

ISSUE 1: APRIL - JULY 2025

southern africa travel

CAPE TOWN
like a local

*NAMIBIA'S
SKELETON COAST*

Maputaland
searching for sea turtles



PLUS BUSH BREAKS, AFRICAN PENGUIN CONSERVATION,
MADIKWE GAME RESERVE, ART 'SCAPES

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1

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3



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OF
RESILIENCE



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the profound history of this iconic landmark. Embark on an inspiring journey to experience the island's natural and cultural heritage with a guided tour and interaction with former political prisoners. A unique symbol of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity, suffering and injustice.

4

5

6

WELCOME



*"Every journey
begins with a
single step"*

Lao Tzu

EDITOR'S COMMENT

For the Travel Southern Africa team, our journey began with an idea, then a single page, followed by many more pages filled with stories of adventure, culture, and discovery.

With the launch of Travel Southern Africa, we invite you to journey with us through this breathtaking and diverse region. From the pristine beaches of KwaZulu-Natal to Namibia's vast deserts, from exploring Cape Town like a local to discovering Malawi as a family-friendly destination, we take you there. We head out on safari, chase adventure in Victoria Falls, and uncover art, cuisine, and luxury escapes along the way.

But this magazine is about more than just places, it's about the people we meet, the communities we connect with, and the stories that inspire. In this issue we explore how tourism can make a difference, share impactful conservation initiatives, and meaningful community projects. These are the moments that stay with us long after the journey ends.

Travel has the power to connect us, to inspire us, and to remind us of the beauty in the world. In every issue, we'll bring you stunning landscapes, hidden gems, and transformative travel experiences that celebrate responsible tourism.

So, whether you're planning your next adventure or simply dreaming of new horizons, we hope these pages awaken your desire to travel and explore.

Welcome to Travel Southern Africa. The journey starts here.

Tessa

#TravelSouthernAfrica

Scan the QR code to download the digital mag to read at your leisure.



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We welcome editorial and photographic submissions to the magazine. Accompanying images should be sent in high-res jpg and minimum 3MB in size.

Please send a synopsis of the proposed article to

tessa@responsibletraveller.co.za

for consideration.

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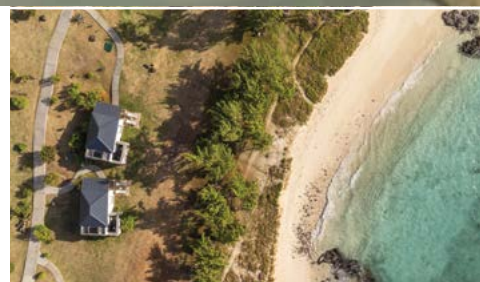
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THE ESSENCE OF AUTHENTIC PARADISE



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BOOK PLAN DREAM

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Discover West Coast Way



Embrace nature's harmony

As you venture into South Africa's Cape West Coast Biodiversity Corridor, one of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots, you are greeted by a vibrant array of colours and an incredible variety of botanical treasures. This natural haven is home to thousands of plants, each contributing to a spectacular display of white, red, orange, yellow, purple, and blue hues. You will find **rain daisies**, **lilac drumsticks**, **bobbejaantjies**, **gousblomme**, **salvia**, **elandsvy**, **beesvygies**, **skaapbossies**, **waterslaai**, and **spinnkopblomme**, all nestled within the rich **Fynbos**, **Strandveld**, and **Renosterveld** ecosystems. Together, these plants form a part of the Cape Floral Kingdom, making the West Coast Way one of the richest areas in the world for endemic plant species.

Exploring the West Coast Way is to become one with the **WESKUS OF SOUTH AFRICA**, immersing yourself in its unique blend of natural beauty, rich culture, and welcoming charm.

As you explore this natural wonder, you'll encounter even more colloquial names that weave the enchanting story of this vibrant landscape: Starting from Cape Town and the West Coast National Park,



CAPE TOWN



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Explore the year-round natural beauty of the West Coast Way today—visit www.westcoastway.co.za or email zubeida@westcoastway.co.za to book, plan, and dream your route to nature!



WEST
COAST
WAY

VANRHYNSDORP



CLANWILLIAM



BIEDOUW VALLEY



NIEUWOUDTVILLE



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SOPHIE BAKER

A Johannesburg-based travel and food writer, Sophie covers everything from luxury Kruger safaris to Mauritius' food scene. When she's not writing about wildlife encounters or the perfect plate of pasta, she's probably on horseback, sipping wine, or trying a new recipe. **Pg 34**



KIM BARNETT

With 25+ years in Zambia's tourism industry, Kim fosters community collaboration and deeper traveller connections to Southern Africa. She's on a mission to prove that Africa is never just a "once in a lifetime" experience, and that it always has more to offer. **Pg 58**



DANIELLE CARSTENS

A South African wildlife photographer, Danielle leads small-group photo safaris across Africa. She also creates educational YouTube content, writes for travel magazines, and offers online photography and editing lessons. **Pg 36**



LORRAINE KEARNEY

Lorraine once dreamed of leaving Africa — until she came to her senses. Now, she writes about her adventures across the region. Based in Cape Town, she happily spends her time eating, drinking, and writing about it all. **Pg 18**



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SARAH KINGDOM

An Australian, now living in Africa, Sarah is a mountain guide, travel writer, yoga teacher, and trail runner. Based on a Zambian cattle ranch, she regularly leads trips in India, Nepal, Tibet, Russia, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, where she climbs Kilimanjaro multiple times a year. **Pg 46**



TRUDI MALAN

A journalist with a passion for conservation, Trudi has spent 24 years dedicated to saving the endangered African penguin, and is the conservation consultant for the African Penguin & Seabird Sanctuary. **Pg 28**



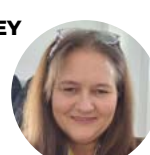
LORRAINE RATCLIFFE

Originally from England, Lorraine spent 23 years in IT before becoming a homeopath. Now, with her children grown, she and her husband are embracing new adventures, exploring the world, and occasionally writing about their experiences. **Pg 44**



CLAIRE ROADLEY

With 25+ years in travel and a deep love for Africa, Claire promotes sustainable hotels and safari lodges through her PR business, Umlingo. Based in the UK, she works with trade partners, tourist boards, and airlines — and occasionally writes about her travels. **Pg 61**



EXPLORE SOUTHERN AFRICA & THE SADC REGION



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MAPUTALAND

SEARCHING FOR SEA TURTLES, BUT FINDING SO MUCH MORE

Words **Tessa Buhrmann** Pics **Tessa Buhrmann / Isibindi Africa**

The stillness of the night is broken only by the rhythmic crashing of the waves and the soft shushing of the wind through the dune forest. The sand is cool underfoot, a welcome relief after the day's heat, as we walk in anticipation along the remote beaches of Maputaland in northern KwaZulu-Natal.





Our guide George points to a dark shadow on the dune, we pause in the moonlight as he takes a closer look. It's a loggerhead turtle, and we're about to witness one of nature's most extraordinary events: a sea turtle returning to the same beach she was hatched on, to start the cycle once again — an ancient ritual that has been unfolding on this coastline for millions of years.

A Legacy of Turtle Conservation

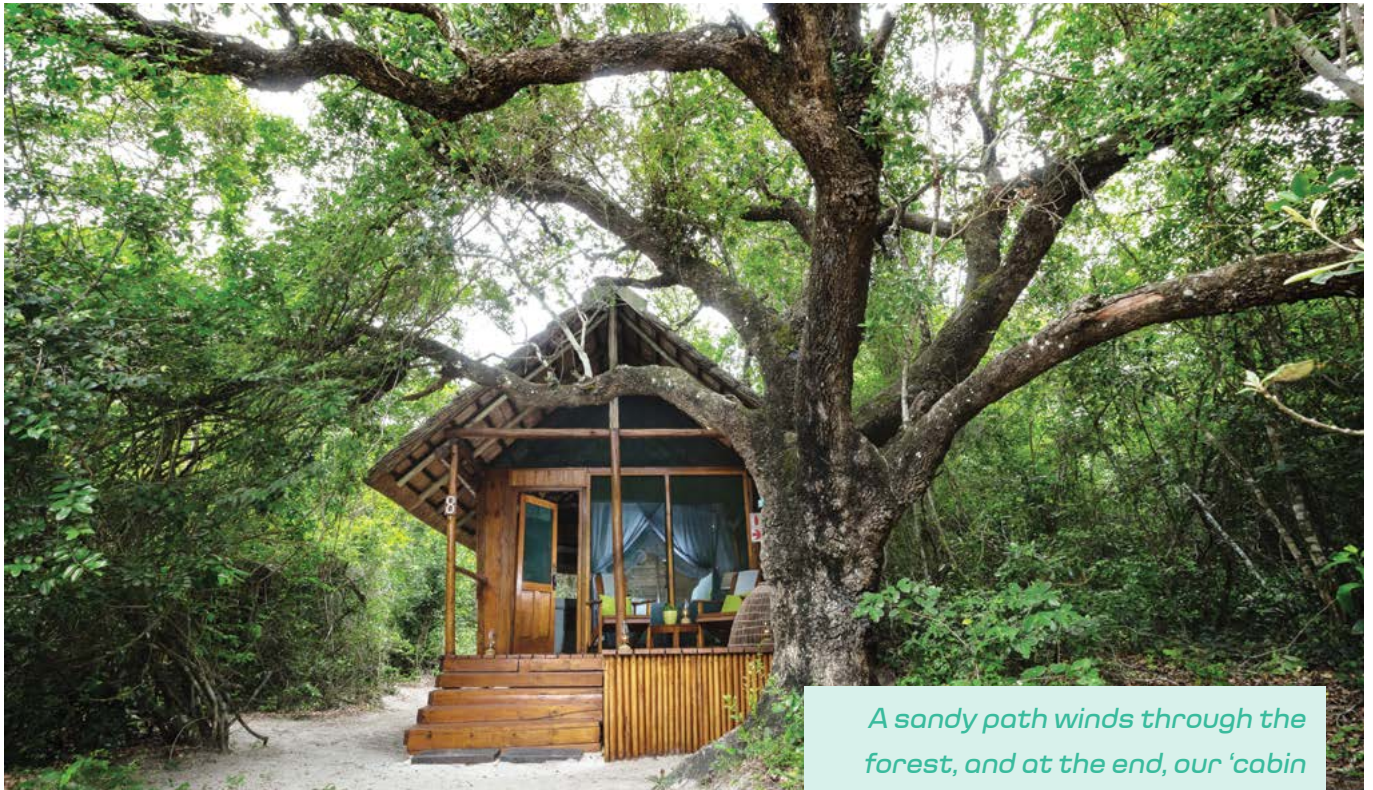
The story of sea turtle conservation along the Maputaland coast is one of dedication and vision. It began with Dr George Hughes, a pioneer in turtle research who recognized the urgent need to protect these ancient creatures. His groundbreaking work led to one of the world's longest-running turtle monitoring programs. Today, KZN Wildlife, together with local rangers and conservationists, continues his legacy by patrolling the beaches every night from November to March to safeguard loggerhead and leatherback turtles during nesting and hatching season.

Globally, turtles face relentless threats — overharvesting, oil spills, vehicle traffic on nesting beaches, entanglement in fishing gear and nest flooding. Plastic pollution is especially deadly, as turtles mistake floating debris for jellyfish, their primary prey. Conservation efforts within the iSimangaliso Marine Protected Area are vital in countering these dangers. Every successfully hatched nest is a triumph, a flicker of hope for the future of sea turtles, and for conservation.

Witnessing a female turtle laboriously make her way up the beach to dig a nest and deposit her precious cargo is profoundly moving. Each deliberate movement tells a story of millennia of survival, culminating months later in the miraculous emergence of hatchlings scurrying toward the sea — a true testament to nature's resilience, against all odds.



We're staying at Kosi Forest Lodge and Thonga Beach Lodge, both nestled within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, (declared South Africa's first UNESCO heritage Site in 1992), a place where lake, forest, and sea invite exploration and adventure, as well as conservation and community. Though my journey here was inspired by a longing to see sea turtles, I quickly discover that it's a region that offers so much more.



Kosi Forest Lodge

We arrive at Kosi Forest Lodge, set within a sand forest on the banks of Lake Shengeza, in the midday heat. The shade of the giant Zulu podberry tree is a welcome relief, as is the refreshing drink and chilled face cloth upon arrival.

No visit to Kosi Forest Lodge is complete without a guided walk through the Raphia Palm Forest and an early morning canoe trip on the Sihadla channel.

George, our guide, leads us into the towering cathedral of Kosi palms (also known as the Raphia palm, derived from its

A sandy path winds through the forest, and at the end, our 'cabin in the woods' awaits – a thatched semi-tented structure on stilts, blending seamlessly into the bush. The trees take centre stage, each structure carefully positioned to preserve the canopy. The wake-up call each morning is a delightful bird chorus, with over 420 species recorded in the area.



botanical name, *Raphia australis*), their fronds stretching up to 10 meters — the longest in the world. These palms flower only once before dying, which thankfully, takes about forty years. A highlight is spotting a rare palmnut vulture alighting from a fruiting palm; the only fruit-eating vulture in the world. Though once thought to be exclusively vegetarian, they will opportunistically snatch fish from an African fish eagle. George tells us that the forest is a vital resource for the local Thonga people, who use the buoyant palm fronds for hut and raft construction. Deeper into the reserve, we reach the Sihadla channel, where swamp fig, waterberry trees, and mangroves line the banks.

As dawn breaks the next morning, we glide silently into the water. Jerome, who guides us for this birding experience, paddles while we juggle cameras and binoculars, quickly ticking off sightings: African jacana, African swamphen, pygmy goose, African darter, squacco heron and white-backed night herons. The haunting call of an African fish eagle echoes through the still air. As the channel widens into Fourth Lake, lilac water lilies float on the glassy surface, reflecting the Kosi palms and the endless shades of green along the shore.

Jerome shares how Kosi Forest Lodge has positively impacted his family and community. The lodge provides much-needed employment in an area where jobs are scarce.



Through a partnership between Isibindi Africa Lodges and the uMvumamvubu Development Trust, the Myayiza community benefits from funding for education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects. Local suppliers, from farmers to traditional entertainers, also gain economic opportunities.



With snorkels and a picnic basket, we set off on a 4x4 adventure to the Kosi Mouth. We pause to take in the traditional fish traps in the lake, passed down through generations, a living testimony to Tsonga heritage. The 'aquarium', as it's commonly called, offers snorkellers crystal-clear waters teeming with marine life — we see devil fire fish, angel fish, and even a moray eel.

But it's the late afternoon drive to Bhanga Nek to search for sea turtles that we've been waiting for. The skies are grey, and a storm is brewing on the horizon. We sign in with the local turtle monitor, Thokozane Shange, one of several young men hired during turtle season to patrol the beaches. We walk briskly, not expecting to see anything in the inclement weather, but fresh tracks tell another story.

George spots a dark shape on the dunes: a loggerhead has finished laying her eggs and is carefully covering them with sand and scattering it to create a decoy site to distract predators. Once done, she turns seaward for her tiring journey back to the surf. Another loggerhead begins to dig, but a flash of lightning disturbs her, sending her back to the waves. We too return briskly to the safety of our vehicle, expecting to be drenched at any moment.





Thonga Beach Lodge

White sandy roads and rolling hills give way to coastal forest-clad dunes and a breathtaking view. As we edge down a steep decline, a sign greets us: “A civilised distance from civilisation” — a perfect description of Thonga Beach Lodge.

Nestled in the coastal dune forest, the lodge offers a luxury beach experience. Thatched eco-suites, designed to resemble traditional Thonga dwellings, blend seamlessly with nature. Some boast ocean views, others are tucked among the trees, all linked by raised wooden walkways.

A sprawling coastal red milkwood shades the al fresco dining area, where we savour a light lunch before exploring the coastal forest. Bird calls echo around us, sunbirds flit through the canopy, and we learn about the medicinal uses of the waterberry tree.



In the afternoon, our guide, Gugulethu, takes us to Lake Sibaya, passing through the local Mabibi community. He is among the 88% of Thonga's employees from the area. We see the daycare clinic and Mabibi Combined Primary School, with its bright blue and white walls. As part of their commitment to the local community, Thonga Beach Lodge established the Mabibi School Feeding Fund which feeds the children a lunch meal every school day. In addition to this the school is supported by generous gifts from guests, some financial and some through Pack for a Purpose. A recent guest donation of a 4x4 school bus, ensures that 35 of the older children from the community are able to get to the Mlingo High School, without having to endure a 20km walk.

We arrive at Lake Sibaya, South Africa's largest freshwater lake and a RAMSAR Wetland of International Importance. With 279 recorded bird species and thriving populations of hippo and crocodile, the lake teems with life... I listen as hippos grunt in the distance while sipping a chilled G&T and nibbling roasted corn kernels.

