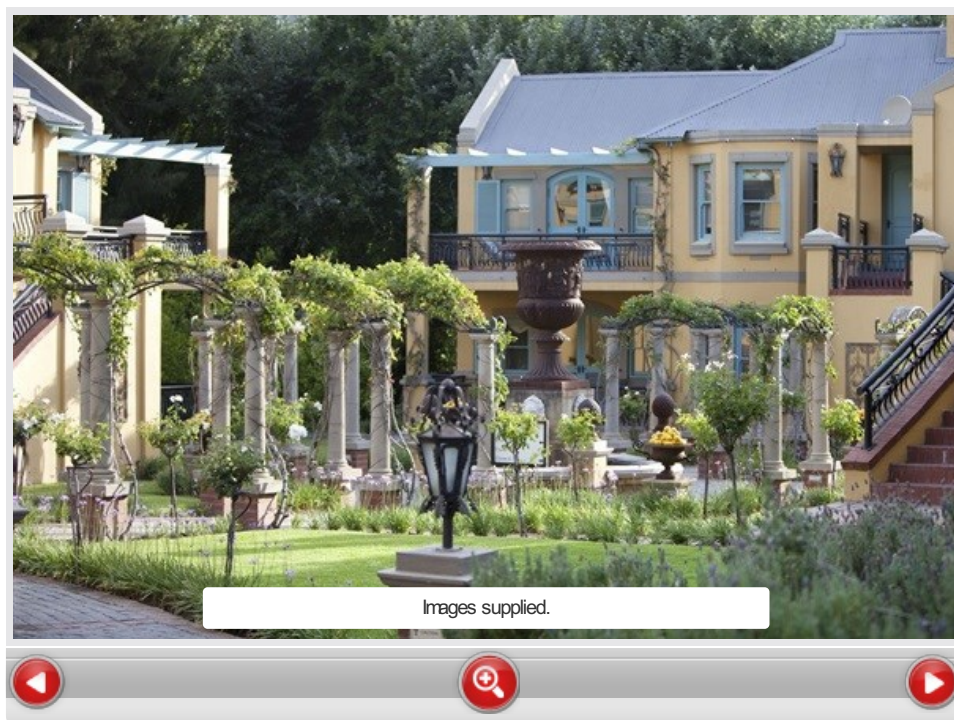


Relax in the 5-star fairytale charm of Franschhoek Country House

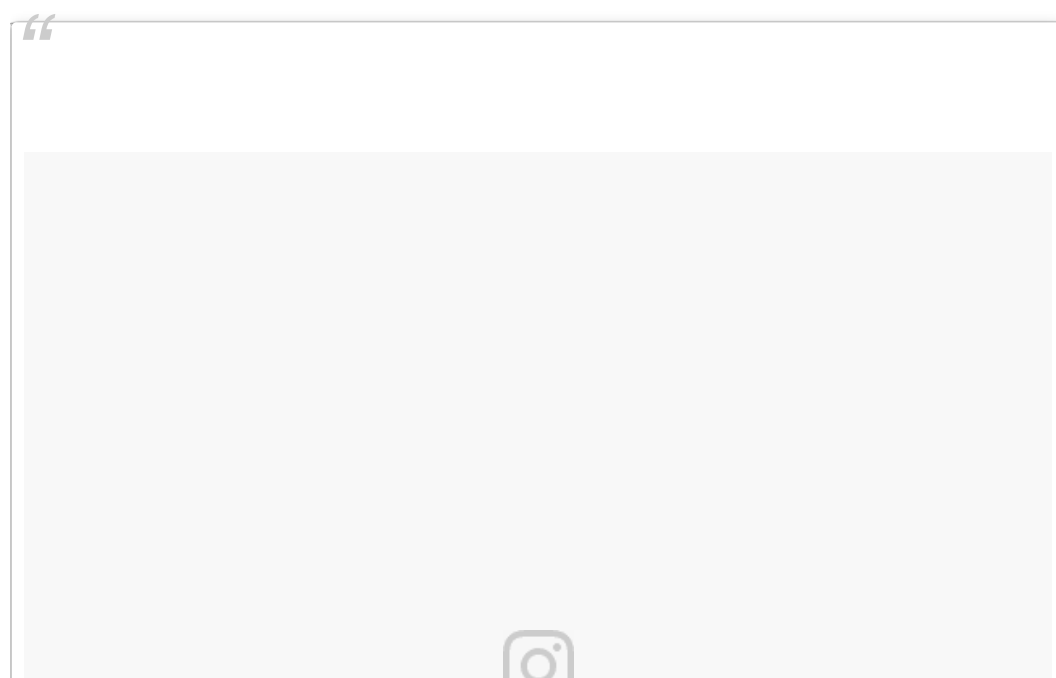
By  Leigh Andrews

1 Jun 2018

Set along the Huguenot Main Road 1.5km before you hit the main town of Franschhoek, you'll see the lemon-yellow with turquoise-trim buildings that look like they're right out of a fairytale. Here's how the Franschhoek Country House (FCH) experience exceeded our expectations and why you need to take advantage of their 'Local is lekker' package.



After an efficient check-in and friendly welcome at reception, where we were given a personalised envelope filled with information on saving water tours and activities in the area and those turquoise bicycles for hire; we were walked towards the lovely bubbling fountain through vine-covered archways and lemons for the taking.



