

The Travel Report

BY

LESLIE SWANSON **travel**

VOLUME I

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ON SAFARI:

Singita Pamushana
Lodge in Zimbabwe

JUST BACK:

The Ferdman
Family Holiday
Kenya & Tanzania

TOURISM FOR GOOD:

JASON TURNER
General Manager
Malilangwe Trust

WHY YOU

Should Start
Traveling With
Your Kids Early

Growing up, my family traveled extensively to places off the grid and hard to pronounce. From the backwaters of India to Iguazu Falls, each experience molded my perspective and inspired me to discover the world off-the-beaten-path through the eyes of people that make our planet so unique.

It is thrilling to me to work with so many travelers today who are interested in enriching experiences that take them to beautiful, remote places, to hotels with exceptional service, and to places where they can connect with the people that live there. Regardless of destination, some of the most unique trips start with a connection.

Travel is all about stories and I am thrilled to share a few with you here. In the inaugural issue of The Travel Report, we hear from passionate travelers, conservationists, and hoteliers about the experiences, destinations, and efforts that make travel today more meaningful (and important!) than ever.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you and your family. I look forward to many adventures ahead!

Leslie Swanson



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Why You Should Start Traveling With Your Kids Early

Virtuoso's Director of Sustainability has some advice for seeing the world with small children:

Start early & go often

BY COSTAS CHRIST

Virtuoso Director of Sustainability

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For most parents with very young children, traveling usually means an interstate road trip to visit the grandparents. It's a worthy undertaking, no doubt, but my wife and I were already global wanderers when we decided to start a family 30 years ago. "Let's just bring them along with us," Sally said.

And so we did. Our first family journey was to the Seychelles, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean. Our oldest son, Tom, was 2, and we'd just had our second boy, Nick, who was 6 weeks old. There, amid seagrass beds with hawksbill turtles swimming by and rainbows of fish darting among bright corals, I taught Tom how to snorkel, a father-son bonding experience. While we practiced how to clear a dive mask, Sally dangled Nick's feet in the warm tropical water, causing gurgles of delight. (He remains an avid ocean lover to this day.)

A wildlife safari came next, with eco-outfitter Conservation Corporation Africa, today known as andBeyond. Our boys were 3 and 5 when we announced our plans to startled coworkers. "You're taking your kids ... on safari? Are you serious?!" was the most common response. We were, and that adventure took us to some of the world's most renowned ecolodges and private game reserves, including South Africa's Londolozi, Ngala, and Phinda. We could hardly get enough of watching elephants take dust baths and searching for "magical kudus" – the name our kids spontaneously gave these majestic antelopes with their long spiraling horns.

