

HOTEL NAME:**MOUNT NELSON HOTEL****HOTEL PROFILE:**

The Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town



Pretty in pink: life's peachy at the Mother City's most iconic luxury accommodation

Built at a time when extravagance and refinement gilded over even the most dire of social problems, the Mount

Nelson Hotel, Cape Town's most iconic blushing beauty, still excels at making everything rosy. The luxurious five-star's grace and decorum is the stuff of Mother City legend, and the grande dame's knack for giving guests a look at life through rose-coloured glasses reaches far beyond her famed pink exterior (fun fact: the hue has a paint colour named in its honour).

Since the opulent hotel – it's snuggled coyly in the crook of Table Mountain – thrust open its doors in 1899 to the first class passengers of an elite British shipping liner, its storied reputation for providing the rich, famous and well-to-do with a home away from home has preceded it.

Winston Churchill called the Pink Lady (as it's affectionately known) "a most excellent and well-appointed establishment", Sir Arthur Conan Doyle felt comfortable enough to hold séances in his room, and more recently, a host of celebrity power players, from Lenny Kravitz and the Dalai Lama to Tiger Woods and Oprah Winfrey, have evaded paparazzi from within its sprawling gardens and sumptuous lounges.

Though, even if you're not a philandering golf god, the most influential woman in the world or the high spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism (families, honeymooners and average holidaymakers, this means you), the Mount Nelson, with its resort-style atmosphere and old-world elegance, is as much a Mother City must-do as Table Mountain or the beaches of Clifton.

A fine repertoire: high tea, a service legacy and lush gardens

Ingratiated into the pages of Cape Town's history as the first hotel to offer hot and cold running water, it's maintained its place as the doyenne of the hospitality industry thanks to both its commitment to honouring traditions and its devotion to thundering forward with new innovations.

Most famous of the lot of venerable extras is the five-star's indulgent high tea, a pastime that attracts both rock stars in ripped jeans and grannies grappling with ancient walkers. According to many, no visit to the city is complete without an afternoon spent sipping one of the Nellie's loose-leaf blends and sampling the accompanying treats from the sweet and savoury spread: think delicate finger sandwiches, delectable dark chocolate cakes, freshly baked scones served with clotted cream and preserves, and uniquely South African confectionery (like melktert). Guests are, of course, welcome to have their cake and eat it too wherever they prefer: in the immaculately appointed colonial-style lounge, outside on the terrace or atop the verdant lawns. And thanks to the property's exquisitely maintained nine hectares of garden, the latter choice is especially alluring. Fragrant rose bushes line walkways that snake their way through the estate, babbling fountains add an idyllic ambience to the oasis-like setting and carpets of green congregating around one of two heated pools lend themselves to days well spent lolling in the African sunshine.

No matter where you settle in though, the long-standing staff – some employees have been with the hotel for over 30 years – will ensure you receive impeccable service. As the heart of the Pink Lady, the Mount Nelson's team prides itself on its consistency, warmth, and, as many a superstar can attest to, discretion.

Those less impressed with legacies of old will find the hotel's newer foci – the Librisa Spa, kids' facilities, Planet Bar and Planet Restaurant – considerably more enticing.

For starters, the world-class house of pampering – it was only built in 2008 – offers a full bouquet of holistic treatments, from lavish full-body massages and exfoliating facials to energising jet lag recovery packages and romantic couple's sessions.

What's more, spa-goers with kids can leave their little ones at the Nellie & Nelson Activity Centre, a vibrant playroom presided over by two furry penguins and one responsible childminder, or deposit young adults in the Teens' Lounge, an area complete with mind-numbing video games, a big-screen television and computers with Internet connection. Surprisingly enough, the Mount Nelson is decidedly family friendly, flaunting both the aforementioned features as well as added extras like interleading rooms, babysitting services, child-size bathrobes and slippers, a children's menu at the in-house Oasis Restaurant and complimentary milk and cookies at bedtime.

Most importantly, the hotel's careful attention to those a half pint and a penny high gives parents free rein to not only spend a few hours relaxing and rejuvenating at the Librisa Spa, but also to indulge in full evenings at the Mount Nelson's swanky nightlife hotspots.

Star-studded in terms of both its décor and patrons, the Planet Bar is where high-powered government officials, the beautiful people and those who love to see and be seen rub shoulders. Complete with celestial installations seemingly floating below the ceiling, a chic black-and-white motif and a Champagne list poised to propel bubbly fans far into space, the swish watering hole is ideal for pre-dinner drinks, a final nightcap or a serious cocktail hour. Similarly, the Planet Restaurant, a fine dining establishment lorded over by award-winning Executive Chef Rudi Liebenberg, is an eatery devoted to sending guests on unforgettable gastronomic journeys.

