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EGYPT EXTERNAL

Exploring the Land of Legends



Luxor Temple, Egypt

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INSIDE

Close to Home
Short Breaks, Big Recharge: The Rise of the Micro-escape

Safari, Reimagined
Embracing the Quiet Magic of Madikwe

Time For a Reset
Unwind at Renosterbos Private Nature Reserve

Culinary Detours
Slow, Soulful Dining in South Africa's Small Towns

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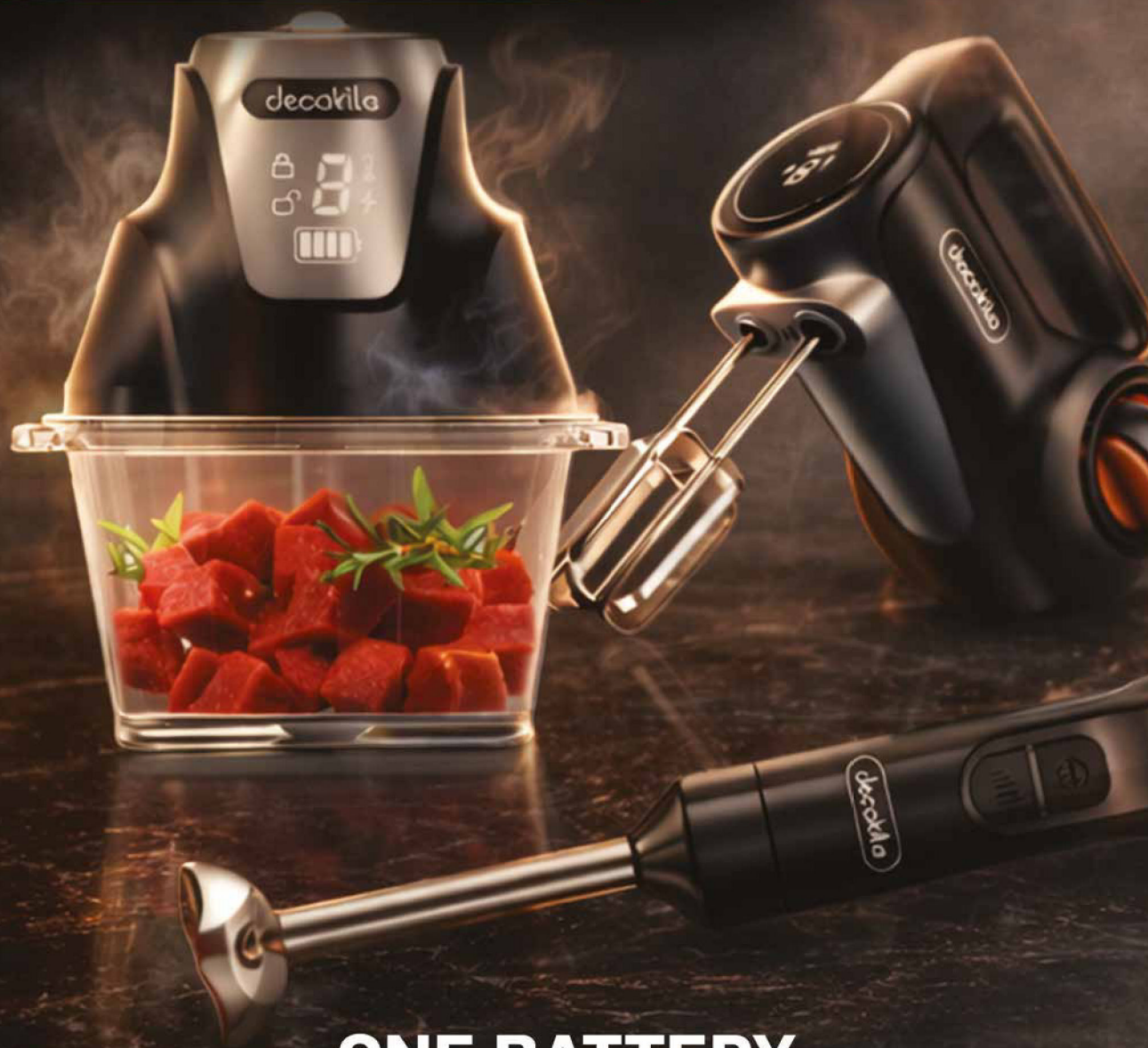


ONE BATTERY
ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

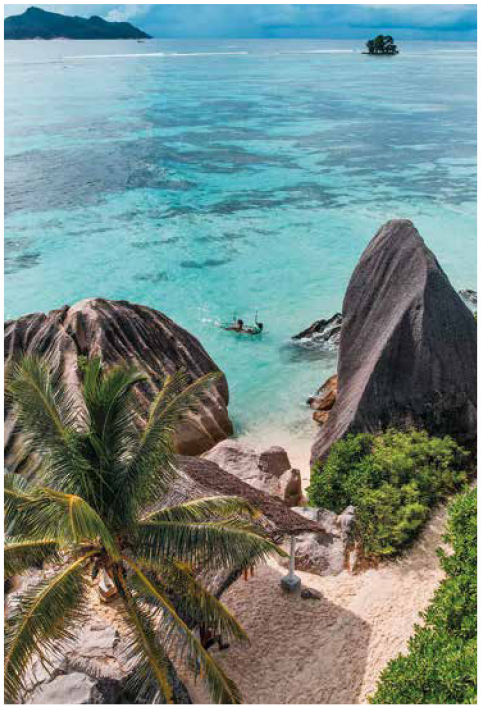
16V

1 BATTERY PLATFORM





The Seychelles Islands









the Seychelles islands Another world

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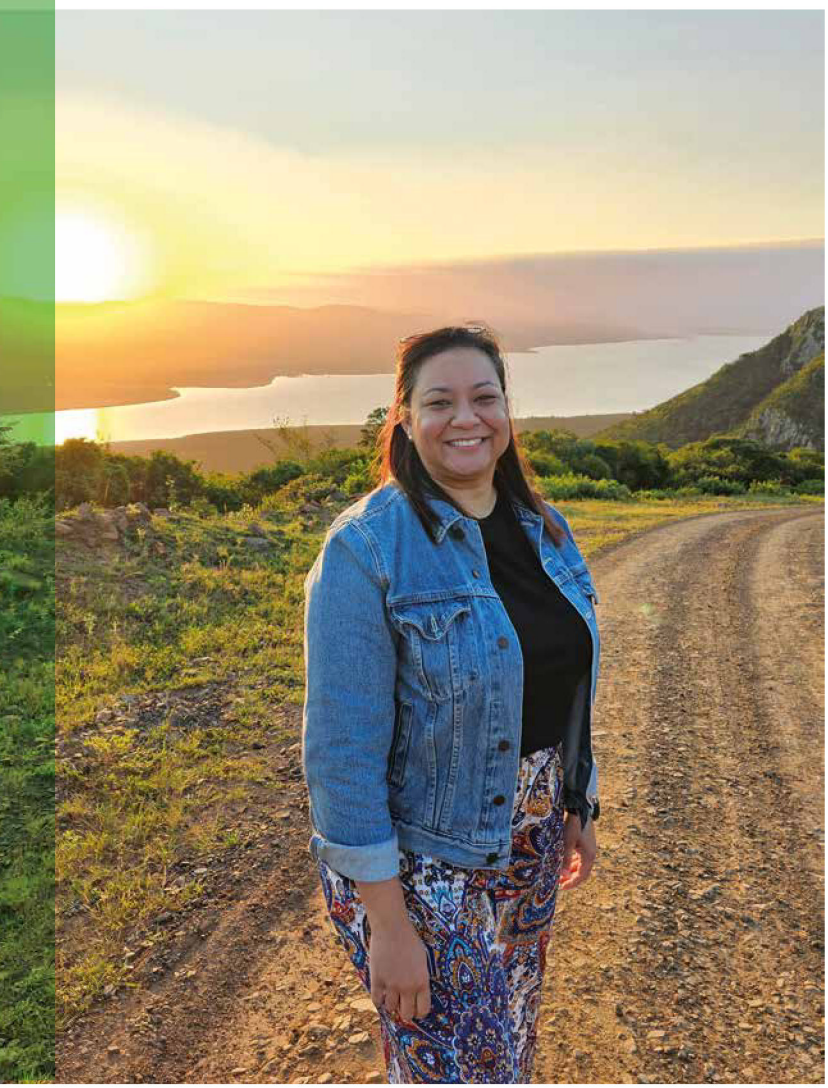
THE SCENIC ROUTE

SLOW DOWN, BE MORE PRESENT, AND ALLOW THE JOURNEY TO SURPRISE YOU AS MUCH AS THE DESTINATION



Allowing the road to guide you to unanticipated destinations is one of life's greatest gifts.

It's that curious time of year when summer is still whispering goodbye, yet winter hasn't quite made its entrance. For me, this period invites both reflection and adventure, and the ideal opportunity to pack a bag, grab a notebook and see the familiar through a new lens.

Travel, near or far, has a way of revealing the unexpected. From hidden towns where creativity bubbles in the most unlikely corners, to quiet lodges where the only thing you need to do is breathe. There's no denying that there's a certain joy in slowing down and letting the road lead you. To discover a local winery tucked away in a valley, a sunset over a lagoon framed by mountains, or a street mural that sparks a whole conversation. These are the moments that linger long after the journey ends.

It's not just about the sights. People everywhere are reshaping travel in thoughtful ways: Restaurateurs championing local produce, guides uncovering stories that rarely make the headlines, and adventurers finding joy in challenges that push them out of their comfort zones. They remind us that travel isn't always about moving from A to B; instead, it's about noticing the textures, tastes and tales along the way.

Even for those of us navigating busy schedules or working remotely, travel is a reset we can't underestimate. A short escape, even if it's just an overnight stay somewhere nearby, a walk along a lesser-known coastline, or exploring a new neighbourhood in your own city, can recharge your curiosity and creativity. It doesn't need to be extravagant; it just needs to make you see the world a little differently.

So whether you're planning an adventure or simply dreaming from your armchair with a cup of tea in hand, there's always a moment to discover something new. Travel, after all, isn't just about places; it's about experiences, connections, and the joy of finding wonder where you least expect it.

MEGAN

MEGAN PAULSE

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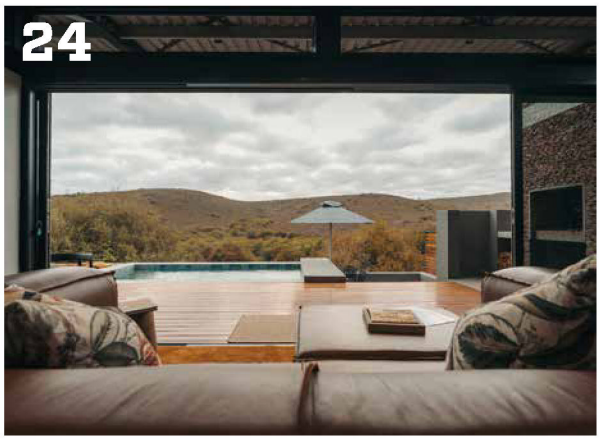
Contents

APR/MAY 2026









UPFRONT

005 The Editor
The importance of slowing down and enjoying the journey as much as the destination

008 Contributors
From the shores of Camps Bay to the banks of the Nile, our team brings you the best travelling tales

011 What's On
This month's not-to-miss events

BRIEFS

015 Snapshot
A peek into the Gasa Tshechu festival

016 Here & Now
ACSA airports win big

018 First Person
Meet multi-award-winning storyteller Ntokozo Mbuli

022 Fun Facts
Fascinating, quirky travel facts

024 Small Towns
Recharge at Renosterbos Private Nature Reserve

030 The Thread
Catching a flight or going for gold?

032 Gear
Campsite comforts you didn't know you needed

034 Oliver's Travels
Parks and pubs in the heart of inner-city London

DESPATCHES

036 Off the Beaten Plate
Small towns make big culinary waves

040 A Stone's Throw Away
Time out at Morea House, Autograph Collection in Camps Bay

PHOTOGRAPHY

048 Life, Observed
Nadine Leonard recaptures the awe of nature

TRAVEL

058 The Last Laugh
Nsefu's new hyena queen

064 Closer to Home, Far From Ordinary
The rise of micro-escapes

074 Magical Madikwe
A place to discover much more than you anticipated

080 The Road to Stillness
Let the Ford Ranger Wildtrak X drive you to stillness at Mosaic Lagoon Lodge

084 Riding the Wind
Adrenaline thrills in Mauritius

090 Sailing Through Time
Taking in Egypt's ancient wonders

WIN

095 Subscribe and Win
Stand a chance to win a Cape Winelands holiday valued at over R25 900

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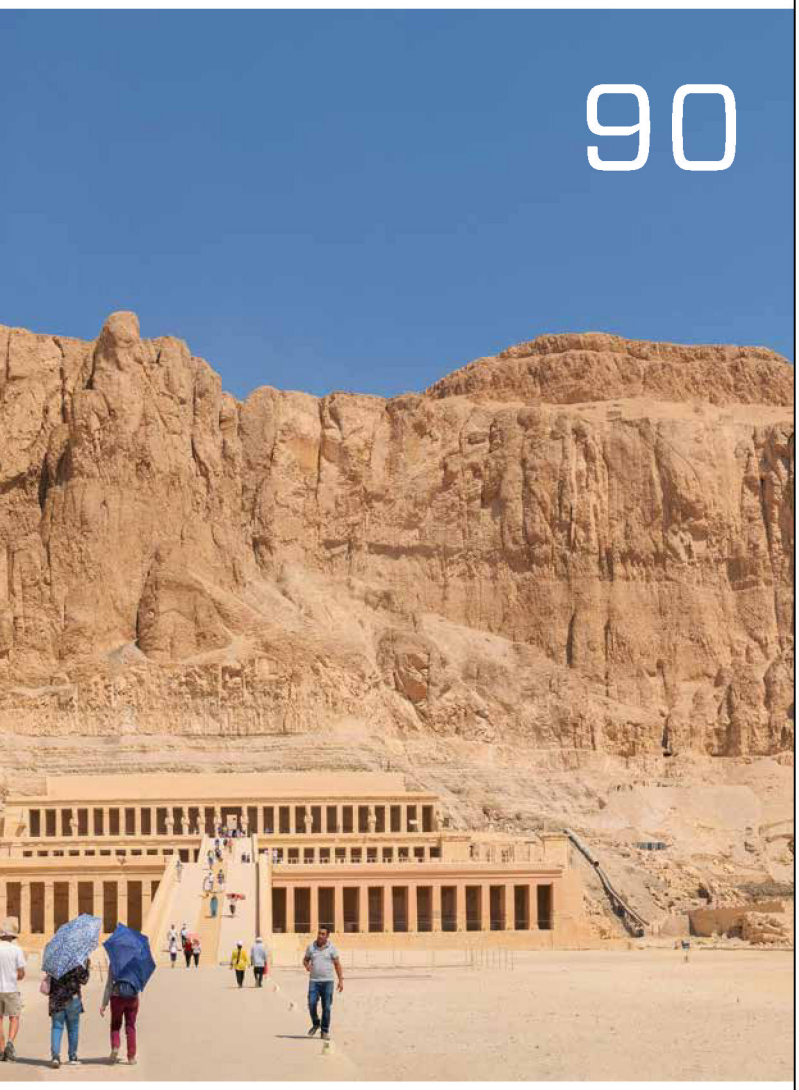

PHOTOGRAPHY CLIFFORD ROBERTS/CANON, UNSPLASH, COURTESY CABIN FEVER ESCAPES **COVER PHOTO** ISTOCKPHOTO/ANTON ALEKSENKO

SUBSCRIBE

103 Never miss an issue of your favourite magazine

BACK PAGES

104 World Wide Weird
Strange but true travel news from online

106 Final Shot
By Photographer Nadine Leonard

ON OUR COVER

Luxor Temple, Egypt

Getaway

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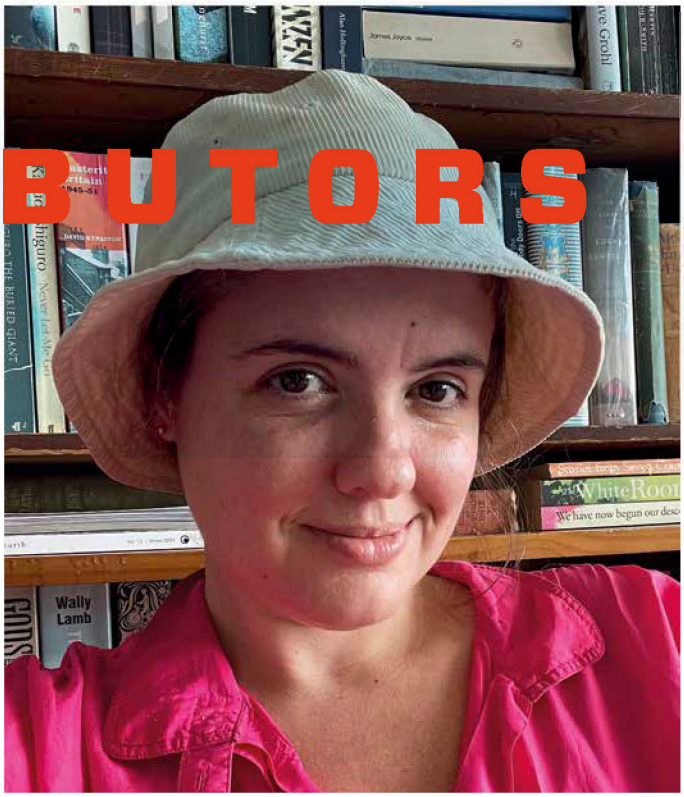
Sophie Baker
OFF THE BEATEN PLATE (P36)
Sophie Baker is a Johannesburg-based travel writer focused on African destinations and food-driven stories. She also enjoys horse riding, chasing good ramen and exploring new countries. She's written for *Condé Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, AFAR, Time Out* and more.



Clifford Roberts
MAGICAL MADIKWE (P74)
His formative years in France with adventurous parents set Clifford Roberts on a lifelong path to explore the world. The travel urge, combined with his frustratingly short attention span, has taken him on many wild adventures, from riding the roof of a taxi to Kin Pun Sakhan in Burma to dodging bullets while camping on an island of the Paris Boulevard Périphérique. He has searched for foxes in the Icelandic wilderness and trekked the Tierra del Fuego. At the heart of these pursuits is a voracious interest in people, cultures and nature. He lives in Cape Town with his journalist wife, Maryke, where he gardens, bakes, occasionally distils, and tinkers with pickles and preserves.

CONTRIBUTORS

Shai Rama
CLOSER TO HOME, FAR FROM ORDINARY (P64)
Johannesburg-based Shai Rama writes about all things design, lifestyle and travel. His work has featured in publications such as *House & Garden, Mail & Guardian* and *Nataal*. When not travelling or writing, he's watching or playing soccer, working on creative projects, or judging the city's restaurants by their interior design.





Cayleigh Bright
A STONE'S THROW AWAY (P40)
Cayleigh Bright, a writer, editor and copy consultant based in Durban, visits Cape Town to explore the details of the Autograph Collection's new property, Morea House, in Camps Bay. Over the past year, she's been busy with various copywriting projects and collaborations, particularly for Design Week South Africa and the Investec Cape Town Art Fair. Despite her demanding schedule, she still makes time to enjoy pasta, baked goods, good books, podcasts and leisurely hikes (or, even better, walks through the city). Additionally, she's working on expanding her free library project, as featured on fairsocial.

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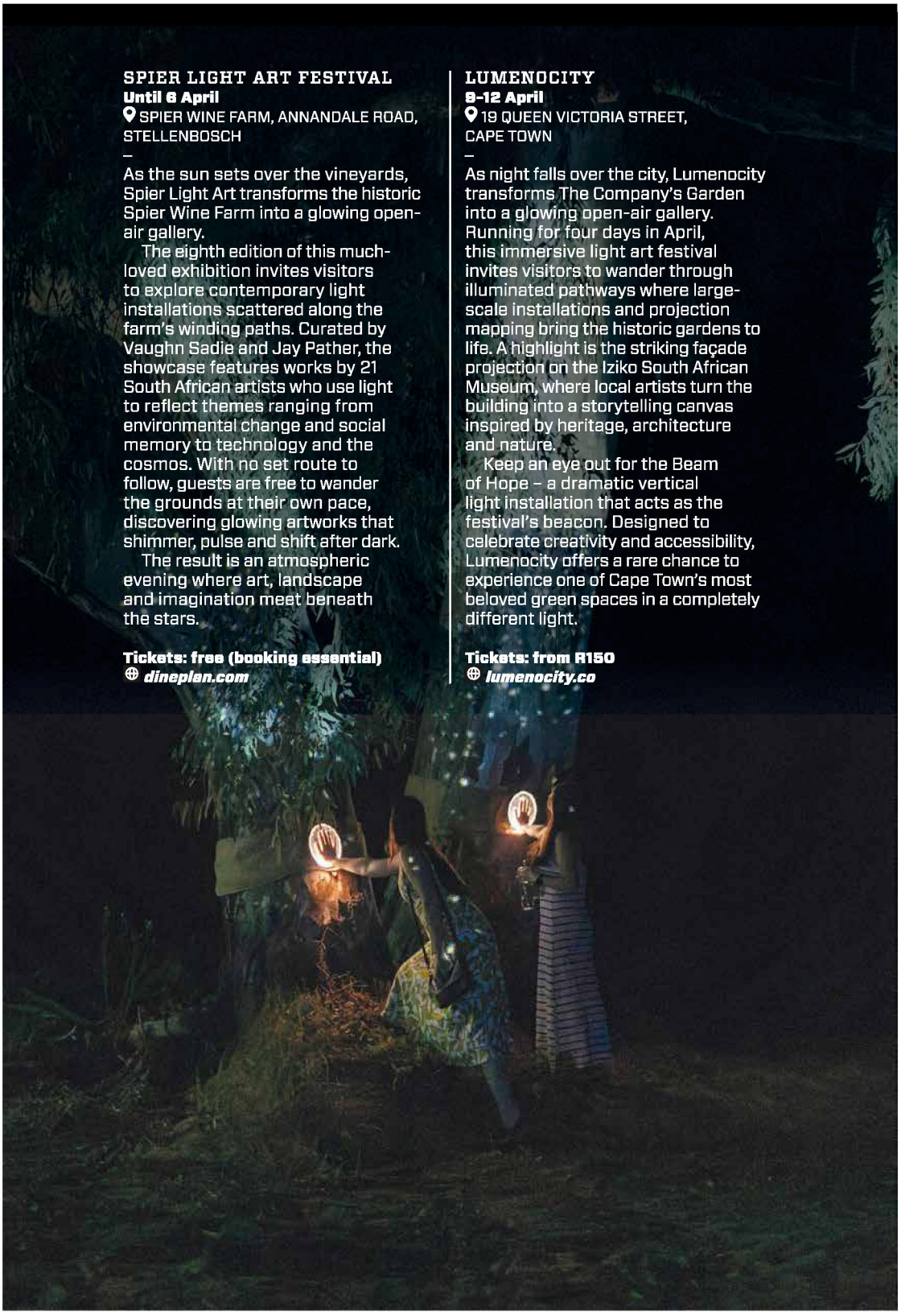


SPIER LIGHT ART FESTIVAL

Until 6 April

SPIER WINE FARM, ANNANDALE ROAD, STELLENBOSCH

–

As the sun sets over the vineyards, Spier Light Art transforms the historic Spier Wine Farm into a glowing open-air gallery.

