



Imvubu Safaris



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Intimate Science based Safaris led by African Conservation Professionals



“This isn't just a safari; it's a journey, with an opportunity to contribute to the resilience of KwaZulu-Natal's wildlife.”



Imvubu knows....

A safari is a bucket list, once in a lifetime vacation.

A safari is an opportunity to appreciate the natural world, including the animals, the land, and to have a firsthand encounter with the wild

And that the world is changing.....

That's where Imvubu's aim lies: not only to fulfill a lifetime dream for nature enthusiasts, but also connect those dreamers with scientists dedicated to protecting wildlife for future generations. Our promise is that you will leave your safari with more than just a photo album; you will gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of wildlife conservation in Africa, along with new connections, including globally renowned scientists.

Essential to Your Trip

- Not a malaria zone
- No visa entry requirements
- Easy flight options into Durban



What will your trip be like....

Lodging

- 2 x Ballito Hotel
- 2 x St Lucia Glamping Tents
- 2 x Guided Hike Safari
- 2 x Manyoni Reserve

Guides

Professional Imvubu guides will accompany the trip. Our guides are regional experts and will be your bridge to immersively and safely traveling the KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa. Imvubu partners with regional Scientists and Conservationists who will guide us through their own projects.

Experiences

- Durban Crowned Eagle Research
- KwaZulu-Natal Amphibian & Reptile Conservation
- Mfolozi River Hippos
- Crocodile Conservation Center- St. Lucia
- HluHluwe Imfolozi Trekking Safari
- Wildlife ACT : Rhino Guardians

Activity Level

A level of hiking fitness will be required to participate although mileage and speed will be managed by guides to adapt best for the group.

Meals

8 Breakfasts and Dinners are included featuring local gastronomical flair.

7 lunches will be provided as well

There is one "Discovery lunch" in the town of St Lucia that will be at the cost of the participant.

Transportation

All transportation from King Shaka International Airport and returning to the airport at the end of the trip will be conducted by Imvubu Safaris.

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ABOUT US

Imvubu Safari started with an acknowledgment of a gap. Dr. Camille Fritsch saw a model in place for hunting, a generous revenue generator for nature reserves, involving the direct involvement of hunters willing to pay to experience a once-in-a-lifetime experience for a culling of animals. Now the correctness of these methods are debated and contested, and Imvubu only draws from the idea that if there is a direct correlation within a certain field of interest, why couldn't there be for science and conservation?

Dr. Camille's experience of researching hippopotamus behavior and ecology, his days turned into years spent in the bush and on the banks of rivers, growing his love for all things big and small that create these unique, thriving ecosystems, he now wants to share that perspective. Imvubu Safaris approaches the concept that conservation doesn't have to be for only the rugged scientist, that by combining modern comforts, phenomenal gastronomy, and creating the bridge between tourism and conservation could we increase awareness of these efforts while providing our own once-in-a-lifetime Safari experience.

Imvubu knows change comes from connection, and connection is a very human to human trait. Beyond the animals, beyond the preservation of our natural world, we aim to create connections with you and the scientists behind these works. We have chosen projects that benefit from your participation in this safari, and designed the trip to understand their mission, develop friendship over a meal, and gain an insight into their life as an ecologist. Direct funding helps to relieve a burden of time and effort put on the conservationists to raise the funds themselves. This opens their world, frees their minds, and allows for the dedication of their time to their projects. Your participation helps to generate meaningful research data and conservation efforts protecting these overlooked species that create the biodiverse systems necessary for the resilience of our planet.

We look forward to sharing our own experience, helping to create your experience, and creating memories with a mission.

- *The Imvubu Team*

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Days 1-2

Arrival: King Shaka Airport

Hotel: Sala Beach House Resort

Activities: Hiking

Species: Crowned Eagles, Reptiles, Wildebeest, Vervet Monkeys

We take the first day to arrive and settle into Sala Beach House, in Ballito, overlooking the Indian Ocean. Enjoy your first South African sunset, South African wines and an introduction to the ***Durban African Crowned Eagle Research Project***.

