Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge Brings Romance and the Spirit of Africa to Walt Disney World Resort

Recreating an African Wildlife Reserve

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge, a deluxe resort, which opened April 2001, showcases the wonder and romance of Africa, from the hand-carved furnishings and the gourmet cuisine served in its three restaurants to the splendor of a 46-acre savanna around the resort where animals roam freely. Disney Imagineers visited more than 20 African lodges for inspiration and research when designing the resort. Here’s a quick tour:

Namukelekile! (Zulu – n? mu ke’ le ke l?): Welcome All of You!

The entrance to Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge, featuring lush foliage, leads to the thatched-roofed main lobby. The lodge’s shape — resembling a horseshoe — is based on the traditional *kraal* (pronounced “crawl”), or corral, a design used in African villages to keep homes and livestock safe from harm. Designed by Peter Dominick (who also designed Disney’s Wilderness Lodge at Walt Disney World Resort and Disney’s Grand Californian Hotel at Disneyland Resort), the six-story resort features towering thatched roofs complemented by rich woods and golden tones. The grand lobby features a large, mud fireplace, natural lighting and giant dormer windows that provide spectacular views of sunrises and sunsets over the animal-filled savanna. At night, incandescent lighting twinkles, resembling fireflies and soft-glowing campfires. Just outside the lobby, an elevated *kopje*, or rock outcropping, puts guests within 15 feet of the animals, and gives an extraordinary, near-panoramic view of the animal reserve.

Guest Rooms: Handcrafted Beauty

Nestled on 74 acres west of Disney’s Animal Kingdom theme park, Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge is built in the middle of its own savanna, providing most of the rooms views into the animal sanctuary, with other rooms offering views of the Uzima Pool and Springs. Guestroom balconies overlooking the reserve put guests within 30 feet of the rich grasslands.

Each of the lodge’s rooms feature handcrafted furniture and art — much of it made in Zimbabwe. Rich woods and vibrant colors showcase the art of African craftsmanship. For instance, some headboard designs have been inspired by “butterfly” masks. The Royal Asante Suite features a domed, hut-like living room that’s truly “fit for a king” with a kitchen, office, dining room and sweeping porches offering spectacular views of the savanna.

Accommodations range in size from standard rooms, to one- and two-bedroom suites. Club-level (concierge) rooms also are available. Each room sleeps four to eight guests with a variety of choices. King-size beds, queen-size beds and bunk beds are available in rooms throughout the resort. Plus, studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom vacation villas are available in the adjacent Kidani Village, a Disney Vacation Club Resort.

A World of Amenities

Famous Disney service and deluxe amenities combine to create an unforgettable adventure at Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge. The resort features a 9,000-square-foot, themed feature pool — which offers a poolside view of the savanna — as well as two bubbling spas. The Zahanati Massage and Fitness Center offers facials, body treatments and massage therapy. Featured for the younger set: Simba’s Cubhouse, a children’s activity center; Pumbaa’s Fun and Games arcade; a pool and the Hakuna Matada Playground.

A Culinary Journey

The resort's signature restaurant is **Jiko-The Cooking Place**, featuring cuisines from around the globe: berbere braised lamb shank, durban shrimp curry, chermoula roasted chicken. Appetizers are equally imaginative, like maize and sweet potato tamales with shredded goat cheese. Jiko is Swahili for "cooking place."

Along with the adjacent Cape Town Wine Room and Cape Town Lounge, Jiko features South African wines. Jiko's interior design, inspired by Disney's "The Lion King," is by Jeffrey Beers, known for his wildly creative interiors.

Boma-Flavors of Africa is the name of the family "marketplace" restaurant featuring an exhibit kitchen with a wood-burning grill and rotisserie. Boma in Swahili is "an open, natural space that provides a safe and sheltered place in the bush." The 270-seat restaurant is open for breakfast and dinner.

Fans of Jiko-The Cooking Place and Boma-Flavors of Africa have a third dining option at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge — Sanaa in the resort's Kidani Village, a part of Disney Vacation Club.

