

# Kenya's Maasai Mara Migration

## Naturetrek Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

**Day 1** Fly Nairobi & overnight

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**Day 2/6** Maasai Mara

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**Day 7** Depart Nairobi

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**Day 8** Arrive London.

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### Post tour extension

**Day 7** Return to Nairobi & overnight

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**Day 8/10** Ithumba Camp & Tsvao East

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**Day 11** Return to Nairobi & depart

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**Day 12** Arrive London

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### Departs

August or September

### Grading

Grade A/B

### Dates and Prices

Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) (tour code KEN08) or see the current Naturetrek brochure.

### Highlights:

- Visit the world-famous Maasai Mara
- Abundant African mammals including Wildebeest
- Five nights at in a comfortable camp in the Mara
- Lion, Cheetah & Leopard all possible
- Expertly guided by local Kenyan naturalists



From top: Lions, Blue Wildebeest and Secretarybird (images courtesy of Shutterstock)



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## Introduction

Every year, the wildebeest and other plains herds travel a roughly circular route around the East African savannahs, following the rains to find the best grazing. In late June into July the herds are typically moving into the northern Serengeti in Tanzania, then towards the end of July and through August, they move north up into Kenya and the Maasai Mara. Throughout their journey there are many dangers, including river crossings and predation. Over 1.2 million Blue Wildebeest are joined by Burchell's Zebra, gazelle and other antelope species in the search for fresh grazing. Where the herds go, predators tend to follow and we'll be looking out for those species that rely on the annual influx of herbivores, including Lion, Leopard and Cheetah.

Cheetah



Following the main tour, there will be an opportunity to extend your holiday with a visit to Ithumba Camp, which has particular significance for those who are interested in African Elephant conservation.

## 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 on board a 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.

### Day 2

### Maasai Mara Game Reserve



From Nairobi, we will set off to the world famous Maasai Mara. En-route, we will drive past open plains and steep hills, passing through the busy Maasai 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 Maasai 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 Maasai Mara by vehicle, although optional wildlife walks are also available.

## Days 3 – 6

## Maasai Mara

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.

African Elephants



Mammals are abundant and include Elephants, Lions, Leopards (can be very elusive), Warthogs, Black-backed Jackals, Spotted Hyenas, Burchell's Zebra, Blue Wildebeest, Thomson's and Grant's Gazelles, Eland, Topi, Maasai Giraffe, Hippo and many, many others. At this time of year, the wildebeest are making their way from the northern Serengeti into the Maasai Mara, so there may well be herds on the move during our stay.

The birdlife is equally diverse. Huge Ground Hornbills and elegant Secretarybirds stride across the grasslands along with Kori Bustards, Grey Crowned Crane and smaller species such as Temminck's

Southern Ground Hornbill



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 Northern Carmine Bee-eater, whilst above them soar Martial Eagles, Lappet-faced, African White-backed, Hooded and Ruppell's Vultures, the latter four always on the look out for a recent kill.

In the camp grounds and acacia woodlands we should be on the look out for a variety of barbets, finches, weavers, turacos, go-away-birds, glossy starlings and kingfishers.



Our next four days will be spent game viewing and enjoying the Maasai Mara. Early morning game drives generally leave camp around 0600 hours (with a packed breakfast) 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 bird calls. 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 aim to 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 Maasai 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, we may see animals in the grounds at any time. Local Maasai guards are always on hand to escort you at night.

Please note that, while there will be possibilities of wildebeest crossing the rivers during this time, we can't guarantee that you will witness a crossing this week.

## Day 7

## Mara to Nairobi

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 8

## London

We will arrive back to London Heathrow early this morning.

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Images courtesy of Shutterstock

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## Ithumba Extension

Please note that this extension is subject to availability at Ithumba Camp, which offers exclusive use of the camp to each group of guests.

## Day 7

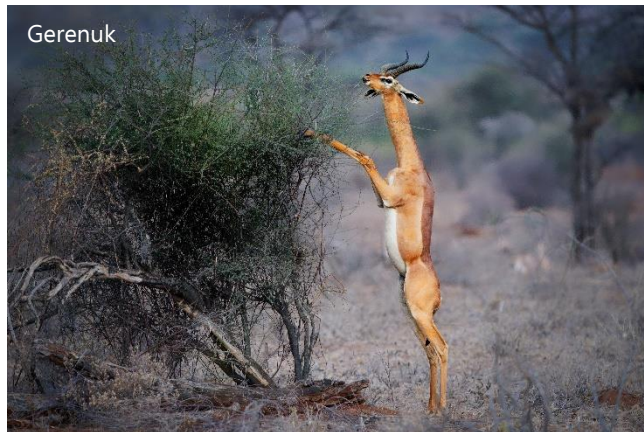
## Mara to Nairobi

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, we will make our way to a comfortable hotel to overnight.

