Green Route ZA goes back to its roots

Green Route ZA is going back to its roots in 2024 and asking eco-conscious South Africans to share their **green route in South Africa**. *
We're all on a green journey. Some of us install solar. Some buy an electric vehicle. Some choose a plant-based diet. And the eco spaces that we explore and support are part of our collective **green route**. Please share yours in the questions below and I will share it on **Green Route ZA's** Substack newsletter and social media. ** *Subscribe for free on Substack*

Questions, questions

Who are you – name, age, where are you from, brief career history and description of what you're doing now and why?

Share your **five favourite** local green spaces and places. They could be a park, a café, a beach, or a business. Please give a brief description of the place and why it's one of your favourites. (If you could supply the digital links for places that you mention that would be a great help to me, thank you.)

Please supply images if you can, of the five green places and your products/you with your products? I will send you a test mail before publishing.

* Below you'll see how I started **Green Route ZA** – with this feature I wrote for the *Sunday Times* Lifestyle magazine in 2017 – time to celebrate!

Sunday Times Magazine F/C 12-13 - 22/03/2017 05:13:16 PM - Plate:

Photo: ANTHONY MOSES

HOW WE SHOULD LIVE

Earth Weekend — whether or not you turned your lights off yesterday – is a good time to turn to green spaces. **Melanie Farrell** followed seven earth-loving activists to their favourite ecosystems

JOY PHALA'S (ORGANIC) GREEN ROUTE

JOY Phala is an urban gardener and founder of Organic Kitchen Gardens, a company that designs, installs and maintains herb and vegetable gardens in urban spaces. She is passionate about healthy eating and sustainable food production.

"One of my favourite health stores is Fresh Earth Food in Emmarentia. It provides a range of organic healthy foods and earth-friendly products. There's a beautiful vegetarian buffet daily in the restaurant and the ginger-apple freshly pressed juice is a necessity when I visit.

"When it comes to environmental stewardship, nature conservation plays a key role. My family and I love to walk the grounds of Walter Sisulu and Johannesburg Botanical Gardens.

"The rose garden at Johannesburg Botanical Gardens is sensational and Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens is my spot for plant material eye-candy. It has a vast range of indigenous and exotic plants and its spectacular waterfalls feed to the Crocodile River.

"If there was ever a way to my heart, garden-to-table is definitely one of them. The Lady Greens café in Muldersdrift is a lovely spot to escape the city buzz and enjoy some delicious garden-fresh cuisine.

"The Porch Hotel in Melrose is a good example of chic sustainability: A beautifully designed space, the hotel has an onsite composting system, a vegetable and herb garden for use in their kitchen, solar energy throughout the property and water bottling on site."

JEREMY LOOPS'S (SEA) GREEN ROUTE

JEREMY Loops is an award-winning folk musician, social activist and environmentalist from Cape Town. He is also co-founder of tree-planting organisation Greenpop.

"My green route starts at Sealand Gear for supplies. It makes beautiful upcycled bags and accessories from used or waste material and the founders are old surfer friends.

"From there, I'd go to my favourite secret surf spot. You'd have a hard time making a stronger case for the power and majesty of nature than the ocean. If you've ever surfed perfect Deep South barrels, you'll know you've never felt more alive than when surfing.

"My next green spot is Cape Nature's Platbos forest. This ancient indigenous forest is Africa's southernmost, and it has a remarkable yet incredibly fragile ecosystem. I love it so much that our tree-planting organisation, Greenpop, takes groups of volunteers there every year to plant 8 000 trees.

"Next, I'd head further up the coast to Vermaklikheid. There you'll find the Duiwenhoks estuary, one of South Africa's most pristine rivers. It's embedded deep in the Garden Route National Park and it goes mostly untouched by people. Those who do come into contact with it are incredible respectful of the space. I'm building a sustainable musical retreat there on a piece of land I bought last year along the banks. It's a little slice of paradise.

"I'd end it all off in the backyard at our family home. My parents have spent a lot of time developing it into this welcoming, green, open space.

"My personal highlights are our generous granadilla trees, our rainwater system which feeds a greenroom full of garden salads and runner beans, the chilli plantation and the artichokes. Self-farmed food for the win!"

Photo: ANTHONY MOSES

DELWYN PILLAY'S (GREENPEACE) GREEN ROUTE

DELWYN Pillay is a Seed Freedom activist and volunteer for Greenpeace Africa in Durban. "My green route starts at ID: Green Camp Gallery Project in Umbilo Road, a pioneering green urban renewal project in a dilapidated old house. Xolani Hlongwa, founder of the camp, transformed the abandoned house into an art gallery, urban farming and recycling community-based project.

"Next is the Gatewood Bakery in Esther Roberts Road, a few blocks from Green Camp. It's a throwback to an era of community-based bakeries, before industrially manufactured food became the norm. All its bread is hand-formed, slow-fermented and baked in a wood oven.

"Another taste bud delight is Thirteen-East Coast Eatery in Florida Road. It serves Italian-influenced food using local, non-GMO and foraged ingredients, such as the sour fig.

"The Permaculture Guerilla Garden in Julia Road has edible plants available to visitors for free harvest.

"My last stop is my Mandala Food Garden at Moseley Park. The idea behind the garden is to provide a beautiful and tranquil space in which to strengthen one's connection with nature and Mother Earth, while reaping the benefits of her harvest."

Photo: JACOB COLLIER

COMRADE CARROT'S (FRESH) GREEN ROUTE

COMRADE Carrot — aka Mac donald Pale — grows organic carrots, spinach and potatoes on a farm in Phillipi. He sells his produce at Komati Foods in Observatory and the Eff its market at Tembonenkosi's Tyisa Nabanye urban farm.

