

TOP AFRICAN SAFARIS

The last decade has seen tremendous growth in luxury accommodations throughout sub-Saharan Africa. That, combined with unique, tailor-made adventure options by top operators, makes an African safari perhaps the most indulgent trip for world explorers today. Whether you want to see Africa by villa or private jet, get to know its tribal people, head out on a fishing adventure or rescue the continent's endangered animals, this compilation of ultimate Africa itineraries consolidates the very best accommodations, excursions and operators.

BY SCOTT GOETZ

GREAT WILDEBEEST MIGRATION /
THE SERENGETI

THE DESTINATION | Just north of the Serengeti's western corridor lies **Grumeti Reserves**, passion project of billionaire Paul Tudor Jones whose vision is to safeguard the existence of The Great Migration. By buying up a series of hunting concessions, the investor reinstated over 350,000 acres of land lost to the animals when the **Serengeti National Park** borders were created. Since the reserve's inception ten years ago, animals have returned in droves.

THE SAFARI | This safari by **Ker & Downey** combines the best in private African accommodation with a dream list of safari excursions during the animal kingdom's greatest spectacle, the annual wildebeest migration. Start with a private charter from Arusha to Grumeti Reserves, where you'll spend two nights in the new **Serengeti House**, a private stand-alone lodge close to Sasakwa Lodge. After spa treatments and a gentle horseback safari on the plains, a short plane transfer delivers guests to their private Land Rover for a breathtaking day amidst the migration along the **Mara River**. Return to Grumeti in the afternoon and spend three nights in **Explore's** mobile tents, getting even closer to nature while enjoying 21st-century comfort camping, Singita-style. End the safari with four nights at contemporary lodge **Faru Faru**, where highlights include bushwalks and a balloon charter over the plains.

TOP LODGES | Be one of the first to stay at **Singita Serengeti House**, opening June 15 on the lower slopes of Sasakwa Hill, with two spacious suites in the main house and two garden suites, all with outdoor showers and terraces. Award-winning design firm Cécile & Boyd's went with a minimalistic chic vibe and high "green" standards. Enjoy a large dining and lounging area, 82-foot swimming pool and private tennis court (\$7,500 a night for up to four guests; meals, drinks and activities included; www.singita.com).

Launched in June 2011, **Singita Explore Mobile Tented Camp** transports guests to the essence of safari with their ingeniously designed mobile camp. While nodding to tents of yesteryear, these en-suite canvas design wonders mix modern camping inventions with sophistication. The camp is booked on an exclusive-use basis for two to 12 guests, and comes complete with a private game vehicle, equestrian guide, camp host, chef and camp staff (from \$925 per adult and \$462 per child per night, all-inclusive; www.singita.com).

Singita Faru Faru Lodge, the most contemporary of Singita Grumeti's accommodations, offers a casual, laid-back atmosphere in a beautiful riverside setting. Book the **Villa Suite** for four, with two en-suite bedrooms and outdoor showers. Exclusive to its guests, the villa's lounge, dining area and pool are built low on the Grumeti River, offering elevated viewing decks over the watering hole. Like the lodge's design style, meals are fresh, inspired and sinfully intoxicating (from \$3,672 a night for up to four guests; www.singita.com).

TOP GUIDE | Lee Bennett, the head guide at Grumeti Reserves

STANDOUT INCLUSIONS | Migration excursions along the Mara River, hot air ballooning over the plains, luxury mobile camping amidst migration, horseback safaris, trips to local villages and Singita's school, private Land Rover, gastronomic three-course meals in surprise locations, private charter from Arusha to the reserve

GIVE BACK | The **Grumeti Community and Wildlife Conservation Fund** supports anti-poaching units, a rhino relocation program, schools and community businesses where guests can see their donations at work (www.singita.com).

WHEN TO GO | June to August, when the migration moves through the property heading north to the Masai Mara

RATE | From \$23,950 for nine nights

CONTACT | Ker & Downey Vice President David Jones, (281) 371-2500; djones@kerdowney.com; www.kerdowney.com

