Jonkershuis Restaurant Simon's Restaurant & Deli

Manor House (Museum)

**Historical Bath** 

**Art Gallery** 

# Cape of many vines

Most grape production in South Africa is concentrated in the southwestern part of the Cape Province. Key viticultural regions include the Coastal Belt and the Little Karoo.

The Coastal Belt, characterised by sloping terrain, receives an average yearly rainfall of approximately 635mm. Grapes grown in this region planted the first vines in the are suitable for dry white and red table wines. In contrast, the Little Karoo experiences more extreme climatic conditions, with lower rainfall and higher altitude. Grapes grown here are typically used for

The Vredendal district along the Olifants River irrigation scheme has from the new must fresh from become an essential region for wine the vat. The grapes were mostly production. Additionally, stretches Muscadel and other white, round along the Vaal River and areas along grapes, very fragrant and tasty. the Orange River near Upington are witnessing the growth of grape quite green, though they hang cultivation for raisin production and

### the three young vines planted 2 History takes years ago, have yielded about 12 auarts of must, and we shall soon root

Groot Constantia's legacy traces back to Jan van Riebeeck, who arrived at the Cape in 1652 to establish a replenishment station for the Dutch East India Company (VOC), Upon his arrival, he wasted no time assessing the agricultural potential of the Cape's fertile

Recognising the importance of self-sufficiency for the fledgling settlement, he embarked on a mission to cultivate crops that would thrive in this new land. Among these crops, grapes held a particular promise, offering the potential for both sustenance and trade. He requested thousands of vine cuttings from Holland, which arrived in 1655. With the assistance of chief gardener Hendrik Boom, and assistant Jacob Cloete van Kempen, they Company's Garden, laying the foundation for what would later become South Africa's flourishing wine industry. This historic moment was captured in Van Riebeeck's iournal on 2 February sweet wines, sherries, and brandies. 1659: "Today, praise be to God, wine was made for the first time from Cape grapes, namely The Spanish grapes are still reasonably thickly on several vines and give promise of a firstclass crop. These grapes, from

soil and temperate climate.

Van Riebeeck's foray into winemaking was challenging. Setbacks marked the early years as the colonists grappled with unfamiliar grape varieties and the peculiarities of the Cape's terroir. After failed attempts at Green

discover how it will be affected

by maturing.

Point Common, they settled on the Liesbeek River area, encompassing today's Mowbray, Rondebosch, and Newlands.

The successful harvest of the Cape's first grapes in 1659 marked the birth of South African wine.

Van Riebeeck departed in 1662, leaving behind a struggling colony and a wine industry with poor-quality wines due to early grape harvesting and the impact of long sea voyages. Only 17 years later, with the arrival of Simon van der Stel, did the Cape wine industry begin to recover from

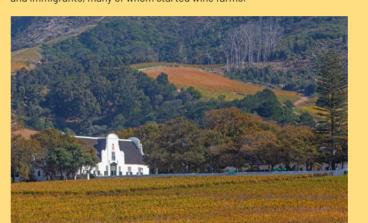
# A vineyard

### is born

Simon van der Stel, the Dutch Governor of the Cape Colony from 1679 to 1699, is a central figure in the history of Groot Constantia. He was born in Mauritius, and his mother was of Malay descent. He was stationed in Amsterdam, working for the VOC. He owned vineyards just outside of Amsterdam that produced wine and brandy.

Renowned for his contributions to advancing the South African wine industry, Van der Stel was the first mixed-race Cape Governor, a detail that the apartheid government largely ignored.

In 1685, during his tenure as Governor, he received title to a plot of land (about 763 hectares) which he named Constantia; this would become the site of the future Groot Constantia. He also granted land to free burghers and immigrants, many of whom started wine farms.



An outstanding view of Groot Constantia

Inspired by European vineyards, Van der Stel envisioned his farm, Constantia, as a model farm dedicated to grape cultivation and the production of fine wines. Under his meticulous stewardship, Constantia quickly gained renown for the quality of its wines, earning accolades from connoisseurs worldwide.

Simon van der Stel's vision for Constantia extended beyond winemaking to encompass agriculture, horticulture, and architecture. He introduced innovative farming techniques, cultivated exotic crops, and constructed elegant buildings that reflected the grandeur of the Dutch Golden Age. His commitment to excellence and innovation transformed Constantia into a thriving estate admired for its beauty and productivity.

