

# HOTEL Pimped up and primed



The Rosebank hotel has been revitalised. Yvonne Fontyn was suitably impressed

**The familiar shell** may be the same but the new Rosebank hotel — simply and stylishly called The Rosebank — has had a rebirth.

For many years the Rosebank Hotel presided solidly, if not stolidly, on the corner of Sturdee and Tyrwhitt avenues, favoured by well-heeled, elderly German tourists, Northern Suburbs families seeking a decent Sunday buffet, and an endless round of corporate conferences and functions. The waiters had been there forever and the names of restaurants and bars were typically Randlord: the Vintage

Restaurant; the Admiral Jellicoe Bar; and the Parktown Cocktail Bar.

The latter used to be a rather under-used, circular-shaped pub known as “the round bar”, where many a *Sunday Times* staffer hunkered over a drink to toast the halfway mark between the Friday night and Saturday night deadline.

When it closed last year, the hotel was tired in that dog-eared way of old, neglected establishments. Which makes its complete change of identity all the more impressive.

Visitors will be entranced to find — in

the place of beige armchairs — oversized sofas covered in red velvet and silver faux leather, with myriad cushions; pimped-up silver and glass tables with mirror mosaic work; meeting places curtained off with hanging beads for privacy. Where the former Rosebank had its

## THE ROSEBANK

**Address** Corner Sturdee and Tyrwhitt avenues, Rosebank, Johannesburg.

**Tel:** 086-174-7444

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[www.therosebank.co.za](http://www.therosebank.co.za)



**State of the art** The Rosebank is stylish yet casual

modest outdoor swimming pool, there is now an elegant sunken lounge.

Off to the right of the foyer is the cocktail lounge, with its 12 m-long bar and a cocktail menu that folds out like origami. Marketing manager Marije Meerstadt says the bar has been designed to appeal to all the senses: so a sea-fresh scent comes through the air conditioning in the daytime; and there is another perfume for the evening. The ambient music never stops, video art revolves on TV screens and there are dangly, decorative objects to twirl as you pass by to sit in one of the intimate seating pods.

Smokers will not be able to bend the rules and smoke in the pub. An adjacent outdoor garden has been created to accommodate them.

The refurbishment, costing R254m, was carried out by new owners, the listed Hospitality Property Fund. Dutch-born Meerstadt — who learnt the ropes of the SA hospitality business on this challenging project — says work was 24/7 in the lead-up to the mid-August launch. The work is still not complete, and parts of the hotel — mostly cordoned off from guests — are still a building site.

The gift shop is not open yet and the spa was not fully functional — though guests could pop in for a five-minute neck & shoulder massage — when the *FM* visited.

The theme of African sophistication —

rather than the tired “African” theme — permeates the space, but the hotel also manages to balance formal and informal, elegant and casual, private and accessible.

The dramatic interior — done by LLP Design — is clearly up-market, yet with no hint of elitism: young trendies will not feel out of place drinking here after a long week at an advertising or modelling agency; but neither will business people who want to network or discuss a serious deal. Make that a BEE deal — you can feel the Afro-optimism in the air.

*Sunday Times* staffers will have to make what they will of it; happily, the barman of many years, one Kurt Schlechter with famed cocktail-making skills, has been retained. An addition to the menu will be champagne by the glass, thanks to new fridges and equipment that can lock the bubbles in.

The theme of African opulence — using rich wood and natural materials — is carried through to the 318 rooms, each with an executive work station, wireless Internet access, Bose hi-fi system, and LCD TVs. One gets the feeling, on a guided tour with Meerstadt, that everything has been thought through. The stylish walk-in bath and shower cubicle is extra-spacious, and you can call a “bathologist” to bring a selection of soothing scents, candles, bubbles and petals.

The carvery buffet and pub lunch of the old Rosebank went off with the builders’ rubble. Fresh Restaurant has

taken their place, and healthy and light salad ingredients are arranged on the buffet for guests to mix and match themselves, with a carvery and some decadent desserts to one side.

Word has it that the nearby Rosebank Café serves excellent coffee and pastries, while at the Butcher Block — which comes on line later this month — the accent will be on fine meat and wine.

Reflecting the embracing culture of our democracy, the conference rooms have been named after African currencies: the dalasi room can accommodate 212 delegates; the pula room 135 and the kwacha room 60. There is space for 280 delegates cinema-style, and 200 at tables. The hotel can sleep them all as well.

Restaurant and conference rooms have glass sliding doors so light streams into them, and they walk out on to a terrace with a peaceful zen garden. There is also an executive lounge where guests hiring suites can enjoy an express breakfast or canapés, and a business centre.

A Virgin Active Technogym is being completed; it will overlook the pool, also not yet finished.

□ Rates: The hotel uses the best-available-rate booking system depending on capacity. Room only rates, per person sharing per night, vary from about R1 100 for a superior room, to R2 700 for an executive suite and R6 800 for the presidential suite. Booking is at [www.therosebank.co.za](http://www.therosebank.co.za). ■