

# MAGAZINE TravelEssence

ISSUE 3 • SEPTEMBER 2020

## SOLLY MOENG

on travel shaping  
the African narrative

## INSIDE

AFRICA  
HERITAGE  
HOUSE

+ 10

REASONS WHY  
GABON  
AWAITS

# MICHELLE

# Brenger

## HOSTESS WITH THE MOSTESS

THE RWANDAIR PROMISE: ACCESSING AFRICA'S KEY DESTINATIONS SAFELY



# TravelEssence MAGAZINE

A NARRATIVES PR PUBLICATION



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# TravelEssence<sup>MAGAZINE</sup>

Culture • Lifestyle • Taste-Making





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I hope you have an experience that alters the course of your life because, after Africa, nothing has ever been the same.

– SUZANNE EVANS



**WHAT IS OUR CALL?**

“To invoke curiosity and desire for exploration in today’s globally conscious individual, connecting them with the diverse travel, culture and lifestyle experiences on offer through industry tastemakers and brands across Africa.”

I invite you to enjoy our latest Issue, and extend our deepest gratitude to all our friends in the industry who are helping us share all there is to offer from the north to the south, and east to the west – with the rest of the world. 

*Gyornne C. Mtengwa*

**E**xciting times as the skies across Africa are beginning to open! We’ve seen Rwanda, Kenya and Zambia begin to welcome inbound flights from overseas, which gives us even more reason to elevate our efforts in bringing you our readers, Africa’s incredible story; one that continues to peak the interest of travellers beyond our coasts, inspiring them to put exploring more of Africa on their bucket list. Additionally, our story ought to challenge us as children of the soil to discover more of what our home as to offer.

Two Issues in, and we are truly enamoured by the breadth of cultural, lifestyle and travel experiences, juxtaposed with rich wildlife encounters each part of the continent has to offer. All these and so much more, are stark reminders that the lands we call home, are sanctuaries to more than just us, but a diverse people with distinctive cultures and traditions that are a celebration of the power of humanity.

Which is why perhaps we should begin to view the notion of exploring Africa as more than just an opportunity to pack a few bags and escape for a time. Travelling across Africa for those of us who are citizens of this great continent, and others intrigued by the promise of intercultural exchange and appreciation of nature, should be viewed as a call to connect with the spirit of togetherness. It is here we see community in a different light, we understand the power of oneness between man, flora and fauna, as we all contribute to vibrant and diverse ecosystems in a quest for unified understanding.

In September’s Issue of Travel Essence Magazine, we connect you with more industry tastemakers and tourism entrepreneurs, we share snippets of some truly distinctive hospitality properties across Southern Africa, and we hear from personalities living outside the continent, who actively contribute to reshaping its narrative through knowledge, event curation and content creation.

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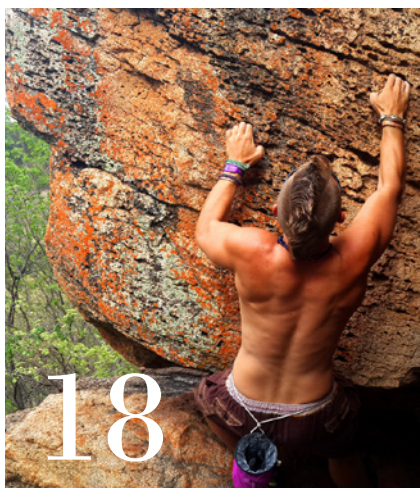
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# The *Ultimate* Guest Experience

RIVERSIDE SUN GENERAL  
MANAGER MICHELLE BREGGER  
TALKS HOSPITALITY AT TSOGO  
SUN, INNOVATION AND  
LEADERSHIP AS PART OF SOUTH  
AFRICA'S POWERHOUSE BRAND.

Photos by: Nicky Jansen van Vuuren.  
Chilli PicNic Photography







**1. TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR BACKGROUND? WHERE ARE YOU FROM AND HOW WAS LIFE COMING UP FOR YOU?**

I am “a child of the universe” as my father fondly coined us in a world that is defined by the need to live life in a box in order to be understood by the confines of the norm. I am South African by descent though born in Zimbabwe of parents who instilled the spirit of fearlessness and confidence. I believe they conditioned us to enter the world wearing a different badge of honour. I grew up in the modest farming community of Norton on the outskirts of Harare, Zimbabwe’s capital. Norton is the home of the late famed singer Oliver Mtukudzi. I was schooled at Chisipite Senior School, also in the capital, and these were the finest formative years in my opinion.

I later received my accreditation into the world of hospitality through the American Hotel and Motel Association. I am proud to say I was an intern and former Execu-

tive Housekeeper of the Meikles Hotel in Harare - Zimbabwe, which was part of the handful of internationally recognized five star hotels in the country and a member of the Leading Hotels of the World at that time.

**2. YOU CHOSE A CAREER IN HOSPITALITY. WHY HOSPITALITY, SPECIFICALLY AS IT RELATES TO AFRICA’S TRAVEL AND TOURISM LANDSCAPE?**

My family were always entertaining. I was intrigued by the happiness, warmth, and comfort that my parents created in our home to visitors that were welcomed. It was that; that was the “it factor,” - that family and friends were drawn to that and it kept them coming back for more.

Our homes in Africa are renowned for their wide, open spaces. My parents are avid horticulturists and created an oasis of palm trees, indigenous flora in and amongst rolling green lawns, a clear glistening swimming pool for relaxing in

the shade of the lapa, with music in the background playing while we seated at the handcrafted railway sleeper bar. This magic created in our back garden in essence is Africa, and why we continue to attract such a large international base of travellers. It is the large spaces and the feeling that you can breathe freely. Africa best explained is tactile as it appeals to the senses.

As a millennial, it was taking a childhood memory of the Lion King and experiencing it in 4D. My choice to take up a career in hospitality was a no-brainer as being the proverbial “hostess-with-the-mostess” came naturally to me. I am a creative spirit and my passion allows me to create experiences for our guests daily. After all we go on holiday to escape what our daily reality is and if you are hosting a function you are creating an experience out of the ordinary.

### 3. YOU WERE RECENTLY APPOINTED AS THE INCOMING GENERAL MANAGER FOR RIVERSIDE SUN, A TSOGO SUN PROPERTY. HOW HAS YOUR JOURNEY BEEN AS PART OF SOUTH AFRICA'S MOST PROLIFIC HOSPITALITY BRAND?

I have had the honour of being a part of this powerhouse brand for just over five years. It has been a wonderful journey of self-discovery as I have had the opportunity to work amongst some of the finest hoteliers and leaders in the industry. Tsogo Sun at its core is centred around our people, a culture of learning, evolution, and innovation. You go beyond managing and into the realm of leadership.

It has been a full circle and a new beginning simultaneously as my journey began with Tsogo Sun at Riverside Sun as Deputy General Manager. I joined the group in April 2015 when Riverside was going through the transformation





of a refurbishment. The property was closed for five months and during that time, I enjoyed a year of operations, pushing the limits and boundaries of the potential of what we could offer.

In November 2016 I had the opportunity to move across to one of our sister hotels in Kwa Zulu Natal, Garden Court Marine Parade as Deputy General Manager, a role in which I flourished for a year. Durban is a different form of hospitality, so too is our Garden Court brand. It is a baptism of fire. It is a lean mean machine of 352 keys with a flat management structure and so it is all about efficiency. I then had the opportunity to run this beauty for over a year as Acting General Manager.

Coming back to Riverside Sun in the capacity of General Manager, in the Covid19 era, has taught me the single most important lesson that will carry me through life and that is “humility”. The platform of a promotion naturally puts you under a spotlight. The euphoria that comes with such a great achievement is expectation; expectation of what you imagine the journey to be and what the mind has conditioned it to be.

Enter Covid19, all these expectations were shattered and juxtaposed with the spotlight, I entered a cocoon with a handful of my team and a cold empty building. Under the guidance of our CEO Marcel Von Aulock and his team

of experts, we began a hard shut down of over 100 properties in 3 days. Having recently celebrated our 50th birthday and having stood the test of time, the wealth of knowledge allowed us to tackle the crisis with a measured approach.

This global catastrophe has allowed us the opportunity and time to re-evaluate our business. As this virus is constantly mutating, so too must we take a long, hard look internally at our processes and continue to question what our “norms” will be. As our business has had to make physical changes, so too has our manner of thinking and conduct. Our leadership has had to adapt and will have to continue to do so with more flexibility and agility for a sustainable future.



#### **4. TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE PROPERTY YOU CURRENTLY MANAGE. WHERE IS IT LOCATED AND WHAT CAN A GUEST EXPECT UPON BOOKING NOT ONLY A TSOGO SUN STAY BUT A RIVERSIDE SUN EXPERIENCE?**

Riverside Sun is an absolute gem of a property nestled on the banks of the Vaal River. A short drive from Johannesburg - 45 minutes to be exact. We provide a feeling of having escaped the city without creating a massive dent to the pocket nor arduous months of planning a weekend or holiday trip away with the family.

Our unique selling point is an invitation to come for business and stay for pleasure. Our business traveller who has been conferencing with us during the week can take a load off and enjoy a sundowner with their family on our deck, enjoying an uninterrupted tranquil view of the Vaal River. We have a variety of rooms on offer which appeal to all budgets as well as each traveller's experience and expectations; whether that be minimal time required in their room or complete rest and recuperation, in which case we would most certainly recommend one of our luxurious suites which dons features including a living area and guest bathroom.

Riverside Sun is unique in terms of her expansive gardens and grounds and

the limitless creative genius she inspires. This allows us to exceed both our conference delegates as well as leisure guests' expectations as we have multiple venues at our disposal, including our exclusive wine cellar, featuring a hand-picked selection of our finest wines from our famed auction wine list.

The boma is situated on the island a distance from the hustle and bustle of the epicentre of the pool and pool bar area. Our lush rolling lawns offer a great alternative to the traditional indoor ballroom extravaganza which we deliver with great finesse, with a twist of a clear marquee so that you are not robbed of your opportunity to dine under the stars.

We have a wide array of conferencing venues available both conventional as well as those that are woven into the elements of our gardens and grounds, gracing our conference delegates with the tranquility of this experience whilst still enjoying the full benefits of all of our facilities. These include the Kite and Weaver which are a short distance away from the hotel and perfect for a strategic session. Resembling log cabins with a full view Vaal River, the natural stimulus of warm sun rays filtering into the room, and the sound of the water running peacefully just outside in the stream is a huge win for our guests.

Our aim whilst recommending the best TsoGo Sun Property that fits your needs and expectations, is to anticipate what these are and assist our guests in making the best decision as we know our products best.

### 5. WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN A GUEST ENJOY IN YOUR VICINITY, ESPECIALLY ONE COMING FROM ABROAD?

I have learned to appreciate our local wonders especially in the times we are living. Be a tourist in your own city, and if you are daring enough, do one thing that scares you daily or often!

The Vaal is rich in history, culture, and stories to be told. It is a destination that is a one-stop-shop for the family that wants to arrive at one destination and park off, the adventure junkie that needs their fix, or the honeymoon couple. The list goes on.

The Vaal River flows for 750 miles or 1 210 km and at each confluence the ambience of the river is unique. In one afternoon, you can travel through three provinces; Gauteng, the Free State and the North West, all of which are within a distance of 60km radius from Riverside Sun to some of my favourite spots which include the Sharpesville Memorial Site and Parys, a quaint town in the Free State with so much character, with the main road dotted with antique shops galore, lots of eateries and delicatessens which celebrate the strong Afrikaans heritage and culture in this area. You will certainly find keepsakes and mementos to take home with you as a reminder of your visit.

### 6. WHAT IS THE TSOGO SUN PROMISE IN YOUR WORDS?

To anticipate our guests needs before they need to convey them to us.

### 7. WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON AFRICAN HOSPITALITY BRANDS AND THE NEED TO CREATE UNIQUE GUEST EXPERIENCES







### FOR EVERY TYPE OF TRAVELLER - LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL?

It would be short-sighted to treat the two market segments differently from the onset. Every guest who makes the choice to enter your doors has made a conscious decision to be there and this is your most powerful marketing tool. Word-of-mouth is invaluable in our industry. The experience and approach that is then created by the host is determined by the origin of the traveller and not demeaned by it, which is very often the case unfortunately. As we have become more figures-driven, sadly some hospitality chains have forgotten the touch points and people aspect of our craft.

### 8. SOUTH AFRICA EXPERIENCES SIGNIFICANT INBOUND TOURISM FROM INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS FROM YOUR KEY SOURCE MARKETS. WHAT EXPERIENCES DO YOU BELIEVE TRAVELLERS ARE LOOKING FOR WHEN THEY CHOOSE SOUTH AFRICA AS THEIR DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR A TRIP TO THE CONTINENT?

The imagery that resonates with most international tourists in my view, is that of the Big Five in the Kruger National Park

as well as the Cape Winelands - both of which are packaged very well. The Minister of Tourism recently personally visited Riverside Sun to begin her campaign on restarting tourism in the domestic sector, which will eventually feed into the international travel recovery plan. We are optimistic that this coverage will encourage a wider scope and generate an interest in South Africa holistically.

### 9. WE'VE RECENTLY COME OUT OF COMMEMORATING WOMEN'S MONTH IN SOUTH AFRICA THIS PAST AUGUST. LET'S SWITCH GEARS A LITTLE BIT AND TALK ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN TOURISM FOR WOMEN. WHAT WORDS DO YOU HAVE TO INSPIRE YOUNG WOMEN WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM?

That firstly the veneer they see in the foyers of the hotels it is just that - a veneer. Our joy as hoteliers is creating joy for our guests, an alternative from their reality. So, the glitz and glam is not a true reflection of the grime and grit it truly takes to ascend to a leadership position if that truly is your goal. You must be clear in your objectives and honest



“Our joy as hoteliers is creating joy for our guests, an alternative from their everyday reality.”  
– MICHELLE BREGGER

with yourself about what it is you seek and what your motivation is.