"Reading is sanity, writing humanity." - Achmat Dangor 💎💎 Also on this week's #blog - a few snaps from the @franlitfest in @franschhoek_sa last weekend. The weather was just the thing to inspire a spot of reading at the fireplace! 💎💎💎💎💎

A post shared by Leigh Andrews (@ramblinglitchi123) on May 25, 2018 at 10:26am PDT

”

Assistant general manager Ben du Toit explained they were at 90% occupancy due to the Franschhoek Literary Festival that weekend, and that the carefully restored manor house, formerly a perfumery, dates back to 1890.

Classic chic French charm

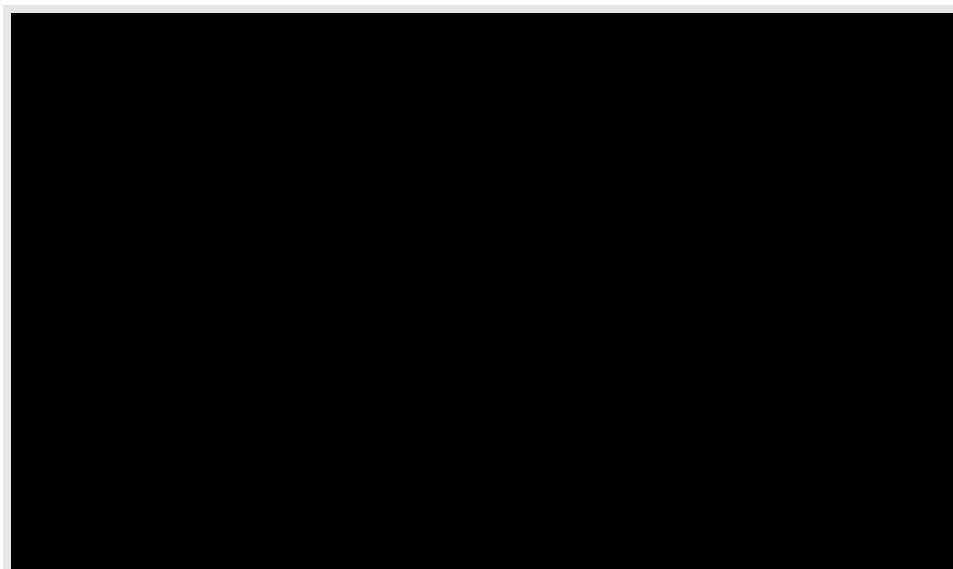
Steeped in the wonder of this 5-star Provençale-style boutique hotel's history, no sooner had we taken a walk through the lovely French style villa – ours was upstairs with shuttered sections and French doors – than there was a ring at the door and we were presented with a smile and wooden tray from the award-winning on-site Monneaux restaurant, voted as one of the American Express Platinum Fine Dining Restaurants and one of SA's Top 10 Restaurants for two years consecutively.



