



TOWN & COUNTRY

DECEMBER 2022/JANUARY 2023

CHARLOTTE
CASIRAGHI
Royal with a Cause

HOLIDAY GIFTS
"We've Got a Guy"

The Myth of the
GOOD FAMILY

Have We
Overdosed on
FUN?
Self-Care for Sybarites

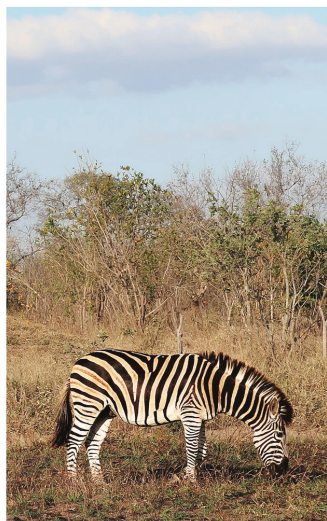
Let's All
Just Move to
MADRID



Caution!
Throw It to
the Wind
How to Celebrate Now



WELL, ISN'T THAT SPECIAL?



From left: A zebra seen in the wild; the writer on safari at Tswalu; a view of the private pool at a villa at Cheetah Plains, South Africa.



When the Big Five Aren't Enough

Anyone can spot a dazzle of zebras. For a truly unforgettable safari, you've got to personalize the wild.

BY ADAM RATHE

Of all the gifts I received for my bar mitzvah, there's only one I remember well. Surely there were checks in multiples of \$18—a number considered to be good luck—and whatever questionable treasures a 13-year-old might have desired in the mid-1990s, but those all fade into the background of the gift. My godmother, a larger-than-life character who insisted on being called “Mamie,” in a nod to her cinematic model, took me to Greece.

Today I might question the wisdom of choosing to trek internationally with a teenager, but more than that, I've been left with a lasting lesson: Nothing makes a better gift than travel.

Nearly three decades after Mamie and I tromped across Athens, wandered through the churches of Tinos, and got into a minor fender bender on Mykonos (“Don't you dare tell your father,” I can still hear her hissing), I got the chance to steal her move.

My own husband has always wanted to go on safari, but in the 13 years we've been together, while we've traveled far and wide, it stayed on the wish list as other vacations came and went. Last summer, after more than two years spent more or less at home and with a big birthday on the horizon, the time finally felt right.

But where to begin? We knew there were certain things that were musts: a stay at Ellerman House in Cape Town; a visit to Boulders Beach, where African penguins run wild; a safari someplace where we could see the Big Five animals but not sleep in tents (we don't go in for glamping). But we had no idea how to bring them together into a cohesive adventure. That's where Elizabeth Gordon, the co-founder and CEO of Extraordinary Journeys (extraordinaryjourneys.com), came in. “A lot of people come to us and say, ‘We want to go on a trip,’” Gordon tells me. “Our job is trying to figure out why.”

To begin the process of truly personalizing our trip, we had a series of phone and Zoom calls with Gordon, explaining the way we like to travel, from the sorts of hotels we prefer to the kinds of meals we like to eat and how we spend our downtime. She asked questions about the places we'd been, the experiences we'd had, and what we couldn't come back to the U.S. without having experienced. She admitted later that she also did some light Instagram stalking to get a sense of who she was dealing with.

“The first thing we need to do is understand where a person is coming from and what excites them,” she says. “Anyone can say they want to go on a safari, but that means different things to different people. A lot of it is talking to people and understanding them—where do they live, what do they like to do? You try to start getting a picture of what a client will want.”

From the minute we landed in Cape Town, it was obvious that her picture was clear. The trip hadn't been personalized to be just what we wanted but to be what she knew we'd never forget.

Take our visit to Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town's museum of contemporary art. We walked through the collection with Talita Swarts,



MOMENTS OF WOW

SUSAN FALES-HILL, producer and author “The creation of two new American Ballet Theatre productions, *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Lifted*, that hold the promise of what ballet can be in the 21st century. Both prove that classic need not mean exclusionary.”

GARRETT MUNCE (AFRICA TRAVEL); RUSSELM KENTON/GUARDIAN/EYE/REDOUX (BALLET)

a tour guide who specializes in art and works extensively with Ellerman House's own stunning in-house collection. What could have ended in the gift shop became something else. A few texts were sent, and suddenly we'd been invited into the Christopher Moller Gallery, where we drank coffee as a shipment of new paintings was being unpacked. From there we hopped over to the Woodstock neighborhood and the loft of artist Matthew Hindley, who unrolled canvases for us and sat to chat about his work as if we were all old friends.

