

A Hidden Gem

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SILVER FOREST BOUTIQUE LODGE

A boutique hotel in the Cape is not only dishing up a unique wellness-inspired destination, but is also showcasing just what makes the often overlooked region of the Helderberg so special.

Perched on the slopes of the Helderberg mountain, pretty gardens filled with flowers and trees frame a magnificent view of Strand in the distance, making Silver Forest Boutique Lodge & Spa in Somerset West as pretty outside as it is inside, where the forest theme continues. All of the common areas, as well as each of the eight suites, boast striking wallpaper depicting forest scenes. It instantly adds a sense of calm to every space, particularly in the rooms, which combine this sense of quietude with cosy furnishings, and

possibly the most comfortable bed I have ever slept on. Night cap surprises every evening make turning in extra special – but not before a drink at the bar and a delicious dinner, where dedicated butlers ensure every need is met.

The owners of Silver Forest pride themselves on that personal touch – something that is often missing in the hospitality industry – and go out of their way to tailor specific breakaways for their guests, whether they are looking for a relaxing retreat, an indulgent gourmet Winelands break, a cocooned spa break, a special occasion, or a golf trip.

They are particularly keen on combining traditional sightseeing and holiday fun with a balance of wellness so that when their

guests reach the end of their vacation they have a wealth of travel memories and feel rejuvenated at the same time.

Spa Your Worries Away

With this in mind, Silver Forest's Spa is the jewel in its crown, and guests are encouraged to languish in the sauna and sip bubbly in the Jacuzzi. As one would expect, there are a range of delicious pampering treatments to choose from, and best of all, the soft spa robes are deemed acceptable attire anywhere in the hotel, so guests can prolong that delicious cosy feeling for as long as they like.

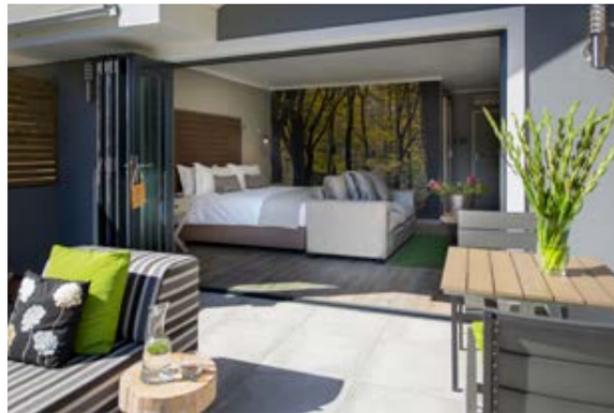
Silver Forest has also partnered with AfriWellness and Lourensford Wine Estate to create personalised retreats which include elements of mindfulness, movement,



^ Vergelegen



^ Lourensford



meditation, and relaxation. Guests have access to a combination of amazing therapists, doctors, yoga instructors, diet advisors, and more, as well as the beautiful estate at Lourensford, where a mindful walk in the vineyards is a highlight.

The Hidden Helderberg

As well as Lourensford, there are a wealth of fantastic attractions, top restaurants, and wine estates right on Silver Forest's doorstep, which the owners refer to as the "Hidden Helderberg" because despite its many attractions, Stellenbosch and Franschhoek are still often top of mind when people talk about the Cape's best wine regions. This is something Silver Forest is keen to rectify, and they often create lovely itineraries for guests to experience the area's many lovely spots.

The Helderberg Heavyweights

Vergelegen Estate has been making its mark on the country's history and wine heritage since it was founded in 1700.

The wines here are renowned, as is its fine-dining restaurant, Camphors. But the estate's attractions extend far beyond the viticultural and culinary, and you would be remiss not to dedicate at least half a day to

exploring the estate's 18 beautiful gardens. When in bloom, the camellia garden, the only International Camellia Garden of Excellence in Africa, is spectacular, and year round the venerable 300-year-old camphor trees are mind-boggling. There are also a number of historical buildings and museums to explore, including the 201-year-old wine cellar which houses a library of rare books that will have any bibliophile's heart racing.

A hop, skip, and a jump from Vergelegen is the aforementioned Lourensford Wine Estate. Like Vergelegen, Lourensford deserves at least a few hours of your day, as there is much to explore, including a coffee roastery, two art galleries - one dedicated to the work of Frans Groenewald and the other to the work of South African Old Masters - a deli, and the Millhouse Kitchen for one of their famous rustic dishes. Guided hikes are on offer through the picturesque estate, and for those with a slower day in mind, there is the option of grabbing a craft beer at the onsite ABRU taproom. Save some space for a wine tasting though - the estate's Wine and Chocolate Pairing is delicious.

What is equally delicious is heading home to Silver Forest after a day of exploring, to find the fire lit in your room and a welcoming glass of sherry next to your bed. While the Helderberg may well be "hidden", it is doubtful as special a place as Silver Forest will remain so for long.

For more information, please visit www.silverforest.co.za. ■

Drive & Dine

Golf enthusiasts are literally spoilt for choice when staying at Silver Forest, with a range of top class golf courses within easy driving distance to choose from, including Erinvale Golf Estate, De Zalze, Stellenbosch, Somerset West, Strand, Hermanus, Clovelly, and Pearl Valley. Fine dining fundi's also have no less than three Top 10 restaurants right on their doorstep - Camphors, Overtures, and Waterkloof - so it is best to work up a sizeable appetite out on the course.