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(& STAY IN THIS AFFORDABLE ECO-LODGE pg 56)

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handy bag
– pg 52.

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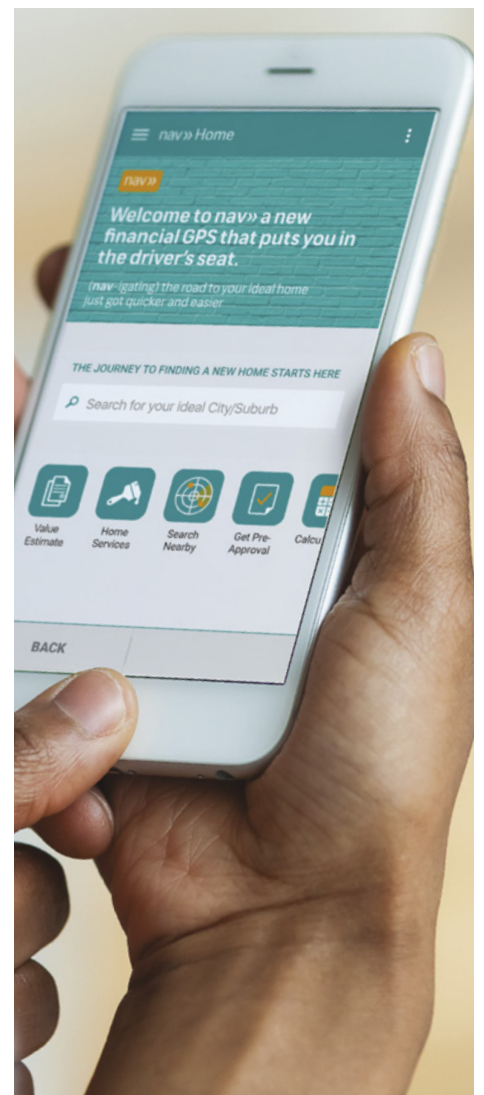
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FIRST THINGS FIRST

SONYA SCHOEMAN



CONTRIBUTORS



JANINE STEPHEN

From pop stars to Alaskan truckers and even a former president, Janine has met (and interviewed) all sorts. Most of all she loves far-flung places... Whether it's Groot Marico or Mexico City. On page 92, she tells you why Mexico's capital needs to be your next faraway escape.



WELCOME LISHIVHA

After a skydiving excursion, this recent addition to the *Getaway* team kept asking everyone to call him 'The One Who Fell from the Sky'. Clearly in need of some grounding, we decided to send him on his first-ever multi-day hike – into the Overberg. Read about it on page 72.



EVAN HAUSSMANN

A veteran journalist with little desire to travel the beaten track, we sent Evan to his happy place (Mozambique) to find a new, relaxing route to get to Inhambane. He may have taken the 'relaxing' part too literally, because we haven't heard from him since. Read his story on page 56.

It's all in the detail

A walk in the wild leads to new resolutions

A month ago I dragged photographer Teagan Cuniffe into the bush again. This time we were at Sanbona Wildlife Reserve, at the foot of the Warmwaterberg mountains. It was spring; it was meant to be warm, but we got up every morning before six and layered tee over vest, then second skin, jersey, scarf and windbreaker, expecting to peel them off as the sun rose, only to tug them tighter against the wind. Our lips chapped, our noses froze, our fingers looked like frozen oven chips. And we were loving it.

We studied brilliant crassulas. We walked up to a rotting hippo carcass and watched as black-backed jackals nosed about its maggot-infested bulk. We saw three rhinos charging down a river bed, scoured the bush for birds. A cheetah took the measure of our graceless two legs, then flipped herself head over tail just like Ozzie my house cat does. It was enchanting.

I'd been to Sanbona before, when it advertised itself as a Big Five reserve, which it is. But coming from KwaZulu-Natal, where the herds of big game come in double-up sizes, it had underwhelmed. However, down on the ground, the detail drew us in, and when we looked up and saw megafauna, it felt like everything fitted.

This change of pace has come about because Sanbona has a new owner, whose approach is focused on legacy and leaving a healthy environment. This has meant the management is now free to focus on the health of the ecosystem. It's exciting to see this shift. If successful, that approach will move out in concentric circles, plus it feels like this way has an ethical starting point.

Living ethically can be complex. One's choices aren't necessarily simple equations that end in positive outcomes.

But there are people out there who make it easier for us, especially as consumers. Take a look at the Green Wine booklet that has come with your magazine this month. All these farmers choose to run their land in an environmentally friendly manner. As a result they produce not only great wines, but wholesome, biodiverse environments. How admirable. It's easier, I'm sure, simply to bend with convenience of modern management techniques.

I believe in eating ethically. Embarrassingly Capetonian, right? But I dislike abattoirs more than I hate how annoying I sound or, no doubt, am. But I might as well go all in: from now on, I've resolved to buy only green wines, too. I mean, pesticides are the abattoir of the insect world, right? And I want to give bees a chance.

Now for inside the magazine: don't miss our cover story on Madagascar by Tyson Jopson (The Brave Came Running, page 82), our features on a set of invigorating slackpacking trails (Two Hikes for Two Types, page 72), or Mexico (The Monster You Want to Meet, page 92). And more. We hope this issue makes you restless.

Sonya



We stayed at the seasonal Sanbona Explorer Camp, which re-opened in October

TO OUR READERS We want to hear your views. Mail us at editor@getaway.co.za.



NOT ALL FINE WINES ARE SNOBBY. IN FACT, THESE ONES EVEN MINGLE WITH SHEEP.

Nedbank is a proud supporter of environmentally friendly agriculture initiatives in South Africa, especially the production of wine. The Nedbank Green Wine Awards celebrates wine farmers who farm sustainably by keeping sheep who eat weeds, instead of using chemicals to keep the weeds away.

You too can do your part for the environment, by linking your card to our Nedbank Green Affinity, which donates to sustainable initiatives on your behalf, at no cost to you. We're celebrating fine wines that are not just deliciously unpretentious, they're grown with nature in mind too.



Nedbank Green Wine Awards. For every kind of friendly.

THE TRAVELLER

DARREL BRISTOW-BOVEY



In-your-face pie

Our columnist bites off more than he can chew at a legendary pizza parlour in New York

When I'm travelling I often avoid swanky restaurants because I don't have my good shoes and jacket with me, and because I'm allergic to bills in foreign currencies that require me to kidnap a sheikh's son for ransom money to afford the tip. But I didn't expect to be intimidated at Totonno's.

Totonno's is the best pizza restaurant in America and probably the world, or so they tell you. A bunch of pizza restaurants in New York tell you that. It's hard to verify, but Totonno's has a strong claim.

'Any particular pizza for your majesties?' she said, dropping a grotesque curtsy

It's not really a restaurant. It's a greasy den on Neptune Avenue in Coney Island at the distant end of the F-train that runs eastwards out of lower Manhattan and hurries through the warehouses and ungentrified hinterlands of Brooklyn. It opened in 1924 and had a table permanently reserved for Al Capone, and I don't think they've changed the tablecloths since.

They only make pizzas, nothing else. The walls are decorated with framed faded sports pages from the 1930s. The guys in the kitchen have hairy arms and grubby white vests, and give the impression they're concealing a lit cigarette and as soon as you look away they'll take an insolent puff.

This is not a place that puts on airs and graces.

I arrived with my friend Jacques and asked for a table.

'We're full! Wait outside!' bellowed the proprietress, an elderly spade-shaped woman with a face like the inside of a duffel bag.

We stood on the sidewalk and watched cars swerve down the street avoiding the potholes until she grunted at us to enter. We sat nervously.

'Where you from?' she said. 'England?'

'South Africa.'

She glared at me as though I was playing a practical joke on the wrong person.

'What'll you have?' she said, with a voice like someone breaking a gin bottle.

'I want a pizza,' I answered in a small voice.

'No kidding!' she hollered. 'Hey, Sal, the English guys want a pizza!'

'Well, la-di-da!' yelled Sal back from the kitchen.

'Any particular pizza for your majesties?' she said, dropping some kind of grotesque curtsy.

It was surreal. I've never felt so abused in a restaurant, which is saying something because I sometimes eat out in Cape Town.

'Um,' I said.

'Um,' said Jacques.

We scanned the menu but we were panicking so much our eyes weren't transmitting information to our brains.

'You'll have the sausage and peppers,' she growled at me. 'He'll have the anchovies.'

I knew I should just nod and accept her decision but I had a question. Jacques' eyes widened as he realised what I was about to do. He began to shake his head and make the sort of low, pleading sounds you'd expect from a sheikh's son who has been gagged and tied to a chair.

'The peppers,' I said, 'are they green peppers?'

There was a long, frozen silence. In the distance I could hear the carnival music from Luna Park and the screams from the kids on the Cyclone.

'Green peppers?' she said incredulously. 'Green peppers?' 'It's just that I don't eat green peppers, and...'

'Sal! This idiot thinks we put green peppers on our sausage pie!'

'No, I'm just checking that—'


'You want green peppers, get the hell out of here.'

'No, I don't, I promise!'

'Why are you even still here?!'

'I'm so hungry.'

Finally she agreed to bring us our orders, provided we didn't do anything and didn't say anything else. I don't even remember what the pizzas tasted like. As we shuffled out, stunned and trembling, she came past and pinched my bottom.

'See you soon, cutie pie,' she said. 

PIZZA TO GO

A FEW WHOLLY RANDOM FACTS

1. In May this year, a pepperoni pizza was delivered to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro by Pizza Hut. It took four days, but the pizza was kept warm by a battery-powered heater.

2. Also in May, a record-breaking 1,8 kilometre-long pizza was made by 250 pizzaiaolos along the Naples waterfront. It was part of an Italian campaign to have Neapolitan pizza-making added to Unesco's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

NEW YORK



INBOX

TRAVELLERS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS

WINNING LETTER

On walking the Belvedere Trail

Belvedere is a word most commonly associated with the opulence of the self-proclaimed 'luxury vodka', which is quite a contrast to the taxing descent and ascent of the Belvedere Trail in the Blyde River Canyon. The trail begins at Bourke's Luck Potholes.

The first leg of the walk led me through the potholes, where I strutted with my head held high like some crusader, venturing off into far-off places where tourists' feet dare not tread. This was, of course, ridiculous, as the trail is frequently walked, and conveniently placed spray-painted directions make it nigh on impossible to get lost.

Once through the potholes, two short bridges take you across to a fairly level path that leads you to the edge of the canyon. The views on this section are magnificent and the walking is easy going and very pleasant. As the saying goes,

'Nothing easy is worth having', and just as you settle into a steady rhythm on the even path, stopping to lay the obligatory rock on the cairn, the path enters into the dappled shade and the descent begins. Going downhill, in my opinion, is the perfect example of how you can have too much of a good thing. I have completed

'Going downhill is the perfect example of how you can have too much of a good thing'

seemingly endlessly ascending walks where I prayed to the skies above for even a metre of decline. There is no such problem on the Belvedere Trail.

The descent takes you down to the bottom of the canyon in a mix of sloping paths and small but frequent drops. Almost the entirety of this section is covered by trees and there are some good opportunities for spotting

wildlife. I was fortunate enough to see a boomslang, and the birding is excellent too. This descent will take you to Belvedere House, which is, unfortunately, derelict and has become fairly decrepit. (It would provide someone with a fantastic weekend escape with very minimal interference.)

From here it is a short ascent and subsequent descent to the bottom of the canyon where the fruits of your labour can be keenly seen. You emerge onto a large rock plateau that sits adjacent to a waterfall, with

stunning scenery surrounding you. From here you can get a clear idea of how far you have walked, and still have to walk, and could spend countless hours watching the roaring water as it tumbles off the edge into oblivion.

The climb back up actually took less time than the climb down and was thoroughly enjoyable. There are some great

spots to take a quick breath while looking back into the canyon and I was sorry to reach the top. The path back to the potholes provides a nice wind-down to the trail and by the time I reached this section, the sun was beginning to dim as I hurried to reach the shop before it closed, which I can thankfully say I did.

– **Hugh Tucker, Mpumalanga**



WIN! Hugh wins a pair of Storm WP hiking boots from Hi-Tec. They're designed for durability, breathability and comfort, and are worth R1 099. Email your letters to editor@getaway.co.za.



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AND ASKED IF YOU
AGREED THAT THIS
PLACE IS HEAVEN?**

'I've seen it, been there ... magic!'
– **INA VAN DIJKVANWIJK**

*'Loved this article!!! A must
on my bucket list!'*
– **MICHAEL ANDREW
THOMAS**

*The private life
of rhinos*

After 20 years of doing safaris in Southern Africa, I was finally able to get this stunning, rare specimen in action on camera.

At first we heard only some noise in the bush but due to our excellent guide, we found this crash of rhinos right in the heart of Tuli Block in Botswana. The majestic creatures were completely relaxed and unalarmed by our presence as they were doing their thing. If you look closely enough, you can see the ear of a baby rhino on the left of the picture in the bush. We stayed with them for 10 minutes then quietly left the scene, letting nature take its course.

This encounter was a reminder that there is still hope for the future of this species if we can commit to protect them properly.

– **René Vromans, The Hague, Netherlands**



SNAP OF THE MONTH

Allan Theron was out on a boat trip with clients in November last year in Plettenberg Bay looking for Southern Right whales. 'We had been bouncing over the huge swells for over two hours and seen nothing and were about to head back to the beach when the spotter said there were whales in the distance.'

WIN!

Send us your snap of the month and win a R400 Outdoor Warehouse gift voucher. outdoorwarehouse.co.za



This month's winners!

FROM GLORIOUS GETAWAYS TO COOL GEAR, HERE ARE SOME OF OUR RECENT WINNERS



A Survivor backpack from istore worth R3 999

This is a lovely prize and will be my new camera and laptop bag. It is well padded and will fit in nicely when I go camping and hiking. Thanks again to Getaway!
– Gerald Kroukamp



A trip for two to Mauritius worth R50 000

Really happy to have won this prize. We got married last year and we didn't have the funds to go on honeymoon, so this makes up for that in the best possible way...
– Grant Spreadbury



Trip for two to Victoria Falls worth R41 850

I visited Vic Falls many moons ago. My wife has never been. You won't believe how surprised and excited we are! Thank you for the wonderful surprise.
– George Groenewald



TomTom GO worth R4 699

We have enjoyed Getaway for the past 15 years. We were planning to replace our ageing device. Thank you!
– Riana van der Bank



See page 104 for the gear prize this month

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ESCAPE

WISH YOU WERE HERE

EYE CANDY FROM AROUND THE WORLD

OUKAÏMEDEN, MOROCCO

At an altitude of 2 600 metres, this is Africa's highest ski resort – and because the village in the High Atlas mountains is a short 40-minute drive from Marrakesh, Oukaïmeden is a popular destination for day trippers. The area is just one of many Moroccan beauty spots, and a recently released mini-documentary showcases all of these in a bid to raise awareness on the importance of preserving the country's ecological heritage. Launched ahead of this month's UN Convention on Climate Change, taking place in Marrakesh, the film includes striking footage of waterfalls, forests, beaches and mountains. **DO IT** Try your hand (and, possibly, your bottom) at skiing one of the six runs at Oukaïmeden. Ski season is January to March. Ski rental is R305 per day, a lift pass costs R1 840. The French Alpine Club, which established skiing in Morocco, offers a two-day trip from Marrakesh, including transport, meals, ski gear, guide and hotel accommodation, for R4 750 pp for a group of four. refugedutoubkal.com



VARANASI, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

At this time of year, the bedraggled city of Varanasi is transformed into a luminous haven of spiritual activity as Hindus celebrate Diwali. One of Hinduism's holiest cities, Varanasi is a fitting place for this 'festival of light' – devotees decorate their homes with candles, fireworks glitter in the sky and the banks of the Ganges River are lined with flickering tea lights. Famous for silk, carpets and tourism, Varanasi has a long spiritual lineage dating back to about 528 BC when Buddha is believed to have founded Buddhism here. Diwali attracts thousands of locals, while Dev Diwali – which takes place two weeks later and sees many believers bathing in the Ganges – has become so popular with tourists that a festival called Ganga Mahotsav has been added in order to accommodate more people. DO IT Diwali in 2017 starts on 19 October. varanasi.org.in. Hotel Temple on Ganges is just that – an upmarket hotel with beautiful views of the river, making it a prime spot for watching the Diwali celebrations. And if all this gives you inspiration, there are free yoga and meditation lessons too. R990 for a deluxe river-view room. hoteltemple.com

** Prices and conversions correct at time of going to print*



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NEWS

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW



HEARD OF DRAGONFLYING?

Well, it's a thing. And insect conservationist Prof Michael Samways has spent a decade hunting down all the species in South Africa, so you can know them too

Dragonflies, like frogs, are a key indicator of the quality of freshwater sources, explains Prof Samways. This idea was behind the book he's produced, detailing the 162 species found (thus far) in SA, and which will aid 'citizen scientists' in helping to monitor the environment.

The black emperor (*Anax tristis*, pictured) at first glance looks almost like a bird, says Samways, and if disturbed it will soar straight up into the sky until out of sight. It's found in and near pools and pans in the hot northern regions. Also attracted to warm places, the square-spot groundling (*Brachythemis leucosticta*) is a familiar sight on the savanna, where it – unusually – perches on hot soil. 'It follows game, which shoo up midges this dragonfly likes to feed on.'

One of the most exciting finds for Samways is the

spesbona (*Spesbona angusta*), thought to be extinct for over 70 years, which has been spotted again near Franschhoek – making it one of the rarest, most threatened dragonflies in the world.

On the other hand, the wandering glider (*Pantala flavescens*) is one of the most widespread insects on the planet, he says. 'It's often seen around swimming pools, and lays its eggs in shallow water, even puddles made by tyres in the mud (sometimes it tries to lay eggs on windscreens, mistaking them for pools). It is highly predatory, and cannibalistic – often only one adult emerges from a small pool, having eaten all the rest.'

Know your dragonflies The Dragonfly Biotic Index can be downloaded as a PDF from biodiversityadvisor.sanbi.org/literature/4327-2/suricata or call 012-843-5000 for the book.

ONCE UPON A TIME, AN AFRICAN PRINCE FELL IN LOVE WITH A LONDON OFFICE GIRL...

The next big biopic to come from Africa is set in Botswana. Now's the time to visit before the hordes arrive following in the footsteps of film stars

Coming to cinemas this month, *A United Kingdom* is a classic British-style period drama that tells the love story of Seretse Khama and Ruth Williams. Against the odds, Khama went on to become the first president of the new nation of Botswana in 1966 (it celebrated 50 years of independence this past September). The story, set in the 1940s and 50s, plays out against the backdrop of the end of colonialism and the start of apartheid in SA. It's being hailed as the 'new *Out of Africa*', and is sure to inspire global audiences to come and see the place so beautifully evoked on screen – as *Telegraph* critic Robbie Collin describes it, 'When the film moves to Africa, it fills with ochres, umbers and flashes of pink and green – plus endless horizons.'

For filming, the crew went to Serowe, the Khama dynasty's traditional stronghold since the late 19th century, and where events depicted in the film actually took place. It's a town midway between Gaborone and Francistown; to the east is the Tuli Block region, to the west the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, the largest sweep of wilderness in Southern Africa. In Serowe itself, the Khama III Memorial Museum has mementos and photos of the family, including those of Seretse and Ruth. The nearby village of Palapye, also a film location (where a 1946-era train station was built and left behind as a memento), is the gateway to the Tswapong Hills and Moremi Gorge – filled with hidden waterfalls and lagoons; visits must be arranged with a National Museum guide in Moremi village. The film, starring David Oyelowo and Rosamund Pike, is at cinemas from 25 November. Serowe is 150 kilometres from the Groblersbrug/Martin's Drift border post on the N11. botswanatourism.co.bw



THE BFGOODRICH
'WHERE ON EARTH AM I?'
COMPETITION IS BACK,
FEATURING YOUR PHOTOS
FROM THE MOST OFF-THE-GRID
AND ICONIC 4X4 DESTINATIONS.

THE THREE CATEGORIES ARE

ACTION AND ADVENTURE

Photos of your 4x4 with BFGoodrich tyres in an extreme environment.

THE ICONIC SPOT

Photos of your 4x4 in an iconic or picturesque spot in Southern Africa.

READERS' CHOICE

Photos of your 4x4 in a breathtaking location.

PLUS

One person who votes for the winning Readers' Choice image will win the use of an Avis Safari Rental vehicle for one week to experience the thrill of an off-road adventure.

For prizes and details
on how to enter turn to page 21

BFGoodrich
TAKE CONTROL

Safari Rental
Proudly rented by **AVIS**

FRANSCHHOEK

4 REASONS TO (DRESS UP AND) VISIT NOW

1 The first-ever **Franschhoek Craft Festival** will offer beer, yes, but also all things handmade, beautiful and delicious. Stock up on cheeses, chocolates, jewellery and decor, among other things, at Môreson wine farm on 5 November. Tickets R180 including wine tastings, webtickets.co.za

PS: **Art Franschhoek** runs until 13 November. The small town has a surprisingly large number of galleries – including ceramics and photography – that are interesting, eclectic spaces to spend time in (some also offer coffee and shopping). franschhoek.org.za

NOT IN FRANSCHHOEK?

