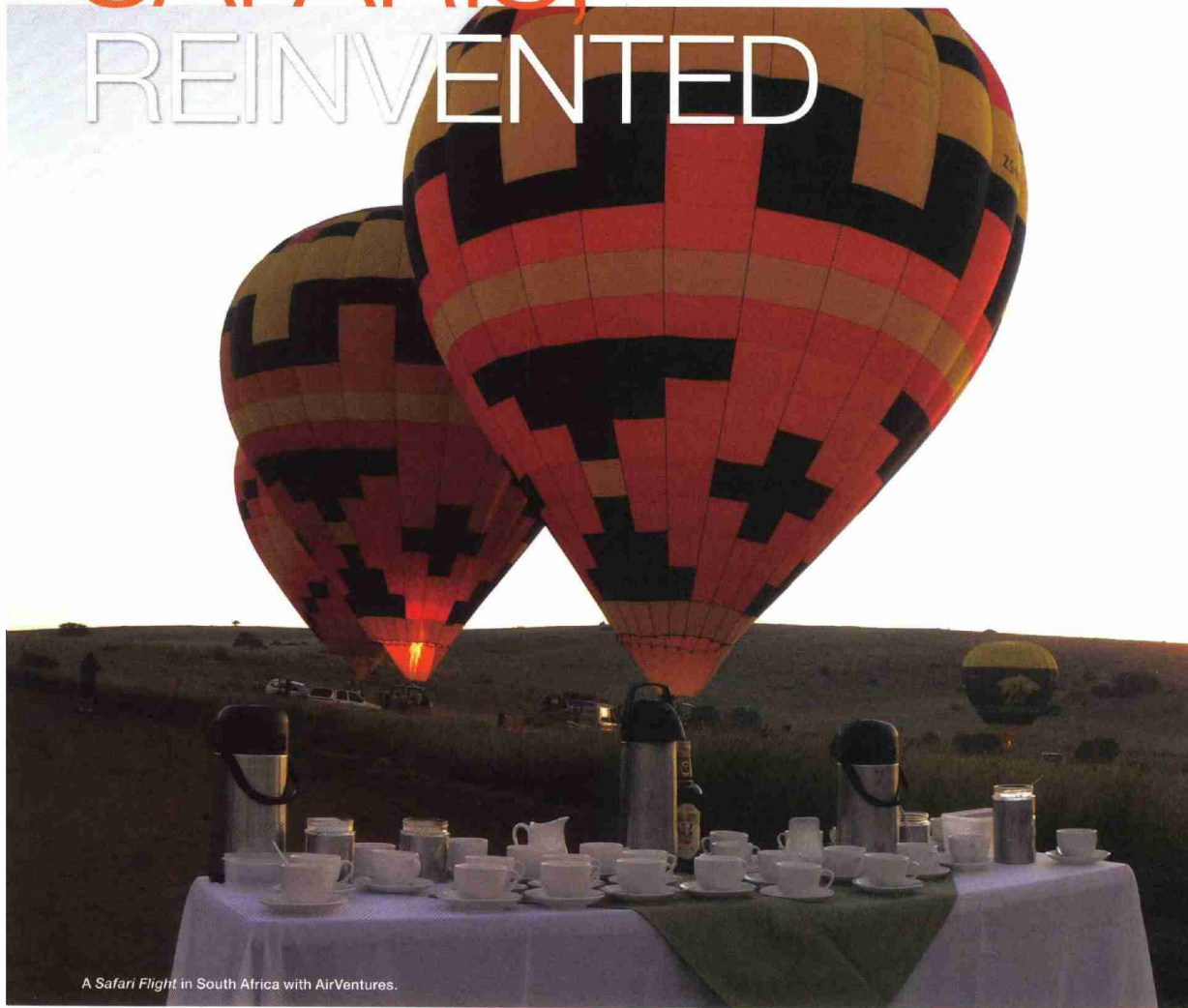


## SAFARIS, REINVENTED

africa



A Safari Flight in South Africa with AirVentures.

The call of the wild is heard loud and clear from land, waterways and African skies.

sarah muñoz

The beauty of the African wilderness is now more easily viewed through a variety of vantage points. We went straight to the source—**Indaba**, Africa's largest travel trade show—to find non-traditional safaris combining adventure, exoticism and a few creature comforts.

Best of all, these products provide clients with rich, even life-altering experiences while allowing you to easily book—even add as a pre- or post-trip to an existing itinerary—and find out the A-to-Z details through packed, info-filled websites.

