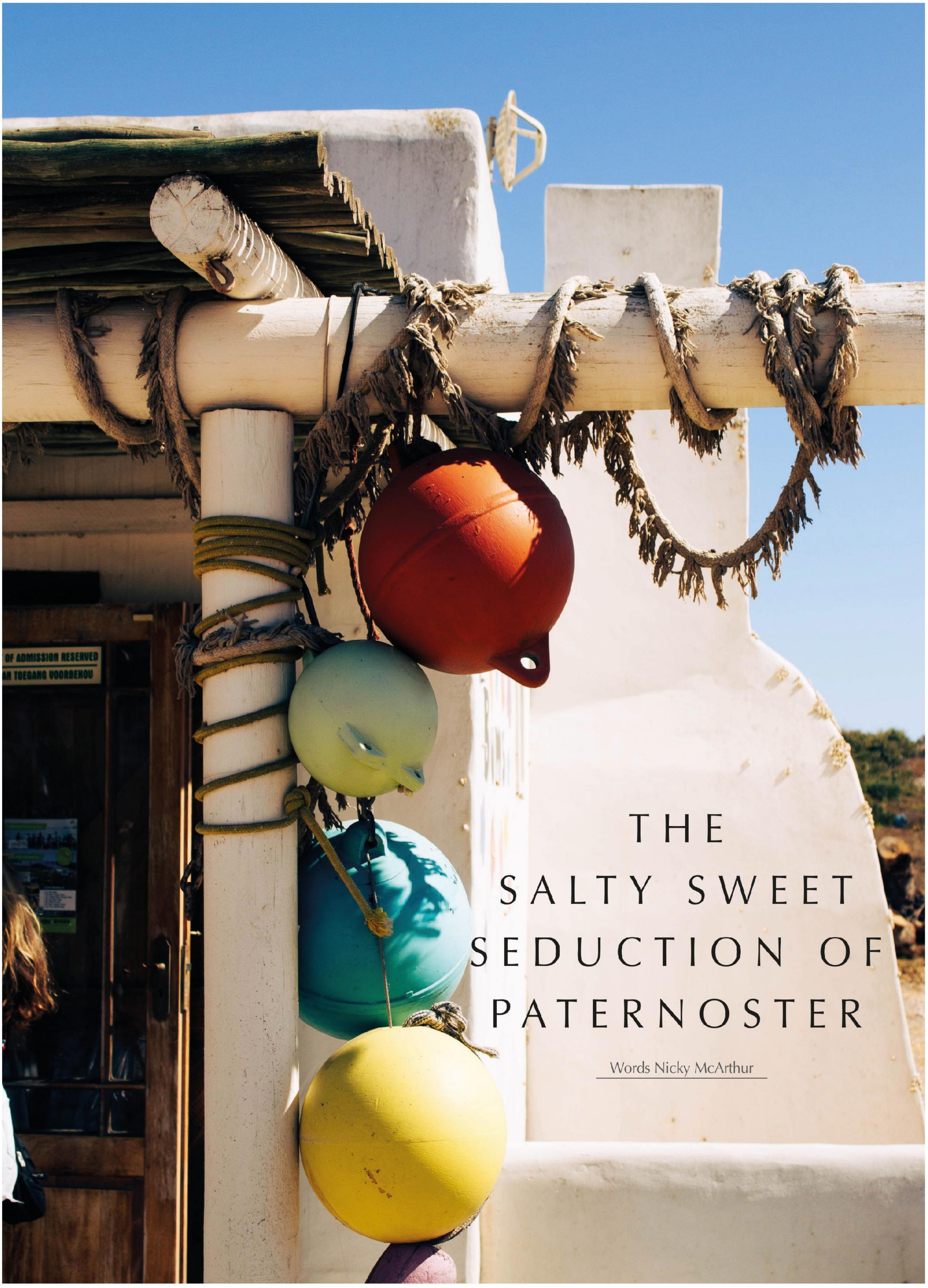


THE SALTY SWEET SEDUCTION OF PATERNOSTER

Words Nicky McArthur







From top: The Oyster Lounge, Oyster Villa Seaview Suites, and view from Voorstrandt restaurant.

Breaking away from Cape Town along the West Coast Road feels like a slow exhale.

It's a two-hour journey that forces you to match its unhurried pace, clearing mental clutter with every kilometre. And as you move nearer to the ancient fishing outpost of Paternoster, the roads quiet and the air changes – crisper, salt-stung, and carried by an Atlantic breeze.

