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WILDSIDE

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THIS EDITION IS DEDICATED
TO EVERY RHINO.

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become a Wildside Warrior.



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Southern White Rhinoceros
(Ceratotherium simum simum):
Photographer: Peter Bendheim

WILDSIDE MAGAZINE

Vol 11 No 4 of 4 2011
Summer Edition

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SUBSCRIPTIONS
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PUBLISHERS
Wildside Publishing cc

PRINTERS
CTP, Cape Town

DISTRIBUTION
RNA

COVER IMAGE: This edition is dedicated to every rhino. The importance of raising the profile motivated Wildside to abandon the traditional cover styling. We hope the rhino poaching issue is escalated through this as well as through the numerous projects dedicated to stop the slaughter of our rhinos.

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www.wildsidesa.co.za

Perspective

Wildside has dedicated this edition to raising the profile of the rhino poaching crisis because with more individuals and organisations becoming involved the chances of saving our rhinos are increased.

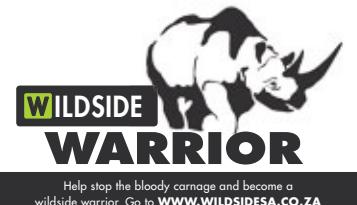
Wildside has launched a Wildside Warrior club. We hope you join and become a warrior because for every warrior who joins Wildside will donate R50 to Project Rhino, administered by the African Conservation Trust. All funds of Project Rhino go directly to anti-poaching. Criminal syndicates are highly organised and have deep pockets. Anti-poaching efforts need to be just as sophisticated. As example, more night vision cameras, more patrols, more aerial surveillance are needed for anti-poaching. Let's stand together and show the syndicates that we can and will fight back.

We asked advertising agencies, Ogilvy, Hardy Boys and Paton Tupper to design a cause advert, free of charge. They all said yes without hesitation and we pay tribute to them for their contribution. We also salute every individual and organisation voluntarily fighting rhino poaching.

Wildside brings you ecotravel, conservation and outdoor adventure and there is a fantastic line up of destinations just waiting for you, and as always loads of superb prizes. There are also thousands of more places to book on our website www.wildsidesa.co.za.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you. To all our Christian readers, we wish you a blessed Christmas.

Nkosi sikelela iAfrica.



Help stop the bloody carnage and become a wildside warrior. Go to WWW.WILDSIDESA.CO.ZA

CONTRIBUTORS



Rod MacLeod

Rod went down south to the Eastern Cape to visit Morgan Bay where he was enthralled by cinematic views and then onto Inkwenkwezi where he was fascinated by the white lion. Rod penned articles and captured superb images of both these destinations for this edition.



Jennifer Crawford

Zimbabwe is becoming increasingly popular amongst South Africans as a travel destination, so Jennifer headed north and visited Chikwenya near Mana Pools which she found wildly beautiful. It's also a world class tiger fishing spot and less populated than Mana Pools.



Dr. Bandile Mkhize

Chief Executive Officer of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Dr. Bandile Mkhize, gives a superb and fascinating overview of Ithala Game Reserve bringing much insight to this historically important region which sets the tone so well for the pages that follow on the reserve itself with its excellent facilities.



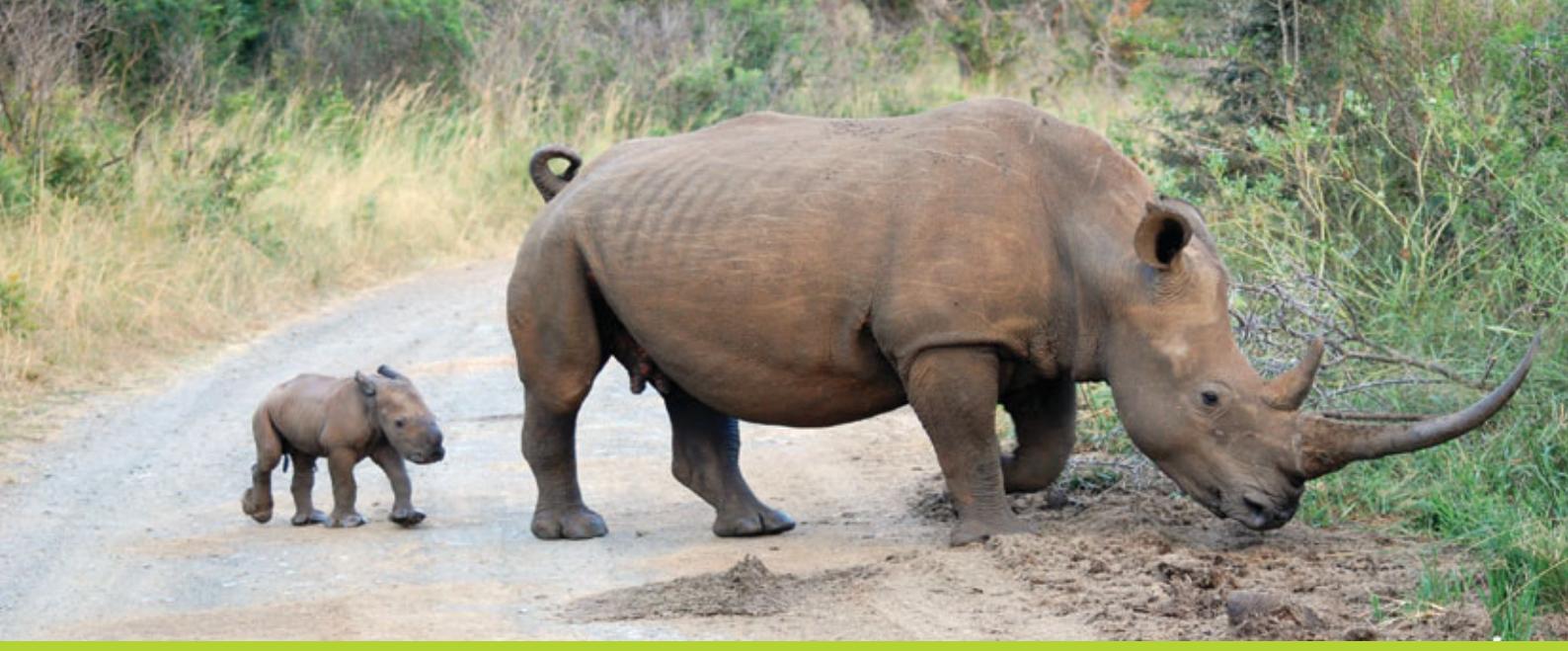
Peter Bendheim

Peter is a photographer and writer employed in the travel and tourism industry. His photographs have featured in National Geographic Traveller. His work is part of the permanent collection of the Durban Art Gallery. For this edition Peter visited Pongola Game Reserve.



Shona Lawson

Shona lives and works at Coral Divers in Sodwana as a manager. She has travelled extensively in South Africa and while her first love is hiking in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg, she's now heading into the sea with her open water course and writes about diving Sodwana in this edition.



Southern White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) in crisis – Page 12.



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COMPETITIONS

Win superb prizes. There's scuba diving, skydiving, a holiday break and book giveaways on offer. Winners of the previous prizes have been announced in this edition. Winners are only announced in Wildside so make sure you get your copy to check if you are a winner and then contact editor@wildsidesa.co.za to claim your prize.

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WILDSIDE TOP SPOTS

Wildside selects a range of top spots each year, all different, but each have a unique offering be it a spa, a great family destination, location or special experience – and sometimes all of this and more. Have a look at the Top Spot's spread and make your choice and when you do always ask about specials.

12

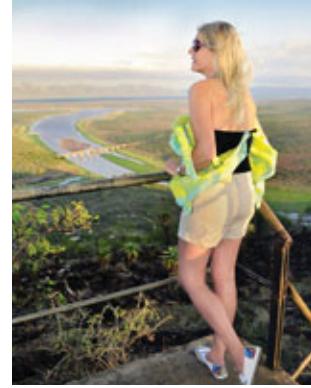
OUTRAGEOUS RHINO WARFARE

This edition is dedicated to rhinos. South Africa holds 93% of Africa's population, and if the poaching does not stop, they will be wiped out in 15 years, or less. It is a crisis. Something, everything, has to be done.

19

WILDSIDE WARRIOR

Become a Wildside Warrior. For existing subscribers, including Gold Rhino members it costs R180.00. If you are not a subscriber it is R280.00 and includes an annual subscription. For every Warrior, Wildside donates R50 to Project Rhino KZN. Warriors receive exclusive accommodation discounts, a vehicle sticker, entry into all competitions and you know you are contributing to anti-poaching.





Morgan Bay Cliffs – the dramatic grandeur of the Wild Coast – Page 48.

26 THE ELEPHANT COAST

The Elephant Coast in the north eastern part of KwaZulu-Natal offers a playground for travellers. There is world class diving, excellent deep sea and shore angling, tiger fishing, and Big 5 game viewing, and much more.



34 PONGOLA GAME RESERVE

Pongola Game Reserve in Zululand offers an authentic experience and affordable accommodation options for the entire family. There is still availability so for those of you who are last minute bookers, give them a ring.



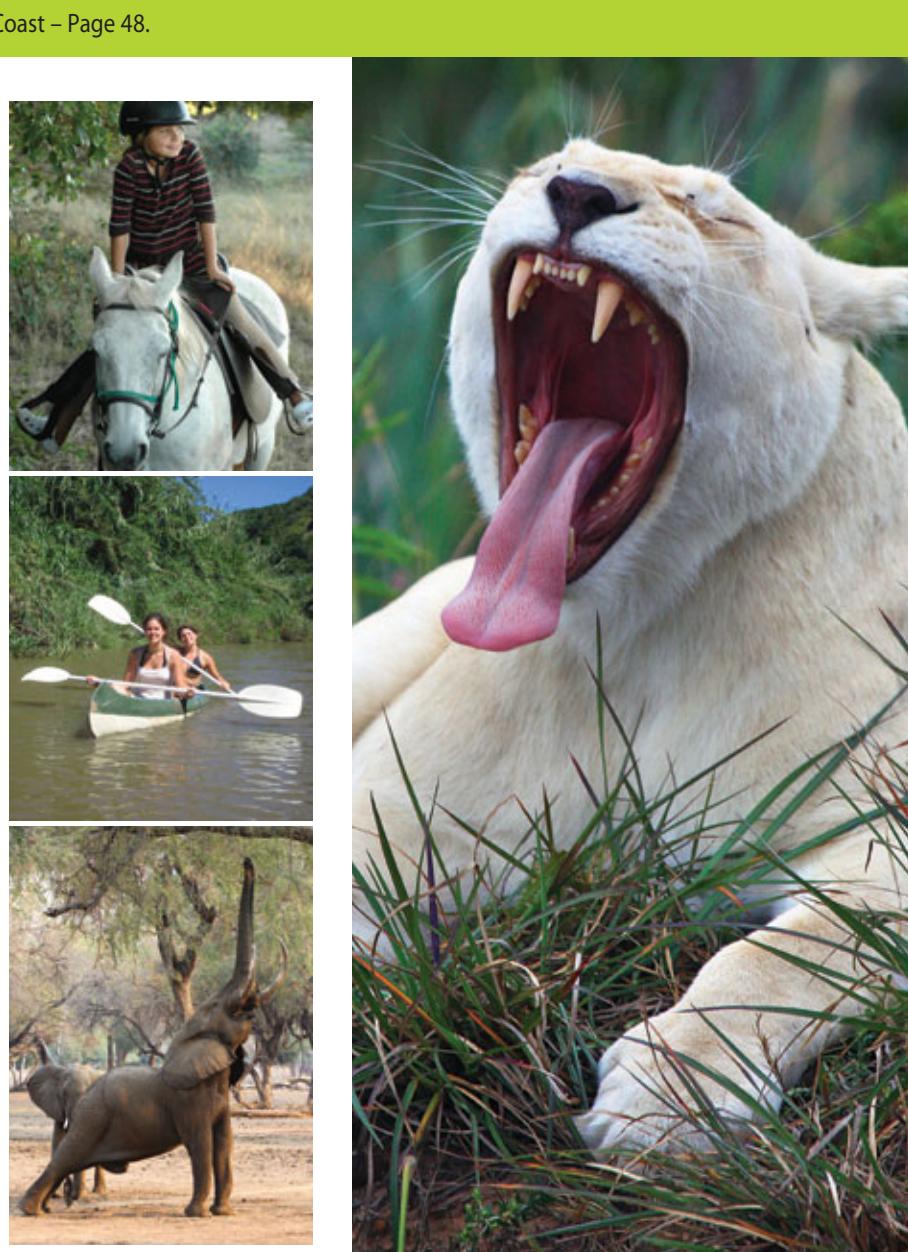
40 ITHALA GAME RESERVE

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife's Ithala Reserve is conveniently situated between Durban and Gauteng and is a beautiful natural sanctuary with diverse accommodation options.



46 THE WILD COAST – PLACES TO STAY

This magnificent stretch of coast has kept its wild charm and continues to offer holidays for people wanting to get away from it all. Wildside visited Morgan Bay Hotel, and Inkwenkwezi - a lodge with a very different offering. Lion at the Wild Coast ? Check it out.



62 ZIMBABWE – ZAMBEZI VALLEY

Wildside discovered Chikwenya, near Mana Pools, without the crowds, and in a wonderful lodge with everything laid on for you including all meals, air-conditioned luxury rooms, expert guides to take you game viewing and tiger fishing.

WIN WITH WILDSIDE

YOUR QUARTERLY ADVENTURE MAGAZINE THAT TAKES YOU THERE
To enter these competitions and give aways visit www.wildsidesa.co.za. Winners will be announced in the next edition of Wildside in April 2012.

SCUBA DIVING COURSE FOR TWO

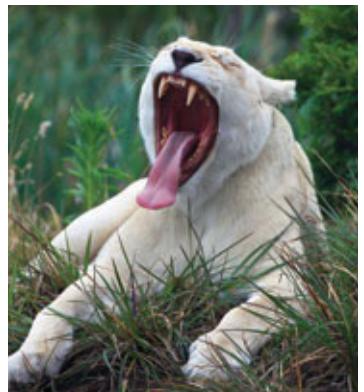


Discover a new and magical world and win a scuba diving course for two people. Coral Divers in Sodwana Bay, a world renowned diving mecca, is giving away a scuba course

for two people which is a full PADI accredited open water course worth R3,995.

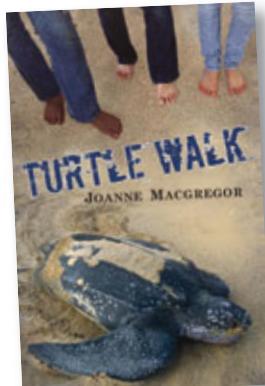
This course will qualify the diver to dive as deep as 18 meters. The prize consists of the full course value, five nights self-catering tented accommodation at Coral Divers, five theory and five pool sessions, an exam and four open water (in the sea) dives at Sodwana Bay. It includes use of all equipment, PADI Open Water Diver manual and PADI certification. It excludes park fees.

BREAKAWAY FOR TWO



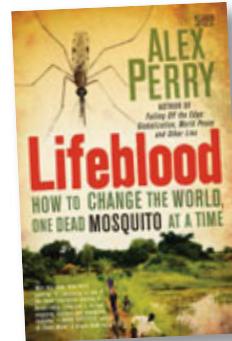
Escape to a unique bush destination and win a two night stay for two people sharing fully inclusive of all meals, local wine and malt. Inkwenkwezi is situated in the malaria-free Eastern Cape, only a 30-minute drive from East London at the

start of the Wild Coast. Inkwenkwezi is an exquisite combination of bushveld, grasslands and forests, with an area encompassing 4000 hectares.



BOOK GIVEAWAYS *Turtle Walk*

Five lucky readers will receive a copy of the book *Turtle Walk* by Joanne Macgregor. This delightful book, that is charming and funny will be enjoyed by young teenage readers who will discover that individuals can make a difference.



Lifeblood

Five lucky readers will win a copy of the book *Lifeblood*, *How to change the world one dead mosquito at a time*, by Alex Perry. In this book Perry weaves together science and history with a riveting exposé of the workings of humanitarian aid. Perry is TIME's Africa Bureau Chief, based in Cape Town.

STATIC LINE SKYDIVING COURSE

Experience the exhilaration of flying. Durban Skydive Centre is giving away two static line courses to the value of R1 350 each. The static line course consists of around 6 hours ground school where you learn all you need to know to make a safe parachute decent from 3,500ft.

In skydiving, a static line is a cord attached at one end to the aircraft and at the other end to the top of the parachute inside the jumper's rig. The skydiver jumping from the aircraft causes the static line to become taut, then it pulls the canopy free of the rig, freeing the



parachute and its passenger to continue descending freely, no longer connected to the aircraft. The main parachute then inflates, breaking the fall.

This static line mechanism opens the parachute automatically with no action required by the skydiver. No real fitness level is required, but you need to be free of injuries, and be in good health. It is weather dependant but KZN offers all year round good conditions.

WILDSIDE WINNERS

Michelle Hibbert is the lucky winner of a complete holiday wardrobe to the value of R3000 from Beach and Beyond.

Henri Christi is the lucky winner of a trip with Lightleys Holiday Houseboats of two nights accommodation for two adults.

Wildside terms and conditions relating to competitions. Winners names will be published in Wildside. Winners will not be notified so if you enter a competition be sure to buy Wildside and check if you are a winner. You will then be required to email editor@wildsidesa.co.za to claim your prize. Prizes not collected within 3 months of publication will be forfeited. All sponsors of prizes have terms and conditions pertaining to inclusions and exclusions. It is the winners responsibility to establish with the sponsor what these inclusions and exclusions are. Wildside will not be held responsible for any of the prizes, nor will Wildside offer any refund for whatever reason with regards the competition and prizes including if but not limited to a sponsor failing to honour a commitment. Prizes are not redeemable for cash, accommodation and courses need to be booked in advance, and the establishment notified you are a prize-winner in the said competition upon booking.



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Sungubala Mountain Bush Camp
is a member of Northern Drakensberg
KZN Wildlife Conservancies.

Sungubala Mountain Bush Camp ... the only bush camp in the mountains

10 000 REASONS TO GO AWAY

Visit www.wildsidesa.co.za to find and book over 10 000 places to stay throughout Africa, enter exciting competitions and giveaways, to view back editions on-line, or subscribe if you are not already a Wildsider !

