

FAQ's for Ranch-Dudes

Ranch Koiimasis, Namibia



Volunteering in Namibia

FAQs for Ranch-Dudes

What is a Ranch-Dude?

As a Ranch-Dude, you will be actively involved in everyday ranch life, horse training and education. At Koiimasis, horse trainers, Ranch-Dudes and guides always work hand in hand. Everyone learns from everyone else and most of all from the horses. The term "Dude ranch" comes from the USA and means nothing else than guest farm. We used to use the common term "volunteer", but this often led to misunderstandings which we hope to clear up with the new name. The time as a Ranch-Dude is, so to speak, a mixture of riding holidays and voluntary service - Working Holidays. That's why the stay is much cheaper than a pure holiday. Your contribution goes 100% into the project - physically and monetarily. Ranch-Dudes are an important part of our work for and with the horses. You get the chance to dive deep into the daily life of a Namibian ranch and will experience things that remain hidden to a normal tourist.

As a Ranch-Dude you spend 90% of your time in the saddle and if you want to take a break, that's ok too - everything can, nothing has to.

How long has the programme been running?

There have been regular Ranch-Dudes at Koiimasis for over 10 years.

How many volunteers can help out at any one time?

Maximum 4



Programme and qualifications

What does the Ranch-Dude programme involve?

What do I actually do there? The main focus of your tasks is working with the horses. You help with training and schooling and do real ranch work - i.e. work from the horse's back.

What qualifications do I need?

You should already have some years of riding experience, ideally in western riding, as our horses are exclusively western ridden. However, experienced riders from other riding styles are also welcome, as long as they want to get involved with a new riding style and new training approaches. We will of course help you to relearn. The project is not suitable for newcomers or beginners. We also have very nice horses, but the main task of the Dudes is to train the horses, both in the field and in the arena. It's all about permeability, gymnastics and health-maintaining riding. We also work our horses a lot on the ground, do composure training and obedience exercises. If you are confident enough to do this, you are very welcome to join us - good horsemanship is ultimately independent of riding style!

You should be at least 18 years old and able to look after yourself, as our Dudes live in their own little house. You should be open-minded, adventurous and open for new things. Not be afraid of nature or hard physical work and be open to new people. The minimum stay is 4 weeks, as it usually takes 14 days to really arrive and settle in. Then it would be a shame to leave straight away - wouldn't it?

What kind of riding do you do and what is the training approach based on?

At Koiimasis we ride exclusively in the Western style. Our training approach is based on the classic California vaquero horsemanship, with the aim of creating an all-round horse that can be used for cattle drives, roping, cutting, but also for trails and many other areas. Our older riding horses have been trained by renowned international horse trainers and their students, such as Mark and Miranda Lyon whose training style has been influenced by Ray Hunt, Buck Branaman, Martin Black and many other big names in western riding. The horse training at Koiimasis is based on the goal of building a strong relationship between horse and rider in order to obtain a horse that wants to serve its rider with body and soul - without force or coercion!

The most important question: what about the horses?

We have about 200 homebred American Paint and Quarter Horses. All with different levels of training. If we see that you are able to train a young horse, you are welcome to join us. If your skills lie more in the training and gymnastics of experienced horses, our oldies are also very happy about health-maintaining training. Please note that we first have to get an idea of who you are and that you will be under our control for a while. But if you prove yourself, you will soon be allowed to work independently.



My day as a Ranch-Dude

What are my daily tasks, what does my everyday life look like?

If you want to support us, we rely on your help. Of course you can ask us anything and we will help you as much as we can, but we also expect a certain amount of independence. For this reason, the programme is not suitable for beginners. You will be assigned your own horses and decide for yourself how much training the different animals need.

