

ASSOCIATED PRODUCT

FIRST-HAND FEEDBACK

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SOUTH AFRICA

Yolande van Staden, Andrea Bull, and Lorrain Ledwaba explored the Lowveld, enjoying overnight stays at Oliver's and Savanna.

Oliver's Boutique Hotel and Restaurant in White River

This is a beautiful boutique hotel with a signature "home away from home" feel, set on the White River Country Estate outside White River in Mpumalanga province. It's owner-managed, and you can see Tanya is really hands-on with the property. She met us on arrival and did a site inspection and had dinner with us. The hotel overlooks the first green of the 18-hole championship White River Golf Course.



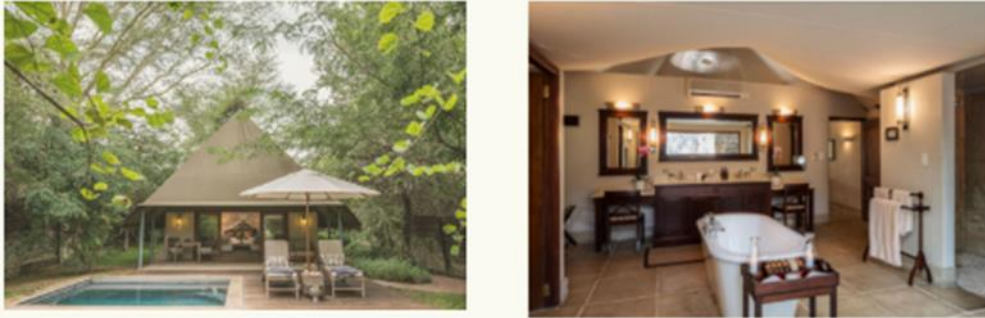
It has various room types to accommodate everyone's needs, from individual travellers to families. The in-house restaurant offers mouth-watering a la carte continental dishes. They also have a beautiful, intimate wine cellar that can serve as a dinner venue to enjoy their renowned raclette fondue evenings paired with famous South African wines. There is also a Wellness and & Beauty centre on the hotel premises that offers treatments from massages to face and body treatments, manicures and pedicures, as well as waxing.



Oliver's is the perfect stopover for guests on their way to or coming back from a safari, before flying out from Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, which is a 15-minute drive from the property.

After our stay at Oliver's, we took an easy road transfer to **Savanna Private Game Reserve** via the Newton Gate.

The 5-star lodge is a short drive from the gate, set within the Sabi Sands Reserve. It has nine suites, seven of which have tented roofs, blending the elegance of a by-gone colonial era with modern facilities – each of these rooms has its own private patio, plunge pool and an outdoor shower. The remaining two suites are the Executive and the Savanna suites with two bedrooms.



The property has a comfortable public lounge area with spacious patios and a main pool overlooking a waterhole. These areas are frequently treated to fantastic views of birds and animals drinking water on a hot summer day. The loft above the lounge is a nice quiet place overlooking the waterhole to sit and enjoy a good book from the library. This area also provides internet access and guests can download their digital photos and save onto CD or DVD.



They have a fully stocked wine cellar and bar close to the dining area where guests can enjoy their meals. There is also a Shangaan boma area which hosts bush braais under the African sky.

Guests can purchase precious mementos of their experience at the well-stocked curio shop.

A fully equipped gym on the premises caters for fitness-minded clients – overlooking the bush, it offers the best view for working off some of the famous safari cuisine on offer. Savanna does not have a spa on the property but does offer exquisite massage treatments in the privacy of your own suite.

Also offered at the property are game drives and walks. Experienced and dedicated game rangers and trackers impart their amazing knowledge of the natural world, allowing guests to unobtrusively observe the lives of the largest and smallest creatures. All the safari vehicles have been modified for guests' comfort and safety, with bucket seats separated by large storage boxes. The vehicle takes no more than two people per row, max 6 guests per vehicle, to give every guest the best photographic opportunities.

