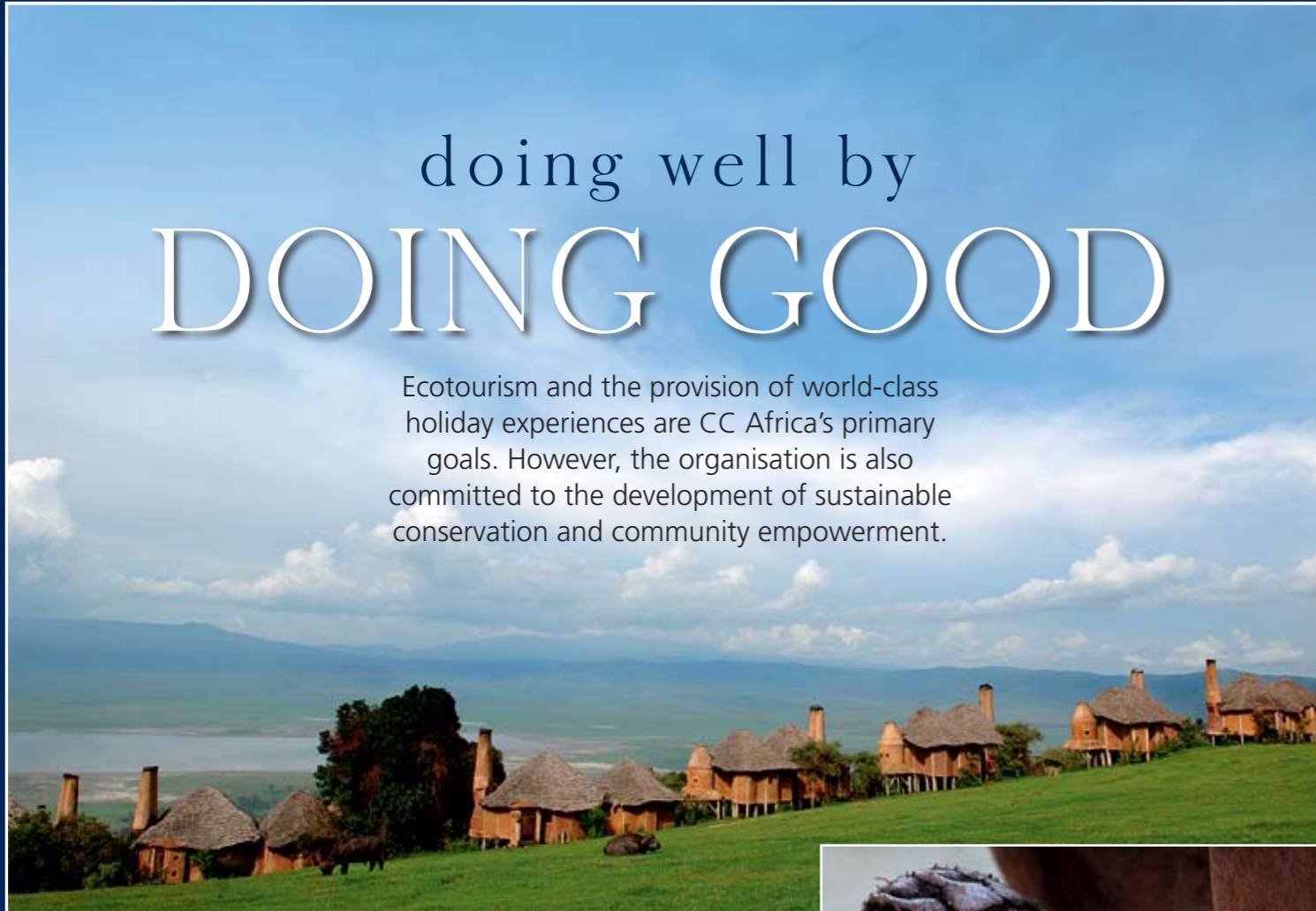


doing well by DOING GOOD

Ecotourism and the provision of world-class holiday experiences are CC Africa's primary goals. However, the organisation is also committed to the development of sustainable conservation and community empowerment.