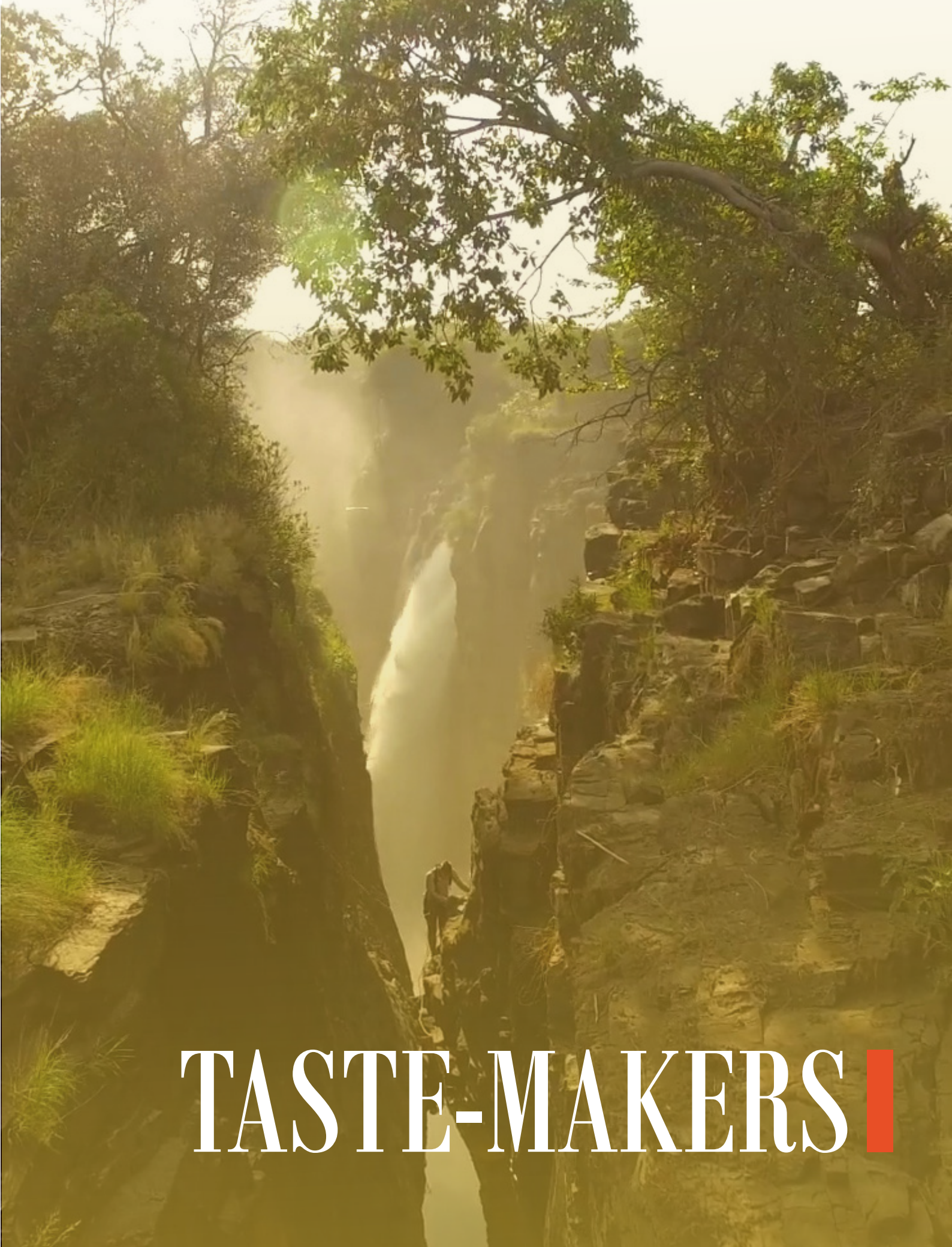
Tourism is a wide spectrum. Are there opportunities? Absolutely! Will you face challenges as a woman confronted by backward and wayward thinking - absolutely! However always remember that you do not have the capacity to change another individual. Within a 5 – 10 minute exchange, what you do have the power over is your response to negativity, so it's important to learn to master yourself as best you can and as early as you can. Read, find sources of inspiration, and surround yourself with people who inspire you to be better.

**10. WHAT WILL BE YOUR FOCUS AS A HOTELIER/ INDUSTRY PROFESSIONAL AND TEAM LEADER CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS INDUSTRY RECOVERY IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19.**

My focus has been to create a new normal for my team in an abnormal situation. The mental toll and strain this epidemic has

placed on people is just tragic - the onus is on us as leaders to be perceptive to this because the time will come where we will still require performance and the reactionary capacity is just non-existent. The conundrum of COVID-19 is that the very essence of hospitality is connection through a handshake, a hug, the human touch that has been taken away and pretty much outlawed for all our safety. We are challenged in a greater way now to truly connect with ourselves, with all the noise of the world removed, and to interact with our people as well as our guests simply with eye contact and gestures.

So, my focus will be the former masks we all adopted and the 'shows,' we put on - that mask will be put away. I will continue to work on myself primarily, insuring that I am in good health physically, spiritually, and mentally, as that ensures that I am in the best place to deliver the best of me to my team. And as the situation with COVID-19 continues to develop, so too will I adapt as is required. <sup>by</sup>



# TASTE-MAKERS |





# INSPIRED TO The Extreme

PAUL TEASDALE IS EXTREME SPORT PERSONIFIED! ZIMBABWEAN AND FROM BULAWAYO, HE SPECIALIZES IN WHITE WATER KAYAKING, STAND UP PADDLING AND PARAGLIDING. A TEACHER OF SURVIVAL COURSES, PAUL HAS LONG BEEN INVOLVED IN TOURISM AND FILMING WORK.

# A

Adventure sport involves risk – activities that engage physical exertion, encompass conquering challenging heights, experiencing break-neck speeds, requiring a strong mental aptitude and of course, highly specialized gear. Cosmetic manufacturing on the other hand, is the production of substances that enhance the hair, face, body, and skin. Paul Teasdale switched from heading the family business - Glen T Cosmetics - to leading rafting teams on Zambezi River's rapids. A drastic shift to some, but a realignment of the same concept to Paul, for him, he was simply focused on building the inner man; whereas in his view, cosmetology covered the outward appearance of man.

## TEASDALE AND THE RAW MOVEMENT

His desire for an internal overhaul gave birth to the RAW movement, which Paul describes as a lifestyle-based philosophy of health and fitness based on the 3 elements of rock, air, and water. What does this mean, one might ask? The vision is as clear and it is imaginative, creating meaning that ties the elements Paul thrives in, with the end result he hopes his program participants will walk away with. "Rock" symbolises strength, stability, foundation and power; "air" constitutes mindfulness, breathing, flexibility and knowledge, while "water" closes the circle by denoting efficiency, flow, environmental harmony, and skills acquisition. The RAW movement fosters a childlike curiosity when it comes to moving through the environment, encouraging one to turn fitness into play time. After all children, don't train; they play. His weight loss journey of losing 22kg in two weeks and maintaining the healthy weight to date – bears testimony to the impact of the RAW philosophy.

An individual who is celebrated for being an inspiration to many through his personal life, Paul lives by the ethos of "ensuring all interactions leave the next person with more and not less."

"A big win is to touch lives" he says, thus Paul's website and social media handles are platforms where he shares his personal experiences, musings, thoughts, and his love for words. "Success for me is taking what I have learnt and passing it on to someone and seeing their lives change – through my vulnerability!" he adds.

"Explore, Create, Inspire - Adventure Sports to Inspire people"

"These are basically the core values I built my purpose around in order to give me direction and focus. Whatever I do or embark upon, I try to keep these words in mind in order to direct my vision," Paul cites when asked about what it means to him for one to live a life of purpose.

## EXPLORE

He describes this as the process of self-discovery, finding one's true self and expressing it without apology. "By exploring the world from as many perspectives as possible, I hope to gain the necessary insights to shape my own belief systems while never becoming dogmatic. I strive to keep my strong opinions loosely held, so I remain open to education, while keeping the courage of my convictions," asserts Paul.

## CREATE

"The responsibility is mine," says Paul, "to create memories, relationships and goodness in the world, whilst building others. This is through the acquisition and utilization of skills to the greater good and ultimately create the world and environment I want to live in."





**INSPIRE**

When asked to chime in on why inspiring others is a core value, Paul states, “Stand in your truth and be uncompromising about it and in doing so, give others the space to do the same. Change the world one person at a time, starting with yourself. By taking extreme ownership of my life and being responsible for the circumstances I encounter, I choose to never be a victim but instead the creator of my destiny.”

**DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE**

Cyclone Idai struck Mozambique and Zimbabwe in March 2019, leaving countless dead and others still missing. The storms, floods and landslides left a severe trail of destruction to homes, local subsistence and commercial agriculture projects and community infrastructure. Acknowledging that he possessed the skills, ability and equipment to help save lives, he embarked

on a solo mission to the disaster zone where he was adopted by Econet (Zimbabwe's largest telecommunications, media and technology company) and led the remote rescue operations in the wake of the cyclone that struck Chimanimani district. He later joined forces with his friend Wayne Williamson and together they went on to Mozambique to give their skills in remote aid logistics to remote villages that were affected there. He still describes the five days in Chimanimani and 5 days in Mozambique as both life changing and at the same time fulfilling. From high angle rescue, swift water rescue, hanging from helicopters and ropes, forging rivers, and mountains, they did whatever it took to save lives. Hard and emotional work –yet he would not hesitate to do it again - as he is passionate about making a difference!

## CONSERVATION

“All animals are important in the ecosystem; not just the cute and fluffy ones” says Paul, who sometimes describes himself as a 9-year old expert snake-catcher”. His love for wildlife and the environment dates back to when he was a child and would rescue and relocate snakes under the supervision of his mom. Marketing his business through fliers on car windscreens, he was regularly called to attend to snake invasions in people's homes.

He laughs as he shares how, on one occasion he responded to a call and upon arrival, the homeowner, expecting an older snake-catcher, assured Paul not to worry as the expert was on his way to remove the cobra from the pool. Fortunately, his mom was present to vouch for his expertise, much to the homeowner's embarrassment! Paul has continued working with the National Parks and other conservation groups in educating people on the need to avoid killing reptiles as this leads to extinction. He also focuses on creating awareness of the options available for catching reptiles that encroach on human territory. Highlights in his later years include rescuing a crocodile at the Victoria Falls Bridge, as well as removing a large black mamba from beneath a 92-year old lady's bed.







I see a Mount Kilimanjaro that needs to be climbed, I take responsibility for that climb, I plot my course and I begin the ascent!

– PAUL TEASDALE

#### **“SO-SHING WITH SUNTWE”**

An offspring of the lockdown and inspired by his writing the “Chronicles of Suntwe”, is “So-shing with Suntwe”- Suntwe being his nickname on the Zambezi and meaning Hyena in Tonga, while “so-shing” is a Zimbabwewan slang term for “socialising”. This show which streams on Facebook, is made up of conversations between two people on a live broadcast. Every Wednesday at 7 pm CAT, there are chats about anything, including an exploration of perspectives and opinion-sharing. Paul believes diversity is a brilliant teacher.

“I do not base my identity on being right all the time, but on looking for the right solutions. To find the right solutions, one must be willing to be wrong and willing to explore perspectives you have not considered before.” Paul concludes.

To be a guest on “So-shing with Suntwe”, interested parties can direct message him on Facebook. Passionate about impactful dialogue that’s smothered in inspirational messaging, Paul hopes to connect with wider audiences that share his same values, bringing hope and a positive outlook on life, one person at a time. 

# Meet MOSES MUTAPATI

## THE CHEF TURNED HOSPITALITY ENTREPRENEUR

It's the colleagues that work with a dream that make the best team players. Their dreams rub off on the rest of the pack, forging an inspired, successful unit! That was the effect Moses Mutapati had on a lot of us.

Co-running the food department at a 290 roomed property in a busy resort was hard work, but with the right team – many things became possible. Refusing to be limited to the kitchen, he was the Executive Chef, found in the Front of House – hosting and interacting with guests, leading the service staff briefings and chatting with the Accountant and Human Resources over budgets and staffing. Suppliers knew him more than the procurement department and the Guest Relations

team always appreciated his problem-solving acumen! Fast forward to a decade later and Moses is still performing the same functions – just in his own capacity! Moses Mutapati is now a well-respected Hospitality Entrepreneur, making a name for himself with his growing hotel portfolio in Botswana.

### CHEF TURNED ENTREPRENEUR

Moses was drawn to Culinary Arts through his uncle who was an Executive chef with Cresta Hospitality in Zimbabwe. Initially keen on a technical career, all it took was a holiday watching his uncle at work and a part-time job at the then famous Harare Sheraton Hotel for Moses to know that he



indeed had cooking hands!

Today, he muses at how people are both puzzled as much as they are pleasantly surprised upon discovery that he is a seasoned Chef who is now in entrepreneurship and business development. For him however, it was inevitable. Describing himself as a perfectionist, hands-on and invested in people – it was only natural that he would be inclined towards the spearheading of projects. Moses loves beautiful places, spaces and things. He appreciates well-managed properties, from the exterior and the architecture, to the grounds and gardens, well maintained driveways, a welcoming reception and lobby, and the organisation of rooms and decoration in the lounge facilities. He credits his keen eye for detail, order and structure for propelling him to become an entrepreneur in his own right, citing how he simply loves running things.

His very first switch into the realm of entrepreneurship began in 2005, where he created the Botswana-based tourism publication – the Hotel and Catering magazine. Over the years his scope has broadened, leveraging his knack for finding opportunities and maximising on their potential into hotel property ownership and management in Botswana's key tourism towns. Today, Moses prides himself in the ownership of The Stay Bridge Apartments and Suites, self-catering 3 star properties in Maun and Francis-





town as well as the Pomegranite Gold Resort & Spa, a mostly business hotel situated on a luxurious Golf Estate, 5 minutes from Francistown City centre.

The new kid on the block is the Staybridge GolfView Suites & Arirang Restaurant, a classic Korean-themed restaurant with an African and Western fusion cuisine and cocktail bar. Moses describes the latest addition to his portfolio as a boutique style hotel boasting luxury rooms and excellent customer service.

### A CHEF AT HEART WITH LOVE FOR PEOPLE

With his dream of one day owning a chain of hotels around the world – after first conquering Africa, Moses Mutapati the Chef and Hospitality entrepreneur describes the key attributes of a good chef as having passion, raw talent and

the constant push to cook from the heart. He adds that the perfect recipe is when these traits are “coupled with the consistent desire to always make the guests happy through your food!”

Moses is quick to remind friends of the precious memories of celebrities he has met during his illustrious career as a chef-turned entrepreneur, from meeting the Princess of Africa – Yvonne Chaka, to the late Great Oliver Mtukudzi, his favourite comedian Steve Harvey and two iconic Presidents - President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and the late former President of South Africa - Nelson Mandela!

A family man who loves Botswana, the culture and its people, Moses is enjoying his journey as a business leader and hopes to inspire others through his personal ad business mantras. In Moses’ words, “Keep doing what you believe. Some will take you seriously and others will not but keep going anyway.”<sup>by</sup>

- By Louisa Conrad Choruma



*Bringing it*

TO THE  
WARM  
HEART OF  
AFRICA

WITH MALAWIAN STYLE





## *1. Through the eyes of friends and family who is Mike Vandell?*

Mike is a very determined person. He knows what he wants and will find a way to make it work. If he doesn't succeed straight away, he will come up with a plan B, C or even D if necessary. By consistently doing what he needs to do to succeed, he most often makes it happen. Always willing to work hard and have a positive attitude in life, he can be very stubborn, but that same stubbornness is also a positive driving force for him to achieve his goals. Besides all that he also is quite a comfort snob. Mike loves material comforts, beautiful wines, delicious food and all kinds of luxuries. He is honest and straightforward; he could be Dutch!

## **2. YOU WERE BORN IN ZIMBABWE BUT RAISED IN MALAWI. TALK TO US ABOUT YOUR FONDEST CHILDHOOD MEMORIES AND HOW THEY INSPIRED THE ADVENTURER YOU ARE TODAY?**

Correct growing up in Limbe (a suburb of Blantyre) was an incredible lifestyle with weekends spent fishing on Lake Malawi, enjoying the various watersports on offer and appreciating the birdlife. While in town, we didn't watch TV (except if it was raining), so my brother and I were encouraged to play outside, walk around the nearby hills and mountains, ride bikes and be boys outside in the sun. Later on, we would venture on road trips to Mozambique and Zimbabwe and appreciate the amazing beaches and wildlife on offer in our neighbouring countries. I went to boarding school at Michael House in Kwazulu Natal where again,

sports and outdoor lifestyle was encouraged which was a character-building experience as we were taught to think outside the box.

