

ISSUE 5

# TRAVEL

*Southern Africa & Beyond*

WELLNESS:  
BEYOND THE SPA

*A Slow Safari*

FINDING STILLNESS  
IN MOROCCO

*Discover  
Wine Country*

*Elevated Journeys. Authentic Stories. Meaningful Impact.*



*Great Southern Africa Train Adventures*



## *The GOLDEN AGE of LEISURE TRAVEL*

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

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# Editor's Comment



*"Live in the sunshine,  
swim the sea,  
drink the wild air."*  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

I've really enjoyed putting this Wine & Wellness issue together. There have been plenty of surprises along the way, and I've been reminded yet again just how many wonderful experiences there are to discover, both close to home and further afield.

We discover the slow roads, great wines and outdoor experiences of the *Cape Winelands*, then go *Beyond the Cape* to explore wine and cuisine in KwaZulu-Natal and

Lesotho. We experience *Mauritius at its most Delicious* and look at a different way of experiencing the bush in *Slow Safari*.

Alongside *The Art of Slowing Down* at Sala Beach House, *Taking Time to Breathe* at Vala House and *Finding Stillness in Morocco*, our *Wellness: Beyond the Spa* feature looks at the many ways we can reconnect with nature, slow down and simply take a little time for ourselves. It's a reminder that wellness doesn't always come with a treatment menu!

And then there's the adventure and photography. We cool off in some beautiful safari lodge pools, head out on foot in Hwange, and join photographer Jacques Marais on a photographic journey through Mana Pools – one of those places that seems to demand that you slow down and simply look. There's plenty more tucked within these pages, too.

As always, I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed putting it together. And perhaps, like me, you'll find a few places and experiences that make you want to pack a bag and go.

Happy travels!

Tessa

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## COVER

Luke O'Cuinneagain, winemaker and cellar master in the vineyards at Vergelegen Wine Estate in 2026  
@Vergelegen Wine Estate

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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@travelsouthernafrica.co.za for consideration.

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# Unexpected Firsts

## UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS



Pour slowly. Linger longer.  
Leave restored.



## Comment from our **CEO**



HILTON WATSON

Welcome to the *Wine & Wellness Edition of Travel Southern Africa*.

Travel today is about more than simply visiting a destination. It is about how a place makes you feel, the people you meet, the flavours you discover and the experiences you take home with you.

Southern Africa brings these elements together beautifully.

Our world-renowned wine regions offer exceptional wines, cuisine, hospitality and breathtaking landscapes. At the same time, wellness tourism is growing as travellers increasingly seek nature, relaxation, healthy living and meaningful experiences.

From the vineyards of the Cape to luxury safari lodges, coastal retreats and destination spas, Southern Africa offers something truly special: authentic experiences combined with world-class hospitality.

At Travel Southern Africa, our purpose is to showcase the destinations, people and businesses that make our tourism industry exceptional, while helping introduce Southern Africa to a wider global audience.

Tourism creates jobs, supports communities and attracts investment.

We invite you to explore, taste, relax and rediscover our remarkable region.

Enjoy the edition.

*Hilton*

## Introducing our **Founder**



ANDREW MUSWALA

Andrew Muswala is the Founder of Travel Southern Africa, and Publisher and Managing Director of Travel & Leisure Zambia, Zimbabwe & Botswana. A passionate travel enthusiast, he has spent more than a decade in travel publishing, driven by a love of Southern Africa and a desire to showcase its remarkable destinations, people, wildlife and experiences to travellers around the world.



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT - DOWNLOAD ISSUE 4



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**NZOVU RUNDU  
LUXURY CAMP**  
Lower Zambezi

*"Life's better in the wild"*

## **WILDERNESS** In Refined **LUXURY**

Set along the Nkhalange Channel of the Zambezi River and framed by the dramatic Zambezi Escarpment, the camp invites guests to experience the pristine beauty of the **Lower Zambezi** in unmatched style. **Nzovu Rundu** offers the perfect harmony of refined **luxury** and **untamed wilderness**.

Inspired by the elephants that roam this valley, Nzovu Rundu is designed as an intimate retreat where every moment blends adventure with serenity. From game drives in the National Park to tranquil canoeing and boat cruises, each experience immerses guests in the magic of the Zambezi. Evenings bring golden sunsets, the perfect close to a day of exploration.

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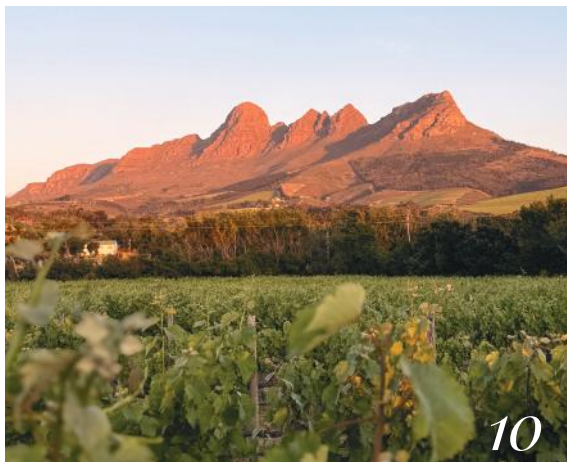
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Slow is the

# FRANSCHHOEK

## VALLEY OF DREAMS

One of the oldest towns in South Africa, Franschhoek has grown into a destination known for its wine, food and natural beauty. Steeped in history and surrounded by breathtaking landscapes, this is a place where history, culture and indulgence intertwine — evoking a sense of authentic small-town charm while offering a world-class experience.

In winter the rhythm here is unhurried yet vibrant, inviting visitors to linger over a glass of wine as chefs transform local harvests into memorable dining experiences. Widely regarded as the culinary capital of South Africa, Franschhoek offers a diverse range of dining experiences. From fine dining establishments to charming farm-to-table eateries, enjoying a meal in this part of the world is a celebration of flavour, community and the simple joy of sharing good food and wine.



# new luxury

## EXPLORE WINE, FOOD, ART AND THAT SMALL VILLAGE MAGIC

Franschhoek may be famed for its cuisine, but it is also known as one of South Africa's most distinguished wine-producing areas, delivering wines of exceptional character. What truly sets the region apart is its ability to marry Old World sophistication with New World vibrancy and innovation, resulting in wines that embody a distinct South African style.

The valley and surrounding mountains offer a world of outdoor adventures for those eager to explore. From peaceful cycling and hiking trails to high-energy thrills, Franschhoek delivers some of the Cape's most memorable outdoor experiences.

A visit is not complete without seeing the iconic Huguenot Monument, visible at the southern end of the main street, and a tribute to the French Huguenot settlers and the influence they have had on the region's culture.

Whether you're seeking a spontaneous escape, a sparkling adventure, or a relaxed fireside weekend, the valley invites you to slow down, savour deeply and reconnect.

# *The Cape Winelands...*

## **SLOW ROADS, GREAT WINES AND LONG LUNCHES**

The Cape Winelands are as much about the journey as the destination. As Di Brown discovers, winding mountain passes lead to vineyards for wine tastings, hidden galleries and delectable lunches you'll be talking about long after the holiday is over.

The wines are world-class, but that's only part of the story. Historic towns, spectacular mountain scenery, outdoor adventures and unforgettable food make this one of South Africa's most rewarding regions to explore.

### **Cape Town's Original Wine Route**

You don't have to head for the Winelands to enjoy a memorable day of wine tasting. Just beyond the southern suburbs, the Constantia Valley is home to some of South Africa's oldest and most beautiful wine

estates. Groot Constantia, the country's oldest wine farm, is where the story begins, but don't stop there. Klein Constantia, Buitenverwachting, Constantia Glen, Beau Constantia and Steenberg each have their own character, from historic Cape Dutch homesteads to contemporary tasting rooms with breathtaking views. It's an easy escape from the city and the perfect way to discover that Cape Town has its own little wine country waiting to be explored.



PICS DI BROWN / SUPPLIED



Di Brown



**MAIN:** Delaire Graff Estate

**TOP:** Stark-Condé Wines

**MIDDLE:** Lanzerac Wine Estate

**BOTTOM:** Family at Babylonstoren



## Stellenbosch: The Heart of the Winelands

Just 50 kilometres from Cape Town, Stellenbosch is the perfect base for exploring the Cape Winelands. South Africa's second-oldest town effortlessly blends history with a vibrant café culture, thanks to its lively university community.

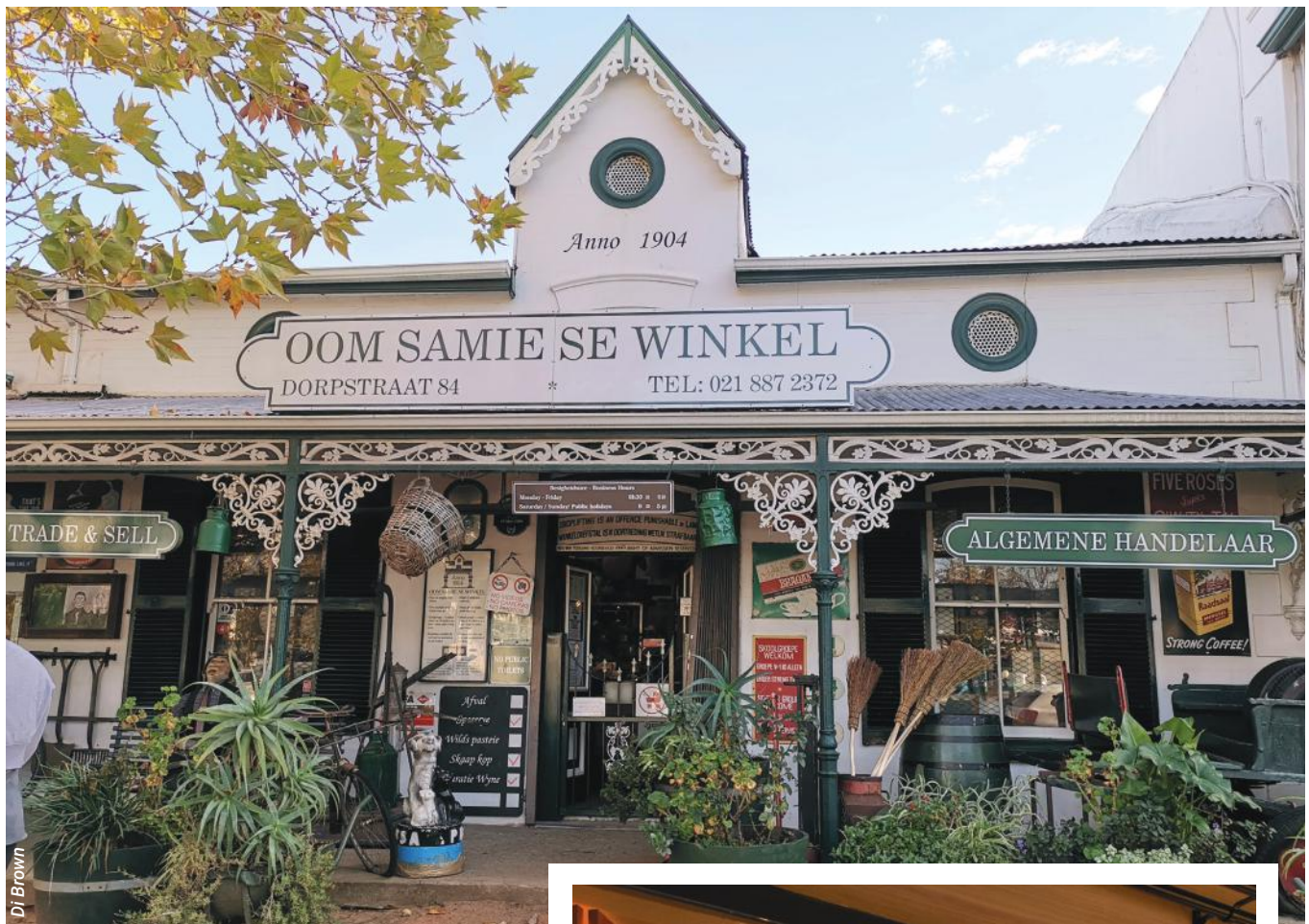
Stellenbosch is a very walkable town. Wander beneath ancient oak trees, browse galleries and boutiques, stop for excellent coffee, then simply lose yourself in streets lined with beautifully preserved Cape Dutch buildings, all framed by the Jonkershoek and Simonsberg mountains.

Wine lovers are spoiled for choice, with more than 150 estates on the town's doorstep. Better still, many offer experiences that go well beyond a tasting. Explore Glenelly

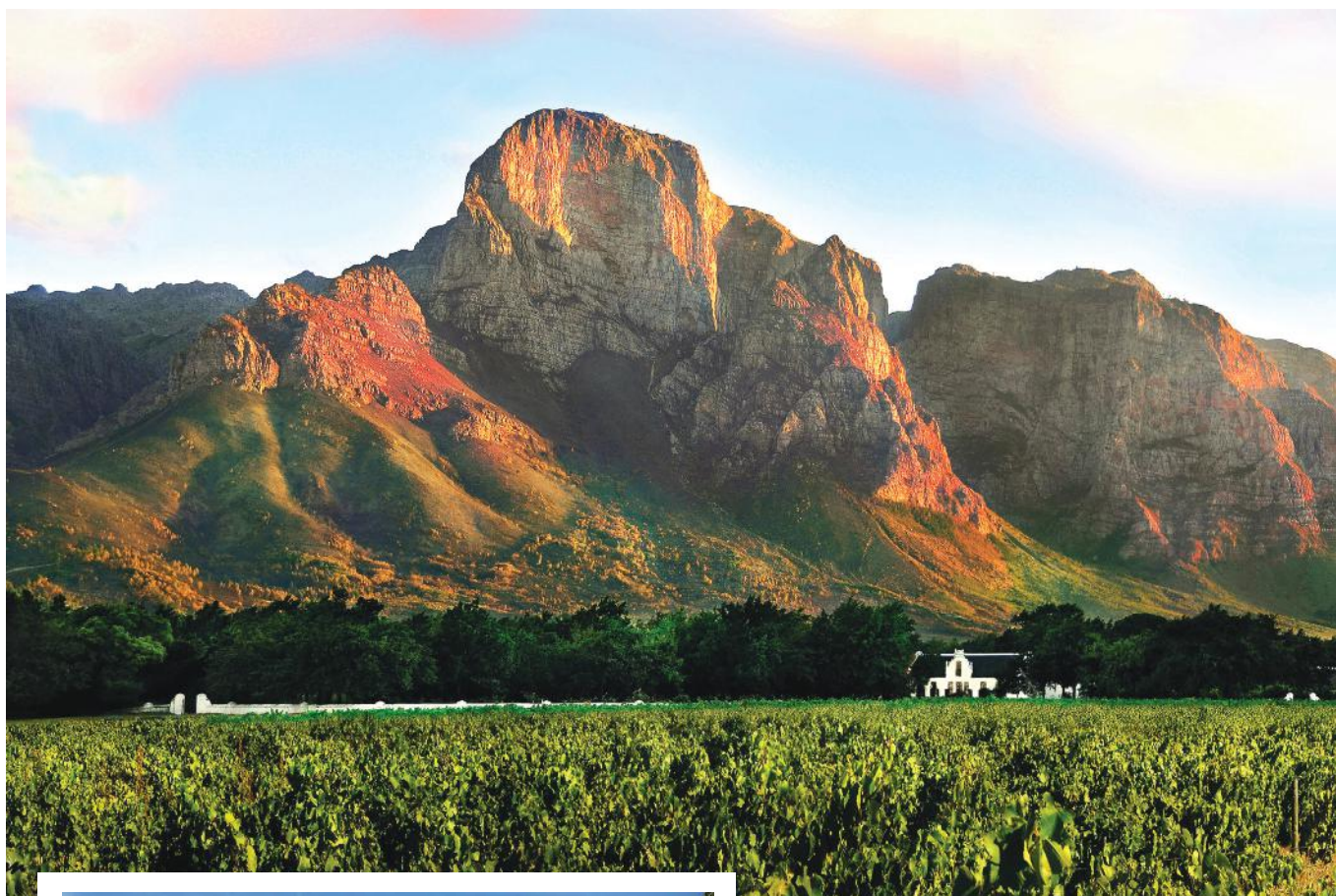
Estate's remarkable Glass Museum, admire contemporary African art at Delaire Graff Estate, or blend, bottle and label your own wine at Middelvlei before sitting down to a traditional South African braai.

Before you relax at the wine estates, get your fill of fresh air and nature. Head to Jonkershoek Nature Reserve for hiking, mountain biking and waterfalls, stroll through the Dylan Lewis Sculpture Garden, or visit the Stellenbosch University Botanical Garden, a peaceful green escape in the heart of town.

Whether you're visiting for the wine, the food, the scenery or the adventure, Stellenbosch has a habit of drawing you back.



ABOVE: Oom Samie se Winkel  
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Delaire Graff Estate  
 BOTTOM LEFT: Cheese platter  
 & glass of wine  
 at Ken Forrester Wines



**TOP:** Franschhoek Wine Valley  
**MIDDLE:** L'Ormarins Wine Estate  
**BOTTOM:** Franschhoek Wine Tram

### Franschhoek: A Small Village, Big Reputation

A scenic drive over the Helshoogte Pass brings you to Franschhoek, one of South Africa's prettiest villages, founded by French Huguenot settlers more than 300 years ago. Elegant Cape Dutch buildings, lavender-filled gardens and dramatic mountains create a picture-perfect setting, while award-winning restaurants and celebrated wine estates have earned Franschhoek its reputation as the country's food and wine capital.

One of the best ways to experience the valley is aboard the Franschhoek Wine Tram, hopping between estates for tastings, long lunches and spectacular vineyard views. Petrolheads shouldn't miss the Franschhoek Motor Museum at L'Ormarins Estate, home to one of the country's finest collections of classic and vintage cars.

Leave time to wander the main street too. Boutique galleries, artisan shops and welcoming cafés make it easy to while away an afternoon, and chances are you'll be bookmarking places for your next visit.



**TOP:** Brookdale Estate -  
Paarl

**MIDDLE:**  
Spioenkop Wines -  
Elgin Valley  
Val Du Charron Wine -  
Wellington

**BOTTOM:** Vergelegen  
Wine Estate



## Beyond the Beaten Track

The Cape Winelands is much more than its two best-known towns. Venture a little further and you'll discover valleys and villages, each with its own personality.

Paarl is almost impossible to miss, thanks to the massive granite dome of Paarl Rock towering above the town. Rich in history and surrounded by renowned wine estates and excellent brandy producers, it's a little quieter than Stellenbosch, making it ideal for a relaxed day of wine tasting, good food and leisurely exploring.

Just a short drive away, Somerset West blends vineyard living with ocean views. Historic Vergelegen Estate is a must-visit, famous not only for its award-winning wines but also its magnificent gardens, ancient camphor trees and inspiring conservation projects.

Robertson, a 150 kilometre drive through the famed Du Toit's Kloof Tunnel, is affectionately known as the Valley of Wine and Roses and invites visitors to slow down. Family-owned wineries, warm hospitality and scenic drives along the Breede River

make this one of the Cape's most welcoming wine regions, while nearby Tulbagh charms with its beautifully restored Church Street, fascinating Earthquake Museum and dramatic mountain setting.

Beyond Sir Lowry's Pass, the Elgin Valley offers something refreshingly different. Better known for its apple orchards and cool-climate vineyards, it's the place to linger over a crisp Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc before exploring boutique farm stalls and country cafés. The nearby Bot River Estates are worthy of a visit. Go during the harvest time for their epic Barrels and Beards festival.

The Hemel-en-Aarde Valley near Hermanus is renowned for exceptional Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, paired with land based whale watching, while Worcester, Wellington and the Breedekloof Wine Valley continue to reward travellers looking to escape the crowds.

*Venture beyond the famous names and discover the Cape's hidden wine valleys*



Di Brown

ABOVE: Hermanus Hop Ataraxia Wine Tasting  
BELOW: Nuy Valley views - Worcester



Di Brown



#### A West Coast Detour

Head north from Cape Town and another wine adventure begins. The West Coast may be better known for spring flowers, fishing villages and endless Atlantic views, but it's also home to a growing collection of boutique wineries that are well worth seeking out.

Darling has quietly become one of South Africa's most exciting cool-climate wine destinations. Thanks to the fresh ocean air, the region produces elegant Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc and Pinotage, while the village itself is full of personality, with quirky cafés, galleries and a wonderfully creative spirit - don't miss a visit to Evita se Perron or Darling Sweet.

Neighbouring Swartland has earned international acclaim for its innovative winemakers and distinctive, terroir-driven wines. Here, vineyards weave between rolling wheat fields and rugged mountain ranges, creating landscapes that are every bit as memorable as the wines themselves.

Here, vineyards sit between rolling wheat fields and rugged mountains, creating a landscape as memorable as the wines.

Continue towards the coast and you'll find the perfect pairing of boutique wines, fresh seafood and salty sea air. Spend the day exploring Yzerfontein, Langebaan or Paternoster, where long beach walks, unforgettable sunsets and relaxed coastal hospitality provide a welcome contrast to the vineyard valleys inland.

For travellers willing to venture beyond the classic Winelands route, the West Coast offers something refreshingly different. Boutique wineries, windswept beaches, fresh seafood and spectacular sunsets combine to create a slower, more laid-back escape.

That, perhaps, is the true beauty of the Cape Winelands. Every region has its own personality, every town tells a different story, and every winding road leads to another memorable discovery. Whether you're sipping wine beneath ancient oaks, cycling through vineyards, exploring hidden art collections or lingering over a long lunch with mountain views, this is a place that invites you to slow down, stay a little longer and savour every moment.



*TOP: Fryers Cove Doringbay Sauvignon Blanc*

*BOTTOM: Groote Post Vineyards*

*RIGHT: Dylan Lewis Sculpture Garden*



Di Brown



**DI BROWN** is a curious travel writer, photographer and aspiring drone pilot with a passion for exploring South Africa, especially its small towns, back roads, beaches and places of natural beauty.

