



# CONTINENTAL BLISS

## INSPIRED BY BOTH THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE CONTINENT, SUE LEDERLE HAS CREATED A COOL AND INVITING OASIS IN THE BUSH

**TEXT** Julia Freemantle **PHOTOGRAPHS** Julia Freemantle and supplied

A bush lodge is a refuge by its very nature – the sense of solitude and the sounds of the veld are restorative on a soul level. So when you add to this an injection of North African exoticism, the effect is exponential – an escape within an escape, an Eastern sanctuary in the African veld.

An interior designer and travel expert by trade, owner and property developer Sue Lederle is a clear case for making what you love doing your day job. She's poured both these passions into this beautiful self-catering lodge, located in the Elephant Point private reserve. A luxury estate developed by the Legacy Group on 290ha bordering the Kruger National Park and neighbouring Sabi Sands, on the banks of the Sabie River, it's an area known for its concentration of big game. Only 65 lodges are planned for the estate, making the opportunities for owning a piece of it finite.

Sue's skill as a designer and vast experience as a traveller show up on a macro and micro level – from the flow of the space to the minutest decor detail. Seeing the vision for the property through required site visits every two weeks, and together with architect Jack Andrew, Sue was on hand to steer the process in the right direction. It was important to strike exactly the right note: 'I fell in love with the Moroccan style on my trips – there, the buildings themselves are beautiful and mysterious, with generous volume and interesting detailing, and don't need much adornment to come alive. That's what I was aiming to achieve here,' comments Sue on the design of the 480m² space.

While modelling it on Moroccan architecture, Sue also drew on bush motifs – the beautiful arches and pavilions married with thatch and rietdak roofing in a hybrid of bush camp and city riad. So while the influence is apparent, it hasn't been administered without discretion. Instead, Sue has cleverly and subtly woven other influences through – French antiques, floral fabrics, velvet-upholstered chaises, carved Indian four-posters – to give it a layered effect. Colour is a key element, too, with rich vibrant splashes of red, orange, pink and teal making a bright splash against the taupe walls and sun-bleached bush backdrop. 'Colour is a big thing in my life and it's integral to the style,' adds Sue. The effect is eclectic, without a whiff of the usual colour-by-numbers game-lodge look.

Another aspect that sets it apart, aside from a complete lack of safari clichés, is its capacity to be run as a lodge. Sue and her late husband John had looked for years for the ideal location in the bush – most properties like this cannot be let independently and can only be used by the owners. So this was a rare find: an investment that also earns an income. 'It was a wonderful project to put my energy into after losing my soulmate,' comments Sue. A self-described serial renovator Sue loves the thrill of taking on a new project, especially lifestyle investments that she can enjoy with family and friends. 'Once we have had some fun and the property is commercially successful I like to sell and get on to the next project,' she adds.

The layout of the public areas was designed with entertaining as a focus, something Sue does as second nature; the house is at its best filled with people. Inside, the huge kitchen/dining/living area is totally open. Upstairs a game-viewing deck cum bar looks out onto the river. The 395m² of outdoor living space navigates different levels and purposes. A sofa-filled pavilion centred on the pool invites lounging, an elevated roof deck is perfect for star-gazing or sundowners, and the pizza oven and braai boma on the outdoor dining deck keep dinner interesting from night to night. But all focus is on the spectacular setting and the idea of enjoying being social in the bush.

The four river-facing suites branch off in pairs to each side of the house. Each has its own identity and special features – one with an outdoor bath, one with an open-air shower, all with beautiful fabrics, black-and-white Moroccan tiles such as Wi-Fi and a coffee station complete with Nespresso, to nice-to-haves such as flasks for game drives, umbrellas by the door and solar lanterns outside. This is someone who knows what people want and expect from a luxury bush experience. [lodge23.co.za](http://lodge23.co.za)



SHOW HOUSE



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** A walled courtyard with potted trees and a trickling water feature is a cool, lush contrast to the bush beyond the doors; throughout the lodge, decorative and architectural details speak to the Moroccan influence; comfortable places to sit are key at Lodge 23, but never at the expense of aesthetics and always oriented towards the setting. You'll find roses in every room, one of the owner's signatures; a reed-roofed raised deck offers a great vantage point for game spotting or star viewing. The existing trees on the site were kept, offering welcome shade, with the deck built around them. **OPPOSITE** The spacious, fully equipped kitchen is the star of the open-plan living area. It's a social space leading onto the courtyard and the lounge and dining zones. Sue made a point of using interesting light fittings throughout the house. **OPENING SPREAD** The huge deck area is designed with numerous areas to eat, read and tan. The covered pavilion looks over the pool and into the bush and is a comfortable, colourful refuge from the heat, should you need one.







LITTLE LUXURIOUS  
TOUCHES REMIND YOU  
YOU'RE ON HOLIDAY,  
WHILE THE WARMTH OF  
THE INTERIORS MAKES  
YOU FEEL AT EASE

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** At sunset, solar Consol Glass jars come in handy, hung in trees or placed around the deck; Sue has mixed African craft with the Moroccan and European influences for an eclectic global blend; the magnificent front door is a restored Moroccan original **OPPOSITE** Game viewing from the pool is the best way to keep cool in the summer heat. Pairs of loungers are positioned around the deck for different viewpoints



**GETTING THERE**  
**From Johannesburg**  
**Drive** Elephant Point is a five-hour drive from Johannesburg.  
**Fly** It's a 45-minute flight to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, followed by a 60-minute drive or a two-and-a-half-hour flight to Skukuza Airport, followed by a 40-minute drive to the lodge.  
**From Cape Town**  
**Fly** It's a two-and-a-half-hour flight to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, followed by a 60-minute drive, or a two-and-a-half-hour flight to Skukuza Airport, followed by a 40-minute drive to the lodge.

**FOR SALE** Lodge 23 is being sold fully furnished, price on application. Although it is currently run by the owner as a self-catering lodge, it can be added to the rental pool of the estate. Any enquiries should be directed to [justin@lederleholdings.co.za](mailto:justin@lederleholdings.co.za)