



WILDFILE

GETTING TO KNOW OUR FLORA AND FAUNA

Secrets of the bush

Some of Africa's top guides reveal some of the most intriguing flora and fauna you might encounter on a walking safari – and what makes them so mesmerising



ALLOTT/RENA

▲ Phumlile Mabuza, All Out Africa

Where Mbuluzi Game Reserve, Kingdom of eSwatini

"A snake is always exciting to spot. I recently caught a glimpse of a 3.8m southern African rock python in the midst of an afternoon meal: an adult impala! It is not common to spot a python in the Kingdom of eSwatini; they spend most of their time hiding, often in termite mounds. They catch and kill their prey by constriction and asphyxiation, tightening their grip every time the unlucky creature exhales. It will take weeks for it to digest the impala and the serpent will live for months on this one catch alone, probably the whole of winter."

Christine Coppinger, Remote Africa

Where Luangwa Valley, Zambia

"A wild dog hunt is particularly exciting to witness – if you can keep up! Their 'hooting' pre-hunt calls to each other are a thrilling sound and their effortless coordination during the lightning-quick pursuit of their prey is astounding. If, after doing your best to keep pace with the hunt, you manage to get on one of the pack members' nerves, you may even hear their short deep alarm bark sending shivers up your spine. These, for a lucky few, are unique experiences that enrich your life far beyond those wild moments."



Saruni Kilemel, Saruni

Where Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

"Horns of antelope are covered with keratins. But when an animal dies, you will find 'pillars' on its horns. This is a result of the activity of a moth called a 'horn moth' (*Ceratophaga vasatella*) of the Tineidae family. It simply amazes me that the caterpillar of this moth has the gut enzymes able to eat and digest the proteins in keratin!"

SARUNI

Douglas Nagl, Cottar's

Where Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

"One thing I really like to show my guests is a termite mound, and to explain to them how a termitary



works: the organisation, the usefulness to the ecosystem, the unique cooling mechanisms that regulate temperatures inside the mound. In addition, I love to explain the different digestive systems that animals have – the advantages of being a ruminant, and the short foraging radius required. And my favourite is to finish with the dung-splitting competition."



FUN FACT Just in case you're keeping a checklist: did you know that more than 1000 mammal species and 2300 bird species can be seen in Africa? All the more reason to keep going on safari!