Image: Leigh Andrews.

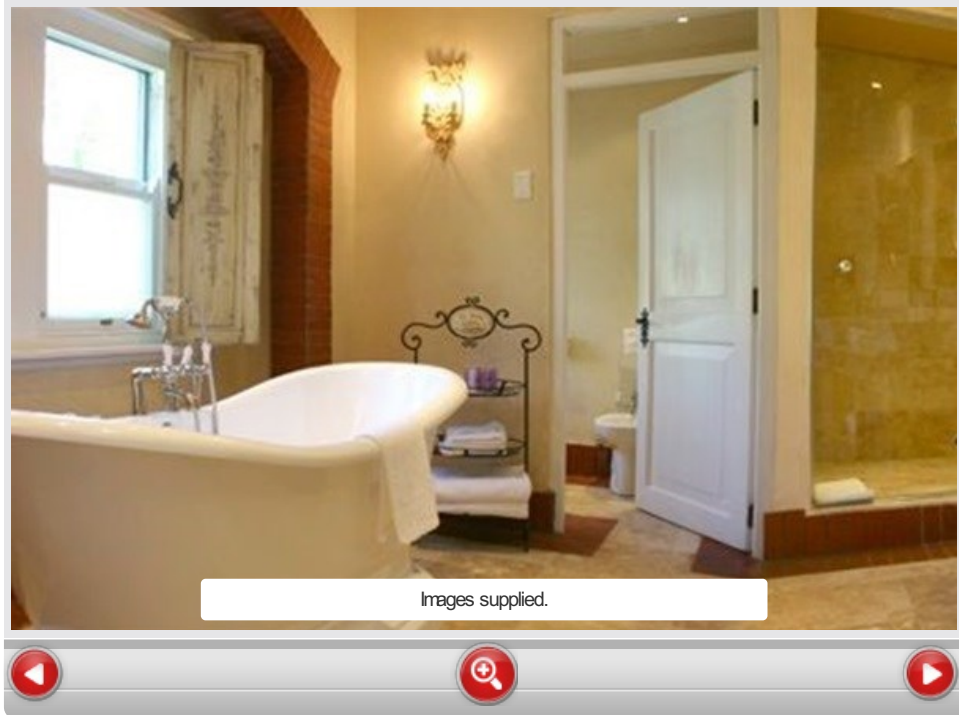
The tray was just drool-worthy, featuring a welcome snack of flutes of bubbly paired with hot crumbed prawns, cheesy croquettes, beef in wine sauce and a berry cheesecake pot featuring raspberries, candied rind, gooseberries and strawberries. Not that we were short on snacks, as there are Mantelli's biscuits, rusks and Terbodore pods at the coffee station just inside the front door and a fruit bowl filled with grapes, bananas, pears, red and green apples, kiwi fruit, Sharon fruit, naartjies and pomegranate. It set the tone for our fairytale stay at FCH.

We quickly set it down in the main living area and wolfed it down while admiring the suite's bay windows, exposed wooden ceiling beams and shabby chic floral sofas, pale tiling and carpets, as well as a cherubim-topped gas fireplace. There's even a surround sound system that can be heard as far off as the bedroom and even in the bathroom as there are speakers beside the plugless, footless bath.





Showers are encouraged as a result of the prolonged drought in the Cape, with water-saving reminders everywhere you look – there's even a handy wall-mounted hourglass timer so you don't use too much water while in the glass-walled shower.

