



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## South Africa 2010

### Horizon Horseback Adventures

#### Information Sheet

Horizon Horseback Adventures is based on Triple B Ranch in the Waterberg in South Africa's northern Limpopo province (formerly the Northern Transvaal). Triple B, which has long been one of South Africa's most successful working cattle ranches, continues to operate as a cattle, game and arable farm but in addition to this, part of the farm is now dedicated to riding and is a centre for several different riding holiday options. This Information Sheet covers a stay at the main Horizon base - for details of Horizon's 'Saddlebag Safaris' please ask for our separate information sheet. A stay at the main Horizon base is a fantastic choice for riders who want variety and flexibility. All levels of rider from novice to experienced are individually catered for and it works very well for those who want concentrated riding but also for those who want to combine riding with a variety of other activities. The riding on offer includes rides out to enjoy the scenery (the Waterberg, which neighbours the Drakensberg, has recently been declared a UNESCO biosphere reserve), rides to view and track game, cattle work, polocrosse and cross-country. Non-riding activities include walks, game drives, visits to neighbouring game reserves, farm and village tours. There is also a new swimming pool in the grounds for guest use and a tennis court nearby. Accommodation is comfortable and welcoming, food is delicious and (one reason many people return) Laura and Shane Dowinton, who own Horizon, and their staff will do all they can to ensure everyone's stay is personal and tailored to suit. Horizon is an easy two and a half to three hour drive from Johannesburg.

**Dates** We can arrange for you to stay at the Horizon base for any number of nights throughout the year, although we generally suggest 7 to 10 nights to allow you to make the most of all the activities and riding on offer. Please call us to check availability for the dates you have in mind.



**The Horses** There are over 75 horses at Horizon with an excellent selection to suit both the experienced and less experienced rider. The majority are between about 14.1hh and 16.3hh and have either been bred locally or on the farm itself. They include South African Boerperd crosses, part Thoroughbreds, Anglo Arabs, pure Boerperds and pure Thoroughbreds. They are all working 'bush horses' that are honest, good natured and sensible - yet they are also responsive and forward going to ride, as well as being well schooled and very sure footed. Maclellan style saddles (which are quite similar to westerns) are used, with some English or Australian stock saddles available for those who prefer. Shane Dowinton who runs the riding from Horizon is an expert horseman (in the 'horse whisperer' mould!) and breaks and schools many of the horses himself. He has been using gentle training methods on young and problem horses for over 20 years and his skill and technique when handling young horses is superb. His horses are calm and contented and he is real pleasure and an inspiration to watch.

**Riding** If you book a stay at the Horizon base you will have a choice of several different riding options, the emphasis being on tailoring your itinerary to suit. You may choose daily rides out - a few hours in the morning and / or evening, or (weather allowing) full day rides with a picnic lunch - to explore over 20,000 acres of undeveloped bush. Rides often include game viewing - game is not the main focus at Horizon but part of the farm is being preserved as a small private nature reserve and is home to hippo, giraffe, zebra, kudu and several species of smaller antelope such as impala, steenbok and duiker. For those who want a more intense 'game experience' a 2 night mini riding safari, staying in a comfortable lodge on a reserve which boasts, (amongst other game) white rhino, giraffe, zebra and wildebeest is an option or you can opt to go on an afternoon game drive at neighbouring Entebeni Reserve, home to the 'Big 5' (there is a small extra charge for both these options). Other riding options at Horizon include working cattle - as part of a busy cattle ranch with a herd of 1200 stud Bonsmara cattle (an attractive and hardy African breed), there are always cattle to be moved, brought in for branding, weighing or to be checked for sickness - and Bonsmara cattle are good-natured and ideal for mustering. Polocrosse (an amalgam of polo and lacrosse!) is another very popular option and there are always plenty of chances to try this exciting - and very addictive - game. Those who have never played before will be given basic instruction and lots of encouragement (one chukka is usually all it takes to become an addict!) and friendly matches are often arranged. As well as all of this, riding lessons are available, mounted games such as barrel racing and treasure hunts are organised and experienced riders can also try the ranch's show jumps and its cross-country course. The latter was designed by one of South Africa's top course builders and built for use in an annual '3 phase' event hosted by the farm. It includes over 100 fences of various levels. You will be asked to wear a hard hat when you ride - there are some hats available to borrow but we suggest you take your own to ensure a good fit.

