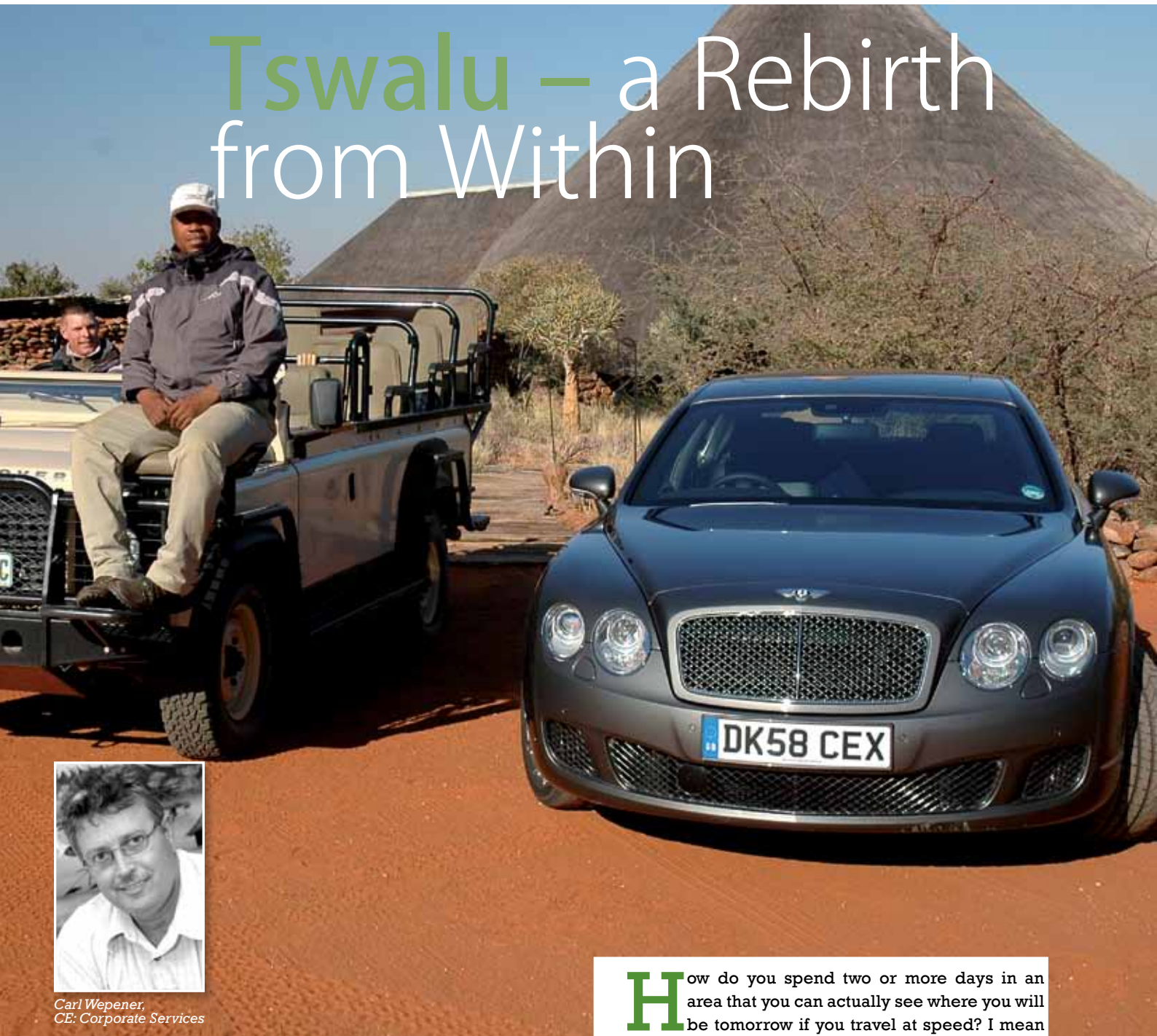


Tswalu – a Rebirth from Within



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When I first heard of Tswalu I had no idea what it represented, nor could I visualise a five star facility in the middle of the Kalahari that would have any attraction at all.

How do you spend two or more days in an area that you can actually see where you will be tomorrow if you travel at speed? I mean one of the roads I travelled on did not make any turns for 50 kilometres.

