Tanzanian National Parks and Conservation Areas are perhaps the best known of the core areas in wildlife conservation. There are currently fifteen National Parks and two Conservation Areas set aside by the government for the purpose of protecting Tanzania’s wildlife. By far the two most popular areas are the contiguous Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The Ngorongoro Conservation Area was part of the Serengeti National Park till 1956 when it set up as a Conservation Area where the local Masai also live and graze their cattle.

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. Game viewing experiences can vary enormously on the time of year as well as the location within the park. It cannot be overstressed how important it is to utilize different lodges and camps at different times of the year to maximise the game viewing opportunities.

Short grass plains
The short grass plains occur east of the Naabi Hill gate and extend almost to Olduvai Gorge in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The area is characterised by large sweeping plains with a short covering of grass which completely withers during the dry season. On the northern fringes of the plains are granite kopjes, large rocky outcrops which in themselves form unique habitats. On the border of the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Conservation Area is Lake Ndutu. The lakes here are surrounded by acacia forests and it is here that all the accommodation and campsites are to be found. It is also from here that it is possible to do some walking with one of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area rangers on the lake shore.
It is on the Short Grass plains during late December through to mid January that the wildebeest herds congregate in large numbers to give birth to nearly 400,000 calves in the first two weeks of February. This is a defence mechanism, as giving birth to large numbers in a very short period overwhelms the predators following the herds. The herds stay in the area till mid to late May, depending on the rains, before splitting up into smaller herds numbering in the tens of thousands of wildebeest all heading west in long straggling columns up to 40 kilometres in length.

This is without parallel and is definitely the best game viewing to be had anywhere at anytime in the world! Not only are the massive numbers of wildebeest beyond comprehension, but the prides of lions and groups of cheetahs provide outstanding viewing opportunities.

### Seasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December to February</td>
<td>Busiest time of the year, especially the last two weeks in February, accommodation and campsites are at a premium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March to May</td>
<td>Game viewing is still superb, but best of all is the small number of visitors. Can be very wet in April, but still well worth it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June to November</td>
<td>Dry and very dusty, small groups of gazelle and occasional cheetah, more rewarding game viewing elsewhere in the park.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main Mammals

- wildebeest
- zebra
- hyena
- cheetah
- lion
- Thomson gazelles
- eland

### Accommodation in the Area

- A number of private or special campsites in both the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Area around Ndutu and Naabi Hill.
- **Ndutu Safari Lodge**, a large rustic and well managed lodge overlooking the Lake Ndutu and actually located within the Ngorongoro Conservation Area.
- **Lake Masek Tented Lodge**, a new tented camp opened in 2009, east of Lake Ndutu.

#### Long grass plains

The long grass plains occur west of the Naabi Hill gate and extend almost to the Seronera valley in the centre of the park. And south to lightly forested hills and ranges forming the south west border. The area is characterised by large sweeping treeless plains with waste high grass. Granite outcrops such as those found at the Moru kopjes, and Simba kopjes provide island habitats within the sea of grass.

Another unique feature of this area is the small termite mounds, themselves home to smaller mammals such as bat eared foxes and mongooses, but also in turn used as lookout points for the ubiquitous topi hartebeest which use the mounds as lookout points over the undulating fields of grass. Other antelopes and zebras rarely do so, although Kongoni have also been seen using these termite mounds but less habitually. Topi whose colour is a rich beige have deep blue black markings on the rump and hind quarters and are not as shy and are more assertive than the Kongoni hartebeest. The topi is a feature of the long grass plains where it does not have to compete with the wandering wildebeest.

This area is also home to about 17 (2009 population) Black Rhinos. Although closely watched with 24 hour guards, it is possible with luck to see these animals, especially around the Moru Kopjes.
**Seronera Valley**

Located virtually in the geometric centre of the park, the Seronera Valley provides the best all year game viewing within the National park. The area consists of a varied habitat of acacia riverina and plains of red-oat grasslands. To the east and south are the lightly wooded Nyaraswiga and Mukoma Hills. The Seronera Valley provides probably the widest variety of game viewing in all of the Serengeti park, being on the crossroads for the migration and having a number of permanent water courses. It is justly famous for both leopards and lions, both of which are usually seen in the area without difficulty. Just to the north of the valley along the road to Lobo is the only place where you are likely to see hippopotamus in the Serengeti.

**Accommodation in the Area**

A number of public campsites located in the Seronera Valley as well as some special campsites located further out in exclusive locations. The public campsites are the best located public campsites to be found in the park and are always very busy.

**Serongeti Serena Lodge**, located to the east in the Nyaraswiga Hills provides an excellent base for all year round game viewing.

