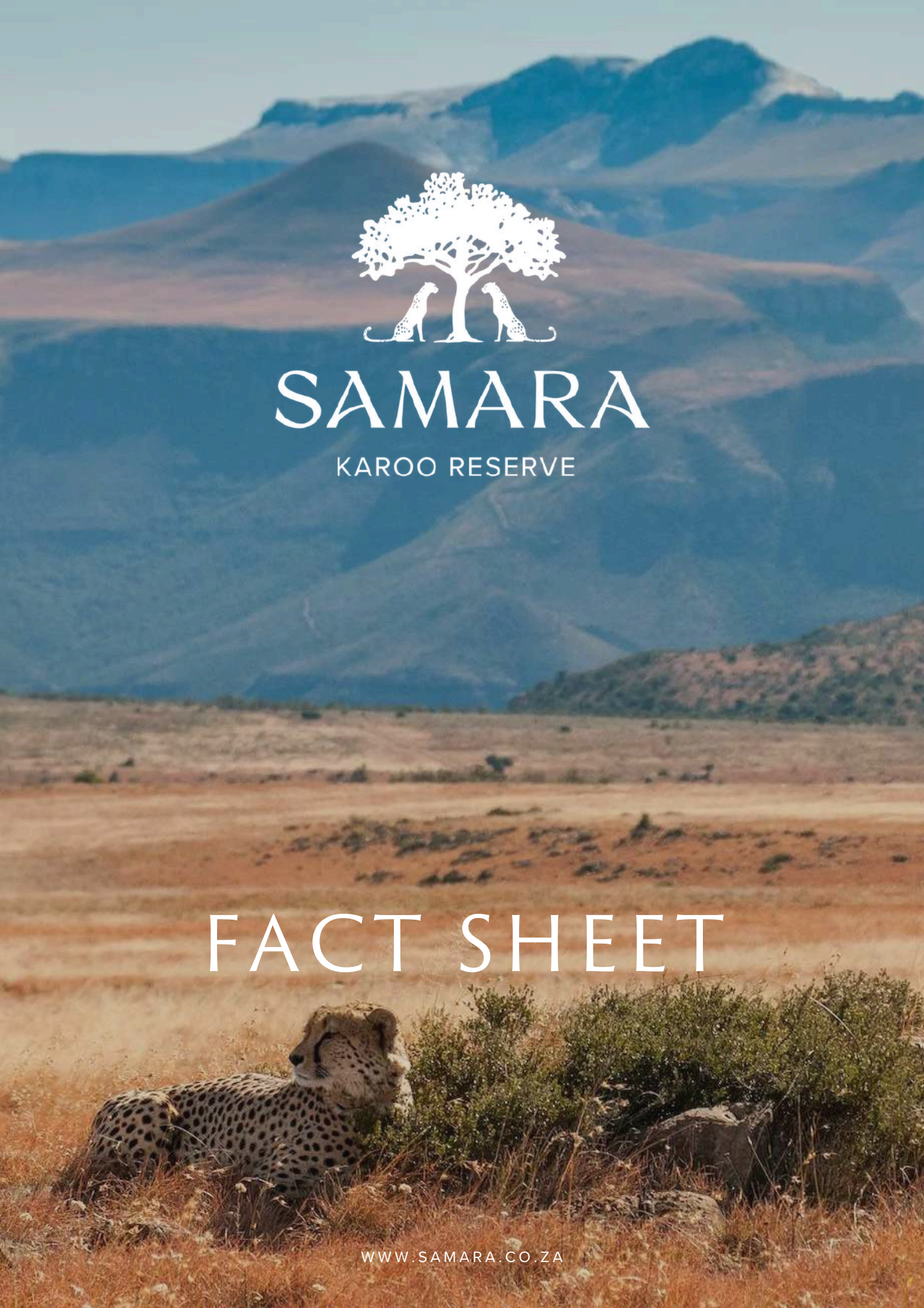

SAMARA

KAROO RESERVE

FACT SHEET

WWW.SAMARA.CO.ZA

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

A leader in luxury conservation-driven tourism in the heart of South Africa's breathtaking Great Karoo region, Samara offers a private luxury safari experience where every guest's stay is thoughtfully-tailored – combining world-class comfort, exceptional wildlife encounters and personal service in one of Africa's most enchanting destinations.

