



Masai Mara and Loita Hills

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart London Heathrow on the morning flight and arrive in Nairobi mid-evening where an East African Adventure representative/trip leader will meet us and help us with our baggage. We then transfer to our hotel (generally the Boulevard) in Nairobi for the night and can relax after the flight.

Day 2 – We leave Nairobi after breakfast and drive to the Masai Mara, one of the most famous and romantic game reserves in the world. From Nairobi it is a 5-6 hour drive across African plains, but we are actually travelling across the bottom of the world's largest and best-known valley system, the Great Rift Valley. Small communities, shepherds, Masai bomas (villages of mud and straw huts) and expansive views of the plains stretching away provide interest and a great insight into Kenya. We climb out of the Great Rift via the edge of the Mau Escarpment as we journey to the reserve gate, where we enter the Masai Mara. Stopping for a packed lunch along the way, we can take in our surroundings and savour the fact that we are in Africa overlooking the Great Rift Valley, a different world from the one we left at home only yesterday. From the reserve gate it is a further 2 hours to Sand River Camp, spotting wildlife in the national reserve as we drive through. The campsite is in the south-eastern end of the reserve, near the Sand River gate and Tanzanian border. It is a good base for game drives around the area because many animals are attracted to the nearby river for water. The concentration of game is very high at times, especially in the dry season when other waterholes have dried up. Soon after arriving at the campsite our crew have the tents up and the smell of dinner being cooked wafts through camp as we sort our things out. Sleeping in the tents we will use throughout our trip, it is not uncommon to hear the laugh of hyena or the roar of lions, as at night, sounds can carry many miles in the bush.



Day 3 - Waking early to the peace of the bush we have a quick breakfast and leave camp for a morning game drive in our four-wheel drive vehicles. These are regular safari vehicles and have detachable panels in the roof for game viewing. We should see a large variety of animals at this time of day - plains game are getting ready for another day, and it is still cool so lion and other predators are hunting before the heat of the day forces them to find cover and rest. During the game drive we will pass through patches of bush and forest that line the river as well as the expansive plains of the Masai Mara, giving us the best chance to see as much wildlife as possible. Getting back to camp late morning we have lunch and the afternoon is spent in camp before another game drive around four o'clock. The heat of the day will have passed now and the animals will start becoming active once more, making it the ideal time for a game drive. The light for photography can be excellent at this time of day, with the setting sun roasting the red soil in this part of Africa, and the acacia-dotted plains stretching away to the horizon - these are sights and smells that are not to be forgotten.

Day 4 – Leaving camp after breakfast we take a packed lunch with us today for a full day of game viewing, enabling us to cover a large part of the national reserve and see a lot of wildlife. Our Masai Mara and Loita Hills trips are run to try to coincide with the **migration**. This is one of the Earth's natural spectacles, as up to 1.5 million wildebeest, 250,000 zebra and 500,000 gazelle migrate in search of fresh pasture, according to the rains. We



will drive to the Mara River and the migration corridor between the Serengeti and the Masai Mara; we can cross the river and meet a park ranger (armed!) to accompany us on a short game walk to hopefully see animals close up and experience the vast plains. There is no guarantee but to see thousands upon thousands of wildebeest on the plains is an amazing sight - though we should also see a wealth of other game, including lion, cheetah, hyena, elephant, zebra, giraffe and gazelle, and crocodile and hippo in the pools near the river. It is a long drive from camp but the rewards are well and truly worth it, with the chance to witness one of the most amazing acts of nature. After a memorable day we will aim to arrive back in camp by late afternoon. Conversation over dinner will undoubtedly be of the day's events and then later it is off to bed for tomorrow, when we shall be heading for the Loita Hills and the start of our walk through one of the least visited areas in Kenya.

Day 5 – Today we take an early breakfast in camp then leave the national reserve and drive to the Loita Hills to start our walk through them for the next few days. An optional early morning game drive before breakfast is available for those of us that wish to see the animals stirring in the Mara at dawn. It is around a 7-8 hour drive to Entesekera Camp, our camp for the night at around 2100m metres height. We will stop for a packed lunch on the way and to rest, as travelling on dirt roads can be tiring, but interestingly different. There is a lot of wildlife outside the reserve and it is not uncommon to see large herds of gazelle amongst the goats and cows of the Masai shepherds. As we travel on, we will have views of the rolling Loita Hills, and there is the option of a short walk into camp for the last few kilometres, to stretch our legs and give us a taster of the days to come. The Loita Hills are an area of unspoilt wilderness between the western edge of the Great Rift Valley (the Nguruman Escarpment)

