

COWABUNGA FLY-CAMP
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Safaris since 1974.

Attention!

The following itinerary is meant to help your safari planning. Since 1974, we at Cowabunga Safaris have done many, many kinds and variations of safaris to Kenya.

This is only one kind of safari. Do you want something more upscale? Do you want something more rustic and participatory? If you have a different safari in mind, wish to stay longer, or want to travel to other parts of the continent, tell us. We can make it happen.

KENYA:

"African Discovery Safari"

(Special Participatory Safari)

- Length:** 14 days from the USA; 11 days in Africa
- Accommodations:** 4 nights in hotels; 7 nights in dormitories at the Taita and Mara Discovery Centres. Hotel rooms have private, hot-water showers and en suite toilets. Bathroom facilities, including showers, are shared at the Taita and Mara Discovery Centres.
- Fitness Level:** A minimal level of fitness is required - enough to undertake walks two to three hours in length over broken ground, and to participate in community service and conservation activities, some possibly physical (e.g., helping to construct a building, or tagging sedated animals).
- Group size:** Cowabunga believes in keeping groups small, to better share Africa. Unless otherwise stated, this type of safari will have no more than 10 Safarists. A custom-designed itinerary might have fewer still.
- Food:** Hotel meals have a wide array of choices: meats, pastas, vegetables, fruits and desserts all served to western preferences. At the Taita

and Mara Discovery Centres, breakfasts consist of breads, fruits, cereal, hot porridge, juice, and hot coffee or tea. Lunches consist of sandwiches, breads, vegetables, and fruits. Hot evening meals are more substantial, but likewise consist of meats, pastas, breads, and fresh vegetables and fruits.

Water: Treated drinking water is provided in some of the places we stay. Everywhere bottled water is available for purchase.

Stay Longer: Experiencing all Africa has to offer is a once-in-a-lifetime privilege for most. Accordingly, some Safarists like to stay longer. We at Cowabunga Safaris understand! If, after this safari, you wish to climb Mt. Kenya or Mt. Kilimanjaro, or to travel to Zanzibar, or to continue on to other parts of the continent, we can help. In fact, given our love of the continent, you can bet we'll beg to join you!

Detailed Briefings: Cowabunga provides in-depth written briefings for all Safarists after they sign-on for any safari. Furthermore, when possible, Cowabunga conducts face-to-face briefings approximately three months before departure. For those who can't make the face-to-face briefings, a detailed transcript of questions and answers is sent to them. Gary, Brian and Nancy always stand ready to brief Safarists at a moment's notice via fax, phone, e-mail, or in-person.

-- A NOTE FROM YOUR SAFARI LEADER --

"Experiencing is different than being told."

-- Kenyan proverb

Safari in KiSwahili literally means "journey." On this journey of African discovery, in a country over four times the size of Kansas, we explore many of Africa's better- and lesser-known dimensions.

For example, though we cross the equator several times, we face Mt. Kenya, with its permanent ice-fields and glaciers, and we are likely to experience nighttime temperatures in the lower 50s (due to us being at an average altitude of 5,000 feet). We traverse the Great Rift Valley (arguably the most prominent physical feature in the world), which stretches for six thousand miles from the Red Sea in the north to the mouth of the Zambezi River in the south and encompasses a unique myriad of cultural and natural treasures. We spend four days in the world-famous Maasai Mara, the northern extension of the Serengeti ecosystem, pulsing with animals in the tens of thousands. Throughout, our activities are exciting and varied: we work side-by-side with villagers on community service and conservation projects; we learn basic KiSwahili, craft-making techniques, survival skills, and orientation; we participate in elephant and lion monitoring; we conduct photographic game-drives; we undertake historic hikes...

This is a program designed to enable every individual, regardless of occupation or discipline, age or ability, to discover Kenya's - and indeed Africa's -- infinite beauty and endless diversity as reflected in its animals, land, people, and immense sky. But in the wise words of a Kenyan proverb: "Experiencing is different than being told." The experience of a lifetime awaits an intrepid few.

