

PORTER

powered by
NET-A-PORTER

Summer Escape 2017
Issue 21

ESCAPE
in STYLE

*Sunset shades,
dream dresses &
swimwear to love*

How to
make that
summer
body last
all year

Wild at
Heart

Join supermodel Doutzen Kroes in our
global campaign to save the elephants

Porter

Summer Escape 2017



The elephant is nature's great masterpiece but its very survival is under threat. In a 53-page special, PORTER visits northern Kenya to report on the crisis facing these majestic creatures, who without our protection could disappear in a single generation. We travel with Save the Elephants ambassador Doutzen Kroes and fellow Dutch model Imaan Hammam to the breathtaking Samburu National Reserve to meet the family who have made the elephants' survival their life's work



Dress by Chloé,
\$3,010; brooch by
Tiffany & Co., \$150,
from a selection at
Net-A-Porter.com

Fragile World

When Dutch supermodel Doutzen Kroes heard about the crisis facing elephants and the effect their loss would have on our planet, she was compelled to get involved. Here, she travels with *Lucy Yeomans* to the nerve center of the Save the Elephants operation in Kenya to meet conservationist Saba Douglas-Hamilton who, with her family and the local Samburu people, is fighting tirelessly to keep the species alive

*Photography by Vincent van de Wijngaard
Fashion editor Julia von Boehm*

I couldn't walk on concrete every day. I couldn't live in a city. It would choke me," says Saba Douglas-Hamilton as we stand watching the sunrise in the Samburu National Reserve in northern Kenya, the silhouette of the nearby mountains just visible in the early morning light. "This," she says, surveying the unending landscape, "feeds my soul."

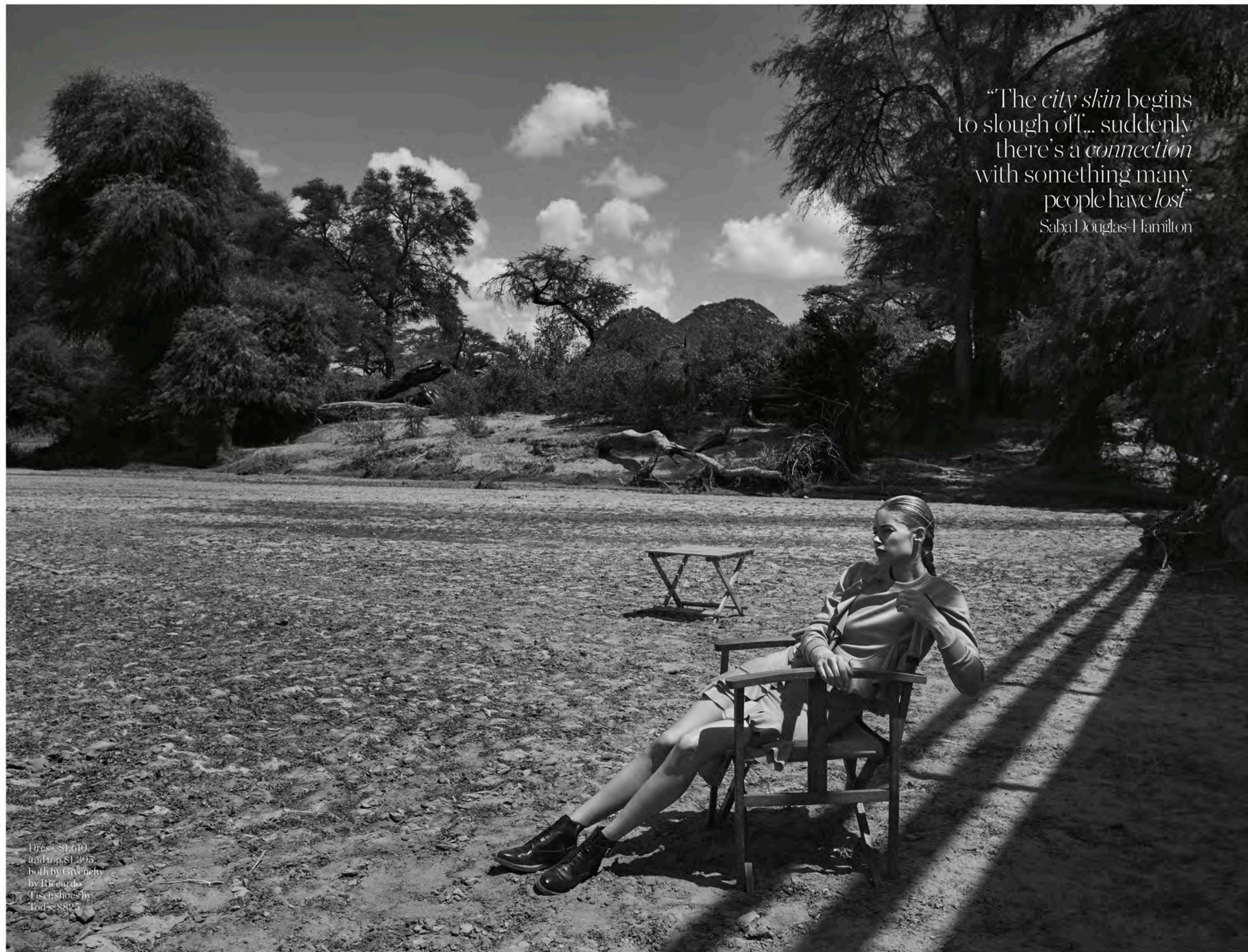
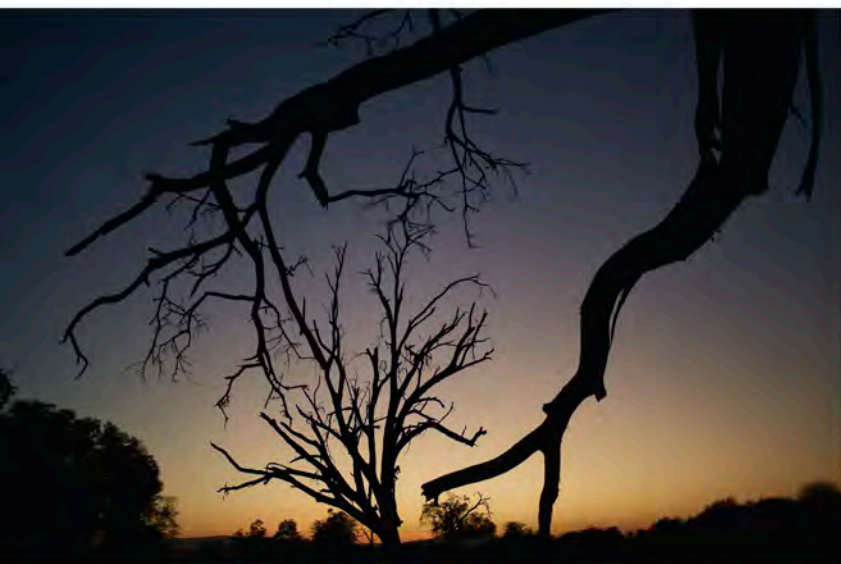
The conservationist, wildlife filmmaker and Save the Elephants campaigner and I are watching Dutch supermodels Doutzen Kroes and Imaan Hammam pose for the PORTER shoot. Against the vast, acacia-dotted wilderness, with a herd of elephants just coming into view, the two models resemble exquisite birds of paradise, the vivid colors of their dresses searing through the dawn mist.

