

# THE RIDING-IN-HWANGE COMBINED SAFARI

## ***Main features of safari:***

**Well schooled horses,  
Selection of tack – English leather and synthetic, GP, Australian stock,  
McClellan, and tree-less,  
Excellent professional guiding,  
Expeditionary style safaris,  
First horse operator ever in a National Park (2007)  
Mixed accommodation styles,  
Small personalised safari camps,  
Mobile tented camps with staff support,  
Private and exclusive campsites,  
Horse's overnight in canvas enclosure,  
Entire camp/horse enclosure surrounded by portable electric fence,  
Extremely low environmental footprint –minimal impact activities,  
Variety of cold and hot drinks,  
Outstanding bush cuisine,  
Hot bush bucket showers,  
Short drop toilets,  
Experienced riders only – THESE ARE NOT ONE HOUR TRAIL RIDES  
No road riding, fences, power lines or human habitation,  
Maximum of 6 guests on the rides,**

## **Day one**

Guests arrive before lunch at Ivory Lodge, Hwange, from either a road transfer or air charter. Ivory Lodge is a private concession a few miles outside of Hwange National Park in well wooded Terminalia, Zimbabwe Teak, Miombo and Acacia woodlands. Accommodations are in separate tree houses with views over a permanent waterhole. There is electricity here with a spacious living and bar area, ideally suited for a relaxed beginning to the safari to come.

Time to settle into the lodge and meet the guide.

After lunch it is a half hour road transfer into Hwange National Park to Main Camp, the park head quarters. Here guests will sign in and pay the necessary Park entry and camping fees for their whole safari duration.

We then proceed into the park area to where the horses and grooms will be waiting. The professional guide leading the safari will give an introduction to the horses that are to be used on this safari and a safety briefing on what to expect and do's and don'ts of riding in this wildlife area.

There will be time for a short ride of perhaps two hours to acclimate to the area and get to know ones horse and tack.

Riders will be observed for their riding ability and knowledge with some possibility of encountering some wildlife.

Once done with the short ride, guests and guides are on a game drive back to Ivory Lodge in time for drinks around the fire, a hot shower and three course dinner.

Over-night in the very comfortable tree houses of Ivory Lodge.

## **Day two**

An early wake up call to prepare for the adventure ahead. Early starts are a must on the horse safaris! Guests will need to pack all belongings and then go for a sumptuous breakfast before once again returning to the Park.

Again meet at the horses and prepare for several hours of riding. Water, food, first aid kits and guests personal items for the day will be loaded onto the horses. All other luggage will go with the support crew to the camp-site.

The safari is led by a qualified Professional Guide who carries first aid equipment, a heavy calibre rifle, hand gun, compass, maps and GPS. These rides are of an exploratory nature with the possibility of routes having never been ridden before by humans or horses! The terrain is very flat with little horizon so good navigation by the guide is vital. Also accompanying the ride is one of our very skilled grooms and a National Parks ranger.

The ride will start at the eastern boundary of the Park and lead into the Park.

Riding is usually from waterhole to waterhole or open areas along well worn elephant paths. The pace will vary from walking to cantering through varied habitats of open waterhole areas, beautiful Zimbabwe Teak woodlands, thorn and teak scrub and stunning Camel thorn Acacia groves.

Various varieties of wildlife can be encountered along the way including mammals and birds of various species. The region is particularly good for elephant, giraffe, zebra, sable, Roan antelope, kudu and steenbok to name a few. Lion can be encountered as with buffalo and white rhino.

The direction and duration of riding is entirely dependant on many factors such as distance to the campsite, weather, time of year, wildlife sightings, rider's abilities and vegetation conditions.

Generally we plan to have a light packed lunch somewhere in the bush, giving the horses a rest.

Camp is reached before dark. The horses are settled in, fed and watered. Guests are expected to assist with un-tacking and watering their horse. The horses 'camp' is an area enclosed by a high 'wall' of canvas sheeting and the whole camp is surrounded by a portable electric fence to keep the horses – and people – safe from lion and hyena.