Founded in 1997, Samara has pioneered the rewilding of this semi-arid yet uniquely biodiverse landscape. Today the reserve is one of South Africa's most diverse safari destinations, comprising five vegetation biomes across strikingly varied topography, home to over 60 mammal species including the Big Five and cheetah, as well as 225 bird species.

By choosing to visit Samara, guests actively contribute to the ongoing restoration and preservation of the Great Karoo's unique biodiversity, ensuring its magic endures for future generations.

ACCOMMODATION

Three intimate lodges welcome just 40 guests at a time, with no traversing by other lodges or queuing at sightings. Guests enjoy unhurried moments on the vast, scenic reserve.

Karoo Lodge is a lovingly-restored farmstead sleeping 24. The Manor offers a contemporary take on Karoo style in an exclusive-use villa sleeping 8. Plains Camp is an off-grid tented experience focusing on walking safaris for up to 8 guests.

EXPERIENCES

Conceived as a love letter to the Karoo, the Samara guest experience brings to life this ecosystem of many treasures – from its abundant fauna and flora to its prehistory and contemporary culture. Slow, meaningful and exceptional safari encounters are a Samara hallmark, with guests encouraged to take the time to breathe in the magic of this special landscape, guided by those who know and love it.

Activities on offer include game drives, bush walks, cheetah tracking, wilderness picnics, a star bed, fly camping, San rock art, conservation and community storytelling, wellness and Spekboom planting. Children of all ages are welcomed with dedicated children's activities.

ACCESS

Samara is easily accessible yet retains a true wilderness feel.

The nearest major airport is 250km away in Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha), serviced with daily flights from Cape Town (flight duration 1h), Johannesburg (1h45min) and Durban (1h30min).

Once in Port Elizabeth, guests may either hire a car, take a road transfer or book a private charter flight onto Samara's gravel airstrip, which is suitable for light aircraft.

Road access from Port Elizabeth to Samara's front gate is an easy 2h30min drive on decent tarred roads through dramatic scenery. Samara's lodges are situated a further ± 30min down a scenic dirt road that winds through the reserve.

The local town of Graaff-Reinet, rich in culture and heritage, is a 45min drive from the lodges. It has an airfield with tarred runways onto which charter flights can be arranged. Charter flights can also be arranged to Samara's gravel airstrip.

Samara offers two complimentary flights per person on a commercial airline between Cape Town or Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth, and a complimentary return road transfer from Port Elizabeth Airport to Samara, when guests book either the "Stay 4 nights including flights and transfers" or the "Stay 7, Pay 6 including flights and transfers" exclusive offer.

USEFUL INFORMATION

SAMARA
KAROO RESERVE

WHEN TO VISIT

The Great Karoo has a distinct beauty in every season – from the dry heat of summer to the crispness of winter.

A minimum 4-night stay is recommended in order to get a taste for all that Samara has to offer.

SUMMER

The height of summer in the Karoo is the period December–February, with temperatures reaching over 35°C/95°F. Expect hot sunny days with the occasional afternoon thunderstorm, which makes for spectacular sunsets and cloud formations – perfect for photography. As the Karoo is a semi-arid region, the temperature tends to drop off once the sun goes down.

The veld is alive with activity in summer, from powerful predators to purposeful pollinators. Migratory birds like the Jacobin cuckoo, European roller and booted eagle add to the birding opportunities.

Summer is the best time of year to sleep out in the star bed and enjoy Samara's fly camping experience. If the spring rains have been good, the opportunity may arise for a picnic in the river with water gently flowing past your toes – bliss!

WINTER

The Karoo experiences winter from late May through August. Temperatures fall and it is not unusual for there to be snow on the highest mountain peaks. Daytime temperatures are mostly mild and balmy (20°C/68°F) whilst evenings and early mornings are cold.

Game-viewing is at its peak – herds of zebra, springbok and buffalo intermingle on the plains, while cheetah, giraffe and lion roam the savannah and flocks of blue crane take to the skies. You may also catch a glimpse of the reserve's most sought-after inhabitant – the usually-nocturnal aardvark out foraging in broad daylight.

