

BOTSWANA - TULI SAFARI

ITINERARY

Day 1

The meeting point for the Tuli Safari is at the information desk in the international arrivals hall of Johannesburg OR Tambo airport at 11:00; the transfer vehicle will depart at 11:30.

Your flight should be scheduled to arrive into Johannesburg O R Tambo no later than 09:30 (and an earlier arrival time will be much safer).

To minimise the risk of flight delays spoiling your holiday you may wish to consider arriving into Johannesburg the day before the safari is due to start.

From Johannesburg OR Tambo airport you first have a road transfer to Lanseria Airport (c.45minutes) and then travel by light aircraft (1.5 hours flight) from Lanseria Airport to Limpopo Airfield.

The return flight from Limpopo Airfield will arrive back at Lanseria airport by 16:00. You then have a road transfer to Johannesburg OR Tambo Airport arriving around 17:00. Onward flights should depart Johannesburg OR Tambo airport after 20:00.

NB: It is possible in exceptional circumstances that the light aircraft transfer is replaced by a road transfer. A minimum of 4 pax is also needed to confirm the air transfers.

You first arrive at the Horizon Horseback Mashatu stables where you have lunch on the banks of the Limpopo River, receive a safety briefing and meet your horses.

The safari operator takes great care to match horse to rider based on riding experience and professed ability. Before setting out on the safari, each guest is given a simple riding test in order to ensure that they are suitably balanced in the saddle and are able to direct their horse in an independent manner. You will be asked to ride your horse away from the group between three points, varying the pace between a collected and an extended canter. You will also take part in a single file group canter to demonstrate that you are able to control

your horse at an even pace without overtaking or allowing large gaps to develop within the group.

The guides' decision is final and unfortunately no refund or alternative activities are possible if the guide believes you are not at the appropriate level.

It is crucially important for the safety and enjoyment of the whole group that everyone on the Tuli Safari is an experienced rider. While the journey is not an endurance test, it does involve long hours in the saddle and, with the possibility of close encounters with elephant and the big cats, all riders need to be able to gently and confidently control their mounts.

The following is the likely itinerary for a seven-night safari. Please note that the itinerary of each safari may vary due to local conditions, but always with your best interests in mind. The order of the camps may vary.

On average you cover about 25-30km each day. The norm is to ride out at first light (around 06:30) and ride for between four and six hours, arriving either back at camp or at the next camp in time for lunch. In the afternoon relax in camp and in the cool of the late afternoon enjoy a bush walk or on some days a game drive. The riding will occasionally be split so you might ride in the morning and again in the afternoon. Afternoon rides are normally much steadier and gentler in pace.

Please note that the groups may include cyclists. Cyclists go out separately from the horse riders but stay at the same camps. Everyone comes together for meals and non-riding activities.



The route on the first afternoon is from the Stables to Two Mashatus Camp, a distance of around 11km. It follows the Limpopo River floodplains with good

opportunities for first encounters with elephant, giraffe, zebra and wildebeest. The route crosses close to a large wetland area which acts as a magnet for game and there is a possibility of seeing bat eared fox, black backed jackal and spotted hyena. It then crosses the Majali River close to its confluence with the Limpopo, a favourite haunt of leopards and a resident pride of lion. Across an open plain and the Two Mashatus Camp awaits you.

Overnight Two Mashatus Camp. Two Mashatus is a semi-permanent tented camp. There are five comfortable and roomy tents, each on its own raised teak platform, with en-suite bathroom.



Interior of twin tent at Two Mashatus Camp

The century old Mashatu tree provides shade and there is a central dining area built in the traditional Botswana style with lala palm thatch. The lounge area has comfortable sofas and hammocks for relaxing between activities.

There is a plunge pool to relax after a long day in the saddle.

The camp is not enclosed and so you might encounter game in and around camp.



Tent at Two Mashatus Camp

Day 2

After breakfast at dawn you set off for a full morning of riding across the game rich area of the central reserve. You first ride along the Majali and then the Mataboli rivers in a north western arc towards Treehouse Camp. You might see elephant, waterbuck, giraffe, impala, wildebeest and zebra. The ride typically takes between four and five hours.