As a Ranch-Dude you have fixed working hours:

In summer: 07:30 - 12:00 and 15:00 - 18:30

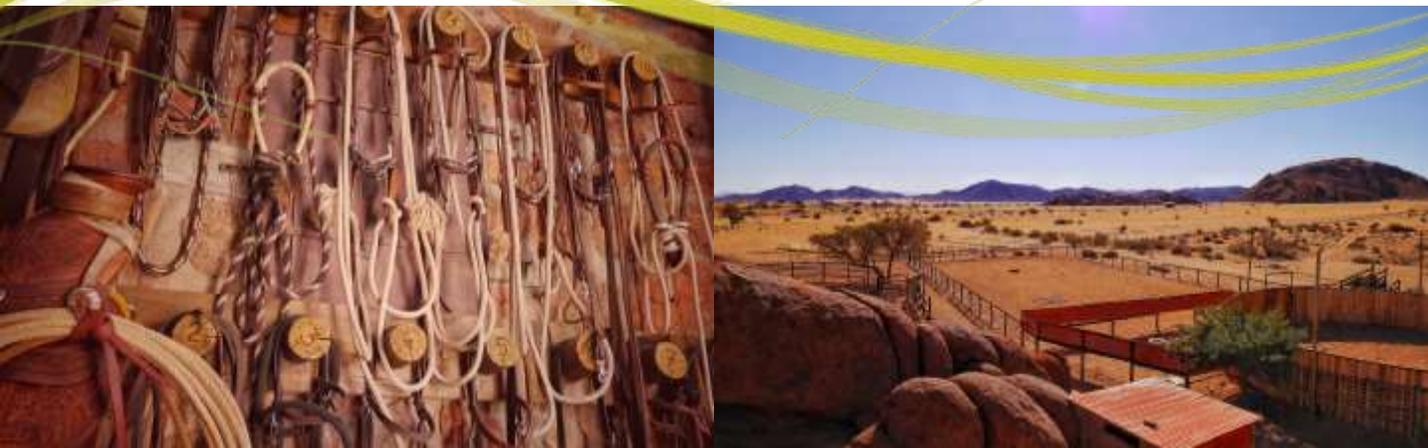
Winter: 08:00 - 12:30 and 14:30 - 18:00

Saturdays you only work half a day

If we have riding guests, you are welcome to accompany every ride and support us in looking after the guests. However, the guests always have priority, as they only stay for a week and pay much more than you do. In this case, the times mentioned above are of course invalid.

A "normal" day could look like this:

- You walk to the cowboy camp in the morning.
- When you arrive at the stable, all the horses are already happy about your arrival and you help with the feeding.
- Then you do some small daily chores, such as filling up the water troughs.
- When the ponies have finished eating, you start with your first horse for the day. Usually you will have several horses that you are responsible for during your time. You clean and saddle your horse and take him to the riding arena, the round pen, the obstacle course, the big arena or do cross-country training.
- For your lunch break, you ride one of your horses to your accommodation, unsaddle it, put it in the paddock and check whether it has enough water.
- The lunch time is at your own disposal, you can cook something to eat, sleep, read, lie in the sun...
- Then you ride back again.
- Now you take care of the rest of your horses, move them and train them, in the riding arena or in the field.
- At the end of the day, you head back home and fall tired into your little bed.



The next day you might have a cattle drive, where you drive a large herd of cattle to the nearest watering hole. Afterwards, you help sort out the cattle for sale and assist with branding, etc. Or maybe you go for a ride with some guests in the afternoon, or you stack hay bales, or you train a young horse in the composure course. In between you practice roping or take care of the maintenance of the tack... I could go on like this for hours. As you can see, no two days are the same.

How much riding do I actually get to do?

90% of your tasks take place from the saddle - one day more one day less. You will get to ride a lot of different horses and definitely learn a lot.

Do I have to do stable work?

Stable work is of course part of the job. The paddocks have to be cleaned regularly, the tack taken care of, the watering troughs cleaned and the plants watered. However, most of your work will be directly with the horse.

Is there supervision?

You won't be left alone, if that's what you want to know. You will work with Freda and Immanuel (more info later in the text). There is always someone there who can help you with all your horse questions and always keeps an eye on how you treat the horses - also for your own safety. Nevertheless, you will be allowed to work with your horses on your own responsibility. However, we cannot offer regular riding lessons. Of course we will support you where we can, but you should be able to ride and train your horses independently.

Can I accompany the riding safaris?

Yes, you may accompany the riding safaris. Of course, you will actively help and support Freda in looking after the guests. If a guest has problems with his horse, you may have to change horses or give up your ride. The guests only have one week at Koiimasis and pay about 4 times what you pay. You get the chance to experience real life on a ranch in Namibia, look behind the scenes and be a very important part of the team!

Please don't think of yourself as a second class guest during a horseback safari, because you, Freda and Immanuel work as a team FOR the guests.

