

ISSUE 4

TRAVEL

Southern Africa

KWAZULU-NATAL

Explore Kruger

**FARM TO FORK
CUISINE**

*Beach &
Bush Escapes*

Elevated Journeys. Authentic Stories. Meaningful Impact.



Great Southern Africa Train Adventures



The GOLDEN AGE of LEISURE TRAVEL

Since its establishment in 1989, Rovos Rail has earned an international reputation for its truly world-class travel experiences. Bespoke train safaris through the heart of Africa combine magnificent scenery with the glamour and excitement of the golden age of leisure travel. In a series of journeys lasting from 48 hours to 16 nights, Rovos Rail links some of the continent's greatest destinations with a variety of off-train excursions.

The beautifully rebuilt wood-paneled trains each carry a maximum of 72 passengers in 36 well-appointed suites and are also available for charter, while the Events Train caters for up to 250 guests and is suitable for daytime journeys. Create itineraries by combining our short and long journeys and receive a 5% discount or explore our specials and collections that link our journeys with other entertaining products.



Editor's Comment



*"The only constant
in life is change."
Heraclitus*

Talking about change feels like the right place to begin. This edition of *Travel Southern Africa* marks a new chapter, and with it, a sense of quiet anticipation. We are delighted to welcome our new CEO, **Hilton Watson**, and Publisher, **Lauren Mark**, both bringing fresh energy and vision to the road ahead.

At the same time, there's gratitude to our Founder, **Andrew Muswala**. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of building something that continues to evolve and inspire.

From here, we step into a theme that feels instinctively ours: beach and bush, with a strong sense of place in KwaZulu-Natal. In our cover story, *Where the Ocean Meets the Wild*, the rhythm of the Indian Ocean meets the stillness of the bush – a pairing that never loses its magic.

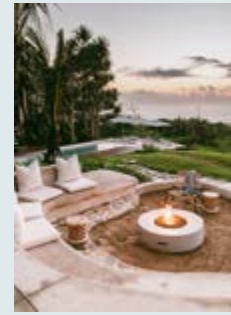
We journey further through the Kruger National Park in *A Journey through Time*, where the landscape holds stories far deeper than the tracks in the sand. Along the way, there are moments of contrast, from boutique escapes, the energy of Hoedspruit, and even the far-flung St Helena Island. Food, too, tells a story. *From farm-to-fork* at Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa to the thoughtful cuisine at Kruger Shalati, there's a real sense of connection to the land.

Threaded throughout are the stories that matter; conservation, community, and legacy. From the *SANParks Honorary Rangers* and the creation of *Nambiti Private Game Reserve*, to the *Makuleke* story and the wild beauty of *South Luangwa*, these are what give travel meaning.

As always, we invite you to look a little closer, travel a little deeper.

Here's to what's next.

Tessa



COVER

Beachside Bliss at
Sala Beach House
@Casey Pratt

FOUNDER

Andrew Muswala

PUBLISHER

Lauren Mark
lauren@travelsouthernafrica.co.za

CEO

Hilton Watson
hilton@travelsouthernafrica.co.za

EDITOR

Tessa Buhrmann
tessa@travelsouthernafrica.co.za

LAYOUT & ART DIRECTOR

Lyn Grandemange
lyn@travelsouthernafrica.co.za

ADVERTISING

advertising@travelsouthernafrica.co.za

SUBMISSIONS

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@travelsouthernafrica.co.za for consideration.

PRINTERS

Millennium Printers & Packaging

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © All rights for material appearing in this magazine belong to Elkat Publishing Pty Ltd and/or the individual contributors. No part of this magazine may be reproduced either without the written consent of the publishers or without due acknowledgement.

Come and write your story with Southern Africa's leading hospitality group. Enjoy home away from home comfort, exceptional quality and intuitive service with flair at every one of our distinctive destinations in South Africa, Africa, the Seychelles and the Middle East.

Discover our world at
southernsun.com

Experience life.



Southern Sun

Comment from our **CEO**



HILTON WATSON

A New Chapter

This edition marks more than a relaunch – it signals a clear step forward.

Over the past few years, the travel and hospitality landscape has evolved rapidly. Expectations are higher, audiences are more discerning, and the demand for quality, trust, and meaningful content has never been greater.

We've taken the time to listen – to our readers, our partners, and the industry. The result is a magazine that is sharper in its focus, stronger in its positioning, and committed to delivering real value.

Our vision is simple: to be a trusted platform for luxury travel and lifestyle, connecting exceptional brands with an audience that values experience, quality, and authenticity.

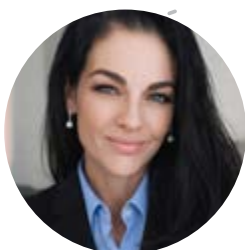
This is not just about showcasing destinations. It's about telling the right stories, building the right partnerships, and creating a platform that works for readers and advertisers alike.

We are proud to collaborate with some of the finest hotels, lodges, and brands across Southern Africa and beyond, and we thank our partners for their continued trust.

To our readers, welcome back.

Hilton

Introducing our **Publisher**



LAUREN MARK

A dynamic business leader spanning events, PR, media and strategic partnerships. Lauren operates at the intersection of lifestyle, hospitality and sport, she architects high-impact collaborations that drive visibility, cultural relevance and measurable commercial growth.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Claire Roadley

📍 @claireroadleytravels

Where the Ocean Meets the Wild – Pg 12

Hide & Peek – pg 64

Sarah Kingdom

📍 @sarah_kingdom_travels

Drifting above the Mara – Pg 82

Sharon Waugh

📍 @thesharonicles

Unique & Boutique – pg 48

David Rogers

📍 @davidrogerstravel

Finding Focus – Pg 74

Kim Barnett

📍 @jollyboys_backpackers

South Luangwa – Pg 86

Victoria Foord

📍 @robin_pope_safaris

South Luangwa – Pg 86

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

Namib Sky Balloon Safaris

📍 @namibsky

Namibia – Where Silence

Takes Flight - Pg 81

Wild About Hoedspruit

📍 @wildabouthoedspruit

Hoedspruit - Where Adventure,
Wildlife & Wellbeing Meet – Pg 61

Makumu Private Game Lodge

📍 @makumu_private_game_lodge

A place where Silence Speaks – pg 38

Where else but



Does logging off mean an
aperitif on the beach?



constancehotels.com

Contents

ISSUE 4: BEACH & BUSH

Cover Story:

Where the Ocean Meets
the Wild 12

Beach:

Diamonds Bijoux
Zanzibar 20

Bush:

Kruger National Park
A Journey through Time 26

Makumu – a place where
Silence Speaks 38

Travel with Purpose
at Cape Vulture Lodge 60

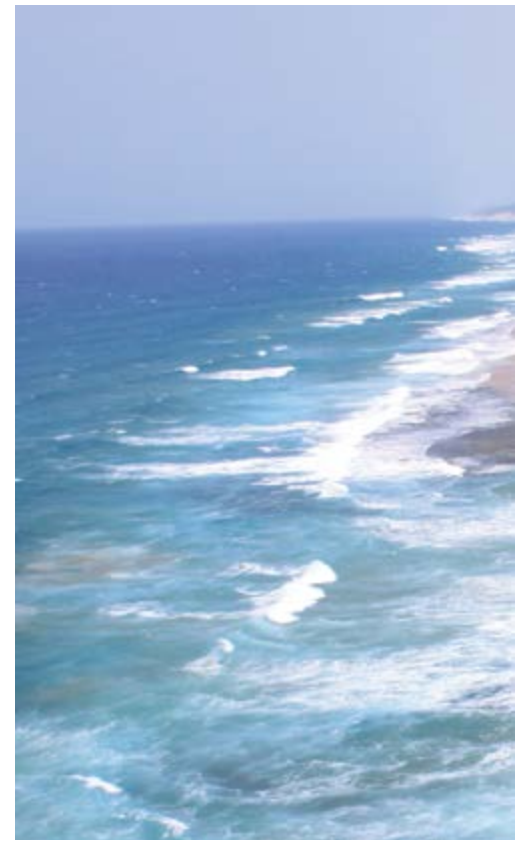
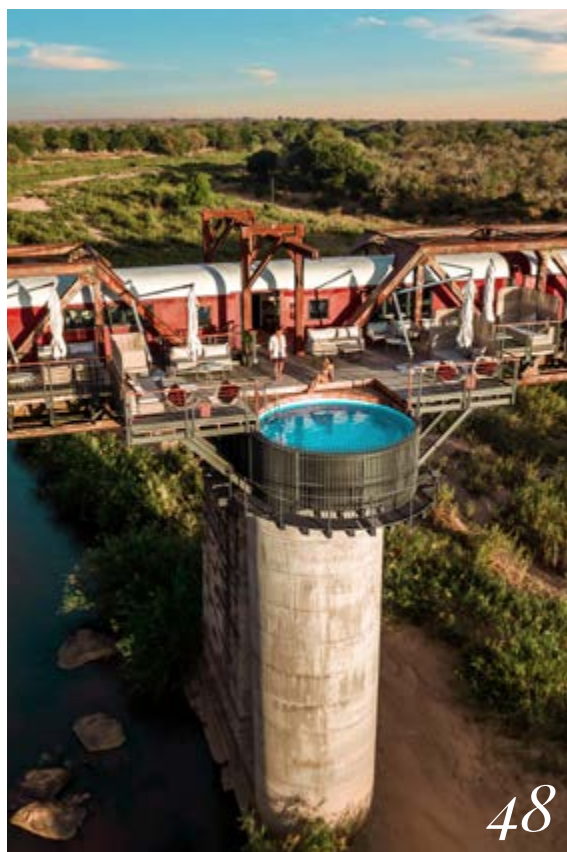
Nambiti – a place of Land,
Legacy and Livelihoods 68

Explore:

Unique & Boutique Hotels 48

Hoedspruit, where Adventure,
Wildlife & Wellbeing Meet 61

Floating through Silence 80





12



61



84



56

Travel:

Stories set in Stone 24

Sun City – the Heart of
African Leisure 43

On the Move –
St Helena Awaits 44

Cuisine:

Farm to Fork at Mhondoro
Safari Lodge & Villa 76

Inspired by Mother Nature
at Kruger Shalati 84

Conservation:

SANParks Honorary Rangers 40

South Luangwa 86

Community:

The Makuleke Story 56

Photography:

Hide & Peek 64

Finding Focus 74



BEACH AND BUSH PACKAGE





SIX NIGHTS IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Three nights at the iconic The Oyster Box
Three nights at mFulaWozi Wilderness Reserve

*From ocean views and oyster breakfasts to
Big Five encounters in untouched wilderness,
this seamless escape brings together
two extraordinary worlds –
with all transfers included and the freedom
to begin your journey at the coast or in the bush.*

THE EXPERIENCE...

BEACH

The Oyster Box

Sea-facing luxury, daily breakfast with oysters & sparkling wine,
a signature Curry Buffet, and effortless access
to Umhlanga's vibrant coastline.

BUSH

mFulaWozi Wilderness Reserve

A fully inclusive safari with twice-daily game drives,
all meals, and drinks – set in an intimate, private reserve.

CHOOSE YOUR STAY

Classic or Luxury Sea-Facing Rooms paired
with Mthembu or Biyela Lodge
Rates on request

SEAMLESS JOURNEY

All transfers included: Airport - Coast - Bush

15 March – 13 December 2026

RESERVATIONS - reservations@oysterbox.co.za



mFulaWozi
WILDERNESS Private Game Reserve



The Oyster Box

SO MUCH MORE. WITHOUT LIMITS. IN KWAZULU-NATAL

From the Indian Ocean's warm embrace to the untamed bushveld of Zululand — the Magical Zulu Kingdom throws open her gates. Proud host of Africa's Travel Indaba 2026. Ready for every traveller, every season, every kind of adventure.

A WELCOME FROM THE MAGICAL ZULU KINGDOM

Sawubona. Welcome to the Magical Zulu Kingdom - a province where the Indian Ocean laps beaches warmed by year-round sun, where the footprints of the Big Five cross ancient Zulu battlefields, and where the Drakensberg stands sentinel over some of the most generous hospitality on the continent. We are proud to be hosting Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 on Durban's Golden Mile; a homecoming of storytellers and a moment of enormous pride for our province. But KwaZulu-Natal does not reveal herself only to delegates. If you are reading this on the trade-show floor, consider it a shortlist. If you

are reading anywhere else, a lounge, an aeroplane, a hotel bedside, consider it an open invitation.

In a single morning you can feel the spray of the Indian Ocean on your skin, trace the footprints of a wild rhino through Zululand acacia, sip a sauvignon blanc against the cool green of the Midlands, and listen to the crack of Zulu praise poetry told around a fire older than memory. Nowhere else do beach, bush, battlefield, berg and boardroom sit so close together, or so beautifully.

To delegates, buyers and media, and to every traveller who has ever wondered what lies beyond the postcard, please regard the following pages as a first taste. A reason to arrive. A reason to return.

Siyanemukela. Welcome home.

BEACH. BUSH. AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.

Six exceptional addresses. Five of KwaZulu-Natal's seven tourism regions. One province without limits.

1.

THE OYSTER BOX | Umhlanga · EThekwin



TGCSA FIVE-STAR PREMIUM · RED CARNATION HOTEL COLLECTION · CONDÉ NAST TRAVELLER READERS' CHOICE

The grande dame of the Indian Ocean. Eighty-six ocean-facing rooms, suites and villas gaze toward the candy-striped Umhlanga lighthouse while white-gloved waiters pour afternoon tea in the Palm Court. One of only twenty-three properties in South Africa to hold TGCSA Five-Star Premium status, and the sole Durban hotel to do so, The Oyster Box pairs its legendary curry buffet with a cliff-carved spa and some of the finest service on the continent. Timeless, effortless, unforgettable.

2.

SALA BEACH HOUSE | Ballito · North Coast



TGCSA FIVE-STAR PREMIUM · BOOKING.COM 9.6/10 · A NORTH COAST EXCLUSIVE

Seven suites. One three-bedroom villa. Zero compromise. The first property on the Dolphin Coast to be awarded TGCSA Five-Star Premium status, Sala is the Italian-inflected answer to boutique beachside living- private, personalised and pouring directly onto a whispering Indian Ocean. Think sundowners on whitewashed terraces, oyster tastings for eight, and a staff-to-guest ratio that makes every arrival feel like a homecoming.

3.

BRAHMAN HILLS | Nottingham Road · KZN Midlands**SPA OF THE YEAR 2025 · RHS PARTNER GARDEN OF THE YEAR — OVERSEAS WINNER 2023**

Rolling hills, classically European gardens, an underground wine cellar. Forty-two rooms, suites and self-catering villas hidden across 200 hectares of Midlands Meander countryside. Dine twenty-four feet below ground at the Skyfall wine cellar, recover at the internationally awarded Healing Earth Spa, and stroll the only Royal Horticultural Society Partner Garden on the African continent. A masterclass in slow, restorative luxury - and the perfect foil to bush and beach.

4.

BABANANGO GAME RESERVE | Zululand · Battlefields Region**BIG FIVE · MALARIA-FREE · ECO-LOGIC GOLD AWARD FOR ECO-TOURISM & HOSPITALITY 2024**

A 20,000-hectare conservation miracle, painstakingly restored across ancestral Zulu land through a partnership between philanthropic investors and local communities. Madwaleni River Lodge and Valley Lodge offer tented luxury with an ethical backbone - rhino tracking on foot, deep Zulu cultural immersion, sleep-outs beneath celestial skies, and the unmistakable feeling of being on land that is giving more than it takes.

5.

PHINDA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE | Maputaland · Elephant Coast**&BEYOND FLAGSHIP · BIG FIVE · SEVEN DISTINCT ECOSYSTEMS · 436 BIRD SPECIES**

&Beyond's celebrated flagship - nearly 30,000 hectares of protected wilderness spanning rare sand forest, savannah, wetland and mountain. Six distinct lodges, from the glass-walled modernism of Phinda Forest to the clifftop drama of Phinda Rock, place guests at the beating heart of conservation: rhino notching, pangolin tagging, turtle tracking on the Indian Ocean beaches of iSimangaliso. Purpose-driven safari of the highest order.

6.

NAMBITI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE | Ladysmith · Battlefields Region**BIG FIVE · MALARIA-FREE · MULTIPLE TRIPADVISOR TRAVELERS' CHOICE LODGES**

Twenty-two thousand hectares of Big Five wilderness unfurling along the edge of the Thukela basin - a landscape where cheetah sprint across grassland and the ghosts of Anglo-Zulu battles linger in the hills. A collection of intimate five-star lodges, malaria-free year-round, combining collector's-edition game viewing with living history just beyond the gates. Quintessential KwaZulu-Natal: a safari with a story.

This is KwaZulu-Natal.

Come for Indaba. Come for the coast. Come for the bush, the battlefields, the berg. Stay for so much more.

www.visitkzn-sa.com · @VisitKZNSA

TOURISM FILM
KWAZULU-NATAL



Where the Ocean meets the Wild

BEACH AND BUSH ADVENTURES IN KWAZULU-NATAL

WORDS

CLAIRE ROADLEY

PICS SUPPLIED

There's a wonderful vibe in the early mornings along the Durban Promenade. Runners fall into step along the "Golden Mile" with sandy shores lapped by the warm Indian Ocean, cyclists glide past in easy rhythm, whilst surfers catch the waves. It's energetic, yes, but never hurried. And this is just a taster of what this incredibly diverse province has to offer!





*KZN is
definitely
less about
contrast,
and more
about flow.*

KwaZulu-Natal has long promised that elusive pairing of beach and bush, but what makes it stand apart is how naturally the two meet. I am also old enough to remember when the province was marketed as the 5B's – namely Bush, Beach, Berg, Battlefield and Buzz! More than two decades on, this winning combination of attractions, all within easy access, still rings true and calls holidaymakers back year after year.

Within a few hours' drive, the salty breeze softens into something drier and earthier. The rhythmic crash of waves makes way for beautiful birdsong as you journey north past sugar cane fields and forests until the golden fever trees (my absolute favourites!), signal that you are approaching Zululand with all its wildlife magic. KZN is definitely less about contrast, and more about flow.

Just north of the city, Umhlanga Rocks, Ballito and Shaka's Rock offer a more polished expression of the coast. Umhlanga's iconic lighthouse stands quietly above the shoreline, the beaches are

wide and inviting with golden, soft sand, glorious rock pools, and warm, almost bath-like ocean temperatures. Mornings stretch out over coffee with an ocean view; afternoons slip easily between beach walks and long, lingering lunches. It's an easy kind of luxury – that doesn't ask much of you at all.

And yet, even here, the pull inland is never far away. It might begin with a drive – the coastline gradually receding in the rearview mirror – or with the quiet anticipation of what lies beyond the dunes and coastal forests.

Pairings like The Oyster Box and the nearby wilderness of mFulaWozi Wilderness capture this beautifully. One is all old-world charm and coastal ease; the other, a return to something quieter, more elemental. Together, they form a conversation between comfort, wilderness and Zulu culture – a reminder that luxury, here, is as much about space and silence as it is about detail. And feeling.

