

TRAVEL MAGAZINE TravelEssence

SUMMER CLOSING ISSUE | AUGUST 2022

FAMILY FUN FARE AT
CENTARA MIRAGE

Dubai Resort

A FULL-SCALE DRAMATIC
AFFAIR AT DUBAI'S PLAY
RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

CURATED AFRICA WITH KER
& DOWNEY® AFRICA

SAFARI PAR EXCELLENCE
WITH SINGITA'S

Star Guides

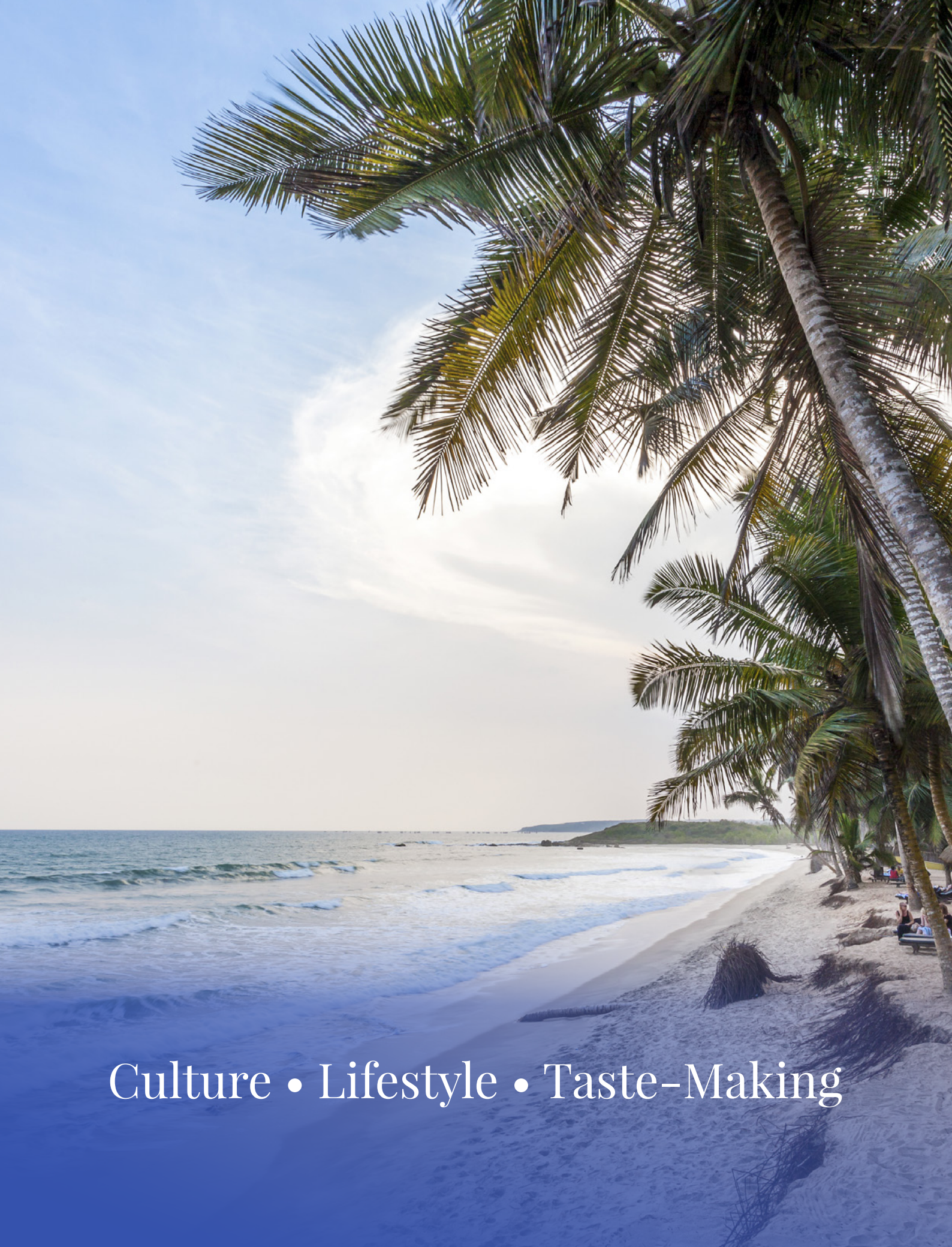
SUZANNE BROWN

TOURISM ENTREPRENEUR AND "SAFARI
MUM" SPEAKS ON KEEPING THE BALANCE



TRAVEL MAGAZINE **Essence**

A NARRATIVES PR PUBLICATION



Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making

TravelEssence

MAGAZINE

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





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We've just turned two Travel Essence family, and we cannot begin to express our profound gratitude for your having joined us in our journey to spotlighting some of the continent's great destinations through our digital travel platform. Ours was an initiative powered by faith, and an inherent desire to be a part of the solution to what we felt was a challenge of not having enough positive stories being told of our continent, her people and the diversity in heritage and abundance of cultures that make Africa such a colourfully wonderful enigma. Having launched on the back of a global pandemic that shaped the face of reality as we knew it at the time, we – like humanity, are thankful to have survived the storm. The human spirit cannot be crushed for too long, and going on 3 years since Covid-19 first made headlines and normal forms of human interaction came to a screeching halt, we celebrate having the will to live, to survive and to explore new territories as we continue to adapt. We thank our readers, the brands and properties we have been so blessed with the opportunity to collaborate with, as well as the professionals that give us more reasons for exploration with every experience curated.

I write this note to you from the banks of the majestic Zambezi River where we are kicking off the next stage of our Family Safari series, after scaling East Africa at the top of the year. As I meet friends in the industry and make new ones during my time in Africa, heading back to the UAE to connect with more professionals in the luxury travel, hospitality and dining space, mine is to say – never discount small beginnings. We have witnessed a dream morph into reality with Travel Essence Magazine and type each word with the hope that you too will be inspired to discover more of what's local.

Africa is calming yet exciting, intuitive yet spirited, young yet fraught with stories of decades past; stories that are sure to inspire you while connecting you to the essence of humanity and the untamed, untouched spaces we turn to for work, play and sustenance.

To moving from surviving to thriving together! 🌍

Yours truly,

Gywnne C. Mtengwa

“To my mind, the greatest reward and luxury of travel is to be able to experience everyday things as if for the first time, to be in a position in which almost nothing is so familiar it is taken for granted.

— BILL BRYSON



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Suzanne Brown: Tourism Entrepreneur and “Safari Mum” speaks on keeping the balance



1. SUZANNE BROWN, WIFE, MOTHER AND WOMAN WHO WEARS MANY HATS. TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD, WHERE YOU ARE ORIGINALLY FROM, AND HOW YOU WOUND UP LIVING IN AFRICA AND ZIMBABWE MORE SPECIFICALLY?

Sitting outside on the veranda under the African sky makes me reflect how blessed my life is and has been to date. I was born in the Southern part of the Netherlands, on one of its many canals. From my bedroom window I could watch the boats go by and I always wondered where they came from and where they were going to. I come from a big family of six girls and the doors of our home were always wide open. We frequently had more than 8 people around the breakfast table. We often had the children of sailing parents come to stay and they had fascinating stories on their adventures living on boats.

Being from a busy family, my dad sought solace in the quietness of nature. I joined him on many occasions and learned about the flora and fauna of our country. He taught me how to fish, row a boat, listen to the birds and appreciate nature. The first music album I fell in love with was “Africa” by Toto and this sparked an interest in this beautiful continent that I now call home.

On one of my birthdays my dad gave me the book “Tippi Child in Africa” and the pictures about the vastness and wildlife, far greater than what I was used to in the Netherlands, made me even more intrigued and I thought how wonderful it must be for a child to grow up in Africa.

Fast forward many years later, I found myself working in the UAE at the prestigious Al Maha Desert Resort, part of the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve. Here is where I met Luke among the desert sands of Arabia. He is a child of Africa and his stories made me yearn to explore the continent and traverse the paths that he has been walking in the wildlife areas of Zimbabwe and its neighbouring countries.

Today, 15 years later in 2022, I call Africa my main home.



2. YOU GREW UP TO HAVE A PENCHANT FOR TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY, SPENDING SEVERAL YEARS IN THIS SPACE ACROSS DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE WORLD INCLUDING THE MIDDLE EAST. WHAT ABOUT THIS INDUSTRY PIQUED YOUR INTEREST?

Whilst growing up our family travels were always within a 500km radius of home. I knew from an early age that the furthest place from us was 20,000 km away, hence there were plenty more kilometres to explore. This made me think carefully on what I wanted to become. The following jobs piqued my interest; an F1 fighter pilot came to mind or joining the Royal Marines. Mothers, however know their daughters best and mine guided me in the direction of international business and hospitality, which still meant I could travel and meet people from all corners of the globe.

Still not entirely convinced, I took a gap year to complete an International Business course in Vancouver, where I made life-long friends. After my time in the Rocky Mountains I flew to Latin America and spent several months travelling around exotic places, staying with the families of my new friends.

This part in my life was crucial because it cemented my mother's advice on what direction to choose.

Thereafter, my first port of call was the UK

where I studied international business and hospitality and worked in Manchester for nearly 5 years. It was here where I entered the world of Leading Hotels landing a position at the prestigious Lowry Hotel. My next job took me to Dubai in 2004 where I took on the post of Food & Beverage Manager for Al Maha Desert Resort. Of course little did I know that here is where I would meet my future husband.

3. YOU ARE PRESENTLY RAISING YOUR TWO DAUGHTERS IN ZIMBABWE'S VICTORIA FALLS REGION, AND OFTENTIMES ENJOY REMARKABLE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE OUT WITH THEM IN NATURE. IN A DIGITAL AGE WHEN TODAY'S YOUTH ARE OFTEN GLUED TO SCREENS, DO WEIGH IN ON WHAT BENEFITS THE OUTDOORS AVAILS TO YOUNG MINDS IN YOUR VIEW?

Our children have inherited the travel bug from both of their parents and so we stimulate them as much as possible to explore and venture out, using all their senses.

We travel a lot and they join us 90% of the time. Nine year old Charlotte and eight year old Annabelle were both born in Zimbabwe and been fortunate to live in 3 different continents to date. They have already learned about different cultures, religions, languages and landscapes.

As a family we are all world citizens but Victoria Falls always call us back and has cemented its place as base number one. Our two young explorers have



inquisitive minds and believe in research, observation and implementation. The wilds of Africa hold many lessons in: science, geography, biology and mathematics.

The girls like to relate back to what the world around them offers, often reading further on the subjects and experiences that they have. For instance Charlotte will never leave home without her bird and insect books, whilst Annabelle carries the binoculars around her neck along with notebook pens and Lego in a girlie, fluffy, pink bag.

Like all modern children, they get some screentime in on their iPads but when you live in a place like Victoria Falls, this is far less than most, with the preference being for an outdoor over a sedentary life indoors.

4. TALK TO US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHY YOU ARE KNOWN TO MANY AS "SAFARI MUM"? HOW DID THIS NICKNAME COME ABOUT?

Our Brown clan unit is called "The Safari Family" so the term Safari Mum has come about by default. Safari comes the Arabic word safar, which means "embarking on a journey". I feel that I have been on a journey all my life and have blessed to have a tribe around me that shares this passion. I am a mum, an explorer and I am passionate about the African Safari.

5. CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION ARE TOPICS OF HUGE IMPORTANCE TO YOURSELF, YOUR HUSBAND LUKE AND WIDER FAMILY? WHY IS THIS SO AND HOW HAS YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THIS SPACE BECOME A PART OF YOUR CHILDREN'S LEARNING CURVE?

We firmly believe we must take up the responsibility of helping to

preserve and protect our wild spaces. We don't own this planet but we are caretakers and need to look after it for generations to come. The greatest lessons in life are found in nature and none of us need to venture out far to find them.

Conservation is not a word anymore that is reserved only for scientists, researchers, activist and policy holders. There is a shift happening in front of our eyes as many are now awakening to the importance of Conservation and Biodiversity. Modern media has contributed to this. More and more young people are embracing the mantra of people and nature together, understanding that we are connected allowing this topic to be more popular.

