

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE There's an open-air bar and firepit and a pool overlooking a popular animal watering hole.

In the living room, hand-painted linen curtains feature an Acacia forest. Modern couches are tossed with pillows made of mud cloth or shweshwe fabric, used in customary South African clothing.

Fishing basket lights hang over the open bar at the newly-opened Phinda Homestead.

The best part about staying at Phinda Homestead? The fabulous animal viewing.



PHOTOS BY PAMELA WRIGHT FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

PHINDA PRESERVE A STEP BEYOND

BY DIANE BAIR AND PAMELA WRIGHT | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

A tail flick. That's all it took Clive, our tracker, to spot a lion sitting on a ledge a quarter mile away. "There," he said, very quietly, pointing to an open valley in the distance. The Land Rover took off, rumbling through dense bush. Minutes later, we were gazing at a pair of beautiful, thick-maned lions, lounging on a rocky rim flanking the open plain. Mere footsteps away.

There were other spectacular animal sightings: a herd of elephants, a dazzle of zebras, a crash of rhinos, a tower of giraffes, a raft of hippos, a cackle of hyenas, and more. We were on safari in the andBeyond Phinda Private Game Preserve in South Africa, where wildlife viewing is intimate, up-close, and revealing.

The now lush and thriving preserve, regenerated from overgrazed farmland, is the flagship property of andBeyond, a pioneer in eco-tourism, well-known for its conservation efforts and local community involvement. Phinda means "the return," in Zulu, and the name has proved to be more foretelling than anticipated. In December 2016, the beloved Phinda Homestead safari lodge burnt to the ground. Last September, it returned with the rise-from-the-ashes reopening of the luxury lodge, showcasing Zulu art, design, and culture.

While many luxury safari lodges are quiet and intimate, the Phinda Homestead takes it a step further:

a completely private lodge (it's rented as a whole), sleeping up to 12, with your own safari vehicle, ranger, tracker, butler, chef, and other support staff. Everything, including menus and activities, is customized for your group.

There are four spacious bedrooms, with indoor and outdoor showers, soaking tubs, and private decks. An additional room, with two bunks, is available for kids. The roomy shared areas include indoor and outdoor dining spots, a large living room, a deck with an open-air bar and firepit, a library, and fitness and massage rooms. A swimming pool with a lounging deck overlooks a watering hole frequented by birds, warthogs, antelope, and elephants. A boma, where you'll experience a traditional outdoor barbecue dinner, has walls made of rhino dung, mud, and grass, built by women in the KwaZulu-Natal community.

More than 90 percent of the furnishings and art at Phinda Homestead is from South African designers, artists, and local community members, thoughtfully curated to pay homage to the Zulu culture. The result is sophisticated, with locally-inspired, story-telling design.

In the living room, hand-painted linen curtains feature an Acacia forest. Modern couches are tossed with pillows made of mud cloth or shweshwe fabric, used in customary South African clothing. There's a modern take on a Zulu throne chair, and an artsy, fun

orange cheetah chair, both commissioned from Casamento, a Cape Town design and upholstery company. There are South African Nguni cattle skins, handmade Zulu ceramics, string art, baskets and beadwork, and lights made of reed and wood fishing baskets or calabash gourds, used by local farmers to collect water. The stunning floor-to-ceiling river reed curtains, found in the bedrooms and other places throughout the property, were handmade by local women, and mimic what hang in the doorways of traditional Zulu homes.

No matter how you do it, an African safari is bucket-list expensive. We asked several travel specialists for average safari prices. They say that generally, low-end, bare-bones safari stays can average about \$300 per person, per night. Mid-range stays hover around \$750 per person, per night. More private, luxury stays average \$1,300 per person, per night — or more. If you're looking in the luxury range, Phinda Homestead, costing about \$6,595 a night for the entire property, packs some value, along with lots of luxury perks. It's a milestone trip, splurge-worthy option. *andBeyond Phinda Homestead*, 27 11 809 4300, www.andbeyond.com

Diane Bair and Pamela Wright can be reached at bairwright@gmail.com.

