

## [ TRAVEL ]

# New hotel concept is finally here

**T**wo weeks ago I was talking about an “in between” country – Laos, in South-East Asia.

This week, I want to tell you about an “in between” hotel in Nairobi.

It is the Country Lodge – the new enterprise of the very energetic young generation of the Szlapak family that owns and runs the Fairview Hotel. And it is situated along 2nd Ngong Avenue – right behind the Fairview.

There are two striking features of the Country Lodge. First, it is only \$60 (about Sh4,200) a night, inclusive of a cooked breakfast and all taxes. Second, it has a style that is much more sophisticated than any other hotel in Nairobi that makes a similar charge.

It targets the business travellers who want efficient and clean accommodation at what might be called a “budget price”.

The reception is open and sharply fresh in its black and white décor – very Scandinavian. The bedrooms are Scandinavian-style, too – with their light-wood floors, white duvets, stainless-steel bedside lights, flush doors and spacious shower cubicle.

I do a lot of staying in hotels on consultancy assignments – and the Country Lodge has everything I would ask for in a room.

First, the ambiance; it is bright, neat

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and pleasing to the eye.

The telephone is the latest IP model. The internet connection is 1 MB wi-fi. To secure such things as money, passport and tickets there is an electronic safe.

And, when you want to catch up with news from around the world – or just take a break from whatever report you are struggling with – there is the satellite TV.

If you feel like a harder or more social drink, you can take a walk to the bar that opens from 6 pm till 11 pm. If you want to relieve your stiffness – or work off your frustrations – more energetically, you can visit the smart mini-gym. And when you are ready for a meal, you can choose from the small room service menu, catch the shuttle that runs to the Fairview restaurants, or take a taxi to any other of the many restaurants close by.

And they call this a “limited-service” hotel. The only thing, it seems to me, that is limited about it is that you have to make your own tea or coffee, drop your laundry at reception rather than having it picked up from your room, or help yourself to the 24-hour, refrigerated refreshment cabinet.

This Country Lodge concept is new to Nairobi. Charles Szlapak’s son Daniel, and his son-in-law Mark, travelled around the world and sampled over 20 budget-type hotels, to establish the concept and to refine the design.

It was Daniel who showed me round the other day.

“Budget price? Yes,” he said. “But there’s real quality here. At this \$60 price, you won’t find anything like this in Nairobi.”

I’m sure he’s right.

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