

DIG IN! Braai platters for easy sharing

#205

ZIMBABWE

Bikepacking adventure
from Harare to Vic Falls

BONNIEVALE

Taste cheese and wine
on the banks of the Breede

go!

YOUR JOURNEY
STARTS HERE

APRIL – MAY 2026

Gone exploring!

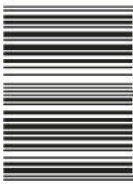
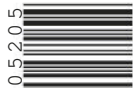
Hide out on the Panorama Route

3 days of
hiking heaven

ISIMANGALISO

The best of
beach and bush

R160 (VAT incl.)
Namibia N\$165



LOOK SHARP! How to choose the right knife
BRAZIL Dance the samba in the streets of Salvador
TABLE MOUNTAIN Climb – and swim – up Disa Gorge

Visit our
NEW exciting
interactive
website!



WHY CHOOSE BETWEEN
ADVENTURE AND COMFORT
WHEN YOU CAN HAVE BOTH!

THE **NEW** MOBI LODGE QUATTRO

Beyond Comparison!
★★★★★



Mobi Lodge



MOBI LODGE CONTINENTAL



MOBI LODGE XL



Scan to view the
rest of the Mobi
Lodge models!

CONTENTS

April – May 2026

go!
#205

PIERRE STEYN

42 iSimangaliso

FEATURES

26 COLUMN: HANCU LOUW

"The engine lost power again, just as it had done on that very first day of our cursed holiday. We limped along, up one steep mountain pass after the next, and arrived at Oxbow Lodge in the dusk, totally frazzled."

30 PANORAMA ROUTE

Six special places to stay along the northern reaches of the Drakensberg escarpment, with views of waterfalls, rivers and gorges.

42 ISIMANGALISO HIKE

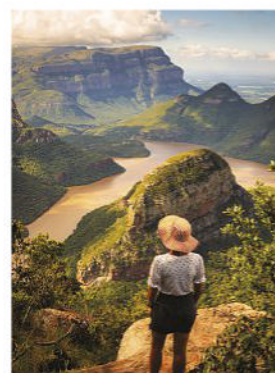
"Nunu stands still, listens and then silently picks a path with those expert bare feet, showing us where to look with our binoculars."

50 ZIMBABWE BY BIKE

"Picture the scene: five soaked, scared, squatting women in a mopane forest; bikes discarded, rain pelting down, adrenaline pumping..."

94 BONNIEVALE

"Friendly faces ride high in farm bakkies and vineyards peek out between the buildings. The Breede River flows past and the Riviersonderend and Langeberg mountains loom in the distance..."



COVER PICTURE
HANCU LOUW

The Three Rondavels viewpoint,
Panorama Route.



SHELLEY CHRISTIANS

72 Finger food



SOPHIA VAN TAAK

86 Take a hike

REGULARS

6 ED'S LETTER

10 LETTERS

16 CHECK THIS

18 UPFRONT

In Brief – 18

Insider Info – 22

Books & Music – 28

58 TAKE YOUR PIC

How planning and patience – and a good dose of luck – can result in a great shot.

64 PORTFOLIO

Ian McNaught Davis has been documenting humans' relationships with water for a decade. Here are some striking shots from his project.

72 FOOD

Easy braai platters that are made for sharing and can be eaten straight off the grid.

78 WHEELS

Get all the kids to the netball match in style in one of these new seven-seaters.

80 GEAR

Knife expert Stephan Kornelius sharpens your knowledge about the best blades for every situation.

86 TAKE A HIKE

Go explore magical Orange Kloof on the back slopes of Table Mountain – pack your swimming gear!

90 STAY HERE

Scolopia Cottage in Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve has new facilities and a river pool within walking distance.

112 WITH MY OWN EYES

Alwyn Viljoen witnessed a moving scene of mourning giraffes in the Kruger Park.

114 KIDS' PAGE

Here's how your family can help the planet on International Earth Day.

116 BIRDS

Why stillness is key to sighting a buff-spotted flufftail, nemesis of many a birder.

118 TRAVEL JOURNAL: SOUTH AMERICA – PART 3

"I soon felt at home in the bustle, and this was mainly due to the people. There was a real African feel in the air. Bahia has a big Afro-Brazilian community – the proud descendants of slaves who gained their freedom centuries ago."

126 CROSSWORD

128 LETTER FROM DUBAI

The Burj Khalifa, a "Dubai brunch" and other wonders in the desert.

130 AFRICA AT ITS BEST

EQUIPMENT

THAT'S READY FOR ADVENTURE

Pack light. Move fast. Stay hydrated. With the right gear, every mountain, canyon, and dusty trail becomes your playground. With clothing that beats the heat, boots that grip on every route, and lightweight equipment that keeps you moving freely, you're ready to take on any adventure.



Outdoor
Warehouse
Services

**OUTDOOR
WAREHOUSE**

for every adventure

SCAN STORE FINDER

For Your Nearest Store Or Call Toll-Free 0800 007 261



OutdoorW



Outdoorwarehouseza





Never underestimate the joy of finding a foam mattress in a two-man tent at the end of a long day's hiking in iSimangaliso Wetland Park (see p 42).

and all her people. I still get excited about the stories in each issue, which I get to read first, long before the magazine gets printed and sold.

When the latest food feature by Johané Neilson lands in my inbox, along with Shelley Christians' photos, I'm often so inspired that I try one of the recipes that very same afternoon. In the case of this issue, it was the pork fillet with plum sauce (p 72) that you wrap in crispy lettuce leaves and eat like a Mexican taco. Delicious!

Cally Silberbauer's bike tour from Harare to Vic Falls with her sister and friends (p 50) inspired me to do even more cycling trips with my daughter, and to take a long road trip through Zimbabwe, which I've planned for the end of May.

It's a long way out still, but thanks to this issue, my wife also knows what to get me for Christmas – the Bugout Ranger folding knife on page 80! Note to self: I must also remember to book a weekend at Scolopia cottage in Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve (p 90) before the magazine hits the shelves, because it will almost certainly be fully booked after that. And I must pay my membership fee for the Cape branch of the Mountain Club of South Africa, because that hike through Orange Kloof on the back slopes of Table Mountain (p 86) is something I really want to do.

Flip, the kids were still at school when we spent a December holiday along the Panorama Route in Mpumalanga (p 30) all those years ago. It's time to point the Jimmy in that direction again, even though it will probably be just the two of us now.

Yup, my calendar is already full, and we haven't even properly started with this year's magazines yet!

Now that's exciting.

Pierre

PIERRE STEYN

PSteyn@media24.com

There are a few assumptions people make when they hear that I work for *go!*

Here's the most common one: "It must be nice to get paid to go on holiday the whole time!" Yes, of course it's nice, but it's still work and if there's no money in the kitty, I can't pay myself a salary – as every self-employed person knows only too well.

Here's another one: "You've probably been everywhere by now! Is there anywhere left to write about?" The answer: No, we haven't been everywhere. This country – and the world – has so much to offer.

Indeed, working for this magazine has cured me of an innate and thick-skinned cynicism, hardened by years of working as a news journalist. The thick skin is still there, but the cynicism has been replaced by an optimism for South Africa, Africa

DON'T MISS OUR NEXT ISSUE!

To subscribe call ☎ 087 353 1300;
e-mail ✉ subs@media24.com.
The June/July magazine will
be on sale at retailers from
22 May 2026.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (WEG & GO): PIERRE STEYN editor@gomag.co.za
 DEPUTY EDITOR: ESMA MARNEWICK
 TRAVEL EDITOR: TOAST COETZER
 FOOD EDITOR: JOHANÉ NELSON
 COPY EDITORS: MARIJCKE DODDS, MARTINETTE LOUW
 CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: JON MINSTER
 JOURNALIST: SOPHIA VAN TAAK
 ART DIRECTOR: LYNNE FRASER
 CARTOGRAPHER: FRANÇOIS HAASBROEK
 WEB EDITOR: DESIREE HARTNEY

PRODUCTION

RETOUCHER: RENE NORTJÉ
 RISK & PRODUCTION MANAGER: JACQUES DU PLOOY

MEDIA ADVERTISING & CONTENT MARKETING

SALES DIRECTOR: BEA VAN DER VYVER bea.vandervyver@media24.com ☎ 011 877 6047
 SALES MANAGER: DANIE NELL danie.nell@media24.com ☎ 082 859 0542

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS

SANETHA MEINTJIES sanetha.meintjies@media24.com ☎ 021 406 2301
 SHARLENE SMITH sharlene.smith@media24.com ☎ 011 263 4847
 OFFICE MANAGER: ANN DU BOIS ann.dubois@media24.com ☎ 011 713 9529

DIVERSE REVENUE

EVENTS DIRECTOR: FRANCOIS MALAN francois.malan@media24.com

STUDIO

HEAD OF STUDIO: LAILA MAJIET
 CREATIVE HEAD: SANDLASETHU-SIPHE YILANI
 EDITOR – SPECIAL PROJECTS: GERDA ENGELBRECHT gerda.engelbrecht@media24.com
 PRODUCTION MANAGER: CHRISTINE SMITH
 SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER: ANDILE NKOSI andile.nkosi@media24.com
 MARKETING MANAGER: SETJHABA MAPHIKE
 PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: NAFIESA HOOSAIN
 DESIGNER – ADVERTISING: ELAINE SCHOEMAN
 TRANSLATOR & ADMINISTRATOR: SANETHA MEINTJIES

SHOP QUERIES: YUMNA TOFEY yumna.tofey@media24.com ☎ 021 406 4552

CIRCULATION

CATEGORY MANAGER: TOMMY CHAPMAN tommy.chapman@onthedot.co.za

PUBLISHING TEAM: MEDIA24 MEDIA

PUBLISHER: EDWINA LYNERS
 GENERAL MANAGER ENGLISH MEDIA: JERUSHA RAATH
 CFO: LUXOLO DYWILI
 CRO: NERISA COETZEE
 CEO: MINETTE FERREIRA

CORPORATE

CEO MEDIA24: RAJ LALBAHADUR
 INTERIM CFO MEDIA24: NELMARIE BEYERS

SUBSCRIPTIONS, RENEWALS AND QUERIES FOR THE PRINTED MAGAZINE:

☎ 087 353 1300 | ☎ 087 353 1287 (WhatsApp only) | ☎ +27 21 065 0000

✉ subs@media24.com | "service" to 31069 (R1,50 per SMS)

FOR THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE: zinio.com magzter.com

WHERE TO FIND US

CONTACT: YUMNA TOFEY yumna.tofey@media24.com ☎ 021 406 4552

CT POSTAL ADDRESS: PO Box 740, Cape Town, 8000

JHB POSTAL ADDRESS: PO Box 785266, Sandton, 2146



Weg/go! is a member
 of the Audit Bureau of
 Circulations of South Africa



MEDIA24

go! is published by Media24, 40 Heerengracht, Cape Town, 8001

☎ 021 406 2121

BEHIND THE SCENES



At the end of 2024, Cally Silberbauer, a digital designer and adventure journalist, and a group of friends bikepacked from Harare to Vic Falls to go and see their favourite band – read her entertaining tale on page 50.

Where does your adventurous streak come from?

Bikes – and getting out in nature – have always been a part of my life. My parents both have travel backgrounds and we've spent many family holidays exploring South Africa. My sister Bianca is my best friend and the perfect adventure buddy. I'm so grateful for the way my family has instilled a curiosity to explore – and for how they've always supported my explorations.

Tell us more about the crew of friends who joined you for this trip.

Magan Hanekom is an accountant, consultant and photographer – she was born in Namibia, grew up in Paarl and is currently one of my housemates in St James, Cape Town.

Jess Meniere is a photographer extraordinaire – she took all the photos in the article. She's also the founder of Bitchy Bites (bitchybites.com), which makes badass biscuits.

Tracy Sanders is a medical doctor, yoga teacher and co-host of the *Correction Dose* – a podcast for Type 1 Diabetics (correctiondose.com). She grew up in Joburg, but luckily for us, she felt the pull of the sea and moved to Muizenberg.

My sister Bianca has a master's degree in animal science and currently works with Panthera (panthera.org), ensuring the conservation of wild cats in different habitats around the world. In 2021, she ran to Namibia in 23 days to raise funds for cheetah conservation.

Give us a quick rundown of your trusted gear.

My bicycle of choice is a Rook Scout (rookcycles.com). This trusty steed has truly been through the most and has never let me down. (Besides the punctures, but that's to be expected.) I have two 25-litre Thule pannier bags (thulestore.co.za) that carry everything I need. I have Pieta Designs bags (bicyclesouth.co.za) up front for my tools and snacks. My tent is a Naturehike Cloud Up 2 Ultralight (naturehike.co.za). I never go anywhere without bike spares, my Jack Black enamel mug, a Spork, insulation tape and cable ties.

What's on your list for the summer of 2026-27?

Ghana! My friend Adam Jacobs is currently cycling around Africa. He'll reach Ghana later this year and I'd love to join him for a small portion of his wild adventure.

SAVANNAH 3 BOW TENT



2.1m x 2.1m x 1.5m
R3 790⁰⁰

SAVANNAH 4 BOW TENT



2.5m x 2.5m x 1.9m
R4 900⁰⁰

SAVANNAH 5 BOW TENT



3.0m x 3.0m x 2.2m
R5 790⁰⁰

SENIOR SAFARI DELUXE BOW TENT

- > 320GSM SAFARI RIPSTOP CANVAS
- > 540GSM HEAVY DUTY PVC GROUND SHEET
- > 8.5MM ELECTROPLATED HIGH TENSILE SPRING-STEEL FRAME
- > INSIDE & OUTSIDE WINDOW CLOSURES
- > HEAT VENT WITH INSIDE CLOSURE



JUNIOR SAFARI DELUXE BOW TENT

3 WINDOWS

2.5m x 2.5m x 1.9m
R6 510⁰⁰

3 WINDOWS
WITH INSIDE & OUTSIDE CLOSURES

SENIOR
3.0m x 3.0m x 2.2m
R8 150⁰⁰

SENIOR GAZEBO



3.0m x 2.8m x 2.3m
R3 410⁰⁰

- > 260GSM SAFARI RIPSTOP CANVAS
- > YELLOW PASSIVATED ELECTROPLATED STEEL FRAME
- > NYLON CORNERS

SNR GAZEBO END WALL SOLID

R720⁰⁰



SNR GAZEBO END WALL WITH DOOR

R830⁰⁰



SNR GAZEBO SIDE WALL SOLID

R800⁰⁰



SNR GAZEBO SIDE WALL, 2 WINDOWS

R1 150⁰⁰



SNR GAZEBO SIDE WALL, DOOR & WINDOW

R1 220⁰⁰



GAZEBO & JNR BOW CONNECTOR

To fit all Tentco's 2.5m x 2.5m bow tents



R1 330⁰⁰

GAZEBO & SNR BOW CONNECTOR

To fit all Tentco's 3.0m x 3.0m bow tents



R1 500⁰⁰

SNR GAZEBO SHADE NET INNER

R3 620⁰⁰



Gazebo and Bow Tent not included

JUMBO GAZEBO END WALL WITH DOOR

R1 050⁰⁰



JUMBO GAZEBO SIDE WALL SOLID

R1 160⁰⁰



JUMBO GAZEBO SIDE WALL, 2 WINDOWS

R1 380⁰⁰



JUMBO GAZEBO SIDE WALL, DOOR & WINDOW



JUMBO GAZEBO & SNR BOW CONNECTOR



COMING IN 2026

JUMBO GAZEBO

- SPECIFICATIONS:**
- > 260GSM SAFARI RIPSTOP CANVAS
 - > YELLOW PASSIVATED ELECTRO-PLATED STEEL FRAME 22MM
 - > HEAVY DUTY REINFORCED NYLON CORNERS



SPACIOUS

4.0m x 2.9m x 2.5m
R4 550⁰⁰

JUNIOR SAHARA



4.5m x 2.9m x 2.65m
R12 510⁰⁰

SAHARA DELUXE



6.0m x 2.9m x 2.65m
R17 340⁰⁰

SAHARA LODGE



8.0m x 2.9m x 2.65m
R23 300⁰⁰

SAHARA GRAND



8.0m x 2.9m x 2.5m
R24 620⁰⁰

ALSO AVAILABLE AT:

NB: PRICES WILL VARY BETWEEN STORES

CAMP CLIMB

Kloppers

OUTDOOR WAREHOUSE

takealot

Agri Land

LeisureWorld

AGRIMARK

VIEW OUR LIST OF AGENTS ON OUR WEBSITE

E-MAIL: info@tentco.co.za

TEL: +27 11 397 6451

PRICES, COLOURS, SPECIFICATIONS & STOCK - E&OE
TRADE ENQUIRIES WELCOME

Follow us on



EZI-UP STRETCHER STANDARD



DELUXE STANDARD STRETCHER



DELUXE LARGE STRETCHER



SINGLE 3D FOLD UP MATTRESS



SINGLE ROLL UP MATTRESS



SINGLE BEDROLL SWAG



3-SHELF DELUXE CUPBOARD



4-SHELF DELUXE CUPBOARD



KITCHEN CABINET DELUXE



STEEL MULTI FUNCTION FOLDING TABLE



COOLER BAG 12L



COOLER BAG 28L



*Contents not included

BIG BOY



SL-2



SLX-2



DC-3



TENTCO BOX BLACK



TENTCO BOX GREY



TENTCO BOX RED



TENTCO BOX ORANGE



DIRECTORS DELUXE



DC EXTREME



CLASSIC



LOUNGER



TENTCO BOX PINK



TENTCO BOX CLEAR



ALSO AVAILABLE AT:
NB: PRICES WILL VARY BETWEEN STORES



VIEW OUR LIST OF AGENTS ON OUR WEBSITE
E-MAIL: info@tentco.co.za
TEL: +27 11 397 6451

PRICES, COLOURS, SPECIFICATIONS & STOCK - E&OE
TRADE ENQUIRIES WELCOME

Follow us on





Where have you been? What have you seen?
Write to ✉ editor@gomag.co.za

COMPILED BY **MARTINETTE LOUW**



**WINNING
LETTER**

▲ A terrifying high five!

A few years ago, we went on an early morning game drive in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. We came across seven young lions just south of Nossob, near Marie se Draai.

The lions were walking down the road and we pulled over to let them pass. They were very playful and one curious young cat came up to our vehicle.

Suddenly, it stepped onto our bakkie's running board, made eye contact and stood upright against the vehicle. It put one paw on the window, like it was giving us a high five. Thank goodness the window was closed! The lion then decided to gnaw on the side mirror, but it soon lost interest and joined its pride again.

The only damage was a small hole on the mirror and a few light scratches – lasting proof of one of our best game-viewing memories!

ESTELLE JORDAAN, Platteklouf Glen



**WRITE TO
US & WIN!**

Estelle wins a Zartek ZA-474 LED spotlight worth R1 899. This rechargeable spotlight delivers an impressive 4 000-lumen beam over a distance of up to 800 m. It has a run time of two to eight hours per charge, depending on which of the four lighting modes you use, and is powered by a large-capacity 6 600 mAh built-in rechargeable battery. The durable rubberised casing is rated IP66 splashproof. A USB mains adaptor charger is included, as well as a detachable red lens for non-invasive game viewing at night. ✉ zartek.co.za

Zartek®



SPEAK TO US

Send your letters to ✉ editor@gomag.co.za – include your name, surname and where you live. Please also include a photo if you have one (at least 2 MB in size). We reserve the right to edit and shorten letters, and use your photos elsewhere in the magazine, on our digital platforms and in our marketing material.



▲ Glutton for punishment

We came upon this scene in August in the Kruger Park. The lilac-breasted roller seemed to have bitten off more than it could chew.

It perched on an anthill and tried again and again to swallow its prey – probably a dragonfly – until it finally disappeared down its throat.

We've been living in Germany for the last six years; it was so much fun to watch this beautiful bird.

KARIN STRYDOM, Weißenhorn, Germany



▲ Pop-up agama

Back in 2019, I did a hike along the Wild Coast from Port Edward to Mbotyi. We didn't follow a specific route and camped along the way.

During a lunch break in Mkambati Nature Reserve, while the other hikers in the group were having a siesta, I walked around looking for photo opportunities. This inquisitive southern rock agama presented itself. After I'd taken a number of pics, it struck this pose.

DEREK DONKIN, Tzaneen



▲ Island style

My wife Helenie and I visited Türkiye in April 2023. We hired a car in Antalya and toured along the Mediterranean to Fethiye. While we were in the coastal town of Kas, we did a boat trip to Kekova Island. Kekova has a sunken city, which is fascinating to see. There are also surrounding islands where you can walk around.

I took this photo at Kekova with my iPhone – the water was so clear it looked like the boat was suspended in the air. The people on the boat were dropping anchor in a small bay where you can swim.

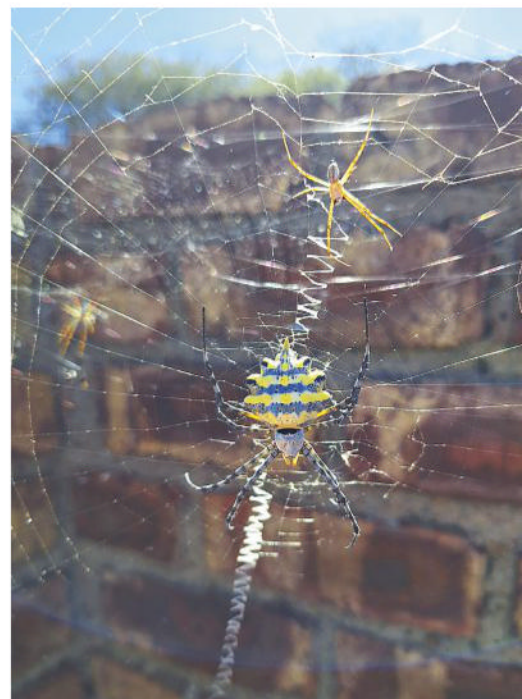
The coast, the people, the excellent roads, the food... Türkiye is a wonderful place to visit!

ANDRÉ VAN DER MERWE, Durbanville

> A romantic meal – for one!

I took this photo of two garden orb web spiders during a weekend getaway on a farm near Christiana. The male is much smaller than the female and stayed close to her... until she caught prey and he scuttled off to avoid being eaten, too!

**SIMKIN GREYLING,
Bloemfontein**





◀ Sociable... owls?

The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is my favourite reserve in the country. When we visited in December 2025, we entered the park at Twee Rivieren as always. After 10 km along the road to Nossob, there's a camel thorn tree with sociable weaver nests next to the road. I always take a photo here to compare year after year.

But last year something unusual caught my eye. White faces peered back at me from the nest – and they weren't weavers... It was three western barn owls!

ALIDA VAN JAARSVELD,
Potchefstroom



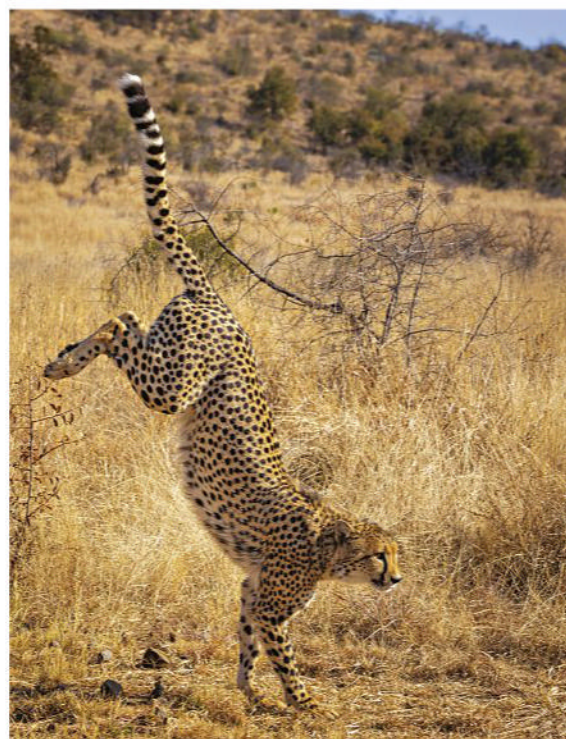
⬆ What goes bump in the night?

I live in an estate in Fisherhaven near Hermanus, surrounded by amazing birdlife from the Bot River Lagoon. Every now and then, I'm lucky to see the Rooisand wild horses, too. I sometimes spot mongooses in my garden, but they're very shy. By the time I try to take a photograph, they've scampered off.

I have two wooden hippo statues in my garden and I noticed the mongooses playing around them. So, I decided to set a camera trap...

Over a period of three months, the camera captured three young mongooses playing on the hippos, plus a genet (inset), caracal and a porcupine!

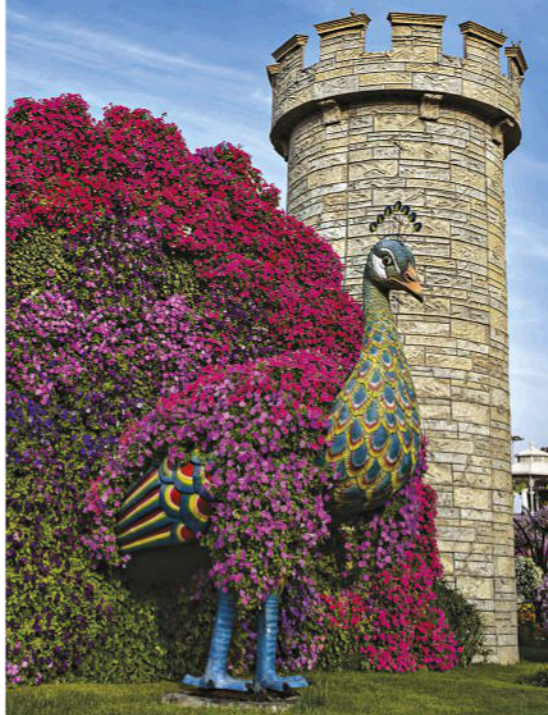
VIKKI BILLINGTON, Hermanus



⬆ Stick the landing

Last year, I followed two male cheetahs in the Pilanesberg Game Reserve as they stalked a small herd of wildebeest, with babies, on Mankwe Way. There was no hunt that morning, but they allowed me to follow them for hundreds of metres, walking through the long dry grass. They both jumped onto a concrete signage structure and back off again. That's when I captured this shot.

CAROLINE ROWBOTTOM, Cape Town



▲ Flower power

I travelled to Dubai in November 2025 for work; I only had a weekend to explore the city. There was too much to see in so little time, but the Miracle Garden stood out.

This flower garden is unparalleled – it's the biggest natural flower garden in the world, created out of nothing in the desert.

Great effort went into the design of the place – there are huge sculptures made from flowers, like this peacock, plus an Emirates aircraft, horses and an elephant.

You're surrounded by spectacle everywhere in the garden – heaven for a photographer!

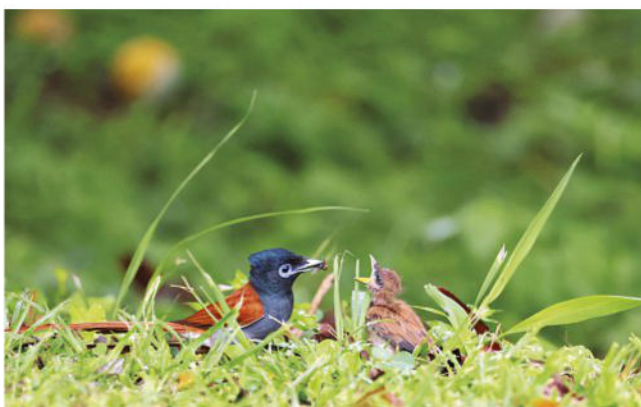
JURIE MAREE, Centurion



▲ (Big) cat nap

Kenya's tree-climbing lions are world famous. A game drive in the Maasai Mara National Reserve exceeded my expectations when I got to photograph this lioness. She clearly has great balance because it looked like she was planning to take a nap high up in the branches!

GERHARDT KOORTS, Randburg



▲ Good parenting

We returned home one Sunday after church to find a male African paradise-flycatcher on our lawn. It flew up and only later did we notice the chick still on the grass.

It had rained pretty hard earlier and at first we weren't sure whether the chick had fallen from its nest or was learning how to fly. The adult male and female took turns to feed their chick. It was wonderful to see how they worked together.

We watched them for hours and later the chick did indeed try to fly.

HANNELIZE LAAS, Mbombela

▼ Surf's up

When I lived in Bloemfontein, I realised there were some interesting interactions going on among the birds in my backyard. The ideal spot to capture the action was under a tree, which was lit by the late afternoon sun. The background was an open grassy space in shadow.

This male southern red bishop landed on the back of a laughing dove while a female southern red bishop looked on – it looked like he was using the dove as a surfboard!

WILLEM KRUGER, Herold's Bay





◀ A last goodbye

In 2018, before old age and ailments finally caught up with me, my wife Esther and I headed to the Kruger Park for one last visit. We were staying at Berg-en-Dal. One morning, we did a leisurely drive to Afsaal picnic site. We spotted a lion lying on the gravel verge next to the road, and we were the only people there. We stopped for about 20 minutes and I took a lot of photos. The sun's rays illuminating the lion's mane enhanced the photos, although I'm no expert in that regard.

The lion yawned several times and treated us to an almighty roar. After the last roar he stood up, stretched and disappeared in the bush. What a wonderful farewell to the Kruger.

TONY JAMES, Johannesburg

Q&A

Every month our experts answer your questions about birds, bugs and beasts. Send your photos and queries to editor@gomag.co.za



◀ ID, please

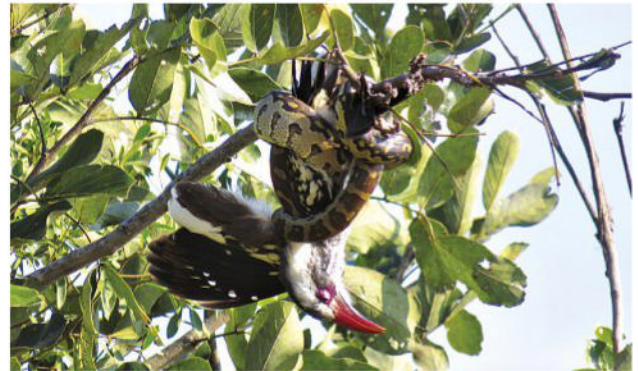
ANET CLAASSEN from Hartenbos writes: My husband Leon recently photographed this bird in our garden. Can you identify it and tell us more about it?

Bird expert LUKAS NIEMAND says: This is a female Cape sugarbird (*Promerops cafer*). It's one of only two sugarbird species found in southern Africa and it's endemic to the fynbos biome. (The other is the Gurney's sugarbird – *Promerops gurneyi* – which inhabits the eastern highlands of the country, including the Drakensberg escarpment.)

It would be easy to confuse this individual with a female sunbird, especially since its relatively long tail and yellow vent are not visible in this photo. The determining characteristic here is the black malar stripe that contrasts with the white stripe under the eye and the cream-coloured throat. The forecrown also shows small characteristic black stripes.

Sugarbirds do have morphological similarities to sunbirds, but are categorized in their own family, called *Promeropidae*. Sunbirds are in the *Nectariniidae* family.

Cape sugarbirds mostly feed on the nectar of sugarbushes and proteas, but will also visit other sources of nectar, like the bottlebrush in the photo, which is indigenous to Australia and an alien species in South Africa.



^ Too sharp to swallow?

