

# Travel **ESSENCE** MAGAZINE

ISSUE 13 • NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2021

WILD OVER  
WILDERNESS  
SAFARIS'  
LINKWASHA CAMP

*10 picks*  
OF AFRICA'S BEST  
HIKING MOUNTAIN  
RANGES

IN THE LAP OF  
LUXURY AT ST  
REGIS DUBAI,  
THE PALM

KER & DOWNEY®  
AFRICA AND THE  
ALL-FEMALE BLACK  
MAMBA ANTI-  
POACHING UNIT

# SHARON STEAD

BRINGING THE AMALINDA SAFARI  
COLLECTION TO LIFE

# KIZA



TOMORROW AFRICA

## WHERE THE SPIRIT OF UBUNTU COMES ALIVE...

"OUR PEOPLE-CENTRIC CULTURE IS AN ODE TO THE SPIRIT OF TOGETHERNESS. IN THE WORDS OF THE LATE GREAT NELSON MANDELA: "IN AFRICA THERE IS A CONCEPT KNOWN AS 'UBUNTU' - THE PROFOUND SENSE THAT WE ARE HUMAN ONLY THROUGH THE HUMANITY OF OTHERS; THAT IF WE ARE TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING IN THIS WORLD IT WILL IN EQUAL MEASURE BE DUE TO THE WORK AND ACHIEVEMENT OF OTHERS."

The KIZA experience is synonymous with enriched fellowship as we celebrate people that walk through our doors, curate ways in which we add value to the lives of the patrons we in turn value and respect, as well as our family which sets a premium in delivering the exception.

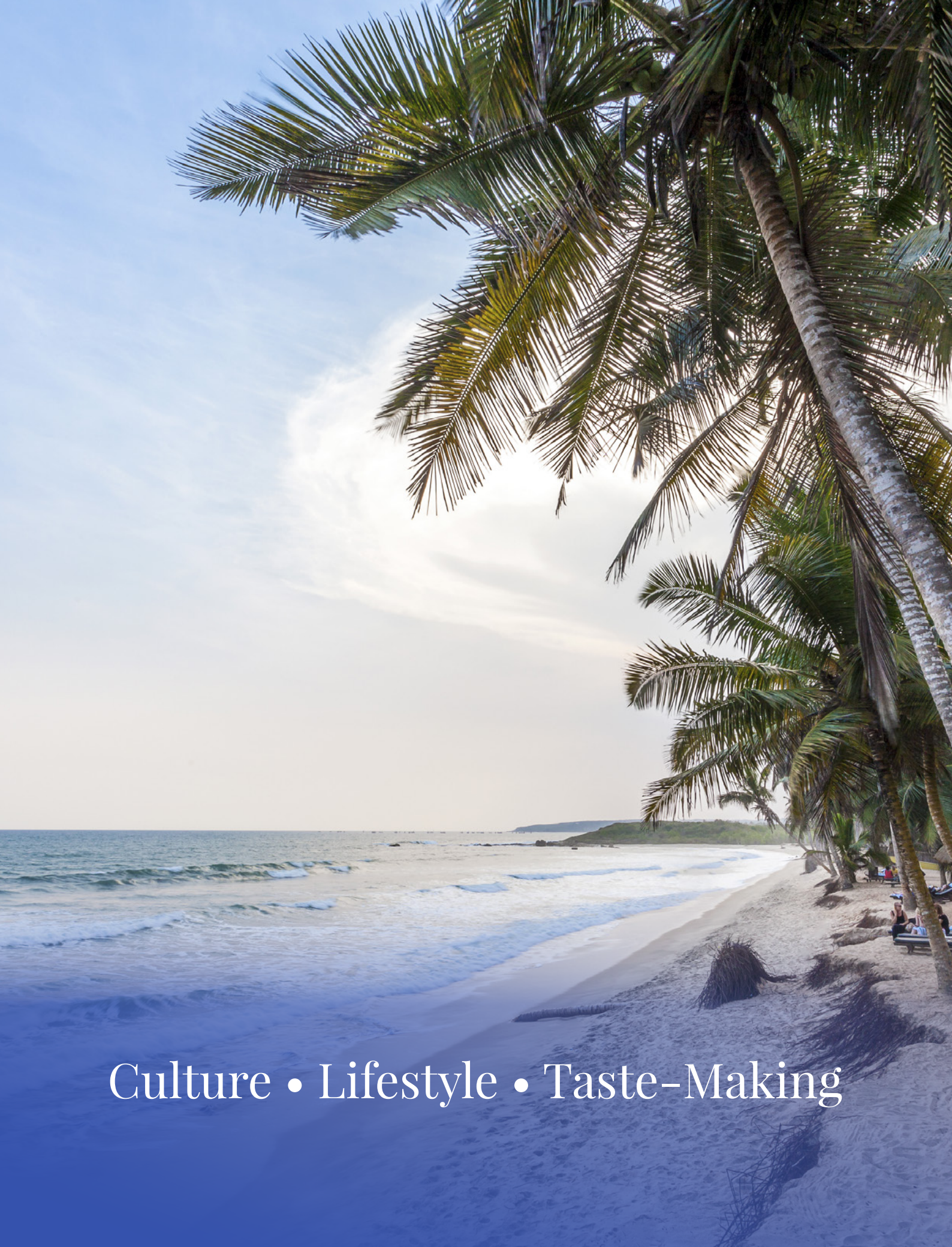
Community to us also means exhibiting our passion for supporting, strengthening and growth through ACTION. From hosting fashion shows, networking events and creative showcases, to sponsoring investment summits, The 12 Inspiring & Entrepreneurial Women, Path to Success with Talent Hive and others - KIZA Dubai is the foremost destination that goes beyond providing an atmosphere for the African community to unwind, dine and be entertained. We are also involved in a myriad of initiatives and mentorship programmes that help foster knowledge-sharing and multi-cultural collaboration in what is viewed as one of the most diverse cities in the world.

*The spirit of 'Ubuntu' is in every sense a part of our operational and organisational fabric. We believe we are because of the people we serve and those that are a part of our growing family.*

Open Daily: Monday - Tuesday : 12pm - 2am | Wednesday - Sunday : 12pm - 5am

Business Lunch: Sunday - Thursday : 12pm - 4pm | Happy Hour: Daily : 6pm - 9pm

Please note that our operating hours may change without notice in compliance with Covid-19 Regulations issued by Dubai Municipality



Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making

# TravelEssence<sup>MAGAZINE</sup>

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





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The evolution of humanity says that Africa reaffirms that she is continuing her rise from the ashes. Whatever the setbacks of the moment, nothing can stop us now! Whatever the difficulties, Africa shall be at peace!

— THABO MBEKI - FORMER PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

**T**he new year is upon us, but we can't begin to look to our future without reflecting on the lessons and adaptations of the past. 2021 has been a year that has widely forced us to accept the fact that we are living through a new norm; one ridden with the impact of COVID-19, news headlines that often profess doom and a host of mutating variants which have affected the upward mobility of travellers across borders. The global pandemic has also, in most if not all markets, translated to job losses and industry set-backs, personal adjustments to the realities of struggles beyond our professional settings, and a need to connect with those we love and value on a deeper level, largely because we have come to realise that life is not promised.

But, we have also witnessed within ourselves and others around us, the resilience of an impassioned people. Regardless of where we are from or what we believe, we have come to appreciate the experiences that teach us plenty, that connect us with the new, and that encourage us to view our cups on the fuller side of life rather than the empty. That in itself, I'm sure we can all agree, gives us HOPE.

As this year closes out, as TravelEssence Magazine, we are thankful for the opportunity to be an industry voice in showcasing the best of what hospitality and tourism avails, both across Africa

and in the UAE where we are domiciled. We've had the pleasure of collaborating with hospitality brands that have long been beacons of service excellence, and look forward to being able to tell more stories of the UAE experience through the lens of African expats in the UAE and region at large. On the continent, our wings after a long pandemic-imposed hiatus from the skies, visiting Cape Town, Hwange and Victoria Falls as we told more stories that answer the question of "Why Africa?"

Our journey has been nothing short of epic, and as we begin to countdown to our two year anniversary, it's through your ongoing support and belief in what we do as content curators and storytellers, that gives us the impetus to keep going. Thanking all our readers, friends and captains of the industry for your outstanding encouragement and support over the past year. We look forward to promoting your unique value proposition, strengthening our position as a travel and lifestyle publication that brings you more reasons to explore some incredible brands and destinations, doing so with safety protocols as a priority of course!

From our team to yours, compliments of the season, and wishing you a prosperous 2022. 🍷

Your truly,

*Gywnne C. Mtengwa*



Travel  
Essence  
*Getaways*

YOUR CALL TO EXPLORING AFRICA

## CURATORS OF

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

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Check out our upcoming trips at  
[www.travelessencemag.com](http://www.travelessencemag.com)

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# 08





# Sharon Stead

## Bringing the Amalinda Safari Collection to life

### 1. SHARON, TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, THE “YOUNGER YEARS” STORY AND THE MEMORIES THAT BROUGHT YOU TO WHERE YOU ARE?

My most influential years were spent growing up on my parents’ farm during a war period of our country’s history. It’s definitely those years that moulded my sister and I to be more resilient and capable women. My parents taught us to suck it up - both the good and the bad - and that you get up early and embrace the day as if it was your last. In today’s world, I’m thankful for what those years taught me; to be capable of taking on life’s challenges and to roll with whatever it throws at you. When I look back, there is a kind of rare beauty in these struggles and today, it keeps me striving for better but also to work towards a legacy I’ll be proud to leave behind one day.

I was not a ‘classroom’ learner at school, and so I would daydream about how I would make an impact and what success would look like. I guess I’m still dreaming. What I have learnt is that it’s not about success. There is no personal gain in that, but more so about the friends and relationships you have built along the way. It’s that which determines one’s wealth.

### 2. HOW DID THE AMALINDA SAFARI COLLECTION COME TO LIFE?

My family, the typical Zimbabwean and growing up on a farm, always had friends staying over. There was always plenty of food and fun going on, so I guess I was born into it. The word ‘hospitable’ encapsulates a typical

Zimbabwean! We are gifted in being naturally warm, friendly, and hospitable – those I believe are some of our traits. Then having my hubby with a degree in Hospitality and Management, it all worked out well that we realised we had the flare of homegrown experience hosting and entertaining guests, combined with his professional experience, and that we could turn these into something special.

So, we started the Collection way back when Sustainable Tourism wasn’t even considered, some 30 years ago, but quickly understood that it was the people, the wildlife and environment that needed protecting to continue being prosperous. Without those two C’s - community and conservation - we would have nothing to showcase. My ambition was to ‘own’ the customer throughout his journey on safari around Zimbabwe; so, when we were given the opportunity to develop our footprint in Hwange, I encouraged my family to take up this venture which hugely benefited our collective tenacity.

In 2001 The Mother Africa Trust where we could begin our work in the areas of sustainable tourism ethics. We believe that it’s our responsibility now to pay it forward and protect our industry as a whole. This fundamental ethos of ethics has been placed very firmly on the table in our company.