Further up the coast, the road narrows and the landscape

begins to feel less curated. The coastal forests grow denser, the air more humid, and the ocean – when it appears again – feels wilder, less contained. This is the realm of iSimangaliso Wetland Park, a place defined as much by its ecological significance as by its quiet, immersive beauty.

At Thonga Beach Lodge, the experience is deliberately pared back. Wooden walkways wind through dune forest, opening onto a stretch of beach that feels almost entirely your own. I spent a few hours on their beach probably 15 years ago now and it remains till this day, the most beautiful, untouched beach I have ever seen.

Days are dictated by tides and light – snorkelling when the sea allows, long walks along the shore, the quiet thrill of spotting turtle tracks (seasonal) in the sand. It is a place that invites you to slow down, to notice, to listen.

And then, just inland, the bush begins again. Phinda Private Game Reserve is often described as one of South Africa's most diverse reserves, where one



moment you're moving through dense forest, the next you're out in open grassland. It is immersive, yes – but also deeply intentional, shaped by a long-standing commitment to conservation and community.

Taken together, Thonga and Phinda offer one of the most compelling beach-and-bush pairings in the province. But they are far from the only story.

Further north still, the landscape becomes more remote, and quieter still. Around Kosi Bay, the pace slows almost to a standstill. This is a place of interconnected lakes and traditional fish traps, where the rhythm of daily life is closely tied to the natural world. It's not a place that demands activity; it invites you simply to be there.

Not far from here, Tembe Elephant Park offers a Big Five safari experience that feels distinctly different. The sand forests are ancient, the roads soft underfoot, and the elephants – some of the largest tuskers in Africa – move through the landscape with a quiet authority. There is a sense, here, of stepping into something older, where it's less about spectacle, and more about presence.

And yet, for all its wildness, KwaZulu-Natal never loses sight of the coast.







It's an ambitious concept – one that brings together ocean and wilderness within a single, curated journey

Places like Sala Beach Lodge, tucked along the North Coast at Thompson's Bay, offer a different experience, that feels both contemporary and quietly restorative. There's an ease to it: mornings that begin with yoga sessions with the ocean stretching endlessly ahead, afternoons that drift between pool, spa and shoreline, and evenings softened by the steady hush of waves, best enjoyed with a cocktail at their fire pit. But what makes it particularly compelling is how easily it pairs with the bush, not as a fixed itinerary, but as either a starting point – or conclusion. Or even better, both!

And then there is what lies just ahead.

In July, Club Med is opening its first South African property along this very stretch of coastline – a beach resort paired with a dedicated safari lodge inland. It's a natural extension of what KwaZulu-Natal has always offered, but on a scale that signals something more. A globally recognised brand choosing to invest here speaks not only to the

strength of the destination, but to its growing relevance on the international stage.

It's an ambitious concept – one that brings together ocean and wilderness within a single, curated journey – but also a significant moment for the region. As the first all-inclusive Club Med resort in South Africa, its arrival signals a shift in how KwaZulu-Natal is positioned on the global stage.

But beyond that, its presence carries weight. It brings new visibility, new audiences, and a renewed sense of confidence in what KwaZulu-Natal has quietly been offering all along. Not just beautiful places, but meaningful, connected experiences.

And yet, even as new layers are added, the essence of KwaZulu-Natal remains unchanged. Undoubtedly, it has always felt to me like the most authentically African experience in South Africa! Where else can you enjoy the same mix of cultures – from eating bunny chows to walking ancient battlefields and exploring local Zulu villages?

There are other combinations, of course. The reefs of Sodwana Bay, where the story shifts beneath the surface. The easy energy of Ballito's coastline. The history and conservation legacy of Hluhluwe-iMfolozi. Each adds another layer, another perspective.

It would be remiss of me to not mention the South Coast too, where the beaches are breathtakingly beautiful, slightly wilder again, and yet very relaxed with numerous charming holiday-towns to choose from such as Amanzimtoti (my old stomping ground), Margate, Ramsgate, Marina Beach, Rocky Bay and Bazley Beach. I spent much of my own childhood camping and caravanning along this coastline – which is famous for its Blue Flag beach standards, acclaimed dive spots, family-friendly swimming – and delicious waffles! A great spot too to catch the annual sardine run!

But perhaps what defines this province most is not any single destination, or even any particular pairing, but the way it invites you to move between them.

This is a place where a morning can begin with the ocean at your feet and end beneath the Milky Way, with the sounds of the bush all around you. Where the journey from beach to bush feels instinctive – something that simply makes sense. With the added benefit of rich culture and history!

And somewhere along the way, without quite noticing when it happens, you realise that these aren't two separate experiences. They are part of the same story – one shaped by land and sea, by movement and stillness, by culture and community, and the quiet, enduring connection between them. KwaZulu-Natal won my heart many years ago and continues to call me back! Woza...



<https://visitkzn-sa.com/>

“

Your Exclusive Bush

Xscape

Awaits

”

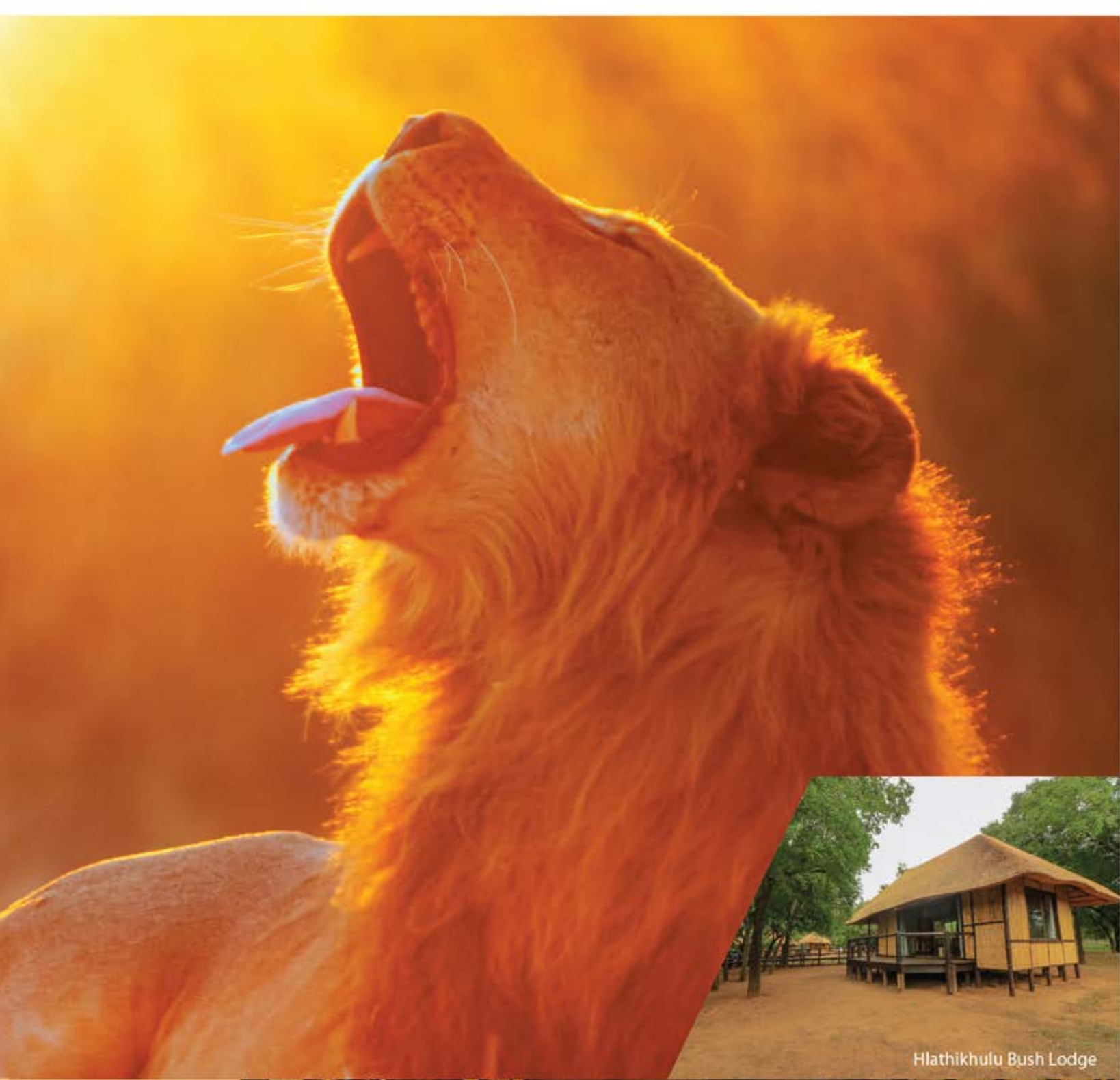


Mtwazi Bush lodge



One of Africa's oldest game reserves is as far away as the door of your chalet.
Comfortable living with the Big Five comes naturally here ...

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park



Hlathikhulu Bush Lodge



T: +27(0) 33 845 1000 E: bookings@kznwildlife.com
Online booking: bookings.kznwildlife.com Web: www.kznwildlife.com



"Your Ultimate Adventure Destination"

DIAMONDS
BIJOUX
*****L

WHERE YOU BELONG

An intimate escape shaped by natural beauty, considered spaces, and a warmth that feels entirely your own.



TREASURED MOMENTS IN ZANZIBAR

At Diamonds Bijoux, luxury is not a performance. It is a feeling, a quiet grace of Sultan-era architecture meeting the soft rhythm of the Indian Ocean. Here, we don't just welcome guests, we welcome you home. In this private sanctuary, every hand-carved detail and every sunset belongs entirely to you.

bijoux.diamondresorts.com

planhotel.com



REFINED SANCTUARY

From our 45-square-meter Deluxe rooms to the sprawling 140-square-meter Two Bedroom Villas, your space is designed for serenity. With private pools and panoramic ocean views, this is an understated luxury that breathes with the island.



A HOST'S WARMTH

Our service is personal, anticipatory, and genuinely warm. Whether it is your butler preparing a private dinner or the reception team greeting you by name, we ensure your stay is defined by ease and a true sense of discovery.



CULINARY ARTISTRY

Journey through five distinct dining experiences. From the authentic fire of the Nyama Choma Steak House to the intimate twists of HI-MI Asian Restaurant, every meal is a curated celebration of local soul and international refinement.



A string of pearls in the Indian Ocean.

A legendary beauty of 115 islands scattered between 4° and 10° south of the Equator like pearls in the western Indian Ocean's warm azure waters!

www.seychelles.com



Discover South Africa's Best Diamonds




**THE
DIAMOND
WORKS**
INSTITUTE

*"genius starts
great work,
craftsmanship
completes it"*

EXPERIENCE A SPARKLING TOUR

- ART OF DIAMOND CUTTING
- JEWELLERY MANUFACTURING
- TANZANITE BOUTIQUE
- OFFERED IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES

CAPE TOWN • STELLENBOSCH • FRANSCHHOEK • O.R. TAMBO • NAMIBIA

thediamondworks@tjd.co.za www.thediamondworks.co.za  



Stories Set in Stone

FROM ORIGIN TO ARTISTRY



Mark Gielgoumie
Gemologist

It began, as so many of South Africa's great stories do, with a child, a river, and a stone that shimmered just a little differently.

In 1867, along the banks of the Orange River, young Erasmus Jacobs picked up a curious pebble that would later be named the Eureka Diamond. Weighing 21.25 carats, it marked the first recorded diamond discovery in South Africa - and quietly set in motion a chain of events that would reshape the country's destiny. Within a few years, word of further finds sparked a diamond rush, drawing fortune seekers to the dusty plains of Kimberley. There, at Colesberg Kopje, thousands of hands carved out what would become the Big Hole, the largest hand-dug excavation in the world, and South Africa's place in global diamond history was secured.

The discoveries came quickly, and with increasing brilliance. In 1869, the Star of South Africa, an 83.5-carat gem, captured international attention and helped ignite a global fascination with the region's riches. Then, in 1905, came the most extraordinary find of all: the Cullinan Diamond. Unearthed at the Premier Mine near Pretoria, the rough stone weighed an astonishing 3,106 carats - the largest gem-quality diamond ever discovered.

Cut into several magnificent stones, including the Great Star of Africa, it remains one of the most celebrated diamonds in history.

These gems did more than dazzle. They built industries, shaped economies, and established South Africa as the heart of the diamond world. Companies like De Beers formalised mining and trade, while advances in cutting and grading elevated diamonds into enduring symbols of love, legacy, and status.

Yet behind every famous stone lies something less visible, but just as vital: human expertise.

For gemologist Mark Gielgoumie, diamonds were not part of some grand childhood plan. His journey began unexpectedly in Cape Town, as an art student who found himself assisting a



But it is in the finer details that the experience truly resonates.

jewellery designer. What started as chance soon became calling. Drawn equally to the artistry and the science of gemstones, he followed his curiosity across continents, from design studios to international diamond centres, eventually qualifying as a Graduate Gemologist through the Gemological Institute of America.

Today, his work at The Diamond Works brings that global experience back to South African soil, connecting modern craftsmanship with a legacy that stretches back over a century.

Founded in 2001, The Diamond Works in Cape Town offers far more than a retail space - it is an immersive window into the world of diamonds. Here, the journey from carbon to brilliance is brought vividly to life. Visitors are guided through the origins of diamonds, formed billions of years ago under immense pressure deep within the Earth, before being carried to the surface through volcanic forces.

But it is in the finer details that the experience truly resonates.

Watching a diamond being cut is a quietly mesmerising process. Under the steady hand of a master craftsman, a rough, unassuming stone

begins to reveal its inner fire. It is here that Mark's influence is most keenly felt, through the emphasis on precision, integrity, and understanding. He speaks of each diamond as having its own character, its own "DNA", shaped by time, geology, and the subtleties of its formation.

Through this lens, the familiar Four Cs - cut, clarity, carat, and colour - become more than grading criteria; they form a universal language through which each diamond's unique characteristics are understood and communicated.

Importantly, The Diamond Works experience also speaks to the modern story of diamonds, one that goes beyond beauty to responsibility. The Diamond Works prides itself on promoting ethical sourcing and sustainable practices within the industry. Visitors gain insight into how responsibly sourced diamonds support local communities, contribute to fair labour practices, and minimise environmental impact. It is a commitment that recognises the broader journey of each stone, not only from deep within the Earth, but through the hands and lives it touches along the way, ultimately contributing to

a brighter future for social and environmental sustainability in Africa.

The Diamond Works experience invites visitors to engage with every layer of this story. It deepens one's appreciation not only for the rarity and beauty of diamonds, but for the extraordinary journey each one has taken - from a riverbank discovery in the 19th century to a carefully curated gem in the present day.

And it is this understanding that transforms the act of owning a diamond. Because beyond the sparkle lies something far more meaningful: a connection to history, to craftsmanship, and to the Earth itself. From the Eureka Diamond to the Cullinan, from the dust of Kimberley to the expertise of modern gemologists, each stone carries a narrative that is both ancient and deeply human.

At The Diamond Works, that narrative is not only told, but also experienced.

And in that moment of understanding, a diamond becomes more than something you wear. It becomes something you truly know.



**THE
DIAMOND
WORKS**
INSTITUTE

"genius starts great work, craftsmanship completes it"

thediamondworks@tjd.co.za
www.thediamondworks.co.za

TheDiamondWorks  





Kruger National Park

A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME, WILDERNESS AND COMMUNITY

WORDS

TESSA BUHRMANN

PICS

SUPPLIED / SOURCED

There's a moment that happens every time I return to the Kruger National Park. A moment when the tar gives way to bushveld road, when mopane and marula narrow around the vehicle, when heat shimmers on the horizon and when the vastness of this ancient wilderness stirs something deep inside. It's a reminder that Kruger isn't simply a park. It is a living, breathing, evolving landscape of people, wildlife and memory – some of its story's centuries old, others written in the dust of the next game drive.

This north-to-south journey through Kruger became not just

an itinerary, but a tapestry of history, conservation, community, and connection. Kruger is more than a destination. It is a story still unfolding.

Where It All Began: A Legacy of Protection

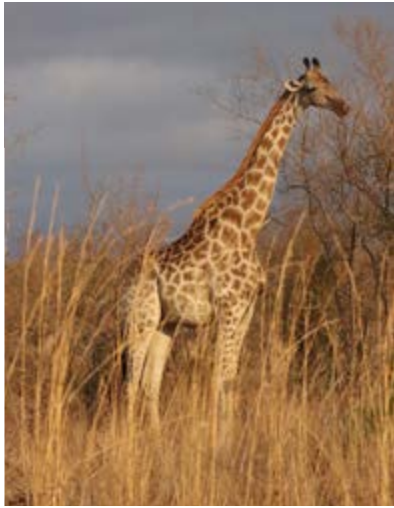
In 1898, President Paul Kruger proclaimed the Sabie Game Reserve, alarmed that uncontrolled hunting was pushing wildlife toward extinction in the Lowveld. It was a radical act of foresight, protecting animals not for sport, but for posterity.

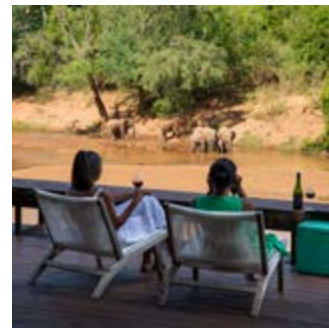
Under the stewardship of James Stevenson-Hamilton and, later,

SANParks, that fragile reserve grew into one of the world's most celebrated protected landscapes. Today, nearly two million hectares of wilderness form the core of what we know as the Kruger National Park – the ecological heart of the Greater Kruger.

Yet this history is not only about wardens and wildlife. It is also about ancient settlements, sacred landscapes and communities whose roots are deeply entwined with this land.

Nowhere is that more evident than in the far north.





The landscape feels different here. Older. Softer. Wiser.

PAFURI: RIVERS, BAOBABS AND THE MAKULEKE STORY

After entering at Punda Maria Gate, we travelled north to Pafuri – that wild, almost mythical corner of Kruger where the Luvuvhu River curves through fever tree forests and baobabs rise like ancient guardians.

Three marvellous days at Return Africa's Pafuri Tented Camp immersed us in the Makuleke Contractual National Park, land returned to its rightful custodians in 1998 after forced removals during apartheid.

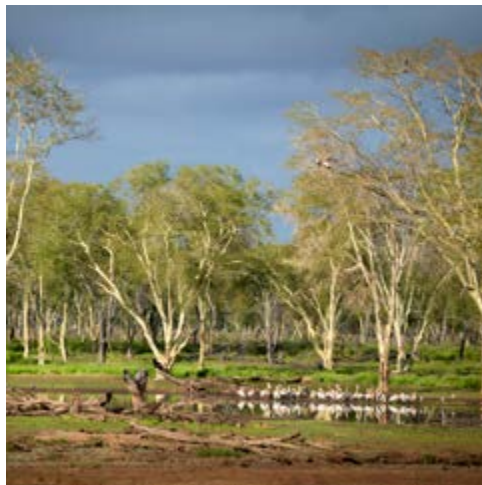
The landscape feels different here. Older. Softer. Wiser.

