

**HONEYMOON IN 'PARIS'
BRAMASOLE, MAGOEBASKLOOF**

I Love Paris

Writer(s): cole porter

I love Paris in the spring time

I love Paris in the fall

I love Paris in the summer when it sizzles

*I love Paris in the winter **when it drizzles***

I love Paris every moment

Every moment of the year

I love Paris, why oh why do I love Paris

Because my love is here

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Ok, so we're not talking about the real Paris, France. But nonetheless, it was Paris. And it was in the fall. And it did drizzle. And I loved it there. Cause my love was there with me. (*Too soppy?? Phhhh, count to 10 and get over it.*)



Car buying seems very impulsive to our friends & family. One day we drive a sexy 4x4 Pajero, the next we drive a diesel Golf 6. But the truth is that Hein and I have discussed a new car for some time. Ok, our discussions were more in the line of exchanging the petrol Pajero for a diesel version. But when we checked to see how often we really, really use our 4x4 option, we decided it was time for a smaller car.

On Wednesday we saw the Golf, on Friday we drove her out of the McGarthy's Sales Garage. Since our

birthdays are later this month, we decided to celebrate our new sexy car with a weekend away. Far, far away to test her diesel consumption.

After a few calls, we decided on Bramasole, Magoebaskloof. (www.bramasole.co.za - 082 375 9467 or 079 515 4795 / Fax: 015-276 4312 / Email: reservations@bramasole.co.za.) It's about 385 km from Johannesburg.

Bramasole (means 'yearning for the sun' in Italian) is a 4-star luxury guest lodge overlooking a glassy lake. It offers 1 luxury apartment (lounge, kitchen, patio with braai, bedroom with bathroom en-suite which includes a spa bath, fire place - also known as the honeymoon suite or the Paris Suite - R1300/night b&b), 4 self-catering suites and 3 standard bedrooms.

Each room boasts a unique theme, so you can choose to experience an African safari, feel like an Egyptian pharaoh, get a taste of the French countryside or indulge in the richness of Morocco. All the rooms have glorious views of the forest and some rooms overlook the glassy lake and sculptured gardens.

Once just a massive concrete shed built to house an Angora rabbit farm, the 2 400m² building on a massive property on the edge of a spectacular forest, caught the eye of Robin McIntosh who had the vision to convert the space into a boutique guest house. An experienced architect with a passion for restoring old buildings, McIntosh decided to buy the property. It took him 10 years to officially move, together with his wife, two kids and parents, to commit to country living - once he was sure he had created a beautiful enough home for them as well as a four-star luxury guesthouse that is unique. (extract from article in Live Out Loud magazine)

Throwing caution to the wind, we booked the **Paris Suite** - the honeymoon suite.

Saturday, 10 April 2010

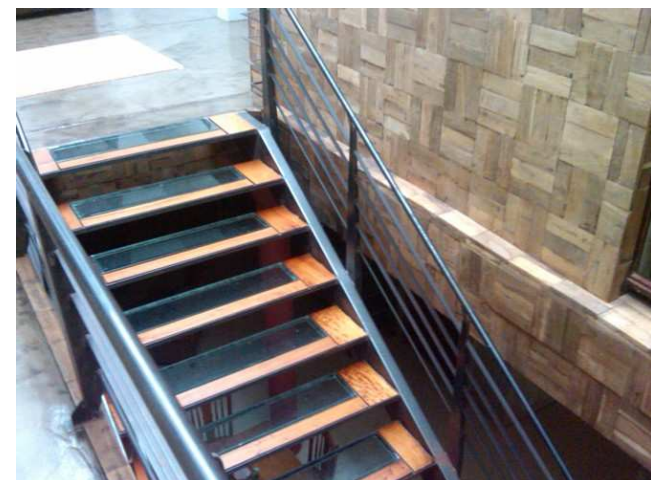


Leaving home on Saturday morning at 06:15 am, we drove past Midrand and Centurion to stop at the Petroport Panorama (left) for a Steers breakfast in the sky. Stacking my flapjack with bacon & egg, I drenched it with syrup and delicately stuffed my face.

Just before Mokopane (Potgietersrus) we drove through the tollgate, only to discover we've managed to 'exit' ourselves from the main road. No problem. We just drove through Mokopane town and joined the highway again.



On the other side of Mokopane, is a Caltex 'The Ranch' One-Stop. Pulling in for water and biltong sticks, I quickly nipped into the ladies. What a lovely sight! Maria, the attendant, (left) said she does the flowers every time. It was just so creatively done and it lifts one's spirits.



Still in the 4x4 mode of the Pajero, I forgot to ask Bramasole about the road's condition. Luckily it wasn't too bad for a dirt road, so our Golf merrily drove up to the lodge (above left) past a dam. 2 Guys were in small boats fishing.

Walking into the lodge, one's eyes wander up to the ceilings and all over in mute astonishment! (above right) The owner has cleverly used reclaimed parquet flooring from an old synagogue in Polokwane as wall cladding (left) and the steps to the conference are made of recycled bulletproof glass (left). The interior decoration is an eclectic mix of modern and old, giving it a lived-in, cosy and quirky feel. Sooooo up my alley!



Entering the Paris Suite, we saw this beautiful art deco (I think) lounge chair and couch. Squishy and oh so comfortable!! Although a TV was hidden in a lovely wooden cupboard, we focused on the fireplace with a stack of wood ready to be used.

