

Training scheme enables gardener to become pro photographer

The Royal Chundu Luxury Zambezi Lodges, near Livingstone and Victoria Falls, has helped former gardener Charlton Muunda to become a professional photographer - with the help of Canon SA and DSLR Training.

In December 2011, Charlton Muunda, from the Katombora community and on the maintenance team at Royal Chundu, was given a Canon Street Photography Kit, a Powershot A2200 camera, Canon cap, Canon photographer's jacket, and a Selphy 800 printer and paper. Muunda received training from Manus and Jennette van Dyk, professional photographers with DSLR Training, which scouts for talented previously disadvantaged photographers to support. Charlton was given training in using his new equipment, as well as training in basic business principles and business plan development.

DSLR Training and Canon specifically look for potential trainees who are close to lodges or institutes that embrace and develop their local communities, such as Royal Chundu.

Van Dyk says that he was on-site at Royal Chundu taking photographs for marketing when Muunda approached them.

"He came to us for advice on taking better pictures and we instantly recognised him as a perfect candidate for our programme," he said.

School a priority

Reports are that Muunda has been offering photography services in his community and is thriving. Orphaned at a very young age, he made it his number one priority to go to school. He worked as a gardener before becoming part of Royal Chundu's construction team and helping to build the lodge. He now helps with the electrical maintenance at Royal Chundu.

As a hobby Muunda taught himself to take photos and sold them to the local people to cover his expenses. He was using an old film compact camera and his clients had to wait up to three weeks to receive their photos because he had to fill a roll of film with 36 photos before he could send it for development. The closest town from his village was Livingstone, 70km away, and he had to catch a taxi in order to get to the lab, which was very costly.

A much larger profit margin

Since the training, Muunda now uses a Digital Compact Camera, so there are no film and development costs. He prints his own images on his Selphy printer and photos are available within minutes for his clients. He can also sell his images at the same price as before, but with a much larger profit margin - and he can take normal, passport and postcard photos and use his images digitally on websites and social networks.

Being in a fairly rural area, with no electricity for the community and far away from most towns, Royal Chundu will keep additional stock of paper for Muunda (which he purchases from them), provide a venue where he can do his printing (Chundu University facility), plus use him to photograph local events and run those photos in Chundu publications. Muunda is generating additional income by acting as "lodge photographer" to record guests' most magic moments and many of his photos are being made into postcards for sale in the Royal Chundu shop.

The lodge offers accommodation in 14 beautiful suites, each hidden from civilization, 10 on the mainland and four villas on the nearby, private Katombora Island. Cruises along the lodge's 15-km private stretch of river afford a variety of wildlife sightings and a sense of incredible peace.

Royal Chundu is part of the Mantis Collection. For more information on Mantis, go to www.mantiscollection.com.

For bookings contact reservations directly by telephone on +27 (0)21 438 9160 or by email on reservations@royalchundu.com or for more information go to www.royalchundu.com.

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