

Eningu – the ‘clay’ idea

The builders of Eningu – Stefanie and Volker Hümmer – found lots of clay in the area, about eight kilometres away from the lodge in a tributary of the dry Seeis riverbed. After the Namibian Construction Engineering Council determined that the quality of the clay was excellent, they got books on clay houses from all over the world and slowly began to realise how many advantages clay has to offer.

Visually, the colour of the clay allowed them to effortlessly blend the tones of the lodge with those of the rusty-red shades of the Kalahari Sand Plateau on which we are located. Remarkably, too, the clay buildings have proven themselves to remain about 5 degrees warmer in winter than conventional buildings and 5 degrees cooler in summer. This temperature balance is a perfect asset in our extreme weather conditions: Stefanie and Volker wanted to offer their guests a healthy room temperature in addition to the pleasing ambience that the walls create as part of the interior decoration.

Every beginning is difficult, however. The process of turning the riverbed clay into Eningu buildings was long and hard. Stefanie and Volker had to dig the hole, sieve the clay into powder, load the clay powder onto the car, drive the clay eight kilometres to the lodge site, add water to the clay, tread the clay with their feet, throw clay balls into brick-sized forms, press out the clay bricks from the forms, and let the bricks dry slowly under plastic sheeting. At times, they probably felt they were turning into clay themselves.

120 000 clay-bricks later, and after drawing up their plans and building a cardboard model of the lodge, they started to build.

After one and a half years of hard work, the lodge called porcupine was finished. The first guest arrived in September 1994. The new lodge built of clay offered a unique addition to the multitude of Namibia’s hospitality establishments.