

## Condé Nast Traveller - United Kingdom 2008



Each suite is individually designed: left, vivid pink and green contrast with vintage pieces; below, the bathrooms are similarly exuberant

The kitchens leading off the dining hall are state of the art. There is a marble-topped display table, backed by tall mirrors above burners, where guests can watch as the chefs perform their flame-grilling wonders and even have a go themselves, during hands-on cooking demonstrations.

Each of the 11 suites is decorated in a completely different style. One has marble floors, with a marble four-poster bed (heated in winter), and a bathroom resembling the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. The sumptuous

A dazzled guest described her arrival at the hotel as 'walking on to the set of my own private film, starring myself on a tiger-skin rug'

The tal-style room is decorated in ruby red and plum, contrasted with apple-green and white silk. In the Tibetan-style room, tripped wooden doors open on to a room furnished with chairs upholstered in cherry-red. In that suite's bathroom, the generous silk curtains in a brocade of red and white, while another is in a hot pink and green colours.

Now, this exotic fantasy remains grounded, thanks to the pragmatism of a consummate hotelier. Liz Biden's guiding principle is that comfort is everything, and throughout the hotel this idea is executed with care, and impeccable taste.

...the set of a private film, starring yourself on a tiger-skin rug'. She wasn't exaggerating. The entrance and dining hall are optical delights with a chequered marble floor, huge fireplaces and gleaming, four-metre-high chandeliers set off by exposed poplar beams. The interplay of rustic-meets-ballroom is splendid and unexpected, with an 18th-century French mirror over the mantel and vibrant artworks on the walls, including a Ken Howard and an irreverent work by South African artist Beazy Bailey.

There is nothing so mundane as a formal reception desk, just an easy welcome from general manager Edward Morton and his staff. You might want to sign the visitors' book on the antique Russian writing desk when you say goodbye, but that is about as formal as it gets. At the far end of the hall there is a sunken living room with squashy sofas and a wine cellar; upstairs there's a library with thoughtfully chosen Africana and bedtime reads.

**LA RESIDENCE** ELANDSKLOOF PRIVATE ROAD, FRANSCHHOEK, SOUTH AFRICA (00 27 21 876 4100; WWW.LARESIDENCE.CO.ZA). DOUBLES FROM R6,200 (ABOUT £430)



### FOUR MORE CAPE WINELANDS HOTELS

#### HAWKSMOOR HOUSE STELLENBOSCH

UNDER  
£100

This beautiful Cape Dutch homestead has four luxurious bedrooms, all with vineyard views. There's a pool and a herb garden with views towards Table Mountain. Matjieskuiil Farm, Klipheuwel Road, Stellenbosch (00 27 21 884 4815; www.hawksmoor.co.za). Doubles from R750 (about £55)



#### MONT ROCHELLE HOTEL & MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS FRANSCHHOEK

The hotel's 16 bedrooms and six suites are in three wings, creating a sprawling country-house feel. Dinner at Mange Tout restaurant is a gastronomic triumph. There are wine-tastings in the restored fruit-packing shed. Dassenberg Road, Franschhoek (00 27 21 876 2770; www.montrochelle.co.za). Doubles from about £115

#### KLEINE ZALZE LODGE STELLENBOSCH

UNDER  
£100

With a Peter Matkovich-designed golf course, and a sumptuous restaurant, Terror, there is something for everyone on this estate: the 46-bedroom lodge makes for a comfortable stop before heading deeper into wine country. Kleine Zalze Estate, Stellenbosch (00 27 21 880 0740; www.kleinezalze.co.za). Doubles from about £80

#### STEENBERG HOTEL & WINERY CONSTANTIA

Owner Graham Beck is breathing new life into this sumptuous hotel and winery. The Heritage suites are enormous (160 square metres) and have private pools. A new restaurant opens in the cellars this summer. Steenberg Estate, Constantia (00 27 21 713 2222; www.steenberghotel.com). Doubles from about £130. SALLY MUNRO