

South Africa for connoisseurs: A weekend in paradise

Excellent cuisine, attentive staff, magnificent horses, superb grounds, breathtaking views and luxuriously appointed rooms perfectly describe the 5* lodge and its associated private, sprawling game reserve, which I discovered during a weekend visit to our partner. Situated on the border with Swaziland, the lodge's buildings are perched on a hill, offering superb views across the surrounding valleys and all the way into Swaziland.

So, on a sunny Friday, I set off in my hire car on the beautiful drive from Durban up the coast to the east to discover 'South Africa for connoisseurs'. My little car first has to struggle its way up the steep hill – not without a wildebeest blocking my path – before I am rewarded with a magnificent view and given a warm welcome. After a light lunch with Isabella, the owner of Austrian origin, we set off on a short hike with two other guests to explore the area. Chamu, our knowledgeable guide, introduces us to the local flora and points out animals along the way. In the light of the setting sun, we encounter several zebras, a herd of wildebeest and a few impalas. On returning to the lodge, we are treated to a delicious four-course meal on the terrace of the on-site restaurant, in the company of Isabella and Anthony, the hosts. Afterwards, I get to enjoy the magnificent room – there are eight in total at the lodge, each with its own terrace overlooking the stunning surroundings. Each of the extremely spacious rooms is dedicated to a different animal of the African bush; I, for example, was accommodated in the Lion Suite. Thanks to the high ceilings, air conditioning is completely unnecessary, as the rooms remain pleasantly cool even on hot days. During my stay, I also had the chance to take a look at the new bridal suite and was delighted by its modern design with an African touch.



Pakamisa Lodge, Pool, South Africa for connoisseurs: horse safari at Pakamisa Lodge, wildlife on horseback

Early the next morning, we set off for the stables, which are situated not far from the lodge in the valley and can be reached quickly by car. Most of our horses have already been groomed, but we're welcome to lend a hand ourselves.

We (two other German riders and myself) are also introduced to each of the fine horses during a short guided tour, as well as the ostriches that keep close to the stables. As well as Arabians, there are also Boer horses, bringing the total to around 30 horses used for trail rides, training and breeding. As well as brisk trail rides for experienced riders, beginners can also learn to ride here and soon venture out into the countryside.

So, now that we're all saddled up, the ride begins with our guides Stephani and Moses, and after just a few metres we're delighted to spot kudus, nyalas, wildebeests and impalas. After a long ride – during which the horses prove to be extremely sure-footed even at a full gallop – we're greeted in the middle of the bush by a beautifully laid table – a fabulous bush breakfast. After this refreshment, we continue on our reliable horses through the plains of the reserve – alongside the many warthogs, the most impressive sight is undoubtedly our encounter with a group of giraffes, who eye us curiously. You can really sense how well-trained the horses are, which makes the riding safaris in the beautiful mountain wilderness an unforgettable experience. Back at the stables, the four-legged friends are given a refreshing shower before we head back to the lodge to relax by the pool and finally enjoy lunch with a view of the plains. In the late afternoon, there's another short hike over the highest mountain in the area to a campfire site, where

the lodge team is waiting for us with a sundowner. We enjoy the last rays of sunshine whilst chatting, and then ride back to the lodge after dark, where another superb dinner awaits us.



The next morning, we enjoy another exhilarating horse ride, during which this time we're able to admire zebras with their young, countless antelopes and, once again, giraffes. After a lovingly prepared breakfast, it's already time to say goodbye – even though I would have loved to linger a few days longer in luxury amidst the seclusion of the African mountains. It's impossible to decide where to relax and enjoy the view here, as the spacious lounge area on the main building's terrace, the pool area with its inviting sun loungers, the library next to the cosy living room and, last but not least, the private terraces with their seating areas all vie for attention. So, after a warm farewell, I set off back towards Durban. On the return journey, a wildebeest is standing in exactly the same spot as on the way there...

It was an unforgettable stay for me, during which all my senses were treated like royalty – be it through the outstanding cuisine, the abundance of wildlife, the view of the endless expanse from every corner of the lodge, the nocturnal sounds from the bush, the sumptuous accommodation, or the warmth of Isabella, Anthony and their team. In a nutshell: the name 'South Africa for Connoisseurs' truly sums up this lodge.

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Link to the programme: <http://www.reiterreisen.com/paksta.htm>