



GRANDE PROVENCE WINE ESTATE SOUTH AFRICA

By Bronwen Gora



The Jonkershuis

Mentioning 'luxury lodge' and 'South Africa' in the same sentence evokes images of chandelier-bedecked safari camps where wildlife is the star of the show. This is why Grande Provence, an historic wine estate 45 minutes from Cape Town near Franschhoek, stands apart. Here its food, wine and premium accommodation taking centre stage over lions, elephants and giraffes. At this retreat, indulgences involve relaxing, imbibing and simply enjoying life amid a serene setting of vineyards and expansive grounds as opposed to bumping around in a safari truck all day.

Grande Provence estate, established in 1694, is now one of South Africa's leading destinations since coming into the ownership of Huka Retreats founder Alex Van Heeren. He has applied to this 300-year-old property the same talent for transforming isolated places into heavenly retreats that he did to New Zealand's lauded Huka Lodge and Fiji's Dolphin Island. Huka Retreats prides itself on excelling at understated style, elegance and discrete service, and the swag of awards and glowing reviews this South African destination has received are testament to his success.

Arrivees receive an indication of the lavish comforts awaiting them the minute they drive onto the property. The road through the estate leading to the main lodge reveals beautiful scenes of trees and vineyards before the impressive white walled complex appears. Accommodation comes in the form of two plush 'cottages' – the Owner's Cottage and La Provencale for larger groups and families. The Owner's cottage has a private pool and spa, and La Provencale a plunge pool among its lovely garden. Mr van Heeren engaged New Zealand interior designer Virginia Fisher to reinvent both cottages, the woman who rose to fame after bringing her vision to the once simple settlement of Huka Lodge on NZ's North Island. Now open for 20 years, it is still rated one of the world's premium hideaways. Ms Fisher has indeed again worked her magic here on the other side of the world, filling rooms with the kind of décor that one traveller commented was so gorgeous it made them want to take everything home in their suitcase.

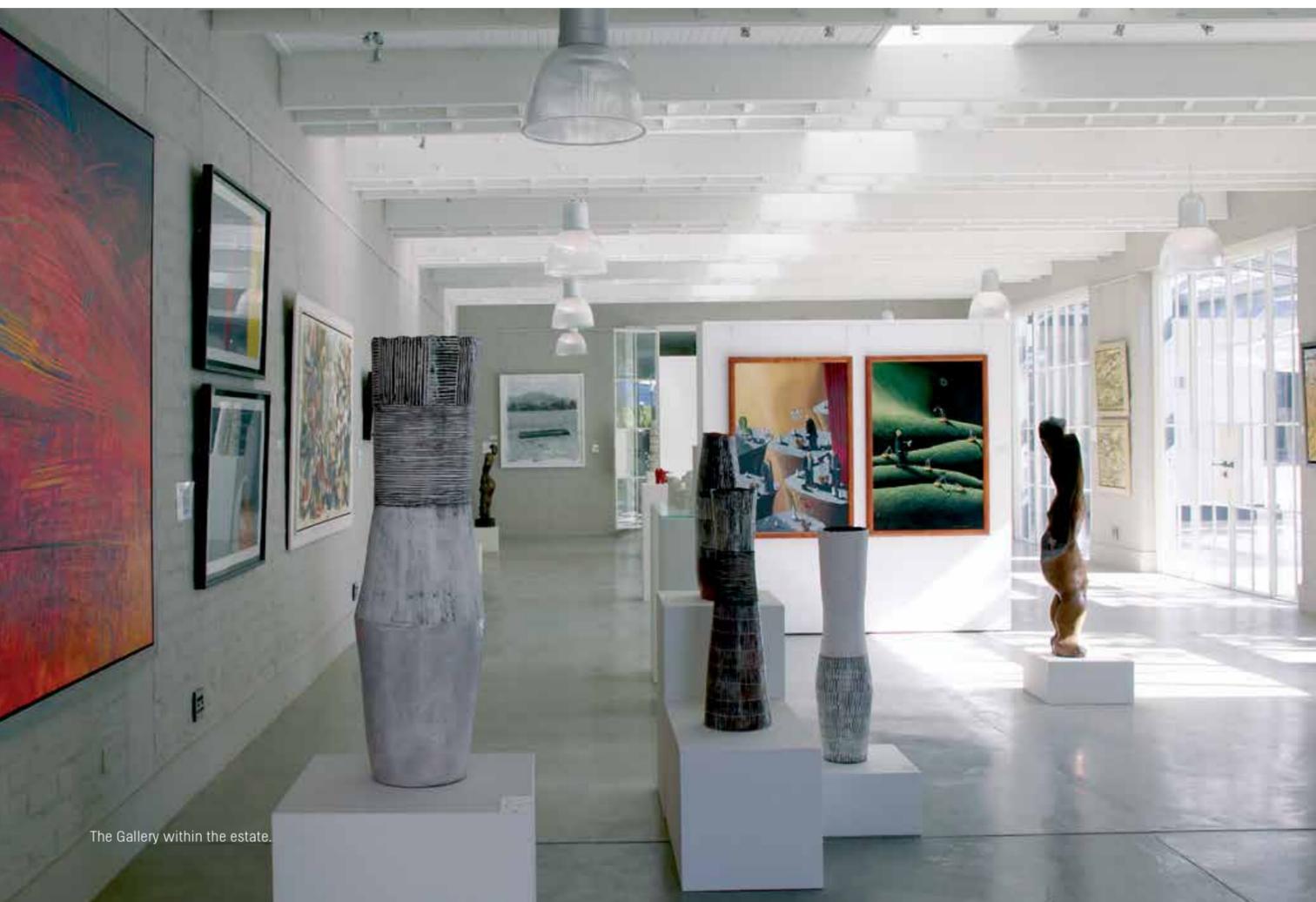
Grande Provence's restaurant serves award-winning menus guided by executive chef, Australian ex-pat Darren Roberts who has introduced such decadence as slow roasted Karoo



