

TRAVELLESENCE MAGAZINE

YEAR END ISSUE 2022

GLAMPING ON
SHARJAH'S COAST
AT KINGFISHER
RETREAT BY MYSK

*Chasing
Waterfalls:*
AFRICA'S 8 MOST
SPECTACULAR
CURTAINS OF
FALLING WATER

WHOLESOME
FOOD
EXPERIENCES AT
TONGABEZI BY
GREEN SAFARIS

What you'll love
ABOUT YOUR STAY
AT ADDRESS BEACH
RESORT

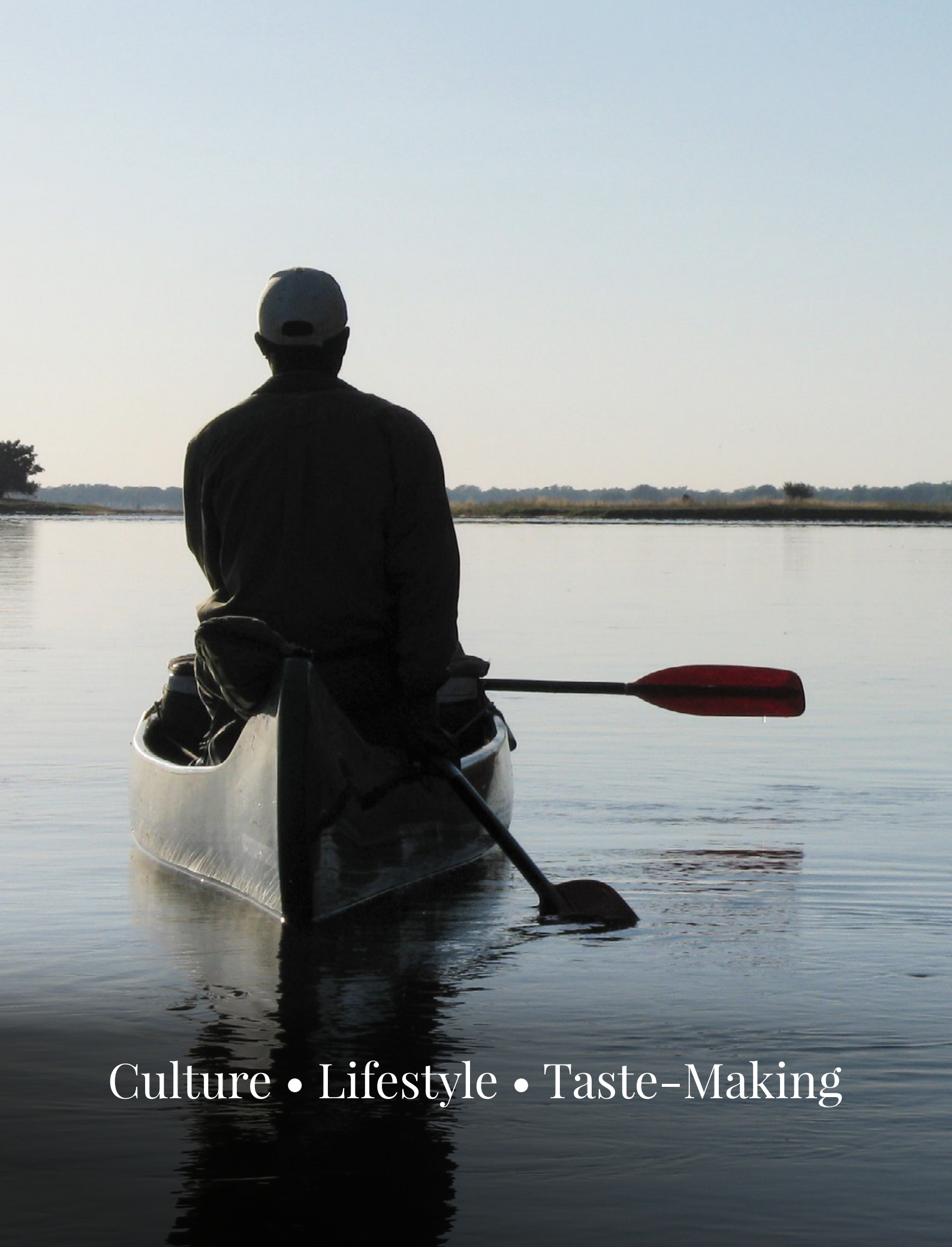
FARAI CHIMBA

LEADERSHIP AND CURATING THE HERITAGE
STORY AS A LIFE AND CAREER MANTRA



Travel MAGAZINE Essence

A NARRATIVES PR PUBLICATION



Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making

TravelEssence^{MAGAZINE}

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





**On The Cover:
FARAI CHIMBA**

Editorial

Yvonne C. Mtengwa

Editor-in-Chief

info@travelessencemag.com

Creative Direction

Lucy Nkosi

lucy@lucynkosi.com

Social Media


Elena Kavalaris

Elena@hazelfeather.com

GENERAL ENQUIRIES


info@travelessencemag.com

www.travelessencemag.com

 @Travelessencemagazine

 @TravelEssenceM1

 @TravelEssenceMag

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The festive season is upon us, signaling the much-awaited time to wind down for a little rest and recalibration, gather and connect with friends and family, as well as enjoy experiences that keep your tempo high for the holidays. As we say in some parts of Africa - #ke-DezembaBoss! Christmas season is definitely a feeling as much as its festivities form a series of events that will carry us into the New Year. Hopefully, we will also use this time to also reflect on the good that has come out of what some have deemed a challenging 2022 still, while others found encouragement in the recovery that ensued in a post-pandemic era.

In a quest to better ourselves, and as we tackle the numerous facets of our day-to-day lives, it can be quite easy to place unnecessary value on what wasn't, when the real beauty lies in appreciating what became. 2022 for the Travel Essence Family was a year of cementing our position as the sole and leading pan-African, now award-winning, travel magazine domiciled in Dubai, and curating content that spotlights the best destinations and some of the talent behind its most compelling experiences.

It was a year we found ourselves on unexpected yet legendary trips, reviewing mid-tier to luxury travel experiences in South Africa, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Senegal, Tanzania; and many more in the UAE; where we equally draw our inspiration.

“Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.”
 – ANDRE GIDE

We have noted the quest for innovation in curating the ultimate guest experience in hospitality brands as we scaled many miles in the UAE and Africa's outdoors. To us, exploration begins and ends with stepping outside our comfort zones, opening our minds to cultural learning opportunities and discovering the restorative nature of being out in wide open outdoor spaces.

Unpacking family safari destinations was also a big pillar this year, which took us to adventures in the Serengeti with the Singita Family, soaking up the beauty of the Western Cape and enjoying stays on both sides of the Zambezi River in Livingstone and Victoria Falls towns. We capped off the year on a recce, back in Zambezi territory, as we held meetings with potential partners that will feed into the revamping of our Travel Essence Getaways group curated travel experiences, which we had to pause in light of the travel restrictions that came with COVID19.

To say I am overwhelmed by your support and recognition is an understatement. It has been our absolute delight to showcase the best of luxury travel, hospitality, culture and lifestyle



through our lens as a Dubai-based publication, keen on shedding light on the vibrant nature of our beloved continent and her people.

As we begin our countdown towards the New Year, I would like to take the opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas, filled with joy, gratitude and connection! May 2023 bring new, abundant blessing, appreciation of the good, and opportunity to elevate whatever you are working towards. 🙌

Yours truly,

Yvonne C. Mtengwa



Travel
Essence
Getaways

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Farai Chimba:

Leadership and curating the heritage story as a life and career mantra

The award-winning Farai Chimba is the General Manager for The Victoria Falls Hotel Partnership and current President of the Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe (HAZ), an organization that represents interests of the hospitality sector spanning the Hotels, Lodges, Restaurants, Fast Food, Night Clubs and Bars in Zimbabwe.

With a wealth of 21 years in hospitality in various management roles at Zimbabwe's premier hotels, and bearing multiple accolades for service, restaurants and 6 time Wine List of the Year recipient with different properties, Travel Essence Magazine had the privilege of chatting with him over his hospitality journey, career milestones, the evolving heritage story at one of the Leading Hotels of the World and his love for the border town of Victoria Falls.

1. FARAI, TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, WHERE YOU GREW UP AND YOUR FOND MEMORIES OF GROWING UP IN ZIMBABWE?

I come from a strong Christian family, being the second child in a family of four. We grew up in an environment that allowed us to discover ourselves and bring out our best in what we did. I can say I get my calm from my father who always stays collected and the fiery passion to get things done from my mother.

Early days were spent in Chitungwiza Unit B in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital, where I still have vivid memories of living in a close community home that was always bustling with family friends and relatives visiting. The sense of community that prevailed was unparalleled where you saw first-hand, the sacrifices made to improve and help each other to become better. Playing on the streets was probably the best carefree time of growing up. Learning to ride a bike using an unsuspecting neighbour's "Black horse" - a term for the famous bikes of that era, did come with bruises and a little disciplinary action when caught.

Schooling years in Belvedere exposed me to a multi-cultural local community and expatriate embassy families, learning a lot about the different cultures which would

become key in the work environment. One of the most missed memories of growing up was milk, bread and newspapers delivered like clockwork at the gate daily and in later years, the daily school bus trips.

In travelling the continent I now get to appreciate how advanced we were then. Travelling and staying in a hotels in Zimbabwe and across the border from the early 80's with the family was always a highlight which opened up my perspective of life and returning to them years later in working in this field is special. You can say I was part of the trade from a tender age as a young tourist.

2. YOU'VE LONG WORKED IN ZIMBABWE'S HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY, WITH SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL EXPOSURE TO BRANDS AND EXPERIENCES BEYOND OUR BORDERS. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO JOIN THE REGION'S HOSPITALITY MAVERICKS?

Hospitality found me as a career, something that had been in my blood without realizing. My late



grandfather was a cook at one of the residences before becoming a Bishop in his later days, and he would tell stories of his work life cooking for the elite family. This coupled with having a mother who is still the best chef, I learnt to cook and bake at a tender age and would pick up some interesting recipes influenced by the Your Family Magazine, turning them into sumptuous results.

Despite all this, I can't say I was influenced initially into joining hospitality as my passion and hobby was harboured in building design and architecture, spending hours drawing house plans. This has come full circle and have used this to design and build my own properties.

