



&BEYOND ANNOUNCES REFURBISHMENT OF WELL-LOVED ECO-LODGE

May 2023

Conservation-focused luxury travel company &Beyond has announced that one of its most iconic lodges, Phinda Forest Lodge, situated in &Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, is due to undergo an extensive rebuild. The property, which was lauded as one of the first true eco-lodges at the time of its construction, will be reimagined within the context of the contemporary luxury safari, while retaining subtle references to its original ‘Zulu-zen’ décor with a new elegant and minimalist interior design.

“&Beyond Phinda Forest Lodge was originally built in the early 1990s,” recalls Kevin Pretorius, &Beyond Managing Director for South Africa Lodges. “Back then, the lodge’s innovative and progressive design made a huge statement on sustainability, as it was sensitively constructed within the ancient sand forest with minimum impact at the heart of the project.”

Pretorius continues, “Phinda, which started as an amalgamation of denuded farmlands in 1991, has grown into an extensive conservancy at the cutting edge of conservation, a modern example of Care of the Land, Wildlife and People. What was only our second owned and operated lodge following the birth of the company at &Beyond Phinda will now be reborn.”

Interior designers Fox Browne Creative, who have previously worked on the refurbishments of the other five lodges on the reserve, are partnering with architectural designer Jack Alexander to reimagine and bring to life the new Phinda Forest Lodge in a design that will offer past guests the comfort and familiarity of one of their most loved lodges while also providing exciting improvements in room flow and functionality. Nestled inside 1 000 hectares (2 471 acres) of Africa’s last remaining dry sand forest in the north of &Beyond Phinda, the lodge embodies a commitment to minimise the impact on the environment. Its iconic rooms were built in perfect harmony with the existing flow of the forest and their design has stood the test of time. As such, the existing room structures will be used to redefine the new lodge in a way that will continue the legacy with which it was originally built.

“The sand forest is one of Phinda’s most distinctive and delicate habitats. It occurs on deep sands, the leftover fossilised dunes of an earlier coastline,” explains Pretorius. Many of the plant species encountered in sand forest can be found nowhere else on earth. Normally shy mammals such as the red duiker, suni and Tonga red squirrel are often encountered in sand forest, and the area is also rich in birds, with several species restricted solely to this habitat.

Due to the sensitivity of the habitat, the lodge refurbishment will utilise existing lodge and room structures to minimise impact associated with an entire rebuild, while also updating the architectural design and taking care not to detract from the essence of the lodge design and its original ‘Zulu-zen’ concept. Throughout the rooms and main guest areas, the interiors will be reimagined with new fixtures and finishes drawing inspiration from the surrounding sand forest, blending aspects of Japanese minimalism with an ode to local culture.

Elements of the natural forest and Zulu culture will be brought into the room through the use of tactile textures and natural materials such as woven matting, textured grass cloth wallpaper, and hardwood floors, with natural stone tiling in the bathrooms. The intention is to reconfigure the room within the existing structure, creating a

more comfortable layout that better utilises the existing space, while maximising the connection to the forest through wide open views.

Phinda Forest Lodge has always provided &Beyond guests with an exclusive, private experience immersed in the sand forest, and this will be enhanced through the redirection and reduction of pathways to and from the rooms. In order to assist with the rehabilitation of the old pathways, we have established a nursery which will cultivate sand forest tree species to be planted along the trails.

Major structural additions include a family suite, a library and lounge, a walkway with central fire pit linking the main area to the library, a newly reshaped and tiered pool, and significant upgrades to the main dining and bar areas. In keeping with the other lodges in &Beyond's portfolio, the family suite will comprise a contemporary designed and decorated standard suite linked to a newly built second bedroom, which can be accessed privately or through an additional linked passageway.

A new purpose-built building will contain the library and sitting room, centred around a reading table and double-sided fireplace with surrounding areas for guests to relax. Timber sliding doors will lead to an outdoor deck with its own shaded spaces, nestled among the trees with views of patches of forest and the wetland areas. The interior of the library and sitting room will combine elements of traditional Zulu culture with cosy minimalist elegance. A wooden walkway will seamlessly connect the library to a new pool area, which will include a reshaped and tiered swimming pool designed to maximize the scenic setting and timeless beauty of the sand forest. An all-new massage sala will also be constructed next to the pool.

Other innovative additions will include a central fire pit that will be located between the library and main area, cast out toward the wetland and offering guests the opportunity to indulge in a fireside chat before and after dinner.

"We are excited about the refurbishment of one of our most loved lodges, and we hope to welcome guests back to Phinda Forest Lodge as of 1 December 2023," says Pretorius.

"Phinda was where &Beyond's vision and impact model were born," he recalls. "Over the years, we have curated a set of unique, immersive experiences born out of this ethos, which guests at Phinda Forest Lodge will continue to have access to. These include experiences focused on the conservation of species such as white and black rhinoceros, as well as Temminck's ground pangolin, and a unique Zulu Village Tour which allows guests to ethically immerse themselves in traditional Zulu culture."

Phinda is also uniquely positioned to offer other extraordinary adventure activities like diving or ocean safaris at nearby Sodwana Bay. Depending on the season, guests may also be able to enjoy expeditions to admire turtles nesting along the Indian Ocean coastline.

With such a wealth and diversity of unique offerings, combined with the newly refurbished Phinda Forest Lodge, &Beyond are excited to continue bringing their guests experiences that go beyond the expectation of average luxury to leave our world a better place.

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ABOUT &BEYOND

Established in 1991, &Beyond strives to leave our world a better place through the delivery of extraordinary travel experiences and our care of the land, wildlife and people. We are bespoke tour operators for sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, South America and Antarctica. We also own and manage 29 extraordinary lodges and camps across three continents. We positively impact 75 communities and directly conserve our footprint of 1 million acres. Our 2030 vision is to scale our impact through partnerships to support the conservation of an associated 40 million acres of key biospheres and to double our 2020 impact investment, while offering discerning travellers a rare and exclusive experience of the world as it should be.