



# HERITAGE PARK HOTEL



## Heritage Park pivots to survive the pandemic

Over the past 12 years, Heritage Park has become something of a Honiara icon. It has been home to a range of visitors to the Solomon Islands' capital, including tourists, business executives, government officials and diplomats from neighbouring countries and beyond. Some of the hotel's most memorable guests include Prince William and Kate Middleton and Ban Ki-moon, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations. On one particularly busy week, there were seven Prime Ministers, two



Presidents and two Governors General staying at the hotel simultaneously to attend a conference.

*"Heritage Park was a bold project. Sir Kostas Constantinou from PNG partnered with PNG's superannuation fund (NASFUND) and formed the company, known as Heritage Park Hotel Limited. They were later joined by the Solomon Islands National Provident Fund (SINPF),"* explained Sanjay Bhargava, Heritage Park's General Manager.

The hotel commenced its operations in 2009. *"The tourism business environment way back in those days*



*"Heritage Park was a bold project."*

*was not as brisk as we know it. Back then, we were very skeptical as to how things would go. Fortunately, things started to happen quickly and the business clicked,”* recalled Sanjay.

The business has gone from strength to strength. Now with 132 employees, Heritage Park strives to be the best hotel in the region and provides a quality of service that its guests could expect to see anywhere in the world. The hotel also caters for local residents with its gym, nightclub and three restaurants, and operates a commercial building next door that rents office spaces to a range of commercial, diplomatic and other tenants.



*“This has been the icing on the cake for me during my time here.”*



Heritage Park has set high standards of hospitality service for the tourism industry in the country. *“We have been the winners for the Business Excellence Awards, which is instituted by the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and the Solomon Islands Government. We have received that award 3 times and have been nominated and been winners for various other accolades all concerning service and hospitality. This has been the icing on the cake for me during my time here,”* said Sanjay proudly.

## HERITAGE PARK

But in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Borders closed, global restrictions came into effect and international travellers returned home. Almost overnight, the rooms at Heritage Park were empty.

*“Covid hit us and people started leaving the country because international borders began to close down. Our hotel suddenly became empty. All our bookings were cancelled. We had no idea what was ahead. That was a scary time,”* shared Sanjay.



The hotel quickly pivoted its business model to ensure it could keep its doors open and its staff employed.

Recognising the demand for virtual conferencing facilities, as well as its dining and entertainment offerings, Heritage Park doubled down on its investment in these aspects of the business to adapt to the pandemic context.

*“We have been surviving mostly on conferences,”* said Sanjay. *“Our unique selling proposition these days is having seven conference facilities that cater from a minimum of 15 people to a max of 200. Since we’re a business hotel, we try and focus on conferences. We invested in hi-definition cameras just so that we could offer virtual conferences and meetings. We’ve been doing very well in that area.”*

*“All our bookings were cancelled. We had no idea what was ahead.”*

## HERITAGE PARK

*“With no rooms being occupied, Food and Beverage, and our conferences have kept us going for a long time now. Our nightclub, Club HP, has done well too,”* he continued.

Social media has played a role in the hotel’s resilience story. Heritage Park uses Facebook because *“it is the fastest growing media at the moment. We need to reach out to the people who are on Facebook. Social media is the easiest and cheapest method of reaching out to people. Who isn’t on Facebook? It’s the simplest way to market your product and services,”* described Sanjay.

Heritage Park regularly posts engaging social media content, sharing images of its friendly staff, glittering views of Iron



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Bottom Sound, and tantalising cakes and meals fresh from the hotel kitchen. Sharing these moments has allowed the hotel to connect with its audience more quickly and easily, and in doing so, helped it to weather the impacts of Covid-19.

*“We have been posting on Heritage Park and Club HP’s Facebook pages of which both have different audiences. We never expected that we would be able to reach out to a certain segmented people, but then we have been,”* explained Sanjay.

## HERITAGE PARK

He continued saying, “We are on the right track where digital marketing is concerned. This is encouraging us to delve deeper into what we can do. For example, the pastry section that we have, it’s been there for so many years but we hadn’t promoted it, or we didn’t even know that we could take it to this level. There’s so many of our pastry products that have been in demand for the past two years now and it’s because of Facebook and it will take us further.”

“I frankly don’t understand how we would have existed without Facebook and Instagram. It’s become so simple; this is the way that one does business,” he concluded.





## Heritage Park Hotel

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