

GWEGWE BEACH LODGE

MKAMBATI RESERVE

WILD COAST - SOUTH AFRICA



Breaching whale and zebras – there are not many places in the world where one can watch wildlife on land with whales and dolphins offshore.

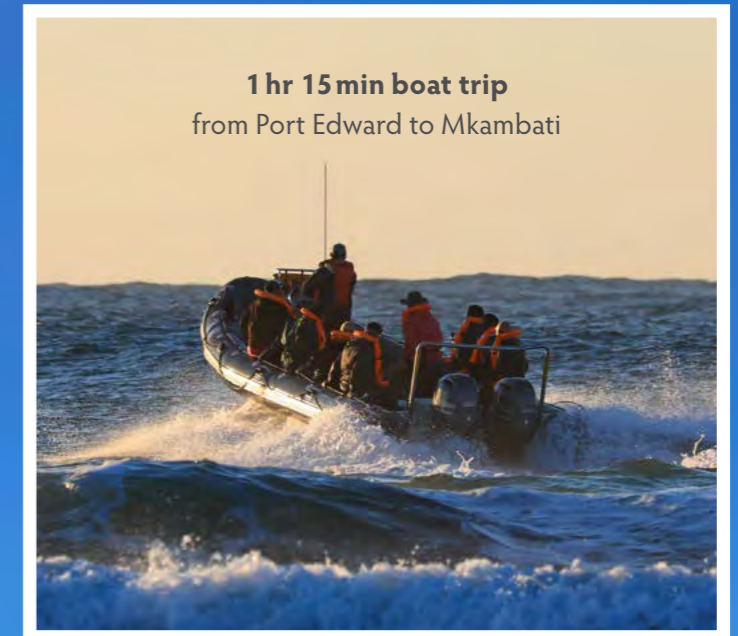
Mkambati Nature Reserve, The Wild Coast, Eastern Cape, South Africa







20 min helicopter flight
from Margate to Mkambati



1 hr 15 min boat trip
from Port Edward to Mkambati

GETTING TO MKAMBATI NATURE RESERVE





MKAMBATI NATURE RESERVE

Mkambati Nature Reserve is situated along Eastern Cape's "Wild Coast" between Port Edward (30 km to the north east) and Port St Johns (59 km to the south west). Mkambati must rank as one of the most beautiful reserves in South Africa. Of all the many diverse protected areas in the country, few can match Mkambati for its pristine ecology and sense of paradise. Crystal clear rivers, deep gorges, rolling grasslands, pockets of dense swamp forest and beautiful secluded beaches are the ingredients to a superlatively photogenic scene. Then there are the waterfalls. Mkambati boasts 21 of them. Among the most impressive is Mkambati Falls, one of only two dozen worldwide that cascades directly into the ocean.

"The rolling grasslands are reminiscent of the Serengeti plains – but with the wild Indian Ocean as the backdrop."

The rolling grasslands are reminiscent of the Serengeti plains – but with the wild Indian Ocean as the backdrop. There are few places on earth where you can watch a herd of eland, blesbok or Burchell's zebra while dolphins and whales breach nearby in the warm sea.

The adjacent Pondoland Marine Protected Area offshore is one of the largest in the country and the focus of one of

the largest animal predation events on earth, the annual sardine run.

A benign sub-tropical climate means that there is no malaria and you seldom have to put on a jersey.

This is not a "Big 5" reserve, so hiking, mountain-biking, fishing, game viewing, rock-pool exploring or simply sunning yourself on the unspoilt and uncrowded beaches are the main terrestrial activities. Boating out to sea is a must for scuba divers, snorkellers and whale watchers.

The reserve has been sub-divided into two; the public southern zone and the private northern zone of around 5,000 hectares.

Mkambati is unique in South Africa and should be on everyone's list of must-visit nature reserves.



