



**JEAN DU PLESSIS**  
Director – Wayo Africa

For the past 20 years, Jean has worked at the forefront of developing new and exciting safari experiences in Tanzania. He has successfully led change in the tourism industry, pioneering canoeing, walking and mountain biking safaris inside Tanzanian National Parks, while positively impacting the wilderness, and uplifting local communities.

Jean has always had a strong affinity to nature. He spent his childhood running around the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains; it was here that an African lifestyle, its people and wildlife was imprinted on him.

After receiving a business degree in tourism from the University of Pretoria, he gained experiences in the South African military, as well as in anti-poaching, ranger training, private guiding, and managing lodges in the Western Serengeti.

After a few years of ranger training, where he was on foot every day in the bush, Jean thought it was a missed opportunity that visitors to the Serengeti didn't have the same wilderness experience off of a game-viewing vehicle. He believed that it was better to enliven the senses and have a truly authentic safari experience rather than simply watch through the windscreen.

In 1999, he began developing Green Footprint Adventures, which later became Wayo Africa, so he could create a company that shared his love for being close to nature in a stripped back way. With Wayo, it's all about exploring outside the vehicle, in comfort, without having to spend a fortune. Experiencing the remote wilderness creates some truly enchanting moments for Jean and his guests. Moments which are unique to the Wayo Africa experience.

With his background, Jean has developed Wayo Africa into one of the first companies to offer intensive guide training and inspire a new generation of guides. Young trainees are employed from local villages, the Street Kid programme and local orphanages. All are offered support, education and guide training to become some of the best in the industry, and to go on to support their own families.

Jean's motivation is sustainable tourism. His company was the first to get rid of plastic water bottles and subsequently, via Wayo, many Serengeti lodges now source reusable bottles too.

As well as being one of the directors of Wayo Africa, Jean is also the host of a popular National Geographic TV series called "Ultimate Africa", as well as "Nomads of the Serengeti" and "Love Nature". In 2022, Jean will start filming for a new series for Netflix and IMAX about the Serengeti ecosystem.

One of Jean's favourite moments was guiding his first trek across Serengeti National Park. There was a moment during the hike when he realised they had not seen another vehicle, a road or lights for seven days. It was just his group, in this wilderness, surrounded by wildlife and nature.

Father to two daughters, Jean has instilled his passion for Africa and wildlife in them – in fact, something he feels committed to do with all his guests. He believes that the best way of exploring Africa is at ground level; one of Jean's favourite moments is when he takes clients to a remote tree in the Maasai Steppe that overhangs a waterhole. The shape of the tree creates a natural platform around which branches have been woven into a "tree nest", which becomes a sleep-out platform. At night it's not uncommon to see over 500 elephants coming to the waterhole; watching them drink on a full moonlit night is a truly magical experience that Jean believes has a lasting impact on visitors.

He believes it is only at this level that a true love and understanding of the continent can be attained. Jean is enthusiastic about Wayo's future with Wilderness and the positive impact the partnership will have on protecting Tanzania's wilderness and uplifting its communities.

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#### **About Wilderness Safaris**

Wilderness Safaris, Africa's largest hospitality and conservation company, operates in seven countries and across more than 40 exceptional camps and lodges. Located in some of the continent's most remote, pristine and game-rich wilderness areas, the company offers unforgettable and exclusive adventures that help preserve biodiversity, conserve wildlife and uplift local communities. Wilderness Safaris believes in creating impactful journeys, which it has been doing for some four decades. The company's purpose today is stronger than ever, in its dedication to conserving and restoring Africa's wilderness and wildlife.

[www.wilderness-safaris.com](http://www.wilderness-safaris.com)

#### **About Wayo Africa:**

Working in the field for over 25 years, Wayo Africa was started by Jean du Plessis, who introduced safari activities to spice up the normal, game driving experiences. With sustainability at its heart, Wayo's focus was also on guide training; giving talented Tanzanian youths the first step to guiding before they took on Serengeti professional guiding. Wayo Africa also facilitated training its own staff, training for other companies and training for Tanzania's National Park Rangers. With a reputation of wanting the best for Tanzania and its local people, the authorities noticed Wayo Africa's efforts, and trusted them with access to camps and adventures further in the parks, utilising rarely-used sections of the Serengeti. From here, Wayo Africa developed semi-permanent and mobile camps, which are very light on the ground, and located in incredibly remote and unique locations.

The development of Wayo's walking safaris allowed for more feet on the ground, and gave poachers less opportunity to evade being noticed. Consequently, Wayo Africa and its guests helped them preserve and protect the Serengeti, improving vast areas with wildlife returning to otherwise barren lands. Wayo Africa focusses on two main things; providing exceptional, life-changing experiences whilst improving Tanzania and supporting its locals in the process.

[www.wayoafrika.com](http://www.wayoafrika.com)