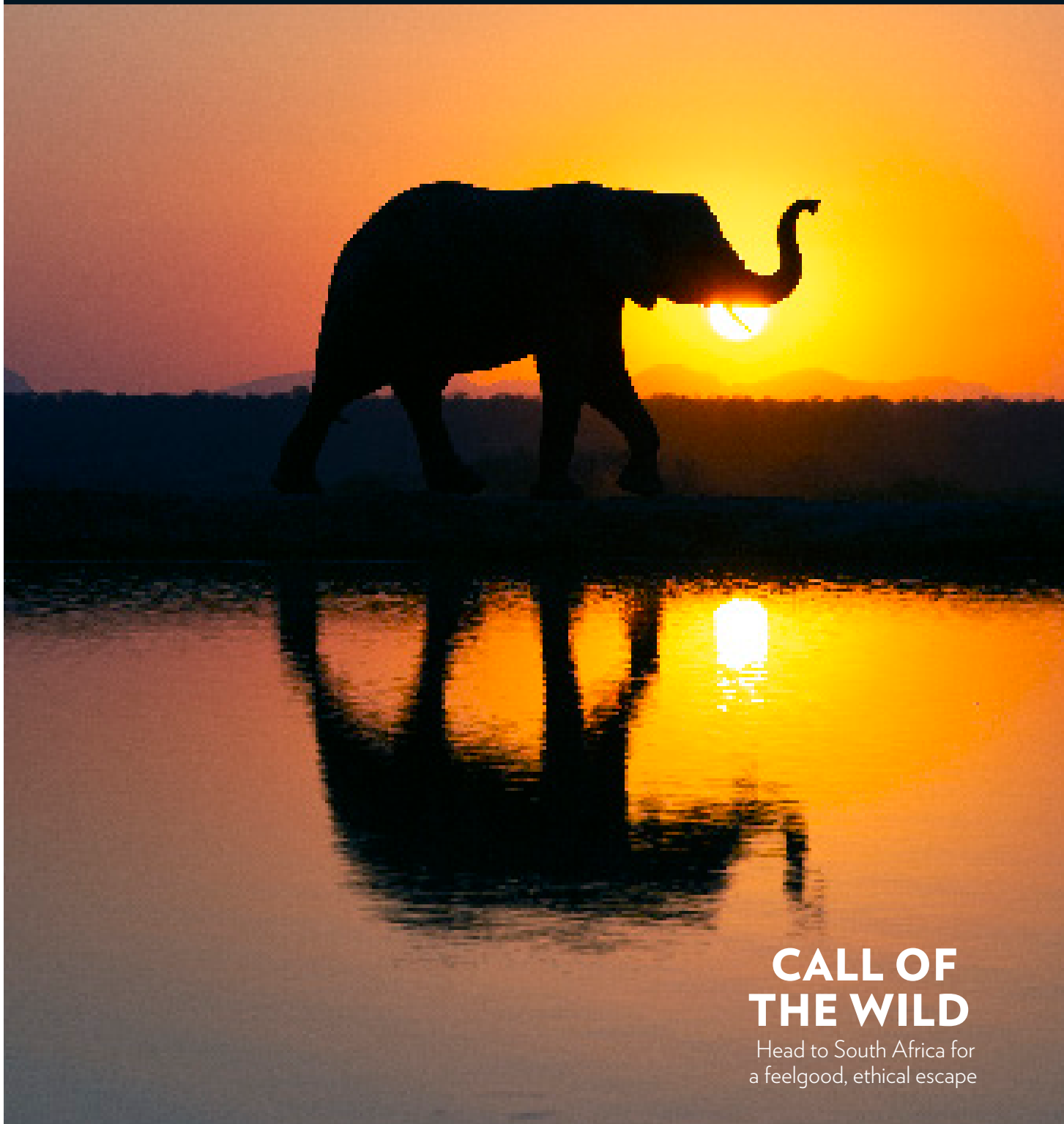


# The TRAVEL EDIT

WHO'S GUIDE TO THE MOST LUXURIOUS DESTINATIONS HERE AND ABROAD



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RACHELLE MACKINTOSH

## CALL OF THE WILD

Head to South Africa for  
a feelgood, ethical escape



Jabulani, the rescued elephant, is the lodge's namesake.

Future lion kings and queens of Kapama.