Luke and I share a passion for wildlife and nature. Luke studied Zoology and our girls have been brought-up appreciating God's creatures and learning about what makes each and every one of them special, even that the tiny and "annoying" mosquito has a role to play. With this background, we formed, the Zambesia Conservation Alliance (ZCA) together with Luke's brother Robin, who is also very passionate about this field. The mandate of ZCA is to unite frontline conservation efforts in the Zambesia region together and drive support more effectively to them.

To do this we have created a platform that amplifies the voices and efforts of those in Africa who work tirelessly for wildlife. We actively seek out local solutions and yearn to help show the world that Africa can be a leader in this field.

6. SUZANNE ON TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP. HOW DO YOU BALANCE BUILDING A BUSINESS IN TRAVEL WITH THE DEMANDS OF PARENTING? WHAT IS THAT BALANCE FOR YOU?



Embracing each day, living in the now, making time for family, exercise and work form part of my daily slogan. Women can multi-task and I actually love the chaos and diversity in my life as it gives me energy. I am very fortunate to have a husband on my side who is my best friend, who balances me out and shares the zest for life, adventure and growth. We are equals who move as a team and raising our girls together.

One of the decisions we made earlier in the year is to put our girls onto a wonderful home guided schooling program. Our mobile existence where we regularly move between continents has necessitated this and brought routine to all our lives. Fortunately our girls have willingly embraced this new way of learning and thriving on it. We also involve our girls in family decisions, listening to their opinions and suggestions and we don't move forwards unless everybody is comfortable.

7. CAN YOU SHARE WITH US YOUR TAKE ON TRENDS IN MULTIGENERATIONAL TRAVEL? WHAT SORT OF EXPERIENCES DO YOU FIND MORE FAMILIES TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN ARE PRESENTLY LOOKING FOR IN A POST-COVID ERA?

Coming out of Covid has united families and we see more and more multi-gen trips where the grandparents are at the helm.

Having a wide range of different ages, expectations, interests and abilities makes planning the perfect family itinerary a rewarding project. I love wearing different hats and put myself in the shoes of children, the parents who want a break, the grandparents who want family time and the boisterous teenagers who are in search of adrenaline activities. Africa offers enough diversity to tick all the boxes.

8. TOP 5 DESTINATIONS IN AFRICA TO TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN AND WHY?

Over the past few years, Africa has become a family destination, but not all destinations are family friendly. Therefore choosing the right one requires some homework. My top 5 are: (no points for guessing) Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Malawi and Tanzania.

Zimbabwe because of its people, the rich wildlife, diversity and the Victoria Falls.

South Africa due to its varied camps and wonderful child programs and of course, ev-

everybody loves Cape Town.

Namibia has amazing high dunes on the Atlantic, vast open spaces and fascinating nomadic tribes.

Malawi has the lake with its colourful cichlids, which is safe to swim in and there are some lovely safaris areas too.

Tanzania allows you to have your own guide throughout, and it remains the home of the Lion King from Crater to Serengeti.

9. LET'S SWITCH TO A LITTLE PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR MOMS TRAVELING WITH CHILDREN ON SAFARI. SHARE 3 DO'S AND 3 DON'TS OF TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN UNDER 10 YEARS OF AGE?

Charlotte and Annabelle fall into this category and the three do's and don'ts that we have first-hand experience of are the following:

DO:

1. Check that the camps have attentive staff and natural barriers so that the child(ren) can't wander off by themselves.
2. Start with preparing the child(ren) at home on safari etiquettes on the do's and don'ts but also keep the energy exciting by encouraging them to make list of the top 10 of animals they would like to see whilst doing a little bit of research on all of them.
3. Gift you kids a pair of simple binoculars, an African animal check list and floppy safari hat.

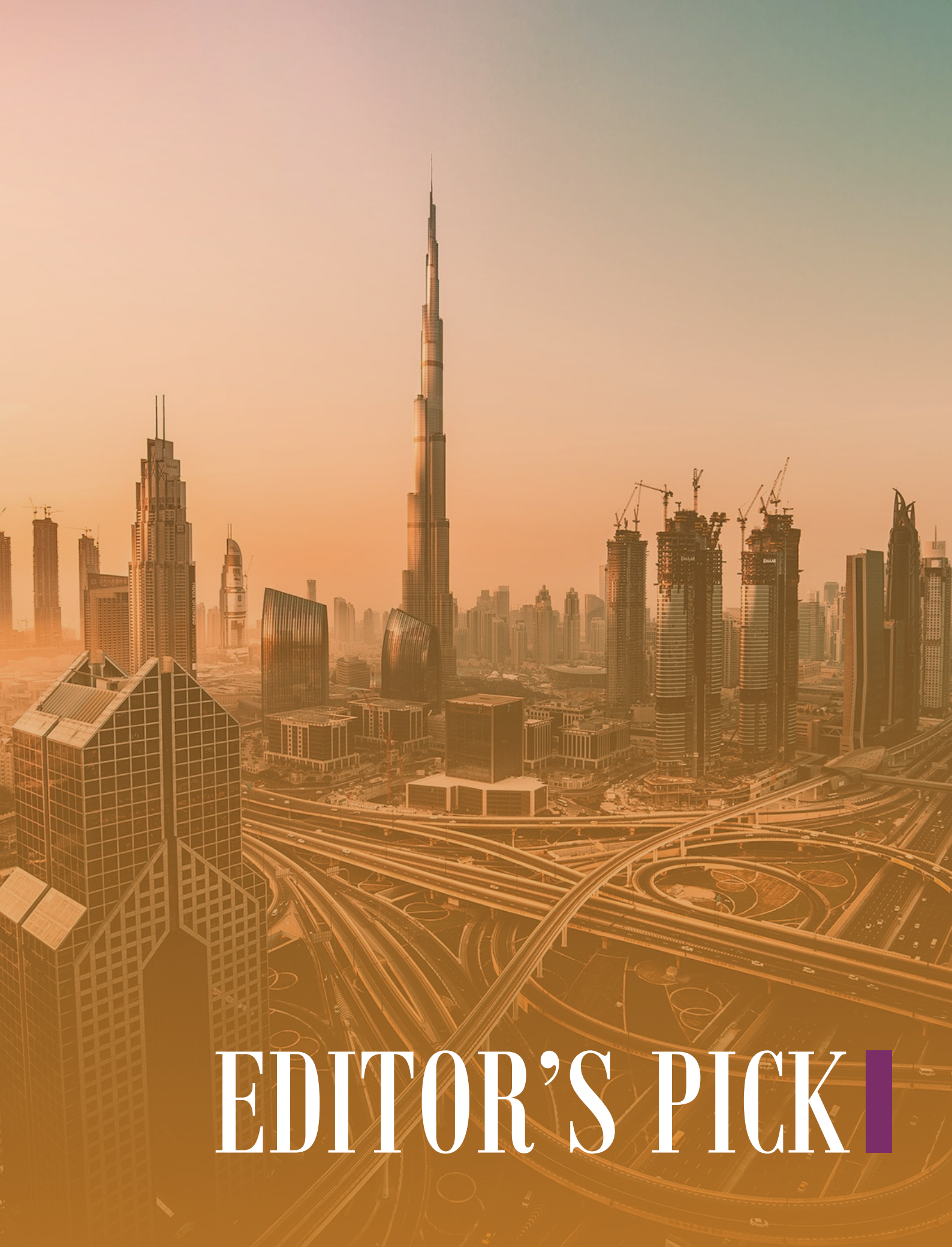
DON'T:

1. Promise that you will see all the animals on the list (i.e. pangolins are a rare sighting).
2. Wear the brightest, most sparkly and fashionable cloths. These will only scare the animals away.
3. Take iPads with on the game drive. Encourage the children to listen and engage with the guide, they will come away with a wealth of knowledge.

10. IF YOU WERE TO OFFER ONE PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT EXPERIENCING THE BEST OF NATURE WITH BUSY MOMS SUCH AS YOURSELF, WHAT WOULD THAT BE?

Mothers are busy people, so this is a chance to take time out. Look at the little things and marvel at its creation. Afterall, the earth itself is female, we never talk about father nature. ^(A)

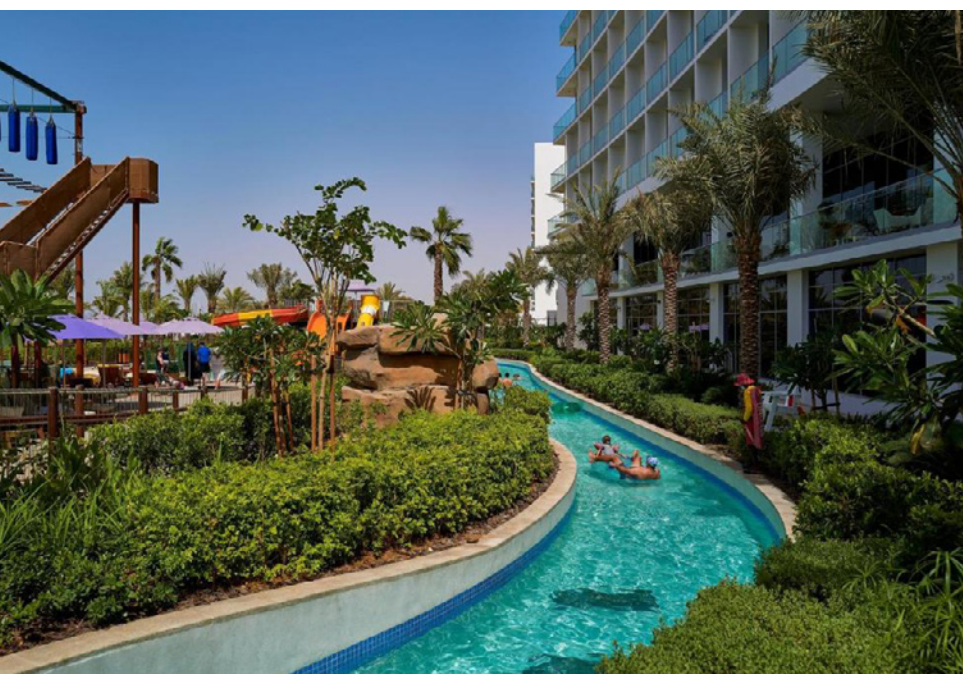




EDITOR'S PICK |

Family fun fare at Centara Mirage Dubai Resort

By Yvonne C Mtengwa



I couldn't help but smile at the sight of my son's gleeful face as we pulled up to the entrance ramp at the Centara Mirage Dubai Resort. It was the nearly life-size mustard-coloured flower-painted elephant statues he had noticed as we geared up for yet another summer staycation in Dubai. The thing about Dubai is that there is always something to explore; between new restaurant, hotel or entertainment destination openings, to simply trolling the malls for the latest trends in shopping. I had heard about this new family-focused resort-like destination on Deira Islands, a brand new development over the new bridges past Dubai's Port Rashid area, and so I had to head out to check out what the resort promised to its inquiring guests.

Mirage represents Centara's themed family resort concept, where the whole family's, and especially the children's, happiness is at the heart of the experience. Parents can rest assured that their youngsters will enjoy unforgettable, inspiring stays in rooms that are perfectly suited to families, with flexible bedding options including bunk beds that accommodate up to two children.

The location

One does get a sense of having left Dubai, driving off into a much quieter location that's yet to be filled with the usual hub-bub of the Middle Eastern mecca that

never sleeps. Sea views are uninterrupted, save for a few distance low rise buildings of Bur Dubai and the Deira District. On these islands emerges what will be a mixed-used development, replete with apartment buildings under construction, beachfront hotels, dining and shopping complexes.

