



Pictures: MARIANNE SCHWANKHART

**W**INE tasting is on the agenda for most visitors to the Golden Triangle of the Cape winelands, and someone always has to be the designated driver. Carolina took care of me after an extensive tasting session at the Backsberg Estate. Only 8 years old, she got me home safely.

Cape Winelands Riding is set at the foot of the Simonsberg, close to many acclaimed farms including Vrede on Lust and Niel Joubert. I joined three other travellers (from Zambia, England and the Netherlands), to explore on horseback during harvest season.

Riding along the farm roads, we could smell the ripe grapes, plums and figs, occasionally leaning out to

## TIPSY RIDER

**Marianne Schwankhart** finds horseback riding and wine tasting make a great combination

grab a piece of fruit. Even our horses stopped to snack on the shiraz grapes, ready for picking.

We did a solid four-hour ride before lunch at Backsberg, where Danwin James presented us with more wine than was necessary. But he did warn us that once you start

drinking, everything else just becomes a great story.

The afternoon ride was a bit shorter and luckily the horses knew their way home, where we washed them down for the night. While my head was still buzzing from the wine, I checked into a luxurious room at Angala Boutique Hotel, tucked away on a hill where there's no traffic noise. I soaked my tender bum in a hot bath overlooking a rock garden, long enough to rejuvenate for more riding the following morning.

Louis Geyer, a former schoolteacher, moved his 17 horses from Underberg to Franschhoek five years ago to establish horseback outrides through the winelands. The abundance of farms

between Paarl, Franschhoek and Stellenbosch allows for tailor-made journeys with options of accommodation, lunches and wine tastings to fit your budget. He makes a great host and you feel looked after while he guides you through the vineyards or takes you to dinner. That night, we dined at Pappa Grappa.

The second morning I glared with envy at the other riders, who travelled with sheepskin saddle covers, and noted that in my book of travelling tricks. We meandered through more vineyards and had a fantastic canter along an airstrip on Donkerhoek Farm, then stopped for a lunch and tasting at Plaisir De Merle, known for its red wines.

Our small group of riders was



experienced and we could canter much of the road home, passing a dam where rider and horse could go for a swim on a hot day.

What I loved most was the sense of freedom I thought the horses had — not just because sweet, ripe fruit surrounded them but also because we rode with halters only, so they could chew on the juicy nectar without a steel bit spoiling their appetite. — *Schwankhart was a guest of Cape Winelands Riding*

