

# Singita 30 Place of Miracles

ISSUE 05 | APRIL/MAY 2024

## CONSERVATION ROOMS

Sharing our purpose,  
inspiring change

## GOLDEN MONKEY TREKKING

Unexpected encounters  
with nature in Rwanda

## THE INAUGURAL WAGORA MTB RIDE

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity  
to ride the Serengeti for a cause

## OUR VILLA COLLECTION

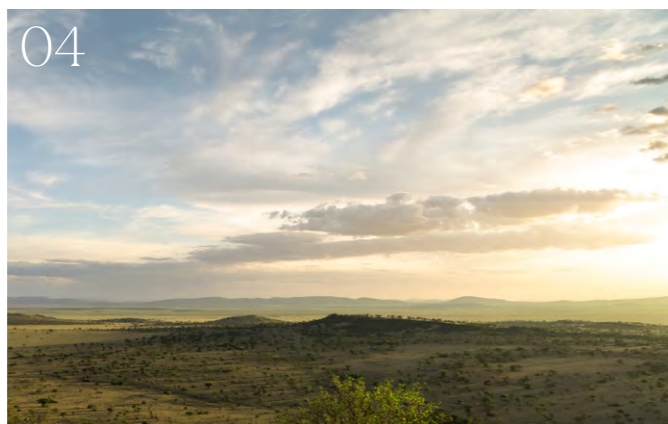
Singita Milele - a celebration  
of contemporary Africa

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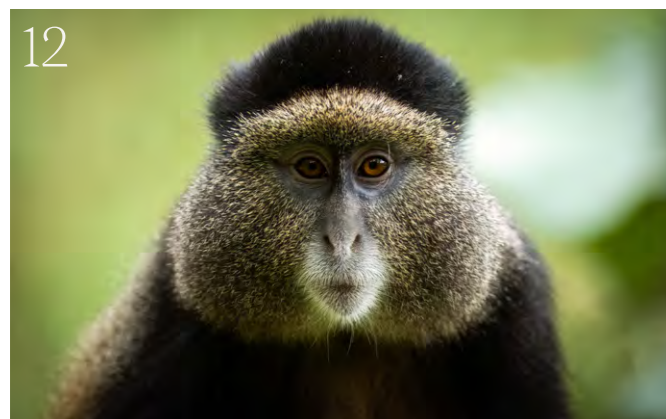
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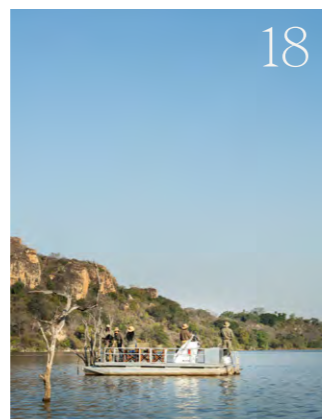
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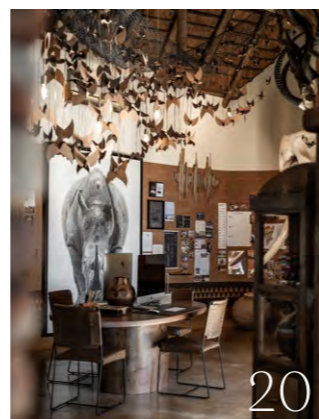
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## Dear Friends of Singita,

This year is turning out to be a busy one. The refresh of Singita Ebony Lodge, our founding lodge in the Sabi Sand, has been celebrated as a new take on luxury safari lodges. We also look forward to the imminent opening of Singita Milele, our new 5-bed private villa in Tanzania. The inaugural Wagora MTB Ride is an exciting event to look forward to, giving our guests the opportunity to ride through the incredible Serengeti for a great cause ([page 2](#)).



Part of the Ebony Lodge refresh is the new Conservation Room, where guests will have the opportunity to interact with innovative displays and learn more about the wilderness and wildlife in the region. We now have three Conservation Rooms across the group - at Ebony, Pamushana and Kwitonda ([page 20](#)).

When you are connected to nature, extraordinary moments are inevitable. Ross Couper's captivating account of his Golden Monkey trek in Rwanda is a great read ([page 12](#)). While mountain gorillas are the stars of the Volcanoes National Park, Ross points out that visiting the playful golden monkeys in their natural habitat is worth every step, and that you should do both if you are visiting Rwanda.



The theme for our short feature is The Best of Southern Africa - and the new flight that links Zimbabwe and South Africa, giving our guests the opportunity for seamless travel between the two countries. ([page 18](#)).

As we enter the next decade of Singita, our focus continues on celebrating Africa through cultural collaborations. Someone who knows much about Africa's homegrown creativity is our own Phumzile Mgiba. She has been with Singita for three decades and loves sharing African design with the world as the charismatic manager of Singita Sabi Sand's Boutique & Gallery (Read our interview with her on [page 24](#)).

Enjoy the read,

*Adrian*

Adrian Kaplan  
Executive Head of Marketing



# Ride for a cause

## The inaugural Serengeti Wagora MTB Ride

Our passion for immersing guests in the wilderness is matched only by our desire to support those who safeguard it. These two principles come together in a meaningful way in the form of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to cycle through the plains of Singita Grumeti.



