

TRAVEL MAGAZINE **Travel**Essence

ISSUE 16 • JUNE 2022

Botswana
BEYOND THE DELTA
WITH JENMAN
SAFARIS

THE STAGE IS SET AT
PARAMOUNT HOTEL
DUBAI

UNFORGETTABLE
SINGITA FAMILY
SAFARIS IN THE
SERENGETI

Dakar
Unpacked!

NICK HOLME

ON WALKING 800KM FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



TRAVEL MAGAZINE **Essence**

A NARRATIVES PR PUBLICATION



Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making

TravelEssence

MAGAZINE

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





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There is something about safari life that makes you forget all your sorrows and feel as if you had drunk half a bottle of champagne — bubbling over with heartfelt gratitude for being alive.

— KAREN BLIXEN, AUTHOR, *OUT OF AFRICA*

A

s we wrap up Q2, summer season and scorching temperatures are upon us in the Middle East, and we have plenty of reasons to lock down some cool things to get up to in a bid to escape the heat. In the southernmost parts of Africa, winter is upon the land's inhabitants, and they too are counting down to when it will get warm again and layers of clothing can be peeled off and set aside till next year. The rolling tides of time and changing nature of seasons. As we set ourselves to closing off the 6th month of the year, our team has enjoyed contrasting privileges of scaling the grasslands of the Serengeti, to experiencing views from the highest points in this metropolis that is Dubai. We are also absolutely loving the environmental, societal and environmental consciousness that the pandemic brought with it, as industry players used the time to create innovative ways by which to re-tool their teams, cross train their staff on tightened operations while introducing or re-emphasizing the importance of effecting sustainable practices.

Within good reason. The significant rises and drops in temperatures denotes massive shifts in climate patterns; and climate change is one such topic that we should all take seriously. Beyond the importance of sustainability, climate change mitigation and the

role humanity plays in protecting the earth's fellow inhabitants and preserving our resources, I'm sure we can all testify to the threats on our mental well-being that comes with addressing societal issues and pursuit of holistic living

In this Issue, we are not only excited to share the story of an incredible feat to be undertaken by Nick Holme as has raises awareness on the correlation between nature and mental health, but you'll find an underlining theme of connecting with nature for balanced living and going green in hospitality operations through the brands that have long embedded this into their organizational ethos. Join us as we go beyond showcasing great destinations and experiences, to touching on the little things we can all do to help contribute to practices that sustain a healthier environment and connectedness to ourselves and others.

To those travelling during the upcoming travel season, we hope that there will be countless, life-changing memories to be made. And to those at the helm of creating these delightful experiences for guests, we salute you in doing so through what continues to be a challenging time etching towards recovery. 

Your truly,

Gywnne C. Mtengwa



Travel
Essence
Getaways

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Beyond Inspiration With Nick Holme:

Walking 800km for Mental Health Awareness

1. NICK HOLME. TELL OUR READERS A LITTLE ABOUT WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU ARE FROM, CHILDHOOD MEMORIES AND WHAT GENERALLY MAKES YOU TICK?

This is actually quite a difficult question to answer! I know who I am, I know where I'm from and I have many childhood memories - most of them good and some of them less so, which I will try to explain here.

My name is Nick Holme and I was born a week after man first landed on the Moon, during the height of the Cold War, in a landlocked country called Rhodesia, which is now modern day Zimbabwe in Southern Africa. At that time the world was locked in a struggle for dominance between ideologies of the so-called 'East' and 'West'; that is, Soviet and Chinese Communism versus the democratic agenda of the United States, Britain and Western Europe. Most ex-British and European colonies had won their independence by then and the whole world was a melting pot of political volatility. Superpower proxy wars were being fought around the globe, whilst the new nations were enjoying the fruits of their fledgling independence. Isn't it sad that volatility persists and is still evident today; it appears that lessons which history could - and should - have taught us are not being learnt?

Of course, as a child growing up in a country far away from the centre of superpower grandstanding, this all passed me by. However, we had our own problems to contend with, as the first 11 years of my life were mired in a civil war that claimed many lives and affected the whole population of the country and this has had a lasting effect on me and my outlook on life. A whole book could be written about it (and many already have been), so I will leave it where it is for another time, but I felt it was important to point out some of the background here.



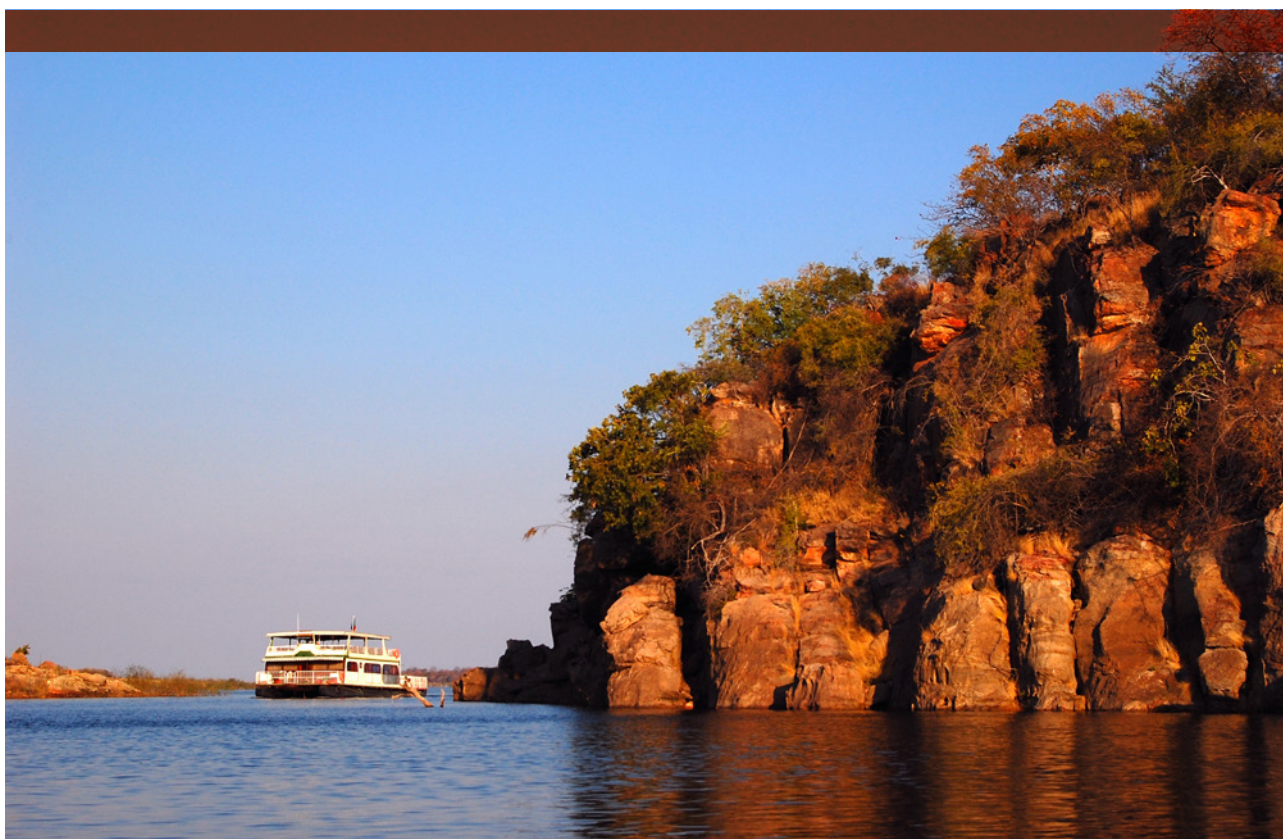
I was born into a farming family, the eldest of five children and spent my first three years in the district of Hwedza, which I don't really have any recollection of, before moving to Headlands, in Manicaland Province, where we grew tobacco, seed maize and cattle. Life on a farm in those days was idyllic and my parents sheltered us from the worst of the daily war, although we were always very aware of the fact that - being on an isolated farm - we could be attacked at any time, or ambushed in our cars, or drive over a landmine on the dirt roads. In a strange way, for a child, that danger added a certain excitement to daily life, but in retrospect, as an adult looking back, the undercurrent was a pretty terrifying one.

The natural beauty of living on a farm with lots of open space and bush, full of the fauna and flora of Zimbabwe, provided so much entertainment for myself and my brothers and sisters. When walking on the farm, you would never know when you would come across a snake, or a troop of monkeys, or a flock of guinea fowl and there was something new to discover every day. We were very, very lucky in that respect and I just wish that every child in the world could have the same exposure to nature that we were fortunate enough to experience. I believe that if we all spent time as children in the natural world, then we wouldn't be experiencing the abuse of nature that is prevalent in today's society.

What are some of my childhood memories? As I said

earlier, most of them are good and some of them less so. Let me get one or two of the not so good ones out of the way first!

- > At the age of seven, I was sent away to boarding school, which was about 60km away from home. It was a very good school and I was privileged to go there, but I didn't know that at the time and I hated it! Going from the freedom of living on a farm, to the regimented daily life of boarding school was a shock to the system and I really didn't like it. I even ran away from school, aged 10 and made it home, only to be returned the next day! Having said that, there were some great people at both my junior and senior schools, some of whom I am still in touch with today, thanks to the likes of social media platforms.
- > I vividly remember the day my Grandmother died. She was visiting family in New Zealand and (it later transpired) at the exact time she died over there, I was asleep in my bed at school in Zimbabwe when I suddenly woke up with a feeling of extreme sadness and loss inside me and said to myself that she has died - and then went back to sleep.
- > The war meant that night times were particularly vulnerable for rural communities, especially isolated farms such as ours and I didn't really enjoy going to bed with a rifle by my side (we learnt how to handle weapons from an early age in those days), not knowing what each night would



bring. I think every child goes through a phase of wondering whether there is a “monster” under their bed, but this took the “monster” aspect to a new level.

Actually, thinking about it, the civil war, while perversely exciting for a young boy, was also the cause of many sad memories, so it is probably best to put those aside for now and focus on some of the good ones.

