

TRAVEL ESSENCE MAGAZINE

OCTOBER | NOVEMBER 2022

THE PERFECT
COUPLE'S
GETAWAY AT
RIXOS THE
PALM DUBAI

Top 5
must explore
beaches in
Seychelles

CURIOCITY
AFRICA
EXPANSION INTO
CAPE TOWN

*All
Fresco*
JAPANESE
DINING AT
ARMANI/HASHI

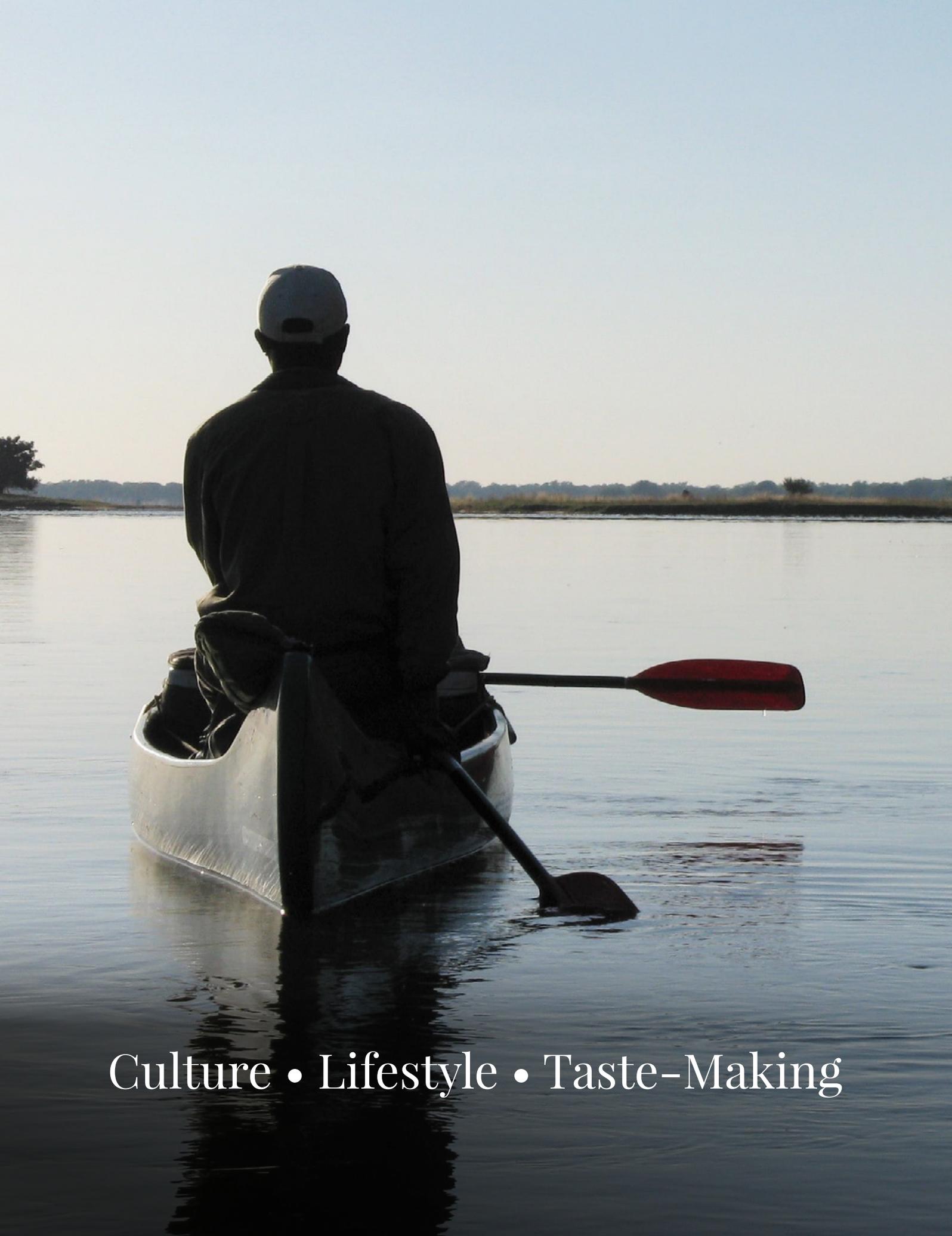
FOCALISTIC

ON BRINGING AMAPIANO MUSIC TO
DUBAI'S ALL AFRICA FESTIVAL STAGE



Travel MAGAZINE Essence

A NARRATIVES PR PUBLICATION



Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making

TravelEssence^{MAGAZINE}

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





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FOCALISTIC**

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

— KAREN BLIXEN

What an epic year it has been thus far, and an exciting start to its final quarter. Travel Essence Magazine brought home the Travel Magazine of the Year and Tourism Blog of the Year Award at the 2022 Pyne Awards Africa, held at an illustrious ceremony in Lagos, Nigeria this past September. As we look ahead at what's left of 2022, we would be remiss to not thank the brands that opened their doors to us so we too could experience the splendor of Africa's wide open spaces and the UAE's distinctive hospitality experiences through the lenses of luxury travelers. It is through their trust in our ability to tell their brand stories that we continue to be recognized as inspiring travel content curators for those on a quest to discover how truly magical our continent is, and what's on offer locally for the expat community. A huge thank you to our readers too, who have stuck with us, and inquired about some of the cool places they have read about in our pages. As I often like to say: “We are because you are!”

The big buzz in the UAE right now is the plethora of entertainment and lifestyle events and trade conferences that are being hosted across the country, a testament of how this country and wider region, continues to scale new heights in positioning itself among the best destinations in the world. A big one on the radar for our team is the All Africa Festival, only the biggest celebration of African culture to bring people together in the iconic Burj Park! It will be 3 nights of spectacular music, dance, and cultural expression from across Africa, taking to the stage in creating an electric atmosphere for all to enjoy! We'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate the wonderful team at All Africa Festival for their tireless work in promoting the rich diversity of our cultures in the most culturally diverse country in the region, the UAE.

The festive season is upon us, but not before we begin to enjoy the cooler temperatures here, taking time to get out for more hikes and camping or live it up for spectacular pool days and brunches about town. Meanwhile in most parts of Africa, we are winding down the year to usher in the excitement of the Christ-

mas holidays, and the opportunity to travel or break bread with the people that have made our year meaningful!

Cheers to the remainder of 2022. May we remember this year as one we embraced the new norm and took to the skies confidently again, reconnecting with our special humans and taking in the gifts of life through travel, hospitality and exploration! 🌍

Yours truly,

Gyonnae C. Mtengwa





Travel Essence *Getaways*

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LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCES • CONTENT CREATOR TRIPS INVESTOR
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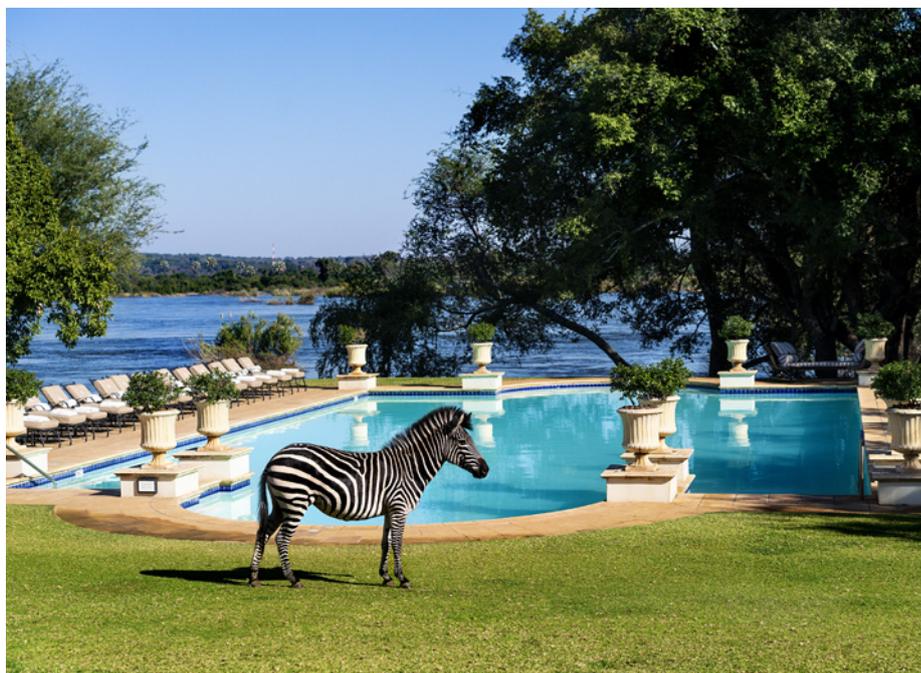
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Focalistic:

Amapiano to the Middle East and beyond

This year South African artist Focalistic brings back his fierce sound and energy to the All Africa Festival stage in Dubai's Burj Park – and we caught up with to find out about his journey and what brings him back to performing at the biggest celebration of African culture in the Middle East – the All Africa Festival – held in one of the world's most iconic destinations, Dubai. Our chat went a little something like this...





1. LETHABO SEBETSO, MOST POPULARLY KNOWN BY HIS STAGE NAME "FOCALISTIC," YOU'VE RISEN TO FAME SINCE YOUR SOUND FIRST HIT THE AIRWAVES IN 2018. TAKE US BACK TO GROWING UP LETHABO? Growing up for me was bittersweet. Just like anyone else, you have the happy moments you have the sad moments. But I think one thing that I'll forever remember is, I was raised with love; love for everything that's happening around us so much that we were taught to always stick together. I guess that that energy is what I've carried into the music, and now it's about taking people through the journey and making them know that they're not alone.

That's why I named my album "Ghetto Gospel". It's not pushing a specific doctrine or idea or trying to convince people to become Christian or any other religion, but it's about letting them know that throughout everything that I've experienced, there's a form of gospel in it, and there's a form of higher purpose attached to everything that we've done or gone through in the good and even the bad times.

2. WAS IT ALWAYS MUSIC FOR YOU? AT WHICH STAGE IN LIFE DID YOU REALISE THAT YOUR MUSICAL TALENT WILL TAKE YOU TO GLOBAL STAGES?

It wasn't always music for me. I always say music kind of chases or chooses you. For me, I pursued my studies and have a degree in Political Science from The University of Pretoria and at the time of doing that degree, I guess that's when the music kept biting me and calling for me to heed its call. With time, I began to acknowledge that perhaps it was time to take it more seriously. But taking it all the way back, it was when my dad passed away that I started making music. I took to music as my diary, you know, because I don't speak much in real life about how I feel. So I guess that's how the music vibe for me started. It was my diary. And as I grew up, it kind of just kept chasing me until it began to feel like that was where I could

find my higher purpose.

I guess today that's what the world relates to. In listening to music, people definitely feel like that their ticket to knowing the artists and the music. And we still on that journey. I think we can only grow bigger and better as we aim to fill up world stages.

3. WHO DO YOU CREDIT FOR YOUR CATAPULTING TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH YOUR CAREER?

Into who I credit my career and success to? GOD! I definitely credit GOD. A lot of the things that have happened in my life, I can't explain you know. All I know as I said, is that music was chasing me and I started making music. My life changed thereafter. All credit goes to God.

And then when you go into the more technical aspects, having a strong team and being disciplined as well, is very important. I think we overlook the power of discipline and having focus. Being focused on your dream, whether it takes two months or two years of that focus is key.