**RACHELLE MACKINTOSH**  
WHO Managing Editor

**GETTING THERE**

To plan your South Africa holiday visit [southafrica.net](http://southafrica.net)

## BE PART OF A SUCCESS STORY KAPAMA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

My mind is blown even before I arrive at Jabulani Safari Lodge. It's been just 20 minutes since their naturalist guide Ruan Roos picked me up from Hoedspruit Airport, and already I'm seeing a female cheetah tucking into a freshly caught impala. And while it's a bit of a gore-fest, it's also a heartwarming sight – because this big cat is living proof that local conservation efforts are working. See, she was born at the nearby Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre (HESC), where its world-leading breeding program is ensuring that South Africa's wild cheetah population of 1300 not only grows, but also has the genetic diversity needed to stay sustainable. So, through HESC's breeding and rewilding efforts, cheetahs are being reintroduced into the bush here, and they're now successfully hunting and living the wild dream. It's just the start of a trip filled with feelgood moments.

Arriving at Jabulani Safari Lodge in Kapama, I head straight to my suite, where its traditional thatched roof, chic polished concrete floors, oversized bathtub, glass-enclosed outdoor shower and luxurious textiles all come together to create an atmosphere of old-school safari opulence.

And, as I take a quick dip in my private plunge pool, I catch a glimpse of a giraffe going about her daily business in the dry riverbed below. Nope, I'm definitely not in Redfern any more!

Refreshed and ready for an adventure, I meet Roos at the main lodge and, after a quick drive through the bush, it's time to meet Jabulani the elephant, the lodge's namesake.

In 1997, Jabulani was only a few months old when the HESC rescue team found him alone, injured and stuck in the mud. It took a year of round-the-clock care to bring him back to good health, and although the local wild herd rejected him, 12 more elephants – rescued from Zimbabwe and brought to Kapama in 2002 – soon became his family.

Today, Jabulani and his friends enjoy the wilds of Kapama with their human carers on hand to help should they encounter any trouble in the bush. And if you stay at Jabulani Safari Lodge you can meet them as part of your visit. It's definitely worthwhile – getting up close to the gentle but gigantic Jabulani, and watching his herd walk with their carers against the iconic African sunset, is an experience that will stay with me for life.

Back at the lodge, I tuck into a delicious

dinner of pan-fried springbok and white chocolate mousse with chilli chocolate ice-cream, before climbing into my suite's gigantic bed and drifting off to the calls of distant hyenas.

The next morning I'm up before the 5am alarm – I'm way too excited to sleep. I'm going to be a part of another successful Kapama conservation project: rhino notching, with the HESC veterinary team. This vital work collects samples from the area's wild rhinos so local authorities and protection teams can identify and track them, helping to keep them safe from poachers.

This work has never been more important – in the past 11 years more than 7900 rhinos have been poached in South Africa, with 769 being taken last year alone. But over the years the vet team has notched more than 1000 rhinos to keep them safe. As a guest of Jabulani Safari Lodge, you can take part in this optional activity, too.

To kick off the experience, the HESC vet team hops in a chopper to locate a wild rhino, which Roos and I follow in our Landcruiser. When they've found the white rhino to be notched – a heavily pregnant female – the vet





Jabulani Safari's suites are all about laidback luxury.

Africa's iconic wildlife can be found at every turn.