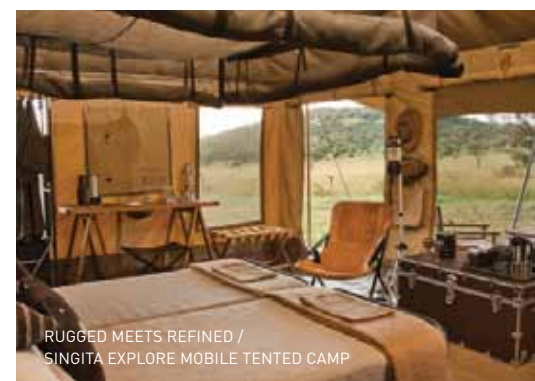
THE SERENGETI MIGRATION



DOWNTIME IN THE BUSH / SINGITA EXPLORE MOBILE TENTED CAMP



FAMILY TIME / SINGITA FARU FARU LODGE



RUGGED MEETS REFINED / SINGITA EXPLORE MOBILE TENTED CAMP



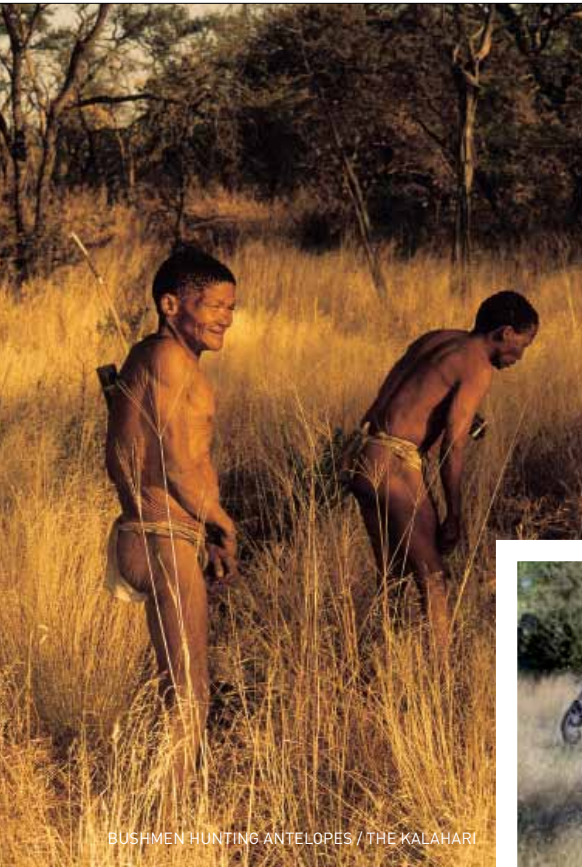
VILLA SUITE / SINGITA FARU FARU LODGE



VILLA SUITE POOL TERRACE / SINGITA FARU FARU LODGE

TOP JOURNEYS

TRIBAL PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA



BUSHMEN HUNTING ANTELOPES / THE KALAHARI



SOULFUL SOLITUDE / NAMIB DESERT



ELEPHANT CHARGE / MOREMI GAME RESERVE



OUTDOOR LIVING / SERRA CAFEMA



MAKGADIKGADI SALT PANS / SAN CAMP

THE DESTINATION | Ker & Downey looked to the bushmen of the Kalahari and the Himba of the Namib Desert for inspiration when creating this safari—our choice for best authentic African safari experience. Conducted by Ralph Bousfield, a fifth generation Botswanan guide whose father helped create the modern-day safari in Botswana's uncharted areas, this trip combines Bousfield's passion for the **Kalahari**, a mobile camp in the **Okavango Delta** and the impossibly remote, surreal **Namib Desert**.

THE SAFARI | Venture out to the **Makgadikgadi Salt Pans**, remnants of the world's largest ever super-lake—now the size of Switzerland—and possibly the origin of man. You'll be astounded by solitude in this flat void, but outings with bushmen, mornings with habituated meerkats, quad bike drives into the pans and sightings of rare brown hyena and armadillo will reveal the rich life that surprisingly thrives here. Transfer in light aircraft to a private mobile camp in the delta's **Moremi Game Reserve** to spend four nights spotting animals and studying their struggles in the circle of life, then move camp to explore the delta by boat. End with a flight to the **Hartmann Valley** where the Kunene River divides Angola with Namibia, spending four days at **Serra Cafema**, where remote rewards include desert walks and Himba village visits.

TOP LODGES | When it opened in July 2011 after a total rebuild, word spread quickly that **San Camp** offered an intimately romantic, fascinatingly remote, yet keenly luxurious experience. Comprising just seven white guest tents (think Persian carpets, four-poster beds and en-suite baths of mahogany and brass), a central mess and separate yoga tent, the camp combines a Bedouin canvas-chic vibe with British military campaign sensibility (from \$1,000 per person per night; www.unchartedafrica.com).

You'll find **Uncharted Africa Safari co.**'s mobile camp no less rarefied. Expect large tents with real beds, flush toilets, down pillows, cotton sheets, Persian rugs and en-suite bathrooms with bucket showers that hark back to days of old. Three-course meals are lantern-lit romantic affairs complete with bone-handled silver cutlery and damask table linens (from \$1,000 per person per night; www.unchartedafrica.com).

Guests are most often wowed by the starkly contrasting dry environs that surround the riverside oasis of **Serra Cafema**, which blends rustic style with luxury elements. Of the eight Meru-style canvas and thatched villas, the intimate **Honeymoon Villa** offers the best views, accommodates families with adjoining units and must be booked well in advance due to high demand. Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen used to spend a week here each year (from \$878 per person per night; www.wilderness-safaris.com).

STANDOUT INCLUSIONS | Private guiding by Ralph Bousfield, quad bike rides, bushman walks, visits to Chapman's Baobab, plane flight over the pans, game drives in Moremi Reserve, bush dinners, boating on the delta, talks on fauna and flora, rare nocturnal wildlife sightings, Himba village visits, walks and drives in the Namib dunes, rafting and fishing on the Kunene River

TOP GUIDE | Ralph Bousfield (Elle Macpherson's choice) is considered one of Africa's best safari guides. He leads safaris at a rate of \$2,550 a day.

GIVE BACK | **Manna From Heaven** is a Botswana-based, Ker & Downey-supported community outreach program that provides love, healing and hope to the poor, sick and terminally ill. The need for food, clothing, cash and medical supplies is immense (www.kerdowney.com/philanthropy).

WHEN TO GO | Between May and October, before the rains come to Botswana

RATE | From \$29,200 per person for ten nights

CONTACT | Ker & Downey Vice President David Jones, (281) 371-2500; djones@kerdowney.com; www.kerdowney.com

THE DESTINATION | Nearly half of Botswana is protected by national parks, private concessions and game reserves, so wildlife thrives, and it's the best place to see game—especially for those seeking the ultimate safari sighting: A kill. By no means a guarantee, this trip puts the odds in your corner by delivering a journey to Botswana's most densely populated wildlife areas.