- ▶ I remember school holidays spent fishing and exploring in the beautiful Eastern highlands of Nyanga, with early morning mists shrouding the lakes and mountains.
- ▶ I remember the first time I visited the magical Lake Kariba and the awe I felt in the presence of elephants, hippos, crocodiles and so many other animals in the raw, beautiful bush that Africa is renowned for.
- ▶ I remember the first time I visited Victoria Falls and witnessing the power and majesty of the Zambezi River as it thundered over the edge. It truly is ‘Mosi-oa-Tunya’, the ‘Smoke that Thunders’ and one of the Natural Wonders of the World.
- ▶ I remember Christmases on the farm and searching the bush for flame lilies, which we picked to fill the house with their magnificent blooms. No matter where I live in the world, flame lilies will always epitomise Christmas for me.
- ▶ I remember exploring all the hills and woods on the farm, with my brothers and sisters and the excitement of seeing rock hyraxes, or dassies, in the granite outcrops known as kopjes (pronounced “koppies”). We always had to tread carefully because of the presence of snakes and we never knew what animal might come charging out of the bush.
- ▶ I remember rowing in boats and swimming in the lake near our house, always slightly fearful about what large fish lurked in the depths.
- ▶ I remember my sister, aged five, stopping a hippo in its tracks when it charged her, just with her very firm voice and a little hand raised in the air, like a traffic policeman controlling the flow of cars.
- ▶ I remember a pet monkey that we raised from when it was a baby. We released it back into the wild and it joined a troop of other monkeys in the woods at the bottom of our garden, all of which used to come into the garden at lunch time, to weed the flower beds.

There are many pleasant memories, which actually far outnumber the sad ones and my overarching memory is one of freedom to enjoy the bush and all its secrets. The animals, large and small. The trees, flowers and grasses. The rivers and lakes. The blue sunny skies and the loud thunderstorms. It was this childhood which instilled in me a true appreciation and love of nature and the realisation later in life how valuable nature is, not only for our physical well-being, but also for our mental health and stability. And it is this awareness of the power of Nature that I am so keen to share with the rest of the world. Getting that message across to as many people as possible is what makes me tick.

And I must just say here that, to me personally, Zimbabwe is the best country in the world! We all love our respective homelands - quite rightly too - and for me Zimbabwe is that homeland. Despite its problems (and which country does not have problems) Zimbabwe is - and always will be - home.

2. ON JULY 4TH, YOU WILL ENDEAVOUR TO DO SOMETHING THAT'S PROBABLY NOT BEEN DONE BEFORE, AND THAT'S AN 800KM WALK AROUND THE WORLD'S LARGEST MAN-MADE LAKE BY VOLUME - ZIMBABWE'S LAKE KARIBA - WHICH ALSO SHARES ITS SHORES WITH ZAMBIA? WHAT INSPIRED THIS RISKY EXPEDITION?

I must state here that, while I will be walking around the entire lake (which has not been done before), the whole endeavour is very much a team effort, with many others helping to make it possible from a logistics and security perspective and also helping to make the world aware of the mission to highlight the importance of conservation and mental health. Without their help, the walk would be a lot more difficult - and dangerous!

As we get older, we hopefully get a little bit wiser and this expedition is one of several endurance events known as W4Life, that my brother, Ed and I came up with, based on our life experiences to date and our desire to share with the world our belief that conservation and mental well-being are inextricably linked.

My own inspiration for this endeavour is partly a desire for adventure, but more importantly being able to use the walk to publicise and raise awareness about the increasing effect modern society is having on our mental health, as well as the damage that is being done to our



natural environment. The climate change debate is now part of mainstream discussion, but I don't think people are taking it seriously enough. I don't believe that people are fully aware of the consequences arising from further damaging the only planet we have that is capable of sustaining life as we know it. Regardless of which side of the climate change debate a person is on, surely we need to realise that damaging Nature can only be detrimental to our survival? We are a part of Nature. We can't control it. Nature ultimately controls us and if we don't accept that fundamental fact then our time as a species on this Earth is limited. We have to work with Nature and not against it and it is this message that we will be trying to get across to all and sundry.

We need Nature to survive physically, as a species, but just as importantly, we need Nature in order to cope with the day-to-day pressures of everyday life. More and more research is being done which highlights the benefits of Nature to our mental well-being and this is also something that I think people are aware of (especially since the recent Covid pandemic), but are not talking about enough. Our aim is to stimulate that discussion more and make it part of mainstream thinking.



3. MENTAL HEALTH IS A TOPIC THAT MANY WILL AGREE IS VIEWED AS LARGELY TABOO TO OPENLY TALK ABOUT WITHIN AFRICA'S SOCIETAL CONSTRUCTS. CAN YOU SHARE WITH US YOUR JOURNEY TO BECOMING AN ADVOCATE FOR RAISING AWARENESS ON MENTAL HEALTH?

I am not a mental health expert, by any measure. However, I am aware of the discussions that take place around mental health, whether it's PTSD, depression, addiction, or any other mental health issue and I know instinctively some of the things that are good for our mental well-being. Discussion of mental health issues is not only taboo in African society - it is also a subject that many people around the world, of all ages, find hard to talk about. The problem with some countries in Africa, though, is the lack of access to professional help and the lack of people to talk to without fear of prejudice.

Talking about it is one of the first steps towards recovery from a mental health problem and our aim during the walk around Lake Kariba - and beyond - is to stimulate discussion, to try and set aside the stigma associated with talking about mental health problems and to encourage as many experts in the field of mental health to join in and help us understand the problems and the solutions, on a much wider scale.

4. A FEW ISSUES AGO, YOU SHARED WITH OUR TRAVEL ESSENCE READERS YOUR VIEW ON THE CORRELATION BETWEEN BEING OUT IN NATURE, AND MENTAL WELLBEING? CAN YOU WEIGH IN AGAIN ON YOUR THOUGHTS, ADDING A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT YOU MAY HAVE LEARNED FURTHER SINCE THAT TIME THAT HAS RALLIED YOU TO EMBARK ON THE 800KM WALK AROUND LAKE KARIBA?

I am a firm believer that Nature is a very powerful antidote to mental health problems and that we can use this free resource for the benefit of all mankind. Being out in natural spaces is so good for us and more and more research is proving this to be true. It's something I think we all know, subconsciously, but nowhere near enough of us apply a daily dose of nature to our lives.

My feeling on this is primarily based on my own experience of being at peace and so much happier when out in a natural setting, but since sharing my views with Travel Essence readers a few issues ago, I am having this confirmed by every single person I talk to. Not one person has told me that Nature has no effect on them, or that it is bad for them. They all agree that it helps their peace of mind and wish they could get out more. Every single person, without exception. That must be telling us something, surely?

5. WE UNDERSTAND YOUR WALK WILL BE THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF FUNDRAISING EVENTS TO RAISE AWARENESS ON MENTAL WELLNESS. DO DELVE INTO THE DETAILS OF THE W4LIFE CAMPAIGN AND WHERE ADDITIONAL EVENTS WILL BE TAKING PLACE AFTER YOURS?

Yes, the walk around Lake Kariba will be the first of many planned endurance events over the coming years to raise awareness about the correlation between conservation and mental well-being. W4Life is a brand under which we want to raise awareness, as well as funds, on a global scale. We happen to be focusing our attention at the moment on Southern Africa because that is where the majority of our team come

from, or are based, but we would like it to be of benefit to all people around the world. In fact it is vital that everyone is made aware of the importance of conservation and mental wellness in our lives. This may sound like an obvious statement to make, but I don't think some people are taking this seriously enough and I hope that we will, through W4Life, help to hasten the uptake in awareness.

The 'W' in W4Life is a bit of a catch-all letter and we are basing future endurance events on this. The first, as you know, is Walk4Life. The next one, in a couple of years' time, will be Waves4Life, when my brother, Ed, will sail a dhow from Oman to the mouth of the Zambezi River. Following on from that will be Wind4Life, which involves flying a hot air balloon from the mouth of the Zambezi River to Lake Kariba and then Wheels4Life which will involve a cycling challenge within the Zambesia ecosystem. That's as far as we have got for now and we would love it if readers of Travel Essence Magazine could suggest further endurance challenges, involving the letter 'W', that could be undertaken.

As far as the Lake Kariba walk is concerned, I will be joined by other people on some of the legs of the journey and we encourage others around the world to join us virtually, via the internet and also to hold mini-walks of their own during the months of July and August to help spread the message and raise the awareness that is so vital to conserving what is left of our natural heritage and for our mental well-being.

Our plans don't just stop there, though, as we will be putting funds raised to good use through the establishment of what we are calling our TERRA programme, whereby we will be building physical infrastructures to cater for Training Education Research Rehabilitation and Awareness (hence the acronym). These TERRA centres will be essential in helping us to understand more the importance of nature and its impact on our mental health and why it is so important to actively engage in conservation of our natural world; whilst providing a platform on the human-wildlife dynamic on which to undertake skills transfer and the sustainable capacitation of communities at the heart of these issues in the deep bush.

The Lake Kariba walk is just the first step in a journey that we hope many people will join us on.

6. HOW DO YOU BELIEVE INVOLVEMENT IN CONSERVATION CAN HELP IMPACT ONE'S MENTAL WELL-BEING?

I realise that, at first glance, it may be slightly confusing when trying to associate conservation with mental well-being, but the link is very definitely there!

As I have already mentioned, we need Nature and our natural world for not just our physical survival, but also our mental survival. The two are joined at the hip and cannot be separated. We have, through our modern lifestyles, become distanced from Nature and its benefits. However, despite that distance, there is thankfully a type of invisible 'elastic band' that still joins the two together. It is being stretched quite thin, but events such as the Covid



pandemic have, in a strange way, lessened our pull in the wrong direction and we are waking up to the fact that we need to reduce the tension on that 'elastic band' before it snaps.

And so, by a simple act of extrapolation, if we need Nature for our mental well-being then we also need to conserve what is left of it and do our best not only to protect what remains, but also increase the biodiversity around us. Put simply, we need to conserve to preserve.

Furthermore, conservation itself is a very rewarding experience. It is also good for one's mental health to give back and to help - and conservation is a way to do this; I would encourage anyone and everyone to play their part in conservation both directly and indirectly. There are times when the magnitude of the problems facing us appear to be too big to handle, but if we all participate in some small daily way then the power of our combined efforts will be hugely rewarding, not only for ourselves, but for many more generations to come. We may have inherited a bit of a tangled mess, but we can all do something about untangling it and leaving a better world to the children from whom we are borrowing this world.

7. CIRCLING BACK TO THE ACTUAL WALK, WHERE YOU SET OFF AROUND LAKE KARIBA. CAN YOU TAKE US THROUGH THE ROUTE OF YOUR WALK AND THE SORT OF TERRAIN AND CHALLENGES YOU ARE HAVING TO MENTALLY PREPARE YOURSELF FOR?

The walk will begin on the Zambian side of Lake Kariba, where the Zambezi River enters the lake. This portion will take most of the month of July to complete. When I arrive at Kariba Town itself, on the Zimbabwe side of the lake, there will be a couple of rest days, with a few activities planned, such as a conference to discuss mental health and conservation issues, as well as a bit of fun involving football and cricket matches. After the rest, I will then continue along the Zimbabwean side of the lake, walking towards the start point again and closing the circumnavigation. This portion of the walk will take most of August to complete and I hope to finish the entire endeavour within the two-month period.

