

QUINTESSENTIAL STYLE

# Cape Town Style

BY LISA LOVERRO





**Discovering new cities**, styles, and cultures has always been a fascination of mine so, while on a recent trip to Cape Town, I set out to find what makes this beautiful city so special. What I found was an eclectic mix of emerging fashion designers, cutting edge architects, and experimental chefs living in a modern-day city with old-world charm—not to mention fabulous wine!

First and foremost, the natural beauty surrounding Cape Town was simply astonishing. One of the most picturesque cities on the planet, Cape Town is nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and its landmark peaks, Table Mountain and the Twelve Apostles. My morning routine consisted of a daily four-mile run up the coast, which provided one beautiful vista after another. Exclusive, high-end communities built into the hills along the Atlantic—Camps Bay, Clifton, and Bantry Bay—gave an almost “Amalfi-like” feel to the shoreline. Signature homes by one of South Africa’s top architects, Stefan Antoni, are evident throughout these “new money” communities. Antoni, himself a resident of Bantry Bay, says he sees the style

*Above, clockwise from top left: Maya Prass boutique in Constantia; the Cellars-Hohenont Hotel in Constantia with its Rose Garden in full bloom; a look from the Maya Prass collection. > Opposite: Cape Town’s coastline with the Twelve Apostle Peaks.*

of Cape Town as “the feeling of openness, freedom, and possibility. A new world on an ancient continent; an authenticity and purity.” His designs set out to capture the essence of South Africa. “The Country has the most amazing light,” he says. “We have the most exquisite blue skies and capturing that light in a building results in something quite magical.” It seems more New Yorkers are buying properties here as well. Denise Dogon, owner of one of Cape Town’s largest real estate companies, Dogon Group Properties, tells me that she recently sold a magnificent apartment in Clifton to a prominent plastic surgeon from New York City. “He arrives just after New Years and spends three months to escape the cold New York winters and



*This page, clockwise from top left: Afternoon Tea at the Mount Nelson; a traditional Italian-inspired home in Constantia; two looks from KLUK/CGOT's latest collection from Ause Africa Fashion Week. > Opposite, clockwise from top left: The restaurant at Le Quartier Francais in Franschhoek; a Stefan Antoni-designed home in Clifton; local beaded African artwork; a look from the Maya Prass Collection.*

enjoy the warm summers of Cape Town,” Dogon says. “Cape Town is self-contained where one could easily live amongst all the natural beauty of mountains, sea, and sandy beaches. It has its own theatre, philharmonic orchestra, vineyards, and world-class restaurants. It’s like a resort city but at the same time, it does have all the elements and feel of an international city.”

In contrast to the modern, exclusive communities along the coast, the “old money” suburbs of Constantia and Bishopscourt are set south of the city and play host to beautiful gardens, colonial homes, and one of the most exclusive Relais & Chateaux hotels, The Cellars-Hohenort. With the help of a luxury touring company, Giltedge, I was able to interview the hotel’s proprietor, Liz McGrath, the only

woman in the world to own three Relais & Chateaux properties. The converted 300-year-old country house, set among nine acres of gardens and a vineyard has been converted to an exclusive resort in Constantia.

“What you see today has evolved from love and hard work,” says McGrath, who is in her eighties. Her labor of love is evident throughout the property as is her style as we stroll through the gardens of herbs, camphor tress, and one of Cape Town’s most prominent rose gardens—a sight not to be missed when in full bloom.

Again, in contrast to the Cellars-Hohenort in the suburbs, the city has its own variety of new, chic hotels, including its newest addition, the One and Only Cape Town. Architect and designer Adam D. Tihany, who is responsible for the interior design of the hotel’s lobby, rooms, and restaurants, says the essence of Cape Town defies definition. “I don’t think that there is one specific style, but that it’s a whole mixture of styles and periods, which gave birth to a very eclectic expression,” he says. “Both contemporary and traditional, Cape Town embodies a cross-cultural and multi-layered aesthetic.”





By far, one of the more special properties I experienced during my stay was the Ellerman House, located above the hills of the exclusive Bantry Bay community, and offering a commanding view of the Atlantic. Once owned by British shipping magnate Sir John Ellerman, the mansion was converted into an eleven-room Relais and Chateaux property housing one of the largest private art collections in South Africa. Additionally, a visit to Cape Town would not be complete without a traditional Afternoon Tea at the Mount Nelson Hotel, where the likes of Nelson Mandela, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Bono have all been known to indulge in its pastries and variety of teas served daily in their lounge.

Every day spent wandering through the streets I discovered more and more local art, fashion, and cuisine than I could have imagined. South African fashion designer Maya Prass, an established designer in Cape Town who opened her own boutique in Constantia in September of 2008, builds her collections each season on a specific theme. With a flair for prints, she looks to natural fibers dyed and printed with sketches.