Conservation Corporation Africa (CC Africa) is arguably the largest ecotourism business on the continent. Founded in 1990, the award-winning venture has gone from strength to strength, providing its guests with the opportunity to visit some 40 top wilderness destinations in six African countries. These include Phinda Private Game Reserve in South Africa, Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge in Namibia and Tanzania's Ngorongoro Crater and Mnemba Island lodges. With a platform recently established in India, CC Africa's ecotourism model is set to launch into Asia, North and South America.

CEO Steve Fitzgerald quotes tourist operators who praise CC Africa as the 'leading experiential team in the world'. For Fitzgerald and his colleagues, the company's focus is connecting people with wilderness. By exposing them to the continent's wildlife, cultures and places, CC Africa hopes to create 'Africa addicts'. It's a winning formula,

with more than one-third of all guests returning to CC Africa for a second visit. 'We like to make people fall in love with Africa and then fall in love with themselves all over again,' claims Debra Fox, group operations director.

Africa's wildlife, particularly the iconic big cats and elephants, are CC Africa's main attraction. But its trump card is Africa's people. A testimony in the CC Africa guest book, bears this out: 'We came for the animals, but it is the people of Africa who will bring us back.'

CARE OF THE LAND

CC Africa is committed to the care of Africa's land. Over the past 17 years, the organisation has restored the 23 000-hectare Phinda Private Game Reserve. Once degraded farmland, the area is now pristine. The Big Five have been re-introduced, and the reserve has been developed as a luxurious ecotourism destination. *Phinda* means 'return' in Zulu, and CC Africa has reclaimed the land for more than just wildlife.

In a ground-breaking land-claim settlement, of which the company is rightly proud, 9 500 hectares of Phinda have now been returned to the Makhasa and Mngobokazi clans, who were dispossessed of their land by apartheid laws. Africa Foundation development manager Isaac Tembe adds, 'Land ownership is an emotional issue. It's about the restoration of these communities' dignity.'

'We want to own the businesses, not the assets,' states Fitzgerald. In other words, the company wants to run the operation, not seize the land. In fact, CC Africa now leases land for several of its ventures in South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya from local communities.

CARE OF THE WILDLIFE

Since its inception, CC Africa has committed to using wildlife-based tourism to make a significant long-term contribution to the conservation of Africa's biodiversity. The organisation also supports several leading wildlife conservation NGOs.

'Most of Africa outside of the parks is used for livestock grazing. We've shown that, by restoring or maintaining wildlife numbers, we can increase the value of the land. That's a victory for both wildlife conservation and the local communities,' says Les Carlisle, group conservation manager.

The following wildlife achievements are especially noteworthy:

Black rhino. Phinda Private Game Reserve was selected by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife as a home for the endangered black rhino. In 2004, 16 rhinos were released, in 2005 the first calf was born and today they are thriving.

African wild dog. In 2004, wild dogs were released at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve in the heart of South Africa's Eastern Cape, the first of these rare canids to wander the Great Fish River valley for more than a century.

Green turtle. Mnemba Island, near Zanzibar, is a safe haven for the conservation of the endangered green turtle. CC Africa staff monitor all turtle-breeding activity from Mnemba Island Lodge.

Wattled crane. CC Africa guides at Sandibe and Nxabega in Botswana's Okavango Delta monitor wattled cranes to learn about the population dynamics and ecological needs of this endangered species.

Indian gaur. In 2008, CC Africa will oversee the re-introduction of the Indian gaur, the largest of all wild cattle, to Bandhavgarh National Park. ▶



ABOVE When Phinda Private Game Reserve was selected by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife as a home for endangered black rhinos, CC Africa released 16 of these pachyderms into the sanctuary.

OPPOSITE, TOP Like other CC Africa Lodges, Ngorongoro Crater Lodge combines high-quality accommodation with a steadfast commitment to its staff and members of the local community.

OPPOSITE A Himba girl. Guests on CC Africa's safaris to northern Namibia, home of the Himba people, can arrange to visit one of these nomadic communities.

CARE OF THE PEOPLE

'Conservation will work when life with live rhinos is worth more than life without them,' says Fitzgerald. 'Ultimately, conservation is about people, not about wildlife.' People are very important to CC Africa, whether in the form of guests, staff or the communities in which they work. Wilna Beukes, the company's marketing manager, emphasises that conservation cannot exist without communities, and that the expectations of both guests and the community stakeholders must be met.

