

Rekindling my love for the Constantia Valley



By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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The Constantia Valley is part of the reason I'd really, like *really*, struggle to move out of the southern suburbs. Consisting of nine wine farms, the valley is also, in fact, the oldest wine-producing region in the Southern Hemisphere - with an uninterrupted history of winemaking that spans over 300 years! Beat that.

I recently had the honour of being hosted at Constantia Uitsig for a winetasting and fine dining experience with the winemaker of Constantia Uitsig, Jacques du Plessis, the winemaker of Eagle's Nest, Duran Cornhill, as well as Steenberg Vineyards' marketing manager, Caroline van Schalkwyk.



Jacques du Plessis, Caroline van Schalkwyk, and Duran Cornhill



A lot has been happening on the Uitsig property recently - from a brand new wine cellar and five-star tasting facility, to the gorgeous heritage market with its breathtaking panoramic views.

The heritage market contributes something unique to the valley. Made up of five cute cottages built in the old Dutch style, each one features a unique treasure: Sushi Box, Alexander Avery Fine Chocolates, Kristen's Ice Cream, Aegir Brewery,

Nest Deli, and the Uitsig Wine Shop.



Canapés by Sushi Box, paired with some delish MOC



Delectable chocolates we tasted at Alexander Avery Fine Chocolates, also paired with an MOC.

Needless to say, the evening consisted of lots of food and wine pairings, with each winemaker sharing more about the farms and their wines and why the valley is special to them. As they were speaking, I realised once again why I love this valley so much.

“ Where else in South Africa can you so easily find a setting with views of vineyards and mountains; quality wines, food, and another delicatessen; and a rich heritage dating back to the 1600s a mere 20-minute drive from the city and 10 minutes from the beach? ”



Constantia Valley is all about honouring heritage

Groot Constantia, being Simon van der Stel's original farm, has subsequently been subdivided into smaller farms, [Constantia Uitsig](#) is now one of a select handful of wine estates that together make up the Constantia Valley Wine Route.

Constantia's history dates back to 1685 when Van der Stel named his property after the daughter of the benefactor who granted him a farm nestled beneath a picturesque mountain range. The lush setting and moderate temperatures bode well for farming and Van der Stel set to work planting orchards and vineyards.



[Steenberg Vineyards](#) was actually the Cape's first farm, established in 1682. History records that in that year, Catharina Michelse, also known as The Widow Ras, asked Simon van der Stel for a portion of ground at the foot of the Ou Kaapse Weg and he agreed to lease 25 Morgen to her. After he became the owner of Groot Constantia in 1685, she asked him for a legal title deed and a mandate was granted to her in 1688 to "cultivate, to plough and to sow and also to possess the farm below the stone mountain."

Legend has it this was one hardcore lady, and you'd miss out not to [read more](#) about the crazy events of her life which add just something extra to the appreciation of the farm...



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A newer one in the tribe, [Eagle's Nest](#) is cradled in the undisturbed valley high up on the slopes of the historic Constantia mountain range, which forms part of Table Mountain. The farm's origins can be traced back to 1836 when it was used as a refreshment station between the area now known as Wynberg in the east, and the harbour of Hout Bay in the west. In order to make this journey, travellers had to cross the mountain pass, now known as Constantia Neck.

In 1984, the 38ha farm was purchased by the Mylrea family. After devastating fires that raged through the Cape in the summer of 2000, the farm was mostly destroyed, except for the historic buildings. Being part of Constantia Valley, known for its award-winning wines, they decided to plant the farm with varieties that best suited the unique terroir of Eagles Nest.

Get out there!

If you don't know the valley all too well, or have maybe never been aware of all the stunning wine farms in the area (gasp!), be sure to make a day of it soon. In addition to these three, other farms to explore in the valley include Klein Constantia, Buitenverwachting, Groot Constantia, High Constantia, Beau Constantia, and Constantia Glen.

For more, go to the [Constantia Wine Route website](#).

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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