4. DUBAI IS GETTING READY TO WELCOME YOU ON STAGE AT THE ALL AFRICA FESTIVAL AGAIN THIS YEAR; AFTER A BRILLIANT SHOW IN BURJ PARK, ONLY THE MOST ICONIC OUTDOOR VENUE AT THE BASE OF THE BURJ KHALIFA. WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE FOR YOU WHEN YOU FIRST STEPPED OUT ON STAGE AND SAW YOUR FANS?

The craziest part about last year's show at the All Africa Festival is that I didn't expect the reaction. So I had anxiety from the hotel, all the way to getting onto the stage. But when people started screaming and when out on the stage, you know, it felt so incredibly fulfilling. But it also felt like this is just the beginning and there's much more that we need to do. I felt like we can definitely work harder and take our culture and our music to the rest of the world. I think I can summarise my thoughts by saying it was an inspiring moment. And, you know, coming back this year, we can only be bigger and better. I trust that even the festival as a whole is going to be bigger and better. I think also knowing the festival owners – Tim and Nina Olatoke, their team, their collective story and creative ambition in pushing Africa to the world, is a reminder of how it links with our story. We all understand that we always have to keep taking things a notch higher, and that's what we're going to do this year.

5. WHAT DOES PERFORMING AT THE ALL AFRICA FESTIVAL AGAIN THIS YEAR, MEAN TO YOU AND YOUR MUSIC?

As I said, getting to know Tim and Nina of All Africa Festival and their team, and promoting African music and cultures through this event, is very interlinked with our story. We are pushing a sound that is purely South African by performing at the All Africa Festival, so what it means to me is that we are one step closer to our vision and to letting



the world know what we're all about as Africans, and for me being a South African in that space as I bring my music to Dubai as an artist taking to the stage at the event. Being able to come in with the catalogue we've developed and adding more spice to the line-up of African performances is truly amazing. The All Africa Festival is truly an African experience on a global stage.

6. WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK THE ALL AFRICA FESTIVAL PLAYS IN SHOWCASING SOUTH AFRICAN MUSIC AND OTHER AFRICAN GENRES TO THE WORLD AT SUCH A TIME AS THIS?

I think the All Africa Festival is one of those important platforms where people take time out of their busy



schedules, and making sure people from across the world can witness first hand, us Africans for real and on stages, showcasing our talent. At the Festival you will see people who paint, people who draw and so on. There's different types of art and different genres of music that you get to experience, and I think what makes this platform so special is that there aren't many like it.

It's very important to open up the world's minds and show people that we also have good music and are also Grammy worthy. What the All Africa Festival brings to Dubai is truly something special and they will always have my support. I am 100% behind what they are doing as a community-focused event in Dubai and I'm honoured to be on that stage to represent South African music, understanding the impact and the power I hold because I'm not just representing myself, but my country, culture and the fans across the world who enjoy my music.

I believe we are the new ambassadors. Back then there were

ambassadors of varied forms and many are present today still, but I think our generation breeds are different in that in some ways, we can relate to children; the kids that see us and perhaps think "Oh, my story is the same as this guy, even though he's from South Africa," for example. I think with the bridge building that the All Africa Festival is doing, people can see that we're passionate human beings. And we're not just human beings, but we can also be extraordinary human beings with extraordinary talent!

7. TAKE US THROUGH WHAT INSPIRES YOU ABOUT DUBAI AND THE UAE FROM WHAT YOU KNOW FROM VISITING AND PERFORMING HERE?

What inspires me is the spirit; the spirit of working hard which I think is also not shown enough in the media. When you're in Dubai, you feel like you can't help but be inspired, not only by what you see but also, you feel a push to work harder. I mean, seeing a Rolls Royce is like seeing taxis in Dubai. You see so many Rolls Royce cars for example, and not just luxurious cars and luxurious buildings, but even with the middle class of Dubai for example, the residents and expats seemingly have an inherent spirit of working hard, of entrepreneurship and of being unapologetic about what you pushing.

For me, that's why I say Dubai is super inspirational as being here unlocks something in your brain that gives you hope in way. No matter where you come from, no matter what you're doing, as much as there is luxury and opulence at just about every turn, if you work hard you can also you be a part of it. You can also work hard and make it in your field.

I think we need to start saying there's the Dubai dream. As much as there is the American Dream there's the Dubai dream and we continue to push for it to unfold!

8. WHAT MESSAGE DOES FOCALISTIC HAVE FOR YOUNG AFRICANS IN THE CREATIVE ARTS?

The message I have for young Africans is be unapologetic about where you come from. That's the secret to your story being unique. There's only one you in the world so never, ever try to change your story to suit a certain narrative because every narrative, especially yours is important. I think, for the longest time our voices were made to seem unimportant, but now we are seeing just how much the whole world is listening to Africa. So, be unapologetic about where you come from, who you are, and your art.

9. AND TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GROWING UP IN MZANSI WITH DREAMS OF GLOBAL INFLUENCE?

I am proudly South African, having grown up with dreams of global influence like many of us. To my fellow South Africans, I say the same thing: Be unapologetic about your art and what you do and make sure that you know you're doing it at the highest level. Also, don't stop praying and working on your goals.

10. TOP 3 PLACES IN AFRICA YOU WOULD ONE DAY LIKE TO VISIT OR PERHAPS PERFORM IN?

We've been fortunate to tour in Africa, so I'll share a combination of places I've been to and others that I would like to one day visit. Nigeria is one place I recommend for people to one day visit. I enjoy the energy of the place and its people, especially when it's festival times and there's so much diversity in their culture one can experience. You get to learn the lingo and experience the food. I feel like **Nigeria is a one big culture pot.**

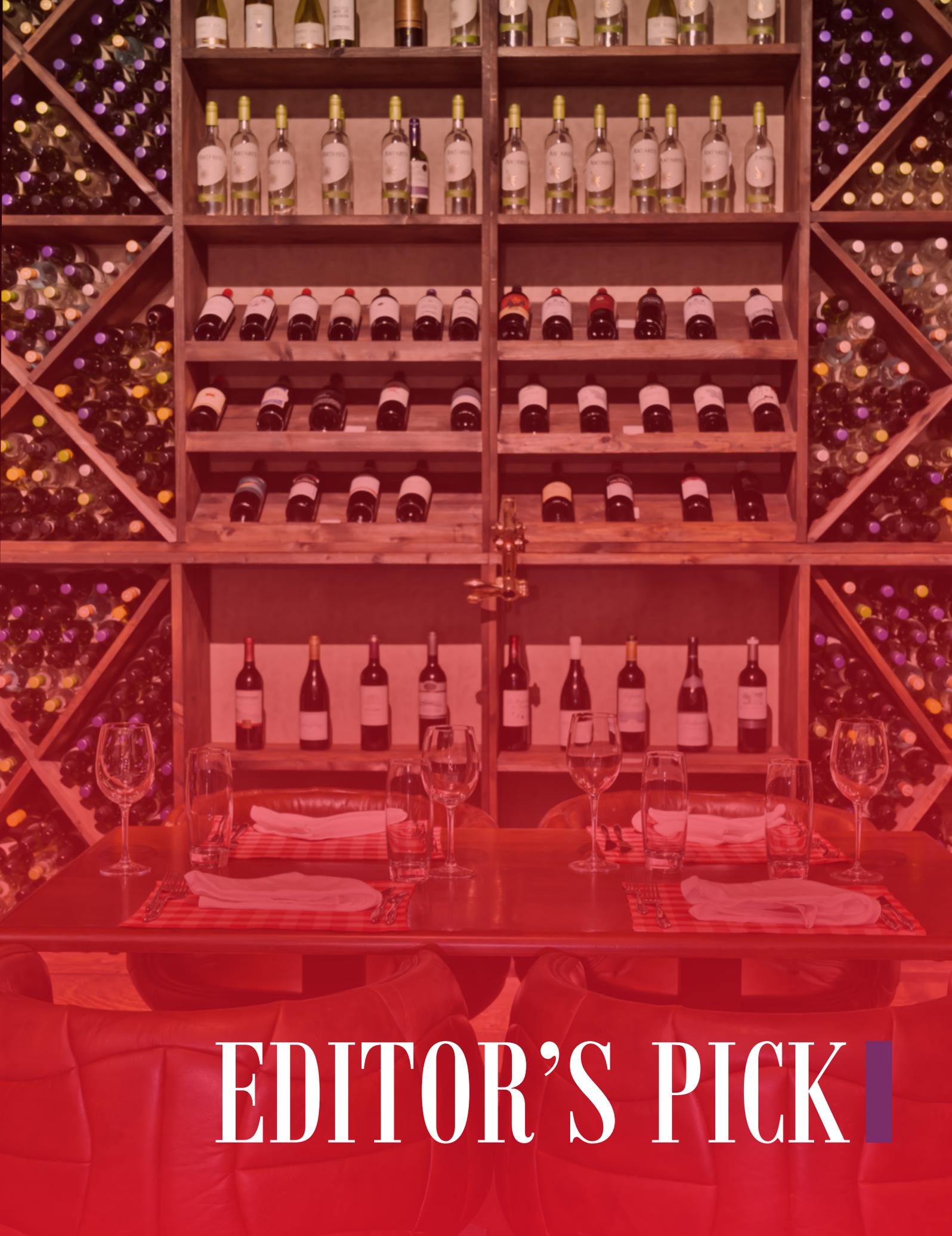
Number two would be a **place I haven't been to actually and that's Egypt.**



Performing in Egypt, Cairo specifically, I feel like would be a monumental and culture-shifting moment being able to spread the music in that space.

The third recommendation of places to visit in Africa would be **another place I've been to which is Ghana.** Ghana also carries strong expressions of culture and is remarkably vibrant.

You asked for three but I'll throw in a bonus for you and say Tanzania and Kenya. East Africa is very close to my heart, also boasting strong cultural expression and remarkable experiences. So if you're reading this and you haven't been to Africa, then you must add our continent to your bucket-list, full of vibrant culture and creative expression, a lot of lingo and plentiful human perspectives you've never experienced before. 🌍



EDITOR'S PICK 

5 Reasons Why Rixos The Palm Dubai Is The Perfect Couples' Staycation Destination

The allure of Dubai continues to mesmerise, with countless opportunities to be whisked away for new, sensory experiences that will leave you feeling like royalty for a time. It had been an incredibly busy few weeks of extensive travel, and so when the call came in for a weekend of rest and recuperation without having to go too far, off we headed to the easternmost tip of Dubai's most prestigious address – Palm Jumeirah – for a weekend at Rixos the Palm Dubai.

By Yvonne C Mtengwa



A pristine drive down the coast of the top eastern frond would reveal the pulse of the destination, with the ultimate in luxury resorts to choose from to our right, and the crystal azure waters of the Gulf's sea and distant Dubai skyline to our left. A warm welcome, true to form in this great city, quickly became an exciting invitation to what lay ahead for our stay. Three days later, there were countless notes to share about why #RixosMoments are in every way, worth the pursuit. With that, here are 5 reasons why if it's a couple's getaway you are after with your loved one, Rixos the Palm Dubai may very well award you the memory-making you'll never forget:

1. Unparalleled views of the Arabian Gulf and cityscape beyond the Palm. The beach resort offers panoramic views of the azure waters of the Arabian Gulf, with waves flowing over white soft sands, and Dubai's iconic skyscrapers, the glittering skyline of Dubai Marina and the remarkable lagoons and architecture of Palm Jumeirah itself off in the distance.

A prime location which invokes indulgence, luxurious escapism and romanticism, Rixos The Palm Dubai is set just a short distance from Dubai's popular tourist destinations and entertainment districts on and off the magnificent Palm Jumeirah. Enjoy a morning or evening stroll on the beach, bask under the rays of the Middle Eastern sun on

your poolside day-bed, perfect for enjoying the relaxed atmosphere that surrounds you on the hotel's grounds.

