

Majeka House - then & now

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It's been almost nine months since my last visit, but within this time Majeka House has undergone a significant transformation. After undergoing extensive renovations and closing its doors for three months, the country hotel has taken a massive gamble. The question is: has it paid off?



Majeka House in all its glory

From the stylish reception area to the refurbished Makaron restaurant, it's a totally different vibe.

One of the new extensions to the hotel is the addition of two new mountain-facing suites. Interior designer Etienne Hanekom, art director of VISI magazine, was given complete carte blanche when it came to the decor. Eccentric, yet eclectic, the imposing queen-sized bed takes centre stage with its electric blue frame set against a grey background.

Little pieces jump out at you like the juxtaposing wallpaper which so elegantly brings the whole room together or the elaborate chandeliers in the entrance hall. But that's just the bedroom...

The ensuite bathroom is done up in a type of off-the-wall French Renaissance theme, not taking itself too seriously but still it's a truly decadent display of quiet sophistication and taste. I just loved the black and white tiled walls - a definite throw-back to 50s decor.



One of the new mountain facing suites

My only irk was the mini bar. A well-stocked mini bar saves you the trouble phoning room service every half hour. Everyone likes a drink, but not everyone drinks wine. So a bigger choice of non-alcoholic drinks would have been a big PLUS.

Run by husband and wife team Karine and Loyd, one can see that lots of love and thought has gone into every addition. Careful not to take too much away from the original Majeka look and feel - a celebration of country French chic and understated glamour - the hotel has now come into it's own by staking claim to something that belongs to them.

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Case in point is Makaron which has undergone the most extensive transformation. Again Etienne Hanekom's hand plays a large part in the facelift. Originally the restaurant was cosy, yet stylishly managed to accommodate dinners without that claustrophobic feeling. Now it's a light, airy space with exposed metal beams giving it that industrial look, but without appearing cold and pretentious.

The menu has also undergone a somewhat more mature change, taking its inspiration from French cuisine. The line fish served with roasted potatoes comes highly-recommended.

A new cigar lounge and the M-Bar are bold new statements carrying the hotel's new image to the next level. Mixing things up with opulent, vintage pieces and soft furnishings conjures up images of Gone With The Wind meets Saturday Night Fever - a weird combination but it works.

The Sanctuary Spa now has three treatment rooms, with its signature treatment being the Himalayan Crystal Salt bed. I'm not one to try out those new-age healing crystal seminar thingy-ma-jiggies, so I was a little apprehensive when my therapist told me to take off my robe and lay on my back. I'll set the scene for you: a dimly-lit room with a bed surrounded by lights. The only difference was that the bed was filled with salt crystals instead of a mattress and the lights are actually colour therapy designed to help you relax and treat insomnia. When I finally laid on the bed, I half expected a jet engine to start up and a voice over a PA system telling me to "please fasten your seatbelt and ensure that your seat is in the upright position."

Suffice to say, I fell asleep and felt completely rejuvenated once the session was done. Rumour also has it that the detoxing properties of the crystals help you lose weight when done in conjunction with a body exfoliation and diet plan.

One can see by the radiant look on Karine's face that they're very proud of their accomplishment, and so they should be. Majeka's transformation is one of a diamond in the rough that's been put in the hands of an expert craftsman, the result being that of a perfectly cut work of art. Hopefully the sparkle won't wear off... - IOL

More info:

For reservations or further information call Majeka House and Makaron Restaurant on

(27) (21) 880 1549; email reservations@majekahouse.co.za; or visit www.majekahouse.co.za