

Cape Town's very own Ambassador



By [Brian Berkman](#)

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The Ambassador Hotel has been a Cape Town landmark since Leon and Anthula Markowitz, at one time the city's mayoral couple, invited the world into their rock-top property in Cape Town's Bantry Bay.

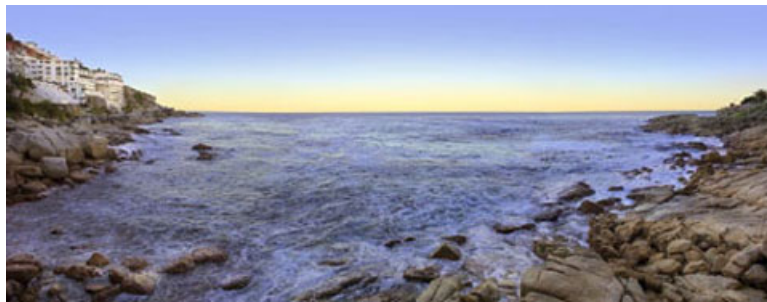
It couldn't have been more chic. Anthula was involved in fashion and together the couple - tall, slender, and very glam, ruled Atlantic seaboard society. That was the '80s and the hotel, restaurant and the bar at The Ambassador were at the height of their popularity.

New team



Fancy a tippie with a view?

Over the years, their son Neil under the Newmark Hotel brand took over the hospitality business which had expanded to own and operate hotels like the Victoria & Alfred Hotel, The Dock House, The Queen Victoria and more recently La Splendida. Newmark Hotels is no longer involved in The Ambassador Hotel but the new team which includes GM Nikki Vardan who managed the hotel under Newmark previously and Mary Steward are maintaining the family-business feel of the property.



After all, this is what you will see.

I had an event, dinner, and overnight there recently and was impressed by the changes. Our room, a sea facing unit has been upgraded in terms of the soft furnishings and the bathroom is completely redone (a larger shower now occupies the bath space). I remember thinking then that the rooms are small (22m²) for what we've come to expect from luxury properties nowadays but they are perfectly formed and despite the postage-stamp sized bathroom it lacks for nothing. In fact, the bathroom should be a blueprint for how to maximise available space in a contemporary, upscale way.

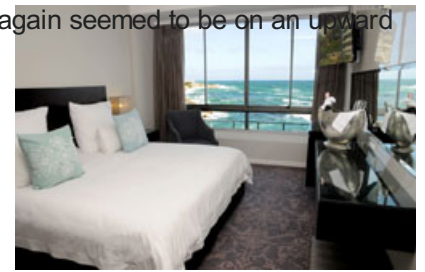
Views for Africa

The allure when the property opened is still its biggest selling point - views, views and views. The Atlantic laps right up to your window and if you're on the pool deck (soon to operate as the Koi Sushi and Cocktail Bar and be open to the public) it feels like you can pumice your feet on the giant boulders while tickling your fingers in the icy sea. I forget how noisy the crashing sea can be and if you're a noise-sensitive sleeper I suggest you bring earplugs, ask for a side room or one of the self-catering units on the opposite of the road.

The Ambassador has always felt like a five-star property to me but I don't think it ever was. It still has the very best and most intimate sea views, the Radisson Blu at Granger Bay comes a close second for its sea-spray proximity but this one stands out above them all.

No attitude

When Salt Restaurant was launched with a series of big-name chefs the property once again seemed to be on an upward trajectory with the high-fash-cash seaboarders but that shine wore off. For now, the newly opened Koi Restaurant, a sister to properties in Pretoria and Rosebank Johannesburg, seems to be the It spot in terms of the people I spied eating there. Very happily, the staff has none of the attitude that sometimes accompanies working for a hot spot. And, based on the meal we had for dinner and breakfast the following day, there is every indication that Koi will remain a favourite as it is underpinned by an affordable and interesting dim sum and pan-Asian staples menu and an unfussy interior that maximises the views.



... Or a bed with a view ?



...Or a conference with a view - though the question has to be asked: How will you keep everyone's attention on business at hand?

We had pre-meeting drinks at Salt Vodka Bar on the opposite side of the road where the Ambassador Suites are. With its James Bond's Dr No interior, black Mies van der Rohe Barcelona Chairs, granite counters and a balcony primed for sundowners, this is a smart space that will get sexy after dark. The ground floor deli, to be called Voila, is being transformed into a casual eatery but was still under construction when we visited.

And if you're travelling on your own...

The three conferencing rooms, in the main hotel building, expand to accommodate 100 guests and have been redone to a high standard.

Where most hotels penalise people travelling on their own, The Ambassador has 12 single rooms, 12m² each.

I missed having a proper desk in our room but there is a work surface under the wall mounted TV which is suitable but a bit too high for the seat provided. There is free Wi-Fi for guests so if you wanted to work you'd probably be more comfortable at the pool or working from the restaurant.

In the last six months, the Ambassador has expanded its reach and accessed new markets. In May alone occupancy was 27% year-on-year while conferencing revenue is up 10% each month for the same period.



And it all begins here.

Valet parking is available for all guests to the Ambassador Hotel and Koi. Visit www.ambassador.co.za or contact +27 (0)21 439 6170 or find follow [@Ambassadorcpt](https://twitter.com/Ambassadorcpt).

ABOUT BRIAN BERKMAN

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