

The road from Laingsburg to Cape Town provides a kaleidoscope of magnificent scenery. But before you leave Laingsburg, stock up with some delicious kudu biltong and droe wors from Karoo Biltong, which sends its products to customers around the world (sorry vegetarians). After about 20 miles one comes to Matjiesfontein, which was established by a Scotsman, James Logan, as a refreshment station for trains passing between Cape Town and the Kimberley diamond fields. This became the famous Lord Milner Hotel – a piece of Victorian Britain in the middle of the Karoo and preserved as such to this day! (They even have a red London bus!) James Logan was a passionate cricketer and is considered to be one of the founding fathers of South African cricket.



About 100 miles further on the seemingly endless, arid Karoo landscape changes as the Hex River Mountains appear and suddenly one enters the fertile Hex River valley with its fruit farms and wineries.



Then it is past Worcester and the turnoff to Wellington (known for its grapes, deciduous and dried fruit and brandy!) to, in the words of the SA Venues website, “a series of generous valleys known as the Cape Winelands – a collection of historic towns, little hamlets and Cape Dutch farmsteads that provide well-regarded South African wines to the world”. Places such as Franschhoek, Stellenbosch, Tulbagh founded by the Dutch settlers in the 18th century have not only natural beauty but also a rich heritage.



From there it is a short drive through the northern suburbs to the centre of Cape Town. There is much I could write about this beautiful city, which is the legislative capital of South Africa, but my focus is the picturesque Hout Bay, situated in a valley on the Atlantic seaboard (ie cold side of the Cape Peninsula!) It started out as a fishing village in the 1860s and it still has a small fishing industry.



There is a marked contrast between the smart houses on the side of the mountain overlooking the sea and the overcrowded township of Imizamu Yethu sprawling up the opposite hillside. The influx of people from the rural areas to Cape Town and its environs has exacerbated the problems of unemployment and economic hardship which in turn have led to huge social problems. That, unfortunately, is replicated throughout the country as we shall see again when we swing round and head towards the southern coast. But more about that next time!

Note: If you would like to find out more about Cape Town, there is a plethora of websites providing information about the city and its environs – things to do, local attractions, places of natural beauty, wine tours, sport and recreation and much else.