

THE SUSTAINABILITY ISSUE

ELLE

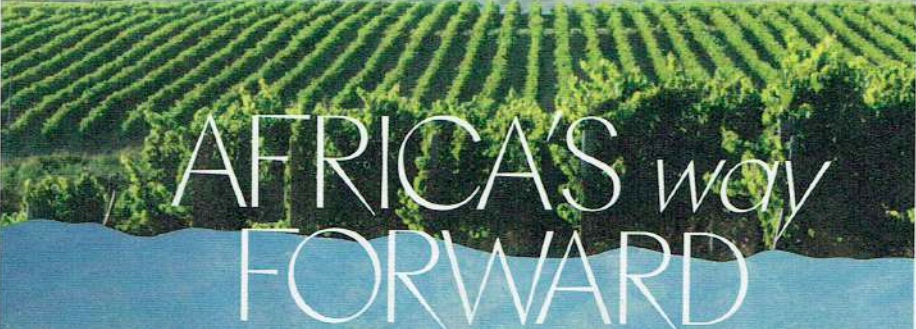
SEPTEMBER 2018

RIHANNA'S MUSE
**SLICK
WOODS**
*talks Fenty,
sexuality &
babies*

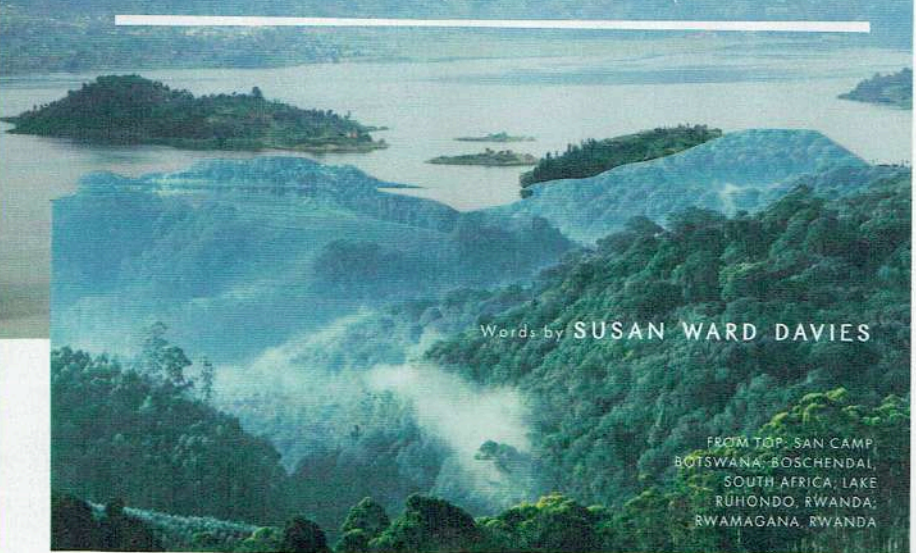
FASHION
the FUTURE



F A S H I O N T H E F U T U R E



AFRICA'S way FORWARD



Words by **SUSAN WARD DAVIES**

FROM TOP: SAN CAMP
BOTSWANA; BOSCHENDAL,
SOUTH AFRICA; LAKE
RUHONDO, RWANDA;
RWAMAGANA, RWANDA

WHEN *it* COMES to SUSTAINABLE travel, AFRICA has BEEN a PIONEER. ELLE UNCOVERS *its* FINEST SPOTS

MY DAUGHTER HAS A TREE in Africa. I bought her a sapling, back when she was a little girl and I was far away, missing her. I looked for a scenic spot on the beautiful Grootbos Private Nature Reserve, near Hermanus, South Africa (grootbos.com) and planted it. As my daughter is mixed race, I thought it would be powerful for her to help sustain a forest on a continent that is part of her heritage. When I got home, I presented her with the certificate of ownership. She was not impressed: 'You bought me a tree?' But she will be, one day, when I take her there.

