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September 2011

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Inspire Me!

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED
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PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MICHAL VENERA

Into the Wild

DESIGNER ANNE-MARIE MIDY FINDS INSPIRATION AT
TANZANIA'S SANCTUARY SWALA RETREAT



For designer Anne-Marie Midy, there's something inherently magical about the wilds of Tanzania's Tarangire National Park. An unyielding quality she can't quite put her finger on. Rock-strewn dirt trails wind through acacia trees and boulder formations, with nary a sign of civilization. Just the designer and her dust-covered Land Rover. Leopards lurk in baobab trees. Tsetse flies buzz incessantly in the distance. Sunsets somehow seem more enchanting, the stars brighter.

Not surprisingly, there's something equally magical about finding sanctuary from that flintiness—a safe haven in which she can wash off the dust, quench her ▶



Anne-Marie Midy enjoys a few of the finer things at Sanctuary Swala—awaiting a game drive, wildlife viewing, and conversation around a pre-dinner campfire.

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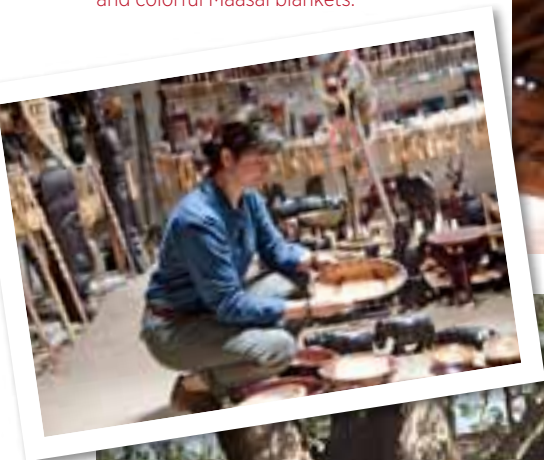


Giving Back

More than just a pretty lodge, Sanctuary Swala has a philanthropic side as well. Camp management has created a community service program, which—among other things—was charged with adding two classrooms to the Gijedabung Primary School in the nearby village of Mamire. Some 600 students (ranging in age from 6 to 13) attend the school.

Local Sources

Anne-Marie (below) shops local markets for handcrafted items, including carved ebony bowls, beaded bracelets and boxes, and colorful Maasai blankets.



thirst, and dream of African savannahs from the comfort of a sumptuous (and mercifully mosquito-netted) bed.

For Anne-Marie—who had been longing to return to Africa ever since a childhood safari shared with her father—Sanctuary Swala is just such a place. The aptly named tented camp, built around a towering baobab tree and utterly secluded in the middle of the roughly 1,000-square-mile national park, is one part Hemingway's Africa, two parts luxury resort.

"Swala truly is a sanctuary," explains Anne-Marie. "It provides absolute comfort in the middle of the wilderness. Looking out at the vastness of the land, one feels vulnerable to Mother Nature. But in camp you experience this splendor that's somehow totally in harmony with the surroundings."

The camp's 12 tents are scattered along red dirt paths frequented by impalas, banded mongooses, and the occasional leopard. Termite mounds and acacia trees dot the landscape. Antelopes, giraffes, and elephants are countless during the dry season when they patronize the nearby waterhole, slowly ►

Lounge A thatched roof and neutral palette create a quiet scheme in the open-air lounge.

Chandelier Recycled-glass chandeliers in the dining room were made by Shanga, a nonprofit organization that employs disabled Tanzanians.

Exterior The camp's common areas encircle a massive baobab tree.



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“
DISCOVERING
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ENRICHING.”

—designer Anne-Marie Midy

wandering by as guests watch from the open-air dining room and lounge.

Reopened in 2009 after a major overhaul, Swala (which is the Swahili word for antelope) was designed with great care, utilizing local artisans and materials. Furniture in the main lounge and dining area was constructed locally. Delicate hanging light fixtures are made of painted acacia tree branches. Baskets, trays, and water-bottle covers are woven from banana-leaf fibers. Artifacts from East African tribes ornament walls and tabletops.

The use of traditional artisans and crafts is a subject close to Anne-Marie's heart. She and her husband, Jorge Almada, own Casamidy in San Miguel de Allende, ►



Artful Accessories

Whenever possible, local artisans were hired to craft decorative items—like these beaded pillows and the banana-leaf accessories (far right) used in guest rooms.



Crafted Illumination

These lounge-area light fixtures of painted acacia tree thorns were created by local artist Jo Cooke. Simple yet striking, they set the tone for the rest of the room.



Tribal Tributes

African antiques and artwork—like these sculptural iron currency pieces, as well as other tribal artifacts—are sprinkled throughout the camp.



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Mexico—a shop with artisan-made furnishings of the couple's design.

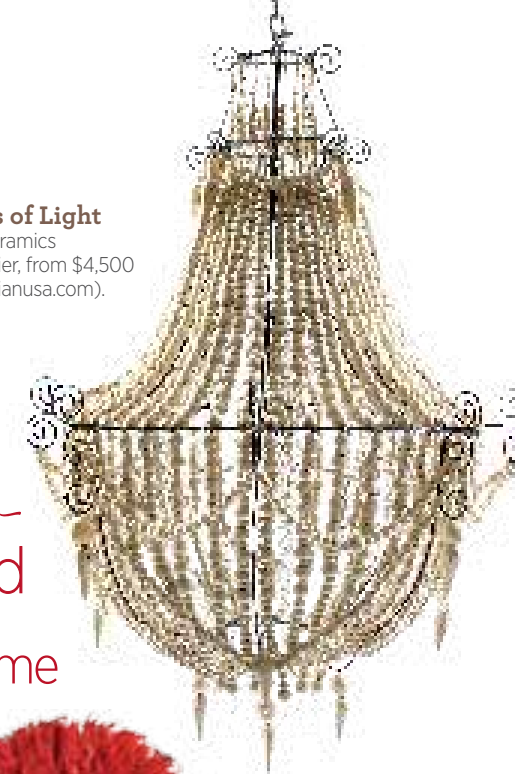
"The use of local artisans not only helps with the survival of local crafts, introducing a cultural context," says Anne-Marie, "but it also fights the generic. I love that every aspect at Swala was considered—from the beads around the door handles and the headboards to the use of organic shapes. It's amazing to witness the transformation of items you'd find in nature—like the acacia thorn branches and the banana leaves. The attention to detail was a design experience in itself." ■

Find it

For more information on Sanctuary Swala or Sanctuary Retreat's 12 additional luxury lodges located in Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Zambia, and Uganda, visit sanctuaryretreats.com or e-mail info@sanctuaryretreats.com.

African-
inspired
finds for
your home

Points of Light
MUD Ceramics
chandelier, from \$4,500
(amaridianusa.com).



Simply Sculptural
Right: "Hollow Zig-Zag"
stool, from \$2,700
(tuckerrobbins.com).
Above: Red Pygmy hat,
\$900 (jalanmiami.com).



Safari Chic
Antique copper
currency ankle
bracelet, from \$950
(jalanmiami.com).



Bowled Over
Andrew Early's
mahogany bowl,
from \$1,100
(amaridianusa.com).



Pierre Frey's "Zen" fabric collection embodies the serenity of Sanctuary Swala. From top: "Moon Lin" linen print, "Zen" embroidered linen, "Galaxie" velvet, and "Passage" embroidered linen (pierrefrey.com).