

FINE LIVING NAMIBIA

Wellness is....
a GocheGanas experience

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FINE LIVING

Wellness is ... a GocheGanas experience

Photograph courtesy of GocheGanas Wellness Village and Nature Reserve

The latest addition to fine living in Namibia is the GocheGanas Wellness Village and Nature Reserve, about 30km from Windhoek.

BY MARIETJE NAUDÉ

The rain was pouring down over Windhoek when we left the city behind in search of an answer to the question of authentic inner wellness.

The capital was barely a spot in the rear-view mirror when we left the B1 and took the short gravel road to GocheGanas Wellness Village and Nature Reserve.

Like so many times before, I was amazed at how drastically and quickly the Namibian environment changes – within a couple of kilometres. On leaving Windhoek you are swallowed by the rugged Auas Mountains and abducted to wide, open spaces on the banks of the Usip River, surrounded by the Leopard Mountains. Some 25 minutes later, we were in front of the dramatic gates of GocheGanas, ready for the experience of a lifetime.

Although the GocheGanas Wellness Village is on a hilltop, you only notice the building when you approach the foot of the hill. With architectural ingenuity they have succeeded in creating a village that can be described as an extension of nature.

At the front door our host, and general manager of GocheGanas, Ingo Stritter, welcomes us with an umbrella and a warm smile. 'Welcome to the place of camel-thorn trees, abounding with candlepod acacia – that's the meaning of the Nama word, 'GocheGanas,' says Ingo. Then you realise why they called it GocheGanas. You look around and see herds of antelope roaming freely among the camel-thorn trees and acacias that stand up like candles.

From the reception area you have a splendid view of the heated indoor swimming pool downstairs, under a cathedral-like vault – in raw masonry... 'We've tried as far as possible to incorporate the resources of GocheGanas in the building,' Ingo says when he registers my astonishment at the sight of the raw concrete. 'Normal' is against our principles. We don't have paint on the walls and we don't have tiles on the floors. The vault and floors are GocheGanas stones, and we've used GocheGanas sand on the walls.'

One of the very first challenges for Ingo and his

wife Sabine was to construct a building that would not be in shrill contrast to nature, and where you could bring nature into the building as far as possible. For them, the answer lay in natural resources and glass-topped dome shapes, to ensure guests felt close to nature – even while taking a bath.

Stellenbosch architect Andrew Horn has ensured that 'the Spirit of Africa' is always present at GocheGanas. Using earthy tones and textures, he has come up with something unique in the international wellness industry. The unrivaled stylishness also represents a celebration of the culture of Namibia and the exquisite setting of the wellness village.

The idea of a wellness village started to materialise when Sabine did some research on complementary health. 'We don't want to be a health hydro for Namibia,' says Ingo. 'We want to offer guests the sort of experience that won't have them so much *needing* to return, but rather *wanting* to return.'

The Stritters did extensive research on the holistic approach to health and wellness, combining all aspects of physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing to realign the mind, body and soul. 'We needed to determine where the wellness world is going and what the modern tourist expects. We also want to have Namibian guests – we don't intend to have an international island, 30km from Windhoek,' says Ingo.

The Stritters have created an African citadel where guests can rediscover the values of life. 'These values are everywhere around you in nature and in what we've partly created at the wellness village and nature reserve,' says Ingo.

Ingo says GocheGanas is not a wellness centre but a village, far removed from the concrete buildings and cars of the city. The separateness of the buildings in the wellness village communicates a peaceful lifestyle without stress.

The earth sparkles with semiprecious stones at GocheGanas and, on our way to the chalet, I discovered all the buildings were given practical and relevant names. The chalets are named after Namibian precious and semiprecious stones, while the three treatment huts are named after the three components of granite. According to Ingo, these three components form the basis of good health.

We stayed in one of the 10 chalets. Each spacious room has a private timber deck and thatched roof and is equipped with an air conditioner, a television, a minibar, a telephone and an internet connection. In the *en suite* bathroom, there's a bath and shower, and a skylight has been built over the bath to ensure that nature is never blocked out. If you want to get even



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closer to nature, each chalet has a private outdoor shower. Large windows everywhere in the chalets allow you to look out over the beautiful landscape and the Leopard Mountains.

There are also five luxury chalets and a 'crown suite'. This private suite caters for a maximum of four guests. The spacious master bedroom is linked, via a timber deck, to a generous living and dining area with a day bed, an *en suite* bathroom and a kitchenette with room service. It, too, is equipped with an air conditioner, a TV, a stereo system, a telephone and an internet connection.

Finally, it was time to pay a visit to the treatment huts with their state-of-the-art German equipment. Once again, all the rooms have a splendid view of the environment. From here the view is of the widespread grass plains – they could have you believe you are in Botswana.

Use of the heated indoor swimming pool, the outdoor pool, the granite bath – which is a cave sauna built with GocheGanas stone – the Kneipp treatment and the gym and fitness facilities are all included in the full-board rates. Fresh fruit, class A

mineral water from the GocheGanas hot water source, juice and tea are also provided at the village.

The wellness village's packages can be tailored to suit all guests' needs. The wellness starter kicks off with a relaxing facial, using the Thalasso range of products from Lüderitz. Combined with a foot massage or reflexology, it brings balance to mind and skin. This is followed by a relaxing massage in the hydrobath and a drive through the quiet and peaceful landscape – which the Stritters say is key to inner balance and good health.

Some of the other packages include weight-loss and detoxification treatments. There's also a package designed especially for men. One of the highlights at GocheGanas is their outdoor massage.

With mind and body nurtured back to wellness, we said goodbye to the Stritters. But the GocheGanas experience is not something that ends once you get back on the road to Windhoek; it's a state of mind, and it lingers for quite some time. And when the rat-race gets to you again, you will know GocheGanas is just around the corner and will welcome you back. ☺

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