



Best of Kenya

Duration: 10 Days

Highlights: Amboseli National Park, Lewa Downs Conservancy and Masai Mara National Reserve

For guests looking to experience the best parks of Kenya this is the perfect journey for them. They start at elephant-haven Amboseli National Park, then onto Lewa Downs before ending at the wildlife packed Masai Mara National Reserve.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrive Nairobi

Arrive at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, clear immigration procedures, meet your representative who transfers you to your Nairobi hotel.

Nairobi is the largest city between Cairo and Johannesburg. Though just south of the equator, it enjoys a spring-like climate. It is a modern city, yet its main avenues blaze with color from tropical bushes and vines. Less than 100 years ago, there was a river in an empty wilderness where Nairobi now stands. Nairobi has a wealth of international restaurants with worldwide cuisine available including Ethiopian, French, Italian and Chinese. Several restaurants also offer local, Swahili favorites. Shopping in Nairobi varies from African clothing and craft shops to bazaar stalls and open-air markets where souvenir hunters find bargains ranging from woodcarvings to Persian carpets. There is also a thriving gemstone and tailormade jewelry industry in Nairobi offering rare and unusual local and regional stones.

Overnight: Bronze: Tamarind Tree Hotel | Silver: Ole Sereni Hotel | Gold: Hemingways Nairobi

Meal Plan:

Day 2 - Nairobi

Today meet your driver guide at the hotel lobby to explore the city of Nairobi. Visit the Ocean Sole workshop and see how they turn washed up flip-flops into wonderful works of art. Then head to the Giraffe Centre to feed the endangered Rothschild giraffe before a final stop at the David Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage.

Ocean Sole is a small enterprise that recycles flip-flops found on Kenyan beaches and waterways and turns them into wonderful works of art. The eye-catching creations, from the life-sized giraffe to the palm sized rhino, are handcrafted by a team of men and women who cut, mold and sand the flip flops. The vibrant creations, mostly animals, are sold in zoos, aquariums and museums around the world.

Next stop is the AFEW Giraffe Center. The Giraffe Center was established in 1983 as a sanctuary for the then endangered Rothschild giraffe. The breeding program has been a great success and visitors can now watch these gentle giants at eye level from a raised platform. There is also the opportunity to learn more about giraffe at the interpretation center and hand-feed them whilst watching the semi-tame family of warthogs snuffle around their hooves in search of titbits.

Set on the edge of Nairobi National Park, the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust was set up by the late Dame Daphne Sheldrick in 1977 in order to raise and rehabilitate orphaned wild animals (mainly elephant and rhino) and later successfully reintroduce them into the wild. The sanctuary provides a perfect home for growing youngsters, with the habitat and space mimicking those that elephants enjoy in the wild. The orphans grow up in mini herds, are bossed about by mini matriarchs and enjoy mud baths. When they slap wet mud to their skins this acts as sun block and insect repellent. Their care in the sanctuary is described by the head keeper during a visit.

Overnight: Bronze: Tamarind Tree Hotel | Silver: Ole Sereni Hotel | Gold: Hemingways Nairobi

Meal Plan: B, L, D

Day 3 - Fly to Amboseli National Park

Today enjoy an early breakfast and transfer to Wilson Airport for your 07:30 scheduled flight to Amboseli National Park.

On arrival at the airstrip, you are met by your guide and vehicle from the property and transferred to the lodge/camp. On the way to the property, you may spot some of the huge herds of elephants that Amboseli is famous for.

You have time to freshen up and relax in your room before lunch is served. The early afternoon is free to explore the lodge or take time to read your favorite book by the pool before taking a late afternoon game drive in the park.

Overnight: Bronze: Amboseli Serena Lodge | Silver: Tortilis Lodge | Gold: Tawi Lodge

Meal Plan: B, L, D

Day 4 – Amboseli National Park

As the sun creeps above the horizon set out on your first game drive of the day. This is the best time to see Mount Kilimanjaro in all her glory and capture that iconic image of the elephants in front of the world tallest freestanding mountain. In the afternoon you have time for a siesta before setting out again in the golden light of sunset on a second game drive.

Amboseli National Park, at the foot of Africa's highest mountain 5895m (19,340ft), Kilimanjaro is one of the most popular of all Kenya's national parks. It lies some 240 kilometers (145 miles) south-east of Nairobi. The snow-capped peak of Mount Kilimanjaro rising above a saucer of clouds dominates every aspect of Amboseli National Park which covers 392 square kilometers (151 square miles). The Tanzania border runs along its base and forms the boundary of the park. Years ago, this was the locale around which such famous writers as Ernest Hemingway and Robert Ruark spun their stories of big-game hunting in the African wilds. The snows of Kilimanjaro, white and crystalline, also form a backdrop to one of Kenya's most spectacular displays of wildlife - lion, elephant, leopard, rhino, cheetah, buffalo and a host of plains game and the combination makes the park a photographer's paradise. Part of the park is composed of a dried-up lakebed which in the shimmering heat produces mirages. Swamps and springs, fed by underground rivers from Kilimanjaro's melting snows, form permanent watering places for the wildlife in times of drought.

Overnight: Bronze: Amboseli Serenal Lodge | Silver: Tortilis Lodge | Gold: Tawi Lodge

Meal Plan: B, L, D

Day 5 - Fly to Lewa Downs via Nairobi

Today you transfer to the airstrip for your shared light aircraft flight to Nairobi at 09:00 connecting onto Lewa Wildlife Conservancy at 10:20. Lewa was one of Kenya's first private conservancies and is the best place to see black rhino in East Africa.

