



PURVEYORS OF CLASSICAL RESULTS-DRIVEN PR

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## **PRESTIGIOUS ACCOLADES AWARDED TO LOCAL PRIVATE GAME RESERVE**

*Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2010*

Three of the world's most prestigious international travel accolades have been awarded to Lion Sands Private Game Reserve, a trio of luxury lodges near the Kruger National Park.

The awards are determined by members of the travel industry and travellers themselves, giving a huge vote of confidence to the experience, standards of luxury and personal pampering that guests from around the world receive in this exclusive part of Africa.

- \* The first award sees Lion Sands chosen as the overall winner in the World Luxury Hotel Awards in the category for the most luxurious game lodge, beating four other finalists.
- \* In a second accolade, Tatler magazine has selected Lion Sands as one of its elite 101 Best Hotels.
- \* Completing the hat-trick is the ranking of Lion Sands as 24<sup>th</sup> in the 500 World's Best Hotels, as selected by readers of Travel & Leisure magazine.

"There are many awards in the travel industry but I'd certainly categorise all three of these as within the top five," says Robert More, who co-owns Lion Sands with his brother Nick. "In tourism now you are constantly being reviewed by customers through online forums. Sometimes it's a thankless industry, so for the staff this is very much a sign of their success because the industry and our customers are telling us we are doing a good job. Our staff makes sure that clients have an incredible experience and this international recognition makes them feel it's worth the extra effort. It really makes the extraordinary work we put in so much more worthwhile."

Lion Sands is made up of three separate but equally luxurious bases: Ivory Lodge, River Lodge and 1933 Lodge, all offering a world class luxury safari experience. More is particularly delighted by the Travel & Leisure Award, describing it as the most prestigious of the trio. "It's important because Travel & Leisure awards are based on customer reviews so it's not influenced by a panel of judges, but by people who have stayed here," he says.

The 2009 World Luxury Hotel Awards highlights the very top hotels that have taken the extra step with regards to their facilities and service excellence. Marinique Truter, executive manager of the awards, said: "I firmly believe that a World Luxury Hotel Award is the highest accolade that a hotel can receive, because it says more about the property than any brochure can communicate, any picture can portray and any personal testimonial can express. Despite the global economic recession, our winners have survived and even thrived. They



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have seen challenges as opportunities and are leading the way as industry leaders.”

In the Tatler award, the magazine ranks Lion Sands as a “showstopper” in its January edition. Lion Sands is one of only four properties in South Africa to make the grade of 101 Best Hotels. The kudos was earned by Ivory Lodge, about which Tatler says: “Against the heavy-duty look of much of the Kruger this place is a fresh glass of lemonade. Simple, modern, with your own bedroom, pool, outdoor deck and sitting room, it's big villa-living right out in the wild. Utterly romantic - you can even get your morning coffee delivered through a hatch so you don't have to get out of bed. Ivory Lodge puts you exactly in the right spot - the wildlife is busy staring you in the face.”

Tatler had ranked Ivory Lodge as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Best Hotel in the World in 2006, and it also made the 2007 listings, so More is delighted to be included once again. The third award sees Lion Sands debut in the listings by Travel & Leisure, a magazine published by American Express, so storming in at number 24 is an enormous achievement. The award encompasses all three Lion Sands lodges, and particularly recommends that readers try the “striking glass-walled villas” at Ivory Lodge or spend a night in the romantic, open-air Chalkley Treehouse.

Ivory Lodge is ultra-luxurious and exclusive, yet simple and uncluttered. Each private villa has a own heated swimming pool and guests can relax on the magnificent River Island Deck or tone up at the Lalamuka Health Spa and gymnasium. Elephants bathing in the river, zebra, wildebeest and Nile crocodile are your only neighbours.

River Lodge on the banks of the Sabie River faces due east to catch the sun as it rises over the Kruger National Park. Yet its 18 luxurious thatched bedrooms provide respite from the Lowveld heat with indoor and outdoor showers and viewing decks.

Nick and Rob More are the great grandsons of Guy Chalkley, who first settled in the Kingstown Game Reserve in 1933. The 1933 Lodge has four spacious suites with private views of Sabie River, with the added luxury of a private chef and ranger, and exclusive use of a Land Rover for game drives.

The reserve has been owned by the More family for four generations, and the family is committed to preserving this pristine bushveld and ensuring local communities share the benefits. The company employs a full time ecologist to help preserve the land.

Lion Sands lodges were barely affected by the recession, More says, but these awards should ensure that the coming year is even more successful. “Your brand



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is built up by these listings and the awards influence the US and UK markets in particular." Americans frequently pay close attention to the rankings and select their holiday accordingly to ensure they experience the very best a country has to offer.

Ask what he believes makes Lion Sands most distinctive, and More immediately says "our passion". Every top-notch African game lodge must boast the Big Five, excellent food and luxurious surroundings, he says. "What people remark on the most are our people. That's where you create the difference between excellent and unforgettable. There is sincerity and service and a real willingness to give that once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Except visitors to Lion Sands are clearly so smitten with the experience that once in a lifetime will never be enough.

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Word count: 997 words

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