

Go Slow ... in Kenya's Maasai Mara

Naturetrek Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Fly Nairobi & overnight

Day 2 Fly Masai Mara

Day 3/8 Masai Mara

Day 9 Depart Nairobi

Day 10 Arrive London

Departs

November

Focus

Mammals, birds and other wildlife

Grading

Grade A (see grading section for more info)

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code KEN05)

Highlights:

- Seven nights in a comfortable bush camp on the edge of the Maasai Mara National Reserve
- Fly directly into the Mara from Nairobi
- Lion, Cheetah and Leopard all likely
- Birds including Secretarybird, White-throated Bee-eater and many others
- Expertly guided by local naturalists
- Comfortable 'pop-top' vehicles with excellent visibility



From top: Lion, African Elephants & Superb Starling.
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Introduction

The acacia-dotted grasslands of Kenya's world-famous Maasai Mara National Reserve are home to one of our planet's greatest concentrations of wildlife. Burchell's Zebra, Blue Wildebeest, Thompson's Gazelle and Masai Giraffe all graze the grassy plains, and with an abundance of prey on offer it comes as no surprise that the Mara is also one of the best reserves in Africa to enjoy sightings of predators, especially Lion, Cheetah and Leopard. A kaleidoscope of colourful sunbirds, glossy starlings, bee-eaters, rollers and other bird species offer an interesting supporting cast, whilst no visit to the region is complete without time in the company of the Maasai people themselves.

This 10-day 'Go Slow' safari includes a seven-night stay at the small and comfortable Basecamp Masai Mara, located on the edge of the Maasai Mara National Reserve. The safari begins with a direct flight to Nairobi and a short connecting flight to the Mara's small airport, avoiding the long and bumpy road transfer. Each of the following days will then include optional morning and afternoon game drives in search of the reserve's abundant mammals and birds, with the opportunity to join a game walk, full-day drives or visit to a Maasai village should you so wish.



Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and 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 transfer to a comfortable hotel in time for a good night's sleep.

Days 2 – 8

Maasai Mara

This morning we transfer to the city's smaller Wilson Airport for a short flight to the Maasai Mara in the south-west of the country where we will be met by our expert naturalist guides who will look after us for the next seven nights, and transfer to Basecamp Masai Mara, our home for the week. Basecamp Masai Mara is a very comfortable permanent bush camp on the northern edge (but just outside) of the Maasai Mara National Reserve, close to the Talek Gate. This small secluded camp



accommodates guests in 17 tents, set under the shade of trees and overlooking the Talek River with direct views across the Maasai 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 camp's chefs, offering hearty breakfasts, alfresco lunches and candlelight dinners.

Throughout our stay we will explore the surrounding area of the Maasai Mara by vehicle on daily morning and afternoon game drives, with plenty of time to relax back at the camp in between. An optional wildlife walk is also included in the cost of your safari, but as with all of our 'Go Slow' holidays, you are welcome to dip in and out of the scheduled drives, walks and activities as you see fit. Early morning game drives generally leave camp around 0630 hours and return approximately three hours later when you will have breakfast outside in the morning sunlight. Drives can also be arranged to include a packed breakfast allowing a more leisurely return for lunch. After lunch you can relax during the heat of the day, and appreciate the silence, punctuated only by strange and exotic birdcalls. Afternoon game drives depart around 1600 hours and return at sundown, after which you can freshen up and gather for pre-dinner drinks. On one day, your guides will also offer a full day's game drive into the Maasai Mara, taking a picnic lunch, for those interested in travelling a little further afield.

The Maasai 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 Maasai. 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.

During our safari drives we will be looking for game including Burchell's Zebra, Topi, Coke's Hartebeest, Impala, Eland, Thompson's and Grant's Gazelles, Bohor Reedbuck, Bushbuck, Kirk's Dik-dik, Masai Giraffe, Elephant and

Buffalo, stalked by all three big cats – Lion, Cheetah and Leopard – along with a variety of other predators and scavengers such as Bat-eared Fox, Serval, Spotted Hyena and Black-backed Jackals.

The birdlife is equally diverse. Huge Southern Ground Hornbills and elegant Secretarybirds stride across the grasslands along with Kori Bustards, Grey Crowned Crane and smaller species such as Temminck's Coursers, Wattled Lapwing, Rosy-breasted Longclaw, Yellow-shouldered Widowbird and Capped Wheatear. Lone bushes or dead trees provide lookout perches for a variety of bee-eaters and rollers, including the beautiful White-throated Bee-eater, whilst above them soar Martial Eagles, Lappet-faced, African White-backed, Hooded and Ruppell's Vultures, the latter four always on the lookout for a recent kill.