The eighth edition of this much-loved exhibition invites visitors to explore contemporary light installations scattered along the farm's winding paths. Curated by Vaughn Sadie and Jay Pather, the showcase features works by 21 South African artists who use light to reflect themes ranging from environmental change and social memory to technology and the cosmos. With no set route to follow, guests are free to wander the grounds at their own pace, discovering glowing artworks that shimmer, pulse and shift after dark.

The result is an atmospheric evening where art, landscape and imagination meet beneath the stars.

Tickets: free (booking essential)
dineplan.com

LUMENOCITY

8–12 April

19 QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, CAPE TOWN

–

As night falls over the city, Lumenocity transforms The Company's Garden into a glowing open-air gallery. Running for four days in April, this immersive light art festival invites visitors to wander through illuminated pathways where large-scale installations and projection mapping bring the historic gardens to life. A highlight is the striking façade projection on the Iziko South African Museum, where local artists turn the building into a storytelling canvas inspired by heritage, architecture and nature.

Keep an eye out for the Beam of Hope – a dramatic vertical light installation that acts as the festival's beacon. Designed to celebrate creativity and accessibility, Lumenocity offers a rare chance to experience one of Cape Town's most beloved green spaces in a completely different light.

Tickets: from R150
lumenocity.co



LIEFDE BY DIE DAM

18 April

EMMARENTIA DAM, OLIFANTS ROAD, EMMARENTIA, RANDBURG

–

Celebrate a decade of Afrikaans music at Liefde by die Dam, one of South Africa's biggest open-air music festivals.

Taking place at Emmarentia Dam, this much-loved event brings thousands of people together for a full day of live performances in a relaxed lakeside setting. The 10-year celebration features a stellar line-up, including Die Heuwels Fantasties, Early B, Mango Groove, Jack Parow and Fokofpolisiekar, among others. Expect a vibrant atmosphere filled with sing-along favourites and feel-good energy.

Pack sunscreen, a hat and a jacket for the day outdoors, and bring along a blanket to relax on the grass – you can donate it to the Liefde Wen initiative to support those in need after the festival.

Tickets: from R220
ticketmaster.co.za

COMIC CON CAPE TOWN

30 April - 3 May

CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE (CTICC 2), CONVENTION SQUARE, 1 LOWER LONG STREET, CAPE TOWN

–

Pop culture fans, gamers and comic lovers can look forward to four days of immersive fun at Comic Con Cape Town, returning to the Mother City this April.

Taking place at Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC 2), the city's biggest pop-culture and gaming festival returns with an action-packed programme. Expect everything from comic books and collectable merchandise to esports, gaming demos, film experiences and cosplay. The event celebrates creativity and self-expression, welcoming fans of every fandom to connect with like-minded communities and explore the latest in geek culture.

Whether you're browsing artist stalls, sampling festival food or spotting incredible costumes, there's plenty to keep you entertained all day.

Tickets: from R230
comicconafrica.co.za

MARBLE FAMILY FESTIVAL

9-10 May

JAMES & ETHEL GRAY PARK, EDGEWOOD AVENUE AND MELROSE STREET, MELROSE, JOHANNESBURG

–

This whimsical event, created by the team behind Marble Circus, invites visitors of all ages to explore a lively festival filled with creativity, food and entertainment. Younger children can enjoy the soft and sparkly play spaces in the dedicated 0–6 zone, while older kids and teens dive into music, sport and tech-inspired fun in the adventure zones. Throughout the day, roaming characters and performances at the Marble Forest Theatre Stage add a magical touch.

When it's time to refuel, the tasting stations offer everything from sweet treats to gourmet bites crafted by some of South Africa's favourite chefs.

Tickets: from R400 (free for children under two)
magicmarblefamilyfest.com

ABSA RUN YOUR CITY CAPE TOWN 10K

10 May

WOODBRIDGE ISLAND, CAPE TOWN

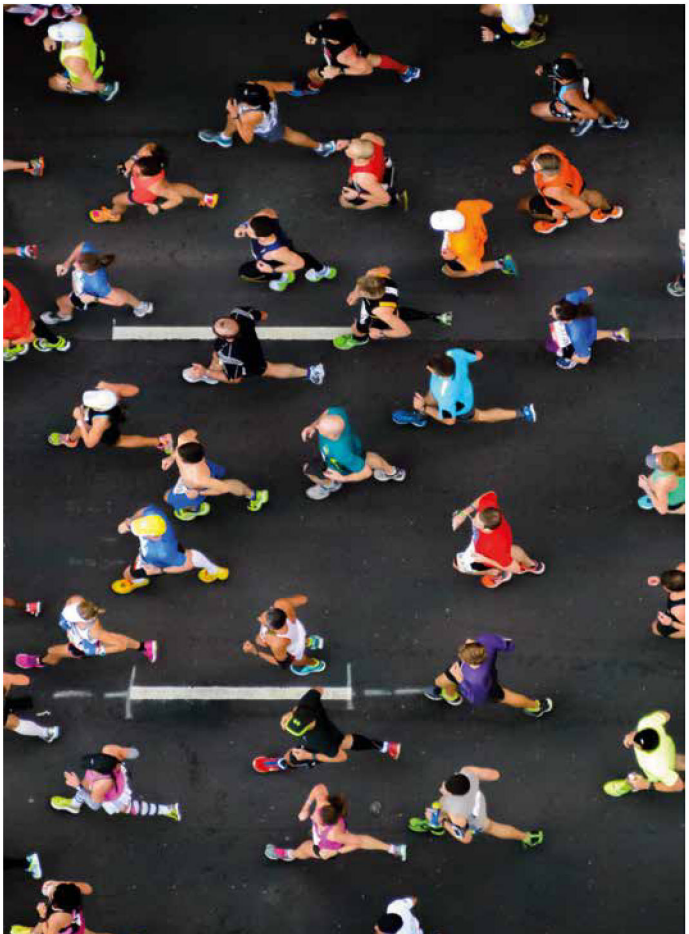
–

Absa Run Your City Cape Town 10K, is one of the Mother City's most popular running races.

The route starts near Woodbridge Island and guides runners along the coastline towards the striking backdrop of Table Mountain. Known for its fast, flat course, the race is ideal for both seasoned runners chasing a personal best and casual participants keen to soak up Cape Town's energy on foot. Along the way, local performing arts groups add to the festive atmosphere, making the route feel like a moving street celebration.

The morning begins with a convenient shuttle from the CBD to the start line, setting the tone for a memorable day outdoors in the city.

Tickets: from R255
runyourcityseries.com



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SNAPSHOT

WHERE ON EARTH?



A Festival Above the Clouds

Held at the historic Gasa Dzong, officially known as Gasa Tashi Thongmön Dzong, in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, the annual Gasa Tshechu is a vibrant three-day celebration of faith and culture. Each spring, hundreds of locals and travellers gather to watch sacred mask dances (cham), folk performances and rituals believed to bring blessings. Colourful traditional dress, music and communal feasting transform the remote mountain fortress into a joyful spiritual gathering.

TAKING TOP HONOURS

SEVERAL ACSA-OPERATED AIRPORTS HAVE BEEN NAMED AMONG AFRICA'S BEST

Airports operated by Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) have achieved outstanding recognition at the 2025 Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Customer Experience Awards, the world's leading global benchmarking system for airport passenger satisfaction. The awards are based on real-time feedback from passengers at over 400 airports in more than 110 countries, providing a robust measure of service quality and operational excellence.

Delivered annually by ACI World, the awards are based on data collected through ASQ's globally standardised Departures and Arrivals Surveys, capturing real, in-journey passenger experiences at airports worldwide.

This year, multiple ACSA airports were celebrated across a range of categories, reflecting excellence in both operational performance and passenger experience. Bram Fischer International Airport (Bloemfontein), Upington International Airport and Chief Dawid Stuurman International Airport (Gqeberha) were recognised as Africa's best airports in departures among airports serving under two million passengers, with Chief Dawid Stuurman International Airport earning accolades for having the most dedicated staff and providing the easiest journey in Africa.

Among the larger airports, Cape Town International Airport received multiple honours for departures among airports serving between five million and 15 million passengers, as well as for offering the easiest, most enjoyable, and cleanest airport experience in Africa. King Shaka International Airport was recognised as one of the continent's most enjoyable airports. Collectively, these awards highlight the consistent and passenger-focused excellence across ACSA's network, from smaller regional hubs to the country's largest international gateways.

'The ASQ Customer Experience Awards place ACSA-run airports among the best in Africa and recognise our teams' high standards,' said Fani Mphaphuli, the acting group executive of operations management at ACSA. 'They reflect our commitment to making every passenger's journey smooth, safe and enjoyable, no matter the size of the airport.'



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY SUPPLIED



With global air traffic projected to reach 10.2 billion passengers in 2026, these accolades emphasise the critical role airports play in delivering consistent service, despite increasing pressure on infrastructure and operations.

'Being honoured with an ASQ Customer Experience Award by ACI highlights Airports Company South Africa's commitment to understanding and continuously enhancing the end-to-end passenger experience. This achievement highlights ACSA's role in delivering reliable, high-quality experiences in airports,' said Justin Erbacci, the director general of ACI World.

ACSA has a notable history of achievements at the ASQ Customer Experience Awards. Some of its previous wins include Cape Town International Airport being consistently recognised as Africa's Leading Airport and taking multiple wins in the Best Airport by Size and Region category.

Bram Fischer International Airport and George Airport placed first in the Best Airports by Size and Region Category in 2024. Additionally, George Airport won a Special Category Award for Easiest Airport Journey in Africa.

Additionally, O.R. Tambo International Airport has been a frequent winner for achieving excellence in governance, efficiency and service levels and has also been recognised in various categories, including Best Airport by Size and Region. King Shaka International Airport has previously been awarded for having the best airport staff and being the best regional airport in Africa.

'As we implement upgrades across all ACSA-operated airports, our focus remains on creating seamless, safe and reliable journeys for all passengers,' concluded Fani.

THE WINNERS

Bram Fischer International Airport:
Best Airports at Departures: Under Two Million Passengers in Africa
Upington International Airport:
Best Airports at Departures: Under Two Million Passengers in Africa
Chief Dawid Stuurman International Airport:
Best Airports at Departures: Under Two Million Passengers in Africa
Best Airports: Most Dedicated Staff in Africa
Best Airports: Easiest Airport Journey in Africa
King Shaka International Airport:
Best Airports: Most Enjoyable in Africa
Cape Town International Airport:
Best Airports at Departures: Five Million to 15 Million Passengers in Africa; Best Airports: Easiest Airport Journey in Africa; Best Airports Most Enjoyable in Africa; Best Airports: Cleanest Airport in Africa

BY ANY OTHER NAME

THROUGH *THE SPOKEN LAND*, A PROJECT FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, NTOKOZO MBULI – A TELEVISION AND FILM STORYTELLER AND MULTI-AWARD-WINNING FACTUAL PRODUCER – SHARES THE UNTOLD STORIES OF SOUTH AFRICA'S PEOPLE AND ENVIRONMENT

Words **Lisa Abdellah**



South Africans consider themselves a racial, ethnic, cultural or language group first. My late father didn't watch the SABC's environmental programme, *50/50*, for the first five years I was on it. His reason was that I presented in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor. He was Swazi, while my mother is Xhosa and comes from Queenstown (officially Komani) in the Eastern Cape.

I thought it was a shame that he was one of many South Africans who felt disconnected from nature, partly because shows like *50/50* didn't speak to them. Indigenous knowledge and Western science have much to offer each other. However, we face a significant barrier in today's society: a loss of language. The argument that tertiary institutions can offer education in the mother tongues, but not in subjects that prepare students for conservation-related careers, is that they believe the ecological and conservation vocabulary doesn't exist. It can't be true. Before colonisation, there must have been a way to differentiate between a black rhino and a white rhino; there couldn't have been just one word for all of them.

Language isn't the only aspect of Xhosa culture that has been forgotten. *Isilimela* is the Xhosa name for June, derived from the Pleiades star cluster, because it marks the rising of the Pleiades. As this month marks the start of the Xhosa calendar and signifies a time of renewal, this is when *ulwaluko*, the Xhosa male initiation rite of passage from boyhood (*inkwenkwe*) to manhood (*indoda*), takes place.

However, British settlers imposed a shift to the Western calendar, which starts in January. Previously, boys were secluded in the bush for several weeks during the winter, as part of their initiation. Now, this aspect of *ulwaluko* is in the hotter months, from late November to early December.

Then, there's Xhosa history, which is primarily oral, but stories can change as they're passed down from one generation to the next, making them less reliable as true accounts.

INTO THE WILD

My parents met while my dad was studying at the University of Fort Hare and later settled in Benoni, where I spent my early childhood. I attended boarding school in Makhanda, also known as Grahamstown, where my education involved many outdoor activities, and I developed a deep connection to the province's rich wildlife.

My first job after studying audiovisual production at university was working for the SABC, where I created promotional content for SABC 2 shows, including *50/50*. One day, while my colleagues were setting up the studio to hold auditions for an eco-news segment, *Bush Buzz*, the show's Line Producer, Este Prinsloo, asked me to help by standing in front of a camera and reading from an autocue. I didn't think much of it; after all, it wasn't an audition.

Then, I moved to England, where I worked for the major production group Endemol Shine UK (formerly Endemol UK, now part of Banijay) for two-and-a-half years. To my surprise, I received an email from *50/50*, asking, 'Where in the world are you? We'd like you to present *Bush Buzz*.' It came at a time when I was feeling homesick, tired of London, and frustrated by the rain, so I accepted the offer and returned to South Africa.

The late Johann Botha, then a presenter of *50/50*, and the show's Executive Producer at the time, Danie van der Walt, showed a particular interest in my growth in conservation. Johann took me on shoots in various locations to experience nature in a way I wanted everyone else to appreciate. I fondly remember him joking about my brightly coloured pumps, which certainly didn't blend in with our surroundings while we were camping in the bush!

Much of the show was in Afrikaans, which I had to learn. We can't have parts of society thinking nature doesn't belong to them. So, I incorporated other languages when presenting. For instance, if I were covering a story about Xolobeni in the Eastern Cape, I would speak the local Xhosa language. By the time I left *50/50* 12 years later, the audience in rural and peri-urban communities had grown significantly.

FORGOTTEN BUT NOT GONE

One particular story, initially Johann's and still ongoing, became a catalyst for my current work. It concerns the proposed Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project, which aims to mine titanium-rich heavy mineral sands along a 22 km stretch of coastal dunes on the Wild Coast. This issue resonates with me not only because of my connection to Johann,



LEFT The Hole-in-the-Wall near the coastal villages of Mathokazini, Lutshini, Jonga, Rhini, and Mawotsheni, Coffee Bay, where Film-maker Ntokozo Mbuli does much of her work, harvesting indigenous knowledge on the biodiversity of the Wild Coast.

BELOW Ntokozo and Drone Pilot Ntsikelelo (Shaq) Mfingwana capture visuals of *Gompo* (Cove Rock), a sacred site for the Xhosa people.



LEFT A village in Flagstaff, Eastern Cape, where Ntokozo was looking into medicinal plant species used by local communities in the area for the medical docu-reality series, *Root Cause*.

BELOW While filming *Imvelogy* in KwaZulu-Natal, Dube elder Baba Jackson provides insights into the history of the Dube clan and why it is named after the zebra.

PHOTOGRAPHY MANDLA TYSON LANGA, AUGUSTINO LYANGA, NTOKOZO MBULI

My work with *National Geographic* involves finding the language to teach the benefits of conserving the environment, as well as reconnecting people with cultural traditions. I drew inspiration from Aquatic Ecologist Nhlanhla Mnisi, who is of Swati descent and from Mpumalanga. His work involves documenting the names of freshwater species in different South African languages. Scientists use the species for biomonitoring and assessing the water's condition. Now that communities can learn about the species in their own language, they have become citizen scientists.

Children should learn about science in their mother tongue when they're acquiring the language of everything else. Because, as Nhlanhla's work shows, the knowledge of nature in indigenous languages can contribute to Western science. G

but also because it highlights the interconnectedness between the environment and the livelihoods and health of local communities.

Stories like this inspired me to found Sugar Bean Pictures in 2018, a production company dedicated to creating television, film and short-form content that emphasises impactful storytelling within cultural, historical, social and educational contexts.

Our medical docu-reality series, *Root Cause*, set in the rural communities of South Africa, explores the social determinants of health, focusing on conditions induced by environmental factors. The series highlights how a healthy environment can lead to healthier bodies in these communities and minimise illnesses and diseases related to environmental influences, particularly in areas where a lack of nearby clinics and hospitals hinders access to proper healthcare.

I spent a year in numerous communities without a camera in hand, just getting to know them. In a village near Coffee Bay, I asked an elderly lady where I could buy *imbola*, a traditional Xhosa ochre clay paste. It's a sunscreen and skincare remedy, as well as holding deep spiritual, cultural and symbolic significance in various ceremonies. 'Buy it?' she asked. 'Come with me. We'll harvest some together.'

While researching for *The Spoken Land*, I uncovered inaccuracies about the Xhosa people in British history books, including misspellings of names. I also spent considerable time with historians, each offering different perspectives on certain events in Xhosa history.

I'm still uncertain about the truth regarding the Frontier Wars. Was King Ngqika a thoughtful strategist or merely a drunkard? Sir Harry Smith, the Governor and High Commissioner of the Cape Colony, wrote accounts that glorified the wars he won. The letters that soldiers sent home to their loved ones contained elements that aligned with his narratives, while others negated some of what the generals had written. It was when local historians and elders from the rural Eastern Cape, and academics from Rhodes University and the University of Fort Hare, confirmed these facts that their significance became clear.



EXPERIENCE THE NORTHERN CAPE: AFRICA'S HIDDEN GEM FOR STARGAZING

When the sun dips below the horizon and the velvet night sky unfurls, the Northern Cape transforms into a celestial theatre unlike any other. As Southern Africa's premier astro-tourism destination, this vast province offers couples, families and adventurers the chance to dine under the stars, chase constellations and immerse themselves in landscapes that feel as timeless as the galaxies above.

A SANCTUARY OF STARS

In the Kalahari, the !Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park stands proudly as Africa's only International Dark Sky Sanctuary. Here, the absence of artificial light reveals the Milky Way in all its glory, stretching across a 360-degree horizon. Guests at !Xaus Lodge can pair stargazing with authentic Bushman cultural experiences, making it a journey of both wonder and heritage.

Nearby, the Witsand Kalahari Nature Reserve enchants with its famed 'Roaring Sands'. By day, the dunes sing with their mysterious vibration; by night, billions of stars shimmer above acacia silhouettes. It's a photographer's dream and a stargazer's paradise.

WHERE WATER MEETS THE COSMOS

In the Green Kalahari, Augrabies Falls National Park offers drama both day and night. Known as the 'Place of Great Noise', the thundering falls plunge 70 metres into the Orange River Gorge. Once darkness falls, the desert's arid clarity unveils skies so crisp they seem painted for astrophotographers. Safe night walks from the campsite make this a family-friendly stargazing stop.

NAMAQUA'S FLORAL AND CELESTIAL SPECTACLE

Namaqua is famed for its springtime wildflower carpets, but its night skies are equally spectacular. Goegap Nature Reserve and Namaqua National Park combine whimsical flora – quiver trees, halfmens and succulents – with pristine skies. Spoeg River's caves add archaeological intrigue, while flower camps in Namaqua National Park offer seasonal stays that blend botanical beauty with cosmic wonder.

For luxury seekers, Naries Namaqua Retreat provides mountain suites shielded from light pollution, while Papkuilsfontein on the Bokkeveld Plateau offers rustic cottages perfect for stargazing in solitude. Both destinations balance comfort with unspoiled natural drama.

DESERT MYSTIQUE IN THE RICHTERSVELD AND KAROO

The Richtersveld National Park is a minimalist's dream: stark mountains, halfmens trees and nomadic shepherds under a canopy of glittering stars. Nights here are crisp, with constellations sparkling like diamonds against the desert black.

Further south, the Tankwa Karoo National Park boasts some of the darkest skies in South Africa. Its windmills and hideaway cottages create striking foregrounds for astrophotography, while the silence of the Karoo basin restores mind and soul.

WHY THE NORTHERN CAPE?

Across its five regions – Kalahari, Green Kalahari, Namaqua, Karoo and Richtersveld – the Northern Cape offers unparalleled astro-tourism experiences. Whether you're planning a romantic getaway in the 'month of love', a family holiday or an adventure with friends, this province invites you to reconnect with the cosmos.



From flower camps to roaring dunes, from heritage parks to desert retreats, the Northern Cape is more than a destination – it's a journey into infinity.

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DID YOU KNOW?

SOME STRANGE, ALL TRUE. THESE FUN FACTS ARE SURE TO ADD A FEW NEW PLACES TO YOUR MUST-VISIT LIST

Monkey BUSINESS

There are approximately **300 Barbary macaques, the only wild monkeys in Europe**, on the **Rock of Gibraltar**, a British Overseas Territory on the Iberian Peninsula. **They're local celebrities, notorious snack thieves**, and, legend has it, if these tailless, primarily ground-dwelling primates **ever leave the area, it will mark the end of British rule over Gibraltar**. During World War II, when their **numbers dropped**, **Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill reportedly ordered more** to be brought in. Today, they remain one of the territory's most **mischievous** attractions.



PHOTOGRAPHY ISTOCKPHOTO, COURTESY IMAGES



SHINE BRIGHT LIKE A GLOW-WORM

New Zealand's North Island has a glowing secret. Deep in the **Waitomo Glowworm Caves**, in the King Country region (Waikato), **thousands of tiny glow-worms illuminate the cavern** ceiling **like a galaxy of stars**. Visitors drift silently by boat beneath this natural light show of larvae, glowing to attract prey. **The result is otherworldly; part science, part magic**, and entirely unforgettable.



DEEP SLEEP

At **Sweden's Sala Silvermine Hotel**, you can **spend the night 155 metres underground**. Once one of the country's most important **silver mines**, it's **now home to the world's deepest hotel suite**. Guests **descend into candlelit tunnels** where the temperature hovers **at a cool 2°C year-round**. Breakfast is delivered ... after taking a lift back to ground level.



