

R15.⁹⁵

Pick n Play

FreshLiving

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Slow it down

45 hearty recipes to warm up your winter

WIN!
A R70 000
TRIP TO
THAILAND



Must-see
winter puddings
page 48

BEAUTY EXTRA

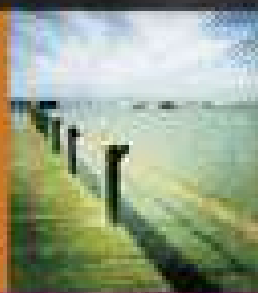
Glow through the chill
with budget skin savers

OLD-FASHIONED PUDDINGS

Classic favourites



**IRISH
NOSH**
RECIPES
USING
GUINNESS



**OFF THE
GRID**
SA'S BEST
-KEPT
SECRETS



**NICHE
FARMERS'**
DREAMS
DO COME
TRUE



The descendants of these first families continued to live in relative isolation...



OFF THE GRID

Two *Fresh Living* staffers discovered the antidote to civilisation by dropping off the municipal grid – and relished the digital detox

Tell friends and family you're heading out of town to a remote hamlet without electricity for the weekend and you're likely to get a mixed response: "Aah how romantic"; "What, no hairdryer?" or "Oh shame!" Freedom from the shackles of city life – cell phones, utility bills and traffic – is a modern-day Utopia for some who like the idea of stepping out of the rat race and vanishing off the societal radar. For the folk who first settled in Churchhaven – on the Cape's West Coast, and Die Hel – near Prince Albert in the Karoo,

a pioneering spirit and sturdy self-reliance were prerequisites. Using limited resources they created little communities, which thrived during the mid 1800s. Over time little changed in these rustic bolt holes. Property was passed down through generations of the Meyer, Lloyd, Barsby, Smuts and De Nicker families in Churchhaven and the Marais, Cordier, Mostert and Snyman clans in Die Hel. The descendants of these first families continued to live in relative isolation without municipal services for years and tried hard to protect their privacy. Today these pockets of paradise have become attractive destinations for curious day-trippers, holidaymakers, environmentalists and survivalists... People in search of a little respite from the frenetic pace and hullabaloo of 21st-century living. *Fresh Living* team members Vanessa Klein and Venessa Dace set off – iPhone cameras in hand – to capture the essence of 'roughing' it off the grid.

Churchhaven's neighbour, Kraal

Baai or Kraalbaai, is a sheltered sanctuary

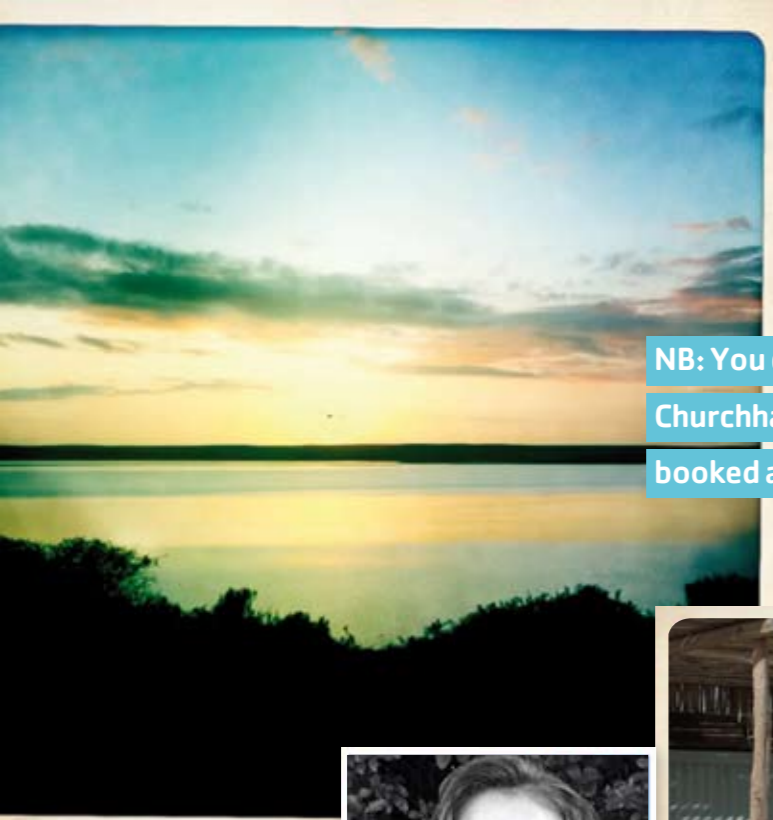
ideal for picnicking and swimming

Clockwise from left to right: There's plenty of space for quiet contemplation in Churchhaven; an old stone boat shed on the beach there; the picturesque graveyard at the little hillside church overlooking Churchhaven; the crystal-clear water of the Langebaan lagoon is one of the many reasons to visit the area; Churchhaven's place of worship; the view from the back of the West of the Moon guesthouse. **This page:** Unlike Churchhaven, Kraalbaai is open to the public.