Fresh sunny days are perfect for walking, hiking and long, leisurely picnics. The landscape is full of colour too, with the rooigrass on the Samara Mara turning a gorgeous shade of pink, and orange-red flowering aloes on every hill. Soft winter light casts an ethereal haze over the kapokbos plants dotted with white blooms resembling cotton-wool.

TRANSITION MONTHS

The transition months of March–May and September–November are some of the most underrated, in terms of both weather and wildlife-viewing.

Springtime heralds the rebirth of the Karoo after a winter slumber. The veld turns progressively greener, its thirst quenched by the occasional thunderstorm. The scent of petrichor mingles with the invigorating aromas of endemic flowering bossies, taking on a distinct Karoo flavour. New life abounds – herds of antelope swell in number with the birth of dozens of calves, bat-eared-fox pups emerge from their dens and tortoises make the most of the milder weather. Carpets of colourful vygies and dramatic sunsets set the scene for a spectacular season for photography.

Autumn days are similarly warm and temperate, although the mercury begins to drop at sunset.

WHAT TO BRING

Make sure to bring the following items with you when you visit Samara. A range of hats and clothing is available for purchase in our gift shop.

ESSENTIALS

- Shirts and T-shirts (short- and long-sleeved)
- Shorts or skirts
- Long trousers
- Jumpers/sweaters
- Walking shoes or hiking boots
- Sandals or other casual shoes
- Wide-brimmed hat
- Lightweight jacket
- Your preferred high SPF suncream
- Sunglasses

ESSENTIALS (CONT.)

- Pair of binoculars
- Camera and charger
- Adaptor plugs

SUMMER

- Lightweight casual clothes (cotton or linen)
- Swimming costume

WINTER

- Warm, wind-proof jacket
- Thermals
- Gloves, scarf and beanie

PACK FOR A PURPOSE

Samara is a proud member of Pack for a Purpose, an initiative that allows travellers to make a lasting impact in the community of their travel destination. If you save just a few kilos of space in your suitcase and take supplies for the projects we support, you'll make a priceless impact in the lives of our local children and families.

At a glance

SAMARA
KAROO RESERVE

SAMARA KAROO RESERVE

Reserve size	67,000 acres / 27,000 ha	**Country**	South Africa
Big Five	Yes, incl. black & white rhino	**Province**	Eastern Cape
Malaria-free	Yes	**Region**	Great Karoo
Maximum guests	40 guests	**Nearest commercial airport**	Port Elizabeth / Gqeberha
TGCSA grading	5 star	**Nearest airfield**	Graaff-Reinet
Eco-accreditations	The Long Run	**Nearest town**	Graaff-Reinet
Time zone	South Africa Standard Time	**Airstrip on-site**	Yes, gravel airstrip

LODGE COMPARISON

	Karoo Lodge	The Manor	Plains Camp
Lodge style	Traditional Karoo farmstead	Contemporary Karoo villa	Eco-luxe tented camp
Maximum guests	24 guests	8 guests (exclusive-use)	8 guests
Number of suites	10 suites	4 suites	4 suites
Minimum stay*	2 nights*	2 nights*	2 nights
Open dates	Year-round	Year-round	Closed July-Sept inclusive
Children welcome	Yes, all ages	Yes, all ages	Over 16s only
Altitude	885 metres	847 metres	721 metres
GPS coordinates	-32.353965,24.861095	-32.391615,24.856976	-32.478655,24.913448
what3words address	///tots.fiscal.studied	///mothership.cocoon.squids	///ballerinas.enlightened.caverns
Electricity / power	220V AC	220V AC	220V AC (mess tent only)
Swimming pool	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gift shop	Yes	Limited selection	Limited selection
Wifi	Yes	Yes	Accessible in public areas
Laundry service	Yes	Yes	Not available
Fenced grounds	Yes	Yes	No
Wheelchair access	In certain suites	In certain suites	No

*A minimum stay of 3 nights is applicable to Karoo Lodge and The Manor during the period 20 December – 10 January inclusive annually.

