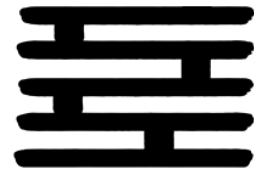




**WEARE
AFRICA**

awards

2023

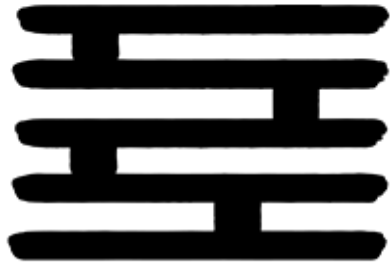


Extraordinary
LEADERSHIP

Celebrating the passionate individuals dedicating their time to changing perceptions of the continent, shaping Africa's future for the better.

AWARDS

Shortlist



Extraordinary
LEADERSHIP

Grace Leonard | Elewana

Michael Lutzeyer | Grootbos Private Game Reserve

Ingram Casey | Escape+Explore

Jonathan Mutisya | Finch Hattons Camp

Sara Gardiner | Matetsi Victoria Falls

Robert More | MORE Family Collection

Grace Leonard

Elewana

As General Manager of Elewana Elsa's Kopje, in Meru National Park, Grace is one of a rare breed: a female Kenyan in charge of a luxury safari lodge. And as well as the day-to-day challenges of the job, there's the responsibility of being a role model, too.

Grace became interested in conservation at a young age. "My exposure started in the small town of Maralal, in Samburu County, where I grew up," says Grace. "Human-animal conflict was an issue, with buffalo and elephant damaging farms. Most of my classmates were put through school with support from conservation companies."

"A lot of tourists came, the majority of whom had driver-guides," she continues. "One day during the annual Camel Derby, I saw ladies guiding the guests, plus one who was in charge of the activities. I was in shock! It was the first time I'd seen ladies in such positions."

This was game-changing. "You can't be what you can't see," Grace states. Being exposed to those female guides, as well as witnessing the work of Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai - the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize - shifted her beliefs.

"Role models represent and expand what is possible," says Grace. "They inspire women to be more ambitious and aim higher, and they demonstrate the mindsets and behaviours required in order to rise."

However, gender equality remains a big challenge in East Africa.

"There is a lack of safe spaces for women and girls to live free from gender-based violence, as well as a lack of participation of women in decision and policy-making at all levels," Grace says.

"We need to ensure women are involved in peace-building, conflict prevention and mitigation. We also need to narrow gender gaps in education, training and employment, and improve access to credit facilities and market opportunities."

There are practical issues too. "It is difficult to have a family - a husband and children - and still work in bush lodges," Grace admits. "For us to balance this, we have to trust a third party to take care of the children. Fortunately, Elewana is one of the most supportive companies. But we need to educate communities that females working in hospitality and conservation can be focused and still take care of their families."



Grace Leonard

Elewana

Grace has some sound advice for women who are interested in working in the industry.

"Create your own personal definition of success. Understand how your company makes money. Cultivate friends at work. And have a vision for your career. In 2022, we had eight girls from our national universities who successfully completed their three-month internship; some were so good that we called them back to work."

One thing is essential, she believes: "Women must support women. Reach out to role models both within and outside your company. Choose great mentors, and be a mentor to other women."

Aside from being a great General Manager, Grace continues to inspire both her professional colleagues as well as her family

"I count myself lucky that my daughter has been able to see me at work. She gets to see a woman in a senior role, as well as learn about hospitality, history and conservation. I believe this inspires her to strive and to develop her dreams at a young age."

She admits it's not easy for women – but nothing worth doing ever is. "There are no shortcuts," she says.

"Keep working, keep striving, never give up. Fall down seven times, get up eight. Keep moving, keep growing and cultivate a culture of commitment. Roll up your sleeves and go to work."





Michael Lutzeyer

Grootbos Nature Reserve

Michael started and has created a five-star eco luxury experience and hospitality product with passion, vision and an unfaltering enthusiasm for which he is well known in the industry.

He built the Grootbos product in an area not originally supported by tourism and has built a sought-after luxury product and destination. No matter what has been thrown at Michael, fires, economic recession, COVID, he is never deterred and only ever positive.

He is considered a 'go-to' person in the industry and is exceptionally generous to absolutely all in the trade.

From inception, Michael intuitively understood that the Grootbos lodges are a nature-based tourism product and that it made sense to conserve the vulnerable Cape Floristic Kingdom that Grootbos was located in. Similarly, he has understood that the communities surrounding Grootbos, are 'our' Grootbos communities and that we need to be inclusive of these communities.

In terms of conservation, this understanding has grown the conservation area of Grootbos to 3 500 hectares and extended the conservation regionally across over 27 000 hectares, laying the baseline for a green corridor with multiple stakeholders connecting Grootbos all the way to the Agulhas National Park.

