



Ride Zimbabwe Itinerary.
Cawston Wildlife Estate and Matobo National Park.
7 nights Plains Game and Rhino Discovery Ride.

Location.

Cawston Wildlife Estate is an intimate 32,000-acre family run ranch offering exclusive and personalised safari experiences on their little slice of paradise in the stunning scenic landscapes of Matabeleland, 70kms north of Bulawayo.

The secluded under the cover of a lush riverine forest with views overlooking an active waterhole, sightings of bushbuck, warthog and kudu are a frequent accompaniment to morning coffee.

Large herds of plains game such as giraffe, zebra, impala, eland, wildebeest, tsessebe, sable and many more mammalian species also call Cawston home and can be observed roaming the land from atop your equine altar.

As the sun sets the nightly chorus comes alive with the stirrings of the carnivores and nocturnal residents.....the stealthy prowls of the leopard, the playful leap of the serval and civet, the forlorn wail of the black backed jackal, the busy shuffle of the porcupine and honey badger and the clandestine crawl of the shy brown hyena, one of the top three rarest carnivores in Africa.

Enjoy the creature comforts whilst exploring the African Bush. Accommodation is provided in Meru style en-suite tents. Enter a state of opulence as you peel back the canvas to reveal a world of comfort and bush chic.....bespoke beds dressed in crisp, cotton sheets perfect for rest and relaxation after a day in the saddle, carefully selected soft wooden furnishings add to the pioneering “Out of Africa” ambiance. With over 220 species of birdlife on Cawston your own private verandah is the perfect place to immerse yourself in the songs of Africa.

“Cawston is a working ranch of wildlife and a few dairy cows to supply the camp with butter, milk, cheese etc. and a small area of mixed cropping. These crops are grown to support the livestock and for the fresh produce for the safaris, whilst some of the milk is turned into delicious farm fresh yoghurts and cheese. Most of the food is organic and freshly produced on the ranch.”

For the second portion of the Safari you will be road transferred two hours to the internationally acclaimed Matobo National Park. Matobo, meaning “bald heads” was the name chosen for this area by the great Ndebele King, Mzilikazi.

Covering approximately 452 square kilometres, the Park was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in June 2003. Situated amongst a range of domes, granite kopjes spires and balancing rock formations, the magnificent Matobo Hills were formed 3 billion years ago deep under the earth’s surface through an igneous intrusion of magma forming the “bald heads” that we see today.

Marvel at this exceptional world of wonders as you meander through the gargantuan rock formations, dwarfing both you and your horse under their colossal might. Drink in the local culture and history as the Bushman Rock Art paints pictures and stories of a time gone by, feel the infamous words uttered by Cecil Rhodes "The peacefulness of it all: the chaotic grandeur of it: it creates a feeling of awe and brings home to one how very small we all are.".....at his grave site on the summit of Malindidzimu as you gaze across the spectacular “View of the World.”

Matobo National Park also holds one of the largest concentrations of black and white rhino and is defined as an IPZ (intensive protection zone) for these impressive animals..... the zenith of your Safari experience will be sightings of one or more of this endangered breed.

Accommodation is provided at the picturesque site of Rowallen Camp, nestled beneath a granite whaleback rock, the essence of Motobo echoes throughout. The camp is semi-permanent and offers a comfortable and rustic old-world charm from which to enjoy your time at Motobo National Park.

The Horses.

There is no greater way to get up close and personal and experience the wildlife of the great African Bush than from the back of a horse. The wildlife exhibits great curiosity and feel very comfortable in the presence of the horses, the scent of human being heavily masked by the delectable "eau de equine!"

Your magnificent steed has been bred or individually handpicked by ourselves especially for being a safari horse, each with their own unique and individual personality, each with an incredible work ethic and each waiting patiently to show you the wonders of Zimbabwe and offer you a memorable safari that you will never forget.

Breeds include Boerperd, Shire Crosses, Thoroughbred Crosses, Friesian Crosses and our home breed. Ranging in height from 15hh to 16.3hh.

Tack is of excellent quality to provide utmost comfort to our horses and clients, a range of saddles from English Leather to Australian Stock Saddles to Leon Liversage Trailmaster. Most of our horses are ridden in a simple snaffle bit.

