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CAPE TOWN

Its stunningly beautiful setting and dramatic history have long made this South African city a place of fascination, but now it is coming into its own as a style destination.

BY SARAH KHAN



Cape Town's natural beauty—soaring cliffs that tumble down to the ivory beaches of the Atlantic coast and a skyline presided over by majestic Table Mountain—has always been its finest feature. “This Cape is a most stately thing, and the fairest Cape we saw in the whole circumference of the earth,” explorer Sir Francis Drake wrote in 1580. Embedded in the city's hills and shorelines is an alluring, motley mix of Victorian, Georgian, neoclassical, Art Deco, and Cape Dutch architecture and undulating, palm-shaded boulevards.

For a simple (and delicious) lesson in Cape Town's rich and varied history, head to the Bo-Kaap quarter, a cheerful medley of marigold, violet, and chartreuse buildings that is home to the city's Muslim community. There you'll find *bobotie*, or baked mincemeat; *dhaltjies*, deep-fried chile bites; *samoosas*, or filled puff pastries; and *melk porring*, a baked milk pudding, all cooking in the neighbor-

hood's kitchens. The origins of these dishes are as diverse as their names: a confluence of Dutch recipes encountering African ingredients, laced with Indonesian and Malaysian spices, and tweaked with dashes of Indian, English, and French influences.

This unlikely mix of cultures began commingling as far back as the 17th century, thousands of miles from Europe and Asia, at the far-flung tip of the African continent. But the city's melting pot has been far from idyllic. South Africa's native black populations were subjugated for centuries, culminating in the horrors of nearly five decades of apartheid. This year, even as South Africa celebrates 20 years of freedom, it still strives to unburden itself of the ugly legacy of forced segregation.

With Cape Town designated the World Design Capital of 2014, its creative vanguard is faced with a complex mission: to implement >

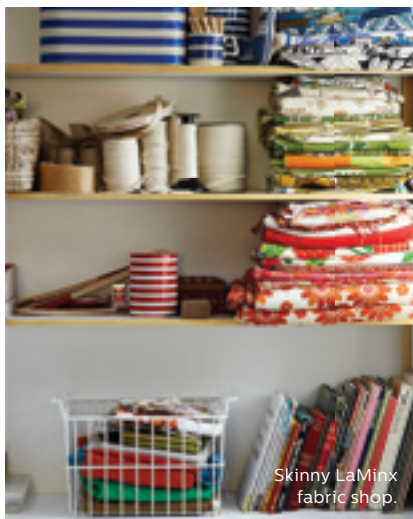
CAPE TOWN



Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden.



Alexandra Höjer Atelier clothing boutique.



Skinny LaMinx fabric shop.



Brightly colored houses in the Bo-Kaap neighborhood.

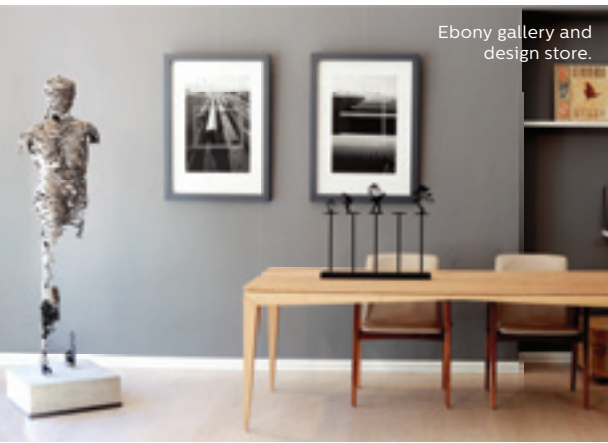


A room at the Babylonstoren guesthouse in the Winelands region.

inspired design that breaks down the divides that linger from apartheid. “Cape Town itself is quite fragmented,” says celebrated architect Luyanda Mphahla, who returned to the city in 2000 after 15 years in Germany. “It has its own charm, its own character, and its own rich fabric. You don’t want to destroy that, but you don’t want a city in Africa that doesn’t integrate all its people.”

