



# PARADISE

Taking its name from the Zulu word meaning Paradise, Pakamisa Game Lodge is an understated exclusive haven for the traveller who wants a personalised experience, preferably on horseback. **Christine Grové** saddles up for a remarkable weekend

The road from Johannesburg to Pongola has the worst reputation, simply because it was punctuated with potholes that could swallow a bus whole, however our recent trip to Pakamisa Game Lodge in Pongola revealed the efforts of a road makeover that proved a rather pleasant and bump-free drive. Upon arrival, the winding dirt road leading up to the lodge took us on a steep incline up a mountain with breathtaking views. A family of kudus were near the entrance, as if on cue to welcome us.

After being introduced to Austrian baroness and owner of the lodge, Isabella, we took a tour of the grounds. The very spacious suites are decorated in warm cottage colours with an air of country living, while the main house draws you in with an enormous library with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and elegantly comfortable seating to relax for a while.

The tour concluded with an invitation to try our skills (or lack thereof) at archery and

target shooting. We then prepared for the highlight of the weekend: The lodge is centred around stables of beautiful Arabian horses, hand reared by Isabella herself, which serve as the game-viewing vehicle of choice for the estate. As I had never done any form of horse riding before, I was terrified at the prospect of getting close to a 500kg creature that could trample me to death. Apprehensive as I was, with Isabella's encouraging words and warm displays of affection towards the horses I was well on my way to discovering what magnificent and gentle animals these horses actually are. A few laps around the training ring on *luxus*, my appointed horse, had me excited for the prospect of game viewing on horseback the next day.

Meals at Pakamisa are an occasion; everything is freshly grown on site and prepared by the chefs at the award-winning *El Prado* restaurant. Contemporary, international cuisine is beautifully presented, enhancing a traditional dining experience on the panoramic veranda. The restaurant also offers an exceptional wine list.



The next morning had us up early and saddling our horses for our game-viewing experience. I was perched upon the beautiful Zulu who was quite lively but followed my movements obediently. Winding up and down the slopes of the mountains, we witnessed the spectacular fauna and flora up close. Being in direct contact with nature certainly has a humbling effect, as opposed to sitting in a game drive vehicle which creates a sense of immediate safety and distance.

back to the stables we even trotted next to a giraffe peacefully making its way through the acacia trees.

Back at the lodge, we decided to opt for a cocktail by the pool in aid of our severely stiff thighs from riding, I suddenly became aware of muscles I didn't know I had. After lunch we were taken on a 'conventional' game drive and were taught the most interesting facts about the indigenous plants and animals of Pakamisa.

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At the end of our trail we were surprised with a beautiful picnic, set out in the middle of the bush, with fresh cheeses, cold meats, breads and fruit. On our way

The 2 500 hectares of land are home to all major antelope, zebra and giraffe which roam the grounds. As the sun started setting we made our way up to

the highest point of the mountain and enjoyed sundowners and snacks as we were treated to a spectacular display of sunset colours spread out in front of us.

At dinner we were serenaded by guests of Pakamisa, a lovely Italian couple who had chosen this special place as one of their must-see local destinations. Pakamisa sees many international visitors who want an authentic South African game experience, as well as local city dwellers wishing to get away from the rush of city life.

Expect a delightful and educational experience with an intimate and personal air, and its especially recommended for those wanting to ditch the car for a horse.

Visit [www.pakamisa.co.za](http://www.pakamisa.co.za) for more on Pakamisa Game Lodge. ♡