Walks are an optional activity for guests who would like to experience the fauna and flora on foot, and are led by an armed guide and a tracker. The tracker shares his vast local knowledge of the bushveld trees and plants which are used in tribal customs and rituals, as well as their practical herbal and medicinal applications. The walks are normally close and around Savanna Lodge, and take place between game drives and meals.



Savanna offers a child-friendly safari that welcomes children of all ages if booking the Savanna Suite. No children under 8 years are permitted at the main lodge. All meals and activities will take place in the Savanna suite. The suite does offer child-minders if the adults want to go on game drives without the children. All game drives are tailor-made as they offer their Bushbabies programme to entertain and teach the children about the bush.

Savanna works closely with neighbouring communities and runs projects to assist and empower the residents.



NAMIBIA

Tonateni had the opportunity to visit the Chiwani Camps, as well as the Onguma Collection of lodges.

Mowani Mountain Camp welcomed us warmly, and the staff made us feel right at home. At our welcome, we received a cool, damp cloth and a welcome drink in the main area. Management and other staff members helped us with our luggage, which they brought into the main hall where we waited for our room allocation.

We each received our room keys and headed to our rooms. All were en-suite, spacious, comfortable and offering all the luxuries you could need, including an outside shower built into the boulders. The swimming pool is close to the main area and once again built within boulders and has the nicest views.

In the late afternoon, we went on the Twyfelfontein excursion, which included stops at Burnt Mountain and the Organ Pipes. Our guide was a knowledgeable, skilled driver, and thoroughly explained everything to us. After returning to the camp, we had a sundowner on top of the viewpoint. Drinks and snacks are offered from the bar, that is built within boulders. This was an incredible experience, with the sun hot but a cool breeze blowing in from all sides. The sundowner spot on the viewpoint is ideal for clients who would prefer to not drive out of camp immediately after arrival or who are exhausted from the long drive.

The next morning, we got into our car and went for a nature drive along the Huab River. We stopped at different areas and at a viewpoint to enjoy the beauty of the riverbed from a higher point in the mountain range. On our drive, we were fortunate to encounter a herd of desert-adapted elephants, which we photographed before stopping

at another location for tea and snacks. The meals were delicious. We loved our stay at Mowani Mountain Camp, which was all worth it.



Onguma The Fort and Onguma Safari Camps are situated on the eastern border of Etosha National Park.

We had an early morning wake-up due to the distance we had to cover that day. After breakfast and saying goodbye, we continued our journey, driving to Onguma Private Reserve, [34 000 hectares of private wilderness] where we stayed at Onguma the Fort for 3 nights. We took the tarred road from Khorixas to Outjo, Otjiwarongo, and Tsumeb. The drive was fairly long; it is only recommended if you are unable to find accommodation on the southern side of the national park.

We arrived at the lodge shortly after noon, we were welcomed by the excited Onguma Fort staff with song. We were given a tour around the main area, the spectacular swimming pool overlooking the waterhole, the spa facilities, curio shops, and gallery featuring hand-drawn pictures that are on sale. Before going to our rooms, the staff briefed us on the safety, placing a strong emphasis on the fact that the lodge is not fenced off and there are predators around, thus we cannot walk to the main area or from the main area to our rooms. We should always request a transfer.

All rooms are private, spacious, and luxurious; each room offers views of the waterhole and has a stocked bar fridge and air-conditioning. All rooms have an inside and outside shower. Only guests in the 2 closest rooms to the main area are allowed to walk. Activities on offer and that we participated in are the pm nature drive on Onguma Private Reserve, the Etosha game drive, the Onkolo hide, and morning walk on the private reserve, which takes

place in a clear area so as to not endanger the clients or the guide. At the end of our morning walk, we had a bush breakfast setup which put a lot of smiles on every one of us in the group.

The service was top-notch here, and we enjoyed our stay to the fullest. In the afternoon, we went on an afternoon game drive in Onguma Private Reserve with our guide Markus. He was knowledgeable, entertaining, and provided detailed explanations. During our drives, we saw a variety of birds, including kori bustards, as well as giraffes, wildebeest, black rhino, springbok and other antelopes. On Onguma Reserve we were fortunate to spot a lone female lion and two cheetahs (mom and her cub) at the waterhole. You could assume they were preparing to hunt.

