



RIDE WORLD WIDE

SOUTH AFRICA

HORIZON HORSEBACK ADVENTURES 2025

RIDE INFORMATION

Horizon Horseback Adventures is in the Waterberg in South Africa's northern Limpopo province (formerly the Northern Transvaal). Part of a property that was one of South Africa's most successful working cattle ranches, Horizon is now a focused centre for riding holidays. This Information Sheet covers holidays at the main Horizon base - for details of Horizon's two centre African Explorer Safaris and Botswana Tuli Safaris please see our separate Information Sheets. A holiday at Horizon is a fantastic choice for riders looking for relaxation, variety and flexibility as well as a chance, as they say, to 'wallow in horses'. The atmosphere is always open and friendly, somewhere you can feel totally relaxed and at ease, but where generous service and comfort are a matter of course. With a herd of over 100 horses on your doorstep, horses that live a natural, free roaming life in acres of unrefined bush and chances to ride out, enjoying the scenery (the Waterberg, which neighbours the Drakensberg, is a UNESCO biosphere reserve), view and track plains game, play polocrosse or perhaps try a few cross-country jumps, there is masses to keep any horse-lover happy. Non-riders too can relax and enjoy welcome 'time-out' from everyday life in this peaceful corner of South Africa, with lots of chances to walk, a good sized swimming pool, opportunities to visit neighbouring game reserves, for cycling, zip wires and to learn about local life in South Africa. Laura and Shane Dowinton, who manage Horizon, and their staff are easy going and friendly, always doing what they can to tailor each holiday to suit. For all this, along with "the sound of thundering hooves, a pall of dust and the splash of water as horses gallop into the yard...things that bring a smile to your face no matter how many times you see them" many guests return year after year. Horizon is an easy 2 ½ to 3 hour drive from Johannesburg.



DATES

7 night set itinerary safaris run each week, Sunday to Sunday year round. Flexible date safaris are also possible and you can stay at Horizon for any number of nights. We generally suggest 5 to 10 nights to make the most of the riding and activities on offer. Please contact us to check availability for the dates you have in mind.

HORSES

There are over 100 horses at the Horizon base with an excellent selection to suit both experienced and less experienced riders. The majority are between about 14.1hh and 16.3hh, with some smaller ponies of around 12hh and above for children. Most have been bred locally and they include South African Boerperds and Boerperd crosses, Thoroughbreds and TB Crosses, Anglo Arabs and some Welsh pony crosses. They are all working 'bush horses', honest, good natured and sensible, but well-schooled, sure footed, responsive and forward going to ride. Shane Dowinton who is in overall charge of the horses at Horizon is an expert horseman (in the 'horse whisperer' mould!) and has broken and schools many of the horses himself. He has been using gentle training methods on young and problem horses for over 35 years and his skill and technique when handling young horses is superb. His horses are calm and contented and he is real pleasure and an inspiration to watch.

TACK

Maclellan style saddles (similar to western style, without the pig pommel) are used, with some English or Australian stock saddles available for those who prefer.



RIDING

There is a variety of riding at Horizon, the set 7 night itineraries are designed for intermediate and experienced riders while on flexible date safaris the emphasis is on tailoring itineraries to suit. Horses are tacked up and prepared for you and there are rides out each morning and afternoon and, weather allowing, sometimes longer rides with a picnic or BBQ lunch to explore over 20,000 acres of undeveloped bush. Most rides include game viewing - although game is not the only focus at Horizon, part of the surrounding area (fenced) is being preserved as a small private nature reserve and is home to hippo, zebra, a few giraffe, kudu, baboon, monkey and several species of smaller antelope including impala, steenbok and duiker. This area is privately stocked with game so you should expect to see animals in small numbers (pairs or small groups of 2 to 5 or so) rather than bigger herds, but it is still a lovely addition to any ride. For those who want to see more wildlife, a night in a neighbouring game area (Bellevue Plains) where there is a larger variety of game including wildebeest, sable, eland and buffalo is an exciting option (included on set 7 night itineraries and sometimes possible at extra cost on flexible itineraries), as are various non-riding game excursions to nearby Big 5 reserves. Polocrosse (an amalgam of polo and lacrosse!) is another very popular activity and there are always plenty of chances to try this exciting - and very addictive - game. Those who have never played before will be given basic instruction and lots of encouragement (one chukka is usually all it takes to become an addict) and friendly matches are often arranged. Riding lessons are also available, you may have a chance to swim with your horse in one of the dams, there are special activities for children such as camp-outs, orienteering, treasure hunts and mounted games, and experienced riders may be able to try a few cross country jumps. You will be required to wear a hard hat when you ride - there are some to borrow but we recommend taking your own to ensure a good, secure fit.



