



ELITE RECOMMENDS

TENTED LUXURY/SAUSAGE TREE CAMP

14 DAYS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Bush luxury continues its evolution, from tented camps, to superlodges complete with spas and gourmet dining, to today's ultimate accommodations—your own private lodges. We've visited the newest luxury lodges across the south of the continent to bring you the best bets for a private takeover. The only hard part? Deciding which friends and family members to whisk away with you for an exclusive, private safari.

BY SCOTT GOETZ



POOL AT NIGHT / IGUAZU GRAND HOTEL RESORT & CASINO

1

ARRIVE IN CAPE TOWN

Cape Town provides a seductive, easy transition into Africa as elements of the continent's wild side are glimpsed within the safe, familiar arena of a cosmopolitan city. The town constantly surprises, whether it's an unsuspecting baboon crossing the street or the inspired design of the **Ellerman Villa** (\$6,500 per night) that Oprah Winfrey, Bill Clinton and John Travolta all know. From its high-dollar perch above **Bantry Bay**, the villa frames a view even more splendid than the priceless South African art adorning its walls. Therapists Vicky and Yvette greet you on arrival, ready to unleash your tension in the villa's two-room spa. At sunset, join Jeremy Vernark, Ellerman's chef, on the deck for charming surfer-style storytelling as he barbeques local seafood.

Contact: General Manager Tim Cumming,
Phone: 27-21-430-3200; Fax: 27-21-430-3215;
Email: tcumming@ellerman.co.za;
Website: www.ellerman.co.za

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THE WESTERN CAPE

After a leisurely breakfast, meet your guide Rehad for a Mercedes tour through the Cape. Experience the renowned grapes of Stellenbosch at **Meerlust Estate**, where the Myburgh family has been producing world-class wines since 1756. Lunch is served under historic oaks surrounded by vineyards at **Terroir Restaurant**. Make a quick swing by **Waterford Estate** for a chocolate and wine tasting, then relax back at the villa by uncorking more pinotage poolside.

Meerlust Estate
Contact: Meerlust Estate,
Phone: 27-21-843-3587; Fax: 27-21-843-3274;
Email: info@meerlust.co.za;
Website: www.meerlust.co.za
Waterford Estate
Contact: Werner Briedenhann,
Phone: 27-21-880-0496;
Fax: 27-21-880-1007;
Email: info@waterfordestate.co.za;
Website: www.waterfordestate.co.za

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CAPE TOWN TO KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Climb aboard your **National Airways Pilatus PC-12**, one of the fastest aircraft in the bush that can land on short strips (like the airfield at your destination, **Singita Sweni**). This six-suite chic hideaway is nestled along the banks of the Sweni River and has glass walls, indoor/outdoor showers and daybeds—ask Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie or Wesley Snipes all about it (\$1,132 per night per person). Head Guide Matthew Harding takes you out to find a crash of Kruger rhinos that makes up half of the world's population. Stay up late for a night drive: Look out for the 19-member lion pride on the hunt.

National Airways Corporation
Contact: Charter Manager Trevor Abrahams,
Phone: 27-11-267-5000; Fax: 27-11-267-5054;
Email: trevor.abrahams@nac.co.za;
Singita Sweni Lodge
Contact: General Manager Jason Trollip,
Phone: 27-13-735-5500;
Email: reservations@singita.com

ELITE RECOMMENDS



LION SPOTTING/ZIBADIANJA



LEBOMBO SUITE/SINGITA



BACKYARD VISITOR/ZIBADIANJA

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KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Only at **Singita** will you find yourself standing outside the game vehicle bravely donning a helmet before jumping on a mountain bike. General Manager Jason Trollip explains the dangers of bush-biking but assures you the lions are miles away before you start. Catch up to the speeding impala that dizzily dart back and forth, but be prepared to kick into high gear if a buffalo appears. Peddle past the crocodiles and hippos to a bank-side brunch where a contingent of chefs prepare eggs and waffles topped with thick yogurt, fresh passion fruit and nutty honey granola. Afterwards, work it off with a bush walk to experience heart-pumping encounters with bull elephants. At the lodge, center your inner jungle madman with the Signature Monkey Orange body massage in the spa. Explore the lodge's store and check out the ostrich leather wing chairs, kudu horns and trade-bead jewelry.

