

ISSUE 2: AUG - OCT 2025

southern africa travel

Snorkelling secret bays in
Seychelles

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WELCOME



EDITOR'S COMMENT

"Travelling – first it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller." – the words of the great Berber-Moroccan scholar and explorer, Ibn Battuta, capture the essence of what travel means to me. It's not just about ticking off destinations or snapping the perfect photo; it's about the yearning to be moved, inspired, and connected.

More than the scenery or the itinerary, it's the moments that move us – the quiet awe of a vast landscape, the joy of discovering something unexpected, and, most importantly, the people we meet along the way. Time and again, I'm reminded that it's the meaningful conversations – with guides who generously share their knowledge, with hosts who welcome us into their world, and with the many warm, passionate individuals who work in tourism – that truly enrich our journeys. These encounters offer us a deeper sense of place and perspective, and it's this connection that makes travel so worthwhile. And that inspires every journey and every page of Travel Southern Africa.

In this issue, we snorkel the crystal-clear waters of the Seychelles, trace African connections through time on the remote island of St Helena, and cycle through the heart of Johannesburg. We reconnect in the soulful wilds of Namibia, search for spring's floral spectacle on the West Coast, and explore the beach-meets-bush beauty of the Zululand Coast.

We also shine a light on inspiring conservation milestones and community-driven tourism projects – stories that show just how powerfully tourism can impact lives and protect our natural heritage.

So, whether you're planning your next adventure or simply dreaming of new horizons, may this issue inspire you to keep exploring, connecting, and storytelling.

Welcome to Travel Southern Africa. The journey starts here.

Tessa

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We welcome editorial and photographic submissions to the magazine.

Accompanying images should be sent in high-res jpg and minimum 3MB in size.

Please send a synopsis of the proposed article to
tessa@responsibletraveller.co.za
for consideration.

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Elise is a Cape Town-based travel writer with a love for wild places and remote islands. Her adventures include marvelling at Victoria Falls and navigating 4x4s across the Omani desert. Elise's vivid storytelling captures the spirit of Africa and beyond.

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Pg 14 & 36



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With camera in hand, Ryan journeys through life, capturing the human spirit in image and word. His work transforms subjects into living narratives, offering glimpses into places both familiar and unknown, always grounded in connection and curiosity.

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Warren is the man behind Warren Green & Associates; a company committed to supporting sustainable travel initiatives for the past 15 years. Through travel, he is committed to changing perceptions and influencing behaviour to positively impact our planet.

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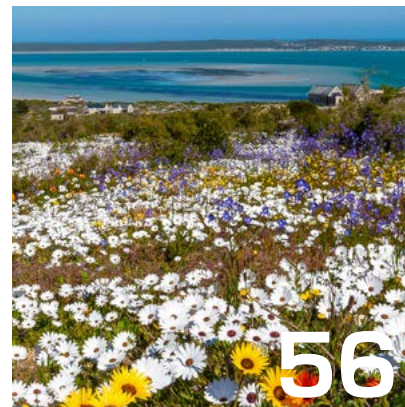
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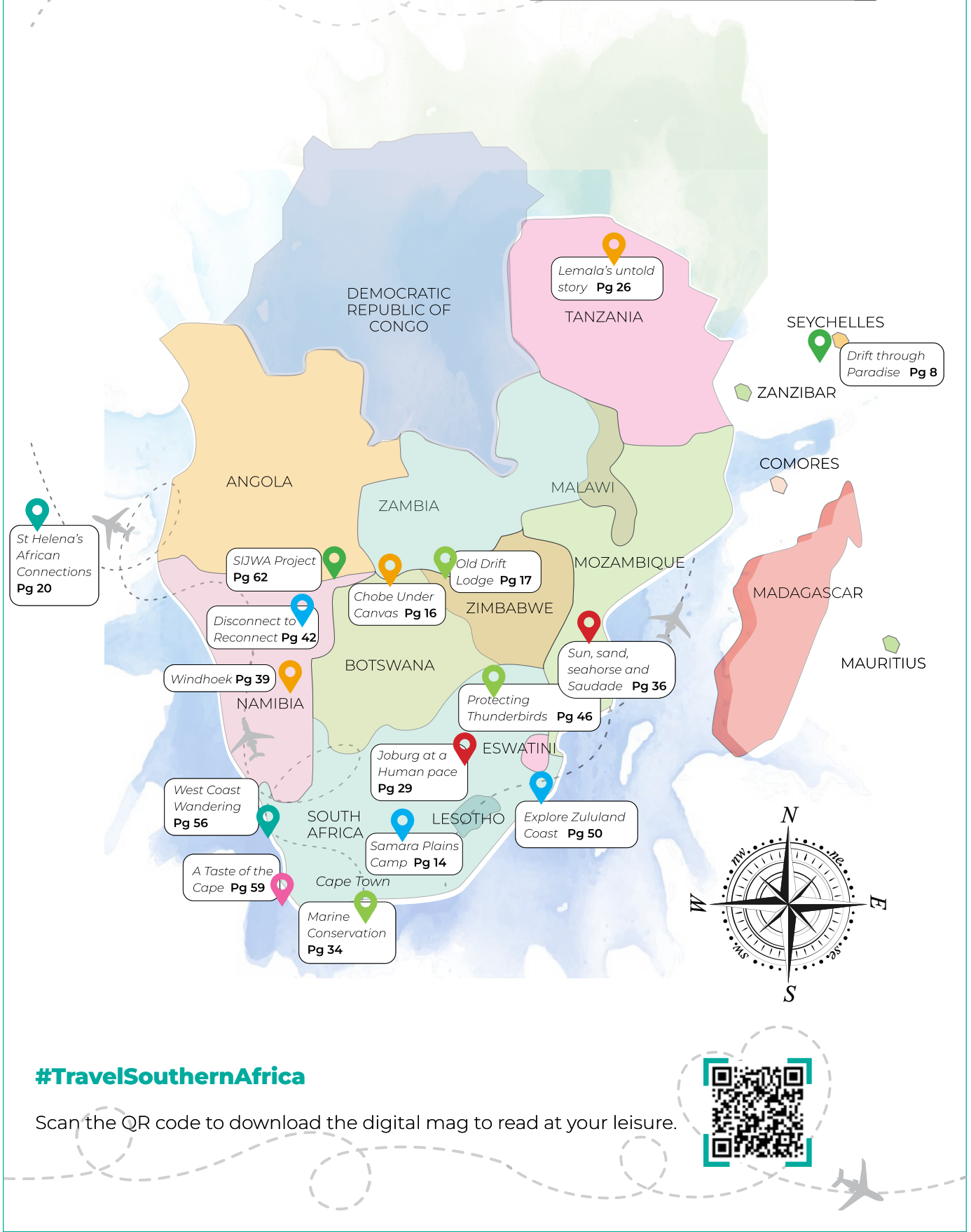


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Melissa, founder of All About Africa Sustainability Consulting, is an established conscious travel advocate within Africa's safari tourism industry. She connects ethical buyers with impactful suppliers, promoting transparency, empowerment, and genuine impact across the tourism supply chain. **Pg 62**



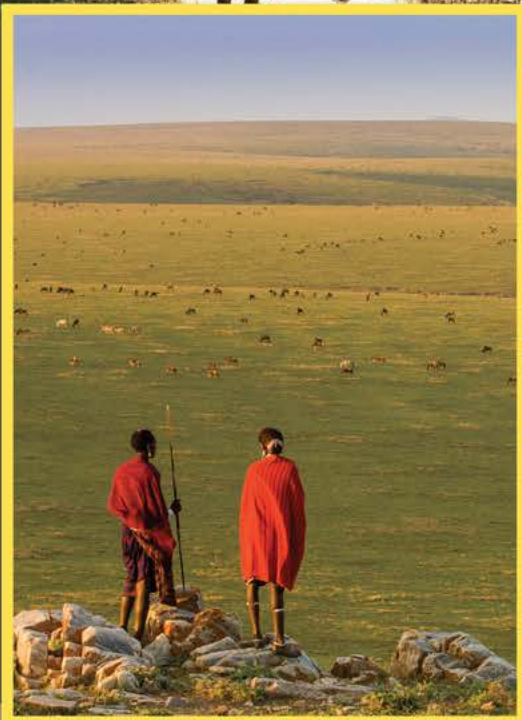
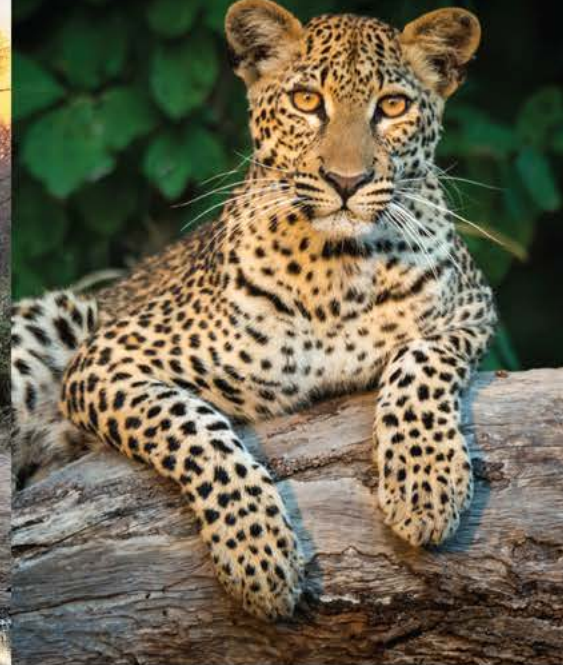
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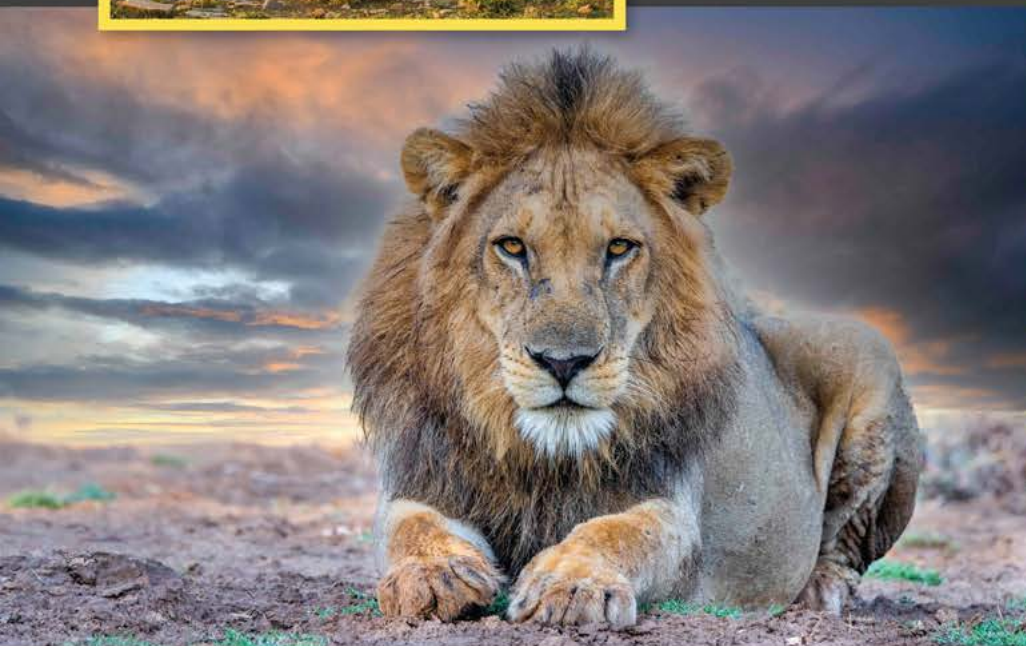
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TRAVEL

“ 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)

DRIFT THROUGH PARADISE...

SNORKELLING SECRET BAYS IN SEYCHELLES

Words & Pics **Elise Kirsten**

On Praslin, unwinding isn't a conscious act. It just happens. The air is thick with salt and the slow rhythms of island life, as if stress itself has been exiled, carried off by the trade winds to some faraway place.

I arrived at dusk, the ferry from Mahé pulling into port under a bruised sky, the water reflecting the last gold streaks of the sun. Daniel, my taxi driver, navigated the winding road through towering palms, past the entrance to Vallée de Mai, where ancient coco de mer palms grow in tangled profusion. "I'd never swap my country for yours," he said, shaking his head as we talked about the weather. He hated the cold. Over the next few days, I'd start to see why – drifting between reefs teeming with life, sinking into the island's easy hospitality, and realising that, here, paradise isn't just a postcard promise. It's real.

Daniel pulled over at Yvon's Tropical Villa where I'd be staying and pointed to the tree nearby. "See, up there," he said. "It's a black parrot. Our national bird." I got out of the car and stood staring at the bird, endemic to the Seychelles and found almost exclusively on this island. "Oh wow," I whispered, not realising this would be my only sighting.

I was warmly greeted by Yvon Esther's daughter, Jaela, and his granddaughter, Gia. Their family-run guest house is footsteps from Grand Anse Beach and would be my base for the next few days. After settling in, Jaela brought me a home-cooked meal of fragrant fish curry and rice. I ate this on the balcony, enjoying the tropical night air, before returning to the air-conditioned apartment to sleep.





Eager to be back in the water, after scuba diving off Mahé a few days before, I'd signed up for a day of snorkelling around Praslin and its neighbouring islands. The next morning, Liroy Lesperance, owner of Geoli Charters, collected me and the rest of the group from our various nearby hotels. One stop was the Coco de Mer Hotel, which stood out for its gorgeous entrance foyer and a pavilion stretching into the ocean, complete with a rim-flow pool and sunbathing nets suspended above the sea.

A sleek Silvercraft 36 HT powerboat was waiting for us, anchored off the beach. After removing Birkenstocks and flip-flops, our group of 13 waded through the shallows and climbed on board. The skipper, Jamie Vidot, and our guide for the day, Cedrick Dugasse, who introduced himself as Rocco, greeted us warmly and explained the itinerary. Then the engines roared to life, and we were off, cutting across crystalline water, mesmerised by the beauty of it all. At one point, Rocco gestured to a small island on the starboard side. "That's privately owned by an Italian family," he said. It struck me how special it was to experience all this beauty without owning a slice of it.

Our first snorkelling stop was Anse Petite Cour, on Praslin's northern fringe. One by one, we slipped into the warm Indian Ocean's embrace. Rocco pointed towards a band of coral and called from the deck, "That's The Aquarium. Swim over and you'll see why!"

I finned toward the reef, where a school of striped sergeant majors darted around me, and electric-blue damselfish hovered above the coral, scattering as I neared. A Moorish idol cruised elegantly by, and then to my delight, I spotted a parrot fish with cyan-and-yellow scales and distinctive beak-like front teeth.

Back on the boat, the sounds of laughter and reggae music mingled in the air as we sped off once more, sea spray catching the light. I felt immensely content, sitting at the bow with the

sun on my skin, salty lips and my hair blowing in the wind.

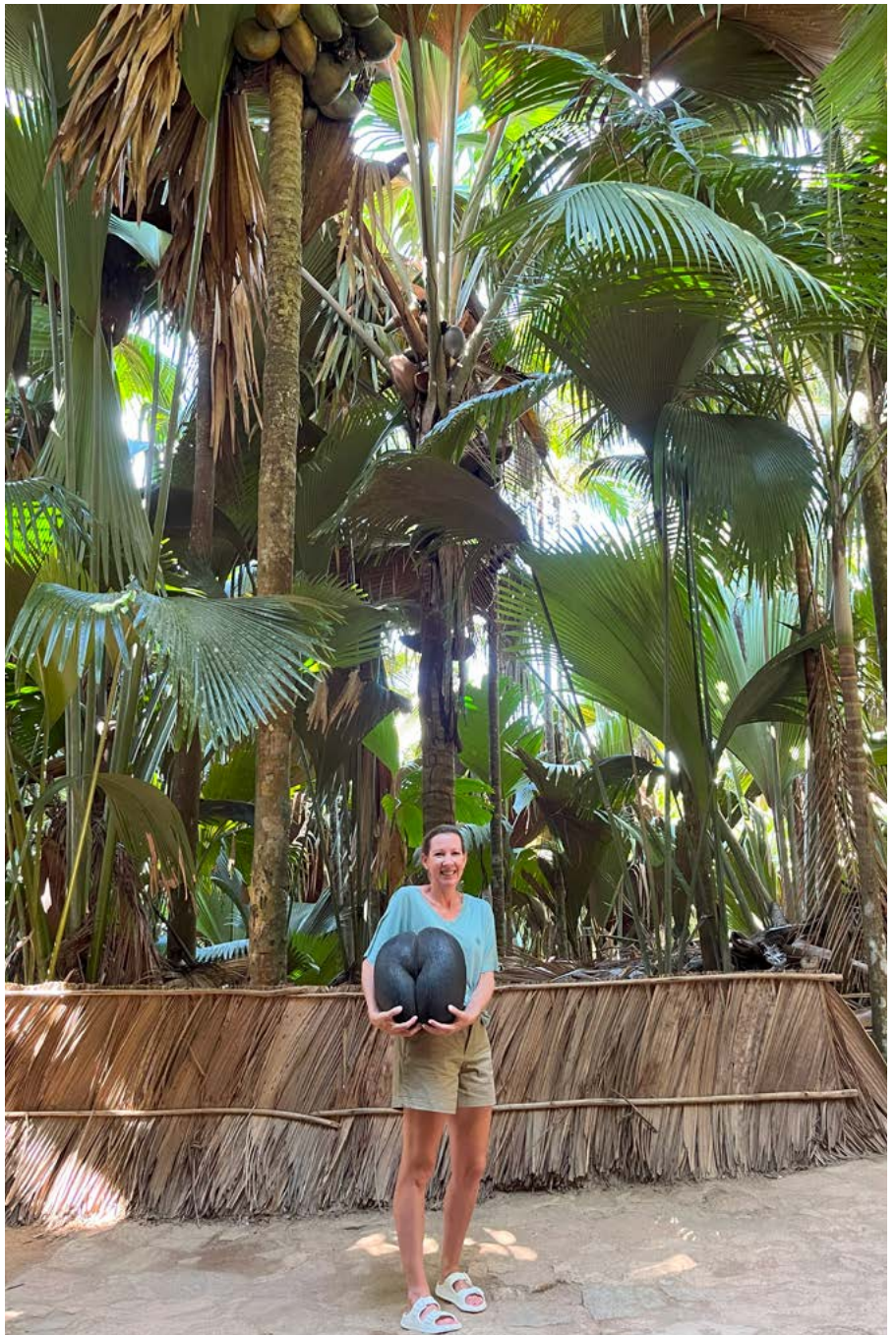
The tiny island of St Pierre came into view. Composed of fluted, granite pinnacles, topped with swaying palms, it rose from the water like a beacon. The ocean around it shifted from translucent turquoise to gin-clear. It was so transparent that we could see fish schooling beneath the stern. A couple of yachts bobbed nearby. Jamie manoeuvred the boat into the perfect position and Rocco took photos of each of us with this idyllic backdrop.

