

ASSOCIATED PRODUCT

FIRST-HAND FEEDBACK

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October 2023

MOZAMBIQUE

Karabo and Oriel from our Travel Design team, recently visited Azura Benguerra in Mozambique.

Azura Benguerra

This is a beautiful property located on Benguerra Island. Access is a 10-minute helicopter transfer from Vilankulos International Airport. At the property, we were welcomed by the staff singing and then escorted to the main area to sign the indemnity form and be briefed about the lodge. The weather was sunny when we arrived, but it can be chilly in the mornings and evenings at this time of year. We stayed in the Presidential Villa that has its own private helipad. The villa has three suites with two overlooking the beach, though the third only has a partial view of the beach. The main area of the Presidential Villa has its own mini-bar, swimming pool, and lounge area with a TV.

With three butlers, meals are normally served on the deck next to the pool overlooking the beach, with delicious fresh seafood most of the time. The staff is friendly and always willing to help – from the GM to the butlers, the guide for water activities and general staff at the lodge. We also did a site inspection of the remaining villas, starting with the Luxury Beach Villa, then the Infinity Beach Villa, Royal Beach Villa and Villa Amazade. The difference between these villas is just the size, with the Beach Villa being the entry level with a plunge pool. Royal Beach Villa can also accommodate a family of 2 adults and 2 children. Villa Amazade can accommodate 2 adults and 3 children plus it has a bar, lounge with a TV, swimming pool and private chef.

After breakfast in the morning, we went to the water sport centre, which is walking distance from the main area and were briefed by the Azura guide about the different water activities and the swimming equipment they have. After that we had a boat ride to Bazaruto Island to climb the Bazaruto dunes. We then went snorkelling and had an island drive in a game-viewer vehicle to visit the community with our Azura guide. We visited Bazaruto National Park, a marine reserve managed by African Parks, and the staff informed us about the conservation that they are involved in on the island. We also visited the local school built by Azura Benguerra and a clinic built by Azura and &Beyond. The highlight of the trip was having a dhow cruise with drinks and a North Point beach picnic setup that was organised just for us by staff who prepared delicious meals with drinks. We also got to experience the Azura Peri Peri Beach Club bar that serves Mozambican cuisine and ending our stay with a spa massage.

Overall, an amazing time was had at this property and we learnt a lot. Azura Benguerra is suited to families, friends, honeymooners, couples and small groups.



SOUTH AFRICA

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 quiriness (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.

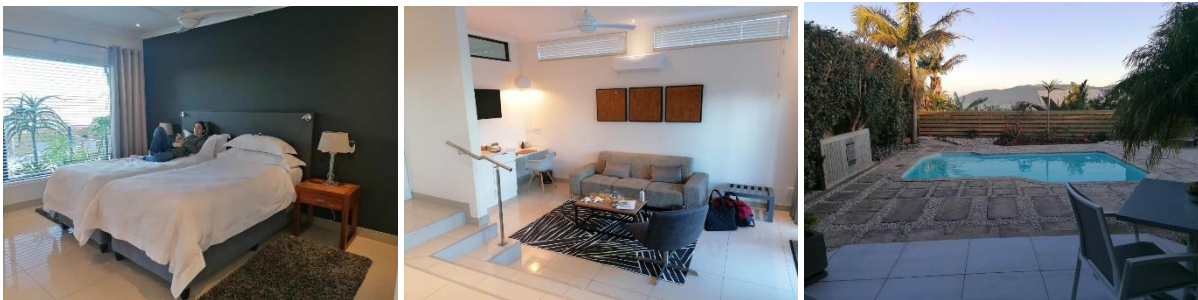


Knysna Paradise Collection

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.

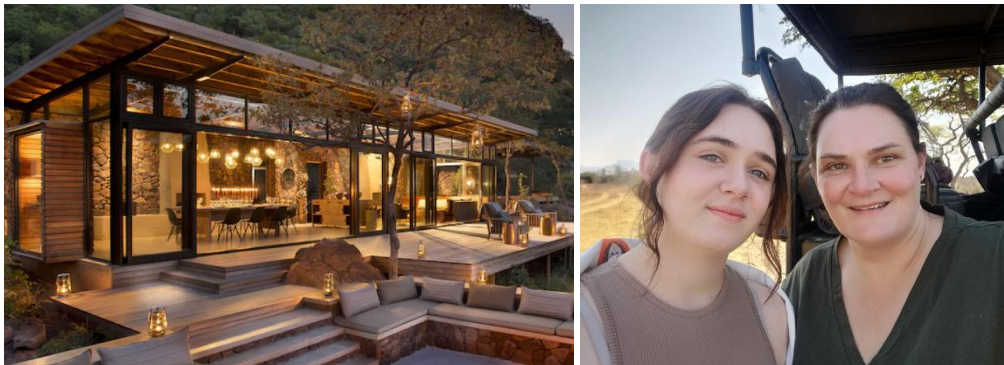
Here are my 15 reasons why I made this deduction:

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.



TANZANIA

Lucy Lopez, Wilderness Senior PR & Media Relations Manager, hosted a media trip in Tanzania with 3 international journalists, and shared some feedback.

Legendary Lodge

Day 1:

Beautiful expansive property surrounded by a coffee plantation. Lovely historical home used as the main area, with enormous guest suites dotted around. Very luxurious accommodation, huge bedroom, bathroom and lounge area as well as boasting a gorgeous garden full of trees. Superb food and hosting. Ismael the general manager, joined us in the evening to tell the group more about the property and its history.

Legendary Lodge is suite to all travellers such to couples, honeymooners, families and small groups.