African Crowned Eagles are the most powerful bird on the planet - famously capable of hunting antelope many times their size. Incredibly, the greater Durban area hosts the densest population of these eagles in the world!

The task of monitoring, protecting and studying these city dwelling mega-eagles has been Dr. Shane McPherson's team at Durban African Crowned Eagle Research. For the last 12 years.

Topping off our first day, we will get a chance to break the ice and get to know Dr. McPherson while indulging in one of Africa's most culturally diverse gastronomes.

Wake up on day two in the coastal forest teaming with vibrant song birds, vervet monkeys and antelope. Start with a delicious breakfast once you wake up – or when you're back from a sunrise stroll on the beach.

Energized by the previous night's events, we head to Tanglewood Nature Reserve in the town of Kloof to conduct an African Crowned Eagle nest breeding survey with the Durban African Crowned Eagle Research team.



Strapping on our hiking boots, we will be guided for 2 km through a diverse range of protected habitats, including critically endangered Kwazulu-Natal Sour Veld and Coastal Rainforest. As we keep our eyes peeled for wildebeest, vervet monkeys, and peregrine falcons, we will be led to the prime vantage point for viewing the nest. With exclusive access to this incredible park and expert guidance from a world authority on the species, we will be ideally positioned to observe the nest and record crucial breeding success data.

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Cool fact : Backdropped by the Indian Ocean and Durban's urban metropolis, this nest, along with Dr. Mcpherson's team was recently featured in an award winning 2023 PBS series that aired in the US and Europe called [Raptors : Fists Full of Daggers](#).

Come down to graze with the wildebeests amongst the lychee and avocado trees for a phenomenal catered picnic by our favorite local deli. A lifelong herpetologist and founder of the **NGO KwaZulu-Natal Amphibian & Reptile Conservation**, Nick Evans will join us to shed light on the roles of reptiles in this semi-urban environment. Nick has not only created one of the world's most remarkable datasets on urban reptiles, but leverages science and community education as tools to highlight the services reptiles provide to the natural and anthropogenic ecosystems. We understand that reptiles might not be everyone's cup of tea, so you

can participate in this activity from a comfortable distance - but there will be the opportunity to participate if you choose. As the main character of DSTV's program Snake Season, trust us when we say there is no better person than Nick to safely handle and learn about reptiles in all of South Africa.



Want more wildlife?! As you enjoy the view of the ocean horizon, keep your eyes peeled for some late-departing southern right or humpback whales or go for a short nature walk to view the birds and wildlife of Ballito.

Day 3-4

Shuttles: 2.5 hours from Ballito to St. Lucia

Hotel: St. Lucia Urban Glamping

Activities: Hiking, Sunset Hippo & Crocodile River Boat Cruise, 2 x Big 4 Game Drive, Turtle Nest Survey

Species: Birds, Hippos, Zebra, Antelope

Shuttling 2.5 hours up the East Coast and into the incredibly scenic and rural region

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of Kwazulu-Natal, we spend the next few days in the first proclaimed UNESCO world Heritage site in South Africa. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is home to 8 interlinking ecosystems, 25,000 year old coastal forests and 220 km of coastline.

The Mfolozi (um-fo-lo-zee) river is the greatest contributor of fresh water within the St. Lucia system, home to crocodiles, monitor lizards, diverse bird species, hippos and even bull sharks. This estuarine ecosystem is both incredible, and important as a refuge for wildlife in Africa. .

Cool fact: in isiZulu, the local language spoken by the Zulu people, iSimangaliso means “miracle” or “wonder”, aka iSimangaliso: The Place of Miracles and Wonder.



Over the next few days, over boardwalks, walking trails, game drives and a river cruise, we will explore this virtually untouched wilderness. Along the way, we

will learn about the history and importance of the St. Lucia estuary for wildlife and fisheries in Africa, and have an opportunity to observe elephants, rhinos, and if we're very lucky - cross paths with a leopard or hyena.



One animal we can guarantee you'll see are hippos! Accompanied by a local guide from the villages bordering the iSimangaliso Wetlands, our group has the privilege to take a sunset cruise up the St. Lucia estuary, where unlike anywhere else in Africa, we can safely approach and learn about hippos as we observe them basking in the African sun, frolicking in their aquatic refuges. Feel serenity as the South African sun drops below the horizon, enjoying this unique experience with a cold beverage, and pinching yourself alongside your loved ones.

