



OUT AND ABOUT on the West Coast



The West Coast may well be in South Africa, but it could really be its own country. Food is fresh from the sea, shopping is quirky, ideas are original and attractions are all unusual

Photographs and story by KERI HARVEY

EAT AT MUISBOSSKERM, LAMBERTS BAY

It's the original open-air beach restaurant on the West Coast, built right on the shore with walls of dry bushes called 'muisbos'. This is where seafood feasts have been hosted for decades, with fresh fish and crayfish cooked on open fires in the middle of Muisbosskerm. There are always at least six different kinds of fresh fish served, plus many other local specialities. It's authentic West Coast cuisine and slow dining – and an unforgettable experience. Call 027-432-1017; www.muisbosskerm.co.za.

SHOP AT WILLE MAGRIETJIE, JACOBSBAAI

Right on the water's edge, Wille Magrietjie is named after the wild yellow daisies endemic in the area. The shop is crammed with all things particularly beautiful, West Coast and indulgent. Much is sourced locally, and there's everything from paintings to olive oil products and handcrafted clothing. In spring, wild daisies in all colours sprinkle the surrounding area, adding to the enchantment. Call 022-715-3327.

SLEEP AT GROOTVLEI GUEST FARM AND OPPIDUIN, LAMBERTS BAY

The manor-style guest house on a farm is decadent and luxurious, with an indoor/outdoor feel, big log fires and sumptuous breakfasts – the omelettes are like no other. But the shell houses on the dunes – called Oppiduin – are something extraordinary and special. Not only are these guest houses built with the footprint of a shell, but they are also encrusted with shells in the walls and floors, and are right on the beach with the Atlantic Ocean in the front garden. Call 027-432-2716; www.grootvleiguestfarm.co.za.

LAUGH OUT LOUD IN BOKKOMLAAN, VELDDRIF

Visiting Bokkomlaan, which runs along the shores of the Berg River in Velddrif, is as refreshing as eating sushi in a sea breeze. It's a glimpse of authentic West Coast traditions and characteristic humour. There's a bokkom (pilchard) packing house next to Ek en Djy – a shop 'selling' laughs, as everything that's for sale is humorous. And next door is River Studio, where local artist Marina Clunie captures the West Coast on canvas. Ek en Djy also serves a West Coast interpretation of sushi or 'sjoesie' as they call it, which is not sushi at all but homemade pickled fish. Call Marina Clunie on 083 415 9524; www.riverstudio.co.za.

WINE TASTE AT FRYER'S COVE, DORINGBAAI

Known to wine lovers as 'bottled ocean', Fryer's Cove wines are award-winning and highly unusual. The vineyard is situated on a harsh coastline just 800m from the Atlantic and 20m above sea level, so the wines produced have a unique character and fresh flavour. Fryer's Cove wine tasting room was the old crayfish factory on the harbour in



Doringbaai (open Monday to Saturday). Any closer to the Atlantic and your feet would be wet. Call 027-215-1092; www.fryerscove.com.

BE ENCHANTED AT R45 ART STUDIO, VELDDRIF

James and Antoinette Bennett create artistic furniture and decor pieces from scrap yard finds. It's 'upcycled' rather than 'recycled' furniture and their chairs made from tin drums are a big hit – and very comfortable. In every way, this is sustainable art with an elegant, unique twist. Everything they make is one-of-a-kind and kind to the environment. Call 076 548 8270.

WALK THE WANDERING WHALE LABYRINTH, STRANDFONTEIN

Built on a cliff top at the edge of the ocean, from the Wandering Whale Labyrinth there are dramatic sea views up and down the coast. Lined with blue mussel shells that crush gently underfoot, at the centre of the labyrinth is a bench surrounded by rose quartz – so you are surrounded by a circle of pink, a bigger circle of blue shells and the vast ocean beyond. In winter you can even whale watch while walking this uniquely situated labyrinth that has already seen over a thousand pairs of feet. Call 027-215-1685.

OTHER PLACES WORTH A VISIT:

Die Kreefhuis, Lamberts Bay – for the finest garlic mussels and seafood curry, right on the harbour. Call 027-432-2235. Plaaskombuis, Lamberts Bay – old farmstyle cooking in an original farmhouse setting. Try the mussel soup and home-



baked bread. Call 027-432-2720. Leonie's Coffee Shop, Strandfontein – for fine coffee and excellent cheesecake. Call 027-215-1522. West Coast National Park, Langebaan – for sea views, wildlife, wetlands and landscapes. Call 022-772-2144. Full Moon Market, Paternoster – on the Friday closest to full moon every fourth week. Call 082 824 8917.