What do I do at the weekend?

On Saturday you only work half a day, after that you have the weekend free. You can relax at the pool of the lodge, climb the mountains of the ranch or do something with the other Dudes.



Booking and Journey

How do I book?

Simply contact the ranch, preferably in the first step via WhatsApp with Freda: +49 (0) 1522 8683803. When the dates are fixed, you will receive an offer as a PDF, which you sign and then send back as a photo via WhatsApp.

How far in advance do I have to book?

Approx. 4 weeks (or less if it suits you) just ask.

When can I help and for how long?

All year round, just ask if there are still places available. Please note that it gets very hot in the summer months (Dec-Feb). The minimum booking period is 4 weeks, otherwise you just can't get into the daily routine - and that's what a project like this is all about. The maximum duration is 90 days, due to the visa. However, longer stays can be arranged in individual cases.

What are the arrival and departure procedures?

Arrival: We will pick you up at the airport "Hosea Kutako" outside Windhoek. If your flight arrives after 12 noon, you may need to stay overnight in Windhoek, otherwise we will have to drive overnight.

We can recommend the following accommodation options:

www.chameleonbackpackers.com if you want to save money and get in touch with other travellers.

<http://www.de-vagebond.com> if you prefer a quieter and more private atmosphere.

Departure: We will drive you back to Windhoek. Please note: If your return flight departs before 6pm, we recommend that you plan an extra night in Windhoek at the end, otherwise we cannot guarantee that you will arrive on time.



Costs and Booking

How much will the stay cost me?

4 weeks minimum: 350€ per week
 From 5-8 weeks: 330€ per week
 From week 9-12: 310 per week.

Transport costs 150€ (from 2023 170€) per person (return journey together).
 Please pay this in cash on site.

Of course, you book and pay for the flight yourself.

Do I need a visa?

You can get more information via WhatsApp: +49 (0) 1522 8683803 (Freda)

How does the payment work?

We offer you different options to pay your bill with us:

- Deposit 50%, 2 weeks after receiving the invoice. Unless otherwise agreed.
- Bank transfer in Namibia Dollar NAD, according to the daily exchange rate.
- Please note that many banks cannot send Namibian dollars. In this case please transfer in South African Rand ZAR, this currency is equivalent to NAD.
- To save transfer fees, you can of course send everything at once.
- The remaining 50% can also be sent as a bank transfer or in cash in NAD, ZAR or Euro.
- Please note that there is no IBAN in Namibia. The data on your invoice is sufficient.
- We ask you to pay the transport costs in cash on the spot.

Why should I pay to work?

Take it from a former volunteer and passionate rider: this is not work! It is the best experience of your life and worth every penny. Since the majority of your tasks consist of riding, it's not work for us horse people - is it? Besides, all the money goes to the project, we use it to pay for our employees, horse feed and riding equipment.



Country and people

Who are my contacts?

Wulff Izko: is the boss of the ranch, hes in his late 50s and a passionate farmer. An engineer by training, he grew up on his father's farm (very close to Koiimasis). Almost 30 years ago, he bought the Ranch Koiimasis to realize his dream: to create a unity with the people, the horses and the rustic, relaxed cowboy feeling that resonates everywhere here.

Freda: is 35 years old, comes from Germany and was also a volunteer at Koiimasis for the first time in 2017. Since January 2020 she is responsible for Ranch-Dudes and guest rides.

Immanuel: is 26 years old and comes from Namibia. He is mainly responsible for the young horse training. He is a real, fearless cowboy.

Of course they are not the only people on the ranch, but they are your main contact persons. You're sure to enjoy a chat with our lovely cook at the saloon, or work with one of the other ranch hands. Our lodge "Fest Inn Fels" is run by Roland, a German expatriate. If you drop by there at the weekend, he will be happy to provide you with the latest news from Germany.

Will I get homesick?

Maybe... Sometimes we have up to 4 Dudes on the farm, sometimes you might be the only one. It usually takes about 14 days to really settle in, so if you adjust to that, it might be a little easier for you.

Where is the ranch located and how far is the nearest town?

Koiimasis is about 650 km from Windhoek, in the Karas region, in the middle of the Tiras Mountains, on the edge of the Namib Desert.