Our next destination was Curieuse, home to some of the Seychelles' most famous residents, the endemic, giant Aldabra tortoises. We anchored at Anse José, a wide, tree-lined beach where we had an hour to swim and unwind before a gentle (less than two-kilometre) hike to Baie Laraie, where the tortoise sanctuary was located.

Rocco led us along a gently sloping trail that wound through indigenous forest. Takamaka trees and coco de mer palms shaded the path, and Rocco, ever the entertainer, pointed to a coco de mer palm and said with a grin, "The female is like a bum bum... and the male is like a ding ding." He was alluding to the shape of the female tree's large seed, which can weigh up to 20 kilograms and resembles a voluptuous female bottom, and to the male tree's phallic-shaped catkin, which can grow up to a metre long.

On Praslin, I visited Vallée de Mai, a UNESCO-listed nature reserve, where I got a deeper understanding of this unique species. My guide, Medina Laboudalloniana, greeted me with a bright smile and infectious enthusiasm. Her passion for the island's biodiversity was inspired by her father, Dr Victorin Laboudalloniana, who played a vital role in protecting Seychelles' endangered birds, including the Seychelles warbler, paradise flycatcher and the black parrot. "My father worked a lot with the black parrot project. He was the one who had the copyright for the black parrot nests. He built a metal box that was covered, which helped increase the black parrot population."

As we walked under the dense forest canopy, Medina introduced me to the fragrant "four-spices" tree, so named because its leaves carry the scent of cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, and cloves. "The leaves are used for cooking. They give curries a good flavour," she said. Then she pointed out a 15-year-old coco de mer palm. "That's still a juvenile," she said. "It takes 25 years to reach maturity when we can tell whether it's a





Cedric Dugasse, aka Rocco



male or female plant. It takes another six or seven years for the seed to ripen. No one is allowed to eat it.” She explained how the seed is technically edible, but it’s protected due to its rarity and slow reproduction cycle.

Back on Curieuse, the hike was gentle, although the sun was hot, and I looked forward to dipping back into the ocean. We made our way across long wooden boardwalks raised above a thick mangrove forest. “The mangrove sediment feeds all sorts of creatures,” said Rocco. “For instance, fiddler crabs dig down and eat the ‘bad’ sediment, making it healthier for other species.”

The path opened up onto a shaded lawn next to the beach at Baie Laraie, full of giant tortoises. Some munched contentedly, while others lounged under the shade.

Rocco pointed to one of the prehistoric-looking giants. “The record we have for the longest-living tortoise on the Seychelles is 165 years old, although they can live to around 200 years. Currently on Curieuse, the oldest tortoise, named Captain Morgan, is over 120 years old.” He then explained that we could feed them lady-finger bananas if we wanted. “But keep your fingers clear, as they don’t know the difference.”

Lunch was a relaxed affair of grilled jackfish, rice, salads, and various braaied meats served next to the sea. I chatted to my companions for the day and enjoyed a Seybrew, the local beer, at the water’s edge. The bay is hedged on either side by large granite boulders and palm trees run along its shore. It was a postcard-perfect Seychelles’ setting. As I drank in the scenery, I watched a ghost crab scuttle across the shore, its quick movements a striking contrast to the slow progress of a tortoise that had made its way onto the sand beneath a palm tree.

We ended the day with a snorkelling stop at Anse La Farine. Set in another cove along Praslin’s southeast coast, the bay

felt secret. If I could have paused time, I would have. Beneath the surface, two batfish drifted past, their dorsal fins trailing like banners, pipefish hovered above, and sergeant majors shimmered in the light. Each glimpse felt like a gift.

Back aboard, Rocco and Jamie passed around blue plastic cups filled with local, Takamaka rum and orange juice. The afternoon sun was warming, but without the midday intensity, the ocean shimmered in layers of turquoise and sapphire, and music floated into the warm air. I’ve never enjoyed a rum cocktail more.

essentials:

Getting there

Air Seychelles flies from Cape Town and Johannesburg to Mahé. From Mahé, get a connecting flight to Praslin, or take a ferry. Air Seychelles also offers direct flights from Johannesburg to Praslin.



<https://www.airseychelles.com>

What to do:

On Praslin: Play golf at Constance Lemuria, the only 18-hole championship golf course in the Seychelles. Visit Vallée de Mai nature reserve. Take a boat trip to Visit St Pierre and Curieuse Islands or to the island of La Digue (home to Anse Source d’Argent, often described as the world’s most beautiful beach).

On Mahé: Visit Takama Rum distillery for a fun-filled and informative tour. For a glimpse into local life, visit the Sir Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke fresh produce market in the Seychelles’ tiny capital city, Victoria. Eat at Marie Antoinette’s, also in Victoria. Go scuba diving with Big Blue Divers and visit Beau Vallon Beach.



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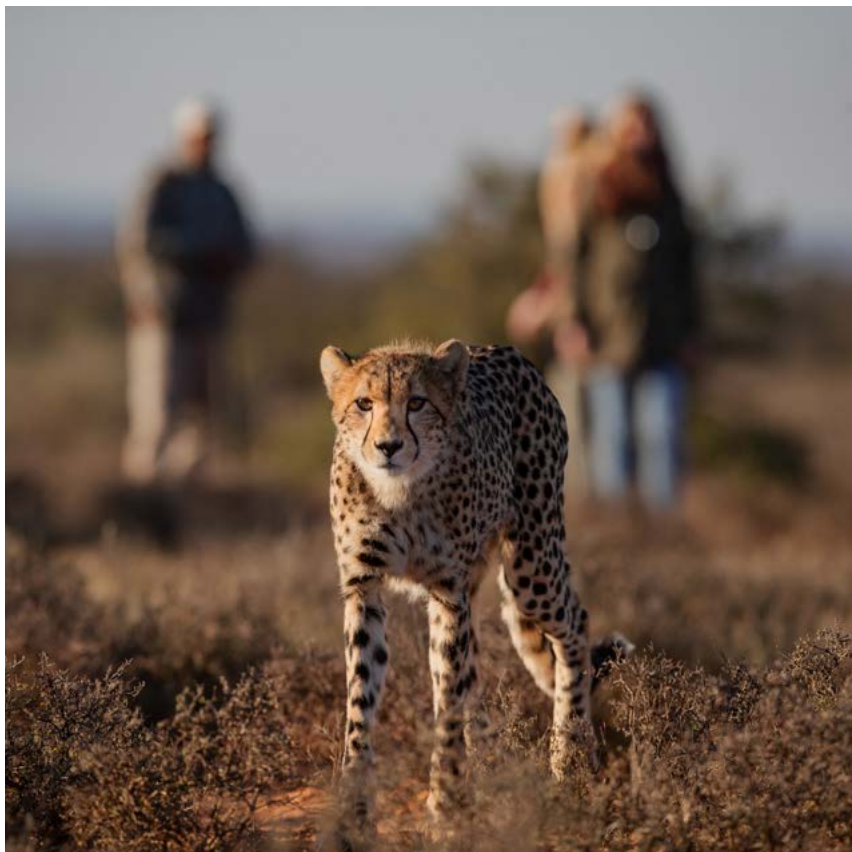
seychelles.com



SAFARI UNDER CANVAS

ADVENTURE MEETS COMFORT

There's little that beats the romance and thrill of sleeping under canvas, especially when you're deep in wild, Big Five territory. It's a return to something raw and real – a place where the line between comfort and adventure is delightfully blurred. At night, the canvas walls breathe with the wind, and every sound, a distant lion's roar, the whoop of a hyena, or the early morning birdsong resonates with your soul.



Into The Quiet: Under Canvas at Samara – South Africa

Words **Sarah Kingdom**

Pics **Samara Karoo**

Set against a backdrop of semi-desert wilderness and jagged mountain horizons, Plains Camp is Samara's most remote accommodation, and it's here that brings you closest to the wild. There are four tents built on raised platforms, spaced far enough apart for privacy but close enough to feel like part of a shared experience. The tents are comfortable without being excessive: cosy beds, crisp sheets, canvas chairs, open-air bucket showers, and sweeping views across the plains where cheetah, giraffe, and buffalo roam. At night, paraffin lanterns light the walkways, and the calls of jackals carry across the veld. There's no electricity, no Wi-Fi, and no rush. Designed with minimal impact in mind, Plains Camp is a celebration of slow travel, simplicity, and space.

This is not camping as you know it. Here, you fall asleep to the night-time sounds of the Karoo, and wake to the warmth of sunrise spilling across golden grasslands. Days are spent tracking wildlife by vehicle or on foot,

with expert guides, while evenings are for sitting around the fire, listening to stories, occasionally lifting your head to gaze at the stars overhead, and soaking in the stillness that only a place this remote can offer.

It's in this quiet, wide-open space that Samara Karoo Reserve has spent the past two decades reversing damage, rebuilding habitat, and restoring wildlife.

Samara Karoo Reserve's pioneering rewilding efforts add a deeper layer to the experience here. Samara is a private reserve, made up of eleven former livestock farms in the Eastern Cape, just outside Graaff-Reinet. Over 28,000 hectares of degraded farmland have been purchased and slowly but steadily returned to a functioning ecosystem. Fences were removed, invasive plants cleared, and natural water systems protected. Over time, native wildlife has returned; some reintroduced, like cheetah, lion, giraffe and black rhino, and others returning on their own as the environment recovered. It's now one of the most ambitious conservation projects in South Africa's semi-arid interior, forming part of a broader effort to link protected areas across the Karoo. And in the middle of it all, you can sleep under canvas in comfort.

The focus here is on slowing down and seeing more. Each day starts early, with coffee around the fire before heading out on foot or in a vehicle, with a guide and tracker. Samara is known for its walking safaris, and with good reason. Without the sound of an engine, you start to notice the small things – tracks in the dust, the calls of distant birds, the smell of wild aniseed crushed underfoot. It's not about chasing sightings but about spending time in the landscape and learning how it works.

That said, the wildlife at Samara is not shy. You may follow cheetahs across the plains, watch giraffes feeding from a low ridge, or pass a herd of eland grazing in the late afternoon light. There are lions here too, and buffalo, but Samara is different from the usual Big Five checklist.

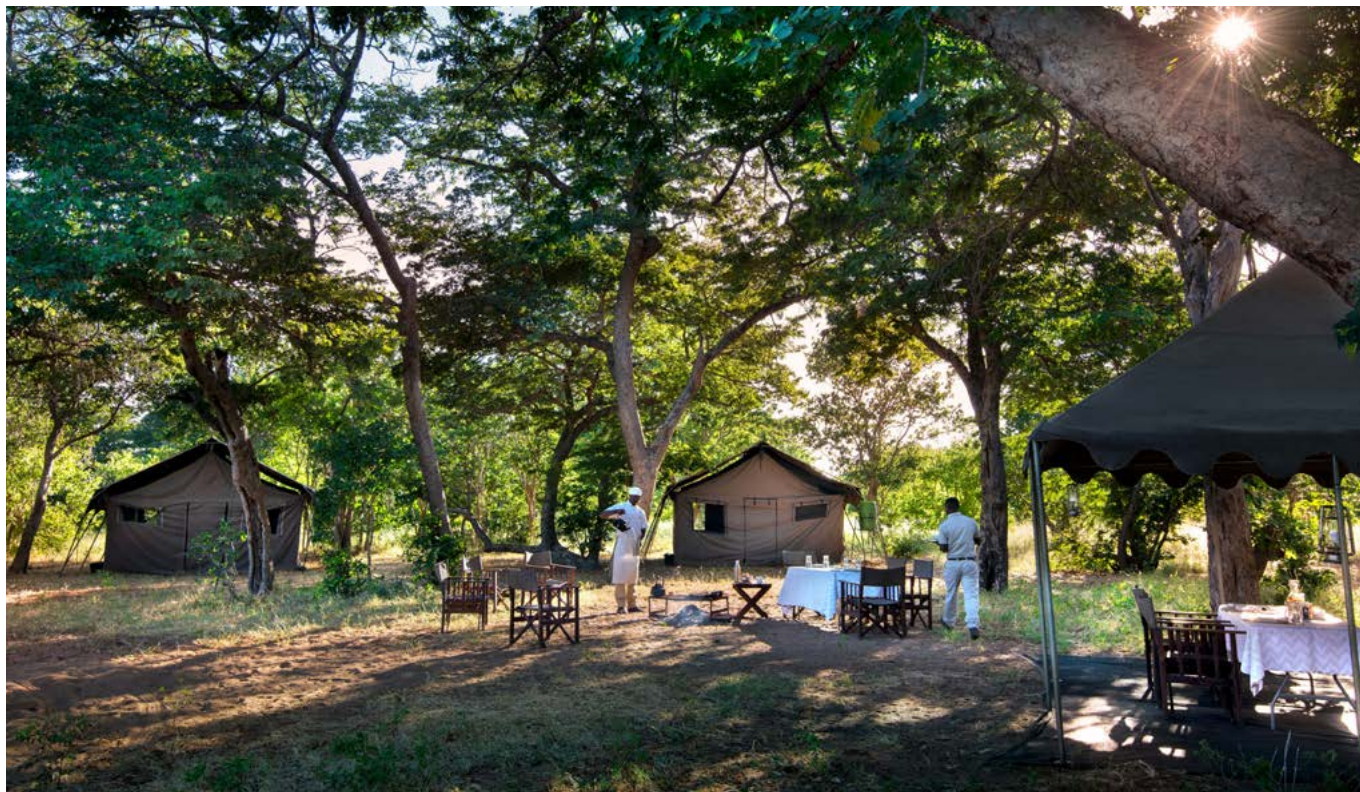
The conservation work being done at Samara adds weight to the experience. This is not just a place for tourists, it's an active conservation site with research programs, ecological monitoring, and community involvement. Samara was the first private reserve in South Africa to successfully rewild captive-bred cheetahs, and its efforts have contributed to national cheetah population management. It's also part of a long-term effort to establish a conservation corridor between Mountain Zebra and Camdeboo National Parks. On a practical level, Samara employs people from surrounding communities, supports local schools, and funds environmental education. It's not just about putting animals back on the land, but about building a long-term future that benefits both nature and people.

Staying at Plains Camp gives you a front-row seat to that process, but it never feels like a lecture. It's just part of what makes the place work. You'll come away with a better understanding of the land and the long-term efforts needed to protect it.

As you sip morning coffee while watching a herd of eland pass by, it's easy to forget the modern world exists, and that's precisely the point. Plains Camp isn't just about luxury under canvas. It's about rediscovering the wild and your place in it.



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



Rustic Luxury: Chobe National Park – Botswana

Words **Tessa Buhrmann**
 Pics **andBeyond & Tessa Buhrmann**

A branch snaps. My husband stirs. In the moonlight, they move like grey ghosts — elephants, just ten metres from our tent. We sit up in bed, silent and spellbound, with only the flysheet between us and the wild. It lasted only moments, but it's etched in memory forever.

This is our first time sleeping under canvas in the vast wilderness of Chobe National Park in northern Botswana.

It's something I've dreamed of for years, though as someone who prefers crisp linen to sleeping bags, I hadn't imagined it would be possible, until I discover andBeyond's luxurious mobile camping experience: Chobe Under Canvas.

Recent rains have coaxed new life from the parched bush. Kudus browse just metres from our vehicle, uncharacteristically relaxed. A yellow-billed kite drinks from a puddle in the road; a water monitor sniffs the air near a flock of alarmed lapwings. We watch buffalo raise dust as they cross the road in front of us, and lionesses lie stretched out in the heat. It's midday, and we're ready to head to camp.

The secluded, semi-permanent camp lies hidden among tall Zambezi teak and other indigenous trees. Rounding the bend, we're greeted by the rich harmonies of the camp team, chilled lemon-scented cloths, and icy drinks. Any doubts I have about camping melt away the moment I step into our tent. Our tent is spacious, the crisp white linen on our queen-size bed is inviting, behind it is an ensuite bathroom, complete with beautiful andBeyond amenities, a bucket shower – with hot water available on request, and a separate flush loo! There's even a washbasin and mirror, luxury in the heart of the bush.

A well-worn game trail winds between the tents to the main guest area

to where a generous gazebo is set beneath the trees. It's where meals are served, and stories are shared. Later that afternoon, we gather our cameras, hats, and binoculars and head out on a game drive.

We follow the sandy track running parallel to the Chobe River, with riverine forest on one side and vast floodplains on the other. Birdlife is prolific; white-crowned lapwings, red-billed teal, a grey heron and little egrets.

We make our way through open grasslands where herds of impala graze, red-billed oxpeckers feast and a kori bustard, Botswana's national bird, struts through the open veld.



What could be better than pre-dinner drinks around a crackling fire in the wilds of the African bush? I sigh contentedly... savouring the sounds of the bush and the gentle evening breeze.

I awake the next morning to a symphony of sounds... the high-pitched chorus of cicadas joined by the 'work harder, work harder' of the cape turtle dove, the cackling chatter of green wood hoopoes and the shrill whistle of a pearl spotted owl. I unzip the flysheet and emerge into the soft morning light; bees buzz in a Kalahari apple leaf tree and crinum lilies bloom nearby. A red-billed spurfowl calls, and an africa grey hornbill squawks from a branch above.

With the sun peeking through the still bare branches of the mahogany trees we head to the gazebo for coffee and breakfast, before setting off on another game drive. We see lion tracks, then lion and buffalo tracks, both heading into the thicket. Was there was action during the night, we wonder?

We follow their tracks into the bush, scanning the undergrowth. No kill, but



two lionesses are dozing beside the track. One slumbers; the other watches us closely. A lilac-breasted roller takes flight, a rainbow of colours against the African sky and a coppery-tailed coucal suns itself in the soft morning light.

Then, just as we think it's time to head back, a herd of elephants emerges



and strides purposefully to the river. We sit silently, hearts full, as they pass, unhurried, majestic, and utterly wild.

Nocturnal visitors at Old Drift Lodge – Zimbabwe

Words & pics **Tessa Buhrmann**

There's something very special about staying in a national park in an unfenced lodge. The anticipation of what might visit, tinged with a slight sense of apprehension – all unfounded, obviously. Old Drift Lodge, on the banks of the Zambezi, is just such a place. It's where the old charm of travellers past blends seamlessly with modern luxuries to make each stay memorable.

Having visited before, I know what to expect, yet the ambiance of the main lodge and the sweeping views across the Zambezi still take my breath away. On arrival, I'm promptly whisked away for an afternoon sundowner cruise – a chilled G&T in hand, honking hippos, and basking crocodiles set the scene.

The tented suites are beautifully appointed and spacious, with an outdoor shower and a gorgeous brass bathtub too – albeit a little chilly to experience this time of year. Dinner is delicious, and the bed incredibly comfortable. I drift off to sleep wondering if I'll have nocturnal visitors again, like on my previous visit when two elephants decided to slurp half the water out of my splash pool. Getting up to peek at these grey giants, I discovered buffalo grazing on the riverbank too... and if that wasn't enough, the distant roar of a lion had me firmly rooted in Africa. This time, it's the low

grunts of hippos and the rhythmic call of nightjars that serenade me to sleep.

