



31 May 2016

### Important industry release regarding the review of Camp Jabulani's Elephant Experience

The time has come to review The Elephant Experience at Camp Jabulani, and a decision has been taken to completely phase out elephant-back safaris. **By 1 April 2017, The Elephant Experience at Camp Jabulani will no longer include elephant rides.**

The increasing international pressure against elephant-back safaris, because of the abusive way in which a proportion of the animals are sadly trained, prompted this decision. Based on our approach to animal welfare issues, **we are in agreement with the negative sentiments relevant to abusive methods of training.**

It is important, at this point, to understand **the origin of the Camp Jabulani elephant herd**. Twelve elephants, all of which had been left orphaned after culling operations in Zimbabwe in the 1980s, were trained for elephant-back safaris on a commercial farm in Zimbabwe from which they were rescued in 2002 at the time of a highly unstable political situation in the country. At the expense of the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre (HESC), a massive rescue operation was planned in a matter of days, and all twelve elephants were relocated to South Africa. Stables were built in record time (the cost of which was also covered by HESC), and the elephants were moved into their new home. The groomsmen who took care of them in Zimbabwe were also relocated, and their jobs kept secure as they once again became the elephants' primary caregivers. **We built Camp Jabulani, and structured its unique offering around the elephants in order to sustain them and keep them alive.** The elephant-back safaris were put in place as a continuation of what they had been trained to do in Zimbabwe. From the beginning we worked closely with an advisory committee of veterinary specialists who guided us in respect of training the elephants, sustaining their emotional and physical wellbeing, and assessing which of the animals were to be used for elephant-back safaris (only six of the herd of fourteen participate in the safaris).

**The well being of the Camp Jabulani elephant herd has always been at the forefront of the operation.** Those who have visited us will know that our elephants spend most of their day in the open on the Big Five Kapama Private Game Reserve under the close supervision of the grooms (letting them roam free would invite the risk of potential conflict with wild elephant herds on the reserve). We have tried to provide an environment as close to a natural one as possible, without forgetting the very real captive circumstances surrounding their upbringing which have defined them.

Our model of training has always been based on **positive re-enforcement**, and no animal in our care has ever been physically or spiritually abused in any way. We abhor any practice that removes an animal from the wild for the purpose of commercial gain, as well as the harmful treatment of any living being. We are thankful that the world is acquiring a greater respect for the animal kingdom, and **we pledge our support in being part of the changes that we all wish to see.**

We have walked a long road with these elephants. As with anything in life, it is not about the destination, but about the journey. As with life, we need to be flexible during times of change. We will adapt our management plan to phase out elephant-back rides during the course of the next year, **but will retain other forms of interaction with the elephants** to create public awareness of the plight of these animals - particularly where and when they have to be sustained in captivity. **Looking after this group of elephants was a responsibility that we accepted from the very beginning, and it is a commitment that we have no intention of forfeiting.**

The Elephant Experience will evolve into an **interactive and observational** one, where visitors will have the opportunity to meet the elephants as well as view them in close proximity, learning more about their behavior, their unique character traits, their incredible story, and what it takes to take care of a herd of this size. Much of this will take place while the elephants are in their natural environment, foraging in the bush, walking through the reserve or swimming in the waterhole. **Photographic opportunities** in close proximity of the elephants will also be afforded.

**Important note regarding bookings:**

- Effective immediately, elephant back safaris will no longer be actively promoted or sold by Camp Jabulani. All collateral will be updated, including the website, fact sheets and new brochure.
- We will honour existing reservations, until 31 March 2017, as well as bookings that were confirmed as a result of current brochure inclusions. However, from 1 April 2017, no elephant-back safaris will be offered at all and agents will need to inform their clients of what The Elephant Experience will entail from then on.
- Effective 1 April 2017, we will no longer offer a partially inclusive rate. Every booking confirmed will include The Elephant Experience, which can broadly be defined as:
  - An introduction to the Camp Jabulani herd and the grooms who have taken care of the elephants over the years
  - The opportunity to watch the elephants in their natural habitat during the day or at their stables early morning/ late afternoon and into the evening
  - Photographic opportunities in close proximity with the elephants, in the company of their grooms
  - Game drives and guided bush walks on the Kapama Big 5 Reserve, getting close to the elephant herd to observe them in the wild

*Please note: As the nature of the Elephant Experience will be determined by the unpredictable free-ranging movement of the elephant herd, there will be a degree of flexibility in the itinerary.*

Should you have any queries or wish to comment with feedback, please email Mari Theunissen (Marketing Manager - mari@campjabulani.com).

With kind regards,

Adine Roode  
Owner

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