

RESIDENT TRAVELER: WILDEBEEST AND WINE

By Lisa Loverro

When my waiter asked how I would like my Wildebeest cooked, I confidently replied, “why medium rare, of course.”

During a recent trip to the picturesque city of Cape Town, I discovered a cosmopolitan city filled with an eclectic mix of emerging fashion designers, cutting edge architects and experimental chefs living in a modern-day city filled with old world charm...not to mention fabulous wine and exotic meats!

First and foremost, the natural beauty surrounding Cape Town was simply astonishing. Cape Town lies nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and its landmark peaks, Table Mountain and the Twelve Apostles. My morning routine consisted of a daily 4-mile run up the coast with breathtaking vistas at each turn. Exclusive, high-end communities built into the hills along the Atlantic Ocean—Camps Bay, Clifton and Bantry Bay—gives an almost “Amalfi-esque” feel to its shoreline.

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Delaire Graff Estate

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There are a multitude of high-end resorts to be had. The newest, The One and Only Cape Town (www.oneandonlyresorts.com) sits down by the V&A Waterfront alongside other seasoned notables, The Cape Grace (www.capegrace.com) and Table Bay (www.hoteltablebay.co.za). One of the more special properties I experienced during my stay was at the Ellerman House (www.ellermanhouse.com), located above the hills of the exclusive Bantry Bay community and offering a commanding view of the Atlantic Ocean. 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 (www.mountnelson.co.za) 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.

Food for Thought

Every day, strolling the streets I found hidden gems...from exciting cuisine to high-end shopping, Cape Town has it all! And for all the foodies, there is a multitude of restaurants serving regional African dishes and sophisticated plates incorporating all local game meats including Wildebeest, Impala and Eland—all of which I tried and were delicious. Be sure to check out Cheyne Morrisby's (www.cheynemorrisby.com) hip, private dining restaurant, Cheyne, on Bree Street, offering fusion dishes of local ingredients and Asian spices. Another notable restaurant is The Roundhouse (www.theroundhouserestaurant.com), set up on a hill in the popular Camps Bay section of town, serving upscale French cuisine. If you happen to be in the mood for gnocchi (and who isn't?), head over to 95 Keerom (www.95keerom.com), hailed by locals as the best gnocchi in town.

Then there's the Old Biscuit Mill...an organic, outdoor market where local restaurants and shops set up stands every Saturday, to which the locals flock. Think Soho shopping meets Union Square

Green Market, only with plenty of beer on tap!

Shopping is as eclectic as the town...there's the funky and hip boutique "Darkie," on Long Street, wild prints and classic designs at "Maya Prass" in the swanky suburb of Constantia and the sophisticated and couture designs of "Kluk CGDT" in the Greenpoint area of town.

Adventure sports abound here. Paragliding off one of the many peaks is an old favorite (not that I did it). I settled for a trip via cable car up to the top of Table Mountain for mesmerizing views of the city's landscape. Be sure to visit the District Six Museum, a very small museum focusing on a specific district and their struggle through apartheid, and a visit to Robben Island Museum. Serving as a prison from the 17th century to 1996, Robben Island is also a World Heritage Site and where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated from 1964-82. Former political prisoners guide groups through the facility, telling anecdotes about their time here.

A trip out to the Cape Winelands 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 with majestic mountain ranges serving as its backdrop. What a learning experience I had as I discovered so much more than their widely recognized Pinotage. I came to realize there are variations of Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay produced in the region as well.

There are many options when it comes to accommodations in the Cape Winelands as well. Le Quartier Francais, (www.lequartier.co.za) a Relais and Chateaux property located in Franschhoek is a real gem and, speaking of gems, the recently opened Delaire Graff Estate in Stellenbosch (www.delairewinery.co.za) owned by Laurence Graff of Graff Jewelers is a must visit for a scrumptious lunch accompanied by one of their signature wines.

In closing, with the 2010 World Cup being hosted by the country of South Africa, Cape Town will likely be showcased more now than ever before. If you are interested in taking a trip, check out the luxury tour operator, Giltedge Travel (www.gilt-edge.com) who'll be able to assist you with everything from accommodations to safari.