My parents were to play a major role, most likely influenced by my love for cooking, encouraging me to pursue hotel management.

Exposure to the Meikles Hotel brand as part of my training at the prime of tourism in Zimbabwe in 1999, and working with the best in the game was pivotal. Despite being hesitant at first, this turned out to come naturally and that talent was identified by David Seaman (no relation to the footballer) who while watching him do his craft, had me sold on pursuing the Food and Beverage field and staying in the hospitality line instead of tourism.

The reason one often stays in hospitality is the fact that it is the most diverse of industry or single business entity with more than 10 trades that you find within it, from lawyers to chefs, medical personnel to engineers, builders, waiters or tradesmen like florists. Additionally, many creatives form part of the teams, making it ideal for always learning new skills. Being able to appreciate this environment and making it work for the ultimate experience to the end user - the 'guest' - is a feat on its own.

With the travel to different parts of the world it has given a

bit more to shape up the Zimbabwean hospitality landscape with exposure to new trends, different ways of doing things and traveller needs anticipation. Being part of this change and leading it is exciting and something that over time will reshape our landscape.

3. THE HOTEL IS CURRENTLY UNDER RENOVATION, AND HAS BEGUN TO UNVEIL A CHIC CONTEMPORARY DESIGN THAT DOESN'T STEER TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE FOUNDATIONS FROM WHICH THE PROPERTY WAS BUILT. WHAT IS THE VICTORIA FALLS' HOTEL HERITAGE STORY?

Our story is one that preserves a traditional service culture and experience, inheriting a structure that has stood a century plus years of existence. Our story bears the significance of the growth of Victoria Falls town to its current city status. As a hotel, it has always created a first in its timelines from having first fans or spate of bathrooms in the 1920's or the first river cruise boats to transfers to the Falls by trolley, shuttle buses to the airport, the country's first and only Diners International Platinum wine list. The Victoria Falls Hotel's list of firsts is endless, making it the foundation of tourism for Zimbabwe.

What has been remarkable is bringing back to life, with an updated touch, some of the styles and fashionable parts of décor and fittings from the 1920's to 40's, complete with the reopening of a 1960's Rainbow Bar area, now The Stanley's Bar, that had closed down in the mid 90's. The renovation serves as a preservation of true hospitality, and this is embodied in celebrating this history and heritage through to the super structure, grounds and facilities onsite.

The renovations capture all the elements of its heritage and more, taken from different timelines of its existence to the present day, and creating the

present day features that also now speak to sustainability. As a property, the history continues to be written, each adding to what has preserved it for so long into an iconic property.

4. THE HOTEL IS OVER A 100 YEARS OLD; IN FACT, ETCHING CLOSER TO 120 YEARS OLD NEXT YEAR. WHAT IS THE SECRET, AND ART OF KEEPING GUESTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD COMING TO THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL?

Consistency and setting the pace to deliver the ultimate guest experience is the epitome of any establishment's success, and this has played a role in keeping the Grand Dame as it's affectionately known, the place to visit. Steeped in the rich history it can only lay claim to in the region, the staff that have worked over the century to those that carry the torch onward have been the key to its success.

Without the people driving its charm, we would be just another building. We





often talk of trends and their impact to any establishment or business. Ours is a well-choreographed dance of tradition and modern conveniences that keeps it a must visit Hotel without pushing out any of the two markets.

5. HOW TO DO YOU BALANCE OUT THE NEEDS OF OLDER GUESTS WHO HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF EXPERIENCING THE PROPERTY, AND THE YOUNGER, UPWARDLY MOBILE TRAVELLER WHO VALUES ULTIMATE GUEST EXPERIENCE, CONNECTIVITY, RELAXATION AND EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE?

Managing The Victoria Falls Hotel is akin to being a curator of a gallery which showcases fine art dating back to decades before us, and still holding an appeal to a new audience. So how you tell and package the story is important without losing elements of what makes it dear to the older audience and endearing for the new generation. The brand has seen continuous evolution redefining luxury over the decades and our role is to create with all stakeholders a modern facility and maintain its heritage.

6. 5 REASONS WHY VISITORS TO VICTORIA FALLS SHOULD CHOOSE YOUR PROPERTY - THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL?

- Location which was influenced by its connection to the bridge, owned by the Emerged Railway Properties. It is the only property you can see the unadulterated bridge and spray views from some of the rooms and certainly from the main restaurant.
- The history of the property which many return to because of the link to other visitors, family or friends along with notable celebrities. One of the main features is the corridors of time that are an activity on their own. Wandering down the passages is so much in history preserved in photographs. Guests can

walk through the gardens and view one of the old trams that carried over 2 million passengers in the early days before they were decommissioned or the commemoration platform that the Royal family used for afternoon tea in 1947.

- The hospitality experience with an old world charm with traditional afternoon tea experience or in one of Africa's oldest running dining rooms with a 7 course meal paired with wines.
- As member of the Leading Hotels of the world throughout the 2000's, it is the only 5 star property in the town of Victoria Falls.
- The gardens, with the expansive lawns and famous 1930 planted mango trees give that ideal natural location away from the concrete cities, which is a major attraction for sun seeking traveller with foliage around them.

7. LET'S BRING IT BACK TO YOU AND YOUR EXPERIENCE AND LOVE FOR VICTORIA FALLS. BEYOND BEING A PLACE OF WORK AND WELCOMING GUESTS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD, WHY THIS BORDER TOWN FOR YOU?

It goes without saying that Victoria Falls is the tourism capital of the country, where true tourism can be experienced and you have to feel blessed to be part of something special by being here. I find its location gives a central hub into continuous benchmarking at a stone throws away with the neighbouring countries, creating synergies and friendships which are rare across borders.

Its laid back lifestyle and sense of community makes it an ideal place to live without the usual chaos found in conventional cities. Being able to stay in a place where warthogs wander into your garden, an elephant on the street while taking a jog or a buffalo herd grazing about the neighbourhood is nothing short of special; just priceless. I believe the potential of Victoria Falls is still to be reached and can become the first Smart City in Southern Africa built around a sustainable model, something that makes it attractive for the future and now.

8. YOUR TOP 5 TRAVEL DESTINATIONS AND WHY?

In no particular order;

- * Nairobi with its vibrant night life and dynamic business culture, you always feel welcome.
- * Bvumba in the Eastern Highlands. It's cool, scenic and the serene time out spent in this place, this is the most undersold part of the country with the best landscape
- * Amsterdam for the warm people, culture and museums
- * Cape Town food and wine experiences. This is wine lovers paradise and you can never get enough of the wine estates.
- * Mozambique islands with their amazing beaches

9. FARAI THE FAMILY MAN. WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING IN YOUR SPARE TIME AND WHO DO YOU CREDIT FOR INSPIRING YOU TO CONTINUOUSLY PURSUE THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF?

Having to wear several hats in the industry and in community projects keeps a full diary with specific timeout for family always a priority. Each opportunity to spend with them I maximize as that time once lost is never recovered.

When not participating in Rotary or other projects I get to throw in a healthy amount of reading especially between travels, play the occasional round of golf which includes hosting an invitational tournament yearly. I enjoy outdoor running, with my son now accompanying me cycling, and will be back on the half marathon circuit 2023 after a 2 year break. Quiet time is when I write journals and articles for magazines.

I am a firm believer that to get to the top you have family first, a team and a community of people that add one piece of the puzzle each to complete the picture, everyone around you contributes and influences who



we become. Lessons and inspiration can be drawn from anywhere and anyone; it's what you take from it. One thing that I attribute to seeing my parents do was how many people they brought up with their successes and that too become successful. Success to me is best measured by how many people you have impacted and brought up in your journey, who can also one day stand up and make a mark.

10. THREE PIECES OF ADVICE TO YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

I am blessed by the Lord to have experienced a very diverse life with no regrets that cuts across divides and continues to evolve and acquire new opportunities and skills which can better serve those around me. One piece of advice to myself would be to do it all over again and make it more fun. 🎉



EDITOR'S PICK █

A stay at the premier address in
Dubai's Jumeirah Beach





What you'll love about your stay at Address Beach Resort

Dubai – the emirate that has it all, from Burj Khalifa – the tallest tower in the world to Ain Dubai – the world's tallest Ferris wheel, eclectic dining and entertainment experiences, sprawling beaches with uninterrupted views of the Persian Gulf and so much more. Booking a staycation or planning a trip to Dubai lends itself the question of where one stays, dines or plays. In a city with so much to offer, it oftentimes comes down to narrowing down your list of options by unpacking what makes your preferred choice of accommodations or destination for indulging in gastronomic or retail therapy, distinguished from the rest.

Adding to the list of reasons to pick Dubai's Jumeirah Beach is the chance to indulge in a luxurious beach escape with Address Beach Resort. Need more convincing? Look no further as Travel Essence Magazine unveils what you'll love about this contemporarily designed hotel gem in the heart of Dubai's renowned Jumeirah District:

1. Located in the heart of one of Dubai's premiere leisure and lifestyle destinations.

Address Beach Resort is the first beach resort of the Address Hotels + Resorts collection, owned and operated by Emaar Hospitality Group. Situated in Jumeirah Beach Residences (JBR) with pristine, seemingly endless views of the Arabian Gulf, the iconic property features two 77-storey towers, comprising a stellar array of immaculately designed and decorated hotel guest rooms and suites, superb dining outlets, unparalleled leisure and entertainment facilities.

Also on site are 443 serviced apartments and 478 residential apartments, the inviting private beach, multiple pools with some availed solely for adults, avant-garde event spaces and state-of-the-art health and fitness facilities, and the award-winning The Spa at Address. With opulent spaces to tailor to your every need during your stay, you'll enjoy an elevated experience of comfort with every turn.

2. Home to world's highest outdoor infinity pool. Not only does Address Beach Resort feature two 77-story towers connected with the tallest inhabited sky bridge in the world, but its unique architectural design was awarded the Guinness World Records™ (GWR) title for the 'Highest outdoor infinity pool in a building in the world', carrying an imposing height of 293.906m. Waters are clear at the pool adjacent to ZETA Seventy Seven, and views of The Palm Jumeirah and Ain Dubai below form a perfect backdrop for a day out in the sun in an adults-only setting.

