

Classy magnificence of Clos Malverne's winter lifestyle package

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

7 May 2018

Passing landmarks as scenic as they sound - hello, Vineyard Lake - a stay at Clos Malverne in Devon Valley, Stellenbosch is the winter break you're dreaming of. The working farm is down -to-earth and charming, with a tangible sense of relaxation everywhere. And the food - my goodness, the food!

Picture this: Spending quality 'us time' with your partner while lying face down, with your eyes closed and thoughts elsewhere, feeling the tensions of the week melt away from the pure bliss of a couples' massage. Now make that a reality, as I've just described just the first part of our wonderful experience of Clos Malverne's lifestyle package.

Meditative morning massage

Having made the trip from the west coast in good time, we stopped to gaze in wonder at the towering trees above us and listen to the wind whistling through them before crunching satisfyingly up the gravel pathway of the estate, following signs marked 'The Spa'. We received a warm welcome by name, and the offer of a glass of fresh cucumber-flavoured water or tea while filling out some massage must-know info, like medical conditions, problem areas and pressure preference.



Images supplied.

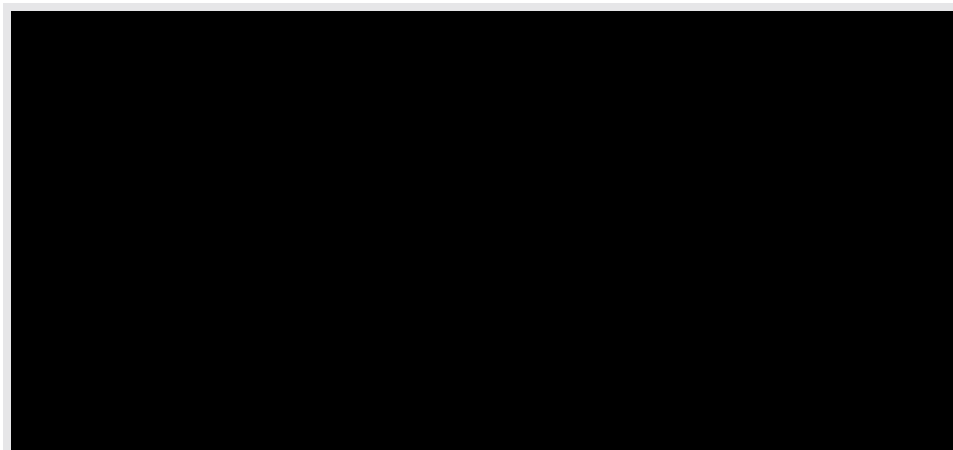


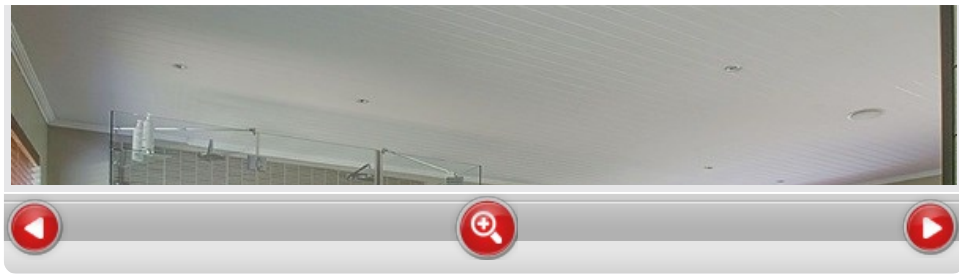
Images supplied.

Forms filed, we met with our masseuses Anina and Tammi for the morning and walked to the couples' treatment room for the 'pure bliss couples' spa package'. No scratchy towels or piped pan flutes here – the room is warm and decorated to match nature, with eye-pleasing creams, greens, natural light and wood panelling. We were wrapped in warm towels and treated to a Ferrero Rocher left waiting on the pillow as the ultimate touch.

“ Another [@closmalverne](#) do - [#treatyourself](#) to a [#massage](#) in the [#spa](#) - this is part of the lifestyle package running all winter! More on my [#blog...](#) ♀ | <https://t.co/uB61cFuCHh> [#reviewpic.twitter.com/3MO2joJdBV](#)— Rambling Litchi (@Leigh_Andrews) [May 4, 2018](#) ”

Once settled on our respective massage tables, we looked down at a bowl filled with fragrant petals, focused on the background chimes and convinced our minds to let go. It was a pleasure to do so as experienced hands firmly criss-crossed our liquid warm backs, necks and shoulders with the pleasingly lemon-scented Kalahari range of products to soothe our tense muscles and knead out those knots. With a whisper from our masseuses that the head rub signalled we were done, we were left to our own devices in the in-treatment sauna room.