### on elephant in south africa

The big highlight at **Camp Jabulani**, a **Relais & Chateaux** property, is elephant-back safaris within the Kapama Game Reserve in South Africa's Limpopo Province, with each guest being paired with an elephant based on their temperament. Once sitting comfortably atop the pachyderms on high-density foam saddles, they'll get a closer-than-ever view of giraffes and birds and a different vantage point of the bushveld.

"The one thing that Camp Jabulani has that is clearly unique is the herd of elephants," says managing director Adine Roodé. "It truly is a life-changing experience, interacting with the animals in such close proximity—and they truly have magical characters, each and every one of them."

Guests can also go on a night safari aboard the elephants with the help of battery-powered spotlights, then help put the elephants to bed. They'll also get to play with baby elephants and even get a "hug" from them.

Besides the thrill of the elephants, one of Camp Jabulani's most enticing aspects is its *Pioneer for Change* program—a "pay for three nights, stay for four" package that requires guests to work half a day at the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre, which focuses on the conservation of rare and vulnerable animals, to get the fourth night free. Although all stays include a visit to the center, the volunteer aspect of this program takes up a whole morning. They'll assist in preparing food for and actually feeding cheetahs, vultures, wild dogs, and small cat species. Participants will also be able to visit the Animal Hospital and talk to the Centre's resident vet if they wish. Camp Jabulani, by the way, is named after a baby elephant that was saved by the Centre and became the inspiration for the camp. As Camp Jabulani was created to care for these animals, each visit helps to support and sustain the herd.

In addition to the elephant-back safaris, a stay here also includes accommodations in the form of an air-conditioned suite, game drives, bush walks, all meals and daily laundry service. Rates start at approximately \$987. For families or small groups wanting to stick close together, the camp has the huge *Zindoga Villa*, with two adjoining suites and an additional room with twin beds.

**South African Express** runs daily scheduled flights between East-gate Airport at Hoedspruit (HDS), the airport closest to the camp, and Johannesburg.

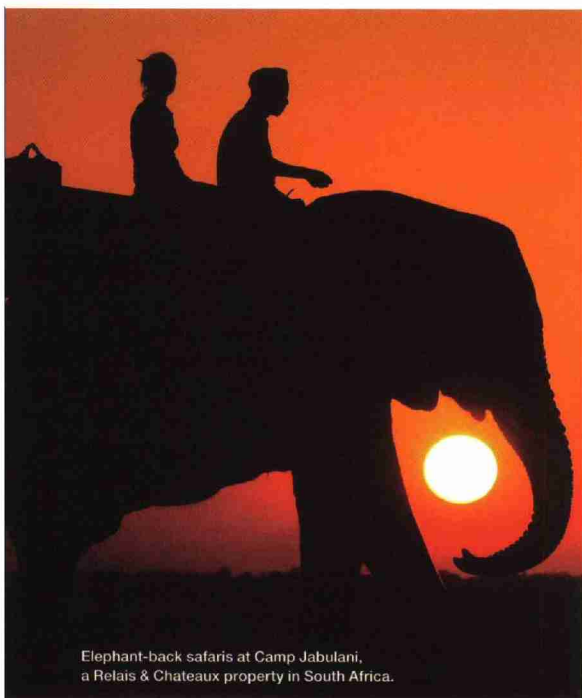
#### on foot + on canoe in zambia

The seduction of an African escape unfurls in Zambia's southern province and reveals itself in the northern bank of the Zambezi River, where **Baines' River Camp**—part of the **Mantis Collection**—is located. This is a colonial-style lodge offering a variety of up-close-and-personal options beyond the traditional game drive, although they also do those, and do them well—there will be plenty of big-game spotting in both the Lower Zambezi National Park and the Chiawa Partnership Park, considered one of Africa's last true wilderness areas, with animals still roaming freely.

For starters, there's a canoe safari—navigating the river's waters silently, without the noise of a motor, and gliding up to antelope, birds' nests, buffalo and other creatures. Braver souls can try a walking safari, exploring the area on foot with a scout from the Zambia Wildlife Authority. With this option, the focus is on smaller animals, tracks and plant life, with travelers discovering everything from colorful insects to medicinal herbs.

Yet another alternative? An angling expedition—catch and release only—on the Zambezi, famous for the African tiger fish and other species such as bream, Cornish Jack and vundu. Baines' River Camp offers fly-fishing clinics that include four nights at the lodge and an overnight in a tented camp on the eastern boundary of the Lower Zambezi so as to cover more ground. The clinic starts at \$3,750 per angler, with two available dates in October. Baines' also offers photo safaris during ►

## SAFARIS, REINVENTED



Elephant-back safaris at Camp Jabulani, a Relais & Chateaux property in South Africa.

the year for photographers of all levels, as well as elephant workshops to learn more about the gentle mammals.

