
The Route of Lost Kingdoms

Limpopo Province, South Africa

The development of this route was facilitated by:

Open Africa



www.africandream.org

PO Box 44814, Claremont, 7735, South Africa
Tel/fax: +27 21 683 9639
Email: admin@openafrica.org

And sponsored by:

DE BEERS
A DIAMOND IS FOREVER

Route of Lost Kingdoms

List of Participants:

Thulamela Route

Golf View Guest House
Limpopo Travel & Avis Rent-A-Car
Pafuri Lodge
Pafuri River Camp
Sagole Spa
The Soutpansberg-Limpopo Birding Route

Mapungubwe Route

Afric Tuli Lodge
Dongola Ranch
Klein Bolayi
Mapungubwe National Park
Mopane Bush Lodge
Ratho Bush Camps
Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve and Little Muck Lodge

Alldays Route

At se Gat / Cosa Nostra
Balerno
Makulu Makete
Mogalakwena Craft Art Development Foundation
Mogalakwena River Lodge
The Artist's Retreat

Primary Contacts for Route:

Contact Name: Willie Botha
Tel: + 27 15 516 5779 / or 516 0525
Cell: +27 82 957 0102
Postal Address: PO Box 533, Makhado, 0920
Physical Address: Copper Road, Phalaborwa, 1390, South Africa
E-mail: africa@lantic.net

Contact Person: Paul Hatty
Tel: +27 15 534 1054
Fax: +27 15 534 7906
Cell: +27 83 679 8884
Postal Address: PO Box 837, Musina, 0900, South Africa
Physical Address: R572 Musina/Pontdrif Road, Mapungubwe, Musina, South Africa
E-mail: mopanebushlodge@limpopo.co.za
Website: www.mopanebushlodge.co.za

Useful Links:

www.krugerpark.co.za
www.limpopotourism.org.za
www.sanparks.org/parks/mapungubwe/
www.mapungubwe.com
www.golimpopo.com
www.soutpansberg.com

Books:

The following books are a suggested reading list:

Huffman T.N. 2005. Mapungubwe. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. ISBN: 1868144089

Tiley, S. 2005. Mapungubwe: South Africa's Crown Jewels. Johannesburg: Sunbird. ISBN: 1919938052

Links to other Open Africa routes in the region:

The Route of Lost Kingdoms is situated near to the following other routes on the Open Africa network - click on their names to load these routes [please note that clicking on a route will load another route map, in which case you will need to use the search function or your back browser to return to the Route of Lost Kingdoms].

[Hlanganani Route](#) – The Hlanganani route is situated in the northernmost province part of South Africa, in the Limpopo Province (previously known as the Northern Province), on the north-west border of one of Africa's finest parks, the Kruger National Park.

[Ribolla Open Africa Route](#) – The Ribolla Route, named after the uniquely shaped mountain in the Makhado district, Limpopo Province, aims to showcase the artistic talents of many of its inhabitants, as well as dancers, storytellers, gardeners and singers. Sense and be filled with the mystery of Africa and its traditions.

[Rixile Route: Culture to Kruger](#) - The Rixile route, meaning "rising of the sun", meanders between Giyani and Phalaborwa, the only town with a gate into the Kruger National Park. The route offers a variety of experiences from cultural sites visits to game viewing in the Kruger National Park.

[Vuyani Kaya Open Africa Route](#) – Based in the Bohlabele District close to the Kruger National Park, Vuyani Kaya means "come home". It is an open invitation to visit rural communities in their villages, as well as the many game reserves in the area.

Route of Lost Kingdoms Background Information:

The Route of Lost Kingdoms stretches from inside the gates of the Kruger National Park at the ancient stone wall site of Thulamela, follows a trail of myths and legends to the Mapungubwe World Heritage site and onwards to the small town of Alldays. The route gives tourists the opportunity to explore this undiscovered region in the north of South Africa, bordering Botswana and Zimbabwe.

Thulamela is a stone walled site situated in the Far North region of the Kruger Park and dates back approximately 450 – 500 years. This late Iron Age site forms part of what is called the Zimbabwe culture, which is believed to have started at Mapungubwe. [Click here](#) to read more about the ancient site of Thulamela.

Pop-up Box: Thulamela

Thulamela is a Venda word, meaning place of birth. The site consists of stone ruins of the royal citadel and dates back to between the 15th and 17th centuries. According to oral histories, the Nyai division of the Shona – speaking Lembethu occupied Thulamela and believed that there was a mystical relationship between their leader and the land. They believed that the ancestors of the leader (or Khosi) would intercede on behalf of the nation. The Khosi, who was an elusive figure and could only be seen by certain individuals, lived in a secluded hilltop palace in view of the commoners as an indication of his sacredness.

The Khosi had a number of officials working for him, some of the most important included:

- The Messenger – a close and trusted confidant who kept the chief informed of all court proceedings and visitors
- Personal Diviner and Herbalist – safeguarded the Chief's health and scrutinized the intention of the visitors
- Makhadzi (ritual sister) – the chief ruled together with her. Her function was that of national advisor and had to be kept informed of all decisions taken by the council. She was also instrumental in the appointment of a new chief.
- Khotsimunene (brother) – legal expert in charge of the public court.

If a commoner wished to meet the Khosi he would go to a special chamber with two entrances (one from the Khosi's hut which he would use and the other for the visitor). The chamber was divided probably by a central wall separating the visitor from the Khosi and so emphasising the Khosi's sacredness.

Both Thulamela and Great Zimbabwe were thriving commercial cities. Commercial traders transported their goods on the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers. These waterways connected the Shona with African east coast commercial trading centres, which networked into the markets of India and China. The Shona people built hundreds of cities of stone, crowded with three story apartment complexes, housing tens of thousands of people.

Architecture was designed with curves. The round homes would nestle against the rounded outer walls in a perfect fit. In this manner, not a precious square inch of area would be lost. The walls were built from stones taken from nearby hills. Great rocks were cut using torches and then chiselled into blocks. Building blocks fitted so perfectly that mortar was not needed to hold the walls in place. The Shona used curved walls inside the city to section off living areas.

Great Zimbabwe contained eighteen thousand people. Royalty lived within the city walls, farmers and workers lived outside. A Shona home would be thirty feet across, a two to three story building, with thick walls coloured in red. Homes were packed together so they touched one another. At night, the cooking fires would create smog over the city that could be seen for miles.

[Click here](#) to see pictures of Thulamela.

One thousand years ago, Mapungubwe was the centre of the largest kingdom in the subcontinent, where a highly sophisticated people traded gold and ivory with China, India and Egypt. The Iron Age site, discovered in 1932 but hidden from public attention until only recently, has been declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Mapungubwe (meaning 'hill of the jackal') first attracted attention in modern times when gold beads, bangles, bowls and figurines were discovered on the summit. Since then Mapungubwe has been excavated and once again there is evidence of an extensive African farming society, based on cattle keeping with agriculture, but in this case with trade playing an increasingly important role. [Click here](#) to read more about Mapungubwe.

Pop-up Box: Mapungubwe

Mapungubwe hill is 300m long, broad at one end, tapering at the other. It is only accessible by means of two very steep and narrow paths that twist their way to the summit, and yet 2 000 tons of soil had been artificially transported to the very top by a prehistoric people of unknown identity. The hill is surrounded by mystery and legend. Local African legends hold the hill taboo and regard it with so much awe that they turn their backs to it at the mere mention of the name, and they believe that those who climb the hill place their lives in jeopardy.

On New year's Eve 1932, ESJ van Graan together with his son, three friends and a young African man, whom they had persuaded with much difficulty to guide them, ventured to the summit of the hill. Here they found the remnants of a lost and once powerful civilization. The hill was covered in ash and soil deposits among which they found iron tools, pots, copper beads and even heaps of boulders positioned so that, at a moments notice, they may be rolled down upon the heads of enemies who dared to climb the cliffs. Where the ground cover had been eroded, they found richly adorned graves ... and gold. Fortunately, Van Graan's son had studied ethnology at the University of Pretoria and, recognizing the academic value of the site; he contacted Professor Leo Fouche and so began the biggest Iron Age archaeological project ever undertaken by any southern African university, which remains an ongoing project today.

Archaeological enquiry uncovered the remnants of numerous dwellings, which had been built on the ruins of predecessors over many generations, resulting in a series of habitation phases. Radiocarbon dates show that the first buildings were erected below the hill at the beginning of the 11th century AD. But adjacent to Mapungubwe is the sister site of Bambadyanalo, which was settled even earlier. It seems that the centre of the state shifted from Bambadyanalo to Mapungubwe hill in about AD 1045, when the town most probably became overcrowded. It was also at about this time that hills and mountains became associated with royalty and the noble classes began to build their structure on high ground.