SALOME VAN HEERDEN from Gqeberha writes: We were on a game drive in the Savuti region in Botswana when we came across a python that had caught a hornbill. Will the snake be able to swallow and digest that long, sharp bill?

Wildlife expert LD VAN ESSEN says: As standard practice, snakes always swallow prey (especially bigger prey) head-first to make digestion easier. This method lets limbs, horns, fur and feathers fold down against the prey's body, which prevents them from catching in the snake's throat or causing injuries. In the case of this hornbill – and other birds with prominent bills – it will also cause the bill to move straight down the snake's gullet.

Since snakes swallow their prey whole, they need very powerful digestive enzymes; in fact, their enzymes are so strong they can break down bone. Unlike many mammals that only keep their food in their stomach for a few hours to a day, a snake's stomach digests its food for several days or even weeks, depending on the size of their meal.

A two-week-long process of digestion with stomach acid at pH of 1,5 is enough to dissolve most organic matter, except keratin. Keratin is the protein that makes up hair, claws, horn sheaths, feathers and the outer sheath of birds' bills (the rhamphotheca, which surrounds the bony core of the bill) as well as insect exoskeletons. So, to answer your question, the snake won't digest the entire bill and will excrete a part of it.

It does occasionally happen that pythons get injured when eating sharp objects. There are recorded cases where a python swallowed an antelope and the horns have pierced the body. In some cases, the snake will die; in others, the horns will fall out once the antelope's skull has been digested, and the wound will heal.

INVADER VIATOR

The new era of luxury.

#2026

www.invader.co.za



CHECK THIS



A baby elephant tries out its trunk while playing with a stick close to its mother. This photo was taken in the Game Management Area bordering the Lower Zambezi National Park in Zambia.

Our latest Botswana guide also includes accommodation listings for Zambia and Zimbabwe, covering all the major national parks. It's the perfect companion for planning your next big African adventure!

Order yours (R145) from
 media24shop.com

PICTURE TOAST COETZER



IN BRIEF

COMPILED BY VANIA JOOSTE

Hello, Mount David

A tiny reserve – the 8 km² Mount David – was recently declared outside Hermanus. The reserve used to be a farm called Diepgat, where the owner Antony van Hoogstraten spent 17 years reintroducing healthy wetlands and fynbos.

An erica species once thought extinct was recorded here in 2010. And during the Covid-19 lockdown, a thriving breeding population of the rare moonlight mountain toadlet (*Capensibufo selenophos*; pictured) was discovered.

The reserve is not open to the general public, but if you're interested you can contact the owner to arrange a visit. General enquiries can be sent to wccapes2025@capenature.co.za.

Mount David is a great example of land owners working with the government to protect nature. If you want to join the effort, send an e-mail to the above address.



Four Questions

Cape Town artist **Jeanne Hugo** is coocoo about birds. Her website, The Coocoo Club, is a one-stop shop for her meticulously made illustrated products.

1 How did The Coocoo Club come to be? It originated from the simple but deep desire to capture the wonder of South Africa's birdlife – and to make that wonder a part of people's daily lives. We don't just have to admire birds outside, they can live inside on fabrics and paper. It started as a hobby during the Covid-19 lockdown and has grown into a design company blending art and functionality.

2 Why birds? They're nature's messengers. They react so quickly to changes in climate, habitat loss and water quality. When an ecosystem starts to deteriorate, it's often the birds that disappear first. Their presence or absence is characteristic of a place. Birds

are also symbolic: They remind us of freedom, movement and most importantly, the idea that everything in nature is connected.

3 Art and functionality – how does that work? I start the illustration as if it's an artwork, with character and detail. Then I look with a designer's eye: How does the bird move on the tablecloth? Where should the wings rest so it feels in balance aesthetically? How can a pattern be repeated without losing its impact? Items we use every day don't have to be boring; they can tell a story. Every time someone uses a Coocoo Club napkin or cushion, it should feel like they're interacting with a mini artwork.

4 Most articles are mass produced these days. Why have you gone the opposite direction? Slowing down is a form of respect – for nature, which inspires me, for the people who produce locally, and for the client who buys something that will last a long time. We live in an era when things are made cheaply and thrown away quickly, but I want the items we make to gain more meaning over time. By working slowly, I can guarantee quality. I think what I do is important because it reminds people to live slowly and to realise the value of nature. Before we lose it.

Instagram: [@the_coocoo_club](https://www.instagram.com/the_coocoo_club)
Visit [thecoocooclub.com](https://www.thecoocooclub.com) to find out about Jeanne's new Art Safaris.





Green Noise into its third season

Have you listened to CapeNature's podcast, *Green Noise*? For the latest season, host Dan Corder left the studio and recorded his interviews in the Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve.

Learn about land rehabilitation, the green economy, new funding models in conservation and filmmaking in nature reserves. The podcast is available on all major platforms and from capenature.co.za



NIGHT WATCH



Once in a blue moon

Make a note on your calendar now: On 31 May 2026, the night sky will treat you to a blue moon. This interesting astronomical phenomenon occurs only every few years, on average.

There's usually one full moon every calendar month. But when there are two full moons in the same month, the second one is known as a blue moon. In May, the first full moon will take place on the first day of the month, and the blue moon on the last. In South Africa, these full moons are known as the Frost Moon and Fire Moon respectively. (See [cfah.org.za/fullmoon – Ed.](https://cfah.org.za/fullmoon-Ed))

Despite the name, a blue moon has nothing to do with its colour. If you want to see a real blue(ish) moon, there needs to be lots of smoke or dust in the atmosphere, like after a volcanic eruption or widespread veld fires. After a volcanic eruption on the island Krakatoa in 1883, it was reported that the moon had a faint blue tint for nearly two years afterwards!

The expression "once in a blue moon", which describes something rare, has been in use since Shakespeare's time – back then it referred to the third moon of a season (autumn, spring...) The modern astronomical definition comes from a 1964 article in the magazine *Sky and Telescope*, which mistakenly referred to the second full moon in a month as a blue moon. The "error" took hold and is now commonly used.

The reason why a second full moon occurs has to do with the duration of the lunar cycle. One lunar cycle takes 29,5 days on average, and most calendar months are 30 or 31 days. If you do the maths, a blue moon occurs every 2,72 years on average. In extreme cases, there can be two blue moons in a year, like in 2018.

– Willie Koorts



REPTILES



WATERBERG FLAT LIZARD

COURTNEY HUNDERMARK

Mirror, mirror on the wall

It's just after sunrise in Matobo National Park, in the south-west of Zimbabwe. You park your vehicle and climb up the massive granite domes that this park is famous for. From between the nearby boulders, a movement catches your eye, followed by a glimmer in the early morning sunlight: scales! Upon closer inspection, you notice a procession of large, brightly coloured lizards moving from their refuges in the shadows out into the daylight. With bold, royal-blue heads and orange bodies, they seem at odds with the faded landscape, as if they might belong in some faraway rainforest and not the African bushveld. Behold, the flat lizards!

Flat lizards – an assortment of species included in the highly diverse genus, *Platysaurus* – live in open, rocky terrain. They're typically found around granite domes or other large, exposed rock formations, where they bask and hunt in the sunshine. Highly gregarious, they live in big colonies and will share their shade with dassies and elephant shrews.

They occur widely in Africa – you don't have to drive all the way to Zimbabwe to see one! In South Africa, you can observe

them at places like Bourke's Luck Potholes, the Blyde River Canyon viewpoints, or the Lowveld National Botanical Garden.

I recently travelled to Limpopo for a week to look for flat lizards and other reptiles I hadn't seen before.

There are currently 16 recognised flat lizard species and numerous subspecies. Each species sports its own unique mix of colours and patterns. From red to bright green, stripes to spots – they have it all! That is, the males do.

In contrast, the females are smaller and duller in colour. Males compete for the best territories, where access to crevices, females and food is most plentiful. Facing each other, they lift themselves up on their forelimbs and twist their bodies sideways, exposing their colourful bellies and circling until an opponent backs down.

Highly mobile and often showing great acrobatic prowess, they sometimes leap into the air after their prey, which is normally some sort of flying insect. They're especially fond of miggies, which occur in endless swarms in some places (like Augrabies National Park, as many visitors will know).

These lizards belong to the taxonomic family *Cordylidae* (girdled lizards) and are distantly related to the iconic, armoured sungazer and armadillo girdled lizard.

Within this group, *Platysaurus* is somewhat of an evolutionary oddity. All other Cordylids exhibit ovoviviparity – a reproductive strategy where embryos are retained within the mother's body, followed by live birth. Flat lizards exhibit ovipary, with females laying pairs of hard-shelled, elongated eggs under suitable cover, often in communal nesting sites.

By now, you might be wondering if I found anything on my trip. In the Soutpansberg, I saw a Soutpansberg flat lizard (*Platysaurus relictus*) and in the Waterberg, I came across a Waterberg flat lizard (*Platysaurus minor*). I also did a last-minute side quest to the village of Ga-Kobe near the Blouberg massif, in search of an orange-throated flat lizard (*Platysaurus monotropis*) – one of the most colourful species in the genus.

Aside from the lizards, I also saw a horned adder, a python and a Mozambique spitting cobra – a successful outing!

– Courtney Hundermark

Hike Joburg with your girlfriends

A failsafe way to make sure you get out of bed on a Saturday is if you know your friend is waiting for you in her leggings and hiking boots!

Hiking groups for women are growing in popularity across the country – and it's always safer to go in a party. Here are a few groups in Joburg that you can join:

- **Belong Community**
📍 belongcommunity.co.za
- **Curves on Trails** @curves_on_trails on Instagram
- **Hike-A-Nathi** hike_a_nathi on Instagram
- **Hiking with a Purpose**
"hikingwithapurpose" on Facebook



Embrace the outdoors.
Elevate your camping experience
with MEERKAT premium gear.



Kick back in Clarens

Musician, TV presenter and now real estate agent
Johrné van Huyssteen has lived in Clarens since 2022.
We asked him about his hometown highlights.



How did you end up in Clarens?

I was born in Griekwastad and later we lived all over the Free State: Thaba 'Nchu, Welkom, Bloemfontein, Excelsior, Smithfield, Memel, Petrus Steyn, Petrusburg, Reitz. ... I spent the longest stretch of my school years in Reitz.

When I was 14 years old, in 1986, I rode my bicycle from Reitz to Clarens – there wasn't much of a town here in those years.

Alet and I got married in 2000. We lived in Bloem, Joburg, Stellenbosch, Bloem again and then Pretoria. During that time, we bought a house in Clarens as an investment and rented it out on Airbnb with the idea of eventually retiring here. But then, when I was 48, we moved here!

What makes Clarens so attractive?

The crime rate is low, there's no load-shedding or big industries, and we have the cleanest air ever! Before Covid, the average home buyer in Clarens was 55 or older. Now many buyers are younger.

There are more young professionals, but 70% of the houses in town are still rented out. It's amazing how quiet things are from Monday to Friday and then there's a buzz every weekend.

Where do you get coffee?

Liewer Koffi (Market Street) is small and serves delicious cortados and the best carrot cake. **Highland Coffee Roastery** (Market Street West; ☎ highlandcoffeeroastery.co.za) is part of the furniture in Clarens. Owner Chris Pefanis has been here for years. You have to try their *bourekas* – it's a Middle

Clockwise from the top. The leafy town square of Clarens. For good coffee and good meals, visit Die Spens Clarens, Highland Brew, on the road to Golden Gate, and Liewer Koffi in Market Street.

Eastern pastry filled with cheese, meat, spinach and aubergine.

Smith Coffee (Main Street; ☎ smithcoffeeco@gmail.com) is more of a takeaway joint and they also sell the best dark chocolate fudge. **Die Spens Clarens** (Market Street West; ☎ 079 696 7708) has a big deli section and serves quality coffee.

Where can you eat out?

Highland Brew (☎ 072 180 1594) is on a farm on the road to Golden Gate Highlands National Park. They do a truffle beer, made from truffles grown on the farm. Their halloumi and aubergine sandwich is a favourite.

In town, the German restaurant **Roter Hahn** has hundreds of beers to choose from, plus German cuisine straight from heaven (corner of Van Zyl and Roos streets; ☎ 058 256 1888). If you prefer Italian, head to **Bocca di Lupo** – and yes, the owner really is Italian (Market Street; ☎ boccadilupo.co.za).

Clarens Koöperasie Restaurant (Main Street; ☎ 061 525 9602) is a good spot to watch rugby on the big TV, while **Treat Restaurant** (Main Street; ☎ treatrestaurant.co.za) is the fancier option in town with chef Francois Potgieter behind the pots. **Andes Café** (8 km outside Clarens towards Bethlehem; ☎ andesclarens.co.za) also has great food, especially their naan bread jaffle with curried apple-and-pork meatballs.

If you want to self-cater, pop in at **Horeb SaveMor** (Sias Oosthuizen Street) where owner Riempiess Claassen runs a butchery – he sells fresh produce and good meat.

How do you stay fit?

In summer I swim in **Kloof Dam** every second morning – it's in the **Clarens Conservancy** (☎ clarensvillageconservancy.com) that wraps around





town. One length in the dam is about 120 m; I usually swim about 2 km or more. But in winter you'll freeze!

Winter mornings are for running in the mountains. I train with my business partner Wilhelm Pelser; right now we're training for the **Spar Titanic Challenge Trail Run** (21 km). The conservancy has well-marked trails for hikers, runners and cyclists. There's also a wheelchair-friendly route. The waterfall outside town is also worth a visit. It's within walking distance of the dam. For amazing vistas, do the **Brandwag Buttress Trail** (3 km) in Golden Gate.

If you just want to enjoy a sundowner or a cup of coffee at a viewpoint, head to the koppie near town. Park in Berg Street just off the town square – it's only a 17-minute climb.

Tell us about the dinosaurs...

Golden Gate Highlands National Park, about 18 km east of Clarens, has a world-class dinosaur museum called the **Kgodumodumo Dinosaur**

Interpretation Centre. It has changed the dynamics in town and we're all now focussed on dinosaurs for marketing.

Clarens Dinosaur Hunting Expeditions (072 335 8768) offers tours to fossils and tracks in the veld.

My colleague Adelé Loots Stander and I have opened **The Dinosaur Shop** at our office, where we sell toys and fruit juices made by Wilhelm and me – they're called Dino Sappies (dinosappies.co.za).

Any fun festivals and events?

Yes, the year is packed with weekend highlights. The **Clarens Craft Beer Festival** is in February, followed by the **Clarens Arts Festival** on 24–27 April. I also think the **Cape2Clarens Wine Festival** (15–17 October) could become one of the best in the country.

The active crowd will enjoy the **Cannondale Maluti Double 90 cycling challenge** (2 May), the **Subaru Amohela MTB Challenge** (23–24 May) and the **Spar Titanic Challenge Trail Run** (5 September).

From top left: SaveMor, Kloof Dam and Johné's Dino Sappies which you can buy at his office.

Below: Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre in Golden Gate Highlands National Park.



The stylish and functional cargo box,
optimized for ease of use.



Thule Motion 3

Whether you're heading out for a family holiday, a road trip with your friends, or a weekend getaway, the Thule Motion 3 offers the perfect blend of space, efficiency, and style. With its improved aerodynamics and a wider range of sizes, the Thule Motion 3 ensures fuel-efficient travels without compromising on storage capacity. Experience hassle-free exploration with quick-mount and easy-to-use features, complemented by a range of innovative accessories.



reddot winner 2024



Size	M	L	XL	XXL
Volume	400L	450L	500L	600L

Bring your life
thule.com



Lesotho or bust

Get a dream car, go on a dream holiday, right? Wrong. As **Hancu Louw** discovered when his family set off for Lesotho in a blood-red VW Syncro.

ILLUSTRATION **NICOLENE LOUW**

When I was growing up, my dad's dream car was always a VW Syncro Kombi. One afternoon in 2005, his dream came true. He rolled up to our house in George in the coolest thing my 13-year-old eyes had ever seen. With its raised suspension, off-road tyres and imposing bull bar, the blood-red Syncro looked like a grumpy hippo. It was second-hand, but to me it was as good as new.

Soon after the Syncro's arrival, my

folks announced plans for a summer holiday road trip to Lesotho. My brother Rouxbert and I couldn't wait. Two weeks in the Mountain Kingdom!

We hit the road that December, with a bike rack on the towbar groaning under the weight of four bicycles. Over the Outeniqua Pass, across the Little Karoo and towards Bloemfontein – our first overnight stop.

But somewhere between Aberdeen and Graaff-Reinet, my dad gave a sudden sigh. "Something is off," he mumbled.

We pushed through to Bloem, where we unpacked at my ouma's house while

my dad called the after-hours number listed for the local Volkswagen dealer. The news was positive. "They said they can help us," he told us over dinner.

We took the car in. What was meant to be a day's wait soon turned into two, because there was apparently something wrong with the engine valves. Rouxbert and I explored every path in ouma's retirement village on our bicycles, while my parents had tense conversations in the living room.

"Ouboe knows a mechanic in Bethlehem who can help us – we just have to get the car to him," my dad said

To make things worse, a troop of baboons stole almost all our food.

that evening. Ouboet was married to my dad's sister, Tannie Karin.

So, the next morning we said goodbye to Ouma and limped to Bethlehem, 250 km away.

"Don't stress!" Ouboet said when we pulled into his yard. "My guy is a Volkswagen expert – he'll sort you out in no time."

The next morning, with our holiday becoming ever more delayed, we took the Syncro to Ouboet's mechanic. The man stood there in his blue overalls and promised to get us back on the road before Christmas. "Give me today and tomorrow," he said.

We should have been in Lesotho already, but what choice did we have? My dad left the Syncro with the mechanic. On the morning of 23 December, when we were meant to fetch the car, my dad called the mechanic. His face fell as he listened to more bad news. "Apparently the damage is worse than he thought," he told us after he'd hung up.

We couldn't stay with Ouboet and Tannie Karin for much longer because they had their own plans for Christmas. The adults discussed the dilemma while Rouxbert and I played *kleilat* with our cousins.

The plan was this: Ouboet would take us to the campsite at Glen Reenen in Golden Gate Highlands National Park, and we'd wait there until the Syncro was ready.

"You'll like it," my mom said. "You can ride your bike and swim in the river."

"Goodbye, merry Christmas and stay safe!" Ouboet called out as he left. "I'll see you in two or three days!"

On Christmas Eve, we swapped gifts around the campfire and on Christmas Day we went for a walk in the mountains. It wasn't Lesotho, but we could see the Malutis in the distance and my parents were in good spirits – they seemed to have faith in the Syncro's speedy repair.

But as the days went by, my dad's

mood soured. To make things worse, a troop of baboons stole almost all our food. My dad had to do a 40 km round trip to Clarens on his bicycle to buy more supplies.

New Year's Eve was a muted affair. I was nervous to ask about the Kombi. "We'll have to wait and see," was all my dad was willing to say.

Finally, on 3 January, after camping for nearly 10 days at Glen Reenen without a vehicle, we got word that the Syncro was ready to roll. Ouboet came to collect my dad and took him back to Bethlehem to fetch it. There were only two days left of our two-week holiday in Lesotho, but we were not going home without crossing the border!

We entered Lesotho at the Caledonspoort border post. Surprise, surprise – the Syncro stuttered and shuddered up the first hill.

"O, *koek*," my dad said and pulled over.

Let me say now that it's not easy to check on the engine in an older Kombi. It's right at the back of the vehicle, under the boot. First we had to remove the four bikes and the bike rack, then my mom and I started to unpack while my dad crawled underneath to see what was going on.

"It could be the prop shaft," he said from somewhere under the Syncro. Being a permanent 4x4, this mechanical rod transferred torque from the rear wheels, powered by the engine, to the front wheels. My dad showed me how to loosen the bolts and remove the shaft. It was a struggle, but we got it out and stashed it under one of the seats. "We'll put it back if

we need four-wheel drive," he said.

We held our breath, but the Kombi started fine and seemed to be working okay as a 4x2. Maybe the diagnosis was correct? But then the engine lost power again, just as it had done on that very first day of our cursed holiday. We limped along, up one steep mountain pass after the next, and arrived at Oxbow Lodge in the dusk, totally frazzled.

We set off for Sani Pass the next morning, stopping again and again to install and remove the prop shaft as the road conditions required. The rest of the day passed in a haze of mechanical toil. Down the pass, back in South Africa, just outside Underberg, the engine gave another death rattle.

Bikes off, bags out, dad with his head under the boot cover... This time one of the engine belts had snapped and damaged the cooling system. I don't know what he did, but dad managed to get us back on the road. Judging by the look on his face, however, our holiday was over.

"We're going home," he said, studying a map and deciding on the shortest route from KZN to George. It was a thousand-kilometre marathon and we drove through the night. I don't remember much, save for sleepy stops at unfamiliar filling stations where my parents tinkered with the engine by torchlight, topping up fluids with bottles of water.

Back in George, we got the Syncro fixed properly and we drove it for another year or two before my dad sold it to a collector.

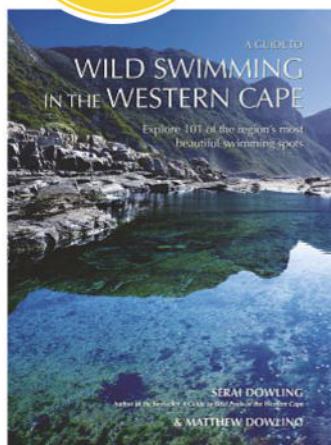
"Those Free State mechanics did more harm than good," he'll mutter to anyone who asks about that holiday.

My mom has more positive memories: "Remember how quickly we could unload that bike rack? And how good you guys got at unbolting the prop shaft?"

But here's the craziest thing: Despite everything that happened, I can't help browsing second-hand car sites, looking for a blood-red Syncro of my own...

BOOKS AND MUSIC

COMPILED BY **MARTINETTE LOUW**



A Guide to Wild Swimming in the Western Cape

by **Serai & Matthew Dowling**,
Rockhopper Books
R475 in bookstores

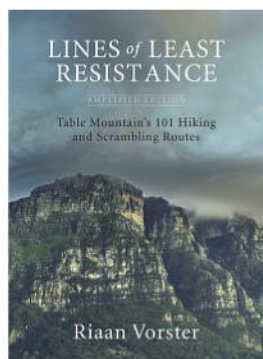
Swap the eye-burning pool at your local gym (and that *omie* lapping you again) for a refreshing dip in a scenic wild spot.

This is the follow-up to *A Guide to Tidal Pools of the Western Cape* (2024), and author Serai Dowling has teamed up with her husband Matthew to point you to 101 amazing swimming spots in the Western Cape – in dams, rivers and along the coast.

Aimed at confident swimmers, Serai and Matthew describe the swimming conditions at each place, the wildlife you might encounter, the distance from Cape Town, and facilities available. They also give notes on the accessibility and safety of the area.

There's a useful page where the best wild swims are grouped according to category: Head to a family-friendly spot like Kraalbaai in the West Coast National Park, a sunrise spot like Santos Beach on the Garden Route, or go properly wild under the Bobbejaanskloof Waterfall in Bain's Kloof.

The rest of the guide is made up of swimming sites arranged by region, anywhere from the Cape Town Metropole to the Cederberg and Karoo. Go make a splash!



Lines of Least Resistance: Amplified Edition

by **Riaan Vorster**, self-published
R445 at Exclusive Books

Have you ever looked at Table Mountain and wondered about the people who first sought routes up its buttresses, gullies and ravines? In this second edition of *Lines of Least Resistance* you can learn more about

those pioneers – the likes of Ken Cameron, George Travers-Jackson and William Henry Crump.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, mountain guide Riaan Vorster set himself the challenge of tackling 101 hiking and scrambling routes on the world-famous massif, following in the footsteps of the early mountaineers. The result is not a guidebook, but a collection of short essays that delve into the origin and history of Table Mountain's various trails.

Originally published in 2022, this updated edition gives you even more historical and personal insight into the routes, and it comes with a vintage A3 map dating from 1908. The route numbers on the map correspond to the chapter numbers in the book. It's a captivating read if you're interested in hiking and mountain climbing.



The Last Lions

by **Don Pinnock & Colin Bell**, **Struik Nature**
R750 in bookstores

Lions have a reputation as powerful apex predators – it's easy to forget that they're actually quite vulnerable in an ever-changing, human-dominated world. Lions are

already locally extinct in 24 African countries, and there are currently only about 24 000 wild lions left in the world.

In *The Last Lions*, authors Don Pinnock and Colin Bell (who also collaborated on *The Last Elephants*, published in 2019) have curated a series of essays by scientists, conservationists and other lion experts. The essays investigate the state of lion populations in various countries, from Chad and Cameroon to Kenya and Angola – even India and here at home in South Africa. It's not all habitat loss, human conflict and trophy hunting – they also emphasize successful interventions and innovative ideas to save lions from extinction.

The photography in the book is a highlight: There are several portfolios of vivid lion images by a range of wildlife photographers, where you can see every whisker and glint in the eye up close.

The Last Lions is a celebration of this big cat and serves as a caution of what we stand to lose.



ROAD MUSIC

More songs for the
***** void

by **The Boy Rose**
US\$9 on bandcamp.com

As the tongue-in-cheek title suggests, this is an album made by a musician not expecting chart success. But music made for the sheer pleasure of it – rather than with some commercial reason in mind – is usually the best kind of music.

Ross Campbell (aka The Boy Rose) is a Cape Town drummer who has played with many of my favourite bands over the years, such as Urban Creep and Benguela. But here he goes solo while roping in the help of many of his muso friends.

"Champagne Castle" is a standout track, an ode to childhood holidays: "Won't you scatter my ashes, in the late afternoon / Beneath a weeping willow, and the mountains of my youth: Champagne Castle, Cathedral Peak..."

It's not all easy listening, but it's music you'll want to return to – digging deeper each time, for so much lurks below the surface. It's the perfect soundtrack for a cross-country road trip, dodging cows and potholes one moment, flabbergasted by the beauty of it all the next.

– *Toast Coetzer*

MEET THE AUTHOR

Rudi Steenkamp

Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa is a fun and accessible guide that will turn a scary daddy-longlegs from foe to friend!



NATASJA LUTJENS

You're a language practitioner by profession – why the passion for spiders?

I have always been interested in photography and nature, and after seeing macro photos of jumping spiders, I really wanted to take photos like that myself. I bought a macro lens and started photographing spiders.

Looking through the lens, that little black dot reveals an astonishing amount of detail, and I could see things I could never see with the naked eye. By posting these photos on spider groups on Facebook, I learnt more about them from the experts and started appreciating their beauty and diversity.

What inspired you to write a book for children?

Children often lose their wonder for spiders after being taught that they're dangerous. They're taught to fear them. I want to spread the message that spiders should rather be admired, and help to break the cycle of ignorance.

Ninety-nine percent of spiders are not harmful to humans and will only bite if they are squashed or if they can't escape. They don't feed on humans – they actually want nothing to do with us! Don't let fear stop you from simply sitting still and observing a spider's behaviour. Watch how it spins its web or builds a retreat, how it hunts...

What's an interesting spider fact that children love to learn about?

Wow, there are so many! I tried to include an interesting fact with every spider entry in the book. Some spiders hunt fish and frogs, or live under seashells under the water during high tide; some can change colour to match their environment, and it has been shown that jumping spiders can dream.

Camouflage is important. Some spiders mimic ants – to hunt them and also to fool

predators – while others mimic beetles because they taste awful, or even look like bird droppings to escape predators.

Much of the photography is your own. How did you go about getting photos of all the different species?

I found lots of them in and around our house in Bloemfontein, or on the regular "spider walks" held by the Spider Club of Southern Africa. I'm also fortunate to know a few arachnologists who sometimes bring back spiders from their fieldwork all over the country so that I can photograph them. For the ones I haven't yet had the privilege of seeing or photographing, I sourced photos from others.

Tell us about the Spider Club... I'm the chairman and the club recently celebrated its 50th birthday. We mostly focus on educating people who want to learn more about spiders or want to overcome their fear, but we also have many arachnologists from all over the world in the club. We try to be a bridge between the two worlds and provide a fun and informative experience for everyone interested in spiders.

On our spider walks, we get together in nature to look for spiders. Sometimes we set them free after taking photos; other times we collect them for scientific research. We've found a few new species like this.

Which spider was most tricky to photograph?

The ant mimics and desert spiders – they're insanely fast and busy. On a few occasions, I've lost a rare spider because it was too fast and simply disappeared.

Some were fun to photograph, especially the jumping spiders – just not the ant-mimicking ones! I enjoy watching them through the lens, as they look around and stretch their legs before they jump to the next leaf or rock.

Any tips for readers who want to take their children to observe spiders in the wild?

Join a spider walk in Gauteng or the Western Cape – we sometimes also hold them in Bloemfontein. Children love attending these events and there's always an expert present who can tell them more about the spiders they find. (Check out upcoming events at spiderclub.co.za – Ed.)

Encourage your kids to carefully lift rocks and logs, scratch around in grass tussocks and look around in bushes, especially at sunset – you'll see plenty of orb-web spiders coming out to spin their webs.

Teaching kids to take photos of spiders will also enable them to interact with the creatures in a safe way, and it will stimulate a love for all the smaller things in nature.

Kids' Spiders of Southern Africa is published by Struik Nature and costs R200 in bookstores.



PANORAMA ROUTE

Stay and play on the Panorama Route

The Panorama Route in Mpumalanga has waterfalls in abundance, jaw-dropping views and plenty of places to stay. Need some help choosing? Here's our pick.

WORDS & PICTURES **MIA LOUW**

Marvel at the size of the Blyde River Canyon from the Three Rondavels viewpoint, or from way down there during a boat cruise on the Blyderivierpoort Dam.



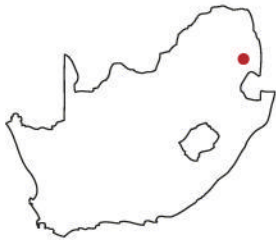
PANORAMA ROUTE

For about 170 km, from the town of Sabie to the Blyderivierpoort Dam, the Panorama Route winds its way along the northern reaches of the Drakensberg escarpment, past tumbling waterfalls and views aplenty.