Boy was I wrong – have I got egg on my face? As it happens we did do an article on Tswalu some time ago, but I have not read it. It was only when one of our clients spoke about Tswalu that my interest was gained and as we discussed Tswalu I was informed that he read about it in CEO magazine. Not long after that, I heard from a colleague of mine about this lovely place in the Kalahari called Tswalu.

Enough was enough so I researched Tswalu and I must say I was more than amazed and I just had to

experience it for myself. As we were already planning the Bentley trip I changed the plans to include Tswalu as one of our destinations.

After travelling 900 kilometres, 10km being a gravel road, we were fortunate to arrive just before sunset, giving us our first impression of this lovely Kalahari – to the west, nothing but open flowing grasslands and to the east the magnificent Korannaberg mountain range with a very diverse eco system.

The reception we received from Riaan and his team at the Motse camp was excellent and we felt right at home the moment we set foot into the lovely, natural buildings. Tswalu's lodges cater for 30 guests and the main lodge has eight secluded Legaes Suites that left nothing to wish for.

The second camp is Tarkuni, housing up to 10 guests in five luxury bedrooms and is nestled between two rolling mountain ranges. Tarkuni is the ultimate private sanctuary. We have not visited Tarkuni as I hope to extend my love relationship with Tswalu by coming back to experience it by way of Tarkuni.

Tswalu's brochure states that the environment is in charge and I wondered how this would play out, as talk is cheap. Well from the start we were told by Riaan, while enjoying a delicious dinner in the boma, that Tswalu limits its guests in order to prevent intrusion on the wildlife, or the environment, for that matter. Tswalu serves to restore, rehabilitate and protect all of the fauna and flora, especially the many endangered and elusive species.

I am not even going to try and describe the projects or the intensity of the work. We have decided that Tswalu's own environmentalist will be doing editorial articles for CEO magazine so that you, the reader, may also note, enjoy and applaud the work done there.

While you can have the most exclusive, most expensive and most everything available, what makes it truly special is the enjoyment and the memories that you take away.

Tswalu means "rebirth" and going there really triggers the rebirth of all your senses, seeing beyond what you ever saw, experiencing colours that are no longer possible in cities, the stillness is so sudden and unexpected that it overpowers you. The wonder and beauty of each individual creation, whether it is one of the 70 species of mammals or 230 species of birds, surround you in all their natural splendour. When last did the formation of rocks, trees or grass make you gasp in awe? Here it happens so frequently that you have to acknowledge that you have been given access to the treasure trove of the Kalahari.

On our game drives we saw a number of different

Activities at Tswalu

- △ Game drives in open-sided, canopied safari vehicles.
- △ Horse riding accompanied by an equestrian guide. Tuition is offered in an enclosed post and rail arena, if necessary and all equipment is available at Tswalu Kalahari.
- △ Bush walks led by experienced guides offering the opportunity to get close to nature and to experience the uniqueness of the Kalahari vegetation.
- △ A variety of dining experiences, including sundowners on lantern-lit dunes, boma dining and mountain look-outs under the umbrella thorn acacias.
- △ Stargazing in the Kalahari, also known as 'the diamond skies'. Your guide will point out all the major constellations in the southern skies.
- △ Sleep-outs on the Kalahari dunes with just the stars as your canopy.
- △ Archaeological sites in the Korannaberg Mountains allow guests to see first hand the rock engravings of the San people.
- △ Meerkat colonies are often encountered but a habituated group allows viewing at close range (children under the age of 6 years must be accompanied by an adult).
- △ Hot air ballooning over the Kalahari landscape can be arranged (prior booking essential).

animals, including true Kalahari black-mane lions that were feeding on the carcass of a big eland. On the mountain there were zebra and further on there was a number of sable and roan antelope. An abundance of smaller creatures such as meerkats and bigger creatures like ostriches were congregated around the water hole. We did not see the elusive aardwolf, desert black rhino, white rhino, cheetah or wild dog, but that was just due to us not having enough time to do so.

Our time was very limited and I suggest that at least four days be set aside to really explore and enjoy Tswalu for memories that will last a life time.

There is never too much that can be said about Tswalu, just when you think Tswalu has been satiated, you find or see something else amazing to say or show.

