

# VOGUE

AUSTRALIA

# LIVING

# TRAVEL

TAKE AN ADVENTURE



Maasai women at Hard Rock village, near & Beyond Bateleur Camp in Kenya, dressed in traditional clothing and performing a local song for visitors.

## Jeremy Simons PHOTOGRAPHER

Simons has been capturing food, lifestyle and adventure travel for 15 years. For this issue, the Sydney-based photographer went to Bateleur Camp (below, left) in Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve. "Having the opportunity to travel and meet the beautiful people of Masai Mara was amazing," he says. "The time spent in the village, speaking with the locals was a truly humbling experience. We are so fortunate to live the way we do." Simons also visited the rugged coast of South Australia's Kangaroo Island to photograph Southern Ocean Lodge. "I find inspiration through creative people and ideas, although travelling and experiencing new cultures and landscapes helps to feed an endless pursuit for the perfect image." [jeremysimons.com.au](http://jeremysimons.com.au) @jeremysimons



The Sydney-based creative grew up in the idyllic NSW coastal town of Yamba, where, she says, "I developed an interest in customs, rites of passage, community and people coexisting with the natural environment." While pursuing a career as a designer and art director, Hassey had a successful solo exhibition of her South American travels, which has led to a life behind the lens. Travelling to the Wild Coast Tented Lodge in Sri Lanka was an "incredible experience — photographing an architecturally stunning and environmentally sustainable safari lodge where the jungle meets the sea". With a love of adventure, Hassey enjoys "being on the road discovering new places, different cultures and connecting to people from all walks of life from around the globe." [elisehassey.com](http://elisehassey.com) @elisehassey

## PHOTOGRAPHER

## Elise Hassey

## Nikki Wallman

## WRITER

After studying journalism in Melbourne, working in PR in London and in advertising in Sydney, Wallman is based in NSW's Southern Highlands. "We moved here a few years ago when our son was a baby," she says, "and love the pace of life, the people, incredible food and wine, and the new energy that's sweeping through this bucolic patch of Australia." In this issue, Wallman details her trip to Sri Lanka's Wild Coast Tented Lodge and is inspired by "the moment of arrival. That breath in between moments where the future still lies in front of you, full of promise and possibility. It could mean anything from arriving on an African airstrip in anticipation of an incredible safari, to the arrival of my son, even the arrival of each new season".



Photographer Elise Hassey (left) and writer Nikki Wallman.

## EDITOR'S LETTER

**I**n a device-driven world, sometimes we need to look up. The new buzzword in travel is 'transformative', but it's really a very old concept. For many people, to travel is to find the unfamiliar, to immerse oneself in different cultures, to see the world through another person's eyes and find those sweet moments when we make a personal connection to a distant place or people. There's a big, beautiful world out there, and it's more profound when it's experienced for real rather than via a screen. Increasingly, travellers are looking for adventures that nurture the soul, finding this in remote communities and landscapes that fire the imagination and recharge jaded senses. In this Travel Special, we journey to four spectacular destinations across the globe — desert, jungle, savannah and coastal bushland — that inspire positive thought and deliver an unforgettable, even transcendent experience. **VL**

Lee Tulloch, TRAVEL EDITOR



The central dining and bar space at Wild Coast Tented Lodge in Sri Lanka.



KENYA

Warming sunlit hues at dawn. Regular run-ins with elephants and giraffes during the day. Calming herb-scented baths by night. This is safari in Kenya, the BATELEUR CAMP way.