2. Modern, luxurious Turkish heritage spaces that invoke spirited indulgence. At Rixos the Palm Dubai, you quickly come to understand why for modern travelers, luxury is no longer about stuffy lobbies with heavy furnishings and hushed, formal, often crowded dining spaces. A swift check in and quick introduction to what experiences were on offer for us during our stay, was a stellar reminder of how contemporary luxury should really be a laid-back affair. Fresh, refined and imaginative spaces are inspired by the brand's Turkish heritage and service rendered to all guests is personal, ensuring a tailored, memorable experience for all.

3. Splendid suites to nestle you into a world of pampered extravagance. A surprise upgrade availed us a delightful corner suite, complete with multiple balconies that showed off vistas of landscapes on which the hotel sits, with palm trees lining winding walk ways and stunning green spaces down below; creating perfect backdrops for those staycation photos.

Rooms and suites at Rixos the Palm are replete with slick design, decorated with attention to detail and quality amenities to provide all guests with a supremely comfortable in-room experience. With the sun-kissed beaches,



sparkling pool and bar areas to look forward to for a little outdoor fun with the grown-ups at the resort, during those moments of enjoying quieter moments – wide screen TVs from either the living room or bedroom provided in-room entertainment, with plenty of space for work at the in-suite workstations, or relaxation in our spectacular abode.

4. Anjana Spa to whisk your mind away to far off places.

A couple's massage is an absolute treat at Anjana Spa; ours of which came fully loaded and accompanied by platters of succulent fresh fruit and infused water to enjoy ahead of our treatment. Nothing short of a spa sensory journey that left us rejuvenated, relaxed and uplifted both in mind and body, a couple's spa escape at Rixos the Palm Dubai is perfection when it comes to creating an opportunity to slow time down and reconnect with your special someone ahead of a massage, wind down in a traditional Turkish hammam, or delight your senses with any of the signature experiences on offer within a very tranquil setting.

5. The city's only true All-Inclusive concept on the Palm, meaning more value for every bit of your spend.

The task at hand was sheer enjoyment by way of a much-needed weekend staycation, and everyone knows that offering guests limitless experiences in accommodation, dining, entertainment, leisure and wellness, especially in luxuriating settings, is the perfect incentive for any lifestyle enthusiast. Ticking all the boxes with fantastic all-inclusive deals will without doubt, bring a smile to your face and freedom to do more with your pocket.

Infinity buffets are designed to fulfil all guests' tastes, with an array of high-end à-la-carte restaurants, bars and lounges serving beverages, cocktails and small bites. The Rixos brand's approach aims to invoke a spirited, care free existence for guests while at their resorts, and this is evident in their 'Abundant Flavour' approach: no hassle of home cooking, no restriction with regard to restaurants and no unexpected additional spend. With a stay at Rixos the Palm, you get to treat yourself while the resort takes care of you! 



Discover The Majestic
Zambezi River From
*The Royal Livingstone
by Anantara*



An opportunity to further invoke the curiosity of my children's minds through travel always takes on an elevated level of excitement through safari experiences. Having spent the first year of my transition to destination promotion more than a decade ago in the tourist town of Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, I long dreamed of one day bringing my children to the destination where my love for travel and nature became deeply etched on my heart.

By Yvonne C Mtengwa





Plans were swift, with the goal being to spend the summer scaling the shores of the mighty Zambezi River from both sides – in Zimbabwe and neighbouring Zambia. This experience was going to set a premium on disconnecting from the everyday tug of war between self, a hectic work schedule and the desire to explore carried by children on a school break, the internet, and all-round stimulation from heightened pace of city life in Dubai. This trip was curated in an effort to reconnect with each other and the wonderment of nature and creation in Africa’s wildscapes.

Putting together the itinerary

The key to enjoyable travel begins with identifying the perfect tribe of handlers who are able to carefully curate an exciting itinerary based on the needs of the traveller. With extensive experience in destination promotion on my part, and an ever growing penchant for travel across Africa, whether roughing it in remote locations or soaking in the “soft life” with luxurious experiences, I knew fully well that I would be turning to the wonderful team of explorers and mindful travelers from Ker & Downey® Africa, experts on all things Africa, with first-hand knowledge on the most sought-after experiences in the most remote corners of the continent. Their exclusive LuxVenture® trips are quality expeditions, bringing together ultra-luxurious nights and adventurous days in carefully crafted itineraries, designed by their team to suit one’s unique needs and interests.





With a few conversations in motion and recommendations on their best picks for an epic family travel experience on the Zambia side of the Zambezi, the first stay was slated for us at the Royal Livingstone by Anantara; exciting for me in that this would be my return since the first time I enjoyed the stay with my growing family at the time – my husband, 2 year old toddler and a baby on the way! This time we were headed back with my daughter as a teenager and my son on the fast track to double digits – and the excitement was palatable.

Family Travel – the perfect way to still time with loved ones

A luxury safari as a family creates the perfect opportunity to disconnect from digital distractions and reconnect with your loved ones surrounded by Africa's pristine wilderness. Stress-free family safaris are made by families for families and ensure the utmost luxury for guests and never-ending excitement for the entire tribe. Our stunning stay at the Royal Livingstone by Anantara began with a pick-up in a luxurious SUV from the airport, a quick shuttle to hotel, where we were welcomed by a towering giraffe and a family of antelope having their share of grass and foliage from the luxury hotel's driveway. Check-in was a breeze, with cooling towels and a refreshing mocktail to usher us into our few nights at the hotel after our long flight from Dubai into Livingstone via Nairobi.

Whether you're traveling with toddlers, teens or with the whole family, the team at Ker & Downey Africa will tailor your experience to create a seam-

less itinerary that suits everyone. Our home during our stay was a family suite, which delivered two spacious, fully equipped bedrooms with river frontage views, accessible by a common entry way but still ensuring privacy for the adults and kids in their adjacent spaces. A butler would attend to our needs at every turn, and after a brief tour of our space, we quickly refreshed ourselves, got some much needed rest in before heading over for a hearty lunch at the main restaurant, with plans for dinner and a taste of Zambia's cultural expression and cuisine at Mukuni Boma later that night.

What's to love about the Royal Livingstone by Anantara?

Exhilarating travellers with wilderness and purity of Africa's wild beauty, The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara opens its prestigious address to guests with the most discerning of tastes, boasting a unique location overlooking the majestic Victoria Falls further downstream. Taking its name from the famous explorer Sir David Livingstone who named the Falls after his queen, the hotel exhibits poignant reminders of bygone eras, ushering guests into a world of nostalgic luxury from the shores of Africa's fourth longest river.

You'll love the hotel's setting on the banks of the great Zambezi River, in full view of the spray of the Victoria Falls, one of the world's Seven Natural Wonders. Guests will also be delighted to note upon arrival that this iconic waterfall is a mere 10-minute walk away on a winding path across the hotel grounds, with guests enjoying unlimited complimentary access via the hotel's private entrance.



Luxurious accommodations to set the scene for a stellar stay

Exuding the charm of Victorian times, luxury guest rooms and four spacious suites at The Royal Livingstone by Anantara, all feature a balcony or veranda with an outdoor seating area facing gardens frequented by free-roaming zebras, impalas, giraffes and monkeys, and the Zambezi River beyond. Elegant furnishings blend with the warmth of African tribal culture, with marble, black and white bathrooms offering invigorating rain showers and long soaks in the tub.

Our Deluxe Rooms adjacent to each other and perfectly appointed for couples travelling with children, availed a king size bed and twin singles for the children dressed in fine white linen, air conditioning, a desk and WiFi, tea and coffee making facilities, a mini bar and satellite television, with personal service offered by a dedicated butler, along with laundry and valet services.

I was later to discover that the Deluxe Corner Rooms also feature an enclosed glass-walled patio with refined mosquito



netting, wicker furniture and ceiling fan to combat the oftentimes high temperatures in the region, but still providing clear Zambezi views protected from the elements, including the roaming wildlife – often docile but wild all the same.

Onsite experiences to relish for a lifetime

Mornings began with an early morning jog to the neighbouring Avani Victoria Falls Hotel, using the same pathway that leads guests to the Victoria Falls entry gates, ahead of a quick finisher work out at the fully equipped gym, which offered amenities that included cooling towels, healthy snacks and infused water. Breakfast with a view was charming and buffet style, with all the trimmings for health conscious patrons and those keen on full holiday indulgence.

Culinary experiences throughout the course of the day celebrate local flavours



and ingredients, complemented by international culinary traditions. Stories are shared in splendour at The Royal Livingstone Lounge over high tea in the afternoon, and later fine wines or whisky are the perfect accompaniment to live piano music as the sun sets into the crisp evenings. Drinks are spectacular on Kubu facing the Zambezi River, with sunset cocktails a perennial treat for all.

Moments by the pool are relaxing, with an added treat being a visit by the resident dazzle of zebras who stroll through, seemingly to pose with guests keen on a unique photo opportunity. Three riverside spa gazebos for individuals and couples afford the rare opportunity to enjoy treatments at Anantara Spa, immersed in the idyllic beauty of the Zambezi River, with rushing water, chirping birdsong and the calls of wildlife providing an uplifting soundtrack. The offer came for a sunset Anantara Spa treatment, which needed no convincing on my part as I was intent on soaking in every opportunity to luxuriate during my stay.

A stay to remember at The Royal Livingstone by Anantara

Our stay was a fitting start to what would later be described by the children as an epic adventure in Zambia's safari territory. From soaking in the quiet moments while at the hotel to venturing off into the nearby town of Livingstone to discover the culture and way of the local communities, explore the popular Mukuni Village market and relive in a way, a pioneering era through Livingstone's famous museum which houses galleries dedicated to archaeology, ethnography and art, history and natural history, we were well poised to share a good number of stories on one of our stays on the shores of the Zambezi, on the Livingstone side of the Zimbabwe-Zambia border. 





TASTE-MAKERS |



Al Fresco Japanese Dining And Views Of Dubai's Dancing Fountains On The Grand Terrace Of Armani/Hashi

“When I create dishes my motto is always ‘simple is best’. I like to use simplistic combinations of ingredients to create delicious and mouthwatering dishes.

— HEAD CHEF SIN KEUN CHOI, ARMANI/HASHI

In welcoming a fresh new season of contemporary culinary experiences at Armani/Hashi, located on the Concourse Floor of the prestigious Armani Hotel Dubai, the Japanese restaurant sets the bar high in exceptional cuisine presentation and tantalizing culinary showmanship.

Housed within the walls of the architectural wonder that is the Burj Khalifa, at Armani/Hashi, dinner is a romantic affair as much as it is an exceptional food journey to the Far East, an experience that comes highly recommended for Dubai's dining enthusiasts and for visitors to the city with a penchant for experiences that carry a unique combination of gastronomical and entertainment overtones.

Setting the scene with Al Fresco Japanese Cuisine

Enter the doors and discover for yourself why the restaurant was recently highlighted in Dubai's first-ever Michelin guide. A night out on the terrace for dinner is sure to unveil fabulous views and award-winning food, as your experience begins with a walk down a golden lit hallway from the hotel's lobby towards the elevator that takes you down to Armani/Hashi's location on a floor a





few levels below. One is greeted by the iridescent lighting, mostly carrying red and golden hues, with décor that's well inspired by Japanese culture and design aesthetic.

