



SAFARI INTO *South Africa*

Label travels to Madikwe Game Reserve in search of adventure.

Ever since Robert Redford and Meryl Streep romanced us with their film *Out of Africa*, a love affair with African safaris has drawn many travellers to the South African bush.

An African safari is an experience that many dream of and South Africa is the ideal place to make that dream come true – a country that will capture your heart and make you fall in love. Located about 90 kilometres north of the town of Zeerust is Madikwe Game Reserve. Although it is currently the fifth largest game reserve in South Africa, it is one of the lesser-known parks, making it a hidden gem.

Madikwe is regarded as one of the best conservation areas in Africa and offers the Big 5 in 75,000 hectares of pristine, malaria-free African bush. It is a true African Eden offering the discerning safari lover access to the big five, including Black Rhino and other rare species such as African Wild Dog and Cheetah as part of its 120 resident mammal species and 350 recorded species of birds.

Madikwe Game Reserve is home to a number of luxurious lodges as well as community lodges, all with their own unique look and feel, not to mention safari experiences. For a first-time taste of the African bush, or even if you are someone who has been drawn back to the call of the wild, then Jaci's Lodges encompass the true safari experience. Located in the park's North West, Jaci's Lodges is made up of two properties; Jaci's Safari Lodge and Jaci's Tree lodge. Both lodges offer guests the perfect destination for unrivalled game-viewing, unique accommodation options, outstanding service and tailor-made safari activities.

Accessible via car or small aeroplane, Jaci's Lodges are a mere 3½-hour drive or an hour's flight from Johannesburg.

The flight into Madikwe airstrip is where the excitement starts, cruising over the countryside speckled with townships and farms, bushland and expanses of terrain for as far as the eye can see. Even from the air, wildlife can be spotted roaming below.

On arrival at Jaci's Lodges you will feel the luxury of the gorgeous safari-style accommodation but be pleasantly surprised at how it blends into the surrounding bush. Bold colourful décor oozes the vibrance of the South African people which works in harmony with the natural woods and stone structures. Jaci's Safari Lodge features two exclusive Starbed Suites, six luxury Tented Suites and two private Family Suites. At Jaci's Tree Lodge there are eight Treehouse Suites, custom-built on wooden stilts and connected by raised walkways which seem to float high above the ground. Even around the lodges, animals such as monkey and various antelope roam freely.

Complementing the luxury in the lodges is the quality of the safari experience. To experience a truly authentic African safari in the splendid Madikwe Game Reserve is truly a once-in-a-lifetime adventure guaranteed to be forever etched in your memory. Comfortable open air 4WD game-viewing vehicles allow you to immerse yourself in the surroundings where you can look forward to an epic experience including the possibility of seeing the Big 5 (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and rhino), as well as cheetah, African wild dog, hyena, giraffe and hippo – all sightings for which Madikwe is famous.

The game rangers and guides are highly experienced with a wealth of knowledge of the area, wildlife and even astronomy at night. Game drives take place in the early morning and then again late in the afternoon, prime times for animal viewing. Morning game drives begin with the backdrop of the sun's golden glow which

blankets the horizon. The sound of morning birds fill the air in a symphony of calls, the smell of the bush in the air, a sweet mix of florals, rustic earthy scents and petrichor from the morning dew. This is when the animals begin stirring from the night before, settling into the day.

Returning to the lodge for lunch allows time to relax and savour the morning's drive, discuss with other guests your sightings or simply enjoy the facilities of the lodge. There is a pool for relaxation and escape from the heat of the sun in summer. Sitting areas are scattered around the lodges where you can just relax and enjoy the surrounding bush, read from a selection of books or even just take an afternoon nap. For those guests who still want to see more wildlife, venture to the Terrapin Hide, which is a submerged photographic hide with a water-level viewing window in the Jaci's Lodges waterhole.

After a delicious lunch there is time for an afternoon game drive which will extend into the evening. The animals are now active again as the sun's heat is cooling off. If you thought the sunrise was spectacular, then the sunsets over the bush in South Africa will take your breath away. Best experienced with a gin and tonic sundowner, this is a great time to get out of the vehicle with your guides, stretch the legs and discuss the day as you watch the sun dip below the horizon. If weather permits, at night you will dine in the best bush restaurant you will experience. Enjoy fire-cooked meals under the stars, with authentic South African flavour and flair. As the fire crackles nearby, tables are lit by lanterns, allowing for an intimate safari experience that will be treasured for years to come.

To discuss how you can experience a South African safari speak with an experienced adviser today by calling 13 071 or visit travel-associates.com.au.