and the Masai Mara national reserve. The area is home to the largest indigenous forest in Kenya, which is sacred to the Maasai and provides them with many things such as honey and medicinal plants, as well as food for their cattle and fresh water from the streams and valleys. The hills reach a height of around 2650m and support a rich variety of flora and fauna - wild orchids, lichens, old mans beard and cedars to name a few of the species in abundance. Colobus monkeys call to each other in the canopy above us, and bushbuck, waterbuck, forest hog, hyena and leopard inhabit the forest as well as bigger game such as elephant. We meet up with the vehicles again as we arrive in camp and are greeted by the sight of our tents that have been put up for us by the crew. We are to be led by a local Masai guide through the hills, and donkeys will carry our equipment and kit between camps, adding to the experience and adventure.

Day 6 – Enjoying the morning freshness and solitude of the campsite we leave after breakfast and walk out on faint tracks through the bush, following mainly game tracks and small trails used by the local people. This evening's camp is Tiamanagen campsite, which is a 3-4 hour walk today through the rainforest.

This can be damp as cloud lingers on the slopes above the forest, especially in the mornings. The trees and lichens actually obtain moisture from the air, thus sustaining themselves from the very clouds that are formed due to the moisture created below in the forest. The sights in the rainforest, especially when shrouded in mist by the cloud encroaching down through the canopy above, offer a very different landscape from the endless plains of the Masai Mara of the previous days. There is a lot of wildlife in the forest but it is elusive and very well hidden. The alarm call of the colobus monkeys and the movement of branches in the trees are usually the first indications of their presence as we make our way through the forest. The pace is fairly leisurely as we climb in and out of valleys over the course of the day, staying around 2300-2400 metres altitude as we walk to our camp for the night. The campsites that we stay on are not on well-used routes through the area and are good places to make camp rather than designated campsites as found on Mt Kenya and Kilimanjaro. All our food is bought locally, mainly in markets, and is prepared by qualified cooks, cooked on gas stoves and served in our dining tent. At each camp that we stay, we use a toilet tent, and a shower tent, providing us with relative comfort in a rainforest at around 2400 metres!



Day 7 – Today's walking is through the rainforest at first, with the similar sights and smells as yesterday. Taking breakfast in camp, we then set off for about 5–6 hours walking to our next camp at Engarenaibor, which is the highest place on the walk at around 2550 metres. Walking at a comfortable pace allows us to enjoy the rainforest and its unique flora and fauna, including large hanging vines and old mans beard. We may possibly see forest antelope and even elephant, though seeing their droppings on the path is much more common than actually seeing the animals themselves. We come out of the rainforest today into a moorland area, which is covered with dense heathers, shrubby trees and plants, interspersed with rock. The difference in temperature as we come

away from the rainforest can be quite marked, becoming much warmer in the direct sunlight. Out of the enclosed forest now we can really appreciate our situation as the views open up now of the Maasai plains of Kenya and the Rift Valley. This is the hardest day but it is not challenging and it is taken at a relaxed pace so we can take in and enjoy our surroundings during the walk and our stop for packed lunches. Tonight's camp is at the highest point of the walk and overlooks Lake Natron below, and the Rift Valley, which we walk down into tomorrow.

Day 8 – It is worth getting up early today for the views into the Great Rift Valley as the sun comes up beyond, especially for the photographs that can be taken of it. We leave camp after breakfast and make our way down the escarpment onto the floor of the Rift Valley, at about 600 metres. As we descend the moorland changes to a more rocky edge to the escarpment, and increasing amounts of vegetation on the side of the valley finally change to plains once more as we arrive at the valley floor. Home to plains game we may see zebra, wildebeest, giraffe and gazelle as we walk to the camp for this evening - Pakaasi Camp, near Pakaasi river, where we meet our vehicles and overnight. This last day of walking takes around 6-7 hours and concludes our time in the Loita Hills, but we spend this one last night in tents before returning to the hustle and bustle of the real world tomorrow.

Day 9 – Striking camp for the last time we take breakfast whilst the vehicles are packed ready to start the drive back to Nairobi, which takes around 6-7 hours. On arrival in Nairobi, we have dayrooms at the Boulevard Hotel (generally) and can take showers and clean up after the past few days in the bush before relaxing with a drink. Transfer early-evening to Nairobi airport for the overnight flight back to UK.



Day 10 - Arrive at London Heathrow around breakfast time.

[BOOK NOW](#)