

# Hotels proving preferred choice for World Cup visitors

FIVE-STAR luxury hotels in upmarket urban areas are proving to be popular with international guests visiting for the World Cup, says David Solomon, chairman of Solomon Brothers Property Holdings, the developer of the Pepper Club hotel.

Many are either fully booked or rapidly approaching capacity for the duration of the four-week soccer tournament, he says.

The yet-to-be-opened R400 million five-star luxury hotel and spa in Pepper Street, Cape Town, has recorded

almost 95 percent pre-bookings for the tournament period.

"This is in contrast to reports from owners of local guesthouses, private homes and backpacker hostels, who say the expected rush for World Cup accommodation has not materialised, with some fearing rooms will stand empty during the tournament," says Solomon.

"However, owners of these establishments should not be overly concerned with the current status of their bookings, as they stand to benefit from the significant overflow once

hotels reach their booking capacities for the tournament.

## Providers should keep in mind that visitors expect first-world amenities

As long as rates are competitive, smaller players will bene-

fit increasingly as the tournament draws nearer."

He says hotels in South Africa's urban areas close to stadiums and amenities such as shopping centres, tourist attractions and nightlife are best placed to attract most of the foreign visitors.

"The feedback we have received from customers is that one of their main priorities is to be as near as possible to the action.

"It seems proximity to host cities and stadiums is a significant, and in many cases crucial, requirement for for-

eign guests."

He says although the local tourism sector's overall aim is to offer visitors a truly African experience, providers should not lose sight of the fact that many visitors still expect first-world amenities.

"When compared with other accommodation offerings, South Africa's luxury hotels still offer a combination of a secure environment, proximity and direct access to top attractions, as well as top-class facilities that many well-travelled visitors have come to expect," says Solomon.



**MELANIE PETERS**

GUEST lodges, private homes and backpackers are worried about the slow rate of World Cup bookings, with some fearing their rooms will stand empty during the tournament.

But five-star hotels are fully booked, or fast approaching capacity.

Chairman of the Seeff property group, Samuel Seeff, said bookings in non-graded B&Bs had been slower than hoped. "With under four months to go, we would have liked to be

# Anxiety over Cup bookings

booked out. This is not to say we're not expecting a last-minute rush. But hotels and guests houses do have to fill up first."

Susanne Faussner-Ringer, chairwoman of Fedhasa Cape's smaller accommodation section, said the unequal situation was partly because flight costs were more affordable for affluent visitors, who could also pay for top hotels.

"The establishments that signed up with Match (the organisation which accredits B&Bs and hotels on behalf of Fifa) will be immediately recognised and supported by first-time visitors," she said.

The Pepper Club, a five-star hotel opening soon in the city centre, is 95 percent pre-booked.

David Solomon, chairman of Solomon Brothers Property Holdings

– developers of the Pepper Club – said it seemed visitors wanted to be close to the action. Establishment owners should not be overly concerned, as they stood to benefit from the overflow once hotels reached their booking capacities, he said.

Hotel veteran Clifford Ross, who is on Fedhasa's board and heads City Lodge Hotels, said: "The sad reality is we're not going to get the 400 000 foreign spectators everyone has been talking about, which means some hotels will struggle with bookings."