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TO THE OKAVANGO DELTA

Wave farewell to South Africa as your plane flies deeper into the continent. Keep cameras ready as the creeks in the plains below slowly widen into the immensity of Botswana's **Okavango Delta**. Foraging elephants, yawning hippos and swaggering giraffes make their home in the lily-filled waters. Safari firm **Cox & Kings** has arranged your stay at **Selinda Reserve** and **Zibadianja** (\$1,025 per night per person), the reserve's new four-tent luxury eco-lodge (built by **Great Plains Conservation**, a multinational conservation-tourism model that is the brainchild of safari veterans Colin Bell and *National Geographic's* Dereck and Beverly Joubert). Camp Relief Manager Elmari Cuyler escorts your takeover group to spacious tents that are each surrounded by a large deck with private plunge pool. *Contact: Cox & Kings' Jeanie Fundora, Phone: (813) 258-3323; Fax: (813) 258-3852; Email: jfundora@coxandkingsusa.com; Website: www.coxandkingsusa.com*

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SELINDA RESERVE

Wake up at **Zibadianja** to catch sight of *lechwe* antelope grazing in the magical morning light. Grab your room's complimentary Canon 40D digital camera before you climb into your private-use Land Cruiser (designed specifically for game photography), a perfect platform from which to shoot photos of rare wild dogs and other fauna of the region. After you return to the camp for brunch, a helicopter chartered by **Okavango Helicopters** arrives for a surprise champagne tour that will take you to an uncharted part of the delta. Here's where you will enjoy a private dinner as well as the amazing noises of the night, a chorus of hippo bellows and lion roars. *Contact: Okavango Helicopters' Peter Perlstein, Phone: (267) 686-5797; Fax: (267) 686-5798; Email: okavangoheli@dynabyte.bw*

ELITE RECOMMENDS



JUNGLE COMPOUND/DUBA PLAINS



VILLA OKAVANGO/ABU CAMP

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DUBA PLAINS

Fly to the farthest reaches of the **Western Okavango Delta** to see one of the animal kingdom's great rivalries: The conflict between the lions and buffalos of the **Duba Plains**. Surprisingly, it's the deep hippo-carved ravines—impenetrable natural fences—that have consigned these adversaries to a life of constant battle. Rarely do visitors get to experience a hunt from chase to bone, but at Duba the chances are multiplied; however, it's the genuine kindness of the staff at this six-tent camp that you'll remember most. Your stay is arranged by **Uncharted Outposts**.

Contact: Camp Manager Maolosi Tumpane,
Phone: (888) 995-0909; Fax: (505) 795-7714;
Email: sandy@unchartedoutposts.com;
Website: www.unchartedoutposts.com

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TO ABU CAMP

It's a short flight south after your morning game drive at Duba to **Abu Camp**. This 400,000-acre private reserve threaded by papyrus-filled waters and grassy islands is a scenic treat, but it's the trained African elephants that make this camp unique. Six spacious tents with four-poster beds and copper baths line the edge of a hippo-filled lagoon and are centered around a teak dining deck where communal meals are casual and homey. Across the lagoon lies the **Villa Okavango** (\$8,036 per night per villa), a two-bedroom colonial camp. After lunch, cross over to Elephant Island to meet the *mahouts* and pick out your elephant (choose Cathy if you can, especially if mahout Billy is working with her).