Later that evening we head out for a turtle drive along the beach – Thonga Beach Lodge has a permit that enables this activity, with tides dictating the times. We drive, and drive and drive some more. Just when we'd almost given up hope, there she was: a loggerhead turtle, methodically digging her nest. Not wanting to disturb her, we took the opportunity to stop for cookies and hot chocolate — which had never tasted so good!

A little later, we watch in absolute awe as she begins to lay. Ping-pong-sized eggs plop into the hole, their soft shells ensuring they settle safely into the nest. We observe for about half an hour before deciding to leave her in peace; the laying process could take a while, and she would still need to cover the eggs. Satisfied, we turn toward 'home,'

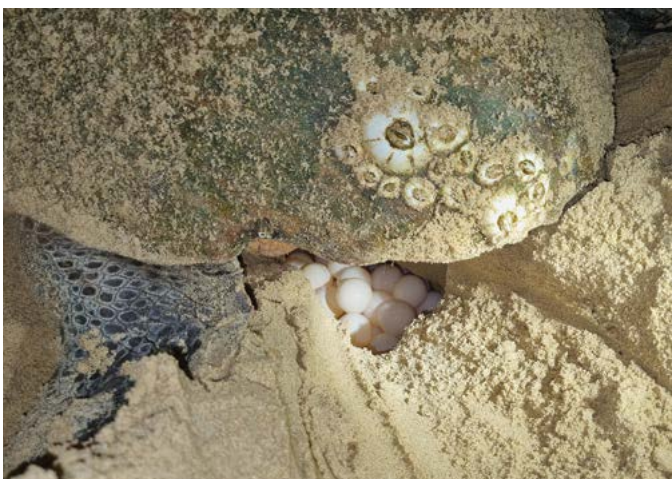


but just as we thought the night was over, we come across another loggerhead making her way back to the ocean.

The Maputaland coastline is famed not only for its turtles but also for its wild, untouched beaches. Golden sands stretch endlessly as waves roll in from the deep blue Indian Ocean, perfect for walks, morning jogs, fat-bike cycling and swims — and, of course, snorkelling. The coral reefs along this protected stretch of beach are home to thousands of species of tropical fish.

Not being a water baby, I hesitate before donning fins and mask, but soon forget my fears, as the underwater world reveals a kaleidoscope of colour. Brightly coloured fish dart amongst the coral, moray eels peer from rocky crevices, a lionfish gives an intimidating display. Shoals of fish glimmer as they dart back and forth, as do colourful parrot fish, electric rays and even an octopus. I'm exhausted, but nothing an icy drink, and the ever-welcome ice cream cart, can't fix!

As we prepare to leave, I reflect on this extraordinary experience. I came for the turtles, but I leave with so much more: the beauty of lakes, forests and beaches, the magic of marine life, and a deeper understanding of the importance of conservation and community. We were fortunate to witness several loggerhead turtles, but unfortunately the giant leatherback turtles eluded us — giving us the perfect reason to return to this beautiful coastline in the future.



essentials:

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Fly to Durban's King Shaka International Airport, and from there it's a comfortable 3-4 hour drive



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Where to Stay:

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Danny Copeland

LIVE LIKE A SAINT

DISCOVERING LIFE ON ST HELENA ISLAND

Pics **Supplied**

Craig Williams

Longwood House

Just eight years ago, a trip to St Helena Island would have required a five-day sea voyage from Cape Town. Luckily, the Island opened its airport to regional flights in 2017, bringing the magic of this sub-tropical mid Atlantic Ocean destination into easier reach of visitors looking for adventure, history, culture or a genuine break from everyday life. If you're looking for a trip like no other, here are five reasons to put St Helena on your radar.

Step into the past

Napoleon I, arguably the Island's most famous resident (although there have been many noteworthy visitors, including Captains Cook and Bligh), spent the last six years of his life in exile on St Helena Island. History buffs can visit Longwood House, the Emperor's final residence, and his original tomb site, where he was buried in 1821; although the tomb lies empty as his body was exhumed and returned to Paris in 1840.

Discover nature's rarities

St Helena provides safe harbour for over 500 endemic species, including the critically endangered wirebird, the blushing snail (with its unique, translucent shell), ancient forests, and tiny tooth-tongue ferns found nowhere else on earth. It is a birders' paradise – and perfect for nature lovers everywhere.

Take a walk on the wild side

They say that "only where you have walked on foot, have you really been" – and this holds true for St Helena. The Island's 25 Post Box Walks (with names like 'Heart Shaped Waterfall' and 'Sharks Valley') all offer a different glimpse of St Helena's diverse terrain, from rocky crags to lush, cloud-forest greenery and endless turquoise sea. Whether you're keen to trace the footsteps of Napoleon, or tread where Charles Darwin or Prince Dinizulu would have trod, or tackle the 699 steps of vertiginous Jacob's Ladder – you'll be rewarded with views to remember forever.

Dive with giants

Each June, humpback whales return to St. Helena, delighting visitors with epic breaching, lobtailing and flipper-slapping displays. Bottlenose and pantropical dolphins are permanent residents in the island's waters, along with prolific birdlife that populates the island's coastal rock formations. A marine cruise is a must; but clear, warm waters (anywhere between 19°C and 26°C) as well as accessible shipwrecks and fascinating marine life (think St Helena butterflyfish, the deepwater jack as well as green and hawksbill sea turtles) also make St Helena Island an enticing snorkelling and scuba diving destination.

Embrace island life

It doesn't take long for the island to get under your skin – or find a place in your heart. The Island's 4,000 residents (affectionately known as "Saints") will happily introduce you to the territory's rich cultural heritage – bringing their food, traditions and maritime history to life with typical humour, generosity and storytelling. Grab a cup of the Island's legendary coffee, adjust your pace, and fill your days with walks, history, botany, marine life, plenty of fresh air and star-studded skies (where Edmund Halley once mapped the stars of the Southern Hemisphere). This is slow, immersive, quirky travel at its very best.



Jethro Kierman



Mathias Falcone



Airlink operates weekly flights between Johannesburg and Jamestown, with additional, seasonal flights operating from Cape Town during high season. For more information, visit www.flyairlink.com.



<https://www.sthelenatourism.com/>



CAPE TOWN

GO WHERE THE LOCALS GO IN THE WORLD'S BEST CITY

Words **Lorraine Kearney**

Pics **Supplied**



MUST DO'S

- ☐ Journey to Robben Island Museum, a symbol of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity
- ☐ Shop, dine and enjoy entertainment at the V&A Waterfront
- ☐ Ascend via the Cableway to the top of Table Mountain, a New 7 Wonder of Nature
- ☐ Explore the splendour of Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, 'Africa's most beautiful garden'
- ☐ Discover Cape Point, the most southwestern tip of Africa
- ☐ Savour award-winning wine at South Africa's oldest wine-producing farm, Groot Constantia

Cape Town is the best city in the world right now, Time Out declared earlier this year. It's got all the good things: natural beauty, cultural and culinary offerings, good vibes, fabulous beaches, sunny tidal pools, forests, mountains – you get the picture.

All this makes it a tourist favourite and it gets very busy in parts (don't try to drive along the Camps Bay strip in December). But there are spaces and things to do and see and learn, that are not on every tourist's map.

If you've got a week in Cape Town, what should you do? We get the low-down from those who know the city better than most. Without hesitation, they say 'mountain, city, beach'.



Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden



SA Tourism

Cape Minstrels

If you've got a week in Cape Town, what should you do? We get the low-down from those who know the city better than most. Without hesitation, they say 'mountain, city, beach'.



Table Mountain Cableway



'Get your bearings first with a peninsula tour or Table Mountain walk,' says Natural Wanderers' Matthew Sterne. Their Mountain-to-Sea Adventure is our tick-all-the-boxes choice. It's a private four-hour walking tour on lesser-explored paths. You get fynbos, forests, beach and sea, and views.

All the while, the guide tells you the history and legends of Cape Town, from indigenous heroes to modern-day icons. It ends with an e-scooter ride along the Sea Point Promenade.

Culture Connect, Natural Wanderers and ABCD Travel offer tours, walks and cultural experiences in less-explored places. Natural Wanderers focuses on history, and wine. Matthew has an incredible knowledge of his city, and his walks are an absolute joy; they take you deep into the complex, multiracial history of the Cape.

Sit down or get up and dance

For wining, dining, theatre, music and everything outright fun, Eat. Play. Drink. Cape Town is your go-to. Bianca Lee Coleman has spent years in her home city diving in to all that it offers. She says: 'There's not much live music these days, but Stardust is good for eating, theatre and music all in one package.' Yep, as this suggests, it's a restaurant (Mediterranean inspired with a South African twist) where the super-talented waiters are the actors and performers who put on a play or concert over dinner.

There's also frequent live music at Café Roux in Noordhoek and Woodstock Brewery in Woodstock. At the twice a week Down to Earth market at Timour Hall Villa in Plumstead, there's music, interesting food and happy people. Cool vibes and cool tunes are guaranteed at The Commons in

Muizenberg, which means you can surf in the afternoon and groove in the evening.

For theatre, Theatre on the Bay in Camps Bay and The Baxter in Rondebosch never let you down. Check the Eat. Play. Drink. Cape Town website to see what's on when you're in town.

Bianca's also got a hotline to all the best restaurants – the fine dining ones and the casual-does-excellent-food ones. For starters, Chorus at Waterkloof Wine Estate in the Helderberg or The Wes Bistro and Bar. And Rapt for ice-cream made right in front of you.

Fly me away

'You must see and experience the "standard" tourist attractions (Table Mountain, V&A Waterfront, Kirstenbosch, et cetera),' says Mike White, co-founder and pilot-guide of Africa Sky Runners, who lives the spirit of adventure. And then you must go adventuring.

Book an Africa Sky Runners scenic flight around the Cape Peninsula, following the coastline. A particularly spectacular sight is Cape Point from the air. You also get an aerial view of Robben Island and the perfect profile perspective of Table Mountain.

If you're really adventurous – and this is worth it, trust us – choose the Tankwa Experience, a less-than-24-hour overnight escape from the city and immersion in the



Robben Island

Tankwa Karoo, an extraordinary place. 'A party at the nearby Onverklaarbar, an authentic and eccentric bar, is also on the cards for those ready for another type of adventure,' Mike says.



V&A Waterfront

Beaching

Go to Boulders in Simon's Town to see the penguins. They're super-cute and critically endangered. But they also smell super-bad. It's part of Table Mountain National Park (TMNP), so there is an entrance fee.

Water's Edge is the beach for the day in this neck of the woods. The small, protected cove is something of a secret. It's safe for swimming, with boulders to jump off, and the rock pools are good for snorkelling.

On the Atlantic Seaboard, skip the in-crowds of Clifton and Camps Bay, and instead go to Oudekraal Beach. It's small, it's beautiful, it's off the average tourist's radar. Again, it's safe for swimming and great for snorkelling, and again it's part of the TMNP and has an entrance fee.

Swimming can also be done at the many tidal pools stretching from Camps Bay to Simon's Town. They're popular, though. An excellent alternative (it's streets ahead of anything else) is Venus Pool in Cape Point, which means an entrance fee. But worth it: Venus Pool is probably the most astonishing tidal pool anywhere. There's a short, flat walk of one kilometre to get there. Take sea shoes, or any shoes that can get wet, because the urchins are prickly. Take umbrellas for the sun; there is no shade. Take water; there are no ablutions or taps. It's advisable not to take food; it attracts the big chacma baboons that live in the park.

See the sun set/moon rise

The best spot to watch the sun set over the Atlantic and the moon rise is Lion's Head, but it is very popular and is quite the hike if you're not used to such things. But there are other, less populated – and less daunting – places. Signal Hill is terrific, and there's no walking required. You just drive up and have a picnic at the top. But if you want to put in a little effort, go for Kloof Corner.

More an early bird? Buntu Matole at ABCD Travel is your guy. 'My favourite thing to do in Cape Town is a sunrise hike up Lion's Head. The climb is just the right balance of adventure and effort,' he says.



Cape Point Lighthouse



Oudekraal Beach



Salt River Street Art

Tour the town

Kate Crane Briggs at Culture Connect says the Company's Garden gives a good understanding of why Cape Town developed as a refreshment station. It's also surrounded by excellent museums – the Iziko National Gallery, the Iziko South African Museum, the Holocaust Museum and the Cape Town Labour Corps Memorial, which commemorates the Black soldiers who died in the first world war.

In the Bo-Kaap, make an appointment to visit Chandler House, where artist Michael Chandler has his studio. It's good for souvenirs, too. Art is Kate's niche, and her walks take in street art in Salt River and in the East City. Union House, the home of the Spier Art Trust, is here. It champions Black artists and designers who haven't had the means to go to an art college. There's fine art beading, mosaic studio and exhibition space. Also in the East City is Church Square and the Groote Kerk. Stop in at Labotessa for coffee, lunch or cocktails. Next door, Ramenhead sates your craving for Japanese food.

...and the township

Khayelitsha is the biggest township in Cape Town – and the biggest single township in South Africa. You would be remiss to visit the city and not visit Khayelitsha.

This is where ABCD Travel is your friend. They do walking, jogging, and cycling trips around the township – and several cultural experiences. Throw in their Party Experience and Cooking with a Local Family and you'll leave a satisfied customer.

For insight into African traditional healing, ABCD Travel offers a guided visit to a sangoma (spiritual healer) or inyanga (herbalist) in a respectful and culturally sensitive way. To get the full experience of Khayelitsha, stay at The Spade Boutique Hotel and Spa.



Groot Constantia

Taste the grapes

A wine tasting is almost a requirement. Natural Wanderers' Constantia Wine Walk is a mix of wine, walking and some unexpected history. With access to private vineyard trails to three of the most revered wine farms in the Constantia Valley: Groot Constantia, Klein Constantia, and Buitenverwachting.

Go Wine Tasting Ekasi with ABCD Travels at Lindile Ndzaba's Khayelitsha's Finest Wines for an exclusive two-hour tasting and pairing.

An underrated counterpart for the popular Franschhoek Wine Tram? Durbanville Wine Safari takes in the Durbanville Wine Valley, which at more than 300 years old, has 11 award-winning wine estates. It's Sunset Sessions is at a secret spot on Klein Roosboom. Pour your wine and watch the sun set over Table Mountain in the distance.

There you have it: everything Cape Town, without the crowds.

* The walks are not accessible for people with disabilities, but beaches, restaurants and wine estates generally are; please check before you visit.

essentials:

What to do:

Eat.Play.Drink. Cape Town
eatplaydrink.capetown

Durbanville Wine Safari
durbanvillewinesafari.com

Table Mountain National Park
(some gates are cashless).
sanparks.org/parks/table-mountain/rates-entry-fees



For domestic flights within
South Africa, contact
South African Airways
<https://www.flysaa.com/>

What to do:

Natural Wanderers
naturalwanderers.co.za

Culture Connect
cultureconnectsa.com

Africa Sky Runners
africaskyrunners.com

ABCD Travel
abcd-concepts

A sea of EXPERIENCES

Near the Southern Tip of Africa

Experience the thrill of Shark Cage Diving or marvel at the Marine Big 5 on our award-winning shark and whale-watching tours—perfect for the whole family. Immerse yourself in the vibrant Dyer Island ecosystem near Gansbaai, and play a part in supporting vital marine research and conservation through the Dyer Island Conservation Trust. We offer exclusive tours and transport for those who are interested.

Visit the African Penguin & Seabird Sanctuary, a haven for rescued seabirds. Then, savour delectable meals at the Great White House Restaurant, where every bite contributes to marine conservation efforts.

BOOK ONLINE

**WHALES****SHARKS**



GROOT CONSTANTIA
LANDGOED • ESTATE



View this exceptionally rare 1821 Grand Constance at Groot Constantia, where the famous 'Sweet wines of Constantia' were crafted over 200 years ago.



AN INVITATION TO INDULGE

Pics **Supplied**

Step into the world of Groot Constantia, where heritage, quality, and sustainability unite, and savour the iconic Grand Constance. At Groot Constantia, these values are a way of life and poured into every bottle we share with you.

A legacy of heritage

Groot Constantia, founded in 1685, is South Africa's oldest wine-producing farm. Each bottle tells tales of emperors and kings. The renowned Grand Constance wine, favoured by Napoleon and other historical figures, epitomises this rich heritage.

Uncompromising quality

Consistent quality lies at the heart of Groot Constantia's identity. With its captivating amber hue, the Grand Constance offers an aromatic blend of Muscat de Frontignan grapes. This perfect balance of sweetness and crisp acidity showcases the meticulous craftsmanship of the winemakers, maintaining the estate's prestigious reputation. Over the centuries, the respect and quality of Groot Constantia wine have travelled the world, with seals found even in the United States, Germany, Belgium and Sweden.



United States



Germany



Belgium



Sweden



Championing sustainability

Beyond preserving heritage, Groot Constantia is a pioneer in sustainable winemaking. As a Conservation Champion recognised by the World Wildlife Fund and a Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trade Association member, Groot Constantia continues to conserve the land for future generations.

