

WINELANDS

Locavore dining, artists' studios, nature trails & spectacular vistas

BABYLONSTOREN

Getting there: take the N1 towards Paarl, take Exit 47, then the R44 to Klompvuts
Distance: 55km
Klompvuts, Simondium Road, Franschhoek
Tel 021 863 3852
www.babylonstoren.com
12 suites, R3,135 to R4,900

INNOVATIVE FARM HOTEL

Because of a vegetable garden that's fast becoming one of the key attractions of the Winelands district, a hotel had to be built, and then a restaurant. And then the garden expanded and a wine-tasting facility and a bakery came into being. Babylonstoren's reputation is phenomenal given it's the newest kid on the block. Although the Cape Dutch farmstead it's associated with is more than a couple of centuries old – the Tower of Babel, named after a nearby soaring peak – everything about this extraordinary place happened recently and grew organically. Its owners considered that their eight-acre vegetable garden would attract visitors who might like to pick its produce, so they provided a simple hotel, with cottages, in the garden, where guests cater for themselves, and Babel, the restaurant where, alternatively, guests eat the fresh produce cooked by chefs. On the other hand, a chef could cook for you in your cottage – and so it goes on. Babylonstoren is extravagantly inspirational and effortlessly stylish. Every part of it, right down to the last all-white bathroom in a guest cottage with its curious mix of clean contemporary styling and bursts of colour, is almost religious in its simplicity. The old farmhouse is also available to rent on an exclusive use basis. The simplicity of its original 18th-century interiors perfectly matches the restraint in the design of the contemporary furniture chosen to fill it.

Winter or summer Babylonstoren is a perfect place to unwind and re-source.

BARTHOLOMEUS KLIP

Getting there: take the N1 towards Paarl, then Exit 47 onto R44 to Stellenbosch then 1 km after Hermon/Riebeek Kasteel turnoff, turn left into Bo Hermon
Distance: 67km
Elandsberg Farms, Bo Hermon Road, Hermon, Riebeek Kasteel
Tel 022 448 1087, www.bartholomeusklip.com
4 rooms, 1 suite, 1 self-catering house, R3,320 to R5,380

COUNTRY HOUSE RETREAT

There are plenty of reasons to visit the Swartland around Riebeek Kasteel. Fifteen minutes from the village, surrounded by golden wheat fields on one side and rare *renosterveld* and fynbos protected by the Elandsberg Nature Reserve on the other, Edwardian Bartholomeus Klip is a place to see the landscape bloom in spring. Walks and game drives reveal a magnificent natural wealth. En suite rooms are simply decorated – “Agapanthus” and “Disa” face the wide *stoep* and look into an old oak-shaded “Cape” garden. A pool, fashioned out of an old farm dam, is well positioned for views across the landscape and to the mountains beyond. A suite in the garden is set away from the house and is completely private and, since this is a childfree zone, the self-catering Wild Olive House, set still further away with its own pool, is for families. Up at the main house a dining room in the conservatory is open to all guests for brunch and dinner. You need never leave this idyllic spot. However, this is a terrific, civilized base from which to see the West Coast flowers, explore Riebeek Kasteel, taste Swartland wines and sample its olives at May's Olive Festival.

COOPMANHUIJS HOTEL

Getting there: take the N1, turn off at Exit 39 and follow the signs to Stellenbosch on the R304, distance: about 50km
33 Church Street, Stellenbosch

Tel 021 883 8207, www.coopmanhuijs.co.za
16 rooms, R2,240 to R2,840

MANOR HOUSE, CENTRAL

Looking out of the windows into Church Street, it's easy to understand why Stellenbosch has another, more colloquial name: Eikestad, Oak Town. Housed in a venerable early 18th-century mansion, this cosy, traditional-style hotel is right at the leafy heart of where it's all happening in this university town. Church Street and the surrounding neighbourhood are filled with museums, galleries, shops and cafés and in-house dining at Helena's Restaurant is the quiet option if you want contemporary South African cooking. There's a spa and a courtyard pool – a necessity in the summer after a day out exploring the surrounding winelands.

DELAIRE GRAFF

Getting there: take the N1, turn off at Exit 39 and follow the signs to Stellenbosch on the R304, then left onto R44
Distance: about 60km
Delaire Graff Estate, Helshoogte Pass, Stellenbosch
Tel 021 885 8160, www.delaire.co.za
10 lodges, R7,150 to R26,500

GLAMOROUS, EXCLUSIVE

This is haute couture in the vineyards. And it's perfectly tailored to anybody unwilling to compromise just because they're having a holiday. The estate straddles a vantage point in the Banhoek, between Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, from which there are magnificent views out over the winelands to Table Mountain in the distance. Set in a manicured wilderness designed by Keith Kirsten, ten lodges each with its own plunge pool, the Delaire Graff Spa (which uses the Swiss Perfection range) and two restaurants – Indochine for Asian dining, and Delaire Graff Restaurant with what it's called “bistrot-chic” cuisine – have been meticulously designed by David Collins who is best known for decorating various dining hotspots in London. The Delaire Graff Restaurant in

particular, has Cape Town's best outdoor dining terrace. Everywhere – lodges, restaurants, public areas, wine tasting lounge, gardens – has a collection of mostly South African art and sculpture, put together by owner Laurence Graff (the diamond king) with help from the Goodman Gallery.

LA CLÉ DES MONTAGNES

Getting there: take the N1, then Exit 59 towards Paarl on R301, then left onto R45 to Franschhoek, distance: 80km
13 Daniel Hugo Street, Franschhoek
Tel 021 876 4646, www.lacle.co.za
4 villas, R9,000 to R12,500

LUXURY SERVICED VILLAS

In an area where provenance is all, and a French one is critical, La Clé des Montagnes has it all. A series of villas is arranged around an old farmhouse built by a Huguenot immigrant early in the 19th century. One of them, La Grange, the original barn, was latterly home to a famous interiors shop also called La Grange whose style it has somehow imbibed, and which set off a tsunami of decorating across the Franschhoek valley in the 1990s as the district was “discovered”. The signature style of La Grange notwithstanding, the other villas highlight a decor sometimes neo-African baroque, sometimes colour-me-fabulous, the pungent lacquers in green and blues, oranges and yellows a startling find in the middle of the vineyards. Le Colonial hints at North African style, bringing Morocco or Tunisia to the Winelands. La Galerie is more edgy – what South Africans might call “*boere* baroque”, others ‘theatrical naff’ (black walls, faux leopard upholstery and lots of purple). Le Manoir occupies the old farmhouse and is conservative by comparison. Each a “private” dwelling with kitchen and dining area, *stoep* and view overlooking the vines and orchards that make the district famous. A chef can prepare your meals “at home” or walk to the village where myriad restaurants line the main street.