


Luxury in South-Africa



A year ago, Marjolein van Mourik (35) together with her husband Roy (51) purchased a monumental, nineteenth century country estate in South Africa, 'De Kloof'. In October 2004, after seven months of renovations they opened 'De Kloof Luxury Estate', a five star guesthouse.



text fleur de ron translation connie moser photography de kloof

How did you come to live in South Africa?

"For our work both Roy and I had been to South Africa a number of times. We both immediately fell in love with this magnificent country. The landscape is varied and the climate is glorious. There are a lot of worthwhile things to see here, such as wild parks, the garden route (not a garden route, but a 200 kilometre coast with sandy beaches and cosy, touristy seaside resorts) and the trendy city of Cape Town. Roy and I met each other in China. I worked there for Hilton International as Director Sales & Marketing. Roy worked for KLM and was sent to China to prepare the airport by Beijing for the arrival of KLM. I had brought in the crew contract with KLM for Hilton International and in so doing met Roy. We clicked right away. When Roy was sent to Lagos, Nigeria, we went together. Roy was responsible for the running of three airports where KLM flew. I set up the duty-free shops. In addition, I also designed interiors for houses, restaurants and 'boutique hotels', small luxury hotels with a maximum of 15 rooms. After four and a half years we were brought back to The Netherlands. In fact, within a short time we were certain: we wanted to go to South Africa and set up our own company. Apart from the beauty of the country, we were attracted by the tranquillity and the space. This was a conscious choice for us."

How did you come up with the idea for a luxury estate?

"I studied at the Hoge Hotel School in Maastricht and it has always been a dream of mine to open a boutique hotel someday. South Africa was the ideal place for it. We went looking for a Cape Dutch house, a house in the nineteenth century Dutch style, with land. We searched for a long time. With various checklists and a number of different estate agents we looked at one house after the other. Until we found this. A house in the perfect location in Swellendam, the

capital city for the Overberg region. After Cape Town and Stellenbosch, Swellendam is the oldest colonial town in South Africa. It has a lot of things of interest for tourists and is located half way between Cape Town and the Garden Route with the famous seaside resort, George. Both of which are located about 200 kilometres from here. At a distance of 100 kilometres from here, lies the most southern point in Africa, where the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean come together. Our house is also unique, a monument from 1801 with many historic elements. The floors, ceilings, windows and window frames are all original. We actually found it quite special that our forefathers had built this. Naturally we had to do some alterations in order to create what we had in mind: a luxurious place to stay. The alterations cost us blood, sweat and tears. We finally had to dismiss the building contractor and continue on with our own team. Forty workmen, all of whom we had to supervise ourselves. Before you knew it, a wall was built at the wrong place or a window had been taken out that didn't need to be. So we were completely invol-

The history of South Africa has been dominated by European tyrants, who arrived in this area in the fifteenth century. The first permanent population was the Dutch, Hollanders from the ship 'Haarlem', which suffered a shipwreck off of the South African coast. Later on Germans and French came and settled here. South Africa became an agricultural colony. In order to work the land, 25.000 slaves from West Africa and East Asia were brought to the region. The 'Boeren' (farmers), originally from Europe, were in charge of running the show. In 1948 the policy of Apartheid (separateness) was adopted, which was responsible for the heavy oppression of the black and coloured population until 1993. Since Apartheid has been abolished, the tourism sector in South Africa has been on the rise. Ever increasing numbers of people are discovering the overwhelming beauty and variation of the country.



ved with guiding all of the work activities. Indeed, through all of this we have become rather handy ourselves. After seven months of building renovations it was finished.

The South African Tourism Grading Council awarded us a five star rating. The historic name is 'De Kloof', a chasm or gap. The name refers to its location in an enclosed valley. So we soon found the name for our luxury estate: 'De Kloof Luxury Estate'.

What has De Kloof Luxury Estate become?

"A deluxe, five star guesthouse in a unique setting in unique surroundings. De Kloof consists of several buildings on 1,1 hectare of land, bordering on the Marloth nature reservation. We have four deluxe rooms and a suite for two to five persons, various beautifully planted gardens, a 12-meter swimming pool and a gym oasis with a breathtaking view over the hills of the Langebergheuvens. For the interior décor we choose for a mix of old and new. The rooms have a modern interior with plenty of art from Africa and Asia. We collected these pieces ourselves during our former travels. In addition to this, we had a golf facility and a tee off laid out. Our own golf professional, James, gives private lessons to small groups and accompanies our guest to the beautiful golf course for Swellendam and the surrounding area. We concentrate primarily on the individual traveller who loves style. De Kloof is also an ideal place for a honeymoon."

How is it to live and work in South African?

"Many Dutch people have a second home in the area around Cape Town and Somerset West.

We have named them the 'swallows.' They stay here for about six months a year and then they return to The Netherlands. Because we want to live and work here permanently we had to go through an entire paper mill, but in actuality we succeeded rather quickly in get-

ting everything arranged. In order to secure a permanent residence permit it was necessary to be willing to invest a certain amount of capital in the country.

It is tremendous living here! The air is fresh, the climate is wonderful, there is tranquillity and you are never stuck in a traffic jam. However, Apartheid has left a strong imprint on society. Fortunately a good deal has changed in the mean time for the black population in South Africa. Especially in the areas of schooling and housing. The concept of Black Empowerment is gaining more ground. But it's not yet ideal, that will take time. You notice that there are frustrations between and amongst different ethnic groups and layers of the society. I think that the enormous growth of the tourism industry which is currently taking place will be good for this country. There are many good chances to be had for many South Africans in tourism. For ourselves, we hope to be able to contribute to the emancipation of the coloured and black people. We attempt to train our personnel as well as we possibly can, with an eye towards their further future. Also, in 2010 the World Cup Soccer will take place in South Africa, which will contribute to the faster development of the country.

There is a lot of hard work being done on the infrastructure and that of course provides more opportunities for work."

Readers offer

For the readers of Global Connection, Roy and Marjolein van Mourik offer a special accommodation price for three nights including a complete, all-inclusive wine tasting, breakfast, 7 hour private golf lesson and entrance fee to the golf course. Possibilities exist for arranging auto rentals and also made to measure tours of the West Coast. For a visual tour and photo gallery. Website: www.dekloof.co.za or e-mail directly to info@dekloof.co.za