



Hand-cut Meru stone, large Lamu-style doors, traditional ironmongery and copper accents mark the interior of Arijju's five guest suites

Inside track

Kenyan eco retreat Arijju is as kind to the planet as it is on the eyes, says *Lisa Kjellsson*

From a distance, it's practically invisible. And then suddenly, part of a hill turns out to be a rather grand house, blending into the surrounding valley thanks to its flat, grass-covered roof.

Arijju, thought by many to be the most beautiful private residence in the Kenyan highlands, was conceived as a family retreat but now welcomes visitors to the Borana Conservancy, drawn here by its magnificent wildlife: the Big Five (lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant and Cape buffalo) are all here, as well as hundreds of other species.

The architectural inspiration came from both the rock-hewn churches of Ethiopia and Thoronet Abbey, a 12th-century monastery in Provence. Quarried Meru stone gives the house an earthy feel while vaulted archways

around a courtyard bestow a sense of spirituality to the place. The views are carefully considered - the dining room opens up to a veranda facing the local watering hole and Mount Kenya - and the love of nature infusing the project means sustainability is at its heart, with solar power, water recycling and a ban on plastic bottles.

The same passion has been poured into the interiors, a mix of reclaimed antiques and bespoke furniture handcrafted by local artisans. The five suites are furnished with four-poster beds draped in rabbit furs, French mirrors and chandeliers, sumptuous sofas and free-standing baths. But there's little else to distract visitors from the meditative views of the forested Sieku Valley through the floor-to-ceiling windows. arijju.com



THE PROJECT A collaboration between Johannesburg-based Nick Plewman and British architect Michaelis Boyd (of Soho Farmhouse fame)

THE BUILDING Comprises five suites, a cinema, a library, a living area and a dining room

THE SPA Uses only locally grown organic ingredients