



# TRAVEL LOG

JANUARY 2001

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## Review of 2000 Rides

### BOTSWANA - THE OKAVANGO DELTA

This year the water levels of the Delta were higher than the norm. As a result Macatoo's usual fly-camps were flooded and the game was very much dispersed. Fortunately, by the time of my two rides, we were the first to use the newly positioned fly-camp. And what an experience that was! After all these years, I can truly say that this year, I experienced with my guests some of the most thrilling riding and game viewing ever! To ride in the Okavango Delta is UNIQUE, so much so

that my guests always want to come back, and do. These rides are very much in demand; please don't wait too long to book!

Some riders' comments:

*"It was all quite wonderful and truly unforgettable!" (Amanda Blackmore, Ireland).*

*"All those great memories of a simply wonderful trip!" (Louise Roche, CA)*

*I never expected it to be so much... That's what it*  
*(Continued next page)*



## Greetings and Every Best Wish for the NewYear!

Another exciting year has gone by. To all of you with whom I have had the joy and privilege of riding, I once again say, thank you!

This year's Travel Log features the two highland rides I did this past year — one in Malawi and the other in Ecuador — and my program of rides for 2001, with exciting new destinations.

One of the new destinations is Spain! It is always very stimulating and rewarding to explore a country, search for an appropriate outfitter who meets my standards, and map out a new itinerary. So this fall, I decided to investigate southern Spain, since a number of you have expressed interest in a ride in Europe. As a result, I have prepared two new rides in Andalusia, which will take place back-to-back next October!

Although it is not on the list, in the spring I will also lead a private trip in France. An English client asked me to organize a special ride there for a group of friends. I took great pleasure in researching and designing this trip in the country of my birth.

2001 promises to be yet another year of exciting new adventures and I greatly look forward to sharing them with you!

*Christine Chauvin*

THE OKAVANGO DELTA



## CALENDAR OF RIDES FOR 2001

### AFRICA

**Botswana: The Okavango Delta**

**August 21—31**  
**August 31—September 7**

**Malawi: The Nyika Plateau**

*No set departure in 2001*  
*Please call for dates*

### BRAZIL

**The Pantanal: Riding Expedition**

**June 23—July 1**

**Serra Gaucha** (Southern Brazil)

*No set departure in 2001*  
*Please call for details*

### ECUADOR

**Hacienda to Hacienda ride**

**November 15—22**

*(a ride for 'Cazenove & Loyd' of London)*

**Andean Rodeo Ride** (as reviewed)

**November 23—December 2**

### INDIA

**Rajasthan**

**February 16—March 3**

**Heritage Riding Adventure — From Jodhpur to Udaipur**

### SPAIN — Andalusia

**Sierra de Aracena**

**October 14—21**

**Doñana National Park**

**October 21—28**

**NEW!**

My website: [www.adventuresonhorseback.com](http://www.adventuresonhorseback.com), has detailed descriptions of each ride. You can also call or e-mail me if you have any questions. It is always a pleasure to talk to you!



*(Continued from previous page)*  
*was for us: perfect! (Sophia de Oliveira, Brazil)*

#### MALAWI — THE NYIKA PLATEAU

When I first said I was going to ride in Malawi I got blank stares. Where is Malawi? Never heard of it! Well Malawi is a small African country landlocked between Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique. With contrasting landscapes of mountains and plateaus in the north, wild nature and large game reserves in the south, not to mention the breathtaking Lake Malawi - the world's ninth largest - it is one of Africa's best-kept secrets.

Last September, after my two Botswana rides in the Okavango Delta, I flew from Johannesburg to Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi and then north to Mzuzu to meet my group of 7 riders from France, England and the USA. From Mzuzu we boarded our charter plane for a 20-minute flight further north to Chelinda, an airstrip over 6000ft on the Nyika Plateau where our hosts, David Foot and his wife Robyn, welcomed us.

What a contrast with the Africa I was familiar with! "It was so unlike anything else. It was

deep in the heart of Africa, filled with the animals of Africa, and yet it was covered with the grasses, the flowers and colors of Europe." So Laurens van der Post described the Nyika Plateau, where the rolling montane grasslands stretch as far as the eye can see, broken only by occasional patches of evergreen forests, whilst extensive Miombo woodlands hide the lower slopes. Big skies, open country and infinite panoramas combine to make this vast untouched, beautiful wilderness the most perfect riding country.

