

Africa on the hoof

By Amanda Hemingway

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Horizon, my third destination, is the only camp to offer facilities for novices and non-riders, making it ideal for a family holiday. It's affiliated to the nearby Dinaka reserve, which specialises in white rhino. You stay there in a idyllic lodge overlooking the Little Sand River, where hippo burble among the water-lilies and you ride out in a green country with deciduous trees and wide acres of grass where you can see rhino coming some way off. When one showed signs of aggression we were able to escape at a nonchalant trot, whistling

Horizons itself, some 6,000ft above sea level, is cooler than the other camp. With more than 60 horses and numerous guides there is always a choice of activities: game rides at a pace to suit a cross-country, polocrosse (a sort of hybrid of polo and lacrosse), and individual lessons. One of the guests who had a bad fall six months earlier and hadn't ridden since said they had given her back her confidence. After a spot of cattle-mustering on the neighbouring farm we recuperated at Windsong in an atmosphere redolent of South Africa's colonial past: a cluttered living room with sepia photographs of pioneer ancestors, tea on the porch, well-tended gardens that could almost have been in England. Charles Baber, the owner, is the descendant of adventures who arrived more than 100 year ago. He himself helped to breed the unique Bonsmara cattle that had given us so much trouble and that thrive in local conditions. His farm tour includes the tiny village church, commissioned from the celebrated architect Herbert Baker by two Victorian ladies who refused to pay him for his pains on the grounds that working for God should be free.

In the evening we went back to Horizons for sundowners on the floating pontoon in the lake, watching the storms building up around the rim of the sky. They struck at dinner, and we sat in the lodge drinking the local wine while outside there was a light show worthy of the best Hollywood special effects department.

Warning: do not travel without arnica cream for a sore bum and suitable painkillers for aching muscles. Beware the tall stories told guides to gullible travellers – my favourite came from Allie at Macatoo, who showed us the seed pods of the lavishly endowed sausage tree and claimed the local name for it was White Man's Disappointment