### 3. HOW EASY OR HARD WAS IT ADAPTING TO THE FACT THAT YOU WERE TURNING A LIFE’S EXPERIENCE INTO A BUSINESS CONCEPT THAT IS NOW AMALINDA SAFARI COLLECTION? WHAT IS THAT ONE THING THAT HAS BECOME AN AMALINDA

### SERVICE HALLMARK AS IT WERE?

You know you grow into it I guess; it was never something we sat around the table discussing. There's a certain amount of 'hospitality' that you can learn, and the rest is either in you or not. My dad is one of the warmest, most genuine people I have ever known, and people gravitate towards him. I hope this has rubbed off on all of us - so I guess to answer you; we've pitched ourselves at being warm, hands-on, interactive with our guests and we love sharing our space with them. Watching their reactions is one of the greatest kicks we get from it. Our core value is 'family', and this is specifically what we bring to the table in our properties, both for our staff and our guests in camp.

The beauty of Amalinda is that there are multiple options in the way of activities to choose from; this includes, but not limited to walking, tracking rhino, an activity that I place right up there with the likes of Gorilla encounters. Matopos is a region of immense spirituality - and we offer cultural excursions into the homesteads of the Matabele tribe via vehicle or by bicycle. You see some incredible landscapes here as the topography of Matobo is truly magnificent.

The historical hike to Cecil John Rhodes Grave and Bushmen paintings, touches your soul. The ancient figurines and animals that are etched into these granite caves are one of a kind, and the stories of Cecil John Rhodes and King Lobengula is part of a by-gone era in our country's history that everyone should learn about when in Zimbabwe.

Hwange is one of Africa's most prominent wildlife areas; unfenced, untamed. It's a bucket list for adventurers and wildlife photographers. Game viewing on foot or by vehicle amongst the mega herds of buffalo and elephant combined with night drives to follow the apex predators and witness nocturnal life is epic.

Guests also love going into the surrounding community with us to experience the work we do with there and their involvement in our projects is immensely appreciated.

### 4. CAN YOU SHED MORE LIGHT ON THE MOTHER AFRICA TRUST? WHAT HAS BECOME THE IMPETUS BEHIND THE WORK YOU DO WITHIN LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

To try pin down one element of Mother Africa Trust (MAT) is hard because each has its different value aspect. In 2016 Zimbabwe experienced a horrific drought; and together with our Trustees, we embarked on a feeding program which for 6 months fed 926 children. It was extremely successful and seen as the biggest privately funded feeding program in Zimbabwe at that time by a private entity. We





measured each child's weight, arm circumference, academic performance, and school attendance, it was incredibly rewarding to see the positive results of this progress. With that, our Girl Child program (empowering young women) elevated our profile to a place where I was awarded Business Woman of 2016 and again in 2017 by the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce.

Conservation is my key focus, and conservation without community involvement is proving to be the most challenging work we've embarked on. The rewards are small, some days I feel like throwing up my hands and saying, 'I can't do this anymore!' However, I was taught as a child, tomorrow is a new day and so comes with it a new gracious vigor to tackle these hurdles again. It's an ongoing cycle.

**5. DO SHARE WITH US YOUR LOVE FOR AFRICA? WHAT IS THERE TO LOVE ABOUT OUR CONTINENT IN YOUR VIEW AND HOW ARE WE SEEING THE FACE OF TRAVEL TO AFRICA CHANGING IN THIS PANDEMIC ERA?**

Well first – AFRICA gives me goosebumps. I love the romance of Africa and I think that's definitely the spirit.



To learn more about the Amalinda Safari Collection, visit [www.amalindacollection.com](http://www.amalindacollection.com)

People fall in love here.... with everything. It's the smells, the views, the vast openness, the sunsets, the people, and it's wildlife - for me that's the spirit of Africa.

Travel for me is the whole adventure, and when I'm not travelling for work, my choice of places includes only those where there are few people and mostly about environment and wildlife. I believe we have entered a period in this Pandemic Era and even post Covid, where space is the new luxury. It's a term more frequently used. Space is the key element in enriching these experiences.

We are seeing travellers asking for longer stays in one destination. Opulence and grandeur are fading out as people search for more fulfilling opportunities, something more soulful and wholesome. It's about getting this mix right. It's a known fact that people wish to travel with family now, with their loved ones or even to meet in these exotic destinations to reconnect with loved ones. Group travel of smaller numbers; that is a maximum of 12, is on trend. We are seeing travellers asking for longer stays, in one destination at faraway places where you don't see other people.

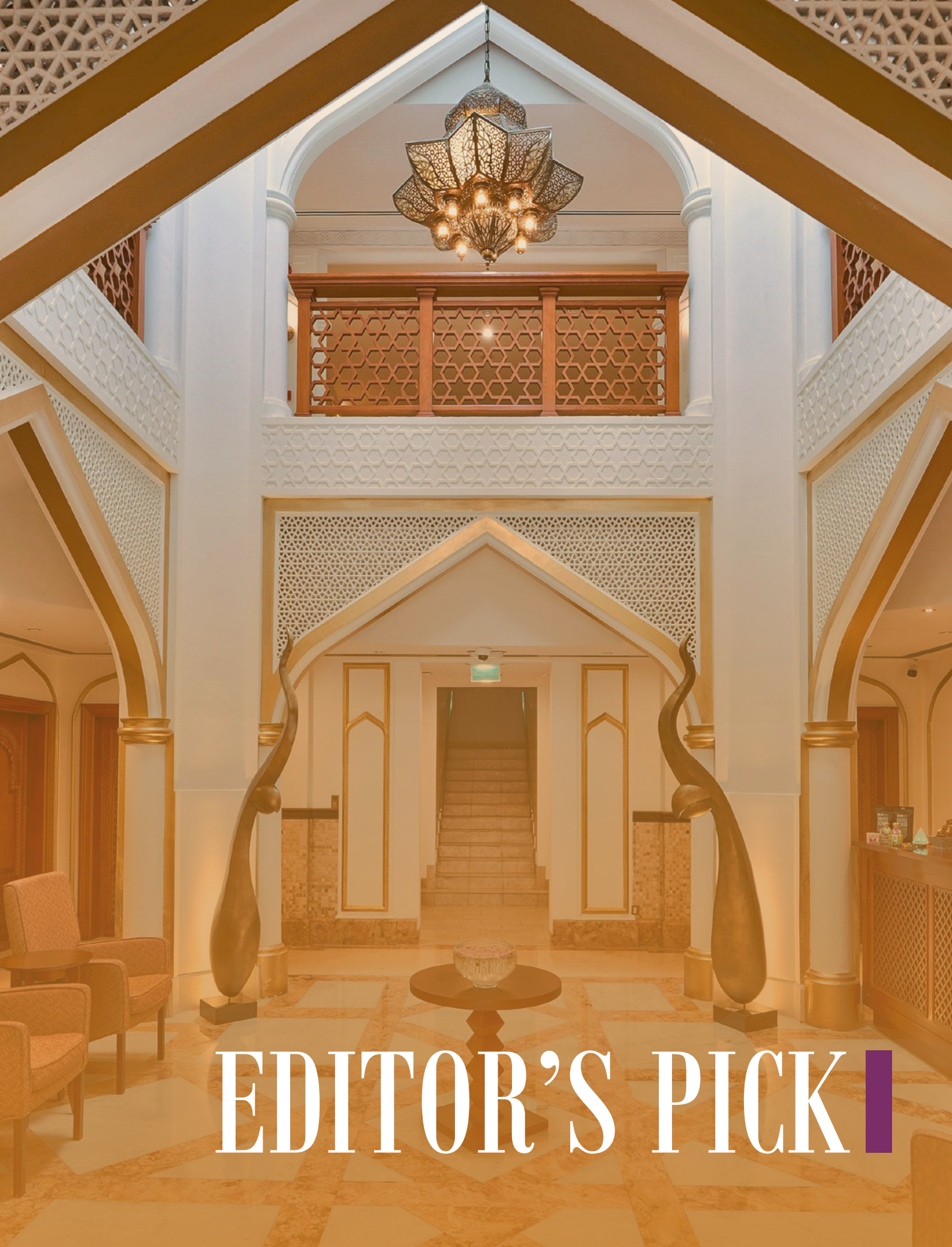
Why not Africa though? African Safaris are the hottest

offerings now in this post Covid era if we can call it that. It's a no-brainer; small safari lodges, personal attention, and space. Wide open spaces. As tourism businesses in the safari landscape, we have encapsulated the meaning of 'safaridistancing'. People are more inclined now, post covid to travel with families and spend longer in a single destination, wishing to avoid big crowds. Safaris are just perfect for that.

## 6. YOUR TOP DESTINATIONS TO EXPLORE ON THE CONTINENT?

Top five destinations in Africa would see Zimbabwe placed No 1 (of course, I'm a Zimbo). Zimbabwe's offering is still so raw and unorchestrated, it's the untouched wilderness and the 'less is more' aspect of the cities which makes it so endearing.

Other destinations in Africa include Botswana, Namibia, Rwanda, and Mozambique simply because of the safari experiences they award travellers. A safari is a life-changing experience, it moves your soul so deeply that we know for certain that you will not be the same person again! 🌍



EDITOR'S PICK |

A wide, paved walkway lined with tall palm trees leading to a large, light-colored building. The scene is bright and sunny, with long shadows cast across the pavement. The palm trees are lush green and line both sides of the path. In the background, a multi-story building with many windows is visible, partially obscured by the trees. The sky is clear and blue.

Mesmerised by Mount Nelson,  
A Belmond Hotel Cape Town

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Our trip to Cape Town was short (a week is never enough to enjoy the magic of the Mother City!) but accommodations so graciously arranged for us by our friends at Ker & Downey Africa, granting us the peaceful retreat my little family craved back on Africa's soil after a long period of limiting our travels from Dubai on account of the global pandemic. We were so fortunate to be welcomed by striking blue Cape Town skies upon arrival, and so you can imagine just how much more pristine my view was as my eyes met the pink façade of the majestic Mount Nelson Hotel, up against the lush green gardens on which it stands, the grey rock face of Table Mountain as the backdrop. The sky, these blue skies which completed the perfect mental postcard visual, are in every way a reminder that you are in the Mother City.

By Yvonne C Mtengwa

**T**he drive through Mount Nelson's stone-columned gates immediately captured our attention, not only on account of how secure the property is, but just the sheer majestic nature of these imposing columns, which we soon learned had been installed in 1925 to welcome the Prince of Wales. At check in, it was obvious that we were soon to uncover the soul of South Africa at this vibrant hideaway with a star-studded history. We were handed two glasses of sparkling champagne, while the kids enjoyed their child friendly version of the same, before discovering a tranquil paradise with countless stories to tell from decades past, is very much an oasis of calm within Cape Town's beating heart.