-- THE ADVENTURE --

Day 1 **EN ROUTE**

Our Safari begins. We depart Kansas City on our South African Airlines trans-Atlantic flight to Johannesburg. (D)

Day 2 **JOHANNESBURG**

We have an afternoon arrival in Johannesburg where we are met and transferred to our hotel. Depending on the time of our arrival, Brian can arrange a tour of Soweto, the famous township from where anti-apartheid activists like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu carried out their struggle. Dinner tonight, our first night in Africa, is on our own, but Brian can take us to any number of nearby restaurants. (B)

Day 3 **NAIROBI**

This morning we return to the airport for our flight to Kenya. After clearing customs and immigration in Nairobi we are transferred to the 680 Hotel on the outskirts of Nairobi. B/(L)/D

Day 4 **TAITA DISCOVERY CENTRE**

After breakfast we travel east on the Nairobi-Mombasa Highway to the *Taita Discovery Centre* located on the Taita-Rukinga Conservancy, adjacent to Tsavo National Park. The Centre has been constructed to simulate an African village with round thatched buildings surrounded by a thick *boma* of thorn trees. After settling into our dorm rooms, we join the education officer for a briefing and informal discussion about the ecology of the Conservancy and Park. This orientation includes our first Swahili lesson and the principles of African social etiquette. The discussion is designed to ensure our comfort and safety in this remote African wilderness, as well as to allow us to "put our best collective foot" forward with local people. Game-drives into this beautifully pristine area further acquaint us with our surroundings; we should catch our first views of the abundant wildlife that thrives here. B/L/D

Day 5 **TAITA DISCOVERY**

Maintaining the balance between wildlife and human needs is fundamental to the long-range goals of every conservation effort. Today we gain a firsthand perspective by interacting with Kenyans on a one-to-one basis. On-going projects include such projects as tree-planting (in order to provide sustainable sources of firewood and erosion management), painting a school or church, or constructing a fish pond (in order to better human nutrition

in the villages). We'll enhance our rapport with locals by visiting a local market, and sharing a traditional African meal prepared and eaten following local customs. B/L/D

Days 6-7 TAITA DISCOVERY CENTRE

Having settled into the daily rhythm of Africa, and having become familiar with our surroundings and nearby communities, our activities over the next three days will focus on the following topics:

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ECOLOGY

Africa is an integrated patchwork of overlapping plant, animal, and human communities. We study the ecology of Taita/Rukinga Conservancy and Tsavo National Park, as well as the communal areas surrounding both. We observe and discuss the impact of fire, grazing, and domestic animals on soils and vegetation, and how the permanent water sources established for the benefit of wildlife have changed vegetation zones.

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SURVIVAL SKILLS AND ORIENTATION

Part of being able to fully enjoy the bush is to feel confident while in it. Sessions include how to live and work in the bush in a safe and responsible manner: we learn the traditional methods of fire-making, and the use of fire as a management tool; we practice map and compass reading; we participate in in-depth studies of the art of game-tracking as used by the Taita Conservancy's anti-poaching unit; we learn about some of the traditional hunter/gatherers' ancient methods for surviving in what (at least initially) appears to be a harsh and unforgiving environment. Following our instruction, we divide into groups and, with an armed escort, walk into the African bush. Using a map and compass, our objective is to locate a site where supplies of food, water, and bedding have been cached, and then to establish a temporary overnight "fly-camp".

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AFRICAN ARTS AND CRAFTS

Various African cultures have long been recognized for their skills in basketweaving, pottery-making, beadwork, and ability to carve wood and stone into utilitarian and art objects. We try our hand at these ancient skills. With the help and instruction of African craftsmen, we select on or more projects on which to work. We may forage for raw materials such as reeds, bark, clay, or lumber with an eye to turn them into a basket, pot, mat, spoon, or walking stick. We may even attempt to make a piece of paper out of elephant dung (elephant dung paper can be used for making note cards, and as a media for sketches and paintings)! Instruction will also include demonstrations in various uses of crafted items, and explanations of historical/cultural meanings.

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ELEPHANT AND LION MONITORING

Resident elephant populations still use ancient migration routes from Lake Jipe across the Taita Hills and into Tsavo National Park. During their migrations they come into conflict with local farmers, often leaving a trail of crop destruction. The migratory elephants, numbering around one thousand, also drink about 20 gallons of water per animal each day. Fortunately, the lion population at Taita is healthy - at least to date. Unfortunately, however, the lions kill around 400 head of domesticated cattle annually. As a result, whenever a lion or lions wander out of protected areas (or even when herdsman wander with their herds into protected areas), they become marked targets.

In terms of elephants, lions, and humans, their interactions lead to some vexing questions. How can the interests of animals and people be protected? How and why should locals assist in conserving wildlife when wildlife drinks valuable water, eats subsistence crops, and kills livestock? We follow resident ecologists and biologists into the field as they research the area's elephants and lions. We identify specific animals, watch for tell-tale behaviors, and learn to estimate population numbers, as well as to differentiate between different animals' sign and spoor. The objective is to connect the needs and actions of the charismatic "mega fauna" with those of people, thus completing the circle necessary for effective conservation and human betterment.

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Day 8 **TAITA/MOUNTAIN ROCK**

Today we bid a fond *kwa heri* to the Taita Discovery Centre. We drive back to Nairobi, arriving in time for lunch, and then carry-on to the Mt. Kenya region. Tonight we sleep in the shadow of Mt. Kenya at the Mountain Rock Hotel. Though we are nearly smack-dab on the equator, Mt. Kenya's permanent snow-capped peaks and glaciers remind us of our altitude. A quiet dinner by the warmth of an open fire will provide welcome relief from what is likely to be a chilly evening. B/L/D

Day 9 **MOUNTAIN ROCK**

Today is a day of active exploration. We take a full-morning botanical/historical hike to caves used by the Mau Mau Freedom Fighters in their struggle against British colonialism. Our return route takes us through the habitat of the rare colobus monkey, and if we're lucky, we might have a sighting. In the afternoon we learn more about the Kikuyu culture with a visit to a local village. Here we hear traditional storytelling and learn about Kikuyu basket-weaving and beer-making. On our way back to Mt. Rock, we drive through Aberdare National Park, through an area called the Salient, in order to look for colobus and green monkeys, giant forest hog, the tiny suni antelope, as well as elephant, buffalo, and the endangered black rhino. If time allows, we might hike to the beautiful Karuru and Gura waterfalls. B/L/D

Day 10 **MARA DISCOVERY CENTRE**

Today is a travel day and we have the opportunity to see life in rural Kenya. We pass through towns, villages, and small *shambas* (farms). It's a scenic drive past sights such as Nyahururu Falls and Lake Naivasha, but be prepared for poor roads. Today will also mark our first descent onto the floor of the Great Rift Valley - a 6,000-mile-long geological feature so immense the astronauts could see it from the moon with the naked eye. Our destination is the Mara Discovery Centre, adjacent to the world-famous Maasai Mara. The Mara Discovery Centre camp is nestled amongst trees at the Mara River's edge, and meals are served under expansive African skies. At night we are lulled to sleep by the surrounding sounds of the African bush - especially the grunts and "laughs" of hippos.

B/L/D

Days 11-12 **MARA DISCOVERY CENTRE**

The Maasai Mara is the northern extension of the Serengeti ecosystem with open plains, acacia woodlands and riverine forest. The park and preserve are intersected by the Talek and Mara Rivers, which are home to many hippos, crocodiles and waterfowl. A multitude of savannah animals can be found on the open grasslands. All the big game are here, often in numbers that can defy description, such as wildebeest, zebra, elephant, waterbuck, lion, buffalo and a few rhino. And whenever you see large herds of antelope you can count on predators. If there has been a kill, we're apt to see hyenas and scavengers such as jackals and vultures nearby. Here, too, are the topi antelope, the only place in Kenya where they are common. B/L/D

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MARA DISCOVERY CENTRE ACTIVITIES

During our time in the Maasai Mara, it is Africa and the animals are our classroom and teachers. Accordingly, it is Africa and the animals that determine what we do, where we do it, and when. The role of our guides and resident biologists is to interpret what we're experiencing through daily discussion sessions. Morning and afternoon game-drives take us to where our chances are best to see the dynamic interactions of predator and prey.

However, one would be neglect if an effort was not made to understand better the people who for centuries have lived in close contact with the natural abundance in the area: the Maasai. We visit a Maasai village for an in-depth introduction to the rich culture of these traditionally nomadic and pastoralist people. While in the village, we are free to visit with the people, to see the insides of their homes, and may even be able to try our hand milking a cow or bead-work.

Day 13 **NAIROBI**

After breakfast we take a final game-drive. Then it is back across the floor of the Great Rift Valley en route to Nairobi. Education is very important to Kenyans and we should see

elementary students in uniform walking to and from their schools. We return to Jomo Kenyatta Airport and board our South African Airways flight to Johannesburg, connecting on to our evening flight out of Africa. B/L/D

Day 14 **HOME**

A morning arrival in the USA, where we connect on to our flights home. (B)

"Africa... grabs hold of a piece of your heart and never quite lets go."

-- Robert Ruark



Safaris since 1974.