

# STILL LEADING THE WAY

When one thinks of Stellenbosch, many images come to mind ... beautiful scenery, historic buildings, oak lined streets. And of course, wine. Stellenbosch is the second-oldest town in South Africa and it is therefore fitting to be regarded as the wine capital of South Africa.

While Stellenbosch wine is enjoyed, Spatz Sperling of Delheim digs in the first sign with the new emblem of the Stellenbosch Wine Route – with Chris Joubert (Spier), Bill Hunter (Bertrams), David van Velden (Overgaauw), Frans Malan (Simonsig) and Marie Stassen (PRO of the route) – 2 October 1981.



Like the well known Bryan Adams song, it all started in the *summer of 1969*. Good friends Frans Malan and Niel Joubert from Simonsig and Spier respectively went on a European tour. Both men were great wine lovers, and they visited the famous *Routes des Vins at Morey St Denis* in Burgundy.

Back home, they persuaded Spatz Sperling from Delheim to complete the now-famous fearless threesome, and so they started their very own organisation representing wine farms in the Stellenbosch region. This organisation would change the face of wine tourism in South Africa, and was the very first *wine tourism* initiative in the South African wine industry, even though the term did not exist yet. The pioneering Stellenbosch Wine Route was officially launched by the then minister of Agriculture, Mr Hendrik Schoeman, in April 1971.

Today there are 15 Wine routes in South Africa, but Stellenbosch remains the most-visited and best-recognised brand among them. From humble beginnings the Stellenbosch American Express® Wine Routes now boasts five sub-routes, with 149 wineries as members, making it the biggest wine route in South Africa.

Stellenbosch remains foremost in the minds of both local and international tourists, and this is achieved through continued effort in collective marketing by Stellenbosch Wine Routes and the Stellenbosch Tourism Information Bureau. This moves the Wine Routes closer to fulfilling our mission of marketing Stellenbosch with one voice.

The renewal of sponsorship commitment by American Express® Cards for the sixth consecutive year bears testimony to the success of the hard work by Stellenbosch Wine Routes to build our brand not just locally, but also internationally. The continued support of American Express Cards enables Stellenbosch Wine Routes to make a tangible difference in our community. In an alignment of strategies towards social upliftment and education, Stellenbosch Wine Routes continues to facilitate wine appreciation training for previously disadvantaged travel agents, hotel school students and farm workers. Stellenbosch Wine Routes sees the value in opening up the wonderful world of wine and the wonders of the Stellenbosch region to these groups, as this will in turn facilitate wine being integrated as the drink of choice, and Stellenbosch as the preferred region, into the greater South African society.

Last year alone, Stellenbosch's status as champion wine region was confirmed on various occasions. Stellenbosch was voted the public's

favourite wine destination by *Wine* magazine, in its annual survey. Tokara was voted the country's best emerging winery, Beyers Truter (Beyerskloof) is viewed as the best wine ambassador for South Africa and, unsurprisingly, readers consider Vergelegen to be SA's best winery, a position it has held convincingly since the first reader poll in 2002.

At the inaugural Financial Mail Wine Business Awards, Stellenbosch walked away with most of the awards. Awards include: Bruce Jack (Flagstone) as Personality of the Year, Inke Gouws (champagne importer) as Young Achiever of the Year, Lourensford for Best Design and Packaging, as well as Best Trade Campaign, *the company of wine*

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*people* for Best Launch, Kleine Zalze as Wine Company of the Year as well as Export Star, and Annareth Bolton (CEO, Stellenbosch Wine Routes) as Brand Manager of the Year.

Stellenbosch was also voted nr 9 on the "Top 10 grape destinations where the wine is divine" listing on [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com). The site has 25 million monthly visitors, comprising the largest travel community in the world.

The annual Stellenbosch Wine Festival remains the biggest regional wine show under one roof, with more than 12 500 visitors over four days.

I therefore salute, honour and thank the three visionaries that helped establish Stellenbosch as the number one wine tourism destination in South Africa. And to the 149 members who work so well together to keep us one of the most successful and recognised wine regions in the world – *Gesondheid!*

