



Welcome to the wonderful world of the Pilanesberg National Park, a hidden gem in the heart of the stunning land of South Africa. This captivating national park offers an unparalleled travel experience, blending luxury, adventure, and wild nature in a unique combination. If you're seeking a luxury journey that takes you to one of the most spectacular regions in the world, Pilanesberg National Park is your ideal destination.

## **Pilanesberg National Park: A Geological Gem**

Pilanesberg National Park is situated within the crater of an extinct volcano, a unique geological environment that has created an incredible landscape. Surrounded by hills and mountains, the park offers spectacular views of azure lakes and verdant valleys. The volcanic crater, dating back over 1.2 billion years, provides a unique geological foundation that has given rise to a rich variety of flora and fauna.

## **Unforgettable Safaris**

Pilanesberg is renowned for its extraordinary safaris, offering visitors the opportunity to explore the wild beauty of South Africa in all its glory. With a wide range of wildlife, including the Big Five: lions, elephants, buffaloes, [leopards](#), and rhinoceroses, you'll have the chance to see up close some of the most magnificent creatures in the animal kingdom. The safaris, guided by expert local rangers, will take you through the park's trails, offering unique encounters with wildlife and unforgettable photographic moments.

## **Luxury in Exclusive Lodges**

To complete the luxury travel experience, Pilanesberg offers a range of exclusive lodges that combine comfort, elegance, and total immersion in nature. Each lodge is designed to provide a luxury retreat, ensuring guests a memorable stay. From suites with breathtaking panoramic views to private pools, every detail has been thought out to guarantee maximum comfort. Some lodges also offer exceptional culinary experiences, with internationally renowned chefs ready to delight the most discerning palates.



## Best Time to Visit

Pilanesberg National Park can be visited year-round, but the best time to experience its magnificence varies depending on personal preferences. The dry season, from May to September, is ideal for wildlife spotting, as animals gather around the few remaining water sources. On the other hand, the rainy season, from November to March, transforms the landscape into a green sea of lush vegetation, offering a unique visual spectacle.

## Unique Experiences

In addition to classic safaris, Pilanesberg National Park offers a range of unique experiences to enrich your journey. You can participate in guided walking tours, explore ancient rock formations rich in history and culture, or even take part in hot air balloon flights to admire the park from a totally different perspective.





Intriguing, captivating, and extraordinarily beautiful, Pilanesberg National Park is the perfect destination for those seeking a luxury travel experience immersed in the wild nature of South Africa. The exclusive lodges, unforgettable safaris, and unique experiences make this national park a first-class option for the most discerning travelers.

[Book your luxury trip](#) to Pilanesberg National Park and immerse yourself in the elegance of wild nature. Whether you're a safari enthusiast, a nature lover, or an adventure seeker, this magical place will leave you speechless as you journey through the timeless beauty of Pilanesberg. Don't wait any longer: your luxury adventure awaits in the heart of safari country.

South Africa is the land of great national parks and nature reserves that protect a large population of wild animals, taking a safari in South Africa is an incredible experience.

Among the most interesting reserves of [South Africa](#), the Madikwe Game Reserve certainly plays a leading role, an incredibly beautiful and wild place where it is possible to admire

numerous animal species.

We visited the Madikwe Game Reserve while staying at the Rockfig Lodge and with their highly trained guides we did some very high level photographic safaris.

The 750 square kilometer territory of the reserve was formerly used as agricultural land but the poor soil only allowed for mostly unsuccessful agriculture.

Then the South African government decided to change the intended use of these lands, restoring them to their original appearance and to establish a protected wildlife area in this place.

The benefits of this change were mainly two: the recovery of an area, which was destined for wild flora and fauna, and the economic benefit for the local communities who found employment both in the management of the reserve and in the various lodges present.







## Madikwe Game Reserve in South Africa

The Madikwe Reserve is a 750 square kilometer protected nature reserve, located in the [Northwestern Province of South Africa](#), bordering Botswana.

