



# BE TRANSFORMED

*Micato Safaris artfully provides authentic travel experiences in a luxurious way.*

BY BECCA HENSLEY







“THIS IS AFRICA. I’M REALLY HERE.” IT DOESN’T MATTER HOW many times you go on safari, you’ll say it. It happens as you watch the sun begin to descend in orange hues toward the horizon. You’ll mutter it as you feel the lasting warmth of the bush or veld clinging to your khaki clothing. You’ll whisper it as baboons bray, elephants trumpet, a bird trills, and a faraway lion roars as if in homage to the sunset. Enraptured, you skim the grassy veld or scrubby bushland with your eyes, lost in the nature, becoming one with the wild you’ve watched all day on game drives. Just then your Micato Safari guide surprises you, pulling your open air vehicle beside a waterfall, atop a craggy promontory, along a riverbank, or in the middle of a golden meadow that unfurls as far as the eye can see. It’s sundowner time, the way safari goes toast the end to a perfect day, sharing stories, nibbling biltong (savory snacks), and sipping lemonade or gin and tonics in perfect harmony with their surroundings. You’ll climb out, take your drink from a portable table covered in a white cloth and say it again: “This is Africa. I’m really here.”

People think of an African safari as a once-in-a-lifetime trip. I’ll tell you that if you go once, you’ll yearn to return, as I have, logging numerous safari vacations to some 10 or more countries—each the holiday of a lifetime. I’ve done game drives, ridden horses and camels through the bush, hiked mountains in search of gorillas, pedaled a bike beside ostriches and giraffes across volcanic terrain, rowed a canoe down a burbling brook, walked for miles in the sun, jogged beside Maasai villages, cruised on a river rife with hippos, and floated in a hot air balloon above all of it. Many of those times I’ve been under the tutelage of Micato Safaris, either on a solo trip (just me and a guide) or with a group. Offering customized safaris as well as scheduled group adventures, the highly awarded and applauded upscale safari outfitter, based in Nairobi and New York, is family-owned and globally sophisticated. Founded in 1966, they continue to excel at the top of the market, offering insider’s experiences that combine inventive itineraries, intuitive service, Africa’s most storied and opulent lodges and safari camps, expert









knowledge, and luxurious but authentic programs like no other guide company out there.

Flamboyances of flamingos, pandemoniums of parrots, leaps of leopards, and journeys of giraffes are merely a smidgen of the groups of lovable creatures you'll spy in the African bush. But that's not all. Micato goes beyond the expected to make both individual trips and group excursions bespoke for all guests. While game drives and special activities such as *al fresco* gourmet dinners in the bush or sparkling wine arrival festivities are *de rigueur* on any Micato safari, Micato guests are matched with local experts and personalities at safari events to enhance the adventure and unveil a deeper layer of the region or country chosen. Anthropology buffs might meet a member of the Leakey family; musicians could be introduced to prominent opera singers or violinists; athletes might get the chance to workout with an Olympian; business CEOs might connect with other entrepreneurs; writers might lunch with a renowned novelist. Most Micato guests return home with new friends and a more profound understanding of Africa's heartland.

Moreover, Micato Safaris makes a difference. Long before today's predilection among travelers to take their holidays in a conscious way, Micato has been hewing a path of community support and sustainability across Africa, making a difference in the lives of Africans each day. Known for their charitable and public-spirited works, Micato offers travelers the chance to dine with the founders in Nairobi in their home, learning about and being given an opportunity to participate, if desired. I'm in awe of their children's education fund, their nonprofit arm known as AmericaShare. Created to enhance the lives of thousands of African children in various ways, the project pays for one child's education per every safari sold. Guests have the opportunity in to visit schools, work with children in ordinary ways, help plant trees, and inscribe books with encouraging words. It's a moving and meaningful way to end a safari—like returning part of the gift that Africa gives. That gift? It's the transformation: that bigger-than-life sense of soulfulness the continent imparts, the feeling that you'll never see the world the same way again. 📍