



More at Mhondoro

Trevor Crichton goes five-star gazing at Mhondoro Lodge.

Game drive, breakfast, massage, lunch, sauna, high tea, game drive, dinner, stargazing, wine by the fire. The daily schedule at Mhondoro Game Lodge in Limpopo's Welgevonden reserve is exactly the kind of 'exhausting' I want in my life.

And that's without visiting the custom underground hide that gets you eyeball to eyeball with game at the watering hole right in front of the lodge, working off some of the lavish meals in the gym, or dodging the elephants who regularly drink from the heated pool at the edge of the main deck. All of this in the most impossibly stylish surroundings, straight from the pages of a trendy décor magazine...

With a capacity of just 20 guests, the emphasis at Mhondoro is on quality and attentive service. The food is high art on a plate, backed by substance and attention to detail. Having specific dietary requirements is a good way to test the level of care any establishment takes in every element of the

experience, and the team at Mhondoro doesn't miss a beat.

The rooms themselves deliver a mix of thatched authenticity, earthy-hued serenity and custom comfort, whether in the two couple-friendly deluxe suites, either of the two-bedroom executive or family suites, or the romantic honeymoon suite with its private spa pool and viewing deck. From the mammoth bathrooms to the gas fireplaces and the extra-length beds, the emphasis is on comfort. There's no danger of being forced to squeeze long-life milk from a triangular cardboard box into a mug featuring equal sachet measures of instant coffee and sugar – the Mhondoro way offers a selection of Nespresso pods and a bottle of fresh milk in your amply stocked minibar fridge.

For those who would prefer to not make their own coffee, the six-sleeper villa comes with a personal chef and butler, personal ranger with a dedicated game-viewing vehicle, a private gym,

yoga studio, and en-suite bedrooms larger than most city apartments. The lodge claims that 'every need has been anticipated' in the construction and operation of the villa, and it's hard to think of a way to disprove that claim.

There are also some animals going about their business in the 35 000ha malaria-free reserve, if you can prise yourself away from your outdoor shower. Ranger Phineas casually pointed out a cheetah resting under a tree for our very first sighting, and seemed to be able to conjure up rhino or elephant from thin air when he sensed our focus was slipping.

All-inclusive rates at Mhondoro start at R3 700 per person sharing, per night. That includes all meals, local drinks and house wines, two game drives a day, reserve entrance fees and scheduled transfers from the Welgevonden main gate.

Boekenhout Kloof, Site 40, Welgevonden Private Game Reserve, Vaalwater, mhondoro.com. ■

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