

THE KRUGER, UNTAMED

Welcome to the safari camp that
disappears without a trace

By Sophie Baker

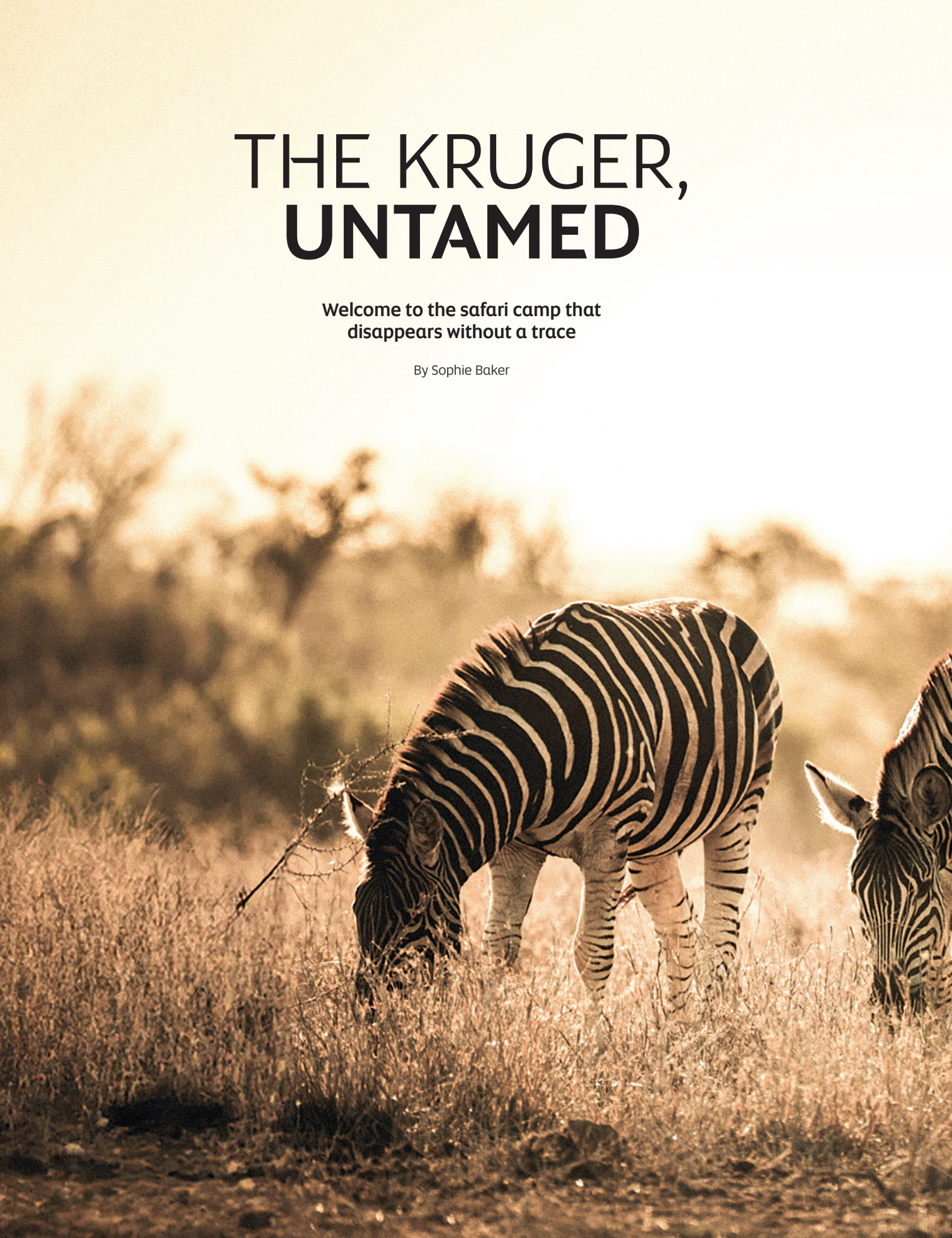




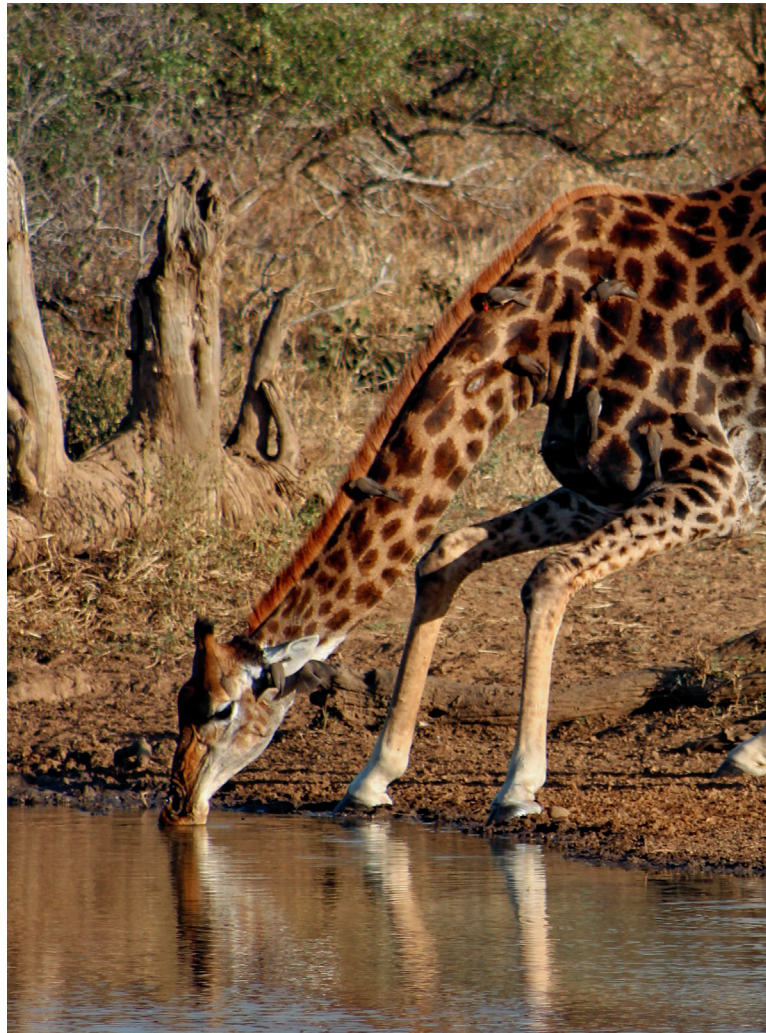
IMAGE: KRUGER UNLIMITED



You won't find permanent roads, manicured lawns or giant soaking bathtubs at Kruger Untamed. Once the season ends, the whole thing disappears. "It takes us six weeks to set up, and another six to take it all down," says Andrew Jackson, general manager at Kruger Untamed. By October, the teak decks are dismantled, the canvas tents are packed away, and the bush looks as though nothing ever disturbed it. Not even a footprint remains in the river sand.

This tread-lightly ethos defines Kruger Untamed, the first seasonal safari experience operating inside South Africa's Kruger National Park. Open for five months a year, the camp is designed to exist in harmony with the landscape. There are no concrete foundations or fixed plumbing; everything rests on removable platforms so as not to disturb the bush. All waste is separated, treated and removed from the park, with grey water carefully filtered before being returned to the environment. Even the riverbed pool is temporary. "Our goal is to disappear after the season. Even the tent peg holes are gone," says Jackson. "This is borrowed space. We treat it with the respect that demands."

Guests can choose between two camps: Satara and Tshokwane. Satara, slightly larger, is located near one of Kruger's busiest game-viewing areas. Tshokwane, more remote, sits beside a long-dry riverbed along a lesser-known migration route used by zebra, wildebeest and elephant in the winter months. Both share the same philosophy of immersive hosting with minimal footprint. There's power during the day for lights and charging, and patchy Wi-Fi if you really need it – though most guests forget their phones not long after arrival.





Despite the stripped-back setup, comfort is never in short supply. Inside the tents are king-sized beds made up with crisp linen and warmed with hot water bottles at night. The en suite bathrooms feel surprisingly normal, and feature water-saving setups with chemical toilets, hand-filled warm water showers, and a thermos of hot water left each evening beside a card inviting you to “keep up your skincare routine”.