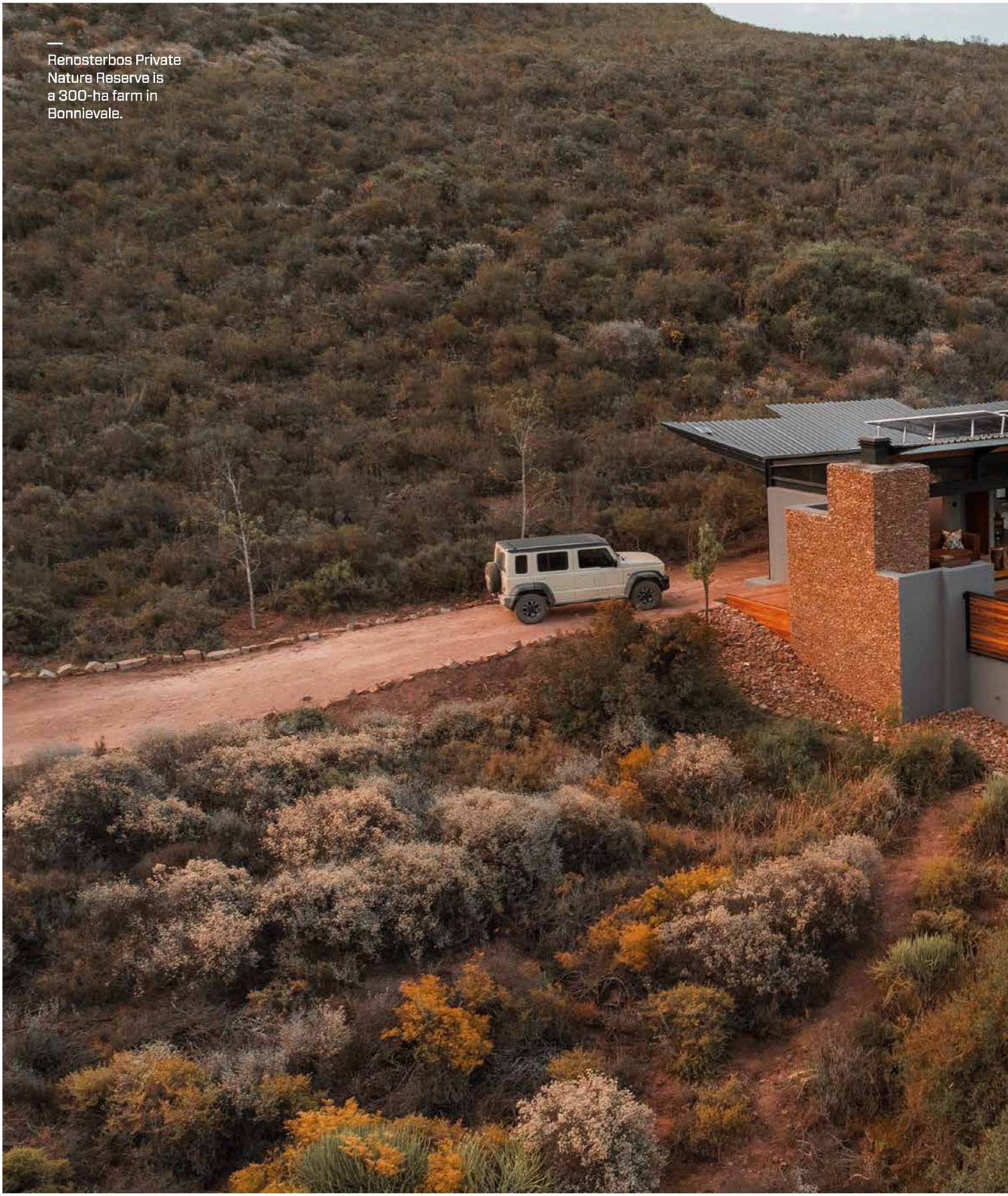
A BORDER RUNS THROUGH IT

At the **Logis Hôtel l'Arbézie Franco-Suisse**, you **can sleep in France and brush your teeth in Switzerland**. The quirky hotel was **cleverly built right on the international border in 1862**. Today, guests can **literally stand with one foot in each country**. Worry not; your quest for midnight snacks won't require going through passport control.

BLOOMING MARVELLOUS

Located in the **United Arab Emirates**, the **Dubai Miracle Garden** holds the **Guinness World Record for being the world's largest natural flower garden**. There are **more than 150 million blooms arranged into elaborate displays**, from floral castles to a life-size Emirates A380 aircraft covered entirely in flowers.





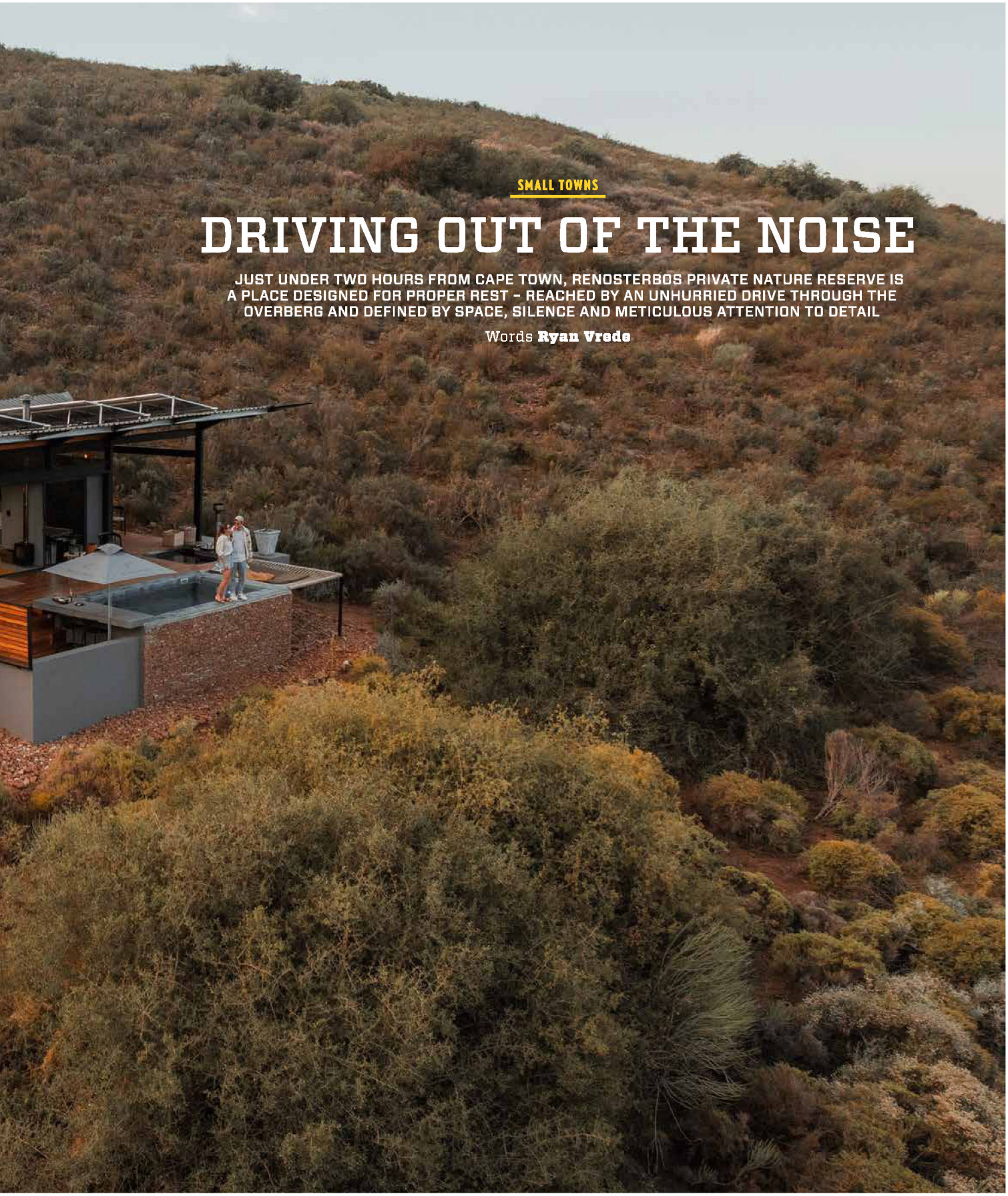
Renosterbos Private Nature Reserve is a 300-ha farm in Bonnievale.

SMALL TOWNS

DRIVING OUT OF THE NOISE

JUST UNDER TWO HOURS FROM CAPE TOWN, RENOSTERBOS PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE IS A PLACE DESIGNED FOR PROPER REST – REACHED BY AN UNHURRIED DRIVE THROUGH THE OVERBERG AND DEFINED BY SPACE, SILENCE AND METICULOUS ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Words **Ryan Vrede**







RIGHT One of three cabins defined by attention to detail.

BELOW RIGHT Lazy days by the pool are encouraged.

Some trips announce themselves loudly. Others arrive more quietly, revealed kilometre by kilometre as the city recedes and the road begins to open up. This one started in Cape Town, heading east before turning inland, trading traffic lights for the open road and the gentle recalibration that only a proper drive can offer.

The journey to Bonnievale – whether you favour the N2's coastal pull or the broader sweep of the N1 – is the kind of drive that rewards unhurried travel. In the Chery Tiggo 7 PHEV, the early stretch out of the city passed almost silently, the vehicle settling into a relaxed, composed rhythm that made the kilometres feel less like a means to an end and more like a prelude. It's the sort of drive that invites detours: a farm stall here, a long lunch there, the landscape constantly shifting as the Overberg opens itself up.

Just under two hours from Cape Town, Renosterbos Private Nature Reserve is in what its owners believe is the ideal sweet spot – far enough to feel genuinely removed, yet close enough to remain accessible for a spontaneous escape. Arriving at the main gate, I received a warm greeting from Heinrich and Tania, who four years ago purchased the 300-ha farm with a long-held ambition of creating luxury accommodation grounded in nature rather than spectacle.

Their search took them through McGregor, Swellendam and beyond, but here in Bonnievale, everything aligned: the landscape, the sense of space, and the ease of access from Cape Town. They've since introduced game to the property, allowing animals to roam freely, a quiet but powerful gesture that reinforces the feeling of being immersed in a working wilderness rather than a styled retreat.







Renosterbos is currently home to three cabins, all built by Heinrich himself – and that personal investment is evident. It isn't the sort of luxury that announces itself; it reveals itself gradually, through use. Attention to detail defines the stay. The outdoor hot tubs heat as efficiently as possible. So well stocked are the braai stations that once you step outside, there's no need to retreat indoors again – a detail seasoned braaiers will immediately appreciate.

Outside, each cabin is anchored by a generous private pool, which was a welcome refuge from the heat. Afternoons drifted past at the poolside counter, the kind of lazy, cocktail-laced hours that feel increasingly rare. A small but useful note: the sun moves behind the covered deck at around 3 pm, so early afternoon is prime time if you're chasing warmth.

As evening settles in, Renosterbos comes into its own. The outdoor bath on the deck is a standout – a place to unwind beneath the stars, drink in hand, as the day dissolves into quiet. Each morning, the outdoor spaces are meticulously cleaned, with firewood neatly packed and ready for the next braai. It's the kind of care that's felt rather than noticed.

—

TOP Spend the golden hour lazing in a hammock.

ABOVE A small collection of wildlife roams freely on the reserve.



RIGHT The cabins at Renosterbos are positioned to give you a sense of seclusion.

BELOW RIGHT Some of the wildlife you can spot at Renosterbos.

I arrived here needing rest. The year had been long, and I wanted isolation, peace, and the sense that I didn't need to be anywhere else. Despite there being other cabins on the property, the layout ensures an almost total sense of privacy – the kind that allows you to drop your shoulders effortlessly.

Sleep came easily. The bed was deeply comfortable, serving this sleep-deprived traveller well, though there's also the option of sleeping outdoors on a hammock, suspended under a sky free from light pollution. I didn't test that particular experience, but the thought lingered.

Cooking is one of my preferred travel rituals, and while the kitchen is compact, it has everything you need to cook properly, nothing you don't. There are excellent wine farms and restaurants within driving distance, but my advice would be to stay put, let the world wait, and fully appreciate the rhythm of the place.

Walking trails wind through the farm, and while I explored them with a respectful eye on the roaming wildlife, everything here feels calm and unthreatening, mirroring the pace of the landscape. On-site staff are available around the clock, a reassuring presence – especially when my own clumsiness resulted in a jammed folding door late one evening. Help arrived promptly and graciously.

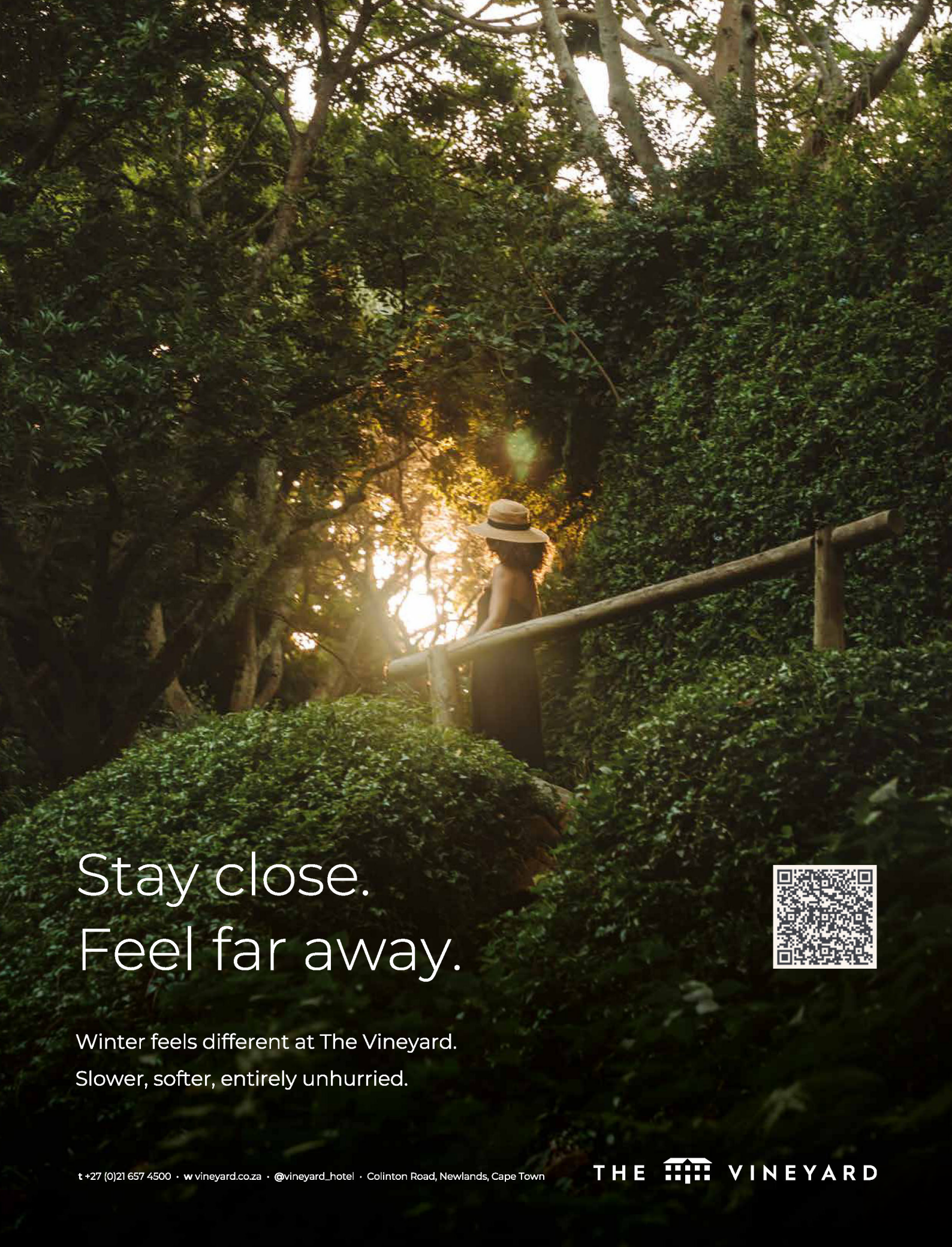
Plans to expand Renosterbos include couples-only zones, family-focused accommodation around a future dam, and a restaurant and events venue. For now, the restraint feels deliberate and wise. Cape Town has no shortage of cabin-style escapes, but Renosterbos distinguishes itself through warmth, privacy and a level of detail that's hard to replicate. It's the kind of place that reminds you that rest isn't passive – it's something you arrive at, often slowly, sometimes over a very good road trip.

And when even the drive allows you to ease into that peaceful headspace, the destination feels all the more earned. **G**

MR280 off R317, Bonnievale
082 848 3336
info@renosterbos.com



WORDS EXTRACTED FROM *CAPE ETC* SUMMER 2026 **PHOTOGRAPHY** COURTESY OF CABIN FEVER ESCAPES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SPRINT, FLY, REPEAT

TIGHT CONNECTIONS CAN QUICKLY TRANSFORM A PLANNED CALM JOURNEY HOME INTO AN OLYMPIC-LEVEL CHALLENGE

Words **Miriam Kimvangu**

The sprint began somewhere between Gate B and my dignity. I had pictured my journey home from Ålesund as the gentle final chapter of a lovely winter trip to visit my parents. You know the kind. Calm airport energy. A coffee in hand. Perhaps a touch of smug satisfaction at having packed efficiently and arrived at the airport unnecessarily early. After a few weeks on the coast of Western Norway, surviving a snowstorm and a brief but dramatic bout of sickness, I felt I had earned a smooth ride home to Cape Town. Instead, I ended up reliving my track-and-field career.

Ålesund is the kind of place that feels almost suspiciously picturesque. Colourful buildings line the harbour, the mountains loom quietly in the background, and when the snow falls, the entire town seems to exhale. It was my first visit, and I'd say besides the blank look on my face when anyone tried to speak to me in Norwegian, I blended right in. Long walks along icy streets. Cosy cafés. And salmon. So much salmon.

By the end of my trip, my suitcase had reached a state I can only describe as ambitious. Wool sweaters, gifts, a worrying amount of Norwegian chocolate, things I probably didn't need from my childhood boxes, but decided to keep anyway. I packed everything happily, assuming that future me would deal with the consequences.

The itinerary seemed manageable enough. Fly from Ålesund to Oslo, continuing to Stockholm, where I could remain on the plane, then settle in for the long flight to Addis Ababa before finally landing back in Cape Town. Simple.

Except for one small detail. As it was during the holidays, there was exactly one flight leaving Ålesund that day. Miss it, and the entire plan would collapse like a poorly stacked IKEA shelf.

The first leg to Oslo was a breeze, and I sat there feeling quite pleased with myself, frequent flyer instincts fully activated. Connections carefully timed. What could go wrong?

The answer, of course, was everything.

The moment we landed in Oslo, and I finished up at the tax-free desk, I noticed the time and realised my comfortable connection had quietly transformed into something closer to an athletic event. Suddenly, I was running. Not a power walk. Not the polite airport shuffle. Sprinting. The truly shocking part was that my body remembered how to do it. I graduated from high school nearly a decade ago, but apparently those muscle memories were waiting for their moment. Unsurprisingly, though, I made the connection. I always win in the end.

In Stockholm, I stayed on the plane, trying to regain my composure and pretending that I had always planned to arrive at the gate looking like I had just completed a 100-metre sprint.

I truly thought I was in the clear, but Murphy had other plans for me, because if Oslo was the warm-up, Addis Ababa was the championship round. The connection window was tight, and I once again found myself running through an airport with the determination of someone chasing an Olympic medal.

By the time I reached the gate, I was breathless and fairly certain I had just beaten my high school mile time. If anyone had handed me a medal at that moment, I would have accepted it without question.

*My **COMFORTABLE CONNECTION** had quietly **TRANSFORMED INTO** something closer to **AN ATHLETIC EVENT**. Not the polite airport shuffle. **SPRINTING***

Eventually, many hours later, the plane began its descent into Cape Town. The familiar outline of Table Mountain appeared beneath the wing, and I allowed myself to relax for the first time all day. The race was finally over.

At the baggage carousel, I waited patiently as suitcases rolled past. One by one, passengers collected their bags and drifted away. Mine, however, had apparently decided it needed a longer holiday.

Eventually, the carousel stopped. The airline staff confirmed what I had already suspected. My luggage had not made it onto the flight. So there I sat, once again waiting for the next plane to arrive, and eventually, my suitcase appeared like a slightly embarrassed guest arriving late to a party.

Would I do it again? Never. Then again, travel has a way of making you forgive these things.

So, the next time you plan a travel route that saves a little money but involves multiple connections, take a moment to consider the possibility that you may accidentally enter an Olympic qualifying event between terminals.

And if that happens, you might want to be prepared. Next time I travel, I'm bringing an inhaler. And my track shoes.

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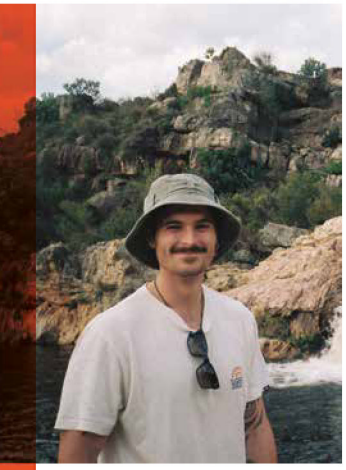
East Side Story

SWAPPING THE RUSH OF THE TOURIST TRAIL FOR SPENDING TIME EXPLORING THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY UNCOVERS A CITY DEFINED BY PARKS, CONVERSATIONS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RHYTHMS, WRITES OLIVER KEOHANE



Oliver Keohane

By 6.30 am in Amsterdam, it seemed I may not make it onto the train back to London, stuck in a backlog of anxious travellers, at the whim of the ambivalent early morning contingent of border security staff. Thankfully, a scramble as the Eurostar rolled into Amsterdam Centraal station spat me out into a window seat, where I dozed off immediately, and woke up to the excited late-morning frenzy of St Pancras International station.

Rubbing the stunted sleep out of my eyes and bracing for a £4 coffee, I readied myself to go east, to the beautiful bustle of Hackney, where both my cousin, Rory, and best friend, Adam, live.

I owe my fondness for London largely to these two, and probably the fact that I have had the privilege of experiencing the city in summer, or at the season's shoulder. Again, thanks to them, I have stayed in two lovely apartments in Hackney, brimming with youthful energy and enough greenery between Victoria Park and London Fields to combat the red-brick dullness of reappropriated council houses.

For a week, I could be anonymous in a city both foreign and familiar, in the company of those closest. But there's a certain pressure to box tick in a place like London, and as I hauled my camera onto yet another tube and announced plans to go photograph Hyde Park, Rory asked, 'What is *your* experience of London? Why don't you tell that story?'

That story is East.

Of course, I had my own boxes to tick outside of the borough. A visit to the famed five-storey toy shop Hamleys, which blew my mind, and taking the tube to Piccadilly Circus to be swept up by the chaotic rhythm of the high streets, with shopping bags, black cabs, red buses and Union Jacks.

I was lucky to travel to Selhurst Park, thanks to Rory, to watch Liverpool play Crystal Palace in the Premier League, and confirm that the stereotypical English football supporter is alive and well. On my final day in London, Adam and I experienced a very different crowd as we travelled South amid a sea of green jerseys to watch the Springboks beat Argentina at Twickenham and win the 2025 Rugby Championship title.

But mostly, I spent a magnificent week between Adam's apartment block, Milborne House, and Broadway Market, a 3 km walk brimming with a Capetonian aesthetic of activity that seems a tonic to London's high-stakes workweeks. Well-dressed cyclists share the space with runners in the morning, and in the crisp evening sun, dogs bound around, body-weight exercisers at the outdoor gym, couples smoking rolled cigarettes on park benches, and the welcoming hum of Pub on The Park, a nucleus of energy on the path down London Fields.

At the end of the path, Broadway Market is on a street that always feels like a Saturday morning. Light, fresh and full of promise during the day. Cafes, bookshops and retailers line the road, and every weekend, the two-day food market thrives. Each night on the street comes with a different promise; one of 8% Belgian Beer and hours of conversation outside a pub, The Dove. Further up the road, Okko serves some of the best Japanese food I have had.

Closer to home, we crawled between other pubs, The Kenton Pub and Chesham Arms, each with its own jovial white noise of friends and beer. There is a warmth, energy and personality to UK pubs that we just don't have in South Africa. Another thing we miss, down South, is the glowing late-night institution of the kebab shop. Anatolia Ocakbasi, a Turkish restaurant, serves expertly wrapped, döner kebabs, flavour-packed and ginormous.

As a child and teenager, I was fortunate to experience London with my parents. They took me to see Big Ben and Buckingham Palace and took photographs of me standing next to a wax version of David Beckham at Madame Tussauds London. They taught me about the city through endless walking and a tourist-heavy itinerary.