NB: You can only enter Churchhaven if you have booked accommodation there!

For booking accommodation in Churchhaven and Die Hel respectively, contact the following:
 Perfect Hideaways – 021 790 0972, www.perfecthideaways.co.za; and Cape Nature – 021 483 0190, www.capenature.co.za.



CHURCHHAVEN

There's not much to do in Churchhaven, no television, no shopping malls – not even a restaurant – and it's wonderful. Gas powers the stoves and ovens here and boreholes provide water. General appliances are run on solar power and many of the homes have been built or renovated according to environmentally sensitive practices. West of the Moon, for example – our rustic cottage for the weekend – was built using sand bags and recycled wood.

An almost hidden enclave in the West Coast National Park on the western edge of the Langebaan Lagoon, Churchhaven unfolds like a travel brochure. Endless fynbos hills and the ever-changing palette of blue, turquoise and green

lagoon are fringed with a swath of white sandy beaches that stretch as far as the eye can see.

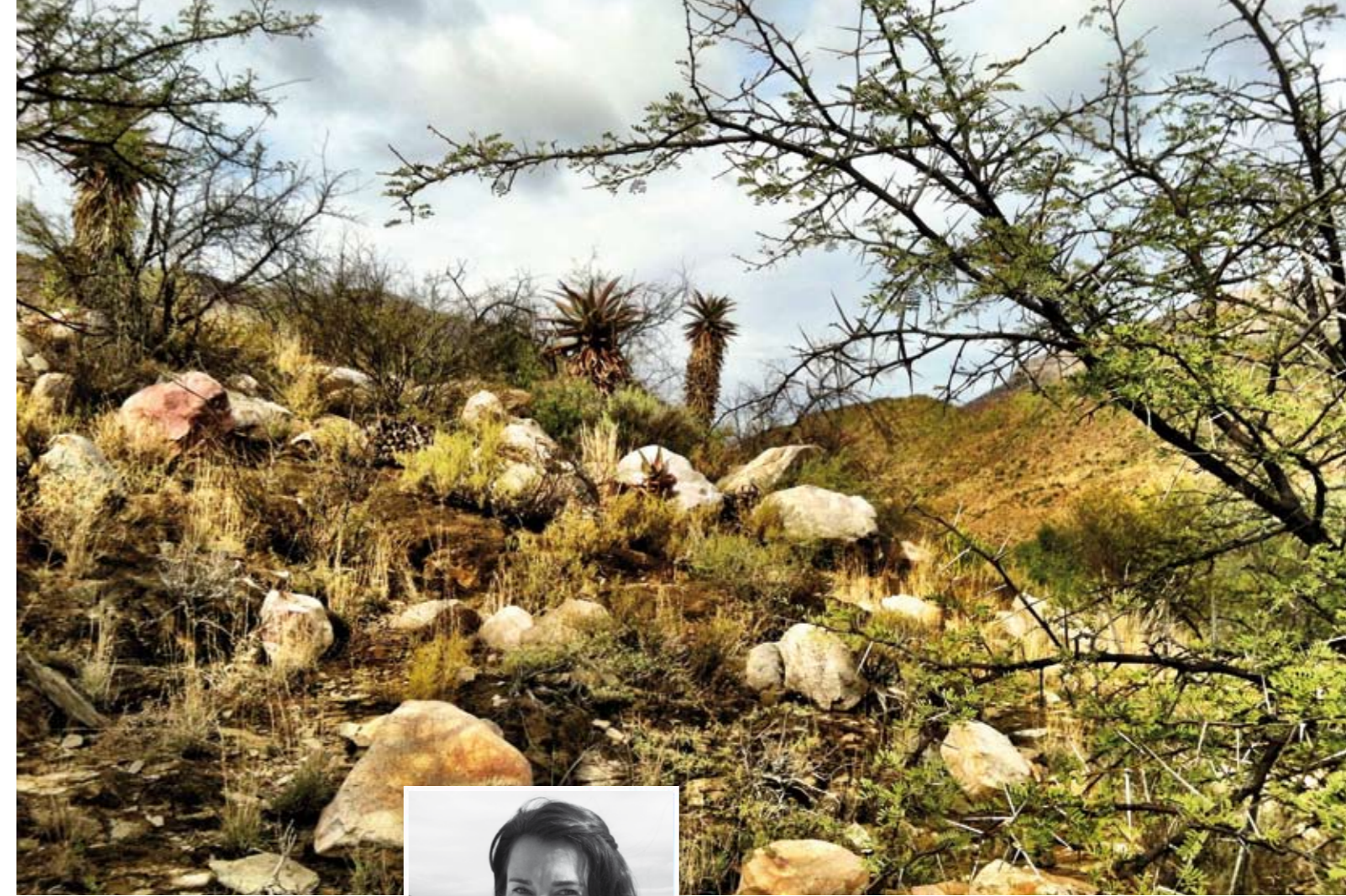
Local lore has it that the very first residents were pirates, but construction of the picturesque St. Peter's Church in the early 1900s cast off any soupçon of skulduggery and established the little settlement as one of three mission stations in the Langebaan area.

