



Standing sentry outside the entrance to the hotel, it marks your arrival. Now an ancient relic, rusty from the salt air, its age speaks to three-generations of family commitment to hospitality.

Today, that commitment to superb hospitality and treasuring guests continues. Richard and his talented wife Jackie are completing a new extension to the hotel. A multipurpose double-story function facility with exterior sundecks, offers sweeping views of the legendary Morgan Bay dolerite cliffs and a mile long beach protected by a nature reserve. "It's an ideal venue for weddings, fam-

young couples with happy children, retired people, overnights between Durban and Cape town and of course, the hotel-hopping Wild Coast meanderers sharing experiences of spectacular wild coast scenery.

To spend the day walking was the real reason I came to Morgan Bay. Up at 4:30am cross over the lagoon, apparently a birder's haven offering over 270 species, and onto a three km unspoiled beach that winds along the Cape Morgan Nature Reserve. You could spend another four hours scrambling a rocky coastline that wraps northward to the Groot Kei River

back whales, pods of dolphins playing and distant gannets diving head-first into bait balls.

Each guest will tell a different story of why the hotel has a special meaning to them. On the morning of my departure I got talking a guest at breakfast, Dr Allan Heydon, an environmental consultant and past chairman of WWF South Africa.

"I never knew that within walking distance of the hotel you could experience five different ecosystems. Remarkable, I am going to recommend the hotel as the next venue for our annual WWF conference," says Dr Heydon.

With the new additions to the hotel, Richard and Jackie are set for some busy times ahead. Their two young boys, Michael and Dylan, hover about in the hotel foyer, watching and learning. Are they the fourth generation of Warren-Smiths responsible for continuing the tradition of memorable family holidays at Morgan Bay Hotel? I hope so.

"It's like coming home"

ily reunions and important functions. Guests now have the opportunity to stay over and relax a night or two before returning," says Richard. As Richard builds this new layer of Morgan Bay Hotel's history, Jackie is careful to ensure the best materials are used. Old décor is being updated, bath and bedrooms refurbished, soft furnishings replenished and it is sure giving the grand old lady a facelift.

Some things haven't changed – the Warren-Smith's personal touch. On the inside page of the dinner menu, each guest is greeted by name with a special welcome message. Groups that gather for a purpose are noted, and all departing guests are blessed with a message of safe travel. Looking over a plate of delicious seafood, the dining room is filled with honeymooners, family groups, relaxed

mouth. This is the last stretch for hikers on their way to Morgan Bay. I spend some time looking at the defunct coastal titanium mine reflecting that this gross disrespect for the environment should never be allowed to occur again.

After lunch, a planned venture to Double Mouth comes to an abrupt end. The famous dolerite cliffs, starting at the point of Morgan Bay, tower cathedral-like into the sky reaching up from the ocean. The sheer magnificence arrested any idea of completing the walk and instead I opted for a scramble up the cliffs. On reaching the top, a grandstand seat offers panoramic views of the ocean. Sitting in solitude, except for a neighboring colony of white-breasted cormorants and a few suspicious looks from rock hyraxes, I spend the rest of the afternoon celebrating every breach of the hump-

WILDSIDE Fact Tracker

Morgan Bay Hotel

How to get there: GPS co-ordinates: -32° 42 31.91, +28° 20 29.97.

Rates: Pppns Db. Standard rooms from R625, Seaview rooms from R675, Deluxe rooms from R745. In season rates higher. December all meals included in tariff. Children up to 4 years 10% of tariff, 5 yrs to 12yrs 40% of tariff. 30% Surcharge for single supplement.

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