Mkambati Falls

ONE OF TWO DOZEN WATERFALLS
IN THE WORLD THAT FLOW
DIRECTLY INTO THE OCEAN



MKAMBATI IS A BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

This south-eastern sector of South Africa falls within one of the world's 34 most important biodiversity "hotspots" – those areas that contain most of the earth's ecological richness yet are threatened. South Africa has three of these "hotspots" – the Cape Floristic region, the Succulent Karoo and the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany region where Mkambati is situated. Mkambati Nature Reserve is the cornerstone of conservation on the Wild Coast, and is one of the few places left on South Africa's east coast that is untarnished by the extensive development seen elsewhere.

The reserve takes its name from the Mkambati palm, one of the world's rarest and most localised plants. Mkambati is also the name of one of the clans in the area. The palm is one of 196 endemic plant species out of a total of 2,200 that grow in Pondoland. Mkambati is one of only

"Mkambati is the cornerstone of conservation on the Wild Coast."

two protected areas within the Pondoland hotspot.

The leached sandstone soils which occur in this part of the Wild Coast have contributed to the high diversity of plant life. The combination of these soils and the warm climate means many plants have had to adapt differently to plants elsewhere else along South Africa's east coast.

Several of the rivers in the reserve have their headwaters within Mkambati and are therefore clean and unpolluted, while hundreds of sparkling rock pools make for excellent swimming and exploring experiences.





Horseshoe Falls

1 OF AT LEAST 21
MAJOR WATERFALLS
FOUND IN MKAMBATI



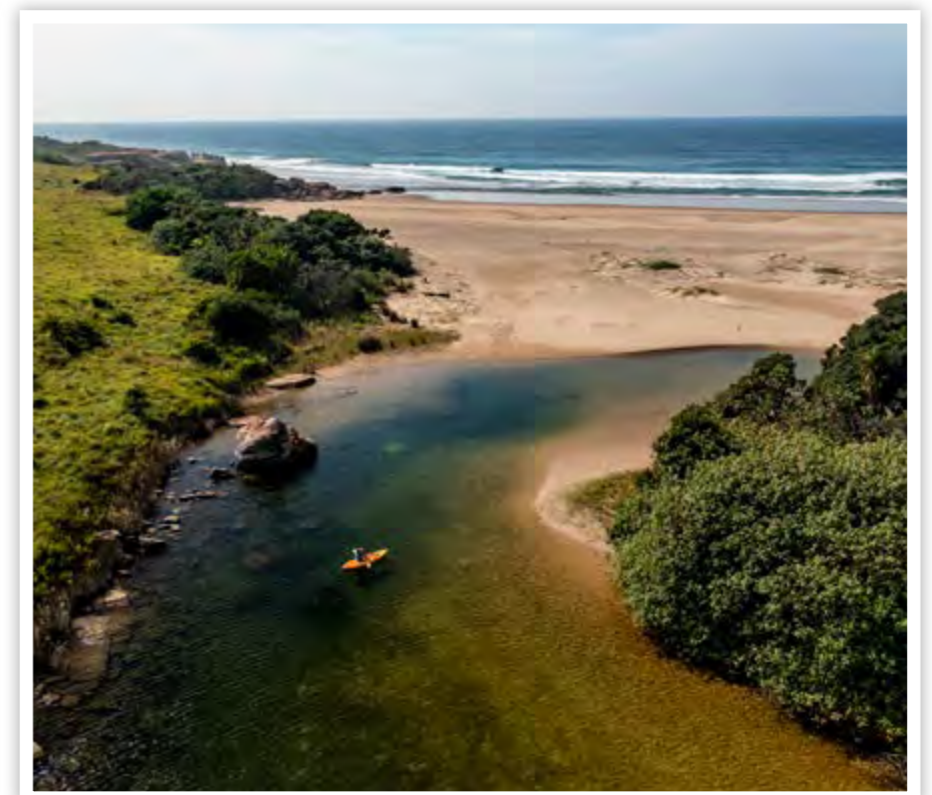


SPECTACULAR EXPERIENCES

Mkambati Nature Reserve is divided into two zones – the public zone to the south, and the more private northern area of about 5,000 hectares where GweGwe Lodge is located.

Access to the northern zone is primarily restricted to guests of the luxury boutique beach lodge and to the trans-Pondoland trailists. Visitors to the beach lodge are assured of exclusivity while enjoying Mkambati’s stunning northern beaches.

