

# SOUTHERN TANZANIA

*Undiscovered Wild!*

VISITORS GUIDE

Itineraries

National Parks

Cultural Tourism

Experiences

Travel Tips



**SOUTHERN  
TANZANIA**  
*Undiscovered Wild!*

# Foreword



Dearest Traveller,

Welcome to our land – whether you are from the next town over or across the world, we are glad your journey carried you to our beautiful Southern Tanzania!

By boat, by foot, by off-road vehicles, by plane, by horseback - there are seemingly endless ways to surround yourself with Southern Tanzania's great outdoors. We have five national parks and two marine parks for you to explore, containing an endless array of things to do and see: whether trekking through dense rainforest, swimming in waterfalls, frolicking through endemic swaths of wildflowers, or trailing a lion stalk its unsuspecting prey – the wild land sustains us, entertains us, bewilders us, and humbles us.

Preserving wild areas has never been a more critical task. Each day, we are faced with an important issue – preserve our national resources or find these precious ecosystems destroyed forever. It has been this deep commitment to the earth that inspired us to create the largest national park on the African continent, Nyerere National Park.

Your visit directly helps support conservation – every dollar from park entrance fees go directly into our preservation efforts. Your bed fees go to building local infrastructure and empowering local communities. You are helping stop poaching, employ local people, facilitate education, and support research that facilitates conservation.

Ancient legends are born from Southern Tanzania – bright blue volcanic craters, endlessly vast horizons, thunderous stampedes beating the hard earth. Together these wild entities constitute a land beyond human imagination. We are confident that a visit here results in surprise and delight around every swift turn in the road. We hope you will tell your friends and family about Africa's top secret and pay us a visit again soon.



Our deepest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damas D. Ndumbaro'.

Hon. Dr. Damas D. Ndumbaro  
Minister of Natural Resources  
and Tourism



# Welcome Note



Karibu Tanzania,

The Southern Circuit of Tanzania is one of the few unspoiled places left on Earth, offering something of interest for every type of traveller. Whether you are a honeymooner, a family with young children, or a solo traveller, you will fall in love with captivating Southern Tanzania. Relish a vacation face to face with roaring prides of lions, raging rivers, floating hippos, expansive plains of multi-coloured wildflowers, well-preserved tribal cultures, historic forts on sandy islands, and coral reef kingdoms among the best diving in Africa.

Your journey will take you through some of the region's most stunning landscapes: the largest waterfalls in the country deep within the jungles of sprawling mountain ranges, high vistas overlooking baobab forests as far as the eye can see, and crimson sunsets along the shores of the mighty Rufiji River.

The diversity of attractions is matched by the diversity of the people. Southern Tanzania is home to dozens of vibrant tribes that continue to practice centuries-old traditions. Spend time with our local communities through Tanzania's cultural tourism experiences and enhance your holiday beyond the safari: learn about Tanzania's fight against colonialism at the Chief Mkwawa Museum, admire intricate handicrafts made by disabled artisans at Neema Crafts, try your hand at teaching English at the Rufiji Lighthouse in Mloka, and, of course, sample the local cuisine!

And the best part? These paradisiacal lands are simply a hop over from Dar es Salaam or Zanzibar. Come for a weekend trip or move slowly and soak up the beauty of this region over an entire month. Welcome to the *Undiscovered Wild* side of Tanzania.



Karibu Sana,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Betrita J. Lyimo".

Ms. Betrita J. Lyimo  
Acting Director General  
Tanzania Tourist Board

COVER PHOTOS:  
FRONT: ROBERT J. ROSS  
INSIDE FRONT AND INSIDE BACK: FABIAN LEU  
BACK: TANZANIA TOURIST BOARD



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# SOUTHERN TANZANIA VISITORS GUIDE

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ROBERT J. ROSS



DANIEL CHARLES MSIRIKALE



ROBERT J. ROSS



ROBERT J. ROSS

# Southern Tanzania in Numbers

**5** National Parks throughout the region



More than **600** bird species



Nyerere is the largest National Park in Africa at **30,893** square kilometres (11,928 sq mi)



Located at an elevation of **2,600** metres (8,500 ft),

Kitulo National Park is the highest national park in Africa



**30%** of the world's cichlid species are in Lake Nyasa



Ruaha National Park is home to **10%** of the world's remaining lions



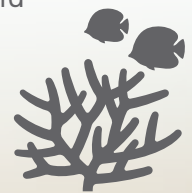
At **221** metres (725 ft), Kalambo Falls is Africa's second highest single-drop waterfall



