

TRAVEL ESSENCE MAGAZINE

ISSUE 10 • JUNE 2021

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KIZA



TOMORROW AFRICA

TOMORROW AFRICA, TODAY


KIZA Restaurant & Lounge – a household name for friends and lovers of Africa. We are renowned as a vibrant venue that curates culturally immersive, entertainment experiences which are an ode to the deep-rooted essence of Africa's people. Our base in Dubai is an invitation to the globally conscious, multi-dimensional and upwardly mobile patron with a knack for satisfying their curiosity. You hear the name "KIZA" and immediately think 'community' and 'collectivism' – as the spirit of KIZA is very much about ensuring that our guests feel a part of something bigger... KIZA is the premium destination in Dubai for African inspired immersive interactions, captivating conversation and celebratory expression.


KIZA FRIENDS, IS TOMORROW AFRICA, TODAY

*And we are about to unveil
an elevated experience....*

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Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making

TravelEssence

MAGAZINE

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





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coming through from all over the world – be it for a visit to the Middle East or across Africa’s open markets. The question of whether or not it is safe to travel remains, but what’s equally important is the involvement of all parties keen on recovery to do their part in advancing the confidence levels of travellers as they move from one place to the next. Whether we are planning a destination conference, wedding, family vacation, or any such activity that would warrant the decision to travel, we all want to have a level of confidence that we will be able to do so as safely as possible. We are in this together and must adhere to instituted policies regarding protection from COVID-19 as best we can, whether you are moving from one building to the next, one city to the next, one continent to the next and so on.

As we move from Q2 to Q3, the rumble of excitement is growing increasingly louder, especially as all roads lead to Dubai for Expo 2021 in the coming months. Across Africa, we are witnessing the resurgence of business across the travel landscape, with strong pushes for local tourism, especially in destinations whose borders aren’t all the way open just yet. We are humbled by the opportunity to continue to deliver your travel inspiration, powered by the vibrant leisure, lifestyle and cultural environments that make it possible for us to curate content to share.

The journey continues, and as we celebrate our upcoming 1st Year Anniversary edition, we invite you to read the stories of some incredible entrepreneurs and discover more places to pique the curiosity of the dreamer that resides within you! 🌍

Your truly,

Gynonne C. Mtshengwa

A

nd just like that; we are wrapping up Q2 of what many of us are viewing as our year of recovery after 2020 - what was the most unprecedented year of our time. For us at Travel

Essence Magazine, the end of June 2020 signifies our countdown to celebrating our 1st year anniversary, and the incredible milestone that came with turning a vision to be the voice of travel and tourism players affected by COVID-19 into an entire publication that celebrates the diversity of Mother Africa’s landscapes, and our desire as a people to connect to lands symbolic of opportunity – whether across Africa or right here in the UAE. As we look ahead at the summer months, we are encouraged to learn from our friends in the industry that bookings are



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Meet
**ZAHIRAH
MARTY**



TV PERSONALITY TURNED BRAND MARKETING MAVEN

1. ZAHIRAH MARTY. BORN IN DURBAN AND NOW LIVING IN AND WORKING IN DUBAI. TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AND GROWING UP SOUTH AFRICAN?

I am the person I am today because I grew up in South Africa – a diverse, culturally rich country that taught me so many lessons about life, humankind and empathy that I only ever fully realized when I moved away. I am a brand specialist and content creator with a passion for entrepreneurship and travel. I am married to Andrew Marty, an Australian veterinarian, and live in Dubai with our toddler, Noah.

As an immensely proud South African who relocated over 10 years ago in search of greater exposure, more travel, and new adventures, I always hold tightly to my roots and am grateful for the values instilled in me. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, I would travel home to Africa at any opportunity to soak up the air, the flavour and the people that I miss so very much. I started in school in 1994, a post-apartheid child who flourished in a diverse community that has contributed to my grounding as a female in a multicultural community.

During my childhood we would spend our holidays on the road, driving all around the country, from our home in Kwazulu Natal. From weekend braais to watching sport events in large public circles, the spirit of South Africa is entrenched in my identity and what I believe in.

2. YOU ARE A FAMILIAR FACE ON AFRICA'S TV SCREENS, HAVING BEEN PRESENTER FOR ONE OF THE COOLEST LIFESTYLE SHOWS ON SABC 3 SUCH AS TOP BILLING, TOP TRAVEL AND MELA. WHAT WAS IT LIKE LANDING THESE OPPORTUNITIES AT THE TIME AND HOW DID

YOUR EXPERIENCE SHAPE YOUR DEEPENED LOVE FOR SOUTH AFRICA AND OF COURSE - THE CONTINENT AT LARGE?

I began my journey into television by sheer chance but fell in love with it forever. When a friend entered me into a presenter search, I laughed it off and thought very little of it again. Until my phone rang, and I was told that I was shortlisted to be a Top Billing presenter. Top Billing was the show we all watched growing up with absolute adoration and aspiration. It represented the magical world of fashion, beauty and premium living and events in South Africa, and I'm sure most people would agree – it simple was the best of the best.

When a shortlist of a few thousand whittled down to hundreds, then tens then 12 – it all became rather surreal. This opportunity taught me many practical and technical lessons and opened my mind and heart to an industry that now forms a huge part of identity and career. My grounding and coaching from my South African colleagues and mentors is unmatched to this day. Despite the environment I work in at the moment, my recognition and respect of South African talent is unlike any other, and through experience I appreciate the creativity and skill within our home market like never before.

I was fortunate to present part of the first season of Top Travel – the luxury travel show vertical of Top

Billing. This role was the gateway to my African love story; a story that has only deepened in passion and connection over the years. From adventures on a houseboat on Lake Kariba, to my first ever dive into Madagascan waters; Africa has something that no other continent has; soul. Through television storytelling, I learnt so much about my own country, got to experience places and meet people I would have never thought possible, and grown through challenges and opportunities as a young woman finding her place in the world.

3. HOW DID WORKING IN TV INFLUENCE YOUR MOVEMENT INTO PR, AND SUBSEQUENTLY, YOU EVENTUALLY STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESSES?

I am a storyteller. If you ask my parents, they will say this was very evident early on when I would gather the family and 'present' shows, with all my little cousins as performers. My love for constructing narratives, and entertaining audiences was always in parallel to having a purpose, and I think that's where PR fits in. I was not the teenager who had their career figured out. Despite being a student leader throughout my junior and high school years, I was very unsure of what the end goal was for me, or what I wanted from life. For a while I thought the natural progression would be health sciences, like most of my family. I knew I was chasing magic, and that something magical was written for me – and even writing this now sounds a bit whimsical – but it is very much the truth. I was chasing my dreams.

When the opportunity for TV came up, I was working in BTL marketing – an early job with FMCG brands arranging mall/store activations. I love brands. I love their story; I love seeing them grow and I love understanding the science and the art that makes that happen. So, when television showed me how much of that existed around me, and how many stories there were to tell, I wanted to immerse myself in a world that allowed me to work with my passions, people and share brand stories.

My last full-time job in South Africa was PR for one of the largest shopping malls in the southern hemisphere. The job challenged me, it taught me so much about human connections and interpersonal skills, and it allowed me to broaden my experience into crisis management and lifestyle PR all at once. As a young professional female in a very complex socio-economic environment, I had to sink or swim, and I was determined to succeed.

I bounced between marketing and PR and learned some very tough lessons when I moved to Dubai. I often hear people talk of their impression of my move; and for the most part most of them are completely wrong. It was tough. So tough.

I used all my savings; I lived in minimally furnished apartment and ate 2 min noodles with very few friends and weekends at home for about 4-6 months. I hated my first job and drew from the strength of my story until that point to pick myself up and get it together!

My strength is human connection, and my passion is people, and I used this to build a network strong enough to support my very first business. Ultimately, if you strip back the layers, the ability to construct and tell stories is at the core of it all and that is a skill television definitely nurtured.

4. THEN CAME THE MOVE TO DUBAI. WHY DUBAI AND WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR CHOOSING THIS CITY OVER ALL THE OTHERS YOU HAD BEEN TO?

Dubai has always had a special place for me. For our very first international family holiday my parents took us to Saudi on pilgrimage, then Dubai, and I loved it! Since then, I'd travel often with my dad to China and India, always with a stopover, and each time fell more in love with the city that seemed to wrap so much into one – old, new, culture, religion, power, entertainment and so much more. We usually traveled East as with the South African rand that what was the treat that was affordable to us as a family.

Prior to my move I applied for a scholarship to do my Masters in International Marketing at a London-based business school. I was granted it. But at the last minute, when it came down to working out the budget for living there and seeing how much my parents were willing to sacrifice and hustle to get me there, I changed my mind. My younger brother was nearing his university years at the time, and it was his turn for the opportunities, so I declined and decided I'd work my way back to that at some point in my life. I haven't yet.

And that's how my Dubai story began. I still wanted to leave South Africa in search of adventure and exposure, to touch, feel, learn and expand my knowledge of brands and markets and the UAE just made perfect sense. It was familiar, I was comfortable and felt safe here, so I packed two suitcases and jumped on a plane. I made a pact with myself that I had to try. I packed for two weeks, and stayed 10 years and counting, and have never looked back.

5. TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ZAHIRAH?

Oh goodness, no day ever looks the same. Most days I am running – from one place to the other, flying between meetings and shoots, and trying desperately to fit in cooking, exercise and play time with my son.

I start my day at around 6am, and on the road to school drop off by 7am. The gap between 8am and the 9am workday kick off is either filled with exercise, an early coffee planning session or if I'm shooting, I'm trying to fly to where I need to be to chase the morning light.

I try to book meetings around my favorite coffee spots, or cafes to avoid food being sacrificed completely. The pandemic has changed the event landscape but in the last few months there has been a rejuvenated events calendar and after my last meeting or client consult, I usually dash into one of these. If not, it's home to cook before tucking my little guy in. I'm usually back on the laptop for some part of

the evening, and if I'm really cruising, I sneak in some Netflix on the couch with my husband a cup of tea.

Shoots form a big part of my schedule, and these can either go for one hour or fourteen. I do make an effort to have my nails, hair and eyelashes done because apart from the role they play in my job, I am a massive believer in the importance of self-care and positive mental health. I book in that time, and whilst I often am cancelling and shuffling these appointments around work, I unapologetically will fit that into my week.

Until Ramadan I really let my fitness slide and I felt sluggish and mentally demotivated. Having changed that and again, prioritized that time in my day, my entire energy and outlook and been refreshed. Dubai is a remarkably busy city, and it is a place you can get caught up in so many dead-end tasks very easily. Self, health and fitness is something I always say needs to be high on the to-do list; without guilt.

6. HOW DOES ZAHIRAH MAINTAIN A WELL-BALANCED LIFE AS AN ENTREPRENEUR IN FAST-PACED DUBAI, AS A CONSULTANT HELPING BRANDS BUILD THEIR PRESENCE, AND AS A MOM AND WIFE?

Balance is a concept I think means different things to different people. I love the pace of this city, and I thrive on it. I have learned through amazing companies like Lighthouse Arabia about being self-aware and through that realizing that the idea of balance may mean different things for me at different times in my week/month/life.

I've learnt to set better boundaries for myself both





personally and professionally, and these have helped me to regain the sense that I am in control of my life at all times. In an industry like mine, often you find yourself 'busy' and you speak to others and they're all 'so busy'; I've stopped saying that. Being busy became a buzz word, and the answer we all felt we needed to give as a sign of our success. I now aim for fulfillment and that may mean that my balance of social is greater than work sometimes, or vice versa, but that is because I need it to be.

I'd like to think that the same echoes into my home with my husband and my son. You don't always get it right, and the parent guilt of working long hours (even if it's just a day or a week here and there) is always present, but being self-aware of that and course correcting is my strategy. I'll then block time to

spend with the family, or strip back on non-essential commitments for that time. Travel is a big part of our lives as a couple and a family and it allows us to work and play in our happy space. As cliché as this is, I love what I do. Most days don't feel like work, and the ones that do will also have hidden passion in them.

7. TAKE US BACK TO AFRICA FOR A SECOND. IN ALL YOUR INCREDIBLE TRAVELS, NAME 5 OF YOUR FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS ACROSS AFRICA AND WHY?

This is a tough question and cannot be answered in any particular order.

South Africa – because it's home and I love it so much!

Kenya – The Masai people kept a piece



of my heart. One of the evenings at our safari camp I wanted to cook dinner with the local team in their tented kitchen. In true African style, they handed me an apron and put me to work as one of their own. I always say to anyone that hasn't had the opportunity to travel to Africa; the people on our continent don't host you. They give you a piece of their heart and welcome you like family.

Morocco – The contrast in the North African culture, architecture, food and lifestyle was fascinating. We created epic content and loved the immersive nature of the country.

Tanzania – Zanzibar is one of the most beautiful places I've been to and the Ngorongoro crater and Serengeti were some of my most unbelievable experiences. The migration was beyond incredible and like all African countries, the people and hospitality are like nothing I've ever experienced in all my travels. Africa is certainly not

a place, it's a feeling that lives with you long after you leave.

Zambia/Zimbabwe – The hospitality and serene nature of the houseboat and the animals around the lake left a lasting impression on me.

8. IF YOU COULD SUMMARISE IN ONLY A FEW LINES, WHAT THINGS DO YOU WANT OUR READERS TO KNOW TO BE UNTRUE ABOUT AFRICA?

That it is backward – when I hear this it angers me. It is a continent with several challenges but still offers world class experiences across sectors and is on par in many areas with anywhere else in the world.

That it is too unsafe to visit. There are parts of Africa, like anywhere else, that pose security concerns, but if you are traveling with an experience company or agent this is not going to be too much of a concern. Naturally, knowing the nature of the destination, you should manage yourself responsibly too.

With any destination you travel to, you should be mindful of the environment and manage your expectations accordingly. I would never travel to China and expect the level of English I'd get in the USA, and every country has its own unique package. Educate yourself on what that package is and make an informed decision on whether that package suits your preferential travel style.

Africa can, and does offer luxury like nothing you've ever seen. With natural landscapes that cannot be found anywhere in the world, it's on par with the most luxurious experiences with a sense that nature has a special hand in designing too.



9. IS THERE ONE PARTICULAR PROJECT YOU WORKED ON IN THE TRAVEL SPACE THAT YOU ARE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF AND IF SO, WHAT DID IT ENTAIL?

In 2019 we worked with a variety of Fairmont properties, along with Audi Canada and did a family road trip across Eastern Canada, into New York and back to Toronto via Niagara Falls. We successfully packaged lifestyle brands that were well aligned and created content for family travel in a completely new region. And with a 2-year-old in a car seat!

10. YOU'RE LIVING A LIFE FILLED WITH ADVENTURE AND GROWTH IN DUBAI. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OUR READERS CONSIDERING A MOVE TO DUBAI FOR GREENER PASTURES? IN THE SAME VEIN, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE EXPATS LIVING IN THE UAE TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT AFRICA HAS TO OFFER BY WAY OF ITS PEOPLE, PLACES AND DIVERSE CULTURES?


