

# Philadelphia on the west coast



Above: Richard Lord enjoying a relaxing morning at the Pepper Tree restaurant.

The historic village of Philadelphia on the R304 just off the busy N7, about 26 km outside Durbanville, is one of our favourite destinations. Nestled among brilliantly yellow canola fields and rolling green fields dotted with dairy cows, and exuding *plattelandse rustigheid*, it invites visitors to slow down and take a deep breath.

Dating back to 1863, the story goes that local farmers grew tired of driving the long distances into Durbanville or Cape Town to attend church, so Jan van Schoor made available 20 morgen of his farm Dasvlei for the founding of an NG Kerk. A picture perfect village soon grew around this handsome church with its square steeple.

Park on the large square behind the church, in the shade of towering bluegums: everything is in walking distance.

The heart of the village is no doubt the Pepper Tree Art Stable and Coffee Shop, open Tuesday to Sunday — comfortable wooden chairs and tables, prettily decorated with freshly picked flowers, tempt visitors to sample from a daily menu of light lunches, sandwiches, salads, wraps, and enough desserts to persuade you to interrupt your diet! Linger in the dappled

shade of the flourishing pepper tree (its branches clearly loved by kids), watch the birds splashing in the water fountain, and enjoy homely country-style cooking. Their apple crumble with ice cream and their cheesecake with berry coulis are irresistible. Pop in at the little shop, to pick up homemade jams and preserves, farm-fresh eggs, baked goods, and some delightful works of art.

Nearby, you will find Magic Minerals, selling a vast selection of rocks, minerals and gemstones, ornate handmade jewellery, wind chimes, colourfully painted wooden items, necklaces made of stone beads, an eclectic assortment of objets d'art, as well as an array of succulents and cacti.

Opposite the church, De Malle Meul, where you can eat a delicious Sunday buffet, is a gorgeous venue for weddings, musical performances, conferences and other functions. If you aren't ready to leave Philadelphia yet, sleep over in their two snug self-catering cottages, or attend one of their workshops. The art centre and gallery proudly displays the work of Pieter van der Westhuizen, who was a resident of Philadelphia for 24 years.

When we visited the village in March

this year, we discovered a labyrinth in the spacious garden at De Malle Meul. The friendly proprietor told us that she had finished building this four-element labyrinth in May last year. A great playground next to it will keep the nippers occupied — the labyrinth itself is not safe for small children. Meditatively walking such a labyrinth is an ancient spiritual tradition of clearing the mind, gaining insight, and reaffirming your life purpose.

Philadelphia is celebrating its 150-year anniversary this year with an exciting program of events.

see [www.ngkerkphiladelphia.org.za](http://www.ngkerkphiladelphia.org.za) ■



Photographs and Text by Regine Lord

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