

Horse Riding and Wildlife Conservation Programme



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A BRIEF HISTORY OF IMIRE

Imire was founded in the 1950s by Norman Travers, initially as a cattle, maize and tobacco farm. He longed for the presence of game and in the late 1970's branched out into wildlife conservation. He pioneered the integration of cattle ranching, farming and long term sustainable wildlife management. Like Noah, the animals came in two by two and within 10 years Imire had become a 10,000 acre conservancy, stocked with impala, waterbuck, kudu, eland and the rare sable antelope.

BLACK RHINO BREEDING AND RELEASE

Imire is internationally renowned for its black rhino breeding and release programme. In the 1980s, during a period of Zimbabwe's worst poaching, rhino numbers crashed from 10,000 to less than 1,000 in just a few years. The Department of National Parks & Wildlife moved the remaining wild rhino into the custodianship of private conservancies, called Intensive Protection Zones. Norman believed that Imire could successfully care for rhino, but was derided as a dreamer - how could rhino from the dry heat of the Zambezi Valley survive the bitter Wedza winters? However, he convinced sceptics by showing them proof of the rhinos depicted in the 700 year old bushman paintings on the conservancy. Imire's adopted rhino and their offspring have since thrived.

THE IMIRE RHINO

Imire were given seven orphaned baby black rhino in 1987. Noddy, Sprinter, Fumbi, Cuckoo, DJ, Amber and Mvu were aged between four and six months. Their parents had been poached in the Matusadona National Park in Northern Zimbabwe. Each of the seven calves were hand-reared on formula milk for eight years and raised as a semi-domesticated herd. Several in-depth studies were carried out by ecologists to ensure the rhino suffered no ill-effects from the new vegetation, climate and herding, since black rhinos are naturally solitary animals.

The seven original rhino bred very successfully at Imire, with 15 births in less than 20 years - a record given the rhino's notoriously slow speed of reproduction. Over the next 15 years, 11 rhino were successfully returned to the Matusadona National Park where they were monitored by National Parks and a team of volunteer student vets. The Matusadona release programme was stopped in 2000 due to a lack of funds and today this ancient animal once again faces extinction in the wild.



IMIRE'S TRAGEDY

On November 7th 2007 Imire suffered the worst poaching incident in its history when three rhino were shot and killed. Two females, DJ and Amber and a male, Sprinter were killed, along with Amber's almost full term unborn calf. The incident left DJ's 6 week old calf, Tatenda, a confused and terrified orphan. On that night, Imire lost a generation of rhino.

Tatenda became an international star in the Animal Planet documentary, "There's a Rhino in My House" which tells the chaotic story of his first year, hand-raised by Judy Travers in her home with a warthog named Pog and a hyena named Tsotsi. He was released into the conservancy, to be a partner for Shanu, in 2008. In November 2016 Imire was struck by another tragedy when Tatenda suddenly fell ill and passed away at the age of just 9 years old. He taught us all so much about hope and survival, and so many people world-wide joined us in mourning our loss. Our work to protect the rhino and secure its future in Zimbabwe continues.



HELP CREATE A POSITIVE FUTURE

Since the poaching incident in 2007, we have had three baby black rhino, rhino Tafika, Tafara and Khanya and one baby white rhino, Masimba. We are grateful and proud that our breeding and release programme has begun again. We are now home to seven black and three white rhino.

Volunteers get very involved with our rhino at Imire, learning about their behaviour and monitoring their activities, feeding and socialisation. You will play a role in their continued protection and security as you enjoy getting to know their eccentricities!



THE IMIRE ELEPHANTS

Imire is home to three elephants. Mac and Mandebvu form our small family herd, and then there is Nzou, who happily lives with a herd of buffalo! The elephants living at Imire were orphaned in the wild at a very young age. Imire rescued them and has since provided them with an environment that is as close to their natural habitat as possible, whilst maintaining both animal and human safety. Had the elephants not been saved and given a forever home at Imire, they would certainly have perished in the wild.