ZETA Seventy Seven can accommodate guests around its spectacular open-air terrace where mocktails and cocktails flow, and servings from an Asian fusion menu. Savor the flavors of the Asian fusion seafood-inspired menu with such signature dishes as Iced Oyster, Wagyu Sirloin, Crispy Fried Prawns, and Miso Lobster

To complement the cooling effect from the sparkling infinity pool are private, indoor air-conditioned cabanas, fully equipped with TVs, music controllers, coffee machines, and other amenities.

3. Distinctive, mouth-watering flavours served from an array of dining spaces. Designed to be a culinary destination, the resort features Li'Brasil – a perfect union between Lebanese and Brazilian cuisines, the award-winning signature concept The Restaurant, serving up an array of internationally inspired a la carte dishes or buffet spreads, a multi-functional location in the lobby, The Lounge, treating guests to the view of the iconic calligraphic art piece by Emirati artist Mattar Bin Lahej, and





sunny beach-side Mediterranean dining indulgence at The Beach Grill.

With an extensive assortment of cuisines and signature dishes served from the resort's restaurants, there are options to satisfy everyone, including Vegan & Healthy options to decadent beverages such as the luxurious 23K Gold Lychee Soda. During the winter season, guests can also enjoy snacks and beverages from one of the many outdoor terraces facing Jumeirah Beach.



4. The award-winning The Spa Address to tick the boxes for all your relaxation needs. Focusing on holistic wellness, not only does the resort provide guests with direct beach access, and a state-of-the-art fitness centre, but the award-winning The Spa at Address is perfect for time spent on your body being pampered in a world-class, relaxing atmosphere.

5. A resort in close proximity to Dubai's landmark attractions and places of interest. Centrally located, Address Beach Resort is a stone's throw away from the bustling JBR district, the iconic Dubai Marina, and within walking distance from the metro and tram station to fuel the explorer in you. The magnificent Palm Jumeirah is accessible in under 20 minutes, the world's tallest building, the iconic Burj Khalifa, is located in Downtown Dubai, and less than 30 minutes away, while a drive further down Sheikh Zayed Road will take you to attractions such as the Museum of the Future, which sits adjacent to the DIFC district. Creekside Dubai will give you a taste of the city's history, where visitors can enjoy walks through oldtown Dubai, the Al Seef District, Souks and also enjoy boat rides on traditional dhow boats.

So if the next time you are in Dubai and wondering where to stay with the pulse of the city's coolest destinations a mere short walk from your room or suite, dare to experience contemporary style hospitality with a touch of classic elegance at the first-ever Address Hotels + Resorts beach-front property – Address Beach Resort, a landmark project nestled in The Beach and Jumeirah Beach Residence, and where life happens and memories are created.📍

Kingfisher Retreat by Mysk:
Invigorating serenity at Sharjah's
oceanfront eco-retreat





An unexpected invitation from the team at Sharjah Collection by Mysk took us on an impromptu, mid-week drive from Dubai to Sharjah. Our schedules were in fact packed that week, juggling between work related deliverables and a host of virtual and physical meetings. And so who was I to decline an offer to come and immerse myself in award-winning beachfront relaxation at Mysk Kingfishers Retreat, which has recently been recognised as a “Leading Natures Retreat 2022” by the World Travel Awards?

By Yvonne C Mtengwa

After all, one must venture beyond the comfort of their homes for some of life's most rewarding experiences. Craving a little breather from my home office, with bags packed for an overnight stay, an orientation pack and directions shared by who would be our host during our stay, we headed down E77, the highway that takes motorists out of Dubai towards the town of Hatta on the Dubai-Omani border, which intersects with the Dubai-Al Ain Highway along the way.

The UAE's terrains have over the years surprised me hugely, as one can go from navigating high octane, sometimes standstill traffic in the city, to enjoying a scenic drive on winding roads cut through mountainous landscapes, before finally making it to the coast, where views of the sparkling seas and sunsets over the Persian Gulf usher you into your local respite for a time. The drive to Kingfisher Retreat piqued our curiosity, as we found ourselves wondering whether GPS was taking us on a lengthy scenic excursion, or completely off track. It was however beautiful, with the road networks providing an intricate balance between stretches of straight, carpet-like tarmac to steep ascents and descents, through what are visibly new roads, connecting our starting point on to Sharjah's corniche (and interestingly, a few minutes away from Fujairah emirate).

Location and arrival at Kingfisher Retreat, Sharjah

Set on an island off the east coast of Sharjah's corniche at Kalba, Mysk Kingfisher Retreat is a haven of conservation, built across a manmade creek. We arrived at the registration center, where we were to leave our car before being whisked onto a small, private boat that would take us to this beachfront eco-retreat. You are promised before arrival, an "abundance of earth, serenity & you," – enough to convince you that yours will truly be a little piece of restorative heaven, and a compelling mix between the arid island landscape on which the Retreat sits, water, air and wildlife.

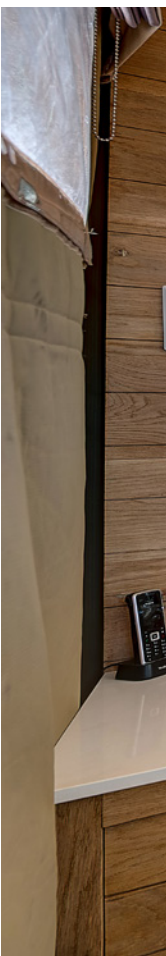
Enveloped by the Gulf of Oman, Kingfisher Retreat is designed to invoke the spirit of relaxation by immersing your senses in the beauty of the pristine beach against the Arabian Sea waters, matched perfectly by refined interiors within tents, made of soft beiges, blues and



desert browns. As we were transported from the canal shore to the Retreat's Main building, our guide highlighted that we would have the opportunity, should we like, to savour the tranquillity of the area by kayaking through mangroves, swimming in our very own private pool, using the bikes assigned to our tent for a cycle to through the camp, or even catch a glimpse of many rare bird species and the wildlife that all define Khor Kalba as a globally important wetland.

Unpacking an abundance of earth and serenity

Mysk Kingfisher Retreat consists of 20 luxurious tents, with each individual tent's design set to provide comfort, privacy and amazing views of the Indian Ocean. Our sanctuary for the night was a stunning 1 bedroom tent, with its own private plunge pool, deck, barbecue and day-beds. The interior was embellished with a superb poster bed, draped in crisp linen of the highest thread count, a plush lounge area with comfortable couches, coffee and tea making amenities and snacks, and a choice of an indoor and outdoor shower or luxurious bath. Having a TV in our tent, even though we didn't actually watch it, was a nice touch, particularly because





in all the luxury tents I've stayed in locally and in across Africa, there has been no entertainment system.

Personalised service from the team would avail a welcome fruit basket and dessert tray delivered to our room after our very hearty lunch post arrival. It didn't take too long to appreciate how our short stay would in fact be just what we needed to disconnect ourselves from the stresses of an already hectic week, granting us a great juxtaposition between reconnecting with ourselves and each other, as well as maintaining some degree of productivity to move our many, often competing needles along. A place where you reconnect your soul with nature in a modern, simple and exotic atmosphere is how one can best describe Kingfisher Retreat by Mysk. We were certainly set to revitalize our sensations and ride the waves of enchantment as we engulfed the cooling effect of the Eastern winds, blowing across the ocean's surface or from the mountain range behind us and into camp.

Indulge in a bespoke dining experience

Indulge in a panoramic ocean view of the Arabian Sea while enjoying a healthy organic culinary experience from Al Qurm restaurant, the hub of Kingfisher Retreat's meal service. Ours was particularly standout, with lunch, dinner and breakfast layered with courses and bursting with flavours from a menu packed full of variety. From traditional Arabic cuisine, to international options for salads and soups, and assortment of breads, meat and seafood delicacies, chocolate and fruity desserts, our dining experience was truly bespoke, decadent and easily the highlight of our stay.

Play and learn in the outdoors

With activities for those of you who like to stay active during their getaways, you will find plenty to get up on site to build on your already exquisite experience. From morning to sunset nature strolls on the beach to cycling on the sports bikes built for outdoor terrains that are assigned to each suite, guests can enjoy a list of several activities that will keep your heart pumping and face smiling.

We had the opportunity to learn and practice an ancient craft at the archery range, a treat for me as I had never held a bow and arrow before. With some hits and misses, hearty laughter over some competitive archery, with a backdrop of the sky's hues changing as the sun





set, archery was a great way to take a break from our laptops for an hour in the cool of dusk.

Early morning are ideal to absorb the tranquillity of this eco-retreat, as you can kayak your way to watch sea turtles hatch, nest and swim, or crabs nestled amidst the mangroves, catching a glimpse of many rare bird species and the wildlife that have Khor Kalba recognised as an important wetland and haven for biodiversity. You can also take time out in during your stay to visit the island's Mangroves Center or Kalba Bird of Prey Center, where you will have the opportunity to learn more about the local natural landscape and pristine ecosystem.

Invigorating serenity for all to enjoy

Mysk Kingfisher Retreat is a delight for a family holiday, fused with an educational experience that grants insights to a unique world of conservation and culture. A stay for couples is also one characterised by romance, with many activities tailored to ensuring one enjoys one-on-one time from the busyness of life with a luxurious, nature focused setting. With personalised at your beckoning, the somewhat short drive away from the hustle and bustle of big city life, was perfect for us, paving way to break the week's intensity with remote working at this award-winning luxurious eco-resort. ^{AV}

To learn more about Kingfisher Retreat by Mysk, visit <https://myskhotels.com/en/our-hotels/kingfisher-retreat/>







TASTE-MAKERS



Spotlight On Chef Zuvi Nawa

WHOLESOME FOOD EXPERIENCES AT TONGABEZI
BY GREEN SAFARIS

Nestled on the banks of the mighty Zambezi River in Zambezi, a short drive from Livingstone Town, lies the award-winning eco-lodge – Tongabezi by Green Safaris. Rewarding guests from across

the world with a distinctive combination of romance and luxury, add the exciting dining experiences and the spirited adventure opportunities available from a mere flick of a page, and you are sure to

immerse yourself in an atmosphere that will enhance your love for nature in its rawest form, and the wild side of Africa. Conde Nast has called Tongabezi one of the top 20 Hotels in the World, and it won't be too long before you see why upon check in. From the luxurious four River Cottages and seven Houses, each individually styled and uniquely set up to cater for anywhere between two to five guests, this charming riverside lodge avails an opulent retreat for all looking to rest and luxuriate in this leafy, rest-inducing exclusive lodge setting. But what's a compelling stay without delightful food experiences? After all, an exceptional

meal is sure to warm one's heart further, especially served within such a spectacular backdrop. At the helm of Tongabezi's culinary offering is Chef Zuwi Nawa, whose journey to heading the lodge's dining experience is nothing short of inspired, as much as it highlights just how important a passion for cooking forms the foundations of any high-end food journey. Travel Essence Magazine enjoyed the privilege of chatting with Chef Zuwi Nawa about his growth with Tongabezi, opportunities to learn and teach, and the farm-to-table ethos that is palatable with each sumptuous mouthful of food.

