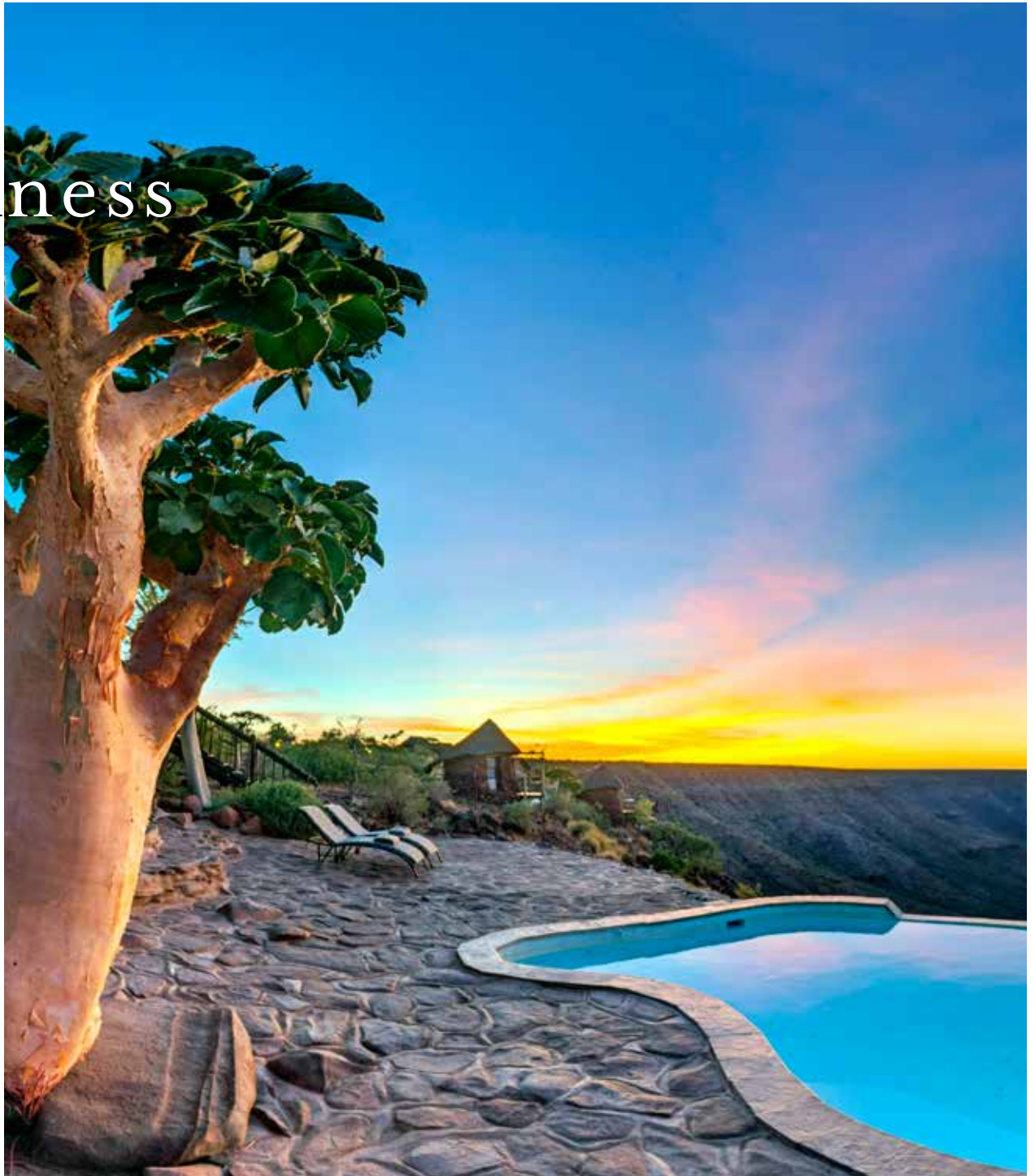


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When the Season Turns

*A reflection on renewal, resilience
and the promise of a new
Namibian season.*

Honourable Emma Inamutilla Theofelus
Minister of Information, Communication,
and Technology
Republic of Namibia



Dear readers,

September has arrived, and with it comes our version of spring, which we refer to as summer. Namibians tend to recognise two seasons – summer and winter. Hot weather signifies summer, and cold weather, winter.

It is a beautiful time of renewal, fresh growth and emergence from cold-induced hibernation. As the landscape changes and the days become warmer, we eagerly anticipate the rain, looking forward to the much-needed refreshment it brings to our dry country.

Symbolically, we mimic the extraordinary baobab, often called the Tree of Life.

For much of the year, this ancient African giant is almost completely bare, its massive branches stretching skyward like roots turned upside down. Then, as the season changes and conditions become favourable, something remarkable occurs. A sudden burst of new growth is supported by water stored within its massive trunk. New green leaves emerge, and spectacular white flowers, each blooming for only a short time, appear.

Many of the biggest baobabs are capable of holding huge quantities of water in their trunks, demonstrating an extraordinary adaptation to life in Africa's arid regions. A large baobab can hold up to 120,000 litres of water.

The baobab displays new life after months of silence, much like we do every 1 September. It reminds us that even after a long and difficult season, there is always the possibility of renewal.

In our great country, the signs of a new season do not reveal themselves in quite the same way everywhere. From the rivers and woodlands of the northeast to the central highlands, the coast, the farming regions of the south and the great Namib and Kalahari landscapes, our experiences of the changing seasons are as diverse as our country itself.

Yet one sign is certain: renewed hope.

We begin to shift our gaze towards the horizon, watching hopefully for what is to come. We wait for the clouds, for the rains and for the promise of new life, just like the baobab, knowing that despite being a drought-prone nation, we too have reservoirs of strength that can sustain us through even the harshest seasons.

It is this relationship with nature that makes Namibia – and her people – quite special.

We are a nation of many backgrounds, languages, cultures and experiences. Not all of us see the same landscape, live the same lives or experience the seasons in the same way. But one thing that identifies us all is the resilience we possess to face each season.

We are the people of the Land of the Brave, after all.

Enjoy September. 🌀



DR WINIFRED E BOWMAN

Cape Wine Master

Wine, Spirits, Food and Lifestyle Writer

Occupational Health Consultant

Honorary Secretary and Member: Circle of Wine Writers (UK)

Member: Association of Wine Educators (UK)

Celebrating the 2026 Michelangelo International Wine and Spirit Awards

*Why a Michelangelo Medal
Means So Much to Producers
and Wine Lovers Alike*

Anticipation for the announcement of the 2026 Michelangelo International Wine and Spirit Awards (MIWSA) is running high, and there's plenty to celebrate! I'm excited, the wine and spirits industry is excited and, I'm sure, wine lovers everywhere are excited too.

For those who may not know, MIWSA is Africa's biggest wine competition and has built an impressive reputation over the years. What makes it particularly special is its international judging panel, with 60% of the judges being carefully selected, highly qualified and respected international wine experts from all corners of the world, who join our equally knowledgeable local judges. It's a competition that

carries real weight, and its recognition extends well beyond the wine industry into the broader hospitality world. You'll even find Michelangelo medal-winning wines and spirits being served in Bidvest airline lounges and onboard flights.

But what is it about those medals on a bottle that makes them so important?

In the wonderful, sometimes bewildering world of wine, a medal is rather like a jewelled badge of honour. It tells a story of quality, skill and achievement. Sitting proudly on a bottle, it catches your eye and immediately says: "This one is worth a closer look!"

And let's be honest, standing in front of a wall of wine and spirits can be overwhelming. There are hundreds of bottles to choose from, and unless you already know the producer or have a recommendation from a trusted friend, how do you decide?

That's where a medal can make all the difference.

For the consumer who doesn't have a particular wine in mind, a Michelangelo medal provides an instant point of reference. And in today's busy world, where many of us make our purchasing decisions in a few rushed minutes on the way home from work, that little medal can be a very helpful shortcut.

Whether it's a Trophy, Platinum, Double Gold, Gold or Silver, a Michelangelo medal tells shoppers that the wine or spirit has been tasted, assessed and recognised by experienced professionals. It gives consumers confidence and, hopefully, the promise of a really enjoyable bottle.

For producers, of course, it means so much more. A medal is recognition of the countless hours, decisions and dedication that go into producing a great wine or spirit. It provides validation, helps a product stand out in a crowded marketplace and can open doors to new customers and opportunities.

And these medals aren't handed out lightly.

Michelangelo judging is a rigorous process involving expert tasting panels and careful evaluation. Judges assess wines on elements such as aroma, flavour, balance, structure and overall quality. So, when a wine walks away

with a medal, it has earned it by meeting — and often exceeding — demanding professional standards.

That's what makes the announcement of the winners so much fun, too. There are always surprises!

Every year, wines and producers emerge with accolades that perhaps weren't on everyone's radar. For consumers, that can be an exciting invitation to try something new and broaden their wine horizons. For producers, an unexpected medal can be a wonderful boost of confidence — and motivation to keep pushing boundaries and reaching for even greater heights.

And there's a very practical benefit too. Research has indicated that medals from respected wine and spirits competitions such as MIWSA can increase sales by as much as 700%. Medals can also influence how consumers perceive the value of a wine. A bottle that carries a prestigious accolade can feel like more than simply a purchase — it can become something special to serve at dinner, share with friends or give as a memorable gift.

So, medals and trophies really do have a multi-layered role in the wine industry. They can help producers build their businesses, validate quality, stand out from the competition, earn consumer trust, strengthen industry connections and gain the recognition and motivation that come from being judged among their peers.

And who ultimately benefits?

We do!

As wine and spirits lovers, we get to discover new producers, explore different styles and perhaps find a few unexpected favourites along the way. So, the next time you spot a bottle proudly wearing a Michelangelo medal, take a moment to look a little closer. Behind that shiny badge is a story of hard work, passion, skill and achievement. It's not simply decoration — it's a little chapter in the story of that wine or spirit.

And ultimately, that medal is an invitation: pick up the bottle, pour a glass, share it with friends and enjoy the celebrated experience that went into creating it.

Cheers, and congratulations to all the very special Michelangelo medal laureates! 🍷



ON THE COVER:

Perched above the vast landscapes of Damaraland, Grootberg Lodge pairs dramatic views with a slower, quieter rhythm. Discover Grootberg Lodge, managed by Journeys Namibia, on page 49.

Cover photograph by:

Grootberg Lodge / Journeys Namibia



Namibia Tourism Board

Michelangelo Magazine supports responsible tourism. We encourage readers to book only with Namibia Tourism Board-registered properties and operators.

On behalf of the Michelangelo Magazine Team
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The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Michelangelo International Wine and Spirits Awards or Great Brands Media.



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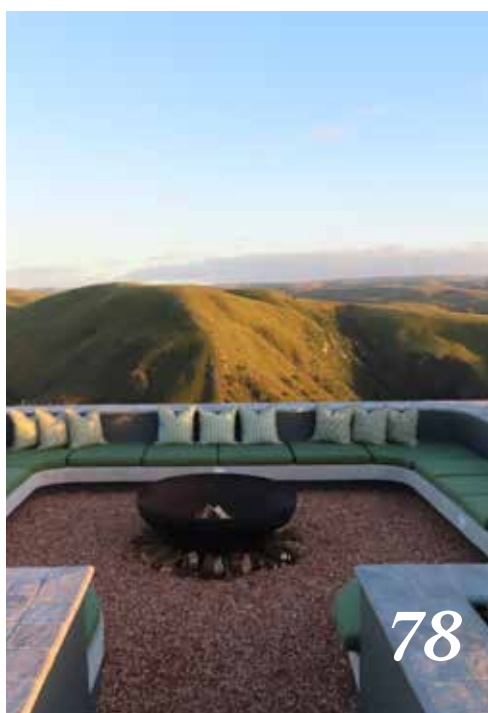
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Tracks of the Giants

*An Extraordinary Journey
with Namibia's Elephant
Rangers*

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



This is an unconventional self-drive, slackpacking journey that won't just matter to you, but also to the conservation of Namibia's elephants. You'll begin in your own - or hired - 4x4 vehicle, and together the small group will drive, slackpack, learn and make a meaningful contribution to the world of elephants.

Tracks of the Giants is a unique, multi-day slackpacking experience in Namibia's remote northwest. It's a collaboration between Wild Cherry Adventures, the Kunene Elephant Walk and local elephant rangers, taking you through a landscape few travellers ever experience.