TRY THIS:

For real treasure hunting, in which the goal is finding gold (or, to be precise, R150 000 worth of Kruger Rands), head to Gold Reef City in Joburg every Sunday in November. Participants in **Digger Joe's Treasure Hunt** get a map to embark on a fun-filled quest decoding clues, navigating and solving riddles hidden in secret locations. Open to Thrill Rider ticket holders, from R105. goldreefcity.co.za

3 Set the festive season off with a bang at **Magic of Bubbles** on 3 – 4 December, offering more than 15 local MCCs and a good few bottles of the French stuff, plus the town's famed chefs making exquisite bites to go with the bubbly. Dress to impress and you could win a R5 000 gift card. Tickets R350. webtickets.co.za
PS: **Boschendal** is offering croissant and bubbly pairings. R60pp, daily 10am – 2pm. Booking essential. 021-870-4227

NOT IN FRANSCHHOEK? TRY THIS:

Sip on premium and boutique Champagnes at the **Finer Things in Life** event at Cape Town's Vineyard Hotel on 25 November. It also offers oysters and sushi, a display of luxury cars and fabulous prizes, including for the best dressed couple (the theme is 'Cats'). Tickets R400 pp. In Robertson on 5 November, Wonderfontein estate hosts the **Paul René Bubbly Festival**, which is also tempting visitors with oysters, salmon, artisanal gin and rides in a motorbike sidecar. Tickets R200 pp. Book for both on webtickets.co.za

2 Choose your own picnic spread from the Pink Food Truck Fair, the laid-back section of the **Cintron Pink Polo** event at Val de Vie on 5 November. Apart from the sporty ponies and stylish people to watch, there's also pop-up fashion, lifestyle and beauty experiences, 'couture' cocktails and Jimmy Nevis performing. Food Truck Fair entry R100 (children under 13 free). computicket.com

NOT IN FRANSCHHOEK? TRY THIS:

It's horse racing like you've never seen it before, with fine dining, audiovisual effects, themed interactive spaces, music and acrobatic cirque-style entertainment. Equinity's **Illuminessence** show, a first in SA, takes place on the night of 10 November, transforming Turffontein Racecourse in Joburg into a theatrical wonderland. Tickets R795. equinity.co.za

NOT IN FRANSCHHOEK? TRY THIS:

Perfect for braais, picnics and dinner parties, SA's first-ever wine popsicles have been launched by Franschhoek's Haute Cabriere estate. **PJ Pops** (R25) come in two flavours: Pierre Jourdan Brut Cap Classique or Tranquille, a still wine Pinot Noir and Chardonnay blend. Available at PnP Liquor and selected bars, restaurants and hotels in the Cape, Gauteng and KZN. For updated stockists, see cabriere.co.za

4 SA's gourmet capital is getting its first Indian restaurant: opening this month, **Marigold** specialises in North Indian dishes (lighter, with less ghee and cream), served in small-plate style perfect for sharing. Chef Vanie Padayachee, formerly of Le Quartier Français, travelled to Delhi for inspiration and additional tutoring. The restaurant is in a restored Victorian building on the main street, with decor inspired by spice colours. Open daily for lunch and dinner. 021-492-2222



TIME TO PUT TSHWANE ON YOUR MAP?

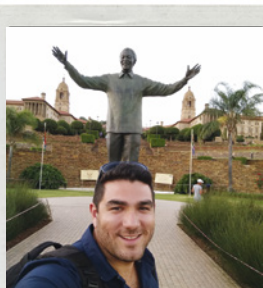
Pretoria is working hard to reinvent itself. BBC World's Travel Show will soon be flying a series of vignettes about it. We tracked down the presenter to find out more

Vaughan McShane is one half of the South African husband-and-wife team behind the award-winning *The Travel Manuel* blog. When the BBC production team contacted him, he thought they'd made a mistake. 'Other than some YouTube videos, I've never really done anything in front of the camera. But they were convinced that I was what they were looking for,' he says. 'The show is focused on highlighting Tshwane as an alternative tourist destination in South Africa, with different offerings.' If it's a success, he adds, the formula will expand to other destinations.

With several years of travelling the world under his belt, he says, 'I try to leave my preconceived ideas or perceptions at home and just go in with a clean slate.' He gamely tackled every activity on the itinerary, getting the lowdown from locals, tasting the flavours and dancing to the rhythms of the city – in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi, for instance, he discovered a wonderful jazz scene and met the legendary Don Laka. He also came to appreciate that Tshwane is 'so fundamental in SA's history, with attractions such as the Palace of Justice, where Mandela was sentenced and wrote the Freedom Charter'.

Also, Tshwane is known as the Smart Capital of South Africa – 'It has to do with the academic offering. Like the HartRAO astronomy centre, which received the first images of Mars, and the Tswaing meteorite crater research facility, the High Performance Centre at the University of Pretoria and the Natural History Museum where the bones of Mrs Ples are kept. Basically, more brainy visitors come to Tshwane than other parts of South Africa!'

*** Tshwane Tourism has published a map-brochure crammed with all the info needed to explore Pretoria with new eyes. It includes transport hubs, where to find free Wi-Fi and fun facts and trivia. 012-841-4212**



Based on his 10-day whirlwind filming tour, here are some of Vaughan's top picks

- **Melrose House** (across from Burgers Park), the home of 19th century transport tycoon George Heys, is just like Downton Abbey! 012-322-0420
- The famous **Boeremark** (farmers' market) on Saturday mornings. At the Pioneer Museum in Silverton.
- **The Market@The Sheds**, a funky craft/artisan market with live bands. I loved the vibe here because of the diversity. Last Saturday of the month; at 012 Central in Helen Joseph Street. marketatthesheds.co.za
- If there's anywhere you *have* to go, it's **Freedom Park** – a memorial that celebrates liberty, diversity and human rights. freedompark.co.za

WIN

WITH GETAWAY &

BFGoodrich
TAKE CONTROL

THE BFGOODRICH 'WHERE ON EARTH AM I?' COMPETITION IS BACK, FEATURING YOUR PHOTOS FROM THE MOST OFF-THE-GRID AND ICONIC 4X4 DESTINATIONS.

THE THREE CATEGORIES

ACTION AND ADVENTURE

Enter photos of your 4x4 with BFGoodrich tyres in an extreme environment.

PRIZE A set of BFGoodrich 4x4 tyres and a self-drive holiday in Botswana.

ICONIC SPOT

Enter photos of your 4x4 in an iconic or picturesque spot in Southern Africa.

PRIZE A set of BFGoodrich 4x4 tyres and a self-drive holiday in Botswana.

READERS' CHOICE

Share your photos through the Facebook app and get friends to vote. Five images with the most votes, plus five selected by *Getaway*, will go through to the second round, where voters will pick the winner.

PRIZE The image with the most votes will win a set of BFGoodrich 4x4 tyres and one voter will win the use of an AVIS Safari Rental 4x4 for a week-long, self-drive holiday.

TO ENTER Visit facebook.com/GetawayMagazine before 14 November 2016 and upload your off-road pictures to the BFGoodrich 'Where on Earth Am I?' app. Provide a short caption giving your name and where the photo was taken. A panel of judges will select the winning photos in the 'Action and Adventure' and 'Iconic Spot' categories. Voting for the 'Readers' Choice' finalists will open on 18 November and close on 19 December. Winners will be published in the March 2017 issue of *Getaway*. Terms and conditions apply and are available at getaway.co.za/competitions



BFGoodrich
TAKE CONTROL

Safari Rental
Proudly rented by **AVIS**



16
+ 10
+ 22
+ 4
+ 49
+ 37
+ 23

161 hours

planning a
big celebration

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TRAVEL FOR THE PROLETARIAT

DURBAN JET-SETTING

• In the past year, Durban's King Shaka International Airport has recorded a 46 per cent growth in international passenger volumes, thanks to four national airlines flying directly into the city – from Qatar, Turkey, Ethiopia and Dubai (Emirates). South African travellers can now use Durban as a gateway to the world: more than 900 global destinations are available through these airlines' networks.

• Zambian airline Proflight also launched its routes to Durban in September. Flights to Lusaka cost around R7 300 return; from here it offers connections to Livingstone (for Victoria Falls) and to Malawi. proflight-zambia.com

ISLAND EXPLORER

• There's a new, free mobile app for travelling around Seychelles, featuring maps and info about restaurants, cafes, hotels and activities. It allows users to rate places and write reviews, and uses an augmented-reality feature similar to Pokémon Go – pointing your phone in different directions will reveal nearby places of interest. seychelles.travel

NEIGHBOURLY CONNECTION

• From this month, KLM flights from Amsterdam to Angola will continue on to Windhoek. Flights arrive early in Luanda on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Mondays, and land in Windhoek at noon (return flights leave later the same day). klm.com



HEAVY-DUTY DUFFEL

The rugged, weather resistant Thule Chasm duffel is an excellent summer adventure pack made with durable, waterproof plastic-like tarpaulin fabric. Removable backpack straps create different carrying options and water slides off easily with a shake. The reinforced zip also prevents water getting through, and the bag works against the kind of fine dust that gets into everything on a trip across the Makgadigadi Pans. Available in various sizes and great new colour options with a 25-year warranty. **From R2 599 for 40-litre pack, thule.com**

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HERE'S 1 GREAT HOLIDAY IDEA

Ready, steady, pick your team... Then get to this new waterpark in Midrand

Obstacle courses are all about making your way down slides, up ladders, across wobble bridges, over trampolines and more. Now imagine the obstacles are inflatable ... and on water. Stoke City Wakepark's new AquaPark, based on a concept from Europe (pictured here), is a first for South Africa: a floating playground of thrills and spills, 'like being a contestant on the TV game show *Total Wipeout* but much less intense,' says Kyle Holtzhauzen of WaterPlaySA. Stoke City also has a new 30-metre bum-boarding slope called the Magic Carpet, cable-skiing, knee-boarding and a SUP course, all in a clean lake. The AquaPark is open daily except Mondays; each session costs R150 pp, lasts 50 minutes and takes 65 people at a time. Entry to the park is R40 pp. stokecity.co.za



THE COST OF A SPLASH

OTHER WATER PLAYGROUNDS AROUND THE COUNTRY

R110 pp, R60 kids*	Splash! WaterWorld in Amanzimtoti
R120 pp, R85 kids	Aquadome at Emerald Resort, Vanderbijlpark
R120 pp (surfing is from R90/hr)	The Wave House in Umhlanga
R120 pp, R70 kids (free for residents)	Sun City's Valley of Waves
R120 pp, R80 kids	Pines Day Resort near Krugersdorp
R135 pp	Adventure Land in Plettenberg Bay
R150 pp, R80 kids	Wild Waters in Boksburg
R160 pp, R80 kids (R40 for residents)	Wild Waves at the Wild Coast Sun
R199 pp, R158 kids (with Sea World)	Wet 'n Wild at uShaka Marine World, Durban

* Age limits and height restrictions vary at different parks. Peak rates given.

GOOD WORK

World Responsible Tourism Day

is on 8 November, and three African operators are finalists in the WRT Awards at the London Travel Market: !Xaus Lodge (image right) in the Kgalagadi Park, Bushman's Kloof in the Cederberg and Tanzania's East African Safari & Touring Company. The awards recognise, among other things, responsible employment practices, wildlife conservation, poverty reduction and community initiatives. 'The ambition is to use tourism



DID YOU KNOW? The first international gathering for responsible tourism took place in Cape Town back in 2002

to make better places for people to live in; great places to live are great places to visit,' says the chairman of the African judging panel, Harold Goodwin.

Celebrate by putting the 2016 finalists and previous years' winners on your travel wish-list, and rest assured you're helping to pay it forward: in South Africa, Grootbos Private Nature Reserve and Mdumbi Backpackers on the Wild Coast, and further afield, Africat Okonjima (Namibia), Maliba Mountain Lodge

(Lesotho), Robin Pope Safaris in Zambia and Malawi, &Beyond's Zanzibari lodges, Footsteps Eco Lodge in The Gambia and Mara Naboisho Conservancy in Kenya, which took gold at the inaugural African Responsible Tourism Awards earlier this year. Other ART award winners included Nkwichi Lodge in Malawi, Baobab Beach Resort and Segera Retreat in Kenya, Chitabe Camp in the Okavango and SA's Sani Lodge Backpackers. responsibletravel.com/awards

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**IT'S BRIGHT, IT'S SMALL,
IT HANGS JUST RIGHT.
WHY, IT'S THE ULTIMATE LIGHT,
SAYS MELANIE VAN ZYL
GETAWAY GEAR EDITOR**

Many torches do the job – shine brightly and last the holiday – but few truly light up my life. For me, the ideal torch must have the following: a high lumen count; replaceable and rechargeable batteries (for budget and environmental purposes); indicator lights so it doesn't *sommer* go flat; dimming options to further save on battery life; and a means of hanging it in the tent. It must also be tough, durable and small enough to fit into my pocket. I tested 10 torches and the 1000-lumen NiteCore MH10 is the closest I've ever got to the perfect torch. It lights up a whopping 100 metres and provides enough periphery light for good visibility.

I really liked the variable beam options (from a soft 70-lumen light to the spotlight beam) and despite being so lightweight, it feels hard-wearing and solid, standing up to its water-resistant and drop-proof IPX8 rating. At just 75g it's great for hiking, but its really useful travel element is the ability to be charged via a car's USB port, electric mains or computer (it takes four hours to charge fully when completely flat). The price is a bit high, but the torch met all my requirements and has military-grade specs. Now, if only it glowed in the dark...

R1 395 (plus R65 for delivery nationwide), nitecoresa.co.za

*Go online to meet the other contenders and learn a clever trick to turn a torch into a lantern.
getaway.co.za/gear*



ESCAPE

MASTERCLASS

TAKE THE PERFECT PICTURE

Make long exposures **WORK FOR YOU**

SLOWING DOWN YOUR SHUTTER SPEED ALLOWS YOU TO CAPTURE STRIKING IMAGES. GETAWAY'S TEAGAN CUNNIFFE SHOWS YOU HOW

1

SET UP YOUR SHOT

Long exposures are fun to do and produce eye-catching results – any movement is blurred: water becomes smooth and ghostlike, clouds streak, busy streets 'empty' of cars and people. Most DSLRs can capture long exposures. A sturdy tripod is essential and your camera must have M (Manual) mode – or B (Bulb) mode which, along with a shutter-release cable, lets you take exposures of longer than 30 seconds. To enable longer exposure times during daylight, you need to use a narrow aperture (f/13 – f/22). At night, it's the opposite. For both, a low ISO is best.

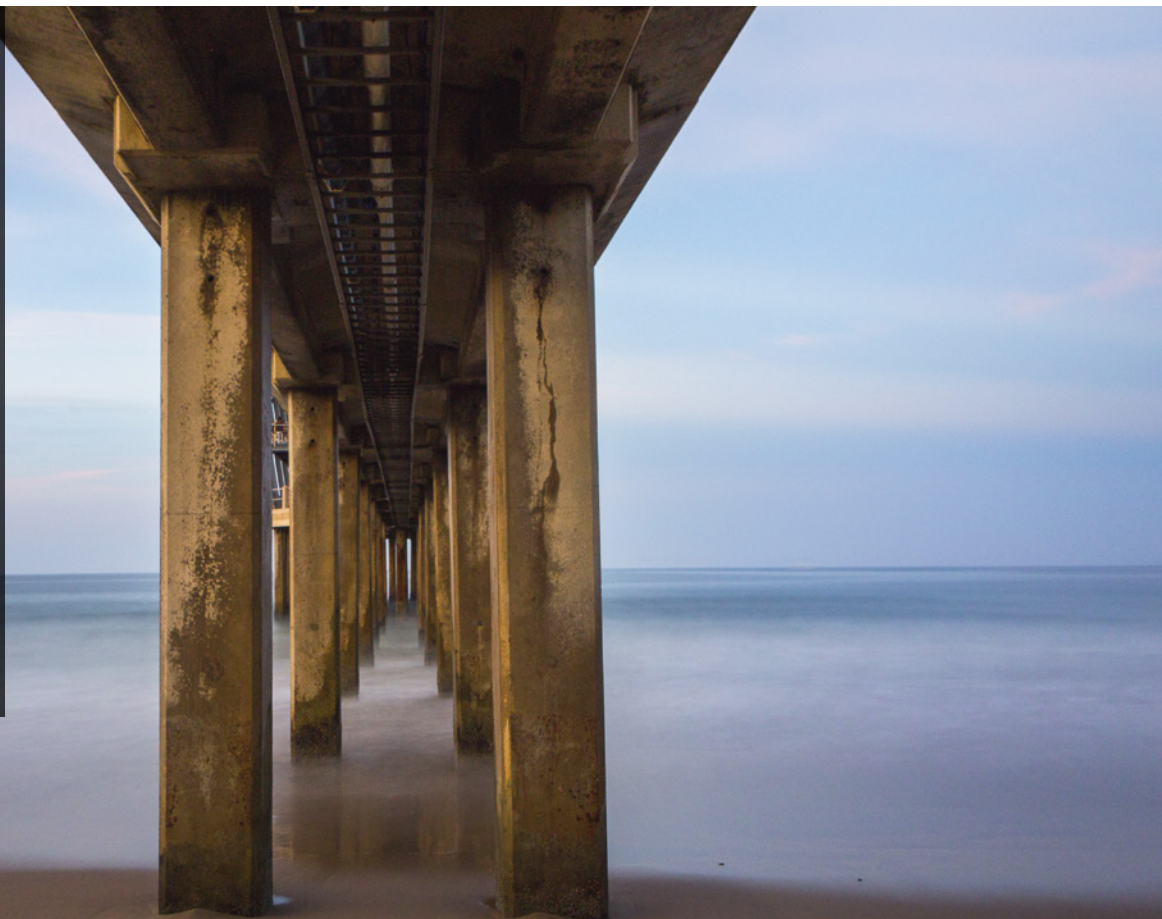


2 CHOOSE YOUR COMPOSITION

The best scenes have motion that contrasts with still elements, such as the traffic moving along the Atlantic coast road in Junaid Samaai's photo (left). Your composition becomes even more important – with movement blurred, the focus falls on the remaining elements that the viewer can see clearly. Pay careful attention to the rule of thirds and to leading lines. Use these to draw your viewers' attention to strong, stationary subjects such as lighthouses or peaks (left). Partly cloudy, moderately windy weather is ideal for flowing cloud detail.

3 SLOW IT FURTHER

Neutral Density (ND) filters are semi-transparent and work by restricting the amount of light coming into your camera, allowing for even longer exposure times. They come in various strengths, reducing light by up to 15 f-stops. The darker the filter, the more difficult it will be to compose and focus through the viewfinder. In this case, compose your shot before fitting the filter. Set an aperture and ISO combination that gives you an ideal exposure, and then switch to manual focus. Attach the filter and compensate for the filter's strength by slowing down your shutter speed.



4 HOW TO CAPTURE THE MILKY WAY

Use a tripod and look for a foreground subject to add interest, as in Daniel Grebe's image here. On Manual or Bulb mode, set your camera's focus to infinity by half-pressing the shutter, causing your lens to 'focus-hunt', and then switching to manual focus once the lens has stopped moving. Set the aperture to f/4 or wider and the ISO to 100 so your image doesn't become grainy. Use a shutter-release cable and start with a shutter speed of 20 seconds, adjusting the time as needed to get the perfect exposure.

5 REPAIR HOT PIXELS

These appear as tiny bright red or white spots on long-exposure images. Canon cameras can self-repair hot pixels (charge your battery to 100 per cent and initiate 'manual sensor cleaning' on the main menu. Leave the shutter open for 30 seconds and then switch off the camera). Or you can 'map' where the pixels are by taking a 30-second exposure with your lens cap on. The dots that appear will be in the same position on the next photos you take, so you'll know where to find them in Photoshop.

Use an even longer exposure to create a 'streaking' effect with the stars, caused by the rotation of the Earth

NEXT MONTH

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Email your burning photography questions to teagan.cunniffe@getaway.co.za

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FINALIST DUNE WIND

I took this photo near Sossusvlei in Namibia. The wind was blowing over the side of the dune and I was fascinated by the effect it was creating in the sand.

– By **Dirk Theron, Betty's Bay**

Nikon D3s, Tamron 150-600mm
f/5-6.3, ISO 200, f/6, 1/400 sec

FINALIST MOTHER'S CARE

While staying at Sentinel Mara Camp in Kenya's Masai Mara, we went on a late afternoon game drive. It was already dusk when we spotted this female leopard. She got up into a tree, looking and calling for her cub. The light was fading fast and I had to crank up the ISO considerably to get a decent picture.

– By **Martin Oosthuizen, Stellenbosch**

Canon 1DX, Canon 400mm f/2.8L II, Canon 2.0x II
teleconverter, ISO 20 000, f/5.6, 1/800 sec





FINALIST HYENA CUB

In Timbavati Private Nature Reserve, we had some interesting moments watching a hyena den. In this instance, a cub stopped for a moment on the side of a termite mound, giving me the opportunity to capture an interesting backlit image.

– **By Willem Kruger, Bloemfontein**

Nikon D4, Nikon 600mm f/4, ISO 2500,
f/4, 1/5000 sec

FINALIST TABLE TALK

I was shooting the 2016 Lipton Challenge Cup from a helicopter in Cape Town. The weather closed in and we couldn't see the yachts ... so I chose to shoot the landscape instead, ending up with this unique image. I later converted it to monochrome for effect.

– **By Craig Fouché, Worcester**

Nikon D4, Nikkor 28-300mm f/3.5-5.6,
ISO 1000, f/16, 1/1000 sec





FINALIST GOT MY CATCH

Capturing this moment was incredible ... I spotted this chameleon in the desert at Swakopmund, Namibia, and lay flat on the sand to get a low angle. I set my camera to continuous shooting mode to get this shot.

– By **Evelyn Gibson, Centurion**

Nikon D500, Nikkor 80-400mm f/4.5-5.6, ISO 1000, f/8, 1/4000 sec

WIN

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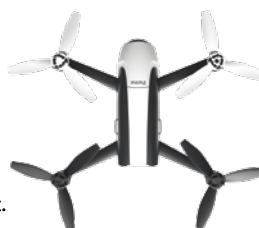


FIRST PRIZE

Namibia trip R67 000 + equipment R57 200

The prize includes:

- a fully inclusive, wild-camping 4x4 holiday with Live the Journey for two through Namibia's Kunene River Mouth region, Hartman Valley, Purros, Angra Fria and the Kaokoland (flights included)*;
- one Parrot Bebop 2 drone and DroneGuard CS 400 drone case;
- a Lowepro ProTactic 450 AW backpack;
- a Tamron lens bundle: 15-30mm f/2.8 and 150-600mm f/5-6.3;
- a Manfrotto MK190XPRO3-BHQ2 tripod kit.