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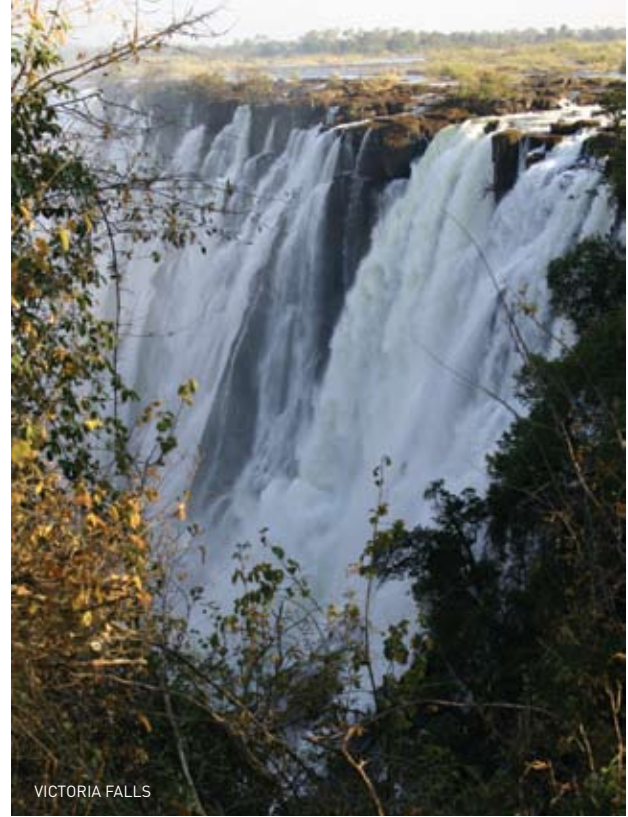
A DAY AS A MAHOUT

Wake up early with the elephants and, if owner Randall Moore is available, enlist him as your guide so you can hear his first-hand stories from days spent working with Clint Eastwood on *White Hunter, Black Heart*. Climb onto your pachyderm for a two-hour ride with an up-close look at what it is elephants do: Eat, trumpet and interact with the local herds of other elephants, giraffes and herbivores. Arrive at a serene picnic spot under a sausage tree in time for lunch complete with fine china and cushy pillows. Later, gain the true delta safari experience of gliding through the flood planes in a *mokoro*, or dug-out canoe.

Contact: Abu Camp Owners Randal and Catherine Moore, Phone: (267) 686-1260;
Email: info@ebs.bw;
Website: www.abucamp.com



LAKE LUXURY/SINDABEZI LODGE



VICTORIA FALLS

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TO THE KALAHARI

Experience the extreme diversity of Botswana's ecosystems by flying southwest from the delta's marshes into the **Kalahari Desert**, where over two million years ago earthquakes shifted rivers and turned this once-largest lake in Africa into the world's largest saltpan. Check into the newly rebuilt **San Camp** (\$950 per person per night) where, on the edge of the **Makgadikgadi Pans**, six 1940s safari-style tents evoke utter desert romance. Fourth-generation camp owner Ralph Bousfield offers VIP guiding (\$2,200 per day) and will meet you for lunch to discuss your interests.

Contact: San Camp Marketing Manager Sanet Fagan, Phone: 27-0-11-447-1605; Email: marketing@unchartedafrica.com; Website: www.unchartedafrica.com

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DESERT EXPLORATION

Wake up early to watch the sun rise over the endless expanse of desert and see why this place is revered by all who venture here. Set off for some personal interaction with the captivating meerkats, then drive to a picnic breakfast at **Chapman's Baobab** (a tree that is over 3,000 years old and one of the largest trees in Africa). In the afternoon, set out on a walk into the past, where Zu'hoasi bushmen trackers teach you how they survive in this harsh environment. After dinner, take the quad bikes out into the saltpan where the moon and stars above make the white sand below you glow.

