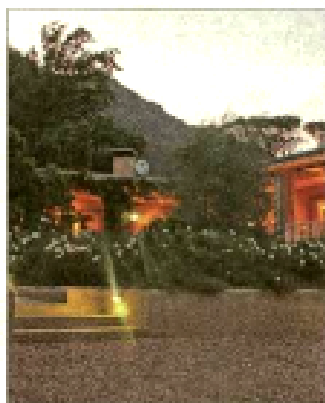
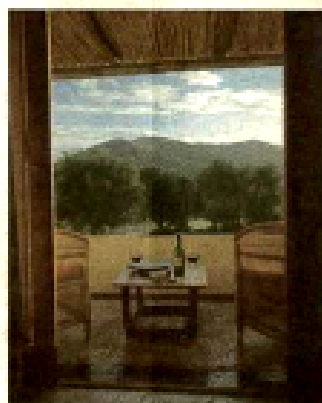




SERENE OASIS: Temenos



STYLE: De Langenhof



HIDDEN: Olive Garden Lodge



SPLENDID: Villa Tarentaal



HISTORIC: Oudekloof

Secret gems of the Cape winelands

TEMENOS

Brue Street, McGregor
Tel: 023 625 1871

"Now you can relax!" These were Billy's welcoming words at Temenos. As passionate maestro of his serene oasis and serious Italophile, who better to guide me on an evening meander to the spiral peace garden and back along bougainvillea-arched gravel paths?

This is a natural paradise enjoyed by 80 bird species and anyone seeking wholehearted R&R. Your inner intellectual will find satisfaction in the eclectic library; those of contemplative mood may seek refuge in The Little Way Chapel or one of the many secret garden rooms; and for more sprightly guests, there's a large lap pool and hiking.

No one should miss the à la carte Café Tebaldi's, and later I enjoyed a frog sonata outside my plant-festooned Cape cottage, complete with open fire. Billy was right. I really did relax.

DE LANGENHOF

18 Lang Street, Riebeeck West
Tel: 022 461 2188

With a warm sun setting behind the Kasteelberg, I sauntered through the five gardens of De Langenhof, ending up by the lap pool. Then I joined my hosts for a glass of the local tippie on the stoep.

Mike and Gail relocated from Cape Town to enjoy the splendid scenery, food and wine of the Riebeeck Valley. Gail is involved in promoting tourism, which was handy when it came to choosing from a plethora of recommended restaurants for dinner, and Mike is a dab hand in the kitchen, as I discovered while savouring my cooked breakfast.

I stayed in one of two garden rooms opening on to a honeysuckle-laden veranda. The four veranda rooms are equally stylish and all rooms offer their guests the highly acclaimed Allesverloren vintage port and Lindt chocolates. Sound like a treat? Well... it is.

OLIVE GARDEN LODGE

Klimskoogds West, Robertson
Tel: 023 626 2028

Olive Garden Country Lodge, almost invisible in a sea of fynbos, is for those who want to lose themselves in nature, but who don't want to compromise on luxury.

This happy combination is typical of Gina and Fernand, conservationists who are passionate about the wild things that crowd round the lodge and especially the award-winning extra virgin olive oil they produce, but who are also epicurean in their tastes.

They are nothing short of magicians in the kitchen. I never thought that the best sushi I would ever taste would be in a remote olive grove in the Robertson mountains – and made by a Belgian.

It's a good job Olive Garden has its own hiking trail up the mountain. Looking back across the view my mouth made a perfect "o". Gina was right: this place is a slice of heaven.

VILLA TARENATAAL

Tulbagh
Tel: 023 239 0868

Graham is Mike and Christine's son and returned from life as a highway patrolman in America with his wife, Brandi, to take over the family business – and to start a family of their own.

People come for the privacy – each of the three cottages offers a private lounge, kitchenette and sheltered braai patio – but stay I imagine, to try every breakfast option which Graham delivers to your cottage each morning.

Christine is still on hand to offer therapeutic massages (book in advance) and Mike will pop in to enchant you with his passion for the pristine garden.

Guests are not the only ones flocking here; you'll witness an abundance of bird life including guinea fowl, Egyptian geese, fish eagle and blue crane. The cottages weren't named after this trio of winged beauties for nothing.

OUDEKLOOF

Wavern Street, Tulbagh
Cell: 072 705 2333

Standing on the veranda of Oudekloof, glass of wine in hand, I surveyed all that lay before me: swimming pool, lawns, vines, the entire Tulbagh valley and the Witzenberg mountain range.

Louise guided me up the ancient wagon route to the Voortrekker Monument and Dutch signalling cannon. Meanwhile, Barnardt was browning tjops and wots on the braai. It wasn't long before we were tucking into our Afrikaans fare around the grand dining table of this refined Cape Dutch guesthouse.

Upstairs, a games room and roof terrace between the thatch separate two generous bedrooms. Both are decked out with antique wooden furniture and Persian rugs.

The Kruger family are delightful hosts and will ensure that you are looked after in a manner appropriate to a venerable wine estate.

ALTHOUGH most first-time visitors to the Cape Winelands will want to see Stellenbosch, Paarl and Franschhoek, these towns are certainly not all that the area has to offer. In fact GG sees some of the outlying winelands towns as the real heart and soul of the region. Riebeeck Kasteel/West, Greyton, McGregor, Robertson, Wolskel, Tulbagh all have strong individual identities and great charm. It is still possible to stay at a fabulous guest house and eat at a neighbouring restaurant while drinking world-class wines from the vineyard across the road. If you're looking for a less commercial and truly authentic winelands experience, book into one of the following Greenwood Guides places to stay.

