

Kenya:

MASAI MARA WILDLIFE SAFARI

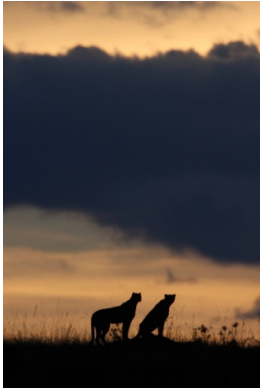
- Stay at Kicheche Mara Camp one of the finest luxury tented camps in the Masai Mara
- Led by Jarrod Kyte - Head of Steppes Discovery and past manager of Kicheche Mara Camp.
- Spend time with *Living With Lions* researchers, working to protect the Mara's lion population.
- Explore Kenya's most prolific nature reserve on foot, and on extended game drives



Summary

Kicheche Mara Camp, situated on the edge of the highly regarded Mara North Conservancy is one of the major reasons Steppes Discovery advocates *slow travel*. When a camp is as good as Kicheche and the game is there on your doorstep, there is no need to commute from camp to camp. Kicheche delivers at all levels. So, the departure information is simple: arrive at the camp, discard your mobile phone and any other distractions and prepare for six days of unparalleled game viewing combined with the best hospitality in the Mara. Having spent two years managing the camp, Jarrod knows the area incredibly well and his knowledge of the area and the people, will offer you a genuine insight into this fascinating part of Kenya.

Overview



This safari is designed for wildlife photographers and perceptive travellers, who know time and patience are required to ensure memorable wildlife encounters. This is not for those wanting to tick off as many species as possible. It's for those who enjoy taking sabbaticals with individual species, loving nothing more than being out on the plains. There will be early starts to catch the Mara's incomparable first light and take full day game drives with sumptuous picnic lunches under the shade of Acacia trees.

There will be flaming sunsets cooled by icy sundowners and, of course, intimate camp fires with only the noise of the bush and a million stars as distraction. Game viewing takes place in custom-built vehicles, however there will be the opportunity to enjoy a game walk, where the emphasis will switch from mammals to birds, insects and fauna. The Maasai are an integral part of any trip to this area and we take great care to ensure your visits to a local market and a manyatta are handled with sensitivity and that they give you an authentic insight into modern Maasai culture.



One of your morning safaris will be accompanied by a Living With Lions researcher working on the Mara Predator Project. The researcher will explain the methods used for identifying lions and keen photographers will be encouraged to take lion ID shots for use in compiling the lion database.



Your leader is Jarrod Kyte, one-time manager of Kicheche Mara Camp now Head of Steppes Discovery. Jarrod is never happier than when in the bush, particularly with big cats. He is an accomplished wildlife photographer. To him, more important than f-stops and shutter speeds is the wildlife itself and the patient, sensitive manner in which game viewing is enjoyed. He knows this area of the Mara intimately, and has an affinity with the people who inhabit this very special piece of Kenya.

Itinerary



Day 1 - Nairobi to the Mara

Arrive at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, where you will be transferred to Wilson Airport for your flight to the Masai Mara. On arrival at Shikar airstrip Kicheche vehicles will be waiting to transfer you to camp. It is from here that the safari begins, as there are plenty of game to be found between the airstrip and Kicheche Mara Camp. After a briefing from the camp managers you will be shown to your tent before sitting down to a delicious lunch. The food at Kicheche is excellent and while the camp claims that nobody puts on weight you will certainly not go hungry for the next six days.



After a few hours to enjoy the peace and solitude, you will embark on your first game drive in the surrounding Lemek Conservancy where your guides will do their best to introduce the Kicheche pride. Whether you see cats or not, there is good game viewing in this area and, with the imperious Killeleoni escarpment providing an amazing backdrop, photographic opportunities are plentiful. With cool drinks in hand you wish the setting African sun farewell, happy in the knowledge that your Kenya adventure has only just begun.



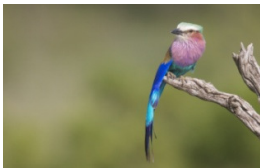
Day 2 - 6

It would be against the ethos of this trip and of Kicheche to set in stone, a day-by-day itinerary. Clinical schedules are counterproductive, as they do not allow for the capricious nature of wildlife. So on this trip, the approach will be reactive as we allow the wildlife to dictate the schedule. For example, if we arrive at Kicheche and hear from the guides that a cheetah with cubs has been seen in the reserve, you know the focus for the following day's safari will be on cheetah. Likewise, if we hear that the Kicheche pride has been active on the Lemek plains, your safari will stay closer to home as we look for signs of these enigmatic lions. Thanks to the skill and professionalism of Kicheche's guides, this flexible approach works well and, over the next five days, you can expect to enjoy the following, in no particular order:



