



A little bit of History:

Montagu Country Hotel is located on the northwest corner of Bath and Kohler (formerly Smith) Streets. Concrete evidence and dates are difficult to obtain since there was not much evidence recorded in the Montagu Museum's archives.

According to legend, Christiaan Schlacht, of German descent, was the first owner. The building was erected in 1875 and the Architecture was similar to

12 Piet Retief Street, currently called Carrington Villa. This forms part of the current hotel facilities. It was built with Victorian accents of the time. This Victorian hotel was erected where the current Bath Street garden wall is situated. The verandah separated the building from the street. It was the favorite resting place for visitors to the hot springs. The fountain site had been too marshy for building upon until piling etc. was developed for sustainable structures there.

In 1880 the hotel was the centre of a political incident. The president of the Transvaal, Paul Kruger, visited Montagu accompanied by a large entourage, including General Piet Joubert and SJ du Toit. The residents of Montagu looked forward to this auspicious occasion with great anticipation. At the last minute, the owner, who did not agree with Kruger's policies, decided not to proceed with the planned grand and opulent function. The local community was not put off by this unexpected last-minute change of plans. The local ladies prepared a sumptuous feast served in Joubert House, 25 Long Street. The dinner service used during this visit, can be seen in the dining room of Joubert House, forming part of the Montagu Museum complex.

Mr. Goldberg then bought the hotel from Schlacht. He was a popular landlord and truly kind to the community, especially sponsoring sports events. He granted the local "Farmers Football Team" a big silver cup as a trophy. The hotel was later managed by a Ms. Fernandes. She was married to the former owner of the hotel at the "Springs". It is said that the blonde lady loved long sleek cars! However, she divorced her husband and subsequently bought the Montagu Hotel.



Mr. A Idelson then bought the hotel from her. It appears that the current Art Deco hotel was erected, right behind the Victorian original, around 1932. On completion, the original structure was demolished. There are cashed cheques of NEW HOTEL MONTAGU dated 23 and 26 July, 1941 issued by Standard Bank, displayed in the hotel foyer.

The name: Russel's New Montagu Hotel, appears frequently in documents and it is believed that a Mr. Russell owned the Hotel after Idelson.

It was consequently owned by the Conradie family and then Mr. Piet Nel. The next and previous owner was Carol Gunter, who spent vast amounts of money on the hotel. Locals can still remember how two giant palm trees were brought in and transplanted in the garden. One's upper crown sadly broke off during this process and the upper section was planted. This tree however did not grow. The one presently towering high above the present hotel is a tribute to her diligence. She however changed some of the features on the front elevation and effected structural changes, harming the appearance of this Art Deco hotel. These changes did irreparable damage to the stylish front elevation. One example is that the main upper balcony between the two outer front gables was enclosed to increase room sizes at the expense of space taken off on the passage side to create en-suite bathrooms.

Mr. Gert Lubbe, creator of d'Ouwe Werf Boutique Hotel in Stellenbosch, acquired the Montagu Country Hotel on the 1 October 1996 during a liquidation sale. True to the spirit of conservation, but at the same time being functional in a business environment, he, over the past 24 years, contributed substantially to create a rare experience for his guests. He made positive contributions towards the community in many ways and was also the founder of Route 62. Gert sadly passed away from a devastating stroke in November 2019 and the Hotel was bought by PJ and Colene Basson in June 2020. PJ has been the General Manager and Gert's right-hand man since 1999.

The beginning of Route 62

Gert arrived at the brilliant idea to create the marketing concept Route 62



(R60 and R62 combined), similar to Route 66 in the USA, but with the distinct difference that Route 66 was never fully operational from coast to coast. The R60 and R62 served as the main highway from Cape Town, through [Oudtshoorn](#), the [Garden Route](#), to [Port Elizabeth](#) to Port Elizabeth. The N2 National road was constructed much later. The fruit of his enthusiasm was the creation of the extraordinarily successful Route 62 awarding Montagu and the Klein Karoo a prominent spot on world maps.

