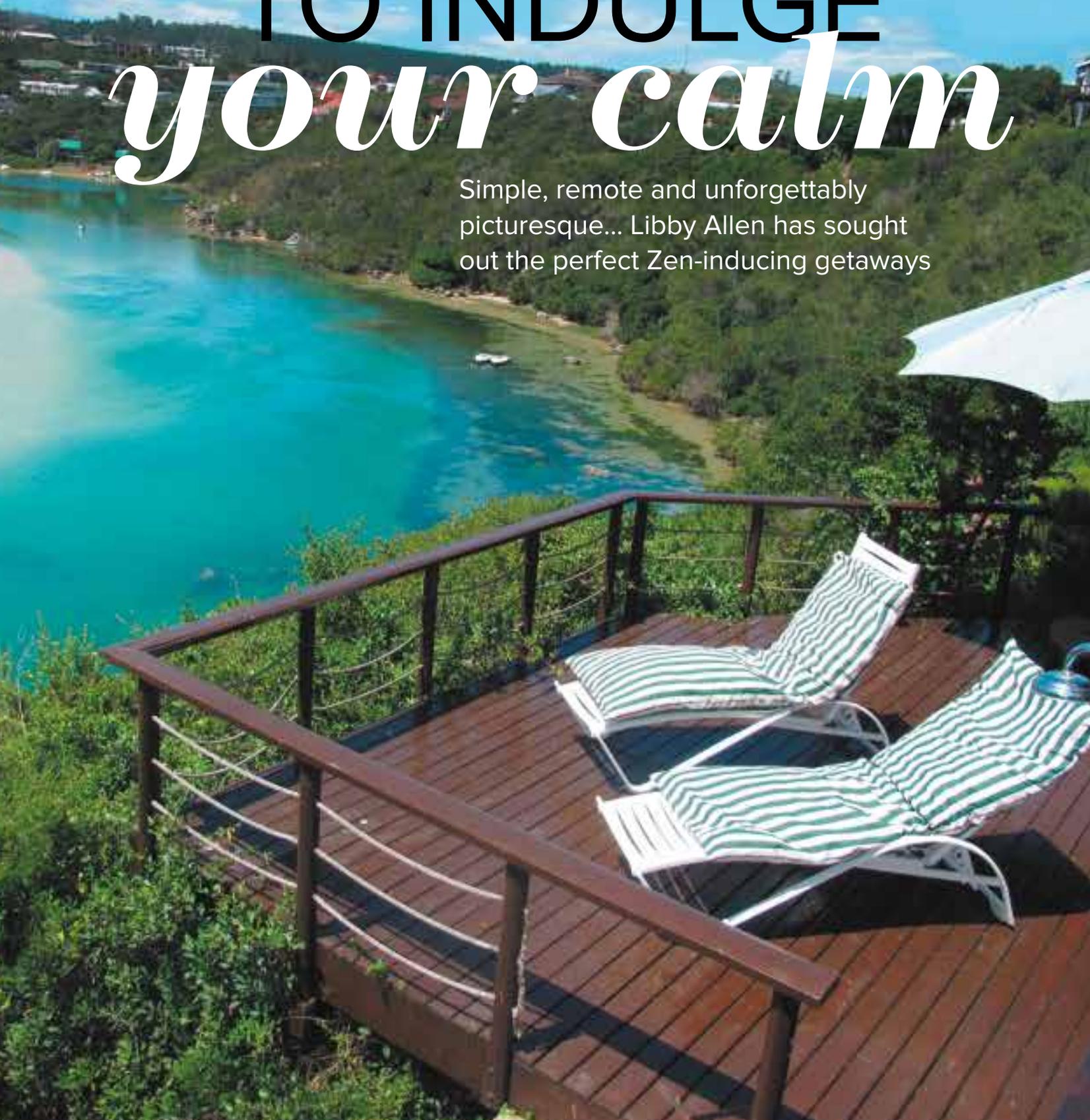
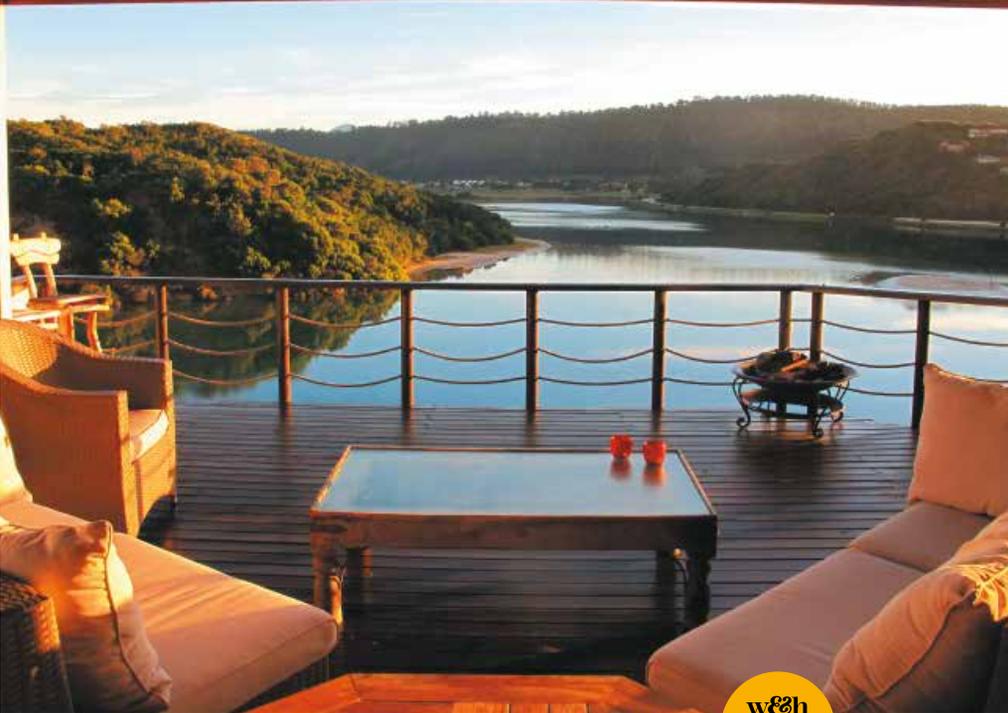


