

Tanzania Itinerary

[Link: Tanzania](#)

Tour Overview

Northern Tanzania contains perhaps the most magnificent wildlife spectacle on Earth!

The famous Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater still support over two million large mammals; vast herds of herbivores and accompanying carnivores live in this immense wilderness and we shall experience this wondrous sight whilst traveling through this superlative region, where some of the best birding in Africa occurs.

We begin on the wooded hillsides between Mount Meru and the mighty Kilimanjaro and visit a diverse cross-section of this wonderful country. The list of splendid wildlife seems endless - lions, leopards, cheetahs, hyenas, zebras, wildebeest, antelopes - and birding will be awesome, from Ostriches to Martial Eagles and Secretary Birds, from sunbirds to sandgrouse, bustards and hornbills.

We descend into the Ngorongoro Crater. There is so much to see here - fabulous birds, lots of large mammals including the alarmingly rare Black Rhinoceros, breathtaking scenery. We also take in Tarangire National Park, home to classic baobab trees and large numbers of African Elephants. The indelible memories on our Tanzania birding and wildlife safari of marvelous wildlife, dramatic scenery and still present wilderness are to be cherished for a lifetime!

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival



Our Tanzania birding and wildlife safari starts at the Kilimanjaro International Airport Lodge with supper and an opportunity to discuss the upcoming adventure with your guide. This lodge is a very good spot of birds and birders. It is immediately beside the relatively tranquil Kilimanjaro International Airport and has a view of the great mountain.
Night: KIA Lodge

Day 2: Arusha National Park



We will commence our Wildlife Safari proper with a morning transfer, that should take less than an hour, from KIA Lodge to Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge, nestled in the lush foothills of Mount Meru. The beautiful and historic lodge (established in 1901) is set in extensive gardens beside a clear and fast-flowing mountain river, lined by old-growth evergreen forest. There are birds and mammals a plenty. High in the riparian canopy Silvery-cheeked Hornbills cackle and chatter to one another whilst splendidly cloaked Pied Colobus monkeys holler gruffly from troupe to tree-top troupe, piercing the crisp morning stillness. There are a few Hartlaub's Turacos and other skulking birds in this forest, and many, many more in nearby Arusha National Park which is our port of call for the first full day. Arusha National Park is home to Tanzania's second highest mountain, Mount Meru, and the world's largest population of giraffes. Much of it is forested and we will pay close attention to this forest as much of the safari will take us through more open savanna habitats. There are two special mammals, both antelopes, too look for here. One is tiny and one very small, both inhabit these moist and often dense forests. The Suni is the smallest and they are together with the monkeys (of which there are three species here: Colobus, Mitis and Vervet) a favourite food of the stupendous African Crowned Eagle. If we are lucky we will get good views of this huge raptor, more than likely in its noisy rollercoaster display flight, high above the montane forest canopy. We will explore a variety of the biotopes protected within this montane park so that our first full day should introduce us to the exceptional biodiversity to be found in Equatorial East Africa. There are numerous small lakes and scattered ponds within the park. Some of these are distinctly brackish with birds to match. Waterbird species range from those that are cryptic and shy, such as the White-backed Duck and African Water Rail, to the brilliantly coloured and seemingly ostentatious Greater and Lesser Flamingos, noisy Black-winged Stilt, graceful Pied Avocets and the utterly splendid Grey Crowned Crane. We will see our first African big game today. Plains Zebra, Common Waterbuck, Bushbuck, African Buffalo, Common Warthog and of course the uniquely fantastic Giraffe, a species for which Arusha National Park is renowned. Perched amongst, around, or even on top of the beasts we will notice their avian commensals. Birds who in myriad ways depend for their livelihood upon the everyday activities of the great browsers and grazers - the East African mega fauna with which Tanzania is so rightly famous. There are oxpeckers, vibrantly coloured starlings, brilliant 'sunshine-filled' weavers, dun coloured pipits and yellow wagtails, in the long grass are tiny Estrildid waxbills as well as many bigger birds: storks, herons, egrets, ibises, lapwings and so forth. Each day we endeavour to get out of the customised, long wheelbase Toyota land cruiser vehicles (with pop-up roofs) as often as possible. In the national parks of Tanzania walking is strictly controlled so we shall make full use of the vicinity of the entrance gates, the picnic sites, restroom areas, museums and interpretive centres, the hotel grounds, camps, lodges and some of the remote ranger posts in order to undertake a variety of mini bird walks. Night at Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge.