Some of the walk will be along the lake shore itself and some of it will be further inland, depending on the ease of the terrain and people will be able to follow me in real time, as I will have a GPS tracker on me which will be integrated into the website. I will also be posting images, videos and blogs on social media throughout the walk.

The walk will be divided into various legs, with the Zambian legs focusing on discussion mostly around mental health issues and the Zimbabwean legs focusing mostly on talking about conservation issues. The main theme of the correlation between mental health and conservation will, of course, be the thread connecting all of these discussions.

The terrain around Lake Kariba is varied. It comprises, undoubtedly, some of Africa's wildest and most spectacular bush. Some of the walk will be a nice gentle stroll along the lake shore, while other parts will involve some steep and arduous climbing up and down hills and through thick bush. It won't be a picnic, by any stretch of the imagination and will require physical and mental resilience to complete.

Added to the terrain will be the daily excitement of close encounters with animals such as elephants, lions, buffaloes, hippos, crocodiles and snakes - to name a few! Another thing I am very much looking forward to is interacting with the local communities who live around Lake Kariba and understanding what their lives are like, having to live with the potential of human wildlife conflict each day and how it affects their mental well-being. With their permission, I hope to share these stories with the wider world.

8. WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES FOR EMBARKING ON THIS WALK FOR YOU, BEYOND FUNDRAISING? WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

Fundraising is a very important part of the walk and the bigger W4Life picture, as we are keen to establish our TERRA centres in as short a time frame as possible.

The other important objective for us is to not only raise awareness about the correlation between conservation and mental health, but also to create a paradigm shift in the way we, as a human race, approach our daily lives when it comes to our everyday existence. We need to incorporate planetary survival into everything we do and pull ourselves away from the existential threat of using financial wealth as our only metric of success. We have to realise that wealth comes in many forms and the preservation of our natural world should be at the top of the list. If we conserve and preserve Nature, then everything else will flow from that, including financial stability. At the moment we are going about things the wrong way round and we need, as a matter of urgency, to change our mindset.

If we can start the world on this path then I think we will have achieved an important - probably even the most important - objective.

9. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE ANYONE READING OR HEARING YOUR STORY TO SUPPORT THIS CAUSE?

Firstly, I would like everyone who is reading, or hearing, this story to approach everything

I have said with an open mind, because it is with open minds that we can then be amenable to making changes. I don't even begin to pretend that we have all the answers, but I know the answers are out there and your readers will have some of them. I hope W4Life will stimulate thought and discussion and I would love it if your readers could share those answers with the rest of the world, through our W4Life platform. This is not just about me, or the walk, or the other W4Life endeavours. This is about everyone coming forward and helping make the changes we need to undertake for our survival.

Secondly, it would be great if anyone reading this could help spread the word about what we are trying to do. We would love to create an unstoppable momentum and it is through people such as readers of Travel Essence Magazine that we can do this. Even if it is simply by forwarding these two web links <https://www.zambesia.com/w4life/> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-fVr7zYJh8&t=3s> to friends and family around the world, that would be a great help.

Thirdly, this is also partly a fundraising occasion and so if any of your readers feel that they can contribute towards the two wonderful charities which have made the walk possible, namely Zambesia Conservation Alliance and Consolidated Africa Services, then every donation will be a great help towards their work in conservation and mental health. There is a page set up for this here: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/w4lifelakekariba> and there will be other platforms to contribute through.

10. IF YOU WERE TO EMBARK ON A SIMILAR EXPEDITION IN AFRICA, WHERE WOULD YOUR STEPS TAKE YOU?

I have mentioned the other endeavours that are planned under the W4Life banner, but if you are referring to a walk that is similar to the Lake Kariba challenge, then I think I would say my next aim would be to walk around the entire border of my home country of Zimbabwe. At more than 3,000km it will take a bit longer than the Lake Kariba walk and I hope my family would give me permission to be absent from home for such a long time! 🙏





EDITOR'S PICK |

Millennium Place Mirdif: Chic hospitality in Dubai's Mirdif Hills Community

A hidden gem intended to be a getaway and a haven for people looking for a vacation, staycation or just a day out has just now clocked six months since opening in Dubai's upcoming Mirdif Hills District, boasting versatility that lends itself to splendour in terms of being a venue for leisure, entertainment and so much more...



The hotel is the first of its kind in the Mirdif area, and is home to 248 keys of 116 rooms and suites, 132 residential apartments, and 6 dining options. The dining spaces include Batchig, a modern take on Lebanese-Armenian cuisine, Sala de Cigar, the largest cigar lounge in Dubai and ideal for the Cuban Cigar enthusiasts, The Urban Bar, the token sports bar for social gatherings and good times, Hunter & Barrel Steakhouse, B Social, an all-day dining restaurant, and Vola Rooftop. A spectacular showcase of beautifully curated interior designs and contemporary architectural features which combine modern lifestyle demands with luxurious and artistic touches, Millennium Place Mirdif is truly an urban chic concept, and perfect for every type of traveller, particularly those who value spacious rooms and access to a range of amenities only a few steps from their room or suite.



The lifestyle property is also outfitted with a gym, spa, and multi-purpose meeting spaces that are excellent choices for corporate team building escapes from the city within the city. What's more, Millennium Place Mirdif is a mere 10 minutes away from the airport, making it an ideal option for business travellers and families or singles on vacation as well.

GREEN SPACES NEARBY

The hotel makes good use of its location as well. Being adjacent to the iconic Mushrif Park, Millennium Place Mirdif is ideal for active, healthy patrons. Great views overlooking Mushrif Park and Mirdif's bicycle tracks are seen from some rooms, and also, being the only fine-dining, licensed property in the area means that the hospitality and lifestyle destination caters to the diverse Mirdif community as well as the adjacent residential areas such as Al Warqaa and Al Khawaneej. Above that,




the hotel is close to a variety of lifestyle attractions such as City Center Mirdif, Global Village and Dubai Safari Park among others.

A NEW ADDITION TO THE MILLENNIUM PLACE PORTFOLIO

The hotel is managed by Millennium Hotels & Resorts, Middle East & Africa (MEA), recognized as one of the fastest-growing hotel management companies in the region. Millennium Place is a lifestyle brand with happiness at its very core. Polite but carefree with bags of genuine energy, it aims to make all the guests feel happy and good about themselves. The brand intends to deliver a compelling guest experience in line with its promise to 'Find your happy place'.

The talent are genuinely happy people, caring and committed to providing the best experiences possible for the guests. They consistently aim to put a smile on every guest, offering an incomparable journey with a cheerful, warm, caring and personal service to all. Combining comfort with leisure, everyone will feel welcomed and comfortable during the happiness journey at the hotel.

The cultural values of Millennium PLACE brand include Playful, Lifestyle, Appreciation, Childhood and Emotional. Millennium Place provides a place for everyone coming from all walks of life, from business to families, ambitious, creative, curious, cosmopolitan, passionate, forward-looking, plugged-in, youthful and experience seekers and more, it is a PLACE for everyone.

Millennium Hotels & Resorts Middle East & Africa operates several brands, including the "Millennium Place" hotels which enjoy an upbeat lifestyle vibe that attracts the new generation of travellers, and Millennium Place Mirdif belongs to that umbrella. With its variety of entertainment and leisure options, close proximity to the airport and many landmarks and attractions, as well as its chic, urban vibes and cheerful disposition, Millennium Place Mirdif is sure to achieve to become the ideal "happy place" for all! 



Atlantis Atlas Project Turns One, Further Making Its Mark In Green Investments



- Atlantis Dubai has invested half a million US dollars in green initiatives that support the resort's efforts to reduce waste and emissions and facilitate a more responsible operation.
- Green investments include the installation of food waste reduction technology, Winnow AI, as well as the construction of an \$300,000 on-site water purification and bottling plant, which will remove 2.7 million plastic bottles per year from the operation.
- 100 locally sourced and sustainable dishes are now available on menus resort-wide, including 22 across children's menus.

O

n this year's World Oceans Day, marked globally on June 8th annually, Atlantis Dubai celebrated the one year anniversary of its pioneering sustainability initiative, Atlantis Atlas Project – proudly announcing that over the past 12 months, the resort has invested over half a million US dollars into green initiatives to create positive change across its operation.

Tim Kelly, Managing Director & Executive Vice President of Atlantis Dubai, said: “We’re incredibly proud to celebrate the results of Atlantis Atlas Project one year on, which reflects the dedication and persistence demonstrated by the entire Atlantis team. Our investment of half a million US dollars over the past year is testament to our commitment to making positive change and improvements to our operation, as well as implementing conservation and education programmes both in-resort and within the region”.

Investing in AI technology to reduce food waste

Reducing food waste has been a critical focus for Atlantis Atlas Project over the past 12 months. With this in mind, the resort has made a significant investment in Winnow AI technology to reduce waste across its main buffet operations. The implementation of this technology has resulted in over 450,000kg of mixed materials being recycled, thus reducing the resort's total waste to landfill by over 95% annually.

Enhancing the resort's sustainable dining initiative

Following the successful launch of Atlantis Atlas Project's sustainable dining initiative last June, the resort has increased the number of locally sourced and sustainable dishes across the menus of all nine signature restaurants by over 70%. As of June 2022, every restaurant, as well as in-room and outdoor dining, features at least five to six dishes across adult's and children's menus, all 100 of which have been carefully crafted from locally sourced and sustainable produce. With the planet-friendly dishes already a firm favourite with hotel guests and residents alike, to date Atlantis has sold 38,751, with the three most popular including Bread Street Kitchen's Uns Farm Caesar Salad, WHITE Beach's local-produced Burrata, and The Shore's sustainably farmed Fish Tacos.

Eliminating single-use plastic bottles by 2023

The destination of Atlantis Dubai (including Atlantis, The Palm, Atlantis The Royal and Atlantis Aquaventure) has pledged to eliminate all single-use plastic bottles by the end of 2023. To set this promise in motion, the resort has invested over \$300,000





into an on-site water purification and bottling plant, which is due for completion in Q3 2022. The plant will remove 2.7 million plastic bottles per year from the resort's operation, directly supporting The Crown Prince's Dubai Can initiative, which aims to eliminate single-use plastic across the city over several phases.

Supporting local conservation and community efforts

In addition to taking sustainable steps forward, Atlantis Atlas Project's CSR programme has continued to thrive over 2022, with initiatives including the donation of 1,530kg of food to the Stray Dogs Centre Umm Al Quwain, as well as 15,690 meals to the region's humanitarian aid organisation, Tarahum Charity Foundation. Last month, Atlantis Aquaventure also became the first waterpark in the region to become an IBCCES Certified Autism Center™.