As an adult, what endears the city to me is the energetic pulse in a borough like Hackney. Between the hole-in-the-wall retailers and shops, the cafes and bars and colourful murals scattered between off-licence corner shops and Lime bike scooters, there is an atmosphere of activity that animates the city from morning through to evening. G

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BELOW Making my way to London Fields, Hackney.

RIGHT Broadway Market, London, is abuzz with activity.





PHOTOGRAPHY UNSPLASH

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SCAN ME

OFF THE BEATEN PLATE

BEYOND THE CITIES, A SLOWER, MORE SOULFUL FOOD SCENE IS EMERGING, DRIVEN BY LOCAL INGREDIENTS AND MEALS MADE FOR LINGERING OVER

Words **Sophie Baker**



A fire crackles warmly in the interior of Vine Restaurant & Wine Bar in Dullstroom, where the evening starts with guests relaxing in armchairs as part of their lounge-to-table concept.

The fire is on when the first guests arrive at **Vine Restaurant & Wine Bar** (***sohodullstroom.com/vine***) in Dullstroom. They are shown not to a table but to armchairs arranged around the hearth, where they'll spend the first hour of the evening with wine and tapas, such as halloumi fries with their crisp squeak intact or beef carpaccio thin enough to see the plate underneath. The wine list is extensive, sourced from estates across the Cape and beyond, while the food is straightforward: steaks with your choice of sauce, slow-cooked lamb shank, pork ribs basted in home-made barbecue sauce. It's pub food, elevated by patience: no one rushes you from the fireside, and by the time you move to the candlelit dining rooms, you've already settled into the idea of an unrushed evening. Outside, mist settles over the highland town's fishing dams and the pine plantations that ring the valley. Inside, the menu features fresh, seasonal ingredients.

This is not how serious South African restaurants used to operate. For decades, Johannesburg and Cape Town absorbed the talent, accolades and diners willing to travel for a meal. If a chef wanted recognition, a city address seemed essential.



— Vine Restaurant & Wine Bar offers an extensive wine selection, featuring over 400 labels.







THE PATERNOSTER EFFECT

That assumption began to shift in 2019, when **Wolfgat** (***wolfgat.co.za***) opened in the West Coast fishing village of Paternoster, with 20 seats, menus shaped by strandveld plants and the day's catch, and deliberate rejection of urban scale. International accolades followed quickly, but, more importantly, it proved that restaurants didn't need urban scale to earn serious attention.

Restaurants along the West Coast, including **Gaaitjie Restaurant** (***gaaitjie.co.za***) in its converted fisherman's cottage and **!Khwattu's** (***khwattu.org***) modern but proudly San food, proved that compelling food could be entirely anchored in place rather than imported to it. Geography became a drawcard, rather than a limitation. The philosophy has since appeared in towns that have little in common with the West Coast, except remoteness and dedication to high-quality cuisine.

— **LEFT** !Khwattu's menu features local ingredients and traditional San dishes, including West Coast mussels and traditional potato dumplings.



RIGHT Bocca di Lupo serves traditional Italian cuisine in Clarens.

BELOW The gardens at Baris Monger supply much of the fresh produce, offering a Winelands-style experience in Clarens.

HIGHLAND HOSPITALITY

In Dullstroom, the pantry is built for cold-weather comfort. Hearty dishes suit the high altitude and the mist that rolls through most mornings, when the chill makes warm food feel essential rather than optional. Trout comes from dams that have supplied anglers for over a century; the waters here were stocked in the early 1900s, and the fishing tradition has shaped the town's identity since.

Across town from Vine, **Mrs Simpsons Restaurant** (***mrssimpsons.co.za***) has become something of a must-visit for Joburgers driving in for a weekend. The restaurant, named for the Duchess of Windsor, operates from a period house with an iconic yellow dining room featuring eclectic artwork and mismatched furniture. The signature trout pasta flies out of the kitchen most evenings. The cream-slicked spaghetti is tangled with herbs, black pepper, and flakes of fresh trout. Moroccan prawns and mussels appear on tables alongside lamb shanks tender enough to warrant their permanent place on the menu. It's comfort food elevated by context: highland air pressing against the windows, the clinking of red wine glasses, and the sense of having driven just far enough that the ordinary becomes an occasion.



FREE STATE REVIVAL

Against the sandstone cliffs and the Maluti foothills of the Free State, Clarens has undergone its own shift. The town once catered primarily to weekenders en route to the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, its main street lined with steakhouses and pizza parlours to accommodate a lot of people. Slowly, kitchens have emerged that adopt a healthy refusal to serve food that feels mass-produced or indifferent.

Clementines Restaurant & Bar (***clementines.co.za***) occupies an old corrugated-iron building that has become a local landmark. The owners have built genuine relationships with nearby farms, Free State lamb producers, and vegetable growers working the fertile valleys below the Maluti escarpment. The menu reflects those ties: springbok carpaccio, sliced thin and dressed simply, slow-cooked lamb bredie, rich with tomato and spice, and vegetables pulled from regional soil. What could be a forgettable lunch stop becomes, instead, a reason to extend the weekend.

At **Treat** (***treatrestaurant.co.za***), Chef-owner Francois Potgieter has built a reputation for precise execution. The lamb shank arrives with a mint-infused jus, while the deconstructed beef Wellington

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY IMAGES

garners consistent praise. It's contemporary French-style country cooking, served in an intimate enough setting that the chef often checks on tables himself. Down a quieter street, the Italian owner of **Bocca di Lupo** (***boccadilupo.co.za***) hand-makes Neapolitan-style pizzas in a wood-fired oven, the dough stretched and blistered according to techniques learned in Naples.

On the outskirts of town, boutique farms add to the draw. **Mile High Vineyards** (***milehighvineyards.com***) is one of the highest-producing vineyards in the country, and offers handmade comfort food, including pot pies, soups, pasta and apple crumble. **Baris Monger** (***baris.co.za***), a cheese farm within easy driving distance, offers tastings in a garden setting that evokes the Cape Winelands without the traffic or tour buses.

—

RIGHT Cheese boards are the highlight at the family-run Baris Monger, where the award-winning Vliedermaus cheese leads the tasting line-up.

BELOW The Northern Cape is a surprising treasure trove of culinary experiences, from quirky padstals to upscale dining at African Vineyard Boutique Hotel & Spa.









THE NORTHERN FRONTIER

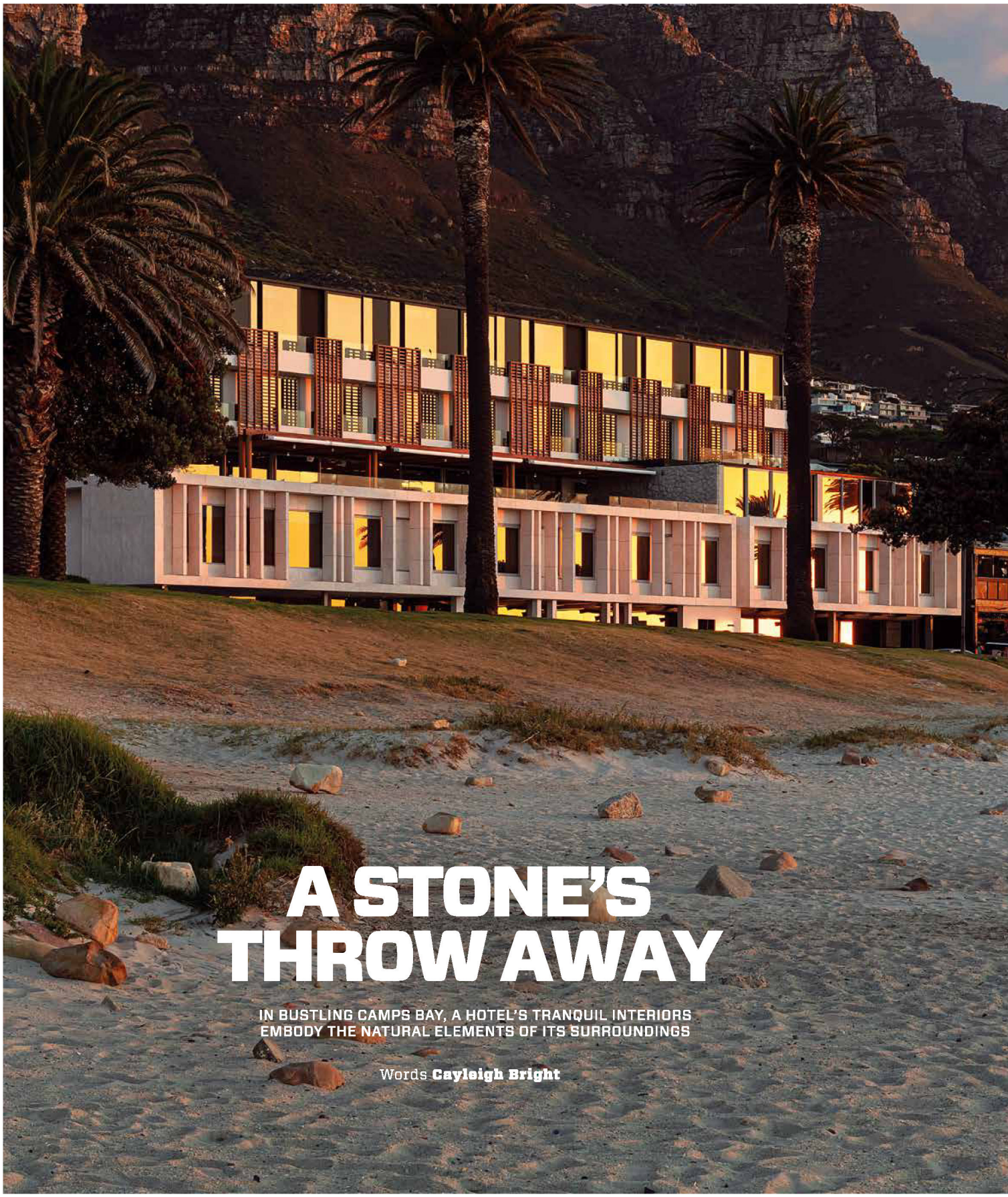
Along the Kokerboom Food and Wine Route in the Northern Cape's Orange River valley, farm stalls and wine estates have begun treating food as a reason to stop rather than an afterthought for those passing through on their way to Namibia or Kgalagadi.

At **Die Pienk Padstal** (**Die Pienk Padstal**) in Kakamas, dried fruit and preserves share shelf space with home-made pies. A few kilometres west, **Die Mas** (***diemas.co.za***) sits on the Orange Riverbank, its elevated veranda overlooking vineyards that stretch toward the desert. The family-run estate makes award-winning copper pot-still brandy, alongside wines and gin, with wood-fired pizzas available for those who linger.

On Kanoneiland, **African Vineyard Boutique Hotel & Spa** (***africanvineyard.co.za***) offers slow-food dinners from local ingredients.

What connects these scattered kitchens is not a single philosophy about sourcing or regionality. Paternoster's kelp comes from morning foraging; Dullstroom's trout from local dams; Clarens' pizza chef imports his technique from Naples; the Northern Cape estates rely on what the Orange River makes possible in the middle of the desert. But the cooks share a conviction: that smaller towns allow for slower rhythms, closer relationships with the diners, and the freedom to build a reputation on consistency and craft rather than novelty or scale.

For travellers, this reshapes how a South African weekend unfolds. The same drive that takes you to the fishing dams or the sandstone cliffs now delivers you to tables where the food is worth the journey, served by people who chose to be exactly where they are. **G**



A STONE'S THROW AWAY

IN BUSTLING CAMPS BAY, A HOTEL'S TRANQUIL INTERIORS EMBODY THE NATURAL ELEMENTS OF ITS SURROUNDINGS

Words **Cayleigh Bright**



LEFT Start your day with a cold plunge in the ocean – and a glance back at the hotel's good looks.

For South Africans, the Camps Bay coastline needs no introduction: framed by the Twelve Apostles mountains and the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the iconic stretch of beach is the backdrop to many happy holiday memories spent on the sand, in the stretch's eclectic mix of restaurants, or just passing through for sightseeing between nature and city. For visitors, it's many things, but serene isn't always one of them: it's a popular tourist strip, with all of the sound and bustling movement that comes with that. As Cape Town's popularity continues to grow, with tourists from Europe, Asia, the US, and around the globe, and being a perennial favourite for travellers from around the country and the continent, what does it take to create a truly serene retreat for leisure and relaxation?

'Our intention is for guests to feel as if they've discovered a sanctuary created just for them,' says Albert Smit, the general manager of Morea House, Autograph Collection. 'Morea House delivers a distinctive experience rooted in place, unlike anywhere else. We want guests to leave restored, reconnected, and carrying with them the essence of this place.'

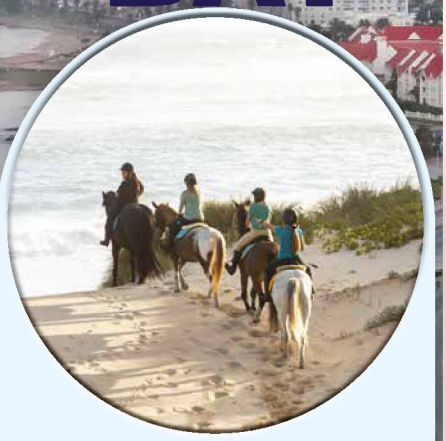
Award-winning Interior Architect Tristan du Plessis, who is based in Cape Town, drew inspiration from the beauty that surrounds the hotel: much like the mountains and sweeping vistas, it's bold and sculptural, but softened by natural textures. You will notice curves at every turn, and these organic silhouettes mean that while high ceilings and large-scale furnishings are impressive, they feel inviting rather than intimidating.

The hotel is larger than it appears. Despite its boutique atmosphere, it features 90 guest suites and rooms. Those without an ocean view showcase the iconic Table Mountain.

'It reflects the city's spirit at every turn,' says Sandra Schulze-Potgieter, the vice President of Premium, Select and Midscale Brands for Marriott

WELCOME TO NELSON MANDELA BAY







GQEBERHA, situated on Algoa Bay, is the largest city in the Eastern Cape and the seat of Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. The province has key economic towns, namely Mthatha, Uitenhage and Grahamstown. Administratively, the Eastern Cape is carved into 37 local municipalities, located within six districts. In addition, there are two metropolitan municipalities. From a tourism perspective, the Province is divided into regions and routes. These have no regard for administrative boundaries but are rather based on regional qualities and experiences.

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

- 3 Airports plus
- 3 seaports
- Baviaanskloof World Heritage Site
- 800 km Coastline
- Big 7 game viewing
- Birthplace and resting place of Nelson Mandela
- Birthplace of Saraah Baartman
- Good road network
- Authentic cultural experiences
- Algoa Bay Hope spot – World Bottlenose Dolphin Capital and Marine Malaria Free

QUICK FACTS

Nelson Mandela Bay is the Bottlenose Dolphin Capital of the world with approximately 28 500 Bottlenose Dolphins using the Bay and has been declared an International Hope Spot for its Marine Biodiversity.

• Nelson Mandela Bay is the Mohair Capital of the world and processes most of the mohair produced in the world. (approximately 53% of all Mohair is produced in the Eastern Cape, followed by Lesotho with 20%)

The area is Home to the Big 7 with Addo Elephant National Park being the only National Park in the world that is home to the Big 7 (Lion, Rhino, Buffalo, Leopard, Elephant and then the Great White Shark and the Southern Right Whale)

Addo Elephant National Park has the highest density of African elephants in the world making it the perfect place to spot these majestic animals in the wild.

The city, named after Nelson Mandela, is renowned for its Friendly People from a diversity of cultures

The Bay boasts 50% of the endangered African Penguin in its natural habitat on the islands of Nelson Mandela Bay

Bird Island has the largest colony of Cape Gannets in the World (approximately 70% of the population) and can be seen in its full glory during the Sardine Run.

Nelson Mandela Bay is the only city in Africa to host the Ironman African Championships annually and is known as the Water sports Capital of Africa.

Port Elizabeth hosted the Cricket and Rugby international test matches in South Africa.

The Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) opera house is the oldest theatre on the continent of Africa and the Southern Hemisphere.

The Donkin Reserve represents the history of the city and is home to the largest South African Flag in the world. The flag can be seen from afar and indicates the location where Route 67 culminates

New Brighton township town is known for its historical history and township tourism experiences,

Nelson Mandela Bay has 11 Green Trail accreditation status.

FACT SHEETS:
Guided Tour Options

- Ocean Safari into Algoa Bay
- Penguin Patrol Tour
- PE Island and Oyster Tour
- Route 67
- Port Elizabeth Beer Tour
- Cape Recife, Lighthouse and Grysbok Nature Reserve 4 x 4 Tour
- Addo Elephant National Park Tour
- City Tour – Port Elizabeth
- Cultural Tours
- Woody Cape Dune Fields and Canopy Forest walk
- The Original BIG 7 Safari
- Bird watching in and around Port Elizabeth
- Best Beaches Sundowner
- 14. Guided walk through the Golden Sands of Southern Seashore
- Sundays River Valley Adventure
- Awehness Art Experience, Gin and Beer Tasting.
- Nelson Mandela Bay Pass

PRIVATE GAME RESERVES

- Nyosi Wildlife Reserve
- Amakhala Game Reserve
- Bushman Sands Private Game Reserve
- Camp Figtree Mountain Safari Lodge
- Founders Lodge
- Hopewell Private Game Reserve
- Inzolo Exclusive Game Lodge
- Kariega Private Game Reserve
- Koffylaagte Game Lodge
- Kwandwe Private Game Reserve
- Kwantu Private Game Reserve
- Lalibela Private Game Reserve
- Pumba Private Game Reserve
- Schotia Private Game Reserve
- Shamwari Private Game Reserve
- Sibuya Game Reserve

Private Game Reserve Addo Elephant National Park Private lodges

- Kuzuko Lodge
- Gorah Elephant Camp
- Riverbend

nelson mandela bay TOURISM
www.nmbt.co.za



RIGHT Levantine cuisine and comforting curves await at Omri.

BELOW RIGHT A 200-drop chandelier by Capetonian artist Jan Ernst pulls together multiple levels in the lobby.

International in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Autograph Collection Hotels is Marriott Bonvoy's portfolio of independent hotels championing individuality. As this is the group's first hotel in Cape Town, she says it's significant that, 'from the architecture and interiors to the sweeping views of the ocean and mountains, the hotel unfolds as a place to pause, explore, and connect with the Mother City and its people. Every detail invites guests to savour life's pleasures, creating an experience that is personal, soulful, and like nothing else'.

The hotel's furniture and embellishments reflect their surroundings, and walls and quiet corners showcase works by South African artists. Rooted in the city's heritage, each detail of the contemporary interiors, layers of timber, stone and bronze tones, fosters connection, delight and relaxation.

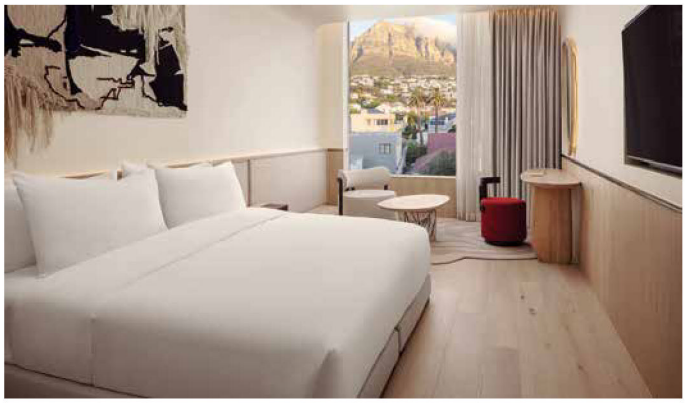
First, the food: not just because that's the best way to experience a new place, but because it's the first part of Morea House that you're likely to experience. Beside the Camps Bay strip and overlooking its beach at ground level, OMRI serves modern Lebanese cuisine with a few South African influences. Diners can indulge in flatbread, labneh, baba ganoush and other Levantine favourites alongside chargrilled steaks and seafood options, including a whole salt-baked silverfish. A lavish treat for seafood aficionados, to be sure, but why not save room for dessert? Baklava, *kunafa* balls (sweet, filled pastry), and plenty of other authentic options are on the menu, many of them incorporating everyone's favourite flavour of the moment, pistachio. Breakfast is from 6.30 am, and the kitchen is open until 10 pm. Booking is essential.

On the other side of the hotel's main entrance, there's a very inviting bar area: in the same tones as the rest of the hotel but with a touch more overt glamour than you'll see in the rest of the hotel's



understated luxe, this is an ideal space to start your stay or end a day of sightseeing in the city.

Back to that 'getting away from it all' dilemma in the heart of Camps Bay. One elegant solution is the Morea Pool Restaurant. Elevated above street level, it's a more laid-back dining option than what's available downstairs, with tapas-style dishes on the menu and a heated pool just off to the right of the seating area. From the balcony, your view is entirely of the water, allowing you to disconnect from city life for a while. In short, it's probably the best place in the hotel to catch the sunset, whether



48 Hours in Cape Town

A food, culture and history tour of Bo-Kaap.

capetowndaytours.co.za

Dine at the city's best-loved restaurants.

lacolombe.restaurant/la-colombe

fynrestaurant.com

galjoencpt.co.za

lacolombe.restaurant/pier

Include at least one nature-focused experience, whether a visit to Table Mountain, a guided hike or spending time at the beach.

Two Weeks in Cape Town

Take a day trip or book a weekend at a vineyard in one of the Western Cape's renowned wine regions. The closest is Constantia, while Stellenbosch and Franschhoek are around an hour's drive from the city.

beauconstantia.com

steenbergfarm.com

babylonstoren.com

Take a walking tour with a knowledgeable guide to absorb the unique architecture, culture and historical sites of the city's neighbourhoods.

capetownheritagetours.co.za

Combine a trip to the V&A Waterfront, a perennial favourite for every type of shopping, from locally made souvenirs and wine to fashion, with a visit to Zeitz MOCAA, a museum of contemporary African art housed in a converted grain silo.

waterfront.co.za/watershed-stores

zeitzmocaa.museum

the season dictates that sundowners are served at 6 pm or sometime closer to 10 pm. Perhaps even more personal, and more uniquely Capetonian, there's The Wine Room: an ideal venue for enjoying tastings of the selection of local wines available at the hotel, or for intimate gatherings.

Relaxation, of course, takes many forms. If curling up with a book is more your speed, you'll want to get acquainted with the library set in an exceptionally cosy alcove leading off from the main atrium. With its soft lighting and inviting textures, this library has a warm, cocoon-like atmosphere different from traditional settings. It's the perfect spot for guests looking to rejuvenate during the Cape Town winter, where the ever-changing weather adds to the charm.