(The van Graan party discovered a gravesite, later named M1, rich with gold ornaments. A large quantity of gold wire adorned the neck and arms of the skeleton, and about 130 of these were still in relatively good condition. All in all, the amount of gold from this burial amounted to 7 503 ounces).

Although Mapungubwe has been scientifically investigated since the early 1930's, many of its mysteries lie unanswered. It is believed that Mapungubwe was home to an advanced culture of people. The civilization thrived as a sophisticated trading centre from around 1200 to 1300 AD. It was the centre of the largest kingdom in the sub-continent, where a highly sophisticated people traded gold and ivory with China, India and Egypt. The region had a population of more than 5 000 inhabitants.

Mapungubwe is probably the earliest known site in southern Africa where evidence of a class-based society existed (Mapungubwe's leaders were separated from the rest of the inhabitants). What is so fascinating about Mapungubwe is that it is testimony to the existence of an African civilisation that flourished before colonisation.

The route passes through both these ancient sites while giving tourists the opportunity to explore the lifestyles of people living in the region today. Rural life can be hard and people have adapted in many different ways to the arid bushveld environment. Take the time to visit some of the villages and meet the people of this ancient land. You will also have the opportunity to see many baobabs as they line the roads and can visit the biggest recorded baobab in the world that is believed to be approximately 3 000 years old. To get to the tree, take the most direct road to Sagole Spa and then drive west along the road that goes through Sagole Spa until you see a signboard reading 'Big Tree' to the right. If you get lost, just ask for directions. [Click here](#) to read more about the baobab tree.

Pop-up Box: The baobab tree

All baobabs are deciduous trees ranging in height from 5 to 20 meters. The baobab tree (also referred to as the upside down tree) is a strange looking tree that grows in low-lying areas in Africa and Australia. It can grow to enormous sizes and carbon dating indicates that they may live to be 3,000 years old.

When bare of leaves, the spreading branches of the baobab look like roots sticking up into the air, as if it had been planted upside-down. Baobabs are very difficult to kill, they can be burnt, or stripped of their bark, and they will just form new bark and carry on growing. When they do die, they simply rot from the inside and suddenly collapse, leaving a heap of fibres, which makes many people think that they don't die at all, but simply disappear.

An old baobab tree can create its own ecosystem, as it supports the life of countless creatures, from the largest of mammals to the thousands of tiny creatures scurrying in and out of its crevices. Birds nest in its branches; baboons devour the fruit; bush babies and fruit bats drink the nectar and pollinate the flowers, and elephants have been known to chop down and consume a whole tree.

A baby baobab tree looks very different from its adult form and this is why the Bushmen believe that it doesn't grow like other trees, but suddenly crashes to the ground with a thump, fully grown, and then one day simply disappears. No wonder they are thought of as magical trees.

The baobab tree has large whitish flowers that open at night. The fruit, which grows up to a foot long, contains tartaric acid and vitamin C and can either be sucked, or soaked in water to make a refreshing drink.

The fruit can also be roasted and ground up to make a coffee-like drink. The fruit is not the only part of the baobab that can be used. The bark is pounded to make rope, mats, baskets, paper and cloth; the leaves can be boiled and eaten, and glue can be made from the pollen.

Fresh baobab leaves provide an edible vegetable similar to spinach, which is also used medicinally to treat kidney and bladder disease, asthma, insect bites, and several other maladies. The tasty and nutritious fruits and seeds of several species are sought after, while pollen from the African and Australian baobabs is mixed with water to make glue.

Along the Zambezi, the tribes believe that when the world was young the baobabs were upright and proud. However for some unknown reason, they lorded over the lesser growths. The gods became angry and uprooted the baobabs, thrusting them back into the ground, root upwards. Evil spirits now haunt the sweet white flowers and anyone who picks one will be killed by a lion.

One gigantic baobab in Zambia is said to be haunted by a ghostly python. Before the white man came, a large python lived in the hollow trunk and was worshipped by the local natives. When they prayed for rain, fine crops and good hunting, the python answered their prayers. The first white hunter shot the python and this event led to disastrous consequences. On still nights the natives claim to hear a continuous hissing sound from the old tree.

[Click here](#) to see pictures of the baobab tree.

In addition to the people there are opportunities for good game viewing at the Kruger National Park, The Mapungubwe National Park or many of the private game reserves in the area. The Venetia Wild Dog Project is also located on the route where tourists are given the opportunity to radio-track the Venetia wild dogs with the researchers on the project. The African wild dog, also known as the Cape hunting dog, is Africa's most endangered carnivore. [Click here](#) to read more about the African wild dog.

Pop-up Box: The African wild dog

The African wild dog is a gregarious, pack-living animal with behaviour similar to that of the well-known wolf of the northern hemisphere. The wild dog has a similar role in nature to that of the wolf in that it removes weak and unhealthy animals from the prey population. Like the wolf, the wild dog has been persecuted relentlessly.

The African wild dog is a slim, long-legged animal about the size of an Alsatian dog. Its coat is a dappled combination of tan, black and white - each individual having a unique pattern. They differ from true dogs and wolves in that they have only four, not five, toes on each foot. Their large rounded ears are characteristic and contribute to an extremely acute sense of hearing.

Wild dogs live in closely-knit packs of up to 15 adults together with their young. Each pack has one dominant female and one dominant male. Usually only these two will mate and produce offspring. All pack members cooperate in the rearing of pups.

A high-pitched twittering, associated with excitement, is often heard when the pack is at a carcass or when they greet each other on returning from a hunt or awakening after a doze in the shade. A hooting call, called the 'whoo' call, allows the members of the pack to find one another when the pack breaks up.

Often regarded as merciless and cruel killers, wild dogs are in fact among the most efficient of Africa's large predators. Their bad reputation is unjustified and probably a result of the frequent observation of their kills by people, as the dogs hunt mostly by day. Wild dogs hunt as a pack - they quickly single out a weak or injured animal within a herd, and the animal is then pursued until it can run no further. Wild dogs are tireless runners and chases may cover several kilometres. Contrary to popular belief, the dogs do not take turns to wear down prey. The mottled hunters quickly kill and consume their prey - impala, grey duiker, steenbok, and the young of the larger antelopes are popular items on their menu.

Wild dogs favour savanna woodland with reasonable rainfall. They occur patchily south of the Sahara, where they are now rarely found outside the borders of wildlife sanctuaries. In southern Africa, wild dogs are confined to large game reserves, such as the Kruger, Hwange, Gonarezhou, Moremi, and Chobe parks as well as the smaller Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park. Free-roaming packs still occur in the Bushmanland region of Namibia, while their status in Mozambique is unknown.

WHY ENDANGERED?

African wild dogs are great roamers and frequently come into contact with farmers and their livestock. Since they prey on small stock they are often shot or poisoned by farmers. Until the 1960s even game rangers eliminated the dogs wherever they could: they were blamed for creating havoc amongst antelope herds, which were then regarded as the priorities of wildlife preservation.

Recent research on these interesting creatures has revealed their fascinating social habits and beneficial role in weeding weak animals out of antelope populations. Reserves now prize any

packs living within their boundaries, these being the only places where wild dogs will survive. Packs often leave the boundaries of protected areas and are then at great risk from stock farmers. Although they breed well in captivity and are thus available for reintroduction, there are few suitable areas to which wild dogs can be returned.

WHAT YOU CAN DO?

* Be sure to report sightings of wild dogs in the visitor's books of national parks and game reserves. Game rangers would be particularly interested to hear of any pups or dens that you may have seen.

* People interested in donating money to support African wild dog research should contact the Endangered Wildlife Trust, P/Bag X11, Parkview, 2122. Tel. 011-4861102.

Also see <http://www.limpopo.co.za/hosted/wilddog/info.htm> for more information and photos.

From Mapungubwe you can head to Pontdrift, where a crocodile farm can be visited before heading off to the small town of Alldays, a traditional hunting hotspot.

The route is ideally located as a starting point to explore the countries of Zimbabwe and Botswana. The Beitbridge border post to Zimbabwe operates 24 hours a day and can be contacted at:

Beitbridge - Tel: +27 15 530 0070
Fax: +27 15 530 0070

The Pontdrift border post into Botswana is open daily from 08:00-16:00 and can be contacted at:

Pontdrift – Tel: +27 15 575 1561
Fax: +27 15 575 1047

Please be warned that the route falls within a malaria area and it is advisable to take the necessary precautions.

