

An escape to the Free State's best-kept secret

By [Nomvelo Masango](#)

17 Aug 2022

In the Eastern Free State, just a four-hour road trip away from busy Johannesburg lies a hidden gem.



Source: www.unsplash.com

In this tranquil haven, the mountains stand tall and are dressed with pride as nature flaunts its utmost beauty. The quaint town of Rosendal is a total breath of fresh air and offers travellers the chance to reconnect, not only with nature but also with self.

Upon arrival, I'll admit that I was a bit sceptical and had plenty of questions. How would I survive? Would boredom have the final say? I'm happy to report that I was pleasantly surprised.



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As a traveller searching for an escape from the hustle and bustle of city life, I was indeed pleased with both the adventure and tranquillity that Rosendal has to offer.

Here are a few things to try out when exploring the Free State's best-kept secret.

Breakfast at Benjamin's

What's a good getaway without good food? Benjamin's is known and loved for its signature sweet and savoury waffles, as well as the delectable breakfast. Their friendly and helpful staff members are an added plus.

The cosy atmosphere makes one feel right at home and the two safely-enclosed donkeys in the yard, Basjan and Oscar, are always happy to greet and spread love to locals and travellers alike.

Since the establishment is also a gift shop, you can purchase something sentimental for a loved one or even collect a souvenir to remind you of your sweet escape to this beautiful town.



Exploring nature on horseback at Moolmanshoek

If you're looking to quench your wanderlust through an adventurous experience, the Moolmanshoek Private Nature Reserve

is definitely for you. From Rosendal, a 20-minute drive gets you to a breathtaking place surrounded by the majestic Witteberg mountains, where activities such as quad-biking, hiking and horse-riding are on offer.

As someone who had never been on a horse before, my activity of choice was a no-brainer. After a very short tutorial session from friendly instructors, I felt like a pro and was good to go. The one-hour tour on horseback was nothing short of magnificent. It is definitely worth the try as one may even be lucky enough to spot some herds of game such as impala, zebra and even water bucks blissfully roaming the plains.

All things splendid at The Service Station

The Service Station Wine Bar is the perfect place to unwind over some good food and drinks. The bar is a former petrol station and offers a wide selection of wines and spirits.

With an affordable Southern European menu, one can never go wrong. Although it is situated in this small and hidden town, The Service Station is not your typical small-town bar as its touch of fine dining definitely sets it apart.



Restful Bliss at the Rosendal Country Retreat

When all the exploring, adventure and dining is done, the perfect place to lay my head was at The Rosendal Country Retreat.

Initially an old cheese factory, the lovely accommodation was the best place for me to embrace slow living. As I made it my home for a few days, I appreciated the cosy rooms, comfy bed, perfect pillows as well as the wood-fired hot tub for my utmost relaxation. With a minimalistic look and feel, the country retreat allows nature to take center stage.

As family-friendly rooms are also available, it makes sense to bring loved ones next time for a state of slow living.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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