

out of office

by Channette Wepener
photos by Hennie Homann

17th Century Fairytale in Graskop

We arrived at the luxurious Flycatcher Castle on the outskirts of Graskop on the Saturday just after lunch. Typical of Mpumalanga, the weather was rather misty, but it blended in with the 17th century fairytale theme of the venue.



Flycatcher Castle is set in the style of an Italian castle, opened to the public at the end of 2007, offering a fairytale experience for all visitors. Our excellent hosts, Manie Connoway and Michael Nuechtern, promised us that we, along with all guests, could expect royal treatment from the moment we set foot inside the castle gates and that was indeed true.

“The Castle was conceptualised from a sculpture of mine that I did early in 2005 and was constructed using hand-picked relics and works-of-art to create a magnificent masterpiece set in one of the most beautiful areas of the country,” Manie explains. Manie and Michael selected items specifically to use in the building of their dreams, including two spectacular feature Art Deco windows sourced from an old Afrox building in downtown Johannesburg.

The Castle offers five airconditioned suites, which are all individually decorated in styles of composers like Strauss, Gounod and Mozart. We were fortunate to have been booked in to the Puccini Deluxe suite, which was definitely more than we bargained for – it was pure luxury! Our open-plan room had a breathtaking view, as well a rose petal filled magnificent bath, which is ideal for couples wanting a romantic and enchanted experience.

“We do not have televisions in the rooms, as we want our guests to switch off completely and relax,” says Manie. “To add to their royal luxury experience on offer, we will be launching a spa at the castle soon, where guests can enjoy a soothing Swedish massage, spa-bath and an ozone sauna.”

Walking through the Castle, I marvelled at the tasteful antiques collected by Manie and Michael from their travels, locally and abroad. The castle also fea-

tures ‘black and blue diamond’ granite top vanities, and impressive chandeliers, typically of the 17th Century. It is, however, not only its interior that is tastefully decorated. The beautifully manicured gardens offer a tranquil escape for bird and insect lovers or even photographers.

After enjoying an informative and enjoyable ‘tour’ through the chapel and the art gallery, showcasing a variety of bronze sculptures, Michael who is also the Executive Chef in their Der Rosenkavalier restaurant, introduced us to one of the best fine dining cuisines I have ever experienced, perfectly completing this magical experience.

The specially prepared Bohemian cooking four-course meal, with classical music in the background, consisted of a delicious chunky winter-based vegetable soup, flavoured with bacon and chorizo, followed by a smoked trout paté on an apple and baby marrow salad, then we were served a leg of lamb casserole, braised with onions, carrots, red wine, kidney beans and vegetables. This wonderful meal was rounded off by ‘Marie Antoinette’ – a combination of sponge cake, custard and fruit compote, which was simply to die for. The castle is not licensed, but guests are welcome to bring their own drinks.

Flycatcher Castle is definitely a unique experience that left me feeling rejuvenated... And given more time, one can visit many well-known attractions like God’s Window, Pinnacle Waterfall, Berlin Falls, Lisbon Falls, Bourke’s Luck Potholes, Blyde River Canyon and Three Rondavels, Echo Caves, the Sudwala Caves and the Kruger National Park. □

For more information contact Flycatcher Castle at +27 (0)13 767 1114 / +27 (0)72 234 4134 / +27 (0) 84 400 3034 or visit <http://www.flycatchercastle.com>