## **3. YOUR CAREER IN FINANCE TOOK YOU TO EUROPE BEFORE YOU DECIDED TO HEAD BACK AND START YOUR OWN BUSINESS IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM. TALK TO US ABOUT THE INSPIRATION BEHIND YOUR BUSINESS - MALAWIAN STYLE? WHAT TRIGGERED YOUR DECISION TO VENTURE INTO ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MALAWI SPECIFICALLY?**

The dream was always to return to Africa and set up a tourism related operation but obviously I needed to gain some real-life experience and build some capital first. The goal was to go to London and get on the property ladder (as an insurance policy in case Africa



ever went completely south!) and ironically this back up plan would be what has got us through Covid-19. In the credit crunch of 2008, the timing was perfect to volunteer redundancy and I booked a flight around the world, learning about various aspects of travel and eventually finishing back in Malawi to set up shop.

Malawi was always home, where the heart was and where I would want to promote and be based out of; whilst also knowing that Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe would be a big part of our plans as they are so accessible for Malawi.

**4. MALAWIAN STYLE HAS BUILT A NAME FOR ITSELF AS A SPECIALIST TOUR OPERATOR THAT OFFERS A RANGE OF SAFARI ADVENTURES IN AND AROUND MALAWI, ZAMBIA, MOZAMBIQUE. WHAT IS MALAWIAN STYLE'S VALUE PROPOSITION?**

Centrally located and incredibly connected. Malawi really has it all (apart from salt water and wineries). For a small country, Malawi is incredibly diverse and very well priced, allowing you to combine the crystal clear waters of Lake Malawi with amazing bush experiences, tea estates, mountains and plateaus, and engage with friendly people in a country renowned for its warmth, hospitality and safety.

All Malawi's hotspots are relatively close, so linking them up is affordable and the lodges themselves are very well priced relative to the rest of Africa. Additionally, the parks have a low density of lodges, so you still feel the wild raw Africa - not the over-commercialised Africa that has become the norm elsewhere. Add this to the fact that it is a 1hr flight to Harare/ Lusaka/ South Luangwa/ Nam-pula or a 2hr flight to Nairobi/ Dar Es Salaam/ Johannesburg so it is incredibly easy to combine with our neighbours for those who need dolphins, seafood and wineries (although the exciting news is that we have launched a wine import company in Malawi to bring the best wines to Malawi and help the lodges and clients have better quality and a wider variety of wines and gins to offer their guests. Exciting times as Wines & Wings was born.

*5. What factors do you believe have*

*made Malawian Style a success?*

No doubt hard work and having a really great team to support the vision of the company. We have always been brave and daring and not scared to take a risk, travel the world and put Malawi on the map. As a result, we have built great relationships with global partners and together this teamwork and vision has built a successful brand putting Malawi on the map.

We have always been huge fans of making sure all of our team experience the products we sell and know all the products/national parks and so on so they can sell with their heart and all the knowledge that comes from first-hand experience. African Parks have also played a huge role with their wildlife conservation success in making Malawi the hidden gem that it is today.

**6. TODAY'S TRAVELLER IS MORE CONNECTED AND GLOBALLY CONSCIOUS THAN EVER BEFORE. THEY ARE ALSO LOOKING FOR TRAVEL EXPERIENCES THAT STAND OUT FROM FORMER TRIPS THEY WOULD HAVE TAKEN. WHY SHOULD TRAVELLERS ADD MALAWI OR ZAMBIA TO THEIR TRAVEL BUCKET LIST?**

Exactly that reason, that both are wild and off the beaten track, both are great value and often run sustainably. Most of the lodges and national parks contribute huge amounts back into preserving the wildlife and supporting local communities. Our Parks have done an incredible job reintroducing wildlife, preventing poaching, creating jobs, supporting and educating surrounding communities and more. So, by travelling to these countries you know that a solid portion of the cost is going back into looking after the region. They say travellers come to Malawi for the landscapes, fall in love with the wildlife, but return for the people and hence the nickname "The Warm Heart of Africa".

**7. WE ARE WITNESSING A SHIFT IN TRAVEL AS THE WORLD ADJUSTS TO THE CHALLENGES BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC. WHAT HAVE YOU AS MALAWIAN STYLE WORKED ON TO INCREASE TRAVEL**



**CONFIDENCE IN TRAVELLERS HEADED TO MALAWI THROUGH YOUR PRODUCT OFFERING?**

We have all been working together to make sure that we have great quarantine options when guests arrive, that includes our company converting our home into a B & B for those that need a few days, and do not want to be in a hotel. We have a nice pool with beautiful sunset, fantastic birdlife, yoga deck, incredible wine and gin selection due to the new business @winesandwings we have recently launched, awesome garden with various tables setup for space and social distancing, home grown veggie garden as well as all the mod cons like fancy coffee machine, good wi-fi. All our partners have also been very proactive with extra cleaning and sanitizing, social distancing, effecting such measures as having a maximum number of people per vehicle or dining table. Take all this and the fact that most of the time you are in the bush or private island with very few other people around, you are probably a lot safer than wherever you are coming from.

**8. A GROUP OF TRAVELLERS - AGED IN THEIR MID-30S TO 50S REACHES OUT TO YOU LOOKING TO PUT TOGETHER A TRIP. THEY HAVE 7 DAYS TO TRAVEL**

**TO MALAWI OR ZAMBIA FROM DUBAI. WHAT ARE YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WHERE THEY WOULD ENJOY A FULLY IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE AS A GROUP AND IN YOUR CARE AS MALAWIAN STYLE?**

Take over a private island on Lake Malawi, climb Mulanje Mountain, also known as Malawi's off the beaten track answer to Kilimanjaro, have a private luxury house amongst the Satemwa Tea Estates, enjoy the wild off the beaten track Liwonde or South Luangwa National Parks or check out one of the 7 wonders of the world – the Victoria Falls. We would always tailor make the perfect trip for clients depending on their budget, time frame and preferences.

*9. Let's talk a little about Mike Varnnell the adventurer. What has been your most adventurous excursion to date? Where to and why?*

Argh there are so many. I loved my time in Fiji, my various marketing trips through the US and Canada but Africa is where the heart is. I love getting off the beaten track where there is no signal and the only sound is that of the bush. Hiking Mulanje is great for that but I also love the wild walking safaris in North and South Luangwa and canoeing down the Mighty Zambezi - with wild-life everywhere and dodging hippos and crocs. That's the real wild Africa.

**10. WHAT MYTHS DO YOU THINK INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS SHOULD DEBUNK ABOUT TRAVEL TO AFRICA?**

Africa is SAFE. Africa is not a country and our part of Africa is up there with the safest and friendliest countries in the world. Africa can be affordable, again our part of Africa is well priced, safe and affordable. 🇲🇼



# CULINARY ESCAPADES





Behold  
the taste  
of mouth-  
watering  
*Chambo,  
Chambo!*

My maternal grandmother came from a township in the Southern Region of Malawi named Mangochi. This township is also located near the southern end of Lake Malawi. Being close to the lake she grew up on fish and passed the love for it as well as the cooking tricks to her daughters and to us her grandchildren. Although my grandmother moved to Zimbabwe and raised my mother and all her siblings there, we were not foreign to the Malawian heritage. For many school holidays my cousins and I were whisked to Vengere, a township in Rusape in the Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe. There I learnt many things about cooking from my grandmother, especially fish, which she totally loved.

My mother also lived in Malawi's town of Mulanje, well known for its vast tea estates. Her living there meant we received many parcels of ufa (mealie meal) Kilombero Rice and of course Chambo fish. I remember watching deliveries going into our pantry at home in Harare, cooler boxes with fresh Chambo and newspaper wrapped dried fish.

Let me tell you a little bit about Chambo fish before I go on. It is the most popular fish found in Lake Malawi. It is a species of freshwater fish in the Cichlidae family popularly known as Tilapia. Over the years various factors such as over fishing and climate change have made this fish an endangered species and could soon become extinct in its natural habitat. This means the memories I have of Chambo, generations to come may not ever savour.

So back to the trip down memory lane. One Christmas holiday, my mom had returned to Zimbabwe with of course, a car loaded with Malawian treats. That Christmas we went kunyumba ya aGogo anga ("my grandmother's house" said in Chichewa, the most spoken language in Malawi) and she made us fish smoked in banana leaves. I remember that day vividly. I

watched her every move, from when she arranged the firewood and lit the fire, to how she prepared the fish before putting it in the banana leaves. I watched her scrape the scales, disembowel and wash the fish squeaky clean. Thereafter she flavoured it so simply with salt and slices of lemon. She wrapped them in the banana leaves, stripped one of the leaves and tied all the fish. She placed them strategically at the corner of the fire where the most smoke was emanating. It felt like forever till the fish was ready. I waited anxiously knowing it would be nothing but delicious to the taste buds. I was not disappointed. More than 25 years later I can almost taste the fish when I think of it.

That's just one way I remember my grandmother preparing Chambo, but she also used to cut it into pieces, coat it in seasoned flour, fry it, then add curry, onions and tomatoes and let it simmer. Sometimes the dried fish, cut in half through the middle, was given to us as a snack or could also be soaked to soften it and then prepared with a relish.

My grandmother died 20 years ago, but her face and cooking talents reverberate all around my spirit. She made me love Chambo and she made me love to cook. The memories of our visits together to Lake Malawi, swimming with the fish and watching fishermen bring freshly caught goodness to our doorstep every morning will never leave me.

It seems her love for fish seeped into our blood from generation to generation. The last memory I will share is of my last visit to Mangochi a few years ago with a large group of my family - aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews. It was surreal. We visited my grandmother's relatives whom I had never met but aspects of my grandmother's culture and upbringing which she imparted in us were very evident. In true Malawian style, food was prepared the moment we arrived and of course what was on the menu, Nsima (mealie meal starch) and Chambo. I felt my grandmother in the room as we ate the deliciousness. The icing on the cake which made me know that my grandmother through Chambo was a part of our lives no matter what in the spiritual realm, was my nephew, who was only about 6 months old at the time salivating as we all ate. My mother being who she is decided to feed him his first solid meal that day of Nsima and Chambo! He ate and ate and in mid chew many morsels later, fell peacefully asleep and only woke up some 3 hours later, making our journey back to Blantyre hassle free!


My parting shot is this. Food is an integral part of history, culture and tradition. As we travel, or get to know people from different cultures, we must be open to experimenting and trying out different foods. There is lots to be learnt about heritage in how and what people eat. 🍷

### About the Author

TAKUDZWA CHITSIKE is the Founder of Footprints Personal Image Services. She is also the Founder of Dee-Kaw-Zee (Pvt) Limited, a company that manufactures & distributes custom made jewellery and fashion accessories, where she serves as the Creative Director. A lawyer by profession, Takudzwa is a multi-award-winning entrepreneur who currently works for a blue-chip company in Harare Zimbabwe.

Connect with Taku | @takuChitsike and Dee-Kaw-Zee @deekawzee





*"Uchef Zinzi"  
Taking Over The  
Victoria Falls'  
culinary landscape*



ou either cook or wash up!" This was mum's simple rule growing up, and although I still hate doing the dishes, I fell

in love with meal prepping and playing around in the kitchen with new recipes. It was always about cooking for me," says Zinzile Yvette Masiye, a Chef, foodie turned blogger, who is steadily creating a name for herself across Southern Africa's culinary landscape.

Having completed her internship at The Elephant Hills Resort, with that season in her life peaking her interest in the vibrant tourism industry of Victoria Falls, Zinzile, affectionately known to her peers as Uchef Zinzi, decided to move back to Victoria Falls after completing her Diploma in Hospitality Management (HND) with a specialization in Culinary Arts in 2015. Zinzile started her career working in small lodges until she was offered a job at The Victoria Falls Hotel.

"I have always taken job opportunities as learning opportunities, so working for a 5-star establishment, accredited as a Leading Hotel of the World at that, was very exciting. I learnt a lot as I was exposed to the concept of "exceptional standards", taking on the challenge of cooking with world class ingredients. It was during this time that I realised that

I'd exhausted what often felt like working in a factory line as part of a production chain," shares Zinzile.

With time, Zinzile opted to try out something new in a push to challenge her culinary skills further. She joined a smaller restaurant establishment operated by Shearwater, an adventure company in Victoria Falls. She came to note that the environment was indeed quite different from working in the kitchen of a 5-star hotel. She was keen on understanding the structure and systems in place for a smaller operation because if ever she decided to open her own Café, this knowledge would prove invaluable. Secondly, financially the opportunity she had received would make more sense in the long run.

"I went in there ready to work and learn more. My creativity was further sparked to a point of conceptualizing and presenting a cooking show on radio, sharing tips and recipes with listeners, and on the Facebook page Simple Home Cooking," says Zinzi.

"I also started to blog my foodie adventures and the experiences I had when eating out or buying take-out. I featured new restaurants about town, and because I love food and I personally respect anyone willing to spend money and trust me to make them a good meal, this led me to creating an Instagram page @eatoutvicfalls. The idea was to profile culinary experiences anywhere I went, and to in some way, hold food service staff like myself accountable to guests. When you document your dining experience, you help to improve food and service quality because service providers are conscious that there is a lot of attention being paid to their delivery, especially as it relates to food presentation," Zinzi adds.

While still at Shearwater, Zinzi contributed to Bulawayo's urban culture magazines by sharing a weekly recipe diary. A little later she moved on to the Victoria Falls Safari Club. Here she found that she was given a lot of creative control on certain dishes, high teas and sundowner snacks, and this was huge for her because this is something she is wildly passionate about – meshing her creativity with different colours, ingredients and textures in food.

"I loved this because I was always on my toes, always trying to do better, playing around with new savoury and sweet pastry creations. Within the same establishment I moved to the main lodge, Victoria Falls Safari lodge where I'm currently working under a brilliant Executive Chef who pushes me and all the chefs on the team to grow and really think outside the box."

As COVID-19 has brought with it a slowdown to Zimbabwe's tourism capital, Zinzi has taken the time away from work to structure her personal goals, researching on healthy eating options and designing meal plans she'll use when she's back in the kitchen. She's also taken on a new challenge – experimenting with traditional Zimbabwean food preparation.

When asked about what brought about her interest in now learning to prepare more traditional meals, Zinzi asserts, "It's about passing on information to generations after us. I feel it's imperative to understand one's traditional food, it's sources, and how it's prepared, as this information is precious and in every way part of our culture and how we preserve our heritage. Chefs in Africa shouldn't shy away from authentic meal preparation and so having said this, I'd like to see how I can further develop my knowledge and skills in this area. Watch this space food-lovers! There's so much on the horizon with my food journey, and I can't wait to share my discoveries with foodies like myself!"

To connect with Uchef Zinzi, visit her pages on @eatoutvicfalls and @Simple Home Cooking



2019

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# AFRICAN FOOD FESTIVAL:

A UNIQUE  
HIGHLIGHT  
ON DUBAI'S  
CALENDAR OF  
EVENTS

*Evolution and  
Adaption:*  
What's new  
this year?

**F**ew places inspire leisure and lifestyle experiences like the Middle East's tourism hub - the United Arab Emirates. A nation that boasts two metropolitan meccas, the destination of distinction Abu Dhabi and glamorous larger than life Dubai. Each offers everything from record-breaking skyscrapers, iconic cultural and historical landmarks as well as theme parks, expensive yachts that dot marinas about town, pristine beaches with views of the Persian Gulf; all of which are a dream for residents and visitors alike. The UAE is an exciting destination for those looking for year-round sun and sand, award-winning dining and entertainment, a vibrant calendar of exhibitions and events, shopping and so much more!

