

**SPECIAL** OUR READERS' TOP 10 IMAGES

2017 Getaway Gallery winners announced

# Getaway

Travel like an insider

## 2018 BUCKET LIST

**SOUTH AFRICA**

KRUGER  
TATTYVIEW  
CEDERSBERG  
SOBANA  
CLARON  
SIMONS TOWN  
ADDO  
UNDLINE  
STANFORD  
BERGVELLE  
HOGSMACK  
GRAAT-  
REINET  
DULLSTROOM  
HLLHLWE-  
IMPOLOZI  
KQALAQADI  
DETTYS BAY  
+ SAS 10  
HIGHEST  
PASSES

+

BOTSWANA  
NAMIBIA  
MOTANIBOPE  
ZAMBIA  
MALAWI  
MAURITIUS  
SEYSEL

48

fabulous destinations  
to suit your budget,  
time frame & fantasies

**WIN!**

5 TICKETS TO  
ZANZIBAR  
UP FOR GRABS

PG 40

**SEAS**

8 travel  
experts,  
8 products  
they live by

**FOOD**

6 SUMMER  
SALADS

that will cut your  
time in the kitchen

JANUARY 2018

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ON THE COVER On the banks of the White Limpopo River





# THE FINAL CUT

PUTTING TRIPADVISOR TO THE TEST, WE RATE THE BEST BEDS

**HOW** As much as we love peer reviews on sites like TripAdvisor, they don't offer a comparative voice. Pippa de Bruyn has been researching and reviewing accommodation for the past 20 years for the likes of *Frommer's* and *The Telegraph*, and also for us since 2015. Scouring online sites for a particular area or village, she makes a longlist of between 20 and 50 properties to inspect, then chooses the best for our monthly Final Cut.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY **TEAGAN CUNIFFE**

There's more than enough space to gather your tribe at Stanford Valley, a 440-hectare guest farm neighbouring Raka Wines

6-15

## Best Getaways List

EXPERT REVIEWER PIPPA DE BRUYN HAS BEEN INSPECTING HOLIDAY PLACES ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA FOR THREE YEARS. FOR THIS BUCKET-LIST ISSUE, WE ASKED HER TO CHOOSE HER ALL-TIME FAVOURITES. HERE THEY ARE – PUT THEM ON YOUR 2018 HOLIDAY LIST NOW

- *Best luxury breakaway* (pg 48)
- *Best beach house* (pg 49)
- *Best remote breakaway* (pg 49)
- *Best B&B* (pg 50)
- *Best family hotel* (pg 50)
- *Best for big gatherings* (pg 51)
- *Best for total defrag* (pg 52)
- *Best-value cottage* (pg 53)
- *Best-value luxury hotel* (pg 54)
- *Best budget lodge* (pg 55)



BEST LUXURY BREAKAWAY

**Camp Figtree**

ADDO, TRIPADVISOR NO. 2 OF 11 SPECIALITY LODGINGS

**WHY THIS ONE?** I was dawdling at the pool on the morning of my departure, talking to a couple who had decided to stay another day. You would if you could. It's that kind of place. The location and atmosphere is quite otherworldly – a dreamlike sense that you are floating above a tangled jungle, yet Port Elizabeth airport is less than 90 minutes away. It calls itself a safari lodge and there are guided game drives to Addo, but I wouldn't move a muscle other than to order

another bottle, turn the pages of my book and plop into the pool.

**WHY NOW?** The word is out. Bookings, particularly during busy seasons, are picking up.

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (May 2017) Creeping up the winding forested pass into the Zuurberg mountains was exhilarating enough; once peaked, I never wanted to leave. In a suite cantilevered high above the forested valley, I watched the early morning mists drift below before rising suddenly, cocooning the camp

in clouds; 30 minutes later it had all but burnt away, revealing an enormity of blue in which an eagle soared. Utter bliss. The decor style is a class act, with a central veranda that is too inviting – furnished with antiques, horns, books, Persian rugs and comfy armchairs. The new owners (since 2016) have installed solar power and added four luxury tents.

