



A peach of an idea

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: The Peech Hotel started out mindful of the environment, progressed to sustainable solutions to energy saving and water recycling and has now embraced the Fair Trade movement to further enhance the growth of all aspects of responsible tourism in South Africa. *Susan Reynard reports.*

The Peech Hotel in Johannesburg has received Fair Trade in Tourism certification in recognition of its diverse range of "green" initiatives. They include environmentally friendly practices, the use of sustainable resources and a now a demonstrably "fair" approach to staff. In the process the hotel is proving that sustainability and style go hand-in-hand.

The hotel, owned and run by James Peech, has incorporated energy- and water-saving

initiatives for some years (solar heating and grey water recycling), plus a range of other eco-friendly solutions such as waste processing and green design, and it now has passed a test of its policies towards staff.

Not alone in its enthusiasm for sustainable tourism – many South African hotels embrace the principles and are seeing the cost-savings produced by the installation of compact fluorescent lamps, heat pumps, solar water heating systems and other energy management

○ ABOVE: With an acre of gardens in the centre of Sandton, The Peech Hotel incorporates green building principles that include water and energy conservation and waste management.

technology – The Peech is ensuring that its products and services go even further, by supporting Fair Trade initiatives locally and in Africa. As a result, it is one of three packaged holidays marketed in Switzerland and Germany to be accredited by Fair Trade in Tourism SA.

The launch of its Fair Trade "model room" in March saw the introduction of Fair Trade apples, chocolates, coffee, cotton bedding, flowers, rooibos tea, sugar and wine. The

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.fairtradesa.org.za
www.fairtourisma.org.za
www.thepeech.co.za
www.greenleafecostandard.net

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idea was to underline to hoteliers what is available for an industry that strives to adopt the worldwide trend to “fair trade”. Some of these products were adopted into the hotel’s operations immediately and others are being researched in a pilot study.

James Peech says he likes working with organisations that genuinely follow green principles and ensure their accredited establishments do too. He is aware of many hotels that have a similar approach but feels there is too much “green washing” in the hospitality industry.

Be that as it may, he is pleased to be singled out as a genuine leader in sustainable tourism. “It’s nice to have someone to advise you. We don’t do this just for the sign over the door, we live it. As an industry, we need to do more than bits and bobs and tinkering. It also gives employers a certain amount of confidence when dealing with staff,” he adds.

The 16-room hotel, which offers free WiFi, is considered an oasis in the Sandton, Rosebank and Melrose Arch region. It has won various awards since it opened in 2004. The bistro and champagne bar are headed by chef Greg Jardim and wine buyer Robert Chifunyise.

The hotel aims to use locally-sourced suppliers and ingredients that are as organic as possible. Herbs come from the kitchen garden outside Room 15, coffee is certified Fair Trade and 100% organic, and the lamb and beef on the menu are from 100% pasture-fed meat.

Putting emphasis on flavour and simplicity, Jardim regularly changes his menu. He says: “I’ve tried to create a menu that reflects what The Peech is all about: simple, laid-back and chic with an understated touch of sophistication.” The bistro is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner to non-residents.

The hotel has a boardroom for up to 20



● **TOP:** Taryn Campbell (left), marketing and promotions assistant at Fairtrade Label South Africa; James Peech, owner of The Peech Hotel; and Jennifer Seif, executive director of Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa; together to facilitate the growth of the Fair Trade movement in the hotel industry.
● **ABOVE:** (Left to right) Apples, jewellery, Stellar Organics wines and rooibos tea are among the Fair Trade products that are available for use by hoteliers in South Africa.

delegates, a swimming pool, an acre of gardens, access to the Planet Fitness Wanderers gym, a library and guest computer, and back-up generator and water system.

As a Fair Trade in Tourism SA certified property, The Peech is committed to triple-bottomline sustainability. It operates in a socially, economically and environmentally responsible manner. This includes fair wages and working conditions, fair distribution of

benefits, ethical business practices, and respect for human rights, culture and the environment.

Peech says it gives him greater confidence as an operator to know that staff are fairly treated and the property is doing everything it can to embrace green operating principles.

Lolla Meyer, FTTSA marketing manager, says: “The Peech Hotel mixes together sustainability, creativity and city living to give guests a contemporary and environmentally-friendly experience that ultimately benefits staff, local businesses and the local community. It proves that responsible tourism and sustainability in an urban environment is attainable and relatively uncomplicated.”

Jennifer Seif, executive director of Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa, says the Fair Trade label is looking to gain traction locally. There are plans to develop a Fair Trade supply chain across more industries, as has already done with wine, she notes. ■