Nowadays, in the interest of conservation, SANParks has become the custodian of much of the area. A few privately owned cottages in Churchhaven are available for rent, though most are booked out months in advance. Unsurprising, really, because you'd be hard-pressed to find a coastal Eden quite like it.

THE FACTS

- ★ Churchhaven is on the R27, roughly halfway between Yzerfontein and Langebaan, just over an hour's drive from Cape Town.
- ★ Perched on the Langebaan lagoon, it offers the perfect setting for water-based activities such as kayaking, cycling, swimming, sailing and windsurfing.
- ★ The unique combination of ocean, lagoon and estuary sustains a massive biodiversity. Bird life is prolific and sightings of animals such as eland, red hartebeest, Cape grysbok and ostrich are common.
- ★ Set in a Cape Dutch building, Geelbek restaurant is the cove's closest eatery. Call 022 772 2134 or visit www.geelbek.co.za.
- ★ For basic self-catering accommodation in the West Coast National Park call 022 772 2144/5.

ONLINE EXTRA
 For more info about West of the Moon guesthouse, visit www.pnp.co.za/freshliving.



Annetjie Joubert of Fonteinplaas is the only remaining born-and-bred 'Gamkaskloof'



DIE HEL

Set in the Gamkaskloof Valley in the Swartberg Nature Reserve, Die Hel reputedly earned its nickname in the 1940s from a livestock inspector who had to climb down 1 000 metres to gain access to the farming community in the kloof. If somebody asked him how the trip went: "Like hell," was said to be his answer. In comparison, our two-hour gravel road trip down the Swartberg Pass was much more bearable.

The landscape is remarkable: a tapestry of fynbos, Karoo-veld and spekboom. For 150 years the families who originally settled here in the mid-1800s tilled the land and survived with very little contact with the outside world. The first vehicle was brought into the area (with the help of donkeys) in 1958 – 60 years after cars were introduced to SA – and phone lines were established only in 1965. Die Hel's isolated character changed forever when the dirt road was opened in 1962, and severe drought in the 70s resulted in many farmers selling their land.

Today Die Hel has been declared a World Heritage site and much of it belongs to Cape Nature, which has taken special care to restore the historical cottages in the area. A visit to Die Hel has unexpected pleasures; it remains a bastion of its settler history – and century-old secrets.



The best time to visit is between August and October when the wildflowers are in bloom

Clockwise from top left: Bikes can be hired for R50 to explore Die Hel; dainty klipspringers are prolific on the mountainside; Fonteïnplaas restaurant is the one-and-only eatery in the area; a typical restored 'Gamkaskloof' house; Ouma Sannie se Winkel, the kiosk next to the restaurant; no wireless means you can put your feet up and gaze uninhibited into the blue yonder.



The Gamkaskloof road can be reached from Oudtshoorn via the Cango Caves road



THE FACTS

- About 90km from Oudtshoorn and 60km from Prince Albert, Gamkaskloof is only accessible by car via the Swartberg Pass.
- Visitors need to bring sufficient food and fuel stocks for their stay – there are no shops or filling stations along the way.
- Self-catering accommodation is available in eight restored cottages, which sleep between two and eight people.
- There are 10 secluded campsites with hot showers and braai facilities, as well as a bush camp that can sleep up to 10 people.
- Before the road was built, a donkey trail over the Swartberg Mountains from Calitzdorp was the area's only commercial lifeline with the outside world. Today you can experience the 25km trail for yourself. Luggage is portered by donkeys and all meals are included: www.donkeytrail.com.

PHOTOGRAPHS: VANESSA KLEIN, GAVIN DACE AND VENESSA DACE

TIPS FOR TAKING PHOTOS WITH YOUR iPhone
We used a mixture of iPhone apps to shoot this feature; Hipstamatic and Camera Plus. If travelling off the grid, remember to buy a car- phone charger to keep you snapping happily.