During the past year, Atlantis Dubai has also supported four universities and non-profit organisations to drive local marine conservation initiatives. This includes the UAE Dolphin Project Initiative in partnership with Zayed University, which collates critical data to

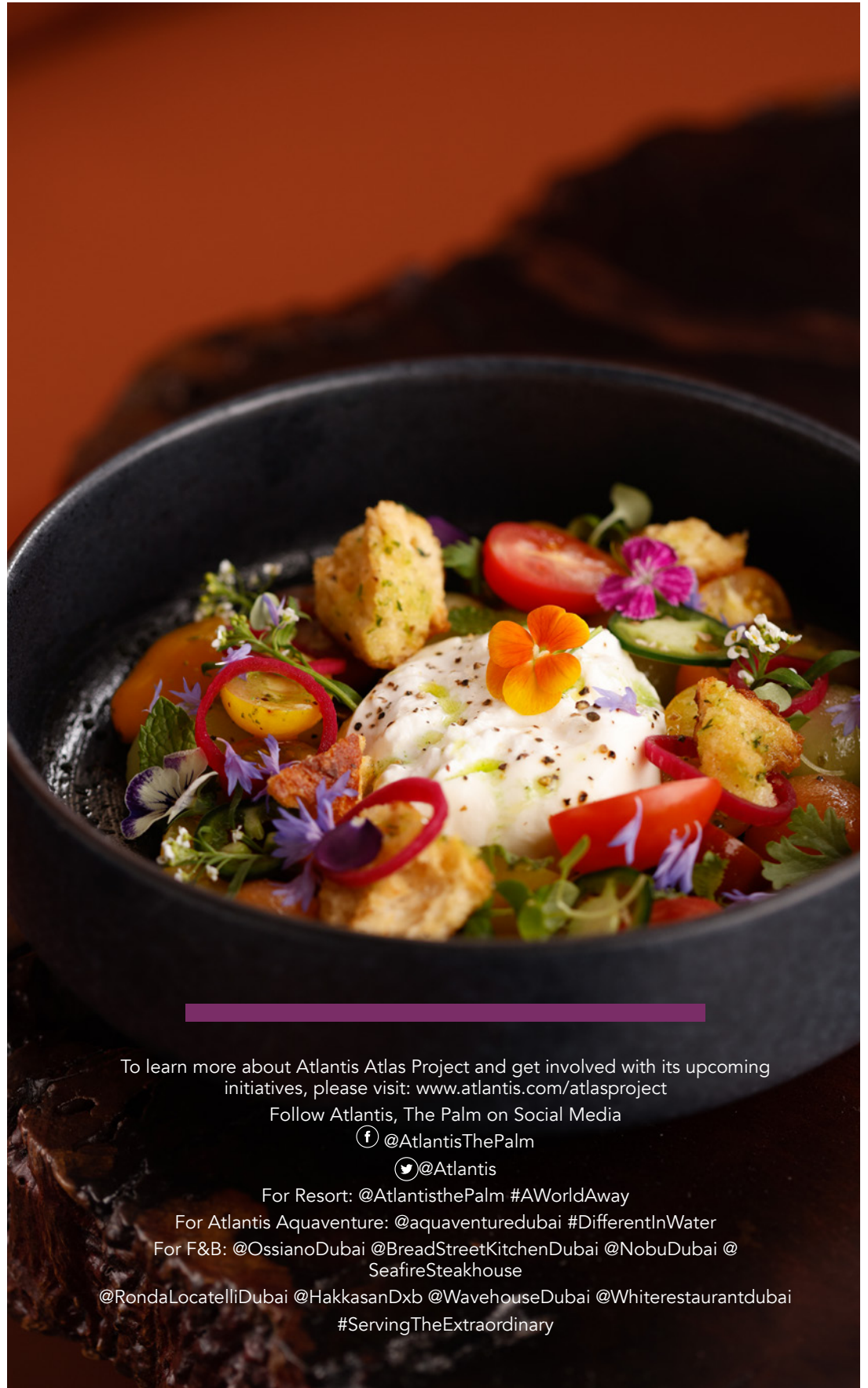


support the study of local dolphin populations. Over the past 12 months, the team have spent more than 270 hours implementing 60 boat surveys, spanning a distance of 5,444km along the UAE coastline. This has resulted in 11,043 images taken – and dolphins spotted 18 times.

Additional projects funded by Atlantis Atlas Project over the past year include supporting New York University Abu Dhabi in their investigations on the impact of climate change on coral reef ecosystems, as well as assisting the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Shark Specialist Group in their mission to coordinate and implement global conservation efforts. Support has also been extended to United Arab Emirates University in their study of critically endangered sharks and rays in


local waters.

Tim Kelly, Managing Director & Executive Vice President of Atlantis Dubai, commented: “Whilst we are conscious that we still have a way to go in our mission to become the Middle East’s champion for responsible and sustainable tourism, we are incredibly pleased to share the many examples of positive change we have made in just 12 months and we collectively look forward to ramping up our efforts over the coming year. At the end of 2021, we attained EarthCheck Silver Certification for the second consecutive year recognising our successful implementation of environmental standards and policies. We look forward to continually improving on these as part of our commitment to do business in ways that are good for both people and the planet”. 



To learn more about Atlantis Atlas Project and get involved with its upcoming initiatives, please visit: www.atlantis.com/atlasproject

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EDITOR'S PICK • PARAMOUNT HOTEL DUBAI





The Stage is set at Paramount Hotel Dubai

Revel in elegance and indulgence at Paramount Hotel Dubai in true Hollywood style! An impromptu decision to take a break from the hustle and bustle of long days and some nights in the office landed us a weekend with our kids at this stunning hotel in the heart of Dubai's Business Bay District – and this decision has us now inspired to perhaps come back sooner rather than later to indulge in a little care-free fun time, accentuated with moments of poolside relaxation, culinary experimentation and some popping in and out of emails at leisure...

By Yvonne C Mtengwa





The allure of Paramount Hotel Dubai

The property rises from the edge of Dubai's Business District, a contemporary financial district where Dubai Creek extends and a water canal winds between towering skyscrapers and interconnected road networks. Nestled within a series of corporate high-rises, stylish apartment buildings and a seemingly unending offering of dining establishments is the uber contemporary Paramount Hotel Dubai, where modern meets glam and the Hollywood themed design rolls out its red carpet.

We checked in straight after school simply because the plan was intentionally about winding down a Friday and ushering in a restful weekend as two moms who had been travelling extensively, and now needed some quality time with our pre-teens. The floor to ceiling LED screens at the check in desks, the glistening chandeliers, gold trimmings and velvet contemporary seating all come together melodiously to welcome you, distancing you from the bustle of Dubai beyond the revolving doors, but still reminding you that you are in every way, still a part of the fast-paced, ever-evolving nature of Dubai – the destination that awakens every sense of spirited adventure.

The Stage is set at Paramount Hotel Dubai

Located just 5 minutes from Downtown Dubai, an additional few minutes from landmark attractions Burj Khalifa, the Dubai Fountain, La Mer Beach and the magnificent Palm Jumeirah, the property is a compelling

invitation to experience understated glam, with countless props, lighting and wall artwork to aid your imagination in running wild and California dreaming.

Who doesn't like "an Oscar" made from milk chocolate as a welcome treat or sprawling views of the city that never sleeps as part of their morning and night time script during their stay? It was the details for me, from food service to the supporting cast – the staff – and their attention to your every beck and call. It was the drama with quotes of some of Hollywood's greats etched into the bathroom mirrors or woven into floor rugs, the black and white portraits of actors from the golden ages and the use of technology to pull all the elements together.

The hotel houses 823 rooms and themed suites, all influenced by the studio's talent for sophisticated design and creative entertainment. Brimming with Hollywood glamour, rooms at Paramount Hotel Dubai are spacious, well-appointed and perfect for those that love to indulge in life's little luxuries. Whether you are looking

EDITOR'S PICK • PARAMOUNT HOTEL DUBAI







to sink into your plush, king sized bedroom, unwind or pamper yourself in the white marbled bathroom with a stand-alone bathtub and rain shower, or enjoy a night of entertainment from the giant high-tech entertainment system and plasma TV which seamlessly doubles as a mirror, rooms and suites will captivate, as much as they will call you to relaxation.

They call it theatre for the taste buds...

If dining and entertainment are on the agenda, then true to form, Paramount Hotel Dubai bears much to choose from. Ours turned out to be a good combination of evenings sipping shakers at our personal bar after a day at the pool where we indulged in a no-frills menu from afternoon into the sun setting, to filling moments from decadent buffet spreads in the massive family style main restaurant.


Breakfasts were hearty from what seemed like an endless buffet and dinners were a combination of an international and Arabic inspired spread. On site is a good selection of dining options, namely the main restaurant, “The Stage”, a Californian Restaurant & Lounge – the Pacific Groove, and open for brunch and dinner are the Flashback, Speakeasy Bar and the Malibu Deck, where we spent most of our weekend lounging by the pool and soaking in cocktails, frozen mocktails for the kids and generous servings of tacos, wings and things from a food trailer.