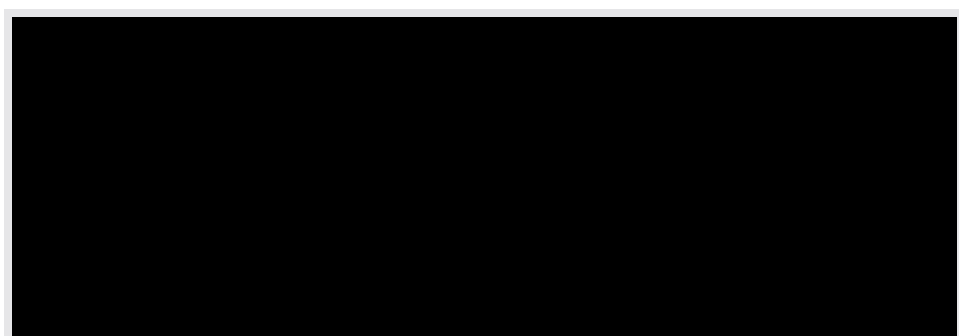


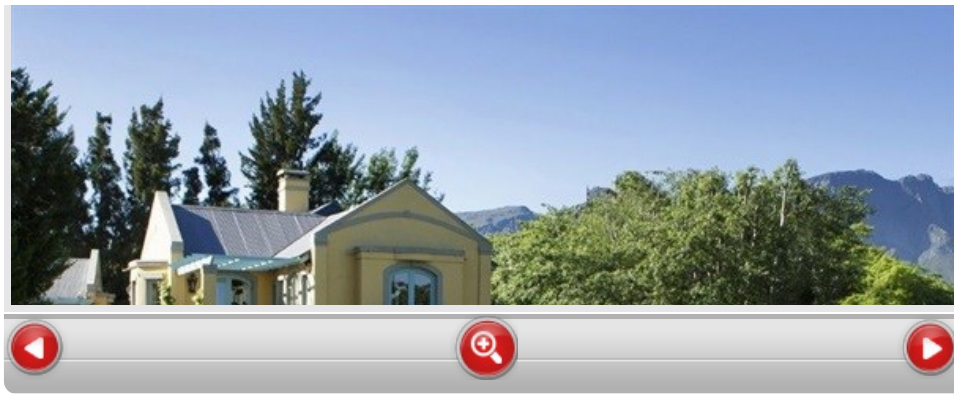
There are also wall-mounted candlesticks sconces, as well as a separate toilet and bidet, a full set of fittingly French lavender bath products and his-and-hers basin units so you and your partner can ablute simultaneously. We counted a total of three telephones – one even in the bathroom, in case of emergency.

Have lemons, make lemonade!

That French country fairytale charm is positively everywhere, from the chandelier-style lights in the bedroom and living room area to the muted pastel-and-gold colour scheme throughout, with little archways onto the balcony from the lounge and leaves-carved-into-four-poster bed-filled bedroom, where you expect birds to appear and sing to you at any moment. But it's lemons, not birds, that you see everywhere you look, from the embossing on the crisp, plush linens to the etching on the glass and the bowls of fresh citrus positively everywhere you look – even in the restaurant bathroom.

This became even more evident after a quick tour of the green grounds dotted with lavender and rosemary, enveloped by those Franschhoek blue mountains. We put a hand in the slightly heated pool and the infinitely cooler pool, surrounded by turquoise towels and a lifeguard ring.





It's a bit of a personal challenge that my Aquarian husband and I will enter any body of water I come across – whether it's a Jacuzzi, swimming pool or the deep blue sea and yes, even in the middle of winter.

We had a wonderful time in the unreal blue waters of FCH, waving to surprised onlookers as the Franschoek wine tram trundled past – the trick is to hop into the cold pool first and then ease yourself into the slightly heated pool – if you follow our lead, you won't even notice you're missing that bath.

On closer inspection at the towel stand, we saw delicious homemade lemonade with mint leaves and slices of cucumber that soaked up that lemony goodness. I may or may not have had more than one glass of this.



Images supplied.

I would have had more had my husband not reminded me of the complimentary sherry, local wines and soft drinks served from 2pm to 5pm, with pretzels and salted peanuts. Couple that with a framed TV that was featuring the British royals wedding, and happy staff that all get along well and greet you politely if you meet along the pathway, and the fairytale touch was complete.

