

42 de Luxe!

A few months ago, Hein joined the Institute of Directors and received a complimentary Friday or Saturday overnight stay in a 5-star luxury boutique hotel, The Melrose Arch Hotel, Johannesburg.

Last Wednesday eve, having a braai, I suddenly got this bright idea – my birthday was on Saturday, 19 April, and Hein on the Sunday, 20 April. With both of us turning 42, a Saturday overnight stay in The Melrose Arch Hotel seemed the perfect opportunity to indulge ourselves.

On Saturday morning we had coffee in bed and decided to have breakfast somewhere. But we were a bit indecisive, so after a 100 km detour, we stopped at the Teak Place, on Kromdraai Rd, close to the Rhino & Lion Nature Reserve. (www.teakplace.co.za)

It's a farm, with a petting zoo, jumping castle, deli & butchery, pet shop and a bar.



The restaurant is a big 'farmhouse' building with a verandah, comfy chairs and a relaxed view over the garden.

Their breakfast menu is 'absurdly' affordable – 2 eggs, boerewors, steak, tomato & potato wedges – R36!

They also have yummy French Toast, Sweet Corn Fritters and of course, divinely strong coffee.

For something different, they have a 'Pick a Veg' area, where you pick your own veg and they clean it for you.

If you feel like a picnic, you order a picnic basket from their deli and enjoy it in the garden. (right)

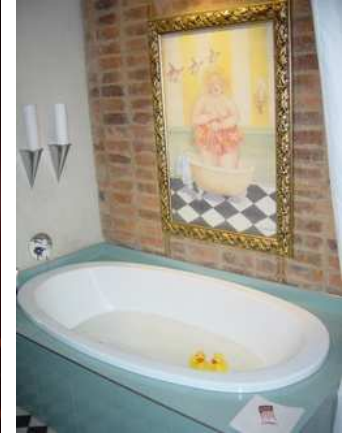
We went home to pack our bags and booked in at the hotel (<http://www.africanpridehotels.com/melrose-arch-hotel.html>) just after 2.



Luxurious, very stylish, yet comfortable and 'homely'. Not stark white, chrome and glass.

In the foyer, they have drapes hanging from giant 'wire coat hangers'. (left)

We were given a guided tour of the downstairs facilities and were taken to our room.



Red-brown wooden cupboards with a safe hidden behind a painting (top left). A flat screen TV with DVD player, 6 complimentary DVD's and surround sound to soothe the soul (top centre).

A King-size bed, bath with a 'fat lady' painting (top right) and a quirky touch - 2 yellow plastic ducks! Instantly there's a smile on your face.



A sliding door leads to the shower and toilet.

April 2008 magazines on the bedside table, M&M's in a glass bowl, terry robes in the cupboard and a tray with 2 bottles of mineral water – 1 still, 1 sparkling. Also bowls of spiced nuts, olives, chocolates and apples. And an orange Barberton daisy floating in a small bowl.



A fully stocked minibar was hidden behind one of the doors. **And so it should stay.....**

- A miniature Johnnie Walker Black Label - R115
- Windhoek Light - R28
- Coke - R18
- Red Bull - R42
- Appletizer - R26
- Small jar of cashew nuts - R49
- Small packet of Liquorice All Sorts - R14.50

I quickly unpacked our clothes and we walked down to the Library Bar.



A big room filled with little conversation areas, soft leather couches, upholstered chairs, pool table and a fully stocked bar. Their cigar collection is impressive and pricey.

Hein had some red wine and I had a refreshing drink of apple juice, green tea and mint.

To nibble on – small bowls of olives, biltong and spicy 'mieliepitte'.

Then there is a 'sound room'. A soundproof room with a flat screen TV, surround sound and leather couches.

I've booked us for an hour (R250/hour) and we chose a Mike Oldfield Tubular Bells DVD!

Sipping on wine and cappuccino, we closed the shutters, dim the lights and watched in total awe one of the greatest performers in the world.

Mike Oldfield plays 11 instruments and we were watching him perform at Edinburgh Castle.

We spent 2 hours there – shut away from the outside world.



On our way to dinner, we looked in at the Pool Bar area. It has tables and chairs in the water (top left), sumptuous day beds (top centre), a bar and for the less adventurous, tables and chairs on the lawn – amongst these humongous tin buckets with trees!

Most of these areas can be used, even if you're not staying there. I know my brother-in-law had a cocktail drinks birthday party at the pool area.

At the Library, you can also sit on the verandah, overlooking the Melrose Arch square and order High Tea in the afternoon.

Ready for a fusion dining experience, we were seated at their in-house restaurant, the March Restaurant.

We started with some sparkling wine to celebrate and ordered our starters. Hein ordered fresh oysters and I 'haloumi, fig & proscuitto spring rolls with an orange dipping sauce'.

We were surprised by a 'starter before the starter'. A tiny white espresso cup filled with a spicy veg soup, accompanied with a small piece of toast and cheese. What a novel idea...

While chatting to the waiter, we told him we're celebrating our birthdays. He then wrote down our names for a 'surprise'.

For our main, Hein ordered soy marinated ostrich on creamed spinach and sweet potato mash with blueberry jus (R125). I had char sui pork belly with egg fried rice (R90). Halfway through our meal, we swapped plates and actually like the other one's order better.

But our surprise was still to come...



Complete with 2 sparklers!!!!
Luckily they didn't sing for us.

Well, we just couldn't resist.

The big slice was a brownie with a fresh & juicy strawberry on top and the small pieces were made from mousse and cake.

It's called 'coffee and Frangelico sushi' on the menu.

And eaten with chopsticks! What a smashing idea.

Returning to our room, they were busy 'turning down our bed'.

With a patio door leading to the 'tin buckets' and lawn, we wandered outside and watched the pool lights turn from blue to green.

One is truly indulged in this hotel...



Bed turned down with rose petals and gourmet chocolates on the pillows and the breakfast room service menu on the duvet (top left). Complimentary slippers were put in front of the bed (top right) and the bathroom candles were lit.



On Sunday, we woke early to have coffee outside. And hallelujah! Someone understands a coffee addict's habits. Besides the tea and instant coffee sachets, a coffee plunger with fresh filter coffee awaited us. Also 2 choc chip- and shortbread cookies.

We sat outside and savored the fresh air and the garden.

Reluctantly, we packed our bags and went down for breakfast.

Another feast awaited us! They had small pastries, mini milk tarts, croissants, muffins, 4 different breads, homemade jams, fig and watermelon preserves, fresh salmon, black AND red caviar (tastes just like fish), fresh fruit, smoothies, cold meats, olives, etc. etc.



Besides blue cheese, Brie and Emmenthaler – they had this enormous hollowed-out cheese.

We finished our coffees, paid for the meals and headed off home.

Our 42nd birthdays - celebrated and indulged 'de luxe' style!