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EAGLE ISLAND LODGE
OKAVANGO DELTA

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CRAFTING THE MAGIC OF THE OKAVANGO DELTA

THE GALLERY HBA RE-CREATES BELMOND EAGLE ISLAND LODGE IN BOTSWANA

(London – 18 February 2016) The Gallery HBA has redesigned Belmond Eagle Island Lodge in Botswana, re-affirming its reputation as one of the country's leading luxury safari lodges and the ultimate Okavango Delta water-&-experience based safari lodge. More than ever before, the lodge is a place of discovery and wonder, delightfully and uniquely capturing the spirit of the delta to become a place where guests can explore even as they relax and unwind after a day's safari.

Perched on a private island surrounded by some of the deepest stretches of the delta, Belmond Eagle Island Lodge encompasses 12 deluxe tented guest rooms, each with a large terrace and plunge pool; a dining pavilion; a lounge pavilion across two levels; an arrivals boma; a retail area; the Fish Eagle Bar; a library and internet lounge; and a camp fire area. All the structures are new, their form inspired by the astonishing and massive termite mounds which rise from the local landscape, as well as the gentle motion of the nearby water channels.



IN COMPLETE HARMONY WITH NATURE

Just as the Okavango Delta is an astonishing and still virtually untouched natural wonder of the world shaped by the waters which flow through it and characterised by the subtle, shifting colours of nature, the redesigned Belmond Eagle Island Lodge is a retreat for the discerning adventurer. Each area within the lodge is a space to explore where the natural world is interpreted into features, materials and patinas that convey its essence, that conjure up the spirit of adventure past and present and which enrich the guest experience with new memories to take home.

Just like the numerous water channels that weave their way through the grasslands, the design flows through the lodge, here and there more specifically picking up on the idea of gently rippling water. The colour palette also flows indoors and out, inspired by the green washing into soft yellows of the surrounding grasslands as well as the layers of grey toned land. This forms the backdrop to pops of vibrant colour which take their cue, for example, from the vivid mustard hue of the indigenous Fish Eagle's face as well as the brilliant red and blue of other local birds.

And, just like the rhythm of the world outside, lighting in the Belmond Eagle Island Lodge has a key role to play indoors and out. Lamps have been specially designed to cast mysterious shadows and play with the illusion of insects in flight or to create moody pools of illumination.

The ambience is of discreet sophistication, the furniture and fittings convey a rugged elegance and many of the elements are artisanal, specially commissioned and hand-made in Africa.



SEALED BY THE VIEW

The public spaces are organic in shape, curving around the ancient trees on the site and located to capture a myriad of views from various vantage points. An arrivals boma has been introduced where guests are welcomed after their short drive from the landing strip. Positioned as a promise of the experience to come, the boma perfectly frames the vista beyond.



DINING AT THE HEART OF THE LODGE

A residential-style open kitchen with a pizza oven to one side and a counter with stools sits at the heart of the dining area, designed to be the place where guests gather for breakfast before the morning's safari or at lunchtime to choose their food and share their stories. Throughout, collections of brightly coloured, preserved insects and scientific instruments add further delight and discovery to the day while contemporary lights, the design of which was inspired by the intricate birds' nests that populate these wetlands, weave intriguing shadows across the space at night time. A key feature is a large bespoke cabinet displaying a fine selection of wines and whiskies.

RETREAT AND REVERIE

A stepped lounge, curving around an ancient sycamore fig tree, flows from the restaurant with a freshly decked area in between. The relationship between indoors and out is seamless and the views from inside over the delta are blissfully uninterrupted. A kaleidoscope of butterflies appears to fly through the air around cocoons. Both butterflies and cocoons have been crafted in metal and are illuminated to create an enchanting swarm. The bar is artisanal in style, formed of irregular planks of rough-hewn timber and a huge fireplace offers the cosy reassurance of a great camp fire at the end of the day. A timber balustrade sweeps around the restaurant and lounge spaces with integrated seating from where guests can absorb the views.





AT THE WATER'S EDGE

Removed from the main dining and lounge areas, near an outdoor barbecue and camp fire and directly on the edge of the water channels by the jetty, the Fish Eagle Bar offers an alternative destination. Here, the colour palette is that of the distinctive indigenous fish eagle with its snowy white chest, brown body and bright yellow face. There is a residential-style bar counter and birdcage swings provide enchanting vantage points at this farthest reach of the lodge.



EACH GUEST ROOM AN EXPERIENCE OF WONDER

The 12 deluxe guest rooms are each 62 sq meters with an additional 20 sq meters deck. Their interiors are full of charming details, each one offering up a little magic of the delta.

