



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## Kenya

### Ol Donyo Lodge 2014

### Ride Information Sheet

Ol Donyo Lodge is a privately owned 20 bed lodge situated in southern Kenya, on the slopes of the Chyulu Hills, between Amboseli and Tsavo National Parks. It was originally built in 1986 as the home of Richard Bonham, one of Kenya's best-known safari guides and is in an enviable position, only 100kms from Mount Kilimanjaro. In recent years it has been redesigned and parts have been rebuilt and it is now one of the most original and luxurious lodges in the whole of East Africa. It also has exclusive access to over quarter of a million acres of pristine wilderness on the Mbirikani group ranch, land owned by the Masai that is unspoilt, untouristed, varied in terrain and landscape and home to numerous game species including the 'big five'.

**Dates** The lodge is open year round. Stays are organised to suit for anything from 2 to 14 nights and can be combined with a few nights 'fly' camping (generally not an option in April, May and November due to the possibility of rain). Please contact us to discuss your plans and to check availability.



**The Horses** There are currently about 25 horses, based in purpose built stables about ¼ mile from Ol Donyo Lodge. The horses are mostly between 14hh and 17hh with a few of 17hh plus and a couple of smaller ponies that are ideal for children. They are of varying breeds, including South African Boerperds, Thoroughbreds, Namibian Warmbloods, Somali cross ponies, TB shire crosses and a Percheron for heavier riders. All are very well-schooled, responsive and enjoyable to ride as well as sensible to handle, used to game and at home in the bush. Several are also natural jumpers and will enthusiastically clear obstacles of up to 4 foot - a great bonus on safari for experienced riders. The horses are ridden in English tack, usually snaffle bridles and either general-purpose English saddles (leather or good quality Wintecs), endurance saddles or a limited number of comfortable McClellan saddles ('cavalry type' saddles that are a cross between an English and Western style). Seat savers and saddle blankets with pockets in which to carry a water bottle (supplied) and small personal possessions (eg sun cream, small camera etc), are provided. Grooms look after the horses at the stables and on mobile safaris preparing them for rides.

**Riding** The amount of riding you do at Ol Donyo is entirely up to you. Riding is one of several optional activities but if you wish, you can spend 5 hours or so in the saddle each day, riding out from the lodge to explore and look for game. Rides from the lodge are either morning or afternoon and riding groups are small, generally a maximum of about 6 guests, accompanied by a guide and groom or back up rider. You can also usually ride with just your own private party if you prefer. The weight limit for riders staying at the lodge is 16stone (100kgs) for novice riders who do not wish to do much riding and 15 stone (95 kgs) for more advanced riders - if are close to these weights please contact us to check if suitable horses are available. You will be required to wear a hard hat when riding. Rides are normally lead by Kim or a local trained guide, accompanied by a back-up rider. Born in Nairobi, Kim spent his early years in Zambia before returning home to Kenya's Rift Valley. Having grown up locally and always with horses, the depth of his knowledge and enthusiasm is exceptional.



**Pace** As the riding from Ol Donyo is tailored to suit, the pace varies, although it always depends on the terrain and weather as well as riders' wishes and ability. The terrain allows good opportunities for long, fast canters and there is good going on the open, acacia studded plains and sandy tracks close to the lodge, but there are also places where the ground is quite rocky and the bush thick and here the pace has to be slower. You might also need to get off and lead your horse from time to time. Overall the pace is well varied and there are usually plenty of chances for long trots and canters and also for experienced riders some fun jumps over fallen trees and logs. Experienced riders might also be able to try the bigger purpose built cross-country course close to the lodge.