Mkambati is perfect for families and couples; indeed, for anyone longing for an unspoilt coastal destination and for those who wish to experience the authentic Wild Coast.





good fishing

SURROUNDED BY A MARINE
PROTECTED ZONE



HOW TO FILL YOUR DAYS

Mkambati today offers a wonderful and peaceful safe haven where friends and families can unwind in a pristine, beach, sea and “bush” environment.

Activities at Mkambati are varied and diverse and focus primarily on its uncrowded beaches, the year round warm sea water and the rolling hills inland. The coastline is complemented by some of the most stunning activities for the adrenalin enthusiast and for the more sedentary – mountain eBikes, walks and hikes; birding; botany-ing; rockpool and intertidal-zone exploring; swimming in crystal clear, unpolluted rivers, pools and lagoons; kayaking and canoeing; whale watching; climbing and abseiling and then offshore scuba, snorkeling and boating! The game drives are productive – the reserve is deliberately not “Big 5” so that one can enjoy one’s walks without wondering what stalks!

The Wild Coast’s seas are warm year round. Offshore is the Pondoland Marine Protected Area, the largest in South Africa that provides a sanctuary for many of South Africa’s coastal fishes that are often over-exploited elsewhere. In total there are around 800 fish species that can be found along the Wild Coast. Sea bream (poenskop, Scotsman and slinger) are endemic to South Africa’s shores and are found nowhere else in the world while species like musselcracker, galjoen, stumpnose, kingfish, yellowtail, tuna and grunter are all found here.

No fishing is allowed in the protected area with the exception of the area around GweGwe, which is consequently renowned for its superb angling. No wonder, as on either side of GweGwe is a thriving and well-protected marine reserve where fish life is abundant. Fishing at GweGwe will be strictly for providing for the catch-of-the-day.





go exploring...

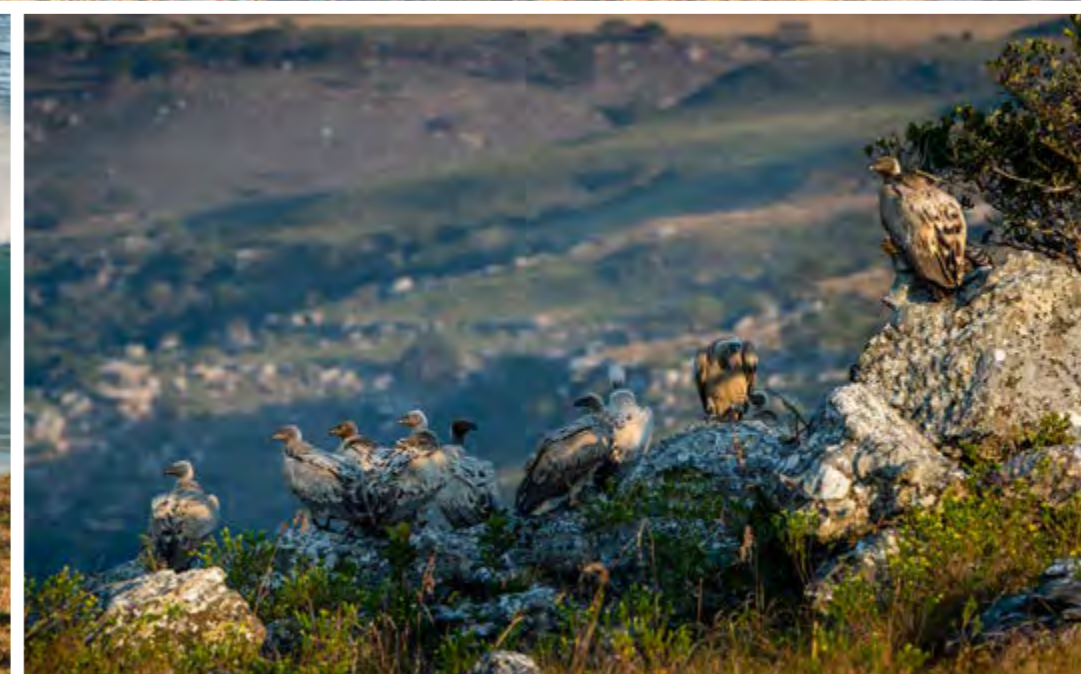
CANOEING ON THE MTENTU RIVER IS ONE
OF THE MANY ACTIVITIES ON OFFER











THE SARDINE RUN:

