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The City Bowl Light & Shade Playbook

Sun, wind and privacy, window by window — written for the two kinds of home that actually stand in this bowl, not for a catalogue. Real sun angles, the real Cape Doctor, and what we'd specify on each elevation, with the honest trade-offs both ways.



Timber venetians on original sash joinery — slats tilted to steer the Table Mountain light, not switch it off.

Most shading advice is written for nowhere in particular. This is written for a suburb at 33.9° South, sitting in a stone amphitheatre where Table Mountain, Lion's Head, Signal Hill and Devil's Peak decide the light before anything else does — and where the summer

south-easter arrives with an opinion of its own. Everything below is sourced; the full reference list is at the foot of the page.

ONE

Why the Bowl is its own problem

The City Bowl is a natural amphitheatre of central Cape Town: Table Bay and the Atlantic open it to the north, and Signal Hill, Lion's Head, Table Mountain and Devil's Peak wrap it on the other three sides.¹ That bowl shape is the first fact of any shading brief here. It funnels the wind, it steepens the streets, and it means a window's real problem depends on exactly where on the slope it sits.

The second fact is the housing stock. Oranjezicht and Gardens are known for classic Victorian and Edwardian terraces, tree-lined streets and mature gardens; Tamboerskloof mixes those Victorian double-storeys with well-built sectional-title apartment blocks; and Higgovale climbs right up onto the mountain slopes.²³ So one street can hold a narrow original sash window a few doors from an architect-renovated home with a floor-to-ceiling glass wall built to hold the view. One suburb, at least two — usually three — different specifications. We measure for the window in front of us, not the suburb's reputation.

TWO

You've marked **nothing yet** as relevant to your home.

Take them to your window schedule →

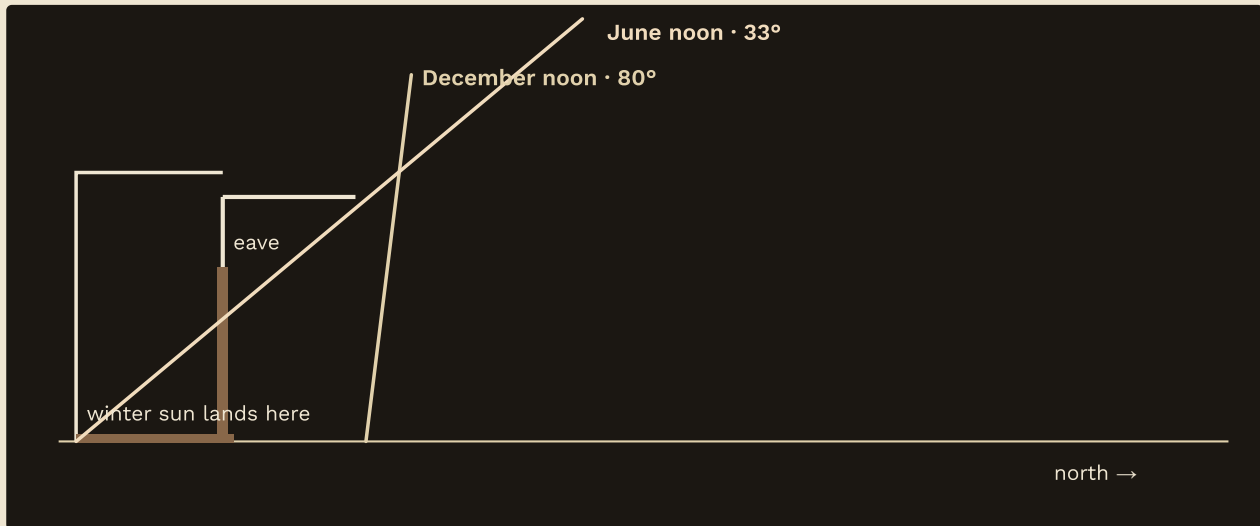
in summer and winter.⁴ Four numbers explain most of it:

Midsummer noon: the sun stands at about 80° — high overhead and slightly to the north.⁴

Midwinter noon: about 33°, due north — low, and searching straight in under any eave.⁴

Midsummer the sun sets at 240° — south of due west, not due west, so the late-afternoon glare arrives on the south-west.⁴

Midwinter it rises at 62° and sets at 297°, both north of the east–west line.⁴



The eave that shades a north window at midsummer noon does almost nothing in June, when the 33° sun comes in underneath it. Angles from source 4.

