

ADVENTURES IN GOING NOWHERE

Jay Roode extols the virtue of seeking out emptiness

There comes a point when the greatest luxury is no longer comfort, but space.

Not the space inside a beautiful hotel, or between appointments, but the immeasurable space of an empty horizon. The kind that asks nothing in return.

When the world begins to close in — the snarl of traffic, the relentless pace of modern life, the endless stream of notifications, opinions and commitments — I find myself craving the simplest of adventures.

That of going nowhere.

It seems absurd that we should travel thousands of miles in search of nothing. Yet perhaps nothing is exactly what we've all been missing.

For me, that place is Namibia.

Its immense landscapes refuse to be held in the mind all at once. Faced with such vastness, our instinct to make sense of everything quietly falls away, allowing thoughts to become slower, gentler... and to even disappear altogether.

Namibia's vistas are so ancient that they seem absent-mindedly indifferent to your presence. They neither welcome nor reject you. And strangely, it is this indifference that feels so liberating. Freed from the world's obligations, we become wonderfully present to ourselves.

Some places aren't here to welcome you so much as to strip you back — to pare away the noise until all that remains is yourself. And that, in its own austere way, is the greatest hospitality of all.

Finding peace

SPACE — AND WHAT YOU DO WITH IT — IS THE CALMING BALM THAT AFRICA OFFERS IN ABUNDANCE. IT IS BECOMING A MORE CONSCIOUS PRIORITY FOR BUSY TRAVELLERS, AND RIGHTLY SO, SAYS **JENNY BOWEN**

Emerging from my room, I stood outside in the African bush. There was silence. Silence from hooting car horns and the cacophony of human conversations, from trilling phones to whirring fridges and from tannoys to grinding truck gears — respite from anything man-made. It was just me and nature.

I felt myself relax. My breathing slowed, my heartbeat became less frenetic, my muscles softened. I raised my face to the sun and smiled. Four warthogs snorted and scampered past, tails erect like little aerials. I was at peace.

I was in Dombeya Game Reserve, Eswatini, a delightful sanctuary with three self-catering villas thoughtfully positioned so you feel as if you are alone. There is something special about this: the solitude and the grounding connection to nature; the space to simply be.

In the African wilderness, the opportunities to get away from distractions abound. Nature gives you permission to appreciate the space you're in. Most lodges understand this. Many are now removing Wi-Fi access in rooms to encourage time for private solitude, instead only providing connectivity in communal areas.

When guiding groups on safari — and particularly when walking in the bush — I often ask guests to find some space to stand by themselves and to be mindful and silent for maybe 10 minutes. For some this seems an extraordinary

amount of time, and it often takes them the first three minutes to get over feeling uncomfortable. For others it comes naturally to be quiet and to do nothing, to simply take in their surroundings.

This creates the opportunity to be solely in the present. It is such a powerful exercise that I have learned from leading safaris for the visually impaired — that stilling the mind and listening to your surroundings can be so enlightening.

Try it when you are next in Africa, regardless of your environment. Be still and do nothing for 10 minutes, and see how rejuvenated you feel.

There are more obvious places where you can attain a feeling of space, escape distractions and immerse in nature, such as the serene waterways of the Okavango in Botswana, sleeping out under the stars in Namibia or sitting on the deck of your tent overlooking the Zambezi River in Mana Pools, Zimbabwe. But wherever you are, there are pockets of space ready to embrace you.

In Africa you move in nature. Connecting with it feels wonderfully close and personal. You step into a softer, slower kind of being, sharing the landscape with wildlife roaming freely across open plains. Making the most of this opportunity feels both grounding and quietly extraordinary — a reminder of why we are drawn back here time and again. 