

# Relaxed vacationing in Plett



By [Brian Berkman](#)

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Aside from being green year-round, the Garden Route delivers a milder climate any time of the year and Plettenberg Bay or just Plett as locals know it has some of the best swimming beaches around.

## The Plettenberg Hotel

[The Plettenberg Hotel](#), one of three in The Liz McGrath Collection of properties, is helmed by MJ Birch. Birch was operations manager for luxury boutique hotel and villa, Ellerman House, in Bantry Bay for eight years where he had firsthand experience how to deliver what A-listers want when it comes to a luxury getaway.



MJ Birch, general manager at The Plettenberg.

At The Plettenberg, a 35 roomed luxury hotel and villas on the rocky peninsula of Look-Out beach, Plettenberg Bay, where he has been since May 2016, he is setting the already high bar even higher. “Now that all Collection hotels are focusing on the whole family (previously only over 12s were welcome) we are ensuring that our guests have the best beach holiday possible by having a ready supply of body boards and all the kit kids need for fun in the sand,” he says.

“We’ve embraced the family in the kind of detailed way we approach all our guests: special amenities, kid’s robes, bed-time books and other child-focused treats”. Although he didn’t work for the Collection when founder Mrs Liz McGrath was still alive, he had the opportunity to meet her at Relais & Châteaux events. Ellerman House and The Liz McGrath Collection’s The Cellars Hohenort, are members of the prestigious marketing organisation. McGrath was, in fact, the first woman to own three Relais and Châteaux properties.



“Although we’re not a corporate hotel, we are upgrading our business and meeting spaces to better cater to incentive travel market and high-end getaways for the executive team.”

MJ also has management experience at Bushman’s Kloof and Londolozi and together with a strong food and beverage skills-set, Liz McGrath’s passion for growing staff potential is something MJ also shares. “Our executive has approved training programmes for all levels of staff so I’m confident that our guests will appreciate all our improvements.”

## **The Beacon Island Resort**

What The Plettenberg is for the well-heeled, [The Beacon Island Resort by Tsogo Sun](#), one of the most popular time-share properties, is for families. For many, the two-week pilgrimage to a property so close to the sea that windows in the below-decks Coral Restaurant and the Playa Bar panoramic windows regularly get splashed is a travel highlight.



This iconic property - an exterior of 70s concrete chic with a New York Guggenheim-type atrium and concentric corridors, remains a head-turner. Built 40 years ago, it recently benefitted from a major upgrade of the entire interior.

## **Robberg Nature Reserve**

Aside from its mild climate and near endless sandy beaches, the great natural appeal of Plettenberg Bay is the Robberg Nature Reserve, a World Heritage Site. There are routes of varying length and difficulty but all guarantee sea views and the opportunity to see the famous stone-age inhabited caves. Note the tides before you visit as the longest route can only be comfortably completed at low tide. Rocks here date back 120 million years ago and there is an easy and well-marked walk to view the myriad seals that nest in one of the bays.





## Dining options

Cuisine at the SeaFood restaurant at The Plettenberg is an elegant and top notch and under the guidance of The Collection's group executive chef Peter Tempelhof. In fact, everything we ordered, from dinner to breakfast, was exceptional. Nearby the hotel are a number of good places to eat. We always enjoy the hearty portions and good-value offering at LM, a Mozambican-style eatery which is always popular. The Look Out Restaurant, right on the beach, is as casual as you'd hope a beach eatery to be.

Accommodations in The Plettenberg are in a number of buildings all within easy proximity of the Fresh Wellness Spa. Hotel guests have the choice of two swimming pool (in the main building and Annex) while the two villas, also within proximity to the main buildings, each of their own exclusive-use pools.



Despite its elegance, guests are encouraged to be as relaxed and casual as they'd like to be which is, after all, what one wants from a seaside holiday. And no matter how exquisite a croissant or perfectly poached egg, breakfast always tastes better after an early morning swim, with the feeling of sand still between your toes.

## ABOUT BRIAN BERKMAN

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