Read practically: **the summer sun is the easy one and the winter sun is the sneaky one.** At 80° a modest veranda handles a north window at midday in December almost by itself; at 33° in June the sun slides in *under* that same eave and reaches metres across the floor.

Two things then push the specification harder. Cape Town's summer UV is genuinely extreme — the index averages around **12 in November and peaks near 14 in December**, well into the "extreme" band where unprotected skin burns in minutes.⁷ That makes fabric fading and UV degradation a real problem, and it's the argument for stopping the sun *outside* the glass on the worst elevations. Then winter flips the wind around: the climate is Mediterranean, with mild, wet winters where roughly **70% of the annual rain falls between June and September**, arriving on north-westerly cold fronts about one every six days.⁸ So an exterior product here has to cope with sun and south-easter in summer and driving rain from the opposite quarter in winter.

Elevation by elevation

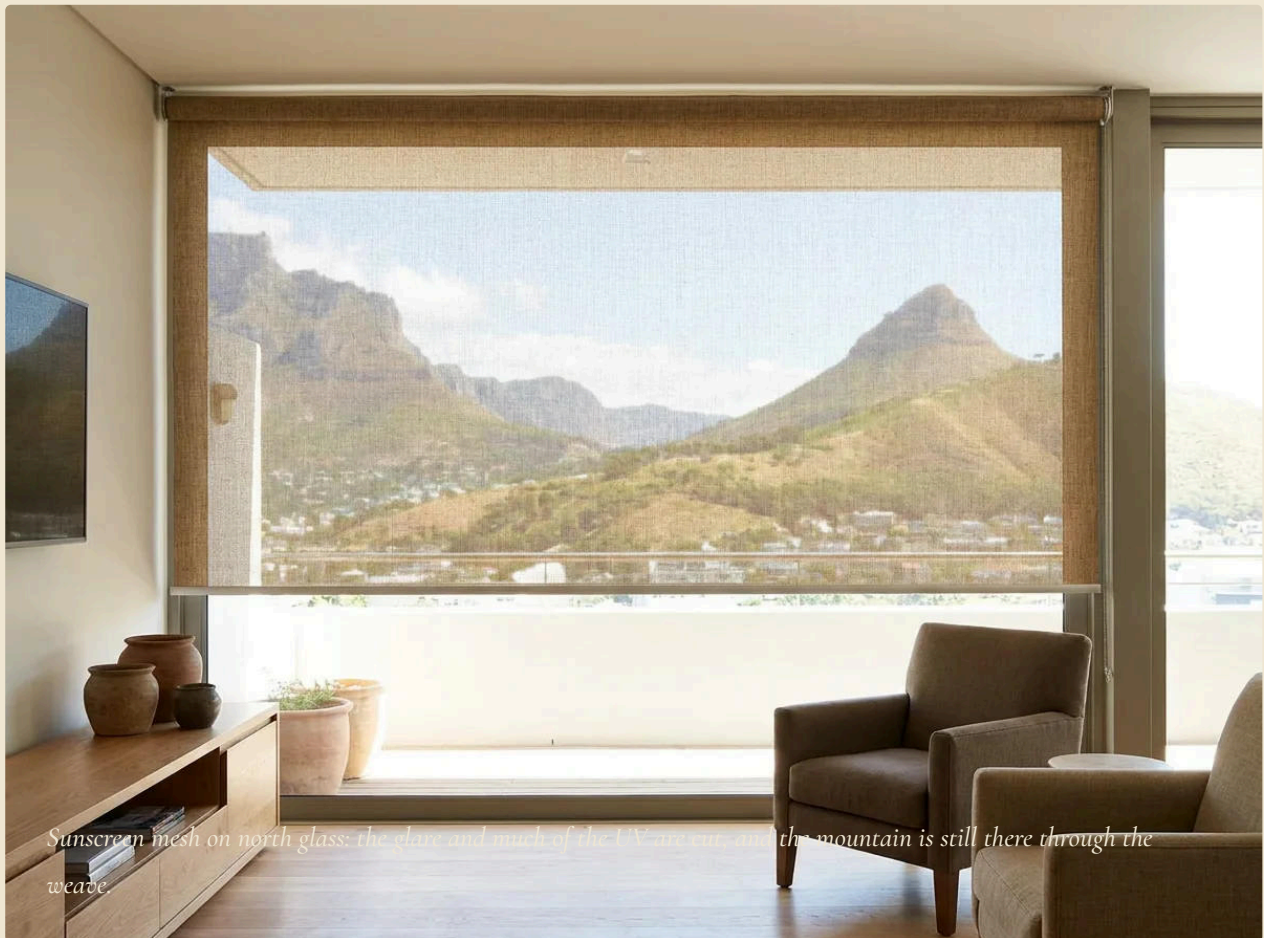
Take a compass to each room before assuming anything — especially on the upper slopes, where houses are often turned to the view rather than to the street. Four cases, plus the wind that cuts across all of them.