HERE

CELEBRATE BAKING AND BREAD

Calling all bakers and grain enthusiasts! The Maine Kneading Conference and Artisan Bread Fair makes its yeasty return to Skowhegan, Maine, with two days of hands-on baking workshops, live demonstrations, and lectures and panel discussions, including wood-fired oven-building workshops and lectures on grain growing (July 25-26). Bringing together professional and home bakers, chefs, farmers, grain researchers, maltsters, food entrepreneurs and wood-fired-oven enthusiasts, the conference includes topics such as building an earth oven, artisan doughnuts, naan and roti, creating seaweed bread, and more. Pre-registration and payment required. \$325 includes all meals from Thursday breakfast through Friday lunch. On July 27, the Maine Artisan Bread Fair showcases tasty offerings from 60 vendors from all over the state. Free. kneadingconference.com

SEASIDE FILM FEST

Film buffs won't want to miss the 28th annual Woods Hole Film Festival (July 27-Aug. 3). A total of 52 feature length and 110 short films will be screened at five different venues in the village of Woods Hole and the town of Falmouth on Cape Cod. The festival's mission — promoting the films and careers of emerging independent filmmakers — means that more than half the offerings are by first-time directors. Keeping it local, films and filmmakers with ties to New England and Cape Cod and the Islands are strongly represented. New this year: The formation of



the Woods Hole Film Festival Film and Science Initiative means you can view a record 20 science-themed films, including subjects from lobster wars to migratory beekeepers to searching for a rare bird in the Guyana rain forest. Visitors can also attend master classes and panel discussions about film criticism, women in film, science and film, and more. Admission to screenings, panels, and parties: \$14 per event. Ticket packages, VIP all-access, and full festival tickets \$75-\$500. 508-495-FILM. www.woodsholefilm-festival.org

THERE

BEACHY ELEGANCE IN N.J.

Those tempted to head to the Jersey shore this summer can do so in style at the newly opened Asbury Ocean Club Hotel. Designed to be a "beach hideaway in the sky," the entire 54-room hotel is located on the fourth floor of a luxury residential building. Each loft-inspired guest room has 11-foot floor-to-ceiling windows offering stunning ocean, dune, or

city views from a private terrace. A 65-by-30-foot pool overlooks the ocean, and is outfitted with a full-service bar and grill serving a Mediterranean-inspired all-day menu. Floating on a reflection pool at the center of the property, the Drawing Room is a glass house that functions as a living room, open kitchen, bar, music room, and all-day retreat. Amenities include state-of-the-art Technogym-equipped gym; pampering spa; daily classes like yoga, meditation, tai chi, and Pilates; and a Beach Bellperson who sets up towels, chairs, and umbrellas on the beach, and delivers lunch and cold bottles of water. Special introductory



rates begin at \$295. 732-825-6000. asburyoceanclub.com/hotel

WOODSTOCK REDUX

Let your freak flag fly — or at least wear some vintage tie-dye — during the 50th anniversary celebration of Woodstock at the Bethel Center for the Performing Arts (Aug. 15-18) in upstate New York. A series of programs and events celebrate the legacy of the historic 1969 concert, including performances by Ringo Starr and his All Star Band, Arlo Guthrie, the Edgar Winter Band, the Doobie Brothers, John Fogerty, and Santana (Carlos Santana returns to Bethel Woods Pavilion Stage exactly 50 years after his groundbreaking festival performance). During anniversary week, the Museum at Bethel Woods will offer extended hours for docent tours of the site, and the current exhibition, "We Are Golden: Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of the Woodstock Festival and Aspirations for a Peaceful Future." Museum admission \$17-\$20. Reduced rates with online or same-day concert purchase, \$8-\$10. Concerts \$32-\$310. www.bethelwoodscen-ter.org/the-museum/woodstock50anniversary

EVERYWHERE

SMOOTH ROCKING PORTABLE COMFORT

What's better than a comfortable, sturdy, and lightweight portable chair? How about a portable chair that rocks? Kijaro has just released its newest offering, Rok-it, that is perfect



for camping trips, sports sidelines, and summer outdoor movie nights in the park. Features include custom-designed rear chair feet for smooth rocking motion; padded armrests; flip-out cup holder; and built-in carry strap. Includes a durable carry bag. Weight capacity 250 pounds. \$60. www.kijaro.com/rok-it

ECO-FRIENDLY TRAVEL BACKPACKS

Urban Originals has debuted its newest line of backpacks made with "premium vegan leathers," meaning no animal leather is used in any of the products. Perfect for travelers looking for elegant design and ethically responsible bags. All products are low chemical and meet eco standards. Urban Originals switches its inventory and styles about five times a year to stay on trend. Available in a variety of styles and shapes — with zippers and straps — and colors including soulful pink, moss green, blush, black, gray, cranberry, plum, tan, and more. \$78-\$98. uobags.com

NECEE REGIS