SECOND PRIZE R24 420

The prize includes:

- one Tamron 150-600mm f/5-6.3 lens;
- a Lowepro Pro Runner BP 350 AW II camera bag;
- a Manfrotto MK290DUA3-BH tripod kit.



THIRD PRIZE R12 300

The prize includes:

- one Tamron 16-300mm f/3.5-6.3mm lens;
- a Lowepro Slingshot Edge 250 AW camera bag;
- a Manfrotto MK Compact Advanced tripod kit.



HOW TO ENTER

Email your entries (about 1MB in size, maximum five a month) with your name and contact details to gallery@getaway.co.za. Include a title, some information on how and where you took it, and details on the camera and lens make and model. *Find full details of the prize, restrictions, travel dates and competition rules at getaway.co.za/photo.



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Parrot



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V&A Waterfront

JOHANNESBURG

18 November 2016 at 6.30pm

Nedbank Head Office, 135 Rivonia Road

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a *Getaway* subscriber) which includes
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The Peech Johannesburg

TUMI MORAKE IS (OFFICIALLY) SOUTH AFRICA'S FUNNIEST WOMAN. SHE TELLS ONDELA MLANDU WHY SHE'S EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN COMEDY, HOW SHE LIKES TO TRAVEL (HINT: NO CAMPING) AND ABOUT HER FAVOURITE PLACE TO STAY IN JOZI

You have a friend visiting from out of town. Where do you recommend they stay?

The Peech Boutique Hotel in Melrose. It's quiet and quaint and a little unexpected ... you forget you're in the middle of Joburg. One year I was pregnant with our second child and it was Valentine's month. I decided to surprise my husband, so I made him type in the hotel's GPS coordinates and drive. When we arrived they came to our room to give us massages. We had Champagne and chocolate and later dinner. >

You were the first woman to win South Africa's Comic of the Year title, at the 2016 Comedy Choice Awards. You were also voted Best Comic at the You Spectacular. How were those moments?

I jump from mood to mood with accolades. Sometimes it feels like I need to live up to something, and other times it's motivation to do better. I was hugely surprised about winning. When you're busy working, you don't stop and acknowledge the work you have done.

How has comedy evolved in Africa?

We are finding fewer reasons to look outside ourselves for entertainment. It's bringing us closer together. Comedy in Africa is still new, yet the collaboration between artists from all over the continent is happening quickly. That's the one thing that excites me about comedy ... it's always ahead of its time. It's great for blurring the borders between us.

Do you and your family travel often?

We try go away at least twice a year. Every time we plan a trip, we ask ourselves if our little munchkins are joining, or if it will be a proper

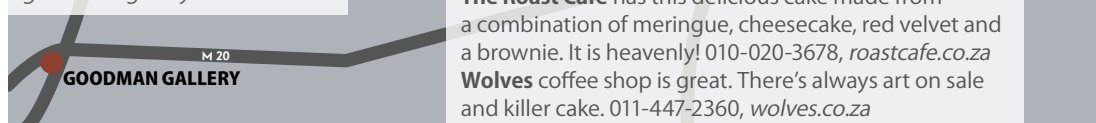
TUMI RECOMMENDS THIS IN THE AREA

FOR ENTERTAINMENT...

The Goliath Comedy Club has stand-up shows from Thursdays to Saturdays. You can have your food with a side of laughter. 010-020-3678, roastcafe.co.za

Melrose Arch is where I do all my shopping, and one of my favourite places there is Artjamming. melrosearch.co.za, artjamming.co.za

Goodman Gallery is the most distinguished and longest-standing international contemporary art gallery in Joburg. 011-788-1113, goodman-gallery.com



FOR EATING AND DRINKING...

The Roast Café has this delicious cake made from a combination of meringue, cheesecake, red velvet and a brownie. It is heavenly! 010-020-3678, roastcafe.co.za
Wolves coffee shop is great. There's always art on sale and killer cake. 011-447-2360, wolves.co.za

relaxed trip. If there are two holidays, one will be just my husband and I.

Next destination on your bucket list?

The Maldives. I need to go there before it disappears under water. That's the next trip my husband and I want to do. We will leave the children behind. I can take the kids to Mauritius some other time.

What is your earliest travel memory?

My late stepfather took us on a road trip. We were going to Durban from Mafikeng. Instead of going there directly we stayed at Hunter's Rest in Rustenburg in the North West. It was the first time staying in a lodge. We then moved on to Durban. That's when I fell in love with road trips.

What draws you to a destination?

Convenience, because I do everything myself at home. I'm not a big

camper. If I'm going somewhere, I make sure everything is taken care of, and I want to be able to explore. I always like places with nice weather – winter and I are not friends at all. I love warm weather. That, for me, is a big factor.

One travel essential you never leave behind?

I always take beta-peramide [I modium]! I don't want to eat hotel food so I always find a waiter and ask where and what they eat ... and if I can join them. My introduction to Ghanaian and other cuisines from Congo, Kenya and Liberia was through people who would cook things from their home countries for me.

What would you say is your travel philosophy?

Be open-minded... The first thing I learn to say is, 'I don't speak the language... in that

language!' Then people can see you tried. In Ghana, the first thing I learnt was how to greet people. I have since learned other words in Twi. It's been eight years of travelling there and I have picked up phrases and can now understand.

Tell us about what you called your 'Eat, Pray, Play' holiday earlier this year?

My friend was turning 29 and she always travels for a month for her birthday. This year I decided to join her on a leg of the trip. In Morocco I forgot that I was still in Africa. The Moroccans were excited about my hair and skin colour and you're like, 'Guys, we

are from the same continent, we are family!' I loved doing tourist activities and I immersed myself in the culture by walking around, enjoying the local cuisine, negotiating and bartering. I had a fabulous time there. And what a big switch when we got to Paris... Africa is warm – not in terms of the weather, but the people. Then we arrived in 'The City of Love' and the people weren't very friendly.

What's the funniest thing that's happened on your travels?

A friend of mine was called 'Lady Gaga' (by the locals) the whole time we were travelling in Morocco. We never figured out why!

STAY HERE

The Peech Boutique Hotel has 16 rooms, mostly in the gardens, and there is a bistro, pool and wine cellar. From R2800 per room B&B. 011-537-9797, thepeech.co.za

Tumi will be hosting the 'Stand Up Africa' section of the Johannesburg International Comedy Festival this month. 4 – 6 November at various venues in Newtown and Braamfontein, and featuring 50 comedians from South Africa and all over the world. One-night pass R400, or from R100pp per show. ticketpros.co.za, jicf.co.za



GAME DRIVES



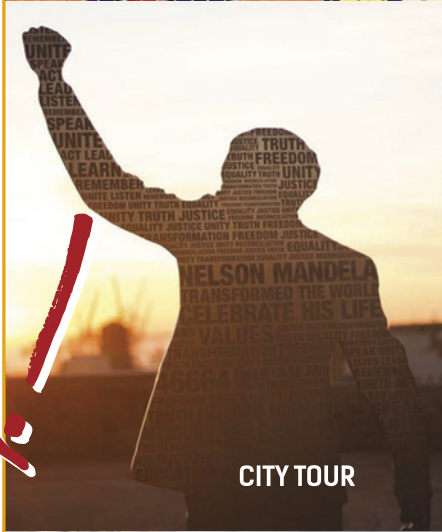
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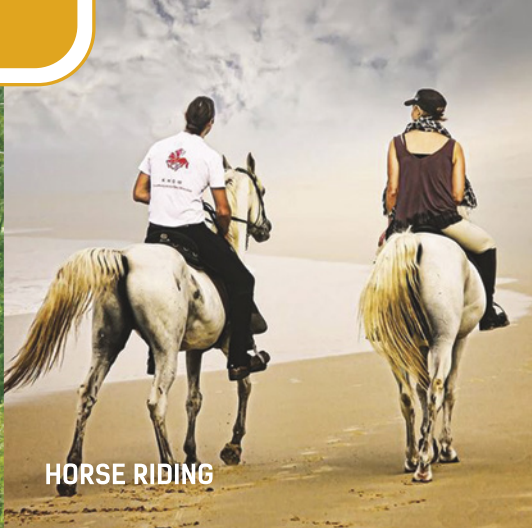
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Hogsback

LOVE NATURE AND ROARING FIRES IN WINTER? THIS EASTERN CAPE HAMLET IS THE IDEAL GETAWAY WITH ITS MANY WATERFALLS, FORESTS AND VERY AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION, SAYS PROFESSIONAL REVIEWER PIPPA DE BRUYN. PHOTOGRAPHS BY TEAGAN CUNNIFFE

OUR EXPERT SAYS:

'Hogsback specialises in compact, fire-warmed self-catering cottages, and they are all bargains'

TripAdvisor lists accommodation rated by guests, but as much as we love peer reviews, can we trust them? Pippa, who has reviewed accommodation for 18 years, inspected 21 properties – some rated on TripAdvisor, plus she rooted out new ones. These 10 made her list.



Best view and biggest collection

THE EDGE MOUNTAIN RETREAT

TripAdvisor No. 3 of 6 B&Bs/Inns

Peter Colyvas and Wouter Jordaan rented out their first cottage back in 1991 and used the income from this to build the next one on the lip of their prime seven-hectare cliff-side property, just a few minutes' drive north of town. Today there is a choice of 20 self-catering cottages – most located within sight of each other but set far enough apart in the sprawling gardens to feel private – and 10 B&B en-suite rooms. All are furnished with bits and pieces picked up from local farm auctions – a leather sofa or armchairs usually taking pride of place in front of a log-burning fireplace. A staffed reception and large restaurant serving good comfort food means that The Edge can offer the independence of self-catering with the pleasures of catered accommodation. With a great private function room, it's also my pick for a group (accommodating up to 70) looking to commemorate a special occasion.

ROOM TIP The five cliff-side cottages are worth the extra cash: Over the Edge is best value (R950, sleeps two) but Heavens Above has the best view (R1 600, sleeps two). Stargazer also has lovely views (R1 800, sleeps four) but if you're four people and wanting to save, consider Birchwood and Apple Tree – semi-detached and set back so there's no view, but they have their own semi-private gardens (R650, both sleep four).

COST From R450 pp sharing a B&B room.

From R650 (for two) self-catering.

CONTACT theedge-hogsback.co.za

THE CASE FOR HOGSBACK

• IT HAS MAGICAL LANDSCAPES

A patchwork of wild farms and gardens carved into the indigenous and plantation forests that carpet the Amathole Mountains, Hogsback is perched at a crisp-air altitude of 1 200 metres. The link between the town and JRR Tolkien may be spurious (based purely, it appears, on naming a local holiday camp for underprivileged children Hobbiton in 1947) but the evocation of a fantasy forest lingers on. And when the mists that wreath the trees and ferns suddenly clear to drop-away views, it is indeed quite magical.

• THERE ARE 27 WATERFALLS AND ONE VERY CUTE CHAPEL

The Tyhume River, replenished by summer rain and winter snow, drops 419 metres to the valley below, affording plenty of picturesque falls. Hogsback Adventures offers a four-hour mountain bike tour (R500 pp) past waterfalls, viewpoints and a swim in a natural pool, and abseiling (R275 pp) down Madonna and Child, the largest waterfall.

hogsbackadventures.co.za

Equally pretty, and even easier to get to, is St Patrick-on-the-Hill, Hogsback's charming thatch-and-stone chapel.

• IT HAS A WARM, INTERESTING, HYBRID COMMUNITY Hippies, retirees, eco-warriors, artists, online entrepreneurs and people who just like to potter about live here, where wealth is not measured in money, and despite the potholes and lack of municipal services, residents are vocal about the privilege of living in what local historian Trevor Webster calls 'the dominant presence of Nature'.

• THERE'S A ROARING FIRE

EVERY NIGHT Apparently snow-falls are recorded every month bar February. Room proportions are cosy, with one or more fireplaces and plenty of wood.

• IT'S CHEAP Hogsback specialises in compact, fire-warmed self-catering cottages, and they are all bargains.

Best-equipped cottages

LARAGH-ON-HOGSBACK

TripAdvisor No. 4 of 10 Speciality Lodgings

Jenny Newman is a perfectionist and her three semi-detached cottages – located in a barn-like structure the Newmans built in their tree-filled garden in 2013/14 – is testament to this. They don't have the big views that many of the other options on these pages offer, but the double-volume units still feel brand new, and you won't find a better-equipped kitchen in Hogsback. Bathrooms are heated (two have good showers, one has a bath) and efficient wood-burning, closed-combustion fireplaces warm the double-volume living space. Each cottage sleeps four comfortably; two have interleading doors should you be travelling in a larger group. A natural host, Jenny stocks her cottages with fresh flowers, tea and coffee, fresh milk, home-made rusks and wood for the first night. For a small fee, she'll even deliver a continental breakfast to your cottage (R55 pp). Given the standard of the accommodation and service (the cottages are serviced daily), this is a bargain, so book early – it's popular.

ROOM TIP Yellowwood is on the north-facing corner with a large, wrap-around L-shaped deck furnished with table, chairs and a Weber.

PRICE From R350 pp for two sharing. Additional guests R150 pp.

CONTACT laragh-on-hogsback.co.za



Best hotel

ARMINEL HOTEL & VILLAGE

TripAdvisor No.1 of 2 Hotels

The best Hogsback options are self-catering, but if you prefer hotel facilities then the 26-room thatched Arminel is the best choice in town. Rooms have a pleasing gingham-and-floral country style, service is friendly and the sprawling grounds are well-maintained by Kat Leisure (owners of nine hotels in the Eastern Cape as well as Simola in Knysna). It's understandably popular with conference groups, with the kind of buffet-style food you expect from a three-star hotel. For the best of both, I'd probably book one of their new self-catering thatched Forest Cottages, built fairly close to each other at the bottom of the sloping garden near the pool. Well-designed and -furnished, these contemporary six-sleeper units are a great option for a family wanting accommodation in a secure, modern townhouse in a forest resort rather than a more secluded, romantic option.

ROOM TIP Hotel rooms 1 to 5 have unobstructed garden views from their porches and are closest to reception and the restaurant.

Forest Cottages numbers 2 and 3 are the best, north-facing and double storey.

PRICE From R660 pp DBB. Forest Cottages are from R1 500 (sleep six).

CONTACT katleisure.co.za



Best-value cottages

MAPLE GROVE

TripAdvisor No. 1 of 6 B&Bs/Inns

When Peter and Lyndsay Walker retired to their property in upper Hogsback, about three kilometres from the village centre on potholed-but-manageable track, the plan was to supplement their income by renting out the cottage in their garden. With experience in the construction industry, Peter then set about enclosing the area beneath their home for family and friends, and this became the snug self-contained cabin. The chalet, which had been an open store-room/carport, followed. Sadly, the Walkers decided to stop at three – they have such a fine eye for design and decor, plus a generosity of spirit, with plenty of wood (the first basket is free), fresh flowers, fresh milk and Lyndsay's famous home-made rusks included in the deal. Add to that the tranquil forest views and this really is excellent value. The website does it little justice, so thank you TripAdvisor reviewers for a spot-on rating (though Maple Grove, being neither B&B or Inn, should be listed under Speciality Lodging).

ROOM TIP My first choice would be Cottage, a lovely open-plan unit with separate bathroom and French doors leading onto a patio and gazebo, followed by well-equipped, cosy Cabin, also with a deck and forest views.

COST From R295 pp sharing for Cabin and Cottage (both sleep two each, plus Cabin can sleep a child on a mattress, and Cottage two teens on a stack bed, for an extra R100 pp. From R1 000 for Chalet (sleeps four); 10 per cent discount for pensioners, students and midweek stays.

CONTACT maplegrove.co.za

The Cottage has a stream at the bottom of its lovely big garden

Most creative eco-lodge

TERRA-KHAYA

TripAdvisor No. 2 of 10 Speciality Lodgings

Variously described as a permaculture farm, Earth Home Project, experimental venture and eco-backpackers, Terra-Khaya defies easy categorisation. Owner Shane Eades has created a magical off-the-grid lodge on his 18-hectare farm high in the mountains, showcasing and teaching visitors how fulfilling an ecologically sound lifestyle can be. With the help of live-in volunteers he has built and beautified Terra-Khaya, using natural building techniques and salvaged materials. Accommodation comprises four double timber cabins, furnished with real artistic flair, plus delightful four- and 10-sleeper dorms. There are no en-suite options but the shared ablutions – comprising a separate composting toilet, a charming bath house and outdoor showers – all feature fantastic views, as do the cabins. Horseriding is a speciality, including various overnight horse-trail options.

Communal meals are highly rated and affordable (around R75). Creative energy permeates the place; there's even an art room in the loft of the communal lounge-library-dining area should the urge arise. As one guest wrote: 'This place makes you feel safe and secure; doors stay unlocked because the only thing that will get stolen will be your heart.'

ROOM TIP Khayalam Down (sleeps two) and Khayalam Up (sleeps four) have incredible views.

COST R135 pp in a dorm; R325 for two in a cabin.

CONTACT terrachaya.co.za



Best luxury bungalow

BREDON SELF-CATERING COTTAGE

Unlisted

Bredon ticks every box: a two-bedroom, two-bathroom thatched dwelling that is totally private, utterly charming and luxuriously fitted, with fantastic views and a huge, deep, stone pool fed by a seasonal spring. It's located in the Bredon Gardens, adjacent to the renowned Applegarth Gardens established by Mary Wilson and 'Sweetie' Wilson in 1938, apparently with the help of a Kew gardener. Today Rob and Sandy Wicks are its custodians and they have done an admirable job of improving and maintaining the grounds and historic buildings. Bredon Cottage is situated well away from the main house, with its own driveway, garden and seasonal waterfall, and gorgeous views through every pane. Stone steps lead down to a small terraced garden with a braai area and a winding pathway that leads to the pool, with more fantastic views from its edge. Sandy supplies loads of wood for the braai and combustion stove, and the kitchen – with more views through the open doors – had me itching to cook. (Incidentally, Rob and Sandy are avid motorbike collectors and could open a museum!)

ROOM TIP The main bedroom is bigger and better of the two, so if you're sharing with friends you'll need to draw lots. No kids under 13.

COST From R1 800 for two, R2 000 for four.

CONTACT applegarth-bredon.co.za



Most magical bolthole

HOGROCKFALLS

Unlisted

Artist Leigh Smith designed and hand-built these two tiny cottages, aided by locals Wayne Bernade and AB Ndzaleni, on the steep forested slopes leading down to a series of private waterfalls. The sound of running water is the constant backtrack here and is part of the soothing energy that pulls you into a chair on the deck with a cup of tea or glass of wine, gazing at the plantation views. Leigh's eye for beauty is evident everywhere – from the choice of the olive-green walls and the nifty gas oven with stove-top to pretty rugs and vintage chairs, it's like being tucked up in a little box of boho treasures topped with a 'living roof'. Enterprising AB now manages the property for Leigh and is extremely helpful – carrying bags, showing the way to the waterfalls and, come sundown, he'll even light the fire for you.

Definitely one of my top picks, and again, a total bargain.

ROOM TIP I much prefer Silver Birch with its cosy loft bedroom, effective fireplace and dinky kitchen with a view. It also has a delightful bathroom (tub only).

COST From R275 pp (both cottages sleep four each).

CONTACT hogsbackinfo.co.za/hogrockfalls

There's a private path from Silver Birch that leads to three waterfalls

WORTH A LOOK

Melody Cottage Swallowtail Country Estate is a camping and caravan site at the entrance to the village, but owner Fritz Klaasen has just built the cutest open-plan cabin for two with a great view of the Hogsback mountains. This would be a featured top pick out of season, but when the campsite is busy it would lose some of its romance. From R700 (sleeps two). swallowtail.co.za

Camelot Cottage An old-fashioned rondavel for two set in the same delightful gardens as the Fairy Meander, this cottage is within walking distance of the village centre. It's tucked away and very cosy, insulated by thatch and warmed with a Jetmaster

(definitely the warmer and more charming of the two cottages on the property), with an outdoor braai area and seating. From R500 (sleeps two). camelot-cottages.co.za

Thatchfield Cottage This quaint two-bedroomed thatch with its own garden and efficient fireplace, usually lit for you on arrival by the most accommodating hosts, Tim and Sonia Willats, comes with plenty of wood, a litre of farm milk, tea and coffee, and it's pet-friendly too. R650 for two and R150 pp thereafter (sleeps up to five). countrycottagecollection.com

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with the next
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Mens Nomads



Style: Frenchy Nomad MN028
Colour: Red/Royal Blue/White/Red



Style: Kiwi/Jalapeno MN031
Colour: Kiwi/dark green



Style: Stamp Nomad MN036
Colour: Black/White/Black



Style: Ethnic Band Nomad MN039
Colour: Black/White/Ethnic Print

Ladies Mermaid



Style: Navahoe Mermaid LM039
Colour: Black/Blue/Navahoe Print



Style: Black Neon Pink Mermaid LM022
Colour: Black/Black/Pink



Style: Pineapple Mermaid LM038
Colour: White/Green/Pineapple Print



Style: Mint Mermaid LM042
Colour: Mint

Boys & Girls Sandals



Style: Neon Stripe Boys Nomad MN018 B
Colour: Red/Blue/White Red



Style: Hibiscus Girls LM041 G
Colour: White/Pink/Hibiscus Print



Style: Shaka Hands Boys Nomad MN038 B
Colour: Black/Shaka Hands Print



Style: Ethnic Girls LM043 G
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1 MOUNTAIN SPLENDOUR

Near Winterton, Central Drakensberg

Bikes of all sizes lean against tents while kids run around delightedly, parents chatting around fires. This is an unassuming family heaven, the perfect introduction to both camping (or 'glamping') and mountain biking alike. There's a Skills Park where you can test your balance, and a purpose-built track that snakes its way around the property. It passes picnic spots and streams, and trails over wooden bridges and hills that leave you breathless – not because you're unfit, although that was my case, but because of the views onto the Cathkin Peak mountain range. Miniature goats and horses enrapture

kids and adults alike, and children can join in the farm experience, herding the horses and milking the cow for the daily tea and scones. Bikes can be rented, repairs made and apparel bought from the farm's fully stocked Bike Shop, which is the only one in the Central Drakensberg. Guided trails and training camps on request.

