



Hotelier
Nick Seewer
back in the spotlight

Nick Seewer is one of South Africa's most experienced hoteliers. After more than two decades as the Managing Director of the Orient Express Group Africa, Seewer's early retirement was short-lived when he was lured back into the game as CEO of Cape Town's hottest new development, the Pepper Club Luxury Hotel and Spa.

Text: Bronwyn Burns • Image: © Epic Communications

New York takes the top of the list for Nick Seewer, who has travelled the globe over the course of his career in the hotel and tourism industry. It is no wonder then that the Pepper Club Hotel caught his attention. "It has that New York city corporate style. Pepper Club is very modern, with clean lines and extremely spacious bedrooms. It is a totally different hotel," he says.

The New York theme spills out of the rooms and into the dining area as well, with Seewer's creation of Sinatra's, the stylistic restaurant inspired by the American singer of Italian parentage. And the restaurant presents that inspiration perfectly by infusing a touch of 1950s decor and classic tunes with traditional and simple adaptations of Italian cuisine to suit everybody's taste, and pays considerable tribute to "Of Blue Eyes" and his career.

While his love for the Big Apple is evident in the hotel, Seewer's own background brings a different perspective. He is a Swiss national who spent his early years in India, studied finance in England, attended the Lausanne hotel school in Switzerland, and gained hotelier experience in Botswana and Kenya before settling in South Africa. It was here that his career with the Orient

Express Group took off and he established the premier Mount Nelson in Cape Town and the Westcliff in Johannesburg.

Many years down the line, Seewer decided it was time to reignite his passion for establishing fine luxury hotels. "I felt the need for change and it is great to get out of the resort environment. But I couldn't allow myself to sit back and do nothing after retiring," he adds. Having taken early retirement from the Mount Nelson resort hotel after 22 years of service, he was ready to try his hand at something new and challenging. So when David Solomon, developer of Pepper Club, approached him to launch the hotel onto the local and international market, Seewer couldn't resist.

The invitation could not have come at a better time. Seewer assumed the role of CEO at the new hotel just weeks before the 2010 FIFA World Cup. "Pepper Club opened in March and the World Cup was fantastic exposure for us. We had one of the highest occupancy rates during the four weeks of the tournament." While tourism figures reported a 65 per cent hotel occupancy average, Pepper Club was able to boast a rate of over 80 per cent.

Seewer may be an industry veteran, but he has proven that he still has what it takes

to develop the character and standards of the hotel to make it a leader in luxury hotel brands. In July last year, just months after Seewer stepped on board, CNN Traveller named Pepper Club as South Africa's best luxury hotel, calling it "stylish, slick and unbeatable". This is a rare achievement for a hotel that has yet to be established and indicates that Nick's uncompromising standards and attention to detail have been put to work from the word go.

CNN Traveller also selected Pepper Club for its world-class features, cuisine, chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce Phantom service and the access to the hotel's own beach club, which overlooks Camps Bay beach. This combined restaurant and clubhouse, called Pepper Club on the Beach, is a first-of-its-kind concept in South Africa.

"It has been great to make a mark in the tourism industry once again and I am excited now to take Pepper Club from where it is today and build its reputation as one of the best hotels Cape Town has to offer," says Seewer, adding that the World Cup may have put Pepper Club on the map, but the welcoming hospitality and five-star setting is sure to continue. ♣