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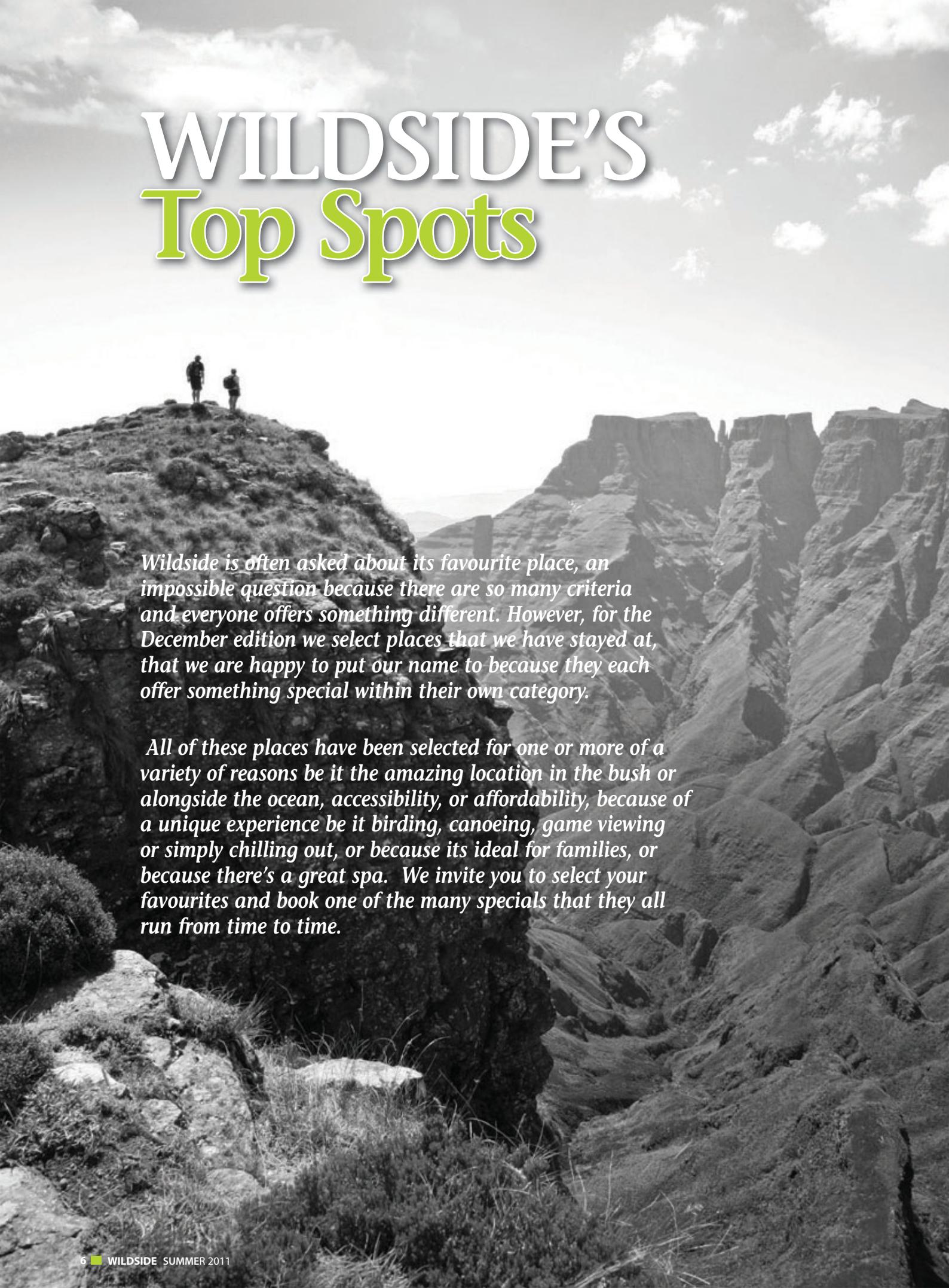
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Email: dpp@futurenet.co.za Web: www.dragonpeaks.com
Postal : PO Winterton, 3340

WILDSIDE'S Top Spots



Wildside is often asked about its favourite place, an impossible question because there are so many criteria and everyone offers something different. However, for the December edition we select places that we have stayed at, that we are happy to put our name to because they each offer something special within their own category.

All of these places have been selected for one or more of a variety of reasons be it the amazing location in the bush or alongside the ocean, accessibility, or affordability, because of a unique experience be it birding, canoeing, game viewing or simply chilling out, or because its ideal for families, or because there's a great spa. We invite you to select your favourites and book one of the many specials that they all run from time to time.



CAVERN RESORT AND SPA

Discovering a holiday destination close by, affordable, luxurious and family orientated is a rare find. So, when we heard about the Cavern Resort and Spa, we phoned to find out more. We were impressed by the professional staff who were thorough, pleasant and obliging and we booked our annual holiday with our three young children all under seven years of age.

A few months later, after a three hour trip from Johannesburg, we were in the midst of the majestic Drakensberg Mountains in the northern 'Berg with spectacular views near to the world renowned Amphitheatre. Once settled in our spacious, chic suite, my husband and I explored the resort with the kids before returning for a delectable lunch. The chef even prepared fresh puréed vegetables for our baby. That evening, my husband and I ate in the Adult Dining Room, whilst the kids ate in the supervised Kiddies'

Dining Room. We enjoyed our 'romantic rendezvous' so much that we ate by ourselves for the remaining four days.

We took advantage of all the activities. My six year old daughter and I relaxed in the spa getting manicures, enjoying the exquisite forest scenery while dad took our young boys fishing. Supervised daily pony rides and activities kept the children busy, while hubby and I took an afternoon nap. We even hired a nanny to take care of the kids and braved the 'Bungee Bounce'.

We left relaxed and with wonderful memories. However, we won't have to linger on them too long as we will be back next year.

R Phone for special offers & rates
i 036 438 6270
e info@cavern.co.za
o www.cavern.co.za

FORDOUN BOUTIQUE HOTEL & SPA

Fordoun, situated in the rolling hills of Nottingham Road in the KZN Midlands, was created and is managed with the goal that every guest should leave feeling uplifted, positive and relieved of stress.

Converted from a farmyard and dairy, this boutique hotel and spa has won many awards and accolades over the last four years. Last year Fordoun was awarded Best Spa in South Africa, through House and Leisure magazine. A glance at the guest comments book tells the story.

"I couldn't believe that 5 minutes from the N3 I'd find utter peace and tranquillity, as if I was in another world. From the staff to the ambience, everything works towards helping one to chill out," wrote a recent guest.

Combining a hotel, restaurant and spa in a great setting like the KZN Midlands gives guests the opportunity to make the most of what we have to offer. As a destination spa, the underlying philosophy is that

Fordoun is focussed on positive energy and the enjoyment of life. Whether guests are combining hotel and spa or just staying in the hotel, they will find delicious food (bordering on the indulgent), an exciting wine selection and staff who appreciate the privilege of hosting them.

Another wow addition to Fordoun with arguably the best view of the Midlands, are five new suites. Visit this superb destination for an all round relaxing experience.

R From R750 pppns
i 033 266 6217
e richard@fordoun.com
o www.fordoun.com



NAMBITI PLAINS PRIVATE GAME LODGE

Nambiti Plains Private Game Lodge, a 5 star African Luxury Eco Lodge, lies nestled within the smoldering beauty of a picturesque landscape of the spectacular Nambiti Game Reserve, a private Big 5 bush retreat and game conservancy set on 20 000 acres of malaria-free bushveld in KwaZulu-Natal surrounded by the Battlefields.

The abundance of natural water, perennial rivers and beautiful waterfalls on the Sundays River make Nambiti a unique sanctuary.

Nambiti Plains is an exclusive 10 bed lodge a mere 3 ½ hour's drive from Johannesburg and 2 ½ hour's drive from Durban. This lodge is one of a select few exclusive lodges that form part of Flavours of KZN – a fine dining experience to complement your special stay. In addition to game viewing, activities include walking

with cheetah, bass fishing, the Elands slagte Battle Field tour – note these activities are charged out separately.

Each of the five room suites are designed with the utmost care and detail to impress and surpass the expectations of even the most discerning guest. All suites are spacious and are completely secluded with 180 degree panoramic views from the bath tub, bedroom, outdoor "bush shower" (not in family suites) and private wrap around deck, guests can immerse themselves in the pure luxury that is Nambiti Plains. Call the lodge now for special offers or visit website to take a further look.

R Phone for special offers & rates
i 071 6804584
e info@nambitiplains.com
w www.nambitiplains.com

ISANDLWANA LODGE

"March slowly, attack at dawn and eat up the red soldiers," Cetshwayo, King of the Zulu Nation (1879). It is with these spine-tingling words in mind that Isandlwana Lodge invites guests to experience its unique hospitality in authentic surroundings and to listen to the fascinating stories of the Anglo Zulu War.

Isandlwana Lodge is located in the area of KwaZulu-Natal renowned for its natural beauty and formidable battle scars. The thought-provoking, four-star lodge is literally carved into the side of the Nyoni rockface, just below where the Zulu commander, Ntshingwayo Ka Manhole Khosa, stood during the epic historical battle as he watched the mighty Zulu impis overcome the British troops under the command of Lord Chelmsford at the base of Isandlwana Mountain on 22nd of January 1879.

Designed to complement the aesthetics of the natural environment, the lodge looks as

if it grew out of the rocks upon which it is built. The property has 12 stylish bedrooms, each en-suite, with a private balcony overlooking the panorama of the battlefield. There is also a guesthouse with three twin rooms which is equipped for self-catering purposes.

Guests from around the world remain mesmerised by the lore surrounding Isandlwana. Vivid stories of the battle at Isandlwana and the attack on the garrison at Rorke's Drift are told by resident historian, author and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Rob Gerrard, or one of his associates.

You are sure to have an unforgettable experience in this magical area of Zululand.

R Special holiday rates from R1120.00 pppns including meals.
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e lodge@isandlwana.co.za



HLUHLUWE RIVER LODGE

Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park remains one of South Africa's favourite game reserves. Along with its surrounding wildlife attractions the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, incorporating Mkuze Game Reserve and the marine reserves of Sodwana Bay and Cape Vidal, offers visitors an area of unmatched diversity.

Hluhluwe River Lodge is a family owned and managed resort bordering False Bay Park on the western shores of Lake St Lucia and the ideal stepping off point to access these fantastic attractions.

The lodge is set in the canopy of a pallid sand veld forest with 12 rooms spread about the shaded lawns where shy red duiker and nyala enjoy the peaceful tranquility. The central entertaining area commands a stunning view across the Hluhluwe River floodplain and lake. The expansive terrace is the ideal spot to put your feet up with a good book and a glass of wine from the lodge's extensive wine list.

Delicious dinners are served 'a la carte' by inventive chefs and only the best local meats are served with locally supplied organic vegetables. Flame grilled kudu fillet with green peppercorn sauce and Sindisiwe's baby chicken with peri peri and lemon herb sauce are but a few of the lodge's signature dishes. Breakfast creations such as the 'False Bay feast' keep you fueled for active days out. Apart from the variety of day trips exploring the area, the lodge offers game drives to the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and horse trails in False Bay Park. There are several kilometers of walking and mountain bike trails in the area and bikes are available for hire. There are also boat and canoe based bird watching trips on the Hluhluwe River. 12 air-conditioned en suite chalets all have decks with views into the forest. Chalet options are standard, family or luxury.

R From R1 200 to R2 200 pppns fully inclusive
i 035 5620246/7
e info@hluhluwe.co.za
w www.hluhluwe.co.za

THULA THULA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Only two hours north of Durban, you will find Thula Thula, the oldest private game reserve in Zululand, a wildlife sanctuary and home to big game and superb birdlife.

Experienced rangers will guide you on exciting safaris in open Landrovers through the unique diversity of this ancestral land to encounter buffalo, elephant, leopard, and rhino, giraffe, hyena, crocodile, zebra, wildebeest, kudu, nyala and a spectacular variety of other indigenous species.

Thula Thula offers you the choice of exclusive accommodation between the stylish Elephant Safari Lodge – renowned gourmet destination and the Luxury Tented Camp, offering an authentic African bush experience in a relaxed atmosphere.

Thula Thula Conference Centre, and its elegantly decorated boardroom or breakaway room with bar, lounge, library and TV accommodates up to 32 delegates. Fully air-conditioned

and situated at the Safari Lodge with great bush views makes it an ideal venue.

Activities include massage therapy, mountain biking, a visit to an authentic Zulu village, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Reserve or a cruise on the St Lucia Estuary as well as yoga and French gourmet cooking classes.

Day visitors are welcome for a game drive and lunch. Children of all ages welcome at the luxury tented camp. Malaria free. Special packages on offer all year long.

R From R1700 pppns
i 035 7928322 OR 0822599732
e thula@netactive.co.za
w www.thulathula.com



THONGA BEACH LODGE

Set on the secluded Mabibi Bay, in the heart of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park is the magical remote Thonga Beach Lodge. It is the perfect place to be fascinated with the diversity, brilliance and beauty of this corner of South Africa. Whether exploring above or below the surface of the Indian Ocean, there is an opportunity for everyone to investigate this magical place of tranquil swimming bays and snorkelling reefs, coastal forests, grasslands, bush, shimmering lakes and exquisite sandy beaches.

Welcome the migrating humpback whales from the tallest dune during the winter, witness the loggerhead turtles laying their eggs in the summer or swim with the dolphins throughout the year – the wildlife at Thonga is captivating.

Activities include scuba diving, Open Ocean experiences, kayaking and sundowner drives at Lake Sibaya, guided

snorkelling, seasonal turtle drives/walks, Tsonga Cultural tours and forest walks. Whether you are a walker or a diver, take advantage of the wealth of activities or simply relax on the white sandy beaches.

The 12 suites are luxuriously comfortable –plush enough to feel pampered, but relaxed for your sandy feet and sarongs. Thatched en-suite rooms have been carefully constructed in the coastal dune forest to ensure minimum impact on the environment and maximum guest privacy.

R R2360 pppns
I 035 474 1473
E res@isibindi.co.za
W www.isibindi.co.za

KOSI FOREST LODGE

Kosi Forest Lodge, a private haven set in the beautiful sand forest on the banks of the Kosi Lakes, in the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve.

The 8 thatched bush suites are comfortable and carefully positioned to provide guests with privacy and intimacy within the forest surroundings. The romantic en-suite bathrooms are open-air, giving guests a truly unique experience.

Kosi's fine cuisine and relaxing atmosphere is perfect for a family holiday with a host of estuarine, beach and wilderness activities. Be awakened by the abundant bird life that ensure Kosi is a recognized birders paradise.

The highlight of many guests' stay at Kosi Forest Lodge is the guided canoe trip on the Kosi Lakes. Admire the magnificent Raffia Palms whilst paddling the slow moving currents on the channels between the lakes.

Explore the 18km-long Kosi Lake system by boat through

various sized lakes and channels, followed by a picnic lunch and a swim in the sea at Bhanga Nek.

An hour's drive away is the beautiful Kosi Bay Mouth where the sea and lakes interconnect in a wonderful swirl of colour, sand and water. Snorkelling is fantastic and the water is warm and often crystal clear.

R From R1590 pppns
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RHINO WALKING SAFARIS – PLAINS CAMP & SLEEP OUTS

The ultimate safari experience has got to be discovering nature on a walking trail. Rhino Walking Safaris is the only officially declared wilderness concession in the Kruger National Park and established specifically to provide this unique and exciting experience. Plains Camp has become a sought after destination and experience. The focus of the trails conducted is on exploring the 12 000 hectares of unspoilt reserve allocated for our exclusive use on foot, guided by strict environmental principles and an enormous respect for nature.

The magic of exploring Africa on foot is the captivation of the senses – which are heightened when out on trail in an area that boasts numerous predators as well as the giants of the bushveld – elephants and rhinoceros. The crack of a twig underfoot sounds like a gunshot, and the scent of wild herbs crushed under foot is intoxicating.

The Trails Base camp is Plains Camp, and it is a shady tented haven which nestles unobtrusively under a thicket of knobthorn trees, overlooking the Timbetene Plain, for which the camp is named. Wooden decks raise the East African style safari tents off the ground, leaving no scarring on the earth. With only four tents (all en-suite) the ambience and service is personal and intimate. This cosy atmosphere is jealously guarded to the extent that specific arrival dates are set to prevent any disruption to the harmony.

R R3050 pppns
i 011 467 1886
t info@rws.co.za
o www.isibindi.co.za

UMNGAZI RIVER BUNGALOWS & SPA

The Wild Coast may be South Africa's most spectacular and yet least touristy region with its rocky coastline, indigenous forests, secluded coves and many river mouths. All on your doorstep at Umgazi, an award winning family resort and spa. The thatch-roofed bungalows amongst the indigenous gardens provide the perfect setting for a totally relaxed holiday.

Spend idyllic days lounging on secluded beaches. Take a guided walk or strike out on your own, explore the mangrove swamps, canoe up the river enjoy the myriad of birds and unspoiled natural beauty that this coastline has to offer. Immerse yourselves in waterways fly-fishing or indulge your wild side in the adrenalin rush of sea fishing.

The chefs offer delectable home cooking and fantastic local cuisine. Sample mouth watering meals and other delights while lounging on the deck or find a private spot in the wine cellar, the Green Door

or the riverside Gazebo. Children enjoy the art of playing whether it is fishing with gillies or sand boarding on the dunes. This is truly a child's dream holiday where they run around bare feet in the mud, slip and slide on the slide or where they make holiday mementos in the creativity corner.

Moms can soak up the sun around the pool or enjoy a bit of pampering at the Spa while little ones are being taken care of by their nanny.

Weekly fly-in packages are available Friday to Friday from Durban where you fly at 500 feet above sea level along the beautiful coastline – a wonderful way to start your holiday.

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t www.umngazi.co.za
GPS Co-ordinates:
S 31 36.680 - E 29 25.938

TIME REMAINING

07

06

35

48

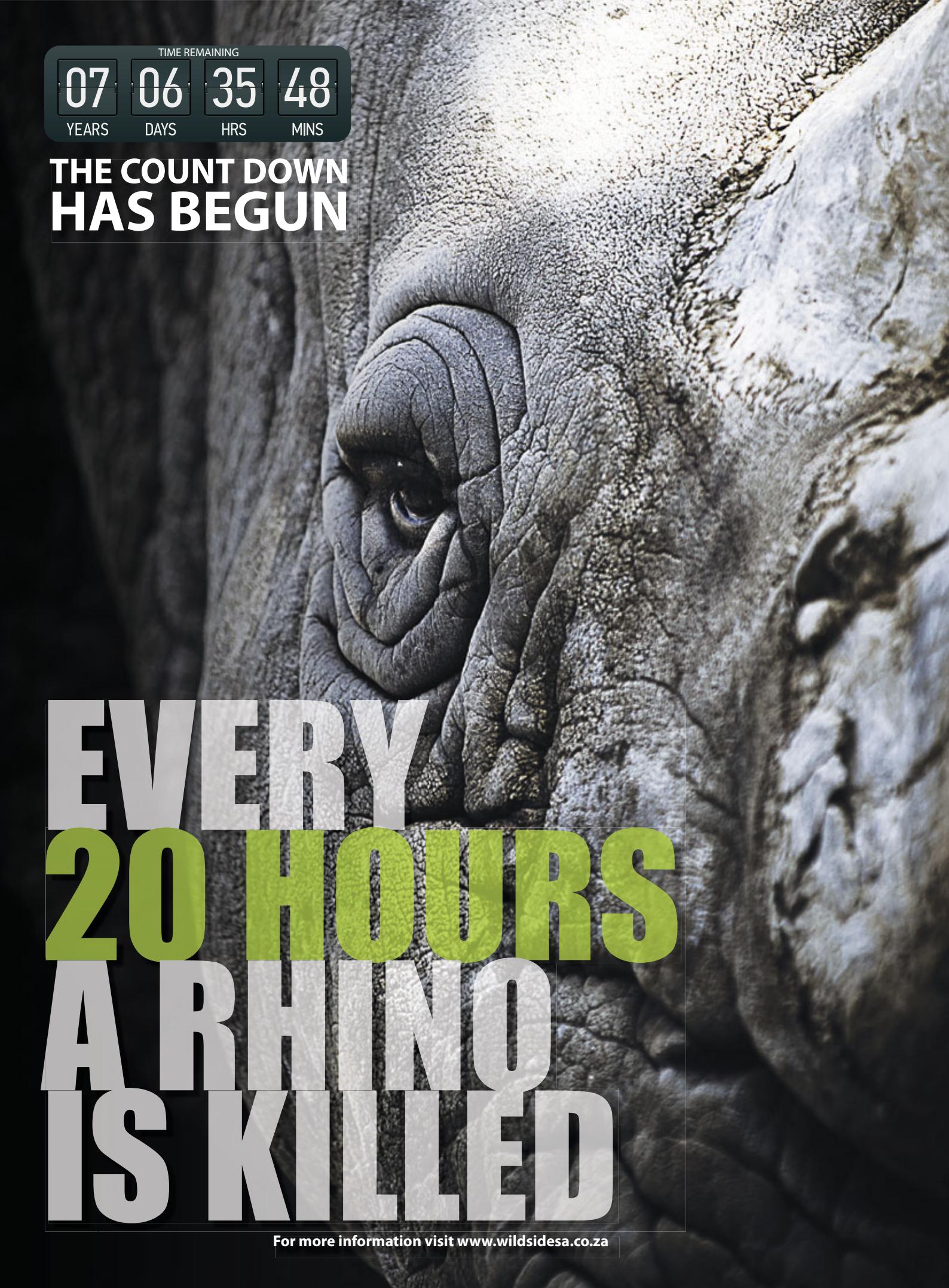
YEARS

DAYS

HRS

MINS

THE COUNT DOWN
HAS BEGUN



EVERY
20 HOURS
A RHINO
IS KILLED

For more information visit www.wildsidesa.co.za

OUTRAGEOUS Rhino Warfare

Night vision equipment, international crime syndicates, gun silencers, secret aerial support, professional marksmen, military precision – sounds like warfare? It is and a bloody one at that. There is a battle being waged between wanton rhino killers and rhino warriors who will do everything to put a stop to this outrageous wildlife crime.

