

# Popular Tanzania Wildlife Safari Destinations

With about 30% of the territory under protection, Tanzania counts 13 national parks, 16 wildlife reserves, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, marines parks and protected areas. The Northern Circuit is the most popular for game safaris and includes Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Tarangire, Lake Manyara, Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Thousands upon thousands of wildebeest that march in mindless unison on the annual migration through the Serengeti, perhaps? Or a family of elephants wading across the wide, muddy Rufiji/Tarangire River? What about a pride of well-fed lions sunbathing on the grassy floor of the majestic Ngorongoro Crater? Certainly, it is such images that tend to spring to mind when one thinks of Tanzania. And properly so!

Tanzania, truly, is a safari destination without peer. The statistics speak for themselves: an unparalleled one-quarter of its surface area has been set aside for conservation purposes, with the world-renowned Serengeti National Park and incomprehensibly vast Selous Game Reserve heading a rich mosaic of protected areas that collectively harbour an estimated 20 percent of Africa large mammal population.

**SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK TANZANIA;** Serengeti National Park with 14,763 sq km is the largest Tanzanian park, contiguous with Kenyan Masai Mara and extending almost to Lake Victoria.

**Species.** The park is teeming with stunning wildlife – it is thought that over 3 million large mammals roam the plains in search of fresh grassland. In May or early June you can witness the annual migration of millions of zebras and wildebeests in search of water and forage as the seasons change.

Large herds of antelopes of all sorts include: Patterson's eland, Klipspringer, Dikdik, impala, gazelles, waterbuck, bushbuck and reedbuck, topis, kongoni, cotton's oribi, grey bush duiker, roan antelope buffalo and wildebeests (the estimate is above one million of these animals). Carnivores include lions, leopards, cheetah, hyena, bat eared fox, hunting dog and jackal. Smaller mammals: spring hare, porcupine, warthog, hyraxes, baboon, vervet monkey, colobus monkey, patas monkey, and mongooses. Larger mammals include herds

of giraffes, then rhinos, elephants, hippos. There are recorded about 500 species of bird, including vultures, storks, flamingoes, martial and fish eagles and ostriches. Reptiles include crocodiles, a number of species of snakes and lizards.

**Activities.** Serengeti offers amongst the most exciting game viewing safaris. You can also do bird watching tours and Balloon safaris, which normally follow the Grumeti river. One of the main attractions is the annual migration of wildebeest herds during the dry season, from the Serengeti northwards in the Masai Mara, where they remain between July to October. Therefore the concentration of wildlife is greater between December and June.

**LAKE MANYARA NATIONAL PARK TANZANIA;** Lake Manyara National park is one of the most popular Tanzanian parks along the Northern circuit. It is located on the ridge of the Rift Valley, with the escarpment in the western border of the park.

**Species.** The park is well known for the abundance of hippos in the lake, for the typical population of tree climbing lions, which remembers the Ishasha sector of Queen Elizabeth in Uganda. Moreover, Lake Manyara is an important stop over for any bird watcher.

**Activities.** Canoe safaris start near Endala and go towards Msasa for 3 hours boat cruise. The Mto Wa Mbu village on the north of the park, near the gate, offers community and cultural activities, like village walks, cycling, boat trips on the lake. Bird watching activities are carried out along the parks trails.

**TARANGIRE NATIONAL PARK TANZANIA;** Tarangire National Park is located along the Tarangire river, to the south of Lake Manyara. During the dry season, from August to October, Tarangire has one of the highest concentration of wildlife than any other African national park.

**Species.** Tarangire features herds of zebras, wildebeests, hartebeests and elephants. The bird population here records about 300 different species.

**Activities.** Day and night game viewing can be organized . Birding is recommended between October and May.

**NGORONGORO CRATER CONSERVATION AREA;** The area is located between the Serengeti and Lake Manyara. The area covers about 8.300 kms including Olduvai Gorge, Lake Ndotu and Masek and a series of volcanoes most of which are inactive. It is home to

the famous volcanic Ngorongoro crater which is the largest unbroken caldera in the world. The crater, 610 metres deep and 260 kms is a microcosm of East African scenery and game and is usually visited on the way back from the Serengeti to Arusha. Scenic grandeur and stunning views are the hallmark of this wonder of the world. Lake Natron is an alkaline lake known for the high population of flamingoes that gather here at the end of the rain season.

**Species:** Ngorongoro enjoys an incredible variety of animals and vegetation, from grasslands, swamps, forests, salt pans, lakes. There are 25,000 larger animals within the crater itself, mostly Zebra and wildebeest. However, this is undoubtedly the best place to see black rhino in Tanzania as well as prides of lion that include the magnificent black-maned males. There are lots of colourful flamingoes and a variety of other water birds around the soda lake on the crater floor. More than a 100 species of bird not found in the Serengeti have been found in the crater. Other game includes leopards, cheetahs, hyenas, elephants, warthogs, impala, buffaloes, hartebeest, eland, reedbuck and Thompson gazelles.