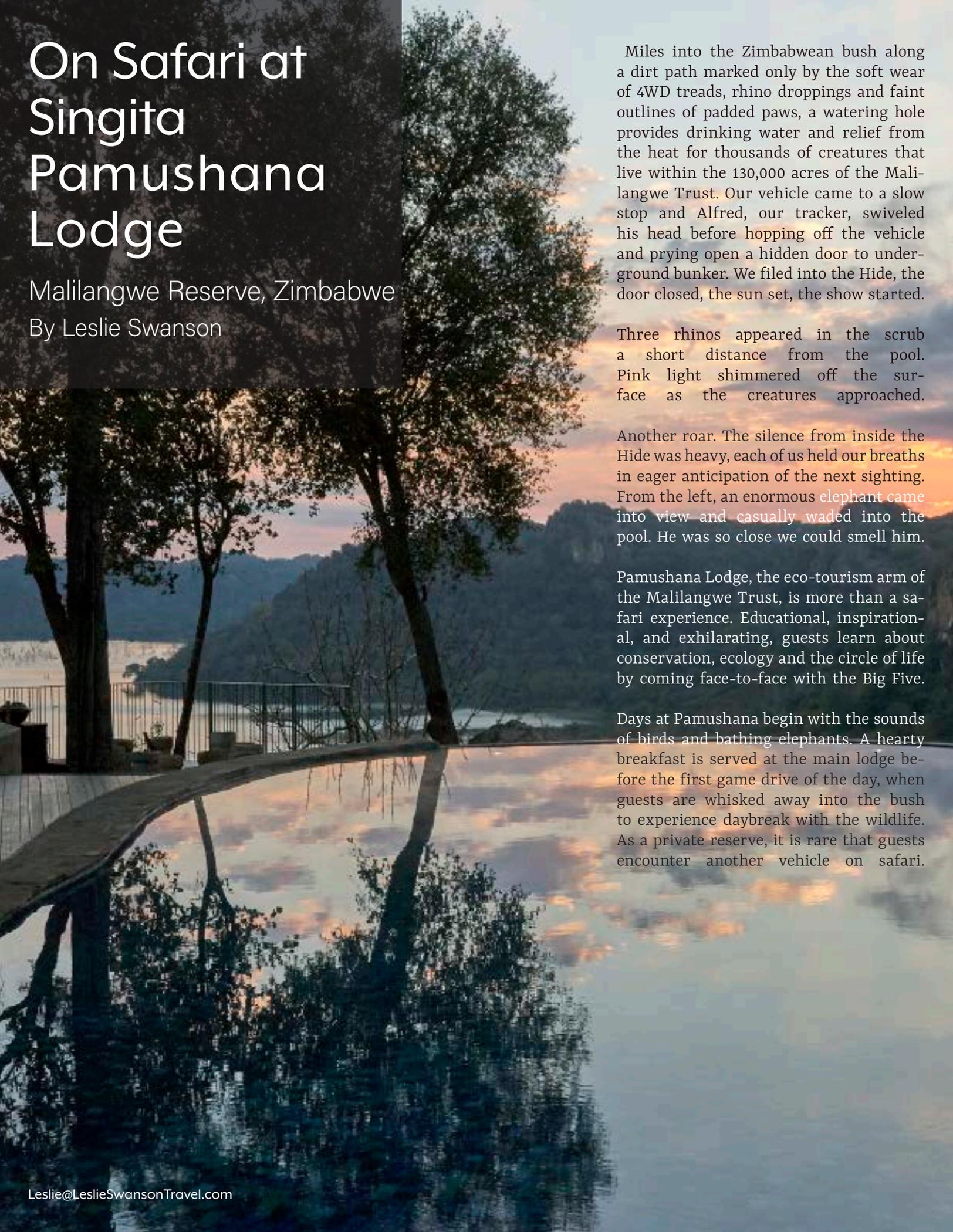
Our explorations expanded to Borneo, Belize, Oman, and, closer to home, the rocky coast of Maine, where we helped pick organic herbs for the chef at Inn By The Sea while learning about native bee pollination.

In Oman's capital of Muscat, we met a local family who invited us to join them for lunch in their home. Seated on a carpet of woven palm fronds, we feasted on curried fish, grilled squid, and mountains of coconut rice – eating with our hands, to the delight of our kids.

That meal had a lasting impact. Sally and I didn't expect – when Tom was in college, he announced that he was going to Oman on a semester-abroad program. "It was my favorite country we visited," he told us. And that African safari? Turns out, it ignited his passion for nature and ultimately led him to pursue a career that includes working as a consultant in sustainable tourism. For Nick, our family's adventures along the Belize Barrier Reef led him to become a certified scuba diver, eager to explore the marine world.

What did we learn? So much – including that children are never too young to travel. What's more, early journeys, whether close to home or across the globe, teach lessons in cultural exchange and sustainability that not only expand kids' worldview, but also shape their future passions and career paths. Would we do it all again? Absolutely. These days, though, we're more likely to ask our two globetrotters to please take us along.



A scenic view of a lodge at sunset. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and blues. In the foreground, a large, dark tree stands on the left, its reflection clearly visible in a calm pool of water. The pool also reflects the sky and the surrounding landscape. In the background, a fence and more trees are visible, suggesting a well-maintained lodge area. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

On Safari at Singita Pamushana Lodge

Malilangwe Reserve, Zimbabwe

By Leslie Swanson

Miles into the Zimbabwean bush along a dirt path marked only by the soft wear of 4WD treads, rhino droppings and faint outlines of padded paws, a watering hole provides drinking water and relief from the heat for thousands of creatures that live within the 130,000 acres of the Malilangwe Trust. Our vehicle came to a slow stop and Alfred, our tracker, swiveled his head before hopping off the vehicle and prying open a hidden door to underground bunker. We filed into the Hide, the door closed, the sun set, the show started.

