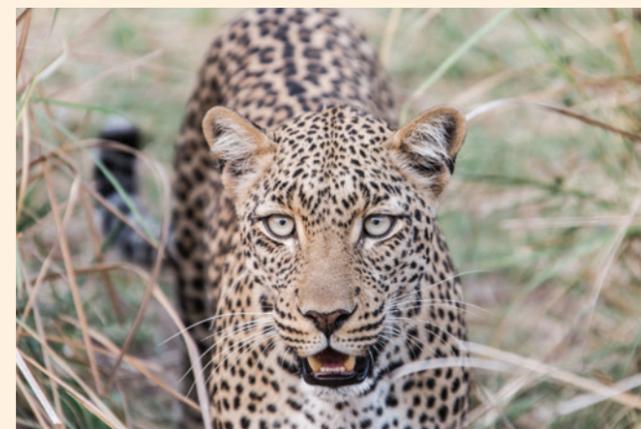




HONEYMOON

BOW & ARBOUR X DIWA ZAMBEZI

The creators of the coolest way to display your wedding photos are now offering amazing honeymoons that help to preserve Africa's most precious places and the animals that live in them. Safari, so good...



Words—Philippa Prentice

Portrait photography—
Nicole Le Roux

Wildlife photography—James
& Sammy Blevin



‘People think places like the Serengeti and Mana Pools National Park will always be there, but nothing could be further from the truth. Many African parks are known as ‘paper parks’, which means they’re scarcely more than a green patch on the map. The majority of African national parks are underfunded – to the tune of 97% in some instances.’

You might be meeting big animals on the world’s second-largest continent, but James Blevin reckons that on Bow & Arbour’s honeymoon safaris you’ll find it’s little things that count. “The star-bed on the roof of your chalet, the thread count of the sheets, the private plunge pool, the coffee from five countries, the cocktail you’ve never heard of, never being served the same meal twice. Okay, maybe they’re not so little!”

Born in Zimbabwe and now based on Australia’s Sunshine Coast with his Aussie wife Sammy, James couldn’t be prouder of Bow & Arbour’s newest venture. Already providing newlyweds with the chance to move beyond the usual photo albums with beautiful bespoke wedding zines, the entrepreneurial couple is now offering honeymoons with a difference too. They’re African safaris, but not as you know them, with all profits invested into conservation through James and Sammy’s own eco-tour company and fundraising charity, Diwa Zambezi.

“With a very talented band of photographers, we tell wedding stories through our Bow & Arbour wedding zines,” says James. “Now we’d like to help couples continue creating their stories through our honeymoons.”

James and Sammy visited Africa together for the first time in 2010 and have returned more than a dozen times since. “We’ve always maintained a close connection to the plight of African wildlife, and that feeling became strong enough in 2014 to start a charity,” says James.

Africa is a life-changing destination, but it’s under constant threat. “In order for Africa’s wild places and beings to survive, they need you to pay to go and see them,” says James. “Their greatest threat is the widely held belief that someone is looking after them. People think places like the Serengeti and Mana Pools National Park will always be there, but nothing could be further from the truth. Many African parks are known as ‘paper parks’, which means they’re scarcely more than a green patch on the map. The majority of African national parks are underfunded – to the tune of 97% in some instances.”

Diwa Zambezi is James and Sammy’s attempt to be part of the difference. The charity is raising funds to ultimately

acquire a wilderness concession in Southern Africa and operate as a non-profit wildlife tourism destination. “Quite simply, the more land that’s held for this purpose, the less is available for stocking, mining, resettlement and agriculture,” says James. “We’d see it as public-private partnership, where Diwa would be managing a national park on behalf of a government, principally because that government has no interest in doing so itself.”

In an industry saturated with options, Bow & Arbour’s unique safaris prioritise authenticity, quality and discovery. The couple themselves prefer less-travelled, remote destinations, so although their tours will take you to some of Africa’s most appealing places, you won’t be walking well-trodden paths. Hosted by James, Sammy or other expert guides, every honeymoon is bespoke, crafted from an extensive menu of amazing possibilities. Track a rhino in Zimbabwe, go diving in Mozambique, visit a village in Namibia, paddle with penguins in South Africa, or luxe it up in an opulent lodge near an ancient migration route in Botswana, where you’ll wake to a chorus of elephants, baboons and eagles.

The safaris are all-inclusive. “Although this concept is still quite foreign to Kiwi and Aussie travellers, it really is the best way to enjoy a honeymoon,” says James. “You can book and pay for your trip in advance, with every activity imaginable included if you want it to be – game drives, jet-ski safaris, hot-air-balloon rides, white-water rafting, surfing, fishing and hiking, to name a few. Combine that with excellent accommodation, meals and drinks, and the knowledge that your breathtaking honeymoon is serving a real purpose, and you have the makings of something very gratifying.”

Whatever epic experiences you opt to include on your itinerary, you can be sure there’ll be some special stays in the mix. “Sammy and I are quite well travelled and we’ve always maintained that no one does luxury quite like the Africans, whether in South Africa, Botswana or Kenya,” says James. “Imagine how well you’ll sleep after a day in the company of Africa’s megafauna, under the stars, in those magnificent sheets.” bowandarbour.com/honeymoons;diwazambezi.com



Quote (opposite)—James Blevin, Bow & Arbour