

Kenya's Maasai Mara – Photo Safari

Naturetrek Itinerary

1, Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Nairobi & overnight
Day 2	Fly Maasai Mara
Day 3/8	Wildlife photography safaris from Mlima Cottage, Maasai Mara
Day 9	Depart Nairobi
Day 10	Arrive London

Departs

October, November or January

Focus

Wildlife photography

Grading

Grade A (see grading section for more info)

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code KEN06)

Highlights:

- Seven nights at private Mlima Cottage, within easy reach of Lion and Leopard territories
- Fly directly into the Mara from Nairobi
- Birds including Secretarybird, White-throated Bee-eater and many others
- Maximum four guests per vehicle to ensure space and comfort.
- Led by wildlife photographer and expert naturalist
- Options to extend to Amboseli & Shompole



From top: Lion, Masai Giraffes, African Elephants, all courtesy of John Haskew



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Introduction

Kenya's Maasai Mara National Reserve is one of the world's most famous wildlife destinations – home to iconic African wildlife including African Elephant, Masai Giraffe, Lion, Leopard and Cheetah, along with more than 450 species of bird. This 10-day holiday includes a seven-night stay at Mlima Cottage, a private residence located near the northern border of the reserve. We will enjoy game drives for our group of up to six (maximum) in the early morning and late afternoon, when soft light is optimal for photography, and rest back at the cottage during the heat of the day. Each evening, we will return to the cottage after sunset to enjoy dinner, share stories, and download our photos for reviewing and editing.

Leopards ©John Haskew



Throughout our stay at Mlima Cottage, we will be guided by expert naturalist and wildlife photographer, John Haskew (or one of his carefully selected photography team), who has spent more than 10 years living and working in East Africa, and is now based full time in the Maasai Mara.

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 on a 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. On reaching the Mara, we will be met by our tour leader for the week, John Haskew, and transfer to our base at Mlima Cottage. Mlima is situated close to the northern border of the Maasai Mara National Reserve and located on a small hill ("Mlima" in the local language) offering panoramic views of the Oloololo escarpment in the west to the Ngama hills in the east.



The cottage is situated in a prime location for wildlife viewing, close to renowned Leopard and Lion territories. The cottage accommodates up to six people in three double/twin rooms each with an en suite bathroom, although our group size may be less than this. It is staffed by its own cook, cleaners and drivers who will be on hand throughout to make our stay as comfortable and enjoyable as possible.

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 Secretary Birds 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.

Our typical day will target the early morning and late afternoon when encounters with wildlife are most likely and soft light is optimal for photography. We will get up early at around 0530 for a cup of tea or coffee and leave before dawn to find wildlife before sunrise. There will be an emphasis on

the big cats, but also plenty of opportunities to photograph a wide range of species. There are three well-established prides of Lions within 20 minutes of Mlima Cottage: the Topi (Ridge) pride, Musiara (Marsh) pride and the Enkuyanai (Double Cross) pride. There are also two well-known Leopard territories, Kaboso and Bahati, each within easy reach of the cottage. Cheetah are highly mobile with very large roaming territories, but several are found in the area around Mlima Cottage

In addition to the big cats, we will endeavour to find and photograph a wide range of other species

Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater ©John Haskew



including Elephant, Hyena, Bat-eared Fox, Black-backed Jackal, Serval, Buffalo and a number of antelope species. The resident birdlife in the Mara is especially varied and will provide plenty of subjects and photographic inspiration.

The first two hours of the day provide the best opportunities for wildlife photography in the best light. At around 0830, depending

on the wildlife, we will stop for a bush breakfast before continuing our safari and search for wildlife encounters. We will be flexible during the day, to adapt to the activity of the wildlife and photographic opportunities, and depending on our preferences, we can stay out all day or return to the cottage during the heat of the midday sun for lunch and to rest. We will resume our afternoon safari at around 1530 until sunset, again the optimal time for observing and photographing wildlife behaviour. Throughout our time in the Mara, we will use a safari vehicle which is customised for photography. With a maximum group size of six, and no more than four per vehicle, there will be plenty of space for each person in the vehicle.

Each evening, we will return to the cottage after sunset to relax, enjoy our evening dinner and share stories. The cottage has a production tent where you can charge batteries and download photographs to your computer for reviewing and editing.

Day 9

Fly Nairobi and depart

After a final morning game drive and lunch today, we must sadly leave the Maasai Mara and fly back to Nairobi. On arrival, we will transfer to the main international airport to catch an overnight flight to London.

Day 10

Arrive London

We will arrive back into London Heathrow early this morning.

Extensions

We are delighted to be able to offer two extension options to this tour – a pre-tour extension to Amboseli and a post-tour extension to Shompole.

Pre-tour extension to Amboseli

Amboseli National Park is situated close to the border with Tanzania and with Mount Kilimanjaro towering over the surrounding landscapes. The habitat here is a mix of open plains, acacia woodlands, swamps, and the dry savannah, which creates a unique combination for a safari.



Day 1

In flight

We depart London Heathrow on a scheduled flight bound for Nairobi. On arrival, we will transfer to a comfortable hotel in time for a good night's sleep.