Thulamela Route – Background Information

This sub-route roughly stretches from the Pafuri region in the Kruger National Park to Musina. The Pafuri region lies in the northern most sector of the Kruger National Park and is located between the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers. To the north and east lies Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This area is destined to become the core of a new transfrontier or 'peace' park that will straddle South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe and is known as the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

A project called the Makuleke 'Concession' created a trust for the Makuleke people living adjacent to the park. The reason why this Trust came into being is that the Makuleke people used to live in the area prior to 1989. They have been awarded this area back by the South African Government and the Makuleke people now own the land. The Communal Property Association (CPA) Trust represents all the Makuleke people and benefits come in the form of direct cash, training, skills transfers, jobs and community development projects that have the lodges as their direct patrons. A percentage of all the money earned by the lodges gets paid directly to the Makuleke CPA. This is a Trust that has been set up to benefit all of the Makuleke people who live in the Makuleke villages outside of the Kruger National Park.

The Makuleke's could have moved back into the area - but have elected to stay where they are and to keep this as part of the Kruger National Park and to ensure that conservation of the area continues. The Makuleke people won their land back under the 'new' South African Government's

land restitution process that allows anyone that was forcibly removed off their land anytime after 1913, to claim their land back through a formal land claim process.

The Makuleke's were one of the first tribes to get their land back in a formally protected area and they have received a lot of attention from this process, as this was viewed as a groundbreaking process that could make or break conservation in the post Apartheid South Africa.

Kruger Park and the Makuleke people have vowed to make this area a showpiece of what can be achieved when communities, formal conservation authorities and ethical private sector partners work together for the benefit of all.

On the game viewing front, this area is famous for the large herds of Elephant and Buffalo that are resident most of the year round. They concentrate in particular around the permanent waters of the Luvuvhu River in the dry winter months. There are resident prides of Lion and the Luvuvhu riparian system supports a healthy population of Leopard.

Wild Dog and Cheetah have been sighted hunting the strong population of Nyala and Impala that live alongside the Luvuvhu system. On the eastern most boundary at 'Crooks Corner' the Luvuvhu supports a large population of Hippo and Crocodile.

The Makuleke Concession is probably one of the few places in the Kruger where one has a good chance of spotting Eland and Sharpe's Grysbok, and is regarded as probably the birding hotspot of South Africa with specialities such as Pel's Fishing Owl, Wattle-eyed Flycatcher, Goldenbacked Pytilia, Crowned Eagles and Racket-tailed rollers. A lot of central Africa birds like the Mashona hyliota are only found in South Africa up in the Pafuri area.

One of the activities available in the area is attendance at the paleo-anthropological activities and lectures. This area could become one of the most important areas in all of Africa for paleo work. There is plenty of evidence of early man, stretching back some 2 million years ago right up to about 400 years ago when the Thulamela dynasty ruled in this area. The Shona people constructed walls and other structures that are not dissimilar to what is found in the Great Zimbabwe. There are rock engravings, hand tools and maybe even burial grounds. [Click here](#) to view the opening and closing times for gates into the park.

Pop-up Box: Kruger Park Gate Times

Kruger Park Gates open:

- Nov-Jan: 05:30
- Feb: 05:30
- Mar & Oct: 05:30
- Apr: 06:00
- May-July: 06:00
- Aug-Sept: 06:00

Camp Gates Open:

- Nov-Jan: 04:30
- Feb: 05:30
- Mar & Oct: 05:30
- Apr: 06:00
- May-July: 06:00
- Aug-Sept: 06:00

Park and Camp Gates Close:

- Nov-Jan: 18:30
- Feb: 18:30
- Mar & Oct: 18:00
- Apr: 17:30
- May-July: 17:30
- Aug-Sept: 18:00

*Information on Pafuri courtesy of www.krugerpark.co.za

From Pafuri the route can be followed to Musina. Musina (previously called Messina) is the northernmost town in the Limpopo Province. The town developed around the copper mining industry in the area. Copper was first discovered in prehistoric times by the Musina people who named it 'musina', meaning 'spoiler', because they considered it a poor substitute for iron, which is what they were after. The mineral was later rediscovered and mined by 20th century miners. Today iron, coal, magnetite, graphite, asbestos, diamonds and copper are mined here. With fascinating attractions and many game farms in the area, tourism and hunting play an important role in the economy of the town. Botanical highlights of the region include fine specimens of baobab trees and impala lilies, which are both protected species. Agricultural products include citrus, mangoes, tomatoes and dates.

The Musina Museum and Library at the Civic Centre provides interesting details of the town's social and natural history, while the original Zeederberg Mail Coach, used between Pretoria and Zimbabwe from the 1890s, can be viewed in front of the centre. Natural wonders include the Matakwe - a single rock of bulai granite measuring 38 ha in size on the Musina experimental farm off the R527 to Pontdrift. Visits are by appointment only. In the Messina Nature Reserve, a particularly impressive baobab specimen, known as the Elephant's Trunk because of the shape of one of its branches, can be seen in the Erich Mayer Park, named after a well-known painter of baobabs. Another park worth visiting is the Impala Lily Park. The Bulai / Dongola Execution Rocks mark the site where the Musina chiefs of old executed their prisoners. At Small Bulai on the side of the road the minor offenders were executed, while serious offenders met their fate at the large rock south of the road. The rocks are found 20 km west of Musina (Messina) on the R572 to Pontdrift.

Fishing is a popular pastime and there are many fine angling spots in the area. Adventure options in the area include hiking, 4x4 trails, white-water rafting on the Limpopo, game and birdwatching safaris, wild dog viewing and gyrocopter flights.

*information on Musina courtesy of www.golimpopo.com

Thulamela Route Participant Information:**Golf View Guest House**

Contact Name: Debbie Mitchell

Tel: +27 15 534 2202

Fax: +27 15 534 2202 \ 0422

Cell: +27 83 391 1386

Postal Address: Private Bag X632, Postnet Suite 22, Musina, 0900, South Africa

Physical Address: 22 Limpopo Avenue, Musina, 0900, South Africa

E-mail: mitchell5@absamail.co.za

Situated in Musina, just 12km from the Beit Bridge (Zimbabwe) border post, on the N1 North, this guesthouse is the ideal stopover for travellers and people on business. It is close to the centre of town with a beautiful view that overlooks the Musina golf course.

The guesthouse is thatched, with a modern, cosy feel. All the rooms are well furnished and the bathroom and kitchen fittings newly installed. The unit is air-conditioned with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Both bedrooms have a queen-sized bedroom suite. The guesthouse is fully self-contained with oven, microwave, fridge etc. The lounge, dining room and kitchen are all-in-one and lead out onto the veranda that has a braai facility.

Separate from the guest house, and on the same property is a palm fringed, stylishly furnished 2 sleeper bedroom with en-suite shower and toilet. The room overlooks the lapa and pool area, available for all guests to use. It has an air-conditioner, mini fridge and tea and coffee making facilities. The full DSTV bouquet is available in both the guesthouse and guestroom. There is also a well-equipped gym (with aerobic classes daily) on site. A Laundromat is available 500 meters down the road. Fax and e-mail facilities can be arranged should you need them.

A continental breakfast is standard and local take-away outlets offer delivery services for other meals should you choose not to self-cater.

Limpopo Travel & Avis Rent-A-Car

Contact Name: Lesley Idzerda

Tel: +27 15 534 2220

Fax: +27 15 534 2233

Cell: +27 83 763 5286

Postal Address: PO Box 1475, Musina, 0900, South Africa

Physical Address: Shop 4, Limpopo Building, National Road, Musina, 0900, South Africa

E-mail: limpopotravel@lantic.net

Avis Rent-A-Car has been operating in Musina for the past 10 years. They service the following areas: Musina, Thohoyandou, Punda Maria, Pafuri, Beit Bridge border post, Pontdrift, Alldays and Makado (Louis Trichardt).

They have the following cars on offer:

- Group P (smallest car on the fleet - Citi Golf or Corsa Lite, no radio or air conditioning)
- Group A (Tazz - radio no air con)
- Group B (radio and air conditioning).

Rentals are done on credit card or Avis account.

The office hours are Monday - Friday - 08h00 - 17h00, with call-out facilities over the weekend.