Madikwe Game Reserve boasts a thriving wildlife population, home to the second largest elephant population in South Africa, as well as lions, leopards, rhinos, wild dogs, cheetahs, giraffes, buffaloes, zebras and numerous species of antelope and birds.

The Madikwe Reserve contains within it a variety of ecosystems, moreover its position, in a transition zone between the Kalahari and the Lowveld, allows the presence of animal and plant species that live in both areas.

The Madikwe Game Reserve is made up of vast savannah plains, open woods, grasslands, the rugged Rant van Tweedepoort and is bordered to the south by the Dwarsberg Mountains; the area is dotted with huge rocky hills or inselbergs.



Rant van Tweedepoort is a range of hills spanning the northwestern province with an estimated land elevation of 1 163 meters above sea level, while the Dwarsberg mountain range marks the southern boundary of the Madikwe Game Reserve, from east to west.

Madikwe Game Reserve is located at a fairly high altitude and in a region with a very dry climate which makes it a malaria free destination.

350 bird species have been recorded in the Madikwe reserve, many of which are endemic to the arid Kalahari Desert and the lush Lowveld region; this feature makes Madikwe Game Reserve a hugely popular destination for birdwatchers and for enthusiasts looking for species from both regions.

The reserve is not open to day visitors, so the only way to visit it is to stay at one of the lodges present; this careful choice by the Madikwe management means that there is less crowding, in this way guests can live a more intimate experience while respecting the tranquility of the animals.

Just to respect the animals and not to stress them, the reserve allows only three cars to be present at a sighting at the same time.





## **The Rockfig Lodge in the Madikwe Game Reserve**

During our recent visit to the Madikwe Reserve we stayed at the Rockfig Luxury Safari Lodge, a gem of tranquility and hospitality in a contemporary setting that offers maximum comfort and hospitality.

**Rockfig Lodge is located in the hills of the western sector of the Madikwe Reserve** and its villas enjoy splendid views of the plains below.

The private villas available to guests are carefully decorated in a contemporary style and are characterized by discreet luxury.

The villas are of various sizes but all have large bedrooms with private bathroom and outdoor shower, a comfortable lounge, a perfectly furnished kitchen equipped with all the tools for cooking.



The external part of the villas consists of a very large area that leaves you speechless: a large raised terrace with comfortable sofas, an area dedicated to relaxation with comfortable loungers, a large dining table and a private swimming pool; the terrace overlooks a large garden where there is also a space for the fire on the ground and an area dedicated to braai, or barbecue.

The privacy of the villas is guaranteed and the feeling you get is that of being immersed in nature away from everything and everyone, a real detox!

The common areas are treated in detail and the cuisine of the restaurant is superb with delicious dishes and excellent desserts.

Obviously, **4×4 safaris are the main activity** and are carried out in the morning and in the afternoon.

The Rockfig Lodge safari guides are very skilled and prepared and, in addition to recognizing the signs of nature to find animals, they provide guests with a lot of information and curiosities about the behavior of the animals and the vegetation of the Madikwe Reserve.

Sightings in the Madikwe Game Reserve with the Rockfig Lodge safari guides are always spectacular and often happens to be the only car that is lucky enough to observe exciting and unique scenes.

The vehicles used for the safaris are **open 4×4 cars** that guarantee maximum visibility; moreover the guides always look for the best positioning to allow you to take excellent photographs with the right light, always taking into account the conformation of the terrain and the habits and movements of the animals.





## Lake Mburo National Park





## **The History of the Madikwe Game Reserve: from agricultural area to nature reserve**

Madikwe Game Reserve is a 750 square kilometer protected nature reserve, located in the Northwestern Province of South Africa, on the border with Botswana; the name of the reserve derives from the Madikwe river which is found in these places.

But in the more recent past there was no nature reserve in these lands, this area had been transformed, over the centuries, into an area dedicated to agriculture and pastoralism.

