



THE PLACE OF *Kinds*

In the heart of Zululand lies a true African jewel, Amakhosi Safari Lodge. Not for the faint of heart this perfect weekend getaway hosts the Big Five which **Daniela Panzeri** soon discovered have a fondness for locals and tourists

Picturesque rural Mpumalanga sets the scene during the five-hour drive from Johannesburg to Amakhosi, which is almost hidden in the Amazulu Private Game Reserve, resting in the heart of Zululand. We arrive in time for 'high tea' and have a moment to freshen up before heading out on the last game drive of the day. Despite the heat of the afternoon, the bush safari will last into the early evening so a jacket is a must.

After a quick tutorial by our ranger Phillip, and tracker Jeremy, the Land Rover rumbles and we are off. I imagine close encounters with newborn cheetah cubs or perhaps even lion, however, I am equally impressed at the sight of camera shy hornbills. The same cannot be said for a large sounder of warthog who pose with their tails in the air before running off into the bush. Perhaps more impressive than the zebra, giraffe and hippopotamus we encountered was the sheer magnitude of the African sky that seemed to glow as the sun began to set.

Sundowners were taken at a watering hole, which was bursting with life thanks to the recent rainfall. While some opted for a cool G&T in an attempt to ward off mosquitoes, my carnivorous side was tempted by the mini kebabs that Jeremy placed on the gas braai.





More intriguing than the food is the large rifle which hasn't left Phillip's side. "Real bullets or mere sedatives?" I ask. "I'm afraid I'm not a vet," smiles Phillip who is happy not to have had to use it... yet. Back on the trail we continue our search for the pride of lion which was spotted the night before feasting on a warthog. Jeremy's eyes are fixed to the ground and

of crawling creatures can leave their doors open and enjoy the view from the bathtub – designed for two – perfectly situated in the centre of the suite, making it one's own private kingdom.

Morning game drives are fresh but both vehicles are kitted out with blankets to keep you warm before the sun rises. Phillip explains that

Those more welcoming of crawling creatures can leave their doors open and enjoy the view from the bathtub – designed for two

those of us perched higher on the vehicle duck and dive the large spiders and even larger webs. Suddenly we are faced with nine lion cubs, soon joined by their mother, whose piercing stare and loud growl signal it is time to head back to the lodge for dinner.

The meal is Euro-African fusion and takes place on the deck in a romantic African setting. The lodge is at full occupancy with 16 guests and stories of the day's adventure can be heard. But it's early to bed with a 05:00 wake up call for the morning game drive.

Enveloped by darkness, the River Suite still buzzes with activity which can be enjoyed through the ceiling-high windows overlooking the river. Those more welcoming

early morning is the best time to see rhino, however, we were blessed with the sight of an elephant that appeared to be more concerned with eating than with our close proximity. A mini breakfast buffet is served in the bush before we head back to Amakhosi for a nap and a dream about the rhino we never saw. Once again 'high tea', scheduled for 15:00, kicks off the afternoon game drive with anticipation that no two game drives are ever the same.

Still in search of the illustrious rhino, we come across a rather aloof male leopard, who seems to enjoy rolling around from left to right, teasing those trying to get the perfect photo...but I have an appointment with some frogs that I cannot keep waiting. Just



before sunset, I meet with general manager, Alwyn Wentzel, who conducts the frogging safaris, which take place in the summer months from November to March – when the rain provides the perfect habitat for these tiny creatures. Donning wellies and flashlights, and an extra hooded jersey, we venture into the night following the calls of the nocturnal amphibians. Alwyn passionately explains that it is often the smaller creatures that are forgotten during a safari, however, they are the first indicators of a healthy environment. Following the call of each frog species as if it were a fingerprint, we stumble across several tiny amphibians, which are tricky to catch and even trickier to hold on to. After enough wading in shallow water and mud, I head back for our last dinner, mesmerised by the splendour of African charm.

To find out more and for reservations, contact Amakhosi Safari Lodge on (034) 414 1157 or visit their website, www.amakhosi.com