Ochre-tinged mopane groves give way to riverine forest where nyala slip through shadows and

elephants move silently toward the water. Dawn is heralded not with lion roars – though they are never far – but with birdsong.

Pafuri is one of South Africa's premier birding destinations. Pel's fishing owl, racket-tailed roller, African broadbill, trumpeter hornbill, to name but a few. Even as a casual birder, I found myself scanning treetops with intent, binoculars close at hand.

We explored the ancient archaeological site of Thulamela – a 13th-century stone-walled kingdom perched high above the Luvuvhu River. Walking among its restored walls with Hlahla, our Makuleke guide, we heard stories of trade routes linking this hilltop



settlement to Great Zimbabwe and distant Indian Ocean markets. Gold beads and porcelain fragments speak of a sophisticated civilisation long before colonial lines were drawn on maps.

Later, sundowners in the fever tree forest turned the world gold. Another morning, coffee at Lanner Gorge offered sweeping views over the river valley below – eagles soaring above and elephants threading through green ribbons of vegetation.

When the Makuleke people regained their land, they chose conservation over commercial development.

Today, tourism revenue supports employment, education and community upliftment. It is a model proving that heritage, wildlife and human wellbeing can coexist – and thrive – together. (Read the full story on page 56)

Watching elephants cross the river at dawn, it felt as though the very origins of the Kruger story were alive before us.



THE SOUL OF THE PARK: SANPARKS REST CAMPS

Behind these camps lies serious conservation work.

From Pafuri, we began the long meander south, stopping briefly at Crooks Corner, where the Luvuvhu meets the Limpopo near the borders of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. There is something quietly thrilling about standing at that geographic meeting point.

Then it was down through Punda Maria, Shingwedzi and Olifants, each a SANParks camp with its own personality.

These rest camps are the democratic heart of Kruger. Relatively affordable, unpretentious and deeply nostalgic, they offer rondavels, chalets, campsites, restaurants and surprisingly well-stocked shops. Braais smoke at dusk. Children compare wildlife sightings. Retired couples sip coffee overlooking waterholes.

A stop at the Tropic of Capricorn marker felt obligatory. Breakfast at Mopani Camp overlooking Pioneer Dam was a highlight – definitely added to our future stay list. Letaba Camp's Elephant Environmental Education Centre impressed us enormously, showcasing research and conservation efforts dedicated to Kruger's iconic giants.

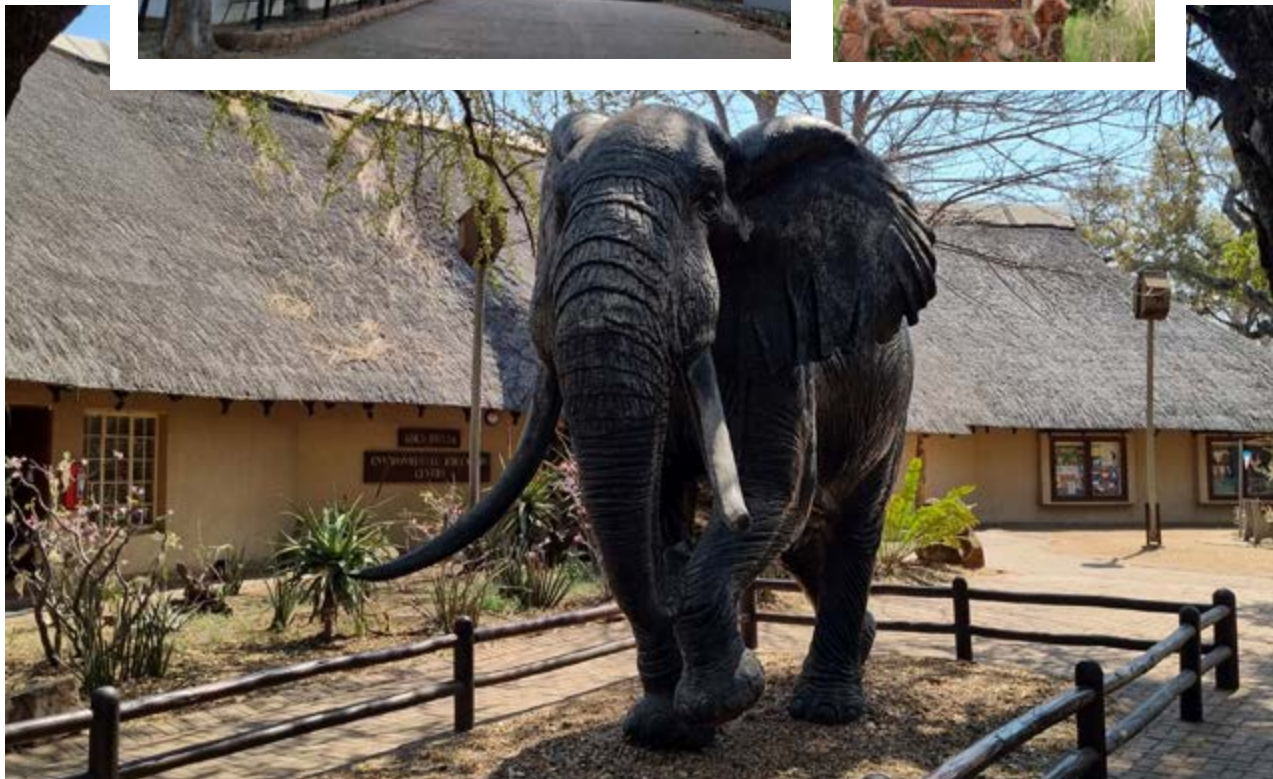
Wildlife sightings unfolded generously: elephants bathing, drinking, mud-wallowing and eating – endlessly eating; a buffalo herd numbering in the hundreds; solitary dagga boys; giraffe, zebra and impala in abundance. No cats initially – until three young male lions appeared as we departed Olifants at sunrise.

The mopane trees were extraordinary – from scrubby

shrubs to tall, stately specimens with leaves ranging from burnt orange to golden yellow. My hubby gently asked how many sunset photos one actually needs. The answer, clearly, is always one more.

Behind these camps lies serious conservation work. SANParks' anti-poaching units patrol tirelessly. Ecologists monitor elephant impacts and predator dynamics. Fire is managed scientifically. Water systems are balanced carefully. Environmental education programmes nurture the next generation of conservationists.

Here, conservation belongs to everyone.



KRUGER UNTAMED: WILDERNESS REIMAGINED

If the rest camps ground you in Kruger's shared history, Kruger Untamed draws you somewhere far more personal, the quiet, unfiltered presence of the bush itself. This we experienced in abundance as our journey continued at the two Kruger Untamed camps – Satara Plains Camp, followed by Tshokwane River Camp.

At its core, Kruger Untamed feels like a quiet return to how safari should be, uncomplicated, respectful, and deeply connected to the land. Working in close partnership with SANParks, everything is done with a lightness of touch. The camps rise with the winter season and disappear again without a trace, as though they were never there at all. There's something reassuring in that impermanence,

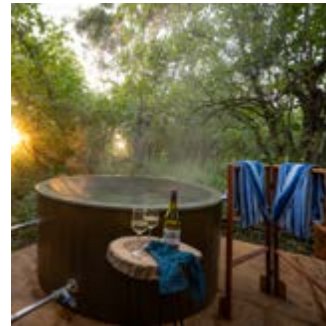
it shifts your mindset. You're not arriving somewhere built for you; you're stepping, briefly, into a space that belongs entirely to the wilderness.

What stayed with me most was how intentional it all felt. There's no excess here, no sense of overindulgence, just thoughtful simplicity. Water is used carefully, power is minimal, and the focus is firmly on experience rather than comfort for comfort's sake. And yet, you never feel as though you're going without. Instead, your attention is drawn to what really matters: the feel of the earth underfoot, the stories carried in the sand, the privilege of time spent, being present, in the bush.

It's also about slowing things down, spending more time

walking and learning, which shifts the emphasis entirely. You're not chasing sightings or ticking off a list; you're paying attention, asking questions, beginning to understand the rhythm of a place like Kruger in a far more meaningful way. In a landscape where safari can so easily become polished and predictable, Kruger Untamed feels honest. And that, for me, is its greatest luxury.





Seeing giraffe, warthog and elephants on foot shifts your entire perspective.

At **Satara Plains Camp**, the camp itself felt as though it had simply appeared, canvas tents tucked beneath trees, barely disturbing the surrounding grassland. We made our way to our tented suite, set beneath trees with expansive views of the grassland. Eco-loos, bucket showers, lantern-lit dinners and wonderful food prepared by warm, attentive staff creates an atmosphere that feels both simple and indulgent.

The highlight, though, was the walking.

We woke early, and coffee in hand, I enjoyed the soft morning light before stepping straight into the bush. Walking here is something else entirely. Without the safety of a vehicle, everything feels closer, the senses heightened. You notice the small things – the imprint of hooves in the sand, the way a broken twig

tells of something passing in the night, the sudden silence when birds sense movement. It's not about what you see as much as what you begin to understand.

Seeing giraffe, warthog and elephants on foot shifts your entire perspective. Watching a breeding herd of elephants move slowly through the bush is quietly thrilling, there's an undeniable surge of adrenaline in their closeness, and yet, in the steady, assured presence of our guides, I wasn't fearful. Instead, the moment was something far more special: one of complete trust, and absolute awe.

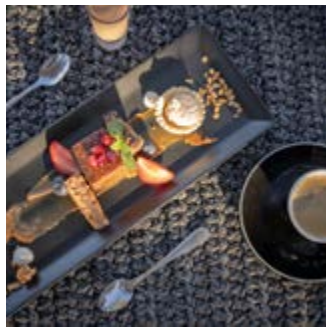
Our experience highlights that walking safaris are less about chasing the Big Five and more about understanding the details – spoor pressed into sand, middens, scat, broken twigs, alarm calls from birds. The

bush becomes a living textbook, interpreted by passionate guides.

Back in camp, the simplicity felt quietly indulgent. A bucket shower, heated by a donkey boiler, became less about necessity and more about ritual, what's been done in the bush for centuries. The smell of the fire, the warmth of the water, the cool air beyond the canvas. Dinner was served under the stars, generous and unexpectedly refined, with laughter shared easily between guests and staff. There's something about these kinds of places that dissolves formality. One night there felt impossibly short.



Tshokwane River Camp had a different energy altogether. Set along a dry riverbed beneath towering trees, it felt wilder, a little more untamed. The sand was alive with stories – buffalo tracks layered over one another, evidence of a herd that must have moved through in great number. You could almost feel their presence lingering.

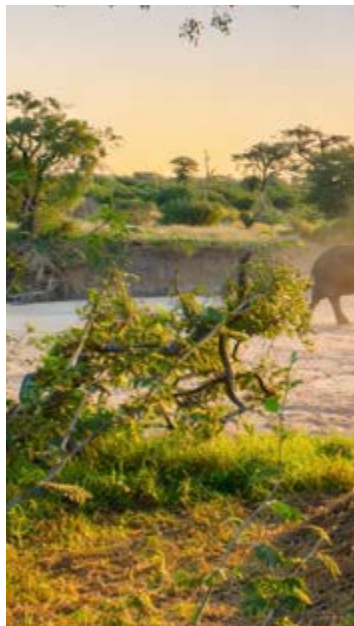


I chose to walk again the following morning, drawn back to that slower, more intimate way of being in the bush. There's a stillness at that hour that settles into you, the kind that stays long after you've left. Meanwhile, my hubby headed out on a drive and returned brimming with stories, his version of a "best

of five" delivered with much enthusiasm: one secretary bird, 'two' many elephants, three cheetah, four lions and five Southern ground hornbills.

But it was the late afternoons that stayed with me most. Once the self-drive vehicles had made their way back to camp, we remained. There's a shift that happens; the bush seems to exhale as the roads become deserted. The light softens, and you feel, briefly, if only for the evening, that you have Kruger all to yourself. We stopped for sundowners beneath a perfectly chosen tree, sipping gin and tonics as the sun slipped below the horizon. It's the kind of moment that asks nothing of you except to be present.

Kruger Untamed, for me, wasn't about luxury in the traditional sense. It was something quieter, more meaningful. Canvas walls, starlit dinners, footsteps on sand. And the rare privilege of experiencing Kruger not just as a place to visit, but as one you move through, slowly and deliberately.





A BRIDGE BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT: KRUGER SHALATI

From wilderness simplicity to historic indulgence – a night aboard Kruger Shalati’s Train on the Bridge felt like stepping into a cinematic dream. There’s something quietly surreal about sleeping on a train that never moves, yet feels so deeply connected to the rhythm of the bush.

Permanently stationed on the old Selati Bridge above the Sabie River, the refurbished carriages are an elegant blend of nostalgia and contemporary luxury. Our glass-walled suite opened the wilderness right into the room; from bed, we watched elephants amble down to drink, their reflections rippling in the water below. The pool, suspended over

the river, felt almost improbable – as if you were floating above a world of hippos and crocodiles going about their ancient routines.

Our afternoon game drive delivered a leopard sighting complete with “traffic,” but thanks to our elevated vantage point we watched as she fed on the impala she had hoisted into a tree, later draping herself elegantly along a branch in classic leopard pose.

Sundowners on the high level bridge rivalled the sighting – the echo of baboons, the low chorus of hippos, the distant trumpet of elephants. After the crowds returned to their camps, the



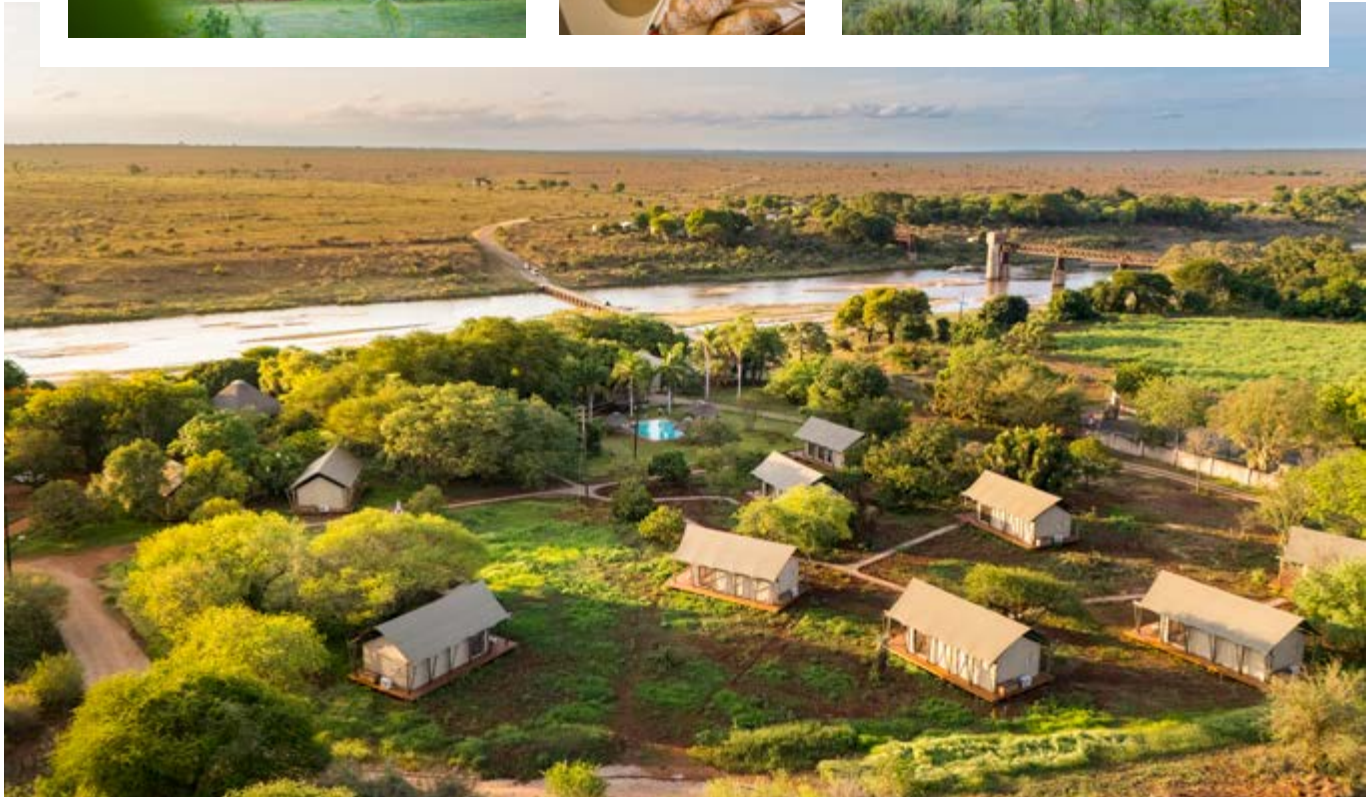
bridge felt ours alone. After a restful night, we chose a slow morning, sipping coffee in our suite as the sun rose, then exploring the engineering marvel of the historic steel girders. If only they could speak.

Chef Vusi and his team produced exquisite dishes – sophisticated takes on traditional flavours, beautifully plated. Sommelier Tinashe poured thoughtfully selected wines. Later, Chef introduced us to Mr Philemon in his garden, where fresh beetroot and edible flowers destined for dinner were grown metres from the kitchen. (Read the full story on page 84)

Manager Justice Mutshinya spoke proudly of staff recruited from nearby communities and students receiving hands-on hospitality training. Mzwandile, once in retail, now thrives as a waiter. Student housekeeper Glad posed shyly for a photograph.

Luxury here is layered, on purpose, and with purpose.





It felt as though we were still in Kruger, yet with the freedom to depart before sunrise if we wished.

ELEPHANT WALK: A GENTLE FAREWELL

Our journey ended just outside Crocodile Bridge Gate at Elephant Walk Tented Camp – newly opened, not quite finished at the time, but already welcoming guests warmly. Shortly after our arrival, a small herd of elephants crossed the Crocodile River, one of many sightings during our two-night stay.

The location is ideal: the perfect first stop if entering Kruger from the south, with no stress about racing the gate before closing time – or if you need to leave for home before Kruger's gates open. Our spacious luxury tent featured double basins

with excellent lighting (rarely a given!), generous hanging space, separate loo, plush bed, abundant plug points and both ceiling fan and aircon. Bliss in the Lowveld heat. The deck offered front-row seats to the river's theatre.

Two daily game drives were included – a treat after many self-drive days. Guide Simon was knowledgeable and attentive, happily stopping for birds and beautiful trees as enthusiastically as for predators. Over two days we saw elephants, giraffe, buffalo, two cheetah brothers and a leopard. A spotted hyena loped through the

veld. Southern ground hornbills strutted solemnly. A bateleur eagle tore into what appeared to be a slender mongoose.