Day 3: Arusha National Park



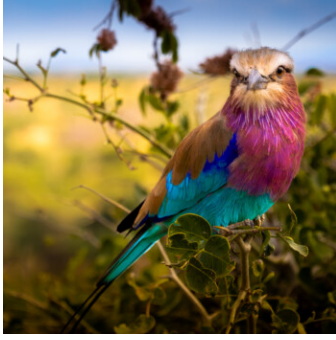
On our second day in Arusha National Park, in addition to revisiting one or two favoured spots, we will investigate those habitats that we did not explore on our first day. We may well ascend a shoulder of the mountain by way of an all-weather jeep track into a stupendous forest of great trees festooned with hanging mosses, beard lichens, epiphytic orchids and ferns. We will be keeping a look out for any of the rarer avian denizens of these forests. Birds such as the very localised Abbott's Starling, the endemic Tanzanian Broad-ringed White-eye and the as yet undescribed 'Nairobi' Pipit. There are forest-dwelling African elephants here and leopards too, but our chances of seeing the latter during daylight are pretty low. Night at Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge.

Day 4: Tarangire National Park



Today we can go for an optional pre-breakfast bird walk around the beautifully mature grounds of Ngare Sero lodge. Hadeda Ibis and Tropical Boubous will have loudly welcomed the dawn, calling out in a series of wails or with rich bell-like duets respectively. After breakfast we will depart for the drier baobab savannas of Tarangire National Park. Our safari lodge at Tarangire has one of the most amazing views in the world. It is quite rightly advertised as awesome. The lodge is perched on a bluff overlooking the sandy river bed, from which the park gets its name. It is not unheard-of for visitors to log one hundred bird species at this lodge, and that is before breakfast! Night at Tarangire Safari Lodge.

Day 5: Tarangire National Park



By this time of year almost all of the resident birds in this part of East Africa are in full nuptial dress. As we drive on the narrow tracks that thread their way between the giant 'upended' baobab trees that characterize Tarangire we will no doubt see much evidence of their nesting activity which by now should be in full swing. We will also endeavour to visit some of the shallow freshwater pools that dot this savanna park. It is here that some of the scarcer migrant breeding birds may be found: Dwarf Bittern, Lesser Moorhen and Yellow-crowned Bishop are three that spring to mind. The pools are the popular haunt of dragonflies, pond turtles and massive prehistoric-looking Nile Monitors, one of the largest lizards in existence. More than likely we will journey south today to the scenic Silale swamp in the heart of the park. This is a place where bird-wise anything can turn up. There is usually a great variety of raptors here in April, including the remarkable Bateleur, two species of Snake-eagle and African Marsh Harriers plus acrobatic flocks of three small migrant falcons hunting insects out over the papyrus beds. Typically there is a number of migrant cuckoo species in the flat topped acacia trees, searching for caterpillars that are browsing the fresh green foliage. There are also sky-tumbling rollers overhead, both the resident Lilac-breasted and Broad-billed as well as migrant Eurasian Roller should be present. There will be two species of Barbet, d'Arnaud's and the incredibly clown-patterned Red-and-Yellow. Barbets are birds we often associate with holes in tall forest trees yet here, in the more open savanna, they usually nest in holes in the spires of red termite mounds. On our way back to the lodge in the late afternoon sunshine we will likely find yet more Lions near to the Tarangire river. And as we cross the river we will pause to watch ibises, herons, lapwings, thick-knees and kingfishers, whilst various swifts and swallows swirl back and fore under and around the narrow bridge. This is an excellent spot for Southern Ground Hornbill, yet another bird, encountered on this safari, that will remind us that Africa is an ancient land, one where archaic-looking wildlife has somehow managed to survive in abundance. Night at Tarangire Safari Lodge.

