

More Africa News

BY PAUL RUBIO



Linkwasha Camp

RE-EMERGING ZIMBABWE

After decades of political and social turmoil, landlocked Zimbabwe in southern Africa has reopened its borders to tourism. A few reasons avid safari enthusiasts are clamoring to return to the country's virgin terrain.

NEW DIGS Last August in Hwange National Park, Wilderness Safaris opened the country's most luxe lair to date: **Linkwasha Camp**, a nine-tented-suite camp overlooking a watering hole frequented by wildlife. Between riveting game drives, gawk at the animal interactions from the privacy of your safari-chic suite — each offers unobstructed views of the natural pond. By year's end, Wilderness Safaris also will rebuild **Ruckomechi Camp** with 10 tented suites in Mana Pools National Park on the Zambezi River in northern Zimbabwe. On land-based and water-based excursions, you'll spot the likes of hippos, lions, leopards, and rhinos. Simultaneously, the company also will construct the more intimate **Little Ruckomechi Camp** nearby, with the number of tented suites not yet determined. Linkwasha from \$550 per person; Ruckomechi camps from \$702 per person. 011-27-11-807-1800; wilderness-safaris.com

NEW JOURNEYS This year, **Abercrombie & Kent** and **Cox & Kings** add itineraries focusing exclusively on the country. A&K's "Signature Zimbabwe" covers three national parks and Victoria Falls over 10 days and nine nights, while Cox & Kings' "Zimbabwe Rediscovered" follows a similar itinerary over 11 days and 10 nights. A&K from \$6,795 per person. 888-611-4711; abercrombiekent.com. Cox & Kings from \$6,670 per person. 800-999-1758; coxandkingsusa.com

UPGRADED AIRPORT **Victoria Falls International Airport** will unveil its \$150 million expansion this summer with a new terminal and runways large enough to accommodate sizable long-haul aircraft. Creating another major international hub in sub-Saharan Africa — it's poised to rival Johannesburg and Nairobi — the airport will make Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Botswana more accessible to travelers.



Hotel Debut in Wine Country

South Africa's western cape region — Africa's answer to Napa Valley — welcomed the new Leeu hotel brand to its vineyard-laced landscapes in December. The 12-room **Leeu House** now graces the main thoroughfare of the food- and wine-centric Franschhoek Village, while 170 acres of mountains and vines will envelop the upcoming 21-room **Leeu Estates**, scheduled to open by midyear. From \$261. 011-27-21-492-2222; leeu-collection.com



Cazenove+loyd's private rail journey

COOL NEW EXPEDITIONS

MALAWI

Cox & Kings goes way off Africa's beaten path, adding an eight-day itinerary that homes in on the country's incredible mountainous scenery; crystal-clear, biodiverse freshwater Lake Malawi; and authentic cultural offerings. From \$4,995. 800-999-1758; coxandkingsusa.com

SOUTH AFRICA

This February, bespoke outfitter **Cazenove+loyd** presents "Eat, Breathe, Live South Africa," a one-week sojourn by private rail — escorted by noted BBC correspondent Michael Buerk — that will visit multiple game reserves, the wetlands of St. Lucia estuary, and the Zulu battlefields of Isandlwana. From \$6,544 per person. 800-409-4233; cazloyd.com

TANZANIA

For the first time, **Fair Trade Safaris** will veer from its FIT (Free Independent Traveler) approach and offer a two-week small-group peregrination through Tanzania in July. Led by a professional photographer and a meditation and yoga teacher, the tour will feature plenty of photo instruction and Zen moments while in the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, and along Zanzibar's beaches. From \$6,485 per person. 800-912-9370; fairtradesafaris.com → Deviating from the norm of double occupancy safari packages, **Four Seasons Safari Lodge Serengeti** now links solo jet-setters through its pioneering Lone Ranger Package. Along with other solo travelers, experience Serengeti game drives, as well as yoga and cooking classes, while enjoying full-board accommodations at the savanna retreat. From \$895 per person. 800-819-5053; fourseasons.com/serengeti

ZAMBIA

For an in-depth, exhilarating bush experience, **International Nature & Cultural Adventures** offers a new 13-day luxury walking safari in Zambia with multiple departures from May through November. From \$8,995 per person. 510-420-1550; inca1.com

4 Reinvented Beach Retreats

MOZAMBIQUE

1 andBeyond Benguerra Island:

Last summer, luxury travel company andBeyond removed the bandages of a \$5.5 million face-lift to the iconic Benguerra Island Resort. Rechristened andBeyond Benguerra Island, this renewed 13-unit island treasure in southern Mozambique's Bazaruto archipelago still possesses a Portuguese colonial aesthetic while now outfitted with modish, understated interiors. Expect diving, snorkeling, horseback riding on the beach, sun worshipping, and eating just-caught

seafood. From \$695 per person. andbeyond.com/benguerra-island

SEYCHELLES

2 North Island resort:

A love match between nature and luxury, this 11-villa resort has set the bar for private-island pampering for more than 12 years and is doing it yet again, fresh from a refurbishment that enhances its contemporary seaside design. Think: rooms with sleek billowing curtains framing the Indian Ocean, stylish furnishings from reclaimed wood, and decorative hand-woven Himalayan wool carpets cast across



