

Good things happen in 3s - just ask Groot Constantia



By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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Friday the 13th is a bit of an urban legend, eerie day for many. I remember my great-grandmother refused to set a foot out of bed on Friday the 13th. Perhaps she had a good reason.



Others, on the other hand, have no problem celebrating on a day such as Friday the 13th - Groot Constantia being one of them. The historic landmark celebrated its 333rd birthday in proper style and with a big spotlight on biodiversity on Friday, 13 July 2018.



Constantia Valley celebrates 333 years

[Ilse van den Berg](#) 6 Jun 2018



Here are my three top things from the birthday celebration which just reinforced why I love this place so much:

1. The trees and passion for conservation

To mark its 333rd birthday but, perhaps more importantly, to symbolise the beginning of a journey to safeguard the environment for future generations, we planted three trees for the future and three trees for the past in the avenue in front of Jonkershuis.

These were only six out of the 333 carefully selected trees and indigenous plants Groot Constantia will be planting on the estate over the coming months.

How I am looking forward to taking my grandchildren to the farm one day and showing them the trees I helped to plant!

2. The wine (duh)

Of course, the wine. Groot Constantia's top-class wines have always been some of my go-to wines - not because they are cheap or easy drinking but because they are quality wines that have never failed to make me go "wow" after each sniff and



Planting my tree! © Daniel Nels

sip.

Groot Constantia's wines also continue to perform extremely well on the global stage and have collectively won well over 100 top awards in the past 10 years alone.



© Daniel Nels

I mean, if Napoleon Bonaparte's favourite wine originated from Groot Constantia (*Grande Contance* as he called it in French); if emperors and kings such as Frederick the Great of Prussia and King Louis Phillipe of France bought 'Constantia Wyn' at auctions across Europe; and if famous writers such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens referred to Groot Constantia wines in their novels, then I'm definitely not being biased or silly by vouching for these wines as far as I go.

3. The history

As you may well know by now, Groot Constantia is South Africa's oldest wine-producing estate. Governor Simon van der Stel of the Dutch East India Company arrived at the Cape supply station in 1679. Back in the Netherlands, he had gained a solid background in viticulture at his vineyards in Muiderbergh.



On our way to go plant some trees. © Daniel Nels

Van der Stel received title to about 763 hectares of land on 13 July 1685 in what we now know as the Constantia Valley. By 1709 there were 70,000 vines on the farm and Van der Stel produced 5,630 litres of wine.

Today, the manor house still showcases many stories and photographs of how life on the farm used to be back in the day.

Together with the Groot Constantia family, we celebrated the homecoming of a bottle of 1855 Pontac Constantia from J P Cloete of 'Great Constantia' which was found in France and bought at an auction. Certainly a highlight of the day!



The bottle of 1855 Pontac revealed. © Daniel Nels

Groot Constantia invites the public to come and celebrate its auspicious 333rd year with them on the estate and to experience and feel everything that makes this one of the most popular destinations in the Cape. Currently on display is an exact replica of the original title deed that was signed 333 years ago.

Cheers to the next 333 years!

For more, go to www.grootconstantia.co.za or connect via social media on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or Instagram - [@GrootConstantia](#).

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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