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Around the World

It's Time to RIDE

Anime
A Frame of Time

Ikebana
A Momentary Arrangement

列岛休闲—激流泛舟
随波逐浪荡烦忧！

美丽的日本—和歌山县熊野
节日火焰映神山



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

A DESERT TREASURE

by Hugh Paxton

It is not much to look at, and its flowers smell of rotting meat, but *Hoodia gordonii*, a spiky little cactus-like plant the size of a cucumber and native to Africa's southern Kalahari desert region, may have the power to save thousands of lives and make the local bushmen, often called San, wealthier than they've ever been.

Hoodia is a hunger suppressant. Other Kalahari plants provide this service—Devil's Claw being a famous example—but hoodia seems poised to be the show stopper.

Hoodia contains a molecule that tricks the brain into thinking the stomach is full.

The Kalahari San have known this for millennia and use it during famine and on long hunting trips. But it has only recently come to the attention of scientists and dieticians.

The "miracle molecule" is named P57 and works this way. Within the brain's hypothalamus are nerve cells that sense glucose sugar. After eating, blood sugar levels rise, and these cells start firing, informing the stomach



that it is fully supplied and that it's time to put away the knife and fork or chopsticks. P57 is approximately 10,000 times as active as glucose.

Kazamm! A super molecule!

After a few mouthfuls of hoodia flesh, the hypothalamus doesn't just think it's had a slap-up meal. It is convinced that it has gorged itself on a 12-course banquet worthy of Henry VIII. Twice.

The effects wear off roughly 24



hours after your hoodia starter and normal hunger kicks back in.

Several points to note.

One: If you want to shed a few pounds, don't immediately hop on ANA partner airline South African Airways for a hoodia binge. The slow-growing plant is extremely rare and legally protected with exports strictly controlled.

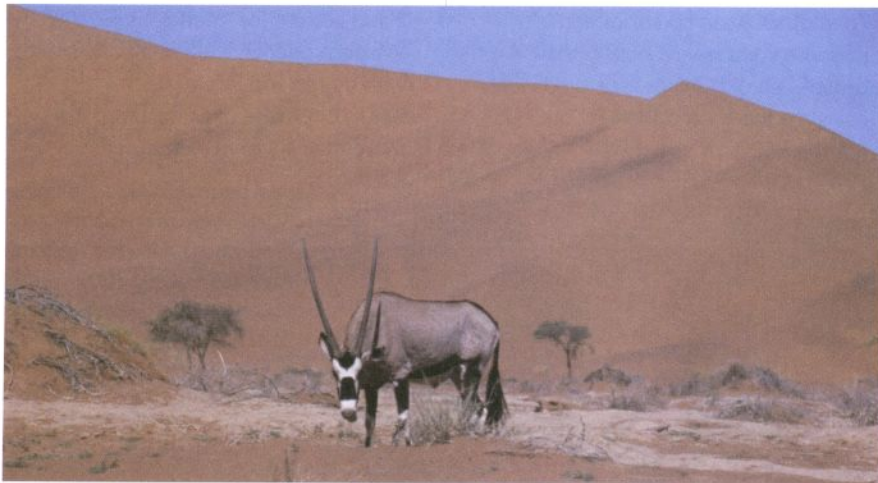
Two: Hoodia is already being marketed in various forms ranging from lollipops and protein shakes to fruit bars and coffee products. A certain degree of skepticism is advised. Many hoodia-based concoctions don't actually contain any hoodia.

Three: Be patient. Clinical trials, although already yielding some extraordinary success stories, won't be completed for several more years.

In the meantime, and while you are waiting, be advised that no visit to the southern Kalahari is a wasted visit. The area is extraordinarily beautiful, well endowed with wildlife: oryx, black-maned lions, herds of springbok, and much more.

And while you drive its red sand tracks and watch the world's largest desert go about its business, keep your eyes peeled for an unremarkable-looking little cactus.

Who knows? It might change the health of the world and the future of the bushmen on whose land it grows. **W**



Getting There: Hoodia only occurs in South Africa and neighboring countries. Access is possible via ANA Star Alliance partner airline South African Airways (SAA).