

# TATLER<sup>®</sup>

## *Travel Guide 2020*

*The 101 best hotels in the world*





# Walk on the wild side

*Swimming elephants, soaring raptors and wolves at the window: these luxurious lodges are completely wild at heart*

## SINGITA KWITONDA LODGE *Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda*

It's not every day that a president invites a civilian to become part of one of the greatest comeback stories in Africa, but that's exactly what Rwanda's Paul Kagame did. He knew that if anybody could raise the bar in turbo-luxe sustainable tourism in his country it was Singita's visionary founder, Luke Bailes. What clinched the deal was that Singita Kwitonda is the only property abutting Volcanoes National Park – location, location, location, as they say – with direct views of three of the volcanic peaks and easy access to the park's headquarters. Every morning, groups of no more than eight set out from here to find their assigned family of gorillas. The opening of Singita's new addition, a boldly scaled eight-suite lodge and a sole-use villa, Kataza House, has made primate trekking in the park's high-altitude cloud forests a seamless addition to a classic Serengeti safari. Local river stones, volcanic rock, bamboo, eucalyptus and handmade, clay-fired red bricks – sourced or produced locally in the district – add Rwandan craftsmanship and authenticity to the interiors, while fiery, molten lava tones saturate cocooning

spaces for post-trek relaxation. The suites (cosy, self-contained refuges for two) sport double glazing, indoor and outdoor fireplaces, a heated pool, library, an iPad pre-loaded with field guides and Netflix, a generously stocked pantry, and a bathroom so big that it doubles up as a massage room. Nourishing, earthy and plentiful food is served as a series of small plates – there are crunchy salads or root vegetable soups and fall-off-the-bone lamb on unctuous risotto – in your own suite, on the verandah or at the kitchen pass with the chefs. Fresh produce comes from the lodge gardens and surrounding agricultural plots, and the on-site Akarobo Nursery supplies indigenous saplings as part of an intensive reforestation programme to increase the habitat of the mountain gorilla. Singita has thought of everything, from the rare South African vintages in the wine cellar to the gear room with all the kit you need for trekking, biking and, come 2020, hiking up to the state-of-the-art Dian Fossey primate research centre funded by Ellen DeGeneres, a diehard Singita fan. *Scott Dunn (scottdunn.com) offers four nights as part of a seven-night trip, from £9,700, including flights, transfers and a gorilla trekking experience.*

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