Jennifer Crawford investigated rhino poaching and found uncomfortable facts and perplexing debates. Remarkable people and organisations have been galvanised into action tackling the war on poaching at every level giving hope to saving this iconic animal which is one of South Africa's world renowned Big 5.

1 RHINO IS KILLED IN SOUTH AFRICA EVERY 20 HOURS. Experts are talking about rhinos being wiped out in South Africa in 15 years, and extinction within 40 years if the poaching continues unabated. South Africa holds 93% of the African populations of near threatened southern white rhino *Ceratotherium simum simum* and critically endangered black rhino *Diceros bicornis*. The black rhino was slowly recovering from a 90% decline in the 1970s - but, rhino poaching in South Africa has escalated rapidly since 2008 and now spread from protected areas to privately owned populations.

WHY THE INCREASE IN POACHING?

Rhino populations have largely been decimated in Africa and poachers turned their attention to South Africa a few years ago with a marked increase in poaching of rhinos for their horns from 2008. Some attribute this increase in poaching to a rapidly increasing middle-class in the Far East, with an insatiable desire for rhino horn because of a belief that the horn is medicinal, and an aphrodisiac. Although science has shown that rhino horn has no medicinal effects, myths persist. In China and Vietnam, rhino horn is promoted as a remedy for nearly everything, from fever to cancer.

There is another more sinister suggestion for the increase in poaching in the past few years. A 2008 proposal from the China Institute of Science and Technology Research, Beijing, entitled Proposal for Protection of the Rhinoceros and the Sustainable Use of Rhinoceros Horn – funded by the State Soft Sciences Project, Development for Traditional Chinese Medicine Research – contains disturbing information indicating that China is already farming rhinos in order to use rhino horn in traditional Chinese medicine. (www.savingrhinos.org).

However, Albi Modise, spokesperson for the South African Department of Environmental Affairs said that “The latest seizure of rhino horn in Hong Kong is an example of the increased cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and South Africa. This follows a September meeting between officials to discuss issues relating to CITES and law enforcement between the two countries. This was followed by another meeting between the Minister of Environmental Affairs in South Africa, Ms Edna Molewa and her Chinese counterpart from the State Forestry Administration in November 2011.” Further, Mr Modise condemned the continued illegal killing of rhinos and assures the public that interventions have been put in place to address.

CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international agreement between governments of various countries, which aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival of which South Africa and China are signatories.



The cause advert on the left was conceptualised and designed by Paton Tupper, Durban. We pay tribute to the advertising agencies for voluntarily contributing their time and talent to support the drive to stop rhino poaching.

www.patontupper.co.za 031 5833260

WHAT IS RHINO HORN?

Researchers at the University of Ohio in the USA have used computerised tomography, better known as a CT scan, to show that horns are comprised of calcium, melanin and keratin. Keratin is the same type of protein that makes up hair and fingernails.

Amongst the sea of campaigns, I take my hat off to a group of South African youths who have launched a campaign – collecting nail and hair cuttings from humans, packaging it and sending it to embassies of countries where there is a demand for rhino horn. Google them, Stop Poaching Our Rhino, and see their You Tube video. Stupid? Yes, of course, that's the point because it serves, so poignantly, to debunk the myth.

“There has been a rise in the number of ‘hunters’ from non-traditional hunting countries. The majority (69%) of rhino hunts in 2009-2011 were carried out for Vietnamese clients.”

What about the suppliers of illegal rhino horn? Has the increase in poaching been fuelled by greedy participants in South Africa, coupled with the apparent ease of poaching and sentences that are not harsh enough to be a deterrent? Some argue that fines meted out to those arrested don't touch sides compared to the profits made in this poaching business, and that jail terms should be enforced. If this were the case, who would be sitting behind bars? Those who take the rhinos down are only the first step in a long and bloody chain.

THE FACE OF A POACHER

Putting a face to poaching has come in the form of arrests. When professional hunter Christiaan van Wyk was found guilty of hunting a white rhino without a permit in Limpopo in January 2011 it contributed to changing perceptions around poachers. His fine - R30 000 or 1000 days in jail and a banning from obtaining a hunting permit in the Limpopo Province for three years. Then there have been pilots questioned for their involvement, and vets and game farmers arrested last year, again changing perceptions and even drawing gasps of shock.

It should come as no surprise that these are the types of people involved because wildlife crime is more often than not committed by people in the industry with the knowledge, contacts and relevant information. It goes without saying that these are the rogues in an industry where you will also find ethical and committed conservationists.

The equipment used by poachers smacks of military type

involvement because it includes sophisticated hi-tech equipment such as automatic weapons and silencers, night vision binoculars and of course air support. Criminal networks form a chain of distribution from community to the international end user. They infiltrate areas near reserves, stake out vulnerable rhinos and plan their kills.

There are broadly two types of on the ground ‘hits’. The first is where horns are removed roughly if not savagely with an axe. There’s a growing number of cases of horns being removed while the animal is still alive, leading to unbelievable pain and trauma. Because of the lucrative amounts end-users will pay, poachers attempt to take the entire horn, chopping it out from the roots. These severely mutilated rhino die from shock or injury, or have to be euthanized – a task that has left experienced wildlife vets traumatised themselves. A video depicting a tragically mutilated rhino can be seen on www.stoprhinopoaching.com. It is horrific but sadly this type of material needs to be aired because we have become desensitised to statistics.

The second type of ‘hit’ is where skilled hunters and possibly ex-military are involved. The rhino falls from a single shot and there’s back-up support in the form of vehicles. Horns are removed with surgical precision, quickly and quietly. There has also been the use of helicopters to kill rhino - either by shooting, or immobilizing the rhino by darting the animal with a lethal overdose of drugs to avoid drawing attention from gunfire. People have been called on to report low flying or unusual aerial activity such as circling near reserves.

HUNTING – SHOULD IT BE BANNED OUTRIGHT?

Pseudo-hunting has deflected from the conservation benefits of legal hunting and a distinction needs to be drawn between the two. Pseudo-hunting is where supposed trophy hunters need to be told how to shoot or they leave the shooting to an accompanying hunter or land owner, a practice that is illegal in South Africa. The implication is that these so called hunters are abusing the legal system to obtain rhino horn for illegal sale. One person acquires several rhino hunting permits per year, under the guise of fake hunters.

There has been a rise in the number of ‘hunters’ from what has been termed non-traditional hunting countries. The majority, 69%, of rhino hunts in 2009-2011 were carried out for Vietnamese clients. Carte Blanche exposed examples of pseudo-hunters - young women from the Far East who didn’t know how to hold a gun, who didn’t shoot anything, but went on safari and



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031 533 9023

PRICKS KILL RHINOS



DESPITE THE MYTHS BEING DISPROVED, 1 RHINO IS KILLED EVERY DAY FOR "MEDICINAL" PURPOSES.
TO HELP STOP THE **SLAUGHTER**, GO TO WWW.WILDSIDEZA.CO.ZA

posed with a dead rhino for a fee.

Below is an excerpt from a document which describes the views of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, the Wilderness Foundation, the Private Rhino Owners' Association and the Rhino Management Group on a moratorium on rhino hunting in South Africa.

"Implementing a moratorium on hunting may have unintended and negative consequences which are prejudicial to southern white rhino conservation. The Endangered Wildlife Trust does not support a hunting ban on white rhino trophy hunting. To address the pseudo-hunting issue, current permitting and hunting protocols must be strictly implemented, with extra attention paid to the current transgressors (land owners and professional hunters), especially in the North West Province."

"There should be a move towards a national white rhino hunting quota (building poaching into this number), with incentives to be offered to those rhino owners helping with metapopulation biological management and who are compliant with legislation. There should also be a move towards a nationally managed hunting permit system. A biodiversity management plan for white rhinos must be developed as a matter of urgency."

Further points in this document include the following information:

- White rhino hunting has contributed to increasing live sale prices. A moratorium on hunting may result in a reduction in prices, and more rhino owners may sell their animals. This would mean a big reduction in the estimated 22 274 km² of conservation land that private land owners currently contribute.

"The increase in poaching has led to some private rhino owners viewing their animals as a liability. This could reduce land availability for rhino."

- Live sales, eco-tourism and limited sport hunting provide economic incentives for the private sector and communities to conserve rhino. This has led to an increase in rhino range and the number of rhinos being managed by the private sector. There are approximately 4 500 white rhinos conserved on private land in South Africa.
- State conservation agencies use funds raised from live white rhino sales to subsidise conservation or in the case of SAN Parks, to buy conservation land.
- White rhino sales have been the biggest contributor to total turnover at KZN Wildlife game auctions, accounting for 74.9% of total turnover from 2008 to July 2011. Any decline in demand and hence price will negatively affect state conservation agencies' ability to execute their conservation mandate.

● The increase in poaching has led to some rhino owners viewing their animals as a liability. This could result in reduced demand for live rhino and a drop in prices. There has been a drop in the average price achieved for white rhino from 2008 to 2010.

● In the past, it was not necessary to have a national hunting quota for rhino, as the number of top dollar hunters from traditional hunting countries such as the United States was limited and market forces dictated that only a limited and sustainable number of white rhino were hunted every year. With the rise of pseudo-hunting and so-called 'hunters' from non-traditional hunting countries, the number of rhino now being hunted is increasing.

PRIVATE LAND OWNERS

Private land owners with rhino have found themselves caught up in the poaching issue as the poachers are increasingly targeting private land. The majority of game reserves are aimed at ecotourism and offer an experience for tourists to experience the bush and wild animals. When rhino are killed by armed poachers on these reserves, and the information is widely publicised, it could have a negative impact on that reserve's tourism. It has been said by well placed sources that the real number of rhino deaths are not reported, perhaps for this very reason.

With the situation being as critical as it is publications may have to think twice before publishing photographs of rhinos on game reserves in order to avoid giving photographic evidence of rhino population size, location, or horn size. Reserves themselves may in due course ban people from photographing rhino.

Private land owners are fighting back. Chairman of the Private Rhino Owners Association, Pelham Jones, says that the Association has an excellent working relationship with authorities directly involved in combating the rhino poaching including the Hawks, National Prosecuting Authority, and the National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit. The interaction includes a spectrum of activities from investigations, to intelligence gathering, and the implementation of anti-poaching measures and campaigns.

Pelham said that the requirements to reduce poaching cover four parallel and supporting actions:

- Better policing, arrests and prosecution. The higher the risk to criminals of arrest and asset loss, the lower the reward and accordingly the viability to poach.
- Allow for legal trade in rhino horn. The current CITES ban has not protected rhino. In the last 45 years 100 000 rhino have been poached throughout Africa.



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www.ogilvy.co.za 031 334 5600



Save a life

A rhino is poached every 20 hours. At this rate South Africa's final few will die before you do.

Pledge your support and let our rhinos live on: www.wildsidesa.co.za

- Education and international awareness to end user markets of the heritage importance of rhino to South Africans and the unnecessary and brutal killing of an iconic species as an ineffective medicinal remedy.
- For South Africans of all walks of society to become involved in protecting a national asset of historic, conservation and tourism importance.

POISONING, DE-HORNING , LEGALISING TRADE IN RHINO HORN?

Desperate times call for desperate measures some might argue, as a variety of measures are being touted. Poisoning is one such measure. The Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve near Johannesburg refer to ectoparasiticides which “are not intended for consumption by humans, and are registered as such. Although not lethal in small quantities, they are extremely toxic, and symptoms of accidental ingestion may include, but are not limited to, severe nausea, vomiting, convulsions and/or nervous symptoms.” They go on to say that the ultimate goal is not to poison consumers of rhino horn, but to prevent poaching. (www.rhinorescueproject.com). However, the poisoning of rhino horns will never work says Kruger National Park spokesman, William Mabasa after the idea was put forward by the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve during discussions held in September this year.

It's been stated that it would be a criminal offence to poison horns which caused death. This begs the question: Would buyers of rhino horn sue sellers, and would they sue poachers who in turn would step forward and sue the land owner of the property from where they illegally killed the rhino and went on to illegally trade the horn? This is of course if it is at all possible to trace rhino horn powder to a specific rhino in the first instance. There are even questions if rhino horn powder purchased by consumers is in fact rhino horn powder.

From a criminality perspective it would probably whittle down to intent, and game farmers advocating poisoning are saying the intent is to prevent poaching, not harm humans. There have been ‘reports’ albeit most if not all of them bogus, of people in the Far East dying from poisoned rhino horn. Perhaps there are people who are throwing their own myths into the pot.

DEHORNING

Dehorning has attracted more serious debate. The legal implications of dehorning are that a person, without a valid permit, can't be in possession of rhino horn. Then there is the frightening prospect of the threat to the lives of people storing rhino horn. A number of armed robberies involving the theft of stockpiles have already occurred in South Africa. The targets include museums, national parks, taxidermist studios and private individuals.

Dehorning doesn't seem to be an effective measure because poachers are prepared to remove any vestige of horns, including the small growth nubs on rhino calves. Rhino horn does grow back provided the horn plate has not been damaged, so dehorning is not a once-off measure. Re-growth would need to be cut regularly. Zimbabwe reported that their dehorning effort was

successful, but only if used in conjunction with anti-poaching measures.

A rhino's horn is not fixed to the skull but is almost an extension of the skin and is similar to a person's fingernails. Horns can't be cut too close to the skull as this can cause injury to the animal, infection can set in and the animal can die. Horns must be removed by skilled veterinarians. There is insufficient research to determine the effects of de-horning on the animal in terms of social behaviour.

Costs associated with dehorning include veterinary expenses, drugs, labour and possible air support – particularly in dense habitats. A dehorning exercise can cost in excess of R8, 000 per animal and are not recoverable as the horns, once removed, may not be legally sold.

CONTROVERSIAL DEBATE ON LEGAL TRADE IN RHINO HORN

This measure has attracted the most serious debate and is highly controversial. Those in favour of legal, regulated trade in rhino horn say that the horn can be harvested without mutilating and or killing the animal, that lifting the ban would allow countries to manage rhino populations and plough funds raised into anti-poaching. There's also the view that the reduction in the world market price of rhino horn would reduce poaching.

Those opposed to lifting the ban on trade in rhino horn point out the burgeoning growth of the middle-class in China – from where the main demand stems. Do the math – 3 billion people - not enough rhinos. So would there be a reduction in the world market price? Considering there are some 4 500 rhinos on privately owned land, what if these owners chose not to participate in ‘rhino horn farming’? Their rhinos would still be targeted by poachers. There is also the possibility that if trade was legalised, it would be easy to push through rhino horn obtained illegally.

Governments do not have adequate resources to police the legal trade, so those opposed to it question how a legal trade would be policed.

SOLUTIONS

While the debate continues in concerned conservation circles, the decision to lift the ban on trade in rhino horn is not one that can be made by individual range states. Any decision to lift the ban on rhino horn trading would have to come from CITES.

Rynette Coetzee, Project Executant: Compliance and Enforcement Project, Law and Policy Programme at the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) says that unfortunately there is no silver bullet solution to the rhino poaching crisis.

“Instead, the EWT recommends a multi-pronged approach, with a variety of interventions at each stage of the illegal wildlife trade chain, including: changing the current perception of poaching as a low risk/high reward opportunity by improving arrest and conviction rates with better trained and equipped anti-poaching units, as well as sensitised legal and law enforcement personnel skilled in dealing with wildlife crimes; improving the detection of wildlife contraband at our borders, thereby thwarting smugglers; and attempting to change attitudes in consumer countries”.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Become informed and only become involved in and contribute to legitimate organisations. There are many people arranging activities and 'raising funds for rhinos' who are neither legitimate nor knowledgeable and they dilute the funds required for anti-poaching as well as the efforts.

There is outstanding work being done by individuals and organisations and there are numerous ways you can get involved from donating much needed funds, your time or skills. You could also write to embassies, use social media and voice your support to escalate the message of anti-poaching. You could even do something as crazy as jumping out of a plane for Skydive for Rhinos, or clipping your hair and nails and posting it off to Stop Poaching Our Rhinos to dump at embassies. See end of article for contacts.

It is not a hopeless situation and there are thousands of rhino warriors building momentum, while tangible anti-poaching activity from on the ground work, all the way through to campaigns in the East are underway.

PROJECT RHINO KZN – A SOPHISTICATED FIGHT BACK

Sheelagh Antrobus, African Conservation Trust spokesperson, gave an overview of Project Rhino KZN, as well as useful facts and figures.

Project Rhino KZN is made up of legitimate, expert organisations with a common vision and goal. It identifies synergies through an integrated approach, and is a representative body that carries powerful leverage ability, aimed at eliminating rhino poaching and securing the rhino populations in KZN.

The association's members work together on the following critically needed interventions including increased intelligence and surveillance, increased field ranger competence, improving legal ability, increased communication sharing, public awareness and education.

In addition Project Rhino ensures the prevention of duplication of projects and/or fundraising events in KwaZulu-Natal and provides a legitimate fundraising platform for real, urgent needs. The association also creates credibility, ensures cooperation and creates a centralised communications platform to media, public, government, and the national and global communities. It also maintains records of activities, conducts reviews, benchmarks successes and identifies shortfalls.

FOUNDING MEMBERS OF PROJECT RHINO KZN



- African Conservation Trust
- Wildlands Conservation Trust
- Wildlife ACT Fund
- Wildlife & Environment Society of SA
- Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
- Space for Elephants Foundation
- Magqubu Ntombela Foundation
- Wilderness Foundation
- Thanda Foundation and Game Reserve
- Zululand Wildlife Security Initiative
- Black Rhino Range Expansion Project – WWF
- Game Rangers Association of Africa
- Phinda Private Reserve
- Zululand Rhino Reserve.

MEDIA PARTNER



CALLING WILDSIDE WARRIORS FOR PROJECT RHINO

For each new Warrior, Wildside will donate R50 to Project Rhino KZN administered by the African Conservation Trust for anti-poaching.



NEW WILDSIDE WARRIOR R280

If you do not already subscribe to Wildside, for only R280, you will:

- Be a donor to Project Rhino KZN
- Receive an annual subscription to Wildside – four editions per year
- Be entitled to special accommodation discounts
- Be entered into all Wildside competitions
- Receive your Wildside Warrior vehicle sticker
- Be entitled to add your name to the Wildside Warrior website list (optional)

WILDSIDE SUBSCRIBERS R180

For all Wildside subscribers, including Gold Rhino Members, for only R180 you will:

- Be a donor to Project Rhino KZN
- Be entitled to special accommodation discounts
- Be entered into all Wildside competitions
- Receive your Wildside Warrior vehicle sticker
- Be entitled to add your name to the Wildside Warrior website list (optional)



Help stop the bloody carnage and become a Wildside Warrior.
Go to WWW.WILDSIDESA.CO.ZA

WILDSIDE WARRIOR

Help stop the bloody carnage and become a Wildside Warrior. Go to WWW.WILDSIDESA.CO.ZA

Wildside is supporting Project Rhino KZN through fundraising, subscriptions, a Warrior club and escalating the attention the issue gets in the media. Funds from Project Rhino KZN only go direct to anti-poaching programs and equipment.