Better known as *The Roaming Giraffe*, she's happiest when she's out doing rather than just looking. At 65, she has no intention of 'acting her age', with recent adventures including surfing, ziplining, gorilla trekking, tracking cheetahs on foot, quad biking in the Namib dunes, white-water rafting, filming from a helicopter, Segway forest tours and shark cage diving.

As a motoring journalist, Di also loves taking the scenic route, using every new vehicle as an excuse to discover another hidden corner of the country.

[www.theroaminggiraffe.co.za](http://www.theroaminggiraffe.co.za)



## Top Experiences in the Cape Winelands

### WINE, ART & CULTURE

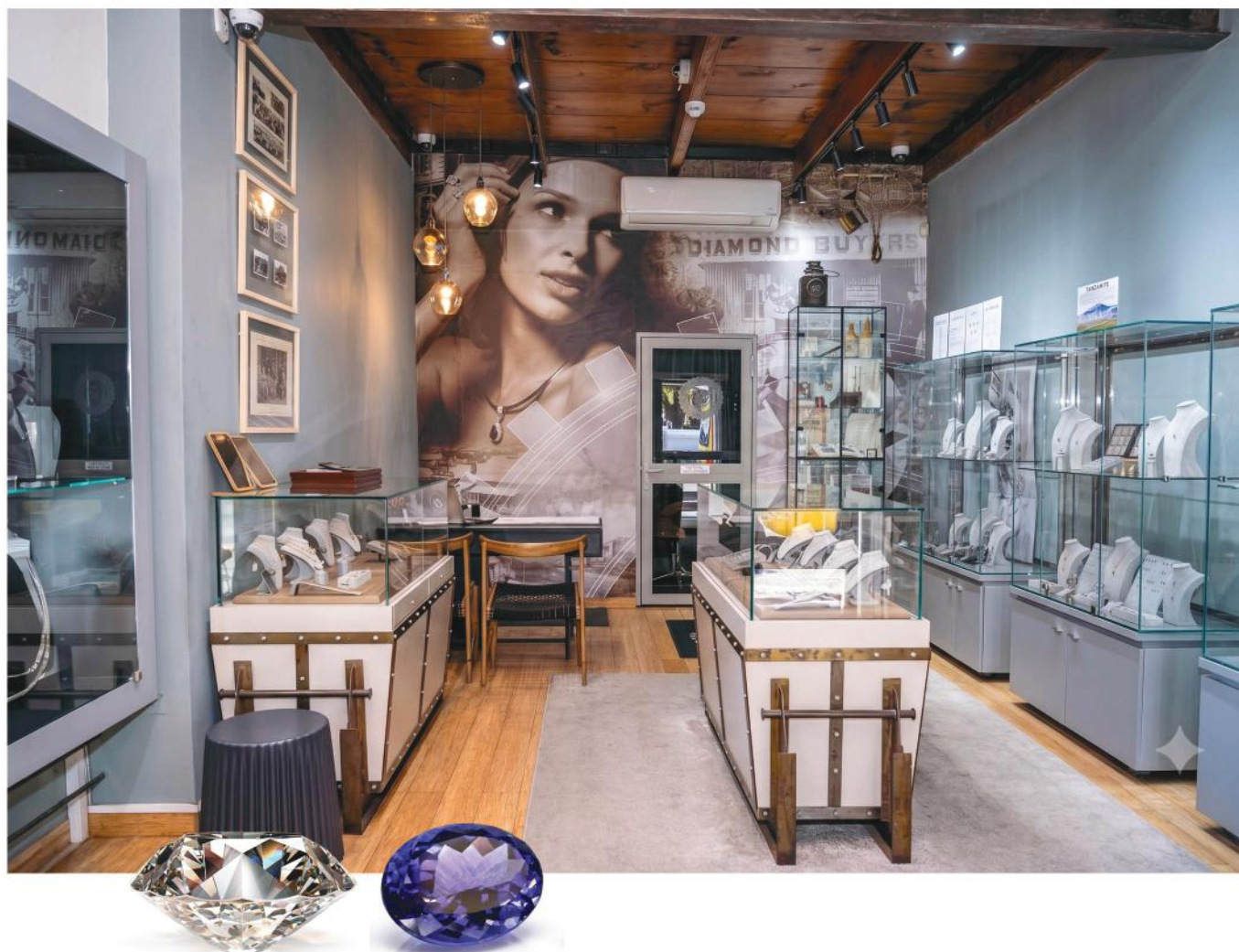
- ☐ Glenelly Estate Glass Museum, Stellenbosch – Award-winning wines and one of the world's finest private glass collections.
- ☐ Babylonstoren, Franschhoek – Explore the magnificent historic garden, then settle in for wine and farm-to-table fare.
- ☐ Dylan Lewis Sculpture Garden, Stellenbosch – Indigenous gardens showcasing remarkable outdoor sculptures.

### UNIQUE WINE EXPERIENCES

- ☐ Middelvlei Wine Estate, Stellenbosch – Blend, bottle and label your own wine before a traditional braai.
- ☐ Wine & Fynbos Pairing, Bartinney Wines, Stellenbosch – Discover how indigenous Cape flora brings out different characteristics in the wine.
- ☐ Idiom Wines, Somerset West – Combine an Eco Safari with a memorable wine tasting.
- ☐ Fryer's Cove, Doringbaai – Atlantic-cooled wines paired with fresh West Coast seafood.

### OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

- ☐ Franschhoek Wine Tram – Hop between the valley's celebrated wine estates.
- ☐ Cape Canopy Tour, Elgin – Zipline through the Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve.
- ☐ Paarl Rock – Climb one of the world's largest granite outcrops for sweeping views across the Winelands.
- ☐ Scootours Stellenbosch – Glide through vineyards on gravity-powered scooters.



## *Treasure's Found in the Cape Winelands*



Nestled in the heart of the picturesque Franschhoek Village, The Diamond Works Franschhoek offers an intimate luxury jewellery experience where African heritage, exceptional craftsmanship, and personalised service come together.

Located on the iconic Huguenot Street, the boutique showcases an exquisite collection of ethically sourced natural diamonds, rare Tanzanite, and beautifully handcrafted jewellery inspired by Africa's extraordinary natural beauty.

Guests are invited to discover the fascinating story behind South Africa's diamond legacy through a welcoming and educational experience. Whether selecting a timeless keepsake, commemorating a special occasion, or designing a bespoke

piece, visitors receive expert guidance from knowledgeable jewellery specialists committed to creating lasting memories.

The Franschhoek boutique specialises in custom jewellery design, allowing guests to transform their vision into reality. From initial concept and CAD design through to handcrafted manufacture by skilled goldsmiths, every piece is created with meticulous attention to detail and uncompromising quality.



Perfectly positioned within one of South Africa's premier wine and culinary destinations, The Diamond Works Franschhoek complements the village's reputation for luxury, artistry, and world-class hospitality. Visitors can enjoy a relaxed, elegant shopping experience while discovering exceptional diamonds, rare Tanzanite, and distinctive jewellery that celebrates the beauty and spirit of Africa.

Whether you're searching for an engagement ring, a meaningful gift, or a once-in-a-lifetime souvenir of your South African journey, The Diamond Works Franschhoek offers an unforgettable experience where every gemstone tells a story and every creation becomes a treasured heirloom.

#### Where Art Meets Heritage

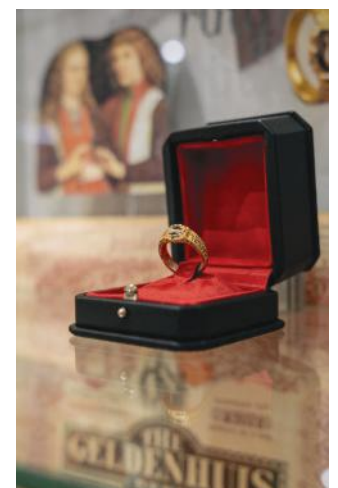
The Diamond Works Franschhoek is proud to showcase a striking new artwork by acclaimed South African artist Stefan Smit, inspired by one of the most significant moments in South Africa's diamond history – the discovery of the legendary Cullinan Diamond in 1905.

Renowned for his bold contemporary style and internationally celebrated murals and fine art, Stefan Smit has reimagined this iconic moment through a powerful visual narrative that celebrates discovery, craftsmanship, and South Africa's rich diamond legacy.

Now on display at The Diamond Works Franschhoek, the artwork enhances the boutique's immersive luxury experience, inviting visitors to explore not only exceptional diamonds and fine jewellery but also the stories, history, and artistry that make them truly timeless. It is a fitting tribute to the enduring brilliance of the Cullinan Diamond and to South Africa's remarkable place in the world's diamond heritage.



*Where  
exceptional  
gemstones,  
African artistry  
and South  
Africa's diamond  
heritage come  
together*



**THE  
DIAMOND  
WORKS**  
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*"genius starts  
great work,  
craftsmanship  
completes it"*

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# Mauritius at its Most Delicious

A CONSTELLATION OF MICHELIN STARS SHINES ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

PICS SUPPLIED

*One festival.  
Countless  
Michelin-  
awarded  
culinary  
experiences.*

Pine needle ice cream topped with glistening caviar, an oyster where the shell is not just edible but an essential part of the dish, and course after course of flavour combinations that ranged from the charmingly delicious to the conceptually audacious: **Sharon Waugh** found herself in a foodie paradise, in paradise, and she's still trying to understand how she knew so little about this surprising culinary festival before she attended it.

Without a doubt, the Southern African culinary scene has a best-kept secret. The Constance Festival Culinaire is held annually in two elegant resorts in Mauritius: the Constance Belle Mare Plage and the Constance Prince Maurice. In the space of a few short days, I dined on food masterfully created by Michelin-awarded chefs from Italy, Germany, Norway, France and Sweden, as well as a Bocuse d'Or Europe winner (a competition

considered to be the Olympics of cooking), unfortunately missing a meal by a UK MasterChef champion. With multiple dinners running simultaneously across the two resorts, even the most dedicated foodie has to make difficult choices!

As the Michelin Guide has not yet come to Africa, one might assume that you would have to go to multiple cities in Europe to experience a galaxy of Michelin-star gastronomy like this one,

but a four-hour flight from Johannesburg gives you access.

What also came as a surprise is that this festival is in its 19th year, a remarkable feat of longevity for an event that seems to be whispered about in elite foodie circles rather than common knowledge among the many who appreciate fine dining.

What's more is that the public-facing dinners are only half the story. The festival has two sides to it and the other is more internal. Running throughout the week is a series of competitions for the staff of Constance Hotels & Resorts in Mauritius, the Seychelles and the Maldives (and possibly next year, Madagascar too). Apart from presenting some of the most memorable



menus you may ever taste, the participating Michelin-awarded culinary chefs and renowned pastry chefs play an additional role in the festival as mentors or jury members.

While a number of smaller competitions take place, there are two that have the status of MasterChef or a similar reality TV show, each overseen by a highly renowned chef in their respective field: Pierre Hermé, widely regarded as one of the greatest pastry chefs of this generation, covers the pastry side of the competition. The culinary side is overseen by Régis Marcon, French chef and owner of the restaurant at Hôtel Le Clos des Cimes, which has been awarded three stars by the Michelin

Guide since 2005. Though there are prizes involved, both the participating European chefs and the Constance Hotels & Resorts chefs do it for the titles and the prestige of being associated with the competition and Hermé and Marcon.

Each participating Constance Hotels & Resorts chef is paired up with a renowned pastry chef or a single-star Michelin chef, and the two collaborate throughout the week to refine skills, test ideas and come up with a menu. On the final day,

**MAIN**  
*Beach at Constance Prince Maurice*

**TOP**  
*Pierre Hermé and the jury of the Pierre Hermé Trophy*

**ABOVE LEFT**  
*Oyster with edible shell created by Emmanuel Fortuno*

**ABOVE RIGHT**  
*Pine needle ice cream with caviar created by Markus Dalen and Thomas Sjogren*



*Once you've  
tasted Constance,  
returning for  
seconds  
feels inevitable.*

the Constance Hotels & Resorts chefs must cook alone, their mentors watching remotely as they present their creations to a jury that includes Hermé, Marcon and several other Michelin-starred figures and celebrities from the culinary world.

If you are an avid foodie, you can be present at these competitions as well as a number of other smaller ones. There are also culinary demonstrations from the likes of Mercotte, a famous French food critic, blogger and TV presenter, and Sébastien Claverie, a highly accomplished

French pastry chef.

While this festival is a massive drawcard and your taste buds are well catered for, the Constance hotels have got so much more to offer for all the senses. The architecture is beautiful with

extensive use of water features, as well as exterior and interior spaces that intermingle so beautifully that it almost seems surreal. Just entering these spectacular hotels takes one's breath away. They are located on pristine white-sand beaches, lined with palm trees and thatch umbrellas. Days unfold easily here: a morning swim in the warm Indian Ocean, a round of golf or tennis, perhaps snorkelling over coral reefs before retreating to a shaded terrace for a long lunch.

Between an ocean breeze on your face, the warm sun on your skin, the sound of the gentle waves lapping against the shore, breath-taking spaces and flavours by renowned international chefs (during one week of the year) and the people who have been mentored by them (all year round), these Constance hotels offer more than just a feast for the senses – they serve a curated multi-course tasting menu of impressively delicious surprises of the highest quality. Now that I have gotten a taste, I will have to return for seconds.

*The next edition of the Constance Festival Culinaire takes place at the Constance Belle Mare Plage and the Constance Prince Maurice from 19 - 27 February 2027.*



**SHARON WAUGH** is a travel writer and content creator based in Cape Town. She loves exploring quirky places, reviewing luxury hotels, embarking on adrenaline-fueled adventures, and "Sharonicling" them for her blog The Sharonicles. She is passionate about the life-changing magic of travel and inspiring others to stop living like they're not dying.



**ABOVE**  
Régis Marcon  
judging the Régis  
Marcon Trophy

**RIGHT**  
Constance Belle Mare  
Plage exterior

#### LEFT HAND PAGE

**ABOVE:** Constance Belle Mare  
Plage Exterior

**TOP RIGHT:** 'Mediterranean  
Breeze' beef fillet at 12 Hands  
Dinner, Constance Prince Maurice

**MIDDLE:** A dish prepared by  
Tanaka Deer Hunter

**BELOW:** Régis Marcon with  
competitors and mentors in  
the Régis Marcon Trophy at the  
Constance Belle Mare Plage





# *Santé Wellness Retreat & Spa:*

## WHERE SCIENCE, NATURE AND LUXURY ALIGN

Santé Wellness Retreat & Spa is an award-winning luxury wellness destination set in the heart of the South African Western Cape Winelands, surrounded by majestic mountains. Renowned for its serene setting and warm hospitality, Santé is a personal sanctuary designed to heal, re-energise, and revitalise.



Blending natural beauty with cutting-edge wellness expertise, Santé offers an integrated approach to optimal living. Guests experience a seamless combination of a world-class Day Spa, pioneering Optimal Health & Wellness Centre comprehensive Bio-Energy Centre and exquisite honestly healthy cuisine. Together, these deliver bespoke, results-driven wellness journeys that are expertly combined, all in an environment which is luxuriously warm and welcoming.

Santé's elevated Day Spa experience features creative menus of unique natural treatments, signature journeys, hydrotherapy rituals and celebrated vinotherapy, using powerful grape-based

antioxidants inspired by the surrounding vineyards. Santé's offering suits both pure leisure stays as well as more defined and goal-oriented wellness breaks. Rest, Relax & Rejuvenate stays and overnight Spa Packages of one or two nights are ideal for revitalising escapes, while personalised Wellness Programs ranging from 3 to 21 days are designed to support specific health, vitality and lifestyle goals.

Accommodation is tranquil and refined, with 5-star suites and a villa offering breathtaking views across vineyards and mountains. Each space reflects Santé's philosophy of uncomplicated luxury – elegant, calm and deeply restorative. Cuisine is

central to the Santé experience. The retreat's honestly healthy gourmet menus are crafted from fresh, unrefined ingredients, free from sugar, gluten, dairy and additives, yet remain vibrant, creative and deliciously nourishing.

With fitness activities, mindful movement, and serene natural surroundings, Santé offers a holistic environment for self-discovery, renewal and sustainable wellbeing. Whether visiting for a transformative wellness journey or a peaceful escape, guests leave feeling balanced, energised and inspired to live optimally.

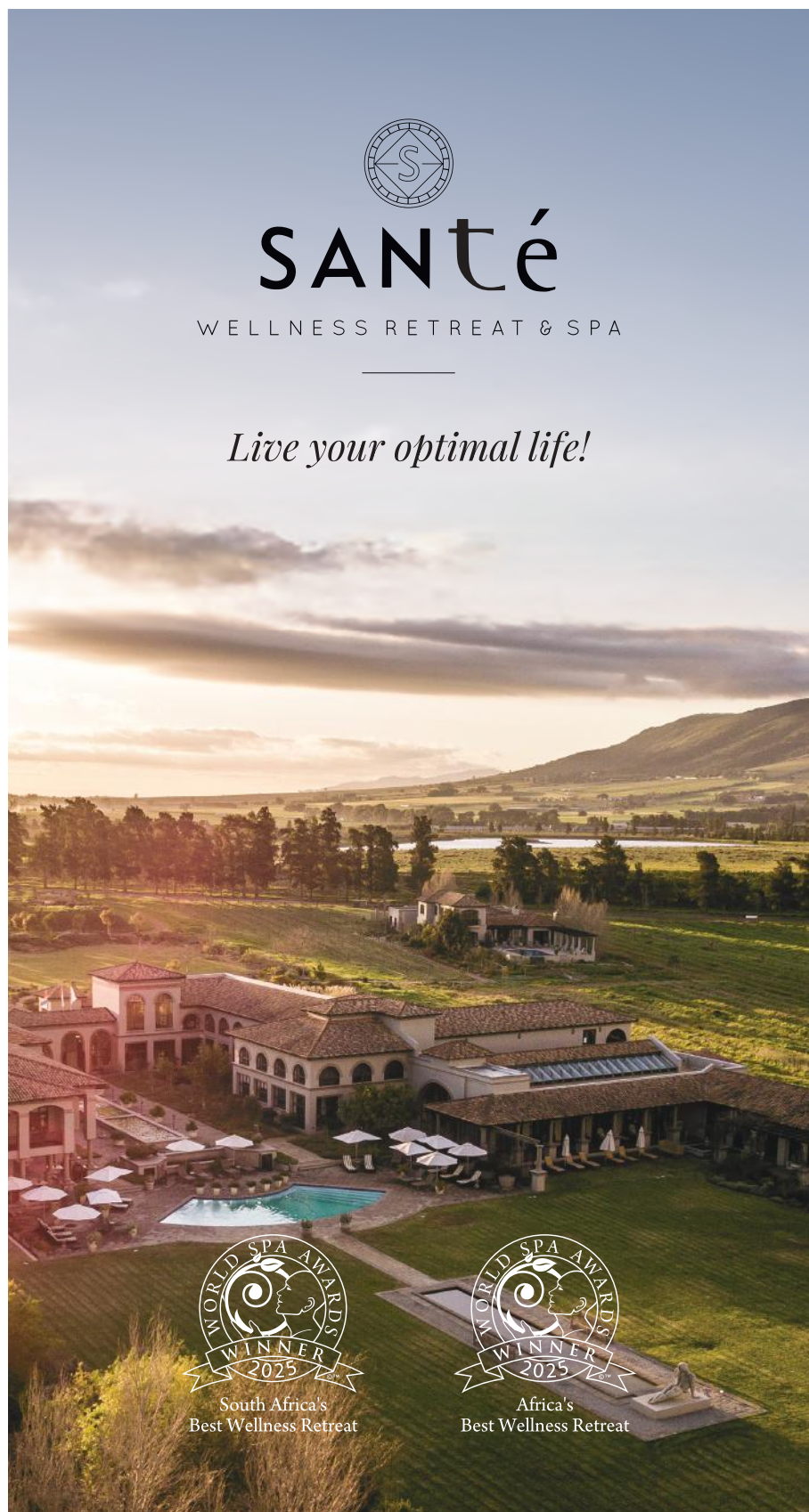
*Santé Wellness Retreat & Spa –  
Live Your Optimal Life.*



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from the best  
wellness retreat*  
**IN SOUTH AFRICA  
AND AFRICA?**

Embrace the art of living your optimal life at Santé Wellness Retreat & Spa — where wellness meets luxury in the Cape Winelands. Immerse yourself in a world of award-winning therapies, advanced holistic treatments and exquisite gourmet healthy cuisine — all expertly combined to achieve life changing results. Stays from 3 to 21 days, offering the perfect duration to rejuvenate, restore, and renew.

Discover our personalised Wellness Programs, thoughtfully designed to meet you where you are and guide you to where you want to be: Destress & Rejuvenate, Detox, Longevity, Ideal Weight & Healthy Eating, Emotional Balance, Ultimate Fitness Boost, Rest, Relax & Rejuvenate.





PICS SOURCED

## *Beyond the Cape*

**A JOURNEY THROUGH THE WINES,  
FLAVOURS AND LANDSCAPES OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL AND LESOTHO**



## *Winelands*

A Wine Journey inspired by Ntobeko Sikosana, lover of good wine, good food and the face of the Taste KZN initiative.

Mention South African wine and most people instinctively picture the sun-drenched vineyards of Stellenbosch, Franschhoek or Paarl. Few imagine swirling a glass of Pinotage beneath the towering peaks of the Drakensberg, discovering boutique vineyards hidden among the misty hills of KwaZulu-Natal, or crossing into the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho to taste wines crafted at altitude.

Yet perhaps that is exactly what makes this journey so rewarding.

For Ntobeko Sikosana, one of KwaZulu-Natal's greatest pleasures lies in experiencing the province "in its purest form – flavour by flavour and story by story." He believes the journey begins long before the first wine

tasting. If you're leaving Durban, he says, fill up the car the night before and head straight for breakfast in the Midlands, because that first leisurely meal sets the tone for everything that follows.