RATES Camping from R145 per adult, R75 per child. Luxury tents from R400 pp sharing, log cabins from R485 pp sharing.

CONTACT 036-468-1172, mountainsplendour.co.za

– TEAGAN CUNNIFFE



2

FROM
R400
PP



3 GLENBURN LODGE

Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng

The Cradle is renowned in the Gauteng cycling fraternity for its 43 kilometres of bicycle-friendly routes threading through the area, and Glenburn sits right in the middle of it. Spread out almost like a country club, the lodge is just a half-hour drive from Joburg, has 100 rooms (from family chalets to swanky hotel suites to the Bush Willow Tented Camp) and two newly opened mountain-biking routes. Both scenic options are under five kilometres and sweep through fields, up mountains and along the Blaauwbank and Crocodile rivers. You can then cool off in the rock-pool jacuzzi and indulge in the cyclist-specific spa treatment: a 30-minute steam, half-hour back massage and 50-minute foot and leg treatment that uses lymphatic drainage techniques. I'll be honest – it's heavenly even if you haven't spent all day in the saddle.

RATES From R770 pp sharing B&B, from R600 per tent (sleeps six).

CONTACT 011-668-1600, glenburn.co.za

– MELANIE VAN ZYL

See our story on
the Cradle of
Humankind on
page 123.



3

FROM
R770
PP



4

FROM
R300
PP

4 INGWE FOREST ADVENTURES

The Craggs, Garden Route

Mountain biking and the Garden Route is like Sodwana and scuba diving, so where better to test your mettle than in the thick indigenous forest of The Craggs? Ingwe, overlooking valleys and farms just outside Plettenberg Bay, is as mad about mountain biking as the adventure-loving guests. Think rustic without the rust; rich pine-scented cabins on stilts, fireplaces and views, starry boma nights and challenging muddy trails through steep river valleys. Book one of SA's top MTB pros, Kevin Evans, to guide you along fast jeep tracks and the locals' forest favourites, and finish it off with a dip in the pool while they wash your bike. (If you don't have your own, they will organise rentals.) Ingwe caters for large and small groups – Tree House sleeps six, Olive Tree sleeps two, Forest Cottage sleeps 14. With so many additional activities on site – including horse riding and orienteering – and in the surrounding area, you might find yourself staying longer.

RATES From R250 pp self-catering.

CONTACT 044-534-8218, ingwe.org.za

– COLLEEN BLAINE

2 TRAIL'S END

Grabouw, Western Cape

A day at Trail's End goes something like this: a healthy breakfast and good coffee as early as you want it, access on the doorstep to over 100 kilometres of trails, and a whizz down the Cape Canopy zipline (a 10km bike ride away). Horse riding can be arranged and the Overberg's wine estates and other attractions are nearby. On returning to the hotel, you can look forward to smoothies, craft beer (soon to be brewed on site) and a dip in the pool. The open-plan, double-volume, light-filled space that is Trail's End (a former warehouse) is a great spot to chill, with a lounge, bar, library and fireplace, and 16 stylish, solar-powered Scandi-style rooms clad in aromatic spruce. This new family-friendly hotel is dedicated to outdoor enthusiasts; guests get one access pass that interlinks all the area's trails, plus an indoor bike lock-up, bike wash, wellness centre, pump track and MTB rental; resident expert Chad Gordon, who gives pro riding clinics, is keen to get beginners started too.

RATES From R800 per double room.

CONTACT 021-859-5193, trailsend.bike

– CAROLINE WEBB

NEWS ➔

A SLICE OF PARADISE ▶

The Chuini Zanzibar Beach Lodge is the latest opening on the Spice Island – but it's not new. A recycling of the Hakuna Matata lodge, which has had a sophisticated makeover, it also preserves the evocative ruins of the Chuini Palace (built in 1873 by the second Sultan). There are just 14 thatched bungalows here, and in addition to being mere steps from the sea on a private bay, they come with mobile phones and 24-hour room service. The ruins are now the setting for Spice High Teas, romantic torch-lit dinners and spa treatments. There are sunset cruises (it's on the west coast) and boat trips to snorkel at a 'secret' sandbank. Stone Town's magical alleys are a 20-minute drive away.

DETAILS From R2 350 pp sharing half-board. newmarkhotels.com



◀ A VERSATILE CITY ESCAPE

A stay on Cape Town's Atlantic Seaboard is notoriously pricey, but visitors who want to be in town and close to the ocean can check in at the Mojo Hotel in Sea Point. It's the first in SA inspired by Japanese 'pod hotels', and offers compact designer 'crash pads' with not much more than a double bed, shelves, shower and flatscreen TV. Best of all, they're on the rooftop, opening onto a grassed terrace and great views. The hip 'hybrid' hotel has other rooms too – dorms, studios (pictured left) and family rooms, with self-catering an option. Funky murals are by street artist Mak1one, and there's a coffee shop and bike rental.

DETAILS From R500 for a crash pad, R1 137 for a family room (sleeps four). themojohotel.com



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FOOD & DRINKS

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IS MAKING A COMEBACK,
SAYS NIKKI WERNER. TRY THESE
THREE BEAUTIES (PLUS ONE
RETRO CLASSIC TART)

1

The
Shortmarket
Club

Those old enough to remember will have a sense of déjà vu on entering The Shortmarket Club and finding themselves in what was once the VIP section of a Cape Town nightclub called The Boiler Room. Now reincarnated, it's where chef Wesley Randles (left) and manager Simon Widdison (right) – both ex Pot Luck Club – are spreading their wings, with chef Luke Dale-Roberts and his wife, Sandalene, invested in the concept. The interior, which is thanks to Sandalene, sets the tone.

The Shortmarket Club (SMC) feels like an establishment that might have existed in another era; banquettes with soft leather upholstery and glass dividers, low-hanging lamps and a bar where someone knows your name. For me that someone is Vuyo Mzozoyana, formerly of Espresso Lab at The Old Biscuit Mill, who would always ensure a single-shot flat white >

*TIP: Go for breakfast
and have the omelette
Arnold Bennett (R100)*



RIB-EYE WITH DUCK-FAT ROAST POTATOES AT SMC

was put through the moment he saw me on the threshold. Now that Vuyo's working the SMC bar, it's tempting to develop a standing order of bubbly and spiced nuts at aperitif hour.

At Pot Luck (also in the Biscuit Mill) I remember Wesley on the pass, handling the stream of orders with focus and calm and always delivering maximum deliciousness. When asked how this venture will be different, he explains: 'Shortmarket is an old-world room with a slight industrial feel. So we're doing old-school dining in a modern way, making it more relevant and up to date. We look to classic crowd-pleasers, like crispy calamari and tartare sauce, but we'll do crispy octopus with green mango atchar and tahini sesame dressing. And if you want steak, he adds, 'there's no complication or five different purées on the plate. It's a big steak, you get a really good Béarnaise sauce and duck-fat roasted spuds.' (R290 for rib-eye with sauce and one side.) Finish in style with a chocolate soufflé standing proud in a copper pan, a hazelnut and Grand Marnier parfait melting into the centre of it (R110).

SMC is open for breakfast, brunch, lunch, drinks and dinner every day except Sunday. Walk-ins are welcome. **88 Shortmarket Street, Cape Town. 021-447-2874, shortmarketclub.co.za**



SNACK ON TRUFFLE POPCORN AT THE STACK BAR



A CITRUS BOURBON COCKTAIL

TIP: There's a Victorian veranda for summer and fireplaces for winter

2

The Stack

Another Cape Town landmark to be reinvented is Leinster Hall. What was once a meeting place for the Cape Town Club has been turned into The Stack, offering club membership for a new generation. Co-owner and designer Sarah Ord exorcised the staid, retained the charm and applied her signature pops of colour to the private members' lounge upstairs and the public brasserie below. While the menu is predominantly à la carte and covers the likes of steak-frites (R150), there is a *plat du jour* set for each day of the week, with duck à l'orange on Saturday and 'le roast beef' on Sunday. These French classics are executed with more politesse than what I've experienced in Paris bistros, but this bodes well when booking for Tuesday's Toulouse cassoulet – there's no risk of fainting due to the copious quantities of goose fat consumed. Another happy result of returning to the dining of a bygone era is a dedicated restaurant bar, in this case with hot-pink seats.

7 Weltevreden Street, Gardens, Cape Town. 021-286-0187, thestack.co.za





FANTASTICAL SCENES IN THE MAIN DINING ROOM AT GLENDA'S

Glenda's

3

In Joburg there's Glenda's, which is somewhat reminiscent of Angelina in Paris – the grand old patisserie and tea parlour with marble-topped tables, where you go to enjoy a jug of hot chocolate or the original recipe Mont Blanc dessert. In the case of Glenda's, the feature mural is vibrant with exotic blooms and birds, and there's a Harry's Bar sandwich (R70) instead of croque-monsieur. Owner Glenda Lederle has created a light, bright, feminine location for an old-world style of socialising that happens over choux puffs and Champagne. That said, it's not only the preserve of ladies who lunch – look out for the tasting menu dinner on Fridays. Hyde Square, corner Jan Smuts Avenue and North Road, Hyde Park, Joburg. 011-268-6369, glendas.co



*The tart
you must
taste*

'Marmite tart is something my generation remembers fondly,' says Rachel Botes of Pretoria's Carlton Café. 'It was one of those staples rolled out for bake sales and Tupperware parties, usually made in a Pyrex dish and cut into squares.' For those who aren't familiar with it, freshly baked sponge cake is drenched with hot, buttery Marmite sauce for sweet-salty effect.

'Toppings differ depending on where you are in the month,' adds Rachel. 'At the beginning it might be sprinkled with grated cheddar and biltong powder, and towards the end it's just the Marmite.' Her clever incarnation is covered with caramelised onions, a soft poached egg and a Parmesan crisp (R48). It's also demarcated with a 'C' on the menu to indicate popularity – people have been known to travel from the Cape to try it!

**71 Thirteenth Street,
Menlo Park, Pretoria.
012-460-7996,
carltoncafe.co.za**

ON TRACK

TRIPPING

SOUTHERN AFRICAN ROUTES WORTH TAKING



Take an exhilarating horse ride through the bush to the beach

El Paso riding guide and stable manager Marzaan Jansen van Vuuren living the Wild West dream in southern Mozambique. **OPPOSITE** Naara Eco Lodge provides unexpected luxury on Nahambavale Lake.



WHAT'S THE RUSH?

Inhambane is SA's favourite Mozambique holiday town. Evan Haussmann found a relaxing, easy route there with some surprising stops along the way

Sun, sea, colourful cultural attractions, diving with manta rays and whale sharks, dhow trips and aromatic markets make Inhambane a popular holiday spot for South Africans, but the 12-hour-plus drive on Mozambique's EN1, much like trying to read this sentence in one breath, can be exhausting. Instead, my girlfriend Claire and I decided to break up the trip and see more of the country we so often whizz through. We discovered, with the completion of a ring road that skirts the erratic Maputo traffic, that we could be in our first slice of paradise in about six hours. Here's how we did it...

STAGE 1: TO THE BEACH



TAKE THIS ROUTE

From Johannesburg to El Paso

Take the N12 and N4 from Joburg to the Lebombo border, then the EN4 to Maputo. Cross the Rio Matola Bridge, then turn left onto the new ring road (avoiding Maputo entirely). Drive 3,7km, cross the railway line via another bridge, head right at the traffic circle, drive 12km and take the slipway left onto the EN1 at the Xai-Xai sign. Head north for 33km to Marracuene village. Turn right at the Macaneta Lodge sign. At the next T-junction turn left, cross the railway line and then the Inkomati River (by ferry or the new bridge, which should be complete by the time you read this). After 6km keep left at an off-centre T-junction and follow the signs to El Paso.



BRIDGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT THE INKOMATI RIVER



THE EL PASO BAR

We made the Macaneta Peninsula our first stop. It's a relatively easy drive from Joburg and a popular weekend escape for the people of Maputo, just 40 kilometres north. We'd also heard about El Paso, an old-style 'cowboy resort'. After turning off the main drag, our GPS cracked us up when the voice said, 'In 500 metres, take the ferry.' I didn't know GPSes could say that. Sure enough, as we rounded the corner a ragged,

rusty and smoking diesel craft laden with cars chugged towards the bank. While waiting to board we bought fresh prawns and ice-cold beers from chatty vendors in the parking area. The crossing, though a bit hairy due to the dilapidated state of the ferry, was uneventful.

Safely ashore, we took a 15-minute drive along a dirt road, following signs to El Paso. The road weaves through tiny villages and bush and becomes quite sandy (passable with a sedan, but it's better to use a high-clearance vehicle).

El Paso is modelled on a Wild West town; horses roam around creosoted wooden buildings decorated with interesting antiques and wagon wheels

FILLING UP

At around R10 per litre, fuel is cheaper in Mozambique so there's no need to bring jerry cans of petrol into the country (you'll also get charged an import tax of around 40 per cent if you do). When refuelling make sure the meter is zeroed and check the price before paying – ensure the correct amount is charged.



OFF-ROAD FROM EL PASO TO THE EN1

on the verandas. The rustic bar, with the requisite swing doors and bar stools made from horse saddles, was a great place to have our first 2M beer in Mozambique.

The people there were gracious enough to ignore my terrible cowboy accent and instead offered advice on accommodation and the best routes north to Inhambane. We were disappointed not to be able to stay in the Gunsmith 'shop' or the El Paso Post Office for the night as they were fully booked. But we did take an exhilarating horse ride through the bush to the beach. Back in the saloon afterwards, Claire's horse sidled expectantly up to

a window behind the bar and was given a beer for his efforts. My inner Wyatt Earp ventured: 'Well I'll be darned! Only in the Wild West, y'all!' The locals may have been happy to see me ride off into the non-sunset at this point.



DO THIS

Buy fresh prawns and Cokes at the Inkomati River. You'll find the vendors in the parking area. Prawns from R100 per kilogram. **Ride a horse to the beach and back.** Rides start and end in El Paso and take about two hours. From R250 pp. +258-84-483-3048, elpasomoz@gmail.com



DON'T MISS

Take the ferry across the Inkomati River. Though the bridge might be in operation by the time you do this route, if there's a chance to take a trip on the ferry, do it. It's a thrill. R25 per vehicle.



STAY HERE

El Paso Mozambique has rustic Wild West-themed chalets. From R200 pp B&B (sleeps four). +258-84-483-3048, find it on Facebook. **Lugar Do Mar** has self-catering chalets with air-conditioning and private braai areas. From R400 pp. 082-378-9870, +258-840-260-409, lugardomar.com

BORDER INFO

Crossing from South Africa to Mozambique at the Lebombo border is (generally) a breeze. The Mozambican side, however, is a challenge. This is mainly due to border officials allowing civilians to stand inside the border post and take advantage of travellers. Their modus operandi is to direct you to a parking space and then ask you to produce the gate pass, which you would have received on entry from an official in uniform. Once the tout has your gate pass it's very difficult to get it back as they doggedly guide you through the border entry procedure. There will, of course, be a 'service fee' for the assistance provided. If you don't want to do this, don't deal with anyone who isn't in uniform. Officials are helpful and will direct you to the next stage of the process. Allow about two hours for this crossing.



UNDERSTATED STYLE AT NAARA'S

PART 1

TRIP STATS

DISTANCE 550KM
TIME 6 - 7 HOURS
FUEL STOPS
KOMATIPOORT AND
MARRACUENE

STAGE 2: THE GREAT LAKE ESCAPE



TAKE THIS ROUTE

From El Paso to Chidenguele

Unless you have a 4x4 (see alternative route below), you'll need to backtrack to the EN1. Turn right at Marracuene and head north past Xai-Xai to Chidenguele. Take the dirt road right into town and head west to the beach, where there are several accommodation options. To continue on to Inhambane later, head back to the EN1 and follow the signs.



ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

From El Paso to Manhica

With a 4x4 it's possible to proceed north from El Paso on sandy back roads through the bush instead of backtracking to the EN1. Be sure to get good directions from a local or you will get lost in the web of dead-end sandy tracks. It'll take about two hours longer to get to the EN1, but it's a pleasant way to avoid the traffic and erratic speed limits on the highway. You'll pass tiny villages beneath groves of coconut trees, and then the road smoothes out and goes through tall sugar-cane plantations before joining the main road again.



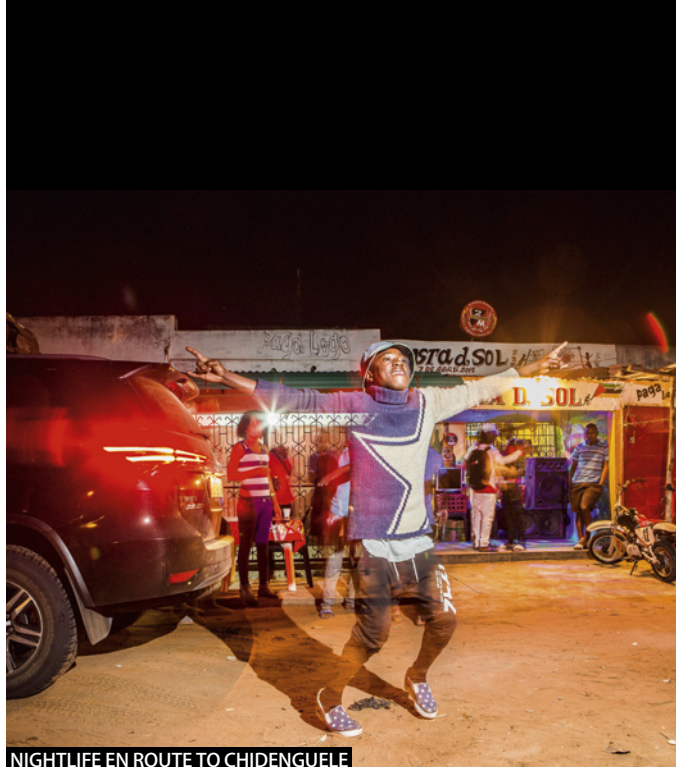
Saddle sore (and not very hungover at all), we were a bit slow to leave the Macaneta Peninsula the next day, which put us on the EN1 quite late. The main highway is busy and the strictly enforced speed limits make progress slow. We didn't force the issue. We took it easy and languidly passed through a number of dusty but busy towns with no differentiating features between them.

We were still travelling when night fell. I'd been told that driving at night in Mozambique isn't advisable as it can be quite dangerous. In reality, and my opinion, it's not any more dangerous than anywhere else. On a whim, and against popular sentiment, we pulled off at a roadside bar, bought a cold drink and sat on a bench outside. Passers-by were clearly intrigued by us being there at that time of night and stopped to chat with the crazy tourists.

A few kilometres later, Claire heard loud music and again we pulled off the main road to search for the party. Cruising slowly down a side street lined



KAYAKING ON NHAMBAVALE LAKE



NIGHTLIFE EN ROUTE TO CHIDENGUELE

with food stands and clothing stalls, we made our way through the dim lights towards the beats.

At the end of the lane we found a group of youths hanging out in an open-fronted, tin-shack bar with a massive sound system pumping out local dance tunes. The vibe was amazing and we hung out with the kids, dancing in the dust and joking in broken Portuguese, English and sign language.

Further along, the GPS directed us to Chidenguele (which means 'the highest point' in the local Chope language) and Naara Eco Lodge, our accommodation for the night, set near a network of freshwater lakes shielded from the Indian Ocean by high dunes covered in indigenous vegetation. In the morning we rose before dawn and paddled kayaks across the largest of these waterways,

the mirror-like Nhambavale Lake, in perfectly golden light.

Afterwards, with wet butts but smiling, we tucked into delicious omelettes in the lodge's understated, open-fronted restaurant overlooking the lake. We'd wanted to visit King's Pool but the tide wasn't in our favour, so instead we headed to the Bao Paz lighthouse. The view from the top reveals an endless beach on one side and a network of inland lakes on the other.

Reluctantly, we tore ourselves away from the luxury and serenity, fired up the Fortuner and slowly headed up the dirt road to get back onto the EN1 and the 200-kilometre home run to Inhambane, which takes you through the seemingly nondescript towns of Quissico, Inharrime and Jangamo. In truth, though, we knew that every one of them had something to offer. One just has to take the time, stop and look.

TIP

Search for 'DriveMoz' on Facebook for a wealth of information, tips and assistance with all things travel-related in Mozambique.



DO THIS

Play on Nhambavale Lake. It's some 20 kilometres long and perfect for kayaking, fishing,

birding and stand-up paddle-boarding. Kite surfers and sailors love it too. It's free for guests of Naara Eco Lodge, which supplies kayaks and SUP boards (BYO if you're not staying there).

Climb the Bao Paz lighthouse and take in the endless views. It's a short drive from Naara Eco Lodge and free. Get directions from the lodge.

Swim in King's Pool, a natural rock pool, at low tide. It's five kilometres long and the crystal-clear water ensures excellent snorkelling and superb fishing. It purportedly gets its name from kingfish so big that they strip fishing reels like candyfloss at a toddlers' party. Bring your best gear. It's seven kilometres from Naara Eco Lodge (they offer transfers there for R100, or you can drive yourself).



DON'T MISS

Stop at any roadside bar, have a cooldrink and mix with the locals to get a true sense of Mozambique. We found great friendliness and generosity.

Buy home-made peri-peri, fresh fruit, veggies and cashews from the roadside vendors too. You'll not only get good organic fare but you'll also be supporting the local economy. From R50 for a 500ml bottle of the hot stuff.

See the Chidenguele Cathedral. It's impeccably kept and the delicate stained-glass windows and impressively tall spire are incongruous alongside the low, traditional homes in the surrounding area. It's open during the day (free entry) but if you can get there on a Sunday during service, you'll be treated to a sermon in Portuguese and particularly beautiful singing; the acoustics are lovely.