THE SAFARI | **Explore Inc.** combines Botswana's best areas with three of Africa's top luxury properties. Start in **Selinda Reserve**, renowned for its predators, with a three-night stay at **Zarafa Camp**. Expect game drives to be raucous adventures as you track big cats hunting their prey. Enjoy quieter viewings of elephants and hippos on the **Selinda Spillway** from your canoe, then stay in a private fly camp under the stars. Move next to world-famous **Little Mombo**, whose position on the tip of **Chief's Island** arguably delivers Africa's best predator sightings, including a large pack of rare wild dogs. Explore arranges helicopter tours of the **Okavango Delta** and all-day game drives—guests may end up having their champagne picnic in the vehicle surrounded by lions! End your safari at **Abu Elephant Camp** riding and walking with elephants while becoming one with the herd.

TOP LODGES | Overlooking the vast floodplains of the Zibadianja Lagoon, **Zarafa** is Botswana's most private and beautiful camp, with just four 1,000-square-foot tents, one of which played host to Lucy Liu. Each boasts a spacious bedroom, living room with campaign-style furniture made from recycled hardwood, indoor and outdoor showers, a copper tub and private plunge pool. Telescopes and Canon 40D cameras and lenses are provided in each tent—a useful amenity when elephants, who regularly saunter up to the private decks, shoo away the baboons that play on them (from \$1,240 per person per night, fully inclusive; www.greatplainsconservation.com).

Little Mombo is a private extension of **Mombo Camp** offering exclusive takeover of three tents—think vast living space, four-poster beds and indoor and outdoor showers. All facilities, including a pool, are raised over six feet above the ground, allowing safe viewing of the animals that pass underneath and in front of the camp's verandas (from \$1,700 per person per night; www.wilderness-safaris.com).

Paul Allen spared no expense when he recently bought **Abu Elephant Camp** and rebuilt it from the ground up. Opting for high style and restructuring the way the elephants were handled (taking them off their chains), the camp now offers the world's premier elephant experience and is the best property in the **Wilderness Safaris** collection. Six high-vaulted tents feature teak decks and outdoor copper tubs; colors and textures work in a subtle elephant-inspired design (from \$1,950 per person per night; www.abucamp.com).

STANDOUT INCLUSIONS | Private game vehicles; overnight on the Selinda Canoe Trail; helicopter photo tour over the delta with Helicopter Horizons; all-day game drive with five-star picnics; dugout canoe rides; riding, feeding and sleeping out in a star bed with elephants

TOP GUIDES | Dukes at Zarafa, Sefu at Mombo, Taps at Abu Elephant Camp

GIVE BACK | Zarafa Camp owners created **National Geographic's Big Cat Initiative** to protect Africa's cat population (www.causeanuproar.com); Wilderness Safaris supports a rhino relocation and reintroduction program (www.wildernesstrust.com); adopt an elephant with **Elephants for Africa**, which Abu creator Randall Moore helped start (www.elephantsforafrica.org).

WHEN TO GO | June to October, when dry grass makes it easier to see game

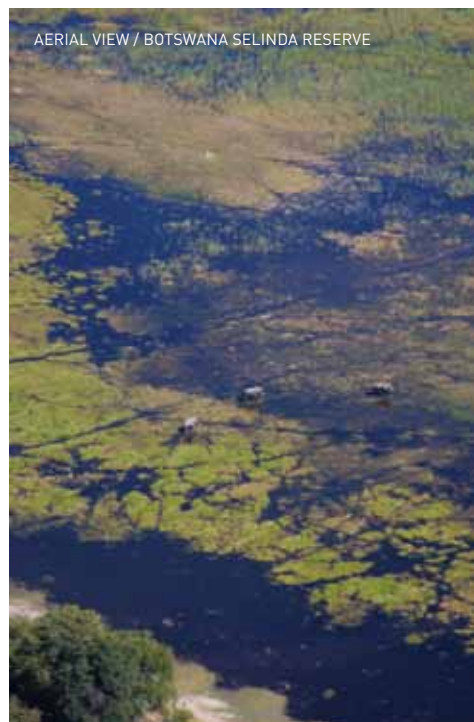
RATE | From \$16,135 per person for eight nights, based on double occupancy

CONTACT | Explore Inc. President Cherri Briggs, (970) 871-0065; cherri@exploreafrika.net; www.exploreafrika.net

BOTSWANA: THE GAME IS ON



ELEPHANT TREKKING / ABU ELEPHANT CAMP



AERIAL VIEW / BOTSWANA SELINDA RESERVE



LIONS AT CLOSE RANGE / BOTSWANA



UNEXPECTED DINNER GUEST / ZARAFI CAMP



NIGHTTIME DELIGHT / LITTLE MOMBO

TOP JOURNEYS

ZIMBABWE IS BACK



HWANGE NATIONAL PARK / WILDERNESS SAFARIS



GAME VIEWING / BUMI HILLS SAFARI LODGE



SPA BLISS / BUMI HILLS SAFARI LODGE



PRIVATE RETREAT / SINGITA PAMUSHANA LODGE



DINNER FOR TWO / SINGITA PAMUSHANA LODGE



MAIN CAMP TENT / LITTLE MAKALOLO



GUEST TENT / LITTLE MAKALOLO

THE DESTINATION | A new shared government and the introduction of the USD has changed the face and mood of Zimbabwe. The country is back on the map and making major changes and renovations so its stunningly diverse parks compete with the best of attractions in neighboring Botswana and Zambia. For a short window of time, prices will be exceptional.

