

KLASERIE

CHRONICLE

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*Wild
Hearts*

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SPOTS

*MUDDY
PAWS*



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A Luxury Safari Experience
FOR EVERYONE

Words & Photos Patrick Suverein

At Ximuwu Safari Lodge, we believe everyone should have the chance to experience the breathtaking beauty of the African bush. Our journey to create a fully accessible lodge began five years ago after a failed back surgery left me in a wheelchair for three months. That time made me aware of the challenges faced by those with mobility issues and what is convenient—or not—for people who rely on wheelchairs.

When the idea to build our lodge arose during the COVID pandemic, my partner, Elly, and I agreed on one principle: Ximuwu would be a place where everyone could enjoy the bush without compromising on aesthetics or comfort. We envisioned a lodge providing an authentic safari experience without the need for unsightly grab bars or hospital beds. We wanted our guests to immerse themselves in the natural surroundings with a tasteful design that blends seamlessly into the environment.

Designing an Accessible Dream

From the outset, we believed we could achieve this vision without an architect. Instead, we partnered with a builder who shared our commitment to accessibility and elegance. While Elly focused on interior design, I worked on the exterior. We chose naturally even terrain, free of obstacles, which made the design process smoother and allowed accessibility and beauty to go hand in hand.

We prioritized easy mobility throughout the lodge. All paths connecting the suites to the main building are paved and designed to be wheelchair-friendly, including gutters that manage water disposal after heavy rain. Guests using wheelchairs can easily navigate from their rooms to the main lodge and back. We also constructed a large ramp for wheelchair access and a designated parking area for our specially adapted game viewer.

Our game viewer is a unique feature that embodies the spirit of Ximuwu. It is equipped with specially designed doors and sliding seats, allowing guests to slide easily from their wheelchair onto the seat, which can then be slid back into place. We can securely strap guests in before closing the door, ensuring a safe and thrilling game drive. Imagine the feeling of the wind in your hair and the scents of the bush as you explore the wilderness in an open vehicle.

Accessibility Without Compromise

Ximuwu Safari Lodge is built entirely on one level, eliminating the need for elevators. Ramps lead from our main deck to the campfire at the boma and extend to one of our accessible photographic hides. While some areas have steeper angles, our attentive staff is always on hand to assist, ensuring every guest's comfort and safety.

All four rooms are designed with accessibility in mind. Two of the rooms closest to the main building offer additional facilities, such as paraplegic toilets and accessible showers with grab bars. Each room features wide sliding doors, over 100 cm wide, for smooth wheelchair access. One room has mounted grab bars in the toilet, while the other is free of them, catering to different needs. We provide a removable rack for those who prefer extra support. The countertops are open underneath, allowing



wheelchairs to fit comfortably, and all taps have easy-to-use handles.

Welcoming All Guests

Over the past 18 months, Ximuwu Safari Lodge has proudly welcomed various wheelchair users and guests with other physical impairments. Without exception, every guest has praised the lodge's accessibility, sharing how effortlessly they could explore and enjoy the bush. We've noticed more groups visiting where one or more family members have physical impairments, highlighting the value of an accessible safari experience.

Our new managers, Demi and Bradley Rinsma, are thrilled to be part of this journey. *"It is so great to welcome the wheelchair guests who are all extremely impressed by all the accessible features our lodge has to offer,"* they share. *"Hearing their positive feedback and seeing their smiles makes all the effort we put into accessibility truly worthwhile."*

Convincing travel agents of the need for such a location was challenging initially. However, more agents now recognize the importance of inclusive travel, and we're seeing an increase in requests tailored to our strengths. These agents know that Ximuwu offers a space where every guest can enjoy an authentic safari adventure.



Convenient Location for Your Safari Experience

Ximuwu Safari Lodge is also conveniently located, just 10 minutes from Eastgate Airport and 30 minutes from Hoedspruit. This makes getting to the lodge easy and stress-free, allowing guests to spend more time enjoying the beauty of the bush.

Amenities Designed for All Guests

In addition to accessible guest rooms, the main lodge features an accessible toilet with an electric door opener, handrails, and ample space for a wheelchair. The spacious dining area accommodates all guests, with tables that provide easy wheelchair access. Every detail ensures guests can relax and enjoy their surroundings.

For those who wish to take a dip in the pool, we have imported a state-of-the-art pool lift from Europe, ensuring everyone can enjoy the refreshing water. Upon request, we can heat the pool for added comfort.

At Ximuwu, we provide a range of specialized equipment free of charge, including emergency buttons that work throughout the lodge via Wi-Fi, different shower chairs, a bath lift, adjustable beds, an electric wheelchair, a manual wheelchair, cooling vests, seat heating equipment, and an accessible airport shuttle van for day trips. ■