#### **A QUIET RETREAT AT THE FOOT OF TABLE MOUNTAIN**

Our family suite constituted 2 meticulously decorated rooms with an interleading door between them, each of which was a spectacular showcase of exquisitely restored interiors with quirky modern touches. For those wondering where to stay while

in Cape Town, authentic South African hospitality comes guaranteed at Mount Nelson, with the uniqueness of each room made evident through a sense of understated style. Our rooms were nestled within the main hotel, for ease of convenience in exploring this stunningly inviting property, painted pink for peace in 1918.

As mine was a working visit, I found a little corner in the salon, where I was to enjoy my lunch while the family ventured beyond the premises to explore the neighbourhood in which Mount Nelson sits. I would soon find out just how much there was to enjoy within the hotel's leafy estate, from imaginative local cuisine and cocktails in buzzy restaurants and bars, to expertly tutored art classes and divine spa treatments. Because we came at a time where the industry is grappling with the impact of limited travel due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, for someone who enjoys serenity, our stay awarded us true relaxation.

Guests can relax by any one of the pools, try a hand at a game of tennis with a tennis coach or join a garden tour to discover Mount Nelson's historic trees, beehives and a fascinating wormery. Just






beyond the gates lies Cape Town's hotspots, including hip and happening Kloof Street and the cultural riches of Museum Mile. A shuttle is on hand to take you to the must-see V&A Waterfront, or have you add tailor-made activities to explore the fabulous beaches, wildlife, and winelands of this extraordinary destination. If the desire is to truly unwind and enjoy the spectacular service and surroundings, one can simply sip coffee from cosy seating on the outdoor terrace or sun lounge, admire vibrant native artwork, settle among local weavings and comfy leather furniture, or unwind on the sun-spotted balconies from their rooms.

### EXPLORE THE ALLURE OF CAPE TOWN

It is said that centuries of exploration, trade and settlement have fashioned a melting pot of culture. One would simply have to visit Cape Town to understand why there is nothing quite like this beautiful city on the southernmost tip of Africa. Back in 1488, Portuguese explorer Bartholomeu Dias rounded the dramatic headland that dominates Africa's southern coast, and since then, settlers from the world over have been irresistibly drawn to what became known as the Cape of Good Hope. Joining the indigenous Khoikhoi people, together they have shaped what is one of the world's most dynamic cities, nestling beneath Table Mountain and framed by sparkling seas.

Today, Cape Town's eclectic, energetic culture is an intrinsic part of what keeps its citizen's staying and travellers from beyond Africa's coasts coming back. From the vibrancy of African craft markets to imposing colonial architecture and a veritable smorgasbord of cuisine served from only the chicest of restaurants and cafes, it's an unmissable destination for urbanites, adventurers, the youth and the young at heart. It's when you step outside your hotel room to venture out in discovery of the allure of Cape Town, that you are swept into breath-taking landscapes, winding roads, quirky shops, stalls, and eateries that will leave you planning for your next excursion.

Watch the sun rise from a craggy clifftop, paddle with penguins, or roam the dazzling diversity of the fynbos floral kingdom. An absolute treat for wine connoisseurs is an opportunity to meander among vineyards by vintage car, while beach lovers are utterly spoilt for choice for things to do or places to dine.

There's an amazing dynamism to the Mother City – seen everywhere from adrenaline fuelled activities such as shark cage diving to thrilling new galleries showcasing leading-edge art. And then, beneath the enduring gaze of Table Mountain, a stone's throw from the action, you'll find Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel, where you will enter their verdant gardens, inhale the scented air – and let your South African escape begin. 





# HILTON RAS AL KHAIMAH BEACH RESORT FOR YOUR YEAR-ROUND BEACHFRONT ESCAPE

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**F**amilies and friends looking for an idyllic beachside destination for that much-needed escape from the UAE's cityscapes need not look further than Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort. The drive from either Dubai or Abu Dhabi will set your feet on the resort grounds in under two hours, perfect for a little staycation in the sun, and putting you within arms reach from some incredible adventure-focused activities either on water or up the UAE's highest mountain, Jebel Jais a short drive away from the resort. With unbeatable staycation deals on offer throughout the year, it's always a fitting opportunity to enjoy some outstanding hospitality, access to pristine private beaches and delicious culinary delights for the entire family.

*Privacy guaranteed with beachfront villas*

This stunning beachfront hotel in Ras Al Khaimah, the UAE's northernmost emirate, invites guests to check into their own private paradise with its collection of secluded villas that are perfect for families, couples and groups of friends. With stunning views of the azure waters of the Straits of Hormuz and the hotel's pristine beach, each of the spacious villas offers a relaxing retreat, complete with five-star amenities.

Should the preference be to enjoy a room beyond the resort's main complex, guests are welcomed to choose from a range of villa options, including the Deluxe Suite Seafrost



Villa or the Deluxe Suite Villa with Beach Access. For larger groups of guests, there is also the two-bedroom family villa which comes with your very own private pool, as well as the two-bedroom seafront family villa, all villas of which were recently refurbished and tastefully decorated. The resort's villas are located on a stretch of private beach away from the main building complex, and so if privacy away from the hive of activity at the main complex is what you crave, then the Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort's collection of villas offer the ideal mix of seclusion, comfort and exceptional service.

### *Eclectic dining experiences on the Arabian Gulf*

Dining and entertainment are at the heart of the experience at Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort, with spectacular views, cuisine and delicious drinks on offer across 9 exquisite venues. Specialty options include fine Italian cuisine at Piaceri da Gustare and Lebanese inspired dishes at Al Maeda, with a wide variety of outlets to choose from for a more casual, beachside culinary experience.

**AL MAEDA** is one of Ras Al Khaimah's most outstanding contemporary Lebanese inspired restaurants, awarding guests a spectacular showcase of authentic tastes, colors and aromas of the Levant. Gather family and friends to sample delicious dishes including the smoked lamb Frikh and Fish Saiyadiyah whilst enjoying an unforgettable dining experience with unobstructed views to the magnificent Arabian Gulf.

**DOME LOUNGE** is the perfect spot to meet with business colleagues or friends to enjoy a sociable drink, or soak in the views of a glorious sunset on the outdoor terrace of the Dome Lounge. Choose from the outlet's extensive list of mocktails, cocktails, bubbly, and aperitifs or try fresh salads, appetizers, and light meals to go along with the drinks.

**PIACERI DA GUSTARE** grants you the opportunity to indulge in the finest à la carte Italian classics, paired with fine wines from an extensive collection at this elegant restaurant. Fancy a taste of traditional Italian







desserts? What more than to close off your dining experience with a gelato or sorbet!

**X.O.**

For your after-dinner vintage port or cognac in this chic and stylish bar at the Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort, X.O. is the place to be wowed by the resident mixologist, with delightful platters to accompany your drinks.

What's a beachside resort without a selection of beachfront bars? Rio Beach Bar, Sol Beach Lounge & Bar as well as the Sunset Bar, are all located on the pristine seashores of the resort, putting you the mood for a relaxed fun or a little party among friends and family to the sound of cool club music as you take a dip in the pool or sea. The sunsets are glorious, perfect for photos you'll cherish long after you've checked out.

**An oasis of relaxation**

Not only can you enjoy waterfront relaxation by frolicking at the beach, but if it's the ultimate opportunity to disconnect you are after, discover the oasis of tranquility that awaits you at Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort's award-winning Spa, where guests can enjoy a wide selection of treatments available at The Spa for the ultimate glow up. From booking a 60-minute massage to opting for a relaxing facial, the spa always offers a full range of treatment packages, using only organic products from Esse, guaranteeing you a blissful and rejuvenating experience to help you achieve the perfect glow and leaving you feeling totally refreshed. The Spa features twelve treatment rooms for men and women as well as two Moroccan Hammams, a Himalayan Salt room plus a sauna and steam room.

**A household name in hospitality**

For 100 years, Hilton Hotels & Resorts has set the benchmark for hospitality around the world, providing new product innovations and services to meet guests' evolving needs. The Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort is one of more than 585 hotels across six continents, all located in the world's most sought-after destinations for guests who know that where they stay matters. So if you are looking for a beachfront staycation on the coastline of the UAE, head on over to this resort for the ultimate stay with loved ones. 

EDITOR'S PICK • ST REGIS DUBAI, THE PALM



# In the lap of luxury at *St Regis Dubai, The Palm*

The tagline reads “Stay exquisite” and within good reason. An address on the iconic Palm Jumeirah Islands, islands built from reclaimed land in a series of artificial archipelagos, often captures the imagination for all in Dubai for a time or calling the city home. St Regis Dubai, The Palm is the newest hotel to open its doors to guests, ushering them into the lap of luxury in this 290-roomed tower located in the heart of the iconic Palm.

By Yvonne C Mtengwa





**C**onnected to Nakheel Mall with 300 shops, restaurants, entertainment outlets, a cinema complex and its own Palm Monorail station, the St Regis Dubai, The Palm hotel is an opulent retreat to both leisure travellers on a quest for escapism with the buzz of the city right outside their walls, or the chic business traveller who values exceptional service in the throngs of standout design aesthetic. A stay at The St. Regis Dubai, The Palm is the ideal starting point and an open invitation for guests to explore the island, its stunning beaches and breath-taking views while also discovering the city's main attractions, malls, and business districts a short drive from Sheikh Zayed Road.

### *An unsurpassed guest and dining experience*

We checked into two of 290 guestrooms and suites, whose white, peach, and yellow and rose gold décor palettes were a promise of comforting relaxation. The hotel's graciously appointed, spacious accommodations offer ceiling-to-floor windows and exquisite views of the Palm Jumeirah, the Arabian Sea and some of Dubai's imposing skyline. The elegant decor avails distinctive style while guests enjoy a tranquil night's sleep on the feather-soft mattress with Frette linen and down-filled pillows. All rooms boast a dedicated seating area and a wardrobe area with abundant closet and luggage space. An added special touch was our 24-hour access to the highly personalized St. Regis Butler services, available for



all guests staying at the property. If travelling with children, guests will be delighted to note that there are also childcare services on offer, and of course the turn down service is a treat to cosy you up for the remainder of your evening.

The St. Regis Dubai, The Palm offers handcrafted menus across four unparalleled restaurants, bars, and lounges. Featuring natural sophistication, creative mixology and time-honoured traditions, guests can indulge in impeccable cuisine and an immersive wine selection at Cordelia. Her by Caroline Astor is a ladies-only afternoon tea lounge where guests can relish luxurious pastries paired with an exquisite selection of afternoon teas. At The St.





Regis Bar, guests savour the signature Bloody Mary, and The Dip Pool Bar offers poolside beverages and bites. As the day transitions into evening, the signature Evening Ritual takes place at The St. Regis Bar with the sabering of champagne, the room of which is a spectacle, with a glistening showcase of the marriage between dramatic lighting and expensive wine bottles for the picking.

*All your leisure and relaxation needs met*


Home to three separate treatment suites for both men and women, guests can soothe the soul and unwind with lavish massages, facials, manicures, pedicures, and crafted rituals at the intimate 791 sqm Iridium Spa. Relax by the two infinity swimming pools overlooking the iconic Palm Jumeirah with one of them dedicated to families with kids. For the fitness conscious, a 24-hour Exercise Room is available, offering a variety of free weights, weight machines and cardiovascular equipment for use, while the Exercise Room offers everything you need to stay in shape during your stay in Dubai.

