

KRUGER UNTAMED

There's hardly anything tame about the Kruger National Park and thanks to hospitality group Motsamayi (the team that brought us the Kruger Shalati train), there's a new way to experience the untamed beauty of the wilderness. **BY JARED RUTTENBERG**

Krugers Untamed offers two seasonal camps, emerging in two distinct Kruger locations each year. They operate for only five months annually, after which everything is packed away and stored until the following season to allow the land to rest fully. These are the only camps in Kruger that operate on this basis. The seasonality is mainly dictated by weather – summer becomes too hot and there’s an increased risk of flash floods. The cooler winter months provide a more comfortable experience deep in the bush.

Motsamayi’s partners in realising the camps’ possibility are bush legends Alex van den Heever and Renias Mhlongo – you may have read the book *Changing a Leopard’s Spots*, which recounts their friendship forged in the wilderness. Alex describes the vision for Kruger Untamed: “Our vision has always been to create a place where we could take people tracking animals and immerse guests in true wilderness experiences.”

While most lodges offer this experience, at Kruger Untamed, much of the boundary between tame and wild is removed. During a recent visit to Kruger, I had the privilege of touring both camps.

TSHOKWANE RIVER CAMP

In the parking lot of Kruger’s Tshokwane rest camp, guide Simon greets us. After directing us to the secure car park, we leave our rental vehicle and board the game viewer. Within minutes, we leave the tar road behind and enter the private 17000-hectare concession. It’s always a privilege to leave the mass of Kruger and know that a significant stretch of pristine wilderness is exclusively yours.

Tshokwane was the first of the two camps to be established, with 2025 seeing its third resurrection. It’s the only camp between Satara and Skukuza, situated right in the heart of the park.

The signboard welcomes us, followed by a lively greeting from the staff. What becomes apparent quickly is that the spirit of camp life is defined by enthusiastic service. Upholding Motsamayi’s commitment to community development, many staff are new to hospitality. Where their experience was still growing, there was no shortage of genuine, heartfelt engagement.

The camp is perched on a high bank of the Ripape River, with the dining area descending to the boma and further down to a dry riverbed, where a stretch tent offers communal space, along with salas, loungers and a pool to beat the heat.

The tents extend from the sides of the camp, each with views into the dry riverbed. The veranda offers excellent wildlife spotting, with chairs angled towards the bush. Within the first hour, I’ve seen elephant, giraffe, bushbuck and kudu from the tent.





Inside, you're welcomed by a comfortable bed and dedicated luggage and dressing areas. The bathroom features an electric flushing toilet and mounted bucket showers. Hot water is boiled in a donkey boiler and when you're ready to shower, a team member prepares everything for you. It's stripped-back luxury, with all essentials included – power for charging devices and a radio to contact the lodge at any time.

Then of course, the game viewing on drives is plentiful – barely had driven far and already a host of species were ticked off our Kruger checklist. Perhaps Untamed's hero offering is the daily bush walks. Guided by trained rangers, the opportunity to traverse the land on foot is a rare privilege, allowing a surreal closeness to the environment.



SATARA PLAINS CAMP

Heading north, the second camp is situated a 30-minute drive from Satara rest camp. Once parked, guides were ready to load our gear and it was off to camp. Again, it was a warm welcome and within minutes the staff were already using our names – an appreciated personal touch.

Here, tents are nestled into the grassland, where waterbuck, zebra and other grazers pass near the fences – with lion, leopard and cheetah often close by. A perennial river nearby attracts game in search of water during winter.

The camp features a similarly large restaurant and beneath a magnificent Natal Mahogany tree is a relaxing deck. Adjacent to the deck are two hot tubs at different temperatures, perfect for cooling off – or some welcomed warmth on a cool night. The space is so tranquil that I forego two game drives to simply soak in the peace. The only sounds are occasional laughs from the staff quarters (a good sign indicating content staff) and the distant call of a playful elephant.

Kelly arrives, ready to take my evening meal order. Dining at Kruger Untamed is always a pleasure. For lunch, there are always two options and dinner offers double choices for starters or mains. After enjoying these creative, tasty meals, I remind myself that all of this is prepared in a bush kitchen, completely off-grid.



In an age where ‘sustainable’ and ‘eco’ are frequently added as labels to tourism, Kruger Untamed sets a new benchmark, recently earning a 100% compliance rating in its environmental audit – the first concession in Kruger National Park to achieve this.

Both Untamed camps have 30 tents, accommodating up to 60 guests if booked exclusively. Outside of event bookings, a maximum of 15 tents are used, ensuring a peaceful bush experience. We arrived just as some guests from a 40th birthday celebration were leaving and I couldn’t help but wonder how perfect this place would be for any special gathering or family reunion.

It’s a little sad to think that all of this would soon be packed away, leaving no trace that hundreds of guests had enjoyed this slice of wilderness. The consolation, of course, is that next year, the magic will return, ready to create hundreds more Untamed memories.

krugeruntamed.com

