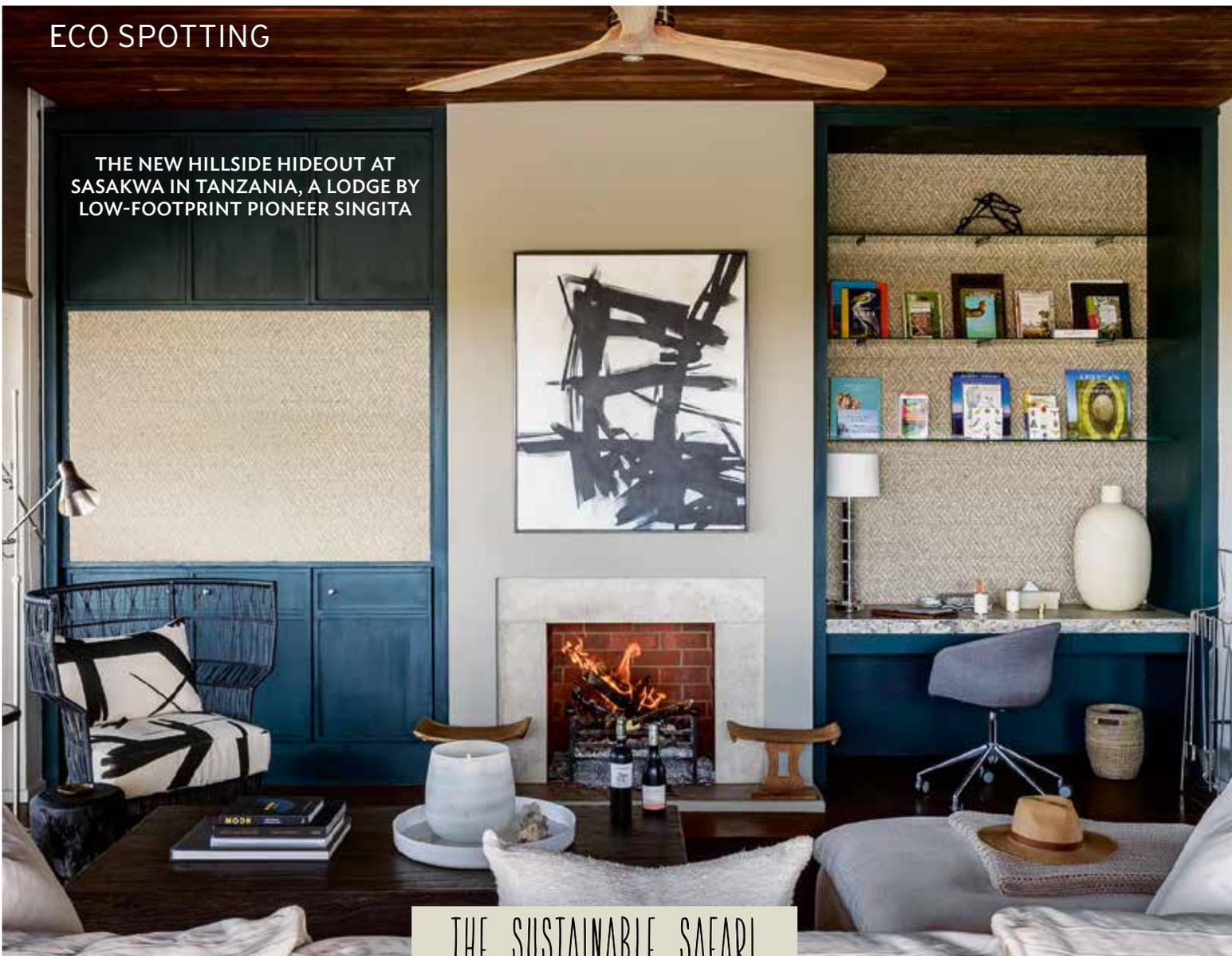


THE NEW HILLSIDE HIDEOUT AT SASAKWA IN TANZANIA, A LODGE BY LOW-FOOTPRINT PIONEER SINGITA



THE SUSTAINABLE SAFARI

EPIC BIG-GAME EXPEDITIONS DRIVEN BY CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Safaris have come a long way since their early-20th-century heyday, when trophy hunters cut a swathe through sub-Saharan Africa. Or even a decade ago, when the poaching crisis hadn't yet begun to force a reckoning around conservation. That era saw the apex of lavish trips, of sumptuous lodges with porcelain dinner service and exclusive access. Increasingly, though, the major players are shifting to large-scale protection of wild spaces, while recognising that communities must benefit as well. And today's safari-goers are looking not just for heart-pounding encounters with a herd of wildebeest, but also to help preserve these tableaux. Long at the forefront of high quality alongside deep-dive experience, **Singita** launched Safari with a Purpose for a behind-the-scenes look at the task of conserving the Grumeti Reserves in Tanzania, while staying at one of its incomparable Serengeti lodges, such as Sasakwa. Carved from former hunting grounds leased by American conservationist Paul Tudor Jones, the area has gone from barren wilderness to thriving landscape. The five-day trip takes visitors into the beating heart of their anti-poaching ops; some have even collared elephants, flying in a helicopter with a vet to tag the enormous creatures. Kwitonda, Singita's other new addition at the edge of Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, takes a different tack, encouraging guests to plant trees to help build a buffer between farms and the park's 320 mountain gorillas. For a more boots-on-the-ground view, **Asilia Adventures** offers a six-day walking expedition across Kenya's Mara Conservancies. The trek covers 10 miles a day over open plains rustling with hyenas and buffalo, with stops at the Mara Elephant Project to see how it prevents human-wildlife conflict, and the Mara Predator

Conservation Programme, which monitors big cats. Those on the trip also gain perspective on one of Africa's most promising conservation models, as local tribes are paid a stable rent for their land, which trekkers are protecting by their very presence. **Great Plains** takes travellers on an equally adventurous circuit around the Sapi Concession in Zimbabwe. At this former hunting reserve they can canoe near hippos and tiptoe past zebras to participate in bringing the wildlife, skittish from years of being shot at, back into balance. This rewilding has become a speciality of the NGO African Parks, which reintroduces lost species while generating income for locals. One such turnaround can be witnessed at **Wilderness Safaris'** new Magashi Camp in Rwanda's Akagera National Park, which was thoroughly shot out during the civil war in the 1990s. Now there's a Noah's Ark flourishing in the savannahs, including translocated lions and rhinos. For those who want to notch their belt in conservation science, **Anderssons at Ongava**, which opened this spring next to Namibia's Etosha National Park, has a state-of-the-art lab where visitors can join scientists studying rhino genetics. Guests who stay in the modern-rustic, caramel-toned lodge will find a live feed in their rooms of the watering hole at night, which they can rush off to via a tunnel. And owner-operated **Natural Selection** offers those who stay at their wildly remote Hoanib Valley Camp – where desert-adapted elephants dig their trunks into dry riverbeds for water and six tents lie on the desert floor like bats – the chance to monitor giraffe movements, giving visitors a hands-on role to play in reversing their silent extinction. ALEX POSTMAN