

# Valleybrook Gardens Horticultural Tour To South Africa 2005

## Day 1 (Fri. Oct. 14)

### The Westcliff, Johannesburg



On arrival at Johannesburg International Airport a private air-conditioned coach will be on hand to take you to your hotel – **The Westcliff**. A haven of peace and tranquility set against striking hillside terraces with spectacular views across the zoological gardens, the hotel is only ten minutes drive from the buzzing city center. Time to unpack, relax and explore your new surroundings.

In the early evening you will meet the rest of your group for a ‘Welcome Cocktail Party’ and an introductory talk by a guest speaker. The rest of the evening is free for you to explore and enjoy dinner in one of the hotels superb

restaurants or dine at one of the excellent restaurants nearby.

## Day 2 (Sat. Oct. 15)

### The Westcliff, Johannesburg

A fairly early start will see the group visiting two major garden centers this morning. Firstly **Broad Acres** – this is the very latest and largest garden center of its kind in South Africa. It is the center focus of an enormous shopping complex consisting of everything from health spas to decorating boutiques, delicatessens, cafes and shops. Built along traditional lines, Broad Acres contrasts beautifully with your second stop this morning to **Lifestyle Garden Center**, a modern streamlined complex of a similar size. You will meet the people responsible for the smooth running of these enormous complexes and have a chance to exchange views and ideas with these innovative people within the horticultural industry.

After a light lunch you will move on to the **Saxon Hotel gardens**. Set in the leafy suburb of Sandhurst, the Saxon makes a world-class statement of ethnic elegance; you will be able to stroll around the beautifully orchestrated indigenous garden with the landscape designer. After returning to your hotel to freshen up for the evening you will be transported to a beautiful **private garden of Vincent Carruthers** in Bryanston. Acquired over thirty years ago, the owners removed all the exotic plants and have allowed the garden to establish its own ecosystem and to develop as a sanctuary for wildlife; from birds and waterfowl to insects, frogs and other small creatures. Enjoy the privilege of being shown this indigenous wetland refuge in the heart of suburbia just a stone’s throw from the concrete jungle that is Sandton, by the owners. Renowned environmentalists, naturalists, and author of books they will entertain and inform over drinks and a buffet supper on the verandah of their home.

## Day 3 (Sun. Oct. 16)

### The Westcliff, Johannesburg

This morning you board the coach for the scenic drive through the Magaliesberg to Sun City, an enormous and opulent oasis of entertainment nestled among the hills to the south of the Pilanesberg. In the grounds of Sun City amongst rivers, waterfalls and cascades is the 25-hectare **Sun City Botanical Garden**. The designer responsible for the incredible design and layout will be on hand to take you through the garden.

After a light lunch you will visit the **Margaret Roberts Herb Nurseries**. Our next stop will be at **Flower Farm** in Benoni, a major importer / exporter of plants all over the world.

We will be stopping for dinner at a restaurant on our return trip to Johannesburg.

#### Day 4 (Mon. Oct. 17)

#### The Westcliff, Johannesburg

This morning you take the drive to the outskirts of Pretoria to visit **Safari Garden Center**, **The Wilds Retail Nursery** and **Malanseuns Wholesale Nursery** near Bon Accord who specialize in frost resistant plants for the world market.

In the late afternoon we visit **Lindley Farm** near Lanseria. Once an old farm and farmhouse this property has been transformed into a most beautiful house and garden. The house overlooks rolling lawns to willows framing the tranquil waters of a lake where a wide variety of bird life abounds. Beyond is the Crocodile River meandering through the hills and thick riverine bush of the 47,000 hectares that is the World Heritage Site that you visited yesterday evening.

Keith Kirsten of Lindley Farm is often called ‘South Africa’s favorite gardener’. A household name across southern Africa, he has informed and entertained radio and television audiences for more than 25 years. This evening you will enjoy drinks and dinner with Mr. Kirsten before returning to your hotel.

#### Day 5 (Tues. Oct. 18)

#### The Vineyard, Cape Town

This morning you have an early departure from Johannesburg airport to Cape Town. On arrival in Cape Town you will be met and taken by coach to the first of the visits to various garden centers. **Super Plants** is situated near Table View where, as the name suggests, you have a picture postcard view of Table Mountain. After some time spent conversing with the owner of this dynamic garden center, you will travel to Rosebank to visit **Starke Ayres Garden Center**, another innovative retail outlet for you to explore.

Once on board your coach again, and if time permits, you will be taken on a scenic journey en route to your hotel, in the leafy suburb of Newlands, on the outskirts of Cape Town.



the Atlantic Ocean.