By then it was a cool and cloudy evening so we were ready to snap the elusive sunset through a gap in the trees. I perched somewhat precariously from various angles on the property – then raced back to the room for a quick coffee on our suite's balcony with wrought iron furniture and blue striped cushions begging you to snuggle down for a nap with a view. Maybe just a quick one before a (timed) pre-dinner shower...

Monneaux showcases Franschoek's finest wines

The sun having just set, we stepped carefully along the lightly lit pathway strewn with autumnal leaves, following the signs to Monneaux. Walking into Monneaux, we instantly sensed why it's won so many awards. I say 'sensed' and not just 'saw', as there's the winter-welcome heat of the fireplace, the soft strains of food-friendly Michael Buble-esque crooning. That's all

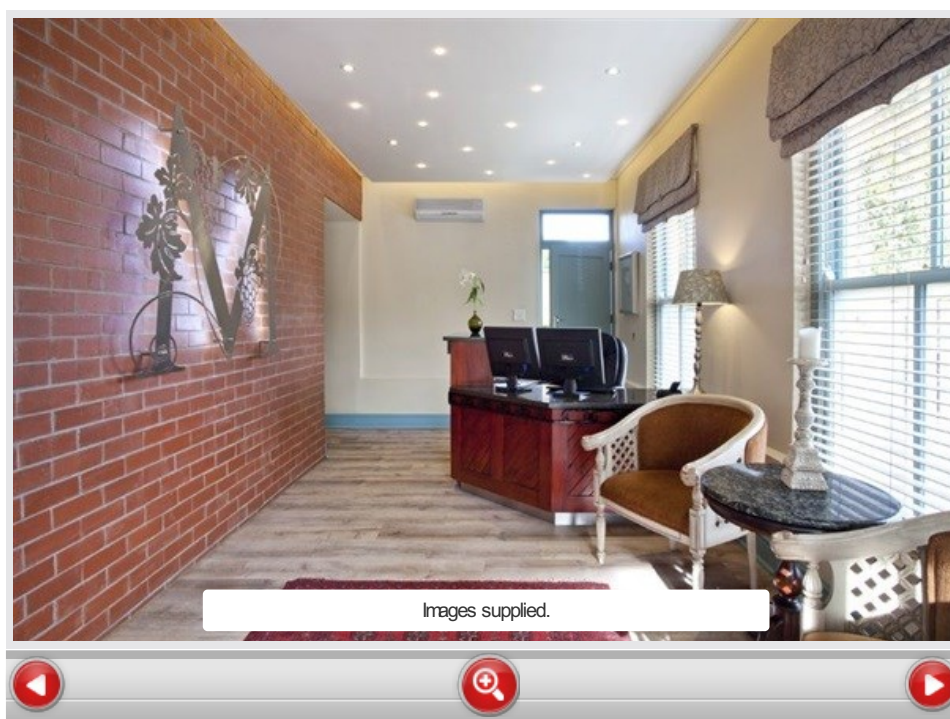
before tasting the food.



Images supplied.

Seated by the roaring fire and presented with pre-dinner drinks of water and the Rickety Bridge Merlot, we paged through the FCH “green bible” of press coverage – a handy tome of its history over the years, in which Reuben Riffel features strongly.

We were walked through the menu options – there’s a chef’s menu and a petite assiette menu. Having spent some time pointing out must-haves on both, we ended up ordering from the chef’s menu, as recommended by Foster, as this meant we’d have slightly larger portions of three different courses, but we couldn’t resist adding one extra each from the petite assiette menu.