WEIGHT

95kgs (about 15 stone), although with prior notice, experienced heavier riders may sometimes be taken if suitable horses are available. Please contact us if you are close to 95kgs to check.

PACE

The going around the ranch itself is generally good, with many wide, soft and sandy tracks that are perfect for canters. On flexible date safaris rides are split according to ability and preferences, so you can choose a gentle pace if you prefer, enjoying the atmosphere, space and peace of the African bush.

RIDING EXPERIENCE

To fully enjoy riding at Horizon you should have some previous riding experience and for the 7 night Sunday to Sunday set itinerary you need to be a reasonably experienced, confident intermediate and above. However more novice riders are welcome on flexible itineraries and the riding program can (as far as possible) be tailored to suit. The variety of riding and horses make Horizon an ideal choice both for the experienced and more novice riders and great care is taken to ensure that all have fulfilling and fun riding. There are plenty of staff and guides and, for flexible dates safaris, if guests are of different standards, groups are split according to ability. Generally rides are limited to a maximum of 8 guests accompanied by a lead guide and back up assistant, but groups are often smaller (4 or 5 guests) and sometimes, if it suits best, you may find yourself riding alone with a guide. Horizon is a fabulous place for families and there are no age restrictions although if traveling with young children, please contact us in advance to discuss your requirements. Generally children should have some previous riding experience to get the most from their stay, but young or novice children can be taken.



NON-RIDING ACTIVITIES

As well as riding, a variety of other activities are always on offer from Horizon. Guided walks in the game area offer a different perspective on the bush; visits to neighbouring properties for 'Big Five' game viewing or guided mountain biking, to various cultural projects, the local town, community church and primary school are always available and those in need of an extra adrenaline rush may like to try the local Waterberg Ziplines (additional charge for most off-site visits). An introduction to the constellations of the night sky with a local astronomer makes a fascinating evening activity (extra charge) and the large swimming pool (a great spot for a massage (extra charge)) is perfect for relaxing days.

TERRAIN

One of the great joys of riding in this area of South Africa is the variety of terrain. Although cultivated in parts and used for cattle and crops, much of the land around Horizon is undeveloped and even the grazing areas are largely untouched bush and scrub, much as they would be in a natural state. In places, the bush is dense and thick with going underfoot stony and rough, but then it opens out and there are plenty of wide sand tracks, open farmland and grassy plains that are perfect for energetic canters. Rocky outcrops provide spectacular views of the surrounding country and the Melk River, which cuts through the land, empties into large lakes or 'dams' where water is stored - and which provide wonderful opportunities to swim - with or without your horse!

ACCOMMODATION

Horizon can sleep a maximum of 12 to 14 guests (occasionally more for families or if booking as a private group) with accommodation in thatched chalet cottages close to the main house, and two standard rooms in the ranch house itself (total 9 bedrooms). All bedrooms have en-suite bathroom with loo and either shower or bath (or both). The cottages are set slightly away from the main house and are comfortable and attractively furnished with double or twin beds and en suite bathrooms. One cottage is set by itself overlooking the dam (lake), there is another lakeside cottage, a further garden cottage, comprising two double rooms sharing a small covered veranda set up with sofa and chairs (ideal family accommodation). A more recently built cottage has two large double en-suite bedrooms downstairs and one upstairs with balcony and wonderful views over the dam (the "Hippo rooms"). The ranch house itself has a good sized, comfortable sitting and dining room with open fireplace and a large covered veranda ('stoop') that is perfect for meals on warm, balmy evenings. Lunch or barbecues are often served in a thatched 'boma' or under a shady tree close to the house. There is a swimming pool and the grounds stretch down to the shores of the dam where resident wildlife comes to drink.



As well as accommodation at the lodge, you can stay at the 'East African' style tented camp, Camp Davidson about 2 kilometres away. In a lovely position with views over the central highlands the camp has 4 spacious walk-in twin /double safari tents set on teak decking each with attached bathroom with flush loo and 'bucket and pulley' shower (water heated whenever required). Tents have proper beds, made up with cotton sheets, pillows and duvets, canvas chairs on the veranda and there is a large central mess tent with sofa, chairs and dining table that is candlelit for meals, which may also be eaten under the stars.



