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TRAVEL

**CHARMING ACCOMMODATION
ON A 17TH CENTURY CAPE FARM**

A homely, unfussy yet elegant and impressive farm stay near Stellenbosch

Such charming and affordable accommodations on a 17th-century farm are rare in the Cape Winelands, writes **Brian Berkman**, who wishes he could have stayed longer. And there's a wine-tasting barn, too!



The 17th-century manor house at Hawksmoor is also available for celebratory dinners in the magnificent dining hall. PHOTOS: BRIAN BERKMAN

Located just off the N1 near the site of the old Tygerberg Zoo and the Joostenberg Farm and Deli in the Cape Winelands, Hawksmoor House, part of Index Hotels, is a 16-room guest house in the farm's sensitively restored buildings.

It's owned by Mark Borrie and Simon Olding, who named the business 'Hawksmoor House on Matjieskuil Farm' after a favourite UK architect, Nicholas Hawksmoor (who assisted Christopher Wren on London's St Paul's Cathedral), and the 1826 given name of the farm.

A WORKING FARM

Still fully operational, the farm produces oats, hay, lucerne and, more recently, butternut squash and green beans. Twenty-one hectares are under grapes, with some vines being almost 40 years old this year.

The grapes grown at Matjieskuil are used exclusively to make their acclaimed wines, mainly

Chenin, Pinotage, Mourvèdre, Shiraz and Cabernet Franc.

While it does fall under the Stellenbosch postal code, the farm, just off the Old Paarl Road, benefits from both the Stellenbosch and Paarl growing conditions.

The land has a compelling history. Deeded in 1692 by Simon van der Stel, it was later named Waarburg, after the place where Martin Luther was isolated. In 1812 it belonged, albeit briefly, to the Voortrekker Piet Retief.

In 2004, Borrie purchased a section of the original farm, which had been divided over the years.

The present owners first converted the 17th-century manor house, which now includes five en-suite bedrooms. Renovations to the former slave cottages, sheds and finally the dairy followed, providing a total of 16 guest rooms. This includes a villa on the edge of the property. All buildings were erected on their original footprints.

Olding, trading under the name Hawksmoor Antiques, still buys and sells antiques that he mostly acquires in the UK and France, where the couple spend Cape winters.

AROUND THE HOUSE

A stellar buffet and hot breakfast are served in the beautifully restored Manor House. The original Aga stove is still in working order, and an honesty bar is located in the elegant sitting room, where guests are encouraged to help themselves. Dinner and other catering are available by advanced arrangement.

It is worth noting that there aren't any shops or restaurants within walking distance. However, a roughly 30-minute journey by car will get you to either Cape Town, on the Helshoogte Road towards Boschendal, or Stellenbosch's Church Street and all that it offers.

Farmer's Weekly stayed in the former dairy at Hawksmoor. The first thing one notices is a circular window in the



ABOVE and **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The Cape Room features yellowwood and stinkwood furniture, and the painting above the day bed is of the Jonkershoek Pieke.

RIGHT: The large, light-flooded bathroom in the Cape Room, located in the former dairy at Hawksmoor House, benefits from two opening sash windows, a free-standing tub, and beautiful art deco basin and lighting details.

BELOW: With an original Aga, the kitchen in the manor house also dishes up delicious breakfasts and other meals by arrangement.





ABOVE: Grapes and pink bougainvillea grow on a pergola outside the dairy. **RIGHT:** A bicycle-wheel window pane is an interesting detail in the dairy rooms at Hawksmoor House.



deep steep wall that now has a bicycle wheel frame and a fitted pane of glass.

A large leather couch with colourful cushions and incidental chairs, potted plants, storage chest, and cupboard are in the outside space, which is shared with the other room (the French Room, which has very dark oak furniture from the Dordogne region) in the dairy building.

For *Farmer's Weekly*, the great appeal of staying at Hawksmoor House is its vast and mature gardens. Grapes and pink bougainvillea grow on a pergola outside the dairy, and there is shade

from a large copse of tall trees nearby, under which parking is available for people staying in the dairy.

The Cape Room, in which *Farmer's Weekly* stayed, has an entrance hall with a kettle and plunger coffee maker. Ground coffee is provided. There is no fridge, air conditioner or TV in the room, and the signal from the free Wi-Fi is weak in the dairy but strong in the main house. A standing fan and underfloor heating are provided.

The large bathroom has two opening sash windows, an enclosed shower, and

a contemporary free-standing bath tub. An art deco pedestal, basin and wall lights are on either side of the scalloped mirror. The bedroom, down one step from the entrance hall, is perfectly decorated with old wooden shutters as a headboard fixed to the wall.

A day bed is in the corner and an elegant wardrobe has green baize interior backing. While a large safe is provided in the wardrobe, it was locked. French doors lead to a sunny outside area, but we couldn't find the door keys.



LEFT: The wine-tasting barn is adjacent to the main house. It is buttressed on one side, while an impressively large light hangs above its door.

BELOW: A colonnade of cypress trees frames the view of the manor house from the swimming pool area at Hawksmoor House.





NO BOTHER AT ALL

This property is so charming that elements that might have niggled elsewhere, such as the fact that only one of the electrical outlets actually worked, didn't bother us. All that did was the sadly limited time we had available, because of other commitments, to fully enjoy the property.

The Cape Dutch manor house has a vast lawn with huge oak trees. Although many (if not all) the furnishings were purchased abroad, to the writer's untrained eye everything looks perfectly at home.

In the manor house the dining table is down the centre of the room, with sitting rooms and a library off to the side.

Even looking in from the front door, the view of Table Mountain is impressive. But from the deep and covered back



stoep area, it is magnificent.

Although there are also dining tables outside, most of the furnishings are intended for lounging and there is a large and inviting cushioned area on the far left. After dark, this area will be quite magical with fairy lights and candles casting shadows through their filigreed iron cases.

Directly ahead a reflecting pool with water lilies and colonnade of cypress trees act as a runway before the eyes land on Table Mountain.

There are beautiful low-walled gardens on either side and a pool area with loungers some steps below. The wine-tasting barn is adjacent to the main house. It is buttressed



FAR LEFT: Furnished with period pieces, the interiors, such as this sitting room, are elegant but also comfortable to relax in.

LEFT: The handsome gable and facade of Hawksmoor House is a fine example of Cape Dutch architecture that was restored by its present owners.

ABOVE: A deep covered stoep at Hawksmoor House is a shared space between the two bedroom suites.

BELOW: Vast lawns and gardens with mature trees are a highlight.

on one side, while an impressively large light hangs above its door.

Hawksmoor House doesn't look or feel like guest accommodation. Rather, it feels like the generous home of a beloved relative who has invited one to stay.

Hawksmoor is unquestionably elegant and supremely comfortable but neither fussy nor pretentious.

And, considering the R1 300 that *Farmer's Weekly* paid in late December, it's a bargain, too.

Phone 021 884 4815, or visit hawksmoor.co.za. **FW**