THE SAFARI | Start out at the colonial icon of **Victoria Falls** on the Zimbabwe side, with its view of the **Zambezi River Gorge** that separates the country from Zambia in full glory. Shop for custom jewelry and croc designer wear at **Ndau Collection** (see p. 117), then golf at the Gary Player-designed **Elephant Hills Resort** course, which has crocodiles in the water hazard and warthogs and elephants on the course. Fly to the southern shores of **Lake Kariba** to catch tiger fish and go on game drives that include a walk with rhinos and a trip to a dinosaur fossil bed. Move next to **Hwange National Park** whose elephant and lion population create a playground of conflict, then end in one Africa's best-kept secrets, **Singita Pamushana Lodge** in **Malilangwe Wildlife Reserve**.

TOP LODGES | Book the **Royal Suite** at the 161-room, Edwardian-style **Victoria Falls Hotel**, which hosted Queen Elizabeth's party in 1947 and David Hasselhoff more recently. Be sure to enjoy drinks and high tea on the **Stanley Terrace**, where adventurers in Africa have crossed paths for more than a hundred years (from \$1,200 a night; www.africansunhotels.com).

Perched on a hill overlooking a game-rich shoreline of Lake Kariba, the 20-room **Bumi Hills Safari Lodge** has undergone a total rebuild and boasts an infinity pool, terrace cocktail bar and indoor/outdoor dining room. From your **Premium Room's** spacious balcony, watch elephants take red-clay dirt baths (from \$449 per person a night, meals included; www.bumihills.com).

The game is so fantastic at the waterhole in front of **Little Makalolo** that guests often stay put and watch the show from their room's veranda. Choose the **Honeymoon Tent** for its proximity to the waterhole, outdoor bathtub and unmatched privacy. Sundowners in one of the "hides"—safe enclosures where the game won't notice you—are magical (from \$552 per person per night, meals and activities included; www.wilderness-safaris.com).

For the ultimate indulgence, book the five-bedroom **Private Retreat** at **Pamushana**. This magnificent "lodge within a lodge," perched high on sandstone cliffs, features a master suite, four spacious bedrooms, private swimming pool and breathtaking views over the 130,000-acre Malilangwe Wildlife Reserve (from \$5,785 a night for up to six guests; www.singita.com).

STANDOUT INCLUSIONS | Private guides; sunset cruise at Vic Falls; golf; fishing on Lake Kariba; reading with a traditional medicine man; visit to a croc farm; track rhinos and Zim's enormous tuskers on foot; champagne cruise on Singita's boat, which converts to a romantic sleep out under the stars

TOP GUIDE | Steve Edwards is known as Zimbabwe's top guide. He is available for private hire at an additional cost (www.muangosafaricamp.com).

GIVE BACK | Rhino relocation and water supply projects are two of the many initiatives at Little Makalolo funded by the **Wilderness Wildlife Trust**; Bumi Hills runs an anti-poaching unit and guests who "Adopt a Scout" can go on excursions to see their impact firsthand (conservation@bumihills.co.zw); Singita partners with the **Malilangwe Trust** on various development programs like bringing daily balanced meals to 23,000 school children (www.singita.com).

WHEN TO GO | August to October, when heat causes fish to bite and it's dry season for game viewing

RATE | From \$24,500 per person for 11 nights

CONTACT | Explore Inc. President Cherri Briggs, (970) 871-0065; cherri@exploreafrika.net; www.exploreafrika.net

THE DESTINATION | Zambia is not often chosen as a typical safari destination but this “Land of the Explorers” hides many secrets in a wild terrain that is heaven for the adventure seeker. To discover Zambia’s diversity, **Explore Inc.** has created an active journey into three of the country’s most diverse areas: **Livingstone**, the **Lower Zambezi** and **South Luangwa National Park**.

THE SAFARI | Start in Livingstone with an exclusive-access **Victoria Falls** adventure—above and below the falls. Raft or boogie board the 25 class III to IV rapids of the mighty Zambezi, stopping along the way to catch tiger fish and elusive electric eels. A plane charter continues the adventure to the Lower Zambezi for more fishing and extreme canoeing in hippo- and croc-filled waters across from legendary **Mana Pools**, before setting off to the South Luangwa Valley, where guests walk from camp to camp in a park known for its leopard and lion sightings, and elephants regularly walk through the lodges.

TOP LODGES | With a personal valet and swimming pool, **Tongabezi Lodge’s** king-bedded **Nut House** provides shelter on a stunning river’s edge site with an enclosed suite of glass. Meals are the best on Livingstone Island (from \$695 per person per night, meals included; www.tongabezi.com).

Those traveling with children or groups should book one of the **Chuma Houses** at **Sanctuary Sussi & Chuma** that offer a personal chef, private guide and two en-suite bedrooms on the edge of the Zambezi (from \$2,295 a night, meals included; www.sanctuaryretreats.com).

The **Royal Zambezi Lodge** is the premier spot for Lower Zambezi fishing and offers imaginative spa treatments, fine dining and an inviting bar on the riverbank. Out of the three, book the **Presidential Deluxe Suite** on the property’s farthest upstream side, which attracts elephants and hippos to its private pool and lawn areas on the river’s edge (from \$840 per person per night, meals and activities included; www.royalzambezilodge.com).

Walking safaris with **The Bushcamp Company** integrate freedom away from vehicles, privacy and luxury in their collection of six intimate, newly renovated camps. Stay at **Chindeni** in one of four tented suites with private verandas looking out onto a lagoon in an area rife with leopards, then walk to **Bilimugwe**, where four thatch suites sit amidst a tangle of old mahogany trees (from \$1,995 per person for three nights, meals and activities included; www.bushcampcompany.com).