Holidays TO INDULGE *your calm*

Simple, remote and unforgettably picturesque... Libby Allen has sought out the perfect Zen-inducing getaways



Go slow at Sedgies on the Water
– what a beautiful view!



BEST ON THE COAST

FIND YOUR ZEN Sedgefield is where you want to go to slow down, with balmy days unfolding in a haze of simple seaside bliss. With Wilderness National Park and the Goukamma Nature Reserve nearby, this small town, nestled between George and Knysna on the exquisite Garden Route, is a perfect retreat for nature-lovers. As Africa's first accredited Cittaslow Slow Town, Sedgefield is part of a worldwide network of communities committed to helping each other and the environment, and living life firmly *out* of the fast lane. A visit here is all about outdoorsy fun, friendly people, and delicious meals made with fresh, organic produce –

read more about Sedgefield's "slow town movement" on slowntown.co.za. And look out for the "tortoise towers": pillars topped with sculptures of tortoises and displaying the Slow Town pledge, dotted around town – Sedgefield's reminder to take stock of every moment as you saunter between the beaches and attractions. One such attraction is the Wild Oats Community Farmers' Market, held every Saturday morning, where you'll be spoilt for choice with an array of locally- and ethically-produced home-made foods to buy.

WHERE TO STAY Sedgies on the Water is an airy self-catering home, with four double rooms, housing up to eight guests. Perched on the Swartvlei Lake estuary, the house is a haven – a roomy deck provides the perfect spot for lazing on a lounge with a lovely book, while lush views unfurl before you. Amble down to Sedgefield Beach, or paddle out on the lagoon in Sedgies's dinghy for a top-class sight of the sunset. Travelling with fishing fanatics? They can cast their lines from the shore below the house and, if they're lucky, all the better – you'll relish a fish braai on the Weber on your deck.

THE DETAILS R2 000pn for the house, sleeping a maximum of eight people. Valid from 1 March to 30 April 2015; see sedgies.co.za



Laid-back chic at Sedgies

BEST FOR ART LOVERS



FIND YOUR ZEN You'll find a stay in historic Nieu-Bethesda soothing and intriguing, with a visit to Helen Martins' famous Owl House – a cathedral-like museum brimming with sculptures – as a highlight of your trip. The town is nestled at the foot of the Compassberg, and twinkling night skies, crisp air, and a hive of art galleries and studios are the order of your stay. You won't find any petrol, ATMs or card facilities in town, so be prepared before you arrive.