Cool fact: “Imvubu” is the isiZulu word for hippo, you could call them our spirit animal. Our founder, Dr. Camille Fritsch, has been a pioneering scientist in hippo

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behavior and ecology for 10 years. After experiencing the paucity of money going towards conservation in KwaZulu-Natal, Imvubu Safaris was created to finance conservation projects on endangered species in the region.

Amongst this incredible wetland system, St Lucia town's of 2,000 permanent human residents and 1,000 hippos welcomes everyone who comes to see the "locals" (hippos) walk through town at night to graze. Touring the Saint Lucia crocodile center, we will learn about crocs and how people in the region successfully live alongside them.

An afternoon free in St Lucia gives you the flexibility to enjoy some time at the beach, local activities such as a horseback safari, or perhaps a bit of relaxing downtime. Our group regathers once again in the evening for a night Safari drive out to Cape Vidal to join a local turtle expert tracking down and hopefully witness hatching Leatherback and Loggerhead sea turtles emerge from their nest in the sand dunes to return to the ocean. This will be an incredible opportunity as many species of wildlife are active at night, under the cover of darkness and out of the hot weather. We will turn on our best nocturnal vision to try to spot some of these unique animals.



We stay two-nights at St. Lucia Urban Glamping. These high-end glamping tents appeal to our sense of adventure, and the surrounding wilderness, while offering all the modern amenities one needs to sleep peacefully each night.

Day 5-7

Shuttles: 2 Hours to HluHluwe Reserve

Hotel: Remote Bush Camp

Activities: Hiking Safari

Species: Elephants, Rhinos, Zebra, Giraffe

Excited yet?! Well we've got good news for you, our favorite parts are still to come!

As we leave St Lucia in the rear view, we head to the oldest nature reserve in Africa: Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park. This charismatic protected area is home to the big-5 (lions, leopards, rhinos, elephants, and the African buffalo) and so much more...and we're going to be taking part in a multi day hiking safari.

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With an opportunity to see the world's most charismatic wildlife safely on foot, for many people this will be the highlight of the entire journey - an opportunity to reconnect with our place in nature - to experience real wilderness in all its glory. We will be guided by locals guides,, born just outside the protected area, who have been guiding groups of people on foot in HIP for the last 30 years. The Zulu have a deep spiritual connection to nature, and a depth of knowledge of plants and animals to take in through osmosis in their presence. We will learn our first Zulu words and sayings, learn about the Zulu tribes close relationship with nature and experience something truly unique.

Going to bed with the sunset and rising again to the songs of over 600 species of birds, we will spend two nights in the bush and make the most of the cooler parts of the day to hike in the wilderness.

Good to know: walking distances and times are determined by the group's wants, capabilities and weather. Our guides are skilled in structuring the day's activities accordingly.

Day 7-9

Shuttles: 1.5 hours to King Shaka Airport

Hotel: Rhino Sands Game Reserve

Activities: Wildlife Act Participation, Game Drives

Species: Elephants, Rhinos, Lions, Warthogs,

In a newly established Big-5 protected area, called Manyoni Game Reserve, enjoy a 360° savannah view, from the deck of your private luxury safari tent. Enjoy early morning or evening game drives in the bush, choose a spa treatment, a dip in the pool, or just to enjoy the view!



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KwaZulu-Natal wildlife management authority is credited for bringing white

As part of these spectacular last few days, our group joins [Wildlife ACT](#), the only African volunteer organization supported by the WWF (the Worldwide Wildlife Fund) to experience behind the sciences conservation activities towards saving endangered rhino populations from rhino horn poaching.

Unfortunate reality: the truth is that thousands of rhinos are poached every year for their horn - of which hundreds take place near our home in KwaZulu-Natal. The good thing is, we can do something about it, and you can too!



Rhino dehorning is the last resort method employed by wildlife conservation managers throughout Africa to deter poachers and protect the lives of the world's most iconic endangered species. In the 19th century, when less than 100 rhinos were left in the region, the

rhino's back from extinction through pioneering methods towards successful breeding.

