

Ode to my Darling

TANNIE EVITA'S NECK OF THE WOODS IS SO CLOSE TO CAPE TOWN THAT IT CAN EASILY BE VISITED IN A DAY. BUT STAY A BIT LONGER AND YOU'LL BE RICHLY REWARDED

By Nick Dall

As we stroll down the middle of Long Street, I can't resist checking out a large colonial building whose snow-white facade is broken only by the words 'DARLING SWEET'. Inside, there's a vintage tricycle on a kist, and shelf upon antique shelf of delicious-looking goodies. The delicious-looking goodies, explains co-owner Frits van Ryneveld, are handcrafted hard toffees, and they taste as good as they look. Through floor-to-ceiling windows we watch as a team of local ladies boils, cools, cuts and packages the preservative-free treats. Darling Sweet, like many establishments in town, is very much a community project, and some of the proceeds go towards Tannie Evita's Darling Trust.



**DISTANCE FROM
CAPE TOWN**
76 km

IN THE AREA

➤ Romantics will be disappointed to know that the town was named after Sir Charles Henry Darling in 1853.

➤ In spring, the hills in and around town are transformed into a kaleidoscope of colour by the spectacular display of spring flowers.





Evita se Perron



'The Groote Post Country Market on the last Sunday of every month between August and April is well worth a visit.'

FRITS VAN RYNEVELD DARLING SWEET



The old railway station



Artwork at Darling Brew



Some of Darling Brew's ... brews

WHERE TO STAY

- **The Granary Petite Hotel** is a delightfully laid-back place in the heart of town, with big rooms and a homely feel.
- **Strathnaver Cottage** offers en-suite accommodation in a historic Cape country cottage in a quiet corner of town.
- **Waylands Farm Accommodation & Guest House's** five rooms are in a historic Victorian farmhouse on a free-range beef farm five minutes from town.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK DALL, GALLO/GETTYIMAGES, ALAMY

Take your time

Darling Sweet's motto is 'Vat jou tyd'. At first I thought it applied only to the time that goes into making (and eating!) their toffees, but, as I wander through the town, I realise that it may as well be a motto for the whole of Darling. Barely 20m further down the road, I am again drawn into a big white building with a welcoming look. Chicory Cheese Café is an airy space with a wonderful garden and sunny walls bedecked with clocks, paintings, hearts, and even a full-sized chair. I ask owner Anesia Darné what the cafe's speciality is: 'We like to focus on the healthier things in life and we cater for vegans and vegetarians,' she laughs. 'But we also like cream and chocolate.'

I am tempted by the cauliflower fritters drizzled with lemon coriander yoghurt and jalapeño hummus, but in the end, I opt for a slice of the most delicious carrot cake in the history of forever, washed down with a berry and banana smoothie.

Chicory Cheese is actually housed in the same building as The Granary Petite Hotel, which is only steps away from the two best dinnertime restaurants in town. Bistro Seven serves up hearty country fare, while The Fondue Pot specialises in German classics such as

Eisbein and proper fondue. You're spoilt for choice when it comes to fine dining.

The First Lady of Darling

No visit to Darling is complete without a stop at Evita se Perron, the rambling rhapsodical refuge of the beloved Tannie Evita Bezuidenhout. Unfortunately, the First Lady herself is away on official business, but her touch and aura are so pervasive that she is barely missed. We take photos of our faces in life-size Evita cut-outs, stroll through Boerassic Park and feast on some traditional bobotie.

If we had planned ahead, we would've been able to catch one of Evita's shows: she performs most Saturdays and Sundays at 2 pm, but we will have to make do with a beer or two at Darling Brew's snazzy new premises in the 'industrial' side of town. The Tasteroom overlooks their gleaming stainless steel brewery and serves up pub grub (try out the Mozambican chicken wings!) and a dozen beers on tap. For the kids, there's an enormous jungle gym in the garden.

There's so much more I'd like to tell you about Darling – the wines, the olives, the festivals, the flowers – but you'll have way more fun finding it out for yourself. Just remember: *Vat jou tyd*. 📖