



Ellerman House

THE QUIET ELEGANCE OF A CAPE TOWN LANDMARK

Architecture by GAPP and Jane Visser/Mark Thomas/Interior Design by Jacqueline Cole & Associates and "C" the Company
Text by John Heminway/Photography by Jonathan Pilkington



It was once an immutable custom for a handful of England's very rich to embark on an ocean passage to the Southern Hemisphere. Every December, as punctual as plovers, they boarded ships such as the *Winchester Castle* and the *Pretoria Castle* that delivered them in two weeks' time to Cape Town, South Africa. There they took rooms for three months or more at the Mount Nelson Hotel, known as the Nellie. The hotel, with views of Table Mountain, helped to banish memories of the frightfulness of winter while guests basked in the South African sunshine.

OPPOSITE: At Ellerman House in Cape Town, South Africa, the pool terrace, shaded by a native milkwood tree, overlooks the Atlantic. ABOVE: The 1912 residence, once owned by shipping magnate Sir John Ellerman, was transformed into one of the city's finest hotels.

Some customs never die. While the world today has little time for lordly languor, Cape Town's appeal remains as solid as ever. The savviest traveler now makes for Ellerman House, an eleven-room Relais & Chateaux gem set high above boulder-rimmed Bantry Bay and hardly ten minutes from the city center. These days, although few stay an entire season,

many Ellerman House guests linger—so distinctive is its style, so spellbinding its surroundings.

Built in 1912 in the tradition of Sir Herbert Baker, the four-story Edwardian mansion spent most of the twentieth century as a private residence. Its last such owner was the shipping magnate Sir John Ellerman, who, like many of his first-class passengers, divided the year between England and "the Cape." In the late 1980s Ellerman House was acquired as an investment by Johannesburg merchant banker Paul Harris, who was also looking for a place to install

his art collection. He knew Cape Town lacked a small, elegant watering hole and chose not just to create a sumptuous hotel but to endow it with singular style.

Guests are collected at the airport by the Ellerman House car and then are whisked straight to their rooms and told to forget the paperwork until the end of their stay. Spirits, such as

Architects Graham Parker of GAPP and Jane Visser and Mark Thomas wanted to preserve the hotel's integrity. ABOVE: The entrance hall retains its original marble floor and teak stair and balustrade. Portraits by Frank O. Salisbury flank a gilt mirror.

The smoking room is paneled in a light washed oak and uses bold plaids and leather to evoke a masculine feeling. Above the carved wood mantel is a painting of a ship, one of several in the room, recalling the hotel's maritime history. The large dining room is beyond.





brandy, whiskey and vodka, are on the house.

The surprises continue in the accommodations themselves. The interiors, by designers Jacqueline Cole and Cobis Wilson, convey a sense of contemplative familiarity: worldliness proud of its Cape Town roots. Each guest room and suite showcases period furniture, chosen for its sleek style and for its ease

with a modern aesthetic—Empire mixes blithely with custom furnishings. The ceilings are high, and the colors are generally light and creamy. The guest rooms feature subtly illuminated art, all South African, all provocative. Contemporary art is interspersed with African tribal works. Some of them bear signatures of well-

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Jacqueline Cole and “C” the Company’s Cobis Wilson created a traditional yet contemporary look for the hotel’s interiors. ABOVE LEFT: The colonial-inspired cane furniture and handmade document print fabric evoke the past in an oceanfront guest room with a balcony.

ABOVE: Lunch is served on a sheltered terrace. “The bar terrace is our most popular location for any meal, or even just a drink,” says general manager Justin Arenhold. A wide selection of local wines complements the regional menu. BELOW: Bantry Bay at twilight.

