

Dorp love

ROSENDAL

Pippa de Bruyn visits the small Eastern Free State farming village of Rosendal and discovers what it's like to travel back in time



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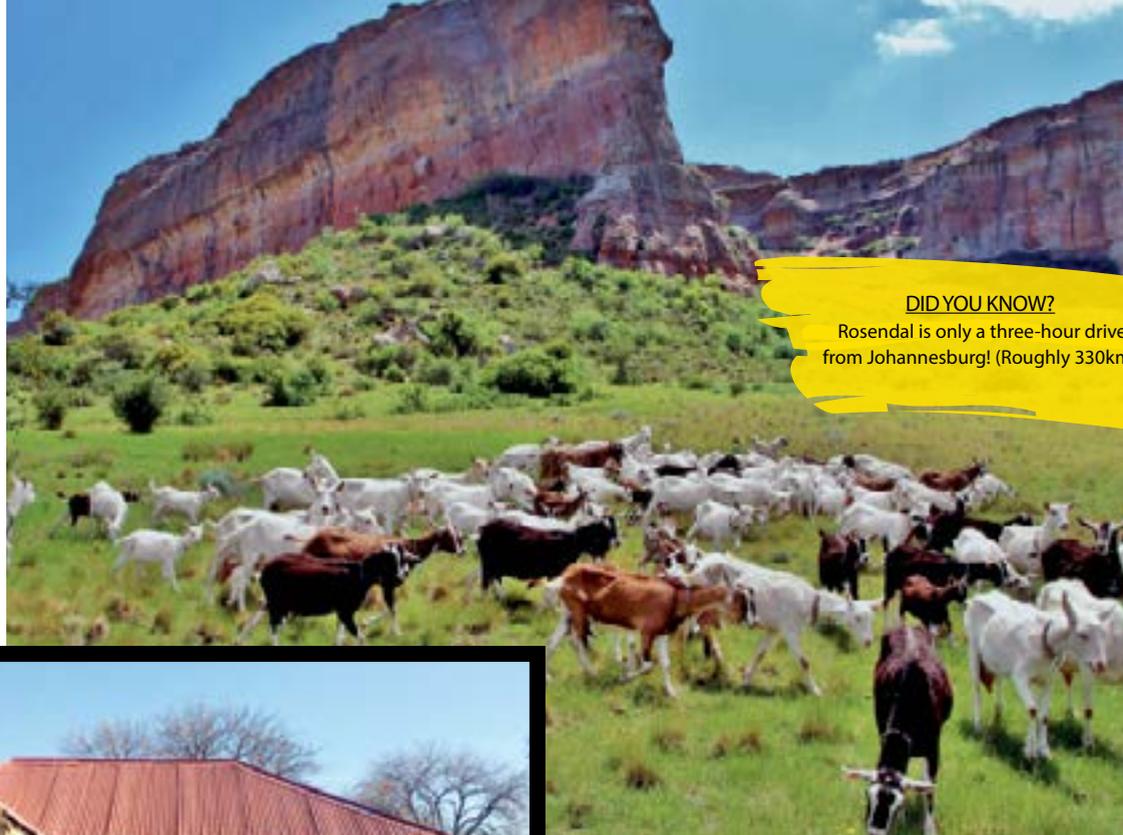
rare sense of peace begins to percolate when you swap the relentless hum of the metropolis for the still life that is the Eastern Free State.

Driving through rolling valleys stripped of the detritus of modern life, towards the Witteberg – foreplay to the Maluti mountains – you pass through a number of dorps, their trademark churches in hand-carved sandstone brick.

Those in search of more urban-style pleasures tend to head straight for Clarens but my hands-down favourite Eastern Free State dorp is Rosendal. Development somehow bypassed this trading post established in 1911. There is only one tar road and no parking bays or car guards; in fact – with only 60-odd houses – there are hardly any cars. No sounds of industry, no street lights, no neon mini-mart or shopping centre, although there is a “drank apteek”!

DORP LOVE

A herd of goats roam across green pastures at Mosamane Guest Lodge, which offers activities such as bee keeping and cheese making. BELOW: Der Kotten, a self-catering cottage.



DID YOU KNOW?

Rosendal is only a three-hour drive from Johannesburg! (Roughly 330km)



It's like travelling back in time or stepping into a film set, the streetscapes unmarked by the tumultuous century and surrounded by fields of gold or green, cypress trees like punctuation marks, and rocky outcrops in striated sandstone silhouetted against a baby blue sky.

Hardly surprising then that the dorp has been a magnet for creative souls for many years – when 7de Laan actor Chris van Niekerk relocated here, Rosendal even had a theatre – and resident artists' work is well showcased in its galleries.

