

The road from Ermelo to Vryburg goes through a number of interesting towns, all very different and mostly unknown to overseas visitors. First there is Evander, founded by Union Corporation to support the Winkelhaak gold mine which it established in 1955. Then the road passes between the steel towns of Vanderbijlpark and Vereeniging on the Vaal River and on towards the West Rand, famous for its rich, deep level gold mines situated around Klerksdop. First, however, there is Potchefstroom, the second-oldest establishment in the Transvaal Republic. On the Mooi River, it was founded in 1838 by the Voortrekkers on their way northwards to escape from British rule. It is now known as an academic city and is home to five tertiary institutions.



Then on to Klerksdorp where gold was discovered in 1885. This led to a gold rush (and even the formation of a stock exchange!). However, it soon petered out as this far west the main gold reefs were deep underground. It was only with the development of deep mining techniques in the 1960s that gold mining took off in the area and mines such as Vaal Reefs and Buffelsfontein helped to propel the South African gold industry to a dominant position in world production. In recent times it has become better known as the birthplace of Bishop Desmond Tutu who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

Moving westwards, one passes through the fertile maize producing area of the North West Province. It is a long drive with large farms on both sides and very few towns. Finally one arrives in



Vryburg, The town was established in 1882 as the capital of the Republic of Stellaland and is on the great northern railway, which ran from **Cape Town** through the **Kimberley diamond fields** and northwards beyond the Victoria Falls. Vryburg is South Africa's largest beef-producing district

and it is sometimes called "the **Texas** of South Africa". Tiger Kloof school was established just outside the town by the London Missionary Society in 1904.



After Vryburg it is a tedious nine hour drive to Laingsburg via Kimberley, the home of the diamond industry and famous for the Big Hole, dug with pick and shovel by 50,000 miners between 1871 and 1914. It is a recommended stopping off point both to break the journey and to find out more about a very interesting part of South Africa's history.

Heading south-west, one enters the far north of the Western Cape. This is the start of the Great Karoo, an arid area known for its sprawling sheep farms. There is very little after Beaufort West apart from farms and a long road disappearing into the distance! Eventually Laingsburg appears and with it an opportunity to refuel and buy some very good game biltong (Speedy Springbok recommends the kudu!). There is a Flood Museum telling the story of the 1981 flood but this is essentially a town serving the farming community and there are no notable points of interest for the tourist. Most people going south don't dilly-dally as they are in a hurry to get to Cape Town.