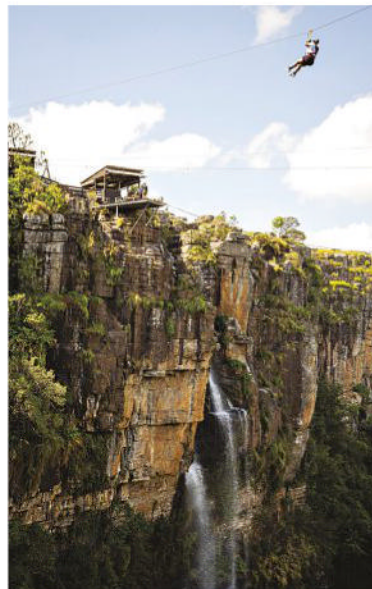
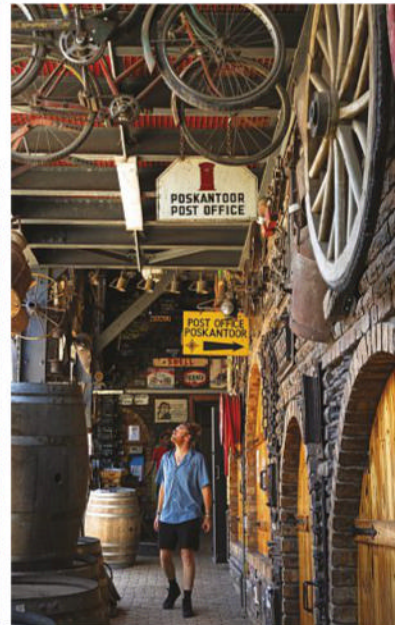
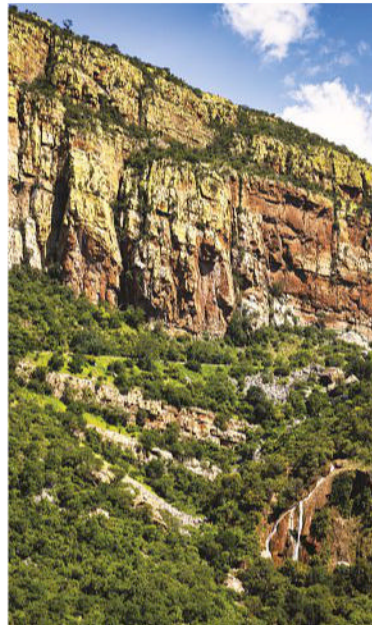
The Blyde River Canyon cuts through this beautiful landscape – 750 m deep in places and snaking for 26 km. History comes to life, too. Many Scottish settlers came here during the gold rush of the 1800s, hence names like Mac Mac Falls. Robbers Pass, north-west of Pilgrim's Rest, was the ideal place for thieves to ambush ox-wagons laden with gold...

These days, you don't have to worry about highwaymen, but you do need to watch out for holes in the highways... Some of the public facilities next to the roads also need attention. But the world-class Graskop Gorge Lift Co. is an example of the potential that can be unlocked here.

We travelled the Panorama Route from end to end, looking for the best places to stay, close to the best views and best swimming spots. Here's what we found.



Clockwise from the top: From the Green Heritage picnic site, it's an easy walk to Forest Falls. Thomson's in Sabie stocks everything from nails to board games. Book a horse ride at River Stables and enjoy the forests around Sabie from an elevated position. Zipline over Motitsi Falls at the Graskop Gorge Lift Co. Robbers Pass descends to the old mining town of Pilgrim's Rest. Stop at the JG Strijdom Tunnel on the Abel Erasmus Pass to gaze at the cliffs or buy a souvenir.



You can drive the Panorama Route in any direction. We suggest this red circular route. It starts in Sabie, includes all the highlights and ends in Pilgrim's Rest when it joins the R532 again. Set aside three days to explore the area.

*This farm stall (083 373 6045) has a wide selection of grass baskets, handbags and mats at reasonable prices. Have breakfast at **The Black Chilli Eatery** (082 389 4448) next door. They specialise in Eastern food like Turkish breakfasts and Korean egg dishes. Choose from 32 milkshake flavours!*

This farm stall sells good takeaway coffee and things like pies and toasted sandwiches. Curious about the shoe? For R5 you can take a look inside at the artefacts and wooden sculptures. theshoe.org

A network of paths leads to viewpoints of the rondavel-like hills towering over the dam. There's a restaurant, toilets and a curio market. R48 p.p; R32 for pensioners and children.

Walk over the bridges high above **Bourke's Luck Potholes** where the Treur and Blyde rivers meet. There's a restaurant, toilets and the Belvedere day hike (10 km). R80 p.p.

Hang out on the deck or browse the jewellery, clothing and handbags at Mello & Co. Or float on an inner tube on the Treur River. R150 p.p.

📞 071 759 3529

From the **God's Window** viewpoint, you look out over the Lowveld. You can also wander through the surrounding forest. R37 p.p. Entrance is free at **Wonder View**.

Pinnacle Rock (30 m)
pokes up like the index
finger of a giant in a
forested valley. R32 p.p.

*It's only a 500 m walk to **Bridal Veil Falls** – you can also get behind the waterfall and to the pool below. R25 p.p. (card payments only)*

It's worth paying the higher fee at Lone Creek Falls if you want to picnic here. But the fence around the pool (no swimming) and the wooden photo frame for selfies somewhat spoil the natural beauty. R50 p.p. (card payments only)

A rock splits the Sabie River in two, forcing the water to form an upside down horseshoe. Walk to **Horse Shoe Falls** – there's a picnic site and accommodation (078 127 2005) about 150 m from the waterfall. R20 p.p.

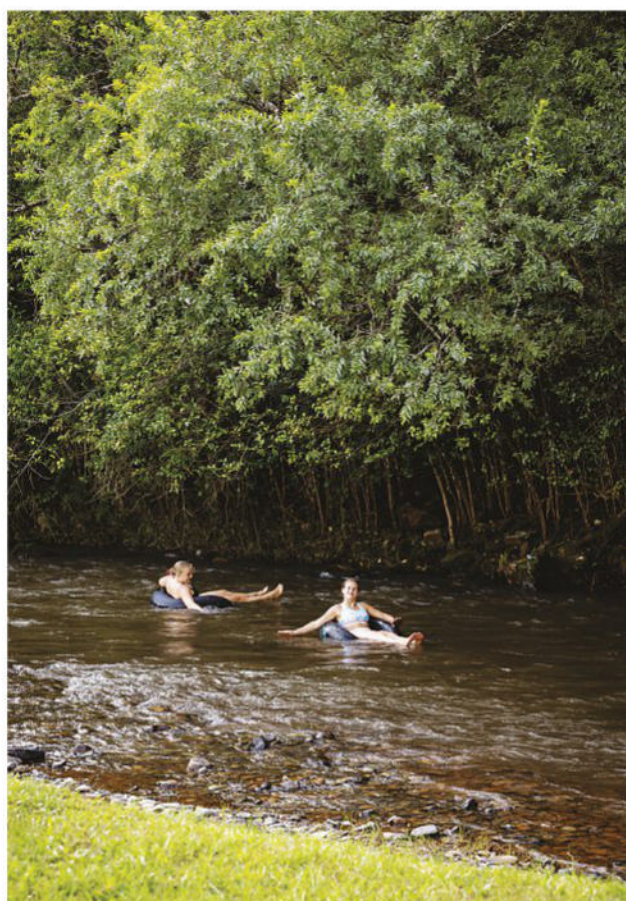
Forest Falls Trail (4 km) starts at the Green Heritage picnic site (R50 p.p.) and leads to a waterfall that's wider than its height. The pool is an irresistible swim spot. It costs R25 p.p. to go look at the Maria Shires Falls on the other side of the R532.

*There's a viewing platform surrounded by a high fence far from **Mac Mac Falls**. There's a wide variety of curios for sale. R25 p.p.*

Mac Mac Pools consist of a series of pools with small waterfalls. The first pool is closed off and some of the picnic tables are in need of TLC. It costs R50 p.p. (card payments only) to swim and picnic. The Secretary Bird Hiking Trail (3 km) also starts here.

 Mashishing (Lydenburg)





FUN ON THE RIVER

1. *Merry Pebbles Holiday Resort*

Merry Pebbles – with its swaying poplars and soft lawns next to the Sabie River – has the feel of an American summer camp. (Don't mind the potholes outside the gate. Once you're inside, you don't need to go anywhere.)

The resort has 35 chalets (including a few "park homes"), 180 camping stands and everything from a shop to a laundromat. Various events are held here during the year, including the Sabie Tube Race in February, where about 1 500 people float down the river on inner tubes.

The stands and chalets (#21 to #24) along the river are the most popular. You can sit with your feet in the water and listen to Knysna turacos and samango monkeys calling in the forest.

Just keep an eye on your dog if he likes to swim – dogs are allowed if you're camping, but the river current is very strong in summer. He might end up in the Kruger Park...

Where? 1,5 km outside Sabie on the Old Lydenburg Road.

Rates: Camping R230 per person; chalet (a neat "park home") from R2 200 per night (sleeps six). There are also brick units and more affordable units without river views.

Contact: ☎ 073 236 2088; 🌐 merrypebbles.co.za

What else? Teach the kids how to fish for trout at Sabie Trout & Forest Retreat (formerly Horse Shoe Trout & About). Day visitors are welcome: R100 per person; half-price after 3 pm. ☎ 079 958 2083

Explore the forests and plantations on horseback at River Stables (☎ 073 226 2533). Rates from R300 per person for beginners. Both places are accessed via the Old Lydenburg Road.



BUDGET-FRIENDLY

2. Mac Mac Forest Retreat

"Just look at all this space I have to explore," says Lucille van Delden from the back of her horse. Lucille is the manager at Mac Mac Forest Retreat and accompanies guests on horse rides along the Fanie Botha Trail. Besides the horses, there are also donkeys, rabbits, chickens and miniature goats to keep the kids entertained. And you can bring your dog if you arrange beforehand.

There are two campsites, each with nine stands and an ablution block. The lower campsite has an unobstructed view of the Maria Shires Falls and the Green Heritage picnic site next to the R532.

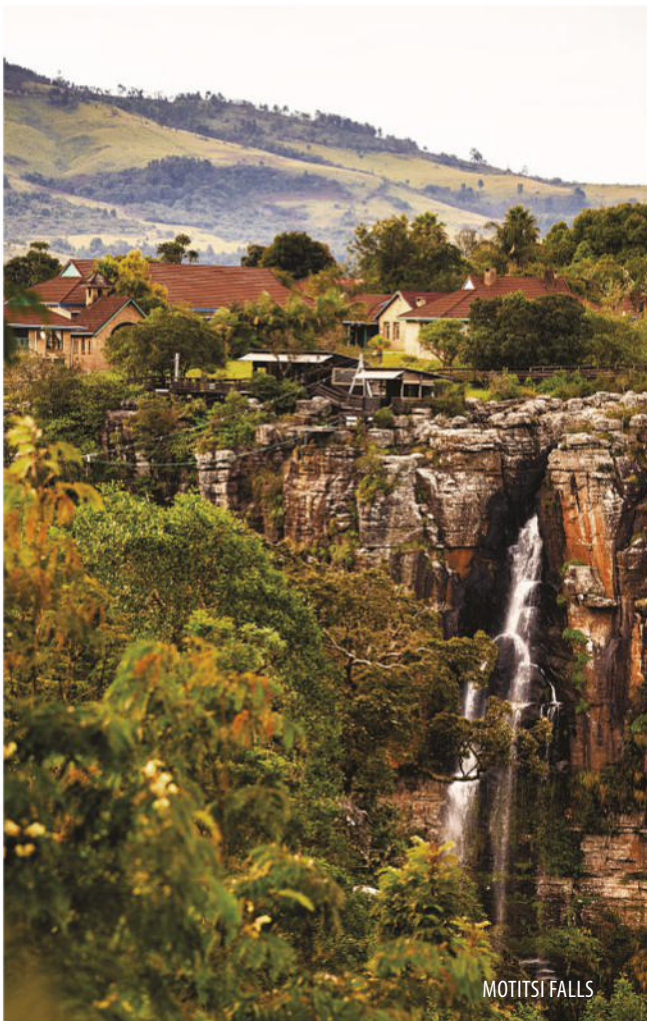
The stands are under old pine trees and fairly close together. Each has a braai (some are a bit old). The bathrooms are clean if a bit worn out, but you won't find a more affordable campsite in the area – and it's a stone's throw from Mac Mac Pools.

The upper campsite is better suited to bigger groups. Every stand has a braai, and there's a communal lapa next to the small swimming pool.

Where? Between Sabie and Graskop.

Rates: Camping R300 per stand for two people; plus R150 per extra person. Safari tent R700 per night for two people. Horse rides from R300 per person per hour.

Contact: 081 749 3228; macmacforestretreat.co.za



ENDLESS VIEWS

3. *Panorama Chalets & Rest Camp*

This place has one of the most scenic swimming pools in Mpumalanga.

"The first owner, Hennie Prinsloo, bought the land with shareholders in 1965. It started as a motel around 1968. This is now the third generation of chalets," says manager Danie van Niekerk, who married into the family.

The swimming pool was built in 1985. "My father-in-law and his brother wanted to build a swimming pool, but Oupa Hennie was against it – he didn't see the point. The brothers persisted and tried to blast away all the rocks with dynamite, but didn't succeed. So they built *around* the rocks," says Danie.

The pool isn't the only place with a view at Panorama Chalets. The restaurant also looks into Graskop Gorge, as do the front row of chalets and camping stands #20 and #21.

The campsite has 21 stands under trees and across terraces. The ablution block and scullery are well looked after, with three indoor braais for when it rains – handy, since Graskop has an annual rainfall of 1 119 mm!

The prices in the restaurant are aimed at foreign tourists, but the pizzas are reasonable: R110 for a margherita.

Where? Next to the Graskop Gorge Lift Co.

Rates: Camping R230 per stand; plus R120 per person; max four people per stand (high season rates). Safari tent from R900 per night for two people. Chalet with a view from R1 500 per night for two people.

Contact: 071 658 4970 (WhatsApp); panoramaviewchalets.co.za

What else? At Graskop Gorge Lift Co. you can experience Motitsi Falls and the forest in every way imaginable: Walk along a suspension bridge or zipline over the gorge. Go down in a lift, do a bridge swing or walk along a series of decks to the forest below!

There are three restaurants, a playground for the kids, an art gallery, a curio market and a clothing store.

Rates from R75 per person to enter (suspension bridge walk included) to R750 per person for the Big Swing. graskopgorgeliftcompany.co.za



ROMANTIC GETAWAY

4. *Blyde Canyon, a Forever Resort*

Treat your partner to a romantic weekend high up on the misty cliffs of the Blyde River Canyon.

The campsite – under big paperbark and monkey thorn trees – has only 30 stands (eight have permanent safari tents) and is much smaller than Swadini, Blyde's sister Forever resort at the bottom of the canyon. The chalets at Blyde Canyon are also more polished, but the luxuries come at a slightly higher price.

Still, it's worth the money because the resort's hiking trails take you to viewpoints overlooking the Three Rondavels and the Blyderivierpoort Dam from angles that other tourists on the Panorama Route can't access. At the Upper Viewpoint at the start of the Leopard Trail, it feels like you can reach out and touch the Rondavels.

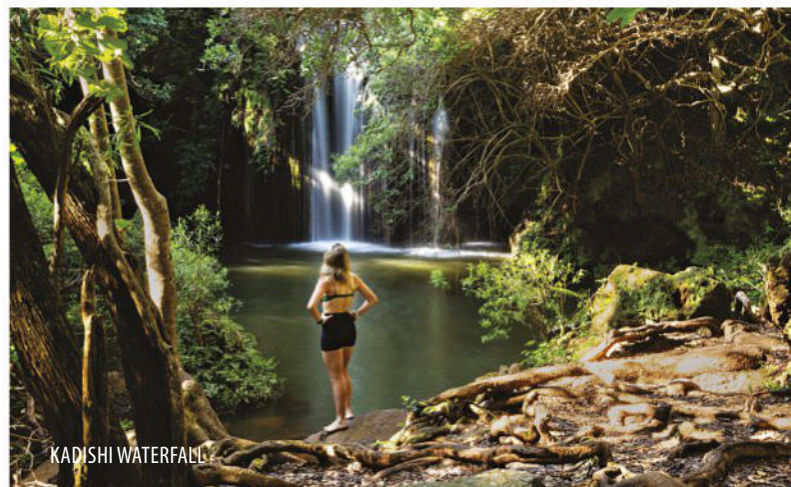
There are four hiking trails, ranging in length from 2 km to 5 km. On the Kadishi Trail (2 km) you can swim in a mountain pool under the waterfall in the forest, but forget about skinny dipping – the trail is popular and the waterfall is less than 1 km from chalet #64...

For dinner, head to the restaurant stoep and watch night fall over the canyon. The resort also has a swimming pool, laundry, shop, liquor store and filling station. Handy because Graskop is a fair distance away.

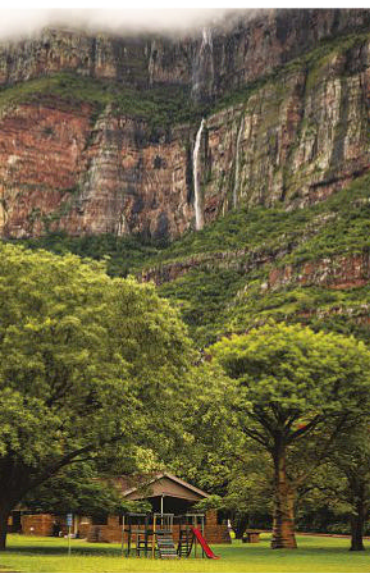
Where? 52 km north of Graskop on the R532.

Rates: Camping from R510 per night for two people. Safari tent from R1 065 per night for two people. Chalet from R2 535 for four people.

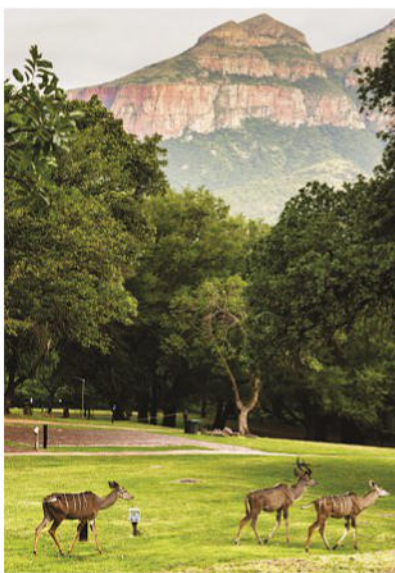
Contact: ☎ 086 122 6966; 📧 foreverblydecanyon.co.za



PANORAMA ROUTE



BLYDERIVIERPOORT DAM WALL



ONE-STOP RESORT

5. Swadini, a Forever Resort

Big family gatherings, travellers en route to the Kruger, pensioners who stay here for the whole winter. ... There's space for everyone at Swadini, which has 78 chalets, 220 camping stands and six ablution blocks spread over shaded terraces along the Blyde River.

Swadini has all the facilities a good resort should have, including a shop, laundry, restaurant and amphitheatre. Your kids won't ever want to leave. There's a cold swimming pool and a heated one, a giant outdoor chess set, trampolines, mini golf course, tennis court and short hiking trails where the trees are marked with their names. Most of the stands are paved to prevent a muddy mess in summer, with enough shade. Kudus often leap over the fence to graze among the tents.

If you want to take a drive, it's only 5 km to the entrance of the Blyderivierpoort Dam and 35 km to Orpen Gate into the Kruger Park.

Where? 35 km west of Hoedspruit, on the R531.

Rates: Camping from R320 per night for four people; plus R70 per extra person; max eight people per stand. Safari tent R940 per night for two people. Chalet from R1 710 per night for four people.

Contact: 063 256 3750; foreverswadini.co.za

What else? There are various activities on offer in this part of Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve: Visit the dam wall; take a boat ride on the Blyderivierpoort Dam (081 487 2267); or hike one of three trails through the forests on the riverbank – Waterfall (2 km), Peninsula (4 km) or Hippo Valley (14 km). Entrance R48 per adult; R32 per pensioner or child; free for guests staying at Swadini.



FOR HIKERS

6. Mount Sheba Rainforest Hotel and Resort

Pitch your tent in the campsite at Mount Sheba and it feels like you're in your own little rainforest – but with all the necessary amenities just around the corner. There's a hotel, two restaurants, a bar, tennis courts, swimming pool, kids' playground, a laundromat and a spa.

The campsite has 10 stands and a big communal braai area in the middle. Bring a freestanding braai if you prefer your own company. Also keep an eye on the samango monkeys when you're unpacking your food...

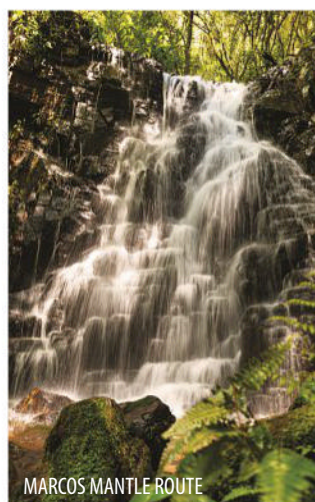
There's a dam next to the campsite where you can catch trout, but the highlight at Mount Sheba is the network of Green Flag hiking trails through forests and past waterfalls. There are eight trails varying in length from 2 km to 7 km. Combine Marcos Mantle and Gola Gola and you'll hike past several huge yellowwood trees and past three waterfalls in under 7 km. On some of the trails, you can see old mine shafts where gold diggers looked for their fortune in the 1800s.

Where? 21 km south-west of Pilgrim's Rest via Robbers Pass. Drive carefully on the last 10 km of dirt road.

Rates: Camping (no power) R250 per person; four people per stand. Self-catering cottage R2 100 per night for six people.

Contact: 076 578 9475; mountsheba.com

What else? Stop at The Vine Restaurant & Johnny's Pub in Pilgrim's Rest for breakfast and a pot of tea. 013 768 1080; thevinerest.co.za



PANORAMA ROUTE

IN OTHER WORDS



Danie van Niekerk, manager, Panorama Chalets & Rest Camp

Give Kuier and Canto's Trattoria in Graskop a try. For a meal with a view, head to the restaurant at the Angels View Hotel.



Ania Ngobeni, curio seller, Mac Mac Falls

I've been selling pots here since 1986. I'll give a discount depending on how much you spend. We do well here, but we wish Safcol – the forestry company – would upgrade the facilities.



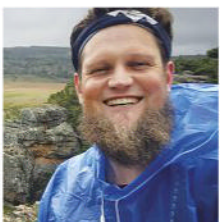
Charl de Bruyn & Reinhardt du Plessis, Safari Reinhardt Tours

You can walk to the waterfall near the Blyderivierpoort Dam in the nature reserve. If you climb up the left side, there are three more waterfalls higher up the kloof. Most of the other waterfalls in the area can only be seen from a distance and behind a fence.



Tiger Goss, owner, The Bookman's Corner

One of my favourite restaurants in Sabie is right next to my bookstore: The Woodsman Pub & Restaurant. The food is great and the prices are reasonable.



Gerrit Pool, forester

There are caves on the 3 km-long Secretary Bird Hiking Trail, which starts at Mac Mac Pools. Some are hidden by forest – you need to look carefully for them.



Migael Coetzer, owner, Leather & Latté

The Graskop Parkrun follows the Jock of the Bushveld Hiking Trail. It starts behind the Spar in Bloedrivier Avenue and goes through grasslands and along the escarpment.

In early February, residents saw a leopard on the God's Window loop (R534). Drive this route at dusk – people often come across jackal, honey badger and porcupine. A black leopard apparently roams near Bourke's Luck Potholes.

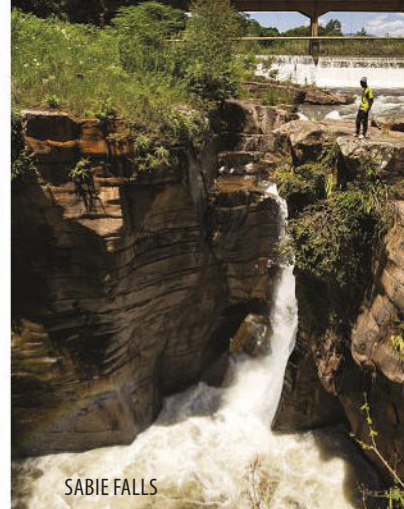


Brine Nyalungu, waiter, The Vine Restaurant & Johnny's Pub

Go visit the house museums in Pilgrim's Rest – you can see how people lived in the past.



HOPS HOLLOW SABIE BREWERY



SABIE FALLS

SABIE

- The African Market shop at The Wild Fig Tree centre sells batik shirts, aprons and kitchen cloths, plus wide-brimmed hats and frozen trout – perfect for tonight's braai. ☎ 076 118 5746
- Raise seven tasting glasses of beer at Hops Hollow Sabie Brewery. A tasting costs R80 per person, bread sticks included. ☎ 076 177 7919; 🌐 sabiebrewery.com
- Browse 40 000 second-hand books at The Bookman's Corner while you wait for your slice of cake and coffee. ☎ 083 467 6307
- Thomson's is mostly a hardware store, but it also has other knickknacks like board games and craft supplies. It's decorated with antique items like wagon wheels, wine barrels, bicycles and old signs. ☎ 013 764 2546
- Sabie Falls, where the Klein Sabie River tumbles into the Sabie, is one of the most accessible waterfalls in the area. It's to the left of Main Road (R532) and the bridge over the Sabie River north of town. There are platforms and lookout points and the surrounding gardens are well maintained. R20 per person.



BRUNO'S BARN PUB & GRILL



LEATHER & LATTÉ

GRASKOP

- At Bruno's Barn Pub & Grill it feels like you're in the gold rush era. The roof is decorated with old copperware, farm implements and enamel plates and mugs. There's a TV for sport. In case you're wondering, Bruno is the owners' black Staffy. ☎ 076 770 0992
- As the name suggests, Leather & Latté sells coffee and leather products made by the owner Migael Coetzer's 14-year-old daughter, Mia. ☎ 064 752 5849
- Modern Art Projects South Africa (MAPSA) is home to Harrie Siertsema's private art collection. Siertsema founded Harrie's Pancakes – ask at Delagoa Arts & Crafts next to Harrie's if they can open up for you. ☎ 013 767 1081

A family of four is camping on a rocky shore. A mother in a brown parka and a father in a tan parka and grey beanie are standing near a small table. Two children, a girl in a green jacket and a boy in a green jacket, are also present. The table has food, including bread and fruit. A small green tent is visible in the foreground. The background shows a rocky coastline with waves.

WHERE
YOUR
ADVENTURE
BEGINS

THE ADVENTURER SERIES™

The Canvas Dome Tent, Perfected.



Available as a 2, 3 and 4-Sleeper



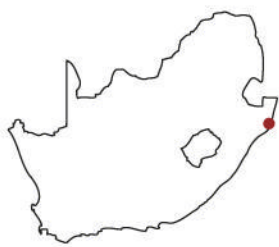
East of ordinary

iSimangaliso Wetland Park is a World Heritage Site and one of our country's most beautiful and diverse wilderness areas. On a new multi-day hike called Eastern Shores, you can explore its wildest side.

BY PIERRE STEYN

On the first day of the Eastern Shores hike, you walk north from Cape Vidal along the coast with sand and seawater at your feet.

ISIMANGALISO HIKE



Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Guides and hikers meet in the Cape Vidal campsite – watch out for the samango pickpockets. A pair of armed guides accompanies the group on the hike. Harmless Cape forest red millipedes (*Centrobolus atrophus*) are common in the coastal forest. Nunu Jobe and Bona Mbanjwa prepare supper.

*“If it’s birds
you’re after
– and we
are after
birds! –
this hike
delivers.”*

Early light filters through the canopies of the umzimbeet and buffalo thorn trees that we slept under last night. The call of a Burchell’s coucal alternates with the call of a fork-tailed drongo in the subtropical coastal forest, against the far-off rumble of waves on a deserted beach.

Five hikers and two guides stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a small circle.

“Thank you for the sea and this forest,” says Nunu Jobe, the head guide, delivering his morning sermon. “Today we will leave only footprints. We will not try to master the bush. We will allow the bush to become part of us, and we will learn from it.”

One cannot help but murmur, “Amen”. Nunu’s words put the group at ease. Each one of us is grateful for what we experienced yesterday. And excited about the day – the days – that lies ahead in this remote corner of iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

Today is day two of the new four-day Eastern Shores wilderness hike. After years of sensitive negotiations, a concession was granted to operate a trail through the Tewater Wilderness Area, which is north of Cape Vidal between Lake St Lucia and the Indian Ocean. In this part of the park, there’s no sign of people. No development – no lodges, roads or even footpaths. Property rights belong to the elephants, the rhinos and the buffalo – especially the buffalo! Also leopards, cheetahs, crocodiles and hippos. That’s why two professional and armed Big Five guides are accompanying us. But the chance of an animal threatening the hikers is very slim, so long as nobody tries anything silly. As Nunu reminded us, we are not masters of the bush.

If it’s birds you’re after – and we are after birds! – this hike delivers. More than 500 species have been recorded here, including multiple lifers playing hide-and-seek in the forest. Thanks to the expertise and patience of Nunu and his co-guide Bona Mbanjwa, we hope to spot quite a few of them over the next four days.

DAY 1

I meet our guides and fellow hikers in the campsite at Cape Vidal: Sarah Drew and Dayle Boardman from Hilton, and John Ferguson and his wife Ingrid from Zinkwazi.

But what’s this? The hike hasn’t even started yet and a pickpocket has claimed its first victim. In broad daylight, right under our noses!

While we’re stuffing our packs with sleeping bags, water bottles and provisions, one of the many resident samango monkeys

swoops in like a lightning bolt and scampers away with a bag of raisins.

“Oh no!” Bona groans. “We’re going to have to be content with peanuts-and-no-raisins.”

Bona and Nunu’s backpacks are almost full. Us hikers are all carrying our own water, but the guides are carrying the cooking pot, kettle, more water and all of tonight’s food. Each also has a .375 hunting rifle.

But today’s walk is easy – a 10km stroll along the beach from Cape Vidal north towards Leven Point. It’s a spring day in September, initially overcast with rain in the forecast, but clearing up the longer we walk.

On my left is a continuous dune wall, in places up to 180m high – some of the highest coastal dunes in the world. On my right is the Indian Ocean.

Are those southern right whales breaching in the distance? John, Nunu and I peer through the binoculars. “They’re Bryde’s whales,” John says. Yes, they’re much smaller than southern rights and humpbacks, and they enjoy this warm water and the fish that stay close to the shore.

We started our hike at 10am so that we could walk at low tide. Sanderlings, white-fronted plovers and ghost crabs scurry around with the wash and retreat of each wave. A Eurasian whimbrel seizes its opportunity and a ghost crab becomes a takeaway!

It’s time for our lunch, too. After almost three hours of walking, a footpath winds up the dune wall into the forest.

We head left and climb the dune halfway before Bona calls a halt and unpacks bread, cold meats, tomato and cucumber. We chew blissfully while watching the whales frolic in the distance, each leap followed by an “ooh” and “aah”.

We pack up and continue climbing the dune. Barely 10 minutes later, we come to a clearing surrounded by trees: tonight’s campsite.

While the guides make a fire for coffee and start preparations for the pasta dinner, we head back to the beach for a swim.

Later, in the camp, everyone clears a space for a mat and sleeping bag, under a mosquito net hanging from a tree like a little white cocoon. The tents are still a day’s hike away. It’s not long before the chorus of waves, crickets, frogs and nightjars sings us to sleep.

DAY 2

Today we’ll be walking about 13 km inland, to the eastern shore of Lake St Lucia, where a temporary campsite has been set up for us: Tents with foam mattresses, two bush chefs, a pop-up shower, long-drop toilet... Luxury!

Just after sunrise, everyone falls in behind



ISIMANGALISO HIKE



ISIMANGALISO HIKE

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: There's an excellent chance you'll encounter game en route, and the dense forests are home to a variety of bird species. Fresh fruit goes down a treat after a busy morning of birdwatching. The trail encompasses different terrains, from easy beach sand to tricky wetland.

“Nunu stands still, listens and then silently picks a path with those expert bare feet...”

Nunu, while Bona – as usual – brings up the rear. Even though the forest floor is strewn with sharp branches and thorns, Nunu does not wear shoes. “I hate the things,” he says. “I feel closer to nature when the soles of my feet are in contact with the earth. As a guide, it also makes me think more about where I am going to take my next step.”

We stroll through the coastal forest. There's so much to see and hear. “*Kliklikli*,” a Rudd's apalis calls urgently to his female mate, and she answers calmly. I try to spot them through my binoculars, but alas... the crown of the Natal mahogany tree where they're hiding is just too dense.

