

Kgalagadi Lodge: Where rugged terrain and luxury meet

 By [Cari Van Wyk](#)

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With Tourism Month now in the rear-view mirror, it is still important to celebrate the multitude of destinations that South Africa has to offer - even those that may be a little out of the way. Despite its size and a treasure trove of destinations and activities, the Northern Cape doesn't get nearly as much love and attention from visitors to SA or local travellers as some of the other provinces. One of the many gems in this region is [Kgalagadi Lodge](#), situated 5km from the Twee Rivieren entrance of the vast Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. We had a chat with Sarel Jacobus (SJ) and Denise Koortzen, co-founders and co-developers of Kgalagadi Lodge, to find out more.



SJ and Denise Koortzen from Kgalagadi Lodge

Tell us a bit about Kgalagadi Lodge

Koortzen: Kgalagadi Lodge, situated between the red sand dunes of the Kalahari, is the ideal desert haven where modern meets wilderness. Two-hundred and fifty kilometres away from Upington Airport, and only five kilometres from the popular Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, this lodge is perfectly located for excitement-seeking travellers.

Kgalagadi Lodge occupies what was once empty, desert land. We saw an opportunity in the bare terrain to create a luxurious lodge which offers only the best services and products to weary travellers and holiday-makers. Whether you're looking for a pit stop en route to your destination, looking to explore the famous national park, or simply looking for the perfect getaway, Kgalagadi Lodge offers various services to meet every guest's needs. With a 50-seater restaurant offering authentic, South African cuisine; a fully-stocked grocery shop and liquor store, and picnic packs available for guests visiting the park, the lodge offers everything you could possibly need for your holiday - all under one roof.

We have an array of strategically placed chalets - the lodge offers 4-star family chalets, 3-star luxury, standard and business chalets, a 4-star campsite and now our newly built Luxury Camping Chalets. For summer there is a swimming pool and for cold winter nights a fire pit to relax around. If you're looking for a proudly natural environment fused with contemporary living right on your doorstep in South Africa, this is the perfect destination for your next getaway, this is where rugged terrain and luxury meet.



■ ***What are some of the top things to do when visiting Kgalagadi Lodge?***

Koortzen: On-site:

- Authentic, South African cuisine dishes served in the restaurant
- Picnic baskets available to enjoy on the red sand dunes
- Bird watching
- Kids will be entertained by all the farm animals from emos, owls, sheep, goats, duikers, steenbok, mongooses, etc.

Off-site:

- Educational walks offered by the Khoisan
- Game drives through the well-known Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (only 5km from the lodge)
- Visits to the traditional Khoisan village in the area
- 4 x 4 trails
- Dune boarding/sandboarding
- Educational walks with [Prof. Anne Rasa](#)

Prof. Anne Rasa owns the Nature Reserve Kalahari Trails at the southern end of the Kalahari Desert in South Africa which she bought a few years prior to her retirement. She has lived there since December 2000 and offers accommodation and guided walks to everyone who is interested in the flora and fauna of the Kalahari.



■ ***Where do most of Kgalagadi Lodge's visitors come from?***

Koortzen: About 65 % of the guests are from the Gauteng province and the Western Cape, from our own province about 2%, 10% are international guests and the rest are from the other provinces in the country.

■ ***Tell us about the relationship between Kgalagadi Lodge and its immediate community? How does the lodge support and develop the communities around it?***

Koortzen: Kgalagadi Lodge is situated on Route 360, only 3 km from the little town of Welkom, with a population of 723 people. Kgalagadi Lodge is a family-owned and operated lodge that strongly believes in giving back to others and therefore, the lodge is extremely involved with the community of Welkom. 80% of the employees at Kgalagadi Lodge are from Welkom. Kgalagadi Lodge supports them by investing in their education and training in the hospitality industry – they offer regular workshops and in-service training. It is important to Kgalagadi Lodge to uplift their quality of life by offering good job opportunities and training in the various areas available at the lodge.

The lodge supports Welkom by:

- Sponsoring the Welkom Rugby Team, Kwaggas.
- We assist the Welkom Primary School where possible: last year the lodge planted trees in celebration of Earth Day, we sponsored an information billboard at the school and also made a donation to help buy jerseys for the children for the very cold Kalahari winters.
- We support our closest national park, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, by donating to help buy gifts for Christmas to give to the local children.
- We also sponsored building materials for upcoming locals starting businesses in the tourism sector.
- Kgalagadi Lodge makes sure that there is always a milkshake and something to eat for local schools before entering the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park for their day trips.
- We also host the beauty pageant for the yearly festival called Noute Fees.
- We sponsored prizes for Miss Kalahari Kuierfees, hosted in Upington yearly, and the two runner-ups.
- We buy products and stock from the locals as much possible – freshly baked goods and hand-made jewellery to sell in our grocery store and curio shop

■ ***What does the Lodge do to conserve the environment around it? How important is conservation to you and how does that influence the day to day operations of the lodge?***

Koortzen: It is very important to Kgalagadi Lodge to conserve our piece of land as we show great respect for the area and its culture and therefore built the chalets around certain landscaping features. Kgalagadi Lodge wants guests to fall in love with the beautiful Kalahari and its red sand dunes in its purest form.

Coming from a farming background, the area is very important to us. We are currently busy building a vegetable garden to grow our own veg and herbs for the restaurant.



■ ***What does Kgalagadi Lodge do to operate sustainably – especially considering the area and the resources available?***

Koortzen: Kgalagadi Lodge implements a green system as far as possible by saving energy with the solar geysers that it uses at 16 of the 30 chalets available, saving water by recycling for watering the trees (irrigation), all plumbing pipes are green, inverter aircons are used in all the chalets. We also installed a big reverse osmoses plant that we use to desalt water from boreholes deep under the riverbed's fresh water supply.

Conservation is an ongoing process and we know that we need to look at more ways to conserve our beautiful area every day.

ABOUT CARI VAN WYK

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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