I'll tackle this question in two parts –

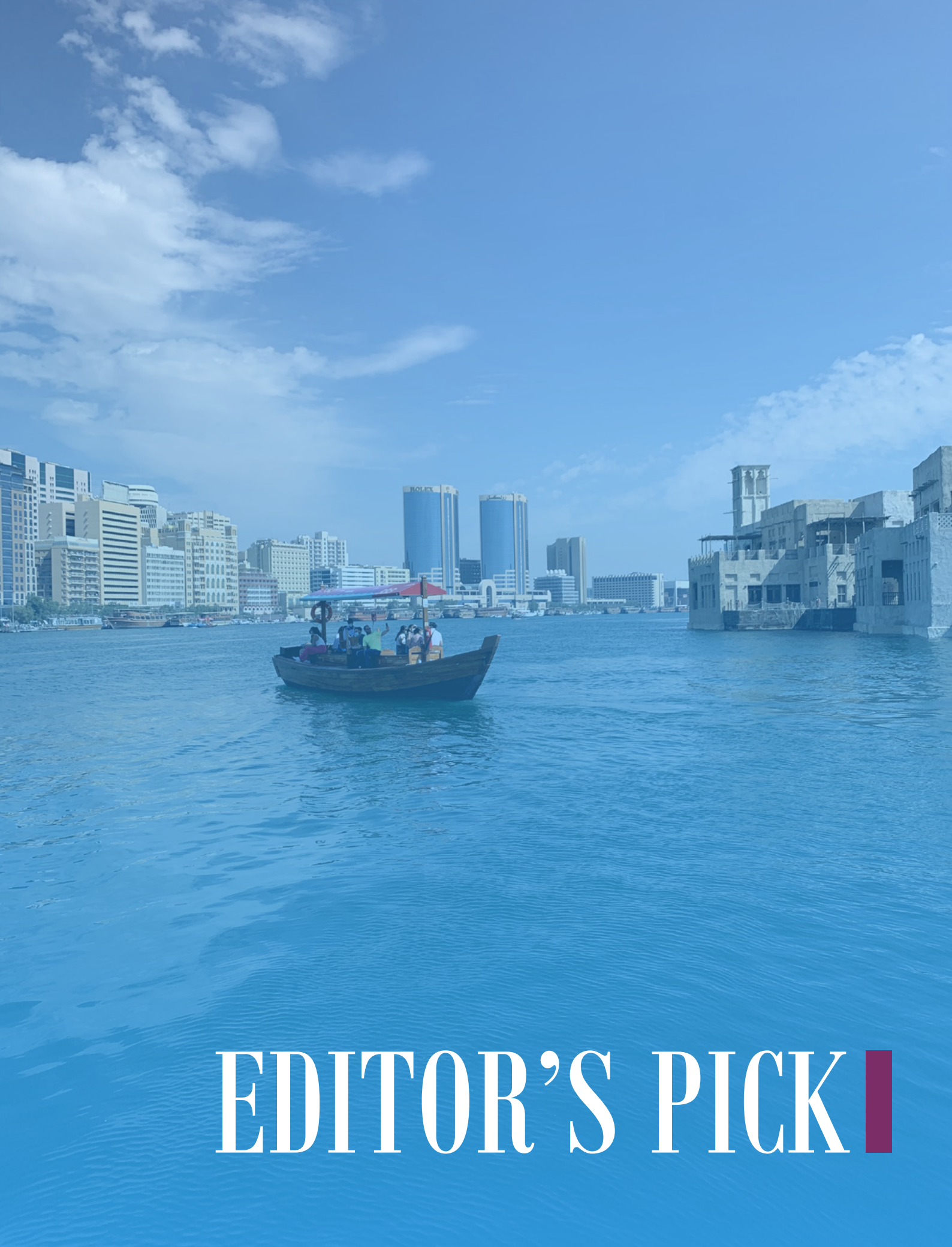
Greener pastures...

As the eldest cousin on my mum's side, I'm often asked for advice from my younger cousins, or their parents sometimes. There is no such thing as "greener pastures",

just different grass. If you're considering a move to Dubai (UAE) know that you are moving to a wonderful country that supports entrepreneurship and creativity like no other country can. It takes good care of its expat community and offers a lifestyle and infrastructure that makes for a wonderful life. In turn, expect to work hard. The streets are not paved with gold and oil does not flow from the taps. Come with the knowledge that great opportunity lies here, and that hard work and effort helps you achieve it. Stay grounded, always remember your roots and the country you come from that made you who you are today and be mindful of your values.

Africa...

I could share forever. Africa is one of the most incredible continents in the world. It is a diverse mix of culture, color, language and flavour and will leave you changed in your outlook to life and humankind. You will never know warmth and hospitality like that of an African. The continent offers breathtaking landscapes of land and sea, wildlife safaris and of some of nature's most beautiful creatures. Every part of the continent has its own personality and story, with a vibrancy and flavor to go along. Traveling to Africa isn't just a trip, it's a journey of heart and mind. For the more practical minded, from a cost and logistics perspective, your dollar (or Dirham) stretches very far, and you get great value for money across all areas. 



EDITOR'S PICK |



Emirati heritage comes alive at **Al Seef Heritage Dubai Hotel**

The experience is unprecedented, and quite literally one that will leave you with memories of Dubai that surpass the imaginable. A solid contrast from the glitz and glamour synonymous with the opulently contemporary Dubai, a trip to the Al Seef District brings you to a destination that carries its own distinctive allure, and a stay at the Al Seef Heritage Hotel Dubai, Curio Collection by Hilton, journeys you through the authenticity and heritage of Emirati culture, blended with elegant, contemporary hospitality.

It really does feel like a presentation of centuries past, preserved, and embedded with countless stories of old-world Arabia. Except you too are now a part of that story, and you get to be enamoured by what you discover as you walk through each alley through the district, watch the sun rise or set over the canal or enjoy your taste of Middle Eastern delicacies, during your stay at Al Seef Heritage Dubai Hotel.

Situated in a vibrant promenade on Dubai Creek's southern banks, Al Seef Heritage Hotel Dubai, Curio Collection by Hilton offers views of nearby souks' rooftops, courtyards, and alleyways, as well as Dubai Creek's bustling waterways. You will undoubtedly feel at home in one of the 190 guest rooms spread across 22 traditional Arabian Bayt (homes) replete with iconic wind towers.

Once checked in, a glimpse of traditional dhows setting sail across the canals from your window will pique your curiosity of what else one can venture into in the area. Sounds of the voices of shoppers and passers-by navigating their way through the labyrinth of cobbled passages that separate one building from the next will grab your attention.

The hotel undoubtedly connects guests to the magical charm of old Dubai, hidden among the area's bustling souks and overlooking Dubai Creek, an ancient port where traders once brought commerce and tales of distant lands to shore. The experience is a unique juxtaposition between traditional design and contemporary service, immersing you into the realms of adventure and discovery of the Dubai that was, and the Dubai that is, which all come together in one setting - Al Seef Dubai.

ENJOY YOUR 'BAYT' FOR A TIME.
Every room is an authentic replica of the trader's accommodation house, but with modern upper upscale



amenities and comforts. Built within a 'Bayt' – the Arabic term for a traditional home - guests can enjoy hotel rooms that have three colour schemes, inspired from the light blue sea waters in the Creek, the soothing beige from the desert sands and soft green tones from the country's flora interspersed with colourful flashes of reds, turquoises, and yellows. Design and décor aesthetic is well-thought out, presenting large windows with traditional wooden panels that offer views down onto the winding outdoor corridors of the ground floor souk and the waters of the creek.

A sparkling pool, spa, and fitness center access at the sister property Canopy by Hilton Dubai Al Seef is included, with free transport to and from as needed. Perfect for families, guests staying with children can enjoy one or more of the connecting rooms, and beyond the adventures of the district as a whole, there is also a vintage playground, and outdoor Majlis on site for some family play time.

A TASTE OF EMIRATI INSPIRED DINING.

Take a walk through the alleyways

to discover Saba'a Restaurant, located on the first floor of one of the bayts, and offering international and traditional Emirati inspired breakfast buffet and a la carte options, as well as authentic Middle Eastern dinner for hotel guests. A feast is delivered to your table, and one gets a strong sense of the spirit of family and sharing being at the center of the dining experience at Saba'a. An in-room dining menu is also available and uniquely served in a picnic basket for those that prefer, after having exhausted their energies discovering the area, to dine in their comfortably thematic quarters.

PRISTINE BACKDROP FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

If you are looking to host a conference, workshop, bridal shower, wedding or any other special event, Saba'a Restaurant also doubles up as great space to host 180 seated guests or 250 in cocktail style, with its additional event space measuring at 290sqm, which can also comfortably host 200 seated guests. Naturally, numbers will vary in adherence to social distancing protocols as needed with larger groups.




EDITOR'S PICK • AL SEEF HERITAGE DUBAI HOTEL



Guests can also take advantage of the additional space availed with the majlis and large outdoor roof top terrace.

PERFECT ACCESSIBILITY TO BOTH OLD AND NEW DUBAI.

Al Seef Heritage Hotel Dubai is a short drive from the magnificent Burj Khalifa, the Dubai Frame, Dubai Mall, La Mer and other major attractions and entertainment venues across Dubai. Yet lying on the banks of Dubai Creek also makes the hotel accessible to spice and gold souks, reachable by water taxi on the opposite riverbank.

Within walking distance are several historical sites, including Al Fahidi District, the oldest District in the Emirate, availing one several authentic cultural experiences that trace the history of what is now revered as the great Middle Eastern mecca for hospitality, trade, innovation, and prosperity. 



To book your stay at Al Seef Heritage Hotel Dubai, visit www.curiocollectionbyhilton.com



A woman with a large, voluminous afro hairstyle is the central focus. She is wearing a strapless, dark-colored dress with a white and blue geometric pattern. A thick, light-colored rope necklace is draped around her neck. She is sitting on sand dunes, with the golden sand forming the background. The lighting is warm and directional, creating soft shadows and highlighting the texture of her hair and the fabric of her dress.

NTOMBI

AFRICAN OPULANCE REDEFINED

EDITOR'S PICK • PARK REGIS KRIS KIN HOTEL DUBAI



PARK REGIS KRIS KIN HOTEL DUBAI — WHERE DUBAI CONNECTS

Almost unassuming in sight and nestled right where one enters what is commonly referred to as the “Old Dubai” is the Park Regis Kris Kin Hotel, a 5-star property that awards its guests the unique opportunity to connect the history and heritage of Dubai, with the contrasting, cosmopolitan, skyscraper-ridden skyline for which Dubai is globally known for.

By Yvonne C Mtengwa



I particularly enjoyed my stay at this property, as I do carry a penchant for trying out new experiences. Experiencing hotels in Dubai and the greater UAE typically exposes one to delightful concepts in service delivery and design aesthetic. Opulence is the standard and within good reason. Competitive landscapes call for hospitality players to carve out their niche in excellence as they promote their distinctive selling points, and as we know, this desert metropolis does this very well.

For me, a stay at the Park Regis Kris Kin Dubai was mainly about how the service and experience would fair given the property's location. After our most welcome check-in from an incredibly gracious staff, the view from our allotted suite was such a compelling juxtaposition between the old and the new. We enjoyed views of the rooftops of shorter and older buildings to one side, with Dubai's Creek district on the horizon, and the towering Dubai Frame that juts out from the ground to reveal a towering rectangular glistening monument on the other side. Beyond the Frame, is of course, the vast expanse of the city and imposing skyline for which Dubai is known.

Park Regis Kris Kin is indeed where Dubai connects, as the hotel welcomes guests to enjoy any one or more of the 384 spacious rooms and suites, with configurations that range from superior, deluxe, suites, and two-bedroom suites, perfect for both leisure and business travellers visiting Dubai for all occasions.

Our suite housed two bedrooms, a beautiful well-appointed master bedroom with a king bed, designer bathroom with bidet



To learn more about Park Regis Kris Kin, visit www.parkregiskriskin.ae



and separate shower and bath, and an interactive TV system, while the second bedroom was perfect for the children, with two twin beds, a workspace, large wardrobes, large bathroom and all the trimmings that made for a cosy space for them to rest, play or simply cosy up for a movie while in bed. The common area was a huge living room and kitchen with bar counter and amenities, making it a great space to entertain, especially if we were to invite guests over during our stay or opt to extend our stay altogether.

A CULTURALLY DIVERSE DINING EXPERIENCE

We savoured our meals from the delightful Kris with a View Restaurant – located on the 19th floor of the hotel and featuring a spectacular 360 view of Dubai's skyline. The restaurant is a true ode to Arabic and Pan-Asian cuisine, hospitality and design, with a menu packed with a wide variety of favourites, brimming with flavours and spices from the Middle and the Far East, with selections reminiscent of a more traditional international menu. Portions were generous as much as they were decadent, and one can enjoy their favourite cocktail or try something new from the extensive list of beverages.

Whether you are looking for a place for business events, social get-togethers, or just a simple breakfast, lunch or dinner, Kris with a View Restaurant has everything to make any occasion a memorable one.

WHERE DUBAI CONNECTS

A vibrant atmosphere beyond the hotel's premises awaits you in the Burjuman District as you immerse yourself in the sound, smells and sights of the buzz for which the area is known. Get to walk about the hustle and bustle of Burjuman, where you will



see many shop owners display everything from cultural artifacts to traditional clothing from parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Burjuman Shopping Center offers a plethora of entertainment and shopping options for those with a knack for more modern contemporary fashions and brands and is located a short 400-meter walk away.

Iconic attractions including Bur Dubai Market, Dubai Museum and Dubai Creek are within a short distance from the hotel. At the same time, World Trade Exhibition Centre is a quick 10-minute taxi ride, making this an ideal accommodation choice for business and leisure travellers alike.

PLAN YOUR MEETING AT PARK REGIS KRIS KIN

Park Regis Kris Kin Hotel has a wide range of conference and event spaces available to suit every meeting and event. The hotel specialises in small to medium-sized seminars, meetings, conferences and cocktail parties and offers



competitive pricing and packages tailored to suit client preferences.

The hotel's nine individual conference rooms can cater for 16 to 200 delegates, and include complimentary Wi-Fi, audio-visual hire, breakout areas and rooms endowed with natural light. With a friendly team of dedicated catering and event planning staff, you are rest assured that any training course, seminar or special occasion will be curated to meet your needs. Park Regis Kris Kin offers the competitive catering packages, accommodation rates and superior event management capabilities in the Burjuman District. 







DUBAI'S BURGEONING HOME-GROWN PRODUCE SCENE

CULINARY ADVENTURES THROUGH A RANGE OF AGRICULTURAL AND ARTISANAL EXPERIENCES

From local farms and agriculture to artisan makers and specialist markets, Dubai has a booming food scene ready to be discovered.

As a unique city located at the crossroads of the East and the West, the diversity of offerings is what makes Dubai a must-visit destination. From heritage to entertainment, outdoor adventures to beach activities, and family attractions to shopping, visitors to the city have so much to look forward to. Making the Dubai experience even more exciting is the wide array of cuisines and diverse offerings reflecting the flavours of over 200 nationalities that live in the city, further enhancing its position as the

culinary capital of the region.

The gastronomy experience goes beyond Dubai's towering metropolis, where one can find a burgeoning produce scene that reflects the city's diverse ecosystem and sustainable food resources. From artisan makers to specialist markets, tourists can delight in a multitude of culinary and artisanal experiences whilst learning about local innovation. What's more, with a large focus on food security and regenerative farming practices, the agricultural sector continues to grow with a record number of ecological farms for tourists and locals to visit, as well as take home the fresh produce.

Through efforts to boost local food production and sustainable agriculture, Dubai offers a multitude of opportunities for residents and visitors to support enterprise as well as providing a new lens through which to experience the city.

Enjoy enriching agricultural experiences

My Farm Dubai is leading the agricultural movement with the launch of a self-sustaining eco farm. A passion project from local Mohammed Aissaoui, the farm takes visitors on an informative agricultural journey where they will learn and taste all types of fruits, vegetables and honeys, as well as the medicinal attributes of an abundance of herbs and spices. There is also a wide variety of different soaps produced at My Farm Dubai, offering delightful gifts for family and friends. Aissaoui, a former engineer who was born and raised in the south of France within a farming family, came to Dubai with the goal

of creating a self-sustaining farm in the middle of the desert by combining nature with advanced technology. Mohammed also educates visitors on the UAE's unique and thriving farming heritage, making it a must-attend attraction for those looking to do something different.