"I started working for this company way back in 1993, and looking back, I was just a young man coming up, and in need of a job. But I was not quite sure at the time, what direction I wanted to take in my life," says Chef Zuwi, when asked how his journey with Tongabezi began.

Chef Zuwi would soon reveal how his curiosity upon witnessing the hive of activity in the kitchen; the energy and zest for delivery from the people in the confines of its walls, became a key driver to his decision to want to join the team.

"I would say my journey with food was, and still is inspired by my childhood. I always wanted to know what I ate and how it would affect my body, believing strongly that if one eats good food, there's a possibility that they will live longer," he says.

"My interest is founded on the need to understand everything there is to know about my ingredients, such that as I'm cooking vegetables for example, how long should I cook them for and what method should I use in preparing them. I ask myself questions like - if I cook something for more than 10 minutes, am I gaining something or am I losing something from it?"

Chef Zuwi credits his experience in the details from the time he spends working with his team, and is quick to cite how our food choices determine our inner health and outer appearance. As he meets more and more guests that choose Tongabezi as their travel destination from the world over, he too has come to realise their consciousness of health, wellness and heightened interest in the freshness of ingredients used to prepare their meals.

The inspiration behind Chef Zuwi's interest in the culinary world

Chef Zuwi grew up with both parents, with his father working as a Chef during what he describes as the end of the colonial era. Beyond having a

penchant for food ingredients and their impact on one's health, he has fond memories of his father's effort in carving out time to cook for his family, and how whatever he prepared tasted quite different from what the women in his family were preparing.

"I figured out earlier on that if Dad could cook, so could I. And so when the opportunity came up for me to join the team at Tongabezi, I knew that I wanted to be in the kitchen, because I had grown up enjoying what my father prepared for us from time to time. He used to prepare this potjie pot stew from oxtail, taking his time to prepare it as he explained the process of making it, and that a good meal requires that one takes the time to prepare it"

Chef Zuwi on pursuit of growth and wholesome food experiences

"People nowadays, are on an active pursuit for a healthy lifestyle. They eat more vegetables, and are eating less meat, but again, being a good chef and conscious of your guest preferences, requires that you don't put pressure on those guests who want to indulge in a little more of this and that. Rather, you understand what they want and work to guide their food experience so it combines the use of wholesome ingredients while embellishing them with taste and textures they travelled so far to

experience,” Chef Zuwi adds.

On circling back to how he got started, Chef Zuwi shares that his learning largely came from working with other chefs and adopting their techniques in food preparation. Keen to take each opportunity to prepare and plate a dish, Zuwi’s goals were always to elevate the experience, not only for himself as the cook, but for the person who would eat his food.

“I knew my experience was limited, notwithstanding the practical training I was receiving at the beginning, and so I asked the management team if there was a chance that they would sponsor me to do a little bit of theory work so that I could understand what I was doing further. The company was hugely supportive, sending me to Lusaka in 1994 to Ridgeway Hotel for some training.

“From there I came back and continued working with Tongabezi, and shortly thereafter I was given another opportunity to go on exchange, working around the corner here at Victoria Falls Safari Lodge in Zimbabwe, working there for almost 12 months,” he shares.

Zuwi continued to excel on his development journey, looking for every opportunity to enhance his craft and passion for food with the blessing and support of Tongabezi. Upon his return from Zimbabwe, he was offered yet another opportunity to head over to Australia, a first for him to journey to the opposite side of the earth!

“I believe I was at the time, showing the team that I was coping well in the kitchen and really keen to learn. But working in Australia was really quite new, and it was something quite different working with and interacting with professional chefs in such a fast-paced environment,” he says.

“I found the entire experience quite challenging – from the language barrier to the speed of cooking in the kitchen. I learned here that you cannot waste a minute in the kitchen and you really have to be on top of the game.”

Chef Zuwi headed over to Australia with his colleague George, who at the time was working for African Queen. They stayed in Australia for a month, where they learned various techniques from qualified chefs, before heading back to Zambia and continuing his journey with Tongabezi.

“Everyday, you have to be willing to learn. Cooking never ends and you simply cannot sit back, stop trying to research and learn other techniques. At this stage where I am, I don’t want to continue cooking the same dish. I want



to try new things and seek new challenges, incorporating new ideas, and interestingly enough, the global pandemic created the opportunity for us to start thinking differently about the entire food journey, from the perspective of us in the kitchen preparing it, and understanding what our guests are looking forward to experiencing,” he states.

An organic food ethos at Tongabezi

“I believe COVID19 was a game changer for all of us, as we all experienced this long season of chaos that challenged us to rethink every spectrum of our lives. I may be putting this in a wrong way, but I do think there were many who were perhaps a little careless with such things as budgeting for example,” Chef Zuwi chimes in.

He goes on to say just how much COVID19 influenced the shift in such things as food sourcing, frequency of meals and size of portions, be it in the household or at hotels, adding that at Tongabezi, they have relied largely on the little garden of fresh vegetables and herbs they grow on the property, and incorporate that with items sourced from the market.

Chef Zuwi admits to having been blessed with “green fingers”, reveling at the opportunity to wake up each morning and head into his own garden because his footprint is in the ground. Bearing such enthusiasm on how food is grown, and what impact it has on the human body and health, he adds:

“I believe organic vegetables are the best for consumption and for meal preparation, largely because there is extensive effort that goes into ensuring the use of pesticides is avoided. At Tongabezi we create our own compost which aids in the nurturing of our vegetables until our guests find them on their plates. Our fruits and vegetables are entirely organic as we make natural insecticide and recycle leftover food into compost.”

Tongabezi also infuses a cultural element in its dining, offering



international guests especially, a taste of traditional Zambian cuisine should they be keen to experience tastes, textures and food preparation techniques that are quite different from what they are used to.

Chef Zuwi on building on the fundamentals

“I think it’s the people that have been so honoured to work with, that can speak on how I am as a chef however, if I could have any words to share on what it takes to build a legacy, I would encourage people, especially the younger generation, to take their jobs seriously. Benefits do come when we work hard. If I’m not here, someone from my team should be able to take on the responsibility and handle themselves well.

Chef Zuwi emphasises that to him, and in the world of culinary arts – there are rules in the kitchen, and that no matter how quickly cooking techniques evolve, fundamental rules are still to be upheld in the kitchen.

“It is important that we keep our eyes open when in the kitchen for example. Clean as you go. Disinfect areas. You may produce food that is delightful in taste or looks good once plated, but if these fundamental rules are skipped, you run the risk

of creating a health hazard for your guests and yourself.”

“Check your fridges, marinate your food on time, and watch your temperatures by checking the recipe. Culinary art is step by step, especially when you are dealing with the hot kitchen. When in the hot kitchen, we call it art. When working in the pastry kitchen, we call it science. Baking is science and is very precise.”

When asked what this food maestro’s favourite meal to cook was, he was quick to share that he loves preparing beef filet in its own red wine jus. He enjoys the process of sealing the steak and using the same pan to create the base of the jus. While he enjoys preparing red meat, Chef Zuwi asserts that his preference is to eat white meat as it is better for our health.

In his spare time, Chef Zuwi enjoys stepping out of the kitchen and playing sport. He enjoys cycling and often cycles to Livingstone town. He’s also an avid farmer, his passion for growing food naturally contributes towards the meals he prepares.

“Farming will stay with me into retirement I believe. I have a heart for it because I know and enjoy its fruits, both for myself and family, and for the guests coming from all over the world, that I am honoured to have the opportunity to cook for.”

Elevated Spaces: Dedicated galleries usher in a new era for African art at Singita

As an ecotourism and conservation brand, Singita is unwavering in its commitment to preserve and protect Africa's wilderness for future generations and since opening its first property – Singita Ebony Lodge – in 1993, sustainability, environmentally conscious hospitality and the empowerment of local communities have been an enduring part of their operational and experiential ethos. Singita's roots in Africa have always informed its vision for the future, and the creativity of its people inspires the heart and soul of their luxurious spaces. These all-important links to the history and heritage of Africa resonate profoundly with Singita guests. Found throughout their lodges and camps, and at each region's dedicated Boutique & Gallery, pieces by esteemed and emerging artists provide tangible links to, and celebrate the culture of each region and the continent as a whole, allowing guests to be immersed in its inimitable energy.





More than ever before, an increasing spirit of regeneration and renewal is placing Africa on the world stage and striking a chord with travellers from all over the globe. And with a guest experience that is constantly evolving, Singita is embarking on a journey to transform and finetune their existing boutique and gallery concept, to echo this spirit and reflect Africa's growing status as a place of artistic renown. Most recently, this takes the form of an extensive expansion of Singita's African art offering, further aligning it with the organisation's overarching vision.