Three rhinos appeared in the scrub a short distance from the pool. Pink light shimmered off the surface as the creatures approached.

Another roar. The silence from inside the Hide was heavy, each of us held our breaths in eager anticipation of the next sighting. From the left, an enormous elephant came into view and casually waded into the pool. He was so close we could smell him.

Pamushana Lodge, the eco-tourism arm of the Malilangwe Trust, is more than a safari experience. Educational, inspirational, and exhilarating, guests learn about conservation, ecology and the circle of life by coming face-to-face with the Big Five.

Days at Pamushana begin with the sounds of birds and bathing elephants. A hearty breakfast is served at the main lodge before the first game drive of the day, when guests are whisked away into the bush to experience daybreak with the wildlife. As a private reserve, it is rare that guests encounter another vehicle on safari.

In the evenings, guests wrap up an exhilarating day of wildlife and discovery with “sundowners”—cocktails and snacks- in the bush. Back at the lodge, guests and families prepare for dinner. Dining in the bush by tea lights under the stars is a quintessential experience at Pamushana, where the lodge’s exceptional food and beverage team prepares a full, multi-course dinner for guests amongst the wildlife—ensuring each traveler experiences the magic of the reserve.

A safari is only ever as good as the guides who eat, sleep, and breathe the bush and Pamushana has some of the best. Game trackers and guides become family and share intimate knowledge and deep understanding of the unique ecology, culture and wildlife that call the Malilangwe Trust home. From bush walks and game drives to sundowner cruises and fishing expeditions, Pamushana’s guides have their fingers on the pulse of the local wildlife and know where the lion prides like to nap with their young...and where to cast your line to avoid the crocs!

An African safari is every traveler’s dream and Pamushana Lodge offers one of the most meaningful, educational, and magical travel experiences for couples and families alike. Getting to Pamushana takes time, but is so worth it. The lodge can be accessed by private air charter directly to the property or by taking a regularly scheduled air service from Johannesburg or Victoria Falls—making the property the perfect accompaniment to a safari including Victoria Falls or South Africa.



Just Back: The Ferdman Family Safari

The Ferdman Family traveled to Kenya and Tanzania to celebrate the holidays in December.



“Kenya was amazing! Mara Bushtops Camps was more than we hoped it would be. Our guides provided excellent sightings of animals and took such good care to accommodate our every need.

Visiting the Maasai village in Tanzania and interacting with the Maasai people, singing with the children in their school and being invited into one of their homes was a highlight of our trip! This trip is a lifelong memory!”

-Shantel Ferdman

Tourism For Good: Q&A with Jason Turner

Tourism General Manager,
Malilangwe Trust

A safari experience is so much more than wildlife and setting—many of the memories we make are thanks to the passionate people who work tirelessly to protect and preserve, to maintain and educate, and to consistently welcome guests with the warmth of a long lost friend.

In this issue of The Travel Report, we catch up with Jason Turner, Tourism General Manager of the Malilangwe Trust, and an integral role of Singita Pamushana's efforts. Jason has been with Singita for over 20 years and in 2006 had the opportunity to return to his homeland to lead efforts to build the tourism segment of The Malilangwe Trust at Pamushana.

Read on to learn more about the unique nature of the Lodge, its heritage of conservation, and Jason's wild encounter with a resident leopard!



Singita Pamushana sits in the heart of the Malilangwe Trust. How does being part of the Malilangwe Trust impact the lodge and the guest experience?

The Malilangwe Trust was formed in 1994 as a purely non-profit organization whose purpose and mission lies solely in conservation and community development. It wasn't until 1998 that The Trust decided to venture into commercial eco-tourism as a means to help sustain its efforts in conservation and community development. As such, it is part of our fabric...and enables the team at Singita Pamushana to strive to deliver at the highest level with the one sole purpose in the back of our mind being to

sustain The Malilangwe Trust's mission. The pride that we as a team have as a result of the successes of our conservation and community development efforts is tangible and I believe is picked up by our guests in how we deliver their experience. It is incredibly humbling to witness the results of our conservation and community development teams on the ground.