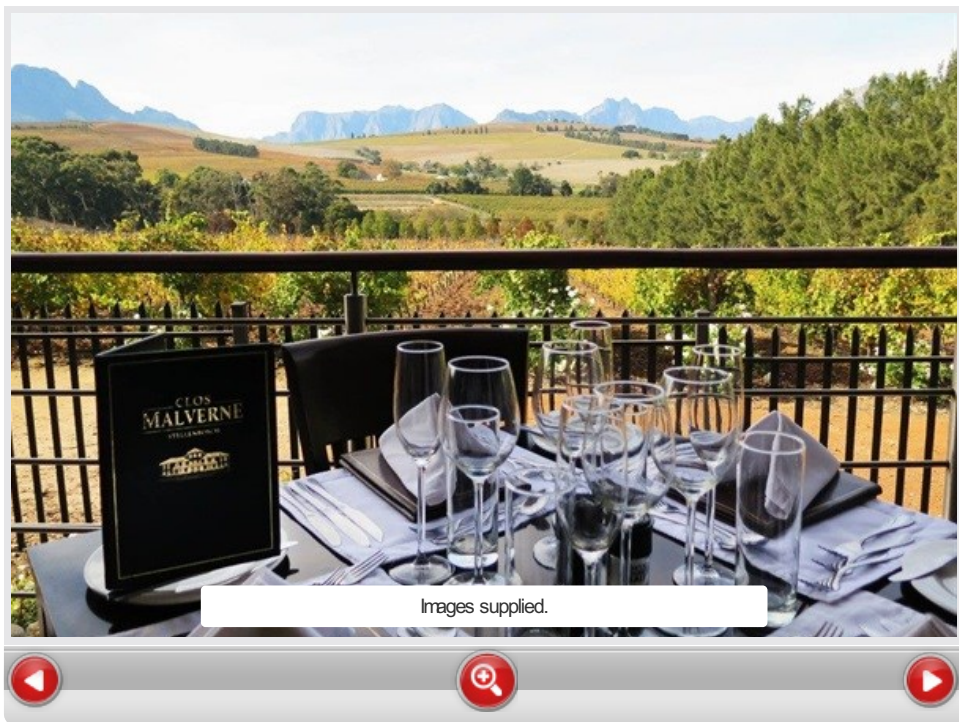


All steamed out, we stretched out in fluffy robes on the recliners with a view of the gardens behind the main property sipped glasses of white wine chilled with ice cubes. By then, our time in the private treatment room was almost up so we got dressed and stepped out to birdsong and sunshine, just like in a fairytale.

Happy, relaxed and slightly sleepy, we took a leisurely stroll through the peaceful grounds before it was time for our four-course lunch.

Four-course food and wine pairing with a view

Walking through the surprisingly full restaurant for just-gone noon on a Saturday, Kudzu seated us at a table with panoramic view from the wraparound porch. She offered us a complementary flute of the Clos Malverne sauvignon blanc sparkling wine, along with tiny loaves of fresh white and brown bread, paired with just-as-tiny golf balls of butter, as well as splashes of balsamic vinegar and olive oil.




Even if you're just there for the meal and not taking up the lifestyle package, the four-course pairing is great value as you get a taste of everything on the *a la carte* menu, with three choices for your first and second course, five for the third (main course) and another three for dessert.

Though if there are only two of you at the table, you may feel you're missing out as everything is really delicious and the bigger your table, the better the chance you'll get a taste of each meal. We soon saw why the Clos Malverne Restaurant is currently ranked as the second top restaurant of 214 in Stellenbosch on TripAdvisor. But I digress...

We perused the menu and decided on a little bit of everything: For the first course, we went with the butternut-goat's cheese *arancini* for me, paired with the Clos Malverne chardonnay; and the half-shell mussels, paired with the Clos

Malverne sauvignon blanc for hubby.

This came in hot and fast, with the six half-shells mussels visually steamy in their spicy coconut broth balanced by the crispness of the wine, while the moreish creamy *arancini* complemented the oakiness of the chardonnay. As a non-seafood-eater I can't speak for the mussels, but there was lots of slurping going on, and the *arancini* dish was a mouthful of cheesy comfort food with a twist, thanks to the surprisingly sweet bacon dust, lemon sour cream and light crunch of the honeyed pumpkin seeds.

