

KWANDWE

PRIVATE GAME RESERVE



Kwandwe Private Game Reserve





OUR PURPOSE

As a tourism conservation entity, our purpose is to preserve the natural and cultural heritage at the heart of South Africa. We are committed to the long-term protection of our region's remarkable biodiversity and to creating meaningful, lasting benefits for the communities that surround us. At Kwandwe, every guest is invited to gain a deeper understanding of our ethos and leave with the knowledge that their journey has contributed to a shared vision for a sustainable, inclusive future.



THE KWANDWE STORY

Kwandwe Private Game Reserve: A Vision of Renewal and Conservation

Nestled in the heart of South Africa, Kwandwe Private Game Reserve spans 74,000 acres (30,000 hectares) of malaria- free wilderness. Once degraded farmland, it is now a thriving sanctuary for wildlife—including Elephant, Black Rhino, Cape Buffalo, Leopard, Cheetah, and Lion. Historical records, from San rock art to journals by early explorers like Barrow and Baines, speak to the region's rich natural and cultural heritage.





But this abundance was nearly lost. Centuries of livestock farming stripped the land of its biodiversity and displaced its wildlife. By the late 20th century, little remained of the original ecosystem. In 1998, a visionary team—including American entrepreneurs Carl DeSantis and Erika Stewart, and naturalist Angus Sholto-Douglas and his wife Tracy—began an ambitious rewilding journey.

More than 5,000 animals were reintroduced, from critically endangered Black Rhino and Cheetah to Lion and African Elephant. Indigenous species such as Caracal, Black-backed Jackal, Bat-eared Fox, Aardvark, and Greater Kudu also returned, restoring balance to the land.

This transformation was ecological and architectural. Over 2,000 km of internal fencing and obsolete infrastructure were removed. Heritage buildings like Heatherton Towers and Uplands Homestead were sensitively restored, preserving the character of the past while welcoming modern comfort.

A GROWING WILDERNESS

In 2012, the Edison Chouest Offshore group acquired Kwandwe—then 52,000 acres (22,000 hectares). Under the Chouest family's stewardship, the reserve grew to 74,000 acres (30,000 hectares), with major investment in habitat restoration and community engagement.

In 2024, a landmark expansion added 19,770 acres (8,000 hectares) of former livestock terrain. Since 2022, more than four million spekboom saplings were planted to help heal the landscape, with the aim to plant 8 million by 2027. In a powerful sign of progress, lions were seen walking across this newly restored area for the first time in over two centuries—a symbol of resilience and renewal.



AN INTIMATE SAFARI EXPERIENCE

Today, Kwandwe offers one of the highest land-to-guest ratios in South Africa, accommodating a maximum of 52 guests at a time. The reserve is home to the Big Five, over 300 bird species, and elusive nocturnal animals such as Aardwolves and Genets. Guests explore its varied landscapes on game drives, guided walking safaris, and hands-on conservation experiences.

Our lodges and villas each reflect a different aspect of Kwandwe's spirit: the classic charm of Uplands Homestead, the effortlessly understated luxury of Ecce Lodge, the sweeping views of Great Fish River Lodge, the relaxed grandeur of Melton Manor, and the contemporary calm of Fort House. Each one invites connection—with nature, with heritage, and with something greater.



PLACE OF THE BLUE CRANE

Kwandwe—meaning “Place of the Blue Crane” in isiXhosa—honours South Africa's national bird and reflects our broader purpose: to conserve biodiversity, celebrate cultural heritage, and uplift surrounding communities. Conservation here extends beyond wildlife; it's about creating a sustainable future for all who call this place home.



Kwandwe is more than a safari destination. It's a living example of what's possible through vision, commitment, and care. Visitors leave with more than memories—they become part of a legacy of restoration, resilience, and hope.

KWANDWE LODGES & VILLAS

With only 26 rooms spread across the 74,000-acre succulent-studded landscape, Kwandwe boasts one of the highest land-to-guest ratios in South Africa. From intimate, tranquil lodges to exclusive-use villas, there's an accommodation option to suit families, couples, groups of friends, and solo travellers.