# A long season of transition

In 1712, Van der Stel died and, two years later, the estate was subdivided into three sections and sold at auction. Pieter de Meijer of the Dutch East India Company bought two of the sections, Bergyliet and Klein Constantia, while the portion known today as Groot Constantia, which included the Van der Stel buildings, was bought by a 73-year-old wealthy Swede, Captain Oloff Bergh.

In 1724, Oloff Bergh died, and the farm was passed on to his wife, Anna de Koningh, the daughter of Batavian slaves. She became the first woman of mixed-race descent to own a wine farm in South Africa. However, she had no interest in wine-making and struggled to manage the property effectively. Groot Constantia fell into disrepair and the quality of the wine produced also suffered during this period.



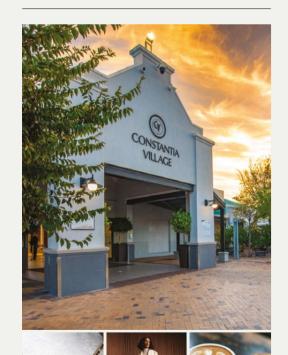
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However, agriculture and viticulture continued under her ownership. Then Carl Georg Wieser and his stepson, Jacobus van der Spuij, followed as owners from 1734 to 1759 and 1759 to 1778, respectively. While Wieser expanded the vineyards, Van der Spuij showed less interest in winemaking, relying on a slave cellar master. Financial problems ensued.

In 1778, Jan Serrurier briefly owned Groot Constantia before selling it to Hendrik Cloete, a wealthy landowner and winemaker, who revitalised the farm. Thereafter, the estate remained in Cloete's family for several generations. Cloete invested in new infrastructure, included a wine cellar and renovated the homestead. Under his ownership, Groot Constantia's wines gained worldwide renown, and the property underwent significant changes. After he died in 1799, his son Hendrik Cloete Jr. took over, until he also died in 1818. The widow of Hendrik Cloete Jr. then divided the estate and sold portions of it to her sons in 1823. The larger portion, which retained the name Groot Constantia, was sold to the oldest son, Jacob Pieter Cloete in 1824. This became the magnificent wine estate that we know today as Groot Constantia.

Despite its illustrious past, the estate faced numerous challenges that affected the wine industry. These included the abolition of slavery in 1834 which negatively impacted labour availability, as well as outbreaks of fungal diseases in the 1850s and vine diseases in 1866. Furthermore, changes in import duties on French wines imported into Britain in 1860 put added strain on the industry.

The Cloete family exemplified the success of the burgher community in establishing themselves at the Cape. They achieved notable prosperity in agriculture, eventually ascending to the ranks of the burgher elite. Despite their longstanding presence in the Cape and close ties with the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the Cloete family notably aligned themselves with the British, marking a significant shift in their alliances.

During the Cloete family's ownership, Groot Constantia relied heavily on slave labour. Records show that many enslaved people were involved in various tasks on the farm, although specifics about their roles are limited. With the inception of the Slave Office and Slave Register in 1816, documentation of enslaved people's personal histories improved, providing valuable insights into their lives and contributions to the farm.

Eventually in 1885, after a series of setbacks, Groot Constantia was put up for auction and was purchased by the Cape Government for a relatively low sum (R125,522 / £5275 / \$6621). The estate underwent restoration efforts, including refurbishing the homestead, which now houses the De Pass Collection. In 1993, the Groot Constantia Trust was established to manage and preserve the estate's heritage.



## Groot Constantia wines in popular culture

Groot Constantia wines have left an indelible mark on popular culture throughout history, with references the prestige of Constantia wines, to its wines found in poetry and literature and even associated with iconic figures like Napoleon Bonaparte.

One of the earliest references to Constantia wines appears in the poetry of German poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock in 1795. In his ode "Der Kapwein und der Johannisberger," Klopstock sings the praises of the virtues of "daughter Konstanzia," preferring her wine with its "bridal blush and scent of rose oil" over wines from his homeland. This early reference

September to November

highlights the allure and appeal of Constantia wines beyond South Africa's borders.

n 1811, Jane Austen immortalised Constantia wines in her novel Sense and Sensibility." In a scene where Mrs. Jennings offers Elinor a glass of Constantia wine, she reminisces about her late husband's fondness for it, emphasising its medicinal properties and exquisite taste. Austen's inclusion of Constantia wine in her novel highlights its status as a beverage of choice among the literary classes, adding to its allure and mystique.