One night of the set itinerary safari is spent at either Savannah or Seringa Bellevue Lodges, where accommodation is either in thatched "rondavels", or rooms in the main house, all with their own private bathroom. The main houses have a sitting room, dining room and a terrace overlooking the swimming pool.

MEALS

You will be extremely well fed at Horizon with three home cooked meals a day, all produced from fresh local ingredients as well as tea and snacks in between! Barbecues or "braais" - a great South African tradition - are a favourite and often feature the farm's superb beef. Drinks are included - you might start the evening with a Pimms or Gin and Tonic, and good quality local wines are served with lunch and dinner. Vegetarians and particular tastes can be well catered for but please let us know in advance of any special dietary requirements. When children are staying, dinner is often served in two sittings allowing them to eat earlier in the evening.



WEATHER

This part of South Africa is a good place to ride year round. In summer, November to February, daytime temperatures can reach 35 degrees C or more, but you will normally ride early in the morning and late afternoon when it is pleasant and cool, with the hottest part of the day to siesta or relax by the pool. Summer is also rainy season with thunderstorms or showers possible, although rain is generally in short sharp bursts, it is often hot in between and rarely interferes with riding programmes. Autumn is March and April, when it is usually pleasantly warm (mid 20's C) and leaves change colour. It begins to cool down, particularly at night, in May. June to September is winter, the dry season, usually still warm (shirtsleeves weather) during the day, but can get cold when the sun goes in, with temperatures sometimes dropping to just above zero at night.

WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.

ITINERARY

Below is an example of the set 7 night itinerary which runs Sunday to Sunday for intermediate and above riders. This covers about 150km by horse during the course of the week, with five nights spent at the main lodge, one night on the Bellevue reserve, and a night at Camp Davidson. For flexible date safaris there is more choice about how you spend your days at Horizon and you discuss how much riding you do with the team. Non-riding activities can be arranged (and paid for) locally although if you wish to include a night at Camp Davidson, Bellevue Plains this is best requested in advance (groups of 4 or more can book ahead). You might also like to combine a stay with Ant's Nest or Ant's Hill lodges which also offer riding - see our separate information sheet - this needs booking ahead. Please note that the below is an example and there may be changes due to weather, group ability, or other circumstances:

Day 1 Met at Johannesburg International airport (flights should arrive before 09.30 for standard meeting / transfers) and leaving at 10.30 you will be driven to Horizon (about a 2 ½ hour drive from Johannesburg). Lunch, time to relax before meeting the horses and a late afternoon ride to try them and for a first view of the area perhaps with first encounters of zebra, giraffe and hippo. Stop for sunset drinks on the open plains before riding back to base for dinner & night. (L,D)

Day 2 Woken with tea and a light breakfast before setting off on an early morning ride to try your horse at all paces, keeping an eye out for resident antelope such as kudu, red hartebeest and impala as you head through an open valley. You might also encounter the pedigree dark red Bonsmara cattle which are bred on the property. Sandy tracks are ideal for faster pace and you cross open grassland and weave through dense woodland to reach a picturesque dam where you stop for a snack, and maybe an exhilarating swim with your horse! A gentle ride back to the lodge for a well earned lunch. Time to relax by the pool or on your veranda, before tea and then in the afternoon ride east, following a river system pas a series of dams where you might see hippo. Return to the lodge



Day 3 An early start is needed for the long ride from the Horizon Lodge to either Savannah Lodge in the far south west of the reserve, or Seringa Lodge in the south east. The first part of the route covers country that you will now be familiar with, but soon enters new terrain. In places the bush is thick but after a while the scenery opens up to grasslands with sweeping views to the south and west, giving you a sense of the vastness of the African plains. The area boasts a very high concentration of game - some herds of blesbuck number 300, and you may see as many as 80 eland grouped together.

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ITINERARY cont.