**Seronera Wildlife Lodge**, built in and amongst a kopje in the Seronera valley has excellent resident wildlife and game viewing all year round.

**Bilali Kempinsky Lodge**, built to the north and opened in 2009, very high end luxury.

**Mbalageti Lodge**, smaller and more exclusive, tucked away in the south western area of the Seronera valley. Limited game viewing all year.

**Mbuze Mawe**, tented lodge operated by Serena Lodges, located to the north of Seronera.

**Main Mammals**

- Topi hartebeest
- Kongoni hartebeest
- Grants gazelle
- Elephant
- Warthog
- Hyena
- Lion
- Leopard
- Bat eared foxes
- Rhinoceros

**Main Mammals**

- Buffalo
- Kongoni hartebeest
- Lion
- Leopard
- Impala
- Topi hartebeest
- Waterbuck
- Baboon
- Vervet monkey
- Zebra
- Wildebeest
- Hippopotamus

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**Seasons**

- Early November to February.
  - The special campsites located at Moru Kopjes are superbly located to catch the migrating animals as they head towards the short grass plains.
- Mid May to late June.
  - The special campsites situated in the shadows of the Moru kopjes are perfectly located for general game viewing and as the migration moves west.
- July to October.
  - Difficult to justify as all the action is located further north or west, which would mean long travelling times for game viewing. (except for the rhinoceros found here all year round).
Western Corridor

The western corridor stretches from the Seronera Valley west almost to the shores of Lake Victoria. The hills and ridges run east -west with the Grumeti River on the northern edge. The Grumeti River drains into Lake Victoria and is the main feature in this area. Much of the low land consist of black “cotton” soil plains that make travelling during the rainy season almost impossible. This area is best at the start of the dry season which is when the main migration moves through the area and heads north east into the Lobo Region of the park and Kenya. Although there are resident populations of wildebeest throughout the drier months, making the western corridor a popular area through the months of late June to September. The Grumeti is famous for its exceptionally large crocodiles which bask on the shores of the river and seize prey with surprising speed. When the wildebeest cross the Grumeti sometime in late June or early July, the waiting crocodiles have a smorgas board of choice. There is an airstrip located at Grumeti and it is thoroughly recommended that this option be exercised here due to the long travelling times. During the rains this airstrip is usually closed.

Kirawira Tented Camp

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Mammals</th>
<th>Seasons</th>
<th>Accommodation in the Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>topi</td>
<td>Early November to early May</td>
<td>A number of special campsites are located near the Grumeti and a public campsite at the Ndahuka entrance gate in the far west. Kirawira Tented Camp, a permanent tented lodge located in the west on a ridge overlooking the Grumeti River valley. Grumeti Camp, another permanent tented lodge located on the shores of the Grumeti River. Kijereshi Lodge is located in the far west, just outside the park and at least nine new tented camps in the Fort Ikoma and Robanda area also outside the park in village lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hartebeest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eland</td>
<td>Early June to mid July</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impala</td>
<td>Late July to October</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baboon</td>
<td>Provides good game viewing throughout these months, but long distances do not justify stays of only one or two nights.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wildebeest</td>
<td>From the short rains in early November, access to this area is difficult and not all roads would be opened. Game is scarce and hard to find for these reasons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zebra</td>
<td>Probably the best period as it is at this time that the wildebeest are moving through the area, and game viewing along the Grumeti is exceptional.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colobus monkey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vervet monkey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lobo and the northern Serengeti

The country north of the Seronera Valley towards the Lobo Hills and the Bologonja gate is characterised by rolling upland. The area is covered by bush and sparse woodland, interspersed with open plains and ranges of hills studded with spectacular kopjes. A number of rivers run through the area to the north including the Grumeti River. Elephants are more likely to be seen in this area of the park than anywhere else and their effect on the woodlands is noticeable during the dryer months. Gallery forest including huge fig and mahogany trees line the numerous watercourses. Bird life is probably more varied in this area of the Serengeti with many colourful birds such as Hartlaubs and Ross’s Turaco and African fish eagles. Also to be found here are a number of mammals not often found elsewhere in the park such as mountain reedbuck, oribi and Patas monkey.

Main Mammals
- oribi
- duiker
- impala
- reedbuck
- wildebeest
- zebra
- lion
- elephant
- giraffe

Accommodation in the Area

A number of public campsites are located around the Lobo area. Special campsites are scattered throughout the north but mainly around Lobo.

Migration Camp, a permanent tented lodge located in the Ndassiate Hills overlooking the Grumeti River.

Kliens Camp, a lodge located on a private reserve to the east of the park.

Lobo Wildlife Lodge, spectacular location built in and around a kopje on Lobo Hill.

