

Plains game discovery horse riding safaris -

1. Umguza – Ngenile Farm, one night.

2. Cawston Wildlife Conservancy, 4 nights.

Introduction

Seasoned African horse riding safari operators Janine and James Varden of Varden Horse Riding Safaris in Zimbabwe are very excited to announce the launch of the first of a series of rides that will be offered in the Matabeleland region.

James and Janine have moved from Harare and set up a base approximately 23km outside of Bulawayo on the beautiful Umguza River. The Umguza base is centrally located to launch rides into the famous World Heritage Site of Matobo National Park as well as nearby surrounds such as the game rich Cawston Wildlife Conservancy Area in the Nyamandhlovu area.

The first ride on offer is a 5 night Plains Game Discovery Ride. Suitable for intermediate to experienced riders. Offering 6/7 hours a day in the saddle on well-schooled, safari conditioned horses.

- Highlights include guiding by top Southern African Professional Safari Guide James Varden.
- Riding on a 32,000 acre wildlife rich ranch which has been in the same family for 30 years.
- Home grown food.
- Away from the regular tourist routes and areas.
- New area to explore with no other safari companies operating on the property.
- Private reserve so we have ability to do activities not permitted in National Parks.

Guests arrive into Bulawayo airport at midday off SAA and will be collected by us and then transferred to Umguza for a relaxed lunch at the beautiful farm homestead built in the 1950's. This too is set on the banks of the Umguza River and is a working dairy farm.

Day 1

- **For the first afternoon, after guests have been settled into their accommodations, we will take them on an introductory ride around the farm. This gives guests time to get used to their mount and also the tack that we use. We will also advise guests on any safety issues and pertinent points to remember whilst we ride and encounter wildlife.**
- **There will then be sundowners at the end of this approximately 2 hour ride and time to relax and for everyone to get to know each other.**
- **A delicious three course dinner prepared by Frances back at the farmhouse will follow. Weather permitting dinner will be taken outside in the herb garden.**

Day 2

- **The following morning will either be a relaxed start for those who need to catch up on sleep, or for those who want to go birding early then that will also be possible.**
- **The horses are trucked from the farm the 53kms to Cawston Wildlife Conservancy whilst the guests will enjoy a delicious breakfast and then pack their bags and also depart for Cawston with a road transfer.**
- **We then reach the safari camp and settle in before lunch out under the trees on the viewing deck.**

- **This afternoon** there will be our first ride out into the bush to view wildlife from horseback.
- ❖ **All rides will be conducted according to the weather conditions of the time, to what wildlife is around, the conditions of the veld and also the desires and interests of the guests.**
- ❖ **There is no set route or itinerary that has to be completed, such is the privilege and fun of exploring a new area.**
- That afternoon's ride will end before it is dark and allow time for guests to go to the camp and enjoy a refreshing drink by the fire whilst enjoying the stories of the day.
- Another delicious dinner will follow and then a welcome good night's sleep.

Day 3, 4, 5

- The **following mornings** will be an early rise whilst it is still dark, and this depends of course on time of year, so as to get an early start on the horses. Guests will meet at the fireplace for tea, good plunger coffee, fresh fruit and a light bite of cereals, muffins and toast with homemade jams and preserves.
- **We need to mount early so as to make the most of the mornings ride out. This will be anything from 4 to 6 hours depending on what route or what we see and encounter out in the wilds.**
- **Paces of the ride will be determined by the general experience of the riders and also what wildlife viewing we will be doing.**
- ❖ **On the rides the guide will take a radio and cell phone for efficient communications back to camp and also a basic emergency first aid kit.**
- ❖ **Water bottles will be filled and placed into the saddlebags of the guests.**
- The ride will end back at camp again for a hearty and freshly cooked brunch, followed by a short siesta so as to be refreshed for the afternoons ride. This ride will be shorter, perhaps 2 hours maximum and once again guests will be back for drinks and stories around the fire.

Day 6

- This morning will be very much dependant on what time the guests need to leave for their onward travel arrangements. If they are leaving midday then there may be time for another very short ride or walk for an hour, then back to pack, have breakfast in camp and then bid farewell. Transfer times will depend on flight times but it will be a nearly an hour and a half drive from Cawston to the Bulawayo Airport.

