

Tanzania Highlights

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2	Arrive Kilimanjaro & overnight Arusha.
Day 3	Arusha National Park.
Day 4/5	Tarangire National park.
Day 6	Lake Manyara National Park.
Day 7/10	Serengeti National Park.
Day 11/13	Ngorongoro Crater.
Day 14	Depart Arusha.
Day 15	Arrive London.

Departs
November

Focus
Mammals and birds

Grading
A traditional vehicular wildlife and birdwatching safari.
Limited walking around lodges. Grade A.

Dates & Prices
Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code TZA01) or see the current Naturetrek brochure

Highlights:

- Visit the world famous Ngorongoro Crater
- Explore the Serengeti National Park
- Game drives in Arusha, Tarangire & Lake Manyara National Parks
- Visit Oldupai Gorge, 'The Cradle of Mankind'
- Abundant birdlife
- Lion, Cheetah & Bat-eared Fox all likely
- Comfortable landcruisers with opening roof & guaranteed window seat



*From top: Lion, Superb Starling & African Elephants
Images courtesy of David Mercer & Oleg Znameskiy*



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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

Depart London

We are scheduled to leave from London Heathrow early this evening on a Kenya Airways flight to Kilimanjaro, following a change of aircraft in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

Day 2

Arusha

We are due into Nairobi around 0630 hours from where we connect onto our onward flight to Kilimanjaro Airport in northern Tanzania. The short flight only takes around an hour but - if the weather is clear - affords wonderful views of east Africa's Rift Valley and, in particular, the snow-capped summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, at 5,895 metres, the highest mountain in all of Africa! On arrival we transfer to either Arumera River Lodge or Serena Mountain Lodge, both located approximately 30 minutes from the airport and surrounded in extensive gardens home to numerous birds, butterflies and other wildlife. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure to birdwatch around the hotel grounds or relax after the long flight.

Day 3

Arusha National Park

After breakfast we set off to explore the nearby Arusha National Park. Aldous Huxley proclaimed Arusha as the jewel of African national parks - it is easy to see why. Set between the towering peaks of Mount Meru (4,570 metres) and snow-capped Kilimanjaro (5,895 metres), the park has three distinct zones, the lush swamps and forests of the Ngurdoto Crater, the tranquil beauty of the Momella Lakes and the rocky alpine heights of Mount Meru. Indeed, there are few national parks with such variety. This morning we will drive through the park in search of our first African mammals and other wildlife.

The Momella Lakes are particularly rewarding. In addition to the pink flush of Lesser and Greater Flamingos that carpet the shoreline, the lakes are home to a host of other waterbirds including Hamerkop, Hadada Ibis, African Spoonbill, Southern Pochard, Maccoa Duck and a rich variety of waders. An occasional Hippo will belch rudely as it breaks the water's surface from its sub-surface daytime retreat, and Waterbuck and Kirk's Dik-dik loiter beside their drinking pools. From watch-points on the forested rim of the Ngurdoto Crater, Warthogs, Giraffes, African Buffaloes and other mammals may be observed as they feed in the peaceful grasslands of the crater floor, whilst in the forest hide Bushbuck, and Vervet and Guereza Colobus Monkeys, together with an exciting and elusive avifauna. The latter may include such species as Bronze-naped and Olive Pigeons, Hartlaub's Turaco, Spotted-flanked and Brown-breasted Barbets, White-winged Widowbird, and a variety of colourful sunbirds and weavers. We return to Arumera River Lodge or Serena Mountain Lodge for a second night.

Days 4 & 5

Tarangire National Park

This morning we drive to Tarangire National Park, a journey of around two and a half hours. Tarangire covers 2,600 square kilometres of grassland, marshes and acacia scrub along the Tarangire River and is located around 75 miles southwest of Arusha. The park holds a year-round population of Fringe-eared Oryx, Eland, Giraffe,

Impala, Buffalo, Lesser Kudu and great herds of Elephant up to 300 strong. Indeed, during the dry season when the animals crowd the shrinking waterholes, Tarangire holds the greatest concentration of wildlife outside the Serengeti! With such a plethora of prey to choose from it is not surprising that the park is also one of the best areas in northern Tanzania for predators including Lion, Leopard and perhaps even the elusive Wild Dog. In much of Africa trees are the domain of the Leopard, but Tarangire and Manyara National Parks are one of the very few places where the Lions are also fond of lazing on a shaded bough, so keep your eyes up as well as down when looking for the king of the cats.