The decision to create the reserve in this land was made for socio-economic reasons; in fact, inadequate agricultural practices, combined with the arid climate and degraded soil had made the area almost completely unsuitable for livestock or agriculture.





The South African government understood that ecotourism would bring more value to the community than agriculture; then the reconversion of the territory into a wildlife reserve was approved.

At this point, an incredible and very demanding work began to restore the area to its primitive appearance; the main activities to be undertaken were three:

- eradicate all alien flora species and reintroduce native species;
- eliminate human settlements and relocate people outside the territory;
- reintroduce different species of wildlife.

This reconversion process began with the gradual restoration of soil and plant life, but it also entailed the gradual reintroduction of most of the animal species that can now be observed in the Madikwe Reserve.

The relocation of wildlife to the reserve began in 1991 with a feat known colloquially as Operation Phoenix.

Over the next seven years, nearly 10,000 animals, from antelope to predators, from rhinos to elephants, were relocated to the Madikwe Game Reserve area, in what was at the time the largest wildlife relocation project ever.

The ownership and management of Madikwe Game Reserve today is a partnership between three major players: North West Parks and Tourism Board, the private sector and local communities.

The result is an excellent conservation model that has worked for the benefit not only of wildlife but also of local communities and which has created a premier safari destination in South Africa.



### Whispers of the wild

In the middle of an extensive rich acacia woodland lies one of [Uganda's](#) most spectacular and breathtaking, the Lake Mburo National Park.

Lake Mburo is a gem of a park, conveniently located close to the western high way that connects Kampala to the parks of western Uganda.

Lake Mburo National Park is a very special place with a medley of habitats ranging from dry hillsides, rocky outcrops, bushy thickets, open and wooded savannas to forest, lakes and swamps.

Its sculptured landscape **rolling hills and idyllic lake shores**, forest galleries, seasonal and permanent swamps and grassy valleys all support a wealth of wildlife in a tropical setting.





The park is remarkably different from other parks; it is the best park to view the gigantic eland, impala, zebras and acacia associated birds; common mammal species include warthogs, [buffalos](#), oribi, defassa waterbucks, reed bucks, and other species of antelopes.

Leopards and hyenas are also present and lions have also returned to the park after years of poaching and near extinction.

**The five lakes** within the park attract hippos and crocodiles while fringing swamps hide secretive papyrus specialists such as the sitatunga antelope and the beautiful red, black and yellow papyrus gonalek.

The park also has an impressive **bird list with 332 species** recorded including shoebill, papyrus, yellow warbler, african fin foot, saddle billed stork, brown chested wattled plover, Carrutter's cisticola, tabora cisticola, great snipe, abyssinian ground hornbill and white winged warbler,

Acacia woodland bird species are especially well represented.

Though just 371sq km in size, Lake Mburu has a varied landscape full of interest and color.

The park is refreshing and full of life given its strategic location near Kampala.

## Activities in Lake Mburu National Park

Several activities can be conducted while in Lake Mburu National Park like nature walks, game drive, boat safari, quad and horse riding.

**Nature walk** is conducted on foot with the help of an armed guide who explains to the visitors about the various flora and fauna.

Rubanga forest, though small, this tract of forest on the western side of Lake Mburu provides a taste of the tropical high forest with closed canopy and is home to a variety of forest bird species.

The **boat** is another interesting activity in Lake Mburu, a visitor gets a chance to see a variety of wildlife: crocodiles, hippos and birds like African Fish Eagle, African finfoot, pelicans, shoebills, cormorants, kingfisher, herons, etc.

**Horse riding and quad** bikes give a spectacular view of the park terrain and wildlife.



## ***The ultimate Gorilla Experience***

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is home to half of the world's mountain gorillas, whose encounter and consequent eye contact is the most exciting and poignant wildlife encounter in the whole of Africa.