Riding.

- This ride is for strong intermediate to experienced riders who are capable of spending 6 – 8 hours in the saddle at a time.
- Riders should be able to control their horses at all paces in open space and should also be able to ride away from danger at speed if required.
- The pace of the ride will be medium with a number of lengthy canters, so a good degree of fitness is ideally recommended.
- As we are riding in the bush the terrain does vary with rough ground to navigate, possible holes to avert, tress to avoid, branches to duck under and the odd log (nothing serious) to jump!!
- Suitable for families with children over 12 who are confident and capable riders.
- We do not take riders over 95kgs weight.
- Riding hats are advisable due to the rocky areas and distance from medical facilities.
- Dangerous wildlife such as elephant, buffalo or lion are not found in the areas of Cawston and Matobo.

When to Visit.

- Ideal time to visit is during the dry season (April – end November) when temperatures are cooler and there's less chance of rain.
- Riding is possible during Wet Season (December, January and March), but there is of course an increased chance of rain.
- We close during February due to the wet season.
- Early morning temperatures can be chilly during May, June, July and early August dropping to zero degrees Celsius.
- Midday temperatures at those times are very comfortable and may reach high 20's by end of August.
- September through November mornings are much warmer and midday temperatures can get to the mid 30's.

“Meet James Varden; your professional safari guide and one of the hosts who’ll be ensuring your riding safari is unforgettable. James has the well-founded reputation of being one of the top safari guides in Southern Africa with over 30 years’ experience in the field, and a zeal for all things big and small, wild and woolly. His unrivalled knowledge of birding makes him one of the top 5 ornithologists in the country. He has a deep passion for all aspects of nature, and his enthusiasm for an active and informative safari mean his guests are left with as satisfying a safari experience as possible. Drink in his knowledge and feel his passion being absorbed into your very soul.”

Itinerary.

Day 1 – Saturday.

Once you’ve disembarked and cleared customs the Ride Zimbabwe team will be eagerly awaiting your arrival at Joshua Nkomo International Airport (Bulawayo) arrivals hall. As the majority of International Arrivals to Bulawayo land at 12h05 this is a scheduled pick up, please enquire about alternative arrangements.

The adventure begins with an approximate 90mins land transfer through the stunningly scenic Matabeleland to Cawston Wildlife Estate. On arrival to Paradise there is every chance you will be welcomed by the graceful lope of the gentle giraffe, curiously drinking you in with their liquid brown eyes or the lively leap of the impala as they frolic through the bush.....perhaps the frantic foraging of the warthog will catch your eye and bring a smile to your face!

Once settled in your spacious Meru tents allow the rich aroma of French Press coffee to lure you for a scrumptious homemade afternoon tea, a delightful Safari tradition that you will begin to eagerly anticipate over the coming days!

After a debriefing with your Guides and Hosts and an introduction to your Safari Team we begin with an introduction ride. This is the most important ride, which serves to ensure you’re happily matched with your mount and comfortable in

your saddle. Many hours over the next 7 days will be spent with the horse you've been given, so we want to make sure your safari is memorable for the amazing experience and bond you'll form with your four-legged companion.

Night falls quickly in Africa, and the eerie call of the Fiery Necked Nightjar heralds dusk falling. The nocturnal symphony of wildlife and bird song erupts and accompanies us as we return to Camp for an ice-cold beer or refreshing Gin and Tonic, gazing at the endless expanse of the African night sky whilst enjoying our sundowners on the deck.

A hot, invigorating shower awaits you in your tent, before regrouping for our delicious 3 course dinner where stories will be shared, and you'll get to know both your hosts and fellow riders, the perfect end to a perfect first day.

Overnight : Cawston Wildlife Estate.

Day 2 – Sunday

Allow the intense full-bodied fragrance of freshly brewed coffee to pull you from your slumber as morning coffee or tea is delivered to your tent. Early starts are paramount in Africa to avoid the intense midday sun and also to view game at their most active. In summer wake-up call is at 05h00, in winter (dry season) at 5h30. Winter mornings can be chilly so rug up.

Join the rest of your group for breakfast as you watch the golden orb of the sun rise above the horizon before saddling up for the adventure to truly begin.