The Samara Story

"In 1997, we fell in love."

It was a very strange feeling because it was totally unprompted and quite unexpected. A battlefield is not normally the sort of place one associates with affairs of the heart. However, the battle sites of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift in KwaZulu Natal must have inspired some primal emotions that led to conduct quite markedly in contrast to our normal, rational behaviour.

After a long dinner accompanied by several glasses of superb South African Cabernet up in Northern Natal, the site of British triumph and Zulu tragedy, we started chatting to a chap from quite a different part of South Africa – the Great Karoo. Magical tales were woven about the vast herds of springbok which once roamed this area, the "Vanished Kings", the black-maned Cape lion who majestically reigned over the Plains of Camdeboo, the rhino, the cheetah, the now-extinct quagga, the explorers, the characters of yesteryear and the haunting beauty of the semi-desert land.

Overwhelmed and smitten by the magnificence of it all, we went away determined to visit the Great Karoo.

Apieskloof ("Monkey Valley") became the first farm that formed the nucleus of Samara and in 1997 we happily became its owner. The dream continued – amass enough land to have a self-sustaining ecosystem that would support wildlife: the herds of antelope that used to inhabit this area, and the predators to keep the balance that helps maintain these fragile ecosystems.

67,000 acres and thirty years later, Samara's rewilding journey has picked up pace. The land is beginning to recover from the effects of generations of agricultural exploitation. The haunting beauty of the landscape that first inspired this campaign of rejuvenation has returned.

An ambitious programme of land rehabilitation and wildlife reintroduction has brought Samara's valleys, plains and mountains back to life. Herds of springbok, black wildebeest, zebra and eland now roam the Plains of Camdeboo. Rhinoceros, elephant and cheetah meander across the veld once more. Almost two centuries after it was last seen, the lion reigns again.

Samara's vision now extends beyond our borders to the creation of South Africa's 3rd largest protected area in a Global Biodiversity Hotspot, providing a winning plan for the people and wild places of the Karoo. In staying with us, you become co-creators of this living legacy. Thank you for joining us on our journey.

Sarah & Mark Tompkins, Founders

Our vision & mission

Rewilding the Great Karoo

Samara is a passionate conservation undertaking and a catalyst for land-use change in the Great Karoo. 67,000 acres of land have been restored since 1997, and we are working with local stakeholders to create a protected area spanning 3 million acres in one of only 36 Global Biodiversity Hotspots, the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Thicket. This will link the Camdeboo, Mountain Zebra and Addo Elephant National Parks with private land in an ecological corridor, focusing on an innovative partnership-based conservation model.

The Great Karoo is the region that up until 1897 witnessed one of the world's largest migrations – when vast herds of springbok roamed these plains in search of new pastures. As well as the multitude of antelope, herds of elephant moved through the river systems, desert-adapted black rhino thrived in the dense thickets, and the predators – Cape lion, leopard, cheetah, spotted hyena, even wild dog – accompanied the melee of prey species across this breathtaking landscape. Resurrecting this malaria-free "Serengeti of the South" and returning the landscape to its former glory forms an integral part of our vision.

Putting dreams into motion, however, requires practical action. We consulted expert ecologists to determine the conservation potential of the land before purchasing 11 farms encompassing 5 of South Africa's 9 vegetation biomes. We then began the mammoth task of eradicating alien invasive plants, tearing down internal fencing and resting the land for almost a decade. Little by little indigenous animals have been reintroduced to the area, with a focus not only on iconic and endangered species but on the ecosystem processes they promote.

We continue to actively restore and rehabilitate the most degraded areas through soil erosion control and the planting of indigenous vegetation, like Spekboom.

In 2006, we set up our first lodge to give social meaning to this conservation undertaking. As a significant employer in the area, one of our proudest achievements is helping our staff realise their own dreams: putting them through further studies and supporting their personal development. We welcome cutting-edge researchers from around the world and educate school children from our local community. We have long seen Samara as site of learning and discovery at multiple levels; a place for personal introspection as well as science generation.

We also welcome discerning travellers exploring a remote corner of the world well off the beaten track, sometimes by accident, but most often by choice.

Thank you for choosing to support us