

Midlife Madness on SAFARI



21 wild days - June 2017



A SPECTACULAR WILDLIFE ADVENTURE IN KENYA & TANZANIA Round, Roly-Poly & Dangerous

IN A REMOTE SWAMPY CORNER OF THE ASTONISHING Ngorongoro Crater (the largest wildlife 'zoo' in the world) we came upon some wallowing **HIPPPOS**. And these guys would easily win first prize in a sight-sound-smell contest. Especially smell.

'Hippopotamus' means 'river horse' – which is what Greeks called these round, roly-poly beasts. But ancient Egyptians (whose stretch of the Nile used to be full of hippos) called them 'river pigs'.

We discovered why at this popular hippo-hole. It was late in the afternoon, and our guide parked the 4WD on a hilly look-out. We disembarked, stood on the edge and looked down, speechless and breathless(!), on a totally unbelievable scene.

In the river below us were hundreds of hippos. Except it wasn't a river. Okay, it used to be – but in the absence of rain it had stopped flowing, and instead had become a soupy, stinky hippo-toilet! And the hippos obviously LOVED IT!

They were pushing and shoving, mating and meditating, roaring and grunting. The noise ... it was unreal. And the toxic pong ... well, use your imagination. (It still brings tears to my eyes just thinking about it.)

There were fat poppa-hippos fighting for space, bellowing loudly, bashing each other with sledge-hammer heads, and slashing at each other with massive wide-

open jaws. There were fat mamma-hippos doing backwards-flips and sideways-rolls in the soup, churning up the river-weeds and baring their blushing-pink bellies. There were fat baby-hippos floating happily in all this gunge – little ears twitching and little red-rimmed eyes

peering out just above the surface. And, everywhere we looked, there were hippos pooping like only hippos can – twirling their stumpy tails like propellers and spraying green hippo-poop all over their lucky hippo neighbours!

According to African legend, hippos were one of the last animals created, and they got thrown together from leftover parts. The poor hippo was so embarrassed by its bloated, hairless body and its clumsy, wobbly walk that it asked the Creator for permission to hide in the water by day and come out only at night to feed. I can't vouch for the truth of that legend, but I can tell you that hippos are dangerous. Forget the jolly, goofy, lovable hippos you've seen in *Disney* movies. These four-tonne slobs are the bad guys of African wildlife. They're aggressive, unpredictable, incredibly fast when they want to be – and they kill far more people with their razorblade

teeth than all the

lions, buffalos and crocodiles put together. Which explains (along with the smell) why we declined to join them for a playful swim!



LATER, AS THE SUN WENT DOWN OVER THE Ngorongoro Crater, we sat around an open fire, swapping hippo-stories and reliving that wild, unforgettable afternoon all over again ...

Midlife Madness Cruises & Tours

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