When you're on the Zambezi, an early morning sunrise cruise is a must. A steaming cup of Amarula coffee warms me as we head out to greet the dawn. Mist hovers on the glassy water and the

sky shifts from inky purple to soft shades of pink and orange. Sunrise never disappoints, nor does the birdlife – African finfoot, grey-headed parrots, and a large flock of white-throated bee-eaters all make an appearance. Old Drift Lodge: scenic, spectacular and always memorable.





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Welcome to Umkumbe Bush Lodge Luxury Tented Camp – the very first tented camp in the Sabie Game Reserve. Nestled in the southern reaches of the world-renowned Sabi Sand, part of the Greater Kruger area, this Big Five reserve offers a truly immersive African bush experience.



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Guests meet in our newly designed dining lounge for delicious breakfasts

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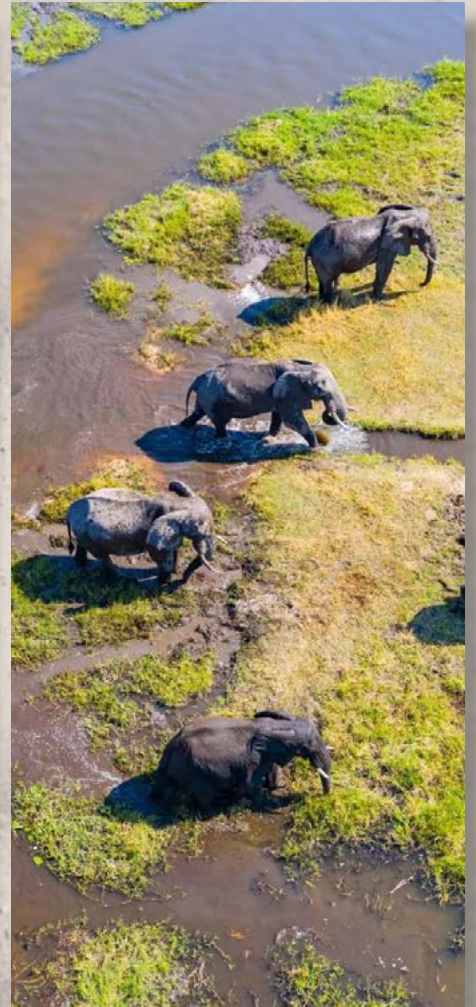
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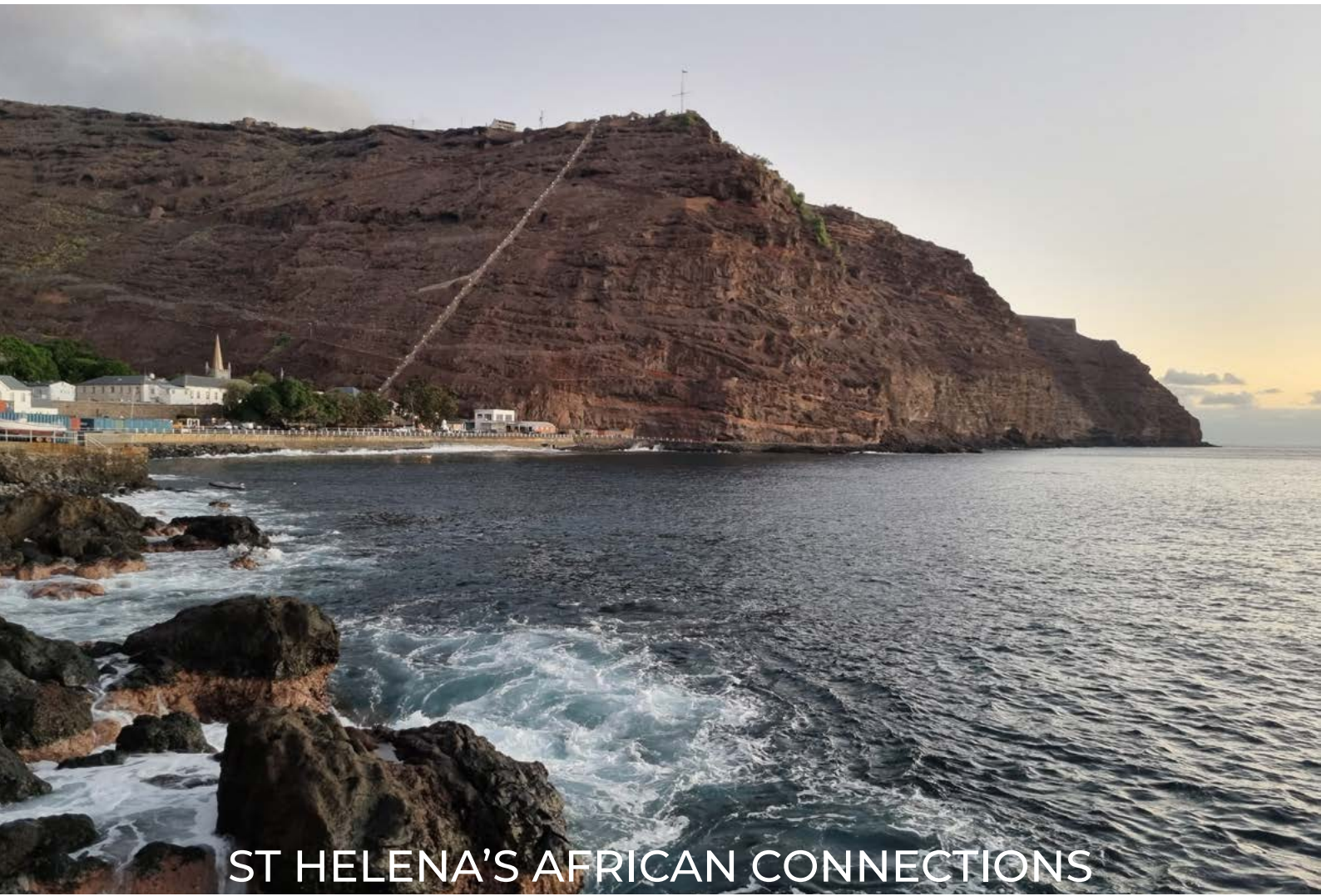


Travel & Leisure Zambia, Zimbabwe & Botswana is a triannual international magazine that showcases the tourism offerings of these three remarkable countries in a balanced and authentic way.

While the content is thoughtfully curated, it remains true to the essence of each experience – offering readers a genuine glimpse into what travel in the region really feels like. The magazine also features real-life stories from fellow travellers, making it the perfect source of inspiration for your next adventure.



www.zambiatravelmagazine.com



ST HELENA'S AFRICAN CONNECTIONS A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

Words & Pics **Tessa Buhrmann**

There's something wonderfully contradictory about St Helena. Remote yet connected. Tiny yet layered with centuries of history. This 122km² volcanic outcrop in the South Atlantic is one of the most extraordinary places I've visited – and while many know it as Napoleon's place of exile, it's the island's African connections that have left the deepest imprint on me.

We begin, as most visitors do, in Jamestown, the capital of St Helena. It's a charming, timeworn settlement nestled in a narrow valley, where Georgian architecture meets volcanic cliffs and history lingers on every narrow street. With local guide Sophia Joshua, we trace stories that stretch well beyond Napoleon's 1815 arrival. Many African journeys passed through this narrow valley – some forced, some free, all significant.

First discovered by the Portuguese in 1502, St Helena remained uninhabited until the British East India Company claimed it as a vital resupply point for ships travelling between Europe, Africa, and Asia. Over time, it became not just a maritime hub, but a place of exile and incarceration.

African lives became deeply entwined with the island's story. Enslaved Africans were brought to work in homes and on plantations. While not on the scale of the Americas, slavery's legacy runs deep here.

On a full-day tour with Aaron's Adventure Tours, we leave Jamestown, wind past Sea View toward Deadwood Plain, which Aaron tells us used to be a Boer POW camp. It's cold and gusty, and I can just imagine what the Boer prisoners, which were encamped here in their flimsy tents must have felt. We pause briefly at Flagstaff to appreciate the sweeping views over the island's dramatic ridges, past the Millenium Forest, a key reforestation project to a view site overlooking Prosperous Bay, the King and Queen rocks and the airport. Seeing the airport from this angle one can appreciate the engineering genius as well as the incredible pilot skill required to land here. But I digress...

A Sanctuary for African Slaves

Central to St Helena's African history is its role in the transatlantic slave trade. After the British abolished slavery in August 1833 (but which took effect in August 1834), St Helena's role shifted as the Royal Navy began intercepting illegal slave ships off West Africa.

From the dramatic ascent of Jacob's Ladder to intimate chats with the locals, the experience is immersive, humbling, and unforgettable.



Between 1840 and 1872, over 25,000 liberated African slaves were brought to Rupert's Valley.

It's a short ferry trip from Jamestown to Rupert's Valley, where Shelley from the National Trust shares this sobering past. The valley, once the arrival and internment area, now holds the graves of around 8,000 freed Africans. Walking through the site, I imagine the trauma and resilience of those who arrived here – many were children, few survived for long.

Construction of the airport road in 2008 unearthed the remains of 325 of these individuals, who were subsequently reburied in Rupert's Valley in 2022, finally giving them the dignity of remembrance. A memorial now honours them – and reminds us that St Helena was once a refuge, however tragic, on the long road from slavery to freedom.

These liberated Africans helped shape the island's cultural and genetic heritage. Creole influences remain in the language, food, and music – echoes of West African ancestry woven into the fabric of the island.

Napoleon's Exile

Just decades earlier, another exile had arrived: Napoleon Bonaparte. Defeated at Waterloo in 1815, he was sent to St Helena under British guard, spending six years here until his death.

French Consul Michel Dancoisne-Martineau leads us in his footsteps, starting at Briars Pavilion, where Napoleon first stayed with the Balcombe family and then to Longwood House, now beautifully preserved by the French government. Still, Napoleon found small comforts, like the sweet Constantia 'Grand Constance' wine from South Africa's historic Groot Constantia estate – favoured by European aristocracy and shipped 3,000 kilometres to this remote outpost, a testament to St Helena's ties to global trade, and to Africa.

Napoleon also took solace in his garden, built with the help of Chinese workers. A small Chinese pavilion overlooks the valley, and among the riot of colour and calm, I imagine him quietly sipping wine, far from the grandeur of his former life.

We lunch at Bertrand's Cottage, once home to General Henri-Gatien Bertrand and his family, who followed Napoleon

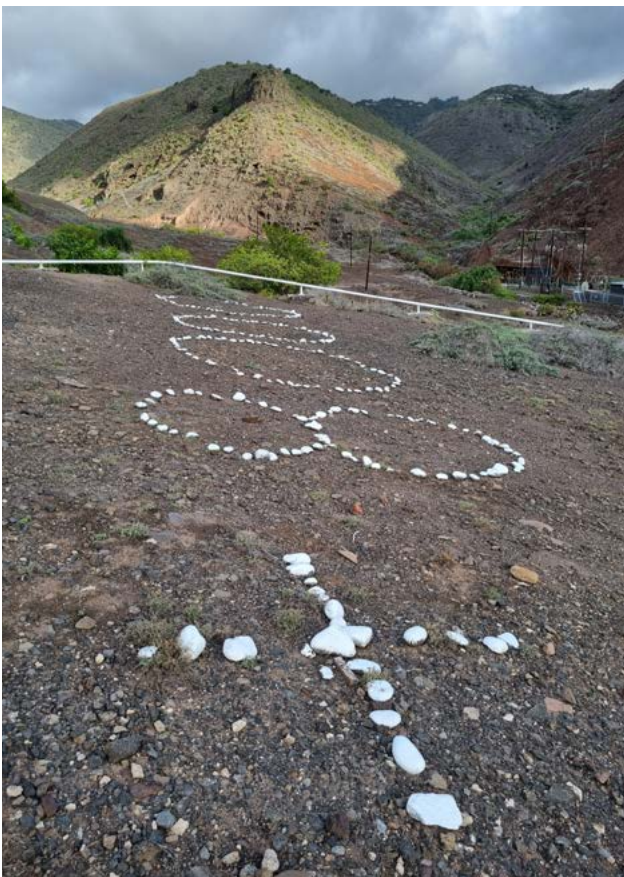
into exile. Madame Bertrand, however, loathed island life and frequently clashed with the former emperor. Apparently, domestic tensions ran high, and she insisted on sleeping in a separate room to avoid nightly disturbances when the General was summoned.

No Napoleonic journey is complete without visiting his tomb in the tranquil Sane Valley. As I gaze at the simple, unmarked stone surrounded by trees, birdsong, and the fluttering Tricolour, I'm struck by the stillness. Though he had wished to be buried on the Seine after this death in 1821, he would wait a further 19 years before his remains would be exhumed and taken back to France, to Les Invalides in Paris.

Coffee Culture

Another import was coffee. In the 18th century, green coffee beans from Yemen (via the Cape) were planted in St Helena's fertile volcanic soil. The variety, Green Tipped Bourbon Arabica, thrived in the island's cool interior valleys and became one of the world's rarest and most sought-after coffees.

At Wranghams, I join a bean-to-cup experience with owner Neil Fantom, who shares the story of this remarkable coffee, cultivated here since the 1700s. I sip a perfectly brewed cortado and enjoy 'teatime' treats prepared by his wife





Debbie, taking in the view over the misty hillsides. Coffee on St Helena Island tells a story spanning continents and centuries. Another must is an iced coffee at the St Helena Coffee Shop overlooking the bay. Perfect for a balmy afternoon after exploring the island.

Africans in Exile

Not all Africans came here in chains. In 1890, Zulu king Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo was exiled to St Helena for opposing British annexation of Zululand. During

his time on the island Dinuzulu had eight children by his Zulu wives, two of whom died and are buried at St. Pauls Cathedral. He also mingled with locals and earned their respect. It's said that he learned English, converted to Christianity, and even taught himself to play hymns on the organ at St James' Anglican Church – the oldest Anglican church in the southern hemisphere.

He was eventually allowed to return to South Africa in 1897, but was once again arrested and sentenced to four years imprisonment for his apparent involvement in the Bambatha Rebellion, the last major armed resistance to colonial rule in South Africa. After his release four years later by then Prime Minister Louis Botha, he was transported to a farm in the Transvaal, where he died in 1913. After which he was buried back in his beloved Zululand. His time on St Helena adds another African chapter to this island's story.

But Dinuzulu and his entourage weren't the only Africans to be exiled here: in 1906, 25 Zulu prisoners involved in the Bambatha Rebellion, were exiled to St Helena. Unlike Dinuzulu, they were not warmly received and were housed at Ladder Hill Fort, where they endured hard labour.

Boers on the Island

During the South African War (previously known as the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), St Helena also became a place of exile for thousands of Boer prisoners. Most notable was General Piet Cronjé, captured after the Battle of Paardeberg in 1900. He, his wife, and nearly 1,000 others were sent to the island. By the war's end, around 6,000 Boer PoWs were held in camps at Broadbottom and Deadwood.



A display at the island's museum highlights how many Boer prisoners integrated into island life, working, starting businesses, publishing an Afrikaans newspaper, forming musical groups, and even marrying locals. Yet not all fared well. Nearly 200 Boers died in exile and were buried in a wooded valley. The quietness of the Boer Cemetery speaks volumes about the toll of displacement, my heart breaking for those that never made it back to their homeland in Africa.

*This, too, is part
of Africa's story,
leaders and
warriors swept
up in the tides of
empire, forging
unexpected
chapters far
from home.*

At the island's museum, Director Adam Sizeland speaks of the 'Saints' – a community shaped by African, European, and Asian ancestries. I hear it in their English, taste it in their food, and feel it in their hospitality.

Today, St Helena welcomes the curious traveller. One can trace the paths of freed Africans, emperors, and exiled leaders, walk wild forest trails, swim in clear seas, and sip coffee grown in volcanic valleys – or search for the St Helena plover, also known as the wirebird, another resilient survivor on an island shaped by centuries of change and connection.

From the dramatic ascent of Jacob's Ladder to intimate chats with the locals, the experience is immersive, humbling, and unforgettable. Whether your roots are African or not, you're not just a visitor here, you become part of St Helena's living, evolving story.



essentials:

Getting there: Airlink operates weekly flights between Johannesburg and Jamestown with additional flights from Cape Town during high season.

Where to Stay:
Mantis St Helena
<https://www.mantiscollection.com/>

Experiences:



St Helena Tourism
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LEMALA'S UNTOLD STORY

Words **Warren Green (Warren Green & Associates)**

Pics **Lemala Camps & Lodges**



Operating lodges in some of Africa's most pristine wildlife areas, you might expect Lemala's story to be one told solely through binoculars and roaring lion sightings. But behind the brand is a quiet but powerful commitment to sustainability, community development, and authentic, regenerative travel. Under the visionary leadership of CEO Leanne Haigh, Lemala is redefining what it means to be a responsible safari operator in Tanzania.



Chief Lubola

A Vision Beyond Tourism

During a visit to Lemala's Mpingo Ridge Lodge, perched high above the Tarangire Valley, it becomes immediately apparent that sustainability is more than a buzzword here – it's woven into every detail. While the luxury tents offer every comfort imaginable, from indoor and outdoor showers to recycled-glass carafes of filtered water, the real story is in the infrastructure.

The lodge is built almost entirely from recycled materials, including 49 tons of motor vehicle steel. Composite decking made from recycled plastic and bamboo replaces traditional timber, and every lodge in the Lemala portfolio runs on solar power. Backup generators are rarely used, thanks to solar panels installed on staff housing, storerooms, and parking structures.

Water, one of the most critical resources in the dry savannah, is sourced and treated locally by reverse osmosis. This system provides pure drinking water across all camps, eliminating the need for single-use plastic bottles, an initiative estimated to have prevented around 170,000 bottles from reaching landfills each year.

To make it even more personal, used wine bottles from the camps are sent to Arusha, where they are transformed into beautiful, hand-blown glassware by local artisans at Shanga, with Lemala purchasing back hundreds of pieces annually.

Transforming Communities Through Partnership

Lemala's impact goes well beyond its camps. In the village of Mto wa Mbu, where most tourists simply pass through en route to Serengeti or Ngorongoro, Lemala partnered with a local community leader affectionately known as "Mr Sunday." With support from Lemala, he established a guiding programme aimed at empowering young women living in poverty.

Initially shy and unsure, these women are trained to lead cultural tours through the vibrant backstreets of their town. One such guide, Mary Chopin, rose through the ranks – from hesitant local guide to Lemala's first female safari guide at Nanyukie Tented Lodge in the Serengeti, after completing the company's year-long guide training programme.

Lemala also supports a small enterprise producing handcrafted banana-fibre boxes used for guest amenities.

Over the past year alone, the company has purchased more than 4,000 boxes, injecting over \$13,000 into the local women-led initiative.

Cultural Connections with Purpose

In a bold and meaningful collaboration with Chief Lubolu, a visionary Maasai leader in the Tarangire region, Lemala has also helped develop a cultural tourism initiative with long-term educational benefits. Tourists are invited to visit his manyata (homestead), where they engage in traditional crafts and learn about Maasai customs.

