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House & Home

Safari Chic: Wild Exteriors and Polished Interiors of Africa
Bibi Jordan
Gibbs Smith
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Whispering the word “safari” can release soothing images of an exotic continent locked away in the hearts of travelers fortunate enough to experience an uncommon journey to this realm or satisfied to be swallowed up by expeditions portrayed in classic films and books. No matter the scenes, scents, and symbolism one remembers or imagines when the word is heard, the place synonymous with a safari is Africa.

Africa is the setting of Safari Chic, a book that serves as a guide for do-it-yourselfers and professional decorators intent on capturing the look of a safari base camp in their home or someone else’s. To ensure its place as a quintessential guide, Safari Chic whisks readers to the unexpectedly warm and inviting safari camps and game lodges scattered across the wilds from Kenya to South Africa, where one discovers that adventurers can sample life in the bush without sacrificing the elegant amenities that bolster both body and soul.

Africa’s alluring vistas and safari sites are splashed liberally on page after page of vivid prose and engaging photographs as author and photographer Jordan imparts the history, mission, and structural and interior design of assorted camps and lodges to give readers an intimate look at Africa. “Rising with the sun, I saw the barely visible outline of Mt. Kilimanjaro etched in the sky like a Zen painting. Floating above a translucent stroke of mist, its snow-capped peak reflected the pink rays of dawn, beckoning me like a landlocked lighthouse to climb the mountain Queen Victoria gave as a gift to her German cousin.”

Among the camps showcased is Cottars’ Camp in Kenya, modeled after the fly-camps used to entertain guests in the 1920s by the first American White Hunter Chas Cottar. Canvas baths, showers, drop-toilets, four-poster beds draped in mosquito netting, and various provisions characterize Cottars’ Camp, while heirloom antiques and champagne add to the ambience.

Another camp that is profiled is the Matetsi Safari Camp in the Zambezi National Game Reserve in Zimbabwe, one of more than twenty camps operated by Conservation Corporation of

Africa. Called a “tent en suite” for its upgraded conveniences, the camp is said to deliver a classic safari experience via tented ceilings, animal-print fabric, solid timber center posts, porcelain bathtubs, overhead fans, and cream-colored walls adorned with African art.

Readers are shown precisely how to attain in their homes the look of these and other safari camps in the final chapter, where the author teams up with decorator and caterer John Tripp. Using mosquito netting, storage trunks, a canvas canopy, Balinese folding chairs, a Malabar lantern, wooden giraffes, a chandelier, and other items unearthed in U.S. stores and on the Internet Tripp recreates the settings that permeate Safari Chic.

Dorothy Goepel