

Poolside perfection at the President Hotel

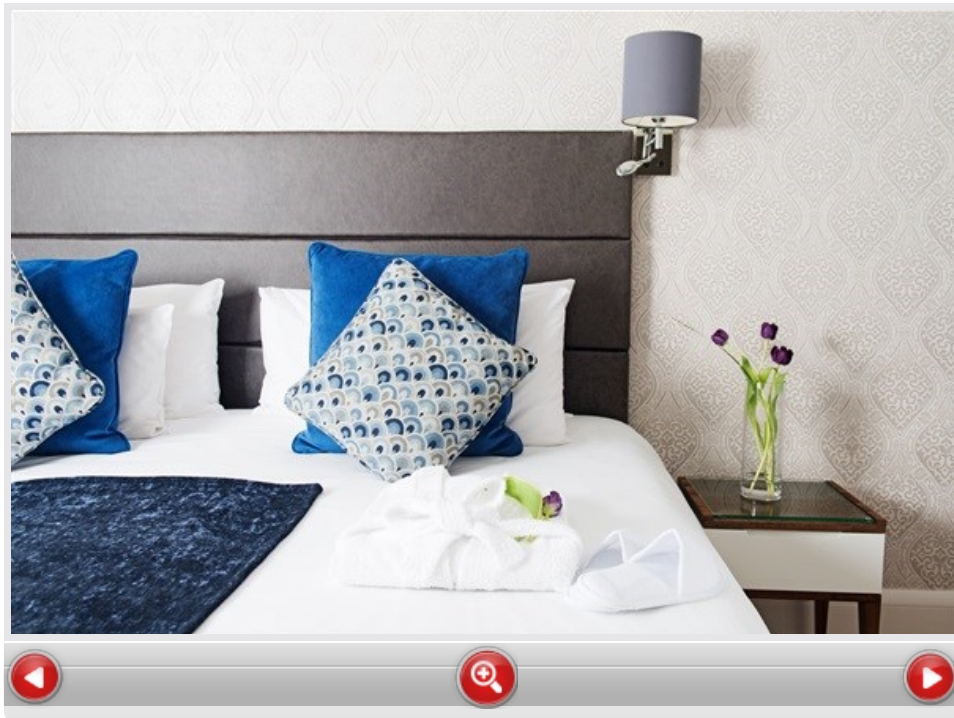
 By Leigh Andrews

13 Apr 2017

Officially opened by former president Nelson Mandela in 1998, a stay at the President Hotel in Bantry Bay on the Sea Point side of town is just what we needed last weekend after the previous emotionally draining, politics-driven week.

Walk in and you're instantly a little awestruck by the view of the cool blue pool beyond the lobby where people are splashing about. It simply smells like holiday, with a delicious coconut tang in the air and the Atlantic literally 500m away from the palm tree-bordered pool. But more on that presidential pool later...

After a speedy check in one floor up we were zooming up the silent lift to our room on the fourth floor – you need to be eagle eyed for this as there's no sign the lift has arrived – and key card inserted, we were soon ensconced in our own private wood-toned apartment suite.



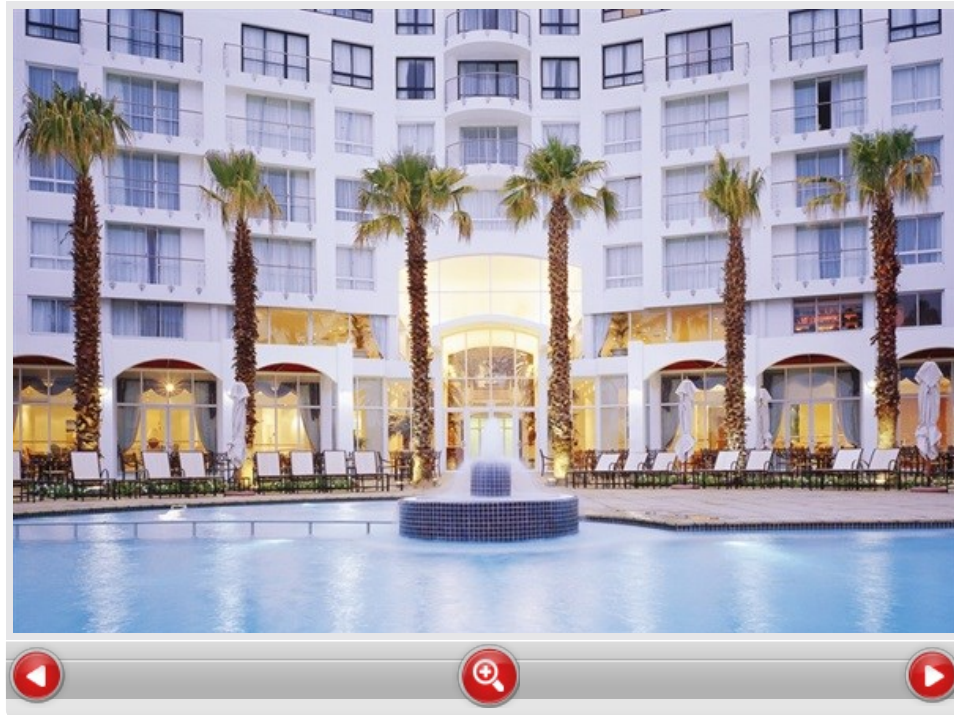
This was a sight for sore eyes complete with coffee station, purified water-stocked fridge and microwave in the self-catering kitchenette, USB ports for easy device charging, and separate square toilet to the full bath with built-in shower and pulsating shower head.

