

Royal Malewane bush luxury at the very top of the food chain

 By [Brian Berkman](#)

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For those among us who only fly First or Business and are able to select from the best travel opportunities the globe offers as well as those who live frugally and save towards a trip of a lifetime to celebrate that special milestone, The Royal Portfolio of luxury properties, even at the top end of the price scale, delivers outstanding value and memorable experiences. No more so than at [Royal Malewane](#), their exclusive safari game lodge in the Thornybush Private Game Reserve, near The Kruger National Park's Orpen Gate and the town of Hoedspruit.



Here, with the exception of French Champagne, spa treatments, and gift-shop purchases, everything is included in the price. This all-in proposition is increasingly finding favour with top-end travellers who are often infuriated by being “nickel and dimed” by other deluxe offerings that may charge less for a room but at the end of the day end up being as or more costly. Royal Malewane is the only safari lodge to be awarded the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Blaizon for outstanding cuisine, facilities, and hospitality delivered to no more than 20 guests.

At Royal Malewane you will not only enjoy the insight of the most qualified and experienced field guides in the land but also a renewed focus on exquisite cuisine paired with the best South African wines. Suites are vast and all have private pools and sun and dining decks and a thatched covered Sala complete with cooling fan. Despite the elegant luxury, Royal Malewane suites are designed to effortlessly remove the barrier between outside and in with glass doors in the living area as well as the equally vast bathrooms that concertina back to make your suite one with the bush.



As game experiences are the primary focus of being in the bush, two daily Big 5 game drives with never more than six guests per Land Rover four by four vehicle are the highlight. Rest stops always include the opportunity for lavish refreshments from brewed coffee and home-baked treats with or without fortification at breakfast to cocktails at sundowners. Every aspect of the visit is one designed to delight you as a guest. There is a special pleasure to matching your Bloody Mary cocktail to the red bush sun or the sound of a classic iced Tonic and Gin in cut crystal sipped under an Acacia tree with elephants nearby.

Only bush sounds

Unless you've had experiences at other top-end lodges too, you will not appreciate the benefit of field guides using earpieces to communicate with other vehicles in the area. I've found the constant radio crackle annoying and disrupting of the natural sounds of the bush. Fortunately, as a Royal Malewane guest, you are forced to listen to nothing but the lions or anxious birds.



Three dining experiences

Guests should aim for a three-night or longer stay as there are three dining experiences which should not be missed. The Bush Dinner, capitalised to indicate the importance of the event, is, as the name suggests, dinner in the bush. At Royal Malewane, however, this takes place in a tented area where the surrounding Jackleberry trees are lit up with lanterns to welcome you directly from being out on an evening game drive and being handed a moist towel and glass of something

delicious.



A highlight for me is to listen to and even to dance with the staff who sing as we arrive, the flames of the nearby cooking fires rising to the heavens like their voices. Despite the fact that there is no electricity at this location and everything is cooked on open fires, magnificent feasts ensue. Most notable is that there is also a private nearby flush toilet and hand basin. Boma dinners are enjoyed around the fire pit under open skies to the sounds of frogs, crickets and distant lions while romantic and intimate dinners are served on the deck overlooking the waterhole at the main lodge.

The Waters at Royal Malewane, among the most exquisite spa and fitness centre you will find in the bush, has a 25-meter heated lap pool, fully equipped gym, spa suites and Moroccan Hamman-inspired day beds for relaxation. Fairly nearby the main lodge but beautifully private is Africa House, Royal Malewane's exclusive-use villa for you and up to 11 of your family and friends. There is even an outside room for your au pair or security detail. Guests at Africa House have the full Royal Malewane experience but with exclusive chefs, field guides and even spa suites in your villa.

Warm and hearty

As general manager Edward Morton puts it: "Service at all The Royal Portfolio properties is warm and hearty rather than stiff and starchy" and of all the things that make this property a market leader it is this: the luxury and game experience is overshadowed by being in the company of the most caring, warm and committed individuals you will encounter whose primary aim is to deliver the very best bespoke guest experience, bar none.

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