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It turns out Paternoster has grown up. But it hasn't lost itself in the process



LEFT Enjoy a meal on the outside patio at The Blues Restaurant.

BELOW The hotel offers a range of wellness options for guests.

over, streaked in improbable colour as the sun slips away.

If you're inclined, there are running routes that begin right outside the hotel, weaving through the village and along the coast. I noted them respectfully, and opted instead for the sauna and spa – a far more appropriate interpretation of rest, in my view.

Days in Paternoster unfold easily. I spent mine wandering, dipping into galleries, browsing artisanal food stores, and taking stock of a village that has subtly become one of the Western Cape's most compelling food destinations. There's a steady stream of visitors, too, who understand that Cape Town, and its surrounds, are best experienced outside of the December and January frenzy.

Back at the hotel, the Oyster Lounge is essential. The oysters, harvested nearby, arrive with a freshness that's difficult to replicate elsewhere. Order them with a glass of something cold and ask – if you can – for a table outside at sunset. It's a simple pleasure, elevated entirely by its setting. I also worked my way through their sushi and wine offering, which, somewhat unexpectedly, ranks among the best I've had.

One evening, I ventured out for dinner in the village – a worthwhile exercise, given the breadth of options – but the standout meal of the trip came back at the hotel's own The Blues Restaurant. Order without hesitation: tuna tataki, beef fillet and Amarula crème brûlée. Consider it a curated experience, if you like. Or simply a very good dinner.

It turns out Paternoster has grown up. But it hasn't lost itself in the process. At Abalone Hotel & Villas, you find a place that understands exactly how to meet that moment with comfort, care and just enough indulgence to make your return feel inevitable.

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COASTAL RETURN

A nostalgic return to Paternoster reveals a village transformed – and a stay at Abalone Hotel & Villas that balances charm, comfort and indulgence, writes **Ryan Vrede**

There's a unique stillness that settles in as you leave Cape Town and trace the coastline north along the West Coast Road. The traffic thins, the air sharpens and the Atlantic – restless, metallic – keeps you honest on your right. It's a drive that rewards patience, best taken without urgency, the kind that invites long pauses and longer thoughts.

Behind the wheel of the Toyota Hilux Legend 55, the journey felt appropriately matched to the terrain. There's a reassuring solidity to it, the sort of vehicle that turns a simple transfer into part of the experience. It eats up the open stretches, gliding past Langebaan turn-offs and salt pans, before the road narrows and the world begins to feel smaller, more considered.

I hadn't been to Paternoster since my childhood. What I remembered was simple: whitewashed cottages, a working fishing village, a sense of quiet. What I found was something else entirely. The bones remain, but the village has grown into itself, confidently so. There's a polish now. A rhythm. Small businesses line the narrow roads, art galleries beckon from behind wooden doors, and restaurants – some widely acclaimed – hum with a steady, knowing trade. It's no longer a secret. It's a destination.

Set just back from the shoreline, **Abalone Hotel & Villas** offers a refined counterpoint to the village's rustic charm. From the moment I arrived, the hospitality was immediate and disarming, warm, informed, and instinctively attentive without ever feeling rehearsed, a welcome that settles you before you've even found your room.

I was shown to an Oyster Villa Seaview Suite, the hotel's marquee accommodation. Compact, yes, but beautifully resolved. Every detail feels intentional, and every amenity precisely where it should be. The palette leans coastal without cliché, and the space invites you to slow down almost involuntarily.



The standout, however, is the semi-private pool. It stretches across the line of suites, creating individual pockets of privacy while still part of a shared whole. The section directly outside your suite is yours, but a polite system of mutual respect governs the rest. In theory. In practice, I couldn't resist the occasional, opportunistic pool-length swim when neighbouring guests seemed otherwise occupied – a small indulgence that felt entirely in keeping with the setting.

Then there's the bed. Plush, expansive, it felt larger than a king-size, though that may have been the exhaustion talking. I arrived in need of rest and left having had more than my share. The linen, the quiet, the way the room holds the night, it all conspires to keep you there longer than planned.

The beach lies a short five-minute walk away, and it's here that Paternoster reminds you why it matters. The water, noticeably warmer than Cape Town's icy Atlantic bite, laps gently against a shoreline that seems to stretch endlessly in both directions. Evenings are best reserved for slow walks, where conversation fades, and the sky takes

ABOVE RIGHT The Oyster Experience at The Oyster Lounge is a must-do.

BELOW The Oyster Villa Suite opens up onto a semi-private pool and has breathtaking sea views.

