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Getting buzzed in Montagu

Jared Ruttenberg

Route 62 is informally known as the longest wine route in the world, and while the region produces sublime wine, there's a lot more to explore. One of the best ways to do this is to spend a night or two in the charming towns along the route.

Shortly after Roberston, take a detour off the road and follow the impressive natural rock tunnel towards Montagu.

This entrance to town is perhaps one of the best places to see the impressive Cape Fold mountains. Stop at the lay-by and climb the stairs to the fort. From the top of the 100-year fort, the views of the folded and faulted Langeberg mountains are spellbinding.

Montagu is not your usual country *dorp* – it's a place that proudly wears its history in its architecture, and there are few better ways to experience this up close and personal than with a Flying Feet Tour.

Vivacious Marchelle van Zyl is the owner, guiding guests through the town's history and charm on her bicycle tours. Not only does she know everything about the town, but everyone in it. There wasn't a person we passed she didn't know. (flyingfeet.co.za)

Another character is hotelier PJ Basson, who stands at the helm of the Montagu Country Hotel – famously known as South Africa's most iconic Art Deco hotel.

In addition to the circa 1920s and 1930s architecture and furniture, Basson has a little trick up his sleeve for wowing visitors. He's the proud owner of two American Dream cars: a baby blue 1956 Ca-

Pictures: Jared Ruttenberg



dillac Sedan De Ville and a 1964 Cadillac Sedan De Ville.

Cruising down the streets in these cars is a blast from the past – along with the commentary from their charismatic owner. (montagucountryhotel.co.za)

The brand-new Bluvines District is a bold, bright and modern addition to Montagu. Legacy hotelier Richard Weilers has taken decades of experience and ploughed it into this restaurant. Knifing my way through the steak tagliata (arguably the best option on the menu), the town's resident troop of baboons graze with equal pleasure at the adjacent field of lucern. (bluvines.co.za)

The final couple I'd meet during my stay, and hosts of my chosen guesthouse were a remarkable pair. Years back, Gauteng-based Petrus sold up everything, bought a bakkie and toured the Western

Corking good times off Route 62



Cape to find his dream town. Montagu topped the list.

He's a versatile entrepreneur who has thrived, and trailing him through his farm is a treat as he introduces his wine, lavender, vegetables, Damara sheep, and much

more. It seems there's little he puts his hand to that is not a success.

One of his guests once remarked it was not good for him to live here alone and they knew of a woman who was beautiful, intelligent, and a keen worm farmer.

It was the latter of the three that initially caught his attention; after meeting Liana, the former two won him over.

Liana, a landscape architect, was intrigued by the fynbos to the point she birthed a company which celebrates it fully, Fijn Botanicals (fijnbotanicals.com).

I joined Liana, basket in hand, as she gently moved through the fynbos, delighted as she came across some of her favourites. After harvesting a few species, we returned to the workshop to incorporate them into the product being developed that day – the Fynbos Body Scrub and Soak.

A stay at Kogman and Keisie truly is the best of both, as the farm forms a buffer between the end of the town and the start of the nature reserve; close enough to explore the town when desired but still fully immersed in nature (kogmanandkeisie.com).