



A PERFECT SNAP

Tap into your creativity and explore the wonders of SA's wildlife through Roho Ya Chui's photographic safaris

WRITTEN BY NAZLEY OMAR

As I crouch in an uncompromising position, trying to hold my camera as still as possible, my heart races as the regal lions in front of me pounce on each other. My fingers don't stop snapping as I try to capture the animals roaring, rolling, biting, striking and thumping. The dust settles as the triumphant, larger lion emits a deep roar, announcing to all in earshot that he is, indeed, the king of the jungle. His defeated brother slumps into the grass, sombre and still.

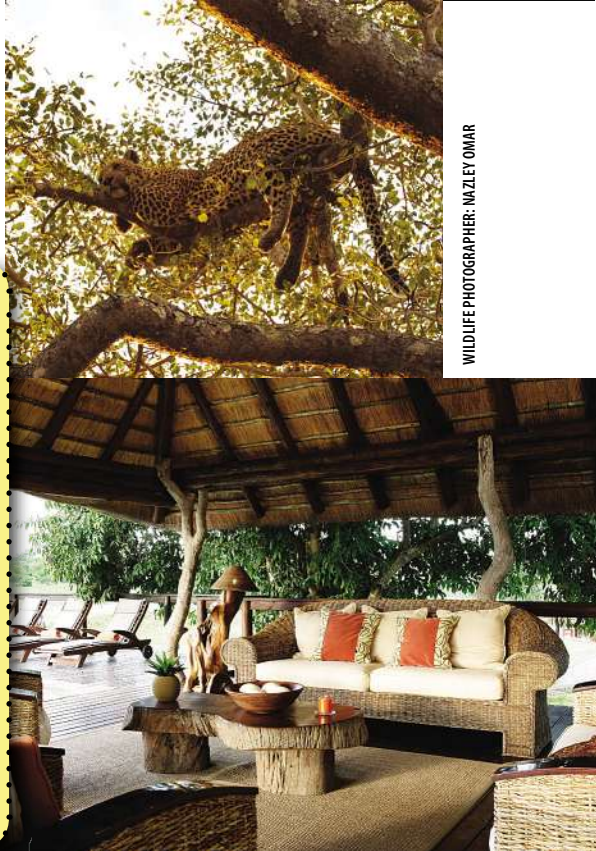
It's day two of my photographic safari at the Arathusa Safari Lodge – which forms part of the 65 000ha Sabi Sand Game Reserve in Mpumalanga – and I'm fully immersed in nature, finding myself surprisingly at home behind the lens. As an enthusiastic, but very amateur photographer, I'm enthralled as I snap away, capturing the spirit, personality and sheer brute power of these magnificent creatures.

After returning to camp, I meet with the rest of the group to reflect on our sightings and photographs. Ute Sonnenberg, a professional photographer and our mentor for the trip, helps us analyse our shots based on the themes she gives us for each game drive, which include lighting, composition, emotion, camera techniques and motion. We look at each other's pictures, discuss and learn from one another in each impromptu session. Originally from Germany, Sonnenberg has an infectious passion for wildlife and photography. Through her psychotherapy background, she gently guides and advises each person on how to connect with their intuitive side and articulate an authentic point of view through personal photography.

As Arathusa is a private game lodge, it allows vehicles to go off-road and venture deep into the bush sans the queues of cars you'd find in national game parks. The game rangers and knowledgeable trackers seek out truly spectacular sightings. In four days and six game drives (morning and afternoon), I saw a leopard devour an impala's skull, crunching each bone till the ear disappeared; a herd of elephants take a playful swim in the dam to cool off; a lioness feed her cubs; an elephant calf show off and pretend to charge our vehicle (I was just a tad afraid!) and a frightened young leopard take refuge in a tree as a pride of lions hovered beneath it.

Now that I'm back home, I apply the principles I learnt on the safari to my everyday photography – and (by my standards, at least), it's almost picture perfect!

WHAT TO BRING: An SLR camera, laptop, upload cable, bean bag, memory card and optional zoom or wide-angled lenses.



WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER: NAZLEY OMAR

ABOUT ROHO YA CHUI
 The rates for the four-day Leopard Special in the Sabi Sands, including accommodation, all meals and game drives, start at R15 000 per person, depending on availability and the number of attendants. Roho Ya Chui offers a range of private photographic safaris to other local destinations, as well as to the Masai Mara in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia and Mozambique. For further information, visit rohoiachui.com or call Ute Sonnenberg on tel: 076 508 5850.