Tour Code
KT4

ADVENTURESABROAD

KENYA & TANZANIA

'the Ultimate Safari'

15 days

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Day 1 Arrive in Nairobi

Today we arrive in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

Part of Maasai land when the British arrived, this modern capital grew with the development of the railway. Derived from a Maasai word meaning "Cold Water," Nairobi is a pleasant mix of colonial British with modern and traditional African influences.

Overnight in Nairobi.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Nairobi - Ol Pejeta Conservancy

Today we travel from Nairobi, through the "White Highlands," so called because of the large number of Europeans who settled here, northwards to the lower slopes of Mt Kenya, rising to 5199 m (16,728 feet), Africa's second highest peak. Our (+/- 4 hour) drive will take us into the Central Highlands, the heartland of the Kikuyu people. This is a very fertile region, well-watered, intensively cultivated, and thickly forested. The land was coveted by the Europeans who began arriving in ever-increasing numbers once the railway through the area was completed. The settlers established coffee and tea plantations on the eastern slopes of Mt Kenya and cultivated wheat on the western slopes.

Our destination is Sweetwaters, a luxury tented camp clustered around a water hole and set in the pristine calm of the private Ol Pejeta Conservancy, a non-profit organization supporting endangered species, tourism and community outreach. Ol Pejeta is East Africa's largest Black Rhino sanctuary, the only place in Kenya to see chimpanzees, and holds some of the highest predator densities in Kenya.

This afternoon we'll enjoy our first game drive within the conservancy.

Overnight at Sweetwaters.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3 Ol Pejeta Conservancy

Ol Pejeta Conservancy is a sprawling landscape, a mosaic of diverse habitats stretching across over 350 square kilometers. Imagine rolling grass plains, interspersed with wooded grasslands, acacia woodlands, and patches of dense evergreen thickets – all contributing to a rich and varied ecosystem. This diversity of habitats supports an astounding variety of animals, including, of course, the iconic "Big Five" – lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and buffalo.

Today, we'll immerse ourselves in this wildlife haven with both morning and afternoon game drives, maximizing our chances of encountering its incredible inhabitants. But that's not all! We'll also have the unique opportunity to visit the Sweetwaters Chimpanzee Sanctuary, a truly special place. This sanctuary is the only one of its kind in Kenya, providing a refuge for the highly endangered and remarkably intelligent chimpanzee species. These chimpanzees, often orphaned or rescued from abusive situations in West and Central Africa, find a safe and nurturing home here. The sanctuary's dedicated staff carefully nurses them back to health, allowing them to live out their days in the security of a vast, natural enclosure. It's a chance to witness these fascinating primates up close and learn about the important conservation work being done to protect them.

Overnight at Sweetwaters Camp.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Ol Pejeta - Great Rift Valley - Lake Nakuru National Park

This morning we travel to Lake Nakuru, a shallow soda lake in the Rift Valley (+/- 5 hours). The Rift Valley was created millions of years ago under the strain of enormous volcanic eruptions which resulted in a giant split in the earth's surface from Syria to Mozambique. Lava flowed into the valley, forming escarpments on either side of the gigantic trough which can be up to 80 km (50 miles) wide, big enough to be visible from space. At the lake, depending on the water levels, we may have the opportunity to see flamingos,* in addition to the over 340 species of birds that have been recorded in the Rift Valley!

Lake Nakuru is very shallow and can fluctuate up to five metres (12 feet) each day. When the water is low, you can see a white band of crystallized soda along the shoreline. This is also one of the best places in Kenya to view the rare White Rhino as we explore the park on our afternoon game drive.

* This, and other Rift Valley lakes, have been known in the past for huge numbers of flamingos; however, this can be very "hit and miss" owing to seasonal variations in rainfall and water level, and the increasing frequency of drought. The best we can do is hope for the best!

Overnight in Lake Nakuru National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 Lake Nakuru - Maasai Mara National Reserve

We rise early this morning and bid farewell to Lake Nakuru National Park, continuing our journey through the dramatic landscapes of the Great Rift Valley. Our route takes us past the serene beauty of Lake Naivasha and the imposing presence of nearby Mount Longonot. This relatively young volcano serves as a stark reminder of the Rift Valley's turbulent geological history. Our drive time today is approximately six hours (plus time for a lunch break en route), which includes a stretch on a less-than-perfect road.

