

Escape

WHEN you've 'done' Cape Town, it's time to go on a road trip along the famous Garden Route (aka Wine Route), taking in Franschhoek, Knysna and Hermanus, before returning to the Mother City.

If you were to drive the Garden Route in its entirety without stopping, you'd get it covered in a day. But there's no fun in that - there's far too many wonderful wine estates to be visited along the way, and bottles to be sunk. And you'd be hard pushed to spend more than €10 on a good bottle of vino in any of the top restaurants along the way.

Once you have left the hustle and bustle of Cape Town, spend a week enjoying the lush winelands, seaside towns, awesome mountain scenery, forest, nature and wildlife along the Garden Route.

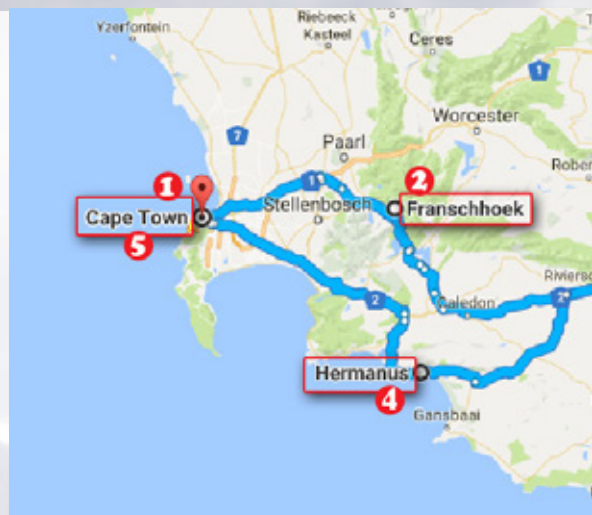
My advice would be to spend two nights in Franschhoek, four or five in Knysna, and one night in Hermanus, before returning to Cape Town.

I have picked out my favourite

There's so much more beyond Cape Town - the finest wine, food, nature and adventure, writes **Fay Brophy**

accommodation options here, but check out Expedia.ie for hundreds more to suit all budgets. Smaller guest houses along this route are especially good value, at about €50 a night.

In Knysna, also check out Teniqua Treetops (www.teniquatreetops.co.za). At this environmentally-friendly accommodation experience, guests eat, sleep and shower in their own personal tent-houses on platforms in trees high above the forest canopy. A haven for nature lovers, Teniqua is less than an hour's drive from Plettenberg Bay and costs about €110 a night. +



Leave th

CAPE TOWN - FRANSCHHOEK 81km/1hr 10m

OF all the world-famous wine-producing towns (Stellenbosch, Paarl, Montagu) in the Western Cape, Franschhoek is the most beautiful one to visit. Known as the food and drink capital of South Africa, it's the country's oldest town - great shopping too.

Stay: Le Franschhoek

www.lefranschhoek.co.za

For luxury, check out Le Franschhoek Hotel and Spa. Rooms are from €160, but pre-plan and book through Expedia.ie at the same time as flights to get discounts and upgrades.

Eat: Grande Provence Heritage Wine Estate

www.grandeprovence.co.za

With lush vines covering 47 acres of Franschhoek's scenic valley, award-winning wines and a restaurant that has earned the reputation for being one of South Africa's finest, a visit to Grande Provence Wine Estate is a must.

The 18th Century Manor House is steeped in Huguenot history, but the restaurant is chic and modern. Book in for lunch and prepare to talk about nothing but the food for days after.

Along with being one of the country's top chefs, Executive chef Darren Bodenhof has a flair for art and science. The kitchen genius knows how to work the land too - he burns old vine trimmings to smoke trout and collects flowers, herbs and fruits which grow between the vines to use throughout his menus.

If Grande Provence was in Ireland, you'd pay about €75 a head for lunch, but in its homestead you can have the finest dining experience for just €26.



Grande Provence

Do: Franschhoek Wine Tram

€13 www.winetramp.co.za

Taste the best wines of the valley's centuries-old vineyards and absorb the incredible scenery on the hop-on, hop-off tram tour. Take the blue line and, as part of the tour, enjoy The Tastes of Grande Provence (€10, includes five wines). To tutor your palate, trained staff will guide you through the wine-tasting process with delicious canapés matched to GP wines from Grande Provence Estate. You can also learn how to blend your own wine.

CLIMATE

CHRISTMAS time is peak summer in Cape Town, and temperatures average between 25°C and 30°C, with 11 hours of sunshine daily. It is also the time when strong south-eastern winds visit. The sun sets early, at about 6.50pm, which is when locals and visitors enjoy their 'sundowner' drinks.



Wine at Grande Provence



Franschhoek Wine Tram

FRANSCHHOEK - KNYSNA 432km

FOR African adventure, pa the place. Surfers and sun Buffalo Bay beach, nature Featherbed Nature Reserve visit the Elephant Park and sanctuary.

