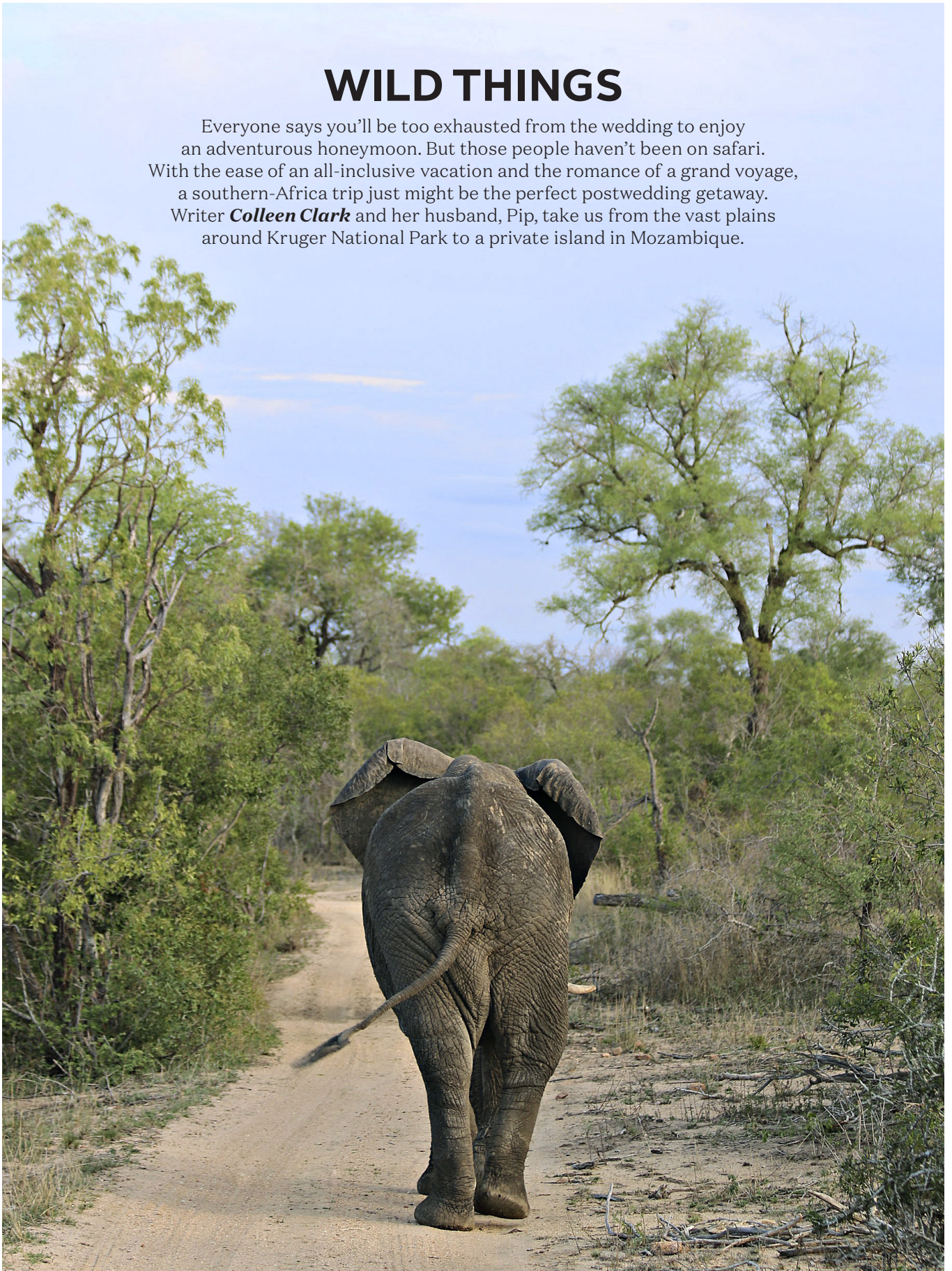


## WILD THINGS

Everyone says you'll be too exhausted from the wedding to enjoy an adventurous honeymoon. But those people haven't been on safari. With the ease of an all-inclusive vacation and the romance of a grand voyage, a southern-Africa trip just might be the perfect postwedding getaway. Writer **Colleen Clark** and her husband, Pip, take us from the vast plains around Kruger National Park to a private island in Mozambique.





A sitting room at Four Seasons Hotel The Westcliff, Johannesburg



Exterior look at Four Seasons Hotel The Westcliff

**DAY 1 | TOUCHDOWN JOHANNESBURG**

The trick to planning a relaxing honeymoon in Africa? Let someone else do the work. Because there are so many moving parts to a safari—national-park fees, confusing visas, bush flights—even the savviest travelers should let a professional handle the details. We used **Micato Safaris** ([micato.com](http://micato.com)), an outfitter that has been in the business for more than 50 years. They arranged to have someone meet us at our gate in Johannesburg, fast-track us through immigration, grab our bags, and whisk us to the **Four Seasons Hotel The Westcliff, Johannesburg** (from \$230 per person per night, [fourseasons.com/johannesburg](http://fourseasons.com/johannesburg)). Not having to use our brains after 24 hours in transit (and a year of wedding planning)? Worth. Every. Penny.