DON'T FORGET

- Passport
- Valid international or SA driver's licence
- Vehicle registration forms
- Third-party insurance (available at the border or from a travel company)
- Two large reflective triangles
- Reflective jackets
- Fire extinguisher
- ZA sticker

Visit the locals. Walk with a guide and get a little insight into the community and its way of life. R65 pp (proceeds go into a community development fund).



STAY HERE

Naara Eco Lodge & Spa is well-signposted from Chidenguele and easy to find in the day (it's a little trickier at night – we had to rely on our GPS). The route to the lodge degenerates into a 4x4 track but the lodge offers secure parking for sedans and a free shuttle service to get you there. Ten private, deluxe en-suite safari tents are set around a very stylish restaurant, bar, spa and swimming pool overlooking a lake. Fantastic fusion meals use mostly locally sourced ingredients; ask to have your dinner on the deck next to the lake – romantic! From R1 300 for two. +258-84-321-2209, naaraecolodge.com

PART 2
TRIP STATS

DISTANCE 260KM
TIME 3,5 HOURS
(WITHOUT STOPS)
FUEL STOP XAI-XAI

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TURN THE TABLES

A GOOD TABLE CAN TRANSFORM A CAMPING TRIP. GETAWAY GEAR EDITOR **MELANIE VAN ZYL** TESTED EIGHT AND CHOSE THESE FIVE (INCLUDING ONE YOU CAN MAKE YOURSELF)

BEST FOR MACGYVERS

1 THE DIY TABLE

What you'll need:

- 2 x black plastic vented crates (54 x 36cm). R99 (each), makro.co.za
- 1 x wooden board offcut, measuring about 90 x 36cm. R100, timbercity.co.za
- 4 x plastic hooks on double-sided tape. R29, makro.co.za
- 1 x dowel rod, about 5cm longer than the length of the board. About R12, timbercity.co.za

Stand the crates on their sides and lay the wooden board over the top. Slide the dowel rod through the vents to create a paper-towel holder. Stick the hooks to the side of the board to hang cloths and mugs. For a higher table, use four crates fastened together with cable ties.

TIP

What's great about this table is that you can pack all your food inside the crates for the road trip.

BEST FOR COUPLES CAMPING

2 KAUFMANN LARGE ALUMINIUM FOLD-UP TABLE

R649, kaufmannoutdoor.co.za

PACKED SIZE 82 x 70cm; folds flat.
TABLETOP DIMENSIONS 70 x 60cm
WEIGHT 2,25kg

DURABILITY The lightweight material means it could dent during rough transit.
STABILITY It's pretty stable on even surfaces, but the fused bar that joins the legs might make it wobbly on uneven ground.
VERDICT The tabletop won't be damaged by heat, which means you can set stoves and hot pots on it, and the aluminium also makes it very lightweight. It's easy to set up, comfortably seats two and offers enough space to prep food.



BEST FOR THE BEACH

3 NATURAL INSTINCTS LIGHTWEIGHT TABLE

R395, outdoorwarehouse.co.za

PACKED SIZE 86 x 8cm;
dismantles and packs into a bag.

TABLETOP DIMENSIONS
63 x 48cm

WEIGHT 2,1kg

DURABILITY If using in the bush the mesh top could catch and rip on thorns, but the metal base will stand some abuse.

STABILITY Even though the top looks flimsy, metal slats below it provide good support

and create a firm surface. The legs can be buried in sand for extra anchoring.

VERDICT It's too short to act as a comfy dining table, but it works well as a side table and for keeping your kit out of the sand. The two drinks holders are stable and the table folds into a neat, lightweight carry bag (like a camping chair would), making it the most portable option.



5 QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE SHOPPING

Are you travelling in a sedan or a 4x4?

We found the bigger the packed size, the more durable the table – but it's still got to fit in the boot.

How many people are usually in your camping group? Some tables are perfect for couples, while others are four-seaters that are best for groups.

How far are you going to carry the table?

If you're after a beach or picnic table, a lightweight option will make your life easier, but you may have to sacrifice some durability.

What is the table made from? The thicker the tabletop and the heavier the table, the more durable it will be. Look for

blow-moulded plastic and sturdy metal legs if you're a regular camper seeking a long-lasting option.

How stable is it? The most stable models were ones with a larger footprint, meaning the table legs are set further apart and better reduced wobble.



THE GETAWAY CHOICE

4 CHECKPOINT 4FT BLOW-MOULDED TABLE

R895, campworld.co.za

PACKED SIZE 63 x 61cm; folds in half and has a carry handle.

TABLETOP DIMENSIONS 122 x 61cm

WEIGHT 9,5kg

DURABILITY The hardy and thick plastic tabletop makes this the most durable option here.

STABILITY Solid legs and sturdy hinges mean this table is exceptionally stable.

VERDICT It's on the heavy side, but this makes it hard-wearing and super-stable. The thick legs are height-adjustable, the top is easy to clean and there's more than enough surface space for a small family. All in all, we found it easy to pack and heavy-duty enough for adventure.



BEST FOR SUMMER PICNICS

5 BUSH BABY ALUMINIUM FORMICA TABLE

R499, checkers.co.za

PACKED SIZE 55 x 60cm; folds in half and has a carry handle.

TABLETOP DIMENSIONS

120 x 60cm

WEIGHT 4,5kg

DURABILITY The medium-density fibreboard top is not very thick, but metal struts that run from each leg to the underside of the tabletop provide some reinforcement.

STABILITY The legs are not terribly

stable, but there are clips to lock the hinges in place.

VERDICT The top is quite thin and the table might not be very durable, but it's easily the cheapest and is exceptionally light and easy to pack. I also really like that the telescopic legs make it height adjustable (it's a comfy height to eat at when sitting in camp chairs) and the wood finish is a nice touch.

ANOTHER OPTION

If you want to shave off R100, the Camp Master Large Camping Table is also a good option with the same tabletop specs, but we preferred the wood finish, folding ability and adjustable legs of the Bush Baby. R399, makro.co.za



TRAVEL

Look into my wild soul

Feel the power of these remarkable, intimate images of wildlife from Angela and Jonathan Scott's just-released book Sacred Nature: Life's Eternal Dance. They also tell us how they got the shots



We were in a small boat riding through a narrow, papyrus-lined waterway in Botswana's Okavango Delta when we came across a cow elephant with a small calf crossing ahead of us. She did not expect us and the whites of her eyes flashed and her ears flared defensively. We knew we had to back away immediately. Leaving the driver to manoeuvre the boat, we grabbed our cameras – choosing a Canon 200-400mm f/4 lens fitted with a x1.4 extender. It's versatile for shots like this, and allowed us to zoom quickly from its widest setting to a tighter shot at 560mm.



This is Frodo, the alpha male of the F Family at Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania. The intensity of his gaze speaks volumes about the intelligence of our closest primate relatives. Our relationship to them, and the natural world, is best captured in this speech by Chief Seattle of the Sioux (c1786 – 1866), 'What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of the spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.' By kneeling on the ground and exposing for the highlights, we were able to create a dark background from the out-of-focus vegetation – the perfect setting to capture the presence of this legendary dominant male.

Being eye-to-eye with one of Africa's most charismatic big cats is an unforgettable moment of intensity and intimacy. At the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia, this male's large eyes embodied that experience. We used a wide-angle lens and shallow depth of field to create a background texture to mirror his spotted coat.





A martial eagle mantles its prey – an unlucky Egyptian goose – in the Maasai Mara National Reserve in Kenya. To capture its piercing eyes and heraldic pose, we used a 500mm lens and a shallow depth of field. This created a nice clean background which helped to accentuate the crest of feathers and threatening visage.



ABOVE Notch's Boys, two of a coalition of five adult males in the Maasai Mara in Kenya. Lions have always had a special place for us – manifested in the BBC series *Big Cat Diary*, which Jonathan hosted. Here we captured the threat of violence in their greeting (an innate part of these cats' language) by using a slow shutter speed to heighten the drama.

DO IT YOURSELF

OKAVANGO DELTA, BOTSWANA

Return flights from Joburg to Maun are from R6 400 pp. airbotswana.co.bw

When to go Winter is good for spotting game and also best for self-driving – in summer roads can become inaccessible.

Stay here Maun Rest Camp is a satellite of the well-known Old Bridge Backpackers. It's quiet and good for day trips into the Delta. Riverside camping is from R130 pp. maunrestcamp.com

GOMBE STREAM NATIONAL PARK, TANZANIA

Return flights from Joburg to Dar es Salaam are from R4 000 pp. From there, return flights to Kigoma are from R5 000. fastjet.com, precisionairtz.com

When to go You're more likely to spot chimps in the wet season (November – June) but photo ops are better when it's dry.

Stay here There is a new luxury tented lodge, plus a guest house and campsites in the park. From R3 600 pp. tanzaniaparks.com

CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND, NAMIBIA

Return flights from Cape Town to Windhoek are from R4 000 pp. From there it's a three-hour drive to Otjiwarongo. airnamibia.com

When to go Winter is when it's cooler and wildlife more active.

Stay here Rondavels from R1 700 pp, including meals, or rooms in the guesthouse from R6 000 pp sharing, all inclusive. cheetah.org

MAASAI MARA NATIONAL RESERVE, KENYA

Return flights to Nairobi from R7 000. From there it's a five-hour drive. kenya-airways.com

When to go The best time for big cats is December to February.

Stay here There are several luxury lodges and tented camps in the park. Prices are given on quotation. maasaimara.com

SACRED NATURE: LIFE'S ETERNAL DANCE

This 288-page, large-format book is inspired by Angela Scott's love of photography and the work of mythologist Joseph Campbell. R995. hphpublishing.co.za, sacrednaturebook.co.za

*Prices and conversions correct at the time of going to print

TWO HIKES FOR

*Sabrina Kennedy spotting monkeys
at Kurisa Moya while our experienced
hiker, Melanie, gets this shot*

SWEET SIMPLICITY



WHO
MELANIE VAN ZYL



WHERE
LIMPOPO



HOW LONG
TWO DAYS



COMFORT LEVEL
PRETTY PLUSH



PETS
PETS ARE WELCOME

TWO TYPES

We sent an experienced bushwacker and a first-time hiker on two completely different slackpacking trails. Their verdict? Read on, then decide which will be your next escape into the wild

Our newbie hiker Welcome
with guide Evan Kortje in the
Groenlandberg Nature Reserve

HARD-WORKING LUXURY



WHO

WELCOME LISHIVHA



WHERE

OVERBERG



HOW LONG

FOUR DAYS



COMFORT LEVEL

VERY PLUSH (AND DELICIOUS)



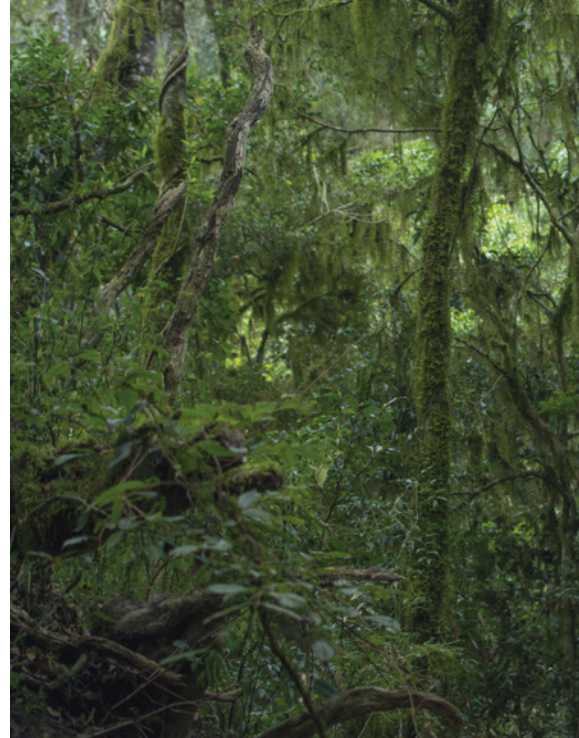
PETS

PETS ARE NOT WELCOME

ROOTS TO RIVERS TRAIL



ABOVE, FROM LEFT The endless views down the Kudu's River Valley; hiking with BirdLife-accredited guide Paul Nkhumane made this trail come alive. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Clambering up koppies; scones to savour for lunch at Graceland; a good night's rest is assured in the cosy cabin at Kurisa Moya.



Heard of 'cabin porn'? It refers to the ogling of gorgeous cabins in remote places – an urge for a simpler life in remote surroundings.

For months, I had been lusting after one particular cabin in the Woodbush Forest near Magoebaskloof. Built on stilts three metres off the ground, it sits among rare samango monkeys and catches a chorus of woodland bird calls. And even though I hadn't been there, I knew it intimately from pictures: an enamel kettle sits on a gas stove in the corner; a big Cadac gas bottle fitted with a lantern hangs from the wall, and a wooden ladder leads up to a platform with low beds.

On assignment to find great ecolodges in South Africa, I passed the entrance to this cabin on a dirt road heading towards a stylish new off-the-grid stay called Graceland Eco Retreat, just north of Polokwane. Then, over a few glasses of wine, Graceland co-owner Anders Ragnarsson told me about Limpopo's newest slackpacking route – the Roots to Rivers Slackpacking Trail – and how it operates between Graceland and Kurisa Moya Nature Lodge ... the home of my fantasy cabin. It was finally in reach. I signed up for the trail.

We set off at 7am from my cabin in the woods. It was everything I had dreamed of, and I woke with a smile on my face. Deep in the Woodbush Forest – South Africa's second biggest indigenous



Did you know? Woodbush is SA's second-largest indigenous forest after Knysna



‘IT WAS EVERYTHING I HAD DREAMED OF, AND I WOKE WITH A SMILE ON MY FACE’

forest after Knysna – there was a chill in the air, which felt damp as I breathed in. The sun was up, but it was still moody below the forest canopy as the light took its time reaching down.

Kurisa Moya’s Paul Nkhumane, one of South Africa’s top BirdLife-accredited guides, provided fascinating insight into the area, and to do this trail without him would be a mistake. Perfectly tuned to this heaving habitat, he pinpointed the birdcalls of bush shrikes, twinspots, robins and the (sprightly) sombre greenbul.

The mulchy floor gives rise to stinkwoods, chestnuts and small-girth yellowwoods, because all the big ones were chopped down before laws were passed to protect them. We ducked under old man’s beard draped from branches and Paul pointed to big holes where saw pits used to function, before >





we stopped beneath the largest known cabbage tree or *kiepersol*, estimated to be about 2 000 years old.

We then emerged from the emerald valley, suddenly stepping into sunshine. The landscape morphed from soft to hard, and it was an easy climb up a rugged koppie into bushveld. I recognised stamvrug trees, which occur in the Waterberg too, except here they're covered in old man's beard – a pale-green reminder of the forest in

the valley below. The throaty trumpets of the Knysna turaco were replaced by the varying calls of a scrub robin, and we caught the first glimpse of our destination in the sprawling Kudu's River Valley below.

We were welcomed to Graceland by three curious giraffes named Lisa Marie, Elvis and Priscilla. I can't think of another place in the country where you could walk below a cool forest canopy in the morning and stumble

PLAN YOUR TRIP ➔

GETTING THERE

From Joburg on the N1, just before Polokwane take the Tzaneen off-ramp and follow the R71 for 20 kilometres. Just before the traffic lights, take the slipway to the left to the University of Limpopo. Stay on University Road for another 26 kilometres until it becomes dirt. Kurisa Moya Nature Lodge is on the right; a kilometre further along, Graceland Eco Retreat is on the left.

HOW IT WORKS

The Roots to Rivers Slackpacking experience is a set of trails near Magoebaskloof, between Kurisa Moya Nature Lodge and Graceland Eco Retreat. The lodges differ slightly: **Kurisa Moya** is more rustic, with two forest cabins, a large farmhouse for groups and a mountain cottage. 071-658-6980, krm.co.za **Graceland** is more chic and has a house linked to a cottage which sleeps

six in total (no kids under 16). 083-277-5553, gracelandeco.co.za. Both are off the grid and pet friendly. For the full experience, I'd recommend booking three nights so you have two full days to explore and walk between the two. You can pack your own grub or ask to be catered for, as we did – meals at both properties were wholesome, generous and very tasty. Packed breakfasts and lunches are also done.

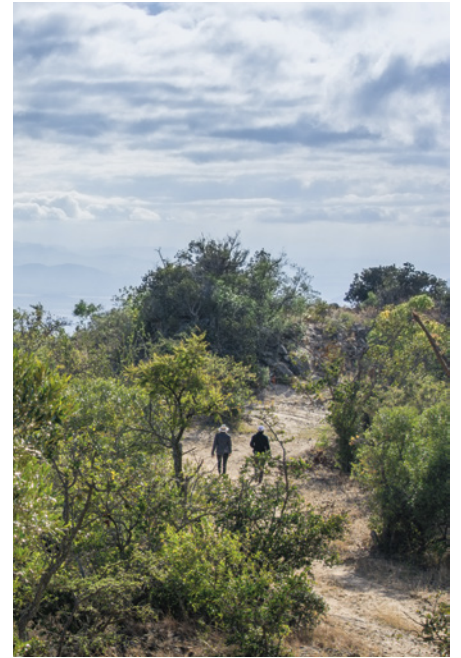
NEED TO KNOW

Spring offers wildflowers, December is green (although there might be rain) and winter has mild daytime temperatures. The route is very flexible and can be tailored to your interests and fitness – we did roughly seven kilometres on the first day and 10 kilometres on the second, but it was easy going. Book a hiking guide, even if it's just for a morning, to bring the area's history alive and

to find out about the fauna and flora. At the end of our stay, we also added on a cultural tour to a village outside Polokwane.

WHAT TO BRING

Binoculars are vital for taking in the incredible birdlife. Wear a hat and carry water and snacks. Be sure to use good walking shoes – you'll be scrambling up rocky koppies, walking gravel roads and trudging along damp forest floors.



THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT The giraffes at Graceland are super-relaxed; heading up to a viewpoint that overlooks the Kudu's River Valley. **OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM LEFT** Homemade apple pie beside the fireplace at Kurisa Moya; cows dot the hillsides of Magoebaskloof.

'WE WERE WELCOMED BY THREE CURIOUS GIRAFFES NAMED LISA MARIE, ELVIS AND PRISCILLA'

across giraffe less than three kilometres away. I was bowled over by the variety of habitat and wildlife I saw in just one day on the trail, and followed the impala tracks to the lodge at Graceland where fresh lemonade and warm cheese scones were waiting.

I found my longed-for simpler life in gorgeous surroundings, but I'm certainly not cured. Now the picture in my mind is accompanied by sounds and smells that drive the urge to return. >

COST

We paid R1 000 for a guide for a full day. There is a R300 luggage transport fee for two days per group. Graceland's Kudu Cottage is from R750 pp self-catering or R1 100 pp DBB. Kurisa Moya is from R550 pp sharing self-catering; meals cost R100 to R280 pp. Kurisa Moya is offering a 20 per cent discount for readers in low season until 1 May 2017.



GREEN MOUNTAIN TRAIL



‘I’m surprised by how relaxed you guys are, and not a word to enquire about the hike tomorrow,’ said guide Andreas Groenewald at dinner.

The nerves kicked in. I’ve only ever walked over a hill in Grahamstown. This was an entirely different story: 57 kilometres over three days (the standard itinerary spreads the distance over four days but time constraints meant we had one fewer in which to do it), and lots of mountains. Real mountains. What made me do it? The promise of wine, a proper bed every night and some new gear from Cape Union Mart that included hiking socks (I didn’t even know there was such a thing).

After a short transfer to the starting point on a private farm, we set off to cross the Groenlandberg Nature Reserve at the decent hour of 9am. Andreas and assistant guide Evan Kortje were like kids in a candy store, their enthusiasm ignited by the sight of a mountain covered in fynbos. Andreas looked at the carpet of erica flowers in front of us as if seeing them for the first time and cried out, ‘Look at all this pink! You’d swear the mountain was blushing.’

The flowers were tiny and growing at ankle height. Evan said they refer to a hike in winter as a humble visitation. ‘You have to get on your knees to truly appreciate and see the flowers,’ he said,



kneeling down over a patch of proteas that looked like baby cabbages.

About five kilometres later, Andreas pointed at the mountain ahead, 'We will walk across that path' – a trail of white sand – 'but before that, we will go to the top of the mountain and from there on

'ANDREAS CRIED OUT, "LOOK AT ALL THIS PINK! YOU'D SWEAR THE MOUNTAIN WAS BLUSHING." '

it's just downhill. It will be a great reward for this hard part of the climb.'

The 360-degree view of the orchards and vineyards of Elgin and Grabouw, Theewaterskloof Dam, Kleinmond right to Hermanus in the distance and the path we'd already covered – all the way back to Porcupine Hills – was a breathtaking reward for the uphill slog.

I couldn't help but feel on top of the world in more ways than one – the indulgent lunch: a juicy spinach and mushroom quiche packed for us earlier and good filter coffee, savoured with a spectacular view from 1 130 metres above sea level (higher than Table Mountain, Andreas pointed out).

Soon it was time to soldier on. The energy required going up earlier was so

much more within my control than the energy I now needed to keep my body from slipping and rolling downhill. We came across a mountain spring flowing out of rock on the side of the trail, but some of us (read me) were less excited about drinking this 'natural water' because of its brown colour. I held back but Andreas wasted no time, scooping it up with both hands and drinking thirstily. 'This is what water should taste like!' he said.

Registering my doubt, Evan told me that minerals in the fynbos enter the water through its roots, so it's known as 'fynbos tea'. Upon closer inspection, it did look like tea, and I drank water from a spring for the first time in my life!

We exited the trail via Viljoen's >



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Welcome with his 'alien' wood walking stick, carved by a local eco project; time to reflect after the hike at Beaumont estate; there are daily spreads of food and wine – this one at Beaumont.
OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP Andreas Groenewald points out where the hike will end on day one; the fynbos that makes the mountains 'blush'.



