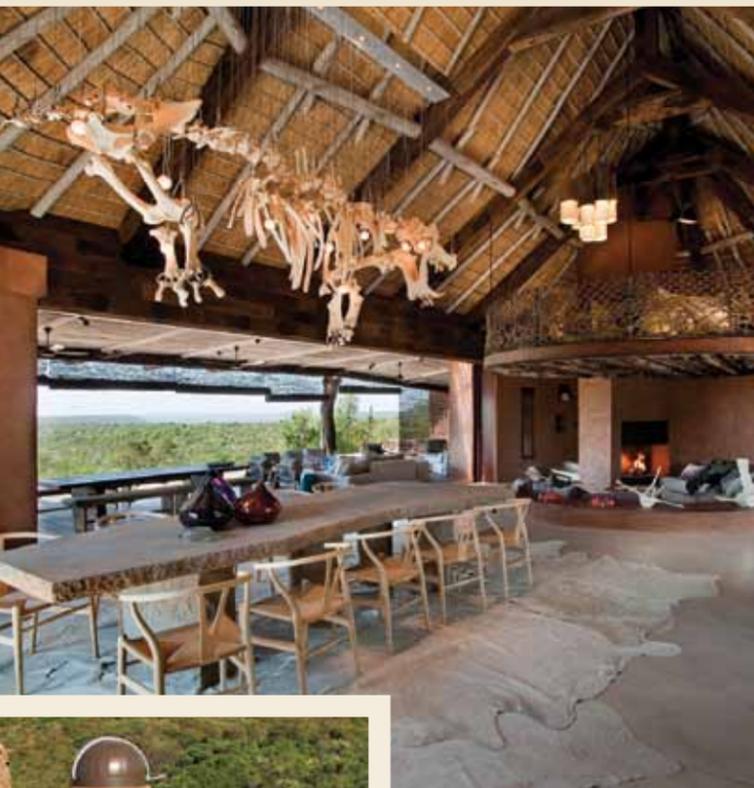


African magic

If you haven't already lost your heart to the African bush, a weekend at The Observatory will ensure an everlasting romance

BY AMANDA CUNNINGHAM
PHOTOGRAPHS: DOOK (DOOKPHOTO.COM)



Tucked away in the magnificent, malaria-free Waterberg, The Observatory in Leobo Private Reserve is undoubtedly one of South Africa's most spectacular and secluded bush escapes.

Designed by award-winning architects Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens, this exclusive getaway oozes luxury in a calm, serene setting. The emphasis is on your personal experience and everything here is designed to ensure an unforgettable stay, from the accommodation to the activities. Quite simply, it is magical – ideal for a very intimate wedding or quiet honeymoon away from it all.

The house has three incredible suites, two of which boast endless views of the Waterberg mountains. All are spacious and beautifully decorated in chic African style. There are four-poster beds, fireplaces, comfortable lounge chairs and truly indulgent bathrooms with enormous baths and both indoor and outdoor showers. Individual collector pieces also feature and the attention to detail is unrivalled. We adored the light fitting above the sandstone dining table – an immense hippopotamus skeleton transformed into a 3D chandelier!

The Observatory was originally built as a private family home (with accommodation for six adults and three children), so it ensures all your comforts are met. Music is piped throughout



the house and can also be heard on individual iPod stations located in each room. There is a snug TV area, cleverly suspended above the main sitting room, where guests are invited to hunker down with popcorn and a drink of choice, and lose themselves in movie magic. The double-storey library is awe-inspiring, with a selection of books on every subject imaginable. It is located in the domed structure that also houses the astronomical observatory – stargazing really does take on a whole new meaning here. (For an authentic viewing experience, there are even spacesuits for eager guests to wear!) Outside, a wooden deck runs the length of the house with sun beds, swings, a heated swimming pool and spectacular views beckoning visitors. There is also a private viewing deck on the top of the house with a jacuzzi to relax in.

Food is a key feature of one's stay and a private chef is on hand to create gourmet meals to delight. There is also a butler to attend to your needs and host of household staff. The estate is situated on 12 000 hectares with no shortage of outdoor activities to enjoy. Options include bush walks, quad biking, target shooting, starlight safaris and bass fishing – all of which help to reinforce a very special holiday. The Observatory can be rented for R35 000 per night. Visit leoboprivatereserve.com.

