

12 Life

An elephant drinking from a pool at Mhondoro Safari Lodge



Mhondoro, where humans and elephants rub shoulders

2.9.2018

deeper pockets can hire the 3-bedroom villa which can accommodate up to six people.

At the villa one gets their own private chef, game drive guide, where hours are more flexible, and private butler.

On the first night after elephants interrupted my lovely salmon dinner, I rushed to the hotel's underground hideaway for a vantage point in the tunnel above the watering hole to take up-close pictures of different animals.

I hit it off with the head chef, Jackson Rapoo, who hails from Tladistad, North West.

His interesting 11-year journey as a chef includes stints in Abu Dhabi, several Protea hotels, a few boutiques and some lodges in Lephalale.

Rapoo explained the various menu options, with lunch served daily as yummy salad and protein platters, to ensure that the guests get a little reprieve from the heavier breakfast and dinner menus.

Welgevonden, Dutch for "well found" also prides itself as a reserve where you will find the Big 5. My wish was to spot lions and rhinos.

We spotted a lot of game beyond the lodge's main entrance. These included a mommy and baby hippo basking on a river bank, a huge crocodile and two rhinos.

After driving for almost an hour we spotted a mommy and baby rhino, and were about to get a closer look when ranger, Greg Toplis, spotted a pride of lions. We drove to the spot and saw five females with two cubs.

One female acted as a child minder while the other four lined themselves up in preparation to attack a huge antelope.

We were excited that we would see a lion-kill unfold. We quietly watched for 30 minutes as they inched closer to the oblivious prey until a vigilant male antelope spotted the lions and aggressively raised his voice to warn the others.

The waiting was exciting even without the kill. And such fulfilment is what you get at Mhondoro, which means a guardian spirit in Shona.

■ Nkosi was hosted by Mhondoro GameLodge.

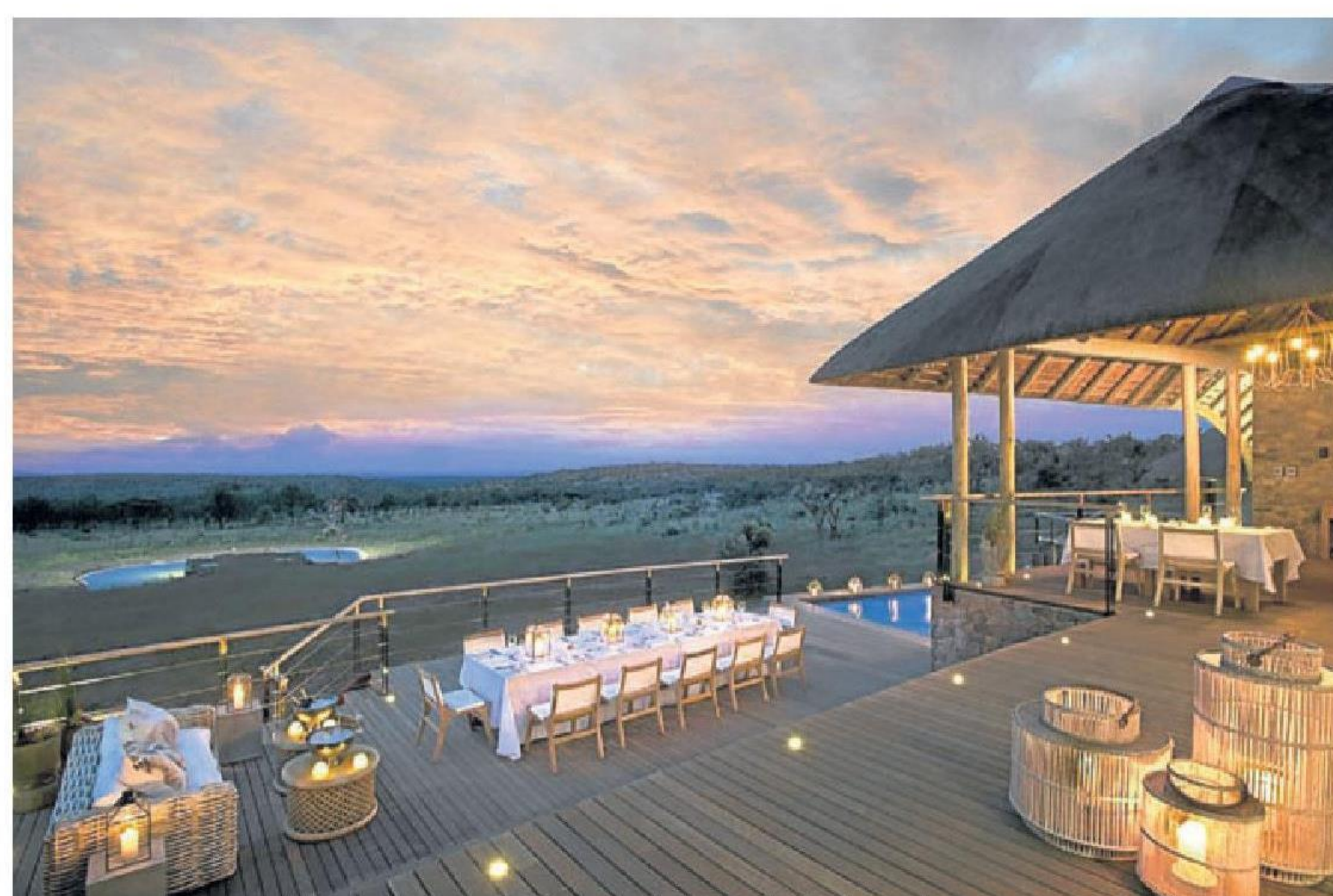
Spiritual retreat in the heart of the Bushveld

