

Birds of Kenya's Masai Mara

Naturetrek Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Fly Nairobi & overnight

Day 2/3 Lake Naivasha

Day 4/8 Masai Mara

Day 9 Depart Nairobi

Day 8 Arrive London.



Departs

November

Focus

Birds and mammals

Grading

Grade A

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code KEN01) or see the current Naturetrek brochure.



Highlights:

- Visit the world famous Masai Mara
- Exceptional birdlife of Lake Naivasha
- Spectacular Rift Valley scenery
- 2 nights at Elsamere, former home of Joy and George Adamson, authors of 'Born Free'
- Five nights at in a luxury camp in the Mara
- Abundant birdlife
- Numerous African mammals including Elephant and Masai Giraffe
- Lion, Cheetah & Leopard all possible
- Expertly guided by a local Kenyan ornithologist



From top: Superb Starling, Lion and Secretary Bird
Images courtesy of David Mercer and Shutterstock Images



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Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

In flight

We depart London Heathrow mid-morning on board a British Airways scheduled flight bound for Nairobi. On arrival we will be met and transferred to our comfortable hotel in time for a good night's sleep.

Days 2 – 3

Lake Naivasha

After an early breakfast we will leave the bustle of the city behind us and after an hour or so, catch our first breathtaking view of the Great Rift Valley. As we leave the Eucalypt trees behind and descend the escarpment onto the valley floor, we get closer to Mount Longonot, a young volcano which rises to 2,776 metres above sea level. Its sides have attractive V-shaped valleys and ridges which make it an imposing sight as it rises from the Naivasha basin. Looking carefully, we may catch our first glimpses of zebra or gazelles amongst the scrubland on the roadsides. Approaching Lake Naivasha, an oasis on the valley floor, the habitat is striking with its yellow-barked Acacia trees and Candelabra Euphorbias. We will spend the night at Elsamere, once home to Joy Adamson. Joy was an author and accomplished artist, but perhaps most well remembered for the film 'Born Free' and the raising of Elsa the Lion cub. The house is now a private lodge, conservation centre and museum and is packed with fascinating memorabilia and photographs of the life of Joy and George Adamson. The colonial style house is set in stunning peaceful gardens which slope down to the tranquil shores of Lake Naivasha. We have 2 nights to enjoy this beautiful location and abundance of birds.

Over 350 species of birds have been recorded here. The dense trees surrounding the gardens contain a wealth of birdlife including Klass's Cuckoo, Speckled Mousebird, Fischer's Lovebird, Green Woodhoopoe, Grey-capped Warbler, Amethyst Sunbird, Golden-winged Sunbird, African Paradise Flycatcher, Superb Starling, Common Bulbul, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, Spectacled Weaver, Common Waxbill and Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu. The most popular regular visitors are a troop of beautiful Black and White Colobus Monkeys, a species which is very successful around the shores of the lake. This group have become partially habituated to human presence and often join guests on the lawn for afternoon tea! Optional



Great White Pelican (Colin Brown)

excursions from Elsamere will be available, which include a boat trip on the lake (approximately US\$30 per person and payable locally), in search of waterbirds including White and Pink-backed Pelicans, Long-tailed Cormorant, African Darter, Yellow-billed Stork, Goliath Heron, Little Bittern, Intermediate Egret, Black Heron, Black Crane, Purple Swamp-hen, Spur-winged Goose, Yellow-billed Duck, Hottentot Teal, Spur-winged Plover, Long-toed Plover, Malachite Kingfisher and many many more.

We will drift to sleep listening to the grunting of hippos and the cry of the Fish Eagle, against the background of cicadas buzzing all around.

Day 4

Masai Mara Game Reserve

Awakening to another true African dawn chorus of croaking Colobus Monkeys and a crescendo of bird song, we will enjoy a final breakfast at Elsamere before heading off to the world famous Masai Mara. En-route, we will drive past open plains and steep hills, passing through the busy Masai market town of Narok, a riot of colour as the red cloaks of the men and the bright colours of the



women's clothes mingle with the many shop fronts, goats and piles of fruit and vegetables for sale. On reaching the Mara we will drive to our base for the next 5 nights at Basecamp Masai Mara, a very comfortable permanent bush camp on the northern edge (but just outside) of the Masai Mara Game Reserve, overlooking the Talek River and located only a couple of kilometres downstream from the Talek Gate

Whilst at camp we will explore the surrounding area of the Masai Mara by vehicle although optional wildlife walks are also available. The birdlife of the Mara is far too prolific to run through in detail but includes such species as Ostrich, White-headed Vulture, Lappet-faced Vulture, Martial Eagle, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Grey Kestrel, Black-bellied Bustard, Secretarybird, Red-necked Spurfowl, Coqui Francolin, Harlequin Quail, Temminck's Courser, Wattled Plover, Bare-faced Go-away Bird, Southern Ground Hornbill, Grey Crowned Crane, Dusky Nightjar, Woodland and Striped Kingfishers, Carmine Bee-eaters perched on Kori Bustards, Magpie Shrike, Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike, Spot-flanked Barbet, Usambiro Barbet, Rosy-breasted Longclaw, Black-lored Babbler, Red-headed Tit, Violet-backed Starling, Hildebrandt's Starling, Red-billed and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers, Red-collared Widowbird and Holub's Golden Weaver.