SUSTAINABILITY

'We're not all about bathtubs and bedrooms,' adds Claire Howse, CC Africa's sustainability director. Here, the mantra is to take less and give more. 'There is a point at which we can use less water and energy, and create less waste, and still run a profitable business.'

Howse points to the environmental accountability of each lodge through a green audit. At each of its travel destinations, even at its headquarters in Johannesburg, a band of CC Africa staff members gathers to form a 'Green Team'. These volunteers raise environmental awareness among other staff members and make sure that environmentally friendly policies are adopted and followed. Each year, the Green Teams compete for the company's Getty Green Lodge Award.

However, the organisation's real pleasure in sustainability lies with the community. 'We have fantastic community relations,' says Howse. Ideas come from throughout the company. 'Take the gardener at Ngorongoro Crater Lodge,' she adds. 'He started planting trees and, after 30 000 trees, his project is still going strong.'

'And there's the chef at Lake Manyara Tree Lodge in Tanzania, who proposed using wet waste to start a pig-breeding programme. Or the community members at Kichwa Tembo Camp in Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve, who have been taught beekeeping. Their hives provide a good cash income.'

The examples are legion. Every CC Africa destination has a unique opportunity to give something back to the land and its communities.

WELLNESS PROGRAMME

'Our biggest asset is our people,' reflects wellness manager, Elsje van Wyk, 'and we realised that our staff were dying.' The main culprits were HIV/Aids, TB and malaria.

In 2003, CC Africa started its staff wellness campaign, based on the Positive Living programme implemented by South Africa's longest-living HIV survivor, David Patient, and Neil Orr. Created to empower people, the



programme taught employees and the communities about the diseases, and about better nutrition, self-help and motivation. In 2007, van Wyk and her colleagues instituted two key motivational programmes. 'Sing for Life' is a celebration of communities through song; 'The Goal is Life' is a sport-based motivational tool. 'To win a game of soccer, you try to score a goal; to win the game of life, you need to have a goal,' is her motto. By empowering its people, CC Africa is empowering conservation.

AFRICA FOUNDATION

Founded in 1992, the Africa Foundation is CC Africa's social development arm. 'Our close relationship with CC Africa extends to the organisation's guests,' says Africa Foundation managing director Dominick Marshal-Smith. 'Visitors are aware that conservation goes beyond fences,' he says. CC Africa hopes that encouraging guests to engage with the

ABOVE Staff members at Grumeti River Camp in Tanzania. In keeping with their policy of giving back, CC Africa's lodges employ and train people from local communities.

OPPOSITE, TOP The 'Sing for Life' concert, held in Johannesburg in January, celebrated cultures through song.

OPPOSITE Horseriding at Phinda. The reserve incorporates some 23 000 hectares of wilderness, with seven distinct habitats and seven world-class lodges.

community will open their eyes to the inextricable link between people and conservation.

The focus of the Africa Foundation is the socio-economic development of rural populations living in or near conservation areas in which CC Africa operates, such as the Kruger and Serengeti national parks. To this end, many successful community empowerment projects have been launched. Currently, the foundation manages six major programmes and more than 80 smaller projects in South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

'We're not working for communities, we're working with them,' says Marshal-Smith. The distinction is profound, although its implementation remains a challenge. 'How do you give something without offending a community? We want to empower people through conservation, not generate a dependency on us.'

The formula they've developed is straightforward. In collaboration with a community, the Africa Foundation will identify its needs, raise funds and implement projects to advance the fields of education, healthcare and income generation. Through education, people are able to enhance the quality of life for themselves and their community, and the Africa Foundation assists in all aspects, from the building of preschools to vocational training and adult education programmes. The foundation also builds and equips local clinics, supports their operation, runs HIV/Aids-awareness programmes, provides healthcare counselling, and helps to provide clean water. Through the DevCentre (an acronym for Digital Eco-Village Centre) project, the Africa Foundation aims to bridge the digital divide by linking rural communities to the latest technological, educational and medical services. ■



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