The camp itself offers just eight decked-out suites, each named after a different African explorer and each with views of Africa's fourth-longest river. Rates start at \$495 per night, inclusive of meals, laundry service and standard safari activities, and the website offers a specific trade login under "rates."

When booking Baines' River Camp, keep in mind that Zambia's main international airport is located just outside the capital, Lusaka, and has daily flights arriving from various major cities in Africa. Once clients arrive in Lusaka, they can take a 30-minute flight to the Royal Airstrip, a tarred 1.2-mile-long bushstrip within the Lower Zambezi Valley. From there guides will take clients on a short game drive to the camp, located a little over five miles from the airstrip.

### from the river in namibia

Floating along the Chobe River in posh comfort, as life in the water and by the shore moves along, gets you closer to the action than you might imagine. Separating Botswana's Chobe National Park from Namibia's Caprivi Strip, the river and its banks are rife with wildlife. Within the 14-suite *Zambezi Queen* river boat it's all champagne, floor-to-ceiling windows and luxe accommodations with private balconies—with decor described as "Africa meets Manhattan"—but it is outside where the real magic takes place.

Passengers can easily spot elephant and buffalo herds, hippos swimming about, prides of lion and leopard, crocodiles on the prowl and antelope on the run. Besides what they spot from the *Queen*, clients also enjoy viewing at Chobe National Park from 4x4 vehicles, plus close-

up, water-based looks and birdwatching—or fishing, should the mood strike—on smaller crafts. The river boat itself is friendlier on the ecosystem than most, relying on solar panels and water-jet drives rather than propellers so as to move along in very shallow water and reduce damage to the riverbed.

Rates include boat and game drives and meals, plus a tour of a local village, and start at \$1,155 pp dbl for a 2-night cruise.

The *Zambezi Queen* is located about 50 miles from Victoria Falls and Livingstone, and about two miles from Kasane International Airport (BBK). Transfers from the airport to the boat are by road and take approximately 90 minutes; road transfer guests are collected from immigration situated on the banks of the river at Kasane in Botswana for the 10-minute boat transfer to the boat's docking station.

You can also book your clients on one of **AMAWaterways'** three *Zambezi Queen* itineraries that include a 4-night cruise plus land sight-seeing throughout the region. The *Golden Trails of Africa*, for example, includes one night in Nairobi, eight nights at game reserves in Amboseli, Lake Manyara, Ngorongoro and Serengeti, one night in Johannesburg, two nights in Victoria Falls and a 4-night safari cruise, during which guests are treated to a traditional African BBQ prepared by a local community, as well as visits to a local school or a fishing excursion for the famous tigerfish. Rates for remainder 2012 sailings start at \$9,495 and 2013 sailings start at \$8,995. ■

## by air over south africa

Game viewing takes on a different meaning from above, with clients getting an eyeful of wildlife and South Africa's landscapes with companies such as **AirVentures**. They can choose to "float" with others on a larger passenger balloon fitting eight to 10 persons or book a flight for two and sip champagne as they take in the view. The *Safari Flight* takes off from the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve and glides silently over a few reserves over the course of an hour, with about 80 percent of flights spotting at least two of the Big Five.

The flights depart at sunrise—another plus, as the photos will be amazing—from the Cradle of Humankind UNESCO World Heritage Site, about a half-hour drive from Johannesburg, and culminate with a full English breakfast. Rates for a *Safari Flight* start at \$257 pp; a flight for two is priced at \$756. Travelers can also arrange to go on a game drive afterwards at the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve.

Archived related articles (available on [recommend.com](http://recommend.com)):  
**Savoring the Zulu Kingdom** (February 2012)

### contact information

**AirVentures:** [air-ventures.co.za](http://air-ventures.co.za)  
**AMAWaterways:** [amawaterways.com/ships/zambezi-queen](http://amawaterways.com/ships/zambezi-queen);  
[amawaterways.com/travel-agent](http://amawaterways.com/travel-agent)  
**Baines' River Camp:** [bainesrivercamp.com](http://bainesrivercamp.com)  
**Camp Jabulani:** [campjabulani.com](http://campjabulani.com)  
**Zambezi Queen:** [zambeziqueen.com](http://zambeziqueen.com)