



# for the love of lions

**Jon Monsoon**

sleeps with lions and discovers that it really is better to be a lion for a day than a sheep all your life...

Did you know: until the late Pleistocene era (about 100 000 years ago), the lion was the most common large land mammal on earth? Today, the lion is listed as a vulnerable species, having seen a population decline of 30-50% over the past two decades, just in Africa alone. Meaning that at this rate, soon the lion will be but a memory – much like the Cape lion, once plentiful in the Boland area, long ago shot to extinction. However, in a place just outside Stellenbosch, in the picturesque Cape Winelands amid 50 acres of sprawling 'lion habitat', the awesome roar of lions can still be heard, everyday from sunset until sunrise. The voices of these primal hunters belong to the 26 captive-bred lions that have all been rescued from criminally cruel and inhumane conditions in zoos and circuses and from breeders who supply the illegal pet and canned lion hunting trade. Established in 1998, Drakenstein Lion Park provides

sanctuary and a life free from pain and abuse to captive-born lions that get to live out the rest of their natural lives in an enriched and safe environment, with the compassion and respect they deserve. The park is not involved in commercial breeding or trade and offers lifetime care to all of its animals. Tourists are welcome here (there is a restaurant and toilets), but they are not the main focus: the park and the people that work there are devoted to the welfare of their lions. Owner and lion welfare campaigner Paul Hart has dedicated his life to his big cats and tirelessly oversees their wellbeing, while trying to raise funds to mount rescue missions for abused lions being held in captivity in places around the world. There are currently five lions desperately needing rescue from cruel conditions from zoos but the lack of funds is preventing the park from getting to them. Paul reckons he has six months, at best, to save

these animals' lives but the R900 000 needed to do so is proving elusive.

**If you can help, donate online and help save these lions.**

**Visit [lionrescue.org.za/donate.htm](http://lionrescue.org.za/donate.htm)**

Existing lions can also be adopted by companies and members of the public.

**[lionrescue.org.za/ourlions.htm](http://lionrescue.org.za/ourlions.htm)**

For a truly sublime experience that we *roaringly* recommend, visit the lions and spend a night among them in the park's comfy and well-catered tented accommodation! (it's very safe, we promise!)

Old Paarl Road (R101), Klapmuts

The Drakenstein Lion Park is open daily from 9.30am to 5.00pm.

Feeding times are on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 4.00pm.

Admission is R40 for adults and R20 for children.

Group Rates are available on request

Call 021-863-3290