

ASSOCIATED PRODUCT

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SOUTH AFRICA
October 2023

GENERAL UPDATES

Airlink has announced that there will be an additional daily return flight at 14h00 from Johannesburg to Harare, Zimbabwe, starting on the 30th of October 2023, providing customers with greater flexibility in their travel plans. From the 03rd of November 2023, an extra return service from Johannesburg at 08h45 to Harare on Fridays and Sundays will be introduced, further strengthening the connection between these two key cities.

Singita Pamushana will be offering two new flight routings in 2024. In addition to the Federal Air flights to and from Johannesburg on a Monday and Thursday to Buffalo Range International Airport, from 01 March 2024, scheduled flights will also be available to and from Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport (KMIA), and from/to Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport (Harare). The two new routings will only be available on a Thursday, for a minimum of 2 pax for a minimum 3-night stay at Pamushana. The KMIA flights will be on either a King Air 350 or King Air 200 aircraft, and will connect to onward flights to the Singita Sabi Sands and Kruger National Park lodges. All flights are only available to guests staying at one of the Singita lodges.

Timbavati Private Nature Reserve – The 31st of December 2023 will be the last day that third-party charter aviation companies will be allowed to land at Rockfig Private Airstrip. We appreciate this may impact some of your reservations and there may be circumstances that warrant otherwise. In this instance, please contact your Travel Designer.

Morukuru Family De Hoop recently introduced "Coastal Conservation with a Purpose". Guests at Morukuru Family De Hoop can now book the optional Coastal Conservation with a Purpose package, provided at least two nights are booked at Morukuru Beach Lodge or at Morukuru Ocean House. This new package will offer a fun and educational immersion in conservation and sustainability at Morukuru Family De Hoop, following the recent partnership with the Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation and the Turtle Conservation Centre. By booking the optional Coastal Conservation with a Purpose package, guests are encouraged to learn more about sustainability and the conservation work taking place in De Hoop Nature Reserve.

The Park Inn by Radisson Cape Town Foreshore will be undergoing a transformational renovation, and the hotel will be rebranded to Radisson in Quarter 2 of 2024, to become The Radisson Cape Town Foreshore. The hotel renovation begins in October 2023 with an estimated completion date of end April 2024. During this time the bedrooms and public areas will undergo a full renovation. The hotel will continue to operate during this time, though there might be some disturbance to guests.

Cellars Hohenort Hotel, located in the leafy Cape Town suburb of Constantia, is proud to re-open the Conservatory Restaurant with a fresh and contemporary look.

Clouds Estate Restaurant at has recently had a facelift. New wooden floors, stylish wallpapers, and new tables for larger groups are part of the transformation. Just a stone's throw from Stellenbosch, this lovely estate neighbours Delaire Graff, and has magnificent views of the Franschhoek Valley.

Boschendal Wine Estate would like to inform everyone that with immediate effect, Werf Restaurant dinner operating hours will now be available on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Lunch service will continue as usual, seven days a week, and the Deli Restaurant will remain open from Mondays to Sundays.

The Last Word Collection was affected by the recent floods that hit the Western Cape area, and is postponing the reopening of the **Last Word Franschhoek** until further notice. Once they have assessed the damage and have a new reopening date, they will advise.

Mont Rochelle Hotel, and all facilities therein, including MIKO Restaurant, the bar and spa, will be closed from 01 – 31 July 2024 inclusive for annual winter maintenance and some facility upgrades.

Shell Lodges has advised that **Periwinkle Lodge** will be closed from the 01st to the 31st of May 2024 and **Abalone Guest Lodge** from the 01st of May to 30th of June 2024, to undergo maintenance.

Kanonkop House has one of the most enviable locations in Knysna, with views over the lagoon, and surrounded by forest. They have recently completed a few refurbishments and upgrades, such as adding a beautiful pergola around the pool, new pool loungers, a new solar-power system (it is totally off the grid now) that also warms the pool, and new bathrooms for the luxury garden suites. The new forest boma hosts fabulous 7-course dinners and a gin-tasting experience. This is the perfect base from which to explore the Garden Route.

Delaire Graff Lodges & Spa reopened on the 16th of October after an extensive refurbishment, and has also launched contemporary Japanese restaurant HŌSEKI.

SPECIALS

Tanda Tula Safari Camp – Have one night free when you book 4 nights or more! T&Cs apply; Valid 01 October to 15 December 2023 and 9 January to 31 March 2024; maximum 6 pax; only applicable to new bookings received; single supplement of 50% applicable; not combinable with other special offers; offer applies when 4 nights or more are booked (4th night is the complimentary night).

