage diners into smart-casual dress (at least). The stylish hostess was matched by waiters very neatly dressed in black waistcoats and ties.

The interior is visually rich, with an "applied Italian" look in the "la dolce vita" pictures, Romanesque small tiled mosaic floor, fountain in the garden, statuettes and a Vespa scooter parked in the patio area. It all added up to an Italian town square feel. But it rises from generic "trattoria" through the contemporary music, the pleasing inside-out flow, plantation fans, wicker-look chairs and lovely red booth seats.

There's also a very attractive old-fashioned bar.

A small wine list features Italian wines by the carafe and the large one-page menu is full of well-described options.

"Popeye's Pollo"; the "Joey Tribbiani" sandwich with meatballs and mozzarella; Ferrari calamari (cold marinated calamari in white wine vinegar, olive oil, chilli and parsley tossed with onion and peppers); "Good Old-Fashioned Macaroni and Cheese"; and from the pizza menu — "Tricky Dicky" (Parma ham, cherry tomatoes, rocket and avocado).

Antipasti cost about R60, salads about R70, pizza R90 and

pasta R70, so it's not budget Italian but neither is it exorbitant (another welcome feature of dining in KwaZulu-Natal).

On a first visit, I ordered gnocchi with prawn and sage (R100) with trepidation, as gnocchi is as stern a test as you get, but was happy to find that Remo's was one of the best I have eaten in SA. Cloudy pillows of gnocchi, tender prawns, with the butter and sage well judged. On a revisit, it remained as good.

Their pizzas are of the oval/handmade style and good too, if far too heavy on the cheese, so as it cools it suffers the "fossilised footprint" syndrome

where an olive used to be, and shows the cheese up as not of the best quality.

A spaghetti with the Sicilian flavours of anchovy and capers was just right, with firm pasta and savoury flavours.

FOR: Lovely up-market but relaxed space, good pasta. AGAINST: Could use better cheese on otherwise good pizza.

JP Rossouw
JP Rossouw is editor of Rossouw's Restaurants, the independent guide to dining in SA. All visits are made unannounced and are paid for. www.rossouwsrestaurants.com

The view just beats the food

MUNDO VIDA | Mundo Vida in Umdloti on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast has both the most sublime of locations and the most mundane. Its second-floor deck overlooks the beach for dreamy lunches; but it's directly above a filling station, with the signs in your line of vision if you look left. Its interior space also looks somewhat worn and rather scruffy, but the warm and owner-led service more than makes up for this lack of aesthetic charm.

The wide-ranging menu covers most bases, from oversized salads (the "Beach Garden" for two at R79 is recommended) to Asian- and Mediterranean-inspired starters to pizza, pasta, seafood platters and grills. The flavours are distinctly calibrated to the robust rather than the subtle. I tried the Louisiana Prawns (R79) — "crispy Cajun-style Queen prawns served on matchstick fries with a salad and jalapeno aioli" — which was fine and spicy, if lacking any distinct southern flavour. Then the Pork Wonton "Parcels" (R49) — "crispy wonton parcels filled with roasted pork belly, carrot and cucumber slaw topped with a sweet and spicy Asian style sauce". The pork was dry, hard and with burnt edges, the sauce a generic-tasting sweet chilli. But the fine Sauvignon and dreamy vista tempered grumpiness. Umdloti Beach Centre, South Beach Rd, (031) 568-2286, www.mundovida.co.za

SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS

ALL-INCLUSIVE RETURN SPECIAL FARES

176 554 SEATS AVAILABLE. EARN VOYAGER MILES!

Johannesburg to Nairobi from:

R5 982

Johannesburg to:

Durban from R1 778	Port Elizabeth from R2 142	Cape Town from R2 348
East London from R1 976		
Maputo from R3 395	Lagos from R5 815	Buenos Aires from R9 189
Kingshaka from R5 194	Beijing from R8 458	Sao Paulo from R9 652

Cape Town to:

Maputo from R4 557	Nairobi from R8 044	Pointe Noire from R10 451
Lusaka from R5 879	Beijing from R8 864	
Kingshaka from R7 256	Sao Paulo from R10 060	
Lagos from R7 877	Buenos Aires from R10 351	

Durban to:

Maputo from R4 557	Beijing from R8 864	Buenos Aires from R10 891
Kingshaka from R6 756	Pointe Noire from R9 951	
Lagos from R7 377	Sao Paulo from R10 600	
Nairobi from R7 544		

Go to flysaa.com, call +27 11 978 1111 or contact your local travel agent to book.

Bringing the world to Africa and taking Africa to the world.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: INTERNATIONAL FARES: Johannesburg/Cape Town/Durban – Kinshasa/Maputo/Pointe Noire/Lusaka/Lagos/Nairobi: Sales and travel period until 31 July 2013. Changes permitted any time at a charge of R400 per change. Cancellation: Anytime tickets are non-refundable. Johannesburg/Cape Town/Durban – Beijing: Sales and travel period until 30 June 2013. Changes permitted any time at a charge of R1 500 per change. Cancellation: 25% fee prior to departure, after departure, non-refundable. Johannesburg/Cape Town/Durban – Sao Paulo/Buenos Aires: Sales and travel period until 10 June 2013. Changes permitted any time at a charge of R1 700 per change. Cancellation: Anytime tickets are non-refundable. DOMESTIC FARES: Johannesburg – Durban/East London/Port Elizabeth/Cape Town: Sales and travel period until 31 December 2013. Changes permitted any time at a charge of R342 per change. Cancellation: Anytime tickets are non-refundable. All fares are subject to availability and change due to currency fluctuations. SA Airways reserves the right to, at any time, change/discontinue these special fares and conditions without prior notice. Subject to same seat availability. * Any unused fuel levies and/or regulated taxes are refundable.