

ADVENTURER EXTRAORDINAIRE

THE LEXUS RC 200T

The masterful new Lexus RC 200t is a car that is designed to be driven. It's a vehicle that epitomises a marriage between balance and overall driveability. It's also the ultimate grand tourer, meaning that it is perfect for the adventurer who wants to go places – literally. Whether you're in Johannesburg or Cape Town Charleen Clarke has sublime destinations for both you and your Lexus!



LEXUS



Going Places From Jozi

PARYS

Located about 100 km from Johannesburg (take the N1 to the Free State, take exit 498 and then follow the R59 to this delightful town), Parys is the perfect day trip for you and the Lexus RC 200t. There are sometimes potholes on the R59 but the RC 200t handles like a dream; you can easily dance your way around them. Lovers of history and architecture can check out the historical buildings such as the Anglican Church (built in 1915 out of blue granite blocks), the beautiful Dutch Reformed Church dating back to 1899, and the Parys Museum, built in 1904. In a similar vein, Parys is littered with antique shops – you can shop until you drop (your Lexus won't).

Food lovers are in for a treat too; the best place to eat is Pont de Val, which is just outside town. The food is excellent and the service is very professional. Book a comfy private booth, which seats two and is positioned away from the main restaurant and deck, right on the river's edge with an unrestricted view of the river; it's almost as comfortable and stylish as the interior of the Lexus RC 200t.

While in Parys, visit The Dog and Fig Brewery (the Lexus is decidedly frugal when it comes to fuel consumption but you may be a little thirstier). The food service can be slow and the menu is unimaginative, but they offer a free tour of the brewery and terrific craft beer. The owners are producing unique beers, which, like wine, can be savoured rather than quaffed. They are something special for those with exclusive tastes – just like the Lexus RC 200t.

CRADLE OF HUMANKIND

The Cradle of Humankind is about 50 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg – so it's just a hop and a skip in your Lexus RC 200t. Most people go there to visit Maropeng, which is great. But, while you there, you simply must pop into the Forum Homini Boutique Hotel. We know that you won't want to leave your Lexus for even a couple of hours (it's just such great fun to drive). But we urge you to park it there overnight and enjoy this wonderful boutique hotel.

It's situated in the 600 ha Letamo Game Estate on the R540 (Kromdraai Road) and comprises ten luxury rooms and two deluxe suites with only the honeymoon suite and Presidential suites visible (the rest are hidden below the ground and are covered by African veldt). In fact, these rooms were designed as chic caves that evoke the cave living of our less upright ancestors – although the five-star embellishments are anything but primitive (think the ultimate in luxury). To mark man's evolutionary journey and spark conversation between patrons about it, the owners have commissioned a large collection of custom-created art and sculpture around the central theme of evolution and human history. Have a look at those out before heading to roots restaurant, the first restaurant in South Africa to only offer a degustation menu. The white linen tables are dressed with Schott Zwiesel glasses and Fortis crockery and cutlery,

making roots the perfect fine dining setting for special occasions. All meals feature carefully selected wine pairings by the sommelier, who selects wines from the large roots cellar. Finally, go to sleep in your "cave", while dreaming of yet another spectacular experience – driving home the next day in the Lexus RC 200t.

PILANESBERG GAME RESERVE

Go wild at the Pilanesberg Game Reserve, which is just 185 km from Johannesburg, and it's a whole different world. Thanks to the immense power of the Lexus RC 200t, you'll be there in well under three hours. You'll love the drive out there; you can marvel in all the car's many fabulous features – especially the cabin, which is optimised for comfort, luxury and convenience. The interior layout delivers excellent ergonomics, ensuring that every journey is a relaxed affair. Once in the park, you can drive for another 200 km. We know that you will put the electrostatic climate control switchgear (these allow adjustments to be made to the temperature by simply sliding your finger along the elegant metal strip) to the test, since it can get quite toasty in the park (but never in the Lexus RC 200t). Naturally, lodges abound within the Pilanesberg, and you can easily choose one that is almost as luxurious as the RC 200t; but we think you may be tempted to hit the road again later, and blast on back to Jozi.

MAGOEBAKLOOF

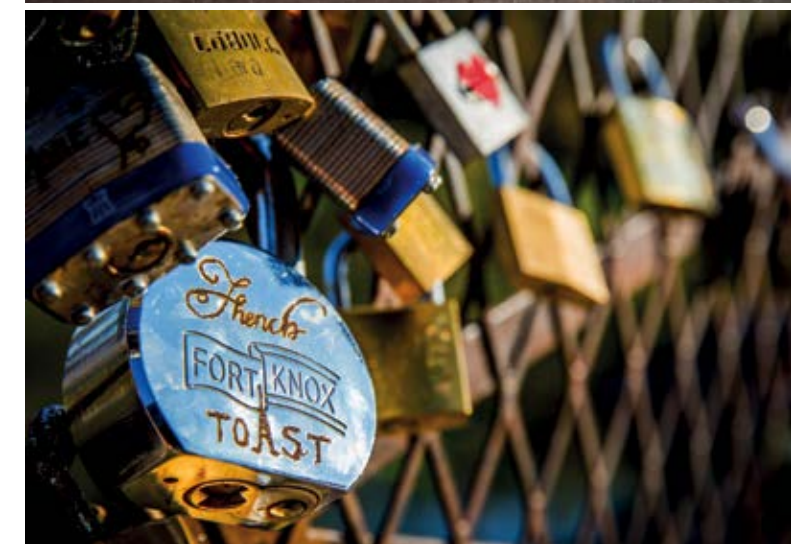
It's about a four-hour drive to Magoebaskloof; you will love every single kilometre thanks to the exemplary occupant comfort of the Lexus RC 200t. Take, for instance, the plush power seats trimmed in luxurious leather; they offer eight-way adjustability for the driver and six-way adjustment for the front passenger. So you can always travel in comfort. Completing the package is seat heating and ventilation for driver and passenger. On arriving in Magoebaskloof, enjoy the lush forested area. Known as "The Land of the Silver Mist", this area has been an inspiration to many well-known authors. The village of Haenertsburg is the so-called "capital" of the area, and it offers a host of activities which include, hiking trails, a variety of accommodation venues, restaurants, nurseries, and of course for the adrenaline junkies, some challenging adventure sport and mountain biking trails.

