

# TRAVEL ESSENCE MAGAZINE

MARCH | APRIL 2024

*The Onyx Hotel by  
Newmark: A JEWEL  
IN THE CAPE TOWN  
FORESHORE*

UNIQUE HONEYMOON  
EXPERIENCES IN AFRICA

*Beans of Change:  
EMIRATI-OWNED ROR  
COFFEE SOLUTIONS JOINS  
FORCES WITH RWANDAN  
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*On your Radar:  
AFRICA'S TOP 10 UNESCO  
WORLD HERITAGE SITES*

# ROB NICHOLAS

ON BUILDING SAND SHERPA - DUBAI'S  
ECO-ADVENTURE OFFERING



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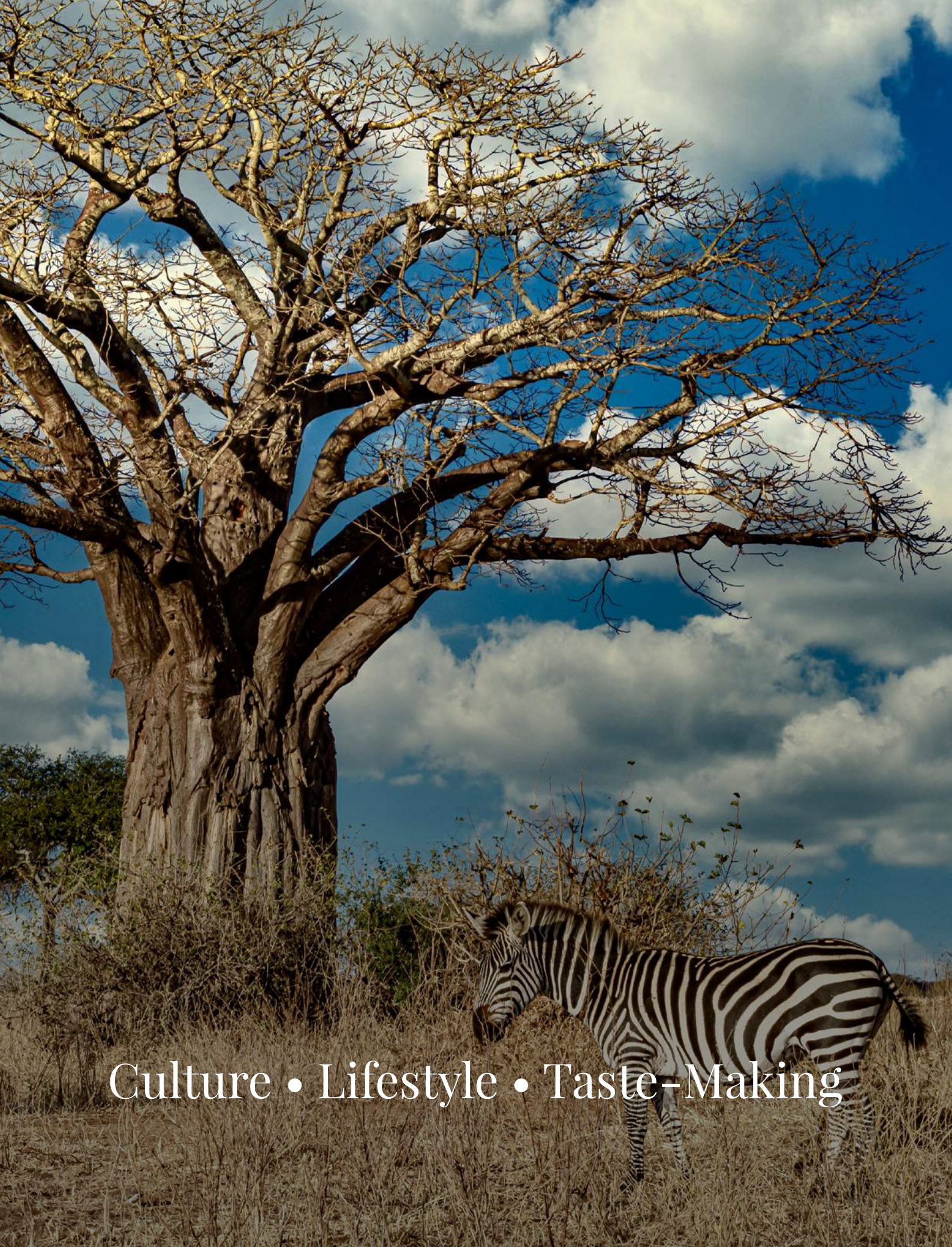
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# TravelEssence

MAGAZINE

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**On The Cover:  
ROB NICHOLAS**

## Editorial

**Yvonne C. Mtengwa**

Editor-in-Chief

[info@travelessencemag.com](mailto:info@travelessencemag.com)

## Creative Direction

**Lucy Nkosi**

[lucy@lucynkosi.com](mailto:lucy@lucynkosi.com)

## Social Media





**Elena Kavalaris**

[Elena@hazelfeather.com](mailto:Elena@hazelfeather.com)

## GENERAL ENQUIRIES

[info@travelessencemag.com](mailto:info@travelessencemag.com)

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

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“ Nothing but breathing the air of Africa, and actually walking through it, can communicate the indescribable sensations.

— WILLIAM BURCHELL

**O** I was a hit and unexpected. It seems this is very much becoming a trend with each start of a new year – and we are here for it all! Newmark Hotels & Reserves swooped in to unveil to us part of their newly refreshed portfolio in Cape Town, doubling up with an exceptional brand campaign roll out also at the city's International Airport. If there has ever been a red carpet into the Mother City – we were beyond delighted to lap it all up!

Africa is having a moment friends! Tourist arrivals are on the rise, and travellers are increasingly looking for immersive experiences that go beyond the traditional safari. We are witnessing a rise of ecotourism as more vacationers are seeking sustainable adventures that minimize their environmental impact. The Responsible Tourism Summit took place on the sidelines of World Travel Market Africa in Cape Town from 9-11th April 2024, playing its role in not only highlighting this trend, but showcasing destinations, brands and personalities committed to sustainable travel practices.

While Africa's coastlines remain a major draw, there's a growing interest in exploring the continent's diverse landscapes. Travellers are seeking authentic cultural encounters, characterised by homestays in local communities, participation in traditional ceremonies, and exploration of historical sites are seemingly in high demand across the continent. The Africa Tourism Indaba is also slated to take place in a few weeks in Durban, South Africa; a major travel trade show that will showcase everything from epic destinations to tour operators that focus on cultural exchange, heritage exploration and off-the-beaten track excursions across the continent.

In this Issue you'll learn a little about 10 of Africa's 103 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Africa alone. We cannot wait for you to see which ones we will be checking out in the coming weeks. Africa is a continent brimming with diverse experiences, and 2024 is the perfect time to explore its won-




ders. We remain grateful for the support of all the hospitality and tourism stakeholders that join hands with us in sharing the allure of our beloved continent.

Thank you for staying the course as we pack our bags ever so often and get ready to discover more of the magic of the Motherland through its people and places! 🌍

Yours truly,

*Zywanne C. Mtengwa*





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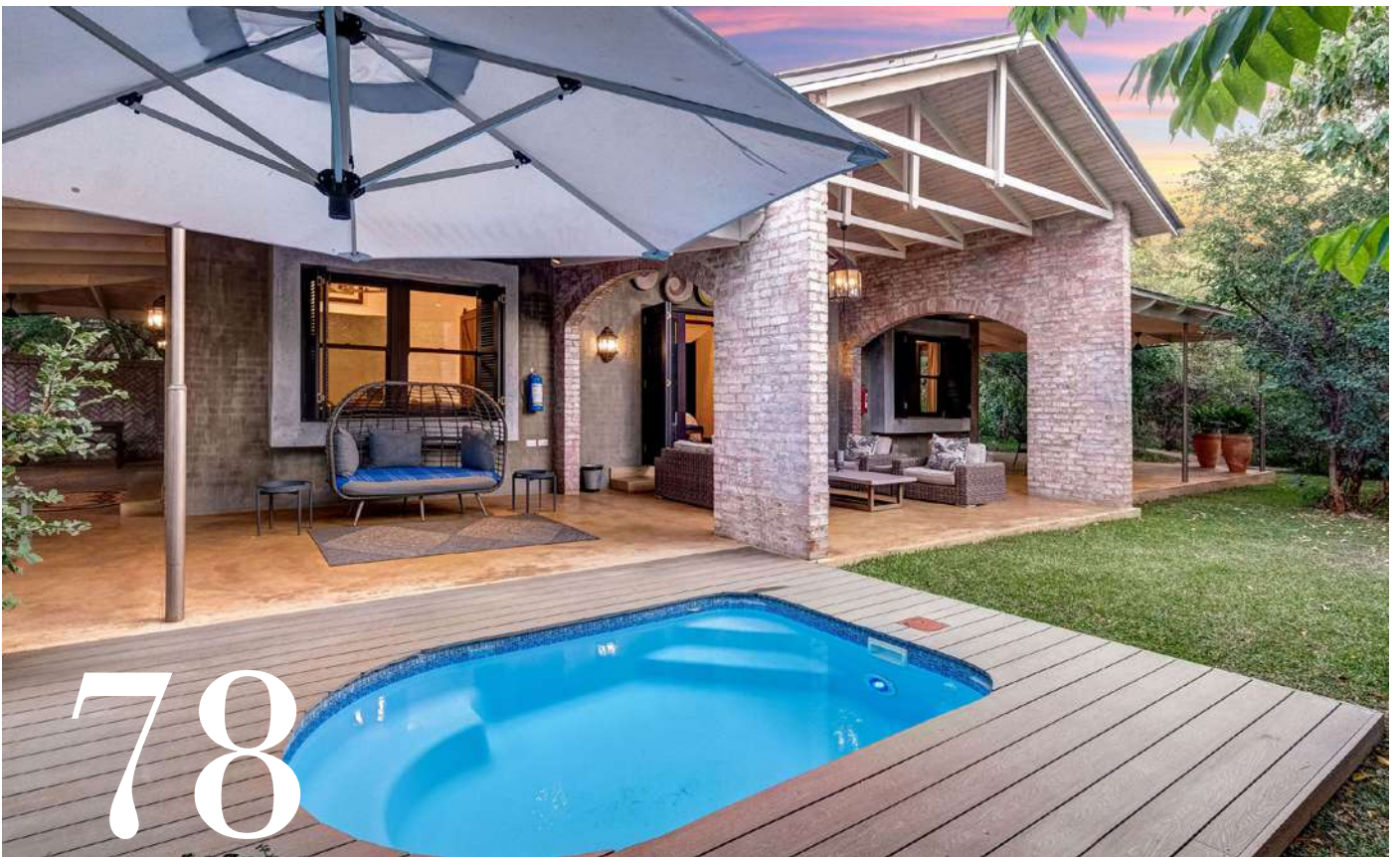
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08



78









*Rob Nicholas*  
Building Sand Sherpa -  
Dubai's Eco-Adventure Offering

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**1. ROB NICHOLAS, YOU'VE LIVED IN THE UAE FOR 37 YEARS, WHICH IS QUITE LONG FOR MOST UAE BASED EXPATS. TALK TO US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR FIRST MEMORIES OF THE MOVE?**

I arrived on April 12, 1986, so am coming up now to 38 years of being here. I moved just a few days before my 11th birthday and have very distinct memories of first arriving here. We took a short walk up to Al Diyafah Street, which was close to our house in Satwa, opposite the Galadari family's villa (a prominent local family). I can still picture the old man who used to make bread outside his shop on a side street and the smell and taste of enjoying my first fresh fruit cocktail and shawarma. Coming here was transformative for myself and my whole family and we have a very close relationship as we came together to interpret new experiences and occasional challenges.

My fascination with the desert was almost immediate. My family had a simple 4x4 – a Daihatsu Rocky – and we would explore the wilderness of the UAE, camping with friends and enjoying freedoms we never knew existed. A complete contrast to restrictive city life in Birmingham where I had moved from.

**2. WE LOVE THE NAME "SAND SHERPA" FOR YOUR CAMP. TAKE US THROUGH HOW YOU SETTLED ON IT AS A NAME FOR THE CONCEPT, AND WHAT INSPIRED THE CONCEPT BEHIND THE CAMPING EXPERIENCE AT SAND SHERPA?**

I've always admired the Sherpas of the Himalayas who guide and assist adventurers in their quest to tackle the world's toughest peaks. I borrowed their name as Sand Sherpa aims to also assist and guide, as well as encouraging a level of independence from our adven-



turers, which makes for a richer and more rewarding participation.

Sand Sherpa aims to put our adventurers in touch with nature and to feel part of it. As humans, this is our natural environment and by integrating with it, we feel more relaxed and connected with each other – our family, friends, and other adventurers.

We use our own conceived camping equipment and have built the camp ourselves. Very few accessories have been bought off the shelf. From our trailers to our tables and grills, they have been put together by ourselves as a team. Even our vehicles have been rebuilt for our own purposes.

Although we aim to provide a comfortable stay, we are keen to point out that we do not offer glamping, which is a popular trend across the world. This is actually the opposite of camping, where modern luxury comforts and separation from nature are hallmarks of its approach.

### 3. HOW DID DUBAI DESERT CONSERVATION RESERVE BECOME THE IDEAL HOME FOR SAND SHERPA? WHAT

#### MAKES THIS LOCATION PARTICULARLY COMPELLING FOR THE PRODUCT AND FOR YOUR GUESTS.

The Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve is one of Dubai's greatest achievements, yet also the one that people know so little about. This area is testament to the importance that the emirate places on nature and the natural desert environment that spawned our city and its people.

