

Lunch break!

Road trip food stops don't have to mean undercooked chips and flabby pies. **Nick Dall** unearths eight roadside eateries worth stopping for.

South Africa is vast and varied and its roads are sumptuously scenic; there's no better way to see our beautiful country than on a road trip. It's a pity about the food though. For yonks, petrol stations around the country have been dishing up the same miserable microwave fare to long-suffering travellers too jaded to expect better.

Not so fast...The *platteland* has recently been hit by the global foodie revolution, and highways and byways all over the country are sprouting gourmet food stops faster than you can say *roosterkoek*.

Red Star

Wellington, Western Cape

I first visited the Red Star out of necessity: roadworks, a traffic jam and an urgent need to pee led me to discover an understated gem a stone's throw from the bustling N1. Hippyish Red Star is all dreamcatchers and scarecrows, but the coffee's good, the mudcakes are epic and the food is both ample and delicious. Choose from home-made wraps, burgers, toasted sarmies or pies – I always order the chicken, spinach, mushroom and feta wrap. The super-friendly staff are as laid-back as the décor, so you may end up lingering for a chat.

WHERE? On the R44 heading towards Wellington, 12km from the N1.



Houw Hoek Farm Stall

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Elgin, Western Cape

Houw Hoek Farm Stall is as Cape as they come. Nestled among the orchards of the Elgin Valley, the quaint green and white building is fringed with roses and lavender, and there's even a trout-fishing pond on the premises (winter months only). The farm stall sells amazing home-baked breads, cakes and pies, as well as a large selection of local wines. But there's also a restaurant-come-coffee-shop, which serves everything from eggs Benedict to slow-roasted pork belly.

WHERE? On the N2 highway, about an hour from Cape Town.

• **Contact details:** www.houwhoekfarmstall.co.za ▶

LEFT: Houw Hoek Farm Stall sells fruit, vegetables and jams, plus local wines from the Elgin region.



USE YOUR REALITY BENEFIT

You don't need a road trip as an excuse to visit South Africa's country delis and coffee shops. As a Reality+ member, you can save the price of a main meal (up to R120) when you order two, at a whole host of lekker local restaurants – visit www.reality.co.za/dining.



Home-baked and extremely fresh, the food at these local roadside eateries and farm stalls makes stopping for a break worthwhile.



HAVE YOUR SAY

Celia Booysen decided to contact Reality Travel to source a Tempest rental car for her family's recent trip to the Western Cape: "I want to thank you sincerely for your superb arrangements for a rental car through Tempest for our Cape visit. The service was excellent, and we really enjoyed driving the Nissan Micra. We have referred many to your Tempest car rental service."

Ronnie's Sex Shop

Barrydale, Western Cape

Many moons ago, bearded, ponytailed eccentric Ronnie Price painted the words RONNIE'S SHOP on the outside of his cottage in the Klein Karoo. Ronnie forgot about his signage until he woke up one morning to discover that his friends had added the word SEX to it. Ronnie's not the confrontational type, so instead of getting mad, he opened a pub; and the rest is history. Underwear, mainly women's, hangs from the ceiling, and the walls are adorned with graffiti from all over the world. There's a small lunch menu, or you can buy a braai pack and cook it yourself on the braais provided. The food's not gourmet, but it ain't bad either. And the beers are most definitely cold.

WHERE? On the R62 between Barrydale and Ladismith.

• **Contact details:** www.ronniessexshop.co.za



Kuilfontein

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Springfontein, Free State

Kuilfontein may just be the best thing to come out of the Free State since Os du Randt. Situated on a stretch of the N1 which isn't exactly famed for its scenic interest, it's a real saviour. It's run by a husband-and-wife team: Martinette whips up the best cappuccinos either side of the Vaal, and Shelton is a qualified chef who specialises in comfort food. My tastebuds do a little *sokkie-sokkie* every time I remember his chicken and masala pie. Kuilfontein is also a working sheep farm, so you can stock up on sheepskin slippers and seat covers while you're there.

WHERE? Just off the N1, 80km north of Colesberg.

• **Contact details:** www.kuilfonteinguestfarm.co.za

Nanaga

Near PE, Eastern Cape

Fifty years ago, local farmer's wife Lynn Lake started selling pies, *roosterkoek* and pineapple juice from her car boot. Now the complex surrounding Nanaga is almost as big as nearby Grahamstown! Although Lynn has long since packed up her baking gloves, Nanaga is still a family business, and the same recipes are going strong. I always end up ordering the bacon and egg *roosterkoek* no matter what time it is, but you can also try the wild boar pie if you're feeling brave.

WHERE? At the 'cloverleaf interchange' where the N2 and the R72 meet, 55km from PE.

• **Contact details:** www.nanaga.co.za



Piggly Wiggly

Mac Banana

South Coast, KwaZulu-Natal

This pancake restaurant on a banana farm with peacocks roaming the dining area could only exist on the South Coast. Choose between sweet and savoury pancakes (give the bacon, brie and cranberry a bash) or more standard fare, while the kids keep themselves busy elsewhere. There's a barnyard for the little ones, and adventure golf and quad biking for the older and more adventurous. After lunch you could do a spot of shopping at the nursery, or just drink in the tropical ocean vibes.

WHERE? On the R61 between Palm Beach and Munster.

• **Contact details:** www.macbanana.mobi

Piggly Wiggly

Midlands Meander, KwaZulu-Natal

We were seriously spoiled for choice in the Midlands, but eventually settled on Piggly Wiggly due to the sheer variety of stuff to do, buy and eat. What started out as a humble farm stall has become the rural equivalent of a shopping mall. The deli has won all sorts of 'local is lekker' awards, and the cappuccinos are officially the best in KZN. You can buy anything from leather goods to wrought iron, and if you have a bit more time on your hands, give candle-dipping or plate-painting a go.

WHERE? In Lion's River on the Midlands Meander.

• **Contact details:** www.pigglywiggly.co.za

Irene Dairy Farm

Irene, Gauteng

Being from the Cape, I was gobsmacked to discover a sleepy country hollow slap-bang in the middle of Gauteng. The Irene Dairy farm has two gourmet restaurants and an excellent deli which even sells dairy products from the farm itself. The Barn restaurant seats 300, but it still feels cosy... probably something to do with its serene location under 100-year-old oaks. The much smaller Deck restaurant has a coffee shop vibe, and the scones with Irene Farm thick cream and jam are its signature dish.

WHERE? On Nellmapius Road in Irene, between Pretoria and Joburg.

• **Contact details:** www.irenefarm.co.za ■

ABOVE: Piggly Wiggly's home-baked bread is just one of the reasons visitors keep returning to this KZN restaurant.

FAR LEFT AND LEFT: A warm welcome greets visitors at Ronnie's Sex Shop in the Western Cape and at Kuilfontein farm in the Free State.