



# RIDING WILD

There are moments in life when you feel that you are living 100%. *Ardina Strüwer* travels from France, gathers the reins and takes to the bush with Johnny Walker...

PHOTOGRAPHY: ARDINA STRÜWER

**R**iding amongst game in Kenya is one of these moments. I chose Borana for its riding safaris as I am a keen rider and knew that the Dyer family has kept horses here for almost a century.

Practically all their horses have been raised on the farm and are the result of Rose Dyer's carefully selected breeding based on healthy, strong and well-tempered ponies.

Borana lies at the foot of Mount Kenya, just 16 miles from the equator. The 35,000-acre ranch hosts a wide diversity of wildlife. This was the place where Disney came to find their inspiration for the making of the Lion King. This is 'real' Africa with buffalo, elephant, giraffe, hartebeest and other antelope. It is also one of the few places where you can easily spot the unusual Grevy's zebra.

Even though I expected to ride a good horse and to see lots of game I was not at all prepared to discover the beauty of the landscape neither the perfectly situated lodge. Borana Lodge is set on the edge of a valley, almost melted into the cliff. It overlooks a waterhole and has the most incredible

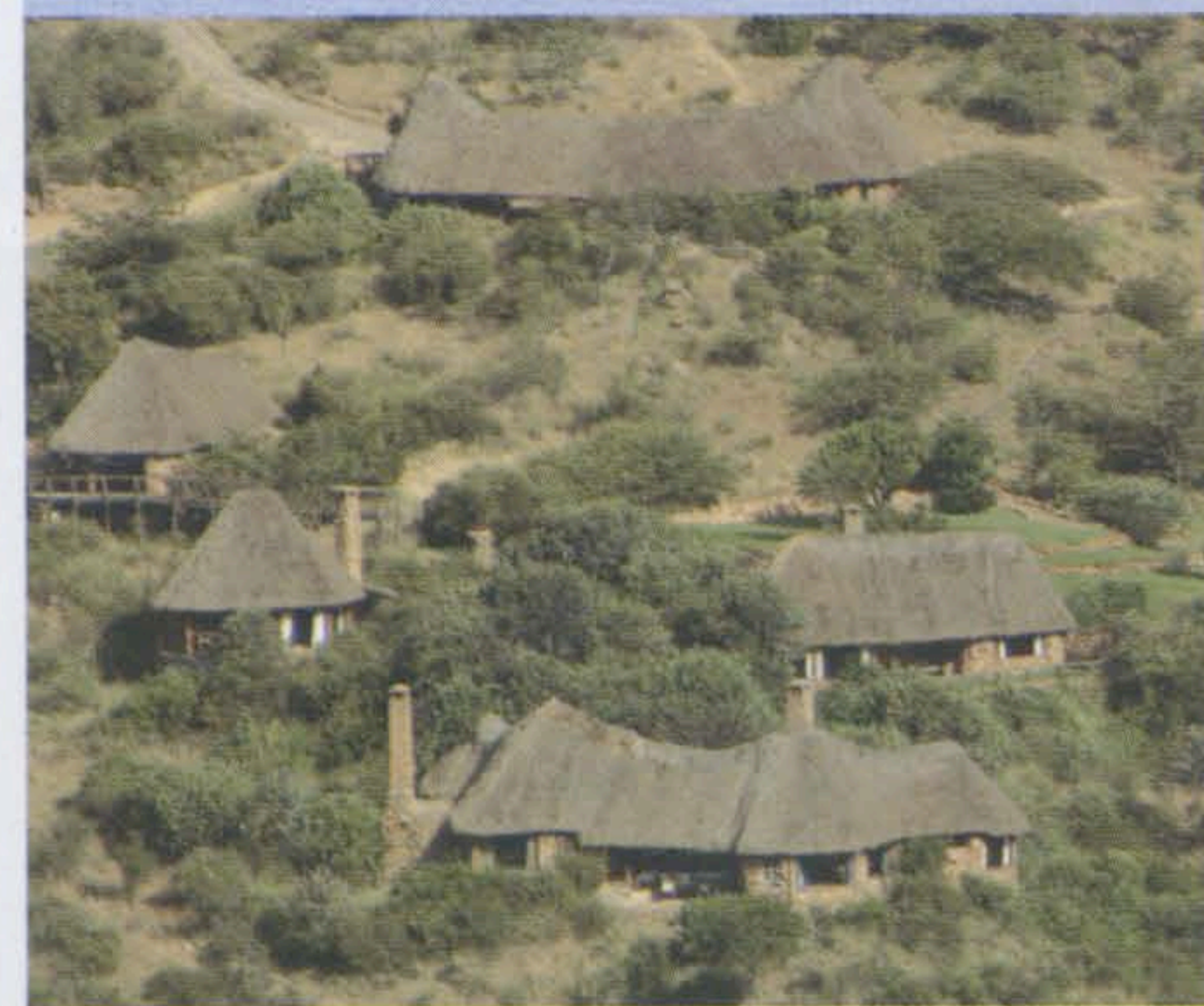
panoramic view over Mount Kenya, the Borana plains and the Ngare Ndare forest.

