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THE GOLD LIST 2017



THE WORLD'S MOST EXCEPTIONAL HOTELS AND CLASSIC DESTINATIONS

COUNTRY HOTELS



BABYLONSTOREN FRANSCHHOEK, SOUTH AFRICA

This is so much more than a hotel; it's a working fruit farm with a historic Cape Dutch homestead, a destination restaurant, an award-winning vineyard, a brilliant bakery and, above all, a sensational garden. Over the past 10 years, owner Koos Bekker and his wife Karen Roos have transformed what was once a derelict, 300-year-old farm at the foot of the Simonsberg mountains into the coolest destination in the Cape winelands. The couple recruited Patrice Taravella, responsible for Le Prieuré d'Orsan cloistered garden in the Loire Valley, to establish the 3.5-hectare walled kitchen garden that is the core of the property and which supplies the restaurant, known for its fresh, inventive salads and vegetables picked young and cooked whole. The hotel itself is small, with just 13 suites carved out of old farm-workers' cottages which line the oak-tree-edged avenue bordering the garden; the original farmer's house was recently converted into a nine-bedroom lodge. Roos delights in combining the historical – small, shuttered windows and rough-hewn stable doors set in thick whitewashed walls – with the contemporary. Kitchens in the cottages are essentially clipped-on glass boxes that jut into the little private gardens; a Philippe Starck Ghost chair presides over a traditional fire-blackened hearth; on a modern four-poster bed is a handmade crochet blanket, and everywhere the sound of water running through culverts in a gravity-fed irrigation system that dates back to ancient Babylon itself. Nowhere else in the winelands manages to feel as fresh or relevant as Babylonstoren. +27 21 863 3852; babylonstoren.com. Doubles from about £260

THE FARM AT CAPE KIDNAPPERS HAWKE'S BAY, NEW ZEALAND

Set on a 2,400-hectare working sheep and cattle station, The Farm isn't yet 10 years old, but it feels like it's been here forever. Perhaps the most beautiful of Julian Robertson's stable of super-smart New Zealand lodges, it has 22 rustic-chic bedrooms and a wonderfully stylish private house, the Owner's Cottage. All are dramatically positioned on a grassy ridge overlooking its superb 18-hole championship golf course and surrounding farmlands, with the orchards and celebrated winelands of Hawke's Bay in the distance. On a clear day it's possible to make out snow-capped Mount Ruapehu on the horizon. The main structures resemble a cluster of farm buildings, with a domed silo that houses a wine cellar in its basement and an intimate snug on the ground floor. Throughout the property, wonderful farm-related objects – old tractor seats, metal cartwheels, wooden grain boxes – are deployed as artworks and the Colorado-based interior designer Linda Bedell has used plenty of tweed and leather to keep the rural dream topped up. Chef James Honore sources the best produce from this bountiful region – cheese from Havelock North, mushrooms from Napier, Hawke's Bay lamb – and supplements them with his own home-grown sweetcorn, fennel, lettuce and tomatoes. From fresh laid eggs with crispy New Zealand bacon for breakfast in the farmhouse kitchen to pre-supper canapés by the open fire, The Farm really does deliver the whole New Zealand package – and on a wonderfully grand scale. +64 6 875 1900; capekidnappers.com. Doubles from about £1,045 half board

