

Kenya's Maasai Mara – Photo Safari

Naturetrek Itinerary

Outline itinerary

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| 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 or November

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, John Haskew



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 four (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. Throughout our stay at Mlima Cottage, we will be guided by expert naturalist and wildlife photographer, John Haskew, 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 will be a maximum of four. 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.



Cheetahs (John Haskew)

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 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 four, 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

London

We will arrive back into London Heathrow early this morning.

Tour inclusions & additional expenses

The 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. This is a traditional African safari, and therefore suitable for anyone of any age, without any great necessity for extreme fitness.

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 three 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.

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.

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. We will 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. This 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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