



## ASSOCIATED PRODUCT

## News and Updates

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September 2023

## GENERAL UPDATES

## AIRLINES

**Airlink** has withdrawn from the Johannesburg-Entebbe route, effective 28 August 2023.

The airline's CEO and Managing Director, Rodger Foster, attributes the move to the commercial non-viability of the route due to thin traffic volumes.

Foster said: "Prior to Covid, Airlink operated the Johannesburg-Entebbe route exclusively six times a week with sustainable viability. In September 2021, after Uganda and South Africa re-opened their markets for intra-African travel, Airlink resumed services with four flights a week on the route. Despite best efforts to promote traffic between the two cities, the post-Covid demand in both directions has remained weak, and traffic volumes are too thin to support competing airlines". Airlink has contacted ticket-holders and is offering to refund in full or re-route on one of its daily flights to Nairobi with onward connections to Entebbe. Foster said the airline will monitor the market and will be ready to return to serving the route when traffic volumes can sustain two competing airlines.

## HOTELS AND LODGES

**Radisson Hotel Group** confirms that Radisson Blu Hotel & Residence, Cape Town, has ceased to operate as part of Radisson Hotel Group from 31 August 2023. The hotel will continue to operate under a Radisson equivalent brand from the Accor stable of brands, and all current reservations and rates will be honoured.

**Camissa House** in Cape Town will be closed for the month of October for maintenance.

**Thornybush Game Lodge** is delighted to announce the launch of its newest addition, the Thornybush Africology Spa and Wellness Centre. This expansion introduces Wellness Safari Experiences into their offering.

**MORE Family Collection** has updated their rates effective from 1 September 2023, for their Cape Cadogan Boutique Hotel, for travel from 4 January 2024, realigned to its enhanced offering at a 15% increase.

**Tanda Tula's** new Sustainability Levy for 2024, payable per person per night at Tanda Tula, ensures transparency and support for conservation and community initiatives in the Greater Kruger Region. The levy consists of four components:

TIMBAVATI CONSERVATION LEVY  
TANDA TULA FOUNDATION FEE  
LAND MANAGEMENT LEVY  
BUSHBUCKRIDGE LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVY

Adult levies are applicable per person per night for ages 13 years and older; child levies are now applicable per person per night for ages 6-12 years. Every cent of the levy goes towards the projects and initiatives, and makes a lasting difference in the ecosystem, as well as supporting the wellbeing of the region. Please contact your Wilderness Travel Designer should you require more detailed information on this.

**Ecce Lodge at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve** has undergone a fabulous facelift of the interiors, and upgrades to the bathrooms. All bedrooms have been redesigned in a soothing colour palette of natural African tones, patterns and textures, and softs have been upgraded. Ecce is ideal for families, with three of the six suites sleeping two adults and two children. Families at Ecce are also assigned a private vehicle and guide.

**Walkers Beach** is a new boutique hotel in Plettenberg Bay, part of the Inspirational Places portfolio, which opened on 1 September 2023. It boasts 11 beautiful suites (most with sea views). This is a beautiful, contemporary hotel with direct walking access to Central Beach. The sought-after location is the very definition of barefoot luxury.

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## SPECIALS

### **Newmark Hotels – “The Best of Both” Package**

Stay 2 nights at The Winchester Hotel, Victoria & Alfred Hotel, Queen Victoria Hotel or Dock House Hotel, and 2 nights at The Hazendal Hotel and Spa. Experience the best of Cape Town’s coast as well as the spectacular Winelands. Includes a R500 dinner voucher at Shoreditch, Ginja or Dash restaurants. Additionally, enjoy a delightful wine-tasting (6 wines) for 2 and a picnic at The Hazendal Lawns for 2. Bookable from now until 31 October 2023. Stay dates are from 1 October to 14 December 2023, valid for all room categories.

**Tamodi Lodge**, which is situated in scenic The Craggs, close to Plettenberg Bay and surrounded by indigenous forest, is a paradise for nature lovers. Activities include horse riding, mountain biking, great bird watching and nature walks. Take advantage of their unbeatable Winter Special Stay 3-Pay2, valid 1 May to 31 August 2024, exclusive to guests of Wilderness.

**Tanda Tula Safari Camp** is offering 1 night free when you book 4 nights or more. Valid 1 October to 15 December 2023. Maximum of 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).

