

Take a walk on the scenic side

Stanford village is a tranquil base

WALKER BAY: GO FOR A RIVER CRUISE, VISIT NATURE RESERVE AND CRAFT BREWERY

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COLOURFUL: The water-dwelling Gallinule is one of the birds you can see on the cruise down the Stanford River.



➔ **Caves around De Kelders inhabited by Late Stone Age people, from 2000 BC.**

Jared Ruttenberg

An easy 90-minute drive from Cape Town, Walker Bay is a scenic slice of the Overberg stretching from Hermanus in the west to Gansbaai on its eastern flank. Walker Bay Nature Reserve includes a large section of coastline, with the Klein River lagoon at its back.

Following the Klein River up its meandering path, you'll soon stumble upon the quiet village of

Stanford. I've always driven past en route to Gansbaai or further afield, promising myself to visit someday. Thankfully, "someday" recently came in the form of a lazy weekend away.

Stanford is the perfect base from which to explore all the wonders Walker Bay has to offer. Gently hugging the Klein River, the town had its origin in 1857, and today preserved Cape Victorian and Edwardian-styled residences line the quiet streets.

I wanted to find a home that took in some of the river's beauty, and Stanford Heights River House merrily checked the box.

Owner David Morin is an American actor and director whose love affair with Africa began as a 19-year-old doing famine relief in Ethiopia.

Many years later he moved to Kenya on a one-way ticket. South Africa followed, and after living in Cape Town for some time, it was regular visits to friends in Stanford that brought him to settle here – and eventually acquire

Stanford Heights River House as a rental property.

On entering the double-volume living space the first thing you'll notice is the view – affectionately dubbed "God's Window". It is a glorious window onto the Overberg wild. The house spans an enviable stretch of riverfront, and before your eyes eventually settle on the towering mountains in the

distance, kilometres of pristine farmlands meet your gaze. David's African love affair is visible in the various art installations in the house – including a wooden canoe that hangs in the lounge.

As much as you might feel like the lord of the manor when renting the home, it's the resident cat Yoda who rules this roost. Originally a rescue cat, she follows



MASTER OF THE HOUSE: Yoda is the resident cat at Stanford Heights River House.

MELLOW. Sip bubbly while meandering down the Stanford River on the Lady Stanford cruiser.



OFFROAD: Walker Bay Nature Reserve is a must-visit and offers 4x4 enthusiasts a thrilling track above the dunes.



guests around the property. The most affectionate cat I've met!

For those who need to combine a little work with pleasure, there's uninterrupted power and the house is always online. In one weekend we experienced glorious sunshine, which we soaked up on the lawn and riverside. When the rain came, we happily retreated indoors and languished at the generous fireplace. stanfordheightsriverhouse.com

When you've settled in, there are a host of local outings to experience. Since the house is perched above the river, perhaps the perfect starting point is a two-hour tranquil cruise down the Klein River aboard The Lady Stanford.

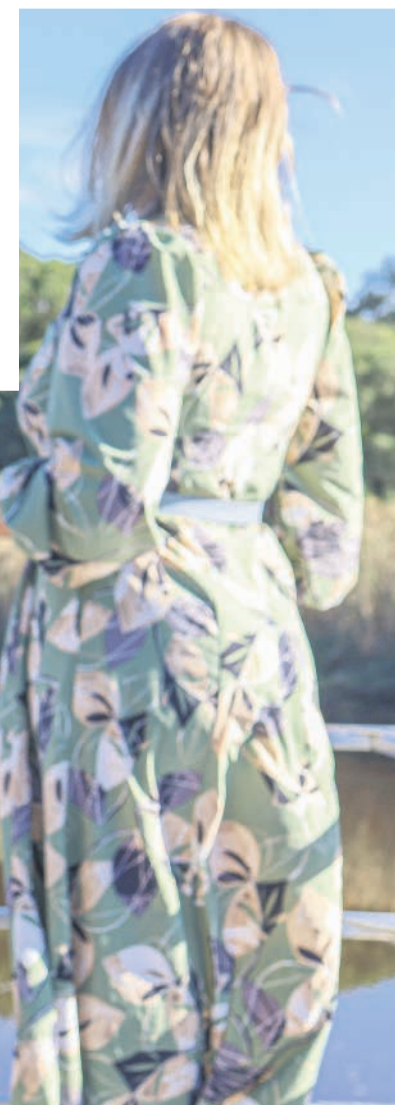
Gently following the meandering river curves, you can expect astonishing bird life, which for us included sightings of the rare African Marsh Hen, Fish Eagles and annually flocks of flamingos will delight dancing their blushing ballets. The journey takes approximately two hours, with three launches per day at R250pp. xplo-rio.com/stanford

Birkenhead Brewery is officially the Western Cape's oldest craft brewery and serves up an enticing selection of award-winning beers accompanied by hearty meals from the pub-style restaurant.

The venue is also home to Walker Bay Wines, so plan for enough time to taste your way through their selection. Tastings start from R80pp. walkerbayestate.com

Less than a 30-minute drive away, Walker Bay Nature Reserve is a must-visit and offers 4x4 enthusiasts a thrilling track above the dunes. Enter from the suburb of De Kelders, and you'll soon see massive shards of sandstone carving the main beach into smaller slices.

There are caves to explore around De Kelders, with the most famous being Klipgat. The caves were inhabited by Late Stone Age people, from 2000 BC.



RELAX: Rooms at the Stanford Heights River House are elegant and comfortable. Pictures: Jared Ruttenberg