ECCA LODGE

An intimate lodge with breathtaking views of the valley, Eccca Lodge blends seclusion, relaxation, and style with understated elegance and natural tones inspired by African culture.



Overlooking a secluded valley, it offers striking vistas of an escarpment of steep shale cliffs. Guest areas include expansive viewing decks and a rim-flow lap pool, seamlessly integrated with the natural surroundings. Lodge Suites are light and airy, featuring wooden decks with private plunge pools and outdoor showers. Each suite includes a super-king bed, spacious en-suite bathroom, lounge area, private deck, and outdoor shower for a luxurious and comfortable stay.

PRIVATE VEHICLE SUITES

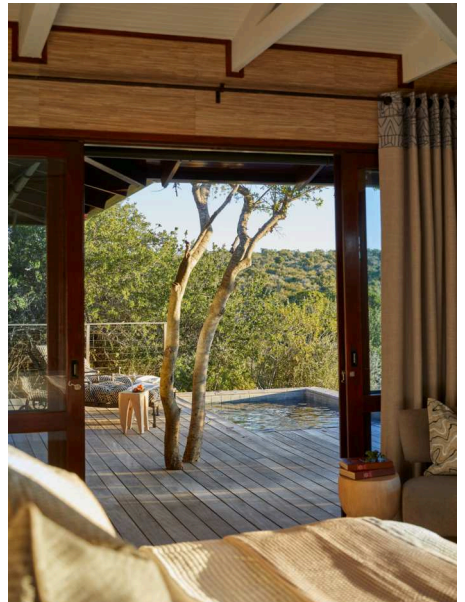
Ecce Lodge offers three Private Vehicle Suites, each providing an exclusive experience with a dedicated safari vehicle, guide, and tracker. A maximum of two children under 12 years stay free in a Private Vehicle Suite, accommodated on daybeds specially prepared for intimate families seeking a personalised safari adventure (only the CCR Levy applies).

LUXURY SAFARI DOUBLE SUITES

Set slightly apart for privacy are Ecce Lodge's three Luxury Safari Double Suites, which share a safari vehicle with a guide and tracker and accommodate a maximum of six guests per vehicle. Children under 12 are not permitted on shared vehicles.

SNAPSHOT

- ◆ 3 Private Vehicle Suites
- ◆ 3 Luxury Safari Double Suites
- ◆ Private swimming pools
- ◆ Rim-flow lap pool at main area
- ◆ Indoor dining room & lounge area, library & shop



GREAT FISH RIVER LODGE

A tranquil and timeless lodge perched on the banks of the Great Fish River with expansive views.



Perched along the lush green banks of its namesake, Great Fish River Lodge has been designed to showcase the endless landscape in which it is set. Large viewing decks allow for a fully immersive experience in nature and are the perfect spot to watch majestic kudu meander down to the river for a drink, or enjoy an African sunset.

LUXURY SAFARI DOUBLE SUITES

Floor-to-ceiling framed glass doors fold back to reveal an uninterrupted wilderness complemented with ensuite bathrooms featuring an outdoor shower as well as indoor bath and shower. Relax by your private plunge pool on your private thatched terrace with unmatched views over the sweeping landscape beyond. After days spent on safari, unwind in the supreme comfort of your king-sized bed and cocoon in fresh linens with a star-filled view.

SNAPSHOT

- ◆ 9 spacious suites
- ◆ Private swimming pools
- ◆ Outdoor boma & deck
- ◆ Indoor dining room & lounge area, library & shop
- ◆ Children 12yrs and older



MELTON MANOR

A chic, versatile and contemporary safari villa,
offering relaxed and comfortable family living



WHERE CONNECTION COMES NATURALLY

Melton Manor, a sole-use villa, is a grand, contemporary retreat designed for the sharing of meals, laughter, and meaningful moments. Centred around a welcoming courtyard and inviting swimming pool, its open, farm-style kitchen invites guests to explore local flavours alongside a personal chef, while generous indoor and outdoor living spaces encourage deep relaxation.