THE GREATEST SHOAL ON EARTH





THE SARDINE RUN:

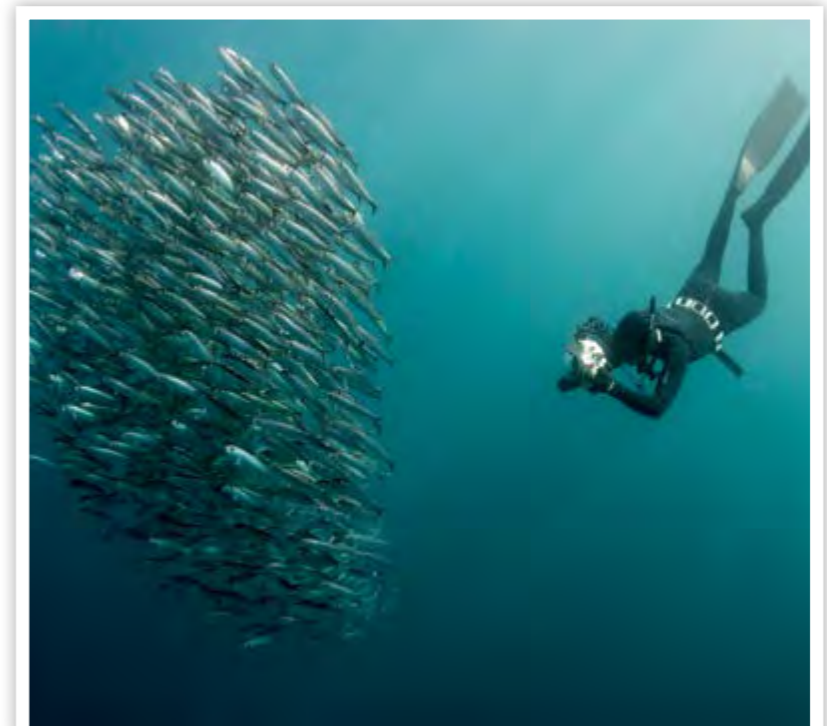
THE GREATEST SHOAL ON EARTH

The sardine run off southern Africa's shoreline occurs from June through July when billions of sardines spawn in the waters off the Agulhas Bank and then congregate and move northward along the east coast of South Africa. The best place to view the sardine run is between Port St Johns and Port Edward in June and July. Mkambati is right at the heart of the action! The sheer number of sardines (sometimes a shoal will be many kilometres long) creates a feeding frenzy along the coastline where every conceivable predator feasts on the migrating fish – both in the sea and from the air. Schools of thousands of dolphins, sharks and Bryde's whales are common at this time of year.

GweGwe is a registered boat launch site and our guests will be able to travel out to sea to view and photograph this spectacle, as well as snorkel and scuba dive in the



warm waters and at some of the offshore reefs. And maybe even a bit of offshore sightseeing, fishing for the pot (within the designated fishing area) and whale watching (if regulations permit).







OUR COMMUNITY PARTNER

THE MKAMBATHI LAND TRUST

In 1922 all the local people were forcefully moved out of their lands and resettled 20km to the interior of Mkambathi Reserve to make way for a leper hospital and colony that was established here. The facility later became a TB hospital. Then in 1977 the seaward portion of Mkambathi's rolling grasslands was proclaimed a provincial nature reserve and the old doctor's house, related facilities and the rondavels built at GweGwe became visitor accommodation.

At the turn of this century, community members of seven villages adjoining Mkambathi formed the Mkambathi Land Trust to represent the rights of 40,000 community members from these villages whose ancestors, the original inhabitants of Mkambathi, that were forcibly evicted. They

claimed for ownership of their lands under the Restitution of Land Rights Act. Today the Mkambathi Land Trust owns 18,000 hectares of both the Mkambathi Nature Reserve and the adjacent "TRACOR" grasslands.

