

Conrad rebrands Cape hotel as part of growth plan

Conrad Hotels and Resorts, a luxury brand within the Hilton Worldwide group, launched its first sub-Saharan Africa operation in Knysna on Saturday as part of Hilton's plans to grow its luxury hotel offerings in SA.



The well-known Pezula Resort Hotel & Spa reopened under the Conrad brand in the Western Cape seaside town, and having the brand behind it would increase the marketability of the resort and the country, according to Hilton Worldwide's vice-president for Africa and Indian Ocean operations, Jan van der Putten.

He said the Hilton loyalty programme, with 30-million members around the world, could be used as a tool "to promote the resort and the country".

While Conrad did not have to redo the bedrooms and restaurants at Pezula, it made various changes to bring the hotel in line with the group's international standards, Van der Putten said last week.

Analysts have said that the outlook for the hotel industry in sub-Saharan Africa is looking increasingly positive.

A report released midyear by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) said a turnaround in growth and revenue is on the cards for SA's hospitality sector.

PwC forecasts hotel room revenue will expand to R14.6bn this year, up 8.7% compounded annually from last year.

In September, Rezidor, a member of the Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, announced it would open a Park Inn by Radisson in Newlands in the first quarter of 2014, its second Park Inn by Radisson hotel in Cape Town. The group also has two Radisson Blu hotels in Cape Town.

Meanwhile, Protea Hospitality last month announced that a new Protea Hotel Fire & Ice was being built in Menlyn, Pretoria, to open in the first quarter of 2014.

The Conrad group this year has opened operations in Portugal, South Korea, and New York, with Pezula being its latest addition. The group intends to open six more over the next two years. While a Conrad hotel operates in Cairo, Pezula is the first to be opened in sub-Saharan Africa. It would be "a brand ambassador for Conrad in Africa", Van der Putten said, adding that Pezula was "a fantastic fit for the Conrad brand".

The group would look for further opportunities in Africa and would take them as and when they came. For now, its hands were full with Pezula's rebranding.

Van der Putten expects international guests will make about 70% of the resort's clientele over the first year.

He said opportunities would arise to increase occupancies. The recession in Europe was not having a significantly negative effect on the industry, as an increasing amount of tourists were arriving from countries such as the US, Eastern Europe, China and the rest of Africa.

Van der Putten said it had long been Hilton's intention to grow its luxury hotel offerings in SA, and the country was "ready" for more luxury hotels.

The MD of Pam Golding Tourism and Hospitality Consulting, Kamil Abdul-Karrim, said the rebranding of Pezula was "a strategic move" by Pezula, and having a luxury brand name behind it was an opportunity the hotel had taken which it hoped would make a difference.

Source: *Business Day*

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>