Discover Groot Constantia

Nestled in the heart of the stunning Cape Winelands, Groot Constantia represents a beacon of excellence in every bottle.

Explore South Africa's wine heritage at www.grootconstantia.co.za.



IN CONVERSATION

CHRIS GODENIR

We chat to Chris Godenir, recent recipient of the FEDHASA Hotel General Manager of the Year Award, for some travel industry insights.

You're a strong advocate for adapting, innovating, and bringing people together. How has this approach influenced your leadership style?

Adaptability, innovation, and collaboration have been key to my journey as a leader. Each opportunity requires a different approach, and being flexible allows me to achieve the best outcomes. Innovation sets leaders apart — finding creative and sometimes untested solutions has been critical in my role. Hospitality is a people-driven industry, and I've learned that true success comes from recognizing individual strengths and moulding them together to create greatness.

How would you describe the current state of South Africa's tourism and hospitality industry post-pandemic?

We are on the road to recovery but still have a long way to go. South Africa has massive tourism potential, but we remain too siloed in our approach and need to reduce bureaucracy. While some progress has been made, infrastructure, particularly in local municipalities, needs urgent attention. Labour regulations, climate change impacts, visa restrictions, and perceptions of safety continue to pose challenges.

What needs to change?

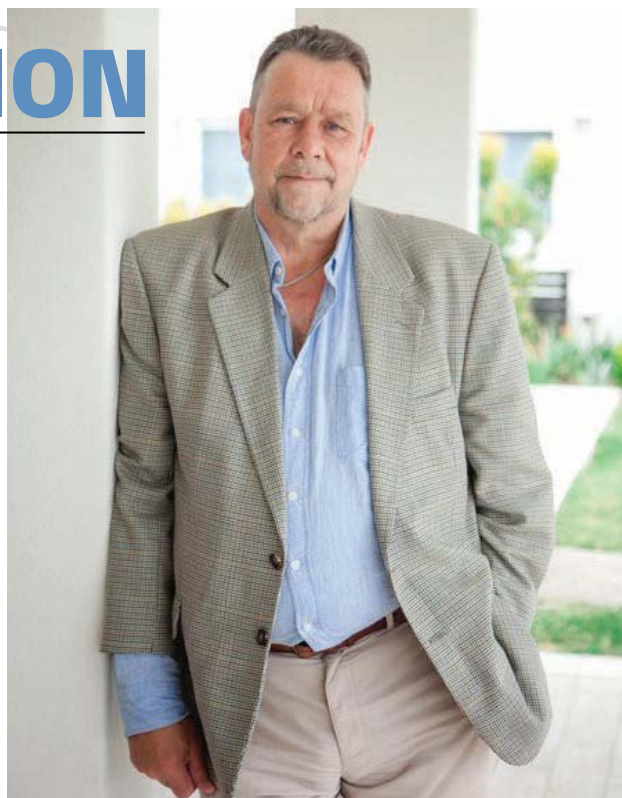
We must start believing in our own potential. The challenges we face are not insurmountable, we need to break them down into manageable steps and tackle them one by one. It's time to leave behind divisions and celebrate our identity as the Rainbow Nation, embracing Ubuntu and reconnecting with our heritage and environment. Our young population is an asset, and tourism must be recognized as a key vehicle for job creation. Collaboration is essential! We must work together across sectors and engage with local government to cut red tape and improve infrastructure. South Africa is one of the most incredible destinations on earth, and while challenges exist, nothing worthwhile ever comes easily.

Cape Town has rebounded strongly post-COVID, while other regions still struggle. How can tourism be more inclusive across different regions and communities?

For tourism to thrive, the entire country, not just select areas, must attract visitors. We are too focused on the Big Five, the Waterfront, and Table Mountain. South Africa has so much more to offer, from vast open spaces, diverse wildlife, fresh air, as well as immersive and authentic cultural experiences.

How can travel planners and tour operators help?

Operators tend to stick to tried-and-tested routes, but it's time to be braver in recommending lesser-known



destinations. The best travel experiences often happen outside of comfort zones. There are incredible places ready and waiting for business, and operators just need to broaden their mindset and introduce travellers to something new.

Words like collaboration, inclusivity, and sustainability are often discussed but not always put into practice. How can the industry move beyond talk to real action?

Each year, hospitality professionals gather for an industry Think Tank to discuss real-time issues and actionable solutions. This year's event takes place on 8 August at The Maslow in Sandton. It's a chance to collaborate and drive meaningful change while raising funds for Reach for a Dream, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and the Think Big Academy. To join, contact thinktank@touchingdreams.co.za or enquiries@touchingdreams.co.za.

For tourism professionals looking to make an impact, what advice would you offer?

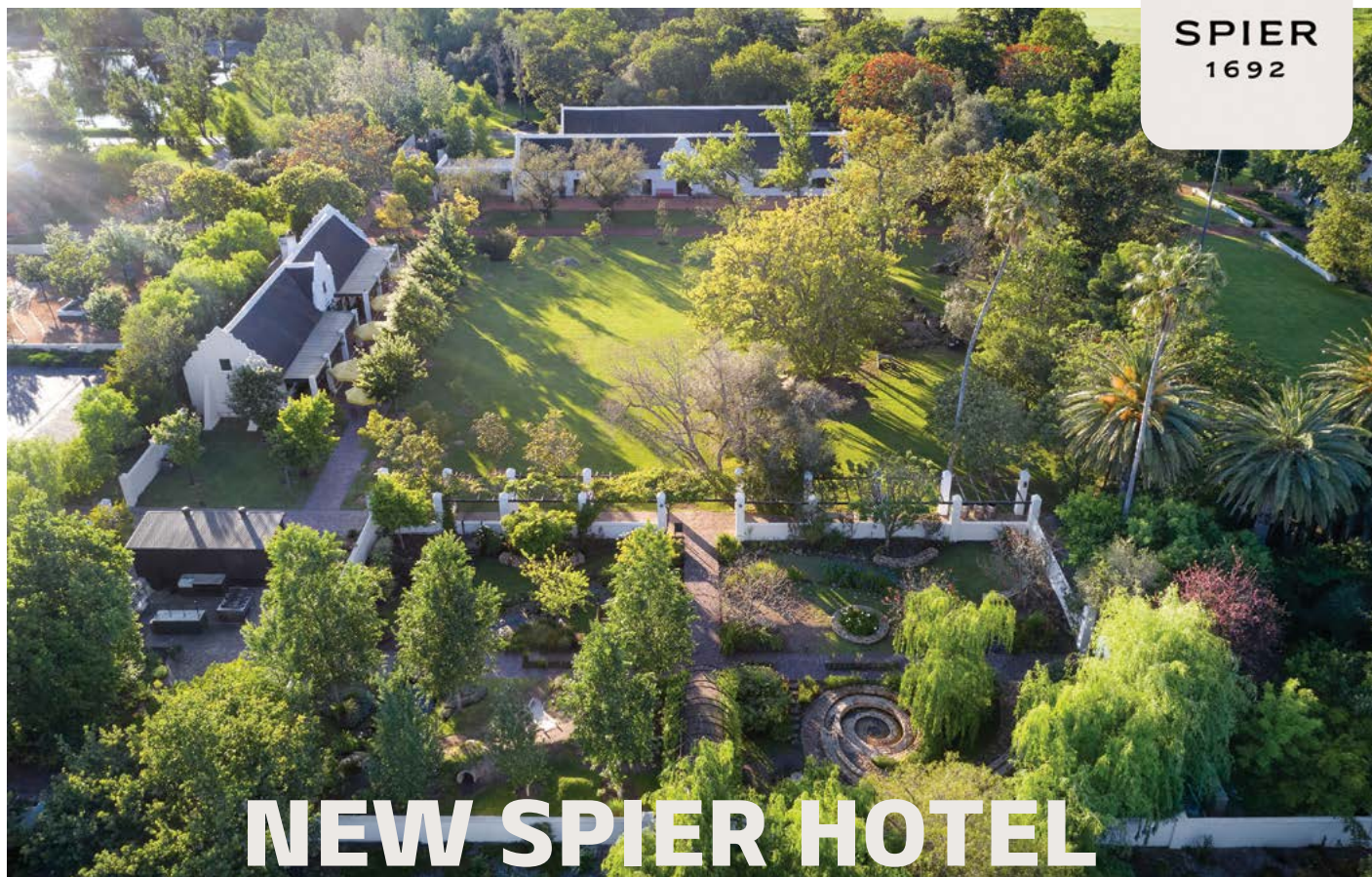
Get involved! Reach out via the Touching Dreams website — I'm happy to connect people with opportunities to make a difference in tourism and hospitality.

What guidance would you give travellers who want their trips to contribute positively?

Most properties have social investment initiatives supporting local communities. Ask about them when you visit. You can also work with us at Touching Dreams NPC, where our mission is to create employment opportunities through tourism, support early childhood development, and collaborate with the Endangered Wildlife Trust on sustainability projects.



<https://touchingdreams.co.za/>



NEW SPIER HOTEL

REDEFINES CONTEMPORARY CAPE ELEGANCE

Spier Wine Farm, one of South Africa's oldest and most beloved working wine farms, has entered a new era with the reopening of its reimagined hotel on 1 March 2025. Renowned for its award-winning wines and commitment to regenerative farming, Spier now offers a hospitality experience that blends luxury with authenticity and purpose.

The transformation aligns with a global shift towards meaningful, sustainable travel. Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism, notes: "Spier sets a new benchmark for luxury deeply rooted in heritage and purpose, reinforcing our region's leadership in authentic, forward-thinking tourism."

Set within the Cape Floral Kingdom, Spier Hotel is surrounded by 39,000 reintroduced fynbos plants, creating a vibrant natural haven. Guests can reconnect with nature at the spa, which features a Cape Herbal Bath House where farm-grown botanicals are used in therapeutic treatments. Rooms open onto indigenous gardens or offer Juliet balconies with mountain views, enhancing the connection to the biodiverse landscape.

Spier's Fair Trade accreditation and Growing for Good initiatives remain central to its ethos. The extensive



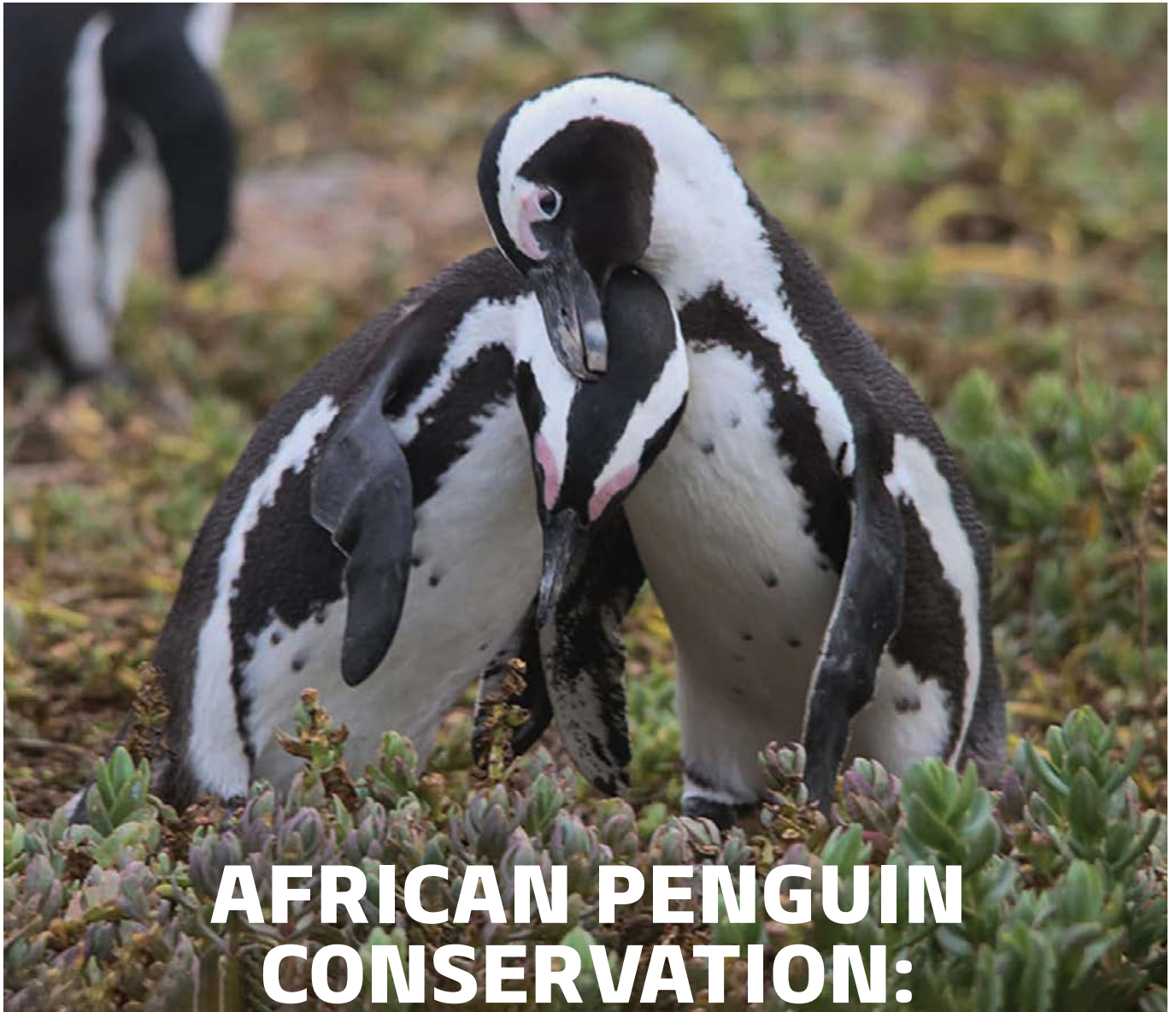
refurbishment prioritized sustainability, with staff participating in accredited hospitality training. At Spier, goodness flows through every facet of the experience — from nurturing the soil to supporting local communities.

Just 30 minutes from Cape Town International Airport, the hotel features 80 luxury rooms and suites, two farm-to-table restaurants, three bars, a wine library, and an expansive

spa. Exclusive villas (launching mid-2025) will offer private pools, outdoor entertainment areas, and dedicated chef and butler service.

The new Spier Hotel offers an immersive retreat where nature, comfort, and purpose come together — creating experiences that linger long after guests depart.

Email reservations@spier.co.za for bookings or more information or visit <https://www.spier.co.za/>



AFRICAN PENGUIN CONSERVATION:

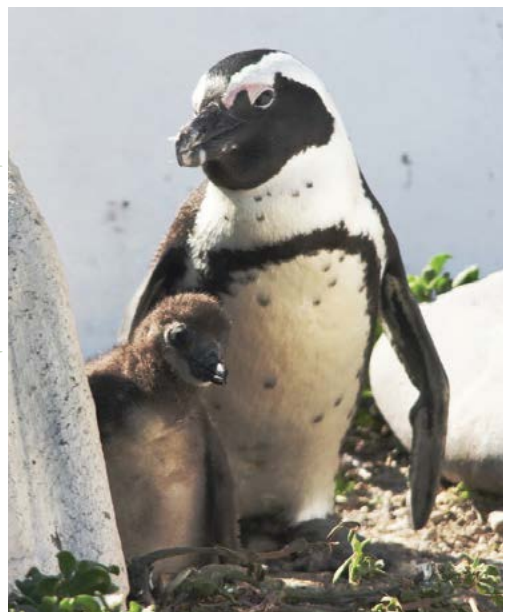
A LIFE OF HOLDING OUR BREATH

Words **Trudi Malan** Pics **Eduard Drost: Dyer Island Conservation Trust**

The African penguin is the only penguin species native to the African continent. Tourists from near and far flock to South Africa's land-based colonies, eager to witness these charismatic, tuxedo-clad birds in action. Their playful antics delight the eye and warm the heart, leaving visitors with cherished memories of their encounter.

But beneath their charm lies a sobering reality — these beloved birds are in serious trouble.

In October 2024, the African penguin was reclassified as Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), edging dangerously close to extinction. The dramatic decline of the African penguin has far-reaching consequences, disrupting the delicate balance of marine life — something that affects all of us.



Living on a Breath of Hope

Wilfred Chivell, CEO of Marine Dynamics and Chairman of the Board for the Dyer Island Conservation Trust, describes the emotional toll of African penguin conservation:

"We are always holding our breath.

When we witness the sheer scale of pelagic fishing fleets, we hold our breath — hoping for sanity, for collaboration, for a future where conservation and the fishing industry work hand in hand. Responsible fisheries should protect marine life and coastal ecosystems. An adaptive management system — one that enforces time and area closures around breeding islands during peak breeding season — could be the lifeline African penguins need.

We hold our breath every time we hear about an oil spill.