FRAMING A MEANINGFUL FUTURE

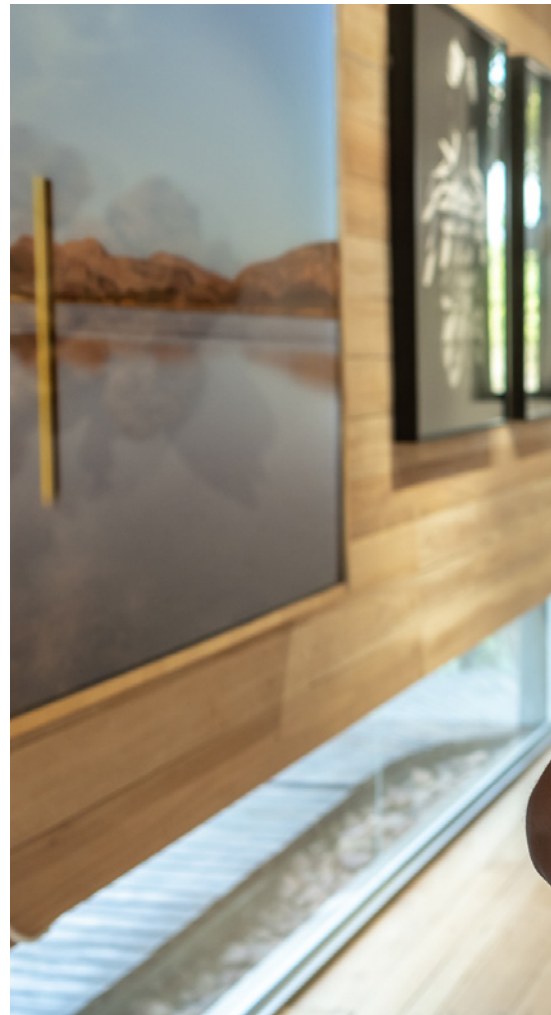
Singita's newly imagined gallery spaces, at Singita Sabi Sand and Kruger National Park in South Africa, will not only exhibit authentic African artwork and collectables, but also embody the creativity, dynamism and innovation that emanates from the continent.

This new concept will allow guests to acquire coveted works by some of Africa's most renowned artists, as well as contribute significantly toward the development of rising talent. Most importantly these spaces will serve to showcase and elevate African excellence, championing the very pinnacle of artistic skill from the continent.

This has informed our curatorial approach too. "We want to celebrate Africa's rich cultural heri-



To learn more about Singita's Boutique & Gallery, visit <https://singita.com/boutique-gallery/>





tage, its unique places and people, and the beautiful stories and experiences that have shaped who they are,” says Phumzile Mgi-ba, Boutique Manager, Singita Sabi Sand.

INVESTMENT ART FROM AFRICA

Collectable investment pieces, spanning creative disciplines from sculpture to photography and installations, by internationally respected, collected and award-winning African artists will be thoughtfully and engagingly curated in the spaces, allowing for a world-class art-viewing experience.

“By creating a space dedicated to contemporary art from Africa, Singita is showcasing the talent and creativity that is so prolific on the continent. The works displayed at the new B&G space in Singita Sabi Sand embody this direction, and we will continue to build on its remarkable momentum across all of our regions,” says Lindy Rousseau, Chief Strategist at Singita.

The reputation and renown of the artists involved can only serve to elevate the stature of African art – this will be beautifully demonstrated at Singita Kruger National Park, the home of the second gallery, where a much-anticipated piece by the multi-award-winning Athi-Patra Ruga has pride of place.

INTERACTIVE & EMPOWERING

As part of this new direction, Singita aims to foster a dialogue by encouraging guests to engage more closely with the works – to learn more about their context, as well as the artists who have made them. This is woven into the brand’s curatorial journey, but also introduced through activations like artist residencies and auctions. With the artists joining the initiative equally passionate about preserving Africa’s wildlife and wilderness, their work will not only depict the continent’s natural beauty, but also contribute towards its conservation.

Because the newly imagined B&G concept is underpinned by Singita’s 100-year purpose, it will include a strong fundraising element to create awareness around key causes and projects across the regions in which Singita bears a footprint. In line with the organisation’s long-term commitment to see communities thrive, the initiative aims to use a percentage of the art sale proceeds to support small and medium local enterprises, as well as continue to represent rising local talent in Singita’s spaces – with a spotlight on women artists. ♀





Big, bold and hearty food flavours & beachside fun at **CLAW BBQ**



The multi-award-winning all-American BBQ joint opened its new flagship location in the heart of JBR, after relocating from what was their iconic home for 9 years in Souk al Bahar. Now beachside and in the pulse of Dubai's Jumeirah Beach Residences district, CLAW BBQ's new venue comes packed with all your old favorites, including a menu filled with oversized portions of American comfort food, CLAWsome cocktails and tons of fun to be had in their epic games room.

In speaking with Gary Smith, Chief of Staff at Big On Hospitality who are at the helm of CLAW BBQ about what a night out at the dining establishment means, he said: "Good company, great vibes, and even better mouth-watering food. Put simply, a night out at CLAW BBQ is always guaranteed to be filled with fun. CLAW BBQ is the place to go to enjoy a night out with friends while tucking into generous portions of amazing, messy comfort food, served with the incredible and authentic CLAW BBQ style and service, while remaining amazing value for money."

Good ol' American hospitality in the heart of JBR

If you are looking for truckloads of good ol' American hospitality, mountains of delicious food and hours of fun and excitement, you'll be in the right place at CLAW BBQ. A huge menu selection, including enormous burgers, succulent steaks, mouth-watering shrimp, fiery wings, sizzling fajitas and of course their famous show stopping crabs and finished off with their massive desserts and eye-popping milkshakes awaits you. The bar also promises you an experience like no other, so patrons are encouraged to come ready to mingle, get comfortable and explore an unrivalled selection. From classic drinks to unique cocktails, draught and bottled hops, spirits, grape, and much more, there is sure to be something for everyone.

Menu inspiration at CLAW BBQ

"The menu is filled with American classics that are inspired by the founder's stays and travels around the US. Drawing inspiration from the great Pit Masters (BBQ experts) of the South as well as a tradition of amazing, generous, flavour-some meals featuring great quality, fresh produce, and enormous portions, the menu has something for everyone," adds Gary with visible enthusiasm.

"The food, like everything in CLAW BBQ, is fun, exciting and dares to be just



a little bit different. We always try to create a lively atmosphere and the menu also features a couple of food challenges for those brave (or crazy enough) to tackle them, including the Inferno Hot Wings challenge and the massive Beast Burger.”

For those seeking a thrill beyond their plates, the infamous Bucking Bronco awaits. CLAW BBQ’s new venue has DJs every day, busting out the tunes as the party continues long into the night. It is a sure destination for good-vibes with friends and family, offering superb value, and incredible sports coverage of some of your favourite fixtures, screened from massive screens dotted across the space.

To stand out or not to stand out: CLAW BBQ’s mantra on a classic American-inspired dining experience

Overlooking the breath-taking Ain Dubai and the world famous JBR The Beach, CLAW BBQ is perfectly located in the middle of a buzzing district in Dubai, boasting two floors of non-stop entertainment, that with the course of the day, shift into a late-night venue featuring stellar music selections, hearty food, refreshing drinks and interactive games to compliment that vibrant atmosphere and spectacular views.

When asked how CLAW BBQ stands out in a city as dynamic and competitive as Dubai for food and entertainment, Chief of Staff Gary says: **“IN ALL HONESTY, WE DON’T SEEK TO STAND OUT. WE ARE TRUE TO OUR CORE VALUES AND THE AUTHENTICITY OF OUR BRAND. WE DELIVER CONSISTENT QUALITY AT GREAT VALUE WHERE A CUSTOMER CAN ENJOY A CASUAL EVENING OUT RELAXING WITH FRIENDS IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS COMFORTABLE AND WELCOMING.”**

“We have built a great loyal customer base with our approach, and we have guests coming back time and time again to enjoy themselves. Perhaps, this, in itself, is how we stand out. We do not follow trends. We are an incarnation of the beloved American diner, dive bar and crabshack,” Gary adds.

Gary goes on to say that CLAW BBQ are firm believers in their team being their greatest asset, as they provide a truly memorable environment by engaging with



our guests.

“This is one of the elements that brings people back time and time again. We always strive to provide exceptional value for money, be that with our pricing or generosity of portions. We pride ourselves in the knowledge that CLAW BBQ stands out as one of the most accessible restaurants in the region for people from all walks of life and we aim to continue this for many years to come.”^{AV}

To learn more about CLAW BBO, visit: <https://www.clawbbq.com>



ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA



Restorative travel and the importance of disconnecting to reconnect through stillness

MY IGANYANA TENTED CAMP EXPERIENCE
IN HWANGE, ZIMBABWE

Words by Marcia Mcleod

Before embarking on my first ever trip to Zimbabwe, I always felt like there wasn't enough time in the day. I was constantly juggling the demands of life, from world related deadlines, to managing my children's personal affairs; children who currently live in a different country from me. I was beginning to feel as if I'd spent an awful lot of time on my phone and laptop, while barely getting any real time to be present, or enjoy any sort of new experiences. I yearned to know what it really meant to live in the moment.



And so, when the opportunity to go on a unique safari experience to Victoria Falls and Hwange, which included a stay at Iganyana Tented Camp, I didn't hesitate to jump at it. From carrying out some research, I learned that Iganyana Tented Camp is not only home to an abundance of wildlife, but the family run business also prides itself in placing huge emphasis on encouraging responsible tourism. This is so important for the conservation of the beautiful creatures that we are so privileged to share this earth with. I couldn't believe that I would be fortunate to see first hand, and be able to understand better, the importance of why we need to protect wildlife and natural ecosystems.

As we set off on the just under 3 hour journey from Victoria Falls, the little border town and gateway between Zimbabwe and Zambia, I had not really given much thought prior to what being in the "bush" actually meant. I guess I would describe myself as one of those people who typically doesn't really place energies into certain things till it is absolutely necessary. I had the pleasure of journeying with two beautiful souls, Yvonne of Travel Essence Magazine and also earlier meeting and now travelling with Kerrith O'Fee of Victoria Falls Yoga. Time flew by during our drive and I enjoyed just being able to do nothing much aside from talk, connect and simply exhale it seemed, which in fact turned out to be the most productive therapeutic thing I could be doing on this trip.

For someone who is typically on the go, and who has also over the years opted to put my mental health on the back burner, I have had to really learn the hard way how to lean into the importance of finding a place where my soul has the chance to quieten, and my mind has the space to be momentarily calm, while simultaneously rejuvenating my body. Can I just

say, if and when you eventually find that place, I absolutely urge you to visit it again and again, whether that be physically or mentally. Allow it to become your happy space. That was what Iganyana Tented Camp became for me.

Our Iganyana Tented Camp moments

We were welcomed by the friendly staff members, whose joy at having us stay was heartwarming. From the wet hand towel we were given to wipe our hands, to the hearty wholesome delicious, varied meals cooked on an open fire, the attention to detail was second to none. After the detailed orientation led by the wonderful Charmaine, I began to really see what adventures I was about to embark upon, especially after she casually mentioned the inquisitive baboons who like to wander and take the liberty to slide open tent doors, if we didn't make sure we had taken the necessary precautions to safeguard our tents. Maybe 10 years ago, that news would have filled me with fear to the point of crippling me, however, the ever evolving journey of self discovery that I find myself on, I have



begun to acknowledge feeling the fear but doing things regardless. So this was not going to stop me!

