



Guests can experience authentic Shangaan community tours September 2009

For decades, visitors to Sabi Sabi have been intrigued by the local Shangaan culture and customs of nearby villages. Stories are shared by the many Shangaan staff members who call the private game reserve home; with their rich heritage, in-depth knowledge of the bushveld and local legends adding a fascinating dimension to a memorable safari.

Now guests are able to gain even more insight into authentic village life by taking part in a tour of neighbouring communities during their stay at Sabi Sabi. Homes, schools, community centres and sports facilities are participating in the tour; and the proceeds from the small fee levied to guests all go directly back to the community.

Sabi Sabi liaison officer, Lodrick Manyathele, uses the transfer time from the lodge to the first stop at Mazinyane Pre-School to give some background to local architecture, agriculture, religion, arts and crafts, food and the like. Many of the places visited have links to Sabi Sabi either through staff family members working or living there or their having been supported by the company over many years.

Elders and residents have opened their village to the tour, and welcome visitors for an authentic view on Shangaan life in Lillydale. Guests will also hear the strains of the local choir practising or drummers learning a new beat. Entertainment groups (singer, drummers, dancers) from neighbouring villages are a regular fixture at Sabi Sabi – a further example of the company's commitment to supporting local communities.

A favourite stop on the tour is the local *sangoma* (herbalist) who enjoys special stature in village life and is regularly called on for advice, healing and blessings.

At each stop on the tour, guests are welcome to take photographs to cement the memories of an enriching and enlightening visit.

The tour starts at 10h30 with collection at your lodge and runs for 2 hours, through the Lillydale community. Visits to the Mazinyane pre-school, the *sangoma* and Swa-Vana care centre are part of the tour. Your tour concludes under the Marula tree outside the Induna's (Chief) house, while being entertained by the voices of the local choir. Your trip back to the lodge is a chance to reflect on the experience and ask further questions from your Shangaan tour guide.

Notes:

- Sabi Sabi is bordered by local the Shangaan villages of Huntingdon, Lillydale and Justicia. The majority of its staff members come from these areas.
- Since its opening 30 years ago, Sabi Sabi has formed partnerships with local communities in support of schools, sports facilities, cultural activities and the like.
- Sabi Sabi has a community programme that includes education (child and adult), healthcare, sport, culture and conservation programmes.
- The community tour charge for 2009 is R290 per person (around US\$40) and all proceeds revert to the community.

For more information contact Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve on **(011) 447 7172**.