



## Meet Jean Toucher – Safari Manager at Ghost Mountain Inn

Jean Toucher is the Safari Manager at Ghost Mountain Inn in Mkuze, Zululand, who not only skips the unforgettable boat cruises and tiger fishing trips on nearby Lake Jozini – but also takes guests out on a wide variety of excursions including guided game drives, walking safaris and birding trips in Mkuze and Hluhluwe. She also leads fascinating and authentic Zulu Cultural Walks as well as scenic hikes up to the top of Tshaneni (Ghost Mountain). She also loves to take the children out on grubby bug walks and Nature Treasure hunts as part of the kids programme.

We decided it was time to get to know Jean a bit better with a quick Q & A session...

Hi Jean. Lets kick off our chat with an interesting fact about yourself?

For all I am very outgoing at work I am an intensely private and solitary person away from the hotel.

What made you want to work as a Safari Guide?

I am a bushbaby born and bred what else is there?

How long have you worked at the property and briefly describe your studies/career path?

10 years. I have a Btech. Nature Conservation, FGASA level III and a diploma in interior design to my name but along the way discovered that I love being a jeep jockey more than anything else

What have you done to make your mark on the property/experience?

I think that my work in expanding the interaction with present day Zulu culture and community involvement are what I am most proud of. My love of the property and the area is also something which I think shines through

Is there any exciting news or developments in the area you can share with us?

Lions were reintroduced to Mkhuze Game Reserve in Dec 2013 after 44 years making it a "Big 5" game experience again, which is still very exciting for us. Twin elephants were also born to a herd on Lake Jozini where I do my boat cruises which is very special and rare and a real treat for guests to see.

What three words would your friends use to describe you?

Kind, bubbly and knowledgeable (but I think they're just trying to get on my good side for some reason)

What is your favourite thing about your job?

Being out in wild, open spaces

Are there any real characters amongst your colleagues?

All of them – you cannot do well in this industry and not be slightly insane

What is your favourite animal & why?

Elephant – intelligent and gentle

What is your favourite bird & why?

Heuglens robin-chat. You only have to wake up to that call to know why

Have you had any heart stopping moments?

Innumerable – most involving humans in one way or another. However a curious young hippo who got his head stuck between a post and the toilet on our small boat recently probable gave me my most recent adrenalin rush.

Do you have an amusing story to share about being out in the bush?

We had some intrepid guests decide to go out exploring on their own recently only to have them return within minutes to the hotel with a scary story about being attacked by a gang of men dressed in black, with blacked out faces and big knives. I took me a while to realise that they were describing innocent sugar cane cutters on their way home from work. As we burn the cane before cutting the men were covered in black soot and carrying their cane harvesting knives. They kindly showed the guests how to use the knives when I took them out and introduced them.

What is your favourite time of day to be out on safari?

Late afternoon/twilight

When is your favourite time of the year in the Reserve?

Mid to late September

An interesting fact about the reserve that is not very well known?

Mkhuze Game Reserve has one of the most amazing hides where winter viewing is great throughout the morning.

Who has been the biggest inspiration/influence in your career?

My father

What is the best advice you recall?

My Grandmother told me to always keep a smile on my face and eventually it will convince your heart that you are happy

What is your motto in life?

Have fun / help as much as possible

What is your favourite mode of travel?

Boat

If you had a super power what would it be and why?

Would not want one – to be human is the best we can be

What are your hobbies?

Reading and all things nature

How do you cope with the advances in technology? Do you tweet?

I don't tweet – and my phone is only used to make calls. I even hate sending texts – but I do update our Ghost Mountain Inn [Facebook page](#).

What's your favourite movie of all time?

Walt Disney's Fantasia

What's your favourite programme on the TV right now?

American politics on any channel is like a soapy addiction for me at the moment but I don't watch much.

If you were a celebrity who would you choose to be and why?

None – the lifestyle is not one I would ever choose

If you could have a room full of any one thing, what would it be?

Dark Chocolate or coffee = how about coffee filled dark chocolate

Thanks Jean for taking time out of everyday "Zululand Life" to chat with us!

***For more information on Ghost Mountain Inn please visit***

***<http://www.ghostmountaininn.co.za> and follow them on twitter @GhostMtn.***

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