

Selous & Ruaha - Undiscovered Tanzania

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2/5	Selous Game Reserve.
Day 6/9	Ruaha National Park.
Day 10	Depart Dar es Salaam.
Day 11	Arrive London.

Zanzibar extension

Day 10	Fly Zanzibar & transfer Fumba Beach Lodge.
Day 11/12	Fumba Beach Lodge.
Day 13	Depart Zanzibar.
Day 14	Arrive London.

Departs
October.

Focus
Mammals, birds and other wildlife.

Grading
A combination of vehicle safaris and short walks. Grade A.

Dates and Prices
Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code TZA04).

Highlights:

- Explore two of Tanzania's hidden wildlife jewels, the Selous Game Reserve & Ruaha National Park
- 4 nights in Selous & 4 nights in Ruaha
- Mammals including Elephant, Masai Giraffe & Buffalo
- Lion, Cheetah, Leopard & Wild Dog all possible
- Abundant birdlife including Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Pel's Fishing Owl & Ashy Starling (Tanzanian Endemic)
- Extend your stay on the beautiful island of Zanzibar
- Led by expert Naturetrek naturalist & local guide



From the top: Wild Dogs, Elephants on the Great Ruaha River & Zanzibar beach



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Introduction

Tanzania is a country of great beauty and diversity, encompassing some of Africa's most evocative wildlife destinations, amongst them the sweeping plains of the Serengeti, the spectacular Ngorongoro Crater and Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain. With over a quarter of its area allocated to wildlife conservation, Tanzania protects some of Africa's last remaining wildernesses and, away from the familiar 'northern circuit' featured in our popular 'Tanzania Highlights' itinerary, much of the country still remains relatively free from tourism. On this holiday we concentrate on southern Tanzania, an area of huge, but little known, national parks and game reserves rich in mammals, birds and other wildlife. Here the lodges are small, the visitor numbers are low and the landscapes are vast. The Selous, for example, is the largest game reserve in all of Africa covering over 45,000 square kilometres yet, to date, has accommodation for only 300 visitors. Compare this to Kenya's Masai Mara which covers a mere 1,800 square kilometres but contains over 7,000 tourist beds! Likewise, neighbouring Ruaha is the largest national park in Tanzania but has equally sparse accommodation and even fewer visitors. It is not uncommon in both Selous and Ruaha to spend the entire day out on a game drive without seeing another vehicle or a single human being.

So please do join Naturetrek in southern Tanzania this autumn and be part of the select 1% of visitors to the country fortunate enough to spend time exploring one of East Africa's last great wildernesses ... who knows for how long it will remain this way?

Itinerary

NB. 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 Dar es Salaam, following a change of aircraft in Amsterdam and Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

Day 2 - 5

Selous Game Reserve



Wild Dog

We are due into Nairobi around 0630 hours from where we connect onto our onward flight to Dar es Salaam, the largest city in Tanzania. The short flight only takes around two hours 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 take a 45-minute flight in a light aircraft to the Mtemere Airstrip on the edge of the Selous Game Reserve and then transfer to the small and exclusive Rufiji River Camp which

overlooks the Rufiji River and features 14 large walk-in tents pitched underneath thatched roofs; all with private facilities. Rufiji River Camp will be our base for our four nights in the reserve.



Northern Carmine Bee-eater

The Selous is a vast wildlife reserve clothed in a mix of grassland, woodland and bush, and bisected by the meandering Rufiji River which, over the millennia, has created a complex network of channels, lakes and swamps. It was named after Frederick Courtney Selous, a famous 19th century hunter, explorer and conservationist whose books of African adventure were best-sellers in Victorian England. Little has changed in the intervening century and today the Selous Game Reserve is still home to a superb array and abundance of wildlife. There are thought to be around 120,000 Cape Buffalo in the reserve, plus 100,000 Blue Wildebeest, 40,000 Hippos, 4,000 Lions and plenty of Masai Giraffe, Greater Kudu and Eland. Around a third of the world's population of African Wild Dogs live here, alongside Leopards, Cheetahs, Spotted Hyenas and a range of other predators. The birdlife is even more diverse, with over 400 species recorded, including Saddle-billed Stork, Pel's Fishing Owl, Palm-nut Vulture, Southern

