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THE ECO-RESORT

Zannier Hotels Sonop

A SOLAR-POWERED COLLECTION OF
CANVAS SUITES IN THE NAMIB DESERT
TAKES 'GLAMPING' TO A NEW LEVEL

Words: Anna Solomon

When Angelina Jolie visited the Zannier Hotel in Cambodia, she urged the owner, Arnaud Zannier (of the vineyard-owning family), to visit Namibia. He did, and decided to open a hotel there.

Namibia is one of the driest and least-populated countries on Earth. An odd choice, you might think, for the French entrepreneur's next hotel. But he was so taken with Namibia's landscape – haunting in its arid beauty – that he opened Zannier Sonop bang in the middle of the Namib desert.

Here, hazy escarpments zigzag on the horizon, and the plains shift from sepia yellow to burnt umber depending on the sun's position in the sky. They're studded with heaps of granite boulders, and it is on, or in, one of these agglomerations that Zannier Sonop resides. Powered entirely by solar panels, ten one- and two-bedroom tented suites lean

into a colonial 1920s theme. Each features a private terrace, which comes in useful at night, when the sky becomes a canvas of distant milky ways – you haven't seen stars until you've seen them above one of the most sparsely-inhabited deserts on Earth.

You are miles away from civilization here – Zannier Sonop is reached by Land Rover or bush plane – but this is in no way limiting. Guided activities include horse-riding, electric fat biking, walking trails, hot air balloon safaris, and sunrise or sunset excursions. Downtime consists of vegging out by the infinity pool, admiring the view as oryx and springbok saunter past. Everything comes back to that landscape – an almost Martian vista of red dunes and contorted camel thorn trees, jarringly beautiful in its inhospitality. ■

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