The more widely known design team of Malcolm Kluk and Christian Gabriel du Toit, who own a boutique in the Greenpoint section of Cape Town, have shown their collections during New York's Fashion Week. Perfumed

air from scented candles fill the boutique while its minimal design gives way to the colorful racks of beautifully feminine, tailored pieces. From couture and prêt-à-porter to bridal, the design house has dressed everyone from South African cabinet members to international royal families and celebrities.

Wildebesset anyone?

For the foodies, Cape Town has everything from regional African dishes to sophisticated plates using local game of Wildebesset, Impala, and Eland—all of which I tried and found delicious! Cheyne Morrisby, owner of Cheyne, a hip, private dining restaurant on Bree Street in Cape Town, can accommodate a group of up to eighteen for dinner, creating a unique, private experience. Morrisby, offering fusion dishes of local ingredients and Asian spices understands Cape Town's dining style. "Dining in Cape Town is more of an event than just eating, people tend to get a group together and head out for an evening of fantastic food, wine





and personalized attention,” Morrisby says. “I have created a space where all of this takes place. It really is your own dining room in the city centre.”

In contrast to the Morrisby’s hip dining experience, The Roundhouse, set up on a hill in Camps Bay is a historic landmark dating back to the 1700s when used as a guardhouse to protect enemies from entering Cape Town on the Camps Bay side. Today, it is a premier dining facility offering contemporary French cuisine along with a breathtaking view of the coastline.

On weekends, when most New Yorkers are heading downtown to brunch at Balthazar or Pastis, the locals in Cape Town are heading to the “Old Biscuit Mill,” which comes to life every Saturday morning. An organic, outdoor market, where local restaurants and shops set up stands. The energetic and vibrant scene here can be compared to a weekend day in Soho.

The nightlife is vibrant with parties and bustling clubs along the city’s downtown area of Long Street. In contrast to the clubs,

there are benefit events, comparable to that of the New York charity scene; evidenced when I stumbled upon a private benefit event for the Homestead, an organization dedicated to helping the street children of Cape Town. Although Cape Town has an affluent and sophisticated society crowd, the people here do not forget about those less fortunate living in the townships outside the city who had struggled through the era of Apartheid.

A trip to Cape Wineland to sample some of the best wine in the world is a must when in Cape Town. Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, two of the most recognized regions, are host to world-class vineyards and boutique hotels, including Le Quartier Francais, a Relais & Chateaux property in Franschhoek offering wonderful service and dining.

While visiting here, I had the distinct pleasure attending a private, pre-opening luncheon at the Delaire Graff Estate, owned by Laurence Graff of Graff Diamonds. Acquired in 2003, Graff vowed to make the Delaire estate one of South Africa’s premier wineries and prominent restaurant and hotel destinations. When asked why he decided to open in South Africa, he responded: “After spending much time in South Africa working with the mines, I realized the growing interest in South





African wines over time, and saw there was a niche market for truly upscale vineyards that provided more than just wine. I wanted to provide an experience, and with this thought in mind, I decided to acquire and completely re-do the Delaire Graff Estate to turn it into what it is today.” He adds, “I believe the completion of Delaire Graff Estate will provide an extremely luxurious, high-end destination spot for South Africa, where my clients would feel pampered and comfortable and have a truly memorable experience.”

Brendan Bell, brand manager for Ernie Els Wines in Stellenbosch echoes Graff’s thoughts on the growing popularity of the region’s wine. “There is a distinct interest in wines from South Africa among Americans,” Bell says. “I think they are more adventurous at trying new wines relative to Old World wine countries.” One thing that distinguishes South African wines is that “We’ve been producing wines here for over 350 years and, because we are far less governed in the department of what and where we can plant vines, we have been finding the correct varietals to plant best suited to the environment.”

And I would have to say he is correct. As I journeyed through the regions and sampled Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay, I realized that South African wines were far more complex than simply their signature Pinotage! ♦

*This page, clockwise from top left: The winter collection from KLUK/CGDT; the One and Only resort Cape Town; Cheyne Morrisby in front of his private dining restaurant. > Opposite, clockwise from top: The Delaire Graff Estate; Denise Dogon of Dogon Group Properties with her daughter Calli; The Delaire restaurant.*

## Visit Cape Town

### TOURS

> Gilt-Edge / [gilt-edge.com](http://gilt-edge.com)

### WHERE TO STAY

> The One and Only Cape Town / [oneandonlyresorts.com](http://oneandonlyresorts.com)

> Ellerman House / [ellermanhouse.com](http://ellermanhouse.com)

> Le Quartier Francais / [lequartier.co.za](http://lequartier.co.za)

### FASHION

> Maya Prass / [mayaprass.com](http://mayaprass.com)

> Malcolm Kluk and Christian Gabriel du Toit / [kluk.co.za](http://kluk.co.za)

### DINING

> Cheyne / [cheynemorrisby.com](http://cheynemorrisby.com)

> The Roundhouse / [theroundhouserestaurant.com](http://theroundhouserestaurant.com)