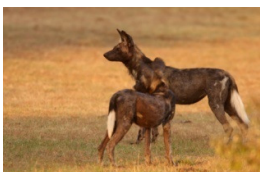
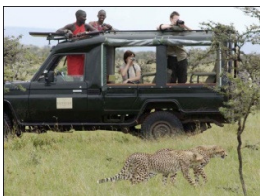
Full Day Safari into the Masai Mara Nature Reserve or Mara North Conservancy

Kicheche is approximately 45 minutes drive from Musiara Gate into the reserve and, to do it justice, the safari will take a full day. At certain times of the year, however, the grass is long in the reserve. The wildebeest, zebra, gazelle and other plains game move north, meaning that their predators follow. If this is the case, you will still be taken on a full day's drive with a picnic lunch but will explore some of the further reaches of the Mara North Conservancy, including areas such as the Leopard Gorge.



Full morning game drive with bush breakfast on the Mara River

The adage of 'the early bird catches the worm' has never been truer than when on safari and you can expect early morning starts on this trip. Not only is the early morning light unbeatable for photography, but the animals are far more active when it is cooler first thing in the morning (especially lions). By getting out there early, you will increase your chances of seeing the wildlife at its most active. The early starts will also be rewarded by a delicious bush breakfast overlooking one of the many hippo pools to be found on the Mara river or under a Balanites tree, looking out across the seemingly never ending Mara plains.



Early morning safari in the Lemek Hills looking for Wild Dog

Any mention of wild dogs in the Mara and the experts will ruefully shake their heads and talk of how dogs used to run wild before canine distemper decimated numbers. Against all the odds, sightings of wild dogs in the northern area of the Mara North Conservancy are becoming more frequent, with dogs seen around Kilileoni, Ngousani and the Aitong Hills. Steppes Discovery is supporting the launch of a conservation project linked to research on this population of dogs. While sightings are increasing, the future of wild dogs in the Mara is still very precarious and research is desperately needed to ensure a sustained presence for these mysterious predators. If sightings have been recently made, you will be taken for an early morning safari up into the Aitong Hills, as the merest sniff of a chance to see wild dogs should not be ignored!



Game Walk

Getting out on foot allows for a more intimate encounter with Africa's flora and fauna, where one can see, hear, touch and smell the real wild Africa. Kicheche's Masai guides will talk you through the medicinal qualities of the local fauna, while looking for animal tracks and pointing out the smaller mammals, reptiles, birds and insects that are often overlooked when in a vehicle.



Visit to Masai market in Aitong

Aitong market is far removed from Nairobi's tourist markets that sell predictable tacky souvenirs. This is a genuine trading post for the Masai, who will often walk for days to bring their cattle and goats, looking to do business and a spot of socialising with their fellow tribesmen. While the men swap stories and trade livestock, the ladies sell vegetables, fruit and clothing. With the help of your Masai guide, you may be able to buy a pair of Masai sandals, made from old car tires and known locally as 'thousand milers'! This is an authentic look at a Masai way of life that hasn't changed in hundreds of years. While the welcome you are likely to receive will be warm, photography will not always be appropriate.



Safari and lunch with Living with Lions researcher

You will be joined on one of your game drives by a member of the Living With Lions team. The Mara Predator Project monitors lions in key areas of the Mara, and identifies key trends and shifts in population. The project also builds an online database of individual lions, so that effective conservation methods can be applied. This morning's focus will be to look for lions so the Living with Lions team member can explain the methods used to reliably identify lions. If you are a keen photographer you will be encouraged to take useful ID shots to add to the Mara Predator Project lion database. You will later be joined for lunch or dinner at Kicheche by a member of the Living With Lions team, after which they will demonstrate how the database works and upload any photographs taken that morning.

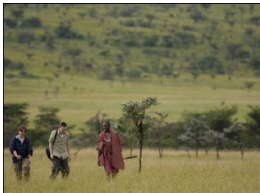


Game drive up Killeleoni escarpment, with unbeatable views over the Mara

A morning game drive up Kilileoni escarpment is a must when enjoying an extended stay at Kicheche. Meaning 'high place' in Maa, Kilileoni forms the natural northern border of the Greater Masai Mara and is an impressive landmark. Standing at approximately 2,000 metres, it is home to a number of mammals such as Klipspringers, gazelle and baboons and, from the summit one can often see Black Eagles floating effortlessly on the rising thermals.

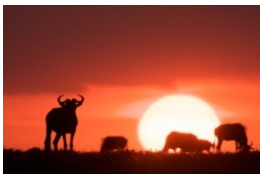


Vehicles can be driven all the way to the summit. Those wanting a bit of exercise can jump out halfway and make the final ascent on foot. Once you have caught your breath and have, absorbed the outstanding views of the dotted plains below, a bush breakfast on top of Kilileoni is a memorable start to the day.



