



Home is the hunter ... traveller Jo Sinfield has brought a collection of artefacts and museum pieces to this self-catering Franschoek property.

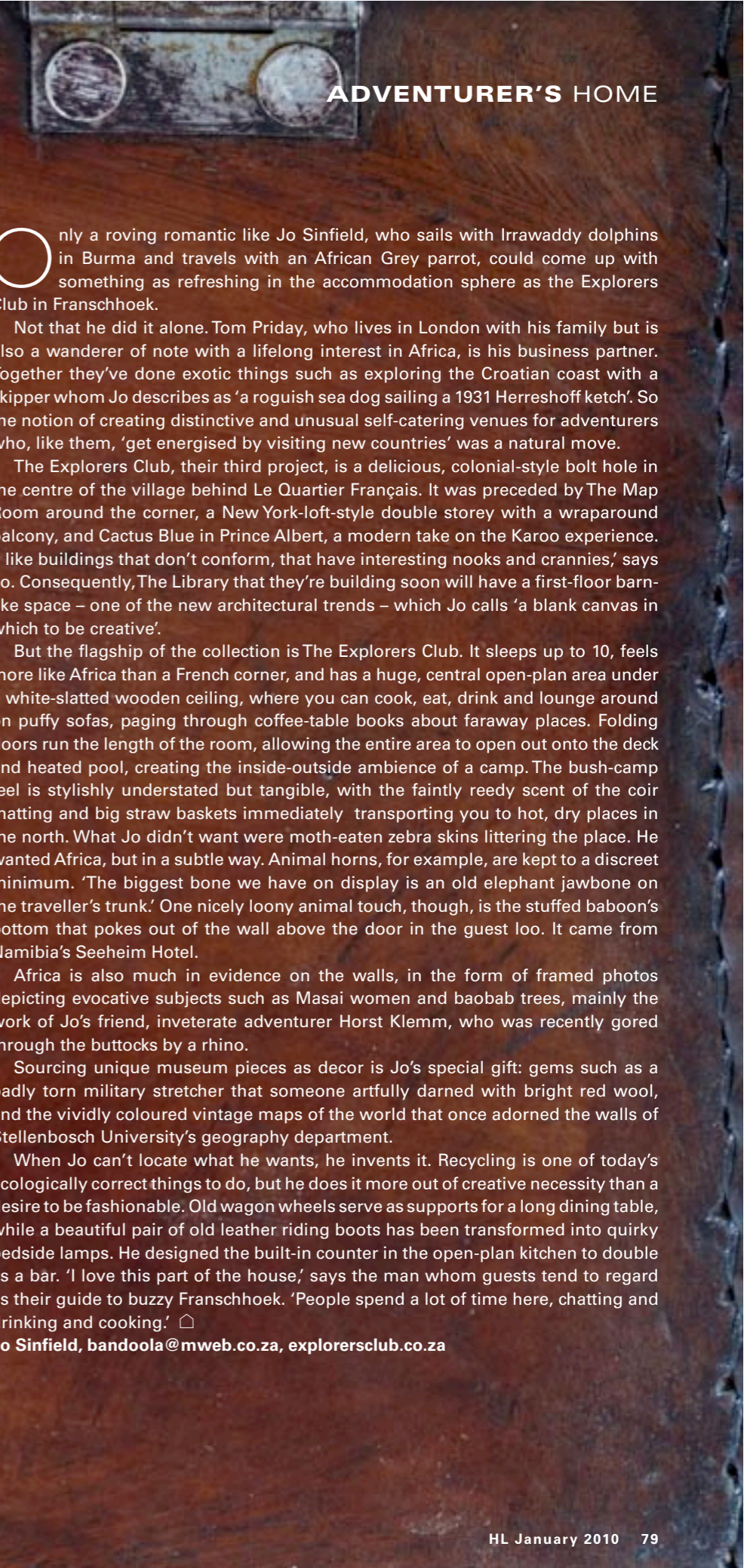
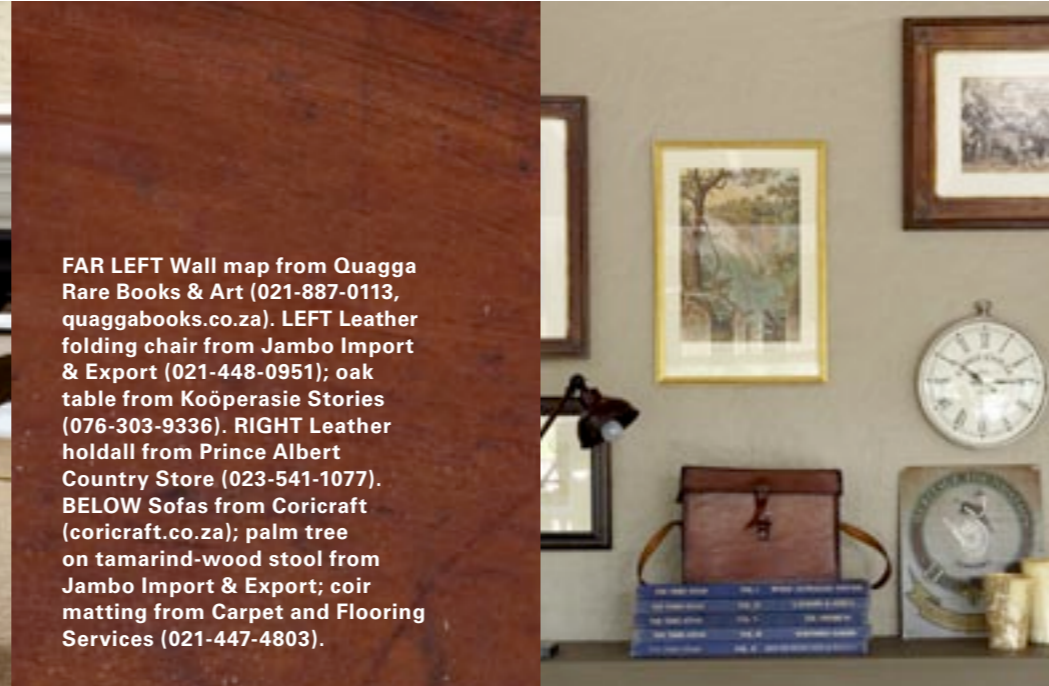
ROVER'S REFUGE