Also known as a Wine Route, Route 62 leads through the wine-growing areas of [Wellington](#), [Tulbagh](#), [Worcester](#), [Robertson](#) and the [Klein Karoo](#) and is thus the longest wine route in the world.

Route 62 spans 850 km from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, and is the obvious alternative to the N2 highway.

The Art Deco Theme

The Montagu Country Hotel is the only authentic Art Deco Hotel in South Africa. The combination of Art Deco door handles as well as door designs with colonial gables are a good example of every kind of decorative design. These are evident at the entrance and throughout the hotel. All the dressing tables in the main building are Art Deco-style pieces of beauty. The lounge suites are re-upholstered original pieces, and are scattered over the property, with a special collection to be seen in Lubbe Lounge.

Art deco designers prime concern was with taste and style rather than with practicality and performance. Fashion designers exploited woman's weaknesses for new clothes by changing styles and colours as often as possible. Certain things stand out as distinguishing marks of the Art Deco period, such as cloche hats, bandeaux worn immediately above the eyebrows and short cropped hair. Certain colours too evoke the "twenties and thirties" as "tango" – a burnt orange shade – silver and black. Great care was taken over the packaging of cosmetics, particularly perfume and the best glass designers like Baccarat and Lalique were employed to design scent bottles. Entertaining changed too from formal dinner parties to cocktail parties



and a whole new society cult was born and of course the clothes, accessories, and furniture to go with it. You will enjoy all this in our beautiful Feathers and Flatcaps Cocktail Bar.

The healing waters of Montagu

The discovery of these thermal springs dates back to the early history of the Colony, when the first trekkers spread out to locate the easiest gradients for their lumbering wagons over the mountains to the first plateau beyond. Naturally, they sought the river routes, and naturally, too, the most accessible of these passes found favour. Cogman's Kloof, as it is now known, is about the easiest of them all in the West, until midway in the pass a most formidable barrier is encountered, in the shape of a tall rock that juts out from the regular formation on the right bank. This rock, which has been tunnelled through, has been found of the utmost strategic value of late years, the blockhouse still remaining on top to overlook the road through the pass, as it does up and down, for 1000 yards. The quart size formation imparts to the descending river a sharp double twist, and in flood times dams back the stream by the severe curtailment of the outlet, producing a "boiling pot" below almost as awe-inspiring as that in the Zambezi under the Falls. A mile or so above this barrier the gorge opens out on the plain on which Montagu now stands.

It stands among local tradition that one of the earliest trekkers injured his hand whilst extricating his wagon that had become jammed in between rocks. He noticed the water close by was warm, he followed it up to its source, not far off, and where the fountain bubbled out of the rock he inserted his hand, he quickly withdrew it again - it was hot! He carried the news back to the moveable camp, which was consequently shifted on the site of Mr. Burger's farm. Dipping his wounded hand again and again, the trekker rejoiced in having his wound quickly healed, and the fame of the fountain was established. It was found that there was not one, but as many as 20 springs in the Montagu area, some as hot as 42° and some cooler. The water often rises to the surface in a stream that contains large bubbles, saturated with gases an indication that it contains abundant minerals. The Montagu water is clear, very soft and sweet



smelling, unlike many other famous sulphur waters. This water contains a variety of beneficial minerals, including iron, calcium, and sodium bicarbonate.

Our Spa and Wellness Centre has a direct water source to the this healing water, and you may enjoy a private jacuzzi bath at your leisure, please book at

Reception.

What to do in and around Montagu

Alpaca Farm Tours

Art Tours

Bicycle Hire

Cadillac Trips in our gorgeous Blue or Red Cadillac

- Town Tour
- Wine Tour

Country Market – Saturday Mornings

Farm Stalls

Golf

Historic self-guided town walks

Horse Riding

Hot Springs

Medicinal Plant gardens

Montagu Nature Reserve

Mountain Biking

Protea Farm Tractor Rides

River Boat Cruises including gourmet picnic

Rock climbing

Wine and Gin tastings and Tours

Please contact our Information Centre situated in the Hotel for all the relevant tours.