

**COWABUNGA FLY-CAMP**  
(Correspondence for Brian only)

Cowabunga Fly-Camp  
Attn: Brian Hesse  
423 W. Clark  
Clarinda, IA 51632 USA

Telephone: (+001) 712 542 1403  
Mobile: (+001) 785 221 0309  
mail: info@cowabungasafaris.com  
:bsite: www.cowabungasafaris.com



Safaris since 1974.

**COWABUNGA MAIN CAM**  
(Correspondence for Gary only)

Cowabunga Safaris (Pty.) Ltd  
Attn: Gary K. Clarke  
Private Bag 4863  
Gage Centre Station  
Topeka, Kansas 66604-0863 U

Telephone: (+001) 785 272 766  
Fax: (+001) 785 272 4746

### **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: "Across the Equator Safari"**

**Length:** 14 days from the USA; 11 days in Africa

**Accommodations:** 4 nights in upscale lodges; 2 nights in hotels; 5 nights in a luxury permanent tented camps. All accommodations have private, hot-water showers and flush toilets. All but one of the places (Mountain Lodge) has a filtered swimming pools (yes, out in the middle of Africa). Most important, all the places Cowabunga stays at are in breathtaking surroundings in or near world-renowned wildlife areas. Pictures of accommodations are available on request.

**Luxury Tented Camps:** An additional explanation... Our luxury permanent tented camps are not the same as the camps you might find on a weekend camping trip in the USA. The tents are large - they are big enough to walk into and stand in -- with comfortable twin beds complete with linen and duvets. All tents are bug-proof with mesh windows, have nightstands next to the beds, and, as has been mentioned, possess en suite bathroom facilities.

- Fitness Level:** Although there will be opportunities for optional walks, this safari is primarily a vehicle-based safari. Only a minimal level of fitness is required.
- 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:** You should NOT go on this type of safari to lose weight! All meals cater to western preferences, are first-class, and excellently prepared. Chefs make exquisite cuisine using a wide array of meats, pastas, and fresh vegetables and fruits grown in the area. Desserts are delectable and overwhelming - so much so, we encourage all Safarists to practice the Cowabunga mantra: to "Eat dessert first, because life is so uncertain."
- 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 --**

"Across the Equator" has been an adventurous theme for Cowabunga for more than two decades -- with good reason. While directly on or near the equator, at times we are in the shadow of the permanently snow- and glacier-capped peaks of Mt. Kenya, the second-highest mountain in Africa. In the near-desert environment of the Northern Frontier District "above" the equator, we see endemic species like Beisa oryx, Somali ostrich, and gerenuk; here runs the life-giving Uaso Nyiro River, its banks lined with palm trees and crocodile. "Below" the equator we explore Lake Nakuru National Park, where both black and white rhino and the Rothschild's giraffe -- all endangered species -- can be found.

Finally, we spend full days in the world-famous life-filled Maasai Mara, the northern extension of the Serengeti ecosystem. Throughout we encounter big game and associated predators...

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Grandest Theatre

by Brian Hesse

*Les Miserables. Miss Saigon. Rent.* When I lived near London's West End theatre district I managed to see many world-class shows. Yet none can equal the scenes played out by nature as seen on Safari. Consider the following:

### **6:00 a.m. Departing camp -**

A full moon was setting in the west, growing in size and increasing in clarity as it approached the horizon. In the east the sun was rising, highlighting the hills in a white aura and painting the sky fluorescent pink, yellow, and orange. Into this scene appeared an inverted, teardropped silhouette: a giant hot air balloon. We approached, clambered in, and soon rose into the sky. Burners provided momentary relief from the morning's chill, then when turned off, accentuated the suspense-filled silence of the African dawn. All around were unbroken vistas, and in the sea of grass below, countless animals and game-trails were visible. At one point efforts to locate Lake Victoria in the distance were interrupted as we drifted over an elephant herd...

