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SPECIAL REVIEW

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Revealing Aberfoyle Lodge



by BERNARD CHIKETO

HONDE Valley is enchanting. And in it lies a sanctuary of peace and adventure. Aberfoyle Lodge. A gem in the Eastern Highlands' crown that feels less like a destination and more like a discovery.

The journey itself is part of the allure. Winding 130 km from Mutare, the tarred road gives way to a scenic gravel track that meanders through the vast, manicured green carpets of the Eastern Highlands tea plantations.

The air grows cooler and sweeter, a prelude to the retreat that awaits.

Upon arrival, the main lodge reveals itself not as an imposing structure, but as a harmonious part of the landscape.

It offers the comfort of fully catered hospitality, where the day is punctuated by three hearty meals and the ever-present promise of a fresh cup of tea or coffee.

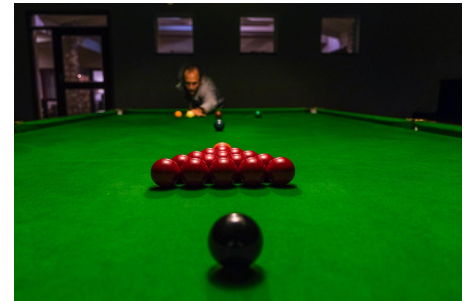
Here, the line between inside and outside blurs. Each of the 15 rooms is a tribute to the valley's vibrant avian life, named and styled after local birds. From a private veranda, guests are treated to serene views—either over a unique golf course or into the dense, whispering riparian forest.

For those seeking a more secluded family escape, private self-catering houses like Hornbill House and Wagtail Cottage offer a home-away-from-home a few kilometres from the main lodge.

But to speak only of accommodation is to miss the point of Aberfoyle. This is a place built for experience.

The iconic 9-hole golf course is arguably one of the most scenic in Africa, its fairways weaving through working tea fields and pockets of ancient forest.

For birding enthusiasts, the area is nothing short of a paradise. Over 400 species call this valley home. With expert guide Morgan, guests might glimpse the flash of crimson from a Narina Trogon, the slow circle of a Palm-nut Vulture, or hear the distinctive call of the Livingstone's Turaco.



Thrill-seekers can take to the skies on the Tree Canopy Tour, a series of ziplines and suspension bridges that offer a squirrel's-eye view of the Nyamankombe River below.

For a cooler adventure, the natural rock waterslide known as the "Bumslide" provides childish delight, while boat cruises on the serene Wamba Dam showcase spectacular, uninterrupted views of Mount Inyangani.

The entire estate is crisscrossed with trails for hiking and mountain biking, including segments of the famed 60 km Turaco Trail.

Beyond its natural allure, Aberfoyle has also blossomed into a premier destination for events. The Arches @ Aberfoyle, an architect-designed event space opened in 2021, stands as a modern complement to the wild beauty.

With an exhibition area, a boardroom, a large hall equipped with audio-visual systems, and a deck offering panoramic vistas, it has quickly become a sought-after venue for everything from intimate conferences to dream weddings.

Aberfoyle Lodge is more than just a place to stay. It is a unique blend of immersive nature, gentle adventure, and elegant hospitality. It is a story waiting to be lived—a slice of Eastern Highlands magic that remains, for now, Zimbabwe's most enchanting secret.

For more information or to plan your escape, visit www.aberfoylelodge.com or follow their journey on Instagram @aberfoylelodgezim and Facebook at Aberfoyle Lodge Zimbabwe.

Do you want your story to be told? Email bchiketo@gmail.com