Then, there's the spa. If the hotel is a sanctuary of rejuvenation, then this is its heart: while guests are encouraged to participate in physical activity outdoors, from guided hikes to yoga and plunging in the pool, the spa makes space for a focused, immersive wellness experience. The multisensory experiences include signature treatments, such as the Morea Elemental Flow, a grounding massage with aromatic fynbos oils, and the Morea Ocean Radiance, a head-to-toe ritual combining a thermal circuit with flowing bodywork and sound therapy. The signature experience is a guided cold-water immersion in the Atlantic to awaken the sense of connection with nature. The spa also incorporates a small pool for cold-water plunges. If there's anywhere in the world ready to educate you on the benefits of this icy wellness experience, it's Cape Town, and there's no reason that remaining indoors should keep you from discovering the pleasures of a cold dip. G

marriott.com/en-us/hotels/cptck-morea-house-autograph-collection

omri.co.za

moreahouse

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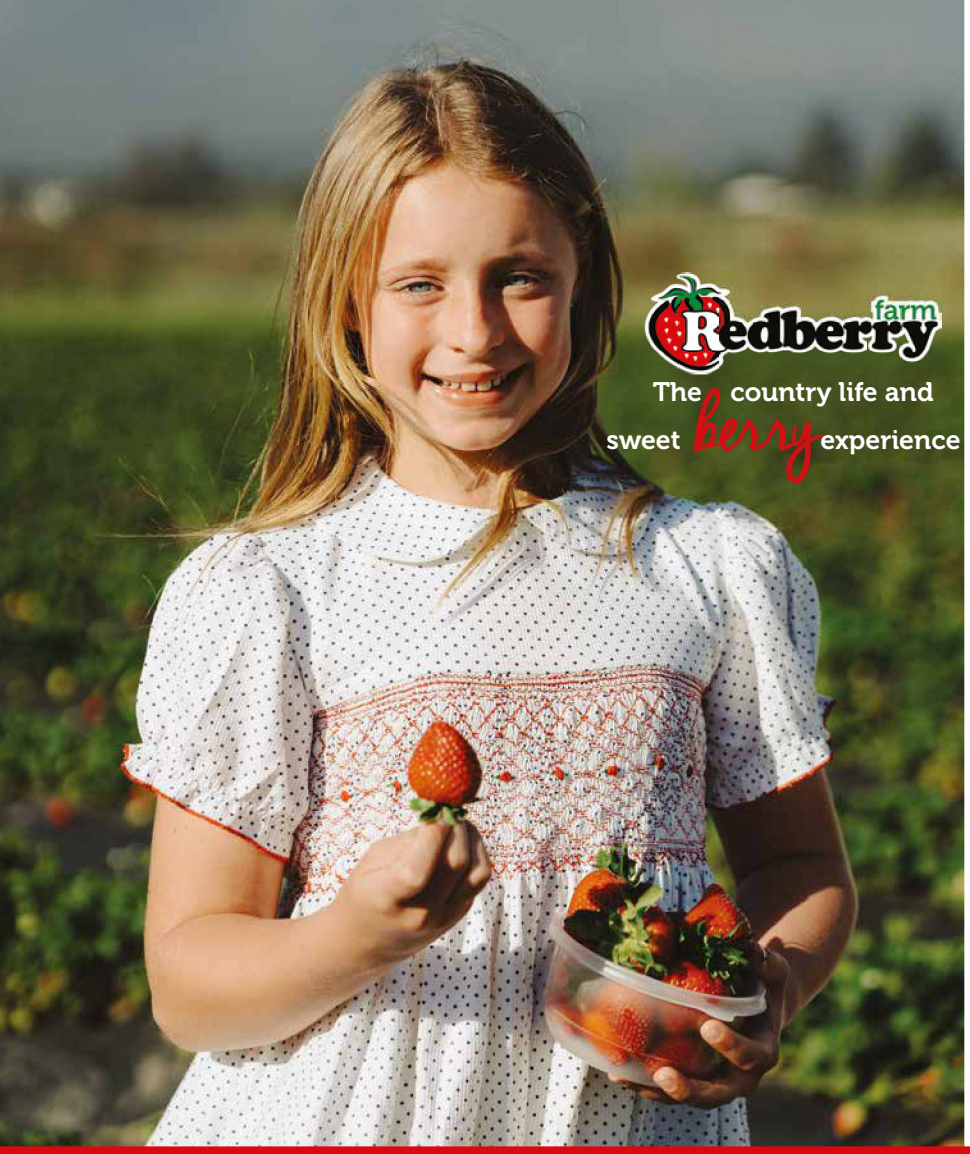
—

ABOVE Cape Town's best sights, sounds, and tastes are all just around the corner.

RIGHT Lion's Head, enjoyed from the comfort of bed.









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LIFE, OBSERVED

TEACHER BY PROFESSION, WILDLIFE STORYTELLER BY PASSION, **NADINE LEONARD** TURNS FLEETING ENCOUNTERS IN THE WILD INTO LASTING REMINDERS OF WHY NATURE DESERVES AWE AND PROTECTION





A lilac-breasted roller in the Kruger National Park.

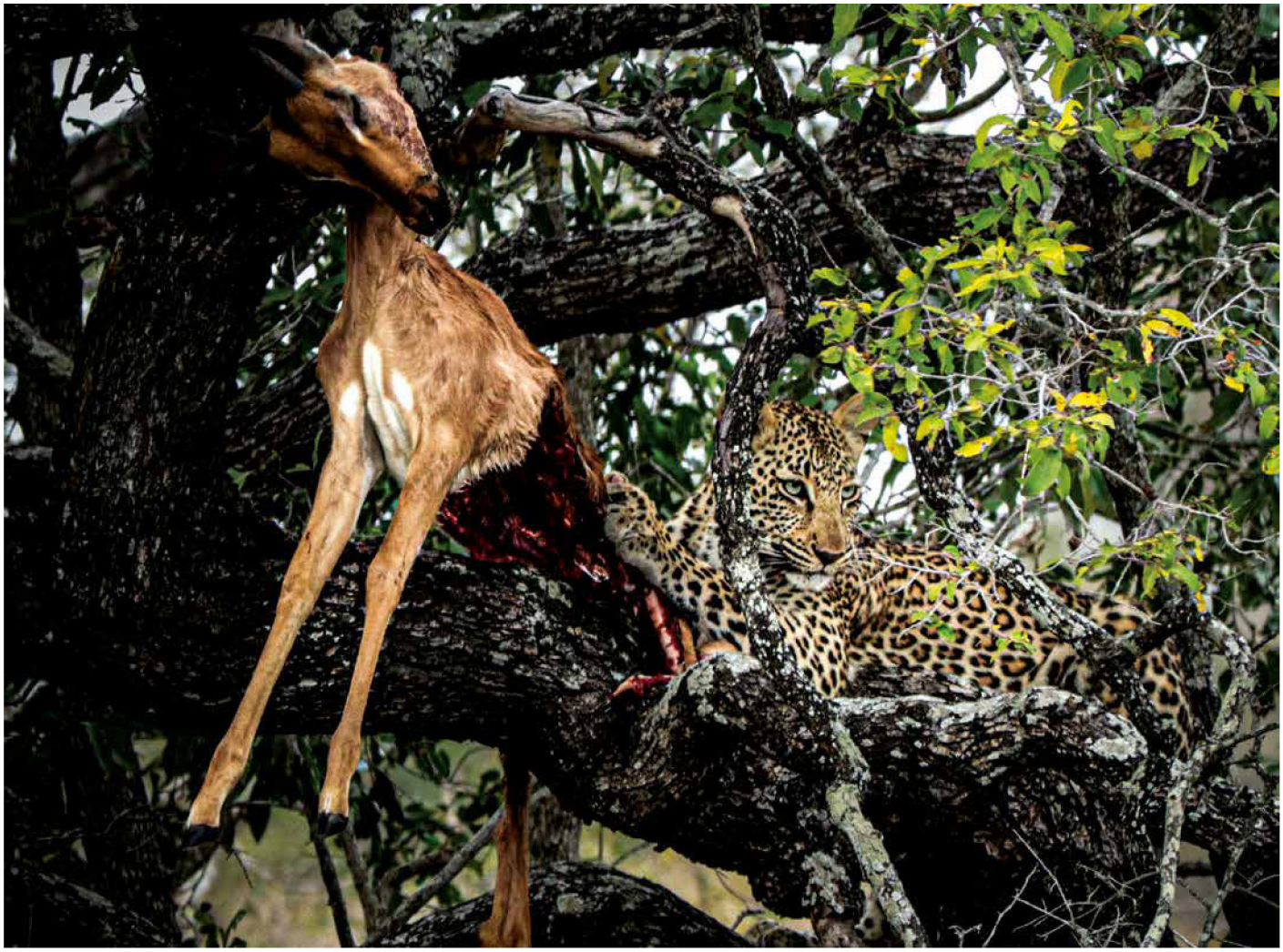
Nadine Leonard is a devoted wildlife photographer and committed life science teacher based in Gqeberha. Blending her profound love for the natural world with a strong sense of scientific inquiry, she captures striking images of wildlife, from powerful big game to the smallest creatures thriving in their natural environments. She established a social media account as a creative space to showcase the beauty, diversity and poignant moments she discovers in the wild, while inspiring others to value and safeguard nature.



A cheetah in the afternoon sun of golden hour in the Mountain Zebra National Park, Eastern Cape.

Nadine's work has featured across social media and in local media, highlighting scenes of gentle interactions between meerkats and other captivating wildlife encounters, and emphasising the link between careful observation and visual storytelling.

In the classroom, she motivates her students to approach life science with curiosity and respect for the living organisms they study. Outside school hours, she spends much of her time immersed in nature with her camera, celebrating both the dramatic and delicate wonders of the wild. **nadineleonard_wildlife**



—
A female leopard perches with her kill in the Kruger National Park.



—
The last ever image we captured of Nomad in the Mountain Zebra National Park.





—

A large warthog in the morning sun in the Addo Elephant National Park, close to Gqeberha.



A buffalo calf soaks up the last afternoon sun in the Addo Elephant National Park.





A majestic kudu bull in the Mountain Zebra National Park.

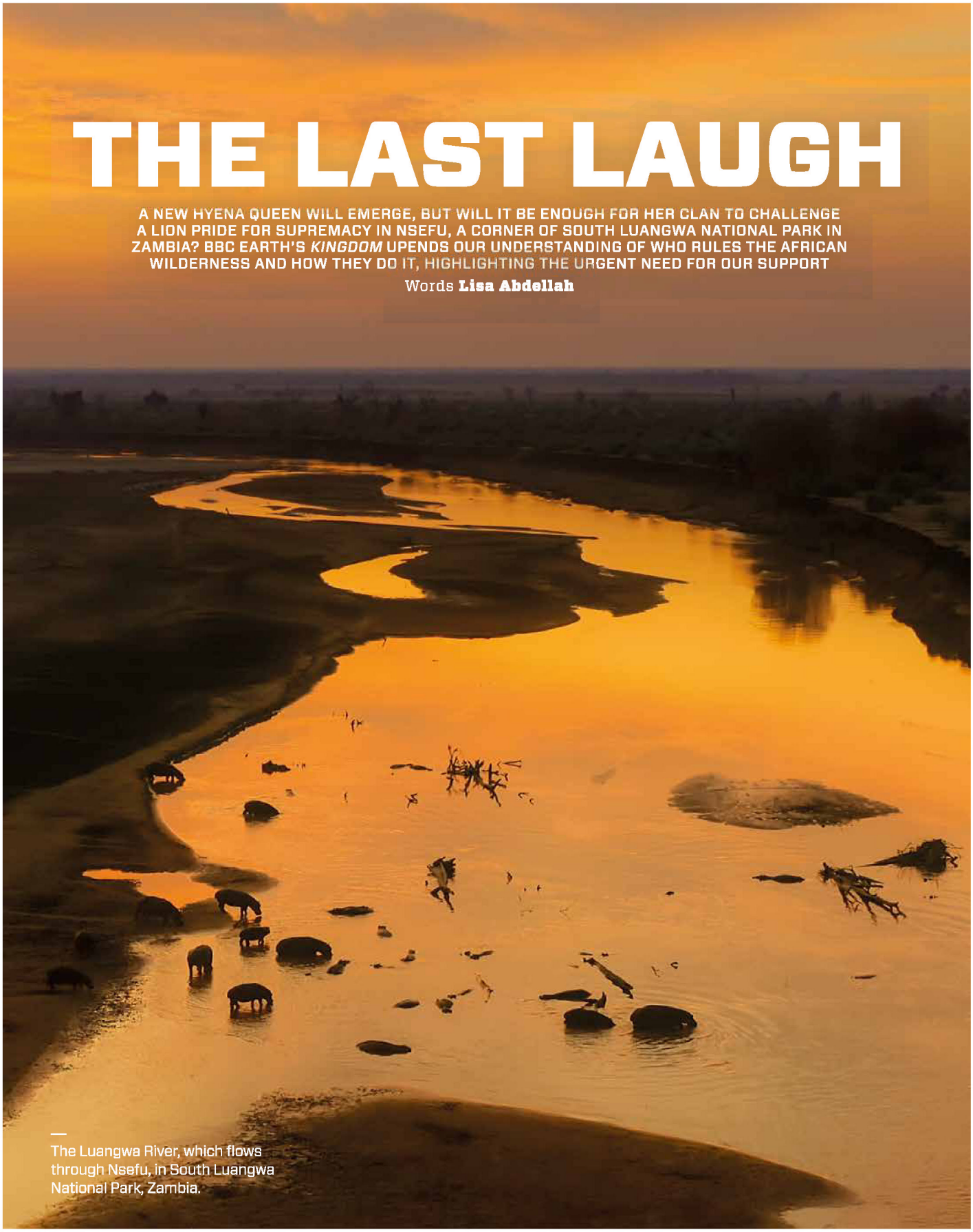


—
A lion pride shares its love and affection for one another in the Mountain Zebra National Park.

THE LAST LAUGH

A NEW HYENA QUEEN WILL EMERGE, BUT WILL IT BE ENOUGH FOR HER CLAN TO CHALLENGE A LION PRIDE FOR SUPREMACY IN NSEFU, A CORNER OF SOUTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK IN ZAMBIA? BBC EARTH'S *KINGDOM* UPENDS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHO RULES THE AFRICAN WILDERNESS AND HOW THEY DO IT, HIGHLIGHTING THE URGENT NEED FOR OUR SUPPORT

Words **Lisa Abdellah**



The Luangwa River, which flows through Nsefu, in South Luangwa National Park, Zambia.

Tucked in a grove of ebony trees in Nsefu, a corner of South Luangwa National Park in Zambia, which spans around 9 050 km² of unfenced wilderness, is a communal den. Here, we meet the residents: Tandala, who has just given birth to her first cub; her mother, Tenta, the queen of the clan, who has two twin cubs that are slightly older and bolder than Tandala's cub; and Tam, Tandala's sister.

BBC Earth's *Kingdom* provides a glimpse into their family life. These mothers care for their young for several years, longer than any other African predator, and produce one of the richest of all milks. But even so, the cubs need to feed for up to four hours a day, and each mother provides milk for a year. An adult can consume a third of their body weight in food; however, cubs don't regularly eat meat until they're around eight months old. Talk about making a big investment!

To track the animals, as well as four other families from other species, and tell this story, BBC Studios Natural History Unit (NHU) filmed over five years, spending around 1 400 days in the field. That's the longest they've spent in one place for a single series.

To the best of their knowledge, this is the first time a film crew has captured footage of these cubs chasing baboons, their behaviour excitable and hilarious, using elements from TV dramas to immerse viewers in the action. 'As soon as you notice the camera, it takes you out of their world,' says Series Editor Simon Blakeney. 'Whereas, filming on their eyeline is what we'd naturally do with people. It's almost impossible to watch that scene without recognising the similarities with what human children do.'





ABOVE A young spotted hyena at the communal den, where hyena mothers from the same clan raise their offspring.

LEFT Storm's African wild dog pack harasses pregnant hyena, Tandala.

We're not talking about a family of leopards, lions, or even wild dogs, but spotted hyenas. 'They have a bad reputation for stealing food, being "grotesque" or "ugly" and, in some places, linked to witchcraft,' says Episode Producer Dom Walters. The side of hyenas the NHU wanted to show was the element of them that often goes unseen. 'A side that will hopefully be surprising to viewers, and help to fight common misconceptions of these incredibly smart and endearing animals.'

It's also the first time the NHU has collaborated with several conservation teams, all working to protect the same area: Conservation South Luangwa, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, and the Zambian Carnivore Programme (ZCP), a field-based non-profit organisation dedicated to



Cinematographer Ian Llewellyn films spotted hyenas at their den in South Luangwa National Park.

conserving large carnivore species in Zambia. Little was known about Nsefu's hyenas before *Kingdom* started filming, but the ZCP started monitoring them more intensively in the same year, with the crew's help.

'In Africa, we have the most social species of the cat family (the lion), of the dog family (wild dogs, even more than wolves), and of the hyena family (the spotted hyena). No one had really made a series that tracks all the species, as well as the leopard, in the same place at the same time,' says Dr Matthew Becker, the scientific consultant for *Kingdom* and CEO of the ZCP. '*Kingdom* captures how heavily these species interact, and how suddenly the tables can turn due to intense competition.'

Carnivores that belong to the same guild share similar ecological requirements, which means they overlap in their diet, space and activity patterns. As a result, nearly every aspect of their existence – such as their appearance, feeding habits, vocalisations, movements, activity patterns and breeding systems – is influenced by competition. One family's triumph can mean another's tragedy.

In a time of rapid ecological change driven by human activities, such as climate change, habitat loss and increasing human populations, scientific information is critical for guiding and informing conservation efforts. This is especially true for spotted hyenas. Although they're widespread in Africa, with an estimated population of around 35 000 in the wild, their numbers are declining. Spotted hyenas face threats similar to those encountered by other carnivores, including poaching, bycatch, legal hunting, and prey depletion due to the illegal bushmeat trade. Despite these challenges, they're classified as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

'One reason is that they've received relatively little attention compared with their more glamorous cat and dog counterparts, perhaps because they're often reviled and persecuted,' says Dr Becker.

AGGRESSIVE?

What fascinates Dr Kay Holekamp, a biologist at Michigan State University, who's been studying the African species in the Masai Mara, Kenya, since 1988, is that hyenas seem to defy many fundamental rules of mammalian biology. Few other carnivore species have females that are larger, more aggressive and socially dominant over males.

'They're the only animal that lacks an external vaginal opening,' says Dr Holekamp. 'Females have a clitoris that, when erect, resembles a penis to the average observer. They urinate, copulate and give birth through this structure, which is quite unusual. Additionally, they have full control over these mechanics, allowing them to choose not to reproduce if they don't want to.

'Every hyena clan [with some clans reaching 120 members] operates under a matrilineal dominance

hierarchy, and your position in this hierarchy affects your access to vital resources such as food. This means that the offspring of higher-ranking females have a better chance of survival compared to those of lower-ranking females.

Simon was amazed as he observed these hierarchies being reinforced almost minute by minute. Capturing it on camera was challenging, as the interactions were often as subtle as a nod. Female hyenas can be aggressive, but perhaps that's necessary to protect their cubs, towards whom they are gentle and patient, as we see in *Kingdom*.

STUPID?

Dr Holekamp began studying primatologists' work on the evolution of intelligence. She wondered if she could test some of their hypotheses using hyenas, whose social structures are similar to those of baboons and macaques. 'We recorded the distress signals of cubs and played them back to their mothers, who could recognise their own cub's voices,' she explains.

Hyenas are capable of performing social-intellectual tasks similar to those of primates. Studies conducted by Duke University and the University of California, Berkeley, have shown that pairs of spotted hyenas can solve cooperative tasks, such as pulling ropes together to obtain food, without any prior training. Additionally, when Dr Holekamp observed a longtime puzzle-box champion named Gucci, it became evident that spotted hyenas can remember how they solved previous problems. Furthermore, Professor Sharleen Sakai, a neuroscientist at Michigan State University, discovered that spotted hyenas have a significantly larger frontal cortex compared to more solitary or less social hyena species.

SCAVENGERS?

Due to their similar ecological needs and competition with lions, the ZCP's task to understand the effects of lions, prey, environment and humans on hyena populations was challenging.

Fortunately, a unique natural experiment took place in Zambia's Greater Liuwa Ecosystem (GLE). Poaching and conflict had nearly driven lions to local extinction and significantly reduced the herbivore population. However, thanks to a long-term partnership between the government of Zambia, African Parks, and the Barotse Royal Establishment, the ecosystem has gradually recovered. The hyenas now face less competition from lions, have an ample food supply due to the increasing population of blue wildebeest, and experience low levels of human-carnivore conflict.

The ZCP monitored 663 individual hyenas across 11 clans in the GLE from 2010 to 2019. They evaluated the survival rates, reproduction and population dynamics of these hyenas in what



ABOVE Spotted hyena Tenta and her twins feed on a decaying hippo carcass.

BELOW A spotted hyena warns off approaching African wild dogs.





Kingdom airs on Mondays at 8 pm on BBC Earth (DStv Channel 184), with episodes available on DStv Catch Up.
Dynasties, *Series 2* (which features the South Clan hyenas, one of Jassiel's main study clans) is available on weekdays on BBC Earth and DStv Catch Up.



ABOVE A yearling spotted hyena, one of Tenta's daughters.

Dr Becker describes as 'Hyena Heaven'. It wasn't surprising that the researchers recorded very high rates of survival, reproductive success and population density. 'One of the hyenas lived to be 18 years old, which is comparable to those living in captivity,' says study author and ZCP Liuwa Project Founder Jassiel M'soka.

In the absence of competition from lions, hyenas in the GLE primarily hunted their prey, with 92% of their kills consisting of wildebeest. This challenges the common misconception that hyenas are primarily scavengers.

Unlike lions, which ambush their prey, hyenas are cursorial hunters. They chase their prey over long distances, depending on their endurance and sustained speed. Hyenas effectively use the landscape to their advantage, often driving their prey into a corner – such as a thicket or the edge of a gully – where escape becomes impossible.

Despite their somewhat dog-like appearance, hyenas are actually more closely related to cats, mongooses and civets. They can weigh up to 90 kg and reach speeds of up to 65 km/h. Moreover, their bone-crushing jaws provide them with the strongest bite force of any mammal.

While the GLE serves as a living example of ecosystem restoration and provides valuable lessons as recovery efforts continue, Nsefu tells a different story. South Luangwa is one of the remaining 10 strongholds for lions on the continent, and the prey base here consists mainly of hippos and buffalo.

Kingdom highlights human-carnivore conflict in Nsefu. Wire snare poaching is one of the greatest threats to large African carnivores. Although these traps are intended to catch herbivores, they often wound and kill large carnivores as well, in addition to depleting their prey. Some hunters can set up to 500 snares at one time, and while no exact figure exists, an estimated tens of millions of snares are deployed annually across Africa. During a year of filming, the ZCP, CSL and DNPW removed over 740 wire snares from South Luangwa.

Tandala, Tenta, and Tam have better opportunities for scavenging. 'One of the drivers of competition among carnivores is not live prey, but dead prey, carcasses, because the risk and energy cost of getting a kill from another species is lower than hunting,' says Jassiel.

In *Kingdom*, we observe hyenas mobbing lionesses to steal their kill. Hyenas possess an extraordinarily complex vocal range, featuring over 10 different vocalisations, including whoops, growls, screams, rumbles and giggles. One of the hyenas 'whoops' to call for reinforcement, a sound its clan can hear from over 5 km away and conveys information about the caller's age and sex. The hyenas choose to challenge the lionesses when the male lions aren't around to protect them. It's opportunistic and, most certainly, strategic.

The cubs' insistent demands force Tenta and the other females to take risks in their search for food. To the best of the NHU's knowledge, they're the first to film a six-month-old leopard cub collaborating with his mother to push a hyena off a kill. Although hyenas are twice the size of wild dogs, we observe that the dogs can outnumber a solitary hyena.

