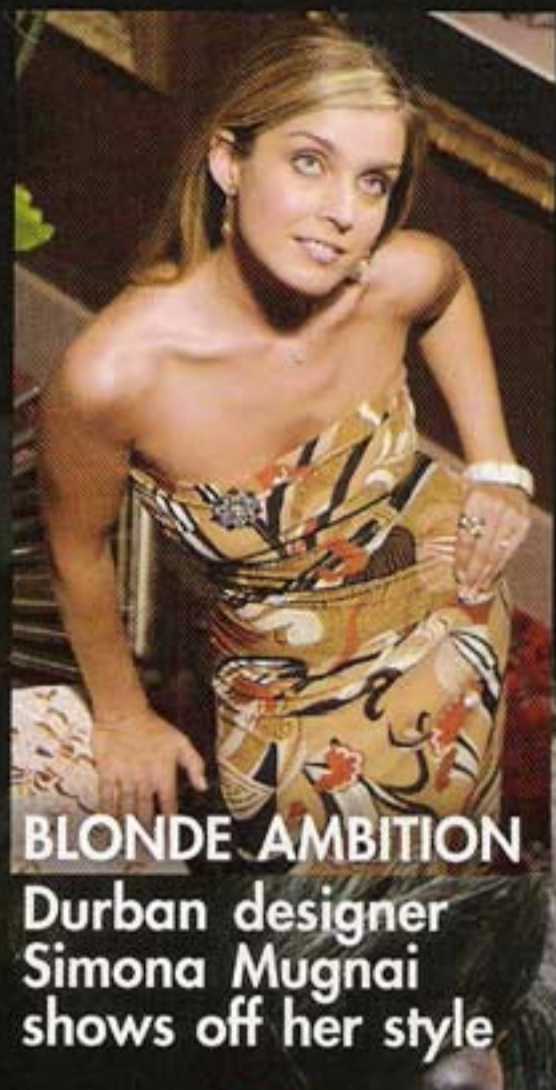


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style

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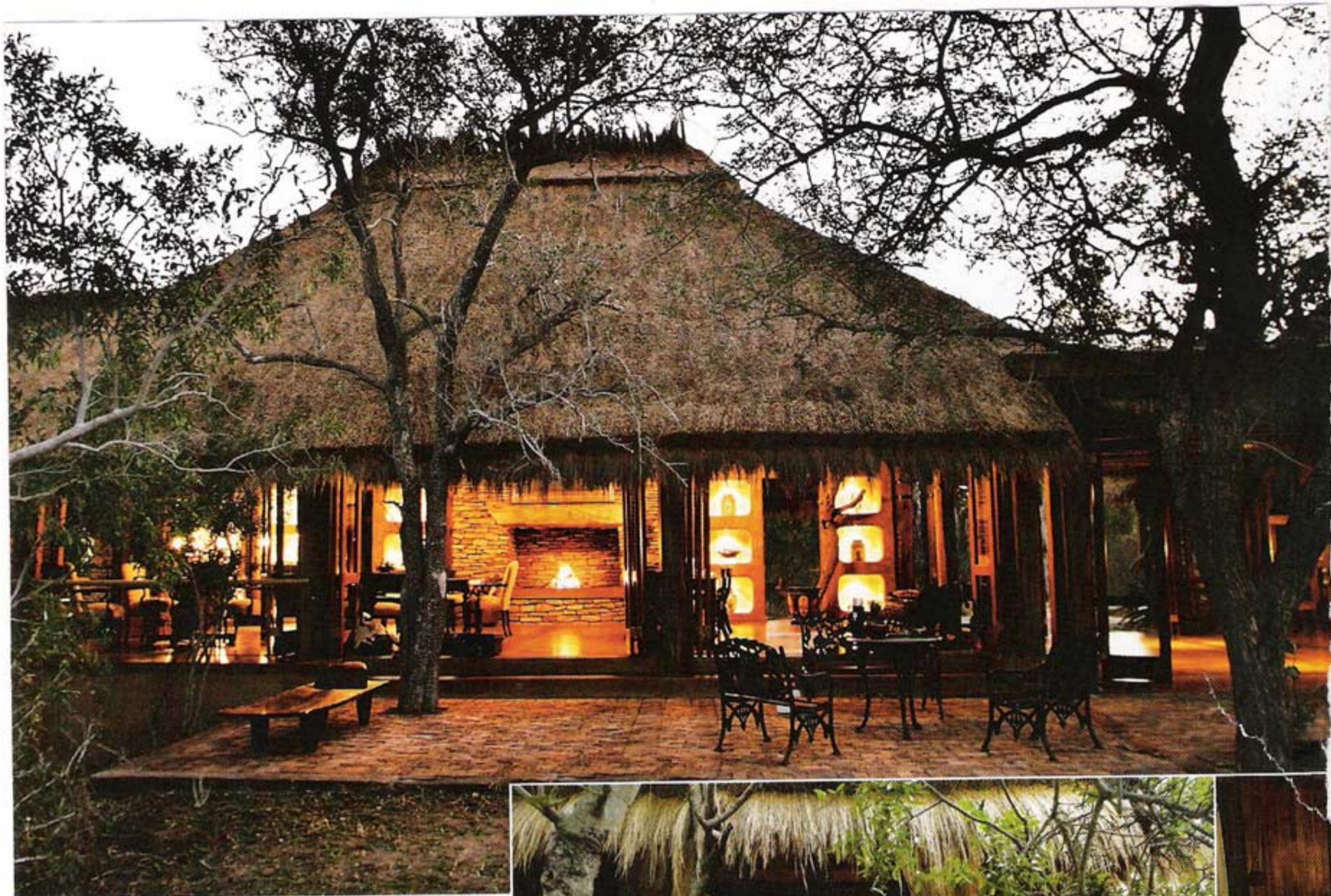
Fabulous Hepburn-
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June 2004





Riding High

Five hours by car from Jo'burg, in the heart of the Lowveld, is a bush escape unique in South Africa.

