

THE AFRICAN ROAD TRIP

WINE AND WILDLIFE ON THE CAPE

A driving holiday with small children might sound like madness, but park those fears: epic as it is, South Africa is crammed with charming small towns, so the next stop is never more than an hour away. It's wildlife that tops the agenda, even on an African odyssey without a safari. Kicking off in Cape Town, that means Boulders Beach, home to thousands of penguins, then back to the Mount Nelson Hotel for afternoon tea. At the foot of Table Mountain, it's brilliantly positioned for whizzing to the top by cable car or eating your way around the foodie hubs of Bree, Long and Kloof Streets (all ages will love the ice cream at Unframed). Inland, in the pretty, laid-back wine town of Franschhoek, La Clé des Montagnes has five villas – each with their own pool as well as nothing-is-too-much-trouble staff to whip up French toast or light a braai. If you pick your estates right, winery hopping offers as much for children as their Shiraz-loving parents. Picnic by the lily-pad lake at Solms-Delta, taste grape juices at Grande Provence or explore the gardens at Babylonstoren, where turkeys and ducks roam. Road signs here warn of baboons, which flash their pink bottoms. But soon the gentle vine-covered slopes give way to the arid landscape of the Little Karoo. Just off Route 60, the Robertson Small hotel has a great guide to nearby vineyards and farms, though it would be easy never to leave its gardens, having story-time on the cactus-print sofas and dips in the two pools. Further south, there's an edge-of-the-world feel to the beaches of De Hoop Nature Reserve. And this is where the wildlife count really racks up: ostriches on the way to breakfast, antelope by the jungle gym and cheeky guinea fowl trying to steal your lunch. Low tide at beautiful Koppie Alleen beach reveals octopus and crabs, urchins and starfish in the rockpools. By the end, as Africa starts to seep under their skin, children are a little bit wilder, a little bit freer and a little bit more full of wonder.

INSIDER TIP Stop at Giraffe House Wildlife Awareness Centre near Stellenbosch to feed Gerry, a rescue giraffe, and befriend llamas and lemurs.

BOOK IT Africa Travel (+44 20 7843 3591; africatravel.co.uk) offers an eight-night trip, staying at the Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel, La Clé des Montagnes, Robertson Small and De Hoop Nature Reserve, from £1,998 per person, based on two adults and two children, including breakfast, car hire and flights.

BY FIONA KERR



PHOTOGRAPH: ADRIAAN LOUW