

SLEEPOVER THE TABLE BAY HOTEL

When you're here, you've truly arrived in Cape Town

SUZANNE MORPHET
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Sooner or later, you're going to visit Cape Town. South Africa's oldest city is also, arguably, its most stunning, with a climate that beckons visitors year-round. When the city's grand Table Bay Hotel opened 18 years ago, Nelson Mandela made it official, lending it a cachet that carries on today. With a recent \$2-million dollar revamp, the hotel is at its gracious best again with new decor that retains the Victorian look and feel of the original design. Even the brand new brasserie Camissa looks old school with brass-tacked leather chairs, black leather banquettes and red brick walls.

LOCATION, LOCATION

There are other five-star hotels along Cape Town's waterfront, but none that say "you've arrived" quite like Table Bay, a member of Leading Hotels of the World. Guests reach the stately eight-storey structure via a palm-lined driveway where uniformed doormen take your bags. From there you walk through a



The waterfront view is extraordinary from Cape Town's renowned Table Bay Hotel, which was officially opened 18 years ago by Nelson Mandela.

glassed-in portico before entering a spacious lobby furnished with custom-made Persian rugs, wing back chairs and plush red sofas. But before you can sink into one of them, you're drawn to the immense floor-to-ceiling window that frames Table Mountain so perfectly it leaves you momentarily speechless. Besides the extraordinary view, Table Bay is ideally situated for strolls along the Victoria and Albert waterfront with its fashionable shops, restaurants and entertainment. The nearby jetty

where Nelson Mandela and other prisoners departed for Robben Island is now a museum. Tours of the former prison leave from another pier close by.

BEST AMENITY

Forget the cramped gym but be sure to enjoy high tea in the large, light-filled lounge. Fine teas are paired with three courses from savoury sandwiches and warm quiches, to scones with clotted cream and a

diet-blowing array of desserts.

EAT IN OR EAT OUT?

With talented Canadian Jocelyn Myers-Adams as the hotel's executive chef, there's no question you eat in. She puts a fresh spin on local ingredients at Camissa, such as *num nums* (a tart red fruit that grows wild) and dune spinach foraged from Cape Town's surrounds. (She also hosts foraging expeditions for guests.) I particularly loved her crispy confit crocodile with *chakalaka* aioli. The hotel is also known for its substantial breakfast buffet, which takes up an entire wall. From cereals to sushi, and fresh-squeezed juices to fresh-shucked oysters, this is more brunch than breakfast. But because a continental breakfast is often included in the room rate, it can be hard to get a table. You can't reserve, so give yourself plenty of time. With all that food, you'll need it.

WHOM YOU'LL MEET

Guests vary with the seasons: You might meet wealthy Arab oil sheiks escaping the heat of

the Middle Eastern summer, or South Africans down from Johannesburg for a weekend splurge in winter.

IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING

Rooms on the second floor look onto a raised roofline from another part of the hotel that is so hideous you'll want to keep the curtains closed. Potted palms outside would give guests something to look at other than concrete and gravel.

ROOM WITH A VIEW

Junior suites in each corner are your best bet for striking water and mountain views. The higher up, the better.

The Table Bay Hotel, 6, Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, Cape Town; suninternational.com/table-bay; 329 rooms from 5615 South African rand (\$570) a night, including breakfast.

Special to The Globe and Mail

The writer was a guest of the hotel.

THE INSIDER

Cape Town is a coastal destination like no other

DEIRDRE KELLY

"Cape Town," says Jackie Olivier of Distell, a South African producer of fine wines and spirits, "is a city that wants to be explored." While she travels a lot in her work, Olivier says nothing compares to her hometown. "Climb Lion's Head for magical views, attend an art exhibition or spend an afternoon shopping, the city will never disappoint with its vibrancy, colour and style," she gushes.

