



MPUMALANGA LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE

IN AN EFFORT TO ENTICE MORE SOUTH AFRICAN VISITORS TO EXPLORE ITS BOUNTY, MPUMALANGA TOURISM AND PARKS AGENCY RECENTLY LAUNCHED THE MYMPUMALANGA CAMPAIGN AND INVITED A FEW LOCAL STORYTELLERS TO EXPERIENCE IT FOR THEMSELVES DURING A FIVE-DAY ROAD TRIP.

WORDS: NADIA KRIGE

God's Window

Is so called for the panoramic view of the Lowveld more than 900 metres down into lush Indigenous forest.



To many South Africans, Mpumalanga is synonymous with the Kruger National Park. It's where they head for their bushveld breaks, often making a beeline for their destination of choice so as not to miss out on any great game-viewing opportunities. While this is all good and well, Mpumalanga – the place where the sun rises – has so much more to offer travellers!

I went along for the ride and found myself enchanted, enthralled and thoroughly energised by the vast array of new and lesser-known experiences on offer. Here are a few of my favourites:



CAMP IN STYLE WITH AFRICAMPS AT MACKERS

Even though I'm not a big fan of adrenaline rushes, I'm no shrinking violet when it comes to outdoor experiences. In fact, there's nothing I love more than a weekend of camping, preferably somewhere the cellphone signal is weak and the closest body of water is strong enough to sing me to sleep at night.

This, my friends, pretty much describes Africamps at Mackers, just outside Hazyview, to a tee. Except, it's even better! Instead of ever-deflating blow-up mattresses and dome tent quarters, this glamping site offers sprawling 55m² canvas homes-away-from-home, complete with white linen, warm showers, flushing toilets, a fully kitted kitchen, even a cute fireplace to keep you warm on chilly nights. Each of the 10 tents can sleep five people in two separate bedrooms and looks out on a particular beautiful section of the Sabie River. What makes it even more exciting is the fact that they only opened their doors to guests in July this year, which means it's all brand-spanking new.

WHERE: Hazyview
COST: Dependent on time of year
More info: www.africamps.com

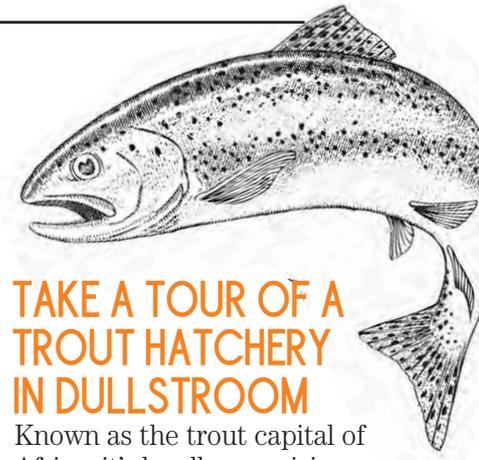


HOP ON AFRICA'S LONGEST TOBOGGAN TRACK AT LONG TOM TOBOGGAN

By the time I realised just how insane I was for doing this, it was far too late. Without even a hint of protective gear between my fragile body and the landscape rushing by, I found myself strapped into a ridiculous toy-like vehicle, flying along a twisting and turning metal pipeline at about 45km/h.

Now, please understand, I am an earth child who prefers her feet solidly planted on the ground. But for some reason, Long Tom Toboggan tickled my fancy and I simply had to try it myself. Yes, for the two minutes and 45 seconds it took to complete the 1.7km track, I was so terrified that I couldn't be sure that the tears streaming down my face were really from the wind. However, by the time I pulled the flimsy little brake stick back and came to a standstill at the end of the track, I felt kind of invincible. I guess that's what adrenaline's all about, right?

WHERE: Misty Mountain Resort on the Long Tom Pass, between Lydenburg and Sable
COST: R250 per person
More Info: www.longtomtoboggan.co.za



TAKE A TOUR OF A TROUT HATCHERY IN DULLSTROOM

Known as the trout capital of Africa, it's hardly surprising that Dullstroom draws keen fly fishers from far and wide. While we did try our hand at this elegant sport (nay, art) during our stay at Dunkeld Country and Equestrian Estate, our efforts brought no dinner to the table and we were left completely devoid of any close-up trout sightings.

This quickly changed, however, as we were invited to take a tour of Dunkeld Trout Hatcheries, a state-of-the-art trout breeding facility that not only helps stock local dams, but also happens to be the Southern Hemisphere's leading supplier of certified, disease-free trout eggs to the Northern Hemisphere.

During the tour, we were introduced to trout in every phase of life: from the tiny week-old fish, already swimming upstream against the gentle current generated in their tanks, to the fertile females being tested for their readiness to lay eggs.

It's an intricate setup, priding itself on its sustainability, employment of local workers and the farming of top-quality fish.

Booking is essential.

WHERE: Dunkeld Country and Equestrian Estate
COST: R50 per person
More info: www.dunkeldestate.co.za

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IT'S A SURREAL EXPERIENCE, STEPPING INTO AN ELEVATOR THAT LOOKS MUCH LIKE THE ONE AT YOUR OFFICE, ONLY TO BE GREETED BY A SPECTACULAR TREE-FILLED VIEW THROUGH THE LARGE GLASS PANES.



AN AFROMONTANE FOREST ADVENTURE AT GRASKOP GORGE LIFT

If you thought Mpumalanga was all bushveld and pine plantations, think again! There's actually a magical Afromontane forest, much like its famous Knysna cousin in aesthetic appeal, just waiting to be explored.

We got to experience it first-hand during a visit to the Graskop Gorge Lift, yet another new addition to Mpumalanga's tourism offering. It's a rather surreal experience, stepping into



an elevator that looks suspiciously much like the one at your office, only to be greeted by a spectacular tree-filled view through the large glass panes. Slowly dropping 51m down a cliff face, the doors soon slide open onto a wooden boardwalk and an enchanted fairy world.

In the forest you can follow a 600m wooden walkway, including a suspension bridge or two, and learn more about the delicate ecosystem through interpretive boards as you go. The first 100m has no stairs, bridges or obstacles, so it's 100% wheelchair-friendly.

WHERE: Graskop

COST: The conservation fees at the gate is R20 for adults and pensioners and R10 for children. To take the lift adults will pay R175 each, while pensioners, and children get to hop on and enjoy the ride for R120 each.

More info:

www.graskopgorgeliftcompany.co.za

Go visit

If you haven't visited Mpumalanga recently, I can highly recommend adding it to your local travel bucket list! Thank you to Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency for hosting us, and to First Car Rental for providing us with road-trip vehicles.



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