

HOUSE & GARDEN

SOUTH AFRICA

KITCHENS
that marry
BEAUTY &
UTILITY

WHAT'S NEW,
WHAT'S NOW

—
GARDENS
celebrating
THE SEASONS

Field to SHORE

INTERIORS *and*
destinations where NATURE
LEADS THE WAY



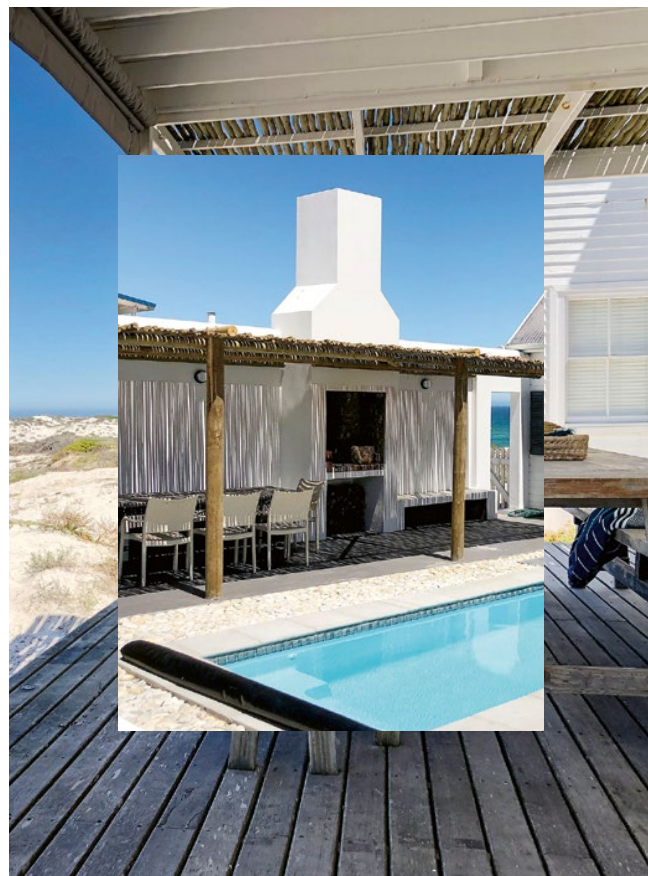
West coasting, SLOWLY

A road trip through the Cape's
forgotten fishing villages

text WADE SEALE photographs HENRIQUE WILDING

Think of the Spanish Costa de Sol, but with a longer coastline, more villages and the constant sense that you've discovered something entirely new every time you arrive somewhere. In the villages that punctuate this ode to creation, fishermen spend their days in the sun, mending their nets by hand. This is the stretch north of Cape Town towards Lambert's Bay: the West Coast.

There are more than a few spots where you can go to make decisions slowly. Start in Yzerfontein, the coastal village about 90 minutes from Cape Town, with the seabird sanctuary ►





PREVIOUS PAGE Classic seaside style at Not Forgotten. THIS PAGE Yellowwood Cottage. OPPOSITE PAGE (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) Relaxation and sea views at Hout Huisie; West Coast Smokehouse; Darling Sweet.

Dassen Island just offshore. Here, the West Coast's laid-back feel is on full display – surfers riding the swells, lime kilns from the 1930s dotting the roadside. The town's motto, 'The sea nourishes, the flowers adorn,' comes to life from August to October when the fynbos bloom vibrantly. It's also the spot of choice for southern right whales to calve in season: June to November.