Another experience that champions organic produce is Desert Organic, an Emirati-owned and run family business producing delicious organic fruit and vegetables. Amongst the 50 types of crops at this four-hectare farm, visitors can purchase kale, celery, capsicums, aubergines, pumpkins and a wide variety of herbs and dates.

For those looking for a unique agricultural experience, located off the Al Ain





Road lies the much loved Camelicious, an ideal activity for the whole family to enjoy. Visitors can experience close encounters with Arabia's native animal on the sustainable camel farm and enjoy activities such as feeding the camels, taking pictures, watch camel races and more. Guests can also enjoy or purchase an array of camel dairy products including milk and ice cream.

Located in the heart of Umm Suqeim is the Jumeirah Fish Market, offering the best fresh and affordable seafood in Dubai. This quaint little fish market is the perfect place for seafood lovers who can purchase more than 50 different types of seafood including lobster, crab, tiger prawns, shrimps, fish and more. The best part is that visitors can also get it cleaned before taking it to one of the nearby local restaurants to cook it to your liking.

The Hatta Honey Bee Garden which is a one of its kind Bee Garden in the region creates 100% raw locally produced honey and blends education with experience by highlighting the importance of bees to our environment. This unique farm promotes the sustainability of the Honeybee for environmental impact, food security, and economic growth.

Must-try artisanal products

For unique chocolate flavours synonymous with

Dubai such as date and cardamom, visitors must head to Mirzam Chocolate in Al Quoz 3. Designed for the production process to be transparent, visitors can experience every aspect of chocolate making at this beautiful workshop, from roasting cocoa beans to hand wrapping each bar. Since launching the workshop in 2016, Mirzam has achieved five awards from the Academy of Chocolate, cementing its position as a delicious destination for all to enjoy.

There is only one place to find finest artisanal products every week and that is The Ripe Market, running across multiple locations across the city including the Dubai Police Academy, Springs Souk, Nakheel Mall and Times Square Centre. Supporting hundreds of makers to sell their goods, The Ripe Market not only nourishes local businesses but provides a platform for young, talented artisans in the UAE to grow and develop.

Local favourites

Dubai's Spice Souk is a colourful, aromatic and sensory experience, and a great way to discover the region's authentic flavours. Visitors can discover the foundations of traditional Arabic and South Asian cuisine as they explore the old-world spice market in Dubai's heritage area. Those visiting the souks





can soak in the atmosphere of the past amongst mounds of herbs and spices, all spilling from large baskets at every turn. A wide variety of fragrant teas from all over the world is also on offer, providing the perfect pit stop for therapeutic refreshment after a tiring day of exploring.

Finally, no trip to Dubai would be complete without savouring its signature delicacy; the humble date. With more than nine indigenous date varieties including the Khalas date and the Barhi date, date palms are as synonymous with the Middle East as oil and sand. Visitors can purchase these sweet gems on every corner of the city, with luxurious boutiques such as Bateel offering tasting sessions and farm to table experiences, as well as a brief history on the date's importance in the region. For those wanting to get an in

depth look at the date production process, Dubai is soon to house the world's largest privately owned date factory, Al Barakah Dates, set to run on 6,500 solar panels to offset 3,000 tonnes of emissions per year.

All visitors to Dubai can confidently tour the city with peace of mind knowing that stringent measures have been put in place to ensure their health and safety, underpinned by the DUBAI ASSURED stamp, a compliance protocol that recognises and certifies all establishments within the tourism ecosystem that are adhering to the health and safety guidelines. Dubai was also awarded the 'Safe Travels' stamp by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in 2020, giving travellers more confidence to visit the destination in 2021. 



Opulence at the gateway to Dubai

The H Dubai Hotel, viewed as the gateway to the Middle East's most dynamic city with its address as No. 1 Sheikh Zayed Road, is a standout, 5-star hotel, renowned for its award-winning lobby that is a magnificent showcase of arabesque architecture and glittering grandeur. From the opulent marble flooring, golden touches, and velvet upholstered furniture that's a warm invitation into the hotel, one is ushered into a promise of great service, filled to the brim with experiences that exude excellence in service quality.

DINE AND PLAY AT THE H DUBAI.

The vibrant mix of food and beverage experiences on the premises alone will capture your attention, as you have delectable cuisine or live entertainment options to entice you at every turn. The in-room dining menu is enough to tantalise your tastebuds if you would much prefer to settle into your room or suite, or very well pull you from your slumber into the atmospheres in the floors below or above yours. Guests can choose from rooftop bars to intimate lounges, all of which deliver on exciting dining and nightlife options.



H BAR

Chic and contemporary - yet casual, the H Bar is the perfect spot to enjoy a casual drink with friends, colleagues or solo and makes for a cozy date night for couples. Whether you choose to sit centre stage at the bar, perched at the pool table or tucked away into one of the comfy sofas – the lighting, music and subtle decor combine to create an ambience which makes you feel that something special is always about to happen.

The team of mixologists are well versed in creating a series of world-class cocktails to quench your thirst, whilst H Bar's knowledgeable sommeliers come ready to share an extensive list of world wines for guests to partake. If it's a post work vibe you are after, pre-dinner drinks, and after brunch party, H Bar is on hand to deliver just the experience that will excite your social appetite.

EAT & MEAT.

Eat & Meat serves an array of international delights in a chic and comfortable setting. Influenced by the belief "Healthy Living is a Lifestyle", the menu infuses



EDITOR'S PICK • THE H DUBAI HOTEL

freshly made dishes, prepared with locally sourced ingredients that abound in flavour.

Dominating almost the entire length of the restaurant is an open kitchen where the restaurant's chefs are on hand to cater to your every guest's needs. The experience is personalised with careful attention to detail in presentation and service. Expect a range of delectable dishes featuring hearty salads, chosen grass-fed and free-range meat products, or fresh seafood – grilled à la minute and a delicious assortment of desserts. An extensive selection of world wines and beverages compliment the experience. For the younger guests, a kid's friendly menu is always on offer.

Warm and friendly family-style service makes it ideal for families, business meetings, or even for private hire in the evenings.

U4

Located on the fourth floor of The H Dubai's office tower, Urban on 4 is a metropolitan cafe that oozes a relaxed vibe. Earthy - yet chic, it is the perfect spot to grab a delicious breakfast, a healthy lunch, or a refreshing beverage after work.

DIADEMAS CIGAR LOUNGE

The decadent Diademas is H Dubai's cigar lounge, located on the 1st floor and yet another perfect spot to enjoy an after-work drink, a gathering with friends, or a pre- or post-dinner cocktail.

Design aesthetic stands out, with dark wooden furnishings, leather sofas, and perfectly placed lighting which fuse together to create a colonial feeling of an era gone by. Throughout the evening, the lounge offers an extensive menu of brandy, whiskey, wine, and cigars – making it the perfect hangout for ladies and gentlemen looking to get together for conversation in an inspired setting.

GLOW

This poolside bar is a trendy hub of activity as guests enjoy the and swimming pool by day, and by night it transforms into a soothing urban space with a relaxed vibe where you can enjoy a relaxed drink, a bite to eat or shisha.





thing. Located on the 36th floor of The H Dubai, it presents a bespoke and evolving menu.

ENISH

The award-winning Enish Restaurant & Lounge brings years of culinary craft to Dubai. Serving a true taste of Pan African cuisine & beverages with a fine dining experience, Enish delivers authenticity to your plate a taste of all regions of Africa, taking you on a culturally immersive dining experience.

Fusing modern design, dark marble, rich materials, sophisticated colours and subtle lighting, Enish Lounge exudes class and luxury whether you've come for a cocktail, dining, or party experience.

SKY5 DUBAI

When it comes to impressing Dubai's nightlife crew, the sky is the limit, and to take your experience above and beyond the azure, Sky 5 Dubai is here to change the game.

Located on the 40th floor of The H Dubai, Sky 5 is the city's brand-new rooftop destination for an affair above and beyond, along with serene views and

THE GALLERY

Located at the heart of the award-winning lobby is The Gallery, an elevated space filled with comfortable armchairs, sofas and carefully placed lighting, which invites you to enjoy a sumptuous meal under the majestic allure of the high lobby ceilings. Dominated by a series of giant floor lamps, it is the perfect spot to meet with clients, read a newspaper over coffee or simply people-watch over a glass of wine.

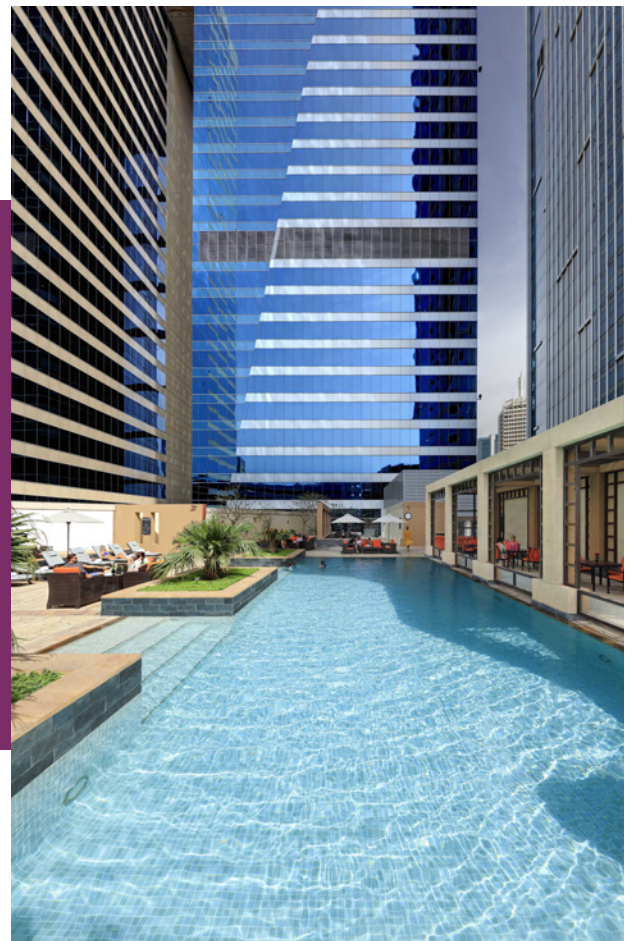
MOOMBAI & CO

Moombai & Co Café and Bar takes you on a journey back to the traditional Irani-Parsi cafes of India. With only 25 left in existence, H Dubai looks to continue this legacy through the authentic tastes, décor and eccentricities that are commonplace in these much loved Mumbai cafés. Fusing together the magic of olden day Mumbai with the modern vibrancy of Dubai, Moombai & Co bring you a café style menu offering traditional Parsi cuisine reminiscent of the dearly loved Indian recipes that Mumbai is famed for.

PLAY

The award-winning PLAY Restaurant & Lounge brings to Dubai an utterly unique and carefully cultivated culinary concept that transports guests on a gastronomic journey like no other. Spoiled with a concoction of exquisite flavours that fuse East and West, guests are introduced to Mediterranean Cuisine.

Home to elaborate décor and a warm and inviting ambience, PLAY proves that it really has the right mix of every-



unforgettable vibes. Accompanied by an energetic atmosphere and a breathtaking picture of the iconic Sheikh Zayed Road, guests are assured to have a time they will long remember.


OSCAR

This sophisticated restaurant serves finest Lebanese cuisine in an elegant setting. Located on the first floor, Oscar Restaurant redefines luxury dining with live entertainment every night, featuring Lebanese and Arabic singers and a belly dance show.

STAY AT THE H DUBAI

Welcoming guests to a stellar world-class collection of 236 spacious rooms, suites, fully furnished serviced suites, an office tower, and a dynamic events centre, a stay at The H Dubai promises you rooms that come with incredible spacing, great for families, made complete with contemporary, plush, Arab inspired furnishings.

Replete with elegance, all guest rooms and suites feature as a minimum: 42" LCD TVs, an oversized bathtub and rain shower, floor to ceiling windows, working space, tea and coffee making facilities, lounge area, safe, and full bathroom amenities including slippers and dressing gowns. Not only are the rooms and suites some of Dubai's most spacious – but they truly invoke a feeling of being in your home away from home, ushering you into comfort and practicality.

Located a mere few minutes from the city's main attractions and business districts including Burj Khalifa, Dubai Mall, Dubai Frame, Dubai Garden Glow, La Mer Beach, and Dubai World Trade Centre, the property awards guests an opportunity to explore the best of Dubai's business, leisure, and lifestyle experiences without needing to venture too far. With lavishly decorated rooms, a unique collection of restaurants serving the best of international cuisines, the H Dubai epitomizes a stay that is the best in class when in Dubai. 



To learn more about The H Dubai Hotel, visit www.hhoteldubai.com



**MODERN
CONVENIENCE
MEETS
BUSINESS IN
JUMEIRAH
LAKES
TOWERS
DISTRICT**





This property is modern and conveniently located within the Jumeirah Lakes District, a thriving community that today boasts hotels, two universities, 87 commercial and residential buildings and an eclectic mix of retail and restaurant outlets to choose from. The 5-star Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Lakes Towers is one of five hotels in the area, and a perfect destination for businesspeople travelling solo, long-stayers who have perhaps opted to take advantage of the remote working offer in Dubai, or small families keen to enjoy a good combination of work for the adults and play for the children.

An invitation to enjoy JLT's pristine lake views.

Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Lakes Towers offers 168 well-appointed rooms which range from elegant Superior and Deluxe Rooms to Premium Rooms and spacious Suites, each of which are a comfortable haven for guests staying at the hotel. Stunning crystal blue lake views from the floor to ceiling windows in most rooms, give one a sense of spirited calm, even though Dubai and the Jumeirah Lakes District are anything but. From young professionals taking their pets out on early morning walks, the more athletically inclined going on their run on the pavements below, to the rumbling of traffic on the highways not too far off, and the towering skyscrapers within the hotel's environs and Dubai Marina a mere 8-minute drive away, the Jumeirah Lakes Towers District is a bustling community that combines residential living and a commercial hive of activity.

A vibrant dining and social scene

There are plenty of restaurants, bars, and cafes to choose from in the area, with Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Lakes Towers opening its doors to patrons looking for a chic dining experience, characterised by innovative cuisine, welcoming service, and irresistible settings.

Nosh is an all-day dining restaurant serving up delicious à la carte and in a welcoming open kitchen setting, located on the ground floor of the hotel. Mouth-watering culinary delights spoil guests with



choice at this restaurant which overlooks one of the many canals in the area, while [U]BK – Urban Bar & Kitchen presents more of a casual dining experience. The award-winning social hotspot serves comfort food and is widely known as a neighbourhood favourite. Crema is perfect to casually meet for a coffee with friends or associates and is best suited for guests who prefer a fresh snack and a coffee.

The wider Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Lakes Towers experience

There are other services and facilities available at the hotel, including a wide range of weights and TechnoGym cardio equipment, for guests on the move and looking for a quick but effective workout. Soul Fitness Club is fully equipped while the temperature-controlled swimming pool is a great way to unwind. Guests can also enjoy free access and shuttle bus to RIVA beach club on the Palm





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Jumeirah. After a relaxing day by the pool, one can enter a sanctuary of relaxation at Elmax Salon & Spa, located on the hotel's first floor. There are seven treatment rooms offering an array of bespoke pampering and curative techniques.

When visiting Dubai, travellers typically look to marry leisure, relaxation, a little retail therapy and of course convenience, especially those in town for business and juggling the thrills of the city and the rushing tides of time. Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Lakes Towers offers perfect convenience, strategically located adjacent to Dubai Marina and JBR areas, only a few minutes from Palm Jumeirah, the iconic Burj Khalifa and surrounding downtown areas. Pristine beaches are in abundance across Sheikh Zayed Highway, giving one an opportunity to disconnect from the city hustle at the start or close of each day.

