

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 fishermen. 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

