

On the wild side

Learn to appreciate the outdoors, rather than ticking off a list

ANNETTE BAYNE

THE air is thick with the smell of the bush. It's a clean smell, complex in its different layers, like a good wine. You sip it in slowly, savouring the freshness and filling your lungs.

You slowly sink into the couch outside your luxury tent and let your eyes wander across the Lu-vuvhu River, taking in the crocodiles lazing in the shallows.

Somewhere a fish eagle calls.

Full up on brunch, it's a delightful spot to take in a mid-morning nap after a just about perfect game drive.

The words "perfect game drive" conjure up images of big cats, elephant herds and rhino families, and yet our first drive with our Pafuri Camp guide Walter was hardly punctuated by encounters with the Big Five.

Rather, it was the "little 500", including chameleons, butterflies and spiders, plus the trees and the myriad of bird life that make this area popular with the twitchers.

It wasn't a leopard or lion that stole the show that afternoon, but rather impala.

The afternoon sun had filtered through the fever tree forest, and Walter stopped to watch a small herd of young impala.

Barely a year old, the youngsters were dashing about the trees, throwing their black-hocked heels up in carefree abandon.

SNIP

For booking enquiries and information (Pafuri Camp and/or Pafuri Wilderness Trail) contact Safari & Adventure Co South Africa:

■ Tel: 011 257-5111

■ E-mail: info@safariadventure.co.za

■ Website: www.safariadventurecompany.com

His appreciation of this graceful antelope's motion was infectious.

There are no jokes about "just another impala" or the "MacDonalds of the bush", and through his eyes, the vehicle of guests were content to enjoy this display of youthful exuberance.

And that is how it was for each of the game drives and morning walks, moments of appreciation rather than a collection of sightings.

North of the Kruger Park, Pafuri Camp is situated in the Makuleke-owned concession along the Lu-vuvhu River.

You can barely walk from the lounge to your tent without encountering some kind of wildlife.

We followed thick-tailed bush babies chasing along the boardwalk, watched an elephant taking his leafy breakfast a short distance from our room and listened to the night sounds of lion, hyena and jackal, from the warmth of our beds.

WALKING TOURS

THE magic of the bush experience is often not just in the seeing of the bush, but being a part of the experience.

Feeling the dirt under your feet, catching the pungency of wild sage on the wind, or just the knowledge that you are walking in the footsteps of elephant, rhino and even lion.

In April, the three-day, four-night Pafuri Wilderness Trail was launched, catering for the more adventurous traveller.

Led by an experienced guide or tracker, the trail allows guests to experience the beauty, magnificence, history and bio-diversity of this area far more intimately.

It's open from the beginning of April until the end of October.

With a maximum of eight walkers per trail, guests will be treated to a unique experience.

At campsites, guests will be accommodated in walk-in tents, have access to hot bush showers and dinner under the stars.



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