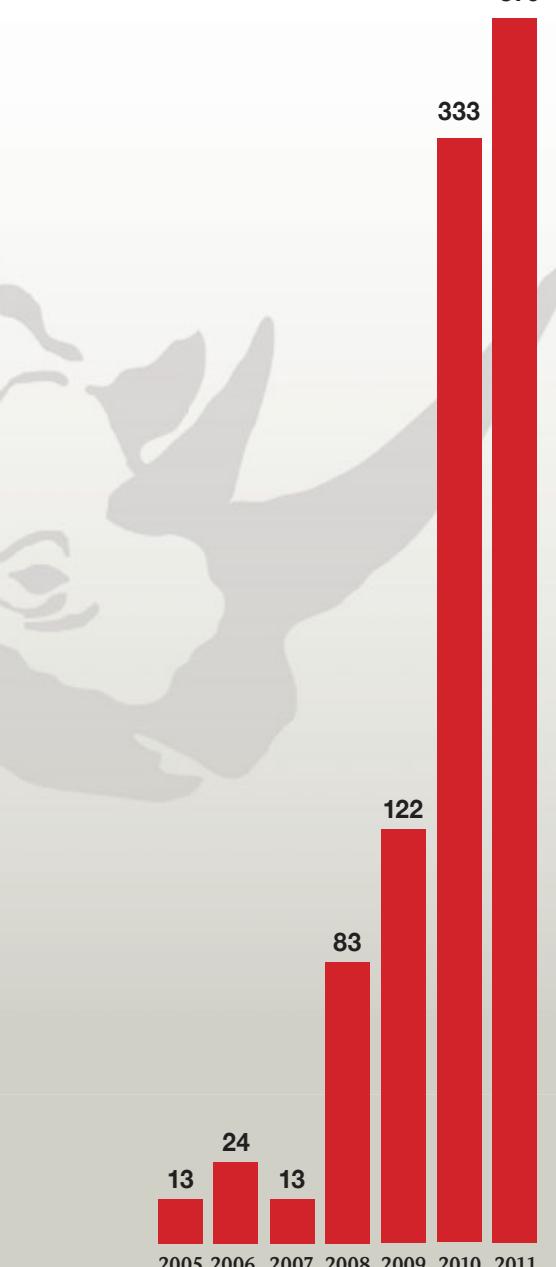


AFRICAN CONSERVATION TRUST TO RAISE R10 MILLION

The African Conservation Trust (ACT) is a founding member of Project Rhino KZN and in August 2011, raised R500,000 for KZN's rhinos through its Skydive for Rhinos campaign. 100% of the funds were used to purchase equipment for anti-poaching patrols, fund aerial surveillance of game reserves, purchase camera traps for rhino monitoring work and micro-chip vulnerable white rhino in the province. These interventions have already had an impact, improving the morale and abilities of anti-poaching units working in dangerous environments and preventing poaching incidents.

For 2012, ACT has set its sights higher and wants to raise R10million through a year-long effort that will include a national Skydive for Rhinos campaign. The members of Project Rhino KZN will be the key beneficiaries and Sheelagh Antrobus, ACT's campaign spokesperson says that this will go a long way to improving protection of the province's rhino populations.

"Project Rhino KZN has identified a wish list that needs a minimum of R20million: we'd like to raise half of that, but need the support of the public and business community to do so," she explained. "100% of the funding will go to bona-fide, prioritised needs," Said Sheelagh.



South Africa's Losses (as of 15/11/2011)* A National Crisis - a Global Tragedy

International losses:

Only five species of rhino survive. These five species are further divided into 11 identified subspecies.

All rhinos are under threat of, and all but one species is on the verge of extinction. The best current global population estimates are:

White rhino: 20,150

Black rhino: 4,860

Greater One-horned rhino: 2,850

Sumatran Rhino: 200

Javan Rhino: <44

IUCN – EXTINCTION NOTICE

November 2011 - the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) announced that the subspecies Western Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis longipes*) was classified as extinct.

It also declared the Northern White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*), a subspecies in central Africa, as being on the brink of extinction.



Fuelled by the high demand for rhino horn in China and Vietnam, rhinos are being killed for their horn, while greed drives the chain of highly organised poaching syndicates.

Rhino Poaching Arrests Jan-Nov 2011

Poachers 166
Couriers 22
Buyers 9
Exporters 2
(Source: *the Hawks*)

74,6%

End Users

0,4%
Poachers

25%
Syndicates

Monetary Exchange % within the Poaching Ladder for Rhino Horn per Kg. (Estimates)

Figures translated into % by Wildside
sourced from the WRSA/ PROA RHINO SUMMIT, November 2011

THE HARD FACTS

South Africa is home to more rhino than any other country in the world (93% of the African population) with approximately 18,000 white and 1,900 black rhino. In the past 45 years, Africa has lost around 100,000 rhino. In the past three years approximately 1,000 rhinos have been killed by poachers in South Africa. Between 1 January 2011 and 15 November 2011 South Africa had lost around 370 black and white rhino and this is expected to rise over 400 before the year's end. One of the issues compounding the threat of extinction is that the birth rate begins to decline as a result of ever-increasing poaching and thinning out of populations and dispersal.

Roughly 60% of rhinos killed by poachers have been killed in the Kruger National Park, with Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal hard hit. Private reserves are equally affected, as poachers turn their attention to these rhino populations too.

CRUEL, LOW RISK, HIGH-PROFIT CRIME

"Today's sophisticated poaching syndicates operate with high-tech equipment, including helicopters, night-vision equipment, veterinary tranquilizers, automatic weapons and silencers. The crisis is being driven by organised criminal networks who see rhino poaching as a relatively low-risk, high-profit crime. These networks include spotters, poachers, middle-men, national-level couriers or buyers, exporters and finally, the end-users," says Sheelagh. The price of rhino horn is now more expensive than cocaine.

199 rhino poaching-related arrests were made in South Africa in 2011 (see table), but with a conviction rate of only 3%, this is little consolation. However, there is growing acknowledgement

from the South African Police Service (SAPS), the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and justice departments that improved evidence collection, leading to successful prosecutions and stiffer sentences is needed.

A step in the right direction is the recently established National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit which will work alongside South African National Parks, SAPS and the Hawks.

SOURCES AND CONTACTS

With special thanks for the information, statistics, and time provided.

African Conservation Trust: Sheelagh Antrobus www.projectafrica.com Tel 033 342 2844

Endangered Wildlife Trust: Drs R Emslie & M H Knight, IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group and the Rhino Management Group.

Endangered Wildlife Trust: Yolan Friedmann, CEO. www.ewt.org.za. Tel 011 372 3600 and Rynette Coetzee, Project Executive: Compliance and Enforcement Project, Law and Policy Programme. rynettec@ewt.org.za

Private Rhino Owners Association: Pelham Jones. Pelham@vibe.co.za

WEBSITES

www.ewt.org.za (Most useful fact sheets available)

www.savingrhinos.org. (More information on state funded research in China)

www.stoprhinopoaching.com (Video footage, detailed material and good updates)

www.youtube and face book: Stop Poaching Our Rhino, email rodneytherhino@gmail.com (To be inspired by a group of young people who are making a difference)

www.rhinorescureproject.com (If you want more information on ectoparasiticide)

Project Rhino KZN: Visit www.wildsidesa.co.za for all the contact details of the founding members. 



DURBAN SKYDIVE CENTER

The place you'll fall for... 5-4-3-2-1...

jump!

Some like to enjoy the sights of KwaZulu-Natal by sitting in a perfectly good car and some like to enjoy the sights by jumping out of a perfectly good aeroplane. From either perspective the KwaZulu-Natal coastline is magical but Skydiving Durban allows you to see the entirety of the magic in one mad leap.

Tandem skydiving is a safe and hassle-free way for you to experience the thrill of free fall and the serenity of a parachute ride. No experience is necessary for tandem skydives with the certified crew having thousands of hours of experience 'as a bird'. A 10 minute briefing will have you soaring scenically in a 20 minute plane ride climbing to the desired altitude.

On your tandem jump, you will be attached to your Tandem Master under a parachute built for two. Instructors' altitude dials will read 10 000 ft above ground level and your 35 second freefall to earth will activate exhilaration. Float under a canopy of adrenalin that the instructors will allow you to steer for a short duration of the 6 minute descent. Approach the drop-zone on a wild sensation of scenery and speed, you'll soon understand just why this is the most addictive sport around.

Tandems are ideal for those who want to skydive "just to see what it is like" or as a once-off: if you decide to take up skydiving as a sport this is an awesome introduction. Optional DVD and photo footage will replay the ultimate flight so you can re-live the thrill. Static-line and Accelerated Free-fall

courses are also available. All equipment is provided.

FACT TRACKER

Tel: 072 214 6040 or 082 559 4795
www.skydivedurban.co.za

Open from January to December, 7 days a week. Situated between Dbn and Pmb at Eston.

Costs:

Tandem Jump 8000ft - 10 000ft – R1 450.00.
Tandem Jump 12 000ft – R1 650.00
Solo Skydives - Jump Slot – R220.00, Jump Slot incl. gear rental and packaging R300.00
Accelerated Freefall Training Course
Ground school and level 1 – R2100.00 Incl. gear hire and DVD.
Levels 2-3 – R1350.00 ea. Incl. Gear Hire and DVD.
Levels 4-7 – R1200.00ea. Incl. Gear Hire and DVD.
Levels 8-10 – R400.00 ea. Incl. Gear Hire.

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Show Jumps and flower drops – prices on request.

Take Note: U16 yrs parental consent required. You should be in a reasonably good physical condition and less than 100kg. Wear casual, comfortable clothes – a good pair of tennis type shoes will do.

Directions from Durban: Directions to Angels Way Farm, Eston, KZN. From Durban take the N3 to Pietermaritzburg, After 50km take the Camperdown turn-off, left at the stop sign to Umlaas Rd. At the T-junction turn left onto the R603 going to Umbumbulu, drive for 16km. Turn right onto the R624 to Eston. Go for 2km and then turn right onto Angels Way Farm.

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WILDLANDS

Wildlands Conservation Trust

UPPER THUKELA STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

Pioneers Payment for Ecosystem Services

Local communities to benefit financially from conservation efforts

As part of the broader KZN Biodiversity Stewardship program being driven by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the Wildlands Conservation Trust (Wildlands) is assisting in the facilitation of the proclamation of an important part of the upper course of the Tugela River, some 45,000 ha area of unsettled land in the Drakensberg mountains, as a new protected area.

The Upper Thukela Stewardship Project (UTSP) will secure an area having a crucial function of supplying a very important source of fresh water to people in perpetuity. Much of the water from the Upper Thukela region, a catchment area which falls on community land owned by the amaZizi and amaNgwane communities, is used either for electricity gen-

eration or as a source of water for Gauteng. The ecosystem provides free services to these communities in the form of water catchment, water filtration, flood attenuation, good infiltration in summer and slow, steady flow in winter because of better water retention. Local communities which own the land on which these services are provided have access to an income model, since local authorities could pay them for services provided by their ecosystem.

Effective management

According to Wildlands Strategic Manager for Stewardship and Protected Area Expansion Kevin McCann, local communities have not effectively managed their land in terms of grazing and fire management in the past. However,

in unlocking the potential of the payment for ecosystem services, various work has been performed which shows the direct financial benefit to communities for managing in a certain manner to allow more water to be "produced" for sale by local or water authorities. Apart from their intrinsic desire to conserve the area, the community has a definite, vested interest in protecting their immediate environment.

The Upper Thukela site is the first pilot of its kind, and securing it as a nature reserve (protected area) legally binds the local community to manage the area in a certain way. The





Biodiversity Stewardship programme provides the communities with crucial resources to make this management possible, while realizing more water resources and therefore a better income stream.

Collaboration

McCann says many organizations have been involved in the area in the past to work on ecosystem restoration based on job creation, but nobody has focused on securing the land itself for conservation. "Wildlands received funding two years ago to initiate the process of supporting the existing NGOs working in the area, to focus specifically on implementing the Biodiversity Stewardship process," he explains. "The UTSP constitutes a set of partnerships – different NGOs and local communities working to protect this area, which will be proclaimed a nature reserve early in 2012. A portion of the land will be zoned as wilderness, and will be integrated into the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, further contributing to the wilderness value of the park."

Win-win for community, conservation interests

McCann points out that the proclamation has the dual benefits of protection for species and habitats, and economically viable conservation-related development. Benefits for the owners of protected areas include financial benefits such as:

- Exemption from property rates for those areas not used for housing or commercial operations;

- Fiscal incentives – reducing management costs incurred to manage the protected area (burning, road maintenance, fencing etc);
 - A tax deduction of 10 percent of the purchase value of the land, every year for ten years after the purchase.

Non-financial benefits include:

- Access to reduced reserve management costs and business expertise, including experts from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Rural Development, WWF, SANBI – CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers), SANBI Grasslands Programme, the Wildlands Conservation Trust
- Potential game donations from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
- Field ranger, wildlife monitor and conservation manager training for members of the local community
- Financial support to help cover the salaries of field rangers, as appropriate

The decision by Nkosi Menzi Hlongwane of the amaNgwane community and Nkosi Mthetho Miya of the amaZizi community to secure this significant area of communal land as a new protected area, and integrating it into the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage site is an incredibly progressive step by these communities, and will be a landmark contribution to conservation in the Drakensberg region.

For more information contact
Wildlands Strategic Manager for
Stewardship and Protected Area
Expansion, Kevin McCann on
Tel: 033 343 6380

About the Wildlands Conservation Trust

Wildlands Conservation Trust's Vision is 'A Sustainable Future for All'

This is inspired by one of the greatest Statesman of our times, Nelson Mandela, whose vision - Freedom for All – was regarded by many as unobtainable, yet inspired the transformation of South Africa.

We seek to inspire and support the ongoing transformation of South Africa into a country that has harnessed the opportunities of the "Green Revolution", as it evolves and gathers momentum.

To achieve this, Wildlands is progressively developing and implementing a range of sustainable enterprise and conservation based community development programs.

For more information visit www.wildlands.co.za.



The Elephant Coast

Sodwana Bay. Photograph
by Eugene Landsberg



THE MAGNIFICENT ELEPHANT COAST IN THE NORTH EASTERN PART OF KWAZULU-NATAL, BOASTS WILD AFRICAN BUSH WITH THE BIG 5, SPRAWLING BEACHES AND DENSE FORESTS, CORAL REEFS AND GRASSLANDS. As diverse as the ecosystems are here, so too are the holiday options and activities including game viewing, angling, turtle watching, diving, snorkeling, birding, horse riding and wilderness trails.

The pristine and unspoilt marine and wildlife weaves its magic into the memories of all who visit. This focus feature on this region gives you a spread of options, including catered and self-catering. There are quite a few amazing spots in this region listed in Wildside's Top Spots in this edition, simply underlining what a superb region it is.

Presented as four routes, there's the St Lucia to iMfolozi with nature based activities like whale watching, big 5 game viewing, or view ancient fossils in False Bay, in the False Bay to Hluhluwe central route. With the highest bird count in South Africa, the Ndumo Reserve forms part of the third route, Mkuze to Ndumo along with mystery and history. The Kosi Bay to Sodwana route includes world class diving, beautiful beaches and game viewing.

SODWANA

WORLD CLASS DIVING

Shona Lawson writes about the diving paradise from her base at Coral Divers.

IT'S QUIET AND PEACEFUL UNDER THE WATER, BUT FAR FROM BORING. Every flicker of movement could be something more interesting: a frogfish, a crocodile fish skittering across the sand, an eel sliding out of his crevasse. It's a kaleidoscope of colours and shapes and you never know when you'll see a sleeping turtle, eyeball a quizzy potato bass, and the shadow above could be a giant manta, or even a whale shark.



In summer Sodwana Bay is hot. The days are of course really warm and the water too, while the diving is nuclear. Sodwana's white sandy beaches and lush green forests provide a beautiful frame for the most magnificent reefs in southern Africa if not the world.

Turtles come here to lay eggs, dolphins are year-round entertainers, humpback and southern right whales sing as they pass close in-shore. The long beach is shaped like a fishing hook with the Jesser Point launch channel at the point of the fish-hook, and part of a marine reserve given World Heritage Site Status in 1999 and re-named iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

Coral reefs are the main attraction, and the magnet for sea-life and divers

alike. There are five bands of reefs, named for their distances away from Jesser Point: ¼-Mile, 2-Mile, 5-Mile, 7-Mile and 9-Mile. They are some of the southern-most reefs in the world, and at depths from 13m to 35 meters allow divers of all abilities a new challenge. With the reefs adjacent to steep drop-offs (the prehistoric depth dwelling coelacanth is also found here) juvenile fish can find sanctuary and larger predators can hunt.

Starting with whale sharks and moving down to nudibranches, a checklist of species is simply too long – more than 1,400 species of fish can be found on the reefs, which themselves are made from all shapes, sizes and classes of corals.

Coral Divers – the perfect base

Coral Divers is your ideal base because of its easy accessibility to all the dive sites, top instructors, good equipment, reasonable dive prices, great package deals and affordable accommodation.

Coral Divers offers something for everyone, rustic wooden cabins lead off the main building built around a swimming pool and deck. The daily routine revolves round diving. Guests can check into en-suite bedrooms, or take the budget 'glamping' option of beds with mattresses in domed safari tents. Dive-planning starts at 7pm every evening, where guests are matched with a dive master, instruc-

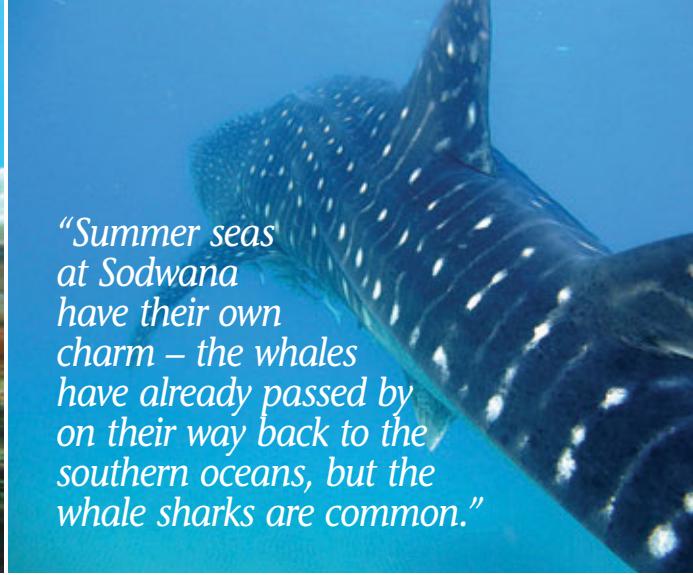
tor, and a dive site.

You can hire all the gear you require or hire only that which you need. Coral Divers hires the 'softs' like a wetsuit, mask, fins and snorkel, as well as BCD, regulator, weights and a tank. The resort can also fill your own cylinders with compressed air or nitrox. And if it's all unfamiliar jargon to a newbie, the on-site dive teams are at hand to explain and interpret.

Dive Options

Dive options range from PADI-accredited Discover Scuba courses which get you into the sea within a few hours of pool work and theory to a full professional diving career development programme.





"Summer seas at Sodwana have their own charm – the whales have already passed by on their way back to the southern oceans, but the whale sharks are common."

Around dive planning guests tuck into dinner, either braaing in the boma, eating from the resort buffet, or cooking up a storm in the self-catering kitchen. Breakfast is along the same lines, with the kitchens starting up at 5am, because in summer the early launches are just after day-break.

Early launches give Coral Divers the edge in the industry. The resort is within the confines of the marine reserve, and guests at Coral Divers have quick and easy access to the beach which is a mere shuttle ride away – no gate queues and long walks. Shuttles are timed according to launches and on the beach the dive staff are there to assist in any way possible.

Don't go and buy gear

Dive gear is expensive, and for those who are new to diving, they will find the hiring costs reasonable at only R170 for the full kit for a day. There's a diverse mix of people who come to Coral Divers from groups of friends and families, to students, including guests from all over the world.

Take advantage of the safari tents - bring your own bedding – for a really affordable trip, and spend your money on the diving especially the low season special price of R195 per dive. Of course it isn't all sandy and rustic ... cabins with private bathrooms (shower, basin and toilet) are being upgraded with fans, reading lights, floor tiles and ceilings, a glass sliding front door and side windows. In the main building there's an internet computer and guest lounge with TV.

Instructors at Coral Divers have all come through the PADI Career

Development Programme, and have worked on the beach, as well as qualified in PADI specialties here at Sodwana Bay, guaranteeing specialised first-hand knowledge of the reefs and sea life.

And for those looking for retail life to browse or get necessities, there is a well-stocked convenience store as well as The Beach Shop with gear and trendy surf fashion wear.

Dive Highlights

Summer seas at Sodwana have their own charm – the whales have already passed by on their way back to the southern oceans, but the whale sharks are common. It's unpredictable whether they will hang about for the divers to splash off the boat or if they will suddenly vanish with a flick of their tails. Potato bass are big and friendly, and if you are able to get onto a night dive, the cheeky giants use the light of your torch to snap up additional meals. But night dives are a rarity, with the weather best for diving early in the morning before the afternoon winds pick up.

