



NATION · POLITICS · WORLD · BUSINESS/TECH · CULTURE · LIFE/HEALTH [msnbc.com](#)

“That was easy” Nancy Pelosi after passing health care bill [PLTCO](#)

Search

LOGIN · REGISTER · SUBSCRIBE NOW | BLOGS: THE GAGGLE · WEALTH OF NATIONS · DECLASSIFIED · HUMAN CONDITION · NURTURESHOCK · TECHTONIC SHIFTS

CULTURE

THE ARTS &
OTHER PURSUITS

MOVIES · TELEVISION · MUSIC · BOOKS · FINE ARTS · TRENDS

The Elephant Massage

By [Sophie Grove](#) | NEWSWEEK

Published Nov 2, 2009

From the magazine issue dated Nov 9, 2009

Share: [Facebook](#) [Digg](#) [Tweet](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Buzz up!](#) [RSS](#) [StumbleUpon](#) [Delicious](#) [Diigo](#)

Tools: [Post Your Comment](#) [Print](#) [Email](#)

It's not uncommon for Elizabeth Maleko's clients to open their eyes mid-way through a Swedish massage and see a leap of leopards. The 26-year-old therapist is used to working in the wild. At Sanctuary Olonana, a luxury tented camp on the banks of Kenya's Mara River, the spa is surrounded by squawking secretary birds and moaning hippos (and, mercifully, a functioning electric fence). The sound of East Africa's menagerie is all around. It's a great place to catch a glimpse of the park's Big Five; the remote, calming spot clearly appeals to the elusive big cats and their cubs, says Maleko. "Last week we saw three playing on the bank."

Safaris can be seriously hard work. The dedicated animal voyeur needs to be up at the crack of dawn, bumping over rough dirt tracks in jeeps and scouring the thicket for rhinos and giraffes. Many need a stint in a coastal resort just to recover. But the travel industry has found the antidote: the "spa-fari", which allows safari-goers to combine bush stalking with facials and body wraps. Clients spend the morning on the move in jeeps, light aircraft, or even hot-air balloons, and the afternoon enjoying reenergizing treatments.

ADVERTISEMENT



We can help
you start
making extra
money today.

To learn more,
[CLICK HERE.](#)

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

November 2009
Circ: 730,52
EAV: £5,099.80

At Sanctuary Olonana, a luxury camp not far from the Siria Escarpment where *Out of Africa* was filmed, Maleko employs indigenous African ingredients, little known in Western markets, to counter the effects of an arduous day's safari. In the signature treatment, a walnut and marula-shell scrub is followed by a vigorous two-hour body massage. Another treatment envelops guests from top to toe in a wrap made from African potato, a powerful native root imbued with aloe ferrox to soothe sun-blached skin. For a face full of East African dust, Maleko uses a South African-produced cosmetic line called Africology, which contains indigenous ingredients like rooibos, neroli, and other potent fruit-derived vitamins believed to be potent anti-aging agents. Guests love it so much, they buy pots of it to take home, says Maleko.

As luxury bush camps have become increasingly ethical and ecofriendly, spas have begun to draw on local know-how rather than imported practice. For a spa-fari, that means incorporating traditional African massage techniques. At the Royal Zambezi Lodge in Zambia, in a rustic spa on a canopied platform, the Ukuchina massage, featuring hot towels, eucalyptus oils, and herbal compressions, was originally performed on Zambian women after childbirth. Another super-luxurious camp, Royal Malewane, in South Africa's Kruger National Park, uses local healers and their ancient rituals to reenergize guests. Here, a gymnasium and a complex of hot and cold African baths have all the trappings of a metropolitan spa, surrounded by hundreds of kilometers of untamed bush.



The Phantom Venice

Barbie Nadeau | Nov 2, 2009

Flooding isn't scaring away the natives. Foreigners are.

- **A Few Luxury Hotels Buck the Trend of Restraint**
- **Spafaris: Body Wraps in the Bush**
- **Relocating Summer's Top Activities to the Snow**
- **Trekking Away the Winter Doldrums**
- **In Spain, Tourists on the Scaffolding**
- **Where Artists Stay for Free**
- **Berlin's Hidden Gems**

In many respects, the modern safari is no longer just about viewing game. Bush camps are taking a holistic approach to the notion of wellness. Camps like Olonana offer energetic canoeing trips (toning for the arms and yet precariously close to crocodiles) and bracing early morning nature walks (with armed escorts in tow) to complete the fitness schedule. Some even have a local counselor on hand to discuss guests' emotional issues.

Industry experts think the safari is even starting to rival the beach holiday as a means to total relaxation. "The modern African safari is a blend of raw nature and chic comfort," says Abercrombie & Kent Group's chief marketing officer, George Morgan-Grenville. "As an antidote to the crazy, digitally connected pace of the modern world, safaris with spas only heighten the catharsis. Guests want to indulge in the entire bush experience." And if that means gazing at a pride of lions while having the soul of Africa ground into your limbs during a three-hour massage extravaganza, then you'll be all the better for it.

ADVERTISEMENT

WORLD CHALLENGE 09

They can win a grant worth
\$20,000

▶ Vote now

In association with