The proceeds from these visits, around \$1,600 annually, have helped fund a classroom and contribute to a teacher's salary. More significantly, Chief Lubolu's mission is to ensure his community's children, especially girls, receive an education. Despite local resistance, including the destruction of his water tanks in protest, he has remained steadfast, replacing them with concrete tanks and continuing to promote education for all.

Closing the Loop

Perhaps the most touching example of Lemala's sustainable mindset is how it handles waste, even the waste left behind by others. Plastic bottles discarded by passing vehicles at Lemala camps are collected and repurposed into composite school desks. So far, 75 desks have been donated to local schools in Ngorongoro and Tarangire, turning pollution into opportunity.

Even Lemala's smaller mobile-style tented camps, which lack the infrastructure of the main lodges, are supplied with clean water and recycled products from nearby permanent lodges like Kuria Hills and Nanyukie. This ensures a consistent sustainability standard across all their properties.

A Model for Responsible Tourism

Lemala is not simply "doing less harm." It is actively creating benefits – for local communities, for ecosystems, and for travellers seeking meaningful, conscious experiences. Whether it's eliminating single-use plastics, empowering the next generation of female guides, or constructing lodges from recycled materials, Lemala is proving that luxury and sustainability can walk hand in hand.

In a time when the tourism industry is increasingly being called to account for its impact, Lemala sets a powerful example of what responsible travel should look like. Their story is not just about five-star safaris or beautiful landscapes, it's about people, purpose, and progress.





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Artist Danisile Njoli at the Living Artist Emporium

AT A HUMAN PACE

Words & Pics **Ryan Enslin**

Forget what you think you know about Joburg. Join Ryan as he explores its vibrant backstreets and studios, uncovering a thriving art scene and a city brimming with creativity, resilience and colour, far richer than the headlines suggest.

There are few ways to experience Joburg as intimately as from the saddle of a bicycle. The city reveals herself differently when you're moving slowly enough to truly notice. Glass towers give way to mural-splashed facades and forgotten corners pulse with unexpected creativity. As you pass people on the street, smiles come easily, hands lift in greeting and Joburg's spirit begins to speak.

Leading this dialogue is Kennedy Tembo, founder of Micro Adventure Tours, a man whose love for the city runs as deep as the gold mines it was built on. Kennedy is a storyteller on two wheels, a curator of Joburg's hidden narratives whose tours reveal the city's beating heart. A former IT specialist, he left the corporate world in 2018 to pursue a calling rooted in passion.

Kennedy's tours challenge tired narratives about Joburg, replacing fear with curiosity and hesitation with discovery.

Whether pedalling between artist studios, walking to hidden coffee shops, or visiting historic landmarks, his mission is clear: to showcase a city bursting with creativity, resilience and soul.

His infectious love for Joburg turns strangers into friends and uncertainty into appreciation.

It's this spirit that frames the art and cycling tour I joined, a ride through the inner city, connecting creative spaces and meeting the artists who are quietly and passionately shaping Joburg's cultural pulse, one studio at a time.

Victoria Yards

Our journey begins at the studio of James Delaney, nestled within Victoria Yards. A multidisciplinary artist, Delaney works across print, sculpture and painting, but is equally renowned for his transformative work at The Wilds, a once-forgotten urban park now revived with whimsical animal sculptures and renewed community spirit. All thanks to his quiet determination.

Victoria Yards hums with this same creative energy, and is also home to artists Dario Manjate and Arlindo Maunde, each adding their own voice to the collective.

Ellis House

Leaving Victoria Yards, we pedalled leisurely through Bertrams, cheered on by children waving from front gates. The route is cleverly plotted, with safety always top of mind for Kennedy. A sweeper rides at the back, making sure no one is left behind, or caught off-guard up by one of Joburg's infamous potholes. Soon, the facade of Ellis House comes into view, a vertical village of artists perched on the edge



Siyabonga Mlambi in his studio at Ellis House

of New Doornfontein, just around the corner from Ellis Park Stadium, officially Emirates Airline Park, Joburg's legendary rugby venue.

It's here that I meet Siyabonga Mlambi, a radiant creative force whose studio is a kaleidoscope of colour, texture and meaning. His signature two-sided faces, in bold, contrasting hues, explore unity, duality and the threads that connect us all. "It's about two souls becoming one," he tells me. Siya also gathers the offcuts from his canvases, scraps once destined for the bin, and shapes them into sculptural figures adorned with his signature motif, a quiet affirmation that creativity begins with simply using what you have.

Siya's work is a reflection of life itself, vivid, layered and deeply human. His pieces now live on walls across five continents, a quiet testament to how his message of unity and connection

resonates far beyond the streets of Joburg.

The Franklin

Leaving Siya's studio behind, we zigzagged through the inner city, the restless pulse of traffic giving way to the broad, industrial sprawl of Newtown. Our destination was The Franklin, a converted high-rise where artist Conrad Botha holds court on the sixth floor. Reaching his studio required a determined push up several of the building's parking ramps, legs burning but spirits high.

I find Conrad in a reflective mood, contemplating the rhythms of the art world, the ebb and flow of buyers and the strange seasonality of it all. Yet his energy remains upbeat as he puts the finishing touches on works destined to be shipped out. As a proponent of the Superblur Art Movement, Conrad creates work that lives in the space



between clarity and abstraction. The movement rejects rigid definitions, favouring images that shift, dissolve and reform depending on how you view them. Using the halftone dot technique furthers this ambiguity.

Before we leave, Conrad gestures to a table where a box of wine sits waiting, unpretentious, practical. As glasses are filled, our conversation continues and the lines between art and life quietly dissolve, as they often do here.

August House

Back across town, we make our way to August House, a towering 1940s building that hums with artistic energy. Long established as a hub for contemporary African expression, it feels like an ecosystem of creativity; part studio, part sanctuary. Here, Teboho Makoatsa welcomes us into his sunlit space.

A series of works immediately catches my eye, portraits of a young girl, playful and carefree, balancing in her mother's high heels, delighting in the sheer fun of it.

"It happened one day when a cousin visited with his daughter," Teboho explains. "She slipped on her mom's high heels, grabbed my brushes, and ran around the studio."

What began as a spontaneous, joyful moment has evolved into an ongoing series, each piece a meditation on how children mirror the world around them. "It's something everyone recognises," he adds. "It's often the first thing visitors connect with when they step into my studio."



Pieces from Teboho Makoatsa's series inspired by his niece

*Taking in
the inner city
by bicycle*





Cycling through the inner city of Joburg

As we cycle back toward Victoria Yards, the city feels different. The stories gathered along the way linger, threads of resilience, creativity and connection woven into the fabric of Joburg. What stays with me is how each artist, in their own way, mirrors the city itself. Bold. Layered. Joyful. Unapologetically alive.

We linger, chatting about creativity and play, before it's time to push on once more. There's a quiet satisfaction in noticing how this thread of childhood joy, playful, uninhibited and full of possibility, continues into our final stop at the Living Artist Emporium, a creative enclave within the old Ellis Park Tennis Club.

Living Artist Emporium

Once the clubhouse of the Ellis Park Tennis Club, the Living Artist Emporium is now a vibrant hive of creativity. Studios spill across the rooftop, while the old viewing deck has become a gallery space, alive with colour and conversation, showcasing the work of the artists who create here.

It's here I meet Splash Motang, whose portraits are stitched together from fragments of fabric, each piece a symbol of identity, belonging and shared humanity. "Every fabric represents a people," he explains, from local tribes to distant nations from across the waters.

Nearby, Danisile Njoli's studio bursts with joyful colour. His work is a tender tribute to the everyday magic of childhood - laughter, play and that fleeting, weightless sense of possibility. "I've always been a child at heart," he smiles, describing how he wanders the streets of Joburg, quietly collecting the moments that become his art. This is what the Emporium offers, not just art, but living, breathing reflections of the city itself.

This is Joburg beyond the headlines, revealed at the human pace of a bicycle, through the eyes of those who shape it. You arrive a visitor. You leave with a deeper knowing, and a renewed sense of how alive this city truly is.

For more on the vast array of tours offered by Kennedy, contact him via www.microadventuretours.co.za or +27 83 772 4678.



Art works on display at the Living Artist Emporium



STYLISH SLEEPOVER IN THE CITY:

A NIGHT AT HYDE JOHANNESBURG ROSEBANK

Words **Tessa Buhrmann**

Pics **supplied**

There's something deeply satisfying about arriving at a hotel that immediately makes you feel like you are part of the family, and Hyde Johannesburg Rosebank does exactly that.

Housed in the repurposed 1970s building, The Bank, the newly rebranded Hyde brings a cool, cosmopolitan energy to the heart of Rosebank. With its bohemian-luxe edge and curated design, this hotel is as much about lifestyle as it is about accommodation.

The transformation of the old bank building into a chic hub of fine dining, trendy tasting room and stylish stays is impressive. High ceilings and generous windows flood the rooms with natural light, while rich textures and clean lines reflect Hyde Hotels' signature aesthetic. My room is a calm, stylish sanctuary: spacious and beautifully appointed, with a king-size bed, tasteful décor, and a sleek bathroom featuring a luxurious rain shower and high-end finishes.

Hyde's location is another major plus. Perfectly positioned in Rosebank's lively centre, it's just steps from boutique

stores, galleries, top restaurants, and the Gautrain station, making it ideal for both business travellers and city explorers.

We dine at Proud Mary, the acclaimed all-day eatery within the Hyde. With its mid-century interiors, moody lighting, and tones of oxblood, teal, and emerald set against terrazzo and brass, it oozes understated glamour. It's the kind of place you could happily linger for hours, and many do. The menu is globally inspired but rooted in local flavours, offering elegant comfort food with flair. I start with the crispy fried squid, followed by a perfectly balanced salmon Niçoise with marinated artichokes and sundried tomato, and end on a sweet note with the decadent coconut brûlée cheesecake. The wine list is thoughtfully curated, spotlighting small-batch South African producers. The Kaapzicht Skraalhans Pinotage hits the mark (yes, I

had red wine with fish, but in a place this quirky, breaking the rules just feels right).

Service at both the hotel and restaurant is faultless – warm, intuitive, and quietly confident. It's no surprise Hyde Johannesburg Rosebank was named Business Hotel of the Year at the Luxe Awards 2025. More than that, it's a place where locals and travellers can truly tap into the city's rhythm. Whether you're in town for meetings or craving a chic urban escape, Hyde delivers modern Joburg hospitality... laid-back luxury that's unmistakably cool.

Best of all? No matter how early your flight, the barista at Proud Coffee greets you with a smile and a perfect cappuccino. Need a snack? They've got that covered too.



<https://hydehotels.com/johannesburg/>

IN CONVERSATION

WILFRED CHIVELL

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS
OF CONSERVATION



We talk to Wilfred Chivell, CEO and Founder of Marine Dynamics, Dyer Island Cruises, the Dyer Island Conservation Trust and the African Penguin & Seabird Sanctuary (APSS) as they mark 25 years of conservation.

Q: Where did your love for the ocean begin?

A: The sea has always been in my blood. I grew up in Gansbaai, right in the heart of the Marine Big 5 – great white sharks, whales, dolphins, Cape fur seals and African penguins. As a young man I spent my days diving on wrecks and spearfishing along our rugged coastline. The turning point for me came in 2000 with the Treasure oil spill off Cape Town, which leaked over 1,300 tonnes of oil into the ocean, coating tens of thousands of penguins. Seeing those birds struggle was heartbreaking. I knew I couldn't stand by – I had to be part of the solution.

Q: Why focus on marine conservation?

A: Sir David Attenborough says it best: "The most important place on Earth is not on land, but at sea." I've always believed that. We can't keep taking without giving back. Instead of fishing or harvesting, I built a business model around non-consumptive ecotourism – whale watching and shark cage diving – that lets people experience marine life alive and thriving.

Today, Marine Dynamics sails a fleet of eight boats and supports about 130 jobs, which in turn support over a thousand people in our community. It proves you don't have to exhaust the ocean to benefit from it – you can build an economy on protecting it. Gansbaai is the only place in the world where you can naturally see the Marine Big 5 in one trip – it inspires people to care.

Q: What moments stand out from these 25 years?

A: There have been highs and lows. Building the African Penguin & Seabird Sanctuary in 2015 is a highlight. It's a world-class rehab centre where oiled or injured seabirds are treated and released. Watching a penguin or Cape gannet waddle back to freedom never gets old.

But there have been hard moments too – like seeing our great white sharks decline due to illegal fishing and habitat pressure. COVID-19 was another test: tourism stopped, our boats stayed docked and our conservation funding dried up overnight. But our team's grit carried us through. Overcoming those challenges makes this milestone feel even more meaningful.

Q: What scientific impact are you proud of?

A: I'm proud that we turned our boats into floating research stations. By hosting researchers and collecting data during tours, we've contributed to over 30 peer-reviewed papers on everything from white shark behaviour to penguin genetics.

This science has real impact – it feeds into conservation policy. For example, our work helped secure a shark catch exclusion zone around Dyer Island in 2021, banning commercial shark fishing there. Seeing our research cited in government decisions shows that tourism and science together can drive change.

Q: What about conservation on the ground?

A: Education has always been central. Through programmes like DEEP, we've given thousands of local children ocean experiences they'd never have had otherwise. Recently, we took 500 learners to see David Attenborough's Ocean documentary for free. You can't care about what you don't know – I truly believe that.

On the rescue side, APSS has saved hundreds of seabirds every year, often victims of oil spills or abandonment. Tourism revenue alone keeps APSS going – each rehabilitated penguin or cormorant helps stabilise a population under threat.

Q: Sharks have been in the news – what's your take?

A: Globally, sharks are in crisis from overfishing and habitat loss. They are still being targeted by demersal longliners, and the KZN Sharks Board's outdated shark nets and drumlines continue to kill thousands of non-target animals each year. That's unacceptable.

I believe responsible shark tourism is part of the solution. Every cage diving trip shows people that sharks aren't monsters – they're wildlife worth protecting. And our operations help monitor white shark numbers and deter illegal fishing. Our collaboration with the government on the Shark Catch Exclusion Zone proves that tourism can influence policy. So while the headlines are worrying, I'm hopeful. Every tourist who comes to see a live shark is a vote for its survival.

Q: How does it feel to reach this 25 year milestone?

A: Emotional. I remember borrowing a truck to launch my first whale-watching boat – now we're an award-winning operation with global recognition. Being honoured with the ATTA Marine Impact Award in London for our 25-year commitment was a proud moment.

But this isn't just my story. It belongs to everyone who joined me – our skippers, guides, biologists, educators, volunteers, our restaurant and lodging partners, and every guest who chose us. When we celebrated at the golf course in Gansbaai, it was humbling to see so many old friends. There weren't many dry eyes that day.

Q: What values do you hope you've passed on?

A: Respect – for the ocean, its wildlife, and each other. Conservation can't be about profit alone; it's about leaving things better than we found them. I hope we've taught people to pause and appreciate the simple wonder of a whale breaching or a penguin chick hatching.

Every guest or schoolchild who leaves here with more awe and a promise to protect these species – that's our legacy.

Q: What's next for Marine Dynamics, DICT, and APSS?

A: We're not slowing down. We plan to expand our research to better understand the species we need to protect. Education-wise, we want to reach more children in remote areas through mobile ocean science units. Advocacy remains key too – we'll keep pushing for better fishing practices and marine protection, and we'll keep telling our story to the world. The mission remains: protect the Dyer Island ecosystem, one whale, shark, penguin or schoolchild at a time.

Q: Any advice for young conservationists?

A: Start where you are. You don't need perfect timing or lots of money – you need passion and grit. I started with one boat and a dream. There will be setbacks – conservation is hard – but the rewards are worth it.

There's nothing like releasing an oiled penguin back to the ocean, or hearing a child say they want to be a marine biologist because of something you showed them. So be bold and persistent. The ocean needs you.

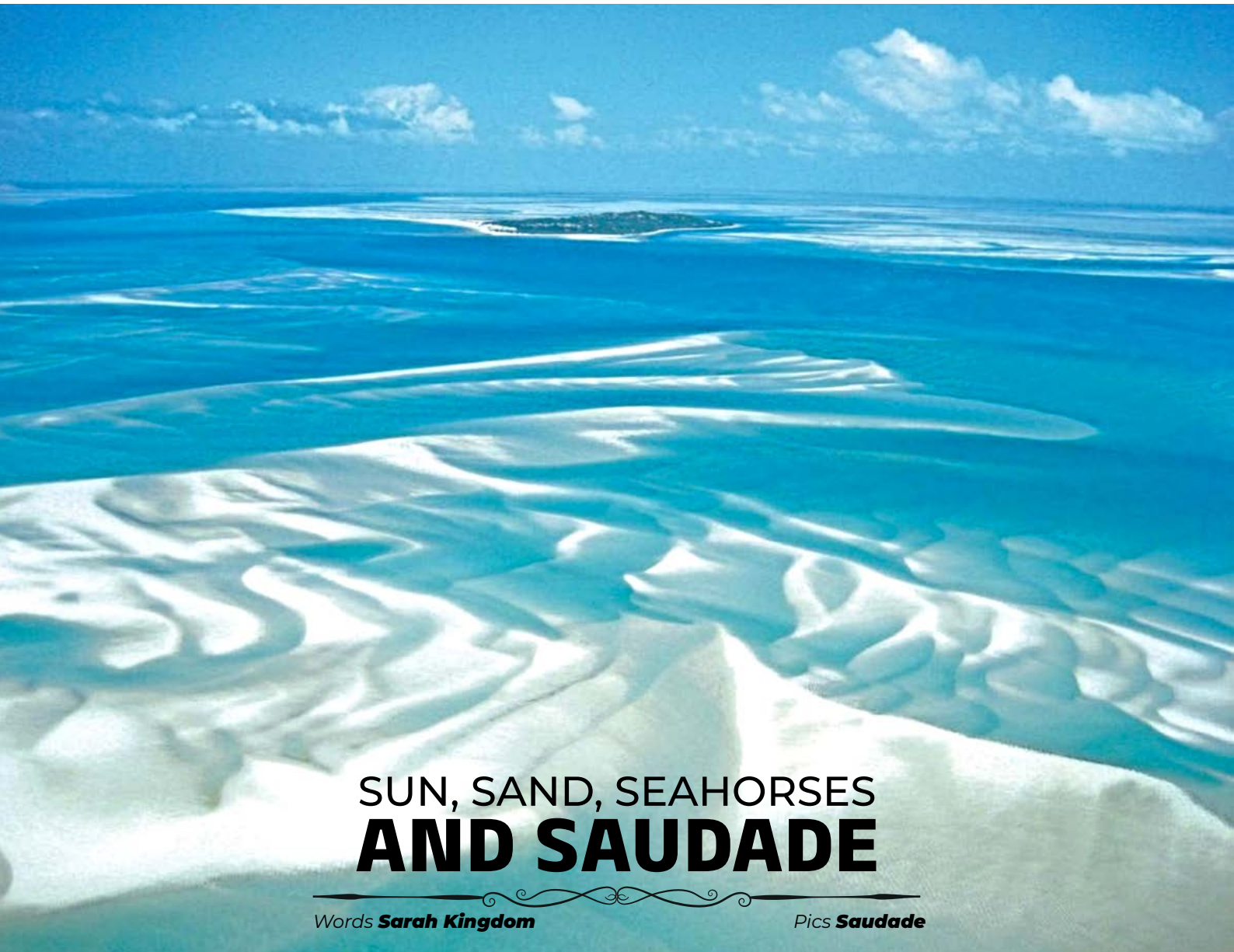
Q: If you could wave a magic wand for the ocean?

