



FRESH NEW FEEL BEGINS FOR CRESTA MOWANA SAFARI RESORT & SPA

The design team from Blacksmith Interiors started the physical overhaul at the beginning of May after months of planning and putting everything in place so that the whole project can be completed by the end of the third Quarter with minimal disruption to the hotel’s operations.

by Lesley Stones

“**T**he brief was to freshen the whole property up and make it more in line with today’s design style with a modern safari theme,” says Helen Farish of Blacksmith Interiors.

The overall feel will be ‘luxury meets nature,’ for the hotel in Kasane, Botswana, and its legendary baobab tree will still stand in the middle of the property as a focal point and a symbol of its solid history.

The previous rustic reds, oranges and earthy tones that decorated the Mowana had felt more African bush than airy river lodge, says Ms. Farish. “We have taken our inspiration from the river and the surrounding vegetation to freshen up the interiors and make it contemporary but relevant to its riverside location.”

The designers have worked within the existing physical structures, except for the wooden deck which needed to be completely replaced. The tiles in the dining room will also be removed and replaced with a tinted screed flooring. The rest of the changes will be cosmetic rather than structural, but the results will be dramatic.

“We will declutter everything and take out all the unnecessary furnishings and open it up to create a better sense of arrival in the reception areas, so the sense of grandeur from the thatched roof and high ceilings shines through. We will bring in clean, contemporary surfaces with some minimalistic organic elements like chandeliers and some iconic pieces of furniture and wall sculptures,” says Ms. Farish.

“We’re using fresh colours of blues and greens with greys and white to lighten everything up and create a cool, calm, refreshing feel which complements the warmth of the thatch and terracotta flooring.”

Interior and exterior walls will be painted in the new colour themes and the soft furnishings like curtains will be changed to match. Most of the new furnishings will be sourced from South Africa. The main alterations will be in the bars and restaurants, with new counters and furniture that can be moved around to make the space more flexible to better accommodate large groups.

Many more plug points will be added throughout the hotel too, since guests now

expect to be able to charge their devices and work anywhere at any time. The conference rooms will also be fitted with state of the art audio-visual equipment.

The bedrooms will be revamped in phases to work around the bookings and keep disruption to a minimum. The bedrooms will blend comfort with convenience, including large screen TVs, hi-speed Wi-Fi, and work stations made of solid wood with slim wrought iron legs to allow lots of leg room. All the rooms have sliding glass doors opening onto a private patio with views of the Chobe River.

“We are adamant that our guests will love the new look Cresta Mowana Safari Resort and Spa,” says Jonathan Cox, the Group Operations Manager for Cresta Hotels. “We embarked on the refurbishment exercise to enhance our beautiful property to improve on the look and feel in all areas including bedrooms, public areas, restaurants and bars. We also want to offer state of the art conference facilities. We will be offering a fresh new look, but still in keeping with a modern African feel. We will also be offering new and fresh menus to go with the new look for both the leisure and conference traveller.”



The new-look Savuti Bar, with its stunning views of the Chobe River and the Namibian floodplains.



The legendary Mowana Baobab Tree, a symbol of our solid history over the years, takes pride of place as the main focal point in our new foyer.



The new reception is open and airy, allowing for ease of guest movement at check-in and check-out, or as a meeting point for in-house guests.



The new Mowana luxury guest bedrooms are a place of renewal and rejuvenation, providing guests with a comfortable place to relive the adventures of the day.



The new design of Cresta Mowana Safari Resort & Spa was inspired by the Chobe River and surrounding vegetation.

A REVAMP THAT WILL PAY FOR ITSELF

The facelift being undertaken at the Mowana Safari Resort & Spa is expected to pay off financially in the long term, as well as having an instant positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Cresta Hotels Managing Director Mokwena Morulane is so confident that guests will love the new look that he's anticipating an increase in the number of visitors towards the end of this year and in 2019, which will make the project money well spent.

That will partly come from reconfiguring some of the revamped bedrooms to cater for tour groups, where the travellers are often single people who are prepared to share a room with another person on their trip to avoid paying a single room supplement.

"Our bedroom stock will remain the same, but we will be increasing the number of twin beds to cope with the demand of overseas groups that usually book twin rooms," says Morulane.

The overall budget for the project is BWP 31 million (R38.6-million/\$3.2-million). Around 75% of that will be spent on building

works, replacement of the decking, and new furniture, fittings and equipment.

"Before the refurbishment was undertaken we took into consideration what the modern leisure traveller is looking for to incorporate into the refurbishment. While the original style and décor of the reception lobby, restaurant and other public areas has been popular with guests – especially overseas tourists looking for an African bush experience – it is now a good time to update it and give the property a fresh new look with a modern African feel in all areas including bedrooms, public areas, restaurants, bars and conference facilities," says Morulane. "It is also time to refresh the bedrooms, because the last refurbishment was over six years ago."

Most of the timber decking along the corridors and around other parts of the property was first installed when the hotel was built 23 years ago. It has served its purpose well, but is now approaching the end of its life. "It is now time to replace it, and, at the same time, take advantage of more modern, environment-friendly and sustainable decking products," Morulane adds.