Day 2

Transfer to Amboseli

We take a morning flight to Amboseli and arrive around lunchtime. Amboseli lies in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak, and this provides the backdrop to the varied landscapes of this park. After time to settle in, we set out for an afternoon game drive. Our main focus will be the families of elephants and also the large male elephants known as 'super tuskers'.

Day 3

Amboseli

We start the day with a morning safari, again focusing on elephants in different habitats and



lighting. We aim to visit the dry lakebed where we have the opportunity to photograph family groups of elephants as they move into the marsh to drink during the heat of the day. This is a really special place, and we will be looking to find unique locations to photograph, including time in a private conservancy. We'll return to our accommodation at the end of the afternoon.

Day 4

Transfer to Maasai Mara

Today we fly from Amboseli to the Maasai Mara to meet up with the rest of the group, picking up the main tour itinerary on day 2.

As a guideline, the cost would start from £1,495 per person based on sharing a room, with two nights' full board and game drives at Amboseli as well as internal flights. A minimum of two participants is required to operate this extension. Please enquire for more information, including single room costs and availability.

Post-tour extension to Shompole

Shompole Wilderness is situated on the banks of the Ewaso Ng'iro River in southern Kenya and is an area of community lands in the Southern Rift Valley. The Shompole region is home to 21 species of carnivore, all the large mammal species that could be expected in this area, except for Rhino, and over 400 species of bird.

Day 9

Transfer to Shompole

We take a morning charter flight from the Mara to Shompole. After an early lunch, we take a short helicopter flight over Lake Magadi and Lake Shompole to photograph flamingoes as they fly over the surreal and dramatic mineral patterns created in the afternoon.



Flamingos over the lake © John Haskew

In the evening, we transfer to the night hide, where we'll wait in anticipation of the nocturnal wildlife which may turn up, and possible species include caracal, striped hyena,

leopard and lion, among others. There are beds available in the hide so we can sleep in between sightings. A spotter will always be on duty and can wake us should anything arrive at the water hole.

Day 10

Shompole

Waking in the hide will allow us the opportunity to photograph animals that arrive to drink in the pre-dawn and dawn light. Returning to the camp for breakfast, we'll then undertake a second helicopter flight over the lakes. Each day offers a new and different permutation of colours and patterns, so every flight is unique.

There will be opportunity to rest in the heat of the day before we head to the night hide for a



second time. We never quite know what will turn up at the hide on an evening, so there is always an element of excitement and anticipation while we wait. Again, there will be the option of getting some rest while the spotter keeps watch.

Day 11

Transfer to Nairobi

Today is our final morning in Shompole. There will be time for some final photography from the

hide before we return to camp for breakfast and to pack. We'll depart on a flight to Nairobi and arrive in plenty of time to connect with our departing evening flight back to London.

Day 12

Arrive London

We will arrive back into London Heathrow early this morning.

The cost for the Shompole extension starts from £5,695.00 per person based on sharing a room, including two nights' full board at Shompole with overnight hide stays. two helicopter rides and internal flights, based on four participants. Please enquire for more information, including single room costs, availability and costs without the helicopter rides.

Tour inclusions & additional expenses

The main tour cost includes:

- International flights to Nairobi and domestic flights between Nairobi and the Mara
- Maasai Mara park fees
- Daily morning and afternoon safari game drives
- Seven nights at Mlima Cottage and one night in a comfortable hotel in Nairobi
- All meals at Mlima Cottage. Overnight accommodation in Nairobi on a bed & breakfast basis.
- Non-alcoholic drinks at Mlima Cottage.
- Laundry service

It does NOT include:

- Alcoholic drinks at Mlima Cottage and all drinks in Nairobi .
- Dinner on the final evening in Nairobi, if required
- Tips for local guides and staff
- Visa fees
- Personal expenses such as postcards, souvenirs, laundry, etc

Grading

Grade A/B. This is a traditional African safari, although with a photography focus, and therefore suitable for anyone of any age, without any great necessity for extreme fitness. Please note that the roads used for the game drives are unmade roads, so some may be rough and some jostling can be expected. We will also be heading out early and sometimes returning late to make the most of the best light of the day, which can be tiring for some.

Focus

Wildlife photography, aimed at amateur photographers of all experience and ability. 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 Milma Cottage, a private residence with four self-contained cottages with double/twin bedrooms for guests, each with an en suite bathroom. The cottage has its own cook, cleaners and drivers who are always on hand to help.

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. January falls in the gap between the short and long rains, so is normally drier and a bit hotter, with daytime temperatures up to 28°C.

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 an Electronic Travel Authorisation or a visa to enter Kenya, and further information on how to apply for this 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.

Flights

The main flights for this tour are typically from Heathrow with British Airways on direct flights to Nairobi. For regional airport options or flight upgrades please contact the Naturetrek office.

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. For groups of 5 or 6, we will aim to additionally purchase a freight seat on the flights which will provide you with another 15kg of weight (approximately), so your total weight limit will be around 30kg in total, subject to availability. This includes your hand luggage. For smaller groups, we can request additional weight allowance, up to 15kg extra, subject to availability, so please let the Naturetrek office know how much additional weight you would be looking to take and we can check the availability for this.

Extensions

In addition to the set extensions, it is also possible to extend your holiday to include other parts of Kenya or East Africa. Please contact the Naturetrek office for further information.

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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