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Know Your Fixer: Micato Safaris on Cape Town

An insider's guide to insider's guides from around the world

By Andrew Sessa

Many a South African safari gets its start or comes to an end in Cape Town, the country's cosmopolitan center. And while it may be tempting to cruise through quickly on your quest for the Big Five, it would behoove you to take time to explore the city either before or after your time in the wilderness. What you'll discover may surprise you.

Urban metropolis that it is, Cape Town has its own wild side, and its own set of exotic creatures and cool cats. To really get to know them, however, you'll want help navigating the city's scene.

To that end, we point you in the direction of [Micato Safaris](#), which has been organizing high-end African sojourns since 1966. Founded by Felix and Jane Pinto, the outfit is now in the hands of their son, Dennis, who — together with his wife, Joy, and sister, Anastasia — heads up operations, bringing the family's vast expertise to destinations from Kenya to Namibia, Rwanda to Mozambique.

As African cities go, it's hard to beat Cape Town. Here, Pinto weighs in with his favorite destinations and experiences.

Ellerman House

Located on the cliffs of Bantry Bay, this petite boutique hotel is an absolute favorite. From its 11 rooms, two suites and a stand-alone private villa, not to mention extensive grounds, the historic Cape Edwardian mansion boasts views of Robben Island, and its guest rooms and on-site gallery are home to some hundred South African artworks. Guests will also find a pool, spa, whiskey bar, library, two dining rooms, and a pair of lounges, plus one of the best wine cellars in Cape Town.



The Test Kitchen

For a sublime dining experience, head to the Old Biscuit Mill and dinner at chef Luke Dale-Roberts's Test Kitchen, one of the city's most critically acclaimed restaurants. Matching his offerings to the season, Dale-Roberts continuously changes the menu at this experimental spot, but you can be sure that whatever he dishes out will be fresh and sensational. Starters such as foie gras, Jerusalem artichoke, and lemon-chicken "tree" with rosemary streusel make a fine introduction to such mains as the chef's prized pan-seared lamb fillets, served with beetroot and Jägermeister jus, braised fennel, sweetbreads, and macadamia-and-cauliflower stuffing.



Missibaba

For the beautiful wares that fill this charming boutique, designer and owner Chloe Townsend employs local craftswomen as well as underprivileged women from the nearby townships to create fine leather goods, which include belts, bags, and jewelry.



A Night of Jazz with Mac McKenzie

Mac McKenzie is a master South African jazz musician and composer, a true genius. In the 1980s and '90s he was involved with the influential rock band The Genuines, which was suppressed by the regime at the time. An immense amount of creative energy was lost in the townships during that period of apartheid, but powerhouses like Mac prevailed, and today his passions include teaching township youth to play music. Micato can arrange an audience with the master for guests who are interested.



Rosie's Kitchen

Rosie has been running this nonprofit kitchen from a one-room shack in Khayelitsha Township for 19 years, and today, with the help of volunteers, she feeds hundreds of people every day. Micato is able to bring guests with food donations to meet Rosie and the people who benefit from her work. The Cape Town experience doesn't get more genuine and off-the-beaten path than this.



For more information and to book travel with Micato Safaris, visit micato.com