

# Resorts need to keep evolving to deliver an experience beyond accommodation

While expectations of resorts may differ from person to person, what drives travellers to resorts - from an escape from the hustle and bustle, fresh air and breath-taking scenery - is a shared desire. Over the years, the traditional concept of luxury resorts - dating back to the early 1800s - has developed into a multi-faceted approach, from basic amenities such as swimming pools, tennis courts and possibly a golf course to business centres and wellness spas that encompass more than just a vacation destination today.



Magalies Park - First Group Resort of the Year 2017

Johann Jordaan, Services and Resorts Director for the First Group, says that resorts need to constantly evolve if they want to deliver the right mix of products that cater for guests from all market segments.

“It’s about creating an environment that is capable of combining the best of its surroundings - whether it’s the bush and wildlife, mountains or the beach - with the best amenities to offer a perfect blend of family ambience, leisure activities, sport, business facilities, events or weddings and health and wellness,” he explains.

## From exercise room to wellness spa

A classic example is the progression of wellness spas from the traditional exercise room, which is now driving a growing interest in resorts. With healthy lifestyles and fitness in the spotlight, these wellness spas are now considered fundamental amenities that serve the market seeking luxurious pampering vacations.



Magalies Park onsite spa

## Events and conferencing

Another prominent shift is the trend towards business centres and the establishment of state-of-the-art conferencing facilities that have had a big influence on the economic growth of resorts. The introduction of wedding packages that offer onsite chapels with picture-perfect backdrops of the natural surroundings, fine-dining reception venues and luxurious honeymoon suites with top-notch guest accommodation has also added a whole new dimension to resorts.

## The family vacation

When it comes to family vacations, Jordaan believes that the main reason why resorts remain one of the most popular choices is that children are so well catered for. “The logistics of planning a family vacation is often stressful, so creating a worry-free experience that is also affordable makes perfect sense. Resorts combine leisure and adventure for the whole family, with a wide range of facilities and services delivered in the most luxurious way,” he adds.

An ongoing comprehensive investment programme is essential to remain unique and exciting, which is why First Group has invested over R79m into the refurbishments of its properties. “We look forward to the future with innovation in our minds and our guests’ best interests in our hearts,” concludes Jordaan.