

{ TEXT: NICKY FURNISS | IMAGES © WALKERSONS HOTEL & SPA & NICKY FURNISS }

WHERE THE FISH DON'T ALWAYS BITE **BUT YOU WILL**

“Do you have sunglasses?” Isaac asked me. It seemed an odd question at 08h00 on a very overcast morning. We had known each other for about an hour by then, though, so I took it as a sign of the usual “we-don’t-know-each-other-but-let’s-shoot-the-breeze” type of conversation. “Yes, but not with me,” I replied. He fumbled around in his jacket pocket and pulled out his own pair, holding them out to me. “Here, take mine”. I must have looked confused because he glanced at my fishing rod and said shyly: “I don’t want you to lose an eye”. And just like that, my romantic visions of me flicking my fly fishing line rhythmically backwards and forwards in a graceful movement à la *A River Runs Through It*, were well and truly dashed.

✘ That said, if you *are* going to try your hand at fly fishing for the first time, you can’t go wrong by heading to that South African Mecca of all things trout, Dullstroom. And for an excellent teacher, ask for Isaac Mngwenya, who works at Walkersons Hotel & Spa, long a bastion of those seeking a place to throw a line in, or to soak in some peace and quiet.

We had nothing (fishy-related) to show for our hour-long lesson with Isaac when we finally wound up our lines. But everyone knows that fishing requires patience and time. And besides – as Isaac very generously allowed us to believe – we reckoned the trout in our particular dam (of which Walkersons has many) had been around the pond quite a few times and could spot a fisherman coming a mile off.

It hadn’t dampened our spirits though, especially as we knew we had a delicious breakfast waiting for us at the hotel, followed by a day to do whatever our hearts desired.

A GREAT GETAWAY

We started off by reserving our spots for some afternoon pampering at the spa, before going for a leisurely stroll around the estate to walk off our breakfast Hollandaise. As we did, we marvelled at the lush green surroundings which made the newly autumnal colours of the plane trees stand out in beautiful contrast. We spied those elusive trout blowing bubbles in the water and said hello to the horses and the ducks that we met along the way. We also looked at the beautiful houses on the surrounding hills and tried to decide which – if we had the means – we would like for our own.

As well as the hotel, Walkersons also has a number of plots for private development for those who want to make their holidays away a more permanent abode. If you can’t afford your own house, there are also a number of self-catering cottages dotted