

## **Araber Safari Lodge Namibia – a dream come true!**

Araber Safari Lodge in Namibia – a dream for every discerning endurance and safari rider

Not far from Windhoek lies the Arab Safari Lodge, nestled in a huge, idyllically located wildlife reserve.

We move into our lodge room with a view of the park – a beautiful, spacious, quiet room in African style. From the very first second, you feel at home here.

There are a few other guests here; the lodge is currently hosting several Chinese groups celebrating Chinese New Year – it's quite a bustle!

After checking into our room, we are sent straight to our hostess Ingeborg in the stables. Each animal is introduced to us individually. Ingeborg breeds her horses with love and dedication. Each horse has its own place and is thoroughly cared for and looked after – great importance is attached to good horse husbandry here!

It is already quite late, so we won't be able to go horse riding today. Instead, we treat ourselves to a three-course meal at the restaurant – today's menu features fresh oryx steak, which we don't want to miss out on. Ingeborg and another German woman join us, making for a convivial and entertaining evening. The next morning dawns early. We set off on a morning ride in the beautiful reserve, hoping to see some animals. My partner has decided to spend a lazy morning by the pool today, while the three of us set off on our ride.

We are taking it a little easier today, as distance training is planned for midday and we need to conserve our energy. Natifa is my companion for the day, an incredibly finely ridden mare with lots of spirit and typical Arabian behaviour: a stone or a branch are dangerous opponents that need to be examined closely. Nevertheless, Natifa is super easy to handle and, after a short period of getting used to her, is a lot of fun. Kudus and eland antelopes cross our path again and again, and we even catch a brief glimpse of shy bat-eared foxes. We also encounter several oryx antelopes.

Many species of birds also live in the reserve, but I cannot remember all their names.

We encounter several giraffes with their young and large herds of zebras, and we are constantly surprised by how many animals we see.

A herd of warthogs comes quite close to us, so we are a little cautious as they have some young ones with them. After a good hour, we take a break at a small lake and meet up with my partner again, who arrives with the jeep, a few cold drinks and some snacks. We take a break in good company and enjoy the shady spot. The horses are led to the water while Ingeborg tells us that a few years ago, a couple of crocodiles escaped from the neighbouring reserve through a hole in the fence and did not

All of them were recaptured. There's no better place to swim in any lake there. But we can't spend the whole morning here, as it quickly gets hot. We set off and make our way home. Most of the animals have already retreated from the heat and are making themselves comfortable somewhere in the shade. Ingeborg is already preparing us for our distance training in the afternoon. We are to feel the speeds of our horses at a trot and a gallop. It proves anything but easy to figure out whether the horse is now running at 16 km/h or 20 km/h.

Back at the stables, the horses are cared for and given a quick wash; the welfare of the horses is highly valued here. After a tasty, light lunch, I head for the pool, while my partner sets off on a jeep safari to see rhinos, giraffes, zebras and warthogs (not all of which remained clean) up close.

I relax, enjoy the glorious weather and sunbathe by the pool. At around 4 p.m., I slowly stroll over to the stables to prepare Natifa for my distance training. There are three of us today and I am very excited to see what awaits me. I have never done distance training before, so I wait impatiently for it to start.

Ingeborg has already set up her laptop and measuring equipment, while my partner watches the proceedings intently from a comfortable chair with a cold beer. It is a 2 km loop through the bush, which you complete at different speeds. At the start of the loop, the average speed you should ride at is specified, for example 16 km/h, 18 km/h or 20 km/h. Then you set off on your own and complete the loop at the gaits you want, but try to stay as close to the specified speed as possible. It is incredibly difficult to estimate your own speed. However, it is great fun.

I trot or gallop briskly along, and a large herd of antelopes grazes peacefully right by the side of the path. I even encounter a kudu on one of my routes. Galloping through the bush at a brisk pace, completely alone, is a unique experience! Back at Ingeborg's, I am asked to estimate my own speed, which is then compared with the actual average speed. As expected, I am miles off the mark. But it's my first time and after two or three laps I am slowly getting better.

Natifa is great fun and moves forward briskly. An absolute dream! I can't get enough of the laps, it's just so much fun! But Natifa needs a break and so do I. In this heat, training becomes more and more exhausting after a while, and it's slowly getting dark. We ride back to the stables and take care of our horses. It's already our last evening and once again we have nice company, with whom we sit together for a while longer in the evening and enjoy a delicious dinner.

My stay at the Arabian Safari Lodge is coming to an end far too quickly, and I would have loved to stay a few days longer. The beautiful, graceful Arabian horses with their wonderful temperament, Ingeborg with her hospitality and friendly company, the extensive reserve with its countless animals, and the delicious

food – I would have loved to enjoy them all a little longer. I will try to come back as soon as possible!

All information about the programme can be found at

<http://www.reiterreisen.com/okasta.htm>

Angelika Kaiser, February 2016