### **10:00 a.m. In the vehicle --**

The cheetah was moving, we were not. Yet the gap between us continued to close. Minutes passed. Five hundred feet became 100 feet, 100 became 25, until the animal was right beside our vehicle. With supreme confidence she cast one look over her shoulder, then strolled along the length of our Rover, her tail brushing nonchalantly against the doors...

### **4:00 p.m. On the savannah -**

The kill was recent. From a distance wildebeest and Thomson's gazelle bobbed their heads nervously before moving on. A few topi stood absolutely still, fixing their gaze on the lion. The two males, stomachs bulging, continued to chew intently on topi bones held between their paws. Already the "bush telegraph" was working: a pair of black-backed jackal appeared, hoping to scavenge a free meal. Vulture might soon begin circling overhead, in turn possibly attracting hyena. Unexpectedly a lioness appeared; her stomach, too, was full. Behind tumbled her two cubs. She was leading them back to the kill...

If I had a ticket to just one of the scenes described above, my excitement would be hard to contain. Imagine, then, how I felt after I had the privilege of witnessing all of them in Kenya's Maasai Mara -- on the same day! One of the greatest aspects of being on Safari is that no one can predict fully a day's plot or plot-twists, or what cameo appearances might be made. Furthermore, a person would be hard-pressed to find a stage with such spectacular scenery on which to watch it unfold. The interaction between people, animals, and landscapes provides unscripted, unparalleled, once-in-a-lifetime memories. Everything is a first and final run. Fortunate are those of us who get to the grandest theatre of them all: AFRICA.

\* \* \* \* \*

## -- THE ADVENTURE --

### **Day 1 EN ROUTE**

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

### **Day 2 JOHANNESBURG**

An afternoon arrival in Johannesburg where we are met and transferred to the leafy suburb of Rosebank and the Grace Hotel. The Grace's rooms are large and comfortable, and the hotel's rooftop garden and pool provide an ideal place to bask under African skies. Dinner is on our own in the dining room, or in any one of a 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 we are transferred to the Safari Park Hotel on the outskirts of Nairobi. The Safari Park is a wonderful introduction to East Africa, possessing 64 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds with all sorts of endemic plants and many birds. The Hotel also has a tropical pool (the largest in Africa) that has to be seen to be believed. B/(L)/D

### **Day 4 SWEETWATERS**

After breakfast we travel north past the coffee and pineapple farms of the Kenyan Highlands and arrive at Sweetwaters Tented Camp for lunch. Sweetwaters lies in the heart of a privately owned 22,000-acre Wildlife Reserve. All tents face the waterhole and salt lick, as well as snow-capped Mt. Kenya, and all have electricity with en suite bathroom facilities. The main bar and restaurant are in what was once the homestead farmhouse, and there is a gift shop and swimming pool, plus an outdoor thatched bar overlooking the waterhole (lighted at night). Even though we are smack dab on the equator, we sleep under blankets and it is frequently cool enough at night for the staff to provide hot water bottles in our beds. B/L/D

### **Day 5 SWEETWATERS**

A full day of game drives which may include a visit to a chimpanzee rehabilitation center. Animals often seen are impala, waterbuck, giraffe, zebra, warthog, baboon, eland, jackal, hartebeest and elephant. The birdlife here is prolific. B/L/D

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Less Wildlife? More Wildlife?**

*by Gary K. Clarke*

We hear a lot of "doom and gloom" about wildlife these days: television specials on endangered species, fund raising appeals from conservation organizations, statistic after statistic

on dwindling animal populations. This is not to say that some species aren't threatened in the wild, or that we shouldn't be concerned. But there is so much negative sentiment expressed that it is often misleading.

I often challenge people on Safari to count the individual mammals we see from the first day to the last, and I predict it will frequently be upwards of 10,000 on a two-week Safari, especially in East Africa. (This does not include those Safaris that experience the migration, where the count could be in the hundreds of thousands.) Granted, it is a daunting task to count individual specimens and to insure you have not tabulated the same ones twice or more. However, with patience, keen observation, practice, cooperation from the group and professional input from your driver/guides, it can be done. (On the other hand, I wouldn't begin to count birds — there simply are too many.)

