

Arabella... love at first sight...

By [Brian Berkman](#)

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What's not to love about 113 hectares of pristine fynbos...?

"What's not to love?" Arabella Country Estate homeowners chair, Steve Argyle, asks while my fabulous Caesar Salad is served at the hotel's Jamani restaurant. I'm not really paying attention, still floaty from the hour-long men's facial treatment I enjoyed at the outstanding spa and embarrassed at having awoken myself twice by snoring snorts.



How's this for a view?

wanting to.

Earlier in the evening we walked the security estate with resident birder Carin Malan - the sort of expert that everyone loves: knowledgeable, passionate and enthusiastic but warmly encouraging of our silly questions.

Close to nature

Listening to Steve and his wife Line in their thick Birmingham accents say they could live anywhere in the world but choose Arabella because of the golf, the tranquillity, safety and living close to nature, I marvel at the high number of internationals that choose to live in South Africa while many local dinner conversations revolve around those leaving, or

Steve is bringing some of this management skills attained during a lifetime of working for confectionery giant, Cadbury to the homeowners association which, combined with estate manager Dirk Uys' background in the military, media and senior management positions, means this estate is a tightly run ship. "We're the only residential estate to be ISO 14001 registered," Dirk tells me while waking around one of the resales: a R7.2 million four-bed, four-bath property with double garage. "The average price for properties on the estate is R4 million," Pam Golding agent Mike Bisset says. "But there is also a three-bed, three-bath house for R2.6 million," Dirk mentions.

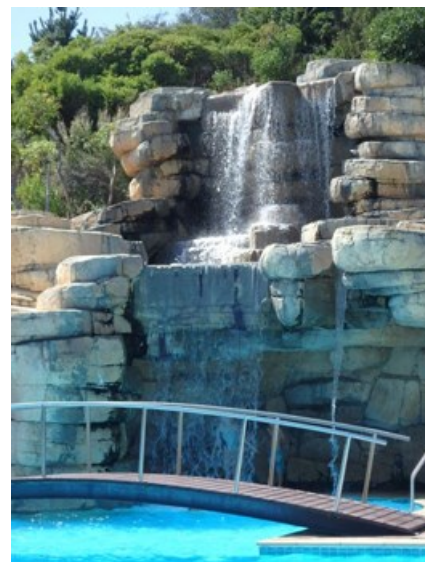
Plants for Africa



A view of the suite... spacious, well appointed and comfortable.

For me, the great appeal of the estate is the biodiversity with over 1800 plant species, 77 of which occur nowhere else on earth, according to their media information. It was a real treat to see two malachite kingfishers diving beak first into the dam and to see African Fish Eagles flying over the Bot River lagoon over which the estate looks.

Aside from the five-star African Pride Arabella Hotel and Spa, there is an award-winning golf course (rated among the Top 10 by Golf Digest). Estate homes are on 237 plots on 113 hectares of pristine fynbos. I liked how the estate balanced the manicured look of the golf course with great swathes of untouched fynbos. I was also interested to learn that the estate is almost entirely self sufficient, processing

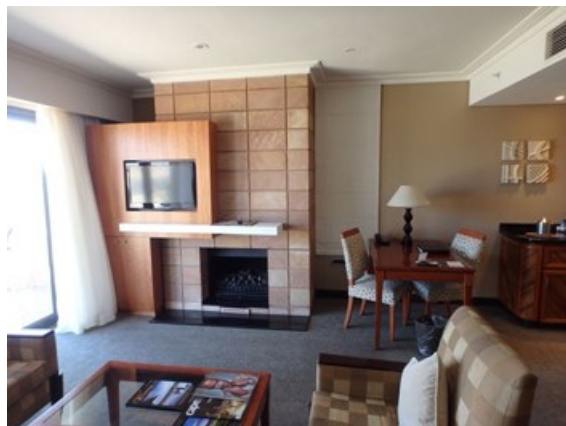


Fall in love with the waterfall.

its own water and waste and only relying on Eskom for energy although this is currently a hot topic among the homeowners who are investigating energy alternatives.

Changing demographics

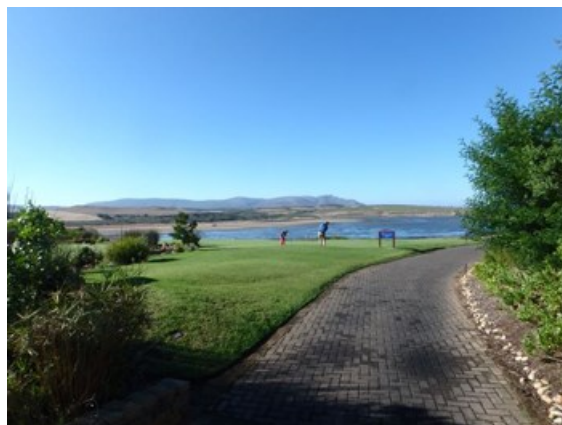
Mike says the age demographic at the estate is shifting as more people working in the tech economy elect to work from home and raise families in protected natural environment that is only 110km from Cape Town and half-an-hour from Hermanus. "With Curo schools nearby there is a greater interest from school-going families," he says although confirming that about 30% of the owners are migratory swallows, mostly from Europe.



Just the thing for a chilly winter's evening...

As a hotel guest, I couldn't have been happier: the hotel hasn't lost its smart,

upmarket feel on account of its architecture and bewilderingly beautiful views over the lagoon, but it seems a little less formal than on previous visits. Our suite, 500, only misses a Nespresso machine but makes up with three huge opening picture windows in the sitting room, bedroom and bathroom of the suite. Outside dining and reclining furniture invite one to sunbathe in privacy but we preferred the many pools. Our favourite, part of the spa complex, is a huge hydro pool with steam room and sauna and comfy, towel draped recliners for relaxing.



A green tee... right outside your door. 'Fore...' sure...

As the sun appeared the next morning we looked out onto the lagoon to spy the blue cranes and flamingos that visit, just two of the more than 40 species that make Arabella their home for all or part of the year. Approach Mike Bisset on +27 (0)82-889-5300 if you'd like to do the same or www.AfricanPrideHotels.com to book a room.

ABOUT BRIAN BERKMAN

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