**ROOM TIP** The two boardwalk suites offer the same gobsmacking views as the luxury suites, for less. The

✳ **OTHER OPTIONS**

- **Buhala**, near Kruger Park (Malelane Gate)
- **Strandloper Ocean Boutique Hotel**, Paternoster
- **UmVangati House**, Hoedspruit

three-room suite with its own pool is also a plum choice and ideal for families (sleeps six, children under 12 are half price).

**COST** From R1 375 pp sharing B&B. Dinner is R295 pp. **CONTACT** [campfigtree.com](http://campfigtree.com)



BEST REMOTE BREAKAWAY

**Woolly Bugger**

DULLSTROOM, TRIPADVISOR NO. 1 OF 31 SPECIALITY LODGINGS

**WHY THIS ONE?** You'll feel every one of the 29 000 metres of jolting dirt that leads here, but isn't the journey part of what makes a remote destination so special? And I do love faraway places, those vast uninhabited spaces where you can feel your spirit expand. These rustic, simple cottages allow for this in spades. Long walks, cycling, fishing, even a spot of archery. Four-legged children welcome too.

**WHY NOW?** Life has never been busier. This kind of place helps recalibrate the mind, the family, the soul. **ORIGINAL REVIEW** (October 2016) I loved everything about Woolly Bugger: just four stone cottages share the 270-hectare farm, each located for privacy and big views, and surrounded by wild cabbage trees and proteas. There's a small, communal, shaded dining area with a braai and splash pool – an ideal gathering spot if you've booked more than one cottage.

**ROOM TIP** Half Hog and Sedgehog are the most affordable, romantic boltholes you could hope to find. **★ COST** Half Hog from R600 (sleeps two); Sedgehog from R1 050 (sleeps four); others from R1 200 (sleep six). **CONTACT** [woollybuggerfarm.co.za](http://woollybuggerfarm.co.za)



✳ **OTHER OPTIONS**

- **Tanagra Faraway**, McGregor
- **Lake House@ZuluWaters**, near Estcourt
- **Kurisa Moya**, Magoebaskloof

BEST BEACH HOUSE

**Rocamar**

SIMON'S TOWN, UNLISTED ON TRIPADVISOR

**WHY THIS ONE?** It's partly the beach it's on. Boulders is one of the most beautiful on the entire SA coast, lapped by translucent waters in which the Peninsula's famous penguins bob. Across the bay the Hottentots-Holland Mountains loom; at night the Hangklip lighthouse is a pinprick flash on the inky waters. Rocamar's position here, with direct access through a garden gate, is reason enough to book. It should come with an Old Testament warning: 'Thou shalt not covet.' How wonderful, then, that you can call it home, temporarily.

**WHY NOW?** Who knows how long it will be available...

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (December 2017) Somehow, photos don't do this house justice. You can see that it enjoys a spectacular position: elevated right above Boulders, though the beach is closer than you think – you walk through the garden and onto the boardwalk. And with its curved walls and arched windows, tiled floors and shuttered windows, you could be on the Riviera. (It was, in fact, built by an Italian family who modelled Rocamar on their holiday house in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.) But it is the atmosphere that sets it apart, an intangible sense that this home generates serenity and joy in equal measure. It gets pricey during peak season but if budget's not an issue and it's available, don't think twice.

**ROOM TIP** There are four bedrooms – one has twin beds; the rest are doubles. These share two bathrooms; one is en-suite.

**COST** From R5 500 a night (sleeps eight). **CONTACT** [perfecthideaways.co.za](http://perfecthideaways.co.za)

✳ **OTHER OPTIONS**

- **The Oyster Box Beach House**, Kenton on Sea
- **St Helier**, near Scottburgh
- **The Beach Hut**, Paternoster
- **The Beach House Lodge**, Salt Rock
- **Rock Shandy**, Marina Beach



Supplied





**BEST B&B**

**Ashbourne Country Escape**

HAZYVIEW, TRIPADVISOR NO. 4 OF 25 B&BS/INNS

**WHY THIS ONE?** I dashed into Ashbourne at breakneck speed – so much to see in the Hazyview area! – and was so enamoured with it that I almost missed my plane. There are two new mountain-view cottages to try out, perfect for couples (and the other two cottages now have their own splash pools).

