

Whatever your preference, Red Carnation will see to it

By  Brian Berkman: contributing editor, travel

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Red Carnation Hotels take their Guest Preference Forms seriously. Would you like foam or feather pillows; neck and back support pillows; an ironing board; a bed board; extra hangers or an extra bed? Would you like a yoga mat and an instructive DVD or a fax/copier/printer? Then there's the menu of extras available at the tick of a box and the swipe of a credit card - rose petals and chocolate dipped strawberries? Check...



A little piece of heaven.

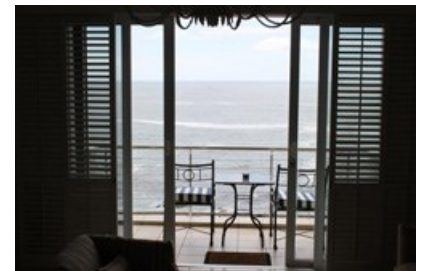
What about your birthday or anniversary cake or a bottle of Laurent Perrier Brut or would I prefer local bubbly? And, speaking of bubbles, what would I like in my foam bath and may they make a reservation in The Spa at The Twelve Apostles?

There are questions about which books and magazines I prefer, dietary restrictions, favourite music and preferred cocktail.

Be ready with your list

If you're a regular traveller, (and who isn't nowadays), it's worth keeping copies of your preferences on file, as it takes an age to complete these forms. It does make a difference though, especially if completed a while before your visit. I'm still surprised to be offered a Sprite Zero with Bitters on arrival and find my favourite magazines next to my hotel bed.

The 12 Apostles Hotel - in fact all the Red Carnation Hotel's that I've stayed in - The Oyster Box, Bushman's Kloof, 41 and Hotel D'Angleterre - are all exemplary. As a family owned and run hotel group, personal service is their hallmark. They were voted the No. 1 Cape Town Hotel in Travel + Leisure's 500 World's Best Hotels 2010 and in the Top 10 Lodges & Resorts in Africa and the Middle East in Travel + Leisure's 2010 World's Best Awards Readers' Survey while Condé Nast *Traveler* listed them in the 2010 Gold List as Best places to stay in the World.

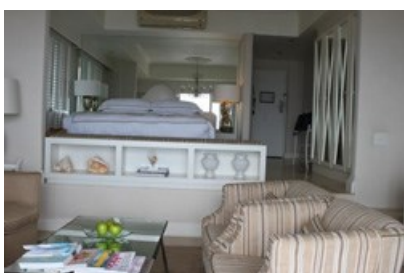


How's this for a view?

What a spot!

Since Horst Frehse (he was GM at Grande Roche in its hey-day, of Singita and most recently of Asara) joined The 12 Apostles and Henrico Grobbelaar, ex-Vergelegen, joined as executive chef, I'm certain even more awards will flow towards this property.

Wedged between the rock and the sea at the foot of, wait for it, the 12 Apostles Mountains, between Clifton and Llandudno beaches, few properties have such an enviable location. Yes, there's Victoria Road that squeezes itself between the hotel and the sea but from the restaurants and sea-facing rooms, it is very easy to believe oneself suspended above the water, as if on a fabulous cruise liner.



Go to sleep to the sound of the sea.

The rooms (and the newly redecorated spa) are exquisitely and individually furnished. Originally decorated by matriarch Bea Tollman, the interior's mantle is now stylishly worn by daughter Toni. Use of their all white-on-white spa grotto, is open to resident guests who bob about in the floating brine pool and sip bubbles while relaxing in the spa pools.

Fancy a dip?

There are two outdoor swimming pools - one built into a rockery with just the mountain behind it with another in the garden, overlooking the sea. There are rest and picnic areas along the path up the mountain with hammocks. Even higher up there are also two thatched but glass walled spa pavilions (if you're having a treatment up there, take proper shoes and not the slippers provided by the spa) from which you'll have an eagles view of the mountain and the sea while having a massage.

Surrounded by fynbos and little else, an hour up there is like a weekend's walk in nature - with less sweat. In poorer weather The 12 Apostles has its own movie theatre with candy jars of sweets and popcorn and cocktails.

While the rates at The 12 Apostles Hotel are among the more costly, there is a lot of added value and, in low season, they offer deals such as book for two nights but stay for three and other specials worth considering. When we visited there was an amazing spa/dine/stay deal that was very affordable.

For more information go to www.12Apostleshotel.com or call +27 (0) 21 437 9255.



Now this IS cool.

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