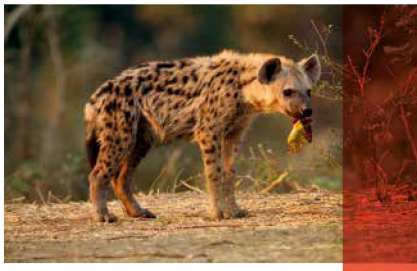
'Making a series where we're led by what the animals do, sometimes unexpectedly, is so much more exciting than making a scripted drama, because you realise they're individuals with different characteristics,' says Simon.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The ZCP's research on hyenas in the GLE and Nsefu is part of an ongoing case study, which also includes a third location: the Greater Kafue Ecosystem. You make general assumptions about hyena behaviour to a point, but you only have to compare those in the GLE and Nsefu to understand that their living conditions significantly influence how they interact with each other and other species. Dr Becker explains, 'We analyse what we call gradients of protection. This means we observe how animals behave in well-protected areas versus poorly protected areas. We also consider source-sink

PHOTOGRAPHY BBC STUDIOS/AMY GILCHRIST, BBC STUDIOS/DOM WALTER, BBC STUDIOS/LLOYD MWAL, COURTESY BBC STUDIOS





To learn more about ZCP's work and support hyena conservation efforts, visit ***zambiacarnivores.org***

ABOVE A male lion chases the spotted hyenas away from a kill.

BELOW RIGHT South Luangwa National Park, Zambia.

dynamics, where animals from well-protected (source) regions support populations in less secure (sink) areas. We believe this is how all these populations are behaving. When hyenas venture outside the safety of the GLE's boundaries, they face various human-related threats that could negatively impact their population.'

Hyenas are adaptable animals that can thrive in a variety of environments, including urban areas. They rarely pose a threat to humans, and they play a beneficial role in our ecosystems. 'Hyenas can actually eat carcasses laden with anthrax and not die,' says Dr Holekamp. 'Their immune function is out of this world. If a human were to ingest such contaminated meat, they probably wouldn't survive, so hyenas are actually helping to save lives.'

Other examples include Mekelle, a city in northern Ethiopia, where spotted hyenas remove roughly 200 tons of rubbish annually. Those in the Okavango Delta consume carcasses entirely, preventing the spread of disease and keeping water sources clean.

To ensure that hyenas can continue their work, the research conducted by the ZCP offers valuable insights into their plight, and that of the other African carnivores, the threats and what we need to do about it. By collaborating with other organisations, the ZCP can use this information to make decisions about conservation management. This includes identifying safe corridors for wildlife and potential poaching hotspots.

'That's where *Kingdom* really comes into its own,' says Dr Becker. 'We can say all these things, but when you see captivating portrayals of hyena clans, these individuals, it's hard not to have an emotional response or to realise that maybe this species isn't what we thought, and that it needs increased protection.' G



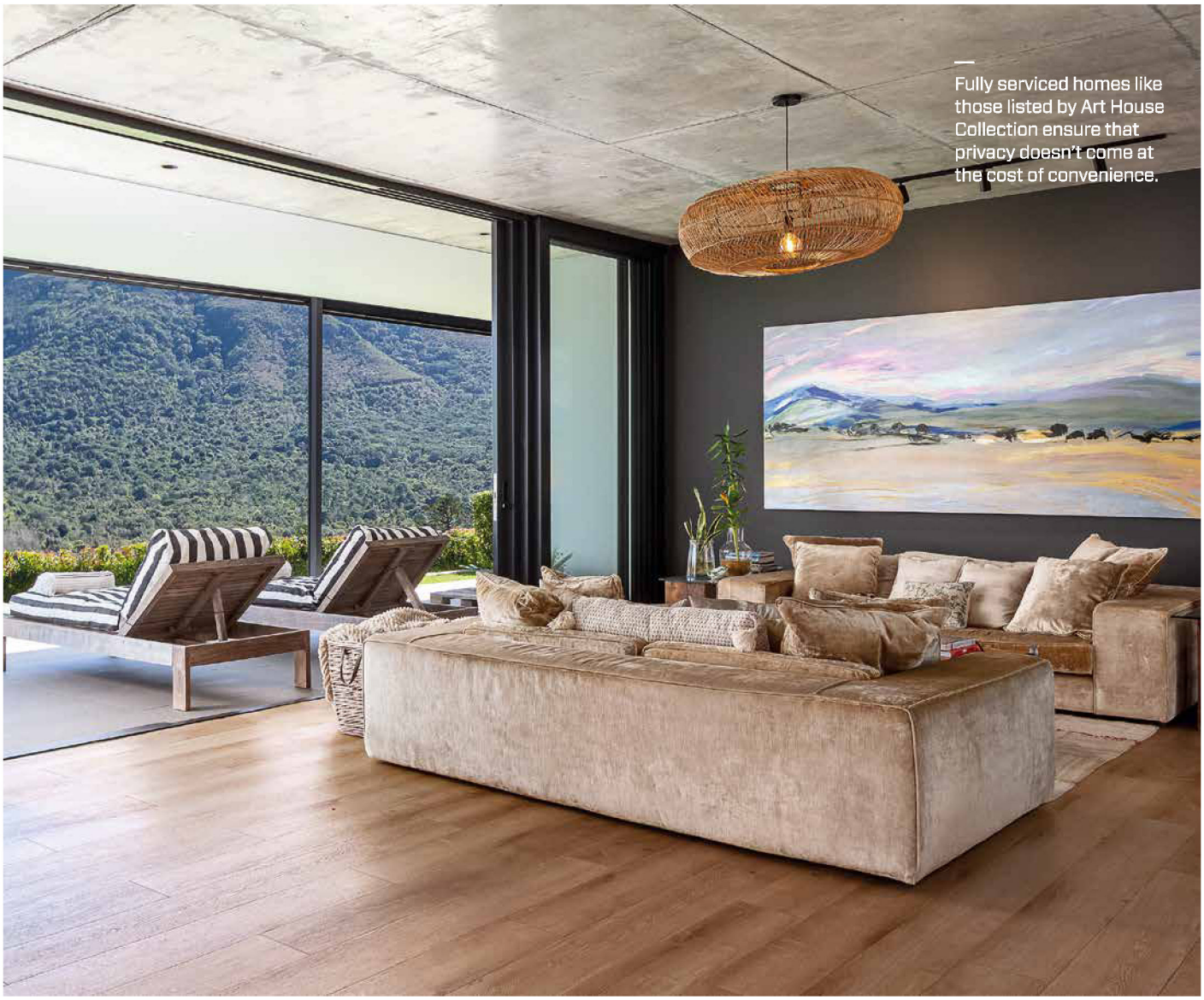
CLOSER TO HOME, FAR FROM ORDINARY

MICRO-ESCAPES ENABLE TRAVELLERS TO TRADE LONG-HAUL AND COMPLICATED ITINERARIES FOR SHORTER BREAKS THAT BRING A SENSE OF BALANCE

Words **Shai Rama**



Cape Grove is one of the properties in the Constantia region that Art House Collection has seen rise in popularity for short, serene escapes.



Fully serviced homes like those listed by Art House Collection ensure that privacy doesn't come at the cost of convenience.

We used to believe an escape required an expensive flight to another country, a currency conversion, learning how to say 'thank you' in a new language, and at least one airport meal that wasn't even worth eating. However, the great revelation is that sometimes all you need is 48 hours of free time. In South Africa, where vineyards, forests, coastlines and mountains sit within easy reach of our cities, the logic feels indulgent, and travellers are trading excess for fewer logistics, fewer crowds, and less 'doing it all' for more rest, more space, and ultimately, more feeling human again.

The rise of the micro-escape is impossible to miss, says Charlene Becker, the founder of Pinpoint Tours. Specialising in sustainable travel and bespoke trip planning, she works closely with travellers and global travel advisors, giving her a wide lens on how preferences are shifting, and a chance to witness the trend's rise first-hand. While short breaks have always existed, she explains that micro-escapes today are far more intentional and driven by well-being. 'Travellers are prioritising rest, balance, and quality experiences over a trip's duration,' she adds. 'I'm seeing more demand for short stays that include wellness elements, time in nature or meaningful cultural experiences rather than fast-paced sightseeing. The goal is less about 'doing it all' and more about coming home feeling genuinely refreshed,' Charlene continues.

Many hotels and lodges are offering curated two- or three-night experiences designed specifically for short stays, often centred around wellness, nature or local culture. There's also growing interest in properties that prioritise sustainability, thoughtful design and a strong sense of place. For hospitality providers, micro-escapes encourage more frequent bookings throughout the year, attracting travellers who value meaningful, eco-conscious experiences, which helps build loyalty and long-term brand trust.



Its seaside setting is one of the elements that make it easy to unwind at the The Oyster Box, a Red Carnation Hotel.

'Short stays can be incredibly effective because they naturally reduce stress: fewer logistics, fewer items to pack, and fewer "must-see" stops,' says Charlene. 'Travelling locally or within a short flight or drive minimises transit fatigue and maximises time on the ground. The most restorative micro-escapes are those designed around what the traveller truly needs; whether that's rest, nature or connection, rather than simply being away from home.'

SEEKING SANCTUARY

'We've noticed a significant rise in guests choosing our hotel specifically for rest, restoration and personal well-being,' says Philisiwe Gumede, the general manager of The Oyster Box, a Red Carnation Hotel. At the award-winning, five-star luxury boutique hotel and spa, the rise of the micro-escape is visible not just anecdotally, but also in booking patterns. 'Guests are increasingly booking The Oyster Box for these shorter trips, and not just for its iconic location and heritage, but for the sense of tranquillity, balance and emotional restoration our environment naturally provides.' A serene coastal setting and innovative amenities provide guests with an ideal environment to disconnect from the demands of everyday life. However, the hotel's proximity to the city means it has always been desirable for a quick but luxurious escape.

'While short stays have always been popular for reasons of cost and convenience, it's interesting to see a growing shift toward prioritising rest on these trips,' says Philisiwe. 'What truly transforms a short stay into a refreshing escape is a combination of attentive service, thoughtful details, and experiences that help guests quickly slip into a feeling of ease. There is also an element of strategy that many travellers overlook. Travellers often don't realise how much a well-curated plan can transform a short trip. A thoughtfully packaged itinerary organises the time while amplifying the entire experience.

'In just a few days, guests can enjoy activities from an immersive local tour in Durban or the Umhlanga area, or indulging in two or more of our signature amenities, whether that's our award-winning spa, high tea, fine dining, rooftop cocktails, or simply relaxing by the pool. When these elements combine, a short stay becomes a richer, fuller escape, one that feels like five days of rejuvenation and discovery.'



—
Those whose ideal holiday centres on rest and relaxation have come to the right place.



—
The high tea table in The Palm Court at The Oyster Box.

BERGHOUSE & cottages

A LITTLE MOUNTAIN PARADISE

Discover peaceful Northern Drakensberg accommodation at the Berghouse and Cottages, a charming mountain retreat nestled in the breathtaking landscapes of the Drakensberg Mountains.

Surrounded by some of South Africa's most spectacular scenery, this tranquil escape offers panoramic views of the famous Amphitheatre, the sweeping Tugela Valley and the seasonal Tugela Falls – one of the tallest waterfalls in the world.

Perfect for travellers looking for Drakensberg cottages, a romantic mountain getaway or a nature-filled holiday in KwaZulu-Natal, the Berghouse and Cottages offers comfortable, character-filled accommodation designed to help you relax and reconnect with nature. Each cottage blends rustic charm with modern comforts, providing a warm and welcoming space to unwind after a day exploring the mountains. Both half-board and self-catering options are available.

Located in the heart of the Northern Drakensberg, guests can enjoy some of the best adventure activities without leaving the property, such as Drakensberg hiking trails, bird watching, guided horseback riding and mountain biking. Visitors can also relax on a private veranda and enjoy uninterrupted Drakensberg Mountain views, surrounded by rolling hills and dramatic peaks.

Nature lovers and photographers will appreciate the proximity to iconic landmarks such as the Amphitheatre and spectacular Tugela Falls, making the Berghouse and Cottages an ideal base for exploring the beauty of the Northern Drakensberg.

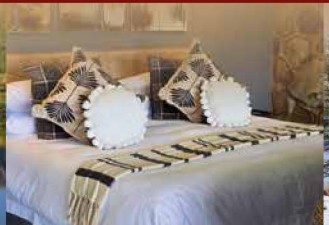
With its peaceful setting, warm hospitality and unforgettable mountain scenery, the Berghouse and Cottages offers a truly memorable Drakensberg accommodation experience where relaxation, adventure and natural beauty come together.



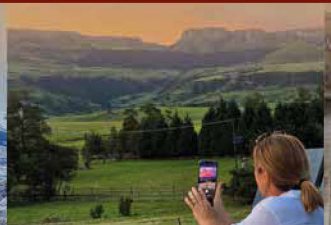
We are located midway between Johannesburg and Durban, high up in the Northern Drakensberg Mountains.

berghousecottages@gmail.com www.berghouse.co.za berghousecottages Berghouse Cottages











THE LUXURY OF DOING LESS (AND MORE)

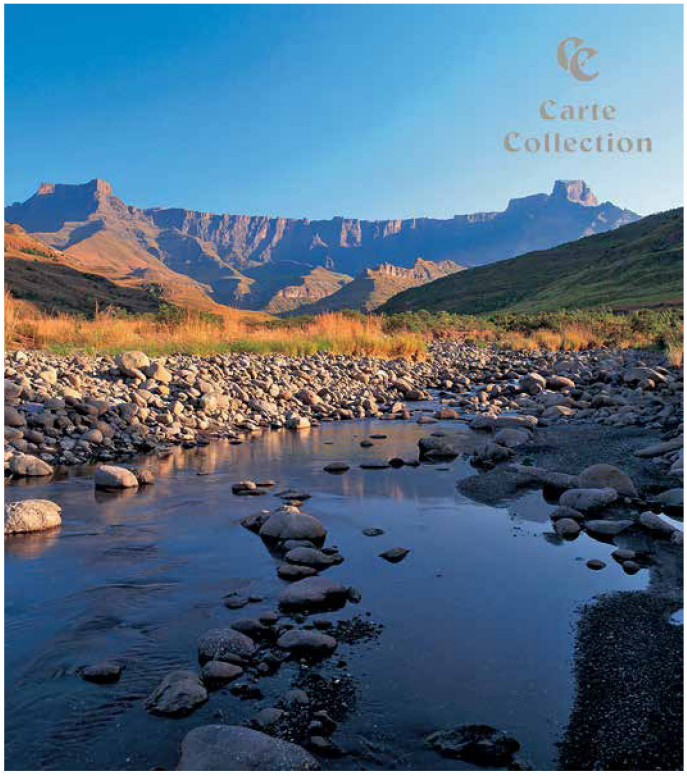
A deeply baked burnout across generations demands that holidays, long or short, deliver a complete disconnect,' says Piet Smedy, the CEO of Art House Collection. 'These escapes are not for Instagram reels; they're for the very real need to reconfigure in a way that feels personal and intentional.' Piet cites research by US-based SmartFlyer, which identified 'transformative experiences' as one of the biggest drivers in global travel: 'People want high-touch, often multigenerational trips. The numbers back up the micro-escape trend: shorter stays were the most popular, with stays of three to four days making up 32% of all bookings in 2025, according to eDreams ODIGEO's annual survey of 7.7 million travellers.'

What does this look like locally? 'There's been a visible shift in the idea of the "ideal location" for





— Signature amenities and the view at The Oyster Box make even a short stay memorable.



A Place For Everyone

Ruth and Bill Carte arrived in the Drakensberg mountains in 1941. Four generations later, their legacy continues with three unique businesses owned and managed by their five granddaughters. These thriving establishments are all different, yet each one provides rich experiences in an extraordinary wilderness.

The Cavern is where families bond, friendships are forged and memories are made. A tucked-away romantic escape for couples, a retreat for quiet solitude, and a child-friendly resort with fun activities, it is fully catered with buffets and a set menu with choices.

Sungubala Eco Camp is on a secluded mountain farm overlooking the Sungubala Valley. A self-catering camp, it is ideal for nature lovers and families who want to immerse themselves in hiking, mountain biking, fishing and bathing in clear rivers and streams.

Montusi Mountain Lodge is a high-end, beautifully appointed lodge offering generous accommodation and fine cuisine. In this gentle ambience, guests remain within nature's embrace, finding solace and peace in the whispers of calm and vast views, magnificent walking trails and time to read on cosy sofas at the fireside.

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Architecture and art set the scene at Spier Wine Farm.





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The CAVERN
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Carte Collection

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

NORTHERN DRAKENSBERG NATURE RESERVE





ABOVE & TOP For travellers seeking a spontaneous escape from the city, Spier presents a series of tranquil options.

a stay,' says Piet of travel trends in Cape Town. 'A few years ago, it was the Atlantic Seaboard every time: Clifton, Camps Bay, Bantry Bay. Recently, guests are choosing to move further out, away from the traffic and crowds, somewhere peaceful and private that still offers proximity to the beach and Winelands. Constantia and Higgovale have become popular options for these reasons, with availability and pricing often less competitive than their seaside counterparts.'

Piet adds that underlying this is a philosophy of slowness. 'At Art House Collection, we follow a philosophy of Blue Zone hospitality: first proposed by author Dan Buettner, whose research examined the places where people live past 100 with vitality. He found that these communities share common principles, not just diet or genetics, but culture and environment. They favoured slow movement, mindful engagement with their communities, and a close connection to place. In the same way, we see the way guests interact with their spaces and the way their spaces interact with their surroundings as an integral part of a restorative stay.'

WINE AND DINE, WALK AND WANDER

If there is one place that understands the art of the nearby getaway, it is Spier. With an 80-room hotel and spa featuring rooms, suites, and private villas surrounded by rewilded fynbos gardens, guests staying at the wine farm enjoy access to a heated outdoor pool and rooftop bar, as well as the farm's nature trails, wine tasting, restaurants, artisanal shops and art installations, all within walking distance.

'Spier has always been a favourite for locals looking for a quick break, but since the hotel's renovation, we've noticed a growing interest in short, spontaneous getaways,' says Aimee Raymond, the Riverbank brand manager at Spier. 'It's an accessible escape for couples celebrating a special occasion. Families also love that there is plenty to do without leaving the farm. Even a two- or three-night stay feels restorative.'

There's plenty of space to wander and explore in a property thoughtfully designed so that even when full, the farm doesn't feel crowded, which helps maintain a sense of calm and privacy. The wine farm is also introducing new experiences to keep visits fresh: their next project is the renovation of the Picnickery with Jacques Erasmus of Hemelhuijs.

'One of the biggest advantages is choosing somewhere easy to reach, so you spend more time relaxing rather than travelling. Once you arrive, it helps to slow down and resist the urge to overplan,' says Aimee. 'A spa treatment, a walk in nature, good seasonal food made with wholesome ingredients, and simply taking time away from screens can make even a brief escape deeply restorative. The key is choosing a place where everything you need to unwind is within easy reach.'

Short, it seems, does not mean shallow. The rise of the micro-escape is less about how much you can see and more about how you want to feel. Across wine farms, private homes, and curated short stays, a pattern is evident: choose somewhere easy to reach, so that you can slow down, eat well, get in touch with a place that feels familiar even though it is foreign, walk outside, and resist the urge to schedule every hour. Let the place do some of the work. In a country as geographically generous as South Africa, two or three nights, thoughtfully spent, can recalibrate more than a packed 10-day itinerary ever could. The micro-escape reminds us that sometimes the most memorable and meaningful journeys are the ones that start close to home. G

PHOTOGRAPHY KEITH QUIXLEY (CAPE GROVE IMAGES), COURTESY IMAGES

Travellers are ***PRIORITISING REST****, balance and* ***QUALITY EXPERIENCES*** *over a trip's duration*



Outdoor dining done right: Even when the farm's at its busiest, Spier still offers plenty of breathing room.

MAGICAL MADIKWE

SAFARIS INTRODUCE US TO NEW PLACES IN THE VELD, BUT SOMETIMES, THE JOURNEY IS MORE INWARD

Words **Clifford Roberts**





—
The Madikwe landscape is cinematic in scale, with classic African safari experiences to match.



I looked towards the horizon where lightning shattered the sky. The storm was beyond the reserve's expanse of bush, perhaps over Botswana's capital. The lights above Gaborone, I thought. It brought to mind a childhood memory of reading Alistair MacLean's *The Guns of Navarone*. The serene days of safari had sent my thoughts to blissful and unexpected associations.

Storms in Africa are unlike any other. They seemingly invoke the gods in monumental clouds, white, grey and black, hurling fury at Earth, man and beast. They are biblical in scale, and I sat for a time watching the heavenly spectacle through the frame of trees at Last Word Madikwe, a luxury lodge in the North West Province.

I'd travelled four hours from Pretoria to get there. As a Capetonian, I had wondered about the road conditions, but these were good. Tar roads, the N4 and R49, take you through a stretch of the countryside rich in battleground history – Swartruggens, Groot Marico, Zeerust. The world feels deceptively peaceful here.

Just over a year ago, torrential downpours caused severe flooding at some of Madikwe's lodges, which diverted visitors to safari in the eastern part of the country. By the time many had completed their revamps earlier this year, however, another storm hit, this time flooding camps in the Kruger National Park and surrounds, making Madikwe among the go-to alternatives.

The lodge perches on a slight ridge overlooking a broad pan of bush. Its manicured garden, set against the dry veld, makes it a kind of jewellery box, and a few low chairs and cushions facing towards a waterhole beckon all who pass. I quickly learned that every hour of the day at this perch brings different moods. The early morning, optimism and excitement; the white-hot midday, silence and immobility; sunset, reflection and transition.

It was different in the dark, when our game vehicle left the pool of light that surrounds the buildings. Usually, I'm in bed at this time, the day's tension slowly seeping away. Not here. Sitting in a game vehicle, discussions on the radio up front were indistinct, though I sensed that something was up. St John, our guide, geared up and gunned the engine. We had some ground to cover, he said, and we held on as the vehicle eventually left the main gravel track and followed a drainage trench. The basalt mounds, evidence of ancient volcanic activity that shaped this land, appeared even blacker now than in daylight. Small white things in the glare of the Toyota Land Cruiser's lights scampered off into the inky verge.

In a patch of scrubland, we found our quarry – a single, large, male lion. St John dimmed the lights. The pride is elsewhere, moving west, he said, so he might spend the night here before moving, too. Out of the dark came a series of distant guttural grunts, and our lion replied in kind, his entire body transformed by the action, from cat to something more unsettling and mesmerising.

Lions are one reason safari-seekers are enticed to visit Madikwe. It's also off the beaten track of reserves in South Africa, malaria-free and one of the few big game reserves with a population of wild dogs, says Lodge Manager Jodi Medlock.

At 750 km², Madikwe is roughly the size of Singapore. It was established in the early '90s from former cattle farms. The translocation of over 8 000 animals of 28 species was the world's largest re-introduction programme at the time.

There are several lodges in the reserve, including the brand's latest acquisition, Last

ABOVE White rhinos bask openly, protected by anti-poaching units.

RIGHT The elephant population has ballooned since the park's establishment.

BELOW Madikwe's lions are from Etosha National Park in Namibia and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier National Park.





I'd never been this close to a ***WILD ELEPHANT****, able to see the small black hairs on its* ***SANDPAPER-LIKE SKIN****, wrinkled like an ancient map, and its* ***MUD-CRUSTED TOENAILS***



Word Makanyane, and its five-suite Last Word Madikwe, where I stayed. The latter was once a family homestead – a characteristic that is incorporated in the current experience. Children of all ages are welcome. There's a pool beside the lawn, babysitting services, a playroom and a short, private and fenced nature trail.

I was drawn to the subterranean hide in late afternoons, with one particularly memorable experience.

