

GET AWAY

Any colour you like but beige

Knysna's Turbine Hotel is quirky yet comfortable in its industrial chic, writes **Andrea Nagel**

THE view of the old turbine building is best from Turbine Trixie, the booze-cruise pontoon barge that takes guests through the picturesque canals of Thesen island and out onto the Knysna lagoon. From the boat you can see the pillars and pipes of the power station jutting into the sunset sky, high above the multistorey structure that gives the landmark building its particular charm.

Although the Turbine Hotel's previous incarnation as a power plant is not as strikingly obvious from the entrance on the other side of the building as it is from the canals, the huge pieces of machinery that have pride of place throughout the five-star boutique hotel have been restored to pay tribute to the space's industrial past. The hotel on Thesen Island is actually part of a Heritage Walk, with its four imposing steam towers visible from far away.

It was clever to keep the soul of the power plant intact because it gives the hotel such distinctive and interesting character in an age when "beige" interior design is the go-to brief for most modern hotels. The industrial backdrop of bare bricks and brightly coloured bits of turbine is softened by the playfulness of the décor. It echoes the playful nature of Knysna itself, between water and forest, full of sprites and magic.

Schalk Hildebrand, the hotel's activities manager, is just as much a part of the hotel



POWER PLAY: Bare bricks and brightly coloured bits of turbine are softened by the décor

It echoes the playful nature of the area, between water and forest, full of magic

as the turbine spirit of it. It's Hildebrand who gets us out of our rooms and exploring Thesen Island and Knysna, across the bridge. We have two days to fill with water sports and booze cruises, bike rides to the famous Knysna Heads and walks through the mystical forests. We ride bikes to the mouth of the lagoon where it meets the sea — the second most dangerous shipping passage in the world — and climb to the top of the Heads where you can see secret coves on the beach below. We also stop at a microbrewery, pause for a wine tasting and visit the endangered Knysna seahorses in the SAN Parks office. We hike a famous forest trail through fern-lined gullies under the canopy of 800-year-old yellowwood trees, and visit the San Ambrosi Chapel Museum, which preserves the fascinating story of the Gouna silk spinners, a little-known history of

immigrants who came to the area to establish a silk industry. And we also couldn't miss the famous hot chocolate from ile de pain in the Thesen Island village.

Chef Ursula Nieuwoudt is at the helm of the hotel's Island Café and the Turbine Tapas Bar, which serves delicious snacks to share. Col'cacchio pizzeria at the water's edge is there if you want even more variety.

● For reservations call 044-302-5746, www.turbinehotel.co.za

● Andrea Nagel was a guest of Turbine Boutique Hotel & Spa in Knysna



FROTHY IDEA

Craft beer for Africa

YOLISA MKELE

THAT South Africans love beer is evidenced by the fact that there are probably more craft beer festivals than bunnies in a warren of rabbits.

But what happens when we want to indulge our mania for artisanal ale after work?

Sure most restaurants offer some craft choices but for those craving a kaleidoscope of options Capital Craft in Centurion may just be your best bet.

Like visiting Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory

Featuring a selection of well over 80 different local and imported boutique beers, Capital Craft is like Donald Trump being simultaneously confronted by 100 cats to pet — overwhelming. This, however, is a good thing.

For someone genuinely in love with beer, paging through the many pages of brews is like visiting Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. The variety is seemingly endless and that means it would take an untold number of post-work drinks sessions to finish your journey of discovery.

The fact that the beer menu is changed every three months also means that only the most diligent beer drinkers would be able to make it through the menu without finding something they have never tried before.

If beer is not your thing Capital Craft also has a surprising range of artisanal gins on offer,



HEAD START: Patrons getting their fill in a craft beer heaven
Picture: YOLISA MKELE

including some on tap.

If you are new to the world of gin, and looking to explore it, they offer something called "gin platters" — essentially six servings of gin done in different ways designed to sharpen your palette.

The first of the platters offers six half shots of six different craft gins. The second serves one gin in

six different ways to show how agile gin can be.

From a food perspective Capital Craft offers what can best be described as discomfort food.

Large burgers, meaty platters — the kind of thing that, when combined with beer, contributes to that uncomfortable distending of the midsection that accompanies happiness.

NEED TO KNOW

What to eat: The Puff and Pass platter will satisfy anyone of a carnivorous inclination.

What to drink: The answer here is pretty obvious.

What not to drink: Commercial beers like Castle Lager et al.

I mean, really; 80 different beers and you still want to go and choose the ones you can get at Spur?

Who you'll find there: Average suburban Joes looking to blow off a little steam after a stint in the salt mines.

Pet peeve: Paper menus.

Address: Highveld Shopping Centre, Corner John Vorster Drive and Logan Avenue, Centurion, Gauteng.

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