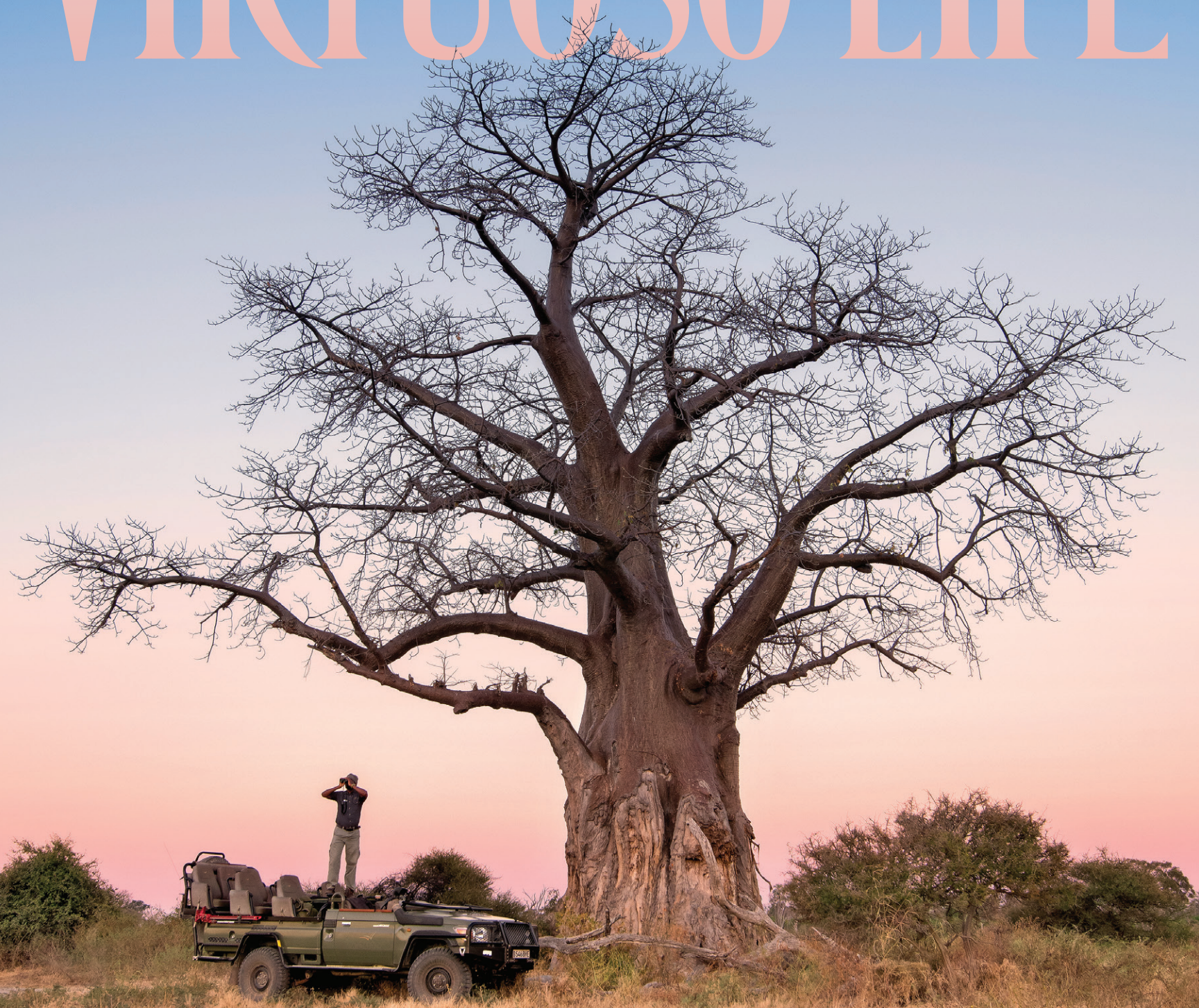


YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS WITH US

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2021

VIRTUOSO LIFE



WILD PURSUITS

SAFARI IN BOTSWANA >> ICELAND ROAD TRIP >> HOW WE TRAVEL NOW

Delta Force

Botswana's new Xigera Safari Lodge delivers big in the Okavango.



WHEN CATE CARUSO GOT A MID-pandemic peek at Xigera, it was love at first Zoom. After her virtual introduction last year, the Vancouver, Washington-based Virtuoso travel advisor set out to take in the 12-room, sustainably minded lodge in the Okavango Delta's Moremi Game Reserve in person.

SAFARI SCENE STEALER I've wanted to go to Botswana forever – many of my clients have been on safari there, and each time I do a post-trip debrief with someone who has just returned, they get this faraway hush in their voice. I knew it would be special. But I became even more intrigued when I met Mike Myers, Xigera's managing director, virtually

in August 2020. He was broadcasting from the camp, where they were preparing to receive 4,000 pieces of artwork they had commissioned for the property. He captivated my imagination. At one point, he mentioned that they had heard lions roaring quite close just a few minutes before – it was nighttime and the whole scene felt like something out of a movie.

LOGISTICS LOWDOWN Direct flights from Joburg or Cape Town to Maun, Botswana's jumping-off point for the Okavango, are less than two hours, but plan on a full day to get to Xigera from either of those two airports, given transfers and the bush plane to camp.



You'll arrive in time to make the afternoon game drive.

