

Waterberg Safaris, South Africa, April 2011

Up-close wildlife encounters on horseback

The warm welcome at the lodge, the sweeping views, the luxurious facilities, the excellent cuisine and the selection of horses are set to captivate me for the next three days. First, I am shown to my accommodation: the combination of African elegance with a breathtaking view over the surrounding bush landscape makes my home for the next few days a true oasis of peace and relaxation. Before a wish has even formed, it has already been fulfilled by the attentive staff, who are prepared for every preference and eventuality.



Upon arriving at the lodge, I am immediately treated to a wide variety of delicious buffet dishes on an outdoor deck veranda, before relaxing on the imposing, cushioned loungers by the pool and taking in the sweeping views. From my room, which is accessed via a spiral staircase, I can also enjoy the fabulous view – you can often spot animals at a waterhole situated not far from the lodge down in the valley. After afternoon tea, the horses are saddled up on the grounds and we set off on a leisurely ride, during which we encounter rhinos, kudus, zebras, wildebeest and a game drive – an alternative to the horse rides. Just in time for sunset, we meet up with the team, who prepare a wonderful sundowner for us so we can savour the twilight to the full. Back at the lodge

, meanwhile, a impeccably laid table awaits us under the open sky in the boma, with a campfire in the background – what an atmosphere! In bad weather, we dine indoors by the fireplace, which also creates a unique ambience of its own. Two members of staff always join us for dinner, and we enjoy the adventurous African tales they have to tell.

On one occasion, when I was taken to the stables at my request – from where the horses are then ridden to the lodge – I learnt more about the horses: they live alongside the wild animals in the bush, yet still return to the stables punctually for feeding times. Through this peaceful interaction with the wilderness, you can get incredibly close to the animals on horseback, which is always fascinating. Riding takes place almost exclusively in comfortable McClellan saddles. The horses range from very calm and composed to energetic, spirited challenges. Waterberg Safaris has a total of two stables, as it comprises two lodges: both are similar, although one lodge is older than the other and is geared more towards families. However, the unrivalled service is the same at both lodges, as is the distinctive atmosphere. As well as expert massages, every other wish is catered for, and excursions range from elephant safaris to visits to local schools.



You're woken up in the morning with coffee or tea – a fantastic alternative to the monotonous ringing of an alarm clock! After a hearty breakfast, the horses are ready and waiting, and another ride teeming with wildlife can begin. As well as the many antelopes, we come across a family of giraffes, which we watch with interest; we catch a brief glimpse of a buffalo and come within touching

. But it's not just the abundance of wildlife that captivates me; it's also the landscape with its endless expanse and dense bush.

If you want to unwind from everyday life, be thoroughly pampered, enjoy the African bush and combine all this with horse riding, this is exactly the right place. As soon as you arrive, all you have to do is enjoy yourself!

Lara von Breidenbach

Link to the programme: <http://www.equitour.com/saasta.htm>