

Thanda Safari: An indulgent wildlife experience

By  [Danette Breitenbach](#)

12 May 2023

There is nothing quite as indulgent as a bush break, and a Thanda Safari bush break is as indulgent as it can get!



Thanda Safari Lodge itself rises up out of the land, blending perfectly with its surroundings, with spectacular views of the 35,000 acre reserve (Image supplied)

Meaning 'love' in isiZulu Thanda is a Big Five private game reserve owned by Swedish philanthropists Christin and Dan Olofsson, located where the Great Rift Valley meets the Lebombo Mountains in Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

I was lucky enough to spend three days at this award-winning reserve at the end of March together with four other journalists and influencers. We stayed at the Thanda Safari Lodge, one of three properties at Thanda Safari.

Thanda Safari Lodge has nine bush suites, shaped like a traditional Zulu homestead, with panoramic views of the surrounding game reserve. The Lodge also has a spa, where you can be pampered in luxury.

The other accommodation option is Villa iZulu, a safari hideaway for families, holidaymakers, and wedding parties wanting privacy is situated amidst lush green lawns and surrounded by expanses of wild African bush and can accommodate 10 guests in five suites.

Then there is the Thanda Tented Camp, which features 15 colonial safari-style tents, each with its own viewing deck and

en-suite bathroom.

(And what is really great is that Thanda Safari has a SADC rate.)

Travelling in style

Our adventure started in style from the beginning when we left Johannesburg in a brand new 2023 Ford Everest Sport.

I will confess that I am not a 'car' person. But the Ford Everest Sport is a car even I was talking about. And it proved its worth on the journey back when we easily negotiated a rural mountain road through farmlands as a detour when there was a two to three-hour hold-up on the highway.

The Ford Everest Sport is comfortable inside, even on the unpaved rural detour, which was not in the best shape – it literally just purred along. I think the vehicle was in its element.



We travelled in style in a brand new 2023 Ford Everest Sport (Photo credit: Danette Breitenbach)

Luxury and indulgence

As I said earlier, I love being in the bush, and the more indulgent the better. And I was in my element at Thanda Safari Lodge, where we were spoilt from the time we arrived at the gate till it was (sadly) time to say goodbye.

Private vehicles are not allowed to travel through the reserve. We were met at the gate by Sabelo Kwesaba and Khaya Myezy, who were to be our guide and tracker (respectively) for the duration of our visit.

It was a pleasure being taken on game drives by these two; nothing was too much for them and they were super knowledgeable about the area and the animals. (They also made an excellent Amarula coffee and superb G&T!)

The lodge itself rises up out of the land. Set on a hillside, it blends in perfectly with its surroundings, while providing spectacular views of the 35,000 acres that make up the reserve.

The lodge itself, with the reception, main lounge area and dining room as well as outside areas and boma are all tastefully

designed.

The suites comprise a giant king bed, a lounge area, and a bathroom with an indoor and outside shower. The bath itself overlooks the reserve. Outside your suite is your own plunge pool (heated) and lounging area as well private boma.

The suite is spacious and the décor rich, evoking a sense of luxury and indulgence (there's that word again).



Outside your suite is your own plunge pool (heated) and lounging area as well private boma (Image supplied)

The importance of conservation

It is the sheer indulgence (and again) of a bush break that I love - rising early, setting off in the game vehicle as the sun starts to rise, with the birds announcing the start of the new day, and that first cup of coffee.

And then there are sunset game drives with the obligatory G&T after an indulgent day of eating well and resting. We were at Thanda in late March, and it was still warm enough to enjoy the (heated) plunge pool in the afternoons.

The game drive is always a highlight for me, and Thanda did not disappoint, but I am always acutely aware of how lucky we are as South Africans to be able to travel to view wildlife - so much so that we almost take this for granted.

But we should not. Not with the environment of these animals being threatened on so many levels.

We were lucky enough during the three days of our stay to have Thanda's wildlife manager Lorraine Doyle join us over lunch.

Doyle is one of the very few females on the continent in this role. At Thanda it is her job to ensure that the reserve follows the best conservation practices and procedures for its wild animals and the indigenous plant life.

"We need to get people passionate about the wildlife we're involved with if we have any chance of conserving it. I always feel privileged to be able to share what I've learned over the past 20 years, and also to continue my own learning," she says.



Photo by Thada Safari Reserve's resident world-renowned photographer, Christian Sperka, who gives tips on wildlife photography

Wildlife photography with your smart phone

The reserve also has resident world-renowned (world-renowned?) photographer, Christian Sperka, on hand to help you capture that perfect wildlife image.

Sperka conducts wildlife photography courses and teaches wildlife photography, as well as wildlife photography game drives. All Thanda guests are offered a complimentary photography lesson to teach them more about the art of catching the perfect wildlife moment with your smartphone.

One of the tips he shared with us was that smartphones are excellent at taking macro-shots.

Armed with his tips, and motto of "Keep it simple", we were all enthused to take the perfect wildlife photograph. And we were spoilt for choice at Thanda.



One of the most amazing sights I have ever seen in all my years of visiting the bush (Photo credit: Danette Breitenbach)

An unique wildlife experience

We had spotted and viewed a pride of lions (a male and two females with sub-adults – that is teenagers Kwesaba explained - and cubs) on our first morning game drive, and had watched them frolicking and playing... relaxed in their environment.

On our last morning game drive, we found the same pride. This time it was a serious affair with the females out hunting (you could hear the Impala baying to each other) while the sub-adults and cubs lay low and quiet in the grass.

When the two females returned the sub-adults and cubs ran to them, making the most incredible sounds and rubbing themselves on the females. Kwesaba explained that they did this to find out if a kill had been made. It was one of the most amazing sights I have ever seen in all my years of visiting the bush.

While I could go on and on about the reserve, this experience summed up my time at Thanda Safari - unique and incredible, from the room to the food and the friendly staff, to the most stunning wildlife sights. (And did I mention indulgent?)

Do I want to go back?

Yes, (but can I have a Ford Everest Sport for the journey, please?)

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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