The unmistakable silhouette of Table Mountain, flanked by Devil’s Peak on one side, Lion’s Head and Signal Hill on the other, comes into view as the coach skirts the city and travels towards the Atlantic Seaboard. Stretching all the way down to Cape Point, it comprises much sought-after residential enclaves and beachfront properties, including Clifton, playground of the rich and famous, with its four magnificent beaches and state-of-the-art apartment architecture. Continue on round the spectacular scenic route with the Twelve Apostle Mountains soaring above you as you skirt round the rim of

Travel on over the saddle of the mountains where the Hout Bay valley unfolds before you, known for its rural, village atmosphere and thriving fishing industry, and over a second saddle in the chain of mountains that stretches all the way down the Peninsula to Cape Point.

The Vineyard Hotel, your home for the next few days, is situated in six acres of attractive landscaped parkland, and is just 15 minutes from the city center and the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, and within walking distance of the exclusive Cavendish Square shopping center. A beautiful establishment with over 200 years of history within its wall, boasting a glass roofed Courtyard restaurant catering for breakfasts and dinners, while “Au Jardin” offers award winning fine cuisine with excellent views of the garden and mountain beyond. Your comfort is assured.



After lunch at the hotel board the coach for the short drive to **Stodels Garden Center** in Kenilworth. Enjoy an interesting and informative meeting with the management while being shown around the retail nursery.

In the late afternoon visit a fine private house and garden. This beautiful 17<sup>th</sup> century homestead is filled with treasures, including a wonderful collection of South African art, and is set in a glorious garden that has been evolving for some years. Comprising of several 'rooms' the philosophy behind the gardening is to plant each 'room' or section with a different mood in mind, but always to give a sense of peace and serenity to the person walking through it. Our hosts, will give us a brief talk on the history of the house and take us on a tour of this most special garden.

Return to the hotel and perhaps go for a stroll around the beautiful gardens of the hotel, before gathering for an early evening welcoming drinks party and talk by our very informative guest speaker. This will be a first introduction to the Cape Floral Kingdom and the extraordinary diversity and endemism that prevails. Of the six floral kingdoms in the world this is the smallest, and the richest, supporting over 8,500 species, of which 67% are endemic. Fynbos, sandveld and renosterveld vegetation will be explained, and you will be amazed at the plants you will recognize that are endemic to the Cape.

The evening is free for dining and exploring on your own.

### **Day 6 (Wed. Oct. 19)**

### **The Vineyard, Cape Town**

After breakfast you will be boarding the coach for the short drive to **Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens**. Known throughout the world for its spectacular beauty and incredible diversity of plants, the gardens spread across Table Mountain's eastern slopes and extend all the way up to Maclear's Beacon. Formally established in 1913, Kirstenbosch comprises over 500 hectares, as well as 478 hectares of natural forest and fynbos. The landscape includes nearly 7,000 species of indigenous plants, nearly 1,000 of which occur naturally within the area – many being unique to Table Mountain. Some 36 hectares are reserved solely for cultivation and research. This morning you can enjoy a visit to 'Glass House' conservatory and a guided walk through the nursery and rare plants section.

After a light lunch in the restaurant situated in Kirstenbosch, you will be joined by the director of the **Abalimi Bezakhaya Greening Project**, as the coach takes you to Gugulethu Township. It is here that previously disadvantaged people are taught basic skills in the planting of waterwise indigenous trees and flora, as well as how to grow their own food. The project is massive and very successful; the director will lead you on an interesting and informative tour of a particular area, and for those who have never been to this country before, you will find it a heart-warming and positive way to spend an afternoon.

After returning to the hotel in the late afternoon to freshen up, you board the coach again in the early evening to visit a beautiful private garden in Constantia. This exceptionally pretty garden containing 5 different axis is the creation of the talented owner passionate about design, and has been evolving since 1985. Faced with part vineyard / part forest on a long narrow piece of ground, it was decided to turn what appeared to be a negative into a joyous positive, the result of which is astonishing. Traditional herbaceous borders confuse and delight with untraditional indigenous plantings. The owner and the horticulturist will guide you around the garden.

Following our garden tour we will move on to dine at **La Colombe Restaurant** featuring superlative cuisine and exceptional wine.

### **Day 7 (Thurs. Oct. 20)**

### **The Vineyard, Cape Town**

This morning board the coach for a drive into the city of Cape Town and the Cablecar Station, to take the gently revolving car to the top of **Table Mountain**.

Over a thousand metres high, and three kilometers wide, this amazing landmark is a **World Heritage Site**. Flanked by Devil's Peak and Lion's Head, it can be spotted from as far as 200 kilometres out to sea. As you look out from this vantage point you will be able to see the beautiful panorama of the whole peninsula spread out before you, all the way down to Cape Point; 44 kilometres as the crow flies. Enjoy a walk through the fynbos, as far as Maclear's Beacon and the top boundary of Kirstenbosch with a specialist guide.