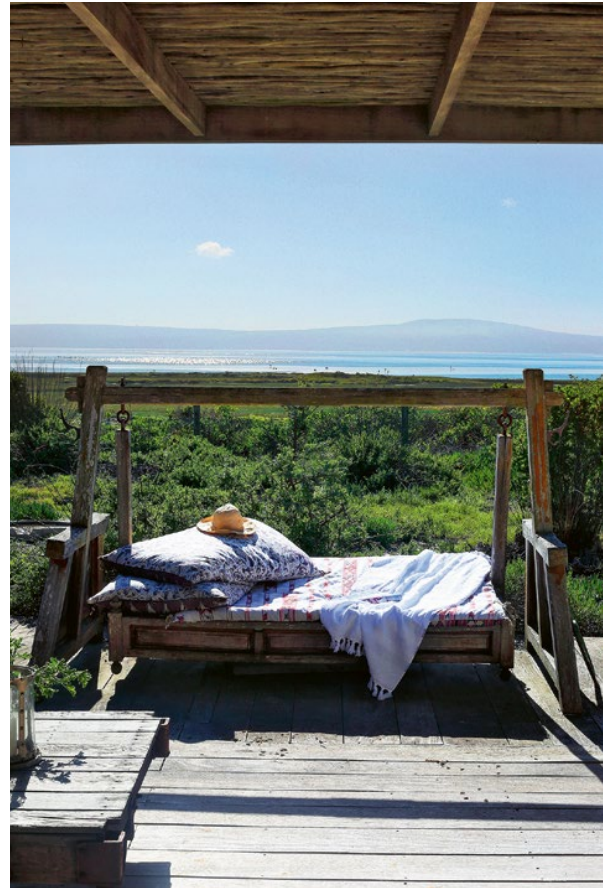
Not Forgotten is a classic white wooden beach house perched on the sand with uninterrupted ocean views and Table Mountain's iconic silhouette in the distance. This retreat is set in coastal wilderness – quiet beaches with few souls in sight. Wander the Schaapeiland Hiking Trail, a two-kilometre path skirting the fishing coves Blaasgat and Spuitgat, or charter a boat to Dassen Island for penguin spotting.

If an inland detour is on the cards, you won't regret a stop at the West Coast National Park. Look for Churchhaven, the tiny, almost-secret hamlet of fisherman's cottages on the lagoon's edge. No development interrupts the views and the reserve's fynbos trails burst with proteas and daisies in season. Entry to the park costs around R120 per person for locals to R270 per person for internationals, making it a worthwhile stop for birdwatching, kayaking, or simply wading in the warm shallows.

If you want to spend a night (or a few) in the area, there are exquisite accommodation options. Yellowwood

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Cottage, simple in sage greens, is designed to disappear into the landscape – running on solar panels, rainwater harvesting and a borehole. The eco-friendly retreat has four bedrooms, each with Morso fireplaces and lagoon views from the verandah – it's back-to-basics, and morning coffee means admiring flirtatious flamingos in the tepid waters. On paper it's an hour from busy Cape Town, but in reality it's worlds away.



Near Churchhaven you'll find Hout Huisie: barefoot elegance on a six-hectare private peninsula in Schrywershoek. This wooden house sits right on the water's edge, with lagoon vistas and white sandy beaches unending and the waters close by are teeming with sea life. Completely off-grid, it features beach-chic interiors, a deck for sundowners and a boma for warm fireside evenings. The setting is intimate and untouched.

Another inland gem is the town of Darling. Here, the Darling Museum is a fun activity for inquisitive little (and not so little) minds, featuring fixtures of everyday life in the 1800s and the dairy industry worked before. The Marmalade Cat is a popular eatery for locals and the town's general dealer store now houses the Darling Sweet, where you can watch as they make toffee. For carnivores, the West Coast Smokehouse offers a delicious selection of slow smoked meats. The brisket smoked for 12-hours alone is worth a special trip.

Back towards the coast, no road trip here would be complete without stopping



by Paternoster, one of the oldest fishing villages in this stretch. With iconic white cottages and boats bobbing in the bay, it's known for rock lobster hauls and a bohemian art scene. Some say it's less touristy than neighbouring towns but it is alive with seafood shacks and galleries. There is a beach of roughly 10km on which to stroll while soaking in the sun and the fresh sea breeze, and you can visit the Cape Columbine Lighthouse for panoramic views. For a wholesome meal, you have to visit Die Strandloper – an open-air restaurant serving braaied fresh catches. It's a West Coast must, so booking in advance is essential.

Then, in Velddrif, a lesser-visited gem on the Berg River estuary, you'll find bokkoms (dried mullet) hanging like decorations, and birdwatchers spotting pelicans and herons. It's a quiet inland-ish detour, perfect for riverbank walks or boat trips.

These are just a few of the hidden gems out there to be explored. From rustic to luxury, quaint to elegant, you'll find what you've been searching for. ■