### Camaraderie & purpose on the plains

Taking place from **10 to 15 October 2024**, this one-of-a-kind adventure is aimed at riders of all levels who wish to experience the beauty of the western corridor of the Serengeti National Park from the vantage point of two wheels. It's not only an opportunity for cycling enthusiasts to pursue a new physical challenge, but also to connect with like-minded people from around the world. Designated time with the Grumeti Fund teams will allow guests to learn about the many initiatives underway in the region in aid of wildlife protection, community partnership, education and skills development.

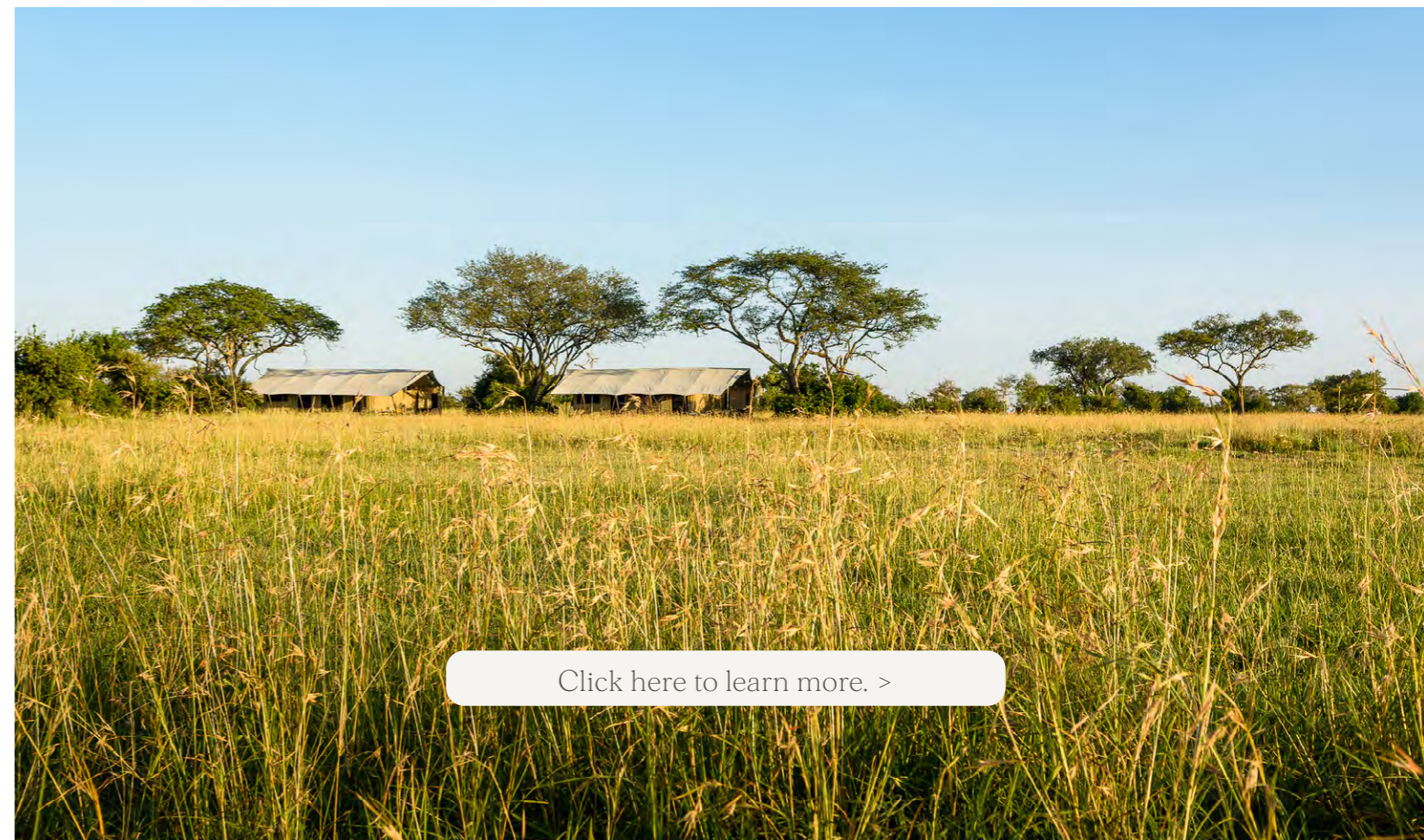
### Nights under canvas

The Wagora MTB Ride is about complete immersion in the landscape - day and night - and participants will be hosted for five nights under canvas at Singita Explore. A close-to-the-earth experience that encapsulates the spirit of safari, this camp celebrates the true essence of a pared-down safari.

Evenings will be spent enjoying expertly prepared meals under the night sky and connecting around a fire. And as the day draws to a close, beautifully appointed tents to retreat to provide all the comfort one would hope for after an active day.

**N**amed after Kitaboka Wagora, a revered ranger who was killed by a poacher in 2008 while in the line of duty, the event honours his bravery and the dedication of his fellow scouts still tirelessly fighting today. In their honour, it aims

to raise awareness for the invaluable work of our non-profit partner in Tanzania, the Grumeti Fund. Just as importantly, it will raise funds to further their efforts in the region, as the donation goes directly to Grumeti Fund's Anti-Poaching Unit.



