

WINE

Historic highlights

GROOT CONSTANTIA, CIRCA 1685

Groot Constantia Road, Constantia.
021 794 5128

www.grootconstantia.co.za

This is the oldest wine estate in the country and former governor of the Cape Simon van der Stel's manor house has been converted into a cultural history museum furnished to reflect an 18th-century home. Originally part of Van der Stel's farm Constantia, the land was eventually divided into two, forming Groot Constantia and Klein Constantia in the 1780s. Klein Constantia is also worth a visit to taste its *Vin de Constance*. In the 1800s, South Africa was so famous for its sweet Constantia wines, that European kings and dukes couldn't get enough of them. Visit the estate to taste the modern version and read up on its illustrious history (Klein Constantia Road, Constantia. 021 794 5188, www.kleinconstantia.com).



Boschendal, circa 1685

R310, Stellenbosch. 021 870 4272,
www.boschendal.com

In the 1680s French Huguenot settlers arrived after fleeing religious persecution and promptly established the land they were granted as a wine producing area. The old H-shaped Cape Dutch manor house at Boschendal has been converted into a museum that tells the tale of its previous owners. Entrance is R10. Guided tours are available on request.

Muratie Wine Estate, circa 1699

Knorhoek Road (off R44). 021 865 2330/6
www.muratie.co.za

The rickety, cobwebbed cellar is Muratie's main charm. Although it is known for its port-style wine, this was also the first farm in the country to plant Pinot Noir vines in 1927. The estate has an interesting history linked to slavery and prosperous European settler Martin Melck. There are historic manor houses and gnarled old vines aplenty in Stellenbosch, but for the oldest of the lot, add Blaauwklippen (1690), Neethlingshof (1692), Morgenhof (1692), Stellenzicht (1692), Meerlust (1693), Kleine Zalze (1695) and Vergelegen (1700) to your list.

Plaisir de Merle, circa 1764

Midway between Paarl and Franschhoek at Simondium on the R45. 021 874 1071,
www.plaisirdemerle.co.za

Here you will find one of the only remaining lynchhuse (line houses) in South Africa. The 1764 gable at Plaisir de Merle manor house is also one of the earliest remaining examples. The farm was originally named Le Plessis Marly after the home village of French Huguenot Charles Marais. The tasting room is open Monday to Friday 8:30 am – 5 pm and Saturdays 10 am – 4 pm. Sundays are by appointment only for groups of 10–15 people.

Company's Garden, circa 1650s

With Stellenbosch and Franschhoek hogging the limelight, the city's role in our winemaking tradition is often overlooked. Jan van Riebeeck planted the first grape vines in the then newly established vegetable garden of the VOC (Dutch East India Company) in the 17th century. Though the vines are no longer there, the garden – flanked by the Iziko SA National Gallery, Iziko National Museum and Planetarium, the Centre for the Book and Tuynhuys – links St George's Mall and the Long Street side of the city and is a splendid place for a stroll and a bit of fun feeding peanuts to the oversized squirrels. But if wine is what interests you most, pop into nearby Winesense in Mandela Rhodes Place for wine tasting and a snack. *Shop B2, cnr Wale Street and Berg Road, St George's Mall.* 021 422 0695.

Heritage Square, circa 1770s

100 Shortmarket Street. www.capeheritage.co.za
Here you'll find the oldest grape-bearing vine in the Cape. It has recently been harvested to produce about eight bottles of vino made by Christophe Durand, which will be auctioned next year (visit the website for more information). Since Heritage Square has come under new ownership, a slew of developments in the square – such as a Sunday food market, live music and art exhibitions – will bring fresh energy to this precious inner-city spot. Turn to 'Sightsee' on page 92 for more information on the square.

La Motte, circa 1695

R45 Main Road, Franschhoek. 021 876 3119,
www.la-motte.com

The manor house, Jonkershuis, water mill and historic cellar have all been declared national monuments after extensive restorations in 1975. The tasting room is open Monday to Friday 9 am – 4:30 pm and 10 am – 3 pm on Saturdays.

Vendôme, circa 1688

Arboretum Avenue, Suider Paarl. 021 863 3905,
www.vendome.co.za

This is a good stop for insight into historical Cape families. Since the first two Le Roux brothers, Jean and Gabriel, came to South Africa in 1688, 10 generations of the Le Roux family have been making wine here. Swing by for a tasting – they should be pretty good at winemaking by now. The tasting room is open Monday to Friday 9 am – 5 pm and 9 am – 1 pm on Saturdays.