An open kitchen greets you immediately as you are guided through the restaurant and out onto the standout terrace, awarding striking views of Souk Al Bahar, adjacent towers within the Downtown Dubai District, and of course, the site of the Dubai's iconic dancing fountains, which come to life in an epic, mesmerizing display of water, light and contemporary Arabic and mainstream music hits ever so often.

A journey to Japan through food

Dive into authentic flavours from across Japan with a special menu featuring all the trimmings such as caviar and blue fin tuna tartare with truffle ponzu, eggplant denkaku with brioche, and M9 wagyu sukiyaki with enoki mushrooms.

Armani/Hashi restaurant and lounge delivers an imaginative twist on traditional and contemporary Japanese cuisine. The freshest fish is flown in daily from around the world, and complemented by a selection of speciality beverages for a culinary occasion that will delight all the



senses, and hosted in a space that can easily cater to close to 230 guests.

When asked what it means for Armani/Hashi to welcome guests from all over the world to such a prestigious restaurant at one of the most iconic addresses in town, Head Chef Sin Keun Choi says:

“WHEN WE WELCOME GUESTS THROUGH OUR DOORS WE INVITE THEM TO START A CULINARY JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY. THE DINING EXPERIENCE IS UNRIVALLED AS WE BRING OUR DINERS THROUGH A RANGE OF EMOTIONS WITH OUR FOOD.”

And this assertion is validated by the bountiful menu with sumptuous options, such as the Oma-kase premium tasting menu, the Oma-kase 9, 8 and 6 course menus, picks for the Otsumami or appetiser options, to signature sashimi, sushi and maki rolls unlike any you have ever indulged in before, and hearty servings of Japanese grilled fish, meat and vegetable combinations in the form of Robatayaki and Teppanyaki that come with a selection of starch and vegetable side dishes.

Surrounded by lighting in the form of akachōchin or “red lantern” in Japanese, stationed around the terrace, and that beaming from the surrounding skyscraper-ridden skies and the thrill of Dubai’s Dancing Fountains, the stage is set for a night of delectable cuisine, made from only the freshest meats, seafood and fruits of the land. If it’s a night of romance or stunning panoramic views of Downtown Dubai you are after over a selection of spectacular gourmet, Armani/Hashi is a guaranteed exceptional night out, and one you will surely come back for. 

For your booking, email: restaurant.reservations@armanihotels.com or call +971 4 888 3666



Christian Muzhira On Motivation From Adversity And Career Growth In The Luxury Lodge Landscape

Travel Essence Magazine first met Chris during a trip to the Victoria Falls and its surrounding areas, an exceptional trip curated by our friends over at Vayeni Safaris. He was part of the management team that hosted us at the award-winning Matetsi Victoria Falls, and a year later, we bumped into him again and this time, from the other side of the Zambezi. We took the opportunity to chat with him about what his journey in the luxury lodge landscape has meant to him. He had this to say...

1. CHRISTIAN MUZHIRA - AN ABSOLUTE PLEASURE HAVING MET YOU DURING OUR STAY AT TONGABEZI BY GREEN SAFARIS WHERE YOU ARE THE LODGE MANAGER. TELL US ABOUT WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU GREW UP AND YOUR TRAINING DAYS LEADING TO YOUR PENCHANT FOR LUXURY LODGES.

I grew up in Zimbabwe in the rural areas of Mashonaland Central, where I attended my primary and secondary school. I completed the first stage of my Primary School education in Harare from Grade 1-4, but unfortunately my dad passed away, forcing my mother, younger brother and older sister (who sadly also too passed away in 2011) to move to the village since my mom couldn't afford the expensive nature of life in the capital city, Harare.

Life wasn't easy at all for all of us; it definitely dealt us some tough blows, especially for my mom who fought hard to ensure there was food on the table, and also having to deal with the pain of later losing her only daughter.

In search of greener pastures, she then moved on to Botswana, leaving me with my younger brother. I was very young at the time and had to cope with the new norm, an experience that quickly matured me when compared with many of my age mates. 2012 brought about our move to Botswana, where I would then go ahead and complete my secondary school education.

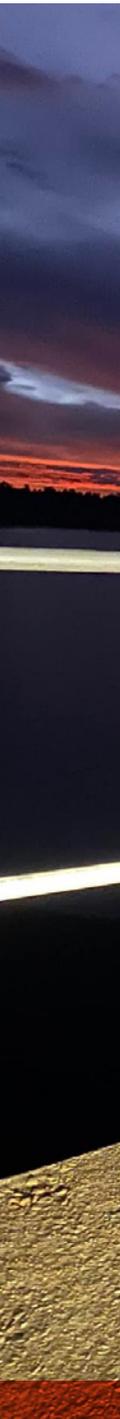
Being the man of the house as it were, I had to look for a few extra jobs so I could help my mother out whilst also paying for my school fees. I

then went on to study IT, which quickly became a field of study I was deeply fascinated with. I credit the season of advancing my knowledge in IT for the many good friends I met who in some ways became family.

On a quest for further growth and maximising of opportunities, I started working on Mobile Safari experiences, doing Filming and Photography, meeting legends in the field and interacting with guests from across the world who were visiting Botswana. With all the experience and the knowledge that acquired when I was working on the different camps in the heart of Botswana, I then moved to Victoria Falls Zimbabwe where I stayed for at least 7 years before joining Tongabezi, owned and operated by Green Safaris.

As Lao Tzu said, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." My quest for personal growth had me add to my skillset by venturing into all manner of maintenance works. Also, during my free time I would offer to help out in Front of House. Lo and behold I then became a Butler, moving on to become a host, an Assistant Lodge Manager and now a Lodge Manager. Let I add too that I continued to pursue my studies and am looking forward to becoming a Sommelier soon!

2. MANY WOULD SAY YOU EXPERIENCED QUITE A RAPID GROWTH IN THE INDUSTRY, GIVEN YOU HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE OF BEING PART OF THE MANAGEMENT TEAMS OF AWARD-WINNING





PROPERTIES SUCH AS MATETSI VICTORIA FALLS AND NOW TONGABEZI IN LIVINGSTONE, ZAMBIA? TAKE US THROUGH SNIPPETS OF YOUR JOURNEY THUS FAR?

Indeed I have experienced a rapid growth in this industry and have also learned along the way that success is no accident. It takes hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do. I would have not gotten this far had I not carried my passion with me, and the zeal to be someone in pursuit of constant growth.

3. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE TRENDS IN GUEST EXPERIENCE TAILORING THAT YOU THINK ARE INTEGRAL IN MANAGING LUXURY LODGES IN AFRICA?

The guests experience is crucial in the hospitality industry. It can either make or break the business and it should be one of the top priorities. Guests come to a hotel for various reasons, but they all want to feel welcomed and relaxed. A well-designed guest experience will make them feel valued and appreciated, which will create a loyal customer base that will come back again and again.

It's important to also note that guest experience is not just about physical design, but also about the services offered by staff members. Receptionists should be friendly and helpful for instance, while housekeeping staff should be available at any time for assistance with luggage or other requests. Guests will appreciate these small gestures of hospitality which can go a long way in creating an excellent customer experience.

The most fundamental element of hospitality is how compelling the guest experience is, and as such, should be the most integral part of Lodge Operations because once everyone on the team gets it right, it translates to guests speaking confidently on your property and the experience. It all means that guests will definitely talk confidently about your property, be it in online review platforms such as TripAdvisor, via social media, word of mouth and some become repeat guests. A happy guest is one of the best types of marketing, so everyone should ensure that you are setting and even exceeding guest expectations. However, understanding and delivering what the guest needs can be a little bit tricky as preferences can change over time, so there is need to be adaptive in service delivery.

4. YOU SPEND A GOOD PART OF THE YEAR IN REMOTE LOCATIONS AT WORK, BEFORE GOING BACK TO THE CITY TO RECONNECT WITH LOVED ONES. TALK TO US ABOUT WHAT THAT'S LIKE FOR A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL ON THE QUEST FOR GROWTH?

HOW DO YOU BALANCE THE TUG OF WAR BETWEEN YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE AND MANAGING BOTH IN VERY DIFFERENT SETTINGS?

It can be quite complicated to balance both to be quite honest, but over the years, I have learned to be strong physically and emotionally as there are a lot of situations and people along the way that may try to create barriers for you, especially when working in camps away from home. I will add though that in as much as I am often disconnected from my friends and family and being far away from the hustle and bustle of city life, has taught me to budget better and to keep excelling academically.

5. TALK TO US ABOUT SOME OF THE KEY LESSONS YOU'VE TAKEN FROM WORKING WITH TEAMS AT LUXURY LODGES?

Working at luxury lodges teaches you the power of prioritization, swift problem-solving, humility and communications. You begin to better understand human behaviour, for example guest responsiveness to having their needs met or otherwise.

Luxury lodge management is about people—each and every type of person. In short, working in hospitality teaches you real-life soft skills that you will carry throughout your entire life. You will have great experiences and you will have some you would rather forget. You may have a total meltdown mid-shift (I know I have) and still live to enjoy some of your best moments a few hours later. There are many lessons I have taken away from my time sweating through a challenging weekend shift and these continue to guide me as I work to improve myself daily.

6. WHAT ABOUT CURATING THE ULTIMATE GUEST EXPERIENCE? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT INTERNATIONAL GUESTS STAYING AT CAMPS AND LODGES LOOK FOR AND WHAT DO YOU DEEM TO BE A WINNING FORMULA TO KEEP THEM COMING BACK?

Pre arrival. Very important. This is where it all begins where a guest chooses a lodge and considers why they would like to visit that particular destination. The choice of the guest can be influenced by many factors though, including previous experi-

ences with previous lodges, online reviews, the word of mouth referral by friends and colleagues or the location of the lodge.

Also, the guest's decision of making the reservation can also be affected by the ease of making the reservation and the way reservation agents interacted and described the facility of the lodge. Elements like room type, room rate, activities offered amenities all play a role in guiding the guest experience. It's for this reason that reservations agents should be sales orientated and present positive, strong image of the hotel, be open-minded with respect to different cultures, very patient and passionate about what they are doing at any given time.

Arrival starts from any point that guests are picked up, be it from the airport, from another lodge, from the border of a neighbouring country and so on. This is the first face-to-face interaction with the staff that you will be dealing with, so the process should go swiftly.

Before the guests arrives, rooms should have been checked to ensure that everything is all clean with no snags needing to be fixed. Little touches such as personalized welcome notes and special treats in the room such as macaroons or millionaire shortbreads are always winning elements. A warm welcome from the Manager and the team, with a well refreshed towel sprinkled with lemon grass, singing and dancing mostly does bring a vibe and it makes guests to feel at home more, especially given most would have travelled long distances to arrive at your lodge. A lot goes into it, but it is absolutely worth it to see the smiles on the guests' faces as they check in and familiarise themselves with their new surroundings and the overall experiences that lies ahead – be it the meals, sundowners, massages should a spa be on site, planned activities and so on.

7. LET'S MOVE THE NEEDLE TO SOME OF YOUR OTHER INTERESTS. WHAT DOES CHRIS DO FOR FUN?

I am an avid photographer. I also love reading novels, watching movies and documentaries, and naturally, I love travelling and experiencing nature.

8. 5 FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS IN AFRICA AND WHY?

My first pick is my home country of **Zimbabwe**. Behind the grim data lies one of southern Africa's most beautiful and diverse countries. Despite our endless troubles, Zimbabweans have never lost their humour and resolve, they are culturally strong, welcoming and vibrant. The thundering Victoria Falls is the most obvious attraction, bungee jumping and white water rafting blend beautifully with the laid back vibe of the town. The wilderness of Mana Pools National Park is home to one of Africa's strongest wild dog populations, the Ruins of Great Zimbabwe are awe-inspiring and the majestic Matopos are steeped in tradition. Hwange National Park is a wildlife haven as well as along the banks of the Zambezi River. Further upstream is the great Lake Kariba on which dreamy days can be spent aboard a houseboat. Despite its global image, Zimbabwe is still a true African gem.