STANDOUT INCLUSIONS | High tea on private Livingstone Island, swimming in Devil’s Pool on the top edge of Victoria Falls, hiking to the base of the falls, guided fishing, helicopter flip after white-water rafting, dinner on a private island in the Lower Zambezi, private guided bush walks

TOP GUIDES | River experts **Safari Par Excellence** have the greatest safety record on the river and have helped create Explore’s Vic Falls experience: Request Lackson Tembo for his rowing skills; Lower Zambezi: Request Bbakasa and top fishing guide Shadrack Butau; Steve Mvula and Manda Chisanga, South Luangwa’s award-winning resident guide, are top picks at Bushcamp.

GIVE BACK | Visit Tongabezi’s school and sponsor a student and teacher (www.tujatane.com); donate to Explore’s fish farm, just one of the conservation commitments the company oversees; support Bushcamp’s community projects aimed at preserving wildlife by working with the local people.

WHEN TO GO | October, when the falls are low enough so you can swim and hike below them

RATE | From \$9,655 per person for nine nights, based on double occupancy (charters not included)

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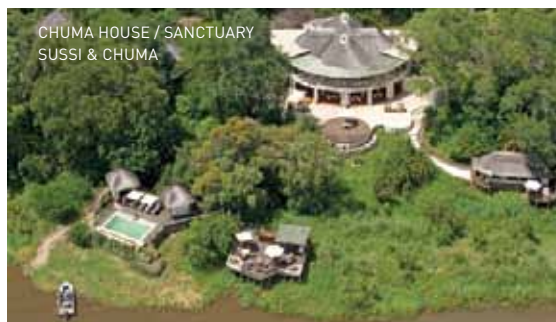
ZAMBIAN EXTREME FISHING