A quick snapshot of the sites includes 7-Mile Reef which is the best reef to my mind, and the dive excess charge is worth the visit, as the reef profile with overhangs and ledges support a profusion of sea-life for advanced divers. Open Water level divers can visit Stringer where the isolated reef means an astounding variety of marine life is crammed into a very small area.

5-Mile Reef has the most diverse array of corals in Sodwana, particularly the ever-rarer mushroom and plate corals. 9-Mile Reef is in fact 14kms from Jesser Point, 500 meters off-shore. There spectacular swim-throughs and overhangs

make for an interesting dive. The distinctive green tree is a giant hard coral, taller than a man from fingertip to fin-tip, and when the sea goldies are hanging about it changes character so you can almost imagine a picture-book fruit-laden orange tree.

Recent dives during Spring saw recorded sightings of the very rare frog fish, the crocodile fish which is uncommon this far south, and the mantis (peacock) shrimp. This tiny character is shy, scurrying for cover once sighted, and never seen in aquariums because one flick from his legs contains enough power to crack thick glass. Sharks abound, and summer brings in the female ragged tooth sharks. Also seen are nurse, black and white-tip, hammerhead and bull sharks, as well as rays, mantas and eels.

Every dive is different, but all dives at Sodwana with Coral Divers offer an amazing experience. **W**

► WILDSIDE Fact Tracker

CORAL DIVERS

To book: For accommodated and non-accommodated divers: Tel 033 345 6531 e-mail coraldivers@mweb.co.za.

Cost: Low season special for the Open Water Course is R1 950 which includes 5 nights self-catered tented accommodation, theory, skills, and 4 sea dives.

Accommodation: Christmas season ranges from a special on self-catering tented accommodation R70 ppnns to R670ppnns on a dbl basis.

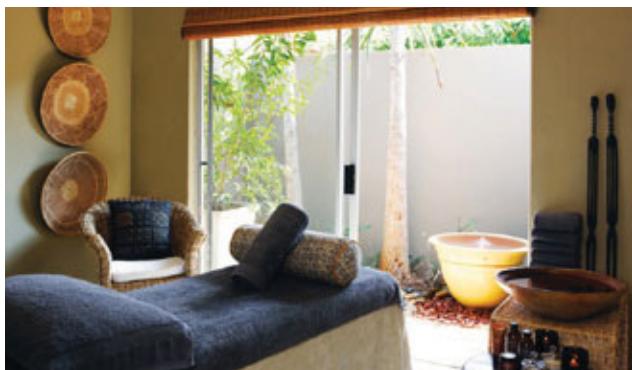
Dives: From R265 including tank and weights. Prices exclude the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife park and community levies.

Other specials: Log on at www.coraldivers.co.za and the Coral Divers resort can be contacted directly on 035 571 0290.



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At the foot of the legendary Ghost Mountain in Mkuzi, northern KwaZulu Natal lies the privately owned 4 star Ghost Mountain Inn. This intimate and beautiful hotel is the ideal location from which to explore the array of wildlife and coastal reserves in Maputaland and the Elephant Coast. Nature enthusiasts will appreciate the abundance of wildlife and the scenic splendours of this rich and diverse region during game drives, guided walks and boat cruises in the company of knowledgeable rangers. Tiger Fishing is arranged on Lake Jozini while birders can enjoy one of Southern Africa's top birding destinations with over 450 species.



Alternatively escape and be pampered at the Ghost Mountain Spa. Enjoy an Africology exfoliation and body wrap with natural South African products or a Dermalogica facial treatment. The spa features a steam room and relaxation area with private plunge pool to rest in between treatments. Those who prefer the relaxing sound of birdsong and the warmth of the African sun will find their respite at the poolside within the glorious gardens of Ghost Mountain Inn.

For those travelling to southern Mozambique, or between Kruger Park, Swaziland and Durban, Ghost Mountain Inn makes an excellent stopover or memorable getaway.

Ghost Mountain have put together excellent 2 and 3 night holiday packages, including a complimentary dinner, a boat cruise on Lake Jozini, a game drive in Mkuzi with a picnic lunch and a 30 minute back and neck massage in their beautiful spa.

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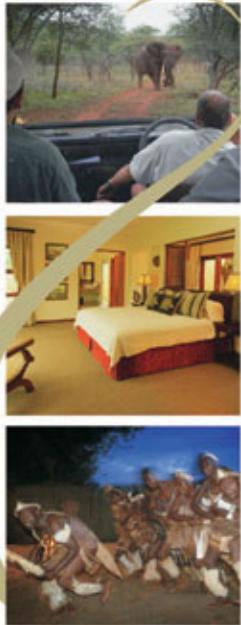


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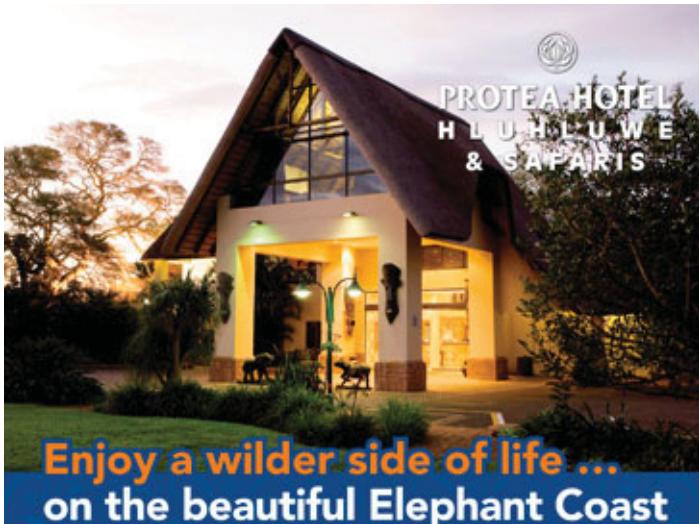
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SOUTH AFRICA



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Relax around the pool, or enjoy a leisurely walk along our bird trail while the kids are enjoying our outdoor play area and kids zone. This family friendly environment is your perfect springboard from which to explore the diverse Elephant Coast, encompassing the Hluhluwe/Imfolozi complex, St Lucia and the Greater iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Experience a memorable safari into Hluhluwe/Imfolozi Park with Hluhluwe Safaris, our safari company who know their game.

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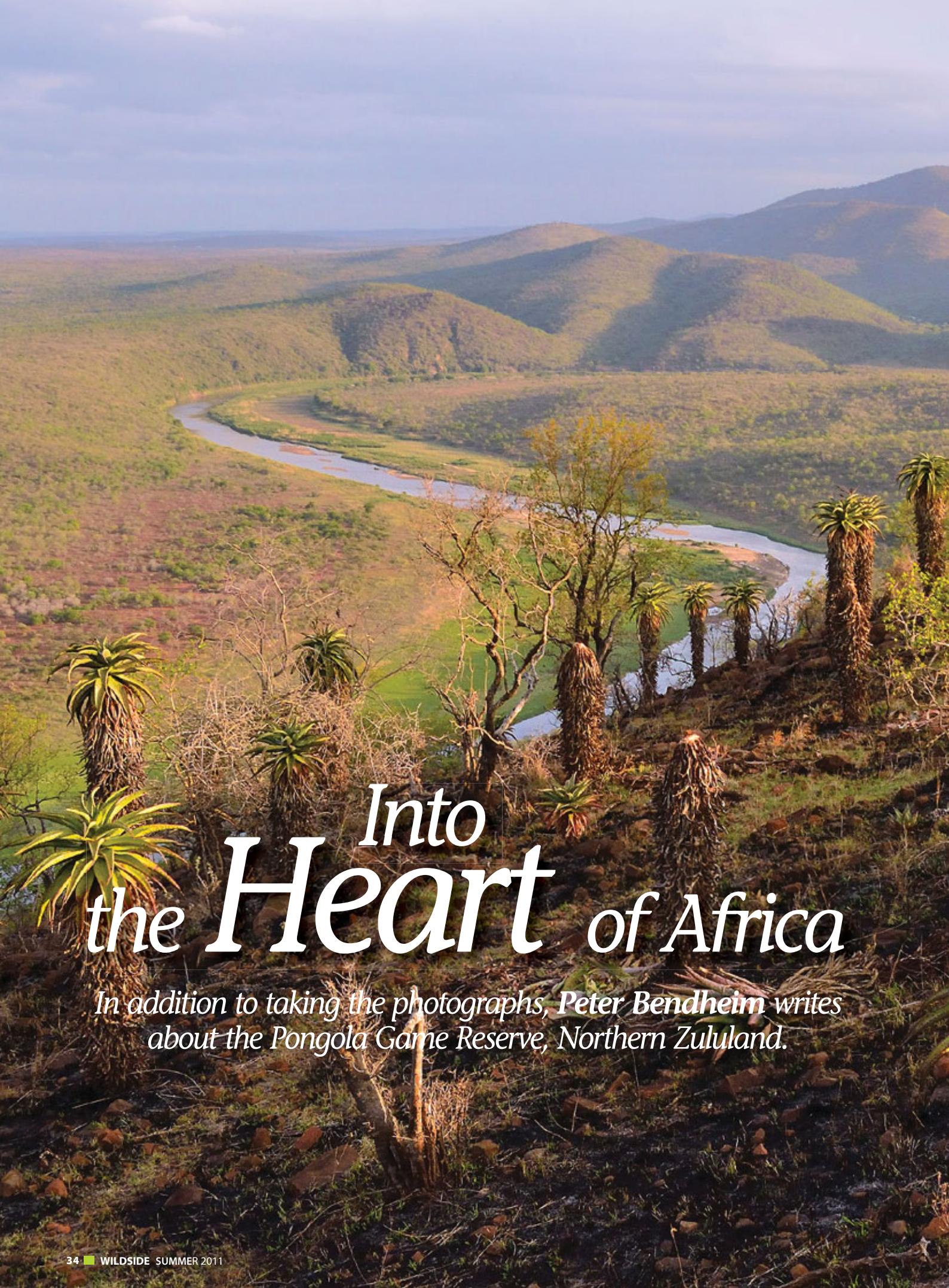
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SCUBA



Into the Heart of Africa

In addition to taking the photographs, Peter Bendheim writes about the Pongola Game Reserve, Northern Zululand.



ZULULAND BEGINS TO FEEL LIKE UNSPOILED AFRICA AFTER THE N2 SNAKES ITS WAY LIKE A WRITHING BLACK MAMBA NORTHWARDS PAST HLUHLUWE AND MKUZE ON KWAZULU-NATAL'S NORTHERN REACHES. The green desert of the plantations becomes stretches of African bush and savannah, the landscape transforms to khaki, brown and green as far as the eye can see. Settlements and roadside garages give way to land without evidence of human clutter.

It's twilight and we have just entered the Pongola Game Reserve, headed for Nkwazi Lake Lodge. Along that short drive, game is in profusion. We see nyala, kudu, warthog in a muddy watergat, a pair of graceful giraffe, and an endless supply of ever-ubiquitous impala. I'd been thinking, based on my initial research, that I was headed for a place primarily aimed at fishermen, as the river and dam it feeds into are renowned as the premier spot in South Africa for tiger fishing. As someone who could barely catch a guppy in a fish tank, I had serious reservations.



Reaching Nkwazi, I breathe a sigh of relief. It's a long sprawling collection of rustic chalets rather than a fishing village, and it's perched high above the lake with vast views of water and bush extending to the distant horizon. We are welcomed by lodge manager Mientjie Devane, and that warmth and hospitality from all the staff is set to become one of the highlights of our stay.

The central area of the lodge comprises a panoramic viewing area, the Hippo Hole bar, a lounge with TV, the dining area, a boma, and three small swimming pools, one of which is heated. Although game drives and boat rides are on offer as separately purchased activities, the viewing deck offers some wonderful game watching from a distance especially with a good pair of binoculars. The next day, we watched for hours as a herd of elephant across the lake grazed in the bush, and bathed in the shallow waters. My eyes followed a large croc as it swam lazily and undisturbed across the water.

Accommodation is rustic, in wooden chalets with a generously sized bath

and a cleverly designed private viewing area that resists both wind and sun, and feels connected to the great outdoors, via cleverly designed glass walls. It's just ideal for families and fisherman, which form the primary market for Nkwazi, one of the six lodges and camps on the reserve.

Dinner at night is around the boma, complete with fire and lanterns, and comprises good home cooked fare; three courses with meat and venison fresh from the reserve's own butchery. There's a large group of guys at the one table, telling jokes and fishing stories, having clearly swapped their suits for shorts and takkies on one of those corporate weekend bonding sessions. It is all quite lively and jovial.

The lake – a glassy jewel

The following afternoon, after a lazy late breakfast served between the sensible times of 9 and 11 am, it's the highlight of the trip – a game-viewing ride on the lake in one of the lodge's powerboats,

and a visit to the other main lodge, Mvubu. The lodge has boats of all shapes and sizes, from a luxurious riverboat to canoes. Gerrit Brits is the young and enthusiastic game ranger who accompanies us for the trip. The lake itself is a glassy jewel surrounded by rich and alluring vegetation. We see rhino, crocodile, zebra, and wildebeest and warily skirt a pod of hippos that look ever so tame languidly bathing in the shallow waters. We were not lucky enough to spot the ever elusive and secretive leopard, but Gerrit says that sightings have been quite plentiful recently. The wildlife is simply amazing, almost as if one had stepped into the Garden of Eden as a secret observer.

Then it's the trip across the bay to Mvubu River Lodge, high on the hillside overlooking the Pongola River and the old arched concrete bridge that crosses it. Mvubu Lodge is charming, with great views and an all-embracing feeling. It's an immediately likeable place, peaceful and contained; one could sit on the deck for hours with a good book or stare at the animals, such as elephant wandering

the plains along the riverbank. Of the two full board lodges, -the remainder are self catering - Mvubu feels remote and African, and is aimed at adults rather than families or fisherman. The spa at the lodge has treatment rooms with superb views across the valley and feels instantly relaxing even before you've had one of the extensive treatments on offer.

From farmland to wilderness

After the short visit to Mvubu and a few drinks with the charming Gerda Mienie, lodge manager, it's time to meet the man who has made the Pongola Reserve a reality, Karel Landman, a soft-spoken man who is equally understated in describing the huge achievement of restoring what was once a collection of commercial farms into a pristine wilderness.

He explains how his passion for wildlife motivated him to give up cattle farming, acquire additional land and encourage surrounding landowners to do likewise. Today, there are several other privately owned lodges in this broad conservation area. From a high hill above Mvubu, reached only in a 4X4, we can see an almost endless vista of





wild vegetation and water, sun-tinged in the late afternoon. It's a glorious sight, almost biblical in its splendour. I tell Karel I only expected to see tiger fishing, as there wasn't too much mention in the brochures about the abundance of wildlife.

"Well," he says "we like our guests to be surprised by what they find here." We certainly were. They almost have the big five, but there are no lions. I ask Karel about this and he explains that the cost of lions and their predatory habits would push the accommodation prices out of the reach of ordinary South Africans. It's a wise move as so many of the private lodges in South Africa are way beyond the reach of us ordinary working folk. Karel feels that it's part of his mission to make the reserve affordable to South Africans – and he has certainly done that. It's an admirable achievement when one considers that the cost of a local holiday is becoming an increasingly difficult dream to realise with rapidly rising living costs.

Aside of the two lodges we visited, there's Inyati, Mhlozi, Sondaba and

Mpalane, all of which are self-catering. These will have to wait for another visit.

We power back over the lake, now rough and windswept, into the encroaching darkness, the wind in our hair. Flocks of birds fly over us, deep into the night sky. It's one of those magical African moments.

Next day, we are quite sorry to leave. The friendliness of the staff, from the barman to management to owner Karel Landman has been exemplary. It's a family business, and the whole team is one big happy family. Leaving behind this escape to the pristine African bush has been a memorable experience. On the top of the hill, overlooking the plains, a small commemorative stone proclaims the Pongola Game Reserve as being South Africa's best-kept secret. Sorry, Karel, but as of now, your secret is out in the open... **W**

WILDSIDE Fact Tracker

Pongola Game Reserve

SPECIAL READER OFFER: Discounted offers for Nkwazi Lake Lodge and Mvubu River Lodge valid for bookings and stays until 29 February 2012 on a dbl basis, excluding activities. Book soonest to avoid disappointment as it is on a first come first served basis.

Nkwazi Lake Lodge: 12 twin chalets, 2 x 4-bed double chalets. R620. pppns, and R720 pppn single. U12years R350 pn sharing. Dbb.

Mvubu River Lodge: 9 twin chalets, 2 double chalets. R660. pppns and R760 pppn single. Dbb.

Inyati Lodge: 3 twin, 1 double chalet. Self-catering R350 pppn. Minimum daily rate R1 750.

Mhlozi: 6 Twin, 1 x 4 bed rondavel. R180 pppns, U16yrs R90. Minimum daily rate R1 550.

Mpalane: 6 rondavels and 6 bedrooms. Self-catering. R230 pppns, U16yrs R110. Minimum daily rate R2 760.

Sondaba: 6 x twin A-frame units. Self-catering. R 155 pppns, U16yrs R70. Minimum daily rate R1 250.

Tel: 034 435 1123, Cell: 083 611 9405
Email: info@pongolagamereserve.co.za
www.pongolagamereserve.co.za

Nkwazi & Mvubu Lodges



E: info@pongolagamereserve.co.za W: www.pongolagamereserve.co.za



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NISHONDWE

CEO OF EZEMVELO KZN WILDLIFE, DR. BANDILE MKHIZE

THE SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS FLICKERED LIKE THE BEGINNING OF AN OLD BLACK AND WHITE FILM. The distant army of weather had built quickly and the late afternoon had blackened into night. The wind picked up and I pulled the blanket around me and waited.

The water seemed to collapse from the sky. The rain overwhelmed all my senses, accompanied by the crusty smell of dry winter soil. In no time that distant shimmering of lightening had changed to a sudden crack and the Almighty roared. It was here.

Protected but alone, I huddled in the security of the verandah at our Ntshondwe camp. And yet I felt exposed and vulnerable. Actually it was eerie. Here I was

at our Ithala Game Reserve and this fury was speaking to me; like a barrage of abuse - an imbizo whose protocol had collapsed under the weight of decades of abuse, deprivation and anger. The raging elements had turned to voices of pain and accusation.

There was a frightening co-incidence about all of this. That very afternoon I had been mesmerized by the turbulent and sometimes tragic history of this protected area and its community's ancestors.

Sam Ndwandwe, our community conservation officer had persuaded me that if I wanted a real grasp on African Conservation then Ithala was the place. I have talked of Ezemvelo's need to look beyond boundaries, to care for our communities and assume their welfare as part of our larger conservation brief. But perhaps I had never got to the heart

of the issue.

If there is one then it lies here in Ithala.

Like the storm, Sam beguiled and buffeted me with stories: Of King Shaka, Zulu Kings and Boers; of locals seeking refuge in caves in the Ngotshe mountain right above me; of labour tenants and the decimation of so much wildlife, overgrazing and soil erosion. In so many respects Ithala represents a very real and riveting slice of South African history.

While most people know this as a game reserve proclaimed by the old Natal Parks Board back in 1973, it is what came before that so fascinated me. I appeal to all of you to come to this extraordinary place and experience a bit of what overtook me that day.

Ithala is something of a cradle of mankind and its most obvious feature is its geology. Did you know that some of the oldest rock formations in the world are found here, dating back some 3000 million years? Ithala is mountainous and you can witness this geology right in your face.

The Ntshondwe Camp I was cowering under in this storm sits right at the base of the Ngotshe Mountain, in many respects the focal area of Ithala. Sam set the scene, saying that Ithala (meaning 'high platform') has been occupied by man for thousands of years. The reserve is littered with Stone-Age spears and axe-heads, which even go back 20 000 years. The San also used the region, leaving their rock art in several sites in the eastern part of the reserve near one of our bush camps, Mhlangeni.

But let me jump forward to the arrival of the Nguni people. People, such as the Ndwandwe clan, originally lived here in the Ngotshe area under King Zwide before 1818. They fought and lost a number of battles against King



Shaka before being incorporated into the Zulu Kingdom. Yet the Ndwandwe clung to these tribal lands around Ithala, sometimes desperately, hiding in these caves along the cliffs right above the Ntshondwe camp. (Ngotshe means something difficult to see, referring to these caves that you can actually see).