Unbeknownst to us, three lions passed along the riverbank during dinner – captured on camera – perhaps following the impala herd we'd glimpsed after dark. A reason to return.

It felt as though we were still in Kruger, yet with the freedom to depart before sunrise if we wished.

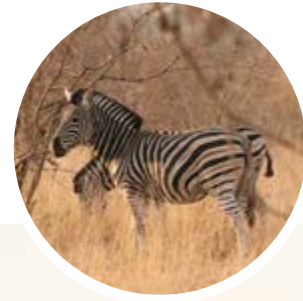


What binds all of this together is the Greater Kruger – an unfenced ecosystem where private reserves and national park share wildlife corridors. Elephants move freely between landscapes. Wild dogs cross invisible boundaries. Conservation here is collaborative, not isolated.

From Makuleke stewardship in the north to SANParks research units, from seasonal wilderness camps to community-supported luxury lodges – Kruger’s strength lies in partnership and cooperation.

And as we drove out, I realised once again that Kruger cannot be reduced to a checklist of sightings, it’s a shared commitment to protect something larger than ourselves.

And every time we leave, we know we will return - because in Kruger, you do not simply visit, you become part of the story.



WHERE TO STAY:



Pafuri Camp by Return Africa

<https://returnafrica.com/pafuri-collection/pafuri-camp/>

SANParks rest camps

<https://www.sanparks.org/parks/kruger>

Kruger Untamed

<https://krugeruntamed.com/>

Kruger Shalati

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

Elephant Walk Tented Camp

<https://elephantwalk.africa/elephant-walk-tented-camp/>



A Place where Silence Speaks

MORE THAN A DESTINATION, A LASTING FEELING

WORDS / PICS
MAKUMU PRIVATE
GAME LODGE

Set within the untouched wilderness of South Africa's Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, part of the Greater Kruger region, Makumu Private Game Lodge offers a safari experience that is both intimate and deeply considered. Rather than focusing on excess, Makumu centres on space, tranquillity, and the rare opportunity to reconnect with nature in its purest form.

Makumu, meaning "endless view" in Xitsonga, lives up to its name with sweeping vistas across open plains and ancient riverbeds where wildlife moves freely and undisturbed. The lodge is deliberately small, with only a select number of

open-plan suites, each drawing inspiration from Zulu, Bushman, and Ndebele cultural elements. This thoughtful design approach creates a space that feels both authentic and refined, blending natural textures with modern comfort. Private decks, outdoor showers, and freestanding bathtubs positioned by candlelight allow guests to experience the surrounding wilderness without interruption.

Life at Makumu follows the natural rhythm of the bush. Early mornings begin with game drives as the reserve awakens, while evenings bring another opportunity to encounter Africa's iconic wildlife under changing light. Between these moments,

guests are encouraged to slow down – whether through guided bush walks or simply spending time in quiet observation. It is in these unstructured moments that the true essence of Makumu reveals itself.

As the sun sets, the lodge transforms. Softly lit by the glow of hundreds of candles, the atmosphere becomes calm and reflective, creating a sense of quiet connection to both the surroundings and oneself. Evenings are unhurried, often spent beneath vast star-filled skies, where the sounds of the bush replace the noise of everyday life.

One of Makumu's most distinctive features is its



underground photographic bunker, positioned at a frequently visited waterhole. This unique space offers a rare, eye-level perspective of wildlife, allowing for close, respectful encounters that feel both powerful and unobtrusive. It is an experience that leaves a lasting impression, whether viewed through a camera lens or simply with the naked eye.

Makumu is suited to travellers who seek more than a traditional safari. It appeals to those who value authenticity, stillness, and meaningful connection. Here, the experience is not defined by

luxury in the conventional sense, but by the depth of feeling it creates. Makumu is not just a place to visit – it is something to be felt, remembered, and carried with you long after you leave.



- 📞 +27 87 057 4512
- ✉️ reservations@makumu.com
- 🌐 <https://www.makumu.com/>





L-R: Heinrich Smit, Remco van Aalst & Riaan Beekman

SANParks *Honorary Rangers* IN KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

“ *The SANParks Honorary Rangers is a registered non-profit whose members freely give their time, skills and resources.* ”

In conversation with SANParks Honorary Rangers West Rand Region – Riaan Beekman (Forensic Accountant), Heinrich Smit (COO – Data Management Company), Andy Branfield (Medical Doctor & Sports & Exercise Physician), Remco van Aalst (Indirect Tax Consultant).

Few visitors to Kruger National Park realise how much of the work behind the scenes is supported by a dedicated volunteer network. The SANParks Honorary Rangers is a registered non-profit whose members freely give their time, skills and resources to support South African National Parks. In Kruger – the flagship of the system – their contribution is both practical and deeply human.

Working alongside park management, Honorary Rangers raise funds for essential equipment including field vehicles, anti-poaching gear and specialised wildlife protection technology.

They also support infrastructure upgrades, environmental education initiatives and improvements to staff facilities.

Their involvement, however, goes well beyond fundraising with many members playing an active supporting role. Within their ranks are IT specialists, engineers, doctors, accountants and legal professionals who donate skills that SANParks could seldom afford to outsource. Collectively, SANParks Honorary Rangers contributes millions of rands annually in funding, volunteer hours and specialist knowledge.

Conservation is also about People

While anti-poaching often dominates public perception, the organisation emphasises that conservation success depends equally on people. Through Project Embrace, SANParks Honorary Rangers provides socio-economic support to park staff and neighbouring communities – from accommodation upgrades and solar installations to school

and family assistance. By enabling local families to experience Kruger firsthand through sponsored visits, the programme fosters shared ownership and strengthens long-term conservation outcomes.

Stepping in During Crisis

The value of the organisation becomes especially evident in times of crisis. Following the devastating floods that impacted Kruger, Honorary Rangers moved quickly to support staff who remained on duty despite damaged infrastructure and disrupted services. Volunteers coordinated food deliveries, drinking water and essential supplies to rangers stationed in remote areas, ensuring they could continue their work under extremely challenging conditions.

Beyond immediate relief efforts, SANParks Honorary Rangers members are actively

involved in the significant clean-up operations required in the aftermath of the floods. From clearing debris to assisting with restoring facilities, their presence providing both practical help and moral support.

Support the
Kruger Flood
2026 Fund here:



The Birding Weekends: Access, Science and Connection

Among the Honorary Rangers' longest-running initiatives are their fundraising birding weekends, now more than 26 years strong. Originally created to attract visitors during quieter months, these events have evolved into flagship conservation fundraisers and citizen-science platforms.

Kruger is home to more than 500 recorded bird species, making it one of Africa's premier birding destinations.



L-R: Den Nhamuche, Riaan Beekman, Heinrich Smit, Andy Branfield, Remco va Aalst & Pat Mabaso

During these weekends, participants explore diverse habitats, sometimes gaining access to areas not ordinarily open to the public. Experiences range from relaxed learning opportunities to the well-known "Punda Extreme," a pre-dawn-to-evening marathon for dedicated birders.

As guests on a recent Birding Weekend shared: *"we arrived feeling slightly intimidated but soon found ourselves encouraged by the enthusiasm and generosity of experienced birders. By the end of the*

weekend, our "lifers" list had grown – along with a newfound confidence and excitement to keep binoculars close and continue learning."

Importantly, sightings recorded during these events are uploaded via the BirdLasser app to the South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) at the University of Cape Town, contributing valuable data for long-term species monitoring and conservation planning.

Beyond fundraising and data collection, the weekends foster meaningful connection. Field

rangers – rarely in the spotlight – share insights into their daily realities, and guests gain a deeper understanding of the dedication required to protect a wilderness as vast as Kruger.

At its core, the SANParks Honorary Rangers organisation is driven by passion – not by what members receive, but by what they give. That spirit of service continues to play a quiet yet powerful role in safeguarding the future of Kruger National Park.

For more info - <https://www.sanparksvolunteers.org/>



KRUGER NATIONAL PARK BIRDING WEEKENDS 2027 – BOOKINGS NOW OPEN



Join the SANParks Honorary Rangers (West Rand Region) in Kruger National Park between mid-January and mid-March 2027 for a two- or three-night Birding Weekend. Explore the park's exceptional avian diversity, contribute to meaningful conservation projects and be part of a community united by a shared love for the wild.

Contact: Joan at westrandbirders@gmail.com

*Above:
Team photo from
the 2026 Birding Weekend
at Pretoriuskop*



Sun City

The Heart of African Leisure

Few destinations capture the spirit of play and possibility like Sun City. Nestled in the Pilanesberg, just two hours from Johannesburg, this legendary resort remains South Africa's ultimate all-in-one escape where adventure, luxury and family fun collide under endless blue skies.

By day, the options are limitless. Drift along the lazy river at the Valley of Waves, tee off on championship golf courses, or explore the nearby Big Five Pilanesberg reserve. Then, as evening falls, the resort transforms: glittering lights, fine dining, world-class entertainment, and the unmistakable buzz of possibility in the air.

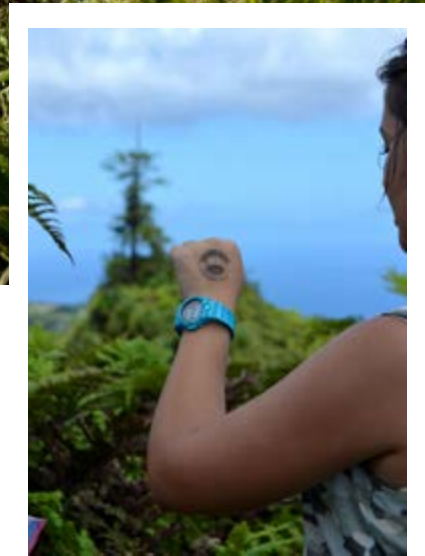
At its heart lies The Palace of the Lost City, an icon of African grandeur where luxury knows no limits. Every detail, from the mosaic floors to the palm-framed pools, invites you to indulge, explore and rediscover wonder.

Whether you're planning a romantic getaway, a family holiday, or a corporate retreat that feels like a reward, Sun City delivers it all. It's a world within a resort, a destination that keeps reinventing itself and never loses its magic.

Because at Sun City, every sunrise brings a new adventure, and every sunset, another story to tell.



- ① +27 14 557 1000
- ✉ sctyres@suninternational.com
- 🌐 www.suninternational.com/sun-city/



On the Move IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE – *St Helena Awaits*

There's something about St Helena Island that calls to those who like to move – not just to see a place, but to feel it underfoot, in the lungs, and in legs. It's an island shaped by time and volcanic force, where the landscape rises and falls dramatically, and where every path seems to promise both a view and a story.

Here, one quickly discovers that the best way to understand St Helena is to walk it.

The island's much-loved Post Box Walks – 25 in total – have long been a quiet invitation to explore. Some wind along rugged coastal edges, the vast South Atlantic stretching endlessly beyond; others lead inland through lush highlands and fragile ecosystems, where birdlife flits between pockets of green. On one walk, history

feels close enough to touch near Longwood House, where Napoleon Bonaparte spent his final years in exile. On another, the remnants of East India Company fortifications hint at the island's strategic past.

Now, these routes feel more accessible than ever. With the Post Box Walks added to the Outdooractive app, there's a reassuring sense of freedom – trails are mapped, downloadable, and ready to guide you even when you're blissfully off-grid. And out here, that matters.

Of course, not all movement on St Helena is gentle. There's the lung-burn of Jacob's Ladder – all 699 steps of it – climbing sharply from Jamestown to Ladder Hill Fort. It's the kind of challenge that leaves your calves aching and your spirit soaring, especially when you turn around to see the town fall away beneath you.

And for those who prefer their challenges measured in kilometres rather than steps, the World's Most Remote Marathon offers something truly extraordinary. Starting at Plantation House, home to Jonathan – the world's oldest living land animal – the route winds through the ever-changing landscape that the changes in elevation bring. There are no crowds here, no city noise – just the rhythm of your breath, the crunch beneath your shoes, and views that seem to stretch forever.

Whether you're hiking, running, swimming, or simply wandering, St Helena doesn't just reward effort – it deepens it.

Airlink operates weekly flights between Johannesburg and Jamestown, with additional, seasonal flights operating from Cape Town between December and March each year. For more information, visit www.flyairlink.com.



Enter the World's
Most Remote
Marathon



St Helena Island[®]
A breath of fresh air

Conquer the trails of St Helena

St Helena's iconic Post Box Walks are your gateway to a world of raw, untamed nature. Scale jagged volcanic ridges, venture into ancient forests, and conquer trails that redefine adventure. With 25 unique routes to discover, how many can you complete?

Keep your adrenaline pumping for the first World's Most Remote Marathon on 28 February 2027. This legendary course carves a path through history and leads you from lush green highlands down to the rugged, sun-bronzed shore of Jamestown.

Whether you are commanding the trails or training for the ultimate endurance test, the island is your arena.

The terrain is set. The challenge is yours. Are you ready?



sthelenatourism.com

Explore St Helena
with Live the Journey

YOUR SOUTH AFRICAN ESCAPE

Sea, City & Safari

© Morukuru Family®



Morukuru Beach Lodge | Morukuru Ocean House
De Hoop Nature Reserve, Western Cape



AtholPlace Hotel & Villa
Sandton, Johannesburg



Morukuru Farm House | Morukuru River House | Morukuru Owner's House
Madikwe Game Reserve, North West Province

morukuru.com | reservations@morukuru.com

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



Unique & Boutique

WESTERN CAPE HOTELS WORTH TRAVELLING FOR

WORDS SHARON WAUGH
PICS SUPPLIED

The Western Cape is home to no shortage of world-class hotels. In order to stand out, some hoteliers have taken a particularly creative approach to architecture, décor and overall concept. While many travellers gravitate towards the familiar and traditional, there are those of us who seek the novel, the unusual and the unexpected.

If you're looking for something more than just a place to sleep, here are four of the most charmingly quirky boutique hotels from across the region.



THE GRAND DADDY BOUTIQUE HOTEL

Normally, I am not one for camping, or even 'glamping', but there are times when I will make an exception. One of those times is when you have to take an antique elevator to reach your campsite... or rather trailer park... on an inner-city rooftop.

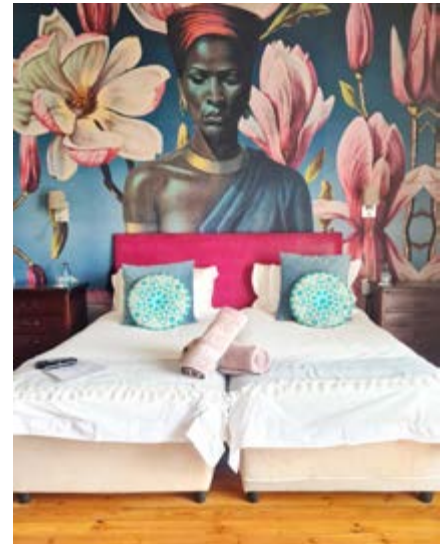
In the centre of Cape Town is a hotel housed in a historical hotel building that dates back to 1895. The original elevator is now the oldest working elevator in Cape Town and possibly the whole of South Africa.

You might expect a building with so much history to be restored to its former glory and operate as a heritage hotel. Instead, the current iteration is modern and full of character. Twenty-five rooms are boldly decorated with striking patterns, bright colours and a proudly South African aesthetic. There are also two event venues, one of which features delightfully trippy Alice in Wonderland wallpaper.

The penthouse suites take the form of seven gleaming Airstream trailers on the hotel's rooftop. Each one has been decorated by a different local interior designer in line with a South African road trip theme, such as Cape Winelands, Beach House, Rooftop Safari and Karoo Dorps. They are fully serviced with luxury bedding, modern amenities and thoughtful touches.

On the rooftop, you can also find the Sky Bar, where you can have a sundowner and take in the views of the city, before retreating to your not-so-mobile mobile home for the evening.

www.granddaddy.co.za



THE KAROO ART HOTEL



Entering this hotel, a member of the Cape Country Routes just off the R62 in Barrydale, feels like Dorothy entering Oz. The white facade gives way to a vibrant technicolour world as you cross the threshold.

Art is everywhere.

Oil paintings line the walls, sculptures appear in unexpected corners and colourful murals transform ordinary spaces into imaginative ones. The public areas double as a gallery, with many of the artworks

available for purchase.

Each of the hotel's rooms is individually decorated with eclectic art pieces, hand-painted murals and other design details.

You can get lost in history looking at mesmerising vintage colonial safari photographs in the Melvill & Moon Room, while the oversized Tretchikoff wallpaper in the Magnolia Room feels light and playful. Some rooms are whimsical, others dramatic, but all feel like small creative worlds

of their own. Apart from the usual facilities, the hotel is also home to an event venue that hosts art-related workshops and live performances, as well as a cinema.

This hotel doesn't simply display art. It is art; colourful, expressive and inseparable from the quirky personality of Barrydale itself.

www.karooarthotel.co.za





THE TURBINE HOTEL AND SPA

On the Thesen Islands in Knysna stands a hotel that, at first glance, doesn't look like a hotel at all.

With three towering chimneys rising into the sky, the Turbine Hotel and Spa resembles an industrial facility more than a place you might choose for a relaxing getaway. That is until you step inside.

The building was once the power station that supplied electricity to Knysna and its timber industry. Now dining tables sit beside colossal machinery, turbines rise dramatically through double-volume spaces and industrial piping snakes across walls. This is all juxtaposed with velvet chairs, contemporary art and soft lighting.

When the building was converted into a hotel, the original turbines

were protected as historical features. Instead of hiding them, the designers embraced them as sculptural centrepieces. What could have felt cold or mechanical somehow becomes warm and atmospheric. The rooms soften the industrial narrative slightly, layering in soft fabrics, elegant furnishings and large windows overlooking the canals.

The hotel's Island Café and Gastro Pub serve dishes that reflect the region's fresh produce and coastal influences, while the spa offers a space for another form of relaxation, proving that even a former power station can become a sanctuary.

www.turbinehotel.co.za

DORP HOTEL

The terms “best kept secret” and “hidden gem” get thrown around a lot, but Dorp Hotel genuinely feels like both. Despite being a sprawling 42-room hotel perched on Signal Hill overlooking the city of Cape Town, many locals are unaware of its existence.

In the Salon, a double-volume space that functions as both a restaurant and a lounge, palm trees tower over quirky pink granny settees while ceramics, cut flowers, books and striking artworks appear everywhere you look. A set of dinosaur bookends holding many an afternoon’s reading material rests on a grand piano, while gold lettering next to the door reads “Check your privilege”.

