

## Wine Tasting – 29 May 2021 – Franschhoek, South Africa

Yesterday was a rest day. We were both worn out after our incredible breakfast provided by Ashbourne Boutique Guest House – eating dish after dish takes a lot of work. As a matter of fact, other than read and nap the only other thing we did all day was eat two more meals.

Today we are smarter. No, we didn't eat less at breakfast but we did take a wine walking tour.



This couple apparently had the same idea and left a few minutes before we did.

Tim, the owner of our hotel, took the time to map out what he thought was a walk we would enjoy and marked what he thought were the best wineries to stop and explore.

The hotel's entire staff was incredible and I am guessing because they took their cues from Tim. Tim provided information on about ten local restaurants, made dinner reservations for us, provided driving directions, a history of Franschhoek and the background on how his family and he had moved from Germany to South Africa six years earlier.



Looking back at Franschhoek.

It was a four-block walk from the hotel to the main two-lane highway. Running parallel to the highway but about 20 feet nearer the open fields was a six foot or more wide sidewalks. Even with the Covid keeping people home, the sidewalk had a number of walkers like ourselves.





It's very late May but that is wintertime in the Southern Hemisphere. When we returned in August to Franschhoek these vines were green.

We walked for about 10 to 15 minutes on the sidewalk before crossing the highway and taking a farm road perpendicular to the highway. Almost no traffic except for the free wine tour bus which passed us every 30 minutes.



Foreground are grape vines and at the base of the mountains is Franschhoek.

The road we were on makes a sharp right at the entrance to Leeu Estates. We returned to Leeu Estates to have one of the most incredible meals in my life at La Petite Colombe. The meal is a 12-course tasting beginning in the bar with a cocktail and I think it was three different appetizers. From the bar we were shown our table and began with one fantastic dish after another. This was our South African splurge and I don't know how we could have splurge better.





We had been walking for about an hour. I was ready for this sign. Only another five- or seven-minute walk and we were on the wine tasting patio. It was chilly so we opted for a table inside.



I thought it was a clever sign.

Yes, the Mont Rochelle wine estate is owned by Richard Branson. What I found interesting is Branson is at best the second richest wine estate owner in Franschhoek. First is the owner of Leeu Estates and half owner of La Petite Colombe restaurant, three other wine estates, a hotel, at least one other restaurant and other properties in Franschhoek plus other world-wide holdings: Analjit Singh or at least that is what we were told.



Being a sophisticated wine connoisseur, I asked for the cheapest reds and we were brought three glasses each with a different red wine.



We weren't through our first glass before we decided food was going to also be a necessity.



One of the various cheese & bread and appetizer plates available.

We spent an hour or more enjoying life. It was then time to make the walk back to our hotel.





The secondary street that led back to the main and only main street in Franschhoek.



Note: her mask is above her nose. Although mask weren't required outside about half or more of the people in the towns and cities wore masks outside. On one of our walks, I did stop to look in the Sotheby's window and dream of buying a local home.





We made a stop for the view.

The next two photographs were taken on our way out of town on 31 May 2021.



Looking down on Franschhoek.





It would have been very easy to spend many more days at the Ashbourne Boutique Guest House. Palm trees and snow on the very close mountains. Reminds me of Tucson.

We returned to Ashbourne after we dropped off the rental car and picked up the 4Runner. A third stay was our last three nights in South Africa before catching our flight home. As you can guess, we highly recommend Ashbourne Boutique Guest House.

If I could buy a second home anywhere in the world Franschhoek is definitely in my top five locations. It is in a drop-dead beautiful valley, the valley is planted in grapes, the grapes are made into some of the best wine in the world and then sold at cafes and restaurants serving the best dollar for meal value I have had the pleasure of eating. But it is one hell of a commute from Marshall, TX to Franschhoek, South Africa.