

Kenya Wildlife Safari

with Naturalist Journeys

September 13 – 27, 2022

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Tour Summary

15-Day / 14-Night Kenya Safari

\$8990, from Nairobi

Airport is Jomo Kenyatta International (NBO)

We treasure Kenya as a prime African destination, famous for its wealth of birds and wildlife in diverse and scenic landscapes. Designed to show off East Africa's incredible birds, as well as wildlife (Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Jackal, Genet, Zebra, Elephant, Gazelle, and more!), our route includes western Kenya's endemic-rich Kakamega Forest, the Rift-Valley lakes of Baringo, Nakuru, and Naivasha, in combination with world-class wildlife viewing during four nights in Kenya's Masai Mara, part of the Serengeti Ecosystem. Direct flights to Nairobi make getting there easier now; a short flight back from the Mara with its teeming wildlife is memorable and reduces driving time at the tour's end.

This Kenya safari can be combined with our Uganda tour in early September, a chance to see Mountain Gorilla, Shobell, and more. It is timed for the amazing spectacle of wildebeest migration—sights of them pouring across the Mara River trying to avoid assembled predators is memorable!

You are coming so far that we recommend you arrive early in Nairobi on the afternoon or evening of September 12 to rest up from your flight. Birding is great, right from the hotel patio!

Day-to-Day Itinerary

Mon., Sept. 12 Early Arrivals

You are coming so far that we recommend you arrive a day early in Nairobi by at least the afternoon or evening today, September 12. You are met at the airport by one of our local representatives and transferred to our hotel. You receive a quick briefing on the next day's activities and then take time to rest and relax at the hotel. Gather informally with any other group members who have arrived early or simply join the full group the following day as we kick-start our amazing adventure.

Accommodations at the Ole Sereni Hotel

Tues., Sept. 13 Jambo to Kenya!

Our amazing adventure officially kicks off today in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city. Whether you arrived yesterday or come in today, you are met at the airport by one of our local representatives and transferred to our hotel. Today you receive a quick briefing on tomorrow's activities and then take time to rest and relax at the hotel. There are two restaurants, with indoor and outdoor seating in a safe and relaxing environment where you can refuel and be ready for your safari that kicks off tomorrow.

Accommodations at the Ole Sereni Hotel (B,L,D)

Wed., Sept. 14 Giraffe Centre | Karen Blixen Museum

Tour Highlights

- Feed and interact with Giraffes and explore the Karen Blixen Museum in Nairobi
- Discover and incredible mix of birds and big mammals on safari drives in diverse habitats throughout this stunning country
- Explore the Rift Valley near Lake Baringo, enjoy boat ride on lakes famous for flamingos
- Cross the Equator!
- Explore deep in the Kakamega Forest, watching for bright and beautiful turacos and a number of regional endemics
- Watch for Black and White Rhinos in Lake Nakuru National Park
- Experience Kenya's famed Maasai Mara at the peak of wildebeest migration

Our hotel is located close to the airport and lies adjacent to Nairobi National Park. You may pick up some introductory bird species on your way, like the splendidly-colored Superb Starling or the majestic Marabou Stork. Today is designed for a leisurely start to some of Nairobi's top attractions.

After birding with our breakfast on an outdoor patio, we head off to the Giraffe Centre. This local attraction breeds the endangered Rothschild's Giraffe and repatriates them back into the wild. We enjoy a nice lecture about the conservation work being done here. Afterwards, we get to feed and interact with the giraffes! A grand start to the trip.

Depending on how time moves, we may choose to take a short walk in the local forest sanctuary, where we enjoy a few more birds. From here we continue to the nearby Karen Blixen Museum. This historic house belonged to the author of the legendary book *Out of Africa*. Karen lived here between 1914 and 1931; now the whole neighborhood is named Karen Estate. We take a guided tour of the museum and house. Afterwards, we bird the museum grounds where sunbirds frequent blooming flowers before returning to our hotel.

Accommodations at the Ole Sereni Airport Hotel, Nairobi (B,L,D)

Thurs., Sept. 15 Nairobi National Park—The Safari Begins!

