

Family brand delivers global luxury rooted in Africa

 By [Brian Berkman](#)

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Not since César Ritz has one family name been as synonymous with quality hospitality as Conrad Hilton's has. For nearly a century, Hilton Hotels & Resorts has been proudly welcoming the world's travellers. With more than 570 hotels across six continents, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, according to their press information, provides the foundation for memorable travel experiences and values every guest who walks through its doors.

As the flagship brand of Hilton, Hilton Hotels & Resorts continues to set the standard for hospitality, providing new product innovations and services to meet guests' evolving needs. Hilton Hotels & Resorts is a part of the award-winning Hilton Honors programme. Hilton Sandton Hotel manager Gert Venter explains: "Hilton Honors members who book directly through preferred Hilton channels receive instant benefits, including an exclusive discount that can't be found anywhere else, free standard Wi-Fi and digital amenities like digital check-in with room selection available exclusively through the industry-leading Hilton Honors app." Venter says that Hilton is comprised of more than 4,922 managed, franchised, owned and leased hotels and timeshare properties with more than 804,097 rooms in 104 countries and territories. "For 96 years, Hilton has been dedicated to continuing its tradition of providing exceptional guest experiences and Hilton Sandton is no different." Venter adds that each year they improve in their guest-satisfaction rating surveys. The Sandton property, located on Rivonia Road within proximity to the business hub that is Sandton CBD, has one of the largest ballrooms in Johannesburg able to accommodate 1,000 guests.



Executive lounge perks

With a sweeping central staircase and phoenix-like steel sculpture floating above the stairs, this hotel is, by turns, welcoming and imposing. Ground floor public areas include the glamorous Faces Lounge and Bar which is a key meeting place for business executives although the sixth floor private enclave of the Hilton Executive Lounge is better suited to the big hitters and those Honor members and suite guests with Executive Lounge privileges. All-day grazing on nuts and biltong and then canape-style snacking at mealtimes. Great coffee and limited open bar make this space an appealing one. Although breakfast is served in the Executive Lounge it is a pity to miss out on the expansive pleasure of the Hilton Sandton

breakfast, served in the Tradewinds Restaurant on the first floor. Meeting rooms and the business centre are also on the first floor as is the ever popular Lotus Teppanyaki and Sushi Bar which combines theatre with a superior dining experience. In the evenings Tradewinds offers a number of pan Asian dishes as a buffet along with a la carte options.



Resort-like pool and garden setting

A standout feature of The Hilton Sandton is its large, resort-like pool and lush green park setting which includes a tennis court. Cocktails and light meals are also available at the pool gazebo bar. The hotel gym is easily accessed from the pool area so guests can, as we did, enjoy a heating sauna after a Precor gym workout and then a swim to cool off.



Staff and service a highlight

We loved the energy and interaction with staff from the moment we checked in until we left. The customer-service offering at this hotel is palpable. We also liked how the hotel, while meeting global standards of luxury and comfort, was able to deliver a product that is rooted in its location at the centre of Africa's business engine. A perfect example of how Hilton Sandton embraces its global/local nature is in the breakfast offering - muffins (and recipe cards) made with local gogi berries and serving the traditional South African Bobotie dish right alongside the Asian Congee rice porridge. And, speaking of breakfast, not tequila shots but herbal juice boosters were brought around to tables like they do in dive bars.

Added value includes free shuttle to Nelson Mandela Square which abuts Sandton City Mall and free transfer to Gautrain Station. When we visited, traffic in the Sandton and Rosebank areas was mayhem to say the least as major construction and development is taking place all around. Top tip is to use the Gautrain from OR Tambo to Sandton/Rosebank/Pretoria. We wished we had. And, ask manager Gert about the tour to Maboneng - the hottest example of urban revival and major foodie scene.

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