

GET A DOSE OF *Vitamin n*

That's N for nature - spending time outdoors can be wonderfully restorative, as three frazzled *WH* staffers discovered

Overlooking
the waterhole
at Mhondoro
Game Lodge.

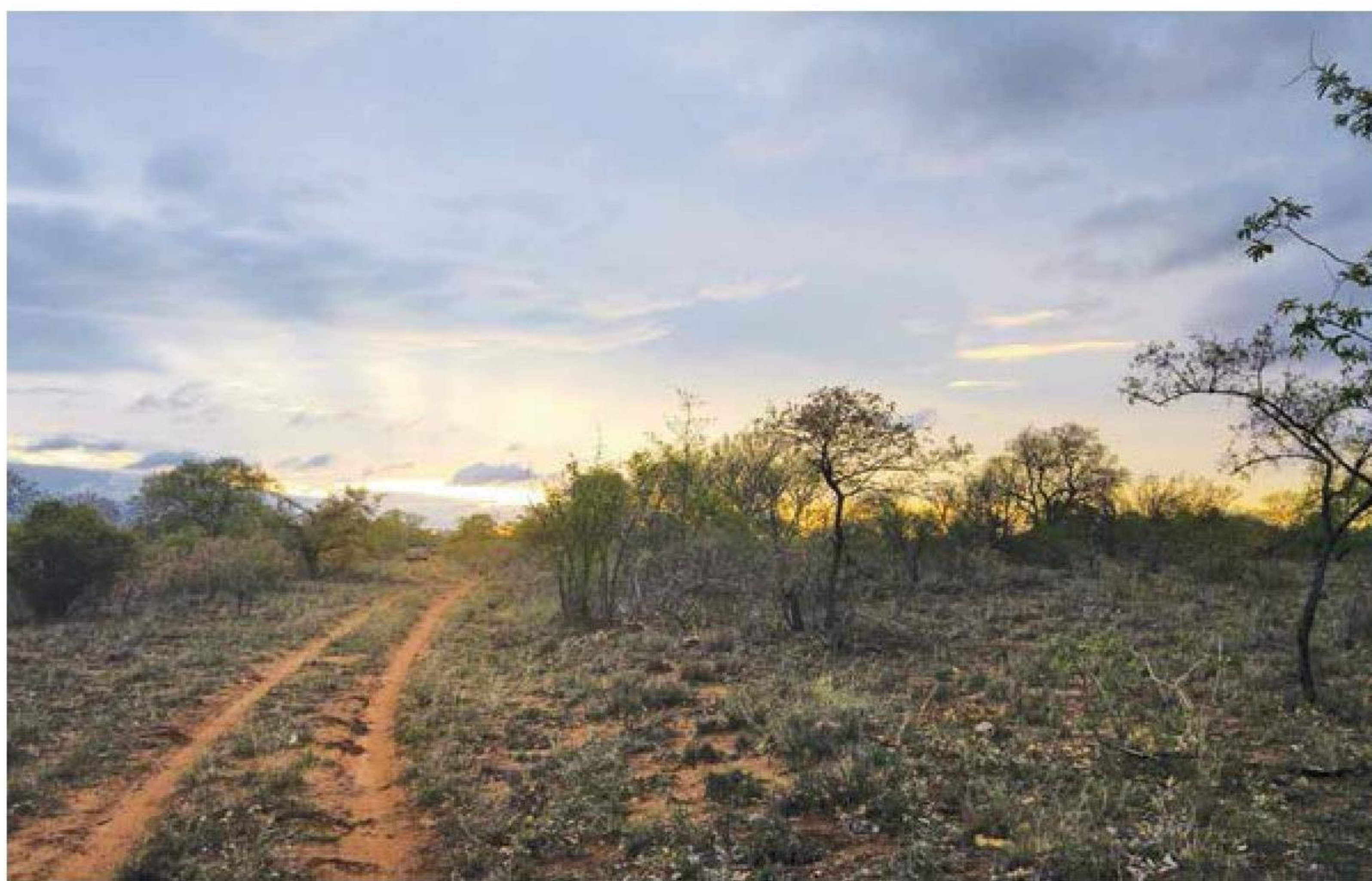


LEAVE THE BEATEN TRACK

DESTINATION:
KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Susan Barrett reclaimed her power by accidentally accepting a camping trip to the Mafunyane 4x4 Eco-Trail in the untamed northern reaches of the Kruger National Park – before she knew *she'd* be driving the 4x4!?

