



COUNTRY ROAD

Two hours – and a whole universe – outside of Cape Town, the sleepy (for now) town of McGregor is going through a renaissance

for the most part, the town of McGregor has swerved the outcome of its many (former) small-town cousins – Franschhoek, Greyton, Prince Albert, the list goes on of once quiet villages swallowed up by the urban-escape tourist market, of city dwellers looking

for a momentary out (and more often, permanent transplant) to these quieter parts. The resulting population boom, and the inevitable influx of Bootlegger coffee shops and Woolworths Food outlets, counterproductively end up erasing the charm and character that first made the town an attractive destination.

The town of McGregor seems to know this, carefully balancing 'mainstream appeal' with the kind of creative quirks only a small

town can get away with. Here, things are still a little weird and a little wild – the kind that makes for unexpected adventures that can only exist outside of the fully-established urban matrix – which is exactly why it should be at the top of your 'next holiday trip' list. Luckily, there is no shortage of fine dining and activities, and a stay at the country-luxe Lucky Crane Villas is a must. • **McGregor Tourism**
📍 tourismmcgregor.co.za

WHERE TO STAY

Lucky Crane Villas

076 151 4526

luckycranevillas.co.za

Beautifully curated, self-contained accommodation is the worldwide trend, with wellbeing, holistic inspiration, connecting with nature, and beauty becoming the new currency of luxury. All these elements combine at McGregor's Lucky Crane Villas, a stunning private estate with easy access to the Robertson Wine Route, the famous Route 62, and the Klein Karoo. Set on the edge of the Krans Nature Reserve and a picturesque stroll from the cafes and creatives of the village, the Villas – five in total – are individually designed, featuring deluxe details that make the difference, from superb entertaining areas and swimming pools with mountain views to olive groves, all decorated in a chic Afro-modern-meets-farmhouse style.

'Exactly seven years to the day since I had landed in South Africa, I visited McGregor – the first place I had stayed when I arrived. I came across an empty piece of land nestled between the nature reserve and a tranquil part of this wonderful village, and the idea of Lucky Crane took seed, says Monika Schmalzl, Lucky Crane's creator, owner and manager, who had closed her advertising agency in Italy to relocate to the Western Cape. 'I am Italian by birth and South African by choice,' she says.

Together with architect Frederik Labuschagne, Monika co-conceived the Villas as a fusion of airy modernity and village aesthetic. Her love of art and gardening shines through in the light-filled interiors and striking landscaping, which she designed. And her interest in food, entertaining and la dolce vita is evident in the high quality and comfort of the Villas, from dreamy bedrooms to great kitchens. 'Most importantly, Nature herself created the wonderful surroundings,' says Monika. 'And I feel lucky to be able to share this incredible setting, especially during this time when we all need relaxation, grounding and personal happiness.' Alongside the exquisite accommodation, Lucky Crane Villas also offers bespoke experiences, curated by Monika, that focus on discovering the unforgettable surroundings, including pottery sessions, bread-baking courses and wellness excursions. ▶



TOP DOWN
THE INTERIOR
OF THE 'WINGED
KITE' VILLA, WITH
VIEWS ONTO THE
SURROUNDING
BREEDE RIVER
LANDSCAPE; THE
FAT LADY'S ARMS
OWNER-CHEF
KURT MIDDLETON
LE ROUX

OPPOSITE PAGE,
CLOCKWISE
FROM LEFT
LUCKY CRANE
VILLAS OFFERS
AN EXPERIENCE-
DRIVEN STAY IN
A PICTURESQUE,
UNTAMED
LANDSCAPE;
THE VILLAS ARE
DECORATED IN
A CHIC AFRO-
SCANDI STYLE,
WITH SPACIOUS
AND LIGHT-FILLED
ROOMS; LUCK
CRANE VILLAS
FOUNDER MONIKA
SCHMALZL

WHAT TO EAT

Ragazzi Osteria

065 598 9542

@ragazzi_osteria

Fine dining takes the form of Ragazzi Osteria, which is owned and run by Chef Clinton Drake (formerly of Singita). The menu is firmly Italian with ingredient-led dishes prepared using locally and sustainably sourced meat, seafood, and market-fresh produce. Highlights include sourdough pizza, homemade gnocchi, and artisanal ice cream. The wine list offers a curated selection of regional producers.

The Fat Lady's Arms

078 514 7454

This converted stable is now a cosy and intimate space owned by Kurt Middleton-le Roux (formerly of Belmont Mount Nelson and founder of Karoux). The menu draws on the international street food scene, influenced by Kurt's travels throughout Asia. Dishes of zheng shui dan (steamed egg custard), hong shao rou (braised pork belly) or calamari katsu can be enjoyed with a selection of hand-picked regional wines.

TOP DOWN
LORD'S WINERY,
ON THE SLOPES OF
THE MCGREGOR
VALLEY; ALILA
HOFMEYER OF
MILLSTONE
POTTERY



WHAT TO DO

Lord's Wines

023 625 1265

lordswinery.com

Located 500 metres above sea level on the northern slopes of the McGregor Valley, the beautifully isolated Lord's Winery presides over panoramic vistas of fynbos and vineyards. A family-run winery headed up by viticulturist Jacie Oosthuizen (an avid cricket fan, he named the farm for the famed grounds in London), the estate is renowned for its sparkling wines.

Millstone Pottery

081 322 5166

Housed in the original 1880s wagon shed, Millstone is one of only a handful of wood-firing pottery studios active in the country. Recently taken over by potter Alila Hofmeyr, the founder's former apprentice, and her partner Lyle Krimchanski, they host ceramic making and firing workshops, eco-landscaping and permaculture workshops as well as small group and one-on-one tailored clay classes. ■