WHERE TO STAY Feel at home in delightful Nieu-Zebra, a rustic self-catering guest house that can sleep up to eight, although it's ideal for a couple or small family. Located right in the heart of Nieu-Bethesda, the house echoes its artistic surrounds with its quirky decor – expect an old-world house with artsy charm, and you'll be impressed. With a braai in the private garden, and fully-fitted kitchen, you can rustle up a feast before settling beside the fire – or take a quick (three-minute!) walk to The Karoo Lamb restaurant for a hearty meal.

THE DETAILS R250ppspn for adults, and R125pppn for children under 12; with a maximum booking for eight at R1 200pn for the house. Valid until 31 December 2015; see kadash.co.za/nieu-zebra >>



A stay at the eight-sleeper Nieu-Zebra is quirky, rustic and charming



BEST FOR CHARM

w&h
ONLINE
DEALS

FIND YOUR ZEN Along Route 62, the world's longest wine route, lies the charming little town of Robertson. Established in 1853, it offers the very best of country living: historic buildings, working water furrows, quaint cottages and fresh produce from surrounding farms.

Residents stop to chat as you wander down the leafy streets and, within a short time here, life seems to slow down to a languid hum.

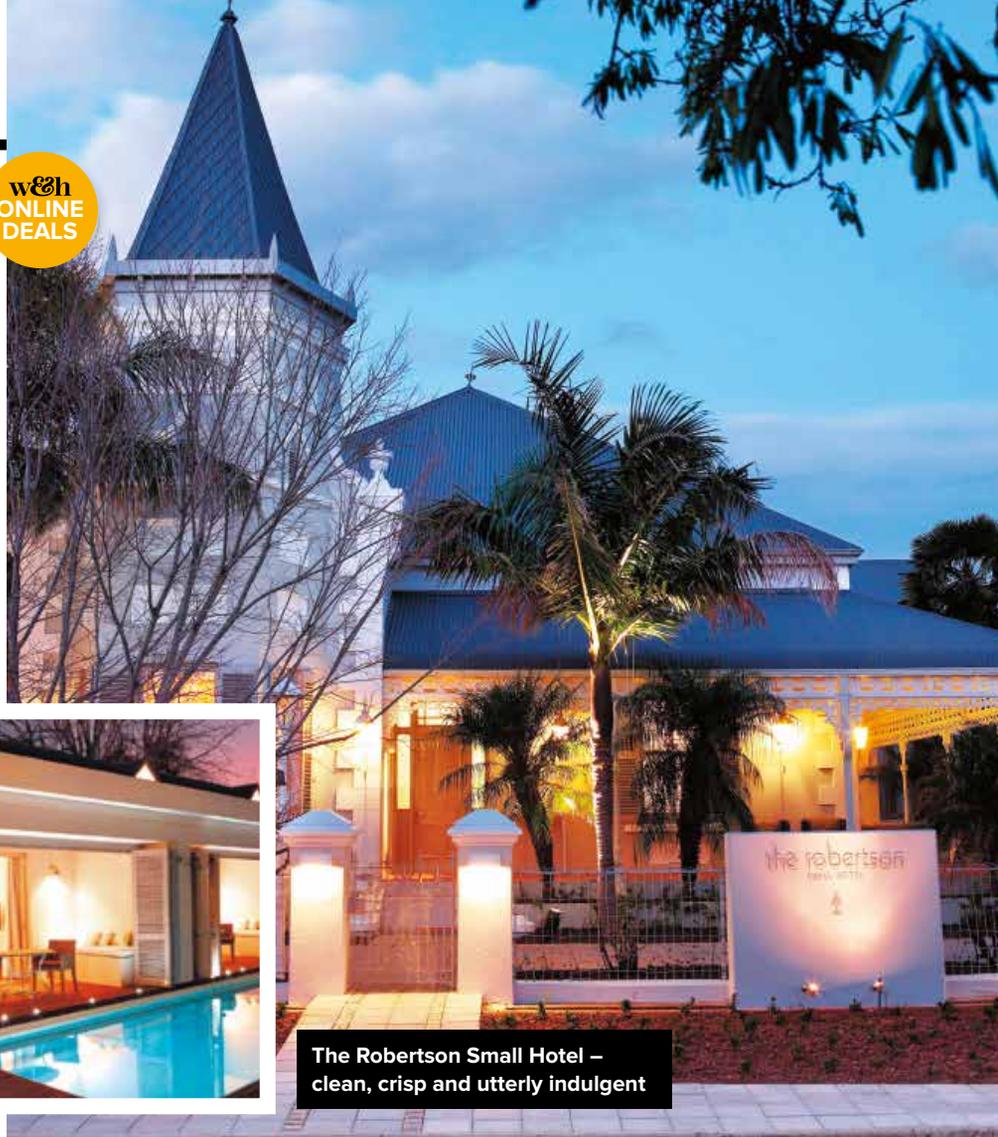
WHERE TO STAY The Robertson Small Hotel offers serenity and style in equal measure.