NORTH Sun every day of the year North glass catches the good light — generous and low in winter, high and strong at the top of summer. The mistake is over-specifying: heavy blackout throws away free June warmth along with the glare. North wants something adjustable through the day, not a permanent off-switch.	WEST The expensive elevation From early afternoon the sun swings toward that 240° midsummer sunset and keeps dropping.⁴ No overhang shades it, because the light arrives from underneath — and on an upper-Bowl stand there's often nothing across the way to block it. Heat, glare and fading land here together.
EAST Glare, not heat The mirror of west, but against cool overnight air and cool masonry, so it rarely becomes a heat problem — it's a glare one. Breakfast rooms and east bedrooms take direct sun before anyone's ready for it. Light control solves it far more cheaply than a west elevation ever does.	SOUTH Calm, with a summer caveat Even, indirect light — the right room for a desk. The caveat: December's sunrise (119°) and sunset (240°) both fall south of the east–west line,⁴ so a south room catches a raking hour of low sun at each end of a midsummer day. In June, none at all — but the winter damp lives here.

And cutting across all of it: the Cape Doctor

The south-easter Capetonians call the Cape Doctor blows mainly from October to March, and the bowl's own shape makes it worse — air squeezed between the sea and the mountains is funnelled and accelerated through the City Bowl, with gusts up to around 160 km/h recorded over Table Bay.⁵ The "tablecloth" cloud pouring over the mountain rim is the same wind made visible. It's the single biggest reason anything mounted *outside* the glass in the Bowl — an

awning, a screen — has to be wind-rated, and ideally motorised with a wind sensor that retracts it before a gust arrives. The upper-slope stands of Higgovale, upper Tamboerskloof and the Vredehoek ridge feel it hardest.



Sunscreen mesh on north glass: the glare and much of the UV are cut, and the mountain is still there through the weave.

FOUR

What we'd specify, and why

Seven answers, each with its reasoning and its honest trade-off. Mark the ones that sound like your home — they carry straight through to the window schedule and the free-measure form below, so you don't retype anything.