The UAE is also home to more than 200 nationalities that relocated to this desert oasis for a better quality of life, with the African community actively contributing towards the growth in yearly expat arrivals. Residents are tied together by their distinctive cultures and experiences while living in the UAE, and so it is no wonder that opportunities for celebrating African heritage through music, fashion and food are also growing in their numbers.

The African Food Festival (AFF) UAE was born out of the passion of its founders, Timothy and Nina Olatoke. They desired to tell the African story, not just to non-Africans living in the UAE but to Africans who call the UAE their home as well. They believed that there were a lot of misconceptions about the African culture, but also the African experience, and so wanted to create an opportunity for Africans and expats from the rest of the world to enjoy a taste of what vibrance and creative excellence the continent has to offer.





## THE AFRICAN FOOD FESTIVAL UNPACKED

While the name of the event centers around food, it is so much more than that. The event has since its inception in 2018, grown to be symbolic of an African story and a cultural experience, with presentations of various cuisines, arts, craft, fashion, music, entertainment, and games. What makes it unique from any other event; other than the fact that it is a free event, is that the African missions also participate, contributing towards a heightened opportunity to share more information about the beautiful continent of Africa to UAE resident expats. The event has garnered significant success, last year celebrating the tremendous milestone of over 7,000 participants in attendance, with over 30 vendors and 15 sponsors/partners, of which the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing and the Dubai Municipality were a part.

When asked to shed more light on the event, AFF's Co-Founder Nina Olatoke cites, "The event is centered around food because food is a unifier and we wanted to attract not just Africans but also, expats of other non-African cultures and backgrounds to come out and explore the diverse sounds, tastes, smells and rhythm of Africa as a continent."

"AFF has been a labour of love for the five of us, and this shows even in our marketing collateral. We introduced the AFF passport, which turned out to be a hit! It was a free collateral that really told the story of what we want to achieve for AFF, which is an Africa United. It is not the easiest narrative, as Africa is a continent with 54 countries, the second largest and most populous after Asia, with well over 3500 known dialects and a cultural uniqueness by regions within countries. All of these attributes alone make Africa the most diverse continent in the world. Add the layer of Africans in the diaspora and African descent experiences, and you have an amazing collage of





uniqueness,” Nina adds.

The team worked at bringing this same narrative into the passport and believe that bringing the passport back each year will be a cornerstone initiative. Internal discussions are in place to even have a ‘diplomatic’ edition where people can personalize their passport and experience. Only time will tell how the event morphs creatively.

### WHAT’S ON THE HORIZON FOR AFRICAN FOOD FESTIVAL?

“From the inception of the event, we knew that this was long term venture hence last year, we created a 5-year road map for AFF. 2018 was ‘Taste of Africa’, 2019 was ‘My Africa’, 2020 is ‘Colors of Africa’, 2021 will be ‘Spirit of Africa’, and 2022 will be ‘Africa unmasked,’” shares Nina.

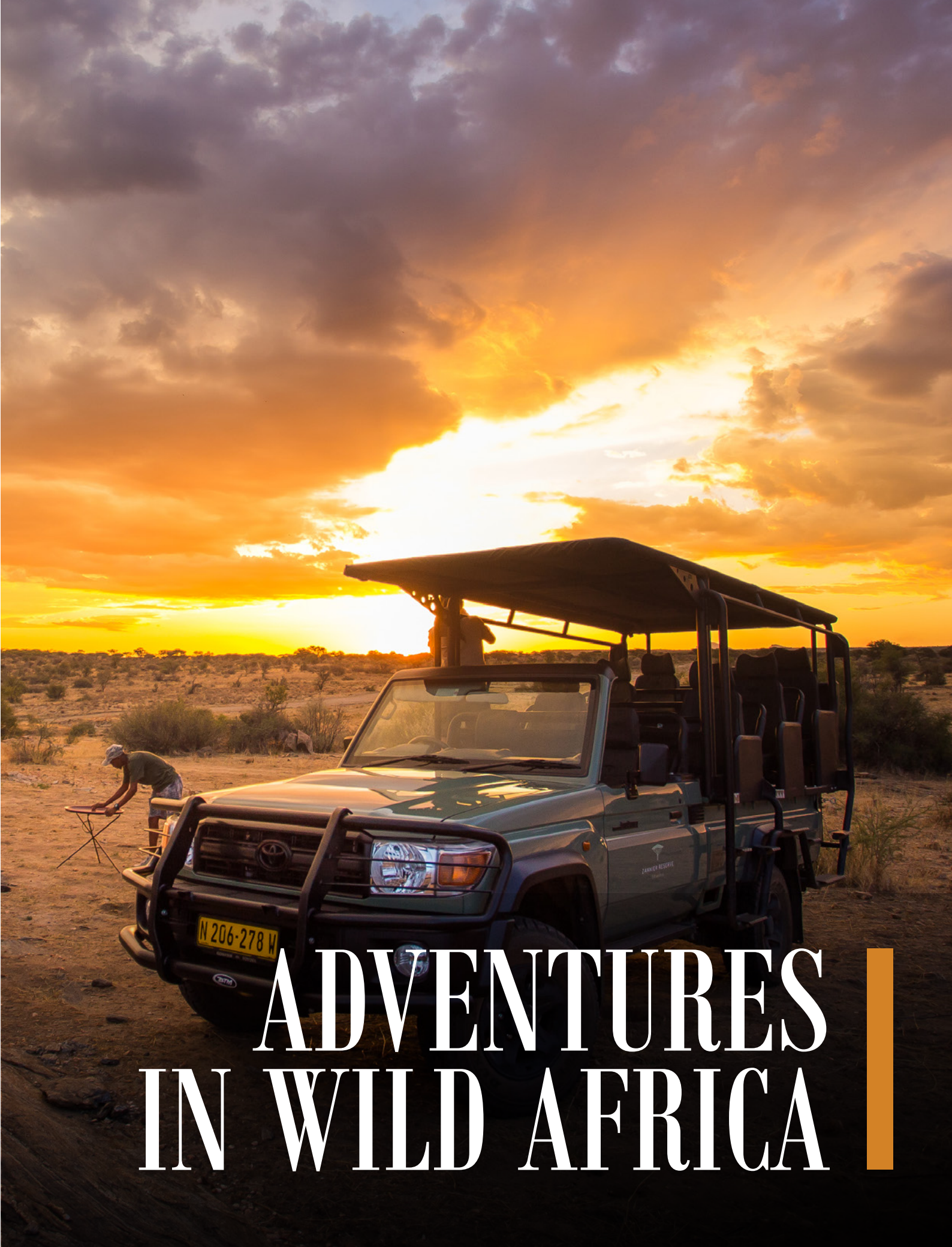
But as we all know, COVID-19 happened and so for an event that is usually live and interactive in format and held in Creek Park, complete with a stage, music and fun entertainment for adult and kids; the Founders of AFF have had to revisit their strategy to meet health and safety requirements for all. The decision has been made to forge ahead, with the view that while



the world and Africa as a whole are reeling from the impact of this global pandemic, experiencing varied challenges across all sectors and landscapes, for the Founders, the ‘Spirit of Africa’ must shine through it all. There is almost a unifying mantra of ‘as long as the sun rises tomorrow, life goes on, and we will smile’.

With COVID-19 in mind, it will not be an outdoor event this year, but likely multiple events hosted mainly in African Restaurants that sign up. These events will be broadcasted live on social media, creating that mix of a vibrant culture, complete with music and interaction with online viewers. While the experience will be different this year, having to adapt to the challenges that COVID-19 has brought to all organisers in the event space, the goal is to still curate an exciting and informative experience for all virtual attendees, who will get a peek inside the vibrant cultures from the Motherland, with food at the center of each activation. 🌍

*To read up on previous editions of the African Food Festival, visit <https://africanfoodfestival.me/>*



# ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA





# THE RWANDAIR P R O M I S E

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# ACCESSING RWANDA AND AFRICA'S KEY TOURISM DESTINATIONS *safely*

Travel from one destination to the other as we once knew it has changed. The wanderlusts and business travellers in our midst have witnessed a significant shift with the advent of the COVID-19 global pandemic, challenging passengers using varied modes of transportation to adapt to the ever-pressing need for adherence to health and safety requirements.

Rwanda, aptly coined “The Land of a Thousand Hills”, is now open for tourism after a months-long lockdown as with most tourist destinations. But the country’s story continues to evolve, having over the past decade more than solidified its position as an African beacon of excellence in modernization and progressive innovation, and as a destination of distinctive encounters with nature, be it in the mountainous jungles of Nungwi Forest National Park, or from the shores of Lake Kivu. Kigali, Rwanda’s capital welcomes inbound tourists from across the world to experience the warmth of her people, enriching them with opportunities to learn more about the nation’s history and inspirational success stories, before they head on to explore the rest of the country’s abundant eco-tourism experiences.

On the pulse of supporting ongoing efforts to promote Rwanda as one of East Africa’s most prolific and pristine destinations is RwandAir, the national carrier, which recommenced its commercial passenger services on the 1st of August 2020, offering 3 flights a week out of Dubai International Airport to select destinations across the continent, where travel restrictions have been eased and borders open to inbound tourists since the global pandemic erupted.

## FLYING THE DREAM OF AFRICA ON RWANDAIR

RwandAir, known for its exceptional service, with a succinct tagline “Fly the dream of Africa” as a genuine reminder to passengers of the attention to service provision rendered to each passenger boarding a RwandAir flight, has with its resumption of flights this time

around, brought with it a key focus on instilling passenger confidence in this season. The modus operandi is simple: to apply stringent health and safety measures at all guest interface touch points throughout the entire travel experience. This means that whether guests are flying into or out of Kigali International Airport, they are assured an experience that sets a premium on the health, safety and wellbeing of all passengers and staff, without taking away from the excitement of travel.

Air travel today is about making passengers feel comfortable with their decision to proceed as they anticipate a fruitful business or leisure experience at their planned destination. What they need is assurance, and RwandAir, being one of the first African carriers to resume flights to multiple global destinations, is well primed to fulfill this service promise.



### A 5-STEP SAFETY PROTOCOL: RWANDAIR'S COMMITMENT TO PASSENGER WELLBEING



Leveraging a 5-Step Health and Safety Guide, available for download at the RwandAir website, travellers can get a sneak-peek into what they can expect their experience to look like pre-boarding, while inflight, right through to arrival and leaving the airport to venture into Rwanda.



**RWANDAIR'S 5-STEP HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDE** is focused on travel processes and critical touch points for all passengers and staff taking to the skies in this COVID-19 era. The initiative's core tenets are outlined as below:



**1. Before you fly** - Recommended Online booking and check-in for all passengers, the presentation of a certificate of a negative SARS-CoV 2 Real Time-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) COVID-19 test performed within 120hrs of departure time from a certified laboratory, completion of a passenger locator form available at the RwandAir website and booking for a 24-hour stay at a designated hotel upon arrival in Kigali.

**2. Arrival at the airport** - mandatory wearing of a face mask and required PPE per destination requirements and of course, adhering to social distancing practices

**3. Inside the aircraft** - Strict adherence to

health and safety regulations including the reinforced use of hand sanitisers, practicing social distancing and minimized contact with other travellers.

**4. Onboard RwandAir** - Beyond ensuring that all staff are wearing PPE for passenger protection and theirs, RwandAir has introduced a comprehensive aircraft sanitization regiment, including the installation of high-efficiency particulate absorbing (HEPA) filters, designed to remove over 99% of germs while ensuring optimum airflow for the comfort of passengers onboard.

Because these are unprecedented times in which we live and now travel, guests will also notice some changes to the inflight experience, including offering pre-packaged meals on long haul flights and snacks and beverage service for flights shorter than 2 hours long. Comforts such as blankets and earphones will be sanitized with each use and sealed before presentation to new passengers.

**5. Arrival at the destination** - In addition to signage advocating social distancing, all passengers arriving from international destinations will be retested for COVID-19 when they check in to their designated hotel for their mandatory 24 hour stay, with results for their tests received within the 24 hour window. Travellers will be greatly supported with all their needs as airport staff are well trained and equipped to offer support with any questions and procedures.

### RWANDA IS OPEN FOR TOURISM

As Africa braces for the reawakening of the travel and tourism landscape, Rwanda is well poised to welcome tourists to the wealth of wonders within its borders. With the perfect Airline partner in RwandAir, tourism operators are expectant as much as they are delighted to begin welcoming guests to the "Land of a Thousand Hills" again. And to the curious at heart, who has endured a long wait to see what Africa has to offer, Rwanda is a good place to start planning your next trip to the continent. 

To learn more about open routes across Africa onboard RwandAir and available offers, visit [www.Rwandair.com](http://www.Rwandair.com)



# FLY SAFE WITH RWANDAIR

Always ensuring your health & safety on the ground and in the air



Book your ticket and check-in online



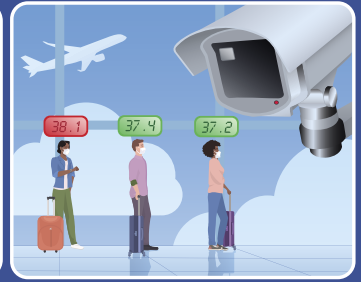
Take a Covid-19 PCR test within 72 hours before departure time



Arrive at the airport 4 hours before departure



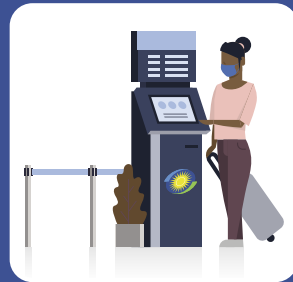
Wear a face mask at all times



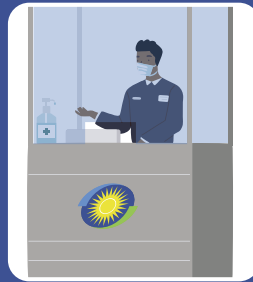
Health screening



Respect social distancing



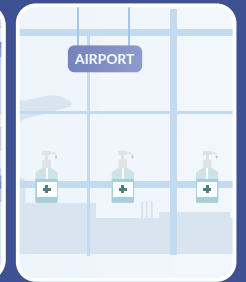
Self check-in kiosks



Counters are fitted with visors and hand sanitizers



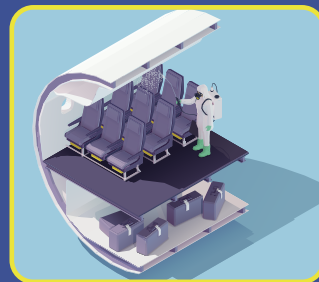
Regular disinfection of surfaces



Easily accessible hand sanitizers



Boarding in small groups



Regular disinfection of aircraft



Cabin crew in Personal Protective Equipment



Pre-packaged meals



Sanitized and sealed amenities



Keep your mask on throughout the flight



Disembarking in small groups



Follow guidelines of your destination airport

● On the Ground (Kigali International Airport)

● On board

● Destination

# ONE WITH NATURE

AT SINGITA KWITONDA  
LODGE AND KATAZA HOUSE



# R

Right on the edge of Volcanoes National Park, northwest of Rwanda, sits two luxury Singita properties; Singita Kwitonda Lodge and Kataza House, which opened roughly a year ago and exist to play a key role in the conservation of the famed gorillas of Rwanda. Luxury meets conservation with these unparalleled properties as guests get a sense of awe when they gaze at the breathtaking volcano views which greet you every morning. For the fortunate residents of either property at a time of planned escapism, they may be so fortunate to be graced with the presence of some buffaloes or elephants as they graze in the park, undoubtedly a breathtaking experience.