The two of us sat alone amongst the sighing grasslands, facing the mountains: An exclusive history class, ideal for story-telling and a vivid imagination.

Later, this Ngotshe region was overrun by the uSuthu and the Boers following the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. Amazingly, after the defeat of Prince Zibhebhu, Ithala Game Reserve and its surrounding areas (more than a million hectares of land,) was given to 800-odd Boers by King Dinizulu in 1884. It was his 'thank you' for their part in defeating Prince Zibhebhu. It became known as the 'Nieuwe Republiek'.

So traditionally occupied land came under settler rule. Yes, the Ndwandwe were suddenly tenants on land that had been theirs for generations. How history feeds us, as I always say.

But the new white farm owners didn't occupy this land. They used it only for grazing their livestock and for supplying labour. The traditional communities could stay on the land but in return they would provide their labour free of charge.

So when labour tenancy was eliminated in the 1970's, those same traditional families were evicted from this land. The title deeds went to the white farmers, whilst the community's ties of settlement, cultivation and family history were ignored. They were driven off by police and farmers with dogs, guns and fire. Huts were burnt down, cattle impounded and people arrested.

Sam had positioned us perfectly. A short walk away from this storytelling was the site of three community graves with their familiar cluster of stones forming the burial

sites. These family graves dated back to the 19thC. (Such claims were particularly strong in this part of Northern Natal; Melmoth, Babanango, Vryheid, Louwesburg). And adjacent to these was an old Zulu indlu (hut) with its intact stone walls. This belonging is here for all of you to see.

Ithala cries African history. Even the gulleys of erosion I spotted were legacies of Ithala's past, where those labour tenancy days caused drastic overgrazing by their livestock. That, with hunting, the rinderpest epidemic of 1896 and the later tsetse fly campaign, decimated this region, which once abounded with wild animals.

We appear to have come full circle, though. Much of the old traditional community land that became so wasted and eroded was bought up by the Natal Parks Board and eventually resulted in the establishment of this incredibly scenic and historic, 30 000ha protected area. It has been re-stocked and wildlife flourishes again. I am delighted that all the areas' Zulu names pay tribute to its African origins, the mountains, flora and fauna, and camps.

For this study and tribute to its African history I take my hat off to the Natal Parks Board.

But what of the community's descendants that still come to visit the grave sites in this protected area? Where do they sit in this evolution? Do I interpret this as saying Conservation is the latest coloniser following King Shaka and the Boers? Was the angry storm the final word from these ancestors? Or do I rest with the stillness and regeneration that followed the next morning?

Dear readers, African conservation is in our hands. I listened to the cries of history that night but the dawn of nature and community caring and upliftment is upon us now. We must live together – this time to the betterment of both. **W**



ITHALA

Game Reserve

PHOTOGRAPHY: Inspired Vision Studios



Conveniently situated between Durban and Gauteng, Ithala Game Reserve is a magnificent natural sanctuary that rises majestically from the Phongolo valley to the craggy heights of the Ngotshe Mountains. This nature lovers' paradise, nestled in the hills and thornveld of northern KwaZulu-Natal, boasts a spectacular variety of fauna and flora, and features a fascinating geological diversity revealing rock formations dating back some 3000 million years ago. With this magnificent landscape as well as our spectacular array of wildlife species, Ithala Game Reserve offers a wildlife experience second to none.

Wildlife

Here, the sun rises over the Ntshondwe Peak to reveal the secrets of the wilds - a magnificent diversity of bushveld life in one of South Africa's most scenic regions. Wildlife species at this magnificent Game Reserve include elephant, buffalo, leopard, black and white rhino, as well as giraffe, zebra, blue wildebeest, many antelope species, and a wide range of other smaller creatures. You will also discover a large variety of bird species including the Verreaux's Eagle, Lappet-faced Vultures, White-backed Griffons, Ostriches and Secretary Birds.

Accommodation

At Ithala Game Reserve our accommodation is geared to suit all, from the sophisticated international eco-tourist or business executive, to informal tour groups and family parties.

Ntshondwe Resort

Ntshondwe can accommodate 172 visitors in two, four and six-bedded self-catering and non self-catering thatched chalets - all of which include DSTV. A six-bed self-catering luxury lodge with its own plunge pool is also available. Visitors can either bring their own provisions or make use of the restaurant, coffee shop and bar.

Bush Camps

There are three rustic bush camps available. Thalu Bush Camp accommodates four people in a two bedroomed reed and thatch unit. Mbizo Bush Camp accommodates eight people in two separate four-bedded units. Mhlangeni Bush Camp accommodates ten people in five two-bedded units. The bush camps are fully equipped, but visitors need to bring their own food, beverages, insect repellent and torches. Guided safari activities can be booked through Ntshondwe Resort for an additional fee.

Campsites

17 km from Ntshondwe, Ithala has an intimate, rustic camp ground which can accommodate 20 people. Basic amenities are available - No caravan facilities or access is available in the park.

Hutted and campsite bookings can be made through Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife:
Tel: +27 (0) 33 845 1000
Fax: +27 (0) 33 845 1001
Email: bookings@kznwildlife.com
Website: www.kznwildlife.com

Ntshondwe Resort can be reached by:

Tel: +27 (0) 34 983 2540

Fax: +27 (0) 34 983 2566

E-mail: ntshondwe@kznwildlife.com

Weddings

Ithala Game Reserve offers the rare combination between the splendors of the African bush and the expected conveniences and comforts of a luxury resort. The ultimate wedding venue for nature lovers alike, this venue will bring an experience never to be forgotten.

The team at Ntshondwe will tailor-make a wedding especially to fulfil the dreams of the bridal couple. Perhaps you are wanting to include a bush braai, a game drive, or a champagne breakfast; or maybe you would like to have a sunset reception overlooking the Phongola River - we can organise it all to make your dream wedding come true.

Wedding guests will be housed in beautiful chalets and will enjoy superb cuisine, which combined with the excellent game viewing, bird watching and other activities make every occasion a memorable one.

Ithala Game Reserve offers each bridal couple the choice between a secret hideaway in the heart of the reserve or luxury accommodation in the Lodge as a honeymoon venue.

Conferencing

Hold your next conference in the heart of Africa...at Ithala Game Reserve. Ntshondwe's spacious, modern conference facility accommodates 120 delegates in cinema style and 80 delegates in lecture style. It has state of the art facilities including a fully equipped projection room, an integrated sound system, versatile automatic lighting, excellent acoustics and air-conditioning and offers two breakaway rooms, accommodating 18 delegates in each room.

Only a morning's drive from Durban or Johannesburg, Ithala offers delegates splendid after hours game viewing, bird watching, guided walks and open vehicle drives.

Ntshondwe's main reception area has a fully licensed restaurant and bar where delegates can unwind at the end of a long day.

For Conference, Weddings and Events these should be booked direct with Ntshondwe Resorts Conference Manager >
E-mail: ithalaconf@kznwildlife.com



Facilities & Activities

Bush braais, champagne breakfasts, outdoor gatherings at the boma, guided walking trails, day and night drives, bird viewing at the bird hide at Ntshondwe, Guided Mountain Bike safari's, Zulu dancing, team building or enjoy relaxing with a sundowner by the pool - the possibilities are endless. Let our team at Ithala Game Reserve tailor facilities to suit your needs...

- Curio Shop
- Kraal Restaurant & traditional ladies bar facilities
- Guinea fowl Coffee Shop
- A secluded boma ideal for braai's & outdoor gatherings
- Swimming pool set in beautiful natural surroundings
- Sun deck overlooking a waterhole complete with bird hide
- Guided & self guided walks
- Excellent game viewing - day & night drives available
- An abundance of bird life
- Many exciting geological features
- Jungle gym for the kids
- A selection of picnic sites
- Bush braai's
- 4x4 Trails
- Camping
- Guided mountain bike safari's

Airstrip

- Suitable for light aircraft, medium to heavy twin-engine aircraft up to a DC3
- Suitable for 3 medium twin-engine aircraft or 5 single aircraft
- 1200m tarred airstrip from threshold to threshold
- Prior permission to land must be booked from the Resort Manager at Ntshondwe



Fantastic Ithala Game Reserve
Special! 

40% DISCOUNT ON ACCOMMODATION ONLY AS FROM
03 JANUARY 2012 TO 31ST MARCH 2012.

Airstrip GPS Co-ordinates
S 27° 31' 58" E 0.31° 17' 55"

Altitude
2854FT (890M)

Location

Ithala Game Reserve is situated near Louwsburg in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

From Durban:
It is best reached via Eshowe and Melmoth to Vryheid. Then take the tarred road to Louwsburg - ± 4½ hrs.

From Gauteng:
The best approach is via Standerton, Volksrust and Utrecht to Vryheid - ± 5 hrs.

From the North coast:
Take the main road to Pongola. Turn left to Ulundi/Nongoma (R66) and then right onto the (R69) Louwsburg/Vryheid road - ± 3½ hrs.

From Pietermaritzburg:
Travel via Colenso, Ladysmith, Dundee and Vryheid - ± 4 hrs.

GATE TIMES - STRICTLY APPLIED

Summer (1 November to 28/29 February)
- 05h00 to 19h00
Winter (1 March to 31 October) - 06h00
to 18h00

The office is open from 07h00 to 19h30

GPS Co-ordinates
(Ithala Reserve Parking lot)
31° 16' 49.14" E
27° 32' 40.88" S





The Wild Coast

The Wild Coast of South Africa's Eastern Cape, stretches from Port Edward to East London boasting a spectacular coastline. This coastline is made all the more interesting by the open grasslands, tidal estuaries, cliffs, wide sandy bays, ravines, waterfalls, and dense coastal forest. The marine and birdlife enhances its wild and natural beauty.

The lack of infrastructural development – due to its historical development – has meant that the Wild Coast has kept its charm and many sections of the coast can only be accessed by foot. The hikes along the wild coast, including guided hikes and trails, are most popular and a must on many a bucket list. There is a diversity of accommodation which has seen the Wild Coast drawing people to holiday here time and again to enjoy being in nature - at the coast.

This page and opposite:
The Cape Morgan Nature Reserve offers idyllic and gentle walking with the opportunity to witness exciting marine activity.

Morgan Bay Hotel

*Three generations of
priceless family hospitality*

For many the Morgan Bay Hotel, north of East London, on the Eastern Cape coast, is a place of sun filled days spent lazing with family on the beach. Others say it is a place fit for a prince. Two princes indeed agreed with this. It's not the pictures of Prince William and Prince Harry that take pride of place at Morgan Bay though, it's ordinary travellers like you and I. Rod Macleod arrived as a guest and left as a friend.



JUST AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR, IVAN WARREN-SMITH TOOK OWNERSHIP OF THE ONLY BOARDING HOUSE IN THE QUIET HAMLET OF MORGAN BAY. Being just a stone's throw from the edge of the sea, Ivan capitalised on its ideal location and transformed the house into a hotel. His son, Jeff, and daughter-in-law, Sue, joined the hotel and over the next 50 years, under their guidance, the Morgan Bay Hotel has hosted thousands of halcyon seaside family holidays. Jeff and Sue's children, Richard, Andrew and Sarah Jane grew up at the hotel. However, it was Richard who took over the running of the hotel from his parents.

"Take a look at this receipt," Richard passes me a 50-year-old piece of paper recording a charge of R54,83 for a 28-day stay and R3,23 to keep the guest's motor vehicle in a garage. In those days, it was a long dusty trek to the hotel where it was necessary to have a petrol pump at the hotel, to fill up for the return journey. The petrol pump is still there.





Standing sentry outside the entrance to the hotel, it marks your arrival. Now an ancient relic, rusty from the salt air, its age speaks to three-generations of family commitment to hospitality.

Today, that commitment to superb hospitality and treasuring guests continues. Richard and his talented wife Jackie are completing a new extension to the hotel. A multipurpose double-story function facility with exterior sundecks, offers sweeping views of the legendary Morgan Bay dolerite cliffs and a mile long beach protected by a nature reserve. "It's an ideal venue for weddings, fam-

young couples with happy children, retired people, overnighters between Durban and Cape town and of course, the hotel-hopping Wild Coast meanders sharing experiences of spectacular wild coast scenery.

To spend the day walking was the real reason I came to Morgan Bay. Up at 4:30am cross over the lagoon, apparently a birder's haven offering over 270 species, and onto a three km unspoilt beach that winds along the Cape Morgan Nature Reserve. You could spend another four hours scrambling a rocky coastline that wraps northward to the Groot Kei River

back whales, pods of dolphins playing and distant gannets diving head-first into bait balls.

Each guest will tell a different story of why the hotel has a special meaning to them. On the morning of my departure I got talking a guest at breakfast, Dr Allan Heydon, an environmental consultant and past chairman of WWF South Africa.

"I never knew that within walking distance of the hotel you could experience five different ecosystems. Remarkable, I am going to recommend the hotel as the next venue for our annual WWF conference," says Dr Heydon.

With the new additions to the hotel, Richard and Jackie are set for some busy times ahead. Their two young boys, Michael and Dylan, hover about in the hotel foyer, watching and learning. Are they the fourth generation of Warren-Smiths responsible for continuing the tradition of memorable family holidays at Morgan Bay Hotel? I hope so.

"It's like coming home"

ily reunions and important functions. Guests now have the opportunity to stay over and relax a night or two before returning," says Richard. As Richard builds this new layer of Morgan Bay Hotel's history, Jackie is careful to ensure the best materials are used. Old décor is being updated, bath and bedrooms refurbished, soft furnishings replenished and it is sure giving the grand old lady a facelift.

Some things haven't changed – the Warren-Smith's personal touch. On the inside page of the dinner menu, each guest is greeted by name with a special welcome message. Groups that gather for a purpose are noted, and all departing guests are blessed with a message of safe travel. Looking over a plate of delicious seafood, the dining room is filled with honeymooners, family groups, relaxed

mouth. This is the last stretch for hikers on their way to Morgan Bay. I spend some time looking at the defunct coastal titanium mine reflecting that this gross disrespect for the environment should never be allowed to occur again.

After lunch, a planned venture to Double Mouth comes to an abrupt end. The famous dolerite cliffs, starting at the point of Morgan Bay, tower cathedral-like into the sky reaching up from the ocean. The sheer magnificence arrested any idea of completing the walk and instead I opted for a scramble up the cliffs. On reaching the top, a grandstand seat offers panoramic views of the ocean. Sitting in solitude, except for a neighboring colony of white-breasted cormorants and a few suspicious looks from rock hyraxes, I spend the rest of the afternoon celebrating every breach of the hump-

WILDSIDE Fact Tracker

Morgan Bay Hotel

How to get there: GPS co-ordinates: -32° 42' 31.91, +28° 20' 29.97.

Rates: Pppns Dbb. Standard rooms from R625, Seaview rooms from R675, Deluxe rooms from R745. In season rates higher. December all meals included in tariff. Children up to 4 years 10% of tariff, 5 yrs to 12yrs 40% of tariff. 30% Surcharge for single supplement.

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E-mail: morganbay@telkom.co.za
www.morgan-bay-hotel.co.za



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MORGAN BAY
est. 1946
Hotel

WILD COAST • EASTERN CAPE • SOUTH AFRICA



Inkwenkwezi Private Game Reserve

Be prepared. On the Bulura River, just outside East London, you will find an extraordinary game reserve. Inkwenkwezi, meaning ‘under the stars’ in Xhosa, is a Big 5 game reserve situated in a valley 5km from the Wild Coast. Rod Macleod found that the reserve is full of surprises.

INKWEZI'S LUXURY ACCOMMODATION, FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES ARE A DRAW CARD FOR GUESTS. If you were in the vicinity during April, you might have spotted twelve Lamborghinis roaring through the entrance gates. It was the escort for President Jacob Zuma's daughter Duduzile, en-route to her wedding here.

However, my greeting is somewhat unusual – a large flightless bird standing sentry at the entrance. Thinking at first it's a strange variety of Eastern Cape ostrich, I do a double take. Half the height of an ostrich, this beaky, rather ugly looking fellow, I realise is an Australian emu. If emus are at the entrance, what's next?

The story of Inkwenkwezi starts with two brothers, Graham and Keith Stanton. Previously dairy farmers from Umtata, they always dreamt of owning a game reserve. In 1983 the opportunity arose to purchase land, but it came with a condition – the seller insisted it had to be developed as a game farm. With no objections, the brothers also purchased the 29 adjoining properties. Today, Inkwenkwezi is a 4000-hectare haven of indigenous vegetation boasting five of the regions seven biomes. The Stanton brothers have made their dream a reality.

Sunday luncheon is a throng of people. Both brothers, sleeves rolled up, are serving behind the counter. I have to ask Keith the story behind the emu. With a smile he answers, “We adopted them from a local farmer who had been hoodwinked into a fictitious business of harvesting emu back-oil secretions for sale into the cosmetic industry”.



In a competitive tourist industry, everyone is vying for guests and if you ever find yourself short on ideas, turn to the Stanton brothers. Often guests, many from Holland and Germany, who have never visited a traditional game reserve, choose to visit Inkwenkwezi for their uniqueness and facilities.

Who else do you know can claim to sell the largest hamburger in Africa? The monumental Inkwenkwezi Burger weighs in at a whopping 1.2kg. To date, 80 000 visitors have had a go at trying to finish it.

Graham, a man born way before the internet generation, is a marketing genius with Facebook. Twice a week, Inkwenkwezi ‘Facebooks’ the public for an ‘eat as much as you like’ luncheon. After lunch, eager children with parents in tow, gather outside to meet the resident African elephants. The children’s delight as they touch a real live elephant is just one of Inkwenkwezi’s highlights.

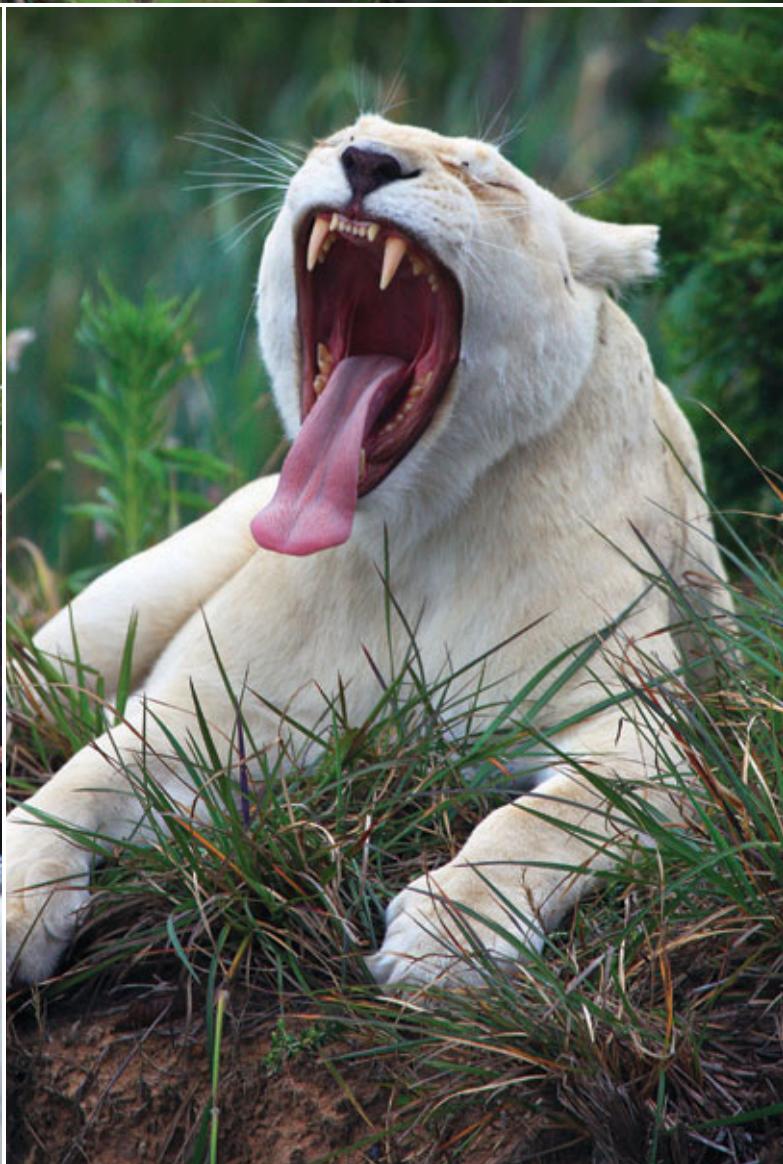
ORPHANED CHEETAHS

Suddenly a distant blood-curdling scream catches my attention. “What on earth was that?” I exclaim to Keith. “It must be the neighbour’s pig. I think he’s got a little too close to the cheetah enclosure,” he casually replies. The orphaned cheetahs are on high alert despite porky having escaped to safety.