Day 3 cont Other species include red hartebeest, tsessebe and ostrich. There are plentiful zebra, wildebeest, impala and giraffe, and smaller groups of sable, roan and waterbuck. The final stretch to Savannah Lodge is along a wooded stream, a favourite habitat for kudu and bushbuck. After lunch and a relaxing time around the pool, it is time to ride to the southern most areas of the reserve in search of Cape buffalo. These are members of Africa's famous "Big Five" and deserve their formidable reputation. You need to be alert and responsive to your guides' instructions. This part of the reserve is also known for spectacular sunsets with the sun setting over the distant headlands of the Waterberg escarpment - a fitting end to an eventful and memorable day in the African wilderness. Dinner & the night Bellevue. (B,L,D)



Day 4 Another long ride, about 5 hours in the saddle, takes you through game rich country back to Horizon Lodge. The route taken is different from that on the outward leg, turning this part of the safari into an exciting journey which passes through diverse landscapes and ecosystems. Game species typically prefer different habitats, with nyala and bushbuck for instance occupying dense forest-like sections of the reserve while blesbuck and hartebeest stick to the open plains, and waterbuck and reedbuck, unsurprisingly, are normally seen close to streams and other waterways. The route provides excellent opportunities to see giraffe, which is always a highlight. In the afternoon there will be the option of a game drive in the nearby Entabeni or Welgevonden game reserves. Although this involves an hour or more of travel to reach these destinations, the opportunity to see lion, elephant and rhino in their natural environments make this excursion well worthwhile (extra charge, approx £100 payable locally). Dinner & the night at the lodge. (B,L,D)



Day 5 The route today takes you deep into the reserve to areas with true wilderness quality. After about three hours riding you arrive at a giant wild fig tree where you stop for a delicious bush breakfast prepared on an open fire. From here the route back to the lodge passes through dense forest where some of the shyer species like to shelter. In the afternoon you leave Horizon and head towards Camp Davidson for an exciting night under canvas. The camp is perched high on a ridge overlooking a vast wilderness area to the east. This is not a long ride, but the route is exciting, following a narrow trail along the edge of the ridge. Wildlife often encountered in the area includes baboon, bushpig, kudu and klipspringer. Porcupines are frequent nocturnal visitors to the camp and leopard spoor outside the tents is not uncommon. A dip in the plunge pool, tea and a hot shower are a super welcome, before drinks around the fire. Dinner and night Camp Davidson. (B,L,D)

ITINERARY cont.

Day 6 Today's route covers the north eastern areas of the reserve, descending from the camp to cross a stream and open plain and then tracks through untouched bush to the upper reaches of Sunset Lake. This lake is a favourite haunt of the hippo on the reserve and home to crocodile, otter, fish eagle and other waterfowl, such as the beautiful African jacana. You should keep a lookout for hippo - they have a reputation for being one of the most dangerous animals in Africa, and though not a threat out of the water during the day they will often honk and blow as riders go by. The route offers an opportunity for exciting splashy canters. Leaving the lake behind, set off across open plains with some quick riding back to the Lodge. Lunch and time to relax by the pool after the morning's exertions. The afternoon activity is polocrosse, an amalgam between polo and lacrosse. The game is highly addictive and is sure to bring out competitive passions! The horses used are experienced in the game and no previous experience of playing polocrosse is required. What is guaranteed is a great deal of fun! Tonight's dinner begins with a wine tasting. Night at Horizon Lodge (B,L,D)



Day 7 Breakfast and set off on another magical ride to eastern wilderness parts of the reserve, with views across the highlands of the Waterberg, then some long canters crossing to the highlands near Camp Davidson and from there following winding game trails back to the lodge. In the afternoon, follow a route interspersed with optional cross country jumps on the way to sundowners at a stunning spot with views over the rolling hills. A slow ride back to the Lodge at dusk completes the day's adventure. (B,L,D)



Day 8 Breakfast and you can discuss with your guide to plan your favourite final ride. Return to the lodge for a celebratory drink and farewell lunch. In the afternoon, at around 13.30, you will be collected and driven back to Johannesburg airport. Onward flights should not depart before 19.30. (B,L)

Horizon Lodge - rates are seasonal per person and vary with room type.

