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Jan Harmsgat Country House is located just outside scenic Swellendam in the heart of the southwest Cape. Originally established in 1723, the farm is surrounded by breathtaking landscapes, close to exceptional wineries, and steeped in centuries of history.

The historic farm straddles a lush mountainous belt, and its spacious orchards of fruit, nut and olive trees are the source of highly acclaimed preserves and produce. The 4-star establishment also plays host to indigenous wildlife such as black wildebeest, springbok, grey reebok and ostriches, which are often seen roaming the grounds.

When Brin Rebstein and his wife Judi bought Jan Harmsgat in 1991, they began restoring its old charm by focusing on converting the wine cellar and labourers' quarters into a charming and inviting guesthouse. During the renovation process, the couple chose to focus not only on the physical beautification of the establishment, but also on its potential to contribute to poverty alleviation. The Rebsteins' efforts have resulted in an extensive training programme to equip staff drawn from the local community with the skills, knowledge, and confidence required to run a first-class guesthouse.

Judi and Brin have also made an impact in nearby Swellendam where Judi set up an award-winning community project, turning part of the old jail (old goal) into a coffee shop. Women from disadvantaged communities were trained and given a stake in the cafe where delicacies like springbok carpaccio and local cheeses are served.

As well as offering the discerning traveler the opportunity to indulge in an authentic country ambience and history, Jan Harmsgat Country House demonstrates that fairness, ethical business practice and environmental respect form a sound basis for a more sustainable tourism industry in South Africa.





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