

SOUTH AFRICAN ART-BASED WILDLIFE TOUR

17th - 27th February 2018

All lodges and reserves quoted can be found on the On Track Safaris website www.ontracksafaris.com

Itinerary:

Days 1-3

For clients flying in - on arrival at Tambo International Airport Johannesburg guests are met and transferred by kombi (mini bus) to Black Leopard Camp on the Thaba Tholo Wilderness Reserve.

Thaba Tholo Wilderness Reserve encompasses 6,000 Hectares, set within the stunning Steenkampsberg Mountains. This private nature reserve is located 30km from the town of Lydenburg and along the route between Johannesburg airport and the Greater Kruger Park region (approximately 200km to the north east). This is a pristine area of mountainous wilderness that is home to several animal species that are not often seen in the Kruger Park region, such as Sable, Eland, Red Hartebeest, Blesbuck, Mountain Reedbuck, Klipspringers, Cape fox, and even Oryx. The reserve has successfully reintroduced Buffalo into the area after an absence of over 100 years.

Our **INGWE Leopard Research** program has operated extensively on this reserve for many years, during which time we have recorded a significant amount of data on the resident Leopards and their movements, including the Black and Golden leopard.

Although Leopard sightings in this mountainous wilderness are less frequent due to the terrain, our network of camera traps continues to record leopard movement on the reserve both day and night. The reserve is also home to some of the most elusive birds in South Africa, such as the stunning Narina Trogon, Paradise Flycatchers, Sunbirds, Bee-eaters, Turacos, Verreaux Eagles and Denhams Bustards.

The historic rock engravings (petroglyphs) that are found on Thaba Tholo date back to the early Stone Age. There are numerous theories as to the meanings behind these rock engravings; some believe they are maps of settlements, others believe they are maps of constellations, and some believe they are drawings of visions and dreams.

More recent historical artefacts include the ruins of Voortrekker (ancestors of the Afrikaners of modern day South Africa) settlements. The ruins of these houses can still be found high in the mountains. They were constructed with large, flat rocks and termite mound mixture; the Voortrekkers would mix pieces of termite mounds with water, to create a kind of cement.

This reserve is family owned, along with Black Leopard Camp, which nestles sympathetically within the reserve. Black Leopard Camp is a four star tented camp, that was built, and is managed by the same family.

Accommodation is mid range. Four star accommodation and five star service.

www.blackleopardcamp.com

Days 4-7

After breakfast on day four, we will transfer to Rukiya Safari Camp in the Lowveld (Kruger Park area). Rukiya www.rukiyacamp.com is an intimate, luxury tented camp situated on the confluence of the Blyde and Olifants Rivers in the heart of Wild Rivers Private Nature Reserve.

The development of the camp was done with a least-impact footprint with a variety of green or eco-friendly principles employed during the construction process. A large part of the area comprises of deck and canvass that has a minimal effect in contrast to conventional brick and mortar. The operation of the camp follows the ecological-sensitive philosophy by utilizing environmentally friendly products that does not contain harmful chemicals. Up-cycled drift- and pallet wood were used to furnish and decorate the camp and were sourced from local suppliers in support of the community. Following a holistic approach to contribute to an ultimate nature experience, great care is taken to provide guests with all the special touches, pampering and comforts during their stay. Safaris and bush walks are part of the offering of all-inclusive packages. The iconic tented accommodation fortifies the African experience that allows guests to immerse themselves in the beauty of the magical Lowveld. Six ensuite luxury tents have been carefully placed underneath the shade of gaint Jackalberry trees with wonderful views to the river.

Rukiya It is our safari home and base for much of our work in leopard conservation. It is offers a unique and intimate wildlife experience and the opportunity to take Big Five game drives in the adjacent Balule game reserve (Kruger Park). When entering Wild Rivers Nature Reserve, expect to be immersed in the vista of endless woodland set against the back drop of the majestic Drakensberg mountains that change colour as the day walks on. This 2,600 hectare reserve is bordered by both the Blyde and Olifants Rivers and boasts a diverse landscape with rocky outcrops and savanna where plains game roam freely. Leopard wander and riverbanks are frequented by hippo and crocodiles.

Days 8-10

After breakfast on day seven we will transfer to the Tangala Safari Camp within the Thornybush Game Reserve. www.tangalasafaricamp.co.za

Tangala boasts sweeping views overlooking an expansive and active waterhole, with the majestic Drakensberg Mountain Range forming an impressive backdrop. With our eco-friendly camp, great hosting, comfortable accommodation and thrilling game drives, guests are assured an unforgettable experience

Thornybush Game Reserve is approximately 14,000ha of game habitat: open savannah woodland with pat Hectares of tangled thicket and thorny scrub. It is a well established reserve and perfect habitat for Africa's famous Big Five as well as a host of other animals (eg. cheetah, African wild dog, hippo, crocodile, giraffe, zebra, various antelope species, porcupine, aardvark). Thornybush is home to 147 mammal species, 114 types of reptile, more than 500 bird species, dozens of fish and

amphibian species and 336 types of trees, as well as countless grasses, insects, etc. Game viewing in the reserve ranks as some of the best in Southern Africa with a near perfect year round climate.

Guests can enjoy off road close-up views of special sightings and once darkness falls, you'll be treated to thrilling spot-lit night drives in search of rare nocturnal creatures and big cats on the move. Guided nature walks complete the spectrum of safari activities. Thornybush is a favoured safari location for movie stars and the rich and famous.

Day 11

After morning game drive and breakfast, transfer to OR Tambo International Airport for overnight flight home.

£3,300 per person

Price includes:

Road transfers

Accommodation

Meals

Tea and Coffee

Guided game Drives and or bush walks

Excludes:

International flights

Alcohol

Reserve conservation entry fees (approximately £17)

Tips and souvenirs