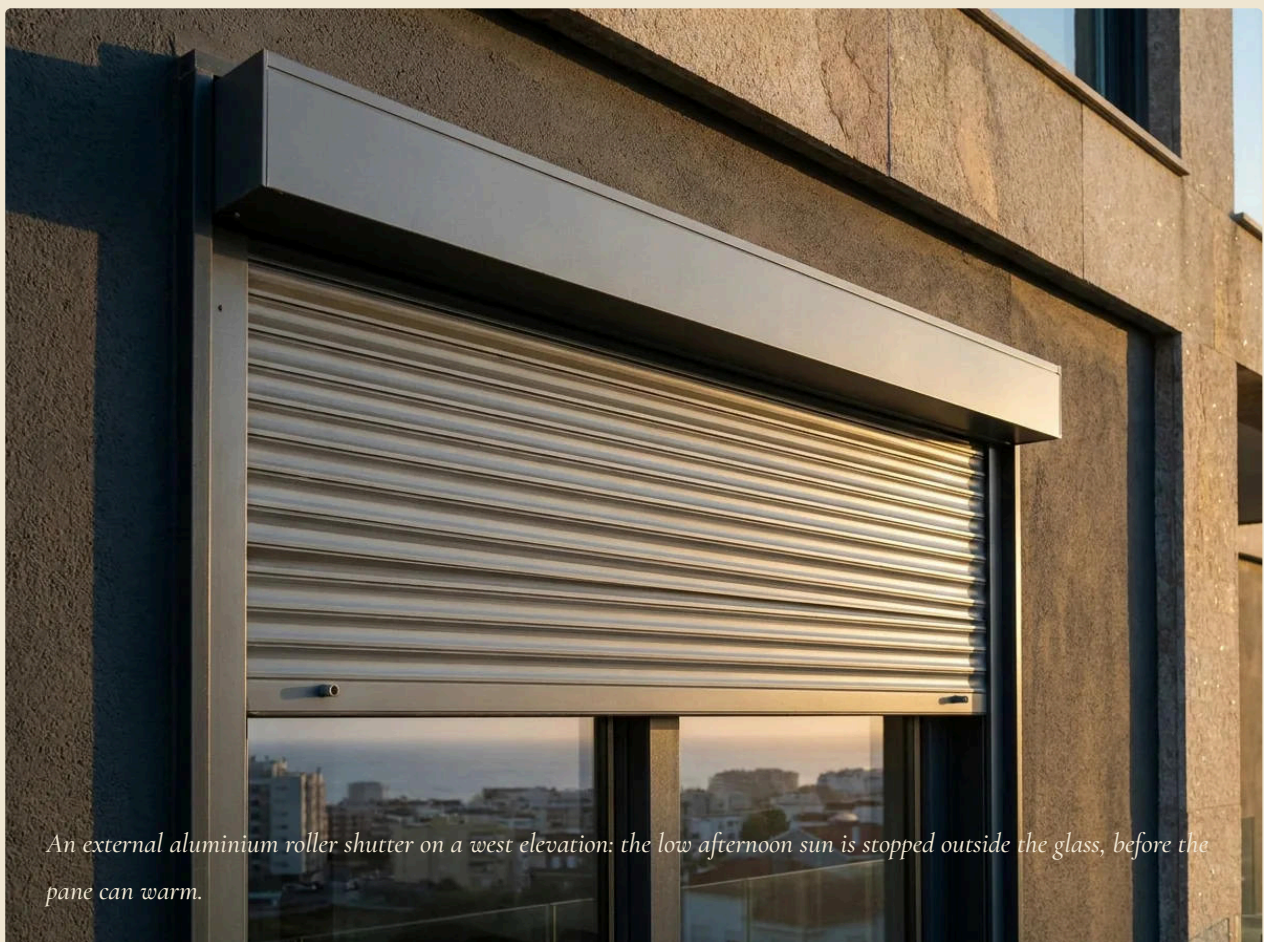
FOR HARD WEST & NORTH-WEST GLASS ON THE UPPER SLOPES

Roller shutters — stop the heat outside the glass, ahead of an interior blackout

Rigid aluminium slats rolling down from a headbox on the *outside* of the window. The physics is the whole argument: they stop the low south-west

afternoon sun before it reaches the pane, so the glass never warms up. An interior blackout roller only absorbs that energy once it's already through the glass — the pane and the fabric then radiate the heat straight back into the room. Half-lowered, a roller shutter takes the top of a tall window and leaves the bottom clear; closed, the slat curtain and the trapped air behind it insulate as well as they shade.

The trade-off, honestly: it's the most expensive route, it's a permanent fixing to the outside of the facade (a heritage or body-corporate step in the Bowl — see section five), and to be plain these are **shading shutters for sun, heat and glare, not security-rated shutters** — a different product, quotable on request. Where external isn't possible, sunscreen mesh plus a blackout on a double bracket is the honest second best: less cost, meaningfully less heat control.



