



Splendid Isolation

THERE COMES A TIME WHEN THE INHABITANTS OF THE MOTHER CITY - AND OTHER URBAN ENCLAVES - NEED TO ESCAPE THE CROWDS. AS TRAVEL WRITER JARED RUTTENBURG DISCOVERED, ABRIKOOS KLOOF POD RESERVE IS THE DESTINATION TO DO JUST THAT

WORDS JARED RUTTENBURG



FAR LEFT, LEFT AND BELOW:
The newest member of Abrikoos Kloof is The Barn House, one of what will be seven stays on the reserve

BOTTOM:
The Cave House, which opened mid-2023, is built into a natural rock overhang in a remote mountain kloof



Tucked away in the crags of the towering Cape Fold Mountains, just two and a half hours from Cape Town and 20 minutes from the historical town of Montagu in the Little Karoo, lies Abrikoos Kloof Pod Reserve. Relatively new on the map, the reserve quietly awaits guests who seek seclusion, and discerning explorers wanting to discover one of the Western Cape's most remarkable stays.

Owner Dennis Viet, an ex-Joburger who now resides in London, takes every chance he can to return to this piece of Cape wilderness. His vision for the reserve – to create a space for people from all over the world to escape their busy lives and reconnect with nature and each other – is exciting and contagious.

With a small collection of seven exclusive stays that will blend into isolated spaces along the hills of the reserve, the Abrikoos Kloof story is one in the making. And for those who enjoy returning to their favourite destinations, the reserve offers the tempting option for multiple visits, each time trying a different pod.

The first pod, The Cave House, opened to guests in mid-2023, and I visited as soon as possible. It is built into a natural rock overhang in a remote mountain kloof. Make no mistake though, this is no rehash of *The Flintstones* – the luxury experience at Abrikoos Kloof ensures that every creature comfort is catered for.

Walking into the fully stocked kitchen, I smiled seeing the DeLonghi coffee machine. Adjoining the four-poster bed and the bathroom (with a freestanding copper bathtub) is a double-sided log fireplace, keeping the cave toasty and warm. Then of course, there's the Victorian loo with a view over the renosterveld.



RIGHT & BELOW:
The Cave House has a private boma, fully stocked kitchen, and an open-plan living space with views over the renosterveld

Moving outside, the sunken boma firepit provides ambience for dining with the braai at night. As comfortable as the cave and its environs are, when it's time to explore the rugged beauty of the reserve, heading out for a run in wild-open space, or going on a short scenic hike to a nearby cave, are invigorating and easy to do.

For those wanting to appreciate the wonders of nature a little more gently, there's a wood-fired hot tub that's hidden metres away from the cave. A minute's walk further and you'll find a farm dam with a relaxation deck. With all of these carefully considered spaces and personalised touches, I have a sneaky suspicion that The Cave House is going to see its fair share of proposals.

The newest member of the Abrikoos Kloof collection is The Barn House. The ultra-modern design is a striking feature in the landscape without detracting much from it: two living areas are joined by a glass corridor, with the whole structure clad in composite bamboo and custom-made brick work for the chimney stacks.

Both bathing and showering are also nature immersions as the freestanding Devon Slipper bath looks out over the fynbos, and the outdoor shower stands proudly under the stars.



Along the front veranda, a cut-out section of the covering allows abundant light to flood through it, providing a fitting frame for the natural beauty outside, where a short walk will take you to the swimming pool, hot tub, and pizza oven nearby.

While self-catering is an easy option at both The Cave and The Barn, the property collaborates with local caterers to offer a range of enticing dining options – whether it's gourmet ingredients to make your own Karoo pizza, a three-course meal, or as in my case, a full breakfast basket to kick off the day.

As a celebration of the fragrant fynbos that surrounds the houses, products are provided by Fijn Botanicals. Liana Jansen is a proud Montagu local, and as a researcher, the area's vegetation fascinated her to the point where she conceived Fijn Botanicals.

The company offers a range of earth-friendly products that are used at a number of lodges and guesthouses around South Africa. Liana also runs Botanical workshops on the farm.

On my way home, I joined one of these workshops, crafting my own bath salts from botanicals we harvested. Since then, every bath or scrub is a decadent reminder of the Little Karoo – and an aromatic hint to return for the next experience in the lineup of Abrikoos Kloof luxury escapes. abrikooskloof.co.za ■

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