

KING'S LAIR

Sweet's wild folly

Guests at this 'cottage' want for nothing but superlatives, writes **Andrea Nagel**

WRITING about Leobo Private Reserve is a particular challenge if you don't want to gush and if you have a mistrust of superlatives. It is an exercise in consciously thinning out adjectives.

The South African bush has a global reputation for inspiring verbose descriptions: the glorious blood colour of the setting sun as it turns alchemist over the wide expanse of thorn trees and grassy plains before the inky blue of twilight brings its own magic.

British IT millionaire Rory Sweet could probably reel off a few poetic descriptions of his own, which would explain why he chose South Africa as the site for his fantasy bush playground.

Sweet built a getaway "cottage" on his 4 800-hectare private reserve overlooking the Palala Valley in the Waterberg in Limpopo. Estate manager Quintus Enslin laughs remembering Sweet's use of the word "cottage".

"Rory bought out his partners a few years ago and started looking for a site for his family 'cottage'," says Enslin. "Architect husband and wife team Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens were looking at the plans with Rory when I got a glimpse of them over his shoulder. 'Cottage' — I had to laugh."

There are two huge front rooms with floor-to-ceiling glass and equally big bathrooms that look out across the plains, an infinity pool and expansive deck, sunken lounge with pools of pillows, and a hippo-bone chandelier over the dining table. There is a room that's a child's dream, a further guest room, a raised sundowner deck with Jacuzzi and, impressively, the observatory and library are a circular extension of the house with a domed electric roof and Nasa-grade telescope that Sweet can control from London.

Sweet seems to have the "if I can dream it, I can do it" attitude to life, which is probably why he insists on having his guests dress in sexy designer space suits to go to the observatory.

Thinking up wild antics for a close friend's bachelor party may have been the inspiration for some of the other activities offered at the reserve: game drives on quad bikes; cross-country Polaris; tug-of-war with Stevie, the resident



GAME FOR ALL: Sweet's 'cottage' includes an observatory Picture: DOOK

FACT FILE

- Leobo Private Reserve is only rented on an exclusive basis. Guests can book the Observatory, the Lodge or a combination of both.
- The Observatory accommodates 9 people (6 adults and 3 children) for R35 000 per night, all inclusive.
- Leobo Lodge accommodates 18 people for R2 750 per adult per night, all inclusive.
- Leobo Private Reserve is in the Waterberg area close to Vaalwater.
- Call 087-808-1513 or e-mail reservations@fish-i.co.za

celebrity crocodile; cheetah petting; sniper target shooting; horse riding safaris; camping with hippos; and sky-diving. Rumour has it that you can even do moving target quad paintball shooting from a helicopter — but that's probably just bush legend.

Game for everything, the eight journalists invited to Leobo for the weekend could put any bachelor to shame on the activity front. We were also particularly good at lazing around the pool at the Leobo Lodge, the overflow venue that can accommodate 18 in beautiful chalets, or sitting around a fire nattering like bushveld birds around the sunken fire pit. After a weekend of gallivanting,



Picture: ANDREA NAGEL

gourmandising and star-gazing, Leobo Private Reserve has achieved something really

spectacular: it turned eight perfect strangers into friends. Thank you Mr Sweet, it was superlative.

MY KIND OF TOWN is Mumbai, says author Jeffrey Archer of India's cricket capital



RAINY DAYS: A man watches waves crash over a seafront wall during monsoon season in Mumbai Picture: VIVEK PRAKASH/REUTERS

Why Mumbai?

I've been to India several times because my novels are popular there. On my first visit to Mumbai, I couldn't believe how many people there were in the city. But it also has some of the world's finest restaurants and hotels, and colonial architecture.

Anything special I should pack?

It's a hot, sweaty city. I'd take light clothing — and remember locals aren't formal.

What's the first thing you do?

Pretty much the first thing I do is go to the Wankhede Stadium, because Mumbai is the cricketing capital of India. It's usually madness in the nicest sense of the word.

Where would you meet friends for a drink?

There is a very glamorous cocktail bar at the Taj President. The bar, Wink, has comfy sofas and is the perfect place to meet people.

Where would you send a first-time visitor?

To the landmark Gateway of India on the waterfront. Another must is going for a walk along the Bandstand Promenade.

What should I avoid?

Safety-wise, I've never felt in the slightest danger while visiting the city. The average speed on the roads is about 3km/h — so you have to adjust mentally and be patient.

What should I bring home?

They have the most beautiful silkwear for women. You could also pick up some Indian art. Alternatively, they have fantastic gold and silverware at Orra in Bandra. Or, you could try your luck at a family-owned store in a side street.

Anywhere that isn't your kind of town?

I went to Iceland with my wife, Mary, a few years ago. I'm afraid the capital, Reykjavik, just didn't press my buttons. — © *The Sunday Telegraph*

● Archer's novel 'Best Kept Secret', the third instalment in the *Clifton Chronicles*, published by Pan Macmillan will be available here soon