The lodge and luxury villa are creatively designed in a modern yet rustic style, while incorporating many local elements, such as the volcanic rock that is found in the structures on the property, as well as the stone and ceramic elements made by local artists. The stone used represents that which surrounds the park, demarcating the park from the wildlife that may enter the retreat.

## *Solitude and sanctuary – the Singita way*

Singita Volcanoes National Park is arguably one of Singita's most sustainable properties and with their unrivalled location a stone's throw away from the Park's dense cloud forests – inhabited by these gentle giant, the gorillas – the intimate lodge and four-bedroom villa provide the utmost privacy and an invigorating retreat for travellers who value the comfort of thoughtful simplicity, subtlety and restraint.



Here, guests can find solitude and sanctuary; a nurturing space in which to reflect on an encounter with the remarkable mountain gorillas, enveloping them in warmth and stillness, and encouraging moments of quiet contemplation. It's an experience that provides a sense of respite and the opportunity for much-needed rest and restoration.

Beyond the views and thrill of experiencing untamed Rwanda, is the exceptional service on offer to guests with the most refined in taste. Thanks to the staff, who are in every way readily available to anticipate your needs as their guest, you will relish the exquisite cuisine as Singita takes on a 'farm-to-table' approach to vegetable and herb growing, inspiring the healthy dishes on the lodge's fresh, seasonal menus.

## *Singita Kwitonda Lodge and Kataza House's conservation story*

While the Rwanda Development Board is responsible for protecting the gorillas and the National Park in which they find sanctuary, Singita's role is to rehabilitate the land on which the lodge is located, so that it can one day form an extension to the gorilla's current habitat. The reforestation of former agricultural land is an important part of the strategy to expand the area



in which the gorillas – and other wildlife in the park, including forest elephants, golden monkeys and more than 300 bird species – can freely roam.

Their long-term preservation is at the core of Singita's purpose for operating in Rwanda. Singita Kwitonda Lodge and the exclusive-use villa Kataza House not only support the country's conservation efforts by drawing guests to the region, but their unrivalled location on the border of Volcanoes National Park – in 178 acres of what was once agricultural land – creates a critical buffer zone that will soon become home for the gorillas.

Singita Volcanoes National Park also serves to draw visitors to this extraordinary country, who in turn contribute to gorilla conservation through trekking permits and supporting industries that employ local communities. Apart from the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to come face to face with mountain gorillas in the African jungle, guests can also learn more about the importance of safeguarding their future from Singita's Wildlife Conservationist, Robert Mugabe – a former National Park guide who studied at Uganda's Makerere University – as he passionately shares his love of the natural world and the story of Rwanda with people from other parts of the world.

Robert can often be found chatting to guests or briefing groups before a trek in the lodge's dedicated Conservation Room – an interactive space designed to provide educational resources that offer further context to Singita's purpose in Rwanda. It features an inspiring conservation wall with valuable information, iMacs, a big-screen television, maps, and books, as well as a private collection of Robert Ian Martin ("Bob") Campbell's travel and photographic equipment. This renowned wildlife photographer and filmmaker was best known for his footage and photographs of Dian Fossey and mountain gorillas published in National Geographic.

### *Project reforestation*

Guests are brought into Singita's world of conservation by taking a walking tour of the Akarabo Nursery and the farm-to-table garden; both important elements of the fulfilment of the brand's conservation vision. Akarabo – meaning "little flower" in Kinyarwanda – is the heart of the reforestation project, where hundreds of thousands of saplings are grown before being replanted. The adjoining kitchen garden








is a visual feast and inspires the healthy dishes on Singita's mouthwatering menus, which feature seasonal herbs and vegetables that make their way from the neatly planted rows to their guests' plates every day, echoing Singita's commitment to sustainability.

The reforestation of Singita Volcanoes National Park has already found great success, with camera traps near the unfenced border between the protected area and the land surrounding the lodge capturing all manner of curious wildlife crossing into the property. Elephants, buffalo, antelope, monkeys and more have been caught on film, enjoying the tender shoots, flourishing grasses and young trees now growing around them. The expanding habitat is great news for gorillas, while for guests, it means the experience just keeps getting better.

## *Rwanda is Ready to Welcome the World Once More*

Travel and exploration are inherent expressions of our desire to feel fully alive; to wholeheartedly experience new destinations and cultures and be moved by moments of incalculable worth. The privilege to encounter mountain gorillas up close – and meet these imposing and powerful, yet gentle creatures in their natural habitat – is at the top of the list for travellers yearning for transformative experiences, especially for the sense of perspective this wildlife highlight can bring.

After temporarily being disrupted by global travel restrictions, Rwanda as a nation is delighted that the skies above the Land of a Thousand Hills are open once more, putting Rwanda's mountain gorillas back within reach for international guests at Singita Volcanoes National Park as they enjoy the warmest of welcomes and captivating, sensory experiences that are guaranteed to be etched in one's memory for a lifetime. A mere 5-hour flight on RwandAir from Dubai International Airport to Kigali provides an ease of access for all travellers, with a safe arrival for all guests of paramount importance to national carrier's sky captains and cabin crew. So why not make your way to the heart of Africa, where the wonderment of nature, coupled with unique cultural and leisure experiences, are sure to warm your heart. 







## Gonarezhou National Park

An absolute marvel to explore ...



@tourismzimbabwe



*Explore*  
ZIMBABWE'S  
EASTERN HIGHLANDS







**E**astern Highlands lands itself on the list of prime tourist destinations in Zimbabwe, renowned as a breath-taking, nature and outdoor adventure alternative to safari territory in the lowveld. Endowed with so many mysteries awaiting a visitor to discover, the Eastern Highlands region's major tourist attractions include Nyanga, Vumba, Mutare and Chimanimani. So if you should find yourself in Zimbabwe, and are looking for a quieter escape where hills, valleys and imposing rocky outcrops surround you in every direction, locals will recommend you to go on a short 3 hour drive from the nation's capital Harare, towards the mountain ranges that border Zimbabwe with neighbouring Mozambique. Once there, there are few stopovers that should be a part of every itinerary as you explore these elevated terrains, however, for now, we'll tackle the popular Nyanga and what makes it so attractive.

#### **NYANGA**

Nyanga is famous for its verdant, mountainous scenery, crystal-clear streams, and Zimbabwe's highest mountain and waterfall. It is regarded as a place of great natural beauty, with most of its attractions within the Nyanga National Park. Its winters are often cold, punctuated with misty, heavy frost common especially in the valleys. Nyanga's landscape is a marvel to any visitor, attracting the adventurous to experience what this resort town has to offer.

Avid fishermen will enjoy the finest fly fishing in the country in its well-stocked dams and lakes including Mare, Rhodes and Purdon dams. The region's altitude is between 1800m to 2593m, and the magnificent views, hiking trails, excellent birdwatching, great outdoors, numerous waterfalls, massive plantations and its mystical history, all make it an ideal holiday destination that avails a unique combination of relaxing and thrilling activities.

#### **MOUNT NYANGANI**

This is the highest mountain in Zimbabwe at 2593m and is situated in Nyanga National Park. The local community believe this mountain to be sacred, citing records of some visitors who are said to have disappeared and never to be seen again. It is believed hikers to the mountain have encountered mysterious, inexplicable happenings however, to guarantee the safety of visitors, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, which runs Nyanga National Park have made it a point that every visitor to the mountain is accompanied by a local professional guide.

An average hike takes about 2 hours, taking you to the summit at 2953m. A truly exhilarating and breath-taking experience once complete, visitors are encouraged to get to the Parks office early morning ahead of their hike. The drive from the Park office to the mountain takes almost an hour, marked with umbrella shaped trees. A huge highlight is spotting game, mainly zebras, kudus and wildebeests. Visitors can always pass through the Nyamuzihwa Falls, enjoy the peace and serenity at these cascading waters, before heading for more adventure. Comfortable shoes are obviously recommended, as there are many steep areas with loose stones especially when ascending. And of course, don't forget to take along water and something to snack on.

#### **MTARAZI FALLS**

Mtarazi Falls is the highest waterfall in Zimbabwe at 762m and the second highest in Africa after Tugela falls in the neighbouring South Africa. Also, with-



in Nyanga National Park, the Falls grant visitors a treat, especially adrenaline junkies who can walk across the nation's first and only skywalk, which offers a guaranteed closer view of Mtarazi falls and exceptional views of Honde Valley below. You can also conquer your fears by trying out one of highest ziplines in the world, the Skyline. After the thrill, an obvious follow-on is to take a nature walk to view the Mtarazi falls from another vantage point.

### **NYANGOMBE FALLS**

*Oh! What a delight to behold!*

It is always a great experience to tour the spectacular waterfall after the Mount Nyangani hike, enjoying beautiful sunsets especially in summer. Visitors hike a few meters down the gorge to see the waterfall, one that will surely mesmerise any visitor. It would be good to have something to snack on whilst you sit back, relax and listen to the thundering cascading waterfalls, before heading back up from the falls where the path is quite rocky and steep.

### **WORLD'S VIEW**

For those in search of panoramic views, the scenery from the aptly named "World's View" is without comparison. Featuring a picnic

garden and small curio market to purchase local crafts and carvings that sustain local communities, hikers are also in for a treat should they decide to tackle Nyamtoro mountain. There is a circular toposcope, very commonly used by visitors attempting to see further than what the eye will allow.

### **PUNGWE FALLS AND GORGE**

It is one of the most beautiful and scenic parts of Nyanga, quite incredible with its unique flora and fauna. The main source of Pungwe falls is the Pungwe River, a perennial river that flows over vast distances. Visitors can take a look at the Pungwe gorge's scenic view just about 2km from the Mtarazi falls. However, for those in search of further exploration, Turaco trail awaits, which challenges even the most advanced in hikers to a daunting trek through Pungwe Gorge.


### **THE RHODES MUSEUM**

A visit to Nyanga is not complete without a tour of the Rhodes Museum situated at the Rhodes hotel. There you'll find displays of manuscripts, photographs and other exhibits of interest relating to explorer Cecil John Rhodes and the region's history. The building was used by Rhodes for stabilizing his horses and mules during his several



visits to Nyanga. Cecil John Rhodes's holiday cottage was later converted to a hotel called Rhodes Nyanga Hotel, and old local landmark overlooking Rhodes dam.

### **NYANGA AWAITS THE OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS!**

A visit to the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe is an open call for experiencing the untamed outdoors and remarkable scenery that captures the soul. It is an opportunity for adventure as much as it is a warm welcome to the country's resort for relaxation. Cool, clean mountainous air; views of rolling landscapes and days that end in comforting huddles by a warm fireplace with friends and family, all come together to add to one's memory bank. So, for the next time you are looking for an opportunity to connect with oneself and nature, Nyanga is a good place to list for consideration when in Zimbabwe! 





*Peregrinations*  
**THROUGH WILD NAMIBIA  
WITH ZANNIER  
HOTELS OMAANDA**





**I**n search of evasiveness? What about discovering the vast Namibian landscape and pampering yourself in exquisite lodges? Zannier Hotels recently opened two outstanding lodges in this very low dense region, one of which is Zannier Hotels Omaanda, a round-thatched hut camp in the middle of the savannah, designed to offer exceptional journeys for travelers aiming at discovering untouched and wild landscapes without renouncing to a certain level of comfort, in a country where the luxury hotel industry is still in its birthing phase.

### *Zannier Hotels Omaanda - the call of the desert*

Zannier Hotels Omaanda inspired by the word “Omhandu” meaning rhinoceros in Oshiwambo) owes its name to its exceptional location, in the heart of a private animal reserve, the Zannier Reserve by N/a’an ku sê.

Lying on some 7,500 hectares in the savannah near the capital city of Windhoek, this vast, soberly luxurious and yet unique site will offer guests an exquisitely peaceful sojourn surrounded by the natural beauty of the area.

The lodge is composed of ten luxury huts inspired by traditional Owambo ar-



chitecture. This ethnic local majority is known for its secular and sober know-how inspired by and yet respectful of the environment that surrounds it.

Zannier Hotels Omaanda invites its guests to return for a short while to the source of life and experience nature at its wildest. The tranquility and the isolation, the fauna and flora, the pure and wild beauty of the landscape stretching as far as the eye can see, will make this destination unforgettable – a timeless break suspended in rich authenticity.

Zannier Hotels Omaanda offers a 360-degree view over the African plains and savannah. The village has been naturally transformed into a luxurious wild retreat boasting contemporary comfort of the highest quality and the trademark of Zannier Hotels, and yet naturally blending into the décor inspired by the Owambo traditions. This is how Zannier Hotels successfully manages to maintain and preserve this particular atmosphere, from the savannah to the city center & from the mountain to the rice fields...


To preserve its charm and peacefulness, and to help the site melt seamlessly into the surrounding background, the lodge is composed of ten huts (eight of 60 sqm with a double room and two of 120 sqm with two double rooms and





a living room). All the huts are equipped in the greatest comfort. From their large private terrace, guests can enjoy the superb views stretching to the distant mountains. This breath-taking show lives like an ode to natural and timeless beauty.

Numerous excursions and safaris included in the services offered at the resort make a change between adventure and rest. This is yet one more unique and incredible experience. The programs are made to measure for guests, according to their taste for discovery and exploration. Each excursion becomes a unique, different, and utterly magical experience.

And so as you consider Namibia for your next vacation spot, an resort escape wherein you are cradled by wild landscapes may very well be what you need. Zanier Hotels Omaanda's unforgettable experiences are sure to capture your imagination and grant you a much needed respite or break from the concrete jungles that dot lands beyond its surrounds. 

*For more information, kindly contact [communication@zannier.com](mailto:communication@zannier.com).*



ADVENTURES IN WILD AFRICA • AVANI HOTELS AND RESORTS

WHEN IN

*wildlife*

ENCOUNTERS

AWAIT AT

*Avani*

VICTORIA FALLS

RESORT

ZAMBIA

**A**vani Victoria Falls Resort connects the wild side of travellers to Zambia's wondrous landscapes and big game thrills. With iconic Victoria Falls on its doorstep, the resort gives roaring adventures, a comfy den with a contemporary vibe combined with essential comforts, all amid dramatic nature.

The resort's biggest draw is its impressive location, just a five-minute stroll from one of the Seven Wonders of the World – the majestic and world's largest curtain of falling water, the Victoria Falls. Guests enjoy free unlimited access to Victoria Falls, coined by the region's locals as Mosi-Oa-Tunya, which means "the smoke that thunders". Easily accessible at just 25 minutes' drive from Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula International Airport (LVI), the resort can be reached by a seamless transfer service. Alternatively, for a refreshing arrival journey, you can transfer from the airport to the Royal Landing, hop aboard a water taxi and meander down the great Zambezi River, where an onward transfer continues to Avani Victoria Falls Resort. A heritage ritual welcomes you at reception, with Ngoni Warriors performing traditional songs and dances.

Avani Victoria Falls Resort stands apart for its natural beauty and vibrant local style, with the 46-hectare grounds also attracting zebras, giraffes, impalas and monkeys. Guests can stroll around the gardens for a wild nature walk, go bird watching, investigate the herb and vegetable garden, or see the worm farm and compost project in action. A series of eight buildings are de-



signed with hints of rugged nature and local culture. Adobe-style architecture is perked up with bright mosaics, ethnic wall stencils and Zambian artworks and accessories – setting the scene for a real African experience.