Pass and the small Nuweberg cemetery that day. I couldn't help but wonder if that graveyard was home to individuals who hadn't been able to make it all the way... Only then, after covering 18 kilometres, the first and longest stretch of the hike, did I look back with pride at having made it, alive. Over the next two days we walked through more of this beautiful region that makes up part of the Kogelberg Biosphere. More than 1 500 plant species grow here, and more than 20 of them are proteas alone. We even came across *impepho* –

a tumeric-scented herb used by traditional healers to chase away evil spirits. Every day was rich in visual artistry, accompanied by an incredible orchestra of frog serenades, splashing waterfalls, chirping birds and leaves dancing in the wind. At the end of each walk we ate delicious food and tasted wine, and each night we sank into comfortable beds. It's perfect for beginners and I realised that though I may walk sluggishly and roll myself over like a ball of dough being kneaded, I can also walk over mountains. **G**



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT The Elgin mountains have fantastic rock formations; beehives next to the Nuweberg cemetery, where the first day's hike ended; historic Wildekran's Country House is famous for its gardens. **OPPOSITE** Looking west towards the Eikenhof Dam and Grabouw.

WHAT WELCOME WORE

JACKET

K-Way Torrential Rain Jacket R899

Made of polyester microfibre, it was light and easy to carry. The inside seams are sealed and kept cold air out and warmth in. It also kept out the drizzle on day three, although its name implies it could deal with far worse.



PANTS

K-Way Mens Explorer Kloof R899

They're made from water-repellent nylon with a UV-protective finish. The leg bottoms can be zipped off to convert them into shorts – due to the weather on my hike, there was no need for that, but in summer this will be very handy.



DAY PACK

K-Way Kilimanjaro R1 099

The shoulder straps hug you tightly but comfortably, so it feels like you're carrying hardly any luggage. Chest straps allow you to tighten up and adjust the hug of the bag. You won't want to let go of this one!



BOOTS

Hi-Tec V-Lite Flash Hike R2599

These waterproof leather boots were comfortable and strong. The high tops offered ankle support – handy in the rocky environment and on the downhills. They're rather 'macho', which inspired me to crunch through vegetation and climb rocks to take pictures and enjoy the views.



Items available at Cape Union Mart

PLAN YOUR TRIP ➔

GETTING THERE

Take the N2 from Cape Town through Somerset West, over Sir Lowry's Pass and past Grabouw and Elgin. After the Houw Hoek Pass, head for Bot River. Drive through town, past the hotel, go over the level crossing and turn right onto the Van der Stel Pass (to Villiersdorp). It is 16km on gravel to Porcupine Hills (signposted on the right). Transfers from Cape Town airport can be arranged.

HOW IT WORKS

The Green Mountain Trail covers 57 km over four days, traversing the Groenlandberg section of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, and visiting farms (Oak Valley, Paul Cluver and Beaumont) that are all members of the world's first biodiversity wine route. Nights are spent at luxury guest houses, which provide breakfast and dinner, and hikers



are transported to and from the trail each day. 028-284-9827, greenmountaintrail.co.za

NEED TO KNOW

Spring has masses of flowers and flowing streams (lots of frogs); summer offers migratory birds, harvest action, orchids and proteas (plus Elgin Open Gardens in late October and early

November); the bulbs bloom in autumn, which is also cooler; winter is cold, wet and 'popular with Namibians'. It's a moderate walking trail, no technical skill needed, and distances range from 11 to 18km, which means you're often only walking for half the day and can spend the rest at leisure, including wine tasting.

WHAT TO BRING

Sunscreen, sunglasses, a hat, snacks and water, as well as something warm and waterproof to wear in case the weather changes (probable in the Overberg).

COST

R8 795 pp sharing (minimum six people) for four days. Solo walkers and smaller

groups can join other groups. The rate includes all meals, wine tastings, guides, luggage transfers and three nights' accommodation at Porcupine Hills, an olive farm, and historic Wildekrans Country House.

**Prices correct at time of going to print*





Trail runners use cattle paths and natural furrows to navigate this isolated region.

Malagasy athlete Romuald Jaoriziki skips down a technical descent near the Irodo River. **OPPOSITE** These red Salomon shoes belong to one of SA's top trail runners. Find out who on the next page.



THE BRAVE CAME RUNNING

In a remote region of northern Madagascar, Tyson Jopson joined 23 runners from around the world on a one-of-a-kind race that merges the toughness of trail running with the rewards of travel

E

arlier this year I learned of the total distance covered in the world's longest official ultra-marathon. It's just shy of 5 000 kilometres. That is not the most staggering thing about it. The entire course spans a city block in Queens, New York. To complete it, athletes lap the block 5649 times. The record holder is a 44-year-old Finnish courier named Ashprihanal Aalto who, in 2015,

completed the 'neighbourhood dash' in 40 days and nine hours.

I'm suspicious of people like this. Finland might not be the most riveting place in the world to live but why would anyone from there (or anywhere else) want to fly to New York, pay for a hotel, catch the subway at least twice and pay an extortionate amount of money for a disappointing cream cheese bagel at least once, to go pound the same bit of pavement every day? It's an awful lot of money to go somewhere new and then not explore it. Or at least explore only the bits between 164th and 168th Street.

Perhaps it was with that knowledge, tucked away in a reservoir of pub-quiz information along with the density of Saturn (687kg/m^3), that I leapt at the chance to cover a foot race that promised a little more than sidewalk scenery: a six-day, 150-kilometre never-been-done-before stage race in one of the most remote regions of the world's fourth largest island – Madagascar. The largest (since we're filling that info reservoir together now) is Greenland. I'm told it's somewhat less tropical though. Twenty-three runners from around the world thought it was a good idea too.

Rice is the island's staple food. Grown in striking green waterlogged fields, it was introduced by Indonesian and Malaysian settlers more than 1000 years ago.

I meet the first of them inside the restaurant of hotel Relais de Plateaux, on a tattered northern edge of Antananarivo, dark with gunmetal grey clouds that soak up the sounds of the urban sprawl. Now listen properly: if ever you find yourself in the company of someone who tells you that they completed the Otter Trail in four-and-a-half hours, know that they leave you no option but to tell them to shut their filthy lying mouth. Because just a handful of people have managed that. And one of them is Thabang Madiba. At 32 years old, Thabang is a South African long-distance trail running champion and billed by some (though I'm loathe to use these kinds of comparisons) as 'the next Ryan Sandes'. Now here's an athlete, I think. Though the grey tracksuit pants, blue Salomon soft shell and matching trainers he's chosen as his dinner outfit does little to disguise that. Thabang smiles and, with a voice that barely rises above the bread basket between us, says, 'I wasn't perfect in one or two places. I could maybe do it quicker.'

The following day, after a two-hour flight above an island that melts from fertile highlands into gnarled brown folds and tropical scrub, I meet the other runners on the balcony of the hotel La Terrasse du Voyageurs in Antsirananana. Formerly Diego Suarez (prior to 1975), this bayside town was once coveted by the British who tried to muscle out Vichy French during World War II. Today it hums with New York-yellow tuk-tuks that weave between a Seuss-like farrago of wooden corner stores and pastel-coloured buildings no more than five or six storeys high. On side streets, loose items of laundry duel like Afghan kites and the smell of burnt rice, carbon and bargain >

*'Beneath a red- and green-striped banner,
23 runners wait for the starter's orders...
Nobody has run here before'*



Thabang Madiba leaps through the rocky basin of Tsingy Rouge, a red laterite canyon created over centuries by erosion and chemical weathering.

FROM TOP
This kitchen was taken down and rebuilt each day; Madagascar's giant day gecko (*Phelsuma grandis*) has no lids on its eyes – it uses its tongue to keep them clean; the local athletes – friendly and very, very fast.

fill the air. It is also a playground peninsula for tourists and, I'm told, a place where pasty old Italian men bring their retirement euros and rent hotel rooms for months and pretend to live like kings. They forget that this is Africa – a continent that has learnt how to deal with that kind of scourge. Here, they're swooned into buying houses and lavish gifts for local women who promise them the world and chase them home when they're dry.

On the balcony of La Terrasse du Voyageurs I'm glad to discover that this is not just a race for the ultra fast or ultra fit. It is impossible to mention everyone, but among the not-so-elite foreigners is Luis Rene Menendez, a 72-year-old Argentinian who looks a little like the writer Jorge Luis Borges, just more cheerful. His partner Delores is not running. She spends the days visiting the national parks and highlights of the Diana region, returning each afternoon with gorgeous photos and a face less flushed than his.

There's Marcus Fong (39), an IT technician from Macau who plans to run all six of the World Marathon Majors (Tokyo, London, Boston, Berlin, Chicago, New York). He's taken leave for this event, but tells me that he's had to buy a local sim card and airtime should there be any urgent IT queries at work. I tell him that I think 'Have you tried turning it off and on again?' would make for a great voicemail. He doesn't laugh.

There's Steven Paul Halton (35), an Englishman who has cycled the length of Africa and has a pair of calves that look like two watermelons strapped to hockey sticks. And Yannick Dinmamod, a 32-year-old Frenchman who sells auto parts in Antananarivo. And then there



is Gavin Sacks (49), a compatriot from Johannesburg who saw an ad in *Runner's World* magazine and who, when quizzed on why he joined, simply said: 'Looked cool, somewhere new, I thought why not?'

Of the Malagasy contingent that makes up much of the field, many are very fast. There is Laurette Rasoarinomena (28), a runner from Toliara, Heritiana Andrianaiivo (28) from Antananarivo and Revelinot Raherinandrasana (38), who has just one arm. He will, after the race, go on to place 10th in the men's 1500m

*'There's an Englishman who...
has a pair of calves that look
like two watermelons...'*

in the Paralympic Games in Rio, only the second Malagasy in history to compete in an Olympic final.

And there is also Zephirin Zimazava (37) who is blind. He will run almost every stage with one arm on his friend and guide's shoulder. Step by awkward step they will cross rivers, clamber over rocks and, fuelled by a stream of constant audio and physical communication, sail through fields. What I discover that night about this mishmash of humans, aside from a love of running and the bravery to sign up for something that's never been done before, is that they all love the idea of being somewhere new.



And so here we are, somewhere new: a plateau above Beamolana Waterfall, a pinstripe of white water cascading into a small volcanic lake a few kilometres east of the village of Anivorano, a bumpy three-hour drive south of Antsiranana. It's the first day of Racing Madagascar and the long grass glows golden in the early morning sunshine and the sky is big and full of promise. Beneath a red- and green-striped banner, 23 runners wait for the starter's orders. Ahead of them, a barely distinguishable zebu (cattle) path of flattened grass, trampled into the dirt, winds its way towards the horizon. Nobody has run here before.

The race begins. Heritiana surges ahead, pausing only to morph into a Super Mario Brother at the first (of many) river crossings before hopping from stone to stone without breaking his stride. A string of seven Malagasy athletes, and Thabang, follow. I don't see them again until the finish line, 20 kilometres later.

And here I should probably tell you how I am getting around. I am aboard a Honda XT400, led by French-speaking guide François Serrano, camera gear and notepad in a waterproof bag strapped to my back. My plan is to buzz from checkpoint to checkpoint to photograph the runners for the first four days. Then, on day five, I will swap riding boots for running shoes and run the 28-kilometre stage with them. It will be the furthest I've ever run in one go.

Day one takes Heritiana an hour and a half. Narcisse Zithaniel (19) finishes a close second and Thabang is third. Zephirin crosses the line with his guide three hours later.

That afternoon some of us head into Anivorano to check out the market. We eat fresh fruit, drink warm Coca-Cola and watch bicycles crammed with baguettes weave between old Renault 4Ls while chickens dart for their lives. That evening, back at our campsite, I take stock of the operation. It takes

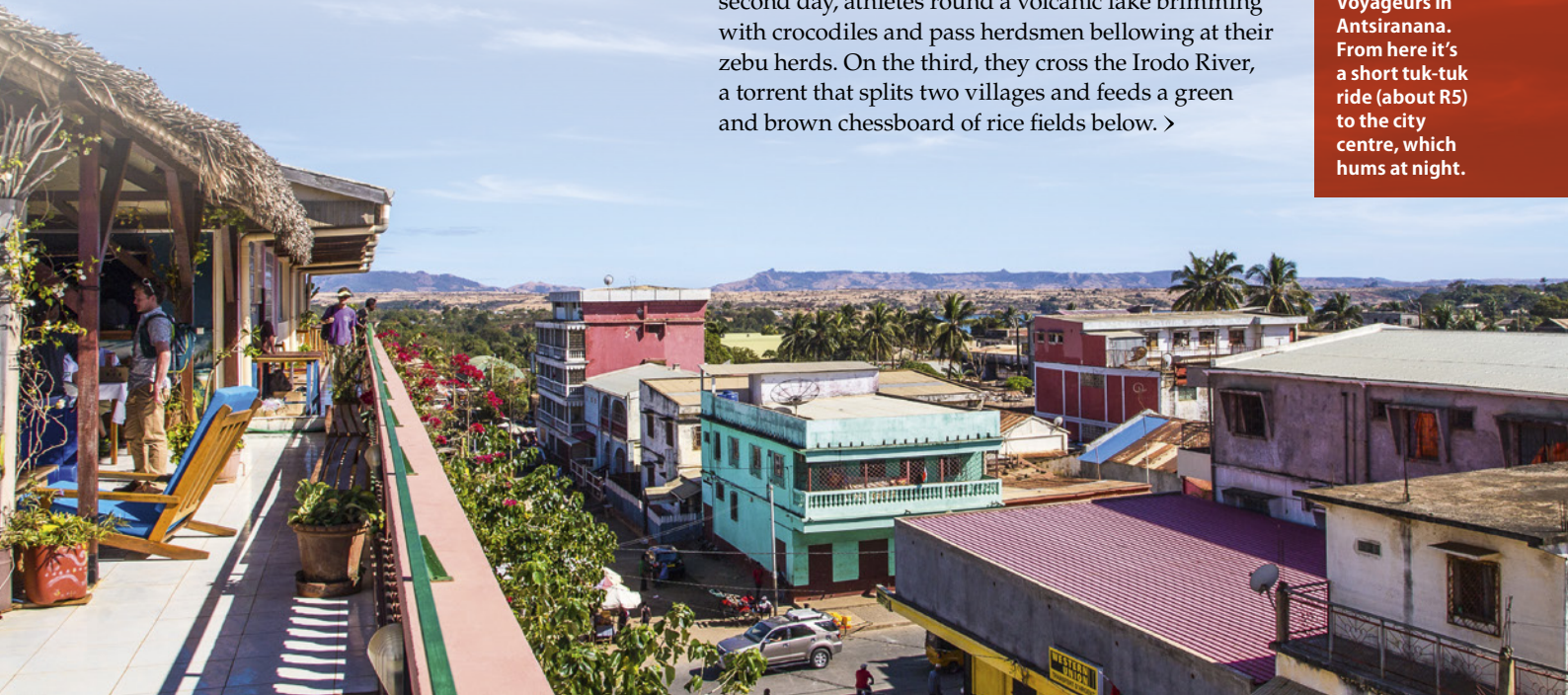


ON THE COVER Much like Unimogs, these Renault TRM trucks did the heavy lifting. They're often referred to as 'Kosovos' because they were used in the eponymous war.

two large Kosovos and a fleet of five 4x4s to transport the camp between each day's finish line. There are canvas tents, bucket showers and pit loos walled by palm fronds and always positioned with the best views. There is a kitchen area, buzzing and simmering with activity, and two palm-bedecked wooden shelters with long benches beneath them, where we will eat. This is more than a mobile village, this is a military-scale operation.

For the next three days, the route creeps slowly north-east and the stage winners chop and change between the locals. The pace is formidable but Thabang is always close... never more than a minute or two behind the winner. Mornings are bright and hot and the afternoons brighter, and hotter. On the second day, athletes round a volcanic lake brimming with crocodiles and pass herdsmen bellowing at their zebu herds. On the third, they cross the Irodo River, a torrent that splits two villages and feeds a green and brown chessboard of rice fields below. >

The view from the balcony of La Terrasse du Voyageurs in Antsiranana. From here it's a short tuk-tuk ride (about R5) to the city centre, which hums at night.



This section of Tsingy Rouge, a laterite canyon on the east coast of the Diana region, consists of fragile rock sculptures carved into shape by wind and water.





The next day runners traverse large canyons of rust-red mineral spires that reach for the skies. One day it becomes so hot that a patch on François' motorcycle tube delaminates, and I leave him to repair it as I chase down the leaders in the hope of getting a shot of them at the finish. On another, one of the Kosovos breaks down five kilometres from the finish line and staff walk the rest of the way for help.

The days are unbelievably tough. But the nights are invigorating. There is good food and music, either country and western rattling out from a cellphone, or djembe drums and a guitar, played in turn by the locals and accompanied by Malagasy lyrics that float up at the ends like butterflies. Lunches are *verleptde* baguettes, baked by the sun. Dinners are rice, zebu

'The days are unbelievably tough. But the nights are invigorating'

skewers and fish. And there are coconuts, first sucked dry and then hacked in two for the flesh. One evening Gavin, Yannick and I wander into a nearby village in Ankerika and share a quart of THB (Three Horse Beer) and stand awkwardly in our tracksuits while a generator-powered DJ booth fuels an open-air party.

On the fourth night Yannick tells me that there are two kinds of chickens in Madagascar. *Akoho gasy* is the kind you'll find in most markets – lean and spry from spending its days dodging rickshaws and eating whole grains wherever it can find them. And then

there is the Occidental kind. It spends most of its time indoors; its food comes in packaging, concocted so as to expand its waistline without much thought for its bloodline. It gets a little exercise here and there and if prodded will wobble and cluck, but get running eventually.

And then it's the fifth day and I am the second chicken. I am not unfit but I've always needed some goading to get my running shoes on, and my diet is more bacon than banana. But I have trained, somewhat, for this day and afoot, with a hydration pack filled with nuts and an extra pair of socks, I quickly find a good stride. Too good. For the first 12 kilometres I settle in behind Marcus at a pace that's well beyond my means. In his wake I sink into sand on Ampondrafeta Beach, tiptoe over muddy channels and cruise along a Jeep track to the first checkpoint. There, exhausted, I tell Marcus in a scene that resembles a bad action movie to 'Go on without me!' And so he does, and I don't see him again until camp that afternoon.

To tell you about the next 16 kilometres is to tell you what any runner will tell you about running. It was the full gamut of emotions. After the pain and self-doubt comes reasoning (just eight more kays to the next checkpoint, you're basically halfway), bargaining (one more kilometre and you can have a break) and then bullying (come on, you little wimp! People fought wars in army boots and ran further). But there were other moments too. Moments that some will tell you are >

FROM TOP Jaquis Justin Rakiky takes a nap in my hammock at the end of Day 4; despite having run 42 kilometres that day, some still had energy for somersaults; making music with Morisse Morisse, Housseny Nasser and Hervé Djaonoro.



the most exhilarating you'll feel as a human being inside its own body. Moments when pleasure and suffering become one and the distinctions between yourself and the world blur. The long hours on the road, early mornings and nights out missed with friends pay off and you're cruising, a missile above a set of limbs like two pistons extending and returning in time with your breath, propelling you forward.

That hardly ever happened. What mostly happened was the inability to think at all. In *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*, the author Haruki Murakami talks about running in a void. On cold days, he writes, 'I guess I think about how cold it is ... and about the heat on hot days.' But for the most part, when asked what he thinks about, he says, 'I don't have a clue.' I think many people run in order to find this void. For some, like me, I'm certain that state is achieved by your mind simply blacking out due to

*'It's the most exhilarating
you'll feel as a human inside
its own body'*

overwhelming suffering. For others, it's probably more esoteric. Regardless, I ran much of that day almost entirely oblivious of my surroundings. It did not matter whether I was here, in a remote region of Madagascar, or in New York pounding the same square block of pavement. Inside the void was just myself, the sound of my breath and my shoes on the earth. Perhaps I got too much sun, but that day the lunacy of long-distance athletes such as Ashprihanal Aalto made sense. The difference is that here, on this island, it's more than just running. It's also about the moments gleaned in recovery beneath dried palm fronds, learning a foreign language and laughing like friends while music plays and the light fades behind an emerald bay and there's nobody but you and your new comrades around.

FROM TOP
Thabang and
Gavin Sacks
were the only SA
athletes this
time round
(hopefully next
year there'll be
more); Marcus
Fong averaged
six minutes/km
and finished a
very respectable
10th.



Thabang crosses the finish line first that day: a red and green banner pegged into the sand on a quiet beach with kite surfers blazing towards the sun in the background and a lone timekeeper with a clipboard clocking him in. He has won the race, his race craft prevailing over the sheer bloody-mindedness of the Malagasy athletes. The next day, a seven-kilometre dash past Pain de Sucre into Antsiranana is a formality, the last stretch accompanied by wheelchair athletes to whom proceeds from this event go. That evening Thabang raises a silver totem, the trophy, as the winner of the inaugural Racing Madagascar. Laurette wins the women's trophy and Gavin, to his surprise, picks up an award for the first veteran, just beating out Luis with an overall time of 23 hours and 26 minutes. Twelve hours behind Thabang.

'I guess it pays to be a part of an inaugural event,' Gavin jokes, 'even I get a prize.' But it's not like he just turned up. He, like everyone else, trained for this. And if the psychologists are to be believed when they say a significant part of the enjoyment of travel is the part where you prepare for it, then for Gavin, the experience begins long before the plane touches down. And sometimes at the end of it is a place so exciting and beautiful, and challenging. A place that's worth getting outside and pounding your own bit of pavement for, wherever in the world that is. 6

PLAN YOUR TRIP ➔

GETTING THERE

I flew return with SA Airlink from Johannesburg to Antananarivo. Flights are from R9 500. From there, Air Madagascar flies to Antsiranana from R3 500 return. There are just five aircraft that service the island so delays and cancellations are frequent. Allow yourself enough time between connections. In fact, give yourself a buffer day on each side of your trip, just to be safe. There are also direct flights from Johannesburg to Nosy Be, further north, with Airlink. From R13 500 return. flyairlink.com, airmadagascar.com

NEED TO KNOW

South Africans can get a visa on arrival. It costs R380. There are working ATMs in some major centres but card facilities are rare. It's best to carry ariary, the local currency. Change your rands into euro before you fly and then convert that into ariary on arrival. The climate is tropical but malaria is rare.

