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*Sacred Lakes, Cultures, Wildlife and History of Limpopo Province*

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**Day 1 – Depart Kruger National Park for Madi a Thavha Mountain Lodge**

Morning departure from Skukuza for Madi a Thavha Mountain Lodge.

The mountains and valleys of Northern Limpopo has many surprises and delightful experiences to offer; a colourful spread of cultural heritage, CraftArt and extraordinary biodiversity awaits visitors who like to explore.

Madi a Thavha is situated in a scenic and peaceful valley of the Soutpansberg Mountains.

The lodge offers Art, Culture and Lifestyle tours to the true heartbeat of Limpopo, and feature a top-notch Arts & Culture Centre, CraftArt shop and Textile & Design studio at the lodge.

Madi a Thavha is a popular 'culture-stop-over' for guests travelling to the Kruger National Park, the world heritage site of Mapungubwe, the game lodges of the Tuli block in Botswana, the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe or for adventurous travelers tackling the off-roads to Mozambique.

The lodges Arts & Culture centre is an enormous asset to the region - Here one can get a vivid summary of the various cultural influences that shaped the region to what visitors can see and experience today.

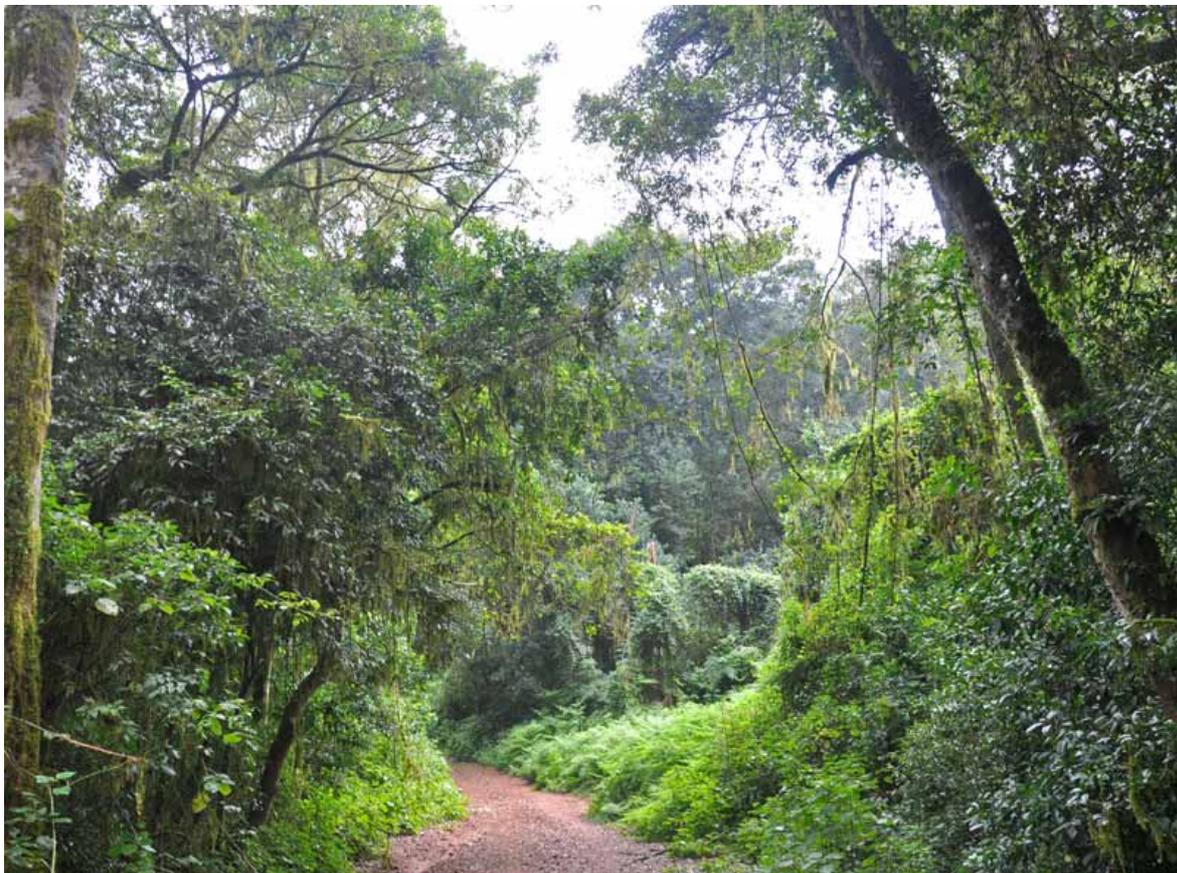
Settle in, dinner and overnight at Madi a Thavha Mountain Lodge.