Imagine a destination so small that has dedicated five percent of its total landmass to nature. A place that has contributed to bringing Arabian Oryx out of extinction in the wild (the only species recorded to have achieved this) and a land with very limited access to automobiles and the general public. This is Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve (DDCR).

The desert in DDCR is unique. An abundance of vegetation, antelope and the lack of vehicular interference has created an amazing habitat of tree groves, dunes, and gravel plains that we are proud to show our adventurers. This is the real modern luxury – a true escape to nature that is untouched and unspoiled, yet accessible to us, just 45

minutes out of the city.

My business partner for the camp, Pete Bergh, has worked in this reserve for the whole of his career in Dubai (over 22 years), starting off as a field guide at Al Maha Desert Resort, before becoming a falconer and having his own business. Pete managed to facilitate our operation in this remarkable area.

### 4. DURING OUR STAY, WE ENJOYED THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCE OF CAMPING IN ONE OF YOUR TRAILERS. CAN YOU UNPACK FOR OUR READERS, THE INGENUITY BEHIND THEIR DESIGN? TAKE US THROUGH THEIR FEATURES AND WHY THIS IS A UNIQUE CONCEPT FOR CAMPING FOR FAMILIES, COUPLES, AND SOLO ADVENTURERS?

The trailers are great because they have a minimal footprint (the base of two tyres) and provide a very comfortable and exciting stay in our custom-made rooftop tents. We have incorporated solar power, refrigeration, shower water and storage into these units which can run independently without charge for a whole season just





capturing energy from the sun.

The trailers have received a second life as they were originally used by the army in the UK. As simple tubs with wheels there wasn't much to them, but we built them up to be fully self-sustaining camping units. Our larger examples not only have the penthouse suite rooftop tents, but also accommodation underneath as a double bunk. They have become a signature of Sand Sherpa.

**5. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE LANDSCAPE IN WHICH THE CAMP SITS, AND WHAT SORT OF SAFARI OPPORTUNITIES FORM THE COMBINED OFFERING AT DUBAI DESERT CONSERVATION RESERVE WITH A STAY AT SAND SHERPA?**

We operate in a grove of Acacia Trees spread over three quarters

of a square kilometre. We have just 12 camping spots and aim to provide privacy and a sense of escape for our adventurers, as well as a communal dining area and comfortable bathrooms.

Sand Sherpa camp is situated in the remotest corner of the reserve almost at a converging border between Dubai, Sharjah, and Abu Dhabi. Apart from our presence, this is a wilderness area, that is exclusive to the natural flora and fauna of the reserve. We are the only operator permitted in this very special part of the reserve and our adventurers benefit from seeing an abundance of desert life here.

The journey to and from camp is as much a part of the experience as the stay. Our wildlife safari drive is complete with all the sights and sounds of our commentary as we aim to educate our participants on all they see around them and provide an insight into the timeless

beauty of this very special environment.

**6. YOU ARE DESCRIBED AS "DUBAI'S ULTIMATE ECO-CAMPING ADVENTURE." CAN YOU TAKE US THROUGH WHAT MAKES THE EXPERIENCE ECO-CONSCIOUS? WHAT INITIATIVES DO YOU DEPLOY THAT ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR GUESTS?**

Education is at the heart of our experience. We don't just talk the talk but go to great efforts to actually minimize our impact on the area where we operate and also to ensure that our adventurers follow our lead based on their learnings and experiences at Sand Sherpa.

By appreciating nature, we value it, protect it, and have a desire to preserve it. That is our most important deliverable at every camp – to make sure every adventurer leaves us with a greater understanding and appreciation







of Dubai's natural environment.

In terms of our own efforts, all power comes from solar. We don't use fuel-based generators. We operate ex-military people movers so need less vehicles and fuel on our drives and safaris. We keep only to designated tracks and don't veer off them to harm the natural landscape. We avoid plastics, use the minimum firewood (sourced and harvested locally from invasive species of trees) and ensure little food wastage. The list goes on, but these are among our key initiatives.

**7. HOW LONG DOES THE SEASON RUN AT SAND SHERPA, HOW ACCESSIBLE IS THE CAMP FOR INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL GUESTS, AND WHAT SORT OF GROUPS DO YOU IN CAMP?**

I wish it was longer, but our season is just 6-7 months and that depends on the weather or as the Bedouin used to say the "hot-hot" (Mwasim al-Ged). We operate for as long as the weather supports us being able to camps and safaris. This differs a little from year to year.

We host all types



of adventurers – solo, couples and families – but also schools (which we love), corporates and special interest groups.

We have recently developed a programme of activities based around Nomad Ways, so can organize three-stone fireplace cooking, treks and other activities which are ideal for teambuilding and events.

**8. LET'S SWITCH GEARS A LITTLE BIT AND BRING IT BACK TO YOURSELF AND YOUR VISION FOR THE CAMP. WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE BRAND AND CONCEPT EVOLVE IN THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS?**

Sand Sherpa is unique in Dubai as we have developed a business based on a passion rather than to address a gap or opportunity in the market – although we have found that we have filled one! We'd like to continue doing what we love and sharing that with residents and visitors.

I have special memories of the resident that was gifted our experience as a leaving resident. He left both happy and sad that after 12 years living here, it was his best weekend in Dubai, yet his first time going to the desert and camping. And of the children that visit us and participate in the commentary for other guests. It is always very special and a unique privilege to share the wonders of the desert with people discovering and

enjoying it for the very first time.

In terms of expansion, we wouldn't want to expand the current site as we would like to preserve both the nature and our experience. However, we have been looking for other sites that could support similar activities. Sadly, they are few and far between and DDCR is a special place to compare anywhere else to.

**9. WHEN ROB IS NOT IN THE DESERT TAKING ON THE SERENITY OF ITS DUNES OR CONNECTING WITH GUESTS IN CAMP, WHAT DOES HE LIKE TO DO FOR FUN?**

Spending time with my family. It is the most rewarding aspect of life, and it doesn't matter what we are doing.







To learn more about Sand Sherpa, visit <https://www.sandsherpa.com/>

Discovering new things together through activities, travel and exploration is particularly fun.

### 10. TAKE US THROUGH YOUR THOUGHTS ON HOW SAND SHERPA AS A HOSPITALITY/ADVENTURE COMPANY, IS HELPING SHAPE CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN THE UAE AND WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

I see Sand Sherpa not just as an adventure company but an education provider. We provide a unique brand of edutainment, that is immersive. It doesn't feel like we are teaching, and the adventurer may not feel like they are learning, it happens naturally in nature.

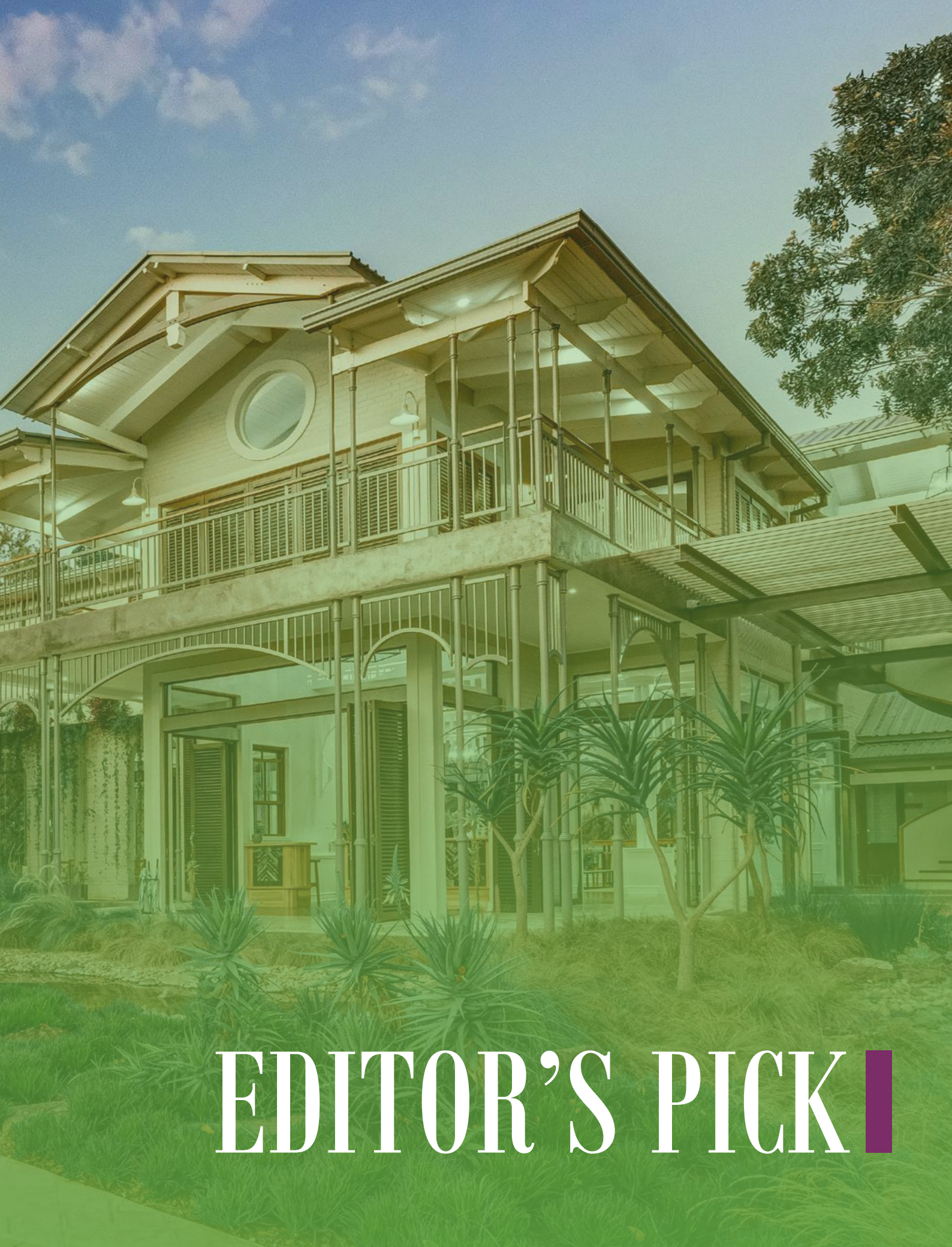
As I said earlier, value comes from appreciation. Everyone that leaves Sand Sherpa does so with more open eyes of what's around them and a better understanding of the place where they live. There is more to Dubai than its wonderful city and there is a natural environment just waiting to be explored and discovered – but in a sympathetic and considerate way. <sup>AV</sup>











EDITOR'S PICK |



# The Onyx Hotel by Newmark:

## A Jewel in the Cape Town Foreshore

By Yvonne C Mtengwa

Cape Town, a vibrant city that continues to break records among Africa's most iconic destinations to explore. With enviable, ultra chic settings to offer the lifestyle enthusiast, you'll be hard pressed to not find something inspiring about being nestled between mountains and the ocean. Each turn presents a unique blend of natural beauty and urban sophistication. And right in the heart of the Central Business District of this captivating city, lies the Onyx Hotel by Newmark, a contemporary haven promising a luxurious and unforgettable stay for the bleisure traveller.

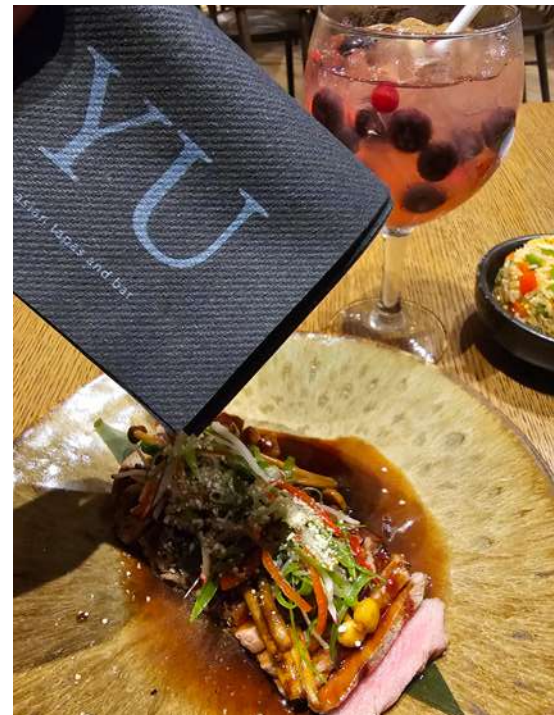
It took only a swift, 20-minute drive from the airport in the cool of the air-conditioned Volkswagen SUV that had been arranged for my pickup to get me to my first hotel on this circuit. On the cards was a week-long exploration of what was new on the boutique hotel scene with the Newmark Hotels & Reserves portfolio, a hospitality group I had fallen in love with since my very first stay at one of their properties a few years ago. Cape Town, South Africa, thrums with an infectious energy. From the majestic Table Mountain to the vibrant V&A Waterfront, the city offers a beguiling blend of natural beauty and urban buzz.

Here I was again, expectant for the days ahead.

I'd been no stranger to stepping into a world of "city chic" of late, and so I really looked forward to experiencing The Onyx, which upon checking in, felt to me like South African vibrancy seamlessly blends with the elegance of a New York loft. The hotel's design philosophy revolves around creating a sense of home away from home, evident in its spacious and well-appointed apartment-style rooms.

### *A Haven of Comfort: The Onyx's Room Design*

I burst into a suite showered in natural light that filtered through imposing floor-to-ceiling windows. Contrasting views of the commercial district below, and the mountainous landscape was







Visit <https://newmarkhotels.com/accommodation/the-onyx-hotel> to learn more about The Onyx Hotel



perfectly captured in the foreground from the frame that was my balcony. Gone are the days of cramped hotel rooms. Dare I say the avid traveller would add these to their list of allergens. The Onyx isn't your typical hotel; stellar in fact, in that it offers a collection of stylish, fully-equipped apartments, perfect for both short and extended stays. Imagine stepping into a haven that feels less like a hotel room and more like your own private Cape Town pied-à-terre. Apartments range from cozy studios to expansive penthouses, catering to solo travellers, couples, and families alike.

My space was meticulously designed with a contemporary aesthetic, boasting sleek finishes, curated artwork and modern furnishings of grey, black and white tones. Emerald green cushions lay as accents on the living room's comfy sofa, and plush carpeting underfoot. The kitchenette came fully equipped, featuring stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, and all the necessary utensils to whip up a gourmet meal or simply heat up leftovers.

Because my days in were made up of a series of virtual meetings, I made the living area my office turned sanctuary to work and unwind from, especially as each day came to a close. High-speed Wi-Fi kept me connected, while the premium entertainment systems me engaged, even on the evening I had a dear friend come over for hearty gossip over our bottle of crisp Capetonian wine. The Onyx truly understands the needs of modern

travellers, providing a space that felt like an extension of my home, yet infused with the spirit of Cape Town.

Because you'll likely choose The Onyx while on business travel, this property by Newmark Hotels & Reserves understands the importance of a good night's sleep, especially after a long journey or day. My bedroom was havens of tranquillity, featuring a plush king-size bed draped in crisp linens. Storage space was ample, and en-suite bathrooms functionally luxurious, with walk-in showers, top-of-the-line toiletries, and fluffy towels.

### *Culinary Escapades at The Onyx*

While your fully-equipped apartment kitchen allows for culinary exploration (who cooks when on holiday though?) you won't want to miss the opportunity to





indulge in the delectable offerings at the Onyx Hotel's restaurants. I was encouraged to carve out a night where I would enjoy dinner downstairs at Yu – a contemporary spot for Asian Tapas and fancy drinks. Did the chefs outdo themselves? My experience lived up to its reputation for sophisticated yet warm hospitality, with platter upon platter being served of rich, decadent staples in Asian cuisine; from sushi and sashimi to seafood, fried rice, bao, ribs and premium steak cuts. The atmosphere at Yu was a fantastic ode to innovative South African cuisine with an Asian inspired twist, alongside a bar serving up craft cocktails and a curated wine list.

### *Unwind and Recharge while on the move*

Though sunny, temperatures were a tad nippy, and so taking a swim didn't come highly on my list of things to do. Guests that love a good pool day while in-house can however, take a refreshing dip in the sparkling indoor-outdoor pool located on the fourth floor. And this pool is heated, boasting an indoor-outdoor placement that allows you to enjoy it from within the space it is located or outdoors where sweeping views of Table Mountain beckon. I also quite loved that the pool area also featured a sundeck with loungers, perfect for soaking up the warm South African sun and enjoying panoramic city views over your cocktail of choice. Not one to miss out on an opportunity to burn a few calories, I took to the gym for my early morning or post-dining invigorating experience in the well-equipped gym.

### *Exploring the "nearby" Cape Town*

The Onyx Hotel by Newmark boasts a prime location in the Cape Town Foreshore, placing you within walking distance of the city's top attractions and vibrant energy. A short stroll away lies the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), a hub for conferences, exhibitions, and events. Art enthusiasts will find themselves within easy reach of the Artscape





Theatre Centre, a renowned venue for plays, musicals, and dance performances. Those with a penchant for learning and discovery can delve into the rich maritime history at the Two Oceans Aquarium.

You'll be spoilt for choice when it comes to exploring the scenic beauty of Cape Town's natural wonders. Hike or take a cable car ride to the top of Table Mountain for breathtaking panoramic views of the city and coastline. Signal Hill and Lion's Head offer equally stunning vistas and are popular choices for outdoor enthusiasts.

And then there's the vibrant V&A Waterfront, a bustling harbour precinct overflowing with your favourite retail outlets, restaurants, concept eateries, and entertainment options. For a taste of Cape Town's legendary nightlife, I made sure to head out to Long Street for a night out with the girls, a lively strip brimming with bars, pubs, and clubs. On my itinerary to fit the rudimentary box carrying a tour of more cultural experiences, was ex-

Yvonne C Mtengwa is the Founder/Editor-in-Chief of the award-winning Travel Essence Magazine, a Communications Strategist by profession, with an avid passion for discovering Africa and the Middle East's iconic landscapes through her travels. Connect with and follow her travel, tourism, and lifestyle experiences on

📷 @Quintessentially\_yvonne



ploring the historical district of Bo-Kaap, known for its brightly coloured houses and rich Malay heritage.

The Onyx wasn't just a place to stay; it provided me a luxurious yet comfortable abode from which to explore Cape Town. With its stylish apartments, top-notch amenities, and unbeatable location that puts me in close proximity of the city's hot spots in arts, culture, entertainment and dining, it's a shore bet to keep up on the pulse of the best of Cape Town during your trip to the Mother City. 🍷





# *Palm River Hotel:*

A lover's paradise on the banks of the Zambezi

By KingPhewa



EDITOR'S PICK • THE PALM RIVER HOTEL





The 3-year-old Palm River Hotel was built with lovers in mind. Lovers of glorious aesthetic, lovers of fine dining, lovers of the African adventure, lovers of architecture and certainly lovers of the riverside.

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**N**estled on the banks of the Zambezi, a few kilometres upstream from the iconic Victoria Falls, the hotel is quite frankly a stunner. A neutral wonder that seamlessly blends in with its surroundings, the 3-storey hotel took our breath away.

The first building you see as

you drive in is the gym which is kitted with three top of the range stationary bicycles which immediately capture your attention. The closer you get to the main reception building; you are met with a replica of the resplendent Victoria Falls Bridge which fits in beautifully with the Australian inspired Queenslander building design. The simple façade really belies the ultra-luxury finishes in the welcome

space. The space sweeps effortlessly into the restaurant which is airy and delicately finished. Awash with natural light and sweeping views, the reception, with its triple volume ceilings and sweeping staircase, finish what is arguably one of the best receptions of any hotel on the continent.

Our room, with exquisite riverside views, was a sight for antic-











ipating eyes. With a modest design philosophy and all the amenities one could need, we quickly settled into what was to be our home for the next few days. The mix of classic and modern aesthetics really tied in nicely with the entire hotel look and feel.

### *Snippets across the estate*

Exploring the hotel, in unseasonably hot autumn, was tricky but well worth it. With the assistance of one of our hosts, we made our way across the grounds, past the on-site curio store, the calming spa, the tastefully curated art gallery as well as the intimate conference centre which is perched atop the reception building. More was yet to come. Ascending 3 flights of stairs, voluntarily at that, leaving the lift behind, we made our way to the presidential suite. A palatial space consisting of an outside lounge and dining area with its own bathroom as well as an indoor dining and lounge section before getting to the bedroom which features an ensuite bathroom that would rival any in its class. This





was certainly the highlight of our tour.

Other rooms on the hotel offering include an executive suite, geared for the businessperson seeking serenity whilst never going off duty, the honeymoon suite, perfect for a couple looking for privacy and indulgence, the family suite with a shared living space and a massive terrace perfect for a family and finally the private villa, a three bedroomed private home with its own pool, perfect for a group or larger family. All rooms are incredibly well appointed and coupled with the outstanding service make it a must visit when vacationing in these parts.

*Partaking of the culinary ethos at Palm River Hotel*

Food is always going to be the centrepiece of any establishment and the culinary team at Palm River Hotel certainly didn't disappoint. When checking in, a complimentary afternoon tea service soon follows. Featuring a wide selection of teas and a hardworking Italian coffee machine, the hot beverages were taken care of. The iced tea and cold water with fresh fruit completed the drinks selection. The accompanying



treats included mini croissants with basil, cheese and tomato and the sweet treats, a variety of mini doughnuts and Danishes. Light, flavourful and sized just right for the perfect afternoon treat.

The bar selection was compact but filled to both regional and international standards. After all the exploring, there was nothing better than settling down to an ice-cold Zambezi lager and a Malawi Shandy. With the river a mere 15 meters away, we had our own little slice of heaven whilst enjoying our drinks. A second round soon followed but this time accompanied by a delightful and incredibly moreish toasted cheese and chutney sandwich and perfectly crumbed chicken strips.

Later, dinner was a fancy affair featuring a carefully selected wine





list and a menu of some repute. Global sensations such as sous vide pork fillet and perfectly fried pork wontons took our tastebuds all around the world in the comfort of the hotel. The short rib main course served with the creamiest butternut risotto should be a dish they never remove, and our request seemed to have been not only heard but also seconded by the management team.

Breakfast was concise and appetising. Arriving from your room you are welcomed by a variety of freshly squeezed juices and the unmistakable aroma of freshly brewed coffee. Fresh fruit, parfaits and a handsome bread and cold cut selection completed the continental selection. The hot section featured eggs benedict's and wholesome English full breakfasts which couldn't be ignored.

Overall, the service was attentive, without being overbearing and again the team really outdid themselves for the duration of our stay.

The trip was highlighted with ad hoc visits by a majestic herd of elephants who gingerly made their way across the front of the hotel. You truly realised how intertwined with its sur-







KingPhewa is a South African based duo who through their love of food, travel and lifestyle curate and review relatable and enticing content. Their focus is on fine dining, luxury travel and all things beautiful. Follow them on

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roundings the hotel truly is.

An excursion that really took our breath away and added credence to the hotel's location on the Zambezi was the sunset cruise on the in-house Ra-Ikane boat. Our group of 10 guests was thoroughly mesmerised by not only the sights but also the wealth of knowledge our captain and his first officer had. They were patient, articulate and their hospitality out of this world. We were happy to see crocodiles, water monitors, buffalo elephants and countless hippos

dotted along the river. The sunset period is a popular time for cruising and whilst the river is busy you never really feel it whilst aboard because they were adept at making us feel like we were the only ones on the water.

In our opinion a trip to Victoria Falls will be incomplete without a visit to the Palm River Hotel. The wide range of accommodations on offer, the space to explore and the romantic setting make it easily and arguably a top pick for leisure and romantic travellers. 🌿



# Luxe Life and Wine Tasting with Jeep Tours Cape Town





We've all scalded the internet looking for the best tours to join when exploring a new destination. Cape Town remains a favourite for most who have had the opportunity to experience this vibrant city that offers a kaleidoscope of experiences between the majestic Table Mountain and sparkling coastlines. To truly capture its essence, one needs a touch of adventure, a dash of luxury, and a healthy dose of breathtaking scenery. And so of course when I set my feet in the Mother City at the top of the year, I called on Lizanne Gomes, Owner/Director at Jeep Tours Cape Town to bring me up to speed with what experiences she and her team had conjured up since my last ride on the famed Cape Townian Jeep entourage.

By Yvonne C Mtengwa

### JEEP ADVENTURES: UNVEILING THE CITY'S SECRETS

My Capetonian wine tasting odyssey began with an early morning pick up from the delightfully chic Winchester Boutique Hotel, which exudes a delicate Cape Dutch charm, sits on the Sea Point Promenade, and boasts sweeping ocean views and elements of the city's skyline. Forget the confines of a traditional tour bus. I decided a long time ago through my travels, that there is always an elegant, more inspired way to explore a city, and if I have it my way, it won't be couped up in a branded minibus. I was deeply honoured on this occasion, to have Lizanne carve out her morning to take me on a personalised tour of the winelands. Ensnared in her signature red customized Jeep Wrangler, with its open roof allowing the sights, sounds, and fresh Cape Town air to wash over me on this crisp yet sunny morning, we headed towards Klein Constantia for our morning wine-inspired adventure.

### WHAT MAKES A RIDE WITH JEEP TOURS CAPE TOWN SO EPIC

With perfectly curated tours that unveil the best of Cape Town and her surrounds, Jeep Tours Cape Town has mastered a personalised, exhilarating approach to highlighting what makes the Mother City so special, with each tailor-made tour taking you on a journey beyond the postcard-perfect views. Imagine traversing scenic Chapman's Peak Drive, a ribbon of road snaking along dramatic cliffs with the vast ocean as your backdrop. As the wind blows against your countenance, your guide, a seasoned Jeep driv-





er, regales you with tales of the area's rich history, pointing out hidden coves and historical landmarks.

### A FEAST FOR THE SENSES

The adventure doesn't stop at the asphalt. Jeep Tours Cape Town ventures off-road, taking you to hidden gems inaccessible by conventional vehicles. Most popular destinations include heading out to the nearby Table Mountain and Hout Bay or venturing to as far as the Cape Point Vineyards, Boulders Beach, Franschhoek or the Atlantis Dunes. On the way, you'll breathe in the intoxicating fragrance of fynbos, a unique South African floral kingdom, and marvel at the occasional vibrant display of proteas, the national flower.

While I would have loved to activate my quest for adventure with a Jeep tour to the Cape Point Nature Reserve, navigating the dramatic curves of Chapman's Peak and witnessing the raw power of nature at the iconic Cape of Good Hope where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans converge, the goal with my tour was to slow things down a little bit, taking on an educational element by visiting Klein Constantia, one of South Africa's most prolific wine estates.

### JEeps, VINEYARDS, AND EXQUISITE WINES

Driving through a set of imposing gates heralded my time to unwind and tantalize my taste buds with a luxurious wine tasting tour at Klein Constantia, one of South Africa's oldest working wine estates. Granted, it was quite early in the day, but Capetonians and frequent travellers into this cosmopolitan city know that no one checks the time when it comes to itineraries that incorporate cuisine and high-level notes on viticulture.

Established in 1685, Klein Constantia boasts a rich heritage interwoven with the very fabric of Cape Town's story. The moment you arrive at the sprawling estate, with its elegant manor house nestled amidst rolling vineyards, you'll be transported to a world of sophistication. I was in






for treat as I embarked on a unique journey into the heart of the estate's most prized possession, driving through the vineyards, picking, and tasting grapes right off the vine, to later exploring the historic cellar. A testament to centuries of winemaking tradition, what better way to learn about the unique terroir that shapes the character of this estate's iconic Vin de Constance dessert wine.

Atop a stellar vantage point, where rows and rows of vines stretched towards the undulous landscape below, it was time for the signature photo-op, and of course, opening a bottle to savour the rich, complex flavours the chilled sparkling white had to offer, each sip a live reminder of to the expertise and dedication of Klein Constantia's winemakers.

#### A TOAST TO CAPE TOWN'S ESSENCE

As the bright blue skies and warm sunshine bathed the vineyards in a warm glow, we rose our glasses of sparkling white wine to an unforgettable morning. Jeep Tours Cape Town, with its adventurous spirit and breathtaking landscapes shone to us mile after mile, perfectly complemented the luxurious, knowledge infused indulgence of the Klein Constantia experience. Together, they offered me a quintessential Cape Town experience, a tapestry woven with natural wonders, rich history, the city's vibrant spirit and a perfect pace for someone working through a robust itinerary.

Leaving Cape Town with a heart full of memories and a palate lingering with the taste of exquisite wines, you'll understand why this city holds such a powerful allure. It's a place where adventure meets luxury, where history whispers from every corner, and where the beauty of nature inspires awe. And with Jeep Tours Cape Town and Klein Constantia forming a part of your itinerary, you'll have unlocked some of the Mother City's secrets in a way that will have you yearning to make your return! 🍷

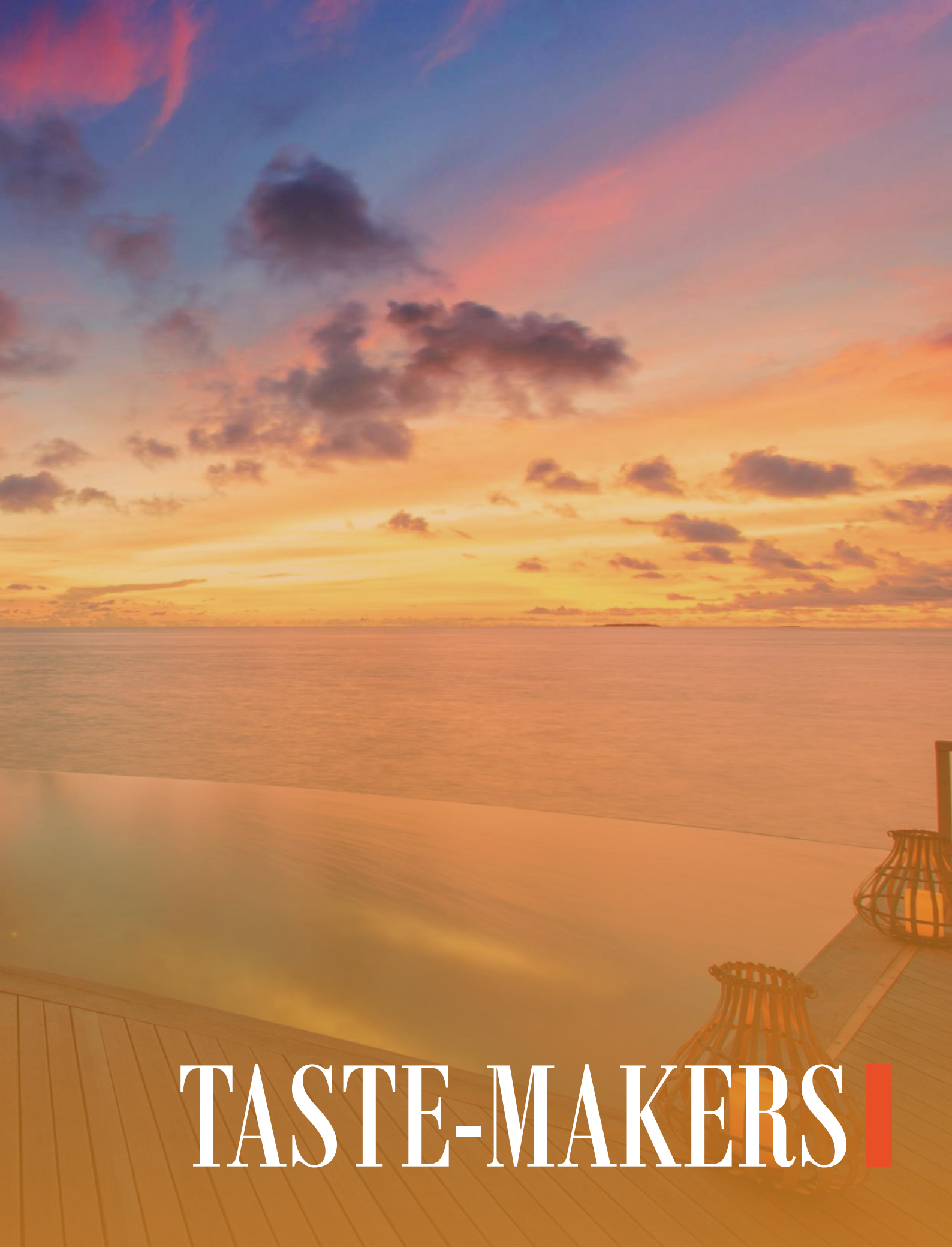
Yvonne C Mtengwa is the Founder/Editor-in-Chief of the award-winning Travel Essence Magazine, a communications strategist by profession, with an avid passion for discovering Africa's iconic landscapes through her travels. Connect with and follow her travel, tourism and lifestyle experiences on  @Quintessentially\_yvonne











# TASTE-MAKERS |





# Shortlist On Setting Sail From African Shores





You've likely conquered landscapes and traversed its skies to appreciate the continent's beauty from above. But did you know that Africa is increasingly becoming a sought-after destination for cruise enthusiasts. While still in its nascent stages compared to established markets, the African cruise industry offers unique experiences and diverse itineraries, catering to adventurous travellers seeking something beyond the ordinary.



## HERE'S A SHORTLIST OF SOME ROUTES THAT CRUISE ENTHUSIASTS HAVE COINED TO BE THEIR FAVOURITE...

### 1. Southern Delights:

Embark on a journey along South Africa's magnificent coastline, with iconic stops like Cape Town, Durban, and Port Elizabeth. Witness the dramatic scenery of Table Mountain, explore the penguin colonies of Boulders Beach, and delve into the rich cultural tapestry of these vibrant cities.

### 2. East African Escapade:

Navigate the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean, visiting Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique. Immerse yourself in the vibrant coral reefs of Mombasa, witness the awe-inspiring wildlife migration in the Maasai Mara, and unwind on the pristine beaches of Zanzibar.

### 3. Island Hopping in the Seychelles:

Cruise the idyllic archipelago of the Seychelles, a paradise of crystal-clear waters, untouched beaches, and lush vegetation. Relax on the shores of Mahé, explore the underwater world of Praslin, and discover the giant tortoises of La Digue.



## CRUISE LINERS TO PICK FROM


Several major cruise lines are setting their sights on Africa, recognizing its potential.

MSC Cruises offers a variety of itineraries, including the recently debuted MSC Splendida in South Africa. Starlight Cruises is a South African-based line catering to the domestic market with cruises to Mozambique, while Viking Ocean Cruises, known for their expedition cruises, ventures to lesser-explored African destinations.

And for the best time to Sail?

The ideal time to cruise Africa depends on your chosen region. For South Africa, the summer months (November to March) offer warm weather and sunshine, perfect for exploring the outdoors. However, this coincides with peak season, so expect larger crowds and potentially higher prices.

In East Africa, the dry season (December to March) guarantees pleasant weather and optimal wildlife viewing opportunities. Exploring the Seychelles islands by cruise ship means you get to enjoy a tropical climate year-round, though the shoulder seasons (April, May, October, and November) offer a good balance between favourable weather and fewer crowds.

As Africa's cruise industry continues to flourish, adventurers keen on setting sail can expect more diverse itineraries, specialized experiences, and improved infrastructure to cater to the growing demand. So, if you're seeking an unforgettable adventure that blends cultural immersion, breathtaking scenery, and exciting excursions, consider setting sail on the vibrant waters of Africa. 





# NARRATIVES

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Contact us on [info@yournarratives](mailto:info@yournarratives) to schedule your consultation.



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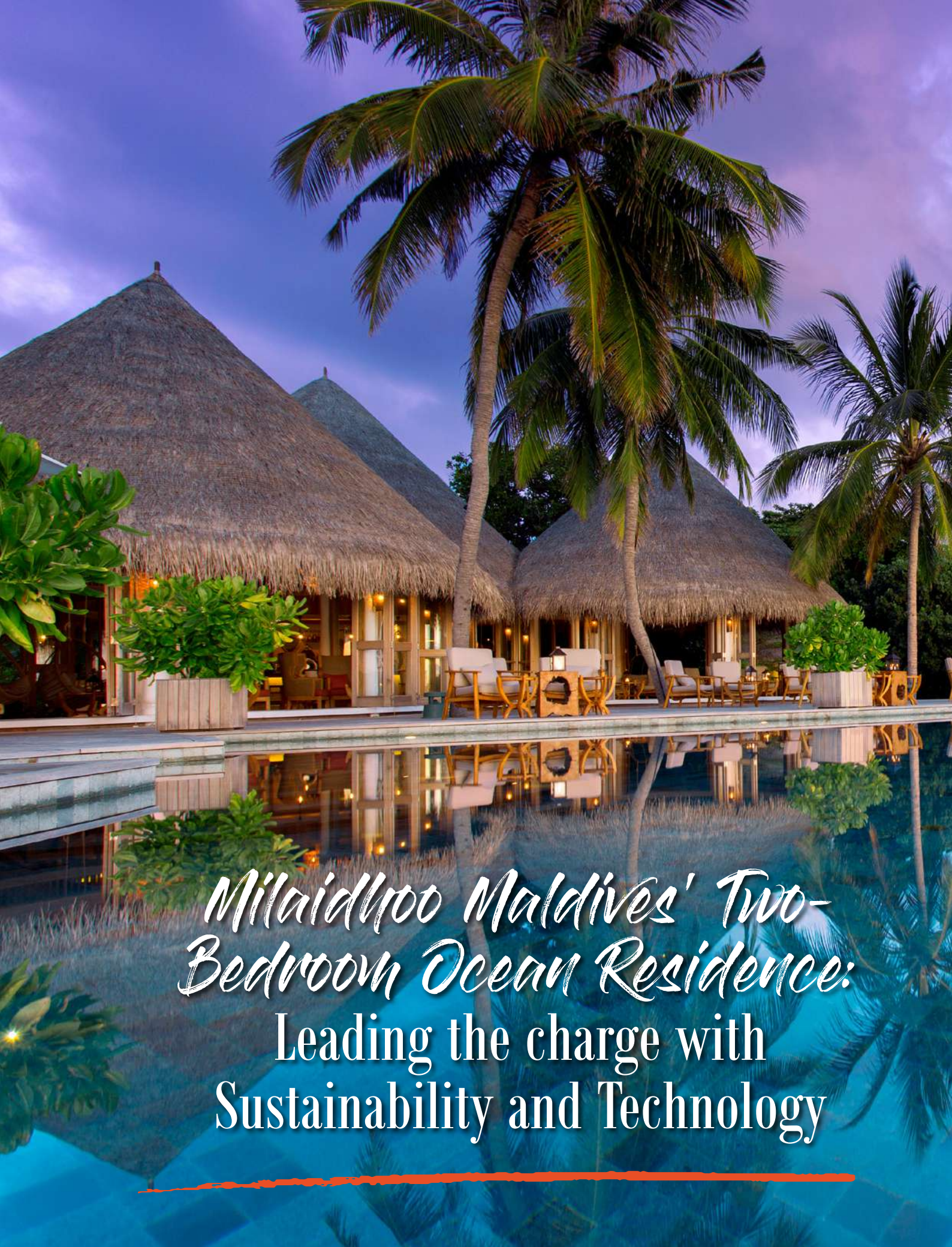


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*Milaidhoo Maldives' Two-  
Bedroom Ocean Residence:*  
Leading the charge with  
Sustainability and Technology

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Milaidhoo Maldives, the epitome of island chic and reinvented luxury in the heart of the Indian Ocean, recently announced that its breathtaking Two-Bedroom Ocean Residence with Private Pool, had been bestowed with two prestigious accolades: the esteemed Gold 2024 Sustainability Award and the Gold 2024 Technology Award by Elite Traveler, the eminent beacon guiding ultra-high-net-worth (UHNW) individuals through the opulent tapestry of global luxury living.

**M**ilaidhoo, gifted to be located in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Baa Atoll, embodies sustainability at its core. The island resort's commitment to environmental preservation is unwavering, as evidenced by its innovative conservation practices and eco-conscious operations. From pioneering marine conservation initiatives to adopting renewable energy solutions, Milaidhoo continually strives to minimise its ecological footprint while maximising guest experiences.

#### MERGING SUSTAINABILITY AND DESIGN

Sustainability conscious guests will be delighted to note that all furniture has been customised for Milaidhoo with local elements to keep the Maldivian spirit. All artefacts and decorations in the rooms are unique and hand-made by local artisans. But that's not all. Connecting guests with the cultural elements has been considered in tremendous detail, such that even the beach villas are in the form of a boat, the dhoni, while the outside shower of the beach villa is the ark of the ba'theli.

No straw has been used anywhere on Milaidhoo Maldives, all waste is recycled, villas and residences have minimum printed collateral, the chef's fresh ingredients are sourced from a garden and nursery on the island and every effort is made to uplift the community through a series of activities, including those that enable connection and interaction with children.

Simultaneously, Milaidhoo seamlessly integrates technology into its offerings, enhancing guest comfort and convenience without compromising the laid-back island lifestyle. By leveraging technological advancements, the resort ensures a harmonious balance between modernity and tranquillity, offering guests a sanctuary where comfort coexists with sustainability.

Mr. David Castaño, General Manager of Milaidhoo Maldives, expressed his profound pride in receiving these prestigious accolades, stating, "This recognition reflects the unrivalled commitment of the Milaidhoo family to maintaining the highest standards of sustainability and technological innovation. We are deeply honoured to be recognised by Elite Traveler and remain dedicated to providing our guests with unparalleled experiences that harmonise luxury, sustainability, and technological advancement."















### INSIDE THE TWO-BEDROOM OCEAN RESIDENCE

Located at the very end of the resort's lagoon jetty, the expansive 564sqm Ocean Residence provides the ultimate in seclusion and comfort, with a mesmerising outlook over the Indian Ocean.

Designed to sleep up to six guests, the Residence comprises two spacious bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, one of which fully opens to endless sea views. There is a vast living room and an extensive, sunset-facing deck complete with infinity pool, comfortable lounge seating and a dining space for lavish family feasts, as well as a private gym and yoga/meditation lounge on the upper floor.

A dedicated butler is on call to ensure a seamless, personalised stay for guests, 24-hours a day. From customising dining experiences, to arranging sandbank excursions, cruises, water activities, tailoring spa experiences and much more, the butler offers comprehensive bespoke servicing from the moment guests step onto Milaidhoo's







pristine shores.

The Two-Bedroom Ocean Residence is ideal for extended families or a group of friends to connect and embrace the value of meaningful time spent together, indulging in the space and privacy the villa offers. Milaidhoo inspires guests to write their own story of a small island, with memorable activities and experiences created for relaxation seekers or the more adventurous, complemented by amazing culinary indulgences.


Perks of staying in the new Ocean Residence include a dedicated Chef, a private half-day excursion on one of the resort's luxury vessels, and a private outdoor cinema screening on the deck. Guests also benefit from the Milaidhoo signature complimentary amenities such as a bottle of bubbly on arrival, use of snorkelling equipment, a special welcome gift and more.

#### BEYOND THE VILLA

Milaidhoo is a pristine island paradise proudly rooted in local island traditions. This boutique luxury resort features 50 contemporary Maldivian-style pool villas, custom-made and made

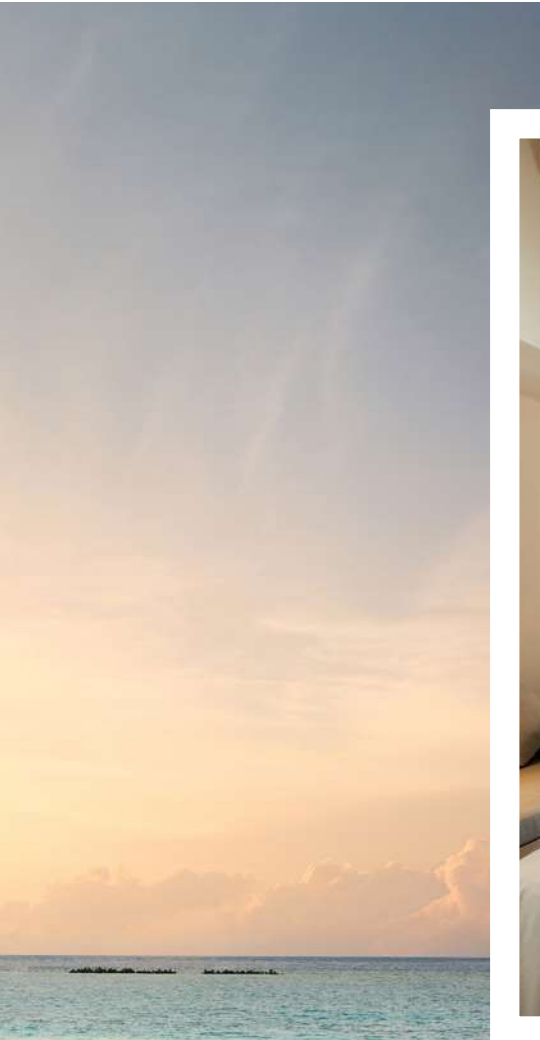
for comfort designed by a renowned Maldivian architect. Each guest is assigned an Island Host to help create meaningful experiences and cater to the guest's every need. Activities include over-water spa treatments, sunrise yoga classes and snorkelling excursions to view the incredible house reef.

Dining is a highlight, with Milaidhoo being home to three world-class restaurants, including Ba'theli. This unique Maldivian restaurant reflects the islands' heritage and is built in the shape of three traditional boats on pillars over a lagoon. The restaurant's innovative and delicious meals are steeped in Maldivian tradition, with each dish inspired by favourites of the ancient maritime Spice Route.

Milaidhoo is the authentic Maldives, a resort of re-invented luxury, where guests feel they belong, experiencing bare-foot informality within this tropical island's natural, lush setting. As an adults-focused resort, Milaidhoo is child-free and tranquil where any dream can become a reality, from sunset dolphin cruises to sailing to a deserted sandbank for a private beach picnic. 







To learn more about Milaidhoo Maldives, visit: [www.milaidhoo.com](http://www.milaidhoo.com)









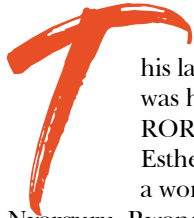


# Beans of Change:

## Emirati owned ROR Coffee Solutions joins forces with Rwandan Women Farmers

In March 2024, Rate of Rise Coffee Solutions (ROR), a homegrown Emirati-owned enterprise, hosted an event in commemoration of International Women's Day, also announcing a significant partnership between ROR Coffee and a Rwandan's women's farm. ROR Coffee Solutions serves as a premier one-stop-shop for all coffee requirements across the GCC region, and with a strong commitment to excellence and sustainability, has been proudly sourcing specialty green coffee from coffee farms in Kenya, Brazil, Costa Rica, Yemen, and Colombia since its launch in 2017.





his landmark event was highlighted by ROR Coffee hosting Esther Mukangango, a woman farmer from Nyarguru, Rwanda. This remarkable and resilient woman had the chance to express her enthusiasm of being invited to the UAE and experience ROR coffee's commitment to ethical and sustainable practices.

### *Bringing sustainable coffee to the UAE*

Esther Mukangango shared her riveting story, by recounting the inspiring journey of 125 women uniting with a common goal to fight poverty by saving and lending money amongst each other. Together, they formed a union called Nyampinga - which translates to "beautiful women in and out." The women of Nyampinga are recognized for their remarkably high level of cooperative management skills, due to which they were able to collect substantial capital and purchase coffee farms. Their impactful movement earned them global recognition, which led to support from more than three local and international banks to provide these women farmers with working capital for coffee harvesting and processing. Furthermore, with partnership and assistance from non-profit Sustainable Growers, Nyampinga is able to highlight the visibility of women coffee farmers from seed to cup.

In the past, women like Esther had never tasted nor had access to coffee in Rwanda as it was seen as a man's drink. Esther inspired the audience by expressing pride in not only being able to own coffee farms, but also being able to now export coffee to the USA, Europe and to the Middle East. Attendees








at the event were moved as Esther highlighted the fact that she and several other women farmers are now able to solve their primary needs by sending their children to school, paying for health insurance, and contributing to a pension scheme for the elderly.

On the other hand, Esther was quick to spill the beans as she expressed gratitude upon realizing that their diligent efforts were being supported by ROR Coffee. ROR Coffee revealed that a percentage from every product sold goes back to Esther and the Nyampinga cooperative, contributing to a brighter future for them and their communities.

### *A taste of Nyampinga in Dubai*

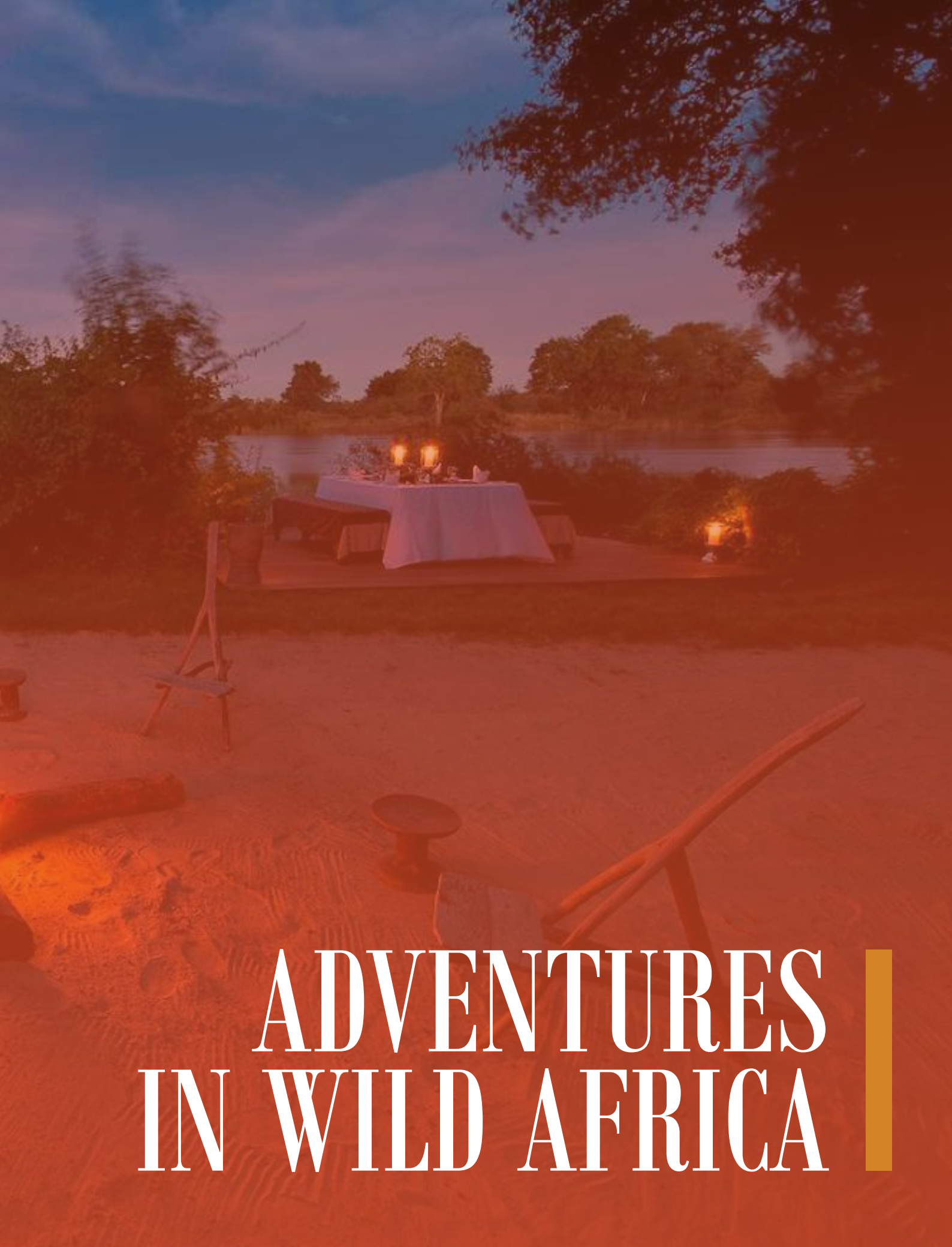
Moreover, ROR enhanced the event by serving a variety of freshly brewed hot coffee imported directly from Esther's farm in Rwanda for the attendees. They used their efficient electric roasters, which have been implemented to reduce their emissions in line with their sustainability goal of cutting carbon emissions by 20% by 2025. Guests were also treated to an exclusive glimpse of ROR's collaboration with Frothing Friday's electric vehicle fleet, utilized for sales, QC and technical purposes - working hand-in-hand to propel them towards their sustainability goals. They also highlighted their fully compostable coffee bags, capsules, and cups across their product portfolio, in a bid to reduce waste.

ROR Coffee's commitment to fair trade and their partnership with Rwandan women farmers marks a significant milestone in their commitment to support and empower women. The success of their impactful event serves as a beacon, inspiring other companies in the coffee industry to not only adopt similar practices but also contribute to fostering a fairer world for women farmers and cultivating a sustainable environment. 









# ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA









# *Inside Atzaro Okavango,* a Sustainable Luxury Retreat in Botswana's Okavango Delta

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AFRICAN BUSH CAMPS, A LEADING ECO-TOURISM COMPANY COMMITTED TO CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT, RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS NEWEST LUXURY CAMP, ATZARO OKAVANGO. LOCATED IN THE BREATHTAKING OKAVANGO DELTA, A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE AWAITS DISCERNING TRAVELLERS SEEKING A HARMONIOUS BLEND OF LUXURY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS.





Ready for your next luxurious escape in the throngs of nature? Here are 5 simple reasons why this property in the Okavango should be on your radar...

**1. ATZARO OKAVANGO - AN EPITOME OF OPULENCE.** Picture ten exquisite luxury suites, designed to immerse guests in the wonders of nature without compromising on comfort. Guests who choose Atzaro Okavango should ready themselves for lodgings perfectly in harmony with the environment that forms their backdrop, as each suite showcases contemporary African-inspired decor, spacious interiors, and private decks overlooking the pristine delta landscape. The camp ensures an intimate setting, enabling guests to enjoy personalized service and unparalleled tranquillity throughout their stay.

**2. A HALLMARK COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE LUXURY.** "We are thrilled to introduce Atzaro

Okavango to our esteemed guests. This new addition represents our commitment to delivering exceptional luxury experiences while upholding our core values of sustainability and conservation," said Beks Ndlovu, Founder and CEO of African Bush Camps, when asked to comment on this exciting new development. The goal for African Bush Camps remains true to form even with this new opening - to create a unique haven where guests can revel in the beauty of the Okavango Delta under the expert care of our guides, while actively participating in its preservation."

**3. MORE THAN JUST A LUXURIOUS RETREAT.** African Bush Camps have long received recognition for its unwavering dedication to sustainability and responsible tourism. As with all its camps, Atzaro Okavango also employs cutting-edge eco-friendly practices to minimise its environmental footprint. This includes the use of renewable energy sources, water conservation initiatives, and a comprehensive







waste management system, with the key driver being to preserve the delicate ecosystems of the Okavango Delta for generations to come.

#### **4. UNSURPASSED WILDLIFE VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES.**

Guests at Atzaro Okavango can embark on unforgettable wildlife encounters, led by experienced guides who have an intimate understanding of the delta's intricate ecosystem. Whether on a thrilling game drive, a serene mokoro (traditional canoe) excursion, or a guided bushwalk, visitors will have the opportunity to witness the diverse wildlife, including elephants, lions, hippos, and a plethora of bird species that call the delta home.

#### **5. LUXURIOUS AMENITIES THAT PAY HOMAGE TO THE CAMP'S SURROUNDINGS.**

Beyond its

remarkable wilderness encounters, Atzaro Okavango offers an array of luxurious amenities. Guests can unwind at the camp's infinity pool, indulge in rejuvenating spa treatments inspired by ancient African traditions, and savour gourmet cuisine featuring locally sourced ingredients prepared by the camp's skilled chefs. The camp also provides a platform for cultural immersion, allowing guests to engage with local communities and learn about their rich heritage and traditions.

African Bush Camps (ABC) is a 100% owner-run, African-based safari company designed to delight adventure travellers with authentic safari experiences amid untamed wilderness across Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. Operations are always focused on the guests, with 18 luxury tented bush camps and lodges, offering seamless safari experiences with internal flights,





food, drinks, and activities included. African Bush Camps promotes and influences travel to Africa on a global scale while operating with a strong focus on conservation and an environmentally sustainable footprint that celebrates the culture of communities in the areas in which it operates. 

African Bush Camps' latest addition to its portfolio Atzaro Okavango, is now open and welcomes guests seeking an unparalleled luxury safari experience in the heart of the Okavango Delta. To learn more, visit <https://africanbushcamps.com/camps/atzaro-okavango/>





# Burundi's Potential:

## A Country Poised for Tourism Take-off?

A little-known treasure in the heart of East Africa is Burundi, quietly shimmering with an untouched beauty and vibrant culture that beckons adventurous travelers seeking an off-the-beaten-path experience. Often overshadowed by its neighbours, Burundi boasts a captivating blend of breathtaking landscapes, rich history, and warm hospitality, making it a country to watch for in the world of travel and tourism.



### AN UNTAMED TAPESTRY OF NATURAL BEAUTY.

Burundi's diverse topography paints a mesmerizing picture, from the emerald expanse of Lake Tanganyika, the second deepest freshwater lake in the world, to the lush rainforests of Kibira National Park teeming with chimpanzees and colobus monkeys. The majestic peaks of the Ruhuhu Mountains pierce the sky, offering panoramic vistas and challenging hikes, while the Rusizi River snakes through the landscape, teeming with hippos and crocodiles.

### LIGHT TOUCH ON THE CULTURE

Beyond the natural wonders, Burundi's soul lies in its people and their traditions. The rhythm of life pulsates to the beat of the "ingoma" drums, the national symbol, and the air vibrates with the infectious energy of the "imigongo" dance. Delve into the fascinating history of the ancient kingdoms at the Royal Drummers' Hill and the Mwesi Shrines, where centuries-old rituals whisper tales of the past.







## Top Spots in Burundi for the Intrepid Explorer

### 1. Of course, the capital Bujumbura:

What's a trip to any new country without some time spent in its administrative center. Burundi's vibrant capital Bujumbura pulsates with life, awarding those with a penchant for discovery, countless opportunities to explore the bustling markets, savour delicious local cuisine, and stroll along the picturesque shores of Lake Tanganyika. A must for tourists is the Burundi National Museum, an informative showcase of the country's rich cultural heritage.

Viewed as the economic center of Burundi, Bujumbura's manufacturing sector specializes in textiles, leather and paper goods, chemicals, and agricultural products. Bujumbura also serves as the country's main port on Lake Tanganyika as most of Burundi's foreign trade is shipped between the capital and Kigoma in the Western region of Tanzania.

### 2. Somewhere on or near Lake Tanganyika:

Embark on a boat cruise across the lake's turquoise waters, spotting colourful fish and majestic hippos. Visit the Rusizi National Park, a haven for bird-watchers and wildlife enthusiasts. Where there's a large body of water, there is always the thrill of adventure or quite rest while enjoying the vast expanse before you. Lake Tanganyika is no exception, with its striking blue waters a haven for sustenance for the millions of inhabitants sharing the lake from Burundi, Zambia, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

### 3. Kibira and Rusizi National Parks:

Replete with abundant flora and fauna, Kibira National Park is situated in northwestern Burundi, overlapping four provinces, and covering 400km<sup>2</sup> and lying atop the mountains of the Congo-Nile Divide, stretching further to the border of Rwanda, where boundary lines are shared with Nyungwe National Park. Hike through the verdant rainforest, home to chimpanzees, colobus monkeys, and over 600 species of birds, immersing yourself in the tranquility of the natural world.

If it's a dance with the wild side of





the river you are after, book a short canoe ride down the Rusizi River, keeping an eye out for the abundant crocodiles and hippos basking on the banks. A delight for birdwatchers and wildlife enthusiasts. Rusizi National Parks is yet another pick for outdoor enthusiasts and only a 20-minute drive to the northwest of Bujumbura.

#### 4. Explore the former capital

**Gitega:** Now deemed Burundi's former capital but still very much the nation's political base, Gitega exudes a historical charm, is the second largest town in the country, and functions as a centre for religion and education. You can get a quick glimpse into the industrial enterprises in Gitega, which are made up of livestock markets, peat exploitation, and ancillary services hedging on both. In Gitega, you can carve out time delve further into the nation's history by visiting the National Museum, featuring exhibits on history and art, and the Mwesi Shrines, sacred sites, believed to be dedicated to the spirits of ancient kings.

#### *Are you ready to explore unchartered Burundi?*


Burundi's tourism sector is considered well-poised for significant growth as the government is actively investing in infrastructure development, improving transportation links and accommodation options. Additionally, the country is committed to sustainable tourism practices, ensuring the protection of its natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

While venturing into uncharted or underdeveloped territories comes with inherent challenges, trends of more investment towards responsible tourism practices are emerging and deemed essential to the growth of tourism as a socio-economic contributor. Travellers into Burundi are subtly reminded to remain mindful of



the local culture and traditions, respecting the environment, and supporting local businesses whenever possible. By doing so, there is real opportunity to contribute to the sustainable development of Burundi's tourism industry, ensuring a positive impact on the lives of its people.

Burundi is more than just a destination; it's an experience. It's a chance to disconnect from the ordinary and recon-

nect with the essence of nature, culture, and human connection. So, if you seek an adventure that will leave an indelible mark on your soul, pack your bags, and embark on a journey to the captivating heart of Burundi. Burundi awaits with open arms, ready to unveil its hidden treasures to those who dare to explore. Are you ready to answer the call? 



# Wedding Season *is upon us!*

Here are some unique Africa honeymoon experiences to book this year.

The allure of Africa for honeymooners offers a heady mix of natural splendour; exceptional wildlife; eclectic culture and romance in bucket loads. Being immersed in nature with your loved one inspires a romance that can only be described once one has visited Africa. There are many things that bite in Africa, but the safari bug will leave you wanting more. The romance loving French call it “Mal de Afrique” which translates to “Africa disease” or a nostalgic “sickness” of a yearning to return to the continent. Here’s our top Africa picks for your honeymoon radar.



**STAR BATHING SLEEP OUT IN BOTSWANA**

Arguably one of the most sought out destinations on the continent, Botswana's romantic appeal swept Meghan off her feet when Harry proposed to her here. The sweet solitude of a sleep out under the stars is a bonding experience for couples and allows a complete immersion in nature. With all the amenities one could need and the unparalleled luxury of feeling truly remote, the sleep out deck at Kanana in the Okavango Delta overlooks an expansive waterhole which plays host to hippo, crocodile, big cats and a myriad of bird life.

Botswana has some of the very best star gazing on the continent due to its vast open spaces and low light pollution, making it the perfect location to spot southern hemisphere specific constellations such as the Magellanic Clouds or the Southern Cross. Falling asleep to sounds of crickets, the rustling of leaves and nearby wildlife calls only enhances a safari experience, and the untamed beauty of the Botswana wilderness become the backdrop from an unforgettable honeymoon.

**A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE BUSANGA PLAINS IN ZAMBIA**

Cocooned in a luxurious, weaver bird inspired 'nest' with vast views over the Busanga Plains, the awe-inspiring Chisa Busanga Camp will exceed all honeymooners expectations in terms of safari. Intimate in its design, each of the 4 woven nest rooms are elevated above the ground with a large circular opening at the front, revealing view of the open plains and milky way lit skies. Remotely located in the lesser visited Kafue National Park couples will feel like they have the untouched wilderness all to themselves here. Game drives are in electric vehicles powered by the sun which allows for closer game viewing and a lower impact on the environment. Almost every sunset, a resident elephant herd wanders below and between the nests towards its preferred watering hole, giving guests an unbeatable sun-downers view from the privacy of their rooms. The camps environmentally con-





scious design and exceptional and varied wildlife make it a unique destination for adventurous couples looking for an off-the-beaten track honeymoon.

### AN ISLAND RETREAT ON THE ZAMBEZI RIVER, ZAMBIA

Cuddled up on a private island in the Zambezi River, Sindabezi Island lodge oozes romance due to its tranquil and heavenly setting amid the ebb and flow of one of the world's great rivers. Nature therapy for the soul, the lodge allows newly-weds to immerse themselves in the serenity of the bush, knowing your only neighbours are the resident wildlife.


Capturing the authentic African bush camp experience in true luxury and style, couples can marvel at the views of the Zambezi River floodplain and Victoria Falls National Park from their open-fronted honeymoon chalet. Located 12km upstream from majestic spectacle of Victoria Falls couples can also tick off one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World. Time your honeymoon with the full moon and you might just be able to witness the lunar rainbow spectacular - moonbow - created by moon light as it is refracted through water particles in the air, and one of the few places on earth where this natural phenomenon occurs.

### A BLISSFUL BEACH GETAWAY IN LANDLOCKED MALAWI

On the white sandy beaches of Likoma Island sits Kaya Mawa, a boutique lodge that embraces honeymooners for an indulgently carefree getaway on the Maldivian-like shores of Lake Malawi. An effortlessly stylish lakeside retreat that exudes the intimacy and seclusion one would expect from a romantic beach honeymoon, though its unique location along the shores of Likoma Island make it much more special. Surrounded by crystal-clear waters and pristine sands, Kaya



Mawa combines a beach style honeymoon with opportunities for cultural immersion and conservation. Lake Malawi is a UNESCO World Heritage site and world's first freshwater marine reserve with hugely biodiversity waters and over 200 varieties of fish offering fantastic diving and snor-

kelling. Being closer to Mozambique than Malawi, Likoma Island has avoided large scale tourism development, preserving its natural beauty, providing an intimate, laid-back retreat for modern couples looking for a one-of-a-kind honeymoon. 





THE  
WANDERLUST  
WITHIN



# Mauritius Beyond the Postcard

By Sophie Baker

Mauritius might first appear to be nothing more than a watercolour of blues and greens, a seemingly typical portrait of an island retreat. And it's true; Mauritius is the home of pristine beaches and luxury resorts. It's a veritable paradise for sun-seekers from around the globe. But during a recent trip with Attitude Hotels, I was nudged gently into a world far richer, as they peeled back the glossy exterior of sun-soaked beaches to reveal the heart of the island beyond its touristy allure.