A little further on we stop again and hold our breath. A waterbuck marks its territory at a small monkey apple tree. It peeks through the leaves at us before clattering through the thicket.

About an hour later, we leave the shade of the coastal forest and step into sunlit grassland. Before long we spot three buffalo and a herd of zebras a few hundred metres away. We stand silently behind Nunu to watch them. The zebras sense our presence and dash away, with the buffalo thundering behind.

The hike follows no set route – just the guides' built-in GPS. Every hike will be different, depending on the animals you encounter and how the landscape changes after the summer rain.

We follow a buffalo trail until a dead end in a wetland. A monitor lizard scurries away, upset that its nap has been disturbed. It gives me a fright and causes my heart to race, almost as fast as the call of the yellow-fronted tinkerbird that decides it, too, is raising the alarm. We turn around and find another way around the vlei.

It's late afternoon when we reach our camp, which has been laid out under giant Zulu podberry trees. The bush chefs – Lindokuhle Mthiyane and Mpumelo Sithole – welcome us with big smiles. These guys know how to cook, set up camp, carry heavy loads and walk fast. The nearest access road is 4 km from here towards Cape Vidal – they carried all the tents, kitchenware and cooler boxes from there in shifts. Thanks guys!

Not only is there already a fire burning and *shisa nyama* being prepared for dinner, but everyone gets a glass of ice-cold MCC sparkling wine!

DAY 3

No one needs to rush today because we're just walking short circular routes and sleeping here again. My daypack is light – all it has

inside are snacks, binoculars and a water bottle.

It's early and I've barely taken my first sip of coffee by the campfire when Nunu beckons me to follow him. Every few metres he stops to listen. Then he bends down and points at a small thicket under one of the trees. There they are, so close I can see them with the naked eye: two, no... three, four green twinspots.

I've heard this timid bird before, but never seen one.

Nunu goes on to repeat the magic trick several times that day: He stands still, listens and then silently picks a path with those expert bare feet, showing us where to look with our binoculars.

The highlight? A narina trogon that we heard calling long before we saw him. He stood with his back to us, as if to say, “You're not worth it”, until he finally changed his mind and turned towards us to show off his royal plumage.

Ingrid and John, experienced birdwatchers, are beaming when the trogon's equally shy cousin, a green malkoha, also makes an appearance – and devours a fat frog in two gulps right above our heads!

Nunu himself cracks a smile when he ticks Woodwards' batis off his life list.

Back at the camp, a tray of wraps and fresh fruit awaits. Tummies full and it's time for an afternoon nap. At dusk we walk along the lake and watch as the water and marsh birds get ready for nightfall.

I add collared pratincole, African marsh-harrier and blue-mantled crested flycatcher to my own growing list.

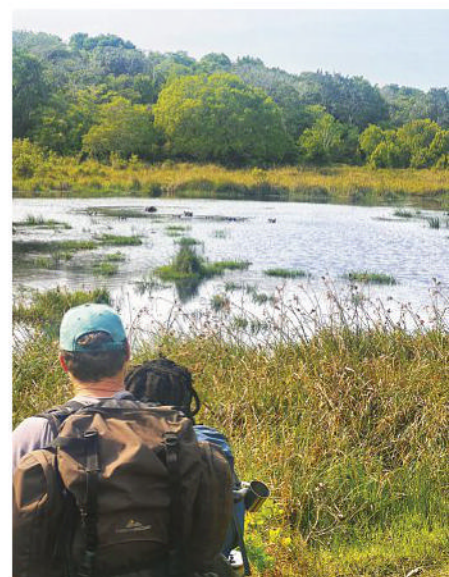
DAY 4

It takes less than an hour to walk the 4 km trail from the camp to the access road, where a minibus is waiting to take us back to Cape Vidal. But it's an hour packed with adventure – again through a forest, then across a grassland full of buffalo with baboons barking from a torchwood tree. Also past pools of water where hippos make it clear that we should refrain from interrupting their soak. “Move along now, nothing to see here,” seems to be their grunted message.

And then, on the way back to Cape Vidal, when our driver stops on a narrow bridge to move a branch that has fallen across the road, I get a parting gift: a brown-hooded kingfisher, one of the few kingfishers that I haven't seen yet, right outside my window, an arm's length away.



ISIMANGALISO HIKE



From left: The sun sets over Lake St Lucia, where hikers will spend two nights in a temporary camp. You can borrow a backpack from the organisers but something like this 65 ℓ North Ridge Nomad is a better option. Grumpy hippos hang out in the pools. The last day is only 4 km long, but those kilometres count!

IN OTHER WORDS

Sarah Drew (right)

It's a "primitive" wilderness trail, with some unexpected creature comforts, in a beautiful and lush wilderness. The potential to see turtles and rhinos on the same trail – even on the same day – makes it quite extraordinary. After a long day hiking along the beach, it was amazing to swim in the warm ocean.

Dayle Boardman (left)

The one moment you're strolling along a golden beach, and the next you're keeping downwind of buffalo, stumbling across massive leopard tracks and clambering over fallen logs to cross a wetland. Each day is a new adventure, and I enjoyed the good food and company around the campfire in the evenings.

John and Ingrid Ferguson

John: This is a unique outdoor adventure where you can move among wild animals and rarely spotted birds on foot. You're exposed to a variety of biomes – the ocean, beach, forests, grassy plains, and pans filled with water – in a short space of time. Nunu's camaraderie and his knowledge is something special – it's quite humbling.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

How does it work? The minimum group size is four and the maximum size is eight. You can request specific dates. Two armed guides accompany each group. Two-man tents, sleeping mats, pillows, camp chairs, mosquito nets and all meals, tea and coffee are provided.

How do I get there? The hike starts and ends at Cape Vidal. Drive from St Lucia to the Bhangazi Gate into iSimangaliso Wetland Park, which is about 3 km north of town. Pay the once-off entrance fee of R69 per person to enter the park, and R12 per person per night that you'll spend in the park. From the gate it's 33 km to Cape Vidal, where you'll meet your guides and park your car.

How far do you hike? There's no set route, but you end up walking 10 – 14 km on the two longest days.

Best time? It's a subtropical region and summer (November to March) is hot and muggy. That said, from mid-January into February, you have a good chance of seeing turtle hatchlings on the beach. The starting times of the beach walk section are determined by the tides. It's also possible to do the route in the opposite direction, with the beach walk on the last day.

What must I bring? A lightweight sleeping bag and preferably a backpack large enough for your clothes, sleeping bag, daily drinking water and personal items. The mosquito net and sleeping mat are provided, but you must carry them yourself. The trail has a couple of 65 ℓ backpacks you can use, but something like the 65 ℓ North Ridge Nomad (featured in *go!* #203) is both spacious and comfortable. Bring snacks, a water bottle, drinks if you want to carry them, sun hat, binoculars, camera and bird guide. Or download your favourite bird app on your phone.

Malaria? This part of KZN is considered a low-risk area, but talk to your doctor. We slept under mosquito nets and used mosquito spray.

How much? R8 100 per person sharing for the full hike, or R5 700 per person sharing for a two-night option. If you prefer to sleep alone in a tent, it costs about 30% more per person. Teens older than 14 can hike if they're accompanied by an adult.

More info: ☎ 084 240 7277; ✉ tours@active-escapes.co.za





Five Feral Girls on the Fighting Road

When **Cally Silberbauer** saw that one of her favourite bands was playing a festival in Vic Falls, she decided to go see them live. But why fly when you can bikepack there with your friends? What could possibly go wrong?

PICTURES **JESS MENIERE**





At Kwekwe, Cally and her friends left the tar behind and headed west towards Lupane on what some locals call the Fighting Road.



Opposite page, from the top: When the group arrived at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport in Harare, they first had to assemble their bikes before hitting the road. Cally asks vendors about the route ahead and potential roadworks. A stubborn puncture forced Cally to make frequent stops. Magan Hanekom enjoys a juicy mango fresh off a tree.

I first met the members of the Zimbabwean band Flying Bantu in 2023. I was at the River Brewing Co. in Vic Falls – on a bikepacking trip from Cape Town to Kilimanjaro. I checked out their music and it soon became the soundtrack for my onward journey – it seemed to encapsulate the vibrant spirit of the Zimbabweans I’d met on that trip.

A year later, I saw that Flying Bantu would be headlining Rock the River – a New Year’s Eve festival in Victoria Falls – and I knew I just had to be on that dance floor. Of course, my bike would also have to be part of the story again...

I pitched the idea of bikepacking from Harare to Vic Falls to my sister, Bianca, and a few of our closest friends: Jess Meniere, Magan Hanekom and Tracy Sanders. They didn’t hesitate – it was on! We’d fly to Harare and ride the rest of the way.

26 DECEMBER 2024

Harare to Chegutu

Tracy was already in Joburg with her family; the rest of us flew from Cape Town on Christmas Day. On Boxing Day, we all met at OR Tambo at 4 am for our 7 am flight. Travelling with bikes usually means you take a bit longer to check in. Despite the ungodly hour, spirits were high and we settled in for a pre-flight brekkie at Mugg & Bean.

As a group of Type-B travellers (i.e. chilled, easy-going) we were delighted with ourselves for making it so far without a hiccup. The smugness abruptly dissipated with a last call for our flight to Harare coming over the intercom. There we were, five friends risking it all for

a bacon-and-egg roll, sprinting towards the departure gate. Cheeks full, hands clutching serviette-wrapped *slap* chips... Feral Girl Summer (as we officially dubbed the adventure) had begun!

After landing at 9 am in Harare, we spent two and a half hours at the airport assembling our bikes. We had several onlookers and many questions as we sorted out our gear. Overpacking is a common theme in this group. In Harare, Tracy took the win. Her fully packed bike weighed 43 kg, including three novels for some “light reading”.

The festive spirit was tangible at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International, with homecomings and hugging family members all around.

It’s 700km from Harare to Vic Falls. With a hard deadline of getting there by New Year’s Eve, we had a few spicy days ahead in terms of the distance we’d have to ride. We had 140km on that first day, but thankfully it was all on tar, and all predominantly downhill.

Our route out of Harare involved a side quest to collect two gas canisters that we needed for cooking (and, more importantly, boiling water for coffee). Since you can’t fly with these, we had sent them ahead by bus from South Africa, safeguarded by a friend of a friend of a colleague.

As we meandered through the suburbs, along what could best be described as a gravel road dappled in tar, we were greeted with shouts of, “Hello, how are you? Where are you from? Where are you going? ON BICYCLES?!”

Canisters collected, the real ride began. We pedalled west along the A5 to Chegutu, which we reached just after 8 pm. We paid US\$5 (R80) each to camp at Magandi Park

Chegutu, which had beautiful green lawns but no running water in the bathrooms. (We used an outside tap to wash.) We rapidly began setting up tents and prepping dinner. (Read: two-minute noodles.) After a day that had started at 3 am, it wasn't long before our camp mattresses were calling.

27 DECEMBER 2024

Chegutu to Kwekwe

We rose with the sun. The day started with a stretch and a dance while we packed our condensed lives into panniers. My cycling bibs were still slightly damp after being washed the night before, but the hot summer air was already drying them on my body.

Tracy and Jess needed to get local SIM cards. We decided to sort this out before heading to Kwekwe, 114 km south-west of Chegutu. We spent a pleasant hour strolling around the dusty streets between markets packed with legumes, raw honey and tobacco. By the time we left with the two SIMs, we'd also collected a few marriage proposals.

It was a pretty straightforward day – all on tar. Our total moving time was six hours, with a decadent lunch break under a mango tree. After making a few purchases from the shop to which the tree belonged, we asked if we could buy a mango. “Help yourself,” came the reply. One mango was devoured on the spot, and a couple were packed for later. So good!

The Feral Girl Summer crew cruised into Kwekwe, found a reasonably priced B&B (US\$18/R288 per person), and set out on our baggage-free bikes to find supper – and our first Zambezi Lagers of the trip.

28 DECEMBER 2024

Kwekwe to Nkayi

Gravel! Finally, we hit the dirt and couldn't be happier. The 260 km-long road between Kwekwe and Lupane – directly west – occasionally gets graded by a donkey cart and mopane branch combo. It's known by the locals as the Fighting Road, and we were about to find out why. We would cover the distance over the next two days.

A slight headwind picked up around midday, bringing the smell of rain and a static crackle in the air.

I also got a flat rear tyre. The rear tyre is



Cally and crew covered 140 km on the first day. They cycled the last few kilometres in the dusk. "Sharing this tough journey with good friends made everything that much easier," she says.

always worse when you're bikepacking because it means that all your bags have to come off before you can fix anything. Bike flipped, I popped in a new tube after checking to see if there were any sharp objects remaining in the tyre. I couldn't find anything, so I assumed the puncture had been caused by a pinch on the rim. But to assume, as they say, is to make an ass out of "u" and "me". And so it was. The rest of that day was spent nursing my tyre, which refused to stay inflated.

Eventually, I decided to race ahead so that I wouldn't slow everyone down with my frequent stops and repairs. As I did so, the sky burst. There's no other way to describe it. A glorious downpour of water, which drenched every inch of me, washed red dust in rivers down my legs. The rain washed away the mugginess and tyre frustrations in one go.

It wasn't long before I heard shouts and laughter behind me and knew that my friends had caught up. Together, we made our way to that night's accommodation in the village of Nkayi. It was just a basic spot (US\$16/R256 per person) with two rooms that we shared between us. There weren't enough beds, so Mags slept on the floor.

29 DECEMBER 2024

Nkayi to Lupane

After a night filled with lightning and rumbling thunder, tube repairs and deep sleep, we awoke to our host, Sithobekile, asking what we wanted for breakfast. Eggs, cow heart and potato wedges on the side – would that be enough to get us through to Lupane? Only time would tell.

We pedalled out, back onto the Fighting Road. I had managed to source a couple of spare tubes from a shop in the village. Since so many people in Zim rely on bicycle transport, spare parts are usually easy to find. Hopefully, this would put the curse of the endless *papwiel* to bed.

Nkayi to Lupane was 127 km of gravel, in the roughest sense of the word. The road quickly deteriorated into corrugations, massive dips and divots. The sun baked down and our sense of humour dried up, as did our water and food. Our choices were to continue and hope for salvation in the form of a spaza shop ahead (from the maps, this looked unlikely), or deviate by 10 km to a small settlement called Mthoniselwa,

just off the main road. The latter won out.

On our way towards Mthoniselwa, we came across a monastery. A man sat outside his house at the entrance gate. We greeted him and asked about water, but he refused to let us enter. Lycra-clad cyclists would not cut it – his was a world of ankle-length skirts. Clearly, not many rules have changed here since 1904, when the monastery was started by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The gentleman did, however, concede to fill our bottles and direct us to a spaza shop nearby. Delighted at the idea of off-brand biscuits – it was lunchtime – we continued further. We were going in the wrong direction for our general progress, but in the right way for snacks.

Pepsi in hand, and bags of biscuits shared between us, we sat on the cool concrete stoep and contemplated the 50 km left to Lupane.

At this rate, we'd get there at midnight.

Back on the Fighting Road, we continued at a steady pace into the heat of the day. The air again filled with the build-up of impending rain. And lightning. The sky darkened and ominous rumbling filled the silence as we saved our energy for each pedal stroke. Soon, the dusty road became a muddy river and our bikes became clogged. All the moving parts grated horribly.

There wasn't much else to do but embrace the discomfort and laugh. But the giggles became more nervous as we counted the time between thunderclaps and lightning strikes... At first there was a five- or six-second delay, but soon there was no delay at all. One bolt clapped far too close for comfort. We all jumped off our bikes and dived into the bushes for cover.

Tracy is a medical doctor. At some point she'd done some wilderness training, which included tips on dealing with lightning. We all assumed the "lightning position" – a crouched stance on the balls of the feet, elbows out and hands over ears. Picture the scene: five soaked, scared, squatting women in a mopane forest; bikes discarded, rain pelting down, adrenaline pumping.

Eventually, as our thighs cramped from crouching, the lightning moved off and we decided to set up our tents. Over the noise of the storm, we shouted to each other through the canvas and plotted our escape to Lupane – and safety.

“Picture the scene: five soaked, scared, squatting women in a mopane forest; bikes discarded, rain pelting down, adrenaline pumping...”

ZIMBABWE



Opposite page, clockwise, from top left: Bianca Silberbauer and Magan Hanekom assess route options and possible refuelling points along the Fighting Road. Tuna and crackers taste better eaten under a mango tree reckons Tracy Sanders. New friends are made over a shared love of bicycles at a market in Kwekwe. The final destination: the Rock the River Festival in Vic Falls. From left are Tracy, Jess, Magan, Bianca and Cally. Jess's bike drew some admiring looks. Taking a break from cycling, the Feral Girls brave a sketchy swim in a section of the river the locals promised didn't have crocodiles or hippos...

30 DECEMBER 2024

Lupane to Hwange

While Magan, Bianca and I slept, Jess and Tracy had managed to find a WhatsApp group of 600+ farmers in Zimbabwe. Soon the news was travelling about the five mad South African girls who were stranded 40 km from Lupane in an electric storm.

Around midnight, Tracy woke us up with the news that a bakkie was on its way to find us. We began packing our sopping gear. The rain had eased a bit and we listened for the sound of an engine.

Around 3 am, we heard via the WhatsApp group that the bakkie had passed us an hour ago. We'd missed it! We hurriedly turned every light in our possession to the road and continued waiting and hoping, with the occasional dance party and game of hide-and-seek to pass the time. An hour later, Nkululeko found us. We loaded our bikes and bags onto his bakkie – mud and all – and piled in. Rescued!

Two hours later, we unloaded ourselves and our gear and passed over a stack of damp dollar bills. Money well spent.

Even though it was 6 am, there was someone awake at the Women's Centre (US\$10/R160 per person) in Lupane, where I'd stayed two years previously on my Cape Town to Kili trip. We showered and collapsed into bed, getting in another three hours of sleep before debating our next move.

Hwange is 165 km north-west of Lupane – a stretch that would have been the longest cycling day of our trip. The storm had ankle-tapped us, so we decided to hitchhike and make up some lost ground.

Jeremy, a farmer from the WhatsApp group, agreed to take us as far as the entrance to Hwange National Park. From there, it was still about 80 km to the town of Hwange.

By chance, there was a flatbed truck parked where Jeremy dropped us. After a bit of negotiation, we had bikes, bags and bodies loaded on the back with some home-brewed beer and *maputi* for sustenance. (*Maputi* is a local treat, like popcorn but made from white maize kernels – it has a nutty flavour.)

John, the driver, dropped us off at our Airbnb in Hwange (we'd booked it en route, for US\$20/R320 per person) where we spent the rest of the day washing and drying our things.

31 DECEMBER 2024

Hwange to Victoria Falls

We had one day left to get to Vic Falls, which was 106 km away. For the first time on the trip, we set an alarm. The 5 am wake-up was to ensure we made it to Victoria Falls Backpackers Lodge with enough time to glam up before hitting the dancefloor.

We were back on the tar today, flying along on our sparkly clean bikes.

Exiting Hwange took us past some mining areas, where the landscape looked as if someone had turned the saturation level down. A sadness lingered in the acrid air. Trucks rumbled past on the potholed roads, carrying coal stripped from the earth – the result of a greed that those on the ground would never benefit from. Our joy became a direct contrast to our surroundings.

As we approached Vic Falls, the green of the bush returned and with it, signs warning of elephants and other wild animals. One last climb into Vic Falls and just like that, the journey was done!

A few beers and showers later, in the outfits we'd saved for the occasion, the Feral Girls were looking thoroughly tamed. On the banks of the Zambezi, we danced our hearts out. The music of Flying Bantu filled the air as we pulled in for a group hug.

Happy 2025, friends!

Follow Cally (@callysilberbauer) and Jess (@jess_meniere) on Instagram for more adventures!





ZIMBABWE

JESSIE SARGEANT



New year, new you? Be bold and send your best photos to **Toast Coetzer** (✉ takeyourpic@gomag.co.za). You might be published here!



WINNING PHOTO

▲ JURGENS POTGIETER

Canon R6 MII

Canon RF 100 – 500 mm lens

JURGENS WRITES: I visited Mashatu Game Reserve in Botswana. On my first game drive there, I got lucky with a sighting of this leopard at sunrise.

The sky was painted in shades of pink and gold as our safari vehicle descended into the dry bed of the Majali River. Just then, the first rays fell across the riverbed – and there it was, a leopard!

It was one of those moments I'll remember forever. I simply kept

snapping away while trying to appreciate the scene in all its majesty.

My shutter speed was set to 1/1 000 second, at an aperture of f5.6 and ISO 640.

TOAST SAYS: Jurgens, next time I'm joining you on a game drive. Clearly, you have all the luck!

Most of us drive around all day long for a week and never see a leopard in a reserve. To see one like this, in such perfect light, on your first drive... That's serendipity

of the highest order.

But the luck of the sighting and the timing of it only tell half the story. Jurgens was ready to take this photo the instant it was presented to him. He'd probably had a coffee at the lodge already, so he was sharp and alert, with his camera in his lap. If this was me, my camera would still be in its bag, and it would be a crazy 30 seconds of zips and Velcro and dial-turning before I'd be ready to press the button, by which time the leopard would probably be gone.

The rosettes on the pelt give the shot a sense of gentle movement; they're bold and vibrant against the uniform colour of the background. (And the foreground – it looks like the furrows of a ploughed field, but it must be vehicle tracks.)

Add that golden wash of light seeping in from the top, and the rim lighting around the edges of the animal, and you've got a winning shot! Congratulations Jurgens – you're the first winner of our new prize, the North Ridge Long Haul bag. (See page 63.) Happy travels!

A



B



▲ PIET VAN RENSBURG

Nikon D7100

Sigma 120–300 mm lens

PIET WRITES: My wife and I visited the Kruger in summer – the park had received a lot of rain. The bush was green and there was game aplenty. Everything looked healthy.

We had breakfast at Lower Sabie and took the H10 to Skukuza, where we planned to sleep that night. However, a forced detour thanks to a flooded road made us take a different route, and that's when we came across this European roller swooping up from the grass with a beetle in its grasp.

The roller perched and proceeded to fling its catch in the

air until it eventually landed just the right way for swallowing. This took a good five minutes to perfect!

My settings: shutter speed 1/3 200 second, aperture f5.6, ISO 640.

TOAST SAYS: The classic roller shot – Piet nailed it! Our inbox gets its fair share of roller photos, because rollers are little show-offs: They're

bright and chirpy and tend to perch prominently next to roads, swooping in to catch insects flying up as you drive past. (This also explains why you often see rollers as roadkill. Please drive carefully around them.)

A fast shutter speed was essential to freeze the action here, and Piet took no chances with his 1/3 200 second.

Piet's original photo (A) is

framed quite loosely, with lots of open space around the bird. This was a wise decision, since the bird might have suddenly flown off, and then you'd need that open space.

However, to improve the composition afterwards, you can crop tighter to remove the "dead" space (B). This changes nothing of the content – all the action remains, but the impact of the shot is strengthened.

> AARON BALFOUR

Canon EOS R50

Canon 100 – 400 mm lens

AARON WRITES: I'm from Hilton in KZN, and photography is my passion. I photographed this female village weaver in the arboretum at St John's Village, just outside my neighbouring town of Howick.

I spent the morning walking through the estate and eventually found a tree full of weavers. I watched them for about half an hour and managed to get a shot of this female. Among the other weaver species that look similar, the female village weaver stands out because of her diagnostic red eyes.

It was quite an experience to watch them making their incredible nests, which hang suspended from the branches.

TOAST SAYS: I love this, Aaron! The delicate textures of the feathers on the bird's head and neck create a very pleasing "feel" to the photo, especially against the rougher, stringier textures of the grass-woven nest.

Aaron's point of focus is perfect – you want that eye to be pin sharp. It's so easy to accidentally focus on the beak, for example, but that beady eye is what gives this shot its extra punch. It's as if Mrs Weaver is looking at Aaron, saying: "Hey, can't you see I'm busy here?"



> LUKE MERRICK

Nikon D7000

Sigma 150 – 500 mm lens

LUKE WRITES: When the poppies in our garden are in season, we have an influx of common waxbills. They sit on the seedheads and rip through the flesh until they reach the nutrient-rich seeds inside – eating the seeds helps prepare them for the breeding season.

I sat in the garden for a while so they could get used to my presence. One evening, with the sun dipping and golden light illuminating the landscape, I took my opportunity.

I kept the camera steady by resting it on our vegetable garden fence, and fired off as many photos as I could so I'd have some options to choose from. This was my favourite – you can see the bird's wet forehead – that's how deep he stuck it into the moist flesh of the plant to dig out the seeds!

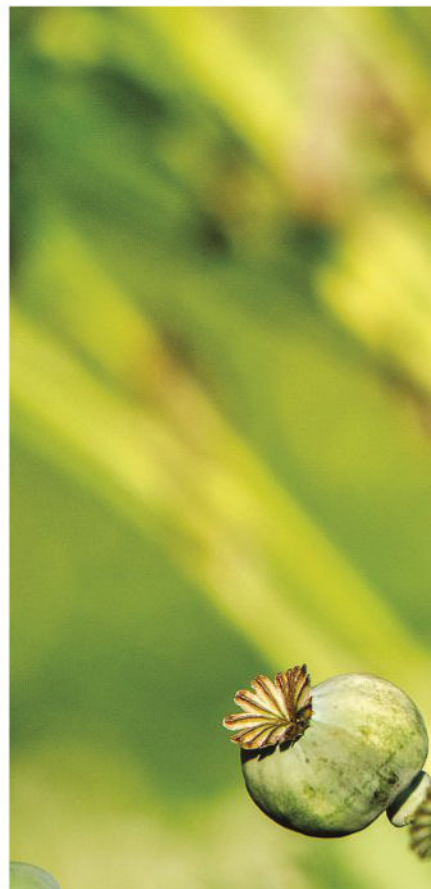
My settings were: shutter speed 1/2000 second, aperture f6.3 and ISO 900.

TOAST SAYS: Luke's composition is perfect. I love the way the waxbill fits into that gap between the seedheads. Their round shapes complement the rounded belly of the bird.

The red details on the face of the bird stand out boldly against the background, like a traffic cone on a sports field. Also notice the flash of light in its eye – that reflection of the sun in the eye of the bird is something a keen photographer will always look out for. It's called a "catch light" and it makes your photo pop.

I like how Luke played the long game here. First, his observational skills alerted him to the regular presence of the waxbills in the garden. Next, he created a sense of safety so the birds would get used to his presence and not fly away. Then he waited... and when the light was perfect, he got his shot.

Bravo!





▲ DENNIS FORSTER

Pentax K1
Pentax DA 300 mm lens

DENNIS WRITES: It's wonderful to experience the first summer rains in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. After the dry months, the clouds build up in the late afternoon, thunder cracks and a brief torrential downpour ensues. The jubilant behaviour of the animals after the rain is a joy to witness.

I took this photo across the road from the Kij Kij waterhole. The scene had darkened considerably under low clouds. This tree was silhouetted against the sun, and the raindrops were illuminated just enough to be visible, blown by the wind and streaking diagonally across the frame.

TOAST SAYS: Drama, drama, drama! Dennis's photo puts us right in the centre of a desert thunderstorm – you can sense the electric energy of the moment. When it begins to rain, most photographers will wind up the window and put away the cameras to keep them dry. But if you start cruising back to camp with your mind on that mug of Milo, you will never capture a moment like this.

Dennis recognised this scene as unique and unusual, and captured it in a way that speaks to our senses – you can smell the rain!

TAKE YOUR PIC

> WILLEM KRUGER

Sony A1ii camera
Sony FE 200–600 mm lens

WILLEM WRITES: On an early drive one morning in the Kgalagadi, we glimpsed an African wildcat running across the road. This was between Gunong and Kransbrak waterhole, between Twee Rivieren and Nossob.

We stopped next to the bush where it disappeared, hoping it would show itself. We were lucky: The cat was quite relaxed and inquisitive. Its head popped up after a few minutes, and it looked straight at me.

Through my camera, I noticed something was not right with one of the eyes. Afterwards – on my computer – I zoomed in and saw it was a fly sitting on the edge of the eye.

TOAST SAYS: This extreme close-up portrait breaks a basic “rule” of



wildlife photography, but for a very good reason. Usually, you'd want to include the ears of your subject because showing the whole outline of the animal helps to identify it. Think of how important it is to see the ears of a bat-eared fox to know (at a glance) that it's indeed a

bat-eared fox you're looking at.

I'm sure Willem took more than enough photos of this African wildcat's ears in full. But his crop (whether done in camera or afterwards during editing – it doesn't matter) really brings home the impact of the cat's yellow eyes.

The thin, coin-slot pupils, black in the yellow sea of the iris, would normally make enough of an impression. But here, there's more: That tiny fly casts a shadow across the one eye, making this portrait unique.

Top job, Willem, as always!

< CAROLINE ROWBOTTOM

Canon EOS R5
Canon RF 100–500 mm lens

CAROLINE WRITES: I took this photo near Skukuza in the Kruger Park. I just love watching the antics of baboons – displays that range from chaotic fun and exploring their environment, to complex social rituals that establish hierarchy. It's all part of their daily life in large, organised groups.

I spent a short while with this particular troop, watching the youngsters swinging through the air like skilled acrobats.

TOAST SAYS: If given the choice between photographing a pride of lions fast asleep under a tree for three hours and a troop of baboons fooling about for three minutes, I'll always pick the baboons.

Lions might be the kings of the bush, but during daylight hours they spend a disproportionate amount of time doing “nothing”, just resting up for their next hunt – which, of course, can be every exciting to photograph! But with baboons, you get bang for buck, all the time. They pinch each other, groom, bare teeth, jump around, pull faces... They remind us of ourselves, and that's what makes them so engaging as subjects.

By chance, all the faces of the baboons here are turned away from the camera. This is a pity, since we miss out on some extra expression. But the frenetic *jolling* between the three main characters in the foreground makes up for it.

I love the positions of the hands, feet and tails – it really shows off their dexterity. This put a smile on my face. Thanks, Caroline!





▲ JUDY CRONJÉ

Canon EOS R
Canon EF 100 mm macro lens

JUDY SAYS: I stayed over in Hazyview on my way to the Kruger. That's where I came across this painted reed frog. The little thing was barely 2,5 cm in length!

While not exactly one of the Big Five, I was reminded again of all the incredible tiny critters hiding right under our noses.

TOAST SAYS: Judy is right – it's often the small things in nature that truly bowl you over. Sure, an encounter with a Kruger elephant is special, but if you fanatically search for the bigger and more glamorous animals only, you'll miss out on the thousands of species that make up the web of life that ends up supporting that ellie.

There are about 13 subspecies of painted reed frog. According to entomologist Jo Balmer, this one is *Hyperolius marmoratus taeniatus*, or a striped painted reed frog (as its mother would call it). They're keen climbers – you might see one clambering up reeds in a wetland or rootling around in a damp suburban garden.

I like the side profile here, and how clearly we can see the eye, glistening like a marble. The vertical framing is perfect – it works with the body position of the frog, which in the composition converges with the leaf in the background.

Excellent work, Judy!



SEND US YOUR BEST TRAVEL AND NATURE PHOTOS!

WHY? We publish a selection of reader pictures in every issue. Don't be shy, haul out those shots you've been hoarding on your computer and send them to us! We like just about anything: wildlife, landscapes, portraits, holiday snaps or bugs in your garden.