We spent the first and last two nights at the newly built Chelinda lodge in beautifully appointed twin log cabins with en-suite bathrooms, open fires and panoramic views over the plateau. After getting acquainted with our valiant horses, we set off on a seven-day safari to explore some of the remotest parts of this 3000-sq.km wilderness.

A strong wind that lasted four days kept us wrapped up on the highlands, but as soon as we descended into the more sheltered valleys it was warm and pleasant. Evenings and mornings were still chilly and the hot water bottles in our beds at night were most wel-

come. Every second day, our mobile tented-camp, consisting of five large classic safari tents with made-up beds and hanging shelves and a comfortable mess-tent would be moved ahead by the staff. A central long-drop toilet and the traditional safari "bucket shower" provided hot showers at every campsite.

We rode uphill, downhill, often in the company of large herds of Eland and Roan antelope who thrive here. We cantered across undulating

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*If you enjoy what you  
do, you'll never work another  
day in your life.*

— Confucius

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grasslands carpeted with budding wildflowers; we trotted along escarpments; we walked through woodlands and jumped over bubbling brooks, always feeling secure on our sure-footed steeds. Smaller groups of zebra, reed buck, and bushbuck would sometimes bounce away as we approached. But it was the never-ending unfolding immensity of the landscape that was so astonishing, ...and the wildflowers. One day we rode up to Nganda Mountain the highest peak of the Nyika (7,600ft) and it felt like riding on top of the world!

David had mentioned that there was a very healthy population of spotted hyena and leopard. So far we had seen none of these predators. Well, on our last night back at Chelinda Lodge we went on an evening game drive and saw spotted hyena! Then a couple of miles from the lodge, in the bracken close to the dirt road, there he was, the most beautiful leopard I've ever seen! Unperturbed, he was lying in wait for dinner to come bouncing by and did



THE NYIKA — A HEARD OF ELAND

HACIENDA CUSIN



not run away. We watched him for a long time, and I got my best video footage ever!

Sadly, I cannot lead a ride in Malawi in 2001 because of my new rides in Spain, but I urge those who want to experience another facet of Africa to consider this beautiful country and I will be happy to arrange a trip for you.

The best time to go: mid September to late October, the flowers are in full bloom and the weather is mild and usually dry. I would recommend combining a 5-day walking safari in the Luangwa Valley in Zambia (a close plane hop) with a 7-day ride on the Nyika, to get a complete African wildlife and nature experience. Please call me if this of interest to you.

**ECUADOR – ANDEAN RODEO RIDE**

After Thanksgiving I led a group of eight of the jolliest riders ever on a ride in the Andean highlands of Ecuador, north and south of Quito. I have reproduced here some comments about this ride made by Richard Strother one of the participants, that I think says it all:

“In the eight days with you in the Andean Highlands we covered the most remarkable

and varied terrain on the most sound horses. From trotting through 13,000-foot mist-swirled meadows as we joined the “chagras” (Ecuadorian cowboys) rounding up the fighting bulls and cattle, to cantering down lanes on the hillside above the Hacienda Cusin. We were shown a horse in the parlor, Paso Fino demonstrations, and a glimpse into the incredible lives of Fernando and Edu on their ranch at Cotopaxi. We were well aware of, and remarked upon, the personal friendships with the people who were our hosts and with their horses, without which the trip would not have been possible. We also appreciated your continual attention to the endless details in your effort to keep us safe, together and content. We thought the group you put together were funny, enthusiastic and excellent riders who were a pleasure to be among. Please accept our sincere thanks and appreciation.”

I will repeat this Andean Rodeo Ride next year in the Highlands of Ecuador after leading a “Hacienda to Hacienda Ride” for Cazenove & Loyd of London. For the dates, see my calendar of rides. I strongly recommend combining either one of these two rides with a visit to the Galapagos.