With mist covered hillsides, this impenetrable forest is the oldest and most biologically diverse rainforest, with over 400 species of plants.

Bwindi NP lies on the edge of the rift valley in southwestern [Uganda](#), and protects at least 120 species of mammals, 346 species of birds, 2022 species of butterflies, 163 species of trees, 100 species of ferns, 27 species of frogs, chameleons, geckos, among many endangered species.





**Bwindi NP is a [Unesco](#) designated World Heritage site** popular for mountain gorillas and chimpanzees, the two great African apes listed as endangered animals in the IUCN Red Data Book.

Bwindi National Park has gorilla tracking as the major tourist attraction with 4 gorilla tracking trailheads; also 9 groups of mountain gorilla families have been habituated and only 8 tourists booked per group per day.

Forest trails in the park lead to various attractions including rivers, waterfalls, swamps and high level of wildlife concentration

**Birding** is another attraction that provides great opportunities to see various Albertine rift endemics such as the short-tailed warbler or Neumann's Warbler.

A 6 hour bamboo trail leads to Rwamuonyonyi peak, at 2607 m, is the highest peak and notable spot for birding; while a 3 hours descend to Mubwindi swamp could lead a visitor to endemic and localized African green broadbill.

Other rewarding activities are mountain biking and nature walks to waterfalls and parts of the forest.

A short drive north to Buhoma, which sits on the Congo border, offers wonderful hikes along the hill crests and rivers to discover waterfalls, glorious views and the traditional lifestyle and folklore of the Kigezi people.

## **Activities in Bwindi**

### **Gorilla Tracking**

Tracking is a captivation and unforgettable experience which more than repays the effort needed to reach Bwindi and to trek through the forest.

Gorilla tracking can be challenging and one needs to be reasonably fit before undertaking to venture into the activity.

### **Other activities around the park**

Though gorilla tracking is the main attraction, a range of other walks provide more relaxed opportunities to spot birds and monkeys while exploring one of the Uganda's loveliest rainforests.



Mountain biking is also a good activity around Bwindi, this is usually done through a well maintained trail.

## Walks

The following walks can be arranged:

- **Munyanga River Trail** in the valley below Buhoma provides an ideal short walk to view birds and primates along the forest edge
- **Waterfalls Trail** leads through one Uganda's most pristine tracts of rainforest, passing beneath tree ferns, epiphytic ferns and orchids to visit three sparkling waterfalls
- **Rushura Hill Trail** provides expansive views across the plains of the western rift valley to the west and Lake Edward and Rwenzori Mountains to the north.
- **Muzabajiro Loop Trail** climbs to the summit of Rukubira Hill for breathtaking views of Bwindi forest, the western Rift Valley and the Virunga volcanoes.
- **River Ivi Trail** follows an old road through beautiful forest emerging near Nkuringo on the southern edge of the forest; it is highly recommended for bird watchers.

Locally known as Most-oa-Tunya, the smoke that thunders, the Victoria Falls are a lifetime destination.

The Victoria Falls are said to be the greatest curtain of falling water in the world carrying 500 million liters of water a minute in time of full flood.

Whether this epithet is true or not, such an extraordinary phenomenon is the result of water erosion.

More than a hundred thousand years ago, the Zambesi River abruptly turned north, bringing the water flow at right angles to the major east-west fault lines of the land.

On reaching one of these lines, soft sediments were washed away easily and a wide, steep gorge was formed, the first set of Falls.

Gradually a weakness was found somewhere on the waterfall's edge, and more and more water fell through this steadily deepening channel, cutting back further until another east-west fault line was met, at which point another gorge was made, the second set of Falls.

Victoria Falls Town, in Zimbabwe, and Livingstone, in [Zambia](#), are the [adrenalin capitals of Africa](#), are the base for a range of activities, including cruises on the Zambezi, African



traditional dancing, abseiling, white water rafting, bungee jumping and canoeing.