Second pick; **Botswana**. This is an excellent destination to photograph large predators, with healthy populations of lion, leopard, cheetah, hyena and the African wild dog. The differing landscapes of the Okavango, Savute Marsh, Chobe River and the semi-arid zones of Nxai Pan, Makgadikgadi Pans and the Kalahari Desert make Botswana one of the very best safari destinations in the world.

The country also boasts the biggest intact migration of zebra and one of the largest salt pan systems on Earth – the great Makgadikgadi Salt Pans. Botswana is also home to the largest continuous elephant population in Africa and the highest concentration of Elephants on earth today

My third pick would be **Zambia**. Zambia can be described as the interface between southern and east Africa and has long been one of the most underrated safari destinations on the continent. Bird life is prolific and the Luangwa Valleys offer brilliant wildlife viewing in safari vehicles and on foot.

The Kasanka National Park hosts the largest migration of mammals on earth as over 8 million fruit bats descend on a particular forest in time for the Summer rains. Zambia is home to the lesser known sub-species of Cookson's Wildebeest, Crawshay's Zebra and Thornicroft Giraffe – endemics to the Luangwa Valleys. The country boasts an intact wildebeest migration in the west and a cultural diversity that is rich and largely unexplored. The Lozi tribe of the Barotse floodplains are one of the most prominent culture elements of this exciting country.

Then we move onto **Namibia**. Wedged between the Kalahari and the South Atlantic, Namibia enjoys vast potential as one of the youngest countries in Africa. In addition to having a striking diversity of cultures and national origins, Namibia is a photographer's dream – it boasts wild seascapes, rugged mountains, lonely deserts, stunning wildlife, colonial cities and nearly unlimited elbow room.

Namibia is one of those dreamlike places that continually makes you second guess what your eyes are seeing. Time and space are less defined here, landscapes collide, dreams are formed and realised. Watch a lion stalking an eland on a never-ending plain in Etosha, or watch a lion snatch a seal from the surf on the west coast. Fly down a giant dune on a sand-board, spend a night alone in the desert under a sky so thick with stars they are blinding. There is nothing else like Namibia.

Kenya & Tanzania, which bear so many similarities yet still so different, it can be quite difficult to separate the two. The original heart of the safari - East Africa is home to the most iconic African landscapes and some its most iconic people.

The snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro presides over the great plains of the Serengeti and Maasai Mara as they roll into the rainforests of central Africa. The Great Migration occurs here when millions of wildebeest and zebra follow the seasonal rains, famously crossing the crocodile infested Mara River as part of their journey. This is the largest movement of terrestrial mammals on earth.

There are deep history and cultural elements to explore while visiting the Maasai

and Samburu people. Along the beautiful coastlines the warm Indian Ocean provides an entirely different tapestry of underwater plants and animals. The diving opportunities are some of the best in the world. Just off the coast is the island of Zanzibar, full of colourful history and tradition a visit here is a delightful assault on the senses and is not to be missed. It is here in East Africa that "safari" first began.

9. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKING TO ENTER YOUR SPACE IN LUXURY CAMPS AND LODGES?

Your background doesn't determine your future and success. You may have inherited wealth from your parents or you might be from a very poor background but the crux of the matter is, for one to

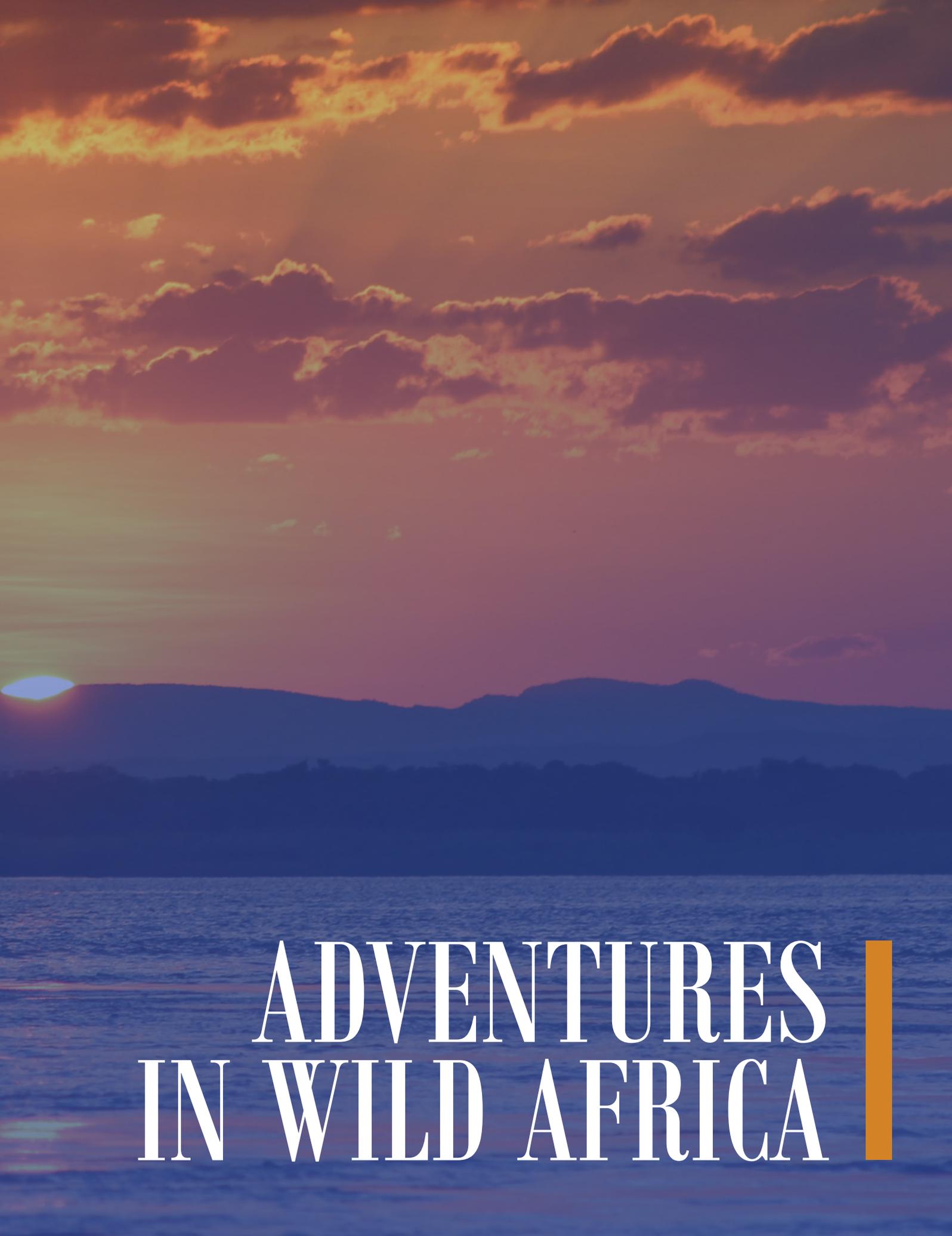
succeed they have to be focused, be passionate about what they do and never stop learning and listening to those who went before them. As the adage states; never stop dreaming, everything is possible and the sky is the limit.

10. GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO TURN BACK THE HANDS OF TIME - WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE OR WHAT WORDS WOULD YOU SHARE WITH YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

I would tell myself to love myself enough to set boundaries. Our time and energy are precious and we get to choose how we use it. We teach people how to treat us by deciding what we will and won't accept." 







ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA





Commitment To Sustainability At The Palm River Hotel

The stunning 73-roomed Palm River Hotel sits on a sprawling tract of land on the shores of the great Zambezi River, only a few minutes' drive from the bustling Victoria Falls town center. Distinctive in its architectural design, and a perfect display of when manmade creativity comes together in perfect harmony with nature, a stay at one of Victoria Falls' most prolific addresses is sure to invoke relaxation and a profound appreciation of unsurpassed luxury in an idyllic setting.

But behind the charming hospitality on offer for guests at The Palm River Hotel, are operations that embrace sustainable practices and environmentally conscious initiatives where possible. The hotel is committed to protecting local wildlife and their habitats as well as preserving the rich cultural heritage of Victoria Falls. Its pledge towards a sustainable footprint includes energy saving via use of solar power and hydroelectricity, sustainable borehole water sourcing, waste reduction and an extensive recycling programme. Most recently the Palm River Hotel launched its Vegetable Plantation, where home-grown vegetables, fuelled by organic fertiliser produced on-site, will ensure a fresh, consistent, and self-sufficient supply for direct use within the hotel's restaurant.

A Genesis of Environment and Habitat Preservation

During the hotel's construction, contracting teams found ways of minimising the destruction of the land and adapting where necessary to accommodate the changing water levels while, at the same time, preserving the many indigenous trees and natural wildlife habitats with which the property is blessed. Over 150 individual trees and shrubs were identified and carefully protected during the development of the hotel. The care taken to preserve the indigenous trees now allows wildlife and guests alike to enjoy the cooling shelter of dappled shade and natural habitats that pepper the hotel's lush gardens.

As an additional onsite activity for guests and nature lovers is the hotel's Indigenous Tree Walk. Guests may embark on a gentle meandering through the natural surrounds of the hotel grounds and identify the variety of indigenous trees that have been carefully marked with a discrete plaque and details of each individual species. From the buffalo-thorn tree to the crocodile bark tree, guests have much to discover with over 150 trees or shrubs to identify within the hotel grounds.

Energy Conservation

The hotel is powered on a unique hybrid system combining hydroelectricity with solar power. The hydroelectricity is sourced from by Kariba Dam, located some 350 kilometres downstream of the Zambezi River. The hotel's hot water is powered by solar heated water tanks that heat-exchange with the air conditioning plants for maximum efficiency. There is an allowance for future

addition of a solar farm on the site to cater for the hotel's power needs; ensuring that the Palm River Hotel is truly a green entity.

Water Conservation

With consideration for its surroundings, the Palm River Hotel water supply is made up of a large bore-hole system, designed to extract a sustainable water sources from deep within the ground. Furthermore, the ever-flowing waters of the Zambezi River, located alongside the hotel grounds, ensure the deep water sources always remain consistent. Water passes through a purification system before use throughout the hotel.

Guests are encouraged to utilise the hotel's water refill stations, placed within the hotel restaurant. The hotel is also equipped with a Natura Water Purification System



enabling the re-use and refilling of still and sparkling water for guests. The Natural Still or Sparkling water is served in reusable and sealed glass bottles to help minimise use of single-use plastic.

To further reduce wastage, the hotel also encourages guests to choose to re-use bath towels where possible, and to place towels on the floor when refreshing is required. As an optional initiative for guests, the initiative aims to minimise water wastage in daily laundry on all towels throughout the hotel.

Recycling and Waste Reduction

Where possible, the hotel endeavours to reuse the amount of single-use plastic, plastic bottles and aluminium cans throughout. The hotel's Natural Water Purification System supplies safe and clean drinking water in glass bottles as a reusable and refillable water supply. The hotel's recycling efforts include a glass crushing machine to allow for re-use, while plastics, aluminium and paper are sorted into correct waste and passed on to the Victoria Falls Recycling Project for processing and re-use.