Ivory poaching is rife throughout Africa and to protect our elephants they sleep in secure bomas at night. In this way we can ensure that there are armed guards, proper lighting and communication systems in place in the event of any incident threatening their safety.

Elephants are extremely intelligent and sensitive creatures. They need constant stimulation in order to remain content. This stimulation occurs in the wild by being part of a large, hierarchical herd, and through the constant challenge of finding food and water, while avoiding predators. Our elephants do not face these challenges which can lead to boredom, stagnation and seeking excitement in other, often very destructive, ways. In order to prevent this from occurring, we set them challenges of our own, developed by elephant behaviour experts. Our training keeps their minds and bodies occupied and helps keep them stimulated. All the training and handling done at Imire is on a reward basis and we do not condone cruelty or physical punishment of any description.



CARNIVORES AT IMIRE

Imire is home to Mambo the lion. We are lucky enough to be able to provide him with a comfortable, spacious enclosure in his twilight years. Imire is his retirement home, as he faced difficulties in his previous home. Mambo is not used for breeding or handling.

There are many other wild carnivores at Imire. These small mammals are elusive and include serval, civet, black backed jackal and some rarely sighted spotted hyena.

OTHER WILDLIFE AT IMIRE

As well as the famous big animals there is much more to discover at Imire with over 250 species of birds including local rarities such as Copper Sunbird, Little Bittern and Melanistic Gabar Goshawk. There are also healthy populations of peculiar nocturnal animals including hyenas, honey badgers, African civet, the elusive aardvark and bushbabies.



HORSE RIDING & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Our volunteer programme is a unique opportunity to live in the heart of Zimbabwe and share the experiences of a 10,000 acre family run African conservancy. You will live in close proximity to black and white rhino, elephants, buffalo, giraffe and many other animals and birds. You will hear incredible stories, learn our history, witness amazing animal relationships and help with research projects to further our knowledge of the wildlife which surrounds you.