A colonial-style house in Franschoek has echoes of an elegant safari camp

Text Hilary Prendini Toffoli Production Sven Alberding, Josie Hemingway Photographs Warren Heath



FAR LEFT Wall map from Quagga Rare Books & Art (021-887-0113, quaggabooks.co.za). **LEFT** Leather folding chair from Jambo Import & Export (021-448-0951); oak table from Koöperasie Stories (076-303-9336). **RIGHT** Leather holdall from Prince Albert Country Store (023-541-1077). **BELOW** Sofas from Coricraft (coricraft.co.za); palm tree on tamarind-wood stool from Jambo Import & Export; coir matting from Carpet and Flooring Services (021-447-4803).



ADVENTURER'S HOME

Only a roving romantic like Jo Sinfield, who sails with Irrawaddy dolphins in Burma and travels with an African Grey parrot, could come up with something as refreshing in the accommodation sphere as the Explorers Club in Franschhoek.

Not that he did it alone. Tom Priday, who lives in London with his family but is also a wanderer of note with a lifelong interest in Africa, is his business partner. Together they've done exotic things such as exploring the Croatian coast with a skipper whom Jo describes as 'a roguish sea dog sailing a 1931 Herreshoff ketch'. So the notion of creating distinctive and unusual self-catering venues for adventurers who, like them, 'get energised by visiting new countries' was a natural move.