The top feature for me was endless views of the sea on the horizon from the full wall of windows in both the lounge and bedroom, each with their own TV, and the tempting sounds of guests splashing about in that same pool I mentioned earlier. As the hotel also offers conference and spa facilities, it's that rare blend – ideal for a vacationing family, honeymooning couple or weary business traveller alike.

Splashing away our troubles

Quickly unpacking and checking in on social media because it's 2017 and the unrestricted Wi-Fi with the fastest hotel speed in the country means this was done in the blink of an eye, the pool is exactly where we spent the rest of the afternoon. It was pure bliss with gulls soaring low and cawing into the distance then swooping in to sit on the lip of the infinity pool to sip the soft water. We watched this comfortably from adjustable white mesh loungers with head shades that

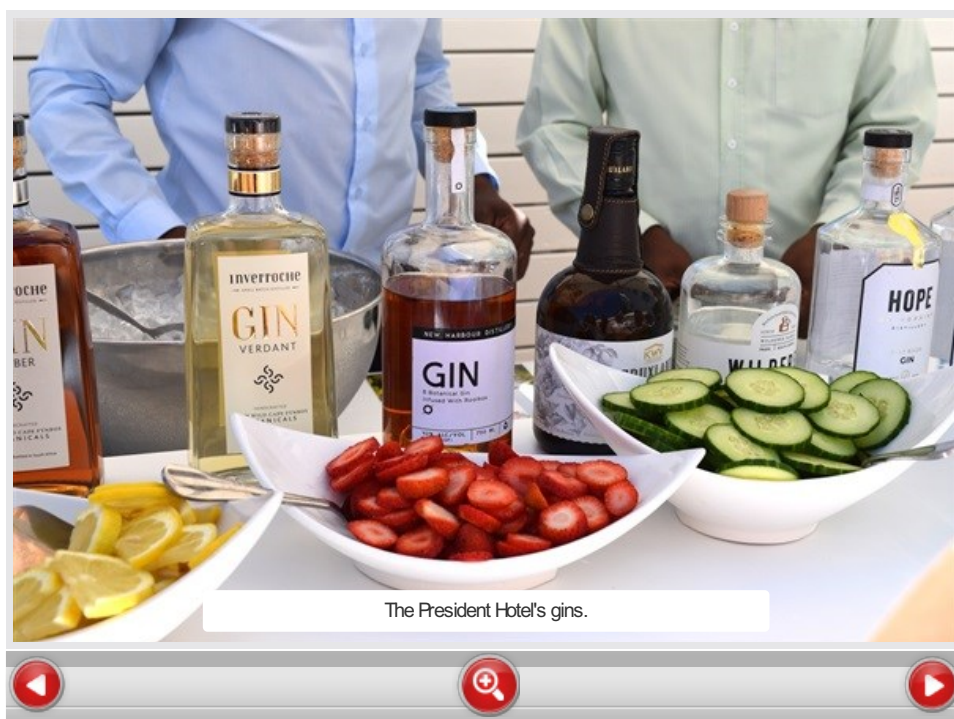
ensure your eyelids sink as you dry off under the last rays of the sun, with friendly, unobtrusive waiters ensuring you're happy and well lubricated on the inside, too.



Hunger pangs kicking in after a fair bit of splashing – so much that the pool's ethereal blue lights kicked in, as did the warm golden lights wound around the palm tree sentries – we reluctantly dried ourselves and headed back to the room to change before pre-dinner cocktails and a three-course feast at The Islands restaurant.