[Click here to learn more. >](#)

# Views forever Singita's new private villa

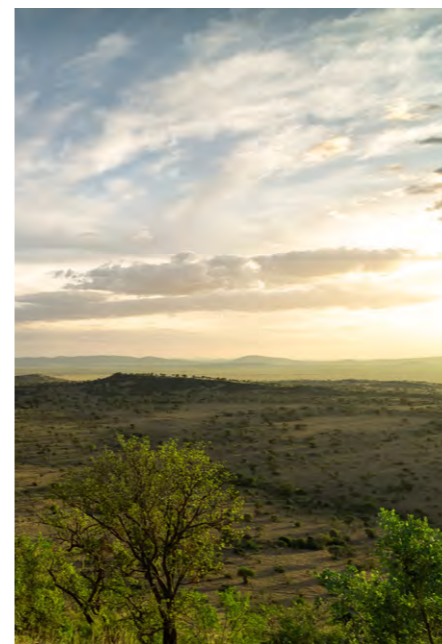
When considering locations for our lodges and camps, we select only those which will offer a memorable and immersive experience of the wilderness. This considered approach ensures that every lodge, camp and villa is one-of-a-kind.



Within our portfolio is the **Singita Private Villa Collection** – a handful of exclusive-use properties that represent the best of private safari. These remarkable villas embody peace and tranquillity - they are havens set in some of Africa's most spectacular landscapes, designed to cater to the individual needs of our guests.

## In reverence of the setting

The latest addition to this prestigious collection is **Singita Milele**, a hilltop villa in Singita Grumeti in Tanzania. Aptly named - Milele means 'forever' in Swahili - its infinite views and expansive sense of space encapsulates the very essence of the Serengeti.



HesseKleinloog Studio, working with Singita's own inhouse creative division, were tasked to create a design that would raise the standard of the Singita experience further still. As always, the surrounds served as the primary source of inspiration when conceptualising this spacious villa – the never-ending horizons echoed in the clean, linear architecture, while the furniture speaks to the natural beauty of the landscape. "An intentional dialogue was created between the structured architecture and the organic forms of the furniture selection," says Megan Hesse.

### Nature's palette & Africa's talent

The materials also take inspiration from nature – honest and earthy tones and textures echoing the plains and anchoring the scheme. Soothing and calming, luxurious yet comfortable, it's the quintessence of a retreat and the epitome of safari sophistication. "Milele is a celebration of contemporary Africa," she notes.

With the five suites inspired by iconic animal species emblematic of the region, each has a unique identity and tonal selection. Throughout, furniture and art have been sourced to showcase the best of African creativity and craft.

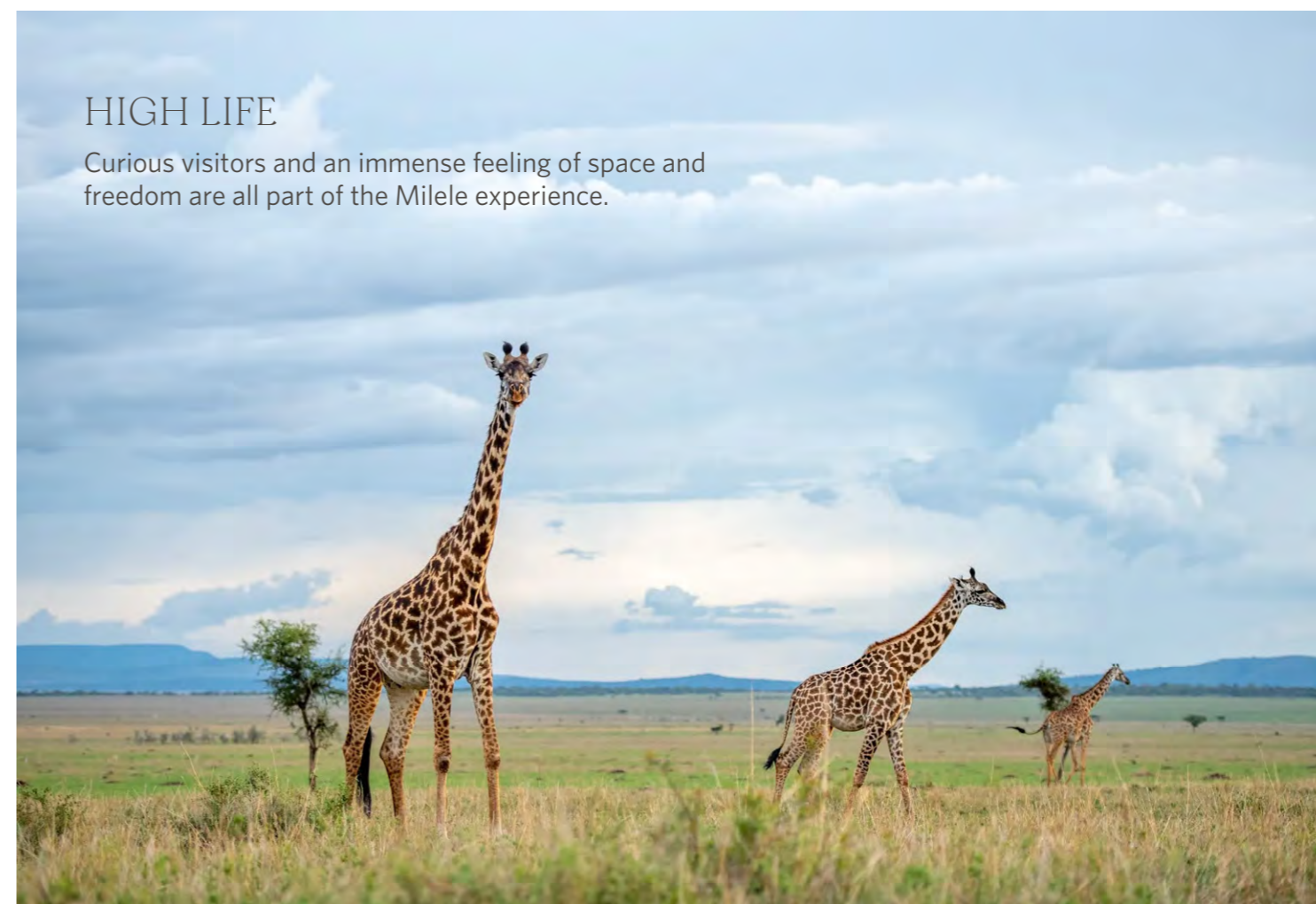
"With Milele we have very proudly made and sourced approximately 90% locally. It's been a remarkable experience to work on such a big project with such a focus on local African art and furniture," says Megan. Among the talent represented in the space are artists like Trevor Stuurman, Water Dixon, Tarien Bruwer and Marguerite Roux, textile designers Coral & Hive and furniture designer Mpho Vackier from TheUrbanative.