The Future Trees Project, which is funded through donations by Grootbos guests, was created after a fire devastated much of the old milkwood forest in 2006. It's just one of the sustainability measures the reserve runs for its Grootbos Foundation, which also does a lot for the community, with an agricultural training project, a farm and a Life Skills College and a Football Foundation.

Africa is often plagued by problematic single narratives (corruption, poverty, conflict), when many of its countries are leading in areas the rest of the world could learn from, namely sustainability. The need for creative answers to a serious problem has resulted in great innovation. Take Zimbabwe's Hwange Art and Recycling Project, which makes jewellery and eco bricks from upcycled

glass and plastic bottles. Founder Natasha Aylward explains: 'When you live off the land, the [awareness] of sustainability comes naturally.'

In the fight for better conservation, travellers can be both a blessing (much-needed income) and a curse (low-spend/high-volume tourists whose numbers damage the land and natural order). But if you have the chance to go on safari and watch lions hunting at dusk, or fall asleep under canvas listening to the distant bark of a leopard, you want to know your presence is benefitting that natural beauty, not endangering it.

In the past, some lodges paid little heed to the environment from which they profit, polluting their surroundings with wastewater and sewage, and fouling the air with carbon from diesel generators instead of using clean solar energy. But that is changing.

Colin Bell, the founder of Great Plains, Wilderness Safaris and Natural Selection (all environmental flag-bearers), quit the safari business in 2010 to start the Africa's Finest project (africasfinest.co.za), which calls out safari lodges guilty of

"YOU WANT
to KNOW your
PRESENCE is
BENEFITTING,
RATHER than
ENDANGERING,
that NATURAL
BEAUTY"

'greenwashing' (pretending to care about the environment while doing little to help it), and challenges bad practice. He champions those who get it right with his Top 50, a list of personally reviewed lodges and camps that support local communities and promote effective sustainability measures. 'It is ironic that the only force likely to be able to slow or halt the rape of our natural resources is business,' he says. 'In Africa, that business is tourism and, more specifically, safaris, whose health is directly affected by the health of the wild places it sells to people wanting to see what the world was like before we stuffed it up.'

The well-run lodges and camps in Africa could show the rest of the world a thing or two about reducing plastic use. Most good safari companies provide reusable water bottles, and many, such as the upmarket Asilia Africa group (asiliaafrica.com), use biodegradable lunch containers and ban plastic straws. Others are testing alternatives, such as straws made from glass (as at Cape Town's Tintswalo Atlantic resort; tintswalo.com), reed or bamboo.

This isn't just happening in tourism. In 2008, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame banned plastic bags – seven years before the UK's plastic-bag tax – and it sparked a trend. Kenya followed suit in 2017, Botswana plans to do so later this year, and Zimbabwe has outlawed the use of Styrofoam-like containers.

Sustainable fashion is another area in which African countries are leading the way. The Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI) believes

some of the most innovative talents today come from the continent. These are young, environmentally aware entrepreneurs, such as Nigerian Lisa Folawiyo (lisafolawiyo.com), one of Business of Fashion's BOF 500, who blends ethically sourced West African fabrics with modern tailoring, and Aisha Obuobi, of Christie Brown (christiebrownonline.com), who aims to make Ghanaian fashion relevant by infusing tradition with contemporary ideas.