Day 6: Lake Manyara National Park and onward to the Highlands



Departing with a picnic box, we travel across the Great Rift Valley, passing through the very colourful market town of Mto wa Mbu (the “mosquito river”), for a full day in Manyara National Park. Manyara is named after the brackish lake which forms its eastern boundary. A small park, the oldest and arguably the most diverse in Tanzania. Birds abound especially along the north western shore line where fresh water streams enter the lake. We will have ample opportunity to investigate this wealth of water birds from the tracks and the viewing platform at hippo pools. It is not difficult to find over 150 bird species during a single day in this National Park. Manyara is also famous for its tree-climbing lions, big elephants and for its large communities of Olive Baboons. However there are many smaller creatures here to delight the eye. Such as the dancing jewel damselfly, the Black Kaiser dragonfly and many very colourful birds: seedeaters of many kinds: such as queleas, bishops, whydahs and widow birds. There are strange looking African insectivores too, such as scimitar-bills, helmet-shrikes and wattle-eyes. There are African Paradise Flycatchers and a healthy variety of rather drab, more typical old world flycatchers. In the tall trees of the groundwater forest, at the foot of the Rift Valley escarpment, usually there are groups of frugivorous birds: green pigeons, turacos and hornbills and a host of more cryptic bird species in the bulbul family. We will spend two nights at Retreat at Ngorongoro.

Day 7: Crater Highlands



This morning we will go for a bird walk in the hill forest at Endoro, on the slopes of the Crater highlands, just above the location of our lodge. The trail up to the elephant salt lick is a broad and easy one, we will pass through several clearings in an otherwise quite dense forest. Our guides will be keeping watch for some of the special birds of these forests, some of whom are delightfully tame, like the Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters digging their burrows in the earthen banks beside the track. Others however are more skulking and we may use recordings of their voices to lure them into the open. African Broadbill, Grey-capped Warbler, African Hill Babbler, Grey-capped Nigrita, Red-faced Cisticola and Tropical Boubou are in this category. There are different species to be seen in the canopy and occasionally we might need to crane our necks somewhat to get better views of birds such as Brown-headed Apalis, the endemic Mbulu White-eye, Schalow’s Turaco, Purple-throated and Grey Cuckoo-shrike, Collared Sunbird and Thick-billed Seed-eater. We will have a truly delicious fresh lunch today in the world-renowned organic gardens of Gibbs Farm above Karatu. Yet again birds are all around us. The scarce and exquisite White-tailed Blue Flycatcher frequently comes to forage in the trees above the dining tables in these gardens; so too do Brown Parisomas and lively and gorgeous Green-headed Sunbirds. Night at Retreat at Ngorongoro.

Day 8: Ngorongoro Crater



Today is often the highpoint in any visitor's experience of a safari in northern Tanzania. Our day in Ngorongoro Crater will provide a succession of fabulous wildlife and bird experiences at very close quarters in a truly spectacular setting. There are predators: lions, spotted hyenas, African wolves (formerly known as Golden Jackal) each either surveying, or equally dozing among, the great herds of wildebeest, zebra and gazelle. There are several hundred old male "Tusker" elephants who graze in the swamps for whom the crater floor is their retirement home. Words definitely cannot begin to convey the wonder of Ngorongoro. It is a place so remarkable, so utterly unique, that being here can be both a breathtaking and humbling experience. There is a seasonal salt lake - Magadi which, by early April, should support thousands of displaying flamingos surrounded by flocks of migrant shorebirds on their way north. There are swamps and small freshwater lakes hosting hippos, Saddle-billed Storks, African Spoonbills, Jacanas, crakes and rails. There are Grey Crowned Cranes, giant Kori Bustards and of course even bigger Ostriches out in the grassland and there are African passerines in the woods. Many, often tiny, birds with confusing and somehow unrevealing names: Apalis or Eremomela, Crombec, Camaroptera or Batis. Visitors must be out of the Crater by six pm, at which point we will drive the short distance along the crater rim to our lodge which is perched right on the rim of the giant caldera. The tall trees below the lodge are festooned with mosses, beard lichens, orchids and various saprophytic plants. When these are flowering they attract scintillating sunbirds among which the Golden-winged, the Malachite and Taccaze are perhaps the most spectacular. Night at Ngorongoro Serena Safari Lodge.

