

THE SIJWA PROJECT

by African Monarch Lodges

African Monarch Lodges, home to Nambwa Tented Lodge and Kazile Island Lodge inside Bwabwata National Park, is the cumulative product of the passion and dedication that its founders, Dusty and Tinolla, have put into its formation. The lodges are part and parcel of their environment – the most crucial element of their success.

“As lodge owners we are custodians of the wild. We take this seriously. So when we build, we ensure that the natural environment is our number one priority.”

And so a new effort was born of this need to conserve, protect and give back. The Sijwa Project.

What is the Sijwa Project? It's the repurposing and reinventing of all recyclable waste from the African Monarch Lodges – Nambwa Tented Lodge and Kazile Island Lodge on the Kwando River in the Zambezi Region of Namibia – and from the local community into exquisite sellable arts and crafts. Another part is an organic permaculture nursery to supply food for local people and lodge guests (reducing the air and road mileage that lodge food usually travels). The sandy soil is nourished

with composted food-waste and super-strength worm juice, given another boost by the occasional dollop of elephant dung. Sijwa is also about a cultural village, an artisanal skills training centre, a beehive project, a free-range egg producing scheme and a junior ranger training venue. Plus, it's an indigenous tree nursery for visitors to buy and plant a tree to offset their carbon footprint. The tree is looked after by a local 'tree guardian' to ensure a better chance to survive nibbling goats.

Recycling plastic is a passion of Chief Mayuni of the local Mafwe tribe. It was kindled by a conversation he had with a tourist who remarked that “plastic is like a flower in Namibia, it is everywhere.” When Chief Mayuni learnt of Tinolla and Dusty's plans he allocated Sijwa – a traditional meeting place in his area in the Mayuni Conservancy of Bwabwata National Park – to this joint venture with the community. After listening carefully to all the presentations, he gave his personal blessing at a large gathering of dignitaries, international media and conservation role players on 17 November 2018.

With boundless passion for everything they put their minds to, Tinolla and

Dusty apply a 'go big or go home' kind of attitude and the Sijwa Project is no exception. They've just broken ground (literally and metaphorically) at Sijwa to upgrade some of the derelict buildings into workshops.

“This vision is bigger than us – we occupy a tiny space on this planet – but we know the Sijwa Project will make a real difference and demonstrate how people and wildlife can live together sustainably.”

Lodge guests will be offered a visit to the Sijwa Project to experience local culture, interact with community members as they go about creating beautiful recycled objects, buy gifts, plant a tree and show support for this community-driven initiative. Sponsorships are sought from corporates, tour operators and individuals to help nurture the project into a shining example of Best Practice for sustainability in a wildlife area. This fits in perfectly with the KAZA objectives of sustainable eco-tourism and communities living in harmony with wildlife.

Visit www.africanmonarchlodges.com for updates and more information on the project.



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