Despite having only arrived yesterday (along with Doutzen, the PORTER crew and my four-year-old daughter Red), and the mammoth task in front of us, Africa is already working its magic and I feel a rare sense of peace. Saba tells me how much she loves watching the effect Africa has on people. "The city skin begins to slough off... suddenly there's a connection again with the wild world, something many people have lost."

It has been nearly 20 years since Saba and I first met at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. I will never forget our first encounter. It was at a first-term ball and all of us girls were trussed up in 1990s taffeta creations. Then in walked this mesmerizing young woman in a simple orange, figure-skimming cotton sheath, feathers casually placed in her hair. We were transfixed. I got to know the Kenyan-born beauty better the following year when we were cast as witches in *Macbeth*. Saba worked with the director on a hypnotic tribal dance: lit by torchlight, on the ruins of St Andrews' castle. During rehearsals, I learned about Saba's childhood in Africa, and the work her father Dr Iain Douglas-Hamilton, an >

SUNRISE IN SAMBURU RESERVE

Watching the sunrise over a vast plain in the Samburu National Reserve in northern Kenya, Saba Douglas-Hamilton says the unending landscape "feeds my soul"



"The *city skin* begins to slough off... suddenly there's a *connection* with something many people have *lost*"

Saba Douglas-Hamilton

Dress: \$1,610,
and top: \$1,295,
both by Givenchy
by Riccardo
Tisci; shoes by
Tod's: \$825

acclaimed zoologist and conservationist, was doing with Save the Elephants, the NGO he had set up to secure a future for the elephants. In the coming years I would watch Saba present wildlife programs; and I heard from mutual friends how she'd married handsome British conservationist and author Frank Pope, and that they had settled in Kenya over 10 years ago. They joined her parents to work with STE, which set up the Elephant Crisis Fund in 2013 with the Wildlife Conservation Network in response to the escalating threat from poaching and trading in ivory. I never imagined, however, that our paths would one day cross again quite like this.

It was a chance visit to Elephant Watch Camp (the eco lodge set up by Iain's wife Oria), by David Bonnouvrier, founder of DNA Model Management in New York, and his American partner and former model Trish Goff, that set the PORTER collaboration in motion. David and Trish, inspired by Save the Elephants' work, returned to New York determined to get the fashion world behind the cause. Doutzen Kroes, the Victoria's Secrets star, had been following his Instagram posts and wanted to know more. "David told me to go to Africa and meet the Douglas-Hamiltons," says Doutzen. "I think even he was surprised how quickly I organized that first trip." After a week at Elephant Watch Camp, Doutzen returned similarly inspired, and she, David and Trish devised a campaign, #KnotOnMyPlanet, which they launched with Tiffany & Co. in New York last September, and which has already helped to raise close to \$2m for the Elephant Crisis Fund. It was at that launch, attended by fashion's great and good, as well as Leonardo Di Caprio who has since donated \$3m to the cause, that Trish, David, Doutzen and I first met to discuss our plan and how best we could shine a light on the plight of the elephants and the work of the Douglas-Hamiltons. >

MONITORING THE ELEPHANT POPULATION

The elephants are kept on the radar of STE using radio-tracking collars – pioneered by Iain Douglas-Hamilton – which reveal the grand scale of elephant life and allow rangers to follow herds in close-to real time and defend them in high risk areas



“David told me to *go to* Africa...I think even he was *surprised* how quickly I organized that *first* trip”

Doutzen Kroes

Dress, \$2,310,
and jacket,
\$3,490, both
by Céline



Saba Douglas-Hamilton grew up with elephants – and is passionate that future generations should do so too. Here, she explains the threats these awe-inspiring mammals face and what we can do to save them...