"What keeps me coming back is the trio of food, wine and stories," he says.

It's a philosophy that perfectly captures the spirit of the Midlands. This is more than a collection of wineries and restaurants; it's a region where family-run farms, passionate producers and genuine hospitality encourage visitors to slow down. Here, every meal and every bottle offers another reason to linger just a little longer.



**FAR LEFT:**  
Abingdon Wine Estate

**CENTRE:**  
Cathedral Peak Wine

**ABOVE TWO IMAGES:**  
Abingdon Wine Estate

**BOTTOM:**  
Sani Wines

### The Misty Midlands

The KwaZulu-Natal Midlands is better known for its winding country roads, artisan studios and cosy cafés than for its vineyards. Yet it is precisely this cool climate – misty mornings, warm summer days and crisp winter evenings – that has encouraged a small but passionate group of winemakers to cultivate vines in this unlikely corner of South Africa.

#### *Abingdon Wine Estate – The Pioneer*

If one estate deserves credit for putting KwaZulu-Natal on South Africa's wine map, it is Abingdon Wine Estate. Nestled in the rolling hills near Lions River, the family-owned vineyard was established by Ian and Jane Smorthwaite, whose vision transformed an unlikely piece of Midlands farmland into one of the province's most respected

boutique wineries. With no formal winemaking training, Ian researched Europe's cool-climate wine regions before planting his first vines in 2004. Three years later, Abingdon released KwaZulu-Natal's first certified estate wine, proving exceptional wines could flourish far beyond the Cape.

Today, Ian is joined by his daughter, Laurie Cooper, whose WSET Diploma and passion for wine education bring a new generation's perspective to the family estate. Her hands-on approach complements the estate's philosophy of minimal intervention.

"The hardest challenge is definitely the summer rainfall and the high disease pressure this brings to viticulture," explains Ian. "We've implemented strategies such as hail netting, rigorous fungal management programmes and specialised

pruning techniques, but most of all it boils down to hard work. It requires many more hours of canopy management than your average Western Cape farm."

Despite the challenges, Laurie says there is very little she would change.

"In an ideal world, the whole farm would be planted to Chardonnay and made into bubbles. The grapes are picked early in the season and are a pleasure to work with. But realistically, one cannot live on bubbly alone... although I'd be willing to try," she laughs.

The estate's diverse range offers something for almost every palate, from elegant Chardonnay to later-ripening Cabernet Sauvignon, giving visitors a taste of just how versatile Midlands terroir can be.

For Jane, however, the greatest reward comes not from the

vineyard but from the people who walk through the tasting room door.

"Seeing the look of surprise when guests first taste the wines, sharing the laughter and conversations during a tasting, and then welcoming them back time and again as old friends – that's what makes it special."

Their motto, "Enter a stranger, leave as family," perfectly captures the warm hospitality that makes Abingdon such a memorable stop on the Midlands wine route.

Ntobeko has seen first-hand how well KwaZulu-Natal's wines stand alongside the country's more established wine regions. At Africa's Travel Indaba in 2025, he partnered with South African Tourism to showcase South Africa's wine regions, with Abingdon representing KwaZulu-Natal.



ABOVE:  
Highgate Wine

"The Lions River gem was one of the highlights of the show," he says. "We paired a lightly chilled Abingdon Tempranillo with thin-sliced *Shisanyama* T-bone steak. The smoky meat brought out the wine's spicy character, and delegates kept coming back for more. It was one of the standout wines of the event."

#### *Highgate Wine Estate – A Family Dream*

Just a few kilometres away, Highgate Wine Estate tells a different, but equally inspiring story. What began as a hydroponic vegetable farm purchased by Rudi and Cindy Kassier in 1996 has evolved into one of the Midlands' favourite country destinations. A humble farm stall grew into the popular Piggly Wiggly Country Village before their passion for food and wine inspired them to plant vines in 2004.

The family's first commercial wines followed in 2016, and today Highgate is known for its elegant cool-climate wines, including KwaZulu-Natal's first certified Chardonnay. Still very much a family business, Rudi and Cindy are joined by their children, Cathryn and Nicholas, who continue to shape the estate's future.

Visitors enjoy guided tastings, stroll through the vineyards and cellar, or settle in for a leisurely

lunch overlooking the vines. It's a place where good wine and relaxed country hospitality go hand in hand.

Ntobeko believes Highgate's wines perfectly demonstrate how naturally KwaZulu-Natal wines pair with the region's cuisine. Through his work promoting gastronomy tourism, he enjoys exploring combinations that celebrate local flavours.

While preparing pairings for the 2026 Hilton Arts Festival, he matched Highgate's 2025 Cabernet Sauvignon with a traditional beef potjie.

"The wine's medium body and gentle spicy notes complemented the richness of the dish beautifully," he says. "It didn't overpower the food – it elevated it. That's what makes food and wine pairing so exciting: finding combinations that bring out the best in both."

Experiences like these continue to showcase KwaZulu-Natal as a destination where local food and locally produced wines are enjoyed together.

#### *The Midlands Meander – More Than a Glass of Wine*

The beauty of the Midlands lies in the fact that wine is only one chapter of the journey.

Leaving the vineyards behind for a while, the famous Midlands Meander invites travellers to

explore artisan cheese makers, craft breweries, chocolate studios, pottery workshops and farm stalls overflowing with local produce.

One moment you're sampling handcrafted cheese made just down the road; the next, you're browsing a gallery inspired by the surrounding landscape before settling into a country café where seasonal ingredients shape the menu.

This is a road that rewards those who take their time. One more farm stall. One more coffee stop. One more conversation with the artisan behind the counter. Like the winemakers, they are all telling the story of KwaZulu-Natal in their own way.

#### *Beneath the Mountain*

There is no dramatic moment when the Midlands ends and the Drakensberg begins. Rolling dairy country gradually gives way to sweeping grasslands and scattered thorn trees, while the towering peaks of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg rise ever higher on the horizon. Around each bend they seem a little closer, until Cathedral Peak itself stands watch over the valley.

It is here, that one of KwaZulu-Natal's most distinctive wine stories unfolds.

#### *Cathedral Peak Wine Estate – Where Mountains Shape the Vintage*

Established in 2007 as the first commercial wine estate in the Central Drakensberg, Cathedral Peak Wine Estate has helped redefine what is possible for viticulture in KwaZulu-Natal. Here, warm summer days and cool mountain nights produce wines with freshness, elegance and a character shaped by their surroundings.

Under the guidance of Cellarmaster Phillip 'Flip' Smith, the estate produces Pinotage, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon that reflect the unique conditions of the Central Drakensberg.

A visit to Cathedral Peak is as much about the scenery as the wine. From the terrace, rows of vines stretch towards one of South Africa's most recognisable mountain ranges. Pair a crisp white with locally caught trout or a bold red with grilled beef or venison, and it's easy to understand why wine and the Drakensberg make such a natural combination.

Ntobeko has introduced many wine lovers to Cathedral Peak Wines through the wine, food and quiz evenings he's hosted at 1787 Wine Cellar in Ballito. For him, the estate is proof that some of South Africa's most interesting wines are being produced far beyond the traditional Cape winelands.

One pairing that has stayed with him is Cathedral Peak's Zulu Range Indoda Dry White served with slowly cooked *umleqwa* (traditional free-range Zulu chicken).

"The wine's bright acidity cuts through the richness and saltiness of the chicken, cleansing the palate between bites," he says. "It's one of those pairings that simply works."

He also recommends leaving room for Cathedral Peak's Jerepigo dessert wine as a fitting way to end the tasting.

Ntobeko believes Cathedral Peak has also helped change perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal as a wine-producing region. "I think what Cathedral has achieved is remarkable. Many people doubted that quality grapes could be grown here, but the altitude, cool mountain nights, summer rainfall and the skill of the winemaking team come together to produce exceptional wines."

#### The Taste of Place

By now, it becomes clear that this journey is about far more than discovering wineries. Across KwaZulu-Natal, the wines find their perfect expression at the table, paired with the local dishes that have shaped the province's culinary heritage for generations.

Zulu cuisine is rooted in simple, locally sourced ingredients – maize, leafy greens, legumes, seasonal produce and locally raised livestock. Like the wines themselves, these dishes reflect the landscapes from which they come, making many pairings feel both natural and authentic.

A fresh Chenin Blanc, with its lively acidity and citrus notes, complements the gentle earthiness of amadumbe and steamed vegetables beautifully, while a crisp Sauvignon Blanc



balances the warmth of *chakalaka* without overwhelming its spices.

For heartier dishes, KwaZulu-Natal's cool-climate reds come into their own. A fruit-driven Pinotage or elegant Shiraz pairs beautifully with slow-cooked beef stews, flame-grilled beef, *inyama yenkomo* or richly flavoured *uphuthu*, where generous fruit and soft tannins stand up to smoky, robust flavours.

Perhaps no meal better captures the spirit of South Africa than a braai, or *Shisanyama*. It is never simply about the food. It is about conversation, laughter and gathering around the fire with family and friends. Opening a bottle of local wine is simply another invitation to stay a little longer.



TOP:  
Cathedral Peak Wine

RIGHT:  
Abingdon Wine Estate



ABOVE: Sani Wines

### Above the Clouds

The journey continues into the Southern Drakensberg, where quaint country villages, trout-filled rivers and rolling farmland gives way to soaring cliffs and sweeping mountain vistas. As the road climbs towards the iconic Sani Pass – one of Southern Africa's great overland adventures – there is a growing sense that you are leaving one world behind and entering another.

The tar soon gives way to gravel as the road twists up the escarpment, each switchback revealing ever more spectacular views across the Drakensberg. Waterfalls tumble down hidden valleys, baboons perch on rocky outcrops, and the mountain air grows cooler with every bend.

Beyond the summit, the dramatic ascent gives way to Lesotho's expansive highlands, where broad plateaus, winding rivers and scattered villages create a landscape that feels both rugged and peaceful.

Known as the Kingdom in the Sky, Lesotho is the world's only independent nation to lie entirely above 1,000 metres. Here, the mountains shape everyday life. Basotho shepherds wrapped in traditional blankets tend their flocks across open grasslands, sturdy mountain ponies remain a familiar sight, and generations-old traditions continue to thrive.

As the road winds towards Maseru, roadside stalls brim with peaches, maize and handcrafted goods, while friendly waves from

passing children become as much a part of the journey as the scenery itself.

On the outskirts of Maseru, another unexpected chapter in Southern Africa's wine story begins.

### Sani Wines – Lesotho's Wine Pioneer

Sani Wines is Lesotho's first commercial winery, created through a partnership between the Thamae family and South Africa's Groot Parys Wine Estate. Together, they set out to discover whether Lesotho's high-altitude landscape could produce wines of exceptional quality.

"It all started with a single row of 70 table grape vines that we planted in 2004 for our fruit nursery. Those vines sparked conversations between my father and his partners about what might be possible, and in 2008 we planted our first wine grapes. We knew almost nothing about making wine back then, but every vintage has been a learning experience," says winemaker Kananelo Thamae.

At more than 1,800 metres above sea level, the vineyards enjoy

cool nights that help preserve the grapes' natural acidity, giving the wines freshness and excellent ageing potential. The greatest challenge, however, comes from nature. Summer rains arrive just as the grapes ripen, while increasingly severe hailstorms can devastate the vines, making every successful harvest a remarkable achievement.

Kananelo recommends pairing the Pinotage with traditional Basotho dishes such as *papa* served with *moroho* and slow-cooked beef, goat or mutton, while the Chenin Blanc complements lighter fare such as pumpkin, *moroho* and free-range chicken.

The tasting experience is unmistakably Basotho. Visitors are welcomed into a circular cellar inspired by a traditional rondavel, overlooking the vineyards and the Maloti Mountains beyond. Often hosted by members of the Thamae family, every tasting offers a warm introduction to Lesotho's people, culture and growing wine industry.

Like the pioneering estates of KwaZulu-Natal, Sani Wines is quietly proving that exceptional wines can emerge from the most unexpected places.

### A journey beyond the Wine

What makes this route unforgettable isn't simply the wines discovered along the way. It's the people behind every bottle, the meals shared around welcoming tables, and the remarkable landscapes that connect them all. From the misty hills of KwaZulu-Natal to the mountains of Lesotho, this

is a journey that challenges expectations. It reminds us that some of Southern Africa's most rewarding wine experiences are found far beyond the country's famous wine routes.

And that's a journey well worth taking.



**NTOBEKO SIKOSANA**, was raised in Hambanathi, near King Shaka International Airport, Ntobeko Sikosana discovered his passion for wine while living in Pretoria in 2016. What began as curiosity soon developed into a deeper appreciation through tastings, travel and conversations with some of South Africa's leading wine personalities. A shareholder in a boutique wine shop, he is passionate about growing South Africa's wine tourism industry. Today, he leads Taste KZN, a gastronomy programme showcasing the province's culinary experiences, while also heading Joypass, an experiential marketing and activations agency.



## Essentials

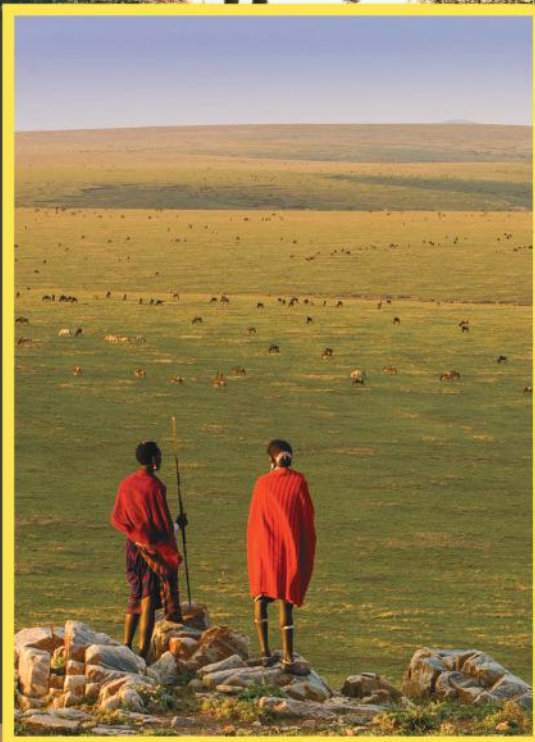
Taste of KZN - <https://tastekzn.co.za/>

Abingdon Wine Estate - <https://www.abingdonestate.co.za/>

Highgate Wine Estate - <https://www.highgatewineestate.co.za/>

Cathedral Peak Wines - <https://cathpeakwines.com/>

Sani Wines - <https://www.facebook.com/SaniWinesLesotho/>



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“ 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)

# Farm-to-Table in Piketberg:

FRESH FLAVOURS IN THE HEART OF BERGRIVIER



WORDS & PICS SUPPLIED

As spring moves towards summer, Piketberg and the surrounding farms come alive with fresh produce, open-air markets and plenty of reasons to stop for a bite to eat. Just 90 minutes from Cape Town, this mountain-framed corner of the Bergrivier is a place where farming and food go hand in hand.

Here, farm-to-table isn't a fancy new concept. It's simply the way things have always been done.

## Markets, Padstalle and the Joy of Discovery

One of the best ways to get a taste of Piketberg is to explore at your own pace, stopping at markets, farm stalls and roadside padstalle along the way.

High up on the plateau, the Piket-Bo-Berg Farmers Market is a popular weekend stop, with artisanal breads, fresh produce, preserves, honey and handmade goods. It's the kind of market where you can chat to the person who grew the vegetables or baked the bread before deciding what to take home.

Along the surrounding roads, farm stalls offer plenty of temptation too – from mosbrood and roosterkoek to homemade jams, dried fruit and local treats. At Skrik van Rondom, you'll find rooibos products alongside biltong and game meat, giving visitors a taste of the area's farming traditions and local flavours.

## From Soil to Sip: Wines, Coffee and Rooibos

There's plenty to drink in Piketberg too. At Org de Rac, one of the region's organic wine estates, wine tastings can be paired with fresh oysters, local cheeses and views across the valley.

*Farm-to-Table isn't a trend here - it's simply the way life has always been.*



For a good cup of coffee, Berg Coffee is worth a stop. It's the sort of place where you're tempted to linger over your coffee and something homemade rather than simply grabbing a takeaway and getting back on the road.

Then there's rooibos, one of the region's best-known crops. In and around Redelinghuys, rooibos farming forms part of a wider agricultural landscape that includes citrus and grapes. Traditionally dried and enjoyed as tea, rooibos is also finding its way into more contemporary products, including rooibos-infused gin.

#### **Olive Groves, Game Meat and Grape Harvests**

Look beyond the markets and farm stalls and you'll find plenty happening on the farms themselves.

Olive farms produce local oils that are perfect with fresh bread or drizzled over a seasonal meal, while game meat from farms such as Skrik van Rondom offers something a little different.

The vineyards at Broodkraal add another dimension, with grape production contributing to the wider winemaking industry and estates such as Org de Rac.

It all adds up to a food scene that is closely tied to the farms and the people who work them.

#### **Where Local Traditions Meet the Table**

A visit to Piketberg wouldn't be complete without exploring some of the food traditions that have been passed down through the communities around it. In the village of Goedverwacht, farming and food remain closely connected to everyday life.

Founded in the early 19th century as a mission station, Goedverwacht has strong Khoisan heritage roots. Organic vegetable farming continues in the community, with seasonal produce harvested by hand and shared locally.

Sweet potatoes, or patats, are particularly important. During harvest time, they feature in local meals and celebrations, while snoek from the West Coast has long been part of the culinary story too.

The annual Snoek en Patat Fees in June celebrates this connection. The tradition dates back to a time when local farmers traded sweet potatoes with West Coast fishermen in exchange for snoek – a simple swap that provided two staple foods for the community.

Today, the festival brings the story to life with braaied snoek, sweet potato dishes, roosterkoek and homemade preserves, along with music, local crafts and plenty of community spirit.

#### **A Place to Take Your Time**

The best thing about exploring Piketberg's food scene is that there's no need to hurry. Stop for coffee, buy something fresh from a farm stall, sit down to a long lunch or simply follow the road and see what catches your eye.

It could be a basket of just-picked vegetables, a bottle of local wine, a jar of homemade jam or something warm from the oven.

That's the beauty of farm-to-table in Piketberg. It isn't a trend or something created for visitors. It's part of everyday life – and there's always something good to discover.



PICS TESSA BUHRMANN / ZEBRAS CROSSING LODGE



Gildo with welcome drinks

A pair of giraffes browse quietly beyond the veranda while a chorus of birds welcomes another Waterberg morning. For **Tessa Buhrmann**, there's no rush to be anywhere. Breakfast can wait. So can the game drive.

At Zebras Crossing Lodge, the bush moves to its own rhythm and, for a few precious days, so do we.

There's no pre-dawn alarm dragging us from beneath the duvet. No hurried coffee gulped before climbing aboard a game viewer in darkness. No pressure to be in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. In fact, there's no pressure at all.

Instead, I wake naturally as soft morning light filters through the curtains.

Once dressed, we wander onto the veranda where Robert, the front-of-house manager, already knows exactly how we like our coffee. As I settle into a comfortable chair overlooking the bushveld, a perfectly brewed cappuccino appears. Somewhere beyond the lodge, a Cape Robin-chat welcomes the day while

Helmeted Guinea Fowl scratch noisily through the grass.

It feels wonderfully indulgent to simply... sit. This is safari at a different pace.

Not because there's any less to see, but because there's finally time to appreciate it.

With no lions lurking beyond the next thicket, we leave the lodge on foot, cameras slung over our shoulders and binoculars close at hand. We have no destination in mind. For once, safari isn't about chasing sightings; it's about letting curiosity decide where the morning takes us.

Soon we're strolling along one of the reserve's quiet tracks, stopping whenever something catches our eye. A dazzle of zebra graze beside a stream, a little wary of our presence. Three elegant giraffes browse lazily before ambling away, while

*The beauty of  
a slow safari is  
that everyone  
discovers their  
own pace.*

impalas pause briefly before disappearing into the bush.

But it's not only the wildlife that captures my attention. Tiny flowers brighten the sandy path beneath our feet. Lichen transforms an old tree stump into a work of art and a variety of birds flit through the trees.

The walk isn't about reaching a destination. It's about enjoying the journey. And quietly congratulating ourselves on getting a little exercise without really noticing.

Eventually we reach one of the reserve's dams, the still surface reflecting the surrounding hills. It's the perfect excuse to stop, breathe deeply and savour the fact that absolutely nowhere is waiting for us. Frogs call enthusiastically from the reeds. Weavers fuss over their nests while Egyptian geese patrol the shoreline. White, pink and pale blue water lilies bring colour to the dark water, attracting bees and dragonflies that skim effortlessly across the surface.

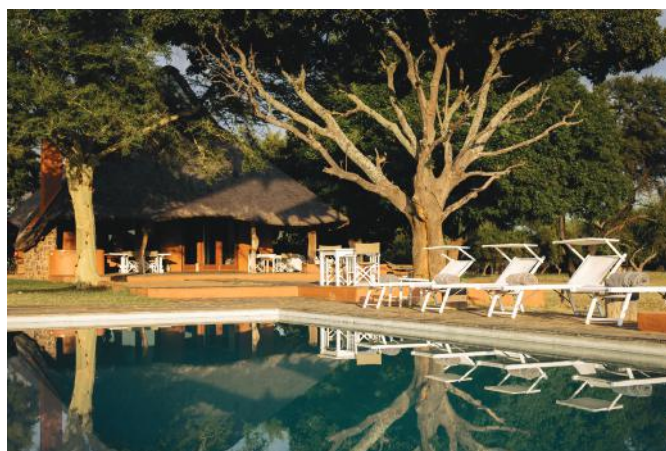
Breakfast can wait.

When we finally wander back to the lodge, the generous spread somehow tastes even better for having earned it.

That relaxed atmosphere is what makes Zebras Crossing such a natural fit for families.

One family has travelled all the way from the Netherlands to celebrate their grandfather's 80th birthday. Having just come from a Big Five safari, they're embracing the freedom of slowing down. Some spend the morning mountain biking while others cool off in the swimming pool. Parents happily allow their children to explore, knowing there are no lions or elephants nearby.