Sipping cocktails with our toes in the sand

Next stop, cocktails while wriggling our toes in beach sand on the wooden deck beside the pool area. The President is known for its gin menu and short gin-based cocktails like their juniper-rich Tom Collins or Kiwi Mint G&T, but those who prefer a sweeter fix are in luck as they also create classic favourites like the Long Island ice tea with sweet fizzy end and pina colada, both served long and perfectly blended to the last double-strawed slurp.

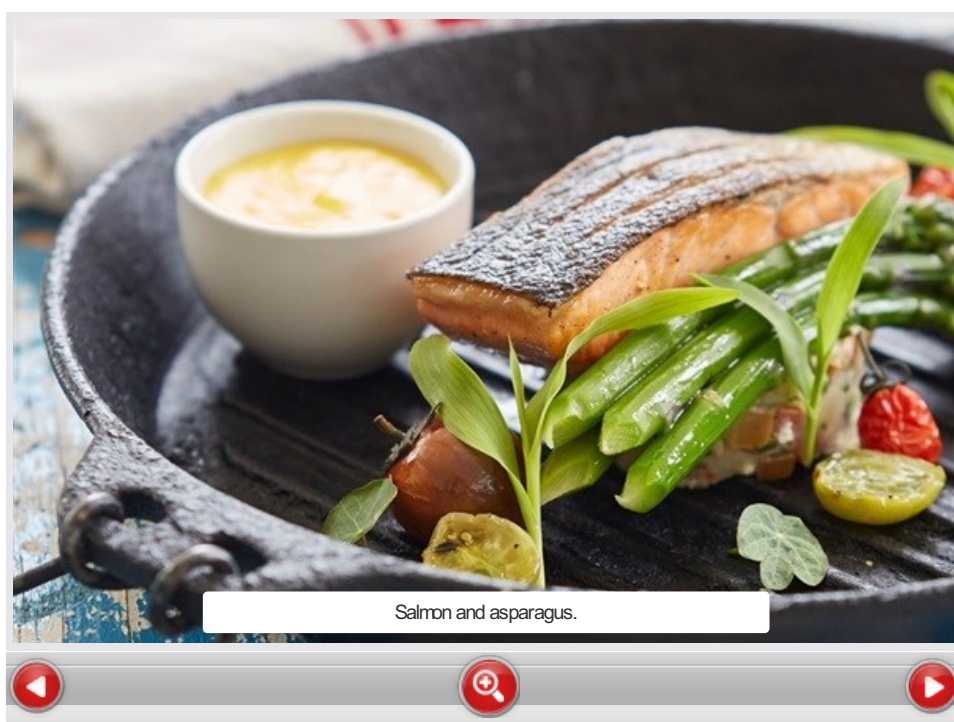


The President Hotel's gins.

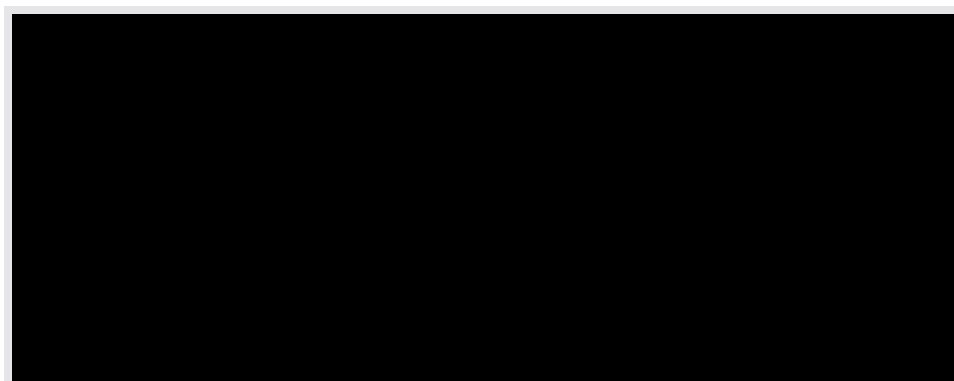
There are also Presidential special blends like the spicy mango daiquiri complete with spicy chili liqueur or the Pornstar martini – a vanilla vodka-passion fruit blend accompanied by a shot of bubbly. They also offer mocktails like the mojito-esque Mosquito for those who prefer to end their evening with a clear head – just the thing to further unwind and get your palate ready for dinner as the sun sets.

