

The green oasis... Kurland

By [Brian Berkman](#): contributing editor, travel

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Forget what you think you know about Kurland. You might also be totally wrong. Sure, they are well known as the original home of polo but I had no idea I would find such a warmhearted and elegant property.



The view from the main veranda.

Perhaps I'm just prejudiced against the snobbery I associate with Polo. Kurland is, after all, a Relais & Châteaux Association member property. I should, perhaps, have given them more of the benefit of doubt.

A true *Tattler* tale...It's a top establishment

Kurland is the South African ancestral home of the Behr family who come from the Baltic from a place of the same name. Baron Peter Behr purchased a tract of land more than 50 years ago in The Craggs near Plettenberg Bay. In 2000, his grandson, also Peter and his wife Dianne, opened the family homestead to the public as an hotel.

From the get-go, the hotel was warmly reviewed with *Tattler Magazine* including it as a runner-up in the Hotel of the Year for 2002. Since then it has continued to win awards but even this knowledge didn't prepare me for what I found.

Although the experience at Kurland is a deeply luxurious one - fine antiques and *objet d'art*, superb imported fabrics and heirlooms from an obviously grand history are everywhere but staying there feels more like being in the home of your favourite, nurturing grandmother who spends her day tending her gardens and making you endless cups of tea.



Followed by a quiet lie-down, if you like.

Looking for peace and quiet?

The vast estate is set on over 700ha and the 12 guest suites, built in that whitewashed Cape Dutch style, take up the tiniest part of the estate. If you imagine Kurland from the air the whole estate is like a green snooker table and the buildings a few Mint Imperials scattered around. It is perfectly understandable why people searching for quiet privacy and security select to stay at Kurland.

What I loved most was the genuine welcome I felt from the staff that made me believe that all they wanted was for me to be comfortable. This included having a crackling fire lit and coffee brought to our Rose suite so that we could ease into our stay after our journey from Grahamstown.

The interiors reflect the good eye and elegance of the owners. Although you will have seen the hotel featured in many décor magazines, nothing feels contrived or unnecessary. It has been built as a place in which to be comfortable and this translates into feeling instantly comfortable in it.

Bring in the kids



This should hit the spot... Champagne on the veranda.



Or try the lounge, yet another oasis of peace and quiet.

Continuing the grandmotherly metaphor, Kurland not only welcomes children but desires them. Activities in the herb and vegetable garden, cooking with the chef, quad-biking and, of course, the Equestrian centre are geared to Kurland's guests of all ages. If you love horses you can spend your entire stay with them or, as we did, you can ensconce yourself on the daybed in front of the fireplace and page through the books they thoughtfully leave in the room.



How's this for elegance?

Family suites have lofts decorated to children's exacting standards and because so few guests are ever on the estate at one time, the schedules we tend to have to comply with at other hotels don't exist here. The experiences and mealtimes are set around your clock.

The food was excellent and executive chef Leon Coetzee is used to tailoring dishes to obscure diets: My high protein, no carbs, sugar or gluten request didn't faze him nor did the eight-year old at the table next to ours' request for pasta with ketchup. Using only top-notch ingredients and herbs and vegetables grown on the estate is part of his philosophy.

The whole nine yards...

As a premium destination a stay at Kurland comes at an elevated price. It also delivers a lot of value offering elements that you'd pay more for elsewhere like their Café Complet, afternoon tea and cake served on the deep and wide veranda with comfy white rattan furniture, overlooking the greens and mountains beyond, at no extra charge.



We told you kids are welcome... and welcomed.

Kurland may be about the ponies but it is also a lot more. It is a gracious family-run hotel and home that invites guests to relax at the same time as feeling part of the landed gentry, albeit just for the duration of your stay.

I defy anyone not to like it.

For more information go to www.kurland.co.za.

ABOUT BRIAN BERKMAN: CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, TRAVEL

Brian Berkman can be contacted on 083-441-8765 or email Brian@BrianBerkman.com.

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