Plett Quarters Hotel (part of Lion Roars collection) is offering a 40% off Opening Special. Booking dates: 16 October to 16 December 2023. Stay Dates: 17 November to 17 April 2024 (excluding peak season).

La Clé in Franschhoek and **Kwandwe Private Game Reserve** in the Eastern Cape are offering a Classic Combo special: save 25% on accommodation when combining 3 nights at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve and 3 nights at La Clé. Valid 1 May to 15 December 2023 & 1 May to 30 September 2024.

FIRST-HAND FEEDBACK

Preshima, Kylee, Dominique and Alex from our Associated Product team, recently visited the new Cape Cadogan Residence in Cape Town as well as experienced dinner at their recently opened restaurant, Upper Union.

Cape Cadogan Residence

We were blessed to have an overnight experience at the new Cape Cadogan Residence. Situated on the right-hand side of Cape Cadogan hotel you will find a beautifully renovated heritage home that can accommodate 6 guests in 3 beautifully appointed, luxuriously decorated en-suite bedrooms. These rooms can be made into twins, and suit families and or friends wanting to spend time together sharing the same space. As you enter the house the hallway leads you past the three bedrooms down to the opulent lounge on the left and fully equipped spacious kitchen on the right. Both these rooms overlook a courtyard with heated pool and outside dining area. The Residence comes with its own dedicated butler who is on call to tend to your needs 24/7. You can either dine out at their fabulous Upper Union Restaurant or your butler can arrange a chef to whip up a delicious meal at your home away from home. Children aged 10 or younger are accepted at the residence, but the main hotel will only accept from 10 years and above.

Cape Cadogan is suited to FIT or small group bookings, couples, friends and families

The Upper Union dining experience was also a highlight of our stay. From signature cocktails made by their expert mixologists to an interactive, breaking-bread style dining experience, with a menu of indulgent dishes from around the globe, made to be shared. The Cape Cadogan Boutique hotel and Residence serve their morning plated breakfast from this restaurant, which is just a short walk next door. We highly recommend all of these offerings if guests are wanting to experience the heart of the Cape Town city scene. You can pair this hotel offering with any of the other MORE family collection properties.



Some of our Product team recently visited the Dorp Hotel in Bo-Kaap Cape Town.

Dorp Hotel

The new sister hotel of Boschendal Estate is a very unique and authentic boutique hotel. It is located high against Lion’s Head in the Cape Malay quarter of the city, and the final stretch of road to its entrance is very steep, and literally breath-taking, as the views from up there cover the entire city bowl, and facing Table Mountain, are spectacular. The hotel has an otherworldly atmosphere to it, one feels transported back to another era. It is very quirky and personal, with a historic, nostalgic atmosphere, e.g. bunched curtains to replace doors in bathrooms. The rooms are clustered together in separate wings, each unique in character, some with city views, some more mountain views, all differ in sizes, some bathrooms have shower only, others with bath and shower. Small imperfections make it feel homely, like flowers in old wine bottles, scuffed stairs and tables (a la shabby-chic). In between there are fairy gardens, overgrown creepers, with quirky outside nooks. The lower wing of the hotel is known as Onderdorp and offers self-catering apartments, ideal for longer stays. Dorp is not for those wanting a spa, a gym, tennis court: it feels more like an unofficial club or a grand home. The double-volume Salon, where meals are served, is beautiful, and somewhat eclectic, filled with plants and antiques, with sisal and Persian rugs, pink patterns, velvet and wool, and large arched glass windows. They serve breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Mindful that Dorp is within the devout Muslim community of Bo-Kaap, there is no alcohol for sale, but guests are welcome to bring their own. This property is for guests that enjoy something unique, whimsical, arty, creative and will appreciate the quirkiness (not for those after glitz and glamour, contemporary style).

Dorp Hotel is suited to couples and groups.



Alex from our Associated Product Team visited a few properties in Knysna, Plettenberg Bay and George.

KNYSNA

The Lofts Boutique Hotel

This hotel has a great location on Thesen Island. Walking distance to all the shops and restaurants. Thesen Island has a total holiday vibe about it year-round. The lagoon facing rooms are the best ones, as it's all about the view. Ideal for couples. They also have 2 bedroomed apartments that would work well for families with kids (can sleep up to 5 people). The hotel has been built in what used to be the old boathouse. The ground level hosts a few retail outlets such as the famous Ile de Pain bakery, wellness shop and The Nest, which is a lovely restaurant with a deck right by the lagoon. Guests are given a R300 voucher (included in the accommodation rate) which they can use for breakfast at either the bakery or The Nest. Room décor is contemporary. I would classify this one as a nice entry-level boutique hotel in Knysna, perfect for couples.



