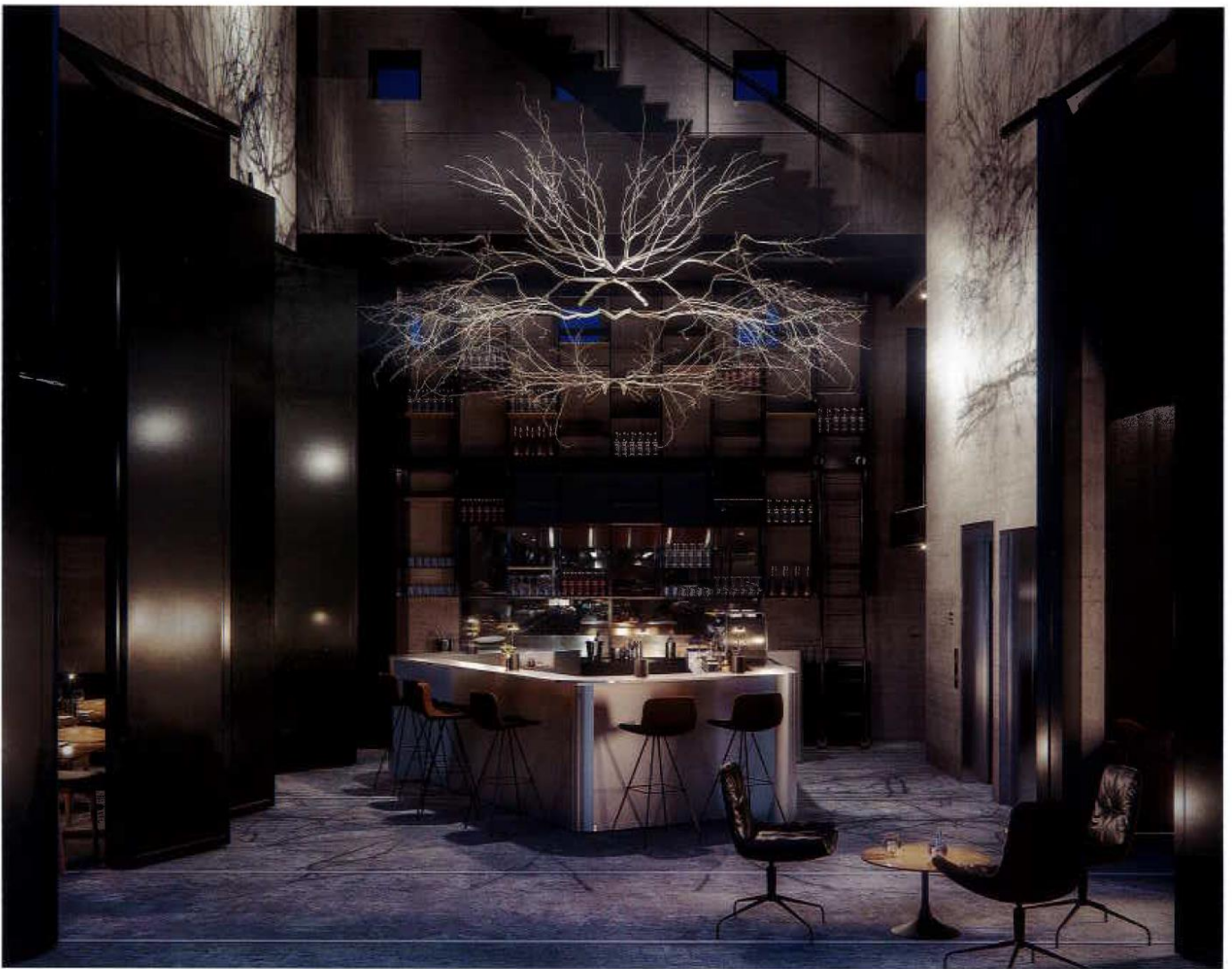


SLEEPER

GLOBAL HOTEL DESIGN

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2018



Hotel Herman K

Brøchner Hotels unveils its conversion of a transformer station in the heart of Copenhagen

Arnaud Zannier

The unconventional hotelier on his journey from mountain to paddy field to savannah

Kimpton Fitzroy

The country's leading designers usher a British institution into a new era

TREND REPORT



TREND REPORT

Lodges & Tented Camps

As guests increasingly seek philanthropic travel experiences, Africa's hotel industry looks set to prosper, with luxury safari camps appearing across the continent.

