

The Grand Daddy Hotel: Airstream Penthouse Trailer Park

Sponsor: The Grand Daddy Hotel

Location: Western Cape (Cape Town)

Industry: Hospitality



Airstream Penthouse Trailer Park is the brainchild of the Daddy Long Legs Group, with one of the hotel directors, Jody Aurichtg, choosing to personally run and oversee the development of the project. The idea came out of the need to create a space for travellers that is spacious, creative, spotless and provides good value accommodation.

Creating this kind of space was never going to be an easy task as this is not considered the norm in the travel industry. However, the Daddy Long Legs team had other ideas and were determined to take their idea to fruition.

The Aim

The aim was to create an accommodation space that would also be an exhibition space, thus creating a place where the guest would be part of interactive exhibition. The Daddy Long Legs Group already has thirteen-rooms in the Daddy Long Legs Art Hotel in Cape Town that are all individually decorated by a local artist drawn from a wide variety of artistic genres including photography, art, poetry, design and music. Each of these artists was afforded complete carte blanche to create the space as they saw fit, which resulted in a collection of very different hotel rooms that are adventurous and satirical - with a touch of humour that emphasises Cape Town's cultural landscape. The Airstream Penthouse Trailer Park, located on the roof of The Grand Daddy Hotel, aimed to extend the success of the Daddy Long Legs Art Hotel.

The Brief

In order for the Airstream Penthouse Park project to be realized, the Daddy Long Legs Group put out a brief that to the artistic community of Cape Town to present themed creative décor schemes for the seven vintage American Trailers. Through this process artists were selected to create the installations and were commissioned to create their installations. The trailers were already stationed on the rooftop of the hotel and each artist was given between four and six weeks to complete the project.

The Hurdles

For this dream to be realised, many obstacles had to be overcome. Firstly the project team had to approach the International Trade Administration Commission for permission to bring the trailers in from America as none of the trailer manufacturers in South Africa make the Airstream caravan. The team had its work cut out in getting a government department to take them seriously, as who in their right minds would want to build a trailer park hotel? Most people have a preconceived idea of what a trailer park is – drawn from popular television shows.

However Jody Ausrichtg, a Daddy Long Legs Group director, refused to back down and after 17 attempts, permission to import the trailers was finally given to the team.

However, the challenges were not over: Just when all systems seemed ready to go and it was time to find a park to place the Airstreams, council red tape would not allow it. Project co-ordinator, Jody Ausrichtg eventually switched to finding a plot in and around Cape Town, eventually settling on and buying the Metropole Hotel, which was built in 1870 in the beautiful Georgian style. The hotel had been through several renovations - most recently in the 60s and 80s. The Metropole features South Africa's oldest working elevator and in 1905 it received a Georgian facade, which it still has today and is part of the reason it is seen as a heritage site. When the Cape Town City Council found out that the new owners wanted to place seven Airstream trailers on the roof they refused permission – citing the fact that there are no building regulations to deal with an issue such as trailers on the roofs of buildings. After much discussion between the project coordinators and relevant people in the council and government it was finally agreed to place the trailers on the roof as they did not interfere with the façade of the building. Permission was granted on the grounds that the new owners did not mess with the Georgian façade of the building.

Another challenge was presented by the curved walls of the trailers. This was a first for the council's building regulations – and added to the fact that there are no building regulations in the world for placing trailers onto the roofs of buildings, it meant many trips to and from council departments by the team. In the end, it took eight council departments before this endeavor could be approved.

The artists had to be creative and turn the spaces into something unique that would double as a living space as well as an exhibition space.

The Results

The project has been an immense success – so much so that the team has created a new brief for artists to enter the Daddy Bloom Festival which runs from Thursday, 8 October to Sunday, 11 October. Instead of nature's blooms, this spring flower show focuses on designer blooms made from any media ranging from paper to porcelain. The team is also launching their Pink Flamingo Theatre on the roof. The team

attributes a large part of their success to the decision to involve local artists. Now new projects keep unfolding out of the initial success of the Daddy Long Legs hotel rooms and the Airstream Penthouse Park on top of the Grand Daddy Hotel – all of which see the Daddy Long Legs team working with new artists to create innovative accommodation and hospitality spaces in the heart of Cape Town.

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