Limpopo Travel has been in operation for the last three years and they offer the following services:

- Airline tickets
- Bus tickets - Greyhound
- Car rental
- Holiday packages

Pafuri Lodge

Contact Name: Lilian Ramaru

Tel: +27 15 962 2066

Cell: +27 72 125 7052

Postal Address: PO Box 81, Vhufuli, 0971, South Africa

Physical Address: Along the R525, approximately 4km from Pafuri Gate

Pafuri Lodge is located along the R525, approximately 4km from the Pafuri Gate of the Kruger National Park. The lodge is very affordable and is situated in a bushveld setting. It is easily accessible as it is located close to the tarred road.

The lodge has a swimming pool and they are able to organise traditional Venda dances for visitors. They also prepare traditional Venda food.

Pafuri Rivercamp

Contact Name: Glynn Taylor

Fax: +27 15 963 1386

Cell: +27 82 785 0305

Postal Address: PO Box 798, Tshikondeni, 0959, South Africa

Physical Address: Along the R525, 3km from the Pafuri Gate

E-mail: rivercamp@pafuri.co.za

Website: www.pafuri.co.za

Pafuri River Camp is situated 3km from the Pafuri Gate of the Kruger National Park. The camp consists of tented tree-houses and has 22 beds in total. Each of the sites has its own kitchen, toilet, shower and braai area. For those that do not want to prepare their own food, meals can be arranged. The camp also has a central lapa with a bar and swimming pool.

Activities that can be arranged include tiger fishing, bird-watching, walks, scenic tours around Venda and shebeen (local taverns) tours.

The camp was built in 2 000 after a big flood washed away the original camp. The camp is situated on tribal trust land that they rent from the local community.

They are close to the Pafuri border post into Mozambique and there are plans to build a bridge and border post into Zimbabwe within the next few years.

Sagole Spa

Contact Name: Petrus Litshani

Cell: +27 82 840 0707

Postal Address: PO Box 783, Sagole, 0995, South Africa

Sagole Spa was developed around a natural hot spring. The accommodation is old and in some need of upgrading. They offer accommodation in rondavels, dormitories or cottages. They have two rondavels with en-suite bathrooms and four with outside bathrooms. All the rondavels accommodate three people. The cottages accommodate six people each and have a kitchen and its own swimming pool overlooking the hot spring.

The spa also caters for school groups and the dormitories can accommodate up to 41 people. There are two dorms – both have toilets and inside showers.

Soutpansberg – Limpopo Birding Route

Contact Person(s): Sarah Venter

Tel: +27 15 5177040

Fax: +27 15 5177034

Cell: +27 82 374 9534

Postal Address: PO Box 203, Makhado, 0920, South Africa

Email: contactus@limpopobirding.com

Website address: www.limpobirding.com

The Soutpansberg-Limpopo Birding Route covers the area from Blouberg to Kruger, Makhado, Venda, Thohoyandou, Tshipise, Musina, Mapungubwe area, Alldays and the Mogalakwena River. The Soutpansberg-Limpopo Birding Route is a non-profit organisation that was created to boost tourism and economic development in the Soutpansberg area as well as provide a vehicle to highlight the conservation importance of habitats and birds.

They offer travel information to birdwatchers, which including information on accommodation, birding sites, events, birding specials, bird lists, maps and travel advice. The Birding Route is also involved in community tourism projects and conservation projects. It is envisaged that the promotion of tourism to the Soutpansberg and Limpopo Valley, through the development of avitourism, will broaden and develop the market as a whole and create opportunities for rural socio-economic development. Thus the birding route offers a means through which rural communities, that would otherwise not have the funds to promote their own destinations, can profit from their association with the larger marketing platform. The increase in tourism to the area will have spin-offs for secondary markets such as local craft producers and other service providers, such as shops, cafes and restaurants.

The main objective of the community development programme is to develop small businesses that will directly benefit rural communities in previously disadvantaged areas. These are 'stand alone' projects which are linked to the birding route, but which can also access the wider tourism market. The birding route has secured funding for the development of two community campsites.

The development of local bird guides is another way in which we are creating economic opportunities in rural areas. Through our long-term programme we hope to introduce bird-watching to a wide range of rural people, a selection of whom will become experienced and confident guides in their areas. The birding route will ensure that they benefit from our marketing and exposure to birding developments.

The birding route offers the ideal co-ordinating vehicle to oversee the bird conservation needs of the region. There are a number of rare and threatened species found in the area and more information is needed to verify their local status. Highlighting the needs of bird conservation also offers opportunities for environmental education for communities situated in ecologically sensitive areas. The birding route is involved in the monitoring of threatened species, bird censuses and the management of a bird database for the area.

Mapungubwe Route Background Information:

The Mapungubwe Route lies west of Musina and roughly stretches to the Pontdrift border post. This is the route to the ancient Kingdom of Mapungubwe, South Africa's first Kingdom, which existed in the 13th century from about 1220 to 1290AD, on top of Mapungubwe Hill, the "place of jackals". It is here where gold artefacts, including the Golden Rhino and other treasures have been discovered, revealing a sophisticated civilisation that was capable of working gold and traded with the Indian Ocean trade network that included the countries of Arabia, China, Indonesia and India. Mapungubwe was the forerunner of the Great Zimbabwe civilisation, and it is estimated that up to 5000 people lived around the area known as Mapungubwe hill.

The Mapungubwe Landscape was declared a World Heritage Site on 3rd July 2003, confirming the international importance given to this area to ensure that the natural bio-diversity of the fauna and flora as well as the African Iron Age archaeological sites are preserved for future generations to learn about and enjoy.

However, the Mapungubwe Route is not only the road to the ancient Kingdom. It is also the road to one of South Africa's newest national parks, the Mapungubwe National Park that incorporates the World Heritage Site. The northern boundary of the Park is the Limpopo River. This once mighty river's banks are still strewn about with giant fever trees, mashatu trees and

huge sycamore figs. The view point overlooking the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo rivers is a vista where three countries, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa, meet. The area boasts an impressive landscape including sandstone cliffs, balancing rocks, riverine forests, mopane bushveld and views of the Limpopo River. The landscape changes dramatically after suitable rain and supports many endemic species of plants and flowers. The boundaries of the Mapungubwe National Park will ultimately include about 28000 hectares. The park will form the core of the proposed Limpopo-Shashe TransFrontier Conservation Area, incorporating parts of Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. Wildlife at present includes elephant, giraffe, eland, gemsbok, blue wildebeest, red hartebeest, zebra, kudu, waterbuck, impala, bushbuck, klipspringer and other plains game. The park offers facilities for both overnight visitors and day visitors. There are birding and game viewing hides, elevated tree-top walks to the Limpopo River, Eco (4 x 4) Trails and picnic sites. Guided visits to and up onto Mapungubwe Hill, to San rock art and dinosaur fossils are available, led by SANParks guides.

The Mapungubwe Route is an area with a great diversity of bird species. It is an area of crossover covering the most southerly latitude for the northern species while being the most northerly latitude for many of the southern species. It is also an area of crossover between the desert birds of the west and the tropical birds of the east. Many of the migrations pass over this area, and vagrants are frequently spotted. In excess of 400 bird species have been identified in the area. This area is also included in The Soutpansberg Limpopo Birding Route that was developed in conjunction with Birdlife SA.

The Mapungubwe Route also provides visitors the opportunity to see a crocodile farm, San rock art, wildlife, wilderness trails and even diamonds at the De Beers Venetia diamond mine.

Along the Mapungubwe Route the Baobab Tree (*Adansonia digitata*) is the undisputed king of the bush. These giant trees with their enormous girth and dominating presence are surrounded by legend, one of which explains the root-like branches by saying that the gods, in a frivolous mood, planted the tree upside down, exposing the roots. There is a nature reserve in the area that was established some years ago to preserve the baobabs in the area and over a hundred mature specimens of this fascinating tree can be seen. This small reserve also contains the world's oldest exposed datable rock, a piece of granite gneiss with an estimated age of 3852 million years. It is a good place to see the impressive and majestic sable antelope.

A Baobab Trail wends its way amongst many baobabs, most over 1000-years-old. Each of these baobabs has its own character and a name describing it. It is a one or two day walking trail, but it is also possible to follow the route on a mountain bike.

Scattered along the Mapungubwe Route, impressive Rock Figs grow out of huge rocks while some of their roots flow over the rock surface.

