

# SUSTAINABLE AFRICAN TOURS

Wild Philanthropy offers a new way to give back while traveling the continent.



A Journeys by Design trip in Kenya.

Investing in the conservation of African ecosystems is daunting without all the right connections. It's always bothered Will Jones, founder of luxury African-tour operator Journeys by Design. So Jones, who grew up in Africa, devised a solution. This fall, he launched **Wild Philanthropy**, a member's club that helps charitable travelers to invest in countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. "We're aiming to elevate the classic luxury safari to a travel club that helps us build conservation legacies for members," Jones says.

Travelers can join Wild Philanthropy by selecting from three tiers of annual fees (\$10,000, \$25,000, or \$50,000) in exchange for different levels of at-cost Journeys by Design **trips to parks and reserves that aren't currently available through mainstream tours**, such as Ethiopia's Chebera Churchura National Park and Chad's Zakouma National Park. One hundred percent of the membership fees is used for investments in and

donations to the enterprise's core conservation projects and partners in Africa, such as initiatives in sustainable tourism, micro-finance, and rangeland management, as well as administrative costs and strategic services like impact reporting. **Nonmembers can also book trips through Wild Philanthropy, which will allocate 20 percent of the profits to these affiliated projects.**

Those who want to invest outside of the organization's purview can work with its consulting arm, Wild Philanthropy Bespoke, which helps donors identify and implement programs on the ground.

For Jones, who trained as an environmental scientist before founding Journeys by Design, the fact that less than 2 percent of institutional and private grants are allocated to conservation globally is personal. "It's time to start reinvesting in the assets we've depended on hugely," Jones says. [wildphilanthropy.com](http://wildphilanthropy.com).

—Elizabeth Sile

The Mark penthouse Library Room.



## The \$75,000 per Night Penthouse

Believe it or not, people are booking the Mark Hotel's new suite, despite its exorbitant price tag.

The **Mark Hotel's** penthouse, which debuted in September with five bedrooms, six bathrooms, a ballroom, and a rooftop terrace, is not just the largest hotel room on New York's Upper East Side. At 12,500 square feet—**nearly as big as New York's Saks Fifth Avenue shoe floor, which has its own Zip Code—the duplex is the largest suite in the United States.** And, as far as we know, it's also the most expensive at a staggering \$75,000. The New York suite that comes closest to rivaling that price is the Ty Warner penthouse, at the Four Seasons, which costs \$45,000; meanwhile, globally, the top room at Hotel President Wilson, in Geneva, Switzerland, is \$67,000 for 12 bedrooms.

The Mark's penthouse had been put up for sale, for \$60 million, in 2008, as part of the hotel's residential side. It never sold. But recently, the Mark's owners say, hotel guests have expressed a desire for a larger space, prompting the conversion into a hotel suite.

The penthouse has already had its first guest—during the United Nations General Assembly in September—and as of press time has had more than 20 other parties inquiring. General manager Olivier Lordonnois justifies the astronomical price tag by citing next-level service, saying, "Penthouse guests determine every detail of their experience prior to their arrival, from what linens are used on the beds to selecting custom-fit house slippers and engraved stationery." 25 E. 77th St.; 212-744-4300; [themarkhotel.com](http://themarkhotel.com). —Robert Khederian



An eating area and fire pit at Singita Ebony's main lodge.

## SINGITA NEWS

In South Africa's Sabi Sand big-cat country, **Singita Ebony**, the first of Luke Bailes's 12 African safari lodges, unveiled a total redesign, 22 years after opening. Walls were knocked down and replaced by canvas and glass to create 12 new tent-style suites that bring guests *this* close to nature. Rooms from \$1,095; Sabi Sand Reserve; 27-21/683-3424; [singita.com](http://singita.com).