**Riding Experience** Riders of all standards can be catered for at Ol Donyo with riding hours and the pace tailored to suit - but because the area around the lodge is unfenced and open to big (and potentially dangerous) game including elephant and lion, if you wish to ride out of the arena, you should have some previous riding experience. As a minimum, to do more than just a short trial ride, you should be well balanced and secure in the saddle and able to control a well-schooled horse in open country at a walk, trot and steady canter. There is an enclosed sand school at the stables and the horses are usually tried here on a short assessment ride on your first day. Novice and young riders can also have basic lessons in the school, to gain confidence before venturing out. Safaris using 'fly' camps, which normally include longer hours, are for the more experienced rider. Children can ride out from the lodge - those who are very young or novice will usually have a short lesson, perhaps followed by a short ride out either on or off leading rein as necessary, whilst older children, who are strong, competent riders, can ride out for longer. On any riding safari, fitness is important and we strongly advise those who do not ride regularly at home to put in some concentrated practice and get used to time spent in the saddle, in the months beforehand.

**The Terrain** Ol Donyo Lodge is built on a hillside in the Chyulus with views out over the bush and a waterhole to wide, grassy plains beyond. As they rise up, the slopes of the Chyulus are dotted with thick acacia woodland and jutting rocky 'Kopjes' (small hills); higher still, the vegetation changes to open grassland and finally to evergreen, jungle-like, mist forest. The hills, which run for 40 miles and rise to over 7000 feet, consist of a series of volcanic craters **cont. over**

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**The Terrain** cont with peaks covered in mist forest that is unique to the area. The going underfoot varies, ranging from dry savannah plains, gentle grassy slopes and rough paths winding around the hillsides, to soft peaty tracks through shady forest. There are many wonderful views and some sharp ascents and descents where the horses need to be lead over rough ground. Kilimanjaro stands as a back-drop for all safaris.



**Accommodation** Originally built as a private house in 1986 by Richard Bonham and added to over the years to become a luxury safari lodge, the lodge has recently undergone a complete overhaul, and was rebuilt in 2008. It is now one of the most original and luxurious guest lodges in East Africa. The main lodge building, which combines polished stone floors with arched doorways and heavy wood doors under a high thatched roof, consists of a huge living and dining area. The dining area, with enormous teak dining table (that can be reconfigured and split to seat smaller groups) is to one side of the arched entrance and the other is set up as a sitting and relaxing area with bar, fireplaces, squashy sofas and groups of comfortable armchairs. The whole is stylishly decorated in earthy tones, with finishing touches such as bronze statues, huge paintings and iron chandeliers. There is also a second lovely dining area, where breakfast and lunch are often served, outside under the shade of an acacia tree. This overlooks a stone terrace and an 'infinity' swimming pool with fantastic views. A network of stone paths running in different directions from the main lodge link the reception areas to six individually designed guest villas, that house ten separate guest suites. The villas are wonderfully spacious, very well situated to ensure privacy and seclusion and beautifully furnished. They include a mix of contemporary and traditionally styled fittings and furnishings, are modern yet retain a sense of the African bush. The villas are all raised on stilts, with high thatch roofs and glass or open fronts to make the most of magnificent views out over the plains to Mount Kilimanjaro. Each suite has a bedroom, a large bathroom with indoor and also beautifully designed outdoor shower, double washbasins and flush loo, and a veranda, some also have their own sitting room. A winding stone staircase from the veranda leads to a flat rooftop terrace from which you can enjoy superb views and the marvellous sense of space and some have a built-in stone platform bed which can be made up, on request, so you can spend a romantic night under the stars in complete safety. All but two suites have their own private plunge pool and four of the villas contain two separate two bedded suites so are perfect for families or a small group of friends, whilst also being versatile enough in design to allow privacy if used by two separate couples. Electricity at Ol Donyo Lodge is generated by solar power and every extra you can think of - thick soft towels, torches (wind-up in keeping with the lodge's ecological aims), locally made soap, shower gels and shampoo in the bathrooms - are included. Access to the lodge is by air charter or scheduled Safarilink flight taking about an hour from Nairobi followed by a 15 to 20 minute game drive from the local airstrip.