For guests seeking an idyllic beach escape with a variety of sumptuous platters and refreshing drinks on Palm Jumeirah,

The St. Regis Dubai, The Palm also offers a private beach club located on Palm West Beach, accessible by a hotel shuttle or a short walk. The Beach Club is fully equipped with sun loungers, cabanas, private changing rooms, and shower facilities.

*Beyond the hotel premises*

The hotel is situated near The Pointe – Dubai's newest waterfront destination offering unrivalled dining, entertainment, leisure, and home to the world's largest fountain. Al Itihad Park is right at the doorstep and its 3.2 km jogging track is ideal for a stroll amongst the lush trees and flora. Preferred for a perfect workout, the park includes a variety of gym equipment along the way with nearby cafés offering healthy and refreshing drinks to replenish your energy stores.

Should you be looking for an experience in one of Dubai's newest hotels located in the city's most prolific address, with exceptional yet personalised service being a pre-requisite for your stay, then perhaps booking your exquisite stay at The St Regis. Dubai, The Palm Jumeirah should be on your cards. 



# TASTE-MAKERS |





# Fireside chat with Mike Vroom: Personal development in hospitality and growth at Newmark Hotels, Reserves and Lodges

## 1. MIKE, TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, CHRONICLES OF GROWING UP AND HOW YOUR EXPERIENCES SHAPED THE WAY YOU NOW DO LIFE?

I grew up in Johannesburg where I did my junior school studies. I was lucky to have a twin brother and amazing parents who have both played an integral part in who I am today from a personal and professional standpoint. I then moved to Cape Town where I completed my high school and tertiary education. I was privileged to gain insight from my dad into the corporate world of retail and the strong relationships that build a business. Having from a young age been involved in business and learning the values of hard work, passion for what you do and dedication to what you love, I believe this has been some of the best building blocks I could have asked for.

## 2. DO SHARE WITH OUR READERS WHAT IT WAS THAT INSPIRED YOUR ENTRY INTO THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY?

I was privileged to have travelled extensively when I was younger, and I was always fascinated that these amazing hotels never switched off and the staff always seemed to know everything about you. I was also very intrigued by the “mini cities” behind the “No Entry” signs that make up the heart of the Back of House in any hotel.

## 3. YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED RAPID GROWTH IN THE INDUSTRY, HAVING STARTED IN F&B BEFORE GRAVITATING TOWARDS OPERATIONS. TAKE US THROUGH WHAT ATTRIBUTES ARE REQUIRED FOR ANYONE LOOKING TO VENTURE NOT ONLY INTO HOSPITALITY, BUT TO ALSO ATTAIN SUCCESS WORKING FOR AN AWARD-WINNING HOSPITALITY BRAND?

I believe there are several attributes that lead to success. The first and most important is that you must love what you do. The hours are long, and pressures are high, but it's like a bug that bites you. It is such an incredible world and industry to work in. A key component to success is also the relationships and the personal brand that you create. Hard work is a given, but the teams that I have worked with over my many years are who truly deliver the amazing experiences and service we provide. As leaders, it is imperative that we provide the guidance, understanding, learnings and support that allows our teams to thrive. Finally, and key to any success is the ability to be authentic and true to oneself.

## 4. YOU SPENT A SEASON IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WORKING AT ONE OF DUBAI'S ICONIC DESTINATIONS – THE PALM JUMEIRAH. WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE FOR YOU, COMING OUT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S HOSPITALITY OFFERING AND CHOOSING TO PURSUE GROWTH IN A

## NOTABLE HOSPITALITY MECCA?

I do strongly believe that working aboard and furthering your horizon and learning is a key development opportunity. Having worked with a team of 40 different nationalities offered huge insight, understanding and growth. Dubai is an amazing part of the world and to some extent, a city that never sleeps. I was honored to be part of a superb executive team at Dukes Dubai, which was awarded “World's Leading new hotel” in 2017.

## 5. AS WITH EXPATS, HOME OFTEN CALLS US BACK. TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT REJOINING THE NEWMARK HOTELS FAMILY? WHAT BROUGHT YOU BACK TO THE BRAND?

I worked with Neil Markovitz our CEO previously and had followed Newmark's growth over the years I was away. I really enjoyed watching how more and more iconic properties were joining Newmark and how they approached hospitality and brand/hotel awareness differently. When he called and took me through the vision and forward plan, I knew it was something I wanted to be a part of. There is nothing more special than touching down in South Africa when you have been away. I haven't been able to put my finger on it, but whether it's the warmth of our nation, the bright smiles as you get as you exit the plane or just hearing your mother tongue, it truly is magical being back.

## 6. DO SHED LIGHT ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEWMARK HOTELS, RESERVES AND LODGES EXPERIENCE.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BRAND'S STAND OUT SERVICE AND EXPERIENTIAL HALLMARKS?

We at Newmark thrive on creating unique experiences while enriching lives. Each of our properties has its own unique offerings and specials elements, however the overriding factor will always be the service. Our teams on the ground play a huge role in the day to day experiences, and its these experiences which drive memorable and unique offerings throughout our portfolio.

## 7. YOU'VE BEEN ASKED TO SELL CAPE TOWN AND A STAY AT ONE OF YOUR PROPERTIES IN THE CITY TO A GROUP OF TRAVELLERS COMING IN FROM THE MIDDLE EAST? WHY CAPE TOWN FOR YOU?

Cape Town for me is a bucket list destination. The culture, people, scenery, and history of this beautiful city sells itself. There are not many places in the world where you can stand on top of Table Mountain, visit the penguins at Boulders, visit Robben Island and experience the restaurant, bar, and wine culture all within the borders of one city. Above this, I believe that the truly authentic, passionate, and real hospitality (something about us South Africans) that we bring make this a must visit destination.

## 8. WHAT INSIGHTS DO YOU HAVE TO SHARE FOR ANY YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKING TO ENTER SOUTH AFRICA'S HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AT THE MINUTE? WHAT KNOWLEDGE SHOULD THEY FUNDAMENTALLY POSSESS TO SUCCEED IN THE INDUSTRY?

There are several areas which I think are important to building the fundamentals of successful leadership and management. Firstly, we are in the service industry, so customer focus is key. Secondly, your ability to be culturally aware and adapt to attitudes and norms that are different from your own is crucial. Thirdly, communication is very important. It is key that you are able to communicate clearly with your fellow staff members, especially in busy, high-pressure environments. Work ethic comes fourth. Hospitality is known for hard work and it's important that your work ethic is a focus. Number five would be attention to detail. Although your attention to detail won't make or break your hospitality career, guests and patrons have high expectations that they expect to be met. Lastly, I'll go with the need for professionalism. Most employers in the hospitality industry rely on their customer-facing staff to uphold the reputation of their brand. It is therefore very important that, at all times, you remain highly professional, irrespective of the situation you find yourself in.

## 9. WITH THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE INDUSTRY OVER THE PAST YEAR OR TWO, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC, WHAT ARE YOUR PERSPECTIVES ON TRENDS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM TO WATCH FOR IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS?

The hospitality industry has been through an unprecedented time over the last 18 months but has shown such amazing resilience. The comeback is going to be undoubtably strong, and I believe that experiential travel and unique travel opportunities

is going to play a big role in the next few years. Guests are wanting to go to more remote locations and are being driven more on experience than the traditional traveler we are used to.

I do also believe that eco/sustainable tourism is going to play a significant part in the years to come. Global warming is an increasing topic of awareness and guests are certainly more conscious and interested in the hotels and places they are visiting and the roles those destinations contribute to changing this. There is also an effort to make solo travellers feel more comfortable, barriers between hotel staff and guests are being lowered, interior design choices are being made to evoke a sense of homeliness and an informal atmosphere is being cultivated. These are some of the key trends I believe we will begin witnessing more of in the coming three years.

## 10. MIKE WHEN HE'S NOT IN A SUIT BEING A HOTELIER? WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU ENJOY SOME TIME TO YOURSELF?


I was recently blessed with a beautiful little girl, so spending family time is very important to recharging my batteries. I also enjoy being able to spend time with my friends, a good run around a squash court and some travelling in between makes up the rest. I have also been privileged to work in the South African Police Service for the last 15 years as a reservist, which allows me to give back to the greater community which I find very rewarding.

## 11. NAME 3 OF YOUR TOP DESTINATIONS TO EXPERIENCE IN AFRICA AND WHY?

There is so much that Africa has to offer and so that's very difficult to pin down 3. Of course, I am slightly biased to my beautiful home country as there are some many experiences and destinations within South Africa that are truly out of this world. But if I had to look into Africa, I would say the following:

1. Doing safari in the Serengeti or the Mara. The abundance of wildlife and open expanses are just breathtaking. Lying in a tent in the Serengeti listening to hundreds of thousands of Wildebeest walking past is surreal.
2. Gorilla trekking in Rwanda. There has been significant work done to ensure these amazing animals are looked after and their population restored. These once in a lifetime opportunities will stick with you forever.
3. Lying on the beach in Mauritius for a week. This small island has so much to offer from a cultural and learning perspective, but also from a hospitality standpoint. From the sugar cane plantations to the rum production and the abundance of sea exploration and food – Mauritius really is a piece of paradise.

## 12. WORDS THAT MIKE VROOM LIVES BY.

Be true to yourself and what you stand for. We are all our own individual brands and it's that brand that makes us unique and special. Also, remember that we have the greatest opportunity to make someone's day each day, and that starts with a simple smile and a good morning. 



# CULINARY ESCAPADES



# DUBAI'S RECIPE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FEATURES DIVERSE AGRICULTURAL OFFERINGS



**S**ustainable farming is gathering pace in Dubai. With a large focus on food security and regenerative farming practices, Dubai's 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. The city offers a multitude of opportunities for residents and visitors to support enterprise, as well as providing a new lens through which to experience Dubai.

As vertical farming, including aquaculture and hydroponic farming, become increasingly popular, they are helping the city chart the course towards a more sustainable future. Supporting the UAE's food security goals, vertical farms are enabling consumers to be closer to their produce. Local produce is taking over the dining table at a number of destinations across the city, with eight of Atlantis, The Palm's restaurants serving dishes with ingredients grown and harvested in Dubai. Local favourites such as, The Pangolin, The Locale at Andaz Dubai and more are also placing emphasis on using locally grown produce.

*Youssef Lootah, Vice*



**Chairman of Dubai Sustainable Tourism** said: “Dubai continues to progress towards its goal to be one of the world’s most dynamic and forward-thinking, sustainable tourism destinations, aligned with the “Year of the 50th” announcement from HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE. Sustainability is one of the UAE’s four strategic pillars for the next 50 years and Dubai Tourism and Dubai Sustainable Tourism strive to collaborate with stakeholders, partners and private companies to boost wellbeing, act as a steward for nature and the environment, support communities and transform the economic future of the UAE.”