There are 10 suites, each luxuriously decorated, but book into a Poolside Suite for OTT pampering. Step straight off your private wooden deck into the sparkling pool, while inside the room, the crisp, white decor is offset by every indulgent spoil a hotel could possibly offer. Well-known chef Reuben designed the menu here, and the dining is superb, with only the freshest ingredients used to make dinners to sigh over as you linger late into the night.

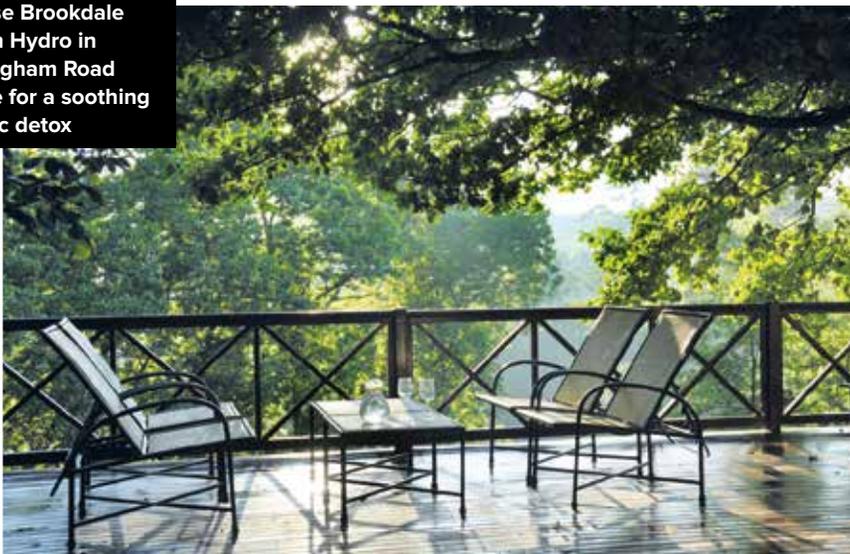
THE DETAILS R1 170ppspn in a Manor House Deluxe Room, including breakfast and mini-bar. Valid until 30 April 2015; see therobertsonsmallhotel.com



The Robertson Small Hotel – clean, crisp and utterly indulgent



Choose Brookdale Health Hydro in Nottingham Road village for a soothing holistic detox



BEST FOR A DETOX

FIND YOUR ZEN Set off for Nottingham Road village, located in the misty hills of KwaZulu-Natal along the Midlands Meander route. Formerly a military fort established to protect the farmers of the area, "Notties" is home to a hive of artists, crafters, foodies and nature-lovers these days, with rolling fields and trout dams setting a beautiful scene.

WHERE TO STAY The award-winning Brookdale Health Hydro is a really

special place – a health retreat offering all-inclusive packages to nurture your body and mind. With a forest to one side of the hydro, and farmland to the other, and a soothing stream trickling through its centre, you'll find yourself in perfect peace. Wander through Brookdale's gardens to find the labyrinth, a maze-like circular path that, when walked, draws you into an ancient form of meditation. Guests can choose between four fabulous Hydro Packages that include spa and beauty treatments, yoga and pilates classes, wellness workshops, and healthy meals.