Words: Emma Love



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From Namibia to Rwanda, Zimbabwe to Botswana, a host of new lodge openings signify growth in the luxury African safari camp sector. Take Namibia, where until now, exclusive properties have been thin on the ground. “I think the current investment into Namibia is demand driven, and this demand is specifically for high-end quality product – something which Namibia lacks in any form of quantity,” says Tristan Cowley, co-founder of tour operator Ultimate Safaris. “The type of camps opening are also very much in line with the country’s desire to be a low impact destination that takes sustainability seriously.”

One such camp is Omaanda, a new 9,000 hectare private reserve near Windhoek owned by Zannier Hotels, designed by Geraldine Dohogne to leave no footprint (a second Zannier lodge is scheduled to open near Sossusvlei next spring). Ten round mud huts with thatched roofs, built in the traditional style of the Owambo tribe, each have earthy tones and natural textures, with a sunken bath and private balcony that face the plains below.

In the social living spaces there are linen sofas and rugs made from hessian sacks, baskets handmade in South Africa and a wooden dugout canoe propped against the fireplace. “I always handpick every object so I can get to know its story, whether it’s the bowls hung on the walls of the restaurant with different drawings from African tribes, or the old pots in the living area that were once used to store

grain,” says Dohogne. Further northwest are two new properties from Natural Selection: Hoanib Valley Camp, which comprises six understated canvas tents designed by Cate Simpson (best known for her work on North Island in the Seychelles) and Shipwreck Lodge on the Skeleton Coast.

It’s a similar demand-driven story in Rwanda where Wilderness Safaris, One & Only and Singita are all tapping into the developing luxury sector. “Rwanda’s tourism strategy is based on a niche market of low volumes and high yields, and that is attracting the appropriate brands,” says Manzi Kayihura, co-founder of Thousand Hills Africa, a tour company that specialises in arranging bespoke trips through Rwanda and Uganda. Wilderness Safaris was first off the ground with last year’s opening of Bisate Lodge, just outside Volcanoes National Park in the north, where the six round villas and open-plan main building by architect Nick Plewman take their design cues from the former Royal Palace in Nyanza. A second Wilderness Safaris property, Magashi, is set to open in the Akagera National Park mid-2019.

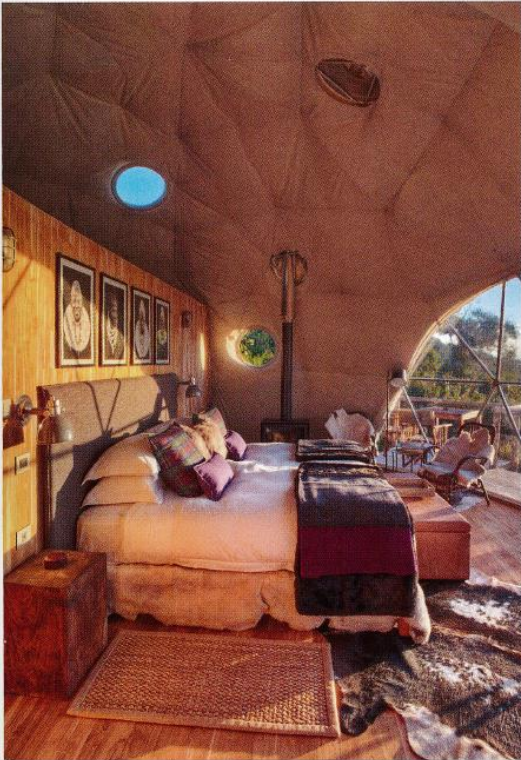
The lead interior designer on the project was Caline Williams-Wynn, founder of Artichoke, but Wilderness Safaris also brought onboard Rwandan entrepreneur Teta Isibo, whose company Inziki Designs collaborated with artisans on crafted homeware and accessories, and the staff uniforms made using traditional ‘kitenge’ fabrics. Of the decision to branch out into Rwanda, Grant Woodrow,

TREND REPORT
LODGES & TENTED CAMPS

This Page (Clockwise From Right): Belmond Eagle Island Lodge, Chikwenya, Little Mombo, Bisate Lodge and Asilia The Highlands have all made their mark on Africa's lodges and tented camp market. **Opposite:** Hoanib Valley Camp comprises six understated canvas tents designed by Cate Simpson. **Previous Page:** Omaanda, a new camp from Zannier Hotels, features ten mud huts built in the style of the Owambo tribe.



