

McGrath family sells hotels, retains minority interest

Liz McGrath Collection has announced that an agreement has been signed with the McGrath family holding company to acquire The Cellars-Hohenort Hotel in Cape Town, The Marine Hotel in Hermanus and the Plettenberg Hotel in Plettenberg Bay. Completion of the transaction will take place when the asset transfers have been registered with the land registry office.



[Image Source: The Collection by Liz McGrath](#) - The Cellars Hohenort

Liz McGrath Collection is owned by James B. Sherwood, founder and chairman emeritus of Belmond Ltd., owners of the Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town; Moulton Investment Ltd., owned by Fred Alger, founder of Fred Alger Management, Inc. in New York, and the McGrath family holding company which retains a 20% interest.

Liz McGrath Collection will take over all the employees of the hotels and central management. Sherwood, speaking on behalf of Liz McGrath Collection, indicated that no changes in the management or operation of the hotels are contemplated. The new owners plan to expand the number of rooms and facilities in step with increasing demand.

The directors of Liz McGrath Collection will be Sherwood, Nicholas Seewer, who was general manager Africa and Mount Nelson Hotel for Orient-Express Hotels (now called Belmond) for 20 years, Alger, Ingrid Wheeler and Michael McGrath.

The history of the Liz McGrath Collection

Sherwood said that he purchased the Mount Nelson Hotel in 1987 on behalf of Orient-Express Hotels and has spent much of January and February in Cape Town every year, staying at the hotel. He met Liz McGrath during his visits and was impressed with the high standards which she achieved in her hotels.

She acquired her first hotel, The Plettenberg, in 1987, followed by The Cellars in 1992 to which was added the Hohenort in 1993, and The Marine in 1998. She transformed the properties to 5-star level through her superlative good taste in decor, gardens, and restaurants. She sadly passed away in 2015 but her three children continued to maintain the hotels to their mother's high standards.

The Cellars-Hohenort was known as Klaassenbosch Farm in 1693, owned by Hendrik ten Damme, Chief Surgeon of the Dutch East India Company. The Cellars building was the wine cellar of the farm. The Marine building was built in the late 19th century by Dr. Joshua Hoffman, the brother in law of General Jan Smuts. It was initially used as a sanatorium because of the "champagne air" of Hermanus Bay. It was converted into a hotel in 1902 and bought by David Rawdon in 1981. Rawdon closed the hotel for four years and fully renovated it, re-opening in 1985.

The hotel's location on the cliff front in the centre of Hermanus makes it extremely popular for tourists, many of whom come for the whale watching which generally starts in August.

The Plettenberg was originally a beach house built on a bluff overlooking Plettenberg Bay in 1898. It was purchased by a member of the McGrath family and developed into a hotel, which opened in 1987. All three hotels have been members of the prestigious Relais & Chateaux group.

Sherwood said the shareholders had decided to call the new company Liz McGrath Collection in memory of the wonderful lady who had created the hotels and devoted her later years to their highly successful operation.

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