The terms of the settlement agreement signed and agreed to by the community is that Mkambathi Nature Reserve will remain a provincial reserve in perpetuity, managed by Eastern Cape Parks. They earn 9% of the gross revenues of GweGwe as well as benefit from the jobs created and the community outreach programs. The first health outreach program took place in August 2024 when free eye testing was offered to all community members (along with free remedial glasses) and the promise of regular follow up visits.

The mobile clinic is in the advanced planning stages.

The selection and training of the all-women "Green Griffons" security and monitoring team is about to commence, inspired by Kruger's highly successful all-women Black Mamba anti-poaching and security unit. GweGwe has already been hiring and training local amaMpondo staff and outsourcing as much work as possible to the local community.

An organic vegetable farm is planned to be created on the outskirts of the reserve – and much more.



TOP LEFT: GweGwe's first Wild Shots Outreach's first conservation and life skills photography workshop. TOP RIGHT: The Mkambathi Land Trust's first venture out to sea from GweGwe.
 BOTTOM LEFT THREE: GweGwe's first community health outreach eye-testing program. BOTTOM RIGHT: The Mkambathi Land Trust, ECPTA and Mkambati Matters agreeing the boundary of the to-be-extended Mkambati Reserve.

GWEGWE LODGE





GWEGWE LODGE

For decades the rustic rondavels right on the coast at GweGwe have hosted many thousands of visitors to Mkambati. This spectacular site will now be transformed into a luxury boutique beach lodge that will open its doors in 2024.

GweGwe is the end of the road for saloon motor cars as the all-weather concrete track ends right here and goes no

further. From GweGwe onwards the tracks are only passable in the beach lodge's rugged 4x4 vehicles.

GweGwe's prime attraction is its wonderful beach and safe swimming lagoon. At GweGwe and a few hundred meters on either side is the only place where fishing is allowed anywhere within the Pondoland Marine Protected Area.

Just inland from GweGwe (and out of earshot) is the reserve's 1,000 meter airfield that will be able to accommodate aircraft up the size of 12-seater Cessna Caravans as well as Pilatus PC12s and some Beechcraft King Airs.

The style of the lodge and the villas is one of appropriate luxury that blends seamlessly with the environment.



GWEGWE LODGE

GweGwe Lodge offers a number of configurations – two-bedded suites; four-bedded family suites and a choice of three-, four- and five-bedroomed villas. Each of the beach lodge’s bedroom suites, no matter which option you select, will be spacious and have its own bath with a dramatic view, an indoor and an outdoor shower, sala and pool.

The beach lodge’s facilities will include a choice of dining areas – some indoors and some outdoors, with a further option to have meals served barefoot on the beach with sand between one’s toes. A snooker and games room, a pub,

“The boutique beach lodge will have world-class facilities, but still resemble a casual, coastal retreat.”

gym and a spa offering round off the facilities. One of the pubs will be more formal; the other a tropical-style casual “shipwreck” bar is on the rocks close to the beach.

The latest renewable green technologies will be used throughout the beach lodge footprint to ensure that the ecological and visual impacts will be minimal. All 220V electricity will be generated by solar and wind on site (with an emergency back-up generator) that will provide ample power all day and night ensuring that there will be no unsightly powerlines to spoil the natural aesthetics. The boutique beach lodge will have world-class facilities, but still resemble a casual, coastal retreat.