Descend the mountain in time for a stroll through the gardens of the famous **Mount Nelson Hotel**, where you will stop for lunch.



After lunch go on a short walking tour of the city and view the architecture of the Dutch and English colonists during their occupations of the Cape. Your tour takes you down Government Avenue, past the Houses of Parliament, and Tuynhuis, the State President's Offices and Guest House, and on through **The Company Gardens**, that were first planted in 1652, to grow fruit and vegetables for the ships rounding the Cape on their way to the East.

As one views the sights and landmarks of the beautiful city, one soaks up the atmosphere and culture from the museums and art galleries, not forgetting the colourful flower sellers who have been trading on Adderley Street for over a hundred years. One listens to the stories of the slave trade, their emancipation in 1834, and what it meant to the people living here. You will hear how the Cape was developed, and begin to understand why South Africa is known as the 'rainbow nation'.

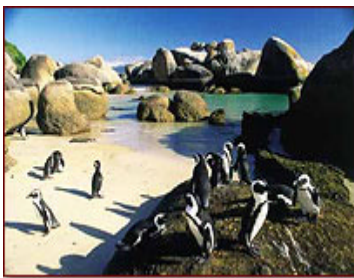
The rest of the day is yours to do as you please. Perhaps a visit to the V&A Waterfront where there's everything from 5 star hotels, restaurants, pubs, cafes, boutiques, antique shops, jewellers, book shops, art galleries, craft markets; the choice is endless. Take time to browse. Take the 'penny-ferry' around the harbour, and view the huge dockyards and beautifully restored Waterfront from the sea. Visit the Nelson Mandela Gateway, Chavonne's Battery Museum, or take the launch out to famous Robben Island, now a World Heritage Site, and learn the plight of South Africa's erstwhile political prisoners, and view the incredible picture postcard view of Table Mountain with the city below. Sip a glass of wine at a sidewalk cafe and watch Table Mountain turn pink with the sunset, before finding somewhere at the water's edge to have dinner.

#### **Day 8 (Fri. Oct. 21)**

#### **The Vineyard, Cape Town**

This morning board the coach for the scenic drive over Chapman's Peak that looks out across the mighty Atlantic Ocean, for a tour of the Cape Peninsula. Stop for a brief visit at **Induli Wholesale Tree Nursery** at Red Hill, near Scarborough. Meet and chat with the owner before moving on to the **Cape Point Nature Reserve** and the **Cape of Good Hope**. The nature reserve, established in 1938, at Africa's most southwesterly tip, covers some 7,750 hectares, and you will take a circular drive through the reserve to Cape Point. Spectacular scenery awaits you.

After lunch at the restaurant in the reserve the bus will be returning along False Bay coast. Whale spotting along the False Bay coastline can be particularly rewarding at this time of year, with regular sightings reported of the Southern Right Whales that come here to calve.



We will be stopping to view the Jackass penguins at Boulders Beach. The penguin colony established itself in the 1970's after an oil disaster at sea.

We will be having time to visit Simon's Town, the historical winter anchorage for the 18<sup>th</sup> century seafarers and their ships, and today's South African naval base. Listen to a description of life in Simon's Town in the early days of the tall ships, and how over 300 warships during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> World Wars limped into the harbour for repairs. Visit the bronze statue of one of Simon's Town's best-loved residents; a famous dog

known as 'Just Nuisance' who was buried with full military honors. Explore the little shops and galleries, before moving on to visit **The Cellars Hohenort Hotel** for late tea or early cocktails and a walk through the garden.

Return to the hotel for the rest of the evening for you to do as you please.

## Day 9 (Mon. Oct. 22)

## The Village at Spier, Stellenbosch

Today you check out of the Vineyard Hotel and board the coach for the scenic coastal route to the Winelands. Enjoy a driven tour of the town of Stellenbosch, established 1679. Of all the towns founded in the Cape during the period of control by the Dutch East India Company, Stellenbosch is one of the best preserved. Here we have many fine examples of Cape Dutch Architecture. The town is surrounded by vineyards and is the very heart of the wine industry.



This morning you will be visiting one of the beautiful Cape Dutch Homesteads on the outskirts of Stellenbosch. Privately owned, this house was originally built in the late 1700's and most probably had a baroque style gable. After a terrible fire that destroyed most of the house, it was rebuilt in 1840, and the gable is typically neo-classical in style.

The house is filled with fine family treasures, and the owners will give us a brief tour of the house, and host a late luncheon on the vine-covered verandah. Over lunch a specialist guest speaker will give a talk on matters horticultural in the Cape.

After lunch you take the short drive to **The Pink Geranium Nursery**, home of **Capeland Wholesalers**. The owner James Fisk, a specialist hybridizer, will be available to talk about the various aspects of his business including importing and exporting.