Each of the four bedrooms offers a private refuge, complete with a large veranda, an enormous bed, a discreet butler hatch for morning service, and ensuite bathrooms with bathtubs perfectly positioned to soak up uninterrupted views of the bushveld.

Overlooking the Afromontane forests and distant hills, the Manor's elegant simplicity and thoughtful design create a timeless space in which to unwind, connect, and truly feel at home.



SNAPSHOT

- ◆ Sleeps 8 in 4 en-suite bedrooms
- ◆ Private guide and vehicle
- ◆ Swimming pool and central courtyard
- ◆ Interactive kitchen
- ◆ Indoor living areas and fireplace



UPLANDS HOMESTEAD

A family villa with heritage and charm and imbued with old-world romance.



A RETURN TO TIMELESS ELEGANCE

Steeped in old-world romance, Uplands Homestead is a private retreat nestled within manicured gardens on one of the most remote corners of the reserve.

Surrounded by sweeping slopes dotted with aloes and the vast expanse of the Great Fish River valley, its setting evokes the wonder of childhood dreams.

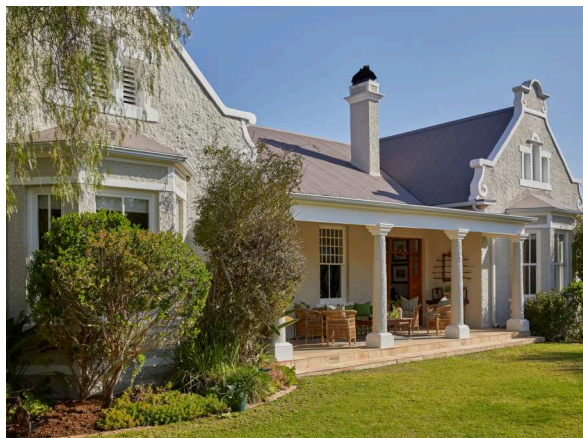
Inside, three elegant suites blend time-honoured charm with modern comfort—think antique mirrors, yellowwood chests, and opulent wardrobes paired with underfloor heating, air-conditioning, and contemporary conveniences.

At the heart of the homestead is a welcoming kitchen, where meals are prepared to be shared with friends and family beneath the African sky in the nearby boma—an ideal end to a day of adventure in the wilderness beyond.



SNAPSHOT

- ◆ Sleeps 8 in 4 en-suite bedrooms
- ◆ Private guide and vehicle
- ◆ Swimming pool and central courtyard
- ◆ Interactive kitchen
- ◆ Indoor living areas and fireplace



FORT HOUSE

Modernity meets charming, classic safari at this exclusive-use family villa.



SOPHISTICATED SAFARI SANCTUARY

Elegantly designed to reflect the rugged beauty of its surroundings, Fort House is a contemporary take on the classic safari villa.

Set within a prime location overlooking a busy waterhole and the sweeping Great Fish River valley, it offers front-row game viewing from the comfort of the boma and firepit as wildlife drifts past. Ideal for families or groups of up to eight, the villa features two master bedrooms and two suites, alongside generous, free-flowing living and entertainment areas.

Thoughtfully appointed with a private study, wine cellar, pantry, and spa treatment room, Fort House invites both relaxation and indulgence. A discreet team of staff ensures every detail is taken care of, allowing guests to unwind completely in this exclusive-use sanctuary.



SNAPSHOT

- ◆ Sleeps 8 in 4 en-suite bedrooms
- ◆ Private guide and vehicle
- ◆ Swimming pool and central courtyard
- ◆ Interactive kitchen
- ◆ Spa treatment room & wine cellar



KWANDWE LANDSCAPE & CLIMATE

Kwandwe Private Game Reserve:
A Landscape of Contrasts and Quiet Wonder





Kwandwe Private Game Reserve is a landscape of contrasts and quiet wonder. From densely vegetated mountains to wide, open plains, the terrain shifts dramatically—and through it all winds the Great Fish River, carving its way through more than 30 kilometres of the reserve. This dynamic landscape is mesmerizing and alive with biodiversity. Here, a rich tapestry of mammals, birds, and vegetation flourishes, making Kwandwe a true ecological haven.