Seasons

| July through to November | The wildebeest migration starts arriving in the area from the west sometime late in July, with some resident populations staying in the northern area around Bologonja whilst the rest moves into Kenya. Mid to late in October, the herds start to move down the eastern side towards the short grass plains in the south. |
| December through to May | Game viewing is still good as a lot of resident wildlife, but all the action is now in the south on the short grass plains. |
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 attraction 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 ecosystems 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Mammals</th>
<th>Seasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wildebeest</td>
<td>December to May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zebra</td>
<td>Green and lush, a popular place to visit, although after rains most of the crater roads can be impassable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buffalo</td>
<td>June to November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elephant</td>
<td>This is the dry season and the crater can be very dusty and warm in the afternoon. Very popular and not unusual to see over 300 vehicles, especially in the mornings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black rhinoceros</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson gazelle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants gazelle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leopard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyena</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hippopotamus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheetah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accommodation in the Area

**Simba Campsite** is the only public campsite located on the rim. Facilities are poor and during the season the camp is overcrowded. A number of special campsites are located on the crater rim.

**Ngorongoro Serena Lodge**, the most popular lodge located on the crater wall. Overgrown with shrubs and bushes, the lodges fits into the surrounding forests.

**Ngorongoro Crater Lodge**, known as the “African Versailles”, the newest lodge at the top end of the market. One of the few that also has its own vehicles for game viewing.

**Ngorongoro Wildlife Lodge**, probably the best located lodge right on the rim, and also one of the first of the larger lodges.

**Ngorongoro Sopa Lodge**, the only lodge located on the north eastern rim and the only one where you are able to see the sunset over the crater.
Walking Safaris in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area
Walking in the Ngorongoro Highlands provides opportunities for visitors to experience the majesty of the Conservation Area without having to sit in a vehicle for 12 hours a day. On most of these walking safaris wildlife will be seen but usually at a distance, and it is highly likely that the camp will be visited by game at night. The scenery is spectacular and is the main attraction to the area, plus the possibility of interaction with the local Masai. On all our walks we have vehicular support and two way VHF radios.

Oldoinyo Gol and Eastern Plains
Best during the wet season from December through to May when there is usually large numbers of plain animals. Immense open landscapes and huge skies. Campsites here are few and far apart and will need to book far in advance. From Olduvai Gorge to Nasera Rock is 31 kilometres and rising 400 metres in elevation, taking about 14 hours. From Nasera Rock to Olkarien Gorge, the largest breeding ground for Griffin Vultures is about 15 hours and 35 kilometres through the foothills of the Gol Mountains.

Ndutu Woodlands
Also best during the wet season from December through to May when the wildebeest gather for the calving seasons. Most of the walks on offer in this area are usually less than a day with one of the NCAA guides from the camps or lodge in the area. Really worthwhile as walks are often taking along the shores of Lake Ndutu.

Endolun Village and Eyasi Escarpment
Located to the south east, the area consists of open grasslands with forested gorges. Mt Lemagrut is one of the main features in the area, from the summit of which are views of the Serengeti Plains, Lake Eyasi and the Ngorongoro Crater. Day walks from the camp at the village of Endolun to the Eyasi escarpment where we find fine rock formations, baobab trees and great views over Lake Eyasi.

Lake Eyasi is Tanzania’s largest soda lake, surrounded by palm and acacia woods. Many diverse cultures live around the lake, including the Hadzabe hunter gatherers and Datoga pastoralist.

Ngorongoro Highlands towards Oldoinyo Lengai.
This is probably the best known area for walking safaris in the Ngorongoro Highland. Located to the north west of the crater and heading towards the spectacular Lake Natron area which includes the active volcano Oldoinyo Lengai, known by the Masai as “the Mountain of God.” The area consists of open grasslands, spectacular natural features such as Empakai crater and Mt Lolmalasin, the third highest mountain in Tanzania. Many Masai villages are located in the highlands and cultural interaction is always a possibility. This is probably the best area for walking expeditions of between two to six days, starting near the crater at Olmoti Crater and walking towards Oldoinyo Lengai, trekking down the Rift escarpment and eventually ending up at Lake Natron. Between Empakai and Oldoinyo Lengai there is no vehicle access down the escarpment, so no vehicular support is possible for one to two days. All the campsites are special campsites with no facilities whatsoever which are all carried in by support vehicles.

Accommodation in the Area
There are quite a few designated special campsites located throughout the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, all of which have no facilities, but all are private campsites that require booking ahead, the only two lodges / camps are Ndutu Safari Lodge and Lake Masek Tented Camp near Lake Ndutu.