Intrigued? Of course you are.

Before you strap on your spirit of adventure, here's what to expect. This is a multi-day hike that doesn't promise luxury. You're going to live simply but authentically. The hike includes interaction with community conservation rangers, accommodation in remote wilderness camps and, while you'll be comfortable, you certainly won't be spoilt - other than by your small group, sensational landscapes and the thrill of contributing to something important. The bottom line? You'll be hiking alongside those who know the terrain best.

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



Lions, like most mammals, feel emotions such as joy, anger, affection, fear and grief.



As Ellen of Wild Cherry Adventures says, “Walking with the elephant rangers provides a unique perspective on one of Africa’s last great wilderness areas and offers insight into the realities of conservation in a region where people and elephants share the same land.” A portion of each booking contributes directly to community-based conservation efforts and supports ranger operations that help protect Namibia’s iconic desert-adapted elephants.

It all begins in Kamanjab, a meeting point chosen because it’s conveniently located for travellers coming from Etosha National Park, Damaraland, Windhoek, Swakopmund and beyond. You’ll need a 4x4 vehicle in good working condition with sufficient ground clearance, and no trailers are permitted. This is not a classic self-drive tour. The group travels together along a guided route throughout the journey. It’s different in every way - every

good way. You’ll receive a walkie-talkie to stay in touch with the other vehicles. And hey, how are your off-road driving skills? The road to the first night’s accommodation is rough and you’ll need them.

As the tar gives way to gravel, the landscape becomes increasingly wild. The vastness of Namibia’s northwest takes your breath away. Tonight’s accommodation is at Forgotten Valley, a remote tented camp where each room has a double bed (no twin rooms are available). Gather around the fire for a traditional Namibian braai and prepare yourself for the silence, the open spaces, the stars and the heart-stopping scenery.

It’s a big day. Travelling through remote landscapes and dry river systems, the group heads for the Ozondundu Conservancy ranger headquarters. Walk alongside the rangers as they provide first-hand insight into their work,

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



Every bit of gold ever mined by humans would fit into a single cube measuring roughly 22 metres on each side.



their conservation efforts and the considerable challenges of managing human-elephant coexistence. Take a stroll to a nearby waterhole as an introduction to both the terrain and the days ahead. Tonight you'll stay in bow tents at the ranger base camp, equipped with a mattress, pillow and ablution facilities.

The guided slackpacking hike begins now, covering around 15 kilometres on foot. You'll carry only your daypack while the support team manages the rest. Ellen describes the route: "It follows ancient elephant pathways through dry river valleys, rugged mountain terrain and remote wilderness areas rarely visited by tourists." She adds, "The elephant rangers will constantly share their knowledge of tracking, wildlife behaviour, conservation management and life in this extraordinary landscape."

The three days of slackpacking are immensely varied,

with opportunities to swim in a natural waterhole, tackle a steep climb and stand high above the Kaokoveld, taking in expansive views. Dome tents become your home, while meals are prepared and served by the support team, all cooked over a roaring fire in a wonderfully relaxed wilderness camp environment. You'll end the three-day hike back at the ranger base in a comfortable tented camp. It's the perfect opportunity to cement friendships, reflect on the journey and gather lasting memories of those working tirelessly to protect Namibia's desert-adapted elephants.

Tracks of the Giants is a superbly organised adventure, kept only as simple - or as complex - as nature itself, with an unwavering focus on what truly matters.

Ask those who've been. 🌀



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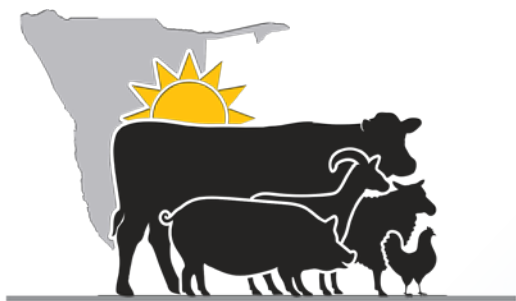
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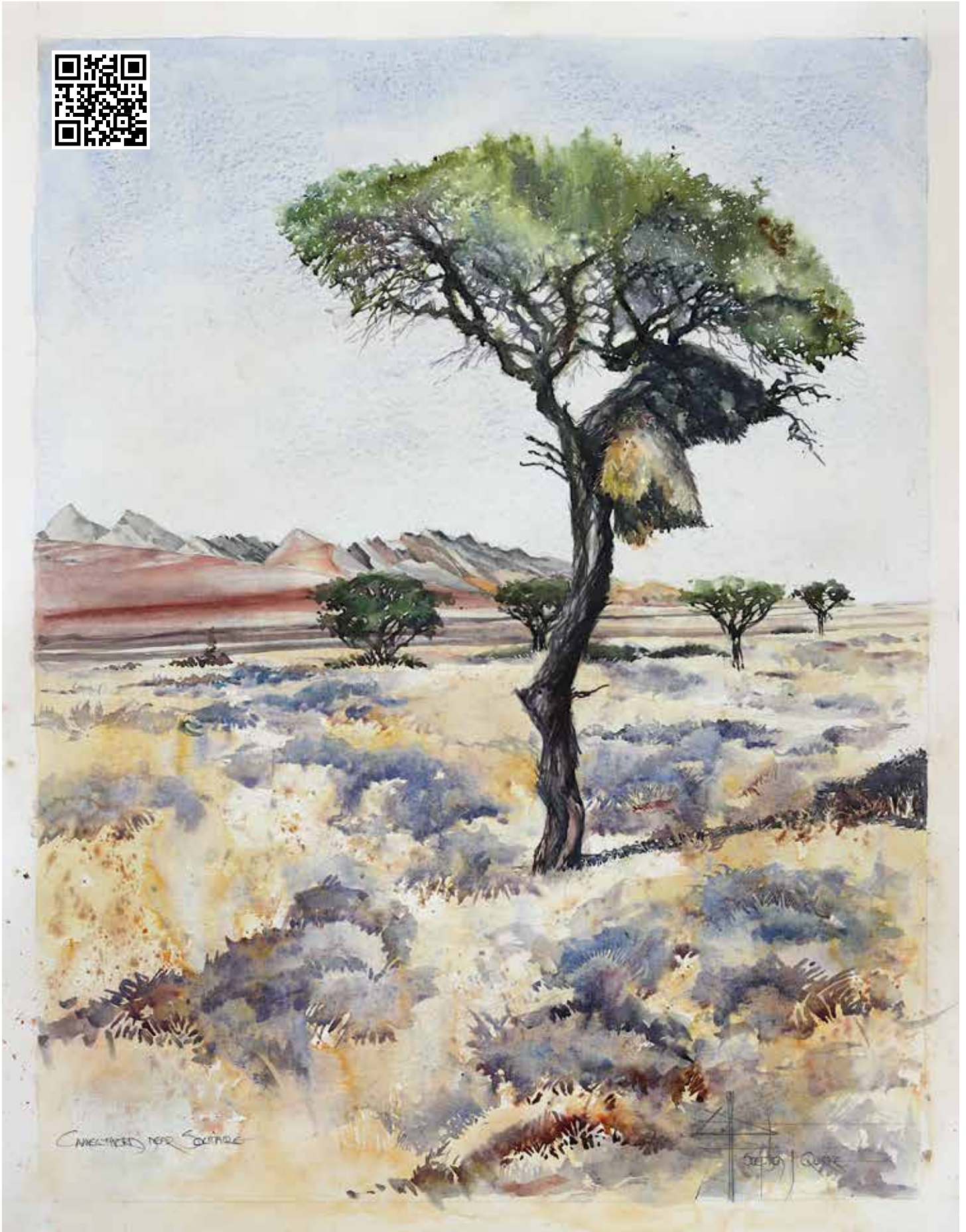
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Namibia in Watercolour

From the Brandberg to Spitzkop, Capturing the Colours and Mystery of the Namib

Words, photographs and artwork by Stephen J Quirke



Stephen J Quirke is a South African artist with roots deep in the Namib. He works with watercolour, combining impressionism and realistic detail to represent the everyday “obvious” and create memories of our yearning to return to the Garden. He documents his journeys through Namibia in watercolours.

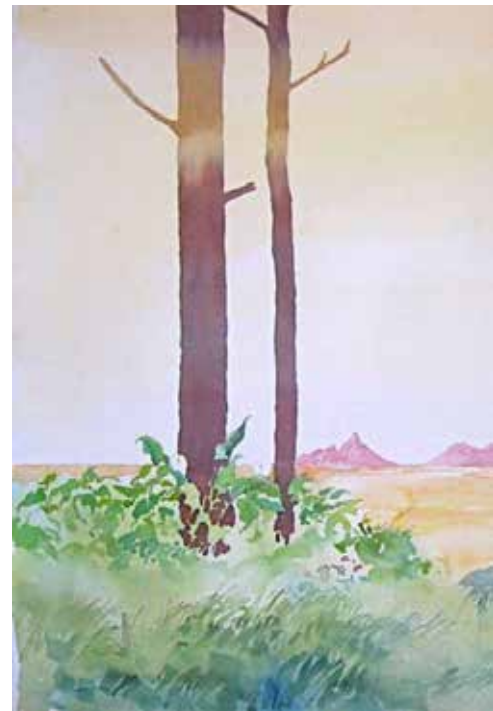
In the mid-80s, armed with a BSc in Geology and an MSc in Applied Science, Stephen Quirke rode his XT500 up to Swakopmund, Namibia, to do vibration analysis on rotating shafts at the Rössing Uranium Mine. There, in the desert, he encountered his passion. He chatted to Michelangelo about his life journey.

Where it all began

“One afternoon in Swakopmund, a watercolour in a gallery window caught my eye. It was of a fish eagle lifting a fish from the water, each pinion feather rendered in one stroke of a broad brush. I had never seen anything like it. I engaged with the artist Nicholas Galloway and signed up for his watercolour classes. I



Animus



Anima

clearly remember mixing colours on a dinner plate, the smell of the brewery over the road and “Autumn Leaves” playing on his reel-to-reel. Etched in my heart is the elation I felt, cycling home through the dark, misty streets of Swakopmund with my work taped to our breadboard in my pack”.

Leaving Namibia

“In the early 90s, my career took me back to Cape Town. I exchanged the Namibian palette of ochre, sienna and umber for the greens and blues of the Cape. I focused on family, work and community, and carved out as much time as I could for watercolours. On Saturday mornings, I’d head out early to paint at favourite places on the False Bay coast and pin my most recent work in my office space”.

My return

“I love the Cape, but I felt a great longing to return to Swakopmund and the Namib. In 1998, someone left a note in my work cubicle, encouraging me to exhibit my work. This initiated an impossible thought. Every day, in my car in the parking lot, at the top of my three-page journal, I would write: “What are you doing about your exhibition?”

In 1998, I began working towards that exhibition, painting at night, often through until dawn. In October that year, I took 80 watercolours and my family to Swakopmund to hold my first-ever exhibition: *Animus and Anima*.

My children modelled for the two key watercolours. I wanted to illustrate being in Swakopmund and yearning for the Cape, then being in Cape Town and yearning for the Namib.

Just before the exhibition opened, I took a trip around the Brandberg, the circular granite plug rising from the desert plain to 2,700 m. Early one morning, I sat on the slope of Elephant Rock to paint two watercolours looking towards the Ga’aseb slope. The first sold at the exhibition, but I kept the one shown”..

More watercolours of the Namib

“After the exhibition, family, career and ‘the stuff of life’ filled the years. I continued to paint watercolours of the Namib based on my collection of photos. I also painted scenes from hikes on the Brandberg, the upper peaks and valleys being so full of mystery and beauty”.