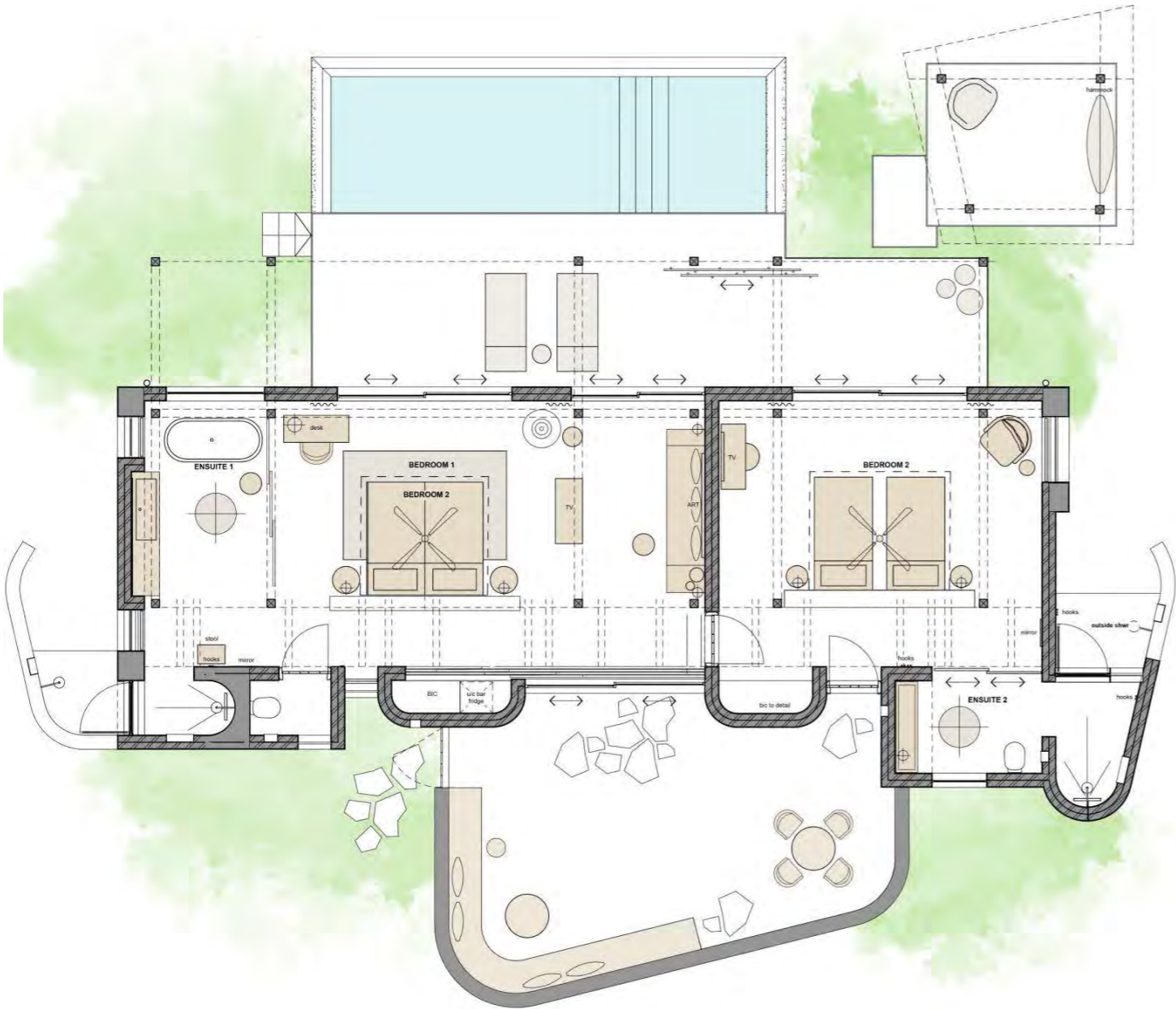
A bedroom suite at GweGwe Lodge.



