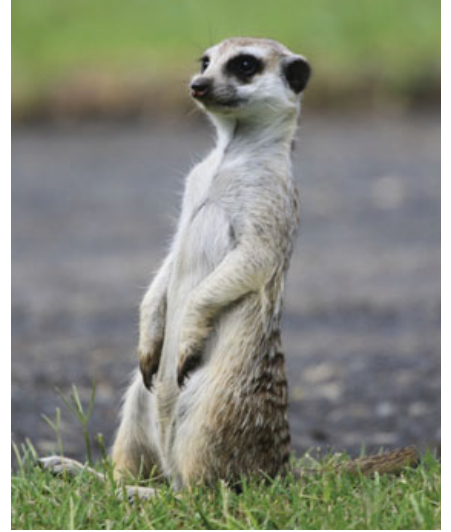


Woodlands

PRIVATE SAFARI LODGE

NAMBITI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

The WILDSIDE team and KIRSTEN DUKES, South Africa's 'Miss Earth' ambassador, encounter the most endangered large cat in africa – the cheetah. PHOTOGRAPHS OF KIRSTEN BY JESSICA MOYA.



A Family & Feline Fiesta

IT'S A WELCOME PARTY WITH A DIFFERENCE. Besides the lodge's staff armed with warm towels to refresh us, a tan and silver-speckled creature sits on a step. Everything in his body posture shows awareness of our arrival. Even before we crunch to a halt on the circular drive, he bounds towards the car. Bright eyes surrounded by black patches greet us. It's 'Zulu the Meerkat' giving his personal welcome to Woodlands Private Safari Lodge.

Not the typical lodge

Woodlands is not the typical safari lodge. For a start the building is not the usual wood and thatch you'd expect. Rather, simple architectural lines with generous verandahs indicate its historical origins as a farmhouse. Its authenticity is revealed in the blue grey rough-hewn masonry. It's the stone of Nambiti Private Game Reserve, and firmly rooted in central KwaZulu-Natal's geology.

Nambiti, situated 25 km east from Ladysmith, is the only Big-5 reserve in this area of KwaZulu-Natal. The reserve's 10 000ha varies in ecospheres from central savannahs, to open grasslands in the northwest and dense acacia thornveld in the south. Woodlands' lodge is among gentle rolling hills of grassland with scatterings of tall acacia.

Accompanying the Wildside team to Nambiti is the beautiful Kirsten Dukes, South Africa's 'Miss Earth' ambassador. Kirsten has a deep passion for conservation, especially for the preservation of endangered species such as rhino. She has joined us as a guest of Wildside Warriors in support of Project Rhino KZN. However, having just met, we are all feeling a little reserved. That is, until Zulu breaks the ice and enchants us with his antics.