The resort's 212 rooms and suites are awash with warm African colours and Zambian charm, and they either overlook the pool, the landscaped gardens or lush wild bush, clearly designed for relaxing nights of sleep and down-time between adventures.

An absolute must on every Zambia itinerary, Victoria Falls is just a five-minute stroll from the resort, and all guests enjoy free unlimited visits. With such swift and easy access, travellers can tick one of the world's Seven Natural Wonders off their bucket list and go back as many times as they like.


### *Then there's the Devil's Pool...*

A daring highlight of visiting Victoria Falls is swimming in Devil's Pool. This uniquely located plunge pool is situated right on the edge of the Falls, where the thundering cascade of water plummets 350-feet, providing a pulse-racing dip for those brave enough to venture into the Zambezi River. The pool is also special in that it can only be visited between mid-August and mid-January, before the summer rains swell the river. Afterwards, the pool remains hidden and off limits under the river's pounding flow.



Adrenalin thrills abound. The Zambezi has class three to five rapids and is one of the world's best for white water rafting. Abseil, gorge swing and flying fox experiences offer dry excitement, and the Victoria Falls Bridge attracts bungee fans to hurl off one of the highest commercial jumps in the world. Highflyers can soar above the Zambezi rapids, the spray of The Falls and the wildlife of Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park in a helicopter, or revel in a bird's eye view with the wind in your face from the open cockpit of a microlight flight.

FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS, GUESTS CAN ENJOY PRIVATE DINING ON THE EDGE OF THE ZAMBEZI RIVER, KINGFISHER ISLAND, THE BIRD HIDE, OVERLOOKING VICTORIA FALLS OR IN THE GARDEN. A PERSONAL CHEF AND BUTLER WILL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING AND SERVE PERFECT MENUS OF PAN-AFRICAN AND ZAMBIAN DELICACIES FOR BREAKFAST, LUNCH OR DINNER.

AvaniKIDS invites the cubs to run wild at Zuba's Adventure Camp, with jungle playground explorations and pack walks out in nature, all under the watchful eye of trained child minders, who also offer babysitting services. 

### About Avani Hotels & Resorts

Launched in response to a growing global group of discerning world travellers whose priorities are service, style and value, Avani Hotels & Resorts is a contemporary, upbeat brand that delivers the perfect balance. With a focus on good sleep, effective social spaces, locally sourced sustenance and genuine service. Avani welcomes guests to over 20 properties in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Seychelles, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, the United Arab Emirates, Portugal, Australia, New Zealand and Laos, with a pipeline of further openings in Australia, Asia, Indian Ocean and the Middle East.

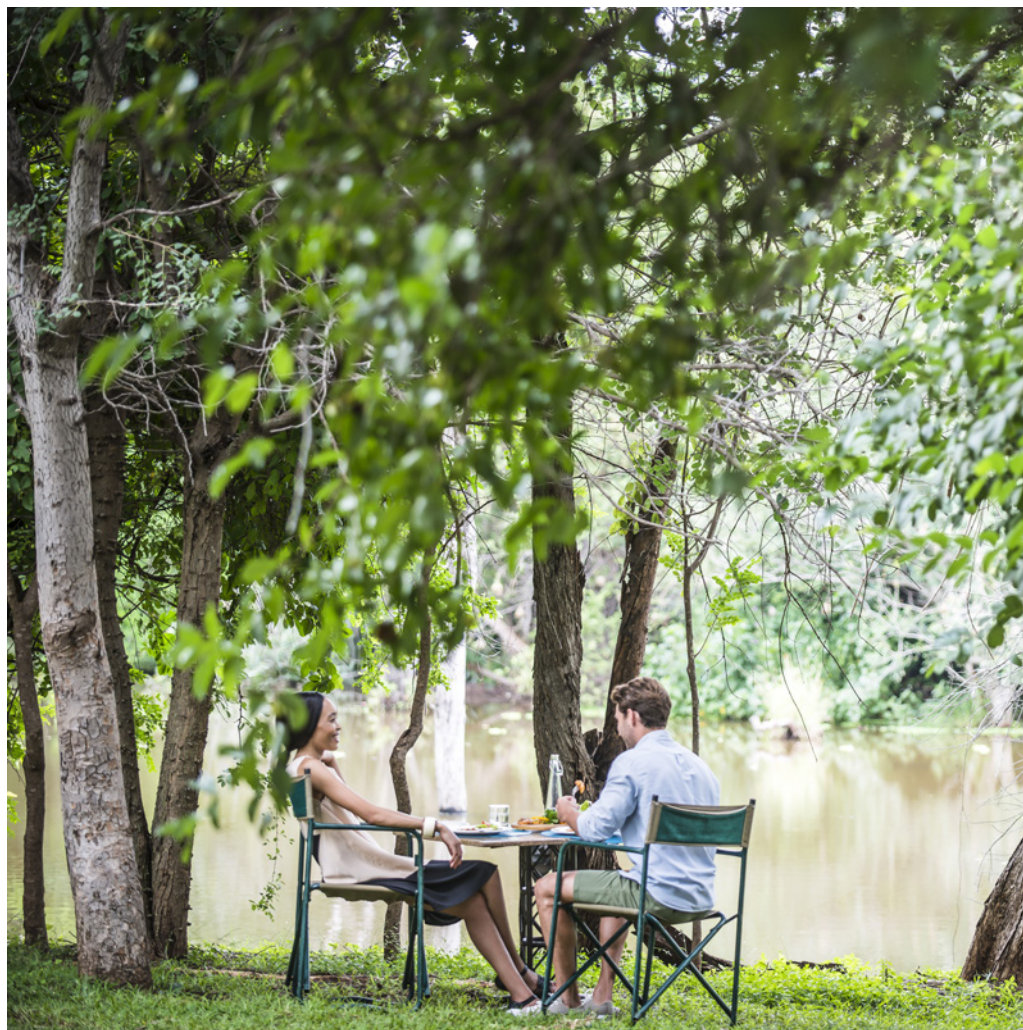
Avani is part of the **DISCOVERY** loyalty programme.

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# SUMMITTING THE ROOF OF AFRICA:

*Lulu Pownall*  
TAKES ON MOUNT KILIMANJARO









"The time was about 6 am and we felt energized and restored from the entire night's hike. We were almost closer to Stella point which is about 1 hour from Uhuru peak."

An attempt to summit Mount Kilimanjaro is a daunting one, but Lulu's adventure as she endured a gruelling hike to reach the top, is one of victory as well as inspiration.

Kilimanjaro is Africa's highest mountain, the highest point being 5,895 metres (19,341 ft). A hike to the top can take anywhere between 5 to 9 days, depending on the route taken and one's pace. Every year, hikers and adrenaline seekers embark on the journey to the top of Kilimanjaro, braving the harsh cold weather, high winds, as well as altitude sickness. Not many make it to the highest peak on the mountain, but the attempt to do so is celebrated. Those that make it to the top, experience the African sunrise as the sun kisses their frostbit skin. Breathtaking views are guaranteed, as you stand above the clouds with a God-like view.

Lulu Pownall, a Tanzanian adventurer, took on Mount Kilimanjaro in 2018. Her story of how she conquered Mount Kilimanjaro will leave you wondering if perhaps, now is the time to start mapping out your next wild adventure and heading off to Mount Kilimanjaro to tackle those altitudes!

## 1. TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF. WHO IS LULU AND WHAT DO YOU DO?

I am Lulu Pownall, born in Arusha, Tanzania and currently the owner of a travel company called Furahi Afrika Safari which offers wildlife safaris, Kilimanjaro climbing, cycle tours and cultural tourism.



## 2. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO TAKE ON MOUNT KILIMANJARO?

Having seen tourists from other nations coming to explore my country, I felt that as a young Tanzanian woman I could also be a pioneer to encourage other women both from within and outside Tanzania to explore the nature that we have and also have a goal achieved. Therefore, climbing Kilimanjaro for me was not only a dream come true but an inspiration to others who love exploring nature and taking on adventures.

## 3. DESCRIBE THE HIKE UP AND THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED ALONG THE WAY

As we may have all heard, Kilimanjaro is described in many words; the most common of which is “The Roof of Africa”. This is a dream come true for anyone who has the idea to make it to the top – a mammoth 5895

meters above sea level!

I began my hiking preparation over three months before climbing. I used to cycle on a mountain bike to be fit, and I never smoked or consumed alcohol. I ate healthily and took long walking tours. September 2018, I was a part of a group of ten people who would climb Kilimanjaro for seven days. The group included a family of seven from the Netherlands, two men, one from Italy, the other from Canada and me.

The start took off with a drive to Machame gate which is about 1800m in altitude. Here we had our lunch, filled our back packs and started our hiking. On this first day, we hiked for about 6 hours through the rainforest and had an over-night stay at Machame camp. The second day, we started with breakfast and then hiking to Shira camp which is 3050m high for about 5 hours. Here, we passed the Moorland zone and got to see the Shira caves.

The third day was a bit challenging since we had to hike up to 4600m high at Lava Tower and then down to Barranco camp which lies at 3850m. The process of acclimatizing helps the body to adapt to the high

altitude and reduce the risk of altitude sickness. On this day, I felt colder, but our supportive guides were always there to help us and service us with delicious warm meals. The day hike took about 6-7 hours walking.

Day four covered a hike from Baranco camp to Karanga camp through Alpine desert. On this day we had a smooth hike and took 4 hours to reach Karanga camp. The fifth day took us to Barafu camp which gives a spectacular view of the Uhuru peak. Here, we camped, rested and prepared for the summit day.

The most exciting day was day six also known as the summit day. We got up early around midnight and started our hiking to the top. It was dark, cold and steep. The wind was blowing, that we could feel the movement. Our guides sang and made us feel better while we tried hard to keep on the hiking. Along the side, we met other tourists on their way up. We had our head torches that gave us light and our hiking sticks which supported us.

As we got closer and closer to the top, the sun began to rise from the Far East. This was an unexplainable feeling – even today, I find it hard to describe. You have to experience it, to know it. It was about 6 a.m. and we felt energized and restored from the entire night hike. We were almost closer to Stella point which is about 1 hour from Uhuru peak.


From Stella Point, we encountered snow and the beautiful view of the crater, and the sky. At this point, we were standing high above the clouds. We continued hiking through the snow to Uhuru peak, the top of Kilimanjaro, the roof of Africa and the world's free-standing mountain. Our journey was now coming to an end, with laughter, tears of joy and time for photos to keep those memories and inspire others to take on similar adventures.

#### 4. WHAT TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE MOUNT KILIMANJARO ON THEIR BUCKET LIST?

To those who have dreams to climb Kilimanjaro, I would say it is never too late to climb. With a willing mind and some preparation, anyone can make it. Of course, one should take precautions in case they have some health conditions that could be risky to take on such high altitudes. The main advice is to consult your doctor. Otherwise, you will just have to keep healthy and fit with some sports and exercises and also follow the guidelines from your tour guides. Drink lots of water and eat healthy too. As you climb the word “polepole” will be used most of the time. This means slowly-slowly, enabling any hiker to take on easy pace and adapt to the high altitudes easily.

#### 5. HOW HAS YOUR LIFE CHANGED POST-KILIMANJARO?

Kilimanjaro climbing has brought more into my life. After my climb, I realized that I could use my passion and translate it into the business. Today, I have established a travel company [www.furahiafrikasafari.com](http://www.furahiafrikasafari.com) which provides adventures and tours based on real-life experience. I want to continue to share adventures, nature and culture in my country Tanzania with the people from every corner of the world. Come explore nature, and live adventure

If Kilimanjaro is on your bucket list, be sure to connect with Lulu and book for an unforgettable experience at the ‘Roof of Africa’. 





# THE WANDERLUST WITHIN






# 10

## Reasons Why "The Last Eden"

SHOULD BE YOUR NEXT  
ADVENTURE TO WEST AFRICA



**G**abon is so unique that it's no wonder

it was coined "The Last Eden" on earth by the National Geographic. And so it is! Located in Central Africa between Guinea, Cameroon and Congo, this little gem is a small nation where forests spread over more than 80% of the country. In 2002, then-president Omar Bongo created 13 National Parks which represent 10% of the country's landmass. Unlike the East African countries which have become a common destination for travellers looking to experience nature's intrigue, Gabon on the other hand makes for a perfect escape for those willing to wander into uncharted territory that also boasts unique wildlife and incredible landscapes.

Because Gabon's touristic appeal is one of West Africa's best kept secrets, with countless experiences that adventurers could marvel in, wanderlusts from far and wide should very well put this nation on their bucket list, as there is much to explore. From surfing hippos and humpback whales, to Clearwater beaches and magnificent national parks, here are a few activities one could add to their itinerary should Gabon be on the horizon:

Photo sourced from Getty Images



# 1 CLIMB MOUNT BRAZZA IN THE LOPE NATIONAL PARK

Lope National Park is the largest National Park in the country and the first ever to be established in Gabon. It's undoubtedly the oldest and one of the most astounding biospheres on the African continent. Recognised as a UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE in 2007, the first thing to impress you as you arrive at Lopé is the patchwork landscape of open savannah and dense rainforest. Towering 500 meters over Lope National Park, Mount Brazza is a playground for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike. The ascent to its summit is a highlight of the national park, a journey that retraces the expedition of the Italian-born French explorer Savorgnan De Brazza, who left an open track for the French colonies. Today, Mount Brazza provides an unforgettable experience and such a breath-taking panorama. The view at the top is truly extraordinary. Whether you're looking for adventure, escape or views to take in, a hike up Mount Brazza is not to be missed.

## SWIM IN BAIE DES 3 RIVIÈRES (3 RIVERS BAY) IN PORT-GENTIL.

La Baie des 3 rivières is a little piece of heaven in Gabon. The scenery is simply magnificent, with clear water and white sands welcoming tourists to one of the most famous beaches in the country. A wide range of activities are available, including snorkelling, paddling, fishing and cruising. Be sure to book your two nights stay at the Eco-lodge "Aux Berges des 3 rivières" if you are looking to start each of your days in what you'll undoubtedly view to be a paradise.

# 2



## *Go whale-watching off the coast*

Gabon is an idealistic place to spot humpback whales, given its marine waters host over 20 species of endangered dolphins and whales. During the breeding season from July to September, whales are often seen putting on spectacular shows off the coast. Local guides can take you on small boats from Libreville, Port-Gentil or Mayumba, and from then on, you'll just need to travel a few hundred meters from the coast before you see some whales. Best believe that if you've never seen these huge aquatic creatures before, whale watching is surely an experience you will never forget.

4

## GORILLA TREKKING IN LOANGO NATIONAL PARK

While the gorilla trekking experience in Loango National Park and even Gabon in general is less refined than its East African peers, some would argue that the overall experience is unique and more authentic. Loango National Park is one of only a few places where it is possible to see habituated, wild western lowland gorillas.

Gorilla trekking is a year-round activity, yet the best time to visit the gorillas in Loango is January – May. Also, it's important to note that a Gorilla permit in Gabon is less expensive than its neighbours, coming in at only \$300 per individual. However, it may need several hours of hiking before seeing the gorillas.

If you desire to make your trip extra-rewarding you should visit Evengue Island too, also called Gorilla Island. There's a rehabilitation centre that was built on the Island by the Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Project (FVGP), whose main aim is to save the orphan gorillas of Gabon. Tourists are invited to visit the rehabilitation centre where they can learn more about efforts to protect gorilla populations in the region from poaching, illegal trade and habitat loss.