Sleeping under the stars, apart from the others in a dry riverbed, I had been blissfully alone. Then he suddenly loomed out from the darkness towards me, towering so close that he blocked out half the night sky. There was nowhere to run in the treacherously soft sand. All I could do was play dead and await his verdict of my scent – a dangerous human. Entirely at his mercy and helpless on the ground in front of him, I was astonished when the giant bull elephant decided to spare my life. And rather than crush me with his knees or skewer me through with a tusk, after a long and heart-stopping moment of utter stillness standing directly above me, he reached out his trunk and instead baptized me from head to toe in his breath before sailing silently away in the moonlight.

I'd grown up with elephants as part of my extended family, as my father – Dr Iain Douglas-Hamilton – was among the first wave of zoologists dispatched to study the behavior of animals in the wild in the mid-1960s. Jane Goodall got chimpanzees, George Schaller got lions, Dian Fossey got gorillas and my father got elephants. But that moment with the bull elephant in the riverbed was definitely when I felt most powerfully the particular mix of awesome strength, complex intelligence and compassionate gentleness that is the elephant.

Elephants are some of the most socially interesting and clever creatures on this planet. Theirs is a mind that experiences the world in a very different way from ours but uncanny parallels exist. The chimpanzee is closer to us, the dolphin further away and the raven further still, but throughout human history there has been something special about the intelligence of elephants that fascinates us. I see this time and again in northern Kenya, when I introduce people to elephants in the wild for the first time and witness their power to transform human hearts and souls. Moved to tears few people can really explain why.

But unlike my experience in the riverbed, it is elephants that need the mercy of humanity not the other way around. They are fast disappearing beneath the steamroller of human needs and desires, and without urgent help could disappear from the wild.

in our lifetime. Once they're gone, that's it. And if we allow elephants – the largest, most charismatic land mammal on our planet – to be wiped out, then what hope for the myriad smaller species that make our world the sole example of complex life that we know of in the universe?

Desire for 'white gold', as ivory is sometimes called, is behind the current crisis for elephants. It's nothing new. Africa's elephants north of the Sahara disappeared 2,000 years ago thanks to the appetite for ivory in Roman times. In the colonial era, harvesting elephants for their tusks became industrialized. By the 1970s and 1980s, America, Europe and Japan were the main markets.

Living among elephants in Tanzania my father suspected that the killing was unsustainable, so he broke off from his behavioral studies to measure what was going on. Few believed him at first, but when he published the data from his pan-African elephant census, it was beyond question. Eventually, in 1989, a worldwide ban on international trade in ivory was put in place.

That should have been the end of the elephant's ivory troubles, and it was for a period. But a misguided decision to allow a one-off sale of tusks in 2008 sparked a new demand in China. By 2010 over 30,000 elephants a year were being killed, their lives sucked from the savannahs and forests through smuggling networks to feed an insatiable market. By 2014 the price of ivory had reached a new record high of over £1,600 a kilo (\$2,100/kilo).

The impact across Africa has been devastating. The continent's second largest elephant population, in the Selous in Tanzania, was reduced by 60 percent in just five years. The vast forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo have largely been emptied of elephants, with only five to ten thousand thought to remain. These elusive giants are the only species that disperse the seeds of some of the larger trees – without them the structure of the forest is likely to change forever. Forests that we have unknowingly relied upon for millennia as the lungs of our planet.

My father established Save the Elephants in 1993 to continue his mission to understand and protect elephants with the power of science. Following elephants using radio-tracking collars – a particular specialty that he pioneered – is an example of how research can protect them. Initially the collars revealed the grand scale of elephants' lives. Now they allow rangers to follow herds in close to real time and defend them in high-risk areas much as a shepherd would its flock. This technology has now been built up into a system that's being deployed in national parks across Africa to help defend not just elephants but all wildlife.

But there's one thing that will help save elephants more than any other: collaboration. Thanks to its global nature and the criminal syndicates involved in trade, ivory is an issue too big for any one organization – or even nation – to tackle on its own. But together we have a chance.

In 2013, with our partners the Wildlife Conservation Network, we set up the Elephant Crisis Fund. The idea was to fuel the dozens of small, dedicated groups on the front line across Africa, and focus the bigger organizations that have enormous power to create change. One hundred percent of all donations go straight to the field. Free from the constraints of a single organization, the fund has grown fast to become a powerful force for elephants.

More than 45 different organizations have been supported in their work to stop the killing of elephants, stop the trafficking of ivory and stop demand in end markets across some 25 countries around the world.

This coalition for elephants has had some great successes from the grassroots level to the biggest arenas. One small group has managed to carve out Congo's first new national park in 40 years and has seen elephants repopulating areas of forest they'd not been seen in for many years. This year saw key members of one of East Africa's biggest crime families – the Akashas – implicated in large-scale ivory smuggling, as well as the drug trade, and extradited to face justice in the US. And most important of all, by the end of 2017 China has agreed to close down all of its ivory retail shops and end domestic trade.

There's still a long way to go but the coalition is growing. Last year the fashion industry joined the ranks. Doutzen Kroes came to meet the elephants at our research site in Samburu National Reserve and immediately understood what was at stake. She became the magnificent figurehead for a movement across the industry that united behind a campaign to end the madness. And now, she has returned with PORTER magazine to shoot this issue and further raise awareness.