Notes

1. The following days will follow a similar activity pattern, however we will add in walks and a sundowner game-drive. We will also have the option of doing a lunch out in the bush.
2. These activities will be dictated by the guests' interests, weather conditions and also how the wildlife viewing is going.
3. Also there are various viewing hides at some waterholes which can be visited and provide for some wonderful photographic opportunities.
4. Of course birding will be a feature of the safaris as with general discussions on the habitats, geology and human history of the area.
5. Also there will be the opportunity for night drives as this is a private reserve.
6. Some of the many mammals that may possibly be seen include Southern Giraffe, Sable, Blue Wildebeest, Plains Zebra, Greater Kudu, Southern Impala, Tsessebe, Common Eland, Bushbuck, Common Duiker,
7. Steenbok, Sharpe's Grysbok, warthog, Bushpig, Chacma Baboon, Vervet Monkey, Scrub Hare, Aardvark, Temminck's Ground Pangolin, Black-backed Jackal, Porcupine, Large and Small Spotted Genets, Civet, Brown Hyena and Leopard.
8. Our horses are part of the family, loved and well cared for.
 - ✓ Breeds include; Boerperd - a hardy bush type, Shire x, TB x, Perchon x.
 - ✓ Heights range from 15hh to 16.3hh
9. Our tack is of excellent quality and we have a range of saddles to fit different horses and cater for guests likes. English leather, Leon Liversage Trailmaster and Australian Stock saddles

10. Most of our horses ride in a snaffle bit.
11. Weight limit Max 200pounds
12. Age limit is 12 years. Families with kids below 12 years is by prior arrangement.

Accommodation:

At Umguza you will be accommodated in a gorgeous Cape Dutch style cottage in Frances' beautiful garden. The cottage sleeps 4 in one double and a twin room with shared bathroom or in the Loft, a funky room with twin beds and outdoor shower looking over the farm. Extra guests can be accommodated in the main farmhouse or with us.

Cawston has a more traditional safari camp style with large walk-in and ensuite tented accommodations. The camp has electricity mains so charging batteries and devices is not a problem, with plugs being 13amp English and some 16Amp round. The whole camp is set on a small ridge under many beautiful indigenous trees which brings welcome shade and respite from the hot African sun. The camp overlooks a small waterhole and wildlife viewing area which is floodlit at night to allow guests to sit out and quietly observe any nocturnal activities.

Conclusion Points

- At the end of the ride guests will be transferred to the Bulawayo airport or we can arrange onward transfers to other safari destinations such as Matobo National Park, Hwange or the Victoria Falls.
- For groups, James Varden is available to continue on with the guests as a private guide to any other safari destinations including the above or Mana Pools National Park, Matusadonha and Gonarezhou National Park. This then gives guests the chance of walking safaris with a top Professional Guide in Big Game areas which is as thrilling and exciting as the riding safaris.

Rates

OPENING RATE SPECIAL \$350 PER PERSON PER NIGHT, ALL INCLUSIVE.

FREE transfers from Bulawayo Airport return. Other onwards destinations to be costed on separately.

There are no National Parks or conservation fees for this specific itinerary.

Drinks will be standard local Zimbabwean beverages. Should guests request specific premium or imported drinks then these, will need to be costed separately.

Includes transfers from Umguza farm to Cawston.

Includes laundry and all non-riding activities i.e. drives, night drives, walks and hide sits.


Exclusive of gratuities.

In keeping with the Varden conservation ethos we consider all elements of safaris, employing local staff, sourcing locally and keeping a low environmental footprint. Nearly everything you eat on this safari will be locally grown.

NOTE: Guests will be required to fill in a pre-ride questionnaire which must be received by us before travel. Guests must be of intermediate to experienced level. Guests overstating their riding ability may not be able to participate in the ride. This is for safety reasons. No refund will be given. Though alternative safari options can be offered.

We look forward to welcoming you on safari.

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Umguza Cottage

1st night of the safari,

□ *Sleeps 4, one double and one twin room, shared bathroom*



*The Loft at Umguza
Twin share,
ensuite, very cosy!*

*View of the Ngenile
Farm garden from
the Umguza
Cottage*

*Stunning outside
shower at the Loft,
with views of the
farm*



Cawston Wildlife Conservancy 2nd 3rd 4th and 5th nights



Herb Garden at Ngenile



Here's lookin' at you...



Riding out at Cawston





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