

GET DECORATING

Avatara Guest House, Green Point

Cher Poznanovich and her cousin Michael Poznanovich look more like A-list celeb guests than guest house keepers. Just like good champers, they're bubbly and make you feel warm and wonderful and totally relaxed.

As you walk into Avatara, you get the feeling that a lot has been going on here – and it has!

"I inherited this dear old rambling Victorian house from my father but didn't really worry about it at first. It was a backpackers' rest house for years and but fell into a really bad state."

Cher has always been an organisational genius, having also been the PR for the

to turn the old faded and jaded Victorian house into a vibey and fabulous pied à terre for guests from far and near.

"We literally disemboweled the building, leaving only the skeleton but still retaining the characteristic Victorian elements like the stairs and wooden mouldings. We remodeled and restructured, turning nooks and crannies into en suites and airy bedrooms. It was a huge project with so many things to trip us up along the way. We managed to keep the charm and the heritage but ditch the decay."

Cher opened Avatara's stained glass front door to her first guest on Christmas Eve last year.

'And when it all gets too much, they can come home to us and wallow in the cool and quiet of these revamped old walls'

SPCA, handling fundraising and bequests.

"I really loved it and the whole idea of protecting and caring for animals but I was so exhausted by the constant fight for funding that I decided I needed a change of lifestyle and a new job. It was time to turn my hand to something creative and tactile like remodeling this old house and breathing new life and opportunities into its creaky old walls."

Michael and Cher have similar tastes in decor and as he has had 10 years in the hospitality trade and they both have a hankering for a challenge, they pooled their skills and came up with a strategy

"Trust me, Michael was still grouting tiles with one hand and carrying suitcases in with the other, but we did it!"

Cher's fascination with all things Indian shines through in the cleverly co-ordinated decor which combines modern furniture and chic finishes with exotic accessories and artistic touches.

"I went to India last year and came away completely obsessed by the spiritual energy and visual stimulation that pours into you. I love the colours, the textures, the patterns and the richness of everything. It's all so vibrant and alive. That's what I wanted for this guest house – a place that fills you with good karma and a sense of well-being."

"I chose the name Avatara, a Hindi word that translates as 'heaven on earth'

and hope that my guests will feel that special aura here. They must feel rested and serene and completely relaxed, shifting energy in a positive way. We are offering more than just a bed for the night – we want to ensure they have a soothing and celebratory stay with us."

Each of the six guest rooms has its own stylish look and is simply but beautifully decorated with Indian touches like a carved wood screen or an exotic tiled alcove basin and comes with all the mod cons you could wish for – heated towel rails, flat screen TV and wi-fi connection.

"We have two very special rooms, one with a deluxe bath with a view over the bay and a fireplace and another has a very sexy art deco bathroom in black which forms part of the bedroom. Another room has a lovely balcony and views of Signal Hill."

"The colour scheme is based on a soothing and calming calico cream with flashes of red, orange and green to add vibrance and resonance to the rooms. My favourite room is the one with the Indian screen and the views of the sea – it's a sophisticated room with sensual overtones and makes you feel totally spoiled."

"I was so impressed by the level of service in India – nothing is too much for a guest's comfort. Michael and I want to make sure our guests feel cherished and he is available to plan and organise outings and excursions for them. We spend a lot of time here and mix with the guests so they become friends."

"We find that guests love the idea of walking to the hub of things and experiencing the outdoorsy pavement lifestyle of the bistros and shops along the way. And when it all gets too much, they can come home to us and wallow in the cool and quiet of these revamped old walls."

They have both taken to their new way of life and getting up early to make and serve their guests a delicious hot breakfast in the glassed-in sunroom is no hardship.

"We chat with them as we whip up omelettes and pour juice and they sometimes help themselves to snacks in the kitchen in the afternoons. It's all open and free and friendly and that's what makes a guest house so special."

"We love going to work each day. It doesn't feel like work – it's like spending a day with your extended family."

● Avatara Guest House, Green Point.
☎ 021-433-0341
www.avataraguesthouse.co.za