While Cape Town is still a work in progress, throughout the city you can catch glimpses of why South Africa now calls itself the Rainbow Nation. On any given Saturday, a cross section of Cape Town’s most stylish residents converges upon a decidedly unchic swath of Albert Road in Woodstock, a gritty district on the fringes of town that has become the city’s creative hub. At the weekly Neighbourgoods Market, local artisans ply organic honey, cured meats, and handmade leather goods to an eclectic mix of patrons clad in head scarves, Afros, and skinny jeans, with piercings galore. The market is housed in a Victorian factory that was restored by Justin Rhodes, who moved to Cape Town from the United States a decade ago, when the city was hovering in a postapartheid, prerennaissance lull. “It was quite underdeveloped, especially in the creative industries,” he recalls. “There weren’t that many people getting off their butts and doing anything.” With his Zimbabwe-born partner, Cameron Munro, he opted to do something himself: The couple founded Neighbourgoods, as well as an art gallery called WhatiftheWorld, helping to spark the district’s rejuvenation. Today, Albert Road is lined with artists’ studios, co-ops, and restaurants (including Luke Dale-Roberts’s The Test Kitchen, the most coveted reservation in town). The walls of the residential neighborhood just off the main street are frescoed with striking, larger-than-life murals. ▷

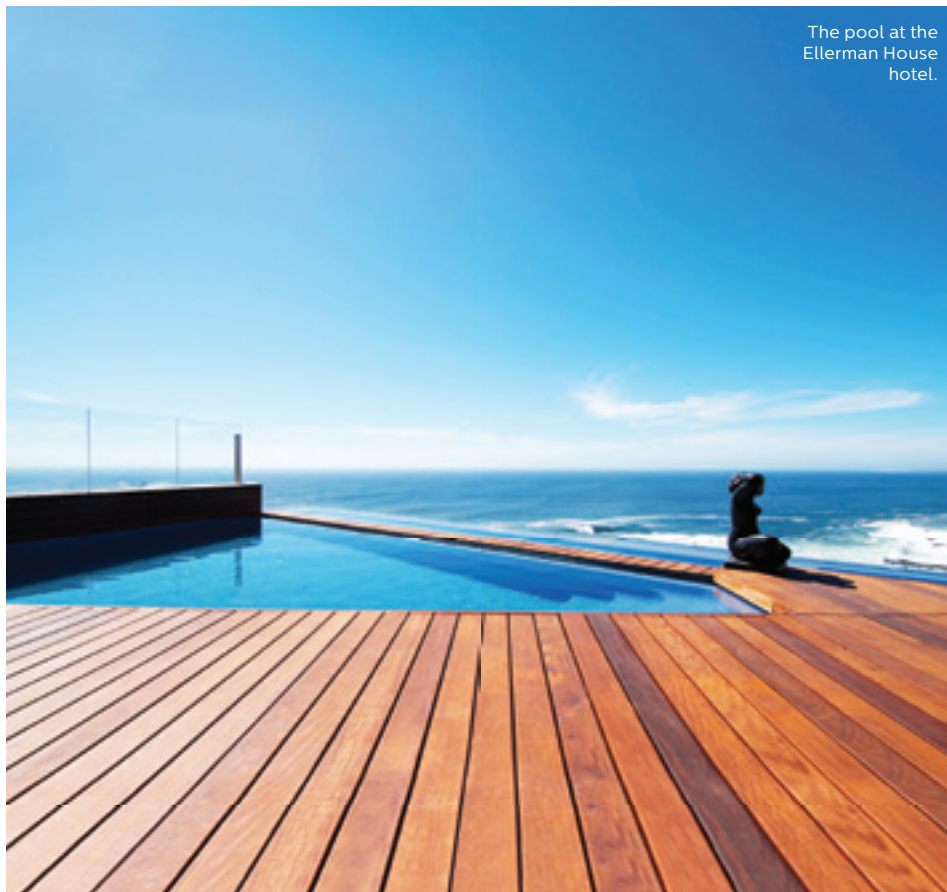
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: © GARY EASTWOOD PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY; WARREN HEATH/FRANK FEATURES; KRISTINGLADNEY/OFFSET.COM; MICKY HOYLE/VISI/MAGAZINE; LAR LESLIE



Ebony gallery and design store.