You arrive at Treehouse Camp in time for a refreshing shower and lunch. Later rest and enjoy a siesta in the comfort of camp in the shade of the majestic Mashatu Tree.

After tea you might go on a guided bush walk up the Majali River in search of crocodile and other game. Kudu, warthog, klipspringer and eland are all present in the area around the camp, as are elephant, lion and hyena. Waterfowl fly low past the camp and birdsong abounds.

Dinner is prepared over an open fire and your day draws to a close with the sounds of the bush all around.

Overnight Treehouse Camp. Wrapped around the trunks of a giant mashatu and two ancient leadwood trees, Treehouse Camp perches several metres up, out of "trunks reach".

The camp overlooks the banks of the Majale River and offers spectacular panoramic views of the adjacent cliffs and floodplains where Mashatu's legendary herds roam.

Sleeping quarters are five beautiful and spacious canvas roofed areas with four-poster beds, each facing into the spacious dining and resting area. There are shared showers and loos. The elevated platform offers a unique camp.



Treehouse Camp

Day 3

You waken in Treehouse Camp to the sound of birdsong as the early morning light filters through the leaves.

After a quick breakfast you set off on the one of the safari's longest rides - up onto the edge of a mini escarpment and then down through the Valley of the Elephants and on towards the distant sandstone citadels guarding the Limpopo and Motloutse Rivers.



The first part of the journey is slower as the horses wind along well worn elephant paths, past giant baobabs and the occasional shallow watering pan. Soon the country opens up and the horses can start to stretch their legs along soft ground leading to the headwaters of a stream flowing off the ridge and down towards the Limpopo. This is prime elephant country and the guides are always on the lookout. Once the path leaves the river the terrain is once again more open and the pace faster. A second river is then joined, which leads directly down to the veterinary control gate on the main road through Mashatu Game Reserve. The route then follows the road for a short while before heading across flat country towards the Sacred Rock massif.

Here the mopane vegetation is short and it is safe to ride quite fast across the plain where you may see large herds of zebra, wildebeest and impala. The guides plot their route using individual mashatu, leadwood and apple-leaf trees as their markers.

Soon you reach the Kgotla and enjoy lunch and a rest.

In the afternoon, you may go out on a game drive in search for the area's resident lions and draw the day's adventures to a close with sundowners at the ancient Amphitheatre rocks.

Whilst big cat sightings from horseback occasionally happen, Horizon follows a ride away policy. The best opportunities to approach lion, cheetah, leopard and spotted hyena occur whilst on game drives where the vehicle acts as a natural hide and is largely ignored by the predators.

Back at the Kgotla you have dinner around a large log fire.

Overnight The Kgotla. The Kgotla is made from an abandoned old tribal court from a nearby community, which was relocated to the banks of the Motloutse River on the western periphery of Mashatu. The boma is an open-air traditional African enclosure made up of leadwood logs.

There is hot running water, open-air showers and flush toilets; the perfect combination of necessary comforts and an authentic bush experience. Guests sleep on beds around a large log fire which sits on a hearth in the centre of the boma.

This open-air enclosure forms the perfect, secure camp for the night. The camp is not far from the banks of the Motloutse River and, with high concentrations of game living along the river's fertile floodplain, the area is home to large prides of lion and clans of hyena. The sounds of these predators at night provide enduring memories!

Meals are around a large log fire. The night is spent with a ceiling of stars and Africa's night-time melody to sing you to sleep.



The Kgotla Camp

Day 4

The riding today is more relaxed and tailored to the group since you are staying here a second night.



A particularly interesting route to follow is first along the Motloutse River, stopping at well known elephant drinking holes to watch the herds come and go before winding down towards the impressive Solomon's Wall, a tall dolomite dyke which was breached by the river in ancient times. This is the favourite haunt of troops of baboon, which are always fascinating to watch. The trail then follows the banks of the river, flanked by giant mashatu and leadwood trees, towards the mighty Limpopo. This area is renowned for its dramatic sandstone rock formations, steeped in colour and home to eland, klipspringer and kudu.