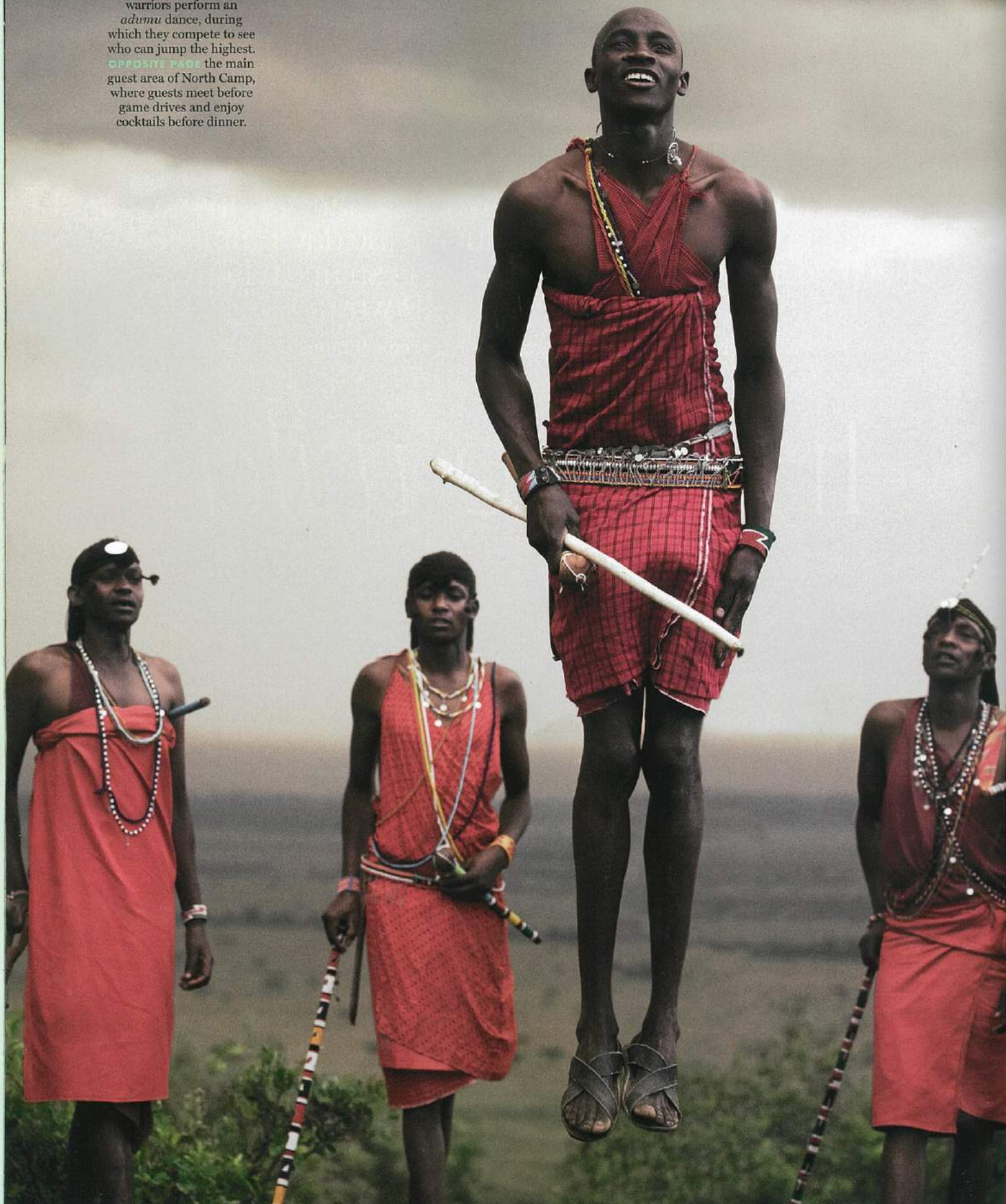
By Freya Herring Photographed by Jeremy Simons

# Into the *wild*

**THIS PAGE** the view from a hot-air balloon safari of the plains of the Maasai Mara National Reserve. **OPPOSITE PAGE** local lions are known for climbing trees.

KENYA

**THIS PAGE** Maasai warriors perform an *adumu* dance, during which they compete to see who can jump the highest. **OPPOSITE PAGE** the main guest area of North Camp, where guests meet before game drives and enjoy cocktails before dinner.





KENYA

**THIS PAGE** a herd of elephants grazing against the backdrop of the Oloololo Escarpment.





At six in the morning, our windows are open and the sun is rising in vivid reds and rushes of yellow over the savannah. Cool air flows in. A hot-air balloon drifts by in fiery bursts as our butler, Benson, drops off hot cups of delicious Kenyan tea and crumbly discs of buttery shortbread on a silver tray. We're at &Beyond's Bateleur Camp in Kenya's Maasai Mara, a lodge so remote you have to fly into it by tiny plane.

Bateleur Camp is situated on the cusp of the jungle at the base of the Oloololo Escarpment that appeared in the 1985 film *Out of Africa*, overlooking 1510 square kilometres of wild-animal-peppered plains. Each day, we go out on safari at dawn and dusk, hosted by our guide, Sammy Ocheng Akatch. At night, we are roused to the sound of lions roaring and the deep chuckle of grazing hippos. Herds of elephants plod by the camp.

Bateleur has been open since 1999 but recently underwent a revamp. Interior designers Debra Fox and Chris Browne of South Africa's Fox Browne Creative oversaw the redesign. "We always create a legend, or personality, around our designs," says Browne. "And this is really an explorer who came with all his little European trinkets and set up in this encampment. It's about that classic safari feel."