## WATCH TURTLES NESTING

Gabon hosts the single largest population of nesting leatherback turtles in the world each year between November and April. Four species of sea turtles nest along the 800 km of Gabon's coastline. The show is so beautiful that is something you should definitely do when you come to Gabon. The turtle capital in Gabon is Mayumba (South West) however you can still watch turtle nesting in the Pongara National Park, 30 minutes away by boat from Libreville. The best experience is to go on nighttime turtle walks! Even so, only a flashlight with a red filter on any camera or device is allowed so that the sea turtles remain undisturbed.



## Paramotor excursions over Pongara National Park

Take an incredible Paramotor flight over savannah (and the forest) as you seek out buffalos, elephants and several of other animals. Experience this beautiful ecosystem from a unique aerial perspective as you explore Pongara National Park.

5



## Dare to surf with hippos and elephants in Mayumba?

If you like surfing and would like to experience an adventure a little less conventional than the typical wildlife sighting while on a game drive or sunset cruise, Mayumba is certainly the place to be. This southern national park is well recognized for not only its waves but for its hippos and elephants on the beach. No this not a joke, you will be able witness something astonishing: hippopotamuses swimming in the midnight blue Atlantic Ocean and elephants walking on the beach. Amazing, isn't it? Nevertheless, getting to Mayumba is a long journey from Libreville which requires travellers to be a little patient on their trip there.





# 8

## SAFARI TOUR IN NYONIÉ

Nyonié Reserve is a gateway when you want to escape from Libreville's craziness. Relaxing on the beach or going on a safari, you have quite a good bit of options to choose from. During the safari you can observe animals such as elephants, monkeys, gorillas, buffalos or even occasional leopard sightings as you would see in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa or other parts of Africa renowned for a wide array of wildlife species.



## *Participate in a traditional dance performance*

No trip to Gabon would be complete without experiencing one of the traditional Gabonese performances. Whether you are watching or joining in on the festivities, the traditional dance performances are uniquely captivating and they hold an important place in the local culture. The way the dancers move and time their rhythm to the sound is as unsettling as it is amazingly beautiful.

# 9

## Visit Sainte-Anne Mission and its Bamboo forest in Fernan Vaz

Sainte-Anne Mission is viewed by some to be an iconic landmark much the Eiffel Tower is to Paris or the Statue of Liberty is New York City. Perhaps to some, the symbolism may not be as significant, however the history books have it that the mother of the first priest at this mission asked Gustav Eiffel in 1889 to ship the plans and materials that would be used to then build the Sainte-Anne Mission. Seeing Saint-Anne mission from afar is quite evocative, as its hues of browns contrast the surrounding bamboo forest. Sort of mystical in appeal, one can open their eyes and look up at the sky, admiring the thick towering bamboo stalks that seem to continue endlessly up towards the heavens. You'll almost certainly feel like you have entered another world, like a place taken out of the fairy tale of Alice in Wonderland.



# Inside Nairobi's African Heritage House

The African Heritage House, which overlooks Kenya's National Park, has become synonymous with an epic showcase of African Culture through art, crafts, and textiles. Built in the 1970s, this landmark has accumulated the world's largest archive of Africa's ceremonies and rituals, many of which have vanished over time and are no longer known to the current generation. An intriguing element to this story is that the owner and co-founder of the African Heritage House, is in fact Alan Donovan, an American man who hails from the state of Colorado.

He arrived in Nigeria in 1967 as a Food Relief Officer for USAID, at a time when there was a terrible civil war between Nigeria and Biafra at the time. Alan's first trans-African safari in 1970 would lead him to Kenya, where after then spending several months in the northern part of the country, Alan would hold his first exhibition in Nairobi on the art and material culture of the nomadic Turkana people.

In attendance at this exhibition were the first Foreign Minister and second Vice President of Kenya, Joseph Murumbi, and his wife Sheila. Murumbi was possibly Africa's greatest private collector of African art and all forms of African culture, and it was his dream to set up a Pan African Gallery in Kenya where artists from all parts of the continent could show and sell their works, thereby preserving, protecting and promoting African culture. And thus, African Heritage House would become a reality, formed by the Murumbis and Alan Donovan in 1972.

Today, Alan is well known for his passion as a curator, collector, and preserver of Africa's most precious historical pieces, while simultaneously celebrating modern artists by showcasing their art. According to a World Bank study, the African Heritage House has become the "largest and most organized" show-



case and exporter of African art and crafts to the rest of the world for over 3 decades, as it houses an art collection spanning 50 years from all over Africa. Alan Donovan is passionate about preserving history as well as celebrating it.

The African Heritage House is a piece of art itself, a mud architectural wonder that was described by the renowned *Architectural Digest* as “an architecture rising from the serene Kenyan plain like an outcropping of earth, a vision of usefulness informed by the African genius for decoration. Inside the house, every wall, floor, and ceiling, is more proof, in textiles, wood, masonry, pottery, weaponry and art, of the irreducible modernity of African art and crafts”.

Alan drove across the Sahara Desert in 1969 and encountered the Pre-colonial mud buildings based on the indigenous architectures of places around Africa. These included the towering mud mosque of Djenne in Mali and the decorated Emir’s palaces in Nigeria, architecture from the East African Coast in Zanzibar and Lamu, palaces in Morocco and Northern Nigeria, and the painted houses of Ghana and Burkina Faso. Most of which has been washed away and never replaced, yet it was these infrastructures that inspired him to then study mud architecture in 1970.

### *The African Heritage House quest experience*

Today, the African Heritage House offers four distinctive guestrooms for overnight stay, with the Bakuba suite, the Moroccan suite and the Lamu suite each with a private verandah overlooking the Nairobi National Park. There rooftop ensuite family room offers 4 single beds, making it perfect for a family of 4 or group of adults.

You can enjoy a meal on the terrace as you take in the view of the Nairobi National Park, getting a better view from the rooftop and marvel at the vast land and exciting sights of wild animals. Take a tour of the house with Alan and be amazed at the unbelievable beauty of the art in the house, as Alan gives you the grand tour, entertaining guests with stories on each piece and how he attained it. “We give them the African Heritage





Experience which for their first visit with us, we provide our guests with an introduction to African history, art and culture. On their last night in of staying with us, we encourage them to return for a going-away dinner so that they can relax at African Heritage House”, cites Alan, when asked what guests can expect from an experience staying at African Heritage House.

### *A curator's dream*

African Heritage House's aim is to showcase artworks made by African artists from all over the continent. After building the mud house, Alan embarked on a journey of collecting the best art and craft pieces that truly reflected African Culture. “I then began travelling to about 20 African countries every year meeting artists and buying stock for my gallery.” The house is a work of art itself through its interior design and art displays, and it is often called “The most photographed house in Africa”. It has graced the cover of Marie Claire in Paris (April 2000) and has been featured in numerous other international magazines. Content creators and photographers travel from around the world to take photos in different parts of the home. It truly is an experience of a lifetime.

### *An evolving story*

Alan is currently building a new museum called the Timimoun African Journeys Museum next to African Heritage House in honour of the memory of the late Joseph and Sheila

Murumbi, who were possibly Africa's greatest private collectors of African art and all forms of African culture. The museum was slated to open on December 12, 2020, with a Gala Benefit, however, plans were interrupted but the global pandemic, which has subsequently impacted global tourism. In the meantime, discussions are underway to also transform the African Heritage House into the premiere African Studies Center in partnership with UCLA (the University of California at Los Angeles) and Strathmore University. A campus will be built at African Heritage House that will accommodate 12 visiting professors and graduate students. Both masters and doctorate programs in African Studies will eventually be offered.

African Heritage House was made a national monument in January 2016, cementing its position as a distinctive Nairobi landmark that preserves African deep rooted, diverse heritage and cultures. The African Heritage House is part of a community of homeowners who have lived along the border of the Nairobi National Park for over 50 years, continuing to serve as a bulwark to protect the Park from commercial development, degradation and poaching. 

# Building “BEAUTIFUL ZIMBABWE”

CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR, BUSANI LEROY BANGO'S SHEDS LIGHT ON THE JOURNEY THAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE “BEAUTIFUL ZIMBABWE” BRAND.

## 1. GIVE US A LITTLE INSIGHT INTO BUSANI BANGO? WHERE ARE YOU FROM AND HOW HAS YOUR LIFE STORY BROUGHT YOU TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

My name is Busani Leroy Bango and I was born and raised in Bulawayo, first in Morningside then Khumalo Flats just opposite Harare Road. Growing up I was quite an artistic kid who used to love drawing a lot. Drawings would vary from cars, portraits, and comical characters mostly and I really performed well in any artistic assignments from school because of this. Art and PE are the periods I loved most in school as they were a chance for social expression with other kids and an opportunity to flex and improve my creative curiosity through drawing.

When I turned 14, I really started to take drawing seriously and did art lessons at the Bulawayo Art gallery. This was a period where I realised that Art was not only defined by drawing but it came in different, unique forms of expression. Around about the same time, an English teacher noticed how creative my composition writing was and would always show her eagerness for me to submit an assignment. To me this was a push in the right direction and this creative

writing has become the basis of my company - Beautiful Zimbabwe.

As I grew older, I took on a new interest. I really became obsessed with Computers and Music. To me the computer was just a fascinating tool, and this is when I started experimenting with graphic design through Windows paint. I loved music because it was a creative art that inspired other creative people into creating and it told so many different stories that I could relate to. Through all this I had parents who let me explore my artistic interests as much as they could, and I believe all this became the foundation for “Busani the Creative Entrepreneur.”

## 2. WHAT ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD INSPIRED YOUR PURSUIT FOR GROWTH IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY?

I had access to satellite television. I became very fond of a wildlife show done by the late Steve Irwin on National Geographic. My interest in animals grew very rapidly and I would usually imagine myself in the bush finding and talking about animals in the wild like Steve did. He was my first Tourism and Wildlife role model and I really wanted to be a professional wildlife guide – arguably a far cry from the artistic space I was wildly passionate about.



Having satellite TV in the home also exposed me to the bigger picture, the world of tourism. It was fascinating that there was such an industry and how the world had so many beautiful attractions including my place of birth - Zimbabwe. I quickly realised how happy people were when they see and experience new things through tourism and how important tourism is to the global economic landscape. I'd say this caused a shift within me when I was about 17 - from wanting to be a professional wildlife guide to feeling the need to impact the tourism industry the only way I knew how - through art and creativity. I had to learn more about tourism first though.

### **3. TALK TO US ABOUT BUSANI THE CREATIVE? WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GET INTO PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY?**

I am a creative entrepreneur who specializes in photography, videography, social media marketing and graphic design. I also run a Travel agency. All these skills are self-taught and driven by the need to grow my tourism and media brand Beautiful Zimbabwe.

Beautiful Zimbabwe has been my sole focus for the past 4 years. In terms of what inspired me to pursue photography and videography, it was the opportunity to travel around Zimbabwe as part of an International Media team for the 2016 Hlanganani/Sanganai Travel Expo held in Bulawayo. ZTA granted me this opportunity and one of my duties was to market and spread awareness of Zimbabwean tourism and the expo through my online platform Beautiful Zimbabwe.

This was my first opportunity to capture Beautiful Zimbabwe through

my lens and I had to borrow a Canon power-shot for the trip. I got a lot of experience from that trip but most of all I realised how important photo and video media will be if I want to grow the Beautiful Zimbabwe brand.

### **4. WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO CHANNEL YOUR CREATIVITY TOWARDS TRAVEL AND TOURISM AS OPPOSED TO DOCUMENTING ANY OTHER SECTOR?**

What made me focus on travel and tourism was the immense and immersive stories that tourism could tell one about the world, about a country, about a city, about a town, about a people and about an individual. To me, tourism is a look into the past, future and present. It is an industry that is interconnected to every other industry, yet it can be viewed as being most fragile. As a creative I want to tell these stories in my own unique way that will engage and grow the tourism conversation in Zimbabwe, Africa, and the world.

### **5. IN YOUR PHOTO AND VIDEOGRAPHY, WHAT MESSAGES DO YOU AIM TO PORTRAY IN THE FINISHED IMAGERY AND VIDEO CONTENT?**

That is a very interesting question indeed. I started Photography and Videography from the perspective of tourism where my content aims to create an immersive experience that has you imagining and wishing you

were there. This is not done through photo and video only but also through captions and a well written story that engages the viewer and makes them want to be part of the destination.

The message I want to portray is one that encourages travel and tourism to a point that there is a realisation that tourism resources must be conserved so that future generations can enjoy them too. This requires an engaging and clear message which for Beautiful Zimbabwe is "Travel is Freedom".

Besides Tourism, I have created content for various NGOs thanks to one of my clients Empretec Zimbabwe which specialises in entrepreneurial training for disadvantaged youth and women in Zimbabwe. It has grown to be a passion for me, as I am an entrepreneur and want to give back to those starting off. Here the message I always want to portray is to tell stories of these entrepreneurs in a way that exposes their talents and promotes their businesses.

### 6. WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS NAVIGATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BEING A VOICE FOR POSITIVE MESSAGING IN A CHALLENGING OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT LIKE ZIMBABWE.

My biggest takeaways in navigating entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe would be that it is important to build a support structure that will help you grow your business. This requires a lot of networking and building your social capital to a point where you are well known to the key people or a lot of people. This will give you the opportunity to export and market your talents.

Also, a lot of people always have excuses that the lack of money restricts them from starting yet they have relatives or friends that can give them the tools to showcase their unique skills at no cost at all. I started Beautiful Zimbabwe because I stayed with an aunt who had internet connectivity in her home. As they say charity begins at home and it's always good to look within your circle and see who can help you towards your dream. Lastly it is good to do your research in terms of the industry and your potential competitors. This is key in creating a unique and engaging product or service. Try to stray off the main path and see what you find.

### 7. LET'S TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT PROJECTS YOU'VE WORKED ON SO FAR. WHICH DESTINATION OR PERSONALITY HAVE YOU ENJOYED FILMING AND WHY? WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THAT PROJECT AND WHAT WERE THE MOST VALUABLE LESSONS YOU TOOK AWAY FROM THE PROCESS?

My creative journey over the past 4 years has been nothing short of amazing. There have been mistakes and lessons learnt but most importantly, a lot of memories created. My most memorable destination project was the 2016 Sangana/Hlanganani media tour. Even though I did not have the best camera, the value of the experience helped me steer Beautiful Zimbabwe in the right direction. It exposed the industry to me substantially and revealed the importance of media in driving Zimbabwean tourism forward. We visited

key local destinations like Nyanga, Mutare, Masvingo, Bulawayo, Hwange and Victoria Falls and there were significant visual assets I was able to capture through this experience.

The most memorable personality I ever filmed is definitely the late Oliver Mtukudzi. I had the opportunity to work with him twice in 2018 all thanks to visual storyteller Steven Chikosi. The first time was when he surprised newlyweds on their wedding day and the second time was during the Jacaranda Music Festival where my images were used as a backdrop for the event. Lessons learnt here was how important it is to always give back to the community and got some expert lessons from Steven Chikosi.

I really want to enter the mainstream music video industry because of my love of music and how I want to visually represent what artists sing about through my eyes. To date I have one music video that I did for a Dance hall artist called Jah Lots for his song 'Sango Rinopa Waneta'. I really enjoy the shooting, directing, and editing aspect of music videos. I would also want to start an organisation that helps upcoming Zimbabwean artists through music video and content creation. What that would look like is still brewing in my head for now though.