**Pace** One of the main emphases at Horizon is flexibility and the pace at which you ride is tailored (as far as possible) to suit. The going around Horizon itself is generally good, with many wide, soft and sandy tracks that are perfect for canters but equally, with rides out from the base split according to guests' ability and preferences, you can choose a gentle pace if you prefer, enjoying the atmosphere, space and peace of the African bush.



**Riding Experience** To ride at Horizon you should have some previous experience, but riders of all levels are welcome and riding programmes are (as far as possible) individually tailored to suit. The variety of riding and horses on offer mean it is an ideal choice for those who are reasonably experienced - but less experienced riders, and also novices, are very welcome. Programmes are flexible and great care is taken to ensure that experienced, less experienced and novice riders all have fulfilling and fun riding. There are plenty of staff and several guides and if guests are of different standards, groups can be split according to ability. Generally rides are limited to 4 or 5 guests - or you can ride alone with a guide if that suits best. The ranch is also a fabulous place for a family holiday. The minimum age is usually 12 years and children must have some riding experience but younger or novice children can sometimes be taken by arrangement, especially if the whole lodge is booked for a private group. During July and August families with children of any age are welcome - if you are planning a trip with children please call us to discuss.

**The Terrain** One of the great joys of riding in this area of South Africa is the variety of terrain. Although cultivated in parts and used for cattle and crops, much of the land around Horizon is undeveloped and even the areas used for grazing are largely untouched bush and scrub, much as they would be in a natural state. There is thick bush in places, with diverse vegetation, but this then opens out to allow long canters on wide sandy tracks, across open farmland and over grassy plains. Rolling hills and rocky outcrops provide spectacular views of the surrounding country and the Melk River, which cuts through the land, empties into large lakes or 'dams' where water is stored - and which provide wonderful opportunities to swim - with or without your horse!

**Accommodation** The Horizon base can sleep a maximum of 10 guests (occasionally more for families or if booking as a private group) with accommodation in the main ranch house and in three thatched cottages ("rondavels") close to it. The ranch house was originally a farmhouse which has now been tastefully converted to provide comfortable, homely guest accommodation. With no TV or newspapers it is the perfect spot to get away. It has three comfortable twin bedded rooms - the two that are normally used for guests are garden facing with en-suite bathrooms with loo and shower and French doors opening onto the veranda; a third smaller room is used on cross-over nights and as an extra room when needed. The three thatched rondavel cottages are set slightly away from the main house and are comfortable and attractively furnished with double or twin beds (one is the 'honeymoon suite') and en suite bathrooms with bath / shower and loo. The ranch house has a good sized, comfortable sitting and dining room with open fireplace, and a large covered veranda that is the perfect spot for meals on warm, balmy evenings and for evening drinks. Lunch or barbecues are often served in a thatched 'boma' or under a shady syringa tree close to the house. There is a swimming pool in the garden and the grounds stretch down to the shores of a small lake where there is the chance of seeing the resident wildlife come in to drink.



**Meals** You will be extremely well fed at Horizon with three delicious home cooked meals a day, all produced from fresh local ingredients as well as tea and snacks in between! Barbecues or "braais" - a great South African tradition - are a favourite and often feature the farm's superb beef. Drinks are included - you might start the evening with a Pimms or Gin and Tonic and good quality local wines are served with lunch and dinner. Vegetarians can be well catered for but please let us know in advance of any special dietary requirements.