### An immersive experience that stands apart

Milele's uniqueness lies largely in its location. High on a hill, its elevated perspective overlooks the Serengeti. The design celebrates this at every available opportunity – from the flawless relationship between external and internal spaces encouraging flow, to an infinity swimming pool that drops off towards the sunset.

The goal for Milele beyond comfort and luxury, was to instil both a sense of restoration and connection. This the designers achieved by creating a balance between intimate reflective spaces for pause, and open, sociable spaces to gather. "The spaces allow guests to tailor make their own experiences," adds Megan.

"An intentional dialogue was created between the structured architecture and the organic forms of the furniture selection." – **Megan Hesse, HesseKleinloog**



# Setting off solo

## The rewarding possibilities of a personal safari

Solo travel is all about stepping away from your comfort zone in search of connection and ditching limiting, old-school travel stereotypes. So, what does that mean for solo travellers planning a safari to Africa?



Singita's Strategist, Lindy Rousseau, says, "We're seeing an increased confidence in solo travellers, they simply want to slot into the rhythm of the experience on offer."

Being in a luxury safari lodge is quite different from being in a city hotel, says Lindy and is extremely nurturing for guests travelling solo. "Life is laid-back in the bush and a lot less regimented. There are so many activities for guests and our team is also incredibly warm and caring, so someone travelling on their own will just become part of the wider Singita family."

### Nurturing spaces & encounters

In a recent [Condé Nast Traveler article](#) on 'The Best Solo Vacations to Take in 2024', Mary Holland highlights gorilla

trekking in Rwanda and staying at [Singita Kwitonda Lodge](#) as an ideal trip for adventurers who are travelling on their own. She writes, "You don't have to worry about having enough travel companions in a group because regardless of whether you're alone or travelling with friends, guests are divided into groups of eight (dependent on their fitness level) where guides take them into Volcanoes National Park to track gorillas."

Rwanda appeals to independent travellers because it's the kind of destination where you can travel alone without feeling alone. Our properties in Rwanda are about the little details that make the difference for the solo traveller. The suites at Kwitonda are the perfect environment in which to relax without feeling isolated - with an in-room bar-deli and private plunge pool, and nooks for guests to enjoy a quiet drink or read a book.



## Leaning into learning

Exploring and learning new things is an integral part of any Singita travel experience, and our Conservation Rooms at Singita Kwitonda and Singita Pamushana in **Zimbabwe** provide interactive learning spaces where guests can discover more about wildlife and connect with our conservation experts and each other. A third Conservation Room is being built as part of the updates to Ebony Lodge in **Singita Sabi Sand**. Caring for wildlife and the planet is at the heart of the Singita story.

Wanting to make a positive impact drives an increasing number of travellers, and another drawcard for solo women travellers to Tanzania is the annual **Serengeti Girls Run**, a multi-stage, three-day run across our concession, Singita Grumeti. The event offers a wonderful way to give back to the community, and the spirit of camaraderie results in meaningful friendships that last long after the event is done and dusted.



## A soulful solo safari

Wellness is an integral part of the Singita experience and one of the drivers of solo travel. But it's not about being formulaic and ticking off activities like yoga or meditation on a checklist; it's part of what the team refers to as 'wholeness'. The idea is to create a space of awareness and wonder – whether you are going on a bush walk, reflecting next to the N'wanetsi River, enjoying stargazing while on a game drive, or soaking up a sound bath on the beautiful lawns at **Singita Castleton**.

Research has shown that more female travellers opt for solo travel than their male counterparts. Lindy Rousseau points out that it's not a case of one size fits all and that, as a brand, Singita is all about curating incredible safari experiences – and that solo travellers don't need to be treated any differently.

“Our staff are very intuitive. We aim to ensure that every guest staying with us has a memorable and, hopefully, life-changing experience.” - **Lindy Rousseau, Singita Strategist**



As we continuously observe shifts in market demands, solo travel has emerged as a significant trend, one that is growing and which spans genders and generations, with independent travellers seeking life-affirming adventures without waiting for anyone else's permission to do so.

# An Unexpected Encounter in Rwanda



Singita's photographer, **Ross Couper**, didn't plan on going monkey trekking on a trip to Rwanda, but it turned out to be one of the highlights of his trip.

