

safari

in style

Think Africa and think pith helmets, khaki clothing and gin and tonics under rose coloured sunsets with roaring big cats for company. The African bush never fails to move even the most emotionally hardy souls. The first sight of a lion stalking its prey at dusk, a hippo rising from a waterhole or a rhino charging in dust is never forgotten ►

BY RACHEL-OAKES ASH

Madikwe Lodge



Royal Malewane Pavilion

africa

gets under people's skin and into their hearts and no more so than South Africa, the home to the original Kruger safari park and now host to a plethora of high end luxury game lodges. There's no reason one shouldn't look and feel one's best when watching the vultures feast upon the lion's kill from the safety of one's plush private game vehicle, butler at hand.

Choose from Elton John's personal favourite, **Royal Malewane** (www.royalmalewane.com) where lunch is served overlooking waterholes filled with elephants.

Take in a spa treatment at The Waters African day spa or shower under the stars on your private villa deck complete with personal infinity pool.

Dinner is served on your deck or in theatrical Bedouin tents straight from Lawrence of Arabia. The wildlife isn't too bad either! Thirteen thousand hectares on a private reserve serving up the Big Five and over three hundred species of birds.

Londolozi Game Reserve in the Sabi Sands region features Tree Camp (www.londolozi.co.za) with six villas adorned in Ralph Lauren interiors built into the forest. Or choose the bling of Granite Camp's three villas in exposed



The Royal Malewane Suite

Images: CC Africa

granite rock and floor to ceiling glass for wildlife watching from silver studded king sized beds. Steeped in eighty years of history and founded by wildlife documentary makers, the Varty Family, Londolozi is famous worldwide for it's leopards.

CC Africa (www.ccafrica.com) have a number of super lodges including the intimate **Ngala Luxury Tented camp** which sits on a riverbed that transforms into an open air dining pavilion by flaming torch light. Ngala Private Game Reserve is a private reserve of 14 700 hectares filled deep within the Kruger National Park. ►