We spend our first day of birding in this amazing park, located next to our hotel. This is one of the most unique parks in the entire world, located literally inside a major city. The park hosts a huge diversity of species in habitats ranging from forests, grasslands, wetlands, and riverine woodland. The park is almost 50 square miles, and hosts over 500 species of birds and each year the park list keeps growing.

The park is a vital and functioning ecosystem that safeguards conservation species such as Southern White Rhino and Black Rhino. We drive a network of game-viewing roads, offering us surprisingly uncrowded viewing for being so close to the city. The park hosts interesting animals including African Lion and Leopard, Common Zebra, Cape Buffalo, and Masai Giraffe. Suni, Common Eland, Black Rhino, Bohor Reedbuck, and Leopard can also be seen!

The birding is terrific here. Some species we expect to find in the park include species associated with the river and small pond areas: African Water Rail, Spotted Thick-knee, Crowned Plover, Speke's Weaver, Yellow-crowned Bishop, and Saddle-billed Stork, as well as those of grasslands: Pangani Longclaw, Jackson's Widowbird, Kori Bustard, Hartlaub's Bustard, a good variety of larks including White-tailed, Foxy, Rufous-naped, and Athi Short-toed. Large acacia and other trees provide us with the chance to see Snowy Barbet, Red-throated Tit, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Pale Scrub White-eye, Ruppell's Robin-chat, and a bird with a big personality, the Northern Pied Babbler.

Overhead we keep a keen eye out for raptors: Martial Eagle, African Crowned Eagle, Lappet-faced Vulture, Secretarybird, Tawny Eagle, and more. And if this is not enough, today we have the chance to see African Quail-finch, Pin-tailed Whydah, Zebra Waxbill, Harlequin Quail, Violet Wood-hoopoe, and our expert local guides help us with often-confusing species such as Nairobi (Long-billed) Pipit, Grassland Pipit, Southern Black Flycatcher, and those pesky but vocal little brown birds: Siffling (Short-winged) Cisticola, Stout Cisticola, Croaking Cisticola, and Desert Cisticola.

Accommodations at the Ole Sereni Hotel, Nairobi (B,L,D)

Fri., Sept. 16 Lake Baringo | Rift Valley | Equator Crossing

From Nairobi, we depart early to avoid traffic and to begin our adventure into the mighty Rift Valley. We break up the drive with time to enjoy many roadside birding opportunities. The first stop is a small highland wetland at

the edge of the city where we try our luck for one of the rare ducks of Kenya—the Maccoa Duck. Other species here may include Golden-winged Sunbird, African Stonechat, Hunter’s Cisticola, Malachite Sunbird, and Cape Wagtail.

It’s a MUST stop at the Rift Valley viewing point to enjoy this landscape spectacle. Your guide provides background on Kenya’s geology. We also stop at the Equator as we enjoy crossing into the Northern Hemisphere. We try a local spot for the splendid Silverbird, a species that deserves its name, from the silvery-grey color of its back. Other possible roadside birds include the graceful White-bellied Go-away-bird and Dark Chanting-Goshawk. Big troops of Olive Baboon occur along the roadside.

We have snacks, and plan to arrive in Baringo for a late lunch. Settle in, and enjoy a break and some late-afternoon birding around the hotel. There are many Hippo in the Baringo area so we take special precautions here as they roam far and wide by night.

Our lodge is a simple but exciting facility located on the shores of Lake Baringo. The rooms are large enough and have modern facilities, despite being in a remote part of the country. It is quite common to find Common Ostrich and Grey Crowned Crane sneaking behind your room. Dawn here is phenomenal—witness the sun rise over the calm lake waters, right behind your room. Being at the shoreline, our boat ride starts at our door step, and this makes for a nice wake up activity. The lodge also has a nice swimming pool, where you can spend a few hours cooling off after a great sunny bird walk. Around the lodge grounds, birds light up the atmosphere with their beautiful sounds and you are likely entertained by a dazzling male Beautiful Sunbird or the rhythmic mimic song of a Spotted Palm (Morning) Thrush.