**Activities:** Most of the activity is within the crater – bird watching, photography, walking safaris, and game viewing. The head quarter is located at Park Village at Ngorongoro Crater, also an information centre. Trekking activities can be arranged to reach the volcanoes of the Crater Highlands from the Ngorongoro Crater (Oldoinyo Lengai, Lemagurut, Oldeani, Empakaai, Olmoti). Archeologists will be interested in Olduvai Gorge, a canyon about 50 km long and up to 90 m deep in the northwest of Ngorongoro. Here it is possible to see the famous discoveries made in 1959 of remains of early Man by Mary and Louis Leakey, who found the skull known as Australopithecus Boisei, 1.8 million years old.

The best time to visit Ngorongoro is the dry season from June to August.

**MOUNT KILIMANJARO TANZANIA;** Kilimanjaro is a giant volcano reaching an elevation of 5,895 m with Uhuru Peak. Other names for this volcano are: Kilima Dscharo, Oldoinyo Oibor (white mountain in Masai) and Kilima Njaro meaning shining mountain in Swahili. The highest and youngest cone is named Kibo. Shira to the west and Mawenzi in the east are older cones that make up Kilimanjaro. Kibo has not been active in modern times, but steam and sulfur are still emitted. At the top of Kibo's summit is a 1 mile (2 Km) wide crater.

**Activities.** The upward track wends through forests that vary constantly with the altitude and finally opens out into open moorland below rocky, snow covered Kibo plateau. It has 3 volcanic centres, Shira, Kibo, and Mawenzi. 5-day, 7-day & 8-day climbs are easily arranged

from Moshi or Arusha and is the perfect start to your trip in Tanzania. The most popular trail is the Marangu Route, which will take 5 days 4 nights.

The best time to climb Kilimanjaro is between June to September and December to March.

**RUBONDO ISLANDS;** Visit the **Rubondo Island National Park** for nature walking, relaxing, fishing, boat Excursions, Bird Watching, name it. Tanzania's tenth National Park and the only one in Lake Victoria, Rubondo Island is located in the southwest of Lake Victoria on a 240 sq. km island. It provides an unforgettable experience for visitors, including the main island and 11 smaller islets, combining the breathtaking panorama of a forest refuge with the relaxing serenity of sandy lake-shore beaches.

The Island is some 28-km in length along the north-south axis and between 3 and 10 km wide. Lake Victoria covers 68,000 square kilometres and is the largest lake in Africa and the second largest in the world – comparatively it is twice the size of The Netherlands.

Rubondo Island boasts a unique diversity of flora and fauna. Get assured of seeing Sitatunga and have the chance of observing small colonies of chimpanzees. Other mammals habitually seen include hippos, otters, bushbucks and vervet monkeys. Rarer sightings are marsh mongoose, genets, colobus monkeys and suni antelopes (dikdik).

The island has an abundance of storks, herons, egrets, ibises, flycatchers, bee-eaters, cormorants, kingfishers, hornbills and birds of prey, including the highest density of fish eagles anywhere in the world. Generally, Rubondo Game Park is a birder's paradise with nearly 430 species documented on the island. The diversity of habitats, from open woodland to papyrus swamps and evergreen forest, together with its geographical location in the heart of Africa, attracts numerous resident and migrant species. The wide variety of invertebrates and diversity of plant species makes Rubondo a fascinating place for naturalists. Wonderful butterflies create a varicolored scenario in the forest together with the splendid seasonal displays of fireball lilies, orchids, and red coral trees. Visitors have the freedom to hunt the forest and lake shores by foot or boat allowing each person to discover his or her own enchantment of Rubondo and to leave with a uniquely personal encountering of the island.

For accommodation, the camp operates 10 bandas (luxury tents). Each of the ten units overlooks the lake, a view that may be possessed from the aloofness of a private

terrace and just a few yards from the sandy lakeshore. An outcrop of rocks amidst scattered trees provides the perfect setting for the restaurant and bar, offering a splendid view of the lake and bay.

The comfortable large tents have windows on all sides and, instead of the common zips, an entrance door. An ample en suite bath- and dressing room has been constructed for each banda. Great care has been taken to use local natural building materials. . A swimming pool is located in the centrally close to the bar, among the palm trees. As if it is not enough, during the day the lake is usually calm. Notwithstanding, when the wind picks up in the late afternoon the waves roll in, carrying in the singing sounds of the sea.

Rubondo's climate is however comfortably warm all the year round and never gets as hot as on the coast. Enjoy its clean air -there is no traffic on the island.