## **Day 2 - Lake Fundudzi and Thathe Vondo Forest Day Tour**

Morning departure for a day tour to Lake Fundudzi

Possibly the most sacred spot of all in Venda Culture is the enchanted body of water known as Lake Fundudzi in the Thathe Vondo Forest, in Venda and is the home to the mythical python and white crocodile.

Lake Fundudzi, the only natural lake of its kind in South Africa, was originally formed by a landslide, say scientists. But the local people see it in a far more mysterious way. They'll point out that three rivers flow into the lake, yet it never overflows and there is no obvious outlet.



### ***Thathe Vondo Forest***

Lake Fundudzi is surrounded by the Thathe Vondo forest – so full of spirits that few Venda people venture into it for fear of the two mythical creatures keeping guard, namely the white lion (the spirit of Nethathe an important chief) and the thunder and lightning bird called Ndadzi which according to myths flies on the wings of thunder, its eyes flash lightning, from in its beak it bears rain and when it drops an egg at a foot of a tree this tree will be destroyed by fire.

The forest has giant trees (jakkelsbessie, yellowwood), a wide variety of ferns, creepers and a wealth of plants and trees which makes the forest nearly impenetrable on foot. One can also find the giant edible mushrooms, Nkoa in these woods.



After Vondo dam viewpoint, the sacred Lake of Fundudzi with its legendary crocodiles and the misty and sacred Thathe Vondo forest, we end up at Mutale Falls, a perfect spot for a picnic and a swim. Your tour guide will tell you about the secrets and legends of Lake Fundudzi and of ancestral spirits in the Holy Forest, both of high spiritual significance for the vhaVenda people. The guide will also explain the importance of the sensitivities around traditional protocols and forms of respect in Venda, particularly for this region.

Here one can feel the special energy that is part and parcel of the vhaVenda people's spirituality. This trip normally gives much to reflect on human value systems, respect and spirituality.

Return in the afternoon to Madi a Thavha Mountain Lodge. Dinner and overnight.

### **Day 3 – Mapungubwe National Park**



Morning departure for Mapungubwe National Park.

Set right up against the northern border of South Africa, uniting Botswana and Zimbabwe, lies Mapungubwe National Park - an extensive savannah landscape situated at the meeting place of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers.

This is the land of sandstone formations, mopane woodlands, brooding baobabs, ancient floodplains and unique riverine forests that form a dramatic backcloth for the wealth of animal life - elephant, giraffe, buffalo, white rhino, gemsbok and other antelope, extensive bird life, and the more elusive mammal like hyenas, leopards and lions.

Mapungubwe is South Africa's first kingdom, a highly complex society that marked the heart of a pre-Shona kingdom between 1050 AD and 1270 AD, only to be abandoned in the 14th century. The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape - the virtually untouched remains of the palace sites, the settlement area dependent upon them, and two capital sites that remain - was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003 and forms part of the Mapungubwe National Park.

The Cultural Landscape provides visitors with a unique portrait of the social and political structures of a society that traded with China and India, was regarded as the most complex society in southern Africa and was the first society since the Bushmen to settle in South

Africa. The kingdom was regarded as the forerunner of the Zimbabwe civilisation and at its height, Mapungubwe, which means place of the stone of wisdom, was the largest kingdom in the African sub-continent. Some 5000 people appeared to live around Mapungubwe Hill where their 'sacred' leader lived in seclusion from his people.

