

ASSOCIATED PRODUCT

FIRST-HAND FEEDBACK

Johannesburg-based Jaques Momberg, Reservations Manager Americas, and Vickey Momberg, Operations Specialist Americas, recently visited **Savanna Lodge** in the Sabi Sands.

What a gem of a camp. As soon as we met Micayla and walked into the camp, we felt at home. The staff were incredible. Lennie, was such a character, and went above and beyond looking after us, making sure that our glasses and bellies were full, and we were always entertained. The rooms were well-equipped with everything you could need, beautifully laid out with great amenities. We like that each room has its own heated pool and a private garden/grassed area with patio to relax in during the day. We had Nick as our guide and Life as our tracker, and they are one of the best teams we have had in the Sabi Sands; certainly, the most knowledgeable and talented we've come across – from their intricate knowledge of the bush and animals in the area to their ethics, enthusiasm and willingness to go the extra mile. The game viewing was also phenomenal with plenty to see. The food was fantastic, and we were surprised with a private dinner and train carriage experience, which is a nice option for guests. The team really went out of their way to make this a special experience, not only for us, but for all guests in camp.



Preshima Naidoo, Head of Product, and Alex Rautenbach, Product Destination Manager South Africa, Latin America and Spain, recently took the opportunity to visit **Tswalu Loapi**, which opened this month. Here is their feedback.

This sustainably designed tented camp has only six private Safari Homes (2 x 1 bedroom or 4 x 2 bedroom), and evokes the carefree, nomadic spirit of camping, and an immersive wilderness experience under enormous Kalahari skies. In essence, each Safari Home is its own private contemporary micro-camp, and includes a private game viewing vehicle, dedicated private guide, tracker, butler and chef, making it the ideal camp for small families looking for a private and exclusive experience. The design lends itself to outdoor relaxation, with your own firepit, environmentally friendly plunge pool and cocoon-style day bed.

Additionally, you have a fully stocked bar with a collection of South African wines, a private study including Wi-Fi, and in-room spa treatments. What really stood out for us on this trip was the incredible flexibility that you can enjoy in terms of timing of game drives, activities and meals, prepared by your own private chef in an interactive kitchen, and served anywhere you wish within your Safari Home, allowing you to determine the flow of the day. If you would prefer to eat out, you also have the choice of eating at Michelin-starred Chef Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen's Klein JAN restaurant, which offers a memorable culinary journey.

The Kalahari really does complement a safari in the Delta beautifully. For example, visit Tswalu Loapi after a stay at Vumbura in the Okavango Delta, and the stark contrast of the lush wildlife-rich Delta and vastness of the Kalahari will be unforgettable. Tswalu Loapi is truly a bucket list experience well suited for all types of travellers.



Robin Binkes: Spear of the Nation hosted seven of our Travel Designers from the Johannesburg office. Here is their feedback on their experience.

Our tour started with an introductory talk on South Africa, its people and languages, together with a brief political synopsis of events that led up to Apartheid in 1948.

After this, we moved onto our first stop – Alexandra Township. This little-known township is where it all started in this area, yet it is located right on the doorstep of the richest area in Southern Africa, Sandton. One of the sites we passed is the Nambuhla Hostel. Here Robin explained the implications of the 1913 Land Act, the early years of Alexandra, the 1986 Six Day War, the growth of the community and the reason for its closeness today.

From here we went onto one of Robin's community projects, Friends of Alexandra Crèche. The crèche takes care of and educates 25 underprivileged children from the community. Next to the crèche is an internet café – also one of Robin's community projects – which gives the community much-needed access to facilities such as computers, the internet and printers. Other community projects in the area include a vegetable garden and food truck. The last stop in Alexandra was Nelson Mandela's first house after his arrival in Johannesburg as a young man. Robin

told a beautiful story about Mandela's journey from the Eastern Cape to Johannesburg, and the beginnings of the fight against apartheid. Alexandra is one of the most visual experiences possible, with the opportunity to experience the colour, vibrancy and excitement of this, Johannesburg's oldest township.

Our next stop was the Apartheid Museum, rated amongst the finest museums in South Africa. The museum has a great deal of information, so Robin selects what he considers to be the most relevant, to provide a balanced understanding of apartheid. He explained the exhibits and events from a personal point of view: the early years of South Africa, the Zulu Wars, the South African War, the migrant labour system, the gold mines, miners' strikes, the Broederbond, Sophiatown, Sharpeville, Afrikaner nationalism, life under apartheid, resistance, the violence from 1978-1994, the release of Nelson Mandela, CODESA, and the country's first democratic elections in 1994. After a visit to this museum, you are fully aware of the effects of apartheid on the country today.

Our final stop was Constitution Hill, which includes the Fort and the Constitutional Court. The Fort was built by Paul Kruger as a prison in 1893, later converted to a fort after the abortive Jameson Raid, and then finally served as a prison right up until 1983. This is where Nelson Mandela and other leading South African struggle heroes were imprisoned on two occasions. The Fort, initially built by Kruger to imprison the "Uitlanders" (foreigners) who worked on the gold mines, is located next to the new Constitutional Court.

The Constitutional Court is one of the most sophisticated courtrooms in the world, and illustrates where South Africa is today in terms of democracy and some of its goals and aspirations. The courtroom is breath-taking in its uniqueness. Depending upon the day, and whether or not the court is in session, it is possible to sit and listen to the proceedings of the highest court in the land. In addition, we viewed the excellent display of South African art on display next to the Great African Steps, as well as the shutters and other artistic finishes to the Court. The court is situated next to the old Fort, as well as Hillbrow – the first "grey" area in Johannesburg, signalling the breakdown of apartheid. Throughout the tour, Robin told stories and anecdotes to make the tour interesting, moving and memorable. The workings of the Court are explained, and a visit is a must for all visitors to South Africa.

Overall, this was an informative, personalised and interactive experience that showcased South Africa's past, present and future. I left feeling informed, but proud, uplifted and filled with hope. Robin Binks is an amazing host and guide. This is a tour that we will all definitely recommend for our guests.