



HOTEL LIFE

Introducing UCT's new hospitality venture

UCT has tendered out the running of the hotel situated next to the Wild Fig restaurant to Protea Hotels, part of Marriott International. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how they've transformed it into a tranquil haven right on our doorstep.

Story by Vivian Warby
Photos by Je'nine May and Hamish Niven

Ashley Francis (pictured below left), V&A Waterfront Group's former chief finance executive, is talking with passion about one of his first projects as UCT's executive director – finance designate.

We're sitting at the Protea Hotel Mowbray, a stone's throw away from UCT, ten minutes from the city and 15 minutes from the airport, and yet it feels as if we are in the countryside.

It is this project – Protea Hotel Mowbray – that has excited Ashley, and once you've explored it, it's easy to see why.

We meet one morning in autumn and a full English breakfast is being served in the dining area of the Cape Dutch manor. It is bustling with guests, both local and international.

The Protea Hotel Mowbray is part of a heritage precinct owned, in sections, and leased, in others, by UCT.

"Last year we decided to change tack on this property and instead of putting out a tender to

rent the space for a fixed fee, we put one out to get a company to manage the space for us, with UCT directly benefiting from the profits," explains Ashley.

"Because of that change in mindset, the property could possibly bring in up to ten times its previous returns annually in the first year."

That sort of extra income could begin to contribute to projects linked to strategic initiatives.

"This hotel," says Ashley, "can contribute to the transformation we are talking about at UCT."

As a youngster growing up in the Cape Flats in the height of apartheid, opportunities were not abundant, says Ashley: "I went to an ordinary high school, a Flats school. I didn't want to struggle like we did growing up. I was lucky that when I entered [Zeekoevlei] high school, an accelerated accounting programme was started."

Ashley ultimately qualified as a chartered accountant – the school's first.

"Today I see students still suffering, unable to access proper education at schools and higher education institutions, so I take my role as executive director – finance designate very seriously. I remember my roots and where I came from, and I am passionate about bringing change. To further transform education, we need the finances: higher education is facing subsidy cuts, and that is why I believe the more money we make for our university, the more positive our impact will be on youngsters who, like myself at their age, dream of a better life for themselves."

That's why the Protea Hotel project, with its projected increased earning potential, is so important to Ashley.

At the soft opening night in February there was one guest: a proud father of a new UCT student. A week later it was at full occupancy. On its 'hot or not' rating by guests, the hotel has received all 'hot' ratings to date, says Marchel Anthony, the general manager.

Clientele to date has been a mix of both local and overseas guests, some who come for leisure, others for business. In its short time, it's also started to attract guests from UCT for functions, stay-overs, workshops, business breakfasts and meetings.

Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price says the university is "excited about this new way of doing business and looks forward to the fruits it will bear."

"Since this is a UCT initiative we'd like to encourage our academics, executives, deans and administrative staff to make use of these facilities as a first port of call."

The hope is that all UCT departments will take advantage of the availability of the facilities and send their local, international and other visitors to use the hotel. With the shortage of venue space at UCT being a constant challenge, UCT staff should also consider the hotel as a first option when planning off campus meetings, functions or events.





PROTEA HOTEL MOWBRAY

ACCOMMODATION

The hotel has a total of 70 air-conditioned rooms: 46 standard rooms, 18 luxury rooms and 6 lofts, including wheelchair accessible rooms. Each has its own balcony or its own small garden, private access, a kitchenette, bath and shower facilities, WiFi and DSTV.

STANDARD ROOM

- **R1 030 per night**, including breakfast (single occupancy)
- **R1 185 per night**, including breakfast (double/twin occupancy)

1-BEDROOM SUITE

- **R1 330 per night**, including breakfast (single occupancy)
- **R1 485 per night**, including breakfast (double/twin occupancy)

2-BEDROOM SUITE/LOFT

- **R1 580 per night**, including breakfast (single occupancy)
- **R1 735 per night**, including breakfast (double/twin occupancy)



CONFERENCE FULL-DAY PACKAGE

R290 per person

- Arrival tea & coffee break
- Mid-morning tea & coffee break with freshly baked croissants
- Lunch: two-course set menu
- Afternoon tea & coffee break

HALF-DAY PACKAGE

R260 per person

- Arrival tea & coffee break
- Mid-morning tea & coffee break with freshly baked croissants
- Lunch: two-course set menu

All conference packages include:

- Venue hire
- Standard conference equipment (plasma TV, flipchart & pens)
- Secure parking
- Notepads
- Sparkling or still water

BOARDROOM

(venue only)

- Half day: R1 500
- Full day: R2 500

Preferential rates for UCT delegates.



The estate has large grassy areas and is dotted with rose and herb gardens throughout (as well as water features). The hotel is also on the doorstep of the Wild Fig restaurant, The River Club, and close to the banks of the Liesbeek River and the Raapenberg bird sanctuary (with its Cape dwarf chameleons, pelicans and flamingos).



Original materials were used and the look of the building was conserved, with some of the old brickwork visible. Some of the original paintings from the home have been restored and are displayed along the walls.

CONTACT

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www.proteahotels/mowbray