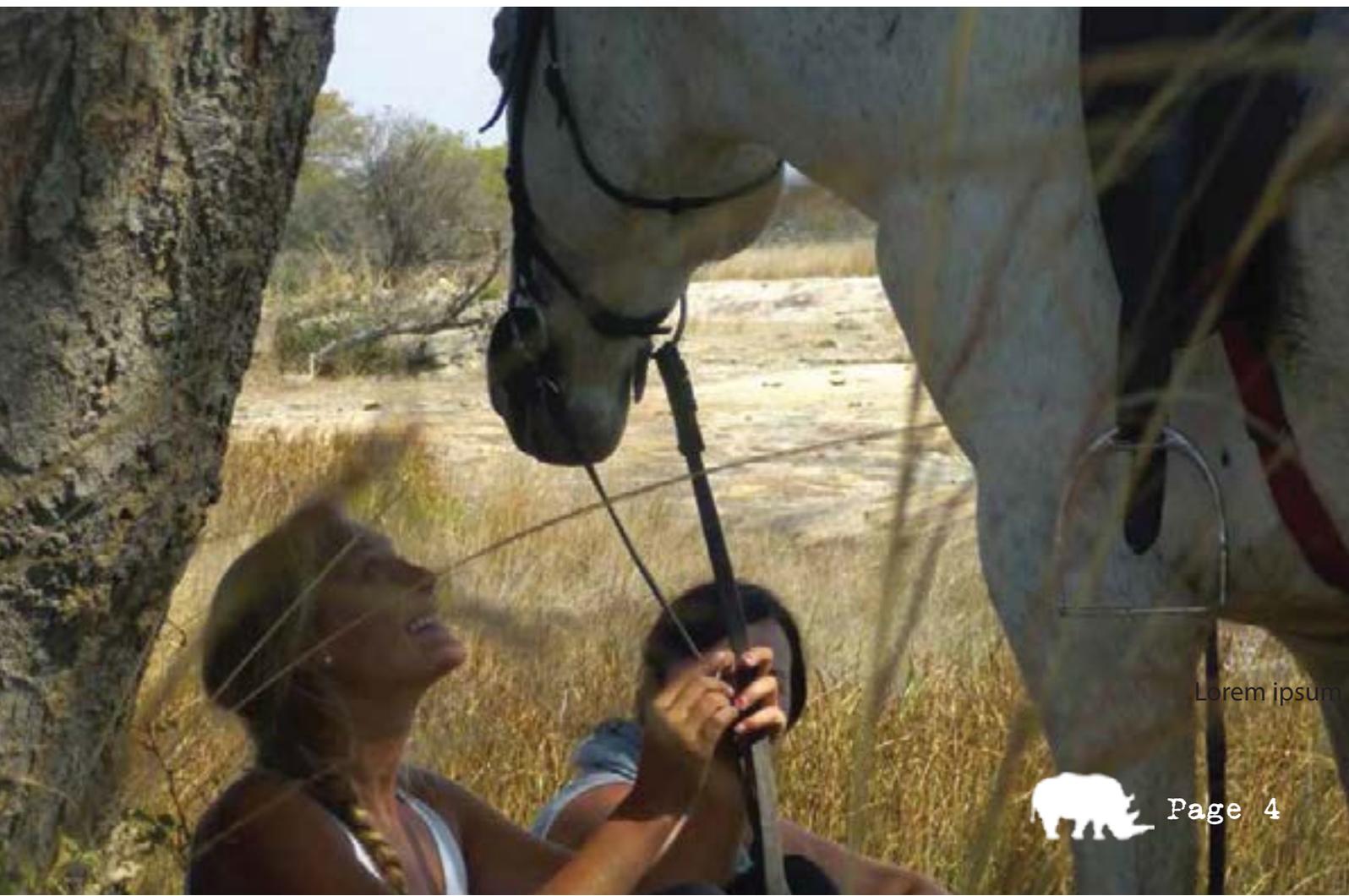
This is a wonderful experience for horse lovers of all ages. Experience Africa in a safe environment, work hard, ride horses and become part of a very special family. Our volunteer programme is a life-changing experience both for volunteers and for our staff and local community. It is a wonderful way to get involved and give something back.

WHAT MAKES OUR PROJECT UNIQUE?

Its all about intimacy and connections. We take just 12 volunteers per site, including a maximum of 4 horse riders, so you will have plenty of time and space to form bonds with other people, your horses, our animals and the spell-binding African bush. You will be part of our family in no time, with three generations of the Travers family living at Imire - from granny to babies!

We also pride ourselves on our programme's diversity; you will work with animals, go on horse back patrols, help with community projects and in the local school, carry out work around the game park and undertake research projects. Learn about the animals, birds and trees which surround you and take a moment to savour the peace and serenity which is so unique to Africa.

Every activity our volunteers get involved with, no matter how small it seems, makes a difference. You will see first-hand the impact that your volunteer experience has on the conservancy and the community.



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WHAT WILL I BE DOING?

No two days on Imire are ever the same and there is always something unexpected around the corner! You will get involved with most of the following activities, depending on the time of year, the weather and what projects are going on at the time.

RHINO CONSERVATION

- Track black and white rhino using telemetry
- Assist the anti-poaching unit in locating the rhino and observing their behaviour
- Learn all about these amazing animals from experienced anti-poaching rangers and guides
- Walk through the bush close to rhino - a once in a lifetime experience

Volunteers monitor behaviour to identify patterns and further our knowledge about rhino, which are notoriously difficult to study in wilderness areas. Our observations are used to predict responses to different stimuli and learn how best to manage our rhino population and habitat. This is especially important for monitoring the development of our youngest rhino. Volunteers also monitor feeding patterns to help prevent over-grazing and over-browsing, to plan rhino movements through the conservancy, and to determine if any supplements are needed to ensure they have a balanced diet.

