

The top 5 African hotels for centi-millionaires

 By [Debbie Hathway](#)

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With an estimated 700 million tourists travelling internationally between January and September 2022 - more than double (+133%) the number recorded for the same period in 2021 - the United Nations World Tourism Organisation expected international tourism to reach 65% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of last year.



Image supplied: Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort dune boarding

Spurred by pent-up demand, increased confidence, and fewer restrictions around access to destinations, the tourism industry in Africa (+166%) reached 60% of 2019 levels with occupancy rates at 61% by the end of that period.

“Tourism continues to recover steadily, yet several challenges remain, from geopolitical to economic. The sector is bringing back hope and opportunity for people everywhere. Now is also the time to rethink tourism, where it is going, and how it impacts people and the planet,” said UNWTO secretary-general Zurab Pololikashvili in a recent report.

Top African hotels for centi-millionaires

If you've set your sights on Africa for your next luxury adventure, take your cue from the 2022 Africa Wealth Report, in which New World Wealth shares the spending habits of the world's super-rich. Centi-millionaires (defined as individuals with net investable assets [wealth] of \$100m or more), who visited Africa from 2015 to 2022, listed the Royal Livingstone managed by Anantara, Minor Hotels' flagship brand, among their top five hotels on the continent.

The Oyster Box in Durban, Ellerman House in Cape Town, Royal Mansour in Marrakech, Morocco, and Four Seasons Resort at Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt completed the top five.



Image supplied: Avani Victoria Falls Resort

“Other major destinations include Cairo in Egypt, the Serengeti in Tanzania, the Masai Mara in Kenya, the Okavango Swamps in Botswana, and Livingstone in Zambia. Gorilla safaris in the Virunga Mountains (Rwanda) and the Bwindi Forest (Uganda) are also popular,” said Andrew Amoils, head of research at New World Wealth.

The Royal Livingstone scooped third place in *Travel and Leisure* magazine’s ‘World’s Best Awards’ and TripAdvisor’s ‘Travellers’ Choice Award for Hotels’ in 2022.

Accolades aside, what makes this property so unique? While its top-end river safaris and luxurious spa are significant drawcards, its location on the banks of the Zambezi River, overlooking Victoria Falls from the Zambian side, has much to do with it. Moreover, the recent discovery that the hotel has exclusive rights to private dining in the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park (while nobody has that right in the Victoria Falls National Park on the Zimbabwe side) puts it in a league of its own.

Seven natural wonders

“We’re focused on location, on experiences, especially at our resorts. Royal Livingstone is a short walk away from Victoria Falls, one of the world’s seven natural wonders. It’s a special location. We acquired that asset because Bill loved it,” said Johannesburg-based Nico Vivier, regional director of operations and development for Minor Hotels Africa.

William E. Heinecke is the 75-year-old ‘minor’ who gave the group its name when his parents had to sign the founding documents because of his age. Established in Bangkok, Thailand, Minor Hotels owns, manages, and operates a diverse portfolio of over 530 hotels, resorts, and branded residences in 50+ countries, 29 of which are in Namibia, Lesotho, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, and Kenya. Anantara, Avani, Elewana, Oaks, NH Hotels, NH Collection, nhow, and Tivoli properties make up the portfolio, soon to be extended into South Africa.



Image supplied: The Royal Livingstone Hotel white water river rafting

“The hotels are important, but it’s also about how we support and develop the local communities. As much as it’s about the location and the luxury, it’s also about the people. Take Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort in Mozambique, for example. To open a five-star hotel with 90% of the staff born on that island is a huge success story. And we’ve invested in infrastructure, opening schools and hospitals and the best eye clinic in Mozambique,” said Vivier.

Responsible travel

In line with global responsible travel trends, although not new initiatives, the group’s various sustainability projects offer meaningful incentives to visit its Southern African properties.

Avani Windhoek Hotel and Casino is the first hotel in Namibia to score the 5 Flowers Eco Award for its eco-friendly principles. And the CSR programme implemented at Avani Victoria Falls Resort and the Royal Livingstone tackles a range of sustainability issues from water, plastic, and carbon footprint reduction to community upliftment projects that support the women-led bee-keeping co-operative in Mukuni village in Zambia.



Image supplied: Avani Victoria Falls Resort

Positive energy, authenticity, warmth, atmosphere, and service play their part, which shows in the bookings. Despite single-digit occupancies across the board from August 2021, Minor Hotels decided to keep all properties open and support their teams through the pandemic-induced tourism crisis.

“We retained 80% of our team over that time, which meant we recovered much faster. Our third-quarter results show we’re up 19% for the same period in 2019,” they said.

ABOUT DEBBIE HATHWAY

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning writer, with a special interest in luxury lifestyle (watches, jewellery, travel, property investment) and the arts.

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