The Golden Monkey trek in Rwanda is a captivating and unique wildlife experience that takes you into the lush and dense bamboo forests in the Volcanoes National Park. I didn't originally have the Golden Monkey trek on my list and was surprised that we could do it within the short time that we were there. I'm glad I did. Unexpectedly, it turned out to be as much of a highlight during our trip as the Gorilla trek.

These endangered primates, known for their striking golden fur, are incredibly beautiful and photogenic. There are a few differences between the gorilla and monkey trekking experiences, which is good to keep in mind if you are only

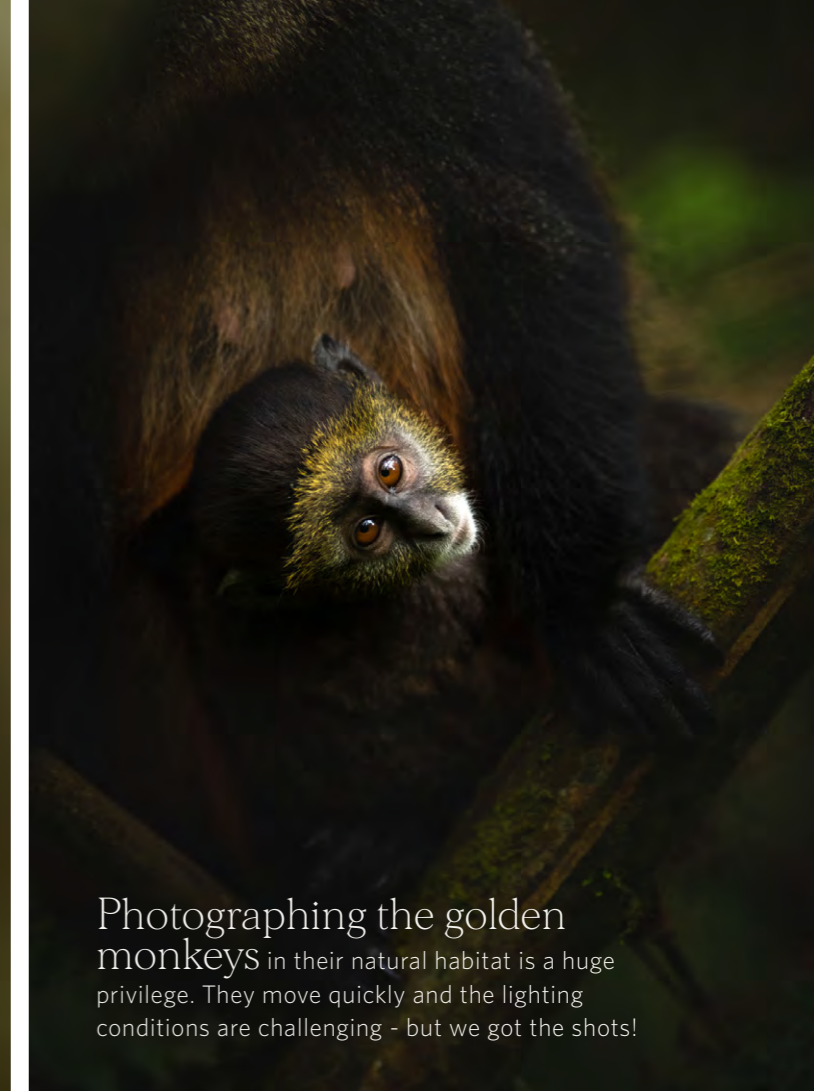
going to go on one. Gorilla trekking is generally considered more physically demanding than golden monkey trekking, as it often involves longer hikes and steeper terrain. However, in saying that, there is an option to choose your level of activity with each Gorilla trek when you meet the park rangers, and this is not the case with the Golden Monkeys. The level of activity is all the same, as the monkeys move along the lower parts of the mountain due to their source of food. Some visitors may choose to do the Gorilla trek first while they're still fresh and have plenty of energy. Others may choose to start with the Golden Monkey trek as a warm-up before tackling the more strenuous Gorilla excursion.



## Enchanted Forest Encounters

After an early start at the lodge, a briefing from the guides, and a short drive, we entered Volcanoes National Park. The forest itself is breath-taking, with towering bamboo trees creating a canopy overhead, filtering the sunlight and casting dappled shadows on the forest floor. The trek can be moderately challenging, with some steep and uneven terrain to navigate, but the anticipation of encountering these remarkable creatures keeps trekkers motivated. Our park ranger notified us that a troop had been located as we entered the forest.





Photographing the golden monkeys in their natural habitat is a huge privilege. They move quickly and the lighting conditions are challenging - but we got the shots!

These agile primates are incredibly active, often leaping from branch to branch with remarkable flexibility as they feed on the bamboo shoots. What I found really surprising was how familiar they were with the guests. They started to descend the bamboo forest stalks and before we knew it they were literally only a few metres away, offering incredible photographic opportunities.

### Being part of the Golden Monkey World

Golden monkeys are highly social animals, typically found in large troops. We encountered about 20-30 individuals. We witnessed playful interactions among family members, grooming sessions, and we were fortunate to see a few young monkeys clinging to their mothers' backs.

