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.

NKWENKWEZI'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 more 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.