

Gondwana Game Reserve

The story of how an American visitor fell in love with a game ranger when she came on safari to South Africa, then married him, and they then started their own game lodge along the Garden Route, is the stuff Hollywood romance is made of.

Wendy, a beautiful business executive, packed her bags and left the crazy world of Manhattan and its 25 800 people per km², and headed for the Kalahari, where you can probably count on one hand the population per square kilometre. Here, Wendy started a new life with Mark, Wildlife Manager at Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, the largest private game reserve in South Africa.

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The 11 000 hectare reserve has been stocked with 1 000 animals, which represents about half of its capacity. To further increase the number and diversity of animals, they would like to more than double the currently available land to 25 000 hectares. The dream continues to evolve.



fireplace glows into the night. Guests can also treat themselves to a relaxing massage or beauty treatment.

The Kwena huts huddle around a central lounge and bar, as well as indoor and outdoor dining areas and the menu is inspired by Italian Executive Chef Allesandro De Bortoli, a Venetian by birth, another member of Gondwana Game Reserve drawn from afar.

The Fynbos Villas, three-bedroom, double-volume, thatched family houses, offer another accommodation option. As with Kwena Lodge, the rate is fully inclusive of meals and local beverages, two game drives per day or horse riding, fynbos walks and fishing. Gondwana offers special rates for SA residents until 8 October of R1 950 per adult, dinner, bed and breakfast, high tea, game drives and a R100 spa voucher (there is no charge for children under 4 and the charge for 4 to 12 year olds is R650 per night). At other times, their Early Bird Special offers 20% discount on bookings settled 60 days in advance, and there is also a discount for bookings made less than 5 days prior to your arrival date. This reserve is also a popular wedding venue. Check out the Safari Specials & Packages page on their website: www.gondwanagr.co.za/accommodation/specials-packages.

If you like the sound of owning a piece of this paradise, you can build your very own private bush villa on a 2,5 acre freehold plot with exclusive traversing rights and full access to the reserve. Each site is surrounded by undeveloped land with spectacular, unobstructed views of wildlife, nature, and the Outeniqua Mountains.

The beauty of these Cape Fold Mountains with endless hills and valleys covered in fynbos is magnificent, even if you don't get to see big animals. But as Mark Rutherford says, “The emphasis is on nature, geology and fynbos and if you see big game, consider it a bonus.”



The story then moves from the Kalahari to the fynbos-covered hills of the Western Cape, where Mark and Wendy bought up land to realise their dream of owning a free-roaming Big 5 game reserve on the Garden Route.

While there is little chance of seeing all of the Big Five during a visit to Gondwana – elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo and leopard –, they are most definitely there.

On a scheduled morning or afternoon game drive, you are privileged if you see lion, black rhino or elephant, which are more elusive than grazers like zebra, black wildebeest and bontebok or the three giraffes and the magnificent kudus. Their presence is, however, proven by elephant dung around the lodge and stories of how guests couldn't exit their suite because lions had encamped on their path during the night.

Kwena Lodge has 14 domed and thatched luxury rondavels that form a horseshoe around a gorge waterhole frequented by animals in the dry summer. The rondavels were designed as a twist on traditional Khoi-San dwellings. One irresistible feature is the ceiling skylight letting you star-watch from your bed. The extra-large beds are dressed with fine linen, and a ceramic