### **Makanyi Lodge**

- Honeymoon Offer – partners stay at 50% discount (minimum 3 night stay). Valid for stays between 1 October and 17 December 2023. Not combinable with any other offers.
  - Stay 4 Pay 3 offer – valid 1 October until 17 December. This replaces the Stay 5-Pay 4 Special. Applicable to new bookings only. No Single Supplement applicable from 1 October to 17 December for the first single room on any booking. Not applicable for more than 1 single per booking.
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# FIRST-HAND FEEDBACK

Dominique Geyser and Preshima Naidoo from our Associated Product team recently visited a few lodges in the Timbavati.

## The new Walkers Plains Camp

We were already familiar with the Tanda Tula Plains Camp that was used as a temporary location for Tanda Tula Safari Camp guests during their rebuild. This property has now been taken back by the owners of Walkers and has since been rebranded to Walkers Plains Camp. They opened commercially this past June, and we were fortunate to be invited to experience their new rebranded offering. Walkers is based on the western side of the Timbavati closer to the entrance gate. We flew from OR Tambo in Johannesburg with Federal Airlines and landed at Rock Fig Airstrip. It was then a short drive through the reserve in an open game vehicle. We were warmly welcomed by the Walkers team and owner-managers. The lodge is situated facing magnificent plains with a waterhole out front. This attracts general game and birds throughout the day and night, so guests are entertained by seeing them coming in for a drink.

The homestead-style lodge is very intimate and homely. You immediately feel you can kick back and relax. The food was fresh and amazing! We could order several options from the menu and it was beautifully presented. The eight rooms, two of which are two-bedroomed family rooms (children over 8 are welcome) are beautifully appointed, with private plunge pools and breathtaking views of the surrounding savannah, and the Drakensberg Mountains as a backdrop. Wildlife sightings were top notch – some of the rarest we have seen, as well as great prides of lions, large herds of buffalo, rhino, elephant and leopard, all in just two days. The guides were also well presented, very professional and made sure the Mocha-Choca-Rula kept flowing! We thoroughly enjoyed the comfort, beauty and intimate hospitality of Walkers Plains Camp, and would highly recommend this offering for multigenerational families as well as groups of close friends.



## The new Tanda Tula Safari Camp

We were very excited to see the newly rebuilt Tanda Tula Safari Camp. On arrival we were welcomed with big smiles and warm hugs at the very impressive new entrance to the lodge. From here, we were guided through into the main lodge, which has panoramic open vistas of the bush and dry riverbed. Layout is modern and open plan, with an Afro-chic feel. Large glass panels allow uninterrupted views yet protect from the elements. They have kept some of the old Tanda Tula furniture, keeping the old Tandies spirit alive. These pieces complement, and are well-placed amongst the new, more modern furniture. We were pleased they decided to keep those elements in. The horizontal lines of the lodge draw your eye out over to the large rim-flow heated pool which still overlooks the



waterhole. Next to that is the new gym and spa, which was still being completed when we were there, but looks like it's going to be a stunning setup, and also overlooks the busy waterhole. Their new boma is an interesting design – what looks to be a large woven basket! Something we had not seen before. Accommodation... we were lost for words on the work that has been done to the rooms. It's a next-level high-standard offering: large, open plan rooms with expansive decks, sunken lounges and plunge pools; also, outdoor and indoor showers as well as a bath and double vanity; plus minibars in the rooms, and high-tech aircon and lighting systems. They also have coffee machines and a great selections of teas, board games and books, which is a nice touch. There are two very spacious family suites that can accommodate families of four and offer in-room dining.

Their dining options offered incredibly diverse choices, incorporating flavours from around the world but retaining their African flair. The meals are served plated on beautiful modern crockery. Very high-end but you still feel at home in the relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Our guide and tracker were very professional and extremely knowledgeable, focusing on the smaller things when the game viewing was quiet. Tanda Tula is owner managed; very hands-on with much attention to detail. Furthermore, their long-standing staff (some have been there over 20 years) make this lodge super special. Overall, we just loved the look and energy of the new Tanda Tula. You can now tie their new premier level offering in with Sabi Sands / Lion Sands Ivory Lodge, as an example. Also, it's a lovely intro to a safari and would pair well with Wilderness Botswana camps such as Jao, Mombo, Vumbura Plains, DumaTau, and Bisate in Rwanda.