Constantia wines also found favour in the eyes of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte during his exile on the island of St. Helena from 1818 to 1821. Records indicate that Groot Constantia supplied Napoleon with at least 30 bottles of Grand Constance every month during his exile. He insisted that it sweetened the bitterness of exile. This association with the iconic Napoleon further elevated making them a symbol of luxury and refinement.

The cultural significance of Constantia wines extends further into literature and poetry. In 1870, Charles Dickens referenced Constantia wines in his novel The Mystery of Edwin Drood, further cementing their place in popular culture. French novelist, Joris-Karl Huysmans, also mentioned Constantia wines in his work in 1884, indicating their international acclaim and recognition.

In recent years, the legacy of Constantia wines has been revived with the relaunch of the award-winning Grand Constance in 2005. This historic wine, favoured by Napoleon himself, continues to captivate modern audiences with its rich history and exquisite taste. The association with Napoleon has led to record-breaking sales of Grand Constance wines at auctions, further solidifying its status as a collector's item and symbol of luxury.

### A monumental

### legacy

The architecture of Groot Constantia reflects a rich blend of styles spanning centuries of history. Originally designed in a late Dutch Renaissance style, the manor house exudes elegance and refinement with its double-storey structure and grand rooms paved with white marble. The wine cellar, built behind the homestead, showcases elements of neo-classicism, with a sculpture adorning its pediment believed to be the work of the renowned German sculptor Anton Anreith. The Jonkershuis complex, once serving as slave quarters and stables, features characteristic wolf-nose gables and a widened gallery. Over the years, additions and renovations, including the installation of slender gables, ornamental vases, and the figure of "Abundance" on the central gable, have contributed to the estate's architectural evolution. Despite the passage of time and various modifications, the buildings of Groot Constantia continue to stand as enduring symbols of South Africa's architectural heritage.



South Africa is home to the world's longest wine route, the "Route 62." Stretching over 850 kilometers, this scenic route winds through picturesque landscapes, charming towns, and numerous vineyards, offering wine enthusiasts a delightful journey through South Africa's diverse wine regions.

Constantia is

sold by way of

auction.

subdivided and

### A Guide to Cape **Dutch Gables**

A gable is the triangular upper section of a wall between the two slanting edges of a pitched roof. In Dutch architecture, the type and amount of detail on a gable often serves to distinguish the home of a proud farmer from that of his neighbour.

Etymologically, the term gable, or 'gewel,' likely shares roots with the Dutch word 'gaffel,' referring to the forked pole supporting the roof ridge of early medieval dwellings.

### **Holbol Gable**

Towards the close of the 18th century, the Cape's gables saw the influence of the Baroque style, introducing an abundance of ornamental details, swirls, and embellishments. However what truly distinguished this gable type from the earlier Bolbol style was the incorporation of some concave lines to offset the convex contours.

### Neo-classical Gable

This gable style was one of the later designs in the Cape - elegant, understated, and dignified. It featured minimal ornamentation, often incorporating urns within the gable caps. Although the earlier concave contours were still championed, neo-classical gables also favoured straight lines, as well as the incorporation of pilasters and pediments. The pediment itself could be in the form of a triangle, a curve, or eature sculpted details.



Credit: De Bosdari (1971)



These triangular, slanting features serve as ornamental embellishments: bell gables, 'neck' gables, and others, which reflect contemporary art-historical styles in their design. The oldest preserved gable, from Joostenberg in 1756, has a 'Baroque' concave-convex style. Had similar gables preceded this, they would likely have been preserved.

Culturally aware historians have interpreted the six gables of an H-shaped homestead, projecting their presence to the front, sides, and rear as a representation of the 'conquest of the land.'

### **Wolfsneus Gable**

This translates to wolf's nose gable. It was the earliest type of gable, and is positioned on the front of a structure, to sit above a dormer window that allows daylight into the loft space directly above the front door.



Credit: De Bosdari (1971)

### **Bolbol Gable**

Later designs of gables reflected the increased prosperity of the Cape. Certainly by the mid 1750s, gables were more elaborate and decorative in design, reaching new heights. Gables whose contours were all rounded and convex in shape were called "bolbol" gables (bol means rounded in Dutch).



