

The Telegraph
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YOUR GUIDE TO HEAVEN ON EARTH SPRING 2015



COLOMBIA'S
GOLDEN AGE



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ULTRA VILLAS



MY PRIVATE AFRICA

Nothing in South Africa beats staying in your own house, complete with its own staff, game, wildlife - and even helicopter. We jet between four of the best in the bush and by the sea.

by LISA GRANGER



NET HOUSE. Look no further than
Africa, with its own observatory,
and THE BUSH HOUSE. Far left:
the pool at The Blue Villas.

FOR THE ADVENTUROUS AESTHETE
Leobo Private Reserve

There aren't many buildings that could be described as sexy. But with its concrete walls, sensual fabrics and endorphin-inducing patina, Leobo is one hot house. Set on 58800 acres in the Waterberg area, three hours' drive north of Johannesburg, the built retreat is the holiday home of John Swain, a British computer millionaire-turned-petroleum explorer. Designed by Lesley Carreras and Silvio Bacci (who concocted the pretty marine interiors at North Island in the Seychelles), it's a sophisticated contemporary hideaway for those who value their privacy.

In both furnished master suites, glass walk-out decks to reveal a carved teakwood four-poster bed, sun-showers with views and an egg-shaped bath for two in the living area, a full hippo skeleton hangs, illuminated, over the dining table like a cool chandelier and the bar area is sophisticated with polished teak.

Outdoors, stars lead up to a rooftop Jacuzzi for spectacular sunset soaks, and down to a cushioned fire pit area for star-watching at night. And, up two flights of stairs in the well-stocked library, decorated with trophies from shark and antelope hunts to a space suit, sits the best toy of all: a retractable domed roof to focus on the sun's final surface and at night transform into the steps of Saturn. Swain can access it from his Glasswelders home as he can see the African skies from there.

While many guests won't want to leave the house, thrill seekers might like to try the other top-end pursuits, which range from a space-bike (this cross-country vehicle and 400cc quad bike), to mountain bikes and a helicopter (from which to parachute, see the country or fly to mountains to see ancient rock art). There are horses, a guided nearby, too, for guests who fancy riding.

The private chef prepares up to 10 courses, if not quite daily, but ambitious meals, served with wines from a considerable cellar.

Neatly attractions Swain has stocked the land with plain game only (no dangerous animals so guests can camp, see animals in safety). While an hour's drive you can reach the 91500-acre Wildgevoens Game Reserve, stocked with the Big Five ([wildgevoens.org](http://www.wildgevoens.org)), Legend Golf and Safari Resort, which has Africa's highest golf tee (810m) and 18 holes, Hwange Honeyback, renowned for its fence-back safaris ([hwb.com](http://www.hwb.com)).

Cost Leobo Private Reserve (leoboprivatereserve.com) costs from £2,200 for up to six adults and three children per night, exclusive of food, drink and activities (horses and helicopter hops cost extra).

FOR THE FAMILY SAFARI
Jembiso

When Charles Whitbread, of the British brewing family, and his Zambian-born wife Jane had children, the thing they most wanted to give them was an African childhood. The explains why Jembiso, in the Waterberg region, is a delight for families — it was designed as a family home. Built of local stone and thatch in a remote three-zone, the six-bedroom double-storey, which is let out to single groups, is surrounded by pretty landscaped gardens that wrap through both to the Palda River.

Its interiors are comfortable and unpretentious — think elegant Home Counties meets colonial Africa — and are furnished with



From the pool I saw whales pass by and from bed at night was mesmerised by waves crashing on to the cliffs below

BONE LAB Chosen for their soft spirit of the Cove, the hipster-shelton-chandelier of Leobo, is a modernist's dream of an African elephant in the living room. The Crown is a hand-painted, the living room is the Black House

antiques, soft toys, local art, shelves of books, games and toys in the playroom, and beds with linen encased in with walls.

Ambika's greatest asset to the house is situated on a 2500-acre estate stocked by the Whitebreads with plain game, including ibex and gazelle. The absence of the Big Five means you're free not just to go on bush walks, but to go jogging, explore on mountain bikes, fish and take the massive sunbather table, some decorated with Sun rock art.

Many of the great staff have been there for more than a decade, and clearly love their work. The food, cooked by chef David Roberts and patisserie chef Paula Hodgson, is delicious, fresh and varied. From croissants and pastries to elegant style ways to light on-air cakes for tea. There are surprise parties on game walks, start dinner in the book, and breakfast on a deck overlooking the river with a view on hand to help those with little sleep in town.

While Leobo is not a place for sunbathing or game-watching, the ranges are ideal for first-timers and children, who can attend a Junior Tracker Training Programme that teaches them to track, identify, and catch fish while parents relax under big African skies, taking in birds, flowers and miles of trees.