**WHY NOW?** When last did you visit Kruger? Ashbourne is the ideal crossover base – 20 minutes from the Phabeni Gate.

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (February 2016) Walking into a special place gives me a certain kind of thrill, and Ashbourne gave me that in spades. First off is the location – high up on a lush hillside, surrounded by indigenous forest, with views of the tranquil Sabi River Valley. There are only five B&B rooms opening onto or overlooking the large courtyard with shaded seating and a lovely pool. Decor is uncluttered, understated elegance, and retired farmers Rob and Dawne Ashbourne are exemplary hosts.

**ROOM TIP** The Balcony Suite, pictured, is best for lovely views (it has two balconies). There's now also a luxury family B&B suite with outdoor/indoor shower (sleeps two adults and two kids).

**COST** From R950 pp sharing B&B, \* self-catering from R500 pp.

**CONTACT** [ashbournescape.co.za](http://ashbournescape.co.za)

\* **OTHER OPTIONS**

- Moontide, Wilderness
- Periwinkle Grove, Clarens
- Berghouse & Cottages, northern Drakensberg

**BEST FAMILY HOTEL**

**Pumula Beach Hotel**

UMZUMBE/SOUTH COAST, TRIPADVISOR NO. 1 OF 1 HOTEL

**WHY THIS ONE?** Family hotels tend to be something parents endure, along with broken sleep and sticky fingers, rolling eyes and sulky looks. Not so when you check in to Pumula. Everyone is happy, including Granny. It's old-fashioned, well-maintained, with great facilities (putt-putt, a pool, lawns, bar, MTB hire) and an unbeatable location on a Blue Flag beach.

**WHY NOW?** Regulars have a better chance of securing rooms during school holidays. So if you have toddlers, book now!

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (August 2015) Unlike so many, Pumula doesn't rest on its location laurels. Every inch of the hotel looks fresh and shipshape (a challenge when you're this close to the sea); the staff is warm and enthusiastic. Not only does it offer a packed children's holiday programme, but they get their own lounge, games room and dining area – kids are encouraged to eat separately so parents can rediscover why they had them in the first place!

**ROOM TIP** Given how popular it is, take what you can get; there are no duds.

**COST** From R1 295 pp sharing full board (from R335 to R695 a child, depending on their age).

**CONTACT** [pumulabeachhotel.com](http://pumulabeachhotel.com)

\* **OTHER OPTIONS**

- Umngazi River Bungalows, Wild Coast
- Cathedral Peak Hotel & The Cavern Resort, both Drakensberg
- Monkey Valley Resort, Cape Town



**BEST FOR BIG GATHERINGS**

**Stanford Valley Guest Farm**

STANFORD, TRIPADVISOR NO. 3 OF 12 SPECIALITY LODGINGS

**WHY THIS ONE?** Good looks, superb service, outstanding food, affordability, proximity to a city – a good checklist for deciding where to have a celebration. And Stanford Valley's score is hard to beat, with its gorgeous, affordable cocoons and classy communal spaces. You don't have to take over the whole place, but if you do, you'll have the most carefree gathering.

**WHY NOW?** Don't let another year pass in a blur. Stop and celebrate! Also, the on-site restaurant is in two separate Top 100 lists this year.

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (July 2016) With 10 en-suite rooms, three self-catering cottages and three family cottages, each with its own stoep and garden and clustered around a large central werf, this is the most fantastic venue. Elsabe Nauta's decor is a mixture of quirky vintage and contemporary classic, comforting natural textures and an overall pared-down simplicity. Book a few meals at the Manor House, which serves sophisticated farm fare alongside big fireplaces and views of the Akkedisberg through large windows.

**ROOM TIP** All the units are well dressed and have fireplaces or wood-burning stoves, but I liked the old-fashioned thick walls of Stables, Pincushion and Erica.

