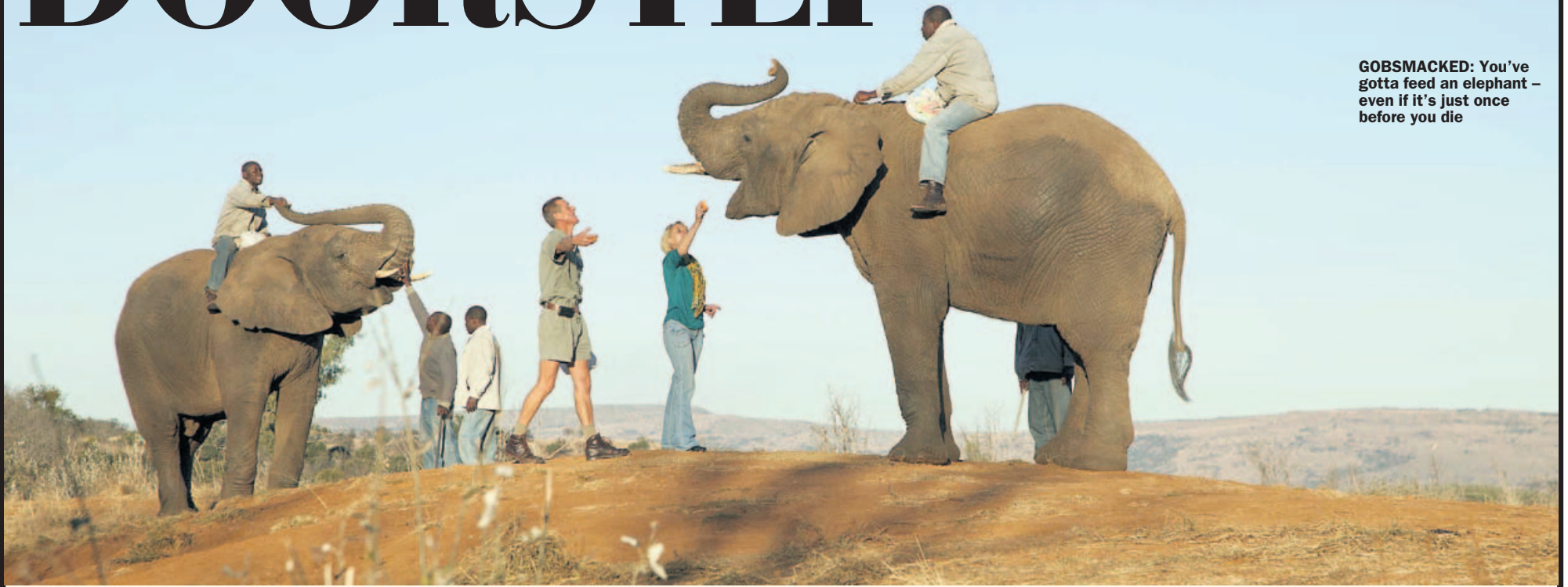


A whole lotta fun right on our DOORSTEP



GOBSMACKED: You've gotta feed an elephant – even if it's just once before you die

Gauteng is more than a working and shopping destination – it's a travellers paradise. So become a Gee Pee today, writes **SOMAYA STOCKENSTROOM**

It's tourism month and Gauteng Tourism launched their "I'm a Gee Pee... and this is MY Gauteng" campaign this week.

It is designed to get Gee Pees on the road and exploring – and to feel a strong sense of loyalty and pride in their province.

A few journalists got to taste the good

life and feel like real Amagepees this week.

First stop was Askari Game Lodge in the Plumari Africa Game Reserve in the Magaliesberg – just over an hour from Joburg or Pretoria.

Here we got to hang out with elephants – a "touch and feed" experience.

There's something so majestic about interacting with these timid beasts.

After seeing the amazing bond between the handlers and ellies, some of us got to feed them.

Having the elephants take an orange from your palm and then from your mouth is



HIGH FLYERS: Sailing through the sky in a balloon is a truly serene adventure

definitely for the brave, I thought.

But upon trying myself I was quite amused.

The elephants seemed to like me too – I got a kiss and blow on my neck, leaving me muddy and bewildered.

Wow! And to experience this so close to home!