When wild winter storms lash the colonies with torrential rain and icy winds, we hold our breath, hoping the exposed chicks won't succumb to hypothermia.

In the scorching heat of summer, we hold our breath, fearing that desperate parents, seeking relief from the relentless sun, will abandon their eggs and chicks.

At the news of a positive Avian Influenza test, we hold our breath, praying the disease won't tear through the dwindling colonies."

But holding our breath isn't enough. With every exhale, we must take action to prevent the African penguin from vanishing from our wild seascape.

How We're Making a Difference

Rescue and rehabilitation play a critical role in conservation — every penguin saved matters. But rehabilitation alone is not the solution.

Long-term protection requires proactive measures, including:

- **Artificial Nests:** Providing safe, sheltered nesting sites has significantly improved breeding success in key colonies.



- **Fishing Restrictions:** Establishing no-fishing zones around major penguin breeding sites helps safeguard their food supply. While not yet perfect, these measures represent meaningful progress.
- **Seabird Rangers:** Having dedicated rangers on the ground allows for early intervention, preventing avoidable harm to colonies.

By prioritising habitat restoration and sustainable conservation strategies, we can give African penguins a fighting chance.

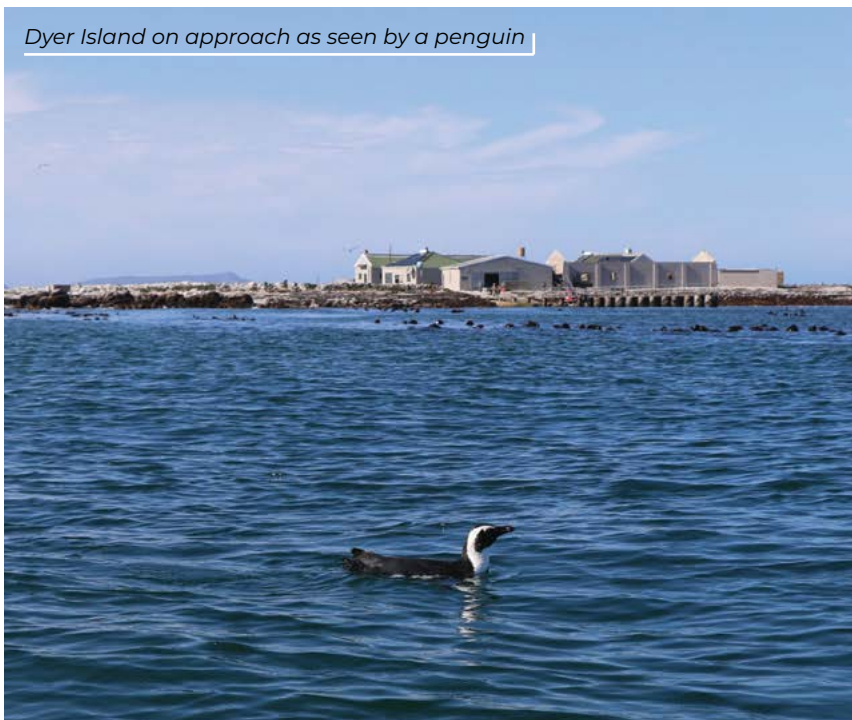
How You Can Help

Tourists and nature lovers can play a vital role in penguin conservation. Here's how:

- **Be a Responsible Visitor** – Keep a respectful distance from penguins at colonies. That close-up selfie isn't worth the stress it causes these vulnerable birds.
- **Support Conservation Efforts** – Invest in an artificial nest or contribute to the care of a rescued penguin.
- **Visit the African Penguin & Seabird Sanctuary (APSS) in Gansbaai** – Open daily from 09:00 – 16:00, the sanctuary offers a chance to witness conservation in action and learn about the plight of these remarkable seabirds.

Together, we can ensure that future generations continue to marvel at the sight of African penguins along our shores — not just in history books.

Dyer Island on approach as seen by a penguin



essentials:

Where to Stay:

The Great White House
<https://thegreatwhitehouse.co.za/>

Learn more:

Visit the African Penguin & Seabird Sanctuary (APSS) and Dyer Island Conservation Trust





BUSH BREAKS

Words **Tessa Buhrmann** Pics **andBeyond, Jock Safari Lodge, Tintswalo**



Wake up to the roar of a lion, sip coffee as the sun rises, and immerse yourself in the wild. Whether you seek luxury, eco-conscious seclusion, or adventure, these three bush escapes promise unforgettable safari experiences.

KwaZulu-Natal - andBeyond Phinda Forest Lodge

Stepping into the recently refurbished andBeyond Phinda Forest Lodge had all the feels of somewhere familiar, the same comfort but with a more contemporary edge. The updates have enhanced this already exquisite lodge, but the essence remains unchanged. The same towering trees stand tall around the lodge, the same views, the birdlife is just as abundant, and the same soothing sounds of nature still fill the air.

Our luxurious Forest Suite — a sanctuary of glass and light, is set within the rare and ancient Sand Forest, where trees are draped in lichen and the diminutive suni antelope moves quietly through the underbrush. I take a moment to appreciate the floor-to-ceiling glass walls that invite the forest in.

The decor is a celebration of eco-chic Zulu creativity, blending rich textures, handcrafted details, and a colour palette that that reflects the surrounding landscape. Sliding screen doors allow the night air to drift in, carrying with it the distant whoop of hyenas, the eerie cry of bush babies, and the gentle rustling of leaves.



Morning starts early; birdsong wakes me from my slumber long before the scheduled wake-up call. The day's game drives holds the promise of incredible sightings — the excitement builds as we head out with Cameron, our guide and tracker, Josiah. We explore the reserve's diverse habitats — grasslands teeming with zebras, giraffe and wildebeest, wetlands alive with the call of African fish eagles, and dense thickets where black rhinos lurk unseen in the shadows, or perhaps even a well-camouflaged leopard. We watch cheetah brothers as they scan the horizon for prey, as well as potential danger. A huge herd of buffalo grazes their way across the plain and a parade of elephants make their way down the road, the matriarch leading the way.

A welcome stop midway through the morning drive brings the chance to stretch our legs and enjoy a hot coffee laced with Amarula and homemade crunchie biscuits. I stand beneath a huge Lebombo wattle in this patch of pristine Sand Forest sipping my coffee, a small but special luxury, a moment to simply take it all in before we continue.

After a hearty breakfast back at the lodge guests have the opportunity to visit the Spa, take a dip in the pool or just curl up with a book. Binoculars in hand I choose to sit quietly and watch as birdlife flits through the branches beyond the deck.

High tea precedes the afternoon game drive, which once again, doesn't disappoint with lions, hyena and white rhino. As the sun begins its descent, we find the perfect spot for sundowners. A chilled G&T in hand, I watch the sky shift into soft oranges and pinks, the silhouettes of acacias stark against the fading light. It's a simple but perfect way to end the day, appreciating the vast beauty of the landscape around us.

Back at the lodge, dinner is a relaxed affair, filled with fresh, local ingredients and bold flavours, each meal is thoughtfully prepared by Chef Zoni and his team. The warm glow of lanterns, the hum of conversation, and the genuine hospitality of the andBeyond team make for a memorable evening.

Phinda Forest Lodge may have a fresh new look, but it still offers the same sense of tranquillity and connection to the wild. Where luxury and wilderness meet seamlessly, and where every moment is a privilege to experience.

<https://www.andBeyond.com/>



Mpumalanga - Jock Safari Lodge

There is so much to love about Jock Safari Lodge. From the moment you arrive, the style and elegance is evident, as is the deep sense of place. Historic photographs depicting life in the 1880s — the time of the legendary Jock of the Bushveld — line the walls, with old ox wagons and artifacts from that era adding to the atmosphere.

Each enclosed thatched suite is a secluded retreat, with reed walls and surrounding trees offering complete privacy.

Stepping outside onto the private deck reveals a luxurious claw-foot bath, plush loungers, and a plunge pool. But the true magic is the Sala — an outdoor daybed draped in netting, perfect for an afternoon nap or a night spent under the stars. Drifting off to the sounds of the African bush, serenaded by nightjars and giant eagle owls, with the occasional interruption of a barn owl's shriek or the distant roar of a lion, is an experience like no other.

Awaiting in my suite is a welcoming treat — bubbly and snacks, a well-stocked minibar, and an inviting selection of books, including Percy FitzPatrick's *Jock of the Bushveld*. At the main lodge, the stylish restaurant and bar area overlook the riverbed, offering a stunning setting for meals. Mornings start with a lavish continental spread followed by plated

hot options, while light lunches and afternoon tea with cake bridge the gap before the evening game drive. Sundowners at Upstairs at Jim's — named after the Zulu herdsman who cared for FitzPatrick's cattle — sets the stage for dinner, which alternates between a lively boma feast and an elegant fine-dining experience.

Of course, the highlight of any safari is the game viewing, and Jock Safari Lodge, located in Big 5 territory within the Kruger National Park, doesn't disappoint. Our ranger ensures we are on the road early — a 4:15 am start means we have the wilderness to ourselves before the crowds arrive.

Our first morning is rewarded with an incredible sighting of spotted hyena with their cute cubs, we watch their playful antics before they slip quietly into the bush. A weary-looking male saunters down the road, our ranger says it's likely that he has been preoccupied with a female in oestrus — nothing a good meal wouldn't fix!

Elephants, from playful calves to resolute adults, move gracefully from tree to tree, feasting as they move, almost silently, through the bush. Zebra, impala, and wildebeest dot the grasslands, while rhinos and a couple of buffalo dagga boys make an appearance. Sunset G&Ts at a waterhole, to night drives revealing spotted eagle owls and darting scrub hares, and an eerie encounter with hyenas slipping into the shadows bring our afternoon game drive to an end.

On our final morning, the ultimate safari moment unfolds — an early sighting of a solitary leopard. We watch in awe as she stalks through the grass, her camouflage near perfect. A nearby warthog burrow catches her interest, but its inhabitants were still slumbering, and well out of reach. Later, a second sighting of this magnificent cat gave us an even closer look, which is always a privilege.

We end a perfect safari atop a rocky koppie in Jock's private concession, Amarula coffee in hand I drink in the expansive views. There's something truly special about a stay at Jock Safari Lodge — luxury, history, and an unforgettable connection with the wild.

<https://www.jocksafarilodge.com/>



Limpopo - Tintswalo Waterberg

Tucked away in the heart of the Welgevonden Game Reserve, Tintswalo Waterberg is a sanctuary where luxury and wilderness blend seamlessly. From the moment I arrive, welcomed by warm smiles and the scent of the bush, I know I am in for something special.

Tintswalo Waterberg is an intimate retreat, designed with an understated elegance that complements its surroundings, and is as perfect for families as it is for lovers — a night on the new sleep-out deck, would do perfectly!

Earthy tones, natural textures, and expansive decks invite the outside in, ensuring that you remain connected to the wilderness beyond. My suite is a private escape, complete with a spacious deck overlooking the bushveld. Waking to a choir of birdsong and the soft morning light filtering through the trees feels like a privilege — one that never loses its appeal throughout my stay.

The lodge's culinary experience is as much a highlight as the game drives. Every meal feels like a celebration, from fresh, wholesome breakfasts



on the deck to long, leisurely dinners beneath the stars. But what truly sets Tintswalo apart is its people. The team, from our ever-attentive butler Melida (who makes a cracker homemade chilli sauce) to the ever-smiling barman, Fanual, and the passionate guiding team, head guide Foster, and his tracker, Mpho, all embody Tintswalo's genuine hospitality.

Welgevonden is a wildlife-rich reserve, and Foster, with his uncanny ability to read the bush, ensures every drive is filled with unforgettable moments – whether tracking an elusive leopard or stopping to appreciate the iridescent flash of a lilac-breasted roller.

We watch elephants slurp water at a waterhole, spot a pride of lion ambling lazily across the grassland, and witness



the quiet curiosity of a crash of rhino as they saunter closer to inspect our game viewing vehicle — each moment a reminder of Africa's wild beauty. Yet, it

is the smaller moments that linger just as strongly — the haunting call of a fish eagle, the scent of wild sage crushed beneath my feet, the hush that

falls over the bush as the sun dips below the horizon.

Tintswalo Lodges is the vision of Ernest and Gaye Corbett, whose love for the African wilderness inspired them to create intimate, luxurious safari experiences. With Tintswalo Waterberg

just a three- to four-hour drive from Gauteng, it serves as their own easy home away from home — one they are delighted to share with fellow nature lovers seeking relaxation in the bush.

As we head out on our final morning, a lone giraffe ambles past our vehicle, pausing briefly as if to say goodbye. It is a fitting farewell to a place that I could easily call my home away from home, a place where one feels comfortable enough to curl up on the sofa for a nap, or head into the kitchen to find a snack.

Tintswalo Waterberg isn't just a safari destination; it's an experience woven with care, where every detail — every meal, every game drive, every warm greeting — comes together to create something truly special.

<https://www.tintswalo.com/>



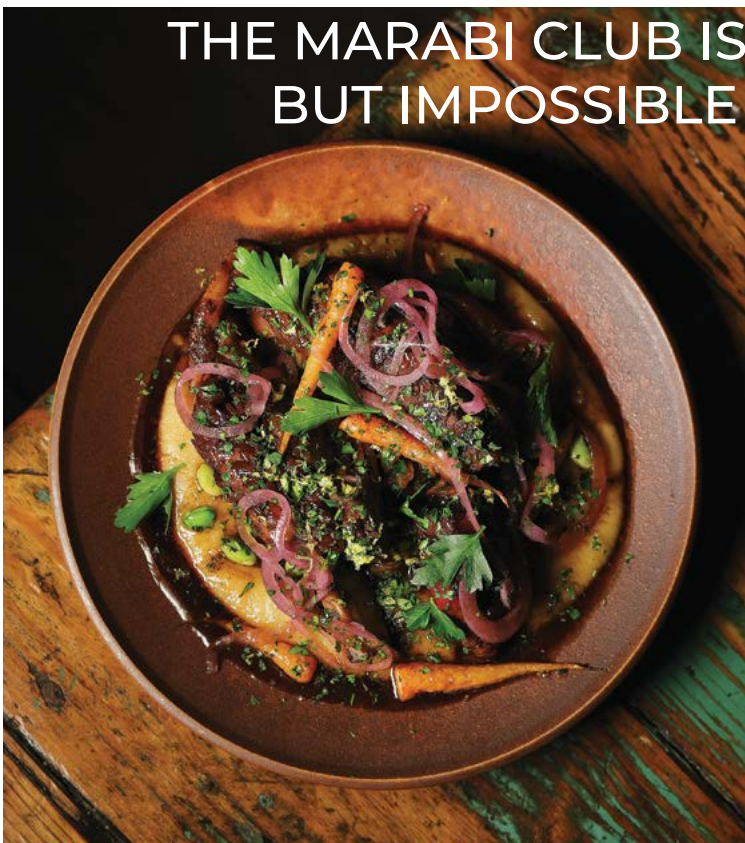


THE BEST JAZZ CLUB YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

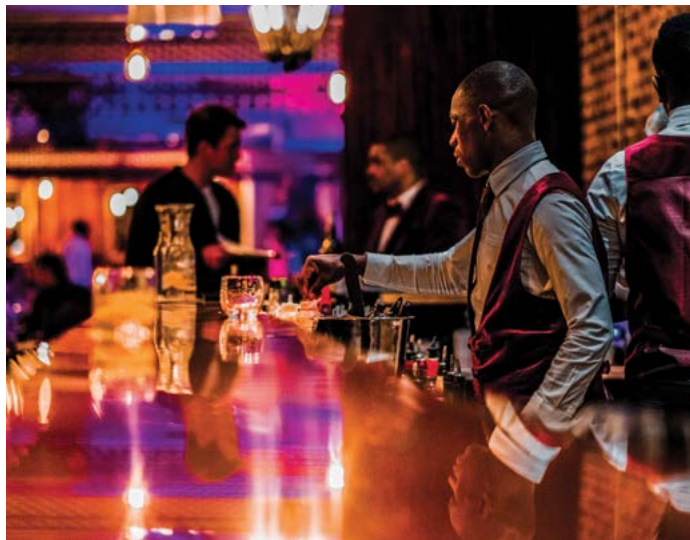
THE MARABI CLUB IS HARD TO FIND,
BUT IMPOSSIBLE TO FORGET.

Words **Sophie Baker**

Pics **The Marabi Club**



The streets of Johannesburg's inner city are worn, their edges softened by time. Old buildings rise in faded shades of ochre and brown, graffiti scrawled across their walls. In the heart of it, a far cry from the polished facades and bright lights Sandton, is The Marabi Club.



Shaped by the underground jazz scene of the 1920s, the entrance is discreet. Most visitors to Africa's richest city never venture into this part of town, let alone take an unmarked elevator down into the basement of former diamond-polishing factory turned hotel.