Excitement erupts when a giraffe wanders past the waterhole beside the lodge. Phones appear almost instantly as the youngsters quietly edge closer, capturing photographs and making memories, that would be impossible from inside a vehicle.



Nesta, Iddie, Tshepo, Freddie, Johanna (Mamzo), Robert and Ghildo

Watching three generations each enjoying the reserve in their own way, I realise that's the beauty of a slow safari. Everyone discovers their own pace.

Later, over coffee with owners Thijs Claassen and Noortje Hart, the conversation turns to the people behind the experience.

Rather than simply operating within the local community, they have consciously invested in it. Staff are employed locally; training is ongoing and promotion from within creates genuine career opportunities. Fresh produce comes from

nearby suppliers whenever available, supporting local farmers while keeping the menu seasonal.

It's not something that's advertised at every opportunity. You simply notice it. The genuine smiles. The pride people take in their work. The relaxed confidence that makes guests feel immediately at home.

Lunch, prepared by Chef Nesta, is light, fresh and beautifully presented. Then comes one of safari's greatest pleasures – an afternoon nap. Sunlight streams through the bedroom windows as

I drift in and out of sleep before another coffee signals it's time to head out once more.

Even the afternoon game drive unfolds without feeling tied to a timetable.

The rugged Waterberg landscape reveals itself in dramatic ridges and broad valleys. Our guide, Tshepo, stops often – not to tick species off a list, but because every bend in the road reveals something worth appreciating.

A herd of wildebeest grazes on the hillside. An enormous golden orb spider has suspended its intricate web between two trees.

The air is filled with a familiar fragrance, which I can't quite pinpoint. Tshepo reaches into the vegetation and hands me a sprig of leaves. I crush them gently between my fingers and instantly recognise the distinctive scent – it's from the curry bush!

A young nyala doe peers cautiously through the bush before melting back into cover. Nearby, a small herd of zebra feeds beside the track. Their coats are strikingly clean, untouched by the thick mud so often found in wetter reserves. Against the dry, rocky landscape, their black-and-white stripes seem even more vivid.

As the afternoon softens, Tshepo steers us towards a rocky escarpment overlooking an endless valley bathed in golden light.

Out comes a zebra-print blanket – naturally – followed by snacks and expertly poured gin and tonics. I edge closer to the cliff for a better view while Tshepo hangs back. "I'm afraid of heights," he admits with a grin, confessing that he occasionally has to summon extra courage when guests insist on sundowners on an even lower ledge.

Meanwhile, my hubby has wandered off with his camera in pursuit of a pair of Mocking Cliff Chats. Tshepo explains that these remarkable little birds can imitate the calls of around thirty other species.

Far below, he points out a waterfall tumbling through the rocks. The reward for guests who tackle one of the reserve's full-day hikes. Natural rock pools provide the perfect place to cool off after the climb.

It joins a growing list of reasons to return.

Eventually we make our way to the vehicle. There's a definite chill in the air now and the warm blankets are most welcome. The sky slowly fades from gold to amber before settling into a deep indigo as we wind our way back to the lodge.

Dinner that evening is a traditional South African braai, which delights the international visitors. The evening has an unexpected surprise. A group of traditional Tsonga dancers



from nearby Modimolle arrives to perform. Before long we're invited to join them. Initial hesitation quickly gives way to laughter as the Dutch family, granddad included, enthusiastically attempts unfamiliar dance steps to the delight of the performers. Watching everyone laughing together beneath a canopy of stars, I can't help smiling too.

There's something wonderfully uncomplicated about Zebras Crossing Lodge.

It reminds me that safari doesn't always have to be measured by the number of Big Five sightings or the 5 a.m. wake up calls. Sometimes the greatest luxury is simply having the freedom to slow down.

To discover that, when life moves a little more slowly, the moments that matter somehow stay with us a little longer.



Guide, Tshepo



## Essentials

For those wanting to combine slow safari with classic Big Five game viewing, sister property Elephant Crossing, in the mountainous reaches of Welgevonden Private Game Reserve, offers the perfect complement. Spend a few days embracing the slower rhythm of Zebras Crossing before heading into one of South Africa's premier malaria-free Big Five reserves.

<https://zebras.crossinglodges.com/>

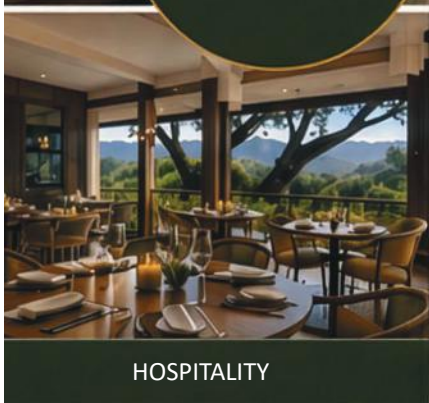


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## *A Night at Hugh's*



**RYAN ENSLIN** is a Johannesburg-based writer and photographer whose work spans travel, food, art and culture. He is drawn to the ways people, places and histories shape one another, following the details that reveal something larger about belonging and the human experience. Whether on a city street, over a meal or in a landscape far from home, he invites readers to look again, and to notice what a first glance often leaves behind.

Above Jutta Street, **Ryan Enslin** finds jazz, memory and Johannesburg meeting in a room that gives people another reason to return to the inner city – and listen with fresh attention.

The lift rises above Jutta Street, and then the city arrives.

Thirteen floors above Braamfontein, Hugh's opens onto Johannesburg through windows, red velvet curtains and the sweep of the Nelson Mandela Bridge. At night, the lights below become part of the room. Music gathers on one side of the glass; the city keeps moving on the other.

Opened in January this year, Hugh's is a new addition to Joburg's jazz scene, created by Adam Levy of Play Braamfontein in collaboration with the Hugh Masekela Heritage Foundation. Drawing inspiration from Ronnie

Scott's in London, Levy has built a room around a similar commitment to live music and a sense of occasion.

### **Before the first note**

By the time the music begins, the evening is already under way. Guests arrive dressed for the occasion. The familiar clink of glassware carries from the bar as cocktails are prepared and guests are shown to their seats. Low light gathers around the stage, drawing the room inward. The sound is clear enough for small gestures to register, a hand moving across a guitar, a breath before a horn enters.

That attention matters. Johannesburg has no shortage of live music venues, but it has lost many of the rooms that once held it. Kippies closed. The Bassline disappeared. The Marabi Club followed. Hugh's enters a city with a deep jazz history and a fragile record of keeping the spaces around that history alive.

For more than two decades, Levy has helped shape Braamfontein's cultural character through places that have become woven into its cultural life, including the Alexander Theatre, Anti Est, Kitchener's and The Playground. Each has left its mark on how people gather, eat, perform and spend time in the neighbourhood. Hugh's extends that work, drawing people back into the inner city by giving them a reason to return.

**MAIN IMAGE:** From Hugh's red velvet interior, Joburg fills the windows, city towers framed as part of the room's theatre.

**BELOW:** Soft lamplight gathers across the table at Hugh's, setting a quiet, intimate tone before the evening's music begins to unfold.

At Hugh's, musicians across generations share the stage, carrying jazz forward through the living conversation between inheritance and new sound.



*Where  
generations  
meet, jazz  
lives on and  
the city listens.*

#### A living name

The name above the door carries weight.

Hugh Masekela listened widely, drawing inspiration from township music, bebop, soul and sounds encountered during his years in exile. His son Mabusha

remembers a musician attentive to what made each sound distinct. His daughter Pula Twala remembers a father deeply committed to conversation between generations, and to keeping culture alive through exchange, questioning and renewal.

That openness, to sound and to one another, shapes the club more than memorabilia does. Hugh's horn was placed on stage on opening night, but the stronger tribute came through the musicians. As Cameron Ward, who joined Masekela's band as a teenager, brought Hugh's songs back into the room, the audience leaned into the performance, alert to every turn. Then Thandiswa Mazwai stepped onto the stage, unplanned, and joined him for *The Boys Are Doing It*.

The moment captured what the room does best. Memory enters, but it does not sit still.

#### Thursday nights

Hugh's currently opens for performances on Thursday evenings, with a programme that moves between established musicians and younger players. That mix has become part of its character. People come for the music, but also for the sense of occasion, the food, the view and the pleasure of being somewhere that asks something of them. The room restores a ritual that has become unusual. People arrive, sit down and listen.

For many Joburgers, Braamfontein is still a complicated invitation. A high-end jazz room cannot solve the city below it, and Hugh's does not pretend to. It can, however, give people another reason to look again.

Late in the evening, the bridge glows beyond the curtains and the musicians hold the room. For a few hours, the city is not a problem being explained. It is simply there, lit up, listening.



**ABOVE:** A portrait of Hugh Masekela presides over Hugh's, framed by warm timber, soft lamplight and the intimacy of the room.

*Find Hugh's at 73 Juta Street, Braamfontein*

#LetsGoWild



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Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park



Hilltop Chalet

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# Traditional Healing, Naturally



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**Empilweni Warehouse & Indigenous Nursery**



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A new initiative at **Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park** is bringing traditional medicine and conservation together, while creating new opportunities for local communities.

The **Empilweni Traditional Health Pharmacy** gives registered traditional health practitioners access to legally sourced, quality-controlled medicinal plants and animal by-products. It also aims to reduce illegal harvesting and unsustainable trade by creating a more reliable, regulated supply.

Traditional medicine remains an important part of healthcare for many South Africans, with natural remedies used to support the immune system, manage chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and arthritis, and promote physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Its **holistic approach** looks beyond treating symptoms to supporting overall health.

The new centre includes **a nursery** where medicinal plants are grown, as well as training in sustainable harvesting offered. A **research and library component** will also help record traditional knowledge and build a better understanding of the plants and natural resources used by practitioners.

For northern KwaZulu-Natal, the project brings together three important strands of the region's identity: **its natural environment, cultural heritage and local communities**. It also shows how the sustainable use of indigenous plants can form part of the wider biodiversity economy, creating opportunities for skills development and livelihoods while taking pressure off wild resources.

Empilweni is already showing how **traditional knowledge** can support community wellbeing while helping to protect the natural resources on which it depends.



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# Wellness *Beyond the Spa*

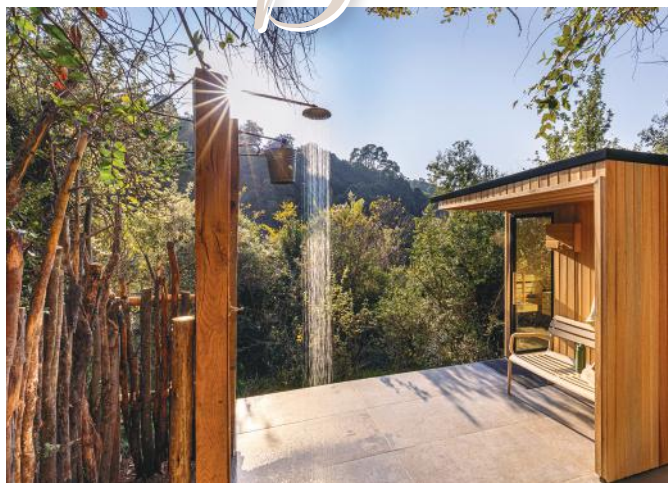
When people think of wellness, they often picture massage tables, scented oils and softly lit treatment rooms. Yet **Claire Roadley** finds that some of Southern Africa's most restorative experiences are often found far beyond the spa. They unfold beneath the towering peaks of the Drakensberg, beside silent waterholes where elephants gather to drink, among ancient San rock art, in fragrant fynbos and forests, or perhaps even on the banks of the Zambezi River.

Across the region, wellness is found in landscapes that invite us to slow down, breathe more deeply and reconnect with nature, reminding us that true restoration often lies in stillness rather than luxury.

Pexels Taryn Elliott

PICS SOURCED

# Breathe



Wellness doesn't always begin in a spa. Sometimes it starts with the first deep breath of crisp mountain air.

Tucked beneath the towering cliffs of the Northern Drakensberg, The Cavern has been welcoming generations of families seeking to slow down

## The Cavern – Healing at Nature's Own Pace

and reconnect with nature for an incredible 85 years. The hospitality is warm without pretence, the pace unhurried, and the mountains gently remind visitors that life is best experienced one step at a time.

The newest addition to the Forest Retreat Spa is a beautifully positioned sauna nestled in the indigenous forest. As the heat eases tired muscles, the view through the glass is one of towering trees, birdsong and dappled light filtering through the canopy. Afterwards, guests can cool off naturally in the mountain stream before lingering in peaceful silence – or, as I prefer to call it, forest bathing.

Walking has always been central to life at The Cavern. More than 15 kilometres of trails wind through forests, grasslands and

mountain streams, with hidden waterfalls, fragrant wild herbs and sweeping Drakensberg views rewarding those who take the time to explore.

Wellness at The Cavern is deeply rooted in the Carte family's philosophy of genuine hospitality, togetherness and an appreciation for the natural world. Even the spa reflects that ethos, with therapists expertly trained and empowered from the local community. Regular retreats celebrating yoga, birding, stargazing, wildflowers, botanical art and nature journaling offer even more reasons to return.

Long before wellness became an industry, The Cavern understood that sometimes the greatest luxury is simply having the space to breathe.

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

## Onguma Nature Reserve – A Sound Safari in the Wild

Safari has always been about seeing wildlife. At Onguma Nature Reserve in Namibia, it's just as much about listening.

Bordering Etosha National Park, the reserve has reimagined the safari experience through its remarkable Onkolo Soundscapes at the photographic hide. Instead of searching for the next sighting, guests are invited to pause, sit quietly and absorb the sounds of the bush.

Sensitive microphones around the waterhole amplify details that often go unnoticed – the distant rumble of elephants, birds greeting the morning, antelope moving softly through the bush and the whisper of wind through the mopane woodland. In a world filled with constant noise and distraction, it's a rare opportunity to simply be present.

That same philosophy carries through every safari at Onguma. Guides allow wildlife encounters

to unfold naturally, never rushing sightings or competing for position. Some of the most memorable moments are also the quietest – a black rhino emerging cautiously from the bush, a giraffe browsing at

sunset or a herd of elephants drinking beneath an endless Namibian sky.

Every stay also supports Onguma's conservation work, reminding guests that

reconnecting with nature also helps protect it.

<https://onguma.com/>

# Listen



## mFulaWozi Wilderness – Where Nature and Culture Come Together

# Connect

Wellness isn't only found in nature. Sometimes it is found in the people who help us understand it.

connected to the land, its wildlife and the communities that have lived alongside it for generations. Here, conservation and culture exist side by side, creating a sense of place that goes far beyond game viewing.

ingredients. Meals become another way of experiencing Zululand, sharing stories and discovering the local culture through food.

Built by Barry and Sonya Theunissen, as a true partnership between conservation and neighbouring communities, mFulaWozi demonstrates that protecting wilderness also means creating opportunities for the people who live alongside it.

It's a place where guests leave with more than wonderful wildlife sightings. Certainly, sighting a leopard just behind Biyela Lodge two nights in a row is one that will stick with me forever! These moments leave with a deeper appreciation of the landscape, its culture and the powerful connection between community, conservation and wellbeing.

<https://mfulawoziwilderness.com/>



Set within the rolling hills and river valleys of Zululand, mFulaWozi Wilderness offers a safari experience that is deeply

Days unfold at a gentler pace, whether watching wildlife from the bush, pausing beside the White iMfolozi River or listening to stories that reveal the traditions and heritage of the Zulu people. Encounters with knowledgeable guides and local communities add richness to every experience, reminding guests that landscapes are shaped as much by people as by nature.

That connection extends to the dining table, where locally inspired cuisine celebrates regional flavours and fresh

# Feel

## Matetsi Victoria Falls – The Restorative Power of Water

There is something undeniably restorative about spending time beside one of Africa's great rivers.

At Matetsi Victoria Falls, the mighty Zambezi sets the rhythm of every day. Wellness here isn't centred on a spa, although indulgent treatments are available. Instead, it flows naturally from the river, the wildlife and the sense of calm that defines this remarkable corner of Zimbabwe.

Mornings may begin with yoga overlooking the water, where birdsong replaces alarm clocks and the river provides a tranquil backdrop for gentle movement and mindful breathing.

River safaris offer a different kind of restoration. Drifting quietly along the Zambezi, guests watch elephants crossing channels,



kingfishers flashing between the reeds and pods of hippo basking in the morning sun. It's a slower, more contemplative safari that encourages you to simply sit back and absorb the moment.

A stay at Matetsi also includes private, expertly guided access to Victoria Falls. First comes the distant roar, then the rising mist and shimmering rainbows before the full power of the world's largest sheet of falling

water comes into view. Few experiences leave such a lasting impression.

Whether on the river, beside the falls or simply watching the Zambezi drift past from the lodge, Matetsi reminds guests that some of nature's greatest gifts are found in slowing down and letting the water set the pace.

<https://matetsivictoriafalls.com/>

# Savour



## 'Tastes of our Home' Swahili cuisine at Mara Bushtops

Wellness isn't only about what restores the body – it's also about what nourishes the soul. Few places understand this better than Mara Bushtops, a luxury tented camp overlooking a bustling salt lick in the Maasai-owned Isaaten Conservancy on the edge of the Maasai Mara National Reserve in Kenya.

Every safari here is tailored to the individual, with a private vehicle, experienced guide and Maasai spotter accompanying each game drive. The award-winning Amani Spa offers the perfect place to unwind between adventures, with massages, holistic treatments and uninterrupted views across the plains, where wildlife often wanders past as you relax.

But for me, one of the greatest pleasures of Mara Bushtops is found around the table.

Dining here is refreshingly unhurried. There are no rigid mealtimes or set menus. Instead, guests can eat whenever and wherever they choose, whether it's breakfast in the bush, lunch overlooking the plains or dinner beneath a canopy of stars. The extensive à la carte menu caters for every palate, while the authentic Tastes of Our Home menu celebrates Swahili cuisine and flavours from across East Africa.

Adding to the experience are the camp's innovative 6x6 Beest safari vehicles, complete with mobile kitchens where chefs prepare gourmet meals in the heart of the Mara. It transforms every meal into a feast for both the senses and the soul.

<https://bushtopscamps.com/destination/mara/spa/>

# Restore

## Asili Spa and Wellness at Warangi Ridge

Perched among the granite kopjes in the heart of Serengeti National Park, Warangi Ridge by The Wilderness Collection is one of Tanzania's newest safari retreats. This proudly Tanzanian-owned lodge enjoys panoramic views across the savanna, while a cascading rock pool nestled among the boulders offers a tranquil place to unwind between game drives.

Its new Asili Spa & Wellness concept, designed by spa expert Nadine Joubert, takes a refreshingly holistic approach. Meaning "essence" or "source" in Swahili, Asili is a multi-sensory wellness journey that begins the moment guests arrive.

After travelling the Serengeti's famously bumpy roads, a complimentary lavender-infused foot cleansing massage offers a gentle

welcome. Guests are then invited to choose an affirmation from the Tree of Intention at the heart of the circular tented spa – a simple but meaningful ritual that sets the tone for the rest of their stay.

Wellness continues beyond the treatment room, with sunrise yoga, guided meditation, breathwork and moments of quiet reflection woven

naturally into each day. Even the evening turndown includes a scented wellness card, gently encouraging guests to pause, breathe and reconnect.

At Warangi Ridge, restoration isn't reserved for the spa. It's thoughtfully woven into the entire safari experience.

<https://thewildernesscollection.com/warangi-ridge/>



## Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat – Where Ancient Landscapes Soothe the Soul

### Reflect

Some places invite relaxation. Bushmans Kloof invites reflection.



Located in the Cederberg Mountains, this extraordinary wilderness retreat is a landscape shaped over millions of years. Sculpted sandstone formations rise above pristine valleys, while ancient San rock art offers a rare glimpse into the beliefs and stories of the region's first people.

Guided walks to these remarkable sites feel less like sightseeing and more like stepping into another time. Standing before artwork that has endured for thousands of years has a way of putting everyday concerns into perspective.

The award-winning spa complements rather than defines

the experience. Treatments using indigenous botanicals soothe tired bodies, while wellness is equally found beside natural rock pools, on fynbos walks or beneath vast star-filled skies.

Storytelling is woven throughout a stay, from guides sharing the region's natural and cultural history to evenings around the fire. Bushmans Kloof offers something increasingly rare: the time and space to slow down, reflect and reconnect with nature and yourself.

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

### Discover

## Grootbos Private Nature Reserve – Finding Renewal Between Forest and Sea



Perched above Walker Bay, Grootbos brings together ancient milkwood forests, endangered fynbos and sweeping ocean views in a setting where wellness is shaped by nature itself.

Home to more than 900 species of fynbos, many found nowhere else on Earth, the reserve invites guests to slow down and appreciate one of the world's richest floral kingdoms. Guided walks reveal a landscape alive with colour, fragrance and birdlife, while the ancient

milkwood forests offer cool, shaded paths for quiet reflection.

From the hilltops, the view stretches across Walker Bay, where southern right whales can often be seen during winter. Watching these gentle giants move through the ocean offers a reminder of nature's rhythms and the perspective they bring.

The connection to the landscape continues at the table, where seasonal cuisine celebrates ingredients from the reserve's gardens and local producers. As a certified Global Ecosphere Retreat® member of The Long Run, Grootbos also puts sustainability at the heart of its operation.

Perhaps that's its greatest gift: by reconnecting guests with forests, flowers, fresh sea air and good food, Grootbos gently restores a sense of balance. Here, wellness is simply the pleasure of being immersed in an extraordinary natural landscape.

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



#### CLAIRE ROADLEY

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

# Rest. Recover. Reconnect.



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Located on the Victoria Falls Safari Collection estate, just minutes from the Victoria Falls, the Victoria Falls Safari Spa offers a tranquil retreat to restore body and soul...

