

MAJOR REFASHIONING PROGRAMME GETS UNDER WAY AT THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL

For only the fifth time in its 115-year history The Victoria Falls Hotel in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, is to undergo a major refashioning and refurbishment programme, starting in January 2020 and set for completion by early 2021.

The refashioning exercise focuses on most public areas, as well as all the bedrooms and suites, apart from those in The Stables Signature Wing. It is aimed at the creation of a stylish marriage of the hotel's unique historic heritage and introduction of the most modern of amenities and facilities expected by top-end travellers of the 21st century.

The acting General Manager of the hotel, Farai Chimba, said that, guided by a values and features programme devised by Source Interior Brand Architecture of South Africa, Project 2021 would enhance The Victoria Falls Hotel's reputation as one of Africa's most significant travel and tourism assets and break exciting new ground in the Zimbabwean hospitality industry.

"Work will be carried out in low-season periods between January 2020 and May 2020 and again between January 2021 and May 2021, removing any need to close the hotel for this substantial elevation of physical infrastructure and visual elements, and eliminating any impact on guests staying in the hotel," he said.

The Victoria Falls Hotel was opened in 1904, at the time of the arrival of the northbound railway development that stemmed from a vision to create a Cape-to-Cairo rail system, and just ahead of the opening of the famous road and rail bridge that crosses the gorge below the falls to link Zimbabwe with Zambia. In the past 115 years there have been major programmes of redevelopment and refurbishment in the formative first decade, and again in the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s, and this programme will thematically use the inspiration of the Victoria Falls Bridge to link the hotel's illustrious past with its exciting future.

"The programme celebrates the hotel's historic architecture while simultaneously addressing the needs of discerning 21st century international travellers. Room layouts have been refined in all refurbished areas to reflect a rationalised selection of style options: Classic, Premium and Suites. "Key features of the exercise will be increasing inflow of light, granting greater access to views of the hotel grounds, creating walk-in showers in bathrooms, as well as upgrading lighting, air conditioning and electrical features such as points for using and charging devices in all bedrooms and suites. The aesthetic thrust will be achieved with use of new structural features and in the use of colour, furnishings, ornaments and basic décor. The enhancement will give greater flexibility for group bookings with increased inter-leading capabilities."

After final completion in 2021, the 61 Classic bedrooms – including two Classic Access bedrooms and seven family bedrooms – will average 25 square metres and offer dedicated entrance foyer, king-sized bed or convertible twin beds, with lounge setting, bathroom with large walk-in shower, full wardrobe with luggage storage, generous refreshment station and luxurious mosquito net enclosure.



The 25 brand new Premium bedrooms will average 43 square metres with dedicated entrance foyer, separate TV lounge, generous refreshment station, king-sized bed or convertible twin beds, with luxurious mosquito enclosure, walk-through dressing area with large wardrobe and luggage storage, bathroom featuring large walk-in shower.

The 11 Suites will each average 72 square metres, with dedicated entrance foyer, separate living room including TV lounge, dining area, generous minibar, separate guest WC, luxury king-sized bed or convertible twin beds, with generous mosquito enclosure and in-room lounge area, writing desk and coffee station, walk-through dressing area with large wardrobe and luggage storage, bathroom featuring large walk-in shower and free-standing bath and double vanity feature. The existing Presidential Suite features with two bedrooms with king-sized bed or convertible twin beds, large living area with separate lounges and dining room, generous bathroom with double walk-in shower. The 42 existing Stables Signature Wing bedrooms and 2 suites remained unchanged.

Mr Chimba said that elements featuring in the designers' and contractors' plans and work would include enhancements through furnishings and fittings, introducing walls and ceiling drops for effect and the use of colours that are simultaneously contemporary and Edwardian: terracotta, pale green, moss green, ivory, grey tones, burnt amber and dark cerulean.

"This will be experienced through furniture, décor, ornaments, features and facilities, with an emphasis on light, bright, cool and comforting, paying genuine homage to a proud history," he said. "The highest possible levels of environmental sustainability and convenience will be hallmarks of the hotel, which will focus on capturing the elements of Edwardian and contemporary styles that are essential to The Victoria Falls Hotel."

Mr Chimba said that by recognising the unique positioning of the famously-named 'grand old lady of the Victoria Falls,' The Victoria Falls Hotel Partnership had developed Project 2021 as a programme that cherished a rich and colourful history of service and achievement, while committing to offering the most modern and desired facilities and amenities for today's most discerning travellers. The Partnership is jointly operated by African Sun Zimbabwe (Private) Limited and Meikles Hospitality (Private) Limited. The hotel and its estate are owned by Emerged Railways Properties, which in turn is owned by the National Railways of Zimbabwe and Zambia Railways.

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