An external aluminium roller shutter on a west elevation: the low afternoon sun is stopped outside the glass, before the pane can warm.

FOR NORTH-FACING RECEPTION & LIVING ROOMS

Sunscreen mesh, not blackout — and matched across the elevation

North light is the good light; you want the sting taken out, not the room switched off. An open-weave mesh around 5% openness cuts glare and much of the UV while the mountain, or the garden, stays legible through it. On a Victorian terrace with a run of matching front windows, specifying one fabric and colour across the whole elevation is what makes it read as a scheme rather than a row of separate fixes.

The trade-off, honestly: mesh gives daytime privacy only — after dark, with the lamps on, it reverses and you become the lit side. Where a room genuinely needs both, a double roller answers it: mesh in front, blackout behind, on one bracket.

FOR ORIGINAL VICTORIAN & EDWARDIAN SASH WINDOWS

Timber venetians that read like the glazing bars

Fifty-millimetre basswood slats sit at roughly the rhythm of a multi-pane sash's glazing bars, so the window still looks like the one the house was built with — and tilting them upward bounces light off the ceiling, lighting a room without the glare on the desk. Fitted inside the deep plastered reveal, they sit properly in the joinery.

The trade-off, honestly: timber slats collect dust and want the occasional wipe, and past about two metres wide we'd split the opening or motorise it. Kitchens, bathrooms and sculleries get aluminium venetians instead — they take the damp and the scrubbing that timber won't.



Timber venetians inside a Victorian reveal — the slats echo the glazing bars, so the window keeps its face.

FOR BEDROOMS

Blockout rollers — where the reveal matters more than the fabric

Every blockout fabric is opaque, and almost no bedroom complaint is really about the fabric. It's light leaking round the edges, and a deep Victorian reveal has a lot of edge for that to happen along. Inside-fit sits neatly in the joinery and you accept a hairline down each side; face-fit over the opening is far darker at the cost of covering the reveal and the timber. A day-night roller is the flexible middle for a bedroom that doubles as a sitting room — sheer and solid bands on one loop.

The trade-off, honestly: there's no free option — inside-fit for looks, face-fit for darkness, or inside-fit with side channels for both at the cost of one more component.

FOR COLD, DRAUGHTY OLDER ROOMS

Cellular honeycomb, where the complaint is the cold not the glare

Bowl winters are wet and the older terraces can be draughty; a tall, corniced south room loses its low winter sun early and holds the damp. A cellular blind is the better answer there than a roller: the honeycomb traps a layer of air at the glass, and it's the air that insulates — quieter, warmer rooms without a heater running all evening.

The trade-off, honestly: cellular doesn't tilt, and it won't take scrubbing, so it's wrong for a kitchen or bathroom. It's an insulation-and-light choice, not a view-management one — pair it with something else where the room needs both.

FOR BALCONIES, TERRACES & COURTYARDS

A folding-arm awning with a wind sensor — or a zip screen where the stand is exposed

Retractable shade suits this climate exactly: cover for the summer entertaining months, then gone in seconds when the low winter sun is welcome back on the paving. Motorising it with a wind sensor is the same argument one step on — with the south-easter funnelling into the bowl, the sensor retracts the fabric before a gust does the damage for you.⁵ On a sheltered, walled courtyard the awning is the simpler answer; on an exposed upper-Bowl balcony with nothing to break the wind, a zip screen — mesh tensioned inside side channels — copes with gusts an open awning arm cannot, and closes a windy balcony into a usable room.

The trade-off, honestly: awning fabric is a consumable and a battery tube wants charging once or twice a year; a zip screen fixed in channels has no such exposure, which is the real reason to choose it on the open stands. Neither is a security product.