When architect Daniel van der Merwe – another

Joburger who purchased a sandstone home here some 15 years ago – was commissioned to build two new Rosendal houses, he took his inspiration from the region's barns and farm sheds, making the most of the wide open vistas with verandas and open-plan living rooms from which to enjoy them.

Creativity and an

appreciation for their surrounds permeates Rosendal's community and it has resulted in a rather fine collection of self-catering houses to rent.

So, if a weekend of utter peace in a charming cottage is your idea of luxury, set your GPS coordinates for 28.5000 S, 27.91670 E.

ROUTE TIP

If you're one of those people who believe the journey should be part of the destination, opt for the Riemland Route (riemlandroute.co.za), which runs from Sasolburg south (R57 and R707) through a number of Free State towns. It makes a great change from the monotony of the highway.

WHERE TO STAY

Given its tiny size, Rosendal's stock of self-catering options is remarkable for both its variety and quality...

For a trip down nostalgia lane, book Der Kotten, a traditional two-bedroom sandstone cottage appropriately furnished in rustic vintage style (search on travelground.com; R800/night).

For a weekend bolthole with stunning views, try the two-bedroom Yvonne's House, built and equipped by someone who loves to cook (rosendalinfo.co.za; R1 000/night), or Huka Tuka, a neat cottage on the edge of town (rosendalinfo.co.za; R300 pp/night).

Molly & Sue's House is perfect for a bigger party (R1 200/night). For more on this or Rosendal's many options, speak to Elmo on 082 776 1310 who handles the rentals for most of the best houses in Rosendal.

If you want a fully catered experience, nearby Moolmanshoek is a wonderful family-run country lodge offering luxury farmstyle accommodation, hearty fare, horseriding in the mountains, 4x4 trails and more (moolmanshoek.co.za; from R800pp, DBB). For a large group prepared for a more rural experience, take over the nearby Mosamane Guest Lodge, a rustic renovated farm shed that can sleep up to 24 for the unbelievable price of R4 180/night (mosamaneguestfarm.com).



You're sure to find something delightful at Turksvy Trading, an eclectic 'junk' store filled with bric-a-brac and memorabilia. BELOW: An artwork at artist Dahla Hulme's gallery DH&H in Market Street, on the main square.

WHERE TO EAT

Die Stoor (Van der Merwe Street) opens on weekends (9am to 3pm) for light eats. Kos-huis-kroeg (Generaal Fick Street) is open Tuesday to Friday from 10am to late and Saturday from 8.30am to late. You can also choose from the pub, deli and restaurant at The Hound & Rose Country House (Neethling Street).

WHAT TO DO

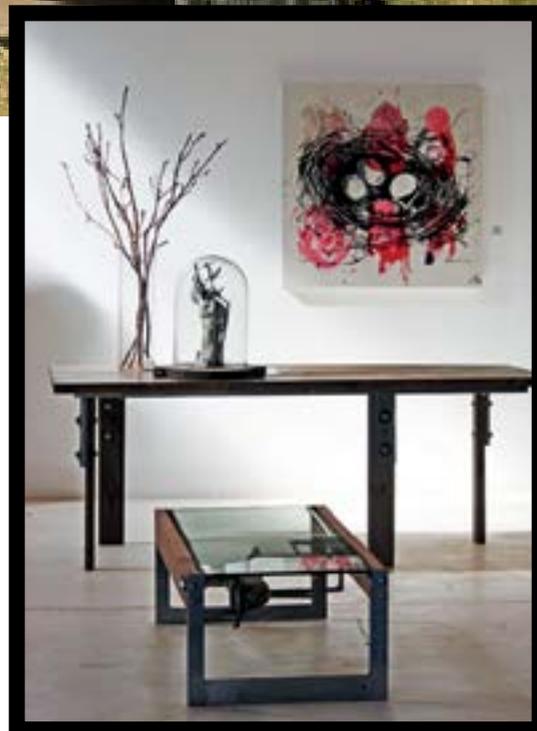
Rosendal activities include walking, mountain biking, browsing for collectables at Turksvy Trading (Kriek Street), picking up art (rosendalinfo.co.za/ galleries-and-artists), 4x4 trails and horseriding at nearby Moolmanshoek and delectable cheese tasting at nearby Mosamane. Or why not relearn the art of doing nothing?

For more information about Rosendal, visit rosendalinfo.co.za

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"Rosendal is serious soul food... It inspires, delights and entertains. It's peaceful, quiet and unassuming." – Yvonne Short, owner of Yvonne's House

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