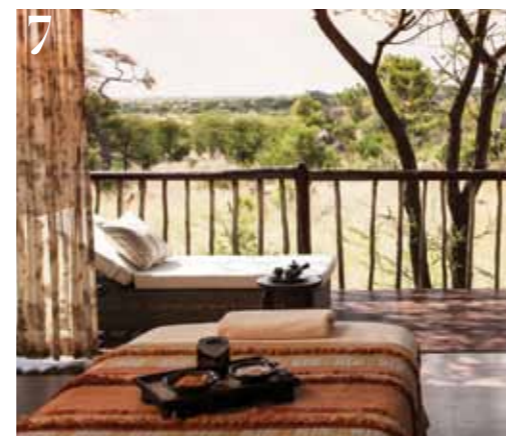


**10 OF THE Best SPA SAFARI LODGES**

Laura French rounds up wildlife camps with spas

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Nothing quite beats the feeling of spotting a creature in its wild, natural habitat, theatrical scenes unfolding amid vast, dusty plains. But while wilderness experiences remain the priority for those after an African adventure, there's a growing interest in adding in some wellness too – and safari camps are catching on.

Here we round up 10 of the best spa lodges for clients wanting to round off days spent in the great outdoors with indulgent, rejuvenating treatments in extraordinary surroundings – infinity pool overlooking elephant watering hole, anyone?

**1 KAPAMA KARULA, SOUTH AFRICA**  
Hidden among the African bush in the Kapama Private Game Reserve, this luxury abode, meaning 'place of peace', offers everything you might look for in a safari lodge – breathtaking natural beauty, 12 luxury suites and a modern lounge and bar. But its pièce de résistance is its all-new spa, complete with glass walls that enable you to gaze out on impala and other creatures bounding past while indulging in treatments that cover everything from mud massages to the Pinotage Bliss Experience – think vine body wrap followed by a soothing marula milk bath.

"I recommend the Special Elements of Africa spa treatment," says Melanie Burton, assistant product manager for Africa at Gold Medal. "It involves lying back on a heated slab

and being exfoliated before hot oils and hot stones are applied to your body – all the while surrounded by the African bush. There's nothing quite like it."

There's also a steam room, ice bath and relaxation area complete with pool and built-in loungers, and those wanting to work up a sweat will find a comprehensive fitness centre too. **Book it:** Gold Medal offers three nights' full board in a Superior Suite at the five-star Karula Lodge from £3,159 per person, including return transfers and flights from Gatwick (valid for travel April 9 to June 30, 2018). **goldmedal.co.uk**

**2 MAHALI MZURI, KENYA**  
Kenya isn't short on the spa safari front, but for something extra-sumptuous look to Mahali Mzuri, part of the Virgin Limited Edition collection and set on the private Olare Motorogi Conservancy. Tents take glamping to new levels with wooden decks and elegant, wilderness-inspired decor, and it's all on the path of the great migration; cue wildebeest roaming in their thousands (if you travel there at the right time of year).

Its wellness offering lives up to the reputation too, with the Nasaro spa offering facials, massages and grooming treatments – including an 'African potato experience manicure' – as clients gaze out over the surrounding bush. All-natural Africology ethical skincare products are used, which are said to 'capture the healing essence of

Africa', and there's plenty to keep the kids entertained while mum indulges; think walking safaris, cultural trips to learn about the Maasai and a stargazing telescope in the main tent.

**Book it:** Three nights starts at £630 per person with Somak Holidays, including all meals and drinks and valid for arrivals from January 2, 2018, to May 31, 2018. **somak.com**

**3 TOKA LEYA, ZAMBIA**  
Right in the heart of the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park and overlooking the rushing flows of the Zambezi river is Toka Leya, home to 12 en suite, safari-style tents, including three for families.

At seven and a half miles from Victoria Falls, it's a hive of activity with game drives, fishing on the Zambezi and various other adventures all on the doorstep, but it's not all about the doing. Those looking to wind down will find a recently rebuilt spa, including a new treatment room with outdoor decking where pilates and yoga take place.

In keeping with the surroundings the treatments are 100% biodegradable and all-natural – with soothing Africology products used for massages, scrubs and facials – and there's a new state-of-the-art gym for clients wanting to work off the calories. Of course, all of that's only relevant if you can tear yourself away from the hippos, crocodiles and elephants that are regularly spotted near the camp.