“Dubai is a city with a number of local farms. Even amid arid weather conditions, vertical and hydroponic farms make it possible for consumers to enjoy fresh, local produce year-round. A number of celebrated restaurants, chefs and hotels in the city are recognising the importance of using locally sourced ingredients, which are not only better for the environment but also superior in freshness and taste compared to imported goods. We are proud to work closely with the private sector to celebrate locally grown cuisine and champion the farmers who help the UAE realise its ambitious National Food Security Strategy 2051 and employ resilient agricultural practices, while helping maintain natural ecosystems.”

*Emma Banks*, **Vice President, F&B Strategy and Operations, Hilton, EMEA**, said, “I am delighted to share that Hilton has partnered with Fresh on Table, an agri-tech platform, to launch Growth of the UAE – a new menu which uses homegrown ingredients to create dishes bursting with freshness. As the UAE sets the stage for Expo and celebrates the Year of the 50th, Growth of the UAE is an important step

towards assisting the country’s food security mission, reducing our environmental footprint and providing a great culinary experience to our guests.”

*Kelly Timmins*, **Director of Conservation, Education and CSR at Atlantis, Dubai** commented: “At Atlantis, Dubai, we recently launched the Atlantis Atlas Project, our commitment to sustainability. As a large-scale hotel operation with 35 food and beverage outlets, reducing our carbon footprint through responsible operations are important to us and increasingly, to our guests. We are currently running sustainable menus in eight of our restaurants, set to expand further due to their popularity. We source an increasing number of ingredients from a number of hydroponic vertical farms that have been locally, organically, and responsibly sourced, for example microgreens, lettuces, heirloom tomatoes and mushrooms. We work with Fresh on Table, a facilitator which connects customers with local farms, delivering fresh produce on the same day it is harvested. This relationship supports

local businesses and helps to ensure that we can supply our restaurants with enough locally grown produce – while minimising waste.”

**SOME OF THE LOCAL FARMS IN DUBAI PROVIDING SUSTAINABLY GROWN, LOCAL PRODUCE TO RESTAURANT GROUPS AND CONSUMERS DIRECTLY INCLUDE:**

**Sokovo Vertical Farm**, an indoor farm spanning over 100,000 sq ft, is gearing up to establish a vertical farm which will produce thousands of tonnes of leafy greens, fruits and vegetables per year. The hydroponic facility will grow fresh kale, spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, strawberries and melons, providing a number of supermarkets, hotels and restaurants in the UAE with fresh and healthy produce.

**Badia Farms** is the UAE’s first urban vertical farm to grow micro-greens and herbs. Consuming an incredible 90 per cent less water than open field growing, Badia Farms’ vertical farming methods champion sustainable agriculture and provide a number of high profile restaurants such as Coya, Gaia, Tashas and more with locally grown, gourmet quality produce.

**Uns Farm in Al Quoz** was established to offer residents of the UAE with high quality, farm fresh produce, grown locally within urban spaces. Their harvests include a variety of crops ranging from leafy to micro greens, herbs to fresh fodder, and strawberries to mushrooms, amongst others. The Farm has a vision to supply premium quality produce to hotels, restaurants and cafes, along with airlines, hospitals, schools, supermarkets and hypermarkets in an effort to create a self-sufficient food system in the UAE, while helping offset carbon footprints.

Chef Ben Tobitt co-founded **Ben’s Farmhouse** to supply local farm-grown produce to hotels across the UAE with salads, sandwiches, desserts and snacks to be used in their coffee shops and cafes. The concept was influenced by the rich diversity and innovations in fresh, local farm-grown produce, coupled with a desire to support local growers and suppliers in the country to showcase the huge steps Dubai and the UAE has made in food security by using locally produced ingredients such as; vegetables, fruit, fish, poultry and dairy. Ben’s Farmhouse will also supply a large food pavilion at Expo, which will give exposure of the products to a larger volume of the visitors and tourists in Dubai.


**Oasis Greens** is a hydroponics, vertical farm growing fresh leafy greens and herbs in Dubai. Oasis Greens was born out of the desire to increase access to fresh, locally grown produce at par with market prices in addition to investing in sustainable food systems in the UAE. The farm grows all varieties of leafy greens such as rocket, several lettuce varieties, bok choy, and kale. It supplies produce to the country’s restaurants, hotels and groceries within hours of harvesting in the morning.

**Emirates Hydroponics Farms** aims to promote clean and ethical farming practices to produce fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables. The farm, which opened in 2005, produces vine-ripened hothouse tomatoes, pest-free lettuce and cucumbers and a range of other vegetables grown in greenhouses. By growing produce in a greenhouse, Emirates Hydroponics Farms reduces the need for pesticides, while extending the growing season for local produce. Hydroponic methods used for growing vegetables enable the farm to accurately manage both water and nutrients as required by the plants throughout their growing stage, from when the seeds are first planted through to final harvest.

**Desert Organic** is 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.

**Andaz Dubai The Palm** partnered with **Green Container Advanced Farming** to grow its own fresh produce on site. The hotel boasts a 400 sq ft hydroponic organic container farm on its terrace, where it harvests fresh produce such as lettuce, herbs and microgreens. Guests visiting Andaz’s dining concepts including The Locale, Hanami and La Coco will be able to enjoy dishes made with ingredients sourced daily from the farm.

“At Andaz Dubai the Palm we continuously seek new ways to contribute to a more sustainable future in every aspect of our hotel and day to day. Our biggest asset to combat and contribute to the environmental issues, is the implementation of the hydroponic organic chamber. A way to create a more efficient crop production, delivering fresh and natural ingredients to our guests in all dishes throughout our dining venues. We continue to commit to a more sustainable future on a daily basis, with multiple initiatives to reduce single use plastic and the use of environmentally friendly products, such as our wooden key cards,” said

*Malek Safa*, Hotel Manager at Andaz Dubai the Palm. 



# ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA



# CELEBRATING THIRTY YEARS IN VICTORIA FALLS' HOSPITALITY LANDSCAPE

The renowned Ilala Lodge Hotel in Victoria Falls recently celebrated three decades in hospitality in Zimbabwe's resort town of Victoria Falls, a tremendous feat for this family-run hotel that has over three decades, opened its doors and welcomed guests to the lap of comfort and understated luxury a stone throw away from the magnificent Mosi-oa-tunya.







**E**quipped with 73 stylish and well-appointed rooms, offering the ultimate in comfort and luxury, the hotel's history dates back to 1991 where it first began as a boutique hotel with 16 rooms, owned by the Brown family. In 1994 the hotel expanded to 32 rooms and in 2015 the hotel unveiled its new Deluxe wing bringing it to a total of 56 rooms. Further developments took place in 2018 with the expansion of the Deluxe wing, growing the hotel to a total of 73 rooms made up of Standard and Deluxe rooms and suites, all situated on lush green grounds which overlook a woodland area that precedes the entrance gates to the Victoria Falls.

Soon after, Ilala unveiled its most luxurious suite, the Strathearn Suite, named after the hotel founder, Strathearn Brown. Fashioned with modern and sophisticated décor, the suite is complete with a lounge, kitchen, en suite bathroom, and private balcony where guests can relax in a large spa bath while enjoying world-class views of the spray rising above the mighty Victoria Falls waterfall. The suite can also be transformed into a spacious family villa known as the 'Strathearn Family Suite' through interleading doors with an Executive Suite and Deluxe Room.

A welcoming plunge pool provides guests with the option of two swimming pools to relax in during their stay, while an elegant poolside lounge, decorated with hand-crafted furniture and wall prints representing palms and foliage, provides the perfect setting for book reading, lounging with friends over a light meal or cocktails, or casual relaxation as one takes in the surrounding lush gardens endowed with indigenous and exotic plants and shrubs. The main lounge, central to the hotel's common areas, offers guests a calming space in which to relax, work from, or simply enjoy moments of playful conversation in an atmosphere that exudes quiet reflection.

### *All the fine trimmings and experiences right outside your room*

The hotel's award-winning restaurant is famous for its gourmet cuisine and al fresco dining under the starry African skies, delightful options in entrees, mains and desserts, all carefully curated and prepared using the freshest in locally sourced ingredients. While soaking in the ambiance of the restaurant, guests can see the spray and hear the rumble from the world-renowned Victoria Falls waterfall no matter the time of day, enjoying hot plates that can include anything from sumptuous steaks, poultry options to a fresh catch of the day, or vegetarian options for those who prefer to go meatless.

The ultimate guest experience is of paramount importance to the staff at Ilala, as evidenced by routine check-ins with guests and conversations on activities and experiences during their stay. But it's not just the friendly staff that will pop by for a check in. Elephants and impala have been known to saunter across the woodland and grassy area in which the lodge overlooks, providing a delightful showcase of the majesty of wildlife as they graze or tug at the trees and shrubs on the property.

If it's more interaction with the great outdoors you desire, Ilala Lodge Hotel also boasts a fleet of luxury riverboats and unsurpassed river cruises on the mighty Zambezi River. The Ra-Ikane I, II and III, offer a variety of cruises, including





# NARRATIVES

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breakfast, birdwatching, lunch, sunset and private charters for those looking to get up close with the Zambezi wildlife and serene riverscape. Cruises on the Zambezi are nothing short of spectacular, giving you a front row seat to all forms of wildlife including hippopotamus, elephants, crocodile, and a plethora of bird species.

*Global pandemic adaptation, pushing for green and community building*

As with most hotel properties that have had to adapt to the challenges of staying open during a global pandemic, the hotel has faced Covid-19 travel restrictions by shifting focus to human resource development. This enabled staff members to diversify their skill sets and learn new trades within the hospitality industry, for example, kitchen porters became gardeners and front of house personnel assisted maintenance teams.

The hotel continues to play a critical role in the growth and development of Victoria Falls community and its team of passionate staff are involved in multiple corporate social respon-





sibility projects. At the forefront of their efforts is the Ilala Lodge Hotel Green Team, a committee driven to bring about meaningful solutions for more environmentally conscious practices.

Established in 2019, the Green Team has implemented a sustainable waste management initiative presented to the Greenline Africa Trust and the Victoria Falls Recycling Project. The team continues to support and attend all local events which endeavour to better the future of green development within Victoria Falls. Other initiatives include monthly town and rainforest clean-ups, community events, fundraisers for local charities and aiding the Pristine Victoria Falls Society – a new community programme to make Victoria Falls the most pristine city in Africa.

As a testament to the hotel's commitment to green practices, Ilala Lodge Hotel was awarded the 'Environmental Stewardship and Social Impact Award' by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and Corporate Social Responsibility Network Zimbabwe. The award recognises organisation that dedicate time and resources to the preserving the environment, waste recycling and wildlife conservation. The hotel has been a Silver Member of the Green Tourism certification programme since 2016, which identifies the commitment of tourism businesses that actively work to become more sustainable. 





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# Ker & Downey® Africa and the all- female Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit: Joining forces to protect South Africa's wildlife

Home to some of the most endangered wildlife on the planet, South Africa's vulnerable animal populations face an ongoing battle against poaching and illegal trade. However, thanks in part to the work of the pioneering all-female Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit, poaching numbers are on the decline. Joining them in the fight against poaching is award-winning luxury travel and safari company Ker & Downey® Africa.

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**K**er & Downey® Africa carries a well-established reputation for curating life-changing responsible safari experiences for travelers. With an ethos in leaving a positive legacy in Africa, Ker & Downey® Africa partnered with the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit, inviting travelers to become active participants in wildlife conserva-

tion in South Africa.

This exciting partnership forms part of the company's Legacy Partner portfolio – a selection of vetted projects and organizations that contribute to empowering local communities, protecting Africa's wildlife, and creating a sustainable future for Africa. And, for each trip booked with Ker & Downey® Africa, a \$100 donation is made to one of the worthy causes.

To celebrate the partnership, Ker & Downey® Africa launched a 13-day Conservation Experience

in collaboration with the Black Mambas, and this opportunity is a remarkable dream for lovers of wildlife preservation and community-focused conservation. This exclusive itinerary gives travelers the opportunity to meet the Mambas on their home turf, to gain an inside look at how this all-female ranger unit is safeguarding South Africa's vulnerable wildlife.

### THE BLACK MAMBA ANTI-POACHING UNIT

The Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit is the world's first all-female ranger unit consisting of 36 formidable women who operate unarmed in Balule Nature Reserve, South Africa.

The Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit was founded in 2013 by Transfrontier Africa NPC in response to the dramatic increase in rhino poaching in the Olifants West Region of Balule Nature Reserve. Within a year of operation, the Mambas were invited to expand their area of service and now protect all 52,000 hectares of Balule Nature Reserve in the Greater Kruger Area.

Working to the concept of the 'Broken Window' philosophy, the rangers strive to make their area of influence the most undesirable, difficult, and least profitable place to poach wildlife. The Black Mambas use non-violent methods to prevent poaching and work unarmed as eyes and ears on the ground, spending much of their day on foot as they seek out signs of poachers on daily monitoring patrols along the park's border.

Serving as the first line of defense on the ground, the Black Mambas have successfully reduced the number of poaching incursions by 62%, decreased bushmeat poaching by 89%, snaring by 99%, and have also eradicated property break-ins.

Having feet on the ground is a pivotal component in the fight against poaching. However, a larger part of the solution lies in the upliftment and empowerment of local communities. The Black Mambas strive to educate the local communities of the Greater Kruger Park about the long-term benefits of saving their natural heri-



tage. They are also actively involved in educating the youth through their Bush Babies Environmental Education program.

### MEET THE MAMBAS WITH KER & DOWNEY® AFRICA

Committed to creating life-changing safari experiences that give back, Ker & Downey® Africa launched a 13-day Conservation Experience in collaboration with the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit.

The trip has been designed for travelers with a keen interest in rhino and wildlife conservation and takes guests to meet the Mambas at their base camp in Balule Nature Reserve.

Starting in Cape Town, guests stay at the award-winning Ellerman House boutique hotel. This exclusive property offers easy access to the city's classic attractions. Ker & Downey® Africa has lined up a private full-day tour of the Cape Peninsula which takes travelers to the scenic Cape Point Nature Reserve, Cape of Good Hope and Boulders Beach – home to one of the largest African penguin colonies in South Africa.

Next up, guests travel to the luxurious Babylonstoren Farm Hotel. Located in the heart of the Cape Winelands, this world-class property is set amidst 8 acres of fragrant fruit orchards and vegetable gardens,



Visit their website at [ker-downeyafrica.com](http://ker-downeyafrica.com) to start planning your conservation safari or email [enquiries@ker-downeyafrica.com](mailto:enquiries@ker-downeyafrica.com).


offering the ultimate farm-to-table retreat.

After time spent in the Winelands, guests then travel to the exclusive Grootbos Forest Lodge in Grootbos Private Nature Reserve. Located on the Whale Coast, this eco-reserve covers 2500 hectares of pristine wilderness and overlooks the Atlantic Ocean which is home to pods of migrating whales who swim within meters of the rugged coastline.

The final stop of the journey takes travelers to South Africa's wildlife haven, Kruger National Park. Guests will stay at Pondoro Game Lodge – a luxury safari lodge located in Balule Nature Reserve and experience expertly guided safari game drives and walking safaris as well as a unique sleepout experience at the

lodge's Treehouse Hide.

Here, travelers will also have the opportunity to meet the Mambas on their home turf. They will be taken behind the scenes to the unit's operations room and given an inside look at how this all-female ranger unit is protecting South Africa's vulnerable rhinos and wildlife.

Pricing for this trip starts from \$8,055 and includes a \$100 donation to the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit to help fund their ongoing operations in Balule Nature Reserve. Want to meet the Black Mambas? Ker & Downey® Africa can tailor a luxury safari trip to match your unique needs and interests. 



# Wild over Wilderness Safaris'

## Linkwasha Camp

By Yvonne C Mtengwa

There's something about journeying into territories unknown, with little knowledge of where you are going or what experiences await you. Our minds were readied for an itinerary that was carefully curated by dear friends who have become family of mine – Luke and Suzanne Brown, Co-Founders of Vayeni Safari, a bespoke luxury tour operator that curates lifechanging itineraries for travellers keen on discovering the compelling magic of Africa.

Pick up came on Day 4 of my Victoria Falls and Hwange circuit. When told it would be a few hours drive to camp in the heart of Hwange National Park, I was quick to suggest that perhaps we venture into this part of Hwange at another time. Suzanne was having none of it. “Yvonne, this is bar none one of the best safari experiences you will have in this area, as Linkwasha Camp is located on the Southwestern edge of Hwange National Park and offers unique game viewing opportunities that you may very well not find anywhere else in the park,” she emphasized.

And so, my sister girl and travel tribemate on this trip, Mucha Nyandoro, settled on driving into camp for our 2 night stay, and flying back out into Victoria Falls via charter, conveniently operated by Wilderness Air. Our adventure was about two city slickers in heels on the daily, leaving the opulence and towering skyscrapers of Dubai, to have a soul encounter with Zimbabwe's great savannah. Our mission was to explore a different kind of luxury; one cradled in the majesty of untamed nature and putting us in the cusp of experiences so far removed from our day to day lives, but in every way designed to reconnect us with our innate love for the continent and nation we call home.

Our transfer began in Victoria Falls at 10am, taking us on an hour and a half quiet drive to Hwange National Park's base camp. We slept most of the way, perhaps because we were still very much fatigued from the adrenaline rush of the day before, having scaled down hundreds of stairs to the base of the Victoria Falls gorge for a little speed-boating on the Zambezi. It was not too long before our turnoff into Hwange National Park. Scenery had changed, with visibly more foliage from the indigenous tree species and grasslands. We were met by our guide, Kingsley, who had the grand task of driving these two divas on the back of an open Wilderness Safaris branded safari truck, into the adventure that awaited them somewhere in Hwange National Park.

### THE DRIVE IN

The picnic was unexpected but oh-so welcome! Fresh fruit, vegetable quiche and

hearty chicken tenders were on the menu before we set out, complemented by a selection of beverages – from soft drinks to wines, whichever was to our taste. Mucha and I agreed that it wasn't going to be Fanta or Sprite to kickstart our adventure. We would be driving a couple of hours from base camp across the wild plains of Hwange National Park, to Linkwasha Camp, the most luxurious of the 4 camps operated by Wilderness Safaris in Hwange National Park. Well fed, ready to roll, we buckled up, put our sunglasses on, piqued our ears to Kingsley's educational drive as he shared tales of the area, facts on wildlife and conversation with these two women that well poised to appreciate every minute of the experience that lay ahead. Did we mention the frequent pitstops to refill our wine glasses?

#### A PARK TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE

A game drive through Hwange National Park simply cannot disappoint. It wasn't long before Kingsley would stop the truck to show us some incredible bird species perched on high or foraging the ground below, naturally with an interesting story to tell about their behaviours, habitats and feeding patterns. Next came dazzles of zebra, some giraffes, one of which was drinking from one of the watering holes on route, visibly conscious that a crocodile was watching from not too far off. We also saw a variety of impala, kudu, and smaller buck, much harder to spot when camouflaged by the tall grasses of brown and orange hues. Then there were one of my absolute favourites – the majestic gentle giants – the elephants. Elephants are in abundance in Hwange National Park – a whole 40,000 in number are estimated – so much that we were going to enjoy a front row viewing as they came each night to drink from the swimming pool at Linkwasha Camp.

Though we opted for game drives to escape the hot African sun, we were made to understand that guided walks were also available for those that dared feel their feet touch the ground as they scope the land for wildlife species. Opportunities to find uncountable dust-kicking buffalos; Africa's super cats – the lions and the cheetah, or African painted dogs in their wake; the more elusive pangolins, caracals, lesser bushbabies, and honey badgers; more than 400 bird species, including raptors, which fill the skies once the rains start – are plentiful. There is even



To book your experienced at Linkwasha Camp, visit <https://wilderness-safaris.com/our-camps/camps/linkwasha-camp>



an opportunity to sleep in a Star Bed high in a tree, though for me, the cosy King Size bed in my luxury canvas tent was all the comfort I needed in these wild plains.

## 2 NIGHTS AT LINKWASHA

Linkwasha sits on the edge of the renowned Ngamo Plains of Hwange, Zimbabwe's largest national park. A staggering 5 657 square miles of diverse habitat, Kalahari sands seeping into teak woodlands and golden savannah grasslands, Hwange serves up some of the best game viewing on Earth, year-round but especially rewarding during the dry season as wildlife roam in search of water. Linkwasha has access to the exclusive-use Makalolo and Linkwasha concessions, incorporating the Plains. With solar-pumped waterholes sustaining the wildlife population, dry-season game viewing around the concessions' 15 water sources is mind-blowing.

A contemporary safari camp in an iconic African landscape, Linkwasha and its panoramic views of the plains immerse you in the bush, as a steady stream of wildlife make their way past the ground-level rooms to the busy waterhole in front of the main area. Nine elegant tents, nestling under a tree canopy, are shaded in the environment's neutral tones reflecting local culture.

I was assigned the 7th tent which was a few steps away from the main camp, though we were told to ensure we never walk alone at night but await a pickup by one of our rangers to ensure our safety. On many evenings, we were joined for dinner and drinks by elephants siphoning their fill from the pool. Candlelit hot dishes made from only the freshest ingredients, barbecue meat skewers over breakfast, fresh local and tropical fruits, prosecco, wine, or cocktails of choice on tap – you find yourself soaking in all the trimmings that luxurious escapism can avail.

A stay at Linkwasha is beyond magical as one is immersed in the sheer thrill of becoming a part of the interwovenness of nature in its wildest form. Beyond how informative the trip was in as far as learning more about the diverse wildlife species occupying the park, the stay was in every sense a soul-encounter; a delightful opportunity to connect with self in the quietness of each day, while enjoying servings of sumptuous dishes and refreshing drinks over great conversation. Linkwasha Camp was every bit what we needed to close off the year in reflection, as we mentally braced ourselves for what was to come next upon arrival back in the Middle Eastern mecca that is Dubai. 🌍



THE  
WANDERLUST  
WITHIN

# TEN PICKS

## OF THE CONTINENT'S BEST HIKING MOUNTAIN RANGES

By Daphine Mabhiza

**H**iking in the best spots around Africa can be so fulfilling if chasing thrills is your thing. From contoured forestlands to rocky mountain outcrops, remote villages and sightings of rare wildlife and flora – Africa boasts a wealth of hiking spots that are sure to offer an adventure – and a workout – you will never forget. Whichever country you visit on this beautiful continent, the thrill of adventure married with magnificent encounters with nature's wonders are an open invitation for exploration. Highlands are rife with rolling hills and breathtaking summits sure to give you a magnificent view of the lands beneath. If you are an avid hiker and adventure lover, check out our picks for top hiking territories across Africa.



### *1. Mount Sabinyo, Uganda*

Mt Sabinyo is in the southern part of Uganda. An ancient inactive volcano with an incredible ecosystem of greenery, flora and fauna and rare mountain gorilla encounters, Mount Sabinyo avails day-long hikes that promise challenging steep rocky cliffs and breathtaking views of Uganda and Rwanda.





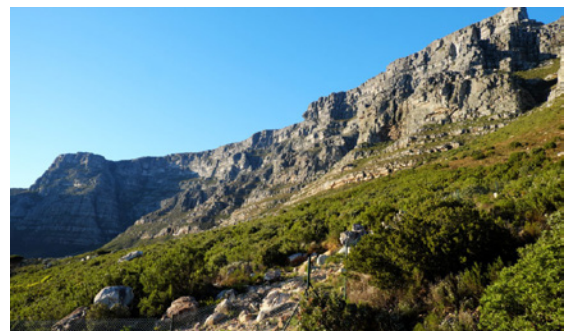
## 2. Mt Mulanje, Malawi

Located in the southern region of Malawi, Mt. Mulanje is a 3000-meter summit offering the opportunity to interact with wildlife such as vervet monkeys and black eagles as well as gorgeous views. Hikers enjoy eighteen different routes which give you a unique experience in complexity and vantage points as you climb higher and higher up what is actually a “massif” of syenite and granite which covers a mammoth 650 sq km. Water erosion from the region’s rivers have resulted in deep clefts which form cauldron like hollows on the mountain scape.



## 4. Skeleton Gorge, Table Mountain, South Africa

This one is for the hike addicts who are always looking for the toughest hike spot out there. Skeleton Gorge is one of the many trails that lead to the top of Table Mountain and is well recognized for how steep it is. A hike along this trail includes boulders, running water, streams, indigenous shaded forest, fresh smells of indigenous flora and a lot of greenery to enjoy. This trail leads to the highest point on Table Mountain that is 1086m above sea level, a god-like view that very few get to see.



## 3. Mt Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Mt Kilimanjaro is the tallest mountain on the continent and well renowned for its challenging hiking offer. For those not looking to reach the ‘rooftop of Africa’, there are multiple routes one can enjoy, such as Lemosho, Northern Circuit, Shira and Machame. Each route offers scenery of the surrounding landscape and can take you anything from 5-9 days to summit.

## 5. Mt Nyiragongo, DRC

Mt Nyiragongo, though lesser known, may be one of the most unique hikes one will ever take as they scale the mountain’s red hot lava volcano and rocky trails. After a full day of hiking, hikers set camp in huts located on the edge of the volcano before descending the following morning. The hike is not for amateurs with its slippery volcanic rocks, but the views are worth the trip. It is important to note though, that sometimes this majestic volcano mountain is inaccessible due to the unpredictable political situation in Goma region of Democratic Republic of Congo.





*6. Mt Kenya, Kenya*

Mount Kenya is the highest mountain in Kenya and the second-highest in Africa, with peaks as high as 5188m. The trek is a challenging and enjoyable journey to Mount Kenya's highest trekking peak, Point Lenana, which summits at 4985 metres. The view from the top is well worth it as you enjoy the stunning site of the dramatic volcanic massif and the two main peaks of Batian and Nelion, as well as long views over the central plains of Kenya.



*7. Mt Toubkal, Morocco*

Mount Toubkal or Jebel Toubkal is the highest peak in Morocco and North Africa. Located in the southwestern part of Morocco, about 60 km south of Marrakesh, this hiking site offers compelling views of the land, ocean and the Sahara Desert in one hike. The trek is not for the faint-hearted though, as it is characterized by steep paths that are often covered in snow.



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### 8. Mount Afadjato, Ghana

Though not nearly as high as some of Africa's other peaks, Mount Afadjato is one of the highest mountains in Ghana at 885m. Mount Afadjato is located by the border between Ghana and Togo in the Volta Region, and is home to countless flora and fauna, as well as butterfly species. The 4-6 hour hike offers little interference from modernization, with an opportunity to explore nearby villages of Liati Wote and Gbledi Gbogame in the Afadjato South District.

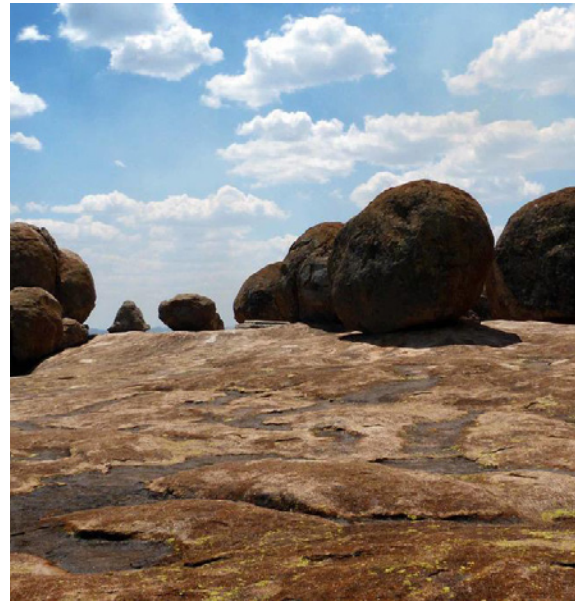


### 9. Simien Mountains, Ethiopia

Simien Mountains are a special hike and a world heritage site. Located in Northern Ethiopia, this hiking spot is a tough one, but a great adventure, as you get to view rare wildlife such as Gelada monkeys and Ethiopian wolves. You also get to interact with the locals who live along the paths. The hike ends with unforgettable views. It is a once in a lifetime experience.

### 10. Matobo Hills, Matebeleland Zimbabwe

Covering over 3000 kilometres of the Matebeleland Province in Zimbabwe are the Matobo Hills, which are characterized by giant granite rocks that have been shaped and sculptured over thousands of years by nature's process. Matobo Hills is rich in history and a hike through these hills will reveal centuries of ancient civilization such as rock paintings made by bushmen illustrating their lives, war, and colonization. Hiking Matobo hills is an exciting outdoor adventure. Enjoy nature's best with the flora and fauna, butterflies, and breathtaking views of the province's splendour. Don't miss out on the Inanke trail in Matobo Hills which offers a cave sighting at the end of the trail.



With a plethora of hiking experiences across the continent, adventurers are encouraged to ensure they are in good health before embarking on an ascent. Trails are remote, as much as they are challenging, and so hikers, are encouraged to conduct their research on accessibility, rest points along the climb up, in area medical support, and safety, including ensuring that there is no civil unrest in the area. With this, it is advisable to hire local guides to accompany you on your trip to avoid unexpected events such as getting lost or venturing into dangerous paths. Happy hiking! 🇳🇸



# PULSE OF THE CITY





# Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Bur Dubai: A weekend staycation at the cusp of Dubai's Oud Metha District



Situated close to key commercial areas in the Dubai metropolis and within close reach to the city's most iconic shopping malls and key attractions in Oud Metha, a central business district in Bur Dubai, is the Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Bur Dubai, a mid-rise building that stands out on account of its European inspired architecture. When staying with family, one's prerequisite typically includes ease of access to Dubai's attractions, and so knowing that should we desire to leave the hotel for an afternoon of exploration, we had the Dubai Mall and Dubai Fountain, world's biggest Dubai Frame and tallest Burj Khalifa, Wafi Mall and others within a reach, was as great in incentive as any to venture out onto the other side of town.

By Yvonne C Mtengwa



ur entry into a lobby that boasts a majestic atrium and dual staircase to the mezzanine floor above, gave us a sneak peek into the experience that awaited us. Business is brisk at this property, with lobby seating occupied by a mix of business and leisure travellers either enjoying a good conversation over coffee under the afternoon light cascading through the lobby's skylight covered space, or people-watching in the hive of activity that characterised the entrance hall's atmosphere.

#### *Our home away from home*

We checked in during the latter part of the day, and so our inclination was to retreat into our well-appointed, incredibly spacious rooms, which had recently undergone a renovation to reveal a sleek aesthetic made of white, blue, and grey hues in furnishings, and a massive workstation adjacent to the windows. One immediately gets a sense that this hotel is well

tailored for the business traveller first, as it does appear more functional than one that whisks you away into immersive relaxation. We stayed in two of the 255 luxury hotel rooms and suites, though the hotel also boasts 57 stylish hotel apartments, with a kitchen and up to three bedrooms, for families in Dubai for longer than a short visit. Wi-Fi in all rooms is complimentary, each room of which has been thoughtfully designed with its own artworks and décor.

#### *Indulgent dining experiences*

What stood out during our stay was the diversity in dining concepts at our 5-star weekend abode. On our first night, we opted for room service, wherein we received most generous serving of entrees and mains that were wheeled in and piping hot. Downstairs, we were to discover as our stay continued, that one can enjoy everything from North Indian and Lebanese cuisine to international flavours and poolside refreshments in one of the seven






restaurants and bars, as well as a nightclub also on site, which roars to life as the sun sets over Bur Dubai.

Our Friday brunch experience was decadent, comprising of such a vast array of international cuisines, served from a combination of set and live cooking stations under the lobby's atrium. The space takes on a lifeform of its own, complete with live music as you enjoy sushi, special cuts in grilled meat and roasts, seafood platters, Indian and Middle Eastern cuisine options, a hearty salad bar and soup station; not forgetting a dessert spread that will entice the sweets lover in your midst.

With an atmosphere so vibrant, and after a hearty fix from just about every station, it was time to unwind by the azure waters of the rooftop pool deck with views of the Burj Khalifa, which lay on the same floor as the fitness centre. There is also an option to enjoy a treatment at the salon, spa or simply marvel at the art showcased around the hotel on the Mezzanine floor of the hotel.

### *Connecting you to the old and new Dubai*

A stay at the Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Bur Dubai puts you at the cusp of Dubai's Oud Metha district, a predominantly residential community tucked between the hive of Al Karama and Al Garhoud areas, and well frequented by traders coming to Dubai for more affordable finds. Within easy reach, one can further relive Dubai's past, while connecting with the city's heritage story, tracing the city's origins in the neighbourhood of traditional souks, authentic dining, and seafaring excursions. By venturing into Dubai Creek area of Bur Dubai, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the city, you get to discover a part of the city that came to life long before the glistening urban metropolis now synonymous with this global destination of distinction.

Booking a stay at Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Bur Dubai connects guests to a hub of residential and economic activity with its foundations deeply rooted in Emirati culture in the nearby Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood and Fort, as well as the 'new Dubai' - with its modern skyline of architectural finds a mere 10 minutes away. With plenty of amenities and facilities to enjoy on site, the property is a perfect destination for every profile of traveller, looking to explore the different sides of the Middle East's most immersive city. 



# One Night at The Maslow Hotel Sandton

By King Phewa



**S**ituated in Sandton's financial district, The Maslow Hotel is an oasis in an otherwise concrete jungle. Set on some of the most pristine grounds in the city, the Maslow Hotel Sandton automatically brings with it a sense of serenity and calm, a sentiment very rarely found in traditional business hotels.

There are marshals from the main road ushering you in to the hotel parking. They are supported by friendly security guards who directed us to parking close to the door. Being met by a porter at our vehicle, really was the cherry on top of an

efficient guest arrival protocol. The check in process was brisk, seamless, and included the now obligatory COVID-19 safety checks.

### SETTING THE TONE FOR OUR STAY

The reception leads off to a contemporary lounge area with seats that incorporate power plugs making work a breeze especially for guests who combine productivity in leisure inspiring settings. The Lacuna Bar to the left and Lacuna Bistro to the right, complete a visually compelling first impression.

Our standard room, situated on the fourth floor, was moderately sized and featured standard amenities. It is comfortable but the space may prove limiting for couples given the room size and lack of duplicate plugs on both bedside stations. A highlight is the views over the pool, lush well-manicured gardens, and parts of Morningside. In room amenities which included a great coffee machine and mini bar, coupled with turn down service were a welcomed part of the service offering.

### THE MASLOW SANDTON EXPERIENCE

We spent some time at the Lacuna Bar with mixologist Sandile who was friendly, attentive, and knowledgeable. If, like us, you have a penchant for an Old Fashioned, then please make sure you spend some time at the bar. It does get a bit rowdy with the after-work crowd but still forms a great backdrop for networking or casual dining and drinks.

The Lacuna Bistro is an inviting space that features a well-stocked bar and a semi open kitchen as the key features. The staff were wel-




coming and food portions generous in size, needed after a long day getting about the business of Sandton. Our night's sleep was comfortable and given the hotel's proximity to the main node of Grayston Drive and Rivonia Road there was concern around noise especially in the early hours of the morning. Thankfully, we experienced minimal noise as the room turned out to be quite well insulated.

The final experience was breakfast. The cold section, featuring fresh juices, vitamin shots, fruit salads, cereals and fresh dairy items was immaculately laid out and looked inviting. The hot station featured a hearty mix of all your breakfast favourites. The execution is still buffet, ideal given health, and safety protocols with regards to food service, but on the whole, hot plates are served by a chef who also customizes egg orders on request. Breakfast did not disappoint as it was hot, fresh, and delicious.

#### ADDITIONAL ONSITE AMENITIES

The Maslow Hotel Sandton also features a fully equipped conference centre and a top-rated spa. If you are a business traveller in Sandton, this hotel is definitely for you. Located in the heart of Sandton's business district, conferencing at The Maslow combines private, uninterrupted meeting rooms with state-of-the-art technology to meet the needs of the modern business executive, with 5-star service provision to welcome your delegates in style.

To help you host an unforgettable event, the hotel promises the availability of a dedicated team who go the extra mile to ensure every detail is covered. The same holds true for weddings and other celebrations, as the Maslow Hotel Sandton's banqueting team will ensure the venue provides a fitting backdrop to help you create memories to help last a lifetime. 





I aim through my work to slow us down, lose our obsession with newness, technology and the instant; find our voice, revive our truth, act as an electric shock to our senses and reconnect our emotions to ourselves, each other, and the world around us.

Aiming for our more humble sense of humanity, through 'The Soul of the Earth' and the humility that lies within us.

A conversation of purity and spirit, entering our soul and staying with us forever; completely disengaged from thought and mind, and uninterrupted by the constraints of the human being. Allowing the soul to breathe, engage, and rest in the silence of the perfect conversation.

As the light glows through the darkness.

**Sacha Jafri**



# AFRICA TO THE WORLD





Meet the media  
trailblazer

*Mayowa Adegoke*

Making waves on TV from Nigeria to the  
UAE and beyond!

**M**ayowa Adegoke is a woman (very much on the move), a wife, mother, daughter, and sister who juggles people relations and career ambitions beautifully. It was not too long ago that she was reporting news from Lagos, Nigeria, before migrating to the UAE to join her beau as a newlywed. Today, and in rapid time, Mayowa has built a brand across Nigeria and the UAE, as a leading media entrepreneur, journalist, events compere, and budding influencer for brands looking to reach more audiences across Africa and Africans in diaspora.

“I grew up in Lagos, Nigeria where I carried dreams of one day making it as a media personality of sorts. I often pinch myself at my current reality; that I’ve managed by the sheer grace of GOD, to build a career in TV broadcasting, entertainment, and media mentorship, and am doing so in one of the world’s leading destinations – Dubai!” she cites enthusiastically, when asked to share a little bit about her background.

She’s quick to chronicle that her journey has been one of determination, wits and drive to go harder in telling the African story. Her growth speaks for itself, having built from the ground up, starting out as an events production assistant in 2011, to becoming a blogger and then a TV presenter on national television in Nigeria, in 2013.

Six years later, in 2019, Mayowa took her leap of faith, something that she says she never expected when growing up.

“Relocating to Dubai as a newlywed was tough, as I found myself not only living in a new country of such diverse cultures and in every sense of the word, different from Nigeria, but having to build again on something that had been at the cornerstone of all my ambitions for years – my career as a journalist,” she says.

But in a short span, and despite a global pandemic and lockdowns, the humble Mayowa is back at the top. Her TV career, which began in Nigeria’s leading media company, Channels Television, where she had started off with blogging for the company website in 2013, to quickly rising to become the face of the station’s entertainment show - watched by over 40 million people across Nigeria, U.K. US and the internet, every night – has taken a life of its own.

In Nigeria’s fast growing entertainment space, media attention is one thing the thousands of artistes looking to become national stars, struggle for, but not with Mayowa. Known to rub shoulders with the A list stars, she was also known to give promising acts a shot plus the chance to be seen and heard. From interviewing top stars like Asa, Omawumi, Waje to international acts, Travis Greene, Chantel Moore, and recently Steve Harvey, Akon, D-Banj and Yvonne Orji, Mayowa is enjoying every bit of her trajectory as one of the few African women in media in the UAE.



### *Recognition and a celebration of success*

In 2021 alone, she has been recognised by the She Awards UAE, been named as 1 of 12 Most Inspiring and Entrepreneurial Women in the UAE by the UAE Africa Networking Group, and gotten nominated as one of the Most Influential People of African Descent, all the while gaining grounds in the city; interviewing the “Who’s Who” and getting access to some of the most exclusive events and stories that impact the Nigerian community living, working in and traveling to the UAE. She also recently hosted the high-profile business gala, Titans of Africa and the 3-day Emaar sponsored All Africa Festival at the Burj Park, which overlooks the iconic Burj Khalifa.

### *Inspiration into the field of journalism*

“My love for media was first influenced by my father, Jide Ogundele, who started out as a journalist in one of Nigeria’s leading newspapers. His close association with the creme de la creme of Lagos meant invitations to private VIP parties and so the younger me was definitely impressed. I’ve been described as warm, having an infectious personality and witty confidence, oratory skills and penmanship, all of which have combined I guess, to making a recipe for my involvement in the arts before venturing into media,” she says.

“I loved to talk, engage people in conversation and debates, so it was either I became





a lawyer or a journalist. I chose the latter as lawyers seemed to have their heads stuck in books all the time, and I can't say that's the vision I had for my future," she adds.

### *Growing up Nigerian and finding success in the Middle East*

Lagos is the city for hustlers, and in the words of Mayowa, "There's a popular saying in Lagos (also called Eko) and it goes 'Eko o gba ghere'. Loosely translated, this means Lagos doesn't take rubbish, and that is the environment Mayowa grew up in. Sometimes, everyday reality was and continues to be a struggle, from catching a bus to being hit by an unruly driver, who finds a way to blame you for the accident!

"Lagos is where you wake up 4am to meet an 8am appointment on the other side of town, because a 35-minute drive may take you 3 hours or more to arrive," Mayowa cites.

Mayowa grew up to be a strong believer in the notion of "anything can happen." Her mother's enterprising spirit opened her eyes to the world of trade, which she carried on as a university student. She took her trade everywhere she went, and she was never short of clients, thanks to her infectious personality.

From various leadership positions held in school, to helping in her mother's trade and then building a career on TV, she learned that value and excellence are the currencies for successful people. Storytelling has become her superpower and she knows how it can bring value to individuals, communities, and nations. And that's what Mayowa has brought to the UAE.

"I find it a rare honour to be called a voice for the African community and believe being in this place at such a time as this really is evidence of divine orchestration. No matter how long I stay in the UAE, I'm glad I would be able to say 'I was here'" she says.

Service is always the watch word - for each story she tells, every business card exchanged, in her mind is the question of how as Africans, the community can be pushed forward, creating wealth and prosperity for all.

"There's more to Africa than you have seen in Western media or online. Often-



times, people pick a side of the African narrative that suits their agenda, and the world is unrepentant in its obsession with the negatives. But I am always careful to project the positives," Mayowa states.


"The continent is still grappling with the basics of human existence, while the rest of the world gallops into the future of human existence. Africans must see themselves as partners in progress with global investors - who may have a form of messiah complex.

Africa is the beauty of the flora and fauna, the resilience of her youth, the wisdom of its aged, the spirituality it proudly upholds, its cultures, traditions, colours, and rhythm. Africa us more than what you see on TV," she says.

Mayowa and the Africa she loves

When asked which parts of Africa she enjoys, she says: "I am yet to travel Africa as I would love but Accra, Ghana stole my heart with its slower pace (a relief from the Lagos rush). I also formed sisterhood with Zimbabwe's Yvonne Mtengwa, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Travel Essence Magazine, and she has made me fall in love with Victoria Falls. I simply can't wait to visit! The All Africa Festival Dubai made me love Ghana's Wiaala, Senegal's Bou Bou, South Africa's Zoe Modiga and I look forward to visiting their countries and experiencing the cultures first-hand."

On the top 5 places Mayowa would like to experience on the continent, she lists:

"Zimbabwe for Victoria Falls. The rush of water is so powerful and enthralling and I would love to behold it with my own eyes. Second would be Kenya for the wildlife, South Africa for the culture! The Umoja troupe once performed in Lagos, and it was nothing short of spectacular. I'll add to my list Morocco, simply for a taste of an Afro-Arabic experience." 



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