

PERFECT BLEND

The Cape Winelands has always been known for its fine wines and relaxed lifestyle. Now it's also hailed as a world-class golfing destination

BY BEN KARPINSKI

The return of the Investec South African Open to Stellenbosch Golf Course this month is further evidence of the advance the Cape region's golf courses. After last hosting the event in 1999, this iconic Winelands golf club welcomes a strong DP World Tour field to challenge for SA's most sought-after golfing trophy.

This month we look at this spectacular region of the Cape, and how you best to enjoy it on a future golfing trip.

<crosshead>Where old meets new

The history of wine production in the Cape dates as far back as 1659, but it was the French Huguenots who settled in Franschoek in the late 17th century who really made the industry way more palatable and celebrated. In doing so, they set in motion the establishment of the Winelands around Stellenbosch.

From this region comes one of South Africa's oldest clubs, and some newer ones that have become firm favourites to both locals and visitors from all over the world.

STELLENBOSCH GOLF CLUB

Originally founded in 1904, Stellenbosch is one of South Africa's oldest and most loved golf clubs. A traditional parkland gem with mountain views, its holes are lined by old oak and indigenous trees, while its connection to the local vineyards and fynbos round off its aesthetic appeal.

ATTRACTIONS OUTSIDE OF GOLF

The Ernie Els Winery

There is an endless list of wineries that you could visit in the Cape Winelands, but if you are on a golfing trip, the Ernie Els Winery is something of a must do.

Modern, contemporary and wonderfully inviting, not only can visitors enjoy an extensive portfolio of award-winning wines in the tasting room, but there is also the trophy room which is sure to impress any golfer.

Their restaurant provides another attraction, and pairs wonderfully with some of the best views you will find at any winery in the area.



More than half of the 50 000+ rounds at the club each year are enjoyed by visitors, and when arriving and looking over course from the clubhouse it is easy to instantly understand why: Stellenbosch just has the feel of a place where you want to spend the day.

For the club's centenary in 2004, new greens were laid to ensure the course could move with the times and they now present challenges and 'playability' to all levels of the game. Additional trees have been planted in the last 15 years to further enhance the parkland feel.

DE ZALZE GOLF CLUB

De Zalze is a little piece of paradise in the winelands where wine and golf merge. The course is part of an iconic golfing estate with the Kleine Zalze Wine Estate tasting centre and restaurant just a short chip from the greens and fairways.

Reflecting all the charm and beauty of the region, the course is a modern Peter Matkovich masterpiece. The Blaauwklippen River runs through the property, fitting naturally into the layout, with large dams on both nines creating some of the most dramatic holes.

The most memorable of all the holes is perhaps the par-four 18th. From an elevated tee, the finishing hole is drivable for the longer hitters. With spectacular views of the mountains, the river and inviting clubhouse beyond the green, it is nothing short of mesmerising for everyone.

Sundowners at Strand

From Stellenbosch, the beach at Strand is only a 30-minute drive away. The peak summer months, when the sun sets nice and late, are an ideal opportunity for some great late afternoon outdoor activities, as well as some spectacular dining options as the sun sets in the direction of Cape Town.

Stellenbosch

Then, obviously, there is the town of Stellenbosch itself. Whether you are looking to start your day at an eclectic breakfast spot, or a vibey local coffee shop, the town is packed with art galleries and institutions – like Oom Samie Se Winkel – to explore. As a student town, there is also no shortage of nightlife attractions, along with some fine dining establishments.

WHERE TO BASE YOURSELF

The town of Stellenbosch alone makes this a worthwhile trip, and that gives you the perfect base to access the three courses mentioned, while also allowing for relatively short trips further afield should you want to add more winelands golf in Paarl or Franschhoek.

De Zalze

De Zalze offers a superb play-and-stay option. There are two separate lodges to choose from, alongside the 1st and 10th



ERINVALLE

Moving towards Somerset West and the False Bay coast, another golfing attraction in the region is Erinvale. Opened in 1995, the initial plan for Erinvale was to be a pioneering golf estate in the area, but the initial plans were not for an overly special course wise.

Gary Player, however, had a different idea. He convinced the developers to go big and allow him to design a proper championship layout and it was a plan that put the estate on the map.

In November 1996 the course enjoyed worldwide television coverage when the new course hosted the World Cup of Golf, with Ernie Els and Wayne Westner storming to a famous team win for South Africa on the breathtaking layout.

Situated on the slopes of the Helderberg mountains overlooking Somerset West, the back nine in particular is where the design really leaves a lasting impression with some spectacular sea views.

Having gone on to host the men's and women's South African Opens, it is well known as a stern test for the best in the game. It does however present itself as a more than playable experience for all levels of golfers from the various tee boxes.

SHAUN ROY | SUNSHINE TOUR | CARL FOURIE | ERNIE ELS WINERY | DEZALZE GOLF CLUB



holes respectively, each providing easy access to the clubhouse and dining venues of the estate.

Majeka House Boutique Hotel

Majeka House, with its in-house spa and dining options, is something to consider, particularly for a more "special-occasion" trip. No matter the reason, you have everything you need here in their comfortable suites, along with being close to both the De Zalze and Stellenbosch courses.

Rozenburg Guest House

For something that puts Stellenbosch's restaurants and bars within walking distance, Rozenburg Guest House is the perfect bed-and-breakfast accommodation. For more affordable options there are many places around the town that will make for an enjoyable base.

GETTING THERE

For out of towners and international golfers, the major hub of Cape Town International Airport is the main starting point. Stellenbosch, with its surplus of accommodation options, restaurants and proximity to well-known wine estates, is just a 35-minute drive from the airport, while Erinvale is just a few minutes longer.