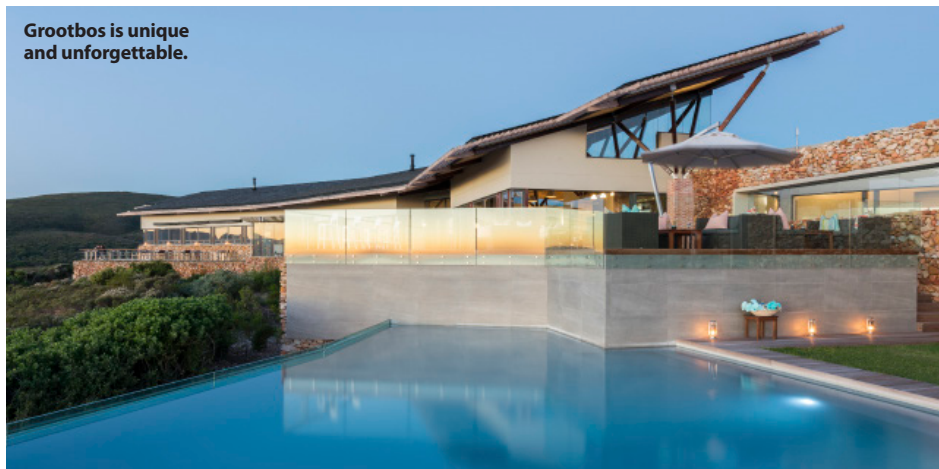


darts her with a tranquilliser, and we all meet up on the ground to record her ID. We quickly go to work notching and microchipping her, as well as taking samples of her blood, hair and horn, and then the vet gives her another injection to wake her up. Within a few moments she's back on her feet, toddling off like nothing has happened. The whole process takes only about 15 minutes, but it's comforting to know I've done something to help these incredible animals as they race against extinction.

Rhino notching and elephant interactions are just two of the activities on offer at Jabulani Safari, but in between these adventures there's plenty of time to explore Kapama on traditional safari game drives, where you'll find all kinds of iconic African critters, including not only all your *Lion King* favourites, but also some you've probably never even heard of (like nyalas, genets and eagle owls?!). Whichever way you fill your days at Kapama Private Game Reserve, you'll spend months afterwards planning your next visit (FYI I'm aiming for April!).

For info, see [jabulanisafari.com](http://jabulanisafari.com); [kapama.com](http://kapama.com); [hesc.co.za](http://hesc.co.za)

Grootbos is unique and unforgettable.



## GO AND GIVE BACK GROOTBOS PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE

For a beach break with conservation cred, Grootbos Private Nature Reserve is about as feelgood as it gets, with the area's biodiversity, sustainability and community ethos offering some of the most rewarding experiences you can have on holiday. This slice of wilderness lies a three-hour drive south-east of Cape Town, in the heart of the 91,000km<sup>2</sup> Cape Floral Kingdom. Here, rugged coastline meets rolling slopes covered in 'fynbos', which means 'fine bush' in Afrikaans, referring to the 9000 different types of plants found only in South Africa's Western Cape region. Camouflaged in this wild greenery, the Grootbos eco-resort features plush accommodation in the Garden Lodge, Forest Lodge, and two private villas with views all the way to the Cape of Good Hope, and the kind of luxury that has kept the likes of Brad Pitt, Matt Damon and Halle Berry comfy.

While Grootbos has the solid gold service and luxe touches you'd expect of a five-star lodge, its heart is decidedly green. In fact, the resort's owners, the Lutzeyer family, created the Grootbos Foundation in 2003 to offer educational and vocational training to the community, and they assist literally thousands of kids through their Football Foundation and weekly sports programs. Plus, their acclaimed Siyakhula Organic Farm provides not only agricultural and sustainable animal husbandry skills to locals, it also supplies all veggies, eggs and honey to the lodges. There's also their community farm based in neighbouring Gansbaai, and their Future Trees project, which has planted 3310 indigenous plants since 2008. These are just a handful of the many projects Grootbos has on the go, and guests are invited to get involved – that is, if you can tear yourself away from the many outdoor adventures on offer. During my two-night stay I explore the reserve on a 4x4 flower safari, where my guide Alison points out everything from the medicinal plants to the prolific birdlife. If you're feeling active,

you can also explore the reserve on a horse, hike or fat-bike.

After you've immersed yourself in this lush landscape, head to the coastal town of Gansbaai, on Van Dyks Bay, where you can join a cruise to see the area's iconic sealife (think: southern right whales, Cape fur seals, humpback dolphins, bronze whaler sharks) and visit the Dyer Island Conservation Trust's African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary, where injured birds from the bay are rehabilitated. The trust also protects and studies the great white sharks the area is famous for, and you can support its work by suiting up for a cage dive with its partner, Marine Dynamics. Being a bit of a scaredy cat, I'm quite nervous as I slip into the cage, but once I'm in I'm surprised by just how relaxing it is to be in the water with these misunderstood predators. As they glide by, I'm in awe of their grace and speed, and I'm heartened to know the Trust is protecting them. It's a fitting way to end a trip to Grootbos, where you feel like your holiday really can make a difference.

For info, see [grootbos.com](http://grootbos.com); [dict.org.za](http://dict.org.za); [sharkwatchsa.com](http://sharkwatchsa.com)



Grootbos' Football Foundation assists thousands of local kids.