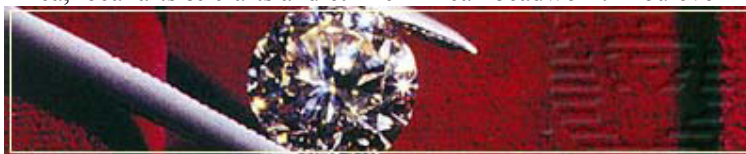
Then move on to **Cape Seed & Bulb** where the owner Jim Holmes will show you around his nursery and talk to you about the new plants he has propagated, and his export trade.

Before checking in to your hotel the coach will stop at Old Nectar Wine Cellar. Neil Ellis the owner and producer of these exceptional wines will be giving you a brief talk while tasting some of his delicious wines.

Check in to the **The Village at Spier** set in the heart of a 300-year-old wine estate on the outskirts of Stellenbosch. The Village introduces a new era of luxury accommodation in South Africa. Designed to recreate the intimate and relaxed atmosphere of a small village, its 155 rooms are connected by indigenous gardens, walkways and waterways.

The rest of the evening is yours to do as you please. The Village has a myriad of offerings including several restaurants, shopping and recreation opportunities. Visit their Cheetah Outreach Programme. Learn more about these incredible cats from a distance, or get up close and personal and even step inside the enclosure.

Or check out the Museum Shop, which features a diverse range of collectables reflecting the cultural heritage of South Africa, local arts & crafts and ethnic African beadwork. You even have the opportunity



to stake your claim in acquiring export quality diamonds direct from the source at Daneel Diamonds. An expert will guide your choice, ensuring that your decision is based on sound knowledge and informed advice. Prepare to be dazzled!

Indulge yourself in a variety of massage and holistic treatments including aromatherapy and reflexology at the Camelot Spa. Within the breathtaking panorama of the Helderberg and Simonsberg mountains lies Figaros, a French classic style fine dining restaurant in a modern setting. Treat yourself to an unforgettable experience where the use of local and organic produce has been emphasised in an array of exquisite dishes.

**Day 10 (Sun. Oct. 23)****The Village at Spier, Stellenbosch**

This morning you will have two options; staying at the Village giving you the opportunity to explore more it has to offer or go into Stellenbosch for some sightseeing last minute shopping. Or take a drive along the scenic coastal route to Betty's Bay on the Indian Ocean. The trip will have an early start and you will be visiting the **Harold Porter Botanical Gardens**. Situated in the centre of the coastal fynbos where the flora is at its richest, the garden encompasses mountain slopes with their wind-clipped heathlands, deep gorges with relict forests, flats and marshes with restios, sedges and bulbs, as well as dunes adjacent to the beach with their specialised salt-adapted plants. The garden is renowned for its waterfalls and amber pools.

In the afternoon the full group will be visiting **Vergelgen Estate** in Somerset West. Here we will be visiting the historic house and gardens as well as the winery for tasting. Vergelegen has been a gardener's paradise from the time the land was first tamed by Willem Adriaan van der Stel in 1700. Not content merely to be a farmer, Willem Adriaan was also a botanist, forester and a horticulturist and wrote the "The African Gardeners' and Agriculturists' Calendar". Much of which he wrote centuries ago is still relevant to this day. Evidence of his skills are still visible on Vergelegen - the five camphor trees gracing the front of the Homestead, the oldest oak tree in South Africa and an ancient mulberry tree.

Late afternoon you will be returning to your hotel to prepare for our farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

**Day 11 (Mon. Oct. 24)**

A day for last minute shopping, packing and relaxing before the transfer to Cape Town International Airport and your homeward bound flight.

Of course you could always arrange an extension. After all when will you next have to explore the wonders of South Africa!

# Profiles

## Accommodations

### **The Westcliff** , Johannesburg – 4 nights

[www.westcliffhotel.orient-express.com](http://www.westcliffhotel.orient-express.com)

: 5 star rating

: An *Orient- Express* hotel and member of *The Leading Hotels of the World*

*“Classic Orient-Express hotel set to become the city’s Grande Dame.”* Conde Nast Traveller

### **The Vineyard Hotel**, Cape Town – 4 nights

[www.vineyard.co.za](http://www.vineyard.co.za)

: 4 star rating

*“Known for its spectacular quiet setting, attentive hospitality, two restaurants, fine wines and excellent health and leisure facilities, the Vineyard Hotel is run with passion and attention to detail.”*

### **The Village at Spier Hotel**, Stellenbosch – 2 nights

<http://www.spier.co.za/home.asp>

: 4 star rating

*“An enchanting Cape African experience awaits you at historic Spier in the heart of the Stellenbosch Winelands. Spier is undoubtedly the most unique Winelands development in the world”*