



The diplomat's choice

Eugene Yiga finds an oasis in the heart of Pretoria at the Menlyn Boutique Hotel.

Did you know that Pretoria has the second-highest number of embassies in the world? (Washington DC is first – because America.) And in the heart of Jacaranda City is the Menlyn Boutique Hotel, rightly rated as one of the city's best.

Formerly known as the Menlyn Guest Lodge (and awarded Best Guest House at the 2012 Tshwane Tourism Awards), the establishment was renovated and rebranded in June 2012. The goal was to transform the property, originally purchased from the Cuban Embassy, into a world-class luxury destination.

Located in the heart of Pretoria, the hotel is an oasis for business and ambassadorial travellers. And even though it's just two minutes from the N1 highway (making it easily accessible from OR Tambo International Airport), it feels like stepping into another world.

The hotel includes standard rooms, self-catering units, executive rooms, and the

impressive Presidential Suite. With high ceilings, neutral tones and forest motifs, it's like staying in a luxurious log cabin in the woods. And yet this tranquil abode still has all the modern amenities, including a Mac-like PC in an office 'nook'.

Many locals visit for the Black Bamboo Restaurant, which changes its menu every two to three weeks, but keeps to the theme of international delicacies with a local twist. Thanks to head chef Pellie Grobler, flavours and textures contrast with innovative flair. Add this to the selection of rare wines, and the dining experience is an absolute delight.

Each dish – from the herb-crusted springbok fillet with chocolate-red-wine sauce to the mango spaghetti with coconut parfait – is presented as a work of art, much like the sculptures and statues sprinkled around the property. Just as creative is the Bamboozled, the restaurant's signature cocktail, which has secret ingredients that the waiter wasn't



at liberty to divulge. All I can say is that it's bubbly, smoky and green.

Breakfast comes in two ranges, depending on how much time you have. If you're making use of the hotel's conferencing facilities – they can accommodate up to 100 delegates – the Rush Hour selection includes the paw-paw crumble (with toasted almonds, yoghurt cream, cider syrup, and paw-paw-seed dust) as a highlight. But if you're starting the day on a relaxing note, the standout Go Slow comprises smoked trout and sweet-potato rösti, with poached egg, spring onions and wasabi mayo. And once you're done burning off all those justified calories at the on-site gym, treat yourself to some time out at the Beauty Within Salon and Spa.

Pretoria may be second on the international embassy list, but the Menlyn Boutique Hotel is the clear first choice.

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