

## Fantastic Fauna Adventure

Itinerary summary: This adventure begins at the lesser explored Arusha National Park, where visitors can experience rich wildlife in the shadow of the volcanic Mount Meru. Visitors then experience the lush Tarangire National Park, where they will catch sight of one of the hundreds of bird species, as well as the park's many elephants and zebras. The next three nights are spent in the legendary Serengeti National Park, home of the Annual Great Migration. The final two days are spent in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, where visitors will descend into the world's largest inactive, intact and unfilled volcanic caldera. Kindly find the full itinerary below.

**Day 1: Pick up at Kilimanjaro International Airport or hotel in Arusha; drive to Arusha National Park, with picnic lunch provided during the full-day game drive. Spend the night at Karama Lodge.**

Arusha National Park, in the Arusha region of northeastern Tanzania, covers Mount Meru, a prominent volcano with an elevation of 4566 m. The park is small, but varied, with spectacular landscapes; it has a rich variety of wildlife, but visitors shouldn't expect the same game-viewing experience they find in other national parks of Tanzania's northern circuit. Despite its size, common animals include giraffes, Cape buffalos, zebras, warthogs, the black-and-white colobus monkey, the blue monkey, flamingos, elephants, lion and many others. Leopard populations are present, but rarely seen. Birdlife in the forest is prolific, with many forest species more easily seen here than elsewhere on the tourist route – narina trogon and bar-tailed trogon are both possible highlights for visiting birders, as well as the less flashy starling species.

**Day 2: After breakfast, drive to Tarangire National Park, with picnic lunch provided during the full- day game drive. Spend the night at Sangaiwe Tented Camp.**

Tarangire National Park, located in the Manyara region, is the sixth largest national park in Tanzania. It is named for the Tarangire River that crosses the park; this river is the primary source of fresh water for wild animals in the Tarangire Ecosystem during the annual dry season. The Tarangire Ecosystem is defined by the long-distance migration of wildebeest and zebras. During the dry season, thousands of animals concentrate in Tarangire National Park from the surrounding wet-season dispersal and calving areas. The park is famous for its high density of elephants and baobab trees. Visitors to the park in June to November dry season can expect to see large herds of thousands of zebra, wildebeest and cape buffalo. Other common resident animals include waterbuck, giraffe, dik dik, impala, eland, Grant's gazelle, vervet monkey, banded mongoose, and olive baboon. Predators in Tarangire include the African lion, leopards, cheetahs, caracals, honey badgers, and the African wild dog. Home to more than 550 bird species, the park is a haven for bird enthusiasts. The park is also famous for the termite mounds that dot the landscape; abandoned termite mounds are often home to the dwarf mongoose. In 2015, a white giraffe (due to leucism) was spotted in the park.

**Day 3: After breakfast, drive to Serengeti National Park; enjoy picnic lunch at Nabii Gate, followed by an afternoon game drive. Spend the night at KatiKati Tented Camp.**

This is Tanzania's oldest and most popular national park. It is also a World Heritage Site and a recently proclaimed Worldwide Wonder. The Serengeti is famed for its Annual Migration, when some six million hooves pound the open plains; more than 200,000 zebra and 300,000 Thomson's gazelles join the wildebeest's trek for fresh grazing. Even when the Migration is quiet, Serengeti National park offers arguably the most scintillating game viewing in Africa: great herds of buffalo, smaller groups of elephants and giraffes, the thousands upon thousands of eland, topi, kongoni, impala and Grant's gazelle.

**Day 4&5: Full-day game drive in Serengeti National Park, with picnic lunch provided. Spend the night at KatiKati Tented Camp.**

The park covers 14,750 square kilometers (5,700 sq mi) of grassland plains, savannah, riverine forest, and woodlands. It lies in northwestern Tanzania, bordered to the north by the Kenyan border, where it is continuous with the Maasai Mara National Reserve. To the southeast of the park is the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, to the southwest lies Maswa Game Reserve, to the west are the Ikorongo and Grumeti Game Reserves, and to the northeast and east lies the Loliondo Game Control Area. Together, these areas form the larger Serengeti ecosystem.

The park is usually described as divided into three regions:

Serengeti plains: the almost treeless grassland of the south is the most emblematic scenery of the park. This is where the wildebeest breed, as they remain in the plains from December to May. Other hoofed animals – zebra, gazelle, impala, hartebeest, topi, buffalo, waterbuck – also appear in huge numbers during the wet season. “Kopjes” are granite protrusions that are very common in the region, and they are great observation posts for predators, as well as a refuge for hyrax and pythons.

Western corridor: black clay soil covers the savannah of this region. The Grumeti River and its gallery forests is home to Nile crocodiles, patas monkeys, hippopotamus, and martial eagles. The migration passes through from May to July.

Northern Serengeti: the landscape is dominated by open woodlands (predominantly Commiphora) and hills, ranging from Seronera in the south to the Mara River on the Kenyan border. Apart from the migratory wildebeest and zebra (which occur from July to August, and in November), this is the best place to find elephants, giraffes, and dik dik.

**Day 6: Enjoy a sunrise game drive, followed by breakfast; drive to Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Upon arrival at camp or lodge, have a leisurely, restful day. In the evening, experience a guided Maasai village tour. Spend the night at Ngorongoro Rhino Lodge.**

**Day 7: After early morning breakfast, drive to Ngorongoro Crater Gate; descend inside the crater for a full day game drive, with picnic lunch provided. Spend the night at Ngorongoro Rhino Lodge.**

The main feature of the Ngorongoro Conservation Authority is the Ngorongoro Crater, the world's largest inactive, intact and unfilled volcanic caldera. The crater, which formed when a large volcano exploded and collapsed on itself two to three million years ago, is 610 meters (2,000 feet) deep and its floor covers 260 square kilometers (100 square miles). Estimates of the height of the original volcano range from 4,500 to 5,800 meters (14,800 to 19,000 feet) high. The elevation of the crater floor is 1,800 meters (5,900 feet) above sea level. The Crater was voted as one of the Seven Natural Wonders of Africa.

Approximately 25,000 large animals, mostly ungulates, live in the crater. Large animals in the crater include the black rhinoceros, the African buffalo or Cape buffalo, and the hippopotamus. There also are many other ungulates: the blue wildebeest, Grant's zebra, the common eland, and Grant's and Thomson's gazelles. Waterbucks are mainly seen near Lerai Forest. There are no topis or crocodiles. Impalas are absent because the open woodland they prefer does not exist. Giraffes also are absent, possibly because of a lack of browse species. The Tanzanian cheetah, East African wild dog, and African leopards are rarely seen.

**Day 8: Enjoy a sunrise game drive, return to camp for breakfast, then drive back to Arusha. Final drop off at your accommodation or Kilimanjaro Airport to catch your flight back home or to your next destination.**

Summary: explore imposing volcanoes and deep craters, while catching varied game during visits to Arusha National Park, Tarangire National Park, the epic Serengeti national Park, and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area.