Left: Martial Eagle, right: Woodland Kingfisher

Whilst the vast herds of Wildebeest and Zebra will be enjoying the fresh grass in Tanzania's Serengeti in November, large numbers of mammals remain in the Mara year round. Elephants, Masai Giraffe, Blue Wildebeest, Buffalo, Burchell's Zebra and Thomson's and Grant's Gazelle are all common. These are stalked by Lions, Cheetah and Leopards, whilst Warthogs, Jackals, Hyenas, Eland, Topi, Hippo and many others add to the wealth of mammal-life that abounds here. You are assured of one of the greatest wildlife experiences Africa has to offer!

Days 5 – 8

Masai Mara

The Masai Mara is probably the most famous wildlife reserve in Africa. It is a rising grassland, watered by the Mara River and covering an area of 1,500 square kilometres. The Mara region has been inhabited by man for at least 2,000 years, the last 200 years by the Masai. The area is part of what is now referred to as the Serengeti - Mara Ecosystem, being joined to the huge Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. In the local (Maa) language Mara means spotted, which is a reference to the patches of bush and trees on the plains.

Our next four days will be spent game viewing and enjoying the Masai Mara. Early morning game drives generally leave camp around 0600 hours (with a packed breakfast)



Lioness in the Mara

and return approximately four and a half hours later. After lunch we can relax during the heat of the day, and appreciate the silence, punctuated only by strange and exotic birdcalls. Afternoon game drives depart around 1530 hours and return at sundown, after which we can freshen up and gather for pre-dinner drinks. Dinner is usually served in the dining tent. We also include one full day game drive in the safari that departs around 0800 hours (after breakfast at the camp) and returns at sunset.

There will also be plenty of time during our stay to learn about the Masai culture and to get a feel for this fascinating area of Africa. Basecamp Masai Mara is a Bush Camp, which means that the wilderness and all its attractions are very much part of everyday camp life and as the area is

unfenced, you may see animals in the grounds at any time. Local Masai guards are always on hand to escort you at night.

Day 9

Mara to Nairobi (in Flight)

Sadly, today we will leave the Mara and travel back to Nairobi, which will take around 5-6 hours. Arriving in Kenya's busy capital around mid to late afternoon, there will be time for a last evening meal in Africa before boarding our late evening scheduled British Airways flight home.

Day 10

London

We will arrive back into London Heathrow early this morning.

Tour grading

Grade A - This is a traditional African safari, and therefore suitable for anyone of any age, without any great necessity for extreme fitness. Walks will be over flat terrain and at a very leisurely pace, stopping frequently to look at natural history along the way. The group size will not exceed 16 clients and the tour will be led by fully qualified local naturalist guides who will meet the group at Nairobi airport.

Focus

This is a birdwatching holiday that will concentrate on Kenya's abundant birdlife. Mammals and other wildlife will not be ignored, however, especially whilst in the world famous Masai Mara. You will spend seven nights in Kenya in a truly spectacular game viewing area, surrounded by traditional flat-topped acacia trees, thorny scrublands and the bright red-cloaked Masai people dotted across the plains. Whilst the vast herds of Wildebeest and Zebra will be enjoying the grasslands of the Serengeti in November, large numbers of game animals and birds remain in the Masai Mara throughout the year making a visit to Kenya a delight at any time.

Vehicles

We use 4-wheel customised landcruisers on this holiday each holding 6 people. These vehicles will be used for transfers between lodges and game drives into the Masai Mara. They have excellent visibility, an opening 'pop-top' and all group members will have access to a window seat. Please note that game viewing can be disrupted by heavy rain.



Breakfast in the Mara (Colin Brown)

Weather

In November the daytime temperatures average around 25°C, although they can be higher. Kenya enjoys a pleasant climate all year round thanks to its altitude, except the coastal regions which can be humid. There may be the chance of an occasional rain shower or thunderstorm.

Tour inclusions and additional expenses

The tour cost includes:

- Flights (unless booking on a land only basis)
- All transport
- Two game drives per day in the Mara
- Park fees for the Masai Mara
- All accommodation
- All meals except dinner on Day 1 and lunch and dinner on Day 9.

It does NOT include:

- Drinks
- Tips
- Visa fees
- Personal expenses such as postcards and souvenirs
- Additional excursions at Elsamere as detailed in the tour itinerary above, and additional excursions (other than the two game drives each day) in the Mara. A boat trip on Lake Naivasha can be arranged for approximately US\$30 per person and a tour of a Masai Village can be arranged for approximately US\$20 per person.

Food & Accommodation

We spend two nights at Elsamere, once home to Joy Adamson. Rooms are en-suite and have private verandahs facing the lake. We then spend 5 nights at Basecamp Masai Mara, which is a very comfortable, eco-friendly, permanent bush camp on the northern edge (but just outside) of the Masai Mara Game Reserve, just a couple of kilometres from the Talek Gate. This small secluded camp accommodates guests in 17 en suite tents, set under the shade of trees with direct views across the Masai Mara itself. All tents are en suite (with bio-flush toilets and solar-heated showers) and equipped with proper beds, linen, bedside tables, luggage racks and rugs. Meals are prepared by the camps chefs, offering hearty breakfasts, alfresco lunches and candle light dinners.



Entry requirements

All nationalities require a full passport to enter Kenya, containing at least two blank pages, and valid for at least 6 months beyond your date of entry into Kenya. British citizens also require a visa to enter Kenya, and further information on how to apply for your visa will be sent on booking. Citizens of other countries should check requirements with their nearest Kenyan Embassy. Various vaccinations and malaria prophylactics are also recommended; full details will be sent to you on booking.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Kenya. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website regularly – www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/kenya or telephone 0870 6060290 prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.

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