**DAY 2 | INTO THE WILD**

Richard Branson's safari property **Ulusaba** (from \$855 per person per night, all-inclusive; [virginlimitededition.com/en/ulusaba](http://virginlimitededition.com/en/ulusaba)) proves the adage that the journey can be as much fun as the destination. This journey involves a twin-engine bush plane gliding over herds of impala, a sun-drenched jeep ride, and a stroll over fairy-tale-worthy swing bridges. The destination? A treehouse suite perched above a dam where hippos and elephants come to bathe. In other words, the best view ever. It's tempting to hole up there (the minibar is stocked with Champagne), but we head out on our first game drive. The Big Five (game animals) are elusive, so we stop at a pretty view and toast the antelope below with a sunset gin and tonic.



A swing bridge at Ulusaba

“  
**The best part of South Africa in November? Baby-animal season!**  
 ”

**DAY 3 | THE CIRCLE OF LIFE**

The best part of visiting South Africa in November? It's still baby-animal season! Knock-kneed giraffes, mischievous monkeys, and naughty lion cubs cavort about, putting on a show as we explore the Sabi Sands Game Reserve. Our jeep speeds across the open plains and into a dense thicket, where we suddenly halt. Two tusks and a massive trunk come into view, curling around a branch and swiftly pulling down an entire tree to reveal a herd of at least 30 elephants. Because these giants see the safari jeeps as one large, peaceful animal, they pay us no mind, sauntering so close that we could (but don't!) reach out and touch them. Our jeep is alone with the herd for nearly an hour, something you're more likely to experience when booking a lodge in one of the private game reserves away from the massive crowds in Kruger National Park. We return to camp for an equally exciting surprise: the impromptu reception of two guests who decided to elope against a backdrop of giraffes and fireflies in the bush. The staff break out the good stuff: bottles of South African pinotage, chenin blanc, and cap classique.



