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✈ LUXE HOTEL

Grootbos, Stanford

From the earthy shades of the décor to the preeminent picture windows found throughout, it is instantly clear that Grootbos – meaning ‘big forest’ in Afrikaans – has been inspired by its surrounds. *Words by Lucy Corne*

The duo of lodges looks out over the nature reserve; their swimming pools, restaurants, and of course, their rooms, designed to take advantage of the sweeping views that take in the reserve and stretch as far as the Atlantic Ocean.

Freestanding suites nestle amid the indigenous vegetation, each one designed with maximum privacy in mind. Vistas of fynbos – shrub-like plants native to the Western Cape – can be enjoyed from outsized canopy beds, from huge tubs sitting in even huger bathrooms, from the surprisingly homely lounges, or best of all, from each suite’s outdoor shower.

Away from the rooms, there’s still no escaping the panorama – not that you’d want to. Light lunches and gourmet five-course dinners are served at tables facing floor-to-ceiling picture windows, and post-excursion sundowners can be sipped on the restaurant’s ocean-facing deck.

If you can tear yourself away, activities take place twice each day, some venturing away from the 2,500-hectare reserve, and others designed to explore it in greater depth. Don a hard hat and delve into Stone Age caves, followed by a coastal walk to take in beach, cliffs, and crashing waves.

For something more relaxing, there are tours of lesser-visited wine routes; while for the adrenaline junkie, Grootbos sits close to South Africa’s top spot for shark-cage diving.

Back at the reserve, hikes – either self-guided or with your own dedicated guide – wind among the 750 species of fynbos, ‘twitching’ tours look out for some of the 100+ species of bird, and horse rides amble through the undergrowth, all designed for those wanting to actually be a part of the view rather than merely an admirer of it. 🐾



GREEN TRAVEL

As well as offering luxury, fine food, and pretty surrounds, Grootbos prides itself on championing eco-tourism. Their foundation trains people from the local community to work in conservation, teaches subsistence farming skills, creates places for children to participate in after-school sports, and runs a tree-planting programme. Guests can visit the various initiatives and will likely meet a Grootbos graduate, some of whom go on to become guides at the reserve.

CONTACT
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Cape Town, South Africa ➔ Distance: 7,427 km ➔ Flight time: 11 h, 25 m ➔ Frequency: 4 flights/week via Johannesburg