Accommodations at the Baringo-Tumbili Cliff Lodge (B,L,D)

Sat., Sept. 17 Lake Baringo | Lake Bogoria

This morning we make an early morning trip to Lake Bogoria. This beautiful soda lake is located on the Rift Valley floor and regularly hosts one of the biggest congregations of both Lesser and Greater Flamingos in the world, a spectacle you may have seen in the movie, *Out of Africa*. We spend the morning here enjoying many waterbirds and woodland species, too. We also keep an eye out for one of the rare mammals that calls this area home—the Greater Kudu. We should find Warthog, perhaps territorial Dik-Dik, Grant’s Gazelle, and Zebra.

We enjoy lunch here and then continue birding for the afternoon around the neighboring woodland between Lake Bogoria and Lake Baringo. We also explore some local cliffs (great for a geology lesson) that often host exciting owls and nightjars. Driving around the lake we may pick up sightings of Heuglin’s Courser, Black-headed Plover, Jackson’s Hornbill, Hemprich’s Hornbill, Northern Red Bishop, White-backed Night-Heron, Spotted Thick-knee, Senegal Thick-knee, perhaps African Pygmy Kingfisher, and flocks of feeding birds that could include Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, African Citril, and White-bellied Canary.

The list of other birds to expect here is long, and may include owls and raptors: the Greyish Eagle-Owl, African Scops-Owl, Northern White-faced Scops-Owl, Tawny Eagle, Shikra, and Verreaux’s Eagle. Forests are attractive to barbets, woodpeckers, and mixed flocks and in them we may find Red-and-yellow Barbet, D’Arnaud’s Barbet, Black-throated Barbet, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Brubru, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike, Three-streaked Tchagra, Gambaga Flycatcher, Woodland Kingfisher, Bearded Woodpecker, Nubian Woodpecker, and more. We are thankful for our local experts that help us sort out the abundant and varied weaver clan, today perhaps finding Little Weaver, Village Weaver, Golden-backed Weaver, Northern Masked Weaver, and White-billed Buffalo-Weaver. Meet the group of birds that rivals our hummingbirds for beauty—possible today are both Beautiful and Shining Sunbirds. Cliffs attract Brown-tailed Rock Chat and Mocking Cliff-Chat and ubiquitous are Ruppell’s Starling and Bristle-crowned Starling. What a day!

We return to our lodge with time to change, meet for a lovely dinner and of course, tally up our wildlife and bird sightings for the day.

Accommodations at the Baringo-Tumbili Cliff Lodge (B,L,D)

Sun., Sept. 18 Lake Baringo to Kakamega Forest via Kerio Valley

We start the day with a boat ride on Lake Baringo in search of birds like African Jacana, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Black Crake, Striated Heron, Goliath Heron, Little Bittern, Purple Heron, Lesser Swamp Warbler, and White-faced Whistling Duck. The boat ride experience also helps us enjoy the beauty of the lake and see the stunning African Fish Eagle advertising their territories.

From here we continue across the western wall of the Rift Valley, into the scenic Kerio Valley. We enjoy birding stops on this route, looking for specialties including the spectacular White-crested Turaco, Red-headed Bluebill, Grey-throated Barbet, Gambaga Flycatcher, Bearded Woodpecker, Rufous Chatter, African Emerald Cuckoo, and Boran Cisticola.

This is largely a travel day and by day's end we end up in Kakamega Forest where our wonderful birding lodge awaits and our birding adventure expands greatly. On arrival, we can bird and explore around the lodge, located inside the forest. Garden birds here may include the spectacular Great Blue Turaco and the majestic African Crowned Eagle. We also scan the forest patch surrounding the lodge, as well as the roadside habitat. More species likely here include Chubb's Cisticola, Mackinnon's Fiscal, Joyful Greenbul, Grey-winged Robin, Tambourine Dove, Yellow-billed Barbet, and Bocage's Bush-Shrike.