Michelangelo

—ART—



Brandberg from Elephant Rock



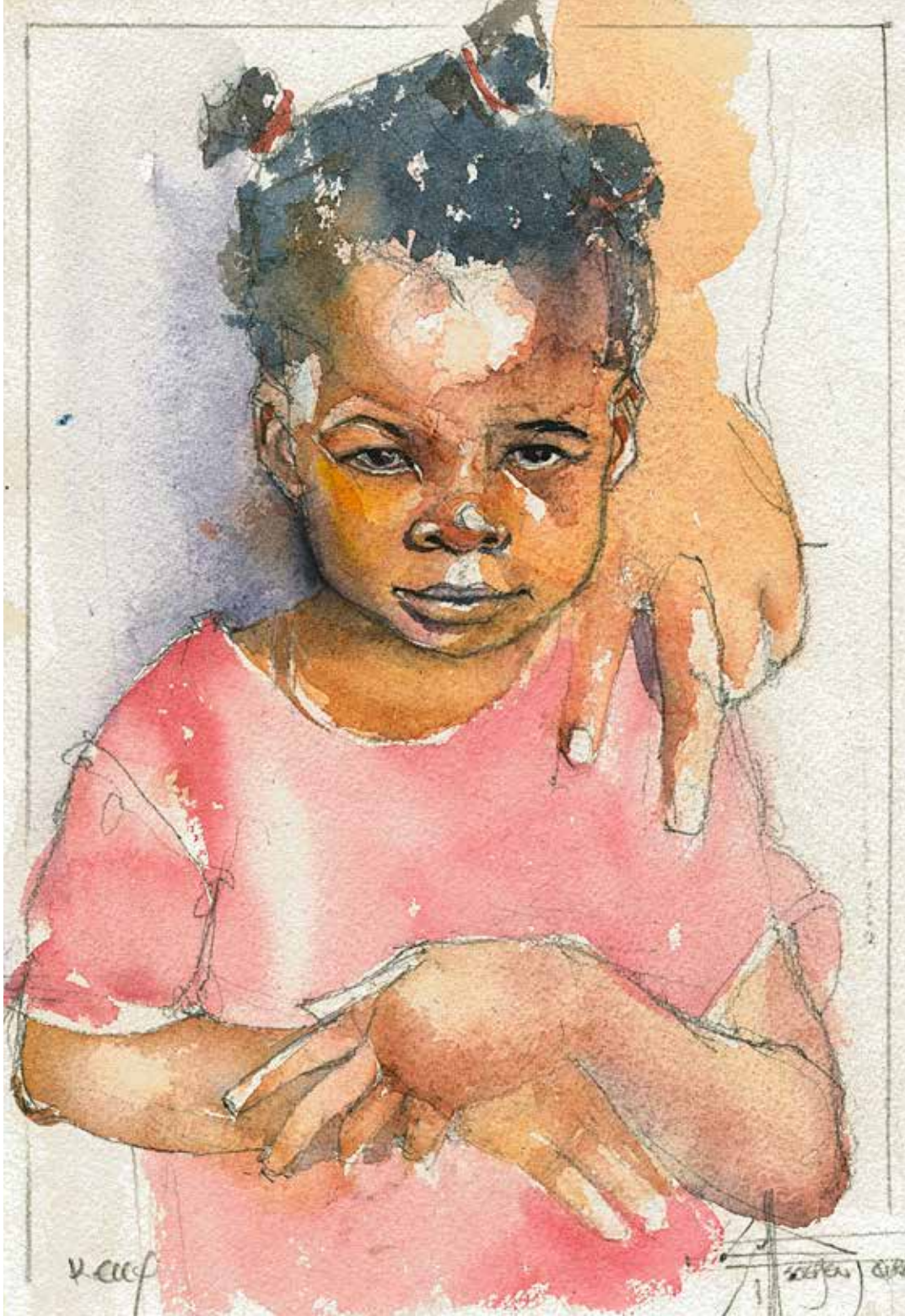
The classic evening view of Grösse Spitskop from the approach road (500 x 1500 mm)



Brandberg looking towards the Ga'aseb ascent from the Dolerite outcrops in the plain (1000x1500mm).

Michelangelo

—ART—

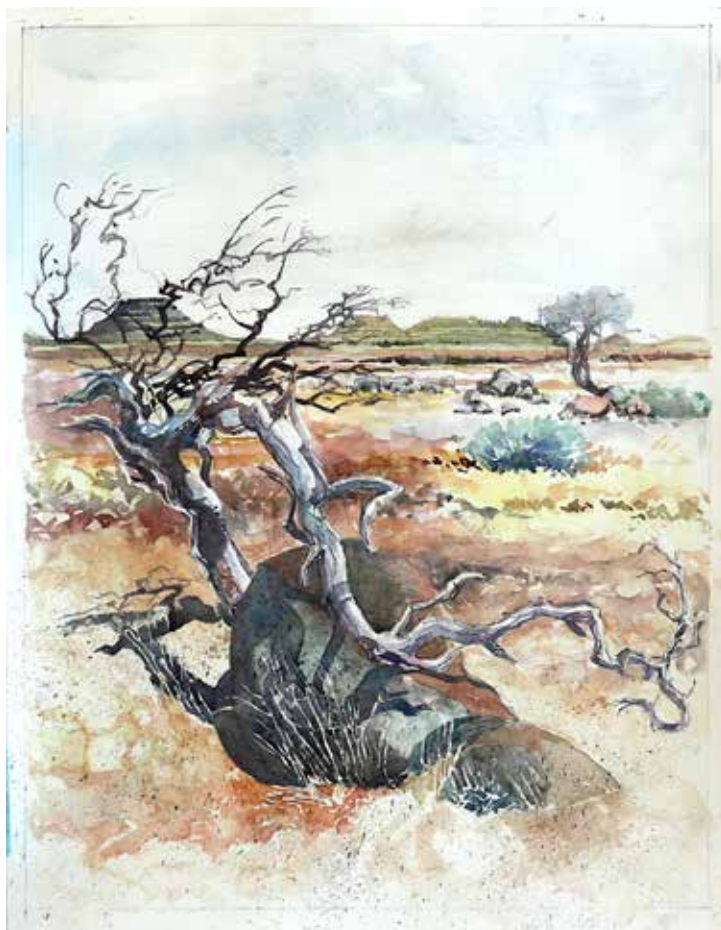


At Springbokwasser campsite, I asked the campsite manager for permission to take a photo of her daughter (Kelly) in order to paint her portrait.

Humans have left about 181,000 kilograms of debris (almost 200 tons) on the surface of the Moon.

Michelangelo

—ART—



Rock and dry tree near Doros Crater in Damaraland.



Brandberg from outcrop near the top of the White Lady Road.



Photographing the Spitzkop sunrise April 2026.

2026 Namib collection

"In April 2026, I took a trip around southern and central Namibia with a friend. Our route took us from Keetmanshoop past Spitzkop to the Brandberg and Damaraland, returning to Swakopmund through Skeleton Coast Park and returning to the Cape through Solitaire, Aus and Rosh Pinah. I took photos en route to create a Namib Collection".

From there to here

"I've exhibited in various galleries from Swakopmund to Lanzerac to Somerset West, and been privileged enough to win numerous awards.

While I was in Swakopmund, I did a morning watercolour demo with the "Desert Painters" in the Ceramic Studio of my good friend Sharon Flewellyn... and loved it. So much so that I'm keen to do more of this kind of interaction when I return to Namibia.

And, as you may have gathered, I will be returning. Soon". 📸

Find my work at <https://sjqwatercolour.com/>

The Calendars: Every year, I set my Collection in a calendar and sell them locally. I also sell a white-label version to organisations for year-end gifts.

19 OL 19

LEISURE

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With the introduction of OL Leisure Tours, discovering Namibia has never been easier or more rewarding. Across a portfolio spanning the Atlantic coast, the wildlife-rich plains of Etosha, the iconic dunes of Sossusvlei, the Otjihavera Mountains and the lush waterways of the Okavango, we have handcrafted exceptional itineraries inspired by the unique character of each destination. Guided game drives, scenic flights, boat cruises and cultural excursions allow guests to experience Namibia's remarkable landscapes, wildlife and heritage while staying at exceptional properties positioned at the heart of every adventure.

Namibia is a country of striking contrasts. From wind-sculpted coastal dunes to Etosha's abundant wildlife, the towering red dunes of the Namib and the lush waterways of the north - every region tells its own story. Experiencing Namibia fully requires more



than simply travelling through it. It calls for meaningful encounters, authentic experiences and carefully selected destinations that allow you to connect with the country.

OL Leisure Tours takes care of every detail so you can simply relax and enjoy the journey.

TWO WAYS TO SEE NAMIBIA

Namibia rewards travellers who want to explore at their own pace. Some choose the freedom of a self-drive itinerary, while others prefer the ease of a fully guided journey. Increasingly, guests are combining both, enjoying Namibia's open roads before joining expertly guided experiences at each OL Leisure property.



Self-drive holidays offer complete flexibility. Pause for the perfect photograph, linger over a wildlife sighting or take the scenic route simply because you can. With carefully tailored itineraries, OL Leisure ensures every route is designed for comfort, convenience and unforgettable experiences.

Guided tours offer a different kind of richness. Expert guides interpret the landscapes, wildlife, geology and cultures that shape Namibia, turning every drive into a story. Long distances become part of the adventure while every detail, from navigation to hidden wildlife sightings, is taken care of.

A STAY THAT'S PART OF THE JOURNEY

At OL Leisure, the destination doesn't end when the day's adventure does. It continues at each of our distinctive properties, where every stay is designed to be as memorable as the destination itself.

Wake to the sound of the Atlantic Ocean at **Strand Hotel Swakopmund**, where contemporary luxury meets Namibia's spectacular coastline. With world-class dining, vibrant waterfront experiences and unrivalled access to the Skeleton Coast, desert adventures and Swakopmund's charming cafés and boutiques, Strand Hotel is one of Namibia's premier coastal destinations.

On the edge of Etosha National Park, **Mokuti Etosha** delivers one of the country's finest safari experiences. Exceptional accommodation, refined dining, tranquil wellness facilities and unrivalled access to one of Africa's greatest wildlife destinations ensure guests enjoy luxury, comfort and unforgettable game viewing just minutes from the park.

Situated in the majestic Otjihavera Mountains, **Midgard** combines authentic Namibian farm hospitality with outdoor adventure. Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and peaceful natural surroundings make it the ideal countryside retreat, perfectly positioned just outside Windhoek. Begin or end any Namibian journey right here.



Surrounded by the iconic red dunes of the Namib Desert, **Le Mirage** rises like a desert oasis. Its distinctive castle-inspired architecture, luxurious suites and exceptional location create the perfect base for exploring Sossusvlei, Deadvlei and one of the world's oldest deserts. Spectacular sunrises and unforgettable desert landscapes make Le Mirage a destination in its own right.



On the banks of the Okavango River, **Divava Okavango** reveals a completely different side of Namibia. Sunset boat cruises, guided game drives through Bwabwata National Park, visits to Popa Falls and exceptional birdlife combine with luxurious riverside accommodation to create the perfect gateway to Namibia's lush northern wilderness.

Together, these properties are destinations in themselves and, regardless of your travel style— independent or fully guided - provide the comfort, authenticity and seamless service that allow guests to experience Namibia at its very best.



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NAMIBIA

ON A BUDGET HOW TO EXPERIENCE NAMIBIA FOR LESS AND ENJOY IT EVEN MORE



There is something beautifully freeing about a Namibian road trip. The open road stretching ahead. A flask of coffee balanced between seats. Dust behind your tyres as landscapes shift from red dunes to rugged mountains to wide-open savannah. And despite what many travellers think, experiencing Namibia does not have to cost a fortune. In fact, Namibia might just be one of the best destinations for budget travel – if you know how to do it right.

The first secret? Slow down. Namibia is not a country that rewards rushing. Long driving distances are part of the adventure, and planning fewer stops often means spending less on fuel, accommodation, and activities. A self-drive journey also remains one of the most affordable ways to explore the country, especially when travelling with friends or family and splitting costs. Namibia's road network is well-maintained and ideal for independent travellers.

Then there is the accommodation question – usually the biggest expense on any trip. But here, budget travel has evolved far beyond basic campsites and uncomfortable mattresses.

This is where Gondwana Collection Namibia's Camping2Go experience changes the game. Camping2Go was designed for travellers who want the magic of camping without the endless logistics. No trailer packing. No



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struggling with tent poles in the wind. No squeezing cookware into every available corner of the vehicle. Instead, guests arrive to fully equipped safari tents already waiting beneath Namibia's vast skies.

Each setup includes proper beds, an en-suite bathroom, shaded outdoor kitchen, fridge, braai area, cooking utensils, and enough space to comfortably accommodate families or groups of friends. It offers the affordability and closeness to nature that camping is loved for, while keeping the comfort many travellers secretly hope for after a long day on gravel roads. And perhaps that is the real luxury in Namibia: simplicity.