**Book it:** Mahlatini Luxury Travel offers a four-night stay at Wilderness Safaris Toka Leya

Camp starting from £2,750 per person, based on two sharing on an all-inclusive basis with flights from London, transfers and scheduled activities, for travel from January 11-March 31 and November 1-December 19, 2018. **mahlatini.com**

**4 MARA BUSHTOPS, KENYA**

Voted top Luxury Safari Spa at the 2017 World Luxury Spa Awards, Mara Bushtops' wellness centre has got itself quite the name. Designed in collaboration with architect Andrin Schweizer, its 'Amani African Spa Village' is something of a work of art, offering a rasul steam room with Arabian mud treatments, hot Jacuzzi, heated infinity pool with built-in beds and plenty more, all decked out in contemporary wooden, nature-inspired design. "It's a destination in itself with many guests choosing a day in the spa over a day out looking for animals," says Dan Heatly, product executive for Kuoni's Discover, a team that focuses on tailor-made itineraries.

Throw in hot-air balloon safaris over the Masai Mara, idyllic game drives and sundowners in the wilderness, and family activities such as Swahili baking and making beads and you can't really go wrong.

**Book it:** Kuoni offers four nights at Mara Bushtops in April plus one night at Fairmont The Norfolk in Nairobi from £3,649 per person including all meals, drinks, game drives and some activities, and flights to and from the UK. **kuoni.co.uk**

PICTURES: JONATHAN COSH; MIKE MYERS; STEVIE MANN; ADRIAN STEIN; SANCTUARY RETREATS; DOOK PHOTO; RICHARD WAITE; MARK WILLIAMS



→ **5 SINGITA SASAKWA LODGE, TANZANIA**

Picture an Edwardian-style manor house and several private cottages in the heart of the endlessly vast, amber-coloured Serengeti plains and you have Singita Sasakwa Lodge. It's an intriguing fusion of European and East African influences and its spa is no less splendid than its milieu, with a selection of Healing Earth and Dermalogica spa body treatments alongside massages using tools crafted from the medicinal Swahili tree, Mwarobaini. Beyond the spa there are tennis courts, mountain bike trips, archery lessons, baking sessions and other family-friendly activities available, making it something of an all-rounder for active types as well as the more spa-oriented.

**Book it:** Cheli & Peacock Safaris offers three nights in a Sasakwa Cottage from \$7,302 for two guests, including all meals and most beverages, transfers, tennis and twice-daily safaris. [chelipecock.com](http://chelipecock.com)

**6 CHIEF'S CAMP, BOTSWANA**

Botswana is on the radar right now and its spa offering is on the rise too. For a relaxing option in the heart of the Okavango Delta, Visions of Africa recommends Chief's Camp, which reopened last year following extensive renovation and now comprises 10 generously-sized bush pavilions alongside a spa. African heated stone massages and a tropical immunity-boosting body wrap are all on the menu, with French marine-based Thalgo products and Africology ranges the critics' choice. They might be needed after a day spent indulging in activities, which span mokoro excursions - local canoes that sail through the bush when it floods in June - to flights over the Delta and 4x4 game drives.

**Book it:** Visions of Africa offers an eight-night trip including two nights at Chief's Camp in Moremi from £5,399 per person fully inclusive based on two sharing, with South African Airways flights from Heathrow.

[visionsholidaygroup.co.uk](http://visionsholidaygroup.co.uk)

**ABOVE LEFT:** Chief's Camp, Botswana

**ABOVE:** Four Seasons Safari Lodge, Tanzania

**BELOW:** Singita Sasakwa Lodge game drive, Tanzania

**7 FOUR SEASONS SAFARI LODGE, TANZANIA**

Is there anywhere quite as iconic and awe-inspiring as the Serengeti? Throw in tranquil spa treatments at Four Seasons' ultra-luxe lodge and you have safari bliss. There's even an infinity pool overlooking a watering hole where elephants frequently gather to drink. The spa houses six freestanding treatment pavilions, all sufficiently sized for romantic couples' treatments, and several feature outdoor bathtubs. Treatments are inspired by the Serengeti and designed with dusty days out in the savannah in mind; look out for the all-new Kifalme Ritual, which promises to hydrate using the local antioxidant-rich baobab oil, or try a yoga class, moonlight meditation session or sunset nature walk guided by a local Maasai for the ultimate mind, body and soul experience.

**Book it:** The Big Five Family Safari Package starts from £1,600 per night based on two adults and one child sharing including meals, a hot-air



→ balloon ride, game drives and a family cooking class, but not flights. The 90-minute Kifalme Ritual costs from \$395.

[fourseasons.com/serengeti](http://fourseasons.com/serengeti)

## 8 KWANDWE PRIVATE GAME RESERVE, SOUTH AFRICA

Roughly three times the size of Guernsey, with two lodges and three private safari villas to its name, this reserve is a force to be reckoned with, picking up several gongs at the 2018 Safari Awards.

It's not only the game drives that impress, but the plethora of in-room spa treatments, all using local ingredients plucked straight from nature – think marula, shea butter, Cape aloe and rooibos used for massages, skincare regimes and hand and foot treatments. Its crowning glory is the new villa, Fort House, which sleeps families of eight with four bedrooms and boasts its own dedicated spa room. There's also a pool, outdoor terrace and traditional boma for idyllic meals under the stars – therapy in itself.

