



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## BOTSWANA, OKAVANGO DELTA 2025

### AFRICAN HORSEBACK SAFARIS (MACATOO CAMP)

#### RIDE INFORMATION

We offer three different horse safari options in Botswana's Okavango Delta region. This information relates to safaris run by African Horseback Safaris from Macatoo Camp. Please see separate details of our other trips. The main joy of all the safaris is riding good horses in a superb wilderness area with a varied, changing landscape and wonderful variety of game. Macatoo's focus is on exciting, but not overly strenuous, safaris, with riding that ranges from heart-thumpingly exhilarating, cantering through floodwater alongside galloping giraffe and lechwe - to serenely peaceful, quietly watching game as it grazes in the evening light. There are also game drives, guided walks and (water allowing) boat trips, plenty of time to relax and for sociable al-fresco meals, all from a very comfortable, welcoming and convivial camp. A wonderful way to experience one of Africa's finest game viewing areas.



#### OVERVIEW OF THE DELTA

The Okavango Delta region covers close to 15,000 square kilometres. Roughly one third, the central and eastern side stretching to Chobe National Park, has been designated a protected area, the Moremi Game Reserve. The rest is sub-divided into huge unfenced private wildlife concessions, all very carefully monitored and managed with strict guest quotas to help protect and preserve the natural environment for wildlife. The terrain over the whole region varies from the permanent water of the Okavango River which joins the Delta to its northwest, papyrus swamps, reed beds and flat, open floodplain to thickly wooded date palm islands, riverine woodland and forests of mopane trees. Depending on the time of year, on rain that has fallen locally and in the River's main catchment area, the Angolan Highlands, 500 kms to the north, the floodplains (which look rather like a grassy fairway on a golf course when not flooded) may be covered with a layer of surface water ranging from a few inches to several feet deep in places. When rain in Angola flows into the Okavango River as it journeys south, the river gradually swells; then as it meets the dry Kalahari basin, it divides like fingers on a hand into narrower waterways, spreading, saturating and flooding out over once-dry grassland to form marshy swamp and water meadow. The floods tend to go in cycles, a number of years of high water followed by a number of years of low. Usually the new water arrives in the main Delta region between late March and July each year, and subsides from August to October.

## DATES

Safaris at Macatoo can be arranged for up to 10 (or more) nights year round (although the camp sometimes closes in February). Dates are flexible - the minimum stay is 3 nights but we recommend 6 or 7 between March and October and 5 at other times to ensure you experience the best of the Delta. For a longer trip, safaris that combine Macatoo Camp with riding in the Limpopo Valley in south east Botswana ('Best of Botswana') or in the Kalahari Desert are excellent options to consider. To check availability please contact us at Ride World Wide.

## HORSES

There are about 50 horses at Macatoo, all between about 14hh and 17.2hh. They include South African Boerperd crosses, Namibian Hanoverians, Arabs, TBs and Arab crosses as well as one or two weight carrying Percheron crosses. They are much loved, well mannered, responsive and forward going to ride, whilst also being sensible to handle, used to game and at home in the bush making hours in the saddle a real pleasure. Grooms are on hand at all times looking after the horses at camp.



## TACK

Tack is English style, English GP Wintec saddles (which cope well in wet conditions) with a few (limited) 'Maclellan' saddles (similar to a western) available on request. Saddle bags are provided if required.

## RIDING

You can ride for up to about 6 hours a day at Macatoo, usually around 3 or 4 hours in the morning, broken up with refreshment stops, and 1 ½ to 2 hours in the late afternoon, although riding hours may vary with game movements, local weather and guest wishes. Rides are limited to a maximum of 8 guests and there are usually two riding groups, with riders split according to ability and wishes. Each ride is accompanied by a qualified guide and a back-up / support rider, often with an additional 'look out' riding with the group to spot game.

## WEIGHT LIMIT

The weight limit is 95kgs (15 stone).

## PACE

Riding is at a medium and well varied pace overall. Morning rides usually include lots of long and exhilarating trots and canters across open floodplain or through shallow flood-water. Evening rides, when the light is excellent for photography, are usually at a slower, more relaxed pace, generally a walk and trot. When the flood is highest, you may find your horse wading or possibly swimming from island to island, but even at high flood the going around the edge of the islands is normally good to firm so there are usually plenty of chance for long trots and canters.

