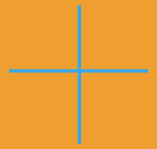


Travel ^{MAGAZINE} Essence

ISSUE 5 • NOVEMBER 2020



NEWTON CROSS
ON MODERN-DAY
BUTLER SERVICE

MALIBA LODGE:
Inside Lesotho's only
5-star accommodation

Riverside opulence
at Tongabezi

KHAMI RUINS: Inside
the Torwa Dynasty

Up Close

WITH RWANDA'S
AMBASSADOR TO THE UAE

HIS EXCELLENCY

EMMANUEL
HATEGEKA

RWANDA'S INVITATION TO CAPTIVATING TRAVEL EXPERIENCES AND
REWARDING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES



MAGAZINE
TravelEssence

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MAGAZINE

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





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“Nothing but breathing the air of Africa, and actually walking through it, can communicate the indescribable sensations.

– WILLIAM BURCHELL


As you turn the pages to November's Issue, we are thrilled that you too have knowingly or unknowingly chosen to celebrate 120 days of bringing you stellar content on all things people and travel across Africa. Five issues in, we cannot even begin to describe the euphoria that comes with the release of each one.

We've shared many insightful conversations on the perceptions that people carry concerning our great continent. Publishing this magazine from the Middle Eastern mecca that is Dubai, which is home to more than 200 nationalities from across the world, has given us an incredible opportunity to share with whomever we meet, why Africa should be added to their bucket list. The world is a beautiful place should we seek out that beauty, but Africa, oh Africa! – few words can describe the places, the smells, the textures, the diversity of a people and languages, the heart and the desire we believe our people carry to witness a brighter future.

And so, this is where we find ourselves as the Travel Essence team; doing what we can to share our reasons to believe with you! As the festive season draws near and we begin counting down to putting to bed a year that has been unprecedented to say the least, we ask that you choose to see this as the year you also made big decisions; one of which was to explore more of the world beyond your own.

We are excited to be launching Travel Essence Getaways in the New Year so we can not only bring you more great content, but be a conduit by which you too can experience a lot of what you read about in our pages.

Thank you for the heartfelt messages from our partners and friends supporting us on our journey. And thank you to all our readers from across Africa, the Middle East, and the rest of the world who keep us going by reading what we share and in turn, supporting the people and brands behind some incredible experiences across Africa. The continent awaits us all! Let's journey together!

Press on! 

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...

LAUNCHING 2021
stay tuned!

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By Louisa C Choruma



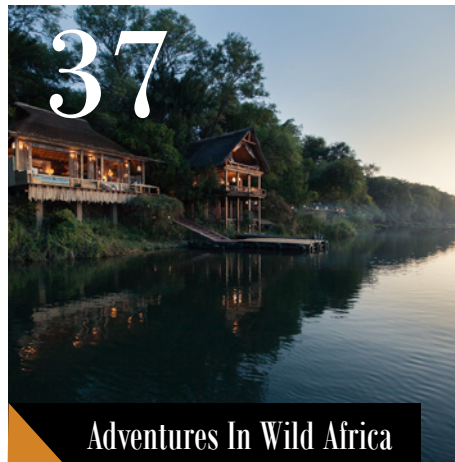
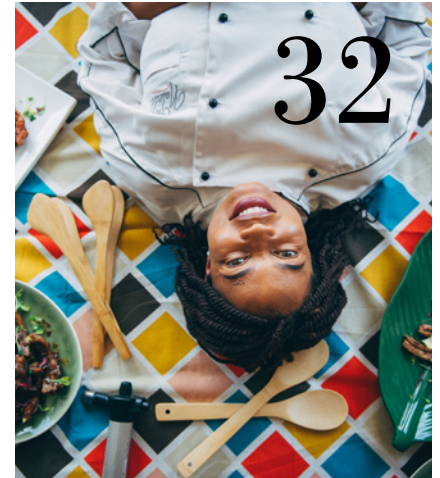
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THE
LAND OF A
Thousand
HILLS

Up Close

with Rwanda's
Ambassador to the
UAE, His Excellency

**EMMANUEL
HATEGEKA**

1. WHO IS AMBASSADOR EMMANUEL HATEGEKA? HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES WOULD DESCRIBE YOU IF ASKED?

Such a difficult question to describe oneself. Perhaps we can tackle this one by my describing what I love doing. I derive my motivation to keep doing what I do from the difference my contribution within a broader team makes to the lives of the people we serve. In this case, it is the fellow Rwandans we serve and seeing the progress Rwanda has made over the years. Knowing that I've played a role makes me happy.

On a more personal note, I believe in empowering those I work with and doing my best to always challenge them to be the best they can be. This equally applies to my family members. Needless to say, I get challenged in equal measure by my superiors and this has been a huge part of my journey.

During my free time whenever there is, I enjoy spending time with my family, connecting with friends, following current affairs in literature and the news. I also spare time for sports to keep fit.

2. SHARE WITH US WHAT THE JOURNEY HAS BEEN LIKE FOR YOU IN REPRESENTING RWANDA AS THE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES SO FAR? WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR HIGHLIGHTS, ESPECIALLY AS IT COMES TO REPRESENTING RWANDA IN THE MIDDLE EAST'S MOST PROLIFIC DESTINATION?

It's been one year since I arrived in UAE on October 14th, 2019 as Rwanda's first Ambassador to the UAE. It is almost a year since I presented my credentials on the 12th of November 2019 to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al



Views of Volcanoes National Park from Bisate Lodge.



Photo by Cyril Ndegeya \ Elephants in Akagera National Park

Maktoum the Vice President, Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai.

That one-year journey so far has been marked by excellent collaboration and support from the host country in the promotion of good bilateral relations and cooperation between our two countries.

Exchange of high-level visits is of great significance in diplomacy. Early on in January 2020, Abu Dhabi hosted His Excellency President Paul Kagame (my President) at the invitation of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to participate in the 2020 Abu Dhabi Sustainability week. This was followed by a private visit to Rwanda of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum the Vice President, Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai beginning March 2020.

As the COVID-19 pandemic struck, with most countries closing borders around mid-March to control the spread of the virus, with collaboration by the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, we were able to repatriate close to 70 Rwandans stranded in Dubai mainly on visit visas. The Government of Dubai through ICD also provided material support in the fight against COVID-19 in Rwanda – for which the people of Rwanda are grateful.

With this unprecedented pandemic, we have embraced the new normal way of conducting business and diplomacy virtually meaning despite the disruption, work continued in a well-coordinated fashion and I am grateful to my host country.

3. WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UAE AND RWANDA AND HOW THEY ARE STRENGTHENING TIES BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS?

Economic relations have also flour-

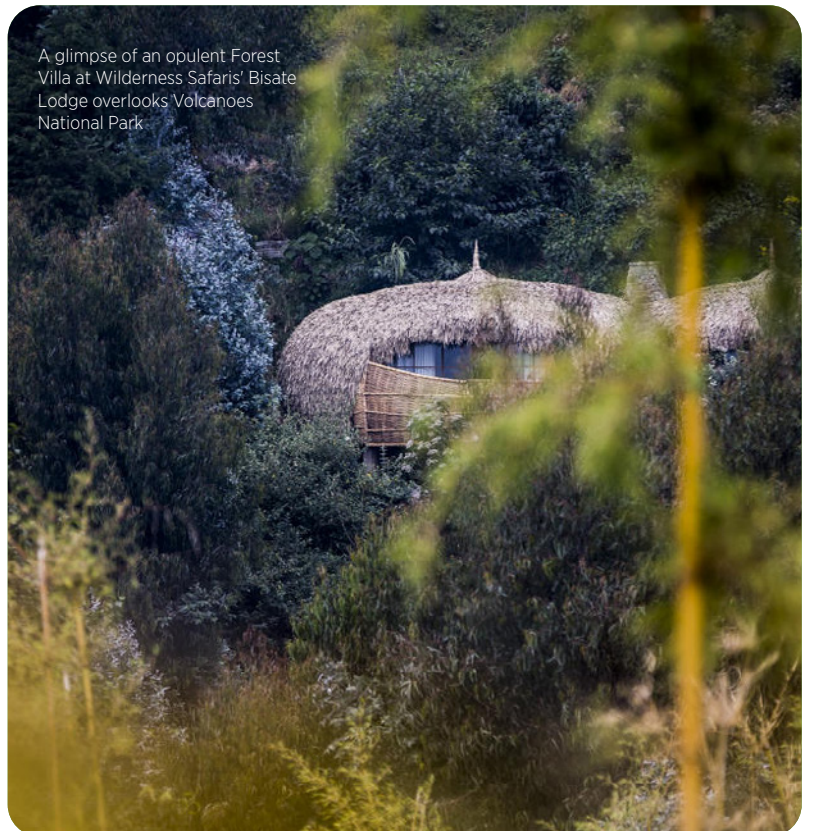


Kigali Genocide Memorial



Dining at Bisate Lodge

Kigali Arena



A glimpse of an opulent Forest Villa at Wilderness Safaris' Bisate Lodge overlooks Volcanoes National Park

Inside Wilderness Safaris' Magashi Camp in Akagera National Park



ished with increasing trade and investment flows between the two countries. Today, UAE is among the top five trading partners of Rwanda in terms of exports to UAE and imports from UAE to Rwanda.

UAE has also invested in two high end hotels close to two national parks the Virunga national park in the north and Nyungwe National park in the west both operated by One&Only luxury hotel brand. The modern dry port and ICD in Kigali was developed and is operated by DP World. We have also registered sizeable investments in mineral processing as well as in communication technology.

To facilitate trade and Investment, two important agreements were signed in 2017; one on double Taxation Avoidance and the other on promotion and reciprocal protection of investments. To further strengthen our bilateral cooperation, an MoU on the Establishment of a Joint Committee for Cooperation between Rwanda and UAE was signed in February 2020 by Rwanda's Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Her Excellency Reem Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation in UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and

International Cooperation.

We continue to develop relations in the fields of technology, Healthcare, Agribusiness, Logistics, Private investment, Renewable energy, and Education and Human capital development. Rwanda continues to enjoy support in the sector of education with scholarships offered to Rwandan students to study in UAE's best Universities, mainly in science and technology disciplines.

4. FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE LOOKING AT YOUR PREVIOUS ROLES IN THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA AS PERMANENT SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND THEN THE DEPUTY CEO OF THE RWANDA DEVELOPMENT BOARD BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT AS RWANDA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES; TAKE US THROUGH THE JOURNEY OF CURATING RWANDA'S TOURISM STRATEGY AND POSITIONING THE NATION AS AN INVESTMENT AND TOURISM DESTINATION TO WATCH IN EAST AFRICA.

Rwanda's tourism strategy is informed by

its vision to position the country as a world-class and high-end ecotourism destination. It is anchored in the country's broad development strategies, such as National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) and Vision 2050. This strategy makes Rwanda stand out as a destination in the region. It will enable the country to double its tourism revenues to USD 800 million by 2024 from close to USD 400 million in 2018 and create thousands of jobs along the value chain.

To achieve this, our government has invested heavily in infrastructural development to spur investments in tourism and other sectors. The country's road network is arguably the best in the region, making access to the different tourism destinations seamless. Additionally, the country has invested in the development of the hospitality industry, which is critical to the realization of the vision to make Rwanda a world-class and high-end ecotourism destination.

Also, as part of this strategy, Rwanda has invested in accelerating MICE tourism growth by attracting big events and conferences and developing cultural and religious tourism through working with the private sector. In Africa, Rwanda enjoys

THE NDAMBARARE WATERFALL
NYUNGWE NATIONAL PARK, RWANDA

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2nd ranking by the International Congress and Convention Association as a MICE destination. This is consistent with its aspiration to become a world-class conference destination.

Finally, Rwanda has strengthened its diplomacy and international cooperation to support the promotion of investment, tourism, and expansion of the market for products made in Rwanda as part of this strategy.

5. THE RWANDA DEVELOPMENT BOARD AS WELL AS RWANDA TOURISM HAVE BEEN ON AN ACTIVE CAMPAIGN TO SHOWCASE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR TOURISM AND INVESTMENT IN RWANDA, LEVERAGING SUCH SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES AS THE SLEEVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN RWANDA AND ARSENAL FOOTBALL CLUB, AS WELL AS US WITNESSING THE ENTRY OF GLOBAL HOSPITALITY PLAYERS/BRANDS SUCH AS MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, THE SHERATON, RADISSON BLU AND OTHERS. TO INVESTORS AND TRAVELERS - WHY RWANDA?

Investors show confidence in a destination with their capital. Rwanda has created an enabling environment for doing business. Before COVID19 struck, Rwanda's economy had been growing at an average of 8.5% per year for a decade. Highly rated as the cleanest, safest and corruption free country on the African continent, we have worked hard to put in place investor-friendly laws, policies and tax regimes that encourage FDI. Today Rwanda is the second easiest place to do business in Africa. It is 2nd in MICE destination ranking by the

Photo by: Cynthia Butare
Of Rwanda's culture and traditions: Intore Dancing



Game viewing at Magashi Camp in Akagera National Park



International Congress and Convention Association. The creation of RDB as a one stop center for business was done to make the investor journey faster and smoother. We have teams responsible for each step of the investor journey - from visas and registration to aftercare. This system has enabled us to increase investment in the country dramatically, and we are pleased with the feedback we receive from investors.

Rwanda has taken a similar "open doors" approach for tourism. It's now easier to visit Rwanda than ever before, thanks to a visa on arrival policy for all citizens of the world. Indeed, citizens of the AU, Commonwealth and La Francophonie receive free visa on arrival. One can say investment in tourism infrastructure, the national airline RwandAir, open visa policy, the tourism marketing campaigns with Arsenal football club and others are all part of the bigger plan to develop our tourism industry.