But downplaying Mauritius as merely resort holiday destination sells short everything the island has to offer. Joining in Attitude Hotels' 'Like a Local' programme, I was gently nudged towards discovering the essence of Mauritius beyond its scenic landscapes. The hotel's 'Otentik' concept, which is a clever play on the Creole word for 'authentic' is one of the standout initiatives which helps them to provide authentic and genuine Mauritian hospitality to guests. To truly appreciate Mauritius, I had to venture off the palm-lined shores. What I found was a nation with a profound connection to its environment and heritage, inhabited by people with compelling stories of resilience to share.

## *Takamaka: The Sweet Taste of Innovation*

It started with a visit to Takamaka, a boutique winery run by a French-trained viticulturalist. A







downpour had hit, and we huddled under a sprawling marquee tent from the downpour. Luckily, Mauritian sprits can't be quelled by some damp weather – especially when there's boutique wine to be tasted.

Mauritius doesn't have the right climate for grapes, but that hasn't dampened their entrepreneurial spirit. Instead, the romance of winemaking is reimagined with litchi. A fruit you'd more likely enjoy fresh off the tree has been creatively harvested into boutique wines, including one which is surprisingly crisp and invigorating on the palate, reminiscent of a good Sauvignon Blanc. Takamaka isn't about wine; it's a bold statement on sustainable agriculture, and a showcase of innovative use of the island's natural resources.

### *The Heart of Mauritian Life*

Trundling across the breadth and width of the island by car, bicycle, and boat, scattered remnants of colonial estates and old sugar mills told a story of a nation of adaptation and transformation. Initially an econo-





my reliant on sugar cane – a legacy of the colonial era – Mauritius diversified their economy when global sugar prices plummeted in the 20th century and pivoted to textile manufacturing. But as the global economy changed, Mauritius was forced to evolve once again, this time turning to tourism and financial services. Yet, amid these shifts, Mauritius has clung to its unique heritage. Initially reliant on sugarcane,

Each community, from the bustling streets of Port Louis to the quiet fishing villages along the coast, has its own story. The island's history is a complex blend of colonial legacies and vibrant local resistance, where every wave that touches its shores brings a new layer of influence and adaptation. Despite the global pressures of tourism, the island maintains a strong sense of identity and pride. This is evident in how the locals cherish their public spaces, celebrate their festivals, and preserve their culinary traditions. From street food vendors in the central market selling *gato piment* (chili cakes) to fishermen in Mahébourg discussing their daily catch, the real Mauritius thrives in its everyday interactions and communal spaces.

A venture into the heart of Port Louis was further evidence of the undercurrent of local personality that the casual tourist so often misses. Setting foot in the central market dispelled any preconceived notions of a sleepy island capital. Clad in the aromas of curried street food, and the cacophony of market haggling, there's a clear rhythm of local life that the city beats to. Each alley and street corner of Port Louis narrates tales of yore—echoes of Dutch, French, and British influences merging with the local Creole, Indian, and Chinese heritage.

It was here, in the capital city, where Attitude Hotels would fling open the doors to a three-storey workshop where local artists have the space to paint, sculpt, and transform to their hearts content, transforming ideas into expression. This space remains largely invisible to the casual tourist but buzzes with activity, each floor dedicated to artists painting, sculpting, and transforming ideas into tangible expressions. Here, art is more than decoration; it's a vibrant dialogue with the island's cultural iden-



ty. Attitude Hotels champions these local talents, integrating their works into their chain of hotels - from entrance hall statues to wall art and even hotel logos - shunning the generic in favour of a palpable Mauritian personality.

Indika, another local small business, are found in an understated workshop off a bumpy road in the verdant heart of the island. It's here that the botanical riches of Mauritius are meticulously crafted face creams, room sprays, and essential oils. It's artisan work at its finest. Each creation is steeped in local tradition yet tailored for contemporary use, making Indika a sanctuary of both heritage and innovation. The products also grace the rooms, bathrooms, and spas of Attitude Hotels.

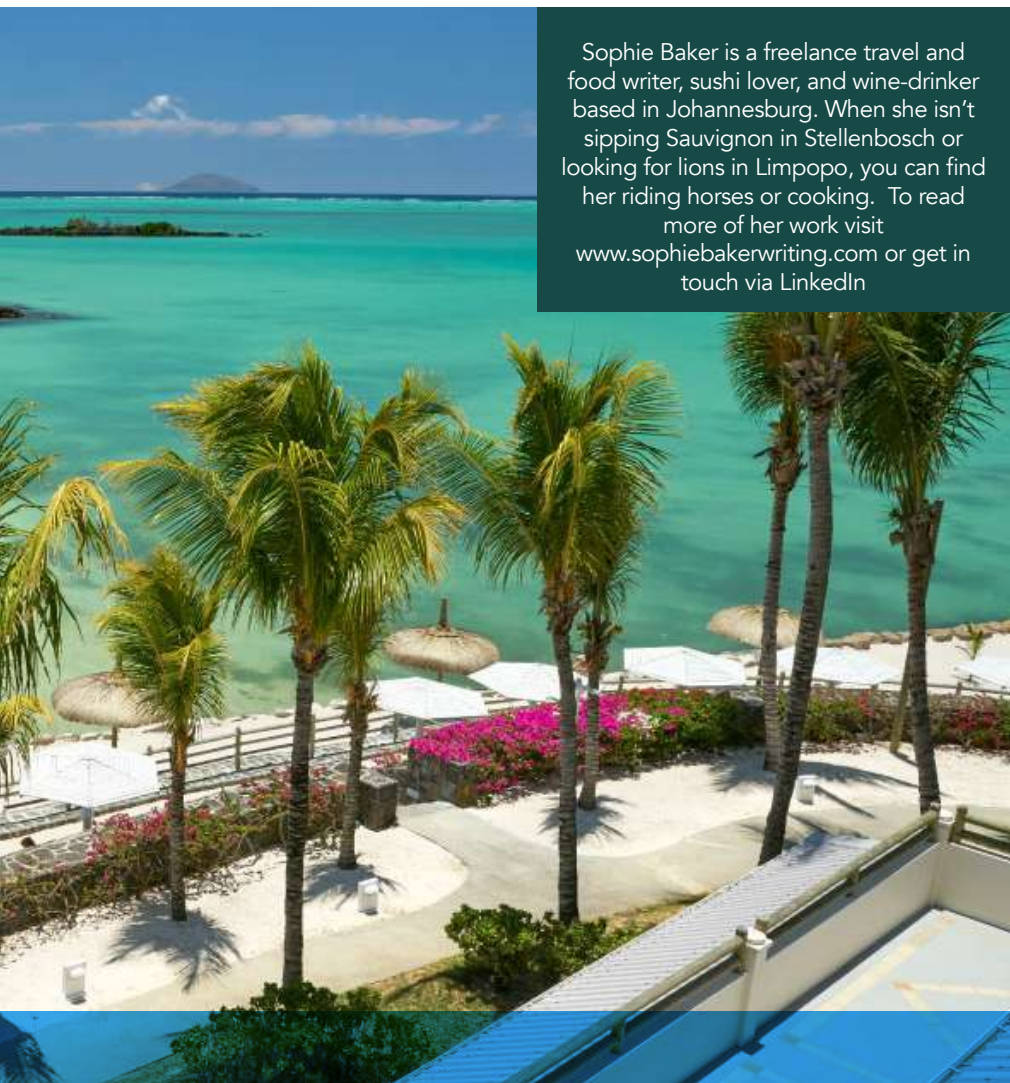
Indika's commitment to eco-friendly practices is evident in their use of sustainable, locally sourced materials, reflecting a broader Mauritian ethos of environmental respect and conservation.

### *A Taste of Mauritius*

For many travellers, wanderlust and food are so intertwined they may as well be one idea. This is another area where Mauritius shines, should you be bold enough to step away from breakfast buffets. Eating local meals isn't just about tasting food; it's about experiencing the soul of Mauritius through its flavours. And where better to do it than the 'tabagie,' which serves as a cornerstone of daily life in Mauritius. These humble eateries, found across the island from bustling urban streets to quiet coastal corners, offer a genuine taste of Mauritian life. They are where locals gather to pick up groceries and enjoy a quick, delicious meal or a beer. Here, the air is thick with




Sophie Baker is a freelance travel and food writer, sushi lover, and wine-drinker based in Johannesburg. When she isn't sipping Sauvignon in Stellenbosch or looking for lions in Limpopo, you can find her riding horses or cooking. To read more of her work visit [www.sophiebakerwriting.com](http://www.sophiebakerwriting.com) or get in touch via LinkedIn



the aroma of spices. Turmeric, cumin, and coriander meld with the sizzling sounds of frying and chatter in Creole, Chinese, and English punctuates the sound of chewing.

Recognizing the importance of these culinary traditions, Attitude Hotels has masterfully integrated the tabagie experience into its offerings through an initiative known as "Taba-J." Taba-J isn't just a dining option; it's an authentic immersion into Mauritian street food culture, designed to replicate the vibrant atmosphere of a local tabagie. Situated within the hotels themselves, Taba-J offers guests a chance to taste various local dishes in an environment that echoes the informal, communal vibe of traditional tabagies. Food is prepared with passion and authenticity, utilizing local ingredients and traditional methods. It's not only about serving local dishes but also about offering a slice of Mauritian life.

Ultimately, Mauritius offers much more than just a picturesque getaway; it is a dynamic, multi-layered island full of life, history, and beauty waiting to be explored. Visitors who choose to step beyond the postcard-perfect images of white sandy beaches and turquoise waters will find a Mauritius that is not only welcoming but also immensely enriching.

My 'Like a Local' journey with Attitude Hotels wasn't just a trip to Mauritius. Every moment was a step closer to the heart of this island, not through its scenic spots, but through its people, its streets, and its stories. From the simple pleasure of a morning dholl puri to tales of local botany changing lives, or something as simple as the tranquil beauty of a Mauritian beach at dusk, Attitude Hotels curated experiences that felt less like tourism and more like a genuine slice of island life. 





# On your Radar: Africa's Top 10 UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Did you know that Africa, a continent pulsating with diverse cultures, breathtaking landscapes, and ancient wonders, boasts a remarkable 103 UNESCO World Heritage Sites (as of January 2024)? These sites encompass the very essence of humanity's shared heritage, recognized for their outstanding cultural, historical, natural, or combined value.

**A**s we embark on a journey across the continent, let's take you through Travel Essence Magazine's pick of ten of these captivating treasures you should have on your list to explore as part of your future travels – assuming you haven't already...

*1. Stone Town of Zanzibar, Tanzania:* Nestled on the Tanzanian island of Unguja, Stone Town is a captivating labyrinth of narrow streets, coral-stone houses with intricately carved wooden balconies, and bustling marketplaces. Listed in 2000, it embodies the rich cultural fusion of African, Arabic, European, and Indian influences that shaped Swahili culture over centuries. UNESCO recognized its outstanding universal value as a testament to the exchange of human values, artistic expression, and architectural styles over millennia.

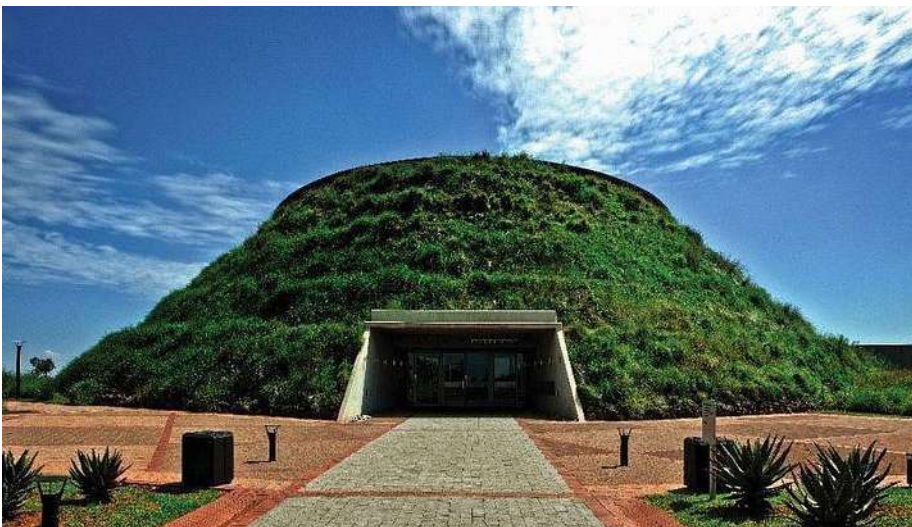




*2. Historic Cairo, Egypt:* Stepping into Historic Cairo, with its labyrinthine alleyways, mosques, and bustling souks, is like stepping back in time. Listed in 1979, it represents a unique Islamic cityscape, where centuries-old monuments like the awe-inspiring Citadel and the magnificent Al-Azhar Mosque stand as testaments to the region's rich cultural and religious heritage. UNESCO acknowledged its exceptional universal value for its architectural ensembles, archaeological sites, and historical continuity, spanning millennia of Fatimid, Mamluk, and Ottoman influence.



*3. The Cradle of Humankind, South Africa.* Particularly of significant paleoanthropological significance is the Cradle of Humankind, located a short drive outside Johannesburg, South Africa. Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999, the site is believed to be home to the largest concentration of human ancestral remains anywhere in the world. The Cradle of Humankind occupies a mammoth 47,000 hectares and is made up of a complex system of limestone caves and bears the name "Fossil Hominid Sites of South Africa" on the list of World Heritage Sites.



*4. Victoria Falls, Zambia/Zimbabwe:* The thundering roar of Victoria Falls, also known as Mosi-oa-Tunya ("the smoke that thunders"), reverberates across the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Listed in 1989, this awe-inspiring natural wonder is the largest waterfall in the world by volume. UNESCO acknowledged its outstanding universal value for its superlative natural phenomena, geological formations, and ongoing ecological and biological processes, making it a crucial habitat for diverse species.