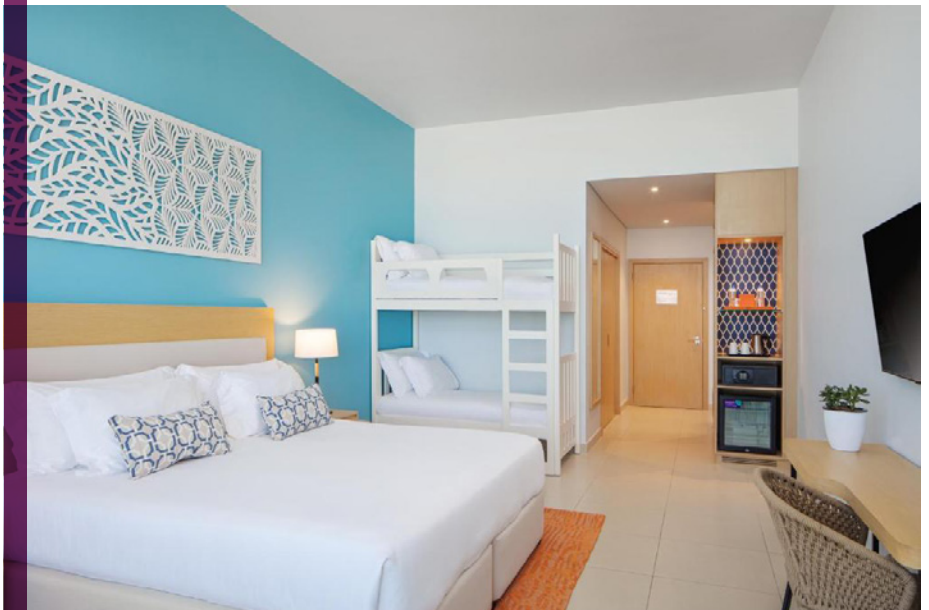
Centara Mirage Beach Resort Dubai sits on an estate that was designed with family-focused beach side fun in mind. I was also soon to discover how the resort is the first Centara property in the United Arab Emirates and represents the third Mirage family-themed resort worldwide, following the Lost World-themed Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya, one of Thailand's most popular family resorts, and the Explorer's Playground-themed Centara Mirage Resort Mui Ne, Vietnam, which opened its doors in 2021.

What makes for a cool stay at Centara Mirage Dubai Resort...

1. Theming done right, with a feeling of island escapism. Influenced by the brand's Thai roots, Centara Mirage Dubai Resort exudes the calming yet contemporary design aesthetic one would expect to find at an all-inclusive island resort. Stark white walls, turquoise, bright yellows and purple accents on furnishings and wide open spaces with huge floor to ceiling windows overlooking a spectacular water park and beach below immediately whisk you away into holiday mode – and that is always a way to set the tone for a staycation.

2. All-inclusive packages means you get more value for your stay. This is of course a win especially when with young children who are constantly ready for a nibble. From settling into an exclusive family lounge area, complete with a play area, a canapé station, a massive shaded balcony and drinks on flow, to heading down to experience any one of the also themed dining establishments on the property, checking in on an all-inclusive package allows you to enjoy an array of cuisines and drinks at a whim, giving you more bang for your buck.

Outstanding cuisine and social venues

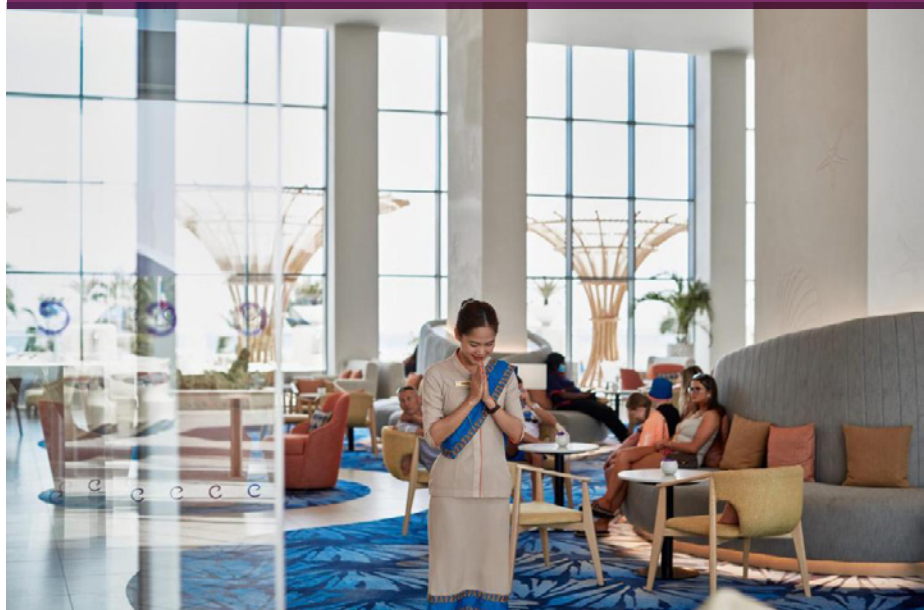


can be enjoyed from nine dining experiences. Suan Bua specialises in authentic Asian cuisine, while Uno Mas is a traditional Argentinian grill with its own wine cellar. Fresh seafood and prime meats can be savoured at Sands, the casual beach club, Waves Pool Bar and Zing promise refreshing drinks and light bites, and Sheesh is a chic rooftop shisha lounge and Lebanese restaurant. Finally, meeting planners can host one-of-a-kind events in a choice of indoor and alfresco function spaces.

3. An onsite waterpark for the youngest guest and those young at heart. Perch yourself on a sun lounger while watching your little ones play, grab an inflated donut and coast along the waves in the lazy river, get your dose of splash time on the slides or challenge yourself to an obstacle course set in water, all surrounded by palm trees and sun decks. Winding wooden walkways lead to the golden beach and turquoise sea, which creates a sparkling setting for water sports.

Whether you choose some play park fun or much prefer to slow down and enjoy a calming dip into any one of the pools on at the resort, there are a myriad of options to keep you cool under the warm skies.

4. Fancy an outdoor movie, football or volleyball on the beach? We thought the movies by night was particularly cute, bringing on some form of nostalgia as I shared with the kids how we used to watch movies from our parent's cars at the city's drive-in during the 80s. A behemoth screen shows Hollywood blockbusters while a plush beanbag cradles you to some cinematic action under the stars. Movie nights





at the beach are perfect for couples or parents looking to entertain their children as part of the countdown to bedtime. A game of beach football or soccer is sure to help you break a sweat ahead of cooling down at the ocean's beckoning.

5. Spa Cenvaree awakens your senses with a full suite of treatments for the mind, body and soul. Moms will be delighted to note that the spa also has a kid-friendly section, offering unique options for the little ones including some that come with edible ingredients like chocolate! I opted for a signature 60-minute Thai massage while the kids enjoyed a massage that they reported to be flavour-some. In short, mom and kiddos were happily pampered.

Beyond the opportunity to escape the fast-paced rhythm of Dubai without leaving the city, Centara Mirage Dubai truly lives to its description of being a mythical Thai and Arabian adventure themed beachfront resort at Deira Islands, offering a commendable array of comfortable 607 rooms and suites and an amazing array of activities. Between the water park, the multiple onsite kids' clubs, a candy-themed children's spa, beach club and more, it's a perfect sanctuary for family-focused fun, with the opportunity to whisk yourself away for much needed relaxation. 



Sleek Hospitality On An F1 Race Circuit

Inside the W Abu Dhabi

Arguably one of the biggest events on the Abu Dhabi emirate annual calendar is the Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, taking place a few weeks leading to the New Year. Engines come rumbling, the atmosphere is electric and yes, the who's who of Formula 1 racing, celebrity, resident and visiting lifestyle officianados make their way to Yas Island, one of the most prolific entertainment destinations in the UAE, and home to renowned theme parks Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Yas Waterworld, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi and the soon-to-open Seaworld Abu Dhabi. The stylish W Abu Dhabi is the only hotel in the world to sit on an F1 track, availing high life enthusiasts alike, an opportunity to luxuriate in the heart of Abu Dhabi's prestigious entertainment island.

A W Abu Dhabi Welcome

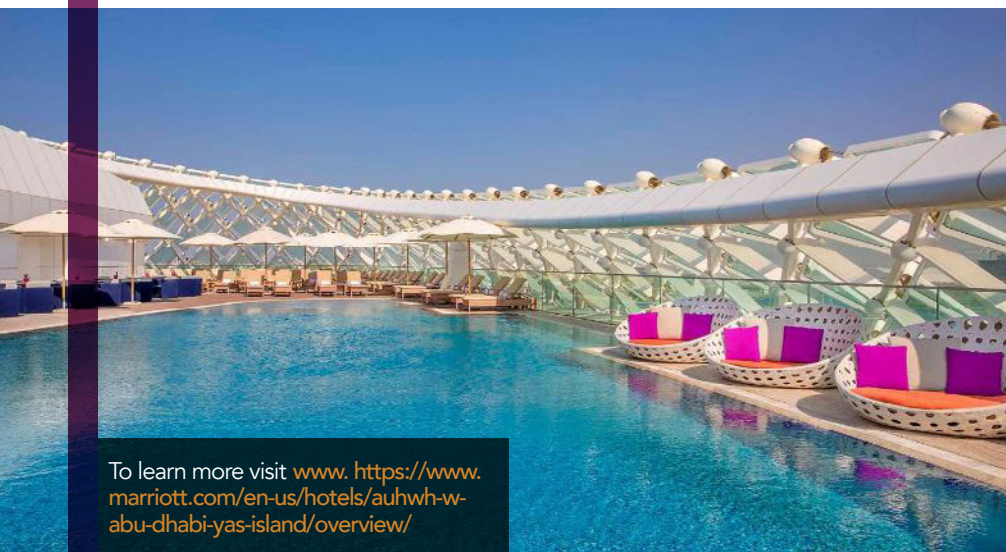
The lobby area is stylishly bold, bearing inspirational architecture unravelling bespoke Welcome desks, designed to illustrate the shape of oil drops, which are paired with jewel tone furnishings depicting the colours of liquid gold. One's eyes will not be void of objects to marvel at upon entering the hotel. In fact, the entire property's aesthetic and decor is influenced by principles of symmetry, drawing on intricate design, parallel lines and shapes of varied forms – from metal to glass to bold blacks against stark whites, brought together to create juxtaposing silhouettes and shades reminiscent of the UAE's wetlands, fossilized sands, dunes and natural lakes.

Why W Abu Dhabi is one for the cards when in the capital...

1. Perfect rooms to stay and play. It's all about the "suite life" at the W Abu Dhabi, with plenty of space to stay and play, setting the tone for an epic stay brimming with tones of inspiration for relaxation in your room. Balconies come shaded with the cascading roof architecture for which the hotel is known for, which glistens by night to whatever occasion is being celebrated on the vibrant Yas Island. Guests can dare to live it up after partaking from their fully stocked bar, or enjoy views of the adjacent marina or racing circuit down below. Linen is plush, bathrooms luxurious, granting you all the trimmings that comes with a stylish, contemporary hospitality experience. For that extra special touch, you can choose between a Fabulous, WOW and E-WOW Suites for an upgraded experience.


2. A distinctive selection of eateries to satisfy your palate. With a cool selection of onsite restaurants to delight in and depending on your mood, a culinary journey can begin for you from the Garage, described as an establishment "driven by a passion for flavour and fuelled by diversity." Garage is the perfect spot for tastemakers, epicurious midnight snackers, and those with a penchant for care-free dining characterised by gourmet servings. Mix with old friends or mingle to meet new ones at W Lounge, taking in amazing





the spices and aromas of the Middle East, or enjoy a soothing facial, manicure, pedicure or massage. You can also enjoy a complete escape for the mind and body with the hotel's Celeb Status, a VIP Suite featuring a private steam room, Jacuzzi with a relaxation area overlooking Yas Marina, a vanity area and a couple's treatment room.

5. Inspired architecture to pique your curiosity at each turn. Make no mistake, The W Abu Dhabi - Yas Island is a luxury playground spread over two buildings, located in the heart of buzzing Yas Island, and revealing the best of Abu Dhabi's history, heritage and culture. Defying convention, pushing the boundaries, and creating a fashionably unforgettable experience, the design draws inspiration from traditional and artistic surroundings complementing the landscape with architectural elements, unveiling as you walk through the hotel's doors, a look and feel that is sleek, and in every sense promises a stay that well marries the adrenaline-filled activities set on the island, with getting up to something a little more relaxing while remaining true to the pulse of the premises.

So if it's a quick getaway you are after when in the UAE, or a unique experience that combines varied options in entertainment while simultaneously whisking you into a relaxation at the only hotel in the world to straddle an F1 track, the W Abu Dhabi is just the place for families with a knack for the highlife as much as it is suited for the vibrant personalities looking for a chic hangout or staycation venue. A mere 25 minute from the heart of Abu Dhabi city or 1-hour drive from bustling Dubai will lend you an opportunity merriment on Yas Island, made complete with a stay at the W Abu Dhabi. 