At Etosha Safari Camping2Go, evenings are spent around a firepit while jackals call in the distance and tomorrow's game drive conversations stretch long into the night. Near Sossusvlei, Namib Desert Camping2Go places travellers among fossilised dunes and some of the darkest skies in the world. Up north, Namushasha River Camping2Go brings a completely different atmosphere, where river life and dense greenery replace desert silence. In Damaraland, Palmwag Camping2Go offers access to one of Namibia's most dramatic landscapes, known for the desert-adapted wildlife and rugged scenery.

For travellers wanting to save even more, there are a few tried-and-tested Namibian travel hacks worth remembering. Planning routes carefully and combining destinations in the same region can help travellers spend less time backtracking on the road – and more time soaking in Namibia's landscapes. Pack reusable water bottles and snacks for long drives between towns. Refuel whenever you can

in smaller towns. And when driving gravel roads, slightly adjusting tyre pressure can improve comfort and reduce wear – advice seasoned Namibia travellers often swear by.

Vehicle choice matters too. Gondwana's Namibia2Go fleet was built for Namibian conditions, offering fully equipped vehicle rentals suited for self-drive adventures across the country. For solo travellers or those who want to avoid driving altogether, Gondwana's Go2 transfers service is also an affordable alternative connecting some of Namibia's most iconic destinations.

Budget travel in Namibia is not about sacrificing experiences. If anything, it often brings travellers closer to what matters most – the landscape, the silence, the campfire conversations, and the feeling of being wonderfully small beneath a sky full of stars. Because here, luxury is not always found in excess. Sometimes, it is simply found in the freedom of the open road. Plan your next affordable Namibian adventure with Gondwana Collection Namibia and discover how unforgettable travel can be – even on a budget.





KLEIN AUS VISTA

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Slice of Life

words by Jescey Bekker



Safety in Height



As a first-time parent, there are many lessons to be learned.

Leaving the hospital for the first time, bath time, nappies... these lead into first steps, first sprints and weaning off the pacifier.

First words, dealing with dogs and toddlers at the same time, every single moment is wonderful and terrifying and beautiful.

I've recently encountered a new lesson in parenthood. A lesson that knocked me harder than I would like to admit. Height.

For the first two years of parenthood, there were certain safe spaces. Plugs were okay until they weren't. Floors were okay until crawling started. Stairs were okay until Toddler started running. Through it all, I always had the safety of height. Being on the taller end of the spectrum, our doors and counters in the house are also higher than typical, so I have been really confident in the sanctity of height. The potentially "dangerous" household items could go onto counters and be closed

behind doors. No harm, no foul, no knowledge of what is up there for Toddler. Excellent.

Not anymore.

In the last few weeks, my sanctuary has been soiled. Once again, with taller parents, our Toddler is above average in height too. Yay. And not so yay. Suddenly, doors are being opened and shelves are being climbed. Countertops can be reached, and our home has been experiencing a variety of new "don't climb that" and "no running with sharp objects" moments — what was once safely tucked away from curious hands is now all within reach, and I am racing to re-secure my household. As well as cleaning a range of cooking oils, spices and sunblock off my walls, floors and windows.

In the short term, everything has been moved to the top of the fridge. It looks chaotic, and I am not sure how long the fridge will tolerate the new weight. At least Toddler cannot reach it.

For now. 🌀

ON THE FRONTLINE

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Dear Diary

words by Sandra Baumeister

The Night We Put a Country in One Room



The worst possible slot for a speech is directly after Lize Ehlers sings.

I knew this in advance. I had written my notes, I had folded them, I had put them somewhere sensible. And then she sang, and the room went quiet in that particular way a room only goes quiet when something real is happening in it — and I thought, well. Good luck to me.

That was the 31st of July, at Copper & Coal in Windhoek. Eleven years of Myeisha. I had not planned a big anniversary. Ten would have been the round number, the one you are supposed to make a fuss about, and ten came and went while we were busy cutting leather. Eleven is a strange number to celebrate. But eleven is where we are, and I had started to feel that I wanted to say thank you out loud, in a room, to people's faces, rather than in a caption underneath a photograph.

So we did it as an evening about art instead of an evening about us. That felt less embarrassing. It also turned out to be the truer version.

Craft and art keep pretending to be different things

I have never been able to see the line. Every bag we make is cut, stitched and finished by hand in our workshop here in the city. That has always been the case, and I have stopped saying it as though it were a selling point, because it isn't. It's just what we do. But the attention it takes is the same attention a painter gives to a canvas. The same intention. The same slightly obsessive respect for the material, and for whoever ends up living with the finished thing.

So the idea for the evening was simply: put all of that in one room and see what it looks like standing next to each other.

What it looked like was two Namibian painters, a generation apart. Michael Mansfield lives in Swakopmund and has been painting for many years. You can see the decades of looking in the work, the



way somebody who has stared at this country for a long time paints its light. And then Caleb Boicky, right at the beginning of his career, everything still ahead of him. Caleb came to the evening himself, which I loved, because people could ask him things directly instead of squinting at a little card on the wall. He would have talked to anyone all night.

Two artists, two generations, one country, both of them in the same room on a Friday evening. I still think that says something quite hopeful about where Namibian art is at the moment.

Art you can't hang on a wall

Lize and I go back to the very beginning of Myeisha. Years ago, she wrote a song for us — Myeisha is Love — which is one of those things that happens to you and then quietly stays.

Music is art you don't hang on a wall. You feel it in your ribs and then it's gone, and everyone in the room had it at the same moment. That is a very difficult thing for a painting to compete with, and a completely impossible thing for a welcome speech to follow.

She sang it again at the end. I had asked her to. I am not above asking.

And then there was all the art nobody had labelled as art. The dress I wore that night was Thandiwe's, by Thatos. Part of the jewellery was Frieda Lühl's, part of it Thatos as well. Made here, and worn, which to me is the most honest place a made object can end up.

The food came from Rona and her team at the Tasting Academy — every single thing on those tables. Lizelle van Heerden of Lizelle van Heerden Cakery made macarons, red, each one with a small golden Myeisha tree on it, and I watched grown adults pick them up and go quiet for a second before eating them. That is craft. Nobody hangs it on a wall and it

lasts about four seconds, and it is still craft.

Even the building was in on it. Jento and I have known each other for quite some time now, and what he has built at Copper & Coal comes from exactly the same place: made from scratch, with care, with a personal signature on it. The gin in everyone's hand was the argument, and it made itself.

The part I nearly couldn't say

Our bags were there too, including the current collection, and people picked them up and turned them over, which is the only way to look at a bag properly. Each one carries the name of a real woman with a real story, so there was a lot of explaining going on in corners of the room, which is my favourite kind of noise.

But the part I had underlined twice in my notes was the team. Most of them were there. Many of us have walked these eleven years together, from Windhoek to the north of Namibia, to Germany and back. Eleven years of leather, of hands, of women. I am proud of the quality we manage now, and I am aware that "we" is doing an enormous amount of work in that sentence.

And my daughters, who believed in this from day one and carried every single mad idea with me. I got that sentence out. Just.

Mostly, though, it was a get-together

I want to be careful not to make it sound more significant than it was. Nobody's life changed. It was music, art, gin, food, macarons and company, and people stayed much longer than the invitation suggested they would, which is the only review of an evening that counts.

Eleven years in, that is what I find I actually want. Not a milestone. A room. 🌿

Fandra

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The Tine Bag

Every Myeisha bag tells a story. About our craftswomen, who lead self-determined lives. About Namibian children in deprived schools, and Namibian rhino conservation programmes we support every day. It's about you and the freedom to carry a bag that matters. Each one is handmade and truly unique.

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If you are an **FNB South Africa** or **Botswana Private Wealth** or **Private Clients credit card holder**, you are also welcome to access the FNB Lounges for a fee.

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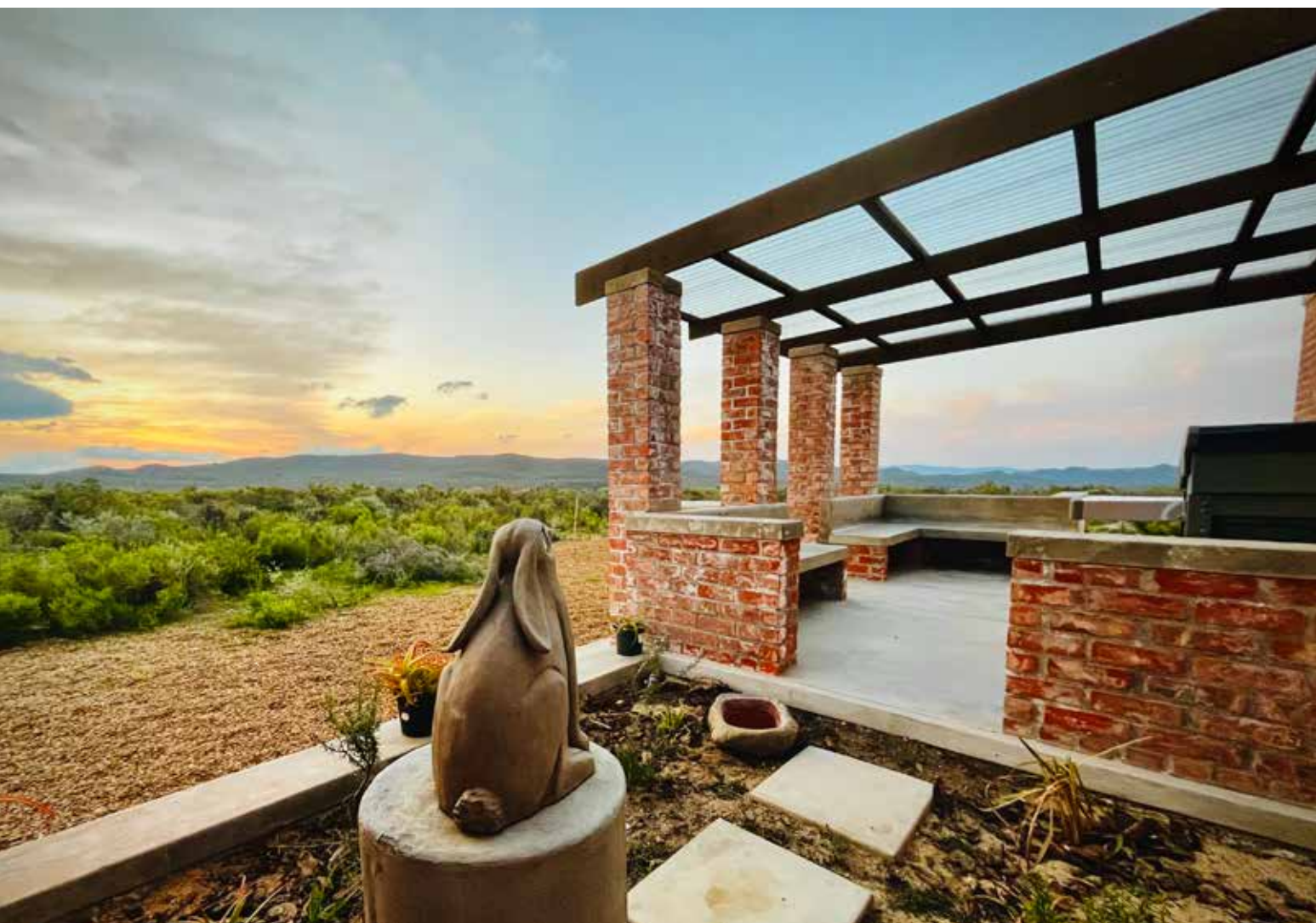
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The Hunter Villa

A Secluded Karoo Escape for Two

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



Barrydale is a few hours from Cape Town, but a million miles from city living. The Hunter Villa is a little haven for two who seek an authentic slowdown, where creativity and simplicity converge.

Halfway between Montagu and Barrydale, along the legendary Route 62, Hunter Villa sits quietly on the 211-hectare Windogels Farm in the scenic Tradouw Valley at the base of the Langeberg Mountains. The rural Barrydale area is a peaceful, off-the-grid area, so prepare to unplug and unwind, with 360-degree views of nature and uninterrupted silence (if you absolutely must, Wi-Fi can be arranged). Surrounded by orchards, vineyards and breathtaking mountain views, why not tune in to nature instead?