*5. The Serengeti National Park, Tanzania:* Renowned for its annual Great Migration, a spectacular movement of millions of wildebeest and zebra, the Serengeti National Park epitomizes the grandeur of the African savanna. Listed in 1981, it is one of the largest wildlife sanctuaries in Africa, harbouring a remarkable diversity of animal and plant life. UNESCO recognized its outstanding universal value for its exceptional natural beauty, ongoing ecological and biological processes, and its importance for biodiversity conservation, making it a vital refuge for endangered species.



*6. The Ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani and Ruins of Kilwa Kivungu, Tanzania:* Located on the southern coast of Tanzania, these ruins are remnants of a once-flourishing Swahili port city. Listed in 1981, they showcase the architectural and technological advancements of the Swahili civilization, serving as a testament to their maritime trade and cultural influence across the Indian Ocean. UNESCO acknowledged their outstanding universal value for bearing witness to a civilization that flourished for centuries, reflecting cultural exchange and the development of human settlement and architecture.

*7. The Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela, Ethiopia:* Carved from the heart of volcanic rock in the 12th-13th centuries, the eleven rock-hewn churches of Lalibela are architectural marvels. Listed in 1978, they represent a unique form of religious art and architecture, displaying the faith and dedication of early Ethiopian Christians. UNESCO acknowledged their outstanding universal value for their exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition, their unique architectural style, and their outstanding artistry.





### 8. *Island of Gorée, Senegal:*

Lying off the coast of Senegal opposite Dakar, the island of Gorée was from the 15th to the 19th century, the largest slave-trading centre on the African coast. Ruled in succession by the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French, its architecture is characterized by the contrast between the grim slave-quarters and the elegant houses of the slave traders. Today it continues to serve as a reminder of human exploitation especially to the thousands that visit this landmark, doubling up and as a sanctuary for reconciliation.



### 9. *Le Morne Cultural Landscape, Mauritius.*

Designated a World Heritage Site in 2008, Le Morne Cultural Landscape is a spectacular showcase of both Mauritius' natural and historical beauty. Situated in the southwest of Mauritius, this landscape includes the Le Morne Barbant mountain. This heritage site is recognised in part, because of its place in history as the home to a fortress used to house slaves originating from mainland Africa and south Asia.



### 10. *Cape Coast Castle, Ghana.*

Of great intrigue to tourists visiting Ghana, is the coastline where a series of Forts and Castles that form a significant part of Ghana's history are found. Cape Coast is in fact a city and fishing port, functioning as the capital of Cape Coast Metropolitan District and Central Region of Ghana. Here, Cape Coast Castle stands as the largest of the buildings at the location, harnessing the legacy of a very dark history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.



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As of January 2024, Ethiopia is recorded as having the lead on the list of countries with the largest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Africa with eleven sites; followed closely by South Africa with ten, Morocco and Tunisia being home to nine sites. Algeria, Egypt, Senegal, and Tanzania close in a seven each. 🌍

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A close-up photograph of a brown leather sofa. A light-colored pillow with a detailed botanical and animal print is resting on the sofa. The print includes green leaves, a red bird, a black beetle, and a butterfly. The background shows a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a wooden structure.

PULSE OF  
THE CITY





# Opulence and Exception at *The Mutota Forest Villa* in Victoria Falls

A visit to the majestic Victoria Falls is a life-changing moment in itself. Add the opulent experience of the Mutota Forest Villa, and you'll find yourself experiencing one of those remarkable moments that will leave you at a loss for sufficient descriptions. A stay in spaces within the Mutota Forest Villa is guaranteed to have you transcend the exceptional and enjoy the best of inspired luxury.



**N**estled within a quiet corner on the grounds of the boutique Mbanjo Manor hotel at the edge of Victoria Falls town, the Mutota Forest Villa stands tall as a beacon of unparalleled luxury and tranquillity. Sleeping a maximum of six people, this exclusive Villa reimagines the concept of opulent living, offering discerning guests an unparalleled retreat within a private luxury home as part of your “Best in Africa” safari holiday.

A natural corridor of large teak trees and bushes defines the entrance to the Villa, whether you opt to arrive via the private Villa entrance gate or walk down the forest paths from the main hotel. You can also opt to fly in from the airport via helicopter, landing only a few hundred metres from the private Villa entrance within a few minutes after having taken the flight.

As you step into the realm of the Mutota Forest Villa, you are greeted by an aura of quiet sophistication and understated elegance, rolled on over 200 metres of living space and more than 700 square metres of private gardens. The living space is surrounded by a spacious wrap-around veranda encompassing three sides of the Villa, with each of the six interior spaces overlooking the forest gardens.

### *Design elements that exude excellence*

The Villa architecture is sublime. A blend of modern luxury, simple cement walls and floors, high open ceilings, framed by extra-large teak doors, windows boasting traditional shutters, offering a setting reminiscent of fine country living. Throughout the Mutota Forest Villa, an







enchanting ambiance captivates the senses, delighting guests with tranquility, and inviting them to unwind while indulging in ultimate relaxation.

The heart of Mutota Forest Villa lies in its expansive living areas, where guests can gather and unwind in style. The interior spaces are meticulously appointed, with every detail thoughtfully curated to ensure maximum comfort and indulgence. While outdoors, the all-enveloping veranda offers the perfect setting for al fresco dining or simply basking under the warm African sun.

Defining the master bedroom is a showstopping king-sized bed suite, with comfortable couch and lush finishes. Then step into the adjoining extra-long master bathroom suite of magnificence, where guests are enveloped in luxury notes, from a spacious double shower, claw bathtub, discreet toilet cubicle, and walk-in dressing room. Sheer opulence. Plus, you can also enjoy a large enclosed outdoor





garden courtyard with two open-air showers.

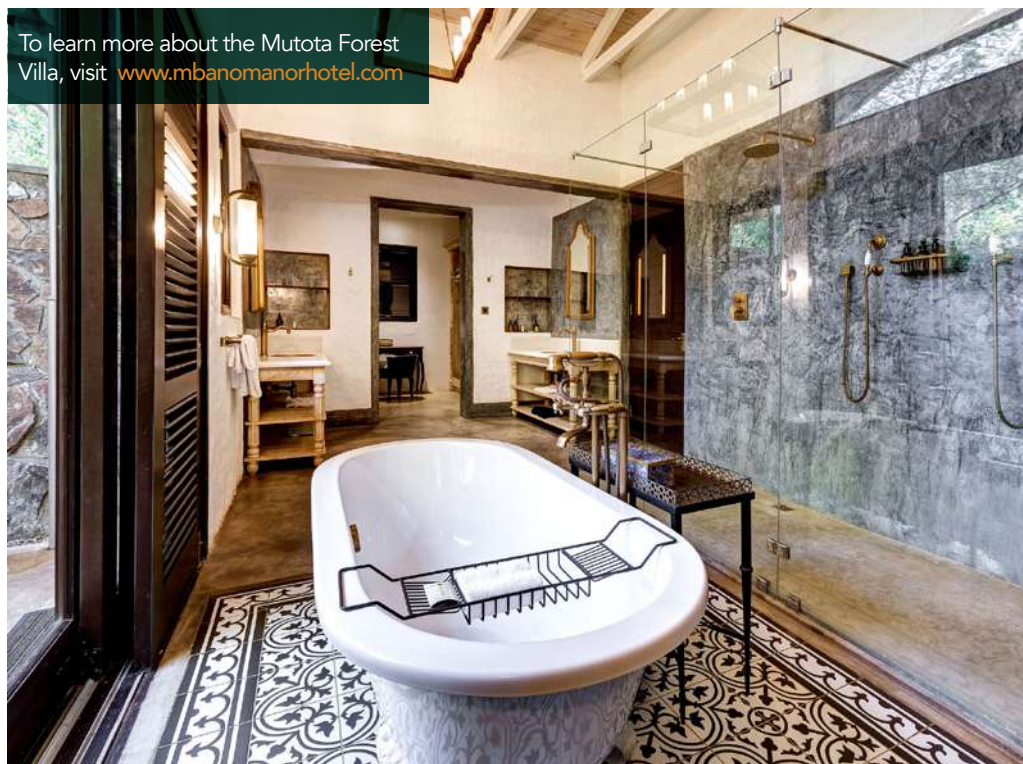
The second bedroom has its private entrance, and is a twin-bedded self-contained unit, complete with a bath suite. The double sleeper-couch in the lounge offers additional comfort and convenience, creating an ideal sleeping arrangement for families travelling with children, adventurous teens, or young adults, or alternatively for the honeymoon couple, or those just celebrating life's finest moments.

For day comfort, the double lounge area is fitted with plush furnishings and tasteful decor, providing the perfect setting for intimate conversations and shared moments of laughter and joy. Those seamlessly blending work and play will appreciate the convenience of a corner desk to catch up on that pervasive but important work email.

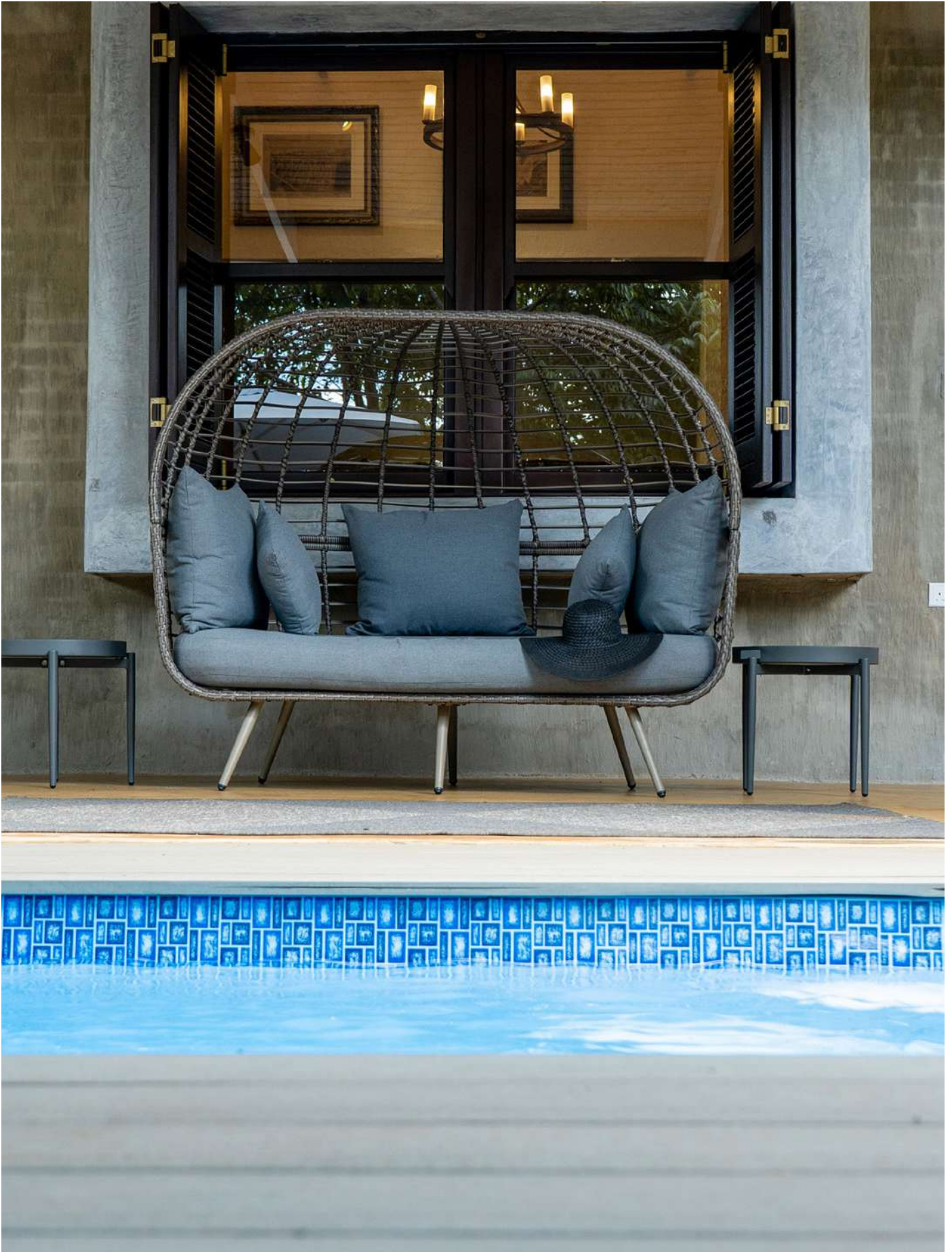
In the Villa's dining room, an elegant oak table seats six people, complemented by a mini-server unit. Furthermore, the Villa's all-inclusive package includes a dedicated chef and butler service, who deliver memorable culinary and service experiences featuring the flavours of Africa's local and classic cuisine.

The Villa's crowning experiential jewel is the sparkling plunge pool, a water oasis where guests can immerse in cool, soothing water that's surrounded by gardens in privacy and seclusion.

As the sun sets with a rainbow over Victoria Falls, retreat to the Mutota Forest Villa at Mbanjo Manor Hotel. For personalized culinary experiences and bespoke concierge services rendered from elegant interiors and expansive outdoor spaces, The Mutota Forest Villa Victoria Falls is undoubtedly the real choice for the lover of safari inspired opulence. 









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