

# TRAVEL



WELCOME: Pier 36, gastro pub of the future

## A Pier-less way to spend an evening

THERE was some debate about whether this article should appear in the travel section or in our eating out guide.

Pier 36 in Donaghadee, Co Down, for years has been one of Northern Ireland's gastronomic success stories whose dedication to locally-sourced and seasonally-led dishes has cultivated a loyal following.

But like any good restaurateur, Denis Waterworth refused to sit on those well-earned laurels and instead turned his attentions to making his business even better.

No easy task given the excellence of menu, the top notch ambience (this is a family-run business, many claim to be but they're not. The difference is pretty obvious) and the first-class service.

So if you've ticked the boxes of the holy trinity – food, service and atmosphere – what does that leave?

Easy, accommodation. Why rush home when you can book a room and have a proper night cap?

The rooms are modern, light and airy and are perfect to lounge around in

after you've overdone it in the dining room. This is easily done and Pier 36's list of awards, including the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Pub Of The Year gong, is testament to the Waterworth's uncompromisingly high standards.

My hunch is they'll be soon collecting awards for the quality of the accommodation.

● PIER 36, 36 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HE, 028 91 884466 email info@pier36.co.uk or visit www.pier36.co.uk. A single room costs £50, double room £70, suite (2 people) £80 and a family room (up to 4 person) will cost £100.



HOME FROM HOME: Perfect to unwind

# SAFARI

MAGNIFICENT: Zebras graze on the Madikwe Game Reserve near Johannesburg

## South Africa's the natural choice for a terrific holiday

By ANDREA WREN

**S**AT in the plush but tiny lounge waiting for an even tinier Federal Air plane to take me to the Madikwe Game Reserve from Johannesburg, I felt like I was playing a starring role in *Out Of Africa*.

And I needed a glass of South African wine, even at 11am, to calm my nerves before the turbulent flight ahead.

A six-seater plane bumping up and down through the rising heat is no easy ride.

However, the beauty of coming to Johannesburg, or eJozini as it's known locally, for a city and safari break is that it is easy to do and the choice of safari is vast.

Be selective about your park and the experience will be that much richer.

If you want to be bumper-to-bumper with every other safari-seeker then the Kruger National Park is where most tourists head.

But to really feel like you're out in the wilderness with other human souls hard to

come by, seek out the Madikwe Game Reserve, about an hour away from Johannesburg by air or a three to four hour drive.

Madikwe is home to the Big Five and also Wild Dogs (it is a breeding centre), and much of the time, it will only be your group checking out the zebra by the watering hole, instead of nudging for camera space with the herds.

For staying in Madikwe, opt for the luxurious Buffalo Ridge, the first community-owned game lodge in South Africa.

By coming here, your cash will go directly to the Leggophung village, who own the lodge, to fund projects such as the local primary school renovation.

My luck was in over the two days I stayed in Madikwe, managing to spot

zebra, elephants, impala, kudu, wildebeest, giraffes, warthogs, puff adders, wild dogs, baboons and a host of other native South African beasts.

Godfrey, our game driver and one of the community members, knew all the best spots to head for while poor Sidney, who shone the lighting into the bush, sat up at the front of the vehicle with his lamp, like buffalo bait.

I was a tentative carnivore when I arrived in South Africa, only just eating meat again after 21 years of vegetarianism.

But the food at Buffalo Ridge cooked by the community-members who work there was something else.

After tucking into a rare beef salad liberally doused with seasoned oil, I wondered how I could have gone for so long without.

Back in the city two days later after almost throwing up on the four-seater plane (yes, even smaller) that brought me

HOPE AND JOY: Soweto child dances

