



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 dbb 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. ppns, and R720 pppn single. U12years R350 pn sharing. Dbb.

Mvubu River Lodge: 9 twin chalets, 2 double chalets. R660. ppns 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 ppns, U16yrs R90. Minimum daily rate R1 550.

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

Sondaba: 6 x twin A-frame units. Self-catering. R 155 ppns, 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



- Tiger Fishing
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- River Cruises
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