Almost everything in Cape Town had that element of surprise. We knew Ellerman House (ELLERMAN.CO.ZA) was a bucket list hotel with million-dollar views and a perfect blend of elegance and equanimity, but we didn't expect the massages upon arrival to be brilliant tonics for jet lag. We had told Gordon that Boulders Beach was a must but never expected to arrive there by helicopter. We had mentioned a fondness for coffee but were shocked to be brought to travel guru Ozzy Yerlikaya's countryside cottage, where we had an alfresco lunch prepared by *Master Chef South Africa* alum Jade de Waal and espresso pulled by champion barista Winston Douglas Thomas. This feeling of wonder would stay with us in Cape Town and beyond.

Next we flew to Cheetah Plains (CHEETAHPLAINS.COM), a private game reserve in Sabi Sand that has the look of a summer colony designed by Richard Serra, where everything seemed planned just for us. Each

“If someone doesn't know better, they'll pick what's most expensive, not the right trip.”

party at the property has its own villa, guestrooms, swimming pool, and staff, including cooks and a spa specialist, giving the feeling that there's no one else staying on-site. House iPhones come preloaded with WhatsApp to text with the staff, each meal is planned with the guests for a completely customized culinary experience, and twice-daily game drives, which we took with our masterful guide, Civilized Ngwenya, were private and designed to maximize our time at the property. Neither Gordon nor our formidable house manager, Clementine Silinda, could promise we'd see all of the animals on our wish list, but they didn't need to. Over the course of our stay we spotted leopards and elephants, and on one memorable night we sped through the brush chasing a lion whose attempts to avoid detection were no match for Civ's skill. It was one of the most exciting drives of my life.

From there we flew north to Tswalu (TSWALU.COM), a private game reserve in the Kalahari ecosystem, where we stayed at Motse, one of the two camps on-site. While the property had a more communal feel—guests congregated for meals and milled about a main lodge, making for a *White Lotus* vibe—there was [CONTINUED ON PAGE 156]



WHEN YOU PAGE A PARTY SHRINK

Celebration expert Darcy Miller divulges her festive commandments. ILLUSTRATION BY DARCY MILLER

1 DO YOU “Instead of looking out, look in for inspiration,” says Darcy Miller, who has fashioned her party planning expertise and artistic talent (see above) into Celebration Expert, a new bespoke consulting service in which she shares ideas, referrals, and top secret sources. “Parties shouldn't be all about you, but they should reflect you.”

2 PICK A PALETTE “Color is always a good thing to grab on to,” Miller says, from the icing on the cake to the dress code. “Even if you just tell everyone to come in gold, that alone makes it festive,” she says. “Your friends might kill you, but at least it sets the mood.”

3 MIND THE LITTLE THINGS “A memorable celebration isn't about how much money you spend,” Miller says. “It's about being thoughtful.” Add layers of personal and interactive touches, whether it's a champagne bar lined with DIY accoutrements like candies and strawberries, or a suite of parlor games to get people bonding.

4 THROW IN SURPRISES Consider a musical guest—but again, no need to go crazy. “It doesn't have to mean, like, Harry Styles coming out to sing.”

5 OR JUST HIRE HER You're welcome: CELEBRATE@DARCYMILLERDESIGNS.COM



MOMENTS OF WOW

ADAM CHARLAP HYMAN, designer “Every time I'm in Venice I visit the shop of Bruno Amadi. It's a small cabinet of curiosities all rendered in glass, though he won't necessarily sell what you have your eye on. There was a life-size praying mantis I've admired for 10 years that he was finally willing to part with. I nearly died and went to heaven.”



PRIVATE HISTORY

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 154] *GQ Turkey* (who is not related to this Koç family), has been tracking the evolution of both businesses. One exalts the socializing aspect of Turkish delights, the other is Caroline's "attempt to redefine this deep history and the culture of textiles that existed since the Ottoman era" but fell out of favor as national habits changed. Both, he notes, "are carefully calculated for the global market." (Selamlıque products are available in New York at the Met Store as part of the Heirloom Project for the Islamic Wing's 10th anniversary.)

At Caroline's house, the wine and cigarettes add up, and the night is drawing to a close. Bruno, her daughter's goldendoodle, barks near the garden's edge, chasing lizards or, possibly, feral cats.