The doors slide open into a world where the room glows gold and blue, with light bouncing off chandeliers onto polished wooden tables and an illuminated '20s New York-style bar. Part jazz club, part restaurant, part speakeasy, and all character, The Marabi Club isn't designed to be stumbled upon.

Marabi music was born in the illegal shebeens of 1920s Johannesburg, where jazz thrived in hidden spaces, out of sight but never out of mind. The quick, looping melodies and rollicking rhythms gave the city's working-class neighbourhoods a defiant, underground soundtrack. That legacy is stitched into every corner of the club: in the low-lit bar gleaming with cut-glass decanters, in the brass detailing that catches the light just so, and in the music. A deep, honeyed saxophone, a keyboard rolling out a melody as rich as molasses, and a bassline all settle into your bones for the night. The club channels the spirit of a bygone era, but without the pretence of a themed concept. It feels authentic because it is.

"We wanted people to come for the food as much as the music," says managing director Dale De Ruig. "It had to be both, otherwise it wouldn't last." It works because every detail feels carefully thought out.

At your table, the first plates begin to arrive: dishes made to be passed around the table between sips of something dark and smooth. Chef Freddie Dias, whose tenure at The Pot Luck Club and Séjour speaks to his mastery of layered, unexpected flavours, curates a menu designed for sharing. "When you come to Marabi, I want you to leave feeling like you've had a night at the theatre. It's a whole experience, a memory. Not just a dinner" he says. "You don't want a formal multi-course meal here. You want to be able to enjoy the music, share food



casually." And that's exactly what the menu does. The Marabi bread course lands first, served with chakalaka, amasi curd, and bone marrow. The tempura mushrooms disappear fast, dipped into seaweed mayo. Later, perhaps the slow cooked lamb belly, which is expertly lifted with red pepper marmalade and zhoug yogurt dressing.

Then, the music takes over. A bassline thrums through the wooden floors, a saxophone weaves through the air, and the Marabi Quartet locks in, shifting the pace seamlessly to match the energy of the room. Some guests lean in or take to the dancefloor, caught up in the rhythm. Others sink into their chairs, letting it wash over them.

"People love Marabi, but it's a commitment to come here," De Ruig admits. There is no sign outside announcing this place, no neon to lure in passersby. You have to seek it out, and that's part of its magic. The Marabi Club is not a place to drop in for a quick drink. A night here unfolds in chapters.

Those who do come have made a decision to be here. And when they leave, they do so knowing they've been part of something rare. And yet, those who find it once always return.

Long after the last note fades, Marabi is still there, waiting for those who know where to look. For all of Johannesburg's reinventions, there are still places that feel untouched by time. The Marabi Club is one of them. And when you finally step back onto Siemert Road with the last notes of a saxophone fading into the night, you realise you've just seen a side of Johannesburg most will never find.

essentials:

To help you find this
Joburg gem,
call: +27 10 591 2879



<https://hallmarkhouse.info/dine/marabi/>

ECHOES

OF THE DESERT

THE HAUNTING BEAUTY OF NAMIBIA'S SKELETON COAST

Words / Pics: **Danielle Carstens**



Have you ever experienced deafening silence? It was the first thing I noticed when stepping off the plane. "It's just otherworldly," we uttered repeatedly as we drove to the lodge — and many times in the days that followed. Sandy plains, rocky outcrops of ancient volcanic material, and then, suddenly — wildlife. Elephants, lions, springbok, and many more.

This is the Skeleton Coast, on the west coast of Namibia, in the remote and rugged Kaokoland region. Despite its remoteness, it remains a dynamic, living wilderness where every creature has learned to endure the extremes. Beneath its eerie, inhospitable reputation lies a vibrant ecosystem, shaped by the relentless forces of the Atlantic Ocean and the Namib Desert. Life here has always found a way to adapt.

We were based 50 kilometres inland from the coast, near the Hoanib River. The riverbed is dry for most of the year, but underground water sustains lush vegetation along its course, providing essential resources for the region's desert-adapted wildlife. Elephants, oryx, giraffes, and springbok are plentiful. However, brown hyenas, lions, and cheetahs also roam these vast spaces, though they cover enormous territories. The Skeleton Coast National Park alone spans 16,845 square kilometers, but the wildlife is not confined to the park — they roam freely across the landscape.

This place is a photographer's dream. As photographers, we're always searching for something unique, and this is most definitely the place to find it.

Large elephants dwarfed by the vast landscapes. Deep shadows creating dramatic, low-key backgrounds.

Giraffes striding across the desert.

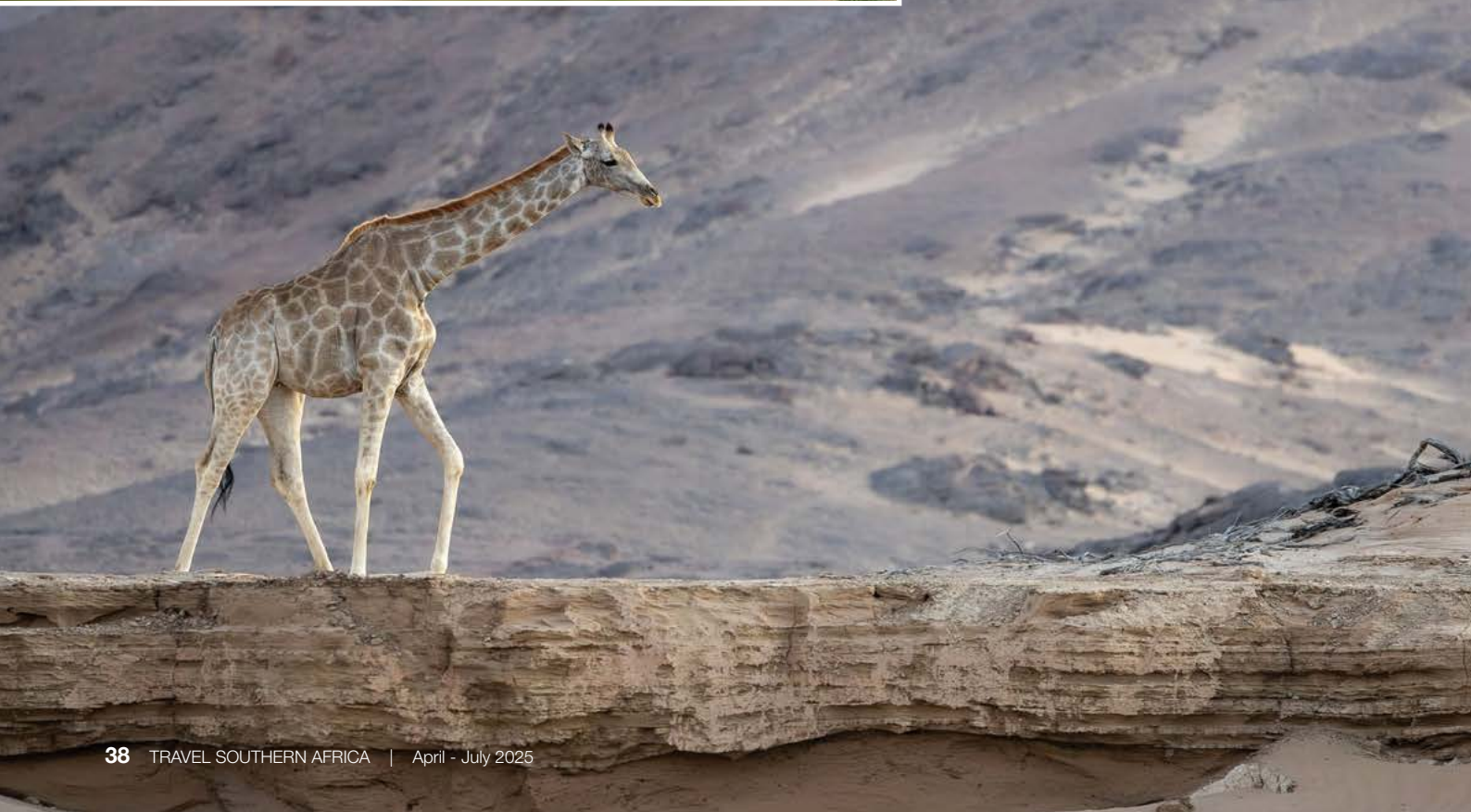
A desert lioness prowling against a rocky, textured backdrop. Backlit dust swirling in the golden light. Patterned dunes in early morning light. It's all possible, and we experienced it all in just four days.





We were thrilled to see not only elephants in peak condition but also a significant number of calves. Their playful antics kept us clicking away, making them a highlight of every game drive. Although I can't single out one sighting as the best, stumbling upon an African wildcat after sunset one evening is definitely high on the list. Shy and elusive, it made its way quickly across the open plain and vanished into the darkness.

These are the moments most photographers dream of. However, as much as I enjoyed capturing it all on camera, it was the non-photographic experiences that are solidly etched into my memory. Early one morning, long before sunrise, I was awakened by a sound I couldn't identify. Despite years spent in the African wilderness, this was foreign to me — an eerie, guttural sound that echoed through the hills, breaking the dark desert silence. Convinced that some unfortunate creature was being suffocated by a predator, I stepped onto my porch and shone my flashlight in the direction of the sound, too curious to ignore it. Nothing. After recording a short snippet of the noise on my phone, I looked up at the endless stars, inhaled the crisp desert air, and felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the privilege of being so deeply immersed in one of Africa's most remote areas.



The mystery of the eerie sound was solved a few days later when I met Emsie Verwey, the resident brown hyena researcher at Wilderness Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp since 2014. Known to the staff as 'The Hyena Mom,' she was intrigued the moment I played her the sound clip. When did we hear it? How long did it last? It turned out to be brown hyenas fighting — a fairly rare occurrence. As camp discussions unfolded, I realised I was the only one who hadn't heard the chaotic commotion on the second night. This time, the brown hyenas had fought more aggressively, keeping nearly everyone in camp awake for hours. I was disappointed to have missed out! While the hyenas remained elusive in terms of sightings, their nighttime antics were unforgettable.

Another special encounter occurred at dinnertime when we received a visit from a Cape fox. Seated around the campfire beneath a canopy of brilliant stars, we noticed movement just beyond the circle of light. Out of the darkness, a small Cape fox hesitantly emerged, edging closer. The only true fox species native to Southern Africa, it was a privilege to see one so close. If it had been hoping for dinner scraps, it was out of luck and soon disappeared back into the night.

On our second-to-last evening, we stopped for sundowners, and I asked the guide, "What time is it now? I'm guessing around 18:30?" He laughed, clearly familiar with this

misjudgment. "It's almost 20:30." We couldn't believe it. The sun had only just dipped below the horizon, and the beautiful blue hour was in full swing. Being on Africa's west coast in January, the summer sunsets arrive late and make for full,

sunny days. The nights were comfortably cool in the desert, even in the middle of summer.

The only other time the guide laughed at a question was when I asked about rain. "Rain..." he repeated with a shy smile, gazing over the parched landscape and shaking his head. "That's not something well-known here." And that's the beauty of this mysterious place. It's a survival game, and everything here is a master at it. It's raw nature at its finest. It's the sensation of being so far removed from civilisation that it feels other-worldly. It's the warm welcome from locals in a seemingly inhospitable environment, yet you feel as if you've returned home to a place, you've always known. It's the haunting calls of hyenas echoing through the hills at 5 a.m. It's a sky so clear that a million stars and

galaxies you've never seen reveal themselves in breathtaking clarity. It's a glimpse into the simplicity of life. It's an experience that will change you forever.

essentials:

Getting there

Several International airlines fly into Windhoek including South African Airways



<https://www.flysaa.com/>

Where to Stay:

Wilderness Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp

<https://www.wildernessdestinations.com/>

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SAFARI IN STYLE AT **EUPHORBIA MASHATU**

Words **Tessa Buhrmann**

Pics **Mashatu Game Reserve**



Located in Botswana's Northern Tuli Game Reserve, Mashatu Game Reserve is often called the 'Land of the Giants' due to its significant elephant population and the distinctive Mashatu trees that flourish along the rivers. Spanning 42,000 hectares, the reserve offers a mix of open plains, rocky outcrops, and riverine forests — each habitat bringing new opportunities for wildlife sightings.

The vastness of Mashatu is evident from the window of the Cessna 208B Grand Caravan as we fly in. The Limpopo River is lined with a ribbon of riverine forest, and beyond, rocky outcrops and small trees dot the open plains. After clearing immigration, we meet our guides for the transfer game drive to the luxurious Euphorbia Mashatu, our home for the next few nights.



The afternoon light spills across the landscape, turning the mopane-covered hills amber. The Majale River is dry but holds the promise of coming rains. Several giraffes emerge from the bush, moving with slow, deliberate grace across the riverbed to reach the greenery of leadwood trees — some, we later learn, are centuries old.

Stepping onto my private deck, I take in the views across the ravine. The plunge pool is inviting — a perfect spot to sip a G&T while soaking in the wilderness. The villa's design, inspired by the shape of mopane tree pods, blends seamlessly into the surroundings, its stone walls and curved lines mirroring the land. Spacious and filled with natural light, it's a space designed for both comfort and privacy. It's a pity my husband isn't with me.

Euphorbia Mashatu embraces sustainable tourism, minimising its environmental footprint through eco-friendly design and operation and the use of solar power. The eight villas, inspired by the shape of the mopane tree pod, are built using natural materials that blend seamlessly into the landscape.

I love the ruggedness of locally sourced stone exteriors, the outdoor shower with its viewing window and the second 'loo with a view,' which makes for an unforgettable bathroom break. Beyond luxury and exceptional cuisine, Euphorbia's exclusivity stands out — only four guests per safari vehicle means uninterrupted sightings and a more personal experience.

Mornings and afternoons are spent on game drives with ranger Rodgers and tracker Pontsho, whose knowledge and enthusiasm bring the bush to life. We traverse sandy plains, rocky ridges, and dry riverbeds, spotting everything from white-throated bee-eaters flitting into nest holes to a Verreaux's eagle-owl watching from an apple-leaf tree. A herd of eland scatters in a cloud of dust.

Rodgers introduces us to Mashatu's 'Big Seven Land-Based Giants' — the African elephant, the lion, giraffe, the baobab tree, the eland, ostrich and the kori bustard. We're lucky enough to see them all. But it's not just the giants that fascinate us. After Rodgers' familiar "hold on tight" as we exit a riverbed, we find ourselves in a fragrant field of wild sage. He hands us a sprig — its scent more intense than expected, and explains its traditional use in roofing and medicine. Pontsho points out a stink shepherd's tree under which a pair of bat-eared foxes pause before scampering off. Nearby, zebra kick up dust. The ground appears barren, but Rodgers assures us that after the rains, it will transform into a sea of yellow devil thorn flowers — a fleeting photographer's dream.

Mashatu is renowned for its leopard sightings, and the reserve doesn't disappoint. On one drive, we have three

unforgettable encounters — a young male strolls across the riverbed, another naps under a knobby combretum, and two more lounge in the branches of a Mashatu tree. A pride of lions lazes in the mopane scrub, cubs play-fighting while the adults rest. Later, in the soft light of dawn, we watch a trio of cheetahs scanning the

horizon, waiting for the right moment to move.

Beyond game drives, Mashatu offers walking safaris, cycling and horseback safaris, and nights spent sleeping under the stars. The photographic hides are a dream, especially the award-winning Matebole Hide and the new Lala Limpopo Sleepout Hide, which is now high on my wish list.

The Matebole Hide, made from a repurposed shipping container, offers a unique perspective of wildlife coming to drink at the waterhole. Close-up encounters with elephants, impala, kudu, and countless birds — red-billed quelea, Meyer's parrots, and African green pigeons — make for unforgettable moments. Seeing an elephant approach from ground level is an experience like no other, some come so close I could almost touch them.

As the afternoon fades, we gather for sundowners on a rocky outcrop, the sky turns shades of orange and pink. With a G&T in hand, I listen to the sounds of the bush, hoping to hear the distant roar of a lion or the call of a hyena. Instead, I feel the gentle breeze, hear the chirping of crickets, and let the stillness settle over me — a rhythm that feels timeless.

essentials:

Getting there: Mashatu Connect handles air and road transport, including flights from Johannesburg's Lanseria Airport to Limpopo Valley Airfield (LVA), situated within the reserve, the easiest way of getting there, although it is a relatively easy five-to-six hour drive from Johannesburg.

reservations@mashatu.com

For domestic flights within South Africa, contact South African Airways



<https://www.flysaa.com/>

Where to Stay:

Euphorbia Mashatu
www.mashatu.com/euphorbia/

Photographic Hides:
www.mashatu.com



PANGOLIN

CONSERVATION EXPERIENCE

Words **Lorraine Ratcliffe**
Pics **Neil Ratcliffe / andBeyond**

Today, we were incredibly lucky to have the rare and special opportunity to join a researcher from the specialist conservation team at Phinda Game Reserve as they located one of the pangolins reintroduced to the reserve.



