

Kwantu Game Reserve

An Eastern Cape game park not only boasts four of the Big Five, it is also the first game reserve under a totally Muslim banner. Billed as South Africa's first Muslim game reserve, the Kwantu Private Game Reserve, it has a mosque and prayer rooms dotted around the bush to allow guests to pray while game-watching. Already it is attracting Muslims, from as far away as Dubai, who want a spiritual experience in a natural environment.

Kwantu, owned by Port Elizabeth businessman Yusuf Jeeva and his wife, Faieza, boasts a musallah, a miniature version of a mosque, containing Qurans and prayer mats. Additional prayer rooms are being built of wood and thatch around the reserve for visitors who want to pray while hiking or on game drives.

Halaal meals are served at the reserve, which opened in November. Jeeva said he had hit upon the idea because it was often difficult for Muslim families to find holiday destinations. "There are more than two billion Muslims in the world and there are no game reserves in South Africa with facilities for Muslims. As a tourist, you don't stop being a Muslim, the obligations are still there and you have to fulfil them," he said.

Muslims who visited game reserves usually ate cheese sandwiches for lunch and supper because the reserves could not satisfy their culinary requirements, Jeeva said. While his game reserve was open to people of all religious denominations, it catered predominantly for Muslims.

"We are targeting North Africa, the Gulf region and Far Eastern countries as our market." Most of his guests were from Dubai, but he had also had inquiries from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar. "What we are offering at Kwantu is not just to see a buck or an elephant but a holistic experience because you can see the greatness of the Almighty in the animals and nature itself."

Separate game drives and eating areas for men and women were organised on request. The 5 000ha reserve boasts four of the Big Five, excluding lion. East London businessman Abu Abdullatief, who visited the reserve late last year, said he felt "very comfortable" at Kwantu. "It's nice for any Muslim visitor, whether local or international. They can feel comfortable having facilities available to them. It's very important for Muslims to have prayer facilities and halaal food."

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