



What One T+L A-List Travel Advisor Has Learned in 20 Years of Safari Trips

Liz Wheeler of Micato Safaris shares her insights on decades of safari travel.

BY LIZ WHEELER

As Director of Global Operations at Micato Safaris, I've been running our operations out of Nairobi for 20 years. My "private Africa" experiences are ones I enjoy with my own friends and family over and over. Safari is not a one-time experience—roughly 30 percent of our Micato guests are repeaters, because these experiences are ones people love to go back to again and again.

I've learned a lot in these 20 years. Here are some of my tips to make your first (or second, or third) safari trip a memorable one, no matter which country you choose to visit.

Start With Kenya, and Don't Skip Nairobi

I'm interested in the vibrancy and diversity of Nairobi, a fantastic city where I recommend visitors spend some time on a culinary safari to experience some of the best restaurants in Africa. Taste traditional African foods and root vegetables prepared in modern ways in a cool atmosphere at Nyama Mama, enjoy the finest Japanese restaurants like Furusato, and don't miss the new 5-star Japanese-Peruvian restaurant called Inti. Out in the leafy suburb of Karen, the eclectic cuisine at Talisman is a local favorite—their Swahili-inspired dishes are a must!

And I never go to Nairobi without stopping at *One Off* Gallery: Carol Lees represents top East African artists at her gallery that's filled with horses, monkeys, a sculpture garden and artist studios. Among my preferred places to stay is the atmospheric Hemingways, a boutique hotel steeped in history where each of the 45 suites is named for a different writer or explorer. I like to check in to the Karen Blixen suite on the second floor for a bit of luxury.

Book a Few Different Kenya Lodges

After Nairobi, I'm off to the bush. The Maasai Mara is a given—you can't go to Africa without going there. At Micato Safaris, we like to align ourselves with companies that have great conservation ethos and Great Plains Camps are fully on board—all stunningly furnished and located in private conservancies which are extremely well managed and lightly visited. Another of my true happy places is lounging by the waterfall pool at the opulent Ol Jogi where massages are included. And even with all that luxury, it's also one of Africa's top rhino conversation areas, so there are always spectacular viewings to be had.

Loisaba Star Beds is another must-do—nothing beats spending a night atop a rocky outcrop under the African skies. Another magical under the stars experience happens at "The Nest" at Segera, where they've built a magnificent tall cylinder, rather like a giant bird's nest. The innovative owners here are also responsible for the Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town, and are dedicated conservationists who deserve great credit for the return of wildlife to the Segera region.

Tanzania Is Another Can't Miss Country

andBeyond's Ngorongoro Crater Lodge is the most romantic hobbit world of thatched huts. Inside every room you'll find old-world splendor of wood-burning fireplaces, the most incredible chandeliers, and lovely windows looking down into the 3-million year old crater—it delivers a breathtaking amount of luxury perched on the edge of a giant caldera. I took my parents here for their 50th wedding anniversary, they were holding hands the whole time, were lavished with rose petals and champagne, and they told me it was the most romantic place they'd been in all the years they were married.

Another unforgettable stay is in the treetop rooms in Tarangire National Park, one of the few special eco systems where you can find Africa's beloved giant baobab trees. For the ultimate in luxury, Mwiba Lodge offers a spectacular wildlife experience on a private 126,000 acre sanctuary. While at Mwiba, guests can have a unique cultural interaction with members of the Hadza tribe, one of the last hunter gatherer societies still in existence.



Consider Your Impact and How You Can Make a Difference

Micato, together with its non-profit arm AmericaShare, have provided an education for thousands of children for three decades.

Our guests tell us often that their visit to the [AmericaShare Harambee Community Centre](#), in Nairobi's Mukuru, is the highlight of their trips. Under the leadership of co-founder Lorna Macleod, it has evolved into a state-of-the-art learning center and library, fully stocked with textbooks and computers and staffed by librarians who have helped hundreds of children thrive.

Just by going on safari with Micato you help send a child to school, straight through their high school years. That's the [Micato One for One Commitment](#). We also have a [School Scholarship Programme](#), through which Micato travelers sponsor children for boarding school. I vividly recall one day when 148 newly-sponsored kids came to the hotel to meet their sponsors—in that moment the children recognized their lives would be forever 100 percent changed. When you see it in the flesh you see how the stars have changed for these kids. And those Micato-AmericaShare educations are continuing today, pandemic or no pandemic.

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