





# Shepherd's hut revived

The road winds through the green fynbos of the Swartberg Mountains near Prince Albert, leading to the subtly hidden cottage with its earthy rust-brown walls. The architecture a blend of African, Mexican and Mediterranean influences; the décor an eclectic take on Karoo style

PHOTOS HENRIQUE WILDING/PERFECT HIDEAWAYS





#### ^ ON THE ENTERTAINMENT VERANDA

The back veranda is painted the same rust-brown as the walls and beautifully furnished with a table, cane chairs and a Persian rug. A black chandelier hangs from the reed roof, while a Mexican-style mirror reflects the surrounding landscape. The bougainvilleas are destined to form a vibrant, flowering canopy. Situated near the veranda is the round farm dam (see page 68). A typical Karoo-style slatted roof shields the blazing sun, while shutters keep the house cool and provide security.



**L**ong unused, the shepherd's hut lies within the private nature reserve De Aap. Once known to locals as Blou Piet, it has been around since the 1820s.

Only the outer walls remained standing; the roof long gone. At the start of the major restoration project, materials found on the farm – like the red earth and invasive black wattle wood – were used to rebuild the thick clay walls. The roof was replaced, and the ceilings feature the typical Karoo slatted design made from Spanish reed. The house was rebuilt identically to the original plan, except for an interior wall that was knocked down to create a large open-plan space, and another bathroom was added. For architect Marielise van der Merwe of MvdM Architects, this was a dream project.

Marielise was determined to preserve the soul of the house at all costs. Where possible, original windows were retained to keep the house cool, but inside they were framed with salvaged American Oregon pine from a demolished building. Throughout the house, grey oxide cement floors were cast – soaking up the sun by day to radiate warmth on chilly nights. Built-in beds capture the Mexican-Mediterranean atmosphere. A fallen tree, found lying in the veld, was transformed into the striking dining table by a skilled craftsman. All the kitchen and bathroom cabinets were also made from reclaimed wood sourced on the farm.

The deep veranda on one side is beautifully furnished, complete with a Persian rug, a heavy chandelier and a mirror. Just a few steps away, a circular farm dam offers the perfect spot to cool off. The wooden shutters are not only aesthetically pleasing, but – like in Scandinavia – also provide double insulation when the surrounding mountains are covered in snow. A boma made from a double row of reeds offers shelter from the cold Karoo wind.

The spot is a wonderful retreat for guests. Although solar power and good internet and cellphone connection are available, there is no television. There's no time or desire for it, either. The veld calls you; maybe you hop on your bike and head for a swim in the cool Aap River. Here, you rediscover yourself.

### **DINING WITH A VIEW (PAGE 60)**

This striking table was crafted from a tree stump found in the veld. A mix of replica Marcel Breuer chairs and pieces with Eastern influences reflects the blending of styles seen throughout the house. The floor is cement screed, stained with grey oxide. The most beautiful part of this corner is the view of the Swartberge. Inner window frames, which swing open inward, are clad in reclaimed American Oregon pine. It creates the illusion of a living painting.



**^ ECLECTIC LIVING ROOM**

The living room is a blend of old and new. The couch, which converts into a double bed, is a family heirloom. A lime green mid-century chair sits beautifully beside the two wicker chairs at the dining table – once a fallen tree on the farm.

**< COAT STAND AND SUITCASE**

The wall hooks and old suitcase offer hanging and storage space for hats, coats and everyday odds and ends.

**> FARM KITCHEN**

A modern stove is built into the deep recess, with a gleaming wooden countertop alongside it. The cupboards with black iron hinges are also made from wood found on the farm, displaying another clever combination of old and new.