A few of the locals

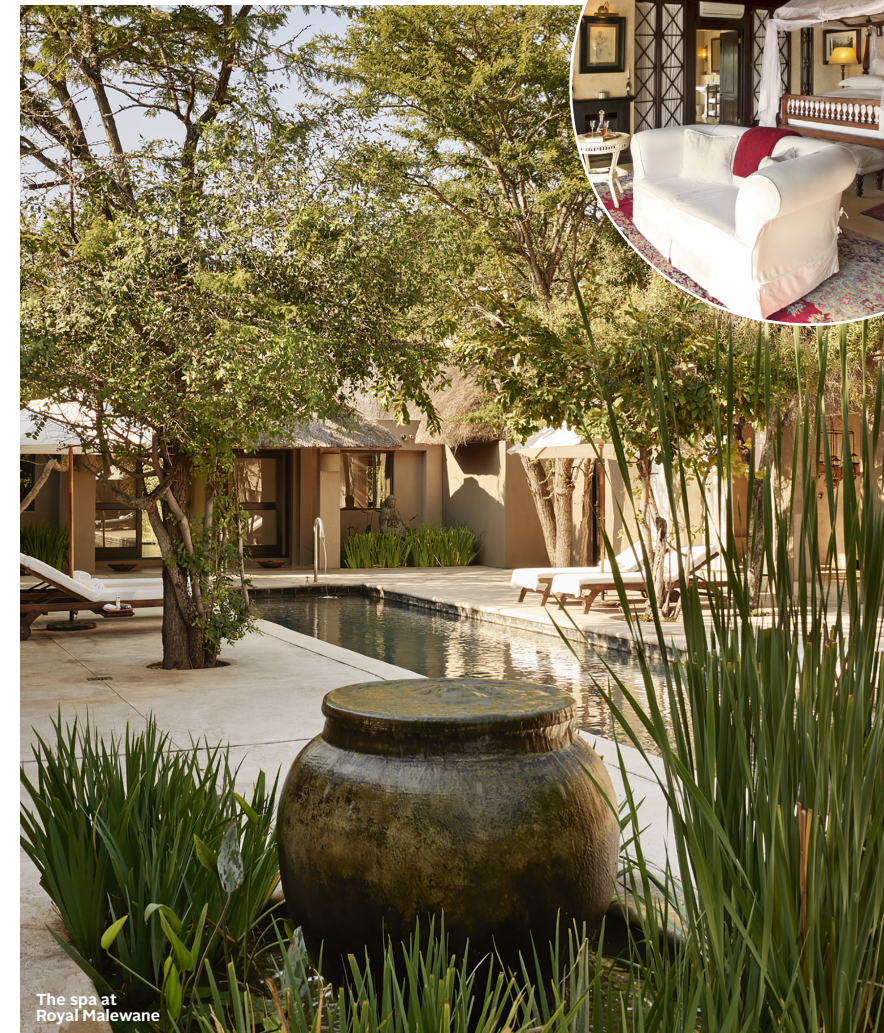


A villa bedroom at Royal Malewane

**DAY 4 |**

**THE ROYAL TREATMENT**

Here's a secret: The Instagram photos make it look like you're on a *National Geographic*-worthy expedition, but safaris are a delicious exercise in laziness. There's no researching where to eat dinner or how to get to the Eiffel Tower. All you have to do is hop in the jeep and let your guide and tracker show you the sites. The only decision you have to make is whether to spend the afternoon at the spa or the pool. We choose both on our first day at **Royal Malewane** (from \$2,130 per person per night, all-inclusive; [theroyalportfolio.com/royal-malewane](http://theroyalportfolio.com/royal-malewane)), an over-the-top lodge that has reportedly hosted celebs like Ellen DeGeneres, Bono, and Justin Bieber. Our villa has a private infinity pool, an open-air massage pavilion, three fireplaces, and a minibar that's anything but mini. Staying at more than one safari lodge allows you to experience different landscapes and groups of animals. And the old-world romance of Royal Malewane is a perfect counterpoint to the jaunty playfulness of Ulusaba.



The spa at Royal Malewane

“  
**Safaris are actually a delicious exercise in laziness.**  
 ”



The private infinity pool at a Royal Malewane villa

**DAY 6 | GETTING GROUNDED**

After we'd lived the high life for nearly a week, it was probably time for us to get our feet back on the ground. And we did... literally. A storm canceled our connecting flight, leaving us stranded overnight in a nondescript little town in South Africa. We did our best to salvage the day by getting a taste of the local food at a ChesaNyama grill house. The rowdy dive-bar-style restaurants have their own butcher shops where you purchase meat by the kilo, then have it grilled on a giant outdoor *braai* (barbecue), and eat it by hand with *mieliepap*, a maize porridge. The verdict? Delicious. But maybe not worth the missed day in Zambia!

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS, JOHANNESBURG (2); COURTESY OF MICATO SAFARIS (3)

COURTESY OF MICATO SAFARIS

**DAY 7 | FALLING FOR ZAMBIA**

Things look up when we arrive at the **Royal Livingstone Hotel by Anantara** (from \$500 per night, [royal-livingstone.anantara.com](http://royal-livingstone.anantara.com)), a stately oasis along Zambia's Zambezi River. We decide to brave the world's most terrifying swim, a pool on the edge of the raging waters of Victoria Falls. A boat speeds us past crocs and hippos, and we plunge into the cool, rushing river, swimming till we reach Devil's Pool, a natural infinity pool at the top of a sheer 355-foot drop. Calm takes over as we settle in and watch rainbows arching in the mist of the falls. We decide to up the stakes that afternoon with a flight on a microlight—basically a giant kite with a motor. Our pilot swoops low across Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, floats above elephants drinking in the river, and cuts off the engine above the falls. My breath catches as we soar in silence, gliding like a bird over the torrents and rapids. We need a drink or two to quiet the double helping of adrenaline, so we head to the candlelit hotel bar as a singer croons like Louis Armstrong, and zebras meander past in the setting sun.



A microlight over Victoria Falls



Zebras spotted from the Royal Livingstone by Anantara

A villa and private pool at Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort



The ocean at Anantara Medjumbe

“  
**We decide to brave the world's most terrifying swim.**  
 ”

**DAY 9 | ISLAND TIME**

We don't exactly excel at relaxing. If there's an activity to do, we'll do it. So we decide to maroon ourselves at the peaceful **Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort** (from \$929 per night, [medjumbe.anantara.com](http://medjumbe.anantara.com)), a private island off the coast of Mozambique. This is the stuff of honeymoon fantasies—think breezy boho villas with private pools that open onto your own stretch of sand. There are activities on offer: scuba diving, stand-up paddleboarding, sailing, snorkeling. We could go deep-sea fishing to catch our own dinner, but we've been lulled into a stupor by the gentle waves. The most we manage is a stroll from the ocean to the pool and back again.

**DAY 11 | HAPPY CASTAWAYS**

We stave off the end-of-honeymoon blues by sailing across the turquoise waters for a day on nearby Quissanga Island. We're the only two souls around, curling up on an antique carved daybed beneath a thatched cabana. Anantara's chef pops across at lunch-time, bearing the morning's catch of giant prawns and lobster, which we eat beneath swaying palms on the sand. We've officially mastered relaxation. And it's given us the space to absorb the sheer joy of it all—of finding each other, of our wedding day, of our luck in getting to share this adventure and all of the other adventures to come.



A cabana on Quissanga Island