



## Cape Winelands Cultural Landscape

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### Statement of Significance

Wine-growing was introduced to the Cape in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century under Dutch rule and was intensified and expanded upon during the period of chattel slavery and at present it is still being developed further. Today South Africa is one of the foremost wine producing countries in the world with a wine industry set in a unique and idyllic cultural landscape. Accordingly, it is categorised as an 'organically evolved landscape' with over 350 years of agricultural interaction between humankind and the environment. This winelands is probably the youngest contemporary winelands in the world to receive a world heritage tentative listing. It is further sub-categorised as a 'continuing landscape' since it retains an active social role in the South African society that is closely associated with the traditional way of life.

To the naked eye it appears as an open air museum. Exhibiting magnificent cultural treasures ranging from fine historic monuments, small towns and villages with a rich cape vernacular architectural tradition, to routes of high scenic value with low hills and valleys. All of which serves as material evidence of the cultural landscapes' evolution over time. The winelands high visual quality preserves many traces of more than 350 years of South African history.

Underlying this seemingly tranquil landscape is a tumultuous past of the first indigenous people, echoes of slavery, colonial settlement and our most recent period of Apartheid followed by the struggle and our eventual freedom. Some of these intangibilities are portrayed through monuments erected by different communities throughout the existence of this landscape. Like most African stories this one is riddled with tales of suffering, oppression, injustices and atrocities committed during the slave period and even before. Despite this unsavoury past the positive spin-off of this African winelands is a physical manifestation which reflects the achievements of both slaves and their masters.

In essence the Cape Winelands is *'an outstanding example of a vineyard cultural landscape enriched by cultural influences accumulated from four continents (Africa, Asia and the East Indies, Europe and North America), natural elements ideally suited for viticulture and situated in a dramatic environment where a unique vernacular architecture developed. With its vineyards, orchards, farmsteads, cellars, villages and towns, and the oldest city in South Africa nestling on the slopes of the Cape's mountains or on the plains along water courses, the Cape Winelands illustrate the impact of human settlement and agricultural activities and more specifically the production of the Cape wines over a period of more than 350 years on the natural landscape.'*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hanneljie du Preez, Department of Arts and Culture, World Heritage Nomination Document, October 2002