

The Marine - where you can have a whale of a time

By  Brian Berkman: contributing editor, travel

9 Nov 2012

One of my first hotel visits as a travel writer a long while ago was to The Marine in Hermanus. Even then, it was the premier place to stay. I tried to find my review of that first visit to refresh my memory of our experience but I couldn't. However...



Millions of acres of clear blue sky, majestic mountains, and rolling waves - and rollicking whales, of course.

One thing I do remember very clearly, and I'm speaking about something that happened more than a decade ago, was the feeling of being in a hotel that was posh and overpriced. At that time it smacked of snobbery. Or, in clearer language, I felt out of my depth, like an interloper who was crashing a party.

A place where you can feel you fit in

None of these feelings tested true when we visited recently. Yes, The Marine is a luxury, five-star hotel and a member of The Liz McGrath Collection and the Relais & Châteaux Association and, as such, is priced at a premium, but I didn't detect the slightest hint of snobbery nor did I notice incongruity between what they billed and what they provided.

From its proud position on the brow of the cliff overlooking Walker Bay, The Marine commands attention. The two-storey whitewashed structure gleams like a jewel in the emerald reflection of the lawns and the sapphire glow from the sea. The timber framed sash-windows of the upper level and picture windows of the ground floor have just one job - to bring the bay, and its most famous visitors, into the hotel. During whale season from June to

November the bay teems with whales and their calves that come to our waters to give birth. I counted 50 or 60 whales in the bay when we were there in October.



Got time for a quick one... Or a place to linger, longer.

Solution? Take a spotting scope, and watch the whales in comfort



A place for some 'me' time - the lounge.

Day visitors to Hermanus will also get an eyeful of these leviathans but the view into the bay from the first floor's elevated position is the most spectacular. I think we had a better whale-watching experience from our bed than we did on the whale-watching cruise we did earlier in the day, which, because of 10m swells, left me queasy and frightened.

The lounge and bar areas are sophisticated but unfussy and the overall impression is of lightness and easy comfort. Similarly, the pool enclosed by a high-walled courtyard to offer privacy and protection from the wind, is all about making guests feel comfortable and welcome.

Exceptional value

Perhaps when the original structure was built the trend was not to have restaurants with views but today it feels decidedly odd not to have a sea view when dining in the seafood restaurant at The Marine. What was also odd, given that the kitchen is under the direction of Relais & Châteaux Association nominated Grands Chef Peter Tempelhoff, a title as sought-after as Michelin Stars, is that it was so affordably priced. To dine on two courses for R205 or R245 for three courses represents exceptional value for cuisine of this quality.



The man to blame if you leave somewhat heavier than when you arrived... a master of excellent cuisine at a very reasonable price.

Breakfast in The Pavilion restaurant was also a highlight and an affordable and accessible opportunity to enjoy the hotel and its staggering views without being an in-house guest. You would be crazy to visit Hermanus with a plan to see the whales and not start here.

Rooms, including breakfast, are available from R4,400 for the remainder of the year.

For more information go to <http://www.collectionmcgrath.com/marine/>.



The rooms are comfortable, and at a price that is great value.

ABOUT BRIAN BERKMAN: CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, TRAVEL

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

- More than an apple a day in Grabouw's tourism future - 9 Feb 2018
- At the very top of the top - 1 Nov 2016
- Bring your own slippers and explore deep into the heart of a luxury villa - 31 Oct 2016
- The key to luxury villa accommodation in the Winelands - 27 Oct 2016
- Fly with the eagles and trot with the elephants - 18 Oct 2016

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

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>