

# Forbes

---

## If You Like April The Giraffe Online, You Should See The Real Thing On Safari

Excerpted from an article by Larry Olmsted, March 27, 2017



*April the giraffe is an internet sensation by live cam from her stall in upstate New York, but you can see a lot more giraffes, in their natural setting, by going on safari to Africa.*

April the Giraffe has become an internet sensation, the world watching online, eagerly expecting her to deliver her baby any day now. She has her own website, live feed and Twitter handle, and when my wife clicked to watch her live last night, more than 91,000 other people were doing the same. Like a star pro athlete, she even has a corporate sponsor, Toys R Us. This morning when I drove to the gym, the syndicated drive time morning show I listen to was hotly discussing the “drama” of watching a computer screen image of a giraffe standing in a stall at the Animal Adventure Park in Binghamton, in upstate New York.

April is undoubtedly cute, her appeal is greatly enhanced by the pregnancy, and animals have always done well on the internet. But as someone who has long championed wildlife vacations and considers a viewing safari the pinnacle of all “Bucket List” trips, I’m hoping April becomes more than just a caricature and serves as an inspiration.

Over the 25 years I’ve been writing on travel full time, I’ve met lots of people who dream of doing a safari, lots more who have gone, often several times, and occasionally a naysayer who says something like, “if I want to see animals I can go to the zoo.” Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion, but these people are flat out wrong. There is nothing like seeing the most majestic animals in the wild, the thrill has to be experienced to be appreciated, and even travelers who thought they wouldn’t be interested are inevitably blown away. When I talk to most people who have returned from safari, they are always full of wonderment, usually describe it as their best trip ever, and more often than not, are already planning or at least considering their next trip.

As a longtime travel writer, I have essentially been living other people's vacations of all sorts for a quarter of a century, and I've had so many epic trips, skiing, golf, adventure, culture, ruins, history, culinary, etc. that I find it impossible to rank them, but when people ask me what one vacation they need to take once in their lifetime the answer is easy: a safari. Except that once is not enough.

I've written on safaris before at Forbes.com, and you can [read about South African safaris here](#), about [tigers in India here](#), and about [the very best safari company you can travel with here](#).

For first timers the choice typically comes down to classic East Africa, Kenya and/or Tanzania, and South Africa. The principal difference has long been that East Africa has more big National Parks, which are awesome but crowded and with restrictions on where you can drive, while South Africa has more private game reserves, vast acreage with few rooms and unrestricted travel, for a more intimate (and often more expensive) experience. South Africa also offers more in the way of non-safari diversions, for those who want to combine wildlife viewing with wine country, beaches, golf, or Cape Town, one of the world's great touristic cities. But in recent years East Africa has been following its rival's lead and adding more private reserves and exclusive lodges, and either one makes a great choice. Second time visitors usually hit the one they didn't pick first, or up and coming spots like Botswana, Zambia or Namibia.



*You will see a lot more than giraffes on an African safari.*

For a luxury experience without parallel, I can confidently recommend my favorite, **Micato Safaris**, which has also won endless awards and accolades in the travel industry, too many to mention, but to give you an idea, Micato is the unprecedented 9-Time Winner of Travel & Leisure's #1 World's Best Safari Outfitter, 5-Time Winner of Condé Nast Traveler World Savers Award, and made the Best Outfitters on Earth lists of both National Geographic Traveler and National Geographic Adventure.

## Why Use a Specialty Tour Operator?

Once you get into certain types of niche travel like safaris, skiing, cycling, fishing, paddling, other kinds of adventure travel and guided excursions, it almost always makes sense to you use a specialist in the field. By definition, niche means a very narrow focus, so why not get help from someone who knows the niche best? For instance, I have covered ski travel for decades and would say I am in the top one percent in terms of being informed on the subject, but this winter when I went to Japan to ski for two weeks, I used a specialist with more knowledge of the region to help plan my trip (Scout Ski) and it was a huge advantage. I'm going to Rwanda this summer to do an article on trekking with gorillas, **and since safaris are especially complicated, with tons of tiny but distinctly different lodges and lots of moving parts and complex infrastructure, I went with the perennially top ranked specialist in the genre, Micato Safaris.**

*~ Larry Olmsted, 5 Big Luxury Travel Mistakes You Might Be Making, March 21, 2016*