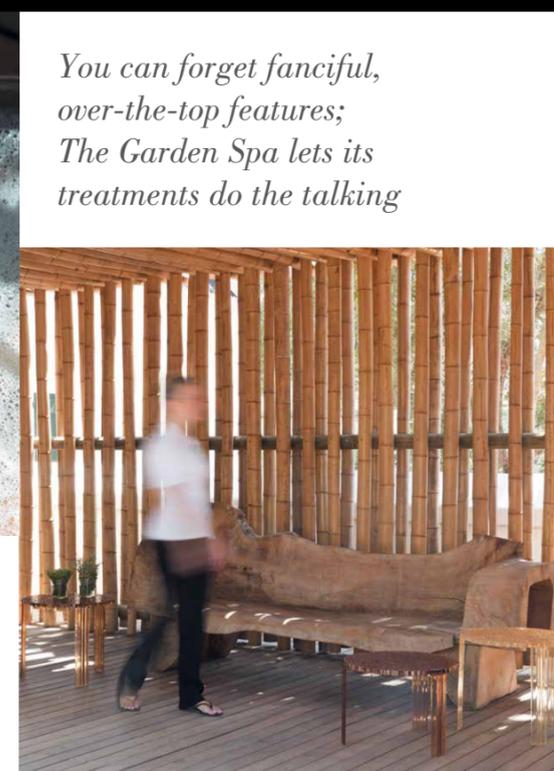


# THE GREATEST *ESCAPE*

LOOKING FOR A WEEKEND GETAWAY, OR EVEN JUST SOMEWHERE TO UNWIND? CONSIDER A DAY AT BABYLONSTOREN

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*You can forget fanciful, over-the-top features; The Garden Spa lets its treatments do the talking*

Babylonstoren is the much-talked-about produce farm, a stone's throw from Franschhoek, that dates back to the 1690s. Its defining feature is the garden, of course, where they grow and produce everything from pumpkins to granadillas to goat's cheese. At this time of year, ripe figs accompany the breakfast harvest table, and sweet, juicy late-summer grapes are part of a welcome basket when you stay in one of the Farm Hotel cottages.

You may have read about the morning guided walks of the garden, the simple colour-coordinated salad plates at restaurant Babel, or the charcuterie platters and make-your-own sandwich options at the more casual The Greenhouse, but have you discovered the farm's real gem, The Garden Spa?

A short stroll up a gravel path reveals the spa, where each section, or treatment room, is enclosed in its own little "house". The changing room, inside a Cape Dutch-style building, is simple in design, with low-slung doors, and features a wall of grass-green lockers and a standard bench. You can forget fanciful, over-the-top features; The Garden Spa lets its treatments do the talking, especially the life-changing hammam.

The hammam treatment is based on ancient Turkish tradition, where a public bath was a place for socialising, relaxing and, of course, cleansing. Babylonstoren's is much more luxurious, and you get to experience it in private (with a swimsuit-clad therapist). As you enter the extremely warm and humid room, you'll notice heat coming from the walls, steam hissing from vents and the sound of water gushing rapidly from a brass tap. There are no regular spa-like sounds here; rather, the sound of sloshing and bubbling water will become the soundtrack to the treatment.

While you derobe, your therapist will slosh warm water from copper bowls on to the floor and onto the raised marble platform in the centre of the room, making the entire room wet. She encourages you to use a tiny nugget of olive oil soap (made from oil produced on the farm) to cleanse your skin, and also to wet your hair.

You then lie on the slippery warm marble and the exfoliation begins, with a Turkish mitten called a *kese*, in sweeping motions up your calves and arms. It feels rough, but it's stimulating to the senses. Skin tingles as warm water is poured over your limbs to rinse. Then the therapist performs a trigger-point massage, stretching and pulling your legs and arms.

Next is a body-butter massage, a simple massage treatment to lock in the moisture your skin is lapping up. Then lastly, once you're scrubbed and smoothed, and have inhaled the steamy, moist air for close on an hour, you'll receive a gentle hair shampoo and condition.

After a few minutes of rest, you're helped up into a sitting position and cool water is poured

over your head (with some warning!). You're given a warm towel and walked into the annex room, to return to reality with a glass of cool water and a plate of fresh figs.

It's a highly sensory, invigorating and unique hydro treatment, unlike any other in this part of the world. And despite its intensity, you will leave feeling rejuvenated, relaxed and almost a bit dazed. The hammam treatment extends the philosophy of the farm, where everything is pure, unique, homegrown – and executed to perfection.

*With thanks to Babylonstoren. Visit [babylonstoren.co.za](http://babylonstoren.co.za) for more information and an extensive spa menu.*