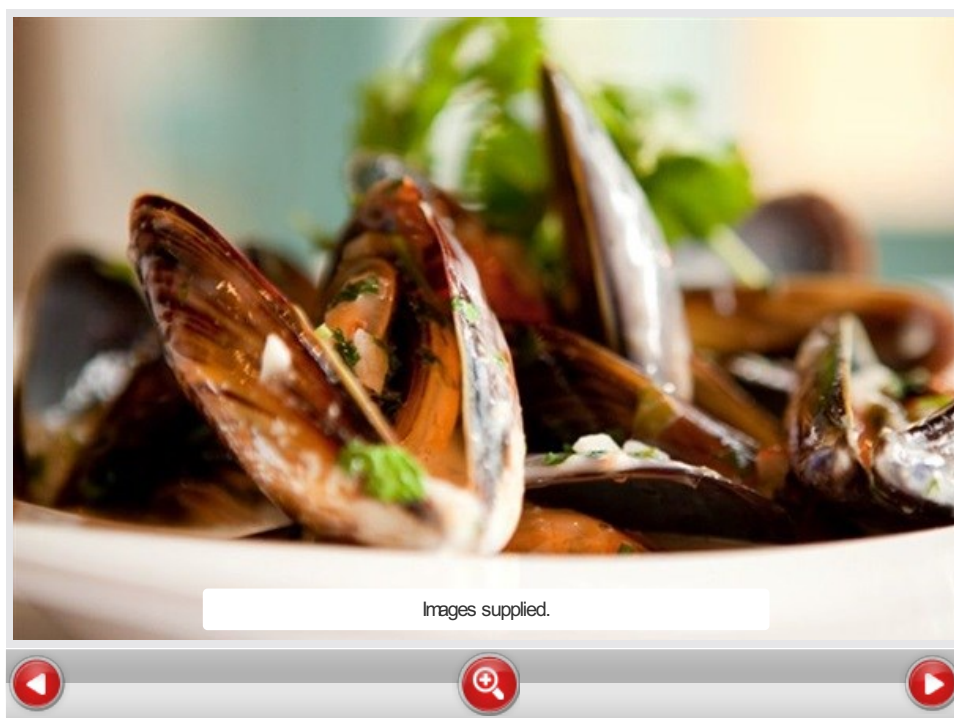


Images supplied.

Choices made, we were seated at a table strewn with white rose petals that we’d seen being plucked while we were in the pool earlier and treated to flutes of Brut L’Ormarins and Appletizer, as well as just-out-the-oven health bread with moreish hummus, balsamic vinegar and olive oil.

Luckily that was just the thing to whet the appetite, as my three courses, *sans* wine pairing, looked as follows:

The crumbed Brie salad with figs, candied walnuts, caramelised beetroot and balsamic reduction as a filling starter; followed by the slow-roasted lamb *osso bucco* on a bed of the softest gnocchi in sweet bolognaise with grated Parmesan gremolata. For dessert, I went for the 'sorbet salad', featuring quenelles of strawberry, apple and melt-in-the-mouth meringue; followed by my extra dessert of *apple tart tatin*, accompanied by a tiny pitcher of savoury blue cheese compote.