The Hunter is named after the constellation Orion, depicted in the villa's interior "star wall". Expect vaulted ceilings that echo the vast sky above, and minimalist luxury with clean lines and soft textures. Designed as a secluded couple's suite, this one-bedroom villa features an extra-length queen-size bed and is fitted with a gas hob, microwave, Weber braai, wood-fired hot tub, oh-so-private patio, outdoor furniture and, of course, is solar powered.

There's a glorious old-world quaintness about Barrydale, but alongside that is a wealth of galleries, craft markets and wonderful architecture. Fruit farms surround you, producing peaches, apples, figs and grapes. Glorious. As a nature lover, you'll be in your element, with everything from hiking and

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



cycling trails to birdwatching and swimming in nearby rock pools and nature reserves.

There's so much to do, see, eat and drink in this delightful Karoo district. A hint... stay long enough to give yourself a sizeable dose of creativity: Mud Modern, Magpie Art Collective, Barrydale Hand Weavers, the famous Joseph Barry Distillery, Joubert-Tradauw Private Cellar and, of course, Diesel & Crème.

There's something special about living totally off-grid while still enjoying supreme comfort. It's not only that there's purified borehole water and solar energy, but when you stay at Hunter Villa, you become part of the sustainable solution. You leave a light footprint... just the right size for when you return. And you will.

P.S. With permission, Fido can come too. 🐾

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The Knife Maker

Blending Traditional Craftsmanship with Modern Materials to Create Heirloom Knives

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs by Marnus De Waal



From hobby to full-time career, Marnus De Waal's knife-making enterprise has grown into an international success story. Marnus believes almost anyone can develop the skills needed to make a good knife, and he has started offering courses to prove it.

Marnus De Waal grew up farming and hunting, so his love of knives developed early.

"I've always tinkered and made things with my hands – everything from a table to a fibreglass dune board. Then I stumbled across the world of handmade knives on the internet. I made my first one out of pure curiosity, using basic hand tools and a friend's cutting torch to heat the steel. It was a fixed-blade hunting knife with local rosewood handle scales." He laughs. "Nothing to brag about, but it's always inspiring to look back at where one started."

Then came the turning point.

"I attended a two-day knife-making course in South Africa and realised this was something I wanted to pursue seriously."

Marnus says his passion for the craft truly developed after attending the South African Knifemakers' Guild Show.

"Seeing what the top makers were capable of really inspired me to pursue it as more than just a hobby."

When did you realise you could make a career of this?

"I used to work full-time as a property valuer, but during Covid I transitioned to part-time consulting. Knife orders increased, and I now spend most of my working hours making knives. My wife and I also run an Airbnb."

Are your orders customised?

"Most of the knives I make are custom or batch orders. The rest of the time I experiment or build knives to keep some stock on hand. Most days follow a typical working schedule after dropping my son off at school, but things can escalate when there's a deadline!"

Do you have a signature style? Can people recognise a Marnus De Waal knife?

"I think all makers work towards developing a style that is uniquely theirs. I've started seeing a pattern emerge in my own work, although I still experiment regularly with new patterns and designs."

"I began by making fixed-blade knives but have since shifted strongly towards folders. These days I mostly make



fixed blades to order and prefer crafting traditional folders using modern materials. I mainly produce slip-joint knives, although I also make some lock-back folders. My fixed blades are my own designs, as are some of my folders. I also work with traditional patterns or modified versions of them, combining classic designs with modern materials to create knives that perform exceptionally well while still having heirloom quality."

Why do people buy your knives? Are they for practical use or simply because they are beautiful?

"I've had everything from people ordering a knife as a birthday gift to clients in the USA ordering batches of knives to sell in their shops.

"I make every knife to be fully functional for its intended purpose, and I genuinely hope people use them. They are, however, handmade custom pieces and therefore more expensive than factory-produced knives.

"A good friend once bought a slip-joint folder from me. A year or two later I asked where the knife was, only to be told that he kept it locked away in a safe and only took it out to show people. Another friend carries his every day."

What materials do you use?

"For handles I use modern synthetic materials such as G10, carbon fibre, Micarta, and stabilised woods and burls. For blades I mostly use N690, a stainless knife steel, although I occasionally work with other steels."

Who buys your knives?

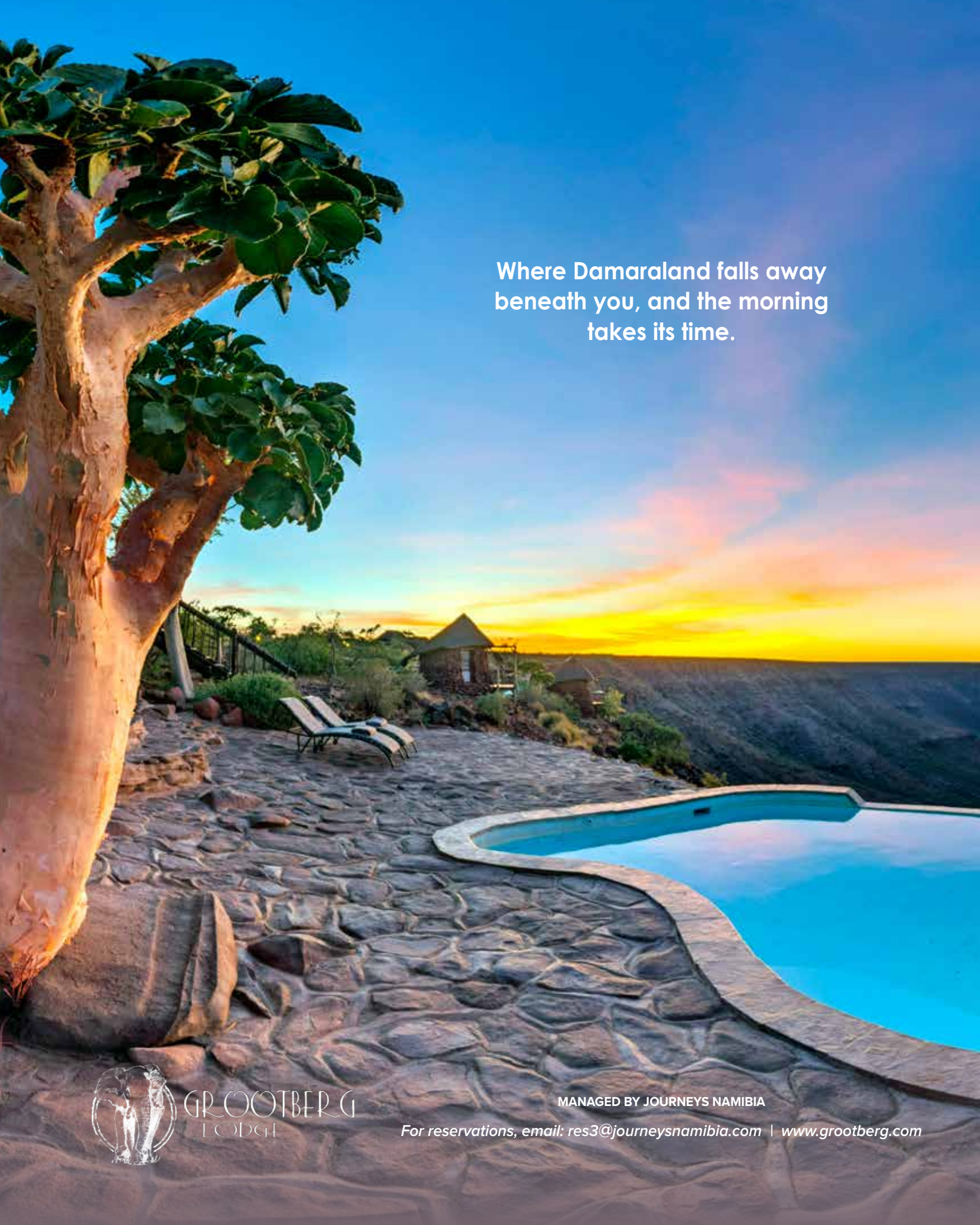
"Since launching my website about three years ago, I've received more and more orders from customers in the USA, with growing interest from Germany as well. I've also had customers in South Africa and, of course, fellow Namibians."

How do you package your knives?

"All my fixed-blade knives come with either a leather or Kydex sheath, while my folders are supplied with a leather pocket slip. The knives are then packaged in a padded nylon pouch for storage and handling. Every knife is supplied with a unique serial number and a certificate of authenticity."

Do you run any courses?

"I recently had my first student complete a knife-making course with me, and I'm working towards offering courses on a regular basis." 🌀



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MANDATORY TOURISM LEVY COMPLIANCE



To All Registered Accommodation Establishments and Regulated Tourism Businesses

The Namibia Tourism Board (NTB), established in terms of the Namibia Tourism Board Act, 2000 (Act No. 21 of 2000), is mandated to promote Namibia as a tourism destination and to regulate the tourism industry, including the registration of accommodation establishments and regulated tourism businesses and the administration and collection of the prescribed Tourism Levy.

1. Statutory Requirements

In terms of Section 29 of the Namibia Tourism Board Act, 2000 (Act No. 21 of 2000), and the Namibia Tourism Board Regulations nr.2, Government Notice No. 137 of 2004, every operator of a registered accommodation establishment is legally required to collect the prescribed Tourism Levy from guests on behalf of the Namibia Tourism Board and remit the levy within the prescribed timeframes, on or before the applicable due date following each two-month levy period.

Levy submissions must be accompanied by a fully completed Tourism Levy Return & Statistics Form and proof of payment to ensure accurate reconciliation and reporting.

2. Offenses and Penalties for Non-Compliance

Failure to comply with the statutory requirements relating to the collection and timely remittance of Tourism Levies, as provided for under Section 29 of the Namibia Tourism Board Act, 2000 (Act No. 21 of 2000), and the applicable provisions of the Namibia Tourism Board Regulations, Government Notice No. 137 of 2004, constitutes non-compliance and may result in penalties and enforcement action. Operators are therefore advised of the

Late Payment of Tourism Levy:

Any levy amount not paid by the prescribed due date attracts an additional charge of 5% of the outstanding levy amount for each month, or part of a month, during which the amount remains unpaid, in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Namibia Tourism Board Regulations, Government Notice No. 137 of 2004.

Offence Non-compliance:

Where an owner fails to pay an outstanding levy or accrued additional charges within 14 days after receiving a written demand from the Board, the owner commits an offence and, upon conviction, is liable to a fine not exceeding N\$4,000, imprisonment for a period not exceeding one (1) year, or both, as provided for under Regulation 6 of the Namibia Tourism Board Regulations, Government Notice No. 137 of 2004.

Withdrawal of Registration:

Continued non-compliance with prescribed registration requirements may result in regulatory enforcement action, including the withdrawal of registration in terms of Section 26 of the Namibia Tourism Board Act, 2000 (Act No. 21 of 2000), where applicable and subject to the procedures prescribed in the Act.

Verification of Account Status & Reconciliation

Operators may verify their accounts through the following channels:



Email Inquiry:

Contact the Finance Division via email at debtors@namibiatourism.com.na



In Person:

Visit the NTB Head Office or regional offices during standard operating hours.