Ground Hornbill, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Giant Kingfisher, White-fronted Bee-eater, the beautiful Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Purple-crested Turaco, Black-backed Puffback, Spotted Morning-Thrush, Common Scimitarbill, Pale Batis, Southern Red Bishop and many many more.

Since the Selous is a 'game reserve', not a 'national park', there are fewer restrictions on wildlife viewing activities and there will be opportunities for game walks and boat trips during our stay, in addition to the traditional vehicle safaris. From our camp in the bush we will see the same Africa as was experienced by early explorers - such as Frederick Selous - and our rhythm will be that of the sun. We normally rise early to the dawn chorus, then head out to see game when the day is cool and birds and animals are feeding or hunting. When the sun is high and the light harsh, we relax at our camp, then head off again as the afternoon sun softens, bringing a spectacular intensity to the colour of the scenery. Between outings there is time to relax and watch for birds, mammals and other wildlife venturing down to drink and bath on the edge of the broad Rufiji River. There is even a shaded swimming pool at the camp in which to cool off during the main heat of the day.



Elephant

Day 6 - 9

Ruaha National Park



Lion

Next we take a light aircraft flight to Ruaha National Park, which is located to the east of the Selous, and transfer to Ruaha River Lodge for a 4-night stay.

Ruaha covers around 20,000 square kilometres, but is part of the larger 45,000 square kilometre Runga-Kizigo-Muhesi ecosystem. Wildlife viewing here is centred along the permanent waters of the Great Ruaha River which flows along the south-eastern boundary of the park and attracts an abundance of game during the dry season. Ruaha River Lodge is set on the banks of the Great Ruaha River and features 24 chalets each with a veranda and a stunning view. Safaris are by vehicle and we will spend our mornings and afternoons slowly exploring the river's edge and the adjacent baobab-dotted plains that stretch to the horizon. Tourist numbers are even lower in Ruaha National Park than in Selous, and some feel that



Grey Crowned Crane

the game viewing here is even better than in its larger neighbour! Ruaha is noted, in particular, for its large herds of Elephant, over 10,000 of which occur, but we should see a wide variety of other species too. Lions are particularly prevalent with a number of relatively conspicuous prides, favouring the large herds of Buffalo as their main prey item in the absence of wildebeest. The Lions of Ruaha are even known to tackle Elephant and Masai Giraffe! Other predators include Cheetah, Leopard, Wild Dog and both Spotted and Stripped Hyena. These keep the ungulates such as Impala, Grant's Gazelle, Eland, Roan, Sable Antelope, Defassa Waterbuck and both Lesser and Greater Kudu constantly on the look-out.

Birders will also delight in the avifauna of which over 450 species have been recorded in the park including the endemic Tanzanian (Ruaha) Red-billed Hornbill and Ashy Starling, plus Violet-tipped Courser, Long-crested Eagle, Verreaux's Eagle, Sooty Falcon, Yellow-collared Lovebird, Black-bellied Bustard, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Black Coucal, Collared Palm-thrush, Fischer's Sparrow-lark and a kaleidoscope of sunbirds, rollers, bee-eaters, cuckoos and many others. Often touted as a 'safari connoisseurs' destination, Ruaha in truth will suit anyone who loves outstanding wildlife in a location far away from the tourist crowds.

Day 10

Depart Dar es Salaam

We may have time for a final morning game drive before we must sadly leave Ruaha National Park and transfer to the airstrip for an early afternoon light aircraft flight back to Dar es Salaam. Here we connect with our early evening Kenya Airways flight to Nairobi and from there home.