It feels less like a hotel and more like the home of a well-travelled

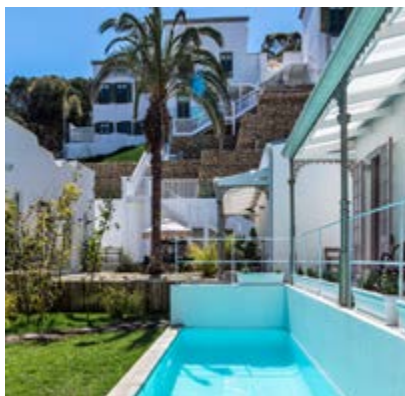
eccentric aunt who has the best stories to tell. Each room has its own personality, decorated with colourful textiles, vintage furniture, books, unusual artworks, unexpected touches and whimsy. A sense of play is woven into every corner, complemented by lush greenery and hidden nooks, perfect for lingering over coffee or a book. The hotel also boasts some of the best views of Table Mountain in all of Cape Town. It almost seems unfair given the captivating interiors.

It’s very hard to put Dorp into words, but it’s impossible to describe the lingering feeling you leave with.

<https://dorp.co.za>



Tony Barnett



WHERE THE STAY BECOMES THE STORY

Each of these hotels tells a very different story. The Grand Daddy spins a playful tale of glamping in the middle of a city. The Karoo Art Hotel immerses guests in colour and creativity along one of the country’s great road-trip routes. The Turbine transforms industrial heritage into dramatic design. And Dorp offers a deeply personal world of art and imagination above Cape Town.

In a world where many hotels are designed to look reassuringly similar, these places remind us how delightful the unexpected can be. Here, the hotel isn’t just somewhere to stay, it’s a destination worth travelling for.

CAPE TOWN BIG 6

ONE DESTINATION. SIX UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES.

CAPE POINT



ONE POINT.
ONE MILLION
POINTS OF VIEW.



See, Discover, Feel
the awe-inspiring tip of the Cape Peninsula. See the historic lighthouse and enjoy a ride on the Flying Dutchman Funicular. Experience the beauty of Cape Point with misty dawns, stunning views, diverse wildlife, historic sites, scenic trails, and dining options.

1

KIRSTENBOSCH NATIONAL BOTANICAL GARDEN



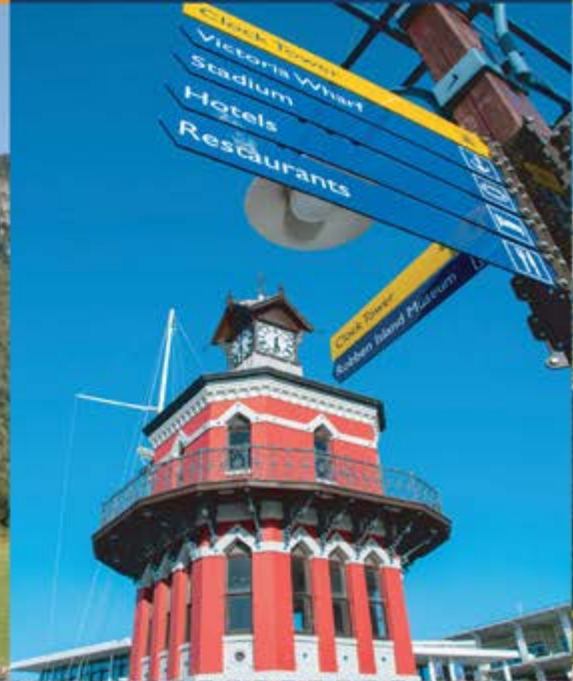
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
GARDEN IN
AFRICA



See, Discover, Feel
the splendour of the garden's unparalleled botanical beauty. Explore 528 hectares, featuring the Boomslang walkway and hiking trails, all within the Cape Floristic Region, dedicated to ecological preservation and unique visitor experiences.

2

V&A WATERFRONT



THERE'S ALWAYS
MORE
TO EXPLORE!



See, Discover, Feel
the city's vibrant culture by exploring Cape Town's design story at the Watershed and contemporary African art at Zeitz MOCAA. Enjoy a diverse array of dining, entertainment, and shopping options—making your visit an unforgettable sensory journey.

3



f @ x
 @CTBIG6
 CTBIG6.CO.ZA

#SeeDiscoverFeelCTBig6

TABLE MOUNTAIN CABLEWAY



JOURNEY UP AN OFFICIAL
 NEW 7 WONDER
 OF NATURE



See, Discover, Feel
 nature at its finest. Enjoy priority access with Fast Track and Private Cable Car options. Enhance your visit with free guided tours, accessible trails, and delicious food. Host bespoke events at Cableway venues, all while supporting responsible tourism.



GROOT CONSTANTIA



SOUTH AFRICA'S
 OLDEST WINE-PRODUCING
 FARM



See, Discover, Feel
 the rich heritage of South African winemaking through captivating guided tours, historic architecture, and by relishing the estate's selection of award-winning wines. Visit the Wine & Gift Shop, and savour dining at Simon's Restaurant and Jonkershuis Eatery for an enchanting Groot Constantia experience.



ROBBEN ISLAND MUSEUM



A LIVING MEMORY
 OF
 RESILIENCE



See, Discover, Feel
 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.





Hit the Road and Rediscover South Africa with Southern Sun

There's something special about a road trip - the playlists, the padkos, the scenic stops, and the quality time together before you've even reached your destination. With so much to explore right here in South Africa, a self-drive holiday isn't just convenient, it's one of the best ways to experience the country's beauty while making lasting family memories.

From bush breaks and mountain escapes to beachfront stays and countryside retreats, Southern Sun has perfectly placed hotels that turn every road trip into a rewarding family getaway.

Easy Gauteng Escapes



Riverside Relaxation at Riverside Sun

Just over an hour from Johannesburg, this laid-back retreat offers comfort and relaxation in a beautiful country setting, perfect for families looking to slow down and reconnect. Dining at Riverside Sun is a delight. Soak in the Vaal River scenery and a delicious breakfast, lunch and dinner at The Riverview Restaurant, all-day light meals in the sunshine on the terrace, a great drinks menu at Le Bourbon Bar, or a meal in the privacy of your room.

WHAT TO DO:

- Enjoy picnics and walks along the Vaal River
- Boat cruises and water activities
- Family-friendly pool time and outdoor relaxation



Countryside Luxury at Mount Grace Hotel & Spa

Tucked into the scenic Magaliesberg, this tranquil luxury escape blends nature, comfort and a touch of indulgence, ideal for families who want both relaxation and activities in a peaceful countryside setting. Dining and drinks at Mount Grace Hotel and Spa are offered in a choice of 3 restaurants onsite, with menus to suite every taste. Let nature set the tone for relaxation with a selection of pampering spa treatments on offer at the Mount Grace Spa.

WHAT TO DO:

- Nature walks, hiking trails and outdoor adventures
- Family pool time and spacious grounds to explore
- Spa treatments for parents and relaxation areas
- Nearby activities like hot air balloon rides, strawberry picking and canopy tours

Beachfront Views



Seaside Durban Stays at Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani

Durban's iconic landmark invites guests to experience a modern full-service stay on Durban's sun-kissed beachfront, ticking all the boxes for effortless beach holidays. There's nothing like a delectable dinner in the comfort of your hotel. Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani is home to 5 distinctive restaurants, offering a diverse menu including award-winning steaks, classic cocktails, café culture and an exceptional buffet. Add a little indulgence to your holiday with a well-deserved pamper session at Mangwanani Boutique Spa, situated in the hotel.

WHAT TO DO:

- Beach days along the Golden Mile
- Visit uShaka Marine World
- Enjoy the hotel pools and family-friendly dining
- Bungee jumping at Moses Mabidha stadium
- Segway along The Promenade

Lowveld Escapes & Safari Moments

Family Fun in the Lowveld at Hazyview SunHotel & Spa

Set in the heart of the lush Lowveld, just outside Kruger National Park, this is an ideal base for a fun-filled family getaway that blends relaxation with adventure. Hazyview Sun is perfect for families wanting an affordable safari base with plenty to do nearby. Dining at Hazyview Sun offers a traditional South African experience under big African skies in the hotel's Boma. The smell and taste of delicious braai favourites, the light of the fire and the sounds of nature set the mood.

WHAT TO DO:

- Day trips into Kruger for self-drive safaris
- Visit nearby attractions like elephant sanctuaries and reptile parks
- Enjoy the hotel's pool, gardens and family-friendly spaces
- Explore scenic routes towards Panorama Route



Golf, Nature & River Views at Sabi River Sun Resort

Surrounded by lush greenery on the banks of the Sabie River, this resort-style escape is a dream destination for a truly special wildlife experience. A beautiful golf course, popular day spa, refined and relaxing accommodation, and the renowned hospitality of Southern Sun ensure this is one of the best holiday resorts near the Kruger National Park, offering something for everyone, from outdoor adventure to laid-back leisure. Tee off at Sabi River Sun Golf Club, a par-71, 18-hole course known for its resident hippos and stunning Lowveld surroundings, as beautiful to view as they are enjoyable to play.

WHAT TO DO:

- Tee off on the 18-hole golf course
- Spot wildlife and birdlife around the property
- Relax by the pool or enjoy family-friendly activities
- Pamper sessions at Heather's Spa
- Easy access to Kruger gates for game drives



The Journey is Part of the Experience

A road trip isn't just about getting there; it's about everything in between. Scenic routes, spontaneous stops, shared playlists and family moments all add to the story.

With Southern Sun's wide range of destinations across South Africa, your next holiday is closer than you think, and the drive might just be your favourite part.

So, pack the car, gather the family, and set off on a journey worth remembering



southernsun.com



Barman Derrick



Guide Hlahla

The Return — The Makuleke Story

WORDS TESSA BUHRMANN | PICS TESSA BUHRMANN & RETURN AFRICA PAFURI COLLECTION

There is a particular stillness in the far northern reaches of Kruger National Park – a quiet that feels ancient, almost reverent. We cross the Luvuvhu River into the Makuleke Contractual National Park, more commonly known as Pafuri, and our destination – Return Africa’s Pafuri Camp. Here, where the Luvuvhu and Limpopo rivers meet, fever trees shimmer in golden light and baobabs stand like sentinels.

National Park. It was a land of abundance – fertile soil, flowing rivers, and deep cultural connection. A place where communities thrived.

That changed in 1969.



General Manager -
Godfrey Baloyi

It is one of the most biologically rich and culturally layered landscapes in southern Africa. But beyond its wild beauty, this is a place defined by a deeper story – one of loss, resilience, and ultimately, return.

It is a story best told by those who have lived it. And few embody it quite like Godfrey Baloyi, General Manager of Pafuri, whose journey mirrors

that of the Makuleke community itself.

For Godfrey, this is not just a landscape. “This is home,” he says. But it is a home that was once taken away.

A Land Lost

The Makuleke people lived in this region from the 1820s, long before the formal proclamation of the Kruger

Under apartheid rule, the Makuleke community was forcibly removed from their ancestral land. Armed officials arrived, and families were given no choice but to leave – many at gunpoint, some forced to burn their own homes before they went. “They were left with nothing,” Godfrey says. “Their dignity was gone. Everything was gone.”



*It is a story
best told by
those who
have lived it*

They were relocated to barren land far from the rivers they had known, a place without water, infrastructure, or opportunity. The contrast was stark, the loss profound.

Even those, like Godfrey, who came later, inherited that absence – the knowledge of a home that existed, but was out of reach.

Stories in the Landscape

Later, standing above the floodplain at Thulamela, it is walking and birding guide Hlahla who brings the deeper timeline into focus. From the stone-walled ruins, the view stretches endlessly – a reminder that this landscape has long been a place of movement and exchange.

“This area was a hub,” he explains. “There was trade, there were people moving through here long before the park.” It adds another layer –

that Pafuri’s significance long predates its modern history.

Later still, at a quiet sundowner along the Luvuvhu, guide Akani traces the story forward, speaking of early settlements, survival, and the pull of the land itself. “This place had everything,” he says, gesturing towards the river. “Water, fertile soil, animals. That’s why people stayed.”

Between them, their stories sketch the outline. But it is Godfrey who fills in the detail – the lived experience that shaped what came next.

The Long Road Back

For decades, the Makuleke people remained displaced. But change came with the dawn of democracy in South Africa. Following the end of apartheid in 1994, new land restitution laws allowed communities to reclaim land taken from them – provided

they could prove historical occupation. The Makuleke community did just that. Their claim was groundbreaking.

Not only were they successful, but they became the first community to win a land claim within the Kruger National Park – a process that took years of legal effort and determination.

Crucially, they were not alone. Among those who stood alongside them was conservationist PJ Massyn, RETURN Africa Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, who had first visited the community in the early 1990s, before the land claim process had even begun. At a time when trust was fragile – particularly across racial lines – his support, along with a group known as the ‘Friends of Makuleke,’ helped guide and advise the community through the legal process.

Instead, guided by careful advice and a broader vision, the community chose conservation.

In 1998, the Makuleke people officially regained ownership of their ancestral land.

A Different Kind of Return

The return of land brought with it a difficult question: what next?

“There were many ideas,” Godfrey recalls. “Some people wanted farming. Some wanted mining. Both were viable. The land was fertile, and mineral deposits were known. But both came with trade-offs – short-term gain at the potential cost of long-term sustainability.

Instead, guided by careful advice and a broader vision, the community chose conservation. It was not the obvious choice, but it would prove to be the most transformative. It was a decision that would shape the future of Pafuri. Tourism became the bridge between land and livelihood.

The Birth of Pafuri

Early tourism developments were led by Wilderness Safaris, creating jobs and opening pathways into the industry. For Godfrey, it was the beginning. Originally trained as a teacher, he joined one of the first groups selected for guide training. “We were camping under the trees,” he says. “I saw everything from the beginning.”

He was there as Pafuri took shape – and again when it was almost lost.

In 2013, floods swept through the region, destroying much of the infrastructure. Jobs were lost. For two years, there was no income. And then, once again, came a turning point.

Return Africa: A Vision Realised

Out of that uncertainty came Return Africa – a new

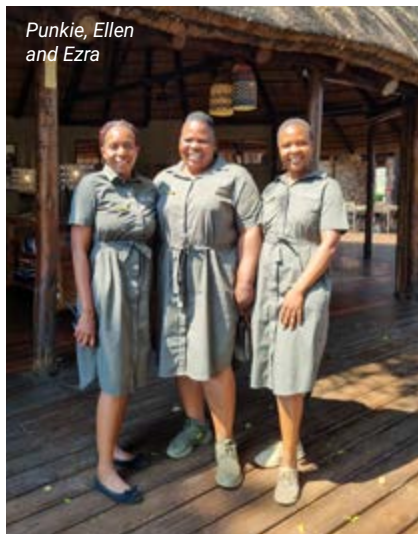
chapter, placing the Makuleke community firmly at its centre. Godfrey was there from the start. “I was part of the discussions,” he says.

The name itself was deliberate. Return – to the land, to opportunity, to identity. And for guests, a return to Africa as a place of origin.

Today, the Pafuri Collection operates under a model that is both rare and powerful: locally driven, community-led, and deeply invested in long-term impact. The majority of staff come from the Makuleke villages, and 100% of management is black – something Godfrey speaks about with quiet pride. “We believe in our people,” he says. “We train them.”

Opportunity, Earned

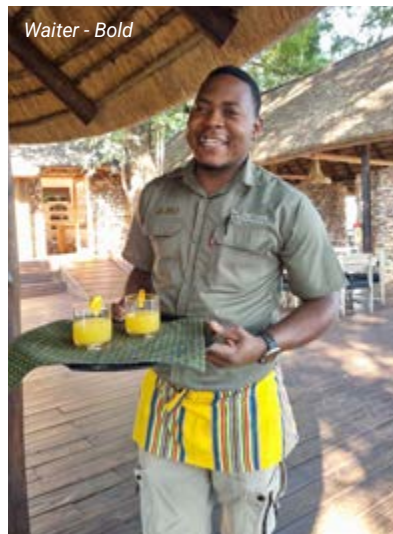
That belief in people is evident across the lodge.



Punkie, Ellen and Ezra



All smiles at a bush breakfast



Waiter - Bold



Spa therapist - Sistance



Guide Akani at a monument commemorating his Makuleke ancestors

Many staff members have grown into their roles from within – a reflection not only of opportunity, but of clear intention. Development here unfolds as a journey. As Hlahla explains, it often begins in the most unexpected places.

“I started in housekeeping,” he says. “Then they moved me – to scullery, to service, to the bar.” At the time, the shifts didn’t always make sense. Only later did the pattern emerge – a deliberate process of building skills, testing adaptability, and recognising potential.

“The more flexible you are, the more they trust you,” he says. “Then they invest in you.”

That investment can be significant – including fully funded guiding qualifications, opening doors that might otherwise have remained firmly closed. “I am the testimony,” he adds.

Across the lodge, similar stories unfold. Ellen rose from housekeeping to assistant manager. Punkie moved from the kitchen into front-of-house leadership. Bongani began as a camp hand and is now a qualified trails guide.

For Ellen, it is deeply personal: “This place is more than just a workplace because it holds history, memories, and a strong sense of belonging. Being part of Pafuri and seeing the progress over the years has made me proud. I feel that I am contributing to something meaningful, something that connects nature, community, and culture.”

Employment sits at the core – more than 60 staff, almost all from the Makuleke community. But as Godfrey explains, it is not just about jobs. It is about opportunities. Beyond employment, benefits extend through profit-sharing and ongoing support for community initiatives – from drop-in centres for vulnerable



children to school uniforms and infrastructure projects.

The impact of Pafuri extends well beyond tourism. “The lodge is playing a very important role,” Hlahla says. “It’s helping the community in many ways.”

A Living Landscape

Today, Pafuri stands as a model of community-led conservation and tourism – a place where ecological preservation and human development exist in balance.

It is also a place layered with far older history than the Makuleke story alone. Thulamela speaks to a time when this region was a thriving trade hub, connecting inland Africa with coastal networks long before colonial borders were drawn.

In many ways, the idea of “return” resonates far beyond recent history.

Coming Home

For Godfrey, the story is not just one of success – it is one of return.

From a community that was forcibly removed, to one that now owns and manages its

land. From loss to opportunity. From uncertainty to pride.

When he walks through Pafuri today, it is with a deep sense of connection – not only to the land, but to what it represents.

“We are happy,” he says simply. “We are proud.”

For PJ Massyn, too, it is a return: “As a boy, I gazed across the Luvuvhu to what was, in those apartheid years, forbidden country to the north. I did not then understand the things happening there. But even as a child, I knew I would one day return. When I did, many years later, I met the Makulekes whose land it once was and would be again. I am deeply grateful to them for granting me their trust.”

And in this far northern corner of the Kruger – where rivers meet, histories converge, and stories are carried in the landscape – that sense of return feels complete – for Godfrey, for PJ and even for us.

FLOOD, RENEWAL, RESILIENCE

In January and March 2026, the Luvuvhu River flooded once again, forcing the precautionary evacuation of guests and staff and echoing the devastation of 2013. This time, however, the response was swift and coordinated, with Return Africa prioritising safety and already beginning the process of rebuilding.

Flooding is part of the natural rhythm of Pafuri’s floodplain – enriching the soil, renewing the forest, and reshaping the landscape. Rather than defeat, the 2026 floods stand as a testament to resilience, with the camp and community united in restoring Pafuri stronger than before.