If elephants are going to have a future they're going to need the whole world on their side. Just as that magnificent bull in a moonlit riverbed showed me his mercy, I believe that by joining hands and taking steps together, we too can save the elephants and fight to preserve the fabric of life on which we all depend. ■

Bernard Lesirin, *senior guide and community liaison at Elephant Watch Camp*

It was via a school friend, who was sponsored by Save the Elephants' educational scholarship program, that Bernard Lesirin (pictured right with Saba Douglas-Hamilton) first learned about the work of the foundation. Living some 250km further north, he managed to get himself to the center by visiting a cousin who was a park ranger in Samburu National Reserve. "I was a very shy little boy," he says of his first meeting with Oria Douglas-Hamilton nearly 10 years ago, "but all I knew was that I wanted to work with elephants." He secured a job as an intern, where in addition to studying for his guiding qualification, he learnt how to individually identify elephants. "Elephants' ears have unique characters and patterns – holes, nicks and tears – so it becomes very easy to identify them," he says. "But you can also go on their personalities or the shape of their foreheads, bodies and size of their tusks." He still treasures every encounter. "Elephants are special and part of our clan." In the last couple of years Bernard's role has taken him to London and Marrakesh, where he spoke about Elephant Watch Camp at a travel fair. "I went with Oria to communicate with all the travel agents about what we have here, how special it is and how we can bring our message about conservation and elephants to more people." His most frightening moment with an elephant? "Whenever I bump into a young bull searching for acacia seed pods in the camp. I've had to run very fast quite a few times!"

TEAMWORK
Saba Douglas-Hamilton talks to the senior guide and community liason at Elephant Watch Camp, Bernard Lesirin

Day 1

The moment our twin-prop plane touches down in Samburu, we are thrust into an intoxicating new world. Samburu warriors greet us on the dusty airstrip, their brightly colored kikois and layers of beads gleaming in the blazing sun. My daughter jumps excitedly into the arms of a warrior – and for the next few days extracting her is nigh on impossible. On the 30-minute drive to Elephant Watch Camp, we pass giraffe, dik-diks and blue guinea fowl, and spy elephant in the distance.

The welcome at the camp is just as warm. Conceived and designed by Oria in 2001 as a place to host donors and visitors interested in the work of Save the Elephants, Elephant Watch Camp is a luxurious, eco-friendly retreat where guests can learn about elephants and get close them. “It’s not for tourism,” Saba tells me. “The point is to bring people here and introduce them to elephants in a safe but intimate way. I’m like a conservation recruitment agent,” she laughs. “People often want to help, but they feel impotent. We unlock the door, show how to take the first steps and fire up the heart.”

One look at model Imaan Hammam, who arrived a couple of days before us at her agent David’s suggestion and is already sporting one of the camps’ elephant-print kimonos, and it is clear this that first-time visitor to Kenya has been well and truly hooked. “Look,” beams one of fashion’s most exciting new faces, waving her iPhone. “Last night I saw elephants, it was just magical.”

For me, it’s a treat after all these years to catch up with Saba, who runs the camp with her husband Frank, now CEO of STE, and to meet their three children, Selkie, seven, and twins Mayian and Luna, five. “Let’s take Red to visit the safari school,” she grins, as she leads me down tree-lined paths to >

THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

Flying into Samburu on a twin-prop plane gives a powerful sense of the vast expanse of landscape – “An intoxicating new world”, says PORTER’s editor-in-chief Lucy Yeomans



“People want to do something but they feel impotent. We *unlock* the door, remake the *connection* and fire up the *heart*”

Saba Douglas-Hamilton

Jacket, \$2,540, shirt, \$640, and pants, \$980, all by Prada at Net-A-Porter.com; belt by Prada; POA shoes by Church's, £410

a small hut, covered with banners bearing heraldic shields, times table charts and children’s paintings. Inside, sitting with their teacher, are her children. They stop for break time – Selkie is taught how to throw a knife by a warrior and the twins climb the vines sprawling up acacia trees.

Saba and Frank’s lifestyle is a simple one. Compared to the guests’ exquisitely decorated tented cottages, the family’s quarters are far more basic: netted tents, rush matting and camp beds for the three girls. Books aside, it’s a pared-down, possession-free zone.

Later that evening over supper on the banks of the Ewaso Ng’iro river, which has completely dried up thanks to a severe drought, Saba explains the family’s participation in Save the Elephants. “My sister Dudu is the spook coordinating the Elephant Crisis Fund’s work on anti-trafficking. I specialize in telling the story and linking it to the bigger picture, my father is the scientist and big strategic thinker, Frank is CEO and Oria is, well, the mighty matriarch.” The other crucial element, she stresses, is the 40-strong team around the world; including front-line scientist Chris Thouless, who is also director of the ECF, and spends his time penetrating some of the remotest and most troubled regions of Africa to find the right people to help. Back home the family’s principal partners are the Samburu people. Indeed, it is this very involvement, the deep friendships and respectful collaborations that exist between the Douglas-Hamiltons and the Samburu that strikes me most in the days that follow.

Day 2

We wake at 4.30am and creep out of our tents in the pitch-black, recalling Saba’s words to always check surrounding >

FOUNDERS OF SAVE THE ELEPHANTS
Acclaimed conservationists Iain and his Italian wife Oria Douglas-Hamilton, inspiring in the work they have done in Kenya and Tanzania; here with their three grandchildren, Selkie, seven, and twins Mayian and Luna, five



Jacket, \$6482,
pants, \$1757,
and shoes, \$888,
all by Hermes

trees just in case there is an elephant or another creature grazing or sleeping among them. We are all hoping to shoot Doutzen’s solo cover with an elephant in the frame, and there has been much discussion since we arrived as to how this will happen – unlike those who feature in countless photographic and film shoots, these are wild African elephants. “The best person to make it happen is Saba,” Bernard Leser, the Samburu warrior who is driving our jeep today, confirms. “Some elephants are aggressive, some are shy, Saba knows which is which.” An experienced guide, Bernard is one of two Samburu accompanying us on today’s mission. Saba drives the last jeep, with Doutzen, Imaan and renowned Dutch photographer Vincent van der Wijngaard.