## RIDING EXPERIENCE

To ride from Macatoo you must be a reasonably competent rider as you will be riding in an open, unfenced area, where there is big (and potentially dangerous) game, including elephant and lion. Although you don't have to be an expert over jumps or in competition, you should be comfortable, confident and in control on a horse at all paces (including long trots and fast canters) and used to riding in open country, over varied terrain with a group of horses.

**cont.**



## RIDING EXPERIENCE cont.

There is a good selection of responsive and well schooled horses but you should be balanced, relaxed and secure in the saddle so you are able to stay on if your horse reacts suddenly, or needs to move quickly out of trouble. Children over 12 yrs old who are strong, competent riders may ride at Macatoo but this is entirely at the camp's discretion, on a case-by-case basis. To ensure sufficient riding ability, an instructor's or Pony Club certificate might be required. At any age you will enjoy your safari much more if you are riding fit.

## TERRAIN

Macatoo is in the south west Delta. The area has plenty of dry grassland outside the main flood period but also receives a reliable, often high, annual flood. When floodwater is at its peak (in recent years May, June and July), you may find your horse wading shoulder high, swimming across a lagoon or skirting dry islands of mopane scrub and date palms surrounded by seasonal water. As water levels recede, expanses of shallow floodplain, then dry grassland open up between the islands and the landscape is a patchwork of savannah grassland dotted with smaller permanent lagoons, waterholes and raised islands of date palms, mopane scrub and thicker woodland.



## GAME

The Delta has huge numbers of game year round and is a gloriously wild, unfenced and unspoiled, environment for game viewing. A large population of elephant roam through the area, along with large herds (sometimes several thousand) of buffalo. Antelope such as the characteristic water antelope - red lechwe - also sable, roan and shy sitatunga - are permanent residents; water lovers such as hippo and crocodile move around locally as water levels rise and fall. Unlike in East Africa, there is no single mass-herd migration and game such as zebra, wildebeest, impala and giraffe migrate in mid-sized herds, social or family groups to and from the drier Kalahari borders as water levels change. Warthog, tsessebe and kudu travel widely through the area as do lion, spotted hyena, leopard and wild dog. During any safari in the Delta you can usually expect to see good numbers of elephant, buffalo, zebra, wildebeest, many species of antelope such as impala, kudu, roan, reedbuck, lechwe and tsessebe, giraffe and also crocodiles, monkeys, baboons and warthogs. If you are lucky you may see, hyena, lion, leopard, cheetah and wild dog. A small number of white rhino have been successfully reintroduced in the last few years, sightings are rare but definitely possible! The Delta is famous for its birdlife with over 400 recorded species - fish eagles, cranes, storks, vultures, kingfishers, ostrich, jacanas, bee eaters and many more. Generally it is considered one of the world's finest game viewing areas both because of the density and variety of game but also because it is such an unspoilt pristine environment for wildlife. However it is important to remember that animals are free to roam across a vast, unfenced area, there may be more of one species than another in a particular place at a particular time and environmental factors such as long grass or high water can (and do) effect game viewing. If game takes cover in long grass, mopane scrub or amongst date palms on the islands, it can be hard to spot or follow safely - although with access to vehicles and boats as well as horses, guests at Macatoo usually have fantastic game viewing. Also as the area is private, a wonderfully exclusive experience, uninterrupted by other visitors or game viewing vehicles, is guaranteed.

## NON RIDERS

Non-riders are welcome at Macatoo, where there are vehicles and (subject to water levels) boats available as well as horses. Riders are also always welcome to take time away from the saddle to enjoy these if they wish. Game drives are a wonderful opportunity to track and photograph 'big' game (and allow you to get closer to big cats, buffalo and elephant than your horse would be comfortable with). They also often provide the best chance of seeing predators on the move. The arrival of the floods, usually around May, brings with it the unique chance to explore lagoons and serene waterways by motorboat or mokoro canoe and to fish (from a boat or land) - always popular with both riding and non-riding guests. Casting from a beautiful fishing spot, between water lilies and wallowing hippo, the challenge is not only to get a fish to bite, but to land it before it is snatched from the line by a swooping fish eagle!

## GUIDES & STAFF

John Sobey the English managing director of African Horseback Safaris has been based in Botswana for over 20 years. Now dividing his time between the camp, Maun and the UK, he runs a dedicated and loyal team of staff, several of whom who have been at Macatoo for many years. Rides are lead by licensed local guides - Bongwe has been a lead guide for over 15 years and has a well-deserved fan base - with 3 lead guides usually in camp at any time. A dedicated camp manager is in camp to ensure everything runs smoothly (Katie Hodges has been excellent in this role for several years) and the Maun office is organised with extreme efficiency by Riana Fourie. The overall emphasis is on efficient, friendly service and this runs through the whole team.