This convergence of natural diversity creates a mosaic of habitats, each uniquely suited to the wildlife that calls it home. Dominant vegetation types, such as Valley Thicket and Xeric Thicket within the Albany Thicket biome, play a vital role in sustaining key species like the African Elephant, Black Rhino, and Greater Kudu. Among the most valuable plants is spekboom—a succulent marvel that covers up to 40% of the reserve. Not only is it a nutritious food source for many species, but it's also one of nature's most efficient carbon sinks, playing a quiet yet powerful role in combating climate change.

SPEKBOOM: NATURE'S CARBON SEQUESTERER

Spekboom (*Portulacaria afra*) is a hardy succulent found across Kwandwe's landscape. Known as the "miracle plant," spekboom plays a vital role in carbon capture and ecosystem restoration, central to our conservation initiatives.

Carbon Sequestration

Spekboom is highly effective at absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Through a process known as Crassulacean Acid Metabolism (CAM), spekboom captures 4.2 tonnes of CO₂ per hectare annually. To put it into perspective, 10 hectares of spekboom can offset the carbon footprint of 26 cars for a year.

Ecological Importance

Beyond its role in carbon capture, spekboom supports the regeneration of soil and provides essential nutrition to herbivores like black rhinos and kudus, helping to sustain Kwandwe's thriving ecosystem.

Conservation Efforts

Since September 2022, Kwandwe has planted over 4 million spekboom cuttings, with a goal to reach 8 million trees by 2027. Recent rains have helped new plantings thrive, especially in areas prone to erosion. By restoring spekboom to the land, we're accelerating the rewilding and regeneration of this pristine wilderness.

BIOMES AT KWANDWE

Set in South Africa's Eastern Cape, Kwandwe is a place of extraordinary diversity, where elements of six of the country's seven major biomes converge. Anchored by the dense, spiny vegetation of the Albany Thicket, the reserve offers a rich and varied landscape unlike anywhere else.

What is a biome?

A biome is a large geographic biotic unit, a major community of plants and animals that share common characteristics due to similar environmental conditions, such as climate, soil type, and vegetation. Biomes are often defined by factors like temperature, precipitation, and the types of species that inhabit them.

In simpler terms, a biome is a distinct ecological area that has a particular climate and is home to a specific group of organisms adapted to that environment.

At Kwandwe Private Game Reserve, several of these elements converge, each with its unique features:



Albany Thicket

(Main): Dense, woody vegetation, rich in wildlife.



Forest: Small patches that provide cover for birds and mammals.



Savanna: Grasslands with scattered trees, home to herbivores and predators.



Nama Karoo: Semi-arid areas with hardy, drought-resistant plants.



Fynbos: Pockets of plant diversity, in the southern part of the reserve.



Grassland: Open plains that support grazing species.

This mix of habitats makes Kwandwe a key area for conservation and a stronghold for biodiversity in the heart of South Africa. Renowned for its diverse ecosystems and exceptional game viewing—think Kruger and Kalahari combined—Kwandwe offers a truly flexible safari experience, with opportunities to get involved and make a real conservation impact.



KWANDWE PRIVATE GAME RESERVE MAP

A HAVEN FOR THE HORNED

Rhino poaching remains a serious threat across Africa, and at Kwandwe, we take extensive measures to protect these iconic animals. Our counter-poaching unit, supported by cutting-edge AI monitoring, helps safeguard both Black and White Rhinos in this sanctuary.

White rhinos are grazers, thriving in open grasslands, while Black rhinos are browsers, feeding on shrubs in denser thickets—both vital to the ecosystem.

Through the Kwandwe Rhino Conservation Trust, we monitor rhinos daily using GPS tracking and collaborate closely with anti-poaching teams. We also work with local communities to promote biodiversity education and environmental stewardship.

For a deeper look, join one of our behind-the-scenes Rhino Conservation Safaris and discover the challenges of protecting these magnificent creatures. By visiting Kwandwe, you become part of our conservation legacy, helping ensure the rhinos' story of resilience continues for generations to come.

www.kwandwerhinotrust.org.za



SUSTAINABILITY AT KWANDWE: A LASTING COMMITMENT

Sustainability and Impact

Restoring land and wildlife is only part of the challenge of being custodians of this corner of Africa. Equally important is operating in a way that minimises waste, reduces consumption, and actively uplifts the surrounding communities. At Kwandwe, our commitment to being a truly responsible enterprise is evident in every aspect of how we work.





