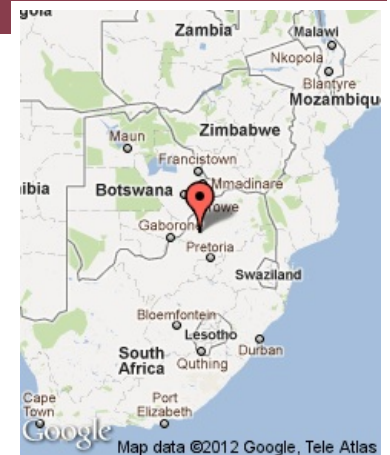


Horseback safaris in South Africa



Highlights

Imagine staying in a luxurious bush home, set on a private game reserve in a malaria-free part of South Africa. Oh, did we mention the 60 resident horses as well? Start the morning with an al fresco breakfast and then canter out into the countryside to seek out animals any wannabe David Attenborough would love to see.

Ant's Hill and Ant's Nest are two lodges set in the stunning Limpopo Province in South Africa. They lie at 4500 feet above sea level, so not only do they enjoy a year-round temperate climate, they also enjoy striking views across the countryside. They're right in the heart of the African bush, so horse-riding here comes with some pretty intoxicating sights. Imagine cantering along sandy tracks to spot a gazelle dive in front of you, or turning a corner to see a herd of giraffes nibbling on leaves. Without the roar of a 4x4 engine, you're much more likely to see these majestic creatures.

This safari holiday in South Africa will get you out into the African bush, so you'll be trekking through scenery most people only get to see on David Attenborough TV programmes. Hopefully you'll get to set eyes on some of the world's most exotic creatures – giraffes, rhinos, zebras and leopards to name a few.

How you decided to explore is totally up to you. With a herd of 60 horses, riding safaris are an obvious choice, with horses suitable for beginners and expert riders alike. Each group will have two guides, so if one of you is an experienced rider and the other is not, you can still participate. When you're not horse riding, you might choose to go on a guided walk or a game drive.

You'll also get to spend time in your own home-from-home at one of the two lodges. Both have swimming pools, idyllic settings and comfy furnishings. And when it comes to food, more often than not, you'll be eating outside at the start of the day under a vast blue sky, or in the evening under a canopy of twinkling stars.

Is it for me?

Flexibility is key here – so if you're travelling in a group where you've got people of mixed abilities, it doesn't matter. Novices and seasoned pro's are all welcome because on each safari there are always two guides who keep an eye on things. Beginners can receive tuition, whilst experienced riders will enjoy riding in such a different environment. Likewise, if you're in a group where someone doesn't want to ride, then that's fine, other activities can be arranged for them.

With a honeymoon suite and luxurious surroundings, this makes a great destination for those looking to relax after hectic wedding planning. The lodges are spacious, so you won't feel like you're living on top of the other guests.

Children are most welcome here as well and encouraged to participate in the activities with their parents. The lodges run 'bug hunts' for the children and they will enjoy going out on a 4 x 4 trip. At both lodges there are child friendly facilities, including sand pits, a badminton & volley ball net and a selection of toys and books. Children are welcome to eat with their parents, but earlier meal times can be arranged so that their parents can enjoy a romantic meal later on!

Accommodation

Prices from
290 GBP (1 night) per person

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Ant's Nest is a lodge that's usually booked out to one group at a time – it consists of a main house with three bedrooms and two further bedrooms set apart in the grounds. All bedrooms are en-suite, there are wide verandahs and a 15-metre swimming pool in the garden.

Elsewhere, on a different reserve, but run by the same people, there's Ant's Hill – a thatched lodge that sleeps a maximum of 12 people. Traditional African fabrics, a four-poster bed and sunken baths make this place pretty special. On top of that, it overlooks a waterhole, so you can watch game while eating your breakfast! For active types, there is also a gym, if you can tear yourself away from the game viewing that is!

In terms of food, most of it's served outdoors. You'll start the day with a light breakfast, during the day you'll have lunch and high tea, while the evening is all about three-course meals or barbecues.

Itinerary

Both Ant's Nest and Ant's Hill offer the opportunity for some of the greatest game viewing in the African bush – from horseback, or by foot or 4x4. We would suggest doing a bit of each! You can canter along open sandy tracks or cross high ridges with spectacular vistas. The pace can be as fast or relaxed as the you like, it is a holiday and not a military operation, so you will also want to schedule a dip in the pool and the all important sundowner watching the wildlife visiting the water hole.

To do your stay justice, you will probably want to stay at least 4 days. After that, you may wish to continue on to another reserve, or explore another part of South Africa. The opportunities are endless.....

A bit more about the horses;

The horses themselves are fit, reliable and responsive, providing a choice for both the professional rider and the absolute beginner. The herd of 60 horses is made up of big thoroughbreds and Arab-boerperd crosses and includes some fabulous children's ponies. Each ride is led by two competent guides and the emphasis is on safety at all times. The enthusiastic rider may wish to ride twice daily and turn their stay into a luxury-riding safari. Families or couples, where some ride and others don't, can enjoy separate activities. As there are always two guides on each ride, novices can go out with their more competent partners without slowing the ride. Basic lessons for non-riders are available at both reserves; many guests learn to ride and gain confidence here.

Tack and equipment: comfortable locally-made Maclelan saddles are used, and provide great comfort for long hours in the saddle. These are based on the famous US cavalry saddle designed for the comfort of both horse and rider alike. There are also a few English saddles available. It is recommended that all guests wear riding helmets. Children under the age of 18 will not be able to ride unless they wear a riding hat. If you plan to spend lots of time on horseback, it's best to bring your own helmet for comfort's sake. Wide brim hat covers are advisable. Your travel insurance company may well make the wearing of riding helmets compulsory. Weight limit is 120 kg (19 stone).

Details

Getting there

Fly to Oliver Tambo International Airport (formally known as Johannesburg International Airport) and from there it's a three-hour drive. Transfers can be arranged or you can hire a car.

Price includes

Peak season: R4150 per person based on 2 sharing

Low season: R3250 per person based on 2 sharing

Single supplement: (only applies in peak season): R2250

Prices vary for groups and children - please enquire for further details.

Included: accommodation, meals, drinks and all activities - horse riding, game drives and game walks.

Not included: travel to and from the accommodation.

Available

Jan—Dec

Typical Duration

4 days - 1 week

Comfort level

Refined (boutique or luxury accommodation and food)

Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed