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OCTOBER | NOVEMBER 2023

INSIDE THE ADULTS ONLY Baboli by Newmark

SUBLIME UNDERWATER
SPACES AT CONRAD
MALDIVES RANGALI

DISCOVERING THE MYSTIC OF SALALAH, OMAN

WHAT TO EXPECT AT DUBAI'S AL QUDRA LAKES

COUNTDOWN TO THE ALL
AFRICA FESTIVAL:
What to expect

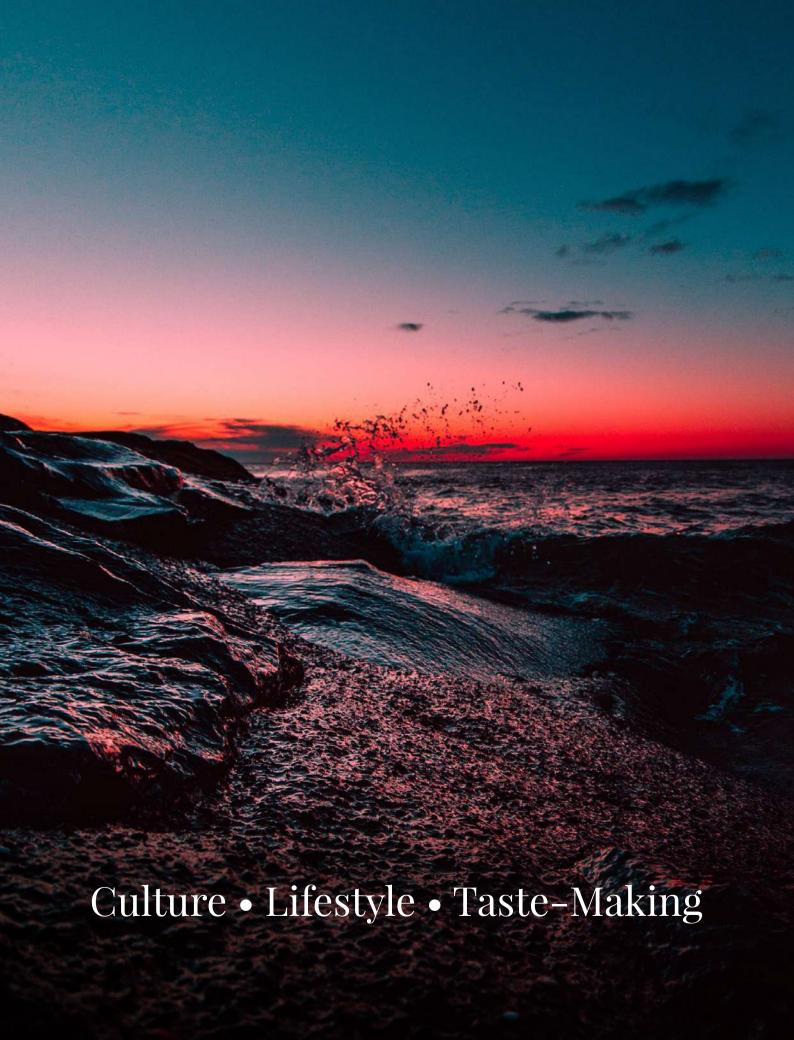
JULIETIBRAHIM

TALKS TRAVEL, THE CREATIVE ART SPACE & EMBRACING
A MULTI-CULTURAL HERITAGE



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A NARRATIVES PR PUBLICATION









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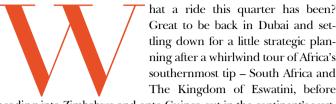
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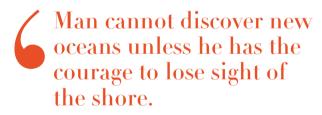
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heading into Zimbabwe and onto Guinea out in the continent's west. The Travel Essence family is elated to have had a remarkable year of discovery, so much that it's quite difficult imagining how 2024 could possibly scale the wins of this year. We couldn't have done it without the hospitality players that believe in our vision, and you our readers, who keep us excited to go further as we deliver content on lodges, hotels and destinations to keep on the radar for your next adventure.

A big take away, particularly from our circuit in South Africa and Eswatini that took us across the big cities and onto savannah landscapes, is that safari travel is booming! Explorers (and bleisure travellers) love the epicurean opportunities that come with taking on new cities, but more and more people are equally eager to experience the thrill of seeing Africa's wildlife in its natural habitat. We had the privilege of discovering parts of South Africa's Limpopo province, exploring Qwabi Private Game Reserve in Bela Bela, Waterberg, before crossing over to Welgevonden Game Reserve and Manyeleti Private Game Reserve. Such varied hospitality products exist across all game reserves, and the commitment to wildlife protection is incredibly evident. Teams were knowledgeable and excited to show us - and other guests - what one can experience a



- ANDRE GIDE

few hours drive from Johannesburg.

But what are the trends that have shaped this exciting travel sector in 2023? For one, sustainability. Safari operators are increasingly focused on sustainability, and travelers are looking for eco-friendly options, making a conscious effort to choose lodges and operators that are committed to conservation and responsible tourism practices. While in the Kingdom of Eswatini, and even as we flew a good 14 hours to Guinea from Dubai this October, we noted how much community-based tourism is also becoming a core pillar in national tourism strategies. Travelers are also interested in supporting local communities when they travel on safari and for them, this means



choosing operators that work with local communities and provide them with a fair share of the benefits of tourism.

A big one for us at Travel Essence Magazine is showing off the luxurious side of safaris, long popularised by international travellers into Africa. It was a huge pleasure to see more and more Africans looking for opportunities to connect with the plush side of going on safari. It's all about carving out time for pampering, exclusivity, enjoying gourmet food and experiencing personalized service - all the trimmings of an exceptional experience in Africa's wild spaces.

As we bring you this Issue, out hope it that you continue to trigger your curiosity on unearthing more of Africa as we have this year. Back in Dubai, Q4 signals mega events and of course the countdown to the Festive Season. As COP28 opens up and closes from Dubai this December, this means that we will be listening in to the conversations around the interface between climate change and tourism, and seeing how that impacts private sector strategies, and the consumer side of travel into 2024.

Thank you for journeying with us still!

Yours truly,

Gronne C. Mtengwa



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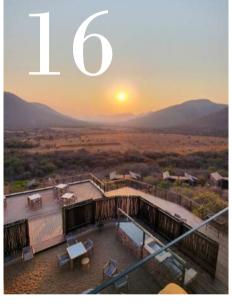
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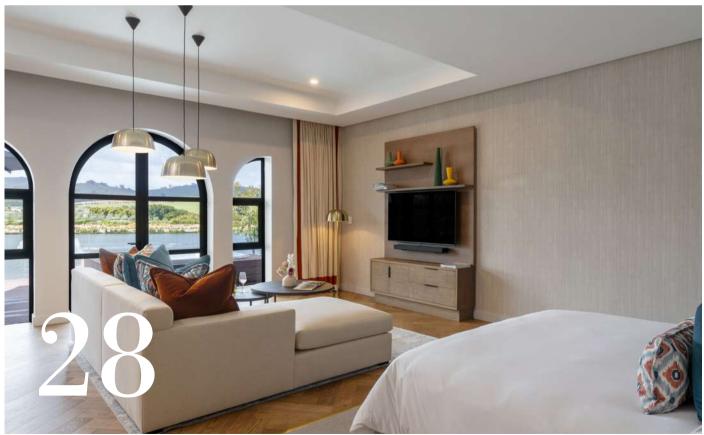
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TALKS TRAVEL, THE CREATIVE ART SPACE & EMBRACING A MULTI-CULTURAL HERITAGE

JULIET IBRAHIM: TALK TO US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT BALANCING OR TAPPING INTO THE CULTURES OF BEING BORN IN LIBERIA OF A LEBANESE FATHER AND GHANAIAN LIBERIAN MOTHER? HOW DID THE DIVERSITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCES, AND LATER GROWING UP IN GHANA - IMPACT THE WOMAN YOU HAVE BECOME?

From a young age, the intricate tapestry of my mixed heritage ignited a deep curiosity within me. This curiosity didn't just stop at understanding the cultures I was born into; it extended to a genuine fascination with languages and a desire to explore the world. My childhood has been an incredible journey that has shaped who I am today. Embracing the cultures has given me a unique perspective on life, allowing me to appreciate the beauty and richness of each heritage.

Being exposed to many languages and cultures from an early age built a solid basis for my love of languages. I found myself drawn to studying other languages, not just for communication, but also to immerse myself in the essence of each culture. This allowed me to connect with people on a deeper level, breaking through barriers and building genuine relationships wherever I grew up and travelled. Growing up in Ghana introduced me to the vivid traditions, values, and friendliness of the Ghanaian culture. It taught me the value of community, resilience, and the joy of celebrating life's milestones. My Lebanese heritage, on the other hand, brought me a rich history, close family ties, and a passion for delectable cuisine.

Balancing these diverse backgrounds was a nice challenge, one that boosted my adaptability and opened my mind to new ideas. This cross-cultural interaction has made me more open-minded, sympathetic, and globally aware. It's also spurred my desire to perform and share stories, allowing me to connect with individuals from all walks of life through my work.

Growing up in several places allowed me to witness personally the wonderful tapestry of cultures and cities from all over the world. Each location I lived or visited has its own distinct set of traditions, sights, and noises. This experience instilled in me a sense of wanderlust, motivating my desire to travel and explore. I yearned to be immersed in the splendor of other settings and to sample exotic foods.

My experiences as I traveled from one location to the next added to the mosaic of my identity. Traveling has become an important part of my identity, altering my perspective, widening my views, and stimulating my creativity. It also strengthened my faith in the power of cultural interchange, reminding me of the numerous connections we can make by embracing our differences and enjoying our common humanity.

In summary, my heritage's diverse combination, together with the adventures of my youth, created the groundwork for a life committed to experiencing languages, cultures, and cities around the world. It's a trip that's still evolving, a monument to the limitless beauty and endless possibilities that come from accepting diversity and cultivating a passion for travel.

Overall, the experience has taught me that embracing variety enhances not only my own life but also the lives of people around me. I'm proud of the woman I've become, someone who can bridge cultures, break down barriers, and inspire people to embrace their diverse roots.

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR PURSUIT TO ENTER THE WORLD OF CREATIVE ARTS, MORE SPECIFICALLY ACTING?

As an actress, I've always stated in interviews that my ambition to pursue a career in the creative arts, particularly acting, sprang from my early childhood love of stories and the need to connect with others on an emotional

level. I grew up watching Bollywood, Arabic, and Nollywood films. When I started being a part of school playlets, I was drawn to the enchantment of cinema and how it allowed me to step into the shoes of different characters and experience their lives. It also emphasized my desire to entertain and inspire others via my performances, which inspired me to pursue acting as a profession. Throughout my journey, I have highlighted the necessity of using art to convey vital messages, offer varied perspectives, and create a beneficial impact on society.

TODAY YOU WEAR MANY HATS BEYOND BEING AN ACTRESS, INCLUDING HUMANITARIAN. SPEAKER, AUTHOR, AND PRODUCER TO NAME BUT A FEW. HOW DOES A WOMAN OF YOUR STATURE BALANCE THE MANY RESPONSIBILITIES THAT COME WITH STRIVING TOWARD EXCELLENCE IN EACH ONE?

To be honest, I am completely committed to my numerous duties and obligations. My ability to balance several projects stems from a combination of good time management, persistent dedication, and a passion for each. I feel that by focusing on one work at a time and defining clear priorities, I can give my all in whatever role I take on.

Furthermore, I surround myself with a supportive team that helps coordinate and manage my responsibilities, allowing me to focus on delivering excellence in all facets of my diverse work. My desire to make a positive difference on multiple fronts drives me to succeed in all of my pursuits.

YOU COME TO DUBAI OFTEN, A DESTINATION THAT HAS PROVED TO BE A HAVEN FOR OPPORTUNITY FOR MANY ACROSS AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA AT LARGE. TALK TO US ABOUT WHAT YOU LOVE ABOUT DUBAI.

For various reasons, Dubai maintains a special place in my heart. The city's vibrant energy and diversified culture speak to me, reflecting my multicultural background. I am awestruck by Dubai's architectural marvels and the way it perfectly merges contemporary and heritage. Every time I visit Dubai, I am astounded by the number of new sites to see. Dubai provides exceptional prospects







not only for job advancement but also for networking and engaging with people from all walks of life.

Furthermore, Dubai's devotion to innovation and breaking new ground aligns with my principles of ongoing evolution and exploration of new frontiers. The city's elegance and opulence create a distinct feeling of inspiration and motivation, inspiring me to aim higher and pursue my objectives with zeal. Dubai never fails to captivate me every time I visit, whether it's the gorgeous skyline, world-class entertainment, shopping possibilities, or welcoming hospitality. It's a place where dreams may come true, and I'm honored to be a part of its rich tapestry.

5. WHEN IN DUBAI, WHAT ARE YOUR FIVE FAVOURITE PLACES TO VISIT OR EXPLORE AND WHY?

When I'm in Dubai, there are five favourite places I love to visit and explore on each trip. Each of these spots holds a special significance to me and offers a unique blend of experiences that resonate deeply:

- The Dubai Mall: As a fashion enthusiast, I adore spending time at The Dubai Mall. It's a shopping paradise with an incredible range of luxury brands and stylish boutiques. The mall's vibrant atmosphere and world-class architecture create a truly immersive shopping experience that I can't resist.
- **Burj Khalifa:** The Burj Khalifa is an architectural marvel that never fails to amaze me. The opportunity to ascend to its towering heights and take in the panoramic views of the city is a breathtaking experience. I also adore the new glass slide experience that has been added. It's a moment of reflection on the limitless possibilities that Dubai represents.
- Wild Wadi Water Park: For moments of excitement and fun for the whole family, I love visiting Wild Wadi Water Park. The thrilling water rides, adventurous slides, and refreshing aquatic environment provide the perfect escape from the ordinary. It's a place where I can let loose and embrace the sheer joy of the moment.
- **Dubai Theme Parks:** I adore the Dubai theme parks for the thrilling entertainment they offer. The various parks cater to different tastes, whether it's the adrenaline rush of roller coasters or the magical world of animation and storytelling. I'm an adrenaline junkie, so you'll find me at the Dubai theme parks



spending an entire day enjoying the activities alone or with my family and friends. It's a fantastic way to embrace the joy and excitement that Dubai brings.

• Global Village: One of my favourite cultural destinations is Global Village. It's a melting pot of diverse cultures, showcasing a tapestry of traditions, cuisines, and performances from around the world. Exploring the pavilions and embracing the global unity on display is both enriching and heartwarming.

. IF YOU WERE TO SETTLE IN DUBAI, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DRAWING CARD?

The dynamic fusion of luxury and innovation that Dubai provides would surely be an attraction for me if I were to relocate there. I find it quite impressive how seamlessly Dubai combines heritage and modernity. Dubai is a place where I can keep broadening my horizons and thriving as both an actor and a person because of the cosmopolitan atmosphere, the limitless prospects for growth and creativity,

and the international mingling pot of cultures. The city's bright energy and constant dedication to excellence and advancement would act as an irresistible magnet to keep me rooted in Dubai and motivate me to add to its rich cultural heritage.

. ANY UPCOMING PROJECT DETAILS YOU ARE ABLE TO SHARE?

I generally wait until a project is ready to launch before making announcements about it, but I'm excited to discuss some intriguing forthcoming projects that I'm working on. On the educational front, I'm presently working on a project to empower and motivate young African women to pursue their aspirations and fulfill their objectives. I have a special place in my heart for this initiative, and I'm looking forward to seeing how it will improve the lives of these young ladies.

I'm also working on a few travel-related projects. I love learning about various cultures, making friends with individuals from many origins, and sharing my experiences with my followers.

These projects will enable me to

embark on adventures that will not only be personally rewarding for me but will also allow me to display the beauty and diversity of the locations I visit.

My memoir "A Toast to Life" is being adapted into a film, which is both bizarre and exhilarating for me. It's an opportunity to bring my narrative to life on the big screen, to inspire others with my experiences, and to connect on a whole new level with a larger audience. The book is currently available in audiobooks, e-books, local bookshops, and online.

Aside from that, I'm working on a new film project with a well-known South African production firm. This partnership is a testament to the power of cross-cultural collaboration and storytelling.

I'm very passionate about making stories that connect with people all over the world, and this project gives me a tremendous platform to do just that. Working with a South





African production business allows me to experiment with new narratives and viewpoints on the big screen. I am also in discussions with a Mollywood production business situated in Dubai about collaborating on large projects involving the UAE, Ghana, and the Nigeria Film Industry.

Both the memoir-turned-film and the new film projects are exciting steps forward in my career as an actor, producer, and storyteller. They are chances for me to keep engaging with people, telling meaningful stories, and making a difference in the world of entertainment. I'm happy about these opportunities and eager to explore where these initiatives will take me next. As usual, I intend to use my platform to make a positive impact on the world. My mission is to inspire, uplift, and make meaningful connections with people from all walks of life, whether through educational pursuits or travel projects. Stay tuned for additional information on these projects, and I'm looking forward to continuing this path of growth and exploration with you all.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP 5 AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO VISIT AND WHY? HAVING VISITED AND LIVED IN VARIOUS AFRICAN COUNTRIES, IT'S A TOUGH DECISION TO CHOOSE JUST 5 BUT HERE ARE MY TOP 5 AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO VISIT AND WHY:

- Ghana: As my home country,
 Ghana holds a special place
 in my heart. Its rich history,
 vibrant culture, and warm
 hospitality create a unique and
 welcoming atmosphere. From
 exploring the bustling markets
 of Accra to relaxing on the
 beautiful beaches of Cape Coast,
 Ghana offers a diverse range of
 experiences that showcase the
 beauty of West Africa.
- South Africa: South Africa's stunning landscapes, from the majestic Table Mountain to the picturesque Garden Route, make it a must-visit destination. The country's blend of cul-

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tures, along with its wildlife and vibrant cities, creates an unforgettable journey that celebrates the diversity of the African continent.

- Kenya: Kenya's breathtaking
 wildlife and natural beauty are
 unparalleled. Embarking on a
 safari through the Maasai Mara
 or Amboseli National Park offers
 a chance to witness some of the
 world's most incredible creatures
 in their natural habitat. The
 local culture, with its traditions
 and festivals, adds another layer
 of fascination to the experience.
- Tanzania: The allure of Tanzania lies in its iconic landmark, Mount Kilimanjaro, and the stunning Serengeti National Park. Witnessing the Great Migration of wildebeest and other animals is a spectacle that captures the essence of the African wilderness. Zanzibar's pristine beaches and historical Stone Town also make it a unique and charming destination.
- Nigeria: Nigeria's bustling cities, diverse cultures, and vibrant arts scene create a dynamic and energetic environment. From the bustling streets of Lagos to the ancient city of Benin, there's a rich tapestry of experiences waiting to be explored. Nigeria's music, fashion, and cuisine contribute to a captivating journey through West Africa.

These five African countries offer a glimpse into the continent's beauty, diversity, and cultural richness, making them truly captivating destinations that I hold close to my heart.

1. FAVOURITE PASS-TIME WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING?

During my downtime, when I'm not working, I love to engage in activities that help me unwind and recharge. One of my favourite pastimes is immersing myself in a captivating book. There's something magical about getting lost in a story and letting my imagination roam free. I also enjoy

spending quality time with my loved ones, whether it's a cozy movie night at home or exploring new places together. And of course, staying active is important to me, so you'll often find me hitting the gym, dancing, visiting a Karaoke bar to sing with friends, visiting the beach, or going for a refreshing walk outdoors. These moments of relaxation and connection are essential for maintaining balance in my busy life.

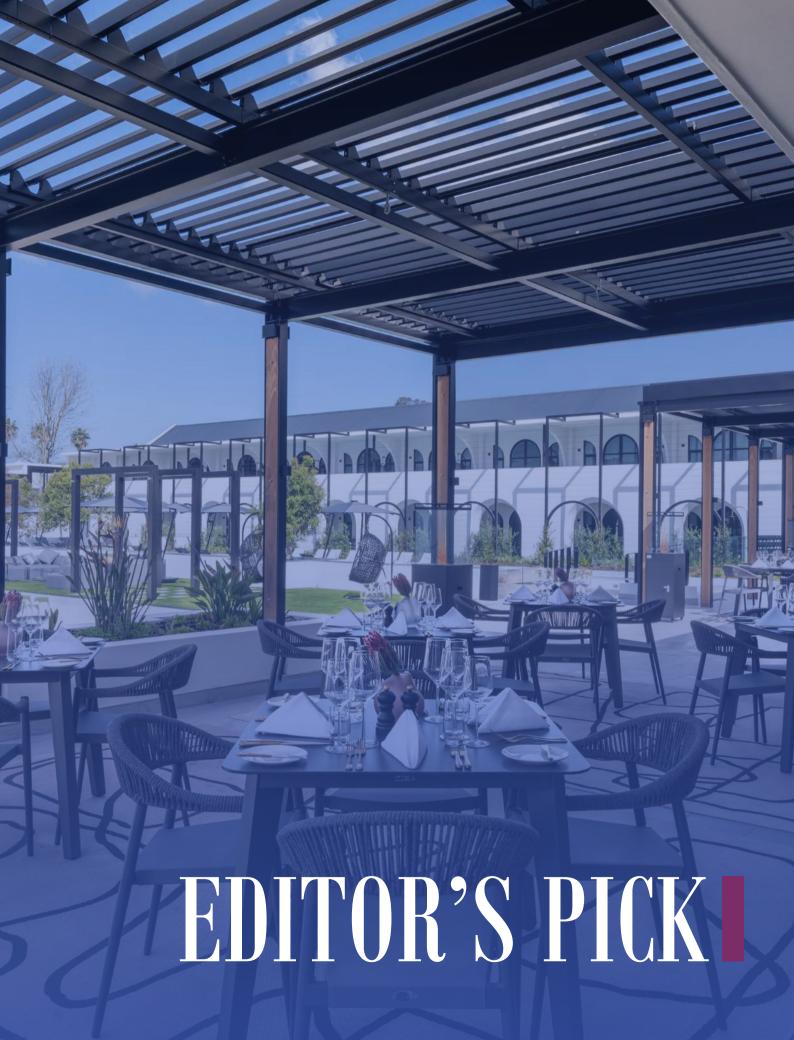
O. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG GHANAIAN, OR FELLOW AFRICAN WOMEN WHO HAVE GOALS TO SCALE HEIGHTS TO GLOBAL RECOGNITION LEVELS AS YOU HAVE?

To all the young Ghanaian and fellow African women who aspire to reach global recognition levels, I want you to know that your dreams are valid, and you have the power within you to achieve greatness. Here's my advice to help you on your journey:

- Believe in Yourself: Your self-belief is the foundation of your success. Embrace your unique qualities, talents, and strengths. Don't be afraid to stand out and confidently pursue your passions.
- Stay Resilient: The road to success is rarely smooth. You will face challenges, setbacks, and doubters along the way. Stay strong, resilient, and persistent. Use every obstacle as a steppingstone to propel yourself forward.
- Continuous Learning: Never stop learning and growing. Seek opportunities to acquire new skills, expand your knowledge, and stay updated with industry trends. Education is a lifelong journey that opens doors to endless possibilities.
- Network and Collaborate: Surround yourself with a supportive network of mentors, peers, and like-minded individuals. Collaboration can lead to innovative ideas and opportunities that you might not have discovered on

- your own.
- Embrace Failure: Failure is a part of any journey. Don't let it deter you. Instead, view it as a valuable lesson and a chance to refine your approach. Use failures as steppingstones toward your ultimate success.
- Set Clear Goals: Define your goals with clarity and create a roadmap to achieve them.
 Break down your larger objectives into smaller, manageable steps. Celebrate each milestone you achieve along the way.
- Embrace Your Heritage: Your African heritage is a source of strength and inspiration.
 Incorporate your culture and background into your work and aspirations. Your unique perspective can set you apart and resonate with a global audience.
- **Give Back:** As you climb the ladder of success, remember to uplift others and give back to your community. Your success can inspire and empower others to pursue their dreams as well.
- Practice Self-Care: Taking care of your physical, mental, and emotional well-being is crucial. Balancing your personal and professional life will help you maintain the stamina needed to achieve your goals.
- Stay True to Yourself: Amidst all the external influences, stay true to who you are and what you stand for. Authenticity is a powerful force that attracts genuine connections and contributes to your long-term success.

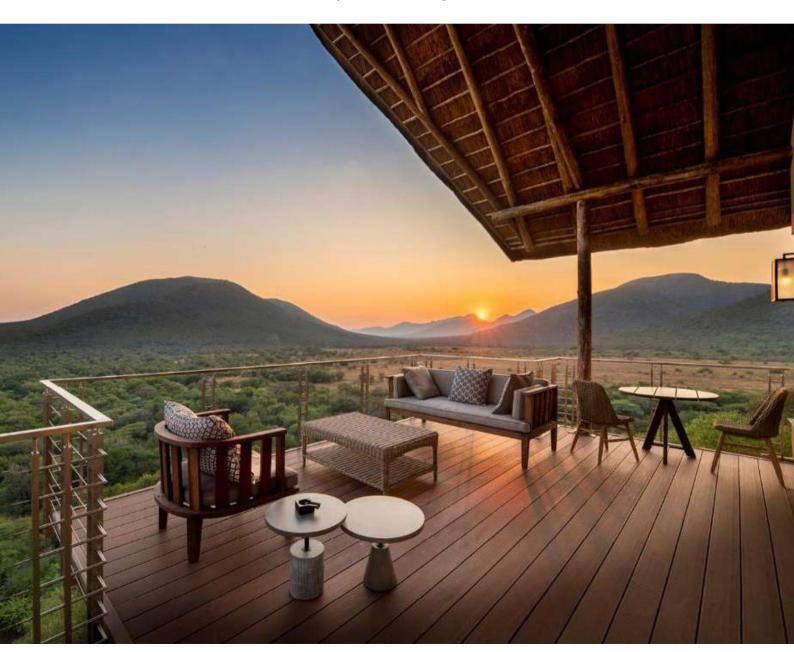
Remember, your journey may have challenges, but each obstacle is an opportunity to grow stronger and wiser. With dedication, passion, and a clear vision, you have the potential to make a significant impact and achieve the global recognition you desire. Dream big and go after your aspirations with unwavering determination. Your story can inspire generations to come.



Inside the Adults Only Babohi by Newmark

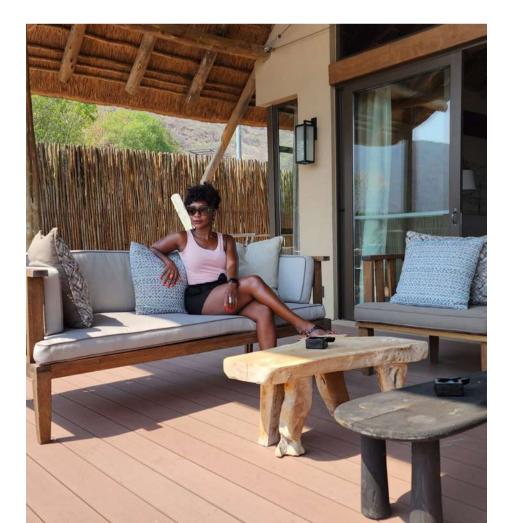
SOAKING IN THE UNTAMED BEAUTY OF SOUTH AFRICA'S QWABI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

By Yvonne C Mtengwa



My journey from Dubai to South Africa on this occasion, was curated with a view to help me garner visibility on how one can infuse both a city staycation in Johannesburg, coined Egoli or City of Gold by the locals, with a safari excursion a short drive away from the metropolis. Two nights at The Catalyst by Newmark, nestled in the bustling heart of Sandton, delivered an epicurean experience in the company of new and old friends, coupled with comfortable relaxation in one of Sandton's newest beacons of modern luxury.

My stay at this boutique apartment-style hotel was a testament to the evolving landscape of hospitality, seamlessly blending sophisticated design, culinary excellence, and a unique appeal to the bleisure traveller. And so as you can imagine, after such a compelling experience in Sandton, I was thrilled to be forging ahead with the next leg of my trip, which would take me to an opulent gem under the Newmark Hotels brand, located in Waterberg's Qwabi Private Game Reserve.



n almost 3-and-a-half-hour road transfer took us from Sandton City to the entry gates of Qwabi Private Game Reserve, a short drive from the small town of Bela Bela in South Africa's Limpopo District. The drive in awakens one to the prevalence of a host of private concessions and game lodges, somewhat indicative of the robust approach to fusing tourism industry development with wildlife protection and resource management. Security is big part of the Qwabi Private Game Reserve's ethos, evidenced by the security team expected my arrival and further confirming the same via telephone communication with the operations team at the lodge. With gates opening and I hastily packing away my laptop so I could appreciate the landscape before me, I was ready to embark on the second part of my trip as a guest at Babohi by Newmark.

A Babohi by Newmark welcome

Babohi by Newmark stands as a beacon of opulence in the heart of the wild, built exclusively for adults and combining luxurious design with the rugged allure of the South African bush. I was welcomed by the team at Letamo at Qwabi Private Game Reserve, the sister-property with a refined offering more focused on families but equally captivating the soul. From then on, I was ferried further into the Reserve onboard a game viewer, which was a perfect herald to the days ahead. It was only a matter of minutes before I witnessed the first signs of a wildlife activity in a part replete with a host of species, from zebra, ostrich, lions, wildebeest and always an exciting one for me to see - the endangered rhino.

Upon arrival, I was greeted by a sweeping panorama of the Qwabi Game Reserve, visible through the expansive glass windows and openair spaces that characterize the main lodge, as well as the suites as I would come to find out later. The openplan design allows for a seamless flow between indoor and outdoor spaces,

EDITOR'S PICK • BABOHI BY NEWMARK

inviting the beauty of nature to permeate every corner.

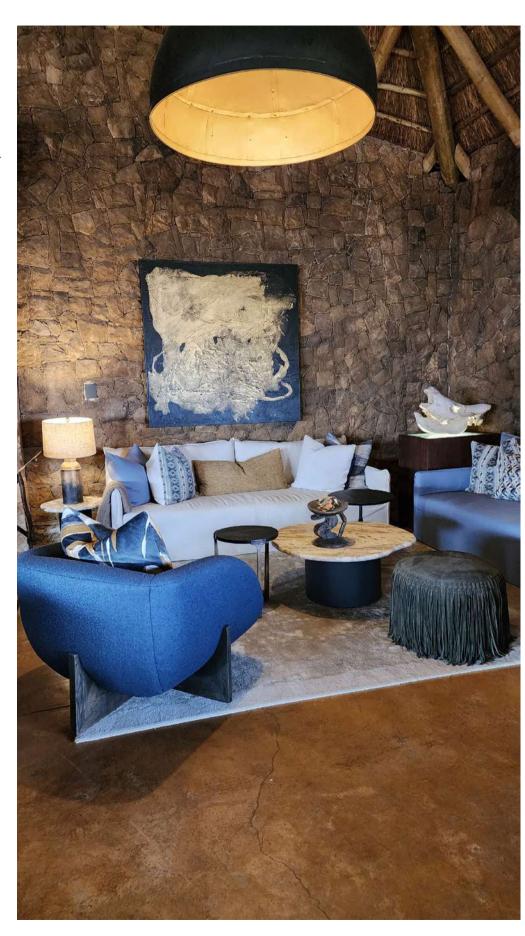
Built on high ground, Babohi by Newmark is an architectural masterpiece; and a celebration of the intentional use of natural materials and textures to bring it all to life. With my welcome drink after a handwashing ritual using soap and scrub also made from nature's splendour, I took time to appreciate how incredibly immersive the lodge's main lounge, dining and pool deck is, hoisted high above the savanna grasslands and suites below. This highly modern and inviting retreat is truly an evocative display of earthy tones, wooden finishes and warm fabrics that merge with modern coppers, marble finishes and sophisticated hues that allude to the African skies.

During orientation, I also learned that Babohi by Newmark is set in one of only two UNESCO-declared savannah biospheres in Africa. With a decent number of guests at the lodge, some frolicking in the elevated pool while others seemingly lounged around on the plush blue and brown couches, I settled for my lunch before being carted to my appointed one-bedroom suite, which came with a spectacular indoor/outdoor shower, private pool, satellite TV entertainment station and no restrictions on space by any stretch of the imagination.

All in the Design Details: A Symphony of Elegance and Nature

I'll harp further on the property's build, largely because it really is quite spectacular. Babohi's architecture is a masterpiece that blends harmoniously with its surroundings, as the lodge's design embraces both modern sophistication and the earthy tones of the wilderness. A careful selection of natural materials, such as stone and indigenous woods, creates an ambiance that is at once sumptuous and grounded.

The interior spaces are adorned with curated artworks and bespoke furnishings that pay homage to African heritage. It is quite clearly as well how local artisans have contributed their craft to create





an atmosphere that reflects both luxury and authenticity. Babohi's commitment to sustainability is evident in every detail, from energy-efficient lighting to the use of recycled materials, ensuring that the lodge's footprint remains as minimal as possible.

Each suite at Babohi is a sanctuary of indulgence, offering panoramic views of the surrounding wilderness. The design ethos extends to the accommodations, where modern amenities and traditional craftsmanship coalesce. Private plunge pools and expansive terraces provide an intimate connection with the landscape, allowing guests to unwind in the lap of luxury while immersed in the sights and sounds of the bush. Stepping outside onto my private veranda was literally like walking right into the bush, except I could settle with the comfort of a low hanging fence to prevent the bigger wildlife from sauntering about my suite unnoticed. I was determined to take the immersive nature of my experience in, and so on the cards was to slow things down a lot from the preceding days in the city, enjoy game drives as they came about, take to my signature poolside moments while chatting with the teams as I enjoyed the beauty of the surrounding landscape.

Qwabi Private Game Reserve's Untamed Majesty

Qwabi Game Reserve, the backdrop to Babohi by Newmark's splendour, is a canvas painted with the vibrant hues of the African savannah. I opted to enjoy my first sunset at the lodge by the pool but made it a point to rise with the other guests at 5am for that rudimentary game drive. Safari enthusiasts will know that no two game-drives are ever the same, and because I had seen so many species of wildlife on the 15-minute drive in from Letamo, I was keen to set my eyes on the two lionesses and their cubs I had heard plenty about over dinner

EDITOR'S PICK • BABOHI BY NEWMARK

with a newlywed couple.

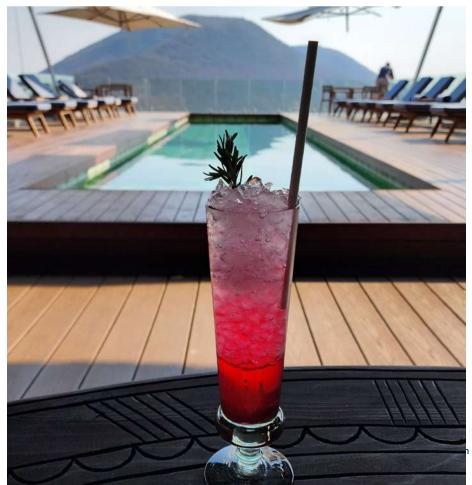
Our morning game drive unearthed the vast expanse that is Owabi; literally thousands of hectares, teeming with diverse wildlife and boasting landscapes that range from open grasslands to dense woodlands. With first light peeping over the surrounding hilly terrain in parts, I took in the sounds and smells of the bush as part of my symphony of discovery, led by our expert guide who navigated the terrain with an intimate knowledge of the resident wildlife. And what a joy it was for my first sighting of the morning to be the two lionesses huddled over a fresh kill with their 5 cubs! The following 3 hours led us to herds of wildebeest, elephants roaming freely, zebras and kudu grazing beneath the acacia trees. Approaching water bodies that dotted across the Reserve also awarded us front-row seating to nature's theatre, including a herd of hippos wallowing in the water. Onboard our game viewer, our guide exuded passion, taking us through the reserve's commitment to conservation, and how Babohi's mantra is one that ensures that encounters between man and animal occur in a sustainable and respectful manner, equally allowing guests to witness the untamed majesty of Africa in its purest form. Our morning closed off with a coffee stop, also by a meandering river's bank, where I enjoyed a piping hot cup of coffee doused with an all-time favourite - Amarula Cream.

An Opulent Safari Get-away: Why Babohi Is Unparalleled

Babohi by Newmark offers more than a luxurious stay; it provides an unparalleled safari getaway that transcends the ordinary. Here, the concept of opulence is redefined against the vast canvas of the African wilderness.

First and foremost, the exclusivity of Babohi ensures an intimate and personalized experience. With a limited number of suites, each guest receives meticulous attention, from personalized game drives to curated culinary experiences, all-encompassing ingredients sourced fresh.











The attentive staff, trained to anticipate every need, elevates the level of service to a standard befitting the most discerning travellers.

The lodge's commitment to responsible tourism is woven into the fabric of the guest experience. Conservation efforts at Qwabi Game Reserve are supported by Babohi, allowing guests to participate in the protection of the natural heritage they come to admire. Engaging in guided game drives with local experts or contributing to community initiatives adds depth to the safari experience, fostering a connection to the land and its people.

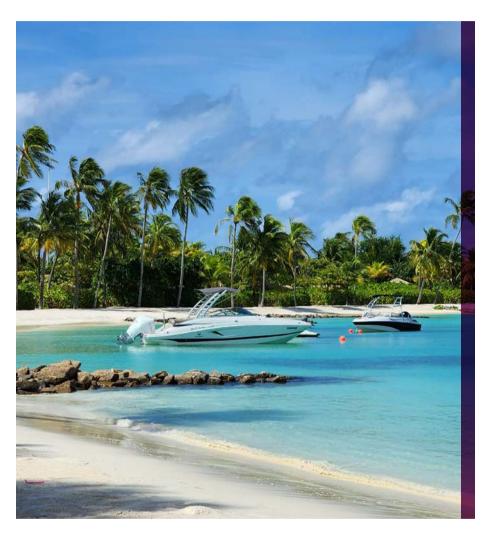
Babohi by Newmark's opulence extends beyond the safari adventures. The lodge boasts a spa that draws inspiration from ancient African wellness rituals, providing rejuvenation amidst the sounds of the bush. Whether indulging in a massage overlooking the reserve or lounging by the infinity pool, guests are enveloped in an atmosphere of sublime luxury.

An easy one for me to return to at any time of year, Babohi by Newmark in Qwabi Game Reserve to me was an invitation to indulge in the extraordinary. Its design, seamlessly blending opulence, and nature, sets the stage for an immersive safari experience. The breathtaking location of Qwabi Game Reserve, with its diverse ecosystems and untamed beauty, ensures that every moment at Babohi is infused with the magic of the South African wilderness. For those seeking an opulent safari getaway that transcends expectations, Babohi by Newmark stands as a testament to the harmonious coexistence of luxury and nature in the heart of South Africa's wild landscapes.



EDITOR'S PICK • WALDORF ASTORIA MALDIVES ITHAAFUSHI

The rhythm of Canadian singer-songwriter Shawn Mendes' hit "Summer of Love" became a fixture on my playlist in the weeks leading to our family vacation to The Maldives Islands. For me, a post-pandemic era has been one that has lent me to dissecting which holiday destinations are best primed for particular traveling groups, be it families, couples, a group of friends or those with a knack for chronically pursuing heightened adventure.



he Maldives, I had always imagined it best suited for romantic get-aways, inspired by the copious amounts of content selling the destination, which typically feature a couple walking barefoot, hand-in-hand on white sands, or sipping a vibrantly coloured drink accentuated with an umbrella from the edge of an infinity pool. And so, upon receiving an invitation from the illustrious Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi, with the

promise that this resort was perfectly suited for family holidaying, who were we to say no? It was going to be a "summer of love" for us; loving on time spent with each other, our idyllic surroundings, and the sheer thrill of discovery of a vibrant destination for family travel. Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi would be our last stop in a week-long series of stays across the Hilton Hotels and Resorts portfolio in the Maldives, beginning at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, on to Hilton Maldives Amingiri and finally to the

ultra-luxe property on Ithaafushi Island.

A ride on board a luxury yacht from Male Velana International Airport signalled what was to be an epic roundup to this set of hyper picturesque islands and atolls that make up the Maldives. The tide was high on the day we departed, as there had been some scattered rains the night before. The skies were a striking blue, cloudless with a perfect juxtaposition between the humidity which one expects on an island destination, and the cool ocean breeze that kept the sea's waves crashing against our sturdy vacht ride in.

Sparkling champagne and juices were served with light bites; much to our delight as the adults onboard the yacht, and our 13 and 10 year old, who had already been so completely enamored by the preceding 5 nights. They simply could not imagine their holiday becoming any better than this! "We were told upon arrival that in fact, Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi was the only resort property to offer this luxury yacht "bubby-infused" transfer, awarding guests a taste of upcoming indulgent service at the lap of opulence.

OF OPULENT SPACES AND
AMENITIES IN THE LAP OF LUXURY
Nestled in the heart of the Indian
Ocean, the Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi beckons families
to experience a world of luxury
and adventure like no other.
This enchanting haven redefines
family vacations, offering a perfect
blend of beachfront relaxation
and excitement delivered through
a host of available activities and
amenities to choose from. Powdery

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white beaches to vibrant coral reefs form a perfect backdrop to your idyllic holiday getaway, one that is worth every cent spent, given the myriad of family-friendly wonders awaiting you at this tropical destination.

The Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi understands the importance of space and privacy for families. We had the distinctive pleasure of being whisked away to our incredibly exquisite two-bedroom reef villa, closed off to other guests by a turquoise painted swing door, that leads to a welcoming patio separating the primary suite and the second twin suite for the children.

Our spacious primary was fully

decked out with a massive dining table that accommodates 10, a stocked bar with premium selects in alcoholic beverages, high-end coffee making station, and an array of snacks. Of course, the signature welcoming gift, a bottle of chilled Veuve Clicquot Champagne, accompanied by a tray of fresh exotic fruits, pastries from the Chef's kitchen, chocolates, dates and more, elevated the excitement of arrival. Check-in was swift and carried out within the suite; a stellar touch for guests who would rather do away with the administrative side of holidaying and dive right into their settings.

A quick scan of the space revealed

an idyllic sanctuary, replete with all the trimmings of unsurpassed indulgence. The open curtains to wall-to-wall, floor to ceiling windows unveiled a massive deck, complete with swing and sun beds both shaded and under the sun, a heated jacuzzi, a mammoth sparkling infinity pool with stairs into the ocean beneath us should we be keen on a swim in the often-calm waves below.

Both the primary and secondary suites came embellished with indoor and outdoor showers and tubs for the gods, each enveloped by superior finishings of marble, treated wood and stonework. Direct beach access was only a few steps away from our villa,

EDITOR'S PICK • WALDORF ASTORIA MALDIVES ITHAAFUSHI



elegantly designed to ensure that we had all the room we needed to relax and bond without infringing on each other's very diverse preferences.

A GASTRONOMIC JOURNEY THROUGH **WALDORF ASTORIA MALDIVES ITHAAFUSHI** At the Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi, satiation takes on a whole new meaning. Amidst the azure waters of the Indian Ocean, it wasn't long before we realised how this luxury resort also beckons travellers on a gastronomic voyage like no other. Our time at the resort was limited to 3 days and so we were delighted to note that our culinary experiences were also going to be tailored for us to try out a broad selection of unique concepts, from fresh seafood feasts on the beach, farm-to-table with ingredients sourced from a garden on the resort, through to Michelin-starred dining.

Breakfast was served to us each morning from the Tasting Table, a beachside family style restaurant that's sure to tantalize your palate with a culinary journey featuring cuisines from around the world. What set this restaurant apart from the others at the resort was a vibrant buffet and rotating menu inspired by international flavours, awarding guests the opportunity to sample a host of sweet and savoury dishes, from Asian delicacies to Mediterranean delights, sumptuous pastries, hot and cold plates as well as mouthwatering breakfast finds for the youngest diners. Also delightfully engaging to watch



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was an arts and crafts station set outside, where tiny tots could express themselves creatively through paint and putty, at the guidance of a team resort team member from the Kids' Club.

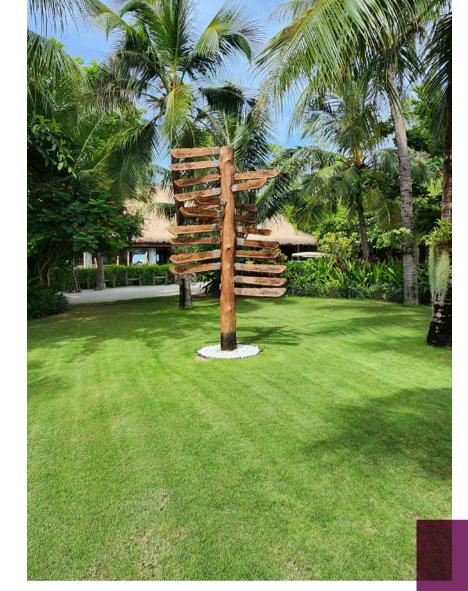
Invited to try out lunch at The Ledge by Dave Pynt, we headed out to experience fine dining taken to new depths at the pool side concept restaurant, helmed by Michelin-starred chef Dave Pynt. Our experience offered a mesmerizing seafood-focused menu, as well as dainty tacos and hearty burgers, much to the delight of the children. The Ledge by Dabe Pynt is a call to savour a plethora of flavours, from grilled lobster to perfectly seared scallops paired with a glass of crisp wine, or perhaps something a little more robust, all while surrounded by the mesmerizing views of the sparkling family pools that stretch into the island's shoreline.

The signature 7 course tasting menu at Li Long, was also a dining experience to relish, and an absolute must for diners keen on being transported to an era of Shanghainese royalty by culinary maven Chef Addy. Who could possibly decline an opportunity to experience the flavoursome signature Peking Duck, roasted in the Maldives' first classic woodfired oven, with an Asian inspired ambience to match.

For health-conscious diners, Glow turned out to be quite a revelation. Travelling as a writer also lends itself to opportunities to try an abundance of menu options and cuisines, of which saying no often proves quite difficult for a self-proclaimed foodie. Glow stood out for its deeply rooted focus on fresh, organic, and sustainably sourced ingredients, crafting dishes that are as nutritious as they are delicious. Pre-dinner drinks began with watching the sun set over a glass of sparkling Rose at the adjacent Amber, before heading on to a masterfully designed space with a feet-in-the-sand relaxed feeling to it. With a menu that caters to various dietary preferences, it's a guilt-free indulgence in the heart of paradise.

FROM MELLOW ACTIVITIES TO THRILLING WATER-BASED ADVENTURES

The resort doesn't just cater to adults; it rolls out the red carpet for little ones too. One of the highlights of a family stay at Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi is the wealth of outdoor activities, all of them perfectly tailored to suit one's comfortability in marine territory. From enjoying a relaxed dip in the shallow waters of the Indian Ocean, to taking the family out for a snorkelling trip and discovering the vibrant marine life just beneath the





EDITOR'S PICK • WALDORF ASTORIA MALDIVES ITHAAFUSHI





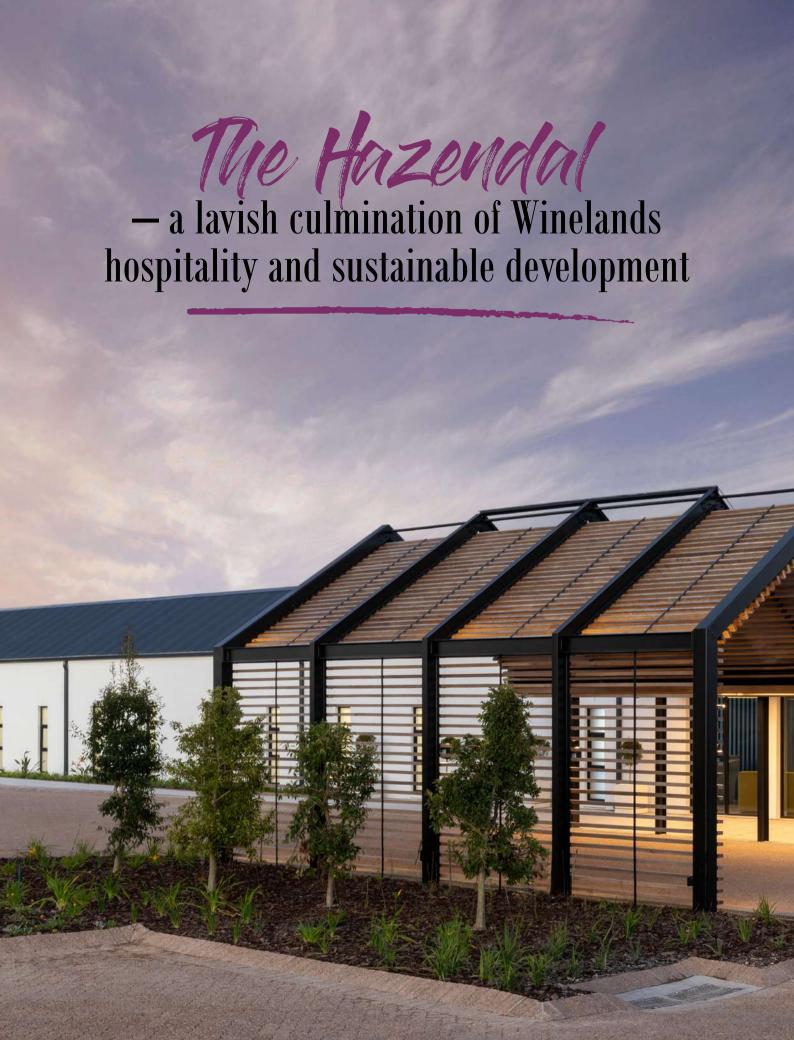
crystal-clear waters, sunset fishing, paddleboarding, kayaking together, adrenaline pumping jet-skiing or embarking on a thrilling dolphin-watching excursion.

And because we have older children, we were spoilt for choice on what activities were available for us to take on, including an array of motorised water sports, kite and windsurfing, or participating in complimentary activities that gave us a little more of a relaxed take on enjoying the ocean. For families looking to blend education with adventure, the resort also offers guided coral planting experiences, an opportunity to teach your children about marine conservation as you actively contribute to preserving the local coral reefs.

I took home notes for my friends with younger cubs. Parents with small children will be delighted to note that even these little gems are well catered to, as Waldorf Astoria Stars Club welcomes young guests aged four to eleven, with guests under four years old having access to use the facilities when accompanied by a guardian or a babysitter. A babysitting service is also available at Waldorf Astoria Stars Club and group activities are available and hosted by certified childcare team members, a special add-on that will make it easier for parents to enjoy a little downtime in this slice of paradise.

Last but certainly not least on the activities tailored for our enjoyment during our stay, was a morning spent at the Waldorf Astoria Spa, moments that rival any worldclass spa within an idyllic setting. On the agenda was experiencing the Maldives' first Aqua Wellness Center, which features a pool designed in zones, with each station targeting a different part of the body. The zones, which include a jet bath, air jets, shower jets, and a massage lounge, use varying levels of intensity and water temperature aimed at easing muscle tension, boosting the immune system, increasing blood circulation, speeding up metabolism and improving deep sleep quality. The Aqua Wellness Center is an invitation to reimagined relaxation and an opportunity to reinvigorate every one of your senses in the comfort of a quiet, idyllic setting, where sea, sand and nature form your postcard-like backdrop.

Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi is more than just a luxury retreat; it's a destination where families create memories that last a lifetime. With its spacious accommodations, tailored kids' and teen programs, thrilling adventures, gourmet dining options and a commitment to ensure that your wellbeing is front and centre of your experience, this Maldivian gem ensures that your family vacation is nothing short of extraordinary. Prepare to embark on a journey of discovery, relaxation, and togetherness in a paradise unlike any other.





EDITOR'S PICK • THE HAZENDAL

ight years ago, an extensive renovation and development project began at a wine estate situated amongst the rolling Bottelary Hills in the magnificent Cape Winelands region. The vision for this family-owned estate was to create a South African destination for all journeys. Beginning with a simple wine tasting lounge, Hazendal Wine Estate began to slowly add carefully curated experiences to its in-house offering. A state-ofthe-art children's edutainment centre was built, an 18-hole golf course, an upscale conference

centre, and a variety of high-end eateries opened their doors. A vintage car collection went on display, a gallery supporting local artists launched, and function venues nestled amongst the estate's water features and landscaped gardens were built to accommodate the growing requests for weddings.

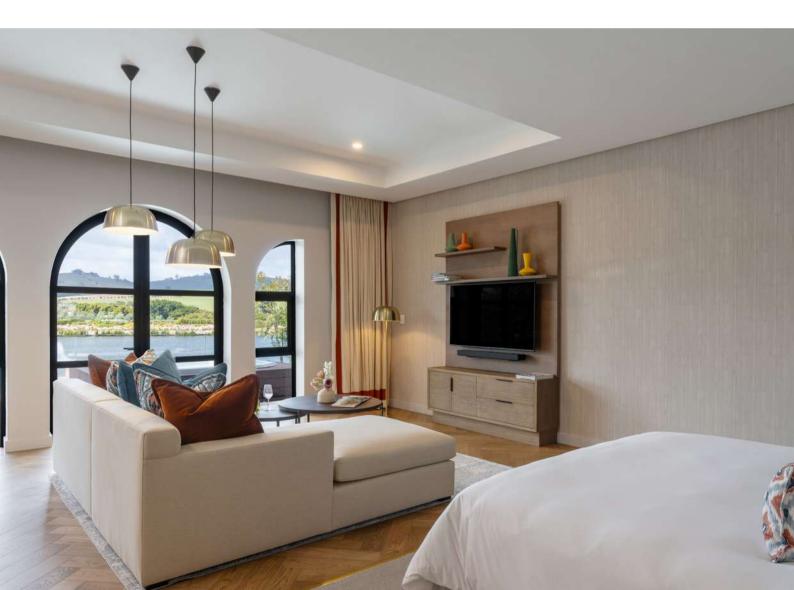
Finally, in October 2023, in a culmination of these exceptional developments, Hazendal Wine Estate opened an opulent new boutique hotel. Seamlessly blending modern design elements with historic Cape Dutch architecture, The Hazendal offers guests a lavish overnight base from where they can experience the myriad of estate offerings and explore the Stellenbosch

Wine Region.

Through all this visionary development, what stands out for Travel Essence Magazine is the estate's long-term commitment to conservation and community. The owners have made extraordinary efforts, in their private capacities, to partner hospitality developments with sustainable initiatives.

Sustainability at Hazendal Wine Estate

One of the most impressive developments on Hazendal Wine Estate is its sustainable water project. Cognisant of Africa's scarcity of fresh water, Hazendal's owners have built a state-of-the-







EDITOR'S PICK • THE HAZENDAL



art filtration system. Water is sourced from the farm's own reservoirs and five boreholes and is purified for use on the farm. Wastewater on the estate is then treated, purified, and recycled as irrigation water.

According to Hazendal Estate's General Manager, Carly de Jong, Hazendal's long-term goal is to be completely self-sufficient for their electricity requirements. The estate is well on its way to achieving this goal following the installation of a solar farm made up of around 748 panels. Every new development on the estate is designed with this in mind. The Hazendal's roof, for example, has been built to maximise efficiency for the installation of further solar photovoltaic panels. Hazendal is also doing its bit to encourage the use of hybrid cars. Estate visitors can charge their batteries at dedicated electric vehicle charge points located alongside the estate's Classic Car Pavilion.

"Recycling has also been carefully included in our development plans. We have a purpose-built refuse centre which ensures that all solid waste from the estate is separated, sorted, and processed for recycling," says de Jong.

A sizeable Harvest Garden supplies fresh vegetables and herbs at the eateries and restaurants located on the estate and visitors are encouraged to sample the award-winning wines that are produced on the farm. Hazendal also encourages and assists their staff to undertake personal journeys towards self-sufficiency. This is evident from the vegetable gardens grown by resident staff on allocated estate land.

"Where produce cannot be grown onsite, we employ a policy that supports local suppliers that are less than 50km from the estate. This reduces the carbon emissions created in the transportation of produce," adds De Jong.

All food packaging on the estate, from paper bags to coffee cups, is 100% biodegradable. Single-use plastics are avoided, and straws are made from biodegradable cornstarch. All packaging is manufactured in Cape Town to keep transportation emissions to a minimum.

Community Development

Hazendal's team is very passionate about childhood development. Children that live in the staff village on the estate can attend Hazendal's pre-school. There is also an on-site sports training programme and a



homework assistance and life skills training centre available to school-going children living on the estate.

"We regularly welcome school groups from underprivileged areas to the Wonderdal Edutainment Centre. We also have a Wonderbox outreach project where boxes, each valued at approximately R10 000, filled with books, toys and educational resources are distributed to aftercare centres around the Winelands," explains de Jong.

What to expect at The Hazendal

Guests staying at The Hazendal can relax in comfort with the knowledge that the estate has made every effort to minimize its carbon emissions.

31 individually appointed Superior and Luxury Rooms decorated with original South African artworks have been stocked with every modern comfort and convenience. Each suite boasts its own private patio and swing chair overlooking either the hotel's stylish central courtyard or the majestic Stellenbosch mountains. Two spacious suites boast private jacuzzis. The hotel's 122 square metre Presidential Suite has been opulently furnished with plush couches, velvet upholstered chairs, vintage-style carpets, and gleaming contemporary chandeliers to enhance its grandeur. This suite's

private deck overlooks a lake and is furnished with its own patio lounge suite and private jacuzzi.

A brand-new spa located at The Hazendal opened its doors last month. This serene space is decorated with textured fabrics and neutral colours. The Spa has integrated historical farm buildings with modern extensions of high set glass windows and double volume ceilings. Indulge in pampering treatments including massages, facials, and detox treatments. There is also a fully equipped nail studio, a Hammam area, and a lakeside treatment pod.

The Restaurant, under the direction of the estate's **Executive Chef Michelle** Theron, is located next to The Hazendal's courtyard. This new establishment will complement the food and beverage offerings already available on the estate with a refined menu served beneath the shimmering chandeliers in this beautiful dining area.

An adjacent bar where one can enjoy Hazendal's fine wines, the estate's own range of vodka and its signature cocktails overlooks the golf course and surrounding mountains. An exclusive cigar lounge furnished with leather couches and botanical-style wallpaper offers another inviting area for guests to relax in. Families will also enjoy the hotel's screen room where families can enjoy movie nights together.



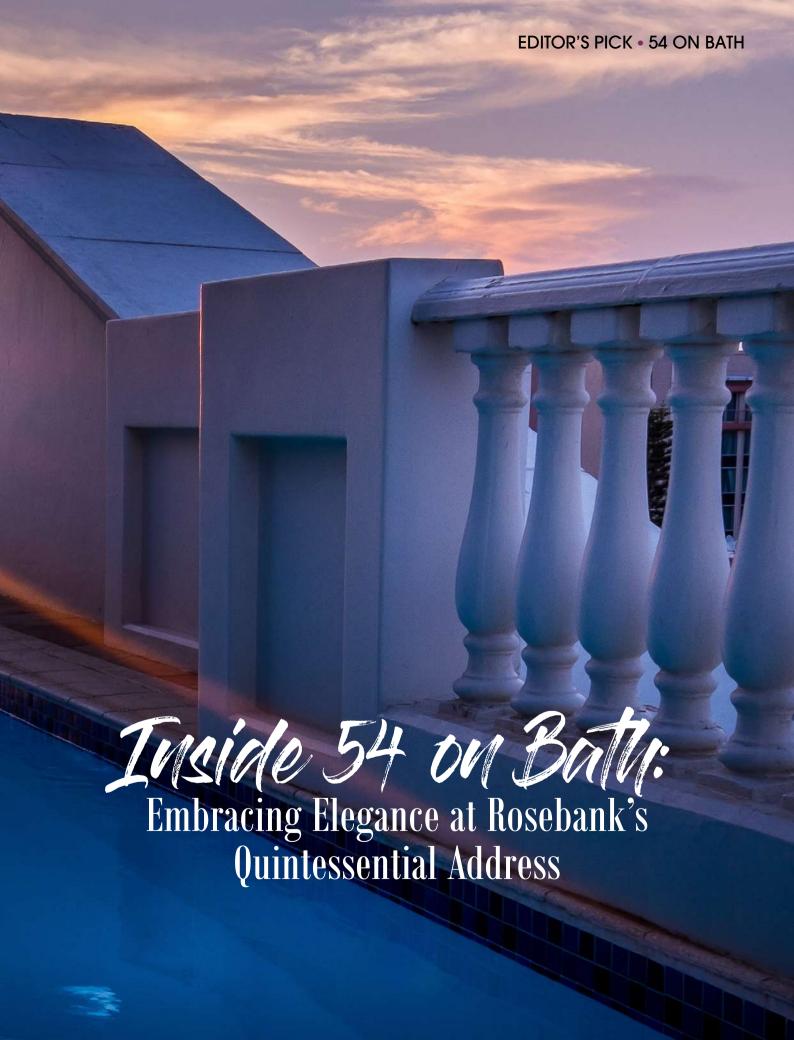












In the heart of the vibrant Rosebank district in Johannesburg, 54 on Bath Hotel stands as a testament to timeless elegance and refined luxury. This boutique hotel, often deemed iconic in the city, captivates quests with its distinctive charm, a culinary journey that transcends expectations, and a design aesthetic that seamlessly blends sophistication with comfort. And so without further ado, let's list 5 reasons why 54 on Bath Hotel is celebrated as a jewel in the crown of Johannesburg's hospitality scene.



As one strolls through the entrance of 54 on Bath, an air of sophistication envelopes every corner. The hotel exudes a classic charm that transcends trends, making it a timeless sanctuary for those seeking an escape from the ordinary, or well accustomed to the richly diverse high end hospitality offering that the city of Johannesburg awards. The architecture, characterized by a harmonious blend of modern lines and classic elements, reflects the hotel's commitment to creating an ambiance of understated luxury.

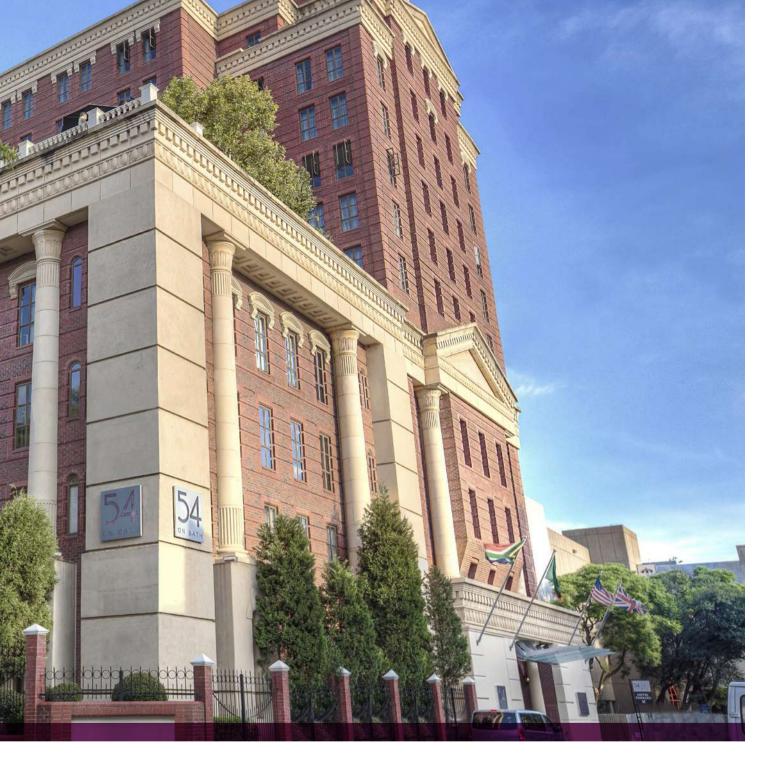
Each room and suite at 54 on Bath is meticulously designed to provide a haven of comfort and refinement. The attention to detail is evident in the choice of materials, the plush furnishings, and the thoughtful placement of amenities.



The result is an atmosphere that caters to both the needs of the modern traveller and the desire for a chic retreat that feels like a home away from home.

2. STAY AT AN ICONIC ADDRESS IN JOHANNESBURG FOR A **CULMINATION OF EXPERIENCES**

54 on Bath has earned its status as an iconic establishment in Johannesburg through what connoisseurs of the softer side of life can comfortably describe as a culmination of exceptional experiences. Whether it's a champagne brunch or the renowned High Tea experience you are after, if it's a glass of sparkling wine with friends or a meeting characterised with a little more formality among business associates, 54 on Bath is strategically located, offering convenient access to the vibrant



Rosebank Mall, the Rosebank Art and Craft Market, and the Gautrain station, making it a hub for both business and leisure travellers.

The attentive and personalized service provided by the hotel's staff adds to its allure. Your first interface with luxury begins at the point of pick up. Transferred from the airport or requested pick up location by a Mercedes Benz sedan, to the stepping into the lobby for check in, and retiring to their rooms, guests are guaranteed a commitment to hospitality excellence that is palpable.

This dedication to service has not only garnered the hotel a loyal clientele but also contributed to its reputation as a beacon of luxury in the city.

3. CULINARY DELIGHTS: A GASTRO-NOMIC JOURNEY AT LEVEL FOUR RESTAURANT

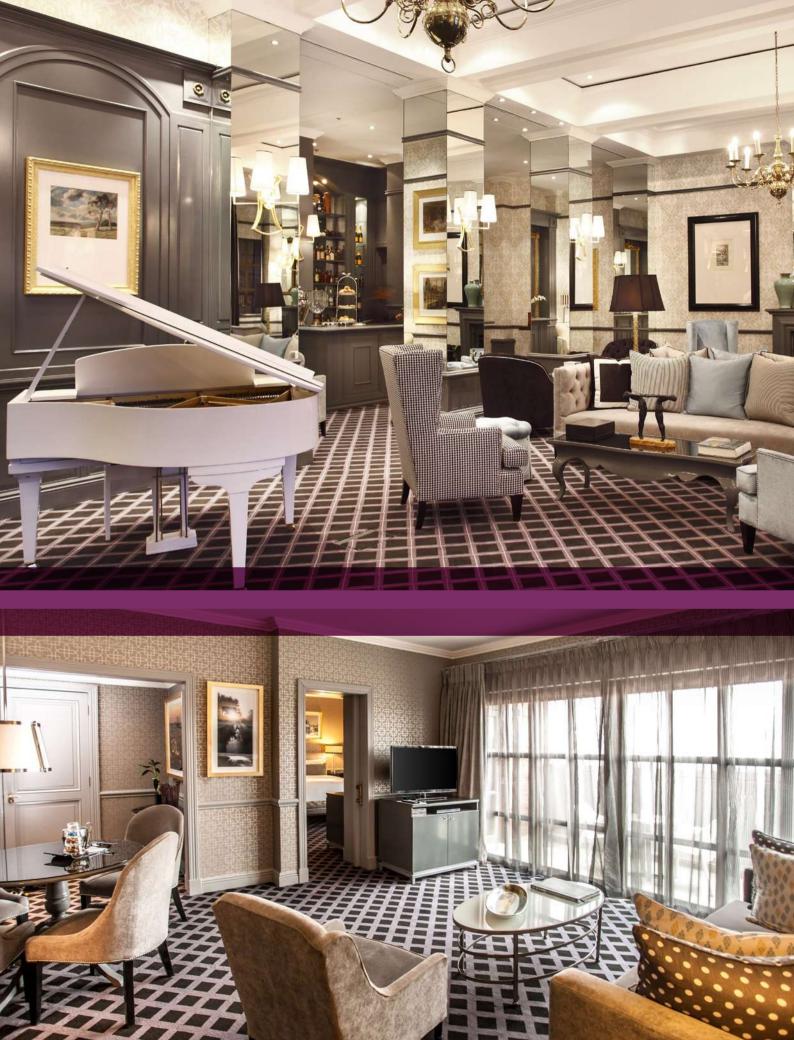
At the heart of 54 on Bath's allure is the culinary masterpiece that unfolds at the Level Four Restaurant. Renowned for its innovative approach to fine dining, the restaurant takes guests on a gastronomic journey that celebrates local flavours

while embracing global influences.

Under the culinary stewardship of an acclaimed Chef Donaldson Madubela, Level Four boasts a menu that is both diverse and meticulously curated. From the freshness of locally sourced ingredients to the artistic presentation of each dish, the restaurant is a culinary destination in its own right. Guests can savour a symphony of flavours, whether indulging in a leisurely breakfast, a business lunch, or a romantic dinner.

The wine culture at 54 on Bath is

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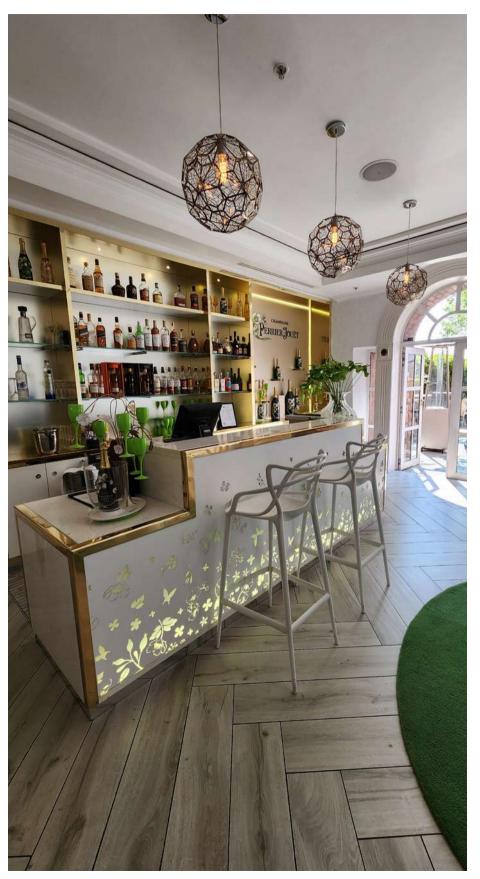




equally impressive. The hotel's extensive wine cellar houses a carefully curated selection of local and international wines. Whether patrons are wine connoisseurs or enthusiasts, the sommeliers at Level Four are adept at guiding them through a sensory exploration of wines that complement and enhance the dining experience.

4. DESIGN AESTHETIC: WHERE COMFORT MEETS TIMELESS SOPHISTICATION The design aesthetic of 54 on Bath is a harmonious marriage of comfort and timeless sophistication. The interiors are adorned with tasteful art, bespoke furniture, and warm colour palettes of greys, purples, white and black contrasts, all come together to create a chic yet glamorously inviting atmosphere. The use of natural light throughout the hotel enhances the sense of openness and tranquillity.

Rooms and suites are designed with



meticulous attention to detail, offering a blend of contemporary amenities and classic elegance. Guests can unwind in luxurious surroundings, surrounded by plush fabrics, modern conveniences, and subtle touches that speak to the hotel's commitment to creating a space that is as aesthetically pleasing as it is comfortable.

5. GARDENS AND OUTDOOR SPACES: A SERENE ESCAPE IN THE HEART OF **ROSEBANK**

It's commonplace to see guests sauntering about the outdoor space on the fourth floor or settling down to enjoy a light meal of their choosing. Beyond the confines of the hotel, 54 on Bath offers an enchanting escape in the form of its lush gardens and outdoor spaces. The well-manicured gardens provide a serene oasis where guests can relax, unwind, and escape the urban pace yet still feel very much a part of it. Whether enjoying a leisurely stroll or sipping a drink on the terrace, the outdoor areas further contribute to the hotel's allure by offering a tranquil retreat within the bustling heart of Rosebank.

A Symphony of Luxury and Comfort
Ask anyone in Johannesburg about

which boutique hotels have garnered acclaim as prestigious addresses. In a city replete with worldclass hospitality gems, 54 on Bath Hotel in Rosebank certainly makes the list, and stands as an embodiment of luxury, culinary excellence, and timeless sophistication. Its iconic status in the city is a testament to the meticulous attention to detail that permeates every aspect of the guest experience. From the opulent accommodations to the gastronomic delights of Level Four Restaurant, and the inviting design aesthetic that graces every corner, 54 on Bath is more than a hotel; it is a symphony of luxury and comfort that continues to enchant and captivate those who seek an extraordinary escape in the heart of Johannesburg.







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Boundaile Hamaile: A tranquil retreat at York Lodge

By Yvonne C Mtengwa

Harare, the "Sunshine City" often proves to be an anomaly for most Zimbabwean diasporans headed in for business and pleasure, especially if they haven't made their way back for a long while. As a buzzing city experiencing the impact of urban sprawl, I'd be the first to say it's becoming increasingly difficult to define where its boundaries lie.

My arrival at the newly expanded Robert Mugabe International Airport was met with fascination, as I was keen to experience what I hoped to be a seamless roll out for any new airport welcoming international guests. I'll describe the arrival procedures as a presenting an opportunity for improvement, as with landing in most airports across the continent. Harare as we know it, is one that challenges you to adapt to the energy of a people constantly on the move to make ends meet, from your initial encounters with airport staff right through to every conversation one might engage in onto their final destination.

ut in its hustle and bustle are pockets of serenity that defy the pulse of what lies beyond the walls from which certain experiences are availed. September heralded an unexpected trip back to the Zimbabwean capital for a period that would be much longer than I had stayed for on my most recent visit only a few weeks prior. Harare continues to invoke curiosity, especially given its fast-evolving nature. It's a sensory overload for some, yet home for us who were born and raised there. There is always something new to marvel at, there are always so many questions on the tip of one's tongue; again, much as you would have driving through the streets of Lusaka or Dar es Salam.

Keen to further discover what else was new on the boutique lodge scene in Harare after the pleasant surprises of the weeks before, I went on to contact York Lodge, which I had heard is a hidden gem and certainly very popular for inbound business travellers. Visitation numbers into the capital have long been on the rise, but where to put heads on beds remains a question for many, given the (less than favourable) locations of most chain hospitality product in the central business district of Harare.

A pristine place in the heart of Newlands, Harare

York Lodge stands as an epitome of sophistication and comfort, making it the perfect accommodation for business travellers seeking a blend of convenience and tranquillity. With its impeccable amenities, proximity to key business hubs, and the enchanting allure of its gardens, York Lodge offers a unique and distinguished experience for those visiting Harare.

Set on several acres of sprawl-





ing lawns, upon entering York Lodge, guests are greeted with an ambiance of refined luxury. The accommodations feature an extension of what used to be a private farmhouse style home, expanded onto the stunning acreage to include standalone suites and semi-detached rooms dotted within the York Lodge grounds. Family owned and meticulously designed, rooms are incredibly, fully decked out to include your coffee making station, large wardrobe, bathroom with soaking tub and standalone shower. The garden facing

units boast patios for one to soak up the warm yet nature-based atmosphere that comes with plush gardens, all providing a harmonious balance between modern functionality and classic charm.

An enchanting garden retreat

One of the standout features of York Lodge is its enchanting garden, a verdant oasis that offers a serene escape from the bustling pace of business activities. The meticulously landscaped gar-





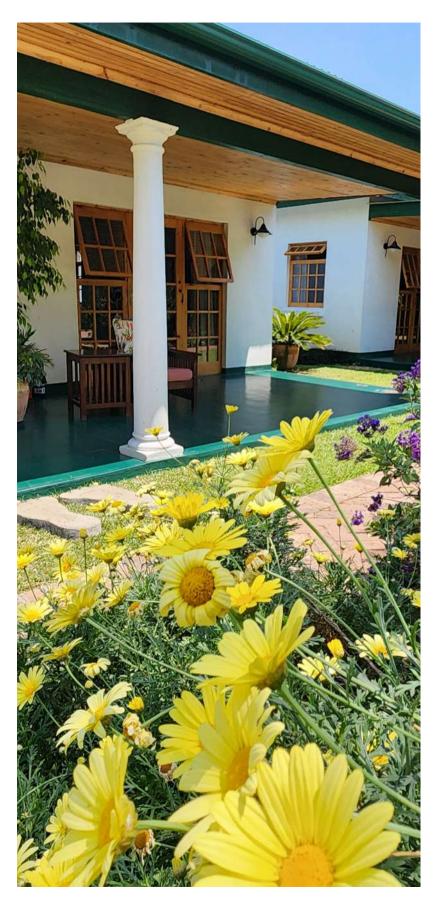
dens provide a tranquil setting, allowing guests to rejuvenate their minds and bodies amidst nature's beauty.

The garden serves as an ideal venue for outdoor events, corporate gatherings, or simply a quiet stroll after a day of intensive work. The carefully selected flora contributes to a peaceful atmosphere, while the sparking swimming pools on the property cue in an additional invitation to enjoy a perfect balance between the energy of the city and the calming influence of nature.

Relaxed diving concept
York Lodge's commitment to excellence extends

York Lodge's commitment to excellence extends to its culinary offerings. The on-site restaurant boasts a menu curated with a fusion of international and local flavours. Mornings begin with hearty hot and cold breakfast options, inclusive of fresh fruits, a selection of cereals, yoghurts and pastries before picking from a robust menu what one would like to top off their first meal of the day.

Of course, in-room service dining is always an option, and business travellers can indulge in a made-to-order gastronomic journey without leaving the comfort of the lodge. Staff are on hand to ask if you will be joining for dinner, a



sustainable approach to ensuring there is no food wastage given the unpredictability of business schedules for some.

A space to integrate work and relaxation

I spent most of my time working from the patio at the main lodge, and moving on to occupy that outside my suite after my lunch. The beautifully manicured gardens were too pristine for me to want to huddle up at my in-room workstation. For those who prioritize connectivity, high-speed Wi-Fi is available throughout the premises, enabling guests to stay connected and conduct business efficiently. The in-room workspaces are thoughtfully arranged, providing a comfortable environment for business activities. In addition, York Lodge offers conference facilities equipped with the latest technology, making it an ideal venue for meetings, presentations, and corporate events.

The on-site business center caters to the diverse needs of business travellers, offering services such as printing, copying, and secretarial assistance. When I needed some support, the office staff were on hand to assist with requests, with this thoughtful attention to detail reflecting York Lodge's commitment to ensuring a hassle-free experience for those with professional responsibilities.

Added advantage: Proximity to Business Hubs

The premises are extremely private, secure and void of any interference from the outside world. Strategically located as the first address on York Avenue in the leafy neighbourhood of Newlands, York Lodge is in close proximity to key business districts and government offices in Harare, ensuring that business travellers can minimize commute times, allowing for more efficient use of their valuable time. Whether attending meetings in the Central Business District or engaging in workshops or hosting meetings of their own onsite, guests at York Lodge benefit from its convenient location.

The lodge's concierge service goes the

extra mile to assist guests with transportation arrangements, providing a seamless and stress-free experience for those navigating the city for business purposes. This commitment to service excellence extends to personalized recommendations for dining and entertainment options in the vicinity, ensuring that business travellers can unwind after a day of meetings.

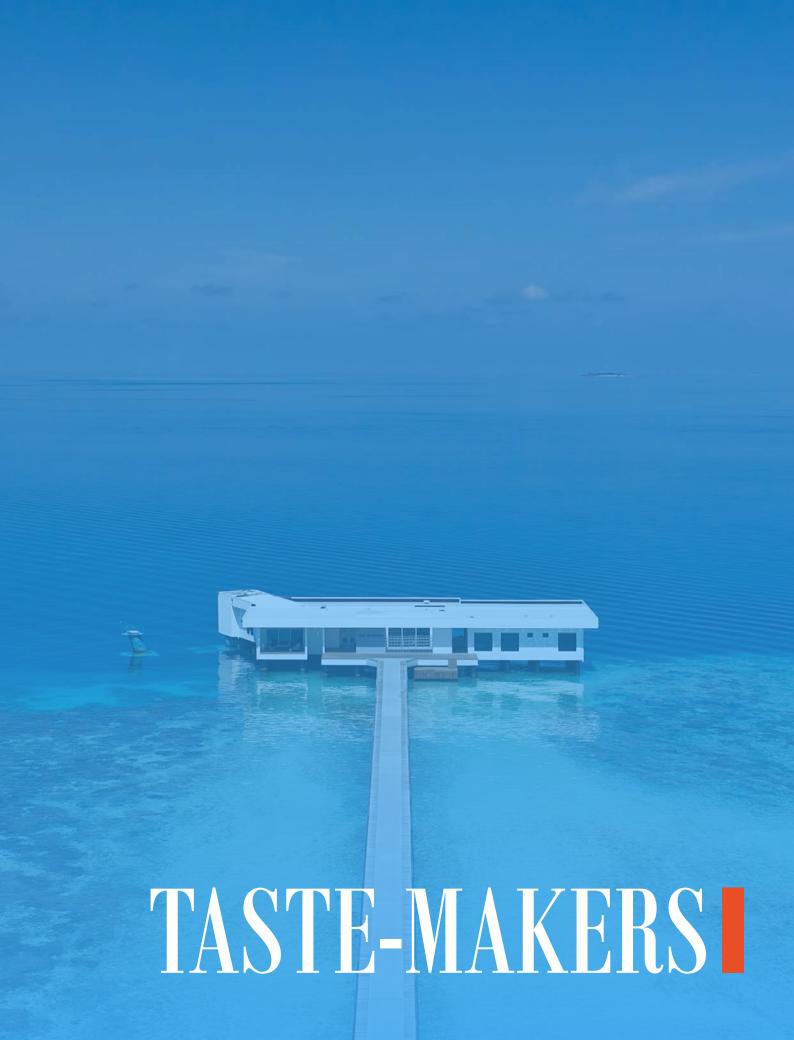
Home away from home while in Harare

From the mushrooming of new shopping centers and commercial blocks, food courts, and a myriad of petrol stations about town, the very evident real estate boom through the workings of privately owned real estate development companies, sharply contrasted by men and women contributing to the robust informal economy, most would agree that Harare is a sensory for some; even those of us who frequent coming home for work or play. But in it also lie spaces that are seemingly far from the madding crowd, providing the relaxation needed to function from within pristine settings. York Lodge in Harare, Zimbabwe, stands as an exemplary choice for business travellers seeking accommodations that seamlessly blend functionality with luxury - and calm.

I'm often asked by friends and family members to recommend places to explore when in Harare. For me, I was delighted to note that I could add York Lodge to the growing list of boutique product in Harare that not only meets the practical needs of business travellers but also elevates their experience by providing a tranquil retreat in the midst of a bustling city. For a harmonious blend of work and relaxation, York Lodge emerges as the perfect choice in the heart of Harare. Do check them out when next in the Sunshine City! You can thank me later! 🚳











By Yvonne C Mtengwa

Nothing could have prepared us for the blissful moments spent in the Maldivian Islands during our summer family vacation. In the heart of the mesmerizing Maldives, where clear waters stretch to the horizon, there exists a remarkable oasis that blurs the line between fantasy and reality. The Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, an iconic luxury resort, is also home to a hidden gem that has redefined opulence in the world of travel - The Muraka Villa - the Maldives' first underwater luxury villa.





ucked away beneath the surface of the Indian Ocean, The Muraka Villa is an architectural marvel that offers an unparalleled immersive experience in marine luxury. As the first of its kind, this two-level villa is not only a haven for those seeking the ultimate in privacy and extravagance but also an engineering wonder that will leave you bewildered by its splendour.

Stepping into The Muraka is like entering a world of enchantment, as it offers a perfect blend between over water and underwater living. The upper level is a sun-soaked paradise, with sprawling living spaces, a stunning infinity pool, and an overwater bedroom that offers panoramic views of the surrounding azure waters. With interiors that seamlessly blend modern design, characterised by clean lines, hues of white, silver accents and natural elements, it's a haven of tranquilli-

ty and elegance, made for those carrying an inherent penchant for the finer side of life.

But it's when you descend the spiral staircase or take the elevator (yes, elevator!) to the lower level that The Muraka reveals its true magic. Here you will find the underwater primary suite, submerged five meters below the surface, and boasting a surreal window into the mesmerizing underwater world for which the Maldives Islands has garnered acclaim. Imagine waking up to the gentle swaying of colourful fish and intricately textured corals, the graceful dance of manta rays right outside your bedroom window as the sun's rays penetrate the surface of the azure ocean for spectacular visual effect.

The Muraka doesn't just provide a front-row seat to this aquatic spectacle; it offers a complete immersion into a world of mystery below the sea and a perfect respite for the wanderlust that resides within. What also makes your stay that much more special the exclusivity of the experience, should you prefer to enjoy your own spot in

paradise, carved out for your total indulgence.

Guests can enjoy a gourmet dinner prepared by a personal chef while surrounded by the vibrant marine life or sip champagne in the bathtub with uninterrupted views of the ocean. The curved acrylic walls ensure that you are at one with the marine environment, with only a few inches of glass separating you from the wonders of the deep.

The experience is not only luxurious but also sustainable. The villa has been designed with environmental preservation in mind, incorporating technologies such as solar panels and a desalination system, reducing its carbon footprint while maintaining uncompromised comfort.

Beyond the villa and connected by a bridge that stretches from the main island to your private retreat at The Muraka, Conrad Maldives Rangali Island also offers a wealth of activities to further elevate your stay. From going snorkelling, to

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coral planting, riding out to into the deep onboard jet skis, to indulging in a spa treatment over the water, the resort caters to every whim and thirst for opulence. And when the day ends, you can unwind with a cocktail at the world's first all-glass undersea restaurant, Ithaa, where the aquatic views are as breathtaking as the cuisine.

THE "ITHAA UNDERSEA RESTAURANT EXPERIENCE: A CULINARY DIVE INTO THE DEPTHS OF FINE DINING"

As if the Conrad Maldives Rangali Island Resort couldn't further elevate your experience, this remarkably picturesque destination reveals Ithaa Undersea Restaurant, an aquatic haven that redefines fine dining against a backdrop of marine splendour.

The submerged jewel and showstop-

ping restaurant Ithaa, which means 'mother of pearl' in the Maldivian language of Dhivehi, is aptly named for its jewel-like presence beneath the ocean's surface. The restaurant's architectural appeal lies in its curved, all-glass structure, which unveils an unobstructed 180-degree view of the vibrant aquatic world that surrounds it. Ithaa, also the world's first all-glass undersea restaurant, is not just a culinary experience; it's a journey into an aquatic wonderland that will remain forever etched in your memory bank.

Arrival at the Ithaa experience is signalled by glass of champagne in hand, before you descend a spiral staircase, which transitions you from the sunny shores above to the cool, submerged interior beneath the ocean's surface. You'll find the dining room to be quite

intimate, seating comfortably only about 12-14 lucky guests and ensuring an exclusive and personalized experience.

A fusion of Maldivian and Western flavours is plated by the resident chefs from a menu curated to tantalize the taste buds. From freshly caught seafood to gourmet dishes prepared with locally sourced ingredients, each plate is a work of culinary art, and a gastronomic adventure where every bite is paired with breathtaking views of vibrant coral gardens and the enchanting dance of marine life.

BECOME MESMERISED BY A SUNSET UNLIKE ANY OTHER.

While Ithaa is known for its spectacular daytime views, it transforms into an even more enchanting destination at sunset. As the sun dips below the ocean's





TASTE-MAKERS • CONRAD MALDIVES RANGALI

horizon, the underwater world takes on a mesmerizing quality as the glass walls frame a canvas painted with the colours of twilight, and the restaurant's lighting enhances the beauty of the aquatic life outside. It's a romantic setting like no other, making Ithaa a prime spot for unforgettable proposals, anniversary celebrations, and intimate gatherings with friends, family, or both.

Ithaa doesn't just dazzle with its aesthetics and flavours; it also highlights Conrad Maldives Rangali Island's commitment to sustainability. The resort places a strong emphasis on responsible tourism, and Ithaa is no exception. From locally sourced ingredients to eco-friendly practices in the kitchen, sustainability is woven into every aspect of the dining experience.

While dining at Ithaa is an experience to cherish, it's also an exclusive one. Due to limited seating and high demand, reservations are essential. The restaurant is accessible to all guests of Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, as well as visitors from neighbouring sister resorts.

In a world where luxury meets nature, Ithaa Undersea Restaurant stands as a testament to the extraordinary. It is where culinary artistry intertwines with the beauty of the ocean's depths, where fine dining transcends tradition and ventures into uncharted waters. For those fortunate enough to savour its delights, Ithaa is more than a restaurant; it's a journey into the heart of the Maldives' aquatic soul.







A tale of Celebrating the Evolution of African Culture in the UAE

The All Africa Festival, co-founded by couple Nina and Timothy Olatoke, bears testament to the resilience of a people with a passion to share the uniqueness, vibrancy, and complexities of arguably one of the most diverse continents in the world. Five years on since the very first event was held in Dubai's Creek Park, the All Africa Festival has grown leaps and bounds, through a post-Covid era that took the extravaganza on a journey of two consecutive years in Dubai's iconic Buri Park.

But with growth comes change, and in the case of the All-Africa Festival, Nina, Tim, and their team of mavericks are getting ready to take the award-winning festival, and the UAE's largest celebration of Africa's rich and diverse cultures in all their vibrant expressions and representations, to Abu Dhabi, for the very first time since its UAE debut in 2018.

n the heart of the United Arab Emirates, a rich tapestry of cultures converges, creating a vibrant mosaic that transcends borders. Approximately 200 nationalities are recorded as calling the UAE across its seven Emirates home, were all work and live together harmoniously in a backdrop of tolerance, safety, and innovation. Among the myriad of influences shaping this dynamic cultural landscape, the evolution of African culture has emerged as a captivating narrative, seamlessly yet subtly interwoven with the fabric of the UAE.

Through the rhythmic beats of music, the expressive strokes of art, the bold statements of fashion, and the diverse flavours of dining, the African cultural influence has found a resonant home in the desert oasis. And now, with the All Africa Festival organisers having announced that the Festival is making its way to Abu Dhabi in February 2024, the stage for this 3-day cultural extravaganza will be set on Yas Island, Abu Dhabi's premier family entertainment destination.

Celebrating Musical Crossroads: The Pulse of African Rhythms

Announced performers so far include Congolese French singer, rapper, and songwriter Maître Gims, Canadian Moroccan actress, singer and dancer Nora Fatehi, Ghanaian Afropop, dancehall



TASTE-MAKERS • ALL AFRICA FESTIVAL

and reggae musician Stonebwoy, Tanzanian Bongo Flava recording artist Diamond Platnumz, French hip hop, R&B and urban pop singer-songwriter Vegedream, Moroccan rapper ElGrande Toto, Sudanese singer/songwriter Hleem Taj Alser and Ethiopian hip hop artist Lij Michael (Faf) as some of the performers slated to take to the All Africa Festival stage.

South African dancer and singer Kamo Mphela, Zimbabwean-born "Queen of Amapiano" Sha Sha, Congolese Soukous Star, Singer and Producer Koffi Olomide and Zimbabwean-born Singer, Songwriter Berita also join the fold of artists performing in Abu Dhabi at All Africa Festival.

The soulful melodies and infectious rhythms of African music have transcended geographical boundaries to find a welcoming stage in the UAE. From traditional drumming circles to contemporary Afrobeat and Amapiano fusion, the local music scene pulsates with the diversity of African sounds.

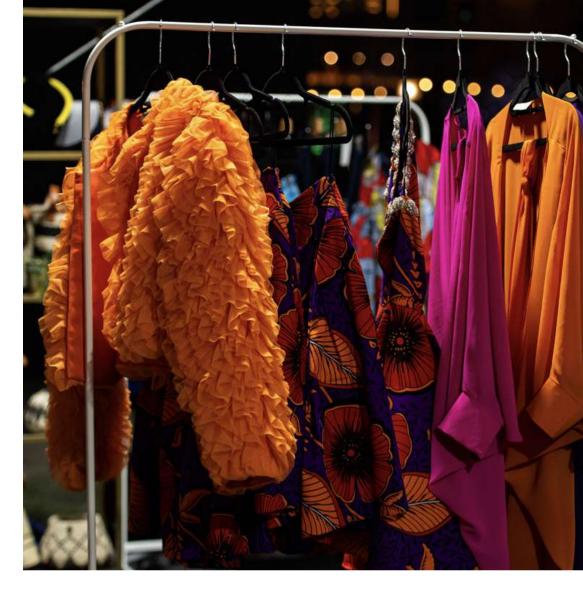
Renowned African musicians frequently grace the stages of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, with more concert organisers and promoters bringing global artists such as Davido, Major League DJs and Asake to local arenas in 2023 alone. These musical encounters serve as a bridge, connecting disparate cultures through a shared appreciation for the universal language of music.



Artistic Expression: Visual Narvatives Unveiled

Plans are underway to bring in the realm of visual arts at the All Africa Festival, as African creativity paints a vivid narrative that transcends the canvas. Residents have witnessed the emergence of local galleries, Effie Gallery in Al Quoz being one such example to proudly showcase the works of African artists, whose pieces explore themes ranging from identity and heritage to the convergence of tradition and modernity. Through planned art-focused activations, guests at the Festival can anticipate the bold use of colours and the symbolic depth within African art resonating with art enthusiasts, the aim of the activations of which is to foster a deeper understanding of the continent's diverse cultures. Through exhibitions and collaborative projects that the All Africa Festival has been a part off over the years, it is quite apparent just how much the UAE has become a canvas where African artists can share their stories with a global audience.

Fashion Fusion: A Tapestry of Textiles and Styles The evolution of African





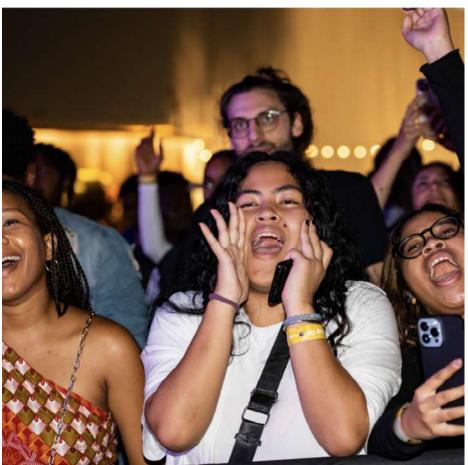
TASTE-MAKERS • ALL AFRICA FESTIVAL

fashion has found a runway in the cosmopolitan streets of the UAE, with the Africa Fashion Week Middle East that took place in Dubai's DIFC District, coming in as a prime example of a celebration of the culture through fashion. Traditional garments, adorned with intricate patterns and vibrant hues, are not only celebrated during cultural events but have also permeated mainstream fashion. Embracing the spirit of diversity, local designers often draw inspiration from African textiles and traditional attire, creating a fusion that reflects the harmonious coexistence of cultures. As fashion shows dedicated to African designs are becoming a fixture on the UAE's fashion calendar, we can anticipate Afro-inspired fashion, be it clothing and accessories, to find their way onto the Festival grounds at Yas Island's Etihad Park come February of next year.

AFF set to spotlight a feast of flavours from the Motherland

What's a festival without the promise of culinary immersion, right? It is no surprise that the aromatic spices and bold flavours of African cuisine have found a seat at the UAE's multicultural dining table. From Nigerian Jollof rice, Kenyan Nyama Choma to South African bobotie, the gastronomic landscape has expanded to encompass a diverse array of African culinary delights. Specialized restaurants, food trucks and pop-ups as well as fusion eateries, will be on hand to add to the celebration of the





complexity of African flavours, offering a chance to embark festival goers a culinary journey across the continent from Abu Dhabi

In the confluence of music, arts, fashion, and dining, the UAE stands as a testament to the harmonious coexistence of cultures. The celebration of African influence has become an integral part of this mosaic, adding depth and diversity to the cultural narrative of the Emirates. As the evolution of African culture continues to unfold on the Arabian Peninsula, the All Africa Festival presents a shared appreciation for creativity, expression, and heritage that creates a bridge that connects two continents, fostering understanding and unity in the spirit of a global community. And whether you are a festival lover, African culture enthusiast, tourist, or vendor - you are invited!

> To learn more about the All Africa Festival or catch key event updates, visit www.allafricafestival.com







An Evnerging Wellness Rennissance:

6 reasons why health and harmony are huge sellers in the Gulf Tiger

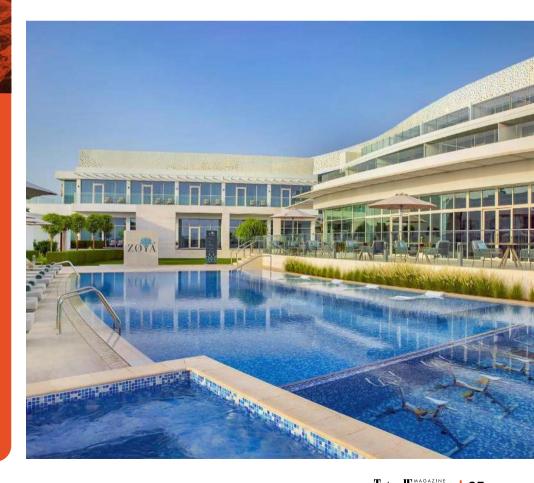
By Yvonne C Mtengwa

Some could easily describe Dubai as the Middle East's version of Miami by virtue of its abundance of lifestyle offerings. Nicknamed the Gulf Tiger by trade, tourism, real estate, IT and financial juggernauts, movement away from reliance on petrochemicals now highlights Dubai as more than just a city with idyllic beaches lined by imposing skylines, towering skyscrapers, and cosmopolitan charm, long synonymous with luxury, opulence and a look and feelgood existence for its residents and visitors alike. Recent years have birthed a discernible shift in the city's identity as a hub for all things epicurean. The wellness industry is emerging as an economic contributor to watch, slowly taking centre stage in the vibrant tapestry of what's hot to be a part of in Dubai.

he evolution of the wellness industry in this dynamic metropolis reflects a global trend towards prioritizing health and self-care. Perhaps we have the global pandemic of yesteryear to thank for that. With several months locked in during lockdowns hindering our ability to get on with life as we have always known it, most will agree that the pursuit of an optimum balance between work, play, mental health, and wellbeing is very much a phenomenon we are forced to make a conscious note of. If active on social media, one needs to only log in and scroll for a few minutes before being bombarded with sponsored posts that speaks to yoga, home massage service, weight management, the latest gym to open or destinations for the ultimate retreat. So, let's delve into the transformative journey of Dubai's wellness scene and explore the top five global wellness trends that are carving out an indelible mark on the city.

1. Holistic Wellness Retreats: Oasis of Tranquillity Amidst Urban Splendour

Dubai has witnessed a surge in holistic wellness retreats, providing residents and tourists alike with a sanctuary to escape the hustle and bustle of city life. One notable example is The Retreat Palm Dubai MGallery by Sofitel. Nestled on the iconic Palm Jumeirah, this retreat seamlessly blends luxury with holistic well-being. Guests can immerse themselves in rejuvenating spa treatments, mindfulness sessions, and personalized wellness programs, all set against



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the backdrop of breathtaking views of the Arabian Gulf.

Zoya Health and Wellbeing Resort in neighbouring Ajman and others in Ras al Khaimah are stellar examples of how residents are escaping the throngs of city life to rejuvenate their mind, body and soul with wellness getaway offers, providing the ultimate sanctuary for overall wellbeing, only a short drive from Dubai.

2. Tech-Driven Fitness Innovations: The Marviage of Tradition and Technology

The UAE, and Dubai in particular, is no stranger to embracing cutting-edge technology, and so it comes as no surprise that Dubai's wellness industry has equally taken on tech-driven fitness innovations to lure enthusiasts with a knack for trialling new products and offers. The concept of smart gyms has gained traction, one which involves leveraging artificial intelligence to tailor workouts based on individual fitness levels and goals. It goes without saying therefore, that residents and visitors can experience a personalized and efficient approach to fitness that not only allows one to tap into Dubai's commitment to innovation, but also encourages you to view the use of technology through the lenses of your work out regiment. The adoption of advanced technologies in wellness, from wearable fitness devices to digital wellness platforms is also another way in which health and fitness enthusiasts are getting plugged in.

3. Culinary Wellness: Nourishing the Body and Soul

Dubai's culinary scene has undergone a wellness revolution, with an increasing number of restaurants offering mindful and nutritious dining options. One notable trend is the rise of plant-based, organic eateries as well as ingredient sourcing that clearly demonstrate a farm-to-table concept in acquiring fresh produce.





Restaurant brands such as "Wild & The Moon," with multiple locations across the city, epitomizes this vegan dining trend, gaining acclaim for organic, plant-based menus while catering to health-conscious individuals seeking a balance between exquisite flavours and nutritional value. Vertical farms are also on the rise, with some city hotels erecting tailored innovations on site to grow fresh vegetables and herbs for use in their kitchens.

4. Mindfulness and Mental Well-being: The Rise of Mindful Spaces The recognition of mental well-being as an

The recognition of mental well-being as an integral component of overall health has led to the emergence of mindful spaces in Dubai, providing a serene environment for meditation, mindfulness workshops, and stress-relief programs. As the demand for mental wellness offerings grows, such spaces become crucial for residents and tourists seeking solace amid urban intensity.

5. Wellness Tourism: Could Dubai be viewed as a Global Wellness Destination?

Dubai's allure as a global wellness destination has soared, attracting wellness enthusiasts from around the world. Luxury hotels and resorts are not just places to stay; they are immersive wellness experiences. Apart from its opulent accommodations, many resorts offer a holistic approach to well-being, including personalized spatreatments, ice baths, fitness programs, and healthy culinary options. Dubai has become a destination where visitors can embark on a wellness journey amid a backdrop of architectural marvels.

6. Inclusive Wellness Intliatives: Bridging Gaps in Access

Dubai's commitment to wellness extends beyond the luxurious offerings, with a growing emphasis on inclusive wellness initiatives. The city has witnessed the rise of community-based fitness programs, public parks designed for fitness activities, and government-driven health campaigns. For instance, the Dubai Fitness Challenge, an annual event initiated by the Crown Prince, encourages residents to engage in 30 minutes of daily physical activity for 30 days. Such initiatives underscore Dubai's dedication to making wellness accessible to everyone.

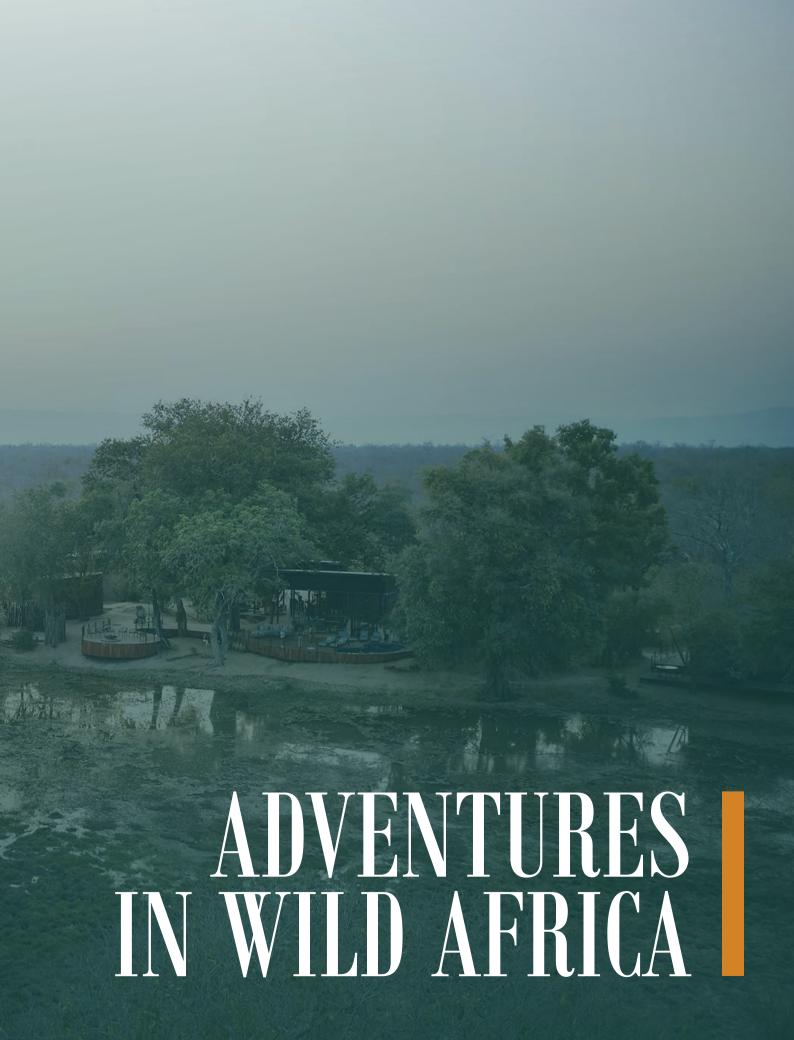
THE FUTURE OF WELLNESS IN DUBAI AND THE WIDER UAE

As we gaze into the future, Dubai's wellness industry appears poised for continued growth and innovation. The city's unique blend of tradition and modernity, combined with a commitment to providing diverse wellness experiences, positions it as a global leader in this evolving landscape. Whether it's the panoramic views from a holistic retreat, the fusion of technology with fitness, or the mindful spaces that nurture mental well-being, Dubai's wellness journey reflects a city that understands the significance of a balanced and fulfilling life. With each passing day, Dubai's skyline not only reaches new heights but also embraces the holistic well-being of its residents and guests, making it a beacon in the ever-evolving world of wellness.













ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • MOLORI MASHUMA

It is six-suited, tented, and spoils guests with an unspoilt taste of Zimbabwe's unsurpassed wilderness. Molori Mashuma is the latest, world-class luxury safari tented camp located in the pristine and untouched wilderness of Mana Pools National Park in Zimbabwe. A stay at the luxurious accommodations at Molori Mashuma, which feature breathtaking views of Mashuma Pan, is sure to sweep adventurers with a penchant for opulence and comfort on an unforgettable and uniquely immersive safari experience. What can one expect when venturing onto Molori Mashuma? We'll unpack Mana Pools and its latest addition to luxurious glamping in this part of Zimbabwe's safari turf...



et in Mana Pools. home to Zimbabwe's biggest concentration of hippos and crocodiles, and large dry-season populations of zebra, elephants, and buffalo, Molori Mashuma guarantees its guests the epitome of luxury and adventure. Here, authenticity and exclusivity collide, cushioned by a concerted effort to deliver design-led accommodations, a personalised approach to service rendering, offered by a knowledgeable team fuelled by a love warm hospitality.

The lodge is part of Rora Private Collection, renowned for birthing luxurious spaces in perfect locations across Southern Africa. Their lodges and camps are designed with multigenerational families and groups of friends who desire to experience a once in a lifetime African Safari, holiday, or celebration in mind. Upon check in, our eyes are set be captivated by the distinctively bold and playful design in camp, which boasts an architectural style that combines the allure of a very traditional camp, with a minimalistic yet contemporary design aesthetic. Interiors showcase a curious collection of layers, colours, and textures, married together by deeply focused, intentional use of colours inspired by nature and its processes.

The camp's design reflects a blend of contemporary luxury and traditional craftsmanship. Meticulously curated interiors showcase the work of local artisans, incorporating elements of Zimbabwean culture into the fabric of the camp. This thoughtful integration creates a sense of place, inviting guests to connect with the heritage of Mana Pools.

The main lodge features a 507m² outdoor deck which has four seating areas, dining areas and a bar. The open-plan living





areas focus on framing the views across the generous outdoor deck and plunge pool overlooking the pan. Situated on the banks of Mashuma Pan, this luxury camp unveils six gorgeously appointed tented suites, each with a private deck, en-suite bathroom, and outdoor shower. Two villa-style tented suites comfortably accommodate up to four adults and include a private pool.

Accommodations at Molori Mashuma epitomize luxury in the wild. Tented suites, adorned with earthy tones and indigenous textures, provide a cocoon of comfort amid the untamed beauty. Each suite opens up to a private deck overlooking the Pan, where guests can witness elephants lumbering about the landscape or catch a glimpse of the elusive African painted dogs.

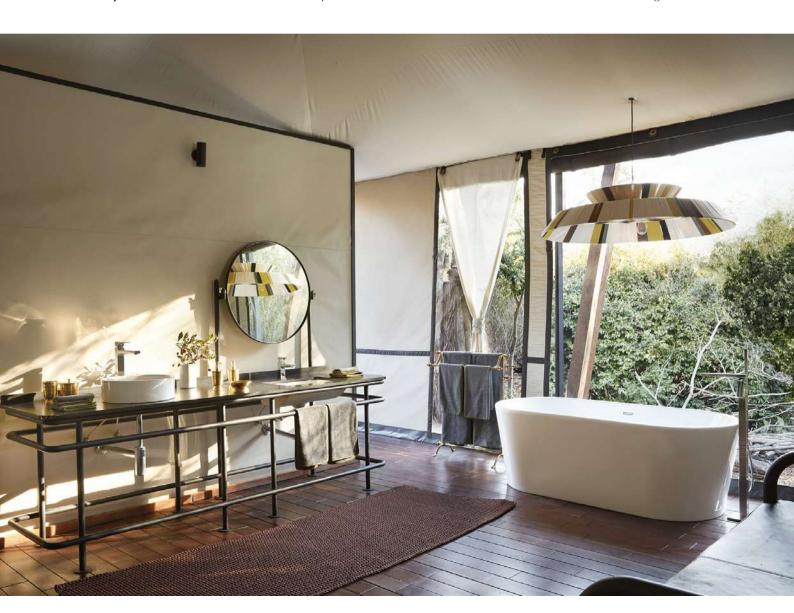
Food journeys from Mana Pools

The culinary journey at Molori Mashuma is a fusion of local flavours and international flair. Expert chefs curate menus that showcase the best of Zimbabwean cuisine, using fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Dining under the African night sky, with the sounds of the bush as a backdrop, transforms each meal into a sensory celebration.

As the African night sky unveils its tapestry of stars, Molori Mashuma takes on a magical quality. Campfires flicker, and the nocturnal symphony of the bush comes alive. Guests gather under the vast expanse of the Milky Way, sharing stories and forging connections that transcend borders.

life on the wild side at Molori Mashuma

Molori Mashuma, is a hidden jewel of Mana Pools, Zimbabwe, and doubles up as a sanctuary that beckons those seeking a genuine connection with nature. Tucked away in the heart of this UNESCO World Heritage Site, Molori



ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • MOLORI MASHUMA



Mashuma stands as a testament to the delicate balance between conservation and luxury. This exclusive camp, discreetly positioned to minimize its environmental impact, offers an immersive experience that goes beyond the conventional notions of a safari.

Walking and photographic safaris in this diverse ecosystem are known to be among the most rewarding in all of Africa. For game-viewing, there are three different areas - the riverfront, the pools themselves, and the wilderness areas behind the pans - each offering their own opportunities for wildlife sightings and photography.

As the sun rises over the

Zambezi, casting a golden glow across the riverbanks, guests at Molori Mashuma are greeted by the symphony of the bush. The camp's commitment to sustainability is evident in every detail, from the solar-powered infrastructure to the locally sourced materials used in its construction. Molori Mashuma seamlessly integrates into the surrounding landscape, allowing visitors to feel a part of nature rather than mere spectators.

A commitment to conservation and community upliftment

The camp's commitment to wildlife conservation is as integral as its dedication to guest experience. Molori Mashuma actively supports local conservation initiatives, contributing to the protection of Mana Pools' diverse ecosystem. Guided by expert naturalists, guests embark on

game drives and walking safaris that reveal the park's rich biodiversity, from the iconic Big Five to the vibrant birdlife that inhabits the riverine forests.

One of the unique aspects of Molori Mashuma is its emphasis on immersive experiences. Beyond traditional safaris, guests have the opportunity to engage in hands-on conservation efforts. Participating in anti-poaching patrols alongside local rangers or assisting in wildlife monitoring programs adds a layer of depth to the safari experience. This interactive approach fosters a sense of responsibility and connection to the preservation of this natural haven.

Molori Mashuma's community engagement goes beyond conser-

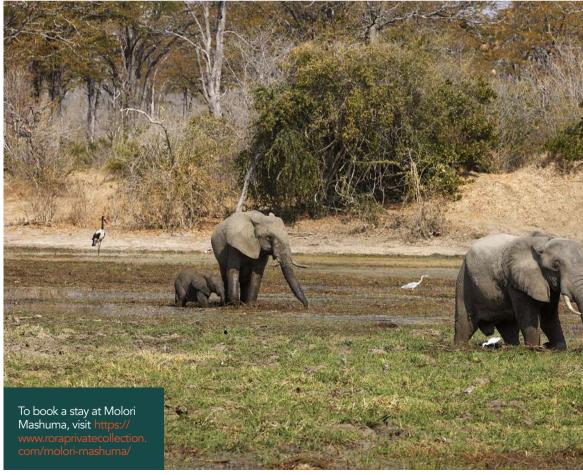
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vation efforts, actively contributing to the well-being of the local population. Collaborations with nearby villages provide employment opportunities and support education and healthcare initiatives. This commitment to responsible tourism enhances the camp's significance, aligning luxury with a genuine contribution to the community.

Molori Mashuma's dedication to sustainability extends to its minimal ecological footprint. The camp employs innovative water and waste management systems, ensuring that the impact on the environment is mitigated. This commitment to responsible tourism aligns with the broader efforts to preserve Mana Pools for generations to come.

In the heart of Mana Pools, Molori Mashuma stands as a beacon of sustainable luxury, where the spirit of adventure meets a commitment to conservation. It is a haven for those seeking an authentic encounter with the wild, a place where the rhythms of nature harmonize with the pulse of human connection. As the camp continues to weave its narrative within the fabric of Mana Pools, it is well set to leave an indelible mark on both the landscape and the hearts of those fortunate enough to experience its embrace.





ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • MOLORI MASHUMA







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Embracing a sanctuary for the soul and spirited adventure at

Myondoro Safari Lodge & Villa

By Yvonne C Mtengwa





ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • MHONDORO SAFARI LODGE & VILLA

Journeys across sub-Saharan Africa's safari territories literally awaken senses often long understated by local and international city dwellers. Perhaps the idea of going on safari is a novelty for most, but avid adventurers will agree that safari holidays remain uncontested, serving up opportunities to connect with self and loved ones in the throngs of nature's wonderment. Sunrises and sunsets are breathtaking. encounters with wildlife are spirited as adrenaline-fuelled encounters lurks in the shadows of tree foliage, abundant shrubbery, grassy landscapes or rocky outcrops.

> estled amidst the malaria-free Welgevonden Game Reserve in the Waterberg District of South Africa's Limpopo Province, lies Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa, a lodge I had first learned about on a trip to Cape Town earlier in the year. Travel writing lends itself to an unending search for what's new, remote or meticulously hidden from the masses on the hotel and lodge scene, gems of which are usually designed to ensure exclusivity for their guests.

On this circuit, my task was to ascertain which properties stood out in Limpopo, which in itself is a smooth, perhaps 3-hour drive from the hive of activity that is Johannesburg's metropolitan area. With a comfortable transfer arranged for me by Mhondoro, my departure from my preceding stay onto Welgevonden started well after sunrise from Qwabi Game Reserve in Bela Bela.

I had been guaranteed relax-





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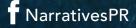
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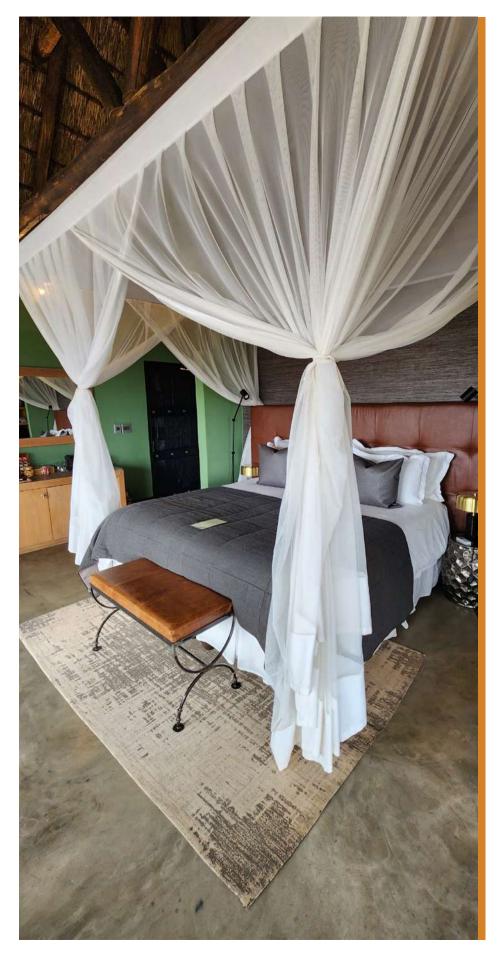
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ation upon arrival; an exquisite blend of luxury hospitality in an authentically African wilderness setting, and so headed in with excitement, and standing on the promise by CEO Fritz Breytenbach wherein he stated: "Mhondoro has earned a reputation as a luxury safari destination of note within the Welgevonden Game Reserve, and now offers more adventurous guests the opportunity to explore further afield whilst still enjoying the Mhondoro standard of guiding, cuisine and service, presented as a luxe, glamping wilderness experience."

A 90-min drive later, our driver coasted us through the entry gates of Welgevonden Private Game Reserve, which I was to learn spanned a behemoth 37 000 hectares of diverse landscapes which was originally fenced farmland, and now converted into open terrain, with conservation and wildlife protection at the helm of collective operations between Lodge owners here. The typography boasts a combination of flat land and rocky outcrops, creating a scenic backdrop for a host of private lodges and homes. And so it made sense why there were a host of game viewers and transfer vehicles checking in and out of the nature reserve's entry point.

It wasn't too long after we hopped on the Mhondoro branded game viewer that was going to take us to the center of the game reserve where the lodge is situated, before we captured out first photos of giraffe, zebra, a lone buffalo and hippos sunbathing adjacent to a shallow pool on our way in. With cloudy skies, the smell of rain and chilly breeze blowing across our faces on our drive in, at the sight of these and other animals, we were thrilled at the potential of viewing many more of South Africa's most prolific wildlife species during our stay at Mhondoro.

EMBRACING THE ESSENCE OF LUXU-RY SAFARI

From the moment you arrive at Mhondoro, you'll be enveloped in an atmosphere of refined yet rustic elegance. A warm welcoming song from the team

ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • MHONDORO SAFARI LODGE & VILLA





was enough of an announcement that our days ahead were to be enjoyed at the helm of cosy, personalised hospitality served by a family of warm, friendly staff. Mhondoro boasts an imposing deck, fitted with a sparkling pool and sun loungers, and providing front row seating to views of the vast flat lands in front of the main lodge. The lodge's architecture seamlessly blends into the surrounding bushveld, and the thatched roofs carried by the individual suites on higher ground behind the main lodge, draw you into warm wooden accents, expansive windows, and the beauty of the African landscape indoors, creating a harmonious connection between the man-made and the natural elements.

Accommodations at Mhondoro are designed to provide an oasis of tranquility and comfort. A secluded haven, featuring spacious bedrooms, luxurious en-suite bathrooms with indoor and outdoor showers, and private decks with breathtaking views of the surrounding wilderness awaken you to the lodge's warmth. Temperatures had dropped significantly at the point of our checkin, and so the warm fireplace set in our suite, added that much of a cosy effect to our space, which also featured an outdoor seating area and private pool. And of course, the lodge's pièce de résistance is the opulent Mhondoro Villa, a secluded sanctuary offering the ultimate in luxury and privacy for families well

intending to enjoy much needed quality time together.

Meals were served a la carte from a quaint yet elegant dining room, often paired with wine, mimosas for breakfast or a rich shot of Amarula for that desert beverage. The farm-to-table approach to ingredient sourcing was evident in each mouthful, as we devoured culinary creations that were a delectable showcase of some of South Africa's finest flavours. Plates came in sharing style, as the lodge's chefs skillfully blended traditional African cuisine with international influences, crafting tasteful dishes that tantalize the taste buds.

Our last evening in camp unearthed a delightful bonfire dining experience,





where three filling courses were served in front of a warm crackling fire, and entertainment hashed out by the team to the sound of drums and the vibrant clapping of hands. I couldn't help but think how much my children would have enjoyed this bonfire dinner experience had they been on this trip with us.

WELGEVONDEN GAME RESERVE: A REALM FOR IGNITING WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

Home to an abundance of wildlife, including the iconic Big Five – lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and buffalo, Welgevonden Game Reserve proved to be a remarkable display of reserve's diverse habitats, from lush grasslands to rocky outcrops, each supporting a rich variety of plant and animal life and offering endless opportunities for wildlife viewing. An option to start or end the day by embarking on thrilling game drives with expert guides always comes as a treat when on safari, gifting you the opportunity to glean from their vast knowledge of the reserve's ecology and wildlife. As we traversed the rugged terrain, we kept our eyes peeled for the majestic cat; be it the

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lion or leopard, which proved quite elusive on this occasion. The gentle giants of the African savanna, the elephants, rhinos and giraffes on the other hand, made their appearance often enough, highlighting the abundance of healthy populations of each species.

IMPACTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH A NEWLY LAUNCHED LOYALTY PRO-**GRAMME**

We were to learn that Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa recently launched a new loyalty programme in support of each of its three community projects, affording repeat guests the opportunity to give back in a meaningful and responsible way, whilst on a personal basis, enjoying a range of benefits and discounts.

Infrastructure for Mhondoro's community projects is solely funded by the owners' MF Foundation to provide

employment, skills development and learning opportunities to staff members from the local communities and their children. These initiatives play an important role in job creation in the area; the sourcing of manpower from the immediate community; and upskilling workers to levels where they are employable, not only by Mhondoro but by other lodges and businesses too. Ultimately those with entrepreneurial spirit are encouraged and empowered to start their own businesses, or work in partnership with Mhondoro.

Mhondoro also purchased two large tracts of land adjacent to the reserve, where it has established an Eco-farm. and the soon-to-be-launched sustainable Farmhouse project. Back at the lodge, the Mhondoro Wilderness School operates from an old storeroom that was transformed to provide worldclass schooling to a growing number of children from the local workforce.

UNVEILING A NEW MHONDORO OVERLAND EXPERIENCE

To add to the thrill of adventure for Mhondoro guests, the lodge has also rolled out a new Overland Safaris product, offering bespoke, guided itineraries for small, private groups of up to 14 guests, to Botswana, Zambia, Namibia and around South Africa. Currently three different itineraries are offered with set departure dates between May and September, with a Namibian itinerary to be added in 2024.

Hosted by a dedicated safari guide, chef, butler and maintenance crew, up to seven guests may be transported in each of the two custom-designed Mhondoro Landcruisers. Enclosed for longer distance travelling, these comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles have sunroofs and charging points, but also convert seamlessly into open game-viewing vehicles with raised, pop-up platforms as roof height vantage points.

Accommodation is provided in glamping tents with comfortable beds and crisp, fresh linen, set up in spectacular sites that include some unfenced, wild camping in nature reserves, complete with the basic comforts of a gas-heated hot shower and toilet facilities. Other nights may be spent in some of Southern Africa's most famous, well-established wilderness camps, while some itineraries also include the option of stays in luxury lodges along the way. All food preparation is done by the chef on open fires with the focus on wholesome, high-end camping meals, including potjiekos, braais and fresh bread baked daily, all enjoyed along with premium quality wines and other drinks around the campfire.

TRAVERSING SOUTHERN AFRICA WITH **MHONDORO**

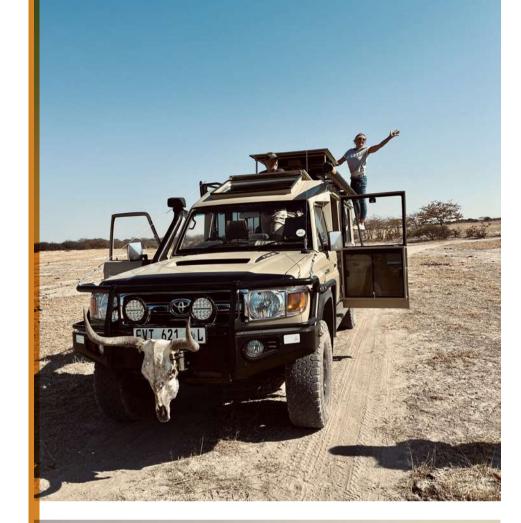
Highlights of the unforgettable Botswana and Zambia overland safari that departs from Maun, includes a Ntwetwe salt pan quad-bike adventure and meerkat family experience in the Makgadikgadi region; the forest and open savanna woodland of Nxai Pan National Park in Northern Botswana; and wild camping at Khwai Magotho between

the Moremi and Savuti (Chobe) National Parks on the edge of the Okavango Delta. From there the adventure continues via Kasane, the meeting point of Botswana, Zambia, Namibia and Zimbabwe, with the option to end at Mukwa River Lodge on the Zambezi River, incorporating a visit to the Victoria Falls.

Departing from the Waterberg, Botswana itineraries can easily be added onto a stay at Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa, covering Mapungupwe National Park, the Tuli Wilderness and the mighty Limpopo River, before returning to Mhondoro.

Those guests who prefer to stay within the borders of South Africa, may opt for the Cape Town itinerary which starts in Port Elizabeth, visiting the Mountain Zebra National Park, Camdeboo National Park with a traditional farm stay, the Swartberg Nature Reserve and Gamkaskloof, which is know as 'Die Hel', onto Oudtshoorn, Montagu and Paternoster with Cape Town as final destination.

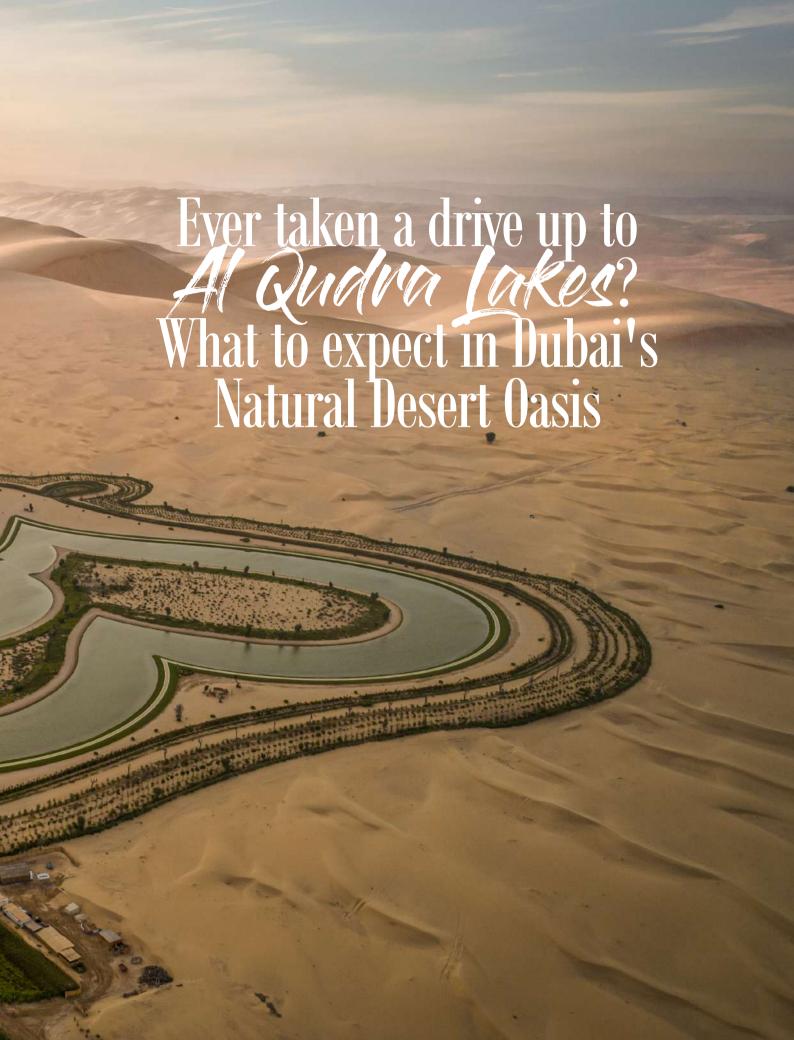
Mhondoro's Overland Safaris will cover some of the most scenic reserves and wilderness areas of Southern Africa, as well as the ancient waterways of the Okavango Delta where itineraries will include scenic flights and boat trips, and Mokoro excursions. "We are pleased to offer a small selection of bucket-list itineraries for those who yearn for a true African safari experience, yet one that is guided and managed by professionals to offer a safe and hassle-free safari. Families with children older than six are welcome, along with those who have a special interest in birds, stargazing, photography, and elephants! Experiencing the local sights, sounds and the wonders of Africa's wildlife will be the order of each day - guaranteed," says Mhondoro CEO Fritz Breytenbach.











Dubai, known for its towering skyscrapers and modern architecture, may not be the first place that comes to mind when thinking of serene natural settings. However, within the vast desert landscape, Al Qudra Lakes stands as a lush oasis that captivates the hearts of both residents and visitors. As the cooler months are upon us. and the wanderlust within those in Dubai and wider UAE is awakened to experience more of the local outdoor scene, it's no wonder why Al Qudra Lakes has become a beloved haven among Dubai's residents, given the breathtaking natural wonders it offers.

tranguil escape away from the hustle and bustle of cosmopolitan Dubai, there is no discounting the fact that Al Qudra Lakes offers a tranquil escape from the urban pace, unveiling a unique opportunity to reconnect with nature, measuring over 10 square kilometers in area. Its popularity among Dubai residents can be attributed to several key factors, including its lush green landscape, which starkly contrasts with the surrounding desert, and of course, the perfectly Instagrammable Love Lakes, a pair of stunning, heart-shaped, interlocked lakes for visitors to enjoy.

Home to a multitude of native and exotic plants and trees dotted across 40 hectares, all of which thrive thanks to a sophisticated irrigation system, Al Qudra Lakes appear in the largest unfenced nature reserve in the UAE, the Al Marmoon Desert Conservation Reserve, which has long been open to the public so they too can connect with the commendable sustainability focused initiatives in-situ, including the region's largest renewable energy project.

Over the years, residents have come to appreciate this location as a popular local destination in a city that stands erect from the desert's undulating, golden brown sand dunes. Verdant lawns, swaying palms, and colourful flowerbeds create a serene atmosphere, forming a perfect backdrop for picnics, leisurely walks, and outdoor yoga sessions for those willing to journey to the city's outskirts for a little breather.

The series of pristine lakes also make it an excellent site for birdwatching and photography, attract a variety of bird species, including migratory birds, which create a haven for bird enthusiasts and nature lovers. One shouldn't be surprised to site Arabian oryx, gazelles or see a large flamboyance of flamingos as they enjoy over 40 hectares of shrub and fertile land, also marvelling at the calming sound of gently rippling waters, which undoubtedly add to the park's serene ambiance.

NOT JUST FOR NATURE LOVERS, BUT ALSO FOR THE ATHLETICALLY INCLINED

We imagine if you've had the opportunity to drive up to as far as Al Qudra Road will take you, you would have noticed that Al Qudra Park also caters to active residents and outdoor enthusiasts. Boasting





an extensive network of cycling and equestrian tracks that wind through the park and extend into the surrounding desert, cyclists can explore the scenic beauty while equestrians can enjoy horseback riding in a unique desert setting. For horse riding, your best bet would be to make a pitstop at the family-owned Head to Al Jiyad Stables, also located within the confines of the Al Marmoom Conservation Area. Here, the Marzoogi family has created a haven for equestrians, whether beginning or experienced, to share their passion for horse riding and endurance training.

A RELAXED, NO-FRILLS DAY OUT IN THE DESERT

Dubai is that one Middle Eastern mecca that will not leave you wanting for things to do. From luxuriating at the finest in hospitality establishments, indulging in extravagant brunches to sunbathing at opulent beach clubs, getting a dose of adrenaline by revving your engine at an auto drome or going skydiving over the city, the list of things to do is quite literally unending. But sometimes, especially when the blistering hot temperatures subside, few activities rival soaking up the contrasting beauty of the desert landscape under the blue clear skies. Al Qudra Lakes treats you to panoramic views of the surrounding desert dunes dotted with bodies of water about the area.

With the landscape equipped with family-friendly amenities such as barbecue areas, playgrounds, and picnic spots, Al Qudra Lakes is a popular choice for families seeking a peaceful day out in nature while enjoying recreational activities and a picnic feast. As the city's residents seek a balance between urban living and the tranquillity of nature, Al Qudra has undoubtedly earned its place as a beloved outdoor destination where the beauty of the desert meets the serenity of an oasis.





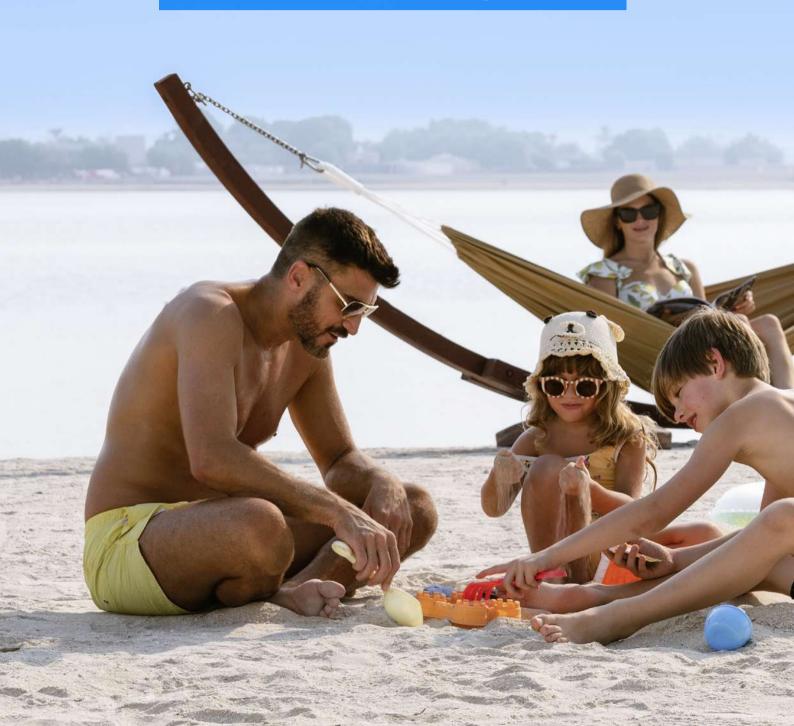




find out more!

Why Rixos Bals at Balan is the perfect all-inclusive family retreat this season

Sun, Sports, Sand, and everything in between



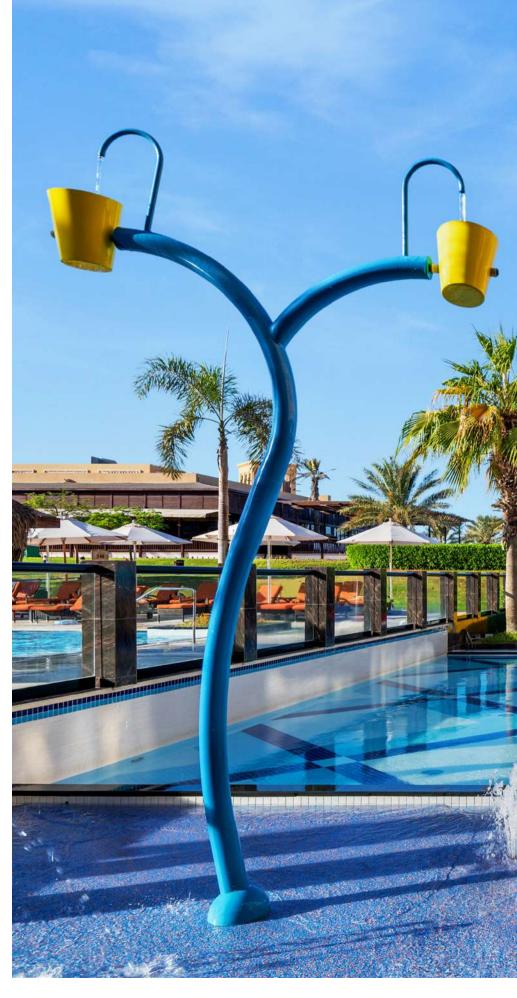


h an ultra-all-inclusive concept, guests can enjoy unlimited access to all the resort offers, such as restaurants, entertainment, fitness activities, and spa, making it the perfect retreat for families and couples alike. Rixos Bab Al Bahr caters to every taste, providing boundless fun to create lasting memories.

There's something for everyone at the resort. Adults can enjoy some well-deserved downtime in the adults-only pool. If you're feeling more energetic, you can join one of the fitness classes with a professional instructor or compete in one of the numerous tournaments like beach volleyball, water polo or darts. An exciting range of Rixy Kids Club and Teens Club offerings entertains little ones. With highly trained staff, children aged 4 - 12 can participate in creative arts and crafts, high-energy games, or special workshops, ensuring they, too, have the time of their lives. Teenagers have a dedicated club for ages 9 – 17 to socialise, make new friends, and lasting memories. The Teens Club offers billiards, a variety of tournaments, Play-Station 5 and fun workshops.