In PJ’s words: “We are resilient. We will rebuild. RETURN Africa has faced floods before, and each time we return stronger.”

www.returnafrica.com





Travel

with Purpose at Cape Vulture Lodge

Set against the dramatic backdrop of Manutsa Mountains, within the northern Drakensberg escarpment near Hoedspruit, Cape Vulture Lodge offers a stay that is as purposeful as it is immersive. Here, the steep cliffs of the Cape Vulture Nature Reserve rise into the open sky, framing a landscape that feels both powerful and quietly restorative.

Spanning 1,800 hectares, the reserve protects one of South Africa's most significant breeding colonies of the vulnerable Cape Vulture. Yet conservation is only one part of the story. Built on the pillars of Conservation, Education and Employment, the lodge creates a model where environmental protection and community upliftment exist side by side.

Guests are invited to explore this landscape at their own pace. Mountain trails wind through the reserve, ideal for trail running and mountain biking, revealing the region's diverse flora and fauna along the way. Time spent at the vulture hide offers a rare, close-up encounter with these remarkable birds, while quieter moments on the escarpment invite reflection.

Beyond the reserve, the experiences broaden. Horse riding, microlight flights, hot-air ballooning and helicopter excursions offer sweeping aerial perspectives, while game drives in nearby reserves and the iconic Kruger National Park add a classic safari element. The renowned Panorama Route lies close at hand, with landmarks such as the Blyde River Canyon showcasing some of the country's most spectacular scenery.

Back at the lodge, the pace softens. The Tented Camp offers light-filled, thoughtfully designed suites with sweeping mountain views, while the main lodge and its fire-lit spaces encourage connection. An on-site boutique spa, using products crafted on the reserve, adds a restorative dimension, making this an ideal setting for slow, mindful travel or intimate wellness retreats.

At Cape Vulture Lodge, nature is not simply admired. It is felt – and, in small but significant ways, it stays with you.

 capevulture
Nature Reserve



 reservations@capevulturelodge.co.za





Hoedspruit:

WHERE ADVENTURE, WILDLIFE & WELLBEING MEET



WORDS & PICS SUPPLIED

Cradled between the Blyde River Canyon and the wild heart of the Kruger National Park, Hoedspruit is a town that quietly hums with adventure, conservation, creativity and warm Lowveld hospitality. It's where visitors arrive for the wildlife, linger for the stories, and leave with a renewed sense of connection to nature.

With its easy rhythm, open landscapes and seamless blend of luxury living and local charm, Hoedspruit offers an irresistible mix of safari, wellness, culture and community – and an abundance of ways to experience it all.



1 ADVENTURE

If there's one thing Hoedspruit does well, it's adventure – the kind that wakes every sense and roots you firmly in the present.

Hot-air ballooning here is unforgettable. Before sunrise, you stand in a quiet field as the balloon breathes itself awake, fabric glowing gold as burners roar into the darkness. Then, with a softness that defies physics, you rise. Bushveld, riverbeds, farmlands, and mountain escarpments unfold below you in muted morning colours. From on high, the world feels impossibly still.

Back on solid ground, adventure takes many forms. You might find yourself gripping the handles of a quad bike, red dust curling behind you, or riding horseback through open savanna as giraffe lift their heads in gentle curiosity. For the truly brave, microlight flights offer a thrilling aerial perspective of the Greater Kruger, elephants like grey beads on a tapestry of green. Hoedspruit has a way of making you feel both exhilarated and deeply connected all at once.



2 SAFARI

Hoedspruit is one of South Africa's true safari capitals, perfectly positioned at the gateway to Kruger National Park and the unfenced wilderness of the Greater Kruger. Here, wildlife moves freely across vast landscapes, and intimate lodges offer an immersive blend of conservation and comfort.

Twice-daily game drives shape the rhythm of each day. Mornings break cool and blue as elephant herds amble toward water and predators leave fresh tracks in the dust. By afternoon, golden light settles over lion prides, browsing giraffe and gatherings of buffalo along dry riverbeds. The experience is as much about atmosphere as sightings – fish eagles calling overhead, rollers flashing colour across open plains.

For a deeper connection, guided bush walks slow everything down. On foot, you notice the detail: tracks, scents, textures and the quiet stories written into the earth. This is Africa at eye level – intimate, sensory and profoundly grounding.



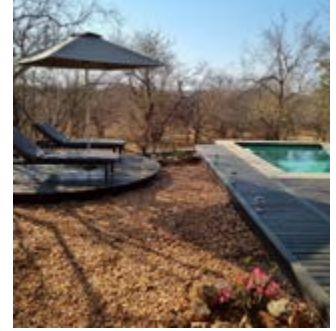
3 CONSERVATION

Conservation in this region is lived in real time, often challenging, but always hopeful.

Standing beneath the cliffs of the escarpment, watching Cape vultures catch thermals like seasoned pilots, is humbling. Their ancient silhouettes against the sky speak of ecosystems both fragile and intricate. The Cape Vulture Nature Reserve is a local vulture conservancy whose work extends far beyond monitoring vulture populations, and embraces education, land rehabilitation, sustainable agriculture and community outreach – all crucial for conservation as well as the upliftment of local communities.

Other rehabilitation centres in the Hoedspruit area offer equally meaningful encounters. These are not entertainment stops; they're windows into the challenges wildlife faces – snares, poisoning, habitat loss – and the extraordinary humans who dedicate their lives to helping them heal.

Together, these initiatives reflect Hoedspruit's ethos: that tourism and conservation can uplift each other in meaningful, sustainable ways.



4 WELLNESS

Here, wellbeing is not a luxury. It's a natural extension of living on bush time.

Picture open-air massage salas under jackalberry trees, the scent of warm oil mingling with grass and earth. Spa treatments unfold in tranquil bush settings, backed by birdsong and rustling mopani leaves. Yoga sessions stretch into golden sunsets, and forest walks slow the mind to match the unhurried rhythm of the wild. Quiet, leafy courtyards perfect for journaling or simply listening to the breeze.

From luxury spas at the region's private lodges to independent wellness studios in town, visitors can enjoy massages, facials, sound journeys, movement classes, and holistic therapies inspired by nature. Even casual cafés feel unhurried – the kind where you linger over a cappuccino, watching hornbills quarrel from a shaded deck.

This is wellness with soul – gentle, grounded, and deeply restorative.



5 CREATIVITY

There's something about the Lowveld light that draws artists in. Hoedspruit's creative community is a quiet treasure: sculptors casting bush textures into bronze, painters capturing the shifting shadows of the Drakensberg, photographers finding soul in every feather and footprint.

Slow mornings spent wandering through studios, craft markets and small galleries become journeys in themselves. The Art House, a thoughtfully curated space celebrating local and regional talent, showcases everything from wildlife photography and abstract canvases to ceramics and textiles infused with the colours of the landscape. Many pieces carry the stories of their makers – art that connects us to the land and to one another.



6 TASTE

Dining in Hoedspruit reflects the region's warmth and diversity. Cafés spill onto shaded decks, bistros celebrate regional ingredients, and restaurants move effortlessly between relaxed comfort and refined flair.

You might begin your day with farm-fresh fare and exceptional sourdough, share craft beer and wood-fired goodness beneath a star-strewn sky, or settle in for fine dining that feels both polished and deeply rooted in place. From railway-side charm to bush pubs humming with laughter, there is genuine variety, yet always the same Lowveld hospitality. The food is fresh, honest and unpretentious. Slow-cooked venison, artisan pastries, local craft brews and inventive cocktails, all enjoyed to the soundtrack of cicadas or distant hyena calls.

And for something memorable, tasting experiences in the bush elevate sundowners to an art form. After a game drive, pause in the golden light to sample craft gin, locally brewed beer, or thoughtful chocolate and coffee pairings – flavours shaped by the same landscape you've spent the day exploring.



7 STAY

Just minutes from town, yet feeling far removed, the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate offers a blend of comfortable living and everyday encounters with wildlife. Wildebeest graze near walking paths, giraffe move quietly through the trees, and sunsets wash the bushveld in warm amber tones.

Within the estate, options like Bushwillow Villa offer a relaxed, home-like base – spacious, welcoming and immersed in nature. It's well suited to slow travellers, families, or anyone wanting to balance comfort with a sense of the wild. Another fun option is the new Aerotel Hoedspruit, which features luxury accommodation in a converted Boeing 737!

Hoedspruit is one of those places where the days feel full – but never hurried. You wake to birdsong and soft light, and the rest seems to follow naturally – exploring, wandering, tasting, pausing.

You find yourself lingering a little longer – whether drifting above the plains in a balloon, sitting quietly at a waterhole at dusk, or watching vultures trace slow circles along the escarpment.

It's the kind of place that stays with you – quietly, but completely – long after you've left.

Where safari meets slow, soulful living.



ESSENTIALS:

Getting there - Just five hours from Johannesburg, with direct flights from OR Tambo and Cape Town, Hoedspruit is perfectly positioned on the edge of the Greater Kruger.

Where to Stay
Bushwillow Villa
🌐 www.bushwillowvilla.co.za/

Aerotel Hoedspruit
🌐 <https://www.aerotel.co.za/>

More info
Wild About Hoedspruit
🌐 www.hoedspruit.co.za/





Onkolo Hide at Onguma

Hide & Peek

BEHIND THE LENS, BENEATH THE SURFACE

WORDS CLAIRE ROADLEY
PICS SUPPLIED

Designed to blend seamlessly into their surroundings, hides minimise disturbance

Africa offers a diverse and thrilling array of safari experiences – but for wildlife photography lovers, her best-kept secrets often lie quietly concealed in reserves with dedicated photographic hides.

A hide is exactly what it sounds like: a discreet, purpose-built structure that allows photographers and nature enthusiasts to observe wildlife up close, without being seen. Positioned near waterholes, salt licks or well-used animal paths, they promise a steady rhythm of activity. Designed to blend seamlessly into their surroundings, hides minimise disturbance, allowing for more natural behaviour than you'd typically witness on a game drive or on foot. Many sit at water level or are sunk into the earth, offering intimate angles, striking reflections and beautifully composed shots.

While some remain rustic, a new generation of high-end hides is emerging, with comfortable seating, adjustable viewing slots, camera mounts and even charging points for longer sessions. A select few offer overnight stays, opening a window into the nocturnal world. At places like Mashatu, the Lala Limpopo hide even features adjustable back and side lighting.

Some hides are tailored for specific sightings – from bird hides with glassy reflection pools to setups geared for nocturnal predators like hyena, civet and honey badger. They also provide a safe vantage point for observing larger animals such as elephant, lion and leopard.

But hides aren't just for photographers. Even without a camera, the quiet anticipation and raw proximity of the wild is unforgettable – that simple "hide and peek" thrill!

Here are some of Africa's finest hides, offering unforgettable encounters for photographers and wildlife lovers alike:

Onkolo Hide at Onguma Nature Reserve (Namibia)

Situated on the eastern fringe of Etosha National Park, **Onguma's Onkolo Hide** offers stunning views and creative angles at water level in Onguma Nature Reserve. It's an ideal spot for capturing diverse wildlife and birdlife in beautiful light. It also offers ablution facilities for those who wish to linger longer - and is best enjoyed with a guide. Many award-winning photos have been captured in this hide. They will also be introducing a new Onkolo Soundscapes experience in the hide in the coming months, so watch this space!

There is also another gorgeous water level hide located at **Onguma Camp Kala** which guests can access at any time, just below the lounge deck, overlooking the watering hole. With only four suites in the whole camp, Camp Kala's hide is undoubtedly one of the most exclusive photo hides you will find anywhere!

<https://onguma.com/>



Mahlasela Hide at Tembe Elephant Park (South Africa)



Tembe Elephant Park in northern KwaZulu-Natal is mostly known for its large indigenous bull elephants with their huge tusks, but its Mahlasela hide is also a prime location for spotting all of the Big Five as they gather around the waterhole.

The live ellie-cam, hosted by Africam, based at Mahlasela, has been in operation for well over two decades and has won over loyal followers from around the globe, many of whom dream of visiting in person, and often do! You can check out some of the highlights including leopards, lions being chased away by elephants - and even a few porcupines here.

This hide was also recently upgraded to be fully accessible with a new lower-level viewing area and a wheelchair friendly toilet on the hidden access pathway – right in the middle of the bush! Not everyone enjoys a tree-wee!

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

Mhondoro Hide in the Welgevonden Game Reserve (South Africa)

Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa is located within the malaria-free Welgevonden Game Reserve in Limpopo. One of its many highlights is its underground waterhole hide, which is connected to the main lodge by a 65-metre tunnel. This allows guests easy and safe access at all times, including nighttime, with or without a guide, to enjoy front row seats to the animals drinking and bathing in the waterhole right in front of the lodge. This flexibility is great for those who might not want to spend hours on game drives and of course for families, although children do need to be quiet so as not to disturb the wildlife.

This hide is especially good for low-angle photography through lovely large horizontal windows, ideal for photographing elephants, rhino, zebra, and birds. Camera cushions and a small drinks bar are provided so that guests can enjoy many hours observing the wildlife from this handy hiding place in comfort.

<https://mhondoro.com/>



Lala Limpopo Overnight Hide at Mashatu (Botswana)

Mashatu also offers a fabulous Lala Limpopo overnight hide for those looking for a very exclusive, immersive nocturnal photography experience. With innovative adjustable lighting and two comfortable bedrooms to lala (sleep) in – up to four guests can capture incredible images from dusk till dawn. With windows at ground level, you can observe elephants and other nocturnal wildlife drinking some three meters away. Nighttime sensors around the waterhole alert you to animal presence, ensuring you never miss an opportunity. There's also a kitchen, lounge, bathroom, courtyard, and photographic area, as well as a room for your PhotoMashatu guide. The experience is offered from March to the end of November each year before closing for the rainy season.

<https://mashatu.com/>



Matebole Hide at Mashatu Game Reserve (Botswana)



The underground Matebole Hide at Mashatu is a dream location for photographing elephants and other wildlife. Created from a sturdy shipping container in 2012, it has since become a renowned hotspot for photographers, with C4 / PhotoMashatu offering expert guidance. Many award winning photos have been taken here including Greg du Toit's Essence of Elephants, which won him the acclaimed "Wildlife Photographer of the Year" award in 2013.

The hide comfortably accommodates up to eight photographers, allowing them to lay out their lenses and capture the classic scenes of Mashatu as they unfold before them. Mashatu offers a "family hour" between sessions so that families with younger children can also get a taste of the Mashatu magic – and can try their hand at fun things like recording timelapses on their mobile phones. PhotoMashatu has also recently made Matebole hide far more accessible, replacing the old ladder down from the roof of the container with a beautiful new walkway and side entrance. Much easier for those carrying heavy cameras too!

<https://mashatu.com/>

Jaci's Terrapin Hide at Madikwe Game Reserve (South Africa)

After unprecedented flooding along the Marico River in early 2025, Jaci's Lodges in Madikwe Game Reserve suffered extensive damage but will be relaunching in July 2026 as Jaci's Private Lodge with 10 newly designed Safari Suites with private decks overlooking the river. Also returning is Jaci's Terrapin Hide which is accessible via a tunnel, to the middle of the waterhole in front of the lodge. With 270° water level views, this hide is another photographer's dream come true! Madikwe is renowned for its wildlife viewing with flourishing populations of lion, elephant, leopard, buffalo, black and white rhino, wild dogs, cheetah, brown and spotted hyena, hippo, and giraffe.

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



Whether you're aiming for award-winning shots or simply to immerse yourself in nature, Africa's hides offer unparalleled and unforgettable wildlife encounters. I think some of my favourite safari memories have been captured (both on film and in my memory) in some of these wonderful hides!



NAMBITI PLAINS
PRIVATE GAME LODGE



THE UNPRETENTIOUS 5 STAR EXPERIENCE

WAKE TO THE WILD, UNWIND IN UNDERSTATED LUXURY





Nambiti:

A STORY OF LAND, LEGACY AND LIVELIHOODS

WORDS

TESSA BUHRMANN

PICS NAMBITI HILLS
& TESSA BUHRMANN

The creation of Nambiti Private Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal is a compelling conservation story – the transformation of tired cattle and maize farms into a thriving Big Five wilderness that now supports both biodiversity and meaningful rural development.

Driving through the reserve today, it's almost impossible to imagine what came before. The rolling hills, thornveld and riverine bush feel whole again – the divisions of fences and fields barely visible.

At the heart of this vision was Rob Le Sueur, who in the late 1990s saw potential in these rolling grasslands and riverine valleys near Ladysmith, where many others saw only depletion. The land, overgrazed and fragmented by decades of farming, held the promise of something more: a restored

ecosystem where wildlife could return, and where tourism could create sustainable livelihoods for the surrounding communities.

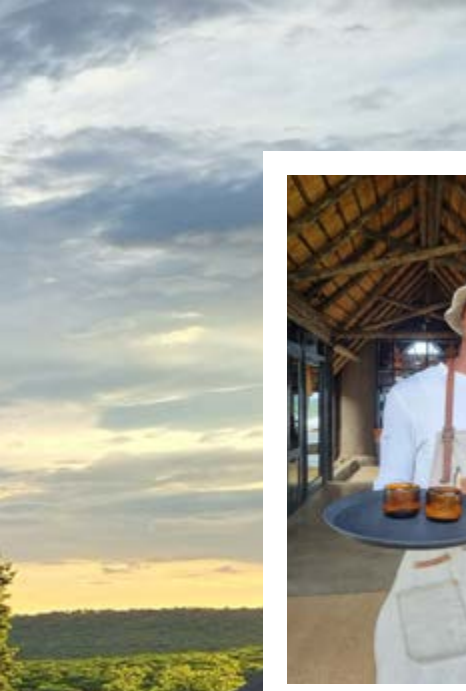
It was, from the outset, an ambitious undertaking – one that required not only ecological restoration, but a long-term commitment to shared ownership and economic sustainability.

By 2000, multiple farms had been consolidated, fences dropped, and the slow work of renewal began. Indigenous species were reintroduced, habitats restored, and gradually, the rhythms of the

wild returned. Today, more than 40 species roam freely here, from lion and elephant to cheetah, rhino and even African wild dog. A quiet testament to what can happen when land is given the chance to recover.

But perhaps the most meaningful part of Nambiti's story lies not only in its wildlife, but in its people.

Following a successful land claim, ownership was transferred to the Senzo'kuhle Nkos'uNodada Communal Trust, ensuring the community became direct beneficiaries of



the understated luxury feels entirely in tune with the landscape.

the reserve's success – with representation on the board and a meaningful voice in how the reserve is managed and maintained. Through a long-term lease agreement, the

land remains protected while generating tangible income – a model that feels both progressive and necessary in the South African context.

This is where the lodges come in – not simply as places to stay, but as the economic heartbeat of the reserve. Each lodge operates independently, purchasing development rights and paying conservation and traversing fees that contribute to the management of the reserve and lease payments to the

community. It's a system that quietly underpins everything: anti-poaching efforts, habitat management, and the ongoing protection of the wildlife that draws visitors here.