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VICTORIA FALLS  
  
*Safari Spa*

# Uncorking Change

## THE WOMEN AND STORYTELLERS RESHAPING SOUTH AFRICAN WINE

A wine list rarely gets a second glance. Guests scan it, pick something that pairs with dinner, and move on. But behind a growing number of South African bottles sits a story far more interesting than tasting notes, one of founders who built brands from nothing, entered an industry that was never designed to welcome them, and are now redefining what South African wine looks like.

**Melissa Foley** takes a look at some of the women and independent creators leading that change, and the wines they are putting in front of the world.



PICS SOURCED

### HER Wines, by Adama Wines

Praisyl Dlamini leads Adama Wines, a producer that has grown into a serious player in both local and export markets while never losing sight of where it started. HER Wine Collection is the heart of the operation, a range built specifically to put women's stories at the centre of the label. Every bottle in the collection carries that intent, proof that a wine can be commercially competitive and deeply personal at the same time. The tagline says it plainly: empowering stories, exceptional wines.

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

### Zulu Girl Wines

Founded by Pamela Biyela and Sandy Ralekholela, Zulu Girl Wines has become one of the more recognisable names on the shelf, and for good reason. This is a brand with attitude, built around confidence, culture and modern African identity rather than tradition for tradition's sake. It has already found its way into travel retail and premium outlets, a signal that its appeal reaches well beyond South Africa's borders. Bold wines for a bold generation is not just a tagline here; it is a description of the founders themselves.

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

### Zintokazi Wines

Zamaswazi Luswazi and Virginia Mtshali are building something quietly ambitious with Zintokazi, a boutique label producing small batch wines through carefully chosen partnerships. Nothing about this brand is mass market. Every release is deliberate, focused on craftsmanship and detail rather than volume, and the result is a wine that feels considered from vineyard to label. Elegance and ambition are not just words on the bottle; they describe how this business has been built.

<https://zintokazi.com/>

### Siwela Wines

Siwela Masoga has turned wine into an experience rather than a product. Siwela Wines is built around tastings, events and personal engagement, the kind of connection that turns a bottle into a memory rather than a line item on a menu. It is this experiential thinking, more than anything else, that has built a loyal following for the brand across South African retail.

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

### LucMo Wines

Lucia Motloung founded LucMo Wines on a simple idea: that premium wine does not need to feel distant or unapproachable. The brand has built genuine relationships through direct engagement and hospitality partnerships, offering a range that is refined without being intimidating. Premium wine, made personal, is exactly what it delivers.

<https://lucmowines.com/>

### Mama Afrika Wines

Few brands wear their identity as proudly as Mama Afrika Wines, founded by Mpelo Sikhwatha. Every bottle is built around heritage and storytelling, a tribute to African identity that goes far beyond flavour. This is a brand for consumers who want their wine to mean something, and it has found real traction with exactly that audience. A taste of Africa in every bottle is not marketing spin; it is the entire premise of the business.

<https://www.instagram.com/mamaafrikawines/>

### Moedi Wines

Lesego Holzapfel has taken Moedi Wines further afield than most, building genuine export relationships that position the brand as an ambassador for South African wine on the international stage. The label balances local authenticity with global ambition, and that balance is exactly what has made Moedi one of the more compelling growth stories in this collection.

<https://moediwines.com/>



### Why this matters for travellers

None of these founders are asking for charity, and none of them need it. What they are asking for is visibility, the kind that comes from a wine list, a tasting menu, or a guide who knows their story and chooses to tell it. For the responsible traveller, that visibility matters. A glass of wine served on safari or at a boutique hotel becomes part of the destination's story the moment a guest learns whose hands built the brand behind it.

South Africa's wine industry has spent centuries building a reputation for quality. What these founders are proving is that quality was never the missing ingredient. Opportunity was. As more of these labels find their way onto wine lists across the continent and beyond, travellers get something far better than a good glass of wine. They get a genuine reason to raise it.

### Koni Wines

Likonelo Maliehe, known to the industry as Koni, has built a brand around accessibility without sacrificing quality. Koni Wines works as comfortably at an everyday dinner table as it does at a premium event, and that versatility has made it a dependable, growing name across multiple retail channels.

<https://koniwines.com/>

### The Township Winery

Christelle September runs one of the most quietly disruptive labels on this list. The Township Winery exists to challenge assumptions about who South African wine represents, and it does so with a strong export footprint and an unmistakable voice. This is a brand built on representation as much as on wine, and it is changing conversations well beyond the glass.

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

### PaardenKloof Estate

Daphne Neethling's PaardenKloof Estate takes a different route to the same destination, a working wine farm where production, farming and hospitality sit side by side. Guests can walk the land that produced what is in their glass, a fully integrated experience that few estates offer with this level of authenticity. From our land to your glass is not a slogan here, it is a literal description of how the estate operates.

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



**MELISSA FOLEY**, 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.



## *A Promise Made Beneath a Thorn Tree*



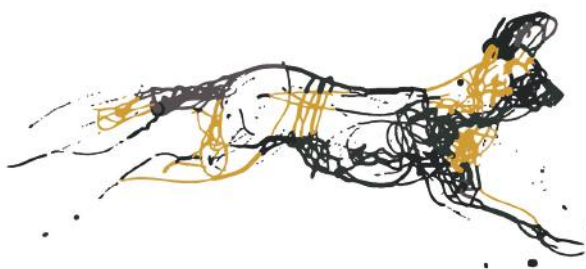
A wine for connoisseurs and for conservation: could it even be possible? Painted Wolf Wines for Conservation has boldly gone and shown that the proof of the pudding, so to speak, is in the drinking. **Lorraine Kearney** spoke to co-founder Emma Borg about the groundbreaking winemaking team.

They are never there when you're looking. African wild dogs. They're elusive, everywhere and nowhere, across the sub-continent. Except on television, when you're watching a David Attenborough documentary. So, I went where the film crew went – 2025's *Kingdom* was filmed in South Luangwa National Park – and watched a pack of dogs snoozing unperturbed in the black river mud, under a brooding purple sky, until the thunder drove us back to camp.

The next day, they had disappeared. Melted into the

vastness of Zambia's remote bush. A few weeks later, in Lower Zambezi National Park, I was transfixed when our late afternoon bumble crossed paths with a big pack. We sat until it got dark, watching as they played and gambolled, the adults as joyful as the puppies.

Lions may lounge obligingly beside roads and elephants announce themselves with the subtlety of a marching band, but painted wolves seem to exist in a parallel safari universe. They're there suddenly, a flash of black, gold and white, a blur of motion,



*Their greatest strength – their extraordinary social bonds – is also their greatest vulnerability.*

a pack on the move. And then gone again.

For Emma Borg, co-founder of Painted Wolf Wines for Conservation that fleeting predator combined with a promise made in the shade of a thorn tree in Botswana to shape an entire business. Emma is not a wine entrepreneur who became interested in conservation. She's a bush person who happened to find a partner and wine as the vehicle to fulfil a promise she made decades earlier.

It must be said there are easier ways to start a wine company, but nonetheless, that's how Painted Wolf Wines began.

#### Origin Story

Long before she'd even thought about wine and labels and restaurant wine lists and safari lodge tables, Emma was a young traveller who found herself

accidentally falling in love with the African bush. "I got to Africa eventually," she says – her first round-the-world ticket had skipped the continent entirely. "I travelled for six weeks or so, having my first bush experience in Kruger, which was amazing."

So amazing that it changed everything. One unexpected opportunity led to another until soon afterwards, relying on her background in hospitality management, she was managing a remote safari camp in Botswana, learning the rhythms of the bush from old school veterans.

"They were the conservationists who didn't call themselves conservationists, because they just got on with it," she says.

And then she met Jeremy Borg, a South African-born winemaker who was raised in Malawi and Zimbabwe, and who had

been working in California's wine industry. The pair married beneath a thorn tree and made a pact.

"One day we'd give back to conservation," Emma recalls, "having absolutely no cooking clue how we were going to, because we had no money."

#### For The Love of The Dogs

This year, Painted Wolf Wines for Conservation is celebrating two decades in business, during which time it has raised more than R4-million for conservation projects while helping to turn one of Africa's least understood predators into one of its most beloved. The company donates a percentage of the sale of each bottle of its wines to conservation initiatives and has built an entire brand around a species many people once dismissed as little more than vermin.





#### LORRAINE KEARNEY

is a writer, editor, lover of safaris and sometime wine-drinker who has written headlines and survived deadlines, fallen out of game vehicles and off motorbikes, and seized every moment, with only minor scarring. She covers everything from conservation to cuisine, often at the same time. When not wrangling words, she's probably misplacing her glasses and/or lounging in the sun.

The species in question is *Lycaon pictus*, which translates directly from Latin as "painted wolf". It is more commonly known as the African wild dog, although many conservationists now prefer painted wolf or painted dog. The name reflects the animal's extraordinary coat, a patchwork of black, gold, white and russet markings unique to every individual, like a fingerprint.

Back when Painted Wolf Wines launched in 2007, the species wasn't a public relations darling.

"We chose the African wild dog because they were so endangered, and so many people were confused about what they were. Are they hyenas? Are they this? Are they wolves?" says Emma.

Today, painted wolves are among Africa's most sought-after safari sightings. Attenborough documentaries have helped to introduce them to a global audience, while photographers and safari guides rave about their intelligence, social behaviour and astonishing hunting skills.

Emma likes to think Painted Wolf Wines has played a small role in that shift.

"I think we have," she says.

"We've spoken to thousands of people over the years all over the world."

#### Extraordinary Hunters

The painted wolf certainly deserves the attention.

These animals are among the most successful hunters on the continent, with some studies recording hunting success rates at 80%, far higher than lions at 10%. They live in remarkably close-knit packs and display levels of co-operation that would make many human families look dysfunctional. Pack members care for injured animals, regurgitate food for pups and even allow youngsters to eat first after a kill.

Kingdom brought us the story of Flint, oldest son of the pack's matriarch, Storm. He was injured in a poacher's snare and lost one of his legs. Although he couldn't hunt, Flint was cared for by his pack, which shared their kills with him. In turn, he became an acute observer of danger and took on a crucial protective role over the pups.

Then there is what for me is perhaps the greatest wildlife fact ever discovered. Probably

my favourite fact ever, actually: the pack is a democratic society in which individuals vote by sneezing.

Researchers studying painted wolves in Botswana discovered that packs use sneezes as part of a collective decision-making process before setting off on a hunt. In "Sneeze to leave: African wild dogs (*Lycaon pictus*) use variable quorum thresholds facilitated by sneezes in collective decisions" (2017) Walker et al found that the more sneezes, the more likely the pack is to move.

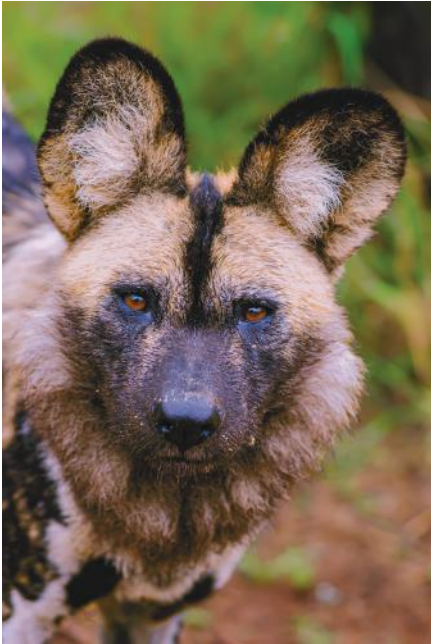
Yet for all their charisma, painted wolves remain endangered. There are fewer than 7,000 across Africa, with only about 1,400 mature breeding adults. Habitat fragmentation, conflict with farmers, road accidents, snares and diseases carried by domestic dogs are the main threats.

That vulnerability is partly a consequence of what makes them so special.

"They're so social," says Emma. "They pick up a domestic dog disease and then because they nuzzle so closely, a whole pack gets wiped out."



Years ago, she would go to tourism trade shows with a



suitcase full of wine and a determination to introduce the brand to tourism operators. "I started with actually going to the travel shows, way back 16, 17 years ago, with my little wheelie suitcase," she laughs, "wandering around, showing my bottles, seeing if anyone might want to taste. And I went up to the Africa Travel and Tourism Association stand, because I saw

they had a lot of East African exhibitors and I wanted to get our wines into East Africa. "So I said, 'Well, I've got some wines in my suitcase, would you mind if I pour them for your exhibitors at the end of the day?'"

The conservation story resonated immediately.

These days, Painted Wolf appears on wine lists from Kenya to Zambia to Cape Town, a fitting outcome for a company whose roots lie not in the vineyards but in the bush. You could say Painted Wolf Wines is a winery that supports conservation, but really, it's a conservation story that happens to make wine.

The wine itself is excellent, of course. Jeremy Borg's Chenins,

Pinotages and Rhône-style wines have earned plenty of accolades over the years. Yet what people remember most is often the animal on the label and the conversation it starts.

"By drinking our wines, you're also giving back," says Emma. "People get busy in their lives and it's not always possible to work out how you go about doing that. But it's very simple in our case. Enjoy wine and you're contributing."

Not bad for a promise made beneath a thorn tree.

Or, for that matter, for a species that settles important matters with a sneeze.

### Conservation Values

Over the years, Painted Wolf Wines for Conservation has supported organisations including the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Tusk Trust and, more recently, the Painted Wolf Foundation. Unusually, conservation isn't simply a marketing exercise attached to a bottle of wine; it sits at the heart of the business. The same philosophy extends into the vineyards.

Painted Wolf doesn't own vineyards but works with growers who share its values, sourcing fruit from organically certified or sustainably farmed vineyards and championing initiatives such as South Africa's Old Vine Project. "It's just about working with people who get it," Emma says, "who know they must work in the best manner possible."

That commitment to purpose has also helped the brand find a home in the safari industry.

If you've spent time in lodges and camps across Southern Africa or East Africa, chances are you've encountered a bottle of Painted Wolf. Emma certainly made sure of it.



### A SINGULAR WINE

Painted Wolf Wines for Conservation has donated more than R4-million to African wild dog conservation since 2008, donating about 4% of the sale of every bottle to conservation projects. The winemakers work with the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Painted Wolf Foundation, and has previously worked with Tusk.

They specialise in Chenin Blanc and Pinotage, and source their grapes from small, sustainably farmed vineyards – "All our growers are either organic or practice sustainable viticulture," they point out. There are three collections: The Den, The Pack and Lycaon Pictus, the flagship collection. Over the past 20 years, Jeremy Borg has made wine in 15 different locations. In April, the Paarl company announced it was partnering with Jordan Wines, in Stellenbosch.

"It's not an amalgamation of Jordan and Painted Wolf," Emma Borg explains. "Painted Wolf will stay on its own two feet and will continue with our kind of legacy for the future, but with the wonderful resources that Jordan has. And in turn, they get our 20 years of Wines for Conservation, for which we have a trademark now."

Painted Wolf Wines sources grapes from Kasteelsig (Estate) vineyards in Malmesbury, Silkbush Mountain Vineyards in Breedekloof Wine Valley, and Welgegund Wines in Wellington, among others. They are champions of the Chenin Blanc Old Vine Project, and Emma says: "look out for our newly released label 'Lightning' Chenin blanc, my absolute favourite wine".



[www.paintedwolfwines.com](http://www.paintedwolfwines.com)

# *The Gentle Art of Slowing Down*





There are some places where wellness arrives with a timetable. Yoga at sunrise. A massage before lunch. Green juice by the pool. **Tessa Buhrmann** discovers that there are places like Sala Beach House, where wellness simply becomes part of the day.

Perched above Thompson's Bay on KwaZulu-Natal's Dolphin Coast, this elegant boutique retreat seems to operate at the pace of the ocean below. Here, the days unfold

gently, guided by the tides, the movement of the sun across the water and the simple pleasure of having nowhere in particular to be. It is the kind of place where you arrive carrying the busyness of everyday life and leave wondering why you ever thought all that rushing was necessary.

Right from the start, with warm smiles and chilled bubbly on arrival, I know this is going to be a memorable stay. Little do I realise just how much I need the invitation to do nothing but slow down. After the busyness of work deadlines, trade show meetings and a busy road trip, that invitation couldn't have come at a better time.

After checking into the Sala Beach Villa – an exclusive-use, three-bedroom private villa – I am immediately drawn to the sound of the ocean, the lush coastal vegetation and the seemingly endless view where sea meets sky. The gardens beg to be explored, as does the beach. Soon I am winding my way through the lush garden, down the wooden steps and onto the soft white sand of Thompson's Bay; the sun warm on my shoulders, the Indian Ocean lapping at my feet and the salty sea breeze on my face. I can feel myself relaxing already... and that is before I've added cappuccinos, cocktails and canapés, and an evening of delicious cuisine.

My turn-down on the incredibly comfortable bed, comes with a reminder that I have signed up for sunrise yoga. A jar of nutritional date balls and a hand-written note: *'Yoga is the ART of waking up xxx'*. Suddenly, it feels less like something on tomorrow's itinerary and more like an invitation to embrace the new day.

The horizon glows softly with shades of apricot as darkness slowly surrenders to dawn. The air mildly chilly as I make my way to an open deck overlooking the Indian Ocean for sunrise yoga. Wispy clouds, a pale sky and a view over the ocean sets the scene as our instructor invites us to settle onto our mats and listen.

Not to her. To the ocean.

The waves roll gently onto the shore below, creating a natural rhythm. The sky slowly transforms from apricot to gold, clouds etched with colour as the sun rises. As we move and stretch, my bones creak and my body briefly protests – as unaccustomed as I am to yoga, but I soon appreciate the gentle movements, the ocean breeze, and the warmth of the sun. Somewhere between the stretching, the sea breeze and the first warmth of the rising sun, I feel both body and mind beginning to wake.

Seagulls drift overhead – is that the shape of Africa in the clouds? Somewhere below, the first early-morning walkers are making their way along the beach, the fishermen already in place on the rocks. The world waking up around us.

By the time the session ends, the sun has cleared the horizon,

casting a shimmering pathway of light across the ocean. Feeling rested and relaxed, I head to the main area for a cappuccino. All thought of deadlines and to-do lists seemingly carried away by the tide.

Breakfast follows, served with uninterrupted sea views. Fresh fruit, flaky pastries, perfectly brewed coffee and beautifully prepared hot dishes arrive at a pace that encourages lingering.

One of the luxuries of a stay at Sala Beach House is that nobody expects you to rush.

In fact, slowing down seems to be actively encouraged.

As the name suggests, Sala Beach House has the design and layout of a fancy friend's beachside home – where soft sofas and comfortable chairs invite you to curl up with a good book, feet tucked under and a cotton throw to ward off any chilly sea breezes. The bookshelves on either side of the fireplace offer a selection of reading material – I pause to pull out a John Grisham novel while I wait for the deliciousness of a spa treatment.

The spa offers a different kind of relaxation. Tucked away in a peaceful corner of the property, it provides a sanctuary within a sanctuary. Soft lighting, calming aromas and attentive therapists create an atmosphere where relaxation begins long before the treatment itself.

I opt for a 60-minute Terre d'Afrique body treatment and quickly find myself wondering why I don't do this more often.

Perhaps it's because, at home, even relaxation can become another task squeezed into an already crowded schedule. Here, however, time seems to stretch. Lerato, my therapist, works patiently to ease away tension accumulated through too many hours spent at my computer, too many deadlines and too many hours on the road.



Outside, I can hear the distant sound of the ocean. Inside, I can feel the stress and tension melting away. When the treatment ends, I linger at the spa, enjoying infused water and the tranquillity of the beautiful space, before walking back towards the villa.

The temptation is to immediately do something productive. Instead, I do something far more valuable. Nothing.

For the next hour, I relax on a sun lounger beside the pool, book in hand and an ice-cold glass of water nearby. The pages turn slowly. Occasionally, I look up to watch the sea and chuckle at a family of vervet monkeys who seem just as intrigued by me as I am by them. The warmth of the sun is delicious on my skin and a gentle breeze drifts through the open space.

It strikes me then that wellness isn't always found in activity. Sometimes it is found in stillness. In giving yourself permission to sit quietly with a good book. To nap without guilt.



To stare at the ocean without reaching for your phone. And to simply be present.

The same sense of presence carries through the rest of the day.

Lunch is enjoyed at leisure, accompanied by the sound of waves breaking below. Later, I'm back beside the pool – book in hand (obviously), watching clouds drift across the sky while palm fronds rustle softly overhead.

The hours stretch lazily ahead. Time slows to match the pace of the day – or rather, the lack of one. My hubby is joining me that evening and it's something I've been looking forward to all day.

Sala naturally encourages meaningful connection. Whether travelling with a partner, friends or family, the absence of constant distractions allows conversations to unfold differently. Long lunches become opportunities to tell stories, while sundowners wander into conversations you didn't know you needed.

Dinner, as with everything else here, encourages guests to slow down and savour the experience.

The cuisine is exceptional, showcasing fresh seasonal ingredients with creativity and confidence. Beautifully plated, without ever feeling pretentious, each dish celebrating flavour while maintaining a sense of comfort and generosity.

We enjoy a feast for the senses with a three-course menu offering mouth-watering cuisine inspired by our local cultures – African, Indian, European and French Mauritian. Focused on fresh ingredients, Sala's cuisine highlights locally farmed produce and freshly caught fish from local fishermen. All complemented by a carefully curated selection of South African wines.

There is something deeply satisfying about ending a day spent nurturing body and mind with a memorable meal. And by the time we retire to our suite, the ocean has become little more than a gentle murmur in the darkness beyond.

We forgo yoga the next morning an opt for a lengthy early morning beach walk and wander through the gardens towards the beach. Fringed by indigenous coastal vegetation, the property feels wonderfully secluded despite being only a short distance from the hustle and bustle of Ballito.

Beach walks have become something of a cliché in wellness circles, but there is something deeply restorative about walking beside the ocean. Toes in soft sand, warm sea lapping around the ankles. The salt-laden breeze clears the mind, while the vast horizon expands my perspective and the rhythmic sound of waves quietens any remaining mental chatter.