Our rhino are collared and volunteers learn to use the telemetry set, identify tracks and signs of rhino movement. Our observations at Imire can be used to assist rhino management techniques across the world.



WORK WITH ELEPHANTS

- Monitor elephant movements and behaviour
- Feed and walk with the elephants and their handlers
- Clean out elephant beds and repair enclosures

Imire is committed to ensuring our elephant have as close to a natural life as possible. They are amazing ambassadors for their species and key for helping educate communities about conservation. You will monitor elephant feeding patterns and repair elephant damage in the conservancy. Walk with the elephants in the mornings or evenings, learn about these iconic animals from their knowledgeable handlers and understand the threats they face and what's being done to protect them.



ANTI-POACHING AND SECURITY

- Undertake snare patrols and critical anti-poaching monitoring
- Fish netting patrols on our many dams
- Fence and boundary monitoring on horseback and on foot
- Weapons training

Volunteers undertake snare sweeps around the conservancy, looking for evidence of poaching and collecting snares and traps. This minimises small animal poaching and helps the dedicated Anti-Poaching Unit in their daily work to ensure that the large animals are protected. You will horse ride once a week and carry out herd monitoring off the beaten track and boundary patrols.

You will also have the opportunity to do weapons training with our Anti-Poaching Unit and scouts. You will use paintball guns to simulate the scouts FN rifles to gain familiarity with a "weapon". You will also join the APU as they do their drills and training.

You will have the opportunity to meet with, and learn from, the experienced K9 Anti-poaching unit and our amazing Murwi a highly trained Dutch Shepherd.



CONSERVANCY MANAGEMENT

- Undertake herd monitoring on horseback
- Help maintain fences, roads, fireguards and park equipment
- Tree planting, bush clearance and removal of alien species
- Cleaning and maintenance of animal beds
- Cattle management: help the cattle section on dip days and support the cattle team with counting and location animals around the park
- Game counts by foot, vehicle and on horseback



COMMUNITY AND TEACHING PROJECTS

There are approximately 500 people living or working at Imire, including conservancy, lodge, volunteer programme and farm staff plus their families. There is a primary and secondary schools just outside the conservancy which we support through sponsorship of building projects, teaching assistance, sports, gardening and conservation education. We also support the local Idube Clinic through the provision of medicines and financial donations.

- Assist with literacy programmes in the primary schools
- Work with the local Conservation Club - educate children in the conservancy on animals, birds and the environment
- Playing sports and games with the younger children
- Cultural evenings - learn to cook and dance from the experts!
- Visit a local Shona family at their homestead and learn more about their every day life and culture

We have introduced a literacy programmes in two local primary schools where volunteers use a Ministry of Education approved English literacy scheme aimed at rural African schoolchildren. The materials address conservation issues in a way which is relevant to their learning. You will also work with local school's Conservation Club, helping to teach secondary school students practical and theoretical lessons about nature and conservation.

Please remember that our school children also have holidays, when there will be no teaching at the school. The 2020 term dates (when there will be teaching) are:

First term 2020: 14th January - 2nd April

Second term 2020: 5th May - 6th August

Third term 2020: 8th September - 3rd December



HORSE RIDING - PLEASE READ BEFORE BOOKING

You will ride for five days a week, Monday - Friday, for approximately 3 hours each day. This may be one long ride or two shorter ones, depending on the weather and what work needs to be done.

Riding Ability

- This is not a teaching programme - all Horse Riding volunteers must be able to ride when they arrive!
- You must be able to confidently carry out a rising trot and canter
- You must have had a number of years experience of regularly riding different horses
- You must be confident that you can handle a horse on your own and get out of potentially challenging situations

Should we deem your riding ability to be below the required standard and if there are other, experienced riders on the programme at the time, you may be asked to transfer to the Rhino & Elephant Conservation Programme.

