

The Vision for Guest Experience

by **Guy Thompson, General Manager**

Guest expectations in hospitality have changed significantly over recent years. Luxury today is no longer defined solely by beautiful spaces or impressive facilities. It is defined by how people feel, how experiences are delivered and the emotional connection guests have with a stay.

I believe the hotels that will stand out in the future are not necessarily the most luxurious, but the ones guests emotionally connect with most. That shift is something I think about constantly at The Johnstown Estate.

For me, great guest experience is shaped by the smaller details that together create a lasting impression. It is how a guest feels walking through the front doors. The atmosphere in the lobby. The energy at reception. The lighting, music, scent and welcome they receive from the team. The feeling that everything has been considered before they even ask.

At The Johnstown Estate, I regularly walk the hotel at different times throughout the week to see the estate through the eyes of our guests. Hospitality is constantly evolving, so it is important we continue to challenge ourselves and refine the experience.

Over the last number of years, we have introduced a range of additions across the estate designed to make stays feel more personal and memorable.

Whether it is dog-friendly lodges, deck chairs throughout the grounds or simple touches like reading glasses available in the lobby, the intention is always the same: anticipating guest needs in a thoughtful way.

For wedding couples, we introduced bespoke gift boxes including The Johnstown Estate robes, candles and honey produced from our own bee hives. The bee hives were introduced not only from a sustainability perspective, but also because guests increasingly want a stronger connection to nature and place when they travel.



What is important to me is that the estate never feels impersonal. Whether guests are here for a corporate event in The Forde Suites, a spa escape, a family break or a wedding celebration, I want them to feel immersed in the experience and encouraged to enjoy everything the estate has to offer.

Guests today are looking for experiences that feel more personal, social and connected to place. I believe hospitality will continue moving away from traditional formality and towards experiences that feel genuine, relaxed and memorable.

The reality is none of this happens without people.

With over 300 team members across the estate, I have always believed culture is the foundation of exceptional hospitality. Guest experience can only be as strong as the people delivering it, which is why creating an environment built on trust, empowerment, accountability and shared pride is so important. When teams feel valued and connected to the vision, genuine hospitality follows naturally.

That is why we place huge emphasis on conversational service rather than scripted interactions, empowering staff to resolve issues quickly, daily guest experience briefings and creating an "own the guest" mentality across the estate. Looking ahead, we are continuing to invest heavily in the future of The Johnstown Estate with plans for 90 additional bedrooms, new padel courts and a new Italian restaurant.

Luxury hospitality today is not about formality or excess. Experience is now the true luxury.

In an increasingly competitive industry, I believe the properties that stand out will be the ones guests emotionally connect with most, and that is what we continue to focus on at The Johnstown Estate.