It is not the six luxury tented suites, with their own Victorian bath-tubs, private fireplaces, outside showers and viewing decks that make Camp Jabulani so unique, nor the gym and masseuse service, nor the individual butler services, nor the sauna and spa facilities deep in the bush.

What makes Camp Jabulani special is the fact that it is the first and only elephant safari camp in South Africa. Nowhere else in the country can you choose each day between a conventional game drive on a 4x4, or a bush amble on the back of one of 12 trained elephants.

Jabulani Camp is located in 13 000 hectares of Big Five country in the Kapama Private Game Reserve near Hoedspruit. It was opened in July 2003 by the camp's



For your first and only elephant safari camp experience, in the lap of luxury, Camp Jabulani is an added must to your bush getaway diary.

patron, Prince Michael of Kent and named after the camp's first adopted elephant, Jabulani.

Jabulani was a three-month-old orphan when he came to the nearby Hoedspruit Research and Breeding Centre, owned by Lente Roode, who also owns Camp Jabulani. When it was time for Jabulani to be reintroduced to the wild it was found that he preferred the company of humans too much to reintegrate.

But Jabulani did not lack elephant company for long, because Lente Roode conducted a rescue mission to Zimbabwe to save 12 trained elephants from a farm that had been invaded. She brought the elephants and their Zimbabwean grooms down to Kapama, where the matriarch willingly accepted Jabulani into the herd. They now take visitors on half-day and full-day safaris.

Jabulani Camp is so secluded that you

can drive all day without seeing or hearing another vehicle. Even better — you get to determine your own safari times. If you want your elephant safari to last from mid-morning till late at night — so that you return under the bright scattering of African stars — that will be arranged for you.

Riding an elephant in the wild is an extraordinary experience. It is more comfortable than you would expect — you sit high and cosy on generous canvas saddles, behind your personal guide who spots game for you as you move along — and it is far quieter than driving in 4x4s. Elephants are astonishingly light-footed and delicate as they pick their way through the bush. It makes you wonder how humans in noisy vehicles ever see wildlife.

Also, no matter how well you know the bush, it looks different from the back of an elephant.



Visits are structured over a minimum of two days, to give you time to bond with your elephant and to appreciate these astonishing creatures that respond to some 80 verbal commands. Any visit to the bush is worth making, but to visit on the back of your own elephant friend — now that's something out of the ordinary; that's something off the beaten track.

For more info, contact Camp Jabulani and Kapama Game Reserve on Tel: (012) 804 4840/1, e-mail gentour@iafrica.com or visit www.kapama.co.za



Where Home Is A Castle

Phantom Beach Castle is outside Knysna but it might as well be in another dimension. A couple of twists and turns off the N1 and you find yourself in the Noetzie conservancy, transported through time and space to a world of fairytales and dreamscapes.

Here, looming above white sands and the aquamarine sea is a real-life fairyland hotel-castle called Phantom Beach. A sandcastle made from sandstone, all turrets and battlements and towers, it shimmers in the clear seaside air as though spun from fantasies and wishes.

You can understand why it is called Phantom Beach — it feels like Brigadoon or some other wonderland that appears when it chooses and can vanish again the moment you look away.

You enter the hotel through the castle's grand doors, like a returning queen and wander through to a terrace overlooking your own beach where Oystercatchers scour the shining white sand, in search of a meal.

There are only four rooms, all sea-facing with their own private terraces and en-suite bathrooms. My room was an elegant dream — a 270-degree seascape panorama through nine windows; the room coolly decorated in shades of beach-sand-white and Indian-Ocean-blue.

For hours I resisted the bed with its crisp linen, lest I fell asleep and awakened to find it was all a mirage.

It seems impossible that Phantom Beach is so close to the tourist hub of the Garden Route that you can walk to the Knysna Heads. The peace and seclusion are absolute. When you are here it seems to be the last seaside place on earth the rest of the world hasn't yet found.

The Noetzie conservancy offers refuge to all manner of flora and fauna — Cape fynbos and sea-otters, Malachite kingfishers and aardvarks.

There is plenty to do if you're so inclined. You can walk the sheltered beach and watch the pods of bottlenose dolphins sporting in the shallows. You can canoe up the Noetzie River and picnic on its riverbanks. Or you can simply bathe in the silence and the privacy and gather your strength for the evening's exquisite six-course dinner.

The castle was originally built as a family home, a secret holiday hideaway place. According to family custom, it still runs on electricity from a generator. When the generator is shut down at night and the candles are lit, it feels as though you are in a palace of elves.

Phantom Beach is something everyone should experience: your own private castle, on your own private beach, on your own enchanted coast. A word of warning, though: everyday life will never feel the same way again.

For more info, contact Tel: (044) 386 0046, e-mail phantomforest@mweb.co.za or visit www.phantomforest.com (see Phantom Beach).