I walk slowly, barefoot, the sand cool and firm beneath my feet. In the distance, dolphins appear briefly before disappearing beneath the surface once more. A Burchell's coucal calls from the thick coastal vegetation.

We pass the Thompson's Bay tidal pool – affectionately known as Charlie's Pool, the Olympic-sized pool was built in 1962 by Charles de Charmoy, his family and farm workers. More than six decades later, it remains a haven for swimmers and snorkellers, where calm, crystal-clear waters reveal colourful fish, corals and a surprising diversity of marine life.

Just beyond the tidal pool lies Hole in the Wall, a striking natural rock arch best explored at low tide. A favourite with photographers and early morning walkers, it provides another reason to linger a little longer along this beautiful stretch of coastline.

We have no specific destination. No fitness target. Just the simple pleasure of walking along this beautiful stretch of beach.

Breakfast is every bit as delicious as the morning before, made even better by the company.

We linger over coffee, reluctant to leave.

Travel has a remarkable way of allowing us to step outside our routines and see life a little more clearly. As we quietly pack our bags, I make a promise to myself, not only to slow down when travelling, but to carry a little of that gentler pace into everyday life.

And if life inevitably speeds up again – as it always does – I know exactly where to return when it's time to slow down once more.



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



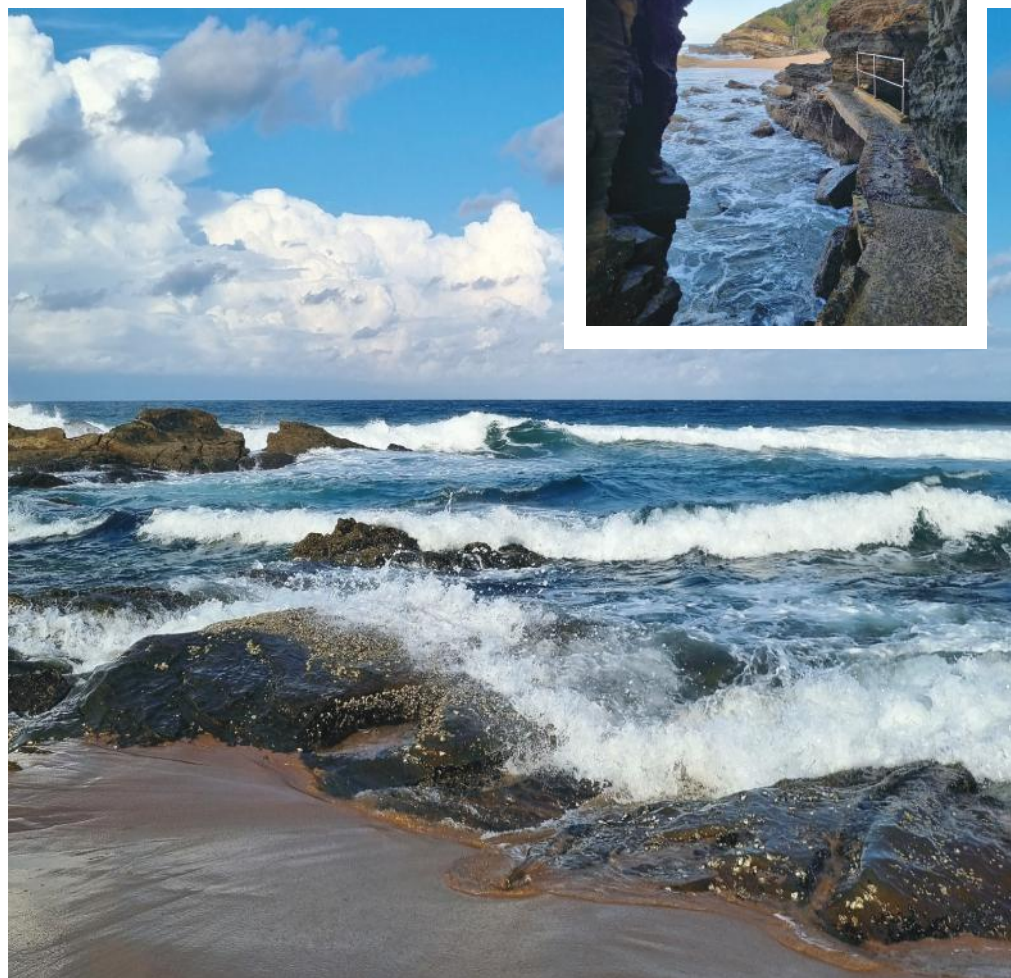
## A SUSTAINABLE RETREAT

One of the things I appreciate most about Sala Beach House is that its commitment to sustainability doesn't feel like a marketing exercise. Instead, it's quietly woven into the experience, much like the property's relaxed approach to wellness.

Guided by the principles of Fair Trade Tourism, Sala is committed to looking after its people, supporting the local community and treading lightly on this beautiful stretch of the Dolphin Coast. From sourcing locally wherever possible to creating a positive working environment for its team, every decision is made with both people and place in mind.

That commitment includes supporting local businesses, producers and artisans, providing fair and ethical working conditions, operating responsibly to reduce its environmental footprint, and encouraging guests to connect with meaningful community initiatives during their stay.

It's a reminder that true luxury isn't just about beautiful surroundings or exceptional service. It's also about knowing that the place you're enjoying is helping to protect the people, culture and environment that make it so special.





PICS ARTHUR COLLETT / DROSTDY HOTEL

## A Karoo Gem

### WITH A 120-MILLION-YEAR HISTORY

For many travellers, the Karoo is something to cross rather than a place in which to linger, a long dry stretch between the north and the Cape coast. Having grown up in the Karoo, Arthur remembers Graaff-Reinet as another dusty town on the road. We arrived curious to understand how it had become a destination in its own right.

*The Karoo creates something rare – enough space to breathe, and enough silence to hear yourself think.*

The change began before we reached it.

Leaving St Francis, we made our way through the Baviaanskloof Mountains as the landscape opened around us. Cape aloes stood beside the road with their bright red flowers, a lone windmill turned against pale blue mountains and the plains stretched towards the horizon.

Passing Jansenville and the road signs to Pearson and Kleinpoort, the tension of everyday life began to ease. The Karoo creates enough space for you to breathe.

The first sight of the Camdeboo Mountains, with the Sneeu Berg in the distance and Compassberg beyond them, told us Graaff-Reinet was close.



Turning into town, we were struck by the wide tree-lined streets, preserved buildings and the Groot Kerk at its centre. David Livingstone called Graaff-Reinet “the prettiest town in all Africa” when he visited in 1841. Within minutes, the description began to make sense.

At the Drostdy Hotel, a glass of sherry and port at reception added a special touch to our arrival. The welcome was warm without being overdone and the history of the building was present without making the hotel feel formal. Old walls, shaded courtyards and contemporary interiors sat comfortably together.

Our room was spacious, but it was the quieter spaces beyond it that stayed with us. We found corners in the gardens where one could sit with a book, talk without interruption or watch the afternoon light move across the old buildings. Walking between the precincts felt less like moving through a hotel and more like exploring a collection of homes gathered over time. The spa, art, dining and wine spaces revealed themselves naturally as we wandered, rather than as a checklist of facilities.

Soon after settling in, we crossed the road to Karoo Origins, the Fossil Centre, where Professor Bruce Rubidge showed us

around. He related the story of how it all began with a child’s question: “What is a fossil, Daddy?”

Peggy Rubidge had asked this of her father, Sidney, a third-generation farmer at Wellwood near Graaff-Reinet. It prompted a family fossil-hunting expedition and grew into a lifelong pursuit. Sidney Rubidge assembled more than 850 fossil skulls and 107 holotypes, the unique specimens used to define species, during his lifetime.

Standing among the collection altered our sense of time. We learnt that this was not simply a display of old bones, but a



#### ABOVE:

*Drostdy Hotel Graaff-Reinet*

*Morne pouring bubbles in  
Drostdy's Vinotheque*

*Coffee at Karoo Origins*

*Bruce Rubidge and Dionne*

scientific resource that continues to draw researchers and students from around the world. Professor Rubidge made the story personal: a child's curiosity had opened the door to a work of international importance. We left aware that the quiet Karoo landscape holds evidence of worlds that existed long before us.

That evening, Morne van der Horst led us through a private tasting in the Drostdy's Vinotheque. Trained at the SA College for Tourism in Graaff-Reinet, he guided us through four wines, showing how each changed alongside the flavours on the snack platter. It was relaxed and conversational, the sort of tasting that gives a casual wine drinker the confidence to pause, taste again and form an opinion.

Dinner at De Camdeboo Restaurant continued the sense of place. Lamb, beef and venison brought the region to the table,

but the meal never felt staged. It felt generous and rooted in where we were.

The following morning, we walked across the road to Te Water House. Ancient yellowwood beams and floors hold the memory of the building's past, including the antique shop once run by the grandmother of owner Jen Rubidge. Jen has gathered local makers and entrepreneurs beneath one roof for an eclectic mix of clothing, food and activities.

We moved from handmade goods and preserves to the smell of baking and the quirky coffee menu. It was one of those places where a quick visit becomes an hour because there is always another room to enter, another story to hear or something locally made to taste.

Later, David McNaughton, owner and founder of Karoo Connections, collected us for the

drive to the Valley of Desolation. His family has lived in the area for at least five generations and he shared its history, geology and wildlife with the ease of someone who knows the landscape intimately.

The road curled upwards through the Camdeboo. A black-backed jackal appeared; kudu moved through the veld and a troop of baboons watched from a distance. David's stories helped us understand that the landscape is not empty at all. It is layered with natural history, human endeavour and the memory of those who travelled these routes long before us.

At the viewpoint, the late-winter light stretched across the Valley of Desolation and the plains below. The scale was difficult to absorb. We felt very small, but not insignificant. The landscape seemed to put the noise and urgency of ordinary life into perspective.



**LEFT:**  
Drostdy Hotel Graaff-Reinet

**BELOW:**  
Quaint shops in Graaff-Reinet

The Drostdy had packed a picnic basket for us, which we enjoyed at the edge of that immense view, along with a bottle of white wine. It was one of the simplest and most memorable moments of the trip: good food, open space and the feeling that the Karoo had briefly brought everything to a standstill.

Our day ended at the Graaff-Reinet Club, opened in 1875 and regarded as the third-oldest club in South Africa. Firearms from the Anglo-Boer War hang behind the bar and marks in the counter recall shots fired by British officers during peace celebrations in 1902. We were there to watch the Springboks play Wales, with the history of the room sitting comfortably alongside the noise of a modern match day. It is fortunate that the Club had changed its membership rules in 1996 and ladies are now allowed to enter

the club, meaning that Dionne could join me in celebrating another fine Springbok victory.

By the time we left Graaff-Reinet, the question that had brought us there had been answered. This is not simply a convenient stopover. In two days, we had moved from fossils to wine, from yellowwood floors to a mountain precipice and from the stillness of a hotel courtyard to the roar of a rugby crowd.

We had only touched the surface. Museums, galleries, theatres, monuments, walking trails, distilleries and local routes remained unexplored. That unfinished list felt less like a failure and more like a reason to return.

As we left Graaff-Reinet, it was with a sense of sadness. Our expectations had been surpassed. Every day of our brief stay had opened new

doors, imparted new learnings and instilled a calm that seems to be inspired by the massive expanse of the plains of the Camdeboo. We felt that it gave life perspective, the surrounding Sneeuwberg Mountain Range, the imposing Compassberg Mountain and Spandaukop, the sentinel that keeps a watchful eye over the town, evidenced by the millions of years of history on display at Karoo Origins. This made us realise that we are a mere speck in the passage of time. Appreciating and understanding our past will be the gateway to being better prepared for our future.

Graaff-Reinet proved that it was more than just a break in a journey. It is a place that gave us perspective.



**ARTHUR AND DIONNE COLLETT** share a passion for hospitality and tourism and a curiosity for the people, places and stories that give destinations their character. Travelling together, they seek experiences beyond the obvious, sharing authentic stories shaped by local voices, history, food, conservation and the unexpected moments discovered along the way.



## Essentials

### WHERE TO STAY:

Drostdy Hotel  
🌐 <https://drostdy.co.za/>

### EXPERIENCES:

Graaff-Reinet Tourism, including local attractions:  
🌐 <https://graaffreinet.co.za/>

Karoo Origins: The Fossil Centre:  
🌐 <https://fossilcentre.co.za/>

Karoo Connections and Valley of Desolation tours:  
🌐 <https://graaffreinet.co.za/karoo-connections/>





PICS IGA MOTYLSKA

## Taking time to Breathe

Wanting to slow down, Iga Motylska embraced a self-imposed digital detox as she surrendered to the restorative daily rhythm of Vala House, a yoga and wellness sanctuary near Knysna. For a week, her days were interspersed with meditation, yoga, somatic therapy, saunas and ice baths – and simply breathing.



**IGA MOTYLSKA** is a registered tourist guide and independent travel consultant who is rarely seen without a camera slung around her neck. Her guiding draws on 16 years as a travel journalist with each story-driven itinerary connecting curious travellers to people and the environment through her love of responsible travel:  
[www.eagerjourneys.com](http://www.eagerjourneys.com)

My skin is radiating the dry heat of the infrared sauna, as I focus on the soft clicking of icicles in the ice bath. I submerge myself to the collarbones. My body tingles with a pricking sensation. The instantaneous physiological response releases an involuntary gasp. I force my breath into a slowness that I haven't experienced in months – lengthening the exhalations to convince my nervous system that it is safe. A sharp clarity follows – the immediate hormonal dividend of vascular constriction during thermal contrast therapy that neuroscientists laud for decompressing the body and mind.

If you've ever wanted to slow down time, this is the way to do it. Two minutes dilate as I gaze across the dew-sprinkled lawn of Vala House through the rising mist to the horses grazing along the perimeter fence against the outline of the Knysna Forest.

This tranquil countryside manor near Rheenendal, just outside Knysna, is giving me the time and space to rewrite the frantic internal scripts of modern-day life for the next week. Away from my laptop and phone (through my own choice, as it's not a requirement), in favour of quietly reading books about slowing down, near the fireplace to the

carefree sound of Geoffrey, Haidee and Lucy snoring, as only dogs do. Their daily naps remind me of the necessity of absolute rest – something I've forgotten how to do.

Vala House is a yoga and wellness sanctuary that offers artistic immersions, rejuvenating burnout retreats and Yoga Teacher Training (YTT) programmes. The focus is on nurturing resilience, cultivating genuine self-expression and allowing for mindful reflection through movement, breath, art and relaxation.



Here, the weight of constant decision-making evaporates into a restorative daily routine with no logistical calculus to navigate besides showing up for myself in whatever way feels right. My mornings begin at 06:30 with the singing bowl signalling meditation that flows into an hour-long yoga class, suitable for all skills levels, that starts and ends each day. A wholesome vegan breakfast at the

communal table follows the sauna-ice bath.

This internal down-regulation is deepened with free time on either side of lunch. My intention is to dilute that habitual urge to plan, calculate, predict, keep myself busied with something – anything, so as not to allow my mind to wander, to process, to feel, to heal, to simply be. Any excuse that now is not the time. Life only seems to accelerate. As my birthday approaches, I recognise that if I don't intentionally make time, by deliberately carving it out into my schedule, it'll surely never come. There'll never be a good time to slow down, to breathe, to listen to my body and regulate my nervous system.

*Sometimes the greatest act of self-care is making time to simply be.*

Mother Nature anchors the entire process, from the hearty vegan meals to the location and surroundings of the ancient ecosystems of the Garden Route. On the second day, we lace up our boots (only to take them off again) for a four-hour forest bathing immersion into the old-growth Goudveld Forest, led by nature conservationist and biomimicry educator Sue Swain.

As mud squelches between our toes, our bare feet connect to the forest floor with the intention of stepping into a safe space that allows us to recognise the infinite wisdom of nature's presence, patterns and principles. Looking up, the sky is obscured by the interlocking crowns of ancient Outeniqua yellowwoods, their trunks wrapped in coarse lichen, cushiony mosses and old man's beard.

Beneath a yellowwood canopy, Sue explains the fluid dynamics of the forest: how the multi-layered leaf architecture of various trees catches the impact of a downpour, dissipating the rain over several hours so it trickles down the trunks and drips onto the leaf-littered forest floor to avoid eroding the topsoil. It becomes a meaningful observation of how a healthy ecosystem slowly distributes

external stress over a collective network.

The following evening, Geoff Brown who comes from a long lineage of Xhosa water pourers, guides a sweat lodge in the garden at Vala House. The low dome of woven branches and twigs, draped in multi-coloured blankets is a cocoon for a transformative metamorphosis of purification, intention setting and emotional cleansing.

Outside in the fire pit, rocks have been fire-baked for hours until they glow red in the dusk. Once they are brought inside in three stages, Geoff ladles water onto them with a scallop shell. They hiss and release dense steam that hangs heavy. It is this physical endurance, coupled with his guidance, that releases deep-seated emotions.

After a week, I realise that this intentional slowing down has been the greatest birthday gift. It has ingrained these healing practices into my daily routines to be practiced long after I'm home.





## VALA HOUSE

Yogi and coach Peter Townshend established Vala House, at the foothills of the Outeniqua Mountains, to create an inclusive space for healing with the help of a community of philosophy teachers, breathwork practitioners, ceremony facilitators and healers.

Guests may arrive on any day of the week and stay for as long as they like. The restorative burnout recovery retreat suggests a minimum three-day stay with a daily schedule that includes meditation, two yoga classes, thermal contrast therapy, combined with an inclusive reiki session, sweat lodge experience and forest walk. Vala House also hosts comprehensive 50- and 200-hour Yoga Teacher Training (YTT) programmes in conjunction with Yoga Alliance.

Guests are welcome to customise their wellness journey with a choice of treatments (at an additional cost), such as massages, beauty treatments, somatic breathwork, Emotional Freedom Technique (tapping), as well as

art, dance and poetry therapy, and private consultations with a psychologist, among others. Vala House also organises a selection of outdoor excursions along the Garden Route from horse riding, hiking and canoeing to paragliding, ziplining and marine eco-safaris.

The beautifully renovated country house has eight elegant en-suite rooms that are divided between standard (R3200/night) and deluxe (R3800/night) and include all meals, snacks and drinks.

Quote 'Eager Journeys' when booking for a 10% discount; friends or couples sharing receive a 20% discount.

[www.valahouse.co.za](http://www.valahouse.co.za)  
[info@valahouse.co.za](mailto:info@valahouse.co.za)  
 071 166 4854

# The Sacred Power of Feminine Qualities



Heena Parshutam  
Brahma Kumaris SA

In a world that often celebrates speed, achievement, and outward success, there is a quieter strength that deserves equal recognition - the sacred power of feminine qualities.

True feminine power is not found in dominance or competition. It is found in the ability to nurture, uplift, and create harmony even in challenging circumstances. It is the strength that listens before speaking, understands before judging, and heals before reacting.

Throughout history, women have carried extraordinary responsibilities. They have been mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, leaders, educators, caregivers, and visionaries. Yet beyond these roles lies something even deeper: the innate capacity to connect with the qualities that unite humanity—compassion, patience, resilience, intuition, and love.

Modern society often encourages women to prove themselves through constant activity. However, some of the greatest power emerges not from doing more, but from being more. Reflection, self-awareness, and inner stillness allow a woman to reconnect with her authentic self. When she values herself beyond titles, appearances, or accomplishments, she discovers a strength that cannot be shaken by external circumstances.

The feminine spirit has a unique ability to transform environments. A calm presence can ease tension in a room. A kind word can restore hope. A listening ear can bring comfort to a troubled heart. These seemingly simple actions carry a profound influence that often goes unnoticed, yet they leave lasting impressions on families, communities, and society as a whole.

As we honour Women's Month, perhaps it is an opportunity not only to celebrate women but also to honour the qualities that come more naturally to women. Every act of courage, every moment of kindness, every expression of wisdom contributes to a more compassionate world.

The sacred power of feminine qualities is not about standing above others. It is about standing firmly in one's values while uplifting those around us. It is strength rooted in reflection, grace expressed through action, and love made visible in everyday life.

When women recognise their inner worth and live from that awareness, they become a powerful force for positive change—quietly, naturally, and beautifully.



THE BRAHMA KUMARIS

*Know your self. Renew your spirit.*

#### THE BRAHMA KUMARIS CENTRES SOUTH AFRICA

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Magnifico.com

# Morocco:

PICS SOURCED

## FINDING STILLNESS BETWEEN THE MOUNTAINS AND THE DESERT

Morocco has a reputation for being loud. It is a country of bustling souks, scooters weaving through ancient medinas, the scent of spices drifting through the air and traders calling from every direction. It's exciting, colourful and wonderfully chaotic. But **Gabriella Ribeiro** discovers that when you linger a little longer and look beyond the bustle, a quieter, more soulful side of Morocco begins to emerge.

It might be watching the sun rise over the Atlas Mountains while the valleys below are still wrapped in mist, perhaps after a few quiet moments on a terrace as the morning air remains cool and crisp. It could be sharing fresh bread and slow-cooked tagine around a family table in a Berber village, where conversation is never hurried and mint tea keeps finding its way back into your glass. Or perhaps it's beginning the day with a traditional hammam – steam,

warmth and stillness that leave you feeling lighter than when you walked in. Then there is the Sahara at dusk, where the only sound is the wind moving across the dunes and the silence seems to stretch for miles.

Those are the moments that stay with you.

In recent years, Morocco has quietly become one of North Africa's most rewarding wellness destinations, although not in the way many people expect. This

isn't a place defined by luxury spas or detox programmes. Instead, wellness is simply part of daily life – found in centuries-old hammam traditions, wholesome food, generous hospitality and landscapes that invite you to slow your pace.

The High Atlas provides the perfect introduction. Walking through these mountains isn't about covering distance; it's about noticing the details. Walnut trees that have shaded generations of families. Terraced fields clinging to impossibly steep hillsides. Villages where life still follows the rhythm of the seasons rather than the clock. Before long, you find yourself slowing down too.