We have also put in place robust health and safety measures because the well-being of visitors is our number one priority. Since we reopened our borders on August 1st, the system we have set up has served us well.

6. RECENTLY DURING A TOURISM WEBINAR, YOU ORGANIZED FOR UAE ALONG WITH RWANDA DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT RWANDA HAS REOPENED FOR TOURISM. TAKE US BRIEFLY THROUGH THE DIVERSITY OF NATURE-FOCUSED, HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, AND CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL AND LEISURE EXPERIENCES AN UPWARDLY MOBILE TRAVELER COMING FROM THE UAE CAN EXPECT TO EXPERIENCE?

Rwanda reopened to international tourism on Aug 1st, 2020, with the resumption of commercial flights. The reopening was made possible by the swift government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The population was supportive of measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus. In recognition of these efforts, Rwanda received the



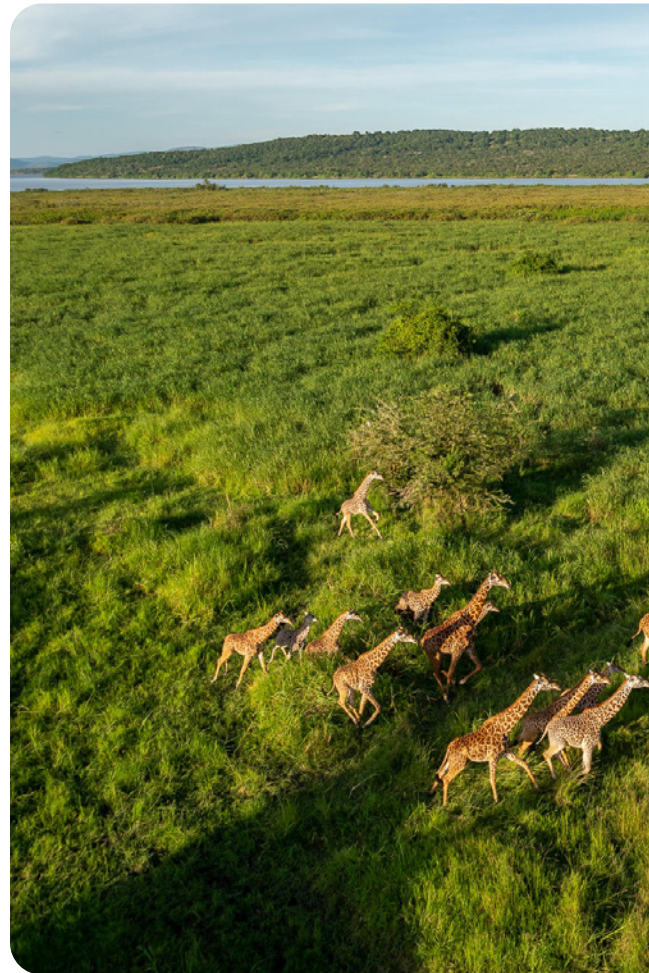
world's first-ever global safety and hygiene stamp launched recently by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). The safety stamp is a form of accreditation for the country which recognizes the efficiency of the global standardized health and hygiene protocols. Rwanda has adopted protocols that are based explicitly on guidelines laid out by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

An upwardly mobile traveler from the UAE would be spoilt for choice on Rwanda's remarkable leisure and recreational experiences from adventures in the mountains, to memorable excursions in serene landscapes, as well as a taste of our lively cities. The unmissable attractions include an opportunity to observe endangered mountain gorillas in their natural habitat. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and the recent arrival of Singita Kwitonda Lodge and One&Only Gorilla's Nest on the edge of the Volcanoes National Park makes seeing the gorillas even more special.

For those looking for a more traditional safari experience, the relatively warm and low-lying plains of Akagera National Park in eastern Rwanda comprise savannah, woodland, wetland, and a dozen lakes which makes for ideal game viewing. Wildlife species that can be seen here include lions, leopards, eastern black rhinos, buffalo, elephant, antelope, zebra, giraffe, baboons and an incredible 490 different bird species. A boat trip on Lake Ihema is also a highlight of any visit to Akagera, with its large pods of hippos, Nile crocodiles and abundant water birds who inhabit the island in the middle of the lake.

Part of Africa's Great Rift Valley, Lake Kivu in Rwanda's Western region is also a must visit! Magnificent mountains surround Rwanda's largest lake (and the sixth largest in Africa) while its deep emerald green waters cover an area of over 2,700 km². On the lake's northern shore lies Rubavu, once a popular colonial beach resort, its waterfront is lined with old mansions, hotels, and trendy bars ideal for sundowner cocktails after a day spent gorilla trekking. It is from Rubavu that the famous Congo Nile Trail extends south 227km through breath-taking hills and mountains beside the lake to Rusizi. For the more adventurous traveler, a kayaking tour on Lake Kivu, or mountain biking or hiking one of the six off-the-beaten-path stages of the Congo Nile Trail is worth the spectacular views!

Beyond our most popular national park – the Virunga National Park, we would also recommend visitors experience our newest national park, Gishwati-Mukura opening later this year 2020. Gishwati is one of the most stunning areas in the country where visitors will find undulating hills and idyllic tea plantations which dot the edges of the reserve. The newly created National Park gives both these ar-



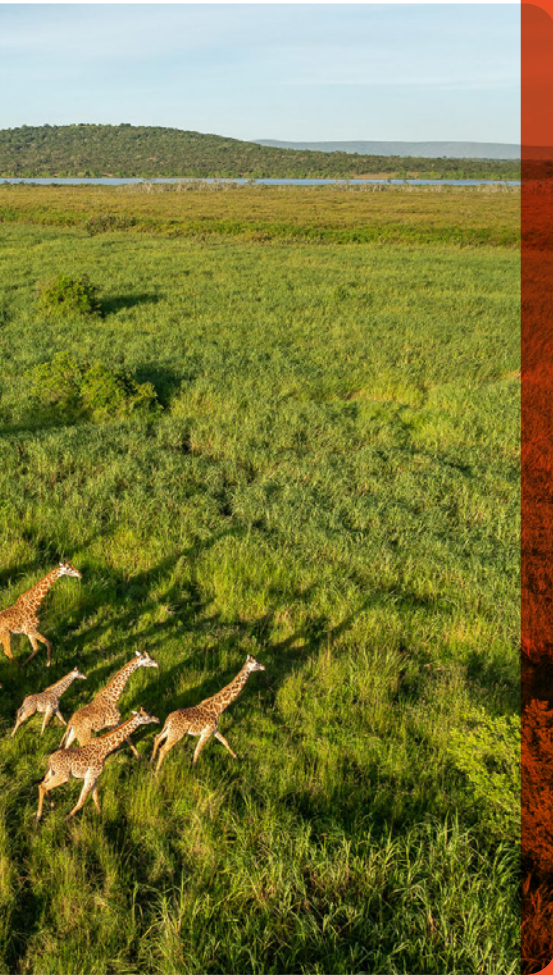





Photo by: Mohammed
Elgailly-Saad
The Ndamberare Waterfall,
Nyungwe National Park

cas official protected status. It is also one of the best spots for birdwatching in Rwanda with 232 species spotted at Gishwati and 163 species sighted in Mukura, and not far from the spectacular Nyungwe National Park, which is home to 13 primate species including chimpanzees.

7. WHAT ABOUT TIME SPENT IN KIGALI, THE NATION'S CAPITAL. WHAT ARE THE MUST-VISIT DESTINATIONS FOR A GUEST TO RWANDA ADD TO THEIR ITINERARY WHEN IN KIGALI?

No visit to Rwanda would be complete without exploring our capital city Kigali, which was founded as an administrative outpost in 1907 and became the capital at independence in 1962. The Kigali Genocide Memorial is a powerful educational experience for visitors which, through education and peacebuilding, honors the memory of and pays tribute to the more than one million Rwandans killed in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. Visitors can also stroll down the city's wide tree-lined boulevards and discover its burgeoning art scene, as well as a growing number of dining options. The Kigali Cultural Village also offers a dedicated space for local artisans and food vendors to exhibit and trade their goods.

8. IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT RWANDA OFFERS SO MUCH FOR EVERY TYPE OF TRAVELLER WITH A MYRIAD OF PREFERENCES TO EXPERIENCE. ANY PARTING WORDS FOR OUR READERS MR. AMBASSADOR?

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



TASTE-MAKERS |



THE MODERN-DAY BUTLER SERVICE

NEWTON CROSS UNPACKING THE WORLD OF
TRAINING TO WORK FOR THE GLOBE'S ELITE

▶ **T**o many the word 'Butler' conjures up an image of an individual such as Mr. Carson of the television series *Downton Abbey*.

The title has always been synonymous with wealth and the upper echelons of society. One envisions an impeccably dressed gentleman in a black and white suit and wearing a waistcoat and bow tie, complete with pocket watch and white gloves. This is the larger than life figure of the Butler in charge of an immense estate as well as the army of servants who are charged with keeping the manor in superb condition whilst providing the utmost in service. Indeed, in centuries past, this was the true image of the Butler.

Mr. Newton Cross of SABA International Butler Academy in Cape Town is the very antithesis of this image. As the creative owner and principal of the Academy, Mr. Cross has a unique, modern, and charismatic approach to Butler training and has changed the way that clients and students perceive the image of a Butler. The modern-day Butler may perform similar duties to the Butlers of old, however many changes have occurred in regards to age, the uniforms worn, places of work and, to answer the question of many, there are a large number of successful female Butlers working in the field!

Mr. Cross unpacked

Passionate and innovative an individual, these qualities have always been a driving force for Newton. He has always been independent, finding entrepreneurialism and mindfulness a very appealing quality. In his own words: "I loved cooking and entertaining from a very young age and my passion for baking led me to selling the cakes I made. As a young boy of 9, I knew that being a Butler was what I wanted to do, however this was not a recognised occupation in South Africa at the time. Years later I was able to realise my dream and qualify as a Butler at the age



of 19 at the school for Butlers and Household Personnel.

After working for several prominent clients, as well as numerous contracts on the luxurious Cunard ocean liner, Queen Mary 2, I realized the need for a Butler school in South Africa. I was working as a Butler for a Dutch property tycoon in Cape Town. When my contract with the family ended and the family returned to Europe for summer, they requested I supply Butlers from my school upon their return to South Africa. Hence a need was recognised and the South African Butler Academy was born in 2009,” says Mr. Cross.

Butlers are typically known as Household Managers in today’s changing world. The work of both is essentially the same thing. There has been a worldwide resurgence of clients wanting and requiring the services of a Butler, younger clients in particular, wanting a dynamic and modern household assistant in their stately residences. Others may require these services in the presidential suites of their favourite hotels and resorts, perhaps on their private jets or onboard their pristine yachts. The demand is constant.

Becoming a Butler: What it takes

Acquiring the technical skills to do the work are essential. This is where SABA International Butler Academy stands apart from the competition. During the 8-week residential Butler training course held exclusively in Cape Town, the trainers at the Butler Academy offer



unique training methods combined with kindness, honesty and sincerity towards students who quickly become a big part of the SABA family. The trainers are original, creative and keep ahead of the trends in the industry.

“We understand very well what the industry requires, and we know what individual candidates require in order to advance in the profession. We are a modern Butler Academy with a modern approach to Butler training.”



The trainers together bring years of experience to the table and they are dedicated to the art of Butler service. As the head trainer and principal, Mr. Cross is exceptionally gifted in infusing his students with the necessary skills to become a Butler. His years of working for the world's elite have been packaged and translated into a most unique style of Butler training.

He has devised an excellent course content that is based on experience, storytelling, and an abundance of practical applications. The trainers teach through an intense methodology of thorough assessments, immense discipline and the emphasis is placed on today's Butlers to be efficient and to manage a household effortlessly. A Butler needs to have excellent self-control, to be subservient and unobtrusive, yet at the same time be absolutely indispensable.

SABA International Butler Academy to the world

In addition to the 8-week training course, Mr. Cross' training programmes are sought-after worldwide. He travels globally in order to bring this unique brand of Butler training to remote resorts and hotels, private yachts, and royal palaces. No institution requiring training is seen as too small. These programmes are tailored to the needs of each client and delivered onsite and their success is measured in the number of clients who continually request return visits to train new staff. It has become clear that SABA International Butler Academy is the most highly sought-after and favoured Butler training academy worldwide.

"Anyone wanting to become a Butler must have the correct attitude. You need a heart and passion for service, unflinching energy, commitment, devotion, and discipline. Successful candidates gain not only excellent technical skills, but they also gain tremendous confidence in their abilities to perform their work," says Mr. Cross.

There is no shortcut to being a successful Butler. What is clear is that it takes hard work, perseverance, and dedication. One needs to begin at the bottom and never be afraid to learn as much as they can.



On balancing the demands of the job and their personal lives, Mr. Cross asserts, "Your personal life will become less important and your personal opinions might not agree with those of your client. Being discreet and not taking anything personally is essential, however if you have the passion and thrive on being of service to others, you will excel as a Butler and have a life-long rewarding career." ^{AV}

A TALK WITH A HOSPITALITY TRAILBLAZER

Hazel Gumpo

BUILDING PEOPLE AND DREAMS IN AFRICA'S
TOURISM LANDSCAPE

By Louisa Choruma

▶ **H**ead Hunting or scouting implies “hand-picking” a candidate for the job or selecting that individual with the desired qualities to best fill a role. Usually akin to sport – Hazel Gumpo brought this to Hospitality. Well respected among her peers as the “Queen of the Brand” who personally identified employees to occupy gaps in the lodge, her meticulous approach, together with her eye for detail, taste for the finer things and passion for people has led to Hazel Gumpo’s unmatched legacy of as a trailblazer in Zimbabwean hospitality.

Having been headhunted by the “Queen” myself, I was thrilled to catch up with Ms Hazel Gumpo, after having last seen her over a decade ago, when I worked under her leadership in the prestigious Functions Department of one of Victoria Falls’ top lodges.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN FOR HAZEL TO NOW

“My love story with hospitality began when from a young age, my father's many international travels brought diverse sets of guests to our doorstep over the years. My siblings and I would assist with the hosting, which I found fascinating and highly enjoyable. It’s safe to say that was when the seed was sown. Over the ensuing years, various other influences, whether in media or the world around me conspired to lead me to my preferred career choice - hospitality,” recounts Hazel.

“I spent a number of years training in Germany, a period during which my gastronomic skills were piqued and honed. Because it is so important to stay current, I researched and followed trends to stay on top of my game,” she adds.

Now a seasoned professional with a career spanning 30 years in hotel management and ca-



capacity building, Hazel's strengths include incisive strategic thinking, creative problem solving and an unmatched zeal for her work. On her return to Zimbabwe, Hazel's first assignment was in one of Southern Africa's finest properties - The Victoria Falls Safari Lodge.

Hazel has worked as a capacity builder for over 15 years for a Southern African company with international expertise in providing cost-effective, tried and tested hospitality solutions, whose operations are characterized by a tireless quest for quality in every aspect of product and service delivery. Certified in AHMA Human Resources Management and AHMA Hospitality Training, the Ghana Hotels Association also awarded Hazel the Hotel Trainer of the Year accolade for 2015. In recognition of her significant contribution to the industry, she was acknowledged as one of the Top 100 Tourism Personalities in West Africa by the ECOWAS region travel fair, Accra Weizo, in 2017.

Her mission statement is to build people and dreams and as such, is passionate about training and developing young hoteliers. Now with Elewana Collection, a portfolio of 16 boutique lodges, camps and hotels known for its unique accommodations in iconic locations across Kenya and Tanzania, Hazel considers herself privileged to head the Elewana Arusha Coffee Lodge team. Her vision is to create unforgettable encounters of Africa for visitors entering the northern safari circuit pre and post safari, thereby providing African culinary experiences with cultural encounters from arrival to departure.

Hazel's passions include interior decoration, creative cooking, hosting and sightseeing. She is the daughter of farmers and delights in a farm environment - working and perhaps living on a farm will be on the cards for her future. She is the first born of a family of 5 girls and 1 boy and has not only grown to be a strong leader, but a trailblazer who was appointed into a significant managerial role at 22 years of age and within the past few years, was one of the few female GMs in Ghana and proudly the first female GM at Elewana Arusha Coffee lodge.

HAZEL'S TOP AFRICAN DESTINATIONS

"Victoria Falls Zimbabwe is my top travel destination in Africa. I worked there for a good many years. It is an incredible place not only for being one of the seven wonders of the world but also the exceptionally strong sense of community. Hospitality there is literally a personal experience," shares Hazel.

"Ghana welcomed me with open arms and in all the years I worked there, I never once felt like an

A new normal in the Hospitality Industry post COVID-19, will be a fine line between achieving physical distancing yet maintaining the warmth of human contact.

- HAZEL GUMPO

outsider. It is a warm and vibrant nation and a cultural experience not to be missed.


I am currently discovering beautiful Tanzania, my current home. A definite must visit nation with its beautiful people, unique landmarks and abundant wildlife," Hazel adds.

Hazel's outlook on the future of Tourism and Hospitality – post COVID

Now the General Manager at Elewana Arusha Coffee Lodge, Hazel Gumpo had this to say about Tourism and Hospitality – in light of the COVID-era we now collectively find ourselves contending with:

"A new normal in the Hospitality Industry post COVID-19, will be a fine line between achieving physical distancing yet maintaining the warmth of human contact. This a big challenge in our industry, and given how innovation is indeed inevitable, new technologies and apps are replacing the human touch that has been our norm," Hazel weighs in.

She also asserts that cleanliness and robust sanitisation programs will take precedence as part of all operations, hence perhaps there is a need to employ a more minimalist approach to running all businesses, especially in the service industry.

"We are talking going as far as reducing the number of items needed to ensure cleaning and sanitised rooms. We are to pursue the rolling out of greater efficiencies, while also remaining mindful of environmental impact in all our processes. The road ahead is a long one, but we can all agree that there is no going back to the way things were before COVID-19," Hazel concludes. 



CULINARY ESCAPADES

A moment with CHEF AMINA LEBELO

THE ROAD TO CULINARY OPPORTUNITIES, KEY
INDUSTRY LEARNINGS AND PLATING UNIQUE DISHES



My passion for food began in 1983 when I was much younger and used to prepare meals for my close-knit family. I was taken by the taste, flavour, textures, and seasoning of food, which led to my desire of creating flavourful dishes that everyone enjoyed. When I left school in 1986, I had just completed my standard 9 and decided to rather seek for an internship or job so as to sustain myself and my younger sibling. Our parents died at a young age and left us in the care of my older sister.

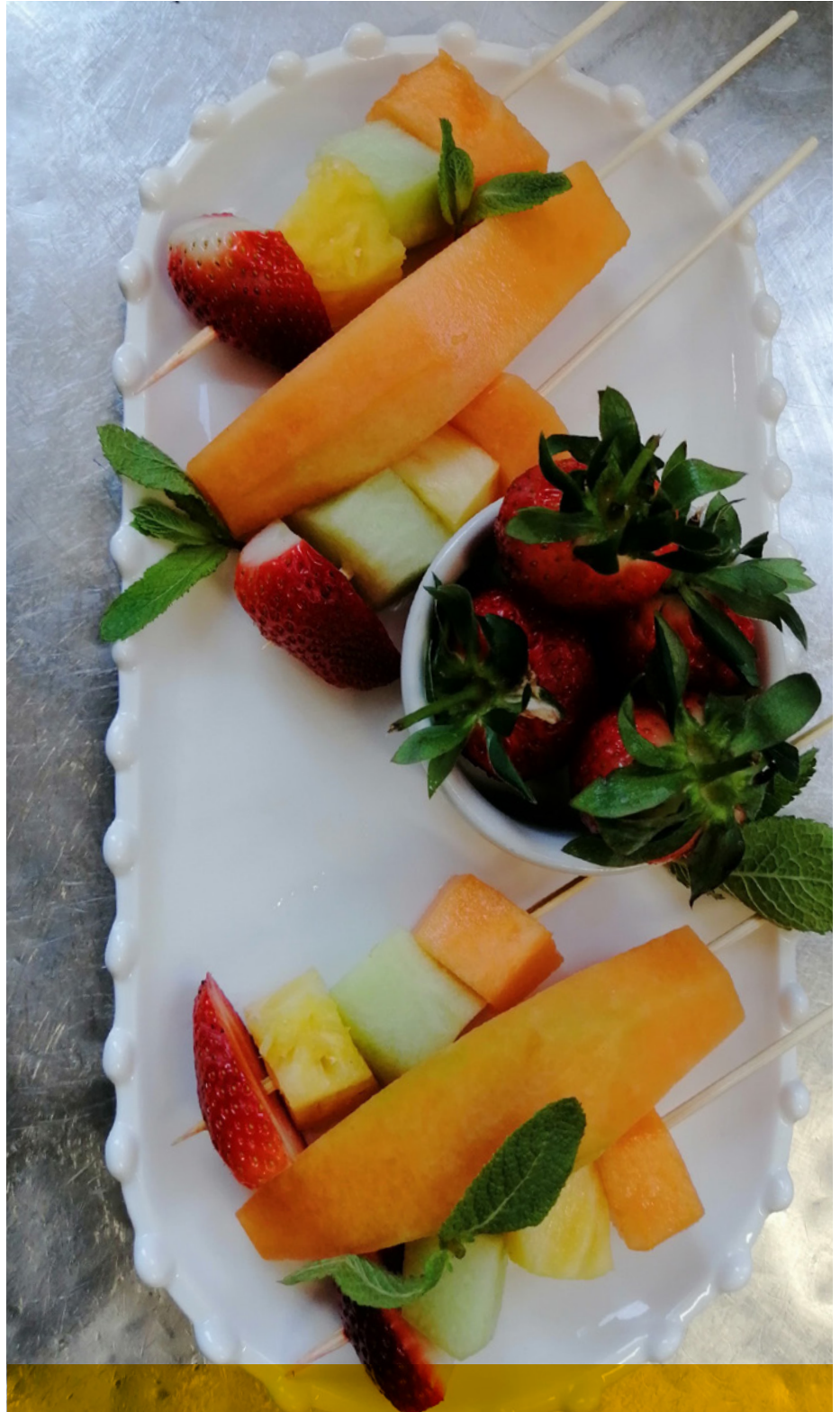
I started as an in-house trainee in 1986 at Riviera Sun International, going on to work in other Sun International properties for a year as a casual worker for months at Lesotho Sun, three months at Royal Swazi Sun, a further three months at Thabanchu Sun and the final quarter of the year spent at Wild Coast Sun. Thereafter, my journey would take me to joining a private hotel group in Bloemfontein as a Sous Chef. Several years down the line and after a few more moves across multiple hotel chains and private brands, I would then join the Tsogo Sun Group, one of South Africa's leading hospitality chains. It is during my time at Tsogo Sun that I have enjoyed the most growth, working my way up the ladder to becoming a leader in the field.

CONQUERING CHALLENGES IN MALE DOMINATED INDUSTRY

Being a female was a challenge as man dominated in the kitchen. The fact that I had no academic qualifications and a matric certificate prompted me to study further. It didn't take long before I noticed many young students I trained in our line of work climbed the ladder faster than I did because they had the backing of a good culinary degree. Adding to this challenge was the fact that I was working in a field where kitchens at every hospitality establishment I worked at were mostly run by male teams. My response to the dilemmas I found myself in was to become proactive in seeking opportunities for further education and also working closely with people who had exceptional knowledge of food preparation techniques and trends in food service.

I worked very hard and made sure I read and experimented with new recipes as much as I could. I always asked questions and made myself available to other chefs when they needed help. By doing this, my flexibility and adaptive capacity in working with other colleagues was soon noticed. Looking back, I can comfortably state that growth opportunity throughout my career came as a result of getting as much information as possible and practicing on how to cook with flair while also leading staff.

My biggest career highlight was being the first Black female head chef in a 5-star hotel; the Sandton Towers Intercontinental Hotel. I had many struggles within the kitchen, and being a female and person of colour, it wasn't easy to lead a brigade of predominantly male colleagues with strong egos. However there is so much joy when people genuinely enjoy your food, not to mention the tips that are shared by international guests as a token of their appreciation. Still to this day, it gives meaning to my job and a great sense of purpose in how I spend my days, beyond meeting monthly targets. Every challenge, I have learned to overcome and find great reward in helping young aspiring executive chefs learn how to do the same.





QUALITIES OF A TOP CHEF – MY TAKE

Being a professional chef means being very structured and managing the entire kitchen. Running a successful kitchen requires setting goals, ensuring on-time food preparation, task execution, plating, catering to guests' unique requirements and so on, on a daily basis. Following these basic steps has always allowed me to get the job done well as I view my role as an executive chef as an integral part to running successful hotel kitchens, managing the overall operations of the business such as achieving business targets, controlling budgets, increasing the business' monthly income, developing my staff, and ensuring high customer satisfactory levels. In all honesty, my passion for food, being a professional chef and love for people and food is what keeps me going. Without these I would have not been able to thrive in this industry.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE INDUSTRY

The opportunities of the culinary industry are endless, with so many available roles including becoming a Head Chef, Pastry chef, Chef de Cuisine, Executive Chef, Sous Chef, Personal Chef, and even an Area Chef. Many individuals who start off working in commercial kitchens aspire to own a catering business or their own restaurant someday. I think we can all agree that it really all depends on your passion and personal goals.

My goal was always to become an Executive



Chef, inspired by my love for cooking and the difficulties we faced upon losing our parents and having to learn how to fend for ourselves. And so finally be promoted to that position after many years of working my way up the culinary ladder was my ultimate career highlight. Not only did I have countless opportunities to gain new skills along the way, but this is where I also attained exposure in a combination of business hotels, resorts, country clubs, private homes, on cruise lines, convention centres, casinos and many other exciting destinations.

For me every day is an opportunity for new experiences through plating unique dishes, creating special menus, making creative new flavour combinations, teaching students that are studying or training, and getting positive reviews from guests and customers. The respect gained overtime from my colleagues, not to mention performance bonuses, has been truly rewarding. The best part for me is the close-knit family that has become a part of my kitchen. We as chefs spend hours working together and socializing, which lead to a close working relationships, strength in team dynamics and ultimately a positive working environment.

THE CHALLENGES EVERY ASPIRING CHEF MUST CONQUER

Although our industry has many opportunities, it also has its challenges like any other. I always caution my students on the fears they must conquer in working in a fast-paced environment, clearly reminding them that if one doesn't have a passion for food, they simply will not survive this industry. The hours are long, and it sometimes means comprising spending time with your family, which was really quite tough for me as an Executive Chef. I often missed important family days due to having to work on public holidays, as well as weekends or double shifts, which also meant I missed out on some of my children's milestones.

A strong support system is integral to the success of any professional. Because




I have been so fortunate to be blessed with a supportive husband as well as understanding children, we were able to overcome the challenges presented as they came along. High stress levels, working long shifts with limited rest periods in between, and dips in physical energy are all occupational hazards, and so it is important that one enjoys great relationships with people that understand the complexities of working in our field.

MOTIVATED BY PASSION FOR FOOD AND THE INDUSTRY

Without a doubt, working with fresh ingredients, developing new menu items, working under pressure, leading and teaching chefs in the kitchen environment about food and its textures, characteristics, flavours, colours and presentation all come together to keep me motivated to pursue continued growth. My personality shines when my hands are full and my adrenaline is running. Great ideas come to mind when I am juggling multiple tasks in the kitchen and playing around with various elements of food preparation.

Being a chef is my true passion and brings meaning to my life. It means a lot because it is not only my chosen career path but also a part of my identity. Cooking has brought with it some of my fondest memories and it is what I would choose to do over and over again because of the satisfaction and serenity it brings me.

Becoming a chef presented endless possibilities for me. All the hard work, passion and dedication does eventually pay off for those that are committed to growing. Additionally, I must also mention that the desire to continue to learn while in the culinary industry has offered the life-changing opportunity to turn mistakes negative experiences into positive outcomes. 

Buffet spreads and
sumptuous platters
WITH *Chef Naledi*



BUILDING A BRAND THAT SCALES THE KITCHEN THROUGH TEACHING, TRAINING AND EMPOWERING.

Naledi Toona, affectionately known by many as Chef Naledi, is a mother of two (a daughter and son) and wife to who she describes to be the most supportive husband. Originally from Botswana, Chef Naledi relocated to South Africa for school in 2005 but never went back home. South Africa was seemingly bursting with opportunities she and her family wanted to explore, and so they chose to settle in the country.

Chef Naledi's culinary journey began informally in 2013. She started with cooking for small events and when corporate clients started approaching her for catering services, this became an opportunity to register her company – Amara Catering, which has since evolved into a bespoke catering busi-

ness. Since becoming fully licensed to operate her food-service business, Chef Naledi witnessed exciting prospects for growth, especially given how her culinary prowess didn't come with any formal training. As time would progress, she decided to enroll into a culinary arts institution, later attaining her a Certificate in Culinary Arts with HTA in 2016.

Her certification is what led to her realisation that her passion for teaching and empowerment was really her calling. She began teaching housekeepers how to cook, tying in some educational tips on maintaining household cleanliness and hygiene. Her path was going to be nonconventional to a degree, as pursuing a career in the hotel and restaurant industry just wasn't something she wanted to do.

Today, her following continues to grow within her community and even across social media as she showcases her enjoyment of experimenting with food and serving up sumptuous platters and buffets spreads for all to enjoy.

Chef Naledi's favourite dishes to cook:

“Mostly anything lamb. But my summer fav is lamb chops and winter favourite is lamb curry. I also enjoy chicken served with a brown rice casserole. Most recently, any whole fish...from sardines to salmon to yellow tail. I love them whole.”



To connect with Chef Naledi, you can find her on  as @chef_naledi. For enquiries contact hello@chefnaledi.com

Favourite dishes to eat:

“Sushi, especially rainbow rolls. I also love a good plate of prawns and well-cooked succulent oxtail.”

Top 5 African Destinations:

“Kasane in Botswana. I love its location because you can quite literally travel from Botswana into Zimbabwe and then Zambia within a matter of hours. I also enjoy the wilderness in this region. The opportunities to view a range of animals and the big 5 in this area are many. Kasane is definitely one of my favourite little towns in Botswana.

Second would be Maun, also in Botswana, which has garnered regional acclaim as one of the Botswana’s tourism hotspots. It’s home to the Okavango Delta and is a spectacular attraction especially after the rainy season.

Victoria Falls also falls on my top 5 list. I’ve been there several times and cannot get enough of it. The falls are just so relaxing and breathtaking to view.

Durban, I enjoy because it’s such a child friendly holiday destination. We go there as a family at least every second year. Lastly, I’d like to add Zanzibar to my bucket list. Admittedly I haven’t travelled a whole lot across Africa and was looking forward to experiencing Zanzibar, but we’ve had to postpone this trip due to the pandemic. I’m definitely looking forward to being able to go though!”

What down time looks like

“I sleep during my downtime. I know it sounds strange, but I genuinely enjoy taking some much-needed rest and sleeping. In my busy seasons I can get as little as 2 hours of sleep – a quick nap really, just to help me reboot for the next barrage of tasks.”



Looking ahead for Chef Naledi

The past 5 years have seen Chef Naledi grow from being an entrepreneur in the catering business to a culinary educator. She enjoyed the teaching and training opportunities so much that she eventually received her accreditation as a facilitator, assessor, and moderator, engaging with her wider network under the self-titled Chef Naledi brand.

While her catering business has been hard-hit by the global COVID-19 pan-

demic, Chef Naledi’s passion for cooking keeps her inspired to try new things in the kitchen while she waits for things to take a turn for the better. Like every entrepreneur trying to ride out what seems to be a prolonged economically challenging season, Chef Naledi believes in the importance of having multiple streams of income to keep one afloat during more challenging times. Chef Naledi also runs a Property Investment Company alongside her husband and business partner, so credits the time she spends at their business - Lenayatla Property Solutions as one of her enjoyable moments outside of the culinary space. 



ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA





RIVERSIDE *opulence* ATTONGABEZI

Tongabezi is a romantic hideaway nestled on the banks of the Zambezi River just upstream of Victoria Falls. Over the last thirty years this lodge has become something of a legend in the safari industry. It has grown from a few open tents with bucket showers to one of Conde Nast's Top 20 Hotels in the World, and all without losing the uplifting sense of community and kindness that defines this piece of paradise.

Tongabezi is known for having been conservation and community driven before it was cool. Guests are given an opportunity to experience the mighty Victoria Falls in the lap of luxury whilst also creating real, positive change in vulnerable Zambian communities. Here, the legendary warmth of the Zambian people is effortlessly combined with Tongabezi's unique brand of exclusive ambiance.

ON LOCATION AT TONGABEZI

Tongabezi is a short twenty-minute drive from the Livingstone Airport or a vital thirty-minute drive from Victoria Falls. The short journey away from Mosi-oa-Tunya, or 'The Smoke that Thunders', is enough to escape the crowds that gather from around the world to see one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World in all her glory.

Guests are welcomed to the lodge by a dedicated personal valet who will look after them for their entire stay. The main area boasts a river view pool as well as a sunshine lap pool, a private gym and trainer, multiple private dining decks around the property, and two fully organic gardens from where most of Tongabezi's fruit, herbs and vegetables are sourced.

The rooms are a selection of six bespoke Houses and five River Cottages, all individually styled with sustainable interiors from all over Africa. Every House and Cottage has its own private deck, and five of the six Houses also have their own plunge or infinity pool. Tongabezi also has its own private island, Sindabezi, which can be booked exclusively for up to ten people.

THE NUT HOUSE:

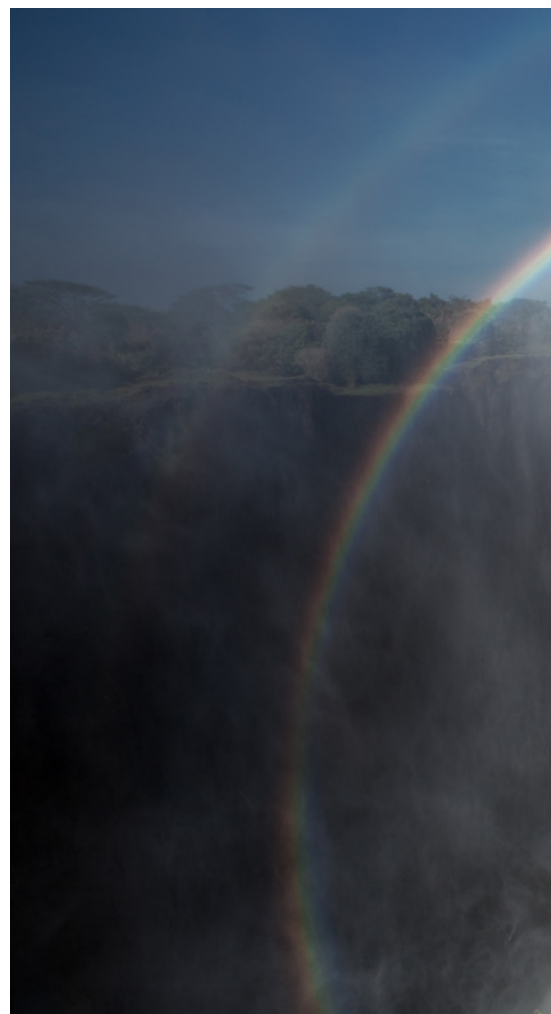
Contrary to its name, the Nut House is a haven from the madness of the outside world. Romantic art, textiles and textures are combined from all around the African continent, and design elements from Morocco, Mali, Zambia and South Africa feature throughout the immense interior space. Folding doors open onto the elevated private garden and an infinite plunge pool that overlooks the Zambezi right where the sun sets each night.

THE TREE HOUSE:

Set against the basalt rock bed, amongst the branches of three Riverine Ebony trees, the Tree House spreads out over a sustainable pine deck and then onto the Zambezi River. The front façade of the Three House is entirely open, making this room completely at one with the sights and sounds of the river. This is the room for dreamers who want to be at one with nature... whilst sipping a glass of champagne in their bubble bath, perhaps.

SINDABEZI ISLAND

Sindabezi Island is unique - the discerning traveller's best kept secret. An idyllic, exclusive camp on Tongabezi's very own private isle on the Zambezi River, it is the only luxury bush camp from where Victoria Falls can comfortably be explored. Experience the large number of activities in the area during the day and





return to a tranquil haven, a thousand light years away from the bustle at night. Fodor's consider Sindabezi one of the top 10 eco lodges in Africa.

A DAY AT TONGABEZI

Guests set their own pace at Tongabezi. Here 'all inclusive' is not simply about fine dining, sparkling drinks, and a sumptuous bedroom. Guests are also offered a range of inclusive activities. In keeping with Tongabezi's individual approach to hospitality there is no set itinerary, so travellers are free to book every excursion at a time that fits perfectly with their ideal holiday.

Activity choices range from a guided game drive in the neighbouring Mosi-oa-Tunya National park – to see the rhinos, perhaps – to island picnics or a romantic dinner under the stars on Tongabezi's famous floating sampan. Guided tours of Victoria Falls are of course included*, but so is a morning spent fishing or wandering around the local fabric markets.

Tongabezi is only twenty minutes from Livingstone, which is known as the Adrenaline Capital of Africa, so the Tongabezi Team are also available to organise additional non-inclusive activities for their guests. Guests are spoilt for choice: activities range from a microlight flight over Victoria Falls to swimming in the



infamous Devil's Pool on the very edge of the waterfall, from walking with rhinos to white water rafting.

DOING GOOD


The activity that Tongabezi staff are most likely to recommend is a visit to Tongabezi's own Trust School: Tujatane. Tujatane means 'Let Us All Hold Hands Together'. This school provides a free education to over 300 children from the local Simoonga area, and also supplies nutritious meals and other vital support to this vulnerable area.

The school is a short five-minute walk from the lodge itself, and the students are always excited to show off their achievements to guests from around the world. The Tujatane students are reigning National Champions at traditional dancing, as well as poetry and drama. Their original song performances are often performed on the Tongabezi grounds, and willing guests might even be invited to learn a local dance or two.

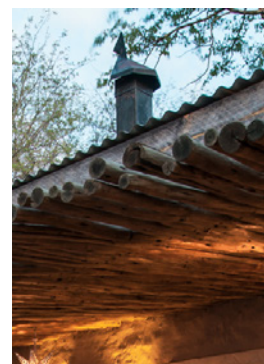
Tujatane offers an incredible opportunity for guests to engage with the empowering work that Tongabezi is doing. What better way to know that your luxury holiday is brightening Zambia's future than to meet the children who will create that future?

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In the beginning of 2020, Tongabezi also became a part of a larger story of responsibility and kindness. They joined the Green Safaris family, a collection of properties around Zambia and Malawi with an inspiring commitment to environmental sustainability, community empowerment, and animal conservation. Green Safaris is best known for their Silent Safaris, incredible electric game vehicles, electric boats, and electric bikes that change the entire safari experience.

So now, together with Green Safaris, Tongabezi will continue to strike a seemingly impossible balance between protecting pristine African wilderness, supporting their teams and communities, and outdoing guests' dream experiences in Africa. 

**Apart from Park Fees.*







EXPLORING KHAMI NATIONAL MONUMENT: INSIDE THE TORWA

Dynasty

A scenic view of a rocky hillside covered in green vegetation and scattered boulders, with a large tree in the foreground. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The text 'EXPLORING KHAMI NATIONAL MONUMENT: INSIDE THE TORWA' is written in a bold, white, serif font at the top. Below it, the word 'Dynasty' is written in a stylized, orange, cursive font.

Possessing subtle and mysterious beauty, Khami National Monument is one of Zimbabwe's five World Heritage Sites. The astonishing dry walled historical site is located 22km west of Bulawayo. Another unique and exceptional testimony to a civilisation bygone, it stands as the second largest built monument after the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, with astonishing Stone Age civilization exhibiting great architecture of the iron age era.

Built around AD1450, Khami was the heart of the Butua State until its destruction around AD1644. After the abrupt collapse of the Great Zimbabwe Kingdom, there arose the Torwa dynasty – the ruling family of the Butua State. Khami Ruins were designated a National Monument in July 1937 and declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986. Now a World Heritage site, the ruins are believed to have been built by the Karanga tribe of the Rozwi Section.

With a relaxing atmosphere oozing from the elusive archaic beauty of the heritage site which is like no other, visitors are wowed by a series of protective terraced and highly decorated stone ruins which are a show of power and wealth. The main features at Khami Ruins are the Cross Ruins, Passage Ruins, Hill Complex, Precipice Ruins and Vlei Ruins, reflecting the early African urbanisation prior to colonisation. In as much as the ruins follow the pattern of the Great Zimbabwe Palace, they are a later development possessing own features and expressions, making the site conspicuous. Exploring Khami Ruins gives the tourist an opportunity to experience the picturesque magnificence of both the Zimbabwean cultural and natural heritage.

To add to the scenic rugged beauty, there is also a beautiful camping site for a greater relaxing experience. Khami Ruins also hosts a site museum which provides useful background site information. The museum was recently re-worked and the comprehensive exhibits are awe-inspiring as they give the visitor a window into the past. The friendly guides will help create a memorable experience, making a trip to Khami worth a drive out of town.

WHILE YOU ARE IN THE AREA...

VIEWS FROM THE TOP AT MATOBO HILLS

With an abundance of spectacular kopjes, massive granite outcrops, boulders and the popular unique “mother and child” balancing rocks, Matobo Hills creates a dramatic cultural landscape that extends approximately 3,000 square kilometres. The beautiful hilly site boasts of over 3,500 rock artworks inside caves, cliffs surfaces and boulders, also featuring the largest concentration of rock art in Zimbabwe and the African continent as a whole.

Located to the south of Zimbabwe's second largest city, Bulawayo; Matobo Hills parades the bushmen's paintings on the walls of caves and rocks using special pigments and natural minerals that have survived the onslaught of climate change and time. The exceptional and extraordinary rock art has displayed the visible remnants of Zimbabwean history.

In 2003, Matobo Hills including the Matobo National Park were also declared a World Heritage. The National Park of international acclaim occupies a total area of 44 500 hectares hosting a number of renowned tourist's attractions including the impressive Matobo Hills. Conservationists would be delighted to know that the area is an Intensive Protection Zone for endangered black and white rhinoceros and encompasses spectacularly attractive flora and fauna. Nature lovers are treated to escorted walks, fishing, boating, game viewing, bird watching, hiking, rhino tracking and tours of the renowned rock paintings. Bambata, Pomongwe, Nswatu-




gi and White Rhino painted caves have proven to be popular as well as the World's View, where prominent colonial personalities such as Cecil John Rhodes are buried. Matobo National Park today is sanctuary to the largest population of white rhino, leopards, black eagles to name but a few.

A PLACE OF SPIRITUAL SYMBOLISM AND PRESERVATION OR TRADITIONS FOR SOME...

The Matobo hills have remained a spectacle to behold as the local community still hold them sacred as the archaic establishment is a reminder of historical events, with sites such as graves, ruins and relics dating back thousands of years through to recent events. Many have been inspired by the hills' dramatic structure and formation which stand as evidence of the barely uninterrupted relationship between humans and their environs over numerous decades.

Regarded by some as a significant part of the soul of Zimbabwe, today the Mato-

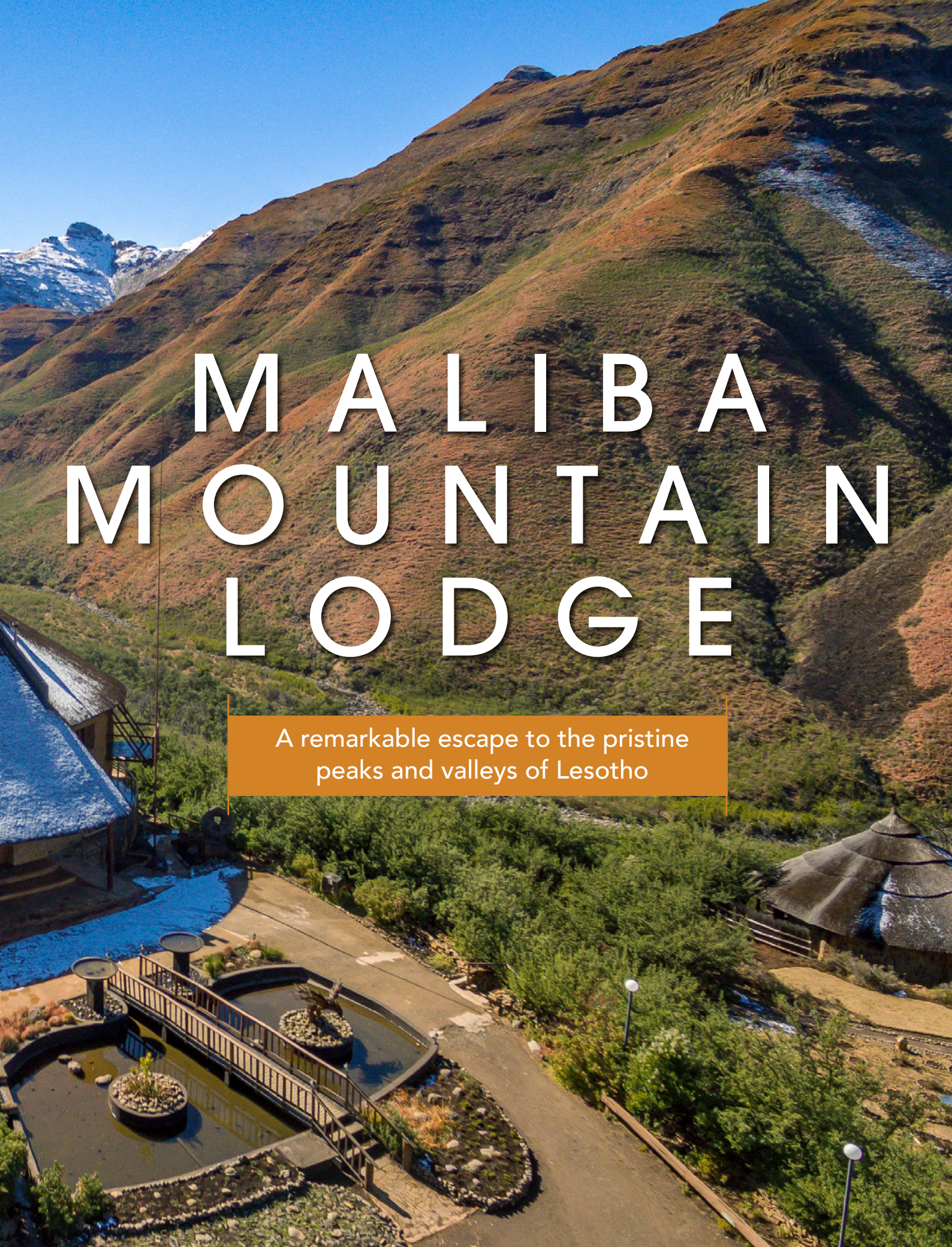


bo Hills are a place of peace; held in reverential awe by local communities. Traditional ceremonies are still performed, believed to assist in the making of rain in what is locally termed 'mukwerera.' Holding deep and mystical significance is the Njelele Hill, which is deemed holy, thereby attracting visitors locally and even from across the borders. People gather at the Njelele Shrine at given months for the famed rain making ceremony; consulting spirit medium and rainmaker uNgwali, who is believed to have extra-ordinary powers to bring the rains. In addition to the astonishing granite rock formations, Matobo Hills present emotively beautiful traditional and cultural landscapes which match no other. 



ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • MALIBA MOUNTAIN LODGE





MALIBA MOUNTAIN LODGE

A remarkable escape to the pristine
peaks and valleys of Lesotho

T

ucked away in the Royal Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho, in Ts'ehlanyane National Park, is Maliba Lodge, a 5-star mountain retreat that welcomes guests to a tranquil experience in Lesotho's great outdoors. Adventure and distinctive cultural experiences are all a part of the package at this luxurious destination, nestled on plains that span 5600 hectares of pure rugged wilderness and mountain terrain, an area renowned for also being one of few remaining protected indigenous woodlands in the mountain Kingdom.

Lesotho's only 5-star mountain lodge

Maliba Mountain Lodge is truly a remarkable escape from the hustle and bustle of the city life, leaving you spoilt for choice as you take in fresh mountain air and pristine views. A 4-and-a-half-hour drive from Johannesburg or 2-hour drive from Maseru International Airport, the lodge is an easily accessible retreat for both business and leisure travellers. The establishment, whose name is related to the fact that the lodge is located near the junction of three major rivers, is Lesotho's only 5-star lodge, perched in evergreen mountains that usher you into an atmosphere of breathtaking scenery and sheer relaxation. Since opening, Maliba Mountain Lodge has truly established itself as the hallmark of Lesotho's future in hospitality and tourism, welcoming guests from all over the world to experience its unique charm, reminiscent of more traditional living in the hill country of Lesotho.

The property took five years to build by a team of two Australians, Nick King and Chris McEvoy, who had business interests in South Africa, alongside local Lesotho Engineer Stephen Phasaki. Carrying a long-standing dream of building an up-market holiday destination in the small kingdom nation, they identified the perfect site which had previously been used as a strategic access point to the

multi million-dollar tunnel that supplies water from Katse Dam in the Lesotho highlands to South Africa. This site does in fact fall in the middle of a pristine valley within Ts'ehlanyane National Park

Luxury Basotho style chalets and riverside lodges await you...

A key feature of the resort are its six exclusive luxury Basotho-style chalets, each offering private viewing decks stretching into the heart of the scenic woodland mountains. Water features greet guests as they enter the main lodge, a testament to the use of natural elements inspired by the area. Adorned with natural aesthetics and rustic décor, this stunning lodge invites guests to relax and converse in comfortable luxury surroundings that comprise of luxury stone and thatch chalets, self-catering river side lodges each with 4 bedrooms away from the main lodge, which are perfect for families and groups. For a more localised and authentic experience, reminiscent of what it would be like to live in tradition housing structures in rural Lesotho sans all the plush décor, guests are invited to book a stay at one of the cozy traditional huts, which are also built a stone-throw away from the river.



Decorated exceptionally with natural theming, Maliba lodge invites the outside in with natural tones and hues. Warmth and comfort are key elements that have been infused into the chalets' design, further enhanced by under-floor heating, heated-bed blankets, heated towel rails and heated wall panels to help combat the surrounding crisp mountain air and cool temperatures. An open fireplace sets the mood for a romantic evening, with the sunken bath offering breathtaking views as one relaxes and soaks up the tranquil surroundings which lie outside the window. A private viewing deck extending from each chalet, provides guests with an opportunity to peer out over the highlands and valleys, offering unparalleled panoramic views of the Lesotho Mountain range.

Unique flora and fauna

Unlike most of Lesotho, the Ts'ehlanyane National Park in which Maliba Lodge is nestled, boasts plenty of distinctive vegetation dominated by mature Che-Che trees, all of which have historical significance to the Basotho people. The reserve, also filled with remarkable flora and fauna that can be found in few places elsewhere in the world, unveils a record 220 flowering plant species and several rare undergrowth plants that are unique to this woodland habitat alone.


Smaller wildlife is often spotted in the area, where there have been 24 small to medium sizes mammalian species recorded in the highlands area. These include the African wild cat, black-backed jackal, porcupine, caracal, grey roebuck, baboon, striped polecat and rock hyrax, ice rat, the clawless otter (there is circumstantial evidence that leopard still occurs in a few refuge habitats). Wildlife conservation enthusiasts will be delighted to note that all these species except for the clawless otter, grey roebuck and rock hyrax are considered endangered in the national park area.

Your call to experience Maliba Lodge and the Beauty of Lesotho

With 4 major rivers running through Maliba's mountainous vicinity, the park is best explored by foot, walking along well-marked trails that range from flat and gentle to

steeper sections. Some trails can be explored on horseback (which the lodge can arrange) with a guide alongside you. Whichever you choose, sensational views are part of the itinerary. Discover the natural swimming pool set above a small waterfall on Tshelanyane River or take a chance at spotting the different animal species that the park has to offer, such as the majestic eland (the world's largest antelope), the rock hyrax and other wildlife and bird species.

Then there is also the opportunity to visit the Tsikoane Cave to see the historic site of the infamous Lesothosaurus, described by locals as "Lesotho's dinosaur". The lizard species said to have reached 1 metre in length. Tourists are invited to view the 150-million-year-old footsteps said to have belonged to this prehistoric creature.

For those after authentic experiences that involved connecting with the local residents of the neighbouring communities, there are plenty of opportunities to embark on interactive experiences that result in you mingling with the locals, learning more about the history, culture and traditions of the Basotho people. 

To learn more about Lesotho's only
5-star lodge,
visit www.maliba-lodge.com





WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN AFRICA: CRAFTING A NEW WAY FORWARD

By Luke Brown



In the last 40-50 years, wildlife conservation in Africa has largely been left up to a relatively small grouping of people and organizations whose passion and personal experiences with wildlife have spurred them on to commit to the cause. These groups can be broadly divided into four categories: firstly, people and organizations that are based in Africa who work on the frontline for conservation. Anti-poaching outfits, wildlife veterinarians, community-wildlife outreach programmes and wildlife educational institutions fall in within this category.

Secondly there are the donors, which are mainly comprised of individuals and organizations based beyond the coasts of Africa, who support the frontline efforts taking place on the ground. They feel positively compelled do this because of their deep-rooted love for Africa, either because of an

epiphany they had whilst on a safari journey or because they deeply care about wildlife in general. Africa fits the bill nicely because it is blessed with a myriad of iconic wildlife.

The third category are the tourism establishments, both on the ground in Africa or in the source markets. These tourism entities support conservation when a percentage of the revenue they generate for each trip they sell gets earmarked for conservation and ends up with the first category outlined above. It is this third category that has arguably contributed the most towards conservation from the private sector perspective. In some cases, frontline conservation outfits receive as much as 90% of their funding from tourism related grants.

The fourth category are the governments and policy makers, whose influence will always be key as they essentially drive land use, and their decisions are influenced by politics and governance.

WHEN COVID-19 HIT: THE IMPACT

A tipping point came about when Covid-19 made its entry, resulting in tourism arrivals and receipts into the wildlife areas of Africa literally drying up overnight. With no signs of meaningful recovery in sight for some time to come,

“When Covid-19 devastated our industry, it dawned on us that the role we had been playing to support conservation in Africa through tourism was far too fickle. We had to come up with a new way to continue our efforts and hopefully make a meaningful difference in the fight for Africa’s wildlife.

– LUKE BROWN, CO-FOUNDER, ZAMBESIA CONSERVATION ALLIANCE (ZCA)

the stage for looming disaster was set because suddenly, the support wildlife conservation was getting from tourism was no longer available.

Even prior to the current global pandemic, all efforts and collective goodwill towards conservation efforts weren't succeeding in their attempt to sufficiently halt the rate of habitat loss and animal population decline. According to the African Wildlife Foundation, more than 43% of the wild African lion population has been lost in just two decades with less than 23,000 individual African lions remaining. This decline has been attributed to both habitat loss and the illicit wildlife trade.

ACTIVATING A SOLUTION: ZAMBESIA CONSERVATION ALLIANCE IS FORMED

In March 2020, a new organization was formed, called the Zamnesia Conservation Alliance (ZCA). Its founders, based in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, all have a background in regional tourism that stretches back more than 30 years. Covid-19 and the resulting lockdowns that left borders closed in a fight to curb the spread of infections, brought with it lots of newfound time on the hands of ZCA's founders, who have since set out to literally 'craft a new way forward for wildlife conservation Africa' - a statement that has become somewhat of a mantra for them.

The new strategy is simple: to create awareness on a much bigger scale across vast cross-sections of people, thereby driving support in all forms towards habitat and wildlife conservation. Through initiating two movements, namely #WeShareAfrica and #SportForConservation the organisation has been able to attract people from all walks of life and not just those from the conventional





circles, to join the fight for Africa's wildlife conservation.

ZCA's gained early success towards achieving this through the Conservation Games, an event that became the catalyst for the #SportForConservation initiative. Series One of the Conservation Games was held in May and June of 2020, and saw more than 70 sports personalities participate, from 12 different disciplines, all of whom represented their countries at the highest level.

HOW THE CONSERVATION GAMES ARE PLAYED

1. Players comprising of real life current and former sportsmen were split into four teams: The Lions, the Elephants, the Leopards, and the Buffalos, each with their own captain to lead them.
2. Teams battle in head to head encounters between players in a series of battles played out virtually.
3. Each match is moderated by a 'Match Master' and lasts about 30 minutes during which the players compete to answer sports trivia questions relevant to the sports they play.
4. Conservation messaging was weaved into the questioning from the Match Masters with an often hilarious climax at the end of each match coming in the form of the 'Whacky Wild' section, where players were asked to re-enact their best version of a 'Rhino Run and Charge' or 'Fish Eagle Swoop and Call' for example.
5. Players were put into 'virtual change rooms' where banter was the order of the day, but on a more serious note, they also enjoyed an opportunity to interact with a different acclaimed conservation coach each week.

One of our main goals of the Conservation Games was to improve the sports icon's own knowledge of conservation so that they could take away something that resonates with them. Most importantly, the participants were able to educate their own audiences on the various topics around the subject of wildlife conservation.

CONSERVATION GAMES – SERIES TWO LOADING

Promising to be bigger, better and have an even greater impact than the first games, Zambia Conservation Alliance is thrilled to be rolling out the next instalment of the Conservation Games. To date, several key frontline conservation organizations have benefitted through the support generated through strong audience engagement and goodwill. ZCA has since distributed resulting financial donations and offerings in kind to entities like the Victoria Falls and Bumi Hills Anti-Poaching Units. Other winning moments include 'Rocky' the baby Black Rhino, in the Save Valley Conservancy of Zimbabwe having received food security for his first three years of life because of Conservation Games. Aside from this event ZCA has also started Conservation Active, a second #SportForConservation initiative that allows everyone, no matter their fitness or sporting capability, to get active and support conservation at the same time. ⁴⁹

To learn more about the evolving story of Zambia Conservation Alliance and its various initiatives, visit:

www.zambesia.com

www.sportforconservation.com

www.theconservationgames.com

www.weshareafrica.com

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YOU!**





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waiting to be tapped.

There is so much to discover in Zambia, with big and little moments that take your breath away. Sitting on a boat on the Luangwa River with blue skies punctuated by hot pink exclamation points of Carmine bee-eaters swooping into their riverbank nests, you can also witness hippo out of the water, eating the fallen sausages from the kigelia; walking through the long grass at sunrise in Laikipia, with a fiscal shrike raiding the wet spider's nests, laden with the evening's caught haul. Thornicroft's giraffe peer over the top of the albizia in South Luangwa. The incredible topography of the Lower Zambezi invites you for a time, to sit and watch the heronries on the Zambezi where spoonbills are clacking their cutlery for their evening feed. There too will you witness

Zambia is an untouched opportunity of humble hospitality; deeply layered cultures of 73 tribes all coming together as one nation; breathtaking landscapes; and a variety of experiences that are unparalleled. The nation is a spectacular showcase of flora and fauna, feathered fabulousness, sweeping views; from the upper Zambezi to the lower Zambezi, from Kafue to Kasanka, from the northern lakes to South Luangwa, the opportunities to experience truly unique adventures lie

the volume (the sound and size) of Mosi-oa-Tunya (known abroad as Victoria Falls), one of the natural wonders of the world.

The award-winning Royal Chundu

On the gentle upper reaches of the Zambezi River sits Royal Chundu, voted as the 4th Best Resort in Africa and 9th Best Resort in the World in the Condé Nast Traveler's 2018 Readers' Choice Awards. Royal Chundu is the first and only Relais & Chateaux property in Zambia and the whole Mosi-oa-Tunya area and has been voted Zambia's Leading Safari Lodge in the World Travel Awards for nine years running. What makes the lodge so special is its relationship with the local communities, who provide for, run, and benefit from the lodge.

This year, Royal Chundu Lodge Manager, Aggie Maseko Banda was

awarded the We Are Africa Shape Award, which spotlights African travel's true trailblazers and rewards and recognises the people whose tireless passion and dedication to the industry have transformed the continent for the better.

Royal Chundu lets travellers feel Africa in Africa.

It is a place to both rest, nest, and digest and to be rejuvenated through an immersion in the land, community, as well as the romance and adventure of the fourth longest river in Africa.

Set on the banks of the Zambezi River in Zambia, Royal Chundu has two lodges. River Lodge holds private access to a secluded 15 km stretch of Zambezi waterway, with 10 exclusive suites set among the trees, like quiet nests of seclusion and peace ogling the river from sunrise to set. Island Lodge is 4 km upstream, happily at home on the remote and private Katombora Island, flanked by two protective rapids. The lodge has four exclusive villas, with outdoor bathtubs and views of the gently flowing river and its plant and animal life.

Royal Chundu's wide open spaces, remote location and local hospitality bursting at the seams, can be explored on canoeing trips and boat cruises at sunrise and sunset to find the hippo, elephant, fish eagles, crocodiles and other animals that call the river home. Also on offer are bird-watching cruises, private island walks with baobabs and jackal berries, a visit to the neighbouring agricultural village and their gardens and craft market, a stopover at a Chitenge market and the chance to have a custom-made Chitenge outfit designed by a seamstress at the lodge. Guests can choose to immerse themselves in the private in-room spa treatments, or head out for a little adventure on day trips to Mosi-oa-Tunya (Victoria Falls) or Chobe National Park. There are also some interactive activities for the family with The Royal Chundu Homeschool and its locally inspired lessons and adventures.



Fruit of the land to your dining table

Dining here is tasting the land, with food that is locally grown, caught, picked, produced, created, and served. The lodge purchases fresh fish, such as bream or parrot fish from Zambezi fishermen – who often arrive via the traditional dug-out canoe called the mokoro on the river – providing fresh fish caught through sustainable fishing methods. Fresh produce is grown in the lodge garden or in the villages next to Royal Chundu, which the lodge supports through seed donations and by purchasing the crops grown at market price.

Of Zambian culture and aesthetic presentation

The lodge's interiors, River Lodge suites and Island Lodge villas are a celebration of Zambia with locally made Chitenge table settings and soft furnishings, hand-carved doorbells, and bright and colourful murals painted by a local female artist. At every opportunity, the lodge provides a way to help give local people the chance to empower themselves through tourism, to receive an income for their art, while sharing the beauty and uniqueness of Zambia with guests.

On a great African adventure, or an exciting Zambian journey with all that the country has to offer, Royal Chundu is ideal as the last stop. It is a place to relax and be moved by the beauty of the setting, people, and the power of travel to create positive change in destinations. The added advantage is that Royal Chundu offers guests the opportunity to have PCR COVID-19 tests at the lodge with results and the certificate returned in 24hrs before you need to head home.

Right now, is the best time to travel.

Africa, in particular Zambia, Kenya, and Rwanda, for instance, is open, remote, and ready for exploring, with far fewer tourists in all areas. With all the precautions that have become part of our everyday lives now, and those taken



by borders and authorities worldwide, airports are able to relax and resume their excitement at being able to welcome travellers once again. Airports are more accommodating, friendlier and safer than ever, with everyone flying required to have a negative PCR C-19 certificate, but also because, as IATA recently published, there is a 1 in 27 million chance of getting COVID-19 due to flying.

The protocols throughout Africa are a little different: sanitiser stations, temperature checks and wearing a mask are standard practices. It allows you to feel safe and secure, but the beauty of Africa is in the natural remoteness of its top destinations.

After a year of being home-bound, the wider wilder world offers its allure in every small and big way. While over the last few months many of us have felt helpless to change the global situation, there is great power in your travels now – in helping to support people, through lodges that work to conserve the land and empower communities, and in seizing new freedoms and taking the adventure you've been waiting for. Africa is open, the time to travel is now. Zambia – and Royal Chundu - is calling you! 🌍



A black rhinoceros stands on a sandy bank next to a body of water at sunset. The sky is filled with orange and yellow clouds, and the water reflects the light. The rhino is facing left, and its reflection is visible in the water. The background shows a rocky bank with sparse vegetation.

FIRST CRITICALLY ENDANGERED EASTERN BLACK RHINO BORN IN THE WESTERN SERENGETI



With the population of Eastern black rhino dropping from 10 000 in 1970 to less than 1000, this species is critically endangered. But thanks to the conservation efforts of the Grumeti Fund, Singita's non-profit conservation partner in Tanzania, the region recently celebrated the birth of a black rhino calf – the first in the region in decades. The Grumeti Fund (www.grumetifund.org) carries out wildlife conservation and community development work in the western corridor of the Serengeti ecosystem in Tanzania.

With 165 dedicated staff working to protect the habitat and the indigenous wildlife, the Grumeti concession is managed and monitored by cohesive efforts between Singita and the Grumeti Fund. The results are emblematic of tireless dedication of the communities and conservationists in the area, such that what was once near-barren plains of 15 years ago, is now teeming with wildlife once more. The rhino calf's birth represents the culmination of years of hard work, strategic partnerships and the technical ability to successfully relocate black rhino over long distances to new habitats.

GRUMETI FUND AND THE BLACK RHINO STORY

Since its inception in 2002, the Grumeti Fund's main goal has been returning eastern black rhino to the western Serengeti; thereby establishing a founder population that contribute to the genetic pool bolstering the greater Serengeti-Mara ecosystem's rhino population.


In the 1970s, rampant poaching decimated numbers significantly and some animals were removed from East Africa, with the intention of saving the species and returning them to their rightful home. Singita Grumeti, a 350,000-acre protected area in the Western Serengeti in Tanzania, has seen a significant reduction in poaching thanks to the Grumeti Fund's dedicated anti-poaching efforts, which include a special operations task team of highly-skilled individuals, an intelligence-gathering unit, mobile patrols, a canine unit and an airwing.

In 2019, the Grumeti Fund, in partnership with government stakeholders – primarily the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) – translocated a breeding nucleus of rhino from an out-of-range population in South Africa.

Following an arduous journey in crates, trucks and airplanes, nine black rhinos arrived safely in Tanzania in September 2019. After a few months acclimatizing in rhino bomas (enclosures), they were successfully released in November 2019. Lindiwe - meaning "awaited" - one of the females relocated from South Africa, gave birth to her first calf in June 2020, and the pair are thriving under the watchful eye of the aerial and ground teams.

Now that the annual wildebeest migration has moved into the area – with well-fed predators and grasses low – monitoring the mother and calf is easier and the risk of predation is reduced. The wellbeing of the animals is the full-time job of the rhino monitoring team – a combination of Grumeti Fund and TAWA personnel. Aerial and mobile units track the rhino regularly, logging their locations in Earth Ranger (the real-time data visualization platform developed by Vulcan Inc.) that collects data on assets, incidents and wildlife reports across the protected area.

"We hope that a few more calves will be born. The speed at which their numbers are rebounding is very encouraging," said Stephen Cunliffe, Executive Director of the Grumeti Fund. "There have been hardships along the way, but it's all worth the significant effort and investments of donor funding because, at this point, the population is increasing. To all who have been a part of this ambitious and visionary project, thank you! You are part of a great comeback story."

Plans to relocate the next group of black rhinos to Grumeti in 2020 have been derailed by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the next phase will take place in 2021. The steady growth of the new satellite population at Singita Grumeti is essential to their future survival. 

To support Singita in its efforts to raise USD 500,000 for the Grumeti Fund's historic translocation and please visit <https://singita.com/donations/?project=26211> to make a donation.



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BEHOLD LE LAC ROSE

Senegal's Pink Wonder




ONLY 3 SQUARE KILOMETERS IN SIZE WITH NO DEVELOPMENT ANYWHERE NEAR ITS SHORES, LAKE RETBA STILL MANAGES TO ATTRACT LARGE NUMBERS OF TOURISTS WHO WANT TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF AFRICA'S ONLY PINK LAKE.

Situated on the Cap-Vert peninsula and 35km north of Senegal's capital Dakar, sits Lake Retba, commonly referred to as Le lac Rose, French translation to mean "the pink lake." This natural phenomenon attracts throngs of tourists to West Africa each year, who come to take in this body of water which is quite literally pink in colour, due to its very high mineral concentration and the presence of the *Dunaliella Salina* bacteria which are attracted to this salt content. The bacteria produce a red pigment with which it absorbs the sunlight, giving the lake a mesmerizing, obviously unexpected pink hue!

Aside from similar pink lakes in Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan and Canada, Senegal is the only African country to boast of such an exquisite body of water! Swimming is a must do when visiting Lac Rose, as one floats easily as they would in the Dead Sea, and it is in fact safe to do so as the bacteria are harmless to humans.

One may however be concerned about the harmful effects to the skin, due to the high salt content in the water. But an external dose of shea butter, rubbing copious amounts of this oil all over one's body before and after taking a dip is great protection. Pleasing to note too that this is what the salt extractors use on their hands, arms, and legs daily for after collecting salt from the bottom of the lake! Senegalese men come in their numbers to scrape the lake's bed while standing in the water waist deep. This salt is then dried and used to preserve fish or prepped for the market, contributing to the more than 20 thousand tonnes of salt exported each year from Senegal.

Tourists have been known to venture out in a traditional canoe, a great way to capture that coveted photo of rose coloured waters as a backdrop. Whether it's a swim or a photo you are looking for, we can all agree that Lake Retba is a must see, should you find yourself taking a trip to Senegal! 



THE WANDERLUST WITHIN



70

reasons why

YOU MUST EXPERIENCE THIS LAND SENSORY EXPERIENCES AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURES



If you have a love for desert adventures, sunsets that are royally Instagramable and a long list of hidden gems found within the confines of one nation's borders - then Morocco is the destination for you. Known as the Kingdom of Marrakesh and coined the Maghreb by the Arab world, Morocco is home to the orange sands of the Sahara Deserts, mixed cultural influences from the Arabs, Berbers and remnants of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial eras, delectable cuisine and architecture to rival any cities that take

you on a visual journey back into seasons past.

Morocco is a beautiful destination in northwest part of Africa, and home to some famous tourist spots such as the capital of Marrakesh and the largest city in Morocco, Casablanca. Perfect for tourists seeking to immerse themselves in an exciting cultural experience while enjoying the warm desert sun, rich heritage, fantastic beaches and more; there are countless reasons why you should add Morocco to your bucket list for the northwest tip of Africa. Here are our picks:



CONNECT WITH THE WARMTH OF LOCAL ARAB AND BERBER PEOPLE

Morocco is a welcoming country, with a people that pride themselves in their hospitable and tolerant practices. The locals are really friendly and perhaps this can be credit to their interactions with diverse nationalities that choose Morocco as their destination of choice for a North African excursion. Given that Morocco was once a French and Spanish colony of sorts after several treaties, you shouldn't be surprised to hear people speaking Berber, Arabic, French and even Spanish in some parts. English is spoken by many as well, so you won't experience much of a challenge finding your way around.



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CHOOSE FROM FOUR IMPERIAL CITIES FOR A LESSON IN HISTORY

Looking for a lesson in history and longstanding heritage? Well, Morocco awards you four imperial cities to choose from, beginning with Rabat which is the current administrative capital and arguably one of the more modern cities within the coastal nation. Rabat will give you plenty of picturesque yet historical attractions to check out such as the old medina and the Hassan Tower.

Marrakesh, commonly referred to as the Red City, is well-renowned for its ancient Badi and Bahia Palaces, the imposing Koutoubia Mosque and the Djemaa el-Fna and Saadian Tombs which house many stories of centuries past. Fes and Meknes round up the four cities you can venture into should the hustle and bustle of a Moroccan city life be the experience you are looking for.



A GETAWAY TO THE SAHARA DESERT

Morocco claims the Western Sahara territory, a vast desert area offering desert tours with activities such as camel rides, dune buggy rides and sandboarding. Also, while it is a long trip from Marrakesh, it's well worth it, as you will experience breathtaking views along the way. Drive through the Atlas Mountains and if you are lucky, you may encounter nomad tribes making a trek across the warm dunes! Looking for a distinctively Moroccan experience to usher you into colourful moments with sumptuous cuisine and vibrant traditional music to get you dancing the night away under the desert skies? The desert camps have got you covered!

4

DISCOVER THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS

Stretching across Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, the Atlas Mountains are a great escape from the hustle and bustle of the city, offering adventurers mountain hiking, nature walking and even snow skiing and snowboarding during the winter. On a nature walk, you may be so fortunate to spot some wild deer, hogs, and various bird species along the way. A hidden gem nestled within the Atlas Mountains is the magnificent Ouzoud Falls (Cascades d'Ouzoud) which is the highest natural waterfall in Northern Africa, at 110 metres high, and one of Morocco's most spectacular nature spots. Get up close to the falls and through the cascades with canoe boats available for tourists. Relax and refresh at one of the few food spots in the mountain and indulge in tasty Moroccan dishes and refreshing drinks to match.



CAPTURE YOUR OWN SHOT OF THE SANTORINI OF AFRICA

You've seen the pictures of this little town with walls painted blue that's reminiscent of Santorini. Chefchaouen, also called Chaouen, is that picturesque little town set on the backdrop of Morocco's Rif Mountains with an intriguing story behind why its walls are various hues of blue. Some say the walls of the building were painted blue as an ode to Jewish customs and culture who believe that as blue is the colour of the sky, it also brings one closer to or reminds them of heaven and God. Others believe the blues keep mosquitos away while others also maintain that blue keeps building temperatures blue. There's no better way to find out the real truths behind Morocco's "Blue City", "Morocco's blue pearl" or the "Santorini of Africa" as Chefchaouen is often nicknamed, than to go and see it for yourself.



Stay at a Riad

A riad is a guest house-style accommodation or restored traditional mansion that offers a garden or courtyard associated with a historical house or palace architecture. Riads are Traditional, old-style, and luxurious, tastefully decorated rooms with strong Moroccan influence. Some riads have rooftop seating, allowing guests to enjoy a meal with a view. Although you may find luxury brand accommodations all over

5



Morocco, staying at a riad will give you the authentic experience you may have come so far to find.

WHAT'S A TRIP TO MOROCCO WITHOUT TASTING TAGINE?

If you are going to get the full Moroccan culinary experience, then couscous, tagine, Pastilla, bissara, harira, and brochettes and many others, will give you plenty to tantalise your tastebuds. A variety of breads and pastries are always a hit too, and meat is a staple on just about every dish, with tagine making the list of servings a standard. Named after the stunning ceramic or clay dome-shaped pots from which the meal is served, tagine is an important part of Moroccan cuisine and has been part of the culture for hundreds of years. Flavourful and stew-like, tagine can comprise of slow cooked chicken, beef, lamb or vegetables, cooked with spices such as turmeric, cinnamon, saffron and cumin, and hints of fruit like apricots and dates, which are common ingredients in Moroccan cuisine. Indulging in Moroccan cuisine is an unmissable experience, soaking up a unique blend of spices and textures to excite your palate.



8

EXPLORE THE MEDINA OF MARRAKESH OR SOUKS DOTTED ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Marrakech is the one of Africa's favourite destinations for market shopping. Built along trading routes, Marrakech was a frequent spot for traders to buy and sell their goods and today, cities are no different. Lined with markets forming the maze-like medina, one can lose themselves in all the craziness and excitement of the smell of spices and oils that greet you as you enter the market! The rest of the country hosts plenty of souks too! From textiles, leather goods, lanterns, carpets and more, there are so many handcrafted items to choose from and of course, you always have an opportunity to haggle with the sellers. Who doesn't want to strike a bargain on some great souvenirs?



9

Catch a glimpse of Morocco's tanning industry in Fez

Chouara Tannery is located in the city of Fez, and still holds its position as the largest and oldest of the three tanneries in the city. Morocco's tanning industry hasn't changed much since it first began centuries ago and so this in itself is quite compelling to a modern traveller to view. Tourists have found the sight of round stone vessels filled with dyes of multiple colours and white liquids to be of great interest, often getting further insights into the manufacture of leather goods for export.

FANTASTIC COASTLINES FOR BEACHCOMBERS, SUN, SAND, AND SEA LOVERS

You'll be spoilt for choice as Morocco boasts beaches along the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic seaboard. Tangier and Agadir are a hit for travellers coming in from overseas yet Asilah has proven to be a beachfront destination of choice for visitors coming in from nearby Spain, as well as the locals welcoming them. Morocco's beaches create a perfect backdrop, whether you are looking to relax under an umbrella or take to the waves for some watersports. A trip to Morocco will definitely grant you a packed itinerary, with so many sensory experiences to leave you wanting more! Did we mention affordability as well? Whether you are looking to travel on a budget, or perhaps would like to indulge in a more high experience – Morocco is calling, with many more reasons that highlight why it is still referred to by many as some form of a kingdom.





Chasing Sunsets:

THE GOCHEGANAS SPA EXPERIENCE

By Christy Shakuyungwa

Photos by: GocheGanas Website, Christy Shakuyungwa



My good Friend Ester, who doubles up as my self-proclaimed travel partner, one day called to complain about an acute tension that she was feeling, suggesting she was in dire need of massage therapy. A few calls to the renowned spas in Windhoek proved futile, as surprisingly, even during these Covid-19 stricken times, most were fully booked for up to 5 days in advance.

I asked her why we were limiting ourselves to experiencing a spa retreatment within the confines of the capital. Surely there would be a place close enough to Windhoek for us to take a quick drive out of town for a little self-care exercise. A few Google searches later led us to the online home of Gocheganas, a luxury lodge located 29 kilometers from Windhoek, which professed to offer a unique experience that combines ones love for wildlife, nature and wellness to curate the ultimate relaxation experience.

THE ROAD TRIP TO ULTIMATE RELAXATION

Needless to say, the website gave us enough information to know that this would be our destination so Ester could experience the spa treatment she had been earning for at the onset of our conversation. It was time for a mini spa get away. We made our bookings for the following Friday afternoon, and the trip turned out to be a short 22 kilometer drive south towards Rehoboth along the B1 Highway, before we would have to turn off left onto the D1463 gravel road for another 20 odd kilometers.

It was a scorching hot day, and the temperatures were about 32 degrees Celsius. An absolute norm for Namibia. There were clouds forming in the sky, which sort of suggested that perhaps rains were around the corner. The drive to the Lodge was scenic, characterised by a mountainous terrain, flagged mostly by camel thorn trees. The conversation enroute to the lodge was mostly on the politics of the day. Local and regional Authority elections were coming up in November, and so the campaigning by all political parties had intensified. The political space seemed to be transforming and it was just interesting to witness.

Before we knew it, we had arrived at the Gocheganas Gate. A friendly greeting from the security guard welcomed us and once he confirmed our appointment, we drove a short 0.5 km to the designated parking Area. From the designated parking spot, one could see the lodge a further distance up on the Hill top. It was majestic.

AN INVITATION TO AN ENVIRONMENT OF TRANQUILITY AND RELAXATION

A shuttle picked us up from the Parking lot and drove us to reception, from where we were directed to the “Wellness Village”. The wellness village reception had high ceilings, with orange and brown toned décor items. There was an indoor pool, and all we could think about with the scorching heat was whether we could take a dip in the pool at all.

Our treatments were booked in rooms separate from the reception area and were carried out in round huts with thatched roofs. The setting offered a great combination of traditional architecture embellished in luxurious design aesthetic. There is something magical about thatched roofs, for they always give a hut the desired cooling effect, and these modern huts did not disappoint.

A WIDE SELECTION OF TREATMENTS TO CHOOSE FROM

We insisted on getting massages in the same room; after all, what is the point of Spa date if we will be apart? Ester opted for a full body Marula Oil massage. The list of services and treatments available at Gocheganas would rival any high-end spa. From manicure and pedicure options, luxurious bath experiences, body therapies, massages and facial treatments, Gocheganas gave us so many options to pick from, all of which promised the use of essentials oils, masks and other such ingredients made from natural elements.

For us, it was refreshing to see a Spa incorporate local marula essential oils into their treatments, marula of which is native to Southern Africa. The marula tree is a deciduous African tree that produces yellow fruit. The flesh is eaten, and kernels traditionally used to make the pale-yellow marula oil which possess high concentrations of oleic and linoleic fatty acids as well as more commonly known antioxidant vitamins C and E.

Typically, at a Spa, one expects the new-age background music that is meant to create a calm and relaxing environment that even induces sleep. Not at Gocheganas. There was absolutely no music at all being played. It was all about the stillness of nature, away from the hive of activity in Namibia’s capital Windhoek, with occasional interludes from birds in a distance. It was different, new, and yet very hypnotic.

While Ester was whisked away by her Marula treatment, I opted for a full body hot stone massage. I had just recently started working out and so it was no surprise that my muscles welcomed the hot stones. My masseuse Maria worked skillfully and patiently for a full hour, or at least I think It was an hour, because halfway through I dozed off only to be woken up later, with her gently tapping on my shoulder.

Ester and I must have both dozed off and only woke up after our






To find out more about the Gocheganas Experience, the accommodations, conferencing facilities and activities available on site, visit www.gocheganas.com



massages were done. From there we headed out to the outdoor pool, a pristine set up overlooking the mountain. But with the feel of essential oils still on the body, the idea to go for the swim was aborted. Instead we opted to sit by the restaurant, order some mimosas and hearty snacks. Conversations ranged from Politics, life reflections, relationships and of course planning the next possible getaway, while also agreeing that such getaways needed to become the norm in our attempt to have a more structured self-care routine.

A WORTHWHILE ESCAPE FROM THE CITY

Time went by very quickly and before we knew it, it was dinner time. We had early dinner at sunset, and the foodie in me couldn't wait to see what the menu had to offer. Mains were a grilled steak for Ester and Kingklip for me. What stood out were the sauces, all well reduced and beautifully complimenting the meats. The mains were followed by a beautiful cheesecake, from which our individual sweet tooth was left satisfied as we toasted to a Friday well spent.

Heading back home from Gocheganas, the drive back seemed a bit longer, but we felt more relaxed. I won't lie, we did toy with the idea of staying over. But maybe, just maybe, a staycation should be the next adventure we take, with the plan to spend more time at this sanctuary on a 6000 hectare nature reserve that boasts 25 different wildlife species, and opportunity to enjoy game drives and walking activities for a more enriched experience. Gocheganas promises distinctive wellness facilities and treatments of a world class standard, and as a party that had enjoyed a day of little pampering and relaxation, they sure did deliver their promise of a renewed mind, body, and spirit. 

THE WANDERLUST WITHIN • NAIROBI



PITSTOP IN NAIROBI:

A FEW THINGS
YOU CAN GET
UP TO DURING
A LAYOVER IN
KENYA'S CAPITAL

Got a long lay-over in Nairobi, or a flight delay that spans more than just a few hours? Then grab this opportunity to step into Kenya's capital as an alternative to roaming the airport and watching stuff on Netflix to pass time. Indulging in the culture and leisure scenes of Nairobi may be more appealing to you, and so go ahead and put on your adventure cape, apply for a day visa at the airport and spend a few hours exploring the best of Nairobi.

Encounters with wildlife around Nairobi

Nairobi has quite a few sanctuaries that keep endangered animals and so it is a unique experience coupled with a bit of an educational component about the dangers these animals are facing such as poaching. The Elephant Sanctuary operated by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, borders Nairobi National Park and offers a haven for orphaned baby elephants rescued from parks and reserves in Kenya. It is an amazing experience to not only be so up-close to baby elephants and watching them being fed and being their playful self but also, there is a learning center where you get to learn a little about what the behaviours of elephants especially after becoming orphaned. The sanctuary also gives tourists a chance to adopt a baby elephant by paying 50usd a year, which is a great way to contribute to their wellbeing and preservation efforts. This also allows you to have a one on one encounter with your adopted elephant whenever you visit.

Giraffe Centre is another conservatory for giraffes, also one of the endangered animals in Africa. Interact with these majestic giants of Africa,



not only watching them in their man-made habitat, but also having an opportunity to feed them is quite the treat for tourists. They will eat out of your hand or even your mouth! It's a once in a lifetime experience and the sanctuary also has an education center where you learn a little bit about the animals and the center's history.

Explore African Heritage House

Visit this architectural wonder and take in the scenes as it overlooks the Nairobi National Park. The African Heritage House is a museum that showcases African textiles, masks, art, artifacts, crafts,




books, and photographs. This is Africa's first Pan African Gallery, and celebration of African culture from across the continent. The building is a mud architectural splendor and the perfect tourist spot for people to get an understanding of African culture and the artistic landscape. Visit the restaurant within the house and indulge in some Pan African dishes that sample recipes from all over Africa. Sit by the terrace and dig in as you take in the view. This place is the total African heritage experience and a photographer's paradise. Definitely worth a visit.

Indulge in some retail therapy at The Village Market

Looking to shop for a few souvenirs before you leave? East Africa's largest shopping mall - The Village Market - is a shopping, recreation, and entertainment destination with over 150 shopping outlets and recreation facilities under a remarkable architectural design. Housing a great selection in retail products, from high-end brands sold from African open-air market style shops and stalls is enjoyable. The building also boasts waterfalls and gardens with thousands of exotic plants that have all been incorporated into the design of Village Market.

Buy some beautiful art, jewellery, African clothing and fabrics, and so much more. The Village Market is a great place to get a feel of the culture and the people while appreciating the amazing handmade products made by local creatives. You will well appreciate colourful kangas and kikoyis, best described as Kenyan sarongs and a must-buy souvenir to take home with you.

In no time, your day tour will be over as you head back to the airport, but you'll agree that a day spent in Nairobi will offer everything from flavor, color, art, and an up-close encounter with nature and wildlife. With so much to offer including a host of unforgettable memories, you'll be tempted to miss your flight! Perhaps a day trip will get you planning for a longer stay the next time you are in that part of East Africa. 

**Travellers are encouraged to carry out their research on the immigration laws and travel requirements before travelling to their destination. Ensure you understand whether you require a visa beforehand or a yellow fever certificate.*





AFRICA TO THE WORLD





CHASING THE DREAM IN THE UAE

ENTREPRENEURIAL



MEET BERTHA BRYSON MRISHA, THE FOUNDER AND OWNER OF BE BEADS ACCESSORIES.

3 2-year old Bertha Bryson Mrisha relocated to the United Arab Emirates in 2017 from Tanzania, and like most young people who make their way to this desert mecca, such moves are inspired by a desire for greener pastures. It wasn't long before she realised that there was a gap in the market for exotic beaded accessories, something that was well reminiscent of the sort of jewellery and embellishments one would find back home in her native country.

"I started my business as I always had the love for fashion and the African design aesthetic. It's part of my culture and so for me, should I venture into business, I would want to be able to impact different people from the continent in some sort of social enterprise initiative," says Bertha.

Be Beads is an African brand based in UAE and they specialize in hand made accessories and apparel, with their crafts inspired by the deep diversity of African heritage.

"I collect jewellery from different parts of Africa that

tells the story of our heritage and helps the local artisans to earn an income, as I source markets for them to sell their products. I had just moved here and after about 6 months, I realised that it had become a constant where people were asking me about the pieces of jewelry I had from home. Having done more research I realised that there was a real opportunity for me to start a business selling African handmade accessories," Bertha shares.

In early May 2018, Bertha launched her brand and named it BE BEADS, a combination of her name and love for the beads she would be selling. Today Bertha sells jewelry are from beads, brass, recycled plastics, African fabrics, shells, threads, and cotton materials, importing most pieces from different countries across Africa such as Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa.



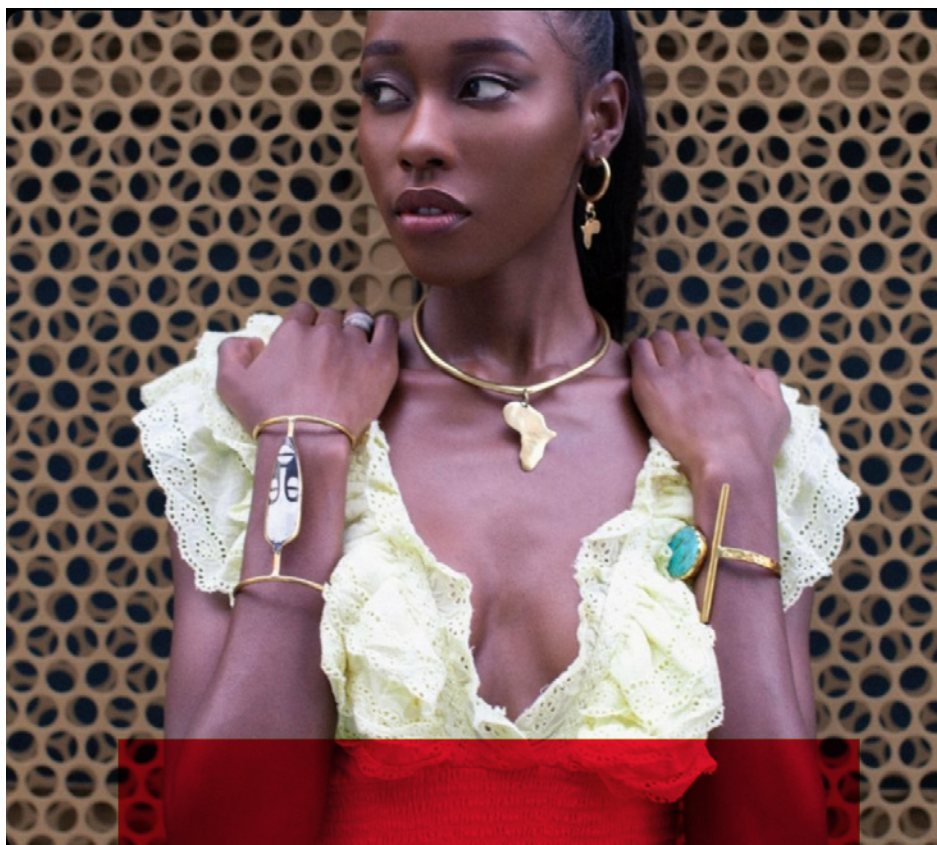
Be Beads seeks to create products and create jobs for artisans back home, with a plan to further import from more markets across the continent. Bertha aspires for Be Beads to be viewed as the “African House of Accessories” in the UAE market, bringing in different types of accessories to cater to the tastes of an already multinational customer base.

But the journey to becoming a business owner is not always easy, and Bertha is always keen to share what challenges she has had to overcome as she builds her brand.

“My journey as an entrepreneur hasn’t always been easy, but I suppose that is the standard for most startups. When I started my business, I was employed full time, and so it was really difficult to find the time to concentrate on promoting the business,” she chimes in.

“I missed a lot of networking events so I could meet people who would be interested in my products and promote the story behind what I was trying to do. Most markets were in Dubai so after my shift at work, I often had to catch the bus to Dubai to go and sell my products. This was often quite taxing to do physically. Other challenges I faced included people really trying to bargain for their price, often not considering the cost of bringing the goods to the UAE, costs of delivery and so on. I have been fortunate to meet other entrepreneurs who have been able to help me with tips to overcoming my challenges.”^{AV}





Today, Be Beads has grown so much that Bertha has opened a store in Wafi Mall at Khanmurjan Souk, Shop No. 6018. To have a look at the Be Beads jewellery and accessories, do visit their social pages on  @be_beads18,  @be_beads and on online store at www.bebeads.co





Switching THINGS UP ON DUBAI'S FITNESS SCENE

INSIDE AFROFIT DUBAI'S
HIGH-OCTANE EXERCISE AND
CHOREOGRAPHY CLASSES WITH
CHRISTIAN NJI.

If you live in Dubai, love a good dose of cardio and are a lover of “afrobeat” - a genre of music with West African origins that has grown in popularity massively over the past few years, then you have probably heard of Afrofit Dubai, the brand that has made quite a name for itself, especially for health and fitness enthusiasts that are looking for a workout with a twist.

AfroFit Dubai founder, Christian Nji, was born and raised in the English-speaking region of Cameroon, in a town called Bamenda. Christian had big dreams for himself coming up with a goal to experience the world beyond his country of origin for a time. And so, when the time was right and fortune was on his side, the opportunity to relocate to the United Arab Emirates presented itself and he took it.

“I moved to Dubai to explore better opportunities and to see my dreams come true,” says Christian, when asked what brought him to the UAE.





The inspiration behind the brand

“There are many Africans relocating to Dubai and the wider Emirates, but for me, it was about also wanting the world to embrace an African fitness club in the UAE. I’m a level 3 certified personal trainer, Bouncefit certified coach, and have garnered a good bit of traction as a fitness influencer, entrepreneur, DJ and Afrodance choreographer on the local scene. It simply made sense to combine all the things that make me feel alive – dancing, music and choreography, into something that would benefit the wider community.”

Today, when one signs up for any one of the Afrofit Dubai classes, they will be delighted to note just how much a session is more than just a high energy cardio workout, but also afro-dance choreography set to the rhythm of the afrobeat genre of music. The coaches are cool, they are patient and professional, helping all students, to enjoy each session regardless of dance capability,





age or knowledge of each track played.

“My love and passion for Afro dance and the fitness industry is what inspired me to start this business,” cites Christian, recounting how much he wanted the different nationalities in a nation where 200+ nationalities call the UAE home, to embrace the dance culture from the continent of Africa.

“Afrofit Dubai squad members, together with everyone who joins our classes, have become somewhat of an extension of my family. Our squad is a family, and we welcome fitness enthusiasts and anyone who wants to break a sweat to the sound of cool music to join our family,” says Christian.

When asked what advice Christian had for any young Africans looking to start and grow a business in the UAE, he says, “My young African brothers and sisters – do not be afraid, just do your thing!! UAE is the best and the safest country in the world to start up a business especially with little or no tax policy for small and medium sized companies.”

“I do miss my family, our food and I the natural landscapes that life in Cameroon award. I would one day like to experience the beaches of the Seychelles or experience Rwanda soon, which I have heard many great things about. But for now, I’m just grateful for the opportunity to have started this business in 2018, which has garnered significant following and participation from people looking to try something different. Dubai is a melting pot, making it a vibrant place to create a service that people from different parts of the world will find exciting – and Afrofit Dubai is exactly that,” says Christian.

So whether one is a resident of Dubai or the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, Afrofit Dubai offers numerous opportunities to experience a fun work out that connects you with a music genre that has scaled charts in music across the globe. 🎧

To join the Afrofit Dubai squad for your choreographed dance or afro dance cardio class, head on over to the Habtoor Grand Hotel in Dubai Marina everyday at 7pm or simply visit their website at www.afrofitdubai.com to book your slot.

A CALL FOR *Contributors*

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

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

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

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

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

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