

LEISURE

bushveld beauty

An intimate new safari lodge in the Waterberg straddles the divide between beauty and sustainability.

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LEISURE HOT SPOT

Low impact, high design. They're not terms we're used to associating with each other. Serious contenders for sustainable architecture often lack the appeal of luxury establishments. The MORE group of hotels' slick newcomer in the Marakele National Park, just hours from Joburg, is changing all that by checking the beauty and comfort boxes, and backing them with an impressive green philosophy.

Escape begins as we leave our car at the group's established Marataba Safari Lodge, from where a game vehicle takes us up to the remote reaches of Trails Lodge. As we pull up at the foot of the hill that backs the lodge, I'm struck by the property's diminutive scope. In front of me are a lean public building to the north and five neat luxury suites that hug the steep slope southwards.

The fact that it's completely off the grid goes one step further in classifying Marataba Trails Lodge as a diamond in the rough. Run entirely on solar power, it has sod roofs and gum pole overhangs for temperature control as well as gas heated, gravity fed borehole water. 'The greening of buildings provides endless design opportunities, allowing the architecture truly to breathe in response to its surroundings,' say architects Rob Marneweck and Paul Swart, who have championed the lodge's low impact design.

You can forget hopping in a car to track down the nearest pride of lions. Trails Lodge has made walking its mode of interaction, with guided hikes leaving twice a day. 'There's no better way to connect with the veld than being on foot,' explains the group's CEO, Robert More.

Modernist in its form, a low-slung timber, glass and steel box stretches from north to south to capitalise on the views over Waterfall Valley, with as little visual disturbance to the landscape as possible. It's a contemporary but pared-back space for dining, unwinding and socialising, with a relaxed style that interior designer Megan Thiel describes as Scandi-safari.

Brass cage pendants hang en masse above a chunky timber table where guests gather for meals whereas modular seating, leather chairs and copper side tables are fused on the opposite end in the lounge area. The two zones are unified by a striking stone wall running the building's length and the slender timber viewing deck along its face. 'By keeping spaces simple and uncluttered, combining natural textures and colours with uncomplicated yet comfortable design elements,' Megan says, she has managed to achieve a very real connection to what's outside. marataba.co.za

A TIMBER, GLASS AND STEEL BOX STRETCHES FROM NORTH TO SOUTH TO CAPITALISE ON THE VIEWS.



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