The impact is significant. Where once there were only a handful of agricultural jobs, Nambiti now supports more than 300 jobs across conservation and hospitality. From guides and trackers to chefs, housekeeping, spa therapists and management, there is a strong emphasis on employing from within beneficiary communities. Training and skills development create real pathways forward, something that feels both purposeful and lasting.

Beyond direct employment, tourism stimulates local supply

chains, transport services and small businesses. The result is a diversified rural economy built around conservation rather than extractive land use – a living example of how land restitution and biodiversity protection can work hand in hand, to the extent that a local taxi owner now drives the Nambiti boundary at night, checking for potential poachers.

I experience this conservation success story first-hand during our stay at **Nambiti Hills**, where the understated luxury feels entirely in tune with the landscape. Where the warmth of the welcome says as much about the place as the landscape itself.

Each interaction feels genuine – a quiet reminder that tourism here is not abstract, but deeply personal.

The lodge sits lightly on the land, positioned to take in sweeping views across the hills. Its design is calm and considered – clean lines, soft neutrals, vaulted thatch and subtle colonial touches that add a sense of quiet elegance. Glass-wrapped spaces dissolve the boundary between indoors and out, drawing your gaze outward, always back to the bush. The recent redesign by Michele Throssell has refined it beautifully, without losing that essential sense of place.

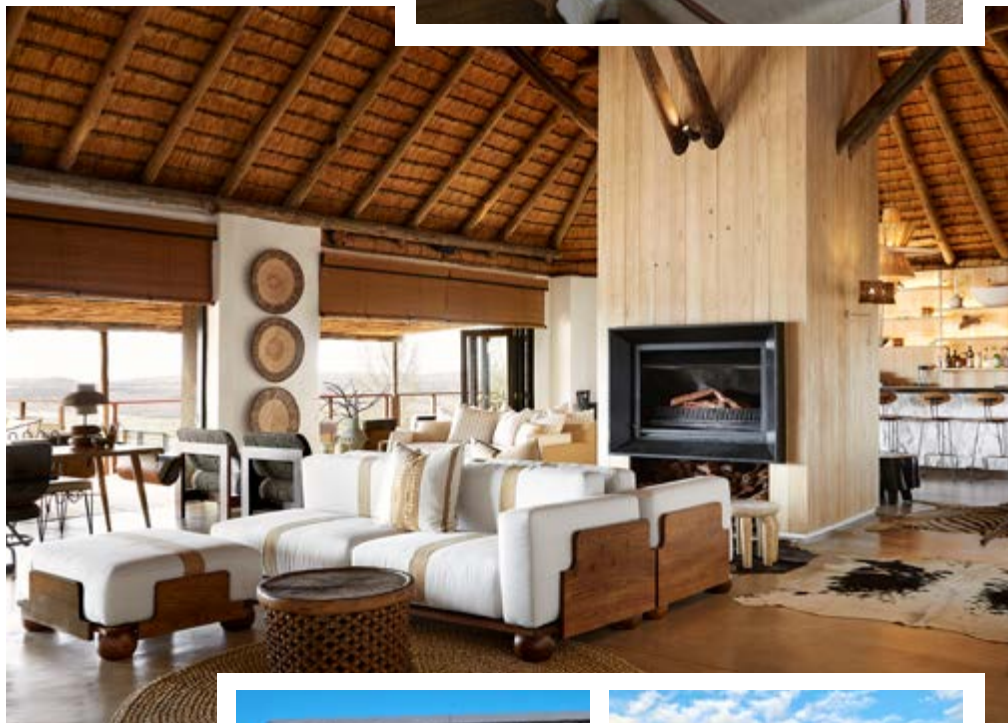
This modern, yet warm aesthetic continues in our suite, the spacious open-plan design – with free-standing bath – offering views through the wide glass doors to the bushveld beyond. It is a sanctuary away from the busyness of life, the perfect spot to relax with a book, have an afternoon nap or luxuriate with an in-room spa treatment. Absolute bliss.

Our early mornings begin with a familiar ritual: early morning coffee before dawn, the sense of quiet anticipation, and then the roll of the game vehicle as we head out into the reserve. The grasslands glow gold, dewdrops catching the first light, and slowly the bush reveals itself. Elephant move with quiet purpose. Zebra, impala and eland graze across the open plains. Two lionesses cross a rocky koppie with intent – the nearby wildebeest unaware, until a kudu's sharp alarm call cuts through the stillness.

What makes Nambiti particularly special is its diversity. Open plains give way to dense bush, rocky hillsides and riverine corridors – a shifting landscape that ensures no two drives are ever quite the same. There are moments of adrenaline, where a sighting takes hold completely, and others that invite stillness – the call of a fish eagle, fresh leopard tracks in the dust, the scent of wild sage beneath the tyres, and the expansive landscapes.

Back at the lodge, time seems to slow. Meals are thoughtful

and beautifully presented, often enjoyed with uninterrupted views over the valley. Afternoons drift easily into evening, marked by sundowners in the bush as the sky turns to amber and rose. And then, as night settles, the sounds return – the whoop of a hyena, the distant call of a lion, the rhythmic note of a fiery-necked nightjar – reminders that



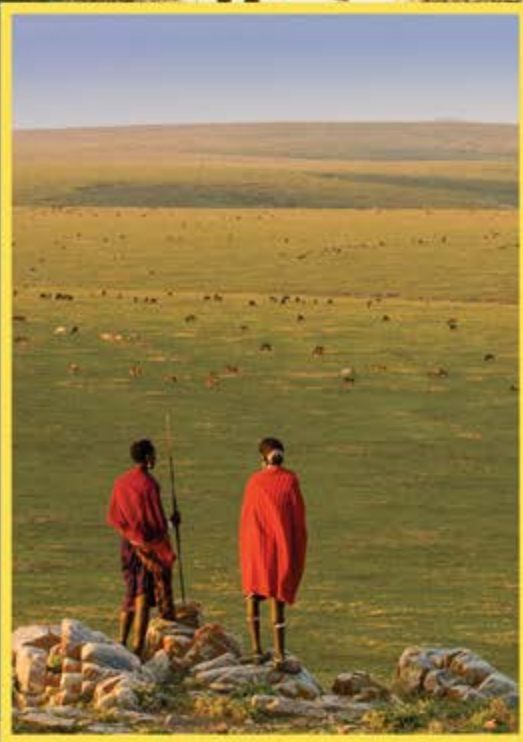
this landscape, once quietened by farming, is alive again.

Nambiti is more than a safari destination. It is a story of restoration – of land, of wildlife, and of community. Through Rob Le Sueur's vision, and the continued partnership with the community, it has become a place where conservation and upliftment exist side by side.

And perhaps that is what lingers most: the sense that this is not just a wilderness reclaimed, but a future carefully, and consciously, rebuilt. One that I hope to return to, time and again.



www.nambiti.com



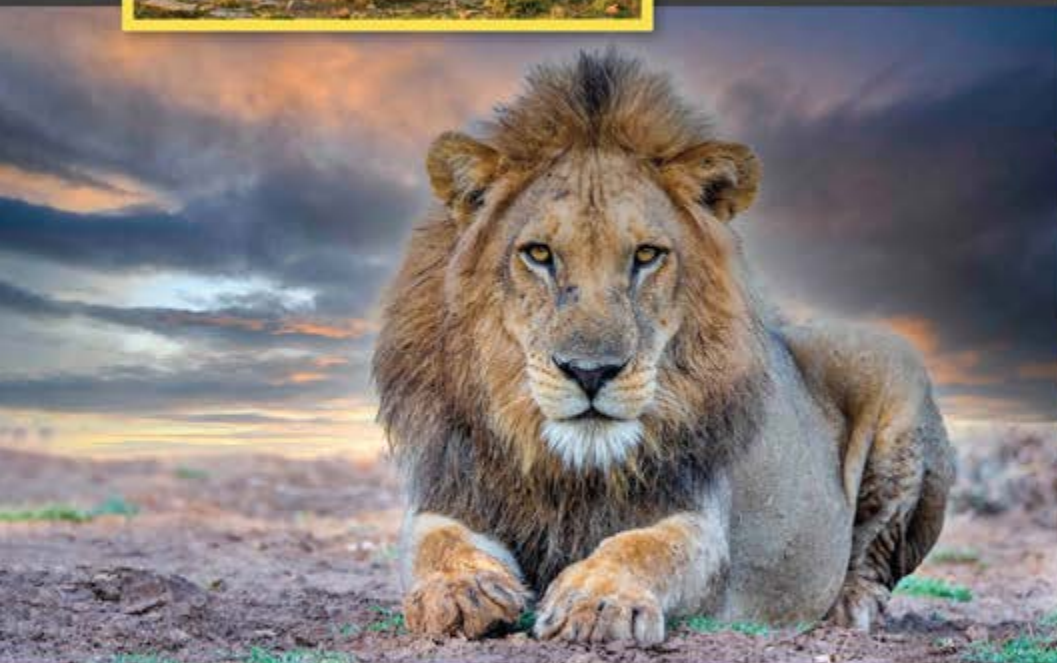
THE ART OF AFRICAN SAFARIS

Experts in planning safaris to South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania, Kenya, Namibia & Mozambique since 1989

Are you or your family thinking about travel in Africa?

David Rogers Travel will guide you in planning multigenerational safaris in East Africa and Southern Africa. All lodges and exclusive private villas in our portfolio are visited personally and offer an exceptional experience.

We offer SADC Rates to residents, best value, and highly personal service to inbound travellers. It will never cost you extra to use our services.



DAVID
ROGERS

TRAVEL

“ It was a fantastic trip, and everything worked like clockwork. So, excellent all around. Amazing animals, great staff and the three camps were each nice with random surprises which were fun. The hot air balloon was also very cool and a perfect change of pace. We look forward to our next African adventure. ” MARC TARPENNING (USA)

For an experience truly connected to nature

Hideaways offers a collection of eco-lodges across South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. Each location is chosen for its rich wildlife and unique, remote setting, providing comfortable, sustainable stays and authentic safari experiences guided by local experts.

NANTWICH LODGE

HWANGE NATIONAL PARK, ZIMBABWE

A remote safari outpost offering exclusive big cat sightings and front-row seats to elephant encounters.



BUMBUSI WILDERNESS CAMP

HWANGE NATIONAL PARK, ZIMBABWE

Step into history and wilderness at this intimate camp set near ancient ruins and natural springs. Ideal for walking safaris.

MHARA RIVER CAMP

MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK, ZIMBABWE

Explore untamed Mana Pools with night drives, walking safaris, and wild encounters on a private concession.



MOGOTLHO SAFARI LODGE

KHWAI RIVER, BOTSWANA

Perched above the Khwai River, this tented safari lodge offers front-row views of Botswana's wildlife corridor and unforgettable game viewing.



CAMP KUZUMA

CHOBE ENCLAVE, BOTSWANA

Elegance meets seclusion at this waterhole-fronted escape, perfect for slow safaris, close elephant encounters, and soul-stirring sunsets.

MANKWE TENTED RETREAT

GREATER MOREMI, BOTSWANA

A peaceful base between Moremi, Chobe and Khwai, offering immersive wildlife experiences and starlit tranquillity.



CAPE POINT HIDEAWAY

CAPE POINT, SOUTH AFRICA

Tucked away in the mountains, this peaceful retreat is the perfect family escape for exploring the quieter side of the Cape.

AMAVA RIVER LODGE

GREATER KRUGER, SOUTH AFRICA

Set along the banks of the Olifants River, this intimate lodge offers an authentic Big Five safari in the heart of Greater Kruger.



TALK TO US

+27(0)21 671 7729

info@hideawaysafrica.com

hideawaysafrica.com



Finding Focus

WORDS DAVID ROGERS **PICS** DAVID ROGERS TRAVEL

With thousands of snappers taking images daily, wildlife photographers wishing to create images that surprise are increasingly challenged.

Thankfully, no two safari days are ever quite the same and even with a group of photographers travelling in the same vehicle, it's amazing how the choice of lens, setting and angle can be so startlingly different. Furthermore, there are some time-tried tips gleaned over many dusty days in the field that may help you keep ahead of the game.

Simplicity

Someone said that true genius is about simplicity and, more often than not, if there's a disturbing element that's not

adding to the drama of your picture, then crop it out. Less is almost always more. Having said this, being a landscape lover, I find that wide angles are fundamental to show the glory of the African landscape, and the habitat where the subject occurs.

Go out of season

By late October in the bush, plump cumulous clouds bulge above the dry plains and thirsty elephants converge in dusty family groups on waterholes – and all at off season rates. This is also predator season

when impala drop their young and antelope are at their most weak and vulnerable.

As the rain falls the first shoots appear and flowers blossom, migrant birds arrive aplenty and opportunities for colourful photographs become abundant.

Go beyond the big five

While we all love capturing the big and hairies in all their splendid forms, don't spend all day with flat lions and rather focus on the smaller subjects like birds, insects, flowers and reptiles. So often it's the colourful chameleon or carmine bee eater that makes it to the centre spread. Sometimes a jackal in golden





The golden light eventually turns to the blue hour — and this too is an exciting time.

grass, a bat eared fox or a pair of fish eagles will win the day.

Low angles rock

In order to get eye level shots of animals, it's often best to choose the front seat of the vehicle. Although you may miss some shots when animals are in long grass, it will leave you well placed for catching eye level shots of leopards walking close to vehicles. Take any opportunity to get out of the vehicle that safety and your guide will allow.

Hides to seek

Choose a camp that either works as a hide (Camp Kazuma in Chobe is an example) or has a separate hide which is built close to the water. It means you can keep shooting all day long. Nantwich in Hwange also has a hide where you can sit and watch elephants and buffalo come to drink through the heat of the day waiting for the action to happen.

Golden Hour

The softest light and most productive time for photography is the hour before and after sunrise and sunset, when rays penetrate through the thickest part of the atmosphere casting everything with a golden glow. After sunset, as the light fades, it's best to crank up the ISO, open your aperture and even underexpose your

images a little to make sure you are shooting at decent shutter speeds. The golden light eventually turns to the blue hour — and this too is an exciting time. Set up a tripod and you will be amazed at how modern cameras can render detail out of really dark scenes.

Rethink light

We often think that it's best to have the light behind us, but shooting with side or back lighting you can often get more interesting images. Backlighting is truly the holy grail for wildlife and works especially well with hairy animals such as baboons, waterbuck and lions when their fringes really catch the light.

Know your gear

Modern cameras are really like modern computers and take some learning, but the key tools of exposure, shutter speed and ISO are essential elements to understand. I am always armed with two cameras — one with a wide angle and another with a zoom of at least 600mm — so I can capture everything from landscapes to birds. Phone cameras are also really powerful, especially for landscapes, macro, low light photography and video.

Keep it RAW

Most professional photographers shoot in RAW format and then use Adobe

Lightroom to “cook” their images by bending light, colour and contrast before exporting as a jpeg. There is hardly an image I take that does not require some post-production. However, I try to keep it real and when crossing the border into AI — adding or removing digital elements — I usually mention this in a caption.

Less is more

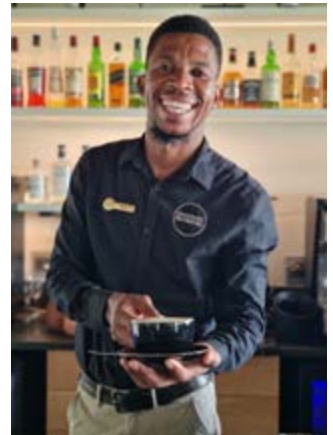
You should shoot freely but cull ruthlessly. On a typical two-week trip, I will shoot upward of 3,000 images and have just 50 or so keepers. Be selective about what you show and if you have trouble narrowing down the list, call a friend and get their input.

See you out there.



www.hideawaysafrica.com





Farm to Fork at Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa

WORDS TESSA BUHRMANN
PICS TESSA BUHRMANN &
MHONDORO SAFARI LODGE
& VILLA

A CONSCIOUS CULINARY JOURNEY IN THE WILD

There was a time when luxury dining was defined by how far ingredients had travelled – oysters flown in from distant shores, out-of-season berries appearing as if by magic. But in recent years, a quiet and powerful shift has taken place. The farm-to-fork movement has redefined fine dining, placing value not on distance travelled, but on freshness, sustainability, traceability and a deep respect for the land. It's about knowing where your food comes from, who grew it, and how it nourishes both body and environment.



What started as a means to fill a need, has developed way beyond what they imagined

Across South Africa's safari landscape, this philosophy has found fertile ground. Remote lodges, once entirely reliant on supply chains stretching hundreds of kilometres, are now cultivating their own gardens, partnering with nearby farmers, and reimagining menus around what is seasonal and abundant. And at Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa in the Welgevonden Game Reserve, farm to fork is not a trend – it's a way of life, which mirrors its wider ethos of conservation, community and connection to nature.

My first visit was during the time of social distancing and face masks – and creative ways of supporting local communities. It was during this time that the lodge developed its own flourishing vegetable garden, not only to supply their kitchen with fresh vegetables and free-range eggs but to provide food parcels to the local community where many of their staff members come from.

What started as a means to fill a need, has developed way beyond what they imagined, to what is now the fully fledged Eco Farm and Welcome Lounge.

It's a short drive from the reserve gate, and soon we're refreshed and heading out to wander among the raised beds and greenhouses with farm manager, Jeanette. In addition to being a feast for the eyes, the bed of rocket is too tempting to ignore, as are the gorgeous plump ripe cherry tomatoes – delicious. Much of the lodge's produce is grown here – herbs, vegetables, fruits and delicate edible flowers – harvested each morning for the day's menu. There are no pesticides or synthetic fertilisers; instead, organic waste is composted and returned to the soil, completing a cycle that feels as old as the land itself. Nature's way.

Leaving behind the fragrance of aromatic herbs we wander through orchards, outdoor

vegetable beds and past the extensive chicken coop – before sitting down at a table brim-full with freshly picked goodness, bread straight from the oven and speciality pies bursting with the goodness. What a welcome!

Beyond the Eco Farm and the lodge's own garden, is the Mhondoro Farmhouse Production Kitchen, established on a newly acquired farm next to the Welgevonden Game Reserve. Mhondoro CEO Fritz Breytenbach had alluded to this when I first visited, and for him, this is the realisation of that dream. "The kitchen serves as both a culinary hub and a training facility", he tells me. "We have employed two new staff members who are being upskilled while game meat is processed and deli items prepared for the lodge kitchens." Additionally, the establishment of the farm has created new jobs for members of the surrounding community.



These handcrafted deli products include Mhondoro's gourmet ice creams – which are exceptionally moreish, freshly baked breads, rusks for those

early morning coffees, and a selection of cured and aged meats, as well as other artisanal products, all curated to elevate the lodge's fine dining experience.

Did I mention the biltong and dry wors? Best enjoyed, of course, with a sundowner in hand as the bush begins to breathe and the sky begins to darken.

But no story about Mhondoro is complete without mentioning the safari experience, and the wonderful cuisine that is very much part of it.

