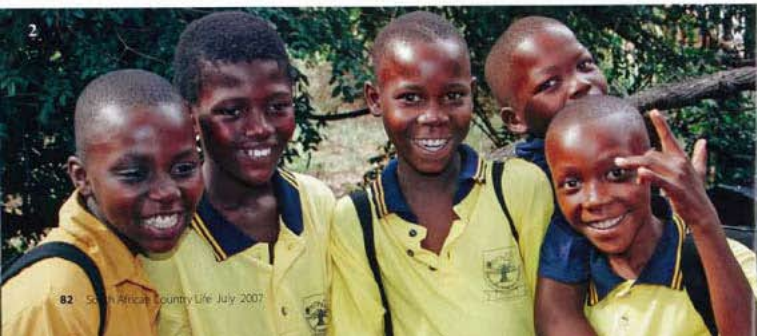


A True Smile

by Cindy May Wang

The affect you have on a child is evident in their eyes. You know you've touched their lives when they give you that unmistakable smile



Educating children about conservation, trust and love . . .

Location Pafuri Camp, Kruger National Park, Maluleke Concession

Transport to Pafuri: Road or fly from Lanseria airport direct to Pafuri on Sefofane Air Charters (4 flights a week)

Map reference: A8 near Crooks Corner where Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa meet on the banks of the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers (see inside back cover)

Contact: Wilderness Safaris 011 807 1800, enquiry@wilderness.co.za

More information: www.wilderness-safaris.com

ROAD trips are great – when you want to be on them. When your focus is only on the destination, though, they can be hell.

I personally am a sucker for road trips. I get a feeling of impending adventure when we set out, packed and not quite knowing what our destination will hold. So I was confused when I was told, apologetically, that it would take seven and a half hours by car to get from Johannesburg to Pafuri Camp in the northern Kruger Park.

Fortunately there was no need for apologies. The trip hasn't disappointed me. It's the first time I've been through this landscape and I'm glad I've been introduced to it, as I'll most certainly be back.

1 Children from the Maluleke community, some of whom have never been in a swimming pool before, delight in spending time having fun in the pool at Pafuri Camp.

2 Rule number one during the Pafuri Children in the Wilderness weeks: Laughter is essential. Picture: Wilderness Safaris

3 The children get a variety of goodies throughout the week, including a book on bird identification. The children show off their new books during a game drive. Picture: Wilderness Safaris



I'm on my way to Pafuri Camp, operated by Wilderness Safaris, but not for a luxury game-viewing holiday. I'm going there to experience what happens at the camp during Children in the Wilderness week, an annual event when the camp is closed to paying visitors and used instead to introduce disadvantaged children to, and educate them about, the lucky packet that is the bush.

As we arrive, things are a little chaotic and there are no children to be seen. The bus bringing them has been delayed. But as plan B is implemented I'm lounging on a deck beside the turquoise pool, trying to get used to the constant moisture that graces my skin. Gosh, it's hot out here.

Finally the bus arrives and there's a flurry of activity as the staff assemble to welcome the children. Their excitement is palpable and from some mystical place, unbelievable to me in this heat, they conjure up incredible enthusiasm. Finally, unable to contain it, they burst into song to welcome the hot, tired and hungry children. The children are bewildered and guarded at first, but as the love washes over them, I see a smile or two appear.

Pafuri Camp is in the Maluleke Concession area of the Kruger Park and was built after a mutually beneficial agreement had been reached between Kruger Park, Wilderness Safaris and the Maluleke community. It's still young, and this is the first Children of the Wilderness week held specifically for children of the Maluleke community, all of whom were selected for the experience by the community leaders for being victims of poverty or orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Many are on their first adventure out of the community.

They've travelled 100 km north of their homes by bus and have come to an environment so different from what they're used to that they are bound to feel some trepidation – I sure would.

The aim of Children in the Wilderness is to educate young people about the need for nature conservation, along with general education on issues affecting them today, such as health, HIV/Aids and safety. It's all done in a fun way to make the children feel secure and it's delivered with love and care.

The staff are amazing. Usually barmen, cleaners, guides and the like, they are now team leaders or counsellors, putting the children at ease by talking to them in their home dialect, explaining what is going to happen, and making sure they understand rule number one: Laughter is essential. After the first day the children are fully aware of and adhering to rule number one.

The children stay in groups in the same luxury tents used for paying guests, just rearranged to fit in more beds. Each group has a team leader who's there to reassure them when bed time comes and see to it that everyone is happy sleeping behind canvas surrounded by wildlife, and to make sure no children wander around at night – as there are no fences around the camp and said wildlife might be on the prowl for late night snacks.

All of the people involved really go out of their way to make the week an experience of a lifetime for each child.





The tented accommodation at Pafuri camp.