### **Kambaku River Sands**

We were welcomed and shown around (mini site inspection) by the assistant duty / host manager – then served a light lunch. We loved the curio shop, which was well stocked and more affordable than the other camps. The accommodation here has a more classic safari feel. The spacious thatched rooms have aircon, Wi-Fi and a patio deck overlooking the bush and/or the riverbed. Levelled sand pathways and few stairs make it easier for those who struggle walking; however, we would recommend allocating rooms closest to main areas. The main lodge has undergone recent maintenance and has a high thatched roof. The main lounge area flows into the dining, bar and pool deck area that overlooks the riverbed, which was busy with passing game. Ellies come to drink from the pool, which is a highlight for many. They have a large bar with a lot of drinks styles to choose from. They also have premier wines that they recommend purchasing that will pair with the menu of the day, which is a nice touch. Food was more traditional safari style. Also loved the location of the wine cellar and private dining offering, as it has a large window facing the dry riverbed, eye level with the passing game. Hot breakfasts and dinners are plated, while brunches and lunches are more buffet style. They had planned to serve dinner in the riverbed, but it was a bit cold, so we dined in the main area close to the indoor fire pit, which was a nice touch and created a lovely ambience. The spa and gym are located on the opposite side of the camp away from bustle of the main area. It's quite an impressive, extensive setup, with many services on offer. We did not have time to experience any of the treatments, but the staff were friendly when we came to have a look. They offer a sleep-out hide, which we did not get to see fully set up, but can imagine how stunning it would be with all the lanterns lit up. It's a lovely extra offering / experience to add. Note accommodation at the lodge for the night still needs to be booked should weather conditions suddenly change. The sleep-out needs to be pre-booked, and can only be settled in camp.

Game viewing in this traversing area was just amazing. We saw so many rare sightings, and great birding. The tracker for us stood out. He has been tracking for 20+ years, and interacted with the guests and assisted the guide in providing more information. Although older in age, his eyesight was amazing, spotting a chameleon at night and just minutes after that, a bush baby. He was always smiling and also left the vehicle a number of times to track on foot. One of the best trackers we experienced whilst in the Timbavati. Owners live on site and are very hands-on. They host dinners and interact with guests, which is a nice touch. We also got to visit Kambaku Safari lodge which has a more intimate feel, nice for families with younger children. They have the lovely Kambaku Kubs programme, offering to teach and keep children entertained.

Overall, lovely classic safari style lodges and the wildlife sightings in this area were incredible. We now have a better understanding of the offering and differences between their River Sands and Safari Lodge so we can better pair the lodges to the right markets, which we recommend for small groups of friends and multi-gen families.



**Some of the Johannesburg Operations and Reservations teams went on a full day site inspection visit of a few hotels in Johannesburg. Here is their feedback.**

We set off from the office and navigated through the morning traffic, making our way to our first property inspection, **Fairlawns Boutique Hotel and Spa**. Online pictures definitely do not do justice to this property. Despite being in the heart of the city, this property offers one a feeling of seclusion. The staff was very welcoming and friendly. We were treated to a delicious breakfast, which everyone enjoyed. However, we didn't get to see the spa as it was closed for renovations.

The next stop was at **Athol Place House and Villas**. Nice little gem, with a home-away-from-home feel. Reception is in the lovely 9-bedroomed main house. The property can be booked on an exclusive-use basis only, and management was quite proud to tell us how busy they have been.

Thereafter we visited **The DaVinci Hotel**. We felt that the hotel has a corporate feel. It has a black and white colour scheme, and would be most suitable for business travellers and leisure guests visiting Sandton for retail therapy.

We then moved onto **The Peech Hotel**. Here we gathered around the fireplace, warmed up with some hot beverages whilst we learnt more about the history of the Peech, from Vicky Peech herself. This is an amazing 4-Star property with 5-Star service levels. They are very eco-conscious and are planning on getting off the grid soon.



Welcome home! That was how we were welcomed at our next stop, **Sanctuary Mandela**. It is a beautiful and tastefully decorated home with art and photographs that reminded us of Madiba's history and our heritage. We all loved the immersive tour of the property and the names of the different rooms that all pay homage to the incredible human that was Nelson Mandela. It is a great overnight night stop after a Johannesburg and Soweto tour.

Following this, we visited the **Four Seasons Hotel The Westcliff**, a luxury hotel with striking pink buildings that can be seen from the highway. We were served a buffet lunch so we could sample their current menu. A unique feature of this hotel is the elevator that connects the reception area to the main restaurants, and offers stunning views of Johannesburg, including the Johannesburg Zoo.

Our day ended at **The Saxon Boutique Hotel and Spa** with high tea, which was well presented and featured teas from around the world. It is a luxury boutique hotel in the centre of Johannesburg that offers security, privacy, and exclusivity.

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