We stayed in the Iganyana Wild section of the campsite, situated within the bush. Although this section is considered the smaller sibling to the main Iganyana Tented camp, it still forms a mesmerizing part of the total 15 tents and singular, recently opened tented villa. I will always fondly describe it as a piece of paradise in Hwange. Situated in the middle of the wilderness, surrounded by acres of picturesque landscape, this rustic but remote campsite is relatively peaceful by day, but as it's an open camp be prepared for any type of wildlife that may pop by for a visit, especially at night!

It boasts its own private dining however, you are by no means restricted to venturing out to anywhere else on the campsite. Every night we joined other guests to enjoy a delicious, healthy, hearty homestyle cooked meal, followed by sitting at the campfire, gazing up at the stars. Simply magical! My gorgeous tent was extremely spacious, beautifully decorated with a huge comfy bed. To be in nature, and see so many wild animals up close and personal was an absolute blessing to me. Hearing jackals, elephants and buffalo, to name a few, is an experience I will treasure forever.

Disconnecting to reconnect through travel

This was a rare opportunity for me to disconnect to reconnect. I would describe myself as a multitasker, but even with that role, it is so important to find, even for an hour, time to turn off all devices. The fact is it's not possible to be present if you attempt to focus on more than one thing at a time. Not having access to wifi at all times was definitely a blessing in disguise. I am appreciative of the moments where I focused on the beauty that surrounded me and opted to be present.

I am being more conscious in my decisions to take the time to switch off! Why you may ask? The proven medical benefits of intentionally setting aside time to simply exhale are huge. After wrapping up a wonderful 30 minute outdoor yoga session at sunset with Kerrith, where I stretched, reset, and recalibrated myself, as I opened





my eyes, an entire herd of elephants came to drink from the onsite infinity pool!

"IGANYANA TENTED CAMP IS SUCH A MAGICAL LOCATION THAT ALLOWS YOU TO RECLAIM YOUR MENTAL SPACE, IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT EVOKES STILLNESS, WHILST BREATHING IN FRESH AIR AND TAKING IN ALL THE SIGHTS AND SENSATIONS THAT COME WITH BEING PRESENT IN THE HEART OF THE AFRICAN SAVANNAH LANDSCAPE."

This trip from the UAE to Zimbabwe for me, was an opportunity to reflect upon the joys and challenges conquered during 2022. Travel has always been a big part of my life, and something I don't take for granted in the slightest. But the manner in which this trip came together, the varied emotions that came with the combination of luxurious and rustic experiences, and the opportunities to truly connect with myself and people, I can't help but imagine what magic can happen if I am more intentional about taking the time out to reflect on the seasons we are in, and what we may want to do differently. Appreciating what my time at Iganyana Tented Camp was like, I look forward to being more intentional about finding spaces where I can comfortably ask myself these all important reflective questions that will undoubtedly help me pin-point any key behaviors that I may need to be working on - and I encourage you to do the same! 🌿



In Search of the Elusive Mountain Gorilla



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GORILLA
TREKKING IN RWANDA'S VOLCANOES
NATIONAL PARK

Words by Yvonne C Mtengwa

One of my 2022 trips took me to Rwanda – aptly yet proudly described by her people as “The Land of a Thousand Hills.” On the agenda was my attendance at the IUCN Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC), the first ever continent-wide gathering of African leaders, citizens from across Africa, and special interest groups, largely in the environmental and biodiversity protection space, aimed at discussing the role of protected areas in conserving nature, safeguarding Africa’s iconic yet threatened wildlife, as well as promoting sustainable development in communities across the continent while conserving Africa’s cultural heritage and traditions.

Beyond the excitement of being a part of a Summit that would be as educational as much as it would award me the opportunity to reconnect and network with colleagues from my client organisation, whose collective expertise benefits people and nature through contributions to the continent’s social and environmental protection agenda, I had plans to



squeeze in a gorilla trekking adventure somewhere on my 10-day itinerary when I was in Rwanda – and was I glad that plan did materialise after all!

After a decision one of my friend (a colleague in conservation and marketing) and I look to move ahead with going on this adventure, we looked into what it would entail for us to take on this activity. We began conducting some desk research, which resulted in multiple conversations over email and WhatsApp messages on findings; given that she is based in the United States and I in Dubai. Our Rwanda experience turned out to be a trip of a life time, with our gorilla trekking experience easily being one of our highlights. It was also a learning opportunity in so many ways. Here are 5 things you should know about going on a search for the elusive gorillas of Rwanda.

1. You will need a government issued permit to go trekking. You will quickly learn just how seriously the Government of Rwanda takes their national environmental and wildlife protection goals. Individuals who would like to go on this epic adventure are required to secure a Gorilla Trekking Permit, and this can only be done by the individual, separately and through the official government website or via licensed local tour operators. Hotels and lodges are not permitted to book Gorilla Trekking Permits on behalf of their guests.

The permit costs US\$1500 (about €1,232) per person per day, and is the most expensive permit for gorilla trekking on the continent. This is nearly three times as much as other countries charge for foreign visitors, such as Demo-

cratic Republic of Congo (around \$200) or Uganda (approximately \$600). I happened to be fortunate to receive a discounted rate as a SADC citizen, putting me out of US\$500 to attain mine.

2. You may need to be tested for COVID19 before trekking. As the world stirred from the disruption of the global pandemic, it also brought with it unique learning opportunities on the impacts of COVID19, not only to our day-to-day lives, but also for the global tourism industry. Not only was a vaccination certificate and proof of negative COVID19 results required to enter Rwanda, but we were then advised that we needed to secure yet another negative result certificate 48 hours before going trekking.

The logic made sense: there was need to safeguard the many people we would interact with closely during this excursion, from the National Parks Rangers, the trekkers and

anti-poaching units who spend long hours in the mountains collating data on Gorilla movement, health and behaviours, the community members of the villages we would pass through as part of our hike, the tour operators responsible for transporting us to the activity, as well as the gorillas themselves, who possess +90% of human genetic make-up and are therefore prone to many of the diseases humans are!

3. If staying in Kigali, be prepared for a long (but scenic) drive.

As I was staying in Rwanda's capital for a conference, my journey started with a 5am pick up from our hotel. With our breakfast packed lunches ready to go, off we headed up a series of winding hills as we made our way towards Volcanoes National Park, located in north-western Rwanda and covering an estimated 160 km² of rainforest. Why the early start you may wonder? Well, Rwanda have very strict driving rules and speed limits (60km per hour!!!) to help drivers navigate the steep ascents and descents in and through its hilly landscape. It truly is The Land of a Thousand Hills, from its cityscapes and into the country.

The drive up was quite spectacular as we watched the sun rise from our vehicle, taking in the cool mountain air and changing hues of the sky; from a dark blue-black to the red-orange notes of dawn, and then onto some shades of blue, on what would be a cloudy day with chances of light showers. We arrived 3 hours later, and right on time to begin the registration process, being split into groups, before beginning our hike into the Volcanoes Mountain range.

4. Come dressed and mentally equipped for a long, challenging hike.

I have to admit; I had watched countless videos of Gorilla trekking, and they all looked quite glamorous. Models clad in cool, green and khaki coloured safari suites, with wide-rim hats on, a walking stick and gaiters, which if for hiking, are typically lightweight, breathable and offer basic protection against rocks, grit and light rain while on mild-weather excursions. This





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was the image I carried into the hike. I was up for a rude awakening.

At the point of making your booking, you are encouraged to wear long sleeved shirts, warm clothing, hiking boots or strong sneakers you can afford to ruin, the aforementioned gaiters which protect you from the entry of small pebbles and crawl creatures into your footwear, water and snacks. You will even have the opportunity to support local community members by hiring rain/waterproof jackets from them for a nominal fee. Do all of the above.

It took us 3-4 hours of hiking up a very steep mountain range, and foliage was dense – really dense, muddy terrain with every type of plant and insect that sometimes tampered with your effort to find your family of gorillas. Prior to commencing the hike, we were split into groups of 7 or 8 people as you do go up the mountains in groups, and each groups is assigned a particular family of gorillas to trek.

5. A remarkable opportunity to learn about these primates and Rwanda's commitment to wildlife conservation and environmental protection. I was impressed to note that Rwanda endeavours to be a plastic-free nation, such that even when arriving at the airport, should you have plastic bags or containers, you will be asked to either discard them or substitute them with alternatives made from cloth, at a fee. There was not a single piece of paper on the ground on any of the roads we drove through while in Kigali, and the long drive to Volcanoes National Park also revealed just how commitment Rwanda is to cleanliness and sustainability.

We also during our hike, found out that the hefty gorilla trekking permit fees go towards the protection of these gentle primates from poachers, as well as sustenance of the communities that live in the very remote foothills and mountain ranges that make up Volcanoes National Park, which encompasses five of the eight volcanoes in the Virunga Mountains, namely Karisimbi, Bisoke, Muhabura, Gahinga and Sabyinyo.

Our arduous trek lasted what felt like



forever and a day before we spotted the “Pablo Family” of gorillas we would spend an hour with. Marked by dense foliage, mist covered forests and slippery slopes with majestic views of the valleys and hills that stretched far into the horizon, it was quite literally one of the most exhilarating experiences I’ve had in the throngs of nature. Seeing 3 silver back gorillas a few meters away in their natural element, along with the adult females and young, at peace and protected, is one such experience that any conservation and wildlife enthusiast will forever carry on their minds.

Ours was a day trip, but looking back, I recommend you make your trip perhaps 2-3 days, booking a stay at either Musanze, the small town which is in many ways the gateway to Volcanoes National Park, or one of the pristine lodges in close proximity to the Park. Because gorilla families are upwardly mobile, and the hikes varied in difficulty, one never knows how long it will take them before they discover the primate family they are looking for. What is guaranteed however, is that finding these fascinating mammals, and the hour you will spend observing them, is absolutely worth every dollar spent and step taken towards discovering these creatures in their habitat. Would I do it again! Yes and yes! I would absolutely head back for another trek and recommend you look into the same for your conservation focused adventure when in you make your way to Rwanda.🐼



THE WANDERLUST WITHIN



Chasing Waterfalls: Africa's 8 most spectacular curtains of falling water

A majestic curtain of falling water. Green, riverside foliage emerging from earth's surface and within the crevices of rocky outcrops. Africa is endowed with vast terrains, secrets to biodiversity that form nature's intrigue and compelling displays of earth's metamorphic processes. As the African continent is an invitation to view its array of superlative natural wonders, from the world's longest river to its second-largest desert, its waterfalls are equally impressive and a testament to the spirit of life springing from its belly.