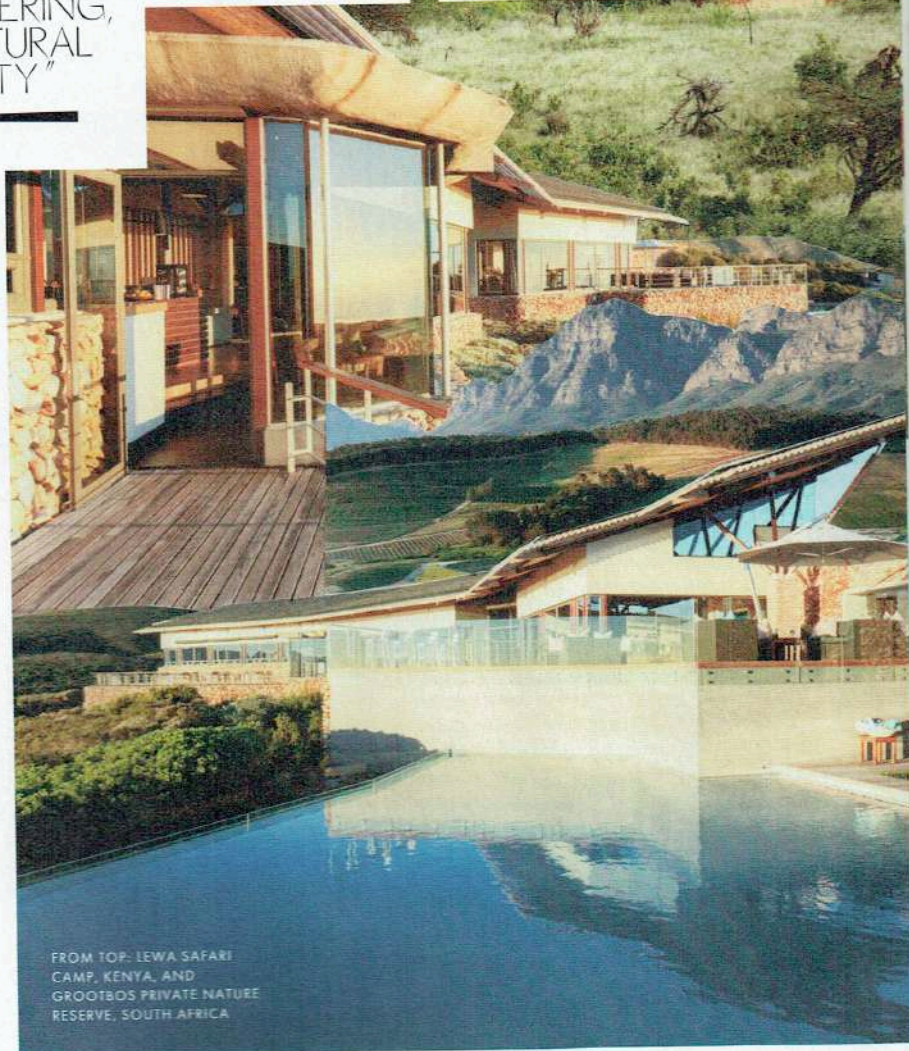
Africa has experienced first-hand the alarming effects of criminally non-ecological practices, such as hunting and overcrowding, that have reduced the lion population from more than 200,000 to 20,00 in the past 100 years. But the foundation for a more sustainable future has been laid and we each have our part to play – even if it's just planting one new tree. ▷



THE HIGHLANDS



GROOTBOS PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE



FROM TOP: LEWA SAFARI CAMP, KENYA, AND GROOTBOS PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE, SOUTH AFRICA

ECO STAYS

HOTEL HEROES

Some of the most innovative accommodation design has sprung from the need for sustainability. ASILIA AFRICA'S THE HIGHLANDS in Tanzania runs almost entirely on solar power, with geodesic domes made of sustainably sourced wood and recycled materials. asiliaafrica.com

HOANIB VALLEY CAMP is solar powered and uses a wood, bamboo and 70% recycled material composite for decking. It also donates 1.5% of profits to conservation. naturalselection.travel

San Camp, Botswana (AKA the most romantic camp in Africa), is 100% solar-powered and has been designed to leave the lightest possible footprint. naturalselection.travel

BISATE LODGE, Rwanda, is a luxury base for gorilla treks from one of Africa's leading eco-tourism companies. wilderness-safaris.com

THE ELEWANA COLLECTION designs its camps to have minimum environmental impact. Its Land & Life Foundation ensures communities benefit from tourism, with projects including the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy – one of the most successful rhino conservation efforts in Africa. elewana.com

