

# HOT SPOTS

PENNINGTON | SOMERSET EAST | WILD COAST | SWAZILAND  
CAPE TOWN

ESCAPE

TAKE THE FAMILY!

## 1 | WILD COAST MBOTYI RIVER LODGE

**RATES** DB&B from R625 a person a night sharing  
**CONTACT** 082-674-1064, 039-253-7200 (satellite), [www.mbotyi.co.za](http://www.mbotyi.co.za)

There's no easy route to Mbotyi. It's in the northern coastal reaches of the Transkei, 180 km south of the KwaZulu-Natal boundary in territory that features snaking, single-lane roads lined with wandering cattle and other hazards, and finally accessed via a 20 km dirt road through the Magwa Tea plantation outside Lusikisiki. You don't need a 4x4, but it might make the rutted track and twisty forest road easier or the pace less plodding. Having said that, isolation is one of its top selling points and why this strip of sandy bay, encircled by verdant bush, tidal lagoon and Indian Ocean, is still so unmarked by the patina of volume tourism.

The resort is three-star rated and is a charming constellation of wooden chalets and thatched buildings dotted on a grassy slope leading down to the beach. On either side, the local Pondo community – many of whom are the friendly staff – has erected a smattering of homes and a school. That is the extent of the development; no highways, no malls – just you, Nguni cows on the beach in the morning and perhaps whales in the iridescent bay. Rooms are simple, but rustically charming, clean and comfortable, with private balconies or outside seating. Meals are served in a communal dining room next to the bar, both housed in a cabin on stilts and overlooking a turquoise pool and jungle gym.

Hikers, this is your paradise. Loads of waterfalls – small and big, permanent and seasonal – are scattered among the hills and ravines, and many are within a lovely hour or two's walk or a half-day trip on graded trails, guided or not. The crown jewel is Waterfall Bluff, from which water tumbles into the ocean. This beauty is a challenging but must-do 28 km return march from the lodge. – **Kate Ferreira**



1 | MBOTYI RIVER LODGE



TASTE OF OLD

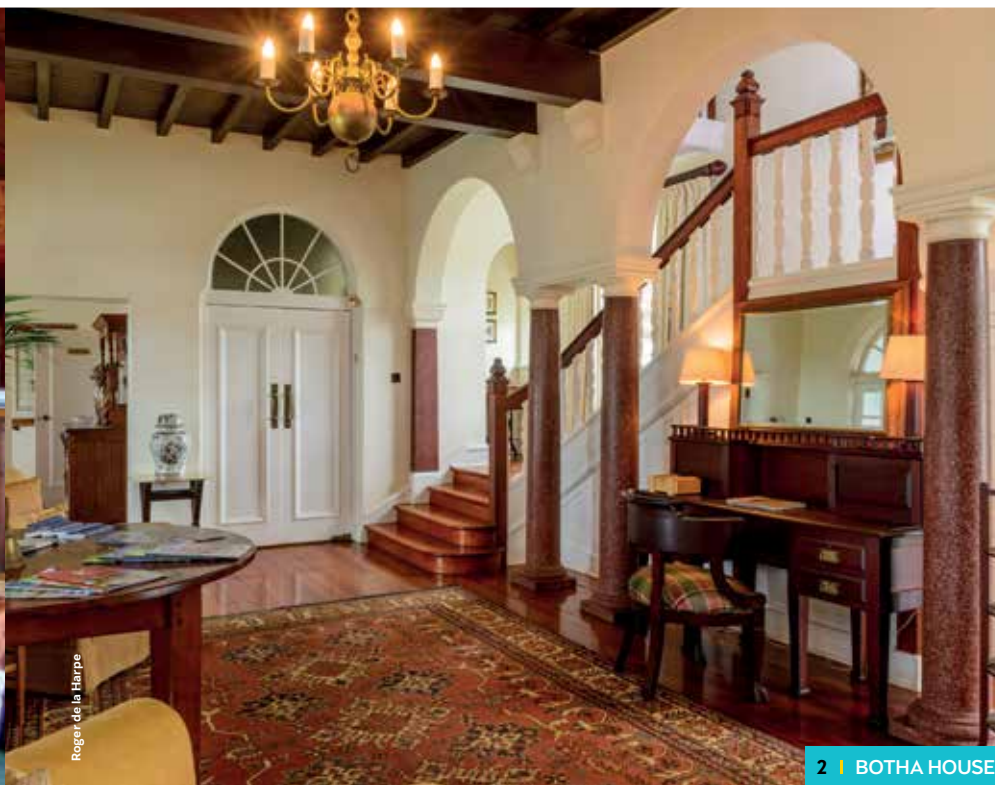
## 2 | PENNINGTON BOTHA HOUSE

**RATES** B&B from R450 a person a night sharing.  
**CONTACT** 039-975-1227, [www.bothahouse.co.za](http://www.bothahouse.co.za)

Step back in time – and sleep there too. Botha House, in the little town of Pennington on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast is a wonderfully maintained sliver of early 20th century South Africa. In its current iteration, it's a genteel B&B within the tranquil Umdoni Park, a subtropical nature reserve boasting incredible sea views, indigenous forest and extensive birdlife, plus a hilly 18-hole golf course. The two-storey, six-bedroom house was originally built for General Louis Botha, prime minister of the then Union of South Africa, on land belonging to his good friend Sir Frank Reynolds, one of the country's first sugar barons. But General Botha never got to stay in his Cape Dutch-style holiday home as he died just three months after construction began. His wife Annie vacationed there and, after her death, the house was maintained by the Umdoni Trust.

It's a locale of history and heritage, and much of the contents – manager Tony Hallett estimates around 85 percent – are the original furniture and fittings, including gleaming Rhodesian teak sideboards and exposed beams. These features have to stay as they are according to the Umdoni Trust which administers the park, and this limits the capacity for modernisation; over-bath showers and exposed plumbing are some of the ways in which this shows itself. But this is no museum. The staff are friendly and welcoming, and the vibe relaxed. Golfers lounge on the sea-facing terrace before hitting the greens of the Umdoni Golf Club next door.

The building, especially the upstairs suites, has an incredible view that invites you to sit and stare – monkeys playing on the lawns, guests lounging around the pool, and the boundless Indian Ocean beyond. – **Kate Ferreira**



2 | BOTHA HOUSE