

TRAVEL ESSENCE MAGAZINE

ISSUE 9 • MAY 2021

SAO TOME & PRINCIPE:
The land that time forgot

**LUXURY MEETS THE
GREAT OUTDOORS AT
HATTA TERRACE**

Inside **SINGITA'S
SOMMELIER TRAINING
PROGRAMME**

**MAKE YOUR SPLASH
THIS SUMMER
AT ATLANTIS
AQUAVENTURE**

**EXPLORING
MALAWI'S LIWONDE
NATIONAL PARK**

Stella Fubara-Obinwa

**Ambition, Leadership And Promoting Global
Destinations To The African Diaspora**



TRAVEL MAGAZINE
Essence

A NARRATIVES PR PUBLICATION



NARRATIVES

PR • COMMUNICATIONS • PUBLISHING

your vision • your story • made clear

At Narratives PR, we are committed to helping African owned corporate, consumer and personal brands connect with their audiences across the continent! We are all about curated storytelling for impact and awareness of your brand in Africa and the Middle East.

OUR SERVICES INCLUDE |

- Communications Strategy
 - Copywriting & Editing
- Book And Magazine Publishing
- Social media Content Development
 - Brand Development & Launch
- Ideation To Launch Programming
 - Media Relations
 - Event Curation
- Stakeholder Engagement Initiatives

Contact us on info@yournarratives to schedule your consultation.



www.yournarratives.com



NarrativesPR



@NarrativesPR

TravelEssence

MAGAZINE

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





On The Cover:
STELLA FUBARA-OBINWA

Editorial

Yvonne C. Mtengwa

Editor-in-Chief

info@travelessencemag.com

Daphne Mabhiza

Content Director

daphinemabhiza@gmail.com

Marketing & Promotions

Louisa Conrad Choruma

Market Engagement Director

louiconrad@yahoo.co.uk

Creative Direction


Yissue Group


info@yissuegroup.com


GENERAL ENQUIRIES


info@travelessencemag.com

www.travelessencemag.com

 @Travelessencemagazine

 @TravelEssenceM

 @TravelEssenceMag

 Travel Essence Magazine

Published by Narratives PR LLC – FZ
Registered at Ras Al Khaimah
Economic Zone (RAKEZ)

“The continent is too large to describe. It is a veritable ocean, a separate planet, a varied, immensely rich cosmos. Only with the greatest simplification, for the sake of convenience, can we say ‘Africa’.

— RYSZARD KAPUŚCIŃSKI

The heat that the desert is known for is upon us in the UAE, while our family, friends and colleagues in parts of Africa speak of the blistering cold that has now descended upon them as we approach June. That's the complexity of life though isn't it – at any given moment we are experiencing different environmental conditions as we adapt to new realities. Some borders remain tightly closed with the discovery of new COVID-19 strains, yet a good number are now letting the business traveller and adventurer in as part of economic recovery. But we must remain resilient. The mark of human strength lies in our ability to push through uncertainties as we accept the seemingly rapid changes in our midst. As more people receive their vaccinations and the travel scene continue to shift with the rolling tides of time – it's clear that as humanity, we are ready to get out again, and start enjoying life as best we can under new circumstances and very different lenses.

The increasing air traffic in some parts and rise in occupancy across hotels and lodges in others, is to us symbolic of growing confidence to travel again, to breathe again as we rediscover the world beyond the lockdowns. As we curate more content on the



tourist and guest experience in the UAE and wider region, while connecting our readers with the remarkable adventures that Africa holds, we are excited to be evolving as we countdown to our 1st year anniversary.

We've had the great privilege of experiencing some great hotels in Dubai in recent weeks, tasting food items from new restaurant menus and attending cultural events curated to remind us of the significance of fostering creative expression. We are humbled to be proudly African and doing our part to celebrate the cultures within our community of readers, showcase the lifestyle opportunities in the UAE and Africa and of course, promote the tastemakers of our time.

To all who are along with us for the ride - thank you all for joining us on the Travel Essence journey. We are because you continue to believe in us and the work we are doing in promoting the great experiences that paint our lives full of beautiful colours! 🌍

My warmest regards,

Gynonne C. Mtengwa



Travel
ESSENCE
Getaways

YOUR CALL TO EXPLORING AFRICA

CURATORS OF

EXCLUSIVE DESTINATION RETREATS • BESPOKE LEISURE AND
LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCES • CONTENT CREATOR TRIPS INVESTOR
TOURS TO KEY AFRICAN MARKETS AND MORE...

Check out our upcoming trips at
www.travelessencemag.com

Contents

ISSUE 9 | MAY 2021

Cover Story

08 | Stella Fubara-Obinwa on ambition, leadership and promoting global destinations to the African diaspora.

Editor's Pick

14 | Luxury meets the great outdoors at Hatta Terrace

By Yvonne C. Mtengwa

21 | What's not to love about the boldly designed RED Hotel at Dubai Digital Park

25 | Dubai culture: Cultivating creative expression and artistic incubation in society

28 | Make your splash this summer :10 reasons why you should cool off at Atlantis Aquaventure when in Dubai

Taste-makers

34 | Timothy Njihia on bold steps across the skies and beyond

37 | Bonjour Senegal! One-on-one with Ndeye Aminata Voyel

Culinary Escapades

42 | Singita on leading the charge in Sommelier training and development

50 | A taste of the Boma – An unmissable Dinner and Drum show in Victoria Falls



28



Adventures In Wild Africa

56 | Liwonde National Park: Malawi's Richly Diverse Wildlife Playground

60 | Saving Ngamba: The ultimate adventure to save Uganda's small Chimpanzee Island

By Lorna Campbell & Kerry Stumpe

70 | The Timbo Afrika Mission

76 | The honeymooners' dream on the Seychellean Archipelago



The Wanderlust Within

82 | Discover Chefchaoen:
The Blue Pearl Of Morocco

By Daphine Mabhiza

86 | “It’s a lifestyle” with
Patricia Blacc: Weekend Bliss in
Franschhoek’s La Residence



Pulse Of The City

90 | Escape to the
Kingdom in the Sky

94 | Sao Tome And
Principe: The Land That
Time Forgot

Africa To The World

100 | Spotlight on Alina
Liwo CEO of Aliti
Productions & Talent
Agency

103 | Anne Adams:
The Clay Bender Of
Nigeria

08





Meet DESTINATION MARKETING POWERHOUSE *Stella Fubara-Obinwa*

Ambition, leadership and promoting global destinations to the African diaspora.

1. STELLA FUBARA-OBINWA, GIVE US 5 WORDS YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

Loyal, Objective, Driven, Happy, and Loving.

2. WHAT WERE YOUR EARLIER YEARS LIKE, GROWING UP NIGERIAN?

I was born in Columbus, Ohio to Alabo Prof. DMJ Fubara & Dr. Mrs Vinolia Fubara, but our family comes from Opobo Town, Rivers State, Nigeria. I am the second of 7 children, and the first daughter. I was chubby and always around food, and the family announcer of supper time (for which I am still mercilessly teased). I had an extremely loving childhood. I don't think a day went by with my parents not expressing love to us. Even when we got spanked (which was rare), a hug and a kiss followed right after the spanking. I recall only 1 spanking incident as a child – my older brother and I were both spanked for riding our bikes late into the evening, and we were hugged right afterwards!

My father's hobby was photography, and he would take pictures of us at every opportunity, capturing all the family moments. My parents were very involved in our daily upbringing and Christian education. They facilitated all kinds of academic, cultural, musical, and gastronomy experiences for us.

When I was 8 years old, we moved to Enugu, Nigeria. My father wanted us to know and understand where

we come from, and who we are. It was a little bit difficult for me at first because I couldn't understand any Nigerian language or the style of communication. I recall that mosquitoes tormented me, and left scars on my skin which further highlighted the fact that I was not "home grown". It took quite a while for the scars to fade.

My American accent alienated me even further, and I was careful not to speak up too much in elementary school. Female classmates made fun of my accent, my dressing, and my skin...but even then, I maintained the happy spirit I am known for today. My saving grace was that my older brother Michael and my younger sister Ayayi were very popular. They were star TV kids, so I latched on to their stardom and did everything they did! I was also an avid piano player and performed at a few concerts at the British Council in Enugu.

We were close to our grandparents too. My grandfather, Firi Shoo Peterside, adored us all, and spent a lot of time nurturing us. He is the reason I am a very good Opobo dancer. I did 2 years of elementary school at Ekulu Primary School, and 5 years of boarding school at the Federal Govt College Enugu and Federal Govt Girls College Abuloma. I loved my early years, and I'm blessed with wonderful parents who ensured we had every tool necessary to succeed.

3. WHAT DREAMS DID YOU HAVE GROWING UP, THAT WERE TO LATER GUIDE YOUR PROFESSIONAL PURSUITS?

I dreamt of becoming an air hostess or pilot. I thought air hostesses were so glamorous! I also wanted to go to Aviation school! My father said for me to

get my degree first and then I could go learn how to fly. I think the real reason he averted me from that path was because I was a little wild by the time I finished high school, and he wanted me close to home.

My parents were big on education. My father is the first black man in the world to get a Ph.D in Geodesy. My mom has a Ph.D in Social Work.....so the expectation was that all their kids would also complete university degrees. I started out pursuing an Electrical Engineering degree at Rivers State University of Science & Technology. By my third year, I was bored out of my mind. I hated it! I remember telling my parents that I could not continue with Engineering, and they looked at me as if I was an alien! A Nigerian child not wanting to complete university was unheard of back then. I moped around the house for weeks, avoiding any contact with my angry parents.

One day, my godfather, Dr. Eugene Ibe, came to visit and my parents shared their current frustration with him. He said, "Why not try a career in the business world?" He advised me about degrees in Accounting, Marketing, Finance etc., and opened a door to a different university. And that was how I switched my educational degree and career. I went to Franklin University in Columbus, Ohio, and I have a B.Sc. in Business Management with a minor in Accounting, an MBA with International Finance/Marketing thesis, and a few professional certifications.

4. AS AN ACCOMPLISHED LEADER IN BUSINESS AND FINANCE MANAGEMENT, YOUR CAREER SPANS MORE THAN 2 DECADES IN EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT. TAKE US THROUGH WHAT MADE YOU PIVOT INTO THE TOURISM AND DESTINATION MARKETING SPACE?

After my first degree, I started as a Compensation & Pension Auditor with Nationwide Insurance. I obtained a lot of professional certifications in Project Management and auditing, and then took a job as a Project Controller with Deloitte & Touche. Deloitte assigned me to projects all over the East coast, and finally a 6-month assignment with Walt Disney World in Florida which became permanent. This was my first exposure to Tourism, Hospitality, and Entertainment.



I loved it. There is something quite rewarding about seeing happy faces every day. The excellence at Disney was unparalleled. People came to work every day to make a difference, and management made sure all “cast” (that’s what all staff are called) were well taken care of. Disney is Tourism at its best. Families saved for years to visit the magic created by Disney. I’m proud of my tenure there. I spent 5 years at Disney before taking a Director Marketing Operations role with Wyndham Vacation Hotels & Resorts.

That was another great experience with the largest hospitality organization in the world at that time. This role had me travelling to Las Vegas, Puerto Rico, most of the Caribbean islands, and Southern USA. Awesome work within the operational, sales and marketing structures of great resorts of Wyndham for 7 years. In 2013, I relocated back to Nigeria and took a role as the Chief Business & Product Development Officer for Wakanow.com (the largest Online Travel Agency in Africa). A truly enlightening role that enabled me to channel my expertise in Marketing, Tourism products, and sales directly within the African ecosystem. I was there for about 20 months, and the job took me all over Africa, creating travel products and marketing strategies that appeal to Africans everywhere. I moved to Dubai in 2015, as a Director International Operations Africa.

5. YOUR CAREER HAS SEEN YOU ACCEPT HIGH LEVEL ROLES IN COMPANIES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES. TODAY YOU HOLD A LEADERSHIP ROLE PROMOTING THE MIDDLE EASTERN MECCA THAT IS DUBAI AS THE DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AT THE DUBAI DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM & COMMERCE MARKETING. WHAT HAS THE JOURNEY BEEN LIKE FOR YOU AS YOU TRANSITIONED FROM THE UNITED STATES TO THE UAE?

My first visit to Dubai was in 2014. I was totally surprised. As well-travelled as I am, I was ignorant about the Middle East, and specifically Dubai. I envisioned deserts, heat, and restrictive clothing. I was completely surprised at what I saw - a city so clean and beautiful with beautiful structures everywhere and efficiency in everything they do. The transition was very smooth, and I’ve enjoyed

every moment of living in Dubai.

The safety in Dubai is unparalleled. The locals are friendly and hospitable. As a Dubai resident with a teenage daughter, I was concerned about how she will adapt. She and my 3 older children love it here. She made great friends, and they have gone off to university together. Everything you need is easily accessible, and the home services and delivery could have you home for days without stepping out. This suits me perfectly because I can stay home 24/7 as long as I have music, books to read, or puzzles to solve. Most importantly, I’ve come to understand myself better. I love what I do, and where I do it. I’m a very loving and happy person, and the beauty of Dubai adds to my serenity. I take a 5km walk almost every morning along the canal because it’s peaceful and inspiring.

6. WHAT HAS IT MEANT TO YOU TO BE ABLE TO BREAK THE GLASS CEILING AS AN AFRICAN WOMAN LIVING AND WORKING IN THE DIASPORA, AND MORE ESPECIALLY, NOW BEING AT THE HELM OF PROMOTING DUBAI TO THE AFRICAN MARKET?

It has been very rewarding. If anyone had told me I would one day live and work in Dubai, it would have been hard to believe. Every job/role I had before coming here prepared me for the job I now have; an opportunity to utilize my finance, auditing, entertainment, hospitality, and OTA experience in a way that benefits both Dubai and Africans

I LOVE WHAT I DO AND WHERE I DO IT. I’M A VERY LOVING AND HAPPY PERSON, AND THE BEAUTY OF DUBAI ADDS TO MY SERENITY.

– STELLA FUBARA-OBINWA

everywhere in the world.

Not a day goes by that I do not get a request from youth to provide mentorship or guidance. I speak at many conferences and seminars too (more of them across Zoom these days), and I get to share my experience in my career path, as well as lifestyle.

As an African woman, I’ve become an example to younger women, that you should have aspirations. Being a wife, mother, single, married, black and so on, should not stop you from achieving. And you should do it with dignity. I’m real big on keeping it clean at all times; that is, no profanity, dress with class even in jeans, learn etiquette as you grow, treat others as you would like them to treat you...and always be kind.

7. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS ABOUT NAVIGATING A CAREER IN A FAST-PACED

INDUSTRY SUCH AS YOURS? WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR KEY TAKEAWAYS WORKING AS AN EXECUTIVE IN THE TOURISM ARENA?

Promoting tourism is all about understanding its components, building relationships, and understanding your target market. You have to be innovative and flexible. Set targets and keep learning daily. Starting from the operations of the different components is very helpful and gives you credibility when dealing with the industry. What are these components? Airlines, hotels, traditional travel agencies, OTAs, transportation, package creation, attractions etc. The more you know about these components, the better you can determine what products or activities will attract your audience. And most importantly, define who your audience is. Define your audience by geography, culture, race, income, content, and status (single, married, family etc.). Expect frequent shifts in who your audience is. That will enable you to direct your marketing and how best to reach them. Tourism is about the product, marketing, customer service, and revenue.

8. LETS GET TO KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT STELLA OUTSIDE THE OFFICE? NAME YOUR TOP FAVOURITE SPOTS TO FREQUENT SINCE YOUR MOVE TO DUBAI?

- a. Global Village – opens for 6 months each year, and is always a delight for all ages. The village is torn down and rebuilt with a different theme each year, so it is always a different experience.
- b. Kiza – The best Pan African restaurant/lounge in Dubai. Experience the food and music from all over Africa in an urban, lively ambiance.
- c. IMG World of Adventure – The world's largest indoor Theme Park. Good for children and

adults, and awesome dining experiences.
d. Dubai Outlet Mall – Get all sorts of merchandise at discount prices. I actually do not like shopping, but the thought of getting a deal on designer items is worth the visit.

e. Dubai Glow Garden – Visit here to see astounding garden structures created and lit up in magnificence. It's perfect for adults and children. I always have a wonderful time here, and feel compelled to watch every Jurassic park movie right after my visit!

9. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE AFRICAN WANDERLUST, ADVENTURER OR BUSINESS TRAVELLER TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT DUBAI HAS TO OFFER? IN SUMMARY, FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE AS AN EXPAT LIVING AND WORKING IN DUBAI - WHY DUBAI?

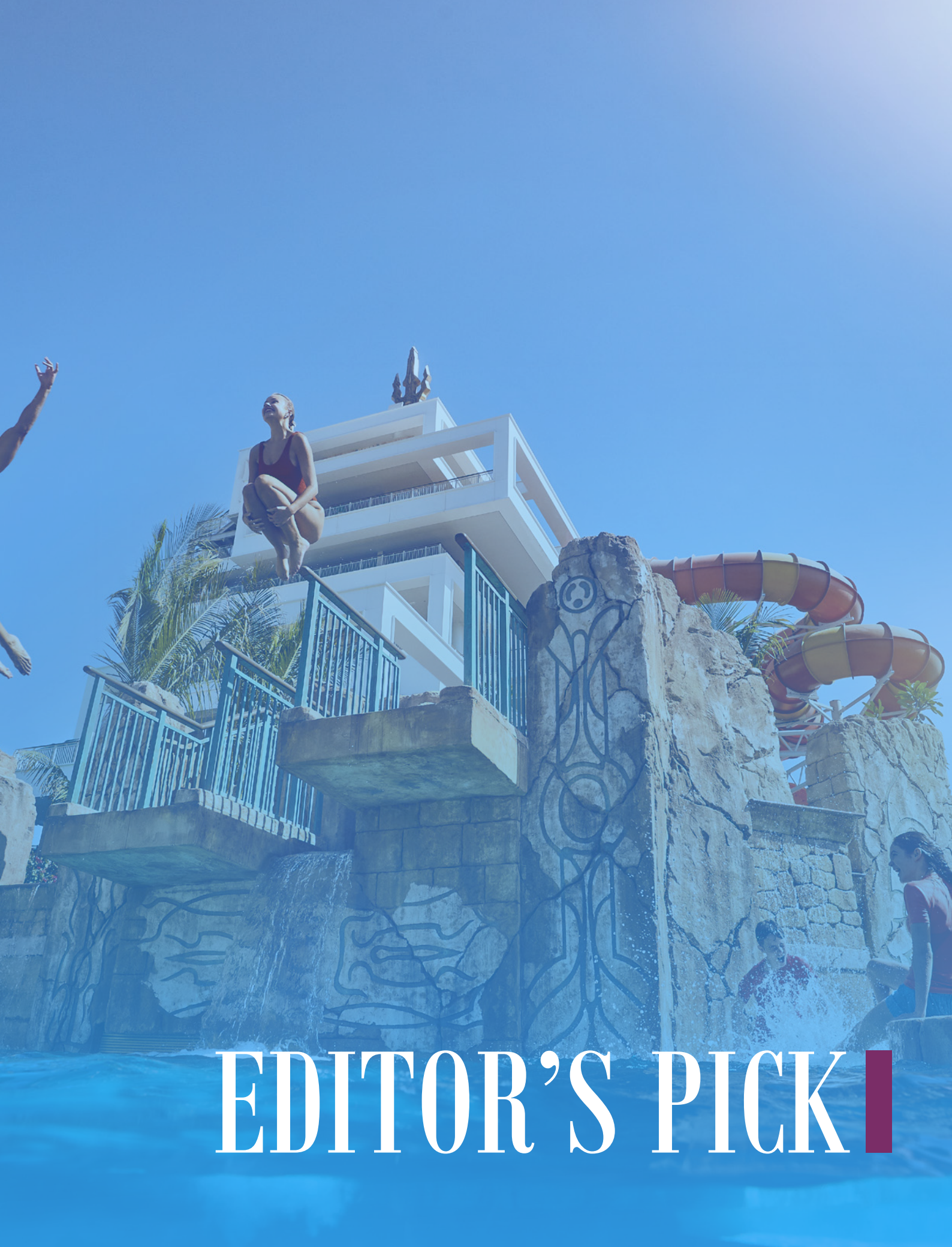
You can have any type of life you choose in Dubai – quiet or adventurous, city or suburb, blue collar or executive.....It doesn't matter. If you are single, you will make friends. If you're a family, there is so much to do. I've been here almost 6 years, and I still find something new on a weekly basis! My parents visit annually and enjoy it just as much as I do!

The visa (entry permit) is the easiest in the world if you need one. Submit your passport data page and a passport photo, and you usually get a visa in 3-5 business days with no in-person embassy visit required.

Contrary to public opinion, life here is not restrictive at all. Foreigners and tourists dress the same as they would back home. Abide by the laws which are in place to ensure your safety, and respect the religion. This is the same you would do if you visited a friend's house!

Dubai has over 12,000 restaurants and food outlets, so you can find any cuisine you fancy. And I must mention the Desert Safaris for which Dubai is very famous. I recently discovered Hatta, a beautiful mountain location about an hour outside Dubai city. I stayed at a beautiful, chalet-style resort, kayaked, climbed, and did some archery. I even went Skydiving for the first time! I'll close by saying, come and see Dubai for yourself! 🌍





EDITOR'S PICK |

EDITOR'S PICK • HATTA TERRACE



LUXURY MEETS THE GREAT OUTDOORS AT HATTA TERRACE

By Yvonne C. Mtengwa



You'll love the imposing architecture and towering skyscrapers of Dubai city, and fancy every opportunity to cruise the Persian Gulf from a yacht or go on the rudimentary desert safari for a little dune bashing, camel riding, and dinner under the skies. But if you haven't been, you will also love one of Dubai's best kept secrets, the mountain village of Hatta, nestled in the rocky foothills of the Hajar mountains.





The quaint little town offers a myriad of rugged adventure activities for lovers of the great outdoors in the open season months, which typically run from September to May. But Hatta is also that quiet retreat from the hustle and bustle of big city life in the off-season summer months, and where you'll find Hatta Terrace, a spectacular holiday villa that will give you an unforgettable opportunity to connect with your loved ones for a little time out and appreciation of the majestic mountain ranges that surround the property.

The journey to Hatta is a 90-minute drive through winding roads that cut into the high terrain bordering Dubai emirate and Oman. Driving out from Dubai city, ours was a scenic drive, with carpet like roads and red sandy dunes through Sharjah emirate, before we began to see mountain territory on the horizon. Before setting off, make sure you've done all your food and snack shopping, as Hatta Terrace is a self-containing villa, which means while it comes fully equipped with a modern kitchen and large dining table that can comfortably sit around 10 people, you'll have to do the cooking and washing yourselves, unless you bring along a private chef! The cooking part was of no concern to us, as we were keen to explore what Hatta had to offer anyway! Ours was really about getting out of the city for a little change of scenery, and so we told ourselves that whether we prepped our own meals or ordered delivery, we were going purely for the mountain air and an opportunity to recalibrate.

INSIDE HATTA TERRACE

Getting there was an adventure in itself, as upon seeing the behemoth white letters on the top the mountain that spell HATTA – we knew our overnight stay was going to be all we hoped it would be. Veering off the main road past the #VisitHatta at the infamous traffic circle, we caught a glimpse of what had to have been adventurers or tourists, taking selfies and pictures of themselves as if a part of a celebratory ritual of welcome or saying good-bye. The drive to Hatta Terrace took us through the small town with roadside shops, kiosks and stalls along the winding roads. Google Maps was the hero of the afternoon as we admittedly caught ourselves wondering whether we were lost the further along we drove.

The villa really is stunning, perched on elevated ground, with a smooth steep inclining driveway that takes you up to the first of many “terraces” that form the foundation of the holiday home. There were mountains on every side, with the floor to ceiling windows across the entire front and sides of the villa granting you unsurpassed panoramic views of the terrain beyond and parts of Hatta town in the valley below. The glistening infinity pool and stillness of our surroundings was



immediately the resounding alert that we were here – to retreat – and take in our picturesque scenery. We were welcomed by gracious staff, who offloaded our luggage and groceries, took us on a tour of our home for the night, ensured we were well connected to WIFI and that Netflix on the huge SmartTV was ready for our viewing in the living room, before handing us the keys to the villa after registration.

THINGS TO LOVE ABOUT HATTA TERRACE

The villa holds three bedrooms, one of which is the Master with a king bed and the other two with two double sized beds in each. All bedrooms are en-suite, with a guest bathroom off the common area, as well as an extra room for your nanny or cook, should they travel with. Décor is warm and inviting, contemporary in aesthetic across all the rooms, which are well embellished with natural light beaming in from the outside.

The villa is perfect for entertaining, with a big kitchen and patio terrace fully kitted out with best-in-class barbeque appliances in a seating area adjacent to the pool deck. A swim in the sparkling infinity pool at any time of day is a treat for both children and adults, as it comes temperature controlled with lighting by night. Hatta Terrace is designed with the guest



of discerning tastes in mind and a holidaying entertainer's dream, and this is evidenced by the attention to detail in décor, in-villa amenities, and architectural design of the space indoors and out.

THINGS TO DO IN HATTA


Hatta has become that little nearby town that city-dwellers escape to for a little adventure or pure change of scenery. It is also very much an Arab town and so roadside markets, touristy shops, food trucks and local authentic cuisine restaurants are a great place to stop for a localised dining experience or a little haggling for souvenirs such as carpets, candle holders and other trinkets that connect you to the UAE's evolving culture and heritage story. For an immersive cultural experience that will take you through Hatta's backstory, one can add a stroll through Dubai's oldest village, or take a trip to Hatta Heritage Village to see artefacts, weapons, and musical instruments of eras past.



CONQUER DUBAI'S GREAT OUTDOORS.

Venture out in a 4x4 vehicle to explore the spectacular rock formations of Jebel Maleihah and Camel Rock, embark on a mountain safari through Hatta, test your kayaking skills or rent out a paddleboat for an afternoon on Hatta Dam, go hiking through the wadis of Hatta or take a dip in the spectacular rock pools of Hatta. Adventurers have plenty of outdoor experiences which all range in ease or complexity, depending on how adrenaline-fuelled one is. Hatta is mostly characterised by hot and dry weather, though the summer months will undoubtedly have you opting to explore in the early hours of the morning or at dusk to avoid the scorching hot temperatures.

THE APPEAL OF HATTA TERRACE

It was the relaxing atmosphere and a glamorous take on “doing the outdoors” that had us truly enjoy our time at Hatta Terrace. Nature took center-stage, bringing us to deeper connectedness to the outdoors in the purest form. With enough space to accommodate two small families or a group of friends, Hatta Terrace makes for the perfect staycation where you’ll feel the spirit of Hatta, while enjoying a scenery that’s a little different from rolling sand dunes and sea and creek views for which Dubai is well known for. 

To book your stay or learn more about Hatta Terrace, connect with them on  @Hattaterrace.



What's not to love

ABOUT THE BOLDLY DESIGNED RED HOTEL AT DUBAI DIGITAL PARK

Beyond the leisure and lifestyle travel-scape, is a form of tourism that does well to contribute to economies that have built solid infrastructure to support. Dubai can now be viewed for the African market and many others, what perhaps cities like London or any metropolises in the first world were like 5-10 years ago for students looking to study abroad, and there are countless reasons why this is so...

With the growth of dedicated districts such as Knowledge Village, Media City, Healthcare City and Academic City, students and professionals alike are now looking to Dubai's compelling list of innovative hubs as possible ecosystems to pursue professional, business and academic opportunities. And so of course, the growth of these districts means that there is a need to also ensure the availability of ancillary services, with hotels playing their roles in the provision of short and long-term lodgings within the vicinity.

Located at Dubai Digital Park, in Dubai's first ever smart city project built with the latest AI and IOT technologies. Radisson RED Dubai Silicon Oasis brings RED's forward-thinking style to the desert mecca that is Dubai. The property opened in the 1st quarter of 2019 and has since been credited in the area for presenting a playful twist on conventional hotel stays, culinary hangouts with a casual feel, buzzing social scenes, integrated technology and bold design personality.

PERFECT ATMOSPHERE FOR THE STUDENT OR UPWARDLY MOBILE GUEST

It's quite clear that the hotel is in every sense of the word, a place that serves up an eclectic mix of modern accommodations, open spaces for the casual meet up or pop-in for lunch and meeting rooms to support the hustle and bustle of the surrounding Dubai Digital Park. It also speaks to the student, be it the student of life, or a student of any one of the multiple educational institutions within close proximity to this district. If you are in town for a short course or training, or here for the long-haul as you take advantage of the opportunities in the nearby Dubai International Academic City, the region's largest academic hub, home to key global, regional and local education institutions, with over 500 diverse programmes to choose from, then perhaps a stay at the Radisson RED Dubai will in fact tick the boxes of convenience and affordability. The hotel comprises 104 contemporary designed rooms, 8 suites and 59 apartments, and what stands out even as you check in, is that the hotel



was truly designed with millennial nomads in mind.

Doubling up as community social hubs and boasting menus as laid-back as the RED restaurant teams, the hotel's signature dining outlets include the 'grab and go' Food truck Lobby and DELI. You simply cannot miss this area as you enter the lobby to be greeted by bright red geometrically shaped stools and large LED screens on the walls, the abundance of casual seating areas that are a call for one to settle down for a little casual chat or work, dine and play in a relaxed atmosphere.

Just off the lobby on the ground floor, OUIBar & Terrace delivers yet another casual chic dining space with live sports screens plus a sprawling alfresco area; while up top RED Roof bar offers RED guests a day to night hang out – from evening sundowners to stretchy sunrise yoga. A splash in the sparkling pool comes highly

recommended to beat the summer heat, even as early as the day begins or after a day of work. You'll also get to enjoy panoramic views of the wider Silicon Oasis district as you tuck into your hearty serving of loaded fries, grilled salmon or steak, vegan hamburger – or whatever you feel like trying out on the packed menu with plenty to choose from.

PLAYFUL DESIGN AT THE RADISSON RED DUBAI

It's the engine RED falcon, measuring 2.5 meters long and 2.2 meters high, and made of marine grade stainless steel, that grabs your attention as you arrive at the hotel. Designed by Dubai-based artist Neel Shukla and taking nearly 18 months to complete, with this body of work, Neel infused elements of Emirati heritage and culture into this stand out sculpture, adding silver headphones




to the falcon's neck to signify the falcon's connection to the new generation.

And connected to the upwardly mobile younger guest the property is! But that's not to say the young at heart won't enjoy the quirky design and creative flare that went into bringing the aesthetics all together. What's a given is that the Radisson RED's brand architecture is everything about piquing the curiosity of instinctively connected generations – whether by necessity or sheer desire to stay in the know of things! The Radisson RED Dubai speaks to the professional, the student, the creative and the holidaymaker, as you see a host of murals that carry visuals emblematic of



local culture across the halls and corridors, contrasted with modern furnishing and contemporary design elements throughout the hotel. The falcon makes its appearance ever so often on the wall paintings as if to further invite you to get comfortable and connect with his significance to the story of Dubai, and with others staying and working at the hotel.

Radisson RED Dubai Silicon Oasis is the centre of Dubai Digital Park, with its brand essence neatly integrating into an environment that already speaks to the spirited learner, innovator and connector. White walls, big murals, striking engine red oversized balloon statues, a lobby food truck station, bicycles, cool benches, and more, are incredibly eye catching as much as they are a call to casual relaxation in an atmosphere that's all about a "cool vibe". The Radisson RED experience is everything about celebrating the creative culture of a destination by bring together local artists and present their interpretation of the iconic elements of the place in which the hotel operates. It is also about meshing convenience and affordability at the epicenter of Dubai's learning evolutionary story, boldly contributing to the development of the city's education tourism landscape by providing a modern space for guests to call home. 



Dubai Culture:

CULTIVATING CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND ARTISTIC INCUBATION IN SOCIETY



On April 15th, 2021, the world commemorated World Art Day, and Dubai further cemented its pursuit to becoming an icon that embraces various types of art, as well as an inspiring haven for artists and art aficionados from all over the world.

Dubai, a city that's well reputed as a chart-topping destination in innovation and progressive development across varied sectors, is fast positioning itself as a hub for artistic expression, as evidenced by the convergence of performing and visual artists in this great city. Art is an open dialogue between societies and a window that sheds light on people's creativity and creations. It is the vessel that carries elements of the homeland and expresses peoples' cultures, values and principles, communicating their messages to all of humanity and transcending the limits of language.

Dubai's interest in art and its sponsorship of artists is known the world over. It is an open space for creativity and creators, with a rich creative community that brings together cultures from more than 190 countries around the world. This iconic city nurtures art, embraces creative talents, and follows an ambitious vision through which it seeks to promote creativity as a sustainable component of its prosperity.

Visionary leadership and its impact on the Dubai arts' scene

Many pioneering steps are being taken, most prominently the world's first long-term cultural visa launched in 2019 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to attract artists and creators from all over the world to take part in the development of the emirate. The most recent of these initiatives and steps is the Dubai Creative Economy Strategy launched by His Highness to transform Dubai into a global capital for the creative economy by 2025.

In accordance with this vision, Dubai Culture and Arts Authority (Dubai Culture), in its position as the government authority entrusted with the culture, arts and heritage sector in Dubai, is committed to providing support for creative talents in the Emirati community, in line with its vision to promote the cultural scene in the emirate and

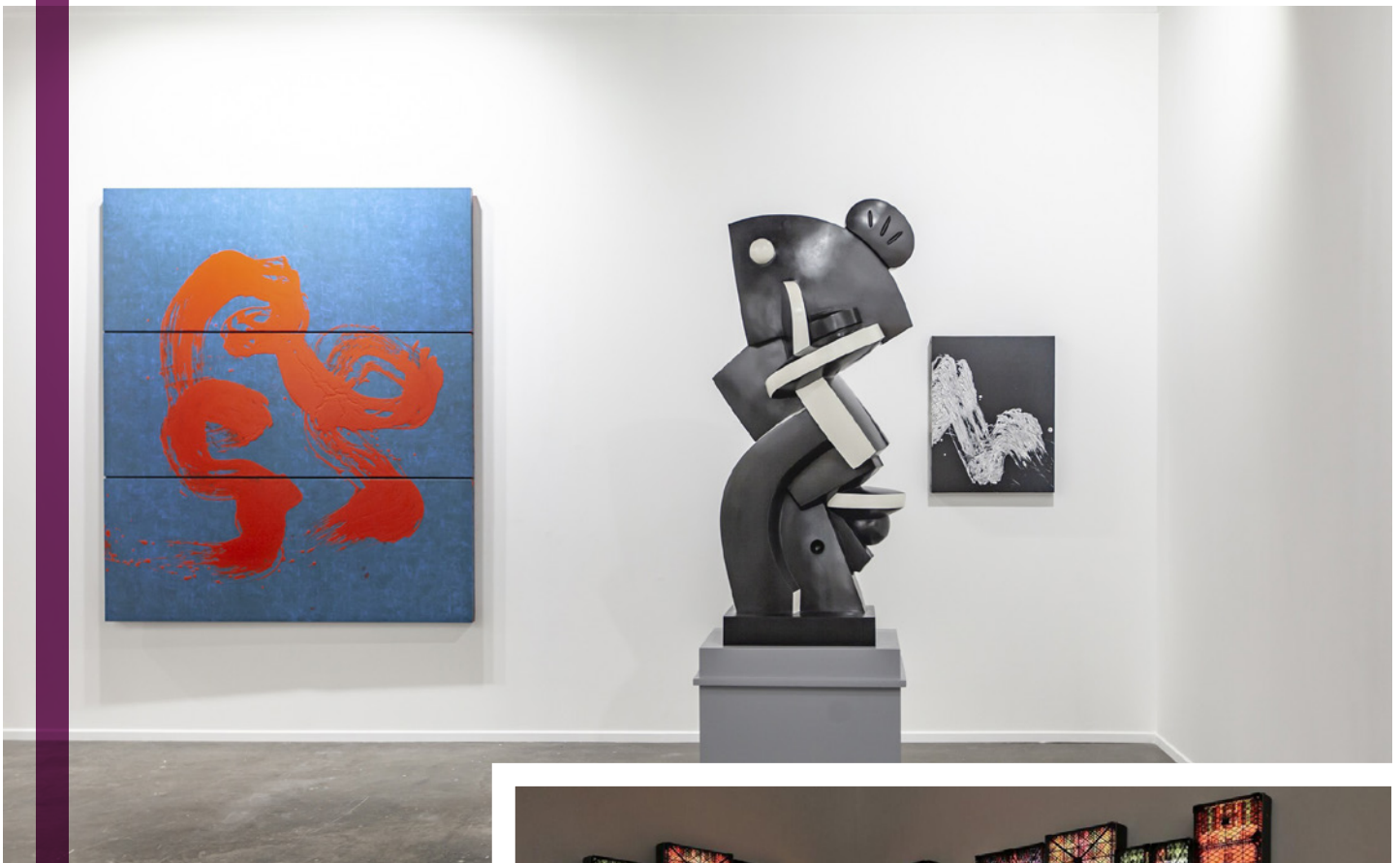
strengthen its position as a global centre for culture, an incubator for creativity, and a thriving hub for talent; thus, fulfilling the objectives of the Dubai Creative Economy Strategy.

Dubai Culture's role in supporting the creative community


As the sponsor of talent and artists in the emirate, Dubai Culture provides a platform for the local and global creative community to celebrate artistic productions, whether traditional or modern, within its programmes and projects as well as the initiatives and events it supports, including distinctive art festivals, such as Dubai Art Season that comprises several activities, including Sikka Arts Festival, Art Dubai and World Art Dubai. Such events, among other exhibitions and creative activities, open the doors to emerging local and global artistic talents to achieve their dreams, express their passions and innovative artistic visions, and contribute to enriching Dubai's artistic and aesthetic scene, all while developing their work.

Another example in the same context is Dubai Culture's interest in international events and exhibitions, such as the World of Banksy exhibition, currently being held in partnership with the Mall of the Emirates, which showcases the works of some of the most prominent global artists. This constitutes an exceptional opportunity to shed light on the creative and cultural sector in the emirate on a global scale and enhances Dubai's cultural global footprint as a hub for world arts.





Dubai Culture is also committed to developing mechanisms, strategies, legislative frameworks, regulations and policies that ensure ease of doing business in the creative fields, investing in its partnerships with governmental, semi-governmental and private bodies, experts, consultants and representatives of the creative sector. Within this context, the Authority is working on a project to develop the Al Quoz Creative Zone to be a vital, creative, and dynamic hub that would embrace local, regional and global creative talents, providing them with an integrated system to support their work, from the initial conceptualisation stage, design and production to the promotion of their creative products.

Artists disperse beauty into this world, and art is a vessel that carries a message of creativity, peace and tolerance. In Dubai, there are many windows of opportunities for fine arts to prosper and allow artists to communicate and cultures to coexist. The emirate is a global city in its texture, spirit, vision and arts, and Dubai Culture will continue to build bridges and produce creative systems that would ensure the flourishing of arts and artists in the emirate. 



Make your splash this Summer



10 reasons why you should cool off at Atlantis Aquaventure when in Dubai

With summer having come back around sooner than anticipated in the UAE, it's a guaranteed bet that residents and tourists alike are on the hunt for cool ways to lower their temperatures in this desert sun. Atlantis Aquaventure recently launched a whole new set of rides and attractions to signal the completion of its expansion project, opening its gates to excited guests who couldn't wait to beat the heat at the onset of Spring. Now that Summer is here, a day spent at the aquatic theme-park, situated on sprawling grounds adjacent to the iconic Atlantis the Palm Resort, is a day well spent. You are simply spoilt for choice with a selection of 79 rides and attractions to slide through, splash into and frolic in when in Dubai.

Because there are so many reasons why you should head on over to this award-winning aquatic theme park, we'll cut to the chase and share our top ten as you cool off this season...

1. YOU'LL GET TO TRY OUT THE 48M HIGH TRIDENT TOWER, THE NEWEST AND GREATEST TOWER AT ATLANTIS AQUAVENTURE. With a thrilling mix of spectacular rides including Odyssey of Terror, Shockwave, Medusa's Lair, Hydra Racers and Blackout, Trident Tower is the newest addition to the park's towers, with Neptune and Poseidon Towers having come first. And yes, Trident Tower lives up to the hype and is the aquatic theme park gift that keeps giving. You'll have a few flights of stairs to scale the 48 meters above the ground, and an additional 10 and 11 meters above Neptune and Poseidon Towers respectively, but views from on high are all worth it before sliding down through any one of the tower's slides to the pools of water below.



2. DISCOVER THE BIGGEST KID'S ONLY WATERPARK EXPERIENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. Great news for moms and dads! Splashers Lagoon and Splashers Cove were designed with your cubs in mind and so you'll no longer wonder if there are enough rides for the youngest members of your family to enjoy. Even the toddlers and kindergarteners have dedicated, fun-filled splash areas, as Splashers Lagoon, Splashers Cove, Splashers Island and Splashers Mountain

combined are home to a total 16 new record-breaking rides and attractions. That's a lot of junior fun and happy moments for all!

3. WHY WALK WHEN YOU CAN KEEP COOL BY SPLASHING ACROSS THE PARK? We all know that dreaded walk from one side of a water park to the next in a bid to escape the blazing sun. Well, rather than walk around the 22.5-hectare site, guests can enjoy The Rapids, a network of waterways that allow them to travel around the water park instead of walking, encouraging park guests to explore Atlantis Aquaventure without having to leave the cool, temperature-controlled water so much.

4. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE STAYING AT THE ATLANTIS THE PALM RESORT TO EXPERIENCE AQUAVENTURE. Though the park is situated adjacent to the iconic luxury hotel at the tip of Dubai's Palm Jumeirah, whether you are a resident in Dubai or staying elsewhere during your trip to Dubai, you can still enjoy a day out playing on as many of the 105 rides and attractions available at the park. That's a fantastic reason to come along if there's ever been one to add to your list!

5. FROM SLIDES AND RIDES TO SUN AND SAND. Maybe you looking to just enjoy a little calm in between the pockets of high-octane fun. How about picking a sun lounger to relax from or letting the waves from the Arabian sea lap at your feet at Aqua-venture's private beach. It's mellow, it's serene, and also gives you front row views of some spectacular villas on the Palm's fronds.

But wait, there's more...
6. FANCY A DIVE IN THE ATLANTIS AQUARIUM? Clad in some nifty diving gear, if you've ever wondered what



an under-the-sea experience would be like, then try a hand at snorkeling, diving, or walking underwater in an Aquatrek experience within the Aquaventure complex, where you can interact with more than 65,000 marine creatures. This is truly an exhilarating and educational experience for the certified or non-certified diver alike, ticking off what is easily a bucket list item for many!

7. SWIM WITH THE DOLPHINS IN A DOLPHIN BAY EXPERIENCE. Learn about these precious bottle-nosed sea mammals, swim with them or even take home a priceless souvenir in the form of a photograph with a dolphin, in yet another bucket list adventure that's a treat for children and adults alike.

8. YOU CAN ENJOY LOADS OF CULINARY AND SHOPPING EXPERIENCES. Atlantis Aquaventure is now home to 26 F&B outlets, which means you can tantalise your tastebuds between the splashing in pools and adrenaline filled thrills of zipping down slides by picking your menu from a selection of casual dining restaurants and kiosks across the park.



To learn more about Atlantis Aquaventure, visit www.atlantis.com/dubai

9. VENTURE OFF FOR SOME WATERSPORTS ON THE ARABIAN SEA.

Perhaps its jet skiing, paddle boarding or a boat cruise for you? Atlantis Aquaventure now offers a whopping total of 26 marine and watersport experiences, availing you the unique opportunity of not only seeing the majestic Atlantis the Palm resort from the sea, but also enjoying a little jet ski speed or serenity from the sea while onboard a boat.



10. BECAUSE A DAY AT ATLANTIS THE PALM AND AQUAVENTURE WATERPARK IS A BUCKET LIST ITEM!

It's great to see the imposing, iconic hotel and from outside its perimeter as you take a walk on the boardwalk adjacent to the hotel. But nothing compares to spending a day at either the hotel, or the aquatic theme park, both of which have brought home numerous awards for their collective experiences. Staying at the hotel grants you access to the park, while a day out on at Aquaventure offers you a great mix of experiences to keep you cool in the warmer months. So, venture out and treat yourself to an experience that will forever be etched in your memories, when next in Dubai! 🐬





TASTE-MAKERS |



TIMOTHY NJIHIA ON BOLD STEPS ACROSS THE SKIES AND BEYOND

An astute marketer and strategist, a commercial aviation professional and a travel management expert all merged into one, Timothy Njihia is a Kenyan national who is a notable trailblazer in his field. Driven by his sense of responsibility with an imbued attitude of confronting challenges head-on and providing solutions, while getting the job done, we caught up with him to find out a little bit more about what he believes to be quintessential elements for career success....

1. TIMOTHY, PROFESSIONALLY, YOU ARE WELL RECOGNISED AS A KEEN MARKETER IN THE AIRLINES AND TRAVEL INDUSTRY. WHAT LED YOU TO PURSUING YOUR CAREER FIRSTLY IN MARKETING AND MORE SPECIFICALLY IN THE TRAVEL ARENA?

I was quite fascinated by travel from an early age and maybe because of my family that was, and still is widely traveled. I wanted to be like them, if not better. Eventually, and as fate would have it, I got an opportunity to study travel at one of the best Travel & Hospitality Schools in Eastern and Southern Africa. From there I got into some of the best global travel management companies (TMCs) starting with operational roles and growing into commercial and general management roles. It was at this point that I decided to go back to school, a decision that my family really backed and supported and that is how I got a chance to join the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) UK, a professional marketing body.

As a CIM finalist, I can say without a doubt that this transitioned me to who I am today, a journey that continues. What is better than to market and, or sell a product and, or service that one knows inside out? This is what propelled me from operational to commercial roles in the travel industry, starting out as Travel & Tours Consultant (Air Travel & Leisure), Senior Manager (headed travel for Shell in Kenya covering the local, regional and hub offices), Group Sales & Marketing Manager and finally to General Management roles. As I covered these roles, I had a calling to the airlines. I wanted to experience the other side.

In the travel business (agency), we sell on behalf of the airlines (principal). My curiosity got the best of me and I wanted to get a feel of both worlds so I pursued a career within the airlines and as fate would have it, I got an opportunity within RwandAir, a commercial leadership position as Country Manager UAE. At some point, I thought I had bit more than I could chew but I was committed to succeed. Deep down I knew I understood the product and having the 'agency blood in my veins' gave me the urge to succeed.

I will always remember my first meeting here in Dubai with one of the biggest providers of travel services in the Middle Eastern market. One of the first questions was about my background and when I responded I came from the travel business, the response was very overwhelming "He is one of us so he will understand us and identify with the market very easily." That was the beginning for me and from that day on, I have been developing, managing, and

sustaining strategic business relationships with a wide range of trade channels (Passenger & Cargo) and other strategic key customers whether B2B, B2C and, or B2e-commerce. I view every business interaction as a relationship and not a transaction.

2. WHAT LEADERSHIP TRAITS DO YOU BELIEVE AN INDIVIDUAL SHOULD POSSESS TO EXCEL IN A GLOBAL BUSINESS, ESPECIALLY AS IT RELATES TO YOUR INDUSTRY?

The list could be long, but picking out from my current experience, I'd say one needs to have a deep sense of self-awareness as well as cultural awareness. In our line of work and as a marketer working in global operations, one must develop sensitivity to cultural diversity. A global view on strategic thinking is critical to corporate success and on a more personal level, I believe one must be patiently impatient, well-spoken and a good negotiator.

3. YOU'VE ENJOYED THE PRIVILEGE OF HEADING UP THE RWANDAIR OPERATIONS IN THE UAE AND GREATER GCC MARKETS. TALK TO US ABOUT THE TRANSITION FROM LIVING AND WORKING IN KENYA TO NOW BEING A PART OF ONE OF AFRICA'S PIONEERING BRANDS IN AIR TRAVEL AND WORKING IN DUBAI. WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MILESTONES?

My life is a story of transition, always leaving one chapter behind, while moving to the next. As I write this, I am once again in the middle of a transition. Probably I should write something about transition, change and change management, I've been thinking about it.

Needless to say, I feel both humbled and privileged to have led the national carrier of Rwanda in the UAE; and as a professional who transitioned from travel management to a commercial aviation leader for an African carrier in the UAE – it has been a rather fulfilling journey of transitions from one country, role, and industry to the other and that can tell you why cultural awareness is key. I have learned, from an early age how to deal with change, accept change as well as transition. It is not easy, and I cannot even say that I have mastered it, but I have learnt to live through it. "It is when we are in transition that we are most completely alive." – William Bridges

Some of the milestones I'd like to highlight are being able to, during my tenure, increase RwandAir's brand awareness in the UAE and greater GCC markets. Coming in I knew that corporate image improvement was going to be one of my key objectives as I assumed my new role. Through thought leadership and executive access in the UAE market, you will agree that RwandAir

has been very accessible and visible within the UAE during industry events, participation in corporate blogs, speaking events, webinars, and roundtables. These are important and have gone a long way in telling our story, the story of RwandAir and Rwanda as a country, the home of the national carrier.

Another notable win was geographical expansion. We managed to grow our footprint into additional and select territories within the GCC i.e., Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain and additionally into Pakistan as offline markets. Lastly, through strategic leadership, RwandAir's passenger and cargo sales grew year on year and before the unprecedented times that we all found ourselves in through COVID-19, a feat that the team and I were particularly proud of.

4. WHAT HAS WORKING IN AFRICA'S AIRLINE INDUSTRY IN A GLOBAL HUB LIKE DUBAI TAUGHT YOU ABOUT GLOBAL TRAVEL AND THE WORLD'S PERCEPTION OF AFRICA?

I must say that working in Africa's airline industry and especially being based in the UAE is a life changing experience by itself. We view the world through a single lens and our own life experiences, or lack thereof. That impacts on what we perceive other places to be, our actions and behaviors unconsciously. My own transition and experience which I define as my lens has helped me debunk a lot of common myths and stereotypes out there, especially about Africa. I use my experience to share the story in my day-to-day activities and demystify any perceptions as I enable travel.

One good example I wish to highlight is how we have been able to build leisure traffic from the UAE to Rwanda through concerted efforts. We were lucky enough to have a support system through both the Embassy and General Consulate of Rwanda in the UAE and other key strategic partnerships with whom we worked hand in hand to sell Rwanda as a preferred destination.

The takeaway here is that air travel is vital in demystifying perceptions and it can also be instrumental in debunking pre-existent myths and stereotypes.

5. YOU HAVE GARNERED QUITE THE REPUTATION OF CONNECTING LIKE-MINDS FOR COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES. SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE POWER OF NETWORKING FOR BUSINESS, ESPECIALLY AS AN AFRICAN PROFESSIONAL LIVING AND WORKING IN ONE OF THE MOST CULTURALLY DIVERSE CITIES IN THE WORLD?

I hope my innate ability to connect with people effortlessly is a good reputation.

"Networking is a lot like nutrition and fitness: we know what to do, the hard part is making it a top priority." Herminia Ibarra

I have found professional networking mutually beneficial and especially when it is genuine enough to continually put the other person's needs ahead of our own. The more interactive you are (as a person, or a business) and professionally while at it, the more you will have more and more people talking positively about you or your products and, or services and thereby increasing referrals.

Networking to me provides for a paradigm shift from hierarchical structures and breaking this down has helped me move across all levels from junior, senior and to the C-suite with a lot of ease. Imagine if you cannot be found, how would we then know about you, or about your business?

6. NOW LET'S SWITCH GEARS A LITTLE BIT AND TALK A LITTLE ABOUT TIMOTHY OUTSIDE THE OFFICE. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE THING TO DO IN YOUR FREE TIME?

I do enjoy watching TV, namely CNN and more so the Travel channel. I am a fan of Rugby and a big fan of the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) and MMA (Mixed Martial Arts). When not doing that, I do a lot of web surfing of a diverse number of subjects, ranging but not limited to air travel, business strategy, supply chain and logistics. I enjoy some golfing, do occasional walks to unwind, drives both within and out of town and that occasional meet up with friends to unwind, no wait I meant network, but informally!


7. 5 DESTINATIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO VISIT IN AFRICA AND WHY?

Tricky...lol! Too many to choose to be honest...

8. LET'S ASSUME YOU ARE SEVERAL YEARS DOWN THE LINE AND ARE READY TO RETIRE SOMEPLACE - AND IT CAN ONLY BE IN AFRICA? WHERE AND WHY?

Home is best, so my answer to this is Kenya.

9. WE SURVIVED WHAT WAS ARGUABLY THE MOST DIFFICULT YEAR OF OUR TIME - 2020. LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT HOPE DOES TIMOTHY CARRY FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2021. WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU HAVE FOR OUR READERS ON DOING LIFE UNDER GLOBALLY CHALLENGING TIMES?

I personally think that what happened has provided, albeit under difficult circumstances, opportunities to say STOP, then START ALL OVER AGAIN, an opportunity to press the RESET button! We have all in one form or another, had to reevaluate what's important to us and so each day I would hope, is an opportunity to maintain gratitude on what's working while reflecting on what role we can play in changing that which we want to see happen differently. Take everyday as it comes, and never be afraid to press the reset button! 

Bonjour Senegal!

ONE-ON-ONE
with NDEYE
AMINATA VOYEL



Meet Ndèye Aminata Voyel, the Founder of the platform www.bonjoursenegal.com, a collaborative online vehicle dedicated to promoting Senegal as a travel destination by connecting travellers to local tourism players such as hotels, guest houses, restaurants and heritage landmarks such as museums.

“**T**he idea started from a simple observation, where a few years ago I noted how difficult it was to find good, credible information online about tourist sites, as well as best activities to do and places to see in Senegal. Moreover, very few industry stakeholders had harnessed the opportunities that come with online presence and so one couldn't find much information on hospitality options, tour operators and any other travel related services on social networks,” says Ndèye.

Today, Bonjour Sénégal is a young and dynamic company run by a team of 4 people. It's online presence features a website that carries highly visual content, as they spotlight experiences and ongoing packages for travellers to take advantage of. Bonjour Sénégal has also grown its followership online significantly since launching, now embracing a community of more than 28,500 followers, engaged customers and brand ambassadors across Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok.

“Our goal is to give more visibility to local tourism businesses, doing our part to develop both local tourism and the appeal of visiting and exploring Africa,” Ndèye asserts.

“The tourism sector is easily one of the most vibrant sectors for job creation, given how it encompasses leisure and business accommodations, the transportation industry, tour operators, promoters of the crafts and cultural arena, as well the dining and entertainment landscape. It is one of the key contributors to economies, promoting intercultural exchanges and investment into markets through tourism remittances, and so as a company, we are keen to play a role





in supporting this industry,” she added.

When asked what her take is on the importance of Africans celebrating the continent’s vibrant tourism assets, Ndèye is swift to highlight her belief that Africa is an underrated continent, and while Bonjour Senegal’s current focus is on Senegal, the company has plans to expand into the rest of Africa.

“The media fraternity typically shows the negative stories from the continent - images of war and political unrest, famine and so on - however with the emergence of social media, we are witnessing more individuals and content creators showcase through their own experiences, more of what Africa is really about, from our people to the different places across the continent. Africa is definitely a-must-experience and we thought it was pretty awesome that Senegal was ranked one of the top 10 countries on the continent to visit by the New York Times Magazine,” cites Ndèye.

WHY SENEGAL?

Her inspiration for venturing into the travel business was the opportunity to discover more of what was beyond her walls. The idea of potentially connecting with local populations, experiencing gastronomic adventures, new cultures, the history and heritage of a place, diverse landscapes, and the know-how of local craftsmen all became increasingly appealing to her.

Having been born and raised in Senegal, it is only after I started to travel across my country that I realized the enormous potential we had in our nation, and there was so much that was little known and undervalued. Traveling also allows you to leave your comfort zone, to meet other people and to create links with them, to face the unexpected, and to discover other culinary traditions.”



NDÈYE'S TOP 10 THINGS TO DO IN SENEGAL

1. The Ousmane Sow House in Dakar
2. The 4 islands of the Dakar peninsula (Goree Island, Ngor Island, Madeleine Islands, Yoff Island)
3. The Pink Lake
4. The walk with the lions in Fathala
5. The desert of Lompoul
6. The National Park of the Saloum Delta
7. The visit of the Bédik and Bassari peoples in Kédougou
8. The Casamance region with its numerous islands and seaside resorts
9. The Djoudj Park in Saint-Louis
10. The megalithic circles of Senegambia



When Ndèye was asked what she would like tourists travelling to Senegal to know about the West African nation, she mentioned that the creativity of the younger Senegalese generation was truly inspired in that it appropriates more of the country's culture.

"Our young people are willing to take more risks in developing their creative talents. I invite tourists to really consider making a trip to Senegal to meet these young entrepreneurs and craftsmen," Ndèye states.


"Tourists will also notice our teranga – or hospitality – as a people. We are a warm and friendly people who welcome visitors from all over the world to discover what they can about our way of life. I also believe our geographical location is of huge advantage, as we are effectively West Africa's gateway to Sub-Saharan Africa. The sun shines all-year round, we have a plethora of tourist sites one can visit, and our safety record means that one can move freely without having any concerns regarding their wellbeing," Ndèye adds.

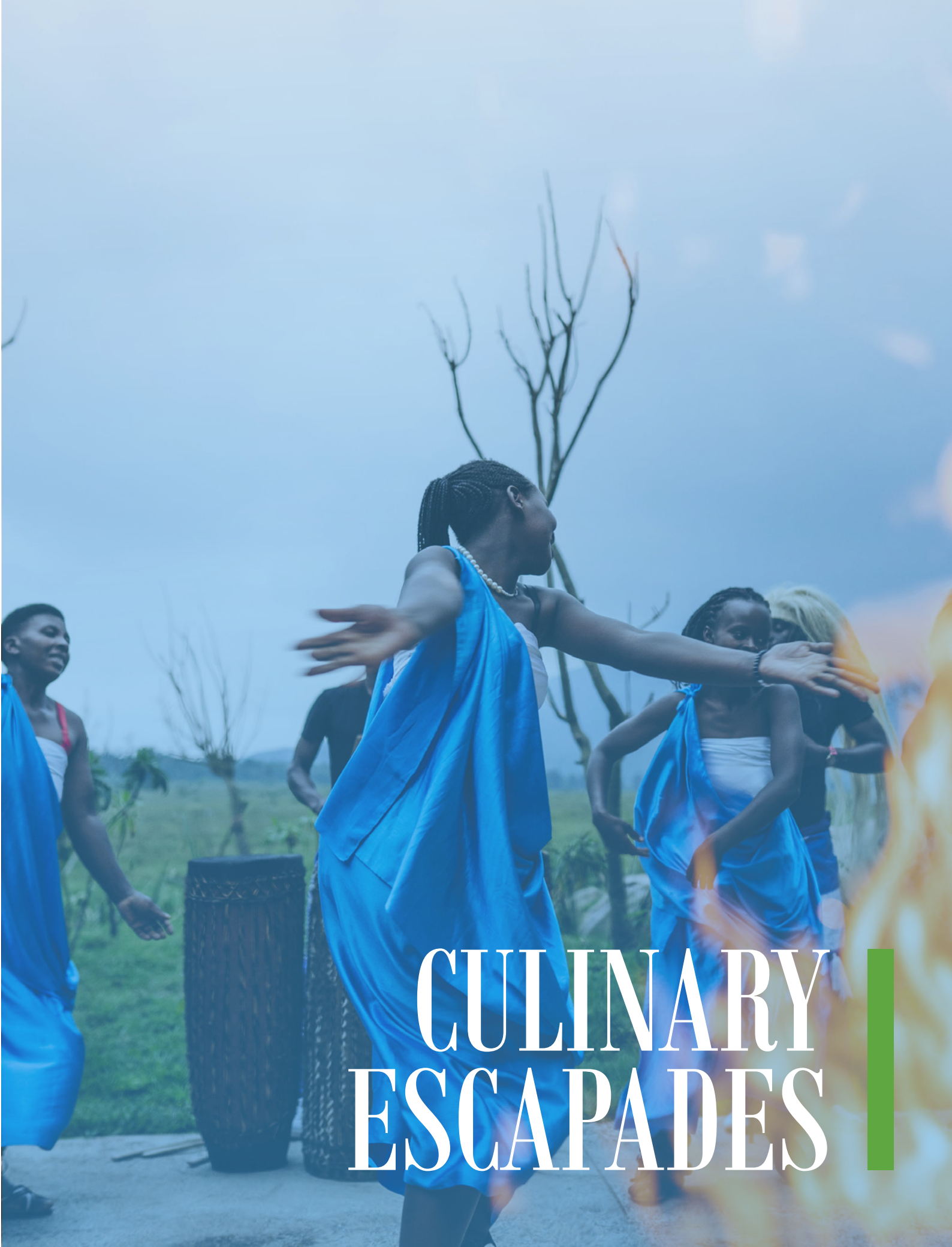
Senegal also boasts an incredible 700km of coastline, which means there are a good number of pristine beaches from which one can holiday from. The nation is home to numerous places classified as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as Saint - Louis, Saloum Delta National Park and Djoudj Park.



"We are culturally diverse nation, and this is evidenced by our freedom to practice one's religious beliefs, with Muslims, Christians and those that practice animism living in complete harmony with each other," shares Ndèye.

A great way for anyone to also enjoy the culture of a place lies in the opportunities available to try out new cuisines. I'd recommend at least 5 traditional dishes one must try when in Senegal, and these include Thiebou dieune, which is our staple food comprising of

fish and rice. Mafé, a Senegalese beef stew, yassa, a chicken or fish dish, thiéré, which is a couscous made with millet, and mbaxalou saloum which is a little known traditional Senegalese dish with a peanut base – are my recommendations. You are definitely guaranteed an immersive culinary experience as you sample these dishes, adding to the enriched moments of learning and discovery as you explore Senegal." 



CULINARY ESCAPADES



SINGITA ON LEADING THE CHARGE IN SOMMELIER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The discerning traveller's experience is one that is undoubtedly characterised by exquisite dining and for those who indulge in the fruit of the winepress, an opportunity to enjoy fine wine over great conversation, stellar views or a sumptuous meal. Singita's Sommelier program is one that has garnered significant acclaim within the fine dining and luxury lodging sector, and so we took some time to knock on the doors of Francois Rautenbach, Director of Singita Premier Wine Division, to learn a little more about what makes Singita so stand-out in its approach to training and developing upcoming sommeliers.



Francois Rautenbach
Photo by Jelena Moro



In line with Singita's ethos, community development is central to the Singita wine programme. François has created a special training programme for enthusiastic young wine lovers, developing the next generation of sommeliers for Africa. The training provides educational assistance, personal mentoring, formal wine training and access to Africa's finest wine programme. François had this to share...

Q: FRANCOIS, TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE SOMMELIER PROGRAM AT SINGITA. HOW LONG DOES IT RUN AND WHAT IS THE SELECTION CRITERIA FOR YOUR SOMMELIERS? DO YOU SELECT CANDIDATES WHO ARE ALREADY TRAINED, OR YOU HAVE YOUR OWN TAKE ON GROOMING SOMMELIERS FOR SINGITA PROPERTIES?

Both. The Singita Premier Wine program requires trained sommeliers with experience and a thorough knowledge and understanding of both international and local wines. International certifications such as the Wine and Spirits Trust level-3 or the Cape Wine Academy Diploma is a prerequisite for a Singita Sommelier position. Any additional or higher levels completed are of useful advantage. It is also essential that the Singita sommeliers are comfortable with distinguished and well-travelled guests and able to build relationships.

Singita also recruits from within the company. The current Relief sommelier, Ngoni Mtizwa, is one example. He started at Singita Boulders Lodge as a bartender/barista and joined the Singita Premier Wine Department, completing a year as a Junior sommelier. He has since been promoted to Singita sommelier and quite recently, into a newly created role of Singita's Group Relief sommelier. In 2020, we were fortunate to launch a Singita Wine Steward and Beverage Program for junior waiter staff within the company and we currently have 19 staff enrolled from various lodges and properties.

One of the main objectives of this program is to create the training environment to identify and nurture potential staff from neighbouring communities, training them from a beginner level in all facets of the Singita wine program, especially the service component of wine and all other beverages (cocktails, spirits, coffee etc). The program has been received with much enthusiasm. The aim is for the Wine Steward program to run for a year, with extended time allowed for candidates who require more input and assistance.

This commitment to empowering Singita staff is further enhanced by Singita's participation in the Wine Forum, an annual event hosted by Jordan Wine Estate in Stellenbosch. Four Singita team members are selected from the properties and nominated to attend the Wine Forum, to mentor young wine industry staff for a career in the wine world. Both programs provide an important foundation to our staff and a steppingstone to ultimately progress to a becoming a full-time Singita sommelier.

Singita takes this further by running two community culinary schools (in South Africa and Tanzania). The Singita Community Culinary Schools offer rigorous professional cookery courses that see young people drawn from local communities, graduating as commis chefs of the highest calibre. They emerge with sought-after skills and strong employment prospects, while kitchens at Singita lodges and those further afield benefit from a pool of expertly trained young chefs.

Meet Singita's top sommeliers

NGONI MTIZWA – RELIEF SOMMELIER

Passion, humility and teamwork are some of the values that we honour most as a company and qualities we look for when welcoming new members into our family. They are essential elements in our ecosystem; principles that drive a shared sense of responsibility for protecting Africa's most vulnerable landscapes. Ngoni Mtizwa, is part of this ecosystem, bringing these values to life and embracing his contribution to the future of the industry.

For Ngoni, an initially unsuccessful application for the position of sommelier prompted him to try his hand at being a barman at Singita Sabi Sand instead, knowing that it could be an opportunity to grow into his dream job in the cellar – an instinct that served him well. His knowledge and love of wine was clear from the start, as was his determination to embrace any chance to develop his skills. Now in his third year at Singita, Ngoni is living his dream of working with wine. He was recently promoted to Singita's first Relief Sommelier, an exciting new opportunity to embark on.

He loves the challenge of working with the chefs to develop interesting wine pairings ("food and wine go hand in glove") and especially enjoys hosting guests for dinners and wine tastings out in the bush. Introducing travellers to South African wines, which he says offer "the element of surprise – the wow factor", and the peacefulness of the working environment are other highlights of his role at Singita Sabi Sand.

Years earlier, a chance encounter with a previous employer led to a sponsorship at the Cape Wine Academy (CWA). Having already earned a Business Science honours degree in Sociology at the University of Zimbabwe, he was no stranger to hard work and, enthralled by the course material, he flew through the first of three courses he would take at CWA. After joining Singita, he completed WSET Level 3 and became a Certified Sommelier with Court of Master Sommeliers Europe.

Ngoni has an obvious talent for his chosen profession, but he also demonstrates remarkable flair for creative thinking. One such example was his concept for a unique wine and art pairing which brought much delight to a group of international guests visiting Singita as part of a South African art experience. Bringing expressions of joy and surprise to their faces was part of his job, but it was the kind of special touch that guests are unlikely to forget. As soon as circumstances allow, Ngoni would like to write his Advanced Sommelier examination with the Court of Master Sommeliers and continue on his impressive trajectory as one of the South African wine industry's rising stars.





**RICHARD DE ALMEIDA - SINGITA
KRUGER NATIONAL PARK**

Meet Richard de Almeida, wine Sommelier based at Singita Kruger National Park working at both Singita Lebombo and Sweni lodges after joining Singita in September 2019.

Richard studied Political Science at Stellenbosch University in South Africa and fell in love with the Cape Winelands. After a brief time working in Parliament, he found himself back in the Winelands, selling wine telephonically for a wine club, his first experience in preparation for wine sales.

Not completely satisfied to stay in a cubicle, selling indirectly to guests, he pursued an opportunity at a Stellenbosch wine estate, De Morgenzon as part of the wine sales department, learning from capable businesspeople such as Wendy Appelbaum and winemaker, Carl van der Merwe. This is where he honed his skills and knowledge for almost 5 years. During this time, he was introduced to Singita while hosting the Singita Sommeliers for a wine tasting.

Once again, his thirst for wine service and a desire to work as a Sommelier encouraged him to explore opportunities. He was grateful to be offered a Sommelier position at Singita Kruger National Park – which is the ultimate wine experience and learning school for Sommeliers. His responsibilities consist of daily stock checks, communication and planning to ensure Singita guests have the best possible wine experience. With Francois' assistance, the aim is to showcase the diversity, excitement and quality in the South African wine industry through passion and tastings.

**DICKSON MATOLA – SINGITA
KRUGER NATIONAL PARK**

Dickson Matola, based at Singita Kruger National where he works from both Lebombo and Sweni lodges, is originally from Zimbabwe and has been working as a Sommelier in South Africa for almost 10 years.

Dickson is on the board of The South African Sommelier Association (SASA), which allows him to stay up to date with current events and news in the South African wine industry while visiting many wine estates in the Cape Winelands.

In 2019, Dickson was one of the first South African Sommeliers to complete the Introductory Course of the Court of Master Sommeliers, hosted for the first time in South Africa. His passion for Singita and the bush further inspired him to complete the FGASA level 2 providing another opportunity to connect with Singita guests.

Dickson's Singita wine journey has been very exciting and an educational and valuable learning opportunity since joining in March 2019.

Before joining Singita, Dickson worked as a Sommelier at De Hoop Nature Reserve and Grootbos.





MELISSA CUNLIFFE, SENIOR SOMMELIER AT SINGITA SABI SAND

Melissa is positive, energetic and full of passion for the world of wine. Melissa started as a Sommelier in 2017 after taking a 6-month sabbatical of traveling through France, India and New Zealand where she was able to visit various wine regions and taste local wines.

Having started out in hospitality at the age of 16, Melissa decided to make a permanent career in wine service after working at a small Wine Bar & Bistro in Sea Point (Cape Town) and as a Tasting Room Manager at Marianne, a Boutique Wine Farm in Stellenbosch. As a Singita Sommelier, Melissa has fully dedicated herself to her wine studies completing WSET Level 3 with the aim to study further in a more wine business-oriented direction in 2021.

Melissa also forms part of the Singita Sabi Sand One Planet Committee as the Events Coordinator and is also Singita Wellness Champion.



MINNIE MTHOMBENI – SINGITA SABI SAND

Meet Minnie – a warm, kind-hearted, Zimbabwean with a genuine passion for wine and food.

Minnie's wine journey started while working for Peter Veldsman, a culinary guru with a serious wine collection and an impressive wine bar. Her love for wine and thirst for knowledge led her to Karibu restaurant, in the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, where her Sommelier and sales skills were put to the test. In 2018, after seven years working in Cape Town, Minnie started working as a Sommelier at Singita Sabi Sand.

She joined the Singita team as a Cape Wine Academy and WSET Level 3 Certified Sommelier. Minnie is also a SASA (South African Sommelier Association) member. Singita guests are regularly taken on memorable gastronomic journeys when Minnie starts describing different wine flavours and textures.

Minnie fondly remembers her first time visiting the Singita wine cellars and her excitement and amazement at the selection of fine wines. After two years of Sommelier service, she still loves hosting guests for a wine and food tasting experience. Minnie continues to study wine in her free time and soaks up every opportunity to learn from her mentors and other wine professionals. Her favourite part of working for Singita is the opportunity to taste and share incredible wines and to witness how a wine evolves over time.



ROBERT MORRISON – SOMMELIER AT SINGITA GRUMETI

Robert Morrison works as the Sommelier based at Singita Grumeti Reserve, Tanzania, where he manages all the Grumeti camps & lodges. Robert also works as the Relief Lodge Manager moving between Singita Sabora, Faru Faru and Sasakwa, which allows him to continuously train service staff at these properties.

Carrying an in-depth knowledge in the world of wine, he started by studying Oenology & Viticulture at the University of Stellenbosch. After completing this degree, Rob gained some practical knowledge in the wine cellars joining the wine

making teams at Ernie Els Wines & Rust en Vrede in the Helderberg Valley, before joining Singita in 2015 as a Singita Lebombo Anchor.

In between working at various Singita lodges, Robert also worked as a harvest intern at Waterford Estate in Stellenbosch, Oyster Bay Winery in Marlborough, New Zealand, and Paul Hobbs Winery in Sonoma California, during the annual harvest and to further his knowledge of South African and international wines – indispensable experience of different wine regions and styles.

Robert also completed a Level 3 certification from the Wine & Spirits Education Trust and continues to use his knowledge and experience to further the Singita wine experience for guests. Rob has been a go-getter at Singita Sabi Sand since his arrival and continues to inspire his team members to follow in his footsteps.

CHANTELLE GOUS, SENIOR SOMMELIER OF SINGITA OPERATIONS, SINGITA PREMIER WINE DIVISION.

Chantelle grew up in a small town in the Karoo, best known for grain and corn rather than grapes and wine. She discovered wine - with all its aromas, complexities and detailed information – as a student waitressing in Stellenbosch. Wine service and tastings became very intriguing, and for the next 10 years she made wine studies her main focus. Chantelle moved to Canada in 2011, exploring the winter wonderland for 4 years, while discovering international wines. With the assistance of generous employers, she also completed the WSET Level 3 certification. She worked in a wine-focused restaurant, but her favourite experience was assisting in an Italian wine shop, where she gained an appreciation for Italian wine, which was enhanced after visiting the wine regions of Italy.

Singita was the first job Chantelle applied for when returning to South Africa in 2015. Having barely landed on home turf, she started as a Sommelier at Singita Sabi Sand lodges. She has not looked back since, moving into the role of Senior Sommelier, based in the Sabi Sand reserve. In 2019, she was promoted to Senior Sommelier of Singita Operations, which saw her settling back in the Cape Winelands.

Chantelle's role now focuses on working with each lodge's Sommelier and service teams to enhance the wine experience, by providing insights, technical information and assisting guests to purchase fine wine. It also includes wine service training, strategic stock control and admin support. She also focuses on the Wine Steward Training Program, to further develop community-based staff and is always on the lookout for aspiring Sommeliers to join the team.

Chantelle is currently studying for her final exam to complete her WSET Level 4 Diploma certification and recently celebrated her 6th year with Singita in March 2021.



The role of wine pairing to Singita's food culture....

The ethos of food and wine pairing is best summarised in Singita's cookbook: *Singita – Our Food Journey*. Francois Rautenbach, the curator of the Singita Premier Wine program says, "Each wine and vintage is individually assessed and selected by us to complement or contrast the dishes on the menus served at Singita's award-winning lodges."

Working with the lodge chefs and individual guests on a personal level, the sommeliers can provide a memorable food and wine experience to guests so they can showcase the excellence and diversity of wines available in Africa.

Singita Executive Chef, Andrew Nicolson says, "Wine pairing and the sommeliers are an integral part of our food experience at Singita. A good wine pairing can elevate your food experience as well as your wine appreciation. Our talented sommeliers work closely with the lodge chefs to make sure we take our guests on an exceptional and memorable culinary and wine adventure."


At Singita, exceptional food and wine offering is an extension of their intimate and exclusive safari experiences. From surprise breakfasts in the bush to dinners under a canopy of stars on the private deck of your suite, each meal is part of our carefully curated farm-to-table food journey that celebrates seasonal flavours, regional recipes that have been handed down through generations and an emphasis on portions that are tasty, healthy and less wasteful.

Singita's world-class wine offering is a journey in its own right. Coupled with the rare vintages and some of the continent's most sought-after private reserves in our cellars, the guidance of expert sommeliers ensures food-and-wine pairings that are perfectly attuned to the individual tastes of each guest.

Authentic and nourishing cuisine has always been a central part of journeys that speak to the soul, and Singita's guests have cherished the warmth and authenticity of the farm-to-table food philosophy since Singita's inception.

Reflecting the creativity, traditions and seasons of the continent, each carefully crafted menu is more than a meal – it's an extension of a guest experience that sees loved ones appreciate the luxury of togetherness, slow down and enjoy the most memorable dining experiences in some of the most exquisite settings on earth.

The culture behind the food at Singita goes much further than what's presented on the plate. It goes to the heart of what food is all about – community, sharing and sustenance – and echoes Singita's enduring reason for being, fully aligned with its commitment to the preservation of the continent's natural legacy.

Singita's extensive cellar showcases a premium selection of the continent's most sought-after private reserves, exclusive release, limited single vineyard, and rare auction wines many of which are no longer obtainable even by rare-wine auction. Importantly, Singita's buying process goes beyond merely purchasing bottles of wine. Instead, it focuses on contemporary Southern African wine and handpicking environmentally conscious producers with community development at the forefront. 





CULINARY ESCAPADES • THE BOMA



Traditional dancers at The Boma - Dinner & Drum Show

A Taste of the Boma

— An unmissable Dinner &
Drum show in Victoria Falls



A “must do” Victoria Falls experience, the exciting energy and festive vibe of The Boma – Dinner & Drum Show can be felt even before setting a foot inside, as guests are welcomed by traditional Zimbabwean dancers. On arrival, guests are ceremoniously dressed in a chitenge (sarong), then receive a mini face paint before being ushered into the main enclosure, where their senses are bombarded by the tastes, sights and sounds of Africa. Once seated, guests are invited to take part in a hand washing ceremony and to taste the local brew, before beginning a four-course dinner, which has something for everyone.

The Boma – Dinner & Drum Show’s executive chef Thomas Koke’s culinary style is all about authentic food and being true to a dish, and since he took up his role nearly three years ago, he has worked on enhancing both the menu as well as the entire guest experience.

Changes under Chef Thomas, who previously spent ten years working in Dubai, have included offering guests non-alcoholic “mahewu”, as an alternative to “chibuku” – both are traditional African brews, popular in Zimbabwe.

In addition, beef short ribs, venison steaks and oxtail have been added to the meat selection, and koeksisters, baobab mousse and pumpkin crumble to the dessert bar.

Recent upgrade to the Boma Experience

The Boma has also recently undergone a back-of-house facelift, with an upgrade and modernisation of the kitchen and serving areas as well as new décor, while maintaining the integrity of the guest experience.



The Boma - Dinner & Drum Show chef Tendai Mutava at the salad bar

Dinner at The Boma –
Dinner & Drum Show



Interior designer Belinda Jones says the concept for the décor came from the traditional cooking huts, and it was an amalgam of different Zimbabwean tribes.

“It reminds the staff of their grandmothers’ huts, where their cooking utensils are proudly displayed. The traditional art form of decorating the walls and shelves with bright pigment goes back a while, but it is now being revived as a new art form,” Jones says.

The four-course dinner begins with a shared starter platter featuring mouth-watering specialities such as skewered peppered impala, smoked crocodile tail and corn ciabatta and “indumba” bean fritters.

Guests then make their way to the campfire for the chef’s freshly made soup of the day served with croutons and homemade bread, as well as a selection of vegetarian dishes, such as vegetable stir-fry, homemade garlic bread and roast potato wedges.

There is also a salad bar, featuring a variety of different offerings made from local organic produce, including sweet potato, legumes, nuts and seeds, complimented by greens, dressings and assorted breads.

Guests then indulge in a feast featuring a braai (barbeque) buffet including a selection of game meats, beef, boerewors, marinated chicken, or the spit roast of the day, served with peanut butter rice or isitshwala/sadza (a thick maize-meal porridge which is the local staple diet) with a variety of sauces.

Taste buds may also be tempted by a traditional hunter's stews or fish – Zambezi bream and kapenta (freshwater sardine). Halaal diners are also catered for. Some may wish to try a local delicacy, a sautéed mopane worm, for which you will get a certificate as proof of your adventurous spirit!

The feast is rounded off with something sweet at the dessert bar which has a selection of treats, including malva pudding, koeksisters, chocolate mousse, fruit skewers, creme caramel, chocolate eclairs and apple crumble.

It is important to note however, that while the classic Boma – Dinner & Drum Show experience involves food being served in buffet style, in keeping with World Health Organisation Covid-19 guidelines, adjustments have been made, with meals now being served à la carte style.

AN ENTERTAINING EVENING FOR ALL

The evening's entertainment incorporates mbira music,

traditional dancers, a local folk storyteller, a fortune teller, a hair braider, elaborate face painters and souvenir sellers.

But the highlight of the evening's entertainment is the renowned energetic interactive drumming show beginning after dinner at 8.45pm. It is the only restaurant-based interactive drumming show in Zimbabwe!

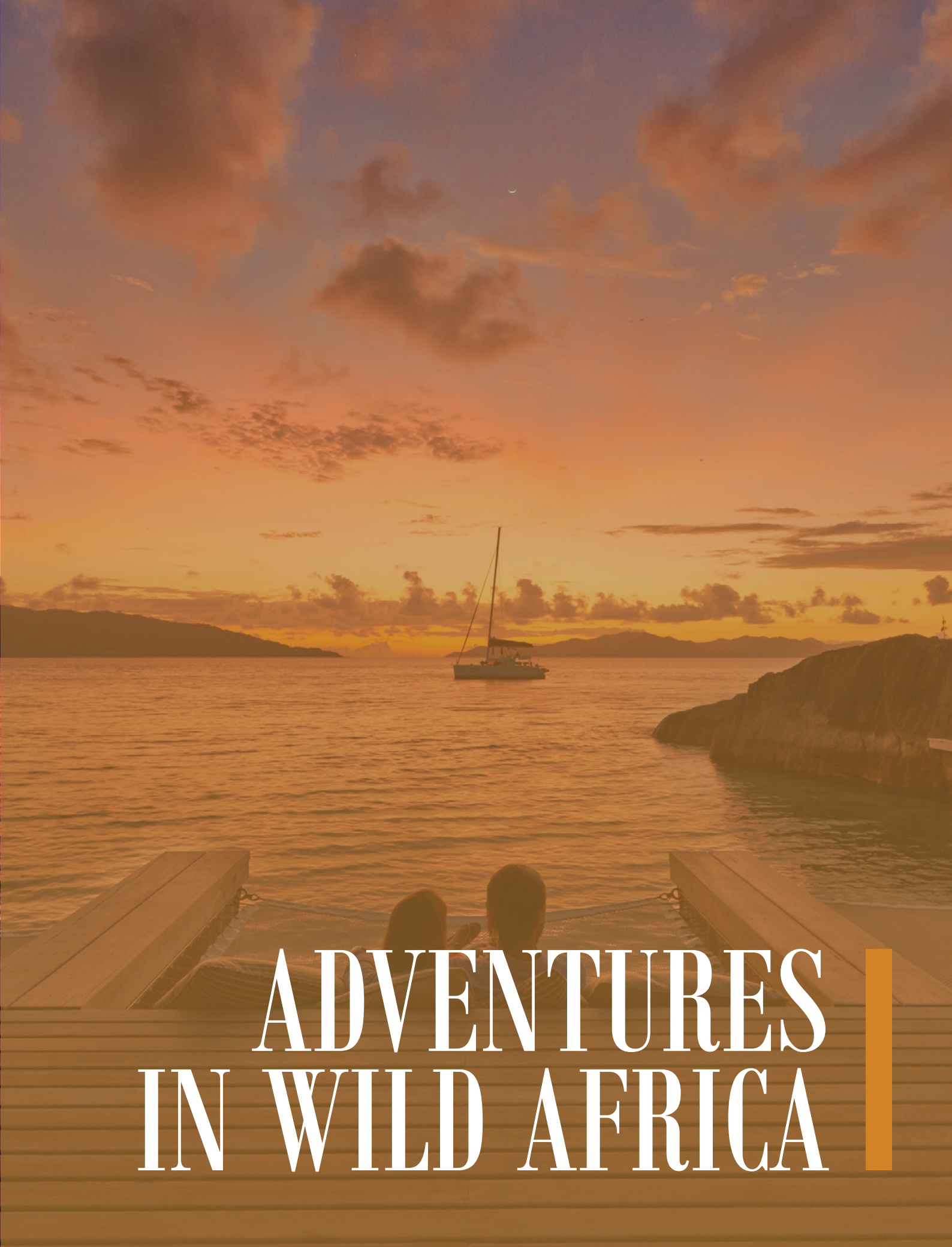
Guests are each handed a djembe drum and given the opportunity to participate in the drumming show by learning a few rhythms. After the drumming show, guests are invited to the dance floor.

The evening is capped off with a group of acapella singers serenading you at your table.

The Boma – Dinner & Drum Show is operated by Zimbabwean hospitality group Africa Albida Tourism, with other properties in their portfolio including Victoria Falls Safari Lodge, Victoria Falls Safari Club, Victoria Falls Safari Suites and Lokuthula Lodges. 



Guests enjoying the interactive drum show at The Boma - Dinner & Drum Show



ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA





A wooden deck at dusk with lit candles and a white sheet. The scene is illuminated by the warm glow of several lit candles on the deck. In the background, a large tree stands against a twilight sky, and a body of water is visible. The overall atmosphere is serene and romantic.

LIWONDE NATIONAL PARK: MALAWI'S RICHLY DIVERSE WILDLIFE PLAYGROUND

To make the above claim for an area of just 600 sq kms - small by the standards of African Parks - might seem farfetched but the number of bird species recorded in the park currently sits at 454, and this gives some credence to this claim and to the range of habitats needed to sustain such a large number. Situated on the eastern banks of the mighty Shire River in Southern Malawi, the various habitats include rocky outcrops with mature miombo woodland, large forests of mopane and albizia, lush riverine thickets of palm and fever trees, expansive moist and seasonally flooded grasslands, lagoons, inlets, and open water. Liwonde National Park is without doubt one of the continent's most beautiful wild areas.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH NATURE'S DIVERSITY

The first description of the area came from the famous Scottish explorer David Livingstone in 1859 when, finding his way up the Zambezi, barred by rapids and looking for a means of justifying the expense of his planned exploration of the river, decided to head up the large unmapped and unknown river flowing into the Zambezi downstream of the rapids. This river was the Shire, and his diaries wax lyrical on its beauty and the large quantities of wildlife on its banks.

The wildlife experience for visitors is equally diverse. One can choose from or enjoy all of traditional game drives by day and night, walks of any duration from 1 hour to 3 days, as well as a quintessential river experience in well-appointed traditional Malawi fishing boats to view the wildlife, birds, and vegetation from the river.

In the dry season the park's large herds of elephant are best seen from these boats which also provide a unique opportunity to view and photograph the distinctively impressive array of water birds. It's always tricky to list a few exciting target species for the keen birders and keep the list to manageable proportions, but a quick attempt at just a few birds regularly seen in the park and around Mvuu Lodge and Camp reveals the Pels Fishing owl, Osprey, Bat Hawk, Palmnut Vulture, White-backed night heron, Bohm's bee eater and of course Livingstone's flycatcher. Other game regularly spotted on both drives and boat trips are lion, cheetah, black rhino, eland, hartebeest, and buffalo.






STAY A TIME AT MVUU CAMP AND LODGE

Mvuu Camp and Lodge are the original camps, opened in 1994 in the park's prime wildlife and scenic area on the banks of the river in the far north. Easily accessible by road transfer from the 2 entry airports of Blantyre and Lilongwe, these camps cater for a large range of interests and budgets. The camp is larger with 38 beds, family chalets and a campground while the nearby lodge caters for 16 guests in considerable luxury, and offers all-inclusive safari rates, wonderful land, and water activities as well as delectable fine dining.

Recently introduced at the lodge is the immaculate **Namagogodo Retreat** for families or groups of no more than four. These accommodations boast two expansive and luxuriously appointed tents with plunge pools, private chef, vehicle, boat, and guide for a truly serene and fulfilling bush experience.

The company has a proud heritage of community and conservation work in the area and around Malawi and is actively involved in three groundbreaking initiatives: HELP Malawi which has built and helps to run a 1000 pupil primary school just outside the park, Children in the Wilderness which teaches conservation to some of the many disadvantaged children in the area, and Root to Fruit which has planted over 250,000 trees in the north of Malawi both as a carbon offset programme for visiting guests and to improve the livelihoods of communities along the northern lakeshore. 

For bookings or more information on the Liwonde National Park and surrounding accommodations please contact reservations@cawsmw.com.

To find out more about HELP Malawi, visit www.helpmalawichildren.com, www.childreninthewilderness.com and www.roottofruit.net to connect with community initiatives in the area.

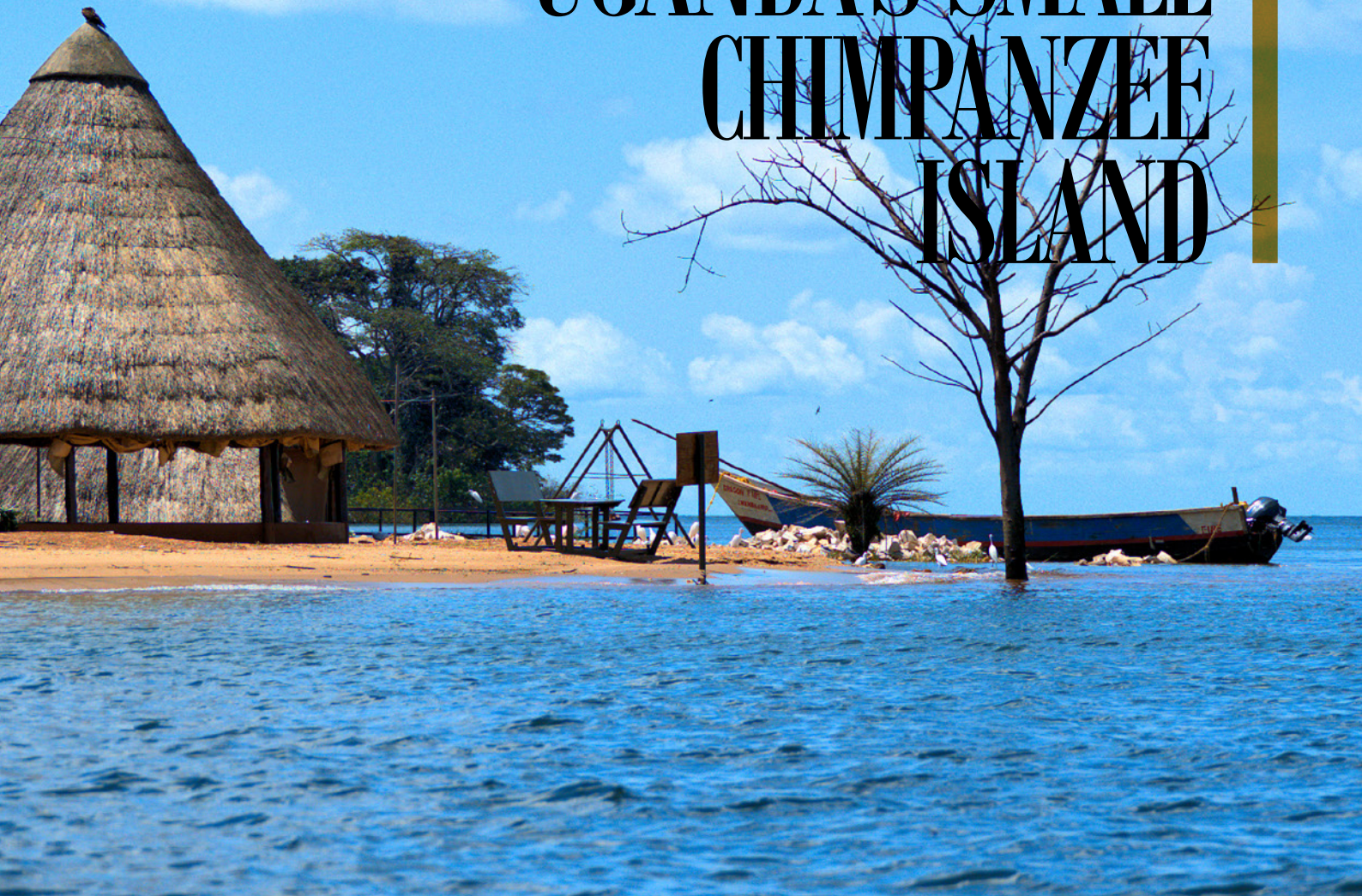




The story of Kerry Stumpe, Founder of not-for-profit organization Children of Conservation, alongside friend and board member Mike Thomas and their quest to save the disappearing shorelines of an orphaned chimpanzee island sanctuary.

By Lorna Campbell & Kerry Stumpe

SAVING NGAMBA: THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE TO SAVE UGANDA'S SMALL CHIMPANZEE ISLAND



Uniquely situated in East-Central Africa, Uganda is a virtual slideshow of the continents' landscape and wildlife offerings. From its impenetrable rain forests, snow-peaked mountains, and sprawling savannahs to its glassy lakes; the 'Pearl of Africa' offers an extraordinary diverse range of adventure. Most of its southern land mass is a sprawling shoreline married to the beautiful, but erratic, waters of Lake Victoria. As the largest tropical lake in the world, Victoria is often unyielding, unforgiving, and unpredictable. Thousands of tiny, seemingly insignificant, but populated islands splinter off the coast like shards of a broken glass bottle on the kitchen floor.

One of those superficially benign slivers is Ngamba Island. Just a short 45-minute boat ride south of Entebbe, this 100-acre island is the precious home to 50 orphaned chimpanzees as well as hundreds of species of vulnerable and endangered birds. While poaching of chimpanzees has declined over the years thanks to the Ugandan government and the Chimpanzee Sanctuary & Wildlife Conservation Trust that runs Ngamba; deforestation and illegal hunting for bushmeat and the pet trade remain a serious threat to human's cousins.

Founded by Dr. Jane Goodall and a small group of conservationist pioneers, this one-of-a-kind primate sanctuary is divided into two sections. 98 acres of lush fruit and indigenous trees are dedicated for the chimps to forage and explore, while the remaining 2 acres are reserved for the island's staff and a handful of lucky guests who can camp in one of four cottage tents at the water's edge. Since chimpanzees don't swim, there is no need for fencing on the shoreline. Once they leave their night enclosures for the day and disappear into the bush, they have the pleasure of a human free existence without unnatural barriers, unlike any other chimp sanctuary in the world.

THE CASE OF THE CHIMPANZEES ON PRESERVING NGAMBA'S FLORA

When Ngamba was first designated as a new habitat for orphaned chimpanzees in 1998, experts projected that the island's vegetation would be destroyed in less than 20 years. To the contrary, the presence of the chimps has actually resulted in an increase in plants and wildlife - not just in number, but diversity. You see, chimps are nature's answer to a healthy rainforest eco-system. They only eat the ripest fruits and berries, allowing flora to mature. When they move to different parts of the forest to settle each evening, they deposit richly fertilized seed pods along the way. As the forest density increases; more birds, bats,



iguanas, otters and other mobile animals start moving into "the best neighborhood in town" bringing their own "seed pods" from trees and plants on nearby islands where they feed for the day. This natural cycle continues to contribute to the diversity of plant species in their new home. In fact, since 1998, the diversity of flora and non-chimpanzee fauna on Ngamba Island has increased by almost 10%.

The biggest current challenge for this tiny island isn't poaching or deforestation though - it's water. At its peak, Ngamba only rises approximately 19 feet above Victoria's edge and, in the past 18 months, her water level has risen a record 5 feet. This unprecedented occurrence has claimed almost 30% of the Island's precious shoreline. The rising waters have wreaked havoc at Ngamba and now pose a significant threat to the island and its endangered residents.

CHILDREN OF CONSERVATION AND THE CALL TO SAVE NGAMBA ISLAND

Kerry Stumpe, founder of the non-profit, Children of Conservation, knows first-hand how important the rock and soil are that make up Ngamba Island. For 9 years, Children of Conservation ("CofC") has run a scholarship program providing an education for over 55 children of Ngamba's staff, so Stumpe knows the island well. In December of 2020, Stumpe and fellow board member, Mike Thomas was meeting about a new CofC project when they got "the call" from Ngamba's Executive Director asking for guidance on building a sea wall around critically eroded portions of the island.

Dr. Rukundo's voice was solemn as he described the urgency of preserving what was left of the shoreline and rebuilding what had been lost. As the discussions advanced, it became clear that Stumpe's background as an Architect and Thomas's experience as a builder were going to be crucial to the project's success. Ngamba could hire day laborers for the blocking and tackling but finding daily "on-site" managers to initiate the project and teach the laborers proper techniques for installation and stability had proven to be a challenge.

After a bit of research and several discussions with the Ngamba team, Stumpe and Thomas determined that this project

would require the construction of a long gabion wall 30 feet from shore - a gabion being a galvanized metal cage filled with rock. The project would require hundreds of gabion cages (6 ft. long x 3 ft. wide x 3 ft. tall) that would be strategically joined together and positioned along the lake bottom perpendicular to the shore, filled with rocks hand-mined from a neighboring island to create a base/footing, then topped with another row of cages secured to the base but running parallel to the shore. It also became clear that the proper construction and placement of the gabions would be crucial to the long-term stability of the wall and the island itself.

THE DIARY OF KERRY STUMPE

And so it began, as these Atlanta-based businessmen immediately started making plans to embark on a 12-day working adventure to save a little part of it the word. Although Stumpe had led other volunteer construction projects in Africa, this was Children of Conservation's first endeavor to address the devastating effects of a natural disaster due to climate change. It was also the first project to be planned in the middle of COVID, which presented a host of logistical challenges. Intrigued by the unique nature of this project, laced with a new frontier in travel planning, Stumpe was to keep a journal of what would ultimately become an incredible wellness adventure, with entries that read....

"After enduring 2 COVID tests, 3 airports, a 4-hour layover in Amsterdam, 8 time zone changes, and 24 hours of travel time, all while being "masked up", we arrive frazzled but excited in Entebbe, Uganda, shortly before midnight. We step off the plane and are immediately greeted by the fresh warm African breeze that wraps us up like a soft blanket on a snowy winter day. Until this moment, I had told myself that we were making the trip to help save Ngamba. However, being here suddenly



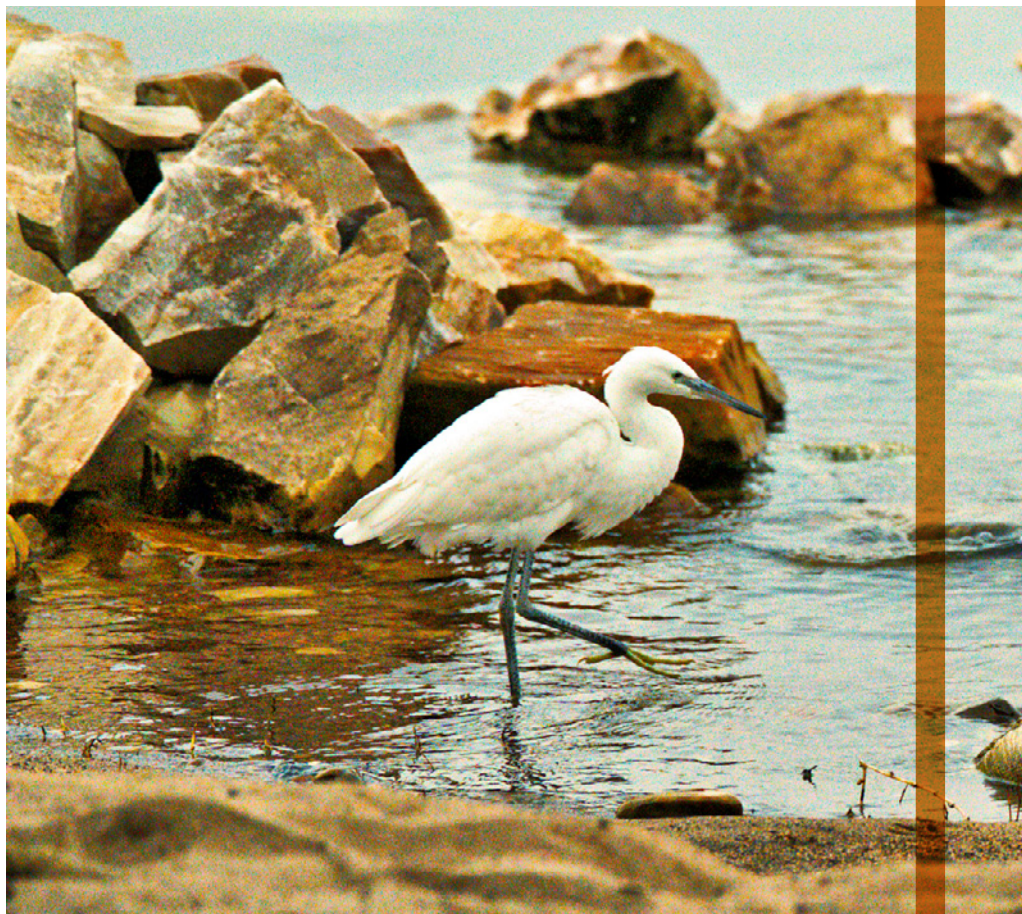
makes us realize the impact the pandemic has had on our emotional well-being and we can already feel the gratitude that we know will be unavoidable as we spend the next two weeks side by side with guys who have faced unimaginable daily challenges their entire lives.

The airport is more desolate than usual, even for this time of night. COVID's stranglehold on tourism stares us down as we coast through customs despite the added temperature checks, negative COVID test verifications, mandatory hand washing stops and health screenings. It's been a long day and it's nice to see the familiar face of our driver as we walk out from the terminal.

In what seems to have only been minutes since I laid my head down on the pillow, daylight streams through the hotel curtains to welcome me to our journey. Before heading out, we grab a quick cup of joe (the coffee here is amazing) and a veggie egg omelet wrapped in chapatti (a local dish known as "rolex"). Dr. Rukundo picks us up and leads us to several shoreline hotels where we inspect recent installations of the very same gabions, we will be using at Ngamba.

Our reconnaissance mission reveals an unthinkable amount of rock that will be required, and an even more sobering realization of the labor and hours it is going to take to install these "rock cages" without the use of any machinery. With no time to waste, we shuttle to the rustic boat dock at the marina. I've been here many times before but, despite having been told about the swelling of the lake, I'm in utter disbelief as I see the dock completely submerged. Just a year ago, there was nearly 5 feet of clearance between the top of the water and the dock. Now, I'm wishing I'd unpacked my waders as our tennis shoe clad feet become immersed, tiptoeing through the water covered wood to the small single engine boat.

Our Captain carefully disembarks, and I turn for the first time to look back at the familiar shoreline. What used to be a desirable and growing waterfront is now littered with flooded and abandoned buildings that slowly disappear as we turn southeast and begin navigating the choppy waters of Lake Victoria. Fifteen minutes into the





trip, the Captain shuts off the engine and stops. He announces in a heavy Ugandan accent “We are now sitting on the Equator.” Maybe it’s just the small-town boy from the Midwest in me, but no matter how many times I make this trip, I never get tired of the notion that I’m crossing the Equator, surrounded by ocean-like waves in a lake that’s bigger than the state of West Virginia!

As we approach Ngamba, her visual profile stands out amongst her sister islands. While the others have been scraped bare by human habitation, Ngamba is a beautiful sight of dense dark green vegetation. There’s a small patch of land with 7 visible and distinct structures: the dining pavilion, a welcome center, an education building and 4 visitors’ tents. I think back to my first trip here over 10 years ago. I have fond memories of laying with my wife on the platform deck of our tent amazed by the endless stars in the night sky. Our old tent is gone, and that platform is now under water. The new semi-permanent tents that were erected just 3 years ago and 30 feet inland, are now alarmingly close (if not partially engaged) with the rising waters. Nonetheless, the sight of these open-air buildings with thatched cone and hipped roofs is welcoming and our excitement is palpable. As we make landfall, we are once again reminded of the power of Mother Nature. The dock that was here just last year has also been swallowed by Victoria and now serves solely as an underwater base for the newly constructed makeshift dock that we use to disembark.

We were expecting to stay in the rudimentary staff quarters with shared showers and toilets, but the COVID related tourism restrictions have rendered all the guest tents vacant. We’re pleasantly surprised to learn that we’ll each be spending our next 2 weeks in our own private roomy and comfortable thatch roofed abodes with solar heated water for showers and perfectly functional (private) indoor plumbing for sinks and toilets. Our old friend, Rashida, welcomes us and reminds us to ALWAYS close our

doors. Open doors are billboard sized invitations to any one of the tens of thousands of fruit bats that migrate nightly at dusk, not to mention the friendly 6-foot iguanas that live beneath our lakefront homes. There is, however, little concern as our reptilian friends are super shy and scurry from us every time we approach! We spend the rest of the day taking stock of materials, assessing the project and meeting about the daunting challenge that lies ahead. We sleep well, surrounded by the sounds of nature and are awoken by the excited pant hoots of happy chimpanzees anticipating their morning feeding.”

MISSION OF THE MIND TO PROJECT EXECUTION

Stumpe continues...

“There just seems to be more daylight at the equator. Days start early and end late when working manual labor. Our typical day starts at 6:30 am with coffee and tea in the dining hall where we sit, mesmerized by the intoxicating waves lapping along Victoria’s edge. Work begins promptly at 7 and breakfast is served at 9:30 (like all guest meals, it is prepared to order). Yes, if you are a laborer in Uganda, you work BEFORE you eat.

Our crew is a rag tag group of 5 hard-working twenty something Ugandan men from the capital city of Kampala; 4 more will join us next week. They are dressed in an array of denim jeans and work pants with old t-shirts and polos. We soon discover that they will wear the same clothes every day of our project. Some have boots and gloves while others are without. Mike came well prepared but has now given his extra sets of gloves to 2 of the workers who worked with none. As I look at their strong rugged hands, I find myself wondering if they would even know the difference. I’ve always considered myself a pretty tough nut, but these guys take it to a whole other level. Donned in our new “work” gear that Mike and I had the “privilege” of ordering online and delivered to our doorsteps before we left, it’s time to get moving.

There are numerous stacks of the caging material piled around the yard. To some, the piles would appear to be nothing more than masses of metal, but we know that these soon to be constructed gabions represent a beacon of hope for the island. The crew carefully connect, twist, and secure the mesh grid panels with heavy gauge wires and pliers to form individual cages. They systematically join six cages at a time into a slightly semicircular bundle that will ultimately result in a serpentine design. From this point forward, the building of the cages will be tackled in the evenings, as a way to rest while still moving ahead on the project after the day's heavy lifting of rocks. It will prove to be a slow, but steady process as our small crew can only move so many stones in any given day.

Once the first few bundles are connected, we each grab a section. As if we are carrying nitroglycerin in a James Bond film, we carefully walk the bound, empty cages in unison into the warm uneasy waters. Most mornings, the temperature is a pleasant 60-70 degrees and, since we are working on the western side of the island, we spend the first couple of hours in shade. We place the bundles about 30 ft. from the shore and position them on Victoria's sandy bottom, securing them from possible undertow. We choreograph our work with Mother Nature's dance and use her waters as a level. We create a sturdy foundation base that tops out 6 inches below the waterline. The placement of these foundation cages is crucial as, once they are filled, additional cages will be placed on top running parallel to the shore. This top layer will create a visible band several feet above the lake, slithering in continuous "s" curves like our shy iguanas swimming in the clear waters. Eventually the 30-foot space between the shore and our gabion wall will be backfilled and planted to re-establish the washed-out soil and rebuild the island.

While challenging, and definitely

the most crucial part of the project, placing the gabions is a welcome task compared to the unceremonious and laborious work of filling them with rock. Unlike the modern conveniences of home, there is no Home Depot or Lowes to call for a delivery. The rock we are using is being hand-mined daily, with pickaxes and sledgehammers, by a crew of a dozen men that could easily be mistaken for pirates, from the neighboring island of Kome. They deliver our bootie twice a day on two overloaded 25 ft. beat up boats and toss the stone on the shore. We inquire if our "pirate" friends could, perhaps, unload the rocks directly into the cages (30 feet from shore and easily accessible by

their boats) to save us the labor of transferring the rocks manually, but the captain of the crew is on a "schedule" and will not alter his plan to assist in helping our cause. Of course, this lack of "construction courtesy" is not unique to Africa, as we've experienced the same familiar attitude on virtually every project we've ever worked on in the U.S.

Given the positioning of the rock piles on the shore, we create a human chain, like firemen with water buckets, moving the stones one by one to the gabions that now seem a mile away. It is an "all hands on deck" effort with our crew, us and even Dr. Rukundo, thigh deep in the water wearing his dress khakis for work. The water is chest high for the four guys at the end who carefully place each stone in the baskets. Cross wires must be installed every 8 inches to stabilize and secure the cage sides from buckling. The cages are completely submerged below the water's surface so the crew takes turns holding their breath and plunging beneath the waves to make it happen. Thankfully, this process means the crossties take several minutes, which allows our 55-year-old backs a much-needed rest fairly often."

DAYS OF IMPACT AND NIGHTS OF BEAUTY CONTINUE

"Day two promises to be a repeat of day one; except that our pirate captain actually does seem to have the capacity for empathy as he arrives with 2 incredibly old and very leaky wooden canoes to serve as our "rock

caddies" for the remainder of our construction adventure. Each boat can hold approximately 200 lbs. of stone. Despite having to dedicate one of our crew full time to "bailing water" from the porous boats, being able to load them at the shore and unload into the gabions is proving to be much more efficient than our human chain gang. As the days begin to meld together, our crew becomes more capable and more confident.

Days become nights and the nights here are unlike any I've ever experienced. Dusk is my favorite time on the island, as we sit and enjoy the symphony around us. There's a soft and almost imperceptible buzz in the air as thousands of fruit bats voyage away from the island for their nightly feeding, while hundreds of white (and not so quiet) egrets migrate in, covering the trees for the night's slumber like freshly fallen snowflakes. The chimps begin to emerge from the forest, shrieking with joy as they enter their nighttime lodging in anticipation of their evening porridge. This treat is not only a delicious snack, but it allows the staff to ensure the chimps get extra nutrients or medications they might need. As the sun sets on the horizon, the vastness of the sky reveals itself and the darkness becomes alive with majestically clear and unthinkable views of the Milky Way. From our porches, we can hear the rhythmic sound of gentle waves that dissolve into the makeshift rock shoreline and a steady breeze flutters our tent flaps. We look out over the black horizon and notice what appears to be fireflies dancing on the lake in the distance. Upon closer examination, we see that the fluttering lights are actually the rustic incandescent lamps of a hundred or so night fisherman that arrive shortly after sunset and remain until daybreak.

Throughout the week, we measure each day's success linearly as our efforts are on full display under the clear waters like a ship in a bottle. The chimpanzee keepers have become our cheerleaders, stopping by occasionally to see the project with encouraging words and disbelief. For them, the construction of this wall serves as a hopeful and certainly, positive step forward, in the long string of despair they have faced this past year. Like most everyone else, this global pandemic has left many in their communities jobless and threatened the lives of their families and friends. However, unlike us, they live in a country where approximately 65% of the population was already living below or just above the poverty line. In addition, the shutdown has restricted visitors to the island, cutting off the much-needed revenue to feed and care for their hairy orphaned friends. Due to COVID and the risk of transmission to the chimps, the staff is now enduring the grind of a mandated skeleton crew that works an isolated 15 day on, 15 day off work schedule. These struggles have been magnified by the flood waters from Victoria and the gut-wrenching sight of watching their precious island disappear slowly into her grasp. Seeing the glimmer of joy and hope in the eyes of our colleagues, we could not be happier to be a small part of the master plan to rebuild and restore the island for ALL her inhabitants.

The continuous sounds of nature bring everything into constant perspective. Whether it be the chirp and chatter of the lapwings and weaver birds, the occasional hoots of the chimpanzees playing in the forest or the waters gently splashing against our legs and aching forearms; we are constantly reminded of the simplistic beauty that surrounds us. Mike and I have decided that, if there is a laborer's heaven – this surely must be it. On the other hand, the very shoreline we are working to restore demonstrates the power of Mother Nature and the

devastating impact of climate change. This project also serves as a lesson in humanity and the importance of partnerships and working together. We work side by side with our local crew and the staff at Ngamba, rely on the crucial rocks provided by the residents of Kome Island and collaborate with the Ugandan government to preserve this place of national heritage – each an important part of the whole – each benefiting from the partnership with the other.”


CELEBRATING CRITICAL MILESTONES Stumpe concludes...

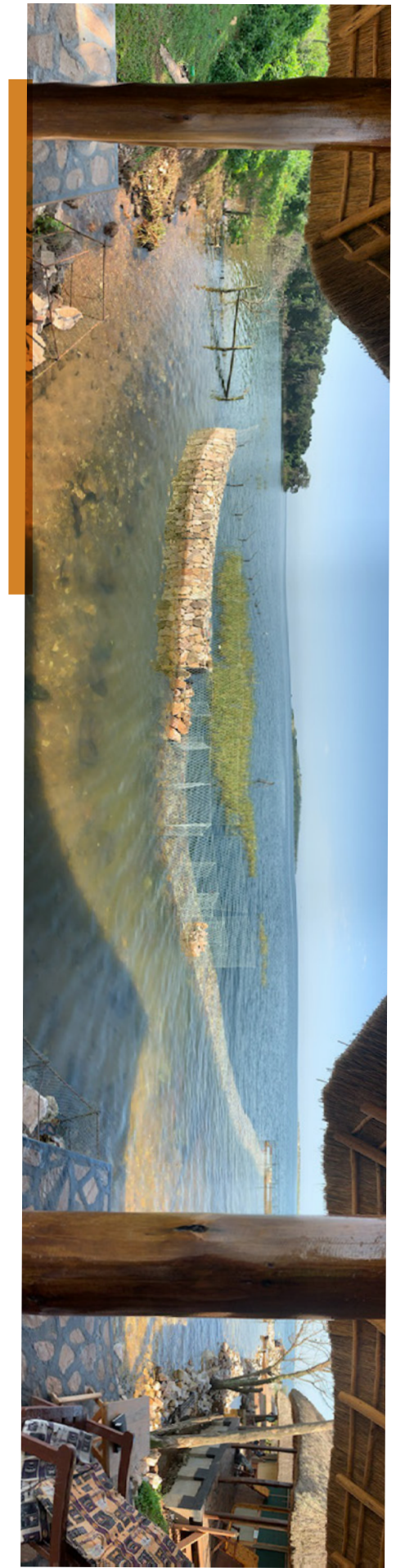
“By the end of our stay, we've taught the local crew the technical aspects and skills to ensure the proper installation of the gabions. Our hands-on approach means we will leave having completed 300 ft. of the wall which, when complete, will remain a visible and constant reminder of Victoria's wrath of 2020. We have constructed and installed 52 gabion cages and moved over 200,000 lbs. of stone; but this is just the



ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • SAVING NGAMBA

beginning. We are genuinely humbled and impressed with our crew. They are the hardest working young men you will ever find and have an estimated 5 more weeks of work to complete their portion of the project. As for our pirates, they will continue to work for another 3 months to complete the backfill of our structure. With any luck at all, the dock, and shoreline of this critical part of the Island will be restored completely by July, just in time to be on the other side of the COVID pandemic and begin welcoming tourists back to this magically unique place.

There's an African proverb that says, 'If you ever think you're too small to make a difference, spend the night in a closed room with a mosquito.' As we head back home to face the second year of COVID, intermixed with heated political rants broadcasted endlessly throughout every media outlet, it will be natural to feel small and defeated by the "next" bad thing that may come our way. But we can now accept our broken world, having been given the greatest gift of all, over the past 12 amazing days. We got to be mosquitos – small (and a bit pesky to our hard-working crew), but able to make a difference – to serve a purpose much greater than ourselves – and to do so in one of the most wonderful places on the planet." 





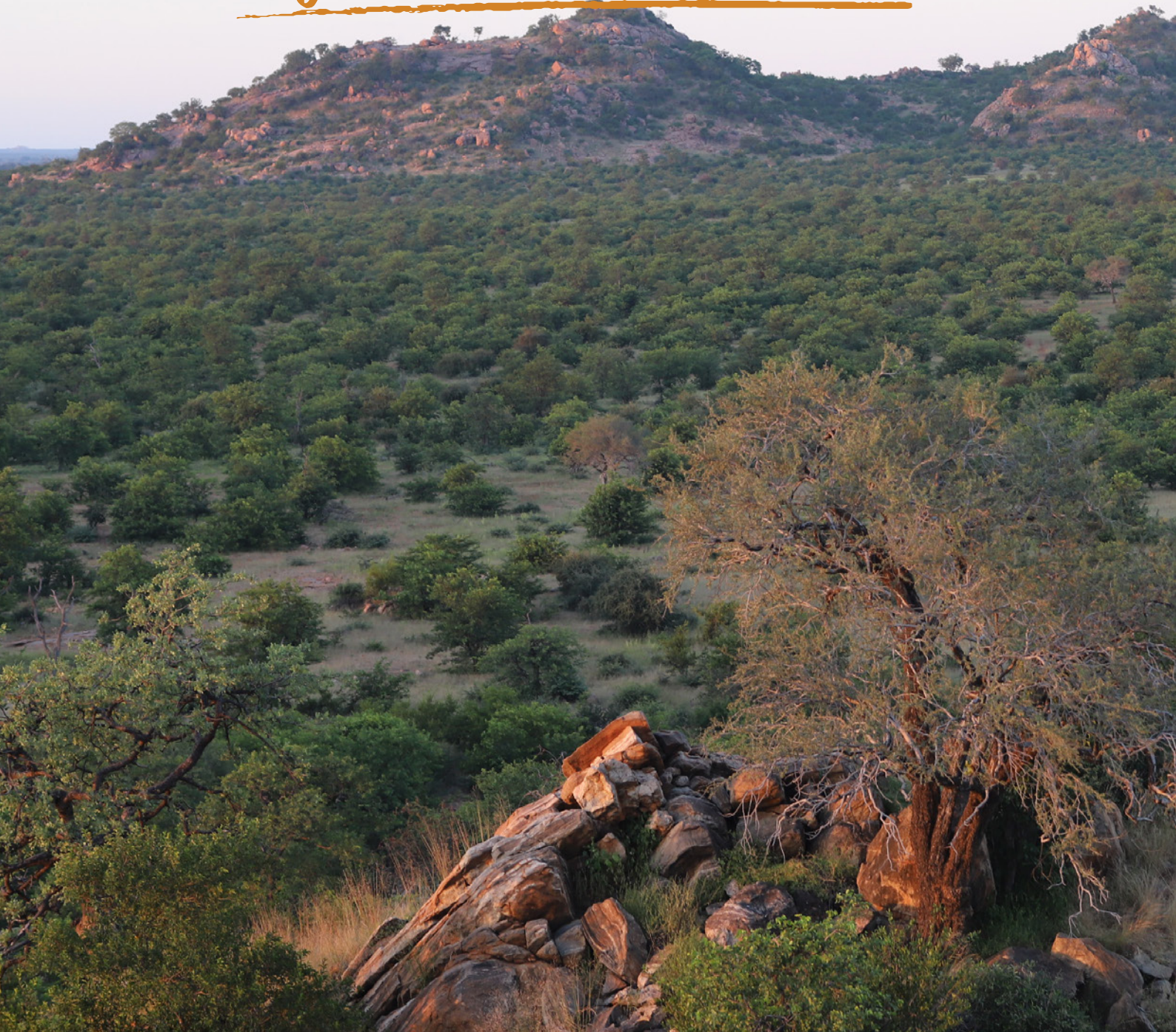
Advertise with us!

Are you looking for more visibility for your **travel, hospitality, leisure and lifestyle brand** to residents and travellers in the UAE and GCC markets?

ADVERTISE WITH US! PACKAGES STARTING FROM AS LOW AS US \$50.

Contact us on info@travelessencemag.com to find out more !

The Timbo Afrika Mission



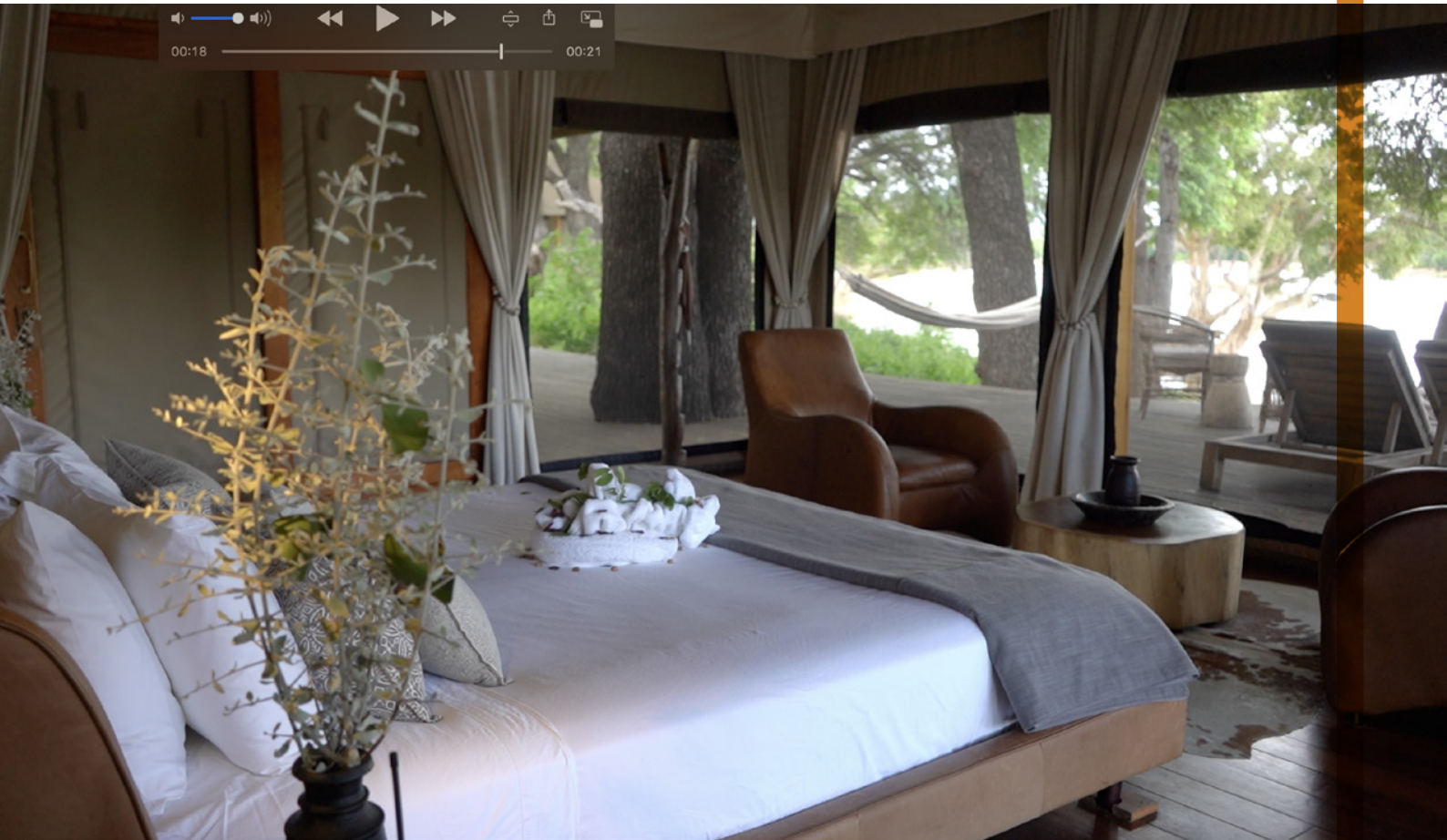


Playing a role in averting human-wildlife conflict in Botswana's Tuli Block

For the first time in history, Botswana's government, in cooperation with the Department of Wildlife & National Parks, proceeded to form a Private-Public Partnership between Government and Timbo Afrika, a private entity with operations that contribute towards Botswana's tourism industry. Today, this ground-breaking partnership has resulted in a team erecting a new 30km-long fence on the outskirts of the nearest village Mathathane, which borders the Central Tuli Wilderness areas. This tremendous milestone is slated to offer long term protection of agricultural areas and local communities from the conflict that results when wildlife and agriculture compete for land resources. The Timbo Afrika mission is one that assures inhabitants of this area that these better and stronger 'elephant proof' fences, will protect people and animals from each other.

THE CASE OF HUMANS VERSUS AFRICA'S WILDLIFE POPULATION

The case of Africa's human-wildlife conflict isn't new as urban sprawl and human migration patterns have often led to people encroaching on lands that have historically been the natural habitats



of wildlife species. In the case of Botswana, and other wildlife rich areas across the continent, elephants have ravaged fields belonging to subsistence farmers, destroying their crops, and in some cases leaving these farmers destitute. Hyenas, lions and leopards are known to raid cattle kraals and domestic livestock pens, not only robbing already relatively poor people from their dominant sources of income and food supply.

A logical and often immediate effect of people losing their food supply is an attempt to find alternative food sources. Over the years, the continent has witnessed an increase in what proponents of wildlife conservationist term “substance poaching”, where initially, the hunting of wildlife was done in pursuit of food or protection against further attack, but now growing into what is commonly coined ‘bush meat trade’ in a bid to attract an extra source income. This is a crude way of indiscriminately catching and killing animals through the use of snares and traps.

ENACTING CHANGE IN THE CENTRAL TULI WILDERNESS AREA

The collaborative exercise between parties at Timbo Afrika and their associates in government has been significantly instrumental in the reduction of rampant poaching in and around the Central Tuli wilderness areas, with hundreds of snares having been removed since the beginning of the exercise to date. The fence has literally created a bond between all stakeholders involved in mitigating the challenges associated with human-wildlife conflict, as all interests across all parties affected are increasingly aligned.

Adding to this, community members now enjoying an increased confidence in their ability to revisit their normal farming practices, without fear of wildlife encroaching on the lands they occupy. As a result of the 30km fence installation, elephants have naturally migrated back into their wilderness areas, and there have been few to no reports of lions having attempted to enter villages to kill domestic livestock for food.

TIMBO AFRIKA AS A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PLAYER

The fence construction was funded through Timbo Afrika, a Dutch foundation committed to the protection of wildlife in the areas in which it has a footprint. Timbo Afrika’s Founder, Albert Hartog, has been a long-time passionate protector of wildlife, allocating notable resources into several large projects mandated to play a role in the preservation of animals, including the acclaimed Furs For Life Program, whereby faux leopard skin was developed to replace real skin for ceremonial use, thus saving thousands of leopards from being killed for their fur.

The foundation has a pragmatic approach to supporting wildlife conservation and is an active player in Botswana’s tourism landscape. Timbo Afrika also owns

Koro River Camp & Koro Island in the Tuli in Botswana, two luxury tented safari camps on the majestic Limpopo River. All proceeds generated through tourism via these camps flow back to the foundation and no profit goes to the owners or shareholders, meaning that each guest staying at the camp is automatically a donor and supports wildlife and nature conservation in the best possible way. The construction of the 30km fence is a direct result of some of the proceeds that have been channelled into the Foundation through guests staying at the Koro River Camp and Koro Island luxury tented camps.

TECHNOLOGICAL USE FOR WILDLIFE MONITORING AND PRESERVATION

But other exciting projects are currently being rolled out as well by Timbo Afrika, all of which are in close cooperation with the government and local communities for maximum impact and mutual benefit to critical stakeholders. Take for instance the case of rhino and sable antelopes which used to be endemic species to this area before succumbing to the impacts of illegal poaching. Timbo Afrika is actively setting up projects to re-introduce these species back into the Tuli area, including ensuring full protection of reintroduced animals to keep these beautiful species safe from malignant activity.

The construction of the new fencing also brought with it the introduction of state-of-the-art technology to aid rangers with anti-poaching efficiencies. Also, in close cooperation with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, the “Smart-parks Monitoring System”, designed in The Netherlands, is being installed. This unique system allows for the use of the latest sensor powered equipment for checking and monitoring fences, tracking vehicles and tracking endangered animals. This will allow high-end digital secure radio communication across the wildlife areas, covering an initial area of no less than 30,000 hectares. For research purposes the Smart-parks Monitoring System also functions as a hyper-efficient reporting system, giving like-minded researchers access to accumulated data and from a management point of view, paving way for detailed reporting



on any type of wildlife related matters.

The beauty is that the system is accessible via the cloud on an app on one’s phone and gives instant access to critical information, ensuring quickened responsiveness by rangers and other on ground supporting staff should there be a poaching incident or a breach of a fence.


TIMBO AFRIKA'S COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION IN BOTSWANA'S TULI BLOCK

Beyond being an active contributor in building Botswana’s economy through sustainable tourism through the luxury tented camp operations, Timbo Afrika is on the cusp of work-

ing together with its partners, further committing the Foundation to equipping a control room at the facilities of the Department of Wildlife with required technological and functional resources. A story of success and critical milestones is evolving through the creation of a joint task force between landowners, farmers and law enforcement.

Over and above this, an exciting Community Owned Tourism Camp is also presently being developed in the same area, creating access for local residents and making sure that community members benefit from employment opportunities at the Tourism Camp but also enjoy an ownership structure that is part of the business model.

With the animals being safer, and research projects yielding data driven insights, the fence installed by Timbo Afrika can be credited for notable impact within the Central Tuli Wilderness area. Local and international guests, now enjoy a more informative experience, as they have the unique opportunity to participating in some of the research exercises as part of their safari experience while in Botswana. This means that beyond enjoying a little leisure and relaxation while on Safari, guests can spot animals from game viewing vehicles while actively interacting with the researchers as they head out into the bush to learn about animal behaviour, hunting patterns, wildlife territories and their eating habits. This participation is even open for our younger guests and has proven to be an absolute delight for the younger guests.

It is safe to say that the fence has not just led to a safer tourism area by averting potential for further human-wildlife adverse interactions but has created an atmosphere of growth in equal interests for all stakeholders. With the revival of more agricultural projects, tourism developments and general recovery as the world adjusts to the impact of COVID-19, one can anticipate continued positive economic and environmental impact as collective efforts forge ahead. 







A romantic beach scene at sunset. In the foreground, a dining table with a white tablecloth is set on the sand with two wicker chairs. The table is set with a bottle of wine, glasses, and plates. In the background, a couple is walking along the beach, holding hands. The ocean is visible in the distance under a warm, golden sky.

The Honeymooners' DREAM ON THE SEYCHELLEAN ARCHIPELAGO

A remote and natural paradise, the Seychelles archipelago is the quintessential honeymoon destination, and for good reason. With a generous dose of luxury resorts, idyllic beaches, verdant rainforests and an abundance of marine life, Seychelles offers something unique that will sweep you and your partner off your feet.

Looking for a honeymoon destination to celebrate the beginning of the rest of your lives together after your wedding day? Well, here's an incredibly itinerary that may entice you into choosing Seychelles as your post-nuptial's destination of choice...



A

award-winning luxury travel company Ker & Downey® Africa carries as well-established reputation for curating some of the most enticing offers for honeymooners and couples seeking to connect with each other in the most pristine of settings. After all, which lovebirds would shy away from an opportunity that is postcard perfect, with their feet wading through the waters of azure oceans by day and romantic, exquisite dinners by night. With a truly once-in-a-lifetime honeymooners romantic 11-day Luxury Seychelles Honeymoon, complete with private islands and exclusive-use villas, newlyweds can spend their time unwinding in the lap of luxury at the Four Seasons Desroches and Six Senses Zil Pasyon or partake in an array of activities on offer to add a sense of adventure to the experience. Think private sunset cruises, island-hopping snorkeling excursions and private movie screenings under the stars.

DAY 1-5

FOUR SEASONS DESROCHES, DESROCHES ISLAND

The itinerary begins on Mahé Island – the international gateway to the Seychelles archipelago – where you will board a light aircraft and be whisked away to your very own private Eden on Desroches Island. You'll be welcomed by the team at Four Sea-





sons Desroches and accompanied to your luxurious Ocean View Pool Villa for 5 nights in paradise.

What to expect from Four Seasons Desroches

The sole resort on the island, Four Seasons Desroches consists of 71 accommodation options ranging from rustic-chic suites to expansive villas, each guaranteeing utmost privacy with a private pool, cabana, and a secluded garden with direct access to the beach. Inside, the villas combine traditional and contemporary Creole style with bursts of bold colour.

Your time on the island can be as active or leisurely as you desire. The island offers plenty of adventure and, while there is a network of buggies to transport you from A to B, you will also be provided with your very own bicycle with which to explore over 15km of biking trails around the island. Try your hand at ocean kayaking, paddle boarding, snorkeling and scuba diving or enjoy a wealth of on-land activities including yoga, tennis, and beach volleyball. For wildlife lovers, there is an inland animal sanctuary where you can meet the Aldabra Giant Tortoises, who are cared for by the Island Conservation Society.

Toast the day's adventure at the resort's poolside bar or enjoy a world-class dining experience at one of the on-site restaurants.

To make your honeymoon extra special, Ker & Downey® Africa includes a 75-minute couples massage at the resort's world-class spa, as well as a complimentary private stargazing experience on the resort's runway, exclusively for you and your loved one.

DAY 6-10 SIX SENSES ZIL PASYON, FÉLICITÉ ISLAND

Next up, you will return to Mahé Island for your onward journey to Félicité Island by helicopter. The 20-minute flight takes you




over dense palm jungles, pristine beaches, and vibrant coral reefs to Six Senses Zil Pasyon – the exclusive resort on Félicité Island. The team will await your arrival at the resort's private helipad and accompany you to a private one-bedroom Hideaway Pool Villa where you can pop your complimentary bottle of bubbles on arrival to celebrate your recent nuptials.

What to expect from Six Senses Zil Pasyon

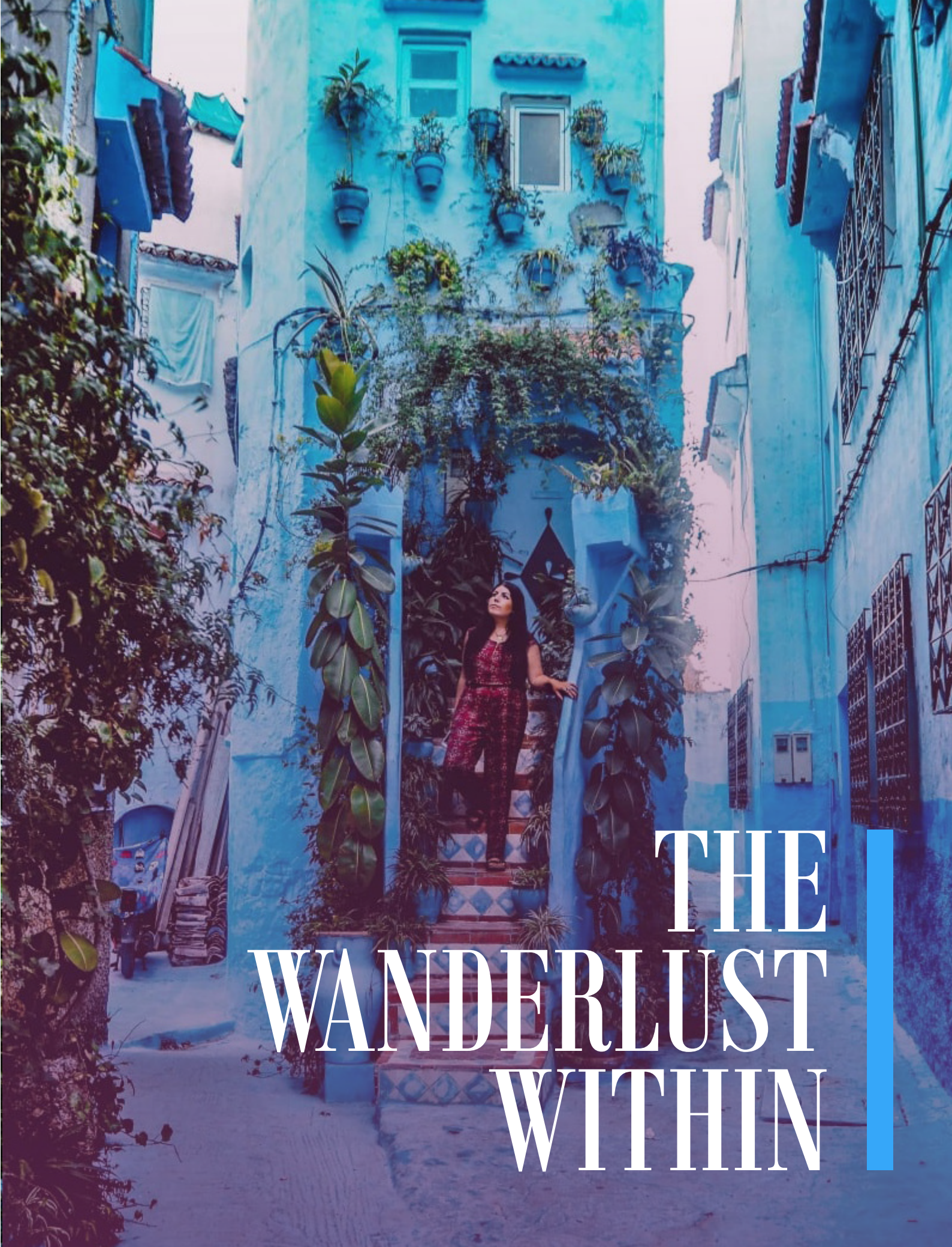
Six Senses' first foray into Africa, the luxurious Six Senses Zil Pasyon boasts 33 exclusive villas moulded around the island's granite boulders and ocean. Each villa is fitted with a private pool and ensures utmost privacy for honeymooners.

The beach-front hub of restaurants, bars, a boutique, modern gym, swimming pool and library set the scene for the main guests' area. The world-class spa with five double treatment villas overlooks the ocean and offers a wide range of holistic wellness and rejuvenation treatments. The spa features an elevated pool with a sundeck, as well as a yoga and meditation pavilion to enhance guests' wellness journey.

Located in the north, Six Senses Zil Pasyon is encircled by Grande Soeur; Petite Soeur; Coco and Marianne Islands, offering the ultimate island-hopping experience. Your personal Guest Experience Manager will provide you with a range of activities within the resort as well as further afield. Soak up the sun on this island paradise with an array of water sports, snorkeling excursions to nearby island reefs, or dive into the deep to witness sheltered reefs brimming with vibrant marine life.

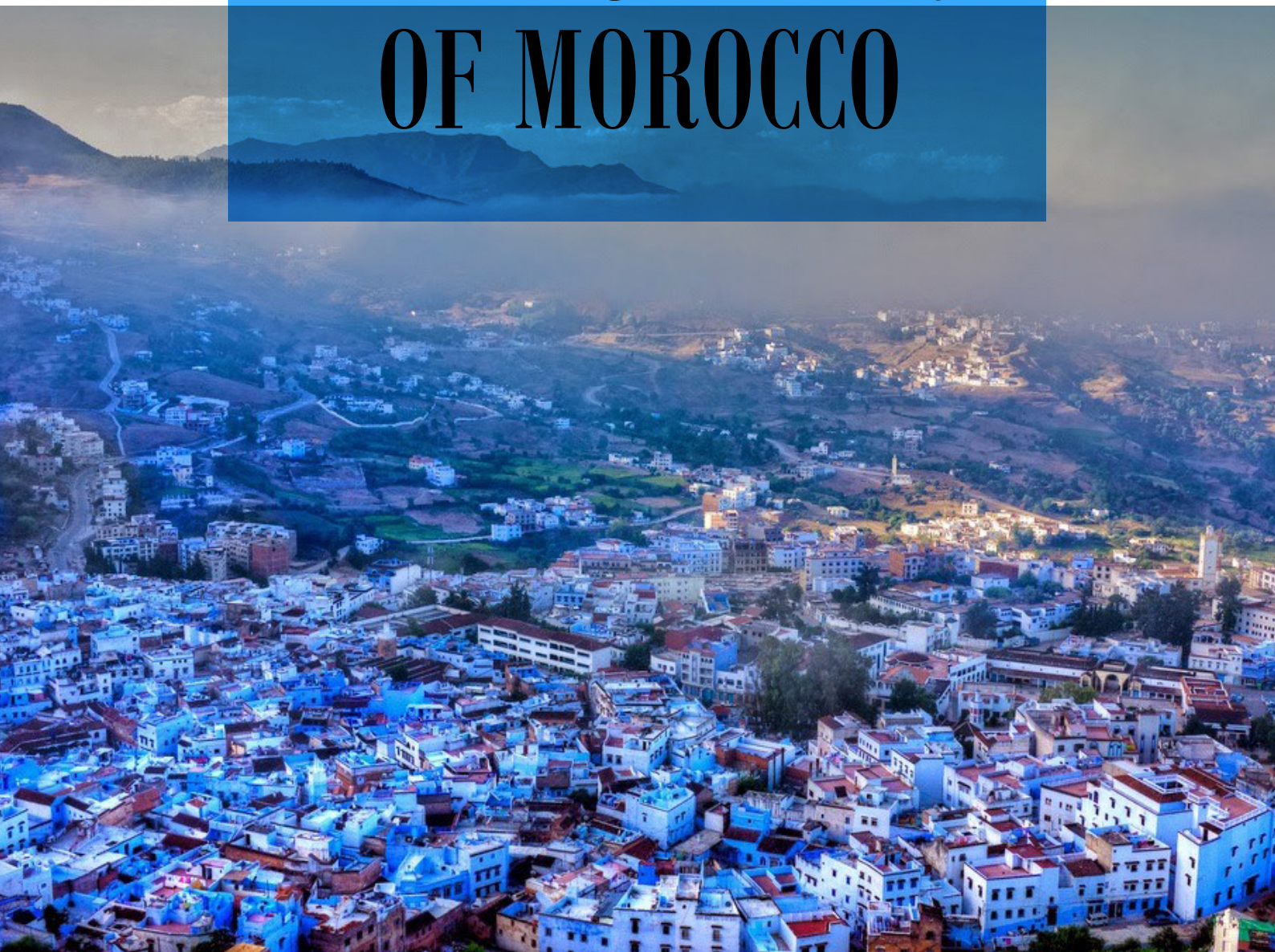
Your honeymoon itinerary includes a 60-minute couples massage, as well as a sunset cruise complete with a bottle of bubbles, delicious canapes, and a private movie screening at the resort's outdoor cinema under the stars. 





THE WANDERLUST WITHIN

DISCOVER CHEFCHAOEN: THE BLUE PEARL OF MOROCCO



Nestled away in the Rif Mountains of North West Morocco is an enchanting town called Chefchaouen, a popular and incredibly Instagrammable travel destination which drawing tourists in with its charm and sheer intrigue. Characterised by its blue-coloured buildings, everything about this little town, from its houses and restaurants, is pretty much stained varied shades of blue...and will leave you with plenty to muse over...

By Daphine Mabhiza



Founded in 1471 by Moulay Ali ibn Rashid al-Alami as a kasbah, which means fortress, Chefchaouen was built in an effort to ward off Portuguese invaders. With time, many Moroccan tribes settled here along with Jewish people, establishing a community that would later become a beacon of historical and aesthetic distinction within the borders of Morocco. Although the town, and Morocco as a whole, suffered numerous atrocities on account of recurring invasions

throughout history, Chefchaouen exhibited resilience, and is now often found on the bucket lists of many travellers looking to take on Morocco as a destination for exploration.

A TOURIST'S BLISS

It's not surprising that one can easily get lost in the magical nature of Chefchaouen. If its not the serenity and breathtaking views of the surrounding Rif Mountains, the blue buildings, warmth of its people and unique food and cultural experiences will do well to intrigue you.

Almost every corner of the town is picture-perfect, making it a haven for photographers, explorers, and content creators alike, awarding one infinite photo-opportunities as you soak in the town's beauty, rich history, and celebration of heritage.


Over the years, Chefchaouen has welcomed an increasing number of tourists, as they seek to experience for themselves a taste of Morocco. Beyond

the strolls through the cobbled streets of the blue pearl of Morocco and the culinary experiences that await, there are countless attractions to explore, including the Chefchaouen Medina, the town's market where you can find some of the most beautiful, distinctively Moroccan artefacts, handmade crafts, and trinkets to take home as souvenirs. Of tremendous appeal to tourists is the ability to negotiate great deals at the stalls, allowing you to indulge in a little experiential shopping while learning more about how goods are made.

Place Outa el Hammam is the main square of the Medina and is a must-visit when in Chefchaouen. From there, you get a view of the main Kasbah, a historical and highly significant building in the town, which is now a museum that showcases the important history of the town's transition from the terrible invasions of centuries past to the peaceful, pristine town that Chefchaouen is today. At the Kasbah, you can see a variety of historical artefacts, which range from traditional weapons and musical instruments to models of embroidered folk dresses, pottery, wooden and copper utensils. There is also an extensive showcase of traditional clothes belonging to the four major tribes of the region: Lakhmas, Ghzawa, Bani Msara and Rhouna. Beautiful antique silver jewellery can be seen here too. If you are fortunate during your time in the Medina, you may find music shows taking place which inevitably elevate your immersive cultural experience, as you enjoy the sights



and sounds of this little blue town, interact with the locals, and taste some great dishes.

A trip to Morocco promises a great mix of cultural exploration, outdoor adventures and culinary escapades that will surpass your expectations. Chefchaouen, much like the rest of the country, boasts a charming local population that is well versed with welcoming tourists from across the globe. The people are famed for their friendliness and will make you feel at home. So, the next time you are looking to explore a destination that carries remarkable charm, consider exploring the cobblestone streets of the enchanting town that is Chefchaouen. An incredible gem of North Morocco, this blue pearl of Morocco is a feast for the eyes indeed. 



“IT’S A LIFESTYLE” *with* PATRICIABLACC

WEEKEND BLISS IN FRANSCHHOEK’S
LA RESIDENCE



I can never get enough of discovering the beauty that Cape Town has to offer. From the wine farms to the cute and hidden spots to eat - there is always something new to see. In that beauty also lies the hotels waiting to be discovered and toured. The thing about Cape Town’s hospitality industry is that it is one of the best and of international standard. I mean let’s face it, Cape Town is a major tourist destination on the African continent, and so best believe, one will be spoilt for choice in as far as experiencing some incredible hotels with incredible dining and pristine views to match - like the famed Silo Hotel, the 12 Apostles Hotel & Spa and Mount Nelson to mention only a few, which are some of the best in the city.

Now...you already know that I love the tranquility of the wine-lands - from Stellenbosch to Franschhoek, and I especially love to be on that side of life because there’s something so peaceful about being in the scenic greenery and mountain views alongside the rows



warding guests with 360 views from any point in the hotel. The iconic pool overlooks the picturesque mountain range and eye-catching greenery, with bright yellow umbrellas to compliment the orange/teal color of the actual building. The furnishing is contemporary enough to make you feel like you have been transported right onto what could easily be a farming estate in the Mediterranean.

PERFECTION FOR THE PALATE

My experience with the dining at La Residence can be summed up into one word: **PERFECTION**. My trip to La Residence was inspired by a call to participate in Restaurant Week, and so true to form, the hotel was showcasing the best of its culinary offering through a delectable two-course meal.

The first course was a delightful salmon terrine, served with asparagus, bell peppers



and rows of vineyards.

In recent times I've been meaning to explore what hospitality properties in Franschhoek were like. Imagine waking up in a hotel deep in the wine lands, with no loud car noises from the city coming alive or the smell of the morning rush in the air; just you and the fresh crisp smell of the freshly watered greenery and the sound of the birds chirping as the morning sun descends on the hotel.

LA RESIDENCE

Mediterranean inspired 5* hotel owned by the Royal Portfolio Group - same Group that owns The Silo hotel on the Cape Town wa-

terfront - is located on a scenic 30-acre estate, deep in the Franschhoek area. Approximately an hour's drive 10 from the city center, I came to discover that this haven is indeed perfect for a Saturday lunch or a weekend getaway.

THE SPACE

Boutique in nature, the hotel exudes opulence, with the promise of luxury the minute you enter the premise. Totally 11 well-appointed, luxuriously decorated rooms, a welcoming lobby area and dining space to usher you into a world of relaxation, you'll be quick to notice that the property was architecturally designed in such a way that it boasts an open plan, re-

and a citrus dressing, followed by a hearty serving of the second course, which was a braised lamb shank, served with a garlic pomme purée and creamed spinach. I like to classify myself as one of the biggest enthusiasts of fine dining, and so it goes without saying that I appreciate the effort that the chefs take in making such intricate dishes, more so when they taste amazing and are actually filling.

The beverage of the day was their house Sauvignon Blanc. Fresh, crisp, and recommended to me by the waitress, it turned out to be a great choice to accompany my meal, especially given how warm the temperatures were the beauty of the landscape that surrounded me.

GREAT SERVICE THAT BRINGS YOU BACK


Service is everything to me. It speaks to the value of a space and the way in which they uphold their customers. It's all in the details; how you are welcomed upon arrival, how your order is taken in the restaurant and the menu explained by your server and so on. This especially holds true in this COVID-19, which has changed the manner in which service is now rendered. It's a great thing to be able to see the smile in the eyes behind the face mask, and a heartfelt greeting while observing social distancing protocols. The General Manager was on the set making frequent check ins with the guests, adding that extra touch to guest interaction.

I am quite sure I will be touring hotels in Cape Town more often with the intent of staying for a night or two to experience the full spectrum on services on offer. As for my afternoon at La Residence? I will be back for a little more than just an afternoon well spent in Franschoek. 🍷



Follow PatriciaBlacc on more of her adventures in the Cape and beyond by connecting with her on

© @Patriciabla

An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. The top left shows a dense line of palm trees and lush greenery bordering a wide, white sandy beach. The beach curves along the shore, meeting a shallow turquoise lagoon with gentle waves. Further out, the water deepens into a dark blue sea. A rocky shoreline with dark volcanic rocks is visible at the top center. The overall scene is serene and idyllic.

PULSE OF THE CITY





ESCAPE TO THE KINGDOM IN THE SKY



A

vanis contemporary style and essential comforts meet river and mountain views in the heart of Lesotho's capital at Avani Lesotho Hotel & Casino. Offering seamless stays for work and play, Maseru's city attractions are on the hotel's doorstep and national parks let explorers live out their wild side.

Lesotho's mountain kingdom and urban bustle is easy to get to with Avani Lesotho's appealing location. A quick 30-minute drive away, Moshoeshe I International Airport operates daily flights from various cities via Johannesburg, and for a more scenic experience guests can drive from Johannesburg which is an approximate 4-hour drive.

Great tastes are the heart and soul of any stay, and Avani Lesotho Hotel & Casino dishes up something for everyone. For breakfast, lunch and dinner, Nala Cafe entices guests to feast, wine and dine during a relaxed breakfast, lunch or dinner. The Pantry offers fresh, quick bites for guests on the move, whether they are looking for a healthy snack en-route to a meeting, or comfort food after a long day of work. The Leifo Bar is the perfect spot to pop in for a beer, cocktail or a place to catch a soccer game. With a fireplace, big screen

television and a full menu of bar snacks and drinks, you won't find a better watering hole in all of Maseru. The Avani Club provides a stylish place to unwind and enjoy a whisky after a long day, the space can also be used as a private meeting room.

Avani Lesotho Hotel & Casino is all about relaxing at a personal pace. Pool days soaking up the sun and cooling off with a swim are a must. African playtime and adventure are close at hand. Lesotho's stunning landscapes set the scene for a wide range of pursuits, and guests can leave all the planning to those in the know at Avani Lesotho Hotel & Casino.