HOW? Send your photos to 📧 takeyourpic@gomag.co.za. Submit only your three best shots each month. Don't send files bigger than 4 MB – if we need a bigger version, we'll ask for it. Give the name, surname, home town and contact number of the photographer. Also include info about where and how the shot was taken, and what equipment was used. If you manipulated your photo in any way, tell us what you did. No AI illustrations, please!

THE FINE PRINT We reserve the right to use your photos elsewhere in the magazine, on our digital platforms and marketing material.



Want to sign up for our online photography course? Visit 📧 takebetterphotos.gomag.co.za



We're on Instagram! Follow us and our sister magazine *Weg* for travel and wildlife pics: Search for @gomagsa and @menseselense

TAKE THE WINNING PHOTO

Win a North Ridge Long Haul bag worth R2 450!



The 83 ℓ **Long Haul bag** from North Ridge's Deluxe Range is perfect for week-long trips, with space for six to ten outfits, two to three pairs of shoes, jackets and extras. (The prize includes a matching shoe bag and toiletry bag.) It features a reinforced base for durability, padded handles, and backpack-style straps for easy carrying.

📧 north-ridge.co.za

Life and water

BY IAN MCNAUGHT DAVIS

For the past decade, I have been working on a photography project that explores humans' relationships with water. It has taken me from baptisms in Ethiopia to kitsch holiday resorts in Kyrgyzstan, from fishing at night with paraffin lanterns in Rwanda to sunrise rituals on the banks of India's holy Ganges River.

With all the conveniences of indoor plumbing, it's easy to think of a tap as a source of water and to overlook how our planet's lakes, rivers and oceans are sources of livelihoods and life; where millions drink, play, worship, wash, irrigate with and travel upon.

South Africa has its own complex relationship with water – as evidenced by the recent floods in certain parts and extreme drought in other parts.

If anything, I hope this selection makes you think next time you reach for that tap.

Ian is a visual artist, writer and lecturer – and a longtime go! contributor. See the full project at ianmcnaughtdavis.com

➤ Dawn dash

Pacitan, Indonesia

Every morning, boys take horses from a nearby racing stable for sprint training on the beach of Pacitan, a small town on Indonesia's island of Java.

HOW? Fujifilm X100S, 23 mm lens, shutter speed 1/900 second, aperture f5.6, ISO 250



✓ The swimming cows of Lake Kivu *Kibuye, Rwanda*

Two years ago, I walked the length of the Rwandan shore of Lake Kivu, which separates Rwanda from the DRC. Halfway through, some locals told me about cows that swim great lengths between the lake's islands. I was surprised by this, but the locals were even more surprised that I didn't know cows could swim!

HOW? Fujifilm X100S, 23 mm lens, shutter speed
1/280 second, aperture F8, ISO 320







✔ One night in Bangkok

Bangkok, Thailand

I was waiting for a boat on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, when I noticed the saffron robes of my fellow passengers matched Wat Arun, Bangkok's iconic Temple of Dawn, on the other side of the river.

It's comforting to know that despite Buddhist monks' traits of self-discipline and restraint, they're also subject to the grip of the phone screen, just like the rest of us.

HOW? Fujifilm X100S, 23 mm lens, shutter speed 1/35 second, aperture f2, ISO 4 000





📍 New life in a lotus pond

Kampot, Cambodia

This girl was collecting lotus flowers on the outskirts of Cambodia's riverside town of Kampot. The pond was once a crater – the result of America's bombing campaign during the Vietnam War. Nature has since reclaimed these many chasms, and they now sprawl with life.

HOW? Fujifilm X100S, 23 mm lens, shutter speed 1/480 second, aperture f2.8, ISO 250



Pork fillet with plum sauce and salad boats

No cutlery required!

Forget about setting the table and washing stacks of dishes. These platters are made for sharing and can be served straight off the fire!

RECIPES & STYLING JOHANÉ NEILSON
PICTURES SHELLEY CHRISTIANS

Steak crostini with
herb sauce



Spicy chicken kebabs



Pork ribs

Pork fillet with plum sauce and salad boats

Serves 6 as an appetiser

Preparation time 20 minutes

Cooking time 10–15 minutes

You need

- 600 g pork fillet, membranes removed
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons plum sauce, plus extra to serve
- 1 teaspoon low-sodium soya sauce
- 2 or 3 plums, halved and stoned
- 2 cups rainbow coleslaw
- 1 tablespoon pickled ginger slices (sushi ginger), shredded
- 3 tablespoons Kewpie mayonnaise
- ¼ cup salted peanuts, chopped
- 2 heads of cos or Crunchita lettuce, leaves separated

Here's how

1 Rub the fillet with oil and season with salt and pepper. Braai the fillet directly over the coals or in a hot griddle pan until golden brown and just cooked. (You don't want to braai the delicate meat too long.) Mix the plum sauce and soya sauce together and baste the meat during the last minute to form a glaze. Let the meat rest for a few minutes before you cut it into thin slices.

2 Braai the plums for a few minutes until charred on the cut side. This step is optional, but lends extra flavour.

3 Put the coleslaw in a bowl and shred it with kitchen scissors until fine. (It's easier to fill the lettuce boats with fine coleslaw.) Add the ginger and mayonnaise.

4 Arrange the fillet slices, coleslaw, plum halves (you can also cut them smaller), bowls with peanuts and extra plum sauce on a serving platter, along with the lettuce leaves. Your guests can fill the lettuce leaves with the other ingredients, fold them closed and eat them with their hands like a taco.

TIP Braai menus are usually heavy on meat and light on fresh ingredients. These crisp lettuce boats add balance and colour. Experiment with different fillings. In his new cookbook *Easy Air Fryer*, Jamie Oliver makes similar salad boats with hoisin duck slices, glass noodles and green salad.

Steak crostini with herb sauce

Makes 24 slices

Preparation time 40 minutes

Cooking time 15 minutes

You need

- 300 g rump steak
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 big baby marrows, cut into diagonal slices
- 1 long French loaf, in 1 cm-thick slices
- 1 cup cream cheese or whipped feta spread (see tip)

For the herb sauce

- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 green chilli, finely chopped
- 1 anchovy, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon capers, roughly chopped
- 1 teaspoon roasted garlic paste (I use Belazu's)
- ½ cup each basil, mint and parsley, finely shredded
- about ¼ cup olive oil

Here's how

1 Baste the steak with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Set aside for 10 minutes or until the coals are ready. Braai over hot coals – with some flames – until cooked to your liking. Let the meat rest for 10 minutes.

2 Combine all the ingredients for the herb sauce except the olive oil. Add the olive oil in a thin stream while beating the sauce until it has the texture of a runny pesto. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

3 Roast the baby marrow slices in a griddle pan until charred all over and mix the cooked slices with a spoonful of the herb sauce. Toast the slices of bread (use a pan or over the coals) – without adding extra oil or butter – until light brown and crisp.

4 Cut the steak into thin strips and baste with the herb sauce. Spread a thick layer of cream cheese on the hot bread, arrange the steak and baby marrow slices on top, and serve immediately. Store any leftover herb sauce in the fridge.

TIP *If you like a salty cheese spread, whipped feta is a delicious alternative to cream cheese. Crumble 150 g creamy feta into ½ cup double-cream yoghurt and add grated lemon zest. Use a stick blender to blitz until smooth.*

Spicy chicken kebabs

Makes 12 kebabs

Preparation time 30 minutes,

plus time to marinate

Cooking time 15 minutes

You need

- 750 g chicken thigh fillets
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- chilli sauce, to taste (I use Lao Gan Ma's Chilli Crisp – get it from your local Asian grocery store)

For the marinade

- ½ cup creamy French-style mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons sriracha sauce
- 1 clove of garlic, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- grated zest of 1 lemon

Here's how

1 Cut the chicken fillets into bite-sized pieces and mix with the ingredients for the marinade. (Do it the day before and marinate the meat in the fridge overnight.) Season with salt and pepper just before you braai. Thread

four or five pieces on a skewer. (Remember to soak the skewers in water beforehand to prevent them from catching fire!)

2 Braai the kebabs over medium-hot coals until golden brown and cooked. Turn them regularly. Small skewers cook very quickly – 5 to 10 minutes at most – so keep an eye on them.

3 Drizzle the kebabs with a spoonful of chilli sauce and set aside to rest for a few minutes. Scatter over chopped spring onion for colour and crunch.

Pork ribs

Makes 1,2 kg ribs

Preparation time 2 hours

Cooking time 1 hour 30 minutes

You need

- 1,2 kg pork loin ribs
- 2 cups ginger beer
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ cup mustard sauce (the kind you get in a bottle)
- 2 tablespoons BBQ spices (NoMu has a great BBQ rub)

For the glaze

- ¾ cup BBQ sauce (I use the Checkers Championship Braai Sauce & Marinade)
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons runny honey
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon wholegrain mustard

Here's how

1 Put the ribs in a pot where they fit snugly – you can cut them into smaller pieces if needed. Add the ginger beer and bay leaves and top up with water until the meat is



Pizza pie with bacon and jalapeño



Miso chicken wings

its underside with olive oil. Close the hinged grid tightly.

3 Braai the pizza pie. Turn regularly until both sides are crisp and the cheese has melted. Serve in bite-size pieces.

Miso chicken wings

Makes 16 wings

Preparation time 30 minutes, plus time to rest

Cooking time 25–30 minutes

You need

- 16 chicken wings
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 tablespoons miso paste
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons soya sauce
- juice of 1 lemon
- toasted sesame seeds

Here's how

1 Season the chicken wings with salt and pepper and place them uncovered on a wire rack in an oven pan. Refrigerate for at least an hour or overnight to dry out the chicken skin a little bit. Remove the chicken from the fridge about 15 minutes before you plan to braai so it's not too cold on the coals.

2 Braai the chicken for about 20 minutes over medium-hot coals until crispy, golden brown and basically cooked. Remove from the grid and set aside in a roaster.

3 Beat the miso, honey, olive oil, soya sauce and lemon juice together until smooth. Pour the mixture over the chicken. Close the lid of the roaster and shake it a few times until the wings are covered in the sauce. Return the chicken to the grid for a few minutes or until the wings are sticky. Scatter over the sesame seeds and serve with lemon wedges.

TIP Miso is a fermented soybean paste with a salty umami flavour – it's almost like Asian Marmite! Once you've tasted it, there will always be a jar in your pantry.

covered. Bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer for 1 hour with the lid slightly open. Use a slotted spoon to remove the meat from the pot and set aside until cool enough to handle.

2 Spread mustard over the meat and sprinkle over the spices to create a layer on the outside.

3 Braai the ribs over a medium heat until golden brown and flavoursome. It takes at least 20 minutes.

4 Heat the ingredients for the glaze in a pot until the sugar has melted. As soon as the ribs are cooked to your liking, baste them with the glaze. Braai and turn the ribs until sticky and irresistible. Let the ribs rest for a few minutes before you

cut them into bite-sized pieces. Keep serviettes on hand!

Pizza pie with bacon and jalapeño

Thanks to Jan Braai for the inspiration for this pizza pie!

Makes 1 big pizza pie

Preparation time 5 minutes

Cooking time 10 minutes

You need

- 2 store-bought pizza bases with tomato sauce, thawed
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1½ cups grated mozzarella

- 100 g bacon, chopped and fried until crispy
- 1 pickled jalapeño, in slices
- 100 g feta, in blocks
- fresh basil leaves

Here's how

1 Brush the underside of the first pizza base with a little olive oil and put it on a hinged grid. (The oil will prevent the dough from sticking to the grid and gives the pizza a nice colour.)

2 Scatter over half of the grated cheese, followed by the bacon, jalapeño slices, feta and basil. Scatter the remaining cheese over the filling in an even layer. Put the other pizza base – tomato side facing down – on top and brush

EAT OUT



RESTAURANT AWARDS 2026



DISCOVER THE EAT OUT STAR RESTAURANTS



BOOK YOUR EAT OUT STAR DINING EXPERIENCE IN CAPE TOWN

Cape Town is a playground for food lovers, and this is your guide to eating your way through delicacies from the coast to the vineyards and the lively city streets.

The Eat Out star-rated restaurants offer a chance to experience the food, culture, and creativity with a trusted guide.

If you've never booked a star restaurant before, we're here to help!

HOW TO MAKE THE CUT

Each restaurant is judged across menu, taste and technique, service, presentation, beverages, ambiance and perceived value.

- 1 star (70 – 79 points): Reliable, great food – perfect for first-timers
- 2 stars (80 – 89 points): Special occasion-worthy dining, adventurous
- 3 stars (90+ points): World-class menu, unforgettable, a true culinary journey

TIPS FOR FIRST-TIMERS

1. Book early, be flexible

Popular spots fill up fast. Consider midweek lunches, early dinners, or joining waiting lists.

2. Know what you're ordering

Most star restaurants focus on tasting menus with multiple courses. Check the menu in advance.

3. Budget for the full experience

Drinks, wine pairings, and service fees quickly add up. Plan ahead.

4. Dress smart-casual

Cape Town star dining is polished but rarely stuffy.

5. Bring curiosity

Star dining is about experiencing the extraordinary. Be curious and savour it all. Let each star restaurant show you a new side of Cape Town's culinary world.

Scan this code to discover the
2026 Eat Out star-rated restaurants





People pleasers

KIA CARNIVAL SXL

Kia and Volkswagen both offer a variety of seven-seater vehicles to move families around in style – we recently drove the new **Kia Carnival** and the **Volkswagen Tayron**.

But the car we're really looking forward to driving is the new **Toyota Land Cruiser FJ**...

BY PIERRE STEYN



Like station wagons, big vans with sliding doors were the favourite type of family vehicle around the end of the 20th century. But then the SUV arrived and ate their breakfast, lunch and supper.

While station wagons remain dead and buried, it does seem as if vans have benefited from some big-brand CPR in the last few years. Volkswagen (Transporter), Mercedes-Benz (V-Class), Ford (Tourneo), Toyota (Quantum) and Hyundai (Staria) all have skin in the game.

But the best of the bunch might be the **Kia Carnival SXL**. Calling the Carnival a “van” is like calling Cirque du Soleil a “circus” – it does the car a disservice. The Carnival is a stylish luxury vehicle, fully loaded with every

modern convenience – as you’d expect at a price of R1,3 million. The sliding doors on both sides are electric, as is the rear hatch, and the back row has oodles of leg- and headroom. The seats in the middle row are the highlight: They’re more like lounge recliners and they can rotate to face either direction. That’s where I’d want to be on a road trip...

In terms of performance, the 2.2-litre turbo-diesel engine – coupled to an eight-speed automatic transmission – is a beauty. It’s frugal (around 7ℓ/100 km) and powerful (0 – 100 km/h in 10,7 seconds); you never feel like you’re driving a bus around town. Add a five-year, unlimited-kilometre warranty and a six-year/90 000 km maintenance plan to the mix, and there’s

very little not to like about the Carnival.

By contrast, the new **Volkswagen Tayron** is a more traditional SUV with the added convenience of a third row of seats. It replaces the Volkswagen Tiguan Allspace, slotting between the top-tier Touareg and the five-seater Tiguan. We drove the mid-spec 1.4-litre TSI Life, which retails for R854 000. It looks, feels and drives like a Tiguan – no surprise there, since both cars share the same engine (110 kW and 250 Nm) and the same seven-speed DSG transmission.

Like all Volkswagen SUVs, the Tayron Life is a comfortable, well-appointed car that’s easy to live with, but the more powerful 2.0-litre TSI version – with VW’s 4-Motion all-wheel drive and mild hybrid system, to



VOLKSWAGEN TAYRON



TOYOTA LAND CRUISER FJ

be launched later this year – is the one I'd be eyeing out.

Two other hotly anticipated launches, scheduled for later in the year, are for the new Toyota Hilux and for a baby Land Cruiser that will revive the famous FJ badge. The **Land Cruiser FJ** was revealed at Toyota's annual State of the Motoring Industry event in Johannesburg in February, and it certainly looks the part of a capable and very desirable 4x4.

The model to be launched – probably in the second quarter of 2026 – will have a 2.7-litre four-cylinder petrol engine (no hint of diesel yet) and a six-speed automatic transmission. Although no pricing has been released, Toyota has suggested that it will cost less than R1 million. Watch this space...



You call that a knife?

How do you choose a good knife? The choices and prices are overwhelming, so we asked expert **Stephan Kornelius** for advice. Stephan is an engineer by day and knifemaker by night – he also happens to be my neighbour and friend. He's made some beautiful knives for our kitchen, and it's a pleasure to pop over to his house when we need them sharpened! Here's his advice for the major knife categories.

BY PIERRE STEYN



KITCHEN

Professional kitchens are full of highly specialised knives and tools used to create amazing dishes. But for home cooks, a basic selection will go a long way.

> SIX-INCH UTILITY KNIFE

If you could only have one knife in your kitchen, this would be it. A knife with a blade between 12 and 15 cm long is capable of more than 80% of everyday kitchen tasks. Whether you're dicing vegetables, portioning chicken or fish, or preparing a fruit salad – something like this Victorinox chef's knife can do it all. If you're going to use it regularly, find one with a moulded plastic handle that can be washed in the dishwasher.

R637  sharpedge.co.za

✓ EIGHT-INCH CARVING KNIFE

While not used as frequently as a utility knife, some kitchen tasks require something bigger, like this Wüsthof Classic Chef's knife. Use it to slice a large roast, or to break down a pumpkin or a watermelon. For those kinds of tasks, a knife with a blade between 18 and 22 cm will do the job safely and efficiently.

R2 699  yuppiechef.com

^ FILLET/BONING KNIFE

A fillet knife has a thin, flexible blade and is good for fine work or to make accurate cuts. Tasks like taking the skin off a fish fillet, for example, or deboning a leg of lamb become much easier using the fine point and narrow blade of this Victorinox Fibrox filleting knife.

R760  sharpedge.co.za

✓ BREAD KNIFE

A serrated blade slices more cleanly through any dish with a crust or with a layer of pastry. The teeth on a bread knife like this Global G Series one will cut through the tough layers of a bread crust or a pie without tearing, so you're left with neat slices and no crumbs.

R1 399  yuppiechef.com

> PARING KNIFE

This is the last "must have" kitchen knife. The small blade of this Humble & Mash paring knife can be used for quick jobs like slicing fresh herbs from their stems, peeling an onion or opening the stubborn wrapping on a braai pack.

R199  yuppiechef.com



POCKETKNIVES

Discussing pocketknives is a bit like arguing about cars, politics or religion – interesting at first, but it can lead to a fight! People are passionate about these useful knives, which many of us carry every day. A pocketknife has a myriad uses – everything from opening a courier box to slicing biltong. Consider the following:

BLADE LENGTH: A blade between 7,5 and 10 cm long strikes the right balance between being big enough to be useful and small enough to carry easily.

LOCKING MECHANISM: All pocketknives have some type of lock to keep an open blade from accidentally closing on your hand. They range from a simple friction lock on older designs, to more advanced frame locks and lever locks on more modern designs. They all work – just make sure you know which one you have so you know how to open and close the blade safely.

CARRY METHOD: Most modern pocketknives come with a pocket clip of some kind to attach to your pocket or backpack. A few of the more classic designs don't have this – keep that in mind when you think of how you'll carry the knife.

Designs and prices for these knives are wide ranging, so look around until you find one you like. Or start your own collection!

< **PREMIUM LOCKING FOLDING KNIFE**

Premium offerings in this category include brands like Benchmade (the Bugout Ranger featured here), Spyderco, Kershaw and SOG Knives. They all use quality materials and have a wide range of customisation options – but they can be very expensive.

R4 699 📞 safarioutdoor.co.za

▲ **GENERAL PURPOSE LOCKING FOLDING KNIFE**

Several companies make these knives and many are manufactured in China. They're great value for the money. Knives from brands like Civivi (the Elementum Micarta 907S featured here), WE Knife Company, CJRB and Honey Badger are all available locally and range from R500 – R2 000.

R1 295 📞 knifeguy.co.za

▲ **SWISS ARMY KNIFE**

This is the blade that started many knife collections over generations. These knives are well made, affordable and some models come with a wide variety of additional tools. The Victorinox Spartan Red is a solid choice and makes for a great gift.

R599 📞 safarioutdoor.co.za

< **REPLACEABLE BLADE**

If you need a tool that will absorb abuse like scraping or prying, or if you do a lot of rope, box or carpet cutting, a knife with a replaceable blade is a good option. The Outdoor Edge Slidewinder uses box cutter blades available at any hardware store, so your pocketknife never needs to be sharpened.

R395 📞 knifeguy.co.za



HUNTING & GENERAL-PURPOSE FIXED BLADE

A fixed-blade knife is faster and sturdier than a pocketknife. If you work in agriculture or game conservation, this kind of knife is a good option. The same knives are typically used by hunters to process game. As with pocketknives, the options are only limited by your imagination and your budget! A knife with a blade between 10 and 15 cm is the most practical. Here are some options.



▲ **GOOD VALUE**

The fixed-blade knives by Morakniv, like this Morakniv Companion, are hard to beat when it comes to value for money. They're available in a range of styles and colours and make fantastic hard-use tools.

R379 📞 safarioutdoor.co.za

▼ **SPECIALISED HUNTING KNIFE**

Some hunting knives, like this Muela Viper, include a gut hook or belly opener in the blade design, which is useful for removing the entrails from game animals to save the meat from spoiling.

R999 📞 safarioutdoor.co.za



▲ **SURVIVAL KNIFE**

A number of companies offer designs that merge hunting, camping and general-use features in an oversized knife that does it all. This Gerber StrongArm is a good example.

R2 499 📞 knifeguy.co.za



> **CUSTOM**

The Knifemakers Guild of Southern Africa (kgsa.co.za) organises regular knife shows where members of our very passionate knifemaking community can exhibit and sell their work. Our makers are globally respected. If you can afford it, a good artisan can make you almost any knife you can dream of. This fixed-blade Hidden Tang hunting knife was made by well-known South African knifemaker Neels van den Berg.

R8 500 📞 blackdragonforge.com



MULTI-TOOLS

The launch of the Leatherman in 1983 created a thriving market for pocket-sized tools that can perform a variety of functions. While a multi-tool will never replace the toolbox in your garage, they offer a convenient way to carry a wide variety of tools in your vehicle, at your camp or out in the wilderness. Consider how you intend to use it before you buy – space is always a premium; you don't want to carry tools you're not going to use.



< BUDGET OPTION

This Lansky Mini Multi-Tool offers a good variety of basic tools. At this price you can afford to keep one in the car, the boat and the caravan!

R286 sharpedge.co.za

> MID-RANGE

The SOG PowerPint is a versatile, good-value multi-tool. Extras include scissors, a saw blade and a file, and it can tackle most emergency jobs around the house or in the bush.

R1 617 sharpedge.co.za



< FANCY

The Leatherman Surge is there for the splurge – it comes with a replaceable carbide wire cutter insert, a variety of specialty blades, and an attachment for interchangeable driver bits (sold separately) that turns it into a pocket powerhouse.

R4 299 safarioutdoor.co.za



A NOTE ON BLADE STEEL

Not all steel is created equal – and you usually get what you pay for. Generally, any iron alloy with between 0.5% and 1.25% carbon by weight can be hardened to make a knife, but a vast number of alloys has been developed over the years to give knives different characteristics matched to their intended use.

The classification code for the steel used to make a blade is often etched on the knife. Because all knives have different properties, it's useful to match the steel you buy to the intended purpose of the blade. Here are the main categories:

- **HIGH CARBON STEEL.** These steels (1095, 5160) take a very fine edge and are easy to sharpen. Carbon steel is often used for high-end kitchen knives, but it's prone to rust so dry and oil your blade regularly.
- **TOOL STEEL.** Steels like O1 and D2 were originally made for drill bits and other industrial tools. Blades made from these steels are very hard, so they stay sharp longer, but they're also more prone to chipping and can rust when not cared for.
- **STAINLESS STEEL.** Used for most commercial knives today, stainless steel is popular because it generally requires less maintenance. The chrome content in the steel slows down rust formation significantly, and by adding elements like vanadium and tungsten, the wear-resistance and toughness can be increased even more. While these rust slower, they can still rust, so keep an eye on them especially after putting them in the dishwasher.
- **PATTERN-WELDED OR DAMASCUS STEEL.** Made by forging many layers of high carbon and high nickel content steel, experienced bladesmiths can make truly breathtaking patterns in steel billets, which are then made into spectacular-looking knives. Typically reserved for very high-end or collectors' knives – Damascus steel is expensive and prone to rust, but it can be used to make an heirloom-quality knife if you want to pass something down to you grandchildren.

KNIFE SHARPENING

A dull knife is more dangerous than a sharp one. You need to apply more force to get the job done, which increases the chance of slipping and other accidents. It's possible to sharpen knives on a waterstone the traditional way, but these days there are easier and quicker options.

➤ **PULL-THROUGH SHARPENER**

This is a quick and easy solution for kitchen or camp, when a slightly dull blade needs a touch-up. The knife edge is sharpened by drawing the blade through two steel or ceramic rods clamped at a fixed angle in the handle. It's not intended to sharpen a knife that has completely lost its edge, but will provide a quick fix if time is limited. The Work Sharp Pivot Pro is a goodie.

R351 📞 sharpedge.co.za



⬆️ **ADJUSTABLE BENCH-MOUNTED SHARPENER**

Many outdoor retailers sell adjustable sharpening systems that provide several different grits of (replaceable) sharpening stones and allow the user to adjust the angle at which the knife edge is sharpened. With something like this Lansky Sharpening Deluxe Kit (and some time and effort) you can bring any knife back to shaving sharp, regardless of the type or how dull the blade has become.

R1 699 📞 safarioutdoor.co.za

⬆️ **HONING ROD**

These come in ceramic and steel options – like this one from Victorinox. The rod doesn't actually sharpen the knife; it re-aligns the fine edge on a knife that is already sharp but may have been dulled slightly by bone or other hard materials. This is the best option to keep a sharp knife in top condition.

R256 📞 sharpedge.co.za



⬆️ **ELECTRIC SHARPENER**

At the very top of the sharpening food chain is the electric belt sharpener, like this one from Work Sharp. This system has a small electric motor that drives a sanding belt at high speed, and it enables you to adjust the angle at which your knife edge is ground. Belts are replaceable and come in a variety of grits – a fast and accurate way to sharpen almost any knife. It's great if you have a lot of knives to maintain. (And your neighbour's... – Ed)

R3 199 📞 safarioutdoor.co.za







TAKE A HIKE

DISA GORGE, TABLE MOUNTAIN

BY SOPHIA VAN TAAK



Want to go looking for a waterfall in a kloof on Table Mountain? Of course you do!

Orange Kloof is a forested area on the southern, “back” slopes of the mountain – a place not many hikers venture into because it’s a restricted-access mini reserve within the greater Table Mountain National Park.

Orange Kloof was a favourite woodcutting area for the original settlers of the Cape – thankfully not to the extent that they eradicated the entire forest. These days it remains an impossibly green spot, filled with ancient indigenous trees, rare fynbos, oxygen and silence. No wonder only a limited number of hikers are allowed here per day.

I always thought that the name of the kloof came from the colonial period – the Royal House of Orange Nassau in the Netherlands. But nope – it was named after the common saffronwood, which once grew abundantly and has a yellow-orange pigment in its bark.

When you look at a map, Orange Kloof is above Hout Bay and behind the Twelve Apostles. It stretches out like an amphitheatre across the Back Table, with a thin left arm that reaches higher, as if it wants to tap the next ridge over on the shoulder. It’s this arm – the densely vegetated Disa Gorge – we’re headed to this morning.

The hike kicks off up a hill from the parking area. For about 2,2 km, we walk along a jeep track below Constantia Corner and Klaassen’s Kop. The road eventually crosses a spruit that runs down from De Villiers Dam, which is on top of Table Mountain. We gulp down the clean water. There’s no need to fill our bottles because there will be water nearby throughout the day.

Another 1,8 km beyond the spruit along the jeep track, a footpath turns off to the right but we continue straight and follow zigzags through

the forest to another stream in Disa Gorge. By now we’ve done just under 4 km. Our legs have warmed up and the fun is about to begin!

The jeep track goes downhill, deeper into the forest, but we go right, upstream, along a narrow path through a jungle of ferns, grass and vines. We’ve progressed only a few hundred metres before we come across the first swimming spot. You know the saying: You’ll only regret the times you *didn’t* swim!

Disa Gorge wraps around us on all sides. We’re completely hidden away from the world – not even satellites would see us here. (My Garmin watch will struggle to chart the route later.) Trees stand broad-shouldered above our heads and the odd sunbeam pierces the canopy to cast a spotlight on the dusky forest floor. Our teeth chatter from the cold water, but our smiles are wide – *this* is what we came for!

We wriggle back into clothes and takkies. A short distance further, we have to shuffle along a narrow rock ledge around a deep pool, like Alex Honnold without a rope. We inch along – the rock is slippery and there’s not much to hold onto. After a few panicked shrieks, we’re all back on solid ground. Phew!

The energetic rush of water is infectious and we scramble along like dassies. We’re scouts. Explorers! Every pool we come across has an even more scenic waterfall, some of which tumble over rock terraces. The murmur soon turns into a roar and the kloof gets narrower still, until we stop at a dark gash in the plateau. This is Hell’s Gate – an intimidating mass of water pours from an invisible height in the thicket.

We’ve only hiked half a kilometre up Disa Gorge, but it looks like the trail disappears here... You can’t climb up either side of the waterfall – the cliffs are sheer and slippery. We look around and find something that looks like a trail on the left slope. It might be where other

TAKE A HIKE

people got out of this dead end!

We climb over loose stone and slippery leaves, our hands looking for purchase and our shoes wedged into tree roots. After a 15-minute struggle, we sink to the ground around an incredible pool above Hell's Gate. Now I need something sweet to calm my nerves!

Once everyone's heart rate is back to normal, we push on to another waterfall in Disa Gorge called Lover's Leap. Here, the cliffs also rise like a cordon and we have to walk back about 150 m to where a faint path winds up an outcrop on the eastern side of the stream. We labour through head-high vegetation to a narrow, dilapidated bridge. We cross one by one and follow a few stone steps to the lichen-covered entrance to the Woodhead Tunnel.

The excitement of the day is getting to us and our imaginations soon turn the ornate gable of the tunnel into something from an Indiana Jones film – the gate to a haunted house, a forgotten treasure chamber... But the real story goes like this: By the late 1800s, the growing population of Cape Town forced the city council to look into alternative water sources. The streams flowing down the front of Table Mountain no longer supplied enough water. The stream we've been following all day had not yet been utilised, so they came up with a plan to channel its water to the city bowl. In November 1887, construction started on a 640 m-long tunnel through the Twelve Apostles so the water from Disa Gorge could reach a pipeline above Camps Bay and run down to the reservoirs in the city. The tunnel was still being built when the engineers realised they'd also need a reservoir above the stream. The Woodhead Tunnel (named after Sir John Woodhead, the mayor at the time) was completed in 1891, followed by the Woodhead Dam in 1897, and the Hely-Hutchinson Dam (named after the governor of the Cape colony) in 1904.

If you continue up the mountain from the bridge, you'll reach these two dams. But the bridge is where we turn around today.

In this part of the mountain, the old Hoerikwaggo Trail is still clearly marked and we follow it for nearly a kilometre down the slope to where it joins up with the jeep track again. The gravel road almost feels too easy, too civilized after our day in the bundu. To think this all exists in the middle of a city!

