

Hotel Check Magalies Mountains



Mount Grace Makeover

WHAT IS IT LIKE?

Mount Grace has long been considered one of South Africa's leading country house and spa properties, and has been renowned for its luxury accommodation, picturesque gardens and the peace and tranquility of its spa gardens... Yet now the 'grand old lady' is in the process of finalising a staggering R135 million makeover – and what a difference!

The existing 81 rooms have already undergone a transformation that needs to be experienced to be believed, and work on an additional 40 new bedrooms is nearly complete. Of the new rooms, 12 are luxury private villas, each coming with a wooden patio overlooking a private garden, plunge pool, dams and the magnificent Magaliesberg surroundings. New furnishings and linens have replaced the 'Biggie Best' look, and devotees of the property may find the new, modern, bright colourbursts a little hard to get used to. Personally, I loved them – and I find the whole new look to be very fresh, exciting, and bang up to date.

There's a completely new reception block (very contemporary and almost New York in its feel), a new parking lot, and the restaurants and bars (another complete makeover) are dazzling – all of which combine to make you think you've discovered a whole new property. In effect,

you have – and the entire place is quite simply magical.

WHERE IS IT?

One hour's drive from Johannesburg. To reach it - head west along N1 (concrete ring highway) and exit at the 14th Avenue off-ramp, where you turn right under the highway, then right again at the second set of traffic lights. This is the M47 to Krugersdorp /Tarlton (you drive past the Hillfox Power Centre). Carry on along the M47 and after some 20 km (the road becomes the N14 to Ventersdorp) you'll reach a T-junction. Opposite is a Zenex petrol station where you turn right onto the R24 to Rustenburg / Magaliesberg (past Maropeng on your right) and continue for 12.5 km where you will reach a crossing. Turn right and continue along the R24 to Rustenburg / Magaliesberg for approximately 5 km before reaching Magaliesburg Village where you (slowly!) proceed through the village. On the far side keep to your right and continue along the R24 for about 2.4km where you will see the first Mount Grace Sign. At the second Mount Grace sign turn right. The property shares an entrance with Camp David and Girls & Boys Town. Cross over the river and proceed approximately 2 km up the mountain to the hotel.

RESTAURANTS, SPA AND CONFERENCING

There's a new culinary team on board, headed up by Executive Chef Franc Lubbe, whose brief is to ensure that the restaurants' famous country cuisine at the trademark Twist Restaurant and the newly conceptualised à la carte restaurant – The Rambling Vine – tantalises and delights. A new walk-in wine cellar also allows guests to choose from a range of over 70 carefully selected fine wines to complement their meals, under the guidance of an expert sommelier. Nice touch is that guests can order any wine by the glass, as opposed to the bottle.

The Mount Grace Spa has already received numerous accolades, including South Africa's Most Unique Spa, and the hydrotherapy spa gardens with Jacuzzi, rock pools and a liquid sound flotation pool are undergoing a complete makeover and being further expanded by the addition of a further 18 new treatment rooms.

The conference facilities at Mount Grace are also being boosted with the building of a beautiful state-of-the-art conference facility overlooking the valley. The brand-new double-storey building will seat 250 people at the top level and another 250 at the bottom. This new venue, scheduled to open in February 2009, can also be reconfigured into 6 separate conference rooms.

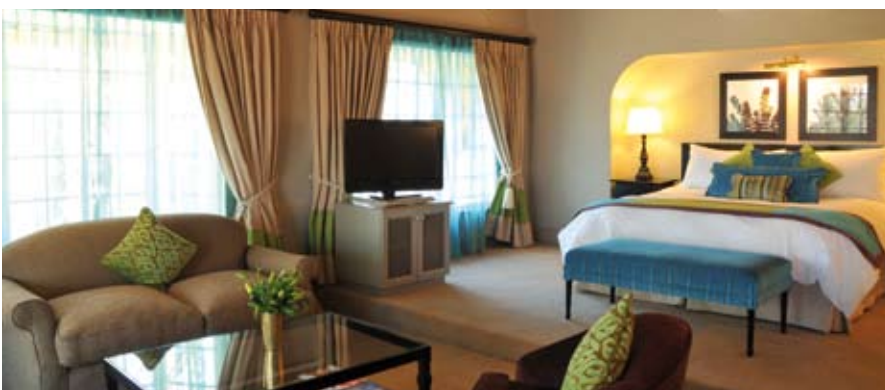
LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Take our advice – and do little else other than unwind here in the gardens, the Spa, Bush Spa and Hydrotherapy Spa Garden if you can – but if you really need to try other things, there are walking trails, mountain biking and tennis on site. To be fair, though, the surrounding area is rich in history and natural beauty, so you could explore and discover historical war sites: The Battle of Nooitgedacht was fought nearby a long time ago – and, of course, you're in the middle of the Cradle of Humankind and the home of our ancestors. There's the nearby Blaauwbank Historical Gold Mine, and golfing, ballooning, fly-fishing, and even microlighting can all be arranged.

VERDICT

You're going to either absolutely love or hate the new-look Mount Grace. You'll love it if you're free-thinking, modern, urbane and ready for change. If you're a dyed-in-the-wool traditionalist with no desire to live in the 21st century – don't go.

Michael Jackson



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