On arrival you are met by the camp guide and vehicle and set out on a game drive across the plains. You reach the lodge in time for lunch; in the afternoon take a moment to relax and explore the grounds of the property before setting off onto the plains for your afternoon game drive.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy is a family owned 60,000-acre game reserve and UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the foothills of Mt. Kenya, this premier wildlife haven has been the home of the Craig family since 1924. Although just 48 kilometers (30 miles) north of the equator, it is home to animal species not seen in the southern hemisphere, including reticulated giraffe, the endangered Grevy's zebra and blue-skinned Somali ostrich. Black and white rhino, introduced here in the early eighties in an effort to provide a haven, thrive here and are relocated to other parks in Kenya.

All three of the big cats, up to 200 elephants, Greater kudu and the graceful gerenuk antelope with its long, elegant neck, are part of the unique experience that is Lewa. Lewa is a world leader, a pioneer in conservation and has won many awards for its efforts. It leads the way in community-based initiatives. As an activity-based reserve, it offers unique bush experiences that are restricted in national parks: you can ride on horseback alongside herds of giraffe, zebra and antelope, take a night game drive, walk with armed rangers, or enjoy a camel ride to a bush breakfast. Several springs bubble up and feed the reserve's perennial water supply supporting the game and ensuring wildlife sightings year-round - including rare sitatunga antelope which, with their splayed hooves, are swamp residents.

Overnight: Bronze: Lewa Safari Camp | Silver: Kifaru House | Gold: Sirikoi

Meal Plan: B, L, D

Day 6 - Lewa Downs

Today you can explore Lewa from a different perspective – from the back of a horse or camel. This optional additional activity is the most exhilarating way to explore Lewa and the best way to get close up with the wildlife. On horseback humans become just another animal and blend in with the wildlife. This allows you to ride alongside a herd of zebra or giraffe and experience the thrill of running free. Rides can be adjusted to suit a variety of levels.

For those that would like to venture further afield you can also book a helicopter excursion. There are several different half day and full day trips for you to indulge in including flying up Mt Kenya with a picnic breakfast for a spot of fly fishing, up into Northern Frontier and view Lake Turkana, interact with the little-known Pokot tribe and fly over the extraordinary Suguta Valley or fly up to Magado Crater where pools of saline water captures the colours of the rainbow.

Both day and night game drives and nature walks are included in your stay – Lewa boasts a spectacular array of wildlife that cannot be seen elsewhere.

Overnight: Bronze: Lewa Safari Camp | Silver: Kifaru House | Gold: Sirikoi

Meal Plan: B, L, D

Day 7 - Fly to Masai Mara National Reserve

Enjoy an early breakfast at the camp and transfer to the airstrip for your shared light aircraft flight to the Masai Mara at approximately 09:35. On arrival, you are met by your camp guide and set out on your first game drive in the Masai Mara back to the property.

Arrive to a warm welcome by the camp team before checking in and having some time to relax and freshen up in your room before lunch. In the afternoon take a dip in the pool before setting out on an afternoon game drive in this wonderful part of Kenya.

The jewel in Africa's crown, Maasai Mara is host to the most spectacular array of wildlife. Her 1,510 square kilometers (583 square miles) of open savannah, woodlands and tree-lined rivers create an eco-system which supports huge numbers of bird and mammal species. Lion are found in abundance throughout the park as are elephant, giraffe, a variety of gazelle species and zebra. Cheetah and leopard are also regularly seen and, if lucky, you may also find rhino.

Overnight: Bronze: Neptune Mara Rianta | Silver: Ol Seki Hemingways | Gold: Sanctuary Olonana

Meal Plan: B, L, D

Day 8 - Masai Mara National Reserve

This morning head out on a morning game drive in the full splendor of one of the world's most densely populated wildlife area—the famed Masai Mara.

In the afternoon you have the option to visit a Masai Village, a fascinating cultural experience. The colourful and vibrant Maasai people are one of the few communities in Kenya to retain their culture and traditions. You are welcomed into the village with a traditional dance followed by a guided tour by the chief. He also gives a brief talk

to the group about the lifestyle of the Maasai people. You are then introduced to some of the families and invited into their homes where you have the unique opportunity to see how they live.

Overnight: Bronze: Neptune Mara Rianta | Silver: Ol Seki Hemingways | Gold: Sanctuary Olonana

Meal Plan: B, L, D

Day 9 - Masai Mara National Reserve

Today you continue to explore this fantastic landscape. We highly recommended an early morning balloon flight over the Mara plains with Champagne breakfast (additional cost).

As the balloon is inflated against the first rays of sunrise your pilot goes through safety procedures. Once aloft, the balloon floats gently over the plains, giving a bird's eye view of the game below as the sun creeps slowly over the horizon. After about one hour the balloon lands as breakfast is being prepared and, of course, enjoy a glass or two of bubbly to toast your flight in a tradition initiated by the Montgolfier brothers.

Game viewing is never dull in the Mara, and patience is often rewarded with unique sightings: a pride of lion stalking their prey; a solitary leopard retrieving its kill from the high branches of an acacia tree; male wildebeest sparring to attract females into their harem; or even a herd of elephant protecting their young from opportunistic predators. The annual wildebeest migration traditionally is present in the Mara from July-September and at this time nature's dramas unfold before your very eyes at every turn.

Overnight: Bronze: Neptune Mara Rianta | Silver: Ol Seki Hemingways | Gold: Sanctuary Olonana

Meal Plan: B, L, D

Day 10 - Fly to Nairobi and Depart

Today, bid the Mara farewell, fly back to Nairobi at 11:00. You are met by your representative and transferred to a restaurant for lunch. There is some time to do some shopping in the city before being transferred to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport for the onward flight home.

Overnight.

Meal Plan: B, L

To continue your journey onto the beach, please see our Kenya Coast Extension or Zanzibar Extension.