## ACCOMMODATION

Macatoo tented camp, was especially built as the safari base in 1999. It has been extensively upgraded and refurbished over the years but remains a small and intimate camp, which is very comfortable but still authentic and unpretentious. The camp sleeps a maximum of 16 guests (normally limited to 12 at any one time, but with 8 twin / double tents so those wanting singles can be accommodated) and is wonderfully situated on a palm island with magnificent views over a large floodplain. Accommodation is in spacious, walk-in twin or double bedded safari tents, each with attached shower room with hot shower and flush loo. Tents are well situated for privacy, are raised on teak decking and each has its own private veranda, with chairs from which to enjoy the view. They also have proper beds with comfortable mattresses, cotton sheets and duvets, solar powered electric lights, wardrobes with hanging space for clothes and bedside tables. There is a lovely honeymoon tent, complete with bath on larger private veranda, where couples can also have a special private dinner and a 'family and friends suite', two tents linked by a walkway above ground for direct, easy access between parents and children. The camp has a spacious central mess tent with sofas to relax on, a plunge pool with sun beds, dinner is served at a candlelit table under the stars and the fire-pit in front of the mess tent is a great place to gather for safari stories. Service is always excellent - from the moment you are woken with tea or coffee brought to your tent, to the laundry service and smiling tent ladies, the whole ethos is one where nothing is too much trouble, and everything is a pleasure. Rates assume twin shared accommodation. There is one single tent which can be booked without a supplement (available on a first come first served basis) but otherwise a single supplement is charged if you are not prepared to share a tent with another guest (of the same sex) if requested (if you book alone, you will only be asked to share if numbers / mix of guests requires). Please note that the camp is remote, there is no mobile phone signal and no quest wi-fi.



## MEALS

You will be extremely well fed at Macatoo with three delicious meals a day and snacks in between. Mornings start early with fresh coffee or tea brought to your tent, then a light breakfast of homemade toast, muesli or fruit around the fire setting you up for an early ride out at about 6.30am. There will be a mouth-watering brunch / lunch late morning and in the evening, a three course dinner, with carefully chosen South African wines, **cont.**

## MEALS cont.

served by candlelight at a beautifully laid table under the stars or in the dining tent. There is always plenty of freshly baked bread, vegetables and salads and those with special diets are well catered for (although please let us know in advance). Drinks are kept chilled with a selection of wine, beer, spirits and soft drinks all included.

## SAFETY

There will be an introductory talk on the safari, including safety in camp and when riding, on arrival. Each ride is lead by a licensed and qualified guide equipped with a rifle and accompanied by a back-up rider. A first aid kit is carried when riding and there is a comprehensive medical kit in the camp. Guides have hand held radios to keep in contact with the camp / other guides and there is a satellite 'phone in camp for emergencies. Emergency medical evacuation cover is included (your own personal medical and travel insurance is also compulsory)

## WEATHER

Summer months in the Delta are September to April and it is generally hottest from October to February, with midday temperatures up to about 38 or 40°C. The area experiences summer rain and the rainy season is usually December to February although it can rain in October and November. The coolest winter months, when it is also dry (no rain) are May to August with maximum midday temperatures about 28°C. During these months, and in early September, it can be quite cold in the early mornings and evenings (dropping to about 4 or 5°C), but even at the coldest times of year, days are normally sunny and warm. Confusing to many guests, the dry winter months are when the Delta has its seasonal flood - caused when rain that has fallen a few months before in the Angolan Highlands, flows down the Okavango River causing the river to flood out over the Delta region.

## WHAT TO BRING

We will send a list of what to bring when you book.