RACING MADAGASCAR

The next edition of Racing Madagascar takes place from 11 - 16 July 2017. The entrance fee is R23 000 per runner and covers all accommodation, meals and transport from Antsiranana to and from the finish line. It does not cover flights. Participants are required to bring all their own gear and necessary extra nutrition. It's a semi self-sufficient race and while your bags are transported and



sustenance is provided at the checkpoints, you are on your own for most of the race. It may not just be for the ultra fast and ultra fit but you do need to train and be in good health. It's still 150 kilometres over six days, you know. racing-madagascar.com

SUPPORTERS PACKAGE

The unique aspect of this race is that there is a full travel itinerary for supporters. Each day is spent with a guide, exploring the highlights of the region before meeting up with the runners every afternoon. It's a great option for those who want to bring their families, partners or friends. It costs from R17 500 pp and includes all meals, accommodation, transfers to and from camps in a 4x4, guides and entrance fees to the national parks. boogieevents-madagascar.com

DO THIS

(All prices below are included in the supporters package). **Explore Tsingy Rouge Park**, an incredible rust-red canyon carved out by the Irodo River. The rock formations look like stalagmites, shaped by wind and water. It is not a national park so there is no entrance fee but a guide is required and costs from R180 per day. evasionsansfrontiere.com **Eat Akoho Gasy** (chicken) in Anivorano. There's a market every Tuesday from 8am until 1pm (though it goes on until much later). From R15 a piece. **Visit Amber Mountain National Park**. It's home to the leaf chameleon (*Brookesia tubercular*), the smallest in the world. The park is only accessible on foot and there are a range of walks from five to 15 kilometres that wind their way past volcanic lakes and

sacred waterfalls. Park entrance is R300 pp and there is a mandatory guide fee of R180 per day. parcs-madagascar.com **Climb French Mountain**, a strategic military position during World War II. It's a fairly strenuous three-hour loop but the views over the bay are spectacular. There is no entrance fee but it's mandatory to go with a guide. From R180 for the entire hike. evasionsansfrontiere.com

STAY HERE

La Terrasse des Voyageurs was the accommodation for the first and last night of the race. Rooms are neat but it's what I like to call an 'either or' hotel. I either had hot water or electricity, but never both. From R200 for two and from R50 pp for breakfast. terrasseduvoyageur-hotel.com

* Prices and conversions correct at time of going to print





The Pyramid of the Sun looms above temples and residential compounds on the Avenue of the Dead, in the ruins of Teotihuacan. **OPPOSITE** Mexico City's Angel of Independence, on the Paseo de la Reforma, with skyscrapers matching her flight.

THE MONSTER YOU WANT TO MEET

*Nicknamed El Monstruo by some, Mexico City is a hazy, crazy slice of chaos.
Or so people like to say. But all you really need to reap its rich
rewards, says Janine Stephen, is a chilled barrio as a base,
some mezcal for courage and a good map*

*More than 21 million
people live in this city*



It seems impossible, but it's true. We're in the middle of mythical Mexico City, sitting under a stone arcade as an organ grinder conjures a spooky tune. Ahead is the Zócalo: a central plaza about 20 times the size of Cape Town's Grand Parade, with the cathedral looming like a volcano at the far end and the soldier-lined National Palace standing to attention at one side. A Mexican flag bigger than a giant's duvet curls to the music. It's still early; the space turns humans into ants (later in the day it's hard to see horizons through the tide of humanity). We're just brushing the crumbs of an excellent *chocolatin* (chocolate pastry) from our lips when a taxi pulls up in front of us. Something about the driver's nose looks familiar. I blink. Never mind familiar – in a city with over 21 million inhabitants, we've just seen the very same driver who picked us up at the airport two days earlier. Mexico City, El Monstruo (The Monster) or just DF (Distrito Federal) suddenly seems that bit cosier.

ABOVE RIGHT Looking towards the Santísima Trinidad church in Emiliano Zapata Street.
BELOW The site of the Aztec El Templo Mayor, on the Zócalo, where the 2400-kilogram Sun Stone was unearthed in 1790.

Forget those aerial pictures of a sea of concrete dwellings. They are there, but DF is also a city of neighbourhoods; barrios radiating idiosyncratic character. Thanks to Google and luck, we'd landed in a corker: Roma Norte (neighbouring Condesa was as good). It's tree-lined, cafe-rich and Bree Street-hip.



On the morning of our arrival, we sat on a bench adorned with a city crest of an eagle and a snake, waiting for the world to wake up. Hipsters ambled past with dogs, beards and steaming coffee. There were ample skateboarders and a bike-share programme (yes: park and ride; such trust). Teeny scalloped Inca doves toddled past dilapidated Art Deco and colonial mansions. Later, seeking out independent art galleries, we





stumbled on a free cello concert in Plaza Rio de Janeiro, music wafting about like the balloons for sale and the egg-yellow swallowtail butterflies among the trees. Bookshops abounded. Bars and delis and bakeries lined the streets; sculptors were carving tree trunks put in public spaces by a caring municipality. El Monstruo? C'mon.

Which is not to detract from the mystery of the place. This strange colonial city squats awkwardly on the past: on the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, a 13th-century beauty built on a lake, threaded with canals (the Aztecs had sustainability down pat). It's possible to look back in time at a site adjacent to the cathedral on the Zócalo, where the Aztecs' El Templo Mayor (Great Temple) appears from the earth. Once, tens of thousands of victims were dispatched here, beating hearts cut out with flint knives in attempts to stave off the annihilation the Aztecs sensed was built-in to existence. The Spaniards placed their grandiose cathedral where they did to cleanse the site of such horrors – but of course the conquistadors were the end of the Aztecs anyway. They drained the lake, built merrily atop it and began sucking fresh water from the aquifers. As a result, the city is sinking – 10 metres



LEFT A Salvador Dali sculpture in the Soumaya Museum. **BELOW** The Metropolitan Cathedral took about 250 years to build, using stone from El Templo Mayor. As a result of subsidence, the cathedral tilts in places.



'A VERMILION FLYCATCHER LANDED ON A ROCK LIKE A SPLASH OF BLOOD'

in 100 years. In the centre, buildings of red volcanic stone dip and list into canyon-like streets.

To get closer to the Aztec brain, we took a series of buses to Teotihuacan, 50 kilometres north-east. There the Avenue of the Dead unfolded like a giant tongue, temples and palaces studding the route like stone teeth. A vermilion flycatcher landed on a rock like a splash of blood. To climb the Pyramid of the Sun's 248 vertiginous steps in the heat of the day is to feel a little crazy; hordes of curio sellers blowing carved whistles that imitate jaguar and quetzal calls add to the madness. Later, standing panting on the

Pyramid of the Moon, thunder growled and spat, sending hundreds of tourists in lollipop-coloured plastic raincoats running for cover. Dead or alive: in Mexico the two are wondrously intertwined. That night I ate *nopal* (cactus) and cheese tortillas and dreamt of jaguars.

Despite the delights of the ancient past, the aim was to scratch around in the present too. In particular, to explore some contemporary art haunts. We'd soaked up some early Diego Rivera murals in the Secretaria de Educacion Publica, all blocky workers and social consciousness. But we decided to skip the ubiquitous worship session at Frida Kahlo's house >



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT A view of Carlos Slim's Soumaya Museum from the Jumex Museum; standing on the steps of the National Palace, a Diego Rivera mural looms up in front of you; decorative clay skulls are made to celebrate Mexico's Day of the Dead.

and instead look for work made this century. A morning rush-hour metro ride disgorged us at Bosque de Chapultepec. It means Grasshopper Hill Forest: Mexicans are democratic about celebrating smaller life forms as well as owls and jaguars. A shady stroll through the city's largest park landed us in the low-slung barrios of Tacubaya and San Miguel Chapultepec, where suburban walls hide multiple galleries. Typically some were closed, some pricey and some misfires (one offered a wishy-washy display of snapped insects and skulls).



'DEAD OR ALIVE: IN MEXICO THE TWO ARE WONDROUSLY INTERTWINED'

The highlight was the elegant Kurimanzutto: an airy, plant-adorned space then filled with taunting, multicultural totem poles created by Dr Lakra. Think of an Olmec head atop a Kewpie doll atop a Buddha. The poles were idols to the flotsam and jetsam of modern culture.

Another day, we resisted the pull of the historic Centro and aimed for Polanco. Here, high-rises and slick apartments stretched skyward. The goal was the Jumex Museum, a legendary collection of Latin American contemporary art housed in a geometrical saw-toothed Lego-ish block, set amid glitzy multinational headquarters. Sadly, we arrived

between exhibitions but next door's Soumaya Museum made up for it. Also architecturally notable, it's named after the wife of the second-richest man in the world, Carlos Slim Helu. It's a floating world crammed with Rodins, Dalis and some 66 000 other pieces collected by Slim from across ages and cultures. Incredibly, it's free.

Our base, Roma Norte, proved full of intriguing galleries itself. The night before, after a couple of glasses of shockingly good tequila *reposado* (rested for two to nine months) and tamales, we'd staggered to an art opening near Tabasco Road. The place was heaving with youngsters in thick-rimmed round glasses



and other cultural signifiers. The proud artist was wearing some kind of sackcloth shift and no shoes, all the better to show off his tattoos. The work was largely ignored. Such are art openings all over the planet.

Inside, bartenders were pouring hefty shots of mezcal, once tequila's rougher, more dangerous sibling, now uber trendy. It's distilled from many varieties of agaves and can range in quality from industrial paint stripper to smoky heaven (the agave hearts are roasted under earth before distillation).

Our plastic cups of spirit rapidly burnt through any vestiges of sobriety. There came a point where I had to deposit the remains in the flower bed and wind home followed by the scream of a sweet-potato vendor's steam whistle.

So: five days in this teeming city and I hadn't seen so much as a wrestling mask or a mariachi band, although we'd spotted Aztec features, little gold limbs as votive offerings and infinite varieties of tortilla. Sure, DF's depths offer bull fights, drug cartels and the odd authentic sombrero. But how wonderful to travel and be submerged in both the ancient past and lip-smackingly modern city life. **E**

PLAN YOUR TRIP ➔

GETTING THERE

Flights to Mexico City from South Africa go via New York or São Paulo in Brazil. I flew via São Paulo for about R16 600 return. travelstart.co.za

WHEN TO GO

If you go for the Day of the Dead (early November), you'll want to be settled in by the end of October. March to May are best-weather months.

NEED TO KNOW

SA passport holders need a tourism visa, which is free. mexico.org.za

If you're transiting (over 12 hours) through a country with yellow fever transmission, a vaccination card may be required – ask your doctor. Street crime varies by area. Locals recommend booking taxis over the phone rather than hailing them (Uber is good). Buses are reasonable, metros cheap and street food a bargain (from R11). You can spend as little as R500 pp sharing daily, including accommodation.

DO THIS

Climb the Pyramid of the Sun. The third-largest ancient pyramid in the world. Look out for the jaguar frescos. Entry is R78 pp with a video permit. visitmexico.com

Browse the Kurimanzutto. It's one of the best art galleries with an excellent bookshop rich in catalogues by Mexican luminaries such as Gabriel



Orozco and Damián Ortega. Free entry. kurimanzutto.com
Stop at the Jumex Museum. Soak up topical Latin American art in a building designed by renowned British architect David Chipperfield. Entry is R71 pp. fundacionjumex.org
Visit the Museo Nacional de Antropología. It's crammed with treasures from the Aztec, Olmec and other earlier societies. Buy candyfloss in Chapultepec Park afterwards and watch Totonac people 'fly' from a 20-metre pole. Entry is R92 pp. mna.inah.gob.mx

STAY HERE

Big and cosy apartment in Roma Norte, on Avenida Álvaro Obregón, was found on Airbnb. Our host referred us to good

galleries, restaurants and bars. It was close to transport links and felt safe to walk around the main streets at night. From R440 for the room per night. airbnb.com/rooms/1142206?sug=50
La Valise Hotel is small and hip – it even has a suite with a bed open to the night sky (not that El Monstruo is known for stars). From R3 928 for two sharing B&B. lavalise.com.mx.
Stella is a 1930s house with a vertical terrace garden, and it's budget-friendly. From R1 290 for two sharing B&B. stellabb.com

EAT HERE

Dulcinea Cocina Urbana is where I had one of the best meals of my life – an artichoke dish with vinaigrette, fresh coriander, chipotle dressings,

dollops of goat's cheese and a vegetable compote containing an enormous dried chilli and corn. Mains from R170. 46 Tabasco, Roma Norte.

Quintonil is number 12 on the 2016 World's 50 Best Restaurants list (its chef Jorge Vallejo was in Cape Town cooking with Luke Dale-Roberts in September.) Fine tasting menu from R980. 55 Newton, Polanco.

Traspatio is a teeny, chilled semi-outdoor joint. A beer and burger is under R115. 150 Calle Colima, Roma Norte.

Mog serves Japanese/Asian food. Queues of tattooed youth wait hungrily for tables. Mains from R90. 40 Avenida Álvaro Obregón, Roma Norte.

*Prices and conversions correct at time of going to print



NATURE ON A PLATE

The best way to enjoy green wines? With a 'foraged feast' of healthy, seasonal and artisanal produce from the same area the grapes are grown in, says Joanne Gibson. We asked three farms to put together their ideal 'table' to match their wines. Photographs by David Ross

JORDAN WINE ESTATE

Duck is one item you won't find on the menu at Jordan. 'Our ducks are our pets,' says owner Gary Jordan, who has been making world-class wines here since 1993. 'But that's not all. They patrol our vineyards, eating all the snails and other pests.'

Located at the head of the Stellenbosch Kloof, along what was once the main thoroughfare between Cape Town and Stellenbosch, the farm has panoramic views of Table Mountain, False Bay and Stellenbosch, and the vines are planted on slopes that face in

every direction – north, west, south and east (no other Stellenbosch wine estate can claim this).

'Unique by nature's design' is how the Jordans describe their farm, which spans 164 hectares, and where 'nature' is the operative word given that over 60 hectares have been set aside for conservation and the enjoyment of visitors taking a 4x4 wine safari (R350 pp) through the estate, spotting wildlife ranging from porcupines and duikers to a family of Cape foxes. The farm is also home to an abundance of Cape dwarf

chameleons. 'A team from National Geographic once came to study them,' says Gary. 'They counted 42 in a minute.'

Appropriately, Chameleon is the name of Jordan's pocket-friendly range of fruit-driven blends, and the proceeds of sales go towards the tuition and research costs of a PhD student to boost chameleon conservation.

At Jordan Restaurant, top chef George Jardine's focus is on locally sourced, seasonal ingredients, including many from the kitchen vegetable and herb garden, as well as wild produce



he forages for on the farm.

At The Bakery next door, chef Honey Nieuwoudt offers more relaxed fare: breakfasts, lunches, platters to share. The deli sells free-range farm eggs, breads baked by Hatley Nyambara, pastries by Simone Afrika, home-made jams and preserves, local cheeses, charcuterie and olive products. Jordan's extra-virgin olive oil is pressed off-site, but Gary's wife Kathy pickles the olives herself. 'Her grandfather came from Greece, so she has olives in her blood.'

Gary, meanwhile, has been interested in beekeeping from an early age, so there are several hives dotted around. He is also chuffed to have propagated capers from a single seed. 'Our wines, our food, our views – it's wonderful to be able to share them with people,' he says.



THE JORDAN TABLE

THE WINES

- Chameleon Sauvignon Blanc Chardonnay 2015
- Chameleon Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2013
- Chameleon Rosé 2015
- Chameleon No Added Sulphur Merlot 2013

The Bakery at Jordan specialises in platters to share, which include the following:

- Dalewood Fromage cheeses – Brie, Camembert and Huguenot
- Jordan olives
- pickled onions, gherkins, caperberries
- beetroot chutney
- Simone's dukkah labneh
- Neil Jewell's cured meats, such as herb-smoked and Spanish-cured pork loin, saucisson sec and various salamis (Italian, Hungarian, Spanish)
- Sourdough bread, ciabatta and seedloaf

FOOD TRAIL

Guests staying over at Jordan can amble along the new **Foraging Trail** with one of the chefs, who will supervise the picking of wild radishes, figs, mustard seeds, capers, olives and mushrooms (porcini and pine rings).

FROM OPPOSITE The feast table at Jordan was set up on the shady deck overlooking the dam, gardens and farmlands in the distance; a selection of The Bakery at Jordan's preserves and pickles, made with produce grown on the estate; a tempting display of Hatley Nyambara's freshly baked breads.

RECREATE THIS TABLE

THE WINE

Jordan is 10km from Stellenbosch. Tasting room open daily; extended hours on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays in summer. 021-881-3441, jordanwines.com

THE FOOD

The Bakery at Jordan's stocks Kathy's olives, Hatley's breads, Simone's preserves, various pickles, chutneys, jams and fresh produce from the farm garden. Open daily until 4pm.

Dalewood Fromage cheesery is open weekdays and Saturdays. Off the R45/ Klappmuts-Simondium road, Paarl. 021-200-2580, dalewood.co.za

Miss Molly's Charcuterie Bar is Neil Jewell's outlet at Môreson Estate. Open daily. Happy Valley Road, Franschhoek. 021-876-4004, breadandwine.co.za

EAT HERE

To enjoy this spread, order the Cheese Platter (R180) and the Mezze Platter (R220) from The Bakery. The Restaurant is open daily for lunch, 12pm – 2pm, and 6.30 – 10.30pm for dinner on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays in season. >

GABRIËLSKLOOF

'Slow down! We insist! It's the only way to enjoy our hearty, honest, soul food prepared with love.' So say Frans and Mariaan Groenewald, who run the restaurant at Gabriëlskloof, a 130-hectare wine farm established by Mpumalanga businessman Bernhard Heyns in 2002.

Bernhard immediately set about replanting existing wheat fields with vines, olive trees and lavender. He also set aside 50 hectares for conservation, clearing all alien vegetation while rehabilitating the indigenous fynbos by scattering seeds collected over a period of time. It was, and remains, model behaviour for a wine farm on the Green Mountain Eco Route, the world's first biodiversity wine route, encompassing Bot River, Elgin Valley, Grabouw and Villiersdorp, all of which fall within the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve.

Against this spectacular natural backdrop, it's no surprise the Groenewalds have a passion for using the freshest local ingredients in good, no-fuss, home-made food. 'We source almost all our produce from neighbouring farms and villages,' says Frans. 'For me, foraging means working with what you get in the area: trout from the Nuwejaars River, beautiful goat's cheese



from Anysbos Farm (which is owned by Bernhard's brother Johan) and exotic mushrooms as well as things like rainbow carrots and baby leeks from Nouvelle Farm near Hermanus.' Describing himself as a French-trained Afrikaner, he says he enjoys bringing classic European and traditional South African fare together, in dishes such as wheat risotto, for example. He also loves pickling vegetables: 'Taking the best produce in its ripest state and preserving it.'

Gabriëlskloof The Blend has five Bordeaux components (Merlot, Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot), made by Kobie Viljoen but blended by Peter-Allen Finlayson, who joined the family – marrying Bernhard's daughter Nicolene – in July 2014, and has gained a following for his Crystallum wines.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT In the cellar, modern equipment complements traditional winemaking methods; in summer, a feast is best enjoyed in the courtyard with its lush lawns and tranquil fish ponds; Gabriëlskloof general manager Barry Anderson surveys the 130-hectare wine, olive and lavender farm; work up an appetite with a horse ride at Klein Paradys in Bot River.

Unlike Frans, who admits he forages mainly in the kitchen, Peter-Allen grew up in nearby Hermanus and has been diving (with a permit) for seafood since childhood. 'Black mussels off the rocks, white mussels in the sand, and even the occasional urchin. Summer is crayfish season, and then there are giant periwinkles or *alikeukel* that have a very similar texture and flavour to abalone, my favourite seafood.'



THE GABRIËLSKLOOF TABLE

THE WINES

- The Blend 2014
- Viognier 2015
- Shiraz 2014
- Rosebud 2016

Chef Frans suggests a meat and cheese platter, and adding various preserves and other local delicacies:

- Italian cured meats, such as coppa, prosciutto and salami
- Klein River cheeses, including the Overberg, Stanford, Van Beulen, Gruberg, Colby and Leyden
- Brown and white bread and ciabatta
- Gabriëlskloof olives
- Pickled beetroot and carrots
- Marinated peppers
- Beetroot and orange chutney
- Biltong and chilli salt
- Makataan (wild melon), green fig and orange preserves
- Curried beans
- Quail eggs
- Exotic mushrooms

MARINATED MARVELS

Chef Frans has introduced a meat line at the deli – marinated steaks and sosaties, plus sausages (developed with Richard Bosman) made with wine instead of vinegar: **pork bangers with Sauvignon Blanc**, for example, and **boerewors with The Blend**.

RECREATE THIS TABLE

THE WINE

Gabriëlskloof is off the N2 just outside Bot River. Wine-tasting on weekdays and Saturdays. 028-284-9865, gabrielskloof.co.za

THE FOOD

Gabriëlskloof Deli stocks breads (baked on site), olives, pickled veggies, marinated peppers, chutney and flavoured salt. Chef Frans's parents make the preserves and curried beans, also available at the deli.

Klein River Farmstead has a cheese boutique on its farm, 7km from Stanford. Open daily except Sundays. The deli-style Picnic Shed is filled with other local produce. 028-341-0693, kleinrivercheese.co.za

The Backyard Farm in Bot River supplies the quail eggs, available at the nearby Dassiesfontein (028-214-1475) or Houw Hoek (028-284-9015) farm stalls, both on the N2.