Stay: Emily Moor

www.emilymoon.co.za

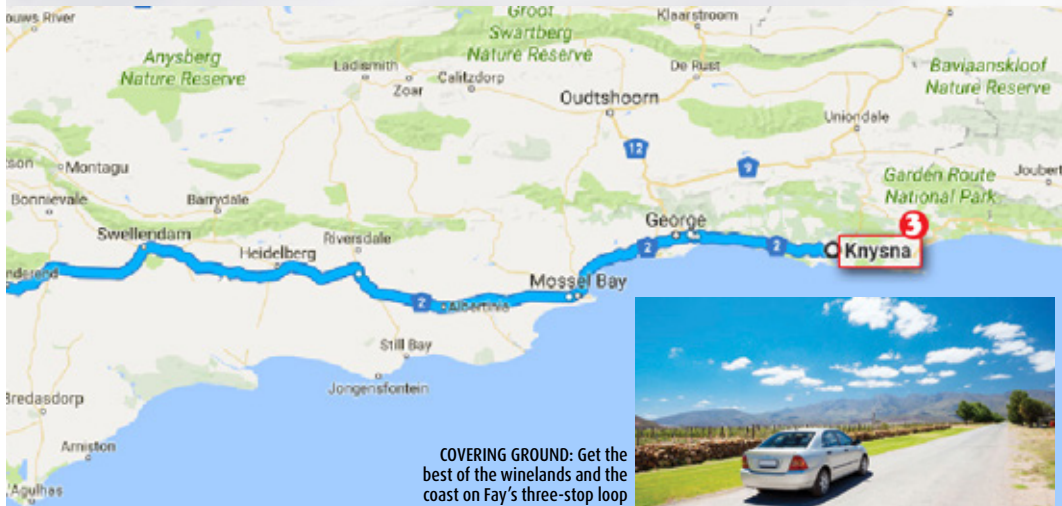
On the banks of the Bi Plettenberg Bay, Emily Moor exclusive, quirky African b made up of six self-cateri in an indigenous garden, ' ping views of the river and Family-owned-and-run, th tranquil paradise that will warmest of welcomes. Pri €110pp over the Christm

Eat: Emily Moor Restaurant

You don't have to go f accommodation to find th experience in Knysna. Mo produce is grown in the L the rest is sourced locally farmers. The menu, like th is a work of art - dishes lik rack, Wildebeest loin, Kar pork belly for meat lovers mussels, and veg and veg

Above the restaurant i is the best place to watch valley. It's vibe is totally la It also serves more casual pizzas, and killer cocktails

In Plettenberg Bay, drc for a super-sized portion c calamari and chips that'll



COVERING GROUND: Get the best of the winelands and the coast on Fay's three-stop loop

YOUR MONEY

IN South Africa, your euro goes VERY far. The best value is food and drink. Eat out like the locals in excellent neighbourhood restaurants for €10-€12 (including wine). If you want to push the boat out, expect to pay €50-€65 in the city's top eateries and hotels. A bottle of beer costs less than €2, and a good bottle of wine in a restaurant will set you back about €8. A big glass of champagne is €5.

Taxis are excellent value, but Uber is even better. It's well worth downloading the app before you go.

The Victoria and Alfred Waterfront is South Africa's most popular shopping destination, but it is very expensive as all the top brands are imported, so don't expect bargains there. Instead, stick to local brands and products.

At the time of going to press, €1 would get you 15.45 South African rand.

the city behind...

TOEK A m/4hr 30m

Paradise-like Knysna is a must-visit for nature-lovers and animal lovers alike. Monkeyland primate

1 River Lodge

On the river, 7km from the Knysna River Lodge is an boutique hotel, offering lodges set with jaw-dropping views of the wetlands. This place is a gem. I give you the best of both worlds as per period.

Far from your usual dining experience, the best of the fresh produce is served in the lodge's garden, from organic to dining room, the Karoo lamb and beef and, alongside fresh fish, are options. I give you the best of both worlds as per period.

Step into The Fish Shop and you'll find a melt-in-your-mouth set you back just €3.



Knysna Elephant Park



Emily Moon Restaurant

Do: Elephant Experience €37 www.knysnaelephantpark.co.za

Take a walk with elephants at the Knysna Elephant Park, which houses and cares for orphaned and rescued African elephants. Learn about the plight of these gentle giants, and the important role the park has played in formulating regulations and guidelines for captive elephants throughout South Africa. They roam free here as there are no fences.

KNYSNA - HERMANUS 411km/4hr 15m

DURING South Africa's winter, Hermanus is famous for Southern Right whale-watching. The majestic mammals don't visit at Christmas time, but don't let that put you off staying a night or two in this gorgeous seaside village.

Stay: Lavender Manor Guesthouse

€60-€70 www.expedia.ie

Located on Hermanus beach, this wonderful luxury, affordable and welcoming guesthouse has an outdoor pool, two bars and even a rooftop terrace on which you can sip a sundowner as you watch incredible views of the sun setting over the Atlantic.

Eat: Mogg's Country Cookhouse

www.moggscookhouse.com

Mother-and-daughter team, Jenny and Julia Mogg, serve up the best of wholesome country cooking in a tranquil rural setting in the beautiful Hemel-en-Aarde (Heaven and Earth) Valley just outside Hermanus. It's incredible value, with starters from €2.50 and mains from €5.



Mogg's Country Cookhouse



Heart of Abalone

Do: Abalone Tour

€7.50 www.heartofabalone.co.za

Abalone, the shellfish delicacy, is also used to make mother of pearl jewellery. The valuable commodity is an integral part of life in Hermanus. Visit the Heart of Abalone hatchery, a working abalone farm, to learn all about it, taste it and even buy jewellery made using the rare abalone marble pearls.

HERMANUS - CAPE TOWN 121km/1hr 40m

- If you're travelling to South Africa, there's so much to see and do, so get pre-planning to get great deals. You'll find the most up-to-date discount flights and cheap airline tickets, hotel deals and car rental, every day on Expedia.ie.
- Book a flight and hotel or apartment

GETTING THERE

on Expedia.ie and save more...and spend it on fun stuff. Check out the Things To Do in Cape Town section on the website, and book in advance to get the best bargains.