

# SOUTH AFRICA AND BOTSWANA - AFRICAN EXPLORER

## ITINERARY

### Day 1

The shared transfers are by road from Johannesburg airport to Camp Davidson in South Africa, by road from Camp Davidson to Two Mashatus Camp in Botswana, and then by light aircraft from Two Mashatus Camp back to Johannesburg. (On occasions the light aircraft transfer is replaced by a road transfer to Johannesburg. A minimum of 4 pax is also needed to confirm the air transfer).

Your flight should be scheduled to arrive into Johannesburg by 09:30 at the latest and an earlier arrival time will be even safer.

If your flight is delayed, then a private transfer (extra cost) will need to be arranged and you will likely have to wait for a vehicle to be sent. To minimise the risk of flight delays spoiling your holiday you may wish to consider arriving into Johannesburg one day before the safari is due to start.

On departure day flights should depart after 20:00.

On arrival at Camp Davidson there should be time to explore the beautiful surroundings and to meet your guides before enjoying a late lunch.

This afternoon you will be matched with a horse to suit your ability and experience and then head off on your first ride. This also gives you a chance to become familiar with your horse and saddle.

The next morning you will be asked to take a simple riding test in order to ensure that you are suitably balanced in the saddle and are able to direct your 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.

The following is the planned itinerary. Please note that the itinerary is subject to change due to local conditions such as weather. The order of the overnight stops in South Africa and Botswana might change and very occasionally you might stay at the horse's base at Horizon instead of at Camp Davidson. These changes are always with your best interests in mind.



Overnight Camp Davidson. Camp Davidson is a permanent tented camp with its own plunge pool. It is set on a rocky outcrop a few kilometres north of the main Horizon Lodge. Each tent has its own shower and toilet.



View from the raised walkway at Camp Davidson



Twin tent at Camp Davidson

## Day 2

A day of exploration in the reserve spent tracking giraffe, zebra, eland, wildebeest, kudu and impala. You may pass “Sunset Lake” where resident fish eagles and Spur-Winged geese are often spotted. The shallow waters give great photo opportunities cantering through the water.

Return back to camp for lunch and a chance to relax by the pool. The afternoon ride provides another opportunity for hippo viewing and some nice canters.



Overnight Camp Davidson.

## Day 3

This morning you set off on another ride tracking the game and possibly enjoy some of the jumping lanes if you would like to jump.

If the weather permits you can finish off with a swim with the horses in one of the many lakes on the reserve before returning to camp for lunch.

Later enjoy a sundowner ride exploring the reserve further.



Overnight Camp Davidson.

#### **Day 4**

This morning you pack up your belongings and depart from Camp Davidson, riding towards the game reserve at Bellevue Plains.

This ride offers lovely long canters on sandy tracks and good game viewing opportunities on the open plains with the possibility of seeing wildebeest, hartebeest, sable, eland, cape buffalo and blesbok.

You arrive at Bellevue Plains in time for lunch by the poolside. After a relaxing lunch break and dip in the pool, this afternoon you explore the reserve further.

You finish the day with dinner overlooking the plains.

This evening there is the possibility, if the whole group would like it, for a night sky safari with local astronomer Dr Philip Calcott (subject to his availability). The absence of light pollution enables incredible chances to view some of the amazing wonders of the universe. This is only possible if the sky is clear of clouds. This is payable locally directly to Phil.





Overnight Bellevue Plains. At Bellevue Plains you usually stay at Savannah Lodge which has five en suite rooms that can be made up as single, twin or double.

The veranda which overlooks a watering hole on the plains is a wonderful place to relax in the afternoon sun or enjoy dinner with a view.

There is a main lounge area with comfy sofas and log burning fire for you to relax in during the cooler winter evenings.

The lodge has its own plunge pool, with wonderful views of the plains beyond. Take a dip and then recline in one of the sun-loungers – a perfect way to relax after a day in the saddle.



One of the bedrooms at Savannah Lodge



Savannah Lodge

## Day 5

Hopefully there will be time for a final early morning ride in the reserve, soaking up the early morning sights and sounds of the African bush before saying goodbye to your South African horses.

You depart from Horizon at around 09:00 and are transferred by road to Horizon Horseback Mashatu in the remote south eastern corner of Botswana (a journey of around 4.5 hours).

You cross the border into Botswana and arrive at the stables in time for lunch and to freshen up.

This afternoon you have your first ride to familiarise yourself with your horse for this leg of the safari. You will be asked to take another simple riding test, similar to the one you did on the first afternoon at Camp Davidson. Please note that even if you passed the test in South Africa you may still fail the Botswana requirements.



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 6



An early start each day means you enjoy the freshness of the morning and maximise game-viewing opportunities in the hours when wildlife is most active. You should soon come across the large herds of elephant for which the Tuli Block is renowned, as well as many different species of antelope; also giraffe, zebra, bat-eared fox, jackal, hyena. If you are lucky, you may even spot lion, leopard, wild dog or cheetah.

After lunch relax in the shady camp or laze by the pool.

In the late afternoon there is a chance to choose between another ride or a bush walk to enjoy the rich birdlife.



Overnight Two Mashatus Camp.

## Day 7

Today you move to Treehouse Camp. You ride out following the movements of wildlife in the area and observing and interpreting the world around you. The tempo of the rides is always varied and depending on the terrain there are opportunities to enjoy the spirit and fitness of the horses at a faster pace.

You arrive at Treehouse Camp for lunch.

This afternoon the group has the choice of an afternoon ride, bush walk, or subject to availability, a game drive with Mashatu Main Camp guides (game drive payable locally). If the group have decided to have a game drive you normally have the chance to explore an area of the reserve which you will not visit on horseback during the African Explorer safari. This part of the reserve is rich in game with a resident pride of lion. The highlight of the drive is a



sundowner in the ancient landscape of rock formations or the Mmamagwa hills, which offer vast vistas across the reserve.

Return to Treehouse Camp for dinner.



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 8

The last day of your African Explorer adventure begins early with a final morning ride before arriving back at the stables. (NB: If the flight back to Johannesburg is not confirmed or cancelled due to bad weather then you may need to miss the morning ride.)

After saying farewell to your horses there is time for a shower and change before brunch.