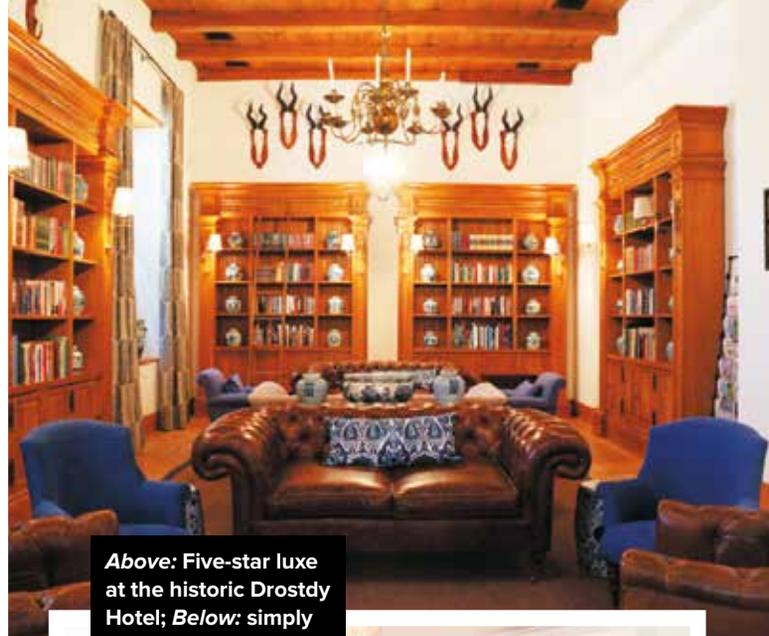
THE DETAILS R8 400pps for four nights in a Garden Suite on the Blissful Retreat package, including all meals, one express facial, one Swedish full-body massage, and one reflexology treatment. All other activities and use of facilities also included. Valid until 2 May 2015; see brookdale.co.za

BEST HISTORIC RETREAT

FIND YOUR ZEN Founded in 1786, Graaff-Reinet is a historic landmark in the Eastern Cape, and the fourth-oldest town in the country. The town is encircled by the breathtaking Camdeboo National Park, where ancient rock formations stretch up to meet the sky – and, oh, what a sky it is! Here, in the semi-arid desert, you'll find yourself in awe of the vast landscape around you and, on a good day, the cloudless blue sky seems almost within reach. What could be more remote than the aptly-named Valley of Desolation in the park, where stone columns reach up 120m from ground-level? Drive to the top to bask in perfect silence, with unparalleled views of the Great Karoo – or take a hiking trail, if you're so inclined. See sanparks.co.za/parks/camdeboo for details.

WHERE TO STAY After a grand refurbishment, the five-star Drostdy Hotel – one of Graaff-Reinet's 220-odd heritage sites – re-launched in November last

year, having operated as a hotel, in various forms, since 1878. The original structure was built to serve as the town magistrate's office, and its latest luxurious incarnation carries a great sense of respect for the building's history. Here's the best of both worlds: architects and archaeologists worked together on the hotel's face-lift, mingling original fixtures and flooring with new luxuries, such as an Africology Spa and three mod swimming pools (a great perk in the desert!). Less than a 10-minute walk from the hotel, you'll find Obesa Nursery – take in one of the world's largest private collections of cacti, and browse or buy from the charming ceramic-pots gallery. Grab dinner at the hotel's De Camdeboo Restaurant, where fynbos and local game are heroes on a swish menu. **THE DETAILS** R2 500pn in an Executive Room, sleeping two, including breakfast. Valid until 25 March 2015; see newmarkhotels.com/accommodation/hotels/drostdy-hotel



Above: Five-star luxe at the historic Drostdy Hotel; Below: simply lie back and relax!



BEST IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

FIND YOUR ZEN Perched high on the summit of Van Reenen's Pass, Van Reenen is a relatively tiny countryside village, and a wonderful base from which to explore the peaceful Drakensberg. Visit Llandaff Oratory, or the Little Church – the smallest consecrated Catholic church in the entire Southern Hemisphere, which carries a stirring history and only seats eight people! **WHERE TO STAY** Retreat to Oaklands Country Manor, a mere 7km from the centre of town, for an uncomplicated holiday spent unwinding amidst beautiful natural scenery. Oaklands is family-run and you'll see and feel it in the outstanding friendly service.

Stroll around the vast estate, or enjoy horse-riding activities (from R150pp). Whether it's a lesson in the paddocks, a scenic outride, or a spot of polo you're after, this is the place for an easy-going adventure. Tuck into fab meals at the Manor's on-site restaurant, Kathy's Kitchen, where chef Kathy Romer-Lee's "veld-to-plate" ethos turns local, seasonal ingredients into dishes packed with flavour. **THE DETAILS** R2 000ppspn in a Garden Suite, including breakfast. Valid from 1 March 2015 until 28 February 2016; see oaklands.co.za w&h



Oaklands's country elegance