Previous spread: The Disa Gorge trail is one of forests, streams, rock pools and plants like this hairy thread orchid (*Holothrix villosa*; bottom left) and vlei disa (*Disa racemosa*; bottom right).

Clockwise from top right: Among the waterfalls on the trail were Hell's Gate and Lover's Leap. The group poses for a photo at the entrance to the Woodhead Tunnel. Ink flower (*Harveya capensis*). The route traces part of the old Hoerikwaggo Trail. There's no shortage of water along the way.



How does it work? The trail is about 10 km long and it's for adventurous hikers who aren't afraid of rugged terrain and scrambling. It's popular, and permits are requested months in advance. SANParks only allows two groups of hikers (maximum 12 per group) in Orange Kloof per day. The permit is free, but your group needs to include a registered mountain guide or a member of the Cape Town section of the Mountain Club of South Africa. (*It's not what you know, but who you know...* – Ed.)

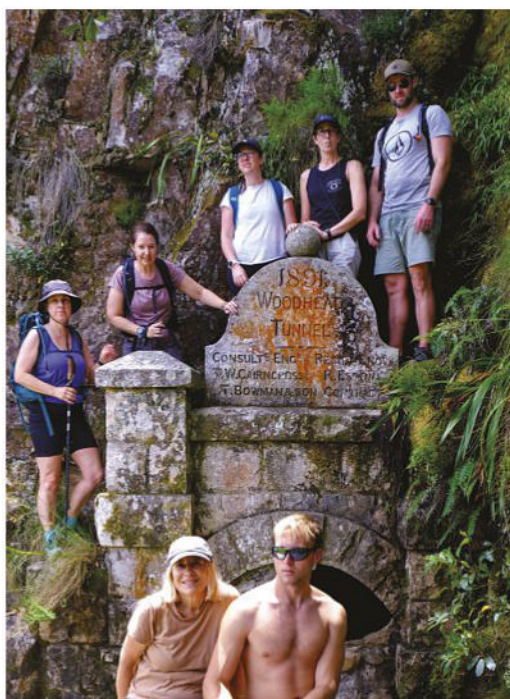
The jeep track and the old Hoerikwaggo Trail are clearly visible. In Disa Gorge the path is very overgrown. **Where?** The trail starts at the Constantia Nek parking area between Hout Bay and Constantia. Support the coffee truck and fruit sellers there.

Contact: 021 422 1601

Charmaine.ntethana@sanparks.org

Sources: *Lines of Least Resistance* by Riaan Vorster; Slingsby's Table Mountain hiking map





WHERE CAN I FIND A MOUNTAIN GUIDE?

There are many registered mountain guides who can accompany you on the trails on Table Mountain. Fees range between R750 and R1 800 per person, depending on the size of the group and what the package includes. Here are some options:

- 📍 hiketablemountain.co.za
- 📍 fynboswhisperer.co.za
- 📍 lekkerhikecapetown.co.za
- 📍 widevisiontravel.com

CAPE TOWN'S MOUNTAIN CLUB

Aside from access to restricted areas like Orange Kloof, members of the Cape Town section of the Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) also get other perks.

The club offers hundreds of guided outings with experts every year, from easy day hikes to longer rock-climbing adventures. Members may also make use of MCSA huts and trails on private land across South Africa. In turn, members have to help with the maintenance of the huts and paths a few times a year.

Membership fees: R350 once-off per adult (R50 for students aged 18–23), plus an annual fee of R900 per adult (R100 for students).

Visit 📍 mcsacapetown.co.za



**STAY
HERE**

SCOLOPIA COTTAGE, GROOTVADERSBOSCH NATURE RESERVE

Grootvadersbosch has no shortage of accommodation options. You can pitch your own tent on a deck, sleep under white linen in a luxury glamping tent, or stay in one of 11 cabins in a clearing in the forest.

But there's one other cottage you've probably never heard of...

When I first visited this tucked-away reserve deep in the Langeberg between Barrydale and Heidelberg many years ago, Scolopia was the *only* unit. The wooden cottage, set apart from the newer accommodation options, has recently been renovated with all the extras you need for a wonderful holiday. It has a fireplace, braai, firepit, hammocks, a private splash pool and a wood-fired hot tub. You'll forget about the rest of the reserve while you're here – if not the whole world!

Birdsong will wake you early and you can sit on the deck to watch the first light touch the treetops. Or you can head down to the bird hide, which is about a five-minute walk away along a jeep track. The hide is elevated, giving you a view of the forest canopy and the mountains beyond, blanketed in fynbos. If you wait quietly, a Cape batis or African paradise-flycatcher might come and say hello.

Spend the rest of the day exploring the various trails in the forest,

or go find another hidden spot that few people know about...

Follow the trail called "Redwoods Road" and don't turn off – you'll eventually reach a gate. From here, a trail descends into a kloof, to a big pool in the Duiwenhoks River. This river rises in the Langeberg and trickles through high cliffs until it flows into the sea near Vermaaklikheid about 50 km to the south.

Swim, lounge on the rocks, watch dragonflies or scramble up- and downstream to reach more pools, the next one even more beautiful (and colder) than the one you just swam in.

Keep in mind that it's about a 2 km hike to the river, and the trail is steep. By the time you get back to Scolopia, you'll definitely be dry – and ready for a dip in the cabin's splash pool before you light the fire!

Niggles? The stacking doors were a bit rickety, probably due to baboons that have tried to enter the unit in the past.

Rates: From R1 650 per night for two people; plus R505 per extra person. The cottage sleeps four people.

Where? Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve is about 20 km from Heidelberg.

Contact: ☎ 087 087 8250; 📧 capenature.co.za

– Esma Marnewick

STAY ON THE GO!

Helps reduce tiredness and fatigue so that you can stay on the go!

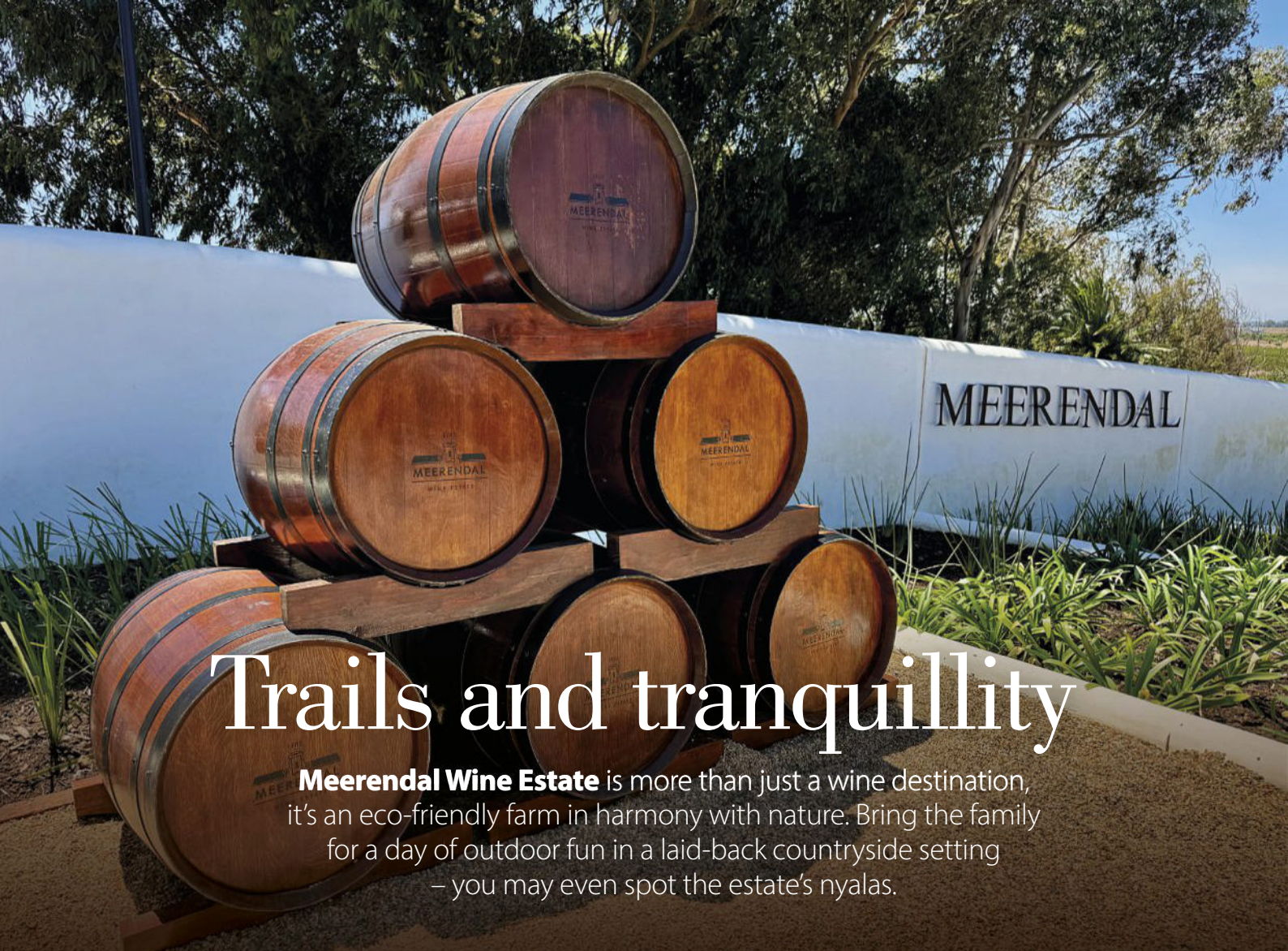


SOLAL[®]

SPECIALISTS IN HEALTHY AGEING

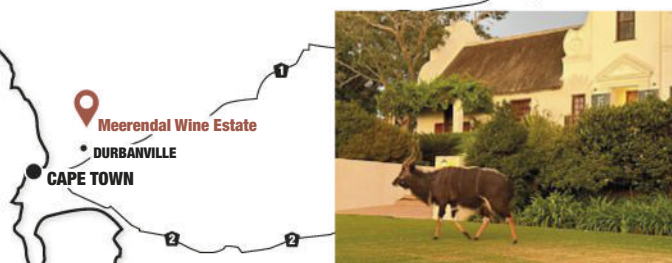
Disclaimer: ACBW1506. D 34.12 Complementary Medicine: Health Supplement. This unregistered medicine has not been evaluated by SAHPRA for its quality, safety or intended use. For full prescribing information and list of ingredients, refer to package insert. References on file.

www.solal.co.za



Trails and tranquillity

Meerendal Wine Estate is more than just a wine destination, it's an eco-friendly farm in harmony with nature. Bring the family for a day of outdoor fun in a laid-back countryside setting – you may even spot the estate's nyalas.



At Meerendal Wine Estate, the city feels a world away. Nestled between Cape Town and Durbanville, this tranquil estate is a natural escape with wide-open spaces, fresh air and mountain views perfect for adventure and relaxation.

Whether you're hiking or cycling, you'll find yourself immersed in an eco-friendly environment where nature is protected. Twitchers can enjoy the abundant birdlife – a sign of the healthy ecosystem that surrounds the vineyards. The farm has a relaxed, family-friendly atmosphere and children are welcome to kick a ball and run on the open grassy areas. Sports lovers will find plenty to keep them active.

TRAIL-RUNNING AND HIKING TRAILS

The estate offers various routes for all fitness levels. The 5 km and 7 km routes meander through the vineyards and around the koppie, offering lovely views over the grounds and Durbanville. For those who want to tackle a bit more, the 9 km route takes you up and down Dorstberg, with spectacular views of Table Mountain. Dorstberg is not for the faint-hearted and is the perfect training ground for multi-day hiking adventures. If you're lucky, you might spot one of Meerendal's striking nyalas.

TRAIL OPENING TIMES

All year-round SUMMER

(1 September – 30 April):

Trails open at sunrise and close at 18:30

WINTER

(1 May – 31 August):

Trails open at sunrise and close at 18:00

**Day permits available
at the entrance gate.**



PARKRUN

Enjoy the beautiful estate during the Parkrun on Saturdays, which is organised by the local community. Lace up, feel the fresh air and join the scenic 5 km route through the vineyards. The Parkrun caters for walkers and runners of all levels.

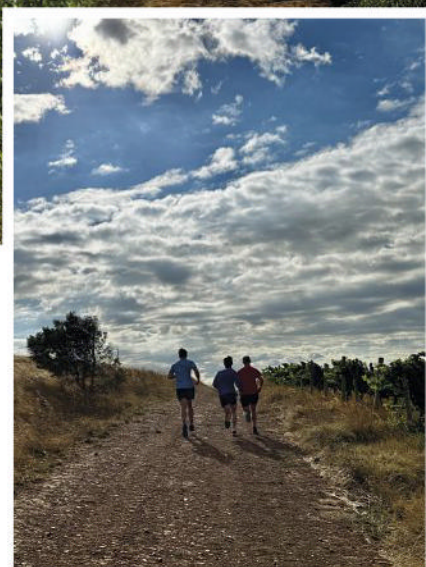
FULL MOON HIKE

Experience the magic of Meerendal under the glow of a full moon. The Full Moon Hike offers a peaceful evening walk through vineyards and fynbos, with memorable nighttime views. The 5 km moonlit hikes usually begin in the early evening and finish at the Tasting Room. Come and have a post-hike drink or dinner at one of the restaurants on the estate.



MOUNTAIN-BIKING TRAILS

Mountain bikers are spoilt for choice. Meerendal offers outstanding mountain-biking trails, featuring interlinking 5 km, 10,5 km, and 17,8 km routes. The network caters to everyone from beginners finding their flow to experienced riders looking for a challenge. Come and experience the famous Stairway to Heaven, Dorstberg and the Burry Stander trail.



FOR THE FUTURE

Since December 2024, Meerendal vineyards have been 100% organic. Sustainability lies at the heart of the estate's farming philosophy. By adopting responsible farming practices, Meerendal can craft exceptional wines in harmony with nature.

Beneficial wasps are released into the vineyards to naturally manage harmful insects. Each year, cover crops are planted to provide essential winter habitats for beneficial insects. In winter, flowering cover crops attract bees and birds, enriching biodiversity even further.

For more information about Meerendal, as well as hotel reservations, visit www.meerendal.co.za

The land of cheese and wine

In Bonnievale, you can taste cheese, wine and olive oil against a backdrop of mountains while the Breede River babbles past. What more could you want from a weekend destination?

WORDS & PICTURES **JAC KRITZINGER**



Drive down the main drag in Bonnievale and you'll feel right at home. Friendly faces ride high in farm bakkies and vineyards peek out between the buildings. The Breede River flows past and the Riviersonderend and Langeberg mountains loom in the distance. No wonder the residents call their town "Eden"...

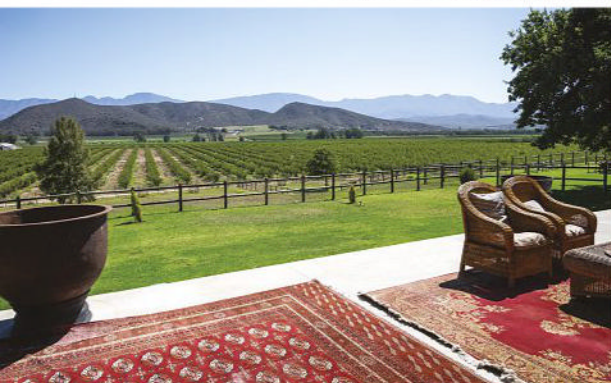
This fertile district, part of the Robertson Wine Valley, has many fruit and wine farms – Weltevrede, Goedverwacht, Jonkheer – and three cheese factories: Lactalis, Mooivallei and La Montanara.

The area's agricultural prominence is largely thanks to a Scottish immigrant called Christopher Forrest Rigg. In 1900, he recognised the potential of the region and started farming. To ensure a steady supply of water on the dry floodplain, Rigg built a canal system, which originated about 15 km upstream of the town centre. The initial structures were made of timber and they did an okay job for about six years. But then Rigg decided to up his game. He and a team of almost a hundred labourers set to work on a nearly 35 km-long network of gravity-driven canals fed by the Breede, which are still in use today.

So, when you sit back on one of the guest farms and take in the scenic landscape, raise a glass to that mighty river – the driving force behind the land of cheese and wine. Cheers!



The elevated position at the top of Waterkant Street offers a pretty view over the town.



6 Things to do

1 Explore a tiny museum

The Danie le Roux Museum is only about 100 m² in size – as big as a two-bedroom flat. Most of its exhibits come from the private collection of the late Daantjie le Roux, who grew up on a landmark local farm called Angora Stud.

The collection includes curiosities like dolls and wood carvings made by Boer prisoners of war on St Helena Island, old farming implements, earthenware and rifles. There's a complete collection of Breyten Breytenbach's works (the author was born in Bonnievale); semi-precious stones collected by Le Roux's uncle, Horst Windisch; and paintings by Le Roux's grandfather, Franz Rosemann, which depict scenes from the latter's time as a prisoner of war in World War II.

Where? 78 Main Road

Opening times: Weekdays from 10 am to 3 pm; Saturdays and public holidays until noon. Closed on Sunday.

Cost: Free, but donations are welcome.

Contact: ☎ 083 270 8490; 📧 angorastud.co.za

2 See a classic car collection

Angora Stud didn't just produce museum artefacts; it's also home to a collection of 30 classic cars.

Farm owner Bertus Oosthuizen's love for these vehicles started when he rode around in his great-uncle's Mercedes-Benz 230 S fintail as a child – he was charmed by the smell of the red leather seats. He bought his first classic car – a 1970 Mercedes-Benz 280 SE – 20 years ago. Most of the vehicles on show are Mercs. Highlights include a 1958 Ponton Coupe two-door, and a light-blue 1968 W111 cabriolet – as rare as you get. You can also see a few quirky Citroëns, like the 1979 2CV Charleston (pictured above left) and a red 2009 Ferrari California that's hard to miss – it's so low its roof barely reaches your hips.

Where? Angora Stud, about 7 km outside town on the R317 towards Stormsvlei.

Opening times: Monday to Saturday, by appointment only.

Cost: Entry is R100 per adult (includes a free coffee); free for children under 12.

Contact: ☎ 083 270 8490; 📧 angorastud.co.za



3 Do an olive oil tasting

Keen to try fennel-infused olive oil drizzled over grapes and feta? Or how about sweet peppers dipped in coriander-infused oil?

"We like to play with our food" – that's the culinary philosophy Clive and Briony Heymans from Marbrin Olives ascribe to. The couple, previously from nearby Robertson, have been in the food and olive industry for years and recently joined forces with Klue Wines to offer an olive oil and wine tasting.

After a wine tour with owner and winemaker Jan Klue, you move over to the Marbrin tasting room. Clive prepares tapas-style dishes made using produce from the valley while Briony tells you about the accompanying olive oils. Along the way, you'll learn why olive oil has such a high price tag – you need about 4 kg of olives to make only 250 ml!

The light, seven-course meal depends on the season. Be careful of the pea and vodka gazpacho with dill-flavoured oil – it has a kick!

Whether or not you're an olive oil enthusiast, this cosy (and reasonably priced) tasting soon turns into a long *kuier* around the table.

Where? Wolvendrift wine farm, about 13 km outside town on the R317 towards Robertson.

Opening times: Weekdays at 11 am. Booking is essential. Closed on Sunday.

Cost: R150 per person.

Contact: 073 840 8228; marbrin.co.za



Right: The Marbrin and Klue Wines team are from left: Briony Heymans, Jan Klue and Clive Heymans.



4 Explore the Breede by barge

Find a comfy seat on the barge – hand-built by the owner of River Goose Campsite, Kelvin Philips, back in 1992 – and go with the flow. If you're a birder, look for weavers and kingfishers in the boughs of the willows and blue gums on the banks. A fish occasionally plops from the water. If it's hot, skipper Gerrit Carstens will drop anchor next to a deep pool where you can swim – there are pool noodles under the barge benches.

The barge ride lasts about 90 minutes – you meander a few kilometres downstream towards Bonnievale and back. Bring your own snacks and drinks. The early-morning time slot is the best: It's cool, the river is calm and the fish are more active. (The southeaster sometimes picks up in the afternoon.) You can also book a specific fishing outing with Gerrit, targeting bass or carp.

Where? River Goose Campsite, about 12 km outside town on the R317 towards Stormsvlei.

Barge times: Saturdays and public holidays at 9 am, 11 am and 1 pm. Booking is essential.

Cost: R150 per adult; R50 per child under 12. Minimum six people.

Contact: 📞 076 380 8179; 🌐 rivergoosecampsite.co.za



5 Tour a wine cellar

On a tour of the cellar at Weltevrede, you'll be led through underground tunnels to concrete tanks where chardonnay and chardonnay-based Cap Classique are aged at a constant, cool temperature. (You can taste them, too, which helps with the claustrophobia.)

On the Captivated by Cap Classique tour, you'll hear how a tank of 2006 Cap was accidentally built over during renovations – it will be a welcome find for archaeologists one day...

On the Captivated by Chardonnay tour, where the dark tunnels are lit up by candles in places, you'll learn about the technical aspects of this variant's cultivation and the history of the farm owners – the Jonker family. Current winemaker Phillip Jonker published an Afrikaans novel called *Die Onsigbare* in 2024; the tour ends with a reading of his poem *The Poet's Prayer* while you sip wine by candlelight.

Where? Weltevrede, 5 km outside town on the R317 towards Robertson.

Opening times: Monday to Saturday. Cap Classique tour at 10 am; Chardonnay tour at 2 pm. Booking is essential.

Cost: R275 per adult; no children.

Contact: 📞 023 616 2141; 🌐 weltevrede.com





6 Visit a church for a child

The Myrtle Rigg Memorial Church was built in 1921 – it's said to be the only church in the world built at a child's request. Myrtle was the third child of canal man Christopher Forrest Rigg and his second wife Lilian. The poor girl died of meningitis in 1911, at the age of seven. In those years, the nearest church was in Robertson. Apparently, one of Myrtle's last wishes was that her dad would build her a church.

You can visit the simple stone building with local guide Theuns Coetzee. The stained glass above the pulpit is special to see.

Where? Myrtle Rigg Avenue

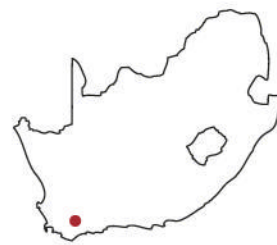
Opening times: Only by appointment.

Cost: Free, but donations towards the building's maintenance are welcomed.

Contact: ☎ 082 417 8597

WHAT ELSE?

- Mountain biking has boomed in the region over the last few years (the Cape Epic went through this year). For more information, visit absolutemotion.co.za (click on "routes and events") or contact ☎ 082 857 3735.
- The Langeberg Meander is a loose network of guest farms, all of which offer unique accommodation, hiking and cycling routes, and fishing spots. Visit langebergmeander.co.za



IN OTHER WORDS

Madré Smuts
Farm manager, Angora Stud

The slow life here is wonderful. The people are lekker and I'm always amazed by the beauty of the surroundings. Every sunset is different.



Lizette Kriel
Owner, Leopard Trail Guest Farm

The landscapes and the wildlife... Those are things I wouldn't trade for anything else.



Riaan van Eeden
Owner, Bonfrutti Guest Farm

When life gets hard, other people want to go to places like Mauritius. But here in Bonnievale, we have all the silence and natural scenery you need to recharge your batteries.



Aneldi Pienaar
Tasting room manager, Weltevrede

It can get busy on the farm, but I love this place. Everyone in town feels like family.



Chantal Willemse
Waitress, Rock 'n Roll Diner

I enjoy nothing more than working with people. Every day is different with all the interesting people from all over that visit.



Gerrit Carstens
Skipper, River Goose barge

Man, things still run slowly here – it's proper platteland, close to nature. We roll up the tar roads at night and unroll them again in the morning!

TOWN

EAT HERE

Rock 'n Roll Diner

This laid-back diner has posters of Marilyn and Elvis on the walls and a digital jukebox where you can play everything from Kenny Rogers to Buddy Holly. They serve burgers (the Royale Cheese with avocado and bacon is a winner), pizzas, waffles, hot dogs and milkshakes at reasonable prices. There's indoor and outdoor seating with a view of the vineyards.

Where? Rivergold wine farm, 16 km outside town on the R317 towards Robertson.

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 11.30 am to 8.30 pm; Sunday until 4 pm.

Contact: ☎ 023 616 2181; 🌐 rivergold.co.za

Kapokbos

Springbok tataki, sheep tails, oysters, snoek parfait, herbed lamb... Yup, this is one for the foodies! The view of the estate complements the chef's creations. There's also a deli next door that serves toasted sandwiches, breakfasts and quality coffee.

Where? Weltevrede, 5 km outside town on the R317 towards Robertson.

Opening times: Kapokbos: Tuesday to Sunday from noon to 4 pm (bookings preferred); closed on Mondays. Deli: Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 4 pm; Sunday until 2 pm.

Contact: ☎ 023 100 4182; 🌐 weltevrede.com

La Montanara

Shop their prize-winning La Mont range in the deli (herbed gouda, feta, white cheddar...) fresh from the farm and at great prices. You can also fill your basket with Happy Hog pork products, or pop into the restaurant with a view of the mountains, where you can tuck into a hearty breakfast, a prego roll or a cheese platter.

Where? La Montanara, 15 km outside town on the R60 towards Swellendam.

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 5 pm; Sunday from 9 am to 2 pm.

Contact: ☎ 023 615 1929; 🌐 lamontcheese.co.za

Still feeling cheesy? Take a turn past Mooivallei (☎ 023 616 3912;

🌐 mooivallei.co.za) and Lactalis (☎ 023 616 3462; 🌐 lactalis.co.za), both of which have factory shops.

Coffee & Company

Visit this friendly coffee shop for your favourite brew and a panini. Their gelato is also a hit – there are various flavours.

Where? De Oude Werf building, 92 Main Road

Opening times: Monday to Friday from 7 am to 3 pm; Saturday from 8 am to noon; closed on Sunday.

Contact: ☎ 083 233 8768



STAY HERE

Gooding's Grove

Three self-catering cottages on an olive farm with views of the mountains: Hartbeeshuisie (sleeps two), Kasteeltjie (sleeps four) and the luxurious Country House with a swimming pool (sleeps six). Each unit has braai facilities and Wi-Fi (no cellphone reception). The units can be booked separately or together for a big group.

And the name? The farm is owned by the legendary broadcaster and voice artist Malcolm Gooding. (Remember the narrator on *Come Dine With Me South Africa*?)

Where? 20 km outside town on the Langverwagten dirt road towards McGregor.

Rates: Kasteeltjie costs R1 250 per night; Country House R2 540 per night; Hartbeeshuisie R1 400 per night.

Contact: ☎ 083 688 0186

🌐 countryhousebonnievale.co.za

Bonfrutti

This guest farm is a part of the Langeberg Meander and a great spot to take a break in nature. Self-catering options include the Olyftak and Druiwetros cottages (both sleep four, with a campsite for extra people) and the Perskepit cottage and adjacent apartment (sleeps nine in total). Oppiwerf consists of two of the oldest houses in the district – they both sleep nine. A good option for bigger groups since you have to

book both at the same time.

Where? 20 km outside Bonnievale on the R60 towards Swellendam.

Rates: Olyftak and Druiwetros from R1 550 per night; Perskepit R1 750 per night; Oppiwerf R7 500 per night.

Contact: ☎ 084 581 9687

🌐 bonfrutti.co.za

A Shady Creek Cottage

This spacious cottage is an olive pip's throw from town, next to the Breede River. The lawn leads to the riverbank and a private jetty (with canoes) where you can fish, watch birds, swim and relax. The two-bedroom cottage is dog-friendly and there are braai facilities on both sides.

Where? About 5 km outside town on the R317 towards Robertson (next to Weltevrede Wine Estate).

Rate: R1 400 per night.

Contact: ☎ 083 688 0186

🌐 infobonnievale.co.za

Angora Stud

The late Danie le Roux bred racehorses here; now guests can stay in 12 renovated stable rooms and a few bigger units. All the accommodation options share a cosy communal kitchen and a big courtyard with a vegetable garden. The units are comfortably furnished with en suite bathrooms – they sleep two to four people. The self-catering Lavender Cottage is behind the



LA MONTANARA DELI & RESTAURANT



ROYALE BURGER AT ROCK 'N ROLL DINER

stables and sleeps up to six. Die Uilhuisie (sleeps four) is a basic self-catering cottage in the veld where you can watch Nguni cattle and eland from your stoep.

Where? About 7 km outside town on the R317 towards Stormsvlei.

Rates: The Stables from R800 per person. Lavender Cottage R650 per adult; R350 per child under 12. Die Uilhuisie R3 400 per night for two people, plus R850 per extra person. Minimum stay of two nights for all options.

Contact: 083 270 8490

angorastud.co.za

Attention, campers!

There are several great campsites in the district, all with clean ablutions and shade-rich facilities. **Riggtou River Farm** (082 782 2697;

riggtouriverfarm.co.za) is on the Breede River but still close to town.

River Goose (082 759 5727;

rivergoosecampsite.co.za) is

also on the riverbank, away from the bustle of town. **Leopard Trail Guest Farm** (082 413 4021;

leopardtrail.co.za) on the R60 towards Swellendam has a campsite and a big dam. Remember your lilo!