During our stay, we inspected the Dream Cruiser, Onguma Camp Kala, Bush Camp, and Forest Camp. In Etosha National Park, we were fortunate to see elephants, a black rhino with its calf, a hyena, and a lioness attempting to hunt giraffes. Unfortunately, the late hour prevented us from watching the events unfold as we needed to be out of the park by sunset. We were treated to a surprise Boma dinner; the setup was fantastic, and featured performances by a group of youngsters from Tsumeb. This is highly recommended if you have a group of 2 or more people, and it should be booked for and paid for in advance. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at Onguma, and the staff treated us like VIPs.

Onguma Tented Camp was recently refurbished with all new canvas tents and extended decks featuring wood-fired hot tubs. Inside the tent, new furnishings include a Nespresso coffee station, and Smeg bar fridge & kettle, to ensure access to refreshments. Complementary beers, house wines, and whiskey, cognac and gin are offered. Onguma Tented Camp also has a butler service upon request.

Onguma the Fort: African feel with spectacular views over Etosha National Park

Onguma Tented Camp: Mixture of relaxation and elegance

Camp Kala: Fitted for honeymooners or couples

Onguma Bush Camp: Ideal for families

Onguma Forest Camp: Mixture of comfort and privacy





Sharon Kandukira, a Journey Specialist in our Namibia office, had the privilege of being invited to attend an Ultimate Safaris educational trip to Damaraland. She spent one night at Camp Doros and one night at Onduli Enclave, with a site inspection of Onduli Ridge.

Our hosts were Katja, the inbound manager and Franco, the guide for Ultimate Safaris. We enjoyed a picnic lunch under a tree in the Omatjete area en route to Damaraland.



Camp Doros: Upon our arrival at Camp Doros, we were welcomed by a group of staff members who offered us refreshing welcome drinks and cool, damp face cloths. They then guided us to the common lounge area while they took our luggage to our assigned rooms for the night. Shivute, the camp manager, provided us with an overview of the camp. The cosy en-suite rooms feature a modest design and a deck with a view of the riverbed.

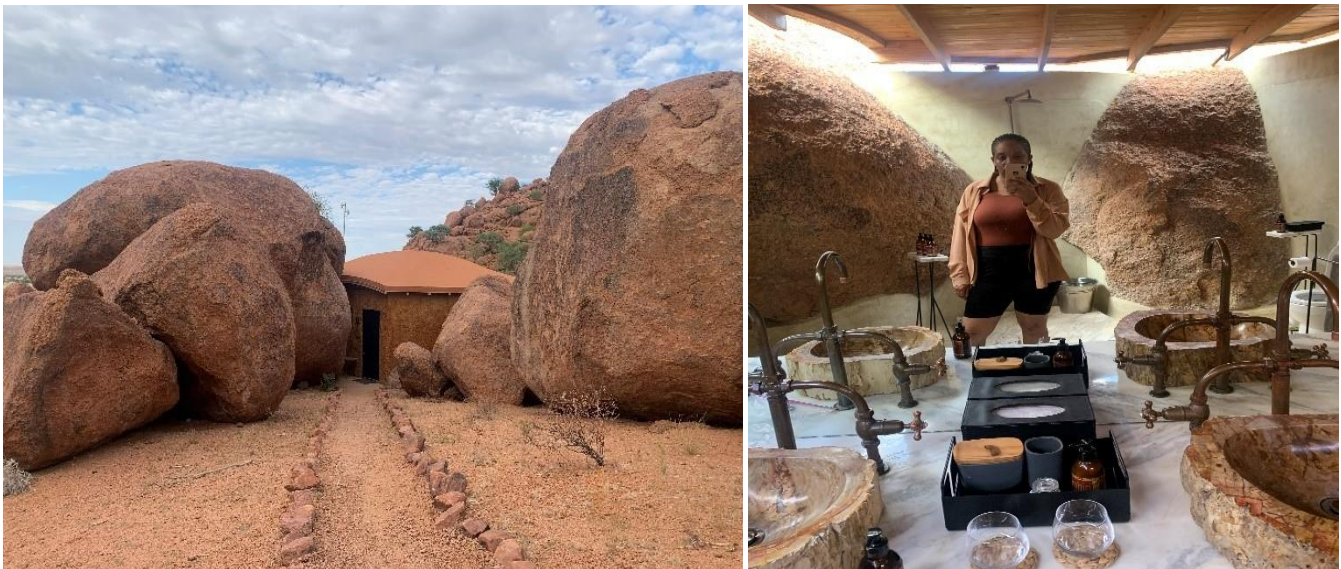
Guests can enjoy a shared plunge pool and sun deck, as well as amenities such as a communal lounge, dining room, campfire circle, and a deck where we gathered for happy hour. The attentive team ensured our comfort and wellbeing throughout our stay. The meals were delightful, with breakfast standing out for its variety, and the coffee was exceptional.