**MAIN** Camels in the desert

**TOP TO BOTTOM**

Two women in colorful djellabas walk along the historic Skala de la Ville in Essaouira

Handmade Moroccan ceramic tea glasses

Sunrise over the High Atlas Mountains

Making traditional clay pottery

A street vendor pouring traditional Moroccan mint tea in a bustling medina market

## TOP TO BOTTOM

Sunset in the Sahara

A narrow street in the historic Fes Medina in Morocco, a UNESCO World Heritage site

Moroccan Berber pottery



Ignacio Ceballos-Unsplash



Vince-GX - Unsplash



Rigel - Unsplash

The experience is just as rewarding away from the trails. Spending time with Berber families offers a genuine glimpse into a culture where hospitality comes naturally. Meals are shared, stories flow easily, and visitors are welcomed as guests rather than spectators. More often than not, it's these simple moments, rather than the famous landmarks, that become the memories you carry home.

Morocco also invites travellers to slow down in unexpected ways. Learning to shape clay alongside a local potter takes patience, and a willingness to enjoy the process rather than rush to the finished piece. Traditional hammams and argan oil massages have long been part of everyday Moroccan life, offering rituals that feel deeply rooted in place rather than created for visitors. The scent of eucalyptus, the warmth of smooth stone and the rhythm of water all become part of the experience.

Then comes the desert.

There is something about the Sahara that is difficult to explain until you've stood there yourself. The vastness has a way of putting everything else into perspective. As evening falls and the dunes shift from gold to burnt orange before fading into shadow, conversations become

quieter. Beneath a sky scattered with stars, the world suddenly feels much bigger.

Perhaps that's why so many people leave Morocco feeling lighter than when they arrived.

Not because they were looking for transformation, but because the country quietly changes the pace at which you move through the day. You linger over another cup of tea. You look up instead of down. You stop checking the time quite so often.

The best journeys rarely announce themselves while you're living them. Their impact is often felt later, when you find yourself thinking about that mountain sunrise, the warmth of a Berber welcome or the silence of the Sahara.

Morocco has a habit of staying with you long after you've returned home.



Jason Briscoe - Unsplash



For **GABRIELLA RIBEIRO**, travel has always been more than a career – it's a lifelong passion. Founder of **TRUMARKETING**, she combines decades of experience in global tourism with a genuine passion for meaningful travel, bringing destinations to life through authentic stories and first-hand experience.



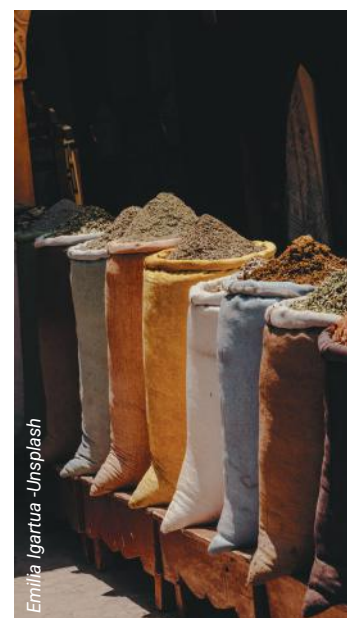
[origindmc.com](http://origindmc.com)



Abdellah Ziki-Pexels



Pexels.com



Emilia Igartua - Unsplash

*In Morocco,  
wellness isn't  
something you  
book – it's  
something you  
experience in  
the rhythm of  
everyday life.*

#### TOP TO BOTTOM

Marrakech

Freshly baked  
Moroccan flatbread

Campfire and traditional  
coffee pots

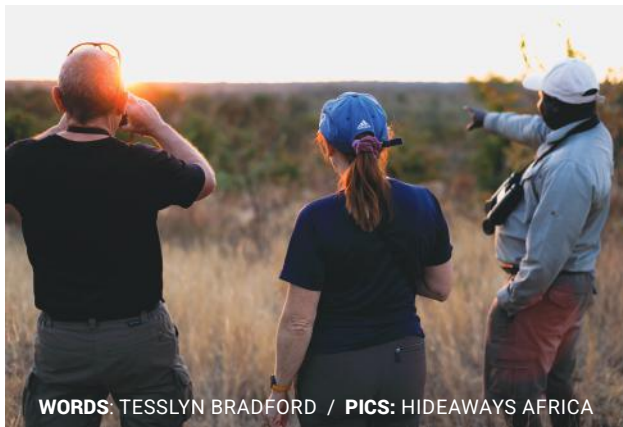
Bags of spices in  
Marrakesh

Oils for a traditional  
Moroccan hammam  
bath ritual



Pablo Ramon - Pexels

# *A Hiking Trail, with an African Twist*



WORDS: TESSLYN BRADFORD / PICS: HIDEAWAYS AFRICA

Mention the word 'trail' and most people immediately think of a scenic walking route. A clear route that starts and ends in the same place, with a loop in between, perhaps a small mountain to climb or a viewpoint waiting at the top. It's one of the most common ways people choose to spend time outdoors, whether it's to connect with nature, spend time with family and friends, or simply lace up their boots and explore somewhere new. For many adventurous travellers, it's an activity they naturally look for when planning a trip.

Travel through Zimbabwe, however, and you'll quickly discover that a 'trail' has a meaning of its own.





While a traditional walking safari offers an unforgettable few hours on foot before returning to camp, it's really just a taste of the true

adventure Zimbabwe holds. A walking trail isn't simply another activity added to your safari. Instead, it becomes the safari itself.

It is undeniably African. And the twist?

More often than not, there isn't actually a trail to follow. Well, not one built by people, anyway.

Instead, walkers traverse ancient wildlife paths carved out by generations of migrating animals, following seasonal riverbeds, well-worn game trails, and the boundaries of private concessions. No two days are the same. It becomes the perfect excuse to slow down, trust the

guide and let the bush decide where the journey leads.

While walking safaris exist in many forms across southern Africa, and Zambia is widely regarded as the birthplace of the modern walking safari, Zimbabwe has built a reputation as one of the continent's leading walking safari destinations. That reputation has very little to do with having more wildlife than its neighbours.

Instead, it comes down to the guides.

Zimbabwe's professional guiding qualification is widely regarded as one of the most demanding in Africa, often taking years to complete. Trainee guides spend countless hours on foot learning tracking, animal behaviour, ecology, first aid and bushcraft before qualifying to lead guests safely through areas home to dangerous game.

The rifle may be the first thing many travellers notice about the guides, though it's usually the least interesting thing about them.

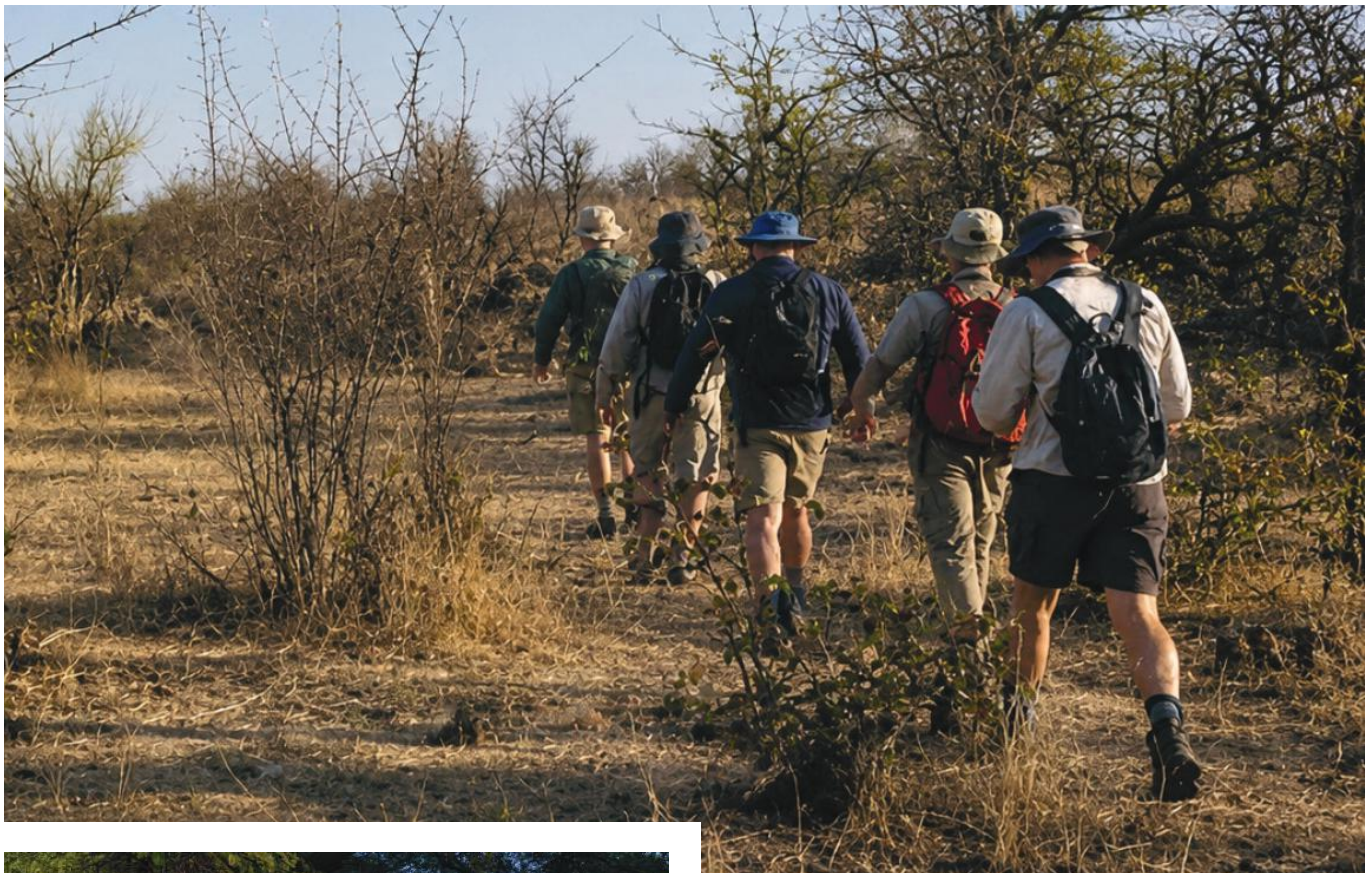
Every guide has their own soft spot for the wild. Some are exceptional trackers. Others can identify birds from a single call. Some notice the smallest details hidden beneath travellers' feet that everyone else walks straight past. Before long, they become far more than the person leading the trail. They become part of the experience itself.

And after two days deep into the Zimbabwean bush, guests are glad they're walking beside them.

Unlike a walking safari, which begins and ends at the same camp, a walking safari trail can last for days. It isn't just a short hike through the bush, but a carefully planned trek, allowing walkers to experience the landscape as it gradually changes around them.

The recently introduced Northern Hwange Walking Safari Trail combines these different landscapes into a multi-day journey between two private concessions, Hideaways Nantwich Lodge and Hideaways Bumbusi Wilderness Camp.





*Where the trail  
disappears,  
the true safari  
begins.*

Walking between private concessions comes with a rare sense of solitude. There are no queues of safari vehicles, no busy picnic sites and very few reminders that anyone else is nearby. It's simply the guest, the guide, and the game.

Unlike the open Kalahari sands that define much of southern Hwange, the northern section of the park is shaped by rugged hills, natural springs, ancient river systems, and remote areas that almost seem designed for exploring on foot.

Our trail begins in lion country around Hideaways Nantwich Lodge, where one of the few permanent water sources in

northern Hwange attracts elephants, buffalo and the predators that follow them.

Here, walkers begin learning the fundamentals of tracking and interpreting the landscape before gradually moving deeper into northern Hwange.

Following the Deka River, the scenery begins to change. Open woodland slowly gives way to rocky hills, natural springs, and landscapes few visitors to Hwange ever experience.

Eventually, the journey reaches Hideaways Bumbusi Wilderness Camp. While the trail may end here, the walking certainly doesn't.

Guided walks continue through a petrified forest or a hidden gorge, while the nearby Bumbusi National Monument preserves the remains of ancient Nambya settlements. San hunter-gatherer petroglyphs etched into sandstone cliffs remind visitors that people have been reading this landscape for thousands of years.

It is one of the few walking safari trails where wildlife, history and geology all become part of the same journey.

Private concessions are what make much of this possible. Unlike busier areas of many national parks, guides have the freedom to follow fresh spoor, adjust routes, and spend more time where the wildlife leads them. There are no queues waiting at sightings, no pressure to move on, and fewer people sharing the same sighting.

And as guests get lost in the bush, the pace changes completely. They decide when to stop. Whether it's to watch a herd of buffalo feeding quietly ahead, spend another few minutes listening to a bird call echoing through the trees, or simply take in the silence.

*So, the next time someone mentions a hike, don't be too quick to picture a clean-cut path. Because in Zimbabwe, if the trail can be seen clearly, it's probably the wrong one.*



# The Wild Path

WALK FROM NANTWICH TO BUMBUSI

• 8 nights •

Morning walks, afternoon game drives, and exploring Hwange's hides & histories along the way

## ILALA LODGE

1 Night Victoria Falls

- Begin your journey at Victoria Falls
- Relax before entering Hwange National Park

## HIDEAWAYS NANTWICH LODGE

3 Nights Hwange National Park

- Begin your walking safari with a private guide
- Morning walks learning to read tracks and signs
- Relaxed afternoons with wildlife viewing from the hide or game drives

## HIDEAWAYS BUMBUSI WILDERNESS CAMP

4 Nights Hwange National Park

- Continue on foot along the Deka River
- Spend afternoons at camp, sundowners, or game drives.
- On your final day, discover Bumbusi's ancient ruins, rocky gorges and petrified forests.

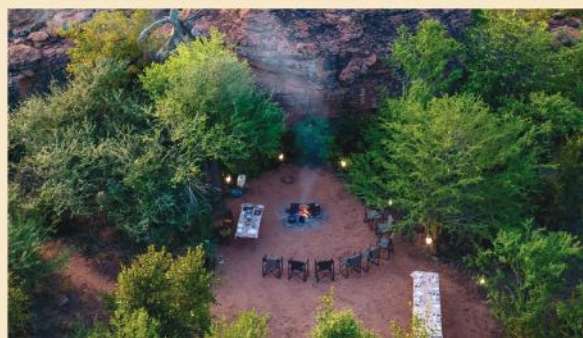
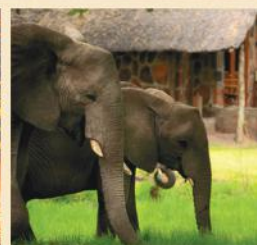
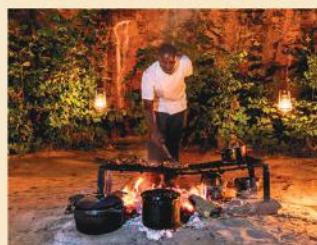
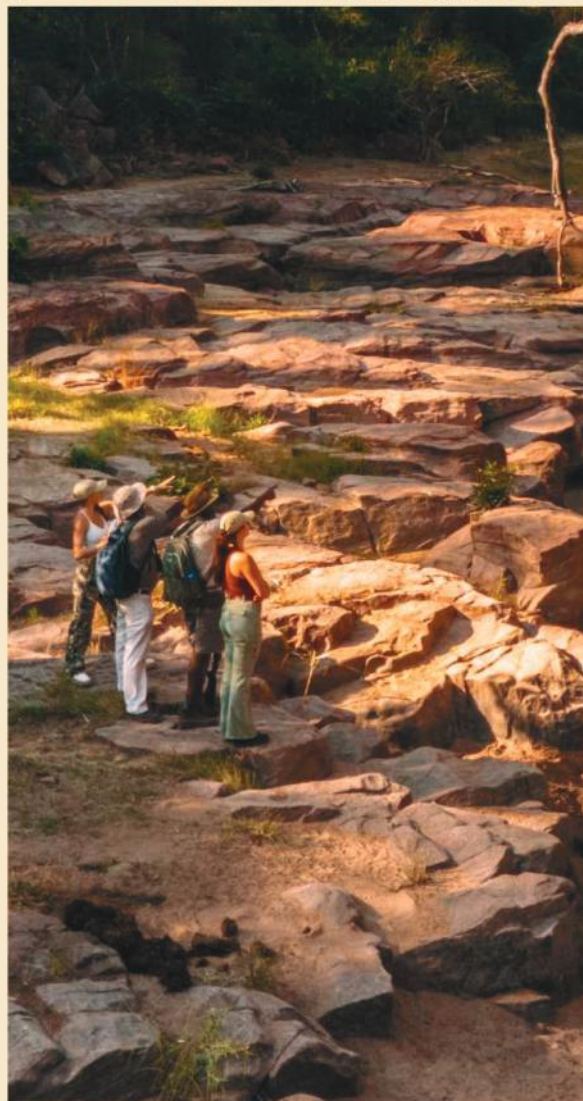
## WALK HWANGE NATIONAL PARK

Scan to visit our Northern Hwange  
Walking Safari Package



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PICS JACQUES MARAIS

# Wild Things. They Make my Heart Sing

## ABOVE: AMPHIBIAN EYE

**THE SHOT:** I saw this grey tree frog (*Hyla versicolor*) in my coffee mug just before pouring in boiling water – lucky escape for both of us! He obligingly posed for a close-up shot when I returned him to the vast Zambian riverine forest.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sony A7r5 & 50mm Sony f2.8 Macro – 1/160th sec @ f11; ISO 100

The Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools Transfrontier Conservation Area stretches between Zimbabwe and Zambia and must rate as one of Africa's wildest places. Jacques Marais captured the magic of this iconic ecosystem on a recent journey with Boundless Southern Africa.

The magnificent Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools TFCA (or Transfrontier Conservation Area) stretches along an untamed swathe of southern Africa's mighty Zambezi River, linking an iconic ecosystem extending across both Zambia and neighbouring Zimbabwe.

I recently experience this conservation space on a media trip with Boundless Southern Africa, a regional initiative promoting TFCAs as crucial cross-border tourism destinations. Supported by the

European Union and Germany, this helps create an economic driver for regional development and the funding of conservation.

For nearly two weeks, we dust-lined along 4x4 trails and hidden back roads from Lusaka, tracing the latte-brown Luangwa River to its confluence with the Zambezi. Through the magical shimmer of mountainous miombo woodland, snatches of mokoros, long-horned Nguni cattle and exuberant kids shuttered, as if in a retro 16mm film.

Our journey dog-legged southwards, with mopane plains and giant baobabs fading away in our rear-view mirror. Finally, the great, green-brown river revealed through dappled shadows of gnarled ana-apple trees, and we entered the ancient winter-thorn forests.

We transferred into boats to cruise the languid waterway, passing through Hell's Gate and the Mpata Gorge. This section of the Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools TFCA is as wild as the river gets, with mega-mammals, primal forests and adventures, covering anything from tracking game on foot or wild camping, to canoeing with Jurassic croc monsters.

When the sun sets, the Zambezi soundtrack fades up as a truly

epic African sound-cloud. The bass-line grunts of hippo tub-thump from muddy river wallows; uncomfortably close elephants snap branches just metres away from your tent; hyena whoops reverberate amidst ironstone outcrops...

Deep into the night, galagos screech in the high forest canopy, with the ominous bass chords of lion rumbling like thunder. You wait for dawn, and the distant echo of African fish eagle patrolling the scudding clouds, and realise these memories will never fade.

Unforgettable wilderness landscapes; the African Big Five, up close and personal; and the ability to immerse yourself in raw nature... this is any photographers' dream. This series of images capture some of my favourite moments from our time in the Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools Transfrontier Conservation Area.