**Book it:** Carrier offers four nights at Belmont Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town with breakfast



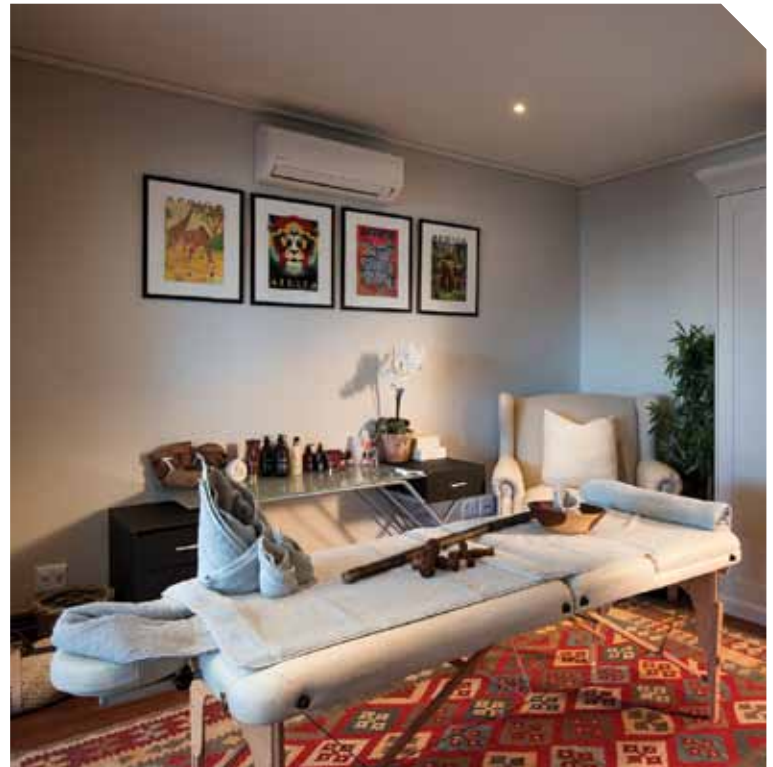
## Soul Spa scents and remedies, inspired by the desert, ocean and bush, are served up in treatment rooms

and four nights' all-inclusive at Great Fish River Lodge at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve from £3,545 per person, including a 90-minute African Wood Massage, BA flights from Heathrow, internal flights and private transfers, based on a May 5, 2018, departure.

[carrier.co.uk](http://carrier.co.uk)

## 9 MSENGE BUSH LODGE, SOUTH AFRICA

For a romantic five-star stay in South Africa's Eastern Cape, Premier Holidays recommends Msenge Lodge on the Pumba Private Game Reserve, which peeps out from the mountains with 11



glass-enclosed chalets.

"It's always a very popular spa option for us, particularly with honeymooners as it combines superb game viewing with fine dining and a luxurious spa experience," says John Parker, product manager. "It boasts an abundance of wildlife, and clients are ideally located to spot the big five. It's also just a short drive from Port Elizabeth, and can easily be twinned with a self-drive from Cape Town and the garden route."

Central to its philosophy is the Soul Spa, where scents and remedies inspired by the desert, ocean and bush are served up in treatment rooms or in guests' private suites. Spa packages are tailored to each individual, and there's also a steam room, gym and plunge pool for those after some post-massage revival.

**Book it:** Premier Holidays offers three nights in Cape Town, two in Stellenbosch, one in Port Elizabeth and three in Pumba's Msenge Bush Lodge from £2,035 per person, including BA flights from Heathrow and transfers.

[trade.premierholidays.co.uk](http://trade.premierholidays.co.uk)

## 10 BUMI HILLS SAFARI LODGE AND SPA, ZIMBABWE

Perched atop a hill 35 miles southwest of Kariba town, this 20-room retreat has idyllic views over the Zambezi escarpment and Lake Kariba. Among its newer additions is the spa, an expansive wellness area where you'll find a sauna, steam room, cold water plunge pool, massage tents, relaxation area and sundeck, all with extraordinary views. Morning, afternoon and night game drives are available, alongside walking safaris, boat trips, fishing excursions and visits to the local village, so clients can pack in cultural highlights with some well deserved me-time at the end of a busy day.

**Book it:** Three nights at Bumi Hills with Abercrombie & Kent starts at £2,740 per person based on two sharing including meals, house beverages, transfers, national park fees, two activities per day and domestic and international flights. Valid for travel from April 1 to June 30 and November 1 to November 30, 2018.

[abercrombiekent.co.uk](http://abercrombiekent.co.uk)



**LEFT:** Bumi Hills, Zimbabwe

**ABOVE:** Fort House, Kwandwe Private Game Reserve, South Africa