We eat a breakfast of boiled eggs, banana bread and fruit while we wait for the sun to come up (the models and crew wrapped in Douglas-Hamilton tartan blankets). Bernard explains how STE has named each of the 1,000 or so elephants and their families that use the reserve. “We have the Swahili ladies, the Spices, the Hard Woods, the Artists, the Winds... and,” he pauses, “I always love seeing the Royals – with Anastasia and Cleopatra – who are, quite unusually for elephants, joint matriarchs of the herd.” Saba chips in, “We could use codes to ID them, but names help you to connect with them as characters, to see them as individuals.”

With shots of the two models together completed, we try to locate a suitable elephant family for the solo cover and en route listen to snatches of radio conversation in a mixture of English, Samburu and Swahili. Elephants successfully located, Saba directs the jeeps into position like a grand master plotting their next chess move. She tells Doutzen to get out of the car and stand silently next to the open door so the photographer can get a shot as the elephants walk behind. >

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Saba and her husband – the British conservationist and author Frank Pope (below), who is now CEO of Save the Elephants – settled in Kenya over 10 years ago to work with her parents



Poncho by Louis Vuitton, \$3,600; pants by Nina Ricci, \$850

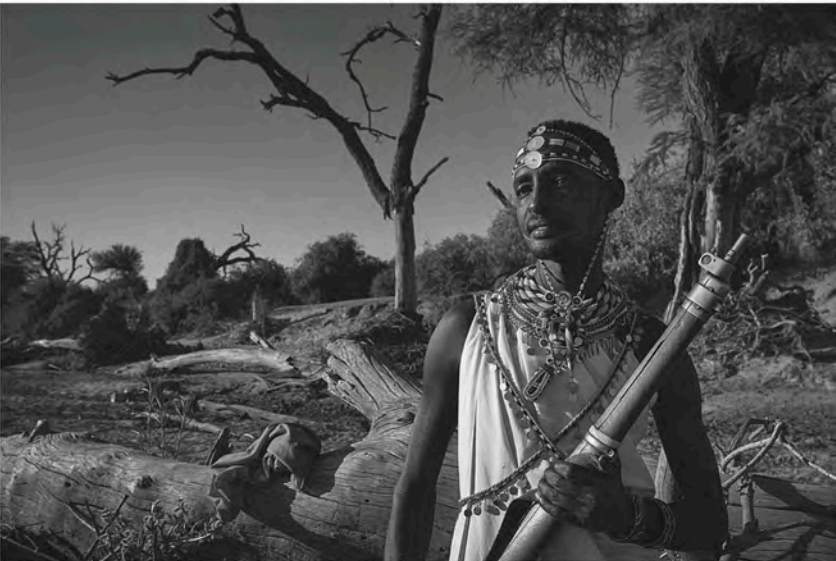


Blouse, \$575, and skirt, \$875, both by Christopher Kane; shoes by Joseph, \$520, at Net-A-Porter.com

Getting so close to these majestic animals is a rare treat and the atmosphere is one of excitement and awe. All is going to plan until a lone bull elephant, hidden in the dense trees behind us, looms suddenly across our vehicles and trumpets the alarm. The mother elephant, who had been wandering peacefully behind Doutzen, begins to menace the car and Saba signals her to run. It's an adrenalin-filled moment. "I have never seen anyone move so fast in my life," Bernard jokes afterward to Doutzen, who, in a fraction of a second, somehow managed to vault back into the car, even in her fitted full-length dress. "I was the only one who couldn't see what was going on with the elephants," Doutzen tells me later. "I had to trust Saba 100 percent and just keep looking into her eyes." Doutzen's unflappable response is remarkable and we continue to witness her game spirit throughout the day. In one shot, she climbs a tree with Saba, both pretending to be baboons (which helps calm the elephants), lying low on the branch so the elephants below can't make out their human >

Serenoy Letoiye, senior guide and assistant operations manager at Elephant Watch Camp

"I went to one of the schools that Save the Elephants supports," Serenoy (below) tells me as we set off on a game drive. "This is my area and I have always admired the work of Save the Elephants and wanted to work for them." He set up a meeting with Oria, who called him the next day to offer him an internship; he has been part of the team at Elephant Watch Camp for 10 years now. Soon we come across five lions lazing under a cluster of trees; Serenoy believes there are four more, a mother and her cubs, sleeping in the undergrowth. Serenoy updates Lion Watch (a nearby NGO) every time he spots a lion. He is able to identify them by their whisker spots and scratches on their ears, and enters the sighting into the Lion Watch app, which will feed the data back to the program to monitor the pride and raise awareness about lion conservation to visitors on safari. "My father is very proud of me," he says, as we drive back to camp. His career highlight? "Being employed at Elephant Watch Camp. Iain, Oria, Saba and Frank are like my family. They have high expectations and want you to be a success."



silhouettes. It is gripping to watch the elephants pass so close to them. On the drive back to the camp, there is a mood of excitement. The most challenging shots are in the bag.

In the evening we are joined by Frank, who has flown in from investigating an elephant death, and Iain and Oria from their home in Nairobi. The little ones are thrilled to see their father and grandparents and the whole family disappears for a stroll up the dry riverbed, before joining us for a lively dinner, where Iain and Oria are bombarded with questions about their life and work. They are impressive, charming and impossibly energetic (it's hard to believe they are both in their mid-seventies), and we all listen, entranced by Oria's tales of adventures and Iain's prognosis on the elephant crisis.

