

BERGPLAAS NATURE RESERVE

Spirit of



the Wild

A 5000-hectare nature reserve in the Great Karoo, Bergplaas Nature Reserve offers a wildlife experience that deeply reconnects people from all walks of life with themselves and with the natural environment.

BY CINDY AND WAYNE MASPERO



Geographically, we neighbour the iconic Compassberg Mountain in the Nieu Bethesda/ Graaff-Reinet region, renowned for its vast, harsh beauty and incredible sense of space. Our reserve is home to over 900 large mammals, several small carnivores and over 133 bird species.

We are members of the Eastern Cape Private Nature Reserve Association, known as INDALO - created by the Wilderness Foundation in 2002 to bring together private nature/game reserves that focus on socially responsible and ecologically sound wildlife and land management.

Bergplaas is renowned for its unique *Spirit of the Wild* Programme, a one-to-three-week wildlife, guiding and leadership programme that awakens each participant's pathways of knowledge, belonging and purpose. In the 21st century many of us have

lost this connection, which is our lifeline to our shared humanity, our collective wellbeing and the achievement of our full potential.

The Spirit of the Wild Programme is endorsed by the Field Guide Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) as a Specialist Training Provider. Participants range from young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in South Africa (including the Wilderness Foundation, SANParks and the Tracker Academy) to MBA students from Europe to global business leaders.

We also offer a springboard from which young people can confidently enter the conservation sector, equipped with a greater understanding of wildlife and the natural environment and their part in it. Extending from this, we offer a number of annual internships for nature conservation students from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in the

Bergplaas can accommodate groups of 18 people. Delicious catering can be arranged.



BERGPLAAS – THE STORY

In her recently published book, Princess Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld tells her personal story about the time she spent on Bergplaas. With inspiring texts, landscape photography, and original excerpts from her diary and drawings, she describes the creation of Bergplaas Nature Reserve. She inspires the reader to think about how we treat the Earth and our own relationship with Nature. The book is for anyone interested in nature, philosophy, spirituality, personal growth and sustainability. Currently in Dutch, we hope to see an English translation next year.

You can order the book or view more information here: <http://bergplaas-eenverhaal.nl/>

CONSERVATION



"Bergplaas offers people a place where they can not only grow and develop, but also to recharge, reconnect with life and find clarity in themselves." - Cindy Maspero **Below:** HRH Princess Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld, of the Netherlands.

Eastern Cape to do their experiential training here.

The Spirit of the Wild Programme evolved after the owner of Bergplaas, HRH Princess Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld, of the Netherlands, spent extended time alone here. She experienced how the wildness and vastness led her to her inner silence and power. From here she conceived *The Spirit of the Wild* Programme, which has been co-facilitated since 2007 by us, Cindy and Wayne Maspero. We both have a wildlife and guiding background.

"The Spirit of the Wild Programme leads to a reevaluation of our personal relationship with the natural environment and our place as humans in this unique ecosystem we call Earth."
– HRH Princess Irene van Lippe-

Biesterfeld of the Netherlands. Many people have said that time spent at Bergplaas is a life-changing experience.

In addition to *The Spirit of the Wild* Programme, Bergplaas hosts cycling, hiking and running groups, mini conferences and workshops. There is no cellphone reception or wifi, which appeals to groups wanting peace and serenity or requiring everyone's focused attention!

We can accommodate up to 18 people (sharing) or 9 people (single) in comfortable double rooms. Bathrooms are shared, as are the common rooms, dining rooms, lounges, library, bomas and conference/workshop room. Delicious catering can be arranged and costed according to the group's needs. A self-catering cottage is also available. ■■



VUYANI MBUZA

Trainee Spirit of the Wild Facilitator Vuyani Mbuza (30) graduated from the Tracker Academy several years back. He later joined the Wilderness Leadership School as a Wilderness Trail's Guide. He has completed the three-week *Spirit of the Wild* Programme, and the Bergplaas team is now training him to be a *Spirit of the Wild* facilitator. Vuyani grew up in the rural Eastern Cape village of Lusikisiki where his home language is Xhosa. His father passed away when he was very young. His mother, who raised him, has also since passed away. "Coming to Bergplaas for me was a very big step but I think I was following my soul because when I arrived here, my soul had a very big smile and the people here were calm and collected. I felt like a new person meeting a new life. I love the peace that I get on Bergplaas and the Spirit of the Wild really feeds people's souls. My experience on Bergplaas has also helped me to understand that animals have emotions like we do; that when I get afraid and my heart is beating fast, it is the same for an animal when they feel fear. We need to respect them and my time here has inspired me to be a leader for nature who helps people who have never tasted its beauty. I think we all need to be connected with nature so that we can be able to experience the same god and not point fingers at other people. I feel joy when I am working with people on the *Spirit of the Wild* programme and I would love to serve *Spirit of the Wild* for the rest of my life."

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