



## Mashatu – An EPIC safari I will never forget



By Claire Roadley

I have stayed in many game reserves, having grown up in South Africa – from staying in caravans and Parks Board style rondavels to the very best in 5 star luxury lodges. I even worked for a Big 5 game reserve (Tembe Elephant Park) for a number of years, which still holds a very special place in my heart.

But wow! Mashatu literally blew us away. I took my Dad there for his 70th birthday and it really felt like the leopards were “growing on trees”. We parked quietly on dry river beds whilst massive herds of elephant strolled past us with their babies in tow. We watched lions sleep, cheetahs stretch while cubs wrestled and leopards lounging lazily. We even watched a leopard drag his massive dinner up a tree right in front of us. [Check out the video!](#)





The scenery is nothing short of epic with massive skies and endless horizons. The lovely smell of the wild sage on the breeze and the (slightly less lovely, but still intoxicating) smell of the stink shepherd trees as we explored the reserve from the back of an open Land Rover.



Our tracker, Morgan (who sat at the back which is unusual but which I really loved as you could ask questions etc) and our ranger Eric grew up in the area and had worked at Mashatu for many, many years so they knew the reserve and the wildlife like old friends. They knew all the best spots to stop for a coffee break or sundowners and made great companions. We loved watching swarms (too many millions of them to be a mere flock!) of red-billed Queleas at dusk making patterns and clouds against the sunset – not to mention the deafening noise.



The staff at Mashatu Main Camp were so friendly and warm and the food was outstanding. Our room was really spacious, beautiful and with lots of space for us to just chill out too. The thoughtful touches and attention to detail – and the inviting, “warm fuzzy feeling” you get on walking in the door made it one of my favourite lodges ever (and I am very blessed to have stayed in a lot of the best ones because of my job!).

My only wish was that there was a balcony we could actually step outside onto – which have actually since been added (clearly that means I need to go back!). We had a refreshing dip in the pool and spent a bit of time wandering around the discovery room.



The boma dinners were great and we had a great laugh with the other guests around a communal table. There were a few families there and even 2 other sets of guests like us (fathers and daughters). But a definite highlight – as I suspected it would be – was spending a few hours in the Matebole Elephant Hide. I have never longed for a decent camera more than sitting there with my ridiculous happy snap camera and an iphone! Although Kirsten, the C4 photography expert with us, made the most of a dire lens situation and showed me how to do a fabulous [time lapse with my phone](#).



***Access to the Matebole Hide***

But it was not just about capturing the moment that counted – but rather savouring it. What a special, memorable way to celebrate my Dad's 70th – quietly watching my favourite elephants with the man who inspired my life-long love for safaris...



Many thanks to David Evans, Peter and his incredible team for memories that will last a lifetime.

To book your stay visit their [website](#). Many thanks to Dani DS who not only shared our safaris – but some of her photos, with permission.