

Gorillas and Wildlife Safari

A thirteen day wildlife experience, visiting the mountain gorillas of Rwanda, the Serengeti and Ngorongoro ecosystem, the rift valley park of Manyara and the Tarangire elephants.

Day 1: On arrival in Nairobi on QATAR or EMIRATES at 13hr05/14hr00 transit before connecting with the Rwandair flight to Kigali where on arrival you will be met and transferred to Chez Lando or similar for dinner and overnight. *(this day is flexible and can be designed to fit in with overnight stays in Nairobi, and most international flight arrivals)*

Day 2: Visit the town and the genocide memorial. After lunch in town, follow the road as it climbs to the base of the majestic volcanoes, with spectacular views across the five peaks. Dinner and overnight is at La Palme.

Day 3: As the first light of dawn breaks through the curtain of mist clinging to the summits of Karisimbi, Bisoke, Sabinyo, Gahinga and Muhabura, we make our way into the Parc National des Volcans. Tracking the gorillas through the unique vegetation can take several hours of challenging walking in wet and muddy conditions. To see a gorilla, the trek will have been worth the hardship. Overnight Chez Lando.



Day 4: **Monday and Wednesdays ONLY:** Morning transfer to the airport for the flight to Kilimanjaro on Rwandair at 06hr00 arriving 08hr15. After arrival in Kilimanjaro depart for the Ngorongoro conservation area with picnic lunch. On arrival this afternoon meet up with one of the NCAA guides to spend the rest of the afternoon trekking on the crater rim, dinner and overnight at the Ngorongoro Wildlife Lodge, perched on the crater rim. *(On Fridays and Sundays the flights depart Kigali late afternoon and arrive early evening at Kilimanjaro, so on these days we would have to overnight in Arusha and head out the next morning to Ngorongoro)*

Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Ngorongoro Conservation Area is the name given to the 8,300 square kilometre piece of land that surrounds the famous Crater and the Highlands of the same name. The Crater was once the headquarters of Serengeti National Park of which it was an integral part, but in 1956, after intense pressure and lobbying from the local Masai community who were dispossessed of the lands when the National Park was set up, Ngorongoro was designated a Conservation Area.

The 210 square km Crater is now one of the principal attractions on the Northern Tanzanian Safari Circuit and the reputation of the Crater Highlands is slowly developing as a premier trekking destination. The Crater is all that it is made out to be, the hyperbole about Garden's Of Eden, Eighth Wonder Of The World etc all justified by its perennial animal population. This cross-section of wildlife is about as convenient as you will find, dispersed amongst an amazing array of eco-systems within the natural amphitheatre created by 600 metre high cliffs around it. It is home to one of the few remaining populations of black rhino in Tanzania and just about every other East African mammal, with the exception of giraffe (walls are too steep) and impala, all unafraid and used to the constant retinue of vehicles.

The crater has the highest density of lions in Africa, with over 30 lions per 100 sq kms, compared to the Serengeti, which has about 14 lions per 100 sq kms; and Kruger National Park in South Africa with about 10 lions per 100 sq kms. In Ngorongoro it is not uncommon to find the lions lying in the shade of the parked tourist vehicle!

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area is unique in that the area is shared between the pastoralist Masai tribe and the wildlife the area was established to preserve.

Day 5: This morning head into the Crater with a picnic lunch for game viewing. Late afternoon depart for the short grass plains of the Serengeti and our private camp set up in the best location for the time of year for dinner and overnight.



Serengeti National Park

Arguably the most famous National Park in the world, the Serengeti Ecosystem (the name comes from "siringit" the Masai word for "endless plains") consists of some 35,000 square kilometres. It extends into the Masai Mara in neighbouring Kenya and provides a vast eco-system for the wildebeest migration that takes place each year. The famed plains are found to the south of the park east of the Seronera Valley, rolling hills in the less visited Lobo area to the north and wooded riverine valleys to the remote east around Kirawira and Grumeti.

The park itself is about 14,763 sq kms in area and encompasses the main part of the Serengeti ecosystem. The ecosystem is defined by the annual migration of over 1,500,000 million wildebeest, zebras and associated predators, which occurs throughout the year and extends into the game reserves, game controlled areas and conservation area surrounding the park boundaries. As in all ecosystems, the vegetation and type of animals you will find are closely correlated, although it is impossible to say exactly where different species will occur, it is possible to build up a picture of the most likely species to be found in each area.

Day 6: Today is spent exploring the Serengeti, either with full days game viewing and picnic lunch or morning and afternoon game viewing with lunch back in camp. Dinners and overnights are within our full service camp.
(download the EASTCO Full Service Camps pdf for a description and photos of our camp)



Photo courtesy of Ben Coffey

Day 7: After breakfast this morning, leave camp with a picnic lunch and head towards the Lake Manyara area for dinner and overnight at Ol Tukai Manyara. Game viewing en route and visiting Olduvai gorge. Mid- afternoon arrive at Ol Tukai Manyara for dinner and overnight.

Lake Manyara National Park

From whichever way you approach Lake Manyara National park, the first view is spectacular. From the west as you pause at the top of the escarpment and gaze out over the thin green strip of vegetation nestled tight against the Rift Valley and the lake shining in the sunshine. Or if you approach from the east, the Rift Valley and Ngorongoro Highlands form an impressive backdrop to the lake.