—

LEFT Waterholes in the reserve attract creatures big and small, like the yellow-fronted canary.

From a narrow slit in the concrete, the structure gives you a ground-level view of the waterhole, and by the time I descended into its bowels, a handful of watchers had already assembled. Towering over us was a large elephant. I'd never been this close to a wild elephant, able to see the small black hairs on its sandpaper-like skin, wrinkled like an ancient map, and its mud-crusted toenails. Beyond its tree-stump legs, the rest of the family splashed and drank at the waterside. 'We're really spoiled,' St John said on another evening drive. 'For many first-time visitors to Africa, seeing an animal in the wild is deeply spiritual.'

The herd at the waterhole, and the big one's eyes looking down at us, felt familiar – a dislodging of something inside, like that storm beyond the reserve. Africa's vast theatre had braided the elemental and the personal, showing me that wilderness is not only something you observe, but something that rearranges you, as surely and silently as thunder rolling over the plains. G

Trip Planner

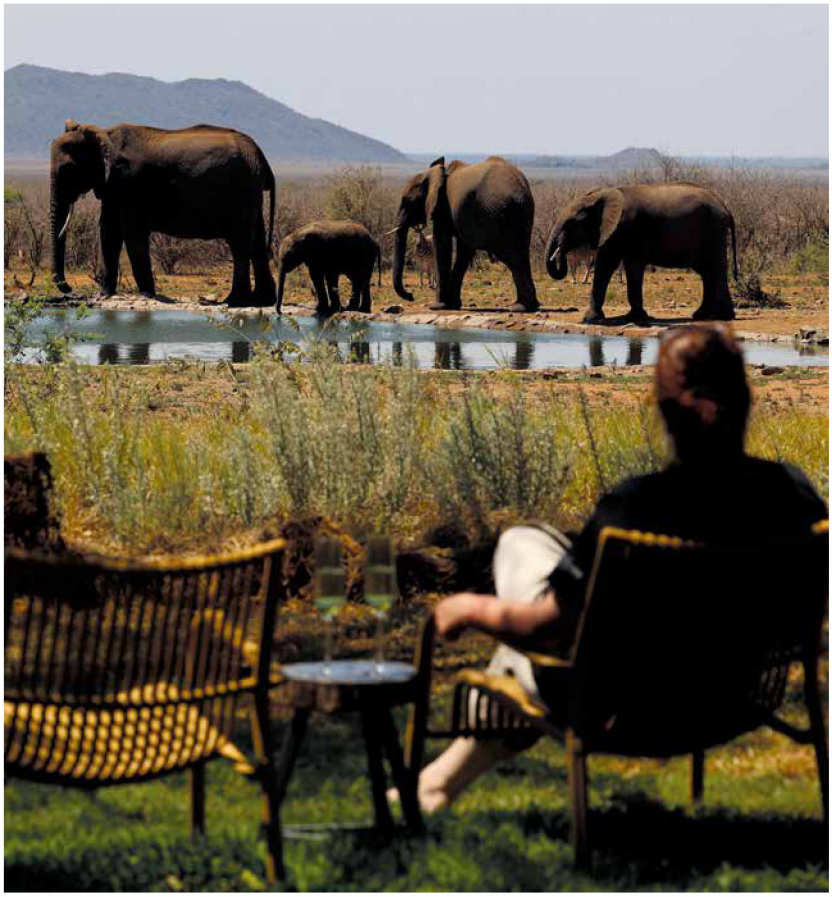
GETTING THERE

The reserve has two airstrips for charter and domestic flights from Johannesburg, but most people get there by car.

Travelling from Gauteng, a fascinating and worthwhile stop is the Vaalkop Country Shop & Museum, near Marico. Last Word Madikwe is 20 km from the Botswana border and a 40-minute drive from Gaborone.

madikwereserve.org





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THE ROAD TO STILLNESS

ON THE EDGE OF THE KLEINRIVIER LAGOON, MOSAIC LAGOON LODGE INVITES GUESTS TO SLOW DOWN, BREATHE AND EMBRACE THE SIMPLE LUXURY OF UNINTERRUPTED TRANQUILLITY

Words **Oliver Keohane**



Often, we find ourselves travelling north from Cape Town into the alien folds of the Cederberg, wrapped up in dry heat, long days and contented disconnect. Less frequently, but with equal gratitude, we make our way into the Overberg, where the green, fresh novelty of being flanked by ocean and mountain never wears off.

Mosaic Lagoon Lodge is on the edge of the Kleinrivier Lagoon. Surrounded by the Kleinrivier Mountains, and the Atlantic Ocean, which faces Walker Bay, this eco-conscious retreat offers a modern rarity: stillness.

My partner and I were fortunate to spend two days indulging in this sanctuary of birdsong and golden evenings, as summer began to wind down.

The lodge adds another layer of natural wonder to waves and rocks: the lagoon. But before arriving at the peaceful waters near Mosaic, we cut a scenic scar through the Elgin Valley, trading the tarred N2 for the red-dirt Highlands Road. Driving from Cape Town, we took the first right after Peregrine Farm Stall onto Viljoenshoop Road, then drove about a kilometre before turning left onto Highlands Road.

It's one of my favourite passes – recommended by a dear friend who said that every year, on the way to Hermanus, his family would take a slow drive down the road, stopping along the way to cut down their Christmas tree. Whether you're a tourist or a Cape Town local, you won't be disappointed taking the 10 km route, bordered by vineyards and coniferous vegetation and, at the close of summer, looked down on by a belting blue sky.

You don't necessarily need a 4x4 or a large vehicle to take this road, but it helps. A vehicle with some clearance is preferable for Highlands' potted gravel; even better is one with a selectable four-wheel-drive or all-wheel-drive system.

For nearly half a year, I'd taken custodianship of the Ford Ranger Wildtrak X as a long-term test vehicle, and while it spent a lot of time ferrying us around town, we took every chance we had to let it stretch its legs for adventure. One of my favourite Widltrak X functions is the 4A on-demand, all-wheel-drive setting, which detects slippage and distributes power to the four wheels accordingly. You can drive it on both tar and gravel (unlike other four-wheel high-range drive modes). It's useful when driving on stretches that alternate between tar and gravel – as do many trips into the Western Cape's surrounds. It proved useful again as we eventually turned off the R43 and idled through Stanford's quiet streets before setting off on the final gravel stretch towards the lagoon, the horizon framed by brilliant green fynbos, the white dirt road guiding us toward the retreat.

BELOW The impressive bed in the Luxury Safari-style Suite with a Forest View.

BELOW RIGHT Breakfast, lunch and dinner are part of the all-inclusive package at Mosaic Lagoon Lodge.



When we arrived, we received a peaceful itinerary that spoke to one of the great pleasures of our two days at Mosaic: the option to immerse ourselves in the beautiful natural surroundings, with an absolute lack of pressure even to leave the room, except for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The all-inclusive package covers meals and a selection of drinks, and Vitalas, Mosaic's charming private guide, helps plan your activity itinerary.

Private activities include a guided nature walk in the early morning, exploring the waters of the lagoon by canoe, or taking a 4×4 beach excursion to Walker Bay, where white dunes zigzag the shores of the Atlantic, contrasting the deep green sea of fynbos in the reserve. From June to November, you may spot southern right whales breaching nearby. Hermanus and Walker Bay are recognised as two of the best land-based whale-watching destinations in the world. The Lady Stanford River Cruise offers a trip along the Klein River toward the Hermanus Lagoon, and you can hike to the Klipgat Caves, the site of some of South Africa's first Middle Stone Age archaeological excavations. Birdlife remains a massive attraction in the area; over 350 species have been spotted in Hermanus and the surrounding Overberg, with frequent sightings of kingfishers, flamingos and African fish eagles.

We skipped the nature walk. Instead, we chose to meander, map in hand, through the lush surroundings. Unfortunately, we had to

DRIVE IN FOCUS

FORD RANGER WILDTRAK X

The Wildtrak X is a factory-built off-road Ford Ranger for buyers who want adventure capability without needing aftermarket upgrades.

The double-cab features a suspension tuned for rough terrain, a slightly raised ride height and a wider stance to improve stability on gravel and uneven tracks. It also has 17-inch Asphalt Black machine-faced alloy wheels and General Grabber AT3 all-terrain tyres, reinforcing its off-road focus straight from the showroom floor.

Power comes from Ford's proven 2.0-litre bi-turbo diesel engine, paired with a 10-speed automatic gearbox and selectable four-wheel drive modes.

The Wildtrak X is among the best in its segment for comfort and technology, offering a large touch-screen infotainment system, digital instruments and practical features suited to touring and everyday use. The result is a Ranger that emphasises genuine off-road ability while retaining the refinement expected of a lifestyle-focused double-cab.







ABOVE The cloud-shrouded Kleinrivier Mountains overlook the lagoon.

PHOTOGRAPHY OLIVER KEOHANE, COURTESY IMAGES

rule out kayaking thanks to uncharacteristic summer rain. It didn't matter, because so much of Mosaic's appeal lies in its invitation to relax. To wake up late, and have coffee in bed as the rain hit the deck in irregular droplets from the dense canopy of evergreen foliage, was as rewarding as any early morning walk.

You can attribute much of the area's serenity, beyond awe-inspiring nature, to Mosaic's architecture, which offers privacy and intimacy. There are five luxury safari-style suites at the lodge – each unique in design and allure. At any given time, you don't see many other people, and even when dining at the same time, there's never more than four other tables worth of guests, quietly chattering over a glass of the house wine and a piece of meat cooked to perfection by Head Chef Lucky.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served between specific times each day, and the lagoon is a different scene at each mealtime. At breakfast, the morning sun bounced hopefully off the water to usher in a new day, lunchtime saw the shores abuzz with the quiet daytime activities of hidden wildlife and birds, and we enjoyed dinner as the sky glowed amber on the horizon line, colouring the Kleinrivier Mountains and lagoon a kaleidoscope of orange as the mozzies hummed to life to go to war with our insect repellent.

We stayed in a Luxury Safari-style Suite with a Forest View. Tucked away in a beautiful tangle of milkwood trees, the thatch-roofed suite blends organic architecture with luxurious modern finishes. Taking centre stage is a king-size bed draped in a mosquito net and covered in lush linen. Striking wooden fittings frame the doors and windows, and the bathroom, built from stone and decorated with warm lights and woven baskets, leads to a private outdoor shower. Beyond the deck, beneath the branches, is a wood-fired hot tub.

A few kilometres from the main lodge lies the Milkwood Spa. After our late-morning stroll, we took the short drive to the spa for a full-body massage. An hour later, smiley and droopy-eyed, we emerged to the sun fighting its way through the day's cloud cover. It'd stopped drizzling, leaving the fresh smell of water on leaves, and an opportunity to take an afternoon drive to the white dunes, and enjoy an evening drink in the company of the birds, the fynbos and the rolling waves of Walker Bay.

You can't put a price on peace, and what Mosaic gets right is allowing you the time and space to unwind entirely and privately. At the water's edge, hugged by forest and fynbos, you can choose to do everything or nothing at all, and luxuriate in either option. **G**

Mosaic Lagoon Lodge
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RIDING THE WIND

ADRIENNE BREDEVELDT HAS AN IMMERSIVE ESCAPE TO THE C KITE FESTIVAL IN MAURITIUS





Set along sunlit shores, the C Kite Festival at C Resorts, Mauritius captures the effortless elegance of kitesurfing – where movement, freedom and ocean energy converge.



A kitesurfer carves through the waves during the C Kite Festival, hosted at C Resorts, Mauritius.

In June last year, while Cape Town was tucking itself beneath winter's blanket, I found myself standing on a sun-warmed Mauritian beach watching kites carve neon slashes across the sky. I had arrived for the C Kite Festival, an annual gathering that transforms the east coast of Mauritius into a playground for wind-seekers, wave-chasers and people like me who love watching humans do impossible things with a sheet of fabric and a board.

Leading the festival is Antoine Auriol, the former kitesurf world champion, whose everyday energy feels charged by trade winds. With the heart of a teacher and the smooth charisma of a TV host, he guides participants into an almost cinematic experience of elite kitesurfing. Under his wing, the festival becomes less of a spectator event and more of a full-body immersion, whether you're riding, learning or specating from the shore with a cocktail in hand.

Then there's the festival line-up, which reads like a superhero cast list: Gisela Pulido, a 10-time Freestyle world champion, moves across the water like a human metronome of precision. Hannah Whiteley, world champion in Kite Speed and multi-year vice world champion in Big Air and Freestyle, flies with a kind of ferocity that makes the ocean look slow. Julia Castro, known for Triple S podiums and world-stage finals, stitches style and power into every trick. Tom Court, British champion and E-foil world champion, brings the sort of laid-back confidence that only comes from having every possible medal already hanging in your wardrobe. Val Garat, four-time French champion, pairs classic freestyle with flawless control. And local favourite Louka Pitot brings home-soil pride: five-time French champion, two-time junior world champion, and firmly within the world's top six.

LIKE WATCHING THE WIND APPLAUD

Even with all this star power, the festival has a secret co-host: its home, C Mauritius, an all-inclusive lifestyle resort settled along the powder-fine coast of Palmar, on the island's breezy east side. It's a place that somehow manages to be both playful and calm, like a resort built by someone who loves colour, comfort and clever simplicity. If the festival is the heart-pounding part of the story, C Mauritius is the warm exhale that follows.

REDISCOVERING PLAY

C Mauritius welcomes you the way a friend would into a beach house: no fuss, no frills, just 'kick off your shoes and breathe'. The resort stretches along a gleaming belt of lagoon where the water glows in that surreal electric-turquoise shade Mauritius seems to manufacture effortlessly. The breeze arrives early each morning as if on schedule, fluttering the palm leaves and promising another perfect day.

Every corner of the resort encourages curiosity and connection. There's no heavy luxury, no stiff

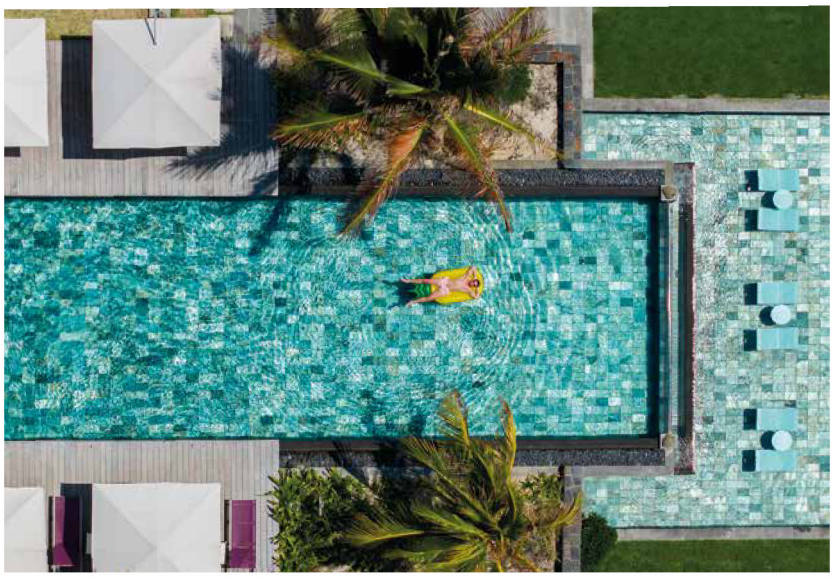


ABOVE Fresh, vibrant and thoughtfully presented – buffet dining at C Resorts Maurtius.

BELOW The shimmering infinity pool at C Resorts, Mauritius, is surrounded by palm trees and sunlit deck loungers.

formality. Instead, the aesthetic is bright, modern and a touch cheeky: swings at the bar, splashes of colour on cushions, communal tables designed for chatting to strangers who might become sunset-watching friends.

My room faced the swimming pool, where mornings began with the soft shimmer of sunlight dancing on the water. The gentle splash of an early swimmer replaced the sound of waves, a rhythm as calming as slow breathing. From the balcony, I'd watch guests drift toward breakfast or stretch out on loungers, their laughter and chatter rising like the first notes of a summer song.



SUNRISE RITUALS AND ISLAND RHYTHMS

One of my favourite moments came on the first morning when I wandered outside in search of coffee. The air still carried its cool dawn softness, and the resort was busy waking up. Staff set out loungers. The kitchen clattered to life. The lagoon turned from grey to teal.

The Cpicerie Artisanal Market, the resort's heart and soul, opens early with fresh pastries, island fruit, and the kind of butter-soft croissants that ruin you for all others. There's also a juice bar that operates like a mini potion station, squeezing everything from pineapple to pawpaw into glasses that taste like they've been distilled directly from sunshine.

Because the resort is all-inclusive, the usual mental maths of 'what will this cost me?' vanishes. Instead, you float from activity to activity with the sort of relaxed confidence that normally only happens when you've won a small lottery.

LIFE BETWEEN WIND GUSTS

When the festival wasn't pulling us to the beach, C Resorts offered more ways to stay busy than a summer camp on espresso.

There's paddle boarding along the clear shallows, where you can look down and see little fish darting like confetti. There's kayaking, which is more relaxing than it looks, mostly because the lagoon is calm and welcoming. There's beach volleyball, which attracts a blend of serious competitors and people who just want an excuse to dive dramatically in soft sand.

And then there's the pool scene, a long ribbon of blue lined with comfy loungers and strategically placed umbrellas. It's the perfect place to disappear for a few hours with a book, or enjoy a nap or icy drink from the poolside bar, specialising in sunny liquid happiness.

If wellness is your thing, the resort's little spa offers massages that turn your muscles into cooperative pudding. After a day of watching kitesurfers perform small miracles, lying still in a dark, cool room feels like stepping into another universe.

THE FOOD: EFFORTLESS, ABUNDANT, ISLAND-FRESH

If travel stories had taste buds, Mauritius would be famous for its kitchen. C Resorts leans into that heritage with ease.

At the main restaurant, buffets don't feel like buffets. Everything is fresh, bright and plated with care. Mauritian flavours take the lead: curries with coconut notes, grilled seafood, fresh roti, fragrant biryanis and crisp salads that taste like they were harvested at sunrise.

There's also Wok 'N Roll, a street-food-style Asian eatery that's equal parts fun and delicious. Sitting by the sea while eating stir-fried noodles and dumplings feels right, as if your taste buds are also on holiday.



LEFT Afternoon indulgences worth lingering over at C Resorts, Mauritius.

BELOW Ocean views extend from the bedroom at C Resorts, Mauritius.

The beach bar becomes the spiritual centre of the resort each afternoon. The menu is simple and satisfying: burgers, wraps, fresh fish and snacks that pair perfectly with sand-between-your-toes living.

By the time dessert rolls around each evening, you've forgotten what hunger is, yet somehow there's always room for the resort's legendary crepes.

THE FESTIVAL ENERGY MEETS THE RESORT SOUL

During festival week, C Resorts shifts into a brighter, more charged version of itself. Everywhere you walk, you catch snippets of excited conversation about wind conditions, foil boards, trick lines and perfect 'pop'. Athletes chat with amateurs. Beginners ask pros for tips.



Even if you know nothing about kitesurfing, the environment pulls you in. You find yourself trying to read the water as the pros do. You feel the wind lift the hair at your neck and think, 'I get why they love this'.

And when you watch the athletes take to the sky, the beauty hits you with surprising force. A kite catches wind, the rider gains speed, and suddenly they're airborne, rising cleanly above the water. For a breath, everything pauses: the board, the body, the sky holding its breath. Then they land with a soft splash, like a punctuation mark on a perfect sentence.

WHERE TIME BEHAVES DIFFERENTLY

Something strange happens at C Resorts, Mauritius: time stretches, not in a lazy, dragging way, but in a calm, unhurried one. You start moving as the island does. You eat when you're hungry. You swim when you're warm. You nap when the palm trees throw shade just right.

By the third day, I stopped checking my phone. By the fourth, I felt like my body had dissolved into the rhythm of wind and water.

RELUCTANT TO LEAVE

When the festival drew to a close, the lagoon returned to its quieter everyday hum. The beach felt a little softer, the sky a little more golden, as if the island knew it had given us something special.

On my last morning, I walked along the shoreline one more time. The wind carried the distant flap of kites still slicing the horizon. The resort behind me glowed in the early sun. Palm trees swayed like they were waving goodbye.

Mauritius has a way of getting under your skin, slipping into the space between breath and heartbeat. And C Resorts, Mauritius, with its easy charm and wind-kissed soul, makes it nearly impossible to imagine not returning. I arrived for the C Kite Festival.

I left with that sun-drenched, ocean-washed feeling you can only get from places that know exactly how to hold you. **G**

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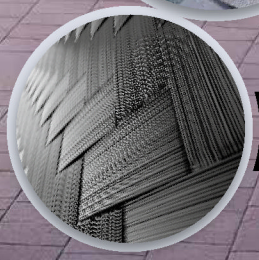

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The vast stone columns of Karnak Temple.

Words **Sarah Kingdom**

SAILING THROUGH TIME

FROM KARNAK'S COLOSSAL COLUMNS TO THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS, A NILE CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS EGYPT'S ANCIENT WONDERS IN GOLDEN LIGHT



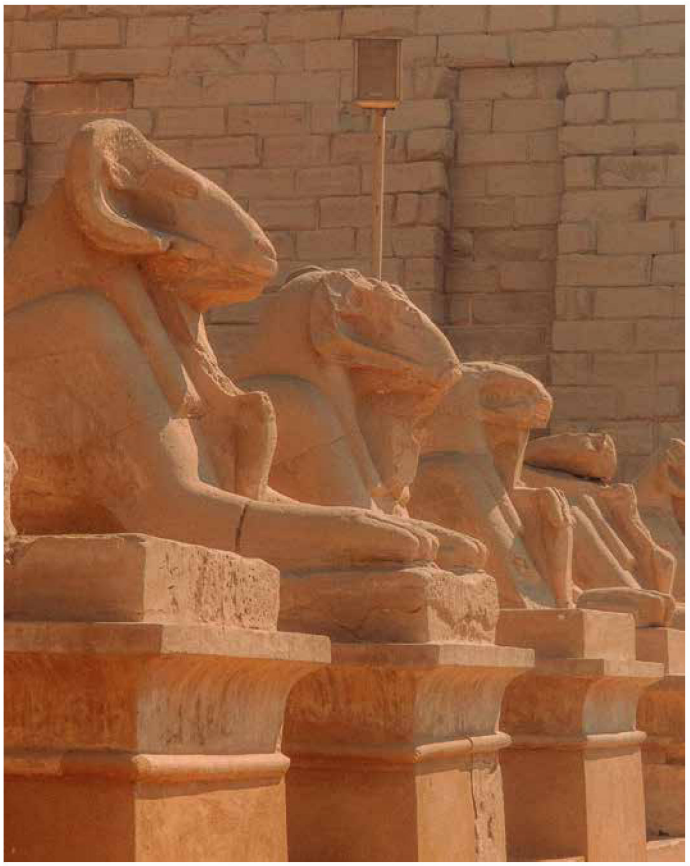
I step out of the taxi and onto the corniche in Luxor, Egypt. I've wanted to visit Egypt since my school days, to see for myself what I've read about in textbooks and encyclopaedias. There are 5 000 years of history here – building techniques, mummification processes, hieroglyphs, and a complex religion with a multitude of divinities, sacred animals, and an obsession with life after death. So, it's to Luxor I've come to start my four-day journey up the Nile and see its treasures. Cruising from Luxor, south to Aswan, is one of the best ways to experience Egypt's archaeological heritage.