Knysna Paradise Collection

This collection consists of 2 boutique hotels, Villa Afrikana and The Bloem, which are located in the lovely suburb of Paradise in Knysna, high up against the hill and boasting lovely views of Knysna and the lagoon. Owner-managed by a lovely couple (the husband is Italian). You would need a car to get into town.

The Bloem (part of Knysna Paradise Collection)

Contemporary in style, with modern art, spacious suites that have a sitting area and offer all the creature comforts (Nespresso machines, mini-bar, large safes, aircon). Suites all have different configurations, but similar décor, 2 of them can be interleading, which could work for families. Josie, who welcomed us, was very friendly and professional. There is a small swimming pool in an attractive corner of the garden. Breakfast is served on the veranda where one has a lovely view over Knysna and the lagoon.



Villa Afrikana (part of Knysna Paradise Collection)

This boutique hotel has the most amazing views over the whole of Knysna and the lagoon (located higher up than The Bloem). Especially the Noetzie Suite and Spitskop Suite boast the best panoramic views. The décor is African chic, elegant with some African art and mementos. I prefer this one over The Bloem as it seems to have more soul, whereas The Bloem is more contemporary and clinical in décor. There are 6 suites, spread over 3 levels. The 2 suites with best views are on the top level; so something to bear in mind is that there are a lot of steps. For guests with mobility issues, you can book them into the Owners Suite which is located on the ground level. Their staff stand out as very friendly and professional. Lovely for couples and honeymooners.



PLETTENBERG BAY

The Bungalow and Villa Sky Hotels (Rare Africa Boutique Collection in Plettenberg Bay)

The Bungalow

This boutique hotel is right on the beach in Plett. It is built adjacent to their Bungalow Restaurant, which is open to the public. The restaurant has a real beach vibe feel to it, bearing in mind the hustle and bustle in season. The rooms are 3- to 4-Star level, neat comfortable, compact. The rooms do not have ocean views as there is too much beach vegetation. I would rather recommend Periwinkle Lodge in this price bracket, should guests want a quieter experience, as it is located in a less busy area, and has rooms with great sea views. The Bungalow has rooms that could work well for couples as well for families with small children.

Sky Villa Boutique Hotel

This is a very modern architecturally designed hotel, with dramatic spaces and lovely (though distant) views of the bay. I think location is its disadvantage, as it's on the high end of Plett (on the opposite side of the main street to which most hotels are located) i.e. it's a drive to the beach. Plettenberg Bay is all about being close to the beach, with the likes of The Plettenberg Hotel, Old Rectory, Robberg Beach Lodge, Periwinkle Lodge, Walkers Beach all being right by the beach. Villa Sky Hotel may perhaps appeal to guests looking for an interestingly designed hotel. Suited to couples and families.

Walkers Beach Hotel in Plettenberg Bay

Beautiful new luxury boutique hotel on the beach (where the Beacon Island hotel is situated) with direct access to the beach. It is built over the rocks going up the hill, and rooms are spread over 3 floors so that most have direct sea views. The rooms and public areas are decorated in muted soft beach colours (blues and beiges), a lot of natural materials, interesting art pieces and wonderful flowing lines. The lounge, dining area are spacious and

open up onto the deck, which has seating areas and the most magnificent beach views. The property has 2 swimming pools (not heated). Only kids over 12 are welcome due to the open pools. They have alternative power supply and are off the grid. Currently they only serve breakfasts but are looking at expanding this to light lunches and dinners. On arrival we were offered lovely welcome drinks and a platter of biltong/droëwors, nuts and grapes – very elegantly presented on a wooden platter. The rooms have all the mod-cons and one gets the feeling that nothing is too much trouble for them. One thing to bear in mind is that the rooms are very open plan with the bathrooms. So fine for couples but perhaps not the most comfortable setup for 2 ladies or gentlemen sharing a twin room. Oceans Blue Adventure is in walking distance (for all the boat excursions), as well as a few restaurants. This property is truly high-end and will work well for our luxury itineraries. You can easily combine this with properties such as Ellerman House, Grootbos and Kwandwe to create a nice Cape circuit that includes city, nature and beach.

Walkers Beach Hotel is great for honeymooners and couples.



GEORGE

Hawthorne Boutique Hotel in George

This is a very charming hotel as it has a lot of history. It was established as a hotel in the 1940s and its heydays were in the 1950-1980s. It has recently been renovated and revived by the new owners, and the public areas have a mix of art deco and old world style with a modern interpretation. It feels cosy and nostalgic, one is transported to another time. The rooms, however, are contemporary in design, spacious and with all the mod-cons, from coffee machines, safes, mini-fridges, modern bathrooms. We stayed in a standard room which was very spacious and had all these amenities. I would place this hotel in the 4-Star category, as a good overnight hotel for guests that are travelling along the Garden Route and would like to break the journey. Also ideal for guests who may have an early flight out of George to Johannesburg or Cape Town. In general, for all guests that don't have the budget for Fancourt in George.