Satisfy your palate with the resort's 14 restaurants and bars, offering a tantalising selection of international cuisines that will take you on a culinary journey like no other. From the all-day dining experience to five delectable a la carte restaurants, there is something to satisfy any taste

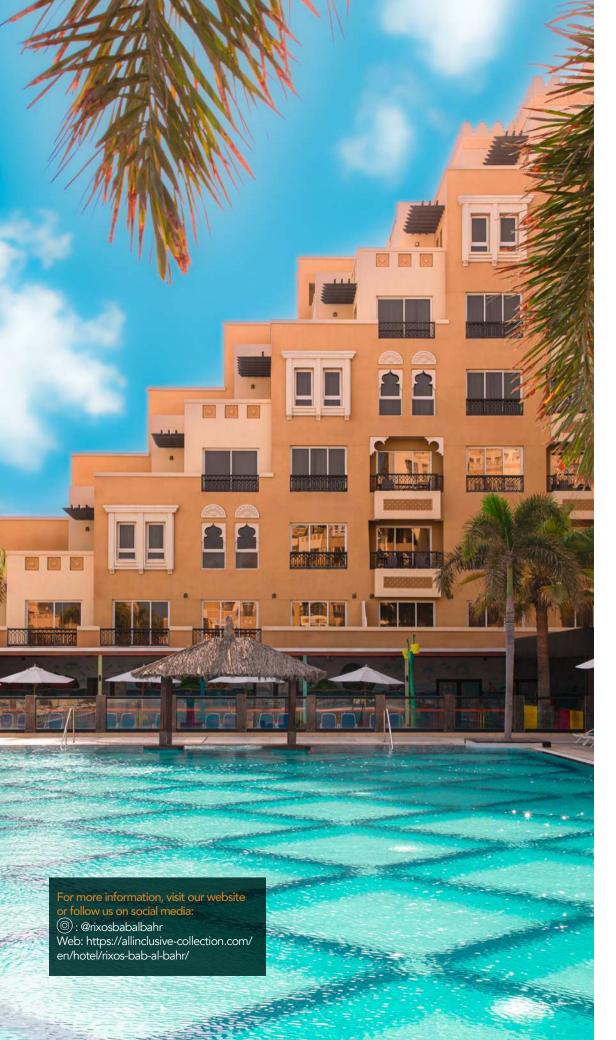
If you want to rejuvenate your mind and body, Rixos Bab Al Bahr has you covered. Anjana Spa offers opulent treatments administered by expert therapists. During your stay, you can









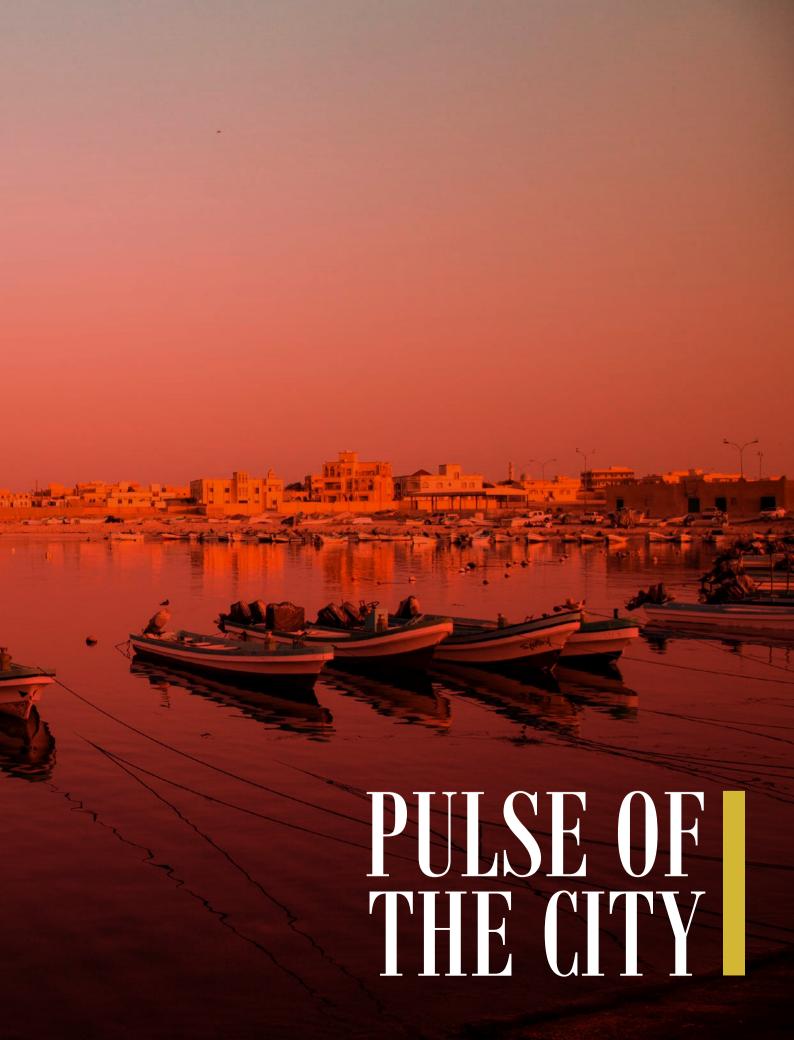


use the spa facilities, including a private pool, sauna, steam room and hammam room. Alternatively, you can let your worries melt away with a heavenly massages and revitalising facials for an extra charge.

As the sun sets, the resort comes to life with first-rate events that promise to transport you to another realm of excitement. From exhilarating concerts to enchanting dance shows, there's never a dull moment at Rixos Bab Al Bahr.

Ahmed Elnawawy, General Manager at Rixos Bab al Bahr asserts, "We curate fun vacations designed to make unforgettable memories with your loved ones. With unlimited access to all our food and beverage outlets, a full-fledged entertainment and fitness program and our kids and teens clubs, Rixos Bab Al Bahr offers something unique you won't find anywhere else in the UÁE."

Don't miss out on this unforgettable holiday destination! Book your stay today.



Rivanda: From a brutal historical moment to inspiring Africa and the World.

By Tonye Princewill

Most people hadn't taken anything more than a lingering notice of Rwanda until 1994 when the genocide that happened there shocked the world. Even then, many ticked a box and marked Rwanda as another place to avoid, in a continent where bad news is more at home than good, and tragedy is a staple food in a media predefined diet. I too was in that category. There is so much news to consume. you have to decide what is important and what is not.

o, for me, it wasn't until I once casually overheard the Former US President Bill Clinton, in the news raving about Rwanda and reeling out growth and economic statistics I couldn't ignore, that I had to go back, dig deeper and take a closer look at this landlocked miracle in the sun.

Even though President Paul Kagame doesn't like the word miracle, it's on record that no country has come out of what Rwanda has gone through and still gone on to achieve what it is achieving. Consecutive growth of 7 - 8% for 15 years, meeting all the SDG targets, highest representation of women in parliament in the world, highest enrollment rate of primary and secondary school students in sub-Saharan Africa, health insurance that covers over 90% of the population and a one stop business friendly registration that takes place within 6 hours. All this for the second smallest country in Africa. The list goes on.

I'll spare you the details of what happened during the 1994 Rwanda genocide, most already know; and there is very little, if any, that hasn't already been said. What amazes me is how they have deliberately pulled themselves up and out of the depths of that despair and re-labelled their

country to write for themselves, a new story.

Tourneying into a painful past; harnessing hope for future generations

Nothing brought it home to me more clearly than when I went to the Kigali Genocide memorial for the third time recently. I had come with a colleague to take a deeper dive on Rwanda on the invitation of the Government, to find out what it was that made them tick so much and to try to put a finger on what made them different. It was the first stop on my itinerary and even though when I saw it, I had not wanted to go yet again to see the sad images and relive the memories of that day, my guide was very articulate, jovial and clear eyed. So, my instincts told me to go with the flow, and I did. Something inside me, told me this visit would be different and it was.

Walking into the reception was not eventful until the discussion of if we could film came up. I had expected a resounding "No", but to my surprise we got the "all clear" albeit with conditions that were quite reasonable. We switched from tourists to story tellers and started to look at 1994 from the eyes of those who were not there. It was no longer enough to wonder, we



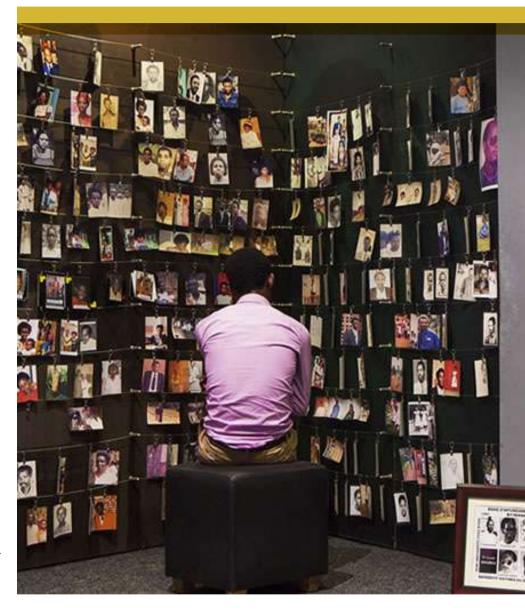


needed to know, understand and ask the questions that you would ask if you were there. Suddenly we became more bold, more inquisitive and this set the tone for the rest of my trip.

With this new hat and my renewed enthusiasm I proceeded down the steps of the memorial and into the first area that welcomes visitors. Unlike my previous visits, I noticed that this time, a lot of children had come to tour the memorial. Their naivety and innocence stood in stark contrast to the tragic history they were coming to catalog, but I put the thought to one side as what I thought was my mission there, appeared before me.

We had started to walk through and capture the experience for ourselves knowing that it would be conveyed in due course to us, with the weight of responsibility that soon loaded on my mind, as I braced for the first of many cries, sobs and screams that would soon be let out. I wasn't sure where they were coming from, but the mind will always try to explain away an anomaly until it fails.

I followed the noises, until I saw what appeared to be students gathered in a central area. Some were inconsolable and in tears, other fellow students were consoling them and a few adults were in amongst them telling them something in Kinyarwanda that I presumed was that it would be okay. Eventually some had to be carried out, a few accompanied back up the stairs to "get some air". All the while the camera was off. We had agreed to respect the privacy of other visitors and recording children in distress was not the mission, but it seemed there was a message here so I asked our guide Yves if it would be possible to grab a word with who I



suspected was their teacher.

Turns out she was the headmaster of a school and it was her responsibility to manage the kids and their experience. She said she would be glad to talk to us once she got a free moment and true to her word, after she organized a charity contribution from her school to the memorial, laid a wreath at one of the tombs reserved for victims that were extinct (whole families wiped out) and sat the kids in what looked like an amphitheater, she came and she spoke to us.

Her voice was soft and calm and she

wore a pained smile, but behind all this I saw a resilience which I later came to observe exists in many Rwandans. She told me her name was Chantelle and that she was the head teacher of one of the technical secondary schools. She had brought the children there as part of the school curriculum to learn about their history. She said that it was quite emotional for the kids seeing it for the first time, but it was necessary - so the next generation can see why it must never happen again.

Before we finally took our leave, we

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managed to squeeze out a few words from Serge, the External Relations Manager there at the Kigali Genocide Memorial. He buttressed on the point made by the head teacher pointing out that one of the key causes of the genocide was the prevailing narrative at the time - hate.

"After the genocide, this narrative had to change", he said. "The new narrative is unity and forgiveness, and it is taught to counter brain washing of the past," Serge added.

Asked what advice he would give to

visitors who had not yet come or had not fully grasped what the purpose here was, he replied, "We welcome them to come and see for themselves. Genocide is like a public health issue where like any disease, it displays symptoms. Coming here gives you an indication of some of those symptoms so that you can avoid them in your society. Treating symptoms early is the best way to avoid the disease. Never again not only in Rwanda, but anywhere else," Serge said.

I left there thinking that you can listen to the same song over and over again and miss the message until one day when you are ready to receive it. Rwanda has not only put its head down and started the hard work of building up a responsible society, but it has also provided the rest of us an inspiration many of us would do well to learn from. I often refer to Rwanda, as the Dubai of Africa, but I am sure the likes of President Kagame will say, "there is only one Dubai and there is only one Rwanda."

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Discovering the Mystic of Saladah: Oman's Haven of Natural Beauty and Cultural Riches

On the southern coast of Oman lies Salalah, a destination which beckons wanderlusts and cultural travellers with its breathtaking landscapes, rich history, and unique blend of traditional and modern influences. Often referred to as the "Perfume Capital of Arabia," and within good reason, given the rich profusion of frankincense trees growing in and around the region, this coastal gem is renowned for its natural beauty, diverse culture, and welcoming atmosphere. People are warm and laid back, unveiling through a myriad of interactions, why Salalah offers a captivating tapestry of reasons that make it a must-visit destination for all. Here are a few you should consider if should Oman be on vour radar of upcoming travel to the Middle East...



1. The Khareef Festival: A Monsoon of Toy The annual Khareef Festival, which takes place during the monsoon season from June to September, has well established itself as a reason to visit Salalah. Dubbed a celebration of life, as the city transforms from arid desert to lush greenery, this unique event features a vibrant atmosphere with music, dance, cultural performances, and a variety of traditional Omani dishes. Visitors can enjoy the refreshing drizzle, explore the vibrant markets, and take part in the local festivities, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

2. Explore <u>lush lands</u>capes and spectacular waterfalls

Salalah's transformation during the monsoon season is truly awe-inspiring, as the desert plains turn into a verdant paradise, adorned with lush greenery, rolling hills, and vibrant flowers. Waterfalls such as Ayn Razat and Ayn Sahalnoot become oases of tranquility, inviting visitors to relax and revel in the beauty of nature. The region's wadis (dry riverbeds) also fill with water, allowing for refreshing dips in crystal-clear pools against the backdrop of towering mountains.



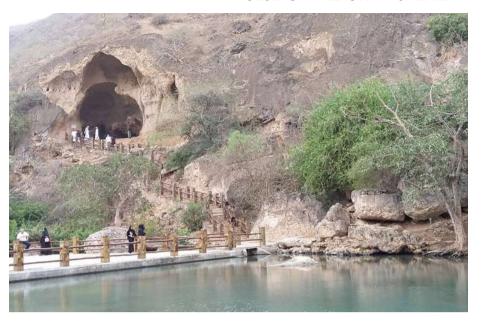
Salalah has a deep historical connection to the trade of frankincense, which was once more valuable than gold. The city's Frankincense Land Museum offers an immersive journey through history, shedding light on the significance of this precious resin in both cultural and economic contexts. Visitors can learn about the extraction process, explore the various grades of frankincense, and gain insight into the role it played in ancient trade routes.

4. Historical and Architectural Marvels

Steeped in history, Salalah also boasts a rich heritage that is reflected in its architecture and archaeological sites. Al-Baleed Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offers a glimpse into the city's past through its well-preserved ruins. The park showcases the remains of an ancient port city, providing a window into the trading activities that shaped the region's history. Additionally, the Sultan Qaboos Mosque, with its stunning dome and intricate detailing, is a testament to the modern architectural wonders of Salalah.

5. Cultural Fusion and Warm Hospitality

Salalah is widely viewed as melting pot of cultures, blending traditional Omani







heritage with influences from Africa and beyond. This unique cultural mix is reflected in the city's cuisine, clothing, and traditions, with the hive of activity in local markets, known as souks, offering a vibrant assortment of handicrafts, textiles, spices, and jewelry. For those looking to immerse themselves in interactions that bring Omani heritage and creativity to life, souks undoubtedly offer the perfect opportunity to immerse oneself in experiences authentic to Oman. The warmth and hospitality of the Omani people further enhance the experience, creating an inviting and welcoming atmosphere for travellers from all walks of life.

6. Pristine Beaches and Coastal Adventures

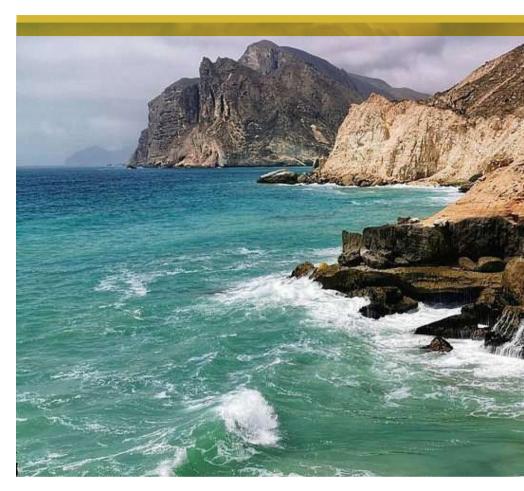
Did you know that Salalah's coastline is a treasure trove of pristine beaches, where azure waters meet the Gulf's soft sands? Al-Mughsail Beach, with its impressive blowholes, is a popular spot for visitors seeking a mix of natural beauty and awe-inspiring geological formations. Adventure enthusiasts can also indulge in activities like snorkeling, diving, and fishing, exploring the diverse marine life that thrives in the region's clear inviting waters.

7. Dhofar Mountains: Nature's Splendour

The Dhofar Mountains form a majestic backdrop to Salalah, offering outdoor enthusiasts ample opportunities for exploration. Jebel Samhan, the highest peak, provides stunning panoramic views of the city and surrounding landscapes. The mountains are also home to unique flora and fauna, including the Arabian leopard and the elusive frankincense tree. Hiking trails lead to hidden gems, such as caves and rock formations, making it an ideal destination for nature lovers and adventurers alike to take a day out under the care of a local guide.

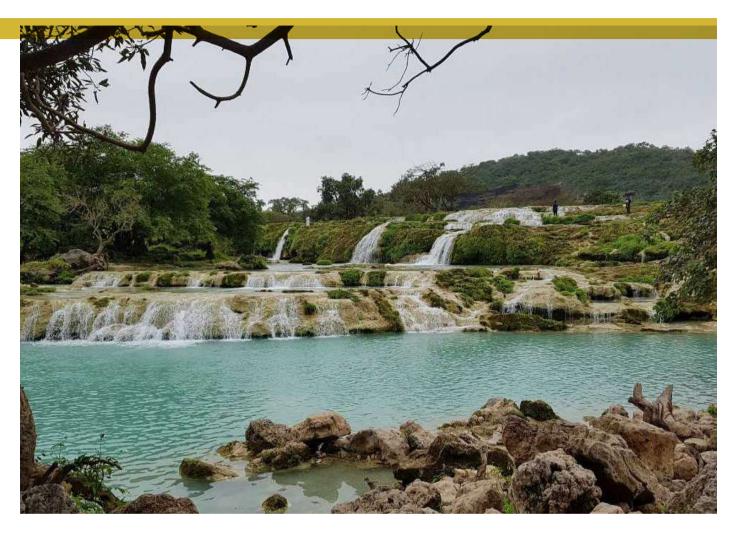
8. Rich Traditions and Festivals

Richness in culture and heritage lends Salalah a spot on the ranks of hosting some pretty traditional festivals which





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provide a glimpse into the region's cultural norms and expressions. The Salalah Tourism Festival, held during the summer months, features a captivating blend of performances, music, dance, and art exhibitions, where visitors can witness traditional Omani folklore come alive, showcasing the enduring spirit of the local communities.

9. The Salalah-Dubai Road Trip

Quite a popular one for Dubai based adventures, and any travellers with a knack for activities that combine discovery and the outdoors. For those seeking a road less travelled, the Salalah-Dubai road trip offers an unforgettable journey through diverse landscapes, taking travellers

through quaint villages, dramatic coastal vistas, and desert expanses. This trip does well in showcasing the stark contrast between Oman's southern charm and Dubai's modernity.

10. Conservation Efforts and Eco-Tourism

Salalah's commitment to sustainability and conservation is evident in its efforts to protect the unique ecosystem of the region. There are several eco-tourism initiatives available that allow travellers to engage with nature responsibly, supporting the conservation of delicate ecosystems while enjoying outdoor activities like bird-watching, nature walks, and camping. In Salalah, one can truly enjoy a break while also learning more about

opportunities to make a difference as people and nature.

Salalah may be one of the lesser-known cities of the Middle East, but in its slower existence, therein lies a destination that enchants with its natural beauty, cultural treasures, and warm hospitality on offer by its people. Whether you're seeking a unique cultural experience, an adventurous getaway, or a tranquil retreat, Salalah offers a diverse range of attractions that cater to every traveller's preferences. Salalah is an invitation to explore the lush landscapes, immerse yourself in a city that boasts rich history, while embracing the vibrant culture that has influenced other parts of the world including the East African coastal destination of Zanzibar.



FOR Contributors

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