

Singita



Our guides exploring the Granophyre ridge – Photo by Monika Malewski

WILDLIFE JOURNAL **SINGITA KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA** **For the month of February, Two Thousand and Twenty-Six**

Temperature

Average minimum: 22°C (°F)
Minimum recorded: 20°C (°F)
Average maximum: 32°C (°F)
Maximum recorded: 34°C (°F)

Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 3mm
Season to date: 864mm
(*Season = Oct to Sept)

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 05h45
Sunset: 18h21

February has brought a sense of calm renewal to Singita Kruger National Park following the heavy rains and flooding that swept through the region in mid-January. While the lodges remain temporarily closed for refurbishment and repair, the landscape itself has responded with remarkable resilience. The seasonal rains have now settled into a gentler rhythm, and we have been fortunate to avoid the full force of the tropical cyclones that often form over the warm waters of the southwest Indian Ocean at this time of year. These systems typically track westward toward Madagascar before making landfall over Mozambique. When they do, the outer rainbands frequently sweep across our concession, given our proximity to the Mozambican border. Just two weeks ago, Cyclone Honde (which impacted Madagascar) served as a reminder of how powerful these

systems can be. Although we experienced peripheral rainfall from associated weather patterns, we were spared the destructive winds that often accompany such storms.

A few of our dedicated guides have been on site, carefully exploring accessible sections of the concession. Many of the smaller drainage lines continue to flow strongly, breathing life into the veld. Several river crossings remain uncrossable, reshaping familiar routes and encouraging new paths of discovery. The bush feels washed clean. It is vibrant, green, and very much alive.



Spending time in the bush you soon realize that there are a few sights and moments that can compare to the bond between a mother elephant and her newborn calf. In this moment a tiny calf, only a few weeks old, unsure on its feet, was gently being guided down a hill by its mother. Something described as ancient, powerful and deeply moving.

This young elephant enters a world fragile and unsteady, despite weighting over a hundred kilograms, relies on its mother for several things, in this case balance. The terrain can be very unforgiving, even a small slope can feel like a mountain to the brand-new legs, but a mother's presence can change everything. With the most careful nudges of her trunk and steady positioning of her legs and body, she will always offer the support her calf needs, almost as if she says 'I'm here, don't worry you are safe' with every movement until the young calf is strong enough to handle the world on its own.

What makes this bond between mother and calf so beautiful is that it is not only instinct, its emotion and the deepest love. These animals show the true definition of empathy towards each other, the slightest of touch means more than we can comprehend. A mother's love is not only patient, protective but also enduring. She is a teacher, guardian and a safe haven all in one.

In the bush, where survival is not always guaranteed, the love and tenderness shown by these animals stands out like sunlight shining through the trees. Watching this mother helping her calf, guiding it down the hill, to me it was more than just a simple act of guidance, it was a reminder of the strength found in gentleness. The saying 'gentile giants' is one of the most accurate was of describing these animals. They show love in its purest, most powerful form. In that quite moment sitting with that herd of elephants, we were not just witnessing wildlife, we were witnessing devotion.



The landscape surrounding the lodges at Singita Kruger National Park is defined not only by its wildlife but by its remarkable plant life. The Lowveld ecosystem is shaped by cycles of drought and rain, fire and regrowth, and the flora here reflects centuries of adaptation to these dynamic forces.

During the development of the lodges, particular care was taken to preserve mature and protected trees, allowing architecture to flow around them rather than displace them. As a result, many of the most significant specimens have become focal points within the guest spaces themselves.

The most iconic among them is the enormous baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) positioned between the dining area and the kitchen. Baobabs are often called the “Tree of Life” for their ability to store thousands of litres of water within their swollen trunks, an adaptation that enables survival through prolonged dry seasons. They can live for well over a millennium, developing hollowed interiors and

deeply furrowed bark over time. Ecologically, they provide nectar for bats, nesting cavities for birds, and sustenance for elephants, which sometimes strip their bark during drought. Architecturally, this particular baobab forms a living pillar within the lodge — a reminder that the structure exists within the landscape, not apart from it.

Nearby stands the pod mahogany (*Azelia quanzensis*), a protected and slow-growing hardwood species indigenous to southern Africa. Its tall, straight trunk and expansive canopy provide essential shade, moderating ground temperatures beneath it. The tree produces distinctive woody pods that split open to reveal glossy black seeds partially encased in bright orange arils — a striking contrast against the summer foliage. Because of its valuable timber and ecological importance, its preservation within the lodge grounds carries both environmental and symbolic significance.

Around the suites and pathways, aloes contribute bold structure and seasonal colour. Their fleshy leaves store moisture, making them well suited to fluctuating rainfall patterns. When in bloom, their tubular flowers attract sunbirds, bees, and other pollinators, adding movement and sound to the gardens.

In the height of summer, the Southern Chinese hats tree (*Karomia speciosa*) bursts into cascades of purple and pink blossoms. Its delicate, lantern-like flowers soften the stone and timber textures of the lodge architecture, creating a seamless blend between cultivated and wild space.

Together, these plants do more than decorate the surroundings, they anchor the lodges in ecological authenticity. After the floods, their renewed growth is particularly striking. Fresh leaves gleam in the sunlight, grasses push upward in dense carpets, and the scent of damp earth lingers beneath ancient canopies. Even in a period of temporary closure, the flora continues its quiet work: stabilising soil, sheltering wildlife, and reminding us that the bush endures, season after season.

From the Guide's Lenses



Bradwin Adendorff - I took this photo while out with a few fellow guides exploring the Granophyre ridges. When we least expected it, I spotted the silhouette of a leopard peacefully resting atop one of the iconic boulders on our concession, soaking up the warmth of the sun-baked rocks. What stood out was not only the beauty of the leopard, but also the uniqueness of the landscape where she lay — a one-of-a-kind ecosystem built upon ancient stone and shaded by resilient rock fig trees, a combination I have never encountered anywhere else.



Sean Surtees - The edge of a rainbow rises above the Lebombo mountains as a tower of giraffe look on in the foreground.



Monika Malewski - In October 2024, the Mananaga Pride ambushed an adolescent zebra at one of the last remaining waterholes, a shallow valley where the water lay stagnant and thick with mud. The young zebra lost its footing on the slick banks, and within moments the pride — nearly fifteen strong — closed in. As they fed, the struggle for meat coated their tawny coats in dark, glistening mud. Only their piercing amber eyes shone through, making them look like black panthers in the fading light. It was a rare and unforgettable sight, and an extraordinary photographic opportunity.



Damin Dallas – I love this picture because it captures the N’wanetsi concession at its absolute best, open, wild, and untouched. The way the river winds through the valley adds depth and draws your eye naturally through the landscape, making it feel expansive and alive. The warm orange of the sunset against the cool blue sky creates a striking contrast that makes the scene feel vibrant but calm at the same time. There’s also something special about the vantage point at the Poort, being elevated gives a full view of the bush stretching endlessly ahead, which makes the moment feel memorable and uniquely yours.