Anysbos Farm produces goat's cheese and olives. Just down the road from Gabriëlskloof. Call to visit. 082-601-1067

Nouvelle Farm near Hermanus does not sell to the public, but their mushrooms are available at the Woolworths in Hermanus, or see the stockists list on nouvelle.za.net.

EAT HERE

At Gabriëlskloof, order the Meat & Cheese Platter (R175). The restaurant is open until 7pm daily except Tuesdays.

GOOD TO KNOW

Spice Route in Paarl has an outlet selling Richard Bosman's cured meats. Open daily. 083-277-3494, richardbosman.me



EARTHBOUND

'Happy environment, happy soils, happy vineyards, happy grapes, happy wines.' That's how winemaker Heinrich Kulsen sums up the approach at Earthbound. It all begins with the land; land tended naturally for good wines and for the good of generations to follow.


The 975-hectare farm is 25 kilometres from Darling on the Cape West Coast. 'It is very, very beautiful,' says Heinrich, describing the farm's slopes, sea breezes and dryland (unirrigated) bush vines, of which 175 hectares are farmed without the use of pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilisers. 'Farming this way requires pretty hard labour,' he admits.

In addition to being organically certified, Earthbound's wines are also Fairtrade accredited, which means a proportion of all proceeds is returned to and administered by the farm workers.

Although Earthbound has no visitor or restaurant facilities, the brand has found a perfect food partner in Shannon Smuts, the 2012 *MasterChef SA* finalist whose catering business, Pure Good Food, dishes up wholesome and ethically produced meals to working professionals in Cape Town. 'I'm forcing healthy food on busy people. They don't realise my burgers are made with seeds and kale rather than bread crumbs and onions.'

Shannon is also involved in social development as she supports – and sources all her fresh (organic) produce from – the Baphumelele Fountain of Hope Youth Farm in Philippi, Cape Town, which houses orphaned youth aged between 18 and 21. 'I'm teaching them how to utilise literally everything that grows on the farm so they will always have something to eat.'

Earlier this year, Shannon introduced them to edible flowers – nasturtiums, marigolds, violas, dandelions, fuchsias and pansies. 'Most people just use them as a garnish and they're pushed to the side of the plate. I showed the



The table of plenty set up in the food gardens at Baphumelele Fountain of Hope Youth Farm in Philippi; chef-caterer Shannon Smuts (kneeling, with glasses on) and some of the young people who grow the organic produce – standing from left, Keaton Stols, Asavela Gosa, Gia Benatar (Shannon's business partner), Thando Mandyoli, Robin Highbucks and Dumisani Jacobs, with Zintle Mnyengeza and Jasmine Jantjies in front.

Baphumelele kids how to use wilted nasturtiums as a base for eggs, and how to make nasturtium pesto. I also taught them that when herb leaves start becoming bitter, you can still use herb flowers with their more subtle flavours.'

Shannon has formed a 'symbiotic collaboration' with Earthbound, developing a range of recipes to pair with the wines (see box below). 'There's a real synergy between flowers, organic produce and Earthbound's wine,' she says, and urges city slickers to grow more herbs and edible flowers – as Heinrich now does at his home in Paarl – and learn more about foraging.



THE EARTHBOUND TABLE

THE WINES

- Organic Cabernet Sauvignon 2015
- Organic Sauvignon Blanc 2015
- Organic Chenin Blanc 2015
- Organic Pinotage 2014 and 2015

Chef Shannon and the young adults at Baphumelele created a veritable table of plenty comprising:

- a selection of herbed breads – plaited spinach loaf, lavender flatbreads, herb-stuffed round loaf, spring onion oval loaf, rolled parsley bread, nasturtium buns, rosemary flatbreads
- three freshly made pestos: rocket, parsley and nasturtium
- mildly peppery Het Bos Olive Oil
- calamata olives and olive jam from Darling Olives
- Skattie and Pepper Caciotta cheese from Udderly Delicious, and Camphill's sweetmilk cheese
- Spanish-style jamon and cold-smoked chorizo from The Flying Pig
- edible flowers grown at Baphumelele

THE RECIPES

Shannon Smuts' perfect pairings:

- **Green Pea and Lavender Soup** to go with the Sauvignon Blanc.
- **Snoek Terrine with Violet Apricot Jelly** to match the Chenin Blanc.
- **Blackcurrant Panna Cotta with Pansy Jelly** for the Cabernet Sauvignon.

Find the recipes on getaway.co.za

CREATE YOUR TABLE

THE WINE

Earthbound has no visitor facilities, but you can taste and buy the wines at the Darling Wine Shop, 5 Main Street, Darling. Open daily. 022-492-3971, darlingwine.co.za

THE FOOD

The Flying Pig cureSmiths, in addition to charcuterie, stocks artisanal breads and locally made olive products, plus Udderly Delicious cheeses made in the area. Open daily except Sundays. 3 Station Street, Darling. 022-492-3677, flyingpigcured.com

Het Bos olive farm is just outside Darling. Visits by appointment. 022-492-2557

Darling Olives is open weekdays and Saturday mornings. It's 3km from town on the Darling-Yzerfontein road.

022-492-3171, darlingolives.co.za

Beulah Farm Deli stocks Rosemead artisan breads and other goodies. Open Tuesdays to Sundays. R27, Yzerfontein. 083-233-5355, 078-335-0039, find both on Facebook.

Camphill Village has a shop on site, or its products are sold at Darling Wine Shop.

The Camphill market is on the first Sunday of the month. Klein Dassenberg Road (off the N7), Atlantis. 021-571-8600, camphill.org.za

GOOD TO KNOW

Baphumelele sells produce to the public through Harvest of Hope (harvestofhope.org.za). Schaapkraal Road, Philippi, Cape Town. 021-361-8631, find it on Facebook.

Pure Good Food is Shannon Smuts' catering business in Cape Town. 021-461-3818, puregood.co.za



HOLIDAY HAPPY HOUR

R859, eigerequipment.co.za

Transform boring sundowner sessions and create fancy cocktails with the Stanley Adventure Happy Time kit – an all-encompassing compact cocktail shaker set with a removable lemon squeezer to juice and a strainer plus two insulated stainless-steel glasses.

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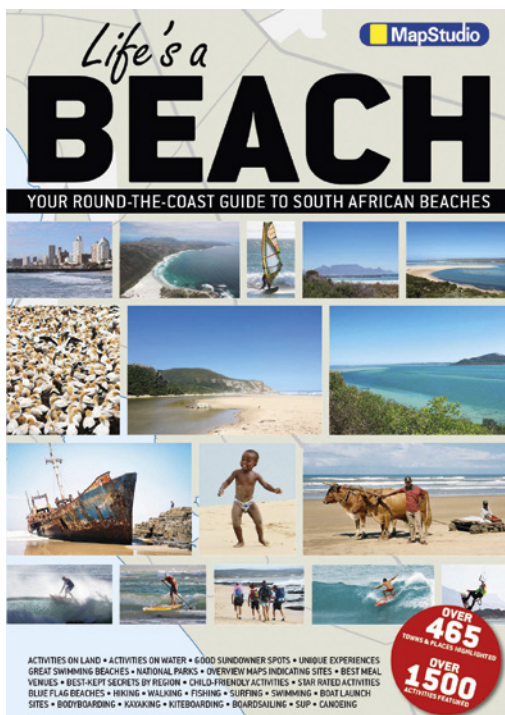
IT'S FINALLY SUMMER AND WE'VE FOUND THE NEWEST ACCESSORIES FOR YOUR NEXT DATE WITH THE SEA.

BY MELANIE VAN ZYL

SEASIDE READ

R220, mapstudio.co.za

MapStudio's *Life's a Beach*, put together by Ann Gadd, is an essential guide for your upcoming coastal escape. It maps the entire South African coastline, with tips on the best sundowner spots and swimming beaches from Alexander Bay to Sodwana. It also has handy tips for good meals nearby and lists Blue Flag beaches plus any recommended water experiences, from fishing to boat-launch sites, in the vicinity.



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SIT OFF THE SAND

R229, kaufmannoutdoor.co.za

Incredibly lightweight (2,2kg) and compact, the Kaufmann Fold-Up Beach Chair is easy to pack and take to the beach for a seat on the shore. It's made from washable textile fabric and takes a maximum load of 120kg.



BLOW ME AWAY

R225, chillwinstan.com

The innovative Chill Winstan Umbrella Anchor is practical and pretty – simply fill the bag with sand and tilt your umbrella into the wind. There's also the Winstan Umbrella Screw, which attaches to an umbrella tip to help drive it into the sand for the best possible stability. It comes in three sizes and costs from R100.

TIP A dry bag is handy for storing wet costumes or taking rubbish home. From R199. capeunionmart.co.za

NAUTICAL KNIFE

R280, awesometools.co.za

The Opinel No. 9 Oyster and Shellfish Knife handle is made from varnished bubinga wood for outstanding moisture resistance. The stainless-steel and chrome blade is durable and anti-corrosive, giving it ocean-going longevity.



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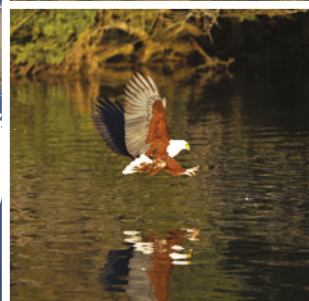


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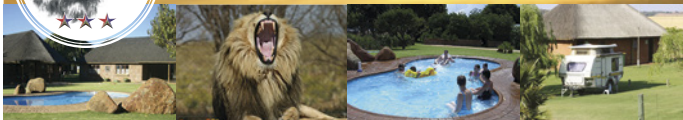
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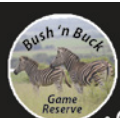
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Nata Lodge is located approximately 10km from Nata on the main Nata-Francistown Road. This is on the main tourist route to the Okavango Delta, Chobe National Park, Victoria Falls Zimbabwe/Zambia and the Caprivi Strip in Namibia.

Nata Lodge offers 22 air-conditioned wooden thatched chalets built on stilts with en-suite bathrooms including, a bath and outdoor shower. There are 10 luxury safari tents with en-suite bathrooms and outdoor showers as well as camping grounds. Activities offered by the lodge include trips to the Makgadikgadi Salt Pan via the Nata Bird Sanctuary which is a community development project supported by Nata Lodge. We also offer quad bike adventures in the surrounding areas.

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SHORT BREAK

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Melanie standing in front of an interactive exhibit at Maropeng, which gives visitors insight into the origin of our species.

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THE CRADLE OF HUMANKIND, WRITES MELANIE VAN ZYL



*'Africa has given the world
humanity - and that is no small thing'
- Professor Phillip Tobias*

ABOVE Replicas of San rock art at The Origins Centre at Wits.

School children crowd around a guide at the Sterkfontein Caves exhibit in the Cradle of Humankind. There's a fizz of excitement at not being stuck in a classroom and they all take turns photographing each other in front of the ape-like reconstructions behind large glass cases. In between pulling peace signs and pouting, the guide manages to grab their attention and about 20 red hard-hatted heads swivel upwards to listen. 'Welcome home,' she says. They all look at her confused. 'This is the Cradle of Humankind. This is where we all come from.'

I've come to the Cradle to get to grips with this statement – and do my utmost to avoid a cheesy read about how I found my roots here. But it's not easy. The Cradle is a Unesco Heritage Site, a protected area north-west of Johannesburg that's home to over 40 per cent of the entire planet's treasury of human ancestor fossils.

To get my head around this I start at the very beginning, before setting a foot there, with a visit to the Origins Centre at

the University of Witwatersrand, where a lot of technical terms and big concepts about our origins are put into perspective at this superb museum. I realise why the Cradle is so important, as the information gathered here challenges the notion that modern culture began in Europe and tells the fascinating story about the emergence of human beings, and more importantly, I think, humanity in Southern Africa. Did you know for example, that the oldest form of art comes from here? It's not sitting in Paris in the Louvre. Africa has the oldest history on Earth, and even if you're not into learning where you come from there's so much more to the Cradle.

My first task is identifying where exactly the Cradle of Humankind is. Spread over 47 000 hectares, I knew it was somewhere between Krugersdorp and Magaliesberg, closer to Joburg than Hekpoort and Skeerpoort, but definitely beyond Lanseria; and then there's Muldersdrift, that's where the Maropeng Boutique



Reasons to go now

Watch the Telkom 947 Cycle Challenge which takes place on 20 November, or stargaze from the Maropeng Hotel rooftop on 12 November.



The Ural sidecar trip explores back roads, stopping along the way for refreshments.



TOP A sign along the cycle tracks in the Cradle that we take to heart. **ABOVE** The Maropeng visitor centre is a fascinating outing for kids and adults alike – you'll come away having learnt something new. **BELOW** Sunset at Roots Restaurant at the Forum Homini Hotel.

Hotel is listed on TripAdvisor. It takes me a Sunday morning to figure out the exact location – basically it's where all the cycling lanes are.

Along with fossils, cycle lanes define the Cradle. I'm a complete cycling novice but I borrow a bike, source some padded shorts and join the weekend multitude that descends on the Kromdraai back roads. I forget my helmet and every passing rider reprimands me. And there are hundreds of them.

Along the way I stop at Bidon Bistro, a favourite haunt for these helmeted hordes – the car park is packed full of vehicles with bike and roof racks. I'm starving and devour poached eggs and pumpkin fritters, washed down with cold, freshly squeezed juice. Set in a garden, this country restaurant is affordable and worth the ride there. Apparently it serves over 400 people on weekends in winter, and my cycling buddies tell me this is nothing compared to the summer months leading up to The Telkom 947 Cycle Challenge >





FROM LEFT Views of the bushveld from the stoep at Cradle Boutique Hotel; one of the breakfasts at Roots Restaurant is a delicious mix of poached egg, pork terrine and broccoli; riding the roads that define the Cradle of Humankind – there are about 45 kilometres of cycling lanes.



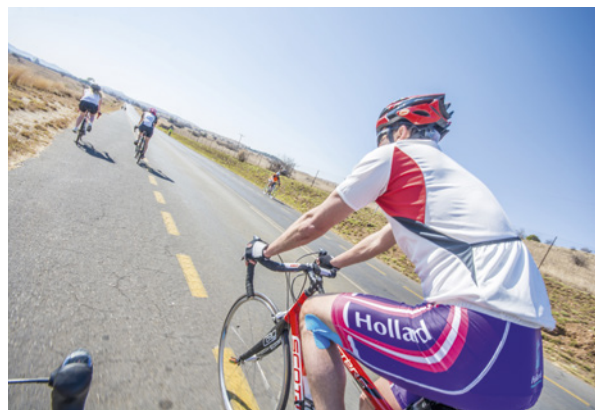
held annually (this year it's on 20 November), when the roads truly belong to cyclists.

I decide along the way that my butt isn't built for this stuff, and so I swap one saddle for another for a ride that's more thrilling (and far less exerting). I'm grinning widely as the machine backfires. 'Where did you find this road?' I shout over the sounds of the engine. Danie is manoeuvring the vintage-style Ural motorbike on a gravel road, passing tractors, cows and farm gates, kicking up a cloud of dust behind us. 'Martie, that guy riding behind us, owns a hot-air balloon company and he checked things out from the sky. He suggested we scope out this area for good back roads.'

Seeing some of the oldest geological forms in the world from a sidecar attached to a Soviet machine is quite something. There's a rug over my knees and my 'chauffeur' is wearing a pair of old-school goggles to protect his eyes from the wind and dust. You can tweak this countryside ride to add stops such as Maropeng or the Sterkfontein Caves to your tour.

I always love a visit to the caves and the small exhibit before the guided tour is one of my firm favourites. When was the last time you went underground? You'll learn that the precursors to modern-day humans were discovered in time capsules buried throughout this cave system – fossil-rich deposits caused by debris falling through holes in the cave ceiling. My guide, who works at the nearby Malapa tour, calls the caves 'bone collectors'. When you look up from inside the Sterkfontein Caves, you can spot various shafts of light and it's easy to imagine how Little Foot lost his footing and fell into history.

Before you leave the caves, you'll find a statue of Dr Robert Broom, the palaeontologist who dug up Mrs Ples. He's now got a very shiny nose and hand



for his efforts. Legend has it that if you rub the doctor's hand, you'll be granted wisdom, and his nose for good fortune. The catch is you can't rub both, or you'll be cursed with terrible luck. I figure with wisdom you make your own luck. We are overwhelmingly lucky to live in the place where humanity began – and I'm going to do my best to remind Gautengers 'that is no small thing'. ⑥

PLAN YOUR TRIP →

GETTING THERE

From Fourways, the easiest way to get to the Cradle of Humankind is along either Malibongwe Drive (R512) or Cedar Road (R552) towards Lanseria. Then follow the R512 (also called the Pelindaba Road) until you hit a traffic circle and the dotted yellow cycle lane lines begin. Turn left onto the R540 and you've hit the birthplace of humanity.

NEED TO KNOW

The Cradle is a cycling mecca on weekends, and you'll often find motorbikes and classic cars cruising the back roads too. With so many cyclists on the road, motorists need to be very alert. If you prefer, drive the N14 and R563 straight to the Maropeng visitor centre, which has fewer cycle lanes so you'll avoid most of the two-wheelers.

DO THIS

Visit The Origins Centre. Explore the history of humans in South Africa from fossils to incredible rock art found throughout the country. The audio guides are detailed and informative, and the exhibitions are well displayed. Adults R80 pp, kids R40. 011-717-4700, origins.org.za
Make your way to Maropeng and tour Sterkfontein Caves.

Maropeng's visitor centre is aimed more at kids but very informative and worth a visit. Exploring the caves requires a bit of climbing, bending and crawling – but nothing compared to what scientists had to do when they were recovering *Homo naledi* fossils – so wear comfy shoes and practical clothing. Buy the combo ticket – it's much cheaper. Adults R190 pp and kids R125 pp. 014-577-9000 maropeng.co.za

Stay for stargazing. You can do this from the rooftop of the Maropeng Hotel. Once a month, there is a talk by local astronomer Vincent Nettmann (the next one is on 12 November 2016), and afterwards you can look at planets and deep-sky



objects through a telescope. R395 pp. 014-577-9100, maropeng.co.za

Take a ride in a Ural sidecar.

This is a great way of seeing the countryside. The Cradle day tour takes about five hours and includes a buffet breakfast. R1 650 per couple. 079-497-2416, uralsidecartours.co.za

Explore The Cradle Nature Reserve.

This is your chance to see your ancestors in situ. The Malapa Fossil Tour starts with a game drive in the private reserve (home to giraffe, wildebeest, blesbok and more), then explores the Gladysvale Cave and the active Malapa fossil dig, which is currently being processed by Lee Berger (the palaeoanthropologist on this year's *Time* magazine list of The 100 Most Influential People, and the name behind *Homo naledi*). R1 985 pp. 087-353-3910, thecradle.co.za

STAY HERE

Cradle Boutique Hotel has brand new wooden cabin-like units with fresh, chic interiors and a great patio looking out into the reserve. Complimentary herbal teas, gorgeous John Moore prints along with yellow design splashes in cushions and back issues of *National Geographic* add to the rooms.

From R3 130 for two sharing B&B. 087-353-9599, thecradle.co.za
Cradle Valley Guest Lodge

offers a farm-style stay with ducks in the garden and countryish decor that's easy on the eye. There are 12 stylish and tastefully furnished bedrooms, all with patios. You can hear the horses neighing in paddocks nearby. From R650 pp B&B. 079-697-3039, cradlevalley.co.za

Kloofzicht Lodge & Spa is resort-like, with over 50 rooms set on sprawling grounds surrounded by fly-fishing dams and beneath the Zwartkops Mountains. The small reserve is also home to kudu, impala and eland, which you can see on the nature trails. From R1 410 pp B&B. 086-114-8866, kloofzicht.co.za

Forum Homini Hotel is designed to replicate the caves that humankind emerged from – but in far superior style. The eco-friendly grass-covered rooms have colourful interiors, double showers, cosy fireplaces and stalactite-like lights hanging from the ceiling. However, this getaway is very much about the food (see Eat Here, right). From R4 000 for two sharing DB&B. 011-668-7000, forumhomini.com

EAT HERE

Roots Restaurant is based at the Forum Homini Hotel and is an unusual dining experience. Expect concoctions such as duck with vanilla and cauliflower, pickled beetroot confit, duck cannelloni, hibiscus flower macarons and mushroom sponge – all on one plate! To round it off, I highly recommend the wine pairing. From R320 pp for a six-course meal; from R95 pp for wine-teaser pairings. 011-668-7000, forumhomini.com

The Cradle Boutique Hotel Restaurant has the best view in the area. The deck over-looks bushveld, and an excellent breakfast, lunch and dinner are served. Book a table before you go, as it gets popular in summer. 087-353-9599, thecradle.co.za

Bidon Bistro is one of the newest offerings in the Cradle and feeds gangs of cyclists over the weekend wanting coffee and brekkie after a good ride. Try its freshly squeezed juice and interesting breakfast options such as blackberry ginger parfait (R45) and breakfast pizza (R65). It's a great value-for-money menu. 076-011-2612, bidonbistro.co.za

* Prices correct at time of going to print

WHERE NEXT?

A DESTINATION TO INSPIRE YOU IN DECEMBER'S GETAWAY

1829 metres...

...is how far *Getaway's* Welcome Lishivha fell from the heavens before his parachute opened on his first-ever skydive – and he made sure he grinned the whole way down. 'Before getting into the plane,' said Welcome, 'I called my best friend to reassure him of my love if I died from this jump. He told me to just enjoy it and smile throughout so the pictures looked good!' The tandem jump with Mother City SkyDiving launches at 3353 metres above sea level over a patchwork of farmland about an hour out of Cape Town, and provides views of the Cederberg mountains, Table Mountain, Robben Island and Cape Point. The free fall in the beginning was his favourite part, said Welcome, with the air rushing past his face and his cheeks doing their own sort of parachuting. In our December issue, we feature a bucket list of five adventures under R5000 – including this one – to help you live fearlessly ahead of the new year.



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