Michael was and is a thought leader in terms of shared value and progressive tourism, where tourism goes beyond an extractive tourism model and looks after both community and conservation.

He has a legacy of over 20 years of work, driving conservation and community work. The industry is starting to catch up and sustainability, conservation and community are now a more mainstream conversation in the industry but this is a passion of Michael and he has truly worked to lead the industry to include conservation and community as a matter of course.





Ingram Casey

Escape + Explore

Ingram Casey has been instrumental in expanding adventure-style tourism to a wider high-end audience than originally anticipated, thanks to his unwavering appetite for innovation. His brainchild, Escape+Explore, was launched in 2014 with the ambitious goal of "transforming travel in Africa beyond its wildlife." Ingram's vision became a reality, as Escape+Explore was recognized as the first non-wildlife experience to win the Most Innovative Experience in Africa award in 2016.

Moreover, Ingram has developed an innovative and truly original form of destination hosting that blends luxury and adventure in a creative way. Each experience is highly unique, challenging traditional ideas of luxury adventure travel in Africa. This has given rise to a new genre of super-qualified adventure guides who set the standards for exploring Africa's urban environments, waterways, and trails professionally and spontaneously, unlocking a dynamic and modern Africa.





Jonathan Mutisya

Finch Hattons Camps

As the Camp Manager at Finch Hattons for over 30 years, Jonathan Mutisya has been a staple foundation in establishing Finch Hattons as a leading Kenyan safari camp in Tsavo National Park. Since 1991, Jonathan has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills and a deep commitment to sustainability, community engagement, and guest satisfaction as Finch Hattons.

Under Jonathan's leadership, Finch Hattons has become a model for sustainable tourism in Kenya. Jonathan has implemented a range of innovative programs and initiatives to reduce the camp's environmental footprint, promote local conservation efforts, and support community development.

Further, Jonathan is deeply committed to engaging with and empowering the local community—an incentive in the foundation of Finch Hattons. He has worked to establish strong partnerships with local communities, supporting a range of initiatives that promote education, health, and economic development in the region. By doing so, he has helped to build bridges between the camp and the surrounding communities, creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for guests.

Perhaps most importantly, Jonathan is a true leader when it comes to guest satisfaction. He is passionate about ensuring that every guest who visits Finch Hattons has an unforgettable, authentic experience and goes above and beyond to exceed their expectations. From personalized service to unique activities and experiences, Jonathan and his team are dedicated to creating lasting memories for every guest.

Overall, Jonathan Mutisya is a truly exceptional leader in the African safari and travel industry and has been an asset in the success of Finch Hattons over the last 30 years.

Are there any changes resulting from this leadership?

Jonathan Mutisya's leadership at Finch Hattons has resulted in a number of positive changes that have strengthened the camp's commitment to sustainability, community engagement, and guest satisfaction over the last three decades.





Jonathan at 19, when he first started at Finch Hattons as an intern.

Jonathan Mutisya *Finch Hattons Camp*

One of the most notable changes that Jonathan has implemented is a renewed focus on sustainable tourism. For example, he has introduced solar energy systems, waste reduction strategies, and eco-friendly practices in all areas of the camp.

He has also partnered with local conservation organizations to promote wildlife protection, habitat restoration, and environmental education throughout Tsavo National Park and Kenya, such as Kenya Wildlife Service and Save Giraffes Now.

These efforts have not only reduced the camp's environmental impact but have also helped to raise awareness of the importance of responsible tourism among guests and staff alike.

By employing the local Maasai communities as guides and trackers, Jonathan has created employment opportunities, encouraged the development of local businesses, and provided training and mentoring to staff members. He has also successfully promoted cultural exchange between guests and locals, bringing guests to visit the nearby town of Iltilal to learn the age-old traditions and cultures of the Maasai.

In terms of the guest experience, Jonathan has implemented several improvements that have enhanced the level of service and comfort at Finch Hattons. He has overseen the renovation of the camp's luxury tented suites, ensuring that they are equipped with all the amenities and comforts that guests expect from a five-star while implementing sustainable practices.

The camp feature an open plan concept, each elevated off the ground to leave a minimal footprint with expansive decks offering stunning views of Tsavo, and creamy white linens, indoor and outdoor showers, copper bathtubs, and gentle lighting for a first-class offering in the East African bush.

He has also worked to streamline operations and enhance staff training, resulting in a more efficient and effective service delivery with a regional staff steeped in Kenyan customs and hospitality.





Sara Gardiner

Matetsi Victoria Falls

Founded by Zimbabwe-born Sara Gardiner and her family in 2016, the award-winning Matetsi Victoria Falls rests just 40km from Victoria Falls and has become renowned for championing both its 100% Zimbabwean team and fervent wildlife conservation.

In love with everything her beautiful country has to offer, Sara is passionate about showcasing the most exceptional from her country, and in doing so making a strong positive impact for the region.

