

Stellenbosch trumpets family-friendly experiences

City of Oaks a 'child's play' stay during holidays

With the long school holidays looming, Mom and Dad do not have to succumb to off-loading the offspring at the grandparents to stay sane during the festive season, as Stellenbosch offers so many budget-friendly, fun and educational attractions for kids of all ages which earn high marks as engaging experiences for the entire family.

In fact, Stellenbosch is the perfect place to stay these holidays. Cape Town is a mere 40 minutes drive away, a trip to the beach just 30 minutes away and neighbouring towns like Franschhoek, Paarl and Somerset West all close by.

There is plenty to keep young and old occupied in and around Stellenbosch. This 'forever young town' spins a merry playground of activities that go far beyond dreary museum visits and faded jungle gyms and to explore this kid-friendly town second-to-none, the Stellenbosch Wine Routes and Stellenbosch 360, the town's tourism office, have come up with a few unique ways to unleash *your* inner child, whilst keeping the little rascals happy.

Tastings & Farm Treats

Just because the parents will be enjoying some quality wines from South Africa's pioneering wine route during the holidays, does not mean that the kids will have to go cold turkey. **Spier** offers Grape Juice Tastings, which includes three different juices and a fun activity sheet, which highlights the role insects play in the vineyards. While there they should also check out the Eagle Encounters to get up close and personal with birds of prey and learn how they keep the farm healthy and balanced. Teens can buckle up for the coolest two wheeled way to see the farm and enjoy a Segway glide amidst the vines and fynbos, whilst the grown-ups sip on some award-winning wines.

Middelvlei also serves up a non-alcoholic tasting for children to test their senses by identifying different flavours, textures and tastes. Why not join the Momberg family for one of their famous Boerebraais which caters for a fun-filled lunch experience without Mom having to do any dishes. Kids can play in the oversized sandpit, feed the farm animals, ride kick bikes, braai their own marshmallows and stokbrood or simply enjoy the vast open space of a working wine farm.

The **DelVera Agri-village**, one of the biggest kids party venues in the Stellenbosch Winelands, is a popular retreat for parents who want to turn their couch potatoes into outdoor-loving beings. There they can run around freely, feed and pet the donkeys, take a spin on the under-roof go-kart track, go on a horse ride or saddle up for the kids bicycle track while the parents chat up a storm in their Simonsberg Café. It sure beats a party at the Spur.

Animals & Adventures

Tame your 'little monsters' by treating them to a roaring time at the **Vredenheim Big Cats Park**, home to various species of wild cat including white lions, Bengal tigers, leopards, cheetahs and more, all to be viewed up close, from the safety of their viewing decks. Or waggle your way to **Vergenoegd** and witness their famous duck parade as the Indian runner ducks march off to forage in the vineyards, under the watchful eye of their herder.

One of the most popular stopovers on the R44, **Butterfly World**, unleashes a magical world of tropical butterflies, small animals and reptiles whilst the **Giraffe House Wildlife Awareness Centre** on the corner of the R304 and R101 invites young and old to get some fresh air in their lungs and relax with a picnic while they learn more about conservation and African wildlife. Their interactive encounters with Gerry the hand reared giraffe and other animal friends will be a holiday highlight amongst the youngsters.

To tap those hyper energy levels why not swing by the **Adventure Shop**, situated in the Black Horse Centre in Stellenbosch, who can hook you up with adrenalin-filled horse riding, guided bike tours, quad biking, paintball and even an amazing treasure hunt through the oak-lined street of this quaint town.

Boys & Toys

If you want to secure your spot in the 'Cool Dad Club' then take your kids to the Toy and Miniature Museum for a world of enchantment that *you* will also love. Amongst the treasured miniature houses, antique dolls, cars and cuddly toys, you can also see a detailed and lifelike miniature of South Africa's famous Blue Train, travelling from a miniature Stellenbosch to the mountains of the Karoo.

Play Dates

Many of the wine farms, outdoor markets and delis in and around Stellenbosch have special facilities for kids such as play parks, jungle gyms and slides but one that truly impresses is **Weltevreden Estate**. Forget about Play Park... it is a Kiddies Carnival, geared to keep the little ones entertained for hours while the adults chill at their Lekke Neh restaurant. Their Carnival area boasts not one, but two humongous jungle gyms, as well as a trampoline, sandpit, tar-tar tracks for scooters and a variety of other toys to be found on the playground for little ones to make long days short under the watchful eyes of on-site child minders.

The **Family Farm**, visible from the R44 between Stellenbosch and Somerset West, is what its name says... a delightful farm where families and friends can spend some quality time together. It is the perfect outdoor venue for kiddies' parties and even has on-site braai facilities, which will keep Dad very happy.

Just up the road from the farm is the ever-popular **Mooiberge Farm Stall**, famous for their colourful scarecrows and fresh strawberry picking adventures – a great day trip for the entire family.

Other child-friendly destinations worth a visit this summer include **Skilpadvlei** which boasts an outdoor and indoor play area and is therefore a great spot to chill out, even on rainy days, and the **Jonkershoek Café** which is frequented by hiking and cycling families en route from the Jonkershoek Nature Reserve. It features an awesome mini BMX track for young dirt hounds. **Warwick Estate** is the ideal family-friendly wine estate to have a lazy day out and sports various kiddies attractions including a ‘junior’ gourmet picnic whilst **Delheim Estate’s** riverside picnics also never disappoints.

For more information about child-friendly things to do without a sinking heart this summer, contact Stellenbosch 360 at Tel: 021 883 3584 or visit their information centre at 36 Market Street. Also browse www.wineroute.co.za and follow blog.wineroute.co.za for the latest offerings.

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