The hotel is within a walking distance to Dubai metro, and also close to notable business districts including Jebel Ali Free Zone, DMCC Free Zone, Media City, Internet City and Dubai Investment Park. A short 20-minute drive towards the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, will take you to Al Maktoum International Airport and the Expo 2020 site, which is currently gearing up for the biggest event on Dubai's calendar. 30 minutes in the opposite direction from the Expo Site and from the hotel is Dubai International Airport, which is also seamlessly accessible by taxi or metro. 





TASTE-MAKERS

"My story begins in Africa!"

Fireside chat with Meredith Anne Fischer – Owner and Host of 528 Victoria Falls Guest House

Born in the harbour town of Mossel Bay, South Africa on the 27th of January 1971, Meredith Anne Fischer is the third of four daughters: the children of an engineer and home maker. She carries fond memories of growing up on the road, travelling around South Africa as her father followed work opportunities.

"Each one of us were born in a different town where my father's profession took us, and we truly enjoyed a life of privilege in a middle-class family, with the opportunity to grow up free in Africa," shares Meredith.

She cites the spectre of apartheid having coloured her parents' view, and so in no time, they took the opportunity to emigrate to Australia in 1980, where Meredith's father was transferred to work on civil projects.

"We settled in Sydney, living on the North Shore where I completed my schooling. We kept in contact with family but did not often return to South Africa during these years, with focus on work and family life, the norm for a busy family of 6. I would later attend the University of Sydney – School of Health Sciences where I graduated as an Occupational Therapist in 1993," shares Meredith.

It was during a trip to the UK that Africa touched a part of her heart again. Chance would have her meet her future husband Paul, who was on a working holiday in the UK. He was from Zimbabwe, and a farmer by trade.



"We made plans to return to Zimbabwe once I had finished my degree, to begin a life on a farm in Headlands, which was adjacent to the farm Paul grew up on. We married in 1994 and so life in Africa grew on me again. We had 3 children and enjoyed building a life on our farm and supporting the extended community that grew around our agricultural enterprise," reminisces Meredith.

But the political unrest that was the reincarnation of Zimbabwe's checkered past would be the beginning of a significant shift in their lives.

"It was an extremely difficult time, one of great uncertainty for the farming community in Zimba-

bwe. Many farmers were violently evicted from their farms, with lives lost and livelihoods in tatters across the country,” says Meredith.

During these years, she opted to return to her profession in Occupational Therapy, working in Harare as a Paediatric OT based at St Johns School. She worked with her good friend Robyn Taylor, both sharing the position and running their services under a private business model.

“We struggled to stay on Rhodesdale Farm for 5 years, working with support structures on the ground to keep as much under cropping as possible, while juggling the constant political pressures and making compromises until 2006, when we finally decided it was time to give it up and return as a family to Australia so try a hand at making a new life,” shares Meredith.

Once in Australia, the young family settled on the Central Coast, NSW where they were close to family and so commenced the process of reskilling, with Paul and Meredith’s focus on building new careers and supporting their small family. Meredith moved back into her professional role as an Occupational Therapist, working in various fields while Paul attended University, completing a Degree in Finance. They lived in Australia for 12 years, moving to the Northern Territory for a period following work opportunities, while their children grew and completed their schooling. This period very much reminded Meredith of how she and her sisters had grown up – having moved to Australia as their parents sought greener pastures.

It was in August 2017 that the family had the opportunity to purchase a property in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, which they planned to transform into a Boutique Guest House. With great excitement, they proceeded with planning their move back to Zimbabwe in 2018. Over that year, Paul and Meredith built



a dilapidated and unkept house, into what is now 528 I Victoria Falls Guest House. It was only a short year later in January 2019, that the couple opened its doors to paying customers! Today, the business has grown significantly, welcoming guests from all over the world onto this pristine property that offers one a spectacular space for relaxation in the tourism border town of Victoria Falls.

528 | VICTORIA FALLS

A unique boutique guest house located just 2.5km from Victoria Falls town and 3km from the iconic largest curtain of falling water – the mighty Victoria Falls - lies 528 | Victoria Falls Guest House, which has grown to be a beloved destination for visitors to the resort town looking for a contemporary yet quaint sanctuary of rest.

A warm invitation to experience uniquely adorned spaces, personalised service, and a taste of Zimbabwe's prolific safari destination, 528 | Victoria Falls is located in a quiet, leafy suburb in close proximity to all local restaurants and activity centers in Victoria Falls town.

The boutique hotel houses 7 en-suite rooms, including 2 triple rooms for families or friends, while the rest are en-suite doubles - king or twin rooms depending on guest needs. Paul and Meredith went to great lengths to ensure that all rooms exude a distinctive look and feel, fully equipped with air-conditioning, tea and coffee making facilities, hair dryers, safes, and luxurious bathrooms. The boutique hotel's small size allows the couple to render personalised service, supported by a close-knit team of staff.

A stay at 528 | Victoria Falls comes with a delicious cold spread and cooked to order breakfasts which are included in the rate, and so guests are assured that their days will start as inspired as well as their bellies are fed. The atmosphere truly connects one with nature as they take in the





lush green scenery and landscaped gardens on the premises as they enjoy their hearty breakfast.

As Paul and Meredith worked on the design of 528 | Victoria Falls, they were intentional about marrying a unique architectural design with a modern yet timeless aesthetic. This was to later be complemented by rich colours and textures within the space, with the use of wall carvings, murals, and bespoke pieces such as the chandeliers which have been locally made by Zimbabwe's talented artisans. Today, these works of art add depth and dimension to the guest experience, telling a unique story of the distinctive craftsmanship of local and regional artisans.

The property's crowning glory is the rooftop bar 'Treetops' with spectacular views to the ribbon of the Zambezi and Zambia beyond. Guests can sip a favourite gin and tonic – or any other beverage of their choosing, as they take in the serenity of astounding sunsets while watching the lights of Livingstone and the stars emerge. 'Treetops' is operated on an honesty policy and has tea and coffee facilities. As well as the public spaces there are plenty of private, insta-worthy nooks to relax and recharge from throughout the main building and gardens.

Sustainability has always been a pillar of great importance to Paul and Meredith, so much that they ensured that 528 | Victoria Falls carried an eco-friendly ethos, with solar powered lighting and geysers installed across the property. All grey water is also reused in watering the lush tropical gardens on the property. ♻️



For more on Rebecca or Becca's Wine Swap:

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CELEBRATING AND UNCOVERING WINE HISTORY, PRESENT AND FUTURE, ONE GLORIOUS SIP AT A TIME.

Zimbabwean born Rebecca Sibanda, a notable legal professional and impassioned African wine content creator shed some insight on her sprouting passion project, Becca's Wine Swap. Those that know Rebecca would boast of her distinct voice in issues relating to women, children, justice; her unconventional but realistic thought process; an intellectual conversationalist as well as a rib-cracker who keeps us intrigued and entertained on Twitter.

In 2018, Becca's Wine Swap was established and has been thriving steadily. Even through a pandemic it emerged victoriously and that, in itself reflects on its founder, who was enthusiastic to share her journey with Travel Essence Magazine.

1. IF YOU COULD WRITE YOUR OWN PROFILE IN A FEW WORDS, WHAT WOULD IT SAY ABOUT REBECCA SIBANDA? TELL US MORE ABOUT THE

"AFRICAN WINE LOVER AND WINE BLOGGER" AS STATED IN YOUR INSTAGRAM BIO.

I am a constitutional law expert inspired to use the law to work to serve Africans, especially women and children. I am very much an African woman and the older I get, the more I learn, the more I want to express my heritage. I am a curious person, bent on discovering as much as I can about the spaces I occupy and the people I meet, with the time I have. I think that best sums up who I am and how I ended up with that caption.

2. WHEN DID YOU DISCOVER YOUR LOVE FOR WINE HAD GONE JUST BEYOND DRINKING WINE AND WHAT DO YOU AIM TO ACHIEVE WITH YOUR WINE SWAP EVENTS?

I think I first noticed that my love for wine went beyond just the consumption when I realised that there was so much

more to wine, beyond the labels, the awards, and the celebrations we often associate with the product. The history of wine making in Africa is riddled with untruths and thankless treatment for labourers. As more people are telling wine stories, a better and more honest representation is being seen and I am excited about what that means for the industry as a whole.

In celebrating South African wine, primarily through purchasing, I think comes an obligation to tell the stories of the winemakers, the marketing teams, right down to farmworkers who have for generations, tended to and harvested grapes on these farms. Seeing more and more Africans of colour taking up more visible roles in the wine space made me want to do my part in sharing and educating.

The movement began with brand fatigue. Most established wine producers have big budgets and long-standing relationships with distributors that they have become ubiquitous. There are thousands of wine brands that are underrepresented in South Africa and struggle to be visible with particularly black, middle class consumers because of the competition. It is no longer enough to make great wine, there are so many more variables involved.

I began the movement in protest against my friends and family always bringing the same wine to events, because that is what is heavily marketed to them or what they see on all menus, for example. I began with a group of friends in my flat and eventually started partnering with boutique wine brands to share knowledge, dispel myths, build confidence among consumers of colour, and generally build a culture of curiosity and exploration when it comes to the plethora of options we have, particularly living in the Western Cape - the capital of African wine production.

3. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHED A BIT OF LIGHT ON SOME OF THE "UNTRUTHS AND THANKLESS TREATMENT FOR LABOURERS" YOU BECAME AWARE OF ON THIS JOURNEY?

With technological advancements in all industries, producers are looking for economic and more effective ways to produce wine and make a profit. Sometimes this ends up looking like the over-manipulation of wine, affecting one's ability to distinguish its origins – which is really what wine is about. It must express the ground from which it grows, the climate it survived etc. This over-manipulation also occurs when wine brands want their product to taste as identical as possible, regardless of the vintage. I think these





changes are also in response to a harsh market/ economic climate and some producers start focusing on volumes and not quality. Another well-known secret is the usage of wood chips to “oak” wines as opposed to wooden barrels. The import of these barrels is costly and while dishonest, it is understandable when struggling producers try to cut corners. A lot of us can’t tell the difference, but those with expert palates do.

When it comes to ethical labour practices, South Africa

has come a long way, however, far too many farm workers earn wages that are too low to live on – for them and their families. They also live in on-farm housing, much of which is not serviced often enough to deem those shelters appropriate for occupation. This also means they have no security when it comes to housing because once they are unable to work the vines, they lose their homes. Some farms use dangerous pesticides which exposes farm workers to health risks that they cannot remedy. Many farm workers know no other employment and generations often work the vines. It becomes difficult to break the cycle of poverty and farm labour when the wages earned can barely feed you let alone finance an education. In their communities, alcohol abuse is rampant and this is a remnant of the apartheid era when farm workers’ wages were paid in alcohol, also known as the “dop system”. While the dop system is now illegal in South Africa, the damage has been done and more work is needed to undo the effects.

As conversations about sustainable production and ethical labour practices become more common, we are beginning to see a shift in wine

culture (in pockets). We are beginning to see wine farms establishing joint ventures with their workers in the pursuit of righting some of the imbalance in land holdings. This means in the future; more farm labourers will have enforceable rights to the homes they live in. Other initiatives include allowing workers to gain partial ownership in the farms they work on. Others are involved in upskilling workers, meaning they can be more than just vine – tenders. They can become wine makers and join management ranks. The wine community is coming together and trying to change their relationship with labour and create a product that is not only sustainable, but ethically sourced and packaged.

4. HAVE YOU EVER DECLINED GOING INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH ANY WINE BRANDS? IF YES, WHY?

I have not yet. I think that as a relatively small wine influencer, who is not dependant on this hustle for my livelihood, I have quite a lot of room to decide who I work with. I have been fortunate enough to partner with brands and people who share the vision and hopefully, that continues.

5. WHAT ARE SOME UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE BWS EVENTS, OR YOUR GENERAL JOURNEY AS A WINE CONTENT CREATOR?

I think learning what it costs to produce a bottle of wine and keep a wine production company afloat has changed my buying habits. I'm more mindful about where and how I purchase and I do a lot more research before I buy. Another surprising and welcome outcome has been the relationships that have been created with producers, marketing teams and even other wine content creators. It is a wonderful community to be a part of and I am excited to keep meeting people and bringing the wines to the people!

I have also made some incredible friend connections and re-connections through the events – it is humbling and affirming to see black faces coming together to learn and share and just have a good time together.

Finally, I think I have learnt what my role in the space is – to facilitate knowledge sharing. So many people push you to enter the wine world professionally and get certified, but I know that would destroy my love for the thing. I am happy to create friendly, non-intimidating environments to introduce people to wine and each other, as well as continue learning, myself.

6. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PERKS OF WORKING WITH WINE BRANDS AND THEIR MARKETING TEAMS?

To be frank, there aren't as many as one would imagine. I am a relatively new name in the business so I do not get that many freebies. I do sometimes get samples of new product. I get involved in activations and launches. My favourite events are wine farm visits and

wine award ceremonies – the wine is excellent; the food is magnificent and the networking opportunities are wild. It is really about how you package yourself and interact with key role players.

7. PRICE & PACKAGE OF BWS EVENT?

It depends on where we are and the format. In Cape Town, where the event has taken the shape of on-site visits, it will cost you anything from R400 including transport, wine and food. We've recently started a series of events in Johannesburg in partnership a boutique wine shop and tasting room Fourways. These events cost R250 per person and covers wine and food.

8. WHAT CAN ONE EXPECT WHEN PLANNING TO ATTEND A BWS EVENT?

Again, it depends on where we are. Cape Town was fortunate enough to be the place I cut my teeth and have a more established group of attendees and network of farms so we have a lot more fun. The events are usually held on Saturday afternoons, involve welcome drinks, food, a road trip when necessary and always a representative from that day's partner to guide us through an informal tasting that allows questions to be asked in a safe environment. The rule is that there are no stupid questions and we do not shame anyone for not knowing certain things. Depending on the energy, we even spend time after the representative has left just enjoying each other's company and imbibing.

In Johannesburg, the format is markedly different. Events are held every second Wednesday evening and are briefer in length. My partner,

takes us on tasting journey which can take the form of a quiz night or even a blind tasting. All the wines showcased are sourced from boutique wine estates, keeping in line with the original idea – to learn and have us purchasing outside of the mainstream – which is not to say larger and older farms don't make incredible wine. They do, they just do not need our help getting their message out there.

9. HOSTING: JOHANNESBURG VS. CAPE TOWN, HOW DO THEY COMPARE?

I think that being a Capetonian, it was not difficult to build a support base. I had friends and acquaintances who made each experience awesome. Also, simply because we lived in the Western Cape, curating unique farm experiences was easier and it broke the monotony of a tasting at my home. I think that the familiarity that people in the Western Cape have with wine made it easier to create a tribe.

Johannesburg is a different energy and, in many ways, I have had to work harder to establish the experience. A lot has changed since I was in Cape Town, not least the pandemic. People are cautious about leaving home and being around strangers so we have to make sure we create a safe environment for each other. Also, finding a space to host the events has changed the format significantly. I hope that for the time I am in Johannesburg, I do make an impact on people, change their relationship with wine and pique their curiosity to explore the wine-lands across the country on their own.

10. BEING A ZIMBABWEAN WOMAN, RAISED IN A NDEBELE HOUSEHOLD, WHAT HAS BEEN THE REACTION OF YOUR PARENTS AND FAMILY REGARDING BEING A WINE CONTENT CREATOR, IS YOUR PASSION PROJECT TAKEN SERIOUSLY IN THAT REGARD?

I was raised super conservative and in a teetotaling household so, as far as I know, they aren't aware, and if they are, they have chosen not to address it. The duality of being a Ndebele woman who moves through the world with certain expectations, while being a free spirit who embraces the life, I have curated for myself is sometimes difficult to navigate. For now, I am happy in this space and I am taking each day as it comes.

