



**COUNSELLOR'S RETREAT  
IN SOUTH AFRICA:  
DISCOVER, REFLECT, & RENEW**

30 April to 7 May 2027

**PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RETREAT FOR COUNSELLORS:

### Personalized, Custom, Guided Historical and Cultural Tour of South Africa.

Embark on a Journey of Discovery: A Professional Development Retreat through the Rich Tapestry of South Africa's History and Nature

#### 1. Explore South African History:

Discover key historical events and cultural shifts through immersive tours, customized experiences, and guest speakers who address psychological and social justice issues in South Africa. These learning experiences aim to support ongoing professional development by enhancing cultural competence and strengthening ethical, culturally responsive practices with diverse client populations.

#### 2. Promote Environmental Stewardship:

Recognize the importance of South Africa's natural landscapes and wildlife, and see how environmental awareness and respect for nature can enhance self-care and mental health.

#### 3. Engage in Self-Care Practices:

Relax through a guided week-long experience where participants embrace being guided without the pressure of planning or organizing for others. This approach provides a break from leadership responsibilities in one's counselling practice, promoting self-reflection and personal growth through acceptance and adaptation to being led. Additionally, the body can recover from stress by connecting with nature and enjoying wholesome foods prepared at the private Safari lodge.

#### 4. Foster Professional Connections:

Cultivate meaningful relationships with fellow counsellors and participants through shared experiences and collaborative discussions that promote personal and professional growth, thereby enriching one's counselling practice.



#### 5. Participate in Debriefing Circles:

Engage in reflective debriefing sessions in various configurations to explore historical narratives and their effects on South African communities, and consider how these insights can inform one's counselling practice.

#### Who is this for?

This professionally coordinated retreat is intended for counsellors (and their colleagues or partners who are willing to participate in our activities of discovery, reflection, and renewal). To ensure a meaningful and connected experience, participation is limited to 20 registrants and is offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Please see the retreat information



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## CONTACT INFORMATION

- Natacha Wauquiez, who owns Nature Connexion, is the professional retreat coordinator and host for this trip. Dawn and Jarvis participated in a retreat she organized in South Africa in 2025. All funds are sent to her. You can contact Natacha at [reservations@nature-connexion.com](mailto:reservations@nature-connexion.com) or WhatsApp: +27 72 114 894 to get extra information or sign up for the retreat.
- Dawn Mc Bride (with DPS) is collaborating with Natacha to organize this event and will host the pre-trip meetings and debriefing circles. Having attended a South Africa retreat organized by Natacha in 2025, Dawn brings direct experience to help shape this trip, aiming to offer a meaningful and well-organized experience. While most communication will go through Natacha, participants are welcome to contact Dawn or Makayla at [admin@dawn-mcbride.com](mailto:admin@dawn-mcbride.com).
- **WhatsApp:** We will have a WhatsApp group where we can connect, exchange tips, etc. This is where Natacha will add reminders, travel documents, etc.
- **Email and other contact details:** Participant emails and names will be shared with fellow participants, the retreat organisers & assistants, and those involved in fundraising. Everyone is asked to keep this information confidential.

## RETREAT INFORMATION

<https://www.nature-connexion.com/retreats/counsellors-retreat-social-justice-wellness-retreat-in-south-africa/>



## BEGINNING & END OF RETREAT

### 29 APRIL 2027

1. Please ensure your international flight arrives at O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg (JNB) no later than 6:00 p.m. on 29 April (ideally).
2. Participants are asked to stay at the retreat hotel, The Catalyst Hotel in Sandton, on the evening of 29 April. This night is booked by you (each person books their own room) – book and pay for it in advance, as this night is not part of the retreat. This extra day is intended for rest and recovery from travel. The hotel has an on-site restaurant, and no formal retreat activities are scheduled in order to accommodate varying arrival times. Hotel to book at: <https://newmarkhotels.com/accommodation/the-catalyst-hotel>

Note: If you wish to book another hotel or arrive earlier, you are welcome to do so.

3. You will need to arrange your transportation to this hotel (e.g., taxi). Our Pre-trip Zoom meetings will give you options (e.g., Natacha can provide some recommendations if you prefer a personal driver).

### 30 APRIL 2027

The retreat officially begins at 1:30 p.m. at the Catalyst Hotel in Sandton (the hotel you are recommended to stay in the night before). From this point forward, accommodation and most meals are included for the duration of the retreat.

### 7 MAY 2027

Please book a domestic flight from Hoedspruit (HDS) to Johannesburg (JNB). The retreat concludes at 10:00 a.m., and a transfer will take you to Hoedspruit Airport (HDS).