**Weather** This part of Southern Africa is a good place for riding year round. In summer, November to February, daytime temperatures can reach 35 degrees C or more, however, so you will normally ride early in the mornings and late afternoons when it is pleasant and cool, with the hottest part of the day spent relaxing by the swimming pool. Summer is the rainy season with thunderstorms or showers possible between November and February, but rain is generally in short sharp bursts and it is often hot in between so rain rarely interferes with riding programmes. Autumn is March to April, when it is usually pleasantly warm (mid 20's C) and very pretty as leaves change colour. It begins to cool down, particularly at night, in May. June to September is winter, the dry season. It is usually still warm (shirtsleeves weather) during the day, but it can get cold when the sun goes in, with temperatures sometimes dropping to just above zero at night.

**What to bring** We will send you a list suggesting what to bring when you make your booking.

### **Example Itinerary:**

You are free to decide how to spend your days at Horizon and the staff will do all they can to ensure you have a wonderful time. Please call us to chat about your riding experience and the amount of riding you would like to do so we can help plan your stay. Two night 'mini safaris' can be arranged for an extra charge (750 Rand; approx £50) - usually Tuesday to Thursday each week. In addition to riding, guided walks, farm tours, village visits, game drives and visits to neighbouring game reserves can all be arranged. If you wish to combine a stay at Horizon with a stay at another local lodge (eg Ant's Nest or Ant's Hill which also offer riding - see our separate information sheet) you will need to book these in advance. The following is an example of a typical itinerary at Horizon:

**Day 1** Transfer to the Horizon homestead (about a 2 ½ hour drive from Johannesburg). Lunch and time to relax after your journey before meeting the horses and a late afternoon ride around the farm to get used to them and for a first view of the area. Return to the ranch house for drinks, dinner and the night. (D).

**Day 2** Early morning tea and a light breakfast and today you might help muster and move cattle. Triple B Ranch is one of South Africa's top stud Bonsmara farms with more than 1500 head of cattle, which need to move regularly to new pastures, or round them up to bring in for checking and weighing - cattle must continually be monitored and checked and there is always work to do. You might follow this with a cooling swim with your horse! Return to base for lunch, a siesta and a dip in the plunge pool. In the late afternoon set off on an exhilarating ride along some of the farms many miles of sandy tracks - ideal for some long canters! Dinner and the night at the ranch house. (B,L,D).

**Day 3** Breakfast and perhaps an introduction to Polocrosse today - starting with the basics you will soon be addicted to this invigorating sport. After lunch you might want to visit the local town of Vaalwater, for some retail therapy bush style! Return to Horizon for afternoon tea and then set off riding to a scenic view point on the dam wall stopping for a drink whilst the sun sets before heading back to base. Dinner and the night at the ranch house. (B,L,D).



**Day 4** An early wake up call and a chance to watch horses being brought into the corrals. After breakfast you might embark on a 2-night wilderness safari. Set off from Horizon on a 4 - 5 hour ride, stopping for a break and a drink on the way, to a stone and thatch lodge set in a private game reserve. Lunch on arrival, followed with a siesta by the pool and afternoon tea. In the late afternoon your guides will take you on a bush walk to see more of the reserve and to track game, which will hopefully include giraffe, zebra and hippo. Return to the lodge as the sun sets for drinks and dinner around the camp fire. (B,L,D).

**Day 5** A long morning ride in the game reserve, day tracking game such as white rhino or giraffe through the bush. Return to the lodge in time for a lunch and a chance to relax by the pool. The afternoon brings the option of a game drive for those wanting to see buffalo or another ride within the reserve. Arriving back at the lodge for sundowners on the veranda. Dinner and night at the lodge (B,L,D)

**Day 6** An early call for breakfast with early risers likely to see game such as giraffe, wildebeest and zebra. Ride back to the ranch house at Horizon arriving in time for Lunch. Overnight Horizon (B,L,D)

**Day 7** Today offers another challenge - those who wish can try their hand at cattle cutting. After bringing a herd in from pasture you take it in turns to move one cow away from the group, an activity that puts you and your horse against the herd instinct of cattle. Return to the ranch for lunch and a siesta or a chance to tour Triple B Ranch with the owner Charles Baber, a great character and mine of information. In the afternoon set off on a ride into the Triple B game area, tracking Giraffe or zebra and learning the signs of the wild and medicinal values of the native bushes and trees. Dinner and the night at Horizon. (B,L,D).