3. How to Pay

Levy payments must be remitted using your official NTB Registration Number as the primary beneficiary reference. Payments can be made via:

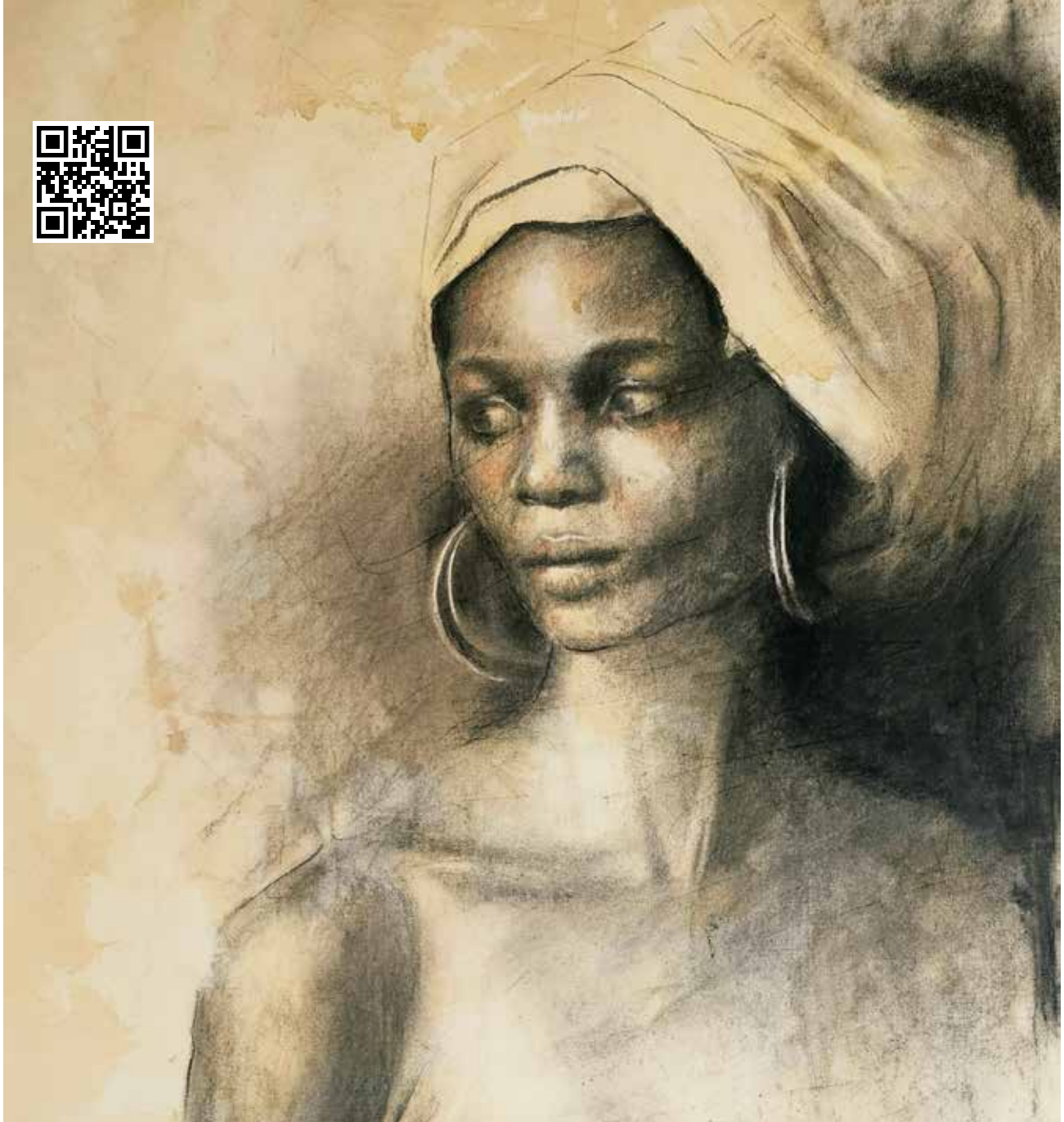
Direct Bank Transfer / EFT:

Remit payments directly to the designated NTB Levy Bank Account (banking details are available on the Levy Return Form or website). Proof of payment together with the Levy Return Form must be emailed to debtors@namibiatourism.com.na.

In-Person Office Visit:

Pay via card facility or deposit verification at the NTB Finance Counter.

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Namibia Tourism Board (NTB)



Annamarike Teijema's World

words by Linda de Jager | photographs supplied

*Float When Fight or
Flight Is Not an Option*

“I can sit all day and forget to eat. What I love about art is that it’s endless—you can never truly say, ‘I’m done.’”



The power of art

I’m almost dragged by the sleeve into artist Annamarike Teijema’s studio at Rossmund Golf Estate near Swakopmund.

My guide is determined that I meet this new artist, who recently moved to Namibia—and whose work they found so compelling, they refuse to let me miss it. Inside her studio, I meet Annamarike—cautious, blonde, and blue-eyed, with a striking presence reminiscent of a Nordic Noir heroine: all brooding, slightly marred beauty and solitude set against vast, wild landscapes.

Before I can introduce myself, I’m stopped in my tracks by one of her oil paintings: a solitary figure adrift in a fishbowl, radiating silent isolation. Annamarike created it as a raw

response to the COVID-19 pandemic, entitled: Float When Fight or Flight Is Not an Option. As I stare, I’m transported back to my own lockdown in Johannesburg—pressed against glass, longing for air, just like so many others.

Isn’t that the power of art—to stop you in your tracks and make you feel, to let you glimpse yourself in its emotion or story? Annamarike excels at this, distilling a mood, a memory, a flash of feeling, and pinning it shimmering to the canvas. “I’m drawn to wide, open spaces and water,” she says—and it shows in so many of her paintings.

Annamarike has a gift for capturing the elusive ‘mood’ of a moment. “For me, painting a perfect blue sky is not a challenge. I like to capture the sea’s different moods.”



*Annamarike with her father, Joop, at sea.
He has since passed away.*



She feels the same about portraits, preferring those where you have to guess what the subject is thinking—never just a sweet smile to the camera, but a glimpse of a thought beneath the surface. “You don’t quite know what the mood is. That’s what I try to catch.” In essence, Annamarike strives to create art that speaks.

Ik en papa

Her truest passion—a tidal force that thrums beneath her skin—is the sea. She strives to capture its wildness, its moods, and its endless transformations. Here, too, it doesn’t take long for me to understand where this deep passion was forged. It reaches back to a sepia-tinted photograph from her childhood: countless days spent at sea with her father, salt and wind tangling their hair as they ventured out together, whether the skies were gentle or raging. She calls the photo simply, ‘Ik en papa.’ Over the years, she shared her drawings with her late father, Joop, even as she moved around the world. “He was my anchor and my greatest critic,” she says. “I’m a self-taught artist. I grew up in the Dutch countryside, with open vistas and wide horizons, and spent many holidays sailing on the Frisian lakes in the province of Friesland.”

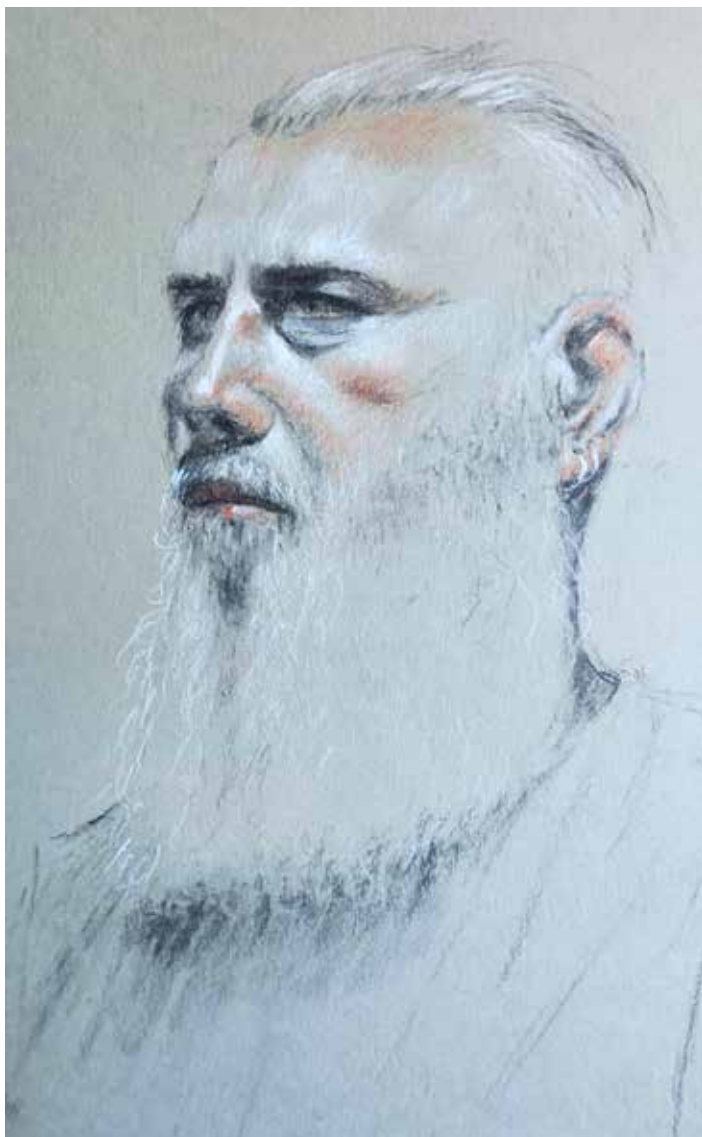
Seeing the world and reflecting on it

At 26, she joined an NGO and moved to Mozambique, working at a school for street children in Nacala during the Frelimo-Renamo war. She remained in Mozambique for many years, and it was there that she began drawing. With no electricity or phones, but plenty of paper and pencils, she experimented with different materials over time and now enjoys working with oils and charcoal. Her first experiments were sketches of her baby daughter Nina’s face. “At that stage, I didn’t even know I could draw,” she says.

Annamarike tells me she becomes completely absorbed in her work. “I can sit all day and forget to eat. What I love about art is that it’s endless—you can never truly say, ‘I’m done.’” She often compares this creative process to watching a toddler learn to walk, then try a little bicycle. “They’re not quite there yet. They fall and stumble, and I experience that with painting too. You want to go a step further, so you keep trying, keep trying. You mess up, and then suddenly, it’s there. I love that.” “With other jobs, there’s a finish line, a clear end. But with art, you keep growing. You keep evolving with your work.”

And this is exactly what Annamarike does—she keeps practicing, learning, and growing.

Lightning is hotter than the surface of the Sun, turning the surrounding air into plasma.



Over time, her work has been exhibited in Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and the Netherlands. “Some galleries in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Nelspruit have displayed my paintings, and I’ve participated in exhibitions at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens in Cape Town,” she says. Annamarike continues to use her daughter’s face—now in her twenties—as inspiration, teaching herself new techniques with charcoal. “I enjoy painting portraits of people I meet from different cultures,” she adds.

Another face she often tries to capture and revisit—much like her daughter’s—is her mother, Janna. Annamarike recalls, “She instilled and nurtured our creativity when we were children. I have three sisters, and we would all sit around the table on rainy, snowy, or cold winter days, making things with clay or drawing pictures while she taught us.” She was a wonderful mother who passed away far too soon. Annamarike admits that capturing her mother’s likeness is especially difficult, as the photographs and memories she once relied on have slowly faded over the years.

A Gypsy at heart

Annamarike is a self-proclaimed Gypsy. Her experiences across countries and languages—she speaks several languages—deeply inform her art. Now, she explores the landscapes around Swakopmund with her Zimbabwean-born husband Craig, finding fresh subjects and light.

“Soon, we plan to explore other parts of Namibia, like the Kunene River, the Caprivi Strip, and Etosha,” she says. “And other interesting areas that the Namibians tell us we should see and experience.”

“We camp a lot and go for long hikes on weekends with our cameras, just to be out there and take in those enormous views. The light in Namibia is amazing.”

As we part, I ask about her hopes for this new chapter. She says, “My hopes for the future are to keep improving my craft and to have more and more people feel emotion and meaning when they look at it. If the painting conjures up emotion, whatever that may be, then, for me, the painting has been a success.” 🌀

TIME SENSITIVE CONTENT

Will be made available on the 04th of September 2026

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How a Yellow Food Truck Became a Coastal Icon

From school bus to Swakopmund street-food favourite.

words by Linda de Jager | photographs supplied



Fork 'n Nice's Maggi and Bill Ackermann



Founded in 2015 after being inspired by a movie, Swakopmund's iconic Fork 'n Nice food truck overcame challenges through hard work and unique street food.

After more than a decade, the long lines on Strand Street are a testament to Maggi and Bill Ackermann's success.

"When we applied for our hawkers licence at the Swakopmund Municipality, this was the only spot left! Back then, this place was completely empty – no one even thought to drive down here!" Maggi says.

But this soon changed.

Fork 'n Nice started when Maggie and Bill bought an old school bus from friends.

"It used to be an ice cream truck at Omaruru," Maggi says.

The yellow painted school bus soon became their trademark, she says.

The food truck idea, however, came from the 2014 comedy-drama 'Chef'.

"It's about a character called Carl Casper, a talented Los Angeles chef who loses his job after a public dispute with a food critic. He then buys and renovates an old American-style food truck, travels from Miami to Los Angeles, and serves people Cuban-inspired sandwiches and other street food while rebuilding his career," Maggi says.