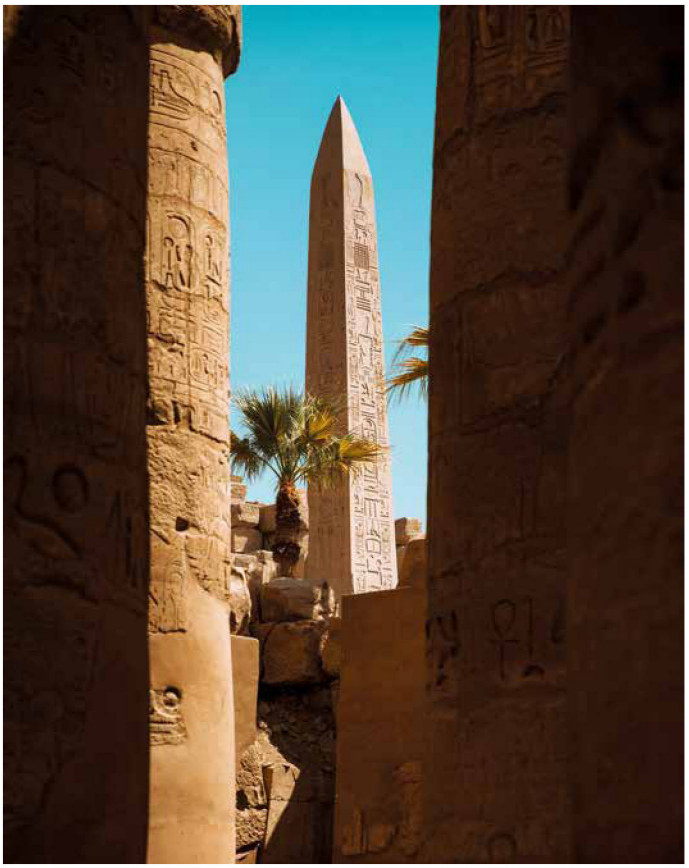
Luxor, located approximately 650 km from Cairo, is built on the ruins of the ancient metropolis of Thebes, which rose to prominence around 3000 BCE. Thebes was Egypt's political, military, and religious capital for roughly 500 to 1 000 years. This is a place so incredible that in 1799, Napoleon called it the world's greatest open-air museum.

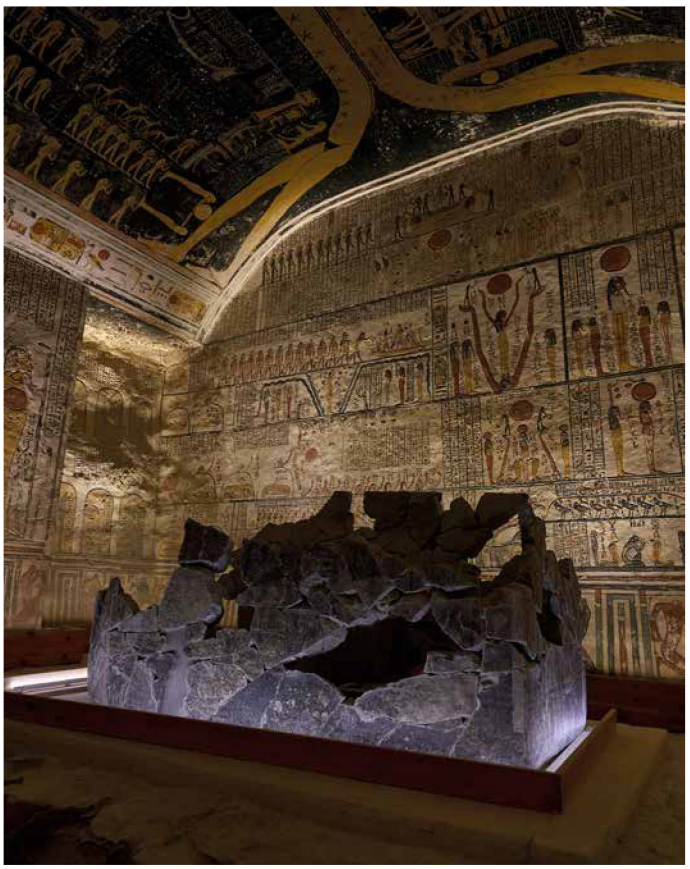
I start at Luxor Temple, on the east bank of the Nile, its sandstone portals catching the late-afternoon light. Standing between two giant statues of Ramses II, who seem to gaze down on us, I am overwhelmed by the detail and grandeur around me. Over centuries, successive pharaohs built the temple, which originated around 1392 BC. There's a shrine to Alexander the Great at the rear, the remains of a Coptic church to the west, and in one corner, a centuries-old mosque built when, for thousands of years, the temple itself was buried beneath the streets and houses of Luxor. There are reminders of how life and religion intersect here, everywhere I turn.

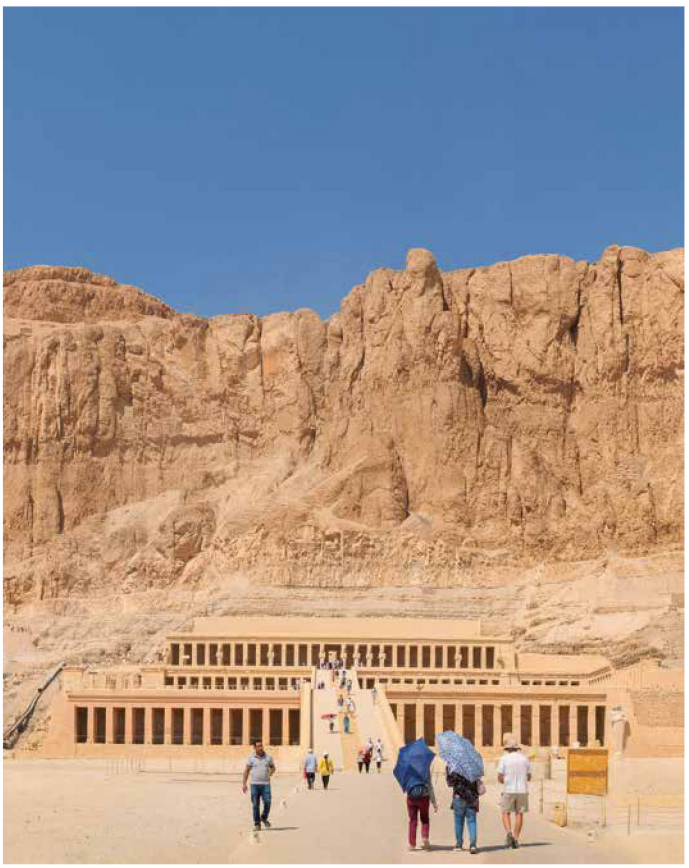
Next, I head to the Karnak Temple – the three-kilometre Avenue of Sphinxes, featuring over 1 350 sandstone statues with human or ram heads, connects it with the Luxor Temple. This building was designed to be beautiful rather than massive. The Ancient Egyptians held their most important religious celebration here, the Opet Festival. When they did, hordes of people would line this avenue to watch the sacred barges carrying statues of the gods from one temple to another.

Karnak isn't just one temple; it's a city-sized complex that took over 2 000 years to build, with contributions from over 30 pharaohs. It covers over 100 ha and is widely accepted as the largest religious complex ever constructed. Late afternoon is a magical time to visit. As sunset approaches









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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The corridor of ram-headed sphinxes at the entrance to the Karnak Temple complex; the Obelisk of Pharaoh Thutmose I at Karnak Temple; the Mortuary Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, three massive, terraced collonaded levels, rising into the sheer cliffs; inside the tomb of Ramesses VI in the Valley of the Dead, painted with scenes from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.

and the golden light plays on the water, the call to prayer echoes from modern mosques built among the ancient ruins, reminding me that in this place, past and present coexist.

ALL ABOARD!

As the afternoon wanes, I return to the riverbank, where my cruise vessel, the *Sonesta Sun Goddess*, is moored, white and welcoming. Boarding feels like taking a fresh, cool breath after all that history. As I get settled in the cabin, there's a quiet pleasure in thinking of the many famous travellers who have embarked on this journey before me. From Cleopatra and Julius Caesar, to King Edward VII, Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon (the finders of Tutankhamun's tomb), Katy Perry and Orlando Bloom, Lewis Hamilton, and, possibly most famously of all, Agatha Christie, who found inspiration here for her novel *Death on the Nile* – I'd be following in their footsteps, without the murder, I hoped!

As if tempting fate, when I return to our cabin after dinner, I almost have a heart attack. Positioned upright on the bed, like some mystery midnight caller, are two pillows, wrapped in a bathrobe and wearing my hat. It takes me a few moments to realise this is 'towel art'. A speciality of my room attendant, he will surprise me over the next few nights with these creations; most impressively, a towel in the shape of a crocodile, wearing my glasses and eating the air-conditioner remote.

AMONG ROYALTY

We remain moored in Luxor overnight and, disembarking the next morning, head across to the west bank and the Valley of the Kings. Here, in the harsh limestone landscape, over 60 pharaohs spend eternity, their tombs cut directly into the rock. For over five centuries, this valley served as the principal burial ground for Egypt's royalty and nobility. But this isn't merely a collection of tombs; it's an underground art gallery, stretching deep into the desert mountains, and although their treasures have long since been plundered, the colour and detail on the tombs' walls is astonishing.

The tomb of Ramesses VI takes my breath away, its tunnels and chambers covered with scenes from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, in colours so vivid it's as if someone painted them yesterday. Above us, the ceiling features star charts and religious texts, designed to guide the pharaoh on his journey through the afterlife.

Near Ramesses VI's tomb and once buried underneath ancient workmen's huts is the entrance to one of the smallest, least impressive, but certainly most famous tombs in the valley: Tutankhamun's. While his treasures are now in the newly opened Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo, his tiny mummy is preserved here over 3 300 years after his death.

Over the ridge from the Valley of the Kings is the Mortuary Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, a ruler in a male-dominated world. Three massive, terraced, collonaded levels rise into the sheer cliffs. Her temple symbolises a peaceful, prosperous era, and the finely detailed carvings on the walls illustrate some of the major events of her reign. It's a masterpiece of Ancient Egyptian architecture that legitimises the reign of a female ruler whose legacy her male successors would try hard to erase.

ESNA AND BEYOND

We head back to the boat, and as we tuck into a refreshing meal, we watch the crew cast off the ropes that secured us to the dock. It's time to set sail for Esna, Edfu, Kom Ombo and eventually Aswan.

By morning, we've arrived at Edfu, where we avoid the waiting caleches (horse-drawn carriages), instead opting to drive with our guide, Amged, to the Temple of Horus. Built in the Ptolemaic era, this is among Egypt's best-preserved temples. For over a thousand years, it lay buried under sand and debris, protected from the passage of time.

Standing in the massive entrance hall, we're surrounded by 32 columns, each one intricately carved. Covering the ceiling are astrological charts and religious scenes that retain their original blue and gold paint. The temple tells the story of the legendary battle between the falcon-headed god Horus the Elder and his uncle Set, the god of chaos. The tale unfolds in incredible detail, like an ancient graphic novel carved in stone, each wall telling a different part of the story. We follow Horus as he avenges his father's murder, battles mythical creatures, and ultimately triumphs over evil.

Returning to the boat, we sit on the top deck with its oversized parasols and shimmering blue pool. As we head north, children wave to us from the riverbank, water buffaloes stand like statues in the shallows, farmers labour in their fields, and delicate white birds tiptoe through the papyrus.

In the afternoon, we reach Kom Ombo, which was constructed between 180 and 47 BC and is the only temple in Egypt dedicated to two gods simultaneously. It's perfectly divided down the



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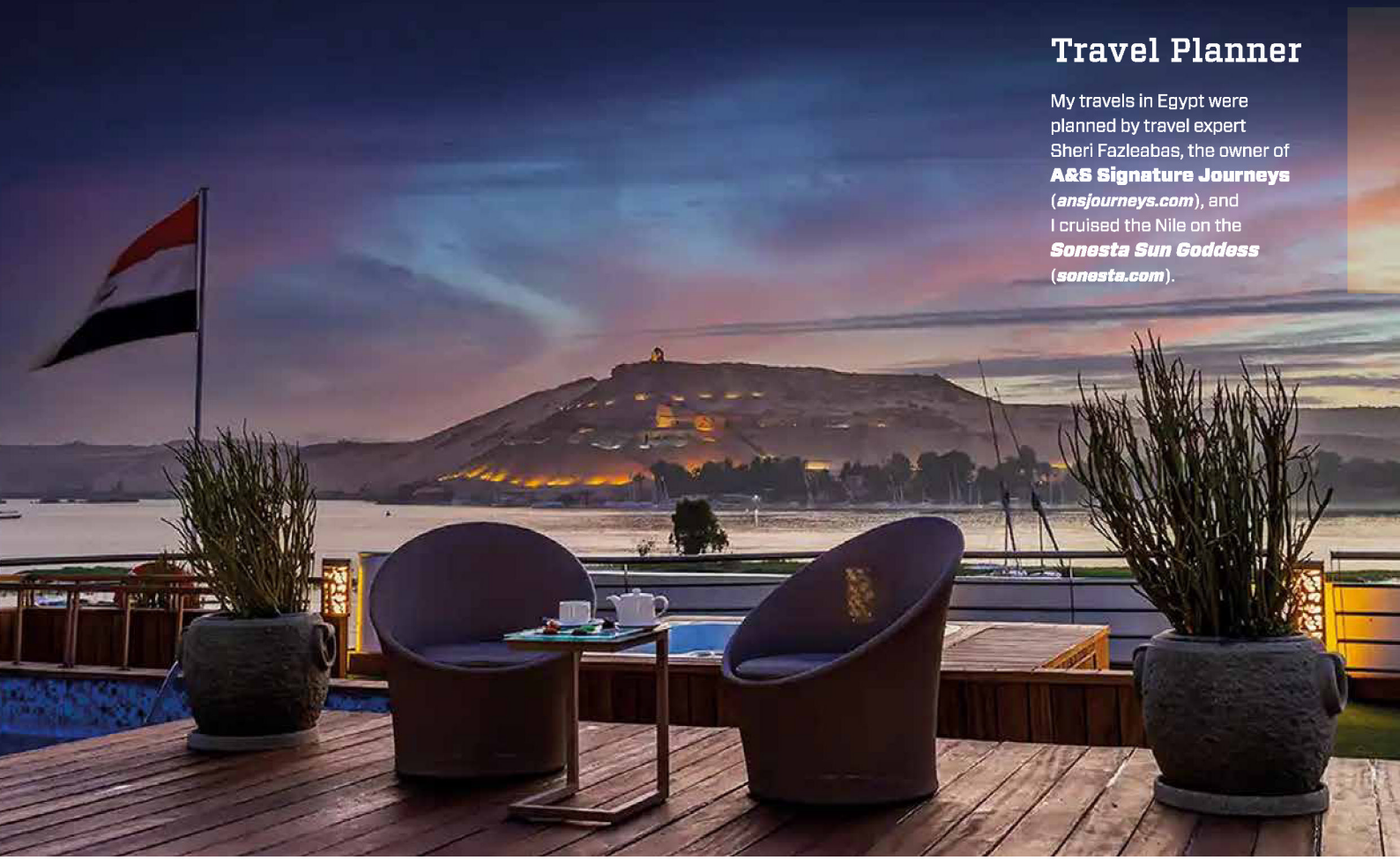
RIGHT Kom Ombo is the only temple in Egypt dedicated to two gods simultaneously: the crocodile god Sobek and the falcon-headed god Horus the Elder.



Travel Planner

My travels in Egypt were planned by travel expert Sheri Fazleabas, the owner of **A&S Signature Journeys** (***ansjourneys.com***), and I cruised the Nile on the ***Sonesta Sun Goddess*** (***sonesta.com***).

middle, with one half devoted to the crocodile god, Sobek, while the other half honours Horus. The crocodile connection isn't just symbolic, we discover, after visiting the museum and seeing some of the hundreds of mummified crocodiles that have come from the temple's crocodile cemetery.

At the heart of the temple is a depiction of the story of Ma'at, the goddess of justice and truth. Before mummification, the Ancient Egyptians would remove all the body's organs, preserving them in canopic jars. Only the heart was left in place, which they believed Ma'at would weigh against an ostrich feather, the feather of truth, to see if the deceased had lived a life worthy of entering paradise.

Kom Ombo also contains what might be the world's first medical textbook, carved directly into stone, with clear depictions of surgical instruments, including scalpels and bone saws. These 2 000-year-old carvings indicate medical knowledge that remained undiscovered in Europe for another thousand years.

The following day, we reach Aswan, where the Sahara begins, ancient Nubian kings once ruled, and traders once brought gold, ivory and exotic animals. Aswan is also the location of one of archaeology's most dramatic rescue missions, as we found out.

The Philae Temple tells Ancient Egypt's greatest love story, of Isis and Osiris. According to legend, Osiris was murdered and dismembered by his jealous brother, Set. Isis, taking the form of a dove, searched the world to collect his scattered pieces and, using her powers, brought him back to life.

The construction of the Aswan High Dam in the '60s threatened to submerge the temple, slowly dissolving it in the rising waters of Lake Nasser. Built from 40 000 individual stone blocks, many weighing several tons, the only way to save Philae was to dismantle it, block by block, and reassemble it on a nearby island, a monumental task – and here it stands almost exactly as it had for 2 500 years. That afternoon, our final on the Nile, we board a felucca, a traditional sailboat whose simple rigging and triangular lateen sail have been part of life here for thousands of years. We sail past the Aswan Botanical Garden on Kitchener's Island, and Qubbet el-Hawa (Arabic for Dome of the Wind), a domed funerary shrine that marks the resting place of ancient nobles and priests.

As we head back towards the *Sonesta Sun Goddess*, I remember a line from the '80s movie *The Jewel of the Nile*, when Omar says, 'Journey down the Nile with me, and I'll give you a chance to record history.' G

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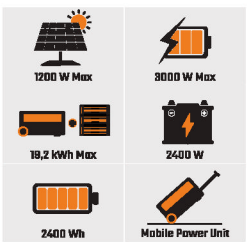





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R1 150-00

SNR GAZEBO SIDE WALL WITH DOOR & WINDOW

R1 220-00

GAZEBO AND JNR BOW CONNECTOR
TO FIT ALL TENTCO'S 2.5m x 2.5m BOW TENTS

R1 330-00
GAZEBO & BOW TENT NOT INCLUDED

GAZEBO AND SNR BOW CONNECTOR
TO FIT ALL TENTCO'S 3.0m x 3.0m BOW TENTS

R1 500-00
GAZEBO & BOW TENT NOT INCLUDED

SNR GAZEBO END WALL SOLID

R3 620-00

JUMBO GAZEBO END WALL WITH T-DOOR

R1 050-00

JUMBO GAZEBO SIDE WALL SOLID

R1 160-00

JUMBO GAZEBO SIDE WALL WITH 2 x WINDOWS

R1 380-00

3.0m x 2.8m x 2.3m

JUMBO GAZEBO SIDE WALL WITH DOOR & WINDOW


COMING IN 2026

JUMBO GAZEBO SNR BOW CONNECTOR


JUMBO GAZEBO

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- YELLOW PASSIVATED ELECTROPLATED STEEL FRAME 22mm
- HEAVY DUTY REINFORCED NYLON CORNERS



R4 550-00

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R12 510-00

SAHARA DELUXE D-DOOR

6.0m x 2.9m x 2.65m
R17 340-00

SAHARA DELUXE T-DOOR

6.0m x 2.9m x 2.65m
R17 340-00

SAHARA LODGE

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R23 300-00

SAHARA GRAND

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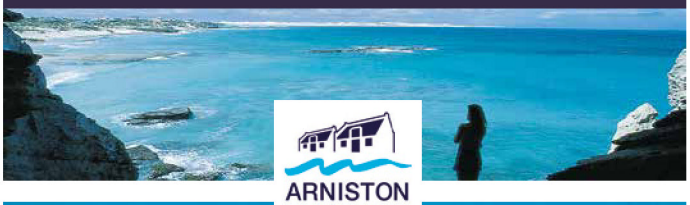

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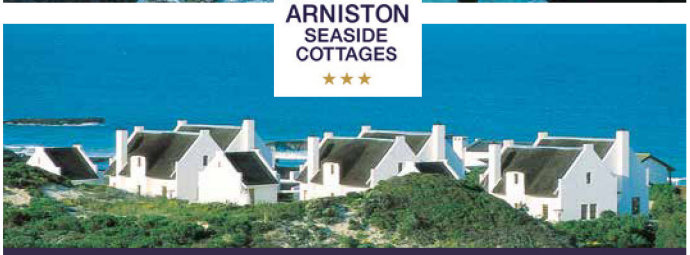

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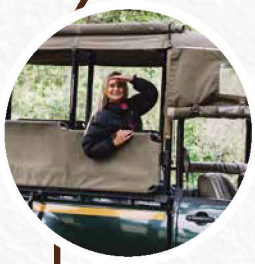


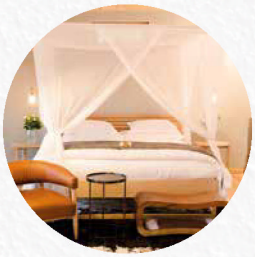
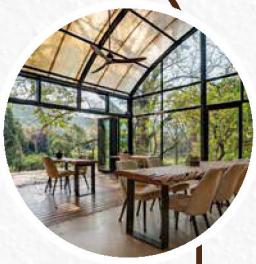

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Caught in the WEB

SOME OF THE MOST FASCINATING AND QUIRKY FINDS ONLINE



Departure-lounge Meltdown

There's no denying that missing your flight is frustrating, but one traveller at Athens International Airport recently took things to a whole new level. After realising he had missed his flight to Cyprus, the passenger reportedly grabbed bottles from a duty-free shop and began smashing and throwing them across the terminal, sending fellow travellers running for cover. Greek media later suggested his dramatic outburst may have been a misguided attempt to get deported home for free. It's safe to say his plan didn't quite go as intended.



Ghosts of the Guest House
A traveller's overnight stay in Thailand went viral after she reported unexplained noises, flickering lights and doors mysteriously opening during the night. Hotel staff reportedly shrugged off the disturbances as 'normal', leaving guests to decide for themselves whether the cause was faulty wiring or something a little more supernatural. Either way, it's not the kind of wake-up call you want while on holiday.

News and Views From the Final Frontier...

WE RECENTLY SHARED AN ARTICLE ABOUT CONTROLLED EXPLOSIONS TO REMOVE HISTORIC DAMS IN KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, RESTORING NATURAL RIVER FLOWS AND ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES...



PHOTOGRAPHY ISTOCKPHOTO

And Here's What You Said...

Fingers crossed, SANDF knows what they're doing.
Ockert Kohne

Have it declared a National Heritage Site!
Trevor Crawford

Who will you blame when the animals start dying?
Leoni Kellerman

The problem is that the animals are confined to Kruger, which is grossly overcrowded. In times of drought, a water shortage could be disastrous.
Ossie Gibson

SOCIAL MEDIA

We Asked:

What's your ideal destination for a weekend getaway?

In a cabin that overlooks a riverbank and is surrounded by trees. Throw in a decent fireplace and a riveting read, and I'm all set.
Marcelle Johnson

Give me a place where I can lie in bed and hear the waves crashing. Nothing beats that smell, or that of a salty ocean breeze.
Baroness Heynes

Anywhere I am allowed to take my dogs gets a big yes from me – if it's in a small town off the beaten path, even better.
Pedro Peters

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A black-backed jackal in the Addo Elephant National Park.

PHOTOGRAPHY NADINE LEONARD



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