## ITINERARY

Safaris are very individualised, inspired by the movement of game, weather and guest wishes. The following is an example itinerary for a 7 night stay:

**Day 1** After a charter flight of about 25 minutes from Maun (can be longer if collecting other passengers), a wonderful opportunity to see the entire Delta and game from the air, land amongst the floodplains on the airstrip closest to camp. Met by an open topped 4x4 game drive vehicle and driven (or, if water levels require, taken by boat) to Macatoo camp, fording rivers, crossing plains and watching game as you go. The drive usually takes around 45 minutes depending on stops and game along the way. Arrive at camp to a warm welcome and after being shown to your tent, time to settle before a short introductory talk over tea. Then, time allowing, meet the horses and a late afternoon ride to try them and for a first view of the area. Dinner and night in camp. (D)



**Day 2** Woken with tea and coffee brought to your tent, a quick breakfast of homemade toast, fruit or muesli before an early ride out to explore. Perhaps head west from camp, riding across open floodplain where you may see wildebeest, zebra and antelope or, if the water is high, wade to the islands, watching buffalo or elephant wallowing in the shallows - your safari is inspired by whatever is out there. There'll be a chance to try your horse at all paces and after an exhilarating morning, head back to camp for a delicious open air lunch with your guides. Relax in camp in the afternoon, then after a cup of tea and homemade cake, ride out again until sunset, one of the best times for game viewing. The evening ride is deliberately slower-paced and a good opportunity to ask questions and take photographs. Leopard sightings are not infrequent, the bird-life is some of the best in the world and towards sunset you can often watch elephant or hippo at the water's edge. Perhaps enjoy a sundowner in the bush, before riding back to camp to freshen up. Drinks around the fire and a well earned dinner...not always in the same place! (B,L,D)

## ITINERARY cont.

**Day 3** After morning tea, coffee and a light breakfast, ride out early again, perhaps heading towards year-round lagoons to watch big herds of red lechwe, a rare semi-aquatic antelope, splashing through the water. Non-riders might choose to join a guided walk or game drive before meeting up for lunch in the bush, where camp staff will have set up a table in the shade. After lunch, back to camp by a different route and a dip in the plunge pool. A siesta beckons during the hottest part of the day, then a late afternoon ride or game drive exploring the lower floodplains where elephant often gather at a deep pool. Return to base at sun set for hot showers, drinks around the fire and dinner. (B,L,D)

**Day 4** Different country today as you ride through a sea of bushman grass to plains dotted with fig trees, Camelthorn and Mopane woods that are ideal cover for giraffe, kudu and the shy browsing antelope. The route home opens out again, wide floodplains are perfect for a long, exciting canter, often disturbing troops of baboons as you pass. Lunch at camp and a relaxing afternoon on your veranda with a book or by the plunge pool. A mid-afternoon cup of tea then a game drive, taking a spot light to look out for leopard, hyena, bushbabies and other nocturnal game as the sun sets. Dinner and night in camp. (B,L,D)

**Day 5** A long morning ride deeper into the heart of the Delta, along some of the high palm islands which offer great sweeping views of the plains. In the afternoon, a ride through changing country in a new area where there is a noticeable difference in game, might end at Macatoo's magical tree house for sundowners before returning to camp by vehicle. Dinner and night in camp. (B,L,D)



**Day 6** Hopefully by now, you will have seen lots of wildlife, and riding alongside moving giraffe, antelope and zebras will have become a thrilling, almost daily activity. Make the most of lunch out in the bush and savour the sights and sounds around you. Later in the afternoon, another ride or the option of a mokoro or boat trip, perhaps fishing for Okavango bream from the boat or a night drive with spotlight. Dinner and night in camp. (B,L,D)

**Day 7** Your last full day's riding sees you cantering across shallow flood plain, admiring deep pools scattered with lilies where Cape buffalo often gather in large numbers (anything between a dozen and two thousand individuals) - you may have to creep up on them using the islands as cover. In the evening, a last quiet ride with memorable smells of wild sage and the warm African dust as the sun goes down. A farewell dinner, perhaps extra-memorable by its surprise location... (B,L,D)

**Day 8** A last early morning ride for your final fill of memorable Delta views and exhilarating canters. Return to camp in time to freshen up before your transfer to the airstrip to meet the charter plane that will fly you back to Maun. (B)



## DATES & RATES 2025

Rates are per person per night and depend on the season. For 2025 there are three seasons - Standard, Mid and Peak. Rates quoted **INCLUDE** twin accommodation, riding and other safari activities, Land Board concession fees, taxes, all house drinks and meals but **EXCLUDE** air charters between Maun and the camp (see below):

**Standard Season - January, February, March & December:**

**Rate:** £625 per person per night sharing

**Mid Season - April, May, 1st to 14th June & 15th October to 30th November:**

**Rate:** £820 per person per night sharing

**Peak Season - 15th to 30th June, July, August, September & 1st to 14th October:**

**Rate:** £1005 per person per night sharing

Honeymoon tent supplement - £190 per couple per night

**Group Rates** Group discounts are available (usually for 6 or more guests) - **please ask.**

**Non-riders** 10% discount on daily safari rates; 50% discount for non-riding children under 12.

\*A 5% discount on daily rates is offered to anyone re-booking a safari at Macatoo within 12 months of a previous visit (discount applies to the subsequent trip)\*.