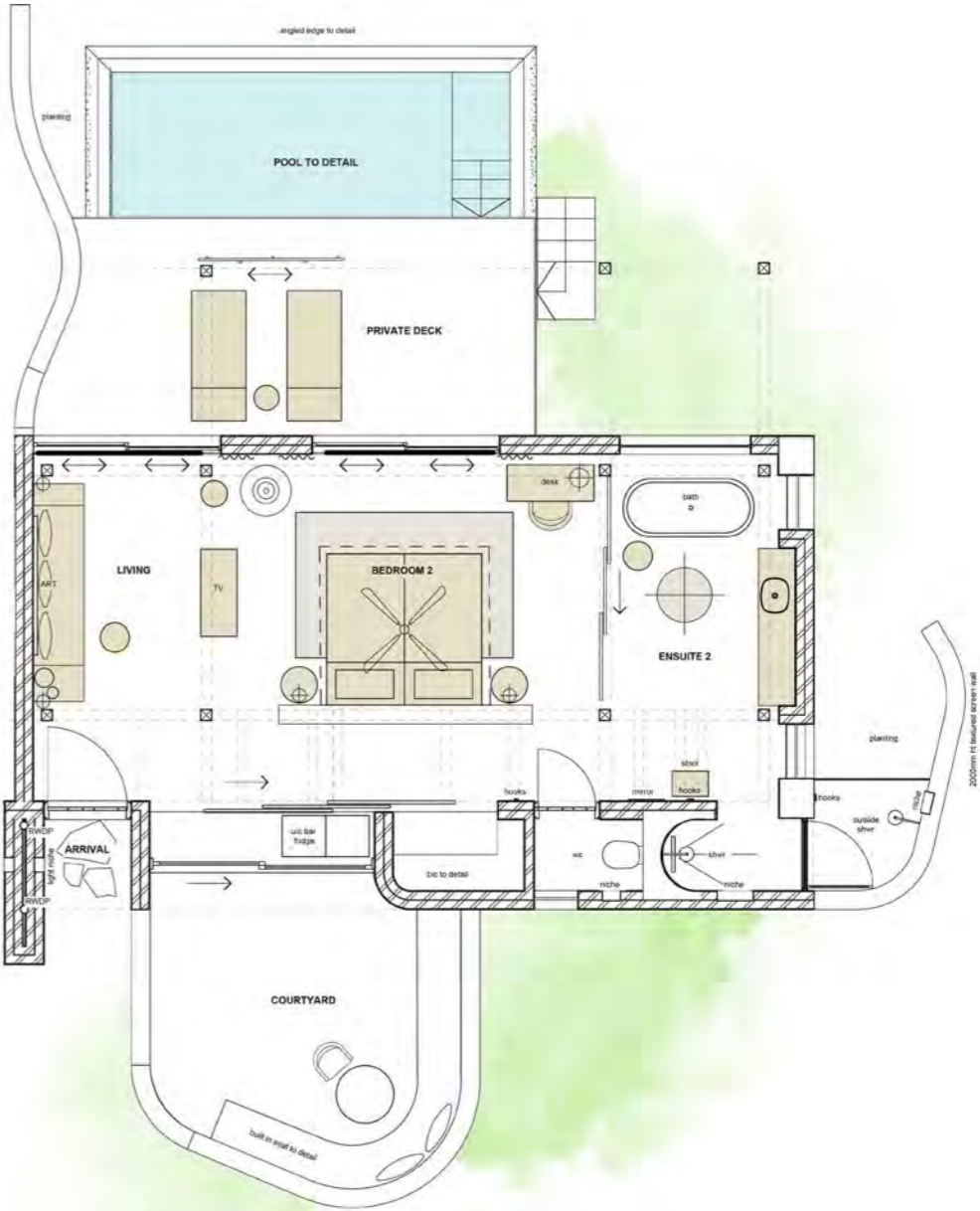


The main area at GweGwe Lodge.

FOUR-BEDDED FAMILY SUITE



TWO-BEDDED SUITE



An aerial photograph of a riverside facility. A large, dark green building with a corrugated metal roof is situated on a lush, green forested bank. The building has a covered outdoor area. In the foreground, a wide river flows, with several people kayaking. One person is on a yellow kayak, another on a blue kayak, and two others on a yellow and a blue kayak. The water is a deep blue-green color. In the background, a sandy beach and a rocky outcrop are visible. The overall scene is serene and natural.

RIVERSIDE

Tucked away into the forest besides GweGwe Lagoon is the Riverside facility that used to offer park accommodation for visitors to this part of Mkambati. It's the ideal bad-weather day area. The old thatched structures were beyond repair and have been knocked down to make way for GweGwe's new leisure centre that will include a pizza bar and restaurant, TV, kiddies club, as well as housing our bikes and kayaks. There is also a massage spa in the forest and a raised platform gym overlooking the lagoon.