### 8. WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU HAVE FOR THE ASPIRING CONTENT CREATOR WHO WOULD LIKE TO TURN THEIR CREATIVITY INTO A PROFITABLE VENTURE?

I would say start by offering your service for free or voluntarily so that you learn and refine your skill set. Simultaneously it is important to showcase your work as you learn so that you can use the feedback to improve on your next creation. Also, social media should be your friend without a doubt. As you identify with your creation style always charge based on the skill level you think you are at. It is also important to be realistic about it to prevent client disappointments. Always aim to produce work that is above client's expectations too.

### 9. WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU HAVE FOR AFRICAN YOUTH IN GENERAL, AND AFRICAN YOUTH IN TRAVEL.

A message I have for the African Youth right now is that your future is in your hands and all you have to do is stretch out and grab the opportunity. The growth of the Information Technology sector has contributed towards increasing opportunities for youth in this digital age, so my question is "What is your unique digital idea?"

My message specifically for young people looking to pursue career in tourism and travel is quite simple really. It's time to move away from strictly focusing on only tourism and travel but also growing your digital and media skill set as preparation for the ongoing disruptive growth of IT in the African tourism landscape. 🌍

To connect with Busani and the Beautiful Zimbabwe brand across social media on:  @BeautifulZimba/ Busani Leroy Bango





# AFRICA TO THE WORLD



# Shaping THE AFRICAN NARRATIVE

SOLLY MOENG, FOUNDER OF THE BRAND AFRICA SUMMIT SPEAKS ON THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY'S ROLE IN TELLING AFRICA'S STORY.

**S**olly Moeng is the Founder and Convenor of the Africa Brand Summit, which has over the years gained significant traction as it builds on its recognition as a leading platform for monitoring evolving perceptions and growing narratives about Africa, as well as their impact on the continent's ability to attract goodwill and grow into a truly dynamic, inclusive and integrated economy.

Solly and others like him who are on an active campaign to redraft the continent's narrative, believe that it is not by chance that people the world over, find it easy to want to go to Paris, London, Geneva, New York, or to Singapore, Hawaii, Cape Town, Sydney, San Francisco, Vancouver, and countless other traditional destinations, and that they will do so almost with their eyes closed, without seeming to worry about whether they would be safe to eat the food, drink the water, walk the streets, or be safely treated at local hospitals should anything go wrong during their visits.

Apart from only a handful of them, African destinations have not always easily benefited from the kind of automatic trust described above. Sadly, being African has also not been covered with glory and automatic acceptance in many parts of the world. Africans still get viewed with suspicion when they board international flights, cross national borders, apply for jobs, scholarships, or attempt to rent places to live in, in many places around the world.

They easily get asked questions that do not get asked of others, and a lot of the attitudes they face have to do with how Africa tends to be perceived, around the world. To many, it remains a place of little development. Little development in global skills; little development in modern infrastructure; little development in what is accepted as modern *savoir faire*, *savoir vivre* and sophistication. It is also perceived as a place of scourges such as high levels of government corruption, dictatorships, illnesses, abject poverty, undeveloped political cultures, and high levels of unpredictability when it comes to economic and political policies.



## TRAVEL ACROSS AFRICA: THE PERCEPTIONS

When travel consumers the world over hear the words “travel across Africa”, as industry stakeholders and more importantly, citizens of the great continent of Africa, it is critical that there is a collective understanding of the perceptions that the world beyond our coastlines carries, so we know how to effectively combat these through knowledge-sharing and continued engagement on the more difficult topics.

“People, who have never been to Africa always have preconceived ideas of Africa being one large homogenous patch of land with wild animals and the village people all over the place. It is often only once they arrive in Africa that they discover some modern cities with advanced infrastructure, beaches, and very diverse wildlife experiences in different parts of the continent. Younger travellers get surprised by the invigorating nightlife in some African cities that favourably matches what they have known elsewhere”, cites Solly, when asked to share his thoughts on the perceptions that some international travellers carry before embarking on a journey to explore Africa for themselves.

Perhaps there is a greater role that all Africans should play in presenting a more positive image of the continent, one that would attract such levels of interest as do the likes of the aforementioned, Western and European travel destinations like Canada, Singapore and France. Africa isn't one big patch of land but rather 54 individual countries with an intricate web of cultures, belief systems, histories and governments.

“Travel marketers across Africa must be smart in how they package the continent to not only focus on stereotypical aspects of it. They must understand their target markets and create opportunities for inbound tour operators to play their part in offering the many tourist gems that often serve to create the appetite for more future visits and word-of-mouth promotions,” asserts Solly.

## AFRICA'S COLLECTIVE USPS

When we talk of travel, tourism and hospitality in Africa, the continent is endowed with incredible assets. Solly believes Africa's most

To reclaim and enhance a positive reputation, Africa must engage in regular uncomfortable conversations. The health of any brand's reputation can open doors for the said brand or ensure that they either shut in its face or remain shut, denying it of opportunities. Where such a brand is a destination, a healthy reputation can help it effortlessly attract Foreign Direct Investments, business and leisure tourists, fee paying foreign students, multilaterally funded research projects, and a whole basket of other foreign exchange earning opportunities that will contribute handsomely to the local economy by bringing in rare skills, developing local ones, and creating a whole array of other job, Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) opportunities in various fields.

– SOLLY MOENG

significant unique selling point lies in just how diverse the continent is.

“Africa's diversity is cultural, culinary, linguistic, scenic, floral, faunal, microbiological, oceanic, historical, and so on. The rich diversity of African people, from north to south and east to west, as well as the topography and expanse of the land, suffice to offer anyone more than a thousand reasons to keep visiting different parts of the continent over time and never tiring of discovering new things. Africa is truly a world in one continent,” states Solly, and his assertion concretely sums up why Africa should appear on the list of anyone looking for truly enriching moments as part of their global exploration itinerary.

“Tourism and travel professionals are vital links between Africa and the outside world, as they play a huge role in first, helping raise awareness about individual countries, regions, and the whole continent and, secondly, educating prospective first time travellers

about the continent and its many offerings. Knowledgeable travel professionals with a passion for Africa are best, as they're best positioned to sell Africa in a positive way and ensure that what they include in the itineraries they propose, provides enough diversity and depth for first time travellers to be turned into positive ambassadors of the continent and to return over time, knowing that there is always something new to discover in Africa," Solly adds.

### THE ROLE OF CULTURE TOURISM IN BUILDING "BRAND AFRICA"

More destination marketers are viewing Africa's artistic and cultural landscape as an opportunity to promote this to globally conscious individuals who are looking to connect with a people and their heritage in a deeper way. Countries such as Ghana, Kenya and South Africa have done well to curate tours that connect travellers with the history of their countries, much of which is presented through the creative space. When asked to comment on whether there are opportunities the continent should be pursuing in a quest to take Africa to the world, Solly emphasises that Africans are already generally known for their rich cultural diversity and artistic prowess, however expresses concern over a good number of famous African cultural and artistic icons opting to migrate and live in the West.

"There is much value in positioning key African centres as places to go to, almost as annual pilgrimage, to experience live festivals of all kinds. Places like Ouagadougou have long been positioned as honey pots for art lovers; other centres can be marketed for other art forms without necessarily competing with what is already working but to complement it. There will never be shortage, in Africa, of cultural and artistic expression of the kind that can be packaged to attract visitors from other parts of Africa and the world on a regular, even seasonal, basis. What Africa needs are people who can package its key offerings in the arts to compete with the best destinations around the world. But such packaging shouldn't just be commercial. It should also involve and benefit locals in various parts of the continent so that they value, protect, and enhance the offering over time," says Solly.

### WHERE DOES AFRICA BRAND SUMMIT COME IN?

Africa Brand Summit aims to serve as a platform for discussions led by Africans, but with strong participation by others from across the world, to diagnose the evolving image of Africa and being African. The aim is to isolate perceptions about Africa and to understand what sits at the root of such perceptions. Some of the things that inform and shape such perceptions are home-made by Africans themselves, while others are fed by non-Africans, particularly, but not exclusively, in global media that often portrays Africa and being African, using preconceived notions and various forms of stereotypes.

In the end, Africans have direct control over their own conduct, on how they run their own affairs, and in the messages they send about Africa to the rest of the world – and this holds true even

in the travel and tourism landscape, where players have a duty to inform. While they do not have control over what others say or write about Africa, they can better address such perceptions by changing many of things in Africa that serve as fertile ground for negative perceptions.

### THE THEME OF THE AFRICA BRAND SUMMIT 2020, TAKING PLACE ON OCTOBER 7TH AND 8TH, IS "RECAPTURING THE SOUTH AFRICAN NARRATIVE; INTERROGATING AFRICA'S BRAND POTENTIAL"

- At a high-level, summit discussions will ask:
- What is the current reputation/image of Africa as a whole, each of its five regions, and of select influencer countries?
- How does such an image /reputation influence attitudes in Africa and across the world?
- What are the key drivers/ influencers of such an image/reputation?
- What must be done to augment/enhance the positive aspects and to progressively eliminate the negative ones?
- What recommendations will be made for policy makers and other leaders in politics, corporate/business, civil society, media, and others, to get them to understand their respective roles and, eventually, to get them to play their part in generating, through their conduct, a progressively positive image of Africa, on the whole, and render it more attractive and hospitable for key skills (including those of expatriate Africans across the globe), (business) tourists, investors, global corporations, multilateral organisations, and so on?

In the words of Brand Africa Summit Founder and Convenor Solly Moeng, there are no short cuts to turning the current situation around and turning Africa into a more positively perceived place at home and around the world. There must be acknowledgement that part of the change must be made by us as Africans. Secondly, there must be a broad agreement amongst Africans about how change in various areas of reputational impact must be brought about and implemented over time.


Ultimately, a positively positioned Africa will be easier to market, attracting more visitation from international travellers who can experience the continent holistically and authentically, thereby debunking myths of what the "African experience" looks like. There is a lot more power in the hands of Africans to take control of the African narrative than many seem to believe, with organisations operating in the travel and tourism landscape, as well as creatives in the arts and culture space, participating in the advancement of positive messaging as it relates to the continent of Africa. 🌍

*To learn more about and register for the Africa Brand Summit visit <https://africabrandsummit.co>*

# African CREATIVITY TAKES CENTER STAGE

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A LOOK AT TEN OF KOFI AGORSOR'S ILLUSTRATIONS THAT HAVE TAKEN GHANAIAN ARTISTIC EXPRESSION TO THE WORLD.

frican artists have long been credited for their ability to redraft and communicate the African narrative through their distinctive workmanship. The term "art" is one that has transcended generations, taking on various new forms – from performance to illustration - using diverse mediums. Travellers often connect with the culture of a destination through its artistic landscape, as is evidenced by just how much arts and crafts markets almost always appear on the itineraries

of most. If it's a souvenir you are looking for that forms a stellar reminder of experiences in a place beyond purchasing the rudimentary t-shirt with a destination's name on it, then a visit to a curio shop or crafts market will surely tick many boxes. But sometimes, there are artists whose works have scaled the subsistence landscape, building a name for the curator and creative as his or her works stand alongside those of other artists at art displays the world over.

Ghanaian artist Kofi Agorsor's work is well revered in the global contemporary art landscape, having made a name for himself through solo and group



musical work, just like his artwork, is very rewarding. It often reflects the energetic subtleties of the collective of musicians he has worked with over time. Recently he has been spending a lot of time in the recording studio with his band. Inspired by both the natural and supernatural worlds, Agorsor's art and music inspires publics greatly. 🎵

## HERE ARE 10 OF KOFI AGORSOR'S ILLUSTRATIONS AND SCULPTURES FROM HIS GROWING BODY OF COLLECTIVE WORKS

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exhibitions as well as art auctions locally and internationally. Taking the story of Ghana to the world as he works predominantly in painting, sculpture, and music, Agorsor's prized artworks chronicle the everyday lives of Ghanaians in pursuit of growing modernisation. His work is presented mostly in an abstract and animated manner, using vibrant colour and distinctive patterns and sounds.

Born in the Volta region of Ghana, he grew up to then study architecture before completing more work specific to developing his artistic prowess at the Ankle College of Art. Agorsor's use of pulsating colors has evolved into an interpretation of the essence of lived experiences not just of people in Ghana, but those of modern Africa as well. His subject matter borders on the generic but rendered often in a buoyant, semi-abstract and witty manner. His canvases may be sparsely populated; often with a solitary figure in a sensuous pose, two lovers enjoying the presence of each other or they may be very populated, inhabited by crowds of market women or glitterati at events. Some of the canvases may be encumbered with splashes, drips, and flows of paint that intertwine to become forests or mazes of enchantment. It's safe to say, his sculptures are an embodiment of spontaneous orderliness.

Agorsor is also a musician and a member of the Af-ro-world band called "AGORSOR. An engagement with his

Above: The Precious fishes 2018 Acrylic on Canvas



Above: Riches  
2007/12 Ebony wood

Top Right : Beauty of  
lovers 2020, Acrylic  
on canvas

Bottom Right: In love  
with the green lady  
2019/20, Acrylic on  
canvas







No Discrimination  
(2011) Tree/Brown  
Ebony wood

Below: The white  
heart 2019/20  
Acrylic on Canvas



Above: The Universe 2017 Acrylic on canvas





To see more of Agorsor's work, contemporary art enthusiasts can connect with him on  @kofiagorsor

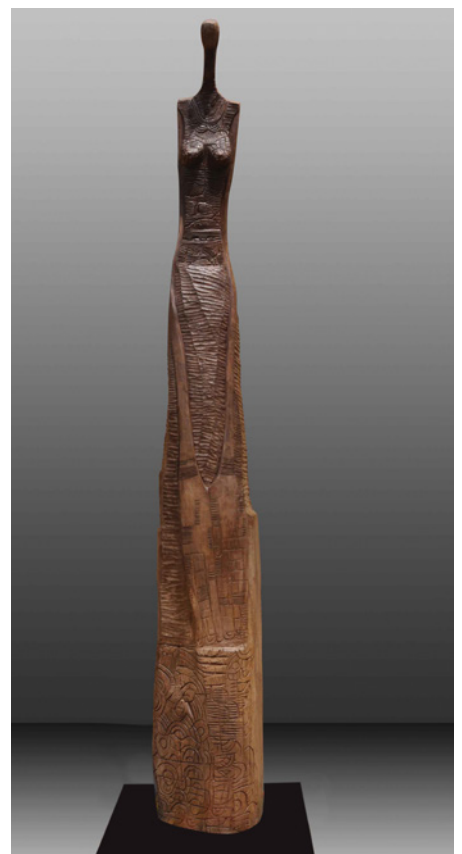
Music Night  
120x120cm  
2019/20 acrylic  
on canvas

Below (left):  
Riches at table  
2020 Acrylic on  
canvas

Below (Right):  
Home 237/59cm  
Ebony Brown



RICHES AT TABLE 2020 153/183CM ACRYLIC ON CANVAS



# 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?

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The image features a tropical beach scene at sunset or sunrise, with a warm orange glow. Palm fronds are visible at the top. In the foreground, two wooden lounge chairs are on the sand. The ocean has gentle waves. The logo for Travel Essence Magazine is centered, consisting of a large orange 'TE' monogram and the text 'Travel Essence MAGAZINE' in white serif and sans-serif fonts.

# Travel Essence MAGAZINE

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