

# Three-star hotels: Comfy in the middle

 By [Guy Stehlik](#)

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We promote our properties with four-star facilities and five-star service as three-star hotels. While this might sound fallacious, it is actually founded in truth. Travelling abroad will make any South African hotel guest realise that our three-star market boxes way above its weight. Most of our BON Hotels are in the three-star bracket, and in most cases, we can confidently argue that they are more than three-star quality and would qualify as such with the grading council. For many reasons moving out of the three-star bracket would be a faux pas, so we are happy to stay right where we are.



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The true pioneer of the South African superior three-star market was the Holiday Inn Group. At the height of the flood in the South African hotel industry, the Holiday Inn Group had 21 three-star hotels across the country. Many of these buildings still stand, albeit some in obscure locations or as rebranded establishments, but their mere presence pays homage to Holiday Inn for successfully introducing those models to South African guests.

Think about it: this could not have been an easy task. Initially, three-star hotels were frowned upon, carrying a stigma as if they 'just didn't make it'. Perhaps the challenges of holidaying in the 80s ushered in a new opportunity, as South Africans were no longer jetting across the globe but were, instead, looking close to home for their holiday or conference. We can also applaud the Protea Group who did a fantastic job of marketing South Africa to South Africans, further contributing to the surge of wonderful three-star hotels in our country.

Fast forward to post-1994: international players who decided that South Africa was a good prospect did not bank on the quality of our three-star hotels. Enter the four-star market, the likes of The Sheraton Group or The Hyatt, shining for a time by exemplifying international five-star standards. But unfortunately, the economic crises of 2008 did not bode well for these newcomers. The corporate buyer refused more than three-star expenditure as company executives were forced to 'downgrade' from business class air travel and from four-star and five-star accommodations. So who comes to the rescue? Enter Protea Hotels and the three-star market.

## A stellar three-star offering

The bottom line is this: our three-star hotels are better than any other in the world, and in many cases, even better than four-star offerings in Europe. And no, this is not because guests are expecting less and are surprised by what they see and receive. I don't buy this. Our mid-market hotels offer a full service: they are sexy, modern and spacious, and in most

cases, only differ from the supremos in price. These hotels have greater access to markets; they can be all things to everyone, and in the current global climate they are the solution for government and corporate bookings as well as conference and leisure markets.

The result: a greater return on investment. Indeed, for a new build, the cost of constructing a three-star facility is significantly less than building a four-star hotel.

Snug in the middle – quite a comfy place to be.

## ABOUT GUY STEHLIK

Guy Stehlik is the CEO and founder of BON Hotels and Director of BON Hotels International West Africa. Having vast experience in all aspects of Hotel Management as well as having owned his own hotels, Guy created BON Hotels as an "owner-staff-community-guest" centric company to herald in and define an exciting new era in hotel management.

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