By **Mapula Nkosi**

One of the amazing experiences about spending time at Mhondoro Safari Lodge is when a herd of elephants who come to quench their thirst at a nearby dam overlooking the lodge, amble towards the pool and extend their tusks to drink from the salt-water pool.

In fact, one of the publicity images of a lone bull slurping away from the pool, with a guest sunbathing on a lounge a few meters away, had heightened my curiosity to visit the lodge.

It seems lady luck was with me as, on my first night at the lodge situated inside the Wel-



Mhondoro Safari Lodge's main pool offers visitors a chance to watch elephants drink before a beautiful sunset

gevonden Safari Reserve, a cheeky bull came near the pool, flapped away the cover and merrily drank from it. He was so close, one only needed to extend a hand to pat his task.

Guests immediately abandoned their food to capture the experience on their cameras.

It is such a signature experience at the lodge. The establishment runs a competition to encourage guests to upload their selfies with ele-

phants drinking from the pool on the background, if one is lucky enough to see this, for a chance to win a stay at the lodge.

My drive to the lodge, that is owned by Dutch couple Frank and Myriam Vogel, was pleasantly quick, just over two hours. Situated just outside Vaalwater, off the main Polokwane N1 highway in the Waterberg area.

Being put up in a luxury honeymoon suite at Mhondoro meant a stay fit for A-listers.

The suite has its own plunge pool, large bathroom and shower area where the indoor show-

er leads to a rugged bath-time experience of their outdoor shower.

No luxury has been spared in the contemporary afro-chic influenced decor. When I ask about their world class furnishings, I learn from front office assistant, Tashinga Dzwukutu, that Myriam is the one who decorated the lodge.

"We had a fire a few years ago at the main house and she had the perfect opportunity to refurbish it," she said.

The honeymoon suite is situated a stone-throw away from the four other suites for privacy.

On my first day I savoured the room and watched the sunset from the heated plunge pool. The lodge can accommodate 14 to 18 guests in their four suites, but those with



The spacious and luxurious bedroom has enough sunlight



The fire area takes you into the lost world