Meals, served on the deck, are elevated homestyle cooking: lamb shanks, kingklip in lemon butter, and beef Wellington with mustardy jus – an impressive feat in a bush kitchen without a floor. Most nights end with a drink in hand and stars overhead. Guests gather around the fire pits, sparks rising into the dark, and trade sightings over a nightcap before drifting off to their tents, fire-scented and full.

Kruger Untamed also prioritises skills development, employing and training guides, chefs and hospitality staff from nearby communities. And it shows. The team has a knack for anticipating what you need before you ask. When I forgot toothpaste, one of the servers quietly brought over her own.






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When my travel partner wasn't feeling well, they made chicken soup from scratch and delivered extra drinks to our tent without hesitation.

During my three-day stay in mid-May at Tshokwane, just before the dry season's golden grip begins to tighten, we saw all the Big Five. There were elephants galore, including a 3-week-old calf, stretching his trunk with all his might to reach the lowest branches of the tree his mother effortlessly stripped. A pair of lions lounged across the road for what felt like hours. There was also the leopard, stalking the roadside before melting into the long grass and vanishing without a trace, like the camp itself. By its nature, Kruger Untamed doesn't aim to be permanent. The riverbeds run dry, the animals pass

through along the ancient migration corridor, and the bush turns from green to gold, and back to green again.

Kruger Untamed was designed to adapt to this rhythm, not interrupt it. "We're not just guests of the park," says Jackson. "We're its caretakers, too." By the end of the season, the canvas comes down. The deck is dismantled. What remains is only silence, thorn trees, and sand. For anyone passing through, Kruger Untamed has vanished without a trace. But those who stayed will tell you otherwise. Some things linger: the primal sounds of lions roaring at dawn, the smell of wood smoke, and the feeling of having borrowed from the land, not taken. krugeruntamed.com