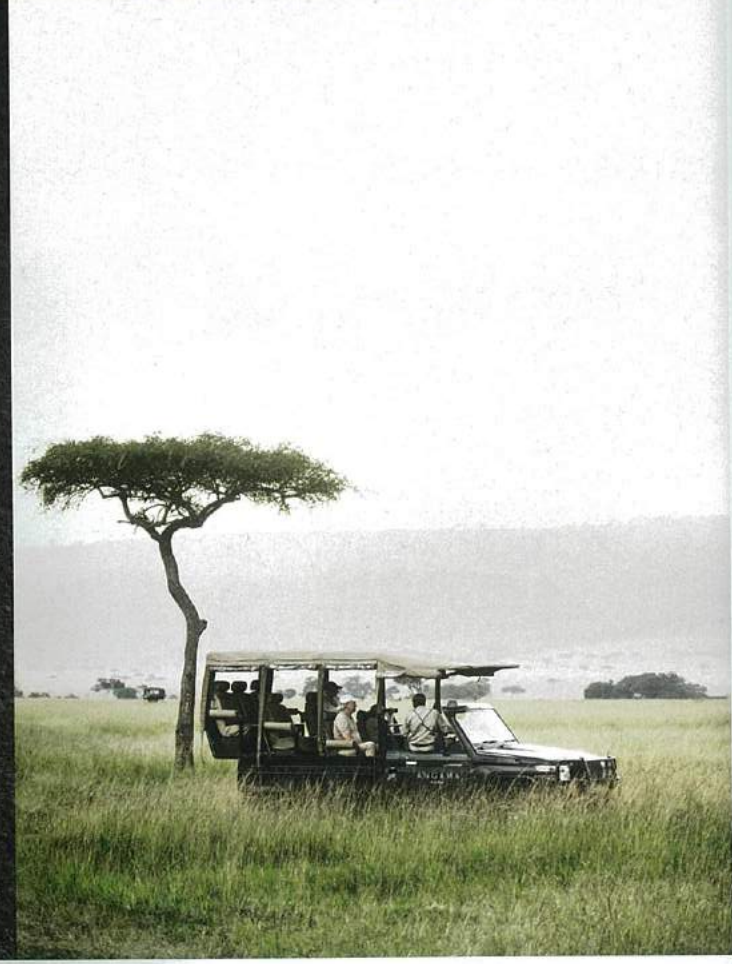
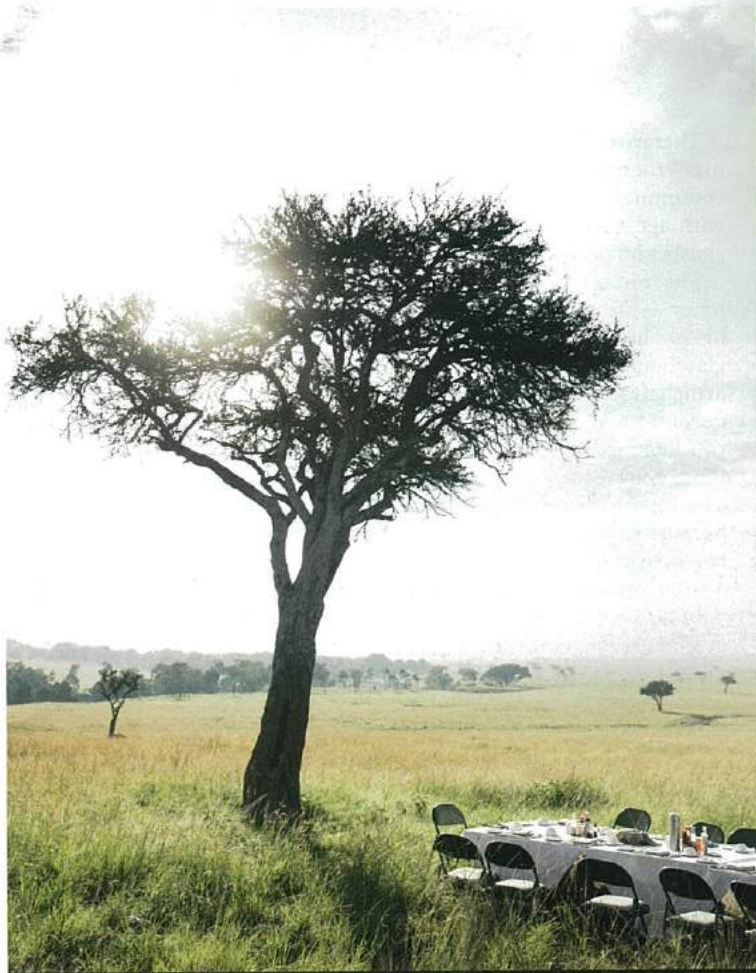
There are two camps at Bateleur, each featuring nine rooms, pools and an elegantly designed communal dining area and bar. The camps sing with age and history, adorned with old, crooked chests and peculiar objects of miscellany.