The kitchen has these beautiful reclaimed parquet floor counter tops. Absolutely smashing!!! With the small red tiles, crystal chandelier and a '3 o'clock' timepiece, fridge/freezer, microwave, coffee machine (although we've taken our Uno machine with), oven, toaster and many more, the kitchen was surely fully equipped.



Walking into the bedroom, another art deco chair awaits a tired body. Ample cupboards, a gorgeous king-sized bed and open bathroom with spa bath promise a luxury stay. Beautiful mirrors, a trendy glass sink-bowl (?) and an accent wall in one of my favourite colours completed the inside tour.

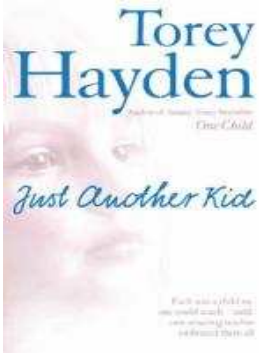
The covered patio is spacious with its built-in braai. On the one side you look over the dam, on the other side a forest with huge ferns, trees and small monkeys swinging around.



While Hein enjoyed a cold beer stretched out on the patio, I quickly unpacked and then we drove to Tzaneen (30 km from the lodge) for some groceries. We first stopped at the Spar, but found it a bit too crowded on a Saturday morning, so we looked for the Woolworths. Quickly buying the necessary bits, we thankfully fell back into the car. It was very hot and humid. Driving back, we sort of confused (got lost?) ourselves with Magoebaskloof and Modjadjikloof, formerly known as Duiwelskloof (Devil's Gorge). For some reason I thought that was Magoebaskloof's new name.

Funnily, when we got back to the lodge, the difference in temperature from Tzaneen was a lower 10 oC.

Stoking the fire with firewood (amply provided), we had lovely boerewors, buns and tomato relish for lunch.



Armed with a true story written by Torey Hayden, I jumped into bed. *Torey Hayden is a Special Education Teacher for kids, specializing in elective mutism. Kids who don't want to speak.*

In 'Just Another Kid' there are 6 emotionally damaged children. Torey Hayden was determined that every one of them should experience joy, hope and a future free of fear. With compassion, patience and, most of all, love, she knew that miracles could happen.

An absolutely riveting book, but after a few pages, the soft duvet begged us for a cuddle and so we had a lovely afternoon nap.

Waking up late afternoon, we lit the fireplace and armed with our books, we squished into the chair and couch and relaxed.

Preparing the outside braai for dinner, I was surprised to see 2 halves of a deboned chicken in its package. Although I did read the Woolworths label, I just assumed it would be deboned chicken breasts. With some lovely herbs, it made for a delightful meal. I've never seen it before, so will definitely look out for it. Hein had a steak. Side dishes were a half packet of potatoes with bacon and crisp steamed veggies.

It was lovely to gaze over the dam, while the meat was sizzling on the red-hot coals. Although I had my pashmina wrapped around me, it wasn't very cold and we had dinner on the patio.



With the spa bath quite close to the bed, we were warned to fill the bath above the jets and also not to stand up while the jets were on. Previous incidents involved a very wet bed.

Luxuriating in the bath was absolute bliss. The jet streams massaged the stress from our backs.

Sunday, 11 April 2010



With breakfast ordered for 7 am, we woke up at 6. To a total different season! Rain was falling in a pit-pat pattern and mist was shrouding the valley. While I made some strong coffee, Hein started a fire in the lounge and soon we were cosy as bugs.

Breakfast was served in the lounge on a dining table. Muesli with yoghurt and juice were followed with a full English breakfast. Eggs to our preference, divine mushrooms and onions, sausages, fried tomatoes and bacon. Also white and brown toast and crispy pastries. 2 Chocolate chip pastry wheels and 2 mini croissant-look-alikes with fruit/jam inside. Delish!!!!!!

Lounging on the couch with a book while the cleaning lady bustled around, these 2 dachshunds bounded in to say hallo. The girl dachshund jumped on the couch, then on me and twisted and turned her little body in pure excitement. Being more of a cat-lover, I just shrieked and they were shoed out of the room.

Hein was reading '*The Black Swan: The impact of the highly improbable. Author: Nassim Nicholas Taleb.*' We both found our books fascinating and would read aloud interesting bits. With numerous cups of coffee, the rain on the windows and the fire warming up the room, we had a blissfully relaxing time.

Lunch was boerewors and lamb rib chops on the braai - with buns and tomato relish.



When the rain stopped for a bit, Hein went for a long walk and took some photos. Everything smelled so fresh and green after the rain.

With my one Torey Hayden book finished, I grabbed another one and was soon immersed in the story. But a full tummy

and fresh air made our eyes heavy, so we dived under the duvet for a cosy nap.

Hein and I explored the conference room area (but our photos came out too grainy) and then we made some coffee and lit the fire in the lounge again. Lazing around till dinnertime, we had lovely chicken and steak (yes, on the braai again). With the rest of the potatoes & bacon and veggies, we also had some fresh watermelon.

Abandoning our books, we turned on the TV and watched the 8 o' clock movie, *The Proposal*, featuring Sandra Bullock. An old theme - of her being a ruthless boss to her male assistant, only to discover she's about to be deported back to Canada. As a stroke of genius, she proposed marriage to her assistant, but when she met his family, she couldn't go through with the wedding. Smoochy, but a light-hearted movie.

Monday, 12 April 2010

When we woke up before 6, it wasn't raining anymore. After coffee, we showered and packed, had another lovely breakfast in the suite and drove back home.

It was a blissfully relaxing weekend, sweetened by the amazingly low diesel consumption of our new car.