

DESTINATIONS

MIDDLE EAST | AJMAN

POSTCARD

Ajman



The easily accessible emirate offers a wealth of natural treasures and local culture, discovers Holidaysplease independent travel expert **Jo Shayler**

We flew out overnight with Emirates into Dubai and were astonished to find it was only a 30-minute transfer from the airport to Ajman. And because you're not travelling into Dubai, you miss all the traffic. On the drive into Ajman, I was struck that it wasn't too built-up as there isn't nearly as much construction going on as in Dubai.

A highlight was the Al Zorah Nature Reserve, where we went kayaking through the mangroves and saw flocks of flamingos – it was a great experience. We first went out on a boat with our guide and each of us planted a mangrove tree as part of their sustainability programme. The mangroves are right next to the golf course, so you see lots of cormorants and herons, and there's no noise – it was very peaceful.

Then you make your way through the mangroves and there they were – hundreds, if not thousands, of flamingos just standing there. It was fantastic to have that experience in a city, and unbelievable to think you could see this nature just half-an-hour outside Dubai.

We also went to the history museum and visited the Ajman Stud, where the crown prince keeps his collection of Arabian horses. It was absolutely mind-blowing. They've got stained glass windows, air-conditioning and individual horse showers! It's not really a tourist attraction in the usual sense; you need to speak to the concierge of your hotel or to your travel agent and they arrange a private tour for you. It was beautiful and something quite different, and would appeal to horse types, although we all found it fascinating too.

The food everywhere was amazing. I can't tell you how much wonderful seafood we ate, and being by the sea we knew it was all freshly caught. And the beaches are natural white sand – it feels as though you're in the Maldives.

There was much more space than in other emirates. The Corniche in particular was a nice, easy place to take a stroll – I didn't once see crowds.

I think there will be an appetite for that at the moment. People who have had to cancel holidays are looking at Christmas because they still want to get away this year. Ajman can be a great option. You get a lot of luxury for your money, and there's a feeling of culture, history and local life. **TW**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Ajman Stud; kayaking to see flamingos in Al Zorah Nature Reserve; Al Zorah Golf Club; Holidaysplease's Jo Shayler

PICTURES: Kevin Murray Golf Photography; Joanna Skladanek