Cold or hot drinks are available around the camp fire, along with snacks and stories of the day!

Hot bush bucket showers are set by the staff to refresh one before a tasty three course bush dinner under a canopy of leaf or stars.

The tents are comfortably spacious for a mobile expedition, with camp sleeping cots, mattresses, pillows, sheets and duvets. Extra blankets are available for the very cold months of May through mid August.

This camp will either be up for two or three nights depending on various 'bush' factors. This is a bush camp – no electricity, generators, phones, newspapers, walls or windows!

## **Day three, four, five, six**

Another early wake up – with tea and coffee by the fire – most welcome on the sometimes below zero Hwange mornings! The day may start with a reasonable breakfast and then we will ride out the whole day from camp, or a light breakfast for a half day ride before coming back to camp for brunch.

This again depends on the time of year, weather, riding abilities and decision of the guide. In hot times it is normal to ride out as early as possible to be back in camp for

the heat of the day. During cooler months we generally leave camp slightly later but ride out the whole day.

Exploring the areas and trying to approach wildlife from horse-back is the focus.

Often in the hot times when water is in the waterholes, we may wade or swim with the horses. Often good elephant viewing can be done at these times of the year due to the still plentiful grasses and water. As the bush changes throughout the seasons, so does the type of riding in response to where the wildlife moves to and that many elephant paths offer wonderful opportunities for trotting and cantering.

Wildlife encounters can be very close and sudden and thus riders must be very competent and confident to control their horses and themselves.

Being in areas never ridden before, most wildlife will never have seen horses; this is the exciting attraction of this area.

These days follow a similar routine, but short walks with the guide are also possible as he is licensed to conduct walks in these Park areas.

In this time, the camp will move location to one other area. Whilst the camp is being moved, guests will ride with a packed lunch and water to the next site, reaching there in the late afternoon.

Many of these finer details will be discussed with the guests by the guide during the safari. Due to the nature of the area and activities, a certain amount of flexibility of daily program needs to be realised as these are real safaris.

Please note – all litter is carried out of campsites and in the hot dry months bathing water is limited as area is semi desert, limited laundry can also be done. Drinking water is from clean borehole sources. All effort is made by our staff to completely clear the campsites to an absolutely natural state. Firewood is used by permission of the National Parks Authority.

### **Day seven**

On this day we will be riding from our mobile tented bush camp to the beautifully appointed and classy bush chic tented camp of Somalisa. Riding time will depend on our mobile camp distance from Somalisa and also to what time we arrive into the camp. Somalisa is also on an extensive private concession area inside the National Park, although there are no fences or big cutlines surrounding the concession. The camp is situated on the Masumamalisa Vlei, an ancient drainage line bordered by a variety of Teak, Terminalia, Red Syringa, Combretum and big Camel thorn groves. There is water available for the wildlife in front of the camp which can provide for some amazing experiences. Somalisa only has 12 beds and is a very naturally laid out bush camp with privacy and an exceptional intimacy with nature. The staff being excellent and the meals of a very high standard, this is the perfect end to some days of wilderness riding. If we get to camp by lunch, there will be an opportunity to take a drive in the area to visit some of the waterholes nearby for some excellent wildlife viewing.

The support staff from the mobile will set up the horse enclosure near to Somalisa and have the guest's luggage at Somalisa.

As always drinks around the fire, hot showers, comfortable beds and a wonderful dinner await in the evening.

### **Day eight**

The last early morning wake up to the sounds of the African bush, hot tea and coffee by the campfire overlooking the waterhole and discussions of the night sounds mark the transition of the riding safari onto fresh adventures.

Breakfast is served, farewells are said and then it is a road transfer through the Park with wildlife viewing to meet with guests onward transfer vehicle at Main Camp, a couple of hours away.

Depending on onward connections of flights or transfers, there may still be an opportunity for a quick drive or walk and farewell to the horses before departing from Somalisa.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

Specifics of clothes can be advised for different times of year i.e. wet / dry, hot / cold and also for weight limits if on air charters, so all listed items do not need to be carried. All camps can do at least some laundry so minimise the weight of clothes.

