



OUR MAN ON THE GROUND TRAVEL AND LIFESTYLE

GLOBAL TRAVEL AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

SEARCH ...

The Hilton Addis Ababa, A Hotel Fit For An Emperor

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It was opened in 1969 by an emperor. That's pretty good for any hotel. But the ceremony for this one was performed by Haile Salassie, the Ethiopian who was his country's regent until 1974. And the man revered by the Rastafari movement as God incarnate. That makes for an enticing introduction to a hotel. Welcome to the Hilton, Addis Ababa.

After a quick click on their website, it's clear that they rate their establishment for things that have nothing to do with emperors, namely: it's minutes from the ECA conference centre and other economic and cultural activities; there's a 24-hour business centre and translation services; a round-the-clock onsite bank and Tour Operator; an eight-hole mini golf course, squash court and geothermal outdoor pool; five restaurants and bars; and seven meeting rooms accommodating up to 900 delegates. Phew!

I have my own Ethiopian Tour Operator (Assefa, the endlessly accommodating CEO from Kibrans Tours); I hate mini golf; and I love swimming but the Hilton's pool (in the shape of a cross, the first of zillions that I am to see in this Orthodox Christian country) is closed for cleaning. (Incidentally, it's a great geothermal pool fed by underground water and every two weeks they drain it for three days. So make sure you book to stay when it's open.)



So, in short, I'm not recommending the hotel for what they like about it. The reason I love the Hilton is because the instant I arrive, the staff are so friendly, so welcoming. They laugh, they joke – and yet they manage to remain professional. (It's Ethiopian New Year, apparently, we're in the 13th month of 2008; even though I'm sure I'm in the ninth month of 2016...but instantly a receptionist charmingly helps me get my head around this. Meanwhile a security man is laughing and complimenting my daughter on her Ethiopian plaits, a hairstyle that took eight hours to complete in um, Israel. It couldn't be a more homely welcome.)

The other thing that appeals to me is that the hotel is so dated, so delightfully stuck in a time warp, so Seventies in its décor. Somehow it doesn't matter that the bathrooms are slightly shabby, and that, in the shower, the hot and cold water taps take five minutes to decide between them on an equitable

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temperature. Who cares when you're in a hotel designed to resemble a Laibela cross? Another perk (make sure you book a room on the top floor) is that there's the Executive Lounge with complimentary food, drink and views (over the parkland surrounding the hotel, all 15 acres of it) available all day. I like that. Especially the views.

What else do I love about it? It's an urban oasis, providing a welcome respite from the heat, dust and clamour of the world outside. There's a playground, four tennis courts, one volley ball court, an indoor squash one and a fitness centre with spa, sauna and gym. The locals come to use the recreational facilities – including 86-year old Mohammed, the first member of the Hilton's club, who has been exercising there since 1969. I have a fun game of tennis with my daughter – although I find it hard to catch my breath at 2,500 metres – with their tennis coach lobbing us balls at us. I started exercising in the 13th month of 2008.



But there's more...The concierge also gets the thumbs-up. I should have noted his name, he was that good. He was probably called Assefa; most of them are. (No offence intended. Incidentally it's a name which translated from the Amharic means, 'He has increased our family by coming into this world'; hard to know how a birth could have impacted on a family in any other way, but there we go.) Anyway, no matter. This gentle man recommended restaurants like Yod Abyssinia where we ate communal plates of 'fasting' food whilst sitting on traditional, low Ethiopian seats, and watched dancers shaking their heads faster than you can whip cream. And the concierge wisely urged us to take the private transport available from the hotel desk – a top tip given that most of the taxis in the street have wobbling wheels and their doors stuck on with Sellotape. (MOT, what's that?)

We venture out in the Kibran Tour's minibus with Jonas, their excellent guide. Outside people pay little heed to the traffic lights and goats are herded in the street. He takes us to visit the Mercato (the world's largest outside market), the National Museum of Ethiopia and the Holy Trinity Cathedral. And to the palace where we sawdrum roll for one of my favourite things....Haile Salassie's former bathroom.

The Hilton has 372 bedrooms and apartments too. Yet somehow I feel at home. I am not alone. One guest has stayed for 20 years. As for my bedroom...OK, so I don't have a pool or mountain view. More of a shantytown and car-park outlook. But hey. That all adds to the atmosphere and colour. The room is comfortable with an iron and ironing board – I just love an ironing board – and tea and coffee making facilities. So delightfully Mad Men meets Desperate Housewives. Add to that that the hotel boasts endless 'relaxed' eateries, banks, bars, a duty-free shop, and boutiques selling everything from souvenirs to pastries. Then why, as the general manager asked, ever leave the compound? Indeed.

The Details:

Hilton Addis Ababa, Menelik II Ave, Addis Ababa 1164, Ethiopia

Tel: +251 11 517 0000 and 0800 066 5487

Website: www.ar.hilton.com/en/hotel/Hilton-Addis-Ababa

Email: reservations.addisababa@hilton.com

Located opposite the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the hotel is 15 minutes from Bole Airport and five minutes to the ECA Convention Center.

Type of Hotel: 4-Star Hotel

Number of Rooms: 372 guestrooms and apartments

Insider Tip:

Book an executive room and enjoy access to the Executive Lounge with food, beverages and great views.

Price Band: Medium

Reviewer's Rating: 8/10

Author Bio:

Cassie Phillips is an award-winning freelance journalist based in London

 **MOOSE The Mountain Spirit**
September 1, 2020

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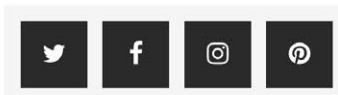
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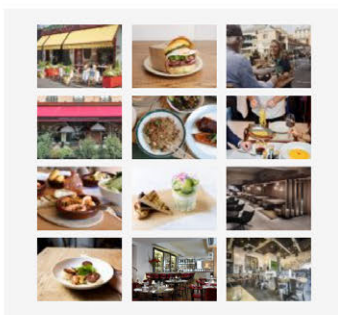
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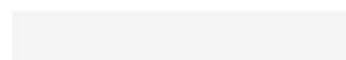
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