\* **COST** From R1 050 for a double room, R2 000 for a cottage (sleeps four). Extra beds can be added for R225 pp.

**CONTACT** [stanfordvalley.co.za](http://stanfordvalley.co.za)

\* **OTHER OPTIONS**

- Damoi, Parys
- Zwakala River Retreat, Magoebaskloof
- Steynshoop, Magaliesberg





## THE FINAL CUT BEST GETAWAYS LIST

### BEST FOR TOTAL DEFRAG

## Greenfire Drakensberg Lodge

BERGVILLE, TRIPADVISOR NO. 2 OF 4 HOTELS (LISTED AS DRIFTERS)

**WHY THIS ONE?** The photograph says it all, surely... A cluster of comfortable cabins in a 1 000-hectare expanse, and nothing to do but walk, read, ride, swim, eat, stargaze, sleep, repeat.

**WHY NOW?** When you are uncontactable (no Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp etc), in a place of extraordinary, timeless beauty, another connection is restored. And that's worth more than a zillion likes.

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (June 2016) As the rutted track ascends higher and higher, so does your heart, until finally you are on top of the world, looking back at a vista that sweeps from the Amphitheatre to Cathkin Peak. The lodge itself is delightful: a cosy lounge/dining log cabin with views from every window and sofas that invite

reclining around the central fireplace. There are nine cabins (with one or two bedrooms), each with a fireplace and powered by solar. Good home-cooked meals are enjoyed around a communal table. This place is pitched at those wanting a big nature fix in a place that is intimate but not claustrophobic. Some may find it a bit too basic but this is my kind of luxury: warm and well-fed in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by wilderness.

**ROOM TIP** Be sure to specify a double bed when booking, if romance is on the cards. The family cabins have balconies with the best views (but are in the wind).

**COST** R995 pp sharing, full board.

**CONTACT** [greenfire.co.za](http://greenfire.co.za)



### OTHER OPTIONS

- Sneeuberg Nature Reserve, Karoo (near Graaff-Reinet)
- Koensrust Tented River Camp, Vermaaklikheid
- Bushriver Lodge, Hoedspruit

Here, you're high up in the Berg, but dwarfed by cliffs that shelter a colony of Cape vultures

### BEST-VALUE COTTAGE

## The French Cottage

CLARENS, UNLISTED ON TRIPADVISOR

**WHY THIS ONE?** I like private surrounds, tasteful interiors and windows with huge untrammelled views – a combination that usually comes at a premium. So when my favourite place to stay is also a total bargain, it's a rare jackpot. The final pièce de résistance? There's a waterfall, a stream and cliffs out back.

**WHY NOW?** The owner has a generous heart but the law of supply and demand may yet raise the price. So bag a weekend as soon as you can find one.

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (May 2017) This double-storey stone cottage is on the five-hectare remains of one of the original three farms that pre-dated the development of the village. It feels rural – sprawling grounds are dotted with established trees; a river path meanders to a large overhang; the striated cliffs of the Rooiberge and a natural waterfall



### OTHER OPTIONS

- Klein Nektar, Montagu
- Umlambo River Cottages, Addo
- Forest House at Hillhouse, Dargle
- Saamrus Guest Farm, Magaliesberg

are literally in your backyard – yet it's a 15-minute walk to the village square. The open-plan kitchen/dining/living area and main en-suite bedroom are upstairs, with cute cottage-pane windows filled with views of your rural idyll. This upstairs level is reached via an external staircase, while the two downstairs bedrooms each have their own entrance directly from the garden, and share a bathroom. Like the ideal life partner, it's gorgeous both inside and out (the original owner was an interior decorator) and affordable. Julia Brownlee believes in keeping the cottage occupied so it's one of the cheapest stays in town.

**ROOM TIP** It's possible for a couple to rent out only the upstairs level, and Monday to Thursday Julia charges R1 000 a night for this, making it the most affordable romantic pied-à-terre in Clarens. Maybe even the country!