Early-to-mid afternoon, we'll arrive at our lodge nestled within the world-renowned Maasai Mara National Reserve. After check-in and a well-deserved breather, we'll embark on another thrilling game drive, venturing out into the reserve in search of its incredible inhabitants. The possibilities are endless, and every game drive offers a unique and unforgettable experience.

The Maasai Mara is essentially a seamless extension of the vast Serengeti ecosystem, and it boasts an astonishing concentration of wildlife. This reserve is home to the largest population of lions in all of Kenya, a testament to its rich biodiversity. Large herds of plains game roam freely across the Mara's grasslands, creating a spectacle of nature at its finest. The Maasai Mara is also arguably the best place in Kenya to spot cheetahs, those sleek and graceful hunters.

Time-permitting, we may have the opportunity to visit a local Maasai village. This cultural immersion would provide a fascinating glimpse into the Maasai people's traditional way of life, allowing us to meet its residents and learn about their customs and beliefs. If time constraints prevent us from visiting the village today, we'll make every effort to arrange this experience on our return journey to Nairobi.

Overnight in the Maasai Mara.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Maasai Mara National Reserve

The Maasai Mara National Reserve, a seemingly endless expanse of rolling grasslands, sits at the northern edge of the vast Serengeti Plain. Widely regarded as Kenya's premier park, the Mara plays a crucial role in one of nature's greatest spectacles: the annual wildebeest migration. These massive herds journey north from Tanzania around the end of June, gracing the Mara with their presence before returning south around the end of September. This incredible movement of animals is a sight to behold.

"The Mara," as it's affectionately known, is a haven for wildlife, supporting all of the famed "Big Five" – lion, elephant, leopard, rhinoceros, and buffalo. Beyond these iconic creatures, the reserve teems with an astonishing abundance of herding animals, including zebras, gazelles, and antelopes, as well as a rich diversity of other wildlife. As you traverse the reserve, you'll likely encounter the stately Maasai men and youth, easily recognizable by their distinctive attire, tending to their cattle and goats along the roadside. Their presence adds a unique cultural dimension to the Mara's natural beauty.

Today we've dedicated a full day to exploring this remarkable reserve, with both morning and afternoon game drives planned. This will give us ample opportunity to witness the incredible wildlife that calls the Maasai Mara home, from the majestic predators to the vast herds of herbivores, and everything in between. Every game drive in the Mara is a unique adventure, filled with the potential for unforgettable encounters.

In the Mara you will also have an optional opportunity to ascend over the northern Serengeti at daybreak in a hot air balloon (optional expense). From over 300m (984 feet) above, you will be able to view the vast land and the myriad animals that inhabit the Maasai Mara. Today or tomorrow are the best days to participate in this activity - details sent upon booking.

Overnight in the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 Maasai Mara National Reserve

We enjoy another full day with game viewing in Maasai Mara. Depending on the season and current game locations and viewing conditions, we may divide our day into morning and afternoon drives, or take our lunches with us in order to venture further into the reserve if conditions warrant.

Overnight in the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Maasai Mara - Nairobi

After breakfast, we'll embark on our journey back to Nairobi. The drive itself is expected to take approximately six hours, factoring in comfort stops along the way.

A highlight of our return journey will be a visit to the Karen Blixen Museum, conveniently located just outside of Nairobi. This isn't just a quick photo opportunity; we'll delve into the fascinating story of Baroness Karen Blixen-Finecke. Imagine stepping back in time to the 1920s and 30s – this Danish Baroness made Kenya her home in 1918 and lived here until 1931. It was during this period that she drew inspiration for her most famous work, "Out of Africa," published in 1937 under her pen name, Isaac Dineson.