A wretched work addict and boy sop, she came out the other end in the emotional driver's seat.



MY BEST

- ▶ You're seeing parts of Kruger your average family-of-five-in-a-camper-van will never see... Get lost. Stop often. Rise early. Stay up late.
- ▶ You must take the wheel. By navigating unpredictable terrain in a scary-big car, you're empowering yourself as a human – and as a woman.



Yup, I'd said yes before I even read the invitation – because I'd recently spotted the tail of the

hamster I was turning into when I checked my butt in the mirror. I didn't know that I'd actually be steering said Isuzu 4x4 through otherwise inaccessible parts of the Kruger National Park on the hairy northern Mafunyane 4x4 Eco-Trail (I drive a Jazz...). I also didn't know that the weekend prior I'd be left stranded with a giant tog bag in the middle of Joburg by the boy I'd recklessly given my heart to. Right on top of a major work event #fail.

It was great timing. Because Kruger dries silly city tears. Particularly the wilder bits. Think: a four-day eco trail that cuts out all the bullshit – your only concerns are reaching your next camp without flipping the car, what's going to be on your plate at the next braai and what might eat you en route to your next bush wee.

Honestly, I felt like a spoilt little fit girl sitting round a fire with my camp mates. These women were *strong*. Awed, I'd watched as they rescued a 4x4 from a muddy riverbank with a length of rope and pure grit, then didn't even blink before ploughing the next five cars through the same skid zone. No one considered calling for help. And they didn't need an Insta snap to prove how cool they were. The deadline-slash-crush fluff that had hijacked my ego just felt embarrassing.

I tested my mettle in the untamed heart of the bush and came out way stronger than when I went in. And all it took was four days.

Susan's trip included driving a 4x4 over rocky terrain, watching bush sunrises and scouting for wildlife. And she even got to throw in a good stretch with her team of strong women.



TIP:
Pack dark clothing only! Whites will never be the same after this trip.



GO HIKING ON A SAFARI

DESTINATION:
EASTERN CAPE



Digital editor Gina Beretta, ditched her laptop to spend three days at Founders Lodge on the outskirts

of PE, where she embarked on a forced social-media detox and learnt how to reconnect with nature by hitting the trails.

I'm ALWAYS online. And that's not a gross exaggeration. To be honest, I'm one of those people who obsessively checks the social feeds 24/7. Anyone who works in digital will agree that you can never really "switch off" – and that can be pretty exhausting.

I was experiencing a bad case of digital-overload and desperately needed to unplug from the Matrix. So, I packed my bags and headed to Founders Lodge, an über-luxurious boutique safari lodge nestled adjacent to the wild – yet malaria free – valleys of Shamwari Game Reserve... Where reception is sketchy.

At first I was sceptical – would I really be able to survive a weekend without access to the net? Turns out, it wasn't that difficult to put my phone down. Instead of waking up at the crack of dawn to check my newsfeeds, I found myself waking up to catch the sunrise on a breakfast game drive and was lucky enough to see the OG of the reserve... A honey badger. Our guide, Phillip, was so excited by the rare sighting that we ended up bundu-bashing through thick bush to get a better look at the cheeky critter. Besides spotting the big five on Shamwari, it was the trails on the Founders Lodge grounds that made the trip for me. After all, it's not often that you get the opportunity to make your way through the bush on foot! It gave me the opportunity to really get up close and personal with nature and forced me to connect with the other guests – rather than tweet at them – as we hiked up and down the hills.

In the end, the only time my phone came out was to take photos of the incredible wildlife. And for once, the only ones tweeting were the birds!



MY BEST

- ▶ Heading off for a hike through the bush while a bemused herd of zebra looked on.
- ▶ Watching giraffe graze just outside the bedroom window. That's something you don't see every day.
- ▶ Bush breakfasts (hello, there's bubbly!).



BOOK NOW!