**Meals** Meals at Ol Donyo Lodge are delicious and plentiful. Ingredients are always fresh and bread is baked every day. Days usually start with a good breakfast and your choice of fruit, perhaps porridge, toast and a full cooked breakfast for those who wish. Alternatively you may be woken with tea, coffee and biscuits brought to your room, then go on an early morning ride or game drive, stopping half way for a delicious breakfast cooked and served at tables set up out in the bush. Lunch might be a picnic out riding or served at the lodge on your return. If a picnic, it is substantial, often with various salads and cold meat as well as bread, fruit, biscuits and hot and cold drinks. After riding or a late afternoon game activity, evening drinks are accompanied by appetising snacks and dinner is three courses served by candlelight. Meals at the lodge may be eaten as a group at a large table in the main dining area or by the swimming pool, but if you wish there is always the option of a private dinner for two or for your group, in one of the dining areas or on the veranda by your room. There is a varied bar and a selection of spirits, wine, beer and soft drinks (with plenty of ice) are all included.



**Conservation** The lodge has an exclusive concession over about 350,000 acres of Masai owned land. This area, which surrounds Ol Donyo Lodge and stretches into the Chyulus, is part of the Amboseli eco-system and is home to the 'big five' - elephant, rhino, lion, leopard and buffalo. Richard is founder and chairman of the Maasailand Preservation Trust, one of the most comprehensive community outreach programmes in Africa. It manages a partnership between the Lodge and the Mbirikani Masai people and has pioneered and implemented several initiatives in the area, including the Predator Compensation Fund (PCF) which has stopped the retaliatory killing of lions and has now been implemented throughout the entire region, including Amboseli National Park. The Trust also deploys over 100 game scouts to patrol and protect elephant many of which have tusks of 80 to 100 lbs. The lodge and Trust are in the final stage of negotiations for a larger wildlife conservancy of around 23,000 acres of Masai owned land. This will greatly enhance the security of game in the area, providing vital corridors for migration routes, whilst also benefiting the local community which will be paid lease fees directly out of lodge revenue. As well as benefiting wildlife, Ol Donyo Lodge has provided the local Masai with schools, educating students through to university level, has helped set up an effective health programme, has initiated water projects, women's projects and continues to be heavily involved in many ongoing programmes that aim to assist the local people.

**Game** There are 38 recorded species of large mammal, including the 'Big Five', in the area around Ol Donyo Lodge, and when staying at the lodge you can normally expect to see elephant (including some of the big Amboseli bulls, with their enormous tusks, that frequent the area), giraffe, zebra and many species of antelope including eland, oryx, gerenuk, wildebeest, Thompson's and Grant's Gazelle, reedbuck and duiker. You may also see rarer antelope such as kudu, cats such as cheetah, lion and leopard, other predators such as hyena and jackal and also ostrich, bat-eared fox and a huge variety of wonderful birds, there are 300 recorded bird species. There are also black rhino in the Chyulus and although water is very limited, buffalo are quite often seen in the mist forest. The limited water in the hills means the game is more prolific in the low country and it is also often on the move from its water sources to the good grazing in the hills - and with waterholes just outside the lodge fed by excess water from showers, there is often very good game viewing from the comfort of the lodge itself.

**Safety** Rides are lead by an experienced guide, accompanied by a groom / back up rider. The guide carries a hand held radio for communication with the lodge (a mobile 'phone is also carried although these only work at certain points in the Chyulus) and a satellite 'phone is carried on mobile safaris. A first aid kit is taken in saddle-bags, with a more comprehensive kit kept at the lodge. Flying Doctor air ambulance cover is recommended for all guests (as well as standard travel insurance) in case of an emergency - this is available for a small extra charge and is normally automatically included in longer mobile safaris.