What are a couple of the achievements you and your team are most proud of?

When I started here in 2007 we had roughly 300 days in the year without a single guest. Then, when we did have guests, trying to achieve the Singita standards after such a

long period of inactivity in the lodge felt impossible. Despite these challenges our guest feedback on the staff in particular has always been fantastic. Today, we have very few days in the year without guests and yet despite the operation being much busier and therefore challenging in different ways, the guest feedback on our staff is consistently great. Even with the most amazing views you could wish for, incredible décor and scrumptious food offerings what our guests truly value is how they are made to feel by our team. This makes us all proud beyond description.

Our track record in conserving, in particular, our rhino population is a very close second in terms of what we are most proud of. Whilst I and my team at Singita Pamushana cannot claim direct responsibility for this, as

this mantle falls squarely on the shoulders of the men and women who are dedicated and committed to the protection of our wildlife, it motivates us hugely to continue with our efforts to attract as many guests as possible to experience the beauty and wonder of this place in order to help sustain The Trust.

How has tourism changed since and where do you see sustainability and conservation playing into that narrative?

Singita Pamushana was named Global Winner of the 'Tourism for Tomorrow Award' in the conservation category at the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) awards in 2011. It is apparent that the guests traveling today are more aligned with our values than ever before. More of our guests are as conscious of their impact on the planet as we are. It is our responsibility to help educate our guests and to share with them the critical importance of conservation of our natural world. Dr. Bruce Clegg, who is our resident Ecologist at The Malilangwe Trust, sums it up eloquently where he says:

"There are many pragmatic arguments for why conservation is critically important, after all, as Stuart Udall famously said, "Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife are in fact plans to protect man". However, there is more to conservation than cold practicality. Wild places are powerfully spiritual and, as a result, they are capable of generating human emotions rarely felt in man-made environments. At Malilangwe we protect wild ecosystems because we believe

that they are essential for both the physical survival and spiritual well-being of people."

Pamushana is home to a wide range of wildlife, including what is commonly referred to as the "Big Five." What is your most memorable encounter with wildlife residents at Pamushana?

Singita Pamushana Lodge is situated up on a sandstone rocky outcrop in the Hills of Malilangwe and as such we have a birds-eye view of the dam and wilderness below stretching out into the distant far hills of the Gonarezhou National Park to our south. Whilst there have been numerous wildlife encounters I have experienced on foot with our guides, some of which have gotten the adrenalin flowing more than others, my most memorable encounter at the lodge itself has to be sitting in my office when Rueben, our Amakeri (Greater) at the time, was shouting up at me in a whisper as loudly as he could.

It was around noon, he was at the front desk which has a perfect view of the infinity edge pool and the hills beyond the dam right in front of him. He could hardly speak properly – it sounded as if he was being strangled at one point. I shot downstairs to see what was wrong with him and realized it was his excitement in that he was pointing at the most majestic leopard silently and gracefully slinking off the edge of the deck into the ironwood forest below. I know every animal has its perfect place in the bush but

seeing a leopard in the middle of the day is always such a special experience for me.

What is most exciting about Pamushana Lodge in the coming year?

In 2018 we closed the main lodge and rooms to complete a major redesign of the lodge. The old vibrant colors of the lodge were replaced with majestic but muted tones reflecting these original references to the local Shangaan culture, artfully combined with contemporary forms and styles inspired by these African patterns and shapes. The result is something far beyond what we imagined at the start of the project and now in 2019 we are completing a similar redesign of the 5-bedroom Singita Private Villa offering to elevate it to a new level of comfort for our guests. The villa comes with a private chef, guide and butler to ensure a completely tailored experience for those guests wanting ultimate privacy to enable them to spend quality time reconnecting with friends and family in an uninterrupted manner. The villa opens in late June and I cannot wait to see how well it is received by future guests.... I'm already very envious of anyone who has the chance to stay there.