Jac was a guest at Gooding's Grove. For more accommodation options and general information about Bonnievale, contact Chantel la Grange on 083 688 0186, or visit infobonnievale.co.za



OPPIWERF AT BONFRUTTI



KASTEELTJIE AT GOODING'S GROVE



RIVER GOOSE CAMPSITE

go! & BUY GUIDE



SHOWER TRAY R850

1050mm x 1050mm x 100mm

Available in:

- Brown
- Olive Green
- Charcoal Grey

VAT and delivery included (RSA)

Also available
on Takealot



www.bigfootoutdoorgear.co.za

info@bigf.co



Air conditioners:

- Caravans
- Commercial
- Residential
- Rooftop air conditioners
- Installations
- Repairs
- Services

Movers:

- Caravan movers
- Ewiks
- Quattro

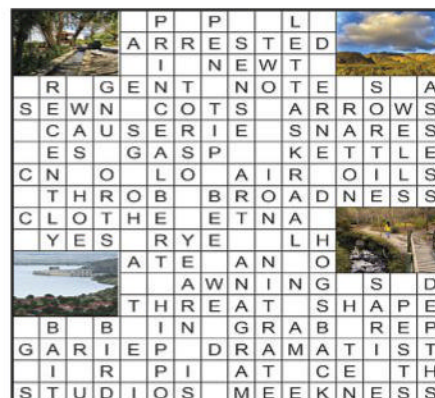
We also do:

- Spare wheel brackets
- Full self-levelling system



CJ Aircon's

072 413 3899 Jacques/Cindy
www.cj-aircons.co.za | info@cj-aircons.co.za



CROSSWORD SOLUTION

TO ADVERTISE HERE, CONTACT:

DANIE NELL

Tel: 082 859 0542

danie.nell@media24.com

SANETHA MEINTJIES

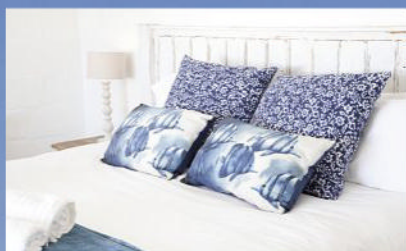
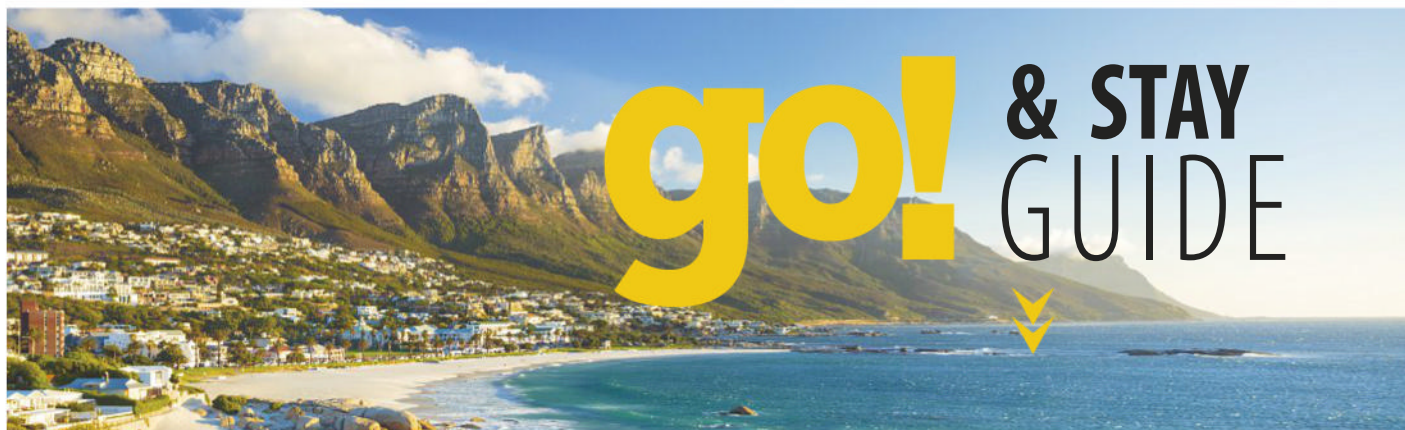
Tel: 021 406 2301

sanetha.meintjies@media24.com

SHARLENE SMITH

Tel: 083 583 1604

sharlene.smith@media24.com



Wamakersvlei Beach Farm

West Coast off the Beaten Track

Wamakersvlei
Beach Farm
Dwarskersbos
West Coast
Laaiplek
Veldrif

Experience 7km of secluded, untouched, breathtaking West Coast beauty at Wamakersvlei Beach Farm.

- Five authentic self-catering cottages
- Group accommodation (30 guests)
- A safe space to connect with nature
- Indoor/Outdoor/Beach braai
- Complimentary Wi-Fi
- Pet-friendly – (4 fenced cottages)

Your Happy Space Awaits

Marlene 083 527 7967 / 068 735 6974
admin@wamakersvlei.co.za | www.wamakersvlei.co.za



The **Quiver Tree Route** runs through the **Northern Cape**, from **Upington** to **Riemvasmaak** and **Kenhardt**.

Green banks along the Orange River, the gentle roar of Augrabies Falls, quiver trees that watch over centuries and roads that slowly disappear into the horizon.

Visit the route in **MAY** when the quiver trees are in bloom, or in **AUGUST** — on the way to the Namaqualand flowers.



Tel: 072 731 5180
Email: kokerboomroete@gmail.com
www.quivertreeroute.co.za for more information on accommodation and activities.

Follow us on  



SWARTRIET



Here you will experience nature in such a unique manner that you will feel like a brand new person after this breakaway!

We offer 29 self-catering chalets on a seaside farm. Only 13 km from Saldanha and Vredenburg, 150 km from Cape Town.
No pets.

Tel: 022 715 4044 / 082 402 0120

info@swartriet.com

www.swartriet.com

Conference facility available



WESTERN CAPE

SALDANHA

WEST COAST



A community website for tourists to Yzerfontein, Darling and Jacobs Bay.

- More than 90 handpicked places to stay.
- Includes budget options and luxury seafront getaways.
- List of all Yzerfontein restaurants.
- Local information and things to do.



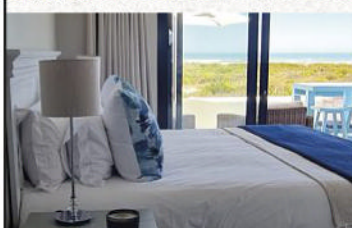
www.yzerfonteinaccommodation.co.za

info@yzerfonteinaccommodation.co.za

+27 (0)83 453 2336 Karen Schröder



Casa del Mar
DWARSKERSBOS



Casa del Mar studio apartments offer luxury self-catering holiday accommodation on a beachfront property in the heart of Dwarskersbos.

Guests have a choice between the seafront West Studio or the wheelchair-friendly East Studio, both of which can accommodate 2 guests. Both studios have an open-plan design and are luxuriously furnished with a king-size bed or two single beds.

FACILITIES

- Self-catering accommodation
- Wi-Fi/Netflix/Smart TV
- Beach towels
- Beach umbrellas
- Beach chairs
- Outdoor braai
- Beach access
- Security

Contact Marlene

083 527 7967

Casadelmardkb@gmail.com

ARNISTON

Luxurious self-catering thatched cottages fully equipped and serviced



Arniston Seaside Cottages

Reservations (028) 445 9772 | Email: cottages@arniston-online.co.za

www.arniston-online.co.za

WESTERN CAPE

ARNISTON

THE BATHS
NATURAL HOT SPRINGS
CITRUSDAL

Located in the picturesque Citrusdal Valley, The Baths Natural Hot Springs offers a serene escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

The resort boasts a natural hot spring, luxurious accommodations, and a host of recreational activities that cater to all ages.

Our hot springs (43°C), rich in minerals and renowned for their therapeutic properties, provide the perfect setting for relaxation and rejuvenation. Whether you choose to soak in the privacy of your jacuzzi or mingle with fellow guests in our communal pools, the warm, soothing waters promise to melt away stress and tension.

Accommodation at The Baths ranges from charming self-catering chalets and apartments to caravanning and camping sites. Enjoy stunning views of the surrounding mountains and lush vegetation, adding to the peaceful ambience of our resort.

Adventure enthusiasts will find plenty to keep them occupied with our extensive range of activities. Explore scenic hiking trails, challenge yourself with a game of tennis, or take a leisurely bike ride through the valley.

To elevate your relaxation experience, visit our on-site Salon Etsheva where you can indulge in a variety of pampering treatments, from massages to skincare, or enjoy a meal at our restaurant.

Visit www.thebaths.co.za or contact us on 022 921 2141 to book your stay and discover the tranquil beauty that awaits you at The Baths Natural Hot Springs Resort.

Kameelboomkoelte



Best stopover in Askham
in the Kalahari

Contact us
Nina 076 991 2561
info@kameelboomkoelte.co.za
www.kameelboomkoelte.co.za

New **self-catering units** with fantastic facilities.

NORTHERN CAPE

ASKHAM



MIDWEEK, SPECIAL OFFER: CAMP FROM SUNDAY TO FRIDAY 2 PERSONS ONLY R900-00

UNITS, SPECIAL OFFER: STAY FROM SUNDAY TO FRIDAY 2 PERSONS ONLY R2 950-00

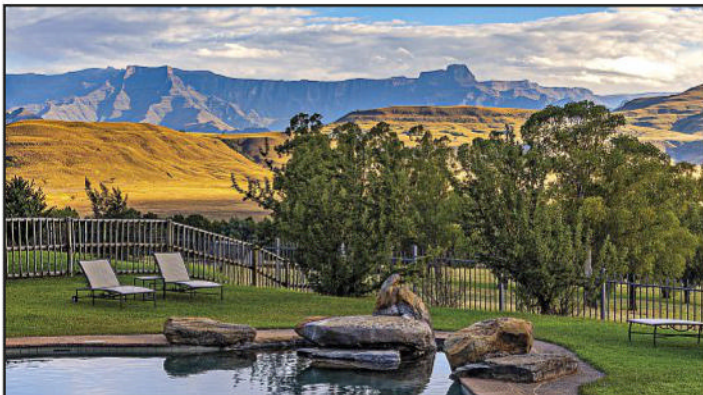
Nature reserve in malaria-free area. Bushveld atmosphere – less than an hour from Pretoria and Johannesburg – close to Brits. Self-catering houses and caravan park with neat ablutions – wheelchair-friendly bathroom. Hikes – cycle trails – bird-watching – game drives – plenty of game

- Play park • Table tennis • Pool tables • Trampolines • Putt-putt • Indoor heated pools
- Jacuzzi • Cold water pools • Lazy river • Water slides • Takeaways

Tel: +27 66 298 5379 / +27 66 298 1664 / +27 73 171 8331 /
+27 82 375 6179 • E-mail: info@dubegame.co.za • www.dubegame.co.za
Book online: www.alloutbookings.co.za

NORTH WEST

BRITS



LUXURY, SPACE & TRANQUILITY

036 438 6243 | 072 591 1210 | info@montusi.co.za | www.montusi.co.za

MONTUSI
MOUNTAIN LODGE



SELF-CATERING ECO ESCAPE

063 030 7161 | info@sungubala.co.za | www.sungubala.co.za

Sungubala
ECO CAMP



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

036 438 6270 | 083 701 5724 | info@cavern.co.za | www.cavern.co.za

The CAVERN
EST. 1941



"Our work is to create beauty, to make the land more fertile, to make our living and to leave the world better than when we came into it." - Bill Carte, Founder, 1941



Tel: +27 (0)21 930 4564 | Fax: +27 (0)21 914 9930

Visit Us! - Shop G29, Willowbridge Lifestyle Centre,
39 Carl Cronje Drive, Tygervally - CAPE TOWN

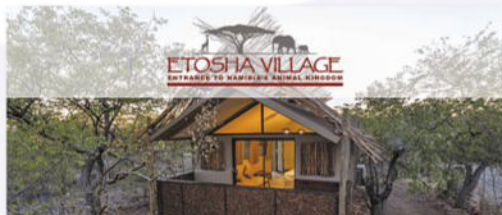
E-mail: reservations@talení-africa.com

f /TaleníAfrica

@ /taleníafricagroup

www.talení-africa.com

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS in Namibia - Book online with Promo code: GO for discounted rates!



Affordable comfort at the Andersson entrance
to Etosha near Okaukuejo

www.etosha-village.com



Experience true hospitality at the
entrance gate to Sesriem and Sossusvlei

www.sossusvleilodge.com



Self-catering excellence
close to the entrance to Sossusvlei

www.desertquivercamp.com



Comfortable self-catering only 5km from the
entrance to the Namib Naukluft Park

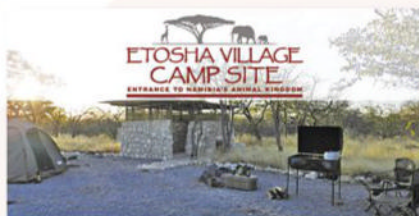
www.desertcamp.com

CAMPING OPTIONS just outside the National Parks in Namibia



Camping with private facilities only 6.5km
from the Okaukuejo entrance to Etosha

www.etosha-tradingpost.com



Exclusive campsite nestled in a
Mopani forest adjacent to Etosha

www.etosha-village.com/camping.html



Camping under star-studded skies
near the entrance gate to Sossusvlei

www.sossus-oasis.com

FUEL & SHOPS just outside the National Parks in Namibia



Ideal stop to refuel, refresh and stock up on
supplies a mere 6.5km from Etosha

www.etosha-tradingpost.com



Refresh, refuel and reconnect at this oasis
in the heart of the Namib Desert

www.sossus-oasis.com



Green Lantern Inn

EST. 1892

Hotel & Gardens

N3 HALFWAY SLEEPOVER

Top of Van Reenen's Pass

Google 4.4 Very good
★★★★★
1,086 reviews



Travelling to the coast? Break your journey...
Book direct www.greenlantern.co.za

Durban
Ramsgate



Van Reenen
halfway stay over

Jhb
Pretoria



Book online greenlantern.co.za stay@greenlantern.co.za 081 744 0770

COMFORTABLE ACCOMMODATION IN THE BEST POSITIONS

HOLIDAY IN RAMSGATE, KZN

In 1994 we fell in love with Ramsgate, on the South Coast KZN. Over 30 selected, privately owned holiday places later, we know exactly what makes the best beach holiday! Contact BillsBest for comfortable accommodation in the best beachfront positions.

- 🏠 Prime beachfront locations
- 🏠 fully equipped with home comforts
- 🏠 assistance during your stay
- 🏠 no hidden costs
- 🏠 great low season specials

Ramsgate offers a Blue Flag swimming beach, restaurants including the famous Waffle House, pubs, and a beautiful trail along the shoreline.

Choose your views...

- 🏠 Couples cabanas & condos
- 🏠 Family holiday homes
- 🏠 Private lodge for up to 28 guests
- 🏠 Pet-friendly options

See you at the beach.

Bill & Gail

OVER 60?
GET 10% OFF
T'S & C'S APPLY

BillsBest
~ ~ ~

BillsBest Southern Comfort

4.4 Very good
★★★★☆
18 reviews

BillsBest Whaleback Cottage

4.3 Very good
★★★★☆
30 reviews

CHOOSE YOUR VIEWS... 🌐 BILLSBEST.CO.ZA ☎ 082 451 6102 ✉ bbinfo@billsbest.co.za



The place to be!

Come share our
Okavango Delta Mokoro Safari
in Namibia



En-suite tree houses, camping, swimming in the river shade, grass, wildlife, river rafting, funky ablutions, and so much more!

Reservations: +264 81 202 8200
bookings@ngepicamp.com
www.ngepicamp.com




Welcome to

Oppi-Koppi Restcamp in Kamanjab, Kunene Region, Namibia.
60km from Etosha entrance (Galton Gate)

It is the perfect destination whether you are travelling for business or pleasure. We offer accommodation in 12 luxury chalets, 2 standard chalets, 1 family chalet and 3 self-catering chalets and 8 campsites. Our kitchen opens from 07:00 to 20:30 daily.

We offer the following excursions:
Peet Alberts rock engravings, Omusauna Himba Village, scenic sundowner quad bike tours and walking trails.

Tel: +264 (0) 67 330 040
+264 (0) 81 781 4691
Email: info@oppi-koppi-kamanjab.com
www.oppi-koppi-kamanjab.com





SELF-CATERING:

- Every unit sleeps 2 pax
- Each unit has its own bathroom, mini kitchenette, a stoep and its own braai facilities
- 24hrs hot water and 220V electricity



SWIMMING POOL | POOL BAR | RESTAURANT



CAMPSITE:

- Some campsites on the Hoanib River
- Big campsites for groups
- Ablution blocks for men and women
- 24hrs hot water and 220V electricity
- The Hoanib River has always had water (from underground, where its origin is 30km west in the Schlucht)

KHOWARIB LODGE IS IN THE NORTH-WEST OF NAMIBIA, ON THE HOANIB RIVER (Damaraland side).
Kaokoland is on the other side of the river. The lodge is 70km north of Palmwag Lodge and 30km south of Sesfontein.

Booking office: +264 64 402 779
Lodge direct: +264 64 81 219 3291
Email: reservations@khowarib.com
www.khowarib.com

NOW IN GAUTENG!

Enter the go! Festival of Hiking in the Magaliesberg

If you've been keeping a jealous eye on the Cape go! Festival of Hiking, here's your chance! This popular event will also take place in Gauteng this year. The go! Festival of Hiking is in collaboration with Salomon and Cape Union Mart, supported by Solal.

WHAT IS IT?

The go! Festival of Hiking is a weekend celebration for everyone who loves the outdoors. Choose from a variety of hiking distances throughout the weekend. Between the hikes, visit the festival stalls where you can browse, buy and eat! Come walk yourself fit, soak up the beautiful views and connect with other hiking enthusiasts.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Participants sign up for one or more of the distances. Everyone starts at the same time (like at a fun run) and walks at their own pace. There will be water points along the route where you can refill your water bottle, but we advise you to also bring your own water. This is not a timed event but we do have some great lucky draw prizes thanks to our excellent sponsors.

DISTANCES

SATURDAY: Choose between 5km (family-friendly and suitable for all fitness levels), 12,5km or 16km.

SUNDAY: A 10km sunrise hike.

If you're fit, hike on Saturday AND Sunday!



IN COLLABORATION WITH

SALOMON



**30 - 31
May
2026**

De Wildt Adventure Trails



Enter now at

wegstapfees.topevents.co.za

**SATURDAY
5km**

**SATURDAY
12,5km**

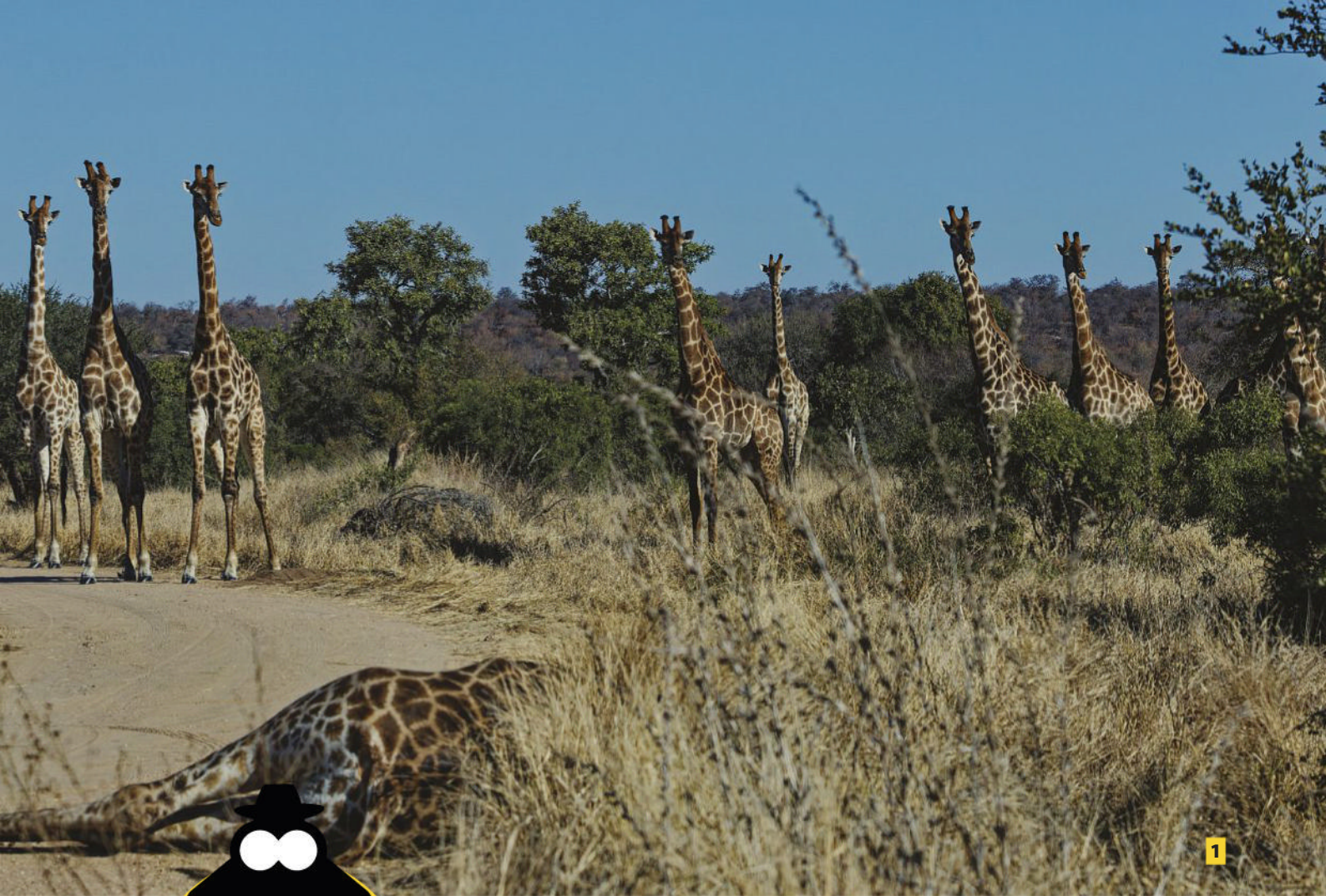
**SATURDAY
16km**



**SUNDAY
10km**



TOP EVENTS
www.topevents.co.za



Animal drama and the Kruger Park go hand in hand, but this touching scene caught **Alwyn Viljoen** off guard.

In July last year, I spent a week in the Kruger Park with my wife Shelley Ann and our daughters Olivia and Zoey. We started at Punda Maria in the north and headed down to Shingwedzi, Letaba and finally, Satara.

The predators were nowhere to be found and we were becoming increasingly frustrated. On this particular morning, we left Satara early, hoping that our luck would turn, but after three hours we returned to camp with no sightings again.

After lunch, we set out on the N'wanetsi dirt road (S100) where we came across a herd of buffalo – there were so many we stopped counting! A Jimny and its passengers were waiting up ahead; they didn't want to brave the mass of animals alone. I suggested that our bigger Ford Ranger take the lead and that they follow us. We carefully crept through the buffalo herd. On the other side, the people in the Jimny thanked us and told us about a giraffe that had been killed by lions on the S39 towards the Timbavati picnic site.

We headed straight there. When we arrived, the carcass of the giraffe was in the road and the lions were fast asleep nearby. There were two other vehicles waiting for the lions to rise from their slumber; we also pulled over to see if we could get more than a flicking tail as the afternoon progressed.

The next moment, we spotted a giraffe stepping out of the bushes – followed by another one, and another one... until there were 12 giraffes on the scene. **1**

They came to a standstill and looked at their friend, and then at the lions. Some took a step or two closer and stopped again. Occasionally, they bent their long necks as if showing respect to their fallen comrade. **2**

It went on for about 40 minutes. At that point, one lioness rose to her feet, stretched and walked to the carcass. **3** She started to eat – right in front of the other giraffes! **4**

Finally the giraffes turned around and walked off. It was a moving experience, and probably something we'll never see again.



WIN!

A THULE CHASM
GEAR CUBE
WORTH R1 299!

HAVE YOU SEEN SOMETHING AMAZING?

Send your series of photos and a short description of the sighting to toast@gomag.co.za. You could win a medium-sized Thule Chasm Gear Cube!

This versatile bag has a compression zip that lets you squeeze out air to maximise space in your luggage, making it a lifesaver when you're facing airline restrictions. The double-coated fabric and coated zip ensure your essentials stay protected from dirt and moisture, while the 100% recycled, durable, PFC-free fabric helps the Thule Chasm Gear Cube withstand the wear and tear of all your adventures.

Available in three sizes: small (3 litres), medium (11 litres; the prize) and large (15 litres). For more information, visit thulestore.co.za.

Buy less, for earth's sake!

On 22 April we celebrate **International Earth Day**, where we focus on all the things that threaten our planet, and the ways in which we can help. But we should be helping year-round, right? Here's how you can do your bit every day.

COMPILED BY **SOPHIA VAN TAAK**

We can't survive without what the earth gives us: oxygen, water, fuel and minerals. But we use so much of these resources that the earth can't replenish them fast enough!

Our habit of buying things and throwing them away is one of the main threats to the planet's health. It causes new products to be made all the time, replacing things that don't need to be replaced. What a waste! The world is caught in a terrible cycle:



1

On your way to the Kruger Park, your family gets takeaways. To make your meal, the restaurant needs meat, potatoes, bread flour and salad ingredients.



2

All these ingredients are produced on farms. These farms are very big because they have to supply meat and other products on a large scale.



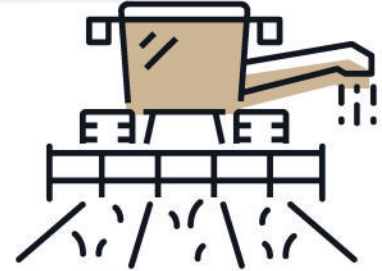
THREAT! DEFORESTATION

To make space for large farms, grassland and forests are cleared and the soil is prepared for agriculture. This destroys the habitat of all kinds of plants and animals. Without a habitat, all the organisms that live there also disappear. In this way, an entire ecosystem is lost.



THREAT! THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

There's less vegetation to filter harmful gases (like carbon dioxide) from the air. Remember, plants and trees absorb bad carbon dioxide during photosynthesis and then release good oxygen. But when harmful gases accumulate in the atmosphere, it surrounds the earth like a thick blanket and prevents the planet's heat from escaping. Like a greenhouse for flowers, the earth then gets unnaturally hot. We call this phenomenon the greenhouse effect and it leads to global warming.



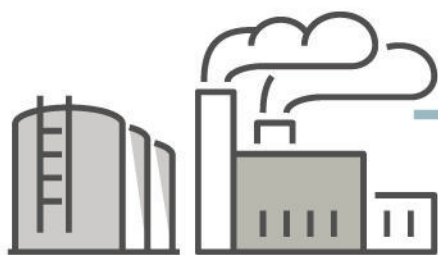
3

Farmers use fertilizer and special supplements so that their vegetables and cattle can grow as big as possible in as little time as possible.



THREAT! EUTROPHICATION

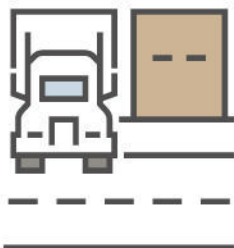
When it rains, high concentrations of nutrients found in the fertilizer and supplements wash out of the soil and end up in rivers that flow into wetlands or the ocean. These nutrients cause an overabundance of algae in the water and they use up so much oxygen that other plant species and fish can't survive. We call this phenomenon eutrophication.



- 4** The meat and vegetables for your takeaway meal are transported to big factories where they're made into patties, chips and bread rolls.

5

The food is stored in big, refrigerated containers and transported to restaurants in all corners of the country, using aircraft and trucks with cooled cargo holds.



THREAT! MINES & GREENHOUSE GASES

Factories use electricity. To generate electricity, large quantities of coal are burnt at power stations. This process emits more harmful greenhouse gases – just like the aircraft and trucks that transport the ingredients for your takeaways. And the coal has to be mined somewhere, leading to more deforestation and habitat loss. Cool storage containers and fridges run on special gases – these gases can also damage the atmosphere when they leak.

6



At the restaurant, your takeaway meal is cooked and packaged in polystyrene containers. You also order milkshakes – in plastic containers – and the restaurant gives you plastic cutlery and straws to use.

7



You don't manage to eat all your food – the portions are too big! Your leftovers end up in the camping fridge, and eventually in the rubbish bin.



THREAT! MORE MINES & GREENHOUSE GASES

Food packaging is mostly made from crude oil, which is broken down using a complex process and mixed with other materials and gases. This happens in a factory that has cleared hectares of vegetation to drill for crude oil, uses lots of electricity, releases harmful gases and pollutes underground water sources with waste materials.



THREAT! POLLUTION

And all the packaging? Well, you need to recycle that correctly. Otherwise it also contributes to heaps of rubbish that must be incinerated, releasing even more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.



How can we make it better?

You might not be able to stop a forest from being chopped down, or a new mine from being built, but each of us can do something about the greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is the most harmful of these gases – that's why we call your contribution to greenhouse gases your "carbon footprint".

For example: If a vehicle uses a full tank (50 litres) of fuel, it leaves a carbon footprint of 114 kg. In South Africa, the average carbon footprint per person is 8,5 tonnes per year!

We can leave a smaller carbon footprint by changing our lifestyle. The Earth Hero app will show you which of your family's habits emits the most greenhouse gases. It also helps you to make easy changes that have a positive impact.

Some easy changes immediately make your household more environmentally friendly – things like eating less red meat and less seafood, buying your clothes second-hand, cooling your house using block-out curtains instead of air conditioning, using your own coffee mug and water bottle instead of buying drinks in single-use containers, going on holiday closer to home...

Your family can implement the list of nearly 200 better habits – you get points for each new habit you adopt. And the more points you gather, the smaller your carbon footprint becomes!



BIRDS

BY FAANSIE PEACOCK

THE WAITING GAME

When Einstein came up with his theory of relativity to explain how time is influenced by gravity and speed, I think he missed a crucial variable: age. For an adult, an hour is over in the blink of an eye. (A decade, even.) But for a child, an hour can be an eternity. Especially if you're sitting in church on a Sunday morning... It's not that I had anything against church; the challenge was the sitting still part – keeping all that youthful exuberance inside. Little did I know that I was practising one of the most essential skills in birding!

Recently, Ronél and I heard through the birding grapevine that a very special bird was around: a buff-spotted flufftail. The nemesis of many a twitcher, this little phantom is nearly impossible to see. Not only does it keep to the densest, darkest undergrowth in the forest, it's also notoriously fast and furtive. Crossing paths with a buff-spot is an honour that few birders can boast of.

The bird's eerie, foghorn-like call doesn't make things any easier. The male produces this hooting sound by inflating his whole body and then giving a low-pitched whistle that lasts about three seconds. Because of its ventriloquial quality, the origin of the call is



ANTON KRUGER

Easy to hear but tough to see, flufftails are among the most elusive of Africa's birds. Most species live in wetland habitats, but the buff-spotted flufftail (male shown here) prefers damp forest undergrowth.

mosquitoes, no scratching an itchy nose and no conversations about the meaning of life. No fidgeting, roughhousing, tomfoolery, shenanigans or horseplay of any kind. Church all over again, basically. We would need to tap deep into those Sunday morning perseverance training sessions if we wanted to succeed. We decided to give it three hours.

The first hour was the hardest. But gradually you disconnect from the outside world, and your whole being becomes the little patch of forest in front of you. You see things you've never seen before, simply because you've never looked before. Insects, fungi, shadows and textures. And you hear tiny sounds that weren't there before. Rustles, clicks, buzzes, hums and rattles. It's as if your senses incrementally widen their periphery until the world becomes flooded with an almost unbearable wealth of detail. And still we waited...

I must admit that I succumbed to temptation. Once. I had brought a flask of coffee along. Unscrewing the flask was an operation that kept me busy for a full three minutes; I executed my mission with the precision and patience of James Bond diffusing a nuclear bomb.

How do you know that you're sitting still enough? You can tell from the reactions of the birds around you. Birds are used to people being big, loud, brightly coloured, upright creatures, blundering about and making a ruckus. But a human sitting perfectly still, wearing subdued clothing, not moving a millimetre and not making any sound, is not in their search image. A robin will come hopping up to you, completely oblivious. When it finally spots you and realises that it's way too close for comfort, it gets a heck of a fright and freaks out, letting fly with a flurry of alarm calls. It would be funny – if you were allowed to laugh.

There's another family of birds that demand superhuman stealth: the so-called palearctic warblers. These are migrants that nest in the glades and bogs of Europe in the boreal spring; and then spend their off season in the woodlands of Africa. They take it easy on their African sojourn, fattening up for their return migration and moulting into a new set of

feathers. They have little interest in keeping a territory or fighting with intruders. And even less interest in being spied on by birders.

So how exactly do you lay eyes on a warbler skulking deep inside a thicket? This is one of the topics a colleague of mine covers in his birding courses. His tried-and-tested strategy is to sidle up to the perfect, berry-laden, creeper-festooned bush and then wait for a warbler to reveal itself. Instead of playing birds calls on your phone, constantly adjusting position for a better angle or making "spishing" sounds to draw the bird's attention, you just wait. As a practical exercise, he challenges his course attendees to stand motionless for 10 minutes. Just 10 minutes. Very few people pass this test.