Weight Limit

- We have a maximum weight limit of 80kg. Our horses are not strong enough to carry more than that weight over sustained periods.

Rules

- There is no galloping allowed anywhere on Imire
- Riders may not take horses out unaccompanied by a member of staff

Riders must bring a 2 litre water bottle / camel pack and small day pack / rucksack.



LEISURE TIME

In your free time you can go fishing and canoeing or relax with a beer after a hard day's work! You may also have the opportunity to go horse riding on a Saturday morning. If you enjoy hiking we can arrange trips to Mutemwa Mountain or a visit to see the Bushman paintings at Markwe Caves outside the conservancy on the weekend. You may also choose to visit Imire Lodge for a meal. (These weekend activities are at a small extra cost).

If you would like to arrange a driver to take you into Harare to visit the markets and shops, we can arrange a private taxi for \$100 per car each way (costs shared between volunteers). Speak to your coordinator to organise this. There is no reliable public transport from the reserve to Harare.



ACCOMMODATION

You will be comfortably accommodated while volunteering at Imire. Your group size will be a maximum of 12 volunteers. Rooms are shared and the furnishings are comfortable single beds with bedding provided (duvets, pillows and extra blankets for winter!). Showers and toilet facilities are shared, and hot water is supplied. Power sockets for electrical items are available in communal areas.

Room configuration is solely at the discretion of Imire management

Three home cooked meals are provided daily on a self-serve basis. Vegetarian and limited vegan options are available upon request. Should you have any dietary requirements or food allergies it is important that you let us know before you arrive. Please note we are unable to cater for very specific dietary needs (for example gluten, dairy or wheat intolerance) so should you need them you will be required to bring any specialist foods along with you. If you bring these foods, our chefs will be able to prepare these for you alongside other volunteer's standard meals.

Your water is pumped from a borehole and is safe and clean for drinking.

We will of course do our utmost to ensure all Imire volunteers, of all ages, are accommodated appropriately and comfortably. With this in mind, our regular sites, Chiwawe and Numwa House will be used to accommodate volunteer families with children aged 14 and over, as well as regular volunteers of all ages. (Note that volunteers aged 14-17 will always be accompanied by families. Our minimum age for solo travelers remains 17 years.)

Families with children younger than 14 will be accommodated separately and their volunteer activities, meals, vehicles and guide will be separate from our regular volunteer groups. Please feel free to enquire about any and all family bookings, and the logistics thereof, on a case by case basis.



BOOKINGS

EQUINE PROJECT PRICING 2020

1 week - \$1305

2 weeks - \$2610

RHINO PROJECT PRICING 2020

1 week - \$900

2 weeks - \$1800

Prices are in US Dollars. All bookings are subject to an additional \$40 administration fee. Please note that items on your final bill e.g. drinks from the bar, t-shirts, additional transfers etc are subject to VAT charged at 15%. VAT will be added to your bill at the end of your stay.

The price includes:

- Return transfers to and from Harare Airport
- All meals and accommodation while you are on the project
- Drinks (tea, coffee, juice, water) excluding fizzy and alcoholic drinks
- All activities while you are at Imire
- Laundry and housekeeping
- 24 hour support from our on-site volunteer managers
- Full orientation upon arrival

The price excludes:

- Any excursions outside the volunteer programme
- Fizzy and alcoholic drinks (over 18s only) from our bar
- 3-course Sunday dinner at Sable Lodge (\$20 per head - optional)
- \$40 administration fee
- Any extra travel e.g. to Harare or to Victoria Falls

HOW DO I BOOK?

Email us your dates and we'll check availability. Once your dates are confirmed we will send you a booking form and medical form to complete and send back once you have organised your flights and travel insurance. In addition you will receive an invoice for your payment.

Unless otherwise agreed, a 50% deposit is required to secure your place. Once this is received into our bank account, your place is confirmed. Full payment is due 60 days before your programme start date. If a booking is made less than 60 days before your start date, 100% of the fee must be made immediately.