Day 11

London

We arrive back in London Heathrow at around 0630 hours this morning.

Zanzibar Extension

Day 10

Fumba Beach Lodge, Zanzibar

We may have time for a final morning game drive before we must sadly leave Ruaha National Park and transfer to the airstrip for an early afternoon aircraft flight to Zanzibar. On arrival you will be met and transferred to the Fumba Beach Lodge for a 3-night stay on a bed and breakfast basis (unguided).

Day 11 - 12

Fumba Beach Lodge, Zanzibar

Zanzibar is an archipelago consisting of the two main Islands of Unguja (commonly referred to as Zanzibar Island) and Pemba, plus around 50 or so other small islets dotted nearby in the Indian Ocean. The archipelago is famous for its wonderful sandy beaches and surrounded by clear turquoise seas. It is the perfect place in which to relax and unwind after the safari, but also a great spot from which to enjoy some of East Africa's underwater wildlife.



For this extension you will spend 3 nights at the Fumba Beach Lodge, located 30 minutes from Zanzibar's historical capital of Stone Town on a beautiful and secluded beach on the Fumba Peninsula. The lodge features only 26 rooms and is set within 40 hectares of lush gardens, full of birds and other wildlife, within the Menai Bay Conservation Area (designated by Worldwide Fund for Nature in 1998). Fumba Beach Lodge is the first and only lodge offering accommodation on the pristine Fumba Peninsula!

For those not wishing to spend all their time relaxing, the lodge offers a range of excursions which can be booked and paid for during your stay. In addition to snorkelling and diving excursions, boat trips in search of dolphins and visits to Stone Town, you might like to join a tour of the nearby Jozani Forest, the island's only remaining track of native forest and home to a wealth of wildlife including the Zanzibar (Kirk's) Red Colobus, one the rarest monkeys in the world.

Day 13

Depart Zanzibar

You have one last morning at leisure before transferring back to the airport for a late afternoon flight to Nairobi and from there home.

Day 14

London

We arrive back in London Heathrow at around 0630 hours this morning.

Grading

Grade A. This is a traditional African safari and therefore suitable for anyone of an average level of fitness. Wildlife viewing will be by a mix of traditional open vehicle safaris, plus boat trips and walks when in the Selous Game Reserve. Walks will be over flat terrain and at a very leisurely pace, stopping frequently to look at the wildlife we see along the way. Although no more than a couple of miles will be covered during these walks, the heat and sandy terrain can make these excursions tiring for some.

Weather

Since the Selous Game Reserve and Ruaha National Park lie close to the equator, the temperature is relatively consistent throughout the year climbing to the upper 20s°C to low 30s°C during the day and dropping to the upper teens, low 20s°C at night. Although October lies at the end of southern Tanzania's dry season, the occasional afternoon thunder shower is possible.

October is an excellent month to visit Zanzibar. Average daytime temperatures climb to 27°C during the day and dropping to an average of around 23°C at night. The average sea temperature at this time of year is 25°C. Visitors enjoy around 9 or 10 hours of sunshine per day with little rain.

Food & accommodation

All meals and accommodation are included throughout the duration of this holiday with the exception of lunches and dinners for those joining the Zanzibar extension. For our time in the Selous Game Reserve we stay in the Rufiji River Camp and whilst in Ruaha National Park we will be based in the Ruaha River Lodge. Both are small and very comfortable, all rooms having private facilities.

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.

Extra expenses

The following expenses are excluded from the cost of the holiday. Tanzania Visas, locally paid airport taxes, additional activities not outlined above, drinks, lunches and dinners in Zanzibar, guide and lodge tips and all items of a personal nature.

Entry requirements

All UK passport holders and most other nationalities require a visa for Tanzania which is obtainable in advance from your nearest embassy. You will also need a valid Yellow Fever Vaccination certificate to gain entry into the country.

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 your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card or book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk. Alternatively please complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.