

7 NIGHTS BUSH, BEACH & LAKES – SELF DRIVE

2 nights Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge
3 nights Thonga Beach Lodge

2 nights Kosi Forest Lodge

**KWAZULU
NATAL**



1: Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park

Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge is situated within a 3.5hr drive from King Shaka International Airport and a 1.5hr drive from Richards Bay Airport; situated on the western boundary of Africa's oldest proclaimed Game Reserve Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, Northern KwaZulu Natal. Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge is the only private lodge within the park. With its four star accommodation, guests are offered spectacular scenery and excellent safari opportunities within the heart of Big 5 territory.

On arrival at Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge you will be greeted by a refreshing drink and welcomed by our friendly team who will give you a short orientation of the lodge and its facilities before showing you to your accommodation. After a quick refresh, we will be waiting to serve you high tea on the veranda at the main lodge which offers spectacular views over the entire reserve.

Here you will meet your guide who will prepare you for your first safari experience offering some useful pointers about the 'do's and don'ts' of the bush. By now you will be eager to board your safari vehicle to explore the magnificent hills and valleys of the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. At sunset your guide will take you to a special spot to enjoy drinks and snacks where after you will travel into the night looking for nocturnal creatures like leopards, owls and jackals. When you get back to the lodge you will be given time to freshen up for dinner and then enjoy superb cuisine on the dining deck or in the restaurant. Sit around the fire late into the night discussing the day's sightings and legendary tales of Africa against a backdrop of a million stars.

2: Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge

After an early morning wake-up, fresh coffee, tea and rusks (a South African tradition!), everybody departs with the guides for an early morning game drive. Be sure to have a jacket and scarf as it can get really chilly on the open 4x4 vehicle. Sunscreen, hats and sunglasses will also be needed for later in the day. Nothing is predictable in the bush, therefore each safari offers a potentially new and unique experience. Our guides will share their wealth of bush experience which involves the identification of animals, trees, grasses, insects and birds. The medicinal uses of plants and local folk lore are also discussed, all the while looking for the ever fascinating Big 5!

When you return to the lodge you will be greeted by a hearty brunch. Now it is time for you to relax and imbibe the natural beauty of Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge. You may wish to spend your day being pampered in our spa, do a few laps at the pool or simply relax in the privacy of your room enjoying the endless views from your private balcony.

Be sure to be back in time for high tea and the evening game drive. Hopefully this time you will spot all those other animals still on your bucket list. On returning to the lodge you will have time to freshen up before coming through for a delicious dinner.

3: Kosi Forest Lodge iSimangaliso Wetland Park

After an early morning game drive and brunch it will be time to bid farewell to Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge and wind your way out of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park back to the main road travelling north to the vibrant African town of Manguzi. For those of you travelling in a 2x4 vehicle you will be met in Manguzi by a member of staff from Kosi Forest Lodge who will transfer you to the lodge in an open 4x4 vehicle. This is a quick 20 minute crossing but always be sure to keep a warm jacket and hat for these trips.

Kosi Forest Lodge is situated in the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve which is part of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park proclaimed a Unesco World Heritage site. This 20-bed wilderness lodge offers the unique opportunity of exploring a pristine wetland environment by vehicle, guided canoes and boats. The Kosi Lakes are a series of interconnected lakes which stretch over some 18km. The best way to see the system is by boat. The full day excursion leaves shortly after breakfast and travels through the lake system and estuarine waterways. The guides stop along the way and explain the traditional fishing traps and the traditions of the Tsonga community who live in balance with the lake system.

A picnic lunch is served on the banks of the scenic lakeside. After your meal, you will continue on to Bhanga Nek beach where you can enjoy one last swim before heading back to the lodge.

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Kosi Forest Lodge guests are accommodated in thatched bedrooms, on raised wooden decks, hidden in the sand forest. There is no electricity, but that's part of the charm! All beds have mosquito nets. The unique open-air, reed enclosed bathrooms with the bath and shower sunk into white forest sand, have been noted by many guests as one of the highlights of their stay. Each room has an indoor shower as well to cater for the less adventurous.

On arrival you will be shown your bush suite and given time to unpack before embarking on your first activity. You will return to the lodge and freshen up before coming through to the dining deck to enjoy dinner.

4: Kosi Forest Lodge

The dawn chorus of hundreds of birds who live in the sand forest will awaken you. One of our friendly staff will deliver a flask of boiling water and the weather report for the day allowing you to decide what you want to experience that day. You will join the Kosi team at the lodge for a hearty breakfast before leaving on your activity.

The highlight for many at Kosi Forest Lodge is the canoe trip on the Kosi Lakes. The best time for this activity is in the early morning and lasts for approximately 2 hrs. Guides escort you by canoe along the Sihadla channel where the bird life is very rewarding and the scenery peaceful and breath taking.

You will return for a delicious lunch and a siesta before embarking on your afternoon activity.

In the afternoon you can enjoy a walk through magnificent Raffia Palms – the tallest in the world! Home to the Palm Nut Vulture and Pel's Fishing Owl. The area can be explored by birders at their leisure.