Our beautiful lodge is a small facility located in the heart of this beautiful forest. At the cool restaurant, we are served various delicacies by the dedicated lodge team. On the lodge grounds, the beautiful White-browed Robin-Chat keeps us entertained with their songs and you may get a photo or two as one hops in front of your cottage. The grounds are lush and green and form a welcome atmosphere to take a leisurely walk or just relax on a lawn. Being a small facility means that most of the day is spent with minimal guests and thus maintains the private touch of being in the forest.

Accommodations at the Kakamega-Rondo Retreat (B,L,D)

Mon., Sept. 19 & Tues. Sept. 20 Two Full Days in Kenya's Kakamega Forest

This is an important part of our trip as we sample Kenya's famed biodiversity. We have two days to explore this easternmost forest in the famous Guinea-Congolian Equatorial Forest. The bird diversity here is just breathtaking and there are a good number of birds that occur here that are not easy to find in other parts of the Equatorial Forest, such as the rare Turner's Eremomela. The forest has several micro-habitats that we explore during our stay here. These include: primary forest, roadside openings, grassland patches, and wetlands (including swamps and rivers). We also explore the neighboring farmlands and guava plantations that surround the forest.

This region is known for its colorful species, some shared with the mountains of neighboring Uganda. See Great Blue Turaco, Red-headed Malimbe, Bar-tailed Trogon, Luhder's Bush-Shrike, and widespread but colorful species such as African Emerald and Klaas's Cuckoo. It is a wild region, with raptors like African Crowned Eagle. Robin-chats may come down to feed on forest paths: Blue-shouldered and Snowy-headed and the forest rings with calls of barbets: Hairy-breasted, Yellow-spotted, and Yellow-billed. Colorful sunbirds include Green and Green-throated. Fruiting trees draw in woodpeckers, which may include Brown-eared and Yellow-crested

Woodpeckers. In the lush forest canopy we find Blue-headed Bee-eater, and three species of wattle-eye: Common, Jameson's, and Yellow-bellied.

There are also an assortment of monkeys to enjoy in this beautiful forest, such as the Mau Forest Guereza Colobus Monkey, Stuhlmann's Blue Monkey, and Schmidt's Red-tailed Monkey.

Accommodations at the Kakamega-Rondo Retreat (B,L,D)

Wed., Sept. 21 Lake Nakuru National Park

We take one last walk in Kakamega Forest this morning before we set off. We then continue back towards the Rift Valley to Lake Nakuru. Along the way, we enjoy several birding stops, including a highland swamp that often hosts Lesser Jacana. Other birds may include the African Marsh-Harrier, Malachite Sunbird, Golden-winged Sunbird, Levillant's Cisticola, Streaky Seedeater, Baglaffeht Weaver, and Red-knobbed Coot.

Eventually, we arrive at the famous Lake Nakuru. This park is a stronghold for numerous mammals, including both Southern White and Black Rhinos. It is an excellent place to see tree-climbing Lion and a beautiful landscape to witness numerous grazing mammals in a variety of habitats. Nakuru is also a true mega destination for birders, and was the first park in Africa to be set aside as a bird sanctuary. The afternoon game drive today passes quickly as we make our way around the lake.

Our lodge is up on a hillside overlooking the water. Lake Nakuru is a beautiful soda lake located in the heart of the Rift Valley. The lake has long been known for its vibrant population of Lesser Flamingo, but for the last decade, it has flooded quite significantly causing reduced flamingo numbers. The lake is surrounded by beautiful Yellow-barked Acacia woodland, which often shows soda-water staining on dry stems. Rivers flow into the lake from all directions, with the famous Makalia River forming a small waterfall on the southeastern end of the lake. These fresh-water rivers provide drinking water for the animals that live here.

Our lodge grounds host beautiful species such as the iridescent Greater Blue-eared Starling and the rare Schalow's (Abyssinian) Wheatear. Dawn choruses are often the work of the beautiful White-browed Robin-Chat. Tonight we dine with beautiful views of Lake Nakuru and the surrounding park.

