



The Taproom pub and restaurant presents the latest creations of Devil's Peak.



Experimental potations brew at Devil's Peak: some beers are aged in wine barrels.

# Get crafty

By Lucy Corne

The vineyards of the Western Cape have long been a draw card for visitors, but these days it's not just wine lists that deserve a look. Craft beer is on the rise, and there's no better place for a pint than **Cape Town.**

**It's** an oft-repeated fact that Jan van Riebeeck, the first Dutch settler to land in Cape Town, planted vines a few years after his arrival. What is less documented is that van Riebeeck also brewed beer — in fact his debut brew was sipped in 1657, a good two years before he first dabbled in winemaking.

Fast-forward more than three centuries and you find that beer is booming in the Cape, though it hasn't always been this way. While South Africa had an early encounter with ales, decades of domination by beer giant SABMiller left drinkers with little to choose from but a range of light lagers. Then craft beer began to trickle from the taps, and today there are well over 100 microbreweries to be found across the country, with Cape Town and its surrounds boasting the bulk of the brews. And if the Mother City is the country's beer capital, then its gentrified neighbourhood of Woodstock is the epicentre of the craft-beer revolution. This rough-around-the-edges suburb is shaking off its industrial past as designer boutiques, eclectic eateries, funky bookshops and of course, a host of microbreweries regenerate the once-gritty streets.

The first of these breweries was Devil's Peak Brewing Company, whose hops-forward beers have become a must-drink for beer lovers and hipsters alike. Launching in 2011, Devil's Peak opened their stylish Taproom in late 2013, transforming a run-down former factory store into one of Cape Town's hottest places to be seen. Their flagship brew is the award-winning King's Blockhouse, an American-style India pale ale (IPA) overflowing with aromas of tropical fruit and citrus, with a lingering bitterness that really challenged the South African beer palate. Try it with their much-talked-about burger, or as a part of the nifty food-and-beer tasting platter. At the Taproom you'll find speciality brews not sold elsewhere, from the superlative black IPA — a South African first — to experimental brews marrying beer with wine.

From here it's an easy walk to the newly opened Woodstock Brewery, passing the Old Biscuit Mill en route — the site of a perennially popular Saturday morning food market. The Woodstock Brewery is an impressive affair, with an aisle of shiny stainless steel fermenters greeting you on arrival. Upstairs is the Local Grill, a well-known steakhouse where you can sample Woodstock's beers. The core range all sport monikers conjuring up the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll era you'd associate with Woodstock's more famous namesake. The Happy Pills German Pilsner is great for sipping on sunny Cape Town afternoons, but it's their Californicator IPA that really stands out.

A short stagger from Woodstock Brewery, in a psychedelically painted former fruit shop, is one of the most intriguing breweries in the country — the Brewers' Co-op. Here 16 amateur brewers have come together to fund shared equipment for brewing a vast range of ales. Alongside four permanent house beers, you might find anything from simple blonde ales made with all-local materials, to bold, high-alcohol stouts, Belgian-style fruit beers and speciality brews showcasing unique South African ingredients. The hip bar opened in March 2015, and once the co-op is running to capacity, you can expect anything up to 18 beers on tap at any one time.

One more must-do stop on the Woodstock ale trail is Riot Factory, established by a pair of beer-loving friends in 2014. Their easy-drinking golden ale is aptly named: it's called Session and is designed to allow you to sink a few in one sitting. Those looking for something bolder will find it in the Valve IPA. The cool taproom sits in an equally cool shopping centre, The Palms, best visited on

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At the Riot Factory, there's only great beer on tap.



A craft-beer-and-food pairing board perfectly matches beverages and bites.

Saturday morning when a farmers market fills the hallways. In a few short years, South Africa has gone from having just one or two beer styles to producing Belgian witbiers and American IPAs, English bitters and German Pilsners. You'll also find staunchly South African brews flavoured with the likes of rooibos tea or buchu, an endemic herb with a unique, minty flavour. One or two brewers are even blending beer with wine in a grape-meets-grain move that might have made pioneer booze producer Jan van Riebeeck smile. ■

Lucy Corne is an avid traveller, freelance writer and craft-beer enthusiast. As well as writing for numerous guidebooks and travel magazines, she has penned two books on the South African beer scene. She also blogs about beer at [brewmistress.co.za](http://brewmistress.co.za).

## fastFACTS

**RESORT DIRECTORY:** [IntervalWorld.com](http://IntervalWorld.com)  
**DON'T MISS:** Beer in the Winelands. Visit Cape Brewing Company in Paarl to taste the crisp, bitter Pilsner, full-bodied weissbier and bold, hoppy imperial IPA with a plate of biltong.

**CAR HIRE:** Not necessary for the itinerary described in the story, but recommended to get to the depth of the peninsula.  
**VISITOR INFORMATION:** Cape Town Tourism [capetown.travel](http://capetown.travel)

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