

3 unique accommodation options in the Western Cape

 By [Shellee-Kim Gold](#)

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If living life on the straight and narrow is not your breakaway style, overnighting 'a la difference' exists all over the Cape. Appealing to a range of budgets and within several hours' drive of the city, you can either sleep in a stationary train or a gypsy wagon or catch your dreams in a tepee or regenerate in a pod.

91 Loop, Cape Town

One thing 91 Loop in the city doesn't offer when you overnight there is a futuristic, body-hugging spacesuit – which doesn't change the fact that your unique sleeping experience is in South Africa's first pod beds.



Slide into your all-white single pod lit up by mini spotlights and you'll find it more than roomy. My feet managed to get halfway flat against the pod's Perspex-type ceiling. Though I'm a little short – 160cm – in height.

Plenty of guests were sitting up cross-legged in their pods, travel literature splayed out on the built-in shelving. Originating

in Japan as a concept and though built for singles, even partners sitting in their pods together didn't look uncomfortable.

Officially a hostel, both the mattress and bedding were surprisingly upscale hotel quality. If you're concerned about privacy, merely draw the little curtain at the pod's entrance.

Being on ground level suited me for night visits to the loo. My neighbours above had to constantly climb the pod ladders.

Typically, large dorms mean sharing the attached bathroom. Happily, showers were always hot and the toilets kept nice and clean.



Residents are issued with their room electronic access cards, which include a spacious locker. Rooms are named after cities of the world – ours was Rio de Janeiro while São Paulo was nearby.

Tackling the highly-trafficked corridors and communal areas brought on a serious nostalgic attack at the familiar scene. Filled with mostly 20- and 30-somethings, some were clustered together, making travel plans or exchanging hazardous tales with fellow travellers.

Others were rattling off in foreign languages on cellphones. A poster of a man gazing into a landscape read: "The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page."



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Hostel living is rarely a quiet affair, wherever you are in the world. Yet despite full occupancy of my 20-pod room – including snorers – I had the most comfortable, but weirdly soundless night's sleep.

Manager Thomas Roux puts this down to room design and the use of wood. "We are an experience. You don't come to 91 Loop to sleep – you come here to 'get' Cape Town," said Roux.



Or 'get' the rest of the world if you're one of their many South African guests. If budget travel is what you're after, information abounds at 91 Loop. You may even find a perfect travel companion over your (included) breakfast of fruit, yoghurt, cereal, eggs, toast and coffee.

www.91loop.co.za

Glen Eden Ranch, Montagu

You don't only have the choice of overnighting in a gypsy wagon or a tepee at Montagu's Glen Eden Ranch, but the whole family - including your furry members – are accommodated on this Karoo farm.



Rated as a destination for the bucket list by guests, glamping in this little private valley is a unique experience. It's also a very rustic one, though it comes equipped with everything you'll need –including solar lanterns.

Made from custom-built wood, the welcoming gypsy wagon's extra-length queen-size bed will please the taller ones amongst us. Down duvets and insulation ensure the wagon's kept super snug in winter. There's also a small seating area with tables inside.



If the night sky and stargazing is your beat, you'll be able to happily indulge – without moving an inch from your tepee bed! Smoke flaps allow for this. Even if you're inspired, don't expect to break out into a Native American sweat lodge ritual as fires inside the tepee are prohibited. Use the fire pit outside instead.

Ablutions and food preparation are catered to in a cute structure near your wagon and tepee, which both sleep two people. A kitchenette comes complete with cookware, crockery, cutlery and seating, in addition to an adjoining full bathroom.



While your fur buddies will revel in the ranch's safe open spaces, there's nothing most little humans love more than to get up close and personal with furry and feathered friends. This is why owners Claudette and Andy Bricknell chose to focus on developing their animal 'touch farm'.

Hand-reared alpacas, goats, springbok, ducks, chickens and geese are some of the residents your kids will be able to hand-feed in their pens. There are information plaques on the species to make it more educational.



You can capitalise on the animal interaction here with one of the neighbouring farm's horse-riding options. The owner will even come and collect you.

If the bustle of town is too tempting to resist, Montagu's restaurants and hot springs are a mere 10-minute drive away from this first-class, funky glamping experience.

www.glenedenfarm.co.za/glamping

Santos Express, Mossel Bay

If life on a luxury train compartment has always held an allure for you, but remained just out of reach, overnighting in the Santos Express's Royal Suites is the next best thing. With the exception that you're on a train going nowhere.



Permanently stationed at Mossel Bay's blue-flag Santos beach, the century-old wooden vintage coaches are a fairly-recent

add-on to the Santos Express's accommodation offerings. Part of a luxury train company until 2013, your colonial living option here includes being surrounded by plush wood-panelled walls. Attention to detail is everywhere.

Linger in a Victorian bath, loll on linen worthy of the experience and enjoy coffee- and tea-making facilities, a mini-fridge and hairdryer – amongst other features.





All four Royal Suites have terraces – a stone’s throw from the sea. Providing you with harbour, mountain and magnificent beach views by day, the lapping wave action should soothe the worst of insomniacs into a sound sleep.

You know what's said about sea air stimulating your appetite. For those who awaken ravenously hungry, a very good continental and hot English breakfast are included in the Royal Suite rates. A bonus could be sighting dolphins, seals or whales in the bay.

Royal Suite D is a guest favourite. Likely due to its privacy, being far from the madding (and noisy) crowds at the onsite restaurant and bar.



If the Royal Suites don't float your boat, there's a range of other sleeper options. This includes a honeymoon caboose with its own en-suite and lovely views, as well as single and double sleepers. Most entail shared bathrooms.

Beds are folded up against the wall when you enter, creating extra space – and authenticity.

www.santosexpress.co.za

ABOUT SHELLEE-KIM GOLD

A long-time globetrotter, Shellee-Kim spent seven years travelling through 43 countries.

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