It is important to note that the Hwange region is at an average altitude of 1000 metres / 3300 feet, and indeed most African safari areas are over this altitude, and therefore temperatures can often be surprising cool to cold. Therefore no matter what time of year, it is advisable to always have a warm jacket. Sometimes air charter flights can be cold. Many Northern hemisphere travellers have been caught out thinking that Africa is only boiling hot.....don't be fooled!!

Air charters usually limit luggage to 12kg / 26lb, but can be more if guests paying for private charter, depends on aircraft type and passenger number.

**REMEMBER** if you do or may suffer MOTION / AIR SICKNESS, please speak to your doctor / physician about bringing medication, preferably non-drowsy meds!!!!

Torches and fresh batteries, recommend with LED bulbs and small headlight i.e. Petzl, Black Diamond, Energizer – this is a MUST bring item to be carried in hand luggage!

Car charger with 12volt adaptor for torch and camera batteries,

Camelback backpack rehydration system – the 2 litre ones are good as can carry limited day items, i.e. small personal first aid, spare batteries / camera cards, tissues etc

Sunscreen, lip moisturizer, hat, sunglasses x 2 with cord (to keep glasses on when cantering or going through thick bush!)

Long sleeved shirts for sun and thorn protection – clothes often get torn,

Half chaps,

Riding boots/shoes

Hat with string

Riding gloves for cold, sun and thorns,

Shorts for walking or zip-off pants,

Long trousers for cold nights,

Light fleece for warm to hot months,

Heavy weight fleece for cold months,

Thermal underwear can be of great use in very cold months,

One of the following - Beanie, woolly cap, scarf, head warmer in very cold months,

Light weight quick dry sports shirts for hot, wet months,

Light weight walking shoes/sandals for walking/after riding/in camp

Light weight but strong binoculars preferably 8 powers, ideally waterproof as these are more rugged for the tough, dry or wet conditions,

Hard Hat if you want to ride in one.

Jodhpurs or jeans

Sarong handy for around camp.

Camera – compact waterproof digitals are ideal for riding, SPARE BATTERIES!

### **WEATHER CONDITIONS**

January to mid March – often heavy rains and strong winds, temperatures can go up to 40C / 104F, often many biting flies, very green, lots of surface water, excellent birding, frogging and insects, wildlife viewing difficult, storms however are SPECTACULAR!!

Non – riding season.

Mid March through April – hot with temperatures as above, mornings can drop to 10C / 50F, some chance of rain, vegetation still thick, wildlife viewing not easy due to surface water in many places and thick bush. The riding is good but not the best time for wildlife viewing. Birding always excellent. Night time / early morning temperatures very comfortable, sometimes requiring a warm jacket.

May through mid August – dry season starts so nearly zero chance of rain. Vegetation starting to thin out / lose leaves and surface water reduces, therefore coming into the better times for wildlife viewing. Most migrant birds will go north now. Day time temperatures around 20 – 30C / 68 -86F and generally clear skies, mild breezes. Sometimes can be cloudy and cooler. Night time to early morning can be FREEZING!! Can go below -10C / 14F and most mornings are at least below 0C or 32F. Riding starts are often around 08h00 as can ride all day.

Mid August to end October – this is the dry season and peak game viewing. Temperatures rising again to over perhaps 45C / 113F in October, generally high 30's / 90s, very little cloud, sometimes rain in October, very dry, little shade and only the pumped waterholes have water. Some tree species are producing flowers, fruit and new leaf during this period so botanically very interesting. Large wildlife concentrations often at waterholes or nearby woodlands. Riding starts very early with long mid-day rest for horses and riding again in the afternoons. Many very big elephant tracks opened up by all the wildlife use so excellent for cantering or long trots.

November through December – very hot, start of the rains so often big storms. Early morning temperatures back up again, but still advisable to have a jacket. Vegetation becoming green again, all bird migrants back, wildlife dispersing across the Park so harder to view. Depending on the rains and flies, there can still be some good riding into December.

VARDEN SAFARIS  
HWANGE NATIONAL PARK

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