

First Group commits to creating green vacation destinations

It's only a matter of time before green practices become a baseline requirement in the hospitality industry - 'going green' is no longer just a buzz phrase. First Group has committed to creating green vacation destinations through environmentally friendly practices at its resorts, acknowledging the need to conserve natural resources and the social consciousness of today's travellers.

“We are perfectly positioned to influence change and make a positive impact through the implementation of eco-friendly measures that reduce harmful environmental impacts and create economic benefits for our local communities,” says First Group Services and Resorts Director, Johann Jordaan.



Hole in the Wall Resort

The Hole In The Wall resort in the Eastern Cape has invested R1m into the installation of a Calcamite sewer water management system for irrigation purposes and a water treatment plant to purify river water for the supply of fresh drinking water to the resort. This initiative went one step further to include drinking water to the local community through an additional 5,000-litre tank.

Full-scale sustainable operation

Magalies Park in the Hartebeespoort region of Gauteng started out with a few conscious efforts which have grown into a full-scale sustainable operational system with fascinating environmental innovations.

A worm farm flourishes on the restaurant waste and the worm “juice” is then used as organic fertiliser. The fish programme, under the supervision of a local retired professor, ensures that the dams are maintained in a healthy sustainable state through the placement of a variety of carefully selected fish species.

The geysers have been replaced with energy saving heat pumps and all the lights are either LED or energy saving. The irrigation timers for the grounds and golf course have been set to start after 9pm, and water consumption is further reduced by planting grass that needs less water to grow.

‘Thinking outside the box’ for eco-friendly initiatives led to the creation of a bat hotel, which successfully lures bats out of the chalets, and an owl house that is home to the resident owl who is tasked with containing the rodents on the resort. A local beekeeper has also introduced 10 hives in a secluded area to help with pollination, and the resort further benefits from being able to harvest its own honey from these hives.

“We encourage our staff to share our sustainability projects with our guests to give them a greater experience in contributing towards a greener future when choosing our resorts as their holiday destination. Through these initiatives, we aim to set the highest standards in developing green vacation destinations that create a culture of environmental responsibility among our staff, guests and local communities,” concluded Jordaan.

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