

Cutting-edge architecture sets Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa apart

Mhondoro Safari Lodge & Villa is a statement of intimate architecture and interior design, welcoming guests with a unique sense of comfort in the rugged territory. Designed to present 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 complements 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.

“Here 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, making 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, which hang over the fireplace, and statement lampshades from the Amsterdam-based design firm, Graypants,

which employs local craftsmen from disadvantaged backgrounds. The lampshades, made from recycled products, give off a warm, low lighting that enhances the calm and home-like feeling within the Main Lodge.

Pieces from the 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, which is recognised locally and internationally.

Limited edition prints from Graham Springer’s wilderness photography collection



Photo: Christopher Clarke

are on display throughout the lodge. The museum-quality wall art features 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.

"Used together, it creates a rustic feeling that suits the architecture and the landscape but without losing the sense of high-end design," says Vogel.

Opened in early 2016, Mhondoro's design was a collaborative effort. Working with the insights from (then) Lodge Managers Annemarie Sechterberger and Jasper Bruinsma, the Vogel's were able to maintain the bush experience's authenticity.

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, 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, the 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.

"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," says Williams.

This same aesthetic was applied to the luxury Villa at Mhondoro. Completely private and exclusive, the Villa is a continuation of the natural theme with warm, earthy tones and ample outdoor living spaces. In its privacy, the Villa offers a calm escape that makes visitors feel right at home in the bush landscape.

These design and architectural details set Mhondoro apart as a home-away-from-home in the bush.

"Our design captures a sense of home so that you can embrace the bush, the animals and the atmosphere without having to rush around or go on a game drive every day.

"We'd like to think that we have created a home for everyone here at Mhondoro," concludes the co-owner, Frank Vogel. ▲

Staff Writer