Mapungubwe Route Participant Information:

Afric-Tuli Lodge

Tel: +27 15 575 1212

Cell: +27 73 2607122

E-Mail: afriquethuli@ananzi.co.za

Afric Tuli is a wilderness lodge located north east of the town of Alldays in the Limpopo province. The rural charm of Afric Tuli is enhanced by its setting amidst outcrops and giant bushveld trees such as the baobab, wild fig and nyala berry. The latter give food and shelter to the many bird species and provide much enjoyment to avid birdwatchers. Herds of elephant are a common sight and as they come to drink in the Limpopo River.

For recreational purposes, a golf driving range and swimming pool are situated right next to the lapa that can also be used as a venue for wedding receptions and other outdoor functions.

The tourist accommodation at Afric Tuli consists of a lodge with eight en-suite double bedrooms, the interior of which represents eight typical South African areas. The lodge offers all the holiday facilities that may be required by tourists, hunters or even business people. Well-equipped conference facilities are also available to the latter.

Dongola Ranch

Contact Person: Tersia

Tel: +27 15 533 1948/9

Fax: +27 15 533 1950 OR +27 11 972 3593

Postal Address: PO Box 12261, Ashton Manor, 1630, Gauteng, South Africa

Physical Address: R572 Musina/Pontdrif Road, Mapungubwe, Musina, South Africa

E-mail: dongola@iafrica.com

Website: www.dongola.co.za

Dongola is a 450-hectare ranch that lies between a cluster of granite hills in the Limpopo Province. Game on the ranch includes caracal, genet, lynx, suricate, serval, civet, wild cat, badger, aardwolf, pangolin, bush baby, porcupine and leopard. The property also has about ninety species of trees, including baobab's. There are also numerous bird species on the ranch.

Dongola offers en-suite accommodation in a camp set in green gardens or more formal amenities in the Loerie Lodge. The camp is unfenced, so many game species wander past the camp to the waterhole.

They also offer game drives where guests can see more of the different species that inhabit the ranch.

The Dongola Conference Centre boasts two conference rooms linked to the main Dongola Centre and Fever Tree Restaurant. Conference facilities cater for up to 150 people. They cater for seminars, indabas (meetings) and team-building groups.

Klein Bolayi Game Lodge

Contact Person: Dr. Dierk or Ingeborg Lempertz

Tel: +27 15 534 0975

Fax: +27 15 534 0976

Postal Address: PO Box 1318, Musina, 0900, South Africa

Physical Address: Pontdrif Road, Mapungubwe Route, Musina, 0900

E-mail: lempertz@gamelodgebolayi.com

Website: www.gamelodgebolayi.com

Game Lodge Klein Bolayi is a private nature reserve situated in the Limpopo Valley, about 20km from Musina. It is graded by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa as a four star establishment.

The lodge is set in the heart of the world's largest concentration of Baobab trees. There are nine thatched chalets, each with en-suite facilities and can accommodate 28 people. All rooms are equipped with cooling fans and air-conditioning. Meals are served by internationally trained chefs in an elevated restaurant with views towards the Limpopo Valley. Breakfast and lunch is served buffet-style while the evening meal is a four course set menu. A fire is lit each night so guests can enjoy a view of the stars.

Game drives are offered in open 4x4 vehicles on the 500- hectare property. Guided bird and wildlife walks through indigenous African savannah or guided excursions on horseback are also offered.

The property boasts all the African plains game and guests might spot the occasional leopard, wild dog, hyena, civet, caracal or jackal. There are also numerous bird species on the property.

Additionally a hydro and spa with a cardiovascular training gym has been built, two saunas and a heated salt water pool, a rock pool and a waterfall. Exclusive water therapy, wellness massages, sports and stone massages, reflexology and back and neck massages are also offered. Body treatments include specialised colour light therapy, facials, manicures, pedicures and wax treatments.

Mapungubwe National Park

Contact Person: Elanza or Bernard van Lente

Tel: +27 15 534 2014

Cell: +27 83 640 4915

Physical Address: Musina-Pontdrif Road, Mapungubwe, South Africa

E-mail: elanzavl@sanparks.org

Website: www.SANparks.org/parks/mapungubwe/

The creation of the Mapungubwe National Park has been an objective of the South African National Parks for many years. It is based on the rich biodiversity of the area, its great scenic beauty and the cultural importance of the archaeological treasures of Mapungubwe, within the proposed park area. The park is currently still in a developmental phase, and has not been consolidated yet, with some facilities still being completed. Extensive rehabilitation work and further infrastructure development will be taking place over the next few years.

The Mapungubwe National Park was previously known as Vhembe Dongola National Park. It is situated 60 km west of Musina and about 230 km from Polokwane, the capital town of Limpopo Province.

The park comprises the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape and the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site. It is also located at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers. Declared a National Heritage Site in December 2001, the park was listed as a World Heritage Site in July 2003. The Mapungubwe National Park covers an area that is well over 28 000- hectares.

The Mapungubwe National Park is positioned on the international borders of Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It is envisaged that the park will eventually form part of a Trans-Frontier Conservation Area shared by the three countries. It is the only geological defined cultural landscape in the region that includes a full set of successive stages in the early history of this area. Its nomination completes an historical triangle from Mapungubwe to Great Zimbabwe and Khami that continues to influence African society today.

International contacts with Islamic traders on the east coast, who were part of a larger Indian Ocean network, led to African gold and elephant ivory, as well as animal hides and hippo ivory, being worked and exchanged for glass beads and ceramics that derived from as far a field as the Indo-Pacific region, including India, Indonesia and China.

The park represents an area with exceptional cultural and natural values. Over the years, it has retained the following values:

- Exhibition of vital interchange of human values, between 900 and 1300 AD in southern Africa - on developments in technology, and town planning.
- Exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which has disappeared from the Limpopo/Shashe area.
- An outstanding example of a type of architectural and technological ensemble and landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history and;
- An outstanding example of a traditional human settlement and land-use which is representative of a culture that became vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

The Mapungubwe National Park landscape has outstanding botanical, ecological, geological and geomorphologic merit, with a range of vegetation types associated with the outcrop of cave sandstone, baobab trees, Karoo fossils and ancient rocks nearly three billion years old. It provides a sanctuary to endangered large mammals, such as the black and white rhinoceros, wild dog, and the continent's flagship species, the African elephant. The famous Golden Rhino along with artefacts, glass beads and pottery was unearthed from Mapungubwe National Park and is evidence of the capabilities of the people of that time in both mining as well as art.

Areas of special interest:

- Mapungubwe Hill: visits to this very sensitive area can only be done with a guide. Enquire at reception;
- The Treetop Hide: always good for birds and sometimes game;
- The Confluence: see the three countries and where the Sashe and Limpopo rivers meet. Also see the ancient fossilized termite mounds to the south of the picnic area;
- The Tshugulu Eco Route: a 4x4 is strongly recommended. This route covers 45km (4-6 hours) through some spectacular terrain and habitat. There is also a state-of-art game hide on this route. Enquire at reception;
- Maloutswa Pan: very good for game in the dry season, and for birds in the wet season; and
- Day walks: a qualified guide will take you for a walk in the bush. Enquire at reception. Walks depend on availability of guide.

Mopane Bush Lodge

Contact Person: Paul Hatty

Tel: +27 15 534 1054

Fax: +27 15 534 7906

Cell: +27 83 679 8884

Postal Address: PO Box 837, Musina, 0900, South Africa

Physical Address: R572 Musina/Pontdrif Road, Mapungubwe, Musina, South Africa

E-mail: mopanebushlodge@limpopo.co.za

Website: www.mopanebushlodge.co.za

Mopane Bush Lodge is located on a game farm, Mapesu Nature Reserve, and was built during 2001 and 2002. It started out as a small camp for hunters, but evolved into a luxury lodge for eco-tourists and particularly visitors to the Mapungubwe National Park.

The design of the lodge is based on typical traditional African living – round houses in clusters. Each chalet is fenced off in its own kraal, thus giving a sense of privacy and security.

It is a safe environment for walking, cycling, birding, driving in the bush, or simply relaxing. They also have a full service bar, a swimming pool with waterfall and martini seat beside the bar, and are wheel chair friendly. [Click here](#) to read more about Mopane Bush Lodge.

Pop-up Box: Mopane Bush Lodge (By Anita de Villiers)

The things some people get up to in their retirement are remarkable, a statement of true intrepidity, mixed with a dash of zesty abandon. When Paul and Rosemary Hatty decided to buy a 6 000 ha rather run-down farm in the most northern part of the Limpopo province, instead of a nice bush getaway near Kruger, their Johannesburg friends were... well, somewhat bemused.