But not only exciting activities can be found in the adventure capitals, there are museums, art galleries and craft markets.



There are two species of gorillas found in Africa: the western gorilla, *Gorilla gorilla*, and the eastern gorilla, *Gorilla beringei*.

The eastern gorilla consists of two subspecies, the well-known mountain gorilla of [Uganda](#) and Rwanda, and the eastern lowland gorilla of the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Both of these subspecies are considered Critically Endangered by the IUCN.

The western gorilla also consists of two subspecies: the western lowland gorilla principally found in Congo and Gabon, and the little known Cross River gorilla of the border region between Cameroon and Nigeria.



The mountain gorilla is the best known of all the subspecies as a result of the work of Diana Fossey but just few 1.000 about animals remain, isolated in the remaining natural islands of the Virunga Massif and Uganda's Bwindi Forest.

Here they exist in family groups overseen by massive silverbacks, roaming their home range in search of favored vegetation.

To protect the gorilla all the tourists must follow a protocol. Such protocols are designed specifically to limit stress and behavioral impact and also potential disease transmission from humans to gorillas.

The protocols are critical for gorilla conservation.

**The protocol guide lines:**

- Maximum viewing duration: 1 hour per day
- Maximum number of guests: 8
- No food and drinks can be consumed close to gorilla
- Smoking is not allowed
- No litter and no spitting
- Keep your voice low and do not make rapid movements that may alarm them
- If a gorilla should charge or vocalise at you, do not be alarmed, stand still, look away from the gorilla and follow your guide's instructions
- Minimum age for gorilla viewing: 15 years
- Guest that display cold, flu or other respiratory tract symptoms will not be allowed to track gorillas

Discover our [itineraries](#) in Uganda and Rwanda to admire the gorillas.





The lion is the largest African carnivore and one of the largest terrestrial carnivores and the *star* during a game drive, let's discover some curiosities on lions.

White lions, or specimens with a distinctive white ivory mantle, are extremely rare and naturally located in the Timbavati area of South Africa, bordering on the Kruger National Park. It is not a subspecies of its own but the effect of a genetic variation, that occurs in many animal species, known as leucism, that involves poor or incomplete pigmentation. The phenomenon is different from that of albinism, that instead is determined by the total lack of pigmentation of hair, skin and iris.

Another physical peculiarity that does not allow to speak of subspecies, but is more easily found in some populations, is the almost total lack of mane in the male. Males with almost or completely absent mane are common in some arid areas of Eastern Africa, such as Northern and Eastern [Kenya](#), the Tsavo area in particular.



To explain this peculiarity, various hypotheses have been advanced, including the most striking that those lions represent a line of evolutionary phylogenetically different from that of the other lions and closer to their prehistoric ancestor. However, the most probable and acclaimed explanation defines the absence of mane as an adaptation to the environment by populations inhabiting the arid and warmest areas. In fact it would be an adaptation for which the growth of the mane is delayed and very slowly compared to the lions of other areas.

“You know you are truly alive when you’re living amongst lions.” – **Karen Blixen**

Along with physical adaptations, we have already seen how some lion prides are capable of developing “cultural” adaptations, that is, non-innate behaviors, typical of some communities, and somehow learned and handed them down within the community itself. An example is the lions of the [Tarangire National Park](#) and the Lake Manyara National Park in Tanzania, which have developed a very particular habit. These cats are not experienced



climbers like leopards, but here they are usually climbing the trees and spending part of the time on rest. However, this is a behavior observed, more rarely, in herds of other areas of Africa, for which several explanations have been proposed. In particular during the seasons with higher rainfall and wetlands, lions prefer to avoid contact with too soft or muddy soils.

In addition, a higher elevation from the ground would also provide a minor presence of annoying insects and gnats that often do not give respite among high grass. As it often happens, even in this case it is reasonable to think of a number of factors that induce behavior rather than a single precise cause.



Tree-Climbing Lion