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Rugged Luxury at Madikwe Safari

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Madikwe Safari Lodge offers wild game sightings and five-star amenities

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Africa / Middle East Hotels Adventure Travel



Lelapa Lodge is reserved for families.
// © 2014 Madikwe Safari Lodge

Getting There

Charters are available through FederalAir, which bring clients directly to the airstrip in Madikwe. They can fly into South Africa from New York or Washington, D.C., via South African Airways.

www.fedair.com
www.flysa.com

The Details

Madikwe Safari Lodge
www.madikwesafarilodge.co

After landing with the help of a small plane on a flat enough patch of orange dirt, I was ushered into the South African bush in the rolling theater seats of a topless, 11-person Jeep. I began seeing animals immediately. First, there were zebras and impalas, and then, as I clicked away on my camera with abandon, the tree I had been looking at seemed to come alive, revealing a huge male giraffe. It was not one of those familiar zoo giraffes — but a giraffe, in the wild, awkward and waltzing from behind the tree. Clearly, it was business as usual for the giraffe, but for me the sight was nothing less than astonishing.

Many travel agents might assume I was in Kruger National Park — one of the most famous destinations in all of South Africa — but instead, I had arrived in Madikwe.

Only 55 minutes from Johannesburg by plane, Madikwe is a game reserve in South Africa's north, located about five miles from the border of Botswana and, unlike Kruger, it's Malaria-free. Most importantly, Madikwe has all the animals to fill a memorable safari: kudu, wildebeest, impala, zebra, rhinoceros, elephant and giraffe, to name a few. It is also home to all of those animals' predatory foes, such as hyena, lion, leopard and cheetah, as well as 350 kinds of birds.

However, a feast for the eyes is not all that Madikwe offers. Experienced guides, in Jeeps and on foot for nature walks, provided an earful about topics ranging from rhinoceros poaching to dwindling cheetah populations.

But I soon learned that there was more to Madikwe beyond life in the wild bush.

As I discovered, Madikwe is an ideal safari destination for clients who want to have their cake and eat it, too. The five-star Madikwe Safari Lodge is actually made up of a trio of fixed structure camps, with almost the

same amenities and decor at each one. Lelapa Lodge is for families; Kopano Lodge is for adults only; and Dithaba Lodge is for small groups.

My accommodation boasted a large room with a wood-burning fireplace and a bathroom with a separate shower, tub and a double sink. Private patios feature outdoor showers, plunge pools, expansive views and in-room massage options. Common areas have free Wi-Fi access and stylish surroundings for relaxing and dining.

Visitors will notice, as I did, small blackboards with notes from housekeeping on their beds. As I was told, the blackboards serve as a two-way conversation. To try it out, I requested the lyrics to "that Africa song by Shakira."

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