“It was sort of a vague decision” is Paul’s bashful answer to the obvious question, to which rosemary laughingly adds that for a businessman he made some pretty vague decisions at the

time. Paul admits that, for a production engineer that would normally not spend a penny before a solid bottom line is spelled out in terms of return on the investment, the project was a little “topsy”. But eight years into their venture, the true engineer has resurfaced – the farm is now the factory building and the wildlife they have since stocked the farm with are the machines. But listening to their account of the first Giraffe’s arrival on the farm is to hear a very unmechanistic, impassioned commitment to their farm, Mapesu Ranch.

In 1996, when the Hatty’s bought the farm, the consolidation of land for the development of a new National Park that would eventually be the core of a Transfrontier Conservation Area stretching into Botswana and Zimbabwe was a dream. Mapesu Ranch is adjacent to the newly opened Mapungubwe National Park and the World Heritage Site, and lies about seven kilometres south of the Limpopo River, where it forms the boundary with Zimbabwe. The rich findings at the Mapungubwe archaeological site had unearthed important new information about South Africa’s cultural history.

The Limpopo Valley is semi-arid land with an average annual rainfall of about 330mm and the sensitive veld is slow to recover from negative impacts. When the Hatty’s bought the farm, extreme degradation, erosion and bush encroachment were the sad legacy of overgrazing by cattle and goats. Except for a number of nifty old kudu bulls and the odd impala, most of the game on the farm has ended life as biltong. So, the rehabilitation of the farm was not your average retiree’s cup of English tea, except if they had a good dose of pioneering blood in their veins.

Paul’s roots are in Southern Rhodesia of old, where his father, Sir Cyril Hatty, was a member of parliament and cabinet minister during the 1950’s. Spanning three generations, the family’s Zimbabwean history reads like a Wilbur Smith novel. However, the good years and the times of trails and tribulations are not anecdotal. They have moulded a family whose endeavours articulate their heartfelt attachment to Africa.

The initial plans were to establish a safari-style camp on Mapesu, but of course the Hatty’s then decided to do something different. Out of their natural flair for drawing people into their warm circle of friendship crystallized the idea of a special place where friends and guests would be able to gather and “kuier”. One thing led to another, so Paul started to pin down some conceptual ideas; their son Christopher found a site with a view; then their nephew Ray designed what he visualised as an African Renaissance style lodge, incorporating the ideas of traditional African living. A concentric design took shape with eight round, en-suite chalets, each with its own kraal stretching out, four on each side, from the central circular buildings and boma.

Under the guidance of Paul and his foreman, Jethro Moyo, construction of the lodge by a team of unskilled workers began early in 2001. Experts were brought in from nearby Musina or Pretoria for specialist work such as the high domed thatched roof of the lounge and dining room. As building proceeded, changes were made to accommodate their philosophy for the lodge. Experiencing the immense silence of the Bushveld weighed heavier than the convenience of having a kitchen near the boma, so the layout was switched around. Wall and floor finishes underwent several processes to achieve their natural colours and textures while mopane poles of varying lengths shaped the perimeter of the kraals and the outside showers. Twisted mopane branches became beautiful door handles and ostrich eggs were transformed into bathroom lights. A long search for a potter who could interpret the colour, texture and designs of the thirteenth century pottery found at the Mapungubwe archaeological site, took them to the Waterfront in Randburg. These pots became the wall lights in the lounge, while pottery from Zimbabwe became the boma’s hanging lights. A pool and deck with a view over the sea of mopane was added and the lodge was completed just in time for the celestial event of 2001 that would put Musina on the world map.

Friends and family were invited for the big happening: Mopane Bush Lodge’s house-warming festivities and the eclipse. The first official booking came from a French couple who had travelled

to many eclipses around the world. They wanted assurance of a hundred percent visibility of the eclipse, so the search was on for the best spot for the event. All astronomical pointers indicated a specific hill in Mapungubwe Park, where they would celebrate the event with a champagne breakfast. But the French, being French, said, "Non, non, you cannot call this champagne, only the French can make the champagne!" But, says Rosemary, "Cap Classique breakfast" just doesn't sound right. Tasting the bubbly, the Franchman held his glass to the post-eclipse light and produced the final verdict. "Mais oui, this is truly champagne!"

Many interesting guests and memorable occasions have since been recorded in the visitor's book. Asking about the activities on offer, Paul enthusiastically explains the latest machine in his Mopane Lodge Factory: the Mapungubwe Route. Co-operating with the National Park, a number of establishments have grouped together to promote the variety of accommodation and activities on offer in the area. To name but a few, tracking wild dog in the Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve; birding in one of South Africa's best birding areas, walking or cycling the Baobabwe Peace Trail; lunching on succulent crocodile steak at Ratho Crocodile Farm; or immersing oneself in an authentic wilderness experience with Šêbê- Šêbê Wilderness trails. However, says Rosemary, the main idea at Mopane Lodge is just to chill out: - to relax and read, enjoy good food and a lovely boma dinner while gazing at the incredible dome of stars and taking leisurely game drives or walks.

Walking along with Paul is to be introduced to the Bushveld through the eyes of a keen observer. He points out spoor of impala, eland, red hartebeest, hyena, and caracal, while relating interesting information about the flora. Most of Mapesu is covered by Mopane, interspersed with Sesame Bush and several varieties of acacia like the endemic Vlei Thorn. The Mopane trees are excellent fodder for most of the game on the farm. In winter, the butterfly-shaped leaves with their prominent veins turn all shades of orange and rust, before dropping to form a mound of nutrition at the foot of each tree. Paul points out the miniscule black droppings of the Mopane worm that also assist in sustaining the trees.

Understanding how the lifecycle of the Mopane worms dovetails into the seasonal rhythms of the trees, brings home the realisation of how infinitely fine the balance of nature is. But to experience this, one must be willing to stand still, to observe and to listen.

Rosemary's reply to what is special about Mapesu says in words what a million images cannot capture. "It is the peace and tranquillity, the vastness of the bush and the endless dome of the sky. I feel the wonder of creation and an awareness of man's proper place in the greater scheme of things. It feeds your soul".

Ratho Bush Camps

Contact Person: Sandra Boshoff

Tel: +27 15 575 1362

Fax: +27 15 575 1580

Cell: +27 82 448 7998

Postal Address: PO Box 26, Alldays, 0909, South Africa

Physical Address: Ratho Farm, Pontdrif, South Africa

E-mail: sandra@ratho.co.za

Website: www.ratho.co.za

Ratho Bush Camps is located west of Pontdrif on the border between South Africa and Botswana. It is an ideal stopover for tourists travelling into Botswana and who want to have an early start.

Ratho offers accommodation in three camps:

- Tented Camp:
This camp is situated on the banks of the Limpopo River, under the shade of a huge Nyala Berry tree and can accommodate up to twelve people.
- Mopani Camp:

Situated high on a sandstone hill, overlooking the indigenous mopani veld (bush), this camp lets you experience sunsets over the Limpopo Valley.

- **Ana Tree and 4x4 Camps:**

For the adventurous camping enthusiasts. This camp is situated on the bank of the Limpopo River and has very limited facilities. Own camping equipment required.

Ratho also has an operational crocodile farm. On average, there are 4,000 - 5000 crocodiles on the Rakwena croc farm. While crocodile skins are exported mainly to Europe and the East, the meat of the crocodile is a delicacy and is also exported. They also have a very rare 'White Crocodile' on the farm

They have a Croc Shop where croc meat and hand made crocodile and other leather items are sold.

The following activities are available:

- Crocodile tours
- Bird watching
- Game viewing, including night drives
- 4x4 routes
- Insight into game farming

Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve and Little Muck Lodge

Contact Person: Warwick Davies-Mostert

Tel: +27 15 534 2986

Fax: +27 15 534 0971

Cell: +27 83 235 2849

Postal Address: P. O. Box 192, Musina, 0900, South Africa

Physical Address: Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve. District Musina

E-mail: venetia.reserve@debeersgroup.com

The 36 000-ha Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve on which the mine of the same name is located, lies close to the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers. The reserve is home to predators such as lion, leopard and cheetah that have established themselves by natural incursion and continue to do so from Botswana and Zimbabwe. The diverse range of habitats in the reserve vary from riverine forest to impressive sandstone cliffs and it supports a wide range of plant and animal life, including elephant, giraffe, rhino and various antelope species.

Little Muck Lodge is situated on a sandstone ridge and offers guests views of the Limpopo River floodplain below and Botswana's Tuli block in the distance. The lodge is situated within the Mapungubwe National Park, which in the future will form part of a new transfrontier peace-park with Botswana and Zimbabwe.