**Other activities** Ol Donyo Lodge is a wonderful place for non-riders as well as riders and is an ideal safari choice for a mixed group of riders and non-riders, as well as couples and families with children. It is in a glorious, secluded position and as well as riding, game drives (both day and night drives with a spot light) and walks with an experienced guide and local trackers are always available. There are mountain bikes, with bicycle rides on the plains another optional activity or you can visit the lodge's anti-poaching bloodhounds and find out how they track by becoming a 'poacher on the run' one morning if you wish. A 'Log Jam' hide allows extraordinarily close up viewing of game visiting the lodge waterhole and picnics, barbecues, visits to a Masai village ("manyatta") and to community / conservation projects are often organised, as well as day trips to Amboseli or Tsavo National Parks (there is an extra charge for these). Bird shooting (extra charge) can be arranged on request at certain times of year. Massage and pedicures are on offer at the lodge (extra charge) and there are experienced (although not professionally qualified) nannies for babysitting if required.



**Weather and Seasons** Daytime temperatures in the area around Ol Donyo Lodge are generally very pleasant for riding at around 20 to 25 degrees Centigrade year round. The wet seasons (as in the whole of East Africa) are late March to May when there may be intermittent downpours with sunshine in between, and November / early to mid December when there may be short, but sometimes heavy, bursts of rain. Ol Donyo is at about 5000 feet and the Chyulus rise up to about 7000 feet and it can be quite cold during the rains (or at any time of year if it clouds over) due to the altitude. It is usually hottest in late March and October when it can reach 30°C and there is often a breeze on the plains so it never really gets too hot. June and July are the coolest months averaging around 20°C, although nights can be cool year round, especially in the hills.

**What to bring** We will send you a list with suggestions of what to bring when your booking is confirmed.

### **Example itinerary Ol Donyo Lodge - 6 night stay**

[Flight to Nairobi (eg British Airways departing London Heathrow at about 10.20 and arriving Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi at 20.45. Transfer to hotel and overnight in Nairobi - OR overnight Kenyan Airways flight to Nairobi JKIA and private charter flight JKIA or Wilson domestic airport to Chyulu airstrip)]

**Day 1** - [You will be collected from your hotel in Nairobi and transferred to the domestic Wilson airport for the scheduled safari-link flight to the Chyulu Hills]. After a flight of about 50 minutes, arrive at the Chyulu airstrip. Met and driven about 20 minutes by game drive vehicle, to the lodge or to the first nights campsite. Shown to your rooms and settle in, then meet the managers of the lodge and / or Kim who looks after the horses, over lunch by the swimming pool. Lunch and a siesta before a short drive to the stables to meet the horses. A short assessment ride and a chance to ride out for a first view of the area. Dinner and overnight Ol Donyo Lodge. (L,D)



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**Day 2** - An early wake up call with tea or coffee brought to your room and then a short drive to the stables. Mount up and ride out to explore the area around the lodge, stopping for a delicious bush breakfast out riding. Return to the lodge mid-morning and cool off with a dip in your private plunge pool or for a swim in the main pool before lunch. Relax by the pool or on your veranda before meeting up at about 4pm for tea. Then your choice of an evening ride, game drive or guided walk. Dinner and overnight Ol Donyo Lodge. (B,L,D)

**Days 3 to 6** - Four full days at Ol Donyo Lodge with a choice of activities that can include morning or afternoon rides, game drives and guided walks. You can also try a mountain bike, visit a Masai manyatta or join one of the conservation initiatives such as the collared lion tracking project. Guided day trips to Amboseli National Park are another option - or simply relax and enjoy the wonderful surroundings. Dinner and four nights Ol Donyo Lodge. (B,L,D)

**Day 7** - Breakfast and depart by private charter or safari link scheduled flight to Nairobi, Wilson airport. Transfer to the international airport for your onward journey. (B)



#### **RATES 2014:**

**Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in US\$. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the US\$/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.**

**Rates are per person, are seasonal and assume twin shared accommodation**

**Green season** (March, April, May & November and 1st to 19th December):

Standard Cottages US\$ 730 per person per night; single supplement US\$ 205 per night

Pool Cottages US\$ 935 per person per night; single supplement US\$ 273 per night

Children 5-15 years, sharing pool cottage: US\$ 468 per child per night

**Regular season** (5th January to 28th February):

Standard Cottages US\$ 820 per person per night; single supplement US\$ 235 per night