"What do you think of Dr. Oz?" Caroline asks me in her aristocratic Turco-Euro drawl, referring to the Turkish-American television personality running for senate in Pennsylvania. She has been watching the race with interest. "He did my late husband's bypass. He was a very good doctor at the time, and then he met Oprah and became a celebrity. Maybe going back to medicine is difficult. I follow him on Instagram and, knowing him personally, all these poses with the weapons..." She pauses. "It's very surprising."

Today's politics and the bloody reality of international conflict are clearly on her mind; it wasn't that long ago that the Russians and Ukrainians met at Erdoğan's palace for an unsuccessful peace summit. Despite it all, Caroline remains an idealist with a long view of things. "You should believe in something," she says. We're sitting on her pool deck, and the Bosphorus, congested with megayachts and cargo ships during the day, is now quiet. She asks me if I've read *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. The work of the Israeli philosopher Yuval Harari has resonated with her, which is perhaps understandable for someone living in a city that straddles two continents and stretches back two millennia.

"Boundaries are unimportant," she says. "We need to realize we are citizens of the world." **T&C**



WHEN IT'S MADE FOR YOU

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 124] and she commissioned her to conceive a new series. The embroideries were then produced by the Chanakya School of Craft in Mumbai, which Chiuri has long supported. Instead of the razzle-dazzle so often associated with couture, the fluid gentleness of the lineup, with its lavish yet calm laces; intricate patterns in soft, natural hues, often tone-on-tone; and numerous references to the Tree of Life (which, Chiuri notes, registers globally) played as an intentional antidote to the fraught geopolitical moment.

"I believe that for a long time fashion was a territory only for fun, only to enjoy," Chiuri tells me. "We didn't see all the different aspects that touch fashion." Which is not to say that Chiuri downplays the enjoyment factor at a time when there is so little big-picture joy. If a new frock can bring a smile, however fleeting, why not? That sensation is surely heightened for couture clients, for whom the process is as important as the final product. Dior's customers often begin in pursuit of an event dress and end up with wardrobe staples as well.

"We help them be organized for their lives," Chiuri says. "They really appreciate it. They know that there is someone to take care of you, that can realize something specific for you."

At Dior that something specific is not limited to Chiuri's work. She shares the remarkable (at least to this writer) detail that a client can order a look from one of the maison's previous couturiers—from her immediate predecessor, Raf Simons, right back to the house founder. The only caveat: The look will be redone exactly, no changes allowed, to preserve its integrity.

Realizing an archival piece can take longer than a current one, but given Dior's creative and financial resources, nothing is beyond possibility—even a reissue of a fabric from long ago. In such cases a look can take as much as six months to complete. But whatever the challenges, the ateliers will find a way to make it work, because, Chiuri says, "this is what it means to be couture." **T&C**



WHEN THE BIG FIVE...

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 129] no sense of embarking on a cookie-cutter adventure. Our guide, Juan Venter, brought us to walk among habituated meerkats, raced to get next to lions napping beside the remains of their just-devoured lunch, and let us wander through the studio of artist-in-residence Hedwig Barry. On our last night we ate at Klein Jan, chef Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen's absurdly elegant eatery hidden in plain sight. Guests walk into what looks like a small house in the sand and, after descending a spiral staircase, find themselves in a dining room as beautifully appointed as any I've ever seen, one that serves a locally procured tasting menu of dishes. Once again, what we expected didn't disappoint, but it was what we never knew we wanted that made the greatest impression.

"When it comes to travel, surprises are fun," Gordon says. "I love it when I've picked up on something about someone and am able to offer it without them knowing. I have no problem doing something simple for very fancy clients if the experience is worth having. If someone doesn't know better, they'll just pick what's most expensive, and that's not always the right trip."

Nothing illustrates her point better than the final leg of our journey, when we landed in Johannesburg for a day of sightseeing. We walked through Constitution Hill, the former prison turned museum, with art maven Carole Brown, who helped build the site's collection, and we skipped the tourist traps to buy gifts at a store recommended by our tour guide, a native Joburger. Best of all, we visited the Pantry, an upscale food shop and boutique attached to a gas station that is run by restaurateurs David Higgs and Gary Kyriacou; I bought my favorite souvenirs there. It was odd to be in a convenience store halfway around the world buzzing with excitement, but once again, what was unexpected turned out to be just right.

This kind of personalized adventure wasn't only incredible to go on, it was that much more gratifying to give. "This has been the greatest trip of my life," my husband told me the night before we left South Africa. Then he took a beat. "Where are we going next?" **T&C**