The lodge is built of stone and thatch and offers simple luxury. All rooms are en-suite, air conditioned, and are set a short distance away from the main lodge area.

Alldays Route Background Information:

Alldays, and the villages of Vivo and Dendron, serve an extensive area of private game and hunting farms. Prolific game – including the Big Five, accommodation and good hunting facilities attract many domestic and international trophy hunters.

Being a traditional hunting area, there are three taxidermists that operate in the area. Citrus farming on the banks of the Limpopo River is also an important economic activity in the district. Several giant trees that occur in and around Alldays are another noteworthy feature of the district. A baobab at Bakleikraal - 21 metres in circumference, a wild fig in Alldays – bigger than

the famous Wonder Tree in Pretoria and a Nyala tree that covers a surface of 100 square metres, are of particular interest. The Venetia Diamond Mine close by is one of De Beers' six diamond mining operations in South Africa and the only major diamond mine to be developed in South Africa in the last 25 years. Opened by former De Beers chairman, the late Harry Oppenheimer in 1992, the mine represents one of De Beers' biggest single investments in South Africa and is the country's largest producer of diamonds. Visits to the mine must be arranged in advance.

Historical treasures in the area include San rock art at Mapungubwe, Little Muck and Kaoxa Bush Camp, as well as remnants of the first ferry ('pont') used by elephant hunters to cross the Limpopo. Today at the Pontdrift border post between Botswana and South Africa, visitors are elevated in carts and taken over the river to view elephants and other game. Visits can also be arranged to the salt pans close by that attracted hundreds of elephants from Botswana in the past. At the Ratho and Parma Crocodile Farms on the Limpopo River some 60 km from Alldays, close on 4 000 crocodiles can be seen, while at Bandur Safaris lions kept in captivity can be viewed. The Ghompi Game Reserve in the vicinity of Alldays is also worth a visit.

Alldays Route Participant Information:

The Artist's Retreat

Contact Person: Isabella Coetsee
Tel: +27 21 424 0133
Fax: +27 21 424 0063
Postal Address: PO Box 60, Alldays, 0909, South Africa
E-mail: mogalakwena@mweb.co.za
Website: www.limpopo-collection.co.za

Artist's Retreat is a refurbished farmhouse that has been converted into accommodation and an art studio. Set on the farm, Canterbury, it provides artists and others with an escape from the rush of everyday life. The retreat has both a loft and garden studio.

It provides artists with an opportunity to escape to the bushveld to gain inspiration and do what they love.

Activities that are offered include bush & river walks and visits to the Craft Art Centre.

At se Gat / Cosa Nostra

Contact Person: Briers Uijs
Tel: +27 15 575 1108
Fax: +27 15 575 1208
Postal Address: PO Box 2, Alldays, 0909, South Africa
Physical Address: Farm Alldays, Ext. 3, Alldays, 0909, South Africa

At se Gat is situated just outside the town of Alldays. They offer the following facilities:

- Two bar's (inside and out)
- Restaurant
- Swimming pool
- Braai area
- Chalets
- Dance floor

The owner, Briers, says that it is "the local pub for all your story telling sessions".

Balerno Bush Lodge

Contact Person: Anita Venter / Claudine van der Walt / Gerhard de Beer

Tel: +27 15 575 1074

Fax: +27 12 807 3945

Cell: +27 82 772 0307 or +27 82 853 2998

Postal Address: P O Box 70124, Die Wilgers, 0041, South Africa

Physical Address: R521, Pontdrif, District Alldays, South Africa

E-mail: africore@iafrica.com OR anitav@gpg.gov.za

Balerno Bush Lodge's rustic design blends almost seamlessly with the surrounding landscape. Situated directly next to the Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site, it nestles between sandstone hills in the mopane bushveld north of the Soutpansberg in the Limpopo Province.

Manicured lawns link 4 thatched chalets; one chalet with wheelchair access. There is a splash pool with martini seat for hot summer days and a fireplace in the boma. There are also under-roof and outside braais (BBQ's) for sultry summer evenings. These are complemented by a fully-equipped, farm-style kitchen; a comfortable, open-plan lounge with DSTV; a wooden dining table which seats 12 people; and a leadwood bar counter with stools – all contained in a huge, thatched-roofed lapa.

Balerno Bush Lodge provides accommodation for up to 14 people (19, if required) in four spacious, thatched, two-bedroomed chalets, each bedroom equipped with a free-standing fan and en-suite bathroom – six with showers, one with bath. All rooms are fully equipped with bedding (please bring own toiletries) and mosquito repellents in summer. All chalets are serviced by well-trained staff.

As the facility is primarily self-catering, please provide own foodstuffs, including meat (the nearest shop is 49 km away in Alldays). However, breakfast and/or full catering can be provided on request. There is a shop-sized 3-door fridge, plus two additional fridges and two freezers, and three stoves: one electric, one gas, and one wood. The lodge has no liquor licence: so, please provide own liquor and soft drinks.

Makulu Makete Wildlife Reserve

Contact Person: Jane Chidgey

Tel: +27 82 903 8697

Fax: +27 15 575 9906

Cell: +27 82 903 8697

Postal Address: PO Box 227, Alldays, 0909, South Africa

Physical Address: Aden Farm, Alldays, 0909, South Africa

Email: pgr@worldonline.co.za

Website address: www.makulumakete.com

Makulu Makete, is a 5,000 hectare (11,000 acre) wildlife reserve in the far north of Limpopo Province, close to the border with Botswana. We are approximately 23 kilometres west of Alldays on the R572. The main camp accommodates a maximum of 12 people, in six, twin-bed luxury tents, each with its own balcony overlooking waterholes where game and birds come to drink, especially early in the morning and at dusk. The tents all have their own en-suite bathrooms. Because the number of guests is small, our activities can be tailored to suit their individual interests.

Activities include tracking wild cheetah on foot through the bush using telemetry, game drives in open Land Rovers, photography from hides, guided walks, lectures on ecology and participation in predator research projects.

Madia Pala Camp is a self-catering camp where you have exclusive use of the facilities at the foot of Kremetartkop. It is within easy walking distance of Mogalakwena River and the baobab trail. The camp consists of a fully equipped kitchen, lapa area, small swimming pool, and three thatched, twin-bed cabins, two with en-suite bathrooms and the third opposite a shower and toilet. The three rooms are of different standards. The camp sleeps a maximum of six people and is a favourite with birders. All linen is supplied and maid service is available if required at no extra cost.

Lulu's Tent and Caravan Camp is situated on the banks of the Mogalakwena River, on sweeping lawns and under established trees next to a permanent river pool. It has just five camping sites, hot showers, flushing toilets, safe drinking water, a large swimming pool and has powered sites. Firewood is available for purchase.

The Reserve is an official BirdLife South Africa Birder Friendly Establishment and are particularly keen to welcome birders. The bird list numbers more than 250 species and is growing weekly, thanks to the help of enthusiastic birding guests. There are more than 40 large mammals on the reserve but because the Big 5 are not present, it is safe to walk through the bush. The baobab trail, which meanders between 30 of the biggest of our 200 baobab trees, is popular with guests, as is a climb to the top of Kremetartkop, for a view of the plain below, dotted with baobabs. The largest baobab tree at Makulu Makete measures 22 meters circumference.

An optional extra day trip into Botswana is offered, across the Limpopo River, in search of elephants and other species which are not found at Makulu Makete. Other day trips can be arranged to Mapungubwe National Park, which is famous for its archaeological relics and where, if you are lucky, you could see rhino, or Venetia Mine where research is being carried out on lions and wild (Cape Hunting) dogs.

A major on-going bush rehabilitation project exists, with the aim of restoring the balance of the habitat and its natural wildlife.

Mogalakwena Craft Art Development Foundation

Contact Person: Isabella Coetsee

Tel: +27 21 424 0133

Fax: +27 21 424 0063

Postal Address: PO Box 60, Alldays, 0909, South Africa

E-mail: mogalakwena@mweb.co.za

Website: www.limpopo-collection.co.za

The Mogalakwena Craft Art Development Foundation (MCADF) was established in 1994 with the exclusive mission to:

- a) create employment opportunities for previously disadvantaged women and young school leavers living in what was previously known as Lebowa Tribal Trustland, now known as the northern part of the Limpopo Province, and to the west of the Blue Mountain;
- b) promote the traditional arts and crafts inherent in the communities, but which had become completely dormant due to lack of infra-structure, lack of funding and lack of market opportunities;
- c) promote the restoration of craft art skills in this community and to enable more members of the community to become self-sufficient and less dependant on unemployment government grants and pensions .

THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND AND THE AIM OF MCADF

In the northern part of the Limpopo Province of South Africa, between the Blue Mountain and Limpopo River, dinosaur footprints and archaeological findings are evidence of the rich and ancient history of this isolated area. This area is home to a tribal community of more than a million Pedi people. The majority of them are women, children and retired men, who for their existence are primarily dependent on meagre state pensions or contributions from husbands and fathers who labour in cities or on farms. Many of these people are illiterate and few of them still possess basic cultural productive skills to support themselves and their children. The area lacks employment opportunities and is largely undeveloped.

During 1994, the Mogalakwena Craft Art Development Foundation (MCADF) launched a program to support the economic and social upliftment of the local community and to reduce pressure to urbanise – training, involving and employing members of the local community.

MCADF specializes in the training of multiple skills - embroidery, bead work, candle making, sewing, basket weaving, cement work, basic computer literacy, practical first aid courses, AIDS awareness & care, children's art workshops and basic principles of cultural tourism.

Its projects focus on and invest in the culture and development of the creative skills of members of the local community. In the result, the local community benefits as a direct consequence of the Foundation's activities and in such a way MCADF has and encourages self-respect and dignity of members of this community. This Craft Art Village is within walking distance from the adjacent villages.

The vision of MCADF is to train and/or employ a minimum of 10 new craft artists per year. As a direct consequence of space limitations, only 26 people can presently be employed. Once The Craft Art Training and Development Centre has been completed, approximately 60 people can be trained and employed.

All construction work including the refurbishment of existing buildings have to date been performed by builders and trainees employed from the local community.

Greenhaus architect, Etienne Bruwer, has been commissioned to design and supervise the development of the Mogalakwena Craft Art Village. During construction experiments with a variety of traditional building techniques, as well as combining traditional with modern materials, are performed. The focus is also on the recycling of materials, e.g. using old discarded window frames in series instead of installing a large new frame. Interest has been received from overseas architects to become involved on a voluntary basis. The development processes are documented for future research.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF WHAT MCADF HAS DONE AND ACHIEVEMENTS DURING ITS TEN YEARS OF EXISTENCE

The Foundation had humble beginnings in old farmhouse where unemployed people from the neighbouring Lebowa Tribal Trust Land were trained in a variety of craft art skills and their products sold to enable them to earn an income.

This training increased, continued, diversified and developed including life skills training, for example Basic Health & Home Care, First Aid, AIDS Care, basic literacy & communication skills as well as basic computer skills. The Foundation's training became sustainable and resulted in people growing and becoming empowered.

The Foundation started its work with two part-time craft artists and now employs 26 people on a full-time basis. A huge escalation in orders resulted after publication of the book, *Craft Art in*

South Africa published by *Struik/New Holland Publishers* and the Foundation was compelled to employ more people.

In 1999/2000 the Foundation leased bigger premises and increased in personnel, employees, and its marketing activities to the UK, USA, France, Netherlands, Australia and Canada.

No financial sponsorship was applied for or received and during its ten years of existence it was independently & privately funded. During 2003 Mogalakwena Craft Art Development Foundation was winner of the Nedbank/Mail & Guardian Cultural Project of the Year Award. [Click here](#) to read more about the MCADF's achievements.

Pop-up Box: List of MCADF's achievements to date

- Exports on order
- 2001: Participation at the World Summit on Sustainable Development
- 2002: children from the nearby Modikwa Primary School in Radishaba Village attending a Children's Art Workshop stencilled their designs on fabric that was sewn into a quilt and presented to Mr Nelson Mandela for his 84th birthday.
- Sparkling Zulu Lulu angels to New York International Gift Fair
- 2003: National commission for Arabella Sheraton Grand Hotel in Cape Town - beaded & embroidered wall panels
- March 2003: Cement basins created at the Foundation are featured in July 2003 issue of *House & Leisure* magazine (pages 148, 149), embroidery featured in Winter 2003 issue of *VISI* magazine (pages 29 & 166) as well as in *Beeld* newspaper of 8 March 2003.
- May 2003: Two works created during a Children's Art Workshop were donated to The Solstice Foundation (www.solsticesa.org) and the proceeds of the auctioning thereof went towards Mama Murial's Creché in Kyalitsha, Cape Town
- 2003: Joint winner of Nedbank/Mail & Guardian Cultural Project of the Year Award
- March 2004: The Foundation was commissioned by SOURCE Brand Interior Architects to create embroidered and beaded cushion covers and a crocheted lampshade for Design Indaba Exhibition held in Cape Town
- 2004: MCADF featured at Citi Bank Philanthropic seminar in St Louis, USA
- 2004: Products taken to Tennessee showcase by Trade & Investment Limpopo
- 2004: Sparkling beaded angels (Zulu Lulus) to the International Folk Art Museum Shop, Sante Fe
- 2004: Beaded sculptures and embroidered bed & table linen bought for the newly launched Mapungubwe World Heritage Site in the Vhembe Dongola Transfrontier Park - South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe
- 2004: Zulu Mama chair weaving project in collaboration with furniture designer, Haldane Martin, Elle Decoration Designer of the Year. This project promises to develop and create significant job opportunities. A group of young male school leavers have been trained during November 2004
- 15 - 18 November 2004: First Aid/AIDS Awareness Workshop in conjunction with Anne Harriss - Reader in Educational Development; Anne Garvey - Deputy Dean; Nessie Brooks - senior lecturer in Occupational Health Nursing - all from London South Bank University; and Edith Smith
- December 2004: Five beaded & embroidered wall panels created for the newly launched Pezula Spa, Knysna, South Africa
- 1 December 2004 - 28 January 2005: Solo Exhibition of Bead Art - "Images of Limpopo" at Polokwane Art Gallery, Limpopo, South Africa
- February 2005: Opening of **The Artist's Retreat and Studio** - a refined bush retreat in Africa for creative minds
- 3 - 16 March 2005: We welcome our first group of 11 international artists to The Artist's Retreat and Studio.

- April 2005: SA Fashion Week workshop held at The Craft Art Village. 36 local craft artists working with SA designers and 2 lecturers from St Martin's Design Academy, London.
- August 2005: MCADF exhibiting at Cultural History Museum, Potchefstroom.
- August 2005: Exhibited products at SA Fashion Week in Johannesburg and Cape Town
- August 2005: Exhibited at "One of a Kind" show during Decorex Exhibition at Gallagher Estate.
- Embroidered items for Tiger Brands new head office
- 1 December 2005 – 31 March 2006: "SYNERGY – Contemporary Bead Art Exhibition" at The South African National Gallery

Mogalakwena River Lodge

Contact Person: Isabella Coetsee

Tel: +27 21 424 0133

Fax: +27 21 424 0063

Postal Address: PO Box 60, Alldays, 0909, South Africa

E-mail: mogalakwena@mweb.co.za

Website: www.limpopo-collection.co.za

Mogalakwena River Lodge offers a truly African experience on the banks of the Mogalakwena River. The accommodation has been created to blend into Africa and a delicate balance is achieved between the harmony of the African bush and the sophisticated smoothness of civilization.

The lodge has been creatively positioned on the Mogalakwena River with a central lodge with four rooms, swimming pool, dining and open lounge areas, as well as a lower and upper viewing deck facing the river. The lodge caters for sixteen guests in eight double rooms with en-suite facilities.

The area boasts a wealth of fauna, flora and an abundance of bird species. The lodge offers accompanied game drives and wildlife walks. Guests can also enjoy fishing in the Mogalakwena River, bird watching and horse riding on the reserve.

Guests are able to visit the Mogalakwena Craft Art Foundation, to see the Pedi women producing crafts, embroidery, screen-printing and candle making. The lodge offers day excursions to cultural heritage sites and half-day excursions to the tribal village for entertainment. They also offer daily wildlife excursions to Botswana. The lodge has a well-equipped conference and function venue for conferences or private functions.

The lodge is four hours drive from Johannesburg and one and a half hours flying time in a light aircraft. Transfers and fly-in safaris are available on request.

Mogalakwena River Lodge is an ideal stepping-stone en route to Makgadikgadi Salt Pans, the Okavango Swamps, Chobe and Victoria Falls.

Personal attention and efficient service are the hallmarks of Mogalakwena River Lodge's philosophy to provide complete privacy and the highest standards of hospitality.