

World's best green hotel

July 24 2015 at 11:13am

By Michelle Pietersen



BEST PRACTICE: Hotel Verde, close to Cape Town International Airport, is the world's greenest hotel. Photo: Armand Hough

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CAPE TOWN boasts the world's greenest hotel. Award-winning Hotel Verde has become the only one on the planet to receive a double-platinum certificate from a US authority for going green.

Situated a few hundred metres from Cape Town International Airport, Hotel Verde boasts an environmentally conscious building management system.

It was awarded a second LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Platinum Green Building Certificate by the United States Green Building Council, making it the world's only hotel to achieve double-platinum status. LEED is a green building certification programme recognising best-in-class building strategies.

Built with environmentally sustainable materials, Hotel Verde was opened in 2013. The 145-room hotel has three wind turbines that produce renewable energy, saves thousands of kilowatts of electricity a year and 6 000 litres of water daily.

The three 17m-tall wind turbines are stationed at the entrance of the building's purple and lime green and mosaic walls.

Certain sections of the building can be switched off when not in use, while solar panels cover its north façade and roof. A selection of artwork in the hotel includes pieces by Grade 11 pupils from schools across the province, while walls in the basement parking are covered by impressive and colourful graffiti by local artists.

A plant room controls the hotel's temperature, allowing the building to use air pumped from 100 boreholes, each 65m deep. This ventilation system controls heating and cooling of the entire complex, which always has warm water flowing through custom-made piping system.

Doors and the roof are thermally insulated, windows are double glazed, while a state of the art braking system operates lifts in the hotel. Inside plants growing from a living wall in the foyer assist in keeping the air cleaner and healthier.

Care was taken in choosing paints to use inside the building as well as materials for the restaurant's menu.

LEED announced earlier this month that Hotel Verde had scooped its second platinum certificate – the highest grading – following a rigorous assessment of the hotel leadership's maintenance and management of the building and its business practices.

The certificate recognised outstanding leadership in energy and environmental design, singling out the business owners, Hotel Verde chief executive Mario Delicio, and his wife as the visionary leaders among hoteliers.

The certificate follows several awards, including Green Hotelier of 2015 in Africa and the Middle East.

A delighted Delicio said: “We are only at the beginning, but we are very much ahead of our time.” He said the hotel was conceptualised about five years ago and the journey to its current international standing was as a result of the team’s clever use of technologies.

LEED commended the company for its stringent waste management and procurement policies, biodiversity and carbon-neutral environment, among other abilities.

In the award announcement letter, Richard Fedrizzi, of the US Green Building Council, said: “The LEED identified Hotel Verde as a showcase example of sustainable design and demonstrates your leadership in transforming the building industry”.

Premier Helen Zille said: “I have no doubt that these groundbreaking achievements will lead to many more, while inspiring many other businesses to follow suit and adopt these best practices.”

Delicio said they would take the green hotel concept to Kenya next, with plans for the new hotel being finalised.