


Family Travel to Africa

February 5, 2014

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THE RESIDENCE ZANZIBAR features a glass-walled swimming pool overlooking the ocean.

Here's a way to explore two different countries with plenty to offer children, parents and grandparents alike.

Start off from New York's JFK International Airport or Washington Dulles and fly [South African Airways](#) to Johannesburg, South Africa. From there, it's a two-hour flight to Nelspruit, the nearest public airport to the massive Kruger National Park in the northeastern part of the country.

Singita Sabi Sand, South Africa

The Sabi Sand Private Game Reserve is right next to Kruger National Park in South Africa's northeast, where visitors can see all of the Big Five animals (elephants, rhinoceros, leopards, lions and buffalo) on game drives. Luxury safari company Singita manages 45,000 acres here, and has several lodges that welcome children.

And when we say that these lodges welcome kids, they really go all-out: [Singita Sabi Sand](#) offers a Mini Rangers' Course that includes age-appropriate activities (think tracking animals, butterfly capture-and-release, astronomy, bush survival techniques, flower-pressing and several tests and challenges). For teens, there's the chance to get involved in community enrichment at local schools.

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Nice touch: Children earn “badges” in tracking, fishing, birding, astronomy, botany and survival in the bush.

A day at the Leopard Creek Golf Country Club, taking a helicopter or hot-air balloon ride, learning to cook in the lodge kitchens, or visiting nearby villages for a cultural experience are just some ways to spend the day. Contact Reservations Manager Linda Jean (linda.j@singita.com; 011-21-21-6833424) to arrange these activities in advance.

The Family Suites at Singita Ebony and Singita Boulders have a master bedroom and a twin bedroom; there’s also a lounge area and a viewing deck with a heated plunge pool. The parking lot for easy pick-ups and drop-offs before or after game drives is right nearby. Each fit two adults and two kids, and are located down a pathway from the main lodge. There are two apiece at each lodge, and they’re connected by the dining room and lounge/verandah area, a nice for big families.



Picture : SINGITA CASTLETON has a series of spaces, such as the verandah, that encourage relaxation, togetherness, and are perfect for families.

Book Singita Castleton exclusively for your clan; it can hold 12 guests in six individual cottages and with that comes a private guide, a house host, a chef and house staff for your stay. Private amenities run from a swimming pool, to a wine cellar, a gym, tennis court and spa.

While spa treatments are available to guests at all three lodges, guests at Castleton can get exclusive access to a spa therapist for up to five treatments per day. (Tip: Be sure to try Singita’s two signature treatments, “Ndzi Lorhe Africa” and “Monkey Orange.”)

Linda Jean is the go-to person to book experiences at any of the lodges and for any requests, including private plane charters from Nelspruit or Johannesburg.

Zanzibar, Tanzania

Safaris are a great way for families to bond, but beach vacations are a time-honored tradition. From Nelspruit, fly back to Johannesburg and transfer to a South African Airways flight to Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania. Upon landing in Dar, transfer to a short flight, or head into the seaside city to catch a ferry to the island of Zanzibar.

[The Residence Zanzibar](#) is a three-year-old hotel on the island’s southwest coast. A member of The Leading Hotels of the World, it is a good pick for families looking for a beach vacation before or after their safari.

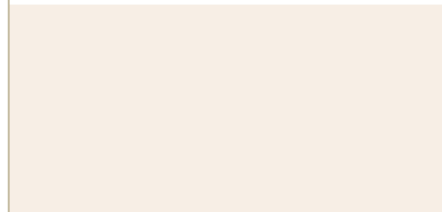
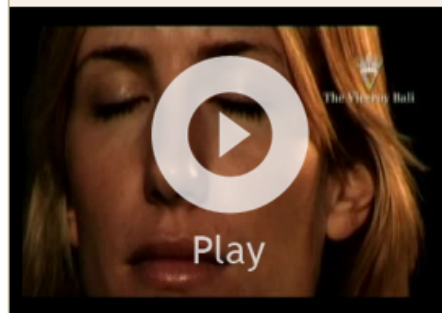
Families will want to book the Frangipani Pool Villas, which can accommodate up to six people in two bedrooms. Good to know: Since the villas are all independent of one another, there are no connecting rooms. Each villa has a private swimming pool and sun terrace with garden or beach with ocean views.

The kids will want to explore Zanzibar’s landscape and culture on the bicycles provided by the resort, but The Residence has kayaks, pedal boats, tennis courts and snorkeling excursions, all on property. Contact Head Concierge Ahmad Mazuri (concierge-zanzibar@theresidence.com; 011-255-24-5555000) to arrange tours, including sightseeing excursions with a local guide to Stone Town, the Jozani Natural Forest Reserve, the local spice plantations, Prison Island or other local attractions.



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A photography excursion runs for three full days; there's a cooking workshop that focuses on Tanzania's cuisine (not incidentally, it used to be known as the Spice Island), and ocean-faring activities that explore the coastal reefs and sea life.



At the Kids Club, younger guests can learn Swahili, ride bikes and play volleyball. Babysitting services are also available for the youngest guests.