Helmeringhausen is about 65km away, there is a small shop for the necessities.

Lüderitz is about 290km away, the small town is a popular travel destination. If there are several Dudes on the farm at the same time, excursions can be organized.

What languages are spoken?

German, English and Afrikaans



What do I need to know about Namibia?

Of course, it's always good to know about the country you're travelling to. Here are some links with great information about Namibia:

- <https://www.info-namibia.com/>
- <https://www.namibia-info.com>
- <https://www.discoverafrica.com/blog/10-interesting-facts-about-namibia/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Namibia>
- <https://www.expertafrica.com/namibia/info/namibia-general-information>
- <https://www.namibia-travel-info.co.za/portal>
- www.fredasauszeit.blogspot.com
- www.quarterhorsesnamibia.com

If you're getting scared now because of all the safety instructions, let me tell you that you don't have to worry. The farm is very far from the nearest town and is its own little cosmos. You will mainly have to deal with the farmers and every now and then you will meet tourists (mainly from Germany) who are on holiday in the lodge or at the campsite. What you should really watch out for are scorpions, snakes and the nasty thorns of the trees and bushes. But if you are a bit careful and take care of yourself, you have nothing to fear here either.

What about money?

The Namibian dollar is the currency of Namibia. One Euro is about 17.3 dollars. Since you start in Windhoek, you can withdraw money here by credit card, for example, as there is no possibility of doing so on the farm. However, some credit cards take a while to work in Namibia (from experience). If you bring cash it is best to change money at the airport.



Accommodation and catering

Where do I live?

You live in the so-called castle. The castle is about 2 km from the cowboy camp and one kilometer from the farmhouse. When you are there for the first time you will get a different relation to distances - believe me. In the castle there are three bedrooms, two bathrooms with shower and a kitchen with fridge, freezer, oven and cooker. Outside you have the possibility to wash your clothes (by hand!) and hang them up. There is also a small gazebo where you can enjoy your meal or watch the Dassies jumping around. You might also see the eagle pair that has its nest nearby. Or you might get a surprise visit from the ponies.

Is there internet?

There is no wifi in your accommodation, but we have mobile data reception. Remember to buy a Namibian mobile phone card in Windhoek with enough money on it. More information in your travel documents.

What about food?

Dudes are self-catering. On the ranch you will be provided with meat, eggs and tap water, everything else you have to buy yourself, as we don't know what kind of food you prefer. Usually you go shopping in Windhoek before you drive to the farm. There are also a lot of German products here. If you find it difficult to estimate what you will need for your time, don't worry, there is always shopping in between and you will get enough supplies. The tap water on the farm is of very good quality, you can just drink it from the tap.

If we have a cook on site, you have the possibility to eat with us at the saloon for 280 NAD/day. You will be charged at the end of your stay. Vegetarians are of course also welcome with advance notice.

What if I get sick?

Travel health insurance is a booking requirement – you can't do without it. However, such insurance is relatively inexpensive. A stay abroad of up to 6 weeks is already covered by many health insurances - just ask your insurance company. For minor aches and pains there is sufficient medication at the ranch. Otherwise, the nearest doctor is in Lüderitz. For the really bad cases, the ranch has an airstrip.



Packing list

Here is a small, but certainly not complete, packing list:

- Clothing: practical, robust, easy-care clothing, sturdy shoes. Don't forget warm clothes, because in the winter months (May-October) it can get quite cold in the evenings.
- Swimwear for a Sunday at the pool
- Riding clothes: breeches or jeans, boots or shoes suitable for riding. Sneakers are not(!) suitable for riding.
- Riding helmet!
- Fanny pack for mobile phone etc.
- If necessary, shoes that you can ride and walk well in.
- Spurs only if you know how to use them!
- Travel health insurance! Please send us the necessary documents before arrival.
- Vaccinations: Tetanus
- Headgear: Cap or other, because the sun is merciless!
- Shower kit, cosmetics, toiletries, lip balm, etc.
- First-aid kit (at your discretion)
- Sun cream!
- Mosquito spray
- Cycling shorts if necessary
- Adapter for South African sockets, if necessary multiple plugs
- Torch
- Sleeping bag
- Hot water bottle for the winter months
- A good pair of sunglasses that stay on your nose when riding.
- You can leave the hairdryer at home, as well as similar things that use too much electricity.
- Pocket money, approx. 2,000 NAD
- USB stick, etc. to share the photos at the end.
- Camera, mobile phone, power bank...