**A poem by Katharine Passmore Ogden**

who rode with me in Botswana

*I miss the pinkening of the sky  
from my bed,  
I miss the tent ladies bringing tea,  
I miss the elephants shaking the  
palm tree,  
I miss the laughter around the  
breakfast fire,  
I miss the excitement of getting my horse,  
I miss looking across the grasses t  
o the tree line,  
I miss the soft whistles when spotting  
an animal,  
I miss the liquid movement of the giraffe,  
I miss the shyness of the zebra,  
I miss the start of the gallop t  
hrough water,  
I miss the grin on my face,  
I miss the sun that dries my wet clothes,  
I miss the lunch bar,  
I miss the danger of the Cape buffalo,  
I miss the birds by the water,  
I miss the quiet of the ride,  
I miss the tired feeling walking  
back to my tent,  
I miss the gin fairy,  
I miss the mokoro boat waiting for me,  
I miss Sara telling us what is for dinner,  
I miss Charlotte's prayer,  
I miss the hot coals under my seat,  
I miss the laughter at dinner,  
I miss the Southern Cross,  
I miss the fear of the night,  
I miss being surrounded by outside,  
I miss AFRICA!*



THE CHAGRAS OF YANAHURCO RANCH – COTOPAXI



## SPAIN: Two New Rides in 2001

**A**ndalusia: the Mecca of beautiful Andalusian horses, ferocious bulls, enchanting haciendas, passionate music and dance, vintage port wines, rugged landscapes, bright blue skies, perpetual sunshine... an untamed country steeped in history and ancient traditions... all the required ingredients for new riding adventures!

I visited Seville and its surroundings late October (the weather was ideal) looking for the outfitter that would meet my standards. I found two I liked very much. Because they are located in very different parts of Andalusia, I decided to do a separate ride with each of them, but I have scheduled the rides back to back so that any one who is interested in doing both can do so!

In both cases I was impressed by the quality of the horses: pure Andalusian and Andalusian crosses – Hispano-Arab or Hispano-Anglo-Arab – all carefully bred and trained by their respective owners, and such a joy to ride. The tack – Spanish Vaquera saddles or English – was beautifully maintained. Everywhere I went, I was warmly received and there was a congenial atmosphere all around. I can't wait to return!

I also visited Dehesa Montonmedio near Vejer de la Frontera, a magnificent equestri-

an training center where the 2002 World Equestrian Games are to be held. Finally, I spent my last night at Trasierra, Charlotte Scott's stunning property in Cazalla de la Sierra, an hour's drive from Seville. Over the years, Charlotte has lovingly restored and transformed Trasierra into one of the most exclusive and beautiful homes I've seen in recent years. If you are interested in learning more about these two amazing places, please call me.

**T**HE FIRST RIDE will take place in the Sierra de Aracena, 100 km northwest of Seville. Five days of riding through varied and superb scenery: over rolling hills, through secret valleys, along high ridges dotted with remains of Moorish and Templar castles. Autumn in these parts is a blaze of changing colors. It is the time of the chestnut harvest, and a gourmet's feast of wild mushrooms grows under foot.

We start by spending two days at our hosts' stylishly refurbished finca, getting acquainted with our horses. We then proceed with a three-day, scenic loop-ride, stopping each night in small inns of some of the prettiest white villages of the Sierra. The last day of the ride brings us back to the finca for one more night. The following morning we transfer to Seville for a luxuri-

ous night in this atmospheric city: a fitting end to this week! **October 14 - 21, 2001.**

**T**HE SECOND RIDE is situated in and around the Donana National Park, southwest of Seville. Leaving from the south of Seville we will ride for six days in this beautiful National Park where thousands of birds come to spend the winter. The landscape of this area is varied: forests of pine, eucalyptus and cork oaks, moors and marshlands, beaches and dunes, all supporting a wealth of animal and plant life.

The terrain, consisting mainly of sandy tracks, pastures and ancient bridle paths, is a dream to ride on. Our itinerary will also take us along pilgrimage routes to the village of El Rocio, named "the International village of the horse" because of its sandy streets and houses with stables. If time allows we may also get to canter on the beach! We will stay at some impressive, privately owned, cortijos (traditional Andalusian manors) and get a taste of the genteel lifestyle of the still present past! **October 21 - 28, 2001**

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