Low Season - 6th January to 28th February

Mid Season - 1st March to 30th June

High Season - 1st July to 31st December:

7 night set itinerary, Sunday to Sunday

(5 nights Horizon, 1 night Camp Davidson, 1 night Bellevue Lodge)

Low Season - £2191 per person sharing Garden cottage or in standard single

Mid Season - £2380 per person sharing Garden cottage or in standard single

High Season - £2744 per person sharing Garden cottage or in standard single

(Above rates include transfers at set times from/to Johannesburg airport)

Flexible date safaris - prices are per person per night

Low Season:

Adult, Garden Cottage per night - **twin / double share £268 / single £375**

Child (under 16), Garden Cottage per night - **twin share £201 / single £281**

Adult, Standard Room per night - **single £268**

Child (under 16), Standard room per night - **single £201**

Third person in any room (per night) - **Adult £228; Child £171**

Mid Season:

Adult, Garden Cottage per night - **twin / double share £295 / single £413**

Child (under 16), Garden Cottage per night - **twin share £221 / single £310**

Adult, Standard Room per night - **single £295**

Child (under 16), Standard room per night - **single £221**

Third person in any room (per night) - **Adult £251; Child £188**

High Season:

Adult, Garden Cottage per night - **twin / double share £347 / single £486**

Child (under 16), Garden Cottage per night - **twin share £260 / single £364**

Adult, Standard Room per night - **single £347**

Child (under 16), Standard room per night - **single £260**

Third person in any room (per night) - **Adult £295; Child £221**

Rates **INCLUDE** all riding, guiding and equipment, guided walks, twin accommodation, meals and house drinks (and transfer from to Johannesburg airport for 7 night Sunday to Sunday set date itinerary).

They **EXCLUDE** International flights to Johannesburg and taxes, transfers between Johannesburg and Horizon (except for 7 night set itinerary), personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), extra activities and excursions (eg game drives on neighbouring properties), massages, any premium drinks (champagnes etc), any visa fees, personal items such as shopping and any tips you may wish to leave staff.



Example costings for 7 night flexible safari

A 7 night stay at Horizon Lodge (sharing Garden Cottage) including return Standard shared transfers at set times from / to Johannesburg = £ 2705 per adult (high season); £2152 per adult (low season);

Camp Davidson & Bellevue Plains Lodge

The set 7 night itinerary includes 1 night at Camp Davidson and 1 night at Bellevue. If you book a flexible itinerary please note that nights at Camp Davidson and Bellevue **are only possible** in conjunction with Horizon **and are booked and paid for locally**. They can be booked ahead only for groups of 4 or more and are subject to availability. Non-riders are welcome to join - game drive and Quad bikes can be arranged for them (please enquire)



Transfers - Transfers from Johannesburg to Horizon are either at set times, or can be arrange on request. For the Sunday to Sunday fixed itinerary the set transfers (included in the price) depart Johannesburg at 10.30 (your flight should land **before 09.30** to make use of these). On the return the leave Horizon at 13.30 (onward flights should not be before 19.30).

Standard transfers for flexible itineraries depart Johannesburg International airport at **11.00** sharp (your flight should land **before 10.15** to make use of these); On return transfers depart Horizon early afternoon (flights out of JNB should **not** be booked to depart **before 19.30**).

The seat rate for the standard transfer for flexible itineraries is £138 per person each way (£276 pp return).

Private transfers can also be arranged at a time to suit for £324 per car each way (£648 return) for 1 to 12 passengers. Please note ALL transfer rates are subject to change and should be confirmed when you book.

Group / family bookings - We can usually offer special rates for groups or families booking the whole lodge (minimum 8 people). **Please enquire for details**



FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The nearest international airport to Horizon is Johannesburg OR Tambo. British Airways and Virgin have one or two direct daily flights from London to Johannesburg, normally departing London in the evening (around 20.00), arriving Johannesburg early the next morning (around 08.00).

You can also fly via Europe (eg with Air France, KLM, Al Italia) but we **strongly recommend** a direct flight to minimize the risk of delays etc. Airfares vary depending on airline and season, but expect to pay around £800 to £1000 per person for a London / JNB economy return. We would be very happy to advise further on and book flights for you. Please ask if you would like a flight inclusive quote for your holiday (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 South Africa for a holiday only and staying less than 90 days you do not need to arrange a visa in advance. 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 entry to South Africa from Europe but the TravelHealthPro website (NaTHNaC) recommends most travellers are up to date with inoculations against Tetanus and Hepatitis A and also against Typhoid, Cholera and Yellow Fever in some circumstances. The Waterberg has seen very few cases of Malaria and is generally considered Malaria free area but if you are planning to travel on in South Africa after / before your visit you may be advised to take anti-Malaria tablets. You should always consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.

DRAFT 02/01/2025