ROMANCE AT DUSK / SANCTUARY
SUSSI & CHUMA



LIONESSES AT PLAY / ZAMBIA



CHUMA HOUSE / SANCTUARY
SUSSI & CHUMA



SPA / ROYAL ZAMBEZI LODGE

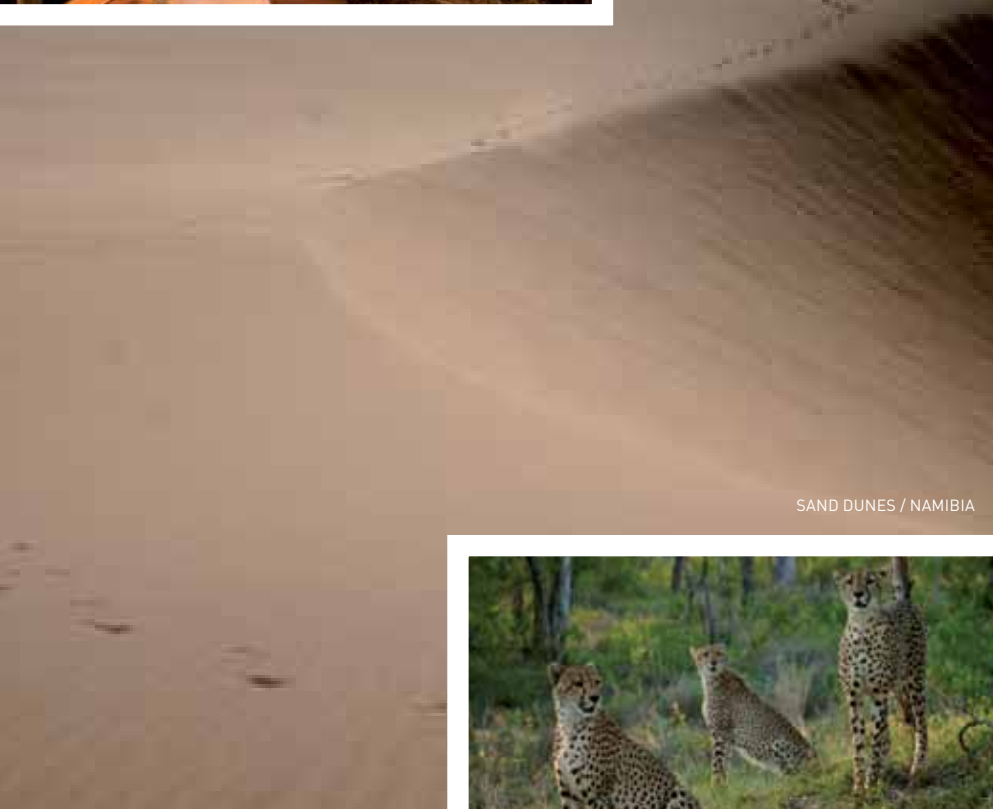


BILIMUGWE / THE BUSHCAMP COMPANY

SOUTHERN AFRICA BY PRIVATE JET



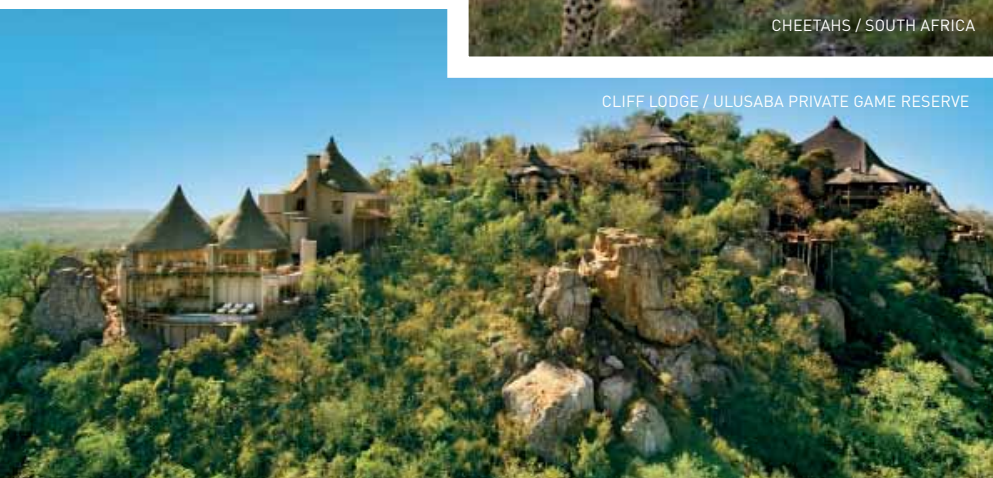
OUTDOOR LIVING / XUDUM LODGE



SAND DUNES / NAMIBIA



CHEETAHS / SOUTH AFRICA



CLIFF LODGE / ULUSABA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE



LUXURY AFLOAT / ZAMBEZI QUEEN

THE DESTINATION | Thanks to **Micato Safaris**, travelers don't have to spend extra days on transfers and unimpressive overnights—often a necessary evil of regional African safaris. Joining forces with **Air Partner**, Micato creates journeys the *Elite Traveler* way, like this Southern Africa expedition by private jet.

THE SAFARI | Arrive in Cape Town and head to **The Boat House** for a private cooking demo and lunch with chef Bruce Robertson. Jet to Namibia to explore the surreal red dunes of **Sossusvlei** in an ATV and soar over forbidden diamond areas and shipwrecks in the sand. Continue to Botswana for game viewing in the **Okavango Delta**, a cooking class at **Xudum Lodge** and an exotic **Chobe River** journey. In Zambia, stay at **Tongabezi** and microflight over **Victoria Falls**. Circle back to South Africa to **Sabi Sand's** leopard and lion country and **Ulusaba Private Game Reserve**. A plane hop to Thornybush unveils **Africa House**, from which you'll helo over **Blyde River Canyon** and go on conservation walks.

TOP LODGES | **Little Kulala's** color palette and spare design were inspired by Dead Vlei, the pan at Sossusvlei's center. Pure linens, cottons and mohair tinted with natural dyes set an organic tone, while creature comforts like AC and plunge pools abound. Of 11 "kulalas," **Room 8** is the farthest from the main area—great for privacy on your rooftop "skybed" (from about \$845 per person per night; www.wilderness-safaris.com).

In Okavango, stay at **Xudum Lodge**, a unique camp eco-themed with recycled materials and found objects. Nine wooden **Private Safari Suites** resemble luxury kids' forts and have rooftop hideouts, private pools and deep soaking tubs (from \$650 per person per night; www.andbeyond.com).

Take a tender up the Chobe River to board the 138-foot eco-friendly luxury houseboat, **Zambezi Queen**. The open-plan lounge/dining room deck has floor-to-ceiling windows and a surprisingly urban vibe. Book one of the four **Master Suites** at the front of the boat, with a king bed, wraparound balcony, rain shower bathroom and amazing game views "in bed" (from \$1,860 per person for three nights, all-inclusive; www.zambeziqueen.com).

Take over **Virgin Limited Edition's** three-bedroom **Cliff Lodge** at **Ulusaba** for a Richard Branson-style private adventure near **Kruger National Park**. Enjoy a private pool, Jacuzzi, spa treatment room, stunning views, private chef and more (from about \$6,900 a night; www.virginlimitededition.com).

Staunch **Royal Malewane** fans include Elton John and Elizabeth Hurley, who regularly return to the 30,000-acre game reserve on the southwest edge of Kruger to book its private villas. **Africa House**, outfitted with bright colors, lush fabrics and *objets d'art*, touts six palatial en-suite bedrooms that open onto private decks (from about \$13,837 a night; www.theroyalportfolio.com).

STANDOUT INCLUSIONS | Sundowners in the sky, dugout canoe rides, helicopter to Tsodilo Hills to see bushman paintings, drumming lesson and session with local tribe, microflight over Vic Falls, Sabie River white-water tubing, helicopter over Blyde River Canyon with champagne breakfast on a cliff's edge, bush walks with Royal Malewane's master tracker Wilson Masiya

TOP GUIDES | Micato will book top specialist guides based on your interests.

GIVE BACK | Royal Malewane is committed to protecting South Africa's rhinos with its new **Tracking Institute** that will train anti-poachers, as well as interested donors, with a revolutionary monitoring system (www.theroyalportfolio.com); for every safari sold, Micato pays a year's school fees for an African child, ensuring the child's education continues with successive safaris.

WHEN TO GO | May to September is ideal for good weather and game viewing.

RATE | From \$36,800 per person for 16 nights

CONTACT | Micato Safaris Director, Bespoke Collection Melissa Hordych, (800) 642-2861; mhordych@micato.com; www.micato.com

THE DESTINATION | Africa's spectacular creatures are under threat, and conservation and anti-poaching efforts are a top priority in the region. **Explore Inc.** can add on to any safari a journey in Kenya, the original home of safari, with **The Safari & Conservation Company**, which offers guests the chance to actively help save Africa's wildlife.

THE SAFARI | Start in Nairobi at **Tribe**, Kenya's most exciting design hotel. From here, a short flight in a small plane will take you north to Kenya's **Laikipia Plateau**, an area of the country where safari is largely on exclusive private reserves or conservancies. Stay at **Borana** private reserve and experience its 35,000 acres on horseback, on foot, from a helicopter or in the back of a custom-made Land Rover. While at Borana, spend a day with the lion conservation team, or help dart and collar an elephant so that conservationists can track and deter it from going into places where its life is at risk. The safari moves on to **Sasaab** for a safari focusing on wildlife, community and spa pampering.