Park Hyatt Zanzibar

your 4,844-square-foot villa. Though North Island could easily rest on its laurels (and its reputation as the chosen honeymoon spot for Prince William and Princess Kate), it chooses to constantly reinvent the modern castaway fantasy. From \$3,488 per person. 011-248-4293-100; north-island.com

ZANZIBAR

3 Park Hyatt Zanzibar:

In the center of Zanzibar's UNESCO Heritage-declared Stone Town, this 67-room hotel is an adaptive reuse of a historic 17th-century Zanzibari

mansion, augmented with a second, newly constructed building. From \$350. 877-875-4658; zanzibar.park.hyatt.com

4 Per Aquum Zalu Zanzibar:

Early this year, the posh Per Aquum brand will unveil its fourth property (the others are in Dubai and the Maldives), a reinvention of an upscale, 49-key resort nesting a crystalline cove along Zanzibar's northeast coast. Designed with local inspiration, villas and suites are defined by white stone walls and capped by triangular thatched roofs. From \$480. 011-255-778-683-960; peraquum.com/zanzibar

NEW (OR IMPROVED) ON THE SOUTHERN SAFARI CIRCUIT

BOTSWANA

Belmond Eagle Island Lodge: Completely rebuilt — including the Fish Eagle Bar, famous for its sublime sunset views — this renewed lodge on northern Botswana's **Okavango Delta flood plains** focuses on the region's water world with activities including motorboat safaris and private helicopter rides over the submerged terrain. In its new incarnation, the lodge features 12 high-design, deluxe-tented rooms, each with a delta-facing bed, a private plunge pool, and outdoor deck. From \$780 per person. 800-237-1236; belmond.com

Duba Expedition Camp: Great Plains Conservation — making headlines for translocating 100 rhinos from South Africa to Botswana — will open this new **six-tent camp** in March with a design that recalls 1920s safari glamour and access to unspoiled tracks of land flanking the Okavango Delta. By year's end, the area's original accommodation, Duba Plains Camp, will be resurrected in a new location as a second luxury-under-canvas option, in order to meet demand in this superb delta location. From \$975 per person. 011-27-87-354-6591; greatplainsconservation.com

NAMIBIA

Hoanib Skeleton Coast camp: This new luxury lodge with eight tented suites on the coast's remote reaches reveals a secret world of iconic African wildlife that has adapted to desert life. Witness elephants, giraffes, lions, and cheetahs against stunning sand-drenched backdrops, and, on the craggy coast itself, pepper your traditional Africa photomontage with shots



Belmond Eagle Island Lodge

of the mammoth Cape fur seal colonies. From \$402 per person. 011-27-11-807-1800; wilderness-safaris.com

SOUTH AFRICA

Sanctuary Makanyane Lodge: Adding to a portfolio that already includes 16 boutique lodges across Africa, Sanctuary Retreats' freshman property in South Africa sports **eight minimalist, glass-encased suites** in the heart of superior wild dog and bird-watching real estate — the 185,329-acre Madiqwe Game Reserve. From \$420 per person. 011-27-11-438-4650; sanctuaryretreats.com

Singita Ebony Lodge: Twenty-two years after its inception, Singita's original — and most coveted — lodge, comprising 12 suites in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve, has received a **head-to-toe renovation**, embracing a modern safari aesthetic. From \$1,065 per person. 011-27-21-683-3424; singita.com



Expert's Tips

Tamsyn Fricker, director of Travel Artistry Africa, a Virtuoso-affiliated agency in Franklin Lakes, N.J.

Get your timing and location right.

"When it comes to viewing wildlife, timing and location can be everything. Take note of seasons and annual migration patterns if you're hoping to witness events such as the wildebeest migration in Kenya or Tanzania or the zebra migration in Botswana or Namibia."

Pack light.

"Don't bring luggage in excess of a duffel bag, a backpack, and a camera case. Small charter flights have strict weight restrictions (usually 30-40 pounds), and high-end safari lodges typically include laundry in their rates."

Identify your safari goals.

"African safaris are anything but generic. Assess your luxury lodge options — bricks and mortar versus tented camps — then think about the desired experience. What's more appealing? A walking safari in Zambia, a canoeing safari in Botswana, a more traditional safari in South Africa, or a more cultural experience with nomadic tribes in northern Namibia?"

Balance the bush with beach.

"Break up your safari sojourns with downtime on Africa's dreamy beaches. Destinations such as Mauritius and Mozambique pair well with Southern Africa, while Zanzibar and Seychelles pair well with East Africa." 404-414-0549; travelartistryafrica.com