The dining room at Le Quartier Français hotel in Winelands.



The pool at the Ellerman House hotel.

Trailblazing projects are popping up in other neighborhoods as well. At the bustling Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, the most visited site on the continent, work has begun on the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa. A historic grain silo building is being converted into a world-class showcase for African art. The museum is scheduled to open in 2016; meanwhile, visitors can take in highlights at a pop-up pavilion near the iconic Cape Grace hotel.

In Cape Town, businesses are often small and unorthodox. Young entrepreneurs feel no qualms about housing varied and unlikely businesses under the same roof. It's not unusual, for instance, to find a motorcycle workshop combined with a coffeehouse (there are at least two), or a café inside a furniture store, such as Pedersen + Lennard. One unique venture called I Love My Laundry is a combination Laundromat, art gallery, wine shop, and restaurant, with such festive events as a weekly fondue party.

"People are keen on opening something quirky," says Reuben Riffel, one of the city's most celebrated chefs. "They're not merely cooking food that they know everyone expects and enjoys. The attitude is, 'Let's challenge them and do something completely different.'"

In the Bo-Kaap enclave, for example, artist and designer François Irvine opened Haas Design Collective as a contemporary art gallery in 2010, then added a premium coffee shop as well as his own advertising agency, all within the same building.

While this sort of entrepreneurial fusion might seem indicative of a new trend, these multipart businesses are just the latest manifestation of Cape Town's rich heritage. After all, this is a city that, for hundreds of years, has taken a little bit of this and a little bit of that, blending it all into a flavorful concoction. ■



Mondiall restaurant.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HENRIQUE WILDING; COURTESY OF ROSS HILLIER; KAREN HAACK; COURTESY OF LE QUARTIER FRANÇAIS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW

ESSENTIAL CAPE TOWN

The country code is 27.

Take a hike. The 360-degree views from the summit of Table Mountain are sublime. The adventurous can hike to the top; for the less hardy, there are cable cars that ascend regularly, weather permitting.

Round the cape. A requisite for all visitors is the half-day drive around the Cape Peninsula, encompassing the fishing village of Kalk Bay, Boulders Beach (where penguins sunbathe), and the stunning views at Cape Point and Chapman's Peak.

Raise a glass. Winelands, South Africa's famed wine region, is only a 45-minute drive away. Highlights include Babylonstoren (babylonstoren.com), a chic farm resort; Overture at Hidden Valley (www.dineatoverture.co.za), one of the country's top restaurants; and Le Quartier Français (lqf.co.za), a luxurious guesthouse with its own celebrated art gallery.

Think creatively. Woodstock, the artistic heart of Cape Town, is the site of the weekly Neighbourgoods Market (neighbourgoodsmarket.co.za), Woodstock Exchange (woodstockexchange.co.za), and WhatiftheWorld Gallery (whatiftheworld.com). Many houses along the lanes to the west of Albert Road feature vibrant murals.

WHAT TO SEE

District Six Museum, 25A Buitenkant St., 021-466-7200; districtsix.co.za: A heartbreaking homage—made up of

photographs, artifacts, and oral histories—to the residents of a multicultural neighborhood displaced by forced removals at the onset of apartheid.

Kirstenbosch, Rhodes Dr., 021-799-8783; sanbi.org/gardens/kirstenbosch: This beautiful botanical garden lies on the slopes of Table Mountain and is home to more than 7,000 species.

Robben Island, 021-409-5100; robben-island.org.za: The notorious prison where Nelson Mandela spent 18 years is a boat ride away from the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront. Tours are given by former inmates.

Youngblood Arts & Culture Development, 70-72 Bree St., 021-424-0074; ybafricanculture.com: This organization's Beautiful Life building is a multiuse space that showcases rotating exhibitions and cultural events. An on-site restaurant, Beautiful Food, serves light dishes.

WHERE TO STAY

Cape Cadogan, 5 Upper Union St., 021-480-8080; capecadogan.co.za: This lovely 15-room hotel in a stately 19th-century Georgian building is steps from busy Kloof Street's restaurants and shops.