She says she and Bill loved the Cuban sandwiches from the movie and wanted to try making and selling them too.

"It made sense – food has always been my passion," she says.

Just like Carl in the movie, Maggi and Bill also had to rebuild their careers. As a young woman, Maggi lived in Windhoek. After marrying Bill, the couple – both Namibians – moved to Swakopmund.

Bill had a wholesale meat business which didn't work out, and Maggi was a sales representative selling cleaning products.

"We needed something new to support ourselves with," she says.



These circumstances, combined with inspiration from the movie and a sense of humour, gave rise to the now iconic Fork 'n Nice food truck.

"The family has a great sense of humour, and we like to play with words. That's how the name emerged," Maggi says.

Street Food Culture

And the yellow school bus fits right in with Namibia's lively street food culture. At Katutura's markets in the capital, you'll find kapana (grilled beef cooked over open flames), 'smileys' (cooked goat or sheep head), as well as tripe (intestines, hooves, and other offal).

Vetkoek (fat cakes) are popular fried dough rolls, and *oshikundu* is a traditional drink you'll find on the streets. Mopane worms are another local snack, and there's no shortage of traditional grains and vegetables. These foods represent the Oshiwambo, Damara/Nama and Herero cultures and can be bought at street corners countrywide.

The Ackermanns got their street food inspiration from Cuban culture. A Cuban sandwich (Cubano), for example, is toasted and pressed, filled with meats, cheese, pickles, and mustard – originally created by Cuban immigrants in Florida, United States.

"After seeing the Cuban sandwich in the movie 'Chef', we researched the recipe and thought it would be perfect

for Swakopmund. In 2015, we added a pressed Cuban sandwich with roasted pork to our first menu.

"The response was overwhelming," Maggi says.

Old-school Fun and a Personal Touch

Today, Fork 'n Nice stands out not just for its delicious meals, but also for its location on Strand Street at Swakopmund – a stone's throw from the beach.

You can grab your food wrapped in newspaper and enjoy it with a view of the ocean. The newspaper wrapping is a nostalgic twist, Maggi says.

"We wanted to bring back the fun and nostalgia of eating fish and chips wrapped in newspaper – just like when we were kids visiting Portuguese shops in Namibia.

"We wanted things to stay earthy and informal. People love it, and now it's our signature!"

People also love the personal touch. "It's always either me or my husband behind the counter," Maggi says.

Their two children, Leané and Billy, helped with social media posts and marketing throughout their teenage years and still provide their input.

Complaints and Compliments

But the business has also had to weather some storms. The Covid-19 pandemic hit them hard, Maggi says.



“We support five families, not counting our own. When Covid hit, we scrambled for an essential service permit – thankfully, food made the cut. We switched to takeaways, people phoned in, came and grabbed their orders, and went home – no one could even wait outside. But somehow, we made it.”

Just as life settled after the pandemic, disaster nearly struck again: The 1968 former school bus flunked its roadworthiness test.

Trucks over three tonnes require annual checks, and this one didn't pass. Locals soon noticed the expired badge, and in the small coastal community, word spreads fast.

Questions flew about why the bus sat in the same spot every night, badge expired. Soon, the truck was blamed for everything from weird smells to greasy windows, Maggi says.

With few options left, the Ackermanns bought a new trailer and painted it yellow. “In response to mounting complaints, we invested in a truck equipped with extraction fans and improved systems to address odour and ventilation concerns,” she says.

Good food, it turns out, settled most disputes. But compliments arrived too.

Maggi says one of the biggest compliments they get is that people value their consistency.

“People come back after seven or eight years and say it's still the same – or even better!”

She says they've even had tourists arrive from Bali “just because they heard about us in town”.

Even a German doctor whose patient insisted he stop by showed up, Maggi says.

Another secret to their success is to make every customer feel like a friend.

“We really try to engage with our people and know everyone's story.”

‘Hard, hard, hard work’

Maggi says serving many customers takes a lot of preparation.

Every evening, the kitchen fills with the aroma of spices as 14 kg of deboned pork shoulder is prepared for the signature pork sandwiches. The meat is generously coated with a homemade blend before being slow-roasted in the oven for seven hours.

Mornings begin with another essential ritual: cutting fresh chicken, readying it for the day ahead.

But Maggi says the crowd favourite is the calamari.

“Our calamari is always the first to go – crispy, tender, and gone before noon! The fish sells out in a flash, and the pork sandwiches – not a crumb left by the end of the day.”

After more than a decade, Maggi and Bill have proven that a little grit and the courage to keep going can truly turn a yellow bus into a local legend. 📍



**“I truly felt like
a champion – a
queen, not a
slave.”**

Train like a slave, win like a queen

words by Linda de Jager and Frank Gschwender
photographs by Sport on the Move Foundation



Namibian Paralympic gold medallist Lahja Ishitile shares her inspiring journey from sudden childhood blindness to track stardom in a new book celebrating local athletes.

She is also the 400m T11 record holder after the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, where she additionally won bronze in the 100m.

Ishitile earned medals at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, the 2015 All Africa Games, and the 2023 World Championship.

Her story features in 'No Obstacle is Too Great to Overcome', by Frank Gschwender, highlighting Namibia's Paralympic athletes.

Linda de Jager caught up with Ishitile to find out more.

What does your name mean?

My name is Magano Lahja Ishitile. Both Magano and Lahja mean 'gift' in my mother tongue, Oshiwambo, and in Finnish.

Where does your Finnish name come from, and where and when were you born?

My Finnish name likely comes from missionaries in Ovamboland. I was born on 21 July 1997 at Okapanda near Outapi in northern Namibia.

Describe your family.

My parents are Loide and Nestor Ishitile. I have five siblings: Simon, Loide, Wilka (my twin), and Selma. Wilka and I are the second-youngest.



Are you married and do you have children?

I'm not married but I do have a partner and one baby boy named Marion Tangeniomwene Liberty Mpingana, who was born on 31 May 2025.

What are your personal best times?

All of them happened in Paris in 2024: I ran the 100m in 12.12 seconds at the Paralympic Games.

The 200m is my favourite – there, I finished in 24.86 seconds, also at the Paralympic Games in Paris. And the 400 metres, which always feels so long, I completed in 56.20 seconds in Paris as well.

How would you describe yourself?

I'm quiet and shy around new people and dislike crowds, but I'm talkative with those I know. I'm also very neat and like keeping things organised.

What are your strengths?

I'm persistent and determined; I always strive to achieve my goals.

Another of my strengths is that I've learnt to be independent. I'm able to live on my own in Windhoek, despite the city being full of challenges. That makes me strong!

Can you share your early life story?

A vivid childhood memory is being separated from my twin sister Wilka at the age of three due to Ovambo tradition.

Wilka went to my dad's uncle, and I to my mom's aunt. I missed home and my twin, felt mistreated, and after nine months, tried to run away but got lost in the forest before being found.

Fortunately, my grandmother's neighbours told my parents I was being mistreated and about my attempts to run away. My mother, who was working at Swakopmund at the time, came back to the north to bring me home again.

How did you lose your eyesight?

I lost my eyesight in 2005 at the age of eight. Only in 2019 did I learn from Dr Helena Ndume that my blindness was due to untreated glaucoma.

On 4 May 2005, Cassinga Day, I was outside collecting berries and watching celebrations and helicopters. After being out in the sun and wind, I went home to rest, fell asleep for two hours, and woke up in darkness.

At first, I thought I was dreaming, but I soon realised I could see nothing but darkness.

Stretching feels good because it boosts blood flow to your muscles, releases endorphins and calms your nervous system, helping to relieve physical tension.



How did you and your family cope after you lost your sight?

In the year that followed, I struggled greatly – not only with my eye condition, but also with severe depression. Most of the time, I stayed at Oshakati State Hospital, only going home occasionally.

My mother did everything she could to lift my spirits, preparing my favourite foods – even out-of-season types – and trying to make my life in darkness a bit brighter.

Eventually, my appetite returned, and I began to accept my blindness and gradually adjust to my new situation.

Was there anyone to help you adapt to living with blindness?

While waiting to enrol at school, I attended kindergarten at the age of nine, which was unusual but better than staying home alone.

There, I met my cousin Liina, who helped me the most with adjusting to blindness. Liina accepted me as I was and made sure I wasn't excluded from the other kids playing. She involved me in all activities – from climbing trees to collecting berries – showing me where to step and encouraging me to join.

Tell us about your educational journey.

In January 2007, my father enrolled me at Eluwa Special School at Ongwediva. At nine, while my twin sister was in Grade 4, I started with Grade 1 to learn Braille from scratch.

Meeting other blind students at Eluwa helped me feel less alone and accept my situation. There, I learned both academic subjects and essential life skills for independence, like making my bed and cleaning.

We could go home one weekend each month. I stayed until Grade 10 in 2017. Then I attended Technical High School in Windhoek for grades 11 and 12, finishing matric in 2019.

How did you balance sport and education?

I've always had to balance sport and education to keep both my parents happy. My dad loves sport above all, while my mom values academics and always encouraged me to improve my grades. Personally, I also prefer education over sport.

What challenges did you face with tertiary education?

My tertiary education journey was challenging at first. I had to rewrite English at matric level, but after improving my results, I enrolled in information science at the University of Namibia, where I am currently in my fourth year.

How did your sport career begin?

My athletic talent was discovered at Eluwa Special School at Ongwediva. The school placed a strong focus on athletics, both in the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Our teachers made sure we participated.

Being small, I enjoyed winning against bigger girls – this motivated me strongly in the early days.

How did your athletic career progress to the international level?

After winning school competitions, I began competing in national para-sport events and qualified for the national team.

My international debut was at the Southern African Development Community Under-20 Games in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2012, followed by Bulawayo in 2014 and Luanda, Angola, in 2016.

I also won bronze at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2014, and the All Africa Games in Congo (Brazzaville) in 2015.

More recently, I won silver at the World Championship in Paris in 2023, and gold at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

Have you experienced any significant setbacks in your sport career?

My biggest setback was at the 2021 Tokyo Paralympics, where I didn't win a medal and was the only Namibian athlete to return home without one. My times were even slower than in 2016, making the result especially discouraging after years of training.

What was your most memorable competition?

My most memorable competitions were the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, where I was the only T11 athlete in the 100m final and won bronze, and the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris, where I took gold in the 400m T11 with a record.

Celebrating with my team at the packed Stade de France, I truly felt like a champion – a queen, not a slave.

What are your future educational and career goals?

After my first degree, I hope to either pursue further studies in information science or study acting abroad, ideally in Finland, to become an actress. My dream is to create a movie series about my life. 📺



Frank Gschwender, author of *No Obstacle is too great to Overcome*



Lahja and her baby boy, Marion Tangeniomwene Liberty Mpingana.

An Officer and a Gentleman

The guides behind the gold: How blind athletes race



Ever wondered how a blind athlete runs a competitive race at full speed? The answer lies in the trust and precision between the athlete and their guide. Sem Shimanda, a Paralympic guide who has helped lead Namibian athletes, including Lahja Ishitile, to Paralympic gold, knows this all too well. He says becoming a guide runner was almost “automatic”.

Shimanda says he once saw blind athletes training at sport grounds at a village in Ovamboland. “The instinct followed naturally to help the blind runners when they trained, and I became more and more involved.”

Alongside his guiding career, Shimanda also serves in the Namibian Police. “As a guide, my job is to oversee the race and communicate with the athlete from start to finish,” he explains. “We move together, act as one, and the athlete must trust and follow.”

Guide running requires close teamwork. The athlete and guide are linked by a short tether, running together with enough freedom to move. The guide simply runs ahead or alongside, constantly sharing updates about the race and the environment. Communication is key. Guides call out turns, hazards, and pace changes – sometimes with just a tug of the tether or a shift in stride.

This partnership takes serious practice. Athletes and guides master matching every move – starts, turns, sprints, even surprises – until they move like a single, speedy unit. “Luckily, my police conflict training comes in handy!” Shimanda jokes. If disagreements pop up, guide and athlete need to squash them fast to stay perfectly in sync.

Shimanda explains that the guide can’t just steer or drag – the athlete is the star. The duo must move as one, “not like a tug-of-war team” he adds. Rules are strict: tethers, positions, even who crosses the finish line first.