**Dates** Start dates and safari duration is flexible. Minimum stay is 3 nights; at least 5 and ideally 7 nights is recommended to get the most from your visit; maximum suggested stay is 10 nights.



**Air charters** Safari meeting point is Maun in Botswana. Rates above **EXCLUDE** transfers from Maun to the camp and you need to **ADD** the cost of these. Transfers are by air charter (flying time about 25 minutes, although stops may be added which increase this) to the airstrip closest to camp followed by a game drive (or depending on water level boat trip).

**2025 charter rates are £300 per person each way (£600 return) Maun / Macatoo.**

\*NOTE that for a stay of 7 nights or more we offer a 50% discount on air charters from Maun; for a stay of 10 nights, the air-charter between Maun and the camp is **FREE** of charge.\*

You can also fly by charter between the camp and Kasane on the Botswana side of the Botswana / Zimbabwe border (about 1 ½ hours flight) a good option if you are visiting Victoria Falls.

**2025 charter rate Macatoo / Kasane is £420 per person one-way.**

**Please note that all** charter rates are subject to variation with increases in fuel costs and can change at short notice so please confirm when you book.

**\*\*Example inclusive safari rates for 2025\*\***

**7 night safari Peak season**, including charters Maun / Macatoo, is £7335 per person;

**7 night safari Mid season**, including charters Maun / Macatoo, is £6040 per person;

**7 night safari Standard season**, including charters Maun / Macatoo, is £4675 per person;

Rates above **INCLUDE** all riding and other activities such as bird walks and game drives, guiding and equipment (activities on a shared basis), accommodation in twin bedded safari tents, all meals, house drinks (including alcohol except premium wines and champagne), Concession fees, government taxes, laundry and ironing service and emergency Medivac cover.

They **EXCLUDE** international flights to Maun and taxes, personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), any visa fees, special activities such as game viewing by helicopter or plane, supplements for private guiding, champagnes and premium wines, personal items such as shopping, satellite telephone calls etc and any tips you wish to leave the staff.

## DATES & RATES cont.

**Single accommodation** Rates above assume twin shared accommodation. If you are booking alone and are NOT prepared to share with another guest of the same sex there is **one single tent**, bookable on a 'first come, first served' basis for single travellers. If this is not available and you are not prepared to share, a supplement is charged to guarantee a single tent. This is £312 per night Standard season; £410 per night Mid season and £502 per night Peak season (NB **not** compulsory for single bookings - only charged if you are not prepared to share if asked and wish to guarantee a single tent.) **Please also note** that charter rates are based on at least 2 people travelling together and there *may* be a 50% supplement on charter fares for solo travellers - please check when you book.

## FLIGHTS AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

Maun is the safari meeting place. The best way to travel from London is generally via Johannesburg in South Africa - there are no direct flights London to Maun. You can also fly to Maun via Windhoek in Namibia, Harare in Zimbabwe and Gaborone in Botswana, but Johannesburg is usually the most convenient connection point.

Travelling from London, you should plan to take an overnight flight to Johannesburg (British Airways and Virgin fly direct London to Johannesburg every day, leaving London at about 19.00 / 21.00 and arriving JHB at about 07.00 / 09.00). Once in Johannesburg, you need to change planes and take an Air Botswana or South African Airlink flight to Maun. These are daily with one (occasionally two) morning departures Johannesburg to Maun taking around 1 hr 40 mins. Due to connection times, to avoid an overnight stay in Johannesburg, British Airways are usually the best international carrier to use with **the earlier flight recommended** on the outward journey. On the return, daily flights from Maun to Johannesburg will connect with overnight return flights to London.

**Please call us for more flight information, a quote for a flight inclusive holiday or if you would like us to book your flights. Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213**

## GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

(NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking)

**Visas** If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting Botswana for a holiday only and staying less than 30 days you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.

If you plan to fly via South Africa please note that there are special requirements for those travelling with children, requiring provision of birth certificates and other documents, which are strictly enforced, particularly if only one parent is accompanying.

**Health** No inoculations are legally required for Botswana but Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid and Hepatitis A are recommended and you will also be advised to take malaria precautions and anti-Malaria tablets - you should consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice. **(DRAFT 10/08/2024)**