Mornings begin in the soft golden light, when the bush is still deciding whether to wake. We follow the tracks of an elusive leopard, pause beside a breeding herd of elephants feeding calmly around the vehicle, and a little later, stop for coffee. Not just any coffee – ranger's coffee, laced with a splash of Amarula

– served alongside freshly baked muffins and homemade crunchies. On another morning, the bush reveals an unexpected indulgence: pancakes, freshly prepared by Lebo and Kamogelo. Such a treat!

Back at the lodge, brunch is an option: fresh fruit, warm breads and garden-grown accompaniments. But it's the waterhole hide that draws me in. Reached via an underground tunnel, it opens out at eye level with the water. Zebra and warthog drift in and out of frame, birds flicker across the surface. But the highlight of my pre-lunch interlude comes when a large bull elephant ambles up to the lodge swimming pool for a drink – something they do with surprising regularity. What a privilege to have a close encounter with one of Welgevonden's gentle giants. Followed by a light, seasonal and thoughtfully prepared lunch – a reflection of Mhondoro's farm-to-fork philosophy.

Our afternoon game drive has us tracking lions, pausing for rhino, lingering over the curious behaviour of wildebeest. Giraffe, zebra, impala and even a cheetah on a kill all makes for incredibly

memorable safari. Add to that, the gin bar at sunset.

But dinner is where Mhondoro's farm to fork philosophy truly shines. Plated perfection in the elegant dining space, reflecting both refinement and authenticity. A tender cut of locally sourced beef served with roasted root vegetables and herb oils made from the garden's bounty. Served with proudly South African wine. Or dinner under a starry African sky, accompanied by the harmonious voices of the staff, a crackling fire and delicious soul food – slow-cooked oxtail, fragrant curries and boerewors with pap.

In a world increasingly disconnected from the origins of what we consume, Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa offers something refreshingly real. Where farm to fork is more than a menu concept, it's a celebration of place – a reminder that the finest dining experiences often begin right beneath our feet.



LUXURY ESCAPES

PREMIUM TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

DISCOVER THE WORLD IN ULTIMATE LUXURY



COMPLETELY UNIQUE SAFARIS



Escape to pristine beaches with private villas, crystal waters, and world-class amenities. Experience paradise with personalized butler service and exclusive beach access.



Embark on unforgettable African safaris with expert guides. Witness the Big Five in their natural habitat while staying at luxury tented camps under starlit skies.



Indulge in curated cultural experiences and private yacht excursions. Explore iconic destinations with VIP access and bespoke itineraries tailored to your desires.

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- ✔ Stay at 5-star luxury resorts
- ✔ Private jet or first-class transfers
- ✔ Michelin-starred dining experiences
- ✔ Private tours with expert local guides

LUXURY HIGHLIGHTS:

- ✔ Exclusive access to iconic landmarks
- ✔ 24/7 dedicated concierge service
- ✔ World-renowned spa treatments
- ✔ Bespoke adventures crafted for you

BOOK YOUR JOURNEY →

More Information:



Website
www.cusafaris.com





Floating Through Silence

Long before aviation became an industry of schedules and jet engines, flight was an act of wonder – fragile, improbable, and worthy of celebration. From the very beginning, that celebration came with a glass of Champagne.

The tradition dates back to 1783, when the pioneering Montgolfier

brothers launched the first untethered hot-air balloon in France. While crowds marvelled, farmers were less impressed when the strange flying machines landed in their fields. Early aeronauts soon discovered that offering Champagne smoothed relations. What began as a diplomatic gesture quickly

became a cherished ritual – a toast to safe landings and the winds that carried them.

Today, more than two centuries later, the tradition remains inseparable from hot-air ballooning. The journey itself is unhurried and quietly magical, drifting wherever the sky allows.

Across Africa, the celebratory glass now follows extraordinary aerial adventures – from the towering dunes of the Namib Desert to the wildlife-rich plains of the Maasai Mara and the bushveld of South Africa's Mabula Game Reserve – each flight ending, as tradition dictates, with a sparkling toast beneath an open sky.



Namibia – Where Silence Takes Flight

WORDS & PICS NAMIB SKY BALLOON SAFARIS

There are moments in travel that entertain you. And then there are moments that quietly rearrange you. A sunrise hot air balloon flight over the Namib Desert belongs firmly in the latter.

Long before the first light touches the dunes, the desert is still – vast, ancient, and waiting. A soft flame breaks the silence as the balloon envelope slowly rises against a sky shifting from indigo to gold. Then, almost imperceptibly, the earth releases you.

Yet the experience begins well before the balloon leaves the ground. In the cool pre-dawn quiet, guests are welcomed by a close-knit team of pilots and ground crew whose calm confidence sets the tone for the morning. There is time for coffee, introductions, and quiet anticipation. Every movement – from briefing to inflation – carries the ease of experience and the pride of people who know this landscape intimately.

Once airborne, you drift into one of the oldest deserts on earth, carried entirely by the wind. There is no engine, no vibration, no imposed direction. Just the whisper of the burner and the quiet awe of suspension above a landscape sculpted over millions of years.

From above, the Namib reveals patterns invisible from the ground. Towering red dunes cast long shadows across pale plains. Ancient mountains rise from the desert floor like weathered guardians. Dry riverbeds snake through the sand like calligraphy, while oryx move slowly below in a world that suddenly feels infinite.

It is not only the scale that humbles – it is the silence. A profound stillness that allows you to hear your own breath and feel the immensity of space. In that hour between night and day, you understand why the Namib remains one of the last true wildernesses on earth.

The landing, gentle and unhurried, is followed by Namib Sky's signature desert breakfast – an elegant spread served in the open wilderness, where each group is seated at their own private table. Champagne glasses catch the morning light as stories are exchanged beneath vast blue skies.

If there is one experience that defines Namibia – one moment that captures its raw beauty and grandeur – it is this: rising with the sun above the Namib.

Because some journeys change your itinerary. And some quietly change you.

<https://balloon-safaris.com>

Once airborne, you drift into one of the oldest deserts on earth, carried entirely by the wind.



Sutirra Budiman - Unsplash

Drifting Above the Mara

WORDS SARAH KINGDOM

It's just before dawn in Maasai Mara National Reserve. Our morning had begun long before sunrise, when we climbed into our safari vehicle at Cottars 1920s Camp and set off across the park in near-total darkness. Headlights traced a winding track, catching the flicker of antelope eyes and the shadowy bulk of elephants slipping quietly into the bush.

By 6 am, we reach the launch site. There's already a quiet urgency in the air. Great swathes of coloured fabric lie stretched across the ground as the crew works methodically, coaxing the balloon to life with fans and bursts of flame. We stand watching as something shapeless becomes something extraordinary.

A safety briefing follows – clear, efficient, and thankfully brief – cut slightly short by the sudden arrival of safari ants (sifufu), sending everyone into a flurry of

swiping and laughter. Then it's time. We clamber into the basket and crouch low, waiting.

The balloon rises almost without announcement. No jolt, no rush – just a gentle, almost imperceptible lift. By the time we're told to stand, we're already airborne.

We drift higher. Ten metres, fifty, one hundred. The Mara unfolds beneath us, washed in early morning light – an endless green expanse that seems to breathe. There's no real sensation of height, only a strange stillness, as though we are suspended and the earth is moving quietly below.

As the light strengthens, life reveals itself. Elephants move in loose formation along well-worn paths. Zebra gather in shifting patterns, their stripes blurring into the landscape. Thomson's gazelles and topi dart through the grass, seemingly unaware of our silent passage above.

Then, something shifts. The pilot lifts us higher, and slowly, the landscape dissolves. We rise into cloud, and the world becomes white and weightless. The horizon disappears. Sound falls away, save for the occasional whisper of the burner. It feels less like flying, more like drifting through a dream.

When we descend again, the Mara returns in breathtaking scale – vast, uninterrupted, stretching to every horizon.

The landing is as gentle as our ascent. We crouch, brace, and touch down with little more than a soft bump. In just an hour, the Mara has revealed itself anew – quiet, expansive, and utterly unforgettable from the stillness of the sky.

Cottar's 1920's Camp:
<http://www.cottars.com/>

Hot Air Safaris:
<https://www.maraballooning.com/aboutus.html>

Suspended in Stillness

WORDS TESSA BUHRMANN

It's the quiet that stays with me.

That particular kind of bushveld quiet you only find in the still of the morning – when the air is cool enough to feel fresh against your skin, and the landscape seems to hover in that in-between moment, gently stirring and awakening.

I'm staying at the luxurious Safari Plains in the Mabula Private Game Reserve; my first action on waking is to check the weather – thankfully it is still, so we are good to go. A short game drive later has us standing in the half-light, anticipation building as the balloon slowly fills.

And then, almost without noticing it, we are rising.

No rush, no dramatic moment. The ground simply falling away and suddenly we're suspended above it all, drifting into a silence that feels deeper the higher we go. The only real sound is the occasional burst of the burner – a soft whoosh that quickly fades, leaving us once again wrapped in stillness.

Below, the bush began to reveal itself in the early morning light. Long shadows stretch from every tree, while hints of green push through the winter palette – new growth catching the sun, the landscape quietly shifting seasons. From above, the patterns became clearer: game paths thread through the veld and trees cast elongated shapes across the earth.

We drift slowly, carried by calm morning air, the visibility beautifully clear in the cool of the season. We can see for miles, the view extending to the Waterberg Mountains in the distance. And then, movement.

A small group of zebra making their way through fresh growth. A giraffe, impossibly elegant, pauses just long enough to glance up before continuing on. A white rhino trundles behind her young calf – such a privilege to see. There's something quietly surreal about this, the way the wildlife carries on as if this enormous balloon above them is the most natural thing in the world.

No engines. No urgency. No sense of intrusion. Just the bush waking up beneath us.

The landing comes as gently as the ascent – a soft touch back to earth, almost unnoticed. The vastness folds in, replaced by the immediacy of ground beneath our feet. It was a different kind of safari altogether. Slower. Softer. More about feelings than sightings.

And then, as tradition dictates, a glass of bubbly in hand – we toast to a beautiful flight, a gentle landing, and a moment that will linger long after it's over.



Mabula Private Game Reserve
www.mabula.com

Safari Plains
www.safariplains.co.za

Bill Harrop's Original Balloon Safaris - <https://balloon.co.za>

Inspired by Mother Nature: CHEF VUSI MBATHA OF KRUGER SHALATI

WORDS TESSA BUHRMANN | PICS KRUGER SHALATI / TESSA BUHRMANN



Perched dramatically on the historic Selati Bridge above the Sabie River, Kruger Shalati has always been about perspective – about seeing the wilderness differently. In the kitchen, that philosophy continues under the careful guidance of Head Chef Vusi Mbatha.



For Chef Vusi, dining here is not separate from the safari experience – it is an extension of it. “I want the dining experience to be an extension of the safari,” he explains. The thrill of a morning game drive, the golden wash of bushveld light, the sense of anticipation – all of it should carry through to the table. A meal, he believes, should hold that same sense of discovery.

His inspiration is simple and deeply rooted: Mother Nature. Being located in the Lowveld of the Kruger National Park, his menus are shaped by what the land offers. “It’s about being true to where you are,” he says. “Serving what is available to the region. Asking the question – how do we be unique?”

The answer lies in what he calls a “Kruger to fork” philosophy. Almost everything is sourced within a 30-kilometre radius. There is an on-site garden, and close relationships with local suppliers who understand the kitchen’s vision. Indigenous ingredients such as imifino and morogo (wild spinach), amasi (fermented milk) and even rare

Mongongo nuts find their way onto the menu. Some, like the Mongongo nuts, come at a price – rare, labour-intensive and time-consuming to prepare – but worth it for authenticity.

“I grew up eating amasi,” Vusi reflects. “So now the question is, how do we balance it? It could be too sour, too earthy – but if we love it and cook it with respect, others will love it too.”

Finding that balance is key. Many Shalati guests have travelled the world and tasted everything. What they encounter here is different – proudly South African, deeply local, yet refined for the global stage. Presentation matters. “We eat with our eyes first,” he says, and the plating is exquisite – colours echoing the bushveld beyond the bridge.

Behind the scenes, it takes a team. Vusi leads a kitchen of 36 staff, with between 12 and 15 on shift at any given time. After years cooking in Johannesburg, he now calls the bush home. “Every day there’s a surprise, every day there’s a challenge,” he says. “But the team is strong.”

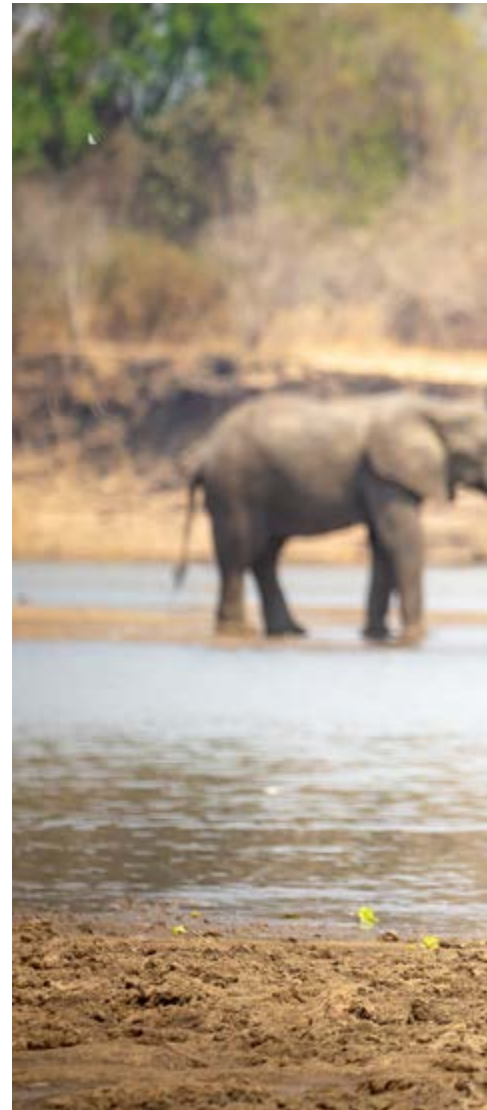
At the heart of the garden stands Mr Philemon, whose passion is as palpable as the scent of fresh rocket and spring onions. Taught by his grandmother and later mentored by Phineas Makubela, he has spent over 15 years cultivating soil and knowledge. Compost is made from kitchen greens; wooden boxes were built by maintenance at his request. Spinach, tomatoes, cabbage, beetroot – all flourish under his care.

He works closely with Chef Vusi, guiding the team on how to harvest correctly. “Don’t pick from the top,” he insists. “Pick from the side so it can keep growing.” It’s a small lesson in sustainability – one that ensures the garden, like the philosophy behind it, continues to thrive.

Dining alongside above the Sabie River, with elephants moving along its banks, one understands completely: here, flavour, landscape and community are inseparable – and every plate tells a story of place.



© Marcus Westberg



South Luangwa: WHERE TOURISM, CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY MEET

WORDS VICTORIA FOORD & KIM BARNETT | **PICS** SUPPLIED

In Zambia's South Luangwa Valley, conservation, tourism and community development are deeply interconnected.

In the remote Luangwa Valley of eastern Zambia, the Luangwa River curves through a landscape of towering ebony trees, open grasslands and seasonal lagoons alive with birds and teeming with wildlife. It's a place known for its remarkable sightings and for pioneering the walking safari. This is South Luangwa National Park, where people and nature live side by side, and where tourism has become a powerful force for both community and conservation.

Beyond the visitor experience lies a conservation framework that genuinely works. The same environment that draws safari-seekers from around the world is home to rural communities whose livelihoods and future prospects are closely tied to the health of the land and its wildlife.



At Conservation South Luangwa (CSL), conservation and community development are inseparable. Responsible tourism plays a central role in sustaining both, and the Luangwa Conservation & Community Fund (LCCF) demonstrates how this relationship can work in practice.

LCCF member lodges create jobs and deliver high-quality tourism experiences while contributing to conservation and community initiatives through a per-person bed night levy. Launched in 2011, thanks to Andy Hogg and other community-focused leaders, the LCCF raises hundreds of thousands of dollars annually for four core non-profits: Conservation South Luangwa, Zambian Carnivore Programme,

Chipembele Wildlife Education Trust and Project Luangwa.

In 2025 alone, CSL received more than USD 160,000 in vital unrestricted funding through its ten LCCF member lodges.

Through the LCCF, funds contributed by safari operators and lodges help equip wildlife rangers, support rapid responses to human-wildlife conflict and strengthen local capacity for coexistence.

For communities living alongside wildlife, these benefits are practical and visible. Wildlife becomes a source of opportunity rather than a distant conservation ideal. At the same time, healthy ecosystems and secure wildlife populations make

South Luangwa an even stronger safari destination.

Initiatives such as Project Luangwa demonstrate how tourism demand for cultural experiences and crafts can generate sustainable income streams. These programmes support skills development and employment, particularly for women and young people, helping to build resilient local economies.

This kind of sustained collaboration reflects a growing understanding across the region that tourism delivers its greatest value when conservation and community benefits are built into the core business model.



South Luangwa is a shining example of how tourism can benefit all.



Conservation South Luangwa and Project Luangwa are among the first vetted Community and Conservation Partners in Africa's Eden Tourism's Community and Conservation Network, an open-source platform linking tourism businesses with credible grassroots organisations.

Organisations listed must be formally registered, financially transparent and able to demonstrate measurable impact, giving tourism partners confidence that their support reaches the destinations.

As travellers increasingly seek meaningful experiences, South Luangwa is a shining example of how tourism can benefit all. Partnerships between locally led NGOs, conservation organisations, tourism operators and networks such as Africa's Eden help ensure that destinations like South Luangwa remain wild while communities can be secure and benefit.

In South Luangwa, responsible tourism is not an abstract idea. It is a tried and tested, long-

standing system that continues to evolve through collaboration and shared commitment.



- cslzambia.org/
- www.projectluangwa.org/
- africaseden.travel/





Discover Your Next Adventure



ABOUT US

- Deep local knowledge
- Handcrafted journeys
- First-hand experience
- Soulful travel experiences



ENVIRONMENT

- Solar power & sustainable materials
- Supporting low-impact safaris
- Minimising carbon footprints
- Engage with nature respectfully



SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Supporting local economies
- Collaborating with locals
- Encouraging cultural exchange



CONSERVATION

- Committed to wildlife protection
- Supporting anti-poaching programmes
- Encouraging responsible tourism



ACCOMMODATION

- Hand-selected accommodation with local charm
- Designed for comfort and harmony with nature



076 430 1057 | enquiries@raharetreats.com



www.montusi.co.za
+27 72 591 1210
info@montusi.co.za

The **CAVERN**

www.cavern.co.za
+27 83 701 5724
info@cavern.co.za

Sungubala

www.sungubala.co.za
+27 63 030 7161
info@sungubala.co.za



“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 came into it” Bill Carte, Founder; 1941

NORTHERN DRAKENSBERG | SOUTH AFRICA

