

How the President Hotel plans to defeat Day Zero

 By Cari Coetzee

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With the drought holding sway in Cape Town, both consumers and businesses have had to find ways to preserve water and Cape Town's luxury hotels are no exception. Cape Town icon, the President Hotel, has been taking measures to make sure that they can stay ahead of the water curve. Jeremy Clayton of Turnkey Hospitality tells all:



What impact has the drought and the looming Day Zero had on the President Hotel – both long- and short-term?

It has galvanised the greater Cape Town community into being more conscious and considerate of water usage. There is no doubt that Day Zero is starting to have a negative impact on local businesses, especially tourism, however, the silver lining is that as a whole the community and the city are actively protecting and reducing the use of the world's most important natural resource.

The President Hotel's long-term plan is to become fully self-sustainable from a water and electricity perspective to ensure a carbon neutral footprint. The water crisis has escalated the need to do this and we are well underway with the exploration phases required prior to drilling for and purifying groundwater.

“ ...the ultimate benefit of this drought will be that Capetonians become far more water savvy. ”

 Jeremy Clayton

Under the water restriction Level6B Capetonians are required to get by with 50 litres a day. Are there any restriction for guests and travellers?

The same restrictions apply to visitors and locals alike, and the hotel has introduced a great many initiatives to ensure that the water crisis remains in the forefront of the minds of all our guests. We have found that it takes time for guests to adapt to new habits, and hence have introduced creative reminders in all our toilets, showers and public restrooms to help reduce consumption.

The hotel furthermore has implemented:

- Bath plugs have been removed from all rooms
- Guests are being encouraged to take 90-second showers
- The overall water pressure of the hotel has been reduced by 35%
- Waterless hand sanitisers and tap misters have been installed in the public restrooms, reducing water consumption by 90%
- Buckets have been placed in all guest showers to catch and recycle the water as greywater
- Aerated units have been installed in all room washbasin taps and flow restrictor shower heads have been put in place, reducing consumption by 50%

By implementing all of these measures over the past few months the President Hotel has reduced water consumption at the hotel by 40%, which is a great achievement.



President Hotel

■ ***What are some of the most important water saving measures undertaken by the hotel and its staff?***

It is extremely important that the hotel and staff encourage all tourists to “save like a local” and at the same time practice what we preach. Every team member at the President Hotel is passionate about Cape Town, and tourism as a whole, and have translated this passion into making water saving the new norm. We are all very proud that the President Hotel is a water-wise hotel but at the same time, ensure that it does not affect the well-renowned guest experience of the hotel.

The hotel has appointed “water warriors” to educate the guests about the drought and water crisis in Cape Town and inform the guest as to how their assistance will help us defeat Day Zero. The hotel has also conducted and communicated numerous educational sessions and material to ensure staff practice water saving techniques both at work and at home.

Waterless chemicals have been implemented for the sanitising and cleaning of all floors, our air-conditioning water is being recycled to water the gardens and wash down outside tiles, water is being sourced from outside the drought-stricken areas to ensure that the pool remains operational for guests, chilled water is reused for cleaning and scrubbing floors, and leftover water in bottles and ice buckets is being recycled for other uses in the hotel.

The President Hotel also feels very strongly about giving back to the community and has started stockpiling water to assist staff and needy communities should Day Zero become a reality for Cape Town.

■ ***How does the hotel plan to cope with water scarcity in the future?***

In the near future, the hotel intends to be completely off the municipal water grid to ensure it becomes self-sufficient. We intend on doing this as a joint initiative with our neighbouring apartment blocks in Bantry Bay. Even once this is achieved, however, the importance of ensuring that water is conserved and used responsibly should never diminish and we strongly believe that all businesses need to do more to be “green” and reduce their carbon footprint.

■ ***What advice would you share with other establishments on dealing with the drought and averting Day Zero?***

It is vital to reduce current water usage so that we can avoid Day Zero altogether. All hotels in the area need to explore new water sources and educate staff and guests about the importance of saving this vital life source. I think there is a silver lining in having to deal with each of these challenges and the ultimate benefit of this drought will be that Capetonians become far more water savvy.

ABOUT CARI COETZEE

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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