Day 9: Ngorongoro Conservation Area



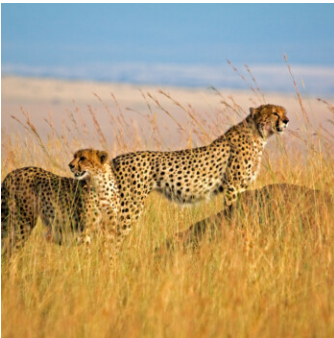
We descend from the crater rim to the shortgrass plains of the Eastern Serengeti. By the time we reach our destination Ndutu Safari Lodge, likely we will feel as if we have entered a new world; so different are these great plains and open flat-topped acacia woodlands from the misty verdure of Meru's mountain forests. For many visitors we will have reached the Africa of our imaginings: a land of breathtaking vistas, groves of thorn bush, grassy glades in statuesque open woodland and, most of all, a land teeming with an abundance of game - with herd after herd of wild ungulates. Mixed in with these mammals we find a delightful array of birds. Birds of every shape and size. Birds ranging from the tiny, near tail-less Pectoral-patch Cisticola scurrying mouse like across the stubbly savanna to Marabou Storks, several eagles and six species of Old World vulture. The raptors soaring in an improbably blue sky. Along the way we may visit the Olduvai Gorge anthropological museum of mankind (a place made famous by Mary and Louis Leakey). Come the evening we may sit on canvas chairs around a modest campfire under the stars listening in the darkness to the sounds of the savanna and soaking-up the ambience of a world that elsewhere has all but disappeared. Night at Ndutu Safari Lodge.

Day 10: Ngorongoro Conservation Area



For a full day we will explore the plains, brackish marshes and the shorelines of the two saline lakes, Ndotu and Masek. We should see tens of thousands of wildebeest and zebra, adult and young, and slightly smaller numbers of Thompson's and Grant's gazelles. There should be eagles, some of which are migrants, including Steppe and Lesser Spotted, making their way north to Russia and Central Asia. There will be flocks of other big birds from the Palearctic such as White Stork, often found together with the smaller Abdim's Stork that breeds in the Sahel of West Africa. Some of today might be devoted to searching for Cheetah and we should by now have seen our first Lion, there are several prides in this part of the eastern Serengeti. If we wish to we can break our leisurely game drive for a hot lunch back at our spacious and tastefully old-fashioned lodge. Night at Ndotu Safari Lodge.

Day 11 & 12: Serengeti National Park



Leaving Ndotu after breakfast we will continue our journey westwards traversing the short grass plains. We will pass through Naabi Hill where we leave the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and enter the Serengeti National Park. At Naabi we will be able to walk up onto the top of this kopje or inselberg (an ancient weathered outcrop of crystalline rock) since it affords us a unique panorama of this wonderland of the world. We will be keeping an eye open specifically for the migrating birds, there should be both Pallid and Montagu's Harriers and flocks of Lesser Kestrels heading north, possibly accompanied by Amur Falcons in the early stages of their amazing return journey to the Far East of Siberia. Our lodgings for the next two nights will be at a small permanent camp in the heart of the central Serengeti. From here we will be well placed to journey short distances in search of all three of the big cat species that still occur here at natural levels of abundance: Lion, Leopard and Cheetah. There will be a diversity of antelope that we will also look for. There are strange-faced, sandy-coloured Coke's Hartebeest and their close relatives the chestnut Topi. In areas of well wooded grassland the supremely graceful Impala occur in herds of anything up to two hundred individuals. We will also look for Klipspringer up on the granite kopjes and out on the plains watch herds of the great Eland, largest of all the antelopes, so large in fact that the Masai classify this animal as an honorary cow. Given the abundance of food Spotted Hyenas are numerous in the central Serengeti. And among the smaller predators that we may find here are African wildcat, Aardwolf, Ratel and small family packs of Black-backed Jackal. Nights Intimate Seronera camp.

Day 13: Lake Victoria



This morning we will leave camp and continue west through the increasingly verdant plains that will lead us to the mighty Lake Victoria. This massive lake is known as Nyanza to the local Sukuma people. As one progresses farther west across the Serengeti the influence of the vast Congo basin, a reservoir of pure, moist air, becomes increasingly apparent. The air is warm and yet so clean that the light is somehow different from what we are used to in more northern climes. We will stop at various points, especially along the tree-lined Grumeti river where, with luck, herds of wildebeest will be making the hazardous crossing on their northward migration to the Mara region along the border of Kenya and Tanzania. Nile crocodiles haunt these waters and the migrating antelope and zebra are understandably nervous. At some point in the afternoon we will leave the Serengeti near the shores of Lake Victoria and complete our journey westward to Speke Bay Lodge. Night at Speke Bay Lodge.