The vegetation of the ranch is dominated by thorn scrub and Mopane woodlands with the stunning iconic Acacia and Searsia woodland forming the Northern boundary. Underlying geology is predominantly basalt and Kalahari sand with these terrains supporting Zambezi Teak habitats.

Riding through various scenery and habitats, the song of the Cape Turtle Dove with its distinctive 'work harder' call sounds in time to the rhythm of the

horses' hoof beats. Listen carefully for the call of the White-Crested Helmet Shrikes, a sound that locals say mean game is near!

As the sun rises in the sky and the heat intensifies allow yourself to be hypnotised by the unique smells of the Africa bush, from the scent of dry grass being trampled upon, to the waft of 'gaminess' from the wildlife we'll encounter. The aroma of the African bush is something quite unforgettable.

After a few hours in the saddle, you'll definitely have worked up an appetite for mouth-watering mid-morning brunch waiting for us on our return to camp. The heat of the midday African sun means an afternoon siesta is in order for everyone until afternoon tea at approximately 15h00.

The second ride of the day will begin at 15h30 – 16h00 for 2- 3 hours giving you the opportunity to see the wonders of the African Bush in the beautiful early evening light. The golden browns and tawny golds of the impala and giraffe seem to shimmer under the caress of the sun's dusky rays, the zebra's splendid stripes glowing as they graze under the watchful glare of the setting sun.

Tearing yourself away from this captivating beauty it's back to camp for sundowners around the crackle and hiss of the campfire and another delicious 3 course dinner.

Fresh air and a day in the saddle is an excellent recipe for a good night's sleep.... let the African Bush Orchestra serenade you to slumber.

Overnight : Cawston Wildlife Estate.

Day 3 –Monday

The morning schedules are almost identical every day on Safari with wake-up calls and breakfast times.....however we never can predict what awaits us on our rides!

Enjoy another opportunity for our Discovery Ride to engulf all your senses, the warm caress of the African Sun on your skin, the smell of sweat from your mount wafting through the air, the chorus of the incredible birdlife, the rhythmic

staccato of beating hooves. The beauty of the sights you may see whilst out on a ride is sure to overwhelm you, be it the elegant, long-legged grace of the giraffe, the camouflage of the zebra, the playful dance of the impala and kudu, the stampeding might of the wildebeest or the antics of misbehaving monkeys and baboons, something is sure to leave you awestruck.

Our afternoon ride has the option of ending either with sundowners or spotlighting for some of the nocturnal wildlife. Enter another world where the shy prowl of the brown hyena or busy shuffle of the porcupine, the stealth of the leopard or legendary ferociousness of the honey badger are all waiting patiently to be discovered under the cloak of darkness.

Perhaps, weather permitting we will dine under the cover of the star encrusted velvety black night sky.

Overnight : Cawston Wildlife Estate.

Day 4 – Tuesday

Today heralds our final day of exploration at Cawston Wildlife Estate. Allow yourself to be captivated and enthralled once more by the vast variety of plains games as you ride with abandon through the magical African Bush, become seduced once more by the call and shrill of the hypnotic bird song, engrain and imprint in your mind every trail and path you travelled with your trusty steed for this land has now become part of you.

The afternoon ride will end at the sundowner site, giving you another wonderful opportunity to see the incredible creatures that come out after dark, maybe you will be lucky and spot an Aardvark on this spotlight safari!

A variation of this day is the option to lunch Al Fresco in the Bush, end the ride at a sundowner spot and be driven back to camp.

Overnight: Cawston Wildlife Estate.

Day 5 –Wednesday

Enjoy a relaxing morning as you will have the opportunity to sleep in whilst your horses are transported to Motobo National Park for the next part of your Zimbabwe Adventure! For your final exquisite meal at Cawston you will be treated to a cooked English Breakfast before packing up for the two-hour transfer to Rowallen Camp at Motobo National Park.

The road transfer takes you through the colourful city of Bulawayo, wide-tree lined avenues and charming colonial architecture makes the “City of Kings” quiet the feast for your eyes.

Once you arrive at Rowallen Camp and settle into your new abode, allow your taste buds to be tantalised by yet another heavenly lunch after which you will finally be reunited with your beloved horses!