These lodges work to support local communities, and give back to the land around them: ROYAL CHUNDU is a family run safari lodge that sources everything locally – they even donate seeds to the community and then buy the produce back at market price. royalchundu.com NKWICHI, Lake Malawi, is a low-impact lodge that is part of the Manda Wilderness Project, which brings local communities together to encourage sustainable practice. kwichi.com SINGITA PAMUSHANA, Zimbabwe, uses its profits to help feed around 20,000 school-children every day. singita.com

Africa's Finest Top 50 is a list of vetted camps and lodges, including: ELSA'S KOPIE, Kenya (elsaskopje.com); MUMBO ISLAND CAMP, Malawi (wilderness-safaris.com); AZURA AT GABRIEL'S, Mozambique (azura-retreats.com); NYUNGWE LODGE, Rwanda (nyungweforest-lodge.com), and NORTH ISLAND, the Seychelles (north-island.com). Book with them for a guilt-free holiday. africasfinest.co.za

For more information, visit Green Tourism (green-tourism.com), a resource for making sustainable choices, and the Africa Travel & Tourism Association (atta.travel). With thanks to Mercedes Bailey, Colin Bell, Chris Mears, Shelley Cox, Veronica Otter, Laura Shelbourne, Emelie Gintzburger Akerbrant and the Commonwealth Fashion Council.

"THE MOST INNOVATIVE DESIGN has SPRUNG FROM the NEED for SUSTAINABILITY"

FROM TOP: SAN CAMP, BOTSWANA; BABYLONSTOREN, SOUTH AFRICA; TINTSWALO ATLANTIC, SOUTH AFRICA

FOOD & DRINK FARM-TO-TABLE

So you thought farm-to-table was invented in LA? Think again – South Africa has long been pioneering sustainable, low-carbon-mile food. The gorgeous farm and hotel Babylonstoren (babylonstoren.com) is famous for its beautiful gardens, ethical values and seasonal approach to cooking. Just down the road is Boschendal (boschendal.com), a wine farm that serves food from within a 30km radius only, with most coming from its own vegetable garden or herd of cattle. And for those living in Cape Town, the only place to buy fresh food is the Oranjezicht City Farm Market (ozcf.co.za), held in the city centre on Saturday mornings. Its seasonal, organic produce comes from a farm project that has helped to rehabilitate disused land, providing jobs for disadvantaged people.

SUSTAINABLE STYLE FASHION & DESIGN

The Ethical Fashion Initiative (ethicalfashioninitiative.org) manages a supply chain that involves artisans – mostly women – from marginalised communities. This enables international and local fashion companies to source products from Africa, creating jobs and reducing poverty. These are the brands to know:

PICHULIK's gorgeous jewellery and accessories are hand-crafted in South Africa. pichulik.com

SIDAI DESIGNS works with Maasai women to produce handmade jewellery. sidaidesigns.com

ANYANGO MPINGA creates womenswear with an eco approach. anyangompinga.com

SOUL DESIGN's founder Abi James creates handmade jewellery using ethically sourced wood and precious stones. soul-design.co.za

DUAL, founded by British/Kenyan sisters Sisi and Eleanor King, is a jewellery line mostly produced in Kenyan cooperatives. shop-dual.com

STUDIO 189, co-founded by Rosario Dawson and Abrima Erwiah, works with artisanal communities on its designs. studiooneeightynine.com

MAYAMIKO's clothing is made on demand to avoid waste, in a solar-powered studio using textiles sourced locally in Malawi. mayamiko.com

THE JOINERY's clothing is made in South Africa from recycled materials, hemp and responsibly sourced fabrics. thejoinery.co.za

ALAMA, a handcrafted jewellery brand, funds community projects in Tanzania and employs Maasai women. alama-project.com



SIDAI DESIGNS



CHRISTIE BROWN