Credit: De Bosdari (1971)



The interesting sculptural forms of the Cloete Cellar

### **ARTS & CULTURE**

The wine farm's proximity to the greater Cape Town area means that some of the country's best cultural experiences are only a stone's throw away. Still, Greater is affected a variety of cultural experiences beyond its wine and an activation of cultural experiences beyond its wine and an activation of cultural experiences beyond its wine and an activation of cultural experiences beyond its wine and an activation of cultural experiences beyond its wine and an activation of cultural experiences beyond its wine and an activation of cultural experiences beyond its wine and an activation of cultural experiences are only a stone of the cultural experiences are only as the cultural experie onstantia offers a variety of cultural experiences beyond its while and off site experiences beyond its while and off site extra cultural experiences beyond its while and off site experiences beyond its while and off site.

### WINE TASTING

To be anywhere near Cape Town is to be close to a treasure trove of fun and adventure. However, Groot Constantia does offer a variety of activities for all age No trip to a wine farm is complete without wine tasting. Enjoy sampling the farm signature wines and a chocolate pairing, or take a tour of the estate's wine cellar families can also enjoy Groot Constantia. There is a player and and short of the constantia. milies can also enjoy Groot Constantia. There is a playground and plenty of op aces for little ones to run around and have fun. For the wanderers, the estate

### WINE TASTING, A SENSORY EXPERIENCE

isual Inspection: Begin by observing the wine's appearance. Lift the glass agains

Taste (Palate): Take a small sip of the wine and let it coat your mouth. Pay attent to the wines taste sensations, including sweetness, actionly, talking for red win and body. Identify the primary flavours, such as fruits, herbs, or spices, and an accordant flavours or undertages. Consider the wine's balance and others are

Mouthfeel: Evaluate the wine's texture and mouthfeel. Note its viscosity, or "legs," which refers to how the wine clings to the side of the glass. Consider the wine's weight on the palate, whether light, medium-bodied, or full-bodied. Assess the lew of alcohol and acidity and the presence of any astringency from tannins.

Finish: If you're tasting multiple wines, swallow the wine or expectorate (spit) it out. Pay attention to the wine's finish, or aftertaste, which refers to the lingering flavours and sensations on the palate. Note the finish's length, whether short.

Jverail Impression: Reflect on your overall experience with the wine. Consider ho compares to your expectations and preferences and its potential for ageing a evelopment. Formulate your final impressions and opinions, remembering that including is subjective and parental preferences your.

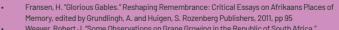
By following these steps, wine enthusiasts can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the wines they taste, allowing them to savour each bottle's sensory experience and nuances fully.

While Groot Constantia is by no means a Big Five hotspot, it can still form part of a Western Cape safari itinerary because of its central location. However, the estate is home to an eclectic mix of smaller critters, six to be exact. The "Little Six" are a celebration of some of South Africa's more endearing creatures. These are the baboon, caracal, bee, ladybird beetle, Cape Eagle Owl and white duck. Bring your binoculars to spot the elusive six while touring the vineyards!



73 Loop St, Cape Town City Centre, Cape Town +27 (0)76 408 4185 bookings@gothatway.co.za | hayley@gothatway.co.za www.gothatwavcapetown.co.za

Design and Illustration by Rebecca Hayter | bexstjohn@gmail.com



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# African wine farm A year in the life of a South African wine farm is characterized by a

A year in the life of a South

### December to February

pruning, canopy management, pest control and regular irrigation to ensure optimal grape development and flavour concentration.

The winemaking process begins in earnest. Fermentation tanks are filled

renowned Groot Constantia Wine Estate and showcasing a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation in every bottle.



# A Timeline of the Past

With the arrival of spring, the vineyards come alive once again as new Simon Van der Van der Stel passes away Stel receives land on 24 June, 1712, leaving growth emerges on the vines. Buddreak signals the start of a new that he names a will in favour of his five shoots ensuring they have the support and nutrients they need to children. In it, he stipulates that Constantia should be sold two years after his death and some of the slaves be set free.

and hounty of the vineyard with wine enthusiasts worldwide Overall a vear in the life of a South African wine farm is a dynamic and rewardir