Picture: THE RESIDENCE ZANZIBAR living room has French doors leading to the deck and pool area, with breathtaking views of the ocean.

The spa at The Residence has six pavilions, each with its own private garden, outdoor shower, bathtub and relaxation area. We hear the Relaxing Massage is one of the more popular options, and that Sussane is one of the most requested spa therapists (she can do facials, massages, and mani/pedis.) Contact Spa Manager Fadhel Bachour (fbachour@theresidence.com) to make reservations and arrangements.

The two restaurants at The Residence – the Dining Room and the Pavilion – are generally reserved for guests, so families can relax over a quiet meal. (We hear the seafood buffet at the Pavilion is very popular, and the Dining Room's terrace is a top place to sit.) Even better: Guests do not need to make reservations in advance, so they can eat whenever it's convenient.

For special requests, reach out to Director of Sales Jennifer Jean Charles (jjeancharles@theresidence.com) or General Manager Yves Montel (yvontel@theresidence.com; 011-255-24-5555000).



Picture: SINGITA CASTLETON'S main house is the central point of meeting for families to enjoy time together.

From Zanzibar, return to Dar es Salaam and fly back to Johannesburg, and back to the United States from there. You'll have had a true once-in-a-lifetime experience with your family...until you go back to see more, of course.

ADVISOR INSIGHT:

Elizabeth Gordon of Extraordinary Journeys went to Zambia last summer; for kids and families she recommends [Lion Camp](#); [Tafika](#) (www.tafika.com; "Lots of activities"); [Chongwe](#), where "the rooms are close together, which makes it not ideal for couples but great for families"; and [Luangwa Safari House](#), which is owned by Robin Pope Safaris for exclusive use in South Luangwa National Park.

Families can also go rhino tracking at Phinda Game Reserve. The Gordons like [Ant's Nest](#) in the Waterberg region of the country for a family-friendly accommodation, or Kwandwe.

ADVISOR INSIGHT:

Jeanie Fundora of Travel Beyond is just back from a trip to South Africa with her one-year-old daughter. Here are her tips for traveling.

"I stayed at [Kwandwe](#) on the Eastern Cape, about a two-hour drive inland from Port Elizabeth. They are putting in a new runway for private planes. Kwandwe is a massive private reserve with four lodges; two are for exclusive use only: Melton Manor, which can hold up to eight people, and Uplands Homestead, which can hold six. Ecce Lodge [where we stayed] is not exclusive, but it takes kids of all ages. It's flexible in terms of game-viewing. Of the four lodges, only Great Fish River has a 16-and-up policy.

"While we were at Kwandwe, we did not get a private vehicle for ourselves. That meant that for safaris, we could not take our daughter with us; we could have if we had taken our own vehicle. We took turns on regular game drives, and then after breakfast, the staff would do a drive with all three of us. It wouldn't focus on predators, but on giraffes and zebras and hippos at the dam. It was only one hour, and it was great. They have a kid's menu that's the same for every meal, and high chairs. Cots are available, and there's a mini-ranger program where kids get an activity book and colored pencils. They even have a children's room with toys, and they offer babysitters at no extra charge. They have an open kitchen where kids can make cookies. It's really geared towards families. It was a great experience.

"I've been in the industry since 1999, and back then, things were much more restrictive for families, especially in Southern Africa. Many places wouldn't take kids under 12, period. But things have changed. A lot of camps have family rooms and the ages have started dropping for game drives. If you take a private vehicle to the lodge, the whole family can go anywhere regardless of ages.

"We also stayed at Singita in [Sabi Sands](#). They just redid [Castleton](#), the former private owner's lodge, which used to be unavailable commercially. It has six cottages, and two of them are close together, so parents can be close to their kids. They have tennis courts and a private gym and an open kitchen, and they don't have raised walkways. It's all flat on the ground with manicured lawns. It really looks stunning. There, we did get a private vehicle and we could go on game drives that got close to predators. It's good for an exclusive multigenerational booking.

"Singita Sabi Sand's Boulders Lodge will be redone in April or May, and there you do have boardwalks that go between the rooms, so if a kid is running they might fall. Castleton and Ebony lodges don't have raised walkways. Family suites at Boulders and Ebony Lodges have two bedrooms, a private pool and a deck, and they are interconnected, so large families can go to a shared, open lounge area outside and share a dining room for large meals.

"The difference between Kwandwe and Sabi Sands is that Sabi Sands is in a malaria area, so you need to take medicine. We covered our daughter in bug repellent. Kwandwe and Madikwe on the Botswana border are malaria-free, so you don't need to worry about that."

On Our Radar

Sub-Saharan Africa is seeing some notable development from some top brands. Mid-year, Four Seasons will make its South African debut with the Four Seasons Hotel Westcliff Johannesburg. The hotel, born of a renovation of the former Westcliff, will have a new spa and two new restaurants. It looks out over the Johannesburg Zoo.

In Tanzania, the Park Hyatt Zanzibar opens in June on a UNESCO heritage site in the historic section of Zanzibar City known as Stone Town. The hotel has direct access to the beachfront.

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