Should you wish to cancel, then your initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days prior to your project start date. We will make any refunds back into your bank account, less any bank charges applied by our bank.

If you cancel within 60 days of your start date and have paid the full amount for the programme, then the refund is as follows:

- 31-60 days prior to programme start date - refund of your initial deposit. You may transfer the remaining balance paid onto a new booking with a start date within 1 calendar year of the original or first project start date. If you have only paid a deposit, then no refund is available.
- Less than 30 days prior to programme start date - no refund of any monies paid. You may transfer your money to a new booking with a start date within 1 calendar year of the original or first project start date.



TESTIMONIALS

My most memorable moment was a day we were herding cattle for dipping on horseback.

I was riding through the bush, living out my childhood dream of being a cowgirl, and I looked to the right to see a group of giraffe running alongside us, and to my left a group of zebra. That was the moment I realised how lucky I was to be here.

– Lizzie Clark, September 2019



Doing the riding programme at Imire is probably the best way in the world to see the animals up close in their natural environment.

Judy, the owner and guide, is a passionate and enthusiastic conservationist. Aside from riding, the activities are absolutely life changing. Getting to feed elephants and rhinos, teach children how to read and playing football with locals... I cannot explain how much you need to do this trip.

– Helen Rennardson, July 2019

I could not wipe that smile off my face! Horseback riding through vast areas of virgin bush, across the plains, it was a spectacular landscape! Tracking, viewing and experiencing wildlife on horseback was the ultimate way of living my dream.....volunteering for the equestrian conservation program in Zimbabwe was fun!

The wildlife conservation mission & local community empowerment initiatives made me humble.

– Sher Lookmanji, November 2019



OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

Victoria Falls - Adrenaline and Adventure

No trip to Zimbabwe would be complete without a visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Victoria Falls. At 1,708m wide, it is the largest sheet of falling water in the world and one of the most spectacular natural wonders. In Ndebele, the Victoria Falls are called Mosi-au-Tunya - "the smoke that thunders" and the spray and noise are visible and audible around the town. The Falls drop between 90m-170m from the Zambezi River into the Zambezi gorge, with an average of 550,000 cubic metres of water plummeting over the edge every minute!

The Falls inspire and impress visitors today as much as they did David Livingstone, who was the first European to discover them back in the 1860's. Today you can do all manner of exciting activities, from bungee jumps and zip lines from the 19th Century Victoria Falls bridge, to game drives, high tea at the Victoria Falls hotel and take part in some of the best white water rafting in the world!

Flights to Victoria Falls can be booked online with Fast Jet and there are a variety of accommodation options from \$20 per night, depending on your budget. This trip must be arranged prior to your arrival on the programme. You will also need to budget \$100 each way for a taxi transfer from Imire to Harare Airport should you choose to visit the Falls during your middle weekend. A taxi from Victoria Falls airport to town is around \$30 each way.

Please note that Imire staff are unable to assist you with the booking of an optional excursion and any bookings or travel plans are your responsibility.



OTHER PROGRAMMES WE OFFER

Nature Enthusiast Course

The 6-week course is an opportunity for nature enthusiasts to study our wildlife and ecology more intensively. You will study mammals (of course closely studying our elephants and rhinos), reptiles, insects and birds; you will learn about the night skies, ecology and you develop a deeper understanding of large and small animal behaviour. This course is perfect for school leavers, gap year travel and graduates looking to take their next career steps. It has also been designed to suit those looking for career guidance, or nature-lovers of all ages and backgrounds who are looking for a longer and more in-depth bush experience.

Horse Riding and Rhino Conservation

You will experience the best of our rhino and elephant conservation programme, as well as contributing to conservancy management from horse back. All this, riding in small group of no more than four, alongside the "matriarch" of Imire, Judy Travers, whose knowledge and passion of the African bush and wildlife will have you mesmerized for every exciting moment. For experienced riders only.





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