Accommodations at Nakuru-Sopa Lodge (B,L,D)

Thurs., Sept. 22 Lake Nakuru National Park

The sunrise here is a breathtaking sight. Awake this morning to witness the sunrise from the eastern end of the park, revealing bright red hues. Today we enjoy morning and afternoon game drives in Lake Nakuru National Park. Habitats we explore vary from the Acacia woodlands to riverine woodland, open grassland savannah, rocky cliff sides, and lake shores. In the heat of the day, we take a break and take in the views from the lodge and watch for birds right around our rooms.

Birds are varied and may include woodland species like Nubian Woodpecker, Nyanza Swift, Arrow-marked Babbler, Lilac-breasted Roller, Little Rock-Thrush, Mocking Cliff Chat, White-browed Robin-Chat, Plain-backed Pipit, Yellow-throated Longclaw, White-fronted Bee-eater, Little Bee-eater, Coqui Francolin, Hildebrandt's Francolin, Plain Martin, African Cuckoo, Black Cuckoo, Levillant's Cuckoo, Grey-crested Helmetshrike, Brimstone Canary, Dusky and Montane Nightjars, and Abyssinian Wheatear.

Wetland birds include Woolly-necked Stork, Red-billed Teal, Cape Teal, Hottentot Teal, Pink-backed Pelican, Great White Pelican, Pied Avocet, Kittlitz's Plover, Three-banded Plover, Blacksmith Plover, African Darter, and Reed Cormorant.

Yellow-fever Acacia are stately and picturesque along the lakeshore; we watch their spreading limbs closely for resting Leopard. Many other special mammals occur here and as we drive, we watch for Common Eland, Grant's Gazelle, Defassa Waterbuck; and the endangered Rothschild's Giraffe. Cliff habitats hold large troops of Baboon and other monkeys are possible.

Accommodations in Nakuru-Sopa Lodge (B,L,D)

Fri., Sept. 23 Boat Ride on Lake Naivasha | Drive to Masai Mara

We are up and out early this morning, and as we exit Lake Nakuru National Park we proceed to another nearby lake. We enjoy more birds at the beautiful Lake Naivasha, another lake inside the Rift Valley. This is the highest lake along this stretch of the Rift Valley, and is famed for being quite cool. The birds here are excellent and we can expect species such as Mosque Swallow, Lyne's Cisticola, Chestnut Sparrow, Abyssinian Wheatear, Nyanza Swift, Mottled Swift, White-fronted Bee-eater, Mocking Cliff Chat, Bearded Woodpecker, Plain-backed Pipit, Giant Kingfisher, Grey-backed Fiscal, Grey-crested Helmet-Shrike, Brimstone Canary, Cape Teal, Pied Avocet, Black Heron, Goliath Heron, Lesser Flamingo, Great White Pelican, Common Greenshank, Ruff, Green Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Hildebrandt's Francolin, Arrow-marked Babbler, Black-lored Babbler, African Fish Eagle, Verreaux's Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Osprey, Hybrid Lovebird, Red-throated Wryneck, Golden-breasted Bunting, Buff-bellied Warbler, Grey Crowned Crane, Black Cuckoo, and Hoopoe.

We then board our boat and keep watch for the graceful displays of the African Fish Eagle and all the other wonders this lake offers.

Once we arrive back on land, we start our journey towards Masai Mara, the climax of our tour. We have lunch en route, aiming to arrive at the Mara later in the afternoon. We are on the lookout for long lines of wildebeest, pouring into the region.

Our camp is located on the Northern end of the beautiful Masai Mara National Reserve along the beautiful Talek River. The camp's swimming pool is a welcome relaxation station after a nice game drive in the reserve. The rooms are designed with a feel of the local Masai Culture and create a beautiful ambience. The rooms are tented, but still contain all amenities of a conventional lodge room. The fresh air flowing into your room from the surrounding nature makes it a homey setting. The camp's lush grounds are often active with birds, such as the musical Common Drongo and the beautiful Grey-headed Bush-Shrike. The beautiful lounge area also offers a nice place to relax. The modern, yet safari-styled restaurant offers delicious meals.