The museum itself is Blixen's beautifully restored former home. It offers a unique glimpse into her life in colonial Kenya, showcasing the style and furnishings of the era. As we tour the house, we'll learn about her struggles and triumphs, her relationships, and the profound connection she felt to the African landscape. It's a chance to connect with the author behind the iconic book and gain a deeper understanding of the historical context that shaped her writing.

We'll make a lunch stop in the vicinity before continuing to our Nairobi hotel.

Overnight in Nairobi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Nairobi - Amboseli National Park

Our adventure continues today as we journey south from the bustling city of Nairobi to the breathtaking Amboseli National Park. The drive is estimated to take around four hours, though this can vary slightly depending on the specific location of our lodge within the park and, of course, the wildlife we encounter along the way. Keep your eyes peeled – you never know what surprises the African bush might have in store!

Amboseli National Park boasts a truly spectacular setting. Straddling the border with Tanzania, it lies on the vast African plain, offering unparalleled views of the majestic Mount Kilimanjaro. Towering above the landscape at a staggering 5894 meters (19,300 feet), Kilimanjaro is the highest peak on the entire African continent. Its iconic, snow-capped cone often appears to float ethereally above the shimmering

plains, creating a truly awe-inspiring vista.

Amboseli is renowned worldwide for its thriving populations of elephants. These magnificent creatures roam freely across the park's open grasslands, often dusting themselves with the distinctive red soil, which gives their skin a particularly dramatic, almost ochre hue. This afternoon, we'll embark on a game drive within Amboseli. Picture this: herds of elephants grazing peacefully on the open plains, with the colossal Mount Kilimanjaro providing a picture-perfect backdrop. We'll be on the lookout for other incredible wildlife as well, but the chance to witness these gentle giants in their natural habitat, with such an iconic mountain as a witness, is an experience you won't soon forget (weather permitting, of course – Kilimanjaro can sometimes be shy behind the clouds!).

Overnight in the Amboseli National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Amboseli, Kenya - Lake Manyara National Park, Tanzania

Our Tanzanian adventure begins this morning as we cross the border from Kenya into Tanzania at Namanga. From there, we'll journey onwards to Lake Manyara National Park, passing through the vibrant town of Arusha. Arusha serves as the gateway to Tanzania's renowned northern safari circuit, and it's a bustling hub of activity. Our total travel time today is expected to be around five hours, though the border crossing itself can also sometimes take a little time.

Lake Manyara National Park, though the smallest of the northern Tanzanian parks at 330 square kilometers (two-thirds of which is the lake itself), packs a big punch in terms of biodiversity. Its diverse vegetation ranges from open savannah grasslands to lush groundwater forests and vital riparian habitats, creating a rich tapestry of ecosystems. The lake is a haven for birdlife, most notably thousands of pelicans, ibis, and flamingos. Their calls and vibrant colours create a spectacle that can be experienced even from a distance.

After lunch at our lodge, we'll embark on an e afternoon game drive within Lake Manyara National Park. The park's location at the base of the dramatic Great Rift Valley escarpment adds to its scenic beauty. Its diverse landscape, encompassing forests, woodlands, grasslands, and swamps, provides habitat for a wide array of wildlife. While the birdlife is undoubtedly a major draw, the park also boasts a healthy population of other animals. We'll be on the lookout for buffalo, elephants, graceful giraffes, impalas, hippos, and a fascinating variety of smaller creatures.

Overnight at Lake Manyara.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Lake Manyara - Serengeti National Park

This morning we embark on a scenic journey into the renowned Ngorongoro Conservation Area. This protected area boasts a stunning, rolling landscape, offering periodic, breathtaking glimpses of the Ngorongoro Crater itself. Before we make our descent onto the seemingly endless Serengeti Plain, we'll pause at a designated viewpoint to fully appreciate the sheer scale and beauty of the crater.

The very name "Serengeti" is derived from the Maasai language, meaning "Land-without-end," and it's a fitting description. This is a place of superlatives, where the vastness of the landscape is matched only by the incredible biodiversity it sustains.

