



# Custom Trails

*Conservation · Ecotourism · Wildlife Safaris*  
Hluhluwe, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

*Website Design & Development*

***Where Every Trail Is Customised for You.***

*Van Zyl Connections · [launchsystem.vanzylconnections.com](http://launchsystem.vanzylconnections.com)*

**Real Client:** Custom Trails is a genuine Van Zyl Connections client. This case study documents the website design and development delivered for their conservation and ecotourism business based in Hluhluwe, KwaZulu-Natal.

## Project Overview

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**Client** Custom Trails

**Industry** Ecotourism · Conservation · Wildlife Safaris

**Location** Hluhluwe, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

**Website** [www.customtrails.co.za](http://www.customtrails.co.za)

**Contact** [info@customtrails.co.za](mailto:info@customtrails.co.za) · +27 72 233 9030 · +27 71 453 6524

**Social Media** Facebook: /customtrails · Instagram: @customtrails2025

**Deliverable** Full Website Design & Development (WordPress)

**Tagline** Where Every Trail Is Customised for You

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## About the Client

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Custom Trails is a conservation and ecotourism operator based in Hluhluwe, KwaZulu-Natal — one of South Africa's most biodiverse and celebrated wildlife regions. The business was founded on a clear and genuine belief: that travel should be as meaningful as it is memorable.

Their team is made up of experienced guides, field researchers, and conservationists who have spent years working in South Africa's most celebrated reserves, including Tembe Elephant Park and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park — home of the Big Five.

What sets Custom Trails apart is not just the access they offer to remote, extraordinary environments — it's that every experience is genuinely customised. No two itineraries are the same. Every trail is built around the specific interests, timeline, and level of adventure of the person travelling.

And every visit directly contributes to real, ongoing conservation work — from lion monitoring and elephant collaring to field research internship programs.

*“Where Your Adventure Becomes a Story Worth Telling”*

## The Brief

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Custom Trails had an established operation and a growing reputation — but no website. Their enquiries were coming in through WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, with no central digital home that could showcase their experiences, communicate their conservation mission, or convert interested travellers into bookings.

They needed a website that matched the quality and uniqueness of their experiences. One that communicated both the adventure and the purpose behind it — the conservation work, the expert guides, the authentic South African wilderness — in a way that inspired people to reach out and plan a trip.

The brief was clear: build a beautiful, functional, mobile-responsive website that tells the Custom Trails story, showcases the packages, displays the tour gallery, and makes it easy for prospective travellers to get in contact.

## The Challenge

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Ecotourism and conservation travel is a visually competitive space. Prospective travellers are making decisions based on emotion as much as information — they need to feel the experience before they book it. A generic or poorly designed website doesn't just miss an opportunity; it actively loses trust.

Custom Trails also had a dual audience to speak to. Adventure travellers looking for safari and walking experiences. And conservation-minded travellers — researchers, volunteers, and eco-conscious tourists — who wanted to contribute something meaningful through their visit.

The website needed to hold both audiences at once — communicating wild, immersive adventure alongside rigorous, purposeful conservation work. Neither could be sacrificed for the other.

Three specific challenges shaped the project:

- **Atmosphere before information** — the site needed to make people feel the KwaZulu-Natal wilderness before they read a single word
- **Dual audience positioning** — adventure seekers and conservation supporters needed to both see themselves clearly on the same site
- **Conversion without pressure** — the site needed to generate enquiries warmly, not push bookings aggressively

## Strategic Approach

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Before a single page was designed, the strategy was established. The website needed to lead with emotion — the visual identity of wild, untouched South African landscape — and then build trust through the depth of what Custom Trails offers.

The architecture was designed around the visitor's natural journey: curiosity → inspiration → understanding → action. Each section of the site moves the visitor further along that path.

**Positioning** Conservation-driven, truly customised ecotourism — where every experience is unique and every visit gives back

**Target Visitor** International and domestic travellers seeking authentic, meaningful South African wildlife experiences · Conservation researchers and volunteers · Eco-conscious adventure travellers

**Core Message** Where Every Trail Is Customised for You — your adventure, your way, with real conservation purpose

**Brand Tone** Warm, expert, adventurous, purposeful — the voice of a passionate guide, not a booking agent

**Key CTAs** Contact Us and Plan Your Adventure — two soft, conversational CTAs that invite rather than pressure

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## Website Design & Development

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The full website was designed and developed on WordPress — responsive, fast-loading, and client-editable — at [www.customtrails.co.za](http://www.customtrails.co.za).