The centrepiece of each guest room is the bed offering views out onto the delta. Its fabulous copper finish headboard references Botswana's copper mining tradition and is uniquely designed. Inspired by the wildlife of the nearby lagoons, this tactile hand-made piece is awash with natural metallic colours and perforated with tiny holes allowing light to filter through and dance on the bed. The mosquito net is suspended from above and custom-made from grey tulle to play with the lighting. Bedside cabinets are integrated into the headboard, the traditional folding camp table is re-invented as a leather upholstered bench at the end of the bed and a separate daybed within a window nook doubles as an extra bed.

Another delightful feature is the mini-bar designed as an explorer's toolbox, full of drawers and concealed cupboards, but this one containing the accoutrements of a luxury guest amenity rather than compasses and picks. Reclaimed and re-stained timber features widely; the hand-stitched details of the waxy leather upholstery and the buckle details of the leather blinds carry echoes of adventurous travels past.

The guest rooms include a walk-in dressing room and a luxurious bathroom complete with two vanity units, lots of space for toiletries, an indoor and outdoor shower and a freestanding black bath tub. In the wet areas, the cemcrete floor is finished in a rippling water effect. The copper taps suggest the valves that open and close waterways; at a glance, the bracketed bathroom lights might just be giant insects.

"Our wish has been to give guests an insight into the soul of the Delta that they can marvel at while they are there and take away with them when they leave," says Inge Moore, Principal & Creative Director of The Gallery HBA. "By using local artisans and materials, reinventing traditional safari camp paraphernalia and translating the natural world into the interiors, the design is crafted to fill the hearts and minds of both safari camp connoisseurs and newcomers alike."



FURNITURE, FABRICS AND FINISHES

In addition to the many items that were handmade in South Africa by Simon Beebe of BB Designs, suppliers included: Moorgas and Sons (rods & rails); Sealy (bed base & mattress); Out of This World (tables); Deker (lounge sofas); Kiwinet (mosquito nets); Streamlight (Headboard reading lights); Chelsom (reading light for daybed sofa).

Fabrics were mainly locally sourced and include generous use of canvas and leather. Suppliers included: Fabric Library; Halogen; Hertex; Kravet Fabrics; Mavromac; Moore & Giles (Leather); St Leger & Viney.

Richly toned jarrah wood predominates, much of it re-used from the previous guest rooms. Bathrooms are finished in grey cemcrete.

Throughout, Belmond Eagle Island Lodge is intriguingly and generously accessorised with handmade curiosities inspired by local flora and fauna as well by such native crafts such as basket making.



REBUILT WITH THE HIGHEST ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

The architectural design and engineering of this project were aligned with the “Best Environmental Practices” methodologies. This included removal of the existing concrete platforms and their replacement using local timbers; reclaimed timber was used where possible in the creation of the structures and roof coverings are of local thatch. Power generation is via a new Photo Voltaic Solar battery system, all lighting is LED based and all energy consuming amenities have been selected for their power efficiencies. Gas fired hot water heaters have been replaced by thermodynamic geysers and drinking water is pumped directly from the Kavango River, treated and then stored in water coolers around the lodge with guests encouraged to fill reusable bottles direct from the coolers.

A COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

Architect: DSA/RSL

Project Manager: FTK Design and Development

Purchasing Agent: Shelley Rorke

Belmond Eagle Island Lodge can be coupled with Belmond Khwai River Lodge in the Moremi Wildlife Reserve and Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge in Chobe National Park for an all embracing Northern Botswana experience. More information is available at www.belmond.com



ABOUT THE GALLERY HBA

The Gallery HBA is dedicated to high-concept, original design for the hospitality and residential sectors. The team's award-winning work is unmistakable for its vision and spirit; it tells a story, uniquely imagined and distilled into the interior design. The Gallery HBA instinctively understands and elevates the experience of contemporary travellers, recognising the many ways in which people sense luxury and absorbing these into its schemes, from the initial space plan through to the smallest, crafted details. The practice is based in London and works around the world.

Current/recent projects include: Hotel Atlantis by Giardino, Zurich; Kanuhura Resort in the Maldives; Pafilia Tower, Cyprus; Hilton Amsterdam Airport Schiphol; One Blackfriars and Grosvenor House, a JW Marriott Hotel, also in London; Four Seasons Kingdom Tower, Riyadh; The Alpina Gstaad; Hotel Maria Cristina in San Sebastian; Hotel Alfonso XIII in Seville.

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