These experiences are our aim as your take home gift - the first person experience into the world of conservation. The financing of our trips helps directly fund research projects like the crowned eagle and snake research - so be proud of what you've chosen to participate in on your vacation.

We wrap up our last day with another client favorite - an opportunity to meet Rambo and Rachel. Unlike the necessity of distance in many wildlife interactions - Rambo and Rachel are wild, free roaming elephants that choose to interact with people. We will learn how this behavior developed in their development, have the opportunity to feed them, feel their tusks, and even try and finish a bottle of water faster than them. Just a heads up - you have no chance as they can drink 5 gallons of water in the time you can drink your water bottle!

We leave each other in Durban, where 9 days before you started the African adventure of a lifetime! Hamba kahle - go well - and until next time!

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Arrivals and Departures:

The trip will start and end at King Shaka International Airport, in Durban, South Africa. Flights can be booked directly to Durban or alternatively booking a flight to Johannesburg O.R. Tambo International Airport, then a connecting flight through FlySafair or South African Airways. Please refrain from purchasing flight tickets until your booking for your Imvubu Safari has been confirmed.

Airport Codes: King Shaka International Airport, Durban : **DUR**

O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg : **JNB**

Lodging:

The Sala Beach House: 2 Nights

With enormous picture windows, spectacular ocean views and direct access to the beach, it offers the chance to indulge in barefoot luxury while soaking up KwaZulu-Natal's balmy beachfront vibes.

<https://salabeach.co.za/> : Shaka's Rock, ZA 4399



Urban Glamping St. Lucia: 2 Nights

Luxury glamping tents within St Lucia and the iSimangaliso Wetlands.

<https://www.urbanglamping.co.za> : St Lucia, ZA 3936



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HIP Walking Trek: 2 Nights

The oldest proclaimed nature reserve in Africa with 96,000 hectares of wilderness awaiting you. Sleep amongst the stars and the African Big 5 in safety and comfort.

<https://www.hluhluwegamereserve.com> : Ngolothse, ZA



Leopard Mountain Safari Lodge: 2 Nights

Leopard Mountain is a fully solar off Grid, 5 Star, multiple award-winning, family-run safari lodge set within the magnificent 58,000 acre Manyoni Private Game Reserve.

<https://www.leopardmountain.co.za/> : Hluhluwe, Manyoni Game Reserve, ZA 3860



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Further Adventures:

South Africa is incredibly rich in diversity, natural wonders, and cultural opportunities. Imvubu knows you may want to pair your Safari with other adventures to truly get to know this country. Below are several destinations Imvubu recommends to parlay with your Safari to enrich and engage yourself in all that is South Africa.

Cape Town's Table Mountain

Table Mountain National Park is a 3,563-foot iconic natural wonder. To enhance your opportunity to stand atop Table Mountain, we recommend that you give yourself a couple of days in Cape Town as the 3,000' Cable transporting guests up and down the mountain can be delayed or closed due to high winds and fog. Before heading up the cableway, be

sure to grab a jacket, as temperatures on the 2-mile-wide plateau can be cool.



Stellenbosch Wine Region



While being the most well-known, the Stellenbosch district is the second oldest wine region in South Africa, after Constantia. Located 45 km outside (28 miles) outside of Cape Town, Stellenbosch was first planted in 1679. Climatic influences from the nearby False bay and the surrounding Helderberg, Simonsberg and Stellenbosch Mountains creates a climate creating complex wines and a surreal backdrop for tasting these wines that have regarded South Africa as an internationally acclaimed region for wine

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Stretching some 200km, the Garden Route is South Africa's ultimate road trip taking in national parks, dense forests, placid lakes and some outrageously beautiful beaches. Known as much for its outdoor activities as its natural beauty, along the way you can learn to surf, leap into water-filled canyons, dive to shipwrecks or simply sit on board a yacht admiring the view with a glass of local wine in hand. Highlight towns, like Knysna, provide ample opportunity for exploration, hikes, and the chance to begin understanding the local, click-based language of the Xhosa people.

South Africa's Garden Route



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