Our first ride in Matobo will give an overview of the wonders that are hidden and waiting to be explored throughout this ancient landscape.

Return to camp as the burning red sun slowly creeps towards the horizon for evening drinks along with a 3-course dinner before being lulled to sleep in your cosy camp cot once again by the nocturnal stirrings of this primeval land.

Overnight: Rowallen Camp.

Day 6 –Thursday

The intoxicating aroma of coffee once again stirs you from your slumber at 05h00/05h30 in preparation for a day in the saddle exploring some of the oldest landscapes in the world.

An unforgettable day is about to unfold as first order of business is the opportunity to track the Parks most famous residents, the Rhino, from aboard your valiant steed.

As you ride through the valleys and pass close to the monumental granite kopjes, a rock hyrax or 'dassie' may chatter at you in alarm,....a harsh 'cry' in this otherwise serene and tranquil landscape. As midday approaches and the heat intensifies, you'll see the dassie's main predator, the Black or Verraux's Eagle circling hungrily overhead. These particular birds of prey are extremely abundant in Matobo, with its population being one of the highest in Southern Africa.

As the great African sun rolls high in the sapphire sky it is time to return to camp for a delicious brunch, and a well-deserved siesta until the temperature cools down later in the afternoon.

Afternoon tea is obligatory before you head out on the second ride of the day at about 15h30/16h00!!

Not only does Matobo hold an abundance of rhino, the Park also has one of the highest concentrations of leopard, with 5 leopards every 25 kilometres!! Perhaps we may be fortunate to spy this spotted cat glistening in the dusky evening light, slinking surreptitiously along the path in search of prey.

All great days in the saddle must end around the burning embers of a campfire with stories, laughter, cold beers and scrummy hot food.

What more could you ask for at the end of a day in the African Bush?

Overnight: Rowellen Camp.

Day 7 – Friday

The now familiar clink of the coffee cup heralds the arrival of a new day and the promise of new adventures.

Once again, we explore this land of intrigue and Indigenous spirit, eerie in the early dawn light. Perhaps we will find some sable or impala grazing greedily in the swampy valleys or perhaps some eland seeking refuge in the Mopane scrub, perhaps the mighty Rhino will once again grace us with their presence.....anything is possible in paradise!

This afternoon brings a break from the saddle as we ascend upon the sacred Ndebele site, the summit of Malindidzimu or “place of benevolent spirits” where we can visit the grave of Cecil John Rhodes. This “view of the world” offers unparalleled vistas of the Matobo landscape, a unique tapestry stretching as far as the eye can see. The kaleidoscope of colours dancing across the granite at sunset will certainly take your breath away, lichens varying from vivid greens to azure blues to russet oranges illuminated by the far-reaching fingers of the sun. The scurry and scratch of Rainbow Lizards and Elephant Shrews the only sound punctuating the peacefulness and serenity that exists at Malindidzimu.

(Please note: there is a small additional fee to visit the grave and the View of the World.)

Returning to camp a final farewell dinner awaits as the magical sounds of the African Bush perform their grand finale.

Overnight: Rowellen Camp.

Day 8 –Saturday

The morning of your last day presents a final opportunity for an early morning ride before breakfast, a final chance to savour the sights and sounds of your safari and the time to say goodbye to the horse you’ve shared so many enchanting experiences with.

After breakfast it is time to road transfer back to the airport heading towards home all wrapped in your wonderful safari experiences, or onto your next safari destination.

You may have left Africa, but Africa will never leave you and we look forward to welcoming you back to Zimbabwe when the foot fall of your faithful horse and the beat of the African drum calls you to return.

Please Note:

- This horseback Safari is extremely exciting but not too strenuous.
- This itinerary only serves as a guide; all scenarios are dependent on the season, weather and wildlife movements.
- During cooler months one longer ride may replace the normal morning and evening rides.
- Ride Zimbabwe Safaris reserves the right to alter the itinerary in any way and leaves this to the discretion of the guides. Local weather conditions may also affect game movements.
- We strongly advise guests to pack a set riding kit in hand luggage in case of lost luggage.
- Deviations from the flights suggested may incur extra transfer costs and may affect riding time.

Ride Zimbabwe reserves the right to change the order of the safari due at its discretion