Amongst the 550 species of birds that have been recorded here are Ostrich, Secretarybird, Tawny and Martial Eagles, Bateleur, a variety of vultures, Kori Bustard, Ground Hornbill, Yellow-collared Lovebirds, Brown and Orange-bellied Parrots, plus many species of kingfisher, bee-eater, roller, hornbill, barbet, shrike, weaver and finch. However, perhaps the two most striking and memorable species that punctuate the park's bushland are the spectacular Magpie Shrikes and the giant, bottle-shaped Baobab Trees. We will be based for the next two nights in the Tarangire Safari Lodge.

Day 6

Lake Manyara National Park

We only have a short drive this morning to the rim of the Great Rift Valley and Lake Manyara National Park. We will be based at the Lake Manyara Serena Lodge for one night, which occupies a magnificent setting, perched a thousand feet above the park on the very edge of the Rift Valley wall. The views are stunning!

This relatively small 329 square kilometre reserve encompasses five distinct vegetation zones; ground water forest with towering mahogany and fig trees, an extensive stretch of marshland and reed beds, parklands scattered with acacia trees and open grasslands and scrubland on the precipitous face of the Rift Valley wall. The lake itself covers 231 square kilometres, although there are no roads leading to the shoreline and it can only be viewed from a distance. Famed for its tree-climbing Lions (which are elusive and tricky to track down!), the park is also home to small herds of Elephant and Buffalo, plus Plains Zebra, Masai Giraffe, Hippo, Vervet and Blue Monkeys, Impala, Bushbuck, Reedbuck and Common Waterbuck. In addition to the mammals, over 350 species have been recorded within Lake Manyara National Park including various sunbirds, weavers and bee-eaters plus, for the fortunate, the beautiful Narina Trogon.

Days 7 - 10

Serengeti National Park

We next head further west, up and over the Crater Highlands (enjoying our first views of the impressive Ngorongoro Crater en route) and into the vast treeless plains of the Serengeti National Park.

Perhaps the greatest wildlife spectacle in the world, the Serengeti belongs to the animals and no one else. Limitless grassy plains, scattered with rocky outcrops, acacia bushland and riverine forest, cover 14,673 square kilometres. The park contains nearly 40 species of large mammals, which in between November and July, includes 1.2 million Blue Wildebeest, 250,000 Burchell's Zebra, 300,000 Thomson's Gazelles and an amazing 2,000 lions. Amongst a wealth of other species we hope to see are Impala, Grant's Gazelle, Eland, Masai Giraffe, Warthog, Kirk's Dik-dik, Waterbuck, Topi and Hartebeest. This abundance of prey is pursued by many predators including Cheetahs, Leopards, Serval, Golden and Black-backed Jackals, Spotted Hyenas and Bat-eared Foxes.

Between December and May mammal viewing is at its best in the southern Serengeti when the vast herds of Blue Wildebeest, Plains Zebra and gazelles move onto the short grass Ndutu plains from the Masai Mara to the north. The herds then track north once more in May and cross back into the Mara in July/August where they remain until October. Although the exact timings of the migration vary from year to year, by November many of the animals would have crossed back into the Serengeti again and will be spread out within the lightly wooded hills and plains that characterise the northern sectors of the park.

The Serengeti is a wonderful place to visit throughout the year, each month having its own sights, sounds and highlights. If the migration is late and the herds are still north of the border, there is still plenty to see in the park as it retains an abundance of animals and birds throughout the year. All the species outlined above will still be present in varying numbers, indeed, the predators are often easier to see in November than February (especially in the south of the park) when prey numbers are lower and they have less culinary choice!

Inevitably this feast of wildlife will eclipse the park's birdlife, but the latter cannot be ignored. Huge 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-throated Longclaw, Red-shouldered Widowbird and Capped Wheatear. Lone bushes or dead trees provide lookout perches for a variety of bee-eaters and rollers, including the beautiful Lilac-breasted Roller, 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 lodge grounds and acacia woodlands we should find a plethora of barbets, finches, weavers, turacos, go-away-birds, glossy starlings and kingfishers.

We will enjoy four nights in the Serengeti, the first two nights at the Serengeti Sopa Lodge in the heart of the reserve and remaining two nights at Lobo Wildlife Lodge in the north-eastern corner of the park.