The main lodge has big picture windows, a huge fireplace surrounded by comfy leather sofas and opens up onto the pool veranda. I get the immediate urge to get into the pool or sit on the veranda with one of the many books from the coffee table until I discover my thatched private cottage with its own little balcony overlooking the valley; now I'm in a real dilemma.

Anyway it is time for my first riding safari; I jump into my riding clothes. A few minutes later I meet Johnny Walker, a 14-year-old thoroughbred gelding that will be my partner and friend for the next two days. I just have time to say 'hello' before I am up and sitting in the comfortable saddle.

Michael, one of Rose and Anthony Dyer's four sons, guides me through the savannah. He tells me the story of his grandfather Will Powys, who arrived here in 1918 to breed sheep and how today the farm has expended its activities to Boran cattle, wheat and the flower growing business.

Soon we pass a small lake with many different birds; we begin to trot. I happily discover that Johnny Walker is both comfortable and eager – a perfect combination. Almost immediately we spot



three elephants and break into a slow canter to get up closer. On Johnny Walker I feel completely safe. He seems to 'read' the ground avoiding holes and scrubby thorn bushes.

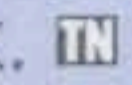
We stop to admire the peaceful scenery of the elephant family. Camera at the ready I try to get just that little bit closer, to get the perfect shot. Michael warns me but it's already too late. The no longer peaceful cow elephant bursts into a fast trot and Michael orders me to take off immediately. Johnny Walker is pretty convinced himself and gallops away at high speed. I quickly look over my shoulder and notice that she is actually catching up with us. Two simultaneous thoughts enter my head: 'this is just so cool' and 'yikes, we are in *real* trouble!'



Half a minute later the angry matriarch – having made her point - returns back to her territory. Michael explains that had she been really angry her ears would have been right back. Whatever, it was enough to get my adrenaline racing.

The landscape is absolutely breathtaking; in whichever direction I look I see something that's worth a picture. We later try to catch up with some timid giraffe; the long, long canter fills me such an overwhelming sense of wellbeing, it seems it will last forever.

When I return to the lodge a fire has been lit in my cottage. I prepare a warm bath and sit for a moment on my private veranda to catch the last

view of the scenery. Night is falling and I am already looking forward to tomorrow's early ride. But first I need my Gin & Tonic by the fire in the main lodge sharing the day's events with my company for dinner. Borana, for me, is that secret valley where you can forget about time while having a lifetime experience on horseback. 

#### HOW TO BOOK

Bush & Beyond, Nairobi on  
tel: 020 600457/605108  
reservations@bush-and-beyond.com

#### LOCATION:

Borana Lodge is situated on a 35,000-acre wildlife rich, private cattle ranch. The lodge sits on the edge of the Samangua Valley with awe inspiring views of Mount Kenya, the Borana plains and Ngare Ndare forest. Over 300 species of bird and a rich diversity of wildlife inhabit this area.

Established 12 years ago Borana encapsulates exclusivity and freedom; freedom to explore a truly spectacular part of Kenya. Built from local materials and dead wood from the ranch, the lodge blends well with its surroundings.

#### ACCOMMODATION & FACILITIES:

Eight thatched cottages decorated in luxurious up-country style. Three cottages have king-size double beds; three have queen-size singles. All rooms are spacious, have open fireplaces, en suite bathrooms and private verandah. A central eating and sitting area is furnished for maximum comfort. A game 'blind' on the edge of a nearby dam provides a superb spot from which you can watch elephant swimming. The horizon pool has fabulous views overlooking the valley below and surrounding hills.

#### HOW TO GET THERE:

Daily schedule flight from Wilson Airport (Nairobi) to Lewa Downs or by private charter flight direct to the Borana airstrip. Alternatively you can drive from either Nanyuki (2 hours) or Nairobi (4 hours).

#### TO DO:


- Game drives (including night drives)
- Game walks
- Horse riding
- Bush breakfasts, lunches and dinners
- A horizon swimming pool that gives you that liberating feeling of being able to swim to eternity...
- Trips to the famed Lewa Wildlife Conservancy; home to black and white rhino
- Guided horse riding treks, walking safaris or mountain bike expeditions to two community-owned lodges and a fly-camp in the Seiku Valley
- Fly-fishing on Mount Kenya

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Nairobi Head Office: Pan Africa House, Standard Street, Nairobi  
Tel: 221992/3/4, Fax: 214120/230872  
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