SOUTH AFRICA - HORIZON SIGNATURE SAFARI

ITINERARY

Day 1

The transfer will leave and return to Johannesburg airport.

Your flight should be scheduled to arrive into Johannesburg by 09:45 at the latest and an earlier arrival time will be even safer. The shared group transfer departs at 11:00. For the return journey to Johannesburg, the shared transfer leaves the lodge at 13:00 and your flight must depart after 19:30.

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.

Overnight Horizon Lodge. After a light lunch in the gardens of the lodge you will be introduced to the horses. The first ride is a gentle introduction to the reserve and an opportunity for first encounters with species such as zebra and giraffe. The riding ranges from walking to cantering along sandy tracks and culminates with sundowner drinks.

Horizon Lodge overlooks a lake with a backdrop of open bushveld. The large colonial veranda provides the perfect spot for relaxing with a drink and absorbing the beautiful surroundings. There is also a swimming pool.

View of the main lodge

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The rooms at Horizon are located throughout the gardens. Some rooms are individual chalets, others adjoin the main lodge. All have en-suite or private bathrooms.

Horizon Lodge and gardens

Day 2

The following outlines the plan for the week but it is possible that rides will be swapped around depending on local conditions.

This 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.

If the guides feel that you are not experienced enough to ride at Bellevue Plains or to Camp Davidson then alternative rides from Horizon Lodge will be organised but no refund will be possible.

The ride this morning is quite sporty. The route follows an open valley which is home to species such as kudu, sable, reedbuck, red hartebeest, waterbuck and impala. The sandy tracks make for good going and the route crosses open grassland as well as dense woodland. You might encounter some of the dark-red pedigree cattle which are bred on the property. When conditions are suitable the last stretch of the ride offers splashy canters along the edge of the

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lake adjacent to the lodge. There may also be the chance to cool off swimming on horseback.

The afternoon ride heads east following the river past a series of dams where you might see the hippo. As you return across the plains you should see game coming and going as they prepare for the night.

Overnight Horizon Lodge.

Day 3

An early start is needed for the long ride from Horizon to Bellevue Plains. In places the bush is thick but after a while the scenery opens up to grasslands with sweeping views to the south and west. Riding through this landscape can give a sense of the vastness of the African plains. This area boasts a high concentration of game with herds of over 300 blesbuck or 80 eland often sighted. Other species here include red hartebeest, tsessebe, ostrich, zebra, wildebeest, impala and giraffe as well as smaller groups of sable, roan and waterbuck. The nyala and bushbuck occupy dense forest-like sections of the reserve, blesbuck and hartebeest stick to the open plains, and waterbuck and reedbuck are normally seen close to streams.

After lunch you have time to relax by the pool or in the lodge. Later you set off to ride to the southern areas of the reserve in search of Cape buffalo. These are members of Africa's famous Big Five and deserve their formidable reputation.

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You therefore need to be alert and responsive to the guides' instructions. This area is known for its spectacular sunsets as the sun sets over the distant headlands of the Waterberg escarpment. A fitting end to an eventful and memorable day in the African wilderness.

Please note that if the guides feel you are not experienced or fit enough for the long ride to Bellevue Plains then alternative rides from Horizon Lodge will be offered and you will transfer to Bellevue Plains by vehicle.

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.

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One of the bedrooms at Savannah Lodge

Savannah Lodge

Day 4

Today you have another long ride through Bellevue Plains as you return to Horizon Lodge by a different route which should provide a good opportunity to see giraffe, which is always a highlight.

Lunch in the Horizon gardens.

The afternoon activity is an optional Big Five game drive (extra cost payable locally) in the nearby Entabeni or Welgevonden game reserves. This offers the possibility of seeing lion, elephant and rhino in their natural environment.

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Overnight Horizon Lodge.

Day 5

The route this morning goes deep into the reserve. After about three hours in the saddle you arrive at a giant wild fig tree for a delicious bush breakfast prepared on an open fire. The route back to the lodge passes through a dense forest where some of the shyer species like to shelter.

The afternoon ride takes you to Camp Davidson for a 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.

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.

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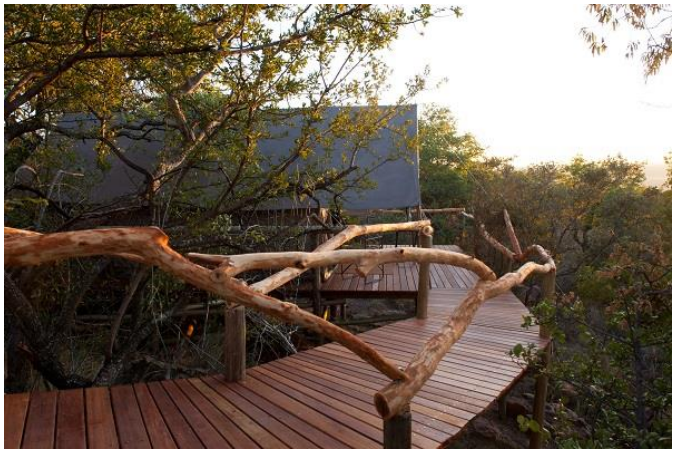

View from the raised walkway at Camp Davidson

Twin tent at Camp Davidson

Day 6

Today's route covers the north eastern areas of the reserve. You descend from camp to cross a stream and plains and then track through bush to the upper reaches of Sunset Lake. This lake is often home to the hippo on the reserve and sometimes also crocodile. You might also see otter, fish eagles and other waterfowl. Hippo, while having a reputation for being some of the most dangerous in Africa, are not a threat during the day but will often honk and blow as they watch you go by.

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If the conditions are right you may have some splashy canters along the water's edge. After you leave the lake you cross open plains with some faster riding back towards the lodge.

After a long lunch, rest and afternoon tea, the afternoon activity is polocrosse which is an amalgam between polo and lacrosse. The game is highly addictive and often brings out competitive passions! The horses are used to playing but riders need no previous experience of polocrosse.

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Overnight Horizon Lodge.

Day 7

This morning's route follows the valley down to the eastern edge of the reserve, before crossing up to the highlands near Camp Davidson and then winding along game trails back to the lodge. There are places on this ride for extended canters should the conditions be right, interspersed with scenic views across the highlands of the Waterberg.

In the afternoon, follow a route with optional jumps on the way to sundowners in a stunning spot. A slow ride back to the lodge at dusk completes the day's adventure.

Overnight Horizon Lodge.

Day 8

This morning is your last opportunity to ride amongst Africa's incredible scenery.

After the ride there is time for a final lunch in the garden before you depart.

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You will be transferred to Johannesburg - O R Tambo Int. airport.

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