Day 14: Lake Victoria



Once at Speke Bay Lodge will be happy to wander at will in the extensive grounds that should help to put the various sights and sounds of the past few days into greater perspective. This is the perfect place to relax among the birds. The owners have managed this lodge in an ecologically benign manner, encouraging birds and other wildlife. We can delight in a great diversity, as there are up to 100 species of bird that occur daily. By now we will have started to become acquainted with something of the delightful soundscapes of East Africa, again so different from the world we come from. These sounds are well indicated in wonderful bird names: Boubou, Gonolek, Brubru, Babbler and by those of the African grass warblers, the cisticolas, hereabouts represented by: Rattling, Trilling, Winding, Croaking and Zitting, among others! At Speke Bay Lodge we are right on the reed-fringed lakeshore and there are hippos out in the water, so we must exercise a modicum of caution. No worries really, these lumbering beasts are typically placid and their lawn-mowing perambulations are strictly nocturnal, especially in any of the places where they are aware that people go. There are owls to be listened for around the lodge buildings at night, more wonderful sounds, from the gruff chuckles of the massive Verreaux's Eagle-owl to the soft "Poot" of the screech-owl sized African Scops. Night at Speke Bay Lodge.

Day 15: Flight to Kilimanjaro



After a final morning of birding we will catch a midday flight from Mwanza International Airport to Kilimanjaro International Airport, in order that our Tanzanian birding and wildlife safari should conclude where it began. We return to the KIA lodge for a final night.

Day 16: Departure

Departure flights can be scheduled any time today. Breakfast is available at the hotel and you can bird the grounds of the lodge or relax by the pool before you take the short transfer to the airport for your international flight.

What to Expect

Birding

On our Tanzania Birding & Wildlife Safari, we often begin birding early in the morning, usually having breakfast before dawn. Days will usually start at first light to catch activity in the morning before the day warms up and activity slows down. The pace will be relaxed and most of the birding will be from the vehicle. On some days, we may rest for a mid-day 'siesta'. During leisurely dinners we discuss the day's activities and review the day's list of sightings, and make plans for the next day. There will be a few optional nocturnal outings, to search for owls and nightjars.

This tour attracts birders, photographers and mammal lovers alike - you will likely have a mixed group!

Food

Breakfast are generally buffet style with hot and cold choices, and also fresh fruit and juice. Lunches are usually a picnic or boxed lunch that we eat in the field. We might occasionally eat lunch at a local restaurant. We will generally have dinners at our lodges/accommodations. Dinners will be a mix buffets and served or plated meals with a variety of choices. Bottle water is available throughout the day.

Driving

Most of the day will be spent in the vehicle viewing wildlife and birds. The vehicles are modified Toyota Land Cruiser, specifically designed for safaris, in which the roof pops up, allowing you to stand up fully and take unobstructed photos or view the wildlife. Everyone will have a window seat in the vehicle (there will be 3 rows of 2 people). We will make frequent stops at clean toilet facilities throughout the day; however, please be aware that in remote areas, some bathroom breaks will need to be taken in nature where facilities are not available. The lodge-to-lodge format offers unique experiences at each location, but the long travel days between them can be tiring. The roads are bumpy and dusty.

Walking

There will be some early morning walks around the hotel grounds. The longest distance will be an

uphill walk, at the Endoro Forest, approximately 3km (2 miles) roundtrip, taking 3-4 hours.

Accommodation

We stay in mostly good quality accommodations, often in excellent birding localities. Some accommodations may be 'tented camps', which are very comfortable walled tents with proper beds and indoor plumbing.

Climate

Tanzania is a diverse country, and we visit montane forests, huge grasslands, arid plains, and expansive wetlands. Short heavy rainfalls can happen at any time, and occasionally humidity is an inconvenience.

Please note that the detailed itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is a guide and may be changed due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Take a look at our blog post: [What to expect on an African Safari](#)

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All meals and soft drinks
- Accommodation in comfortable well-located lodges throughout
- Ground transportation by long wheelbase Toyota Land Cruiser
- Internal flight
- EET guide and driver with 4 - 6 participants.
- All park, conservation and entrance fees
- Gratuities to driver and local hotel staff

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Flights to and from start / end location
 - Travel Insurance
 - Alcoholic beverages
 - Items of a personal nature
-