



M A K A N Y I  
PRIVATE GAME LODGE

### *A Word About Us...*

In April 2013, I found myself with no plans for the Easter holidays, but I had recently been in touch with an old school friend, living in Johannesburg, whom I hadn't seen for years. So, when he asked me to visit, I didn't hesitate to book a nine-day holiday to Johannesburg and Cape Town. This was my very first time in South Africa and I loved it.

Back home, my father was so enchanted by my pictures with lion cubs taken at a city lion park, that he decided he wanted for all of us to return together. I suggested going on a proper safari, as we had never been on one, and it would be an amazing experience for my son – a unique five-year-old with an unusual passion for animals and nature. Before I knew it, I booked to stay at a safari lodge for the half term holiday in May, and we were off - having the experience of a lifetime and meeting many incredible people. When we departed, we felt as though we were leaving part of ourselves in the bush.

With the summer holidays looming and my son going away, the choice was obvious: South Africa was calling me again. This time, I wanted to do some community work, as well as catch up with the friends I had already made. The only thing holding me back was the thought that I had never been on holiday on my own. But I knew the place and had good contacts, so I took a deep breath and headed back.

I can honestly say that trip changed my life. I stayed much longer than planned, only leaving because of my commitments at home. Those had been the most beautiful and intense ten days I had ever experienced, going way beyond seeing the animals (although that is always amazing). It was the bigger picture that had made such an impression; the ways the country and the bush fit together, how it all began and where everything is heading. The happiness of the people, which reflected their environment, brought me back to the things that really matter: the beauty and simplicity of that environment, nature's instincts and the delicate balance of it all - not the fast, anxious priorities of busy cities. I found myself thinking in a way I never had before. Having only ever lived in busy cities, how wonderful it would be to live in the bush! But what would I do there? And, most importantly, what would my son do?

Then again, maybe it wasn't such a crazy thought. For my son, it would be an astonishing opportunity to grow up in one of the few places on Earth where nature is virtually untouched. He could live a happy, healthy, outdoor life surrounded by beauty, simplicity and genuine people with a common passion for nature. In London, he might go to a 'good' school, with the pressure to be the best, coming home in the rain to watch TV. Or... he could live in the sunshine, attend a school where kids are allowed to be kids, where priorities are different, surrounded by the natural world, spending his afternoons fishing, swimming and adventuring and dedicating his life to something he loves.

For me, it would bring my passions together. They didn't make enough sense on their own, but in this new context, they took on a different meaning. I studied hotel management at one of the best schools in the world and, although I've always had a keen interest in tourism and hospitality, there wasn't a particular area I was drawn to, nor any one location. I've always loved animals and wanted to find a way to work with them, but had put that enthusiasm to one side too as I didn't know in what capacity. In South Africa, I knew I'd be able to combine these loves by owning and running my own lodge and dedicating my time to conservation. Perfect!

As I gave the idea more thought, it began to make real sense. I started looking at schools for my son and learn more about the local area, and realised it could work. It would be a massive change, but it *could* work.

A friend who knows Africa well helped me search for a lodge. One morning in September, he emailed with a brochure showing the most beautiful place for sale in the Timbavati. "What do you think?" he asked. It was my dream come true.



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In October, I went to spend a day at Makanyi before revisiting the lodge where I had spent my holidays. I asked the people working there, many of which had become my friends, for their opinion of 'my' lodge, and they told me it looked stunning. Most importantly, they knew it would be the perfect location to observe the fascinating wildlife. In November, I decided to buy it.

I will be forever grateful to the people who are or have been part of this incredible journey and have led me here, and I am thankful for this amazing opportunity.

Makanyi is so much more than a safari lodge. We want our guests to love this place as much as we do, to take it to their hearts and embrace a fuller understanding of nature and a deeper respect for animals - for this is their home. We would love for them to leave with not just an amazing photo album of all the wonderful sightings they had, but with something in their heart that they will carry inside forever.

For us, this goes way beyond being a business; it's an opportunity to share our experiences and sense of wonder. We believe in bringing tourism together with conservation and community to create awareness and something beautiful, unique and sustainable that we can preserve for the generations to come. As well as caring for our guests and ensuring that their stay is truly spectacular, we dedicate our time and resources to the natural environment and its inhabitants, and particularly to the ongoing fight against rhino poaching in the Timbavati.

We are committed to being responsible custodians of this inspiring land, so we sincerely hope our guests will share our vision and values - because this is not merely a holiday destination, it's a way to expand horizons and help our planet.

It is now just over a year since I first set foot in South Africa, and I am the very proud owner of a beautiful safari lodge, in the most wonderful place on earth. I'd be delighted if you were to join me here.

Jessica Gold