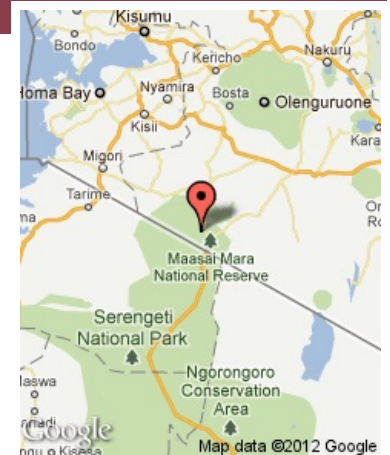


6 Day Maasai Mara and Rift Valley Safari



Highlights

Our most popular itinerary in Kenya. This 6 day tour that shows off the very best that Kenya has to offer, with a perfect blend of small-scale eco tourism and big hitting safaris.

The **Maasai Mara Reserve** and Lake Nakuru National Park are Kenya's two most popular national parks and it is easy to see why. The Maasai Mara National Reserve is a vast park of rolling grasslands interrupted only by crocodile infested rivers. It plays host to all the big game and the incredible wildebeest migration during the peak summer months. **Lake Nakuru** is much smaller, but the big attraction here (in addition to the lions, rhinos and hippos...) is the lake itself which is teeming with flamingos and pelicans.

Whilst the undoubted highlight for most will be roaming over the Maasai Mara grasslands in a rugged open top 4wd Landcruiser, it is the Maasai people which make this tour special. You will get to camp out in the Maasai wilderness with a Maasai warrior standing guard against the wildlife outside. You'll also visit Maasai villages and schools and hopefully get a small sense of the incredible changes that modernisation is bringing to these remote communities. When you are not camping, you'll stay in charming local guesthouses, including a night in a Colonial tea plantation complete with an out of Africa veranda and lush gardens. All in all this is the perfect introductory safari for anybody visiting Kenya for the first time.

Is it for me?

This tour is suitable for anyone, young, energetic and old alike. It is designed specifically as an introduction to the highlights of Kenya with a focus on eco-tourism. The only requirement is that you don't mind a little camping. Having said that, apart from the night in the wilderness you will usually have ensuite rooms. Ensuite rooms are not guaranteed, because we prefer to use smaller character accommodation and occasionally the only rooms available have shared bathrooms.

Accommodation

Accommodation is a combination of small mid-range local guesthouses (aprox 3 star), fixed camps and wilderness camping. Availability allowing, in the Rift Valley Lakes area you'll stay a night each in a small Lake-side lodge (with pool) and a Colonial guesthouse on a tea and coffee plantation. In the Maasai Mara, you'll stay two nights in Mountain Rock Mara Springs fixed camp just outside the park. The Tents are permanent structures with nice ensuite showers and there is electricity from a generator in the evening. You'll also spend a night at an exclusive wilderness camp out in the Maasai bush. You'll be sleeping in a modern tent but there is a drop toilet and mess tent for shade. In Nairobi you'll stay at the Rock House in Karen which is a quirky small guesthouse complete with swimming pool and lovely en-suite rooms.

All meals are provided. When camping, you'll have a cook with you who will prepare meals, and in guesthouses you'll typically eat at the in-house restaurant.

Itinerary

Day 1: Nairobi to the Rift Valley

Prices from

1,145 GBP (6 days) per person

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Am. Drive 200km / 3 hrs from Nairobi to Rift Valley

Pm. BBQ lunch, wildlife walk in tea plantation, evening game drive

After breakfast you'll be driven from Nairobi to tea and coffee plantation near to Lake Nakuru. The plantation is a lovely lush forested setting where you will enjoy a delicious farm lunch in the gardens followed by a guided bird walk on the estate and a chance to visit the tea and coffee processing operations. The estate has a evocative colonial guesthouse where you will be staying the night. You can take an optional night safari drive around the estate grounds with the chance of seeing hyena and if you are lucky, leopards. (B,L,D)