A: I'd ban destructive fishing methods, scrap the outdated shark nets, and create thriving marine reserves around Dyer Island and other special places – with local communities as custodians. And I'd make sure every child has a chance to experience the ocean up close. You only protect what you love – so we need more people to fall in love with the sea.



Learn more: marinedynamics.org





SUN, SAND, SEAHORSES AND SAUDADE

Words **Sarah Kingdom**

Pics **Saudade**



Early in the day, our dhow, a traditional wooden boat with a patched sail and years of stories etched into its timber, glided quietly out from shore. It was a damp and chilly morning, and we huddled in the bottom of the boat to get out of the wind and rain. One of the crew stood at the bow of the boat, his gaze fixed on the water as if reading something we could not yet see, another steered us through the shallows.

Before long, the boat drifted to a stop. Our guide, Ilídio Cole, climbed over the side and into water that was just above his knees, gesturing for us to put on our masks and follow. The sea grass underfoot swayed gently, moving like ribbons in the current, hiding secrets that would take time and patience to reveal.

Ilídio moved carefully, brushing aside seagrass with hands that must have done this a thousand times before. He stopped and pointed. It took a while to focus, and then I saw it. A tiny shape, curled around a blade of grass – a seahorse, perfectly still. It was no longer than my finger, and almost invisible if you weren't looking for it. After a little more searching, we spotted more. Some golden, others a dusty rust colour, some curved like musical notes, others camouflaged in pale browns. We didn't touch them. We just watched, floating in the silence, aware of how easily we could have missed them.

As we searched, Ilídio explained to us that these special little creatures don't travel far. They live their entire lives in a patch of seagrass, tethered to their territory, as vulnerable as they are rare.

Most wild seahorses are monogamous, he told us, with some species mating for life. Searching for a mate can be a challenge for a seahorse, especially given they are poor swimmers, are found in low densities, and rely on camouflage to hide from predators; so once they've found a mate, they tend to stick together.

Ilídio told us how seahorse couples greet each other every morning, with a unique dance that sometimes even involves changing colour. A seahorse couple will promenade and pirouette together for several minutes, before separating for the rest of the day. They greet each other this way to confirm the other partner is still alive, reinforce their bond, and synchronise breeding. We also learned it's the male seahorse that carries the eggs and gives birth. During mating season, the female will deposit her eggs into the male's kangaroo-like pouch, at which time the male will fertilise them. After about

two weeks, out pop the seahorse fry, ready to swim off and explore the ocean.

Once we returned to dry land, we learned more about the background of the community-run seahorse project that we'd just experienced. Back in 2018, the fishermen in the local village were being approached by traffickers linked to the traditional Chinese medicine trade. With the temptation of earning money by capturing, drying and selling these 'diamonds' as the fishermen started to refer to them, thousands of seahorses were being pulled out of the water.

It takes about 700 to 800 seahorses to make 1 kilogram, and the fishermen were being paid around \$240 per kilogram, which roughly works out to 3 dried seahorses for a \$1. At that rate, after 10 years, there would be no seahorses left; a tragedy for the environment and nothing left for the fishermen to sell. The future was looking bleak. But then, in stepped Juliet Lyon.

Juliet had previously been working with a local NGO, but was so horrified by the plight of the seahorses that she met with local fishermen and decided an outreach campaign was needed. One that would educate the local community about seahorse conservation, and would develop a seahorse-focused eco-tourism activity in the village. She felt both of these would be vital steps in curbing the rampant seahorse poaching. With this in mind, Juliet cofounded ParCo (Parceiros Comunitarios, Portuguese for Community Partners), to address not only the seahorse issue but also other issues facing local people, including environmental education, sustainable fishing practices, a sunscreen project for children with albinism, a community preschool programme, waste collection and recycling.

Around this time, Ilídio, our guide for the seahorse expedition, had just finished a bachelor's degree in rural economics. He and Juliet met at a community meeting about dealing with plastic waste taking over the local beaches, and the seahorse project was born.

Not long after the project had started, local police confiscated 1782 dried seahorses from traffickers, along with notebooks naming local poachers. The traffickers were jailed, and the local community now realised that there was some risk involved in continuing poaching seahorses, and that they could end up in jail if caught. It became clear to them that an





alternative source of income was needed – seahorse tourism, as an alternative to poaching, took off.

Local fishermen now double as tour guides, taking tourists out in their dhows to the seagrass beds, where seahorses can be observed in their natural habitat. What makes this initiative great is the fact that it is completely run by the local community. All decisions, planning and funds are controlled by them. Over 100 trips have now been led, with over 1,000 visitors experiencing for themselves these little creatures.

*The stillness and significance
of the seahorses stayed with me.
We returned to the villa slowly,
salt drying on our skin, the rhythm
of the tide still in our minds.*

The next morning, we boarded a boat again, this time a speedboat boat, and headed for Magaruque Island, part of the Bazaruto Archipelago National Park. The trip took us across shallow banks and deeper blue channels. We passed fishermen on dugouts, casting nets with casual precision – out here, the ocean dictated the rhythm of life.

Magaruque came into view, its sand dunes rising behind a stretch of pristine beach. The boat cut its engine. We pulled on our snorkelling gear and dropped over the side. Below us, a reef unfolded like a slow-moving canvas – coral, anemones, giant clams, sea cucumbers, schools of fish in electric blues, yellows, and silvers. A single dolphin appeared in the distance, surfacing once before vanishing into deeper water.

Once done with snorkelling, we headed for shore. The sand was fine and pale, and squeaked beneath our feet. A billowing blue tent had been set up for lunch. Tablecloth, chilled wine, delicious food; nothing complicated, everything perfect. Not yet ready for lunch, we walked the island. Strolling along the waterline, we looked for shells and watched pale pink crabs scrambling to escape the waves. We climbed the tall dunes at the heart of the island and looked out over a full sweep of sea. The low tides had created a mosaic of sapphire, indigo and aquamarine in the water, and we could see into the permanent deep channel where we'd been snorkelling earlier. The mainland, only 8km away, was just a faint silhouette behind a band of haze. We returned for our waiting lunch. Content and happy, we sat, ate, drank and enjoyed having this tiny piece of paradise all to ourselves. A magical and memorable day.

Back on the mainland, Saudade, a boutique, luxury villa that had been our home for the past few days, awaited. Huge open plan spaces, high thatched ceilings that let in the breeze,

windows that framed ever-changing skies. Indoors that flowed into outdoors: from the breezy dining terrace to the sheltered lounge and bar, from quiet corners made for books and contemplation to the palm-framed infinity pool. Saudade didn't shout for attention – it whispered.

Our room faced the sea. The bed was draped in white netting, and the whole space was textured and tactile. Woven baskets tucked neatly under benches, carved wood, soft cotton throws, and smooth floors underfoot, everything had been chosen with care.

From the minute we'd arrived, it had been easy to fall into the rhythm of Saudade. Each morning, I'd woken early, to the sound of waves and the scent of coffee, before wandering barefoot down to the beach. At low tide, the water retreated, leaving behind long flat stretches of sand, rippled with traces of the waves. Crabs the size of coins would scurry sideways into holes, and seabirds circled overhead in slow arcs. These long strolls along the sand were always followed by breakfast back at the villa, out on the terrace, with views over the silvery sea.



When the final morning came, the sea was still and the sky just beginning to lighten. I stood looking out over the water and listened; to the waves, to the birds, to the absence of everything else. That's when I thought again of the villa's name, Saudade. It's a Portuguese word that doesn't translate easily. It describes a deep, bittersweet feeling, a sense of longing or nostalgia for something you have loved and may never experience again in quite the same way. It's not sadness exactly, but something softer; it's the ache of something beautiful slipping just out of reach. And that, I realised, was exactly what this place had given me. Not just memories, but a mood, a rhythm I'd slipped into without noticing. A part of me was already missing it, even before I left. And that feeling – of stillness, of space, of saudade – is what I carried home.

essentials:

How to get there:

Airlink operates daily direct scheduled flights between Johannesburg, South Africa and Vilanculos, Mozambique.

Where to Stay:

Saudade: <https://saudademozambique.com/>



<https://www.flyairlink.com/en-zm/flights-to-vilanculos>



WINDHOEK

DISCOVER HIDDEN GEMS, HISTORY, AND WARM HOSPITALITY

Words & Pics **Di Brown**



Windhoek, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay are the major towns in Namibia; the rest of the country consists of small, unspoilt towns separated by vast distances of dramatic semi-desert landscapes. Numerous hills have shaped the development of this picturesque city, which boasts a well-maintained road network, minimal traffic, and more trees than one would expect in a water-scarce country.

Windhoek offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy the comfort, amenities and convenience of a cosmopolitan city before or after their road trip or safari.

Pamper

Dry and dusty after days on the road, or dehydrated and stiff after a long-haul flight, why not treat yourself to a pamper session?

Gents, head to Jaybird and Blade, a barbershop that serves excellent coffee, has a unique vibe and stocks a high-quality range of beard products. The Old Power Station Shopping Centre in Southern Industrial is where you will

find Ancient Organics for massages and beauty treatments, Healing Touch Aesthetics for massages, and Clark3s. eyecandy for lashes.



HINT: Several of the top hotels offer onsite spa facilities, so be sure to check this when choosing your accommodation.

Shop

Carl List Mall in the CBD for unique souvenirs, hand-crafted artefacts, jewellery and leather wear, travel accessories, restaurants, clothing boutiques and coffee shops.

Bougain Villa is a charming small centre with an enclosed courtyard, offering a great selection of leisure and boutique shops. Support local skills and job creation by supporting African Kirikara. They sell gorgeous rugs hand-woven from soft karakul and Swakara wool, exquisite jewellery, ceramics, textiles and local art. Crafters will love Jenny's Place, Art & Crafts Emporium, and when you have shopped till you drop, relax at The Stellenbosch Wine Bar and Bistro.



HINT: Windhoek Luxury Suites is a great option for an overnight before heading out on safari.



Old Breweries Craft Market is quite touristy, but it's a fun place to visit. Set in the historic brewery building, it offers a selection of local crafts, souvenirs, clothing, books and a cafe. And Sam's Hobbies and Toys in the suburb of Klein Windhoek is fantastic if you are shopping for kids. It has a wide range of Lego, dinosaurs, unicorns and everything that people under 12 deem cool.

Explore

The impressive Independence Museum is dedicated to the country's anti-colonial and independence struggle, reflected in memorabilia, artefacts, and outstanding artwork. Don't miss the spectacular views from the restaurant on the top floor. Over the road is Alte Fest, built in 1890. Now closed to the public, it is worth taking a look at the old cannons, statues, and artefacts on the veranda.

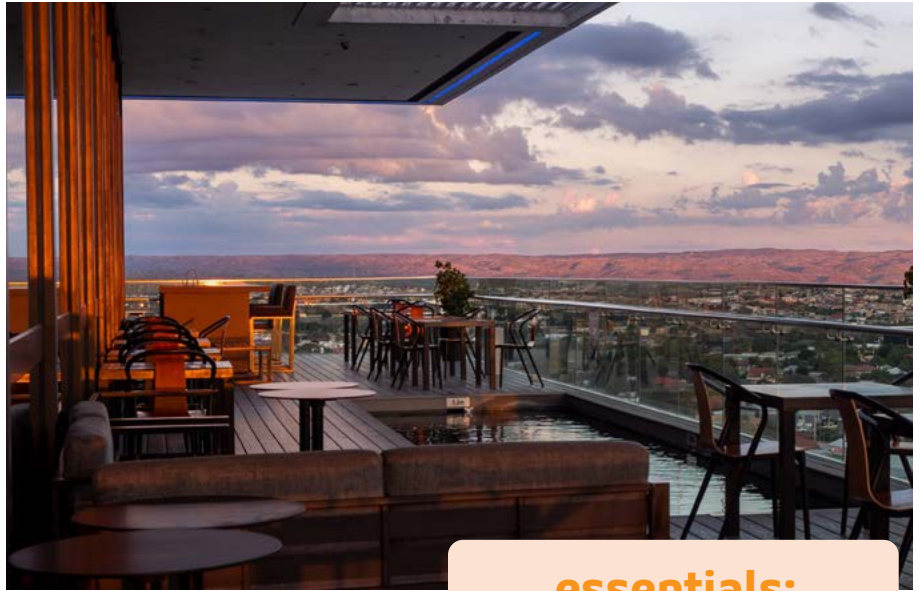
The Heroes' Acre Monument is 10 kilometres south of Windhoek and is the burial place of Sam Nujoma, Namibia's first president. The beautiful architecture and tranquil location, make it a great place to walk around and reflect. The marble obelisk and huge bronze statue of the Unknown Soldier are imposing, as is the 5000-seater arena.



Attractions

Sundowners at The Stratos Restaurant and Bar on the 15th floor of the Avani Hotel is the coolest place in town. This hotel lights up and changes colour, you can't miss it. Feeling lucky? Head to the high-rolling casino at the Avani Hotel or the Desert Jewel Casino at the Windhoek Country Club Resort. You can also book a round of golf here.

Visit Okapuka Safari Lodge, a 30-minute drive from town. Enjoy a meal overlooking the lawns and ancient camel thorn trees where warthogs and graze. Book a game drive to see giraffe, ostriches and, most importantly, white rhino – but be sure to book a day in advance.



essentials:

The flight time from Cape Town or Johannesburg to Windhoek is approximately two hours. The airport is a 30-minute drive from town.

Hosea Kutako International Airport is small, but modern and clean, and is located 45 kilometres outside of town, the trip taking about half an hour.

Arrive 90 minutes before departure. After customs, you'll find a couple of curio shops, a small duty-free, and two pricey eateries, so rather make use of the fantastic coffee shop and restaurant outside before you head through customs.

Purchase an inexpensive SIM card, airtime, and data on arrival. The Namibian dollar is pegged to the South African rand at a one-to-one exchange rate and you can use rands but will receive change in Namibian dollars.



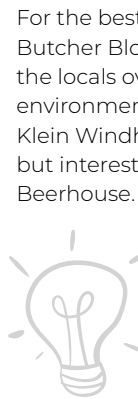
HINT: Get into safari mode with an overnight at Zannier Omaande Hotel located conveniently close to the airport.

Enjoy a nature walk on the trails around the Avis Dam, located at the edge of town. Peaceful, with gorgeous mountain views and indigenous vegetation. For safety, it is not recommended to walk here alone, although plenty of local dog walkers do.

Eat

Lodges are known for their exquisite cuisine, but sometimes the choices are limited. If you've been camping and self-catering, it's nice to enjoy a good restaurant before and after your trip.

Head to Hotel Heinritzberg- Leo's at the Castle for fine dining, an excellent wine cellar and spectacular views over the city.



HINT: For a full-on local pub with noisy Namibians, open mic and quiz nights, go to The Handle Bar. Phone first, as they might be closed for a private function.

Twenty kilometres out of town is Elisenheim Guest Farm and Farmers Kitchen. An indoor and outdoor venue, serving fantastic German food and great beer, and featuring an impressive kids' play area.



DISCONNECT, TO RECONNECT... AT ONGUMA TRAILS CAMP

Words **Tessa Buhrmann**

Pics **Onguma Safari Camps & Tessa Buhrmann**



There's a point on the long, scenic drive north from Windhoek when the Namibian horizon begins to stretch wider and the air grows tangibly quieter. It's late afternoon by the time we turn off the long tarred road to Onguma Private Nature Reserve, located just outside Etosha National Park, for a night at Onguma Tented Camp before heading deeper into the wild.

Onguma Tented Camp is as much about sophisticated style as it is about earthy connection. With its stylish interiors, rim-flow pool, and views over a busy waterhole, it's the kind of place that invites you to slow down and savour. We do just that, and after the quintessential safari drink – a chilled G&T – we enjoy a long, lazy evening of five-star dining and wonderful conversation beneath a star-studded sky.



After a night immersed in safari serenity, we set off early to explore Etosha National Park. A few hours' drive through this vast landscape of shimmering salt pans surrounded by lush green grasses, wildflowers, and acacia trees yields sightings of zebra, springbok, wildebeest, and oryx, as well as a breeding herd of elephants and an abundance of birds.

Shortly after midday, we drive into Onguma Forest Camp – our guides Liberty and Victor are there to meet us... our Trails Camp experience has officially begun.

Transferring deeper into the reserve, we arrive at Onguma Trails Camp, a seasonal, solar-powered, off-grid camp set within a treed grassland in a rehabilitated area of the just over 35,000 ha reserve, and Namibia's first true walking safari experience in big game territory. Thoughtfully chosen for its biodiversity and suitability for walking, this part of the reserve is thick with old trees and thriving vegetation. The camp itself is intimate and considered: accommodating just eight guests in four canvas bell tents, each thoughtfully designed with extra-length beds, private outdoor bathrooms, and a wood-fired hot tub from which to absorb the wilderness in warmth and silence. The bucket shower is the perfect bush indulgence, adding just the right splash of adventure to the comfort Onguma is known for.

Our tent sits beneath a large camel thorn tree (*Vachellia erioloba*), its shade offering reprieve from the afternoon sun.

Appreciating the well-placed camp chairs, I watch a pair of Meyer's parrots as they forage in the bark before vanishing into a nest cavity – it's the perfect place to pause and breathe.

After a light tapas-style lunch in the open-air mess tent, we set off for a late-afternoon sundowner drive to acquaint ourselves with the terrain we'll be walking through the next morning. The grasses shimmer in the golden light, and the wispy clouds turn from pale apricot to the colour of squished plums. Dinner back at camp is hearty and flavourful: a three-course celebration of fire-grilled meats, fresh vegetables, and delicious braai-broodjies – essentially toasted sandwiches cooked over the coals. Delicious!

Morning begins before dawn, with a quiet wake-up call followed by coffee and rusks around the fire. We set off just as the sun's first rays brush the tops of the trees, with Liberty and Victor leading us on a 6–8 km walk through dry riverbeds and open plains. Within minutes, Liberty draws our attention to the trail of an oryx, a deep furrow in the dust where it has bolted, disturbed by our presence. His enthusiasm is infectious. "You can tell he was startled," he says. "Look how wide the stride becomes. That's when he took off."



As we move quietly through the landscape, the bush comes alive with stories. A set of freshly disturbed aardvark tracks near an active burrow. Scat, neatly buried. "He hides the evidence," Victor explains. "Doesn't want to be found. He'll patrol about two kilometres from here."