Afternoon trip into Arusha to meet some of the artisans who created items for Usawa. We met a lady called Evelyn who does pottery and who employs local community members, trying to perpetuate the craft of pottery. Also, concrete basins and sinks incorporating recycled glass. Met Jeremiah who makes lamp shades from acacia thorns and who does wood carvings. The headboards at Usawa are carved by him, and many of the side tables in camp. Then we went to SANAA, basically a creative art hub that gives employment to people with disabilities. The blankets, throws, tapestries and the beaded chandelier at Usawa come from there.

The Arusha tour was hosted by Doctor Tipiya who was an orphan who was adopted by an American woman who runs an orphanage, and who will be heading up the community engagement side of things and CITW.

Delicious dinner was had at Legendary Lodge to end the day.

Usawa

Day 2:

Flight to Kogatende and straight onto game drive with Chrisple Sikawa as our guide. Wonderful man, very kind, soft spoken, respectful and knowledgeable.

Went to the Mara River, lots of carcasses around, vultures and marabou storks. Big herd of wildebeest looked like they wanted to cross but decided against it and we moved on. Landscape is insanely beautiful, wide-open plains and then hills as far as the eye can see. Heaps of wildebeest, zebra, topi, gazelle, elephant, mongoose, and a very special sighting of a cheetah mother with two cubs, who were very relaxed.

That evening we had the most incredible traditional meal by the fire. Plantain soup, fish stew, okra, pap, sweet potato and butternut. Local equivalent of vetkoek with caramel dipping sauce and South African wines.

Day 3:

Left camp at 4am as Jean managed to arrange a hot air balloon ride with Serengeti Balloon Safaris.

Unbelievable experience to float over the Serengeti and spot wildlife as the sun rose over the Mara River. Flew lower than I was expecting, it was possible to spot a fair amount of wildlife. Afterwards we had a champagne breakfast, then met up with Chris for a full day game drive and picnic lunch in the most beautiful location, with no

one else around. Would really say that the Usawa guides know where to find the best locations where you don't see anyone else, and it feels like a private area even though it isn't. Fabulous lion sighting (5 lions), giraffe, plains game, etc.

Dinner in main area as it was raining. Again, delicious food, and a fun evening.

Day 4:

Walking safari direct from camp, about 7km long, it took us 2.5 hours out, and a quick 30 minutes back, with a stop under a stunning fig tree where we had smoothies, carrot muffins and date balls.

Early lunch was cold avocado soup with chapati, crudités with baba ganoush, hummus and tilapia.

Tents are very comfortable, but you do feel quite exposed to the elements. However, this creates the feeling of being totally part of whatever is going on out in nature.

Bucket shower works quite well and lasts longer than I expected.

Game drive in the evening, again in the private area with sundowners in a spot with amazing views.

Journalists seemed blown away by the experience – although it's quite something for someone who hasn't done a safari before, it's very wild and raw and close to nature, animals all around and for some, sleep was challenging because of the noise of nature all around.

Impressed with the team in camp, very friendly and caring and fantastic service. They commented that activities were very well planned out and locations well chosen. It really is possible to do the Serengeti and make it feel like a private experience most of the time. Loved being able to walk directly from camp.

Usawa is suited to couples, honeymooners and guests looking for an adventure!



Zanzibar White Sand

Day 5:

Early departure from camp to Kogatende, where we flew to Zanzibar – around 1 hour 40 minutes direct flight. Roughly an hour to get from the airport to Paje which is on the east side of the island and where we stayed at Zanzibar White Sand. This is a stunning property, each villa has a butler, and the staff and service are impeccable, as well as the food. Villas are very spacious, mini-bar, fruit basket, welcome gift (sandals, hat & kanga cloth). Lovely amenities. Two-bedroomed villa is perfect for families or friends, private lounge, outdoor dining area and private plunge pool. Close to the beach, beach bar serves sunrise breakfast from 5:30am.

Heaps of activities available, could easily spend 4 to 5 days there and still keep busy, or simply relax. Todd and I did a cooking class with Emmanuel, the executive chef, and we learnt how to make an octopus stew using spices from Zanzibar, coconut milk from the trees on the property. The property has its own garden, herbs & banana trees, etc. We then had a set course dinner in the dining area overlooking the pool.

We did a tour of the property, main area comprises reception, dining room, sunset bar upstairs, kitchen, small lounge area. Décor is contemporary with both African and Eastern influences; bit of a Bali feel in the spa area particularly. Stunning gardens, lots of tropical plants and a few species of monkey around.

Day 6:

We met for breakfast and then Andrew and I went to Stone Town for a guided tour. We started around 10:30 and finished at 14:00 so it's quite long but there is a lot to see and definitely worthwhile, as it gives great insight into the culture and the history of Zanzibar. All buildings made of stone hence the name. Started at the fish market, then veggie market, meat market, and spice market.

Very interesting to see the architecture, mosques, etc. Zanzibar is probably 95% Muslim. Went to the Slave Market and learnt about the history of slavery in this area and further into East Africa. The site of the actual market is now an Anglican cathedral. Freddie Mercury's childhood home is in Stone Town and is a museum, but we didn't go inside.

We learnt all about the famous carved doors of Stone Town and what the carvings mean.

Back at ZWS, went for a swim and then a complimentary massage. Wonderful, peaceful spa.

The general manager then told us a bit more about the property, privately owned by a Polish family that has been living in France for 40 years and they are very involved in it. It's almost 10 years old. They have just added two new villas with two more to come soon which are entirely solar-powered.

Traditional meal in the evening, served buffet-style around the pool, the food was excellent. Local band singing local music, very good, great vibe.

Zanzibar White Sands is suited to couples, honeymooners and families wanting to relax after a busy safari.