Royal Malewane villa bathroom

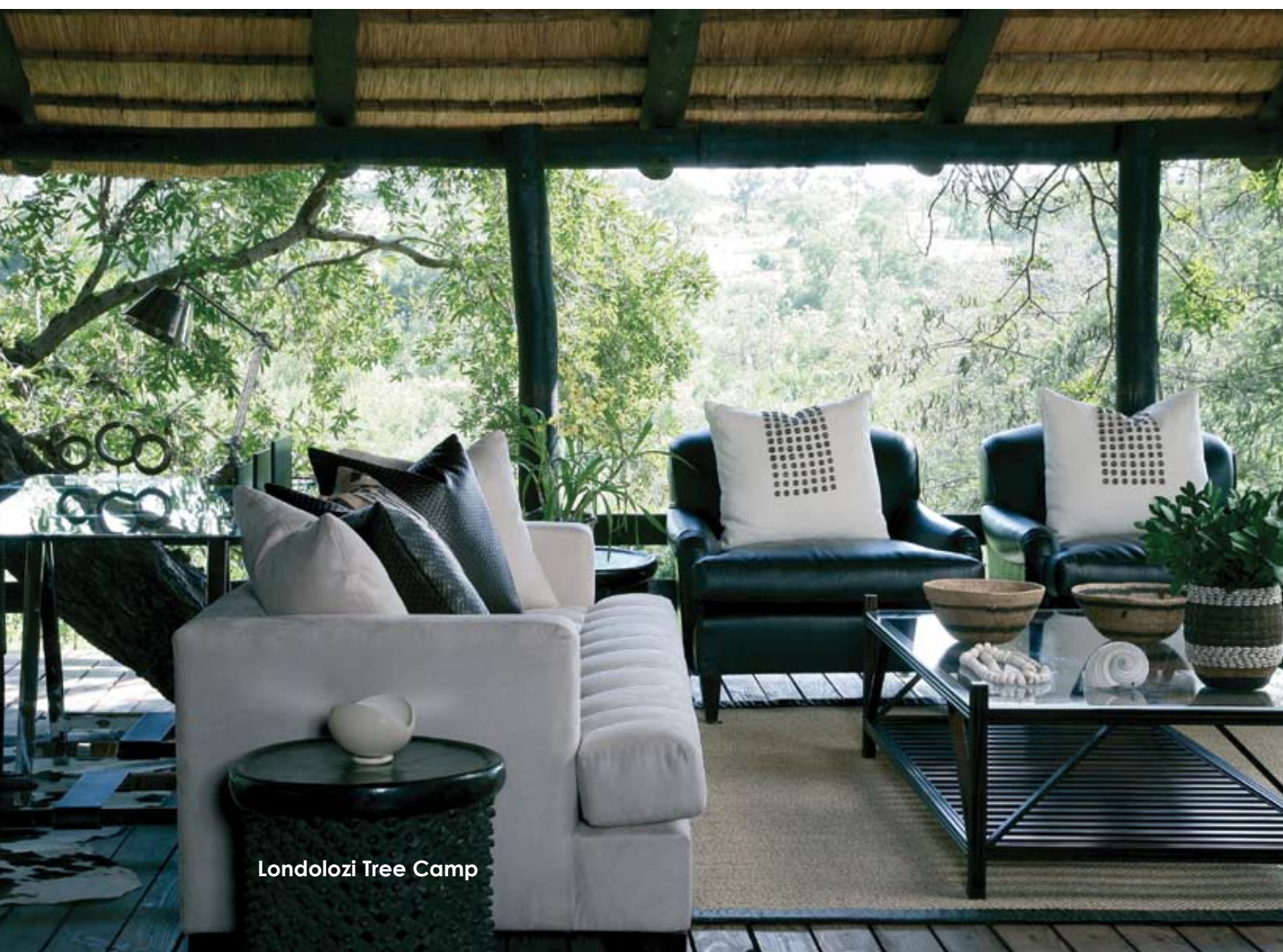


travel**PROFILE**

Royal Malewane Waters Spa



Ngala Luxury Tent



Londolozi Tree Camp



travel**PROFILE**

Madikwe Safari Lodge Boma



Madikwe Safari Lodge Room



Morning Stroll at Royal Malewane

◀ The fantasy Moroccan styled **Madikwe Safari Lodge**, also of CC Africa, is in the north west province on the border of Botswana and home to the endangered African wild dog alongside elephants, hyenas, lions and the like. Expect chilled champagne bottles hanging from silver ice buckets on lantern lit trees by night and pancake pit stops by waterholes of a morning. It's just one of the many personalized surprises that CC Africa specializes in.

When on safari in South Africa it's important to stick to the schedule. Yes, the 5am wake up calls can be ghastly but not when presented with a freshly brewed cup of coffee and homemade chunky cookies. Early starts are de rigueur if you want to catch the animals at their liveliest as like most sane creatures they sleep during the heat of the midday sun.

Morning game drives take about four hours with a mid way stop for hot chocolate and Amarula Cream (local African liqueur) on linen clothed tables set up car side in the African bush. Decadent breakfast buffets conclude the drive back at the lodge where guests compare wildlife sightings. The Big 5 (rhino, elephant, leopard, lion, buffalo) are the top of the sighting status tree. Zebra, giraffes, warthogs, jackals, impala and baboons also score well.

It all happens again as guests gather at 3.30pm for brewed tea and cream cakes before setting off on the 4pm game drive for more leopard spotting. Come dusk you'll be sipping gin and tonics with canapés before a night game drive and a four course meal worthy of any Michelin star restaurant.

Repeat the whole process in the morning.

fact file

Where:

South Africa - South Africa
Tourism www.southafrica.net

How to get there:

Thai Airways International
fly to Johannesburg with
shopovers in Bangkok
www.thaiairways.com.au
1300 651 960

Where to stay in Johannesburg:

The Saxon Boutique Hotel and Spa
has hosted both Nelson Mandela and
Oprah Winfrey and is a member of
the Leading Hotels of the World. Set
amongst landscaped gardens in the
heart of mansion Mecca, Sandton.
www.lhw.com or 1800 222 033