A sobering moment comes after dinner; an elephant poaching incident has been discovered further north and David Daballen, Iain and Frank's right-hand man and head of field operations who had gone to investigate, has not been in touch for 24 hours. "It's volatile up there," explains Iain. "And these killings are for ivory. The situation has been a lot better here in Kenya recently, but this shows you can never be complacent." The story of what happened will unfold over the course of our trip.

Day 3

I have picked up lots of interesting facts about the work of Save the Elephants – and the crisis facing the animals – but it is a privilege to finally get the complete picture from Iain, the godfather of elephant research and conservation, who I talk to after breakfast. As always, he is clutching his iPhone and, like Imaan a few days earlier, he is keen to show me something on it. "As you can see technology plays a great

part in our lives," he says showing me images of elephant icons and detailed maps of Samburu (Save the Elephants works closely with Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen's company Vulcan, a key supporter and co-creator of the Save the Elephants Tracking App). "I can see, for example, where this young bull was a few hours ago."

Iain, who admits he got into elephants by accident ("I went to Africa in the 1960s to study lions but was told George Schaller already had them and was asked if I would like elephants instead!"), was the first to track them using radio collars, which now provide a near-instantaneous GPS location. He can also tell if an elephant has been immobile for an unnaturally long period, a warning that it might be in trouble. Longer term, the data helps to build a better knowledge of elephant behavior.

"There are two very practical reasons for tracking them," says Iain. "One is to protect them from poachers – if the anti-poaching people have an idea of where the elephants are moving they can organize patrols preemptively." The second is to help prevent crop raiding, the other main reason why elephants are killed illegally. Iain shows me some charts on his laptop monitoring the movements of Tim, "a big tusker" from a region where there is a huge crop-raiding problem. "The Kenya Wildlife Service and some other NGOs asked us if we could help by tracking him. So we collared him and set up a whole load of buffer zones; when one is crossed a signal is sent to the rangers. This one's called the OS line – the Oh Shit line," he laughs, "which means he's now in the crops and needs to be headed off by the anti-crop-raiding patrol."

Iain is a gifted raconteur who manages to weave science, statistics and anecdotes into an easily comprehensible and palatable stream. It serves him well, as an important part of his life and an element that is critical to the success of Save the Elephants is lobbying governments, securing funding, encouraging collaboration and generally building momentum. He describes the many hoops that he and others jumped through in order to explain the impact of the ivory trade to the Chinese government and persuade them to ban it – the mass slaughter of elephants since 2008 was largely driven by the increasing demand for ivory in China. Iain shows me two anti-poaching videos created with Chinese basketball star Yao Ming and actress Li Bingbing, both influential public figures who have visited Save the Elephants in Samburu. They are powerful and very moving and Iain believes they, along with high level lobbying, had an important effect. After many years of sharing the stories and the data, last year the Chinese ban on ivory was finally announced. "We can't say it was cause and effect, but we can say that we made the effort and the law changed," Iain concludes. "We should show them to your team," he adds with a wink, "to motivate them a bit."

The crew watch the films before lunch. We've barely sat down to eat when Frank suggests a change of plan to the afternoon's schedule – to visit the carcass of an elephant found 50km away. Vincent and Doutzen think it's important that we go. I'm concerned about publishing this image, but in my heart know this is a story that has to be told, either in pictures or words, so join the trip. The necessary vehicles, >

"Doutzen, Jerenimo and Frank go and see the *elephant* up close. Doutzen places a *sprig of green twigs* on what is left of its *forehead* and they stand together in *silence*"

THE HARSH REALITY
Doutzen (below) faces the heart-wrenching and disturbing scene of the aftermath of an elephant killing, tusks intact, suggesting that rather than ivory poachers, the elephant could have been killed by a startled herdsman or caught in the crossfire of a tribe altercation



Coat by See by Chloé, \$630; blouse by Zadig + Voltaire, \$368



“Coming here
and getting
involved with
the elephants
has made *sense*
of my life”

Doutzen Kroes

Jacket, \$1,890,
and skirt, \$1,490,
both by Ralph
Lauren Collection;
bodysuit by
Michael Kors
Collection, \$495

including the Save the Elephants four-seater bushplane, are quickly mobilized. The timings, Saba explains, are tight because we will need to land back in Samburu before sunset. “I was really nervous,” Doutzen tells me later. “But I knew it was important that I saw this to make sense of everything we are doing.” The atmosphere aboard the plane, with its red tail and perky elephant logo, is subdued. Doutzen and I are worried we will cry. “Don’t worry,” reassures Frank from the cockpit before we take off. “You’re not alone. Iain cries at the drop of a hat!”

Frank touches the plane down on the dusty Shaba airstrip where we meet a jeep driven by ranger Jerenimo. I chat to Frank about his father-in-law. “His guiding star is data,” he begins. “Data is what drives every decision we make. Back in the day people used to say he was crying wolf about the crisis facing the elephants. No one believed him. Now they do. Three years ago China was in complete denial, but thanks to the data, they eventually understood that this was real. All the state factories and shops selling ivory are now being closed.”