Here's Olivier's guide to the best Cape Town has to offer:

BIENTANG'S CAVE

One of South Africa's most pop-

ular coastal towns, Hermanus, is about an hour and a half from Cape Town. My favourite restaurant there is Bientang's Cave, which according to me is the restaurant with the most unique setting in the world. Created out of a traditional cave, the restaurant spills out onto the rocks. There is no better spot to watch the whales. The seafood here could not get any fresher and the variety is overwhelming. *Marine Drive, Hermanus; www.bientangscave.com*

THE GRAND CAFÉ AND BEACH

Now and then I like to get out of the normal routine, dress up and sip expensive Champagne at

one of Cape Town's trendiest bars. Closer to the ocean you cannot get – The Grand Café and Beach is designed for Cape Town's glorious summer nights. *Granger Bay Road, www.grandafri-ca.com*

THE TWELVE APOSTLES HOTEL

Even for Capetonians, this is the best escape you can ask for. The hotel looks out onto the ocean, framed by the spectacular Twelve Apostles mountain range, and waking up to the fresh smell of the sea is magnificent. You feel completely secluded from the hustle and bustle of the city, and here you can

appreciate nature at its best. My favourite time of day? Enjoying a chilled glass of wine while watching the sun set over the Atlantic Ocean. *Victoria Road, Camps Bay, 12apostleshotel.com*

DESRAY BOUTIQUES

I love the trendy yet classic fashion that designer Desiree Jearey creates. But it's not only the clothing I enjoy. I admire her entrepreneurial spirit to grow her business from scratch, starting in Greenmarket Square, to where it is now, more than 20 years later, one of the most successful fashion labels in the country. *Various locations, desray-.co.za*

CAPE POINT

The Cape Point nature reserve is one of the most awe-inspiring places to visit. This is where the two mighty oceans meet, flanked by rugged rocks and cliffs 200 metres above sea level. I love spending time here with my family for a leisurely hike or to climb to the top of the Old Lighthouse. The fresh air, shipwrecks and the legendary stories of sailors, pirates and ghosts make it a great place for the kids to explore and have fun. *capepoint-.co.za*

This interview has been edited and condensed.

SHOE EXHIBIT

Step into the history of sneaker culture

LUQMAN ADENIYI NEW YORK

The sneaker is a force in fashion, music and sports, but where did it all begin?

With the rubber tree, of course, and that's where senior curator Elizabeth Semmelhack ventured for a new exhibit, *The Rise of Sneaker Culture*, at the Brooklyn Museum.

"I wanted to go all the way back to the sap of the tree – the rubber tree – and find out how and why the sneaker even came into existence in the first place," said Semmelhack, from Toronto's Bata Shoe Museum, a partner for the show with the American Federation of Arts. The exhibit of about 150 shoes opened July 10 and is ambitious in scope, spanning rubber production to Prada to the coveted kicks bearing basketball legend Michael Jordan's name, along with his monumental endorsement deal with Nike. Semmelhack created the show after 15 years focusing on high heels, when she realized "there is no way I can ignore the sneaker because they are so important culturally."

Sneakers, after all, are one of the few things people spend days in line to acquire. They're the subject of songs and have helped turn multimillionaire athletes into fashion designers in the chase for the next hot pair.

Among those showcased in the exhibit are Adidas donated by Darryl (DMC) McDaniels, from legendary rap group Run-DMC. The group was among the first music acts to get a sneaker endorsement deal. Original Converse All-Stars from 1917, a replica of Michael Johnson's 1996 Atlanta Olympics gold spikes and Adidas Muhammad Ali Confidence Shoes are also included.

"These are sneakers that you just cannot see," Semmelhack said. "They are seeing some shoes that are hidden away in the archives and in recesses of people's offices that if it was not for the exhibition they wouldn't have gotten a chance to see." After Brooklyn, the historical look at sneakers will travel to the Toledo Art Museum in To-



The Rise of Sneaker Culture exhibit runs until October 4. KATHY WILLENS/AP

do, Ohio, the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Ky., and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta.

Sneakers have "a long history that has both incredible continuity but also incredible shifts and have been with us for some profound cultural moments," Semmelhack said.

Foremost, she said, they were in the realm of the elite. Before the five-day work week, only the wealthy could make the time to play tennis and jog in the early 19th century – and they were the only ones who had a need for sneakers. Between the two world wars, governments began to democratize physical health and sneakers so that people had fit bodies to serve their country.

Once rubber production was simplified after the Second World War, "it loses status," Semmelhack said. "The price point becomes so low. It becomes the footwear of childhood."

It was not until the 1970s that sneaker culture began to develop as we see it today. Nike gets in the game and creates expensive brightly coloured shoes for the "Me Generation" that decides to exercise at athletic clubs.

"They begin to segue back to a status symbol, as well as fashion, because these same people who are jogging begin to wear those bright-colored shoes to discos like Studio 54 and the idea of casual wear and fashion is becoming really important," Semmelhack said.

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