FOR APARTMENT GLASS WALLS & ARCHITECT-RENOVATED ROOMS

Panel glides and concealed boxes — and a motorised curtain track on top

Floor-to-ceiling apartment glazing and sliding balcony doors want something that stacks right back and clears the opening: panel glides for a glass wall, verticals for a wide sliding door. On the architect rebuilds, a concealed blind box drops the fabric from a slim ceiling slot with every bracket hidden — the detail that keeps a minimal room minimal. Where a formal room wants the layered, quiet-luxury upgrade, a motorised curtain track glides heavy lined curtains open on a button or a timer, over the top of the blind that's doing the actual sun work; on a long run of matching windows, one motor opens the whole elevation together. Gable glass and loft conversions get tensioned skylight/shaped systems that hold flat at any angle.

The trade-off, honestly: a concealed box is a build- or renovation-stage decision — hard to retrofit into a finished ceiling without opening it up. A curtain track is a genuine upgrade layer, not a replacement for the blind; we spec the blind for the sun problem first and the track as the dressing on top.

Want this marked up for your home?

Tell us which rooms are the problem and we'll send you a copy of this playbook with notes written against your own elevations — which of the above we'd put where, and why. Same guide, read for your house instead of in general.

Thank you — that's through.

One of our expert consultants will send your marked-up copy of the playbook, and will contact you shortly about the rest.

FIVE

Heritage & sectional title, plainly

Two rules bite in the City Bowl more than almost anywhere. First, the National Heritage Resources Act protects any structure — or part of a structure — **older than 60 years**: you can't alter or demolish it without a permit, and in the Western Cape the authority is Heritage Western Cape.¹¹ Second, the City of Cape Town runs **Heritage Protection Overlay Zones (HPOZ)** that add development rules on top of the base zoning — covering renovations, extensions, demolitions and even new designs. The overlay takes in Tamboerskloof and the lower half of Oranjezicht, and Bo-Kaap was gazetted into its own HPOZ in April 2019.¹¹¹³

Inside the reveal is a furnishing decision. Outside the glass is a building decision.

A blind fitted inside the reveal doesn't alter the structure. Anything fixed to the *outside* of the facade — a roller-shutter headbox, external shading rails, an awning cassette, zip-screen channels — is a change to part of a structure, and on a home older than 60 years, or one inside an HPOZ, it may need a permit. On top of that, many Bowl addresses are sectional title: on a body corporate, an exterior change needs the scheme's sign-off before anything's ordered. We'll

help you check the scheme rules first, we can supply slim profiles, quiet colours and the product data an application needs — but we won't call an approval a formality, or submit it on your behalf.

SIX

What only a site visit answers

Everything above follows from a plan and a compass. These five don't — and any one of them can change the recommendation:

1. **Reveal depth, at several points.** Victorian and Edwardian openings are rarely square, and the gap between a shallow and a deep reveal decides whether a headbox sits inside the joinery or proud of it.
2. **What's behind the plaster.** Solid masonry, later brick-and-cavity, or a rebuilt stud wall — the substrate decides the bracket, and whether an external system is even viable on that wall.
3. **True orientation, room by room.** Upper-Bowl houses are often turned to the view rather than the street, so you can't read the aspect off the road — and everything in sections two and three depends on it.
4. **Wind exposure at your exact stand.** A walled Oranjezicht courtyard and an exposed Higgovale balcony a few streets apart behave completely differently in the south-easter — which decides an awning versus a zip screen.
5. **Where the power goes, and any sign-off the building needs.** Whether a plug is within reach for a motor, whether a battery tube recharges without a ladder, and whether the body corporate or an HPOZ has a say on anything visible from outside.

That's the honest reason the measure exists, and why it's free: far better to find these out before quoting than after fitting.

— SEVEN

Two ways forward — pick whichever suits you

One gets you an exact answer; the other a number to think about first. Both are free, and neither commits you to anything.

— THE STRAIGHT ANSWER

Book your free expert measure

A consultant comes with fabric and slat samples, checks the five things in section six, measures every opening precisely, and leaves you with a written, itemised, per-window quote. We take five or six measure appointments a week across the Bowl, so the diary fills early — no charge, and no obligation either way.

Thank you — that's through.

One of our expert consultants will contact you shortly to arrange your free in-home measure, with samples, at a time that suits you.

— OR, FIRST

Rather have a rough number before a visit?