In the camp grounds and acacia woodlands you should be on the lookout for a plethora of barbets, finches, weavers, turacos, go-away-birds, glossy starlings and kingfishers.

There will also be plenty of time during our stay to learn about the Maasai culture and to get a feel for this fascinating area of Africa. Basecamp Masai Mara is a permanent '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 Maasai guards are always on hand to escort you to your tent at night.

Day 9

Fly Nairobi and depart

After a final morning game drive, today we must sadly leave the Maasai Mara and fly back to Nairobi. On arrival we will transfer to a convenient restaurant for anyone who wishes to have a bite to eat (dinner this evening is at your own expense, as required), before continuing on to the main international airport to catch the direct, overnight British Airways flight to London.

Day 10

London

We will arrive back into London Heathrow early this morning.

Images courtesy of Shutterstock & Chameleon East African Tours

Tour inclusions & additional expenses

The tour cost includes:

- International flights with British Airways and domestic flights between Nairobi and the Mara.
- Maasai Mara Park fees
- Daily morning and afternoon guided game drives
- Seven nights at Basecamp Masai Mara and one night in a comfortable hotel in Nairobi
- All meals from breakfast on Day 2 to lunch on Day 9

It does NOT include:

- Drinks
- Dinner on the final evening in Nairobi, if required
- Tips for local guides
- Visa fees
- Additional optional activities such as extra game walks, visits to a Maasai village, balloon rides
- Personal expenses such as postcards, laundry and souvenirs

Grading

Grade A. This is a traditional African safari, and therefore suitable for anyone of any age, without any great necessity for extreme fitness. One optional game walk will be offered, which will be over flat terrain and at a very leisurely pace, stopping frequently to look at natural history along the way.

Focus

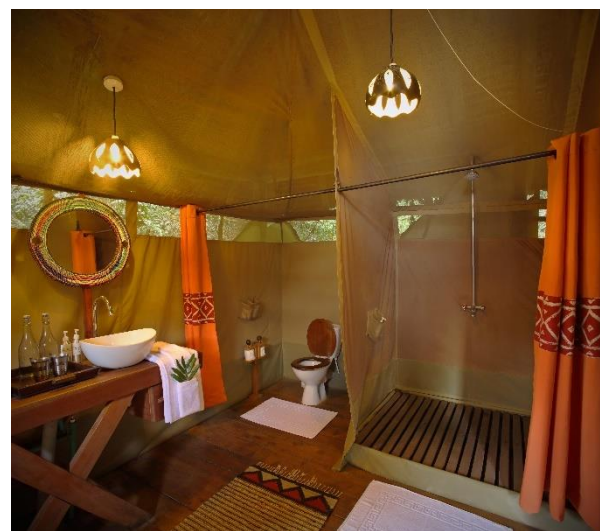
Mammals, birds and all other aspects of natural history will be enjoyed.

Accommodation

On arrival in Nairobi we spend one night in a comfortable hotel where all rooms are en suite. The rest of the safari is based at the comfortable Basecamp Mara, where all tents are en suite (with hot water showers) and equipped with proper beds, linen, bedside tables, luggage racks and rugs.

Weather

November is the start of low season in the Mara, so it should be a little quieter than the peak months of July to October. The 'short rains' usually begin around the beginning of November, so we should expect a few short showers during our stay – usually in the afternoons, and mostly short-lived. Significant periods of extended rainfall are unlikely at this time of year. Daytime temperatures usually peak in the mid to high 20s°C in the afternoon, though it can feel chilly setting off on a game drive first thing in the morning, so some extra layers will be useful.



Entry requirements

All nationalities require a full passport to enter Kenya, containing at least two blank pages, and valid for at least six 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 with your pre-departure pack (for more info in the meantime please see here: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/kenya/entry-requirements>). 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.

Vehicles & guiding

We use 4WD Land Cruisers for this safari (see photograph). They have removeable side windows and offer excellent visibility with an opening 'pop-top'. All group members will have a 'window' seat. Please note that game viewing can be disrupted by heavy rain. Our group will be met on arrival in the Mara by one or more of our expert local naturalist guides who will look after you throughout your stay. A representative from our local agents in Nairobi will meet the group on arrival in Nairobi and coordinate all the transfers between hotel and airports here.



Baggage restrictions

Please note there is a weight limit of 15kg per person in soft bags only for the flights between Nairobi and the Maasai Mara. This weight limit includes your hand luggage.

Your safety & security

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 – 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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