



## **African Horse and Wildlife Conservation Project**

### **About the Project**

African Dream Horse Safari nestles in the north-west Lowveld region of South Africa's Limpopo Province within the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate – 420 hectares of sprawling nature reserve. The estate is home to the likes of leopard and hyena along with a vast variety of primates, small cats, birds and other savanna animals. The adjacent nature reserve holds Africa's Big 5 – lion, elephant, rhino, leopard and buffalo – and during the project volunteers will go on bush walks, game drives and night drives in the wild to expose them to as much wildlife possible. Nearby you'll find the tourist town and transport hub of Hoedspruit and other towns and cities perfect for day-trips, not to mention the world-famous Kruger National Park.

Unlike other conservation programs, this is designed for people who are interested in learning about an equestrian center and the conservation management thereof – from understanding the correct way to ride, handle and care for horses, providing instruction to new riders, developing basic veterinary skills and riding in the arena and surrounding wilderness trails, to learning all about local eco-systems and conservation, nature guiding, identifying tracks and signs, animal behavior and so much more.

The project is owned and operated by Traci, a devoted guide, accomplished competitive rider and dedicated conservationist. She is qualified in both FGASA Level 1 and Level 2, as well as Advanced Trails guiding and facilitation. Participants will have plenty of opportunity to get to know Traci and other team members like Shannon, who manages the stable yard and works with the horses, and Ryan, who conducts game drives and wildlife internship projects. Their mission is to develop an enduring love for and awareness of the environment and conservation efforts underway in South Africa.

The Wildlife & Equestrian Center stables are located in Hoedspruit itself with 30 indoor stables, separated into two barns. There is a dressage arena, jumping arena with full sets of competition jumps, a smaller arena for beginner riders and a secure lunge ring. As well as horseback safari trails, the equestrian centre offers riding lessons to all abilities and ages. There are also regular horse shows held and volunteers are welcome to speak with Traci about competing if they wish to gain performance experience. Exiting the stables area, you enter the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate for trails riding.

### **Necessary Experience**

Participants of all riding and experience levels are welcome. You do not need to have experience working with or riding horses – but please do let us know if this is the case! The team in South Africa is happy to work with riders of all levels, and will tailor your volunteer experience accordingly.

If you *do* already have experience riding, there will still be plenty of opportunity to advance your skills in new ways and continue building on existing knowledge. The project offers opportunities for jumping, dressage and lunging in the arena and stable yard in addition to trail riding through the bush with your guide.



### **Activities – Equestrian Section**

Participants will be able to further their equestrian knowledge and riding skills relating to horse trails, show jumping/dressage and stable yard within a wildlife environment. Activities and skills-work may include but is not limited to:

- Out rides in the reserve plains-lands
- Horsemanship (general care, lunging, riding)
- Natural horsemanship
- Stable management
- Basic veterinary and horse anatomy knowledge
- Tack care
- Teaching (beginner riders)
- Basic First Aid

### **Activities – Environmental Section**

This section of the program lets participants get to know the African bush, sit around a campfire listening to the calls of the wild while sipping a well-deserved drink and watching the African sunset. You'll be given the time and exploration to fall in love with and gain an in-depth understanding and an awareness of the environment, with conservation as the focus. Venture out for game drives in safari vehicle, guided walks and learn about the nuts and bolts of reserve management and maintenance from roads, fences and erosion to brush – clearing, game capture, research and monitoring. Additional on-going research projects you may get to assist with include:

- Elephant Impact Research
- Elephant population dynamics
- Rhino identification
- Monitoring trap cameras throughout the reserve

### **Daily Schedule**

Although flexible, days are typically split between equestrian arena work with conservation work on the reserve. There is no set wake-up call, and volunteers are responsible for waking and readying themselves each morning. Breakfast at camp is self-served, after which you are transported either to the equestrian center or deeper into the nature reserve to begin a day of learning and hands-on experience. Each day's activities will depend upon weather conditions, the horses, and the needs of your volunteer group. You will be updated nightly on the scheduled activities of the following day.

You will have free time to relax at camp in the mornings before departing, in the evenings after returning from your day's work, and over the weekends. Dinner will be served at camp in the evenings, and lunch will be taken out on the reserve. The evenings are yours to spend as you wish, with optional activities throughout the week like movie nights, bush meals, karaoke, etc. Speak with Traci if there's a special activity you want to inquire about while there! There is no set bed-time.



Weekend schedules are less rigid, with plenty of opportunity for excursions and sightseeing, or perhaps some shopping in nearby town or simply relaxing at camp. Every Friday evening you'll have an opportunity to eat out at a local restaurant (payable direct).

### **Optional Excursions**

Speak with Traci and the project team to arrange any weekend excursions you're interested in. All weekend excursions are at additional cost, as they are usually a full day and require special staff, transportation and other arrangements to cater to the individual volunteers' preferences.

These weekend excursions let you explore and learn more about the Lowveld and surrounding area. You will always be accompanied by at least one guide/supervisor. Availability and pricing subject to change. All arrangements should be made directly at the camp once you arrive in South Africa.

- Wildlife rehabilitation center visits
- White water rafting/tubing
- Micro – lighting
- Hot air ballooning
- Elephant back safari
- Day in the life of an anti-poacher
- Walk in the Wild
- Hiking

### **Accommodation & Food**

Participants sleep in comfortable chalets on the adjacent Big 5 reserve. There are three chalets in total, each with 4 bunk beds (accommodates 3 – 5 students) and an en-suite bathroom. Nearby you will find a full swimming pool with wooden decking and overlooking the bush. The camp has one central common area with fully equipped kitchen, lounge area, and braai area – where meals are shared – that overlooks a waterhole and serves as a common area for socializing, reading, or relaxing while you watch the game go by. The kitchen is fully equipped with a stove, kettle, microwave and other electric appliances and food for a self – service breakfast and lunch. Suppers are prepared for everyone in the evenings. Each chalet gets a turn to cook in the week – whether it is something as simple as burger and chips or a special meal from the country they're from. Monday evenings, the equestrian center's staff chooses and prepares the meal for everyone.

Internet and self-service laundry are available at some additional cost.

***\*\*Please let us know if you have dietary restrictions or allergies. This project is able to cater to all diet requirements – vegan, vegetarian, gluten intolerance, etc. – but they will need to prepare accordingly before your arrival.***

***\*\*The legal drinking age in South Africa is 18. If you choose to drink, please do so responsibly and in moderation. You will not be able to purchase alcohol at camp, but there are shopping trips to town throughout the week when you can purchase your own alcohol.***