To learn more visit [www. https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/auhwh-w-abu-dhabi-yas-island/overview/](https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/auhwh-w-abu-dhabi-yas-island/overview/)

views of the marina and race track or sip and savour crafted beverages from one of three bars while the resident DJ drops the beat to the latest hits in music. This is quite literally where you want to be to enjoy socialising at the rumble of super cars on the adjacent track! If it's a little relaxation in the sun you are after over snacks and refreshing cocktails, the WET Deck is perfect for the grown and exciting, offering an adults-only pool side chill zone at the roof top.

3. World-class theme parks a few steps away. We did say the W Abu Dhabi is located on UAE's iconic entertainment island! Rev up your inner-engine for your dose of adrenaline at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, slither your way down some of the coolest slides in the fun-filled waterpark Yas Waterworld, interact with your favourite cartoon and comic characters – from Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman to Bugs Bunny, Scooby-Doo and The Flintstones at Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi. Whatever your pick for family friendly entertainment, it's all a short drive away from the W Abu Dhabi and right on the Island.

4. Relaxation goals are met at the W Abu Dhabi. What's a stay on an iconic island without indulging in a signature spa treatment? At Abu Dhabi Soul, there are a plethora of options to award you a deeply restful experience, be it before or after some fun in the sun or ahead of the exuberant dining and night life in wait. Allow the therapists to immerse you in an exotic blend of essential oils recalling



TASTE-MAKERS |

Fireside Chat with Singita's Star Guides

By Yvonne C Mtengwa

My family recently enjoyed the honour of experiencing unsurpassed luxury in the heart of Tanzania's great plains, checking into 5 days of safari fun, married with sheer luxury in the throngs of nature's heartbeat in the Serengeti. Between the wild calls of the night, the excitement of watching a pride of lions search for their next meal from an elevated vantage point, being mesmerised by a herd of more than 200 buffalos painting the landscape black amidst the lush green grass, to watching a tower of giraffe going about their morning feeding ritual of fresh, dew encrusted shrubbery; I could go on and on about the game viewing opportunities, lavish accommodations, fine dining and all the unique perks that come with checking into any luxury lodge, tented camp or private villa owned and/or operated by Singita.

But with every luxury safari experience, it's the interaction with the teams; gurus in the field of fine service and the ultimate guest experience, that make a stay that much more enthralling for me. Guests often spend many hours with their designated field guide; and

for us, we were privileged to have Jeremiah Morris look after us throughout our time in the Serengeti. From fireside chats to bush breakfasts together, where we learned about the vast wildlife species and nature's patterns, as well as Singita's commitment to protecting biodiversity for future generations through the Grumeti Fund, Jeremiah's passion was palatable, and knack for engaging with each member of our family shone through.

This led me to wanting to learn more about what got Jeremiah into his career as a professional guide, seeking to also connect with some of his colleagues across the portfolio. The brief for them was simple: to share a little about themselves, why they chose to be a part of Singita's evolving story and what lessons they have taken away from the bush over the years. As would be expected, their shares were as insightful as much as they were a testament to what a culture of building people can do for a brand and its ability to impact its guests and patrons beyond operations. Meet some of Singita's Field Guides, beginning with the inspiration for this write-up – Jeremiah Morris

Jeremiah Morris

FIELD GUIDE, SINGITA FARU FARU,
TANZANIA

14 years at Singita, having joined in 2008. “I was born and raised on the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro, in a place called Rombo, near the border of Tanzania and Kenya. I studied Hotel Management and worked at several hotels before joining Singita. Singita is a well-known company in our industry, and most people dream of working here. I’m inspired by the 100-year purpose and the passion for wildlife conservation that Singita bears, which gives the western corridor of the Serengeti hope - not only for the wildlife, but also to the communities surrounding the reserve.

3 things Jeremiah love and learnt as guides at Singita?

“I love the fact that I am helping to protecting the fauna and flora here. I enjoy interacting with people from all corners of the world. I love the team I work with. All these things have been made possible by Singita and the Grumeti Fund since they are committed to conserving and protecting the wildlife and guests get to enjoy this pristine wilderness in its natural state.

Why I love Singita? Singita has helped me grow my career. In 2008, I joined Singita as a waiter, and when I showed interest in guiding, they gave me the opportunity to train as a guide and supported me. I am so happy to be part of this amazing team and so I say, “Thank you Singita.”



Kirsten Tinkler

FIELD GUIDE, SINGITA KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA

“I was born in Johannesburg and moved to the UK when I was four years old. We travelled frequently to my home country to spend time with family and for me, I knew one day I’d return to South Africa.

I grew up in Weybridge, Surrey. Further studies took me to art college and then onto Nottingham Trent University where I completed my BA Hons in Fashion Design (I know, VASTLY different to the bush!) I specialised in sportswear and illustration and although this is a far stretch from tracking lions, my active artistic mind always inspires me to get creative in the bush. Necklaces, trinkets, bush tea and bushman painting are some of the activities I’ve incorporated into drives with my guests.”

Describe yourself in three phrases?

- Compassionate
- Creative
- A free spirit with an energetic zest for life

“I’ve been with Singita for three and a half years (three years at Singita Sabi Sand and now at Singita Kruger National Park). My journey as a field guide began in 2017. From there I went to work at Honeyguide Ranger Camp (Entabeni) where I fell in love with wildlife. A passionate drive for challenges and to develop my skills took me to Khwai in Botswana, where I spent a month with nature guide training mentors, learning how to approach dangerous animals on foot. From this experience, my mentors recommended I approach Singita, and I haven’t looked back since.

Singita is a brand based on beautiful values, such as humility and generosity to name a few. Being surrounded by like-minded, passionate people from all over the world is inspiring. As a field guide, I’m given a lot of flexibility when it comes to the guest experience. From roasting marshmallows next to the N’wanetsi River, to art and yoga in the bush. At Singita, there’s a drive to adapt, explore and try new things all the time.”

3 Things to love about being a Singita Field Guide?

“Being a guide at Singita makes me strive to



become a more conscientious and thoughtful person, I’ve learnt how to be resourceful and adapt, especially in the rainy season! I’ve also learnt more about conservation and the importance of protecting wildlife and wilderness areas. “

I’m very lucky that I get to take guests out to explore the bush. Setting out from the lodge turning circle, not knowing what’ll come our way and going on an emotional rollercoaster together before we return to the sanctuary of the lodge is such a treat.”

What life lessons have you learnt in the bush?

“I’ve learnt to have gratitude - for every moment. The power of taking a breath, pausing, and tuning into the rhythm of the bush rather than trying to manipulate a scene or an animal at a sighting. I’ve been transformed by my ability to now take time to value what I have in front of me.”

Solomon Ndlovu

ASSISTANT HEAD GUIDE AT SINGITA
LEBOMBO & SWENI LODGE,
SOUTH AFRICA

“What life lessons have I learnt from the bush? Awareness. In the bush you need to always be aware of your surroundings and try to use all your senses. Smelling, hearing, and eyesight and much more.

I was born close to Sabi Sand game reserve in Ottawa, I grew up in a small village between Kruger National Park and Sabi Sand.”

Solomon Ndlovu in three words

- *Activator* - I like starting something and motivating others to become better.
- *Communicator* - I like capturing people's attention and engaging them in conversation
- *Positive* - I like to focus on the positive side of any situation

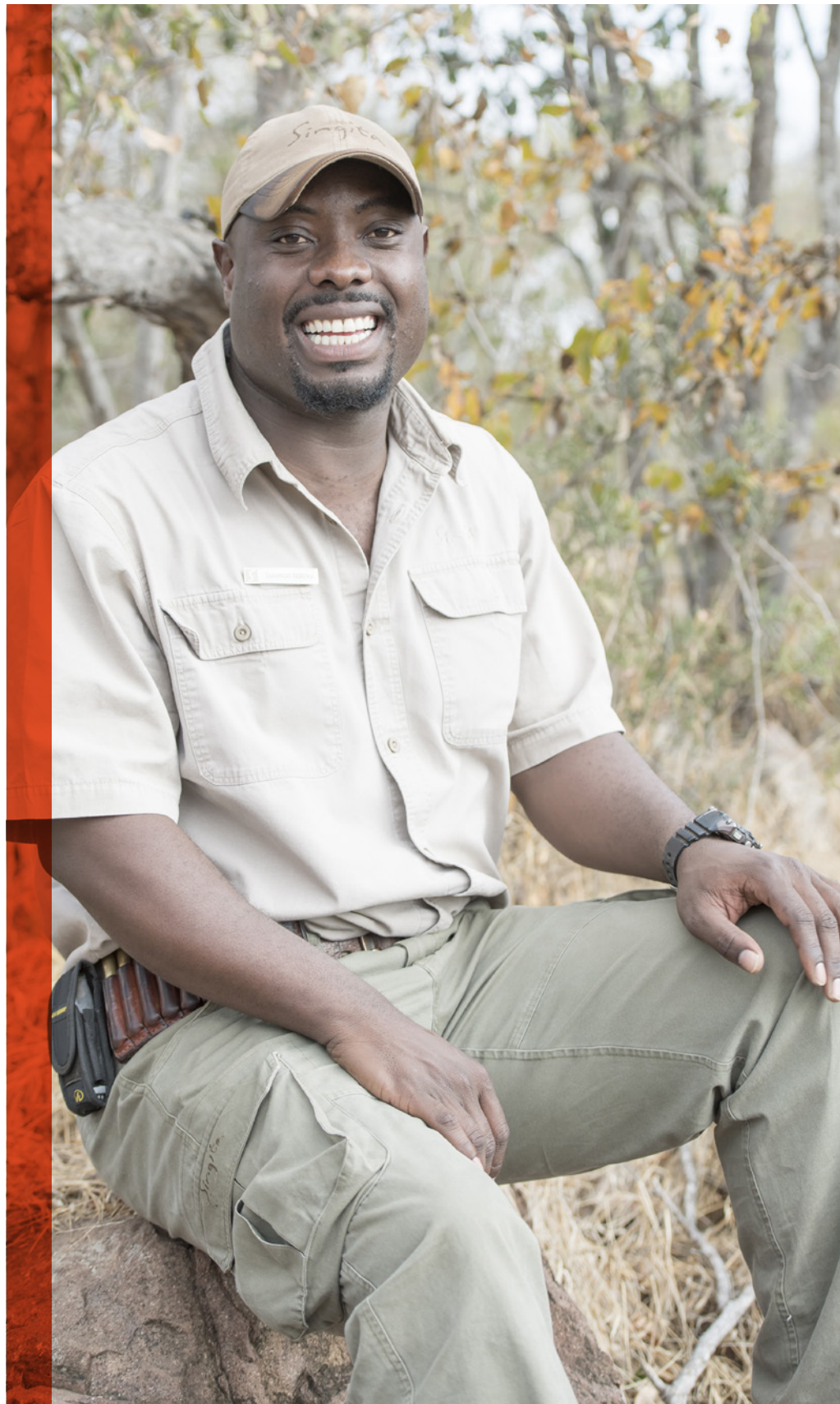
“I joined Singita in 2010 as a trainee tracker and I was employed after the training. I have now progressed to Assistant Head Guide. I have been with Singita for 12 years.

Solomon is a finalist in the FGASA Best Guide of the Year, 2022. (Winner not announced yet)

Why Singita for you?

“My Father knew about Singita because the camps are near each other, and he wanted me to work for Singita. When I heard about the training course, I resigned as guide where I used to work and came to join Singita. I love my team, ecotourism, and sustainability and I have learned most of this at Singita.

The absolute peace in the wilderness and watching the wildlife roaming free in their natural environment, makes me appreciate the privilege of being a safari guide. The Elephant is my favourite animal. I love that they are always doing something, be it feeding, drinking or playing with each other. A sleeping elephant is considered a rare sighting. Also as a guide you also have opportunity to meet people from all over the world and also learn their cultures, and that too is one of the key highlights of my job.”






Mishi Mishi

FIELD GUIDE, SINGITA GRUMETI, TANZANIA

“I have been working at Singita for 15 years. I grew up in a very small town called Mto wa Mbu, just at the base of the Manyara Escarpment.