The rooms — which are, in fact, ginormous tents — feature marble bathrooms and shiny brass baths set within their own private glasshouses. Another corner sees two plush armchairs with sherry housed in a crystal decanter and an ornate, private bar. Everywhere you look, extravagance is balanced with nature. "You don't ever want the design of a place or a building to distract from the wilderness out there, because that's really why you're here," says Fox. "It needs to give you that sense of reconnecting. We want people to fall in love with the world again."

In the centre of the bathroom is an aged leather ottoman. "The leather over the ottoman is actually a beaded Maasai wedding skirt made from goat skin," says Fox. "We wanted to incorporate that sense of Maasai in the design, so there are clay-toned mud walls and Maasai artefacts thrown between English antiques and old-world treasures. There's that feeling that you are in Maasai land but with all the comforts of home."

At night, we drink Negronis by the fireside to the chorus of the animals, before sitting down >>





A photograph of a giraffe standing in a lush, green forest. The giraffe is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the frame, facing right. It has a distinctive pattern of brown and white spots. The forest is dense with various types of trees, including tall, thin trees with sparse foliage and shorter, bushier trees. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or a shaded area within the forest. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

**THIS PAGE** a giraffe in the forest that surrounds &Beyond Bateleur Camp and the Saparingo River. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** breakfast in the Maasai Mara National Reserve after a hot-air balloon safari; the verandah of a guest tent at &Beyond Bateleur Camp; a guided game drive on Bateleur Camp's private concession; a Maasai woman dressed in traditional clothing.

**THIS PAGE** the swimming pool at South Camp. **OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM LEFT** the sky can be seen from this bathtub due to an atrium-like setting in the guest suite bathroom; a woodland kingfisher.



« to four-course feasts of dishes such as Kenyan crushed vegetables (called *irio*) with smoky grilled steak, or crème caramel dusted with coconut and served with passionfruit (the Bateleur team grow much of the produce in their kitchen garden). Drinks, laundry, meals... everything is included here. “Welcome home,” we are told each time we return from safari.

There’s no need to worry about those animals, either. They are one of the reasons you come to Bateleur. Around 70 per cent of the staff here are Maasai — “the most courageous tribe in Africa,” our (non-Maasai) driver tells us. From a young age, the Maasai are trained to protect themselves against the wild animals they encounter day-to-day in this

dangerous part of Africa, and so they travel with you from the restaurant down a starlit path, across a stream, to your room at night. They are armed with spears, in case any hippos (extremely dangerous beasts, it turns out) have decided to wander in. You couldn’t feel more protected.

At the onsite spa, we are scrubbed with herbs, our bodies tenderly massaged for hours — as if we weren’t already relaxed enough. An optional hot-air balloon ride over the savannah at dawn is the stuff of fantasy. The sun rises and we land on

top of a mountain to laid tables set in the long grass, where we are served Champagne and hot waffles with honey and butter.

On game drives, a pride of lions circles our jeep. Staring up at us, the two dazzlingly

Around 70 per cent of the staff here are Maasai — “The MOST courageous tribe in AFRICA”



maned males laze as the lionesses saunter past, their babies trotting along by their mothers' heels. There are elephants, zebras, buffalos and cheery warthogs at every turn, and cumbersome rhinos trudge up to our jeep. A journey of some 18 giraffes surrounds us right after we've stopped for our sundowner cocktails, overlooking a river full of hippos, bobbing up and down, in and out of the murky water.

Unlike many camps, &Beyond has its own range, the Kichwa Tembo private concession, so there are fewer rules here — we can go off-road and right up to the animals. Akatch knows where to find them. One day, we watch lions heave themselves up into tall, spindly trees, their paws dangling down from the branches, tails twitching.

With another sundowner (drinks in the bush are daily events at Bateleur, each evening in a different spot), a team of Maasai warriors surprises us to demonstrate their *adumu* dance, jumping and singing hauntingly. It's an honour to watch

the continuance of this ancient culture, which has remained largely unchanged for centuries.

All of this is exhilarating and exciting, but it's also tiring. "Safari is actually quite hard," says Fox. "You're out early, your hair is dusty, you feel hot and sweaty." Bateleur offers relief, a balm for the thrill. "It needed to feel like a sanctuary when you came home — an oasis where you can recover."

On our final night, we return from our game drive to a hot run bath. Herbs scent the water. We don't play music. We barely talk. It's hard to take in — and to put into words — what a pleasure and a privilege it is to be here in this special, spectacular place. The staff sings as our jeep leaves for the plane that will take us away from here, their welcoming voices filtering through the jungle as we trundle down the hill. **VI**

*Vogue Living experienced Bateleur Camp as a guest of Travel Associates Virtuoso. [travel-associates.com.au/virtuosoandbeyond.com](http://travel-associates.com.au/virtuosoandbeyond.com)*