Neatly attractions Ambika shares the same attractions as Leobo (no previous entry). In addition, Lapala Wilderness (Bogalaba) is set on the Waterberg Reserve, a 40000-acre private game World Biosphere Zone and a prime place to see foot-dragging rhino and sub-Saharan rock art. Black Mountain (Vaalwater) is worth stopping at for big local sights.

Cost Leobo (leoboprivatereserve.com) costs from £1000 per night, for up to eight, exclusive of food, wine and most activities.

FOR THE HIP PARTY
The Cove

The approach to this ultra-modern sea home is not promising — through a suburban housing estate on the outskirts of Krugersdorp, near the electric garage doors open and the car has rolled into the gated house, another world's revealed in all its contemporary glory. The Cove has been built right on the edge of a cliff, on concrete, wood and glass, and through each of the rooms double-height windows with the views are staggered, across the sea and northwards up the coast.

The modernist construction is locally known as the James Bond House for good reason — few other homes have electric gates and garages, their own cinema with 27 screens, surround sound and feature bedrooms in every room, a private beach (accessed via 274 steps) and even a glass elevator for those who can't (or don't fancy) expending energy on the central spiral marble- and glass staircase indoors. It's not a house for the body-conscious, each of the four capacious sea-side bedrooms is walled in glass, and the only place to hide in bed, each of which is enclosed by full-length curtains. But it is decidedly spacious, with double-height living areas that would easily host a party of 200 people, programmable mood lighting, wine fridge, floor-to-ceiling glass walls that fold back, a Jacuzzi and 18ft L-shaped infinity pool. From the pool, water falls into a bay during the day and waves crash against the cliff at night. A half of the means you don't have to fly a flag on the domestic front, other than to cook — although a chef can be arranged. Krugersdorp is 10 minutes' drive away, with good

supermarkets, a French bakery and seafood restaurants.

Neatly attractions Waterports on Krugersdorp's horse-riding, fishing, sailing and gliding on the harbor, riding catches in Coshdown, fishing in the Tubbakona Forest, golfing at neighboring Peka, which also has a spa. Birds of Eden aviary, Monkeyland primate sanctuary, and Krugersdorp Botanical Gardens.

Cost The Cove (leoboprivatereserve.com) costs £1000 per night, for eight, with dinner and housekeeping.

FOR THE DESIGN LOVER
The Black House

The Black House is one of the most beautiful coastal homes in Africa should seem as one summer when you know who its owners are. Terence and Susan Swain (the country's South African design duo, which includes and exports the work of South Africa's leading designers, and his husband Julian is a British set designer, who has worked with the BBC and National Theatre).

Their holiday home, perched on the cliffs, showcases the cream of the country's design — from a lamp by the furniture-maker George Jensen and lampshade by Heath Nash to sculptures, paintings and fabrics. It also showcases the world outside. From every room in the three-storey glass house are spectacular natural views, the mountains behind, and the long empty beach to the front. "Having moved here from London," Terence explains, "what we wanted was a sense of space and to see big skies."

With five children, they also needed space. The house is divided into three floors, and extends into a cool courtyard garden to the east and an infinity pool and deck to the West. All around are terraces and decks that open fully to create large inside-outside spaces. As well as two suites with sea views — one on the top floor, one on the bottom floor for two couples who share some privacy, there are four children's bedrooms that connect to a playroom, a roof terrace with a fireplace for cool evenings and loungers for sunny days, and fishing from the pier and dining spaces.

As pool expert in the home of two creatives, every room is pleasing to the eye. From the World War cockroach and free while lockdown to artworks by the YBA Alan Quinn (who is a friend of the family), while there is direct access from the pool terrace to the beach below, this is through a locked gate, which gives peace of mind to parents of small children.

Neatly attractions The quiet local village of Wilderness has a handful of coffee shops, casual restaurants (Pommes) and the best pizza on the Garden Route) and a small supermarket (The Black House is joined at self-caterers). The ancient tropical forests of the area are home to the Woodville Big Tree, an 800-year-old Calocarpus yellowwood with a 40ft girth. There is a pretty lagoon nearby, which is great for kayaking and bird-watching.

Cost The Black House (leoboprivatereserve.com) costs from £3000 per night, for up to five adults and eight children, with daily cleaner.

Amoroso (www.amoroso.com) costs £1000 a day holiday to South Africa from £200 per person, exclusive of South African Airways flights, four nights full board at Leobo, four nights housekeeping at The Black House, and four nights full board at the Cape George Hotel in Cape Town, as well as transfers and international flights. Prices are based on eight adults and eight children.