Constantia Valley celebrates 333 years

By Ilse van den Berg

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Did you know that the Constantia Valley is celebrating 333 years of winemaking in the region this year? I'd say it's a pretty good reason to celebrate when so many businesses close their doors after two years.

And celebrate we did. A bunch of us were recently invited to attend an event at Silvermist Vineyards for some mysterious reveal which coincided with the big celebrations.

Silvermist

Barely twenty years after Jan van Riebeek landed at Table Bay, Simon van der Stel properly launched the wine industry in the Cape. Appointed the Cape Colony's first Governor, he also had training and experience in viticulture. After sending numerous soil samples from all over the Cape back to Europe to be analysed and ascertain the best location to plant vineyards.

Van der Stel chose for himself a 2400 hectare piece of land to start planting - hello Constantia (*insert in-love emoji*).

Constantia Glen

Within a few decades, the Constantia wines were already being enjoyed by royalty and nobility, and written about by the likes of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and Baudelaire.

333 years later, the wines of Constantia (the Southern Hemisphere's, oldest wine producing region) are still enjoyed around the world: a proud heritage of the country.

Buitenverwachting

But, even though history is precious and beautiful and needs to be protected, the world does move forward and things change with the times. Digital transformation has been the hot topic in practically all industries - the wine industry included. Those not willing to adapt and get on board are being left behind.

Experience the valley digitally

At our little get together, the nine wine farms in the region revealed their new innovation which they hope will take the wine route to the next level. The Constantia Wine Route website's latest photographic footage showcases the scenic beauty of the wine valley and all the wine estates have to offer - from vineyard to cellar to tasting room and dining experiences.

Rekindling my love for the Constantia Valley
Ilse van den Berg 22 Feb 2018

The valley aims to create experiences that are authentic and that bring its visitors closer to the heart of its winemaking process.

What this means is you can interactively explore each farm's nooks and crannies via 360-degree high-quality photos, right from your computer, tablet, or mobile phone. It's quite a fun experience clicking on all the little red icons, moving seamlessly from the vineyard to the tasting room, to the restaurant etc. And best of all, it makes you itch to get out there and go and experience it in person.

I think what I love most about these nine farms in the Constantia Valley is how they are really trying to work together and support each other.

"If you're not going to buy my wine, I'm going to make sure I try and convince you to buy my neighbour's wine," one winemaker remarked.

Another one noted how he will never forget the pride he felt to be a part of this wine valley when, one evening, someone from each surrounding farm (and their families) voluntarily pitched up to help the new guy on the block with his first grape pickings.

Call it whatever you like. To me, it beautifully resembles the South African spirit of Ubuntu - "I am because we are".

For more, go to the [Constantia Wine Route website](#).

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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