

CUTTING-EDGE ARCHITECTURE WITH AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN DESIGN

A staggering one million local and international visitors arrived in South Africa in January 2016, setting a precedent for the next tourist season. With safaris amongst the most sought-after travel experiences, with a restrained blend of clean, contemporary lines that unites the best of European - especially Dutch - and African furniture, fittings and interior art, Mhondoro Game Lodge is attracting visitors for more than just the alluring local game.



African project Mhondoro Game Lodge - South Africa



A

statement in intimate architecture and interior design, Mhondoro welcomes guests with a unique sense of comfort in rugged territory. Designed to give guests a seamless experience of luxury interiors and bushveld landscapes, it stands alone in its inspired use of leading African and European design.

“With a mixture of local and European design, our interiors match organic architecture to create a feeling of home away from home in the South African bush,” says Myriam Vogel, a Dutch interior designer who co-owns the lodge in Welgevonden Game Reserve with her husband Frank. Raw materials, earth tones and natural textures create a comforting interior that compliments the landscape. The style has a tactile effect that makes you want to reach out and touch the luxury wallpaper from France’s Élitis and Belgium’s Arte, or stroke the bespoke wooden table from Cape Town’s Pierre Cronje, produced in South Africa by skilled craftsmen.

“In Africa it’s all about texture, whether from the plants, animals or earth,” says Vogel. “From the wallpapers to the natural wood accents, the interiors instil a feeling of the environment so that you want to reach out and experience the space you are in.”

Other striking pieces include the iconic kudu and buffalo sculptural lights by Cape Town’s Anthea and Michael Methven that hang over the fireplace, and statement lampshades from Amsterdam-based design firm Graypants, which employs local craftsmen from disadvantaged backgrounds. The lampshades, made from recycled

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products, give off a warm, low lighting that enhances the calm and home-like feeling within the Main Lodge.

Pieces from award-winning Cape Town designer Vogel are also to be found, including the brand's signature wooden Nguni head coat hooks. Vogel, one of the first contemporary designers in South Africa, is credited with helping create the country's distinct aesthetic recognised locally and internationally.

Limited edition prints from Graham Springer's wilderness photography collection are on display throughout the lodge. The museum-quality wall art feature evocative, documentary-style wildlife images from the remote wilderness of northern Botswana. Even the most minor details, like guest umbrellas, have a designer touch at Mhondoro, with Durban native Clinton Friedman's nature-inspired collection available. "I like the sense of purity one gets from African design and the balance it creates alongside the minimalist element of European pieces," says Vogel. "Used together, it creates a rustic feeling that suits the architecture and the landscape but without losing the sense of high-end design."

At Mhondoro Game Lodge, [Mansonia Joinery](#) was contracted to manufacture the windows and doors, kitchens, staff kitchens, built-in cupboards, bathroom vanities, room service stations, shelving, bars butler stations, mirror frames and handrails. [Mansonia](#) were also tasked to design and install the wooden panel cladding, louvres and wooden pelmet linings.

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Opened in early 2016, Mhondoro's design was a collaborative effort. Working with the insights from lodge managers Annemarie Sechterberger and Jasper Bruinsma, the Vogel's were able to keep authenticity to the bush experience. Bruinsma conceptualised Mhondoro's underground waterhole hide, the first of its kind in South Africa. An animal viewing hide built around the waterhole that stands out front, it is accessed by a lit underground corridor leading from the Main Lodge, providing guests with the unique opportunity to view game at their leisure.

At ground level, the hide provides excellent photographic opportunities from a distinctive perspective, as well as the excitement of getting really up close, anytime day or night, to elephants and other wildlife drinking from the waterhole.

"The waterhole hide and underground access route really distinguishes Mhondoro from many other lodges," says Julia Williams, founder of Imprint Architecture in Johannesburg. Working on the architecture of the Main Lodge, Williams worked to integrate features like the waterhole into an overall design that celebrates the bush surroundings. "In a bush setting, architecture shouldn't compete with the natural environment but should complement it," says Williams. "By using the natural outline of the landscape, our design blends into the contours of the environment and puts the horizon and the waterhole on show."

"The main concept behind the main lodge was an attempt to use contextual forces to

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