

A Private Safari Can Be An Affordable Luxury

EXCERPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY ALLISON OLMSTED

There are many advantages to private travel.

You are not limited to the handful of dates offered, and can make the trip fit your work, school or life schedule. But to me the best thing about going private is that you get to choose your traveling companions, and if you have some like-minded friends, private doesn't have to mean unaffordable.

For example, African wildlife safaris are never bargain vacations, but they are certainly Bucket List trips, and while I suggest going as often as your budget allows, the reality is that for many travelers this is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience - and that is all the more reason to do it in the best way possible.

I've been very fortunate to have had great experiences with many excellent travel companies, but regardless of the genre, one stands above all others. Micato Safaris is widely considered best in class, and has won *Travel + Leisure's* World's Best Safari Outfitter an unprecedented 10 times - no other company in any other travel category has come even remotely close to this industry record.

Micato's custom private departures are exquisite but expensive, and even its scheduled group trips are costly, but they are amazing (they are also truly all-inclusive, down to tips and alcohol and many things other active travel companies charge extra for). If you are going to take the plunge, this is definitely one to consider doing as a private with friends, because safaris are very intimate trips with shared experiences you will remember forever. They are also longer than your average bike, hike or ski trip, often more than twice as many days, and you typically share a safari vehicle that holds six for the game viewing drives, the main event of the entire trip, so it might as well be shared with friends.

On its scheduled departures, the average group size is twelve guests, with a maximum of eighteen (this is rare) in peak season. But you can do the same trips with as few as two other couples and keep it in the same price ballpark. For example, I checked one of Micato's classic itineraries, the 12-day Heart of Kenya and Tanzania trip, and this coming May, the catalog trip is \$14,750 per person, but for a party of six, it costs \$16,100 each to make this a private departure, and if you have more companions the gap closes further.