Some 45 minutes later, we arrive at a stream surrounded by acacia trees. It’s one of the most verdant, idyllic landscapes we have yet set foot in. The only signal that something is amiss are the vultures sitting menacingly in the trees ahead. We walk in silence up a slight hill and suddenly the body of the elephant comes into view. From one side, it looks as if it’s just sleeping by a tree, but from the other, we can see the bloodied leg where it was shot and the remains of a trunk, clearly eaten away at by animals. “Hyenas probably,” Jerenimo tells me later. Insects crawl over the open wound and the stench isretch-inducing. There are no words to describe the immediate feeling. Each one of us is silent, lost in thought. Doutzen tells me later it was the saddest day of her life. “Seeing something so beautiful, something that has taken so long to create, just lying dead there... it felt so completely unnecessary.” The reasons behind the killing are as yet unclear. Frank and Jerenimo do not think it is a poaching death because the tusks were left intact. “It could have been a herdsman who just stumbled across an elephant and fired off his AK47 to scare it away,” says Frank. “Or it could have got caught in the crossfire of a tribal altercation.”

Doutzen goes with Jerenimo and Frank to see the elephant up close. She then places a sprig of green twigs on what is left of its forehead and they stand together in silence. Afterwards Jerenimo tells me about the ritual. “The Samburu have an elephant clan,” he explains, “so we give respect when we see a carcass. We find some green twigs, place it on their head and say ‘Sleep well our comrade.’ That’s also what elephants do when they find a dead person, they find a twig or a branch and place it on the body.” My own tears, which I have managed to keep in check until this moment, suddenly begin to stream. Doutzen, who has also been crying, walks over to me and we hug each other for a few moments, both rendered completely speechless by what we have seen.

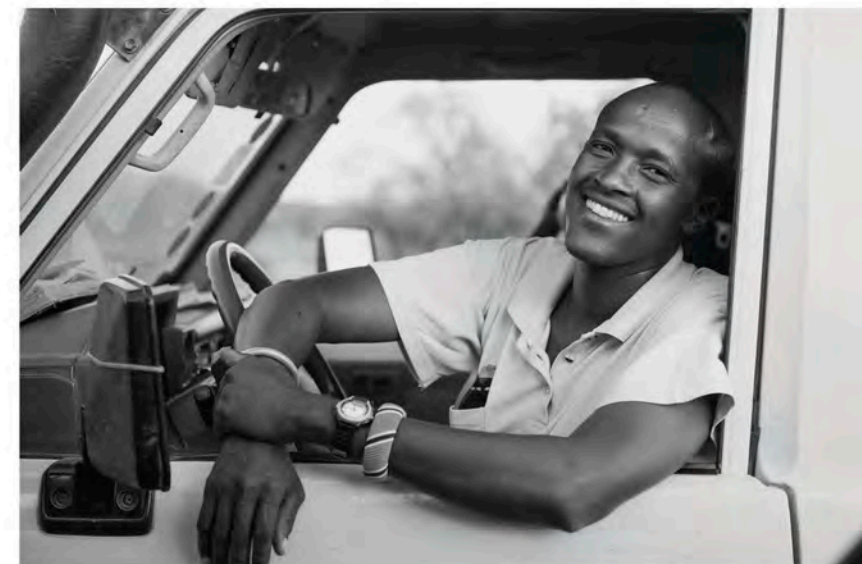
We are all silent on the plane ride home, processing what we have just seen. It is only when the plane circles Elephant Watch Camp and we catch sight of the children playing on the dry riverbed, waving up at us frantically with beaming grins, that the sombre mood lifts. >

David Daballen, head of field operations,
Samburu Camp

“It’s not been a usual week,” says David Daballen (below), attempting to summon a smile, as he pulls up a chair opposite me outside the Save the Elephants camp research center in Samburu, the elephant skulls laid out in lines in the sand behind him, a reminder of the very real danger he has just faced. Head of field operations and a member of the Save the Elephants team for nearly 18 years, David has just returned from the northeast, where he was investigating what turned out to be a large-scale elephant poaching incident, the likes of which has not been witnessed in this area for some years.

Six days earlier, David had been told by the Northern Rangelands Trust that some of the community rangers had heard reports of dead elephants from local herders. “Our mission was to actually see who had died and how they’d died. The poachers had picked whoever had big tusks in the group, in this case two older females, a 25-year-old male and a young male, all from the same group.” He explains how they had collected shells from AK47s. “The poachers were experienced: they got so close to the elephants, who were probably all just resting in the shade and just went brrrr... brrrr... straight at their heads.” Finding the next site was tougher and more dangerous, involving a 30km trek through the 40-degree heat, guided by Samburu warriors who were herding and guarding their drought-stricken cattle. “We eventually found three more animals,” David sighs wearily. “One very young baby lying next to the mother and then another 15 to 20-year-old male.” On the day we met, the total amount was still unclear, but David said, “We have now discovered 14, but there are more, definitely more.”

After leaving school (where he was head boy), David wanted to become a ranger with the Kenya Wildlife Service. One day he came across a poster featuring Save the Elephants. “I got in touch and said, ‘What do you guys do?’ They said, ‘Oh, we get to know elephants individually,’ and I said, ‘Wow, can I be an intern?’ After six months they said, ‘Why don’t you extend your internship for six months.’ Six months,” he grins, “became 16 years.” David can now identify over 500 Samburu elephants by sight (“A unique talent,” says Iain Douglas-Hamilton). “I’ve learned so much about elephants, and about the rest of the world, from Iain. He has been a blessing in my life.” David, who during his career with Save the Elephants has been featured in several films and documentaries (for the BBC, National Geographic...), sees being in the field as a continuous learning process. “It’s been an amazing journey for me,” he says. “I’ve seen ups and downs, sad and happy moments, but I’m determined to just look forward and work for the future of elephants together with my team.”