*OPTION: Please note that an optional excursion is available on May 7-8, and you are welcome to extend your trip after the retreat for any other activity you may wish to plan.*

## PRE-RETREAT MEETINGS (Optional)

These online or Zoom meetings, hosted by DPS, will serve as an opportunity to connect, prepare, and learn about the country we will visit. Attend all, some, or none; however, you are encouraged to attend at least one to meet everyone. Basic minutes from these meetings will be shared with all retreat participants.

### 1. November 28, 2026, 9:15 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. (MST, Calgary time).

Agenda: (a) Introductions (Natacha & Dawn), (b) Participants introduce themselves, (c) Brief description of the retreat & our optional SA book club, and (d) Open Q & A time.

### 2. January 17, 2027, 6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. (MST, Calgary time).

(a) Icebreaker to get to know each other, (b) Checking that hotel and flight bookings have been made, (c) Debrief a portion of the book, optional book club.

### 3. March 6, 2027, 9:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. (MST, Calgary time).

(a) Another icebreaker to get to know each other, (b) What to pack/bring, (c) Things you might like to know about SA (interactive), and (d) more discussion about our book.

### 4. April 11, 2027, 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. (MST, Calgary time).

(a) Checking in that everyone has transportation to the hotel on April 29, (b) open Q & A, and (c) optional book club.

## OUR BOOK CLUB (Optional)

If we decide to have an optional, informal book club, a list of books we can choose from includes:

- Long Walk to Freedom, Nelson Mandela (a must-read).
- The New Apartheid by Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh critically analyses modern inequality. <https://sizwempofuwalsh.com/product/thenewapartheid>
- Classic Literature Addressing Social Justice: Cry, the Beloved Country by Alan Paton: A seminal novel detailing the profound impact of racial injustice on a Zulu pastor.

Please find a list here also: <https://www.panmacmillan.co.za/blogs/news/essential-books-on-human-rights-social-justice-and-history>





## ACCOMMODATIONS

### A) THE DAY BEFORE THE RETREAT OFFICIALLY STARTS: April 29, 2027

- *Recommended location:* The Catalyst Hotel, Sandton, Johannesburg. <https://newmarkhotels.com/accommodation/the-catalyst-hotel>
- *You must book & pay:* Please book one night: Book April 29, 2027
- *Why:* Participants are asked to stay at the retreat hotel, The Catalyst Hotel in Sandton, on the evening of 29 April. This night and transportation to the hotel is booked individually – book and pay for it in advance, as this day/night is not part of the retreat. This time is intended for rest and recovery from travel. The hotel has an on-site restaurant, and no formal retreat activities are scheduled to accommodate varying arrival times.

### B) WHAT IS INCLUDED IN YOUR RETREAT FEE:

#### 1. The Catalyst Hotel, Sandton, Johannesburg

- *Location* (same as above, pre-retreat hotel)
- *Duration:* 4 nights (included in your retreat fee)
- *Single or shared:* Single

#### 2. Khaya Ndlovu Manor House | Rietspruit game reserve, Limpopo

- *Location:* Limpopo – beautiful area and manor
- *Duration:* 4 nights (included in your retreat fee)
- *Single or shared:* Double (shared) occupancy – single beds. For those travelling alone, you may want to connect with others during our pre-trip Zoom meetings to arrange who you would like to share a room with. However, there will be ample time once we are in SA to also decide on roommates.
- *Please note* that three (3) rooms are available in single occupancy on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to payment of the deposit, starting on May 1, 2026. Please consult with Natacha for more information.

## DOMESTIC FLIGHTS (to return to Johannesburg)

You will need to book your flight HOME from the location where the retreat concludes.

Two companies, [AIRLINK](#) or [CEMAIR](#) are available to book your domestic flight AFTER the retreat to return to Johannesburg from Hoedspruit (the location where the retreat ends on May 7, 2027).

- 7 May (or 8th or later if selecting the excursion)

We recommend you book one of the flights below, from Hoedspruit (HDS) to Or Tambo Airport (JNB):

Departing HDS Airlink 4Z872 - 12h10 --- 13h10 arrival to JNB  
Departing HDS Airlink 4Z874 - 14h30 --- 15h30 arrival to JNB



## REGISTRATION & PAYMENT

### How to register for the retreat?

- Please send a sign-up request by email to [reservations@nature-connexion.com](mailto:reservations@nature-connexion.com). A welcome email, booking form and a personalized invoice will be sent to you.
- Alternatively, please complete the booking form directly through Nature Connexion website: <https://www.nature-connexion.com/booking-form/>

### How much does this retreat cost?

- It is all-inclusive for the most part (accommodations, most meals, local transportation fees, arranged guided tours & cultural events, event fees, several safari outings (morning and/or afternoon), speaker costs, debriefing circles, donations, taxes, pre-group Zoom meetings): ZAR 77 400.
- For a detailed list of what is covered, please see the last 2 pages.