This was a rare window into the world of these shy, elusive, and critically threatened mammals — allowing us to observe their unique features and adaptations firsthand as the researcher conducted a health check and downloaded data from the UHF tag attached to the pangolin.

As with any wild animal sighting, it could be short, long, or non-existent and we had no idea what to expect. So when our ranger called at 2:30 p.m., urging us to leave immediately because the pangolin had been located, we leapt into action.

Twenty minutes later, after a bumpy ride through the reserve, we arrived. The researcher, wearing radar monitoring equipment, looked like a ghostbuster — fully geared up and focused on tracking the pangolin. The excitement was palpable.

Three years ago, I had never even heard of a pangolin, let alone known what one looked like. It wasn't until I saw a news article on TV about their near extinction due to poaching, both for their scales, falsely believed to have medicinal properties, and for their meat, that I became aware of their plight. I was both saddened and horrified. So, when I had the chance to support this research and see one in person, I jumped at it.

Meeting the research team, we were introduced to Boots, a female pangolin, who got her name because she was found in the boot of a car.

The first thing that struck me was her tail — wide, rounded, and solid, almost chunky, about 50 cm long. It acts as a counterbalance when she walks on her hind legs, which resemble mini elephant legs with perfectly round bases. I had assumed pangolins were related to anteaters or porcupines, but surprisingly, they are more closely related to domestic cats. And despite their scaly appearance, they are mammals, not reptiles.

A mammal with scales? It sounds unbelievable, but it's real – and absolutely fascinating.

We watched quietly as Boots snuffled through the grass and dirt, burying her head into the soil in search of ants. After foraging, she found a sunny spot at the base of a tree and rolled onto her back like a puppy asking for a tummy rub. Her belly was soft, dark brown skin, and the temptation to stroke her was enormous — but I resisted. The researcher explained that Boots was very relaxed and didn't feel threatened by our presence, which was both reassuring and concerning. Given that she had been poached, rescued, and rehabilitated, it was worrying that she was still so trusting.

After about half an hour, the researcher picked her up carefully, supporting her belly while avoiding her sharp scales, and placed her in a bag for weighing. It looked awkward, and I worried about her past trauma, but I reminded myself that she was used to this process. Our ranger held the scale as we gently lowered her in — she weighed 11.7 kg, much heavier than I expected! She carefully removed her and released her, allowing her to return to her burrow or continue foraging. It was incredible to be part of this conservation effort and witness such a rare and special moment.

Boots has been at Phinda for just over two years and, in that time, has had two babies — one about 18 months ago and another just a few months old, safely tucked away in their burrow. Boots has one mate, and researchers believe he fathered both offspring. He doesn't share a burrow with Boots but visits her from time to time. Her firstborn no longer lives with her. After leaving the burrow, he was found far away on the other side of the reserve. Researchers are still learning about pangolin behaviour, and Boots and her offspring are providing valuable insights.

This was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. I felt privileged to witness and support this important research. I can't wait to learn more about these elusive, shy, sensitive, and wonderfully strange creatures when the research is published.

This groundbreaking project, in partnership with the African Pangolin Working Group, is the first of its kind for pangolins worldwide. The research findings will be crucial to the long-term survival of these fascinating creatures — the world's most trafficked mammal. By participating in this monitoring experience, we were able to support the researchers in their mission to re-establish Temminck's ground pangolin in a region where they had been locally extinct for decades.



Boots being weighed

essentials:

Getting there:

an easy 3-4 hour drive from King Shaka International Airport / fly with Federal Air from Johannesburg OR Tambo International Airport
www.fedair.com



Book your Pangolin Conservation Experience

Where to Stay:

andBeyond Phinda Private Game Reserve – choice of six lodges
www.andBeyond.com

More information:

www.africanpangolin.org

FAMILY ADVENTURES IN MALAWI

SAFARIS, SUMMITS, AND LAKESIDE BLISS!

Words **Sarah Kingdom**

Pics **Supplied**



Green Safaris

Kaya Mawa

Many years ago, when our children were small, my husband and I decided on a last-minute family trip to Malawi. Living in the middle of Zambia, spontaneity was easy — we simply got in the car and headed north.

Six hundred kilometres later, we reached Isoka, cleared immigration, and continued another 120km of some hair-raising dirt road driving to the Hewe border crossing into Malawi, which was little more than a hut with a log across a narrow track. It was Sunday, and the lone immigration officer was at church. A child was sent to fetch him and while we waited, a group of shy children curiously watched us. Eventually, the immigration officer arrived, somewhat surprised to see us and apologetic about his prior absence. After some rummaging, he found his long-unused stamp and, with a thud, stamped our passports, releasing us into Malawi.

What followed was a week of adventure – camping in the rain at Nyika National Park, swimming with cichlids in Lake Malawi, buying sugarcane in markets, and endless family fun. Fifteen years later, we still talk about that first trip. Though we've returned many times since, that journey remains part of our family mythology.

Planning a family holiday? Malawi might just be the answer.

Your kids are finally old enough for that adventurous African holiday — but where to go? Family trips create lifelong memories, so you want the perfect mix of adventure and relaxation. With safaris, beaches, and warm hospitality, Malawi might be just what you're looking for.

Known as the “Warm Heart of Africa,” Malawi is a safe and welcoming destination, easy to explore on a self-drive trip or with guided transfers. It's also an emerging safari hotspot. The past 15 years have seen major wildlife reintroductions, including elephants, rhinos, lions, wild



Fish Eagle |

dogs, and cheetahs. Majete Wildlife Reserve is a thriving Big Five destination, while Liwonde National Park offers scenic walking safaris and boat trips on the Shire River. Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve, a vast and untouched wilderness, promises adventure and tranquillity.

Its most famous attraction is Lake Malawi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Often called the Lake of Stars, a name inspired by the fishermen's lanterns bobbing on the lake's waters at night, Lake Malawi stretches over 580km north to south, 75km east to west, and covering more than 20% of the country in water. Fringed with vast stretches of sandy beaches, its crystal-clear waters are perfect for swimming, canoeing, sailing, or simply relaxing. With over 500 fish species, including the colourful endemic cichlids, the lake is perfect for snorkelling and scuba diving. And the call of the African fish eagle is ever-present.

For land-based adventure, hike Mount Mulanje, Central Africa's highest peak, or explore Zomba Plateau, for breathtaking views, cooler air, and mountain biking. But what truly makes Malawi special? Its people. Take time to meet the locals, experience their culture, and embrace the warmth of this unique family destination.



Kaya Mawa |

Here are a few ideas to keep your family occupied on holiday in Malawi:

African Parks



Majete Wildlife Reserve

1

Go on Safari at Majete Wildlife Reserve

A Malawi safari is an adventure the whole family can enjoy. Head to Majete Wildlife Reserve in southern Malawi for an unforgettable experience. Home to the Big Five, the park also boasts cheetahs, African wild dogs, sable, hyenas, aardvarks, pangolins, and over 300 bird species.

For something truly special, guests staying with African Parks can opt for a Nakamba Hide sleep-out — a rustic yet comfortable open-air platform beside a waterhole. Picture dinner by the campfire, stargazing from your bed, and drifting off to the distant roar of a lion. How much more memorable can family time get?

Wikimedia



Mount Mulanje

2

Climb Mount Mulanje

After your safari, swap game drives for altitude and set off for the summit of Mount Mulanje. The highest peak, Sapitwa (3,002m), offers a challenging but rewarding multi-day hike. Along the way, scramble over rocks, discover waterfalls and pools, and reach the summit for a spectacular sunrise over southern Malawi. You'll stay in rustic mountain huts, with a personal cook preparing hot meals to keep you energized. At night listen to stories from your guide about the local myths and legends that surround Mulanje.

For a more relaxed trek, opt for shorter routes leading to equally stunning peaks. A three-day trek gets you to Sapitwa, but a four-day route allows for detours to scenic pools. Stay overnight before or after your trek at Likhubula Forest Lodge or nearby tea estate at Huntingdon House.

African Parks



Liwonde National Park

3

Take a Helicopter Flight Over Liwonde National Park

Next, head to Liwonde National Park, home to lions, cheetahs, wild dogs, black rhinos, elephants, buffalo, hippos, and more. The birdlife is equally spectacular, attracting birders eager to spot the Narina trogon, Böhm's bee-eater, and the elusive African pitta.

For a unique perspective, take a helicopter flight with African Parks. Used for conservation efforts, including anti-poaching patrols, wildlife monitoring, and relocations, the helicopter offers an incredible aerial view of the park. Spotting elephants and hippos from above is an experience your kids will be raving about for days!



4

Chill at Lake Malawi

After safari adventures, it's time to relax by the crystal-clear waters of Lake Malawi. Not many destinations let you go from Big Five game drives to sandy beaches in a single day!

For a mix of water sports and beachside relaxation, head to Makokola Retreat, which is perfect for teens. The resort offers snorkelling, sailing, waterskiing, speedboating, kayaking, tubing, golf, beach volleyball, soccer, birdwatching, and cultural excursions. Activities designed to keep the whole family busy!

For a more rustic and off-the-grid experience, take a boat to Mumbo Island, just off Cape Maclear. Enjoy a barefoot lifestyle and digital detox, with hiking, snorkelling, scuba diving, and kayaking. With no Wi-Fi or electricity, it's a perfect spot to disconnect and soak in nature.



5

Explore Likoma Island

For a different take on Lake Malawi, visit the idyllic Likoma Island. Just 18km² and sitting close to Mozambique's shore, this hidden gem offers an authentic mix of history, culture, and water activities. Kaya Mawa offers an array of fun watersports to engage your kiddos, from sailing to paddleboards and kayaks to snorkelling. If you're up for exploring, take a tour of the island and visit St Peter's Cathedral, built in 1905 by Scottish missionaries who came to end the slave trade. The cathedral, with its stunning stained-glass windows and intricate stonework, is as large as Winchester Cathedral in the UK.

With its vibrant culture, diverse landscapes, and spectacular scenery, Malawi is perfect for families with older kids looking for adventure. From safaris and mountain treks to water sports and island escapes, it's a destination that will pull your kids away from their screens and create memories to last a lifetime.

essentials:

Planning your trip:

Lilongwe based, family owned and operated Land & Lakes was Malawi's first established tour operating company. They know the country intimately and have been planning amazing trips for 39 years and can plan your itinerary right down to the tiniest of details.



<https://www.landlake.net/>

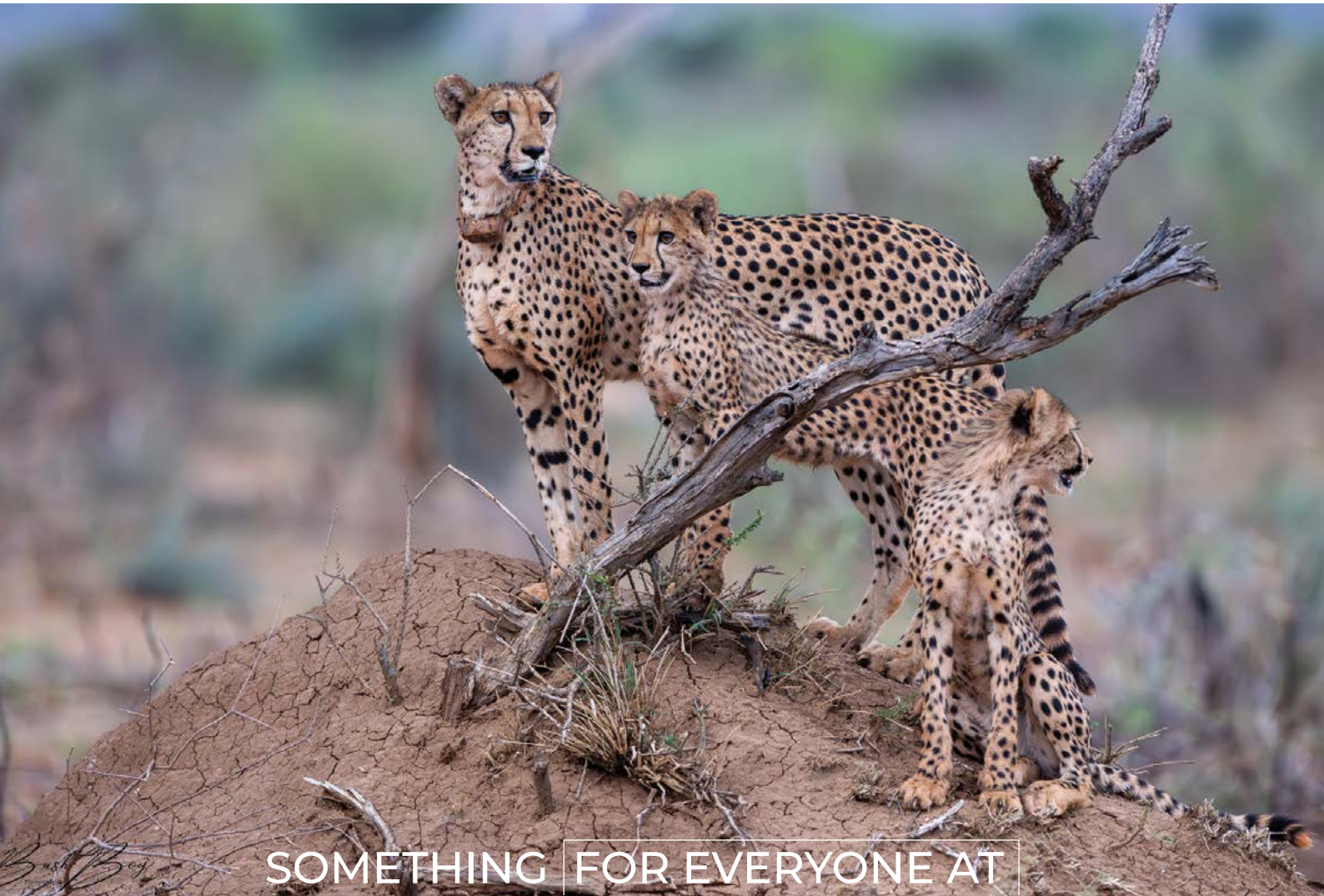
Getting there:

Several International airlines fly into Lilongwe

Where to Stay:

Makokola Retreat
<https://makokola.com/>

Mvu Lodge (and bushcamp) -
<https://mvuulodge.com/>



SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE AT **MADIKWE GAME RESERVE**



Words **Tessa Buhrmann**

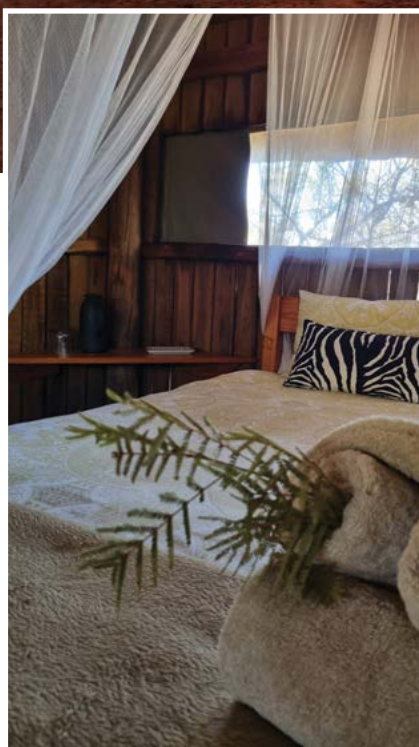
Pics **Tessa Buhrmann / Clint Parsons**



Madikwe Game Reserve, established in 1991, is one of South Africa's largest game reserves, covering 75,000 hectares (750 km²). This malaria-free reserve offers an excellent chance to see Africa's Big Five — lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and buffalo — so named because they were historically the hardest and most dangerous to hunt on foot.

Madikwe is a remarkable conservation success story. Once an expanse of overgrazed farmland, the land was transformed into a thriving wildlife haven through one of Africa's largest rewilding projects. In the early 1990s, the government at the time initiated Operation Phoenix, a groundbreaking conservation effort that saw the reintroduction of more than 8,000 animals, including elephants, lions, cheetahs, and African wild dogs. Today, Madikwe spans over 75,000 hectares, offering a sanctuary not just for wildlife but also for local communities that benefit from eco-tourism and conservation initiatives.





Mosetlha Bush Camp & Eco Lodge: Off the Grid and Immersed in Nature

The allure of the African bush is undeniable — it's a place I love and have visited often. But nothing could have prepared me for the simplicity and authenticity of Mosetlha Bush Camp & Eco Lodge. From the moment I arrived, I felt as though I had stepped back in time, where connection meant more than convenience, and luxury was found in the pleasure of spending time in the bush.

Mosetlha is a small, rustic, unfenced bush camp, in the heart of Madikwe. It operates entirely off the grid, with lantern-lit pathways and meals cooked over an open fire. Mod cons include private bathrooms, albeit a bucket shower with the water heated through an old-fashioned wood-fired 'donkey boiler' and an eco-friendly 'bush loo,' which thankfully, isn't as rustic as it sounds.