The large variety of wildlife to be found in the park, mammals, reptiles and birds and the different vegetation, all within a small area make Lake Manyara a diverse and particularly interesting place to visit. The Park derives its name from the Masai word 'manyara', which is the name for the plant Euphorbia tirucalli. The Masai use this plant to grow livestock stockades, eventually producing a stock proof hedge which is more durable than that of any built of thorn.

The Great Rift Valley is part of the fault which runs from Mozambique in the south, north 8,000 kilometres to Turkey. In the Manyara area there is no eastern wall to the Rift Valley as there is in Kenya. Here it is flattish country which falls gently into a depression and towards the Masai steppes of the Lolkisale and Simanjiro region.

The types of vegetation which occurs in the region is related to the geology of the area. The northern part of the park consists of volcanic rock which being porous allows many streams of clear water to flow out of the base of the rift wall, Further to the south, around Msasa River, the volcanic rock gives way to crystalline rock which is harder and less porous which allows fewer streams to emerge.

Despite being only 630 sq kms in area, of which 230 sq kms is the lake, it contains a large variety of habitats; the rift wall, the ground water forests, acacia woodland, areas of open grasslands, the lake shore, swamp and the lake itself. Due to the wide range of habitats the lake can support a diverse selection of wildlife.



Day 8: Today is spent exploring the Manyara eco-system, whether on game drives, or walks along the lake shore. Evenings spent around the camp fire as the sunsets over the lake and the rift valley escarpment. Dinner and overnight at Ol Tukai Manyara.

Day 9: This morning after an early morning walk and breakfast on the lake shore, depart with a picnic lunch for Tarangire National Park to spend the day game viewing. Unlike some parks, the best game viewing in Tarangire is during the middle of the day, as the elephants, zebras and wildebeest come down from the ridges, where they have spent the night, to the permanent waters of the Tarangire River valley. It is at this time of the day you will see the spectacular mosaic of wildlife in the river bed which Tarangire is famous for as well as the hunting cats, lying in ambush.



Tarangire National Park and Conservation Area

This park represents perhaps the closest approximation to people's expectations of Africa. Savannah lands, acacia stands, clusters of baobab trees, large herds of elephant and large tracts of rarely visited game lands make this perhaps the epitome of the safari experience. The park is approximately 2,600 sq kms within an ecosystem of over 20,000 sq kms on the Masai steppes, and during the height of the dry season is second only to Ngorongoro in density of wildlife. Tarangire is also arguably the best park in Africa for elephants with a population of over 3,000; and during the season, these are concentrated around the permanent waters of the Tarangire River during the heat of the day.

As in all ecosystems the vegetation and the types of animals you find are closely correlated. The principle features of the ecosystem are grasslands and floodplains, Acacia tortillas and baobab parkland, riverina woodland, acacia commiphora woodland and combretum woodland. Three swamps form very important all year water sources for the large elephant populations, Silale and Gursi within the park, and Goswa within the conservation area.

Tarangire is also one of the only places in Tanzania where you are able to combine the traditional game viewing from vehicles with other activities such as night drives, walking safaris and fly camping. For avid birders, to be able to walk in the Conservation Area with one of the trained Masai guides is incredibly rewarding as it is at this pace it is far easier to spot and observe the many bird species. Night drives also enable visitors to spot the nocturnal animals such as African wildcat, Serval cats, genets, civets and bat eared foxes. The larger predators are also active at night and it is not uncommon to spot leopards hunting in the woodland margins or lions on the plains.

For birders, species to note include Hildebrandts Starling, the endemic Ashy starling, Yellow collared lovebird and Orange bellied parrot. Also seen around the camp are Brown parrots, Von der Deckens Hornbill, Northern pied babbler, Northern white crowned shrike, white bellied go away bird, plus a variety of rollers, woodpeckers and other species. On the night drives we also have the chance to see some of the many owls in the area, as well as two banded coursers and Montane nightjars.

Community Conservation

During the late eighties and early nineties, Tarangire National Park was in danger of becoming an island surrounded by marginal agricultural activities. This would have been a disaster for the Tarangire National Park and the world would have lost one of the top three wildlife migrations. The local Masai communities, seeing their natural heritage endangered entered joint partnerships with private investors and established areas set aside for habitat and wildlife preservation. It is in these areas that we offer our walking safaris, night drives and fly camping, with economic benefits flowing back to the local Masai communities.

Days 10 and 11: Full day game viewing, walking safaris and night drives. We will also take the opportunity to visit one of the local Masai bomas found near the area. Dinner and overnight is at Boundary Hill Lodge.

Day 12: This morning is spent exploring Tarangire before departing for Arusha for onward flights to Zanzibar or Kilimanjaro for international connections.

End Of Services

Included:

This is a private safari with all game viewing in 4WD land rover or Land cruiser with English speaking guide. Included: all full board accommodation, all park fees and conservation fees, unlimited kilometers on game drives, all walking safaris and night drives as stated. One Gorilla permit per person as stated. Flights Nairobi to Kigali and Kigali to Kilimanjaro.

Not included: Soft and alcoholic drinks, all items of a personal nature, visas and international flights. **Flights Kilimanjaro to Nairobi , or Arusha to Zanzibar are NOT included at this stage.**

This itinerary has been designed as a private departure, so there is quite a bit of flexibility, and it is possible to visit the gorillas in Rwanda after the safari in northern Tanzania, or to fit in with international flights.

Accommodation styles is also flexible and there are many options which can be explored, ie standard bush camping in the Serengeti rather than full service, or upgrading to some of the new lodges near the Parc des Volcans or an extra day exploring the lakes in Rwanda.