Recycling and waste reduction is also an important consideration beyond the Palm River Hotel, the hotel is often asked to provide packed lunches for guests' onwards travel, and when doing so the hotel ensures these requirements are met with biodegradable and recyclable packaging and cutlery.

Sustainability in food

Sourcing local and seasonal products for the hotel's restaurant menu marks a shift to more sustainable food supply. All biodegradable waste matter is carefully sorted and placed into an on-site composting system, for organic breakdown and re-use as organic fertiliser for self-grown food products.

The Palm Vegetable Plantation

As its latest endeavour towards better sustainability and self-sufficient food chain supply the Palm River Hotel has developed an on-site vegetable production plantation, consisting of a series of onsite greenhouses and herb troughs.





The hotel is blessed with rich soils that have been nourished by the waters of the Zambezi River, in addition to the supply of a consistent water source and a warm and sun-filled climate. Together, these factors enable an idyllic location in which to establish a productive on-site vegetable plantation.

Fertilized with the hotel's organic compost (also produced on site), the Vegetable Plantation enables the production of home-grown vegetables, herbs, and spices, for use as a fresh, consistent, and self-sufficient supply to the hotel's restaurant.

Palm Hospitality Group's Corporate social responsibility at the heart of operations

PALM HOSPITALITY GROUP (PHG)

GREEN TEAM

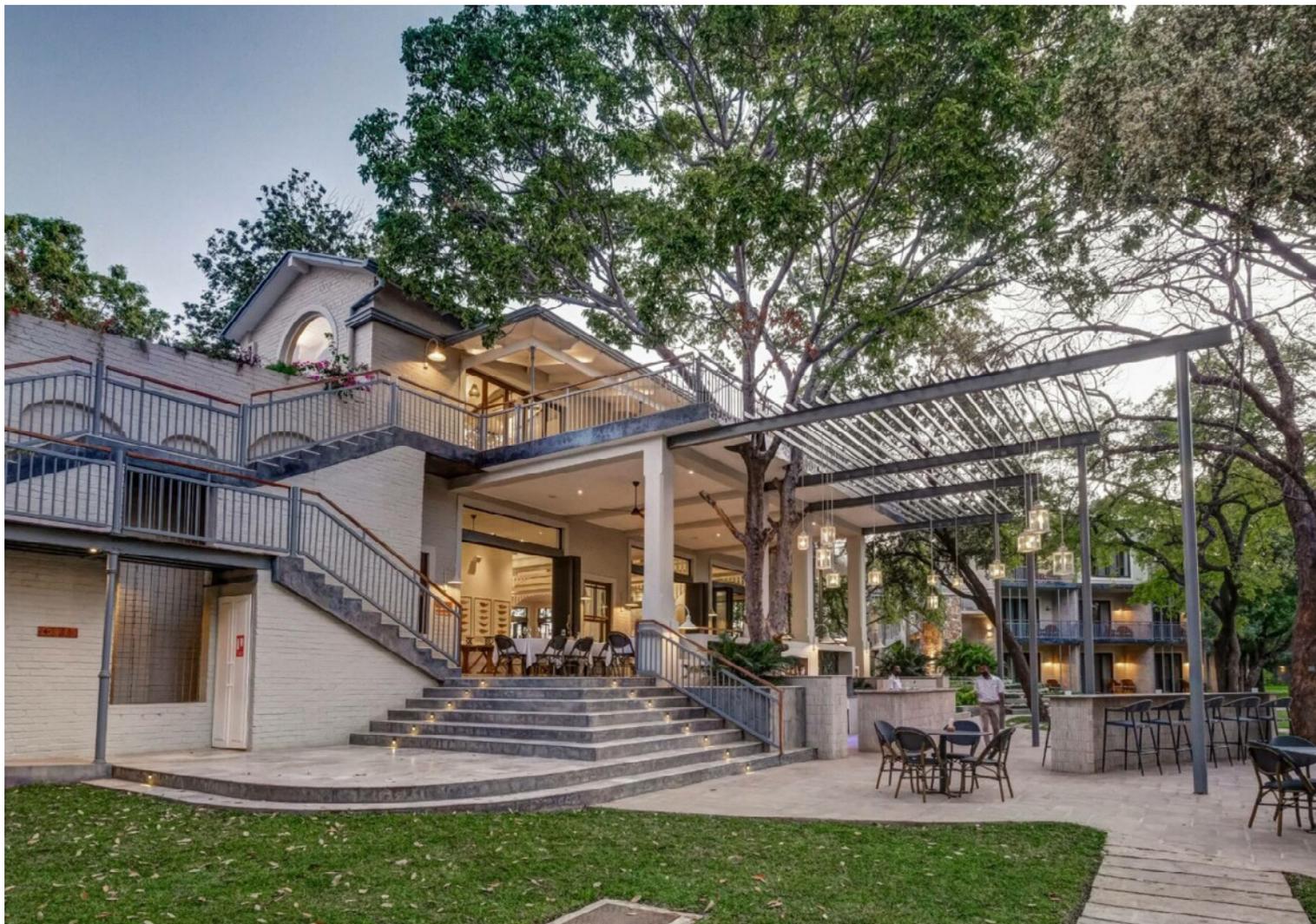
The Palm Hospitality Green (PHG) Green Team committee is made up of Palm River Hotel and Ilala Lodge Hotel staff members who are passionate about meaningful and practical solutions for more environmentally conscious practices. The PHG Green Team was first established 2019 at Ilala Lodge Hotel and has assisted with multiple corporate social responsibility projects over the years, these include but are not limited to:

WASTE MANAGEMENT: GREENLINE AFRICA TRUST AND THE VICTORIA FALLS RECYCLING PROJECT.

Among many achievements, the team proudly introduced a sustainable waste management initiative, presented to the Greenline Africa Trust and the Victoria Falls Recycling Project. This community initiative is made up of various events and projects that endeavour to better the future of green development within Victoria Falls.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION: MONTHLY CLEAN-UP & LITTER BIN INSTALLATION

Every first Friday of the month, hotel staff take to the local town streets, carparks and public areas as part of a



community clean up. The teams collect litter and sweep these areas in a bid to maintain and preserve the wonderful tourist town of Victoria Falls.

With care for the wonderful natural habitats in Victoria Falls, the organisation takes great pride in ensuring that the surrounding national park is free from harmful litter. Not only does this aesthetically spoil natural surroundings, but litter can also be exceptionally harmful to the wildlife and birdlife that roam Victoria Falls. In a bid to combat the spread of littering and as part of the staff's community involvement, Palm Hospitality Group have installed over 20 steel litter bins throughout the town and within the pathways along the Victoria Falls Rainforest walk. The bins enable a safe place for guests to discard of litter, while also deterring

baboons and monkeys from foraging and tipping out items from the previous plastic bins.

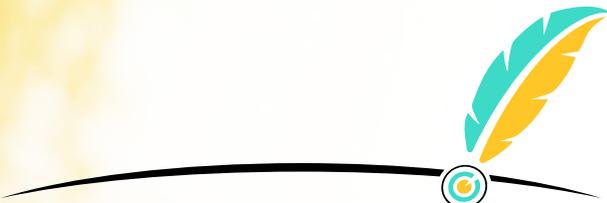
COMMUNITY SUPPORT: WITH THE HELP OF MUMMY'S ANGELS

The organisation also endeavours to supporting the wonderful and dynamic organisation, Mummy's Angels, as they make positive changes to the Maternity and Paediatric Art & Play therapy ward at Victoria Falls Hospital. Palm Hospitality Group has assisted with multiple donations over the years including truckloads of pre-used linen, curtains and mosquito nets, having been recently upon to support with donations of towels and bathmats which will be used for nappies, facecloths or donated to those in need.

WILDLIFE: VICTORIA FALLS ANTI-POACHING UNIT – GOLF DAY FUNDRAISER

Palm Hospitality Group also supports the Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit (VFAPU) - a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of local wildlife and natural resources in Victoria Falls. VFAPU tries to protect wildlife and habitats from poacher pressure (subsistence and commercial), rescues and rehabilitates animals injured by human interference and educates schools and communities on human and animal conflict.

The Palm River Hotel makes monthly donations towards the organisation as well as supports in major fundraiser events, such as annual golf days. Most recently, the hotel took part in a sponsored Golf fundraiser event which raised a record amount of US\$ 44, 290. Money raised from the event goes directly to the Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Units, dedicated to the pertinent conservation of wildlife within Victoria Falls. 



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THE WANDERLUST WITHIN



5 Must-Explore Beaches On *Seychelles Islands*

The 115 islands of the Seychelles Archipelago, jewels in an Azure Sea, lie scattered across their secret corner of the western Indian Ocean like precious gemstones set in a universe of azure water – stepping stones to the east coast of Africa, some thousand miles away, and natural gateway to the many treasures of the continent.





Seychelles, straddling the western Indian Ocean between 6 and 10 degrees south of the equator, is divided into 6 island groups with the Inner Islands of Mahé, Praslin and La Digue together with their neighbouring isles forming the hub of the islands' tourism industry,

Mahé, the principal island is a mountainous, granitic island that boasts no less than 65 beaches. Commanding spectacular views of the surrounding ocean, Mahé contains the lion's share of the archipelago's hotels, tourism amenities and retail outlets. Mahé also showcases a surprising variety of flora & fauna including many indigenous species, discoverable at the Botanical Gardens or on organised excursions

along popular walks and trails. The fascinating underwater treasure houses of the Ste. Anne and Cap Ternay Marine National Parks, meanwhile, can be visited on snorkelling expeditions and a variety of excursions.

Seychelles' second largest island, Praslin, lies 45 kilometers (24 miles) north-east of Mahé and is accessible by Air or by fast ferry. It is home to the legendary Vallée de Mai in which grows the fabulous Coco-de-mer and possesses some of the most striking beaches of the archipelago such as Anse Lazio, widely acclaimed to be the most beautiful beach on earth.

Praslin stands at the forefront of the country's tourism industry with a rich assortment of hotels and guesthouses whose strong tradition of Seychelles' hospitality over a period of many years has proved a favourite with visitors. The island is ideally situated for holidaymakers wishing to island hop to a handful of nearby exotic destinations such as Chauve Souris, Cousin, Curieuse, St. Pierre, La Digue and the Aride bird reserve. It is also a haven for nature lovers seeking rare endemic species such as the black parrot for which Praslin is the last habitat or wishing to explore the island's network of footpaths.

La Digue, known as 'the island where Time stands still', is situated forty kilometres (25 miles) from Mahé and 7 km (3.5 miles) from Praslin and is the fourth largest island in the Seychelles after Silhouette. This granite island, with its unique, languid pace of life, receives its visitors mainly by boat at the quaint jetty at La Passe and is a

popular destination for holiday-makers wishing for a taste of the traditional. Here is a place where the bicycle and ox cart still hold sway on shady island pathways and where a distinct sense of antiquity pervades the island's customs, architecture and general way of life.

Anse Source d'Argent is among the island's most famous beaches, celebrated for its granite boulders that seem to have been sculpted by a divine hand to adorn a beach of breath-taking beauty while at the Union Estate, visitors will have the chance to view some of the traditional local industries of times past. Nature lovers will have the opportunity to seek out the rare Black Paradise Flycatcher, once thought to be extinct but now protected in the La Digue Vev Special Reserve which is also home to two extremely rare species of terrapin. The woodlands of La Digue are especially attractive and nurture several species of delicate orchids. The island is also an ideal stepping-stone for the nearby island attractions of Grande and Petit Soeur, Félicité, Coco and Marianne.