Cape Grace, West Quay Rd., V&A Waterfront, 021-410-7100; capegrace.com: An elegant grande dame hotel with 120 nautical-inspired rooms and a bar that boasts one of the largest whiskey collections in the country.

Ellerman House, 180 Kloof Rd., 021-430-3200; ellerman.co.za: A brand-

new three-bedroom villa with a 7,500-bottle wine gallery occupies this oceanfront property in the exclusive Bantry Bay neighborhood.

The Marly, 201 The Promenade, Victoria Rd., 021-437-1287; themarly.co.za: This 11-suite boutique hotel in the posh Camps Bay suburb overlooks a dazzling beach.

One&Only Cape Town, Dock Rd., V&A Waterfront, 021-431-5888; capetown.oneandonlyresorts.com: Each of this hotel's 131 spacious, Adam Tihany-designed suites has a balcony with views of Table Mountain.

Taj Cape Town, Wale St., 021-819-2000; tajcapetown.co.za: Located in the central business district, this 176-room hotel has a stunning lobby, a remnant of its past life as a bank.

WHERE TO EAT

I Love My Laundry, 14 Bree St., 073-939-7619; ilovemylaundry.co.za: Drop off your laundry, order dim sum, and check out some art at this quirky hybrid restaurant.

Mondiall, Alfred Mall, V&A Waterfront, 021-418-3003; mondiall.co.za: This new brasserie by local chef Peter Tempelhoff offers global fare, from ceviche to steak frites to buffalo wings.

Reuben's, Dock Rd., V&A Waterfront, 021-431-5800; reubens.co.za: Chef Reuben Riffel's bistro at the One&Only hotel has an Asian-fusion menu.

Royale, 273 Long St., 021-422-4536; royaleeatery.com: Widely considered Cape Town's best burger joint, with

more than 50 decadent offerings.

Societi Bistro, 50 Orange St., 021-424-2100; societi.co.za: Set in a rambling old house, this intimate eatery is a favorite among locals.

The Test Kitchen, 375 Albert Rd., 021-447-2337; thetestkitchen.co.za: The innovative Luke Dale-Roberts has won accolades for his refined five- and nine-course tasting menus.

WHERE TO SHOP

Afraid of Mice, 86 Long St., 021-423-7353; afraidofmice.com: This popular vintage shop carries hard-to-find pieces from Chanel, Halston, Marc Jacobs, and others.

Alexandra Höjer Atelier, 156 Bree St., 021-424-1674; alexandrahojer.com: Swedish designer Höjer prints her own fabrics for her men's and women's clothing lines.

Avoova, 97 Bree St., 021-422-1620; avoova.com: Every item in the store—from bangles to dishware to picture frames—is delicately embellished with shards of ostrich-egg shells.

Charlie.H, Ravenscraig Mews, Ravenscraig Rd., Woodstock, 076-966-1084; charlieh.biz: Designer Charlie Hilltout sells her lavishly printed kimonos, wraps, and towels out of this homey studio.

Ebony, 67 Loop St., 021-424-9985; ebonydesign.co.za: A combination gallery and design store with a carefully curated selection of furniture and artwork by South Africans.

Haas Design Collective, 67 Rose St., 021-422-4413; haascollective.com: Works of art are scattered on every visible surface at this gallery in the Bo-Kaap neighborhood.

MeMeMe, 117A Long St., 021-424-0001; mememe.co.za: Owned by avant-garde designer Doreen Southwood, MeMeMe is one-stop shopping for the hottest indie labels from Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Missibaba/Kirsten Goss, 229 Bree St., 021-424-8127; missibaba.com, kirstengoss.com: Designer Chloe Townsend, whose buttery-soft handmade leather bags have a cult following, has teamed up with jewelry designer Kirsten Goss to open this joint boutique.

Pedersen + Lennard, Woodstock Exchange, 66 Albert Rd., 021-447-2020; pedersenlennard.co.za: Minimalist, modern wood furniture and lighting by two local craftsmen.

Skinny LaMinx, 201 Bree St., 021-424-6290; skinnylaminx.com: Illustrator Heather Moore prints her distinctive whimsical patterns onto fabrics that are fashioned into everything from cushions and tea towels to aprons and table runners.

The restaurant at the Taj Cape Town hotel.