“ Another reason to visit [@ClosMalverne](#) - the beautiful plating of the four-course food-and-wine pairing lunch, with tastes to match  | <https://t.co/uB61cFuCHh> #reviewpic.twitter.com/pBTUHTdmYM— Rambling Litchi (@Leigh_Andrews) [May 4, 2018](#) ”

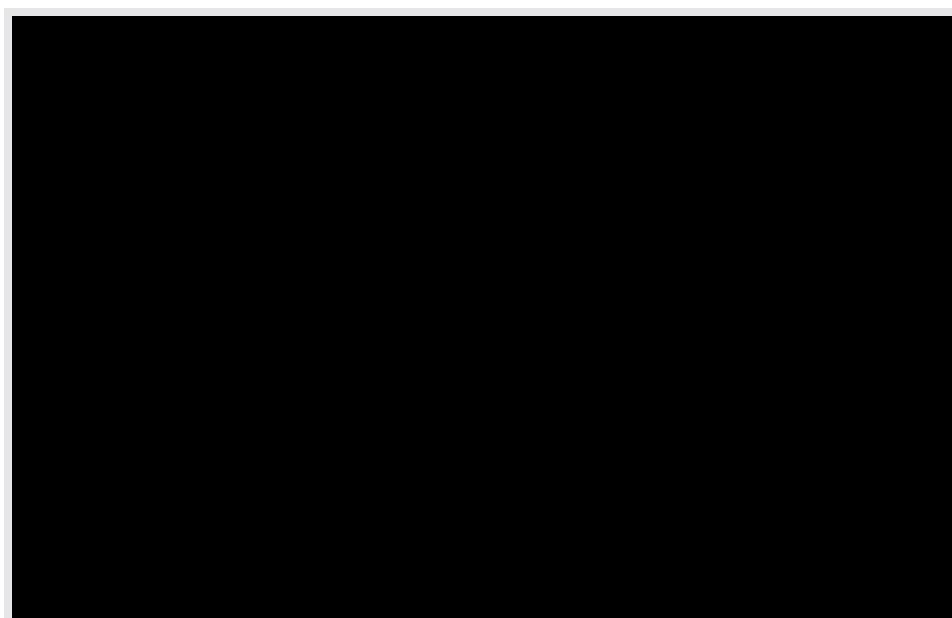
Second up was the springbok samosa and the star-aniseed pork belly, both paired with the ultra-dry spicy Clos Malverne cabernet/shiraz blend. The samosas have a crisp shell but you'll want to wolf them down so the base doesn't go soggy, as they're resting on a bed of sweet shimeji mushrooms and a coriander salsa.

“ The pork belly was the star of the meal. Tender, sticky and sweet, with the cutest baby apple dusted in poppy seeds, and an amazing pistachio praline crumb that rendered each forkful heaven on the tongue. ”

By now content to just gaze at the breath-taking view of the blue mountains in the distance, the autumn-coloured vineyards and green fields before that, we were ready for 'thirds' – the fillet steak ordered medium rare and paired with the Clos Malverne Auret, the estate's flagship Cape blend of pinotage, cabernet sauvignon and merlot, as well as the bacon-wrapped chicken breast with the cabernet sauvignon/merlot blend. These are both serious reds that make your mouth pucker. The steak was melt-in-your-mouth tender, while the creamed leeks and parsley-mashed potatoes formed the perfect pillowy base for the herb-butter stuffed chicken fillet, hugged by crispy, salty bacon and the gorgonzola cream sauce.

And then, dessert. The savoury courses were so good that I went with the 'savoury sweet' dessert. How could I pass up the description of 'butternut pistachio-chili cheesecake, saffron syrup, butternut crisps and salted caramel? Paired with the Clos Malverne Ellie MCC rosé, named for the winemaker's 'mother-in-law's sparkling personality', it was all that and more.

The slightly tart cheesecake was balanced by the sweetly artful swirls of caramel, saffron and butternut, but I swooned just as much over my husband's 'white and dark chocolate' dessert, featuring a jigsaw-block mousse of white chocolate and dark chocolate, with cubes of strawberry jelly, fresh strawberry and chocolate crumb to break up the sheer chocolatiness. He's not a dessert man, but the muscadet made from sweet riesling grapes made this dish a must and between us we finished absolutely everything on every single plate – even the edible flowers.





By then we were completely satiated but I'm sad we didn't try the other dessert option as the other tables were raving about it – pecan nut tart with carrot cake ice-cream, honeycomb and cinnamon meringue. Next time!