With interiors inspired by African art and remarkable views of the resort's Sunset Savanna through 9-foot windows, diners experience "the art of African cooking with Indian flavors" in the 150-seat, family-oriented restaurant located on the ground floor just below the lobby.

Two other dining locations at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge: **The Mara**, named after the Mara River, a quick-service eatery serving breakfast, lunch and dinner — and **Victoria Falls**, the mezzanine lounge overlooking Boma, serves gourmet coffee and teas, South African vintage wines, international beers and cocktails.

24-Hour Animal Viewing Opportunities

The savanna is home to more than 200 mammals and birds representing a cross-section of the African palette — greater kudu, Grant's zebra, wildebeest, giraffe, impala, marabou stork to name a few. The hoofstock and birds roam freely on the savanna where resort guests may enjoy 24-hour viewing opportunities.

Landscape: The Art of the Earth

Landscape design at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge began long before the resort opened its doors, with the first vegetation planted and secured two years prior to opening. The rich environment is designed to simulate the landscape systems of the African continent — forested lands, river systems, grasslands and the bush. Tall thryalis and pampas grass cover the ground in front of the resort, while red and pink hibiscus, bright clusters of red, orange and scarlet *Ixora*, fragrant white jasmine and green pygmy date palms border the Uzima Pool. Behind the lodge on Arusha Rock *kopje* is the signature tree, *Peltophorum dubium* — or Yellow Flame Tree — the canopy tree most recognized as the one on the African plain.

Art: A Celebration of Culture

Reflecting the romance and beauty of African culture, Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge features an extensive collection of authentic African art. Approximately 380 museum-quality pieces are featured in public areas throughout the resort, with more than 4,000 handcrafted works in the guestrooms.

Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge contracted an art consultant, Mary Hannah, to bring the collection of art to Walt Disney World Resort.

The centerpiece of the resort's collection is the *Igbo Ijele* (pronounced e-bo e-gelay) mask, featured in the lobby. The Ijele, created by the Igbo people of Africa, is a massive creation that towers more than 16 feet tall and is eight feet in width. In Africa, the mask signifies an important event or celebration and makes rare appearances. No other Ijele, which is the largest mask in tropical Africa, is known to exist outside of Igbo land.

An African Safari Experience

Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge guests can observe birds and animals during the Wanyama Safari, a 3-hour

experience that includes an excursion aboard a specially designed vehicle and dinner at Jiko-The Cooking Place. The sunset safari strives to recreate the essence of an African experience with free-roaming wildlife in an authentic environment, taking guests into the savannas that horseshoe Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge. The sunset safari is offered seven days a week with a maximum of 12 persons.

Programs For All Ages

A series of kid-friendly programs and adult enrichment opportunities at the resort increase guests' knowledge and appreciation of the African culture. Children can hear African folklore around the outdoor firepit, become a Junior Safari Researcher or Junior Chef of the Day at the resort. Guests of all ages can also learn from the lodge's Savanna Guides in programs that show differences in animals' physical and naturalistic behavior, while adults take part in wine tasting (the resort boasts the largest collection of South African wines anywhere in the United States) or a self-guided tour of the resort's extensive art collection.

Authentic Merchandise in the Marketplace

The festive, 5,300-square-foot Zawadi Marketplace carries authentic crafts, clothing and other distinctive merchandise from Africa. Woodcarvings, Zulu baskets, hand-painted dishes, batik fabrics and hand-made jewelry are offered — even clothing inspired by African tribal wear. African artisans demonstrate wood carving, painting, jewelry-making and more. Character and resort logo merchandise also is available.

Call of the Wild — Where to Call for Reservations

Reservations for Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge can be made by contacting 407/W-DISNEY (934-7639) or a travel agent. Rates vary depending on season and room type. Additional information is also available at www.disneyworld.com.

Disney's Animal Kingdom Villas

Disney's Animal Kingdom Villas are Disney Vacation Club accommodations that are part of Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge. The studio, one or two-bedroom vacation villas feature intricate African-inspired details and home-like amenities, and most offer sweeping views of an expanded savanna inhabited by a variety of African animals.

###

AKLMAIN2/rev :5-1-14