My green route starts at Komati Foods organic farm. I've grown up in this soil with my family of vegetables. I fell in love with the piece of land I am on when I first saw her. I call her my 'first love' because together we have produced so much.

"Eff Its is an old military base just above Bokaap. It's a naturally rejuvenating, energy-filled spot. It's ironic that during my military career I spent so much time doing my national service at bases like this all over the country and now this abandoned base is my place of trade every Sunday morning at the organic market.

"Soil for Life in Constantia is a dream garden and the first time I went in I discovered it looked like my grandfather's farm. It has the bread and garden all in one, nicely smelling of compost and herbs.

"Soil for Life runs workshops in communities, training people in backyard gardening and guerilla gardening for business. I am a big believer in backyard gardening.

"I love that Komati Foods in Observatory has become a friend at a time when I have been in deep conversation with myself about food and my body. It's been easy for me to embark on a vegan diet because the shop is supplied mainly by local producers, from Ashley's raw golden honey to vegetable rotis from Man.

"I like going to Simon's Town beach because the water is warm and not too deep, you can swim and picnic and it's rarely crowded. I recommend getting there by train and I recently found that it's not too expensive to Uber from there. So you can afford to miss the last train out of Simon's Town and indulge in some good wine at a local restaurant."

Photo: WWW.WWW.WWW

MELISSA DE BILLOT'S (SLOW) GREEN ROUTE

DURING the day Melissa de Billot is an architectural technologist but after hours she's a Slow Food volunteer. Her main role in the non-profit is as co-ordinator for its Ark of Taste project in South Africa. The project is an international online catalogue of endangered food products.

"The veggie patch in my backyard is a quiet haven from the noisy city of Johannesburg. Every morning I sit with a cup of tea amongst the mealies, pumpkins, tomatoes and herbs. When I get home from work, I leave my cellphone in the house and go and weed, dig, water and plant seeds until the sun sets.

"Delta Park, a large nature conservancy above Braamfontein Spruit, has a small sensory trail garden. It's accessible to wheelchair users and it has braille descriptions of the plants. My favourite part is the bridge over a small stream, where you can sit quietly listening to the water flow, and watch dog walkers and cyclists go past.

"Across Braamfontein Spruit is Rand Epileptic Employment Association's vegetable garden in Craighall Park. The home's residents run a beautiful organic veggie garden, produce a range of preserves, there is a nursery and coffee shop next door where you can sit and watch the cyclists and horses go by.

"On the other side of town, towards the concrete jungle of Joburg CBD, is Bertrams Inner City Farm, an organic veggie farm that was grown on an abandoned bowling green. It supplies vegetables to local markets, creating a sustainable income for the community.

"West of Johannesburg, travelling towards Krugersdorp, is Random Harvest Nursery that specialises in endemic Highveld plants. If you are looking to grow a hardy, indigenous water-wise garden, this is the go-to place. There is a lovely outdoor tea garden set under some giant acacia trees.

Photo: MELISSA DE BILLOT

Photo: JORDAN ROSKILLY

TONY BUDDEN'S (HEMP) GREEN ROUTE

TONY Budden lives in a hemp house in Noordhoek, Cape Town, and is the owner of Hemporium South Africa.

"I'll start my green route at Soaring Free Superfoods Store in Westlake for all things nutritionally super like cacao, maca, chia and of course hemp seeds and oil. Their raw chocolate ganache is amazing. I am an absolute addict. If you are looking to change your diet and boost your energy, this is a great place to start.

"Living within one of the world's floral kingdoms is awesome, but take it up a few levels with a day spent wandering around the incredible Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden.

"Just a few years ago it was practically impossible to find certified organic products in Cape Town, and now you can walk into Organic Food in Lakeside and find everything you need.

"Cape Point Nature Reserve has to be one of my favourite places on the planet to go and recharge and explore.

"Sexy Food in town has styled its menu around fermented food and drinks, making healing healthy delicious and oh-so-good for your gut. They keep coming up with amazing products, my favourite being Ginger Kaffir-ade. Have a meal there and you will feel the difference in how your body processes your meal."

THABILE GASA'S (VOLUNTEER) GREEN ROUTE

THABILE Gasa volunteers for different NGOs in Amanzimtoti, KwaZulu-Natal, including Mother of Peace, Amanzimtoti Community Upliftment Project and Durban Botanical Gardens Permaculture Centre.

"My green route starts at home in my permaculture organic vegetable garden and a small fruit forest. We have grapes, granadillas, litchi, avo, pomegranate and mango trees.

"Mother of Peace is an NGO in Illovo that grows abandoned, abused and orphaned children a home. Gerhard van Rooyen and I decided to give back to our community so we started a food forest and raised beds using permaculture ethics and principles. We invited Tsh Saints and the Amanzimtoti community to donate seeds and fruit trees to make this project a success. From the harvest the home feeds the children and sells to the community.

"Amanzimtoti Community Upliftment Project is a community-based food building a feeding scheme that feeds Pre-community in and around Amanzimtoti. It also acts as a rehab centre and runs courses teaching the community about their non-GMO vegetable tunnel.

"The Birches Pre-Primary School in Pinetown is a proud International Eco-school. It has a large recycling station on its car park, a herb spiral, and they make their own compost.

"My route ends with Ntumbenhle Mtambo, who has a flourishing food forest in her own back yard. She is an amazing woman, leading by example in Mpophomeni community near Howick. She turns dump sites into productive gardens and almost every home has a small organic garden." **LS**

Photo: JACOB COLLIER