Acorn Guest House in George

Nice location opposite a leafy park and close to town. Décor in room is a little dated, therefore would prefer using the Hawthorne Hotel, but for guests with a very limited budget it's fine to book. Would recommend booking King Rooms only (as the standard and queen rooms are a bit compact). Bathrooms are modern. Lovely friendly hosts. Surrounded by gardens and has a swimming pool. Quaint and authentic, entry level property. Possibly also an option for guides/drivers.

Tanya Wichmann, Reservations Manager – Latin & Retail, recently visited Welgevonden and Marakele.

I have always been curious about these precious reserves, so while on holiday I asked Wilderness if I can spend time there to experience more. They secured accommodation with our long-standing partners, Marataba Safari Lodge, Makweti Safari Lodge and Mhondoro Safari Lodge and Villa.

It is thanks to these lodges that I now have a richer understanding of the conservation and tourism offerings in these great parks.

Marakele National Park borders Welgevonden Game Reserve. Marakele is 21 000 ha and Welgevonden 36 000 ha. Both conservation initiatives are located in the Waterberg Biosphere reserve which is a recognized UNESCO site. Marataba is the only lodge in the Marakele National Park; in Welgevonden Game Reserve, just a select few commercial lodges that really do offer pristine safari experiences in a controlled and conserved area. You are not even allowed to drive on the latter reserve and must be collected from the main gate.

In my 27 years in the tourism industry, I have been privileged to discover many places where conservation initiatives are a fortuitous endeavour funded by tourism dollars. There is no such thing, in my opinion, of one place being more special than another. It sounds clichéd but the longer you are in the bush, the more you realise that each and every spot of God's creation is magnificent in its own way. In the same way, every lodge accommodation and class serves a niche in the market, albeit in dollar budget or convenience, and in being the perfect match for your clients' needs and wants.

Marakele and Welgevonden just happen to tick most of the boxes for me.

Here are my 15 reasons why I made this deduction:

1. A successful private sector initiative to conserve a biosphere that should be guarded for generations to come.
2. A successful project where rhinos can still be seen in large numbers, most with their horns intact.
3. Carefully managed access – at Welgevonden you are collected at the gate, so no unwarranted vehicles are allowed to traverse the park at all. This keeps the conservation efforts in control of the park management and causes less damage to roads, and invariably the ecosystem.
4. You can see all game here, the Big 5 and some other rarer species of antelope like sable and the majestic eland.
5. They do not have wild dog as the park as the terrain is not suited to their needs.
6. We saw incredible sightings of lion, rhino, buffalo, elephant and the smaller game species.
7. It was incredible to see white and black rhino so beautifully conserved.
8. The lodges are family friendly so can cater for multigenerational travel, which has become quote the thing of late.
9. The lodges leave a light footprint, and they have projects where some are completely off the grid, with solar, water purifying, and agriculture to produce their own greens and microgreens.
10. Admirable community projects where schooling or ranger/guide training is offered.
11. Employment of people from the local communities.
12. Impeccable park management systems.
13. Effective leasing agreements that ensure low-impact tourism numbers.
14. Incredible biomes that you cannot find anywhere else.
15. Rhino projects, leopard research, blue crane breeding, livestock guard dogs, elephant management, lion management and effective fire policies.

The Waterberg biome has at least 18 threatened or scarce plants species, 11 bird species, 4 reptile species, 4 species of fish, 1 butterfly species and 18 mammals that occur in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. All are deemed of the utmost importance for biodiversity conservation. Red data List species include the white-backed night-heron (*Gorsachius leuconotus*), the Cape vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*), the armadillo (*Orycteropus afer*), the brown hyena (*Parahyaena brunnea*) and the Critically Endangered black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*). The Nylsvley Nature Reserve in the south-east of the reserve is a recognised wetland and registered Ramsar site. (Source unesco.org).

Given all of the above, I must say that the Welgevonden Game Reserve and Marakele National Park experience left me positive and hopeful for conservation being a reality. I feel refreshed and it has been quite some time since I felt this appeased by the human species' efforts to conserve that of the other fauna and flora we share our living space with.

Thank you so much to MORE Family Collection for the stay at Marataba Safari Lodge, Makweti for the amazing stay and Mhondoro Safari Lodge and Villa for the amazing experiences.