The remaining five groups of Outer Islands represent the far frontier of the Seychelles holiday experience. Here, shimmering atolls and reef islands, thread like pearls on strings of surf and unaltered since the days of their origin, offer the summit of island-style living. Currently, only four such islands offer accommodation: the islands of Denis and Bird located 100 miles to the north of Mahé and Desroches Island in the Amirantes, 140 miles to the south-east. Here the fishing, diving and sailing are



superb in places where the only sail on the ocean and the only tracks on any beach will be your own.

And finally 248 miles southwest of Mahe is Alphonse Island. Part of the Alphonse Group of Islands, which also comprise St Francois and Bijoutier, this pristine, natural paradise is considered one of the purest natural idylls in the world, so when it comes to the Seychelles you have a vast and diverse world within a world to discover.

With a trip to Seychelles, here are five beaches which should absolutely be on every visitor's Instagram list:

ANSE COCOS

An idyllic hideaway spot, on La Digue, Anse Cocos is located on the eastern coast of the small island and is only accessible by a 30-minute hike, either by taking a path from Grand Anse or in the other direction from Anse Fourmis. Less well-known than the much photographed Anse Source D'Argent, with which it shares similar features, picturesque Anse Cocos is all the more prized for its secluded aspect, which makes all its charms.

ANSE LAZIO

Known as the most famous beach on Praslin, Anse Lazio is often listed among the top ten beaches in the world. Age-old granite sentinels stand guard at



For more information please visit
www.seychelles.com



both ends of the picture perfect stretch of soft white sands leading to clear waters, perfect for swimming and snorkeling. A must on every visitor's list, Anse Lazio remains agreeably soothing and will not disappoint.

ANSE GEORGETTE

Another favorite on Praslin, the superb Anse Georgette is well worth the 30-minute hike through the grounds of the luxurious Constance Lemuria Resort. Alternatively, it is accessible by boat. If you make it to Anse Georgette, you will definitely be conquered by powder soft sand fringed by lush tropical flora, as well as an amazing snorkeling spot.

ANSE SOURCE D'ARGENT

Reputed to be the most photographed beach in the world, and accessible by a bicycle ride through La Digue's L'Union Estate, this unique landmark is treasured for its huge granite boulders but also its soft white sand and clear turquoise waters. Sheltered by the reef, the sea is endlessly calm at Anse Source D'Argent, making it a favorite for families and couples who just want to be rocked by the waves or try their hand at snorkeling. A must, if you are on La Digue!

ANSE TAKAMAKA

Often described as 'breath-taking' or even 'outstanding', Anse Takamaka is one of Mahé's most stunning beaches. Located in the south of Mahé, Anse Takamaka epitomizes the postcard-perfect beach, where the wild waters of the Indian Ocean come to shore. 🌴



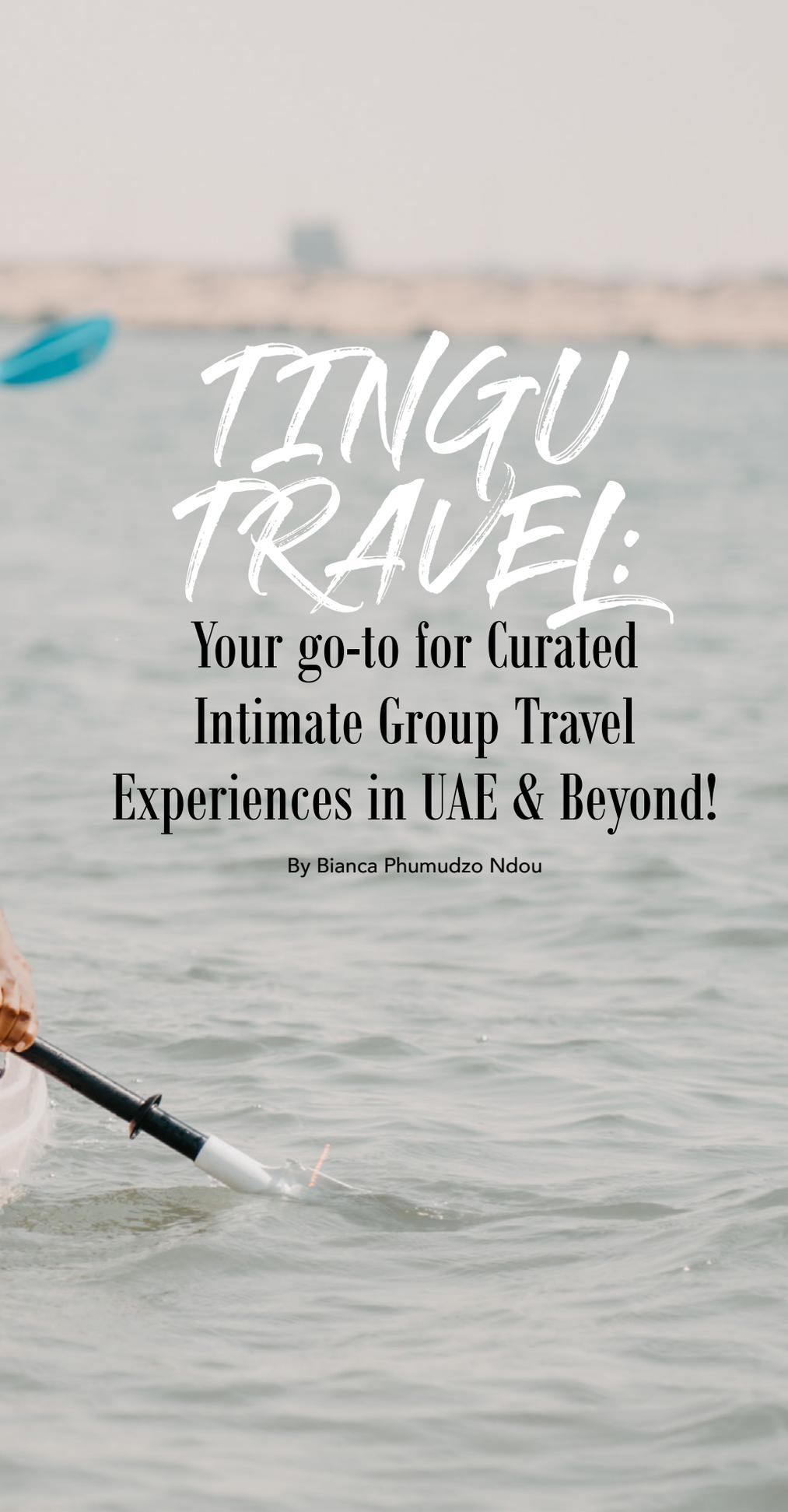
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TINGU TRAVEL:

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By Bianca Phumudzo Ndou

Group travel companies have become quite popular, and even though they are not that new a concept, I found myself rather fascinated by one UAE-registered one in particular founded by Zimbabwean, Ashleigh Mazivisa, whom I met at a Professionals Networking event. I was quite intrigued by Ashleigh's drive, being that she had only been in the UAE for 2 years when she launched Tingu Travel. She spoke with so much passion that evoked the explorer in me to embark on some of the group trips! What I thought was going to be another pleasant group trip turned out to be a very fun, well-curated and detail oriented experience.

FIRST TINGU TRAVEL EXPERIENCE: UMM AL QUWAIM KAYAKING & BEACH TRIP

My first experience with Tingu Travel was a low-cost trip to Umm Al Quwain, as soon as I made my booking (with a 5% discount on your first trip, provided that you joined the mailing list)

I received a full-on detailed itinerary:

- Meeting place: One Life Kitchen in Dubai Design District at 08:00am
- Short Briefing and distribution of snack packs
- Drive Mangrove Beach in Umm Al Quwain, the drive was about 1 hour, 15 minutes
- Kayaking for an hour, double and single kayaks available

Pre-planning Process:

- A few days before the trip, Ashleigh sent out a video to all of us (via private message on WhatsApp), introducing herself as the host and extending a warm welcome to us and giving us a summary of what to expect on the trip. As a first-time client, this definitely helped put my newbie anxiety at ease.
- Some of us explorers aren't mobile, so it came as a relief that there were simple carpool arrangements in place whereby she divided us into groups and placed us in different cars. We simply had to pay the driver

a certain amount each for fuel.

- Lastly we received a more detailed schedule, with details of what to bring and what would be provided, as well as an indemnity form that we had to sign and return to Tingu Travel before the day of the trip.

The Adventure Begins:

The long awaited day of the trip finally came and we all met at 8am at One Life Kitchen in Dubai Design District for a briefing, introductions and distribution of our Tingu Travel branded snack packs and water. We used this stop simultaneously as a coffee / light breakfast stop for those of us who can't breathe until we've had that morning coffee! Having shared contact information, location maps and informed of the route we would take, we all jumped into the cars and set off to our first destination. Despite having information overload, Ashleigh constantly called each group to ask if everything was going well and if we needed anything. Hosting par excellence, if you ask me!

Kayaking at Mangrove Beach in Umm Al Quwain:

Our first stop was the Mangrove Beach, which was a fairly new beach and some parts of the beach was still under construction, however, that was not in the way of our kayaking activity. There were double and single kayaks available for people who preferred sharing and those who preferred a solo experience. The kayaks were pre-booked by Tingu Travel from an external service provider. This was my first time kayaking, so naturally I, and a few others were nervous but Ashleigh assured all the first-timers that the water was pretty shallow and she gave us tips and hacks that came in very handy during the activity. Needless to say, we all got the hang of it almost instantly and had the time of our lives so much that the one and a half hour seemed quite short.

Lunch at Kite Beach Center:

Kayaking was a low-key workout, so we were all happy to head over to the next part of the experience which was lunch





at the Kite Beach Center. The menu was decent, service not so great, but I must say it was a full house so that might have been a factor affecting flawless service delivery. I must give Ashleigh credit for sending us the menus in advance, we all got there ready to order and she had also pre-booked some cabanas; these came with a humongous fruit salad and some water as well and our private showers and an outdoor AC all in these fancy-shmancy cabanas, which was a relief to find this already set up for us, otherwise we would have struggled to get such a lovely spot.

After lunch in the restaurant, we headed to our private cabanas, where we spent the rest of the afternoon at the beach, swimming as well as establishing connections with each other, great atmosphere to meet new people and networking as well in a relaxed environment. To end the day on a high note, we had a professional photographer take photos of us during the sunset, a great perk for those who thrive on Instagram-mable pictures!

Overall it was a full day of exploring, fun, interaction, laughter and relaxation. I definitely think the experience was worth the amount we paid. I personally just enjoyed the fact that there was so much detail put into the planning and in addition Ashleigh's consistent checking in on the group and on individuals as well.

SECOND TINGU EXPERIENCE: HEART BEACH HIKE

Following my wonderful debut experience with Tingu Travel, I signed up to the newsletter and followed them on Instagram to receive more information on upcoming trips, and before you know it there was a beginner's hike being advertised and without hesitation, I booked! I had never been hiking before or entertained any hopes of doing so, but, if I was going to do it, it had to be in a way that I would not feel too anxious about it. I figured Tingu was the way to go, as I had felt at ease doing another first-time activity with them previously.

I immediately noticed the developments as I booked, this time around the carpool arrangements were simplified for us. Unlike the first trip where you had to pay cash to your carpool driver, this time as you booked you selected your package as with/ without your own transport. We ended up all going in a minibus, except those who preferred driving.

As usual the itinerary was shared with us and this time with a more detailed checklist of required items, appropriate clothing and recommended items as well to enhance the experience.

Hike Day!

- We arrived at the meeting point, which was again One Life Kitchen in Dubai Design District, but this was an early rise trip as we were expected there by 7am. It was nice to see some familiar faces from the previous trip. Clearly I wasn't the only one who was sold on the Tingu experience. It was also fabulous to meet new faces as well!
- We received our snack packs, this time with more items like sunscreen, Lobelo lip balm, water, fruits and oat bars, packaged in customized Tingu Travel bags which I've used at home for multiple purposes since then.
- The briefing was detailed as always, but didn't take too much time before we were all on the minibus and set to go explore this long awaited trail!

Khorfakkan Hike, Sharjah:

- The difficulty of this 4km hike was level 2, and the elevation on the trail was gradual, which was just enough of a challenge for beginners.
- As the hike began, we started off in our group but soon disintegrated as some people were more experienced hikers, however, Ashleigh did slow down the group from time to time to encourage the novices to catch up.
- There were some ups and downs along the way (pun intended) howev-

er, as we reached the summit we all united in taking celebratory photos. The descent was with much excitement as we were now excited to have lunch at the pre-booked Thai restaurant at the beach for lunch.

Quick Site-Seeing and Beach Time:

- After lunch we headed over to the Khorfakkan waterfall as well as the amphitheater in one go, of course we broke out into mini photo shoot sessions all over the place.
- We ended the day at the beach, again enjoying the sunset before calling it a day and heading back to Dubai

I would recommend Tingu Travel for:

- Adventure-loving people who are new to Dubai and would like to explore new places and meet new people! This is definitely an easy way to meet people with similar interests.
- People who don't have the luxury of time to plan out their weekends, Tingu Travel will plan out the nitty gritty details for you and all you have to do is book and attend the experience!
- People who don't do too well in crowds, the experiences are normally a tight knit group and not overcrowded.
- People like me, who just enjoy indulging in a plethora of experiences, interact with all sorts of people from various walks of life.
- Poor planners who like to enjoy organized events, yes, we know you exist.

The only thing that maybe one would probably find as a challenge is having to go for the full package when they only want to participate in some of the activities and not all, but, from a cost perspective the experience would probably cost more if the activities were broken down into individual parts.

In conclusion, I am very excited about the point based loyalty programme that Tingu launched for regular clients to earn & accumulate points on all the dirhams spent on trips, which will later be redeemable on trips. How's that for value for money? 🙌









PULSE OF
THE CITY |



CURIOCIITY Africa Unveils A New Home For Curious Travellers To Cape Town

In a wave of continued growth, the CURIOCIITY Africa footprint expands up the coast of Cape Town. Founded in Johannesburg South Africa, by award-winning travel entrepreneur Bheki Dube, CURIOCIITY Africa welcomes two new properties into their portfolio in Blouberg Western Cape, and this development is hot on the heels of his launch of a FARMHOUSE58, a new regenerative travel destination further inland, in The Cradle of Humankind.



EXPANSION DRIVEN BY COLLABORATION

The extension of the CURIOCITY brand, means that the group will now operate SALT, a -5 star boutique guest house and an adjacent property, "SaltyCrax Backpackers", a charming backpacker's hostel in the surfing and kitesurfing haven of Blouberg. Dube has made a mindful decision to diversify his portfolio to cater to the both upwardly mobile explorers, budget travellers, digital nomads, wellness enthusiasts and adventure travellers too.

"We're evolving for both the well-heeled and barefoot traveller! Our expansion into new venues as management partners means we can add our authentic flavour into all elements of operations, partnerships, collaborations, marketing and management." - says Bheki Dube, Founder of CURIOCITY Africa.

The enormous benefits of networking and having partners on the pulse of innovation in the hospitality industry are the recipe for success; independent property owners look for synergy when partnering with hotel management companies, and having aligned values is critical to operational growth, refinement and revenue.

"This partnership with CURIOCITY provides for good stewardship, early identification of changing trends, innovation and expertise that will lead to market leadership; we're excited about the passion Bheki and his team will bring to this project!," comments SALT and SaltyCrax Property Owner, Carla Ferreira.

A FUTURE-PROOFING MODEL

The CURIOCITY Africa model is positioned as a sophisticated hybrid hotel offering backpacker and hostel-style 'dorms', luxury private rooms, wellness-retreat style getaways, urban penthouses and stylish boutique guesthouse accommodation in South Africa. The group is known for creating spaces that come alive with ambience and energy, and naturally, the approach to re-energising these properties will be focused on collaboration and experience, fully embracing the surrounds and tapping into lifestyle experiences for beach lovers, surfers, SUP Boarders, kite surfers, and wellness enthusiasts.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

SALT is a 5-star 8-bedroom boutique guest house in Blouberg, one of Cape Town, South Africa's premier holiday destinations. Just a stone's throw away from the ocean, close to the windsurfing capital beach, a quick ride from the surrounding Winelands and under 30mins drive from Cape Town International airport, SALT invites you to indulge in all that makes this location exceptional while relaxing in the many amenities the village of villas offers; pool, cabanas, massage room, co-working space, lawns for yoga and relaxing, entertainment areas and a large open-plan kitchen.

Its rusty mottled metals, rough ropes, shiny seashells, and weathered woods talk to the coastal surrounds in a tasteful and curated way. The reuse of materials from one journey to the next, calls for upcycling, reinventing and consciously designing forward.

SaltyCrax Backpackers is a 5-star hostel in Blouberg, an adventure paradise and west coast suburb of Cape Town. The hostel is a few minutes from the beachfront, boasting fabulous restaurants, bars, shops, public transport, and the beautiful white beaches of Blouberg & famous Kite Beach. Saltycrax has a vibrant Lapa area, home to the reception desk and activity centre.

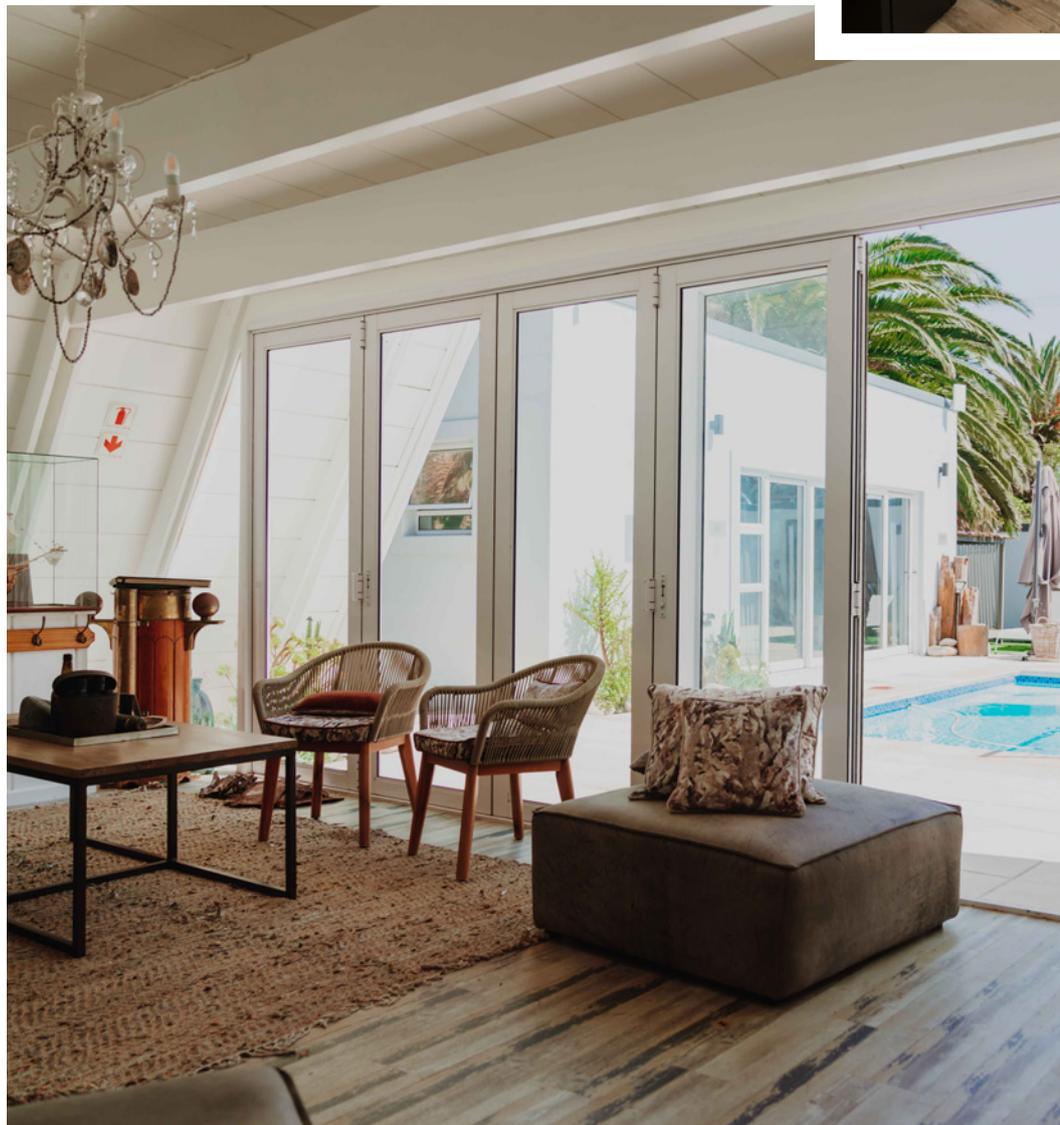
Guests can relax in an ample communal living space, a fully equipped self-catering kitchen, and plenty of luscious garden scenes fill the property for those wanting to relax and unwind comfortably. Accommodation at Saltycrax includes mixed dorms and single, double, triple, family room and en-suite options. In addition, the team have used local

knowledge to create a variety of soft-landing inclusive packages to make more time for exploring, surfing, eating out and making memories.

Look out for private dining events, artist residencies, surfing, beach clean-ups, co-working days, yoga, fireside gatherings, corporate retreats and workshops as CURIOCITY injects culture and soul into these venues on the West Coast.

UNLOCK TRAVEL THROUGH THE CURIOCITY PORTAL

CURIOCITY is a disruptive African hybrid hotel and hostel movement with sites in Cape Town, Joburg and The Cradle of Humankind. Travel across South Africa within the portfolio and discover a myriad of destinations, experiences and immersions. [Av](#)







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CURIOCIITY Cape town
Fox Street Studios
12 Decades Art Hotel
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For more information,
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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.

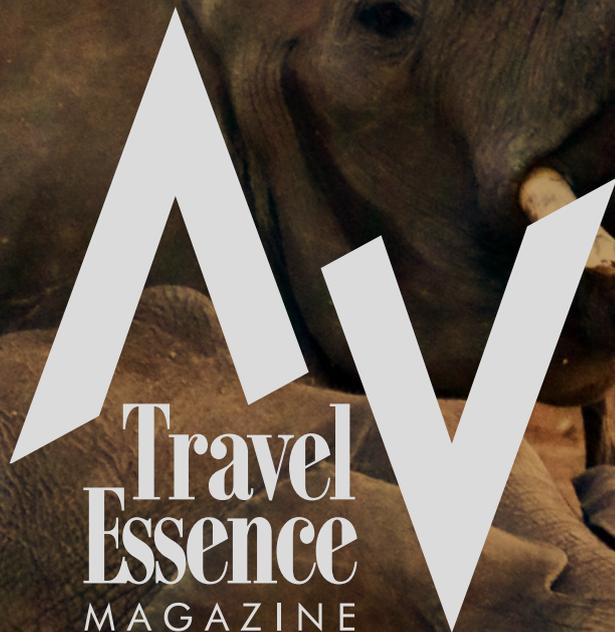
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