The forest echoes with the sounds of their calls - soft chirps and trills that reverberate through the trees. It's a truly immersive experience, as you become completely enveloped in the sights and sounds of the golden monkeys' world. After spending an unforgettable hour observing the golden monkeys in their natural habitat, it was time, reluctantly, to make the journey back to the trailhead. En route we passed the gorilla naming ceremony area, and decided on an impromptu picnic. While looking at the large steel and bamboo statue of a gorilla family we had a good laugh about the possible names we would have submitted for consideration, followed by a brief moment of silence - it was a special moment to take in the beauty of conserving these wild, endangered creatures and what it means to all of us. And that right there was the perfect ending to an incredible day in Rwanda.

“Its a truly immersive experience, as you become completely enveloped in the sights and sounds of the golden monkeys' world.”

- Ross Couper, Singita Resident Photographer

### The lowdown:

- > Permits are required for both monkey and gorilla trekking and must be obtained in advance.
- > Click [here](#) for our guide to trekking in Rwanda.



## Capture The Moment

From golden monkeys to mountain gorillas - heart-stopping moments of solitude and grace are part of any adventure into Volcanoes National Park. — PHOTOGRAPH: ROSS COUPER



# The Best of Southern Africa with Singita

With a new seamless flight connection between the Singita properties in Zimbabwe and South Africa, it's now easier than ever to travel between the two countries. Our lodges in these iconic regions offer guests the opportunity to experience the best that both have to offer.



## Best of Both Combinations

Our 7-night itinerary is just one example of the exciting combinations available, and includes three nights at our award-winning Singita Lebombo Lodge in the Kruger National Park, followed by four nights in the beautiful wilderness of Singita Malilangwe (Zimbabwe).

[Download our sample itinerary here >](#)

Since 1 March 2024, Singita has introduced weekly flights between Buffalo Range Airport in Chiredzi, Zimbabwe and Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport in South Africa.

## Immersive Experiences at Singita Kruger National Park & Malilangwe

Situated in the central eastern part of the Kruger National Park, Singita Lebombo and Sweni offer the perfect vantage point to explore this vast and wild landscape. Our concession follows the N'wanetsi River, and is known for incredible wildlife sightings no matter what the season.

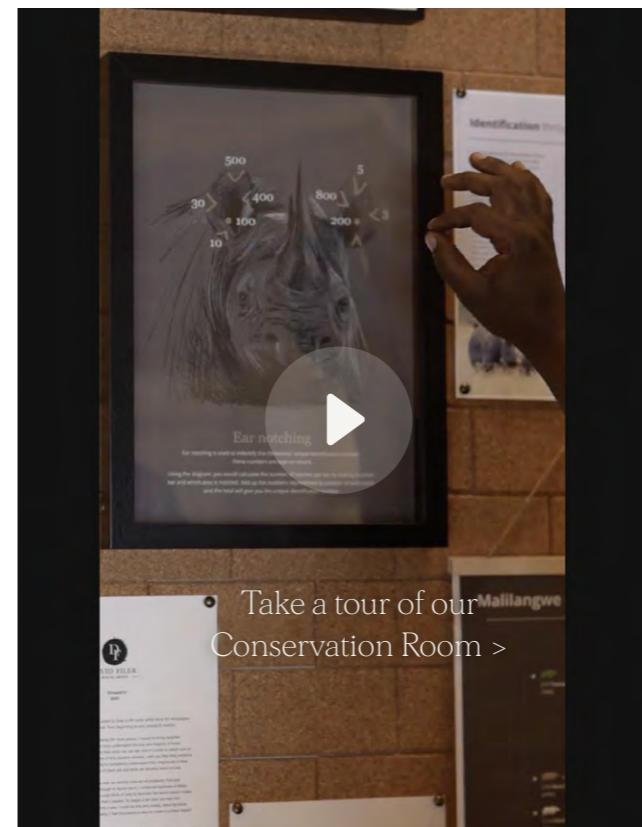
Zimbabwe's Malilangwe Wildlife Reserve is home to Singita Pamushana and Malilangwe House. Overlooking the Malilangwe Dam, in addition to twice-daily game drives guests can enjoy a variety of water activities, experience ancient rock art or take a day trip to Gonarezhou National Park, with its iconic rocky cliffs and abundant elephants.





# Inspiring spaces that share our purpose

Sharing our 100-year purpose with guests is a big part of how we further our conservation efforts. By communicating the impact of the projects driven by our non-profit partners, we hope to inspire others to engage, and join us in supporting them.



We have created dedicated Conservation Rooms at three of our lodges so that guests can immerse themselves in the stories of the places they find themselves in. These spaces are designed as a guide through the unique landscape, history and culture of the region and the current conservation work being done here.



“Our Conservation Rooms bring to life what our non-profit partners and their teams work to achieve every day.” – Inge Kotze, Singita Group Head of Conservation

Most crucially, our Conservation Rooms help to communicate the value and impact of the projects driven by our non-profit partners, and in so doing inspire others to support and engage in these initiatives to protect large tracts of African wilderness.

This can take various forms – from guests donating to key projects, raising awareness within their own networks or by taking part in activities like the K9 dog experience and rhino dehorning. Whichever way they choose to engage with the conservation work, seeing the impact it has firsthand never fails to inspire and underscore the real sense of purpose that drives us.

Spaces to inform, engage & inspire  
Our Conservation Rooms embody our purpose and are an important way to physically preserve and display our history. “These rooms are a valuable tool through which we hope to instil curiosity, and encourage people to learn more and engage with the various conservation programmes underway in each region,” says Inge Kotze, Singita Group Head of Conservation.