Then off to Maropeng hotel – the Cradle of Humankind.

This is apparently where life began.

The area looks dry and boring, but

as you come closer it's quite serene with a crispness in the air.

The hotel is spectacular with an impressive entertainment area and the rooms are decked out in tasteful African décor.

A therapist at Mangwanani spa indulged us with a full body massage in the privacy of our rooms. Relaxing and much needed.

The following morning we went on a balloon ride. I'm not a morning person so the thought of being up at 4am in the freezing cold did not appeal to me.

But once we were in the air I wasn't sorry. It was a comforting ride drifting over hills and valleys. Three landings and take-offs made the experience more worthwhile.

To get to do all this in my own back yard is truly amazing. I advise everyone to jump on the bandwagon and take advantage of the beauty Gauteng has to offer.

It is, after all, not just the province in which to work but also to play.

Hard partying to hard travelling

BOITUMELO TLHOAELE

THE saying "familiarity breeds contempt" might ring true to most city dwellers, especially Joburgers.

Yes we're a city that boasts of bling, hip and cool, and hard partying. But Joburgers don't explore enough of the area around their city – especially the youth.

I can attest to this somewhat, as when it comes to travelling in the countryside around Jozi I'm not quite there. There are many places I still have to visit. And what better way to explore the city than on a Harley Davidson with 35 Steelwings bikers and 37 Dstv subscribers?

It was exciting on the mean machines, commanding attention wherever we went. Lots of stops for food, drinks and sightseeing were the order of the weekend. But three places stood out for me as we cruised around the countryside.

MAROPENG

Maropeng, the Cradle of Humankind, is a breath of fresh air, a place vast in activities and history, as well as many wonderful restaurants.

One of these is Roots. Situated on the outskirts of the area, the intimate restaurant is opposite a calm dam. The furniture is understated and modern and there are some

beautiful art pieces.

But the highlight of the restaurant is the wonderful gourmet food served on the most extra-ordinary crockery. But be warned: if you have breakfast be sure to specify how you'd like your eggs.

MOGALE BUNGEE

This seemingly dreary area boasts Mogale Bungee, a forestlike place with trails for hiking, bungee jumping off an old bridge or whooshing over the trees on a zipline tour. This is a great place to unleash

your daring side.

AVIANTO VILLAGE HOTEL

One of the most exquisite hotels I've seen near Jozi is the Avianto Village Hotel in Muldersdrift – an area known for its enormous farms and property.

The hotel's architecture is typical Tuscan style and boasts a stunning wedding area, dining rooms and suites. The suite where I slept – like a baby – is furnished with classic but modern furniture.

Fine silks and premium

cotton bedding is used. But the cream of the crop is the bathtub right in the centre of the room and the luxurious soaps and lotions. Certainly makes one feel like a Victorian queen! Complete bliss.

The weekend was superb with new friendships formed and new discoveries made of this wonderful place! Go out and discover the Jozi surrounds.

■ Boitumelo Tlhoale was an invited guest of the Dstv and Steelwings weekend road trip.



SHEER LUXURY: At Avianto Village Hotel, you take a bath in your bedroom – and what a fine experience it is!

Win tickets to a fab show



HENNESSY Cognac is bringing together six of South Africa's most exciting musical talents in a final Halo concert.

This year's artists – Siphon "Hotstix" Mabuse, Flash Republic, Zonke, Crazy White Boy, Slikour and Zakes Bantwini – will perform in the prestigious Halo concert at The Venue in the exclusive Melrose Arch on September 17. 10 lucky Sunday World readers will get double tickets. To find out more about the Halo concert, visit facebook.com/hennessysa.

To stand a chance of winning this prize, SMS: Hennessy, your name, ID number and city to 41936. Terms and conditions: SMSes cost R1,50 each. Avusa Ltd employees may not enter. The competition closes on Monday September 12 at 11.59pm. The winner will be the first entry drawn at random. This prize may not be converted into cash and does not include transport to and from the venue. No under 18s may enter. The winners will be notified by phone. Drink responsibly.

WEDDING EXPO WINNERS

Thenjwe Msimango – Johannesburg
Lydia Nteka – Johannesburg
Queen Baliso – Johannesburg
Charlotte Beta – Limpopo
Getrude Mphahlele – Burgersfort