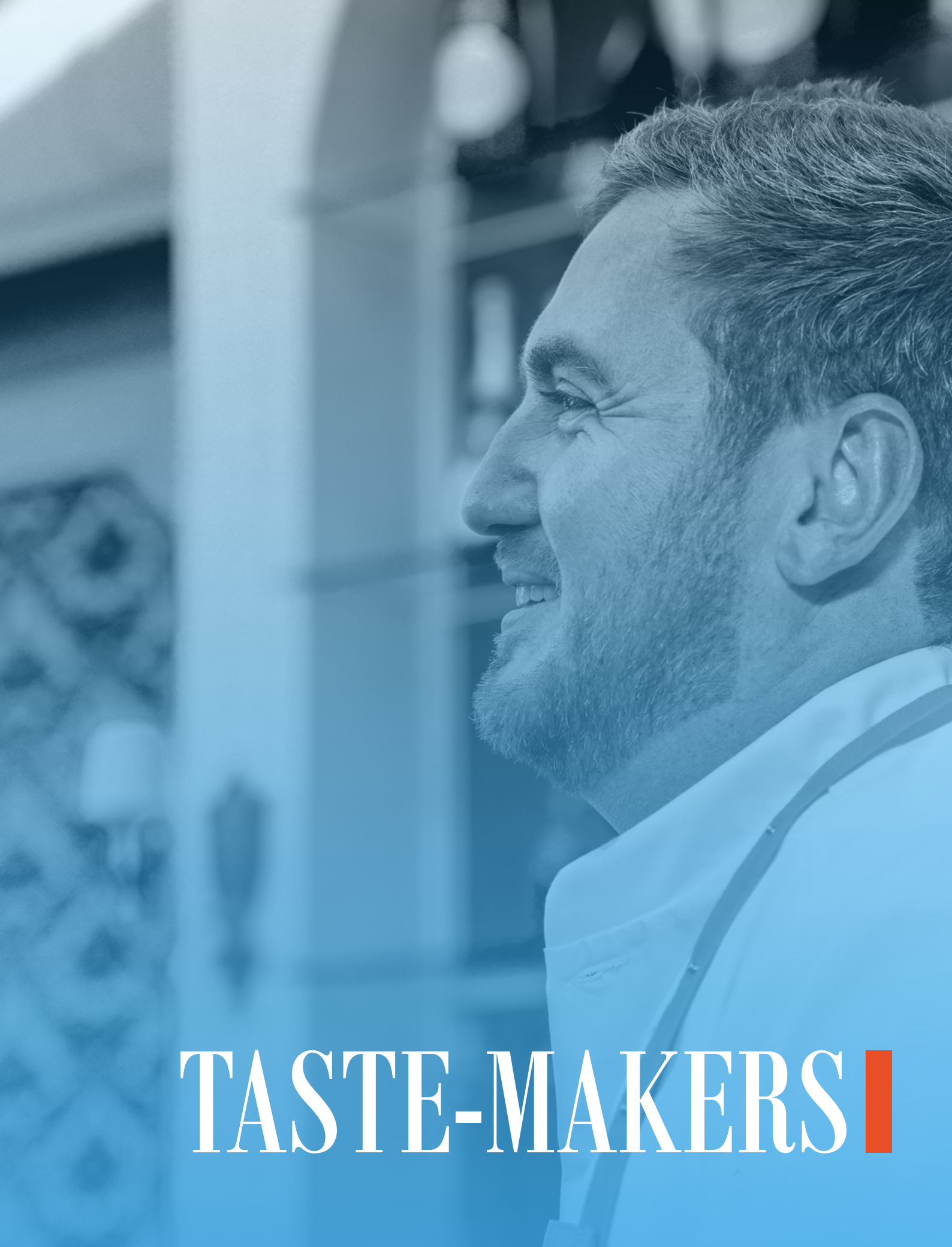
A touch of wellness on site

Because the stage is set with your stay, and the property spares no creative flair in creating the ultimate Hollywood inspired experience, like any star, relaxation, pampering and indulgence is most certainly always on the agenda. Beyond reclining in opulence at the resort-style pool, an extra touch of indulgence never hurts at the luxury PAUSE spa Château Berger in Dubai, where cosmetics optimize your beauty capital, offering you the best of your self-care and aftercare routine. Or you can keep yourself in celebrity shape at the hotel’s dedicated PAUSE Health & Fitness Studio should the call to break a sweat arise.

The Paramount Hotel’s Grand story

The theme is drama, mystery and glamour, with hotels inspiring the kind of luxurious lifestyle that lives on beyond the big screen. The Paramount Hotels brand delights in warm service, awe-inspiring design, epic entertainment and exceptional dining experiences, all of which are curated to set a new standard in the world of hospitality. And all these, we very well experienced!

Rooted in over 100 years of rich history, each property has been carefully curated for the creatives, by the creatives, unveiling a journey that excites, elevates and engages your silver screen senses. A new stage, where guests can experience the celebrity-style spotlight is housed at the incredible Paramount Hotel Dubai, where theatrical experiences are complemented by accents of local colour and culture. 



TASTE-MAKERS |

TASTE-MAKERS • POL GARCIA



Fireside chat with Soho Garden Executive Chef Pol Garcia

Travel Essence Magazine recently took to the town for a new menu tasting at Soho Garden, described by its frequent patrons as “a playground of discovery and an unparalleled entertainment destination that captures true Dubai living.” It’s trendy and cosmopolitan, hosting some of the coolest acts in urban entertainment while invoking the inner celebrity status in everyone walking through its doors. But what’s a night out without good food? Our mission was to catch up with the personality behind the Soho Garden food experience - and Executive Chef Pol Garcia was on hand to take us through his journey to Dubai...



1. WHO IS POL GARCIA AND WHAT INSPIRED YOUR ENTRY INTO THE CULINARY WORLD?

Originally, I am from the beautiful Basque Country in northern Spain, and I began my culinary journey when I was very young. I was born in a very small city with a big culinary tradition and since I can remember, I’ve been going to all kinds of restaurants. I fell in love with food from these experiences and this really encouraged me to pursue gastronomy from when I was young. I was inspired by my work with Martin Berasategui, whom I started working with at the age of 16, to really love food. This passion for food was instilled in me from such a young age, which encouraged me to really gain an interest in the craft and become adventurous in my designs and creations.

2. SHOWCASING YOUR TALENT IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST EXCITING CITIES - DUBAI - MUST BE AN ABSOLUTE DREAM. WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND DUBAI IN PARTICULAR?

To live and work in Dubai has always been a dream for me. It is a melting pot where a wide variety of so many different cultures and people can mix. It is an incredible landscape to experiment with new culinary concepts and create delicious dishes. Dubai has access to such a wide array of the freshest ingredients and so you are not limited in how you can combine products in different ways. I also really enjoy the vibrant metropolitan lifestyle in Dubai with everything you need at your doorstep. It is constantly growing and advancing every day, allowing for us to be more experimental and unique.

3. ARE THERE ANY INFLUENCES



YOU DRAW FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD WITH YOUR COOKING AND IF SO, WHERE FROM?

I have been extremely blessed to have been able to take my culinary journey to many different parts of the globe, and I always bring these experiences with me when I go somewhere new. Throughout my career, I have been lucky enough to have worked in my native Spain along with the likes of London, Shanghai, Bangkok, and Hong Kong at some top-quality restaurants. Travel broadens the mind, and this is no different when it comes to food. These experiences taught me techniques and styles that I still use to this day to help me design unique offerings for our valued guests.

4. WE RECENTLY ENJOYED TASTING YOUR NEW CREATIONS AT MEYDAN'S SOHO GARDEN. TALK TO US A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT YOU ENVISIONED WHEN PUTTING THIS MENU TOGETHER - FLAVOURS, PRESENTATION ETC.?

When I was designing this menu, we wanted to have a fresh touch with Mediterranean flavours and an Asian twist. I wanted to highlight the balance of flavours and create an incredible selection of food, allowing guests to have an easy to share experience. I always like to be bold and try new things, and this menu gave me the perfect opportunity to do so. The wonderful city that is Dubai also afforded me the chance to utilise exotic and unique flavours to design mouth-watering combinations. I put my own personality into the menu and want my diners to enjoy the unique journey on every plate.

5. WHAT SORT OF EXPERIENCE CAN GUESTS WITH A PALATE FOR EXCEPTIONAL FOOD, DRINK AND ENTERTAINMENT LOOK FORWARD TO WITH A NIGHT OUT AT SOHO GARDEN?

An incredible setting like Soho Garden deserves an incredible line-up of food, drink, and entertainment to match it. Every night, guests will be entertained by the best of international and local artists, along with a huge variety of exceptional food and beverage offerings. Every venue at Soho Garden has


its own personality, but with a common vision. We are all so passionate about showcasing our excellence, not only in terms of entertainment, but also in terms of the sensational culinary experience. With out of the box events, and a mouth-watering array of food and drink, Soho Garden should be your only choice for an unforgettable day or night.

6. WE CONTINUE TO WITNESS THE FAST PACED EVOLUTION OF FOOD PRESENTATION MADE FROM FRESHLY SOURCED LOCAL INGREDIENTS? TALK TO US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR TAKE ON UNIQUE FARM-TO-TABLE CONCEPTS?

Where buying local is possible, it is very important that we do so. Locally sourced ingredients are not only fresher, but they also help the local economy. It is so important for us to have a close relationship with producers, so they understand our needs and we learn so much from them that we can later implement into our cooking techniques. Every year I like to take some time to visit them and every time I come back with new products or techniques that we later adapt for our upcoming menus. For us it is very important to have seasonal products from local producers on our menus, this means we are constantly

adapting and changing our original recipes and keeping things fresh.

7. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR CHEFS-IN-TRAINING ASPIRING TO ONE DAY WORK IN A CULINARY HOTSPOT LIKE SOHO GARDEN?

Aspiring chefs should know that working as a chef is not an easy life, but if you love food and being creative with what you cook, it can be a beautiful life. It is also very important to be constantly learning and you should try to learn from every experience and person that you encounter. Once you get that passion for food, there really is nothing better than serving up a meal that is universally enjoyed by everyone! 