Each is unique, and tells that region’s own story – unpacking the flora and fauna found here, the local culture, the work being done and why it matters. At Ebony Lodge in the Sabi Sand for example, the new Conservation Room will hero the longstanding leopard conservation in the region, and Singita Lowveld Trust’s early childhood development (ECD) programme. At Singita Pamushana, the work of the Malilangwe Trust in rhino conservation is given prominence, while in Rwanda, the focus is on the active restoration and natural rewilding of our property – a unique buffer zone to the Volcanoes National Park and critical new habitat for the growing gorilla populations in this region.

Translating science & history into art  
Translating technical and scientific data spanning many years, into an engaging experience for guests requires creativity.



The goal is to create welcoming, interesting and interactive spaces that make it easier for the guest to learn more about the property and the specific trust/fund active there. This is where our design team come in.

“Each space is unique – we don’t copy anything from one to the other. The data is interesting and rich, but dense – our aim is to sieve through it and translate it into visual and tangible elements that will appeal to guests of all age groups,” says Georgie Pennington, Singita Group Head of Creative Direction.

By appealing to the senses, the rooms make the information accessible and engaging. From a ‘flock’ of 1 500 birds in flight hung from the roof at Singita Pamushana, to the soundbite of a leopard call playable on command, the rooms offer a multisensory journey through time and space. “Our Conservation Rooms bring to life what our non-profit partners and their teams work to achieve every day,” says Inge.

Singita’s design team takes inspiration from each region’s successes, scenery and spirit. “The work is meaningful and we want to do it proud. It is so rewarding to share the incredible work done by the various teams, as well as the beauty of properties – their fauna and flora – in exciting and new ways,” says Georgie.



It's a source of pride that so many of our people stay with us for years, and even decades. When Phumzile Mgiba first joined Singita in 1996, she began her career as a banakeli (waitress), and today visitors to Singita will find her managing the Boutique & Gallery space at Singita Sabi Sand.

ultimately led to the Boutique & Gallery. "For my personal development I wanted to learn something new," she says. To prepare, Phumzile upskilled herself by completing training in business management and computer literacy. "With support from Singita I was able to gain a better understanding of how the business operates."

### Growing & evolving together

Those who walk a long path with us are encouraged to progress - sometimes upwards, rising from maintenance to management, and sometimes laterally, taking a detour (from gardener to sous chef for example). Helping people to grow and explore their interests within the company allows us to help each individual achieve career fulfilment and in turn offer the best possible guest experience.

Her natural ease with people drew Phumzile increasingly to a role that offered more engagement with guests, which

### Sharing African design with the world

As the charismatic manager of the Boutique & Gallery, Phumzile is sometimes a guest's first ever conduit to experiencing African art, craft and design. "Seeing them leave with a smile on their face, knowing the piece they've chosen will always remind them of Singita brings me joy."

She finds satisfaction not only in sharing African culture with others, but also in supporting local makers and entrepreneurs. "But the most rewarding part for me is learning something new every day."

## A passion for people Phumzile Mgiba's three-decade journey with Singita

Singita is built on the strength of its people. Our passion for personal, intuitive service, and our dedication to hospitality in the truest sense means that our team is our most precious asset. They embody our commitment to protecting the wilderness and to creating meaningful experiences for every visitor.



Phumzile loves sharing what's on offer - including incredible work from African artists and designers, including the latest edition of the Thebe Magugu heritage collection.

THE PEOPLE OF SINGITA

# Q&A with Elsa Pallett

Singita's new Conservation Marketing Manager recently visited our reserves in South Africa. She shares some of her impressions.



**Q:** Which community projects did you visit?

**A:** I had the privilege of experiencing a few of our community projects. We spent a significant amount of time at our Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres and visited the Good Work Foundation. I also met a few of the Hustlepreneurs who have been through the Hustle Economy programme founded by Africa Foundation (one of our partners).

**Q:** What were the highlights of your trip (and why)?

**A:** It was the first time I experienced the work of the Singita Lowveld Trust (SLT). I got to know the SLT team and witnessed their passion for what they do, which was inspiring.

My main highlight was speaking to the recipients of the Trust's efforts. I had conversations with many ECD practitioners who shared their stories of dedicated work spanning over 20 years. It was beautiful to hear how much they love their jobs and appreciate our support. This is evidence that our approach of holistic and sustained impact is improving many lives and having a ripple effect on entire communities.



**Q:** What did you learn about SLT's work?

**A:** Interacting with the communities made me realise the real difference SLT makes. When I heard about the Trust's work from the Singita Head Office in Cape Town, it sounded great but I didn't fully grasp the impact. The ECD practitioners and centre managers I spoke with highlighted how SLT's holistic approach has enabled them to assist children's development through play, which is the aim of the ECD centres. Before SLT's involvement, they lacked the training and resources to do so.



**Q:** Who inspired you and why?

**A:** So many people working on the ground inspired me, but the Hustlepreneurs stood out. Their ability to create incredible products and services using what they have was humbling!



"I had conversations with many ECD practitioners who shared their stories of dedicated work spanning over 20 years."





