

# Remote workers heading out of town



By [Berry Everitt](#)

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When we talk of semigration now, we are no longer just talking about the familiar pattern of movement from Gauteng to Cape Town, but about the worldwide counter-urbanisation or de-urbanisation movement, which sees people actively moving away from cities to smaller towns in search of a less stressful, more peaceful, country lifestyle, while still retaining their city jobs, if they wish to do so, by working remotely.



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Technology has increasingly freed people to work remotely - or even run a business – from just about anywhere that has a good cellphone signal and fast internet connectivity. In fact, it has already enabled a large number of ‘digital nomads’ around the world to keep working and earning even as they indulge a love of travel to different places and countries.

## Rise of the super-commuter

And before Covid-19, this new “digital freedom” had already given rise in SA to the super-commuter – which is the term for a professional or executive who relocates with their family to a safer, quieter coastal or country town and then commutes weekly between this location and the city.

But now, many more people and companies have had to switch to remote working mode to survive and have realised that:

- It is much easier than they thought;
- It does not necessarily mean a drop in productivity; in fact, people are often more productive when working from home; and
- Many types of work lend themselves to working remotely on a permanent basis – and from wherever one prefers to live.

We are thus not surprised that more employees as well as executives are now seriously exploring the idea of moving away from a big metro to a smaller town or an estate in a more rural area. This pandemic has been a wakeup call for many people and families who are now seriously reassessing their priorities, and seeking ways to make permanent changes to achieve a lifestyle that is less rushed and stressed, and we see this reflected in a significant increase in enquiries for country homes.

In keeping with international trends, however, most do not want to relocate to another province or region but just to a small town or estate that offers the possibility of a quieter life and is still within a couple of hours' drive of their origin city – particularly if their friends or family members still live there.

The areas that could be prime targets for this process of “de-urbanisation” in SA are the Cape West Coast, the Winelands, the Garden Route, the Little Karoo, the North Coast of KZN, Hartebeespoort, the Vaal, Lanseria, the Waterberg in Limpopo and towns in Mpumalanga close to Mbombela and the Kruger National Park.

## **Attracting 'de-urbanites'**

Of course, not all towns in these areas will immediately benefit from this trend, but those that can attract the “de-urbanites” with good municipal management, reliable power and water supplies, reliable and fast internet connectivity, reasonable proximity to an airport, good shopping and medical facilities and good schools if they have children, will prosper most.

As for the type of property these new semigrants are likely to buy, there is already high demand among affluent buyers for homes in out-of-town lifestyle estates such as Val de Vie, Pearl Valley and Boschenmeer in the Wineleands, for example, as well as the golf estate in Mossel Bay, the estates at the Vaal and around Hartebeespoort and the high-end estates along the KZN North coast such as Zimbali, Simbithi and Mount Edgecombe.

And as the trend grows to include many more remote workers of all ages and all income levels, we expect to see rising demand for ordinary freehold homes and whatever apartments may be available in and around various small towns – and possibly also for smallholdings where young families can keep horses or some livestock, go off-grid and grow their own food if they wish.

## **ABOUT BERRY EVERITT**

Berry Everitt is the CEO of the Chas Everitt International property group, which is one of the top five estate agency companies in South Africa and widely recognised for its innovative marketing methods, its technological leadership - and its absolute dedication to achieving exceptional customer service. Everitt is the youngest son of the group's founders, Charles and Tilla Everitt, and has been involved in the business since it was established in 1988.

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