That night Oria and Saba have planned a special surprise. We climb a nearby hilltop to join a group of about 40 Samburu warriors and women in a special ceremony in which a goat is sacrificed. Back at the camp a huge table has been laid out by the riverbed and a bonfire lit. Imaan and Doutzen are the first to be pulled by the warriors when the dancing begins and soon we all find ourselves joining in the hypnotic chant. Seeing my daughter, who has definitely sloughed off her city skin, wearing only cut off denim shorts, her body and legs smeared with mud, swaying and jumping in the firelight between two ornately dresses warriors, totally lost in and bewitched by this extraordinary new world, is a moment I will never forget. It has been a day of highs and lows for us all.

Day 4

It is our last morning and before we fly back to Nairobi, the team are capturing a few final shots of the special Tiffany & Co. elephant charms that will be sold globally from June to raise money for the fund. I still haven't visited the research center or talked with David Daballen, who thankfully had returned safely to Samburu in the night. So I jump in a jeep with Iain to get an update on the killings in the north.

We pull up to the research center, a cluster of huts and one partly open-sided building, the visitors' center, which Iain tells me was opened by Chelsea Clinton two years ago. The walls are covered with boards outlining some of the projects Save the Elephants is working on, including those the Elephant Crisis Fund has financed. But it is the seriously crumpled remains of a jeep that captures my attention. "Yes, that's what an elephant can do if he's really angry," Iain grins. "The two researchers in the cars were [CONTINUED ON PAGE 180]"

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Local goat herders in Samburu work closely with the community rangers, a vital resource in tracking the whereabouts of the elephants and reporting any casualties



Jacket by Michael Kors Collection, \$1,875; shorts by Zadig + Voltaire, \$398; shoes by Joseph, \$520, at Net-A-Porter.com

Makeup Lotten Holmqvist at Management + Artists. Hair Tomohiro Ohashi at Management + Artists. Models Doutzen Kroes at DNA Model Management, Imaan Hammam at DNA Model Management. Production Baker Kent. Shot on location at the Samburu National Reserve, Kenya on March 10, 2017. With thanks to Kenya Airways, Ole Sereni, Samburu Intrepids and Elephant Watch Camp

“Seeing something so beautiful, something that has taken so long to create, just lying there... it felt so completely unnecessary”

Doutzen Kroes



Clockwise from top: the Elephant Watch Camp's large alfresco dining table is prepared by one of the Samburu National Reserve's welcome team; Samburu tribespeople gather to watch the sun set over the north Kenyan plains; the camp's daybeds, overlooking the Ewaso Ng'iro river, are the perfect place to reconnect with nature; an open-sided drawing room, made with sustainably-harvested palm thatch, where guests can relax at the end of the day; all of the camp's en-suite tents are crafted from natural materials, including trees felled by elephants

Elephant Watch Camp

When the jeep first pulls up at Elephant Watch Camp, a discreet cluster of part-tented, part-thatched houses on the leafy banks of the Ewaso Ng'iro river, you know you've arrived somewhere special. If you haven't yet encountered a herd of elephants or some meandering giraffe on the short drive from the airstrip, there is every chance you will in the grounds of the camp itself. And the sight of the Samburu welcome team, draped in vivid pink, red and blue shukas, arms and necks stacked with bracelets and necklaces, is both a visual and emotional treat. The gaiety of the spectacle is more than matched by the warmth of the welcome. Any children in the party are quickly scooped up by the warriors – who are as friendly and gentle as they are fierce and proud – and are soon monkey-spotting near the riverbed or climbing kigelia trees, while you relax with a refreshing chai and take in your beautiful new surroundings: the lofty thatched ceilings festooned with pink and red swathes of diaphanous fabric; the vast sofas and armchairs crafted from fallen trees and piled with vibrant elephant-embroidered throws and cushions; the coffee tables brimming with books; the rainbow-colored crystal glasses above the honesty bar; and, of course, the view...

"I wanted to create something different, a place where our guests could come and join us in our life and learn more about elephants and conservation," explains Oria Douglas-Hamilton, as we look through the trees to the dusty burnt orange river bed, through which a group of elephants happen to be passing. The "matriarch", as her daughters call her, of the Douglas-Hamilton clan, Oria, a conservationist, designer and author, first set up the camp in 2001 as somewhere for her and her husband, Iain, and visitors to stay following the opening of the Save the Elephants research camp. "I wanted something that was intimate and real, and had a low footprint on the environment," she says. "I used all the trees that had fallen or been pushed over the by the elephants to build with, I used only local things that the nomads use, like these belts," she points to a strap on a chair. "Camel herders use these to tie up their bedding on top of their camels. Everything had to be locally sourced or recycled. That was my vision."

Today, Elephant Watch Camp, which is now run by Oria's daughter Saba (who is also special projects director of Save the Elephants), boasts six luxurious tented bedrooms – each decorated in a similarly vibrant style to the main drawing room. Guests can enjoy hot showers in the en-suite, open-air shower rooms (water is poured from animal motif-decorated, upside-down, watering can-style contraptions) – as well as some of the best cooking I've ever tasted in Africa, a mouthwatering fusion of Italian and Kenyan fare, much of which is freshly picked from Oria's organic vegetable garden. In the evenings, lanterns lead guests down to a large dining table by the riverbed and a huge fire, where more can be learned from the Samburu or a member of the Douglas-Hamilton family about the elephant community.

Getting people to love these majestic creatures is, after all, the real purpose of Elephant Watch Camp, as Saba, the most welcoming, informed and beguiling of hosts, tells me as we watch the sun rise on a game drive the next morning. "I call it our honey trap. We want to bring people here, feed them well and ensure they leave as elephant lovers and conservationists." *Lucy Yeomans*
From \$795 per night; elephantwatchcamp.com