Covid19 info

What if I am unable to travel due to Corona?

If you are unable to travel due to Covid19 because you or a family member is infected, you are unable to enter the country due to a travel warning, closed borders or cancelled flights, we will allow you to rebook at a time of your choice free of charge. For up-to-date entry information, please keep yourself informed via the website of your Foreign Office or the Namibian Embassy.

How safe is it for me in Namibia with regard to Covid?

Of course, there is no general answer to this question. The greatest risk is on arrival and in the capital, where legal restrictions are observed everywhere (masks are compulsory, etc.). On the farm, the risk is very low because we are very far away from any city. As long as you keep the prescribed distance to our guests and refrain from shaking hands, there should be no problems. Please make sure that your travel health insurance also covers treatment for a Corona infection.

Entry at Corona times

As of 07/22: Fully vaccinated travellers may enter with proof of vaccination. Unvaccinated travellers must present a negative PCR test not older than 72 hours issued by a laboratory certified in the country of departure upon entry. Please always print out everything DOUBLE in ENGLISH! In case of a transfer flight, please inform yourself about the entry regulations of the respective country.

Exit at Corona times

As travel regulations change almost constantly, please plan a night in Windhoek at the end, in case a Corona test is necessary. Currently (as of 07/22), vaccinated and recovered persons may enter Germany without a test.



Reviews of former Dudes

Steffi (33) from Heddesheim writes:

"I spent just over four weeks as a Ranch-Dude on Koiimasis. Back again, I think to myself: I should have booked directly for three months! What can I say? In a nutshell: Great people, great horses and a beautiful spot on earth!

When I arrived at the ranch I immediately felt welcome. I always found the interaction with everyone (especially Freda, Wilna and Wulff) to be warm, familiar and uncomplicated. There is little time for homesickness ;-) I have been lucky enough to know Freda for a long time and have followed her blog from the beginning, read her articles and regularly ask about her farm life. Finally being on site was really cool and I was not disappointed at all! Working with the horses was a great experience for me. I was allowed to ride horses with different levels of training, all of them real characters. Working on the next training goals with youngsters, teaching calm and routine to somewhat nervous companions or experiencing the higher art of western riding with well-trained 'oldies' - simply everything was there. On the riding arena, in the round pen or in the countryside, the work with the horses was very varied. In addition, I accompanied two tours with riding guests during my stay. So it was not boring. I was able to look behind the scenes, so to speak, as Freda's right hand to look after the guests and experience the brilliant rides and excursions to the full. Freda (and Wulff), I am grateful for the many opportunities, the trust and the great cooperation. My time as a Ranch-Dude was simply a huge adventure, which I would not want to miss and will certainly never forget. I hope to come back again very soon."

Reiner (52) from Dunningen writes:

"Thanks to Corona, I had the opportunity to spend 4 weeks on Koiimasis as a Ranch-Dude at very short notice. With 30 years of experience on different ranches in Wyoming and Montana, I was looking forward to my African adventure.

As soon as I arrived, I was pleasantly surprised and very impressed by how lovingly the cowboy camp and the Adventure Village were designed. I immediately felt at home. My accommodation - the castle - was awesome. But any ranch is nothing without the people on it - and the horses, of course. I was quickly integrated into a great team and it was especially great to be able to work with different horses straight away. In my opinion, riding different horses helps every rider a lot. I definitely took a lot with me - and maybe I also left something behind. The highlights included long gallops on really good, lively and characterful horses, exploring a trail over the Tiras Mountains together with Immanuel and Freda for many hours for the following guest ride and, of course, being able to ride in the dunes of the Namib Desert. I hope I was able to give the guests an unforgettable holiday as part of the Koiimasis team, but one of my favorite tasks was working cattle with Immanuel. The food was just great - regionally produced, lovingly prepared and in keeping with the place. Thanks to the kitchen - I actually gained a little over a kilo - despite the intense physical work. Unfortunately, the time was far too short. I hope that I can and may come again some time. I can only recommend the place to everyone; whether as a holidaymaker for a few days or also as a Ranch-Dude who likes to work intensively with horses."



Contact



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See you soon!

