



Highlights of Kenya

Duration: 8 Days

Highlights: Samburu National Reserve, Aberdares National Park, Lake Nakuru National Park and Masai Mara National Reserve

This safari showcases the different facets of a Kenya safari from the savage wilderness of Samburu National Park to the cool Mount Kenya highlands, down to Lake Nakuru in the Rift Valley and culminating in the wildlife rich Masai Mara National Reserve.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrive Nairobi

Arrive at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport aboard your international flight. You are met by our representative after clearing immigration and customs. Thereafter, you are assisted on to your vehicle for transfer to your Nairobi hotel and assisted to check into your rooms.

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. The nearby Nairobi National Park boasts the presence of all but one of the 'Big Five'. Nairobi has a wealth of international restaurants. Cuisine of all types is available from Chinese to French and Italian. Several restaurants also offer local favorites. Nightlife varies from dining out to going to local nightclubs with discos and bands. 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 are 3 excellent museums, offering insights into the fauna, culture and history of Kenya.

Overnight: Silver: Tamarind Tree Hotel | Gold: Hemingways Nairobi

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Day 2 - Drive Nairobi - Samburu National Reserve

After breakfast, join your driver guide and drive north to Samburu (350km or 220 miles) approximately 6 hours. Check in on arrival at your lodge/camp and thereafter enjoy lunch. Later go on an afternoon game drive (16:00 - 18:00 approx.).

Samburu National Reserve in the dry country in the north of Kenya is thriving big game country thanks to the mighty Ewaso Nyiro River. The river takes its name from the local dialect meaning "River of Brown". It rises from glaciers on Mount Kenya and flows through the reserve on its journey north. The river provides the lifeblood of this harsh wilderness, without which the game would not survive. You'll see animals here that you won't see in the south: the impressive Beisa oryx which stand a meter at the shoulder and thrive because of a physiological ability to store water, the reticulated giraffe, the thin-striped Grevy's zebra and the gerenuk antelope with its improbably long neck. This is also lion country - the Samburu was home to George and Joy Adamson who raised Elsa and brought us Born Free. Samburu's remoteness means it has clung to much of its appeal of yesteryear, it feels as untamed as it looks.

Overnight: Silver: Samburu Intrepids Camp | Gold: Sasaab Lodge

Meal Plan: B,L,D

Day 3 - Samburu National Reserve

Enjoy an early breakfast and head out on a morning game drive. After a morning spent in search of the Samburu Five, return back to the camp/lodge for rest and lunch and a dip in the pool.

16:00: Head out in search of any of the animals that you may have missed in the morning game drive. There is also the opportunity to visit a Samburu village where you get to learn about the 'butterfly' people

Together with neighboring Buffalo Springs and Shaba National Reserves, this area is home to the Samburu tribe, cousins of the Maasai, who share the same nomadic, cattle-herding existence and staunchly observe age- old rites and customs.

Overnight: Silver: Samburu Intrepids Camp | Gold: Sasaab Lodge

Meal Plan: B,L,D

Day 4 - Drive Samburu National Reserve - Aberdare National Park

Breakfast at the camp/lodge and thereafter join your driver guide for a drive to the Aberdare National Park (220km, 3 hours approx).

The Aberdares present an unexpected and welcome hiatus between the parks to the south and the deserts in the north of Kenya, their startling chill and dense forest the perfect foil to hot, dry savannah. The forests are home to a range of wildlife that includes secretive species seldom seen anywhere else including the Blue Duiker, the Giant Forest Hog, Golden Cat and rare melanistic leopard and serval cats - whose coats have turned black as a survival adaption to help them absorb warmth from the sun faster in a cooler, darker environment. The Aberdares are also home to Kenya's rarest antelope, the pretty and bashful Bongo with its chestnut coat and chalk stripes across its back; watch for them as they slip shyly through the forest, dappled sunshine filtered

bottle-green by

trees catching the gloss of their coats.

Upon arrival at the lodge, check in and enjoy lunch.

In the afternoon, head down to the animal viewing bunker where you get to almost patting distance of buffalos and elephants as they hang out at the nearby saltlick.

Overnight: Bronze: The Ark | Silver: Serena Mountain Lodge

Meal Plan: B,L,D

Day 5 - Drive Aberdares National Park - Lake Nakuru National Park

In the morning, enjoy a hot breakfast then join your driver guide at the reception and proceed to Lake Nakuru National Park (220km or 136 miles, 3 hours approx). On arrival, check in, lunch and rest. At 16:00, head out on a game drive in the park.