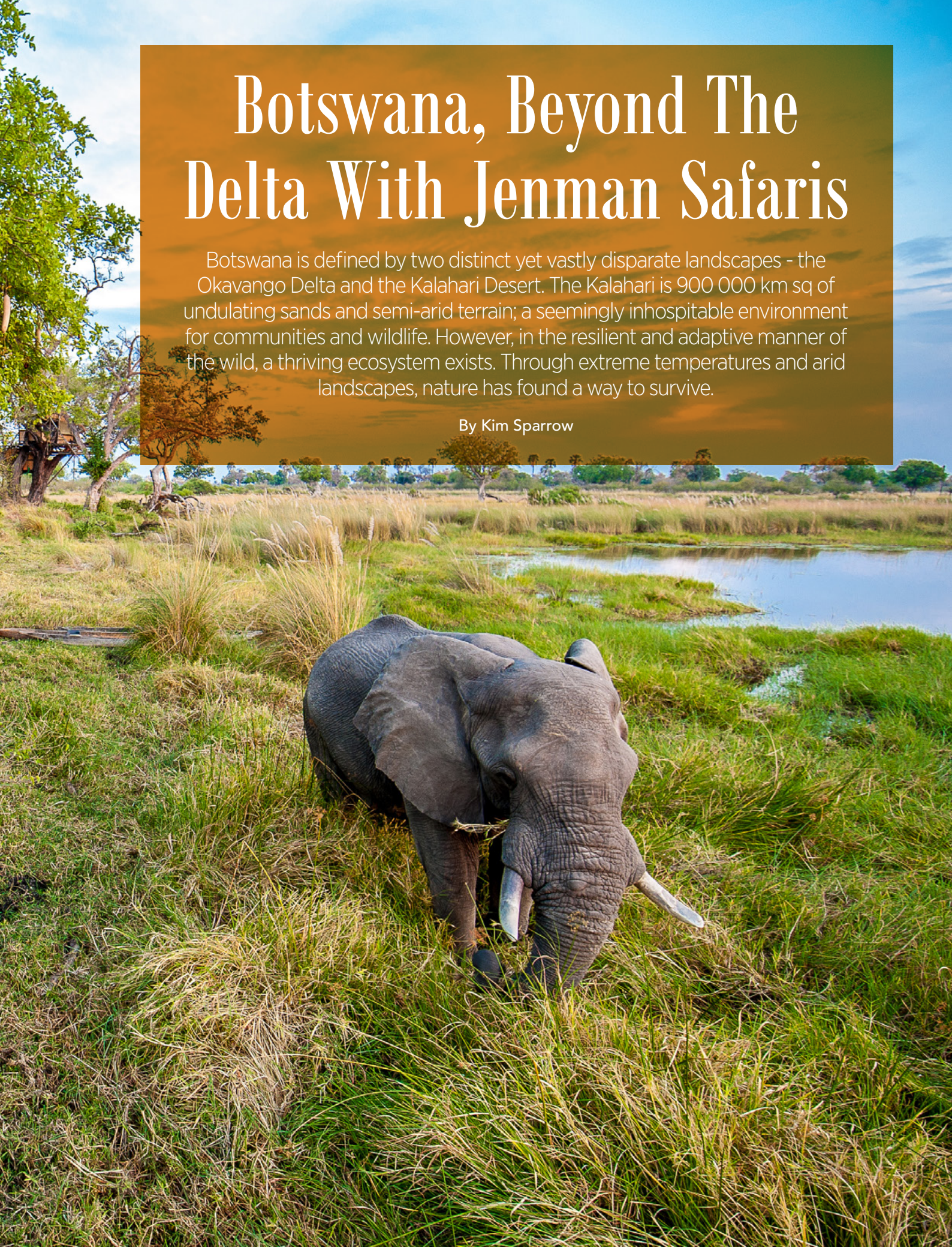
ADVENTURES
IN WILD AFRICA



Botswana, Beyond The Delta With Jenman Safaris

Botswana is defined by two distinct yet vastly disparate landscapes - the Okavango Delta and the Kalahari Desert. The Kalahari is 900 000 km sq of undulating sands and semi-arid terrain; a seemingly inhospitable environment for communities and wildlife. However, in the resilient and adaptive manner of the wild, a thriving ecosystem exists. Through extreme temperatures and arid landscapes, nature has found a way to survive.

By Kim Sparrow



In winter, nights can drop to as low as minus 15 degrees Celsius and rise to 45 degrees Celsius during the summer. The Kalahari covers most of Botswana, spreading into neighbouring South Africa and Namibia as well. The name 'Kalahari' is derived from its Tswana origin, meaning 'waterless place'. Hence the importance of its water sources, from the Okavango Delta and beyond.

The Okavango Delta represents and preserves the heart of Africa's finest game viewing, richly diverse in ecology and wildlife. Its landscape is shaped by water, a vast variety of plant and animal species existing with seasonal ebbs and flows. Botswana is dry, being mostly occupied by the Kalahari desert, making the waters of the Okavango a life source for both humans and wildlife. The yearly floods are a much-anticipated key to survival, arriving from its source in Angola having flowed through Namibia and eventually settling in Botswana to form the delta. This floodwater creates a variety of habitats; islands, forests, marshes, lagoons, woodlands and floodplains. This 'liquid gift' is the life source for wildlife as well as human settlements along the way.

Discover the untamed Okavango Delta

The delta is a wilderness ecosystem at its best. Such diversity attracts a wealth of life, from insects to reptiles, fish, birds and mammals. It is one of the few inland water deltas in the world, nourishing expansive wildlife populations which depend upon its tapestry of land and water. Not only is it the life source for animals, but the area connects ancient migratory corridors which allow wildlife to move freely in search of food and water, depending on the season. Supporting the world's largest





population of elephants, as well as other prime mammals such as lion, leopard, cheetah and the endangered rhino, it is an undeniable species stronghold; a safari seeker's dream destination.

Where to stay to experience the delta at its untamed best? Delta Camp comes recommended by Jenman Safaris, located on a palm-studded island deep in the Okavango Delta. Delta Camp is a dream for guests in pursuit of experiences the essence of nature and the deep Okavango, with chalets designed to take advantage of the many indigenous, old-growth trees of the island forest. The buildings blend ceremoniously into their surroundings, meaning that sometimes a tree grows through a roof or a floor; that you will find no glass in the windows and it very often means that the building itself is elevated onto a deck. If it's bush and flood-plains you are after – Delta Camp receives our nod.



Explore the dramatic Khwai River at Molothlo

The Khwai River is an extension of the Okavango Delta, maintaining its wild essence and biodiversity. Situated between Chobe National Park and Moremi National Park, the area is an ecological pearl; abundant in abundance. Moremi is the oldest and first protected area of the Okavango Delta, and has some of the highest concentrations of wildlife in Africa. Its area is made up of floodplains, lagoons, acacia forests, mopane woodland and islands. The biodiversity of these areas deems Moremi a safari seekers' dreamscape, each terrain holding its own ecological wonders. It covers much of the eastern side of the delta and combines permanent water with drier areas, which create some startling and unexpected visual contrasts, as well as diversity of species. Being on the border of such diversity as well as sharing ancient animal corridors, the Khwai supports and celebrates its ecologically distinct neighbour.



Amongst this myriad of ecosystems within the delta, the Khwai River is one of the most dramatic. As the season changes and the African heat rises, depleting water and food sources, the Khwai becomes a lifeline for wildlife. The water from the delta has pushed as far up the Khwai channel as it will go for the season, animals congregating along its river banks to quench their thirst.

The Khwai is dependent on the northern overflow of the Okavango Delta's floodwaters and continues to fill as the dry season extends. It is this natural phenomenon and reliable water deposit which attracts wildlife to the area, a literal oasis in the desert of Botswana. The area is characteristic of the Okavango in its teems of wildlife, herds of zebra, lechwe, wildebeest, buffalo and elephant drawn to the Khwai River bank. With such bountiful numbers of prey, the predator population equally thrives, following in the footsteps of their next meal.

Mogotlo on Khwai River, is a luxury tented camp built off-grid, and seamlessly blending into the banks of the Khwai River. Guests will be thrilled to note just how much they can immerse themselves into an African safari experience, guided and hosted by Mogotlo's passionate team made up of residents from nearby villages. Each of the 13 spacious and luxurious tents, has been intimately placed to ensure unspoiled panoramic views of the African bush, with a touch of class and plenty of privacy. Offering a unique view of the river, a life source and watering hole for wildlife, you will have ample opportunity to observe wildlife in its element and the ever-changing landscape from the privacy of your balcony.

Camp Kazimba for game viewing on the Chobe

Last but not most certainly not least, located in northern Chobe National Park, the Chobe River is the life support of the area. Also known as the 'river with many names', Chobe's waters sustain life beyond Botswana borders. Originating in Angola, it travels through Namibia's Caprivi region where it is known as the Kwando, into Botswana where it is first called the Linyanti, diverting east to become the Chobe in the Kazungula area where it flows forth towards Victoria Falls, turning into the mighty Zambezi. Eventually, it reaches the sea.

The river forms a natural boundary between Botswana and Namibia, a platform for tourism, transport and trade as well as a bountiful and busy wildlife intersection. With ancient migratory routes between the Moremi Game Reserve, Okavango Delta and Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe, its presence is



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crucial for wildlife, especially during the dry season. The amount of life that the Chobe supports, from communities to conservation areas, is worthy of accolades within the wilderness.


The volume of animal traffic which depends on the Chobe River is nothing short of astounding. Supporting the largest elephant population in the world, the national park feeds and waters approximately 120 000 African giants, reliant on the Chobe River. In addition to being an elephant Eden, the area is also home to wild dog, leopard, giraffe, buffalo, lion, puku and more - as well as a healthy and varied population of birdlife. These resources make Chobe one of the most important wildlife areas in Botswana, beyond the Okavango Delta.

Camp Kuzuma, a boutique eco-lodge in Botswana bordering Chobe National Park and Hwange National Park will host you, located in exceptional safari area teeming with wildlife that inhabit this busy wildlife corridor. The seven well-appointed tents are incredibly spacious, boasting deep Victorian baths and king-sized beds draped in mosquito nets,

there is a true commitment to eco-tourism, as the camp is completely off the grid yet offers all the comforts guests may desire on their Botswana Safari Experience.

The attraction of Botswana is endless....

In a national park, water is life, each ecosystem directly dependent on its availability. This truth resonates even more so in a country covered by desert. Through rainy seasons, natural springs, lakes and rivers, its presence is vital to the existence of nature. Its ebbs and flows during each season shape our landscapes, sustaining both our plants and animals. Without water, our wild spaces would cease to exist. Botswana and its landscapes are a testament to this, its rivers imperative for survival.

The attraction of Botswana is endless, from its vast and varied landscapes to its wildlife heritage and wild waterways. As an unparalleled ecological haven, it draws safari aficionados, conservationists and travellers from near and far to drink from the well of the Botswana wilderness. 

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Singita Family Safaris In The Serengeti
**Lock In Unforgettable,
Transformative Connections
With Loved Ones In Africa's
Untamed Wilderness**



The opportunity to embrace Africa's positive spirit and step into nature's classroom, makes a Singita family safari the ultimate gift to young minds. From learning how to track animals to the thrill of witnessing a predator on a hunt, each day opens a world of knowledge.



Set in Singita Grumeti, adjacent to the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, Singita's lodges and camps allow you to explore many protected habitats offering a rare chance to travel into the heart of the continent, where its most coveted wildlife thrive. Travelers are seeking out more meaningful ways to travel, and remote destinations that provide authentic nature-based activities are especially sought after.

Exclusive Family Safaris are leading the way. At Singita, every Family Safari is personally tailored so you can share transformative journeys of discovery while experiencing its warm-hearted people and their fascinating stories. There's a sense of belonging from being embraced by the continent's energy – delighting in nourishing food filled with Tanzanian flavours; learning tracking skills passed on for generations; and listening to inspiring stories and fireside songs – it leaves a lasting impression on the entire family.

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

The last two years have taught us to treasure the present and make the most of spending time together. The unhurried pace at one of Singita's Tanzanian lodges presents the best opportunity for family groups to enjoy time under the radiant African sun, eat outside in the mild night air, and appreciate the healing benefits of being outdoors.

The beauty of safari is in its universal appeal. Being immersed in the wilderness is special to all age groups. Singita's award-winning camps cater to all ages, with a wide scope of relaxing, or more physical, activities. From thrilling bush walks and game drives, to cooking classes, wine tasting with world-class sommeliers, or lounging by the pool, even a mini game ranger's course, all members of a multigenerational group will be kept as occupied as they choose.



However, the lodges are designed for escaping the frenetic pace of 'normal' life and replenishing the soul. Outdoor wellness treatments, or afternoons spent enjoying the solitude from your deck are encouraged.

