

# Safari and Serengeti Information

## General Safari Information

- Safaris in the Serengeti are for people to observe the animals in their natural habitat and take pictures.
- **No guns** are allowed in these parks.
- Park hours are limited (*6am-7pm*) and strict gate entrances/exits are required.
- Colors worn should be tans and shades of green or pale blues. Bright white stands out to the animals. Also, dark blue and black attracts tsetse flies which are painful when they bite!
- Hats are needed to keep the sun out of your eyes. Sunscreen and insect repellent are a must. *The tsetse flies' painful bite is most noticeable in Tarangire.*
- Scarves with built-in insect repellent are a huge plus to have for convenience.
- Vehicles are only allowed to drive on roads – not onto grassy areas. They are very basic dirt roads. While riding, huge amounts of dust enter the vehicle. A coating of dust ends up on everything and up your nose.
- I agree with the person who dubbed "Aerobic exercise a la Land Rover." Roads cause a bone jarring, bumpy ride. You experience hours of hanging on and bracing yourself like when your guide rushes to catch a hunt and it's most enjoyable to ride standing, watching the view with the wind blowing in your face.
- Thus, when arriving at "camp," they often greet you with a wet washcloth and a cool drink. Aaaah.
- Rangers monitor the parks and can be contacted by radio for animal movement updates and info.
- Visitors are NEVER to get out of the vehicles around the animals.
- Guides are extremely talented. They locate specific animals you'd like to see as well as finding beautiful spots for picnics and creating daily travel plans that pass by public restrooms when needed.
- Private guides do not cost much more and allow you to make quick decisions about whether to stay and watch an animal or move on to find a different animal to observe. Otherwise in groups of 8, many people must be pleased. If you're the minority person who doesn't want to merely watch the 500 bird species, you may be disappointed.
- The animals have grown up with these safari vehicles around them and they typically ignore them. A RARE exception would be the example of a cheetah jumping on top of the vehicle (*as if it's a large rock*) to get a better view of its prey.
- Unfortunately, vehicles can obstruct animal activity because spectators want the best view. Once, where a lion and lioness were hunting a cape buffalo, we departed because I counted 31 other vehicles.
- Unfortunately, some groups choose to break rules. Fines are imposed and worse – the driver/guide is punished which affects his livelihood.
- Sleeping in tents is not like camping since they include sinks, toilets, beds and showers. (*Hot water is poured into reservoir at the time that you select for a shower. Each room also has some filtered water.*) It's incredible because you hear animals walking next to the tents at night!

## Some Important Insights I Gained While in Africa:

- Termite mounds are scattered all around and vary in heights and widths. Mongoose live in them. Animals stand on them. At a distance, they look like a lion or other animal. I finally recognized that if my "sighted animal" doesn't move for a while, then it's a branch or a termite mound – not an animal.
- Animals will avoid a fight because they do NOT want to risk being injured. If a predator is injured, it cannot catch food and will eventually starve. If an herbivore is injured, it cannot travel with the herd/group and will become a meal for another animal.

- Life is very good. However, it is extremely hard. Most animals have rough looking fur, faces, ears from injuries in fights or by their habitat. Bugs constantly fly around them. Some other animal is always trying to steal their food and they must take extra steps to hide that meal.
- Shade is cherished by most animals.
- Water is life. "Where there is water, there is life." (*Some animals can go long periods without water because they eat leaves full of water.*)
- Animals are often hunted by predators at watering holes and the prey are aware. A pair of warthogs we saw were so frightened that they abandoned their trip to the water, turned around and quickly ran away.
- Animals of varying heights work together because they can warn one another of approaching danger.
- The best way to see animals is by being observant of 1) signs in nature like tails hanging from trees or animal habits AND 2) what other people are watching. (*Also works at home, in parks and on beaches!*)
- In many photographs, later you notice at least one other type of animal walking in the background.
- Poaching is still a BIG problem because of money and lies - Like the myth that giraffe parts cure AIDS/HIV or that ground Rhino horns help male disfunctions.
- Unfortunately, ivory is considered to be "white gold" by poachers. Plus, tourists, including many Americans, legally hunt beautiful animals like leopards and lions in nearby areas for about \$40,000 or more to collect their "trophies." Ugh. Efforts are being made to stop Chinese illegal trading so that poachers will not have the market to sell their illegal items.
- Use clean, good-looking US money for purchases / tips. Local grocery stores and markets are great places to shop. When US cash is exchanged, larger bills are better because they exchange at higher rates. So, giving a \$20 bill tip is much better than 20 \$1 bills.

## Serengeti

- There is no place like it. It's unique with a very diverse ecosystem.
- *Serengeti* is a Maasai word meaning "endless plain." (*Maasai can also be spelled Masai.*)
- The National Park is 5700 square miles.
- Travel in the park is only allowed from 6am – 7pm.
- Serengeti offers the best grazing land in all of Africa.
- Ash from the volcanoes is fertile. It discourages tree growth.
- Phosphorous and calcium in volcanic ash passes through grass into the mother's milk and then into the growing calves of grazers.
- All plants and creatures are important. For example, the Dung Beetle keeps grasslands healthy. Without them, millions of animals would not survive.
- Bats are the sole pollinator of transferring pollen from Baobab trees. No bats means no Baobab. (*Note there are no Baobab trees in the Serengeti. However, they are close by.*)
- Elephants recognize humans that have been mean to them and do not react well when they see them again. *Maasai tribes are being taught to put out beehives to prevent the presence of elephants.*
- The Great Migration consists of 1.3 million wildebeests, 400,000 zebra and 300,000 Thomson's gazelles covering a circuit of about 600 miles (1000 km). This "Greatest Wildlife Show on Earth" covers the general "rainfall gradient" across the ecosystem with lower rainfall in the southeast (*short grass plains*) and higher rainfalls in the northwest.
- The magnificent, rocky outcrops are called kopjes. Pronounced "copies." They are islands of rocks jutting above the grasslands. Animals use them for fabulous views and to stay safe on the higher ground.

**Pictures tell much more than I can say:**

Discover more scenic pictures, as well as animal photos at: [www.theater4church.com/Animals.htm](http://www.theater4church.com/Animals.htm)

**Kopjes:** Lions are lounging at the top just under the barren tree in middle. That's why you need binoculars.