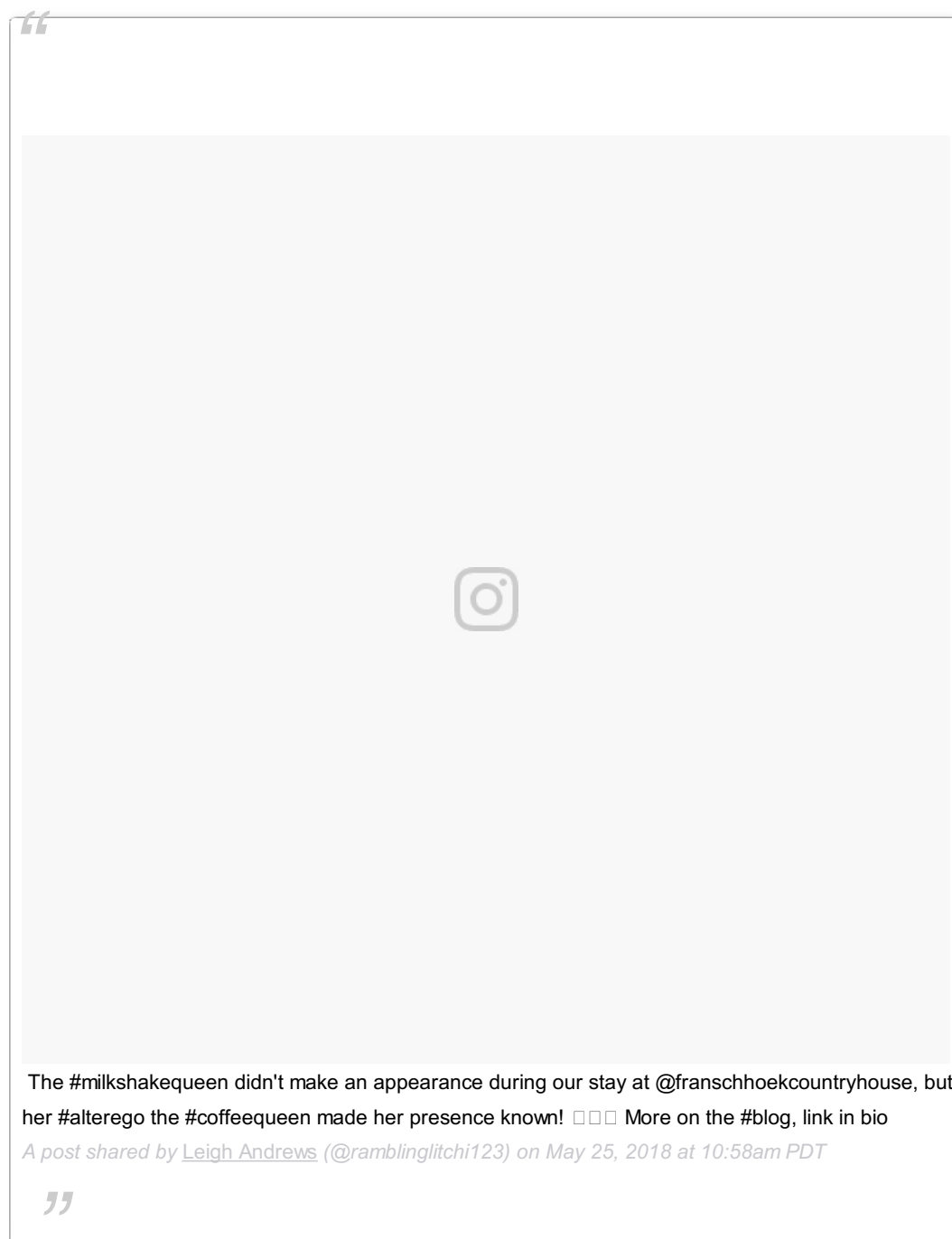
Opting for completely different tastes, my husband went for the chef's three-course option with wine pairing. Starting with what he called "absolutely wonderful" steamed sweet chili mussels with garlic bruschetta (he swivelled and turned his bowl every which way to politely spoon every drop), paired with the tropical La Motte Sauvignon blanc, a separate bowl was thoughtfully provided for the mussel shells, as well as a finger bowl of water with (you guessed it) lemon slices.

Nothing fishy about the seafood dishes at Monneaux

He also couldn't resist ordering the smoked octopus in dashi stock starter from the petit assiette menu, which he described as "tasting more like the sea than the sea does." Concerned this meant it was overly salty, he was quick to say, "Imagine yourself standing waist deep in seawater, when you notice a wave coming towards you, then smashing you in the face - in a good way!" That means it was good. The strong anchovy scent of this dish meant it paired perfectly with the Haute Cabriere blush Pinot Noir.

For mains he stuck with the seafood theme but hopped back to the chef's menu for the 'fish of the day' – smoked salmon served on not-as-spicy-as-you'd-expect prawn jambalaya rice with a separate pitcher of creamy lemon butter sauce and a glass of the Pierre Jourdan Tranquile.

For dessert, he opted for the chef's vanilla-flecked creme brûlée, along with crunchy caramel bits, and a glass of the dessert-perfect Pierre Jourdan Ratafia – a 100% Chardonnay fortified by brandy to become a syrupy sweet white port.