The following morning, we had the opportunity to join a rhino tracking activity, during which we encountered a rhino and later stopped for a refreshing lemonade break. We received insights from the Rhino Rangers, learning about the collaboration between Ultimate Safaris and the conservancies on conservation efforts. Camp Doros offers a unique wilderness glamping experience off the beaten track, focusing on rhino conservation, with the option to include a river/elephant drive on a 3-night stay. It is advisable to discuss accommodation standards in advance to ensure the guests expectations are managed effectively.

Following the rhino tracking activity, we said goodbye to the Rhino Rangers and proceeded to Onduli Ridge.



Onduli Ridge: Upon our arrival at Onduli Ridge, we were once again greeted with a refreshing beverage and cool face towels. We conducted a site inspection and the suites were nestled among the granite boulders, offering a breath-taking blend of rustic charm and luxurious touches. We had the opportunity to view the spa room, which was still in the process of being constructed. The property also features a wine cellar, an infinity pool, and a waterhole for observing wildlife.





Onduli Enclave: Moving on to Onduli Enclave, located not far from Onduli Ridge, we were introduced to a new level of luxury. This exclusive villa boasts three spacious glass-fronted super king size suites. Each suite included a private deck with wood-fired hot tubs, sun loungers, and a shaded seating area. The rooms were generously sized, with bathrooms featuring both indoor and outdoor showers. The star beds in the rooms can be moved outside for a unique sleeping experience. Guests have access to a phone in their rooms and are attended to by a dedicated butler throughout their stay. A private chef and guide are assigned to guests at the Enclave. Our butler/manager, Kali, provided exceptional care during our visit.

Our time was limited, so we were unable to partake in the activities offered at the enclave, but we did have a wine tasting, which was both informative and enjoyable. This was followed by a fun evening of crafting our own pizzas, with a variety of toppings to choose from. After dinner, we retired under the sky. The next morning, we enjoyed a leisurely early morning walk with Franco.

Onduli Enclave caters to upscale clientele and focuses on giraffe conservation, as well as offers activities such as elephant nature drives and visits to the Twyfelfontein engravings. Rhino tracking is available for guests staying three nights or more, with additional options including e-biking and nature walks.



BOTSWANA

Chantell Faasen recently had the opportunity to visit some of the Natural Selection properties in Botswana.

North Island Okavango is in the Okavango Delta on a private island surrounded by open savannah and woodlands. The staff are friendly, and the facilities are beautiful and more than what a guest would need. Main area has a library, bar, dining area, fire pit and pizza oven. There are so many quaint nooks for private dining, which really adds to the romantic feel. There is also a hot tub and gym close to the main area, but no spa, though they offer in-room treatments on request. Each room has its own private pool so there is no pool in the main area.

For this time of year, we saw great game. Location-wise, they have a good population of wild dogs and other predator-prey interaction. It is great for birding, has mokoro excursions throughout the year and water-dependent boating. Moderate herds of buffalo are seen in the area, meaning lion sightings too. Their location allows for night drives, and we were able to see serval, civet and genet on our early evening drive.