Whimsical ice cream-wine pairing

Still on the dessert track, Clos Malverne offers an ice-cream and wine pairing separate from the lifestyle package but we could resist a taste, especially as this was the first wine estate in Stellenbosch to offer this unique tasting experience – and at just R86, you can't pass this up!

While my husband and the wine merchant bonded over the meaning behind their tattoos - #malebonding – we were presented with four dishes of the prettiest seasonal ice cream I've seen, each with an accompanying glass of wine.

“ On the [#blog](#) this week - scenes from our amazing stay at [@ClosMalverne](#). The [#icecream](#) and [#winepairing](#) is a must... [https://t.co/uB61cFuCHh pic.twitter.com/l9oSagY6yM](#)— Rambling Litchi (@Leigh_Andrews) [May 4, 2018](#) ”

We started with the 'lemongrass, chilli and litchi', paired with the equally refreshing, fruity Clos Malverne Sauvignon Blanc Brut.

Then we had the 'gingerbread, cranberry and white chocolate' with the berry-peppery on the nose and palate Clos Malverne Cabernet/Shiraz. Next, a scoop of the Autumn-ultimate 'parsnip, saffron, salted caramel and pumpkin seeds,' with the estate's coffee-style Pinotage Le Café – literally a mouthful, this is full bodied and smoky-strong, making those caramelised pumpkin seeds and smoked sweet parsnip sing.

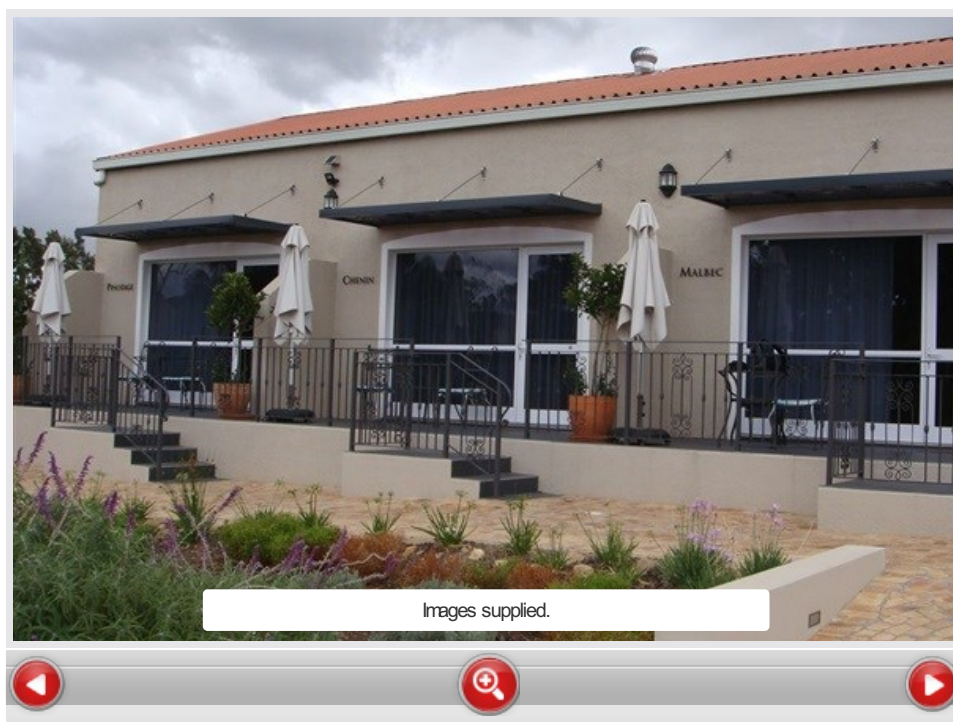
Last, the melty-smooth 'orange, *gluhwein* and star aniseed', paired with the syrupy Clos Malverne Honeydew. Citrussy-sweet, the gluhwein component is the estate's own heated Pinotage.

The ice creams were all immensely flavoursome and the wines definitely paired well, but our favourites were the gingerbread and the orange-gluhwein... Or maybe the lemongrass-chilli-litchi and parsnip-caramel-pumpkin seeds. Hmm. This pairing is definitely a win as you're sure to find a flavour combination you love, even if you're not there for the lifestyle package.

By then, having spent three hours and counting filling our bellies, we were more-than-full and a nap was in order. If, like us, you stay the night – the hour or so road trip back home seems a little less of a must after all that wine and we couldn't really rest our heads on the table in the cathedral-like food hall – so it was time to make our way to our room.

