

The Cape Winelands Three Ways: Delaire Graff, Boschendal, Thokozani

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Delaire Graff

Delaire Graff Estate

I am forever ready to indulge in the luxuriant beauty that is the Cape Winelands, especially because year after year there is no one way to indulge; as the region's farms, vineyards and properties multiply and expand, so too does the variety of its otherworldly offerings. Select your style from these disparate winners—or, better yet, treat yourself to all three.

FOR FARM-STYLE FABULOUS

As one of the oldest wine farms in South Africa, **Boschendal Wine Estate**, which dates back to 1685 and was revitalized as a deluxe property in 2013, offers guests the opportunity to experience Cape Dutch history—in dazzling yet unpretentious luxury. Nestled in the Drakenstein Valley, the vast, Edenic property, encircled by surreal-looking mountains, is chock-a-block with vineyards, fruit farms, cattle ranges, rose gardens and an expansive herb garden that is simply magical. Activities abound: mountain biking, garden tours, horse and carriage rides, swimming, fly-fishing in the dams—and, most of all, wandering wide-eyed through all that splendor.



Boschendal

Boschendal

EAT Boschendal is a farm-to-table fantasy come to life, a place where everything you put in your mouth is sourced onsite and the heavenly scents alone are liable to bring tears to your eyes. There's a gourmet bakery, a butchery slicing organic varieties of biltong, a Farm Shop & Deli selling jams, sauces, fresh produce—and serving up a delectable breakfast of kale frittata and watermelon-mint juice. Boschendal's crown jewel is The Werf, which treated me to one of the best farm-to-table dining experiences of my life. Set in a refurbished wine cellar, The Werf has an open kitchen and a seasonal menu of flawlessly designed small plates, all bursting with freshness and innovative flavor. As the sun danced pink on the mountains, I feasted on fermented breads with eucalyptus and honey butter, slow-roasted lamb shoulder with summer squash, chuck with smoked bone marrow (sourced from Angus cattle on the farm), squid spaghetti with fennel and goat cheese, and yellowfin tuna with kefir ice and marmite broth.



Boschendal

Boschendal beauty

STAY Amble through a charming vineyard garden and settle into one of Boschendal’s elegantly restored Werf Cottages, which embody farm-style fabulous. I woke up in my four-poster bed at dawn, stepped outside and saw a ball of crimson fire explode across the mountain range (admitted hyperbole for a most dramatically gorgeous sunrise). Then I strolled through the mountain trails as the sun rose high.

DRINK Boschendal is the biggest producer of fair trade wines in world; among its renowned offerings are an elgin pinot noir and a hugely popular brut rose. But the best part of the wine experience here are tastings in the original Manor House, painstakingly restored to look as it did centuries ago. Private signature experiences include a historic tasting of wines representing the history of Boschendal; a connoisseur tasting of limited release wines; an MCC and canapé or oyster pairing; and a Shiraz and angus beef pairing.

EXTRA SPECIAL If you don’t picnic at Boschendal, you haven’t experienced Boschendal. You have two options, a Rhone Rose Garden Picnic or a more casual Werf Farm Picnic, but both include baskets filled with locally sourced artisanal delights, including fresh-baked bread, local cheeses and organic salads. Boschendal.com

FOR THE SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS

It means “celebration” in Xhosa, and **Thokozani**—a four-star property, wine estate and business-within-a-business located at Diemersfontein Wine & Country Estate—has much to celebrate, indeed. Its highly unique, socially conscious business model—80 percent owned by

its employees, predominantly of color—makes a profound statement in an industry built on the backs of South Africa’s people of color, from the slave era to the slave-like labor conditions of the present day. “My parents were low-wage farm laborers who told me to never go into this industry,” says Thokozani’s Managing Director Denise Stubbs, as business savvy as she is passionate about social justice. “I did—but only because I’m part of its radical transformation.”

EAT Chef Howben Jantjies at Seasons Restaurant on Diemersfontein Estate loves to pair your wines with his unique creations, doused in local spices. His chicken skewers will blow you away.

STAY Three cottages are cleanly, simply decorated, to allow Thokozani’s main attraction to take center stage: breathtaking views of the farm, bluegum trees, a serene lake and lush vineyards. More cottages are slated to open by next year.