Contact: Cyrus Dar, Phone: 27-11-447-1605; Fax: 27-11-447-6905; Email: jacks@unchartedafrica.com; Website: www.unchartedafrica.com

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VICTORIA FALLS

Wing it out of the desert for a breathtaking flight over **Victoria Falls**. Land in Livingstone, where expert river guide Potato Chisanga (from **Bundu Adventures Rafting**) escorts you on a thrilling **Zambezi River** adventure. A helicopter lifts you out of the gorge and shuttles you to the five-bedroom **Sindabezi Lodge** (\$2,120 per night for four people).

Bundu Adventures

Contact: Nico Chassing,

Phone: 260-332-44-07; Fax: 260-332-4406;

Email: info@bunduadventures.com;

Sindabezi Island

Contact: General Manager Rudy Boribon,

Phone: 260-21-33-27-468; Fax: 260-21-33-24-282;

Email: rudy@tongabezi.com;

Website: www.tongabezi.com



AFRICAN ARCHITECTURE/CHONGWE RIVER HOUSE

LIVINGSTONE TO LOWER ZAMBEZI

This morning visit the **Tongabezi Trust School** and sponsor a child or donate art materials, clothes and toys. A two-hour flight west finds you above a nearly two-mile-wide section of the Zambezi River flanked by mountainous bush. Land in the **Lower Zambezi National Park** where a boat will whisk you away to the four-bedroom **Chongwe River House** (designed by Neil Rocher of **Shompole** fame). Built of Ferro walls and wild wood that follow the natural lines of the branches, the resort gives off a flowing futuristic atmosphere, especially when you enjoy it from the riverside pool. Chef Mofat Tembo creates menus upon request and General Manager Brendan Raisbeck does double duty as your licensed guide.

Contact: General Managers Clem and Brendan Raisbeck,

Phone: 260-1-286-808;

Email: info@chongwe.com;

Website: www.chongwe.com

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LOWER ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK

It's impossible to fully appreciate the **Zambezi River** until it is explored by boat, so rise early this morning and meet your guides from **Sausage Tree Camp** for a full day of canoeing. As one of the few operators based inside the park, they are able to explore the river's most stunning section, the **Chifungulu Channel**. No experience or particular strength is required; your guide does most of the work. The 20-mile trip lasts two-thirds of a relaxing day filled with photo-taking, picnicking and bird-watching. Canoe lovers can continue another 20 miles to sister camp, four-chalet **Old Mondoro** or head to one of Sausage Tree Camp's six Bedouin-inspired rooms where elephants often trundle past (\$895 per night per person). Dress for your farewell dinner, hosted on a romantic lantern and moonlit island.

Contact: Sausage Tree Managing Director Jason Mott, Phone: 260-211-845-204;

Email: jason@sausagetreecamp.com;

Website: sausagetreecamp.com

LAYOVER LUXE

Even on a private jet safari, it's hard to avoid layovers in Johannesburg. **The Westcliff** can turn it into an event with its easy-access helicopter pad, a surprise cheetah welcome in the **Presidential Suite** (\$2,009 per night), a catered dinner in the elephant enclosure of the adjacent zoo or even a visit with a traditionally dressed Sangoma witch doctor.

Contact: General Manager Mark Holden, Phone 27-86-681-9596; Fax: 27-86-682-9722; Email: mholden@westcliff.co.za; Website: www.westcliff.co.za

UNCHARTED EXPERTS

U.S.-based Sandy Cunningham is expert in designing luxury trips to the smaller, privately owned African properties. Her devotion to ecotourism and community has made **Uncharted Outposts Safari and Travel Company** one of the nation's oldest and most respected African safari specialists.

Contact: Sandy Cunningham, Phone: (888) 995-0909; Fax: (505) 795-7714;

Email: sandy@unchartedoutposts.com; Website: www.unchartedoutposts.com

GETTING THERE

South African Airlines' A340-300 from New York or A340-600 from Washington D.C. has fast flight times to safari gateway city Johannesburg as well as lay-flat Premium Class seats.

Contact: Director of Sales Todd Neuman, Phone: (954) 769-5000; Fax: (954) 769-5079; Email: toddneuman@flysaa.com; Website: www.flysaa.com