More than **35** different ethnic groups

Mnazi Bay is home to more species of coral than anywhere else on the East African coast and

**400** different types of fish



More than **600** plant species in Udzungwa Mountains National Park are endemic to the Eastern Arc Mountains





# Colours of Southern Tanzania

Southern Tanzania's vibrant landscape is made of thousands of shades of colours woven together to create a spectacular rainbow tapestry. Hues are brighter here: sunsets are radiant ruby balls of fire that slip into shades of orange and purple before dipping below the horizon. The vast coastline is a mosaic of blue: hues of aquamarine swirl with light azure lapping against the shores. The animal life that surrounds you comes in every colour, from the olive crocodiles to the radiant lilac breasted roller overhead. Your eyes are in for a technicolour treat.

PHOTO CREDITS ON INSIDE BACK COVER





# Southern Tanzania at a Glance

## Location

Tanzania is the biggest country in East Africa. It borders Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique. It also has more than 15 islands in the Indian Ocean, including Zanzibar.



reach for international visitors. Tanzania also has land borders with eight African nations, making it the perfect place for overland travel. To reach Southern Tanzania, options include a bush plane, train, a hired safari vehicle with a driver, public bus, or self-drive.

## Geography

Nestled between the Indian Ocean coast and the sandy freshwater shores of Lake Nyasa, Southern Tanzania spans thousands of miles of terrain. Due to its fascinating location in the African Rift Valley, it is a land of lakes, highlands, jungle, rainforest, savanna, desert, plains, plateaus, islands, rivers, and sandy coasts. You are sure to find beauty wherever you choose to go.





**What is the Southern Circuit?**

The Southern Circuit is the name for a wide offering of destinations in Southern Tanzania that can be visited alone or combined, however is most commonly an itinerary consisting of the four anchor destinations of Nyerere, Mikumi, Ruaha, and Udzungwa Mountains National Parks.

**Climate**

Most of Southern Tanzania is subject to annual wet and dry seasons. Expect heavy rains from November until April. Although most tourists prefer to visit the Southern Circuit in the dry season, those interested in birdwatching and/or the wildflowers in Kitulo should consider a trip to Southern Tanzania in the wet season. The dry season (June–October) usually means sunny skies, but prepare for rain in the jungles of Udzungwa Mountains National Park, where it rains year-round. Dry also does not necessarily mean hot. Temperatures are cooler during the night, early morning, and evening. Even under the midday sun, temperatures only rarely reach 32 degrees Celsius.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
JUNGLES												
MOST AREAS												



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**Swahili 101**

Here are a few important Swahili phrases to know before you arrive. Conversing with local people you cross paths with shows your respect for the culture and will reward you with the famous smiles Tanzanians are known for.

- Hello: *jambo/salama*
- Goodbye: *kwa heri*
- Nice to meet you: *nafurahi kukuona*
- Thank you: *asante*
- Thank you very much: *asante sana*
- Welcome/You're welcome: *karibu*
- Please: *tafadhali*

**Accommodation**

With award-winning five-star boutique lodges boasting personal dipping pools to canvas tents levitating above jungle canopies, Southern Tanzania offers a wide variety of accommodation options to meet your needs. Let your heart and your budget guide you.



HAAK NEEL



# Top Experiences in Southern Tanzania

Want to make sure you get the most out of your time here? Here are the top experiences for your Southern Tanzania visit.

**1 Have a national park to yourself:** Game drives are among the most popular and effective ways of viewing wildlife. In Ruaha, Mikumi, or Nyerere National Park, expert guides will drive you in Land Cruisers through the labyrinth of dirt roads in the parks and help to spot and identify the animals along the way. Because the Southern Circuit receives so few tourists over such an expansive space, it is rare you will bump into another car.



Iringa red colobus

HAAK NEEL

**2 Come face to face with thousands of unique species in Tanzania's Biodiversity Hotspot!:** Udzungwa Mountains National Park is one of the world's 34 "World Biodiversity Hotspots" and one of the 200 World Wide Fund For Nature Ecoregions of global critical importance due to the thousands of plant and animal species that call this region home. For a special treat, keep your eye out for some species that only live here. Throughout this mountainous terrain, you are guaranteed to spot some of these endemic species, like the red colobus or the rare rufous-winged sunbird. Don't forget your binoculars!

