

# The Singita Safari

By Andrea Berninger

Safari. Just the word quickens the pulse. The safari experience promises a fascinating and unforgettable exploration of Africa and its amazing four-legged inhabitants.

Elevating that experience to vacation perfection is Singita Private Game Reserve, a South African resort about 37 million steps up from

cuisine à la kerosene, mud-caked khakis and canvas tents accented with bushveld dust.

At Singita, which means “miracle” in the local indigenous language, nothing is spared to make a guest feel like the most important human being under the majestic canopy of Africa—if not the entire planet. This lavish level of attention has come back to the reserve in the form of repeat travel industry awards such as Best Hotel in the World (*Travel & Leisure* magazine) and World’s Best Destination (*Condé Nast Traveler*).

With their instruments of capture loaded, Singita’s guests hunt the priceless images and experiences gained by encountering Africa’s animals. Sightings of lions, leopards and the elusive Cape hunting dogs are common in the reserve. South Africa’s Kruger National Park is home to more wildlife species than any other game sanctuary on the continent, including the “Big 5” game traditionally sought by those on safari—the lion, elephant, leopard, rhinoceros and buffalo. More than 1,000 lions and large populations of leopard and cheetah roam, along with zebra, giraffe, hippopotamus, impala and

kudu—more than enough to satisfy the shutter-happy photographer. Kruger is also an outstanding destination for bird watchers, offering a diversity and abundance of species.

Even the most enthusiastic safari-goer must come in from the bush once in a while. Singita operates five distinct lodges all bordering or within Kruger National Park. Though each all-suite, full-service accommodation has its own tasteful style, every property has been designed to harmonize with the surroundings and avoid overshadowing the encompassing views.

Ebony Lodge, Boulders Lodge and Castleton Camp are situated within the Sabi Sands Reserve. Ebony Lodge has the most “traditional safari” feel of Singita’s properties, but with the luxury dial turned up. Featuring plush colonial-style furniture blended with native crafts and relics, Ebony evokes man’s mysterious love affair with Africa. An understated alchemy of stone and thatch, Boulders Lodge overlooks and blends seamlessly with the river landscape that frames it. Once a private bush retreat, Castleton Camp caters to families and small groups of up to 12 guests who inhabit the camp’s six private cottages. Guests gather at the classic lodge’s roomy verandah to dine, sip and watch for visitors to a nearby watering hole popular with resident and migrating game.

Lebombo Lodge and Sweni Lodge quietly witness the watery southeast section of Kruger National Park, a colorful section frequented by big cats and antelope. Constructed of high-quality, but understated steel, wall-to-wall glass and wood, Lebombo reveres the African expanse. Nearby on the banks of its namesake river, Sweni Lodge is the smallest of the Singita lodges. Built on stilts, the contemporary yet unobtrusively elegant structures merge with the landscape.

In addition to game drives and walks, Singita is known for the range of activities guests may enjoy at its lodges. What could surpass the pure satisfaction of mid-morning spent on a private-suite deck with nothing more to do than get lost as



## Travel Information

Singita’s own Web site ([www.singita.com](http://www.singita.com)) includes information on appropriate dress for South Africa’s seasons, which vary from very hot with rains to cold nights and crisp days, depending on the month. An Internet safari to scout Singita should include a look at [www.go2africa.com/singita](http://www.go2africa.com/singita), as well as [www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net) for general South African travel information.

# A Day at Singita



your imagination mingles with the sights and sounds of Africa before you?

Envision adding a massage therapist's or aesthetician's skilled hands working to draw out any tension or toxin that dares to linger in your body. Two innovative spas pamper Singita guests. The Bush Spa serves those staying in Ebony and Boulders Lodges. The Village Spa caters to guests of the Sweni and Lebombo Lodges. Signature treatments include the Big 5 Therapy, a two-hour indulgence by two therapists who provide massage, a body wrap, a milk bath and reflexology. After a long flight guests can disembark and surrender to the spa's Jet Lag treatment, a snowbush glow followed by an African-spiced body pack application and full-body massage.

Each Singita lodge has complete workout facilities, but more adventurous guests may elect to take a power walk or run into the bush escorted by a ranger-driven Land Rover.

Since it's impossible to stuff the entire Singita experience into a suitcase, stop in the resort's African Trading Store. The store's original merchandise includes jewelry made from Africa's precious metals and gems, sculptures and photographs, apparel, outdoor gear, African music and home decorations.

Dining traditions at Singita vary by lodge and meal. A family might choose to bring a specially made rustic picnic and cocktails on a private bush drive, or a honeymooning couple may opt for a private candlelit dinner on their suite's deck. Wherever they choose to eat, Singita guests will encounter

a dining experience as original and rare as the creatures they spot on safari: a cuisine influenced by African flavors, but governed by Western tradition. Dishes such as kudu filets with sweet corn fritters or African peanut butter and butternut soup allow visitors a taste of the continent's harvest. Reflecting Africa's past and future, the chefs may prepare selections reminiscent of the Colonial era



or create a pan-African, Asian-tinged delicacy. Complementing the menu is Singita's submerged secret: the most comprehensive wine cellar in the African bush. Buried in naturally cool rock deep below Boulders Lodge, the cellar encloses more than 12,000 bottles of South African and international wines. Sample a crisp South African Sauvignon Blanc or Shiraz, and you'll want to raise a toast to all of Singita's buried and above ground treasures.

*Opposite* Catch a glimpse of an African elephant as you have a massage on the pool deck at Boulders Lodge.

*Upper Left* Relax in a comfy chair on the deck at Ebony Lodge.

*Above* Experience some True African cuisine with Singita's Smoked Rooibos Chicken.

*Below* Soak in the African sun alongside the pool at Boulders Lodge.



**5:30 a.m.** If the sounds of the bush before dawn don't rouse you from slumber in Singita's luxuriously appointed sleeping quarters, a guide's rapping on your suite door serves as a wake-up call. Guests gather at the main lodge for coffee, tea and light snacks to fuel themselves for an early morning game drive.

**6:15 a.m.** Trackers and rangers meet the sun on the horizon as they depart in one of the Land Rovers. Watching for elephants, impalas, and rhinos swiftly sweeps any remaining sleep from the eyes.

**8:30 a.m.** Back at the lodge's main deck, a cold buffet followed by a delicious hot breakfast satisfies any appetite worked up by filling one's digital camera memory stick with images of the African plains and its wild residents.

**10 a.m.** Fending for yourself never sounded so good: revel in a massage, spa treatment, workout, shopping excursion in the trading store; or just take an occasional glimpse up from the pages of a good book to marvel at the landscape.

**1 p.m.** While guests have been busy relaxing, Singita's culinary masters have composed an edible medley of western-style recipes seasoned with just the right measurement of African influence.

**4 p.m.** Afternoon tea and refreshments are offered in the lodge while rangers and trackers map out the evening game drive.

**4:30 p.m.** It's prime time in the African bush. Animals become more active at dusk, including preying big cats and rarely seen nocturnal creatures. Midway through the evening drive, you'll stop for "sundowners," cocktails at a vista point as the sun disappears.

**8 p.m.** Return to the lodge to share safari stories at dinner around the fire under the stars, or by candlelight in the dining room. Often, local entertainment complements the sumptuous fusion cuisine. As the night winds down, your suite awaits with a peaceful night's sleep.