### What is the cancellation policy? Is my deposit refundable?

- Please go to [Nature Connexion Terms & Conditions](#) for these answers. See Section 4: Cancellation Policy & Retreat Alterations

### How much is the deposit? When is the deposit due by?

- A 40% deposit is required to reserve one of the only spaces on this retreat.
- Deposits will be accepted starting on May 10, 2026. Deposits are paid directly to Nature Connexion.
- Deadline to pay the deposit: November 10, 2026 (transfer can take up to 7/10 days).

### When is the balance due?

- The balance of your trip is due at least 90 days before departure:  
By 15 February 2027.

### How do I make the payments?

- You can make your payment online or visit your bank to arrange a payment transfer. Give the teller the retreat invoice, as it contains all the information needed to process the funds transfer. The payment must be made in ZAR (South African rands) by bank transfer (no IBAN in South Africa) or via the platform [WISE](#). NOTE: Bank transfer fees are your responsibility; please ensure that your bank makes the necessary arrangements so the retreat organizer receives the full retreat fee with no deductions.

## TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Please read our [Terms & Conditions](#), available in the footer of Nature Connexion's website. By signing the Nature Connexion booking form, you indicate that you have accepted the retreat organizer's Terms & Conditions.
- *In addition, rates are subject to change without prior warning in case of any increases in third-party services, park or entrance gate fees, conservation and tourism levies, fuel surcharges, taxes, or currency fluctuations beyond Nature Connexion's control.*

## TIME ZONE

The time zone is SATC, South Africa Standard Time. GMT +2.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

- Travel and medical insurance is compulsory, as mentioned in paragraph 5 "Insurance" of our [Terms and Conditions](#). Please ensure you book your insurance at the same time as your flights.
- We invite you to check out [Wanderwell](#), a travel insurance agency offering comprehensive yet cost-effective plans that give you peace of mind. They implement responsible and regenerative tourism and are proudly a Certified B Corp.
- You may also want to check what is covered by your credit card covers when purchasing your flight tickets.



## PHYSICAL FITNESS

No specific level of physical fitness is required.  
However, you will need to:

- Walk for about 3 hours during your morning walking safari and during the arranged tours. These walks aim to be easy but will be on uneven ground in various weather conditions (e.g. hot, rainy).
- Get in and out of vehicles (e.g., cars/vans/buses) unassisted.
- Use stairs (e.g., when entering and exiting buildings, on tours).

## ENTRY AND EXIT IN SOUTH AFRICA

- Please ensure that your passport is valid for more than 6 months after your date of arrival in South Africa and that it has 4 blank pages.
- Always carry identification (a copy of your passport) with you. Immigration officers and police may request to see these documents when deemed necessary.
- Canadian citizens do not require a visa to enter South Africa.

## LOCAL CURRENCY

- The rand (ZAR) is the national currency in South Africa. Banknotes are available in denominations of R200, R100, R50, R20, and R10. Coins are available in denominations of R5, R2, R1, 50c, 20c, 10c, and 5c.



## BANKS & CASH

- Several banks with ATMs (Absa, Nedbank, FNB, Standard Bank, Capitec) are available at Johannesburg Airport.
- We recommend that you exchange your currency for Rands upon arrival in Johannesburg to pay for souvenirs and tips.

## WATER

Tap water is safe to drink. However, drinking water will be provided throughout your stay, along with a water bottle.

## MALARIA

Malaria is endemic and present in Hoedspruit from October to April. Although the risk of contracting malaria is low, we recommend that you consult your doctor about the use of prophylactics before your departure.

## ELECTRICITY & POWER OUTLETS

220/240 volts, with type D plugs.



