



It's Gin o' Clock in Jozi

By Claire Roadley

Johannesburg is a city that probably doesn't feature very high on many travel bucket lists - but things are changing! Times Luxx has tipped it as one of Africa's "buzziest cities" in their latest issue and Forbes magazine recently voted it one of the "12 coolest neighbourhoods around the World" – beating the likes of New York, London and Paris! In fact, the city is so hip and happening with its melting pot of cultures, designer shops, uber cool art galleries and slick restaurants and bars that it is fast becoming a city where people want to linger a little longer rather than just using it as a quick gateway to the rest of the country. And I couldn't be prouder of the place I used to call my home!

Of course if you truly want to indulge in some of Jozi's gourmet grub and coolest cocktails, you are well advised to pick a hotel where the drinks may not be ON the house - but at least they are IN it! For those not wanting to drive after a few tipples, there are few places that tick this box better than [The Fairlawns Boutique Hotel & Spa](#) in leafy Sandton. Just a stone's throw from the main hub of clubs, bars and restaurants, this hotel offers a fantastic retreat from the real world with a real injection of fantasy, quirkiness and fun. No matter where you look in this hotel your eye will pick out something that is "curiouser and curiouser" - a visual playground of décor that really shouldn't work – but definitely does! I absolutely love it!

Foodies will be in their element here. Amuse-Bouche, Fairlawns' fine dining restaurant, has an adventurous young chef called Jandri Niemand at the helm creating culinary works of art he affectionately describes as "constructive chaos", to complement the restaurant's Diamond Award Winning wine list. There is also the more casual Manor House bistro with terrace - if you can call a Strawberry Daiquiri tea trolley serving decadent cakes casual?

BEST FOR BUBBLES ...

But it's those who like to embrace the "lusher" side of life 😊 that are in for a real treat! Last year Fairlawns opened its **MUSE Champagne Room** in collaboration with French Champagne house, Perrier-Jouët – complete with a beautiful courtyard overlooking the gardens and pool. Its cocktail menu includes a tantalising variety of designer beverages including Champagne Ice Balls and Banana Coladas, which can be enjoyed with nibbles from its Case-Croûte Menu. It is undoubtedly one of the best hot spots in Joburg to sip bubbles as the sun sets behind the trees.



Michael Kewley, MD of Fairlawns has really stamped his design style in MUSE and the result is a sumptuous Art Deco mix of all things elegant in shades of emerald green and rose gold, with wallpaper that echoes the floral print of Perrier-Jouët's Belle Epoque label. In the courtyard, the décor is inspired by nature - with stone fish hanging over a decadent outdoor fireplace, bowls that resemble bird nests – and even a butterfly shaped swing for an added touch of whimsy! (which clearly my fellow cocktail drinker Amanda couldn't resist!)



G&T TIME..

The latest development that everyone is talking about though is the **new Gin Bar at Fairlawns!** Every afternoon (except Mondays and Tuesdays) between 4pm and 6pm is Gin o' Clock on the terrace! German-produced Monkey 47 Schwarzwald Dry Gin is Fairlawns' premium brand, complemented by South Africa's Blind Tiger Gin from KZN Distillery and Marari Blue Orient Spiced Gin and Pink Damask Rose Gin from Anchor Distillery. Each week a choice of other local and international gins is added to the tasting selection.

The hotel's "Gin Genius" barman encourages guests to share with him their favourite scents and flavours from the Gin Harvest Table in order to create their personalised dream cocktail. The Harvest Table offers a choice of botanicals such as Juniper Berry and Elderflower, herbs (rosemary, thyme, basil and mint), spices (chilli flakes, peppercorns and fresh ginger) and fruits (cucumber, pineapple, grapefruit, lime, mango and various berries). The most popular cocktail is their popping candy cocktail, which is a blend of gin, tonic, grapefruit, sliced fruit, edible flowers and mint. The one top of my list to try next time is the one that comes with toasted marshmallows on the side pictured below!

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BOOK IT

Africa Travel (020 7843 3591; africatransport.co.uk) can arrange a long weekend to Fairlawns Boutique Hotel & Spa from just £1,495.00 per person sharing, which includes three nights with breakfast in a Grand Chateau Suite, private airport transfers, one 60-minute massage & one 60-minute facial in the award-winning Balinese Spa, and direct British Airways return flights from London.