



Thula Thula Exclusive Private Game Reserve and Safari Lodge

The elephants walk in whispers

'Thula Thula...' The hushed musical notes of a Zulu lullaby meaning peace and tranquillity float through the bushveld midnight like a sliver of silvery moonlight. For here there is a special kind of quiet, a chance to break away from the humdrum of everyday living and soak up the ambience of an ancient land. Thula Thula is so much more than a wildlife reserve for travellers and game – it is also a sanctuary.



Romance, luxury and elegance are evident at every turn in the beautifully appointed Thula Thula Safari Lodge, and wildlife is right on your doorstep. The interaction with elephants makes this special place truly memorable.



Set in a malaria-free zone two hours' drive from Durban, this private game reserve is said to be the oldest in KwaZulu-Natal. It is an area steeped in centuries of cultural and wildlife heritage, tracing its origins to the legendary hunting grounds of the powerful Zulu warrior, King Shaka. The reserve is family-owned and -run, and therein lies a tale. Lawrence and Francoise Anthony met in a London taxi queue – she an elegant Parisienne and he a passionate wildlife conservationist. It was destiny for the pair, who then moved to South Africa and bought the property with the intention of helping the local Zulu population to utilise and protect the natural resources of the area through ecotourism. The Lodge is all you could hope for in an exclusive African safari retreat. Cool air sweeps through the spacious living areas, while outdoor loungers and swimming pool offer respite from the midday sun. Pull up a chair and toast the evening with a cocktail at the Marula Bar or retire to the gazebo with a glass of fine South African wine to gaze upon wild game partaking in their own sundowners at the watering hole. What could be more agreeable than a romantic, candlelit dinner under an African sky? Almost certainly one cooked by a French-trained chef. Co-owner Francoise – who trained with top chefs in Paris – and her team are on hand to create gastronomic feasts combining flavourful and exotic local tastes with the sophistication and flair of traditional



French cuisine. Retire rested and replete to one of eight private chalets exquisitely decorated in an eclectic mix of noble Zulu ethnicity and graceful colonial grandeur. All offer romance, luxury and tasteful elegance in everything from the large, beautifully draped four-poster beds to the private verandas, spacious bathrooms and personalised service. The 'Suite Royale' and 'Suite Imperiale' have been especially handpicked for honeymoons and special occasions. For a chance to experience a closer fusion with nature, stay in the Luxury Tented Camp, which has eight tents in total. All have two comfortable four-poster beds with mosquito nets, while two of the tents

are larger and contain two extra single beds, perfectly set up for families. Each has an en-suite bathroom with Victorian bath ... or an outside shower where you can bathe beneath the stars and eavesdrop on a host of nocturnal creatures. At the Tented Camp you have wildlife on your doorstep. Sit in the pool and peep over at the animal comings and goings or wile away the afternoons lazing in a hammock overlooking the Nseleni River. Colourful buffet lunches are served outside near the pool and traditional South African braais (barbecues) and *potjiekos* (meat and vegetable stew) dinners are slow-cooked on open fires in the sheltered boma.

No stay at Thula Thula is complete without a game drive in an open Land Rover or a game walk with an experienced guide and tracker. Home to a diverse wildlife population including the Big Four – elephant, rhino, Cape buffalo and leopard – the reserve also has an abundance of other wildlife: giraffe, zebra, crocodile, nyala, kudu, springbok, jackal, monkey and many more, with over 370 bird species upon which to train your binoculars. For most, the draw card attracting locals and tourists aplenty is Lawrence's famous band of wild elephants. These were relocated to his reserve as a last-ditch attempt to settle them after they'd continuously created trouble on another farm. Traumatized, angry and mourning the loss of their matriarch and baby,

the elephants eventually responded to Lawrence's tireless efforts to create a bond with them. The result is a beautiful viewing herd and his nickname, 'The Elephant Whisperer'. It is said that when he goes away on a trip, the entire herd will come to the lodge to welcome him home. Thula Thula is situated close to other tourist attractions, so visitors can choose to take trips to the Zulu Cultural Village or head into the Hluhluwe Umfolozi Game Reserve to spot lions. The St Lucia Estuary is also a magnificent place to find hippos and has an incredibly prolific birdlife. The beautiful beaches of the Indian Ocean are a short drive away and whale-watching trips can be organised in season. Africa is a vast, wild, unpredictable and sometimes harsh land, yet when you

experience the warmth of the people, the nurturing of the wildlife and the protective environment at Thula Thula, the whole place feels guided by a gentle hand. Could it be the Anthonys' or could Mother Nature simply have a favourite?



Thula Thula

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Thula Thula is just 45 minutes from Richards Bay airport and less than two hours' drive from Durban. There is also a 700m airstrip on the property.

It is administered to the highest ethical standards, in keeping with modern conservation methods for the protection and enhancement of its indigenous and endangered species.