

Tswalu...

the heart of the

KALAHARI

Jenny Handley shares what makes **Tswalu's Loapi camp** a safari experience like no other.

IT'S THE RAW, RED BEAUTY AND VAST EXPANSE OF LAND THAT is distinctively the Kalahari. Here you automatically unwind and relax into the pace of the land to appreciate nature better, to breathe slower. Silence, solitude and understated sophistication beckon, but it's the people who bring it alive. Dedicated people who help you live in the present while they quietly focus on the future. They're passionate about restoring the equilibrium of the land with carefully considered conservation. And they match this passion in how they make the guest feel like they're the only ones that matter.

Add a private plane ride with no more than eight passengers, from Cape Town or Johannesburg in less than two hours as the ultimate indulgence. Or you can drive. But whatever it takes, put it on your bucket list and get there.

“Sunset was appreciated with our choice of tipple against the dramatic backdrop of the African sky.”



LOAPI LUXURY

The warm welcome from safari manager Gary and tracker Tebogo, who were our guides for three days, took place under an ever-growing rooftop of twittering birds making their home in the thatch. It's the first indication that here nature always comes first. After a quick drive we were settled into our safari home by our 'homathi' (meaning house manager), Amber and chef Theo. My husband and I were immediately struck by the luxury of these six tented camps, which house either two or four guests.

No attention to detail has been spared, yet it is low-key luxury at its best. A water-wise private plunge pool and deck with day beds and even a fire pit, you're hard-pressed to leave your haven, and that's the joy...you can choose if and when you want to.

There is no script at Tswalu. Having your own vehicle, guide and tracker means that you decide on how early, late or long your game drives will be. The privacy is perfect for VIP guests who desire anonymity, or those like us who simply like to be uber casual in the bush, and to lock into our own thoughts on a drive, the sounds of the wild dictating. It's the click of eland chasing through the bush, the roar of a lion or cry of a wild dog. It's never the noise or intrusion of another vehicle lining up to share a sighting, it's all yours, without having to share common spaces with other guests.

Stay 4 nights, pay 3 nights at the new Loapi Tented Camp, valid for all new bookings for travel between 1 January and 31 March 2024.

For reservations call +27 (0)53 781 9331 or email res@tswalukalahari.com

DESIGNED FOR LOW IMPACT, HIGH COMFORT

The horizon seems to be extra length, the long lines of the Korannaberg mountains extending as far as the eye can see, interrupted only by savannah grassland. There are 114 000 hectares to explore, with Loapi being one of three camps, and Tswalu boasting the lowest guest bed to hectare ratio. In Setswana, the native language, Loapi means 'the space below the clouds'. The six secluded safari homes were created with a light footprint in the largest privately protected wilderness, a true reflection of the owner's commitment to the regeneration of the environment and relentless commitment to sustainability. It was designed for minimal impact with solar power, water-recycling technology and energy-efficient air conditioning.

As importantly, it's aesthetically impressive.



PEOPLE, PLANET, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Our 'micro camp' had a welcome area with info, a neutral space in which to meet Gary and Tebogo. It's where we were 'handed over' by Amber each day so that our drives and dinners could be seamlessly co-ordinated for ultimate pleasure.

The modular canvas cocoons, each at least 50 m apart, ours a large 300 m², were constructed with steel, canvas and glass, created offside for minimal impact and to ensure shade from the harsh sun. The large living and dining area is the focal point, with an open-plan kitchen that closes when your chef wishes to pamper your every desire.

Time with chef Theo meant that we could discuss our culinary whims and appetites, clearly disappointing him on one day when we stated that we were saving ourselves for dinner at Klein JAN! Meals, enjoyed on the deck, were light, imaginative and tasty, a triumph of produce that was pristinely fresh in spite of being in the middle of nowhere. Freedom of choice dominated every aspect of our safari sojourn.

Our game drives were not 'tick-the-box' experiences, trying to notch up a list of

as many animals as possible. It was our treat to enjoy the immense knowledge of Gary, who is an avid birder and naturalist with an instinct for sharing just the right amount of info, at the appropriate time. One of our days we declared a cat day, watching closely three lionesses, later a cheetah and her three cubs, and lastly a mob of meerkats (of the mongoose family!), up close and personal. Rhino, mountain zebra, buffalo, giraffe and a plethora of buck dominated our drives. Sunset was appreciated with our choice of tippie against the dramatic backdrop of the African sky. On the first night we returned to our 'home' for a romantic dinner for two, the crackling fire and bubbles to welcome us. Theo excelled himself, and we dined like king and queen in solitude, Amber's choice of background music and wine setting the mood.

All too soon we had to tear ourselves away, back to the hustle and bustle, but now contemplative, appreciative and calm.

“ From sunrise to the rising of the full moon, every moment was memorable. 🍷 ”