HARTBESPOORT

While Haarties is a delightful destination, so too is the drive there, it meanders through koppies and aloes (that bloom during the winter months). The RC 200t delivers excellent driving dynamics and enhanced agility, so typical of a GT – and this will be best enjoyed on this winding road. You will notice that there is hardly any body roll whatsoever, and that the grip is just exemplary.

On arrival in Haarties, head straight for French Toast Coffee Café. It's as French as the Eiffel Tower. Speaking of which, it even boasts its very own Tour de Eiffel and a love lock bridge! (Maybe you want to prepare one for you and your Lexus?)

Photos: © Charleen Clarke





Wonderful Drives in the Western Cape

PATERNOSTER

One of the most picture perfect villages in South Africa, Paternoster is about 155 km from Cape Town – meaning an easy 1.5-hour drive in the Lexus RC 200t. You can blast up the R27, a very good road that will allow you to fully appreciate the car's 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbocharged engine.

The only hazard en route could be the occasional tortoise (luckily the Lexus has a four-sensor Anti-Lock Braking System with Brake Assist and Electronic Brake Force Distribution) or Mr Plod, eagerly hoping to catch you travelling at 230 km, which is the car's pegged top speed.

Once in Paternoster, park your Lexus RC 200t and try one of the village's many excellent restaurants. If a good setting appeals, you cannot do better than Gaaitjie; it's literally right on the beach (and it's much better than the Voorstrandt, another beachfront establishment). If you're a real foodie, then the place to be is the Noisy Oyster; every single dish is an absolute treat that will have you planning your next trip back to Paternoster.

LA COLOMBE

Just like the Lexus RC 200t, La Colombe is something really special; and while the car has earned the admiration of buyers the world over, La Colombe has been ranked 76th Best Restaurant in the World by The World's 50 Best Restaurants (La Colombe is the only local restaurant on the list).

It is thus fitting that you would take your Lexus (undoubtedly one of the country's best cars) to visit this fine establishment. It's located on the beautiful Silvermist Wine Estate at the top of Constantia Nek (the entrance is approximately 300m from the Constantia Nek Traffic Circle in the direction of Hout Bay).

Assuming you're staying at the V&A, it will take about 30 minutes to get there in your Lexus. The vineyard road from the Silvermist entrance gate up to La Colombe is scenic and a little steep, but the destination is worth the climb.

The food is indisputably gourmet, with a South African touch here and there. The service is impeccable and nicely judged, so that you feel attended to without being cramped. The setting is pretty; in the daytime you can see over vines and a herb garden with mountain

slopes in the background; at night the cosy fire and subtle lighting make for a special treat. It is that special-occasion restaurant. Just like the new Lexus is a special-occasion car.

FAIRVIEW

You could also take the Lexus RC 200t to Fairview, a winery outside Paarl, where owner Charles Back has turned the property into a fabulous destination, producing goats' cheeses and a huge range of excellent wines (Back brought the first goats to Fairview in 1980, with the aim of producing South Africa's first goat's milk cheeses).

Very good food is on offer at the Goatshed restaurant. Your children will love the most recognisable members of the Fairview team: the goats who have their very own tower, built in 1981.

There are lots of delicious goodies on offer at the shop – and the Lexus RC 200t has a cavernous boot that's just itching to be filled to the brim!

GO COASTAL

The Lexus RC 200t is one of the finest driver's cars on the planet – this will be confirmed when you tackle the sensational coastal drive from Gordon's Bay to Rooi Els, and then on to Pringle Bay (stopping off at the wonderful Ticklemouse Country Fare, a bakery par excellence).

Then travel on to Betty's Bay, pop into the Stony Point Nature Reserve (home to one of the largest successful breeding colonies of African Penguin in the world) and head back to Cape Town via Sir Lowry's Pass. The Lexus will love the drive, and so will you.

DARLING

Visit the town made famous by the wonderful Pieter Dirk-Uys. When he's all dressed up as Evita, he cuts a dashing figure. So too does the RC coupé, with its curvaceous lines and dramatic detail. So expect to be the centre of attention when you pull into this village!

Once there, ensure that you catch a show at Evita se Perron, which is housed in the former Darling station.

It's also possible to order a meal at the theatre, but beware, it's boerekos and certainly not haute cuisine. Still, the smiles will make up for it; and, of course, your smile will only broaden after the show, when you head outside to your RC 200t, open the door (there will be no scrabbling for keys; the Smart Entry system allows convenient access to lock and unlock the vehicle), settle into the luxurious interior and blast off back to Cape Town. ■ Charleen Clarke

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