## Day 8

## Ithumba Camp via Tsavo East

This morning we will head to the airport for a short flight to Ithumba. This camp is in Tsavo East,



Gerenuk

one of the oldest national parks in Kenya, spanning over 5,300 square miles. It is a flat, dry plain intersected by the Galana River. This semi-arid wild space is home to the mane-less lions, as well as the other Big Five safari species – African Elephant, Rhinoceros, African Buffalo and Leopard. The sparse vegetation means that it is relatively easy to see animals, despite the lower population densities here, compared to some of the other national parks. It lies at

the latitude over which northern and southern forms of species overlap, so has a rich diversity of wildlife within its bounds. One of the more specialist, dry habitat species found here is the Beisa or Fringe-eared Oryx. The long necked Gerenuk can also be found here, perhaps standing on their hind legs to graze vegetation higher in the trees or bushes.

Over 500 bird species have been recorded in Tsavo East, and it's one of the most southerly places to find Somali Ostrich. Other species include Vulturine Guinea fowl, Golden-breasted Starling, Taita Falcon, Rufous Chatterer, Martial Eagle and Black-faced Sandgrouse.

Ithumba Camp is located in the remote Northern sector of Tsavo East National Park and we'll be based here for three nights.



Martial Eagle

## Days 9 -10

## Ithumba Camp

Tsavo is located on the point at which northern and southern African species meet, so has a wide diversity of wildlife within its 13, 747 square kilometres of wilderness, however the main focus of our visit to Ithumba will be to learn more about the elephant conservation work, particularly with the orphaned elephants that have been raised at the sanctuary in Nairobi and now need a place to



roam. Operated by the Sheldrick Trust, the reserve is a place where these elephants can be reintegrated back into the wild. We hope to visit some of the orphans at their stockade in the early morning or in the evenings. Once an elephant reaches three years of age, they look to reintegrate them into wild herds. Initially they roam during the day time and return to the protection of the stockade at night while they learn the etiquette of elephant society and

survival skills from the wild elephants that live in this area. It can take eight to twelve years for an elephant that was orphaned to feel comfortable living in a wild herd, but they can go on to be fully integrated with a herd and have calves of their own. To further protect the elephants, the Sheldrick Trust support anti-poaching measures in this area, in partnership with the Kenya Wildlife Service. They also look out for Black Rhinoceros, as well as providing a veterinary services to wildlife in the region.

During our days here, we'll learn more about the Sheldrick Trust and the work it does, as well as exploring some of Tsavo East. We'll hopefully come across some of the elephant herds that include individuals that have been part of the project.

## Day 11

## Return to Nairobi & depart

Following a final morning at the camp, we must take a return flight back to Nairobi, and will arrive in the late afternoon. There will be day rooms arranged so that we can prepare and have an evening meal ahead of our late evening flight out of Nairobi.

## Day 12

## London

We will arrive back into London Heathrow early this morning.

**Extension cost:** 4 people - from £3,295 per person, 5 people - from £2,995 per person or 6 people – from £2,695 per person, SRS would be from £75 per room. If there are less than four people interested in the extension then Naturetrek will provide a quote. This cost includes flights from Nairobi to Ithumba and back, 3 nights' accommodation at Ithumba Camp, meals at Ithumba and a selection of activities from Ithumba Camp.

Ithumba Camp is a self-catering property, in that guests must bring their own food with them, however this will be provided for our groups by the local team and meals are prepared by the on-site chef.

## Tour grading

Grade A/B - This is a traditional African safari, and therefore suitable for anyone, without any great necessity for extreme fitness, although you need to be able to step up into the safari vehicle. Walks will be over flat terrain and at a very leisurely pace, stopping frequently to look at natural history along the way. There will be a number of longer drives during the tour, which can be tiring. The group size will not exceed 6 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 traditional African safari, covering all aspects of general wildlife including both mammal viewing and bird watching. You will spend five nights in Kenya in a truly spectacular game viewing area, surrounded by traditional flat-topped acacia trees, thorny scrublands and the bright red-cloaked Maasai people dotted across the plains.

## Vehicles

We use customised 4WD Land Cruisers on this holiday each holding 6 people. These vehicles will be used for transfers between lodges and game drives into the Maasai 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 if there is heavy rain.



Breakfast in the Mara (Colin Brown)

## Weather

In August/September 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 in economy class (unless booking on a land only basis)
- All transport
- Two game drives per day in the Mara
- Park fees for the Maasai Mara
- All accommodation
- All meals except dinner on Day 1 and lunch and dinner on Day 7.



It does NOT include:

- Drinks
- Tips
- Visa fees
- Personal expenses such as postcards and souvenirs
- Additional excursions

## Food & Accommodation

We spend one night in a comfortable hotel in Nairobi; rooms are en-suite. 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 Maasai 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 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 camps chefs, offering hearty breakfasts, alfresco lunches and candle light dinners.



Please note, if we are unable to stay at Basecamp Masai Mara, we will stay at a similar tented camp in the same general area instead.

On the Ithumba extension, we will be staying at Ithumba Camp. This is located in the north of Tsavo East National Park, and can accommodate up to eight guests in tented rooms. Ithumba Camp is a self-catering property, in that guests must bring their own food with them, however this will be provided for our groups by the local team and meals are prepared by the on-site chef.

## 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](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/kenya)

## 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](https://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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