

At peace with nature

Daniel Scheffler trades the stress of city life for the stillness of the African bush at Singita Castleton



WELL-BEING

There is something to be said for privacy – in the true sense of the word, that is. We as humans, and certainly I, search for these moments of freedom from interference. It's with this reasoning that I seek out the exclusive-use camp that is Singita Castleton.

Singita, known for its expression of a new luxury far beyond bling, has established itself in some of the very best locations for a spa junkie in search of true peace and quiet. The Kruger National Park, Malilangwe in Zimbabwe and the Serengeti come to mind, but this time I'm all in for Sabi Sands. Part of this quest for privacy is in the commitment to get there; I take a flight from Nelspruit's international airport in an eight-seater plane and then a bush drive in a Land Rover deeper into the private reserve.

Castleton, the former home of Singita founder Luke Bailes' grandfather, is designed as a private-use lodge – meaning the whole place will be mine to indulge in during this trek towards wellness.

I start out with some yoga at the pool overlooking the waterhole, with a few elephants playing tricks, my breathing carrying me into the first stage of relaxation. With no one around, the lodge sits quietly behind me as I delve boldly into meditation. Even though the lodge has a dedicated spa room, I choose to have my treatment out on my cottage's generous veranda. The views over the waterhole and the nearby hills provide the next phase of chill-out. The white noise of the surroundings and my solitary presence in them slump me down on to the massage bed.

There is something playful about the name of the treatment I decide on – Monkey Orange, named for the massage tool that is used. Described to me by the therapist as a round indigenous fruit, part of the calabash family, it makes total sense that it would feel sensational freewheeling across my back. Said to ease tension and release pressure points, this implement of choice does exactly that.

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My personal philosophy concerning massage is that it needs to be acute to be worth spending the time on, so my request for extra-firm pressure is thankfully granted. Somewhere between the sound of birds nearby and the bray of a zebra, I manage to waft into a deep state of repose – something city life leaves you hankering for.

The scent of the oils mixes with the smells of the grassy bush as the smooth calabash kneads deep into my back. After an hour and a bit of pummeling pressure, my back feels the much-needed release and my stress levels bounce back to a place I can consider normal. Making the time for a massage seems impossible in my usual schedule, but heading out to the lodge and committing to a true timeout proves to be remarkably effective.

My therapist leaves me with a cup of rooibos tea and I take a seat on the grass in front of my room. The ground beneath me feels reassuringly solid – the perfect spot from which to quietly contemplate the wilderness of life. **①**

Your Diners Club Card is accepted at Singita Castleton. Visit singita.com for more information. Contact the complimentary Diners Club Concierge Service on 0861 DINERS (346377) to book your treatment.