He tells us that ants build a two-hole entrance to prevent rain from flooding their nests, and that a favourite snack of the African grey hornbill is the armoured cricket, one of which Liberty scoops up to show us. Victor stops, there's a boomslang curled on top of a bush, waiting for a bird to make the wrong move. We sidestep, giving it the respect it deserves. "Closest we've come to danger," someone whispers.

We learn how the San people use the sap from the Bushman's poison plant (*Adenium boehmianum*) on arrowheads, and that chewing leadwood leaves and swallowing the juice helps with severe stomach aches. Liberty, whose grandmother is Damara, tells us she makes a delicious sour plum jam using the small fruit of the sour plum tree, and that it's also known for treating dysentery. "But don't ask her for the recipe," he laughs. "It's a family secret."

Not to be outdone, Victor shares the significance of the sandpaper raisin tree, from which the sturdy knobkerries (fighting sticks) are made. "You never touch your grandfather's stick," he tells us, reverently. "That's where his power is."

As the sun climbs higher, we pause for a scenic bush breakfast under the shade of a large tree – eggs, muesli, and bread cooked on an open flame – before returning to camp for rest and a lazy afternoon in the shade.





Later that afternoon, during our sundowner drive, we watch as a lioness crouches low in the grass, eyeing a herd of wildebeest. One of them spots her. There's a pause. Then, to our amazement, the herd, about fifteen strong, turns the tables, closing in on the lioness. She stands up slowly and, with all the regal nonchalance of a queen deciding not to make a fuss, retreats into the bush. Drama on the African plains.

That night, we dine under canvas in the stretch-tent mess area, sharing a hearty meal and later, Amarula in hand, share stories around the fire. The camp is beautifully still. No Wi-Fi, no mobile signal. Just the hiss of the fire, the occasional call of a nightjar, and the sound of quiet contentment.

As we discover the next morning, a bush walk is not just about the little stuff. We come across a group of giraffe and watch quietly, while soon becoming the watched – they peer at us, ever curious, but without losing their caution. Back on the path, we come across the distinct pug marks of a leopard, still fresh, likely from a female. A few hundred metres further, we find the shallow indentation in the grass where she has curled up to rest. The thought of her watching us silently from the thickets sends a thrill down my spine.

We skirt the thick bushes and head into the long grass. It's soft to the touch, but as Victor shows us, easily capable of slicing the skin when pulled sharply, something to be mindful of. Walking quietly in single file, our peace is disturbed as a guinea fowl explodes from the undergrowth, and my heart leaps. "Heart-attack bird," Liberty chuckles.

We move silently through a dense stretch of mopane woodland, tracking elephants. Broken branches, plenty dung, and scuffed earth tell us they are here recently, likely just the

afternoon before. Every snapped twig or shift in the breeze heightens our awareness, even the bush seems to be holding its breath. Victor points out signs of recent rhino activity, and the realisation that both giants may still be nearby sends a ripple of adrenaline through the group. It's a thrilling reminder that out here, we are guests in their domain.

Back at camp, a lazy afternoon beckons. Some doze in their tents, others soak in their hot tubs or lounge in the communal area with a good book. I watch the Meyer's parrots again, feeling utterly content.

That evening, our boma dinner is accompanied by stargazing and conversation. Over a local Namibian gin and tonic, Liberty shares his philosophy on bush walks: "They need to be enjoyable, educational, and memorable. We don't just look for safety for the guests, but for the comfort of the animals too. This is their home first."

We'd seen signs of change in the reserve, old farm fences that had only recently come down. Tracks of herbivores, and evidence that predators are beginning to return. "Elephants will help clear this thick bush eventually," Victor muses. "But already, this place is healing." And so are we, I think to myself.

As we pack to leave, I linger a little longer beneath our tree. In Herero, the word Onguma means 'the place you don't want to leave.' Trails Camp embodies that sentiment completely. It's more than a camp, it's an invitation to walk in quiet reverence, to learn from the land, and to witness nature on its own terms.

And while Onguma Tented Camp may be safari chic at its finest, out at Trails Camp, with dust on my boots and the call of a Meyer's parrot overhead, I discover something richer still: connection.

Where to Stay:

Onguma Tented Camp

Onguma Trails Camp

<https://onguma.com/>





PROTECTING THUNDERBIRDS...

THE RESOUNDING CALL OF CONSERVATION

Words **Tessa Buhrmann**

Pics **Tessa Buhrmann & Mabula Private Game Reserve**

Somewhere between the golden grasses and dappled bushveld of the Waterberg, a low, resonant boom breaks the early morning stillness. It's not thunder, though it sounds like it. It's the call of the Southern Ground-Hornbill – the 'thunderbird' of local legend and a flagship species of South Africa's savannahs.

Here, on Mabula Private Game Reserve, that deep, rolling call is more than just a soundtrack to the safari experience; it's the call to conservation, and it echoes through the work of people like Nthabiseng Monama and the team at the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project.

I'm staying at Safari Plains, the elegant, tented camp nestled in the heart of this 12,000-hectare reserve, not just to indulge in the luxuries of bush life but to experience conservation in action while celebrating Mabula's '30 Years of Conservation'.

Safari Plains is a place where adventure and awareness walk hand in hand, and nowhere is that more evident than in the stories behind the animals that call this reserve home.

One of our most memorable encounters was watching a group of ground hornbills as they forage across a sunlit clearing, their glossy black feathers catching the rising sun, their haunting calls carrying over the plains. They're impossible to miss, tall, slow-moving, deliberate, and yet tragically easy to lose. With us is Nthabiseng Monama, the hornbill and people manager whose passion for these birds is infectious.

"They're more than just beautiful birds," she tells us. "They're indicators of the health of the savannah ecosystem. When they disappear, it means something in the balance has shifted."

For over two decades, the Mabula Ground-Hornbill Project, based here in Limpopo, has been working to turn that around. What was once a slow but steady disappearance of this culturally revered species is now a growing conservation success story, powered by science, passion, and community collaboration.

We sit in the shade of our game viewer – it's an unseasonably hot day, and we're sweltering – the group of four hornbills don't seem to notice as they methodically poke through the grass for insects and small reptiles. Nthabiseng watches them like you might watch family, affectionate, alert. One bird in particular, a male named Janowski, holds a piece of her heart. "He's not tame but manageable. He allows us access to view and monitor him but would disappear in seconds if frightened. He has a tenacious personality," she says, smiling. "And I love that about him."

Her work, however, is anything but sentimental. With only around 3000 southern ground hornbills left in South Africa, and just a few hundred breeding groups, their future depends on dedicated intervention. Unlike many



Isaiah Banda



Nthabiseng Monama





bird species, ground hornbills have a complex social structure. They live in cooperative groups, but only the dominant pair breeds, and even then, it's often just one chick every nine years that survives to adulthood.

That's why the Mabula project harvests second-hatched chicks – those that would normally die of starvation – and hand-rears them with the goal of reintroducing them into the wild. These young birds are kept in captivity for few years of their lives then they're sent to 'bush schools' where established hornbill groups slowly teach them how to be wild again. It's a delicate, thoughtful process that has already seen success, with birds reintroduced into areas where hornbills had long vanished.

But the work doesn't stop there. Loss of nesting trees is one of the major issues, so artificial nest boxes are being installed in breeding territories. And crucially, local communities are being included through various initiatives empowering them to protect these nests, monitor sightings, and help reintegrate the birds back into the land that once echoed with their thunderous call.

"Community conservation means involving communities in the planning, decision making and implementation of all these conservation efforts we are undertaking," Nthabiseng explains. "You can't protect these birds without the people who share the landscape with them." Her team spends time in local schools and villages, using art, music, and storytelling to reconnect people with a species that has long been part of traditional beliefs and cultural identity.

As we drive away from the sighting, I

find myself deep in thought. There's something primal about these birds, with their deep red wattles, their striding gait, and their unmistakable calls. To witness them in their rightful place, wild and thriving, feels both a privilege and a responsibility.

Of course, the broader conservation picture at Mabula Private Game Reserve doesn't stop at hornbills.

The reserve is part of the national cheetah metapopulation management strategy to ensure genetic diversity and stability for cheetah populations across South Africa. One morning, just after dawn, we set out to track one of the reserve's cheetahs – not by vehicle, but on foot, telemetry receiver in hand. The soft crackle of static gives way to a sharp pulse, guiding us through the bush toward the sleek feline forms resting in the shade.

Isaiah, our guide explains that the cheetahs are fitted with tracking collars so researchers and reserve management can monitor their movements, behaviour, and prey preferences. Being on foot with these animals, even at a distance, is a moving experience – a reminder of just how fragile and powerful life in the wild can be.

And then there are the wild dogs, elusive, endangered, and, for us, unseen this time. But their story is no less powerful. On 11 May 2022, a pack of four was released into the Mabula Private Game Reserve, the second-known breeding group in the Waterberg. Carefully bonded in a boma before

release, they now roam free as part of a broader effort to restore wild dog numbers. Central to this success is the Waterberg Wild Dog Initiative, a community-based nonprofit, which works with local communities to reduce conflict and foster coexistence. Their work includes education and conflict mitigation with local farmers, crucial in a landscape where wild predators are often perceived as a threat.

Beyond this, Mabula's commitment to restoring and protecting the landscape is an integral part of its conservation efforts. Years of careful and scientific management and some rehabilitation have helped to revive the natural balance of the reserve, allowing indigenous flora and fauna to flourish once more. Key to this is the strategic collaring of elephants to monitor their movements and manage their impact on sensitive vegetation zones. White rhinos are also collared as part of critical anti-poaching measures, ensuring real-time tracking and rapid response to threats. These interventions, guided by science and a deep respect for the land, are helping Mabula thrive as a sanctuary for wildlife and wilderness alike.

What makes Safari Plains, the lodge I call home for a few nights, so special is that it supports all this important work without compromising on comfort. My luxury tented suite is a sanctuary of soft linens, air conditioning, and wide bush views. From my private deck, legs curled in the hanging chair and coffee in hand, I watch impala graze beneath a marula tree while the chatter of guinea fowl drifts across the veld.

It's a seamless blend of eco-conscious luxury, a reminder that responsible travel can be as restorative as it is enriching.

For more information on the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project, visit



<https://ground-hornbill.org.za/>

Where to Stay:

Safari Plains
<https://safariplains.co.za/>

Mabula Game Lodge
<https://mabula.com/>



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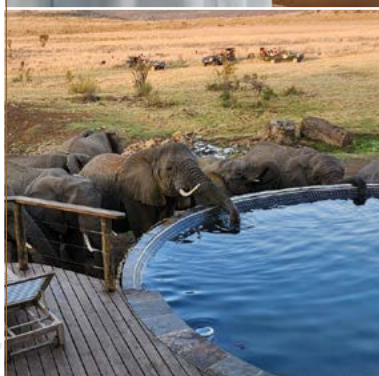
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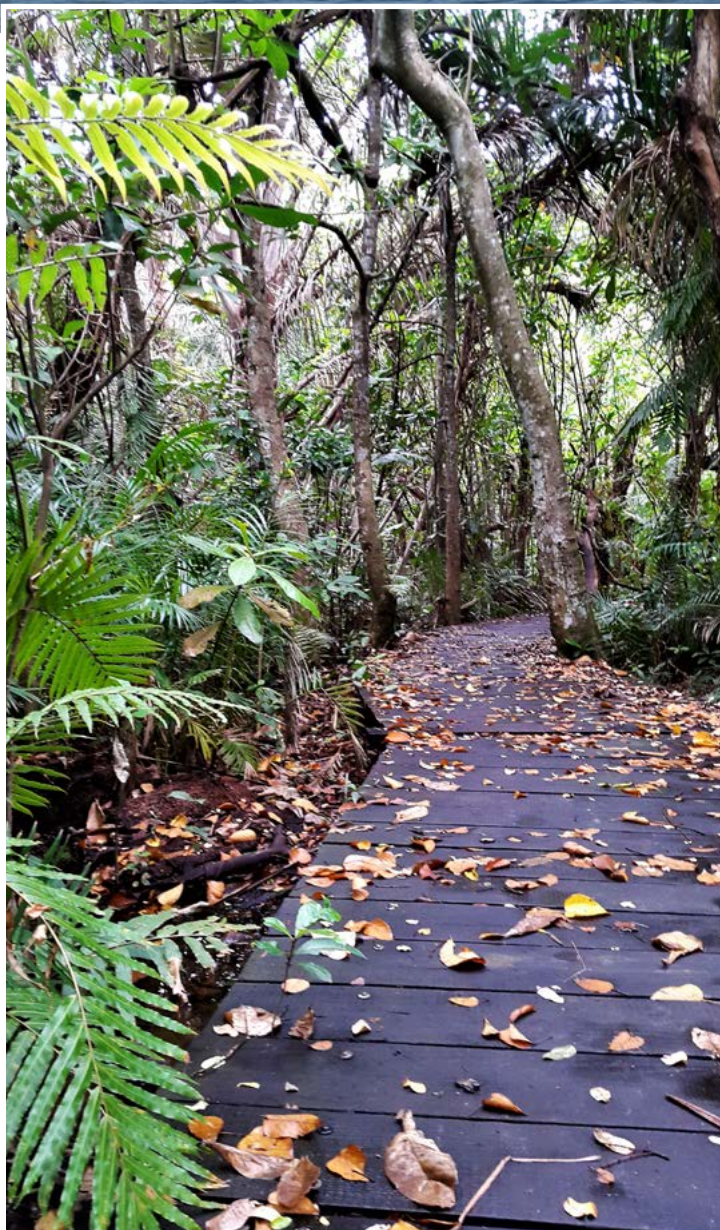

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EXPLORE BEACH, BATTLEFIELDS & BUSH ON THE ZULULAND COAST

Words & Pics **Tessa Buhrmann**



An easy road trip from Durban takes us north to the Zululand Coast, where golden beaches are lapped by the warm Indian Ocean and crystal-clear waters invite you in. Inland, the landscape shifts to rolling hills, grassy plains and forested valleys teeming with wildlife. We aren't just chasing sun and sea, but something more meaningful: a connection to the rich blend of culture, history, and wilderness that encompasses this part of KwaZulu-Natal.

Crossing the uThukela River, we enter the historic territory of John Dunn, hunter, trader, and legendary 'white chief' of Zululand. Born to Scottish parents, Dunn moved to Zululand at 18 and became advisor to Prince Cetshwayo, later Zulu king. In return, he was granted chieftainship over the fertile Ongoye coastal strip. Embracing local customs, Dunn took 48 Zulu wives (to his wife's dismay!) and fathered at least 117 children.

Beach

Our first stop is Richards Bay, the coastal city within the uMhlathuze District Municipality, often thought of as an industrial port – and rightly so. Home to giants like Hillside Aluminium and the world's largest coal export



terminal, this port city also boasts South Africa's deepest natural harbour. But, with a warm subtropical climate, lush wetlands, dune forests and quiet beaches, Richards Bay is an ideal base for exploring.

We make our way to the Tuzi Gazi Waterfront, where fishing boats and luxury yachts bob gently beside harbourside cafés. Later, a sunset catamaran cruise offers a fresh perspective: we glide past hulking cargo ships at anchor and quiet mangrove-fringed islands while fish eagles call overhead. With cocktails in hand and the sun melting into the Indian Ocean, the city's industrial backbone feels miles away.

From Richards Bay, we take a scenic drive south to Mtunzini, a charming village with a laid-back feel. Its name, meaning 'a place in the shade,' gives a hint of what to expect. And no better place to appreciate this shade is with a walk through the Raphia Palm Forest, an official National Monument since 1942, here we come face-to-face with towering Raphia palms and, if only briefly, a palm-nut vulture.

This coastal gem is also home to the Umlalazi Nature Reserve, where we spent a morning hiking along the Mlalazi River, the mangroves reflecting mirror-like in the still water – I smile at the antics of a pair of mudskippers and watch as fiddler crabs scurry to-and-fro from their burrows. The haunting cry of an African fish eagle overhead reminds us to keep a watchful eye out for some

of the region's rare birds, the African finfoot and the mangrove kingfisher. We follow the path through the mangroves to Dunn's Pool, a manmade bathing spot built by John Dunn for his many wives – safe from crocs and hippos. While Dunn's legacy still echoes through the area, today Mtunzini is more about birding, beaches and natural beauty than colonial intrigue.

Battlefields

History, however, is never far in Zululand. We cross the uThukela River heading north and follow the path of old trade and military routes. Route 66, one of the oldest in the region, winds its way through coastal plains and deep into Zulu heartland. In the late 1800s, it was a lifeline for ox-wagon traders travelling from Port Natal (now Durban) into the interior. Today, it's a gateway to battlefields, royal sites and cultural landmarks that shaped the region.

The Anglo-Zulu War, though often associated with Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift, began on these very coastal plains. On the banks of the uThukela River, beneath a sprawling wild fig tree, a plaque marks the spot where the British delivered an ultimatum to King Cetshwayo in 1878 – disband your army, or face war. It was a moment that changed the course of South African history.

On the January 22nd 1879 at Nyezane, near Eshowe, Zulu warriors launched a surprise attack on British troops as they prepared breakfast, leading to what became known to the Zulu as the Battle of Wombane. The British eventually claimed victory, but at great cost – over 400 Zulu and 12 British soldiers lost their lives that day. Alongside Isandlwana, this skirmish prompted the British to retreat, regroup and rethink their tactics. Today, reminders of these events are scattered across the landscape.

In contrast, the Dlinza Forest offers moments of calm and quiet reflection. Walking the aerial boardwalk suspended



above the forest floor, we are immersed in birdsong and filtered light. A Narina trogon calls from deep within the canopy and a trumpeter hornbill calls overhead. History may echo through the region, but nature has never stopped singing. Nearby, Fort Nongqayi, once home to colonial police forces (known as the Nongqayi), now houses a museum that delves into the region's complex past. Exhibits cover missionary life, military campaigns, and local Zulu culture.

Further inland, the Valley of the Kings unfolds, a sacred and storied place – a place where King Cetshwayo once sent ivory and gifts in a final attempt to avoid conflict. At eMakhosini, the royal burial valley, we walk quietly along the commemorative trail, pausing at the memorial to the Zulu kings. This is not a museum but a living cultural landscape, rich in memory and meaning. We pop into the Mtonjaneni Zulu Historical Museum, as well as the KwaZulu Cultural Museum at Ondini which offer valuable context, telling the stories of kings, conflicts, and cultural resilience.

While King Cetshwayo's story ended in exile, his legacy endures across Zululand's evocative battlefields, royal sites, and living culture.

Bush

Of course, no visit to Zululand would be complete without experiencing its wild natural heritage, fortunately this region is home to some of KwaZulu-Natal's best reserves. Just outside Richards Bay, the Enseleni Nature Reserve offers us a gentle start – a short hike through grassland and riverine forest, where zebra graze peacefully and giraffe watch with curious eyes. The



call of a fish eagle follow us through the trees, and as we walk, we keep an eye out for birding specials like the African finfoot or Pel's fishing owl.

