



## Inside an African Safari

By Sekita Ekrek

Few trips feel as epic as an African safari. Touching down on a bush airstrip in the savannahs of Kenya is one thrilling ride. You instantly feel like you're following in the footsteps of explorers, novelists, and great adventurers. The remote setting is intoxicating. The first signs of wildlife roaming freely are slightly Disney-esque. Over the course of a week in the bush, our shock became awe, then appreciation, and finally, sheer gratitude for our great big animal kingdom.



**Welcome to Kenya** The gateway to safari begins in the bustling capital Nairobi. Check in to the legendary **Fairmont Norfolk Hotel**, a colonial oasis dating back to 1904. After settling in, head to the bar for a *dawa*. The classic Kenyan cocktail—made of vodka, muddled lime, honey, and crushed ice—is refreshingly addictive. Don't miss the vintage photos lining the corridors. Famous guests, from Theodore Roosevelt and Ernest Hemingway to Meryl Streep and Mick Jagger, have spent the night. On Tuesdays, the excellent Maasai Market is held on Kijabe Street, behind the hotel. Bargaining is part of the fun. You'll walk away with hand-beaded jewelry, colorful textiles, and handicrafts galore.



**Traditional Maasai Village and Mount Kilimanjaro** The Maasai are one of Kenya's last traditional tribes. Famous for their look and customs, these nomads live as they have for centuries. Upon arrival you'll be met by the village chief's son and treated to a traditional welcome dance by the men and women before getting a tour of daily life. The village sits on Amboseli National Park, home to Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. You'll stay in the park at **Oi Tukai Lodge**, a spacious resort with some of the best views of the mountain. Take time by the pool or your terrace to watch herds of elephants, wildebeest, and Cape buffalo graze against the magnificent backdrop.



**Endangered Rhinos and the Lewa Conservancy** Fly north of Nairobi for 100 minutes and safari magic begins. Your destination? The Lewa Conservancy in Laikipia Reserve. Set against Mount Kenya, this wild, romantic and sparsely populated land is home to an astonishing variety of wildlife. From touchdown to arrival at the luxury **Lewa Safari Camp**, we spotted elephants, Grevy's zebras, ostriches, giraffes, white rhinos, gazelles, impalas, and sleeping cheetahs. No wonder Prince William proposed to Kate here—it's that kind of dreamy place. Pay particular attention to rhino spotting; this endangered creature is fiercely protected here.



**Afternoon at Harambee Community Centre** Back in Nairobi, the slums of Mukuru are overcrowded, chaotic, and sprawling. But deep inside is a place of calm and inspiration, and a perfect way to end the journey. The Micato-AmericaShare Harambee Community Centre is committed to education and local outreach. Spend time learning how lives are changed every day. There's a nursery school, learning resource center, library, green lawns, fresh water, and programs to empower young girls. It's an opportunity to not only lend compassion, but also learn how to make a difference.



**Exploring Nairobi** Kenya's history comes to life at the fascinating Karen Blixen Museum. The Danish author of the famed memoir "Out of Africa" lived on a coffee farm in the early 1900s. Now a museum, the farmhouse is the setting for much of the Meryl Streep-Robert Redford 1975 film. Blixen was so adored that the Nairobi suburb of Karen is named after her. Nearby is a sanctuary for another beloved resident—the giraffe. The Giraffe Centre is a hands-on opportunity to learn about, feed, and even kiss (!) the endangered Rothschild's giraffe. It's loads of fun.



### Hot Air Ballooning over Maasai Mara

Floating above the savannah at daybreak, when animals are most active, is exhilarating beyond words. Capturing these bird's-eye views in complete silence is worth every penny. Afterwards, toast that rush with champagne and a hearty bush breakfast. You'll be up early anyway as you're staying at the swanky **Fairmont Mara Safari Club**. Each luxury tent in the camp hugs the Mara River, where grunting hippos serve as your dawn wakeup call. It's hard not to spend hours watching the herds frolic, spar, and show off to one another.

*Our travel insider, Sekita Ekeke, went on her first African safari with Micato Safaris. To learn more, contact our friends at First in Service Travel at [imagine@firstinservice.com](mailto:imagine@firstinservice.com) or 212-398-6555. **B***