



Deciphering animal tracks in the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve.

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Struik Travel

PICTURE: SIMBAVATI TRAILS

WALKING SAFARIS REBOOTED

In SA's wild places, something marvellous is afoot. From the Cape fynbos to the lush Lowveld, Hlengiwe Magagula reports a proliferation of new guided, down-to-earth safaris



Guests at Morukuru Rustic Camp will find that the dramatic terrain of the Marakele National Park is best admired on foot.

PICTURE: SANPARKS/HONORARY RANGERS



THE AUTHOR

Hlengiwe Magagula is co-author of *Walking Safaris of South Africa*, newly published by Struik Travel & Heritage (R270). Both a practical guide and a lyrical evocation of the pleasures of walking in wild places, the book covers 21 parks and reserves with big game and guided walks.

We love walking in our wild areas. Wildlife watching on safari is wonderful too. What happens when we merge the two? Magic happens. All of our senses sit up and pay attention. We see the true richness of wilderness ecosystems, from the smallest insects to the mightiest trees. We smell the scent of wild basil and sage as we wander in a fever tree forest at dawn. Our ears warn us of possible dangers ahead, the crunch of a browsing elephant, the alarm call of a vervet monkey, the low grunts of a lioness with her cubs. Even our sense of touch is awakened, as we discover the incisors of a long-gone hippo, caress the cracked bark of a leadwood tree, try our hand with an ancient grinding stone.

It's no surprise that new walking safari opportunities are opening in SA's parks and reserves. From the Cape to the Lowveld, from sleep-outs to ultra-luxury camps, lovers of wild walks are spoilt with novel options that meet the growing demand for healthy outdoor experiential travel. Some new trails launched just before the

pandemic, only to see park gates shut. Now, with reserves open – and staying open – they are rebounding and welcoming guests. There are tempting special deals to be had and, following widespread summer rains, rivers are flowing and the bushveld is green. Yes, 2021 will be the year of the walking safari.

TRAILS

1 KRUGER SLEEP-OUT: Primitive Pafuri

Have you ever dreamed of drifting to sleep under the stars in one of the world's great wilderness areas? Primitive Pafuri may be the answer. For the first time in the Kruger National Park, hikers can go totally wild and sleep tent-free, taking turns for the night watch. After a few test runs last year, African-Born Safaris is ready to lead adventures in the Pafuri Triangle in the park's far north, with the first trails planned for April 2021.

Known to be the Kruger's most biodiverse area, the landscapes vary from the spectacular Lanner Gorge in the west to the pans and fever tree forests of the Limpopo River flood plain to the east. Hikers supply their own food and kit – but

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