Some experts debate South Africa's seasonal Tugela Falls as a contender for Venezuela's Angel Falls in height, while others wrangle between which is more majestic between the mighty Victoria Falls on the Zimbabwe-Zambia border, and Canada's Niagara Falls. Because any chance for comparison also presents an opportunity to learn, and clock in more destinations to add to your bucket-list, here are our picks for Africa's must see waterfalls.

1. Victoria Falls – Zimbabwe.

It goes without saying, Victoria Falls, known by the locals as Mosi-oa-Tunya (meaning "The Smoke that Thunders") and located on the Zimbabwe-Zambian border, is remarkable spectacle of nature, and a one of the seven natural wonders of the world, boasting several principle gorges. Its spectacular, and also largest curtain of falling water measures 5,604



VICTORIA FALLS

feet wide and 354 feet tall, with a spray from the plunging volume of water easily and felt from great distances away. This is especially so during the flood seasons after the summer rains (from February to May), when more than 500 million litres of water plummet over the gorge's edge every minute.

Viewpoints are abundant along a trail in the in Victoria Falls National Park on the Zimbabwean side, or Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park on the Zambian side. With the bigger, more impressive falls most visible from Zimbabwe, Zambia offers adventurers the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to swim in a natural pool on the edge of the falls known as the “Devil’s Pool”.

2. Lumangwe Falls – Zambia.

These Falls so closely resemble Victoria Falls and form the largest waterfall found wholly within Zambia borders, measuring heights of 115 feet and a width of 328 feet. The Kalungwishi River falls cascades downwards in a wide, mesmerising veil, creating spray that rises some 328 feet in the air, and nurturing a small rainforest on the adjacent river banks.

Local folklore has it where the waterfall is believed to have been named after the Great Snake Spirit, Lumangwe, which stretches between the falls at Lumangwe and Kabweluma; and is most powerful at the end of the rainy season in April and May. Viewpoints emerge at the summit and on the opposite bank, with a camp site for those that wish to spend the night at this location in the throngs of nature.

3. Murchison Falls – Uganda.

Situated on the Blue Nile (although the river is known as the Victoria Nile in Uganda), Murchison Falls is one of premier focus points of Uganda’s most prolific wildlife landscape. The river avails an intriguing natural sight, as it forces itself through a narrow gorge that measures just 23 feet in width, before plummeting 141 feet into the Devil’s Cauldron. A permanent rainbow adorns this majestic waterfall, with an estimated 187 million litres of water flowing over its lip each minute. A trip upriver from Paraa village garners you a view of the falls, with plenty of wildlife species such the elephant, buffalo, lion, and the endangered



Rothschild's giraffe making their appearance during your excursion.

4. Tugela Falls - South Africa.

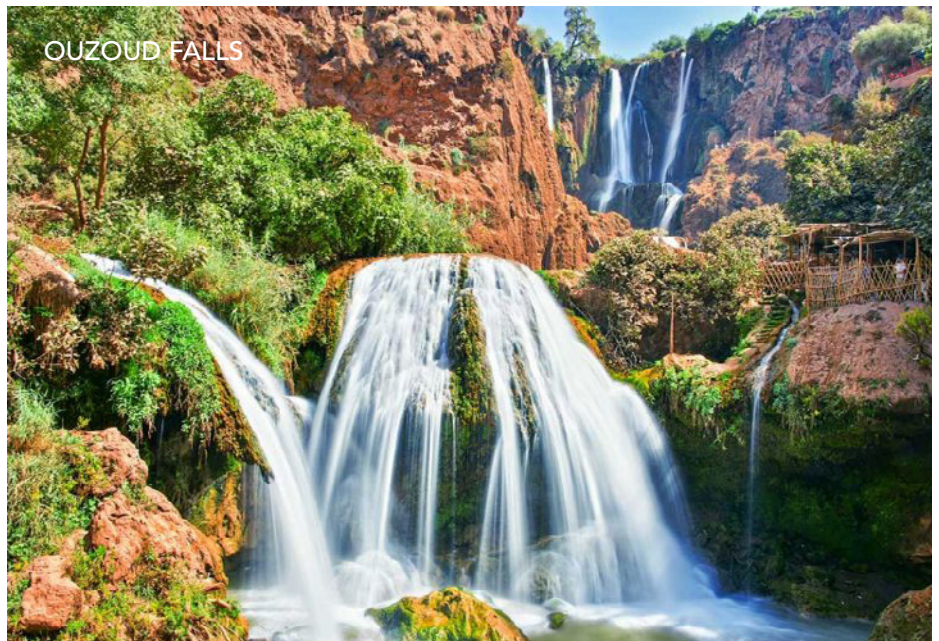
Comprised of a series of five free-leaping, seasonal cascades, South Africa's Tugela Falls has a total drop of 3,110 feet, making it the second-highest waterfall in the world. It's a spectacular sight to behold, plunging in a plume of froth from the top of The Amphitheatre escarpment—which is the most recognizable natural feature in KwaZulu-Natal's Royal Natal National Park. One of the highest peaks in the Drakensberg Mountains, Mont-Aux-Sources, is the source of the Tugela Falls. Those with a penchant for activity can take on the challenging Sentinel trail or hike through the Tugela Gorge to the foot of the falls.



5. Ouzoud Falls - Morocco.

One of the lesser known waterfalls of Africa is the Ouzoud Falls, located in Morocco's Atlas Mountains, a landscape of contrasting lush greenery in some parts and sandy desert dunes in others. A collection of cascades tumble into the El-Abid River, and are named Ouzoud; for the Berber word meaning "the act of grinding grain;" referencing the small mills located where the falls begin top of the falls.

Visitors to Ouzoud Falls will note its popularity for tourists, and also the supporting infrastructure that make it a great destination for exploration. From taking a boat tour to the swimming pool at the base of the falls, or tucking into a sumptuous meal at one of the restaurants located along the waterfall footpath, a day out at Ouzoud Falls is one that will leave you refreshed and invigorated by your surroundings.



6. Kalandula Falls - Angola.

The falls are one of Angola's best-known natural features, lying on the Lucala River in Malanje Province, measuring a significant 344 feet in height and 1,300 feet in width. Kalandula Falls are one of the largest waterfalls by volume in Africa, boasting a horseshoe-shaped waterfall on the edge of a dense forest, numerous cataracts and plumes of spray thrown up by the plummeting water, much like Zimbabwe and Zambia's shared Victoria Falls. Accessing Kalandula Falls is a mere 10 minute taxi



drive from Calandula Village and a longer 5 hours from Angola's capital, Luanda.

7. The Blue Nile Falls - Ethiopia.

Also a distinctive display of nature are the Blue Niles Falls, found on a River bearing the same name, and less than 20 miles downstream from Lake Tana. Referred by the locals by its Amharic name – Tis Abay, which means Great Smoke – the Blue Nile Falls clock at approximately 170 feet in height, and are made up of a confluence of four streams that originally combined to create a width of 1,312 feet during the rainy months.

Two different hiking routes avail visitors access to the falls, with the first taking you across the first even 17th-century stone bridge in Ethiopia to revere the main waterfall viewpoints from either side of the river. Visitors can also take in the view of the falls by taking a short boat trip across the river to the base of the falls.

8. Maletsunyane Falls - Lesotho.

Graced with rolling hills and lush green landscapes, Lesotho is very much that sleeping giant on travel radars, yet in terms of sheer beauty, few waterfalls rival the country's Maletsunyane Falls. Located near the town of Semonkong, meaning the Place of Smoke in the local language, the Maletsunyane River plunges into a continuous cascade of water over a 630-foot precipice, and is one of the highest single-dropping falls in Africa.

As you can imagine, countless local legends are told of this wondrous display of nature, including claims that the echo caused by the sound of plunging water are wails of souls that have drowned in the falls. Nearby adventure activity operators can buckle visitors up for horse riding or abseiling while within the vicinity, making it a super opportunity to balance a little adventure and appreciation of nature.