On an early morning game drive, we huddle beneath blankets, thankfully it slowly warms up and we begin to shed our layers. We watch zebra and wildebeest graze, a warthog roots through elephant dung, amusing us as it finds tasty undigested seeds and giraffe nonchalantly browse. A pride of lazy lions nap beneath a large marula tree, a few swishing tails and inquiring glances is all the response we get, but we're thrilled to have this moment to ourselves.



Despite being mid-winter, daytime temperatures soar to nearly 30 degrees Celsius, and the landscape is dry and dusty — the region is in the grips of a terrible drought. At a waterhole, elephants gather, drinking deeply and spraying themselves to cool down. A young elephant huddles close to its mother, while two white rhinos arrive to quench their thirst.

Back at camp, downtime means relaxing in the open-air lounge, flipping through wildlife books, or simply soaking up the tranquillity. The near absence of Wi-Fi isn't a drawback — without distractions, I feel more present, attuned to the bush around me. For those worried about devices, an emergency solar system keeps batteries charged for lodge radios and guest devices.

Our afternoon drive is spent tracking a leopard, but with no luck. From an elevated position, we watch family after family of elephants coming to the dam to drink, wallow, and dust bathe, coating their skin to protect against the sun and to repel insects. After a spectacular sunset and sundowners, we head back. Our guide Jonny switches on the spotlight, scanning for feline eyes. The vehicle slows as he points to an impala kill tangled in a fence. "Leopard,"

he says. "It must still be nearby." His bush knowledge soon reveals a young male leopard hiding beneath a bush. We wait, hoping he'll retrieve his meal, but he remains hidden.

Dinners at Moseletsha are communal, with guests gathering around a long table to share hearty, home-cooked meals. We sip Amarula by the boma fire, sharing stories beneath a blanket of stars.

My cabin, a raised wooden structure with canvas walls, is simple yet inviting. A comfortable bed, solar lanterns, and the sounds of the bush lull me to sleep. Just after midnight, I am startled by a sound. A rhino grazes beside my cabin and black-backed jackals call nearby. In the distance, a hyena whoops, a nightjar sings, and crickets chirp.

On our final drive, I chat with Jonny over coffee. He tells me that Moseletsha was originally founded as a guide training camp by Chris Lucas. He tells me he was among the first to learn bushcraft, track animals, and understand the intricacies of the wild. Growing up in the area before it was proclaimed a game reserve, he has witnessed its transformation. Moseletsha is more than a lodge; it is a place of learning and deep respect for nature, where the legacy of Chris lingers. Without frills, it reminds me that true luxury is about authenticity, purpose, and memories that endure long after departure.



Luxury in the wild at Madikwe Safari Lodge

After a hearty breakfast, we transfer to Madikwe Safari Lodge, where we're welcomed with lemongrass-scented cloths, chilled drinks, and warm smiles. We stay at Kopano, a boutique-style lodge nestled against a rocky koppie surrounded by bushveld.

This intimate retreat lives up to its name with just four suites — 'kopano' means 'small gathering' in Setswana. I step into my suite; it's a haven of understated luxury and the vast bed draped in crisp white linen dominates the room. I walk through the glass doors onto my private deck, complete with a plunge pool, perfect for cooling off in the afternoon heat. It feels as though this little piece of the African bush was reserved just for me — a refuge from the busyness of life, where time slows, and life-work balance is returned.



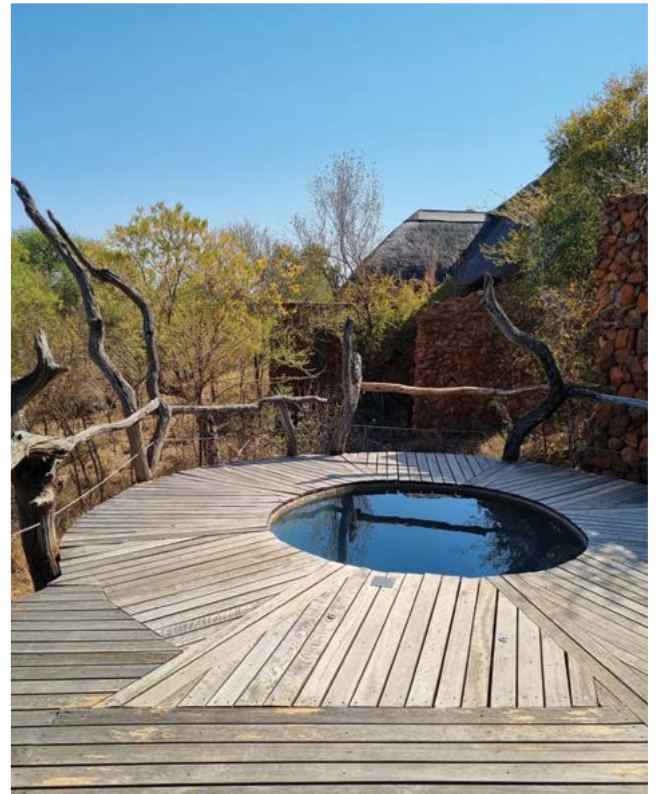


The main lodge, elegantly designed with earthy tones and natural textures, blends seamlessly into the landscape. The main area is open plan, leading onto an expansive deck, beyond which is a fire pit overlooking a waterhole and the wilderness beyond. Ideal for viewing the parade of wildlife that comes to drink.

We visit Lelapa Lodge, the family-friendly section of Madikwe Safari Lodge. The main pool at Lelapa is a green oasis, perfect for sunbathing, sipping cocktails, and watching elephants drink and wallow in the waterhole it overlooks. A small horizontal electric fence separates us from the elephants just a few meters away, offering an unforgettable front-row seat to this incredible spectacle.

Our game drives with guide Ryan are both fun and informative. We quickly spot more elephants, zebras, giraffes, and two male lions, “they’re brothers,” Ryan tells us. We watch in awe as a cheetah mother calls for her five cubs. They emerge from the bush, crossing the road right in front of us. Later that afternoon we come across a crash of white rhino, their size and bulk defying their vulnerability. How can anyone even consider poaching these magnificent animals, for what is just keratin?

I love the coffee and sundowner stops, where we stretch our legs and spot animal tracks — from huge elephant prints to the tiny spoor of a steenbok. One evening, a brown hyena wanders past as we sip our G&Ts. But it’s at night, when the spotlight comes on, that the magic happens. Ryan spots a herd of elephants; they amble past, first one, then another, their grey bodies gleaming in the moonlight. Big ones and little ones. Some curious, most just lumbering along. I realize I’ve been holding my breath in wonder — the perfect end to our Madikwe safari.



Note: Madikwe Game Reserve has had substantial rain since this winter visit, and is now lush and green.

essentials:

Getting there

Fly SAA to O.R. Tambo International Airport and then Federal Air directly to Madikwe Game Reserve (daily)
<https://fedair.com/>
 (Or a 4-5 hour drive from the airport)



<https://www.flysaa.com/>

Where to Stay:

Mosetlha Bush Camp & Eco Lodge
<https://www.thebushcamp.com/>
 Madikwe Safari Lodge
<https://madikwesafarilodge.co.za/>



ART 'SCAPES

Words & Pics **Tessa Buhrmann**

For art-loving travellers, some hotels offer more than just a stay — they provide an immersive artistic escape. Showcasing locally inspired sculptures, ceramics and fine art, these destinations celebrate creativity and culture, turning every visit into a visual feast.



Eastern Cape - Mantis No5 Boutique Art Hotel

Tucked away in the leafy suburb of Summerstrand in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), the Mantis No5 Boutique Art Hotel is a sanctuary of style, sophistication, and creativity. This beautifully restored Art Deco property was once a private home, now reimagined into a luxurious boutique hotel that seamlessly blends history, artistry, and contemporary comfort.

From the moment of arrival, the striking Art Deco exterior hints at the visual delights that await inside. Stepping through the doors reveals

a feast for the senses — gleaming parquet floors, plush furnishings, and a collection of stunning artwork adorning every wall and corner. Each space has been meticulously curated, with much of the art sourced from talented South African artists. It's a gallery experience in its own right, drawing guests to

the intricate details, bold colours, and captivating compositions.

The Mantis Collection, as a brand, is built on the ethos that 'man and nature together is sustainable.' This guiding principle is evident not just in the art, but in the hotel's seamless integration with its surroundings — where luxury meets sustainability in a thoughtful, responsible way.

One of the most delightful aspects of No5 is how it constantly surprises. Every corridor, every room, and every turn reveals something new — a striking sculpture, a mesmerizing painting, or an exquisite piece of furniture that adds to the hotel's timeless charm. It's the kind of place that encourages slowing down to truly appreciate the beauty that surrounds it.

Beyond the aesthetics, No5 Boutique Art Hotel offers a world-class experience, from its elegant suites and attentive service to its fine dining and intimate private cinema. Whether for an art lover, a luxury seeker, or someone who simply appreciates the finer things in life, this boutique gem in Gqeberha is an unforgettable retreat. The opulence, paired with the stories told through every brushstroke and design choice within its walls, leaves a lasting impression.

<https://www.mantiscollection.com/>



KwaZulu-Natal - Brahman Hills

Nestled in the picturesque KZN Midlands, Brahman Hills is already renowned for its rolling landscapes and luxury accommodations. But now, thanks to a collaboration with Art Eye Gallery, its gardens have become an immersive outdoor art experience, blending nature with striking sculptural works. This curated collection, featuring some of South Africa's most talented artists, transforms a simple garden stroll into a journey of artistic discovery.

As you wander through the beautifully manicured gardens — recognized by the Royal Horticultural Society — you'll find sculptures seamlessly integrated into the natural surroundings.

Each piece tells a story, drawing inspiration from history, mythology, and the wild beauty of the African landscape. Tyron Selmon, the owner and curator of Art Eye Gallery, has carefully selected works that evoke emotion, provoke thought, and spark curiosity.

Among the standout pieces is Grace da Costa's *Schoolgirl with a Dog*, a life-sized sculpture capturing a tender moment of childhood innocence and contemplation. The delicate interplay of expression and form invites the viewer to pause and reflect on their own youthful memories. In contrast, the bronze *Leopard* by Michael Canadas embodies the silent power and patience of this elusive predator, frozen in a moment of quiet strength that mirrors the untamed wilderness beyond the gardens.

For those seeking an even more enchanting experience, the night art walk is an unmissable highlight. Guided by lanterns, visitors follow a mystical path to an underground grotto, where flickering candlelight reveals Sandro Trapani's evocative *Medusa*. This striking bronze and wood sculpture reimagines the legendary figure, her gaze both mesmerizing and intimidating. The mythology of Medusa — her transformation from victim to powerful icon — adds a deeper layer of intrigue to the experience.

More than just an art walk, the Brahman Hills sculpture experience fosters a deep appreciation for the relationship between art and nature. Each sculpture, thoughtfully placed within the gardens, enhances the sense of wonder that this unique destination offers. Whether you're an art enthusiast or simply seeking a new way to connect with the beauty of the Midlands, this fusion of creativity and landscape is an inspiring celebration of artistic expression.

<https://www.brahmanhills.co.za/>



Gauteng - Fairlawns Boutique Hotel & Spa

Nestled in the leafy suburb of Sandton in the heart of Johannesburg, Fairlawns Boutique Hotel & Spa is a luxurious haven offering a tranquil escape from the bustling city. Renowned for its eclectic blend of elegance and artistic charm, the hotel is a showcase of carefully curated collectables and whimsical treasures, all reflecting the keen eye for design of its Managing Director, Michael Kewley.

Among its many gems, the Ardmore Satara Suite stands out as an extraordinary testament to creativity, craftsmanship, and impeccable design. This opulent suite is the result of a collaboration with Ardmore, the renowned South African ceramic and design studio. It is a space where every element tells a story, each detail a celebration of vibrant African heritage.

From the moment you step into the suite, your senses are enveloped by a symphony of colour and pattern. Bold, vibrant hues interplay with intricate motifs, creating a visual feast that deepens the more you look.



The centrepiece being the hand-painted feature wall, masterfully created by artists Wiseman Mpofo and Sydney Nyabeze. Their signatures, subtly hidden within the breathtaking artwork, a secret waiting to be discovered by the keen-eyed observer.



The suite exudes elegance, effortlessly balancing drama with serenity. Plush, inviting sofas offer a cosy retreat, while the private outdoor balcony is an idyllic spot for an early morning coffee or a quiet moment of reflection. The bathroom is equally exquisite, adorned with bespoke Ardmore wallpapers and ceramics, each bearing the artist's signature beneath its intricate designs. Thoughtfully curated amenities enhance the luxurious experience, ensuring that every moment spent here is one of pure indulgence.


More than just a room, the Ardmore Satara Suite is a living gallery — an immersive journey into African artistry. It offers discerning guests an exceptional space where vibrancy and colour are seamlessly intertwined with calm and comfort. But Michael Kewley's artistic vision extends beyond this singular suite. His keen eye for design has imbued Fairlawns with a distinctive character, where eclectic collectables and treasures abound.

Every corner of the hotel holds an unexpected delight, a carefully curated piece that brings warmth, charm, and an unmistakable sense of whimsy.

Whether visiting for an overnight escape or an extended stay to explore the wonders of Johannesburg, the Ardmore Satara Suite at Fairlawns Boutique Hotel & Spa is a destination in itself. It is a space where art and luxury coalesce, where African heritage is honoured in the most exquisite of ways, and where every guest is invited to delight in a truly unforgettable experience.

<https://fairlawns.co.za/>



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THRILLS, CHILLS AND WATERFALL SPILLS



ADVENTURE SEASON AT VIC FALLS

Words **Kim Barnett**

Pics **Africa's Eden**

Tony Barnett



Old Drift Lodge

Ask anyone who has lived near Victoria Falls when their favourite time of year is, and chances are they won't say the cooler peak tourist months of June to August. While high water season is a dazzling spectacle, with the falls shrouded in mist and rainbows dancing in the spray, there's another side to this natural wonder that emerges when the Zambezi River recedes. Welcome to Adventure Season, spanning from late August to December, when unique experiences unlock for those with an intrepid streak.



Things to Do During Adventure Season

World-Class White-Water Rafting - Regarded as one of the world's best one-day rafting trips, the Zambezi River below Victoria Falls becomes an adrenaline-pumping playground in low water season. With exposed rapids like "The Terminator" and "Oblivion," the intensity ramps up, delivering an unforgettable thrill. Operators like Wild Horizons, Shearwater (Zimbabwe), and Safari Par Excellence (Zambia) run daily trips, with multi-day expeditions offering nights under the stars on Batoka Gorge's pristine beaches.

Devil's Pool and Livingstone Island - Once a local secret, Devil's Pool has become a global bucket-list experience, yet many don't realize it's only accessible when water levels drop. Perched on the precipice of the falls, this natural rock pool offers a heart-racing dip at the edge of the abyss. Tours to Livingstone Island, where Dr. David Livingstone first laid eyes on the falls, include a boat transfer, a history-rich guided walk, and a meal featuring local delicacies — with a gin and tonic for those visiting later in the day. Availability is limited, so early booking is essential.

Kayaking the Zambezi - For kayaking enthusiasts, the Zambezi's high-volume, warm-water rapids provide a prime playground. Local villagers assist in carrying kayaks along steep paths, while visiting freestyle kayakers hone their tricks on the river's stationary waves. With cheap beer, warm weather, and lively backpacker hubs like Jollyboys in Zambia and Shoestrings in Zimbabwe, it's an unbeatable escape from the European winter.

Wildlife Watching and Safari Season - Though peak safari season runs from June to August, September to early November offers exceptional wildlife viewing. As water sources dwindle, animals congregate at remaining watering holes, providing unparalleled sightings in parks like Zambezi National Park (Zimbabwe), Mosi-oa-Tunya (Zambia), and Chobe (Botswana). When the first rains arrive in November, greenery re-emerges, impalas birth their young, and the air fills with the intoxicating scent of petrichor.

Relaxing by the Zambezi River - Beyond the adrenaline rush, Adventure Season offers tranquillity with fewer crowds and stunning riverfront retreats. In Zambia, Tintswalo Siankaba and Sindabezi Island promise serene getaways, while Chundukwa River Lodge offers horseback safaris along the riverbanks. Mukwa River Lodge delivers boutique luxury with world-class cuisine and breathtaking river views. Downstream, the newly rebuilt Taita Falcon Lodge, perched on Batoka Gorge, serves up panoramic vistas.

On the Zimbabwean side, Chundu Island and Victoria Falls River Lodge provide secluded escapes, while The Palm, a 5-star hotel in Victoria Falls, offers elegance minutes from the Falls. Old Drift Lodge's Star Suite invites guests to sleep under the African sky in sheer luxury.

