

Pumba in paradise

 By [Brian Berkman](#): contributing editor, travel

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Just a hop, skip and jump away from Grahamstown towards Port Elizabeth is Pumba Private Game Reserve.



"Good heavens, you're also as white as a sheet... Did I give you a fright?"

Created in 2004 as a project by conservationist Dal Howarth and hotelier Trevor Lombard, of the PE Hotel Group, work began to return the land to what it was like in the 1800's before it was first farmed by Piet Retief. Major alien-plant clearing and the reintroduction of animals, including The Big 5, which are endemic to the area, and over 3,000 head of antelope make it the very well stocked wildlife reserve it is today.

I especially like the fact that it is a malaria-free area and its proximity to Grahamstown, just a short while off the N2, makes it super easy to get to in a regular car. That is, of course, if a massive elephant isn't blocking your path. We were told

after that that Elephant was quite calm and would have given way to our Honda but we thought it prudent to reverse at speed and get out of its way.

Game on your doorstep, literally

Pumba, the name of the warthog in *The Lion King*, are everywhere to be seen. A group of about six were grazing next to the boardwalk as we approached our room and we were so focussed on seeing them and wondering about the reddish colour (which they get from the earth colour) that we didn't see a huge male nyala nibbling on the fynbos between us and our suite. We got a fright, the nyala got a fright and then the warthog ran off with their curly tails pointing the direction. Two close encounters within minutes of arriving.



Just the spot to relax after a hard day... of relaxing.

Our stay in the palatial Impala Suite was nothing short of amazing especially as we had our own pool and own large steam room. The suite has two bedrooms and two bathrooms and more showers than one can imagine. From our deck over the water we spied a family of hippos lazing on the opposite bank in the sun but from the loud sounds emanating from them at night they seemed really close. The next day we approached them on foot as part of a walking safari, which has remained one of the highlights of our stay.

Spoilt for choice



An amazing suite - with its very own steamroom as well.

The area there is vast and there are five biomes found at Pumba - fynbos, savannah, grassland, forest and subtropical thicket as well as two vastly different lodges, Pumba Water and Msenge Bush Lodge so you have the experience of being in almost entirely different environments on one game drive.

If a lodge's green credentials matter to you, and they should, you'll be pleased to know that the directors of Pumba have committed to the Green Leaf Environmental Initiative and their work to develop the population of white lion is much more to them than just having something to distinguish Pumba from its competitors.

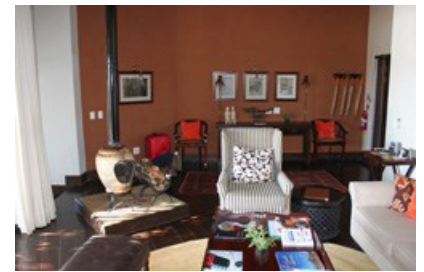
Time for a snack

I was impressed by the many personalised touches especially that the snack pack in our room took into account my sugar-

free diet. It isn't often I feel so well catered for.

The spa at Pumba is based at Bush Lodge so it is worth booking your treatment near lunchtime and having lunch at Bush lodge. That environment is more contemporary while Water Lodge is pretty traditional in terms of what you expect from game lodges with thatched overhangs and animal skins.

See www.PEHotels.co.za or phone +27 (0) 46 603 2000 to book.



The sitting room is well-appointed and that fireplace will take the chill off on a cool evening.

ABOUT BRIAN BERKMAN: CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, TRAVEL

Brian Berkman can be contacted on 083-441-8765 or email Brian@BrianBerkman.com.

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