Take the enchanting wood fire burning in the hearth, for example—it's more than ambience; it's a quiet conservation win. The firewood is sourced from alien wattle trees, a species indigenous to Australia. Every log burnt clears the way for native vegetation to return, while supporting a local initiative to remove these invasive trees. Solar energy powers the tourism lodges on Kwandwe as well as over one hundred kilometres of electric fencing. This investment in renewable energy enhances sustainability while maintaining the safety of wildlife and guests.

Employment is another cornerstone of our impact. More than 80% of our staff come from nearby communities, gaining not just income but also valuable skills and experience. This empowers individuals and contributes to the resilience of the region. We believe education is key to South Africa's future. That's why we've constructed, extended, and staffed the Fort Brown Primary School, support early childhood development at the Mgcambele Centre on the reserve, and provide daily transport for young scholars to attend schools in nearby Makhandla.

By visiting Kwandwe, you're directly contributing to a brighter future for the people and communities of this region. Twenty-five percent of the Conservation & Community Rehabilitation (CCR) levy goes directly to the Ubunye Foundation, which helps fund and sustain a wide range of impactful community projects.

Established by Kwandwe in 2002, the Ubunye Foundation began as an in-house initiative to address socio-economic inequality in the region. It has since grown into an independent non-profit organisation, deeply embedded in the local landscape. Today, Ubunye works hand-in-hand with rural communities to build resilience, develop livelihoods, and strengthen early childhood development and educational opportunities.

Read more about the success story of the Ubunye Foundation. www.ubunyefoundation.co.za

THE MAMMALS OF KWANDWE



Kwandwe is home to an extraordinary diversity of mammals— each playing a unique role in the ecology of the reserve. From the mighty African elephant shaping the landscape to the industrious porcupine rustling through the undergrowth after dark, every species contributes to the complex web of life that defines this wilderness.

Many travelers come in search of Africa's iconic big cats, and with good reason. Watching a cheetah in full sprint, hearing the resonant roar of a lion at dusk, or glimpsing a leopard slipping silently through the thickets are moments that stir the soul.

But the magic of Kwandwe extends far beyond these apex predators. Smaller cats such as the serval, caracal, and African wild cat offer their own quiet allure—stealthy, graceful, and perfectly adapted to their surroundings. Even more elusive are the nocturnal prowlers like the small-spotted cat or the aardwolf, whose presence is felt more often than seen. Yet it's not just the carnivores that capture attention.

Herds of antelope graze the open plains; troops of baboons patrol rocky outcrops; and species like the Black rhino and Cape buffalo tell powerful stories of survival and conservation.

Whether it's the flick of a bat-eared fox's ears or the towering gait of a giraffe, the mammals of Kwandwe reflect the breadth of biodiversity protected within the reserve.



THE BIRDS OF KWANDWE – PLACE OF THE BLUE CRANE

Kwandwe Private Game Reserve—whose name means “Place of the Blue Crane” in isiXhosa—is a sanctuary of biodiversity nestled in South Africa’s Eastern Cape, a region celebrated for its rich variety of flora and wildlife. With a proud legacy of conservation, Kwandwe is home to thousands of animals roaming freely across its expansive plains and plays a vital role in protecting threatened and endangered species, including South Africa’s national bird, the iconic Blue Crane.

Renowned as a paradise for birdwatchers, the reserve boasts over 300 recorded bird species. From the call of the majestic Fish Eagle to sightings of the colorful Bokmakierie, the stately Kori Bustard, and the powerful Crowned Eagle, Kwandwe’s birdlife offers endless fascination. Expert guides and trackers enrich every safari with their deep knowledge, helping guests spot and identify these avian treasures, adding vibrant color and life to the wilderness experience.