While total numbers of mammals is a good indicator, variety of species is another. It reflects the status of the ecosystem, the stability of the habitat, and the adaptability of animals despite the many changes taking place in the natural areas of Africa. And while I don't like to make a "numbers game" out of wildlife sightings, it is a reflection of the diversity of wildlife.

My first Kenyan Safari was in 1974. I only recently completed yet another Kenyan Safari. Curious to see what changes had taken place in the intervening decades, I reviewed journals from that first Safari to Kenya and my most recent one. Kenya in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century compared very favorably with Kenya 1974. In fact, my recent Kenya trip was a truly amazing Safari.

Highlights included sightings of seven free ranging black rhino, six side-striped jackal, three cheetah, two leopard and 46 lion! In addition, we saw Jackson's hartebeest, suni antelope, and gerenuk in feeding posture. So much nocturnal animal activity occurred that it was difficult to go to bed: rhino and elephant at the waterhole, spotted hyena and genet scavenging, a mother hippo and her two young in the same narrow river and a short distance from a monstrous crocodile!

Then there were the unrepeatable scenes and interactions: a troop of over 100 baboon running at top speed single file across the shallow crocodile-infested Uaso Nyiro River; the reaction of a spotted hyena clan when an outside hyena interloper came in; and the dramatic stand of two adult bull Cape buffalo (Old Dagga Boys) against a pride of nine lion (two male, seven female) — both buffalo charged up out of a *donga* (draw) and chased the lion repeatedly, causing them to run for their lives and to scatter through the bush!

Two weeks on Safari in Kenya quickly dispel the doom and gloom misconceptions often projected about African wildlife. The number of animals, the variety of species and the marvelous behaviors to behold all make for the experience of a lifetime.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Days 6-7    SAMBURU**

We continue north this morning across the Equator to the semi-arid region of the Northern Frontier District to an area known as Samburu. Along the way we may see Samburu, Turkana and Somali ethnic groups in their traditional dress.

The Samburu National Game Reserve is dominated by the Uaso Nyiro River. This river is unique because its waters never reach the sea, but dissolve in the Lorian Swamp to the east. Since we are north of the equator this is our opportunity to see species of animals that are not found in others parts of Kenya, including Grevy's zebra, reticulated giraffe, Beisa oryx, Somali ostrich and gerenuk. Although often just called Samburu, the entire area includes three different National Reserves including Buffalo Springs, Shaba and

Samburu. The dominant tribe in the area is the Samburu, closely related to the Maasai. On occasion we see northern desert tribes, sometimes herding their camels. Our accommodations are at Samburu Serena, a luxury lodge on the banks of the Uaso Nyiro River. Each bandana has a ceiling fan, front porch and en suite facilities. The lodge has a swimming pool and the famous Crocodile Bar. Game drives each morning and return to the lodge for meals and overnights for these two days. B/L/D

### **Day 8 MOUNTAIN LODGE**

This morning we drive south across the Equator back into the southern hemisphere in time for lunch. We then proceed through the montane rain forest of the Aberdare Mountains to Mountain Lodge, perched at an elevation of 7,500 feet above sea level. From the Lodge C in fact, from our rooms, because all rooms face the lighted waterhole and salt lick C will be kept busy watching all kinds of activity. Animals come and go all night and this may be a night with little sleep! Cape buffalo, elephant, mongoose, warthog, bushbuck and if we're lucky, rhino, often appear. B/L/D

### **Day 9 LAKE NAKURU**

This morning our scenic drive takes us down the escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. The Valley is 6,000 miles long and stretches from the Red Sea to the mouth of the Zambezi River at the Indian Ocean. It is such a prominent natural feature that the astronauts could see it from the moon with the naked eye. Our destination is in the heart of the Great Rift, at Nakuru, which is the name of a town, a National Park, and a lake.