Later, I identify with the children’s enchantment as I run my hand over the back of a fully-grown male cheetah. I’m under no illusions of this animal’s power. This is confirmed as a paw’s non-retractable claws unintentionally draw blood on Keith’s forearm. If you are under 1,5 metres in height access inside the enclosure is not allowed.



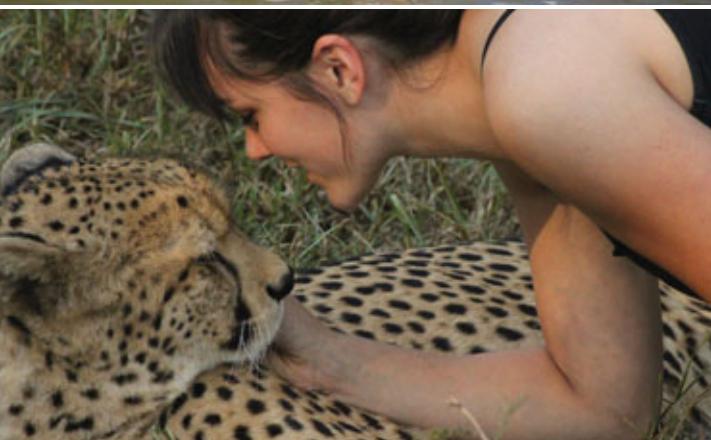
The white lion of Inkwenkwezi are fascinating: Here an adult male strides majestically through the thicket while over the page the cubs, females and sub adult male show their unusually beautiful colouring. The earliest recorded sighting of white lions is in the Timbavati region during 1938 although oral tradition points to their presence being far longer.







Left: Inkwenkwezi offers a diverse range of activities such as elephant interaction and getting up close and personal with cheetah. You can also canoe down to the beach, enjoy swimming in the river or go on a guided game or bird trail. Inkwenkwezi is a favourite wedding venue and was voted SABIA's 2010 Brides' Choice Gold Award winner in the safari reception category for the Eastern Cape.



On route to the luxury en-suite tented Valley Camp, we pass through grasslands and coastal thickets with evidence of fynbos, and descend into a riverine gorge with yellowwoods and rare cycads. Home to abundant bird life, local ornithologist Neil Smith has recorded 180 species including the Stanley bustard and rare ground hornbill.

Views from the deck of my luxury tent are of an impenetrable wall of green forest. No one is in sight and the bush secures total privacy. Guests at the luxury tented Valley Camp have three meals a day, with local wine and malt included. In between two daily game drives, meals are in the lapa's open plan informal lounge, bar and dining room. It's where you are free to curl up next to the cosy indoor fireplace or relax on the deck around the open-air fire pit. There's also horse riding, abseiling, quad and mountain biking, elephant interaction and guided walks in the reserve.

GIRAFFE AT THE COAST

Justin our field guide attends to our every need and also offers up a host of information. "There are over 40 species of game, including, buffalo, rhino, lion and evidence and sightings of leopard which have been encouraged by the presence of antelope to return to the area," says Justin as the safari vehicle bumps and rocks its way to the ridge of the valley.

At the top, the reserve's real charm reveals itself. A tower of giraffe lope past with a backdrop of a panoramic coastline and breaching whales out at sea. If the view of the beach alone is not enough, you can paddle a canoe all the way to the river mouth and spend the day on the beach.

THE WHITE LIONS OF INKWENKWEZI

Scanning the landscape my attention is drawn to white spots contrasting with the green bush – the white lions of Inkwenkwezi. We spend the next two hours observing the behaviour of a fully-grown white male lion, a dominant tawny female, three white cubs, two young white males and one white female lion.

The earliest recorded sighting of white lions is in the Timbavati region during 1938. However, oral tradition amongst elders in the Timbavati points to the presence of white lions going back centuries. Their white colouring blends into the light coloured sands of riverbeds and bleached grasses of the Timbavati region.

As fascination with white lions grew globally, so did the pressure from trophy hunters. From the 1970s wild white lions decreased dramatically. Many were removed and placed in breeding programmes and zoos across the world. The Global White Lion Protection Trust refers to the period from 1994 to 2006 when endemic white lions were technically extinct. Current estimations of white lions in captivity range between 300 and 500.

Since then the Trust has successfully reintroduced a pride into a 1000-hectare control area of the Timbavati. They are now hunting for themselves and are self-sufficient. The white





With no one is insight the Valley Camp secures total privacy. Below:
Guests at Valley Camp eat three meals a day in the thatched open
plan dining room, local wine and malt is included in your tariff.



The reserve's main reception and the Emthombeni Restaurant.



Inkwenkwezi's Bush Camp.



Views from within Valley Camp's luxury tents and ensuite bathrooms: Look out through glass shower walls and across decks into an impenetrable wall of indigenous green forest.

lions at Inkwenkwezi are fenced in a 200-hectare area and their feeding is managed.

GLOBAL WHITE LION PROTECTION

Jason Turner, senior scientific advisor and lion ecologist of the Global White Lion Protection Trust says that a study determined conclusively that white lions are not albino lions. According to scientists, albinism occurs when the gene responsible for melanin production is turned off resulting in no colouration. The red or pink eye color in albinism is from visible blood vessels. The original lions of the Timbavati have blue or gold colouration in their eyes. The white lions at Inkwenkwezi have predominantly light blue to blue-grey eyes.

Scientists believe that the unique coloration of white lions is the result of a double recessive gene. This gene is responsible for melanin production. The amount of melanin produced determines skin, hair and eye colour. This gene, just like the blue in the eyes of humans, determines that only a specific amount of melanin is made.

Jason notes that in white lions if both parents are tawny and are carrying this gene there is a 25%

chance of having white cubs. If one parent is white and the other is tawny but carries the white gene, there is a 50% chance of white cubs. If both parents are white, 100% of the offspring will be white. Based on recent genetic studies on white bears endemic to British Columbia, the Trust is motivating for the white lions to be declared sub-species of *Panthera leo*. As a new sub species this will allow their non-protected status to be revised.

Inkwenkwezi – Extraordinary Game Reserve on the Wild Coast

If you plan to travel to South Africa and your time is short then a stay at Inkwenkwezi Game Reserve almost guarantees good sightings of animals. Choose between the luxury 4 star tented Valley Camp or the very comfortable tented Bush Camp. For the best experience ensure that you have enough time to do all the activities.

If you don't have the energy to canoe all the way to the river mouth, ask the brothers to book you into their 3 star Chintsa Sands Guesthouse. In true Stanton style it's right on the beach. **W**



Discounts, incl. off special rates for Wildside Warriors only. All bookings donate to Project Rhino. See www.wildsidesa.co.za

WILDSIDE Fact Tracker

Inkwenkwezi PGR

Where: Just outside of east London on the Wild Coast, Eastern Cape.

How to get there: By air East London's airport is a 40 minute drive. By road from East London take the N2 highway to Umtata approximately 25km out of East London, watch for the signpost to Inkwenkwezi / Cintsa, turn right, after 8km the entrance to Inkwenkwezi is on the right.

Valley Camp: a spacious well appointed, luxury tented accommodation fitted with percale linen, air-conditioning, mini bar and four-sided glass shower.

Bush Camp: offers luxury accommodation for twelve guests in six en-suite safari tents. The en-suite features a shower crafted to resemble a cave. From its hilltop site the camp overlooks a valley and each safari tent is positioned on a raised timber deck offering you private game viewing.

Activities: Elephant interaction, cheetah viewing, game drives, birding, canoeing, horseback tours, mountain biking, team building. Inkwenkwezi is a popular wedding venue.

Rates: Bush Camp - Special offer from R850.00 pppns and Valley Camp R1150 pppns. For both camps the rate includes all meals and activities offered at the lodge including guided horse rides, guided mountain biking and hiking trails, canoeing and elephant interaction. Stay 3 nights and get a free elephant safari.

Tel: 043 7343234

Website: www.inkwenkwezi.com



CRAWFORD'S BEACH LODGE • CHINTSA BAY – WILD COAST

Crawford's Beach Lodge offers barefoot luxury and elegant thatched accommodation for the most discerning of traveler and conference organizer, who is looking for fun, sun and relaxation.

Crawford's Beach Lodge is nestled in the middle of the beautiful Chintsa Bay on the Wild Coast, surrounded by rolling hills, lush tropical beach forests and the warm Indian Ocean. The perfect venue for a honeymoon or even for the more adventurous, wanting to explore the many beautiful treasures the Wild Coast has to offer.

Spend your days walking on our endless golden beaches and be absorbed by the untouched natural beauty of the landscape while discovering new exotic bird and fish life indigenous to the area.

The location of Crawford's Beach Lodge is in a malaria free area. The lodge is approximately 42km from East London, the surfside city famous for its Nahoon Reef. Far enough from the maddening crowd but close enough for emergencies.

The Crawford's pride themselves with the cuisine they have on offer, delicious and nutritious homemade meals. All meals are served in the main dining room overlooking the sea and are set on a buffet basis, giving the diner a good selection to choose from.

Treat yourself and the special person in your life to a romantic getaway. We also offer Spa Treatments in the privacy of your own room or neighboring Wellness Centre. Stay in a luxury thatched suite, relax on the deck while you sip on champagne watching the sun go down over the shimmering ocean. Come and share our slice of paradise.

Crawfords beach lodge
★ ★ ★ ★
Star of the Wild Coast

043 738 5000 crawfords@iafrica.com
 www.crawfordscabins.co.za



WAVECREST BEACH HOTEL & SPA – WILD COAST

Wavecrest Beach Hotel is situated on a pristine, mangrove-lined estuary, surrounded by magnificent dune forests and endless expanses of beach. It has recently undergone an upgrade and refurbishment as new owner Gloria Serobe, a Johannesburg based business woman has taken over. The hotel still has the same relaxed atmosphere in a spectacular setting.

By virtue of Wavecrest's setting, energetic guests can enjoy activities, while those wishing to just relax and put their feet up, can do so with magnificent views. It is the perfect destination for families, with plenty for the kids to do. While the kids are busy you can revitalise at the Wavecrest Spa which offers a delightful range of beauty therapies and spa treatments to indulge in.

Situated on the southern bank of the Nxaxo Estuary, Wavecrest is the ideal starting point for all birding. The wide variety of habitat types are easily accessible and within close

walking distance. Wavecrest is one of the most diverse angling destinations in as it offers all aspects of shore angling. The rivers are extremely productive and perfect for light tackle enthusiasts.

Aviators will appreciate the well maintained grass airstrip, over 800m long, situated next to the hotel. Come and enjoy the quiet air space and spend time flying this stunning stretch of coastline. Come and wander our network of scenic walking and hiking trails. Stroll along the grassy coastal hills full of wildflowers, watch the antics of dolphins and whales, and spend time exploring the deep forests.

043 740 4762 wavecrest@pixie.co.za
www.wavecrest.co.za

AREENA

RIVERSIDE RESORT | ADVENTURE VILLAGE | GAME RESERVE

Wild Coast • Eastern Cape



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- Restaurant

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www.arenaresort.com



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043 734 3055 www.arenaresort.com

MAZEPPA BAY



There are many attractions at Mazeppa, the main one being angling, due to the steep continental shelf and as such Mazeppa has great appeal to the game fisherman.

The bird life at Mazeppa is also quite spectacular. The Manubi Indigenous forest being a particular delight for bird and plant lovers alike. Other walks include the one across One Mile beach to the One Mile rocks.

Mazeppa Bay Hotel has kept its old style charm, which keeps families coming back generation after generation, where friends are made and people have a chance to take a step back from their busy lives to really relax with their loved ones. So take your shoes off, and relax.

actons@polka.co.za 047 498 033 www.mazeppabay.co.za



MBOTYI RIVER LODGE

Escape to the wondrous Mbotyi River Lodge, situated 26 kilometers from Lusikisiki in the wilderness area at the mouth of the Mbotyi River on the Wild Coast. Mbotyi River Lodge is in a perfect position for those looking for a tranquil holiday or for the adventurer. The Lodge offers comfort, style, friendly service and hearty home style cuisine. Mbotyi River Lodge also offer a range of hiking trails along beautiful beaches, up on the grassy escarpment overlooking the sea and through indigenous forest. Mbotyi comes to life in June/July when divers and wildlife enthusiasts from all over the world descend to be part of the Sardine Run. Mbotyi River Lodge is offering a package to guests who wish to participate in this exciting event and view this incredible phenomenon from the ocean. To experience this once in a life-time opportunity, contact us at:

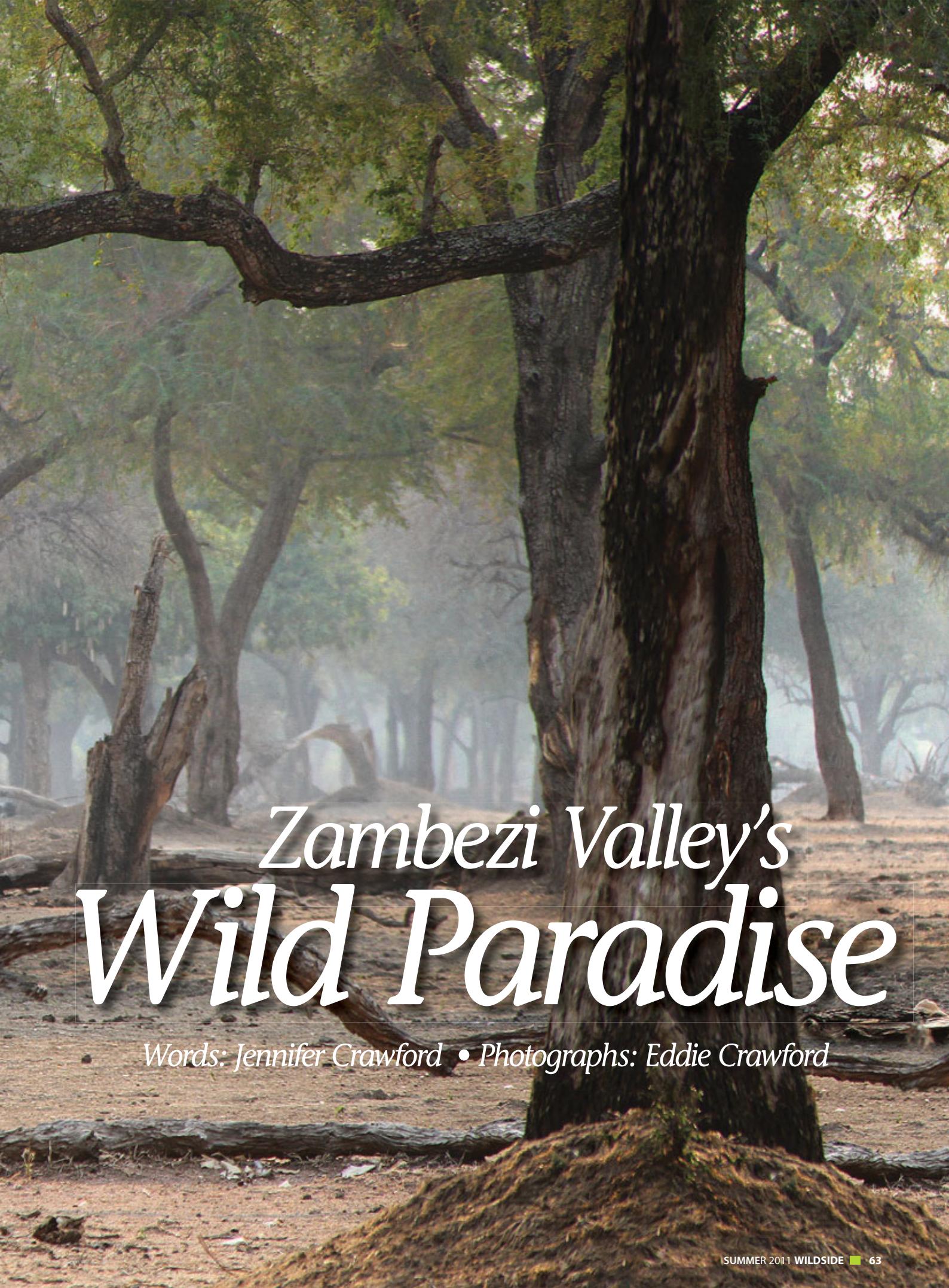
mbotyi@pondoland.co.za or 039 253 7200



Mbotyi is the perfect place for anyone looking for a peaceful and tranquil holiday or for the adventurous wanting to explore the many beautiful and wild treasures this coast has to offer.

**Telephone: 039 253 7200/1 • Cell: 082 674 1064
Fax: 039 253 7202 • www.mbotyi.co.za**



A large, dark tree trunk dominates the right side of the frame, its bark textured and weathered. In the background, a dense forest of similar trees is shrouded in a thick, pale mist or fog, creating a sense of depth and mystery. The overall atmosphere is one of a wild, natural environment.

Zambezi Valley's Wild Paradise

Words: Jennifer Crawford • Photographs: Eddie Crawford

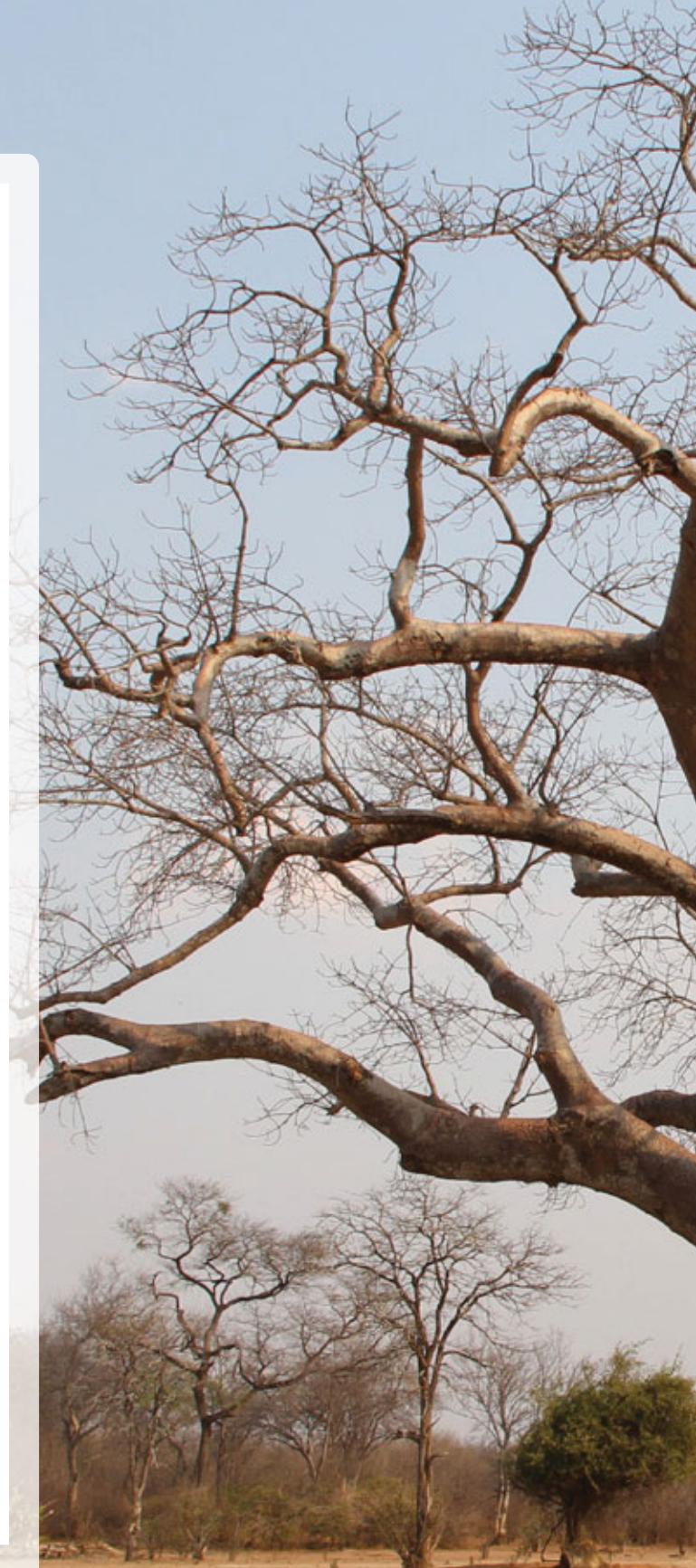
THE WINTER THORN DRAWS AN ABUNDANCE OF WILDLIFE TO THE LOWER ZAMBEZI FLOODPLAINS PROVIDING SUSTENANCE DURING THE DRY SEASON WHEN THE LAND BECOMES PARCHED AND THIRSTY. These open floodplains flank the iconic Zambezi River host to one of Africa's greatest concentrations of hippopotamus, crocodile and tiger fish.