Day 7 - Goodbye to Kicheche and the Mara...

In order to fit in a final morning's game drive, your flight back to Nairobi is booked for the afternoon. Lunch is provided at Kicheche and, if the camp is busy, you will have the use of a day tent to freshen up before flying back to Nairobi. At Wilson Airport, you will be met and transferred to the Rusty Nail for supper before being transferred back to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.



Date

2012

Saturday 16th - Friday 22nd June, 2012.

dates are provisional and subject to change

Main tour cost

From

£2,495 per person based on twin share.

Please note this price is subject to change according to currency fluctuations and is based on eight people travelling. If less than eight people travel, there will be a minor supplement to pay.

Includes

Your tour leader Jarrod Kyte and local Kicheche guides, all meals (excluding evening dinner on Day 7 in Nairobi), all drinks (excluding drinks at the Rusty Nail in Nairobi on Day 7), laundry at Kicheche, all park fees, use of tent on the last day at Kicheche, transfers, internal flights, game drives and walks.

Excludes

International flights, travel insurance, visas, vaccinations, dinner and drinks in Nairobi on Day 7, gratuities and items of a personal nature.

Costs For Tailor made Trips

This trip is available as a non-group departure and is tailored to meet your individual needs. Please give us a call for more information.

Single Supplements

We do all we can to avoid charging you a single supplement, unless you want a guaranteed single room. We are happy to match you with a same sex, single traveller, subject to rooming availability. If we are unable to do so, there will be a single supplement charge of £400 per person for the entire tour.

International Flights

Steppes Discovery is protected by ATOL and is happy to help you book international flights from the UK. Please give us a call.

Important information

Coming From The USA

If you are travelling from USA, you may find it easier to go via the UK, from where we can help organise flights.

Weather And Best Time To Travel

We expect this time of year to be warm and sunny for the majority of the time. However, be prepared for temperatures to get cool and take a fleece for evenings and morning game drives. March is the build up to the wet season and the light can be very dramatic as it breaks through the converging clouds. The wet season is April and May and June is usually very green and lush, with plentiful game.

Vaccinations And Visa's

A visa is required for entry into Kenya for British or American citizens. This can be obtained for US\$50 per person on arrival in Nairobi. However, to avoid long queues, we would suggest you obtain a visa before departing the UK - see <http://kenya.embassyhomepage.com/> for more details. A full passport is required and it is recommended that this is valid for six months from return date of travel.

Health And Fitness

We recommend the following inoculations: Typhoid, Tetanus and Hepatitis A. If you are a regular traveller abroad we would recommend that you are up to date on all childhood inoculations and vaccinations including Polio. Malaria is present in Kenya. It is important that you consult a medical practitioner for specialist advice. A reasonable level of health and fitness will allow you to fully appreciate the walking options available on this trip.

Essential items

You should take sunblock, strong sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat. When walking wear colours that blend with the scenery. Long trousers or track-suit (not jeans) give protection against thorns and do not leave you cold when wet. Good footwear and a light coat or sweatshirt for the cold mornings is advisable, as is a good pair of binoculars and a camera. Charging batteries is no problem for digital cameras and videos at Kicheche.

Our commitment



Since 1997 we have raised significant contributions in support of the world's leading wildlife and conservation agencies, researchers and experts, and have increased awareness of travel and conservation through newsletters, lectures and consistent media coverage. Furthermore, we have voluntarily spearheaded collective action campaigns such as Travel Operators for Tigers in South Asia.



Under the banner of the Mara Predator Project, Living With Lions monitors lions in and around the Mara North Conservancy (MNC), building an online database of lions so that each one can be tracked and studied. Identifying individual lions allows researchers to map their home ranges, monitor reproduction and identify long term population trends. This, in turn, helps to apply effective conservation efforts, while working closely with MNC rangers, who help to monitor conflict and apply effective solutions.

Our travel partners, accommodation, service providers and ground agents are all carefully chosen to ensure their commitment to the environment, most being quality, family-owned businesses which reflect the unique character of the places, the abiding hospitality of the people and the remarkable spirit of the wilderness.

Now come along and see for yourself. With us it won't cost the earth!

Want to discuss this trip?



Please call Jarrod Kyte on 01285 643333 for more details or to make a booking

A love of wildlife and wild places has long been Jarrod's motivation for travelling. At his happiest when photographing big cats in Africa, Jarrod spent two years in Kenya managing a luxury tented camp in the Masai Mara, together with his wife and young son.



In the relatively short history of Kicheche, Jarrod stamped an indelible mark on its success. Many seasoned safari-goers considered him the perfect camp host and manager. With extensive knowledge of the Mara's fauna and people, he is the perfect choice for those wanting a comprehensive and rewarding safari. Paul Goldstein - owner of Kicheche Camps