Pop in rough sizes on the window schedule below and we'll send a budget range by the next working day. If you're unsure how to measure, or simply would rather not, leave it — our consultant measures for free, and you'll get exact per-window pricing either way.

Build my window schedule ↓

Plenty of people do both — rough sizes now, the measure after.

City Bowl Blinds — window schedule Walk the house, fill this in, then type it in at citybowlblinds.co.za. Take the opening itself, in millimetres, with the width written down first.

— YOUR BALLPARK, IN ABOUT TWO MINUTES

The window schedule

One line per window. Rough is fine — a tape measure and a guess to the nearest 50 mm is plenty for a budget range. Nothing here is binding, and nothing is priced from it: the real number comes from the free measure.

ROOM	WIDTH (MM)	DROP (MM)	INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE REVEAL	PROJ

Nothing on the schedule yet

[Send this schedule with my details ↑](#)

Your rows travel up to the free-measure form and go off with your details — we come back with a budget range by the next working day. Would rather not measure at all? Leave it blank and just **book the free measure**: the consultant measures for you, and you get exact per-window pricing instead of a range.

Nothing on this page is binding, nothing is priced from it, and nobody's going to phone you about a half-filled table. Print it, walk the house, come back to it whenever.

Sources

Every factual claim above about the sun path, the Cape climate, the City Bowl's housing stock and the heritage law comes from one of these. Where a figure came from a secondary source rather than a primary weather-station dataset, we've said so in the underlying research file rather than presenting it as more certain than it is.

- 1 Wikipedia — [City Bowl](#) (the natural amphitheatre; Signal Hill, Lion's Head, Table Mountain and Devil's Peak; open to Table Bay and the Atlantic).

- 2 SA-Venues — [City Bowl, Cape Town](#) (Oranjezicht, Tamboerskloof and Gardens; Higgovale and Oranjezicht on the mountain slopes).

- 3 DG Properties — [Tamboerskloof area profile](#) (Victorian double-storey homes alongside sectional-title apartments); Wikipedia — [Higgovale](#) (position on the slopes below Lion's Head).

- 4 Gaisma — [Cape Town sun & moon data](#) (latitude -33.93° ; December-solstice elevation at 12:00 $\sim 75^{\circ}$, sunrise azimuth 119° , sunset 240° ; June-solstice elevation at 12:00 $\sim 31^{\circ}$ due north, sunrise 62° , sunset 297°). This page states the sun's actual peak, calculated from the latitude with a $\pm 23.44^{\circ}$ declination; the numbers above are the source's 12:00 readings.

- 5 Cape Town Magazine — [The Cape Doctor](#) (the south-easter, October–March; funnelling and acceleration through the City Bowl; ~ 160 km/h over Table Bay; the "tablecloth" cloud).

- 6 Nomadseason — [Cape Town UV index](#) (November UV ~ 12 , December ~ 14 , "extreme" band; secondary/aggregator source).

- 7 Climates to Travel — [Cape Town climate](#) and Weather Atlas — [Cape Town climate averages](#) (Mediterranean climate; $\sim 70\%$ of rain June–September; north-westerly winter cold fronts roughly one every six days).

- 8 Cape Town City Bowl Ratepayers' & Residents' Association (CIBRA) — [Conservation Panel](#) (Heritage Western Cape; the 60-year rule; the HPOZ covering Tamboerskloof and the lower half of Oranjezicht; CIBRA acting for Oranjezicht, Higgovale, Gardens and Tamboerskloof).

- 9 IOL — [Heritage protection for Bo-Kaap approved](#) (HPOZ gazetted April 2019; overlays add development rules over base zoning, covering renovations, extensions, demolitions and new designs).

The full underlying research, including anything we could not independently verify, is logged at wiki/research/areas/citybowlblinds.co.za.md. We drew the sun-path diagram, wrote the elevation notes and made every product recommendation on this page ourselves. It is our opinion, given free, and it obliges you to nothing. Nothing here is a heritage-approval opinion — that belongs to Heritage Western Cape, the City of Cape Town and your own heritage architect.