[FoundersLodge](#)
[ByMantis.com](#)

From her luxurious accommodation and bubbly breakfasts in the bush to hiking around the grounds of the lodge, Gina's trip let her relax and unwind – no internet connection required!



gear up FOR THE GREAT OUTDOORS



TRAIL SHOES Keep your footing as you explore paths and trails. Ramble trail shoe, R499, Olympic



PUFFER JACKET A bonus of getting away from the city: a canopy of stars. But it'll be chilly – as is sunrise yoga. Swan down jacket, R1 499, K-Way



HEADLAMP Pretty much no. 1 after water and shelter – now you can braai and wee hands-free. LED Lenser SEO7R Headlamp, R1 199, Cape Union Mart



CLEANSING WIPES

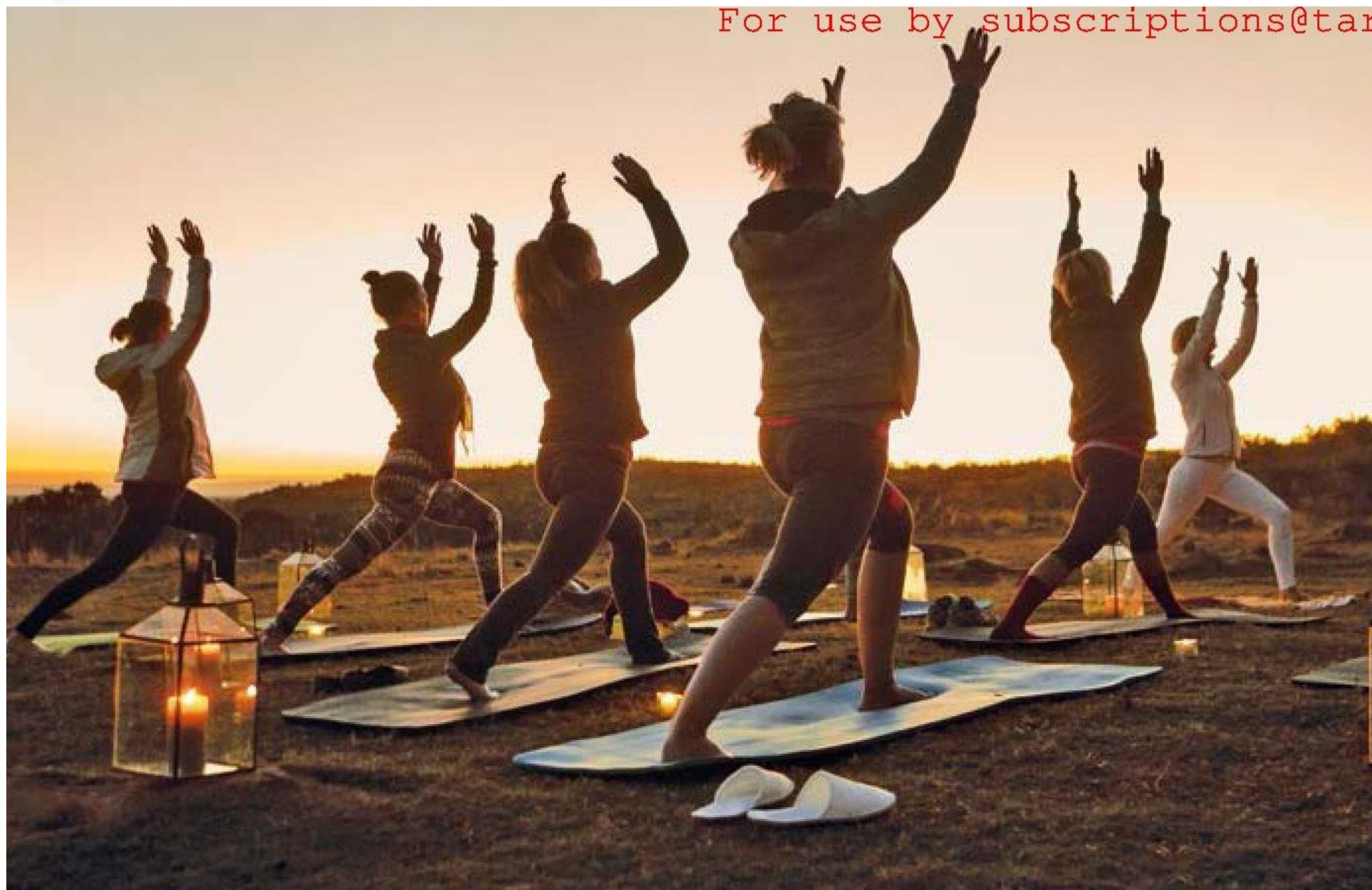
When you're off-roading and camping, think of them as your bush "bath". Toss used ones in a packet for disposal later. Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleansing Cloths, R140



INSECT REPELLENT

Avoid nasty itchy bites. Badger Anti-Bug Balm, R150, WellnessWarehouse.com

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DO YOGA IN THE BUSH

DESTINATION:
LIMPOPO



It didn't take much (okay, nothing!) to convince *WH* editor Danielle Weakley that escaping the

confines of the office for a couple of days of yoga in the great outdoors was just what she needed to restore her flagging winter spirit. And not just any outdoors – the five-star variety at Mhondoro Game Lodge in the Welgevonden Game Reserve in Limpopo.

You know – unequivocally – that wellness has seeped into every corner of your world when even something as relaxing, life-affirming and good for the soul as a bush break ups the ante by including a yoga detox in its calendar. Mhondoro Game Lodge has introduced a series of yoga weeks with an international yoga instructor from Zenzo Yoga in the Netherlands. The idea is to take the very best of the bush – the solitude and innate connection with nature – and just add yoga. And “ohm” to that – it was glorious!

Usually, the pre-dawn hour in the bush kicks off with coffee, rusks and a game drive and things are no different here... Although there's little chance of you getting a rusk! Just make peace with it – it's hot water and lemon before you're bundled into ponchos and blankets and set on your way in the open cruisers for a drive around the park.



On the yoga front, everything is provided, so you don't need to be a yogi of any standing to participate. Zenzo Yoga has also supplied rollers and other props to aid your practice and your alignment.

Dan was able to Zen out completely at Mhondoro Game Lodge, where she yoga-ed, meditated and ate her way to blissful relaxation.

Once the sun's up, it's time for a gentle yoga class. The ranger brings the mats, towels and a rifle – and against the backdrop of the wild landscape, we line up our sun salutations, close our eyes and breathe. Yoga practice takes place twice a day – in the early morning and in the evening. In between, there's time for guided meditation and mindful bush walks, where the yoga instructor talks us through breathing exercises and mindful practice. And there's a spa where full-body massages are the treatment of choice, that is if you're not opting for an Indian head massage – which you absolutely should do.

On all fantastic bush breaks, the food plays an intrinsic part in the experience. It seems near-impossible

to marry the idea of a detox with the sheer indulgence that a five-star bush break allows, but, to be honest, this was no different – it just didn't include coffee, booze, gluten, dairy or red meat. And you'd never even notice.

Breakfasts were a feast of eggs, salmon, sweet potato flapjacks, home-made granola and goat's-milk yoghurts, while lunch was a table groaning with different salads and dinner – still served around a roaring open fire under the stars – saw fish on the coals, instead of the usual meat, served up with loads of braai'd veggies and salads.

We left feeling grounded, lighter, healthier, Zenned out and ready to face the world again. ■

MY BEST

► We practised yoga super-early one morning, lit only by loads of candles, to take advantage of the sunrise. Get up early and do it! It was life-affirming.

► Do not miss the goat's-milk veg lasagna – since my trip to Mhondoro I've become shamefully addicted to any version of melted goat's cheese you can offer me.

► Set aside time to creep down to the watering hole just outside the lodge. It's connected to the main building by way of an underground tunnel, so you can walk across and literally be eye-to-eye with the animals without disturbing them at all.

► If you're really lucky, you'll have a visit from the local elephants. They enjoy swinging past the swimming pool at the lodge for playtime in the late afternoon.

BOOK NOW!

Booking is open for Mhondoro Game Lodge's Yoga (Detox) Retreat, 20 to 25 November. Mhondoro.com