TOP LODGES | **Tribe**, Nairobi's first design hotel, offers chic style and excellent service within an architecturally modern structure that showcases 800 pieces of original local art. Drew Barrymore, Anne Hathaway and Wyclef Jean have all called the **Presidential Suite**—complete with oversized couches, a 60-inch plasma TV, Bose Lifestyle sound system and private balcony—their home in Nairobi. Tribe's owners strive to celebrate Nairobi artists and recently collaborated with **GenArt** to support emerging Kenyan fashion designers, a project that launched with a star-studded fashion show (from \$1,165 a night; www.tribe-hotel.com).

Each of the private cottages at **Borana** has its own veranda to enjoy the views and the animals sauntering by on their way to the waterhole and the dam below the lodge. Borana was one of East Africa's first luxury lodges and still has the characteristics of pioneering design, using material largely collected on the reserve itself (from \$640 per person per night, all-inclusive; www.borana.com).

All nine Swahili-inspired rooms at **Sasaab**, complete with private plunge pools, four-poster beds, Egyptian cotton sheets and powerful showers, deliver grandeur in the bush. The lodge's spa, **SpaSaab**, uses Liz Earle organic products to offer the ultimate bush wind down right on the riverbank, where wildlife sightings and birdsong enhance your treatment (from \$545 per person per night, plus \$120 park and conservation fees; www.sasaab.com or www.thesafaricollection.com).

STANDOUT INCLUSIONS | Horseback riding at Borana, lion conservation excursion, elephant collaring, spa treatments at SpaSaab

TOP GUIDE | Expert conservationist Dr. Max Graham

GIVE BACK | Team up with Max Graham, a PhD from Cambridge and founder of **Space for Giants**, to go out and collar an elephant for conservation. A helicopter collects guests from their lodge for an operation that takes most of the day and will include darting the elephant, taking tests and attaching the collar. This fascinating experience is only open to generous supporters of the cause—at cost, this means a \$10,000 contribution for the collar and \$2,200 an hour for the helicopter time (www.spaceforgiants.org).

WHEN TO GO | Conservation efforts operate year-round, but plan ahead to ensure your trip coincides with Space for Giants' conservation schedule.

RATE | From \$27,000 per person for seven nights, including elephant conservation donation and five hours of helicopter time

CONTACT | Explore Inc. President Cherri Briggs, (970) 871-0065; cherri@exploreafrika.net; www.exploreafrika.net

KENYAN RESEARCH SAFARI



DR. MAX GRAHAM AND HIS TEAM AT WORK / KENYA



PRESIDENTIAL SUITE / TRIBE



SAMBURU / KENYA



ELEPHANTS / KENYA



PRIVATE PLUNGE POOL / SASAAB

SOUTH AFRICA BY PRIVATE VILLA



MOLELO SUITE / MOLORI SAFARI LODGE



ELLERMAN VILLA / ELLERMAN HOUSE

THE DESTINATION | Whether you're in the bush, the winelands or the fashionable neighborhoods of Cape Town, South Africa delivers an intoxicating mix of old world and new, and brims with welcoming, creative people. This unique mix and unmatched warmth is distilled in the country's luxury hotels and private villas. **Ker & Downey** created this private villa itinerary showcasing five of the country's top villas that, through design and destination, embody the spirit of exclusive South African luxury.

THE SAFARI | Start in Johannesburg at the **Saxon Boutique Hotel** with massages in your villa's dedicated spa suite, then indulge in a chef's tasting menu. A charter whisks you to the 185,000-acre **Madikwe Game Reserve** for four nights at **Molori Safari Lodge** to spot Africa's Big Five and many rare species. Set off for the Western Cape and **Grootbos Private Nature Reserve's** flower safari in the *fynbos*—the smallest and most diverse of the world's six floral kingdoms, including a special boat charter with a champagne brunch, whale watching and shark cage diving. Next head to Franschhoek, culinary epicenter of the winelands, where a helicopter picnic and chef's culinary journey at **La Residence** are part of a two-day food safari. Finish at **Ellerman House** in Cape Town for a gondola up **Table Mountain** and a tour of **Robben Island**.

TOP VILLAS | As a former mansion, **Saxon Boutique Hotel, Villas and Spa** played refuge to Nelson Mandela even before Oprah called it home. Now the Black Eyed Peas and Shakira check into its private villas, which opened in 2010. The three stand-alone units feature private elevator entrances direct from a carport, a 24-hour staffed bar, 4,304-square-foot **Villa Platinum Suites** and a host of VIP services. Book **Villas Two** and **Three** for their massage suites (from \$8,400 a night for exclusive use; www.saxon.co.za).

The five-suite **Molori Safari Lodge** offers urban residential luxury that is often absent from the bush, plus a knockout chef. Book the two-bedroom **Molelo Suite**, whose floor-to-ceiling glass walls fold up accordion-style and disappear to connect you to the free-form infinity pool that wraps around the length of the villa's sprawling deck (from about \$8,555 a night; www.molori.co.za).