Our journey today, including our game drive, will take approximately five hours, though this can vary depending on the wildlife we encounter along the way and the location of our lodge within the Serengeti. This afternoon's game drive will serve as a wonderful introduction to this remarkable landscape and the diverse array of animals that call it home. Our guides will help us spot and identify the various species, sharing their knowledge of the Serengeti ecosystem and the intricate relationships between its inhabitants.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Serengeti National Park

Today we have a full day of game viewing on the Serengeti. We will visit the "kopjes," a series of low, incongruous hills dotting the open landscape that often provide a vantage point for hungry predators contemplating the endless stream of hoofed animals parading past them. Depending on the season and the timing of the rains, up to 1.5 million wildebeest and a half a million zebra embark on a single-minded and perilous quest for water and grazing land. Following this spectacle, of course, are the meat-eating opportunists, hoping to capitalize on the physical toll this journey exacts on the desperate grazers. Even outside of "migration" time, large herds are still seen as they bear their young and feed, gaining strength for their annual return to the park's northern reaches. Resident species that do not migrate make for rewarding animal viewing in any season.

It may be possible to take an optional hot-air balloon safari over the plains at daybreak; today is the best day to participate in this activity -- details will be sent sent upon booking.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 13 Serengeti - Olduvai Gorge - Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Travelling back to Ngorongoro today we make a stop at Olduvai Gorge, site of the Leakey excavations in the 1960s and 70s that established this region as the prehistoric habitat of some of the earliest species of hominids with some finds dating back 1.8 million years. Experts in the life sciences have argued that the Olduvai contribution to the story of human origins remains unsurpassed by any other prehistoric site in the world. A small museum on site outlines the unique geological and human history of the area.

Called the 'eighth wonder of the world' and stretching across some 8300 sq km, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area boasts a blend of landscapes, wildlife, people and archaeology that is unsurpassed in Africa. The volcanoes, grasslands, waterfalls and mountain forests are home to an abundance of animals and to the Maasai. Ngorongoro Crater is one of the world's greatest natural spectacles and its magical setting and abundant wildlife never fail to enthral visitors. Depending on road conditions, gorge stop, animal sightings, and lodge placement, this journey can be 5-6 hours.

Overnight in the vicinity of Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 14 Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Today promises an unforgettable experience as we embark on a half-day tour within the magnificent Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. After an early breakfast to maximize our time, we'll descend into the heart of the Ngorongoro Crater, a truly breathtaking natural wonder. This massive caldera, spanning 20 kilometers (13 miles) in diameter and boasting walls reaching 700 meters (2,300 feet) high, is a microcosm of African wildlife.

The crater floor is a diverse ecosystem teeming with life, and our game drive will take us through this incredible setting. We'll be on the lookout for the famed "Big Five" – lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and buffalo – any sighting of which is always a thrill. But the crater is also home to a plethora of other fascinating creatures. eep your eyes peeled for herds of wildebeest, graceful gazelles, zebras with their distinctive stripes, and lumbering hippopotamuses. Adding to the spectacle, thousands of vibrant flamingos often gather on Lake Magadi, creating a stunning display of colour against the backdrop of the crater walls.

* In order to reduce congestion and stress on wildlife, the Tanzanian government limits visitors to half-day visits of the crater. Depending on what time "window" we are assigned, our excursion may take place first thing in the morning, or later in the afternoon (both of which are equally advantageous for game viewing, given the relatively mild climate at this altitude).

Overnight in the vicinity of Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 15 Ngorongoro - Arusha - Depart

This morning we descend the Ngorongoro Highlands, retracing our steps back to Arusha via a lunch stop at Gibb's Farm. Founded during German colonial times and still privately owned, Gibb's Farm is now a small hotel perched on the outer slopes of the Ngorongoro Highlands, surrounded by coffee plantations with long views over lush and beautiful agricultural country.

We pass again through the town of Mto Wa Mbu ('Mosquito Creek'), famous for its lively cosmopolitan atmosphere and red bananas, which taste the same as regular bananas but their skins are a startling bright red. We continue to Arusha to connect with homeward evening flights (a +/- 5 hour journey including lunch).

LAND ONLY PASSENGERS need to take into account our morning journey when booking their flights out of Arusha (JRO). Your departure should occur no earlier than 8:00 pm.

SAFARI NJEMA!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch