

Old School is Cool

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CAMPER VAN ROAD TRIP



I have always felt a strong connection to the open road; meandering off highways to explore small towns filled with big adventures. The road is yours to embrace and the journey yours to define as you travel onwards, and there is truly no better way to experience a memorable journey like this than by taking a nostalgic trip in a 1970s camper van.

Myself and a friend called up Derek Serra from Classic Camper Hire in Cape Town to check out his impressive fleet of old school VW campers. We decided to venture forth in a 1979 Jurgens Autovilla named "Villa".

This camper was in immaculate condition, sleeps four people comfortably, has an upgraded Ford V6 engine, and is perfect for long trips. She is equipped with a built-

in gas burner, 220V fridge, and Classic Camper Hire provided all the goodies we needed for comfortable camping.

Our road was the Garden Route. Armed with a plan to stop at a few rustic gems along the way, we were also open to letting the journey unfold organically. Not wanting to push old Villa too much on her first day, we took a slow 190 km meander to Pearly Beach, one of the longest undisturbed sand beaches in the Western Cape, and a remote seaside hamlet with an azure ocean annually visited by an influx of migrating whales.

We covered roughly 305 km the next day, making use of as many gravel back roads as we could to get the most untouched scenery we could find. Our next stop was Gourits River Guest Farm

Eco-Camping, located on the banks of the Gourits River, about 16 km from the small town of Albertinia near Mossel Bay. This privately-owned farm has six campsites situated right next to a beautiful river, with a staggering mountain backdrop. We were the only campers there, so we got to enjoy the peace and serenity as well as the night sky, scattered with a mass of constellations and shooting stars.

Our next stop was Nature's Valley - arguably the most beautiful part of the Garden Route. Here, we had two things planned: to bungee jump with Face Adrenalin at Bloukrans Bungy and kayak Storm's River with Untouched Adventures. What we had not planned for this leg of the trip, however, was a place to stay.



Fortunately we came across the gracious hosts at Wild Spirit Backpackers.

Next we headed inland towards Oudtshoorn and the iconic Route 62. We travelled around 190 km and were greeted by very different landscapes as we weaved along incredible mountain passes and were suddenly surrounded by ostrich farms and vast desert.

Amber Lagoon was to be our stop for the night - a backpackers and campsite described as a "green oasis" with staggering views of the Swartberg Mountains and Gamka Nature Reserve.

The warm hosts welcomed us with open arms and went out of their way to make this space a sanctuary.

The next leg of our journey was a 270 km drive to Assegai Rest Farm situated at the foot of the Langeberg Mountains in the Klassvoogds Valley, just outside of Robertson. We stayed at Assegai Rest in a tipi - a cone-shaped tent, traditionally made of animal skins on wooden poles. The hosts, Jackie and Andre, have built a haven here amongst the mountains. The tipis are great as they are able to accommodate up to five people each in a private camping

area complete with outdoor shower, fully stocked kitchen area, and fire pit. Inside the tipi, you can make a fire in the middle of the space, as the open top flap acts as the perfect smoke extractor without letting any rain in. The area is magical with an abundance of hiking trails and mountain paths to explore.

The next morning, fresh from an extremely cosy night's sleep and outdoor morning shower, we were off again, this time to Piketberg. Kruismentvlei Farm is really like nothing you will find anywhere else. Even the drive up Versveld Pass will leave you breathless. Once there, the magnificently formed, shimmering boulders with a rich history of San paintings really intrigued us. This eco-friendly farm has a beautiful camping site set amongst these ancient rocks and fynbos. We spent a peaceful night here contemplating the universe under a blanket of stars and woke to do a short hike in the fresh, dewy morning air. We were sad to leave, but had to hit the road again for the last leg of our epic journey: the West Coast.

We made our way to Grotto Bay, watched one final sunset, and then headed back to the city, sad to say goodbye to Villa and the road, but invigorated, inspired, and enlightened by the unrestrained freedom that, we realised, is within everyone's reach. So, go out there, hire yourself a camper, and experience it for yourself. ■

For more information:

Classic Camper Hire - www.classiccamperhire.biz

Gourits River Guest Farm Eco-Camping - www.gouritsriverguestfarm.com

Face Adrenalin - www.faceadrenalin.com

Untouched Adventures - www.untouchedadventures.com

Wild Spirit Backpackers - www.wildspiritlodge.co.za

Amber Lagoon - www.amberlagoon.co.za

Assegai Rest - www.klaasvoogds.co.za

Kruismentvlei Farm - www.ksvfarm.co.za