Days 11 - 13

Ngorongoro Crater

We depart early this morning on our drive across open Maasai plains and back into the Crater Highlands to our final destination, the world famous Ngorongoro Crater. En route we will visit Olduvai Gorge, the 'Cradle of Mankind' which was brought to the attention of the world by Dr Louis Leakey. Here he discovered the 2-million-year-old remains of the 'nutcracker man', as well as those of prehistoric Elephants and giant Ostriches. Approaching the Ngorongoro crater itself, we climb up through liana covered hillsides and deep jungle-like vegetation. On reaching the top, we will find one of the world's most amazing sights before us as we peer down at the crater floor, dotted with animals, trees and lakes.

Eight million years ago Ngorongoro was an active volcano. Its cone collapsed forming a massive caldera, covering 311 square kilometres, and creating one of the most scenic spectacles in all of Africa and the 'eighth wonder of the world'. Over 600 metres deep and 20 kilometres across, the caldera is covered by extensive grassland, patches of forest, marshes and lakes whilst attractive montane forest clings to the rim. Unlike other ecological systems in Africa, Ngorongoro is permanently watered and therefore able to support a resident population of animals. It is home to over 30,000 large mammals including Blue Wildebeest, African Buffalo, Plains Zebra, Grant's and Thomson's Gazelles, African Elephant, Black Rhinoceros, Hippopotamus, Lion, Spotted Hyena and Black-backed Jackal. Indeed, Ngorongoro, is one of the few places in Africa where the 'Big 5' (Buffalo, Elephant, Leopard, Lion and Rhino) can be seen together. The birdlife is no less spectacular. An

exciting range of waterbirds includes many species of ducks, geese, waders, storks and hundreds of thousands of flamingos. Then there are the bustards, cranes, widowbirds, francolins and cisticolas to be found in the grassland and an equally diverse range of forest species!

Park regulations now limit each vehicle to 6 hours on the crater floor each day. The first few hours of daylight are particularly special for not only are the animals and birds at their most active at that time, but the crater floor is relatively free from other tourists. We will return to the lodge for lunch and spend the rest of the afternoon birdwatching around the lodge and crater rim. The Ngorongoro Crater is undoubtedly one of the very best areas for photography so make sure you bring plenty of memory cards!

We will be based for 3 nights at the Ngorongoro Sopa Lodge which is ideally situated on the crater rim only a short drive from the descent road to the crater floor.

Day 14

Arusha/In Flight

This morning we must leave the Crater and return to Arusha. En route we will stop at Gibb's Farm for lunch, a beautiful eco-friendly guest house situated between the Ngorongoro Crater and Lake Manyara, five kilometres from Karatu, the junction town of the crater highlands. This area is surrounded by extinct volcanoes and is an important farming area for the local people. After lunch we will take a birdwatching walk towards the nearby waterfall and visit the farm itself before continuing to Arusha in time to catch our early-evening return Kenya Airways flight from Kilimanjaro Airport (changing in Nairobi).

Day 15

London

We arrive back in London Heathrow early-morning.

Grading

This tour has been graded A, being a traditional lodge-based East African safari. Please remember that, in the game parks of East Africa, it is generally not permitted for visitors to leave the safety of their vehicles, apart from in the lodge grounds, meaning that we will spend quite a lot of time in our safari landcruisers! It is, though, the only way to see Tanzania's unrivalled wildlife and every participant will enjoy a window seat.

Weather

During our tour we can expect most days to be dry and fairly sunny, with daytime temperatures ranging from 20 - 30°C, depending on altitude. Overcast weather, particularly in the afternoons, may not be infrequent, and the occasional rain showers likely, especially on high ground such as Ngorongoro. Here the weather can also be cold at night, even dropping close to zero degrees on occasion!

Food & accommodation included in the price

All meals and accommodation are included throughout this holiday, with the exception of lunch and dinner on Day 2 and dinner on Day 14.

Please also note that it may, on rare occasions, be necessary to change the one or more of the camps and lodges outlined above. You can be assured, however, that any alternate lodge or camp will be of the same standard as the original and all will be in excellent areas for mammals and other wildlife.

Entry requirements

All UK passport holders and most other nationalities require a visa for Tanzania which is obtainable in advance from your nearest embassy. If your flight is routed via Kenya, you will also need a valid Yellow Fever Vaccination certificate to gain entry into the country (or a letter of exemption from your doctor).

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Tanzania. 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/tanzania 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 our main Naturetrek brochure and complete and return the enclosed booking form together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us now on 01962 733051. Alternatively, you may call us and make a booking with a credit or debit card, or book on-line at www.naturetrek.co.uk.