When you return from your afternoon activity you will have time to freshen up before coming through to enjoy a delicious meal on either the main deck or in the Boma. The lodge is charming and as it is not on mains electricity, the pathways and dining decks are lit by lanterns that create a romantic atmosphere to soak up the sounds of nature.

5: Thonga Beach Lodge

iSimangaliso Wetland Park, KwaZulu Natal

After your breakfast and morning activity you will check out of Kosi Forest Lodge and return to the pickup point at Manguzi. You will continue south to the Coastal Forest Reserve and continue along the sand road to the Coastal Cashew Factory where you will be met by a Thonga Beach Representative and transferred to the lodge. The total transfer time from lodge to lodge is approximately 2 hours.

On arrival you will be welcomed with a refreshing drink and given a brief orientation of the lodge before being shown to your room and given time to unpack and relax before coming through for some lunch. After enjoying one of the many activities hosted at Thonga you will have time to freshen up before settling down for a delicious meal under the stars.

6 & 7: Thonga Beach Lodge

Thonga Beach Lodge is set on the secluded Mabibi Bay, in the heart of the iSimangaliso (formerly Greater St Lucia) Wetland Park, an internationally recognised World Heritage Site. With direct access onto the pristine shores of the Maputaland coast, this luxury lodge is the ideal place to discover one of the last unspoiled and undeveloped wilderness beaches left on the African continent. Mabibi is a magical place of tranquil swimming bays and snorkelling reefs, coastal forests, grasslands, bush, shimmering lakes and exquisite sandy beaches. It's clear, warm waters offer superb snorkelling and fantastic offshore SCUBA diving.

The 12 en-suite rooms have been carefully constructed in the coastal dune forest to ensure minimum impact on the environment and maximum guest privacy. Each room has a double vanity, stone bath, indoor shower, bar fridge, air-conditioning, ceiling fan and mosquito net. Deluxe rooms have private plunge pool.

Activities at Thonga Beach Lodge include SCUBA diving, Open Ocean experiences, kayaking and sundowners at Lake Sibaya, guided snorkelling, seasonal turtle drives/walks, Tsonga Cultural tours and forest walks. Whether you are a walker or a diver, take advantage of the wealth of activities that await you in this beautiful hideaway, or simply relax with a Spa treatment or on the beach deck.

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SCUBA diving at Mabibi is phenomenal. Our professional lodge diving team can accommodate enthusiasts, from the beginner to the veteran. For those who don't dive, we have an Open Ocean Experience. An exciting launch through the surf in front of the lodge takes you beyond the breakers to a world of dolphins, whales and other creatures. The warm Indian Ocean supports a myriad of fish and marine life.

Guests can sometimes swim with dolphins or whale sharks, or snorkel with Manta rays and giant turtles. In summer there are nocturnal walks and drives along the beach in search of pre-historic turtles laying their eggs. Witness the culmination of an incredible journey as giant Leatherback and Loggerhead turtles come ashore to lay their eggs in carefully prepared nests.

Turtle tracking is offered in the evening from November to end of February. The turtles lay their eggs from November to January. Hatchlings arrive from end December to end of February.

Every precaution is taken to ensure these magnificent creatures is not disturbed during the laying process and data collected from the turtle drives is submitted to the Ezemvelo Turtle Monitoring program.

8: End of Arrangements

After breakfast you will check out of Thonga and be returned to the Coastal Cashews where you will continue with your itinerary.

Includes *Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge*

2 nights' accommodation Safari Room, upgradeable to Bush Villa or Honeymoon Villa, all meals, teas and coffees, morning and afternoon game drives

Kosi Forest Lodge

2 nights' accommodation, breakfast, lunch and dinner, teas and coffees, canoeing on Lake system, walk in Raffia forest, transfers to and from pick up point

Thonga Beach Lodge

3 nights' accommodation Forest View room upgradeable to Ocean View or Deluxe Ocean View, all meals, teas and coffees, use of snorkelling equipment, guided walks, cultural tours, kayaking and sundowners on Lake Sibaya. When in season nightly turtle walks are offered. (Nov to Feb)

Excludes

Park fees, 4x4 transfers, drinks, laundry, gratuities and items of a personal nature.

Kosi Forest Lodge

Kosi Mouth Trip, Full day boat trip on the Lake System, Turtle Tours in season.

Thonga Beach Lodge

Spa treatments, scuba diving, Open Ocean experience, dive equipment hire, 4x4 transfers and turtle tracking tours by vehicle in season. (Nov to Feb)

Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge

Spa Treatments and day trips out of the park. Guided safari walks.

Note!

Extra days can be added at any of the lodges and other Isibindi Africa Lodges may be added to this itinerary.

Contact marketing@isibindi.co.za for your tailor made package.

Honeymoon Add On

All packages can be upgraded to a Honeymoon Package (See rates sheet for cost)

Includes

Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge

Sparkling wine on arrival and private dinner.
Hand and foot massage for both partners.

Kosi Forest Lodge

Sparkling wine on arrival, private activity where possible, private dinner and aromatherapy outdoor bath.

Thonga Beach Lodge

Sparkling wine on arrival, private dinner, private dune picnic, back and shoulder massage for both partners and a romantic aromatherapy bath.