



THE MONTH

SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

AND THAT CAN MEAN ONLY ONE THING - A VISIT TO THE CEDERBERG

adventurous including rock climbing, mountain biking, overnight hiking trails ('the length of which are limited only by the weight of the provisions you can carry on your back'), swimming and horse riding. For the less adventurous, there's game viewing, fishing, bird watching, easy hikes, rock art and even wine tasting. Travelling distances are not short in the Cederberg (and the roads not easy), so pick your areas carefully. The conservancy can be accessed from the north off the N7, via Algeria, or from the south on a decent gravel road via Op die Berg.

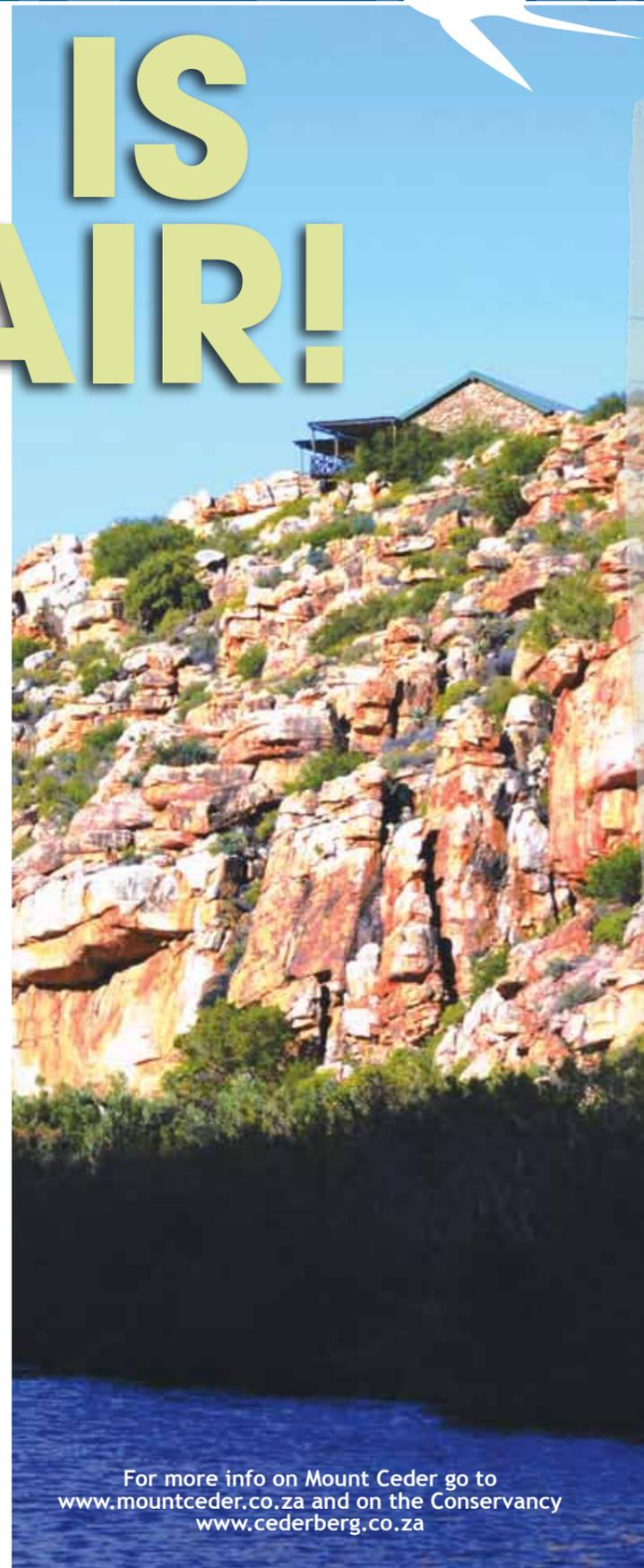
Being big on mouth and small on action, my three-day, two-night stay suggestion is to take the camera for an easy hike or two, inspect the rock paintings and, in true The Month fashion, taste some wine. At just 51 kilometres off the R303, Mount Ceder is the perfect place to discover the southerly section of the Cederberg and you'll find ideal accommodation at 'Klipbokkop' - the most elevated of eight, 4-star, fully equipped, self-catering cottages that dot the Grootrivier running through the farm - with a Jacuzzi on the balcony to boot!

Day one is full of arriving and the gathering of information but a canoe trip up the river is 'a must' to clear the mind, appreciate the silence and drink in the sense of space. So, when you're fetching wood for the braai, grab a paddle from reception - a bit of exercise will work wonders before an evening of food from the fire, a couple of glasses of wine and stargazing from the huge wooden balcony overlooking the river.

Day two will have you woken by the call of Egyptian Geese, the foraging of a small Grey Mongoose, or the scrambling of Rock Dassies, so head down to breakfast at the farm overlooking the stables before taking a short drive south and an easy 30-minute hike to the waterfall. You could easily spend the whole day lazing, watching the weavers building their nests or dipping into the inviting clear water but history beckons. Head back past the farm, skirt the olive groves,

If hiking's not your thing (feel free to see across the page if you're still in two minds about that) but you appreciate the great outdoors, fancy some isolation and aren't averse to a dollop or two of breath-taking natural beauty, then the Cederberg in spring, with water aplenty and not yet too hot, is undoubtedly the time to shake off the winter blues and lap up some exposure to the natural elements.

Just three hours north of Cape Town, the Cederberg Conservancy - a voluntary agreement between landowners to manage the consolidated 22 properties in 'an environmentally sustainable manner' - was constituted in 1997. The resulting 182,000 hectares of rugged, mountainous terrain offer a variety of activities for the



For more info on Mount Ceder go to www.mountceder.co.za and on the Conservancy www.cederberg.co.za

‘The Stadsaal Caves - where you'll find intriguing rock formations and neatly written graffiti dating back to the nineteenth century’

and hike to a cluster of rocks where the San and Khoi people, who inhabited this area from about 8000 years ago, have left behind a rich legacy of images. But remember, you're on baboon turf, so don't be surprised if they scream, defecate or even throw rocks at you from above to express their displeasure at your visit.

Back up to Klipbokkop for a quick body-warming Jacuzzi and light lunch before you get your tasting pants on and head out to the Cederberg Private Cellar where, at an altitude of more than 1000m above sea level, you'll hear about a how the diverse soil types, unpolluted air and crystal clear waters combine to produce wines at the highest altitude in the country. From there you can buy a permit for the fascinating wind and rain eroded Stadsaal Caves, where you'll

find intriguing rock formations and neatly written graffiti dating back to the nineteenth century - and including, more recently, 'Staatspresident P W Botha' which, it appears, has been given the baboon treatment mentioned above. If the corrugated dirt track allows, keep a steady eye out for the fairly common Rheebuck, Klipspringer or Duiker on the way home - or the 100 or so bird species that inhabit the conservancy. Dinner with a couple of bottles of Cederberg Shiraz 2009 should complete the day as you settle down, once again on the veranda.

Leaving after another hearty breakfast on day three might have you pondering (as it did me) that there's a massive difference between 4-star establishments and that a failing of the rating system is that there's no appreciation of the 'X' factor - which Klipbokkop has in abundance. Of course it's clean and neat, has a lovely inside ceramic fireplace, air conditioners that didn't go unnoticed (but did go unused), and everything else required of that rating, but places as special as this certainly don't need to trade on it. Far greater is the peace of mind and sense of satisfaction you feel having stayed in an exceptional environment - and there's no measure of that, besides a trip there yourself!