# Safari Conversations: The Singita Podcast

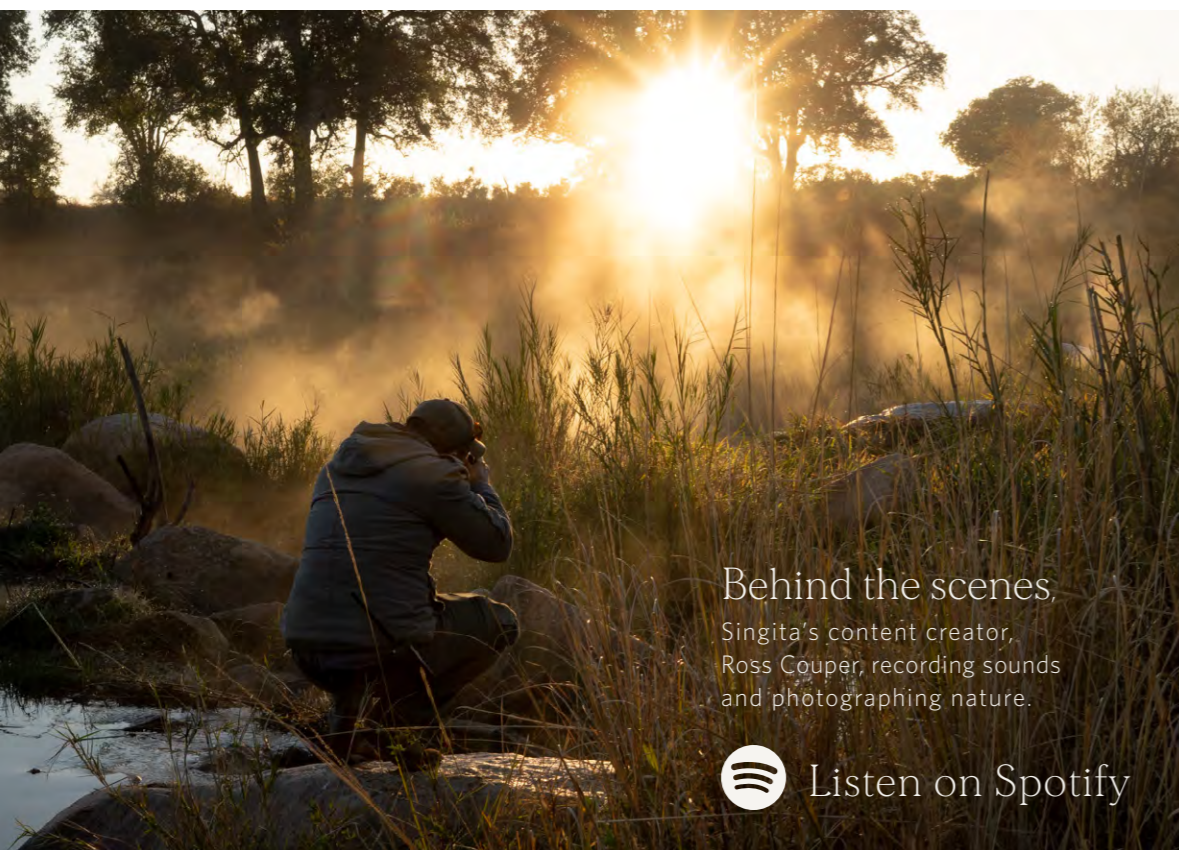
We recently launched "Safari Conversations: The Singita Podcast," a project inspired by the extraordinary individuals who enrich our world and the captivating stories they have to share.

Whether it's food, architecture, décor & design, sustainability or conservation – our podcasts are designed to give valuable insights into everyday life and extraordinary moments at Singita.

In one of our first episodes, Vanie Padayachee, Head Chef at Singita Volcanoes National Park discusses sourcing local produce from a group of women farmers, her love affair with Rwandan raspberries and the joy of juicing sugar cane. In another chat, Executive Chef at Singita Grumeti, Mia Neethling unpacks about how "being in the middle of nowhere" (our lodges in Tanzania) has made her more inventive and creative, with a sharpened ability to "think on her feet."

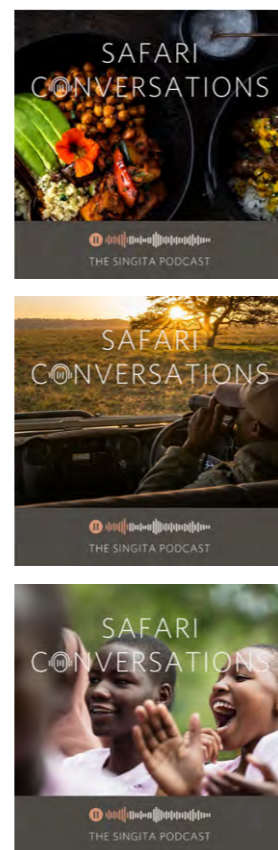
While food is a fascinating topic, **Safari Conversations** goes way beyond that. Our resident photographer, Ross Couper, engaged with Sarah Clegg, an ecologist at Malilangwe Wildlife Reserve in Zimbabwe, about the practical steps to restore the region's historic biodiversity. In another episode, Dr Andrea Ferry, Singita's group sustainability co-ordinator shares the importance of sustainability in the luxury safari industry.

For a wonderful contrast of past and present, Georgie Pennington, Singita's Group Head of Creative Direction, and Megan Hesse, Partner & Interior Designer of HK Studio delve into the recent refresh of Ebony Lodge, where the Singita story began thirty years ago.



Behind the scenes,  
Singita's content creator,  
Ross Couper, recording sounds  
and photographing nature.

 Listen on Spotify



## A moment to pause at Pamushana

Stargazing is an opportunity to observe Zimbabwe's magnificent night skies and contemplate life and the Universe.

— PHOTOGRAPH: ROSS COUPER