

Intimate encounters

Sometimes, the wildlife will come to you

DAVID BATZOFIN

THULA Thula had recently extended the reserve and that meant the elephants we were looking for were in the new area as they proved that the grass is always greener on the other side of a (removed) fence.

We had a delightful pair of sisters on our drive who not only knew every species of bird we saw but were able to mimic their calls – with 370 species of birds and raptors this

property is a twitchers paradise.

There are two camps on the property: a tented camp as well as the original Elephant Safari Lodge.

It was on one of our game drives that we found a water terrapin that was a long way from water – certainly not on the Big Five list, but a first for both my wife and I.

In August 1999, seven elephants, were released onto the property by owner Lawrence Anthony, who goes

by the nickname of “The Elephant Whisperer”. He was able to get this “rogue” herd to accept staying on the property, even though many said it was a lost cause.

There are currently 19 elephants in the herd, and with the new portion of the property to feed on the herd will be allowed to grow.

From our bath in Suite Royale at Elephant Safari Lodge we had a wonderful view of the waterhole and we were able to spend some time on our veranda watching two young orphaned rhino.

Thabo and his female companion Ntombi are often accompanied by two young orphaned warthogs.

It was these warthogs that greeted us on our arrival and promptly lay

down and waited for their tummies to be scratched. We were uncertain if the rhino thought they were warthogs or vice versa!

Lawrence’s wife, Francoise, likes to refer to the food at the tented camp as the “braai/potjiekos” variety. She describes the Safari Lodge menu as elegant gourmet plated food with a French influence.

While we were packing to leave, Thabo and Ntombi decided to

climb onto our veranda and “hold us hostage” while banging on the glass to try and get in.

It was like a scene out of *Jurassic Park* and quite frightening to only be separated by a pane of glass.

We decided to take refuge in the bathroom until the two youngsters, tired of trying to attract our attention, went around to our front door and politely knocked there.

Children under eight are not allowed at the lodge, but they are welcome at the tented camp.

The highlight of our visit was watching as 10 buffalo were released onto the property.



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