Elite blind running is about more than speed. It takes trust, practice, and teamwork – because every champion needs a partner in the race for gold. 🏆

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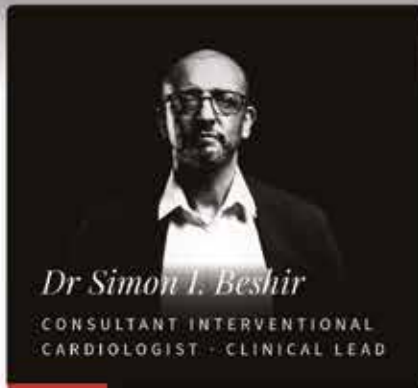
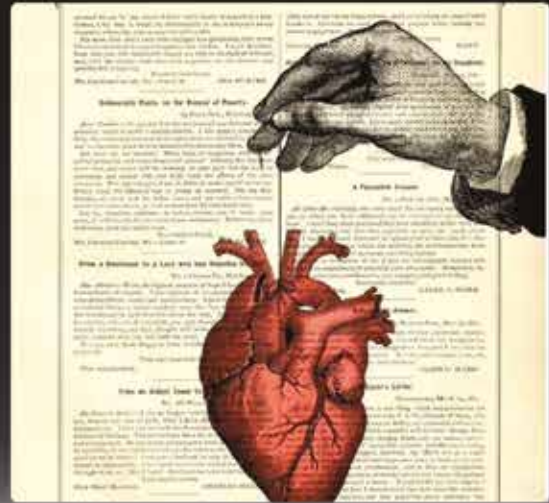


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Hiddn – The Secrets of Stillness in the Suurberg

From Forest Walks and Sound Therapy to Sunset Views and Exceptional Cuisine, Mantis Hiddn Invites Guests to Slow Down and Reconnect

words and photographs by Kathy Malherbe



Mantis Hiddn is often touted as a retreat in which to decompress before or after a safari, but, in truth, it offers an escape from everything, at any time. The Suurberg in South Africa's Eastern Cape offers exactly that kind of seclusion, in considerable luxury.

Millions of years ago, the earth's tectonic plates began nudging two continents towards each other. Seabeds and sediments compressed, warped and folded into ridges and valleys that rise and fall like the drape of soft fabric. And so, the Cape Fold Mountains were formed.

Mantis Hiddn in Addo, part of the Mantis Collection of luxury eco-lodges, rests lightly on the eastern end of this range, on a mountain called Suurberg, close to 700 metres above sea level.

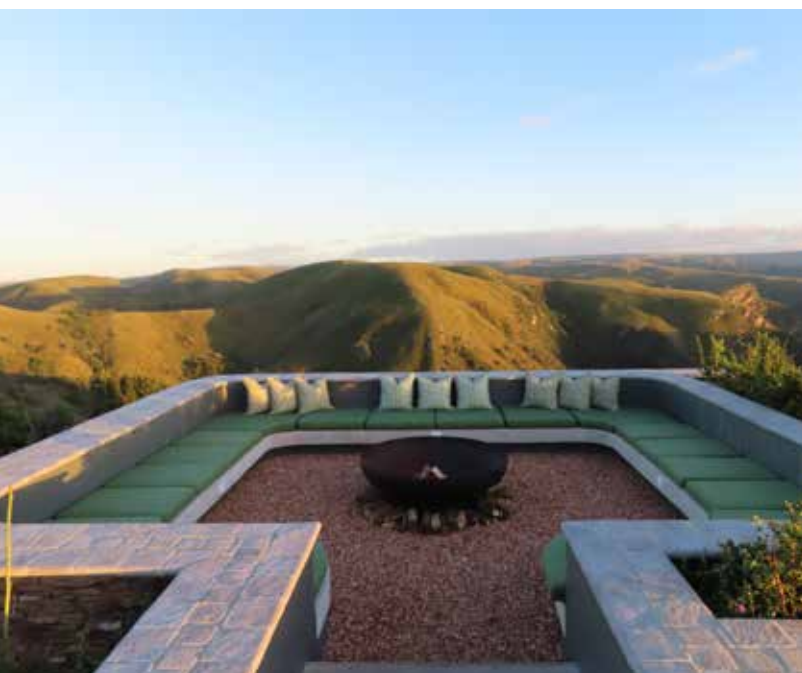
From Gqeberha's airport, formerly Port Elizabeth Airport, the journey takes about an hour to Hiddn's Welcome Centre at the base of the mountain. It feels fitting for a retreat of this calibre to be so secluded that even Google Maps briefly falters in finding it. Here, your self-drive ends. You are transported - literally in a Discovery 4x4

- and figuratively far from the relentless pulse of daily life.

As you round the final bend, the lodge reveals itself as if whispering: 'Surprise.' A resident sounder of warthogs makes an inquisitive appearance to greet the new guests. Gertrude and her comical little piglet - instantly christened Tweedle Dee - clearly take their role in 'guest relations' seriously. Though 800 hectares of wilderness are theirs to roam, they are always nearby, their tufted tails bobbing like enthusiastic aerals searching for reception.

Your gentle induction begins with a traditional African greeting: a foot-washing ritual and a soothing massage for weary travellers, followed by quiet reflection and a gradual recalibration to a slower pace. Nothing jars here. Silence reigns, broken only by the mellow call of birds or the scurry of small creatures in the bush.

The property is exclusive and luxurious in a subtle, understated way. Twelve suites and two private villas lean into the landscape, designed for complete privacy and spacious comfort. The four-bedroom Mountain Villas offer infinity pools and expansive decks, along with private



butler and chef services. Villas welcome guests of all ages, while the suites accommodate those aged 12 and above.

Delightful touches include a freestanding bathtub on the expansive deck, a wood-fired KolKol tub, views from the extra-large king-size bed, a closed fireplace and indoor-outdoor showers - all framed by breathtaking vistas.

Mohair, often called the 'golden fleece of the Karoo', plays a central role, while colours drawn from the African palette are echoed in the décor, creating a calm continuity between the interiors and the natural surroundings. Locally sourced and woven into blankets and carpets, the mohair adds warmth and lustre. Hand-dyed rugs in natural tones anchor the spaces, while crafted furniture showcases local artistry and provides vital employment opportunities within the community.

Attention to detail extends beyond the design and décor to the service and cuisine. Dinner in the lodge's dining room, with its huge fireplace and hand-hewn furniture, continues the theme of gentleness. A favourite detail is the animals and birds of Africa lightly etched into the burnished copper chimneys - the flamingo, Cape sugarbird, sparrow, elephant and wild dog. They do not reveal themselves immediately. You need to be still, allowing them to gradually come into view.

What makes the experience even more remarkable is the people. The team feels almost improbably accomplished. Together, they create the rare sense that this is not simply a luxury lodge, but a carefully curated collection of exceptional people. General Manager Tracy Lancaster explains that they were handpicked from across the country, not only for their skills, but also for their personalities and their ability to work together in harmony.

That same thoughtful approach extends beyond the guest experience and into every aspect of the property. The sense of care, attention and long-term thinking that defines the team is equally evident in Hiddn's commitment to sustainability. The lodge operates entirely off-grid, powered by solar energy and supplied with naturally filtered water drawn from ancient aquifers beneath the mountain. Extensive recycling systems also help minimise its environmental footprint.

The wellness treatments are extensive and intriguing: lymphatic detox botanical therapies, oxytocin relaxation rituals, African clay and red earth purification immersions, KolKol botanical bathing ceremonies, aromatherapy sleep preparation, guided breathwork, meditation and yoga.

A firm favourite was the guided meditation and sound therapy, which uses resonant frequencies from



instruments such as crystal singing bowls, gongs and tuning forks to anchor awareness and induce deep relaxation. The vibrations help shift brainwaves, slowing the nervous system to relieve stress and improve focus.

The effect is rather like the feeling that settles over you while watching waves roll onto a quiet shore. Your thoughts become less urgent, your breathing slows and, for a while, there is a sense of spaciousness, as though someone has turned down the volume on the constant background noise of life.

Just as relaxing is walking through the forest with the experiential guide - in this case, Des. It is a lesson in slowing down. Though only two kilometres long, the walk stretches out as you pause to absorb the details: lichen growing only on the southern side of trees, serving as nature's compass; and a sculpted aardvark burrow now appropriated by warthogs.

The quiet, the pace and the small details lull your mind into stillness. A clearing awaits, with mimosas and snacks - a moment of delight in which to savour your surroundings.

Food and beverage form a central part of the journey. A welcome drink crafted from indigenous botanicals greets you on arrival. A dedicated sommelier curates an exceptional, award-winning South African wine list. Meals are served with the same warm conviviality that defines the lodge.

One evening, dinner in the lounge, with the stack doors

wide open, allowed us to sit in comfort while gazing out over the view. On our final day, we returned to the lounge, this time with a palette of oils and watercolours, enjoying a foot massage while capturing on paper the gentle journey we were completing.

The deck and pool area seem suspended on the edge of the cliff. A massive timber waffle canopy shelters the outdoor deck, creating a shaded communal space. The boma is the place to watch the sunset: the sky brushed in peach, apricot and pale rose, while the fynbos shifts from green to amber and olive before fading into black. Night falls, and you sense the nocturnal hunters and the vigilance of their prey - the eternal cycle of life.

The night sky is startling in its blackness. The Milky Way is smudged across it in an arc, like a monochromatic rainbow. Stars step out of the darkness, and you believe, for a moment, that all is well with the world.

Mantis Hiddn has all the ingredients to fulfil its promise: the setting, the people, the cuisine and the exceptional wine list. Yet none of these memories would be quite so cherished were they not wrapped in the warmth of extraordinary service.

True luxury is the ability to surprise and delight. Hiddn ticks those boxes multiple times. 🌿

The Last Word

words by Chris Coetzee

As some of you may remember from last month's Last Word, last year we found ourselves reported for allegedly promoting tamed wildlife.

The correspondence continued relentlessly — even on 26 December, when most sensible people were still recovering from Christmas lunch, I was receiving emails. There were strong opinions, heated exchanges, and no shortage of conviction.

By then, I must admit, the whole affair was beginning to feel rather desperate.

Then, six months later, fate decided that this particular story was still missing a punchline — and, goodness, did it deliver.

Of all the photographs that could possibly have found their way to me, there it was: the very person at the centre of the entire controversy, casually holding one of the most unmistakable wild animals on earth. Not a slightly confused tortoise or some obscure little creature that might reasonably have been mistaken for something else.

A pangolin.

Perhaps, occasionally, the universe has a sense of humour. Because with the arrival of that single photograph, my administrative burden underwent what can only be described as a Biblical reduction.

To the entire investigation team — and the universe — thank you.

It is remarkable how quickly one small thing can alter the mood of an entire situation. One photograph, and six months of frustration suddenly looked rather different.

Which brings me, rather appropriately, to mood swings. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the term mood swing back to at least 1916, although the phenomenon itself is, of course, far older. Human beings have always

been creatures of changing emotion — calm one moment, furious the next.

And we are certainly not alone.

Mood changes appear to be part of a much older biological system: a way for living creatures to respond to changing circumstances, threats and opportunities. We know at least one rule has survived evolution perfectly intact: do not pet a lion while it is eating.

Which may also explain why Tannie Evita has always understood one of the great truths of diplomacy: put your enemies around a dinner table and feed them. It is remarkably difficult to sustain a proper argument when your mouth is full.

There may be far more wisdom in that than we realise. Food has an extraordinary ability to change a mood, soften an atmosphere and turn a gathering into something memorable.

Which brings me rather beautifully to another table — and to our Michelangelo Approved Destination for this month.

I have been hearing a great deal about the new SkyBoma at OL Leisure's Mokuti Etosha, and the feedback has been exceptional. I keep hearing that it is raising the benchmark for Namibia.

And benchmarks matter.

Every time a visitor leaves one of our establishments thinking, "That was exceptional", the name they carry home is not only that of the establishment. They carry home Namibia.

So whenever Namibia raises the benchmark, we all stand a little taller. Not out of arrogance, but out of pride.

Pride in what this country can achieve when vision, hospitality and excellence come together.

Perhaps that is the true measure of a place, a person or even a country: not that everything is always perfect, but that every now and then something happens that shifts the mood, raises the standard and reminds us what we are capable of.

This is our country. This is our standard. This is Namibia. 🐉



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