Day 2: Lake Nakuru

Am. Long morning game drive

Pm. Drive 50km / 1.5h to Lake Naivasha

Lake Nakuru is Kenya's second most popular wildlife park and for good reason. Although small in size it surrounds a beautiful lake that is teeming with pelicans and flamingos. The park plays host to a variety of terrain, shallows, mud flats along with classical African Acacia Woodlands and grasslands. Lake Nakuru is rich with big game and good sightings are virtually guaranteed. Lion, hyena, rhino, buffalo, giraffe and Zebra are all common. After a long morning game drive with a boxed lunch, you will journey the short drive to a lodge on the shores of Lake Naivasha. You'll have time to enjoy the pool at the lodge in the afternoon.

Day 3: Hippos in Lake Naivasha and Wilderness Camp

Am. Lake Naivasha boat safari

Pm. Drive 300km / 5hrs from Naivasha to Loita Plains

After breakfast you'll head out for a boat ride on the vast Lake Naivasha. Unlike the surrounding soda lakes, Naivasha is freshwater and has a large hippo colony and excellent birds with fish eagles, pelicans and love birds common. After returning to shore you'll be driven to the Loita Plains just outside the Maasai Mara National Reserve, stopping for lunch along the way. You'll be staying at the Olanganayo wilderness camp in a lush green spot by a small stream. Whilst the crew set up camp you'll be free to take a short stroll and take in the vastness of the Maasai plains. This area forms the corridor by which Wildebeest migrate to and from the Maasai Mara National Reserve, so wildlife spottings are not uncommon. Our Maasai host will take us on an early evening walk to the nearby Maasai village and stand sentinel through the night (lions are always a possibility). Spend the evening around the camp fire.

:Day 4: Loita Plains and Magi Moto Eco Camp

Am. Short bush walk & drive to Maasai Mara

Pm. Sunset walk or night game drive

After waking to the sounds of the bush and a full breakfast, you'll enjoy a short 2-3 hour walk along a small river course and through the open savanna for wildlife viewing. The local Maasai will act as guides and you will often walk amongst giraffe, impala, zebra and wildebeest. You'll then drive to Maji Moto a fascinating community run eco camp with a hot spring and a lovely spot for lunch. There is the opportunity to visit a widow's village and school for girls rescued from female genital mutilation. Then onto the permanent tented camp at Mountain Rock Mara Springs. There will be time for a late afternoon game drive in the Siana Conservation area and in the evening you can enjoy a hike up the nearby Naumare Hills to glimpse a stunning sunset over the Mara. Overnight in en-suite permanent tents.

Day 5: Maasai Mara National Reserve.

The big draw. You'll spend all today in the reserve on a game drive in rugged 4wd extended wheel base LandCruisers with pop tops. With an experienced naturalist guide and driver you'll have every chance of spotting elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, Cheetah, Rhino, hippo, crocodile and countless others. An undoubtable highlight is the Mara River, the scene of so many famous encounters between hungry crocodiles and migrating wildebeest. Overnight at the Mountain Rock Mara Springs again.

Day 6: Back to Nairobi

Early game drive in the Mara

250km / 4-5hr drive back to Nairobi

Another early morning game drive in the Mara at 6am to spot any animals you might have missed and an opportunity to spot the early morning birdlife. After this drive you'll return to camp for a late breakfast then drive for approximately 4 hours back to Nairobi arriving for late lunch at the Karen Rock House. Optional stay at the guesthouse where you can while away the afternoon around the lovely swimming pool.

Details

Getting there

Kenya has international airports in Nairobi (Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta NBO) and Mombassa (Mombasa Moi International MBA) which are around 8 hours flying time from the UK. Virgin Atlantic, British Airways and Air Kenya fly regular direct services to Nairobi. Return tickets usually range from £450 to £750 depending on when you are travelling. If you are willing to put up with the inconvenience then cheaper tickets can usually be purchased with a stop from Qatar Airways, Ethiopian and Emirates.

Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta airport is a ½ hr 16km drive from Nairobi City Centre, but traffic is often very bad.

This tour includes pick up and drop off in Nairobi.

Price includes

Price includes all accommodation, meals and transfers to/from Nairobi as set out in the itinerary. You will have the services of an English speaking naturalist guide. The price also includes all the Park fees and all group camping equipment.

The price does not include international flights to Kenya, visas, personal insurance, Alcoholic and soft drinks and

tips.

When is best

Kenya is subject to 2 rainy seasons, and a busy peak tourist season, but in reality is a year round destination. Most people visit during the summer months of July and August, when the weather is dry and the Maasai Mara is teeming with the Wildebeest migration.

July and August are peak season with Europeans and Americans making the most of their summer holidays, so expect crowds. However they also fall right after the long rains, so expect lots of lush green.

September and October play host to the short rains. Rain tends to fall for only a couple of hours in the afternoon or morning, so you shouldn't let it stop you.

November, December, January, February and the first half of March are the dry season. Expect hot weather and quiet parks.

Second half of March, April, May and June plays host to the long rains. During this period it tends to rain through the night and into the morning. It is usually possible to get a dry spell between 10am and 2pm for getting out on safari. Many of the roads in the Maasai Mara Reserve are rough grass tracks that can become virtually impassable at the height of the rainy season (April – May). It is still possible to visit the Maasai Mara during this period you just won't be able to explore as much.

Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

Experience required

Not relevant

Travellers should bring

Luggage: The thing to remember when choosing safari luggage is mobility. You will probably be moving between several different modes of transport (airplanes, cars, light aircraft, trucks, boats) so plan accordingly. Suitcases with wheels don't work very well in the African bush but they are adequate if you don't mind carrying them. A daypack is very handy to transport the items you need while driving around in the safari vehicle or walking through the bush. **Safari clothing:** Ideal in neutral colours and preferably non-synthetic and comfortably fitting. It is not necessary to go out and buy specialist safari clothes. At most, avoid bringing very bright colours or white clothes, but at the end of the day the wildlife are going to know you are there regardless.. **Essentials items:** Sun-hat, jacket / warm fleece, shorts, long sleeved shirts, long trousers, underwear, something to sleep in and a swimming costume. **Walking safari footwear:** Comfortable hiking/walking shoes (not white) - these are very important on a walking safari. Flip-flops or sport sandals (for use in public showers and airing feet) and enough socks (preferably cotton). **Safari Essentials:** Malaria tablets (very important) and additional insect repellent, Lotions and gels. (Wet wipes/hand sanitizer or no-water/antibacterial soap – very handy in the safari vehicle). **Additional Toiletries:** 2-in-1 shampoo/conditioner, Razor & shaving cream/gel, Sanitary requirements (shops are sometimes few and far between, and very basic), a travel towel (light to occupy little space), Soap/shower gel **Items of personal nature:** (mostly the same as the Mountain Kit list). Binoculars (You're experience will be vastly improved by the purchase of a good set of binoculars!) Travel pillow, or you can use your polar fleece/windbreaker Money belt Plug adaptors - Kenya uses the UK three square pin plugs. Mini combination locks (keys get lost) Sunglasses Pocket Knife (Swiss/Leatherman type) and small scissors and tweezers (if not on your Leatherman/Swiss knife). Toothbrush/toothpaste/dental floss Painkiller, Antiseptic cream, Motion sickness tablets, Heartburn remedy, Anti-diarrhoea medicine, Re-hydration salts, Cold/flu, Allergy remedy tablets, basic broad band antibiotic, Sterile needles (in case you need an injection and don't trust the hygiene conditions), Prescriptions/prescribed medicine (enough to last your trip) Pen/pencil, Small compass, Deck of cards/travel size game, Book to read between game viewing and other leisure time String/rope (washing line, tying sleeping bag, multitude of uses!!)