Some of the oldest civilizations in southern Africa settled in this valley. Archaeological evidence in the area includes middle and late stone age tools, rock art and the legendary Mapungubwe Dynasty. Mapungubwe means "Place of the Jackal" in the Venda language and this dynasty existed around 1220 AD. The Mapungubwe topography itself is ancient and timeless and, combined with the wildlife sightings, makes for an incredible riding experience.

The game drive in the afternoon takes you to the foot of the impressive Mamagwa massif, a free standing formation which was used by British troops

as a defensive position against incursions from the Transvaal Boers at the end of the 19th century. Sundowners are typically taken at the far western edge of the massif, with endless views over the wilderness landscape whilst you watch the sun slowly slip over the horizon.

The drive back to the Kgotla in the dark provides you with more opportunities to spot lion, leopard and hyena.

Overnight The Kgotla.

Day 5

Today you journey northeast and follow a series of river trails on the way back to the centre of the reserve. Life in this arid environment is always concentrated near water and the ride promises sightings of elephant, zebra, giraffe and wildebeest. The route crosses the watershed and then winds along ancient paths adjacent to a stream flowing north towards the Majali River.



At these elevated heights, the sweeping views to the north reveal the true wilderness character of Mashatu Game Reserve. Baobab trees scatter the landscape as they have for centuries and remarkably two of these giants are found growing directly in the stream itself. This provides an excellent spot for both horses and riders to stop for a rest and a drink.

The remainder of the ride is a mixture of elephant trail trekking and canters across relatively open mopane veld. The final stretch is along the Majali River itself, past rocky pools, cliff faces and ribbons of green grass. You might see baboon, kudu, klipspringers or even crocodile.

Treehouse Camp is finally reached after 4-5 hours of riding.

This afternoon your horses have a well earned rest and you will go either on a guided bush walk or, subject to availability, a game drive with Mashatu Main Camp guides.

The game drive (although at an extra cost) is highly recommended as sightings of lion, leopard and sometimes of cheetah are very likely. This is because the guides are very knowledgeable about the structure and whereabouts of the various prides.

Overnight Treehouse Camp.

Day 6

With an early departure from Treehouse Camp today's ride offers sweeping views to the east and south as you traverse along the edge of a ridge near the centre of the reserve.

The path then descends to a game rich area along the Majali River. The deep river pools are the favourite haunt of baboon and impala. Sooner or later the great herds of elephant come past for their daily drink, to play in the water and enjoy a dust bath.



The final part of the ride is across open plains with some fast canters and then through cool riverine vegetation along the approaches to Two Mashatus Camp.

Arrive at Two Mashatus Camp in time for lunch and the opportunity to relax by the pool.

Later you might take an evening bush walk with your guide. This is the perfect opportunity to see all the smaller residents which are often overlooked whilst passing through on horseback.

Overnight Two Mashatus Camp.

Day 7

On your last full day on Mashatu Game Reserve the riding explores the game rich area along the Majali and Pitsani Rivers.

Overall the riding is relaxed, with the guides responding to game movements whilst keeping their eyes peeled for the big cats.

In the afternoon there is the option of a bush walk or a shorter ride, maybe to the banks of the Limpopo River where elephants are often seen crossing.



Your final dinner is in the lala palm rondavel at Two Mashatus. Experience your last evening in the bush, relaxing around the fire pit with the unforgettable sounds of Africa echoing around you.

Overnight Two Mashatus Camp.

Day 8

The final ride of the Tuli Safari is back to the Stables, following the Limpopo River upstream.

The route passes game rich habitat, including a hyena den and a large wetland which can be home to large flocks of waterfowl. Other notable sightings include Kori Bustard, the largest flying birds in Africa, bat eared foxes and ostrich.

Once at the stables there is time for a shower and lunch before you start your journey home.