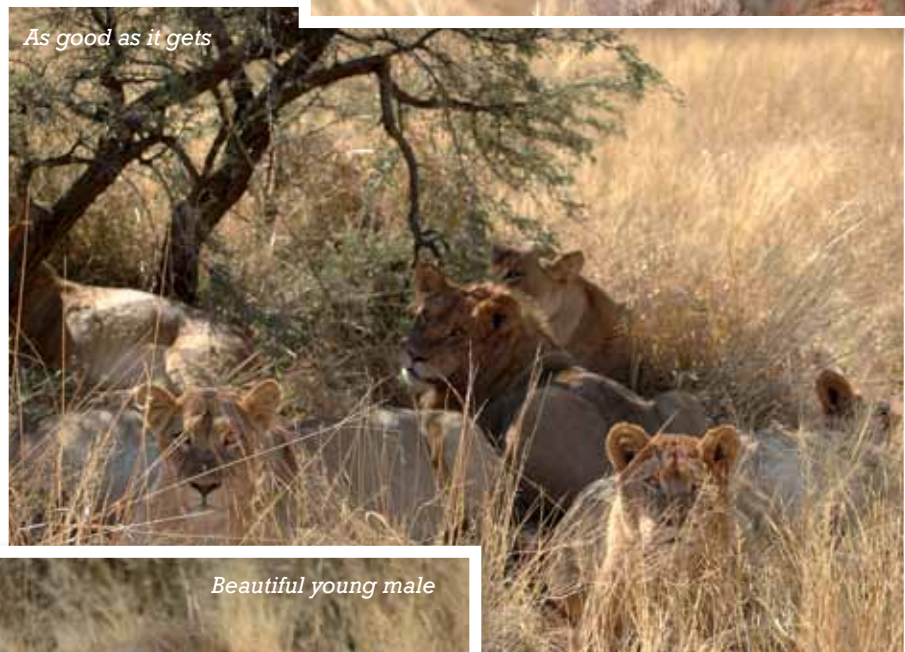
I have always been a person who believes that a picture is worth more than a thousand words. What makes it even more precious is if you can give your experience through telling the story around the picture.

△ Game drives in open-sided, canopied safari vehicles are great, but one forgets that you may actually get very close to some very dangerous and sometimes hungry animals. While we were on our game drive, our guide was radioed and told that a pride of lions had made a kill. We subsequently made our way there.

When we arrived we spotted this lovely black-maned male lazily walking back to the pride of two females and eight 14-month old cubs lying in the shade of a tree. They looked like potbellied pigs after feasting on the eland. We got quite close to them until one of the females got angry and showed us, in no uncertain terms, how she felt by making a mock attack on us. I will not try to explain or say what happened then, except that we have much more respect after having those penetrating yellow eyes stare at us.



Don't touch my food!



As good as it gets



Beautiful young male



△ Since Tswalu is so spread out and has had sectors fenced off from each other, we could experience a lovely afternoon of horse riding in a sector where the lions were not going to make us their next meal. The only problem was that not one of us had been on a horse in 20 plus plenty years. We were thus very cautious and made our lack of experience well known. All riding equipment was available at the stables and we were accompanied by an equestrian guide that guaranteed us that we had horses suitable to our experience – or lack thereof.

Riding through the wilderness as we did, is really a must. We enjoyed the wildlife around us which included blue wildebeest, kudus and a selection of other species. It brings you near to the animals, but part of the fun for us was the tuition offered as we were riding along.

△ A variety of dining experiences may be had and we enjoyed sundowners on the lantern-lit dunes with a nice fire going while enjoying the splendour of yet another magnificent sunset under the umbrella thorn acacias.

Driving back we saw the awesome stars proving to us that the Kalahari really does have ‘the diamond skies’.

Our guide pointed out a number of the major constellations in the southern skies and I must say that it contains a lot more stars than we see in Gauteng.

We did not do a Sleep-out on the Kalahari dunes nor did we have the time (or ‘Footwear’) to visit the Archaeological sites in the Korannaberg Mountains.

What we did experience was a Nyala doe, with her one week old offspring suckling on its mother, right in front of our chalet. The animals were not frightened at all and I could get to within three metres from them before they got nervous and walk on.

For those who would like to experience Tswalu unfolding slowly under them, hot air ballooning can be arranged but prior booking is essential.

Bush walks led by experienced guides offer the opportunity to get close to nature and to experience the uniqueness of the Kalahari vegetation. This is a must as you experience so much more of this magnificent reserve and the value that it brings you. □

**For further information on Tswalu visit its Website www.tswalu.co.namibia.*



World class cuisine is on offer at every meal