The Explorers Club, their third project, is a delicious, colonial-style bolt hole in the centre of the village behind Le Quartier Français. It was preceded by The Map Room around the corner, a New York-loft-style double storey with a wraparound balcony, and Cactus Blue in Prince Albert, a modern take on the Karoo experience. 'I like buildings that don't conform, that have interesting nooks and crannies,' says Jo. Consequently, The Library that they're building soon will have a first-floor barn-like space – one of the new architectural trends – which Jo calls 'a blank canvas in which to be creative'.

But the flagship of the collection is The Explorers Club. It sleeps up to 10, feels more like Africa than a French corner, and has a huge, central open-plan area under a white-slatted wooden ceiling, where you can cook, eat, drink and lounge around on puffy sofas, paging through coffee-table books about faraway places. Folding doors run the length of the room, allowing the entire area to open out onto the deck and heated pool, creating the inside-outside ambience of a camp. The bush-camp feel is stylishly understated but tangible, with the faintly reedy scent of the coir matting and big straw baskets immediately transporting you to hot, dry places in the north. What Jo didn't want were moth-eaten zebra skins littering the place. He wanted Africa, but in a subtle way. Animal horns, for example, are kept to a discreet minimum. 'The biggest bone we have on display is an old elephant jawbone on the traveller's trunk.' One nicely loony animal touch, though, is the stuffed baboon's bottom that pokes out of the wall above the door in the guest loo. It came from Namibia's Seeheim Hotel.

Africa is also much in evidence on the walls, in the form of framed photos depicting evocative subjects such as Masai women and baobab trees, mainly the work of Jo's friend, inveterate adventurer Horst Klemm, who was recently gored through the buttocks by a rhino.

Sourcing unique museum pieces as decor is Jo's special gift: gems such as a badly torn military stretcher that someone artfully darned with bright red wool, and the vividly coloured vintage maps of the world that once adorned the walls of Stellenbosch University's geography department.

When Jo can't locate what he wants, he invents it. Recycling is one of today's ecologically correct things to do, but he does it more out of creative necessity than a desire to be fashionable. Old wagon wheels serve as supports for a long dining table, while a beautiful pair of old leather riding boots has been transformed into quirky bedside lamps. He designed the built-in counter in the open-plan kitchen to double as a bar. 'I love this part of the house,' says the man whom guests tend to regard as their guide to buzzy Franschhoek. 'People spend a lot of time here, chatting and drinking and cooking.' ☺

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The bush-camp feel is stylishly understated but tangible

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
A bedroom features a wall chart from Charts International (021-419-7700), tamarind-wood bedside table from Jambo Import & Export, and military stretcher from Prince Albert Country Store; guest Lilian Plomp shares her lunch with Dooley, Jo's African Grey; Jo entertains Franschhoek locals Saskia Blaisse and Mark Dendy Young around a wagon-wheel table by Jack Andrew (082-532-7573) beneath kerosene lamps from Agrimark (kaapagri.co.za); a gramophone adds an old-school touch; Horst Klemm artworks adorn the wall (horstklemm.com); an ensuite bathroom gets glam with a slipper bath from On-Tap (ontap.co.za); iceberg roses and lavender border the pool.



JO'S HOME TRUTHS

I live in Franschhoek because it's a vibrant melting pot of cultures. The foreigners who reside here and regularly visit their own countries bring those flavours back with them. For a village this size there's a surprising number of inspirational people and they're wonderful to have around. I enjoy entertaining and all our properties have an open kitchen-and-living area designed around a central island to encourage conversation. Cooking is creative and challenging, and takes one's mind off clutter. The menu must be simple so I can enjoy people's company, but I usually prepare one fairly complicated dish – such as Yotam Ottolenghi's harissa-marinated chicken with red-grapefruit salad. I do the Floyd thing and have a glass of wine at hand while cooking. My most useful cookery book is *The Cook's Companion* by Stephanie Alexander. I draw the line at things my friends will balk at, such as sheep's eyeballs!