9. Chamarel Waterfalls – Mau-

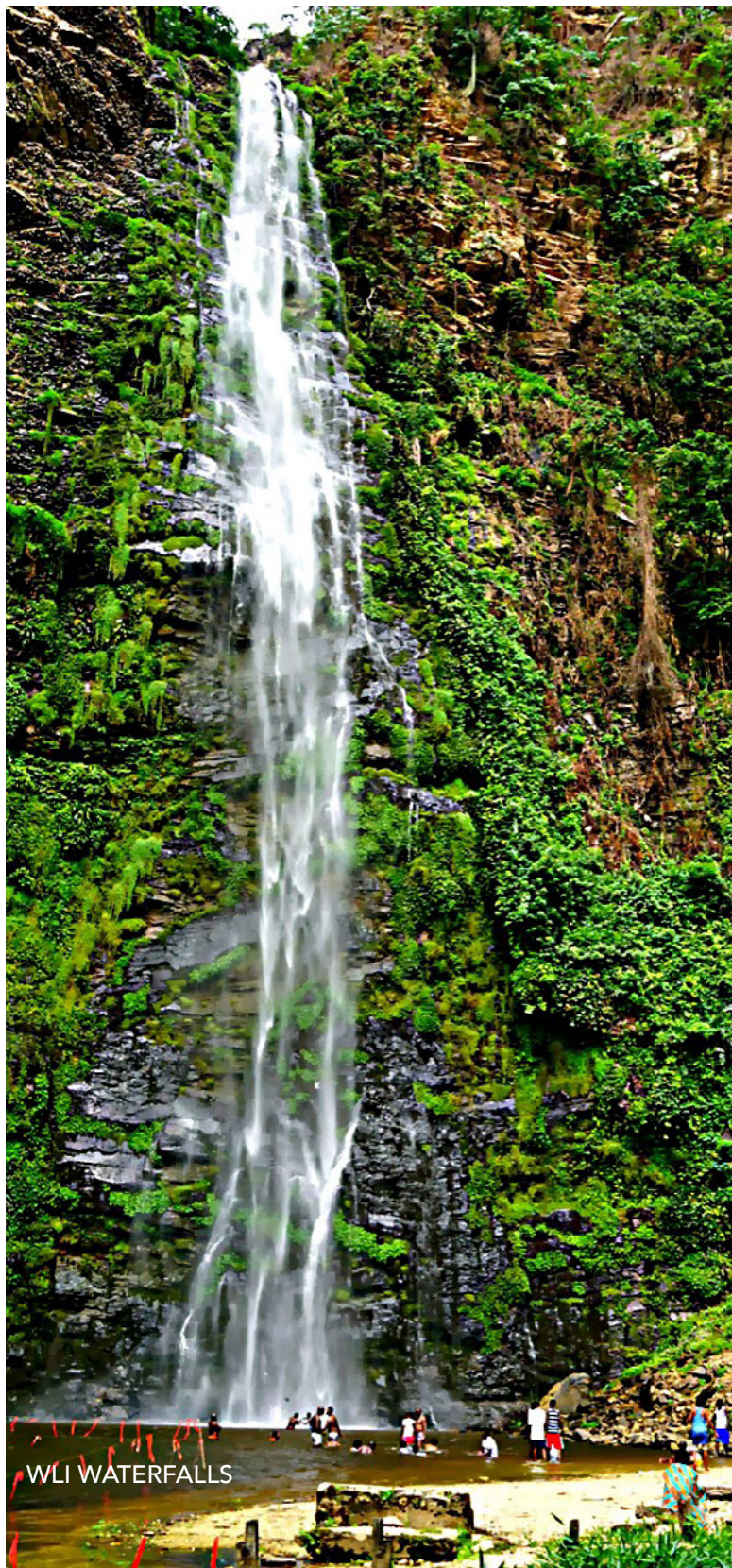
rifius. This waterfall is particularly breath-taking, as it cascades down against the contrasting dense foliage, which stands out against exposed volcanic rocks, dating back to approximately 8-10 million years ago. River Saint Denis which is nearby the village Cachette, Cascade Chamarel and La



THE BLUE NILE FALLS




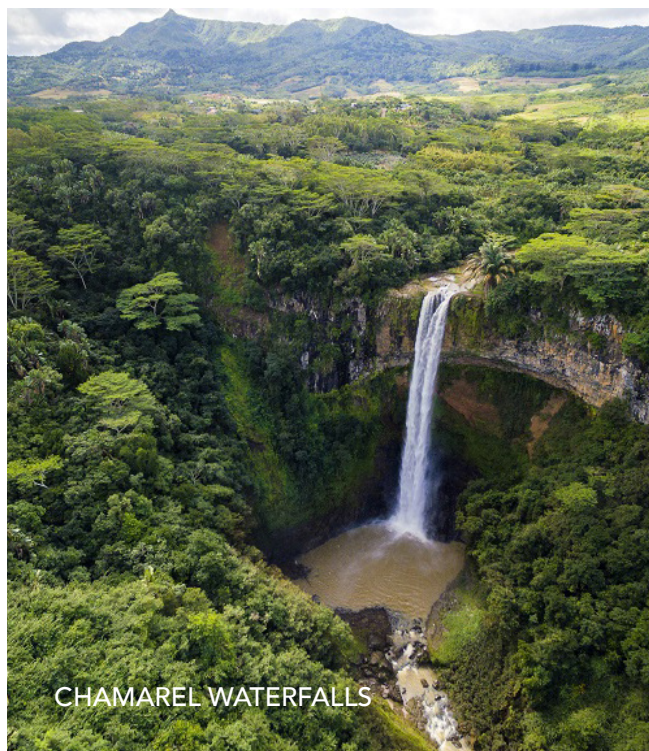
MALETSUNYANE FALLS



Crete are the three streams from which the Falls originate, making Chamarel Waterfalls easily the most popular of the many curtains of water dotted across the Island and much loved destination for hiking.

10. Wli Waterfalls – Ghana. At 260 feet high, Ghana’s Wli or Agumatsa Waterfall is the tallest body of plummeting water in Ghana and the greater West Africa region. Special in that visitors can swim at its base, Wli Waterfalls are also nestled within the Agumatsa Wildlife Sanctuary, and create a pristine destination for hiking enthusiasts and bird lovers.

Africa’s landscapes are as diverse as its people, and so it’s never an easy feat to narrow down a list of “The Best of” anything when it relates to the continent’s travel destinations. But one must try, for therein do they often find reasons to venture out and explore further! 





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PULSE OF THE CITY

California Dreamin' in the heart of Dubai

Inside Paramount Hotel Midtown

From the moment you walk through the property's revolving doors, you are whisked away into vivid expressions of Hollywood glamour, with dark green velvet seating, sleek gold accessories and the signature props; the Producer and Director chairs and bold, poster-sized framed wall art, emblematic of a true movie production set. With a stay at Paramount Hotel Midtown, you are the cast and definitely the star of the show.



Feel good vibes, restful moments within one of the 281 rooms and suites the hotel houses, five refreshing, bespoke dining options, the luxurious 5-star Pause Spa Chateau Berger and a rooftop infinity pool to rival any of the others about town, get ready to immerse yourself in an experience as chic as you are! The red carpet is rolled out the minute you arrive, with an express check-in from a warm and welcoming team.

The Paramount Hotel Midtown experience is curated for the young-at-heart who love to be at the centre of it all. Perfectly positioned in Business Bay Dubai, just a stone's throw from Sheikh Zayed Road, the must-see attractions around the Downtown and DIFC districts including Burj Khalifa, Museum of the Future, and the plethora of retail experiences available at Dubai Mall, Paramount Hotel boasts mid-century styling, set in a space that lavishes with opulently themed décor.

Superbly appointed rooms with a touch of Hollywood

Soak up that cool, Californian style from your very own room selection of the aptly named: the Scene Room, Family Scene Room, Blockbuster Suite, A-List Suite, Premiere Suite, Co-star Suite and Paramount Suite, in line with the hotel's theming. Enjoy spectacular views of Dubai's main traffic artery – Sheikh Zayed Road, as well as the Dubai coastline in the not-so-distant horizon. When exiting the elevator to your floor, more production-set themed furniture greets you, complimented by vibrantly coloured wall art immaculately placed along the tower's lengthy corridors. Boasting floor to ceiling windows, rooms are well-lit during the day, revealing the city's lit up skyline by night, and perfect for

taking in the sights and sounds of a city that never sleeps.

King-sized bed, fluffed-down pillows, a marbled bathroom with a walk-in shower, a breath-taking balcony, and all the amenities that award you greater convenience during your stay, you'll get a sense of true Hollywood glamour that simultaneously invokes spirited comfort and curiosity in discovering more of what lies within this tower located on Al Mustaqbal Road.

An array of bespoke dining venues

Dining is an exciting affair, as guests can partake of decadent selections from menus carried in any one of five bespoke restau-

rants at Paramount Hotel Midtown. It is almost always a Friday feeling when on site and sampling some pickings from the resident chef's creations. Indulge in classic Italian dining at the Paparazzi Tuscan, where divas escape the drama. Oozing authentic Italian charm, this hidden hot spot is tucked away on the 14th floor, with a red carpet leading you to a space where you can escape the lights, cameras and buzzing action of the city. With an open-plan kitchen and Chef's table experience, this upscale restaurant is where you can feast on the freshest ingredients true to Tuscan nature.

If it's something a little more relaxed yet up-tempo you are looking for, set the weekend mood right at Melrose Bar & Lounge, the fashionable, urban lounge, where you'll



love the opportunity to lay back in a leather recliner as you peruse a fine list of curated smooth whiskeys, classic cocktails, craft beers and botanical gins. It's surely a taste of the West coast at this outlet, perched on the 64th floor of the hotel, and awarding one some of the best panoramic views overlooking the Burj Khalifa, Sheikh Zayed Road, The Palm and the Dubai coastline. A chic, pool deck by day serving up fresh, summery cocktails and a buzzing lounge by night with sundowners and light bites, Malibu Sky Lounge & Bar is where Dubai's elite come to daydream, dine and dance the night away after perhaps having enjoyed a dip in an sparkling infinity pool.

Named after the widescreen films used in the prime of Hollywood (VistaVision cameras), CineScope offers a Californian-fresh feel with a light, airy and bright atmosphere. This all-day dining restaurant, serves up an international mix of multi-ethnic cuisine as eclectic as the L.A scene itself.

A pampering experience unlike any other

PAUSE Spa Château Berger is an invitation to immerse yourself in the luxury of a splurge-worthy spa, and is perfect for those who deeply value calm and relaxation in the throngs of service excellence and cosmopolitan style. With spectacular hues of golds, tans, oranges and whites, scents to mesmerise and an array of textures to mentally and physically transport you into the tranquillity you've been craving, the PAUSE Spa experience is curated for individuals as well as the chicest of couples in need of a little downtime away from the buzz and pressures of everyday life.

Serene, tranquil and a private space where you can indulge, let go and leave your worries behind, PAUSE Spa Château Berger awards you the

Keen to learn more? Visit <https://www.paramounthotelsdubai.com> to book your very own taste of Hollywood glam in the heart of Dubai.






opportunity to sink into a Jacuzzi, unwind with an aromatic massage or get your 'Hollywood glow' on with a rejuvenating facial. Using a range of exclusive Château Berger skincare products and cosmetics, the goal is to renew one's youth, revitalize your beauty and invigorate your senses in a backdrop of glamour and superior indulgence.

A show-stopping stage for the celebrity in you

Make no mistake; in a city where glamour, innovation and superior service leads, Paramount Hotel Midtown is your destination for your desired celebrity-style experience. Rooted in over 100 years of rich history, with the Paramount portfolio of hotels, each property has been carefully curated for the creatives, by the creatives.

A stay at Paramount Hotel Midtown becomes a journey that excites, elevates and engages your silver screen senses, while catering to your inherent need for the softer side of life. It is a place where theatrical experiences have become synonymous with expressions of glamour and accents of local colour and diverse cultures. Located in close proximity to Dubai's Downtown and Business Bay districts, and only a few minutes' walk to the nearby metro station, the hotel is conveniently located a few minutes away from the city's major retail, entertainment and business destinations, including Dubai Marina, Palm Jumeirah, DIFC and La Mer Beach. 





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

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