## YOUR BOOKING DETAILS & DIET RESTRICTIONS

We request that all participants email Natacha their flight information, medical considerations, or dietary requirements: [reservations@nature-connexion.com](mailto:reservations@nature-connexion.com)

## WHAT IS INCLUDED IN YOUR RETREAT FEES, starting on April 30 until May 7

- Accommodations in single occupancy at The Catalyst hotel in Johannesburg.
- Accommodations at Khaya Ndlovu in double occupancy (limited options for single rooms).
- Meals at The Catalyst hotel and Khaya Ndlovu lodge (breakfast, lunch, and dinner).
- All safari activities at Khaya Ndlovu.
- Transfers in and around Johannesburg; between The Catalyst hotel and Khaya Ndlovu lodge; between Khaya Ndlovu lodge and Hoedspruit airport (HDS).
- All visits in Johannesburg suburbs: Soweto, Vilakazi street, Mandela house, Rosebank, Victoria yards, Constitution Hills, Mandela's house.
- Road transfer from Johannesburg to Hoedspruit.
- Historical city tour of Johannesburg (Gandhi square, Newtown).
- Apartheid museum and Constitutional Hills visits.
- x1 Lunch at the Cradle boutique hotel restaurant.
- x1 Lesedi cultural village tour.
- VIP guides for all cultural visits in Johannesburg.
- Klipton NGO visit.
- x1 Pack lunch on 4 May.
- x1 Yoga class on 6 May.
- Pre-trip Zoom meetings.
- Dawn's programme of reflection (as it relates to the objectives of the retreat).
- Coordinator's fees.
- Donations (at the Coordinator's discretion) .
- Anticipated 3 guest speakers who shall address psychological and social justice issues in SA.
- All safari activities and meals at Khaya Ndlovu lodge.
- Conservation levies.
- Water and soft drinks at The Catalyst hotel and Khaya Ndlovu lodge.
- Material – flip chart, paper, markers, notebooks, and pens.

## EXCLUDED

- Pre-retreat costs.
- Book for the book club (to be determined)
- International and domestic flights.
- Transfer to Hotel The Catalyst on your day of arrival and pre-trip hotel/meal stay.
- Personal items (e.g., snacks, gifts, cellular fees).
- Travel and medical insurance (compulsory).
- x1 dinner on 30 April; x1 lunch on 1 May at the Playground market, Braaimfontein and x1 lunch on 2 May.
- Alcohol
- Tips.



[Please see the retreat information](#)

## APPENDIX A: OPTIONAL EXCURSION (MAY 7 to 8, Post-retreat)

### Elephant sanctuary excursion & overnight stay in Hazyview (May 7 to 8, 2027)



- *What it is:* Step into a rare, guided encounter where you will walk alongside rescued African elephants and interact with them, learning about their intelligence, care, and behaviour in an intimate, small-group setting. This experience offers a meaningful opportunity to connect with these gentle animals in a way that is both educational and memorable, deepening your understanding of wildlife, relationships, and presence in the natural world.
- *Optional:* This excursion, suggested after the retreat, is not part of the official retreat program. Participation is voluntary and requires you to stay an extra day and to cover all associated costs. There is no guarantee this will be offered, and if its cancelled, then a refund will be issued minus any bank processing fees.

### ANTICIPATED COST

Estimated rates for 2027:

- Transfer by road from the retreat hotel to the recommended post-retreat hotel: R 1140
- Accommodation at Hippo Hollow: starting from R1 700
- Sunset interaction at 16pm to walk with the elephants in their natural environment: R2 200
- Transfer by road from Hippo Hollow to Nelspruit airport (KMIA): R870

Total estimated: R5 910

### ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

- Participants are responsible for their own meals and must arrange accommodation for the night of May 7. The recommended hotel with a restaurant, [Hippo Hollow](#) is located approximately 10 minutes from the Elephant sanctuary and within walking distance (not recommended at night) of a small shopping area.
- It is recommended to select a room along the river so you can watch the elephants pass by from time to time.

*NOTE: You are welcome to extend your stay at your own expense and coordination to enjoy more of what this lovely part of SA, the Hoedspruit area, offers to tourists.*

### FLIGHT TO RETURN TO JOHANNESBURG AIRPORT

- On May 8, a transfer to Nelspruit Airport (KMIA), located 58 kms from Hippo Hollow, for the return flight to Johannesburg (JNB) can be coordinated with Natacha for those who select this option.
- Please note: The cost of the airport transfer becomes more economical the more people share it, particularly for those travelling on the same flight. The cost above is shared among participants, estimated at approximately per person for a group of four.

### DEADLINE TO DECIDE ABOUT THE EXCURSION

- Please let us know your choice when you pay your 40% deposit for the retreat. An additional ZAR1 500 for transfers will be added to this deposit, with any outstanding difference payable with your final balance.
- We invite you to book your ticket and the recommended hotel for this excursion as soon as possible.



NATURE  CONNEXION

Do not hesitate to contact Natacha should you need assistance  
[reservations@nature-connexion.com](mailto:reservations@nature-connexion.com)  
(WhatsApp) : +27 72 114 89 47

[nature-connexion.com](http://nature-connexion.com)