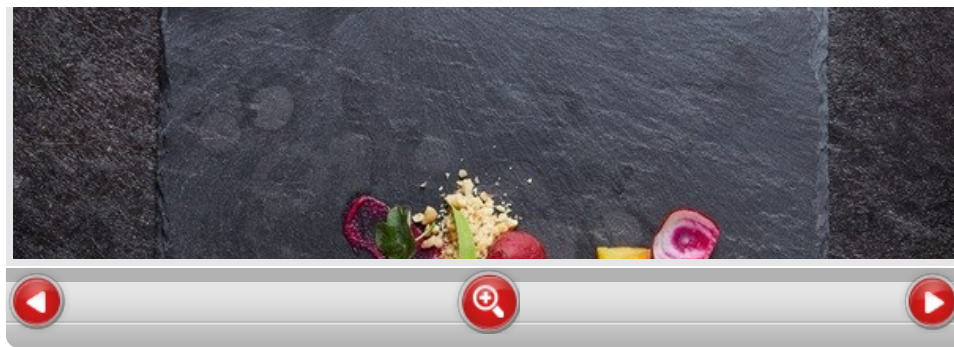
Dining under the stars

We were more than ready for it. With a choice of in or outdoor seating we went for outdoor as the weather was balmy and breathless, a rarity for Cape Town in April. Sommelier Job was keen to share some interesting wines with us and helped my husband select a glass of the Leopards Leap 2014 spicily fruited Merlot to pair with his meal while if you know me you won't be surprised that I went for an ultra-chocolatey milkshake. Subtly sheltered in case of sudden downpour, the tables are situated far enough apart that all you hear is the pleasant hum of fellow diners without worry that you'll back into their table when loosening the top button of your pants, as you'll likely end up doing.



That's because without thinking you mop up the swirl of homemade wholegrain mustard-infused butter on seeded rolls, a moreish start before you've even placed your order. After a few coin-tosses we ended up with starters of the most gorgeous West coast mussels in a creamy black bean and coconut sauce – down in our personal books as one of the best starters my husband has ever had, and he has eaten at some of the country's finest. I opted for the tangy chicken Caesar salad with crisps of bacon, thin sheets of cheese and tiny peeled quail eggs. Delicious and a simply enormous portion. Next up was mains of wow-worthy lightly seared salmon with crunchy asparagus and a tiny dipping bowl of zingy hollandaise that got poured liberally all over my chips – my best of the night – paired with the light Klein Zalze Cellar Selection 2015 Chardonnay. For me, the absolutely enormous beef burger with thin wedges of blue cheese and syrupy figs.





You'll sense my sorrow that our rounded bellies and cheeks meant the most we could muster was a shared sugar waffle with wonderful white chocolate ice cream, brûléed banana chunks and bright, tart berries for dessert – this was an excellent flavour combination, especially washed down with a Blacksmith coffee movement cappuccino. With options like the burgers and waffles available on the night owl menu from 11pm to 6am – that's when the breakfast seating begins – this is a true treat and any item would serve as a filling meal, let alone the typical three courses!

We zipped back up the lift to our room and noted that the thick curtains and large windows seal out the outdoor noise if you don't want to hear the gulls squeaking, pool fountain tumbling and waves crashing in the distance. Content to channel-hop until our eyelids drooped, we were soon embraced in that SA coast novelty – the lullaby of the sea. The bedding is cool, crisp and plump with the room easily climate controlled.

Buffet breakfast bliss

Unfortunately the external climate couldn't be controlled quite that easily so we woke to a cloudy, overcast day – no morning swim for us, but our moods were instantly lifted at the thought of breakfast. This time a buffet in the Islands, it lives up to its title as the best buffet breakfast in Cape Town. Filter coffee is poured with individual pots of tea prepared the moment you seat yourselves. After a quick sip we hopped up for a recon mission. "There are two types of bacon, and you can have kippers OR haddock," my husband excitedly reported back. Apart from the standard hot options there were also litchis and grapes, prunes, pear halves and stewed fruit with three yoghurts to choose from, nuts and warm oats, meats and cheeses and rolled-up salmon, potatoes and a little pastry oven brimming with fresh baked goodness. Oh, we ate and we ate! The only thing missing was grilled tomatoes.

Though a cold front had settled in overnight we were determined to trot along the promenade to work off some off that weight we'd just added. And in a flash, our stay at the President was over.

The only downside was the lack of hotel gowns. This meant we needed to fully dress ourselves for coffee while leaning over the balcony to catch a glimpse of the sunrise and gaze at the pool's early bird visitors – they were literally birds, swooping in low for a sip. That's what I call poolside perfection.

**Leigh Andrews was a guest of the President Hotel and Islands Restaurant. Contact them on +27 21 434 8111, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) and [click here](#) for current specials, rates and availability – note that their pool will be closed for repairs from 1 to 15 May 2017.*

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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