

Luxe in the wilderness

Dramatically cantilevered over the dunes and embracing the unspoilt beauty of the sweeping Wilderness beach below, the contemporary Views Boutique Hotel & Spa is the newest and most exciting addition to the Garden Route



Known as the pearl of the Garden Route, the seaside village of Wilderness has always been a much-loved holiday destination, with its pristine stretches of white sandy beach, the calm and winding rivers leading to the bird-filled wetlands that form part of the Wilderness National Park, and the untouched beauty of the Kaaimans River nearby. For years, nature-lovers and families have cherished happy holiday memories of spotting the steam train cross the Kaaimans River bridge, canoeing along the peaceful inland waterways and walking for hours along the coast. But it wasn't until the contemporary Views Boutique Hotel & Spa opened that Wilderness realised its full potential.

Wilderness now has a magnificent five-star boutique hotel perched on the sand dunes with views like no other. In fact, these are views that would be hard to match anywhere in the world! Conveniently situated just 15km from George airport (a 40-minute flight from Cape Town), this contemporary new gem of the Garden Route has changed the Wilderness landscape forever. Today, guests can even lie in bed and watch pods of southern right whales slapping their tails in the sea below when they come close to shore to calve in season. Everywhere, the glass-lined interiors invite nature in, including the Seaview Lounge and Library Lounge, which reveal stunning panoramas of the surrounding

landscape. The swimming pool – for in-house guests' private use only – is solar-heated and positioned to face the Outeniqua mountains in the distance, giving both sea and mountain views. Architecturally striking, the design of the new hotel has created an extraordinary setting – one that constantly provided inspiration for interior designer Lulu Ridgway. Having taken her cue from the

The light-drenched atrium features a delightful glass seagull installation that, together with its spaciousness and magnificent outlook, makes you feel one with the outdoors.



Even though Views Boutique Hotel is strikingly contemporary in style, this modern look is offset by the use of natural textures and driftwood so the effect is always uplifting, never stark.



breath-taking views and the hotel's sun-filled glass atrium – where she designed a rotating installation of more than a thousand delicately handcrafted glass fish that is lit by LED lighting and suspended in circular layers over three storeys (an intriguing commission and one that attracts enormous interest) – Lulu began her 12-month interior project. Views has

18 individually decorated suites with four interlocking rooms designed to create family suites. The *pièce de résistance* is the penthouse – a 100m² space surrounded by glass and with a bedroom, bathroom, private lounge and dining room. Needless to say, these views are jaw-dropping. The brief was to 'complement the views and use no dark colours', giving the

feeling of uninterrupted beachfront living – a new sense of barefoot luxury. By blending sensual and tactile fabrics with raw, earthy textures, Lulu achieved a wonderfully comforting but modern interior, contrasting frameless glass expanses with tactile accessories, a pared-down colour. Weathered driftwood contrasts with pearly glass mosaic



Aquatic colours and organic shapes are used throughout with striking installations such as this glass fish mobile, conceptualised and designed by Lulu Ridgway



and tactile resin-and-quartz flooring massages feet underfoot, while glamorous modern pieces offset the soft bedding. Custom-designed light fittings and crystal chandeliers were commissioned to enhance the airy spaces, and life-sized suspended seagulls add an unexpected and whimsical touch. For added luxe, customised mood-control lighting systems feature in every suite, and for guests' convenience, a pillow library promises to provide the perfect shape, size or filling to suit everyone's needs.

Bathrooms are sumptuous, blissful sanctuaries with uninterrupted views of the ocean and designed for heavenly relaxation after a day at the beach or exploring the coast in nearby Knysna or Plettenberg Bay, both a short drive from the hotel and with an extraordinary range of activities on offer, from yacht charters to The Heads to walks along the Robberg peninsula or some retail therapy. But those who are keen to stay at the hotel and be pampered simply need to step into the Views Spa at the Sea or the fitness centre to discover a whole new sense of wellbeing. No expense was spared here and relaxation is guaranteed with a heated pool, Tylarium, Rasul chamber and flotation room, all of which offer therapeutic experiences; the Hydrotherapy Lounge is the ideal place

to relax afterwards while sipping herbal tea. There are four treatment rooms, with a tandem room that is large enough for a couple to enjoy a variety of wellness treatments together. The Vitality heated pool is surrounded by intricate mosaics and hand-painted murals with hanging glass bubbles suspended from the ceiling. The spa has a fantasy suite to it, with underwater ocean elements featuring in the murals and gentle colours blended throughout. For the more energetic holiday-maker, state-of-the-art circuit training is available, as well as all the fitness equipment anyone could wish for, including personal trainers on request. Fancy a movie? Surround-sound luxury is at hand in the hi-tech media room or there's a games room to be enjoyed at leisure. And if you need to work while on holiday (or have cleverly chosen the hotel as a business venue), there's Wi-Fi connectivity throughout – even on the roof deck; how thoughtful is that? Conference facilities are available on request, making this the most desirable work venue in the land. Gourmet food is on offer at two gorgeous restaurants, and the Cocktail Deck overhanging the beach has exceptional

views, making it the perfect venue for light meals or sundowners. Sails is a family-oriented restaurant that serves light meals, lunch and dinner either inside the glass-walled restaurant (protected on windy days) or on the sunny deck outside. Every table has incredible views over the sea below, where dolphins and whales visit regularly in season. Local South African cuisine produced with the freshest ingredients sourced locally is the



speciality but the menu is wonderfully varied, with something for everyone (including children) to enjoy while soaking up the views... without doubt the most beautiful along the Garden Route. Foam is a more sophisticated 50-seater restaurant offering a dining experience in a relaxed atmosphere. Food is billed as avant-garde with 'a splash of foam and science'. Named after the foam that

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TOP Views from the cocktail deck and restaurant are truly breathtaking. ABOVE The marine theme is carried through to the decor in the spa.



RIGHT Honeymooners can enjoy the endless views and even choose to dine on their own balcony. BELOW Foam offers a sophisticated dining experience with its avant-garde menu.



celebrity Spanish chef Ferran Adrià made so famous, Foam is set to attract foodies as it pushes the boundaries of South African cuisine. Elements of the Karoo are included in the trio of carpaccio (which features ostrich, venison and beef), figs, aloe gel, prickly pear chutney and black olive powder; and for mains the *sous vide* ostrich filet with sweet potato fondant, sugarsnap peas, barley miso air, or the poached lobster tail served with spicy Asian slaw, risotto cake, rose ice cream and basil oil powder are both mouthwatering options. Dessert is difficult to choose: will it be the airbrushed chocolate volcano with lava bubbles, chocolate rocks, soil and berry sorbet, or the equally intriguing preserved lemon tart with crème fraîche, cherry caviar, caramello and rooibos ice cream? Even more beguiling is the Experiential Menu, keeping guests who stay a few days delighted with new taste sensations. With its unbeatable combination of spectacular location, staggering scenery and sublime interiors, Views is set to become the talk of the town, bringing visitors from all over the world to experience the natural beauty of the area and enjoy a five-star beach holiday.

Views Boutique Hotel & Spa

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Views Boutique Hotel falls under the umbrella of the Mantis Group of boutique hotels and lodges in Africa

Views is in Wilderness on the spectacular Garden Route, just 15km from George airport and a short drive from Knysna and Plettenberg Bay.

