

Nature is the new luxury

Anyone who says, "you can't always get what you want," obviously hasn't headed East, writes
NADIA GARDNER

WHAT is luxury? We all have our versions of the ultimate top-drawer experience, be it a chic African safari lodge in a wildly beautiful setting or a resort villa with its own plunge pool and bowing butler on call. What is constant, though, is luxury means privacy, space and an accumulation of lovely, thoughtful details.

A truly different form of luxury is Summerfields River Lodge and Spa, situated in Hazyview. To refer to this exclusive enclave as a mere weekend getaway does not do this property justice. Even though it's only four hours outside of Johannesburg, Summerfields feels like it's a world away.

Situated on a 100ha forested rose, macadamia nut and litchi tree farm in Hazyview, the emphasis is on nature being the new luxury.

While the guest count can be small, the service is big. Helpful hands will guide you from the property's entrance, all the way to your accommodation, pointing out the simple yet stunning details that make this destination exemplary.

A must-do at the farm is a rose tunnel tour. Summerfields boasts 17 different types of roses.

Among my favourites were Anastasia, Sunshine, Lavender Mascara, Miss Paris, King Kong and Tabasco.

From the vast pool deck and sumptuous verandah above a sparkly pool, you can see a variety of bird life, not to mention the occasional sightings of hippos and crocodiles.

CAMPING IN STYLE

If you love camping but hate being sandwiched between a polyester sack and a pile of rocks on the ground, you'll love this offering.

The lodge boasts luxury tents as accommodation, each named after a rose and each one hidden under the canopy of trees, that are the perfect place to unwind in privacy.

The Sabie River solemnly streams past. Each tent sleeps two

in a king-size bed and has a private outside en-suite bathroom with hot showers – ideal for honeymoons, romantic mid-week escapes or simply spoiling yourself with some quality time alone.

An offering unique to Summerfields has to be the bath ritual, either before dinner or after at bedtime. I was offered the before dinner option – the invigorating bath ritual, where a citrus blend of zesty grapefruit and orange oils uplift and increase circulation.

This bath is a guaranteed pick-me-up for fatigued and exhausted travellers.

TASTEBUD TREAT

Dining at the Summerfields Kitchen is truly a treat for the tastebuds.

Our best breakfast offerings included banana fritters with maple syrup and flaked almond; soft-boiled egg with pesto, parmesan and prosciutto toasts; and chef Lienkie's Dagwood delight.

We found dinner equally delectable with our favourites being: a marinated prawn, mango and sunflower seed salad with lemon and dill aioli; crispy salmon with spicy oriental sauce on a bed of pan-fried red cabbage and buttered asparagus; peppered fillet served with roasted vegetable, rosemary straw potatoes and a Shiraz jus; and char grilled lamb cutlets served with potato wedges, butter-nut puree and creamed spinach.

Never one to turn down a dessert, my choice would be the rose meringue disc layered with Chantilly cream and seasonal berries, finished with a vanilla pod strain.

PAMPER TIME

Whether you're staying at the lodge or just passing through the area, book a treatment at the spacious spa. Even for the most avid pampering aficionado, I bet that the spa at Summerfields has an innovative treatment that will knock your spa slippers off.



OUT AND ABOUT IN HAZYVIEW

The outdoor enthusiast will find the staff to be extremely knowledgeable about the vast number of ways to enjoy the natural surroundings presented by the Hazyview region. Here are my picks:

- Abseiling
- Caving by candlelight
- Mountain biking
- Quad biking
- Hot air ballooning
- River rafting
- Open vehicle safaris in the Kruger Park
- Endangered wildlife tours
- Bridge swinging

HOW TO GET THERE

Summerfields owns and operates a fleet of aircraft for use by lodge and spa guests. Normal departures are from Rand Airport, Lanseria or Grand Central to either the airfield at Hazyview, or for bigger groups and in inclement weather, to Kruger International in White River, a distance of 380 kms, where a luxury bus will collect and transfer guests to the estate.

The spa's design works in concert with the lush natural surroundings and expertly meshes with the beauty and serenity of the Sabie River.

A sigh-worthy pampering notable at this enclave includes a four-hour treatment entitled "A touch of nature". It begins with an exfoliation and massage with crushed papaya, after which time

your body will be cocooned in banana leaves. This is supposed to add necessary moisture to leave your body feeling nourished with the essence of nature.

This is followed with a somewhat icy Vichy shower. Then comes a relaxing aromatherapy massage. Next is a facial treatment to enhance your relaxation, where the exfoliating power of lemon,

fresh herbs and macadamia nuts will leave your skin cleansed and purified. The treatment ends with a blissful foot massage.

For more information about Summerfields call 013 737 6500 or visit www.summerfields.co.za