In line with the Mount Nelson's age-old trailblazing success (remember the running water point), the culinary gem is, perhaps most pointedly, upholding the five-star's spirit of innovation. As a pioneer of the farm-to-fork movement, Rudi's using only locally sourced ingredients cultivated with the utmost respect for the land, and he's also spearheaded a number of cutting-edge environmentally friendly initiatives, namely worm farm composting and a hearty fruit and vegetable garden. Furthermore, with the help of sommelier Carl Habel, his food and wine pairing menus are symphonies of first-class flavour combinations.

Needless to say, with so many incredible things to see and do within the Pink Lady's palm tree-lined borders, there's only one foreseeable complaint that guests may have: life's so peachy on the inside that you stand the chance of foregoing amazing activities on the outside (after all, Cape Town boasts some serious sightseeing opportunities). So, as tempting as it may be to make yourself comfortable in the Mount Nelson's lap of luxury, don't forget, there's a big, bad, interesting world beyond its rose-coloured walls.

The grandfather clock in the Hotel Lounge dates back to the early 1800s. It is said to have chimed so loudly that an irate guest hammered two six-inch nails into the chimes, and for 20 years it remained silent. It still chimes today, but not nearly so loudly.

History:

1806: The house that was to become the Mount Nelson Hotel was let to an auctioneer, William Maude. It was named the Mount Nelson in honour of Admiral Lord Nelson, who died at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and because of its proximity to Table Mountain.

1843: Sir Hamilton Ross purchased the property and created magnificent gardens around it.

1890: The Mount Nelson was purchased by shipping magnate Sir Donald Currie, owner of the Union-Castle shipping line. It was his dream to build an elegant hotel to cater exclusively for the line's First Class passengers.

1899: Mount Nelson Hotel opened on 6 March. The first hotel in South Africa to offer hot and cold running water, it was applauded for being "even better than its London counterparts".

1899: On 12 October, the South African War began. The British used the Mount Nelson Hotel as a headquarters from which to plan their military campaign. Lords Roberts, Kitchener and Buller were familiar figures in the hotel corridors, and a young war correspondent based at the hotel – Winston Churchill – described it as: "...a most excellent and well-appointed establishment which may be thoroughly appreciated after a sea voyage".

In the pink: The Mount Nelson Hotel's second manager, Aldo Renato, celebrated the end of the First World War by painting the hotel pink. Pink hotels were popular throughout Europe for the next few decades, and so it was that Mount Nelson Hotel retained her blush and is still known as "Cape Town's famous pink hotel". A definitive "Mount Nelson Pink" has been developed by paint experts, who have formulated a shade calculated to fade to a specific colour between coats.

1925: The Prince of Wales visited the hotel (the Prince of Wales Gate and palm-lined driveway were built the previous year in his honour).

Mystery man Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of Sherlock Holmes), stayed at the hotel at the end of 1928. A keen spiritualist, he is said to have outraged other guests by holding séances in his room.

1973: The Oasis accommodation wing was added to the Mount Nelson's main house.

Ship to shore The wooden chairs in the Garden Room and the Lord Nelson Room were originally used as deck chairs on the Union-Castle Line ships.

1988: Mount Nelson Hotel was purchased by Orient-Express Hotels.

1990: A row of eight perfectly restored, historic cottages in the grounds were converted into the Garden Cottage Suites.

1996: Mount Nelson Hotel acquired Helmsley Hotel and three historic buildings adjacent to Palm Avenue, and all four buildings were restored and converted into guest accommodation.

Holy visit In 1999, the Dalai Lama addressed over 500 Capetonians in the Mount Nelson Hotel's ballroom.

2003: The Planet Bar opened, fast becoming a celebrity hot spot.

2008: Librisa Spa opened.

2010: The star-spangled Planet Restaurant opened on the site of the former Cape Colony Restaurant.

DK - 1



Mount Nelson Hotel - DK 1 - Front



Mount Nelson Hotel - DK 1 - Obverse

DK - 2



Mount Nelson Hotel - DK 2 - Front

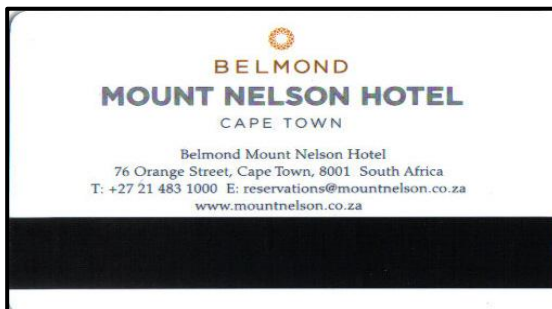


Mount Nelson Hotel - DK 2 - Obverse

DK - 2A



Mount Nelson Hotel - DK 2A - Front



Mount Nelson Hotel - DK 2A - Obverse

