

MOYA *Magic*

JARED RUTTENBERG GIVES AN EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK MOYA'S VINEYARD, A GORGEOUS NEW VILLA IN THE MAJESTIC HEMEL-EN-AARDE VALLEY



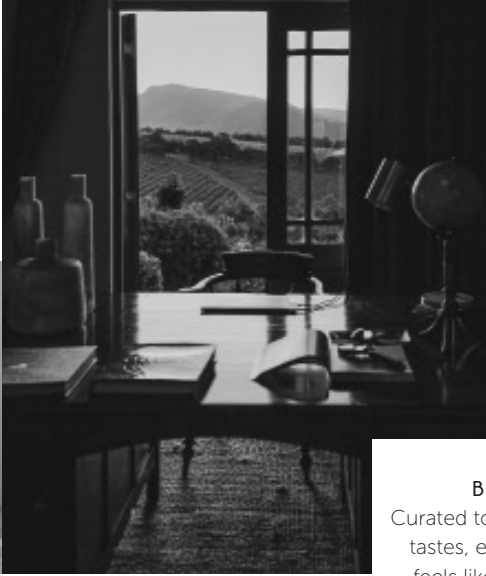
LEFT & ABOVE: Nestled in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, Moya's Vineyard is a picturesque exclusive-use vineyard, accommodating up to 20 guests

TOP, RIGHT & ABOVE RIGHT: A mix of authentic farm style and modern African elements, you can expect every creature comfort for the perfect luxury escape

South Africa's wine regions are renowned worldwide, attracting millions of visitors each year who are eager to indulge in wine, the sunshine, and breathtaking landscapes. Thankfully, there are still some quieter wine routes and the Hemel-en-Aarde ('Heaven-and-Earth' in Afrikaans) Valley just outside Hermanus in the Western Cape, is perhaps my favourite.

Here, an ancient conversation unfolds between mountain and ocean, with the gentle maritime breeze acting as a bridge between the two. As such, this area is perfect for producing premium wines and as a travel journalist who loves wine, I was eagerly anticipating my journey as I navigated my way up the valley to meet up with friends at Moya's Vineyard. A new-to-the-market exclusive-use rental, it can accommodate 20 people and we were going to celebrate being together again.

Leaving the main road, the farm road meanders through vineyards and stately conifers until the farmhouse comes into view. Terracotta-plastered walls are framed by flowering hydrangeas in the foreground and towering mountains behind. The owners, captivated by the valley's beauty, share their story: "We discovered this gem a few years ago; the beauty lies in its simplicity – the farm life, the tranquillity of a vineyard – all set in the most magical surroundings. Our vision has been to create a space where family and friends can come together to connect with nature and with one another, creating unforgettable experiences."



BELOW:
Curated to guests' unique tastes, each mealtime feels like an event on the vineyard



The accommodation consists of simply styled rooms that blend modern African interiors with authentic farm elements, always allowing the majestic surroundings to take centre stage. Four en-suite bedrooms are complemented by a large lounge and kitchen (both with dining areas), as well as a rather plush study for those needing to put in a few hours of work. The barn contains a king bedroom downstairs with a separate lounge, and upstairs, two spacious rooms, each with four single beds that can be converted to doubles, in addition to a central seating area.

Stepping outside, lush gardens wrap around the house and barn and verdant vegetable gardens are open for picking. Expansive lawns featuring a boules pitch lead to the vineyards and olive groves. Beyond, two dams offer respite from the summer heat. My favourite spaces, by far, were the large wraparound verandas and their spectacular views down the valley to the ocean, many kilometres away. With all this on offer, you'll probably not want to leave the property. However, the wine estates of Hemel-en-Aarde are only minutes away, and Hermanus is just a short drive

Fruit from the farm's vines is crafted into wine by local legend Hannes Storm of Storm Wines, although it is not currently available for commercial sale. Taking my brief for a group of close friends celebrating being together again, the Moya team was eager to create bespoke experiences on the farm – something they take great pride in doing. More than mere activities or a property jumping on the experience bandwagon, the staff arranged these as a labour of love. At lunchtime on the second day of our visit, we were asked to take a stroll to the top dam and to arrive hungry. Under a willow tree, a gourmet picnic was laid out with wines from the neighbouring farms.

On our final evening, we were invited to the orchard at sunset. Anticipating what was to follow, I had asked my companions to arrive in their finest. As the hour approached, the lawn was transformed into a red carpet, where dresses and suits gracefully made their way across as the mellifluous timbre of Diana Krall's voice floated out from the outdoor speaker.

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A G&T table, laden with condiments and nibbles, had been set up, and our host Nikki Bouic was clearly in her element. Crafting individual drinks based on our preferences and palates, I whispered to her that she looked like she was having fun while mixing our drinks. Beaming, she responded: “This is what makes me come alive – offering my guests high-end and personalised service. My aim is that our visitors leave with their expectations far exceeded.”

As if on cue, a cooling catabatic breeze gently descended the mountain, easing the heat of the day. The sun began to sink away, leaving champagne-coloured streaks across the sky. This is Moya magic – and judging by the social envy following each guest's social media posts, Moya's Vineyard will soon be home to a string of intimate gatherings where, to borrow from the valley's name, heaven touches earth. ■

moyasvineyard.com