Lake Nakuru itself is one in a chain of Great Rift Valley lakes, some of which are fresh water while others are alkaline. Known for its flamingoes, sometimes thousands are seen near the shores of the lake. Lake Nakuru National Park is known for its leopard and the endangered Rothschild's giraffe. It has been declared a rhino sanctuary and both black and white rhinos are found here. There are several distinctive habitats, including yellow-barked acacia forests and massive concentrations of candelabra trees. Our accommodations at *Lion Hill Lodge* are in cottages with en suite facilities. There is a swimming pool. B/L/D

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Tips for Safari Packing**

*by Nancy Cherry*

You're thinking of fulfilling your lifetime dream: a Safari to Africa. You may have even sent in your deposit to hold your space. Now a jillion questions pop in to your mind and one of them is bound to be what to pack. Perhaps a look at the beginning of this past century will help provide some perspective at the beginning of this new one.

Martin and Osa Johnson were a Kansas couple who, in the early 1900s, undertook numerous African Safaris. Osa kept very good records and when they landed in Mombasa, Kenya (they went by ship in those days) the crates were unloaded and she listed everything in them as the customs inspectors opened them.

The list is quite long, so we'll just cover some of the highlights. A partial list: cameras, dish rags, aprons, soap (Osa wrote: "mountains of it, a gift from Sidney Colgate"), folding chairs, tables, washtub, enamel dishes, tanks for rain water, Delco Electric system, Coleman stoves, flashlights, butter churns, fish hooks, chains (for towing), papers, pencil, ink, magazines, books, wearing apparel and seeds (she planted sunflowers in their camp at Marsabit).

Today you needn't concern yourself with bedding, dishes, food or tools. Nearly everything is done for you on Safari. Food is excellently prepared, making use of fresh fruits and vegetables grown in the area, with delectable main courses ranging from fish to lamb, to beef and chicken; deserts are overwhelming. You do not have to set up your own tent - even if you're staying in a tented camp. Most tented camps are known as "permanent" tented camps. That is, the tent is erected on a concrete slab with ample rugs on the floor of the tent; it is under a thatched roof to give you additional protection from the rain; and in most instances you have a private shower and a flush toilet attached to the back of your tent. However, we at Cowabunga still recommend packing some of the very same items Martin and Osa brought on their Safaris. Indeed, we suggest that a person should *always* have a torch (Safari-speak for flashlight), *always* have a pen, and *always* have an emergency supply of toilet paper (although I think Osa was too much of a lady to mention the latter). If you want to bring sunflower seeds, that's OK too.

Of course the Johnsons were staying for months at a time in Kenya, and setting up house (or more appropriately, camp) both in Nairobi and out in the bush. We go for two weeks and the basics are more than amply provided for. Hence, the Cowabunga maxim: Those Who Travel Light Shall Be Rewarded.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Day 10 MAASAI MARA GAME RESERVE**

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 an interesting drive, though be prepared for poor roads. Our destination today is Mara Sarova Camp, situated inside the Maasai Mara Game Reserve. Tents in the camp are scattered over a sizable area with many winding paths. Incredible views of the Mara's magical vistas abound. An optional activity while in the Mara might be a hot air balloon flight. B/L/D

#### **"Balloonning Over Africa"**

The Maasai Mara is one of the few areas of Africa that offers the opportunity for a hot air balloon flight. It is a fantastic experience, and for many, almost a spiritual event. There's something about floating silently above the expansive plains and woodlands that fosters an awareness of how insignificant we as individuals are. The flight is steady and smooth and so unlike an airplane. Once aloft you see no power lines, transmitting towers, parking lots, or roofs of buildings - just pure Africa. Upon landing a gourmet champagne breakfast with omelets cooked-to-order is served on the open savannah. We strongly urge you to take advantage of this option. It's something you won't regret.

### **Days 11-12 MAASAI MARA**

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

**Day 13                      NAIROBI**

After breakfast we drive across the floor of the Great Rift Valley back 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 the Safari Park Hotel, where day rooms are available. This evening we have a Farewell Dinner before heading to the airport for our evening flight out of Africa. B/L/D

**Day 14                      HOME**

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

*"Seeing is different than being told."*

-- Kenyan proverb



Safaris since 1974.