For a more classic safari, we head north to Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, Africa's oldest proclaimed game reserve. Driving through the undulating hills and open plains, we see a breeding herd of elephant, white rhino (now de-horned), buffalo, and even a fleeting glimpse of a cheetah sunning itself on a termite mound. It was here that conservation pioneers helped save the southern white rhino from extinction – a legacy now carried forward by initiatives like Project Rhino, which unites reserves in their fight against poaching.

And then there's iSimangaliso Wetland Park – a name that means 'miracle and wonder,' and rightly so. From Lake St Lucia's hippo-filled estuaries to the Indian Ocean's warm surf, it's a place of extraordinary biodiversity. We stop for ice creams at Cape Vidal, clamber over the rocks at Mission Rocks and explore coastal forest trails in St Lucia. Summer brings turtle nesting to the beaches and in winter, whales, the migrating giants of the sea – a seasonal rhythm of survival and spectacle. Back on the quieter Western Shores, we picnic beneath marula trees and watch nyala nibble their way through the bush. The only sound is the wind in the trees and the consistent chatter of sunbirds. It's the perfect pause – wild, unfiltered, and restoration to the soul.

Whether you're watching hippos wallow in the estuary, hiking through coastal forest, listening to the echoes of history on a battlefield, or simply kicking back with your feet in the sand, the Zululand Coast offers an unforgettable blend of nature, culture and adventure. It's where South Africa's dramatic history and natural beauty come together – and all within a few hours' drive from Durban.

Whether it's beach, bush or battlefield, Richards Bay is your perfect base for exploring the wild and storied landscapes of northern KwaZulu-Natal.

Where to Stay:

Indaba Lodge Richards Bay
<https://www.indabarichardsbay.co.za/>

Ngoye Lodge (Mtunzini)
<https://www.ngoyelodge.co.za/>

St Lucia Ecolodge
<https://www.stlucia-ecolodge.co.za/>



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Nestled in the heart of KwaZulu-Natal's vibrant harbour town, Indaba Lodge Richards Bay offers the perfect blend of modern comfort and coastal hospitality.



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Located on the 4th floor, the Mowana Boutique Spa invites guests to relax, unwind, and indulge in a range of rejuvenating treatments. From massages to facials, it's the ultimate escape for those needing a little self-care above the bay.

Food lovers are in for a treat at Trevally's Restaurant, where every meal is served with flavour and flair. With a menu that celebrates both local favourites and international classics, it's the perfect place to start the day or enjoy a laid-back dinner.

For corporate travellers and event organisers, the lodge now boasts a brand-new conference venue, accommodating up to 150 guests. With modern technology, flexible layouts, and professional support, it's ideal for meetings, seminars, and special events.

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ABOUT CONFERENCE

The Tourism Investment Forum Africa

The Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA) provides the ultimate platform for destinations to accelerate their economic growth ambitions by promoting and profiling investment opportunities

Global Vision, Local Action

Built on the principle of "a global platform for local action," TIFA seeks to shine a spotlight on secondary and tertiary cities and regions, showcasing them as premier investment and tourism hubs. By positioning these regions for sustainable growth, TIFA helps drive their economic ambitions while providing access to critical capital, networks, and strategic insights on investment in trade-in-services sectors such as tourism.

Fuelling Broader Economic Impact

Beyond tourism, TIFA fosters investment across other sectors that contribute directly and indirectly to the business travel and tourism economy. From nurturing start-ups to supporting established businesses, TIFA seeks to catalyse regional economic development and expand business opportunities in host destination and participating destinations.

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HUNGRY MINDS

WHY EDUCATION BEGINS WITH A FULL STOMACH

Words **Nadia Lubowski**
(Managing Trustee, Anton
Lubowski Educational Trust)

Pics **supplied**

*We often ask: Why are our schools failing?
But perhaps it's time to ask a better question:
What do our schools need to succeed?*

In conversations about educational reform, we tend to focus on curriculum, infrastructure, or assessment outcomes. Rarely do we stop to consider something more immediate: *Has the child eaten today?* And yet, no textbook or teaching strategy can compensate for a child trying to learn on an empty stomach.

Hunger is a silent saboteur in the classroom. It dulls focus, weakens memory, and lowers motivation. But the impact of nutrition goes beyond test scores. When children receive regular, nourishing meals, they not only perform

better academically, but become more emotionally regulated, socially connected, and cognitively resilient.

Emerging science is uncovering something even more profound: the link between gut health and brain function. The gut – often referred to as the “second brain” – is home to trillions of bacteria that help produce key neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine. These chemicals directly affect mood, attention, and learning capacity. A healthy gut microbiome equips a child to absorb and retain information, to engage meaningfully with the world around them.

And when we speak about nutrition, we mean real food: whole, nutritionally dense meals that offer variety and vitality. At the Anton Lubowski Educational Trust, this is what they provide – not just calories, but sustenance that supports growth and development.

Food is not separate from education. It is the foundation of it. But nutrition is only one side of the coin. The other is teachers. We need to do more than respect teachers – we must reverence them. They are not just implementers of

curriculum; they are custodians of our collective future. Each child they guide, each moment they give, holds the potential to change lives.

Yet teachers are often overburdened, underpaid, and asked to fulfil countless roles – educator, counsellor, caregiver, administrator – without sufficient support or recognition. When we fail to invest in their personal well-being and professional growth, we risk more than burnout. We risk systemic breakdown. And we limit the potential of the very children we claim to prioritise.

What if we reimagined education as a reciprocal ecosystem – a partnership between student and teacher, family and community, environment and earth? What if feeding a child was not charity, but a strategic imperative? What if teacher development was not a budget line item, but the foundation of the entire system?

These are not radical questions. They are urgent ones.

The way forward is clear: we must nourish both body and mind. We must value and support our teachers. Because when we invest in children – and in those who teach and care for them – we don't just build schools. We build futures. Whole, active citizens who care for themselves, for others, and for the earth.

Here's how you can help:

- **Donate new or gently used storybooks** – Early literacy lays the foundation for future success. Storybooks spark imagination and a love for learning.
- **Support our nutrition drive** – Just R40 provides a nourishing hot meal via our soup kitchen, and R500 feeds a household of six for two weeks through our food parcel programme. Every contribution helps families focus, grow, and thrive.

Read More

Read more about ALET and Anton Lubowski's legacy here



<https://www.alet.org.za/>





WEST COAST WANDERINGS

TO SEE THE WILDFLOWERS

Words & Pics **Di Brown**



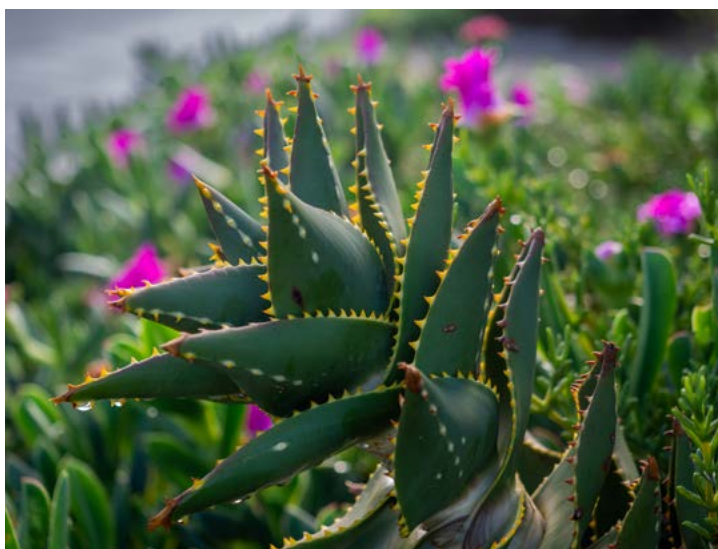
Philosopher and poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, said, “The earth laughs in flowers”, and if that is true, then the Cape West Coast in spring demands a road trip to witness nature’s annual comedy festival.

Sometimes, the joke’s on you. The flowers only open if the weather meets their exacting requirements. They demand sunshine, abhor clouds, are not keen on wind and dislike temperatures below 19 degrees Celsius, so a localised weather check is essential for successful flower spotting. Generally, the flowers are open between 11 am and 3 pm on a warm sunny day. Fortunately, the West Coast has countless scenic spots and attractions to entertain you when the flowers are not playing along.

Postberg in the West Coast National Park in Langebaan

My eyes feast on the ethereal scene from the balcony of the Shark Bay Hotel. The early morning sun burns away the mist, and the water of Langebaan lagoon is like glass, animated by the wake of a solitary fishing boat. I’m excited about my first visit to the Postberg section of the West Coast National Park, which is only open to the public during August and September. I arrive at the entrance gate before it opens at 7 am to avoid the queues, and drive 35km to Tsaarsbank to be sure I am one of the limited number of cars allowed in when those gates open at 9 am.

Postberg exceeds all my expectations. Fynbos covered dunes give way to rolling hills with Stonehenge-like rock





formations, where zebra, eland and gemsbok graze. The sun warms the air, the flowers open, and magic happens. The landscape transforms into an endless scene of the quintessential South African foam mattress. You know the one, a brown background with yellow, orange and white daisies. Cars line the side of the road, compelled to get out into the sun, visitors walk among the flowers, take millions of photos and laugh from the pure joy of the spectacle.

Leaving the Postberg section, I savour a flask of coffee on the beach at Preekstoel, and start mentally planning my next visit, inspired by my distant view of the houseboats moored at Kraalbaai. The West Coast National Park spans 32,000 hectares, and apart from the spectacular flowers, this family-friendly National Park warrants an overnight visit to fully enjoy the walks, hikes, cycle routes, bird hides, beaches, braai areas and picnic spots.

Passes and Padstals

The Biedouw Valley, deep in the Cederberg mountains, is a wildflower hotspot. The three-and-a-half-hour drive from Cape Town takes me five hours due to the numerous stops to take in the views and visit the farm stalls. Heading out of Cape Town on the N7, I resist the urge to stop until I reach Piekenierskloof Pass just past Piketberg and about halfway to the Biedouw

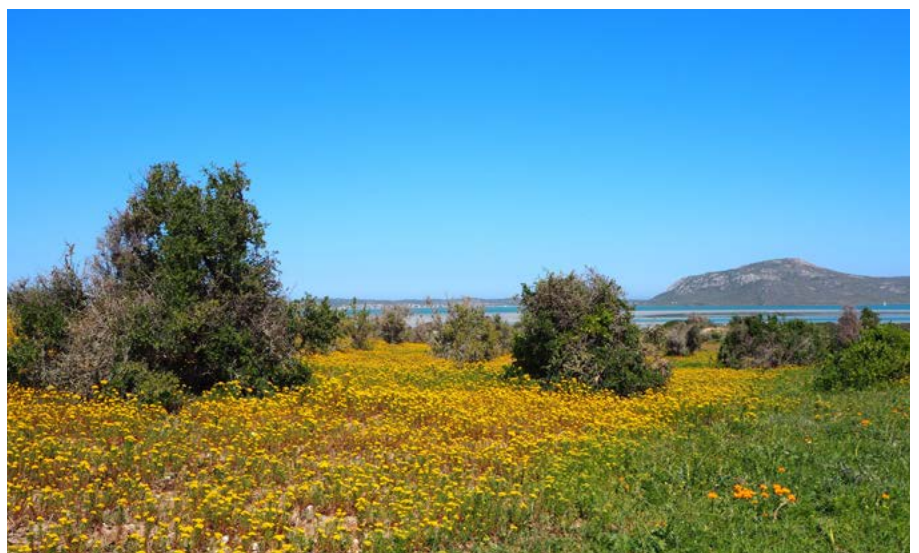
Valley. Kardoesie Farmstall, De Tol, and Hebron are all within a two-kilometre stretch, and I stop at all three. Refuelled with coffee and well stocked with local wines, preserves, and craft beer to take home, I snack all the way to Clanwilliam, the home of Rooibos tea, where I pop into the House of Rooibos before heading into the majestic northern Cederberg's wild and raw wilderness. Halfway up the Pakhuis Pass, I pull in at Travellers Rest for brunch in the sun and poke around in the gorgeous gift shop.

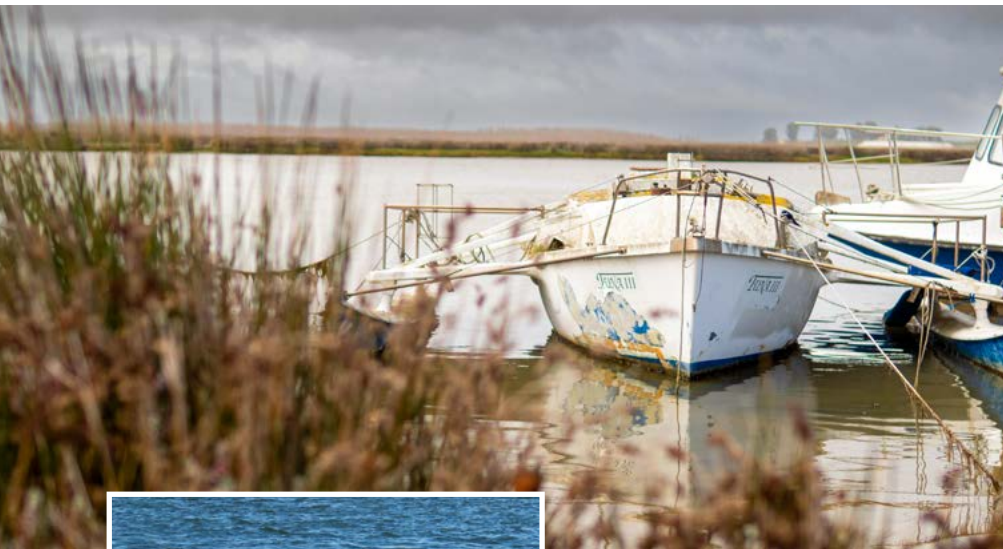
I love driving, and the 50-kilometre road down into the Biedouw Valley has some fantastic twists, turns, and spots to stop and take in the jaw-

dropping views and colourful display of wildflowers. Surrounded by towering, craggy mountains, the valley epitomises tranquillity.

Blissed out on the wonders of nature, I drive on to see the nearby Rhenish Mission town of Wuppertal. This place speaks to my soul.

Donkeys wander along the embankments of the Tra Tra River surrounded by reeds and trees, and through the streets, where whitewashed houses follow the contours of the





terrain. Children play cricket in the fields, locals nod and say hi. The church, shop and Veldskoen shoe factory are the centre of this timeless village.

Bokkoms, Birds and Boats

Rocherpan is a coastal nature reserve north of Velddrif, about two-and-a-half-hour drive from Cape Town on the R27. It consists of a large seasonal vlei, prolific birdlife, magnificent bird hide, marked trails to the dunes and beach and a myriad of colourful wildflowers.

En route to Rocher Pan, I stop to explore the best kept local secret, Bokkomlaan. It's a microcosm of slow living and the ethos of the West Coast overlooking the Berg River. Caffeinated by a takeaway brew from Columbine Coffee, I wander into the Riverside Studio to see Marie Clunie's paintings, then continue to watch the skilled fishermen preparing the dried harders known as Bokkoms, a kind of fish biltong. Lunch with river views at Ek n Jy fishery, where they serve good food, not fast food, and where the resident pelican might beg for scraps. Boats bob alongside the jetties, strangers start friendly conversations, and I make a note to schedule a trip on the Cracklin Rosie to view the birds and flowers of the Berg River.

Blooms and Beaches, a winning combo.

I'm an ocean addict, so visiting Paternoster to see flowers and stunning beaches is a double win. Cape Columbine Nature Reserve sits on the

southern edge of this charming town known for its whitewashed cottages, fishing boats and quirky shops. Sandy paths meander along beaches and cliffs and up to the highest point where a lighthouse stands tall and proud. I chose the fun option to explore this reserve, where every inch of land not taken up by massive granite boulders or white sandy beaches is carpeted in vibrant wildflowers. Helmet on, I follow the knowledgeable local guide from WOW E-bikes on a thrilling and effortless cycle along nineteen kilometres of pristine beaches, powering up hills and navigating the stony paths and dense dunes of the reserve, all the way to the ever so pretty Tieties Bay. End the day with a casual dinner at the beachside Voorstrandt Restaurant or dine in style at the award-winning Leeto Restaurant at the Strandloper Ocean Boutique Hotel.

A "No Daisy Day" in Darling

When clouds cancel any chance of seeing flowers in Darling, known as the Golden Mile of the plant kingdom, I go in search of culture, heritage, retail therapy and sustenance. Which I find in droves. At !Kkwa ttu, a SAN heritage site and nature reserve, I explore the phenomenal Heritage Museum and try, unsuccessfully, to master the various click sounds of the SAN language.

I laugh until I cry at the brilliant live show by satirist Pieter Dirk Uys at Evita's se Perron, which was once a railway station but is now a theatre, restaurant, and museum of sorts. Lunch is chilled and tasty at Africa's first carbon-neutral brewery, Darling Brew, followed by afternoon tea at the historic Groote Post winery outside of town.

There is so much to experience when visiting the West Coast during the flower season. Book a scheduled tour with West Coast Way for a relaxed guided multi-day tour of the flowers.



essentials:

Early bloomers can emerge in mid-July, and generally by mid-October, the late bloomers have completed their show.

Flower Shows:

Hopefield Fynbos Show
28-31 August 2025

Clanwilliam Wildflower Show
29 August – 7 September 2025

Darling Wildflower Show
19-21 September 2025

Download the free Clanflora App to identify the wildflowers in the Cederberg, Nieuwoudtville and Namaqualand regions.

Where to Stay:

August and September are busy on the West Coast, so book accommodation well in advance. Yzerfontein Accommodation has over 80 properties listed in Yzerfontein, Jacobsbaai and Darling, ranging from backpackers and B&Bs to large luxurious beach houses. Yzerfontein Accommodation <https://yzerfonteinaccommodation.co.za/>

Experiences:

Visit West Coast Way for comprehensive info on what to eat, see, and do in the towns and villages on the West Coast.



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

A TASTE OF THE CAPE:



SAMPLING THE MOTHER CITY'S UNIQUE FLAVOURS

Words **Sharon Waugh** Pics **Supplied**

Boschendal

When you visit a place, dining there is never just about sampling the local cuisine, it's about the whole experience; the sights, the sounds, the decor, the ambience and the interactions you have with the people you encounter. It all culminates in an experience that leaves a taste in your mouth - hopefully a good one.



We recently wine and dined our way through Cape Town, and here are some of the flavours we believe every visitor should taste:



The wine farm picnic

It's not hard to see why people travel from all over the world to experience both the scenic beauty of the Cape Winelands and the products of this region. A picnic is a great way to enjoy both of these things simultaneously.

Our adventure began just an hour outside Cape Town at Boschendal where we enjoyed a picnic on lush green lawns in the shade of soaring oak trees stretching towards the sky. Much of the

contents of our picnic basket (or rather box) was grown on site or ethically sourced from local artisans. Some of our favourites included the harissa cream cheese dip that went well with the freshly baked bread, and the free-range chicken drumstick with honey and mustard sauce. A bottle of Boschendal's Cap Classique (sparkling wine) beautifully completed the meal.