**COST** From R1 600 a night for four, R400 pp extra (sleeps six).

**CONTACT** 072-291-0685, [wheretostay.co.za](http://wheretostay.co.za)



## THE FINAL CUT BEST GETAWAYS LIST

### BEST-VALUE LUXURY HOTEL

#### Drostdy Hotel

GRAAFF-REINET, TRIPADVISOR NO. 1 OF 1 HOTELS

**WHY THIS ONE?** You know how much I love a bargain, and if you like five-star luxury, it doesn't get better than this. The Drostdy is not just luxurious – it's classy, elegant, gracious, historic; the Mount Nelson or Oyster Box of the Eastern Cape, at a quarter of the price.

**WHY NOW?** Even the peak rate of R1 210 pp sharing a standard room is great, given the luxury, but in winter the hotel usually runs a special, reducing its already incredible low-season rate. Definitely worth planning a holiday here, with great safari, nature reserve and Nieu Bethesda add-ons.

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (March 2015) The grande dame of the Eastern Cape has been generously restored by the Ruperts and is looking the best it has in its 200-year history. No expense was spared in creating elegant interiors that retain the hotel's historic character and Karoo surrounds – animal skulls and nguni skins are offset against delicate embroidered botanicals and Chinese pottery, while the hotel's

original antiques have found new homes throughout. The dinner menu, which celebrates Karoo ingredients, is exceptional. The service is generally excellent; it is worth noting that about a third of the staff are new graduates from the local SA College for Tourism – all from previously disadvantaged rural communities.

**ROOM TIP** The hotel is divided into three areas. I prefer the historic feel of the Ferreira Precinct and Stretch's Court (best bachelor rooms) to the newly built Kromm's Court. The best room overall? 1704.

✦ **COST** From R550 pp sharing B&B.  
**CONTACT** [newmarkhotels.com](http://newmarkhotels.com)

✦ **OTHER OPTIONS**  
(good value when they're running specials)  
• **Bartholomeus Klip**, near Riebeeck-Kasteel  
• **Angala Boutique Hotel**, Franschhoek  
• **The Oyster Box**, Umhlanga



### BEST BUDGET RETREAT

#### Terra-Khaya

HOGSBACK, TRIPADVISOR NO. 2 OF 10 SPECIALITY LODGINGS

**WHY THIS ONE?** Because it's more than just a backpackers. It's a magical forest experience, attracting a certain kind of traveller (off the grid, outside showers, no TV) rather than mere budget seekers. I came home raving about how I'd like to run away and spend a few months here. Soon after, my 19-year-old daughter and a friend set off on a road trip to Terra-Khaya, and both returned with the same evangelical glow. Maybe it's something they put in the water...

**WHY NOW?** If you've never been to Hogsback, it's so worthwhile. Besides, given the state of the planet, if you're sitting on the fence about living more 'green', this should help convince you.

**ORIGINAL REVIEW** (November 2016) Various described as a permaculture farm, Earth Home Project, experimental venture, eco-backpackers, Terra-Khaya defies easy categorisation. Owner Shane Eades has created a magical lodge on his 18-hectare farm high in the mountains, showcasing and teaching visitors how fulfilling an ecologically sound lifestyle can be. With the help of live-in volunteers he

has created and beautified Terra-Khaya, using natural building techniques and salvaged materials. Accommodation comprises four timber cabins, furnished with real artistic flair, plus equally delightful dorms. There are no en-suite options but the shared ablutions – composting toilets, charming bath house, outdoor bath and showers – all feature fantastic views, as do the cabins. Horse riding is a speciality, including various overnight trails. Meals are communal and delicious, and creative energy permeates the place; there's even an art room in the loft of the lounge-library-dining area should the urge arise.

**ROOM TIP** Khayalam, a double-storey cabin (sleeps two downstairs and four upstairs), has incredible views.

✦ **COST** Cabin from R385 (for two), R165 pp in the dorm (10 beds). Meals around R85 pp.

**CONTACT** [terrakhaya.co.za](http://terrakhaya.co.za)

✦ **OTHER OPTIONS**  
• **Temenos**, McGregor  
• **Rustig**, Magaliesberg  
• **Bodhi Khaya**, near Stanford

