MATOBO HILLS WORLD HERITAGE MTB CHALLENGE

“The Matopos Heritage Ride”
25th to 29th March 2020

BIZA INDABA 1
Greetings from the Matobo Hills
REGISTRATION
This must be done on-line. Links will be available on our web site, and will be emailed to our mailing list. Entries will open on 1st December 2019 and remain open until the event is full. We look forward to seeing our old friends and many new friends in March 2020 for the eleventh edition of the “Matopos Heritage Ride”

CHALLENGE
This event is designed as a challenge rather than a race, and completion of all three days is a significant achievement. It is however a timed event, and trophies are awarded for the best times in men-only, ladies-only and mixed teams

TEAMS
Teams may comprise 2 or 3 riders. Two riders per team must complete the event for a team placing. The time of the last team member will be recorded as the team time, and team members have to ride together. Entries by a solo rider will not be accepted

GENERAL INFORMATION
The Matobo Heritage Ride is a three-day off-road mountain bike event, held entirely within the Matobo Hills World Heritage site. The route is designed to take participants through some very rugged terrain and enjoy some magnificent scenery. There are no route maps, the ride is based entirely on GPS tracks that are sent to all registered riders in the fortnight before the event

The check-in is at Maleme Rest Camp on the afternoon of Wednesday 25th March 2020, with the main briefing after dinner that evening. It is essential that all riders attend that briefing. Overnight at the event village at Maleme

Over ten years the course has been refined and altered so that today it represents one of the finest three-day routes to be found in the sub-continent. That combined with the camaraderie around the camp fire each night, has created an event that is praised by all who have participated

Day One: Thursday 26th March 2020. This route is about 75kms. Allow 5 to 8 hours. The event kicks off at 7:00am from Maleme Rest Camp with the first technical challenge at about 3kms. There is some terrific single-track as we head west, towards the sacred Njelele Mountain. Beyond this point the single-track flows through woodland and across rivers. The first water point is at approximately 40km, the most westerly point, the second at 60km, alongside the iconic Mother and Child balancing Rock formation where you are obliged to stop for the compulsory photo. This section is within the Matobo Game Reserve. This is normally closed to cyclists and so whilst we are riding on dirt roads here the possibility of seeing rhino or any other large game keeps the riders on edge. The final compulsory stop is at the Lion Shelter, an interesting rock art site. There is also a sharp climb out of the Maleme valley up to the finish line at Maleme Rest Camp. There is
limited portage (bike pushing) on the route, mostly around Shambenyama River, after the first water point. But there are some terrific sweeping rides through woodland, and many technical challenges to test your skills

Day Two: Friday 27th March 2020. Starts at 07:00 at the gate to Maleme Rest Camp and ends at Camp Dwala. The route is approximately 68kms but don’t allow that to fool you. Allow 6 to 9 hrs. The first half is deceptive, a good single-track start, followed by open tracks, and then a superb single-track ending in a quality technical decent. Then back onto tracks to just before the Tuli River. Then a turn north, and we climb from the lowest part of the route (and the World Heritage Site) to the roof of the hills at Mwazi in three tough steps, approximately 500m within 15 kms. The first step involves light portage, pushing of the bike on a rocky path with recovery at the first waterpoint. Then a sharp climb alongside a waterfall out of the Nendeleki valley, and onto Dananombe which is a steep dwala ascent. Some will endeavour to cycle to take up the "Danamombe Challenge", but most will push. Be sure to look back at the views behind you. The last climb of the day is up Mwazi and this is followed by the first substantial dwala descent, which is fast and rough. Burbbling streams will be found along these sections of the ride, and we defy you to resist the temptation to stop and swim! This day will be longer than day one. The first water point is located in the Mazhowe valley, alongside waterfalls and pools. This is a compulsory stop on this day of 15 minutes duration, enough time to take a dip in the pool so come prepared! The second water point, between Danamombe and Mwazi, is near Dopi School

Day Three: Saturday 28th March 2020. The route is around 75kms. Allow between 5 and 9 hours. Starting and ending at Camp Dwala the route takes you down to the Mtshabezi River with a great dwala descent and then a few small sections of portage may be necessary. Then into the Mtshabezi Gorge for a short way and a climb out under the canopy of the Brachystegia gloucescens (tamarandoides). You will need to push and carry your bike, though the full route is ride-able for some. Then onto Shale school, down one of the sweeping highlights of the day, and then a steady climb takes you up to Tshingengoma, a 350m climb from the gorge with spectacular views. There is a steep dwala descent that requires care, and then down and through the historic battlefields of 1896 before going onto Diana’s Pool and the famous Orbicular Granite. At Rhodes Indaba site we enjoy a water point and compulsory stop. You then climb past Bembi, hopefully the waterfalls are still cascading down and then a flowing descent as you turn north. Easy riding to the Mtshabezi valley, then steady climbs with a short sharp portage before the second water-point and then the last big dwala ascent up Gorflinga. A relatively easy 5kms to the finish

Sunday 29th March 2020. After an early breakfast, riders depart for home
No special footwear is required for the portage stages, but you will need plenty of liquid if we have warm humid days. A GPS is absolutely critical. Please ensure a back-up machine and plenty of batteries! There is a lot of single-track which does not appear on any maps.

**GPS ROUTES**

The route is finalised as late as possible, so that diversions can be planned in the case of erosion from rainfall run-off. The GPS tracks will NOT be available for download from our web site (to avoid “route piracy” by other organisations) but will be emailed to all registered riders in the fortnight before the event. The route remains the copyright property of the Matobo Conservation Society and Dwala Safaris. You are requested to delete the route from your GPS on completion of the event. You may not ride any portion of the route without prior permission of the Matobo Conservation Society or Dwala Safaris.

**WATER POINTS**

There are two water points on each day, with a compulsory 10-minute stop at one of these. Ample water will be available to fill camel-bags from large containers, and some snack food is supplied. Riders should bring their own recovery drinks, and any special food requirements.

**QUERY CONTACT**

Email matoboheritageride@gmail.com. You can also refer to the Matobo Conservation Society web site, www.matobo.org or to our Facebook page “Matopos Heritage MTB Challenge” which you may find interesting.