

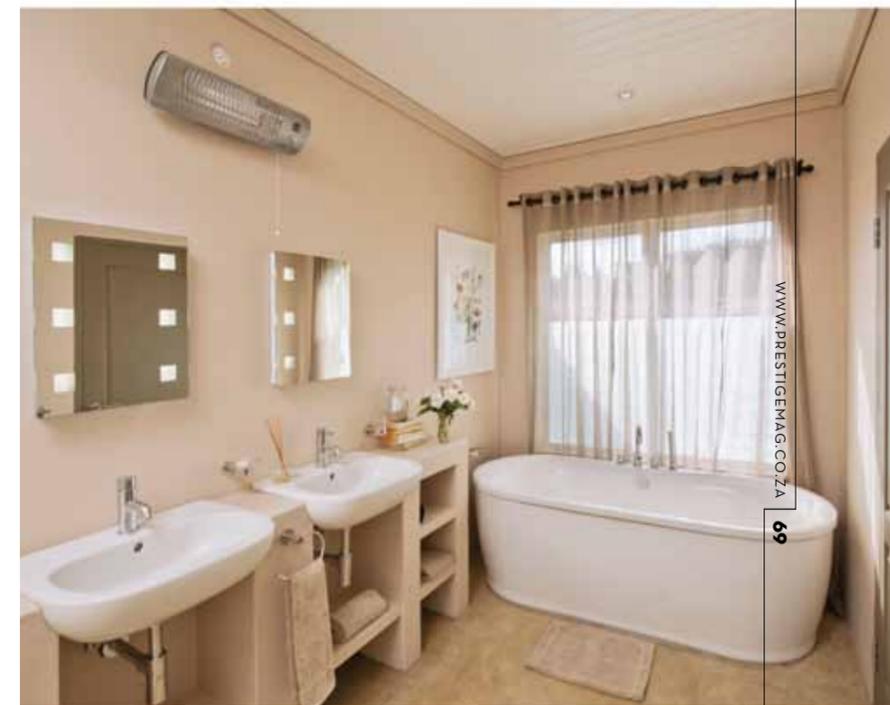


# OAKLANDS COUNTRY MANOR

VAN REENEN'S PASS IS SEEN AS A WAYPOINT ON THE BUSY ROUTE BETWEEN DURBAN AND JOHANNESBURG IN SOUTH AFRICA. YET, IF YOU TAKE THE RIGHT TURN THERE ARE MAGNIFICENT VISTAS PROVIDED BY THE HILLS AND VALLEYS IN TRUE TO THE KWAZULU-NATAL COUNTRYSIDE STYLE.

**T**he Van Reenen village offramp from the famous N3 highway, leads to the equally beautiful Oaklands Country Manor. We were fortunate to spend a few days at this authentic country estate with its homely, inviting ambience and equally hospitable team.

What would a farm be without a proper genuine rustic farm gate laying the foundation for a proper country experience. Everything on Oaklands is a slice of organic culture, home grown and nostalgia. It feels like you are visiting an old uncle and aunt on the farm – like the Americans with their ranch experiences. At times I really felt like Billy Crystal in City Slickers. Oaklands is a family run establishment, and guests are immediately made to feel at ease. The family's four great Danes were as eager to meet and greet the guests as the rest of the staff. The rooms and living areas are congruent with a traditional farmhouse with tastefully appointed bedrooms with inviting fireplaces.





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Oaklands also offers the unique experience of polo for guests. No matter what your skill or level they offer you expert tuition or a short introduction to polo, if you dare give it a try. The property has a floodlit polo arena, a polo pit and a fully equipped classroom. They have on hand well mannered, trained horses which makes the experience comfortable and assuring.

Other activities on the estate range from chilling around the swimming pool to hikes on the vast proportions of the grounds, best of all up the mountain ably escorted by the great Danes as tour guides. There are also tennis courts, volley ball courts for the energetic and active and trout dams for those who enjoy the tranquility of a day's fishing. Some famous landmarks in the area worth a visit include battlefield tours to Spionkop and Majuba, the Basotho Cultural Village and the world's smallest chapel (Llandaff).

Oaklands Country Manor can be booked as individual rooms, however, I feel it would be a perfect getaway for an entire family to book out all 9 rooms and family suites (32 guests) for a celebration or event to ensure privacy. 🏡

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The staff was quick to point out that the "menu of the day" comprised substantially all ingredients grown organically on the farm on a garden to table concept – which boasts a standalone composting system to complete the eco cycle of production of wholesome foods on the estate.

We were excited to see a whole polo field full of horses grazing in their tranquil surrounds, which presented a stark contrast to the hustle and purpose that they gallop on the same fields in a live polo match. One of the highlights of the visit was the outride, even though I have never been on a horse unattended the staff were competent in providing a basic lesson. My horse was the most boisterous but we had a good rapport and we bonded even on the more adventurous canter and gallop through the fields and valleys. The scenery would be ideal for a romantic horseback ride.