### PAGE STRUCTURE

#### Hero Section

Full-screen immersive opening with the Custom Trails headline, tagline, location, and two primary CTAs — Contact Us and Plan Your Adventure. Designed to immediately transport the visitor into the KwaZulu-Natal wilderness experience.

#### Three Pillars

Adventure · Education · Conservation — the three core dimensions of what Custom Trails offers, presented immediately below the hero to anchor the brand's dual purpose.

#### About Section

The Custom Trails story — the team's passion for conservation, their years of field experience, and the philosophy behind every customised trail. Includes the brand quote: 'Where Your Adventure Becomes a Story Worth Telling.'

#### Packages Section

Four detailed experience packages with individual imagery, descriptions, and inclusions:

- **Tembe Elephant Park Conservation Work** — lion monitoring, collaring, call-ups, wildlife tracking, and field research internships
- **Walking Safaris** — multi-day trails, base camp adventures, and day walks at Tembe Elephant Park
- **Customised Tours** — bushveld experiences, coastal escapes, seasonal turtle tours, and Big Five itineraries
- **Wildlife Safaris** — guided drives at Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and Tembe Elephant Park

#### Why Choose Us

Four trust-building value propositions with supporting imagery:

- **Tailored Adventures, Designed Around You** — every itinerary built around the individual
- **Conservation Meets Experience** — join real field work at Tembe Elephant Park
- **Intimate Journeys, Big Impact** — small groups, authentic personal experience
- **Guided by Experts Who Live the Wild** — conservationists, trackers, and researchers

#### Tour Gallery

A rich, scrollable photo gallery of real Custom Trails experiences — 24 images from the field. Lions, elephants, landscapes, guided walks, coastal experiences, and camp life. The visual centrepiece of the site.

#### Contact Section

Full contact form — name, email, phone, and message — plus direct contact details: two phone numbers, email address, and a warm CTA: 'Plan Your Adventure with Purpose.'

## TECHNICAL DELIVERY

- **Built on WordPress** — reliable, scalable, fully client-editable after handover
- **Fully responsive** — designed and tested for desktop, tablet, and mobile
- **Fast-loading image optimisation** — 24-image gallery optimised for performance
- **Contact form integration** — name, email, phone, and message fields
- **Social media integration** — Facebook and Instagram linked in header navigation
- **SEO foundation** — page title, meta description, heading hierarchy, and semantic HTML structure
- **Navigation** — smooth single-page scroll with section anchors: Home, About, Packages, Gallery, Contact
- **Branded footer** — copyright and 'Designed by Van Zyl Connections' credit

## Visual Design Direction

The visual design was built to evoke the KwaZulu-Natal wilderness — earthy, natural, alive. The design communicates the authentic, immersive quality of the experience before a word is read.

**Colour Direction** Deep forest greens, warm earth tones, and natural photography dominate. The palette feels organic — not corporate. Nothing feels artificial or tourist-brochure generic.

**Photography** All imagery sourced from Custom Trails' own field photography — real animals, real landscapes, real guides. Elephants, lions, walking trails, coastal environments, and camp settings. Authentic and immersive.

**Typography** Clean, readable fonts with a warm, adventurous character — approachable but credible. Hierarchy gives structure without rigidity.

**Layout** Generous white space and large imagery allow the wildlife photography to do the emotional work. Text is secondary to visual immersion.

**CTAs** Warm and inviting — 'Contact Us', 'Plan Your Adventure', 'Plan Your Adventure with Purpose'. No aggressive booking buttons or urgency tactics.

## The Outcome

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Custom Trails launched with a complete digital home that matched the quality and depth of the experience they offer. The website communicates what no WhatsApp message or Instagram post could on its own — the full picture of what Custom Trails is, what they stand for, and what it feels like to be out there with them.

The gallery alone gives prospective travellers 24 real, powerful images of the experience — from tracking lions through the bush to watching elephants at Tembe. That visual credibility is the most persuasive element on the site.

The contact form and direct contact details give interested travellers multiple ways to reach out — lowering the barrier to the first conversation and beginning the relationship that leads to a booking.

**Page Sections** 5

**Gallery Images** 24

**Experience Packages** 4

**Primary CTAs** 2

**Mobile Responsive** 100%

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