



# wild at heart

Set your heart on fire in South Africa while steeped in luxury amidst a wilderness of exotic animals, writes Rachael Oakes-Ash

There's something primal about Africa. All those wild predators roaming free in the bush certainly gets the blood pumping. Add some spectacular sunsets of gold and pink hues, combined with nature's soundtrack for company, and you'll be falling in love all over again. South Africa, on the continent's

tip, has some seriously luxe safari lodges, designed for the perfect honeymoon – private, intimate and exclusive.

## Londolozi Private Game Reserve

It's hard to choose at Londolozi. Does one go for the bling of Granite Camp with its three majestic villas filled with shades of elephant grey and daring black and white? The suitably studded velvet bed board is enough to make Versace quiver, and the floor-to-ceiling glass in the living room provides a wildlife viewing platform like no other. Or does one go for the more subtle Ralph Lauren-style tones of Tree Camp, with its six intimate villas deep in the African forest offering private plunge pools on one's deck?

**TOP TO BOTTOM:** The light, airy and secluded Granite Private Suites at Londolozi. One of the charming locals. The large decks of the Suites open onto the Sand River. The river view from the deck.



Either way, the wildlife at Londolozi will thrill: leopards lounging in trees; rhinos basking in the sun; hippos soaking in the water and lions sleeping off a hunt. On top of this, add four-course meals worthy of the city's finest dining, and a generosity of spirit only a family-owned resort can offer. [londolozi.co.za](http://londolozi.co.za)

## Ngala Luxury Tented Safari Camp

Conservation Corporation Africa, one of the continent's leading luxury safari operators, are known for their surprises, only they call them 'guest's delights'. You'll call them heavenly as you amble back from dinner to roses floating in a freshly drawn bath and a romantic rhyme written by your bed. Other delights include drinks in the African bush lit by lanterns hanging from branches, melted chocolate with ready-to-dip strawberries at bedtime, champagne on ice hidden in the open-air shower, with petals leading the way. Best we not give all their secrets away.

All this, and more, is served up in six villas loosely referred to as 'tents'. The resemblance stops there, as these tents are more royalty than army, with lush, king-sized beds, designer sheets, open-air showers and stand-alone tubs. Enjoy four-course meals by candlelight in the dry river bed, and take on the Big Five with a morning safari. Grrrrrr! [ccafrica.com](http://ccafrica.com)

## Royal Malewane

Understated elegance in muted tones designed to blend with the bushland, that's Royal Malewane. If it's good enough for Bono, Elton and a host of celebrities who



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. What passes for a tent at Ngala Luxury Tented Safari Camp. Decksiding dining at Londolozi Tree Camp. Nesting in the trees at Londolozi. The fine food at Londolozi



PHOTOGRAPHY: LONDOLOZI





retreat here, then it's more than good enough for a honeymoon. By day, watch elephants bathe and play in the water hole beneath the open pavilion's dining deck. Retreat into a world of Bedouin magic by night, with theatrical dining under the stars.

Did we mention the Waters Spa? When the heat of the day reaches its peak, lounge within the cooling walls of this Moroccan-style oasis, with double day beds for loved-up couples, aqua waters for dipping and glassed treatment rooms surrounded by wildlife drinking from the natural ponds. Then it's all gin and tonics while on a game drive at dusk and champagne mimosas at dawn.

Did we mention the private infinity plunge pool on your villa deck and an all-inclusive alcohol cabinet in which to play?

[royalmalewane.com](http://royalmalewane.com)

### Phinda Walking Safari

Trust us, the excitement of tracking wild rhinos and elephants on an exhilarating walk through Africa's great wild lands gets under the skin, into the heart and lifts the libido. Of course, you'll have to retreat to your canvas tent with through-flowing breeze and nothing but nature surrounding you. There may be



no electricity on Phinda Walking Safaris, but gourmet dining served up by firelight is far more romantic. You'll be thankful come night, when the only thing between you and nature's beasts is a thin wall of fabric, and nothing to cling to but each other.

Four strategically placed tents make the most of the great outdoors, with a communal marquee for dining and lounging in the shade, or you can always take the hammock!

Finish a three-night walking safari with a couple of nights in one of six suites suspended from the side of a cliff at Phinda Rock Lodge and reach for the stars.

[phinda.com](http://phinda.com)

### FACT FILE:

**Where:** South Africa

For more information on what to do and where to go, visit South African Tourism at [southafrica.net](http://southafrica.net)

**Getting there:**

- Thai Airways International now flies three times a week to Johannesburg via Bangkok. (For the ultimate honeymoon shopover, take a few days to unwind on the way there, back or both). See [thaiairways.com.au](http://thaiairways.com.au)
- Stay at Bangkok's deliriously attentive and stately Peninsula hotel, sitting on the city's Chao Phraya river, and take in a couple's spa treatment in the teak three-story, traditional Thai country home. See [peninsula.com](http://peninsula.com)

**Where to stay in Johannesburg:**

- You'll need to bed down before embarking on your great African adventure. Ten Bompas Hotel is a boutique retreat of 10 chic suites right in the heart of Johannesburg. The restaurant's three-story wine wall is a must-see destination itself for the serious imbiber. Drink up! See [tenbompas.com](http://tenbompas.com)
- Follow in Mandela's footsteps at the Saxon Hotel and Spa in swanky Sandhurst. It was at this grand private hotel that he wrote his bestselling autobiography, *Long Walk To Freedom*. Try the sound therapy treatment in the spa for a truly decadent experience. See [lhw.com](http://lhw.com)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The Royal Suite, Royal Malewane. Candlelit bathing at Royal Malewane. Phinda Walking Safari lets guests enjoy the African bush in luxury, but without cars or electricity.