Lesotho may be one of the smallest countries in the world, but that certainly doesn't mean that there aren't exciting adventures to be had amid its natural beauty.

KINGDOM IN THE SKY

Known as the Kingdom in the Sky, Lesotho has the highest base altitude of all the countries in the world - 1,400 metres above sea level - and it is home to remarkable heritage sites and opportunities for memorable escapades, however active you choose to be.

Avani Lesotho Hotel & Casino provides a comfortable and stylish base from which to explore this magical country over two days and have provided a list of adventures to enjoy when visiting



To learn more about Avani Lesotho Hotel & Casino, visit www.avanihotels.com

this wonderful country. One can visit the Morija Museum and get an insight into various projects in the arts, culture, heritage management and community-based tourism that this non-profit cultural and educational institution is involved in.

A trip to the Thaba Bosiu Cultural Village will grant guests insights into the historical foundations of Lesotho. You can also visit the remnants of an ancient Basotho village, consult a traditional doctor, sample Sesotho beer and take in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of traditional Sesotho life for added measure.

Looking for a little outdoor adventure? Visit the Maletsunyane Falls to behold the wonder of a 192m waterfall. A hike here provides for exploration in a magnificent scenery. If you're looking for a quick adrenaline rush, the Maletsunyane Falls is home to the longest commercially operated single-drop abseil in the world – 204 metres of pure adrenaline rush. End off your exploration of Lesotho with a traditional Basotho blankets “likobo” presentation and learn about the different designs and their meanings, before heading back to your abode at the Avani Lesotho Hotel & Casino for added relaxation during your time in the Kingdom in the Sky. 



Sao Tome & Principe: THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT

São Tomé and Príncipe, a small island nation floating in the Gulf of Guinea, is in fact Africa's second-smallest nation, and can best be described as a unique blend of natural wonders with a gripping history. Once a vast network of plantations and a centre of global cocoa production, São Tomé and Príncipe has suffered an economic downturn since independence from Portugal in 1975. In the countryside, squatters inhabit once great mansions; and in the capital, historic colonial buildings slowly decay on broken streets. But perhaps this is where its fascination lies, because while it does carry a marred past, the country boasts a notable safety record, welcoming growing numbers of ecotourists, for whom the advancing jungle is a delight.

This is particularly true on tidy and unspoiled Príncipe, an island of just 7000 people. The thick canopy of evergreen foliage, broken by spires of primordial rock, is characteristic of Príncipe, and is in every sense of the description, a magnificent lost world awaiting further exploration from the adventurous beyond its shores. Offering fantastic beaches, jungle exploration, snorkelling, fishing and birdwatching opportunities, Príncipe is a magical land that time forgot. And so, the invitation is ongoing, to come and explore the island nation's forests and coasts, its beaches, and bays, and let the warmth of its people renew you.

THE HIDDEN GEM OF OMALI SÃO TOMÉ WELCOMES YOU

São Tomé, with its exuberant landscapes, cocoa and coffee plantations in colonial style, distinct biodiversity, authentic culture, and unique people is a pleasure to new guests to the island, as they embark on journey of discovery in this truly magical equatorial island. There really is so much to explore courtesy of the Omali São Tomé Hotel, a part of the HBD group whose positioning is based on a responsible tourism focus.

Perfectly situated, close to the Airport, the capital city centre and the beach, Omali São Tomé is the natural choice for those who want to visit São Tomé. With 30 comfortable rooms, this charming Boutique Hotel is also an excellent venue for all types of meetings and social events. Relaxed and full of life, Omali will make you experience the true feeling of "Leve Leve". The atmosphere is relaxing, and a staunch reminder of the importance of stilling time for a while so you can recalibrate as you enjoy a mel-
lowed-out way of life while visiting.

The impetus is to through HBD's mission, contribute to local development in a sustainable way. And so, it comes as no surprise that Omali São Tomé Hotel is a great base for those





visiting Príncipe Island, having been awarded recognition by ITR for its commitment to Responsible Tourism. Beyond basking in the ambiance that surrenders you to complete rejuvenation, when staying at the hotel, you can also choose a host of activities, from private excursions with an English or French-speaking guide, walking tours, or renting a car to drive yourself about the island, diving, and of course, incredible gastronomical experiences that pay homage to the island's culture and traditions.

TOUR THE CITY!

Visit the capital of São Tomé and discover the wonders of the Portuguese colonial architecture and the National museum. On this tour, you will be visiting the most important places in the city such as the municipal museum – Fort of S. Sebastião, the Nacional library, the Presidential Palace – 'Palácio cor-de-rosa', the Cathedral, the Independence square, the local market, and the Holy Lady of Conception church.

PLANTATION EXCURSIONS TO TAKE YOU BACK IN TIME

Looking for an immersive experience that will shed light on the history of the island? A good place to start discovering the wealth of São Tomé, is to explore the cocoa plantations, with the first step being the historical mark of Fernão Dias. The tour continues on to the Agostinho Neto plantation, where guests visit the botanical garden and to see the process of drying the Cacao. Then, on passing by Boa Entrada plantation, one can take in the site of some of the most beautiful colonial architecture. Along the West Coast, the tour arrives at the historical place of Anambô, where the Portuguese first arrived in 1471, before finishing off in Monte Forte plantation which brings you back to present times. It is one of the last working plantations in São Tomé, where people still work in agriculture.

An exploration into the island's coffee-growing history takes guests into the mountains, where you may go as far as reaching the altitude of 800 meters above the sea level. From on high, you are sure to enjoy the panoramic views of the city of São Tomé, before heading on to São Nicolau waterfall.





The Monte Café plantation will also award you a spectacular front row view of more beautiful buildings from the colonial times. This plantation was the biggest and the most prosperous among all the coffee plantations in São Tomé, with the best coffee beans grown and exported to markets all over the world.

LIFE'S A BEACH

Ready for a beach day, or more than one? A day at the beach will have your feet leaving footprints along some of the most beautiful landscapes of São Tomé, with a visit to Água Izé plantation, Boca do Inferno, Ribeira Afonso town, São João plantation, Angolares town, Pesqueira beach waterfall, Malanza river, Porto Alegre, Jalé beach and Piscina beach and absolute must during your time on the island.

For the more adventurous traveller with a knack for a little adrenaline filled activity, the 4-hour diving program will connect you to the underwater wonders of diving. This diving session includes a 30-minute theory class, 4 basic exercises on the pool or in the sea and 1 dive accompanied by the instructor to a maximum of 12 meters beneath the sea's surface.

WHAT'S A TRIP WITHOUT A LITTLE CULTURE?

Signing up for a traditional dance workshop is a guaranteed unforgettable experience, where you will learn every step of African dances like Kizomba, Socopé ("just with your feet"), Ussua, Puita and Rumba.

For the wellness enthusiasts with a little curiosity on how the human body responds to traditional medicine, you can discover the traditions practiced in São Tomé, where through the use of herbs, barks and roots, the island's locals have developed the treatment for several diseases. Much of it is knowledge passed on from generation to generation, and still practiced today by the hands of the island's "healers of the bush."


Bulawê is the most traditional cultural manifestation of São Tomé and Príncipe, characterised by animation in popular



festivities, and deemed to be a simple language translated into music and dance.

You can also experience Tchiloli, which is also an exemplary cultural manifestation of São Tomé, representing the arduous harmonisation between two cultures, the African and the European. Tchiloli is the Creole name of the Tragedy of the Marquis of Mantua and the Emperor Charlemagne (written in the 16th century by Baltazar Dias, and also published in Almeida Garrett's *Romanceiro*), a product of medieval inspiration recreated in São Tomé and Príncipe.

A CALL TO EXPERIENCE OMALI SÃO TOMÉ

Omali means "ocean" and "source of life" and the hotel's perfect location next to the Lagarto beach but just 1.5 kms from the airport makes it a great base for exploring São Tomé. Tastefully decorated with lovely gardens, and well known for its excellent restaurant, the hotel offers 30 comfortable rooms and suites for families and business travellers and is an open invitation to explore this little-known destination that unveils a mystical experience for guests to the island. 



To learn more about
Omali São Tomé, visit
www.omalilodge.com





AFRICA TO THE WORLD





Spotlight on Alina Liwo

CEO OF ALITI
PRODUCTIONS &
TALENT AGENCY

A tale of being African, born in the UAE and creating opportunities for self and others in talent management entrepreneurship.

1. WHO IS ALINA LIWO? TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT FUELS YOUR PASSION AND ALL-ROUND ZEST FOR LIFE?

I am a business starter and an entrepreneur who is extremely passionate about everything that I do. Aside from my artistic passions, which involve singing, dancing, writing, creating poetry, drawing, and playing the piano, I have a deep spiritual and philanthropic nature that rears itself in everything that I do. This usually involves providing people with the tools and the resources they need to put their best foot forward; affording them the opportunity to live a financially empowered life, doing what they love.

2. HOW HAS YOUR UPBRINGING SHAPED YOUR LIFE, AND SUBSEQUENTLY, YOUR CHOOSING TO CALL DUBAI HOME?

I was born and raised in Dubai, and then my family moved to the States when I was 15 years old. However, throughout my childhood, we often took family vacations during the year and every summer, traveling to different countries like Cameroon, India, Russia, Oman, Kenya, and so on. The global exposure and the morals my parents instilled in me have shaped



me into the woman that I am today. Cultural and religious tolerance was taught to me in my youth, and so I believe this to be one of my greatest assets and contributes to why I am easily able to work with and sustain long-term business relationships with clients from China to Italy, Australia to Pakistan all the way to Ghana, and so on. I also find this to be the reason why living in a melting pot like Dubai has made it quite easy to call this city home.

3. GROWING UP OUTSIDE THE BORDERS OF AFRICA, YET HAVING VALUES FROM HOME SO DEEPLY INGRAINED IN YOU; TALK TO US ABOUT WHAT IT IS ABOUT YOUR CULTURE AND HERITAGE THAT INFLUENCES HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS?

I would first like to thank God for His hand that He has placed over me that has never wavered and continues to guide me in everything that I do. I would also like to give full credit to my parents for their dedication to me as their child, and for their sacrifices made, to ensure that I had all the tools I needed to be an educated, independent, respectable, and successful woman in today's society. My siblings love, support, and challenge me to outperform myself; and I am blessed with dear friends who too support me and have stood by my side. I am also grateful for my fiancé, for his 15+ years of friendship, and for being my rock and clarity when I doubted myself and the strength that I had to overcome life's obstacles and its character building hurdles. God first, and the people in my life have all been instrumental in the woman I am today.

Despite being born and raised abroad, my parents made sure to take us back to Cameroon, where my roots are from, on a regular basis during my adolescent years. As members of the royal family in the village we come from, the direct exposure

to my culture, as well as certain traditions and practices being maintained and enforced at home (along with eating Cameroonian food and listening to African music in general) ensured that we still maintained a strong connection to the motherland. That pride of knowing who I am and where I come from, as well as the morals my parents instilled in us, has filtered through to my work ethic; ensuring that I always work hard and do my best to complete everything that I do with honor and integrity.

4. ALITI PRODUCTIONS & TALENT AGENCY - HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT FOR YOU AND WHAT SERVICES DOES YOUR AGENCY OFFER?

ALITI Productions & Talent Agency (USA | UAE) is the sister company to my fashion brand, ALITI FASHIONS, USA, which I launched in 2009 at the age of 19. The brand became extremely popular, gaining national and international recognition. I was subsequently invited to major fashion weeks and showcases taking place on a national and international level and received a nomination of 'Emerging Designer of the Year' at New York Fashion Week.

As a brand, recognition was achieved for four main reasons; my unique and exclusive designs, using ethnically diverse models, using models of all sizes down the runway, and the ability to make apparel created with African textiles mainstream. The usage of models who were XXXL, for example, at my showcases limited the flexibility in having other models model my collections at fashion shows I was a guest at. For this reason, I, along with my sister, would specifically select models to train and use at my fashion shows. I would then travel these same models out and around with me across the States to participate in my shows. Eventually, they started getting contacted to model at NYFW,

Bridal Shows, for Abercrombie & Fitch, and even to act as extras for TV shows like Glee.

After seeing the positive results from our training, we decided to launch the ALITI Productions & Talent Agency in Illinois in 2013 and received our first UAE contract to cover the celebrity wedding of Tiwa Savage at Burj Khalifa on behalf of I-Factory Live, Channel O TV South Africa and MTV Africa in 2014.

We officially launched our UAE branch in 2017 at Creative City-Media Free Zone, operating out of Dubai, and provide Talent Development (Classes/Grooming) and Talent Provision, Events Management Services, Production Services (Video/Photography), Media & Advertising as well as Business Consultancy.

5. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU HAVE FOUND WITH GROWING A BUSINESS WITH A FOOTPRINT IN THE UAE AND THE UNITED STATES AND HOW HAVE YOU OVERCOME THEM?

The cost of starting a business in the UAE is generally more expensive than it is in the United States. In addition to those start-up costs, some challenges one may face when it comes to setting up the necessary supporting business structures to be able to make your business operational makes setting up a business in the UAE not one for the faint of heart. However, being that the UAE is a country that opens its doors to people from ALL over the world and gives them the freedom to set-up businesses that will enable them to pursue their dreams, I personally commend them for having created a structure that can apply to every aspiring business owner; despite where they are from.

6. WHICH PROJECTS HAVE YOU WORKED ON THAT YOU CONSIDER TO BE CRITICAL MILESTONES FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

ALITI P&T is proud to have established partnerships with network media distributors, such as Mimiyuni Media Entertainment, Etisalat e-Life, and OSN Network

Middle East. We have also worked with some luxury hotels, such as Mall of the Emirates Kempinski Hotel, Sheraton Dubai and Sharjah, restaurants, such as Doors Freestyle Restaurant & Grill, as well as your favorite fast-food joints KFC, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Hardees, and others through our partnership with Kuwait Food Groups. Dubai's top tourist destinations like the Dubai Miracle Garden and Global Village also fall within our client portfolio. Just these partnerships have fostered the birth of some extremely exciting projects. Critical project milestones for our business also include our two top annual projects: the Dubai Miracle Garden Photo and Video Shoot as well as our UAE-USA Talent Exchange Program.

7. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE ALITI PRODUCTIONS & TALENT AGENCY TO BE BEST KNOWN FOR IN SAY, THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS?

We would like ALITI P&T to be known for its ability to guarantee success and exposure for any talent registered under the agency just by affiliation.

8. FAVOURITE PLACES TO ENJOY MOMENTS OF RELAXATION FOR ALINA?

At home, definitely the beach, as well as the gym (I'm a workout-aholic).

9. LET'S TALK TRAVEL. WHICH 3 WOULD BE YOUR FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS IN AFRICA AND WHY?


That's easy. My picks would be Tanzania's beaches because of my love for the beach. I love a great safari in Kenya for the sheer abundance of Africa's wildlife. My third pick are Treehouse Hotels in South Africa – these are simply beautiful.

10. HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA GROW IN THE UAE OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS AND WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE CHOOSE THE UAE TO PURSUE THEIR GROWTH AMBITIONS?

The UAE is much like America or the UK for Africans who may experience challenges in migrating to Europe and out West. I believe that a big draw for the UAE is that if you are honest and hardworking, the UAE welcomes its doors to everyone. The UAE does not discriminate against the color of the skin of the hand presenting itself, or the background from whence that hand came, as it is a hand of strength and courage that is presenting itself to not only invest in themselves as a person, but in the country's economy as well.

The UAE prides itself for being one of the safest countries in the world, and as a continent that believes in family, for Africans, the concept of moving to live with your family in the UAE or sending your child to the UAE to study at one of the country's very many accredited universities is a better option for many.

It is for this reason that many Africans seek to venture out to this 'promise land' to seek better opportunities and a brighter future for themselves, whether through employment or self-employment, and in turn, their families.

Having been born and raised here, it has been a pleasure to see the people of Africa rise to also break the world's stereotypes about the 'primitive' or 'dark continent' through their hard work, success stories and milestones achieved here in the UAE. I'll end with saying - people of Africa, we see you, we commend you, we thank you, and we appreciate you all for paving the way for the future generations of Africans who will venture into the UAE to come. 



ANNE ADAMS:
THE CLAY BENDER OF NIGERIA

Anne Adams, a young and boldly innovative creative, burst onto the arts scene powerfully with her creations that grabbed the attention of arts and crafts enthusiasts across Africa as well as internationally, with her work being exhibited in some international galleries abroad. Anne, a ceramist is also known as the ‘clay bender’, was raised in Abuja and is living in Lagos, where she pursues her dream as an artist. Anne is breaking barriers and building a reputable name for herself in the visual arts space, much to her delight and that of others who have watched her evolve over time. Travel Essence Magazine caught up with Anne to delve into the details of her journey and what she believes her future holds for her....

1. TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

WHO IS ANNE ADAMS?

Being true to myself and my interest inspired me to become an artist. It took a while for me to realize this was my path, and though I was always extremely interested in art from an early age, I never thought it was a sustainable career. I'd say that I didn't have the direction to see it as a sustainable career and so I went ahead to study Economics at university. However, at some point I had to have multiple conversations with myself, and to soon accept that I was born to be a creative.

2. WHAT WAS YOUR CHILDHOOD LIKE, AND DID IT HAVE ANY IMPACT ON YOUR DECISION TO BECOME A CLAY BENDER?

In all honesty, my childhood was very typical. I remember I had always loved to draw and paint. I got very bored easily and was always seemingly absent-minded. You could always find sketches at the back of my notebooks, in the middle pages, everywhere else I could muster while the teacher was teaching maths or other subjects. The only thing that kept me excited was anything related to art, and so naturally, I excelled at art projects and became interested in exploring all forms of art including writing.

My first encounter with clay was in my junior secondary school. Though I can't remember the class exactly, I do recall having an art teacher that set up a mini studio with a potter's wheel. I would






follow him to the studio and watch him figure out how to throw forms. I was deeply intrigued, and so I kept coming back every prep time. Unfortunately, he left the school abruptly, and so my lessons ended. The new art teacher was only interested in painting and drawing still life and landscapes. Fast forward to 2019, when I met Cameroonian Ceramicist Djakou Kassi Nathalie. I asked her if she could teach me how to mould clay and that is how I started my journey as “The Clay Bender”.

3. WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS DURING YOUR JOURNEY AS A CLAY BENDER?

I would say it has been a good combination between my moment of self-discovery, defining what I believe to be my life purpose, navigating through all the uncertainty, self-doubts, and all the collective sacrifices I've had to make to see a dream come to reality. Those moments have all been defining and priceless and have led me to many achievements as well as disappointments.

Also, this year 2021, working on a project, I unlocked a new expression of freedom through my art, expressing myself in the way I felt, inspired by the experiences I have had, and not the way I thought my art should be or look like.



Anne is a force to be reckoned with and we will surely see more of her in the art industry internationally. Check out her 

@adamsanne_ to see more of her work and her story.

4. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PIECE THAT YOU HAVE MADE SO FAR?

It is a piece I titled Solitude; it is a body of work inspired by a book written by Gabriel Garcia Marquez called “100 years of Solitude.” It’s a hard read with complex characters, but it changed my view on humanity and time.


5. WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST TAKEAWAY DURING YOUR JOURNEY AS AN ARTIST? HOW HAS IT BEEN RECEIVED BY THE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKET?

My biggest takeaway is that you must be willing to fail. Art is a lot of hard work; it’s a constant battle of discovering yourself, educating yourself, having an open mind for reception, upgrade, and change. So, it’s not just creating, it’s researching, soul searching, listening, experimenting, failing, disappointments and all of it. I’d say the reception has been great both locally and internationally, in the sense that I have found a purpose in creating art with clay in a different way, that doesn’t serve as functional, but as a narrative of experiences and skill.

6. WHAT IMPACT DO YOU HOPE TO HAVE ON THE ARTS AND CULTURE INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA AND BEYOND?

Clay is an ancient art form, but somewhere along the line, it got very domesticated. Clay is a medium of expression just like any other form of art. I’ve made it my goal to see that clay is seen as that, and not just as a medium for making flower vases, cooking pots, plates, and mugs.

7. WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU? ANY FUTURE PROJECTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS?

Great, great things, I hope. It’s a journey that keeps on evolving. I have a duo exhibition at Affinity Art Gallery, located in Victoria Island on the 27th of June 2021. It’s a show that bares my newfound level of expression and freedom with my medium, and it will be a show to see. 



A CALL FOR *Contributors*

ARE YOU A **HOTEL, TOUR OR WILDERNESS CAMP OPERATOR** OFFERING DISTINCTIVE EXPERIENCES YOU WANT PROSPECTIVE GUESTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT?

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE COVERAGE OF YOUR **TRAVEL, HOSPITALITY, LEISURE AND LIFESTYLE BRAND** AND OPERATION TO EXPAT TRAVELLERS IN THE UAE?

ARE YOU A **TRAVEL BLOGGER OR CONTENT CREATOR** LOOKING TO SHARE YOUR STORY WITH THE WORLD THROUGH AN ENGAGING TRAVEL AND LIFESTYLE FOCUSED PLATFORM?

Register your interest in becoming a contributor or send your proposed content (press release, feature article, listing guides or reviews) to info@travelessencemag.com.

All content should be accompanied by relevant hi-resolution images or video content, facts sheets and a bio for personality profile pieces.

A MEMBER OF OUR EDITORIAL TEAM WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH YOU.



Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making

📷 @Travelessencemagazine | 📧 @TravelEssenceM

📱 @TravelEssenceMag | 📄 Travel Essence Magazine





 @Travelessencemagazine |  @TravelEssenceM

 @TravelEssenceMag |  Travel Essence Magazine