The #milkshakequeen didn't make an appearance during our stay at @franschhoekcountryhouse, but her #alterego the #coffeequeen made her presence known! ☐☐☐ More on the #blog, link in bio

A post shared by Leigh Andrews (@ramblinglitchi123) on May 25, 2018 at 10:58am PDT

Clearly not just wines from the Cape, these are Franschhoek's finest. Cutlery was switched out between courses and service was swift despite the fact that the dining area was absolutely packed. And just when we thought we were done, we were told there was one more sweet course yet to come – Pure dark chocolatey truffles that coated our mouths in gloriously bitter cocoa and just called for a final coffee – in our suite though, as we'd been in Monneaux for three hours by then.

We linked arms and slowly made our way back to our suite, where we lounged in our lounge. Note that there are no gowns in the rooms, you'll need to request the short-sleeve karate style version we wore from reception. But there's almost no need what with your temperature control options of both air-conditioning and underfloor heating.

Brilliant country breakfast spread

After a sleep in which the underfloor carpet heating seeped into our dreams, we woke to find it had rained quite heavily overnight, so all was wet and glistening anew.

Heading down to breakfast we heard the cheerful chatter of those already there, with paintings of food on the wall just the thing as we swallowed that first glug of filter coffee – there's also a selection of green and black teas if coffee's not your thing – before making selections from the breakfast buffet table.

This included the full spread of granola, strawberry pops, flaked almonds, dried fruits, soft cheeses and crackers and charcuterie, mustards and pickles, fruit juice and cut fruit and dried fruit and fruit in a jar – note that the cereal bowls are very deep, so you may end up scooping up more than you expected! Especially as there's also a hot breakfast menu with a full list of options.

“



"I don't think he knows about second breakfast, Pip..." Aragorn may be clueless on that front, but I'm not. If that's not one of the best looking #breakfast #buffets I've ever seen - and I've seen many! 💎💎
💎💎💎💎☐ Thanks @franschhoekcountryhouse, more on #blog. Link in bio!

A post shared by Leigh Andrews (@ramblinglitchi123) on May 25, 2018 at 10:42am PDT

”

We ended up with a Belgian warrie topped with bacon, bananas and berries and the eggs benedict topped with both spinach and ham – followed by a tiny twist of croissant to add a French taste to the breakfast. Just scrumptious.

Another bonus? Checkout is only at 11am, so there's time to savour your breakfast and properly pack all your belongings – and even have a quick nap – before heading off home or to the next stop on your journey. It's easy to see why Franschhoek is said to be the culinary capital of South Africa. If you're a true oenophile, FCH and Monneaux are the perfect base as you'll sample some of the region's finest.

The only downsides were that we didn't get a chance to try out bicycles on the rain-slicked roads, and also the spotty-at-best Wi-Fi.



It's a Francophile's folly

Brian Berkman: contributing editor, travel 21 Jun 2010



The welcome note mentions that Wi-Fi throughout the property is complimentary at 500mb per device per day but the hotspot service is recommended mainly for web browsing and emails – you'll struggle if you're aiming to upload the hundreds of pics you've taken from your stay to social media. But that's what #latergram is for... Click through to [my blog](#) for the pics we took during our stay.

**Leigh Andrews was a guest of Franschhoek Country House and Monneaux restaurant. Note that the FCH 'Local is Lekker' package, where you can stay in at a reduction over the existing per room B&B winter rate – whether you opt for a standard room, luxury room, garden cottage or villa suite – is valid for SA residents only and runs until 31 August 2018. [Click here](#) or call 021 8763386 for more information, and be sure to follow FCH and Monneaux [on Twitter](#) for the latest updates.*

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.

- Make Ocean Eleven luxury guesthouse your Hermanus homebase - 20 Mar 2020
- Savour Hemel-en-Aarde's harmoniously matched food and wine at Creation Wine Estate - 18 Mar 2020
- Next-level pairings with Stellenbosch Hills' popcorn-and-Polkadraai - 30 Jan 2020
- Haute Cabrière brightens Franschhoek mornings with breakfast - 15 Jan 2020
- Feel charmingly rejuvenated at Kove Collection's renovated The Marly - 14 Jan 2020

[View my profile and articles...](#)