I'm serious! Think you can sit still for 10 minutes? Give it a go. Remember, you can't read a magazine, play a game on your phone or scroll social media. And you can't nap or daydream either – you have to stay focused so that you don't miss those precious few seconds when the warbler or flufftail races across your field of view.

Not as easy as it sounds. In fact, the only people who truly master this zen-like skill are Buddhist monks. And hardcore birders.

A part of the problem is that, increasingly, we don't decide where our attention must go. Algorithms do. Clever little codes that compete with each other not to hold our focus, but to fragment it: swipe, scroll, refresh, repeat. Over time, sustained focus starts to feel like a real effort, and constant novelty becomes the norm. But this paragraph is veering dangerously close to preachy, so let's get back to what really matters: birds.

Our first afternoon looking for the buff-spot yielded absolutely nothing, nor did our session the next day. But on day three, just over two hours in, there was a sudden shift in the shadows beneath a creeper. A cautious, curious head appeared, followed by a body covered in delicate golden spots. A spindly-legged, tail-flicking creature dashed across the mud in an awkward dance, seemingly torn between speed and stealth.

Nine hours of waiting for a sighting that lasted a few seconds... Time well spent!

tough to pinpoint. Furthermore, they often sing during misty or drizzly weather, and at night.

As a result, lots of different creatures have been credited with this spooky sound. My favourite story is that it's a chameleon mourning its mother, whom it killed in an argument over mushrooms. Creative, but not exactly biologically accurate...

Our plan was simple: We'd sit on a bench by a stream in a small town on the Garden Route and wait for the flufftail to amble past. But since the slightest twitch or sound was likely to scare it off, we would have to remain motionless. Still as statues. No swatting



SOUTH AMERICA

Part 3

TRAVEL JOURNAL



Porto da Barra beach, at the tip of Salvador's peninsula, draws a daily crowd. People come to relax or play beach sports like "footvolley".



Samba in Salvador

The city of Salvador on Brazil's north coast was once a major slave trading port. It has since grown into a refreshing melting pot of cultures that will have you dancing before you know it.

WORDS & PICTURES FRANCOIS RAUBENHEIMER

Opposite page, clockwise from the top: The Lacerda elevator was constructed in 1873 and transports pedestrians safely between the upper and lower parts of Salvador. A group of *olodum* drummers gather for a street performance wearing characteristic bright-coloured clothing. The Gonçalves funicular, which dates from 1889, is another mode of public transport between upper and lower Salvador.

Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, with Sugarloaf Mountain towering above... That's the scene most people imagine when they think of Brazil's coastline. And while I did visit Rio during my 2024 tour of South America, the city of Salvador further north, in the state of Bahia, made a far greater impression on me. My journey to Salvador actually started back in 2019 – in Malawi of all places. That's where I met two Brazilians travelling from Cape Town to Kenya, Marcos and Nath. We stayed in touch and when I planned my trip to South America, they were back home in Salvador – and thus the city was on my radar.

The Portuguese established the city of Salvador in 1549. Of all the states in Brazil, Bahia probably has the strongest ties to Africa. At one point in time, Salvador was the most important port in the slave trade; most of the slaves came from West Africa.

Shortly before my trip, I read the fascinating novel *The Seed Thief* by Jacqui L'Ange, which was mostly set in Salvador. It inspired me further to explore the city.

Beach culture

I approached Salvador from the state of Acre in the far west of Brazil. (See the previous two issues for *Francois's tales of the Andes and the Amazon*. – Ed.) From the city of Cruzeiro do Sul, I had to catch three flights over a distance of nearly 3 800 km before I arrived on the coast.

The transition was dramatic: I'd swapped the Amazon jungle for a modern harbour city.

Salvador has a basic railway network, which I used to travel from the airport to the city centre. Finding affordable accommodation on my tight budget proved to be a challenge – there weren't many attractive options. I spent the first night in a cramped room in an apartment, sharing with a few other tourists. I put down my luggage, took a quick shower and headed out to meet Marcos.

What a pleasure to see a friend I'd met elsewhere in the world in his hometown! He took me on a short tour. I have a good sense of direction, but soon gave up as we made our way along the winding streets. Our destination was one of the beaches – my first introduction to the beach culture of Salvador.

One night in the apartment was enough – I moved to a backpackers near the sea in the popular Barra neighbourhood the next morning. It felt like everyone hung out on the beach. There were businesses that sold or rented everything you might

need, from chairs and umbrellas to food and drinks.

The difference between the jungle and a city was a shock to the system. Suddenly everything was easily accessible again – accommodation, transport, restaurants, shops...

Yet I soon felt at home in the bustle, and this was mainly due to the people. There was a real African feel in the air. Bahia has a big Afro-Brazilian community – the proud descendants of slaves who gained their freedom centuries ago.

A highlight was the samba shows. This musical style – with strong elements from Africa – often attracts big crowds. It's music that makes you smile and dance; you can't help it!

Marcos gave me proper insider info here – locals like him are familiar with the regular parties, but not so much the tourists. It felt like everyone knew the words to the songs and could sing along. After a while, I learnt to differentiate between the samba variations. There were the more intimate events where couples would dance together; the street versions where the musicians would sit in the middle of the crowd while individual dancers showed off their moves; and the more formal shows where the crowd would listen rather than dance.

Another music style that had me shuffling my feet was *olodum*, where a group of drummers express a very energetic percussion style. Then there's the rhythmic drums and the *berimbau* (a musical bow from Angola) which accompany capoeira – Salvador is the birthplace of this modern martial art.

In *The Seed Thief*, I read about Salvador's so-called "upper" and "lower" cities. The lower part is on the coast around the harbour – this is traditionally where poorer people lived. The upper city is 80 m up the escarpment and has more historical buildings and neighbourhoods where wealthier residents live.

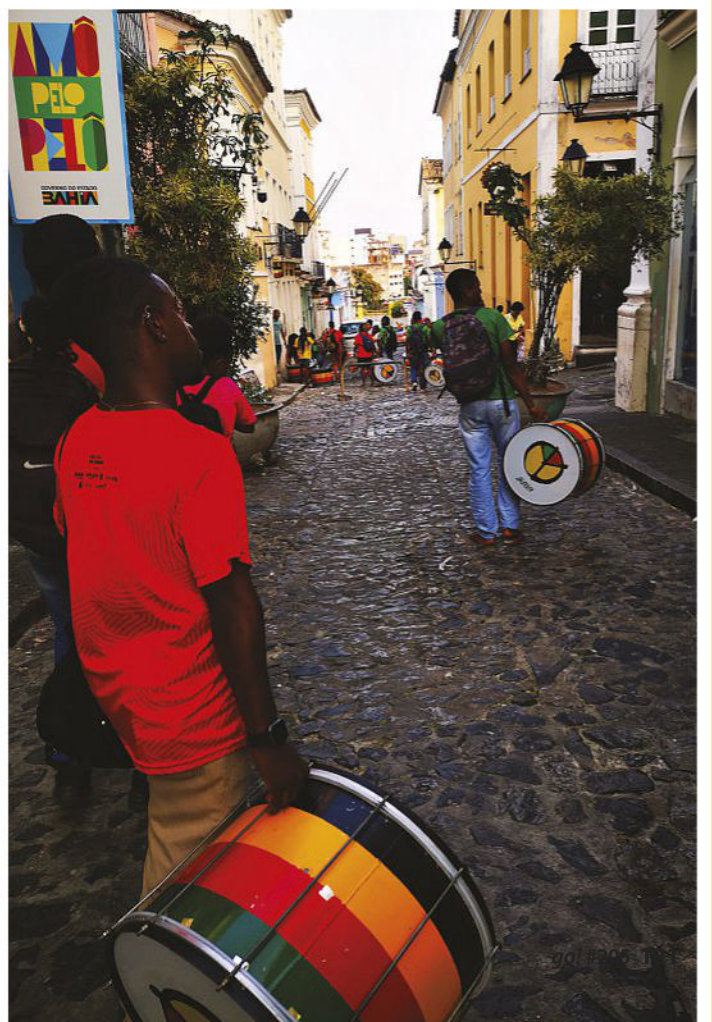
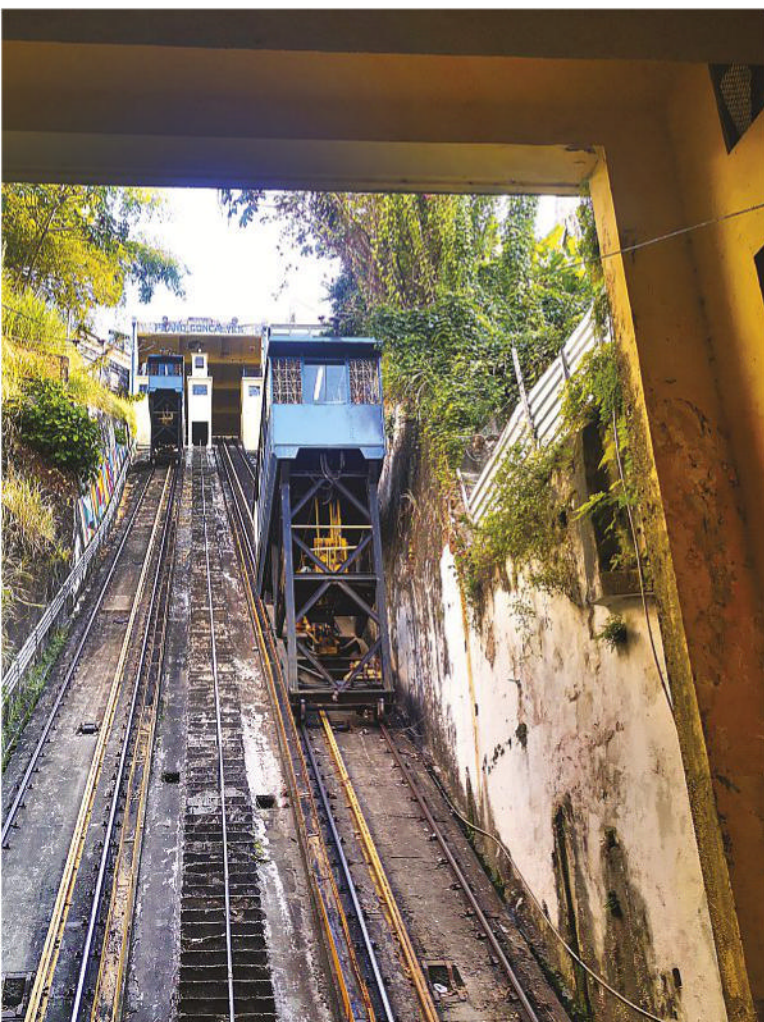
Pedestrians can use the Lacerda elevator to go up the cliff that separates the two. Unfortunately, this historical elevator (which dates from 1873) was closed for maintenance and I had to make do with a ride on Gonçalves funicular. Still, it saved me from a sweaty 2 km hike through the city.

I also visited the Casa do Carnival, a museum dedicated to carnival culture. There were costumes on display and recordings to watch.

Fireflies in Chapada Diamantina

After four days on the pulsating streets of Salvador, I was ready for something different. A hike in the Chapada Diamantina mountains ("Diamond Plateau")

“The difference between the jungle and a city was a shock to the system.”



Opposite page, clockwise from top left: This 200 m-long natural tunnel runs through a hill called Morro do Castelo. When you exit, there are two viewpoints overlooking the valley below. It was a detour to reach this viewpoint over Vale do Pati, but totally worth it. Hikers relax at a river pool in the Rio Preto.

awaited. Diamonds were mined here from the late 18th century, but the industry declined when diamonds were discovered in South Africa.

I took an early-morning bus and arrived in Palmeiras, about 450 km to the west, in the late afternoon. From there, I took a taxi to the town of Vale do Capão (also called Caeté-Açu) on the north-western edge of the mountains. Capão is in a forested valley with several hiking trails and a river full of pools to swim in. It felt like a cross between the Bushveld and Garden Route.

I camped at a backpackers called Filhos da Floresta – “Children of the Forest”. I found a group of friendly people, but the campsite wasn’t great, so I moved on to Pousada e Camping Lakshmi, where I camped undisturbed beneath big trees. Capão has great restaurants and I mostly ate at places around the town square.

One afternoon I did the short walk to Rio Preto, which flows past to the west of town, and swam in many of the river pools.

I also did a day hike to Cachoeira da Fumaça (“Smoke Falls”), which was a good introduction to this dramatic landscape. Sheer cliffs rose over deep chasms and the waterfall almost never hit the pool below directly – the water blew away like a plume of smoke before it could reach the bottom. Unfortunately it was still the dry season and the waterfall wasn’t at its most potent.

My main goal in the Chapada Diamantina National Park was to explore Vale do Pati – a hidden valley in the mountains that can only be reached on foot.

After my adventures in the Andes a few months before, I felt brave enough to hike on my own. There would be other people in the area and I researched the network of paths beforehand. I packed up at Lakshmi and headed south. There were no park fees to pay so I just walked in.

The first day was easy, all along the plateau. I pitched my tent next to a river pool with the ruins of a deserted farmhouse next to it. I laughed when a school of fish came to nibble at my tired feet. A local on a horse arrived unexpectedly. He led his horse into the pool for a quick swim and disappeared again.

It drizzled the next morning, just enough to make breaking camp uncomfortable. But the clouds cleared quickly and by the time I could see Vale do Pati, it was starting to warm up.

I climbed a hill up to a peak with the amusing name Subida do Quebra Bunda – loosely translated, it means “butt break ascent”!

The footpath ran along the top of the western leg of the mountain. Before long, Vale do Pati showed me its secret world to the left: high cliffs with dense forest below.

I had planned to overnight in the valley, but now that I was at the top, I figured I had to first go to one of the best-known viewpoints in the area – even if it meant a 10 km detour. It was very hot and I stashed my backpack under a bush. This way, I had a lighter walk to the viewpoint at the top of the valley, with cliffs hundreds of metres high.

When I arrived, I found that the river here had run dry, so there was no waterfall. But it didn’t bother me – as I dangled my feet over the abyss, swallows circled below me.

It was afternoon by the time I returned to my backpack and followed the path down. When the park was proclaimed in 1985, some families didn’t want to give up their farms. They were allowed to stay, on condition that no roads were built into the valley.

Some of the farms offered accommodation and they were all named after the owners. I chose “Miguel and Agnaldo”, at the foot of a hill called Morro do Castelo (“Castle Hill”), which rises in the middle of the valley. There wasn’t a formal campsite so I pitched my tent in a forest next to a river. That night, the forest lit up with hundreds of fireflies.

I packed up after breakfast and left my backpack at the farmhouse to climb Castle Hill. Where the path left the forest and met up with the cliffs, I walked through a 200 m-long natural tunnel about 10 m wide and 5 m high.

There were two viewpoints on the other side. I was now nearly 500 m above the valley floor, with nothing but cliffs and forest in all directions (and a few other hikers). The landscape reminded me of the Blyde River Canyon.

I could have sat there for ages, admiring the scenery, but I had to move on to my next camp. I hiked back, retrieved my backpack and headed for the river pool at Poço da Árvore, about 10 km downstream. Along the way, I could see how Castle Hill got its name – the cliffs looked like the crenelated ramparts of a medieval fortress.

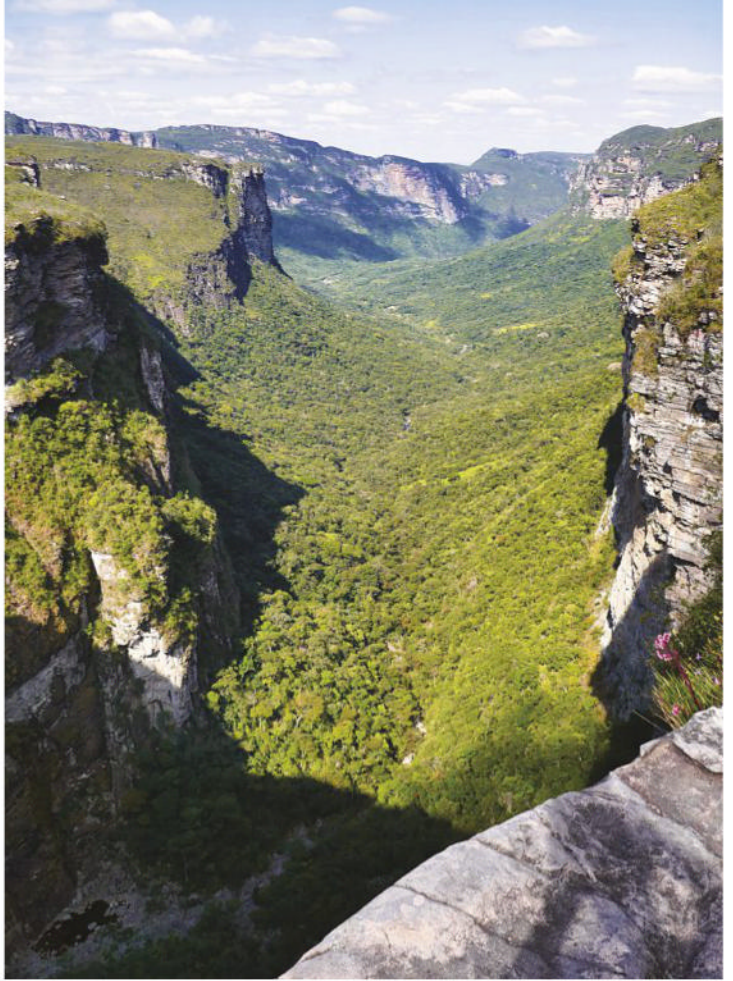
Near Poço da Árvore, I pitched my tent under a rock overhang and spent the rest of the afternoon in the water. That night, I built a fire under the overhang, cooked dinner and went to bed early – the last long day of hiking lay ahead.

It was about 15 km from Poço da Árvore to Andaraí, one of the original diamond mining towns. I walked past the last few farms and breathed in the cool air of the forest one last time.

The 2 km-long pass to the top of the mountain was steep, but no worse than Plattekliip Gorge up Table Mountain – except I had to carry a heavy backpack!

After the forests of the hidden valley, the

“That night, the forest lit up with hundreds of fireflies.”



Opposite page, clockwise from the top: The Capão town centre only gets busy after sunset. A day hike to the Cachoeira da Fumaça offers a great introduction to the scenic landscape of the Chapada Diamantina mountain range. Francois on the Porto da Barra beach in Salvador with his friend, Marco (right). Many buildings in Salvador are decorated with artworks like this one.

landscape on the other side of the mountain was arid and drained of colour – a bit like the Bushveld in winter. Near Andaraí, the rocky landscape was like a maze and I was grateful for the clear path. The town had colourful old houses and surprisingly clean cobbled streets, although there weren't many signs of the short-lived riches of the diamond rush.

I slept in a hotel near the bus terminal and travelled back to Salvador early the next morning.

Reflections in Salvador

I now had a better idea of what I still wanted to see during my visit – with camera in hand, I tackled the city with fresh energy.

Salvador is a visual spectacle on many levels. The street art is ubiquitous. From small artworks on walls (painted, written, glued on...) to 15-storey murals and sculptures.

One conversation in particular made me reflect on our situation in South Africa. One morning, while wandering around the Santo Antônio neighbourhood, I saw a sign for a hostel on a wall and entered to find out what they were offering. Two young men were drinking coffee in the courtyard and asked me where I came from.

They were surprised when I told them I was from South Africa. "But you're white," one said. I explained that my family had lived in South Africa for generations, which prompted the same reaction. I explained more about our country's history and one said: "So, you're saying your family has lived in Africa so long and you're still so white? Your family must really not like black people!"

He had a point. Over the centuries, Salvador and South Africa tackled social integration very differently. Maybe the samba helped! This is one of the wonders of travel: To see the world through a stranger's eyes, and to understand it better.

I spent my last days in the Pelourinho neighbourhood, in the historical city centre (the "upper city"). For two nights, I stayed next to a bar called O Cravinho, where nearly 50 varieties of a local rum called *cachaça* are aged and flavoured in vats. Each vat is connected by a pipe to a central wooden panel with nearly 50 taps. But you can't see which vat is connected to which tap...

When the barman pours you a drink, he adds a bit from this tap, a bit from that tap... The result is a random mixture of different tastes. A dangerous (but delicious) adventure!

Indeed, Salvador taught me a lot about how different cultures can work and thrive together. Yet relatively nearby, other families in Vale do Pati choose isolation. Both options are valid; each brings its own lessons. And it seems like there's space for both in Bahia.

This is the last instalment of Francois's series on South America. Read the previous ones in issues #203 and #204.





VISAS

South Africans can apply for a visa upon arrival in Brazil free of charge.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

This list gives a general idea of what accommodation cost during Francois's visit in 2024. He mostly used [booking.com](#).

SALVADOR

- **Solcity Hostel** (Barra neighbourhood): R170 per person for a bed in a dormitory.
☎ 00 55 71 99414 8716
☎ 00 55 71 99173 3660
- **Axé Home** (Pelourinho neighbourhood): R260 per person for a room.
☎ 00 55 71 99140 8275
- **Tamboleiro's Hostel** (Pelourinho neighbourhood): R160 per person for a bed in a dormitory.
☎ 00 55 71 98473 3280
☎ 00 55 31 99728 1959

CAPÃO

- **Camping Permacultural Filhos da Floresta**: R110 per person to camp in your own tent.
☎ 00 55 75 99273 2078
- **Pousada e Camping Lakshmi**: R150 per person to camp in your own tent.
☎ 00 55 71 98874 7417



MEET THE AUTHOR

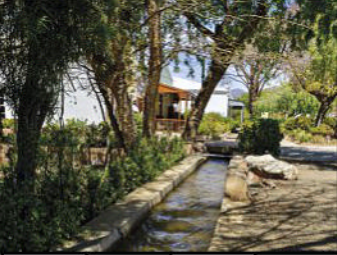
Francois Raubenheimer is a software developer. When he's not travelling and working remotely, he lives in Observatory, Cape Town. He has a passion for art and nature – and an endless curiosity about everything that's unfamiliar and different. Since 2019, he's been on the road extensively in Africa, Europe and South America, following his life motto: "Home is where I am."

"My travels are an exploration of culture, art, food and nature," says Francois. "There are endless wonders to experience in the world. Contact with 'difference' is valuable for your personal growth."

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY GERDA ENGELBRECHT

SOLUTION ON PAGE 102

			Town in the Western Cape (6,6)		Fountain or rollerball		Perceive	Be in . . . minds (un-decided)		New Cape-Nature reserve (6,5)			
			Apprehended		Salamander					Sea eagle (literary)			
Of late		Courteous man					Short memo				Raid		Evaluate
(Have) stitched		Existed					Pinnacle				Snitch (3,2)		Water sources
			Baby beds					Darts					
			Singular (abbr)										
Informal talk								Catches					
East side (abbr)			Pant					Appliance					
			Scraps					Charged atom					
		Tiller		. . . and behold			Breeze			Mineral liquids			
				"I see!"			Honey-maker						
Copernicium (symbol)					Ache								
					Wideness								
					Volcano in Sicily					Village in the Amathole Mountains			
					Long for								
Dress				Cereal grass			Scrambled word	Found in fertiliser					
"I think so!"				Munched									
							Indefinite article			Left hand (abbr)			
							You and I						
			Danger	Shelter							Indian garment		Remotest parts
				Water mammal									Nuisances
									Form				
									FM and . . .				
Large dam on the Orange River		Food for a fish hook		Dove or eagle, eg			Snatch				Republic (abbr)		
				Not out							X		
						Playwright							
						Be							
Small apartments		Rand (abbr)		Circle ratio			@			Cerium (symbol)		Thorium (symbol)	
							Timidity						

TOAST COETZER; KYRA TARR; EVAN NAUDE



go! Puzzles #15 is still on sale!

Buy a copy at your local shop (R100) or order online from media24shop.com

*Six Generations,
One Passion*



www.diemersdal.co.za

Not for Sale to Persons Under the Age of 18



In a glittering metropolis,
Vania Jooste ponders the
privilege of travel.

It's early evening and I'm looking out over Downtown Dubai. I'm on the 124th floor of the highest building in the world – the 163-floor Burj Khalifa. Yes, the very building Tom Cruise climbed in *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol*. But Tom isn't here tonight – just thousands of tourists, like me, who have come to watch the sun set over this improbable city in the middle of the desert.

To reach the lookout deck, you first have to walk through the Dubai Mall. My credit card and I gave the Hermès and Rolex stores a wide berth...

The view is amazing from this high up. Dubai is in the United Arab Emirates and it's known as a playground of the super-rich. Shiny buildings try to outdo each other, each with their own impressive architecture.

Two nights ago, I went to a show called La Perle by Dragone, where acrobats and stunt riders tell the story of Dubai's origins as a port for pearl divers. The stage was purpose-built with a 2,7 million-litre pool in the middle. The spectacle made my head spin faster than the motorbikes circling inside the gigantic steel ball above the water.

I'm here to visit my good friend Eduan who has lived and worked in Dubai for the past 17 years. He has become blasé about all the shiny things, and how smoothly everything runs, and the comfort that seems almost mundane. But for this Capetonian on her first visit to Dubai, everything feels fresh and mind-blowing.

I ordered sunscreen on Amazon Now and it was delivered to Eduan's apartment exactly seven minutes later. (Is there a fully stocked truck parked on every street corner?) And when Eduan rented a car for us online, we didn't have to pick it up at a rental company. It was left in a parking area, with the key in the ignition! (You unlock it via an app.)

Dubai has almost zero crime. Nothing gets stolen. Your handbag and phone are safe on the restaurant table when

you go to the bathroom; and you scan and pay for groceries yourself at Spinneys – a supermarket like Checkers.

The so-called “Dubai brunch” is a popular tourist pastime. Despite the name, it's more like a lunch that sometimes lasts up to four hours... You can book for brunch at a hotel or restaurant, and it usually includes several courses and drinks that keep flowing. (I was surprised by the abundance of alcohol in this Muslim country.) We went to a restaurant called Carnival by Trèsind (everything is *by* something else), which had a DJ and exotic dancers! Yes, that was me on the dancefloor in the middle of the day... (*We wouldn't have expected anything less, Vania! – Ed*)

I was in Dubai from late December until the middle of January. It was winter in the Middle East, but the beaches were packed and I wore my summer clothes. It got up to 25 °C most days.

A friend who had visited Dubai many years ago sent me a WhatsApp to ask if the country was still so conservative. I looked around: There were bikinis on all the beaches...

One afternoon we browsed a souk and bought kaftans and scarves, and drank *karak* – a strong, milky tea. These markets can be overwhelming with (sometimes) pushy shopkeepers. But this is what I wanted to see: a glimpse of the old Dubai, where traditional culture still holds sway.

We also went to Abu Dhabi (the capital of the UAE, about 140 km south-west of Dubai) to see its version of the Louvre, where works by Monet and Rodin are exhibited. As I strolled from Impressionist painting to classical sculpture, I realised what a privilege it is to travel – to see how other people live, whether it's three towns over or thousands of kilometres away.

Travel enriches life in your corner of the world.

*“The so-called ‘Dubai brunch’
is a popular tourist pastime.
Despite the name, it’s more like
a lunch that sometimes lasts
up to four hours...”*

WHERE MUSIC *meets* THE MOUNTAIN

“
True Jazz.
True Karoo.”

From **30 April to 3 May 2026**,
Journey to Jazz returns to Prince Albert,
unfolding across intimate venues,
community spaces and the Swartberg
Mountain Pass itself.

This is a festival built for *travellers who love discovery* - where world-class jazz meets wide-open landscapes, star-filled skies and a town that welcomes you like an old friend.

Follow the music from church halls, a former car showroom, to mountain roads and beyond. From late-night listening rooms to sunset performances in the pass.

FEATURING

Vusi Mahlasela • Zawadi Yamungu • Nomfundo Xaluva • Paul Hanmer
Kyle Shepherd - William Kentridge Live Film Score • Jonathan Rubain • Donvino Prins
Yonela Mnana and the Soultee Sisters • Linda Sikhakhane & Paras Dlamini
DJ Bob • Amy Campbell • Ntone Edjabe • ¡Gracia! (Italy) • Karoo Jazz Project

Come for the journey. Come for the scenery. Come for the sound.

BOOK EARLY - ACCOMMODATION IS LIMITED

TICKETS VIA QUICKET

JOURNEY TO JAZZ FESTIVAL

Prince Albert, Western Cape
30 April – 3 May 2026
journeytojazz.co.za
[@journeytojazzfestival](https://www.instagram.com/journeytojazzfestival)

JOURNEY TO JAZZ
PRINCE ALBERT

Image credit: Swartberg pass preparing to welcome J2J 2026 - Inga Terblanche for PACT

A face-to-face encounter with a mountain gorilla is one of Africa's bucket-list tourism activities. I photographed this gorilla in Volcanoes National Park, in the north-western corner of Rwanda.

Mountain gorilla numbers have slowly increased to just over a thousand in recent years. Back in the 1980s there were barely 400 left in the mountain forests of Uganda, Rwanda and the DRC. (These three countries share the Virunga Mountains across their borders, while a separate population of mountain gorillas can be found in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park in Uganda.)

So-called blackback gorillas – like this one – are males subservient to the silverback in a mountain gorilla family. Our trekking group arrived at this gorilla family at about 10 am; the gorillas were resting in the thick undergrowth. A couple of mothers and their babies were playing around in open pockets, but the males were mostly napping out of view.

Just as our 45 minutes of face time was about to run out, this blackback appeared on the path behind us and momentarily locked eyes with me.

– Toast Coetzer

Expand your world, one page at a time

**YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP
FOR BOOKS, PUZZLES,
MAGAZINES, & MORE!**

From captivating reads and fun puzzles to travel guides and recipe books, we've got something for everyone. Whether you want to plan your next adventure, cook up a storm, or relax with your favourite magazines, you'll find it all in one place.



SHOP \ MEDIA 24

Free delivery!

WHY SHOP WITH US?

- 1 A wide selection of the **top-rated** magazines in SA
- 2 Exclusive online **discounts**
- 3 **FREE delivery** with the code **#Bargain24**

MEDIA24SHOP.COM



For Every Move.

Adventure with your IceFlow™ Bottle Flip Straw 2.0 in
Goldenrod Coral

Our bold new range of IceFlow™ Bottles are here. Keeping your water ice-cold for hours when you're out exploring or in the gym. Sip it, snap it, stow it – fits perfectly into your bag or car cup holder.



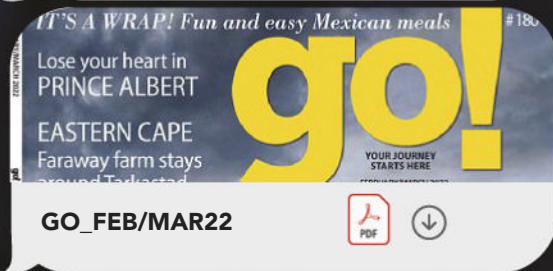
Indigo

Violet Blossom



Sunel

Look at what I got for free!
Pass it on. 😊



Johan

How did you get the latest issue
for free?? 😊

Sunel

Who cares! Just send it on!

THE SHARING OF PDF PUBLICATIONS IS A **CRIME**
DON'T STEAL!

IF YOU RECEIVE A PDF PUBLICATION VIA EMAIL, WHATSAPP OR ANY OTHER
MESSAGING GROUP PLEASE REPORT IT TO REPORT@MEDIA24.COM

MEDIA24