The Owner's Cottage at Grande Provence



Vineyards views from the manor house.



The Gallery within the estate.

lamb neck and truffle tiramisu to his offerings. The wine is of course fabulous, made by a passionate team whose work has delivered Grande Provence numerous accolades over the years. Indeed the estate has been winning top awards ever since its first flagship wine, Grande Provence 2004 was launched in October 2007. The collection comprises pinot noir/chenin blanc, sauvignon blanc, chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, shiraz and a muscat D'Alexandre Dessert Wine. As well as lodging Grande Provence is famous for its leading art gallery. Complete with a sculpture garden, both feature works from South Africa's leading as well as emerging artists, alongside a shop selling fine African artefacts and designer jewellery.

The lavish Owner's Cottage is set within expansive grounds and positioned to take in vistas of the surrounding landscape of rolling hills, valleys and rugged mountains in the distance.

Within the Owner's Cottage are four double rooms with en suites and the added luxury of a deluxe suite filled with elegant furnishings in shades of white. A covered patio with a dining setting looks out over the manicured lawn to the glittering private pool surrounded by deck chairs. Special packages designed just for the Owner's Cottage focus on the exceptional food and wine to be experienced here. Indulgences contained within a two night stay are an eight course degustation and on the other evening, a pre dinner complimentary glass of the estate's Wine of the Month with canapés and a bespoke Chef's Table dinner. Guests are also delivered one of the wineries best sauvignon blancs, a gourmet picnic hamper, a special food and wine pairing experience or an 18-hole round of golf at Pearl Valley. Relaxation is paramount and guests are treated to an in-room couples spa session and full body massages.



The Restaurant at Grande Provence



The Owner's Cottage conservatory lounge.



Vineyards at Grande Provence

An even larger private cottage, La Provencale, is also part of Grande Provence's offerings. Larger, with two more bedrooms plus en suites, it is suited to families and larger groups who can avail themselves of the shared sitting room. This lodge is also surrounded by private grounds and features a plunge pool.

Packages aside, guests can at any time visit the world-renown French restaurant, consistently voted among South Africa's best. Discretion is a hallmark of Huka Retreats resulting in many private dining areas also being available around the estate.

If guests manage to pull themselves away from the comfort of their cosy cottage or restaurant table, the town of Franschhoek nearby is a good place to seek distraction, not to mention a place to walk around and build up the appetite again. As the central town surrounded by a valley of more than 50 wineries, Franschhoek offers everything to entertain a traveller from cafes and designer shops to a cheese and wine emporium. But be warned: resisting filling your bags with even more to eat and drink will prove just as difficult as not trying every morsel and tippie offered by the gracious hosts at Grande Provence.

To book your stay at Grande Provence contact Unique Estates on 1300 911 720 or email: info@uniqueestates.com.au