Sara Gardiner - "Everything that we preserve, nurture and create will be our legacy, and as we protect wild places for wildlife and future generations, we hope to inspire others to do the same.

In late 2021, in partnership with her brother Charles, Sara set up GRACE, a fund-raising and grant-giving organisation that works primarily with projects that affect community empowerment and upliftment, as well as sustainable conservation initiatives, which continues the incredible philanthropic work that their parents have done over the last 30+ years.

Through GRACE, Sara and her family have and are continuing to regenerate 136,000 acres of wilderness, part of a minimum 50-year commitment, leading the example in Zimbabwe of a successful conversion from a hunting concession to photographic and conservation.

By managing the land through a process of rewilding and aided by 16 solar-powered boreholes that deliver much-needed water to the area, a wide-ranging radio communications network and an extensive road network for anti-poaching activity, Sara's vision for the game reserve has seen a 100% regeneration of numerous species over the past years, including elephant, kudu, impala, giraffe, zebra, buffalo, sable and wildebeest.

Along with the help of Matetsi's anti-poaching unit that launched in 2021, named 'Amaganyane' (meaning 'Wild Dogs' in Ndebele), the organisation is able to undertake wildlife rescues, from snared elephant calves to kudu, they have removed over 22,000 wired snares, arrested 683 hardened poachers, and saved 179 mammals injured through snaring and then released them back into the wild.





Sara Gardiner

Matetsi Victoria Falls

Aside from creating employment opportunities for local Zimbabweans and continuing their conservation work, Sara and the family are equally committed to supporting their rural communities in Northern Matabeleland. Partnering with the small but incredible non-profit Greenline Africa Trust, Matetsi supports the work that they do to help marginalized and vulnerable communities to develop, implement and support sustainable projects focusing on livelihoods, health and education.





Robert More

MORE Family Collection

Robert More showed decisive leadership as Chair of the Inbound Recovery Forum during the pandemic. Within this forum, he fostered collaboration between the group of 15 travel tourism stakeholders.

The forum's main objective was to lobby the government to initially remove interprovincial borders that would support domestic tourism, then to encourage the removal of international travel restrictions.

This was done through various ways: - media lobbying with important stakeholders that could impact the government were always quoted in the press; tourism campaigns such as South Africa is Travel Ready, and I am Tourism; and a white paper for the government on how to open borders safely.

As Custodian and CEO of MORE Family Collection, Robert inspired and prioritised his staff with a focus on their continued employment where possible as well as their personal health. Many informational documents were shared with respect to health management. The core message was that "We Stand United". There were four key messages within this that were embraced by the team:

Be INFORMED

Be CALM

Be POSITIVE

LOVE OUR GUESTS, MORE than ever before.

Robert also used this time to formalise the sustainability journey of The Collection. Since 2020, a sustainability consultant worked with the staff who then had the time for training in terms of documenting statistics.

The objective was as per one of the core pillars to be better coming out of the pandemic and to have more impact in the long term for conservation and community.

Whilst the first two years of data were not representative of normal operations, 2022 and now 2023 patterns can now be properly discerned. In 2023, the sustainability management was handed over to the More Community Foundation.

"I am personally proud of the work we have done through the More Community Foundation, our non-profit arm through which we deliver our corporate, social and environmental responsibilities. We also have the Nakavango Conservation Programme in Zimbabwe." - RM





Robert More

MORE Family Collection

Robert holds regular virtual connects with the entire organisation to ensure transparency and company updates.

South Africa is in recovery and Robert continues to contribute to media commentary with respect to this, always painting a positive but realistic picture.

Over 2022/2023 the MORE Family Collection has rebuilt, reemployed, and ensured staff have been financially compensated to recoup some of their losses over that time. Health management measures remain in place with staff encouraged to exercise on site, with even the head office having regular sessions.

In terms of being ahead on the sustainability journey - In early 2022 the first solar installation at Marataba were completed and in the same year a total of 649 panels were added at Lion Sands Game Reserve that will supply power to River Lodge in the Sabi Sand, Narina Lodge and Tinga Lodge in Kruger National Park, as well as to our staff village.

"We are making some incredible reductions in our carbon footprint which includes the investment in solar power. We have sustainability champions on each site that continually ensure we all remain aware, always seeking out ways we could be doing things better and treading more lightly. This is a journey that takes consistent effort, and I am truly proud of our team for their ongoing commitment to all these initiatives." - RM

"We have introduced a benchmark comparison of data derived from 70 different African properties, against which to measure our own efforts. This guides us to improve our practices and set achievable tasks that uphold industry standards." - RM

"Over the last year considerable investment has been made to grow the MORE Family Collection product creating more opportunities for our people. This includes the Residences portfolio, the refurbishment of Cape Cadogan Boutique Hotel and the opening of a new restaurant Upper Union in Cape Town. Alongside this, the Artist Residency at Lion Sands has expanded contributing to guest experience. We are also proud to be involved in the new MORE Field Guide College campus at

