

# One-horse wonders

South Africa's small towns are more popular than ever with city folk trading the city bustle for the birdsong and beauty of smaller, sometimes secluded dots on the map. We went on a cross-country search to bring you the cream of the countryside crop

WORDS **MART-MARIÉ DU TOIT**



## 1 CLARENS FREE STATE

You'll find the small town of Clarens at the foothills of the impressive Maluti mountains. A weekend here can be filled with hiking, mountain biking, beer tasting, white-water rafting, shopping or fly fishing. It's a given that every member of the family will enjoy the Free State hospitality and scenery.

### HUNGRY?

**The Courtyard Bakery and Cafe is a relaxed spot on the main square. Here you can enjoy crispy breakfast waffles or reserve your seat for their hearty Sunday lunch buffet. You certainly won't be disappointed. Their on-site bakery also has delicious fresh bread, croissants, muffins and a smorgasbord of other tasty baked goods to take home. 324 Market Street, 058 256 1124.**



## 2 HAENERTSBURG LIMPOPO

On the road between Polokwane and Tzaneen, you'll find the small village of Haenertsburg. With only 124 houses and an estimated 228 people living here, you can count on a perfectly peaceful getaway or stopover on your way to the Kruger. Haenertsburg is popular for cycling, biking and fishing, and visitors rarely

leave without exploring Magoebas-kloof's array of lush hiking trails and one of SA's steepest passes.

### HUNGRY?

**Try Lekwar Restaurant, a log cabin in the shadow of the mountain. Sit outside and enjoy one of Zwakala Brewery's tipples on tap, and order the baked trout stuffed with spinach and feta and their signature mlkrtart pancake. R71, 015 276 1102**



## 4 GRAAFF-REINET EASTERN CAPE

You'll come across a few interesting small towns on a road trip through the Eastern Cape, but none with as much historical value as Graaff-Reinet. Here you are surrounded by the Camdeboo National Park, in the heart of the Great Karoo. Visit the famous NG Church, have a drink at the Drostdy Hotel and take a leisurely stroll down side streets. A highlight is driving up to the Valley of Desolation for sights that seem unbelievable and otherworldly.

### HUNGRY?

**At Polka, the food is a labour of love. Friendly faces will serve you plates filled to the brim with Karoo food. Try the Karoo lamb neck, it is slow cooked in red wine and spices, and melts in your mouth. 52 Somerset Street, 087 550 1363, polkacafe.co.za**

## 3 GROOT MARICO NORTH WEST

Just off the N4 that leads to Rustenburg and Mafikeng, you'll find Groot Marico. Time stands still in this laid-back town, which gets its name from the Groot Marico River (the only unpolluted river in the North West and Gauteng). Here you can experience the magic of the bushveld by watching the enthralling sunsets with a glass of their famous mampoer in hand.

### HUNGRY?

**The Trading Post deli was opened because Outpost Safaris wanted the hunters that frequent their farm to have a pit stop in town before they head out. But you don't have to be a hunter to enjoy their delicious coffees, home-made venison pies and freshly baked cakes. There is also a range of pastas, sauces and jams to take home. Voortrekker Street, 076 264 9761**





TOP 7

**5** NOTTINGHAM ROAD  
KWAZULU-NATAL

Nottingham Road sits in the heart of the Midlands Meander in KwaZulu-Natal. Spend a day golfing at Gowrie Farm, pub-crawl your way through boozy taverns, or amble down the Meander with your family. History buffs will enjoy the Nelson Mandela Capture Site and Battlefields route close by.

**HUNGRY?**

**At Netherwood Farm, you get the best of all worlds – cheesecake at Blueberry Cafe, local beers on tap at Happy Days Brewery, gin at EmerGINcy Room, and grilled tomahawk steaks at Fork 'n Cleaver. You might just spend a day here! Near Exit 132, 033 266 7132**



**6** DULLSTROOM  
MPUMALANGA

It's unheard of to drive past Dullstroom, in the Mpumalanga Highlands, without stopping – if not to wet some line, then at least to explore the main road. The town ticks all the right boxes – great food, views for days and just enough activities on offer that you can spend a week

alternating between trout fishing, whisky tasting and reading in front of the fireplace.

**HUNGRY?**

**At The Art of Food, farm-style food and Ferran Adrià-esque gastronomy are combined to present tasty, beautifully presented dishes. The menu changes regularly, so pop in more than once. Naledi Drive, 082 324 7594**



**7** GREYTON  
WESTERN CAPE

This quaint town nestles in a hollow in the Riviersonderend mountain range. Close enough to Cape Town for a weekend away, but far enough to feel like a holiday, Greyton has it all – gourmet restaurants, historic walks and charming Insta-views. If that doesn't convince you, the delicious Von Gesau chocolates are made in Greyton...

**HUNGRY?**

**The all-day breakfast burger at Via's B & B Roastery Cafe is a treat you shouldn't miss. And do yourself a kindness and have a coffee – at Via's they roast your coffee beans on site. 31 Main Road, 028 254 9190**

PHOTOGRAPHY: MIKE KOCK, SANDI LEIGH MOORE, ALAMY