Tour de Kruger and Great Limpopo National Park Mountain Bike Event

About 200 cyclists will shortly embark on a challenging 350 km mountain bike tour through two national parks to raise funds for the non-profit organisations, Children in the Wilderness and the Peace Parks Foundation.

The Tour de Kruger and the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park Mountain Bike Event, which will be taking place between 31 July and 5 August, is the third of its kind and allows cyclists to access wilderness areas usually unavailable to them.

Commencing at the Giryondo border post, it will take in a variety of terrain and diverse habitats, including wildlife habitats. The ride will conclude at Wilderness Safaris Pafuri Camp in the northern Kruger National Park.

Says Heather Wilson, event organiser: "The tour, which was launched in 2005, has been tremendously successful, having raised over R1 million for the two organisations."

The funds raised this year will help educate a large number of rural children on the importance of the environment and assist in ensuring that critically threatened environments are conserved.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, thus reducing overheads and generating more income for the charities, please contact Heather Wilson on heatherw@wilderness.co.za or 011 807 1800.

Definitions

Wilderness Safaris

A safari company providing unique experiences in magnificent, remote areas, with camps in Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Seychelles. They ensure that their impact on the environment is minimal and that their effect on the surrounding communities is maximal. Their aim is to bring added value to the areas where they operate by directing conservation efforts to where they are needed.

Children in the Wilderness

An ongoing project that sees Wilderness Safaris camps providing nurturing environments where impoverished children and children whose lives have been disrupted by illness and HIV/Aids can be imbued with a conservation ethic and shown what the bush and the life it sustains is all about.

Wilderness Safaris Wildlife Trust

A trust set up to help facilitate the conservation efforts of Wilderness Safaris and projects necessary in the areas under its management to enrich the wilderness, protect endangered species and right some of the wrongs of the past.

Active Education

A group that uses sport, fun and education to build a confident, active youth. Trained professionals introduce children to a variety of sports and then support and guide them in selecting the sport of their choice. Together with the Children in the Wilderness team, they plan and execute the week of active education, thus building confidence through knowledge. 🐾

Win Three Nights at Pafuri Camp Worth R11 700

Support Children in the Wilderness by entering this SMS competition and you could win a three-night stay valued at R11 700 for you and a partner at Wilderness Safaris Pafuri Camp in the northern Kruger National Park.

All you have to do is send an SMS message saying CL DONATE, and your name, to 39242. The SMS will cost you R15 and all profits from the competition will be donated to Children in the Wilderness.



Terms & Conditions

- The prize will be awarded to the sender of the first correct entry drawn after the closing date.
- The judge's decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- All SMS's are charged at R15 per entry.
- The prize is a 3-night stay for two people at Wilderness Safaris Pafuri Camp in the Kruger National Park.
- The prize may not be taken up over public holidays and is subject to availability of accommodation.
- The prize is not transferable and cannot be converted into cash.
- All travelling costs not expressly included, airport taxes, visa costs or any additional costs will be for the winner's expense.
- The prize must be taken up between 01 October 2007 and 31 December 2007.
- The competition is open to all SA Country Life readers except employees of Country Magazines and the host company.
- The closing date of the competition is 30 August 2007.
- The winners will be notified telephonically.
- SA Country Life reserves the right to use all entrants' contact details for upcoming promotions and events.

What you'll win

A holiday at Pafuri Camp in the widest and most remote part of the Kruger National Park. Pafuri Camp is situated in the ancestral home of the Maluleke people, giving it an evocative atmosphere, steeped in the folklore of early explorers and ancient civilisations. The camp comprises 20 safari tents with en-suite bathrooms, all on raised wooden platforms overlooking the lush Luvuvhu River. The main deck is the perfect place to sit and watch the daily passage of wildlife to and from the river. And on scorching days, the swimming pool is the best place to wash away the heat of the day, also while overlooking the Luvuvhu.

The prize includes accommodation for the winner and your partner for three nights at this luxury camp in the Kruger National Park, plus all meals, game-viewing activities, park fees and the tourism levy. Your transport to the camp, the cost of your drinks and of any laundry during your stay, any insurance necessary and the park conservation levy will be for your personal account. The prize must be taken up between 1 October 2007 and 31 December 2007, excluding public holidays during this period, and subject to availability.



PAFURI CAMP

Kruger National Park
South Africa's birding hotspot



Pafuri in the far north of Kruger National Park has long been considered the birding Mecca of South Africa. Here one can see outstanding regional specials like **Three-banded Courser**, Mottled and Böhm's Spinetails, Kestrel-tailed Roller, White-crowned Lapwing, and Dickinson's Rackle to name but a few. South African specials include **Pel's Fishing-owl**, **Bat Hawk**, **Grey-headed Parrot** and **Black-throated White-eye**, 30 southern African endemic or near endemic species are just some of the 400 species recorded in this scenic, pristine area.

WILDERNESS SAFARIS

Our Journeys Change People's Lives

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