STAY WITH PURPOSE

Supporting Conservation and Community Development

At Kwandwe Private Game Reserve, every guest plays a vital role in conservation and community upliftment. By choosing to stay here, you actively support initiatives that protect wildlife, empower local communities, and preserve biodiversity, aligning with Kwandwe's vision of responsible and sustainable tourism.



CONSERVATION EFFORTS (25%)

A quarter of the levy funds the Kwandwe Rhino Conservation Trust, a non-profit organisation dedicated to safeguarding black and white rhinos. This trust is instrumental in protecting rhinos at Kwandwe and the Great Fish River Reserve, ensuring their survival for generations.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (25%)

Another 25% supports the Ubunye Foundation, founded in 2002 to uplift local communities through education, healthcare, and sustainable development. This initiative strengthens the socio-economic fabric of the region, providing opportunities and support for those who call this area home.

RESERVE MANAGEMENT (50%)

Half of the levy is invested in managing Kwandwe's 30,000-hectare wilderness, including Biodiversity conservation, Control of invasive plant species, Road and water management and Wildlife monitoring and protection. By staying at Kwandwe, you directly contribute to these vital efforts, ensuring your visit has a lasting impact on both the environment and local communities.

SUPPORTING CONSERVATION

DONATE TO THE UBUNYE FOUNDATION AND EMPOWER COMMUNITIES

The Ubunye Foundation is Kwandwe's social development partner—a registered non-profit organisation working with communities both within and surrounding the reserve.

For protected areas like Kwandwe to truly thrive, they must benefit not only landowners but also the people who live nearby. With this in mind, Kwandwe's founders established the Ubunye Foundation as a rural development trust— an integral part of the reserve's vision from the very beginning.

The foundation focuses on five key areas: Leadership, Self-Help Groups, Health, Education, and Economic Development. This work goes beyond philanthropy, embracing a development-led approach that promotes self-reliance and lasting, sustainable change.

During your stay, you're welcome to visit the Mgcambele Community Centre to see the work in action. Guests may join a preschool music class, explore vibrant community programmes, or purchase handmade products created by local self-help groups.

The foundation relies primarily on donor funding, and contributions from guests are deeply appreciated. Your support helps sustain and grow these life-changing initiatives.

DONATE TO THE UBUNYE FOUNDATION

The Ubunye Foundation empowers local communities through:

- Education initiatives and scholarships
- Healthcare and early childhood development
- Sustainable development programs

Your donation supports long-term community resilience and ensures future generations have the tools to thrive.

DONATE HERE:

www.ubunyefoundation.co.za



DONATE TO THE KWANDWE RHINO CONSERVATION TRUST AND HELP PROTECT ICONIC WILDLIFE

The Kwandwe Rhino Conservation Trust is dedicated to the preservation of both black and white rhino populations at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve. As part of our broader conservation mission, the Trust focuses on the critical protection and sustainable management of these endangered species, ensuring their survival for future generations. Founded to address the growing threat of rhino poaching, the Trust supports a range of anti-poaching initiatives and works closely with local authorities to combat illegal activities. Through a combination of advanced technologies, field operations, and veterinary care, the Trust is committed to safeguarding rhinos and enhancing biodiversity within the reserve.

Your visit to Kwandwe helps support this important work. With opportunities to help learn about the efforts underway, guests can gain an understanding of the Trust's role in rhino conservation and how it contributes to the broader ecosystem. The Trust relies on donations from individuals and organisations who are passionate about wildlife conservation. Your contribution plays a vital role in preserving these magnificent creatures.

DONATE TO THE KWANDWE RHINO CONSERVATION TRUST

As a registered NPO, the Kwandwe Rhino Conservation Trust welcomes donations to support critical anti-poaching and rhino protection efforts. Your donation can help fund:

- Tracking collars for rhinos
- Anti-poaching K9 units and trained security dogs
- Night vision equipment and aerial surveillance
- Veterinary care and medical procedures for injured rhinos
- Bulletproof vests, radios, and patrol vehicles for anti-poaching teams

Every contribution makes a difference. Your support ensures that these iconic animals are protected for future generations.

DONATE HERE:

www.kwandwerhinotrust.org.za