I came to Singita to fulfil my dreams, having learned more about the organisation as I started to evaluate what my career options would be. I admire the Singita standards and values of the company. I love spending much of my time in the bush because that is my passion. I especially enjoy the great training we receive as guides, and of course, the team I work with make it all that much more special.

I love Singita because they have internal job applications, giving people opportunities. I was given a chance to grow internally. I started as a data collector and I am now the only female guide within Singita’s Tanzania-based family, which makes me proud.” 





Sam Chercoles
on a full-scale dramatic
affair at PLAY Restaurant
& Lounge



Travel Essence Magazine recently took to an exciting dining and entertainment experience at the invitation of Sam Chercoles of PLAY Restaurant & Lounge. Wowed by the entire evening's culinary adventure, we had to connect with Sam to learn more about his exciting role as Managing Director, what inspired his creative flair and what it takes for restaurant concepts to succeed in the city that has it all.

1. SAM CHERCOLES - YOU'VE ENJOYED AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER IN THE DINING AND NIGHTLIFE ARENA, WHICH HAS TAKEN YOU FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ACROSS EUROPE. TALK TO US ABOUT WHAT FROM YOUR UPBRINGING INSPIRED YOU TO GET STARTED IN THIS INDUSTRY?

Someone who inspired me in my personal life and work is my oldest brother. I believe that his desire to help and motivate others made him a great leader and he excelled at both through consistent effort. He recognized that building strong relationships is just as important as being competent in your work. One

of my favorite quotes he often said to me was, "Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

2. MIXOLOGY IS IN ITSELF AN ART. HOW DO YOU DEFINE THIS AND WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE SETS ONE APART FROM HIS COUNTERPARTS IN THIS CRAFT?

For chefs, cooking is an art, and when a mixologist readies a drink to meet the customer's expectations and satiate his thirst, it's both science and art at play. I believe it's essential to learn first the story of every drink and dish to appreciate the thought process that



goes into combining and creating new flavours. In my early career, I was inspired by the story of the Guinness World Record for the most expensive cocktail served at the Merchant Hotel in Belfast, the classic “Mai Tai Roa Ae”. In Tahitian this means 'Out of this World – The Best' and I found that by combining history, food and beverage with art, I have been able to create similar drinks that cost as much as 30 thousand dollars. The objective of my passion is to resurrect the old-world cocktail culture of its origins and bring it back to life with an entertainment element that explains where, who, how, when, and why each classic cocktail was created.

3. NOW YOU FIND YOURSELF HAVING GONE BEYOND THE ART OF MIXOLOGY AND BAR DESIGN TO BEING THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PLAY - A TRULY UNIQUE CONCEPT IN DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT IN DUBAI'S H HOTEL? CAN YOU GIVE OUR READERS YOUR TAKE ON THE OVER-ALL PLAY EXPERIENCE?

Play Restaurant & Lounge is truly the jewel in the crown of the H Hotel. The first time I experienced Play, I felt as if I was part of The Great Gatsby movie. The interior design is an art deco masterpiece, stunning space with theater-like balcony dining levels and the grandeur of the place is breathtaking. Play is a sanctuary for everyone who approaches life in a more playful way. The Play concept has been carefully curated to redefine the world of fine dining and



entertainment. Allowing guests to relax, socialize, and celebrate in the most elegant environment that stimulates the senses by re-writing the rules of dining and embodies a new approach to feeding the soul as well as the body, creating unforgettable emotional experiences around the world.

4. WHAT INSPIRED THE OWNERS TO BRING THIS CONCEPT TO DUBAI, A CITY RENOWNED FOR INNOVATION IN FOOD SERVICE AND HOSPITALITY?

One of the most favourite quotes of our founder is "A Business That Makes Nothing but Money Is a Poor Business" by Henry Ford. And that quote has been his guiding light with whatever he does. For him, it was not just about creating another F&B concept but more about showing the world a glimpse of what the future of F&B should look like. I'm sure you've seen us use the term "Dining Redefined" many times, and the first time we heard that was from him when he sat with all of us and specifically said, "The goal is not just to create a destination, but to create an emotional journey starting with the original purpose of what restaurants have been for diners everywhere and end it with our magic, by providing an unforgettable experience where dining is forever redefined." Today we follow his inspirations, remember his words, and use them as our mission statement.

5. LET'S SWITCH GEARS TO THE MENU? HOW IMPORTANT IS INNOVATION FOR PLAY AND WHAT ARE YOUR CORE TENETS IN PROVIDING GUESTS WITH AN EXPERIENCE TO REMEMBER?

Whilst others call chefs cooks, our founder always viewed them as artists. That belief was instilled in all of us. The purpose of art has always been to trigger people's emotions, and we wanted to apply the same sensation to our food. People sometimes forget the different feelings a memorable dish can create. Whether it was a childhood memory or other important personal moments of our lives, good food has always had the power to bring that inner happiness out of us. With that mantra, we believe in playing with the emotions of our guests by offering them food that is familiar yet, at the same time, something that they have never experienced before.

Our global Avante Garde approach is what differentiates us from others. Even though we call it Avante Garde, I personally like to describe it as luxury comfort food. What's unique with our offering is that we are constantly evolving. Our founder always believed in giving our culinary artists the freedom to always try new things and never hold them back. In the end, it is that belief that makes it a win-win situation where our chefs are happy by having the opportunity of constantly



creating new things, and we at the front of house always have the satisfaction of surprising our customers with new and unique flavours and table-side experiences every time they visit. Good food, drinks and service are the main pillars of Play's culinary emotional pleasures.

6. YOU RECENTLY HOSTED TRAVEL ESSENCE MAGAZINE GUESTS FOR A SPECTACULAR EVENING OF CULINARY EXPLORATION AND THEATRE - AN EXPERIENCE WE DESCRIBED AS "SENSORY" ON EVERY LEVEL. WHAT GOES INTO CURATING THE PLAY EXPERIENCE ACROSS THE TEAMS - DANCERS, MIXOLOGIST, CHEFS, HOSTESSES ETC?

Play "seamless morphing" starts from our staff members, since they are the ones who bring the concept alive. Play staff members plays a crucial role since they represent our brand, and I believe that the Food & Beverage industry is all about innovation and that every server is an actor, an entertainer, a performer where the scenario is the manual, and this is how we start the process of unveil-





ing the beauty of our dining metamorphosis.

Play conceptualization is to focus on offering a new type of customer experience with a different and unformal style of service “Funky – Gourmet”. Its all about creating a remarkable atmosphere, powerful aesthetics and a unique approach of creating an experience that clients will seek or remember something they haven't seen before, where entertainment meets the passion of Chef's and Mixologist's and giving diners a truly unique and carefully cultivated gourmandize episode that will take guests on an unrivalled gastronomic journey of an emotional dining experience.

7. WHY DUBAI FOR YOU, AND WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR ANYONE ASPIRING TO ONE DAY LEAD A TEAM AT AN ESTABLISHMENT LIKE PLAY?

Dubai is the perfect city to showcase your passion in whatever you do. This city is filled with ambition, from a range of mega malls, private beach clubs, world best dining restaurants, to the world's tallest buildings and largest artificial islands, Dubai really does have it all. My greatest admiration of Dubai lies in the Ruler's, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, extraordinary legacy achieved by his visionary leadership and ability to deliver no matter what the odds are, and from him is where I learned that leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.

In line with Dubai's vision, we can proudly say that Play Restaurant and Lounge has revolutionized the fine dining concept of Dubai luxury lifestyle and hospitality industry. Launching Play back in 2016, we are reaching a landmark marketing of six years on the UAE Market this year. With a great response and rapid growth of the brand since, we experienced a steady rise of loyal following each year, the current peak point being 2016-2018. Clients have become more familiarized with the product name and through specific marketing strategies over the past year.

8. SAM'S 5 FAVOURITE THINGS ABOUT DUBAI?

1. Safety

What I love about Dubai is that it is one of the safest cities in the world. Dubai's government and leadership emphasize the safety and security of citizens, residents, and visitors as a paramount objective, which enables investors and professionals from around the world to live, work, and prosper here.

2. Burj Khalifa

I have to say, this skyscraper is my favorite architectural design of all time, a true masterpiece. You can't talk about Dubai without mentioning the Burj Khalifa. Over 828 meters high, Burj Khalifa is crowned as the tallest building in the world. This iconic building can be seen from anywhere in Dubai.

3. Palm Jumeirah

It always makes me wonder how they came up with the idea to build this man-made island. Designed to resemble a stylized Palm Tree from above, Palm Jumeirah was the first offshore development of its kind and was originally called the Eighth Wonder of the World.

4. Desert Sunset

The best place to see the sunset in Dubai is while you are doing a Desert Safari. This is a place that will give you enormous pleasure and provide you with great memories.

5. Dubai Mall

My favorite place to buy clothing is without a doubt the Dubai Mall. With over 1,200 retail outlets, including galleries and Bloomingdale's, over 200 international dining experiences, and a wide range of entertainment and leisure attractions for families.



9. WHEN NOT "PLAYING" AT PLAY - WHAT DO YOU GET UP TO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Keeping up with the night industry requires a healthy lifestyle. Sport activities and visiting the beach at La Mer are some of my favorite things to do during my free time. Also, I love to explore the city to get ideas for my food and beverage concept designs by looking at all the amazing architectural structures and restaurants.

10. 3 REASONS WHY VISITORS TO DUBAI SHOULD EXPERIENCE PLAY?

> Play is a homegrown concept that has established itself as one of Dubai's best dining restaurants and it truly offers an immersive dining experience. The interior design is a feast for the eyes that wows

everyone who experience it for the first time.

> Play was the first fine dining restaurant to initiate the dinner show revolution in Dubai. Play is a stress free, fun loving environment where hungry people can be entertained. Where fond memories can come along with today's reality. A place designed to put smiles on faces and abundant laughter in the air.

> In the words of the same people who designed our brand "Play is for the thinkers, the dreamers, the trendsetters and the mavericks, everyone who approaches life in a more playful way." This is the place where those looking for a destination that reflects their outlook on life, their style and their aspirations can get together, socialize, laugh and enjoy exceptional food, drinks and music in a unique atmosphere designed to stimulate all the senses. 🎵





Oren Leano Kgosietsile
and his journey to
E.G.Y.P.T



ENTREPRENEUR, DESIGNER, STUDENT AND ATHLETE CURRENTLY LIVING AND PURSUING HIS DREAMS IN HIS ADOPTED COUNTRY OF GERMANY, OREN LEANO KGOSIETSILE WAS BORN AND RAISED IN BOTSWANA. HE ATTENDED BOTH CORNERSTONE COLLEGE IN PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA AND BOTSWANA'S LIVINGSTONE KOLOBENG COLLEGE FOR HIS HIGH SCHOOL, WHERE AFTER SUCCESSFULLY ATTAINING HIS HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA WITH HIGH HONOURS RESULTS, HE EMBARKED ON A JOURNEY TO PURSUE HIS DREAM IN EUROPE. IT IS FROM HERE WHERE TRAVEL ESSENCE MAGAZINE WOULD LEARN OF THIS YOUNG MAN, AND HOW HE HAS FORGED A NEW PATHWAY ON HIS ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY WITH THE LAUNCH OF HIS SHOE LINE NAMED E. G. Y. P. T. FOOTWEAR

E.G.Y.P.T Oren says, is an acronym for “Everything God’s Years Patience and Time,” citing that he came up with this name after having completed his first design and realising that he didn’t want to name his footwear line after himself but rather after something that would help him tell the story of his journey without his being the object of focus.

“My story is one that could be told or begun by having a ball at my feet and being able to go on my knees and ask for guidance on how to deal with life as a teenager. Growing up I was obsessed about 2 things: football and economics. One would find me in two different places, either on the football field or

the library,” says Oren.

He is quick to add that he always bigger dreams than just becoming a Professional Footballer or an economist, and so creating his shoe label was much less a surprise to him than it was to others.

“I believe that everyone was created ambidextrous as well as having the ability to tackle and achieve multiple goals. And so for me, the journey became much about focusing on one vision which would open the door to other dreams and an extension of the greater vision,” he says.

FUELED BY FAITH AND INSPIRED BY HIS MOTHER'S SACRIFICE

Oren believes that building something

requires a foundation or a base from which that thing can stand otherwise some level of instability will ensue. His base or foundation in this sense, is his relationship with God and the ability to observe and learn.