Located near the coastal town of Hermanus, the six-suite exclusive use **Grootbos Villa** offers impressive views of Walker Bay from its protea-covered hillside. The 10,764-square-foot space is contemporary in design (think walls of glass) and boasts plenty of living space, multiple barbecue areas, top-of-the-line appliances and a pool. Guests have access to the stocked wine cellar and a media room with big screen and projector. Two master suites feature outdoor and indoor showers and a tub with front-row bubble bath views of the

GETTING THERE

South African Airways (SAA) recently expanded its network, connecting more than 40 cities on the continent to its Johannesburg hub. The leading airline features the shortest flight durations from the US to Johannesburg and business class services that deliver flat beds and a host of other five-star Skytrax-rated comforts. It's their sky cellar stocked with top South African vintages that truly exemplifies the bounty of the nation. Each year SAA holds a competition of winemakers whose wines are judged by balance of flavor and intensity to shine at 30,000 feet. To really bring out the flavors of the wines, this year they partnered with South African celebrity chef Reuben Riffel, whose restaurants—Reuben's in Franschhoek and at One&Only Cape Town—are drawing international acclaim.

Contact: VP of Sales, North America Stroebe Bekker, (954) 769-5022; stroebebekker@flysaa.com; www.flysaa.com

In the last year and a half, **Turkish Airlines** redesigned its brand and brought it up to luxury standards, expanded routes including a nonstop flight from LAX to Istanbul and unveiled the new **CIP Lounge Palace** at Istanbul Atatürk Airport. With new flights to Kenya and Tanzania, this airline is a top choice for those flying from the US to East Africa. Enjoy new planes with flatbed seats and delicious cuisine prepared by their Flying Chefs. Book a **Private Suite** in the Lounge Palace during the layover for an airport escape that includes a rain shower with Etro amenities, a twin bed and desk, as well the fine dining offered in the lounge.

Contact: Turkish Airlines New York Office, (212) 261-0470; info@tknyc.com; www.turkishairlines.com

SOUTH AFRICA BY PRIVATE VILLA

fynbos. To top it all off, every room displays pieces from the owner's million-dollar collection of modern art (from about \$6,281 a night; inclusive of private butler, chef and guided activities; www.grootbos.com).

Interior design junkies began placing **La Residence** on their travel bucket list from the time it opened in 2008. Drawn to its courageous interiors and bold color palette, devotees include Elton John, Ivanka Trump, Richard Gere and Adrien Brody. Choose one of five new villas on the vineyard's edge to discover a sumptuousness that encourages guests to drink from crystal glasses, recline on chaises next to claw-foot baths and sleep in rooms rich with silk (from \$1,119 a night; www.laresidence.co.za)

Ellerman House's 11 rooms and suites atop Bantry Bay offer unsurpassed service, privacy, cuisine and comfort. Its star abode, though, is **Ellerman Villa**, a contemporary three-floor, five-bedroom architectural masterpiece featuring an infinity pool, spa with steam room, glass elevator and indoor/outdoor living spaces. Displaying pieces from one of the best private South African art collections and offering access to a 7,000-bottle wine cellar and screening room, this accommodation is the premiere villa in Africa, if not the world (from \$8,835 a night; www.ellerman.co.za).

STANDOUT INCLUSIONS | Private villas; private chefs, guides and luxury transfers; bush dinners; private boat charter in Gansbaai for a crayfish beach barbecue; helicopter picnic and wine tastings; Franschhoek culinary experience; horseback riding; Robben Island cruise; guided visit to Table Mountain

TOP GUIDES | Robin Binckes in Johannesburg, Rudi Venter at Molori, owner Michael Lutzeier at Grootbos, Pat Furno in Cape Town and the winelands

GIVE BACK | La Residence supports the survival of free-ranging cheetahs through **Cheetah Outreach**, which, for donations of \$1,500 or more, will bring an ambassador cheetah for a personal educational encounter on the lawn (www.cheetah.co.za); Ellerman House guests can support local education in disadvantaged areas through **Penreach**, an organization founded by Ellerman's owner (www.penreach.org.za); for each traveler they book to South Africa, Ker & Downey plants one tree to reforest the Milkwood forest through the **Grootbos Foundation's Future Trees** program (www.kerdowney.com/philanthropy).

WHEN TO GO | August to November is whale season, and the bush is dry and great for animal viewing.

RATE | \$55,000 for 12 nights, based on six people traveling together

CONTACT | Ker & Downey Vice President David Jones, (281) 371-2500; djones@kerdowney.com; www.kerdowney.com



SHOPPING SPOTLIGHT: SUPPORT ZIMBABWE'S ARTISTS AND "BRING IT BACK"

Africa is heaven for handicraft shoppers, but for handcrafted wearable art that's both sophisticated and of quality, head to **Ndau Collection** in Victoria Falls. Ndau is a collective of designers who work with antique African trade beads, sterling silver, brass, copper, gemstones and exotic leathers to create unique pieces such as belt buckles of Cape Buffalo horn and recycled antique ivory set in silver, and crocodile skin cuffs recycled from the tails of crocs whose belly skins were sold to the likes of Prada and Louis Vuitton (look for exceptional deals on crocodile purses, wallets and belts dyed in fun pinks, oranges and powder blues). The craft complex houses a host of creative Zimbabweans who keep alive traditional arts. One jeweler, who comes from a long line of witch doctors, invites shoppers to design jewelry with the ancestors by throwing bones to determine the materials for a one-of-a-kind necklace. By purchasing and wearing these conversation pieces, people directly help a country on the mend by bringing awareness that Zimbabwe is back, while putting dollars into the hands of its creative people.

Contact: Co-owners Gail van Jaarsveldt and Christie Halsted, 263-772-369-998; gcvj@mweb.co.za or christie@christiehalsted.com; www.ndaujewelry.com