DRINK Thokozani has launched several brands, including its newer Ovation label, but its trademark wine remains a rich coffee and chocolate Pinotage. Thokozani.co.za

EXTRA SPECIAL For another dose of do-good delights, hop over to nearby **Bosman Family Vineyards** and taste the third oldest chenin blanc in the country, in a majestic 18th-century wine cellar. Also a fair-trade and inclusive-ownership model, Bosman man supports the Adama foundation, which funds a community center—all the teachers there were once farm workers—a transport system for laborers, sport clubs and scholarships. Bosman also opened a lovely new branch in Hermanus last December. BosmanWines.com



Delaire Graff

Delaire Graff Estate

FOR AVOWED AESTHETES

As if the winelands weren't beautiful enough, diamond mogul and philanthropist Laurence Graff upped the ante by adding one glorious ingredient to the winning wine-food-grounds recipe: art. The gorgeous grounds of his feted **Delaire Graff Estate**, bursting with lush color, thanks to over 350 indigenous plants and reflective pools, doubles as a museum, showing off dynamic paintings and sculptures by Ndikhumbule Ngqinambi, Dylan Lewis, Lionel Smit and Hank Willis Thomas—pieces so powerful, they refuse to simply blend in. Savor the vineyard views and the full-on, faraway shadow of Table Mountain from the infinity pool, book an evening at the plush eight-seat cinema, or go shopping at the Graff Diamond store and such designer shops as 100% Capri, which makes white linen look like a million bucks.

EAT Even the food at Delaire Graff is art—a designer greenhouse on my plate. At the Delaire Graff restaurant, I sampled brassicas and curds, beef tartar, Mauritian seabass and quinoa risotto; the waitlist is so long here—for good reason, I affirm—that the property built a grill house section for walk-ins. At Indochine, located in the spa and cottages area, there was tikka lamb with scotch egg, vindaloo of local seafood and larb of guinea fowl. My breakfast there—eggs royale with caviar and edible flowers—was so gorgeous I don't want to touch it; accompanied by fresh-baked scones and carrot pineapple juice, it was a heavenly start to the day.



STAY Six cottages feature luxe décor, including private sundecks with heated pools; four more and a villa are currently under construction. The best part of waking up there: a sunrise hike

through chardonnay vines to Leopard's Landing, where I swore I could see right into my Cape Town flat from such glorious heights.

DRINK Delaire Graff wines, especially its chardonnays, chenin blancs, and semillon/sauvignon blancs (sourced from across the country's wine regions), are a mainstay on South African menus; I'm partial to the oh-so-drinkable Estate Cabernet Franc rosé and the Delaire Graff Sunrise Brut sparkling wine. Enjoy these in the lavish wine lounge, with its copper roof, teak floor and full-length glass walls. But even more special was my sunset gin tasting with Kyle the charming sommelier, who seemed lifted from an Agatha Christie novel (mustache and all). I gleefully discovered two of my new favorite spirits: Inverroche Amber Gin, flavored with spicy botanicals, and Hope of Hopkins, an SA-hipster favorite.

EXTRA SPECIAL Delaire Graff's spa is beloved for its massage therapies and such skin treatments as Diamond Tip Microdermabrasion. I fell in love with it for its healer-in-charge, the guru Hildegard, who gave me a reflexology treatment that connected mind and body in a once-in-a-lifetime fashion. Delaire.co.za

BONUS TIP: Visit the winelands during Cape Town summer, in January and February. You'll get to experience harvest season and a host of musical events taking place under vines and stars; Boschendal throws picnics with live local acts and Thokozani was hosting opera singers the night after I was there. This also nicely times your visit with the two sexiest, most fabulous horse races on the Continent: the **L'Ormerins Queens Plate** (Lqp.co.za), which makes the Kentucky Derby look shabby, and the **Sun Met** (Sunmet.co.za), billed as the richest race in Africa (this year Usain Bolt was its designated King of Bubbles, and I confirm that he indeed earned that title). To ensure you're fully catered to during your stay, connecting with bespoke luxury concierge service **VIP South Africa** is a must (VIP-SouthAfrica.com).