“I was always that kid that was always underestimated and counted out in everything I did. That built a storm within me the older I became, as I began to realise that I always moved in a unique way. It was the pressure of knowing and believing that I am talented and the frustration of not being able to yet see it come to fruition as quickly as I would have liked,” he states.

And so Oren began to use observation as a way to release all that energy built





up within. But as life would have it, a blow was dealt for his family, which he would later use to build on the lessons he was learning as time lapsed. His mother had just lost almost everything and so he had to watch her rebuild everything from fresh foundations with a teenage son to feed and put through school.

“With all my mother’s academic brilliance, I witnessed her struggle with the pressures of being gifted yet desperate to see the tide turn for the better after a major setback. My greatest inspiration has been watching her build, with tears, sweat, faith, and absolute tunnel vision, her company Wise Leadership over the years, which has now garnered significant success in the field of Corporate Governance in Botswana and Southern Africa,” Oren says with pride.

Finding inspiration from his mother’s journey has allowed Oren to open himself up to embrace every challenge and failure, recognising them as an opportunities to learn valuable lessons. Oren cites that his mother told him two things he has hung onto into adulthood; the first being to pursue all your dreams and passions no matter what, and most importantly never to look like what you have been through.

“These words came from someone who wanted to be a fashion designer growing up, and so it is what brought on my mother’s fashion sense and confidence. It is an unwritten rule for her to always step out of the house looking fabulous and elegant,” says Oren.

THE JOURNEY TO E.G.Y.P.T

He credits his creative spirit to his mother, which often showed up in how he dressed, but is quick to say that while clothes were never the problem, it was always the shoes that would never fit the outfits he chose to wear. And so his obsession with shoes started from there and progressed when he moved to Germany in 2016.

“I would be in the store and all the shoes would seem pretty nice, but somewhat lacked the look, feel and elegance I felt would fully complete an outfit. And the ones that could, would just break your bank account by just even considering buying them. Noticing that there was a lack of elegant shoes that could complete any outfit and make it stand out, I decided to pursue my creative side and that

is how E.G.Y.P.T-Footwear was born,” Oren recounts.


A believer of creating a good narrative behind everything he sets his mind to, Oren decided he wanted to tell a story through his shoes whilst inspiring other people to tell theirs when wearing the shoes. That is why every shoe has a unique name and an inspirational quote on the inside of the tongue of the shoes.

REVEALING E.G.Y.P.T

“The first release is called ‘Erweckung’ which means awakening in German and the quote inside is “Don’t count the days. Make the days count”. The ultimate idea is that everyone has a journey and a story to tell. Which means everyone walks on a different path and at a different pace in this journey of life,” Oren says with excitement.

He is of the belief that with every committed step one takes, they could get closer to your goals, passions and dreams regardless of how rocky the road may be, and that they should make a concerted effort to tell their story along the way.

“Shoes are just not shoes, they are a platform, one in which I hope to provide to people in my bid to inspire them. The crazy thing about it all is that this is just the genesis of it all as we aim to cause disruption in the shoe business,” he quips.

“My message to all the mothers out there is that your strength and courage to fight for your families doesn’t go unrecognised by your children. They may not say it, however they learn and absorb it. That is why you are pillars of the community, and so please do not take every action you take for your children or granted, as it will one day be highly appreciated if not already, and your sacrifice viewed as something of great importance within society. 



A savanna landscape with a giraffe and people, overlaid with a green tint. The scene shows a giraffe standing in a field of tall grass, surrounded by large, leafy trees. In the foreground, several people are visible, some wearing hats, suggesting a safari or wildlife viewing activity. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA





Ultimate relaxation with Hideaways at Lazuli Bush Lodge

Are you headed into South Africa and in need of escaping the hustle and bustle of the concrete jungle? Let's journey into a destination that comes unexpected to many flying into Africa's southernmost nation's eastern landscapes. Trust us when we say, the tranquil setting of Lazuli Bush Lodge in the lush surroundings of the Kuleni Game Park in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa is the perfect spot to revive body, mind and soul.

By Liryn de Jager



because this semi-precious stone was seen as combining the blue of the heavens and the golden glitter of the sun. Nestled amongst trees and held in dappled sunlight, this private villa is the quintessential picture of exclusivity. Much more than this though, the lodge's total immersion and seclusion in nature radiate the stone's qualities of awareness, healing and self-care.

Through the exquisite design concept of being one with nature, the villa melts into the surrounding landscape with views of the wild from every angle. Large glass sliding doors welcome in the light from the four ensuite bedrooms, all with outdoor showers too. The spacious and flowing open-planned kitchen, dining and lounge area complete with an indoor fireplace for those cosy winter nights, is a natural extension of this forest haven. Languid and lazy summer days are best spent in the pool and under the trees surrounding the outdoor deck.

Take a deep breath, touch the earth and be present with a **forest bathing experience** at Lazuli Bush Lodge. The Japanese may have initiated the concept of *shinrin-yoku* – “forest bathing” or “taking in the forest atmosphere” – but the importance of the natural world to our health have been known for ages. Let nature touch your body and soul with this ancient art practise at Lazuli. The sight, smell and sound of the peaceful surroundings will allow you to reconnect to yourself.

Kuleni Game Park is the pristine setting for Lazuli Bush Lodge and the inviting landscape holds a treasure trove of opportunities to wonder out and about. The park's 150 hectares is a natural habitat for countless plains game, from giraffe and zebra to bushbuck and nyala. From the comfort of the outdoor deck area, you will also be able to observe the resident warthogs while night-time will bring about the antics of nocturnal creatures like bush babies. Twitchers can glance skywards for the more than 140 bird species that call Kuleni home.

Exploring the wide outdoors

If you feel the need to break away from the peaceful embrace of Lazuli Bush Lodge, there are endless options for outdoor excursions in the area

This exclusive 8-person private villa is part of Hideaways' range of bespoke African accommodations. It offers an authentic experience, whether for an intimate occasion or a family retreat. Situated within a stone's throw of the splendour of **iSimangaliso Wetlands Park, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and Sodwana Bay**, Lazuli offers infinite possibilities for relaxation and exploration as a safari and sea holiday destination.

At one with nature

Lazuli rightly personifies the origins of the word it gleans its name from. For as far back as Roman times, lapis lazuli has been described as “opaque and sprinkled with specks of gold”





surrounding Kuleni Game Park.

Rise at dawn, take a guided game drive in the **Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park** and tick the famed Big Five of your sightings list. This natural gem, right on Lazuli's front steps, is blessed with incredible biodiversity. The park has been a haven for endangered black and white rhinos while elephant, buffalo, lion and leopard are also present. It is also one of the world's top spots for viewing nyala and a prime birding destination with close to 340 species. A road network of more than 200 kilometres and a number of hides overlooking water holes offer many game viewing opportunities.

Venture to the blue waters of the Indian Ocean and marvel at humpbacked whales on a boat safari or scan the skies for the abundant birdlife of the **iSimangaliso Wetlands Park**. The balmy waters of the Indian Ocean on the KwaZulu-Natal coast, and as far as Mozambique and Madagascar, are favoured breeding grounds for especially humpback whales.

It is the setting for the spectacular and lively breaching of these enormous marine mammals each year between June and November. The experience gets amplified when calves are observed, seeking comfort in the close presence of their mothers.

iSimangaliso Wetland Park also offers tours between November and March to observe leatherback and loggerhead turtles laying their eggs and watching the hatching of baby turtles.

Head to the shores of **Mission Rocks** in iSimangaliso Wetlands Park for a day of exploration in the countless rock pools, meandering along the open sandy beach and looking out from the various vantage points. The flora and array of marine species in this spectacular setting are a delight for wildlife enthusiasts. There are also fantastic picnic spots with magnificent views for proper rest and relaxation.

Take to the Hluhluwe River for a game cruise and get up close with the resident hippos and crocodiles. Opt for a museum

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tour with plenty of insight into the local Zulu culture and history for an experience with a difference.

The more adventurous can explore the underwater wonder world of **Sodwana Bay** while snorkelling or get better acquainted with snakes and crocodiles at the **Zulu Croc Reptile Park** in Hluhluwe.

Guests at **Lazuli Bush Lodge** wouldn't have to venture too far to experience a whole host of leisurely activities. National parks, wetlands and the ocean await outside the boundary of the **Kuleni Game Park**, covering excursions from safari to sea. Not feeling like leaving at all? Then simply relax by the pool, take a stroll around the property or a relaxed walk in the forest.

Indeed the perfect destination for lovers of all things leisure. 



An aerial photograph of a lush, green landscape. In the foreground, a river flows through a marshy area with dense green vegetation. A thatched-roof building is nestled among trees on the left side. The background shows a vast expanse of green fields and scattered trees under a clear sky.

Mesmerising Okavango at Vumbura Plains

By Melissa Siebert

ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • VUMBURA PLAINS





Wilderness Safaris Botswana's flagship camp Vumbura Plains recently received a facelift, opening in April 2022 to unveil a luxury bush camp more gorgeous than ever, while continuing to offer the ultimate Okavango Delta experience in sublime style.

Vumbura seems to float above the radiant blue Delta channels, facing the floodplains dotted with small islands and ilala palms. Redesigned doors and windows now maximise the views; the new décor brings in the landscape even more, with its palette of blues, purples, greens, and neutrals and cultural flourishes like walls of similarly hued baskets, all of which are locally made.

As always, Vumbura's diverse habitats – mopane, acacia woodlands, floodplains, and permanent swamp – deliver exceptional land- and water-based game viewing year round, as well as a host of other adventures.

Adventure on Land

Beyond sheer relaxation and the opportunity to take in the Okavango's biodiversity and wildlife in its most natural form, a stay at Vumbura Plains awards you the prevalence of exceptional wildlife encounters. Lions in pursuit of prey; vast elephant and antelope herds

peacefully grazing; African wild dogs on the hunt; a leopard guarding its kill; and countless other creatures are in abundance and roaming freely.

It's an ongoing wildlife parade around camp as elephants gather around the deck and hippos serenade. Watch the big and small animals visiting the camp from the safety and comfort of your room or from the elevated common areas. Walking safaris allow you to discover the 'smaller things' such as flora and fauna, with your guide who expertly knows and reads the bush.

With more than 600 avian species on hand throughout the seasons, Vumbura Plains is a treat for the avid birdwatcher. You'll have a field day searching for the likes of Pel's fishing-owl; carmine bee-eater; saddle-billed stork; lilac-breasted roller; slaty egret; secretary bird; various hornbills; and hundreds of others.

Fancy a hand at photography? Get that great shot with state-of-the-art Olympus camera gear – available for your use, with or without the input of one of our guides.

What about a little romance?

Many options for romantic dining are available here; from private suppers on your deck, next to your own plunge pool; dining by the fire pit, with a creature



ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • VUMBURA PLAINS

chorus around you and the stars above; meals served with panache in the bush, and more. Why not order an in-room massage to ease you deeper into your Delta experience.

Take the fun to the Water

Hum along the channels, past reeds, waterlilies, and some wildlife surprises in a six-seater Delta boat, slow down the pace and lay back in a mokoro, traditional dugout canoe, as you drift dreamily over the waters. Test your casting skills with a little catch-and-release fishing – with some expert help, if required.

If you'd much rather take your adventures from the sky, from April to September, soar above the Delta's serpentine waterways for a bird's-eye view of wildlife below in a hot air balloon. Adrenaline enthusiasts will have a field day as they brave a safari by 'copter and get their adrenaline going.

Or do it all...

Like regular Vumbura guest, ecologist Robert Taylor, does:

"Vumbura is a truly Okavango experience", he says. "There is water everywhere, and the multitude of aquatic and wetland habitats results in a diverse and constantly changing environment to explore.

"Game viewing is done in style against a backdrop like no other. The forest along the waterways around Vumbura Plains is host to a vast array of bird species and a small female leopard which calls Vumbura Plains home. The wetland life around camp is exquisite – waterlilies flower in their thousands and bell frogs serenade you with their chiming calls as you eat supper..."

First prize, Robert says, is to explore Vumbura Plains from all angles, citing a recent 'holistic experience' there – non-stop adventuring capped by cooling off with sundowners and a delectable supper.