The river is only interrupted by wooded islands where you may find shy elephant or be fortunate enough to spot the rare Pel's fishing owl - *Glaucidium periatum* on a night time boat cruise. A hem of emerald riverine forest adds to the wild beauty of the Lower Zambezi Valley, guarded by distant blue-grey mountains. Within the forest it's bursting with life, filled with the sound of birds, and providing food and shelter to the animals.

Here, at Chikwenya Safari Lodge, situated at the confluence of the Sapi River and the Zambezi River, on the eastern border of Mana Pools National Park, Zimbabwe, you are absorbed into this spectacular wildlife setting. We'd arrived at the tail end of winter, dubbed suicide month, because of the searing temperatures that gallop to 45 degrees Celsius. However, in the same way that you become immersed in the drama of the wildlife, the heat seems to seep into you as opposed to grasp at you. It's a dry heat, and the anticipation of rain at the end of a long dry winter dangles in the air like the oversized fruits of the sausage trees.

Ancient Baobabs

The edge of the riverine forest is deceiving though, boasting its emerald green colour, because the forest stretches back into the interior, away from the river, thins out and becomes dehydrated and devoid of greenery. Water holes have become dust







bowls that pockmark the landscape, further motivation for wildlife to move closer to the river. You will find magnificent giant ancient baobabs, some as old as 2 000 years. We'd flown into Chikwenya and had had site of the vast, dry land beneath us that was more mauve-brown than green and seemed incapable of sustaining any life form. But, so large were some of the baobabs that they could be seen from high above in our tiny little 5-seater plane.

Fortunately the 2km deep band of fayherbia albida woodland, commonly known as winter thorn, near the river, produces a highly nutritious seed during Zimbabwe's winter months of June through November and acts like a magnet for wildlife. The non-vegetarians, like lion and wild dog follow the vegans, mainly impala, but will consider buffalo too. Eland wander through the forests, and as a KwaZulu-Natalian who has only seen them in the higher reaches of the Drakensberg, they seemed comically out of place.

Chikwenya Lodge

Guests to Chikwenya are drawn to the spectacular wildlife and to the world class tiger fishing. The lodge enjoys an exclusive 7000-acre lease of pristine lower Zambezi floodplain and some 5km of river frontage. It's one of the most luxurious lodges to be found in the region and is comprised of nine double suites and one presidential suite, all built on raised teak platforms. Each suite is separate but interlinked by raised wooden walkways, and all are beautifully appointed, air-conditioned and have a gorgeous outdoor ball and claw bath. They all have private decks with views into the bush and onto the floodplain.

Deck Game Viewing

The central area is comprised of a sprawling deck with cinematic views of the open grassland floodplain and river. There is also a pool, indoor and outdoor dining areas, and bar. The deck hugs the edge of the floodplain and a superb activity is lazing in the rim flow pool watching the daily rituals of the animals.

First up in the late afternoon baboons saunter down to the water's edge, followed by a steady stream of buck - sometimes skittish signalling the presence of lion. Warthog dart around with uncertainty. Elephant swagger across the plain and baboons give way albeit reluctantly. The buffalo don't fit into any timeless tradition, but parade stubbornly across the plain whenever they feel like it. Sometimes they stomp right up into the lodge grounds, metres from the central area, or even alongside rooms at night, particularly if there are lion in the area as the lodge provides shelter.

The lion slink down to the river in late afternoon, but frustratingly they kept slipping down minutes after that



From top: A sub adult male lion within meters of the lodge, eland in the forest, the lodge, views onto the open plains and river from the rim flow pool. The area is rich in bird life as well as having an abundance of game.



Characteristic behaviour of the elephant particularly at the end of winter seeking out the last of the greenery.



golden hour for photography was over. Not that you don't have remarkable photographic opportunities. We'd had the privilege of spending more than an hour late one afternoon to view lion that were spotted near the lodge after a kill.

We'd been lazing in the pool mesmerised by the vistas when the lodge manager, Sonja, came to us and asked if we wanted to go on a game drive as lion had been spotted. We didn't hesitate and minutes later we were on a game drive in our sarongs. Chikwenya's like that, spontaneous and accommodating. You really can choose to do what you like when you like be it game drives, boat cruises, or fishing. There is also a beautiful hide which we spent time in just watching the animals.

The most illustrative example of Chikwenya's harmonious blending into the wild, is when on one of the days we set off for a game drive from the lodge. Hilariously, our drive consisted of little more than a loop, and we tracked the lion back to the lodge. There we sat in the open game vehicle, meters from the lodge, watching the lion.

There is an abundance of elephant and buffalo. The elephant have ingeniously developed a skill to ensure survival when the trees are thinning out. They stretch out, arch their backs and extend their trunks or rise up onto their hind legs and reach for the last of the green leaves. We didn't see wild dog, but large packs are often spotted right in front of the lodge.

Boat cruises are a must and offer up not only serenity but a beautiful noisy chaos too as hippo grunt to each other and their guffaws reverberate in the Zambezi Valley and elephants on the land trumpet as you float past them. In the background the water thick-knee (Dikkop) *Burhinus vermiculatus* signal the close of another untamed day in Africa. **W**



16 POUND TIGER FISH

STORY BY EDDIE VAN OS

"A 16 POUND TIGER FISH (*HYDROCYNUS VITTATUS*) WAS CAUGHT LAST WEEK" SAID WILLARD BAKARI, OUR FISHING GUIDE AT CHIKWENYA LODGE, WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE FISHING CONDITIONS ON THIS STRETCH OF THE ZAMBIZI. "Oh ja, I've heard that one before," I whispered to my intrepid fishing buddy before teasing him that only in his wildest dreams would he ever think of catching a tiger fish of that size, or any size, for that matter. "OK", he retorted, "Competition is on. Let's see who catches the most and the biggest. No prize, just pride at stake."





“The 16 pounder was the start of an epic three days of fishing. Between the two of us we managed to catch and release over 300 pounds of tiger fish with the average weighing in at 7.6 pounds. ”

Fortunately Chikwenya Lodge is a well known fishing destination which caters well for their fishing guests. There are four pontoon fishing boats all geared with rods, reels and necessary tackle. We had decided to take our own tiger traces, which is advisable.

Each boat is skippered by an experienced fishing guide, who apart from fulfilling his regular fishing duties, also acts as good motivators by continuously reminding you that “You have to be in it to win it”. We were fortunate in that not only is Willard a passionate fisherman but an avid and knowledgeable birder and tree fundi extraordinaire. So whilst drifting down the river he would point out the common name and Latin name of animals, trees and birds.

Our strategy was to start our little competition by fishing with bait, progress to spoons and then to finish off with a spot of fly fishing (yes, we’re an ambitious lot). For bait fishing cheza is the bait of choice which meant a short stopover at the ‘House of Cheza’ as Willard calls it, to stock up. Catching bait is usually a pain in the butt, but to us it was great fun with the cheza taking the worm with almost every cast, plus putting up a very spirited fight. I guess it was a sign of things to come when we lost a few hooks to some cheeky little tigers.

From the ‘House of Cheza’ it was off to find a good spot to

start our drift which in our case was a drop off where the river eddies after flowing over a sandbank, just down river from the lodge. This stretch of the Zambezi River is teeming with wildlife; I mean there are hippos, crocodiles, elephants, buffalo, antelope, and birds wherever you look. This is an experience on its own, but to catch it at sunrise with the blood red sun creating a liquid gold reflection off the river and fish eagles crying in the background is something very special. I was just thinking how fortunate I am to live in Africa when Willard’s excited voice brought me out of my melancholy state.

“You have an enquiry” he said, which is fishing-speak for a tiger showing an interest in your bait, and it had me up on my feet, rod in hand waiting for the right moment to strike. Tiger fishing is not easy; these fish have exceptionally hard palates, a set of teeth that will make jaws nervous, plus a healthy aversion to being caught. You strike too soon and the hook won’t set, strike to late and the bait is gone, strike in between and you may have a chance.

My strategy was to wait until it jumped before striking, which proved the right one because a few moments later a monster of a fish jumped about 40 yards from the boat. After a long seven minute fight we had a 16 pound tiger “in dee boat”. This was beyond my wildest expectations and after a quick weigh-in and

photo session it was for me even more satisfying to see the fish released and swim away. Although the fishing is catch and release, what really impressed me was the care and concern shown by the guides. If a fish happened to pop up to the surface after release they would stop everything and try to revive the fish.

The 16 pounder was the start of an epic three days of fishing. Between the two of us we managed to catch and release over 300 pounds of tiger fish with the average weighing in at 7.6 pounds. To be honest we also lost a lot of fish due to "technical operator fault" as Willard called it that is, striking too soon or too late. My only regret is we didn't progress to the fly fishing stage of our competition, but to be honest it was too hot at 45 degrees Celsius and we were having far too much fun with the bait fishing.

Boating back to the lodge on our last evening with the sun setting over the horizon it was fitting way to end what was for me the most memorable fishing experience ever. Once again I contemplated how lucky I am to live in Africa. **W**

WILDSIDE Fact Tracker

Zambezi Valley – Chikwenya Lodge

Where: Chikwenya Lodge is in Zimbabwe, situated at the confluence of the Sapi River and the Zambezi River, on the eastern border of Mana Pools National Park in the Zambezi Valley.

How to get there: Fly from Johannesburg to Harare, take a charter (1.5 hrs) to Chikwenya. Wildside flew with Solenta Airways and found the flight an exciting aspect of the trip as you fly over the vast landscape before landing at Chikwenya. Access via road from Harare is the Chirundu highway. In the dry months, four-wheel drive recommended. From Harare, it's 430km, and a 6 – 7 hour drive. The caution is to secure fuel for the trip.

Accommodation: Nine double suites including the honeymoon suite and a presidential suite. All air-conditioned, beautifully appointed with private decks, indoor and outdoor bathrooms.

Rates: US 375 inclusive of accommodation, all three delicious meals per day, all activities game drives, boating, and fishing with expert guides and equipment. No fuel charges. Excludes park fees and drinks. Ask

about low season specials.

View on rates: The rates include all activities, such as game drives, boat trips and fishing which means fuel. As all logistics, fuel in particular, adds to costs, we feel the rates are fair all considered. However, it is flights that make the trip costly as the Jhb to Harare flights can climb to R6 000, and then there is the charter in US dollars. Despite this, the market at Chikwenya is predominantly South African many drawn to the world class tiger fishing.

Activities: Game drives, walks, boat cruises, night drives, bird watching and fishing on the Zambezi for the world famous tiger fish. All activities are done with top guides who are experts on the flora and fauna of the area.

To book: Email: reservations@chikwenyasafaris.com

www.chikwenyasafaris.com

Tel +263 (0) 4499875

Cell +263 (0) 77 2470 065

Contact: To enquire about specific lodge information, contact the lodge manager Sonja Clark: chikwenya.zambezivalley@gmail.com.



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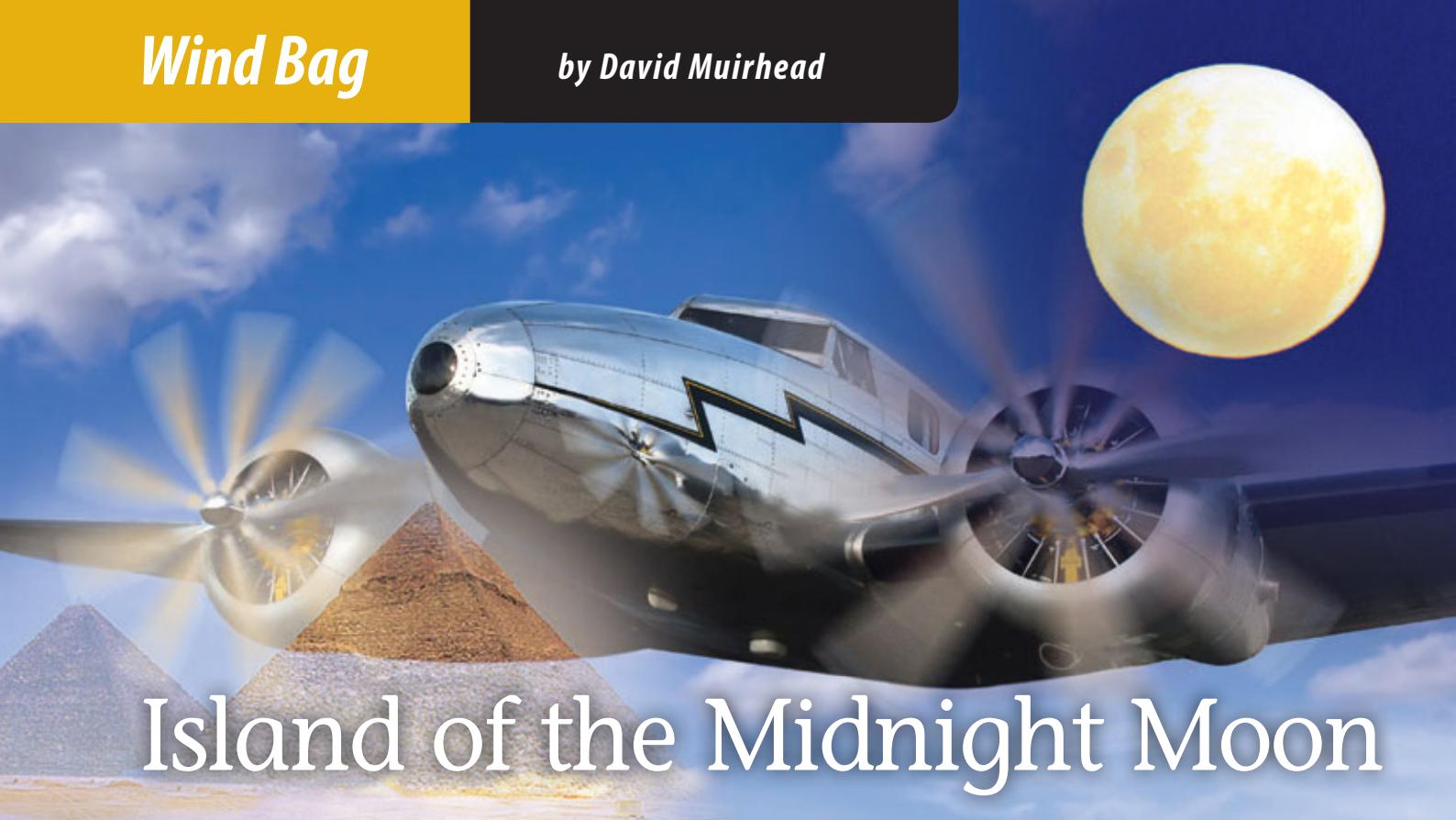
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Island of the Midnight Moon

When I was a small boy I used to travel back and forth from Uganda to England on an aeroplane with four propellers. It landed and took off in five different places before finally wheezing down through the thick clouds into Heathrow. One of those places was Khartoum. It was always night time when the plane landed there. All you could see from the aeroplane window were a few twinkling lights and flickering desert fires. When they pulled back the rusty bolts and opened the door there was a huge blast of red hot air, impregnated with indescribable aromas. Back then, when I was four foot six, I used to think that Khartoum was a suburb of Hell and I promised myself I'd come back when I was six foot four for a closer look.

Perhaps I've been too good because the powers that be in the universe have so far chosen to spare me an adult visit, let alone forced me to live there permanently. Good on you, powers of the universe.

Mind you I probably haven't been that good because I've ended up in any number of places which were undoubtedly colonies of Hell. Fernando Po tops the list, an island with a name so unlikely that up until the time I actually set foot on it, I doubted that it really existed. In this island paradise one half of the population had been murdered by the other half. The survivors had apparently eaten just about every other life form, vegetable and animal, even the monkeys. The glass in the hotel

windows wasn't there anymore, or maybe never had been, and the water in the swimming pool had long since disappeared into an enormous jagged hole, one that presumably led straight down to the ornamental fountain in Lucifer's foyer. The harbour was the crater of an extinct volcano, open to the sea, the water so black and deep even the light from the midnight moon was scared to go there. Today Fernando Po goes by another name and a sudden and unexpected windfall of oil money has enabled the locals to call in a glazier and generally spruce up the place.

Why, you may ask, am I telling you all this. The answer is that I have a theory: we don't really choose our destinations in life; they choose us, at least in the eerie sense of giving us our just deserts. Don't get depressed, at least not yet: it is not an entirely melancholy theory. You may have recently got back from a fortnight lolling on a palm fringed beach with Angelina Joli. If you have, I'm sure you have a contented grin on your otherwise vacant face, you lucky bastard, and probably agree with me. Or maybe the sixteen kids came along too and you have a scowl on your face and you still reluctantly agree with me.

But it's not as simple as taking your baggage with you, so to speak. It's easy to turn the Heaven Hilton into a doss house if you arrive there with a bad attitude. No amount of pampering will add sparkle to the wine; no amount of

bosomy dancing by hula-hula girls can cheer professional grumps. People like that hold season tickets to Crapville and its everywhere they go.

No, what I'm trying to say is that there are places on earth with your name on them, whether you like it or not. When you travel on business that's obvious; you usually don't have a choice anyway, you have to go where the customers are. But when you're going on holiday you think you have a choice. You pick up a magazine or maybe troll the Internet and something leaps out and grabs your attention. It may be a gob stopping photograph of a stupendous view or even something quite mundane, like a picture of a particularly delicious looking breakfast. It doesn't matter. The point is that you intuitively feel you've found the ideal place when all the while the place has actually chosen you. It knew you were coming and has been there all along, waiting for you to arrive. If you've been good this past year, take comfort; it will inevitably be delightful. If you've been bad it'll be the island of the midnight moon.



	ACCOMMODATION	Bush camps/lodges	Camping/caravan sites	Caves	Group Accommodation	Hutted accommodation	Lodges	Rustic	School/youth accom.	Safari Tents	Trail/mountain hut	FACILITIES	Basic supplies	Communal lounge/hall	Conferencing & Functions	Curio shop	Fuel	Interpretive centre	Local craft market	Public telephones	Restaurant / Tea Garden	Ski boat launch site	Swimming pool	Trails for the disabled	Tennis Court	Television	ACTIVITIES	Game viewing	Birding	Boating	Conducted vehicle tours	Diving	Fishing	Guided walks	Hides	Horse riding	Launch tours	Mountain bike riding	Picnicing	Swimming (rivers/dams/sea)	Walks/hikes (day & overnight)	Whale watching tower	Wilderness trails
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2. GIANT'S CASTLE																																											
3. DIDIMA																																											
4. HILLTOP																																											
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28. PHONGOLO																																											
29. VERNON CROOKES																																											
30. CHARTERS CREEK																																											
31. FALSE BAY PARK																																											
32. CHELMSFORD																																											
33. WAGENDRIFT																																											

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Information

For details visit our website
www.kznwildlife.com

Bookings

All reservations regarding accommodation or wilderness trails should be made through the Head Office of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in Pietermaritzburg.

Enquiries

Should you have any enquiries, please contact our Reservations office on +27(0) 33 845 1000 Alternatively, detailed information is available on our website, be advised that the information on this page is subject to change.



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