

SETTING THE STANDARD

For close on 130 years, Royal Johannesburg & Kensington Golf Club has been regarded as one of South Africa's premier golfing facilities

With its rich history and two award-winning parkland courses, this prestigious members' club in Linksfield North is one of South Africa's timeless classics. Yet 'Royal' is not a club that rests easily on past achievements. The board, management and staff at the club have a clear, unified vision and desire to drive the club into a bold new future; one where the golfer experience

- for member and visitor - is at the heart of everything it does. By successfully balancing its legacy as the fourth-oldest golf club in the country with modern business practices and customer-centric hospitality, Royal has been able to move with the times while respecting the traditions of the past. The ethos has paid off handsomely, with membership and round numbers booming - all while local and international awards continue to rack up. For the second



year in a row, the East Course has been recognised as the Best Golf Course in Africa at the World Golf Awards; a truly remarkable accolade given the stiff competition out there.

'At Royal, we are constantly striving to improve,' said CEO Chris Bentley. 'Golf and the golfer experience may be at the centre of everything we do, but through progressive, innovative thinking we have created a modern, inclusive golf club that is welcoming to all visitors, whether they are here for golf, business or leisure.'

Over the years, both courses at the Royal Johannesburg & Kensington club have, mostly, stayed faithful to their original designs. Numerous updates and improvements have modernised the layouts and the benefits of state-of-the-art irrigation and drainage systems, as well as their sand-based greens and silica-filled bunkers, are obvious to see. Smoother, more consistent greens and level tee boxes, together with improved all-round course conditioning has seen both courses consistently ranked in the top 30 in the country, with the East Course regularly mentioned in any conversations about the country's top golf course.

The East, some 500m longer than the West, is considered the 'big brother' of the two and has serious championship credentials, having hosted just about any championship worth mentioning in South Africa, including nine SA Open Championships and 11 Joburg Opens.

It will be on this iconic layout that the South African Amateur Championships will break new ground in 2020 where, for the first time, the men's and women's amateurs will be played simultaneously. It is difficult to imagine a better venue for the world's best amateurs to compete for the biggest prizes in amateur golf in South Africa. In keeping with its commitment to furthering the development of the game, Royal Johannesburg & Kensington is scheduled to host the landmark event for the next three years.

The club stands out as an example of astute management and environmental conscientiousness, and in 2005 was the first course in South Africa to become a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.



Further efforts to improve sustainability are being conducted in conjunction with GEO Foundation, with Royal leading the way as a responsible, resource-efficient business in an ecologically rich landscape.

Beyond the fairways, the clubhouse, revamped at considerable cost, is modern and airy and retains the feel of a traditional golf club. There is no shortage of golfing history adorning the walls of the many rooms and passages at Royal and one could spend hours soaking up the rich history of this remarkable venue.

Royal Johannesburg & Kensington has flourished under the stewardship of Bentley, the 2019 PGASA Club Manager of the Year, and the club has shown itself to be a true innovator in a traditionally conservative industry.

It is also fast becoming the home of golf in South Africa, with the PGA of South Africa, the Club Management Association of South Africa and the Seniors Golfers Society of Gauteng electing to base themselves on the premises.



Golfers have access to the finest practice facilities, from the well-conditioned driving range and short-game areas to instruction from fully qualified PGA professionals such as Martin Briede and Gavan Levenson, while the pro shop is run by 2019 PGASA Regional Club Professional of the Year Greg Jacobs.

The club has further broadened its offerings by adding a fully fledged inbound and outbound travel department, daily activities such as sunrise yoga and night adventure runs and exciting future projects include a R700m property development on the outskirts of the courses, clubhouse enhancements that will include a family centre, kids club and fitness centre and a renovation to the West Course in June 2020.



Under its iconic bell tower, Royal Johannesburg & Kensington club is quietly paving the way forward for golf clubs to thrive in the competitive modern-day economy. No longer just a golfing facility, the club can rightfully be considered a social and business centre - with a clear focus on family and fitness - where members and visitors, from scholars to captains of commerce and industry, feel at home.

As membership continues to gather momentum, the club is considering closing membership in 2022, following the inclusion of its residents. For anyone looking to find a golfing home in Johannesburg, the country's most progressive golfing facility, with its two sublime golf courses, should be the first name on the list. ☺



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