Sunset coffee and poolside parfaits

If we thought the views from the restaurant were something, we in for just as much of a treat when we saw our room and its view. Each is wine-themed – we were in Merlot, decorated in more of the pleasant cream-and-green tones that worked so well in the spa, with floral water colours by R Rust and ‘winter touches’ like extra blankets and mosquito spray to ensure a pleasant night.

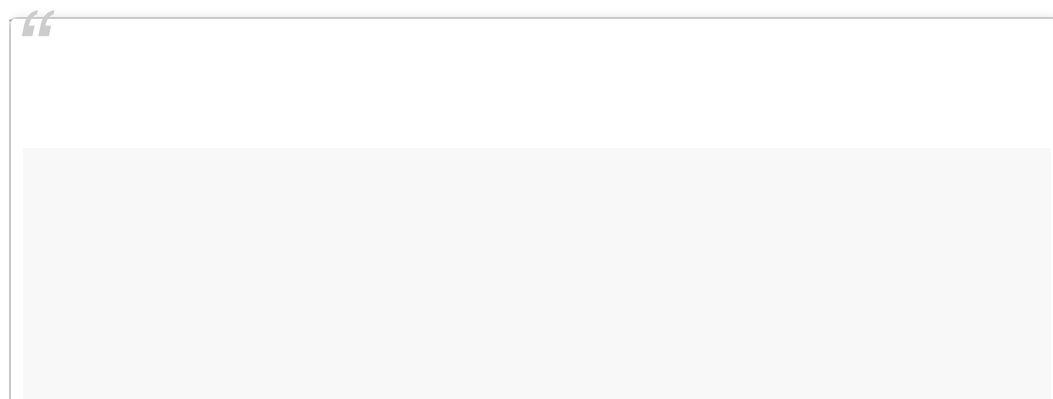


As each luxurious guest room has a full wall of glass, we saw clear across the valley of vineyard and couldn't look away from the icy-blue pool framed by immense lavender bushes. So French! If you're feeling a little cold, there's air-conditioning Wi-Fi and DSTv to keep you happy indoors. There's also a walk-in shower extending the breadth of one wall in the bathroom, with Hansgrohe taps and classic Miss Lynn bath products to wash away the city blues.

There's also a gift in-room of three wines to take home with you, as well as plush gowns and slippers to add to that luxurious sense of being somewhere special.

And so we spent an evening sipping coffee and watching the sunset from our balcony after a daring plunge in the private pool that proved to be just as cold as it looked – Brr! Just what we needed after all that grub and grog. Plastic glasses are provided in-room in case you'd like to take that party poolside.

When you wake up, there's ample time to relax as check-out time is 11am, and breakfast isn't served in the restaurant, as it only opens at noon. That's not to say you're left to your own devices. We were pleasantly surprised to find an in-room continental breakfast, ready for you to consume at your leisure once you've woken.





Also on this week's #blog - #breakfast #parfait perfection at @closmalverne last weekend. Link in bio!
#weekend #yoghurt #fruit #goodmorning 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷

A post shared by Leigh Andrews (@ramblinglitchi123) on May 4, 2018 at 10:26am PDT

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A freshly prepared fruit-and-yoghurt parfait awaits each guest in the fridge, as well as milk and orange juice, with boiled eggs, two mini *pain au chocolat* pastries under a glass cloche, tubs of granola and a covered bowl of fruit awaiting on your in-room table, and enough tea and coffee sachets to keep you going overnight and into the morning. Just the thing for a Sunday start.

We slowly packed our bag, waved farewell to the fluffy brown cows on the adjacent field and added Clos Malverne to our 'Stellenbosch must-see' list. Staff were unobtrusive and eager to make our stay as relaxing as possible.

The downside? We only stayed one night, and with all that wine sampling we didn't even step into the official tasting room. All the more reason to return this Winter. Though we only reviewed a mini version, the full lifestyle package comes highly recommended. If you don't have a significant other, take a friend! [Click here](#) to view the pics I posted on my blog.

**Leigh Andrews was a guest of Clos Malverne, situated on Devon Valley Road, Stellenbosch. The Clos Malverne Lifestyle Package includes two nights' accommodation for two people in one of the estate's luxury units, a four-course food & wine pairing lunch, pure bliss couple spa treatment and take-home gift of some of the estate's award-winning wines, all for R4,950 for two people. Contact Michelle Nolte on 021 865 2022 or email accommodation@closmalverne.co.za for more information about their Lifestyle Package.*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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