

Tracks, Tales And Family Ties In The Waterberg

Deep in the untamed beauty of the Waterberg, LETAMO at QWABI Private Game Reserve is reimagining the bush as a place not just for game viewing, but for shaping young minds and rekindling family bonds

BY RYAN ENSLIN

In the heart of the Waterberg, tucked away in South Africa's Limpopo province, lies a rugged wilderness of rolling hills, ancient rock formations and untamed natural beauty. Although renowned for its thriving wildlife, rich biodiversity and malaria-free safaris, this UNESCO-declared savannah biosphere is now gaining recognition as an off-the-beaten-path haven for budding conservationists, with LETAMO at QWABI Private Game Reserve leading a new wave of multi-generational travel: the family safari. These adventures bring together wildlife, education and quality family time, echoing similar global trends toward sustainable, multi-generational travel.

LETAMO transforms the bush into a classroom for eager minds. "We love being the ones to guide a young person on their first bush experience," shares Dane Johnsen, LETAMO lodge manager. Here in the Waterberg, Dane and his team of specially trained guides are shaping experiences rooted in hands-on learning, designed to ignite a lifelong sense of environmental responsibility in conservationists-to-be.

Integral to this approach is the pack each child receives from the lodge at the start of their journey. This includes animal and bird checklists, a spoor-tracking guide, stimulating nature-based puzzles and space to sketch what they encounter when out on a game drive. Rhino collaring information is also shared in the pack, as the children are guided towards a conservation-first approach to age-appropriate fun in the bush. "Our guides engage with the young guests on their level, often stopping to point out spoor or identify a bird," shares Dane. "Their checklists are usually filled with information upon departure," confirms head guide Damien Fourie.



Specially trained guides shape experiences designed to ignite a lifelong sense of environmental responsibility. **Opposite page:** LETAMO transforms the bush into a classroom for eager minds.



JUST AS THE SPA NURTURES THROUGH THE HEALING RHYTHMS OF THE LAND, DINING AT LETAMO IS A CONTINUATION OF THIS SENSORY JOURNEY.

The impact of this approach is clear – it cultivates genuine family connection. Removed from screens and the pace of daily life, families rediscover each other in the stillness of the bush. They share game drives, tick off sightings together beneath fiery sunsets and bond over laughter at dinner tables set deep in the bush. “This outdoor learning space is a window for exploration and learning through doing,” points out Dane.

While out on a game drive, eco-warriors are given the opportunity to identify a spoor they would like to cast. With the necessary materials on hand, the guide makes a cast right there in the bush. Having dried overnight, young eyes have been known to glow the following morning when the cast is handed back to them, a keepsake from their time at LETAMO.

The emphasis on unplugged, nature-based experiences aligns with growing

research in the field of human-computer interaction. A recent study by Kawas et al, involving 15 families, with 23 children aged 8 to 12, revealed that time spent in nature can significantly reduce screen-time tensions between parents and tweens, a time when independence starts to assert itself. In an age where digital devices often dominate daily routines and family interactions, shared experiences in the bush can offer an essential counterbalance.

The study found that nature-based activities foster stronger communication, co-operation and emotional connection among family members, particularly in the tween years. When immersed in the sensory richness of a game drive, children become fully present, engaging with the world around them rather than the digital one in their hands.

At lodges like LETAMO, this intentional approach naturally displaces

the pull of screens without needing strict rules or digital-detox mandates. Instead, the bush becomes the medium through which deeper bonds are formed, curiosity is sparked, and children learn to pay attention to something far bigger than themselves. It’s a gentle recalibration of focus, where attention is reclaimed not through restriction, but through meaningful connection.

Beyond child-centric game drives in the Waterberg, LETAMO delivers all the refined luxuries discerning guests have come to expect from a property of this calibre. The beauty of nature continues into the Wellness Spa at LETAMO, where a sanctuary of indulgence and serenity inspired by the spirit of the bush awaits. A curated menu of treatments boasts local herbs, natural earth elements and plant-based extracts to uplift both body and soul.

PHOTOGRAPHS: RYAN ENSLIN, SEAN GIBSON

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Just as the spa nurtures through the healing rhythms of the land, dining at LETAMO is a continuation of this sensory journey. From breakfasts to generous high teas and African dinners, each meal is crafted as an extension of the bush experience. The culinary team honours local traditions, bringing bold flavours and soulful storytelling to the plate. It’s food that restores, delights and lingers in memory.

Not to be left out, the LETAMO Kids’ Club offers a home base for little explorers, a welcoming space where they can unwind between bush adventures, under the supervision of the trained Kids’ Club team. Here, games and toys spark imaginative play, while activities, like clay modelling and crafts, keep curious minds engaged. For quieter moments, there’s a cosy corner for storytelling or screen time. Outside, a jungle gym and kids’ pool offer the perfect setting for carefree fun under the African sun.

Family safaris at LETAMO at QWABI Private Game Reserve are fostering powerful, regenerative journeys, blending shared discovery, active conservation, education and deeply meaningful multi-generational bonding. From kid-focused guides to authentic engagement, the approach is both purposeful and emotionally resonant. A shift from passive tourism to experiences that inspire the next generation of environmental stewards. One safari at a time. 🦒



SCAN TO BOOK
LETAMO AT QWABI
PRIVATE GAME RESERVE