What used to be a sleepy secret known only for whitewashed cottages and sun-dried *bokkoms* has evolved into one of South Africa's most compelling destinations. Today, it's a little more sophisticated, a little more polished, thanks to an array of art galleries, boutiques, and a vibrant food scene.

Despite the town's evolution, the laid-back coastal vibe remains, and that's what makes it so popular.

As one of the oldest coastal villages on the West Coast, Paternoster's heritage is etched into its very landscape. The name itself – Latin for "Our Father" – is whispered to be a legacy of shipwrecked Portuguese sailors praying for survival on this rugged coastline.

Step onto the sands of Gaatjies Beach, and you'll instantly feel the romance of the place. Giant granite boulders overlook the bay, and the scenery is defined by the eternal waltz of crashing waves.

The town council's strict development rules mean the old-world charm remains flawlessly intact. The iconic white cottages with their blue shutters and thatched roofs evoke a Greek Island aesthetic, playfully grounded by West Coast quirks: colourful, distressed wooden boats strewn like beach art, old somewhat smelly lobster pots, and vibrant coastal gardens.

And, although the town has grown over the years, some things never change: fishermen still head out on colourful boats to harvest snoek, hake and the much-prized West Coast rock lobster (*kreef*) and local kids on go-karts dodge stray dogs down narrow lanes.

STAY

Tucked just back from the shoreline, Abalone Hotel & Villas offers an elevated spin on seaside style. With its whitewashed walls and thatched roof, this boutique hotel may look low-key from the outside as it blends into Paternoster's architecture, but on the inside, it is a fabulous 5-star retreat. Step inside, and you're immediately welcomed like an old friend with a chilled glass of bubbly. The interiors are full of character, thanks to a mix of eclectic antiques and curated artwork. The small cosy lounge area and its roaring wood fire set the scene for a sumptuous stay.

There are plenty of accommodation options, but the Oyster Villa Seaview Suites are a must. Newly built, each one offers an

idyllic retreat with panoramic sea views and direct access to a sunlit patio leading to a shared pool.

For those seeking the pinnacle of independence, the beachfront Ocean View Villas are ideal. We stayed here, and with a full kitchen, a dining and lounge area and two bedrooms, it's ideal for families, giving you privacy, flexibility and the choice to eat in or go out. Located across from the beach, large glass doors open to a verandah and the deep blue horizon. It is well kitted out and super comfy, and the private pool and hot tub make the villa exceptionally hard to leave.

Yet this is a beach holiday, and regardless of the time of day, it is a haven for walks, finding shells, boulder hopping and exploring rock pools. Even a dip in the sea, as on this side of the world, is noticeably warmer than its CT counterpart.

FEAST

Paternoster is awash with restaurants and home to dining spots like Wolfgat and the popular Voorstrandt restaurant overlooking the beach. The former needs reservations well in advance. And pizza at the Jolly Roger is a must! (yes, it's the cuzzie of the Parkhurst Jolly)

But if you want to stay closer to home, you will not be disappointed. Abalone Hotel is home to two restaurants, open to both residents and the public.

The Blues Restaurant is the hotel's culinary heartbeat. Breakfasts are a simple, delicious affair. Long, lingering lunches let you enjoy some great West Coast wines. Dinner is a romantic affair by a roaring log fire.

The Oyster Lounge is a hotspot that serves local oysters, ranging from classic to zesty Nikkei Fusion (with tempura scallions and tataki dressing). Their Japanese Peruvian sushi menu and Mussel pot are famous. Watch the sun set with another glass of bubbles.

EXPLORE

For the ultimate indulgence, visit the hotel's Wellness Suite. Leave your troubles behind with traditional African-inspired body treatments or simply surrender to a full body massage while the sound of the Atlantic does the rest.

For the restless, the 24-hour reception can arrange any excursion for you. Think e-biking, beach horse riding, which looks very cinematic, or gliding through the calm, clear waters of Paternoster by sea kayak.

The wonderful thing about Paternoster and its stunning accommodation options is that you can be as busy or as lazy as you like. There is so much to do and visit, you really are spoilt for choice. But it is also a magnificent coastline, which also begs to be admired slowly from a deck chair, preferably with something cold in hand.

A weekend in Paternoster is just not enough, and the Abalone Hotel & Villas begs you to stay longer and next time we will.

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