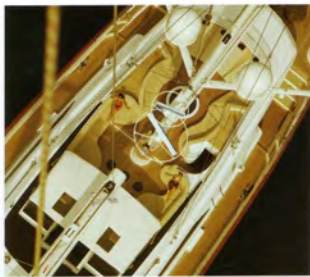


PRESTIGE

IN THE LAP OF LUXURY



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WANDER

Camp Jabulani

Giants on Safari



I won't soon forget my first time astride a three-tonne elephant. I felt a little like an Indian Princess and a lot like John Wayne, though his mount of choice was a stallion – much less of a distance for one's aching thighs to manage. As we padded gently through the African bushveld I wondered if life could get any better.

Words: TONI MUIR. Images: © CAMP JABULANI



ved, their enormous feet like cushions when touching the earth. Jabulani took the lead, stopping every so often to tear a branch off a tree – 'takeaways' as the guide riding in front of me called them. He regaled me with fact after fact about elephants, how they can carry as much as 20 percent of their body weight on their backs, how they eat as much as 250 kilograms of food a day, and how 120 litres of blood flow through the veins of a full-grown male. But most amazing of all: they can 'talk' to each other from a distance of 60 kilometres. That deep rumbling in their chests – that's them talking, and they do it at some frequencies we can't even hear.

The following morning we headed to the HESC, doing a bit of bundu bashing en route as a mother lion and her two adolescent offspring has been spotted not far off the main road. There they were under an Acacia tree and I must say, unless they're hunting or eating, they don't do much, these kings of beasts. After a few moments spent observing and admiring, we continued on our way.

The HESC has established itself as one of the leading private research and breeding facilities for endangered species in the country. Here, we waited at the 'vulture restaurant' as staff threw pieces of meat into an open cemented area, upon which the hungry birds descended with wide wings flapping and sharp beaks agape. It was a feeding frenzy; fascinating albeit a tad frightening. We also saw first-hand the various projects undertaken by the Centre, including the cheetah and wild dog breeding projects. The work undertaken by the HESC is crucial to the survival of so many of our world's species.

But it was our night safari on elephant back – the only experience of this kind in the world – that left the most lingering memory. My other half being six-foot-seven-inches tall (a full two metres), insisted that we ride

on Sebakwe, the largest elephant, who happens to be 3.4 metres at the shoulder. Sitting on him we were thus eye level with whatever was at least four metres off the ground, and I found myself staring over the tops of the Acacia trees, far into the distance. Talk about a different perspective on things! We started walking, and Sebakwe gave a low rumble that I felt deep in my own chest. It was echoed by a roar in the distance. "It's just a lion," said the guide. It sounded far away enough not to cause concern. Until I shone my spotlight a little ways off and found, lying just there, maybe 10 metres away, a full-maned male lion. There's no chance the elies didn't hear him, smell him and see him, but they showed no hesitation at all, merely plodding on slowly into the night. I looked up, the sky now completely dark, the Evening Star twinkling just above the horizon and thought well, if they're not worried, I won't be either, and settled in to enjoy the ride. ☀

About the lodge

Camp Jabulani, a Relais Et Châteaux property, is located on a 14,000-hectare Big 5 private game reserve in Hoedspruit, Limpopo. The lodge features six large, ultra-luxurious open-plan suites with lounge area, fireplace, and spacious bathroom with free-standing stone bath, double vanity and glass-enclosed shower surrounded by African bush. Outside, the wooden deck overlooking the dry riverbed has sun loungers and a private plunge pool. The main lodge has a large dining room, lounge, open-air spa, fitness centre and sauna, and dedicated business centre with wireless Internet connectivity. Zindoga Villa features two individual suites connected by a joint lounge and dining area. Each unit has a large bedroom with en suite bathroom, wooden deck and private, heated plunge pool. Contact +27 12 460 5605, +27 12 460 7348, or visit www.campjabulani.com.



Dr. John Demartini has consulted for Fortune 500 CEOs, entrepreneurs, Hollywood celebrities, sports personalities, financiers and other professionals. He has appeared on hundreds of national and international radio and television talk and financial news shows including CNN's Larry King Live, CNBC, CBS, NBC, PBS and more.

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