A unique pairing with a bit of extra sparkle

While a wine tasting is practically mandatory for any visitor to Cape Town who drinks, there are other local drink pairing experiences to be had. The setting of a diamond jewellery showroom, however, certainly makes for a unique one.

After getting a history lesson about diamond mining in South Africa and

learning to polish a diamond ourselves, the Diamond Experience at the Rockwell Shimansky then enabled us to indulge in a gin and chocolate pairing. Three Triple Three gins, with flavours of African botanicals, citrus and raspberry, were each paired with complementary chocolates that were enjoyed under the same lights that illuminated thousands of tiny diamond facets, all shimmering at us while we savoured the moment.

Making friends and meals

Cape Town is known as the fifth friendliest city in the world and Food Jams is the place to dine if you want to discover why. The only catch is you have to help make dinner first! During this interactive dining experience, we joined forces with a team of strangers to learn how to make ostrich bobotie, among other dishes. Not only did we pick up some cooking skills along the way, but by the time we sat down to enjoy the fruits of our labour, we had made some new friends in the process too. By getting strangers to collaborate, while jamming to the beat of the resident DJ, with the encouragement of some of the most charismatic staff around, Food Jams has discovered a certain alchemy that makes for a special night out.





Street food on a city rooftop

The Radisson RED Rooftop now known as Locál, has always been known as a hotspot for beautiful people and gorgeous views. After a recent refurbishment, the new menu includes some distinctly local favourites, like the classic Gatsby. This usually consists of an oversized bread roll filled with chips (French fries) and other fillings such as chicken, meats and salads, all topped off with tasty sauce. In this case, they have included battered fish, black pepper bread, smoked triple-cooked chips, masala onions, lettuce, plum tomatoes and pickles. Sampling local street food is a great way to get the flavour of a place and the Radisson RED Rooftop allows you to get a taste of Cape Town while simultaneously looking at it from an amazing viewpoint.

A sophisticated local experience

Yizani is the place to go for a refined world-class restaurant experience that is still distinctly South African. Located at the Southern Sun, Waterfront, the menu combines contemporary influences with classic local dishes. From West Coast mussels to the Malay-inspired curry, and a selection of premium grill cuts, as well as desserts like Malva Pudding, here we experienced polished service, perfectly plated mains, and a calm sophistication.

Comfort food with some quirks

When you arrive in the Salon at Dorp, the double volume room filled with large pink granny settees and indoor palms almost takes your breath away, even before you notice the incredible views of Table Mountain out the windows just beyond them. The more you explore, the more you notice quirky details, like

dinosaur bookends and mermaid motifs. On Signal Hill near Bo-Kaap, this sprawling hotel feels welcoming and luxurious but also somewhat unhinged. Here, in the Salon, they serve simple, home-style comfort food like their legendary roast chicken. The decadent cheese soufflé will also leave quite an impression. This hotel and its restaurant are full of personality, much like the artistic free spirits who call Cape Town home and are the reason that this city is the creative heart of South Africa.

An immersive entertainment experience

GOLD Restaurant is known for offering a distinctly African dining experience that extends well beyond the borders of South Africa. Each member of staff wears traditional attire and the entertainment throughout the night consists of singing, dancing, drumming, storytelling and even Malian puppetry.



Here, we experienced a more personalised affair in the form of the Spice Experience. In a private dining room, we learnt all about the Spice Route and how it influenced world history while sampling different spices and the dishes that they flavour. A sneak peek into the kitchen revealed even more remarkable skills among the kitchen staff who serenaded us after teaching us how to prepare our own spices.

From farm fresh treats to pan-African feasts, sophisticated dining to DIY bobotie, our journey through the Cape proved one delicious truth: to understand a place, you have to taste it. And if you taste Cape Town, you'll be coming back for seconds.



essentials:

Dining

Boschendal - <https://boschendal.com>

Food Jams - <https://www.foodjams.co.za/>

Radisson RED Rooftop - <https://www.radissonhotels.com/>

Yizani - <https://www.southernsun.com/>

GOLD Restaurant - <https://goldrestaurant.co.za/>

Salon at Dorp - <https://dorp.co.za/>

Experiences:

Shimansky Diamond Experience - <https://shimansky.com/>

Cape Winelands - <https://www.cape-winelands-info.co.za/>



SIJWA:

WHERE SUSTAINABILITY, STYLE, AND SOCIAL IMPACT MEET IN THE CAPRIVI

Words **Melissa Foley**

Pics **African Monarch Lodges / Sijwa Project**



Tucked between the waterways and wilderness of Namibia's Zambezi Region, the Sijwa Project isn't just a community development initiative — it's a living, breathing blueprint for how tourism can regenerate, not just sustain.

Conceived and championed by African Monarch Lodges, Sijwa is more than an afterthought on the guest itinerary. It's a proudly local social enterprise and circular economy project with the power to transform how lodges across Africa procure, decorate, and give, all while investing directly in the communities and ecosystems that make this region so extraordinary.

"The vision is bigger than us – we occupy a tiny space on this planet – but we know that The Sijwa Project will make a fundamental difference and will demonstrate how people and wildlife can live together in a sustainable manner"
Dusty and Tinola Rodgers - Nov 2018

A Community-Driven Supply Chain Solution

At its core, Sijwa is about dignity, skills, and self-reliance. Here, waste becomes wonder. Used glass bottles are transformed into elegant drinking glasses and décor. Upcycled linens are hand-embroidered by local women into luxury soft furnishings. Discarded materials are creatively reimagined into retail-ready, ethically made gifts that reflect the spirit of the Caprivi.

The quality is exceptional. These are not pity-purchase curios or well-meaning but poorly made crafts. Sijwa's products rival those found in high-end urban boutiques, and yet each one carries a story of empowerment, circularity, and conscious design.

For safari lodges and eco-retreats, Sijwa offers an extraordinary opportunity to source with purpose. Whether you're outfitting your rooms with handmade linens, looking for meaningful guest amenities, or stocking

your gift shop with items that guests will actually want to buy and feel good about purchasing, Sijwa delivers. Better still, their offerings make exceptional corporate gifts, allowing tour operators and DMCs to walk the talk of responsible tourism with beautifully packaged products that give back in real, traceable ways.

Certification-Ready, Regulation-Aligned

In a tourism landscape increasingly shaped by sustainability compliance, Sijwa's model fits seamlessly into global frameworks like Fair Trade Tourism, Travelife, and Green Destinations. By integrating Sijwa into your operations or guest journey, you're not just supporting local livelihoods, you're directly addressing key criteria around

community benefit, circular economy, and verified impact.

Even more critically, Sijwa's operations speak the language of the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and Green Claims Directive. As global procurement standards tighten, especially in European

markets, tourism businesses must now demonstrate clear social and environmental impact across their supply chains. Sijwa provides the kind of transparent, measurable, and high-integrity sourcing partnership that helps meet these obligations without sacrificing aesthetics, quality, or guest experience.

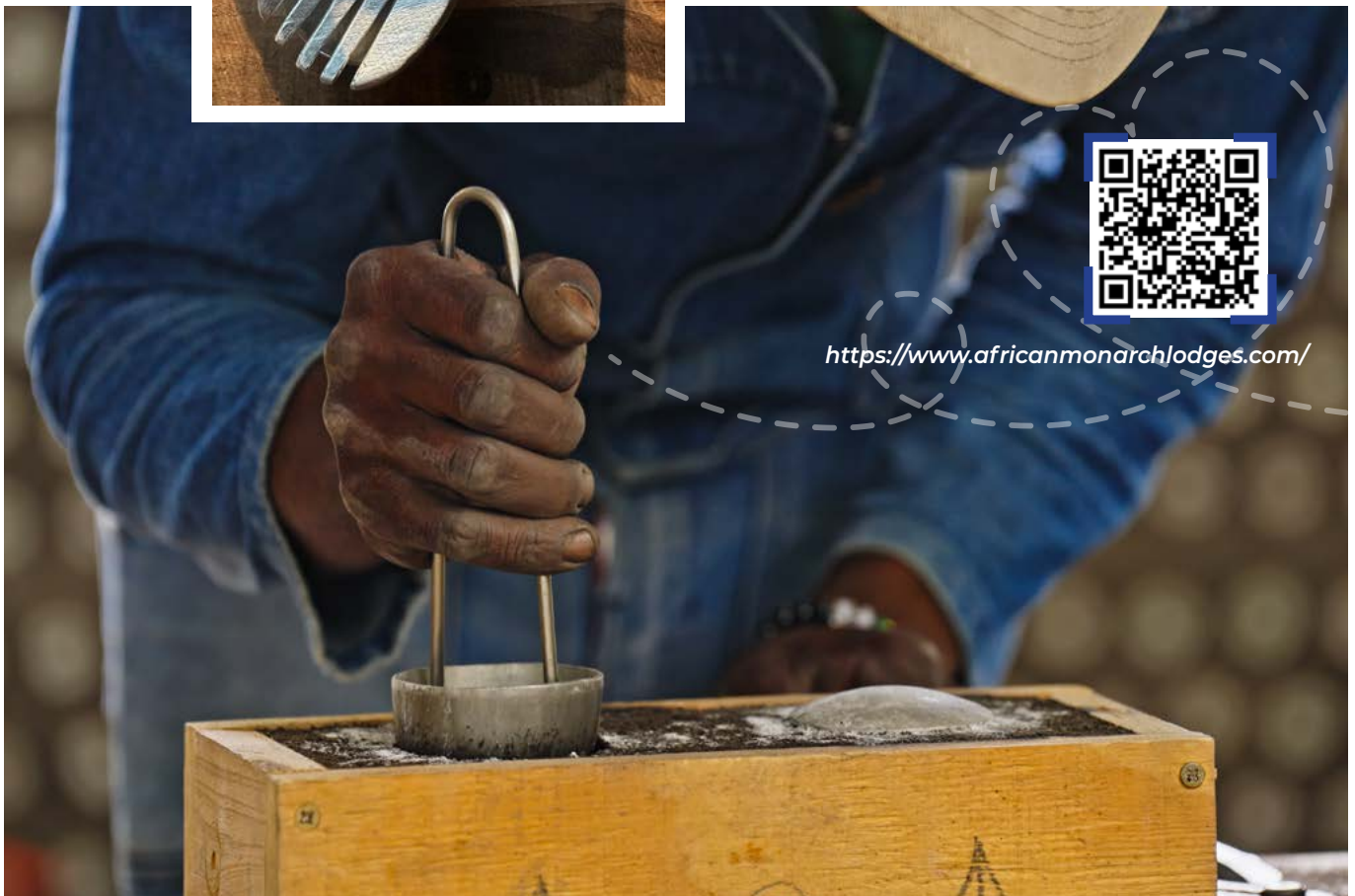
A Model for the Future of Travel

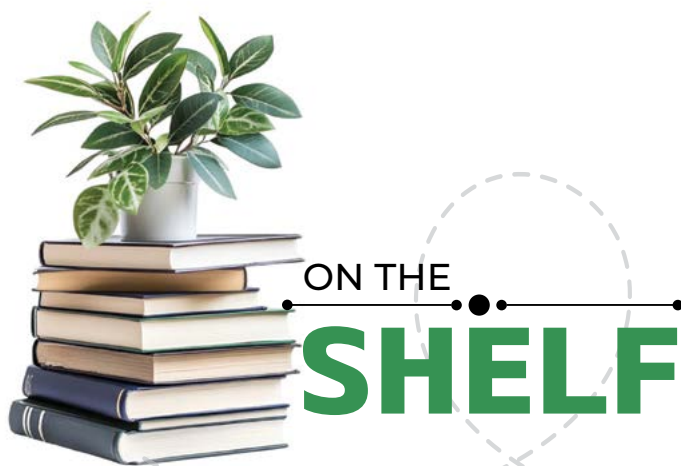
The Sijwa Project isn't a charity add-on or a token CSR line item. It's a model for what's possible when tourism reinvests in its own roots, when waste is reimagined, talent is nurtured, and business becomes a tool for regeneration. It's also a case study in what authentic impact looks like in practice.

At a time when greenwashing is rampant and travellers are more discerning than ever, initiatives like Sijwa remind us what tourism is capable of, not just as an industry, but as a force for good.

If you're a lodge, DMC, agent, or hospitality buyer looking for real solutions that reflect your values, don't just pass through the Caprivi. Integrate it. Procure from it. Partner with it. Let the Sijwa Project be your compass.

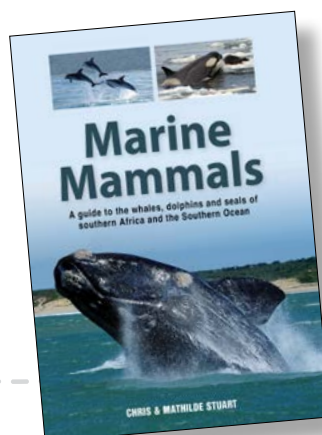
Because where community thrives, so does the industry.





Marine Mammals - A guide to the whales, dolphins and seals of southern Africa and the Southern Ocean

by Chris & Mathilde Stuart



This easy-to-use identification guide to the whales, dolphins and seals found in southern African waters and the Southern Ocean is the perfect companion for anyone with an interest in marine mammals, or heading out on a marine safari. It is compact and comprehensive and covers key identification features, behaviour, diet and distribution.



Wildlife of Botswana – A photographic Guide by Nikos Petrou & Neil MacLeod

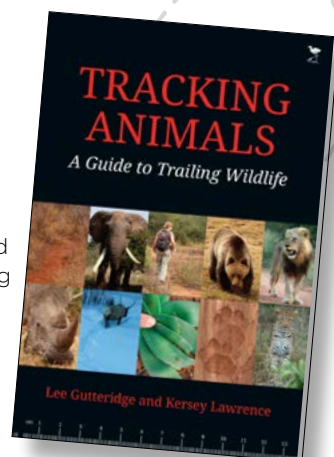
No space in your luggage for several guidebooks? No problem, this compact wildlife guide is an easy-to-use, all-in-one guide to the country's most conspicuous and interesting mammals, birds, reptiles, invertebrates and plants. Making it an excellent portable travel companion for visitors to parks, reserves and other wildlife-rich places in Botswana.



Tracking Animals – A guide to Trailing Wildlife by Lee Gutteridge & Kersey Lawrence

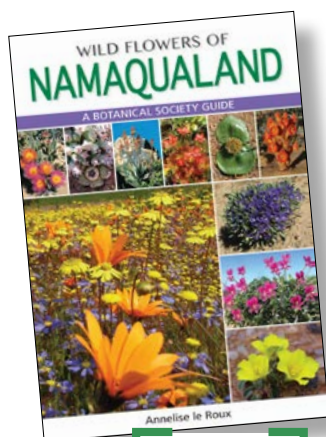
A captivating guide to the art and science of wildlife tracking, this book reveals how to follow animals without disturbing their natural behaviour. Rich with field stories, photos, and practical techniques, it goes beyond track ID to interpret animal behaviour, age trails, and understand ecosystems, making it an essential companion for nature lovers, guides, and

aspiring trackers worldwide. Perfect for your next walking safari.



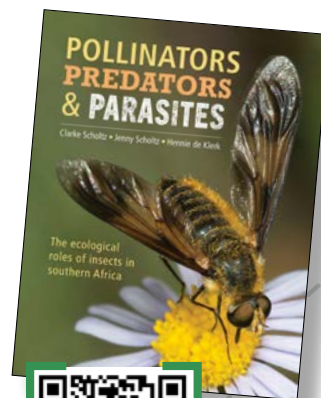
Wild Flowers of Namaqualand by Annelise le Roux

This beautifully illustrated guide showcases nearly 600 of Namaqualand's most striking and significant wild flowers. With concise species descriptions, flowering times, and fascinating insights into plant uses and habitats, it's an essential companion for flower season. A celebration of biodiversity, it also highlights conservation concerns – perfect for visitors and plant lovers exploring southern Africa's extraordinary floral treasure.



Pollinators, Predators & Parasites – the ecological roles of insects in southern Africa by Clarke Scholtz, Jenny Scholtz & Hennie de Klerk

Richly illustrated and deeply informative, this landmark guide explores the vital role insects play in southern Africa's ecosystems – from pollination to predation and nutrient cycling. Structured by biome and featuring 1,600 stunning photographs, it offers fascinating insights into the region's insect diversity and ecology. A must for nature lovers, conservationists, and anyone curious about the miniature world beneath our feet.



TRAVEL & LEISURE ZAMBIA, ZIMBABWE & BOTSWANA

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

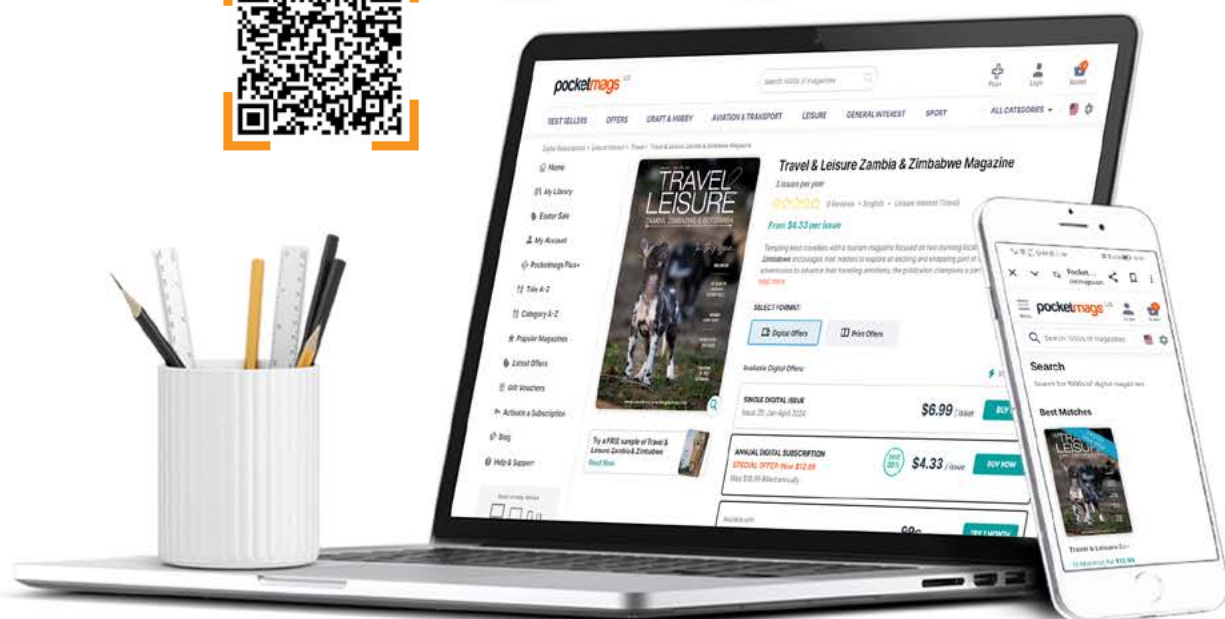
The publication showcases various tourism products found in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana.



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