For the ultimate in relaxation, hop aboard a sunset cruise from either side of the river. As the sky ignites in gold and crimson, sip on a chilled glass of wine and watch hippos yawning in the river — nature's way of reminding you that holiday mode is officially engaged.

A Different Perspective on Victoria Falls

Adventure Season at Victoria Falls is an extraordinary time, offering an unmatched blend of thrill and tranquillity. Whether rafting legendary rapids, peering over the edge of the falls, or soaking in the beauty of the Zambezi, this season reveals a lesser known yet equally breathtaking side of one of the world's greatest natural wonders.

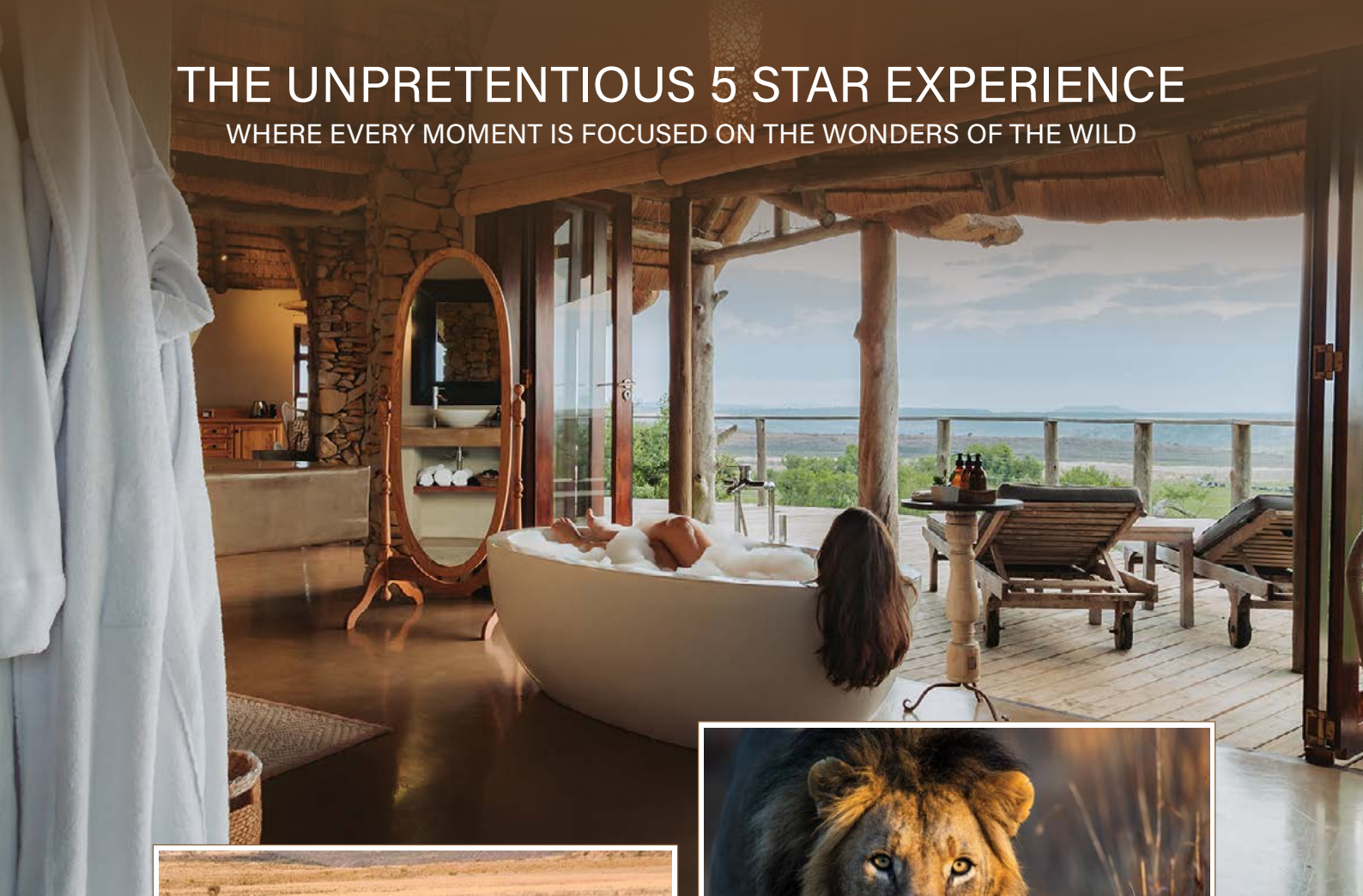
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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A FAMILY LEGACY & THE POWER OF POSSIBILITY

Words **Claire Roadley** Pics **The Royal Drakensberg Education Trust**

If you ever doubted the positive impact of tourism on local communities, The Cavern Drakensberg Resort & Spa is proof otherwise. Established in 1941 by Ruth and Bill Carte, this family-run retreat in KwaZulu-Natal's Northern Drakensberg has flourished for generations, staying true to Bill's vision: "Our work is to create beauty, to make the land more fertile, to make our living and to leave the world better than when we first came into it."





After Bill's passing in 1954, Ruth, with four young children, built The Cavern into a thriving resort. By the 1980s, her sons Peter and Anthony took over, expanding the family legacy. In 2000, Anthony, Jean, and their daughters established Montusi Mountain Lodge nearby. With Peter and Rhona now retired, sister property Sungubala Eco Camp has been added as a self-catering option. From humble beginnings, The Cavern has grown into a renowned award-winning retreat, still guided by the Carte family's vision and commitment to hospitality.

But the true impact of this hotel is measured by far more than just its many happy guest returns. The family is absolutely passionate about making a difference in their local community... with an unwavering belief in the power of possibility, especially when it comes to education!

The Cavern family founded, and is heavily involved in, The Royal Drakensberg Education Trust which is a non-profit set up to help support and transform the local rural communities living in the region through quality education initiatives.

Each year the Trust aims to achieve these minimum outcomes:

Baby Boost – This project supports around 30 mothers and carers, often Gogos (grandmothers) annually to ensure the first 1000 days of a child's life support development, through coaching sessions, toy libraries, books and interactive play groups. 576 carers and baby interactions through playgroups this year, with 72 home visits and 36 carers trained.

Royal Drakensberg Primary School – this facility was built and is financially supported by The Cavern family, corporates and friends to support 130 local children, including salaries for seven teachers and two interns. They have a 99% progress and pass rate for Grade RRR to Grade 4! Over 750 extra mural activities are provided annually.

Khanyisela Project – 18 pre-schools serving 850 little ones in the AmaZizi community, under the care of 50 practitioners trained in early childhood development, health and nutrition. With friends and supporters, they've helped build classrooms, repaired playgrounds, upgraded classrooms, installed toilets, painted and supplied learning resources.

Teacher Development – supported 55 practitioners across 21 schools, including 15 courses and six workshops. Six teachers were formally educated in 2024 as well as four interns with 120 mentor visits clocked up over the year.

Wellness Programme – provided 191 400 meals (porridge) for 1000 children across 21 schools as well as run 2280 yoga sessions and four nature outings.

Community reading – The Royal Drakensberg Trust has gifted over 1,200 books across four local communities, reaching over 600 children.

The Trust focuses its energy around their "Theory of Change", believing that if the local children, especially those from birth up to the age of eight, get the support they need at the start of their lives, that they will be better prepared for their next phase of education. Part of this is ensuring that standards in rural education continually improve so that these incredible young minds can realise their own power of possibility!



"This change", Megan says, "begins in the first 1000 days where we stimulate neurological pathways through our BabyBoost programme. We grow and develop young children in our ECD, Khanyisela Project which supports 850 children and 50 practitioners and this all happens out of Royal Drakensberg, our hub and our heart... which incidentally has 130 little people enrolled in 2025. And our mission at Royal Drakensberg is that children learn2read so that they can read2learn".

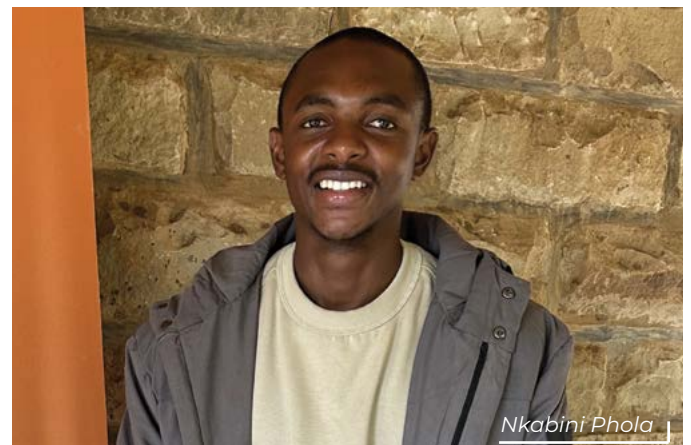
Thanks to the support of the greater Cavern family, which includes many guests and Rotary societies around the globe, swirls and ripples of positive change are created – with the children being the cheerful beneficiaries!

Just one success story of this programme is that of Nkabini Phola. Phola grew up in the local village of AmaZizi, raised primarily by his Gogo in very challenging circumstances. Not even the treacherous five kilometres walk to school, or any of the other obstacles that he faced on his path would deter him from his determination to gain an education. When he was in Grade 9, following the untimely death of both his parents, he was forced to step up into the role of father figure and breadwinner for his younger siblings at just 14 years old, selling clay mouldings on the road to eke out a living.

Despite everything, he completed his schooling, and a year later secured a job as a waiter at The Cavern, quickly working his way up to bartender. He then managed to secure a place at UNISA university, working during his holidays back at The Cavern to earn money. Somehow, he still managed to find spare time to volunteer at a local primary school in his amaZizi village. Seeing his passion for education, Megan encouraged him to apply for their internship at Royal Drakensberg Primary School (RDPS) and today Phola is a qualified teacher, fulfilling his childhood dream of shaping the lives of others through the power of education. He also now sponsors his nephews so that they do not have to pay for transport and school uniforms, paying it forward. If you can dream it, you can do it!

Over the years there have been many similar success stories... including Sibonelo, the cook who has become a teacher, Idah, the child-minder that now teaches, and Samkelo, a young student who has conducted the Youth Philharmonic Orchestra in Pretoria.

The Cavern is a unique home-from-home hotel with real heart, where strangers become friends, couples reconnect and families truly bond. With every year, and every repeat visitor, the Cavern family grows. Many guests become regular donors to the various projects supported. The African spirit of Ubuntu continues to make an impact wherever communities work together to create the possible.



Nkabini Phola

essentials:

Getting there

A 4hr drive from King Shaka International Airport, Durban



<https://www.royal-drakensberg.org.za/>

Where to Stay:

The Cavern Drakensberg Resort & Spa
<https://www.cavern.co.za/>

Montusi Mountain Lodge
<https://montusi.co.za/>

Sungubala Eco Camp
<https://www.sungubala.co.za/>



ON THE SHELF

Mashatu – Land of the Giants

by Roger and Pat de la Harpe



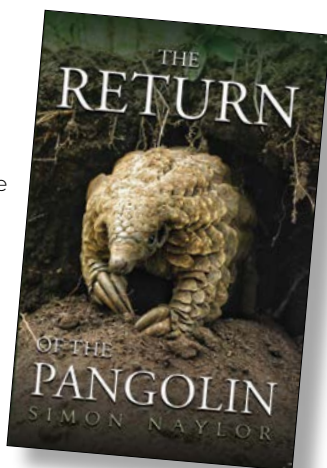
This coffee table book showcases stunning photographs and informative text that capture the spirit of Mashatu, a wildlife reserve in eastern Botswana, located at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe river's. This beautiful book highlights the reserve's diverse wildlife, including elephants, big cats, and birdlife, with QR codes linking videos to enrich the experience.



The Return of the Pangolin

by Simon Naylor

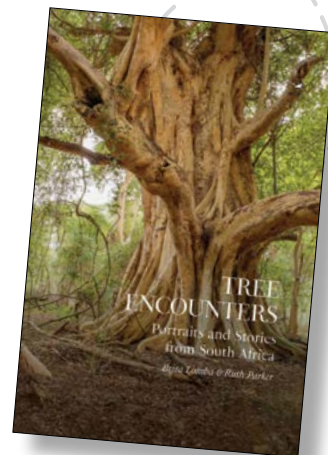
This is the inspiring story of a groundbreaking achievement in pangolin conservation. Rescued from poachers and nursed back to health, these endangered creatures were successfully reintroduced into the wild, marking the return of a species locally extinct for decades. This story symbolises hope for the world's most heavily trafficked mammal.



Tree Encounters - Portraits and Stories from South Africa

by Brite Lombard & Ruth Parker

Tree Encounters celebrates South Africa's majestic trees — forest giants, childhood companions, urban landmarks, and desert dwellers — through stories from writers, conservationists, and historians. This beautiful coffee table book blends nature, history, and photography. This collection honors trees' deep cultural ties and calls for their protection as vital pillars of our ecosystems.

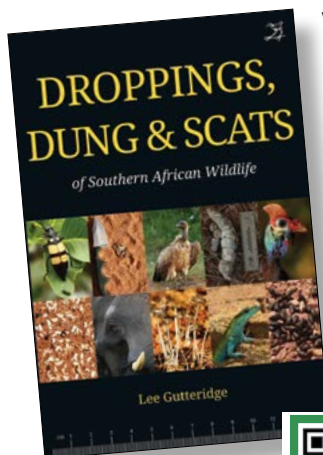


Droppings, Dung & Scats of Southern African Wildlife

by Lee Gutteridge

As an experienced and well-known tracker and guide, Gutteridge's comprehensive guide to wildlife droppings is an essential companion for the bush, game parks, farms, and even the city. Covering mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, and more, it features detailed descriptions and images to aid in tracking and understanding the natural

world. Perfect for curious explorers and nature enthusiasts.



Sappi Tree Spotting KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape

by Val Thomas and Rina Grant

The Sappi Tree Spotting series makes tree identification easy and enjoyable with clear terminology, seasonal grids, animal and human uses, gardening tips, and maps. Perfect for exploring South Africa's magnificent indigenous trees and enhancing your tree-spotting adventures.



TRAVEL & LEISURE ZAMBIA, ZIMBABWE & BOTSWANA

is a high quality, A4 full colour tourism magazine filled with breathtaking photography and inspiring stories, published three times a year (January, May, and September) by Safari Magazine.

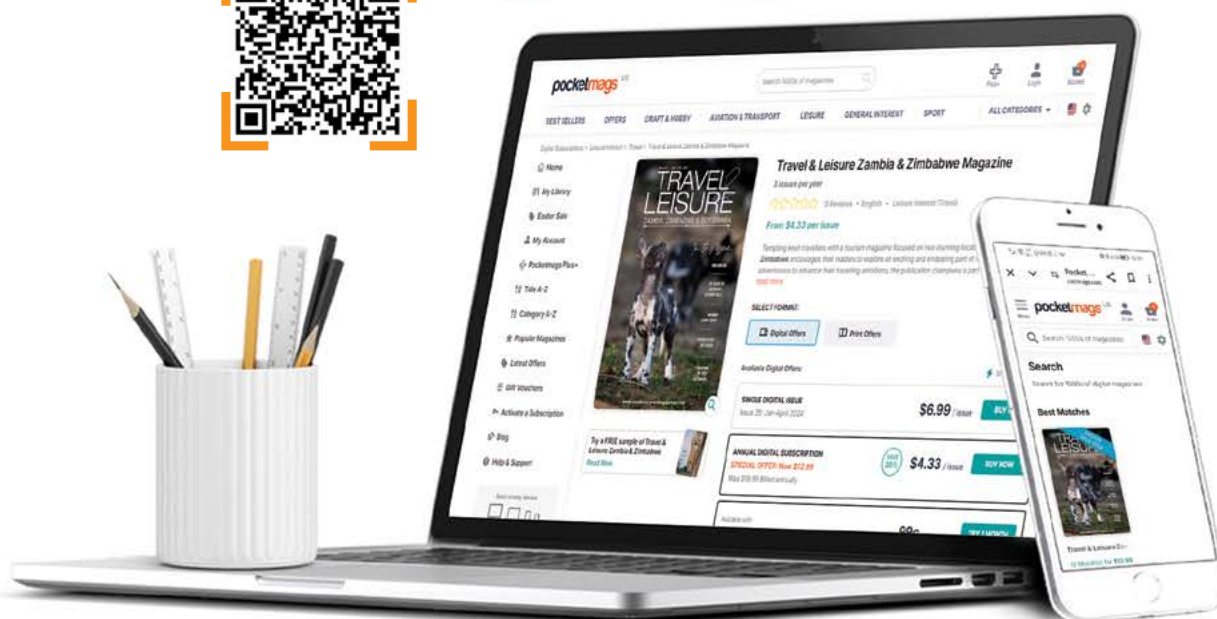
The publication showcases various tourism products found in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana.



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"Our work is to create beauty, to make the land more fertile, to make our living,
to leave the world better than when we came into it." Bill Carte, 1941 - Founding Grandfather

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