

IN THE LAND OF GIANTS

THE TULI SAFARI LIMPOPO HORSE SAFARIS



As a rider, one wants a certain experience on a horse riding safari: good, faithful and honest horses combined with knowledgeable and experienced guides. As a photographer, one looks at places with critical eyes, be it scenery, wildlife, camps or even the night sky. I am fortunate enough to be both a rider and photographer of many years. So imagine my thrill, when my business partner, Laura said "T, you have to come to Botswana for two weeks to take some pics, I am afraid?". Not only were we going to do a two week photoshoot shadowing the Tuli safari, but also we were there to help direct the new drone video!

Botswana is one of my favourite countries, and the Mashatu Game Reserve in the Tuli Block, the setting for the Tuli Safari, certainly does not disappoint. Its

spectacular rock formations and iconic Mashatu trees staccatoed throughout the bush, cannot but impress. This terrain isn't known as 'The Land of the Giants', for nothing, and it is literally teeming with herds of elephant. One afternoon, we were lucky enough to witness a 300 large herd crossing from Zimbabwe into the reserve. It was truly amazing to see how silent so many large animals can walk through the African bush. It was a huge comfort to see the professionalism of the Tswana guides, West, David, Mpho and Mushi as they weaved through dense patches of bush with bull whip in their hands, ready to crack if an elephant was startled. When these huge majestic giants encounter the horses, they raise their trunks like snorkels to investigate. Once no threat is established, they carry on, mustering their young between their legs.





The Two Mashatus camp, the first camp of the the Tuli Safari, is in an area that the elephant frequent so you are almost guaranteed to see ele's almost immediately on the first day. This camp is charming, nestled under a huge Mashatu tree, with dining and lounge rondavels thatched with palm leaves. A secluded swimming pool is also very welcome to cool down in after a long ride. After hours game viewing in the saddle, the guests were looking forward to supper. I know I had certainly worked up a healthy appetite behind the camera. To my astonishment, a three course meal was produced on an open fire, and not just any three course meal either: Fire roasted bone marrow, Tarzan lamb, followed by a delicious banana and chocolate tower!
But what any rider really wants to know is, what are the



horses like? Personally, I've always steered away from 'horse riding holidays' after a terrible experience I once had on a riding excursion in Canada many years ago. Large 'clumpers' were produced for us to ride, and we were not allowed to even get out of a walk for fear of the company being sued! Thankfully I can report that the horses you'll ride on the Tuli Safari are certainly not 'clumpers', quite the opposite, and you will definitely get out of a walk. In fact you might actually be relieved to walk after the many, many extended canters through the bush. The only way to describe the horses to horsey people is that they are beautiful and look fabulous. More importantly, they are well schooled, athletic, brave and experienced around big game such as elephant, which just makes riding them a total pleasure. There is even a bush cross country course to enjoy.





The Tuli Safari traverses the vast Mashatu reserve from camp to camp, four in total, each of which are distinct and unique. However, it is hard to beat the experience of 'Kgotla', a disused tribal court. The Kgotla is made from leadwood branches, which twine around, forming an enchanting 'boma' where you sleep and eat around a large open fire. Set amongst ancient rock formations and canyons, there is a certain mystique about this place.

Being a photographer, I was also wanted to see the wildlife and certainly Mashatu Game Reserve is packed with large herds of game. One day we saw a journey of giraffe about 70 strong and a large herd of eland around the next corner. My three favourite sightings by far, however, were the hyena



in the riverbed, which we followed to its den where it met its mate, the lion lying motionless under the bush, with a huge belly having just consumed a wildebeest and the elegant cheetah resting in the shade of the midday sun.

So would I recommend this safari to riders? Yes, absolutely, I guarantee you will not be disappointed in the horses, riding, game viewing and generally fun experience. The icing on the cake to me was that both the Mashatu Game Reserve and the horses on the Tuli safari were just a photographers dream.

The Tuli Safari runs throughout the year, for a maximum of 8-10 guests. It is a seven night safaris for experienced riders. Hats are mandatory. Contact: laura@limpopohorsesafaris.com +27(0)83-419-1929

THE TULI SAFARI

LIMPOPO HORSE SAFARIS

This seven day mobile safari is set in the Mashatu Game Reserve in the Tuli Block of Botswana. Viewing wildlife from the back of a well schooled horse is a just wonderful. The reserve is teeming with elephant, giraffe and plains game and combined with frequent sightings of leopard, cheetah and hyena, it is an unrivalled experience on horseback. The Tuli Safari traverses 120 miles of bush, open plains, staccatoed with magnificent Mashatu trees, and between the rocky ancient landscapes. A highlight is the 'Kgotla' camp, for two nights sleeping under the stars.



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