REVIVED AND READY Botswana checks all the boxes, particularly for travelers who have done South Africa or Kenya and Tanzania. It's a stunning area, especially for birders. Go now before the rest of the world comes back – there's nothing like traveling during this "pandemic pause." The animals have had a break, many young have been born, and their habitat has remained relatively



The Baobab Treehouse and (inset) the lodge's Sausage Tree Suite.



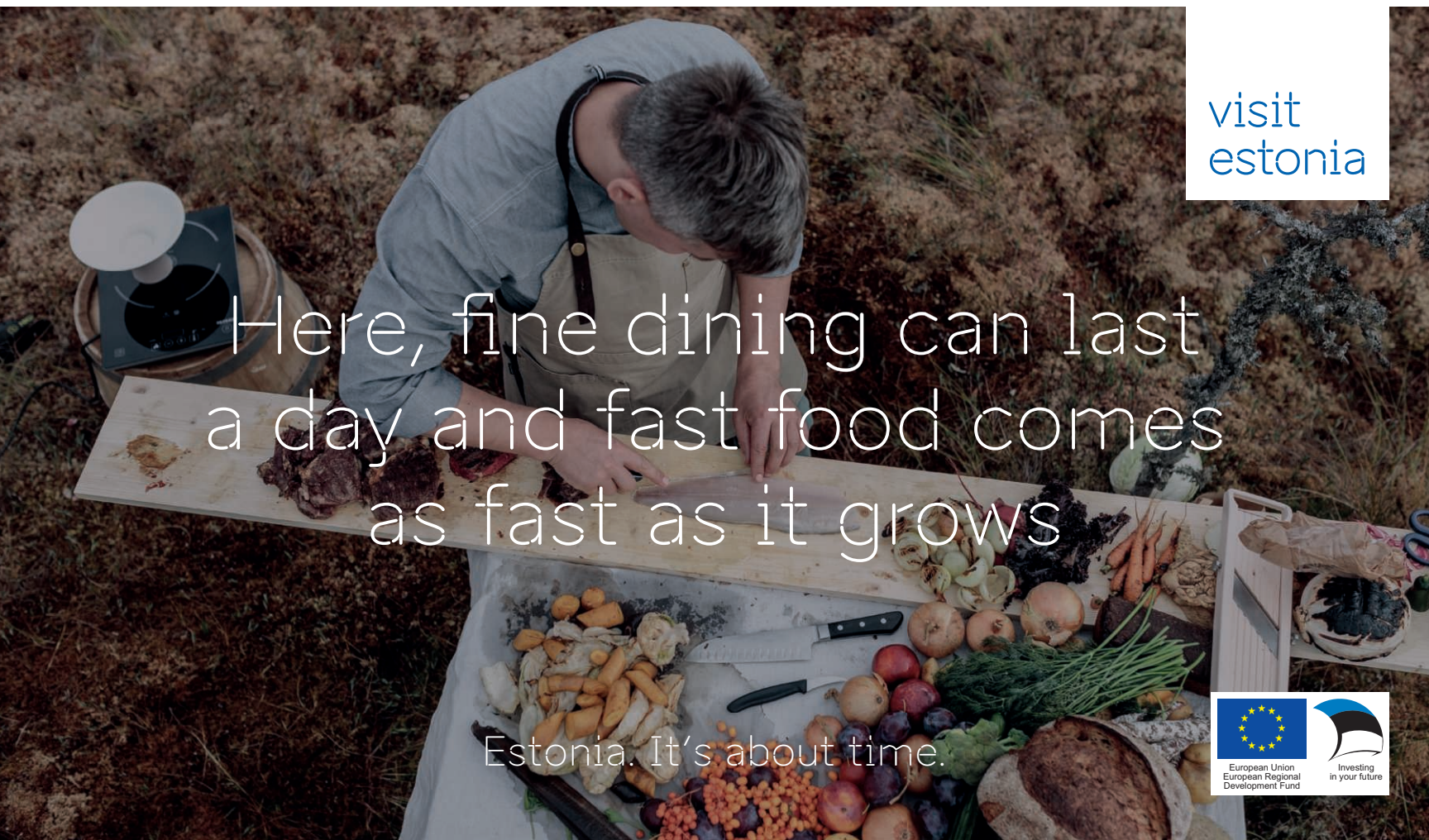
unaltered and without human interactions for more than a year.

VILLA THRILLER The views from every corner of my villa and its spaciousness struck me right away. There were artistic touches everywhere I looked, well-placed lighting, and thoughtful amenities, from the watercolor set to the art books to the candles beside the bath for a nightly soak. A deck ran the entire length of the villa, with access from every room.

BIG NIGHT OUT The Baobab Treehouse is an eye-catching piece of sculpture and design work, in addition to being a portal into the heart of the bush experience. A half mile from the lodge, the 30-foot-tall structure has a spacious bathroom and a bedroom for a secluded night under the stars.

POWER PLAY Xigera's Energy Center stands out as a jewel in the crown of safari lodge sustainability tech and includes a solar panel array and Tesla battery storage system. It's able to power the entire lodge.

WILD AT HEART Impalas, lions, warthogs, giraffes, elephants, incredible birds, and one gorgeous leopard – we saw it all. My favorite sighting was the lion on the final night of my stay: It was around dusk, and I was getting ready for dinner at the firelit boma when I heard his distinctive roar. I ran out to the deck and there he was, standing on a small rise between me and the water hole, majestic and looking right at me. *(Read more on Botswana on page 88.) VI.*



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