

# HOTELS

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# HOTELIERS OF THE WORLD



# FRANCO RIENZO

GENERAL MANAGER  
ANDBEYOND MATETSI PRIVATE  
GAME RESERVE, ZIMBABWE

**Franco Rienzo, formerly GM at Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort Mozambique, took over in June after a US\$10 million renovation at the Zimbabwe-based AndBeyond Matetsi Private Game Reserve.**

## **You're Swiss-born. How did your career path bring you to Africa?**

After spending the majority of my career in Europe, I decided that in order to be a world-class hotelier, I had to experience new continents with different cultures and to challenge myself in different environments. First, I branched out to cruise lines and I worked with people from many different parts of the world. I had a team of more than 300 from 34 different countries. Then I went to India and after a short break, I found new challenges in Africa. Started off in Mozambique and now in Zimbabwe.

## **What's a personal skill that makes you unique as a hotelier?**

My eagerness to accept challenges, venture into the unknown and question the status quo. These often bring a fresh perspective to organizational issues together with innovative solutions.

## **One of your favorite things about Africa?**

The people! Something you don't find everywhere in the world: people always at the ready with a smile and happy to help. Africans do both of these and they're also willing to learn.

## **One of the most challenging things about Africa?**

Logistics and bureaucracy.

## **A surprising, non-hotel skill you have learned on the job?**

Reading maritime maps.

## **Favorite app?**

Geocaching. I love to involve my tech-savvy guests from time to time.

## **What do you do better than anyone else you know?**

A senior vice president of hotel operations once said they found me to be a left-thinking classical hotelier with the talent to make people happily do what I want them to do.

## **Have you made a personal goal for the year, and what is it?**

To have my 8-year-old son finally living with me and my wife.

## **What's the most creative part of your job?**

To look for service innovation and to surprise my guests. My greatest reward is to hear "wow" from a surprised guest.

## **What do most people not know about you?**

Out of my work environment, I'm a shy person.

## **Who taught you your biggest lesson, and what was it?**

One of my schoolteachers taught me to always move away from my comfort zone, always challenge myself. These are wise words in many industries. It certainly is in hospitality.