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June 2025

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Experience

## Guest Post: Where the Light Begins

in Lodges and Camps

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# Guest Post: Where the Light Begins

*Mathieu Courdesses is a French wildlife photographer. A graduate of ESCP Europe, he specialises in photographing endangered animals. From the mountain gorillas in Rwanda to the Sumatran orangutan and the brown-maned lion of the Kalahari Desert, he aims to raise awareness through his work. He recently visited Singita Kruger National Park, where the light left a lasting impression.*

Some places feel like they have their own relationship with light. Not just places where light shines, but places where it shapes the landscape, reveals texture, softens contours, and brings the extraordinary to life. Welcome to [Singita Lebombo Lodge](https://enquiries@singita.com/lodge/singita-lebombo-lodge/).

Set between the red cliffs of eastern [Kruger](https://enquiries@singita.com/region/kruger-national-park/) and the Mozambican border, the Singita concession is one of those rare sanctuaries. I spent four days here, reconnecting with the kind of light that stirs something deep in me as a wildlife photographer. A light that moves, shifts, almost breathes, and gives the land a soul.

In the late afternoon, the rugged Lebombo hills catch fire in shades of red and burnt orange. I’ve rarely seen this effect with such intensity anywhere else. The mountains look volcanic, as if glowing from within. Then, just as quickly, the sun fades and the rivers that weave through the concession turn into mirrors of the sky. Pinks and purples ripple across the surface like a living painting. One that would have made Monet blush. In that light, nature changes. Everything feels softer, richer, and somehow more alive.

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## Where the visible and invisible meet

This is also the land of a creature as luminescent as the light itself: the white lion. According to Shangaan tradition, these ivory-coated lions came from the stars to watch over the Earth. Today, only seven remain in the wild, all within this region. I didn’t spot them this time, but their presence is still felt. It lingers in the imagination and reminds you that this land holds old stories and quiet mysteries. Some lights only appear to those willing to wait.

Maybe that’s the true magic of Lebombo. A place where light shapes extraordinary creatures. A place where the visible and invisible blend into one.

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## A lodge at the edge of the wild

Perched above the valley like a natural lookout, the lodge feels like it grew out of the land itself. Wood, stone, and glass come together in a way that’s elegant but never intrusive. Luxury here feels organic, in harmony with the wilderness around it.

Each evening, after a day on the tracks, I would return to my suite and dive into my images. With the soft light inside and the sound of elephants snapping branches just outside, I’d relive the day’s encounters and plan the next. Total immersion. Even in sleep, the bush never feels far.

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## Leopards and wild backdrops

At night, another ruler takes over: the leopard. Elusive, graceful, and endlessly photogenic, this feline moves like a shadow. And at Singita Kruger National Park, the terrain fits its elegance perfectly. Cliffs, wild acacias, and dry riverbeds offer the perfect stage.

In my photography, I’ve always sought the balance between subject and setting, the harmony between animal and landscape. Here, that connection is everywhere.

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## A reason to return

As I left the concession, I knew I was only taking a small part of it with me. I didn’t see the white lions. But I witnessed a light I had never seen before. A light that tells stories, that transforms everything it touches. A light that, maybe, only exists here.

And that’s more than enough reason to return.

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*Images courtesy of Mathieu Courdesses*

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