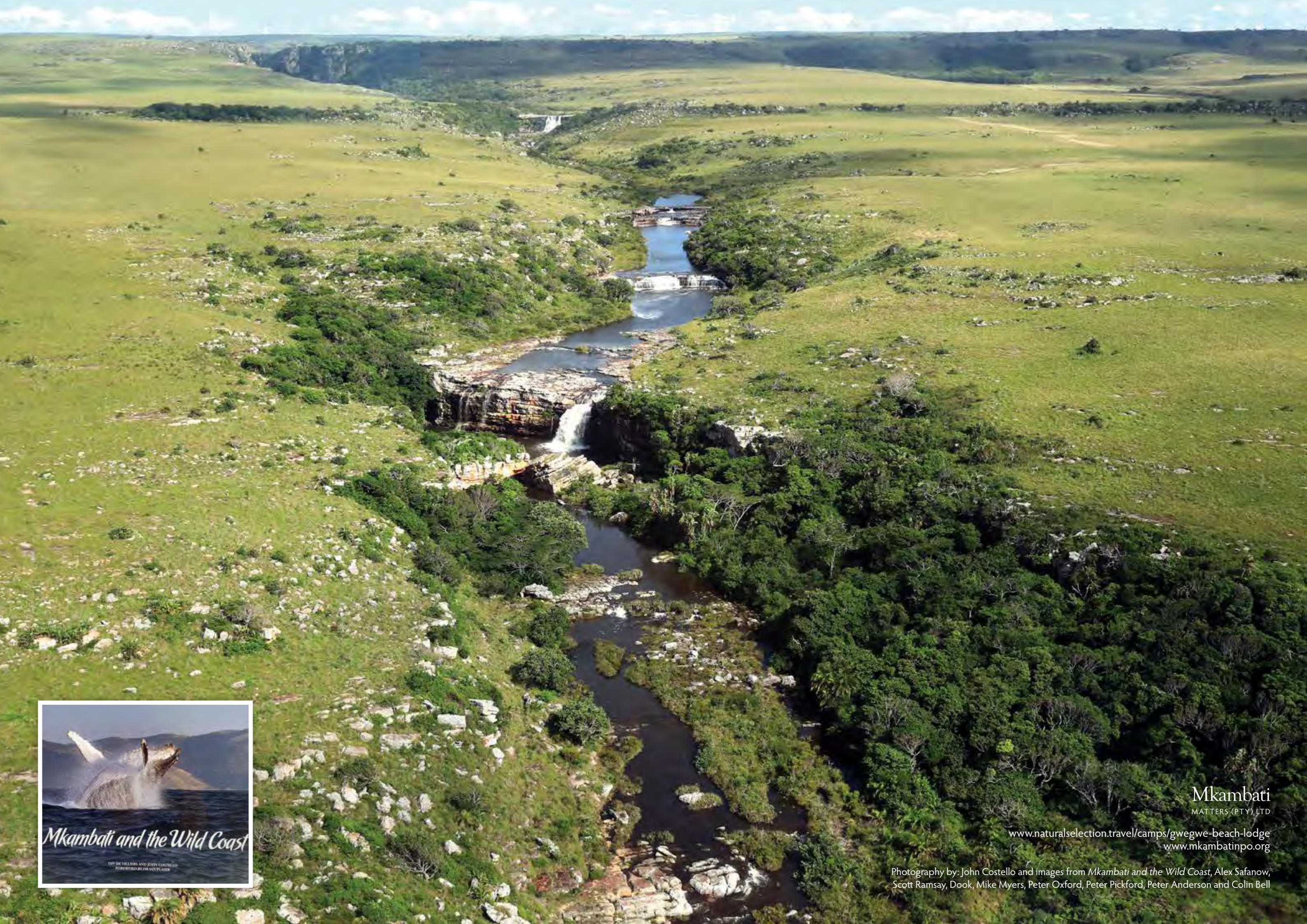




One of the more adventurous ways to arrive at GweGwe from Port Edward.







Mkambati
MATTERS (PTY) LTD

www.naturalselection.travel/camps/gwegwe-beach-lodge
www.mkambatinpo.org

Photography by: John Costello and images from *Mkambati and the Wild Coast*, Alex Safanow, Scott Ramsay, Dook, Mike Myers, Peter Oxford, Peter Pickford, Peter Anderson and Colin Bell