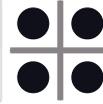


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Contrary to its name, the town of Dullstroom in Mpumalanga is everything but dull. Like Greyton and Stanford in the Overberg and Clarens and Parys in the Free State, Dullstroom is a favourite breakaway destination, and it has many attractions on offer.

This small town is primarily known for fly fishing – not only in streams and rivers, but often in well-stocked trout dams. The town's whiskey bar, Wild about Whiskey, has the second-largest whiskey menu in the world and the largest whiskey menu in the southern hemisphere. They have 45 set tastings on offer and, apart from whiskey, you can taste gin,

brandy, cognac, rum and tequila. Then there's the Clock Shop which, with its own factory, boasts the largest selection of clocks in one shop in the southern hemisphere. Not only does it manufacture clocks, but it also imports them. There's everything from cuckoo clocks and grandfather clocks to antique clocks. You can also visit Dullstroom Bird of Prey and Rehabilitation Centre, the Anvil Ale Brewery, more than a handful of restaurants and pubs, and go on hikes and horse trails.

History behind the name

A question that visitors often ask

is: "Where did Dullstroom get its name?" In the 1880s Paul Kruger undertook to encourage and finance Dutch emigration to South Africa. As a result, Dullstroom was established by Wolterus Dull, a Dutch merchant. The latter part of the town's name actually refers to the Crocodile River that has its origin there. Interestingly, Dullstroom is the only place in South Africa where beech and elm trees grow. They were originally planted by the Dutch colonists.

Dullstroom has gained a reputation as one of the best fly fishing destinations in the country. The postmaster of Lydenburg (a town about 53 km from Dullstroom) was responsible for introducing trout to the district. He brought fingerlings to Dullstroom in the early 1900s.

One of the best places to try your hand at fly fishing is at Walkersons Hotel and Spa, a luxury lodge reminiscent of a Scottish country manor. This establishment is situated a few kilometres



outside the town. Apart from fly fishing for rainbow trout in one or more of the 14 lakes and dams on the property, there are paved paths for lazy strolls or for more strenuous walks or jogs.

The place of eternal mist

Dullstroom is one of the coldest villages in South Africa and it is often covered in a blanket of mist. This makes for atmospheric walking and whimsical photos. It's no wonder that Dutch settlers called Dullstroom 'the place of eternal mist'.

I chose to forego fly fishing as one needs coordination for that, which I lack, and I was also too lazy to go for any kind of walk (at least I had the misty weather as an excuse). Instead, I savoured a glass of sherry – followed by another – in front of a cosy fire in my room at Walkersons. Given the weather, many establishments have fireplaces in their rooms or public areas.

One of my travel partners opted to learn how to fly fish though, as an ardent animal lover, she was terrified that she might actually catch something. A passionate and patient fly fishing guide soon got her going, yet managed (we'll never know whether intentionally or not) to ensure that she didn't hook anything at all. She was much relieved.

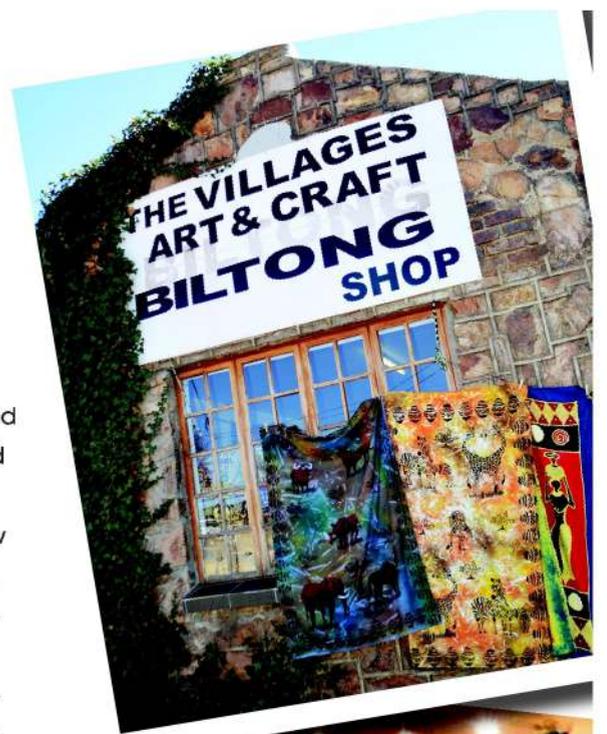
Mouth-watering options

The culinary options at Dullstroom are mouth-watering. Staying at Walkersons Hotel and Spa means that you can head to Peggy's Bar to boast about the one that got away, or show pictures of the one that didn't. When you tire of the conversation in Peggy's Bar – or you've done your share of bragging – you can make your way to the Flying Scotsman restaurant. Four-course food and wine pairings are de rigueur here.

Back in the hamlet of Dullstroom you can relive your childhood with a chocolate nut sundae at Udderlicious Milkshake Bar, or tuck into trout dishes or a pie at The Historical Rose Cottage. There's mince jaffle at The Farm Stall or you can buy some trout to take home at Milly's Country Trout Stall and a bag of oranges or avos from a street seller at a corner of the Main Road.

You can also browse for books, including Africana and collectibles, and cigars and pipes at The Smoky Owl. On your wanderings you will encounter a bead shop, rock shop, knife shop, the Village Angler, known as the 'friendly fly fishing specialists', and Topsy Trout, the liquor store.

Once you've experienced Dullstroom, it's hard not to return to it. ○



If you go:

For accommodation including weekend stays and fly fishing go to www.walkersons.co.za

For whiskey tasting go to <http://wildaboutwhisky.com/>

Interested in birds? Go to www.birdsofprey.co.za

Feel like a beer? Go to www.anvilbrewery.com