

EL hotel upgrade eyes World Cup team

By [Andrew Stone](#)

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A multimillion rand upgrade could give East London's Blue Lagoon Hotel the chance of hosting an international team during next year's 2010 Soccer World Cup.

General manager Peter Gregersen said the hotel had received notification that it had been short-listed as a potential base camp facility for the 2010 tournament for one of the 32 competing teams.

"We're the only East London hotel that was put forward as a potential host but will only know next year February if we've been successful," he said.

Gregersen said he was currently in negotiation with three international teams about one of them possibly using the hotel as a base camp.

"I can't name them right now but I'm optimistic we'll get a team staying with us," he said.

"People don't realise it but East London has a lot of advantages; we're an hour and a half away from Johannesburg and Cape Town in terms of flying time and we've got excellent shopping, healthcare and training facilities located within five minutes of the hotel.

"We've also got beautiful beaches and Nahoon River is literally on our doorstep."

Hosting a team would have a positive impact for EL

Buffalo City Tourism managing director Peter King said East London would benefit greatly from hosting a World Cup team.

"If we do get a team it would have a substantial positive impact for the city because you do get a fan base following these teams and there will be significant tourism spin-offs."

Gregersen said if a team did base itself at the hotel, it would not only benefit the Blue Lagoon but the entire city.

"Big teams such as Brazil can have up to 120 000 supporters travelling with them, so the knock-on effects will be huge," he said.

"The Soccer World Cup will be eight times bigger than the Rugby World Cup (in 1995)."

Work started in October last year and is expected to be completed in early November, adding a further 27 rooms to the 76 already available.

“In addition to adding the new rooms we're also refurbishing our public areas including staircases, walkways, reception areas and the Highlander Bar,” said Gregersen.

Innovative ideas to save electricity and water are being incorporated into the new rooms.

“We're installing solar heating which will heat the water and save on electricity, and we'll also be collecting rainwater to use for flushing toilets,” he said.

“A single flush can use up to 20 litres of water, and multiply that by 27 rooms, three times a day and it works out to be a lot of water that we'll be saving.”

The rooms have also been designed to maximise space to the fullest and will make use of natural light as far as possible. “We're very conscious about what we can do to lessen the impact on the environment,” said Gregersen.

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