



There are a good many reasons to stop over in the Karoo town of Graaff-Reinet, with its wide, Jacaranda-lined streets and charming, broekie-laced buildings, surrounded by some of the most astonishing landscapes in the country. There's nothing to beat watching the sun dip behind the crags in the mystical Valley of Desolation, casting a golden hue over the endless plains, or spending a day antiquing and uncovering the fascinating history of the town, which has more than 200 heritage sights. But now that it's famous, elegantly gabled Drostdy Hotel has reopened after an extensive overhaul and under new management, there is every reason to make a luxe retreat of it.

If walls could tell stories, the Drostdy's certainly would. Designed by master architect Louis Thibault and completed in 1806, it was the magistrate's office before being converted to travellers' lodgings. It's been a hotel ever since, although its latest incarnation – managed by Newmark Hotels, Reserves & Lodges, and employing a dream team of architecture firm dhk and interior designer Stephen Falcke – has



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The Drostdy is a landmark in Graaff-Reinet; find an impressive selection of wines at the Wijnkamer; there's no shortage of comfortable Chesterfields. PREVIOUS PAGE Wood and leather add to the masculine feel of the private wine cellar.



brought it right up to date as a modern boutique establishment. Along with more guest suites and spruced-up decor, there's a sumptuous Africology spa, art gallery, wine boutique and noteworthy cuisine.

In consultation with heritage authorities (parts of the complex are National Monuments), some of the original spaces were reconfigured while a restaurant wing and additional accommodation block were added, designed to complement the existing vernacular. The gardens have been masterfully redesigned by landscaper Jan Blok. In the shimmering heat of a summer's day, welcome shade can be found beneath palms, cypresses and pepper trees, or you might seek respite on a chic striped lounge beside any one of three swimming pools.

Stephen Falcke lavishly furnished guest suites, lounges and other communal spaces

ALONGSIDE THE WOOD ARE CHESTERFIELDS AND WINGBACKS UPHOLSTERED IN MONOCHROME HIDES AND JOLTS OF DELFT BLUE

with antiques, many originally from the Drostdy. Alongside the gleaming wood are handsome leather Chesterfields and wingbacks upholstered in monochrome hides or jolts of Delft blue echoing displays of old china. Skins and horns abound, as do beautifully framed prints of flowers and birds, and sepia photographs offering a glimpse back in time.

You'll find all the musts for discerning travellers, from good coffee in your room to a Wi-Fi connection. Meals are a treat, especially for those with a love of Karoo lamb and game dishes, although there's plenty of lighter fare, too – all matched by a superb selection of South African wines. Heritage, homely comforts and first-class hospitality have rarely been as well combined. [Drostdy Hotel, 30 Church St, Graaff-Reinet, drostdy.co.za](#)

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Interior designer Stephen Falcke has worked his magic throughout The Drostdy, such as in this lounge, which comfortably combines antiques and contemporary pieces; there's easy access from the new Kromm's cottages to this swimming pool, one of three on the grounds; a gabled section of the original building.