SINGITA SASAKWA LODGE, SERENGETI, TANZANIA – CHILDREN OF ALL AGES WELCOME.

Striking the perfect balance between casual luxury and sophisticated elegance, this lodge features a grand entrance, and wraparound verandas reminiscent of a stately manor house but with a light and airy atmosphere. The most spectacular, panoramic views of the Singita Grumeti concession can be seen from the veranda or the private plunge pools in every suite.

Cool Facts:

Children's Activities: Mini Rangers' Course • Cooking interactions • Arts & crafts • Movies • Tennis • Activity booklets • Board games • Swimming • Stargazing • Bush walks (min age 16) • Hot Air Ballooning (min age 7)
Accommodation: • 6 x one-bedroom cottages • 2 x two-bedroom cottages • 1 x three-bedroom cottages • 1 x four-bedroom cottages • 1 x one-bedroom Hillside Suite (villa for two)

SINGITA FARU FARU LODGE, SERENGETI, TANZANIA (CHILDREN OF ALL AGES WELCOME)

Intuitive ease and a laidback approach to luxury throughout this contemporary African lodge where exquisite river views and oversized (electric) windows welcome the wilderness inside. Here, a relaxed flow between modern comforts and nature maximises opportunities to discover the magic of the Serengeti.



Children's Activities:

- Mini Rangers' Course; Cook- ing interactions; Arts & crafts; Movies; Activity booklets; Board games; Swimming; Stargazing; Bush walks (min age 16); Hot Air Ballooning (min age 7);

Accommodation:

- 7 x one-bedroom suites & 1 x two-bedroom family suite
- 1 x two-bedroom suite with private pool

A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES TO STIMULATE YOUNG MINDS

Singita's Min Rangers' courses show nature's ability to inspire, excite and transform the next generation. This specially crafted course equips young explorers with wilderness-survival skills, knowledge about tracking animals, astronomy and bird identification.

THE FREEDOM IN PRIVATE STAYS

Singita's (seven) exclusive-use properties are especially good for family travel or special-oc-





casian celebrations— where you decide the pace and flow of the day. The absolute pinnacle of luxury travel, the villas are also peaceful and secluded, designed for quality time. However, the lodges also offer two-or-three-bedroom suites suitable for families sharing.

SINGITA EXPLORE, SERENGETI, TANZANIA

One of the most unconventional exclusive-use camps (villa) in Africa! As the very essence of classic East African safaris, this is an authentic “roughing-it in great style” experience in the Serengeti. From waking up to birdsong and the smell of freshly brewed coffee on the fire, you step out of your luxurious custom-designed tent to breathtaking views, and days unfold to the pace of nature, concluding under a canopy of stars around the campfire at night. The camp is made up of 6 tents booked on exclusive use.

SINGITA SERENGETI HOUSE, SERENGETI, TANZANIA

Set on the gentle slopes of Sasakwa Hill, this exceptional 4-bedroom retreat epitomises casual, carefree living, with endless views of one of the continent’s most iconic settings – the Serengeti plains. Welcoming families or friends in the utmost seclusion and comfort, this exclusive-use villa offers everything from private wellness treatments to stargazing, wine tastings and cooking classes, tailor-made bush walks and community experiences, along with a private chef and safari vehicle and guide.

THE GREAT MIGRATION: THE GREAT-EST SHOW ON EARTH

Each year, as the seasons change, massive herds of wildebeest move along ancient grazing routes across Tanzania and into Kenya’s Masai Mara (approx. June to September). Considered one of the most majestic natural phenomena on the planet, the Migration highlights the power of nature on a dramatic scale. Driven by the need to seek out new grazing, the herds – in their hundreds of thousands – traverse






the Serengeti plains. They attract predators and treacherous river crossings makes for a humbling game-viewing experience. For every member of the family, this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The tranquillity of each family-friendly lodge ensures that guests can completely unwind after exhilarating days.

THE LUXURY OF PRIVACY – SETTING SINGITA APART

The word exclusivity means different things to people depending on their interests and stages in life. Singita believes the need for peace is inherent in every traveller’s interpretation, and the entire guest experience is built around allowing guests time to unwind in nature.

Here, exclusivity extends far beyond luxury on a superficial or merely physical level. There’s a stillness and ease that comes from the magic of enjoying game drives in places where no other vehicles are seen; of lodges with the lowest possible bed counts; and of dining under the stars with only the gentle soundtrack of the bush. It lies in the feeling of having the wilderness all to yourself, and life-changing memories cherished forever. 







THE WANDERLUST WITHIN

Dakar Unpacked:

Top 5 Experiences On A Whirlwind Trip To The Senegalese Capital

By Yvonne C Mtengwa



I didn't start off the year knowing I would find myself taking my very first trip to West Africa. As a matter of fact, when told I would need to attend the World Water Forum; I remember asking the question – who hosts conferences in Dakar? Africa is as diverse as its people in landscapes, wildlife, cityscapes, cultures and all the elements that draw out the uniqueness of a place. With bags packed and ready for my assignment, I departed from Dubai International Airport for my 14 hour flight that would have us fly into Guinea Conakry before landing at Blaise Diagne International Airport in the very vibrant city of Dakar; a city known for its markets, French influenced architecture, longstanding musical culture and of course, the magnificent behemoth Monument de la Renaissance.

The commute from the airport to our hotel in the city was long – a whole hour if not more! Highways from the airport were visibly new, streets were clean and there was a strong sense of heightened progress, with buildings along the main highway such as the Diamniadio Olympic Stadium, which has a capacity of 50,000 and is slated to host the 2026 Summer Youth Olympics. We would be spending our next week at the World Water Forum, held at the Centre des Expositions de Dakar, a huge and also new Exhibition Centre a good 45 minutes from the city center.

The shuttle driver proudly spoke about the new high speed train that had been commissioned a few months earlier, and how this was a convenient way to beat the traffic. Because I arrived on Saturday afternoon, it was a smooth drive into what was now what I call “rugged Dakar,” a city seemingly stuck in an era past with heavy French influence in architecture and pace. Streets were incredibly narrow and crowded, forming a mosaic that connected row after row of very old buildings that were hardly appealing in view. Pavements were filled with road side markets and hawkers selling anything from fresh produce to traditional Senegalese attires. Arriving at the hotel after a 14 hour flight led me to nothing else but a shower, quick meal and bed time. Exploring Dakar was going to have to take place at some point during what was to be a very hectic conference week ahead.

A QUICK TOUR FOR THOSE SHORT ON TIME...

We toured the city as much as we could after our long days at work, and because we were travelling as a big group, we often shared tips amongst ourselves of the best things to see and what others felt wasn't worth braving the traffic. I was more interested in sites of historical and cultural interest beyond the dining scene by night. And so here's where I ring what was most compelling for me for its symbolism and guest experience. Should you find yourself in Dakar and void of a whole lot of time to do things leisurely, here's are my picks on what to check out when in Dakar and on a whirlwind tour....



1. Monument de la Renaissance

It really is quite spectacular, and having seen a few Instagram posts on it, I'm glad I was able to tick this one off my list of to-dos in Dakar. The African Renaissance Monument, or Monument de la Renaissance Africaine in French, is an imposing, 49-meter tall bronze statue located on top of a hill outside Dakar's central hub, and was built overlooking the Atlantic Ocean in the Ouakam suburb. Apparently marred with controversy on account of its expense, the Monument de la Renaissance is the tallest statue in Africa, with its formal dedication having occurred on the 4 April 2010, Senegal's "National Day", in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the country's independence from France.

What's cool about the statue beyond its size, educational tours and the walk up several hundred steps flanked by flags of other African countries, is its symbolism. Launched by then Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade, the statue shows a family stretching towards the sky, with the man carrying his child on his biceps and holding his wife by the waist. They say this is symbolic of "an Africa emerging from the bowels of the earth, leaving obscurantism to go towards the light" and it's easy to see why that makes good sense.

A tour of the monument begins with an explanation of its construction, before learning more about the Senegalese road to independence from French colonial rule and other global leaders of the black renaissance. You can then go on up to view the city from the man's head which is about 15 floors up from the base of the statue. And what a sight to behold by night as the statue is lit up to reveal its golden glory. Should you be hungry after being inspired by the African renaissance, there is a restaurant on site to whet your appetite with local and international cuisines!

2. A drive to Lake Retba

Yes! The Lake really is pink! Lake Retba, also referred to as Le Lac Rose lies in the north of the Cap Vert peninsula of Senegal, a good 30 km drive in the north-east of Dakar. Waters are pink because of the *Dunaliella salina* algae which thrive in hypersaline environments such as salt lakes and salt evaporation ponds. Salt content in Lake Retba is high - up to 40% in some areas - and so you will come to find out that salt is in fact exported across the region by up to 3,000 collectors, men and women from all over the region who harvest the salt over long hours. It is here where we learned that Senegal is the largest producer of salt on the continent of Africa - and were able to see small fishermen boats on shore and some harvesting taking place under the hot West African sun.



3. The Heritage Tour at Goree Island

The Island of Goree is a grim reminder of one of the greatest tragedies in the history of mankind - the slave trade. Taken on a tour of what was the site of the largest slave trading centre in on the African coast, the fortresses, streets and squares tell the story of human exploitation and the long-haul fight for freedom for many who stood on the shoulders of their forefathers who bore the ultimate sacrifice.

Gorée Island lies off the coast of Senegal and is accessible only by ferry. We were to learn that it was ruled in succession by the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French, and all this is evidenced in the architecture dotted across the island, and the massive contrast between the grim slave-quarters and the elegant houses of the slave traders. The *Maison des Esclaves* ("Slave House"), built in 1786, includes displays of slavery artifacts, and the *Fort d'Estrées* stands as a historical museum. In 1978 Gorée Island was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, and several of its historic structures were restored in the 1980s and '90s.



4. Dinner at Le Lagon

Calming and clearly a vibrant dining and entertainment destination for Dakar's elite, dinner at Le Lagon was a welcome treat from much of the small bar lounges we experienced for a taste of Dakar. The oceanside restaurant is perched on stilts and makes for a perfect spot to enjoy the day's fresh catch, a sparkling glass of wine and great company. Viewed as one of Dakar's top seafood spots, what stood out was the theming – from brass sailing instruments, a vintage diving suit as you enter the restaurant – which set the tone for the culinary exploration that awaits you. It was clear from the patrons that Le Lagon is a hotspot for Dakar's expat community and international visitors and is definitely worth your spend.




5. Go on Safari at Bandia Reserve

Never one to shy away from a good safari, Bandia Reserve granted us the opportunity to get out for some air especially after being hulled up in an exhibition center all week! The Bandia wildlife reserve is a great place to view native flora and of some of Africa's most prolific wildlife. Bandia lies 65km from Dakar and 15km from Saly-Portugal and though small in size, awards you an opportunity to view game such as herds of big antelopes and gazelle, a lone buffalo, giraffe, ostrich and even a rhino.