Accommodations at Mara-Mara Leisure Camp (B,L,D)

Sat. Sept. 24 – Mon. Sept. 26 Three Full Days in Kenya's Famed Masai Mara

We spend the next three days exploring this amazing place. This is arguably the top conservation area in Africa, and its fame has been amplified by the numerous films done here. The annual Masai Mara-Serengeti Wildebeest migration is a spectacle that has made this place more famous and is often regarded as the Eighth Wonder of the World. These massive herds march across the plains like an army headed to battle. Hot on their heels are many other animals, mainly Common Zebra and an array of carnivores that don't let the buffet pass by unnoticed. The Masai Mara is managed as a national reserve and hosts some of the top mammal populations in Africa. Our photographers delight in marvelous views of many species. The Mara forms the northernmost limit of the diverse Serengeti Ecosystem.

We enjoy game drives here scouting the vast savannah grassland and the riverine vegetation around the great plains. Though much of our Mara time we focus on mammals, many birds are also spotted here, including the

Southern Ground-Hornbill, Rufous-bellied Heron, Pennant-winged Nightjar, Square-tailed Nightjar, Dusky Nightjar, stunning Schalow's Turaco, Grey-crested Helmetshrike, Red-necked Spurfowl, Red-winged Francolin, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Rufous-chested Swallow, Lappet-faced Vulture, Brown Snake-Eagle, White-headed Vulture, Ruppell's Vulture, Secretarybird, Grey Kestrel, Temminck's Courser, Rosy-breasted Longclaw, Green-capped Eremomela, Black Coucal, African Quailfinch, Kori Bustard, Bush Pipit, Melodious Lark, Flappet Lark, Athi Short-toed Lark, Rufous-tailed Weaver, Grey-capped Social Weaver, Karamoja Apalis, Black-backed Cisticola, Long-tailed Cisticola, Pale Wren-Warbler, Usambiro Barbet, Familiar Chat, Sooty Chat, African Wattled Plover, Woolly-necked Stork, Saddle-billed Stork, and Magpie Shrike.

Mammals are in great abundance and we can expect all members of the "African Big 5:" African Lion, Cape Buffalo, Black Rhino, Africa Elephant, and Leopard. Other mammals include Nile Hippo, Topi, Common Eland, Common Zebra, Masai Giraffe, Blue Wildebeest, Thompson's Gazelle, Cheetah, Spotted Hyena, Black-backed Jackal, and Grant's Gazelle. We also scan the rivers for the massive and pre-historic Nile Crocodile.

Accommodations at the Mara-Mara Leisure Camp (B,L,D)

Tues., Sept. 27 Flight from Masai Mara to Nairobi | Evening Departures

On this final morning we take a short game drive to the local airstrip to catch our flight to Nairobi. On arrival we are transferred to a local restaurant for lunch and then spend some refreshing time at our hotel, where we have booked day rooms for you to shower and freshen up before your international flights home. We are transferred to the airport this evening, marking the end to our phenomenal tour. *(B,L)*

Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. To support conservation, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Travel Information

Please plan to arrive in Nairobi at your leisure on September 13, though we encourage you to come in a day earlier on September 12 to rest up and get turned around from your travels. Please plan departure flights after 5:00 PM on September 27. If you need to book an earlier flight please check with us, it may need to be the next day, and if so we can arrange a hotel for you for the evening at an additional cost.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of this 15-Day / 14-Night Kenya Safari is **\$8990 DBL / \$10,450 SGL** per person. This cost includes accommodations for 14 nights, all meals as noted in the itinerary (B,L,D), all land transportation, game park and other entry fees, boat rides on Lakes Naivasha and Baringo, and the one-way internal flight from Maasai Mara to Nairobi.

Tour cost do not include: transportation from your home city to Nairobi, optional activities, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, gratuities for guides, lodges and drivers, or beverages from the bar. Costs exclude: International airfare; personal, medical, cancellation insurance; tips for guides, drivers, and lodges.

Photo Credits

African Scenic by Peg Abbott

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