

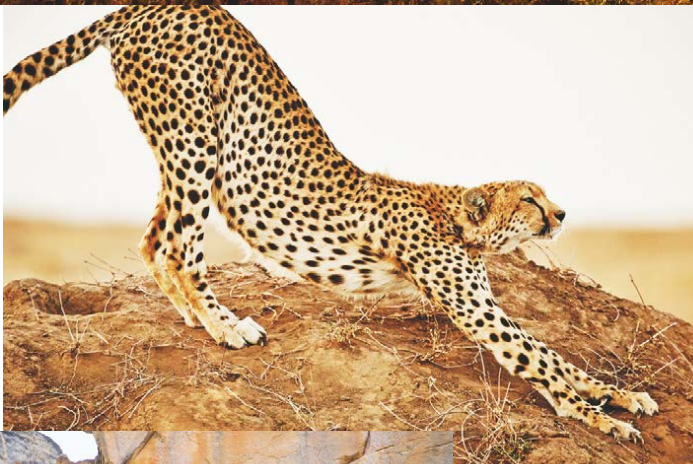


## PITCH FORWARD

## AFRICA'S MOST DIRECTIONAL SAFARI OUTFITS ARE REFRAMING THE CONVERSATION BY LAYING CONTROL BACK IN THE HANDS OF LOCAL EXPERTS

Before becoming one of the first black owners of a camp in Kenya's Maasai Mara, Johnson Ping'ua 'Ping' Nkukuu was already something of a trailblazer. The man behind **Enaidura Camp** has a history of making a stand: he was thrown out of his home for opposing his father when an older man wanted to marry his 18-year-old sister; today, she's a doctor based in Nairobi and the family has reconciled. Female empowerment is still a focus for him; Nkukuu aims to get more women involved in the safari industry and is currently training Sialo 'Sarah' Shonko as a guide. There's plenty of resistance – 'a lot of people don't like change,' he notes – but real societal shifts are far more effective when coming from within a community. Nkukuu co-founded Enaidura – six smart tents spread along the Talek River – with fellow guide Paul Kirui in 2016, marking an overdue turning point.

Black Africans have very little stake in the safari industry: most owners (and, in South Africa especially, managers and guides, too) are white. The African Travel and Tourism Association estimates that, at most, 15 per cent of its 600-plus camp-owning members are black. One of the hurdles for entrepreneurs is funding. As a former guide himself, Bill Given – wildlife biologist and founder of USA- and Tanzania-based tour operator The Wild Source – was inspired to invest in lodges owned and run by locals, with three change-making outposts: in addition to Enaidura, there's **Njozi Camp** in the Serengeti of Tanzania and **Bushman Plains** in Botswana's Okavango Delta. The latter, with four tents overlooking a flood plain stalked by leopards, is the country's first to be majority-owned by Bushmen, the indigenous people of southern Africa. 'The areas where we were raised with my parents had been taken,' says guide Motswasele 'Diesel' Tshosa as he walks through a cluster of ebony trees. 'Safaris had not been benefiting us.' Deo Magoye, owner of the Tanzania branch of The Wild Source, opened Njozi in late 2018. The mobile camp oscillates between two Serengeti sites, trailing wildebeest as they follow the rains. The focus is big-cat research, and guests are joined by young scientists-in-training. On a tour around the northern Serengeti, guide Sosy Maira and his biologist brother David switch easily from discussing observations of the impact of tourism on cheetah hunts to the best Bongo Flava musicians. Magoye also plans to start a vocational college for youngsters. 'They can conserve this place,' he says. As we resolve to travel with purpose and consideration, making a positive impact, these spots – where the nightly rate is a direct contribution to local ownership – should be just the sort of stays we seek out. HEATHER RICHARDSON [thewildsource.com](http://thewildsource.com)



From top, Enaidura Camp; cheetah in Tanzania's Serengeti; rock art near Bushman Plains; Ping Nkukuu, co-owner of Enaidura; sable antelope in Botswana