In addition to experiencing the wilder side of nature, visitors can also see replicas of Serere pyramids with burial chambers, or enjoy a meal from the restaurant and bar which overlook a waterhole – a total feast for animal lovers and photographers when animals do come out for a drink of water.

Of course there is much more that one could explore in Dakar, including the markets for jewellery, African print material and artefacts. Carrying out a more expansive tour of the city, its monuments and beaches is always the best way to discover the hidden gems within a city, but ours really was what felt like a pit-stop because of how packed our schedule was at the conference we were attending.

The Senegalese are warm and engaging, though you'll often find yourself in situations quite challenging to communicate your way out of if you do not have French language basics at hand. Taxis are a riot – a safety hazard to be quite frank - food is an adventure but all in all...I'd have to say Dakar is in many ways a charmer...





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Ever heard of Jirapa?

Jirapa is one of the best places and the fastest developing areas in the region to visit when you are in Ghana, West Africa, due to the fact that most people have not heard much about it as a tourist attraction. But the buzz has been growing on Jirapa – interestingly nicknamed by many as “Jirapa Dubai”, after doors to the Royal Cosy Hills Safari Resort, a fairly new 4-star hotel in Jirapa, Wa, in Upper West Ghana, recently opened.



By Selorm Sosu

What makes this municipality as they call it so intriguing? Well, there is a first of its kind hospitality complex or “Safari Resort” in Ghana built there, featuring an opportunity to view wildlife, with some originally from South Africa and countries in South America such as Peru, Chile and Bolivia once the nearby park opens! But there’s more to see within the environs of Jirapa, and here are some cool things one can discover as part of their trip to Jirapa...

1. Explore the intriguing Mushroom Rock

A visit to Jirapa without visiting the Mushroom Rock at Wuling is like traveling without a real plan. Located about 10 minutes ride from the main town, the site bears lot of rocks scattered around with only the Mushroom Rock a distance away from the others. Shaped this way on account of weathering and erosion, the Mushroom Rock stands about 2.2 metres high above the ground and creates a spectacular site for nature lovers.



2. Explore the new Safari park

360 acres of land set aside for wildlife protection is the home of a host of native and non-native wildlife brought in from as far as South America to inhabit the savannah grasslands of Jirapa. The new wildlife park near which Jirapa Dubai sits, is home to a host of animals and birdlife, including lions, alpaca, parrots, hippo, varied types of antelope, zebras and more. The Royal Cosy Safari Hills Resort is garnering acclaim for hosting the best safari opportunities in Jirapa for all nature and animal lovers to come through and enjoy once the park is opened.



3. An immersion into Ghanaian cuisine

Jirapa is a respected farming community with fertile lands — meaning you can find some of the best fresh produce in the country, and exceptional ingredients for a hearty culinary

immersion into Ghanaian cuisine. A few of the good things to try while in Jirapa include locally grown yams, a non-alcoholic maize drink called peeto, a large lunch dish called waakye, made from rice and beans, and arguably the nation's favorite dish, chinchinga, which is tasty kebab meat.



4. Intriguing Architecture to combat scorching temperatures


It's an intriguing architectural blend of old and new, and because Jirapa's climatic conditions include harsh weather conditions, the region showcases a unique way of constructing its buildings. Because temperatures can get extremely high during the dry season, making it quite difficult for the people living there to even sleep in their rooms, it is commonplace for homes to have rooftops used for sleeping in the hotter months, with homes built from traditional clay building with flat roofing made from earth dust mixed with weeds and cow dung.

5. Culture at its best in Ghana's Upper West Region

What stories can be told of a trip to uncharted territory without experiencing rich culture through festivals and events? As in the rest of Ghana, festivals are a way of life in the Upper West Region and such gatherings are a huge deal to the locals, carrying heavy symbolism and merriment as the people and their Chiefs dress in colourful smocks and hold durbars in the course of the celebrations. The Paragbiele Festival held by the Tumu people in the last week of January into February is one such gathering, where a showcase of farm produce from the community, together with music and dance, come together as a way of thanking God and the ancestors for their guidance over the farming season. Other festivals include the Willa, Zumbenti, Kakube and Kobine and with perfect research, timing and the help of a guide, you can be well on your way to experiencing parts of Ghanaian culture and beliefs within communities.

A little more about Jirapa...

With a population of 600,000 and covering only three percent of Ghana's total land area, the Upper West Region, though smaller in size, is home to some of the most compelling, untapped tourist attractions and wildlife areas in the country. From former slave trade sites now turned to heritage monuments, to savannah grasslands where biodiversity thrives, to captivating architecture of diverse influences, there is much one can explore and learn about when in Jirapa. Wa, Jirapa's regional capital, highlights the role of religion within communities, with Catholic Church buildings and ancient mosques dotting the town.

Ghana on the horizon? Venture out to the Upper West region when you will experience the beauty of the lesser known Jirapa. 



About the Author

Camping tastemaker SELORM SOSU is a freelance traveling photojournalist who has travelled the length and breadth of Ghana 70 times (at last count), sleeping in tents while exploring the beautiful serenity of Ghana through his lens. His expeditions have inspired him and others to take on the thick green jungles of most parts of the West African nation, where he loves to document the lives of Ghanaian people and the landscapes they call home.



PULSE OF THE CITY





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**Boutique Luxuriating A Stone-throw Away
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It's boutique, it's cosy – and bears all the trimmings that make for a serene staycation in the heart of Cape Town's most pulsating district – the V&A Waterfront. A visit to Cape Town is always one that appeals with a throng of leisure experiences; from exceptional food and wine pairing, to setting off towards the call of nature with views of the ocean or drives up the rolling hills of the Western Cape. A stay at one of Cape Town's most distinguished boutique addresses, the Queen Victoria & Manor House, is that icing that cradles it all together, as this 5-star hotel's close proximity to the nearby hive of activity, ushers you into the timeless elegance, the contemporary design that the rooms within its walls present and the stand-out service offered by a dedicated team of professionals.



Checking into the Queen Victoria Hotel & Manor House

Deep purples and calming greys welcome you into a cosy atrium, where skylights unveil the stark, often blue Capetownian skies, depending on how favourable the weather is at check in. We all know that life has a knack for driving you in many different directions, but who needs to go far when a resident of the Mother City, and why not venture to the Africa's prolific, southernmost destination if in fact you are looking for an opportunity to blend the thrill of cosmopolitan living in South Africa, and the wonderment of nature's secret processes, which over time, have formed the backdrop of such a captivating city. You experience stellar views of Table Mountain in the distance and the bustling seafront not too far off from the window to your pristine suite, swathed with rich deep hues of grey carpeting, white soft linens and silver chandeliers dangling from your ceiling.

Welcomes are warm, with wide smiles from the delightful staff that have plenty tales to tell of Cape Town and the history that lives within the walls and cobblestones of the quiet precinct on which the property sits. Cape Town is indeed the most visited destination in South Africa and where the Queen Victoria Hotel & Manor House and Dock House Boutique Hotel are located, is quite literally, across the road from the renowned landmark – the V&A Waterfront. This avails guests of even the most discerning of preferences and tastes, an opportunity to explore the sights and sounds of the district, while immersing themselves in complete privacy in intimate settings.

A day in and around the hotel...

Many visit Cape Town simply to appreciate the beauty of nature at every turn. Manicured gardens form the backdrop of most hotels whether boutique or larger in size. For a more serene way to spend the day, those on which the Dock House Boutique Hotel sit are perfect to still time while surrounded

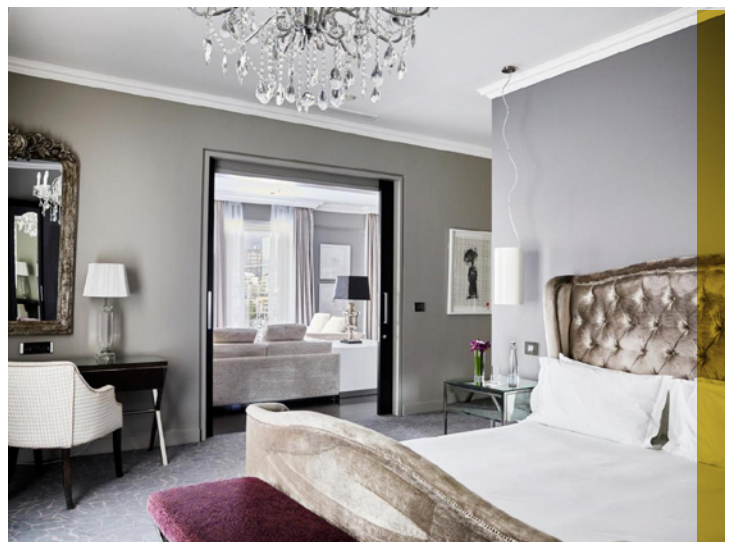
by the majestic views of Table Mountain and the famous Big Wheel.

Breakfast in the utterly charming Dock House breakfast room – a kin to a 19th century cottage or manor, with the same exceptional luxury and warmth – is in fact the near perfect way to start the day. What's not to love about a selection of cold cuts and cheese, cereals and yogurts, before tucking in a hearty farm style breakfast, complete with waffles, pancakes and freshly squeezed juices.

Nestled in a charming nook of the Waterfront, is a world of luxury and convenience to be discovered beyond the walls of Queen Victoria Hotel & Manor House and Dock House Boutique Hotel. Lunch is quite literally served from a plethora canal side restaurants should you be keen to venture out and explore the neighbourhood. A short walk will take you to the heart of V&A Waterfront, where the mall stands replete with much to choose from by way of retail therapy and dining options. Attractions such as the Watershed, The Alfred Mall and Pierhead, The Clock Tower, and Breakwater Point can be visited in no time at all, and make for a perfect outing moving solo or with company.

For a little pampering while checked in at the hotel, the Sanctuary Spa is but a few steps away, located in the same square as the hotels and hidden enough to still feel like a private escape or retreat someplace else. Sanctuary Spa boasts a tyarium – a combination of a sauna and a steam room for re-balancing your body's metabolism at an optimal temperature – and an absolute delight for spa-cation lovers.

After a long day exploring the city, relax in the fire-lit bar and lounge area of Queen Victoria Hotel, settling down for your favourite cocktail over soothing lounge music or a performance from the Baby Grand piano should you opt out of a night out on the town. The in-house restaurant, Dash, which recently underwent a soft refurb to unveil bespoke finishes from various designers', serves up sumptuous a la Carte meals made from on the freshest local produce; perfect to close out your day before retreating to your opulent room. 









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