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“It started with high tea in camp, followed by a game drive to the Little Vumbura boat station, and a boat cruise to a remote palm tree-covered island where a helicopter was waiting. We flew over permanent papyrus swamp, spotting sitatunga and enormous crocs, then winding our way along the Nqoga River (aptly named after a slithering snake) and landing in the shallows, where the guests took off their shoes to wade calf-deep through

cool, crystal-clear water to a gin bar, in the water, as the sun sank slowly over the horizon. A short night drive back to camp culminated in a delicious meal on the deck.”

Many others sing Vumbura’s praises, including Wilderness Safaris Botswana MD Kim Nixon: “Vumbura’s diverse habitats and range of activities make this a must-visit destination – one that truly celebrates the best of Botswana’s natural and cultural heritage.”^{AV}



Breath-taking Namibia the Jenman African Safaris Way

By Liryn de Jager



The skies have long opened up again and for those with itching feet and a sense of adventure, this means departing to foreign lands to re-discover this wondrous planet we call home. Namibia is one of the standout destinations in Africa with the country's vast landscapes luring countless safari-goers to this part of the continent each year. From the endless dunes of the Namib Desert that bleed into the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean, to the deep valleys of the Fish River Canyon and the wildlife haven that is Etosha National Park – Namibia is truly one of Southern Africa's best kept secrets in adventure travel.

The breath-taking vistas of Namibia are incomparable with the fiery red dunes, moonlike mountains, never-ending plains and churning waters. These natural wonders forever grab a hold of visitors' senses and souls. Just the mere mention of names like Sossusvlei, Naukluft and Damaraland create a certain expectation, one that won't disappoint. It is indeed an experience that is out of this world.

SOSSUSVLEI: A salt and clay pan, surrounded by high red dunes and located in the southern part of the Namib Desert, it includes Deadvlei and Sesriem Canyon, carved millions of years ago by the Tsauchab River.

NAUKLUFT: The Namib-Naukluft Desert, situated between the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and the edge of the Great Escarpment, is home to some of the rarest plant and animal species in the world.

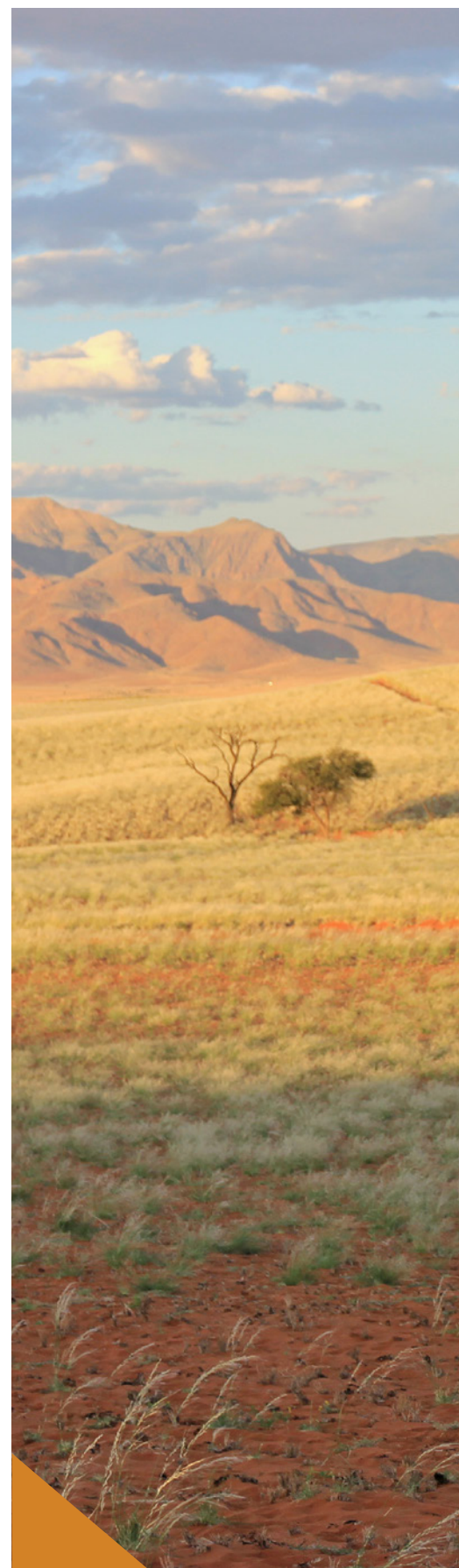
DAMARALAND: The north-central part of Namibia is defined by the Namib Desert in the west and the Kalahari Desert in the east, while iconic granite mountains tower over the impressive landscape.

Namibia is the ideal destination for exploring with the highways and by-ways stretching on endlessly. There are more than enough opportunities to roll down the window and marvel at the scenery. Exciting discoveries can be found around every bend with the enigmatic landscape providing countless memorable moments.

When to pack your bags for Namibia

The best time to visit Namibia is between June and October. It is wintertime in the southern hemisphere which for the country means dry weather and moderate daytime temperatures. Pack a sweater though as the nights are still pretty chilly.

Choosing Jenman African Safaris for a tailor-made Namibian adventure







ensures a journey with a distinctly personal touch. The small-group scheduled safaris are more personal and comfortable than larger group tours. Great value is placed on travellers' experience of the wildlife and scenery, local cultures and all the numerous activities.

The variety in landscape and experience, together with Namibia's fascinating character, truly comes alive. The knowledge of experienced guides enhances each and every trip by offering a deeper insight into this unique destination. Ranging from 15 to 24 days and incorporating the best of South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana, the Namibia Tours highlight the multitude of sights and sounds of the region's spectacular scenery.

NORTHERN SKIES - 15 DAYS

The beach town of Swakopmund, the breath-taking dunes of the Namib Desert, an up-close and personal encounter at the Cape Cross Seal Colony, and exceptional game viewing in Etosha National Park ensure the days are filled with exceptional safari moments. Visits to the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park in Botswana and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe are also included.

GREAT TRANS-AFRICAN LODGE SAFARI - 21 DAYS


The astonishing magnitude of Namibia's desert and unforgettable wildlife encounters provide countless

photographic moments. It is an ancient land with an ageless spirit. The golden-red sands of Sossusvlei and the Namib-Naukluft National Park feature prominently. Combined with the unique fauna and flora of Etosha National Park, this is an unforgettable safari experience. The tour further comprises stays in the Greater Moremi and Makgadikgadi Pans areas in Botswana, as well as Hwange National Park and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe.

NORTHERN EXPERIENCE - 24 DAYS

A smorgasbord of exhilarating experiences blends together superbly for a fascinating journey through Namibia and up into Botswana and Zimbabwe. Swakopmund is a coastal oasis while Damaraland contains some of the most scenic areas in Namibia, dotted with the presence of the famed desert elephants and the endangered black rhino. The Caprivi Strip is a birder's paradise and also boasts an abundant river life.

Travelling is done in fully equipped safari vehicles, ensuring comfort at all times. Overnight accommodation is carefully selected and a mix of lodges, chalets and luxury tented camps. Mealtimes are a delectable affair with dinners often enjoyed around a campfire.

For those who prefer to explore Namibia at their own pace, there is the option to drive themselves. Self-drive holidays in this gem of a destination are unforgettable. Bespoke itineraries are designed with care, taking into account travelling distances and time for scenic stops. 

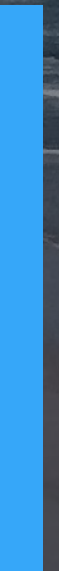
With a comprehensive network of partners, Jenman African Safaris takes care of all travel arrangements, guaranteeing a once-in-a-lifetime experience. To curate your trip to Namibia with Jenman African Safaris, visit www.jenmansafaris.com, email info@jenmansafaris.com or call +27 21 683 7826 | +27 82 300 6656







THE WANDERLUST WITHIN





Ilha Awaits Your Presence

Aayat is a fifteen year old student and a budding writer, poet and blogger, from Mozambique. Her written works include topics such as nature, culture, travel and tourism, having written for one of Mozambique's famous travel and culture magazines called, Xonguila. She is also a blogger for South Africa's leading nature guide training company called, Ecotraining. Having made a name for herself as Mozambique's first blogger on, 'Voices of Youth - UNICEF', Aayat was also recognised as a winner at Bloomsday - 21 poetry competition held by the Irish Embassy in Maputo. Most recently, she won a bronze medal for writing a piece on climate change by VILIPO - Lithuania. She is currently participating in a project for Kids Rights Changemakers - Amsterdam.

By Aayat Irfan

On the destination in Mozambique called Ilha, she writes....

A small coral island lies on the edge of the Mossuril Bay, at the sun-kissed golden shores of the Indian Ocean, known as the Island of Mozambique. Mozambique got its name after this island. In the local Nahara-Macua language of this remarkable island, it is also called 'Ilha' or 'Muhipiti'. Ilha was Mozambique's capital prior to Maputo.

Ilha is rich with incomparable architectural monuments and buildings, all consisting of a hint of African, Arabic and European cultures. Due to its splendid architectural sites Ilha was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991.

The Makuti Town and the Stonetown, are the two parts that make Ilha whole. The Stonetown consists of ancient buildings that are constructed with the use of stones, each one of them being collected from the island itself. The Makuti Town is below sea level because large amounts of stone were collected so that the Stonetown could be built. Makuti Town has houses built with thatched



Aayat Irfan



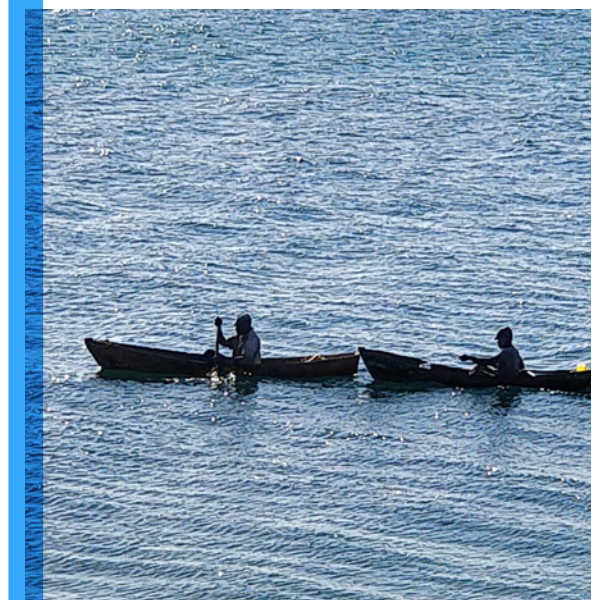
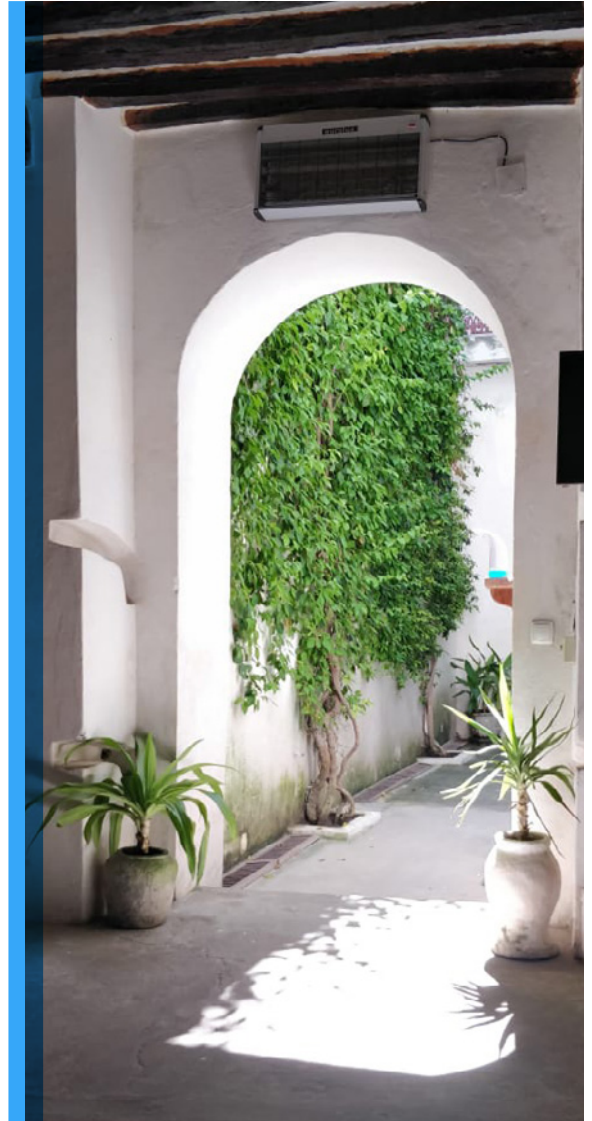
roofs, all made from the traditional ma-kuti leaves.

