

Close, closer, closest

Driving for days ... pffft, who needs it! We'd rather be kicking back at any one of these ultracool, ultraquick-to-get-to destinations.



Country calling

What would life be without a sneaky little getaway every once in a while to one of Gauteng's hidden gems ... sad and blue, that's what. Head out the Magaliesberg way and you'll find the ideally situated **De Hoek Country Hotel**. The hotel, which resembles a classic historical home – think beautiful stone walls and ornate wood finishes – will have you feeling as if you're a million miles away from inner city mania in a lickety split. Foodies, try to keep your excitement under control when you see what's on the menu. Think French continental food and a new five course menu every day ... oh golly, you can hear the tummy rumbles already, can't you? Renowned head chef Michael Holenstein doesn't hold back. Bread, brioche, biscuits, cakes and pastries are baked fresh every day, while creative and unusual flavours are combined with new food trends in dishes that'll send your taste buds into a frenzy. As much as you'd like to spend your

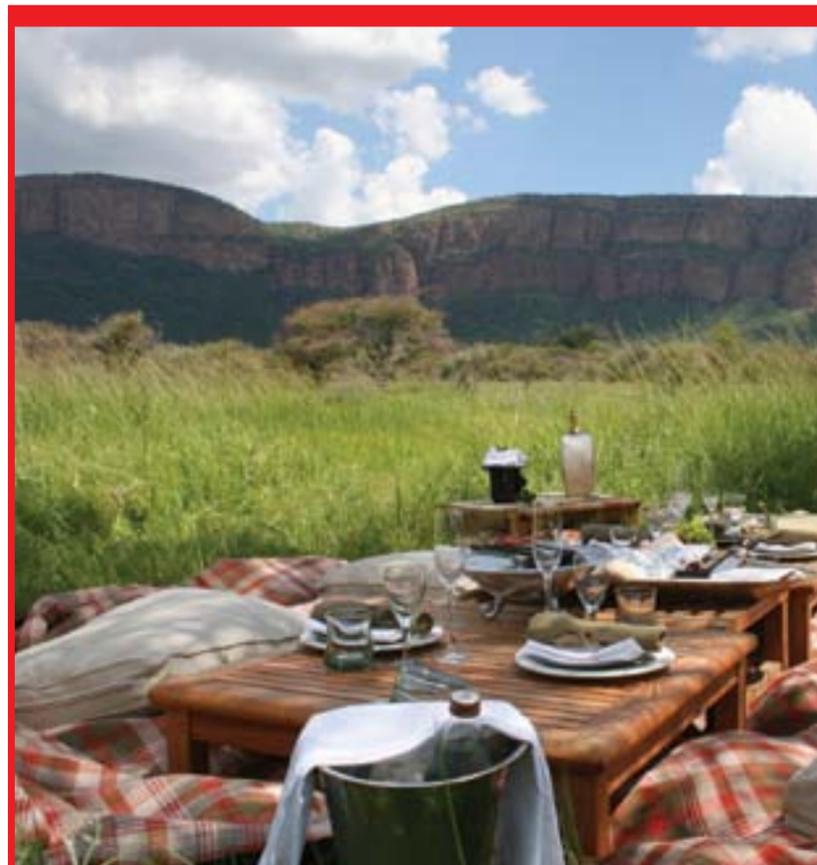


time eating at this Mecca of yummy food, there are plenty of must-try activities on the agenda. Adventurous types can take their pick – hot air balloon ride? Heli flip? Archery? Microlight flight? Or perhaps a more leisurely picnic in the stunning country gardens or a massage at the spa ... option B we think. Don't worry about schlepping for hours in a cramped car - it's all just a short drive from Jozi. The one night Winter Celebration package starts at R4 490 a couple and includes lunch, dinner and breakfast. *Details: www.dehoek.com or 014-577-9600.*



Not your average outing

When is a hotel not a hotel? When, 100 years ago, it was actually Mahatma Gandhi's home. Huh? Yes really! **The Satyagraha House** is now a listed historic building, museum and ... a guest house. Bet you never in your wildest dreams imagined you'd be able to stay there. And the beauty of it all? It's literally on our doorstep. Not Magalies, not Harties but Joeys ... that's right people, here in one of our very own suburbs – Orchards. We love it that the owners have tried to keep the spirit of the house similar to what it was like when Gandhi actually lived there. Think introductory courses in yoga and meditation, an entirely vegetarian menu using only organic produce, and as little modern technology as possible. But before all you techno crazies out there start getting sweaty palms at the thought of no technology, there is electricity and one other little concession ... WiFi so you won't be completely out of the loop. Whew! All seven bedrooms are simply decorated, keeping in mind what it would have originally been like, from basic furniture and ornaments down to the bedding from India ... to think that Gandhi developed his concept of passive resistance within these walls! Maybe you'll leave inspired to change the world and bring about world peace (OK, not very likely) but perhaps you'll just leave a little more enlightened than you were yesterday. Whatever it is, to a local or an out-of-towner, you can bet on an experience that'll be a blast from the past. Prices start at R1 735 a room a night (breakfast included). *Details: www.satyagrahahouse.com or 011-485-5928.*



Sanctuary found

Is there anything that beats the smell of the fresh bush air first thing in the morning? Well yes actually ... the smell of fresh bush air coupled with impressive mountains, grass-clad hills and deep valleys at **Marataba Safari Lodge**. Don't judge, but when it comes to camping we're really not your number one eager beaver. But glamping, well now, that's a whole different story. At Marataba the luxury tented suite is how we like to camp. There are 15 canvas-and-stone tented suites, tastefully furnished and decorated with a contemporary twist. Forget about the hours of chill time you intended on getting in while here – there are animals to see. If you're off on a game drive, keep your eyes peeled for the mischievous warties trotting about or wild cats on the prowl. And if there's action somewhere on the reserve, the expert guides will find it. Feeling extra adventurous? Step out on the wild side on a guided walking trail, then cool off after your jam-packed day with a sunset river cruise sipping G&Ts with a few hippos and crocs nearby.

Lounging around is best done in one way – the comfy way. You can get cosy beside the fireplace with a good read from the library or pick a spot and soak up the view from a hammock, pool lounger or grassy patch. There's no time to beat around the bush (see what we did there) when it comes to the food here because it's all pretty darn delish. Don't expect your usual bush braai, it's more like five star dining. Think scrummy buffets and hot English breakfasts, light lunches on the lawn (under the watchful eyes of the monkeys) and at dinner, the chef really pulls out all the stops with a gourmet set menu. The team here is marvellously friendly and just about bends over backwards to make your stay a memorable one. It's the kind of place that'll make you want to trade in your day job for a couple of weeks to explore the ridiculously pin-up-worthy landscapes in search of the big five. But we city-bound folk will have to settle for a more realistic couple of days which is entirely possible as it's just a stone's throw away in the Waterberg. Prices start from R5 280 a person a night sharing. *Details: www.marataba.co.za or 011-880-9992.*