Jason lives on-site at Singita Pamushana Lodge with his wife and two boys. For more information about Singita Pamushana Lodge, The Malilangwe Trust, or to plan a visit, contact me at Leslie@LeslieSwansonTravel.com.



Running Wild: The Serengeti Girls Run 2019

Experiencing the magic of the Serengeti plains on foot is a privilege few will ever be able to appreciate, and the sheer joy exhibited by the participants of last year's inaugural Serengeti Girls Run – as well as their camaraderie, perseverance and passion – inspired this year's follow-up event in October.



The run is an all-women event that forms part of Singita's signature collection of conservation safaris called 'Safaris With A Purpose', and is held in partnership with the Grumeti Fund to support the empowerment of girls and women in rural Tanzania. This year will see double the amount of runners participate in the once-in-a-lifetime adventure that's set in one of the most iconic wilderness areas in Africa, covering 21km daily over three days.

The multi-stage event invites runners of all levels to cross the vast plains in Singita's private concession in the western corridor of the Serengeti, where they'll encounter an abundance of wild-

life and breathtaking scenery at every turn. The participants will be accompanied by expertly trained and highly experienced anti-poaching scouts from the Grumeti Fund, who'll keep an eye out for curious animals, while a support team in a shadow vehicle will be on hand to take care of their safety and comfort.

Tired legs and sore muscles will soon be forgotten once the participants kick off their shoes after their daily runs and retire to the event's home base, Singita Sabora Tented Camp. This intimate 1920s-style explorer's camp embodies the magic of a bygone era and features everything from opulent chandeliers and Persian rugs

to four-poster beds and bowls filled with fresh roses. It provides the perfect space to soothe and restore runners for the next leg of their adventure.

The exclusive, purpose-driven experience is aimed at raising funds for empowerment programmes for girls and women, which are specifically focused on providing opportunities for women to become leaders in conservation. Each contribution will assist in funding numerous non-profit programmes including scholarships for local girls in secondary school, vocational studies, university; internships in enterprise development; and environmental education.

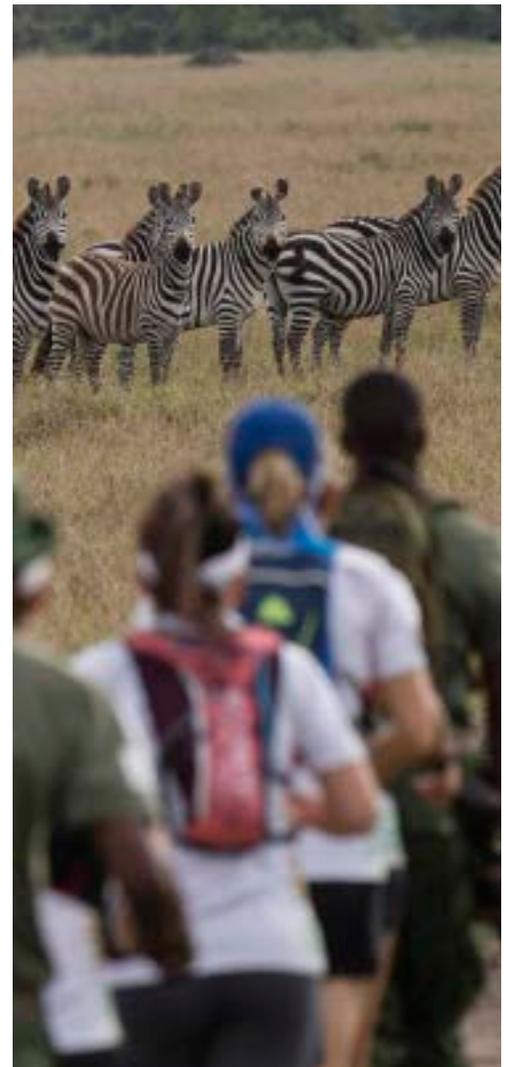
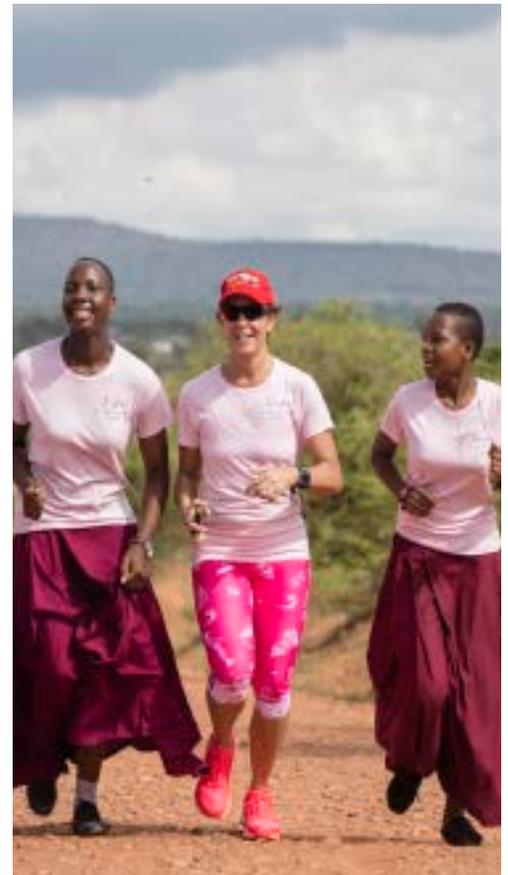
One of the highlights of the experience is that it will offer participants various opportunities to engage with the women and girls who benefit from these programmes. The day after their arrival, guests can join girls from the local community on a short 4km fun run, followed by a career fair, where they can share their own inspiring stories with hundreds of girls from rural villages who have big dreams of their own.

