

THE LOST KINGDOM OF THULAMELA

Discover South Africa's best-kept archaeological secret in the heart of the Kruger National Park

The Pafuri region is a little-known treasure trove of archaeology, biodiversity and cultural history. It is home to the ancient **Kingdom of Thulamela**, South Africa's best-kept archaeological secret. Hauntingly beautiful, this partially reconstructed hilltop settlement is surrounded by ancient baobabs and commands spectacular views across savannahs, floodplains and mountains.



Thulamela thrived between 1250 – 1700 AD when it lay at the heart of the most dynamic trading system in Southern Africa. A contemporary of Mapungubwe to the west, and Great Zimbabwe to the north, it was connected to and molded by similar trade links and cultures.

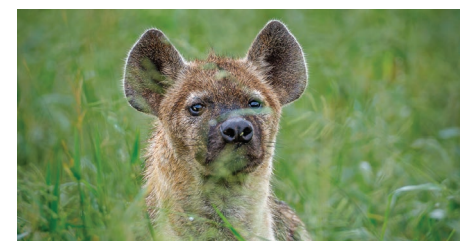
Excavations at Thulamela in the 1990s uncovered royal graves with gold, copper and beaded ornaments, evidence of the wealth derived from its trade, via the Swahili coast, with Arabia, India and beyond.

Thulamela is not open to the general public and visits are made by special arrangement.

BIODIVERSITY

Thulamela is flanked by the Limpopo and Livuvhu Rivers which embrace a spectacular landscape of mountains and gorges, flood plains, baobab and fever tree forests. The diverse landscapes, habitats and food sources support the richest biodiversity of the Kruger Park.

A renowned birding destination, it offers over 450 species, including many migrant populations found nowhere else in South Africa. The Pafuri floodplain supports large breeding herds of elephant, buffalo, zebra, kudu, giraffe, eland and wildebeest. Leopard, hyena, hippo and crocodile occur in abundance.



RECENT HISTORY

The area's human history is as rich as its archaeology and natural bounty.

Lying at the confluence of the Limpopo and Livuvhu Rivers (where South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique meet) 'Crooks Corner' served as a refuge for rogues and fugitives, poachers and smugglers in the early 1900s.

Pafuri is the ancestral home of the Makuleke, a community that famously transformed the loss of their land under apartheid into an innovative and successful commercial land reform partnership. It is now widely recognized as a model for partnership-based tourism and conservation and is a stable source of jobs, training and revenue for the community.



TRAVEL OPTIONS

Thulamela is accessible by road or air. A variety of options are available to suit the circumstances of different travelers – whether as a standalone destination, a stopover (en route to Mozambique or Zimbabwe via the nearby Pafuri border post) or as part of a self-drive safari in the Kruger.

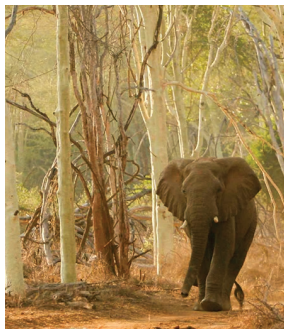
Fly-in options include direct flights by light aircraft from Johannesburg to Pafuri Camp or on scheduled flights from either Cape Town or Johannesburg, via Hoedspruit.

THE CORE ITINERARY

At Thulamela, a short drive away from Pafuri Lodge, you will explore the royal enclosure which includes the graves of the Khosi and the Queen, and the meeting place where the affairs of the day were settled.

Beyond the Thulamela site, your days will be spent on leisurely morning and evening game drives and walks, exploring some of the numerous loops and detours of this game and bird-rich area. Highlights include:

■ **Lanner Gorge** – where the Livuvhu river cuts a deep gorge through the sandstone mountains offering spectacular views of the river canyon and the cliffs on either side.



■ **The Fever Tree Forest** – the most impressive in South Africa, regularly frequented by herds of elephant, eland and other game.

■ **Crooks Corner** – the confluence of the Limpopo and Livuvhu rivers, where three countries meet. Historically, a refuge for fugitives and rogues, it is now home to a resident pod of hippos and giant crocs sunning themselves on the surrounding banks.

■ **Ancient baobabs** – Pafuri is the place of baobabs, some of which have been dated at over a thousand years.

A three-night stay will allow for a leisurely exploration of the Thulamela hilltop site and an immersive experience of the Pafuri area as a whole.

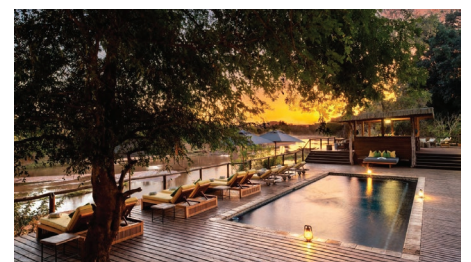
The blend of magnificent wildlife, iconic archaeology and luxury accommodation is a combination found nowhere else in Southern Africa.

ACCOMMODATION

Guests are accommodated in the **Pafuri Luxury Tented Camp** on the banks of the Livuvhu River. Nineteen luxury tented suites, each with en-suite bathrooms and private viewing decks, offer unrestricted views of the Livuvhu river and the diversity of game that drink from it.

Guests unwind at the camp's bush bar, its large swimming pool and *al fresco* dining and sitting areas from where the full riverine panorama can be quietly enjoyed.

Professionally guided morning and afternoon game drives and walks enable guests to experience the extraordinary biodiversity and scenic splendour of the area.



To discuss your visit and explore pricing options please contact us by phone or e-mail:

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