Ilha is a must for thalassophiles. It is the perfect tourist destination where travellers can experience scrumptious seafood, feel the tropical yet cold air from the gentle swaying of coconut trees, enjoy the sun rays kiss their cheeks and watch dhows slowly glide away from the island. Ilha is one of the few places where the beautiful merging of sun into the dark deep ocean can be witnessed.

Ilha is a symbol of religious harmony, also home to an ancient Hindu temple. It also has one of the oldest mosques of Mozambique. Ilha also has many well-known churches, all of which represent Ilha's cultural heritage and diversity.

Most islands serve their tourists with excellent seafood, Ilha does too. But Ilha also has something else to offer. Ilha's traditional dish called, 'matapa de siri siri,' would leave your trip incomplete if you haven't tried it. This dish is mainly made of seaweed, cashews and cassava leaves. This dish is best paired with coconut rice.

Offering much more to its tourists and residents apart from its spectacular



beaches, Ilha is a dwelling place for an ample number of heritage hotels. The advantage of staying in a heritage hotel is that it allows its guests to experience the raw and pure cultures and traditions of Ilha while offering the best level of comfort.

Most of these hotels have been constructed by renewing old buildings or ruins. Reconstruction of these ruins doesn't only help preserve the cultural beauty and

provide education regarding it, but it also is an extremely sustainable method of construction. This way the carbon footprint is reduced.

Ilha will welcome you with its cheering children enjoying the sea water, its stalls over-filled with summer items and the delightful music of the everlasting tides ready to fill up your ears. Travelling to a place rich with culture, heritage and traditions will also weave experiences filled with the same. 🌿



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PULSE OF THE CITY

Curated Africa with Ker & Downey® Africa





ALUXURY AFRICAN SAFARI COMPANY BASED IN CAPE TOWN AND OFFERING PERSONALIZED TRIPS THROUGHOUT THE AFRICAN CONTINENT, KER & DOWNEY® AFRICA'S MISSION IS QUITE SIMPLY TO CHALLENGE, TO CONNECT AND TO LEAVE A POSITIVE LEGACY FOR AFRICA. A POWERFUL STATEMENT THIS, AND PERHAPS THE VERY REASON WHY THEIR PROMISE TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS IN PLANNING A LUXURY AFRICAN SAFARI TRIP FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD HOLDS TRUE. THE QUEST IS TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF AFRICAN TRAVEL, INVOKING A SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE AND EXPLORATION TO ALL WHO DESIRE TO EXPERIENCE THE CONTINENT'S VIBRANT CULTURES AND COLOURFUL EXPRESSIONS.

When one speaks of African travel, the wanderlust's mind often journeys them to the savannah grasslands that lie in wait in the East in Kenya or far south, the rolling sand dunes of the Kalahari in Namibia and Botswana in the south west and the thick tropical jungles that make up Africa's eastern center in Rwanda, Uganda, the Congo and parts of Tanzania lining Lake Tanganyika. But up north, there is a wealth of history and tales of the intermingling of Arabic and European influences in Morocco and Egypt. Journeying through the now-growing-in-popularity Rwanda and the lesser known Malawi under the care of Ker & Downey® Africa will be nothing short of life changing, connecting the inquisitive mind with the essence of the continent's past, beautifully infusing experiences that speak to the heart of the 21st century nomad in the now.





Enchanting Morocco unpacked

A place of mystery and magic, Morocco calls out the contemporary nomad to follow in the century-old footsteps of travelers and traders. A feast for the senses, the gateway to Africa from the north boasts an enchanting mix of Arabian, Native Berber and Mediterranean cultural heritage and tradition. Travel to Morocco and wander through colorful mazes of the ancient medina in Fez, watch Marrakech come to life at Djemaa El-Fna street theater, admire the mesmerizing blue facades of Chefchaouen, or simply take it all in while sipping on a cup of mint tea from the corner street café in Casablanca.

Want to take your Moroccan adventure beyond the ancient cities? The country's diverse landscapes invite visitors to journey through the Sahara desert on the back of a camel, take to the skies on a hot air balloon safari over the snow-capped High Atlas Mountains, or surf the clean waves along the coast at Safi Beach. Whichever destination choose for Morocco, Ker & Downey® promises travellers a distinctively enchanting itinerary for even the most seasoned of adventure seekers and culture enthusiasts.

A snapshot of the cradle of humanity in Egypt

Egypt is a beguiling land steeped in ancient history, dating back thousands of years to the dawn of civilization itself. This enchanting land is shrouded in history and has captured the imagination of travelers for centuries. Located far up in the northeast of Africa, linking the continent to the Middle East, the country is characterized by a diversity of landscapes, cultures and ancient artifacts.

One of Egypt's most charming and friendly cities, nestled

along the banks of the Nile River is Aswan. This breathtaking region is characterized by lush greenery, granite cliffs, archeological temples, museums and the brightly colored houses of the indigenous Nubian people.

The beauty of Aswan is best explored on a scenic felucca river cruise down the Nile. These traditional wooden sailing vessels, sometimes referred to as 'dhows of the Nile', have been a fixture on the watery highway for centuries.

Relax and discover stunning riverbank landscapes, fascinating ancient sites and colorful villages from the comfort of the boat and understand why Aswan is such a unique and charming part of Egypt's makeup. A sunset cruise is particularly great for budding photographers when, amongst hundreds of lanteen-sailed feluccas, the Nile river shimmers in the light of the setting sun.

Harness the power of biodiversity in Rwanda

Rwanda is a country of ever-changing landscapes ranging from rocky mountains, to dense green rainforests and expansive savannah plains. Such biodiversity brings a unique and varied spectrum of wildlife experiences to all those that dare to venture into the remote regions of Africa. Famous for primate trekking and jaw dropping landscapes, countless hiking trails and the incredible Lake Kivu, Rwanda is not to be missed.

The highlight of a trip to Rwanda is undoubtedly a trek through the famous Volcanoes National Park to come face-to-face with Africa's mountain gorillas as they eat, play and groom in their natural habitat. Located in the far northwest of the country, the park – considered to be the best gorilla trekking destination

in the world – protects the steep slopes of the Virunga mountain range and is home to more than half the world's endangered gorillas.

With so few of these majestic giants left in the world, this is a once-in-a-lifetime wildlife experience that will leave you humbled as you gain an intimate glimpse into their intricate family lives.

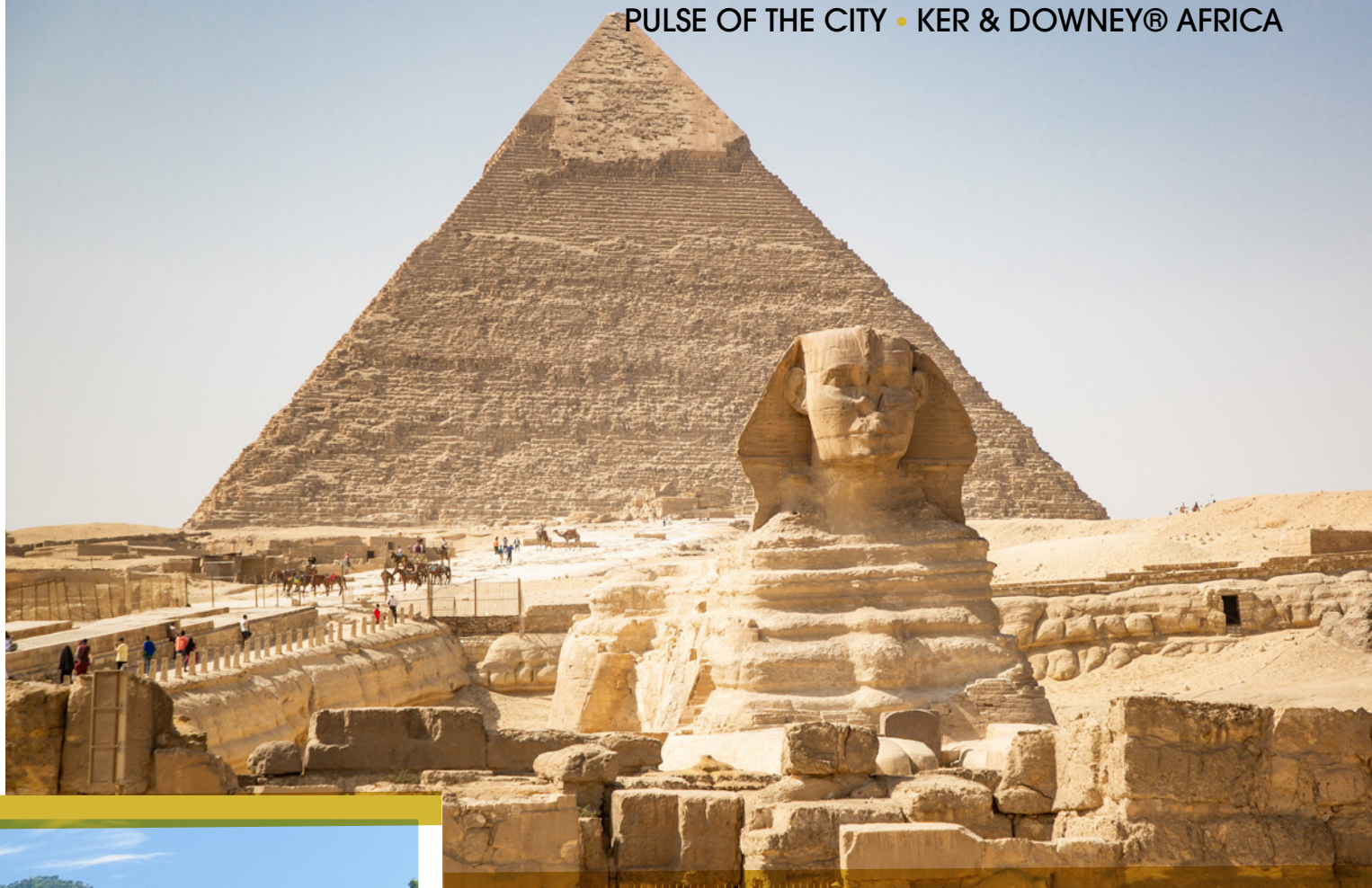
Let the warm heart of Africa speak to you in Malawi

Malawi is undoubtedly one of Africa's untouched wildlife destinations. This landlocked African country is dominated by towering mountains and cliffs, the vast Lake Malawi, and endless savannah plains that are home to huge herds of elephants, prides of lions, bathing hippos and countless other

huge and impressive wild animals. The Great Rift Valley dissects the country in two, creating Africa's third-largest lake, which is popular with divers, snorkelers, kayakers and beach goers.

Malawi is quickly emerging as one of Africa's top safari destinations and its small size puts all that the country has to offer within easy reach – cloud-coated mountain peaks in the south, rolling highlands in the north, and expansive waterways and grassy plains in the center. Majete Wildlife Reserve is Malawi's only Big Five destination and under the management of Africa Parks, it has become a conservation success story. Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve and Liwonde National Park are also fast becoming top wildlife destinations in Malawi.





Tailor-made safaris that inspire transformation

The call to discover Africa as a riveting as it is a sure guarantee to connect with the essence of creation in its untouched elements. Few experiences rival going on safari, and a luxury safari easily steps things up several notches, especially given the level of detail that goes into travel experiential design.

Whether one is taking on a destination as renowned as Egypt or is keen to discover the warm heart of Africa in Malawi, Ker & Downey® Africa offers a spectacular array of luxury safari experiences to choose from; from solo travel, private, fly-in, wildlife conservation and family safaris, wildebeest migration, bush and beach, gorilla trekking and walking safaris. ^{AV}

To book your next adventure with Ker & Downey® Africa, visit <https://ker-downeyafrica.com/>



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