This property is great for honeymooners and guests with a healthy budget. It will combine well with Mombo or Little Mombo to create a high-end itinerary.



Tuludi Camp was amazing, the staff were incredible, and we immediately felt comfortable. You can see that the staff are all proud and honoured to be hosting us. Ndi was the camp manager during our stay. She has a warmth and vibrancy to her that added to the overall experience of the trip. Her presence was felt throughout camp, and she clearly knew the importance of inspiring and leading the rest of the team, who all work so well together, and I could find no fault in their service delivery.

KK was our guide, and he has such a wealth of knowledge, sense of humour and storytelling attributes that made for a fun and informative game drive experience. He was patient and put everyone on the vehicle first. It was my first game drive where a guide wanted time with everyone in the front seat to get to know us all, so we rotated to ensure that each of us had time in the front seat with the guide.

The rooms are massive and had fully stocked minibars, plunge pools and lounge space on the decks. Housekeeping asked if she could stock with different items when we met and did a briefing of the room. A WhatsApp number is available as a direct line to staff for anything guests might need.

Tuludi has a unique style and flow, unlike any other main area I have seen. Some of the deck and walkway webs together and forms a treetop viewing deck, with lower decks for private dining, sunken decks for lounging, and the fire pit. There is no shortage of private spaces for guests to relax and spend time in the main area. It also has a slide for adults that every guest will no doubt try at some point. There is no traditional boma area or spa, but they do have a pool close to the main area. All dining is private, unless guests request to share with other guests in camp. Food was incredible. All fresh and high standard. They took careful note of everyone's dietaries and our group even commented that the chef executed their dietaries perfectly, so very confident that they can

accommodate most requests. They also offer a “breakfast to go” option for game drives to enjoy on the morning coffee stop. Nice offering to guests who do not eat early in the morning. Some options were fruit salad and yogurt to go. Also jaffles, rusks and coffee to go.

Natural Selection in Khwai operates in a private concession within the Khwai Reserve – good location for year-round Okavango Delta experience. Historically the Khwai River has water throughout the year, which attracts wildlife.

Overall, I was so impressed by high level of service in all areas from housekeeping through to food and guide. Impeccable service. This is a property that is easy to sell for all guests and is easy to combine with the likes of Singita, Tswalu, Mombo, Vumbura Plains, DumaTau given its high level of service and offering.



Tawana Camp officially opened on 1 May 2024, and my visit was prior to the camp being ready for guests, so there were still some construction and final preparations taking place during our visit. Taking this into consideration, I would like to comment on the camp’s potential to be a premier camp offering, experiencing a camp prior to opening is a completely different experience and once they work through the initial stages of opening the camp, would combine well with any Wilderness premier offering and the likes of Singita or Tswalu. Staff were all welcoming and immediately made us all feel at home. They were all excited for the opening and the expected high level of service was detailed in every meal and interaction with the staff.

Tawana is located inside the Moremi Game Reserve overlooking the Gomoti Channel. The camp is built around popular animal corridors, allowing for in-camp wildlife sightings. The high concentration of antelope and water nearby has the potential to be a versatile wildlife destination year-round. Currently awaiting the opening of Santawani Airstrip, you can only access the camp via helicopter. Once the airstrip opens you can access by fixed wing flights on Mack Air and Wilderness Air flights.

Tawana is the new addition to Natural Selection’s premier circuit partnered with the local community and built with the purpose of offering much needed opportunities to the nearby communities.

Luxurious accommodations cater to every traveller – 8 suites include 3 family suites, each with its own lounge, private terrace, plunge pool and outdoor sala. At the moment the camp is undergoing construction of a spa and until construction is complete, they do offer in-room treatments. In my experience this camp caters more for couples and romance, but taking into consideration the family rooms this camp could also be perfect for multi-generational or small-group travellers.

Activities are land-based and limited to the Moremi Game Reserve rules, therefore no night drives or water activities are permitted. This in no way hampered some spectacular sightings during my stay.