Pool Cottages US\$ 1055 per person per night; single supplement US\$ 313 per night

Children 5-15 years, sharing pool cottage: US\$ 528 per child per night

**High season** (June & October):

Standard Cottages US\$ 883 per person per night; single supplement US\$ 256 per night

Pool Cottages US\$ 1141 per person per night; single supplement US\$ 341 per night

Children 5-15 years, sharing pool cottage: US\$ 571 per child per night

**Premium season** (July, August, September and 20th December to 4th January 2014):

Standard Cottages US\$ 1003 per person per night; single supplement US\$ 423 per night

Pool Cottages US\$ 1297 per person per night; single supplement US\$ 563 per night

Children 5-15 years, sharing pool cottage: US\$ 649 per child per night

**Rates INCLUDE:** All riding, guided walks and local game drives, guiding and equipment, twin accommodation (single rooms only if paying supplement or if otherwise available), Conservancy fees, meals, drinks (except champagne, premium spirits and cellar wines) and laundry service.

**Rates EXCLUDE:** International flights to Nairobi and taxes, local departure taxes, transfers between Nairobi and the lodge, personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), visa fees, personal items such as telephone calls etc, certain activities (eg mobile camps, Amboseli Park Fees and day trips to Amboseli, contribution to bloodhounds, Lion Collar / monitoring project or to local Masai if visiting manyatta, massages and pedicures, exclusive use of vehicles (subject to availability) and any tips you may wish to leave.



**Single Supplements:** The single supplement is usually payable if you are travelling alone unless there is someone prepared to share a twin suite with you, although it is waived in some cases, if bookings allow. Please contact us to check.

**Travel arrangements / Flights** - The closest international airport to Ol Donyo Lodge is Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta. Kenya Airways has direct overnight flights from London to Nairobi every day, departing London in the evening and arriving NBO early the next day and both Kenya Airways and British Airways have day flights every day, arriving NBO in the evening. Several other airlines such as Air France and KLM also have flights via Europe although we recommend a direct flight where possible to minimize the risk of delays and missed connections. Airfares vary with the airline and season but expect to pay around £600 to £800 per person for an economy return. **If you would like a quote for flights, advice or to book please contact us (our ATOL number for flight booking is ATOL 6213).** We can also book onward transfers, any extra nights accommodation you may require in Nairobi and additional activities or stays on the coast or at another safari lodge. There are lots of wonderful options and we would be delighted to advise.

Transfers between Nairobi and Ol Donyo Lodge are by private charter flight, by scheduled Safarilink flight and onward vehicle transfer or by private vehicle. Rates depend on the method of transfer, the number in your group and the dates. Please contact us ask for a quote. By way of example (NB charter rates vary from time to time and may increase with fuel costs etc.) a one way transfer between Nairobi and Ol Donyo Lodge in a Cessna 206 charter plane seating up to 4 guests is approximately US \$1400 for the plane. A smaller Cessna 182 may also be available at a lower cost. Scheduled safari link flights are approximately US\$300 per person Nairobi / Ol Donyo Lodge return, including taxes.

**General visa and health information** (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking.)

**Visas** As of 1st March 2001, British Passport holders DO require a visa to visit Kenya as a tourist. The fee for a single entry visa, valid for 3 months from the date of issue, is currently £30. If bought on arrival in Kenya the fee is US\$50 (cash only).

**Health** The Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London recommends that you are up to date with inoculations against **Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria and Hepatitis A**. It also recommends you are up to date with **Yellow Fever** (a booster is needed after 10 years) and that you carry a valid yellow fever certificate with you - you may be required to show this when entering Kenya (generally only if entering from another tropical country) because of an episode of transmission of Yellow Fever in Kenya during the last five years. Rabies, Cholera and Typhoid may also be recommended in certain situations. You will also be advised to take **anti-Malaria** tablets - you should consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice about this.

**DRAFT 18/12/13**