For more information, visit [www.boundless-southernafrica.org](http://www.boundless-southernafrica.org)



**ABOVE: BIRDS OF A FEATHER**

**THE SHOT:** White-fronted bee-eaters (*Merops bullockoides*) flock together along the banks of the Zambezi River. They hunt insects from their small colony – a few dozen holes dug into the red-earth cliffs – and then perch on handy twigs as they wait for their next prey.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sony A7r5 & 70-200mm Sony Gmaster Lens – 1/300sec @ f5.6; ISO 100

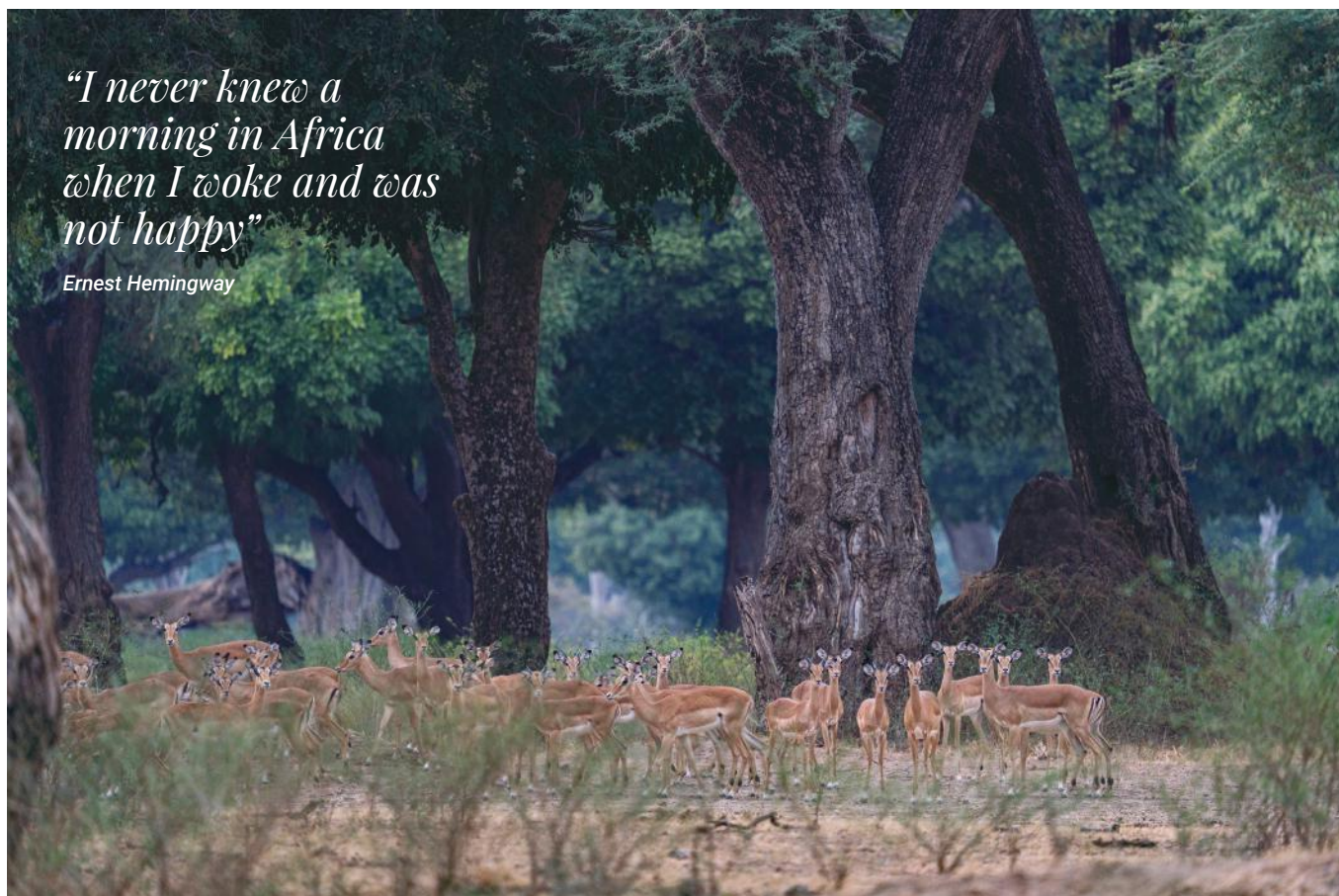
**BELOW: AVATAR HAZE**

**THE SHOT:** A herd of fleet-footed impala pauses in the 'blue hour' before dawn, alert in the shade of the tranquil winter-thorn forests. Overcast conditions cooled down the available light, bathing them in just enough of a suffused glow to comfortably shoot hand-held.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sony A7r5 & 150-600mm Sigma DG Sport – 1/320th sec @ f6.3; ISO 1600

*"I never knew a morning in Africa when I woke and was not happy"*

Ernest Hemingway





#### IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GIANTS

**THE SHOT:** A lone elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) bull approaches while out on a hike with guiding legend, Steve Bolnick. Steve and I followed this big tusker for nearly an hour, at times close enough to feel the vibration of his sub-sonic rumbling.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sony A7r5 & 150-600mm Sigma DG Sport  
– 1/400th sec @ f5; ISO 250



#### SIBLING SIMIANS

**THE SHOT:** Two chacma baboon (*Papio ursinus*) youngsters at play on the gnarled trunk of a winter-thorn (*Faidherbia albida*) tree. The albida seed pods make for a protein-rich snack for them, and most other animals in the Lower Zambezi TFCA. Their tag-and-chase game necessitated a fast shutter speed, so I bumped the ISO up to 800 for this photo.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sony A7r5 & 150-600mm Sigma DG Sport – 1/1000th sec @ f6.3; ISO 800



**JACQUES MARAIS** is a storyteller, poised in the no-man's land between photographer and author. He is a respected African outdoor photojournalist and has captured action sports and adventure destinations on five continents. Marais has authored a dozen-plus outdoor guides and travel books, is an award-winning photographer and regularly contributes features to premium publications in SA and abroad. Follow him on [@jacqmaraisphoto](#) or [www.jacquesmarais.co.za](#)



#### BILLION-STAR NIGHTS

**THE SHOT:** Camping Wild in Mana Pools National Park immerses you in Africa proper. Elephant and hippo wandered close to our tents, and we often heard spotted hyenas sniffing near our tents late at night.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sony A7r5 & 14mm Sony Gmaster f1.8 lens – 30sec @ f1.8; ISO 200

*In Conversation:*  
***Khulu's Zimbabwe***

There are conversations that fade into the background after a trade show, and then there are those that stay with you for years. *Tessa Buhrmann shares her memorable conversation with Cedric Wilde.*

I first met Cedric Wilde, affectionately known as Khulu, at Africa's Travel Indaba a few years ago. We chatted over a glass of wine, as one does when a busy day of travel trade meetings winds down. What struck me was not his success in tourism, nor the remarkable *Amalinda*

*Safari Collection* his family has built, but the grace and love with which he spoke about Zimbabwe. There was no bitterness in his voice. Instead, there was a quiet conviction that a person is not defined by what is taken from them, but by what they choose to build afterwards.

*To know my great-grandchildren  
can experience the Zimbabwe  
we've loved for generations is  
incredibly special.*

Kylie Loubser

It was a conversation that lingered, so when I had the opportunity to chat to Khulu again, I asked him to take me back to the moment everything changed.

---

"At that particular time I was devastated," he tells me. "I couldn't understand how it could happen to us after such a long period of believing everything was secure. Being told that we had to leave the farm was overwhelming."

He pauses before adding the sentence that would shape the rest of his life.

"I didn't want bitterness to kill me and turn me into a bitter old man," he says. "I've seen that happen to people. I knew I couldn't throw my life away because of what had happened."

Khulu had spent decades farming in Zimbabwe. His family's history in the country stretches back to 1872, and leaving was never a simple option.

"This was my home," he says. "I love the African people in our country. I could speak their language. I didn't feel it was worth going anywhere else."

Instead, he made a conscious decision.

"I'm not going to destroy my life over what's happened. There's too much history behind us."

That love – for the country, its people and its landscapes – never disappeared.

But what happened next is perhaps the most unexpected part of the story. He picked up a pair of running shoes.

"My daughter encouraged me to start long-distance running when I was sixty-five." He laughs softly. "I ended up completing two fifty-six-kilometre races."

For Khulu, those endless kilometres became something far greater than exercise.

"When you're running for that long, eventually the anger disappears. You simply can't carry it anymore. You slow down and start asking yourself, 'What is all this achieving?'"

Somewhere during those long, solitary runs, the decision became clear – to turn it into a positive.

His children gave him and his wife a home and welcomed them into the family's tourism business. Together, they began restoring a camp Khulu had built in Matopos in 1989. It was the first step in an unexpected new chapter, followed by the renovation of Ivory Lodge in Hwange National Park and, eventually, the creation of Khulu Bush Camp, named in his honour by his children.

In Ndebele, *khulu* means grandfather, and it quickly becomes clear how deeply that role matters to him.

Today, when he talks about the camps, he speaks less about business and more about the joy of watching travellers experience Zimbabwe for the first time.

"The most exciting thing for me is seeing international visitors in awe of the beauty of our land and the wildlife," he says. "That is what gives me happiness. We have something to pass on as a legacy."

For Khulu, safari has never simply been about wildlife. It's about sharing a way of life.

"It's the lifestyle we enjoyed that we wanted other people to experience," he explains. "The beauty of Zimbabwe, its wilderness, its people... that's what brings me the most joy now."

As we talk, the conversation shifts naturally from tourism and wildlife to family. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren are now experiencing the same landscapes that shaped previous generations.

Watching them discover elephants, lions and birds with the same sense of wonder that shaped earlier generations is,

he says, one of life's greatest rewards.

"To know they can experience the same country we've loved for generations... it's incredibly fulfilling," he says. "There will now be six generations in Zimbabwe. For them to experience the same things we have had is incredibly special."

That, I realise, is the heart of this story.

It is not a story about loss, although loss is part of it. It is a story about refusing to allow loss to become the final chapter. Khulu could have left Zimbabwe physically, but more importantly, he could have left it emotionally. He chose not to.

When I ask him what ultimately guided that choice, his answer is simple.

"Turn a negative into a massive positive."

As our conversation draws to a close, I think back to that first meeting at Indaba, and to the quiet optimism that stayed with me.

"My wife and I are so lucky to be in a situation like this at our age," he says. "We are blessed."

And that's perhaps the most remarkable thing of all: after everything he has endured, the word he chooses is blessed.

Looking back, I realise it wasn't the story of what Khulu had lost that stayed with me all these years. It was the way he chose to tell it. And perhaps that's the Zimbabwe I want readers to discover too – not only for its remarkable landscapes, but for the warmth, resilience and generosity of the people who have welcomed me there, time and again.

[www.amalindacollection.com](http://www.amalindacollection.com)

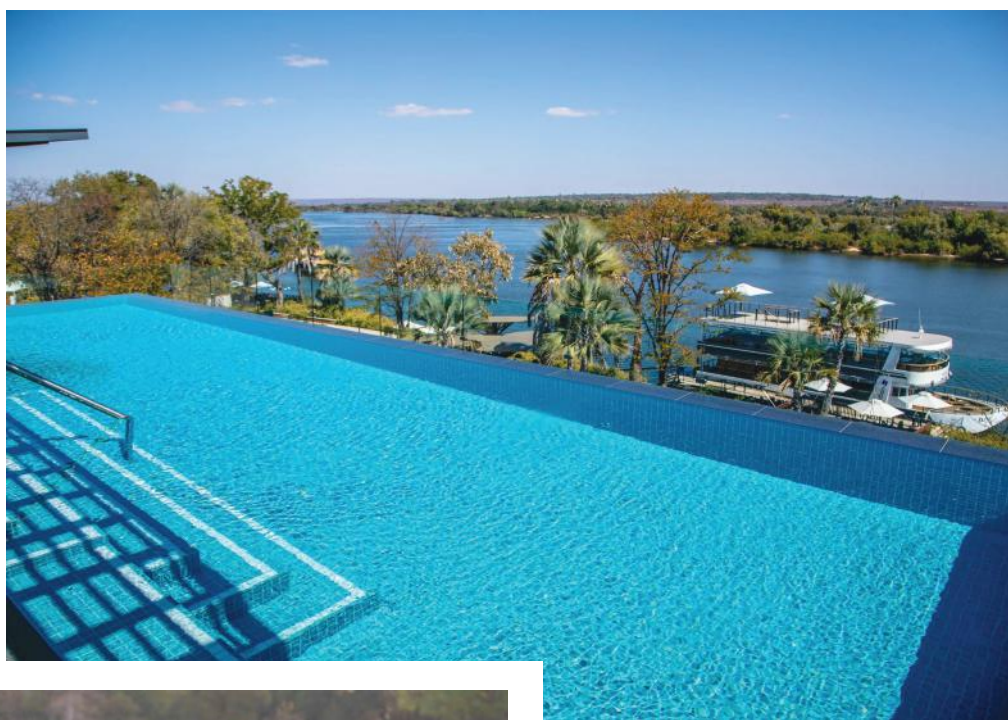


PICS SUPPLIED

# *Where Wilderness Meets Water:*

## **SOUTHERN AFRICA'S MOST STUNNING SAFARI POOLS**

Safari isn't only about the 5am wake-up call. Kim Barnett discovers that sometimes it's floating in a pool while elephants wander past or claiming your spot poolside with a well-earned gin and tonic. Across Southern Africa, these safari lodge pools are part of the experience, where the pace slows, the views steal the show, and leaving becomes the hardest part.

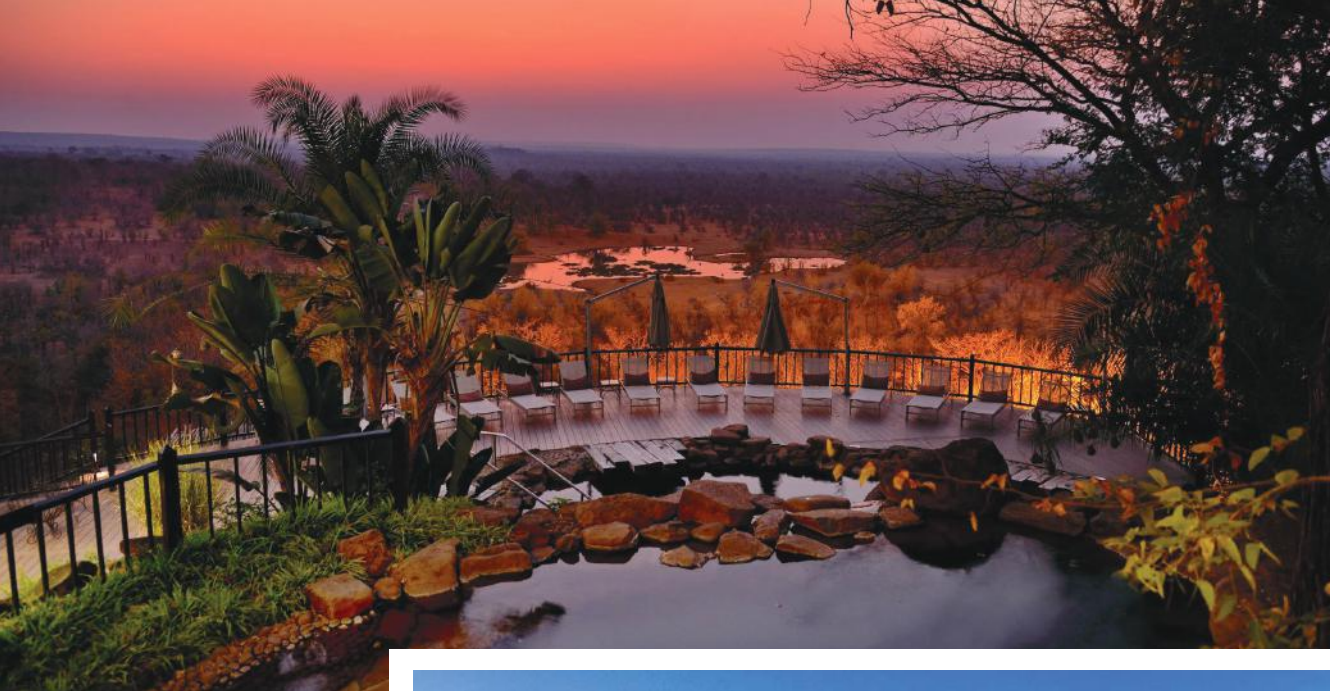


*MAIN: Old Drift Lodge.*

*TOP RIGHT: Kafunta River Lodge.*

*MIDDLE: Radisson Blu Mosi-oa-Tunya*

*BOTTOM: Chikunto Safaris*



**ABOVE:**  
Victoria Falls  
Safari Lodge

**RIGHT:**  
Matobo Hills Lodge



### HOT SPRINGS AND INFINITY VIEWS AT KAFUNTA RIVER LODGE

*South Luangwa National Park, Zambia*

Kafunta River Lodge's natural hot tub is fed by a geothermal spring, creating a rare safari experience where warm mineral waters meet the wild. Set on an elevated deck overlooking the bush, it's the perfect place to unwind after a day in South Luangwa.

Below, the spillover pool often attracts hippos, drawn to the warmth, while the occasional cheeky baboon has been known to take a winter dip. Pair this with the lodge's infinity pool and sweeping views, and you have a spot that's as entertaining as it is restorative.

### A ZAMBEZI RIVER INFINITY POOL AT RADISSON BLU MOSI-OA-TUNYA

*Livingstone, Zambia*

Set along the banks of the Zambezi, the heated infinity pool at Radisson Blu Mosi-oa-Tunya is all about wide-open views and easy luxury. Overlooking the river and Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, it's a place to slow down between activities, whether that's a morning dip before heading to Victoria Falls or an afternoon spent under shaded pergolas. The pool sits alongside the Amani Spa, making it easy to move between swim and treatment. With the river flowing past and wildlife never far away, it's a polished, comfortable base with a strong sense of place.

### POOLSIDE WILDLIFE VIEWING AT VICTORIA FALLS SAFARI LODGE

*Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe*

At Victoria Falls Safari Lodge, the pool overlooks one of the region's most active waterholes, turning a simple swim into a front-row wildlife experience. Elephants, buffalo, kudu and more gather here throughout the day, often within easy view from the water's edge. You'll often spot sounders of warthogs making their way in too.

And yes, now you know that the collective noun for a group of warthogs is a sounder.

Elevated above the surrounding bush, the safari lodge pool setting offers uninterrupted views and golden sunsets that

stretch across the horizon. It's an easy place to spend time between activities, especially after a visit to the Falls, with the added bonus that you don't need to leave your lounge to feel part of the action.

### AN INVITING SWIM AT CHIKUNTO SAFARIS

*South Luangwa National Park, Zambia*

Just 50km from the Mfuwe gate, Chikunto Safaris sits along the Big Bend of the Luangwa River, with its pool perfectly positioned to take it all in. From the water, you're looking out over a busy stretch of river and floodplain, with the Chikunto Waterhole drawing in elephant, buffalo, waterbuck, puku and giraffe throughout the day.

The setting makes it easy to lose track of time, whether you're watching the movement unfold or simply cooling off between activities. For something more active, the counter-current system turns the pool into a surprisingly good workout.

#### TAKE A DIP AT MATOBO HILLS LODGE

*Matobo National Park, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*

Set within the UNESCO-listed Matobo Hills, just 55 minutes from Bulawayo, this family-owned lodge is defined by its setting. The pool is built into the granite at the base of a kopje, looking out across the Maleme Valley and the balancing rock formations the Matobo National Park is known for.

It's a quiet, grounding place to cool off between activities, whether that's rhino tracking, exploring rock art sites or walking through the hills. The simplicity of the design lets the landscape do the talking, making this less about the pool itself and more about where it places you.

#### POOLSIDE ELEPHANT ENCOUNTERS AT NKASA LUPALA TENTED LODGE

*Lupala National Park, Zambezi Region, Namibia*

Built on the banks of one of the many channels of the Kwando–Linyanti river system, Nkasa Lupala Tented Lodge sits

in a unique wetland corner of northern Namibia, within Nkasa Rupara National Park. From the lodge's pool, the setting feels completely open to the surrounding floodplains, with wildlife moving through at a steady pace.

Elephants are regular visitors, particularly in the dry winter months from June to October, when they come down to drink and cross between channels. Buffalo, hippo and birdlife add to the scene, making this a place where a simple swim often comes with more than you bargained for.

#### PRIVATE PLUNGE POOLS OVER THE ZAMBEZI AT OLD DRIFT LODGE

*Zambezi National Park, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe*

Set on the river's edge of the Zambezi National Park, Old Drift Lodge offers a blend of classic safari style and riverfront setting. The lodge features ten double suites and four family suites, each with a private plunge pool overlooking the Zambezi, making it easy to slip between game drives and complete stillness.

From your deck, the river moves steadily below, with

uninterrupted views that come into their own at sunset. Between activities like river exploration, gorge adventures or even a full moon dinner, the pool becomes a natural pause point, private, spacious and firmly connected to the setting.

Start your morning with a coffee overlooking the river, watching the first rays of sunlight burn away the mist. Or, for an equally memorable start to the day, head out onto the Zambezi, where the river slowly comes to life as birds begin to call and wildlife stirs along the banks.

#### RIM-FLOW POOL ON THE RIVER'S EDGE AT ZAMBEZI DUSK LODGE

*Livingstone, Zambia*

Just 30 minutes from Victoria Falls, Zambezi Dusk Lodge offers

a peaceful retreat away from the bustle of town. Villa Zambezi features a private rim-flow pool overlooking the wild, untouched banks of the river, directly across from Zambezi National Park.

From the pool, watch animals move along the shoreline and take in the richness of birdlife that defines this stretch of the river. Early mornings are particularly special, with mist lifting gently off the water, while golden hour brings a warm glow across the river's edge. With guided river tours, spa treatments and a stocked bar on hand, the pace is entirely your own.

For more info:



<https://africaseden.travel/>



ABOVE: Nkasa Lupala

LEFT: Zambezi Dusk



**TOP:**  
Zambezi at Matetsi  
River Lodge

**BOTTOM LEFT:**  
Kavinga Safari Camp

**BOTTOM RIGHT:**  
Mawimbi Bush Camp



## CLIFFSIDE POOL AT KAVINGA SAFARI CAMP

*Mana Pools, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe*

Just 8 km from the renowned Chitake Spring, Kavinga Safari Camp is a small,

16-bedded semi-tented camp set in one of the most remote corners of Mana Pools. The cliffside pool overlooks the Ruckomechi riverbed and Zambezi escarpment, with wide views across a landscape known for its density of wildlife. Below, the waterhole regularly draws large herds of elephant and buffalo, often visible from the pool itself. Between swims, guests can make use of nearby hides for close-up sightings or simply stay put and watch the movement unfold. It's a dramatic

setting, but one that still feels quiet, wild and removed from everything else.

## PRIVATE POOLS WITH ELEPHANT VIEWS AT MATETSI RIVER LODGE

*Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe*

At Matetsi River Lodge, every Luxury River Suite, Family Suite and the exclusive River House features its own private plunge pool overlooking the Zambezi. From your deck, elephants frequently move along the riverbanks, often within clear view, adding to the sense of immersion that defines a stay here.

For those wanting a larger swim, the main 20-metre lap pool also looks out over the river, offering the same calm setting with more

space to unwind. Whether private or shared, the pools here are less about spectacle and more about quiet connection to the river and the wildlife it draws in.

## OFF-GRID LUXURY PLUNGE POOLS AT MAWIMBI BUSH CAMP

*Kafue National Park, Zambia*

Nestled between the Kafue River and surrounding wetlands, Mawimbi Bush Camp offers a more intimate, off-grid take on safari. The plunge pools here are designed to blend into the natural setting, offering a quiet place to cool off while taking in views of the surrounding channels and floodplains.

It's a slower pace of stay, where time is spent reconnecting with the environment and stepping

away from the distractions of everyday life. Between activities, the pool becomes a simple but effective retreat, cool, private and perfectly in tune with the stillness of the bush.

*We'd go to great depths to find a worthwhile swimming spot, and hopefully we've helped you find your next one. Let your surroundings guide you, whether it's ancient rock formations, wide-open views or wildlife gathering at the water's edge. It might be a quick dip or a long pause with a drink in hand. Either way, it's all part of the experience.*

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Bill Carte, Founder; 1941



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