

MEET GLEN AVON LODGE'S GENERAL MANAGER, HANS J. HEUER



Hans Heuer took over as General Manager at Glen Avon Lodge in Constantia in April this year – but his relationship with the Stringer family goes back more than two decades as he worked with David and Anette's daughter Wendy when she finished school. Hans is well known in tourism circles having worked at various hotels around southern Africa.

We decided it was time to get to know him a bit better with a quick Q & A session....

An interesting fact about yourself:

In 1997, I was asked by the Producer of the HBO Movie "Mandela and De Klerk", which stars such well-known Actors like Sidney Pointier and Michael Caine, to be a part time Actor. I played the role of a Cabinet Minister and in fact there is one scene where you only see two faces on the screen - Michael Caine and myself! (Read more on [IMDB](#))

What made you want to work in the hospitality industry?

When I immigrated in May 1994 to South Africa I decided that the Hospitality Industry was for me as I had always enjoyed the service industry. In my opinion, there are three very personal fields to anybody's heart – what they eat and how they sleep (hospitality) and their money (banking) – so the two fields are taking care of something very private to people.

Briefly describe your studies and career path?

I was originally educated as a Banker in Germany. After immigrating to South Africa I realised that the Hospitality Industry was the field of my professional future. I took up the opportunity to move to the USA and studied Hospitality and Tourism Management. I studied, inter alia, at such well known Universities as Boston University and Madison University. After returning at the end of 2001 to South Africa, I joined the Mantis Collection. After about one year on the Garden Route, I became the General Manager of the 54000 Hectare Sanbona Wildlife Reserve in the Klein Karoo.

After being in the bush for a while it was time to go back to civilization. I joined Fedics, South Africa's largest Leisure and Catering Company, and took the position of General Manger for the Fedics Units at Sun International's Grand West Casino in Cape Town as well as Carnival Casino in Gauteng where I was responsible for some of South Africa's largest Entertainment outlets.

Moving forward I accepted an offer to join Best Western Hotels in Tanzania and Zambia and was responsible for the Best Western Hotels in Dar es Salaam as well as opening the first BW Hotel in Zambia. After a further stay in Zanzibar, I decided to return to South Africa and as it happened, my close friends, the Stringer Family in Cape Town, were looking to engage for the first time a General Manager for their 5 star Boutique Hotel in Constantia – Glen Avon.

What have you done so far/plan to do to make your mark on the property/experience?

For now my main emphasis is on training the team to assist them to become even better. I am also very active in sales and marketing for Glen Avon as competition is strong and it requires a continuous market presence in order to ensure the wellbeing of the business.

Are there any exciting things going on at the hotel this year?

Every day at Glen Avon is exciting, simply because it is such a unique property. One of the new developments we are looking at is to build a Conservatory to extend the Dining Room so that our guest can enjoy our magnificent gardens at any weather.

What words would your friends use to describe you?

Persistent, dedicated, detail-oriented.

What is your favourite thing about your job?

I always have and still enjoy the engagement with guests – its just something that makes our industry so special.

Are there any real characters at the hotel?

There are many characters at Glen Avon, from the Service team to the Housekeeping team...all of them are special in their own way.

Do you have a favourite dish at the hotel?

Undoubtedly the Butternut Soup is my favourite dish during winter

An interesting fact about the hotel that is not very well known?

The Manor House was build in the mid-19th Century by freed Slaves which indeed adds a historic component to Glen Avon.

When is your favourite time of the year in Constantia?

I personally like, what I would call, the green season (others call it winter). Although it does get cold for few days during that time of the year, when the sun is coming out, it is just too beautiful for words.

Which is your favourite room at the hotel and why?

Our last addition, "The Gables" are my favourite rooms. They are light, elegantly furnished and have an air of sophistication yet remain truthful to the character of Glen Avon.

What is it that makes Glen Avon special in your opinion?

The personal touch that was given to Glen Avon by Annette, David and Wendy over the two decades it has already been in operation has created a unique feeling that is hardly to find anywhere else.

We believe “Day Zero” has officially been averted for Cape Town for the foreseeable future - thank goodness – but can you tell us a bit about how you tackled the water shortages recently?

Fortunately, we at Glen Avon have our own water supply and are not reliant on the supply of water by the Municipality; however, everybody has to participate in saving water and therefore we also ask our guest to use water sparingly and avoid taking a bath but rather shower instead.

If you could change three things in the industry, what would they be?

I think the massive hotel chains should be limited as they tend to dominate the industry and potentially destroy the market or at least make it extremely difficult for smaller independent hotels and lodges to compete.

Who or what has been the biggest influence in your career?

Life at large is the influence - it's the journey rather than the destination that counts.

What is the best advice you recall?

Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, so live in the Now.

What's your favourite town/part of Africa and why?

Cape Town – without a doubt. Cape Town is a superb mixture of sophistication combined with a touch of real Africa which makes it unique.

What is your motto in life?

Don't sweat the small stuff.

What item do you always take with you when travelling?

My cell phone, I enjoy reading news and articles.

What are your hobbies?

Culinary Arts. I enjoy quality food and wine. I enjoy cooking. I rather enjoy classical music.

How do you cope with the advances in technology? Do you tweet?

I believe the amount of information can be totally overwhelming. It is imperative to focus on the content, quality and source of media one is happy with. Too many people want to be self-styled journalists; I am sceptical about that as social media has definitely both a good and a bad side.



Watch a video about Glen Avon on <https://vimeo.com/255364904>

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