11. APART FROM LAW AND WINE WHAT ELSE ARE YOU DEEPLY PASSIONATE ABOUT THAT PEOPLE MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I love the law and I am very much immersed in the wine space. Both take up a lot of my time. When I can, I like to collect books – the difficult part now, is actually getting to read them. I enjoy the food scene and the cities I have lived in have an excellent array of food options. I think the one thing people might not know about me is that I basically only watch the Food network. I'm like an old woman who doesn't like change that way. And sadly, I don't try as many of the recipes or techniques I see as I would like to.

12. HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO JUGGLE YOUR LEGAL PROFESSION AS WELL AS YOUR FAST-GROWING PASSION PROJECT?

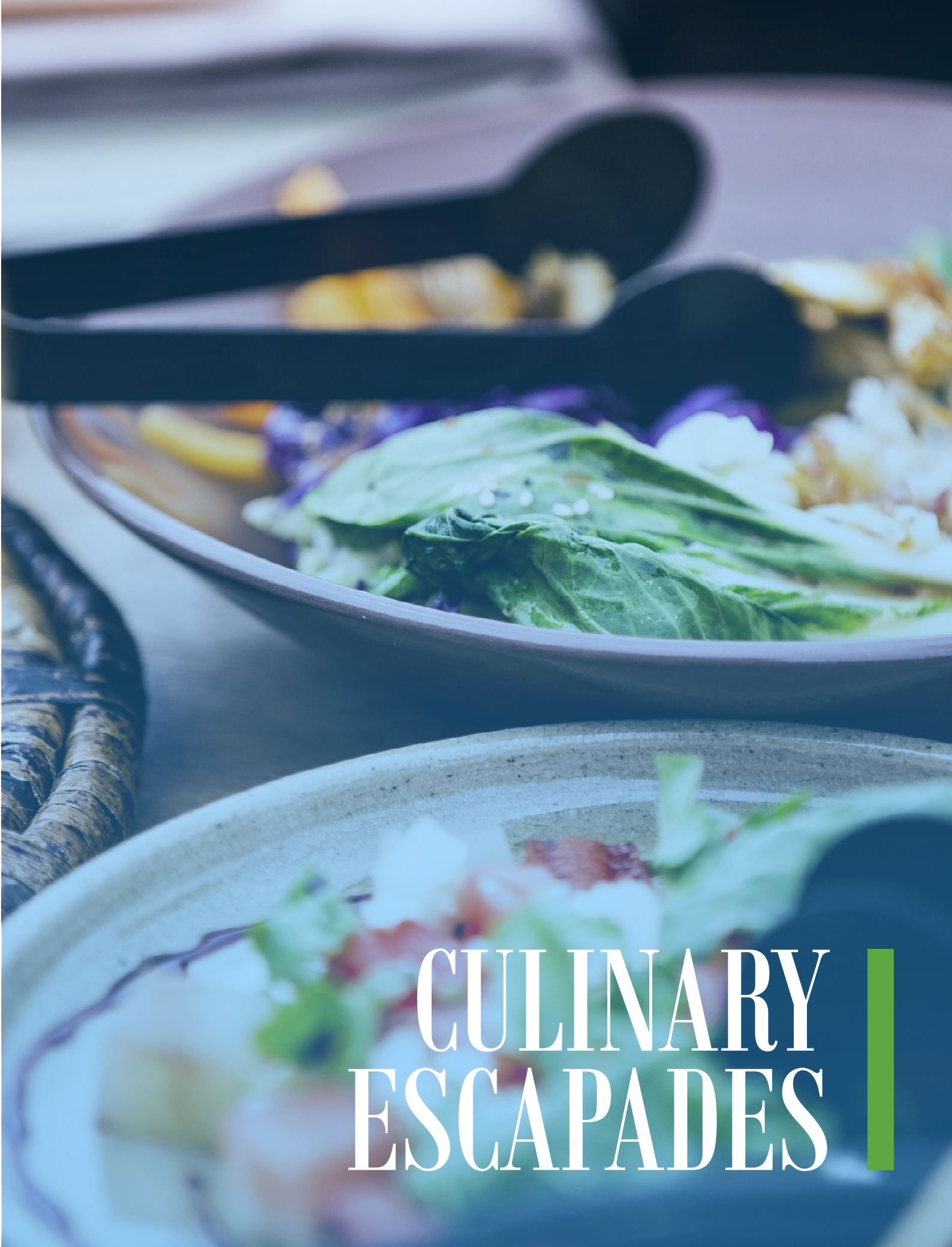
I am very mindful about how I spend my time. Over the years, it's become like second nature. I know when to focus on one and when to focus on the other. The pandemic also put breaks on development and we are slowly starting up again. I now work from home and I freelance, meaning I now have a lot more control over my time.

13. WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR YOU AS A WINE BLOGGER AND WINE EVENT CURATOR?

I would love to collaborate and work with wine brands across the spectrum and have more honest conversations about connecting with your target market in a way that relates to them and recognises the demographics on the country. I'd also love to be part of the bigger movement to have more representation in the wine industry for not just people of colour, but for women especially. It is quite intimidating to first step into this often elite world and I would love to be a gateway for other wine lovers and people who look like me to be less intimidated and develop their own relationship with the thing.

14. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE YOUNGER REBECCA SIBANDA THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW THEN THAT YOU KNOW NOW?

Fear is okay. Not doing because of fear is bad. I made a lot of bad decisions and lost some great opportunities because of fear when I was younger. Whether it was the fear of speaking up for myself or the fear of failing. Now, I jump at the opportunity to do something new, try my best and hope that I succeed. If I don't, I'll either try again or I won't, but I'll make sure I learn whatever lesson I was supposed to. I would definitely push myself to face more of my fears. 🍷



CULINARY ESCAPADES



THE SINGITA FARM TO TABLE PLEDGE

DELIVERING DISTINCTIVE, WELLNESS
PROMOTING DINING EXPERIENCES





The global pandemic brought with it drastic change to the industry, with the hard-hit travel and tourism players having to revisit their notion of safety and sustainable operations under stringent conditions. Singita has utilized this time to really understand what they believe guests will place value on moving forward. Having to interrogate every touchpoint of the guest experience and enhancing the offering in anticipation of how guests have adapted to the travel experience in light of COVID-19, the brand is emphasizing slowing down the entire experience, creating the opportunity for guests to walk, learn, connect with nature, to sit quietly or meditate.

By elevating every aspect of bespoke safaris, Singita have adapted to the evolving expectations of travellers while tirelessly continuing with the pursuit of product improvement down to the finest details. Teams have never been better trained, are more motivated and ready to curate and execute the most meaningful and memorable experiences and journeys.

Food service is focused more on health and wellness as the dining experience plays a huge role in wellness and healthy immune systems. By dissecting the food offering at every lodge and reviewing every menu through a wellness lens, initiatives such as introducing home-made cordials into mini-bars as opposed to canned fizzy drinks, offering chamomile tea after dinner instead of coffee, serving more plant-based menu options and focusing on local procurement.

For example, at Singita Sabora Tented Camp, which opened during the lockdown, in the Serengeti, there is an opportunity for guests to produce their own smoothies with healthy ingredients in their in-suite pantry with a juicer or Nutribullet.

Unpacking Singita's new food journey

Singita values simplicity, with the new food journey encompassing the following key elements:

1. Emphasis is on sourcing local ingredients.
2. Rwanda properties probably carry 80% vegetarian led menus.
3. Singita can cater for every dietary requirement without sacrificing taste or exciting options.
4. Plant-based guests do not get less variety and get a personalised vegan menu.
5. Local honey is sourced in all regions.
6. Smaller portions to avoid wastage and using only the best ingredients sourced locally.
7. Each property must have at least one item that is sourced from their garden/community garden.
8. There is at least one African-inspired dish on the menu. Singita's modern



take on African food and ingredients is such that they teach guests about Africa's cuisine.

Sustainability - It is more than a meal.

Encouraging surrounding communities to participate in the economy of lodges' operations by engaging small-scale farmers and food producers as suppliers, Singita ensures powerful ecosystems of supply and demand that benefit guests, local communities, and the environment at large.

These initiatives are part of Singita's three-pronged approach to conservation – sustainability, community, and biodiversity – with a core value system that revolves around environmentally conscious hospitality, sustainable conservation, and the empowerment of local communities. Supporting small enterprises helps to fulfil its long-term community partnership goal of working with communities to thrive, both economically and socially, as well as contributing to a more sustainable model of tourism on the continent.

This philosophy of sustainability extends further still, to skills development. Singita's Community Culinary School, which was established in 2015, is its second such institution (following the success of its counterpart in Singita Kruger National Park) and provides a valuable resource for aspiring chefs to develop and nurture their interest and proficiency in a culinary career.



Grounded and restored – the healing power of nature.

An ever-increasing yearning to completely escape the hurried pace of life as we know it has gradually transformed the travel landscape globally. Apart from allowing you to broaden your horizons and experience life-changing encounters in far-flung locations, travel has also become synonymous with being profoundly grounded and it offers the chance to reset body and soul in remote and nurturing settings.

Seeking some much-needed rest and regeneration to counter a year like the one



we have just emerged from, discerning travellers are searching for destinations that provide stillness and sanctuary, and optimum opportunities to restore wellness – physically as well as mentally.

Singita's take on wellness.

Continuous connections with nature – from wellness treatments outdoors to activities immersed in the bush – centre and restore guests' sense of wellbeing.

A holistic approach that actively incorporates an awareness of wellbeing into every aspect of a guest's stay is becoming not only commonplace, but essential. This takes a myriad of forms – from healthy, locally sourced food to relaxing massages and alternative healing – and is open to interpretation from one destination to the next. But what is consistent is that travel has become inextricably linked with wellness.

This is not new at Singita however, where the guest experience has always been intrinsically linked to a vision for conscious hospitality and conservation. And since its inception, the brand has embraced a philosophy of wellbeing in creating environments in which guests can reconnect with nature and enjoy the luxury of a slow pace and sense of space throughout.

“We believe that true wellness needs to be woven into the entire experience and focus on every conceivable touchpoint,” says Renée Rosettenstein, Group Wellness Coordinator for Singita.

“As a result – and with the lodges and camps already offering nurturing experiences at every turn – it was a natural and seamless progression to incorporate even deeper layers and levels of wellness,” she adds.

Brought to life in unique ways to celebrate the iconic location of each lodge and guided by its overarching principles as well as the current and growing demand globally, Singita has focused even more attention on aligning its offering with an awareness of what wellness means now. From transformative massage treatments that harness the restorative powers of Africa's most healing rituals, ingredients, and settings to guided audio meditations, sensory sound therapy and mindful crystal experiences – opportunities to reawaken the senses and restore balance abound. 🌿



From archaeology to fulfilling his *passion for pastry making*

Connecting with Karl Rambanapasi of Karl's Forbidden Pastries



“Hello, my name is Karl Rambanapasi and I’m a 26-year-old Zimbabwean. In 2017 after graduating from the University of Zimbabwe with an Honours Degree in Archaeology I decided to risk it all and start a contemporary cake brand known and loved as Karl’s Forbidden Pastries. The road has been bumpy (for more times than I would prefer) but overall, I am grateful to be in a position to serve.

Meet Karl, who playfully asserts that the above would be his more conventional introduction, however he is known for going against the grain, and so therefore perhaps, that is the reason why he prefers to speak on his “WHY”.

“I believe it to be a moral imperative that in our lifetime we honour our talents by developing them to the fullest and achieve at the highest level possible to amass a massive legacy, not to showcase us but to show to other people what's possible. What we need desperately in this world are examples of people that have gone against the grain of mediocrity and chosen to create a life of distinction,” says Karl.

Karl goes on to share his views on the notion that at the end of the day, whatever one’s legacy is, it will live on in the human archive and for some, in the internet space for all



eternity, highlighting what the outcomes were.

Karl has over the years focused on building his business, a journey which started in July 2017. When asked why he chose the name Karl's Forbidden Pastries for his ventures in pastry making Karl asserts that he made the realisation as he developed his talent that Patisserie treats were long viewed as being exclusive to the high-income minority and reserved for the elite.

"You may have needed to frequent high-end establishments just to be in the know or to have your touch of the culinary heavens. The whole ethos of Forbidden Pastries is to demystify the Patisserie, to break barriers, and to make specialty pastries to a greater portion of the population," Karl shares.


"I took a pledge to share the information that I have been gathering to everyone, having recently self-published my first recipe book called 'A Symphony of Flavours: Unforgettable Recipes from Karl's Forbidden Pastries'. Call me an educator, a new baker, an activist for an alternate way of preparing and presenting pastry treats. I like to view myself as an agent of change, who is advocating for intellectual exercise, while inspiring my customers through my baked goods.

Karl is quick to cite that one of his highlights in business is receiving referral business from satisfied clients or when new potential clients reach out to him after having seen his baked goods online.

"COVID-19 really came as a blow I think for everyone in business, and I am still experiencing the effects to this day. I would have to say that the pandemic exposed weakness in my business model, and so I've been learning to operate as lean as I can and practice what Simon Sinek calls "Existential Flex", defined as the capacity to initiate an extreme disruption to a business model or strategic course to more effectively advance a cause or mission," he asserts.

Karl is excited about the prospects of growing his business, given what operating in the complex environment has taught him, sharing that the best way anyone can support his mission is by buying any one of his sweet treats or evangelising about it. While baking is one of his passions, Karl also obsesses over contemporary classical music, some of his favourites being Hans Zimmer, Ludovico Einaudi and Ramin Djawadi.

"In my free moments, I am on YouTube watching some nerdy shows, a documentary or spending time with loved ones who don't get to see much of me as a juggle many of my responsibilities," says Karl.

As a self-taught pastry chef, Karl is challenged by one of his favourite quotes by Steve Jobs, which reads: "Stay Hungry... Stay Foolish", believing it can mean a lot of things depending on one's perspective. He goes on to mention that being a student of African archaeology has taught him plenty about the continent's cultural diversity, its tangible and intangible heritage, and various elements that make Africa so magical. Inspiration is abundant on the continent, and it is here where he finds the impetus to continue to push the envelope with his passion for making pastries and challenging himself as an entrepreneur. 





ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA





Madagascar

THE HOME OF THE TRUE LEMURS!

The animated movie “Madagascar” left our spirits giddy and happy. You will remember the entertaining “King Julien” - the character that was the King of the Lemurs, and not only did he make us dance and sing, but he also introduced us to the fascinating primate that is native to the island of Madagascar - the lemur. It is reported that the island is home to over 110 species of lemur, and they are endemic species, meaning they are only found in this region.

By Louisa Choruma





Previously known as 'the "Malagasy Republic" and now fondly described as the home of the true lemurs, the island's official name is "The Republic of Madagascar" and is the world's fourth largest island, separated from the Africa's southeast coastlines by the Mozambique Channel. With its capital Antananarivo, the island covers an area of 588 800 kilometres, and is characterised by two distinct distinctive climate zones - the wet East and the dry West, with the central region naturally a combination of both.

If an adventurous excursion to Madagascar is on the cards for you, it is best to visit the Island between the months of July and November. Described by many as a wildlife lover's paradise, Madagascar is popular for its breath-taking landscapes and rich biodiversity! From families to adrenaline junkies, to honeymooners and birders – the island of Madagascar offers an assortment of activities for all.

VENTURE ACROSS THE ISLAND'S EASTERN REGION

This region is in fact the inspiration behind Madagascar being referred to as the home of the true lemurs! It is also in its wealth of wildlife and plant diversity. With the East of Madagascar being the cradle to The Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. Brimming with thick tropical forests, together with wildlife that includes 14 species of lemur and 100 species of birds and is a must explore when on the island.

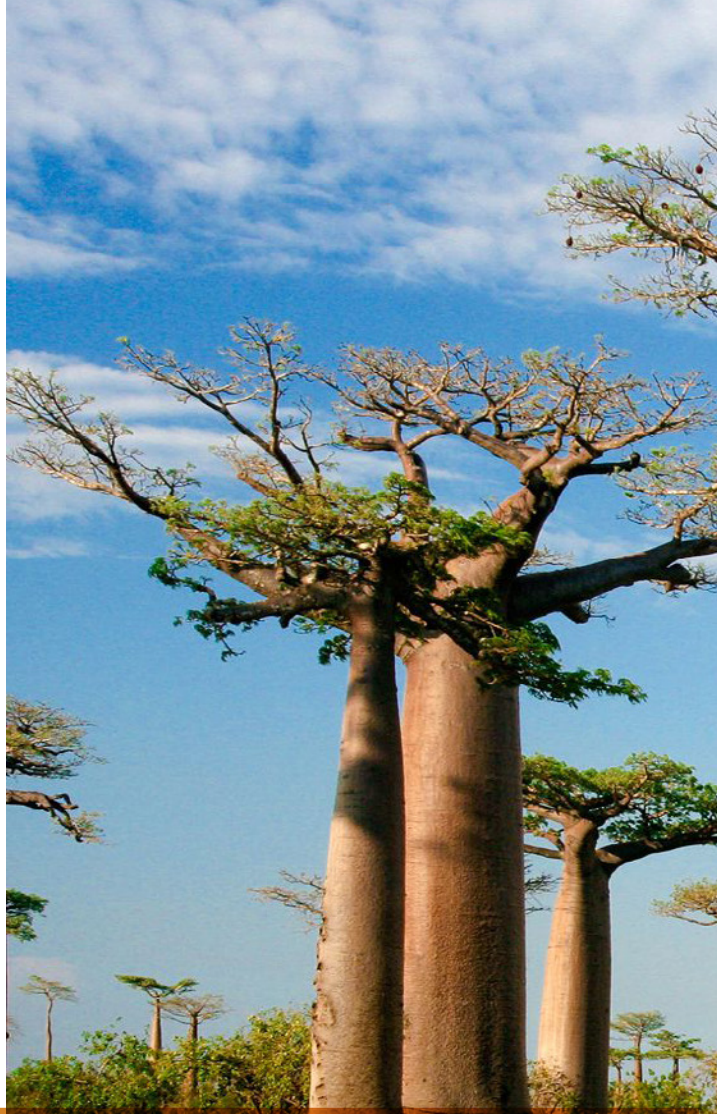
The Palmarium Reserve is also home of the Indri Lemurs. This private reserve, known locally by its name Ankanin'ny Nofy which means 'nest of dreams' in Malagasy, is spread across 50 hectares of peninsula land in the Lake Ampitabe area. It is here too, that rare flora such as the Malagasy palm trees (Dypsis and Lemurophoenix) are located.

Close to the Palmarium and off the east coast of Madagascar is the Nosy Boraha, which means either the “Island of Abraham” or “Island of Ibrahim” in Malagasy or Île Sainte-Marie. This gem of an island, with its white sandy beaches and clear blue waters, also carries a rich history of pirate activities of the past!

MADAGASCAR'S SOUTH

The south of the island is a magnificent showcase of natural space and majestic landscapes! It is a celebration of tradition as local tribal communities can still be found cattle ranching and fishing as they have done for centuries. The Isalo National Park, with its dry and dramatic canyons is famous for its scenery and perfect for hiking and camping! Established in 1962 – the park is popular in the birders and botanists’ circles for its unique bird species and vegetation.

Located on the south east coast of Madagascar is Fort Dauphin or Taolagnaro in Malagasy. The fine beach lends itself to sun, sand, and wind surfing! Tours to nearby reserves, gardens and parks are available and it is the best place for eating out as there is an array of eateries.





OVER TO THE NORTH OF THE ISLAND...


Also known as the Tropical North and the Diana region – the north is also famous for its astonishing landscapes, beautiful beaches, mangrove swamps and dense rainforests! The rich marine life in this region includes mammoth whales, whale-sharks and of course, various species of turtles!

Madagascar's premier beach resort, Nosy Be Island is located in the Northwest and is an ideal destination for honeymooners! The combination of good climate, palm trees lining the beach and the rustic charm of its non-commercialised resort feel – makes it a top choice for anyone planning an escape from everyday reality. Amber Mountain National Park and Anakarana Reserve are also some of the many parks in the area that visitors can take time to experience.

CIRCLING BACK TO MADAGASCAR'S WEST

Characterised by dry weather and savannah vegetation and farmland – the Western Region is great for hiking and exploring. It is the adventurer's haven with its numerous cultural and natural attractions such as the Avenue of the Baobabs and Kirindy Reserve. This is Madagascar's' first official natural monument and is located on the dirt road on the west coast of Madagascar linking Morondava and Belo Tsiribihina. This road is lined with many rare, large and tall ancient baobab trees that create

a stunning setting that looks like giants protecting the users of the road! These captivating sights make for great photo opportunities!

We all fell in love with these small, long snouted, large-eyed, triped tailed and tree loving creatures; after watching the Dream-Works blockbuster Madagascar, but it is quite clear to see that a trip to this Indian ocean island offers one an opportunity to interact with more than just the lemur; but the abundance of flora and fauna that make this island one to be reckoned with. And so, if perhaps you are looking to trek across an island that's fairly untainted when pitted against more widely explored Indian ocean island counterparts, also boasting much by way of biodiversity, Madagascar's lemurs and so much more await you! 

Unearthing the correlation between Conservation & Mental Health

By Nick Holme, Zambesia Conservation Alliance



When I was a young boy growing up in rural Zimbabwe in the 1970's and 1980's, the bush, with all its amazing animals and plant life was a source of pure joy and wonderment for me. I was always happiest when I was amongst the blessings that Mother

Nature had endowed on us and if ever I felt sad and down, it was the bush that restored me to happiness and gave me the sense of equilibrium that we lack so much in this modern world.

Fast forward to 2020, when the world was ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic and countries entered into total lockdown, with people being restricted to their houses for weeks and months on end. We were suddenly denied the simple pleasures of going for a walk and watching the birds flying from tree to tree or the bees and butterflies flitting from flower to flower. We weren't allowed to visit the green parks in cities or walk in the open countryside. We weren't allowed to hear the babbling of streams, or the wind sighing through the leaves. We weren't allowed to run through meadows of lush green grass or experience the majestic beauty of hiking up mountains. We were prisoners in our own homes and gradually became prisoners of our minds. Our mental health suffered and the whole world came to the realisation that mental well-being is inextricably bound to our natural world and the myriad of simple joys that can be experienced in

nature. Even the most hardened of city dwellers suffered and probably more so than those who were fortunate enough to be living in the countryside.

If we only learn one thing from this terrible pandemic, let it be the realisation that Nature is the most important thing in our lives and without it, we will suffer unimaginable consequences, both physical and mental. We do not control Nature - Nature controls everything - and if we nurture Nature, then Nature will nurture us.

It begins with protecting our wild landscapes...

It goes without saying that the preservation and conservation of our remaining wild spaces should be a priority for all human beings. Without the incredible biodiversity on this planet, we will simply cease to exist. We need earthworms for our soils; we need bees to pollinate plants; we need elephants to spread seeds in their dung; we need dung beetles to clear up the dung; we need vultures to clean up carcasses; we need whales to store carbon; we need trees for oxygen - the list is endless and every living organism plays its part, somewhere, to maintain the equilibrium required for our physical survival as a species.

Without the amazing biodiversity around us we cannot survive, and Nature has incredible coping mechanisms to ensure that we do not endanger it - from viruses, to earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and droughts, Nature has many tools at her disposal to prevent our excesses from destroying the environment. However, those methods used by Nature will be at our expense and we need to realise that Nature does not need us, but we most certainly need Nature. We have to learn to work with Nature and not against it. This is something we, as humans, used to do, hundreds of years ago, but in our quest for dominance, we seem to have forgotten who the true boss actually is!

So, we need Nature for our physical survival, but... we also need to conserve what's left for our mental survival.

The relationship between Nature and our mental wellbeing


The symbiotic link between Nature and human beings is being researched contin-

uously, with an ever-increasing number of scientific studies coming to the conclusion that a prescription of time with Nature is quite often better than some of the drug prescriptions that we have relied upon so heavily in the past. Researchers around the world have discovered that even spending a short time in a natural setting can have positive physiological and psychological effects, such as reduced stress, lower blood pressure, less negative emotions and happier moods. The benefits of Nature are so positive that nature therapy, or ecotherapy, is being prescribed more and more by medical organisations, such as the National Health Service in the UK, to help tackle mental health problems.

According to Thembile Gola, a student Clinical Psychologist who runs the mental health and resilience programmes for Consolidated Africa Services PVO in Zimbabwe: "The Covid-19 pandemic really put into perspective for everybody just how much we rely on our natural environment to keep well mentally and emotionally. Our environment constitutes a huge part of our holistic health, as nature has a proven soothing effect on us. We seek to continue demonstrating the various ways humanity can leverage the healing power of nature and give back by conserving the environments that sustain us."

Furthermore, for those concerned about the cost of conservation - and it certainly isn't cheap - on reversing some of the damage we have already done and preserving what's left - one Australian study, published in Nature Communications in 2019, estimates that the global value in improved mental health from being in the great outdoors is around US\$6 trillion per year. This means that if we did not have natural spaces for people to visit, then Governments would have to find at least US\$6 trillion (and probably a lot more) for alternative mental health treatments to replace what Nature is giving us for free.

Compared with the estimated US\$300 billion - US\$400 billion needed globally for conservation each year, I would argue that spending those conservation dollars is a lot cheaper than finding more than US\$6 trillion annually for mental health treatment alone - and that doesn't even take into consideration the extra funding we would have to find to combat climate change and evolving agricultural practices just to keep up with feeding an expanding population, which is a whole topic in itself.

Conservation and mental wellbeing are inextricably linked. Even if we are callous enough not to worry about the extinction of a few species, we should, at the very least, be conserving our precious flora and fauna for our sanity - and our survival. 



To learn more about Zambesia Conservation Alliance (ZCA) an organisation that exists to drive awareness through creative and impactful movements that directly connect to conservation, visit www.zambesia.com

Inside Shongwe Lookout

A suburban oasis





Hidden amongst the quiet suburbs of Victoria Falls is a gem you will not want to miss. Shongwe Lookout, a fairly new lodge, opened its doors in June of 2019, just before COVID-19 forced the world into lockdown only a few months later. But manager Jamie Henson realised that this quiet lull would be the opportunity he needed to take the boutique lodge to greater heights, opting to use this time to perfect Shongwe's garden, unleash the chefs, and make sure every detail is taken care of for guests at the quaint property.

▶ **T**he lodge is famous with locals for its lookout tower, a feature allowing guests to watch sunset or sunrise light up the spray from the majestic Victoria Falls about 2 kilometres away. To ensure guests do not miss a single moment of those famous African sunsets, a dumbwaiter connected to a pulley system brings a steady supply of drinks up and down the three-story tower with the pull of a chord. There is even an intercom so drinks and nibbles can be ordered directly from the bar.



MEET JAMIE, SHONGWE'S PRINCIPAL

A Zimbabwean lad with a wife from New Zealand, Jamie Henson moved over to his homeland to take up the job with Shongwe Lookout. He says the adventure has been exhilarating.

“We were looking for a chance to bring something different to Victoria Falls. We wanted our guests to experience what we got a glimpse of in New Zealand – lodges that provide first class décor, food and service,” says Jamie.

“We really felt that Shongwe Lookout would give us that opportunity, and it has. The designer, Amanda West, exceeded our expectations in every regard, and we still get guests commenting on just how beautiful the lodge is.”

Targeted at Baby Boomers looking for fantastic quality, without breaking the bank, Jamie says they knew they had to get the details right.

“The market we target are old enough





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to know how things should be, and young enough to have the energy to demand it. We have a huge focus on service and maintenance to ensure our guests realise how important they are to us.”

STAY AND DINE AT SHONGWE LOOKOUT.

Shongwe Lookout is comprised of 21 rooms set amongst verdant tropical gardens, landscaped by the manager himself. The layout ensures privacy for each room as many of the guests are couples. Interlocking rooms, however, make it easy for families to stay, while honeymooners can expect a sprawling, extravagantly decorated room if they book the Executive suites.

The lodge is renowned locally for its food. Chef Jason Cook has been an integral part of setting the standard for fine dining food, giving dishes a creative local twist. The menu changes depending on what is seasonal and available, with guests able to choose from several options for dinner and lunch from an elegantly scripted blackboard.

The restaurant has become so popular that it is open for bookings by non-guests, and it is recommended that these bookings are made well in advance.

The breakfast menu remains set and is included in the price of the room. Local Zimbabwean coffee roaster, Mushe Coffee, gives Shongwe Lookout guests their caffeine hit, with a range of local teas, hot chocolates and herbal teas or juices available.

A bar offers guests a fantastic selection of cocktails, wines, and spirits, with a lounge area nearby for those wanting to kick back and relax rather than head up the tower.

The lodge pool is another feature in which Shongwe’s focus on detail comes to the fore. Decoratively tiled by another local company, Burnt Earth Tiles, it combines cooling down with creativity.

Guests can also expect to enjoy tea and coffee trays in their rooms, keep valuables in a safe, cool down with either a fan or an air conditioner, and stay mosquito-free with bold, dramatic nets hung from the ceiling.

ADAPTING THROUGH A COVID-19 ERA

While many lodges in Victoria Falls closed their doors and hunkered down to wait out the global pandemic, Jamie decided to stay open.

“My primary aim was to keep my staff earning,” he said.

“We don’t have a welfare system in Zimbabwe, so in a sense employers are it. I felt it was my responsibility to make sure they could still feed their families, even if they weren’t earning as much as before.”


Jamie says there have been some hard months trying to make sure wages were paid, but local support has been fantastic.

“We’ve kept all of our staff on and managed to pay them a full or part salary every single month. For their families, that’s huge.”

Jamie also ensures that Shongwe Lookout remains committed to impacting the wider community of Victoria Falls. His passion for gardening comes out in the many initiatives Shongwe Lookout is either involved in or has started. His staff also maintain gardens on road verges and are involved in planting trees around the town wherever tourists may otherwise find themselves walking under a hot African sun.

Community gardens are the primary source of fresh produce for the lodge, and Jamie sources staff uniforms from Greenline Africa Trust, an organisation which employs rural women, otherwise trapped in poverty, to sew the uniforms, allowing them to earn an income for their families.

“Our partnership with Greenline is really important to us. We know them, we have seen the relationship they have with local villages, and we know they target schemes that really make a difference,” says Jamie.

“We support them however we can, and when guests ask where they can donate to most effectively help this community, we point them in the direction of Greenline.” 





THE WANDERLUST WITHIN



Snapshot of Angola through the lens of photographer Jasão Ferreira



Meet Jasão Ferreira, Cruise Consultant who was born in Angola and grew up in Portugal. We worked together on a cruise ship over 15 years ago, where an almost permanent feature on his person was his camera!

By Louisa Choruma

His love for photography stems from when he was younger. “When I was a teenager, I began playing around with Papa’s Canon FTB. This camera was silver and black, and a beautiful machine!”, says Jasão. “With it, I learnt the basics about composition, speed, aperture light, and so on.”

WHY HE FELL IN LOVE WITH PHOTOGRAPHY.

He is quick to say that when he is behind the camera, the creativity in him comes alive, with a world of options running through his mind until he achieves the results he desires. Not limited to any particular style of photography, Jasão will take pictures of anything that grabs his attention across all subject matters. And so naturally his portfolio of images can range from a shade to a pose, a smile to an object.

A few years ago, he hosted an exhibition titled “See the world” which was centered around details he found intriguing and made up of interesting composition.

THE LANGUAGE OF IMAGES!

“Images speak a unique language too and can very well fill one’s mind with many questions. Take for instance when I take pictures of people during my travels across my home country of Angola, I often ask myself what situations the people are living through, what are some of the details of their lives and what hopes and dreams do they hold for their future,” Jasão says.

Pictures tell a story and keep our minds in wonderment of the meaning of







varied situations, and that is in fact the power of pictures and the language of imagery.

INSPIRED BY LIFE ON THE CRUISE SHIPS.

“At few years ago, my journey onboard the cruise ships began. The camera was always by my side as I was keen on documenting my adventures at every port of call,” Jasão further adds.

“Travelling across the world and with my work on cruise ships, photography became the passion that I would take with me to the seven seas of this awesome planet!”

With his heart still in Angola, his favorite food is the traditional dish Funge de Mandioca, (a thick porridge made of cassava flour and water), usually served with fish or any other meat option. A lover of wine, Jasão describes his favorite being from Portugal due to its rich diversity. It is the exquisite reds from Douro Valley and the young and fresh green wines from Minho region that he genuinely loves.

“When last he was in Angola, Jasão took his camera everywhere he went as he discovered more of the country that speaks to the essence of his identity. From women at the market selling dried fish, to national monuments and old administrative buildings, children playing or riveting landscapes, Jasão shares a few of his favourite images of Angola through the lenses of one of his most prized possessions, his trusted camera. 📷”







“IT’S A LIFESTYLE”
with PATRICIABLACC

DISCOVERING PATERNOSTER - SOUTH AFRICA'S VERY OWN TASTE OF GREECE.

All white buildings, coastal towns and beauty all around, Paternoster is a quaint little town located just under two hours from Cape Town and is well known for its white-washed cottages resembling those found on Greek's islands. The incredible seafood selections, its restaurants and the pristine beaches offer a wealth of serenity-filled moments and so much more...

The wine farms are stunning to visit, and even better to stay at – but nothing compares to a quick relaxing weekend getaway to a small town where you can immerse yourself in conversations the locals, enjoy private beach walks and wake up in the morning to the sounds of the waves crashing against the rocks. Paternoster in more ways than one is a sweet little seaside retreat that deserves far more attention than it gets, but that also means that it's remained fairly quiet and untainted, an accessible treat and welcome escape from the big city life.

I chose a quiet weekend in May, just before winter settled in. The goal was to retreat and relax on the beach and what an amaz-

ing decision it was. Just a head's up, though — since Paternoster's biggest draw is undoubtedly its relaxing atmosphere, don't expect a booming party scene or a ton of things to do. There's a different pace of life there, and everything shuts down quite early. So, with this in mind, here are my suggestions on the best things to do in Paternoster.

A FEW DAYS IN PATERNOSTER

There are plenty of places for accommodation throughout the town of Paternoster depending on your budget. There are luxe hotels such as the Strandloper Hotel and more budget friendly places like Gonana Guesthouse. For the duration of my stay, I chose to stay at Gonana Guesthouse, a beautiful, warm and very affordable space.

Gonana Guest House is nestled on the banks of the Atlantic Ocean, giving unrestricted views

and access to the ocean. The great room cum kitchen was my favourite part of the entire house. Beautifully decorated, it opens to a deck that faces the ocean, giving you the most breath-taking view especially in the mornings during breakfast. My room was beautifully furnished with earthy tones that complimented my view of the water-wise garden, a site that was purely magical in itself.

Being able to see and hear the ocean upon waking up and just before I went to bed was dreamy. The ambience of Gonana Guest House is a warm invitation to an opportunity to reclaim your life and all its beautiful moments with a picturesque setting as your backdrop. A sparkling blue splash pool, adjacent deck chairs, and an upstairs communal area that features comfortable couches, a collection of books for those that like to tuck into a great read during their time of rest, a fireplace, an honesty bar, locally



produced gifts and skincare items for sale are some of the many features that made my stay that much more special. One really heads home having experienced value for money with unsurpassed settings to match.

CONTEMPORARY LUXURY AT THE STRANDLOPER HOTEL

A fusion of beach style and contemporary luxury; with organic lines, hues and textures that still carry an overall feeling of simplicity, the Strandloper Hotel is an awesome choice for someone with a knack for the glam that comes with a luxurious boutique hotel. Each room has its own terrace or courtyard, some with small splash pools, and wide doors that open out onto breath-taking views of sky, sand, sea and space. Located a mere 3 minutes-walk from the

beach, the Strandloper is the perfect location to relax and take in the beauty that the West Coast has to offer. It's a gem that will have you wanting to stay longer, and I especially look forward to making a trip to experience its luxurious appeal in the future.


DINING IN PATERNOSTER

There is an eclectic variety of eateries in Paternoster, from swanky restaurants to grab-and-go spots with more casual options for dining. Known for its impeccably fresh seafood – for obvious reasons - you won't struggle to find a restaurant willing to satisfy your oyster or your perfectly fried hake cravings.

During my stay, I had the privilege of trying out Gaaitjie on my first night in Paternoster. It came highly recommended from the host at my guesthouse and it certainly did not disappoint. The menu is quite limited but also a showcase of some very interesting dishes, including less conventional ingredient combinations that were well thought by the resident chef. Exquisitely prepared dishes and prompt and courteous service are a win for any guest, naturally complementing Paternoster's unique setting and vibe.

Dining at Leeto, located within Strandloper Hotel is a delightful experience, with a menu that is also a spectacular showcase of seafood delicacies such as mussel soup and oysters for starters, or seafood risotto for mains. Perfectly positioned within the premises of the Strandloper, your views as you dine grant you a perfect picture of the sea even as you relax on the porch while sipping the finest local wine.

A quiet town, Paternoster

is an escape from the everyday bustle of life in the city, something I value to break the monotony of a busy schedule. Activity-wise, my trip was characterised by a few strolls on the beach and trying out different restaurants during my stay there. From taking a tour of the town, to realising that there wasn't much by way of variety to purchase your essentials or clothing, and that locals have to travel 20 minutes to the nearest town in order to buy household groceries, I still found it to be a pleasurable escape for rest. If calm in a pristine setting is what you are looking for, then Paternoster is the perfect place for you. 



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





PULSE OF THE CITY





When in Namibia...

Stay Social at Avani Windhoek Hotel & Casino



Set in Namibia's vibrant capital, Avani Windhoek Hotel & Casino is the place to sleep, work, and play. This is the perfect start or finish to a great safari experience with plenty to do from living it up in the hotel casino, chilling by the rooftop pool, or exploring downtown Windhoek. The property is great escape if you are travelling with friends or family and the best hotel for business travellers.

Located in the centre of Windhoek's bustling business centre within the confines of the Gustav Voigts Shopping Centre, this stylish hotel has a great deal more to offer guests than its remarkably convenient location, with banks, restaurants and shops of every description in the adjoining shopping centre.

The Casino is at the heart of the hotel and offers guests a pleasurable gaming experience. Boasting comfortable accommodations, with the superb rooftop pool and gym add to the overall guest experience, a nearby sports club also offers guests golf, tennis, squash and bowls. Horse-riding facilities are also in close proximity.

A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE

The Pantry serves up fresh, quick bites for guests on the move, whether they are looking for a healthy snack en-route to a meeting, or comfort food after a long day of work, guests can enjoy a quick alternative to the hotel's other dining options, which are designed for a more relaxing, indulgent experience.

If the finest dishes, fruits and wines are to your flavour, then look no further than the Dunes Restaurant. Open for breakfast, lunch



To learn more about Avani Windhoek Hotel & Casino visit windhoek@avanihotels.com

and dinner, the Dunes Restaurant is an informal restaurant offering an a la carte menu, with choices so sublime and prepared with only the freshest ingredients are.

The Stratos rooftop and restaurant is redefining the social scene in Windhoek and setting itself apart as the ideal location to experience amazing food, drinks and magnificent views of Windhoek. It has fast become the perfect spot to unwind for both business and pleasure, where guests can relax after a busy day or take business partners for a refreshing end to a meeting.

PLANNING AN EVENT IN WINDHOEK?

Avani Windhoek Hotel & Casino offers a small and intimate conference venue and banqueting facility, located on the rooftop of the hotel, with magnificent views of the city.

The Sossusvlei conference facility includes a lobby,

pre-assembly/bar area and a multi-purpose function room. The meeting room is ideal for conferences, seminars, fashion shows, dinner, dancing or cabaret, and can comfortably seat 120 diners banquet style and 150 cinema style seating.

WHEN IN WINDHOEK

Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, is a tranquil, cosmopolitan city offering visitors and travellers a wide range of cultural diversions and entertainment. The Etosha National Park and the Namib Desert offer a close encounter with nature in all its contrasts and complexities, making Windhoek a great destination to go back in town to learn a little about Namibia's colonial history, take to the great outdoors for an exciting safari experience or simply tour some cultural hotspots about town.



Numerous air carriers have direct access to Windhoek, and Windhoek Airport is situated 35 km from the hotel. This international airport is serviced by Air Namibia, South African Airways, British Airways and Lufthansa Airlines, with Air Namibia operating an extensive internal flight schedule, and weekly overseas flights are also available via numerous international airlines. Direct international flights arrive and depart from Windhoek to Cape Town, Johannesburg, Frankfurt and London. 

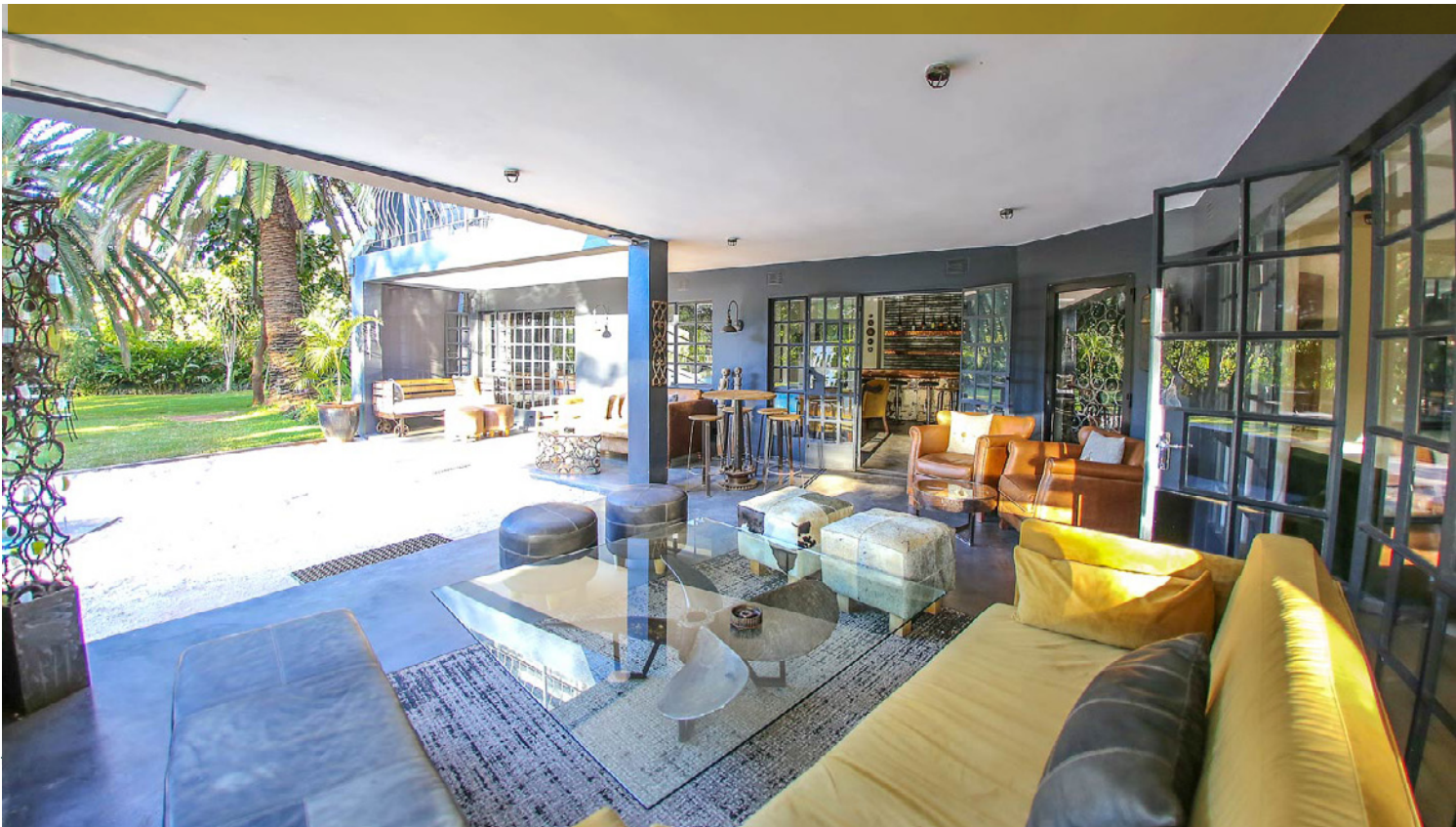


Latitude 13°: Experience the charm of Lilongwe.

▶ **T**he Latitude Hotels Group has long set its pace as a unique African

lifestyle hospitality brand based in affluent suburban areas across the continent. Delivering creative concepts such as members clubs, co-workspaces, a spas, gyms and conferencing facilities, the Latitude Hotels brand offers quality spaces for relaxation that have attracted clients from all over the world, including Europe and America.

The properties are superbly constructed and designed, creating a comfortable retreat amidst the pulse of some of the continent's greatest cities. Latitude 13°, nes-



tled in the leafy lanes on the northern edge of Malawi's capital city, Lilongwe, is one of the hotel group's luxury properties, showcasing eclectic loft-style apartment rooms, garden suites and 3 club rooms.

Latitude 13° is indeed a superb property, characterized by its warm staff, visually captivating environs, and exceptional service. An African contemporary feel with exposed brick, wooden ceilings and floors, and a good dose of ironwork are on standby to draw you in, whether you are in Lilongwe on business and require a quiet space for working, or you are a tourist on a quest to explore Lilongwe.

DINE OUT IN TRUE LATITUDE 13° STYLE.

The Latitude 13° restaurant and bar will satisfy every palate, with the resident chefs serving up sumptuous platters and refreshing mixes of dishes and drinks from all corners of the world, each carrying a unique infusion of African flavours. The new pool-side area is a temple of chic, sustainable local design, conceived to surprise, provoke and delight guests. So, one will never truly be bored as the space carries plenty to not only admire but inspire. No matter the time of day, and whether you are looking to a healthy breakfasts post-gym and pre-work, or tuck into light business lunches and evening indulgences from exotic cocktails and an extensive wine list, to tantalising canapés and delicious fine dining menus, there is plenty for guests to enjoy. One can also book a private event space and allow the staff to take the hassle out of planning their next dinner, cocktail party or celebration.

THE WELLNESS ETHOS AT LATITUDE 13°

The fully equipped gym brings an element of fun and variety to fitness. With treadmills, elliptical trainers, bikes and rowing machines for cardio workouts, ab crunchers, benches, balls and kettlebells for strength sessions, your workout will always be something to look forward to. You can also take your workout to the water, with the heated







18-metre pool outside, allowing you to plough those lengths no matter the weather. Personal trainers are also available onsite to help guests meet their goals. Guests can also join one of the wide range of fitness classes and health-related sessions to mix things up a little, be it music pump or meditation.

If it is a relaxing experience, you are after, the 13 Spa has exactly what you need to alleviate any stress in a moment of total rest through a variety of treatments. So, whatever you are into; Balinese, Indian, Malawian, or Swedish massages for those muscle-soothing, calming, strain-releasing moments, the warm and welcoming staff will take good care of you.


Treatments are infused with natural herbs and ingredients such as Moringa Oil, Green Clay, Rockweed, Alfalfa, Aloe and Geranium, harnessed from a powerhouse of plant-based oils and extracts from African species that have adapted to cope with the harshest conditions on the planet. Their unique product range can help your skin do the same while naturally enhancing your beauty, as all products are inspired entirely by Mother Nature and contain only essential ingredients.

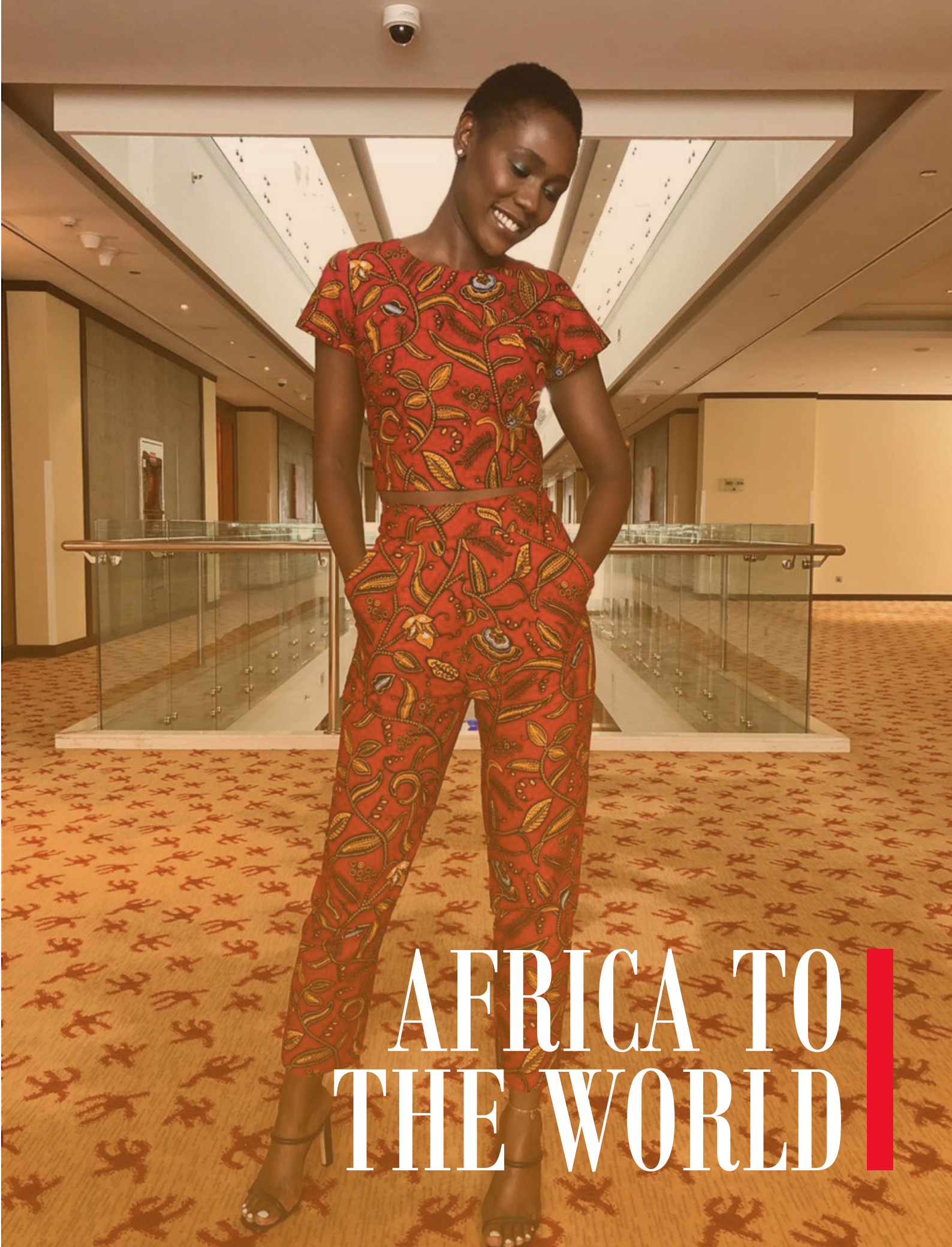
LILONGWE'S CHIC SPOT TO MEET.

The hotel offers a modern business environment that is both stimulating and stylish with a mix of open-plan hot-desking, as well as meeting rooms and conference areas. The collec-

tive meeting spaces can host anything from wedding receptions and parties in celebration of special occasions, business functions and brainstorming sessions or private dinners. This space allows for corporate brainstorming and one-on-one or online meetings. The staff work tirelessly to ensure guests experience uniquely curated events, and Latitude 13° is Lilongwe's tier 1 venue for informal concerts, Ted-style talks, art exhibitions, fashion shows and workshops, all designed to stir the mind and body and stimulate wholesome exchange between guests.

AN INVITATION TO MALAWI

Revered as the "Warm Heart of Africa" with Lilongwe as its capital, a visitor to this small gem of a country is spoilt for choice on what they can get up to during their visit. Latitude Hotels continues to enlarge its footprint across the continent, curating elegant, proudly African inspired experiences at affordable costs. Latitude 13° infuses the spirit of Malawi, from its culinary experiences, opportunities to rest and the rooms in which one chooses to lay their head for a night. Bespoke with personalized service in a tranquil setting is what Latitude 13° offers. And so, if your mind is made up on making Malawi your next Africa travel destination, Latitude 13° may be a great place to start when you touch down in Lilongwe. 



AFRICA TO
THE WORLD





Khanya in African Print by Thenji

BRINGING NDEBELE PRINT TO LIFE IN THE UAE.

Thenjiwe Pamela Ndlovu, affectionately known as MaNdlovu, is a Zimbabwean entrepreneur living and working Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital. Hailing from Bulawayo, the City of Kings (and Queens) Thenji was born and raised in Harare, Zimbabwe, but holds true to every fabric of her Ndebele family roots and cultural linkages, which have in turn been translated into her small business, now making waves within the UAE's African community.



“I am the founder of Khanya in African Print and now co-owner of the family business which we are running in Abu Dhabi and Harare. The brand represents a shared family passion of various African print designs, characterized by bold and bright colours for those who dare to stand out, and subtle too for the more reserved,” cites Thenji.

She encourages her customers to remember that there is an echo of elegance in simplicity. The Khanya in African Print brand represents a fun, comfortable, affordable, cheerful, and casual closet with jollity in its accessories too.

“The aim is to make our clients feel comfortable and still shine while attending events or on regular days. There is always a story to tell through certain prints, and so for me, naturally my favorite is the Nguni/Ndebele print which is significant to my tribe. The print is characterized by different shapes presented in vibrant colours and it is particularly exciting that we are witnessing the translation of elements of our culture into modern wearables,” says Thenji.

FROM STUDYING IN SOUTH AFRICA TO FINDING INSPIRATION FOR BUSINESS

Her journey took flight when she left Zimbabwe for South Africa to pursue her studies. It was in the Rainbow Nation, where she got exposed to numerous cultures and traditions as she travelled during her child safeguarding related projects, voluntary work, and internships in 4 different provinces in South Africa: from Mpumalanga to the Free State, Limpopo, and Gauteng.

“I quickly came to discover just how rich with cultural heritage South Africa is, so my experiences in each province were truly immersive and came jam packed with exposure to unique languages, cultural dressing and mannerisms,” Thenji asserts.

“I was also crowned an Ambassador of my University in 2010 which

opened up more doors of travel for me as a model and Beauty queen back in the day. Leveraging my titles of Miss Turfloop (University of Limpopo) in 2010 (Yes! the same institution attended by Tito Mboweni and current South African President Cyril Ramaposa) I would then go on to scoop Miss SA Campus 1st Princess, hosted in Stellenbosch and Miss University Africa – South Africa, hosted in Nigeria,” she adds.

Over the years, Thenjiwe drew her confidence from the fact that she was able to not only showcase her beauty through modeling, which she grew increasingly passionate about, but also went on to acquire her degree in Social Work during her reign, still delivering on her extracurricular and academic projects beyond what was expected of her. She has since evolved to not only being the proud owner of African print fashion, but is a qualified social worker now registered with three boards. Relocating to the United Arab Emirates has further created opportunities for Thenji to grow

professionally and creatively, now also juggling the world of world of entrepreneurship as she builds her brand both locally, and back home in Zimbabwe.

LESSONS FOR EARLY ADULTHOOD

“My experiences in my auspicious early adulthood years of managing school, travel, and working in corporate with NGO’s molded me into the woman I am today. “It takes a village to raise a girl child,” they say, and it did indeed, with friends and family cheering me all the way through my multitasking and life in general.”

Thenji credits her experiences and view of the world for helping her come to understand the importance of culture and its relevance in society.

“I believe it is important to have is the ability to share and enjoy the arts, manifestations and intellectual activity of society without imposing it on other people or being ethnocentric about it. No culture is better than the other and each is unique and fascinating in its own way,” she states.

“It was a privilege to experience ethno-diversity at Miss University Africa 2012 where I was a debutante amongst 52 others representing each African country. Looking back, I realise that this experience inspired my desire to share my culture through the brand Khanya in African Print in the Middle East, going on to showcase our product-line at events like The Afro-Latin fest, pop-up markets in Dubai and the Africa Fest. Interacting with different nationalities is always fascinating because I always learn something new,” says Thenji.

She also acknowledges her unending hunger and thirst for attaining knowledge and is thrilled at the prospects of one day having her designs showcased at major events like the Dubai African Fashion week.

“What I have learnt about being a Zimbabwean woman, a mom and wife building a business in the Middle East is that you cannot be proud of where you are or where you are going without paying tribute to the past - the good and bad - because it is what makes us. I have



learnt not to give up but to rest because giving up drains momentum but resting rejuvenates you.”

Thenji believes every entrepreneur’s willingness to succeed will determine where they go and end up. Rushing through the process does not guarantee success, but rather consciousness of the varied elements that contribute towards your success.

“As a new business owner in this space a few years ago, I came to realise just how much competition there was even within a minority group; that is Africans living in the UAE. Borrowing of ideas is commonplace and it gave me a wakeup call on the importance of company registration and trademarking for the protection of your brand and hard work.”

Thenji ends by sharing how in social work, two principles come greatly valued – the first being that of maintaining a paper trail and the second, having evidence. She believes the same applies, even in the world of Business and entrepreneurship, as keeping record of one’s hard work is just as important as always having a business plan or proposal ready.

“There will be hiccups trying to please everyone, especially as you try to balance family, personal, social and business responsibilities, but it always comes together when you trust that all of the experiences are a part of the process.” 🍷



130 attendees convened
at the event

Kwibuka 27 in the UAE

RWANDANS, FRIENDS OF
RWANDA IN UAE MARK THE
27TH COMMEMORATION
OF THE 1994 GENOCIDE
AGAINST THE TUTSI

H.E. Jiří Slávek
Ambassador of Czechia





Post the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, thanks to the visionary leadership under President Paul Kagame, Rwanda has risen from the ashes and the renewal journey has been built on key pillars of unity, accountability and people centered development.

Rwandans and friends of Rwanda in the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom of Bahrain came together in Dubai and remotely last month, on Friday 21st May to honor over a million lives killed in a gruesome way during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Addressing the audience, H.E. Emmanuel Hategeka, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the UAE paid tribute to victims and honored survivors who gave all they could by way of forgiveness. He noted that the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi is a stark reminder of the greatest failure of humanity and total failure of the international community in recent history. He called for fighting genocide denial and revisionism.

“The genocide against the Tutsi was stopped 27 years ago, but the genocide ideology and genocide suspects still at large continue to propagate genocide denial and revisionism even among the unborn youth at the time, making the commitment to never again almost mission impossible. On this occasion, I urge the youth in whose hands the future of our country lies to distance themselves from genocide ideology, genocide denial and revisionist narratives,” H.E. Ambassador Hategeka urged.

“We also call upon the international community to recommit to Never Again by bringing to justice genocide suspects still at large. There are now 1,100 genocide fugitives roaming in different countries and they have not been apprehended,” H.E. Ambassador Hategeka added.



Dr. Bideri Diogene of CNLG reminded how the genocide against the Tutsi was planned and implemented



H.E. Reem Ebrahim Al Hashimy and Amb. Hategeka

H.E. Reem Ebrahim Al Hashimy, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation expressed compassion and solidarity: “I am deeply honored and humbled to represent my country at this 27th Commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. This is a very important moment and a very important milestone for us to remember and honor the victims and also for us to pay respect to the survivors and ensure that what happened never happens again. There is a lot of respect, compassion and solidarity from the people of the United Arab Emirates and from the leadership of the United Arab Emirates towards our fellow brethren in Rwanda and also the leadership of Rwanda led by H.E. the President Paul Kagame, who we hold a lot of respect for; we continue to enjoy strong relations with Rwanda.”

FROM ASHES TO A GREAT RISE

Post the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, thanks to the visionary leadership under President Paul Kagame, Rwanda has risen from the ashes and the renewal journey has been built on key pillars of unity, accountability and people centered development.

In April, 2011 while speaking at the 17th Commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi, President Kagame said: “The body of Rwanda was tortured, assaulted, and succumbed but the spirit never died. It is that spirit that should fight on, that spirit will never and should never be defeated. Defending Rwanda’s spirit is within our reach and means.”

More than 90% of Rwandans are currently covered by community-based health insurance scheme. Education, which was polarized by those who controlled the ship of the state before 1994, has experienced a sharp transformation with universal education granted to all children. Electricity connectivity rate in Rwanda is at 61.5% while 87.4% have access to clean water.

Infrastructures that include roads, health facilities and schools saw a dramatic rise. Rule of law, peace, and stability, zero tolerance to corruption have replaced anarchy that existed before. Rwanda is among top four least corrupt countries in Africa. The country ranks first in East Africa and 37th globally in adherence to rule of law according to recent reports.

The economy was growing at a healthy average of 8% for the last decade pre-COVID19. The new economy outlook suggests that Rwanda which had a 0.2% growth in 2020 will recover to a 5.7% this year and 6.8% which is relatively close to the earlier 8% growth before the pandemic.


The Vision 2050 sets a new pathway that will lead the country to the living standards of upper middle income by 2035 and high-income countries by 2050.

RWANDA: AN INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE AN EVOLVING STORY OF HOPE

In an earlier conversation between H. E. Emmanuel Hategeka, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the UAE and Travel Essence Magazine, we asked him where, should one find themselves headed to Rwanda either for business or leisure, they could go to learn more on the history of Rwanda and subsequent milestones as part of the national healing process.

“No visit to Rwanda would be complete without exploring our capital city Kigali, which was founded as an administrative outpost in 1907 and became the capital at independence in 1962. The Kigali Genocide Memorial is a powerful educational experience for visitors which, through education and peacebuilding, honors the memory of and pays tribute to the more than one million Rwandans killed in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi,” he cited.

Rwanda, most referred to as the Land of a Thousand Hills, provides a scenic backdrop from which one can truly connect with the heart of a nation, and its pursuit to become a beacon of inspiration for other nations that have endured a dark past. With a breathtaking showcase of natural splendor across the East African nation’s national parks, visitors are spoilt for choice and slated to enjoy a memorable experience that connects them to the success story of a nation undergoing continued innovation in governance, innovation, and social security.

“Rwanda is truly a dream destination. It is safe and clean, you get to see the Big Six including Mountain Gorillas, the perfect experience with rich fauna and flora - from the savannah to the great lakes and mountain rain forests. I would say it is one destination that one must experience for themselves to deeply appreciate what the nation offers. The Land of a Thousand Hills is open and welcomes travellers from across the globe to experience a loving people, and to explore breathtaking landscapes that bring you in complete harmony with nature!” H.E Emmanuel Hategeka shared. 



A CALL FOR *Contributors*

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

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

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

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

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

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