



Cheetah Plains Announces Strategic Leadership Appointments:
NJ & Mettie van der Merwe as Managing Director & General Manager respectively



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April XX, 2026 (Sabi Sand, South Africa) Cheetah Plains, South Africa’s premier eco-luxury safari lodge nestled within the celebrated Sabi Sand Nature Reserve, is thrilled to announce the appointment of NJ van der Merwe as its new Managing Director, supported by his wife Mettie in the expanded role of General Manager. This leadership decision marks an exciting new chapter for the brand as it continues to elevate its world-class safari offerings and reinforce its commitment to sustainable tourism, personalised hospitality and luxurious, exclusive-use experiences.

NJ brings with him a visionary leadership style grounded in both operational excellence and an unwavering passion for responsible tourism. In his new role as Managing Director, he will guide Cheetah Plains through the next phase of growth, continuing to champion the brand’s ethos of sustainability, exclusivity, and unforgettable safari moments. Owner Japie van Niekerk shares, *“I’ve built a relationship rooted in genuine trust, with NJ and Mettie and believe that they represent both a strong partnership and the leadership skills necessary to push the lodge to be the best ever.”*

Coinciding with this change in leadership, Mettie van der Merwe, will step into her expanded role as General Manager of the lodge. Mettie will play a pivotal part in shaping the day-to-day guest experience

and ensuring operational excellence across all facets of the lodge, from immersive safari journeys and culinary excellence to refined service standards and team Development.

Both NJ & Mettie have been a part of Cheetah Plains for the past seven years, overseeing the lodge's day-to-day operations whilst simultaneously playing a pivotal role in shaping and positioning the lodge as a luxury brand. Now, with NJ at the helm and Mettie championing the guest experience, Cheetah Plains is poised for strategic evolution as a brand. Having been together since 1994 and involved in the world of luxury travel and hospitality since 1995, this pair is well-versed in the many highs and lows of the industry and are primed to step into the roles that await them. Their combined expertise and passion for hospitality will shape the brand's future, expanding its reach while remaining true to the core tenets of personalisation, sustainability, and luxury.

Of the appointment, NJ stated, *"Together with our incredible team, Mettie and I look forward to welcoming guests to experience the beauty, luxury, and unforgettable moments that Cheetah Plains offers in this extraordinary part of South Africa."*

About Cheetah Plains:

Opened in 2018, Cheetah Plains is home to the exclusive-use luxury villa and sustainable safari experience nestled in South Africa's most celebrated wildlife area, the Sabi Sand Nature Reserve. The eco-luxe experience includes three private villas with four guest bush suites that accommodate up to eight guests each with its own formal lounge, living and dining areas, expansive swimming pool, and outdoor deck that operates off-grid. Each villa comes with a complete hospitality team consisting of an accomplished host, butler, culinary team, and spa therapist, as well as an expert field guide and tracker dedicated to you for the duration of your stay. Families and children of all ages are welcome to experience their own personalized safari, guided bush walks, wellness offerings, fitness gym, and tailored activities for kids. Cheetah Plains sets the standard in South Africa for zero-emission game-viewing utilizing its own fleet of solar-charged Land Cruiser Electric Safari vehicles. A luxury sustainable safari that is beyond expectations.

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