During the six-day itinerary, the participants' will also visit the Grumeti Fund's Environmental Education Center, which hosts week-long, residential courses for local students on the critical role we all play in minimising our

impact on the Earth's limited resources; and meet the Fund's anti-poaching team at the Joint Operations Centre to find out more about how they preserve and protect the region's critical ecosystem.

The Serengeti Girls Run 2019 takes place from October 25-30 and the package includes five nights full board at Singita Sabora Tented Camp in Singita Grumeti in Tanzania.

For more information please contact Leslie@LeslieSwansonTravel.com





Wildlife Beyond Africa

The fun doesn't stop after Africa

Alaskan Wilderness Adventure

Alaska represents the Last Frontier of the American West and is filled with adventure, wildlife, and breathtakingly beautiful views. Adventurers of all kinds can track wild black and brown bears between hikes and explorations of some of Alaska's most dramatic glaciers. From the vantage point of a helicopter, guests witness bears following moose, poke into beaver lodges, or fishing for salmon in pristine freshwater streams.



Cruise the Amazon

An Amazon river cruise is possibly the most rewarding nature expedition in the world. Journeying into Earth's largest rainforest, the explorer is ushered into Mother Nature's Cradle of Life, which covers some 40% of South America across nine countries. A voyage into the selva ("jungle"), as the locals call it, is only possible by boat on the mythical Amazon River. Also known as Rio Amazonas, this great waterway originates from the foothills of the Andes mountains in Peru and flows east on a 4,000 mile (6,400 km) course towards the Atlantic Ocean.

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The Galapagos Islands



A trip to the Galapagos Islands should be on every family's bucket list! Snorkel with sea turtles and swimming iguanas, and walk among sunbathing sea lions on Fernandina, the youngest and most volcanically active island in the Galápagos. Sail through the islands on a small expedition ship and experience this living classroom alongside some of the world's foremost naturalists and guides. Stops on Santiago, Isabela, Genovesa, Santa Cruz and other islands will reveal a seemingly endless cascade of wildlife, from lava caves full of fur seals to tide pools of undulating octopuses and sea urchins. In Isabela, see birds in the area that range from finches to penguins.

Leaving the nest: College Planning

College trips can be daunting. With limited time, lots to do, see and experience, not to mention the emotional rollercoaster, it helps to have a solid plan that takes the guess work out of the trip and helps you maximize your time. If college trips are on your To-Do list, let's talk!

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