**Day 8** Your final morning and a mounted treasure trail might be organised - a great game with clues leading you to various points on the farm. Finish with a celebratory drink before returning to the ranch house for a farewell lunch. Alternatively those addicted can try another session of polocrosse. Depart in the late afternoon for Johannesburg. (B,L)

### 2010 RATES:-

**Low Season** - £150 per person per night

**(10th January to 28th February & 1st May to 30th June)**

**High Season** - £185 per person per night

**(1st March to 30th April & 1st July to 10th January 2011)**

Child under 16 years - £150 per person per night high season; £123 per night low season

The rates **INCLUDE** all riding and other available activities, twin accommodation, all meals and drinks. They **EXCLUDE** international flights to Johannesburg and taxes, transfers between Johannesburg and Horizon, personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), supplements for single rooms, extra activities (eg 3 day mini safari, game drives on neighbouring properties), any visa fees and any tips you may wish to leave staff



**Transfers** - We can arrange car transfers from Johannesburg to Horizon on request. There are regular transfers to Horizon departing Johannesburg International airport at 10.00 and there is a regular return transfer departing Horizon at 3pm. The seat rate for these transfers is £55 per person each way (£110 per person return). We can also arrange transfers at other times - the rate is usually £150 per car each way (£300 return) in a Polo type car seating 1 to 3 passengers; for a bigger vehicle (eg Condor) seating 1 to 4 passengers the rate is £200 each way and for a minibus seating up to 7 passengers, it is £250 each way. Please note that transfer rates are subject to change and should be confirmed when you book.

**Single rooms** - The above accommodation rates are based on two people sharing a twin room, however as Horizon is a popular choice for single travellers, the lodge allocates 3 rooms (the rooms in the house) to single travellers without charging a supplement. Please enquire about availability of these rooms when you book. If none of them are available and you are not prepared to share a twin room with another guest of the same sex if asked (e.g. if the ranch house is fully booked and / or the numbers or mix of guests requires) to guarantee a single room, a 20% single supplement is normally charged. Please note that this is not compulsory for single bookings, but it will be charged if you are not prepared to share a room if necessary.

**Example costing****High Season - A 7 night stay at Horizon is £1405 per person.****Low Season - A 7 night stay at Horizon is £1160 per person.**

This rate assumes twin accommodation and includes a return vehicle transfer at set times from / to Johannesburg

**Group / family bookings** – We can usually offer special rates for groups or families booking the whole lodge (minimum 8 people). **Please enquire for details****TRAVEL / FLIGHT INFORMATION**

The nearest international airport to Horizon is Johannesburg. British Airways, South African Airways and Virgin all have one or two direct daily flights from London to Johannesburg, normally departing London in the evening (around 20.00) and arriving Johannesburg early the next morning (around 08.00).

You can also fly via Europe (eg with Air France, KLM, Al Italia) although we strongly recommend a direct flight to minimize the risk of delays etc. Airfares vary depending on the airline you choose and the season, but expect to pay around £550 to £850 per person for a London / Johannesburg economy return. We would be very happy to advise further on and to book flights for you. Please ask if you would like a flight inclusive quote for your holiday (our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213).

**General visa and health information** (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking)**Visas** If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting South Africa for a holiday only and staying less than 90 days you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.**Health** No inoculations are legally required for entry to South Africa from Europe but Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid and Hepatitis A. are recommended. The Waterberg is a Malaria free area but if you are planning to travel on in South Africa after / before your visit you may be advised to take anti-Malaria tablets. You should always consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.**(updated 03/03/10)**