© Mark Williams



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Above: Singita's Lebombo Lodge in the Kruger National Park will soon be joined by a new addition to the portfolio in Rwanda

Wilderness Safaris Chief Operations Officer explains: "Our interest in Rwanda began as long ago as 2009, when we started contemplating how our ecotourism model could contribute to the conservation of the Virunga Massif ecosystem and an iconic endangered species like the mountain gorilla. When we made the decision to invest in Rwanda, the last thing we intended to do was just to build a boutique lodge and sell gorilla treks. We wanted to ensure that our brand of responsible ecotourism made a real difference to both rural Rwandan people and biodiversity conservation."

Responsible ecotourism will also be at the heart of Singita Kwitonda Lodge when it opens next August, just outside the Volcanoes National Park. "Singita has always been intent on working to support the preservation and protection of at-risk species and wilderness areas so there is huge conservation appeal of being in Rwanda. The country has one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Africa today and a government that is dedicated to sustainable development but private sector involvement remains essential to the economic growth," says Tom Fels, CEO of Singita. "Our contribution is strongly tied to the

"Rwanda's tourism strategy is based on a niche market of low volumes and high yields, and that is attracting the appropriate brands."

Manzi Kayihura, Thousand Hills Africa

livelihood of the people who live alongside the protected areas." Fels is also seeing a strong guest desire for philanthropic travel experiences. "Travellers have become more engaged, seeking conservation experiences that effect real change and we are looking to curate specific experiences with this in mind at Singita Kwitonda."

In other African regions too, the confidence in the market is reflected in new investment and contemporary design. Two years ago Singita's Lebombo Lodge in the

Kruger National Park unveiled a complete redesign, with 13 open-plan suites suspended over the N'wanetsi River, each with minimalist interiors in an unfussy palette of calming greys, smudged inky toned artworks, glazed earthenware and stonewashed linens. There is also a new partnership with Cape Town chef Liam Tomlin and a new 25-metre lap pool proving that fitness is high on the agenda.

Around the same time, Asilia opened The Highlands in the remote Ngorongoro conservation area of Tanzania: eight dome-shaped canvas and teak tents with striking black and white portraits of Maasai women above a huge bed layered with cosy blankets and tartan cushions, cow hide rugs on the floor and a wood-burning stove



Above: Omaanda – along with many of Africa's lodges and tented camps – taps into a guest desire for conservation experiences

which is lit at night. Days are spent with Maasai guides who will take guests hiking down into the nearby Embaki crater to see flamingos resting on one leg in the salt lake, organise a game drive in the Ngorongoro crater to spot four of the big five, and pay a visit to a Maasai village to see how the tribe live.

In Botswana, Belmond Eagle Island Lodge in the Okavango Delta re-opened three years ago following an almost total re-build with new look interiors by designer Inge Moore. Twelve tented rooms each feature an oversized bed facing the delta with a handmade copper finish headboard that references the country's mining tradition, a mini-bar crafted in the style of an explorer's toolbox and a custom-designed table with canvas and leather pockets. "For the colour palette, I was fascinated by the grey tones on an elephant's body when they are half wet, half dry from walking through the water so I put this together with the golden chest of the fish eagle after which the lodge was named," recalls Moore. "We developed a special plaster colour we named wet elephant."

In 2017, Wilderness Safaris launched Qorokwe Camp in the

"We wanted to ensure that our brand of responsible ecotourism made a real difference to both rural Rwandan people and biodiversity conservation."

Grant Woodrow, Wilderness Safaris

Qorokwe Concession, bordering the Moremi Game Reserve, also in the Okavango Delta, which operates entirely on solar power and this year re-opened its newly re-built flagship camps Mombo and Little Mombo. Here, Caline Williams-Wynn has included plenty of new elements – bed bases made from crackled leather, wood and brass chandeliers, Belgian linens – while still giving a nod to its design past with copper-clad fireplaces, wooden floors that have been salvaged and re-used as the breakfast bar in the dining room and original doors as a feature in the tents.

"In Botswana the market has remained very strong and Kenya is enjoying a great revival," says Frances Geoghegan, Managing Director of Africa Travel, who is also positive about Zimbabwe as an upcoming market, especially with October's re-opening of Wilderness Safaris Chikwenya Camp in Mana Pools National Park. "Zimbabwe is a growing market from a very low base; people are taking baby steps back. In terms of luxury, it's all about having the best concessions and how good your ranger is – and critically, in Zimbabwe they have the best guides." Watch this space.