Lake Nakuru, a shallow, soda lake in the Rift Valley was once famous for being home to some of the biggest flocks of flamingos in the world. Due to increase in water level, the flamingos migrated to other lakes in the Rift Valley however Lake Nakuru and its surrounds are home to many other bird species including pelicans, cormorants, black-winged stilts, avocets and in the European winter dozens of migrant waders. From the large - fish eagles with their enormous six-foot wingspan and haunting cry - to the small - tiny jewel colored pygmy kingfisher - life thrives here in feathered abundance.

Lake Nakuru National Park, created in 1960 specifically on account of the extraordinary bird life here, complements what the lake has to offer. Beside its magnificent bird life, it is also a rhino sanctuary, one of the best places in Kenya to see both black and white rhino. As a result of the haven, you'll see Rothschild's giraffe here, relocated from Uganda in the mid-seventies to protect them. The park shares other secrets: it's home to the rare Long-eared Leaf-nosed bat and a resident population of tree climbing lions.

Overnight: Bronze: Sarova Lion Hill Lodge | Silver: Lake Nakuru Sopa Lodge | Gold: The Cliff

Meal Plan: B,L,D

Day 6 - Drive Lake Nakuru National Park - Masai Mara National Reserve

After an early breakfast, depart and drive to for Masai Mara National Reserve. Enjoy lunch en-route to the reserve.

On arrival at the camp/lodge, check in have a relaxing afternoon. Later go on your first afternoon game drive in the Mara.

The Maasai Mara plays host to the most spectacular array of wildlife. 1,510 square kilometers (583 square miles) of broad biscuit-colored savannah sprawls as home to huge numbers of birds (almost 600 species) and animals and is adjacent to the enormous expanse of the Serengeti; the two make up the most diverse ecosystem on the continent.

The word 'mara' comes from the local dialect, Maa, as spoken by the Maasai and means 'spotted'; certainly, the vast grasslands here are dotted by the shadows of small clouds which scud across a huge sky above. Every year this special place witnesses the most incredible animal phenomenon on the planet - the wildebeest migration. The mass of plains game moving north from the Serengeti in search of fresh pasture returning south around October, a heaving line of grunting, snorting life that stretches for miles. At the Mara River they mass together nervously on the banks before plunging onwards; their pursuit of food overwhelming their fear of the crocodiles that lie in wait for the annual feast. This incredible spectacle involves the movement of over a million wildebeest and their fellow travelers, half a million Thomson's gazelle, half a million zebras as well as smaller herds of topi and eland all operating on the principle of safety in numbers. They are followed, inevitably, by predators, primarily lions and hyena.

Overnight: Bronze: Sarova Mara Camp | Silver: Mara Intrepids | Gold Sanctuary Olonana
Meal Plan: B,L,D

Day 7 - Masai Mara National Reserve

You have the day to seek out those animals you haven't spotted in the Mara. You have the option to go on an early morning balloon safari that gives a bird's eye view of the wildlife below at the sun creeps slowly over the horizon. Later, get up close to nature on a walking safari with experienced guides. Visit a Maasai village to learn about Maasai culture which has continued to remain resilient despite the changing times.

Overnight: Bronze: Sarova Mara Camp | Silver: Mara Intrepids | Gold: Sanctuary Olonana
Meal Plan: B,L,D

Day 8 - Drive Masai Mara National Reserve - Nairobi - Depart

After breakfast, bid the Masai Mara goodbye and drive to Nairobi (310 kilometres or 192 miles) about 6 hours approximately.

A table has been reserved at the Carnivore Restaurant for lunch.

The Carnivore Restaurant, situated at the edge of Nairobi National Park, is a meat eater's paradise. The focal point of the main restaurant is the 'roasting pit' where a staggering array of meat is roasted on huge metal spears over charcoal. Waiters bring different meats - crocodile, ostrich, lamb, beef, chicken, pork - to the table and carve onto piping hot plates with an exceptional array of sauces to complement the meats. They continue their rounds until you admit defeat and lower your flag (perched on your table!). There is a vegetarian menu for non-meat eaters. If you have any room left after the unlimited servings, a variety of tempting puddings are on offer before mugfuls of steaming Kenya coffee herald the end of the meal.

Also, on the Carnivore grounds is the African Heritage shop which offers a small collection of art, tribal sculptures, artifacts from all parts of Africa, jewelry, some hand-crafted home accessories and African textile designs.

Later, transfer to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport for your departure flight.

Meal Plan: B,L