

Molori Safari Lodge Spa

By Devanshi Mody







Private pleasure abode for the owner and his friends -- until recently. I had heard tales of a wildly extravagant safari lodge somewhere in South Africa, but it remained mysteriously shrouded in anonymity. I long thought it chimerical, but the lodge does exist, and it now even receives, but ever so selectively. Exclusive and elusive, South Africa's best-kept secret almost requires the guile of Bond to excavate. Indeed, this is a James Bond safari lodge, all jet-set and touch-button.

It comes with a Bond Girl too, Metsi. Like any self-respecting Bond Girl, she must tantalise. And so we shall tormentingly defer elaboration of her charms...





Let's begin with Bond. Now, he'd get there in a chopper. If you've one, they've a helipad. Otherwise, Federal Air shuttles you there from Johannesburg in almost as much style.

General Manager Leana and team receive and refresh you with cocktails -- fresh, punchy, shaken, not stirred. No canned horrors are

here, differentiating this ultra-luxe lodge from synthetic South Africa. For something stiffer, hit the owner's enviable whiskey collection. But if you think you're imagining that 30 elephants have engulfed the waterhole the lodge overlooks, then it isn't the whisky. It happens daily. This marvellous occurrence is best captured from an elevated terrace

where lunches are served, unless you prefer the poolside pavilion below where views are just as unobstructed. Or soak into a sofa in the unwalled main lodge, that smartly assembles furniture and artefacts of varietal genres, all hand-picked by the owner himself -- it's almost French Riviera, flash dashed with African aura.

Straggling paths lead to 5 stand-alone suites, all individually and choicely decorated, all unabashedly luxurious, with vaunting immense outdoors terraces and viewing --decks with private-pools and panoramic outdoor showers. There are a million light fixtures and as many Bond-button switches -- somewhat laborious turning them all off if you choose to conserve electricity, but most guests don't. There are also gismos galore and swish TVs, but wouldn't you rather watch the outdoors drama from floor-to-ceiling retractable walls, showcasing the wilderness theatre?

Each morning, my guide, Jonty, comes to the suite before the game-drive, bringing coffee and cookies. Jumping onto the game vehicle, where I'm presented hand warmers (nice touch), I mention I hadn't time for coffee. Jonty insists on rushing to my suite for it. Not many guides in South Africa would. But then, few other guides in South Africa are award-winning, or indeed African. Jonty's tribal instincts distinguish him from bookish Afrikaans guides. And yet, Jonty wields hi-tech equipment, deploying iPads to show me birds and animals, books being too old-fashioned at this hi-fi lodge that disallows children under 3 on game-drives. Perhaps this is because they cannot distract themselves with iPads whilst Mummy snaps lions.

Jonty, with his keen African eyes, can spot small birds and dinky duikers far away. He can tell you about the famous "Linyalo Brothers," a pair of notoriously boisterous lions who recently killed another lion and presently juggle three harems -- a feat not even a Zulu chief could boast. Jonty can also tell you about legendary Zulu chief, Shaka, who slew his brother, usurped the throne and forsook his land to the Brits who bewitched him with a mirror. "He loved his image so much," Jonty chuckles.

Over a mid-morning coffee break in the wilderness, Jonty rues the fate of rhinos, fast nearing extinction due to mindless poaching. A rhino horn can fetch up to half a million dollars, because the Chinese believe it cures cancer and ensures virility and immortality! After we see pictures of rhinos hacked for their horns, I rather lose my appetite for the cookies, cakes, cereals and fruit on offer with coffee.



Back at the lodge, Chef Jacques discusses lunch at breakfast, where one must avail of super smoothies like strawberry-coconut-banana. Chef lately abandoned Singita for Molori, and when you have staff voluntarily leaving Singita, you know Molori's doing something special. At Molori, suppers include four-course bush-dinners in the jungle or briars in the lodge's boma (an al-fresco enclosure), where Chef Jacques sprawls South African specialties and "boma-fide" Afrikaans malva pudding, macerated in Amarula liqueur and Roibos tea.

But why dine out when you can dine in Metsi's arms? Ah Metsi, alright, she isn't quite a Bond Girl, or even a girl. But this preposterously lavish presidential suite has all the seductions of a Bond Girl. Think crystal chandeliers swooping down from a thatch roof or hanging from trees. "Metsi" means "water" in Setswana, and the outdoors flows into the indoors where trees thrust out behind sofas. There's also a



fluidity of styles, as antiques flirt with avant-garde, and a stupendous Chinese drum is stationed by indigenous African art. Stately arm-chairs Marie Antoinette might've sat in laze by contemporary-cool, red-as-passion chairs made of reed and cane. The study has a chair in zebra hide, the deck is sleek with white-leathered swings and suave chaise-lounge. The bedroom boasts the most sumptuous bed in all South Africa, whilst three bathrooms stock enough Aqua di Parma toiletries to fill a boutique. The main bathroom is a "living room", with a velvet sofa longer than a

train, and not a walk-in but a "sit-in" wardrobe with a splendid ottoman... The pool, the size of a lake, has a heated jacuzzi and a resident frog or two. At breakfast on the terrific terraces, you might be combating yellow-beaked hornbills that purloin your cookies as plumed plethora bedazzle. The lodge has a hillocked spa, but enjoy signature Molori facials and Molori massages within the luxuries of your butlered suite.

There's a sense of irreverence, abandon and irony about this place. It's outrageously over the top, but pulled off with panache.