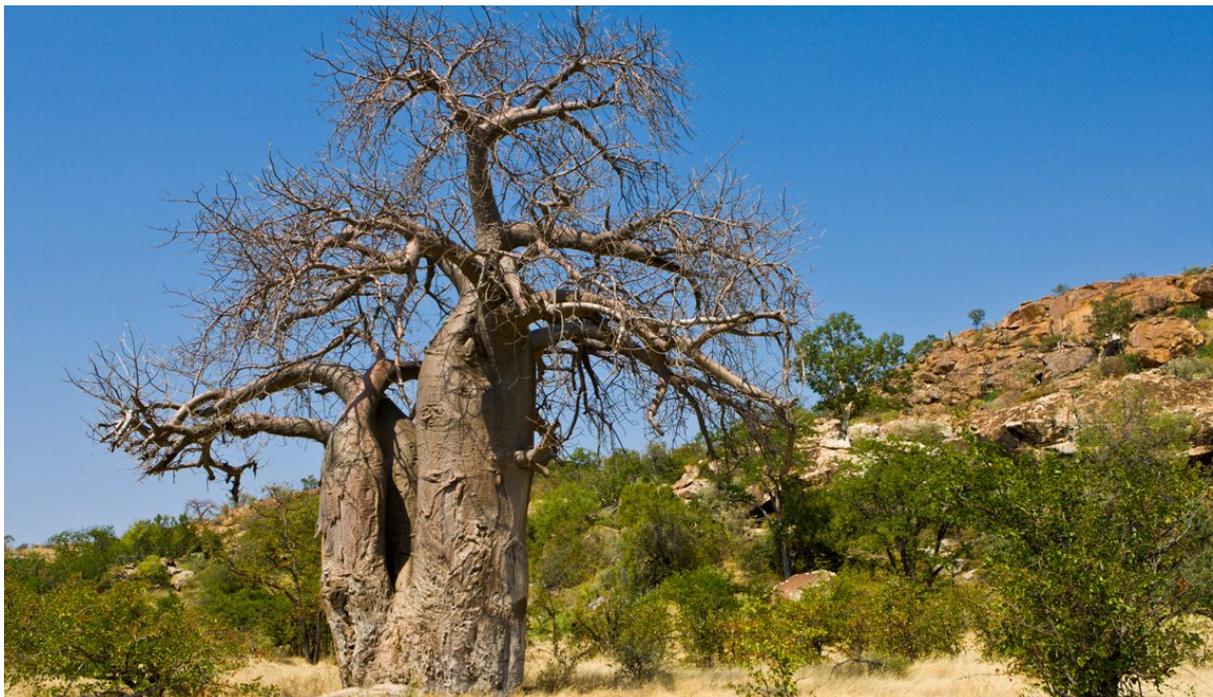
After the collapse of Mapungubwe's society, it was forgotten until the wealth of artefacts on top of Mapungubwe Hill - a sandstone oval-shaped hill with sheer vertical cliffs and a plateau of about 300 metres known as the 'place of jackals', accessible only by means of two very steep and narrow paths - were discovered.

Dinner and overnight Leokwe Camp.

#### **Day 4 – Mapungubwe National Park**

Morning Heritage Tour to Mapungubwe Hill.

As part of this tour, you will be given the opportunity to visit the elite graveyard at the top of Mapungubwe Hill, view a natural amphitheatre and the entire spectrum of the region, traverse the territory once walked upon by the ancestral Mapungubwe People - now roamed by four of the Big 5.



The Museum centre which is built near the main gate of the Mapungubwe National Park won the building of the year competition in 2009 and is home to the famous Golden Rhino.

Afternoon game drive in Mapungubwe National Park.

Overnight Leokwe Camp.

## **Day 5 – Mapungubwe to Johannesburg**

Early morning departure for Johannesburg (please note this is a long drive and it would be highly advisable to book accommodation for the night close to the airport for a flight out the next day).

Rate per person sharing: \$ 2000.00

Rate per person single: \$ 2850.00

Rate is based on a departure minimum of 4 pax

Rate is inclusive of the following:

- All transfers and land travel
- Accommodation
- Dinners and breakfasts
- Entrance fees and conservation levies
- Game drives

For further information please contact River Degenaar at [river@outdoor-africa.com](mailto:river@outdoor-africa.com)