**3 Immerse yourself in culture:** Dozens of unique tribes call Southern Tanzania home. Practice local languages with your guides, explore Bena cave shelters in Nyumbu Nitu, and learn about the Hehe people in Ruaha and Iringa. Also be sure to visit the many villages around the national parks. Mloka Village, for example, is right outside of Nyerere and a perfect place for you to sample traditional food at the daily market and tour the Rufiji Lighthouse, a school that hosts visiting English teachers. In the Ruvuma district, learn about the Maji Maji Rebellion, the most significant challenge to German colonial rule on the African continent.



Sampling traditional food

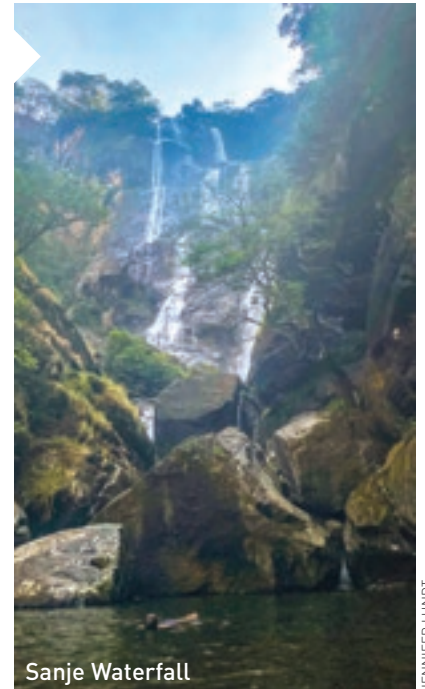
HAAK NEEL

**4 View the sunset from a Rufiji River cruise:** Nyerere National Park is one of few places in Tanzania to offer a boating safari, and the best time to take one is in the evening. As you cruise up the Rufiji, you are guaranteed sightings of various aquatic birds including kingfishers and herons. You'll cruise past hippos and crocodiles and feel the thrill as they dip underwater right beneath your boat.

**5 Soak up ancient UNESCO recognised history:** Take a step back in time as you wind through the remains of the ancient coastal city of Kilwa Kisiwani, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The thousand-year-old Great Mosque is the oldest of its kind on the East African coast, and its massive dome and preserved vaults are guaranteed to impress.

**6 Have a private beach day:** In the shadows of the Livingstone Mountains lies the vast and deep Lake Nyasa in the southwest corner of Tanzania. You won't tire of the variety of attractions here: get a suntan on the sandy beaches, go water skiing or scuba diving, feast in Matema Beach Town, hike in the nearby mountains, watch local pottery experts at work, or tour local rice and cocoa farms.

**7 Swim under gushing waterfalls:** After a long hike through the mountainous jungles of Udzungwa Mountains National Park, there is nothing more rewarding than plunging into the deep, cold pools under the magnificent Sanje Waterfall. Float on your back and try to see the start of the waterfall 170 metres up the vertical rock face, or jump off of the surrounding boulders into the dark water below.



Sanje Waterfall

JENNIFER LUNDOT

**8 Scuba safari through the technicolour reefs:** Whether you are new to diving or a seasoned professional, everyone can enjoy the coral reefs in Mnazi Bay, near the Mozambique border. While diving or snorkeling, you'll be treated to the most biodiverse reef on the East African coast, with over 400 types of fish. Serious divers can take multi-day boating trips with plenty of time under the water every day.





Grey-headed bush shrike

**9 Spot rare, brightly-coloured birds:** Southern Tanzania boasts some of the largest bird populations in East Africa and will turn even the most inexperienced amateurs into avian aficionados. From the ubiquitous red billed hornbill in the acacias of Ruaha National Park to the rare Udzungwa forest partridge to the brilliantly coloured lilac breasted roller, birders will delight at the seemingly endless variety of our feathered friends in the region.

**10 Picnic with hippos and crocodiles:** In Mikumi, Ruaha, or Nyerere National Park, pack a breakfast or lunch and have your game driver stop at a watering hole or river to enjoy your meal. From a safe distance, observe the brilliant exhibition of life in and around the water. You'll spot dozens of birds, hippos, and crocodiles, probably some impalas, zebras, giraffes, and elephants, and maybe even a big cat. Just don't feed the animals!

**11 Take flamboyant photos of wildflowers:** Travel to Kitulo National Park to bask in the glory of millions of wildflowers. Lose yourself in the sprawling meadows and rolling hills of the park, where flowers of every hue sprout from the fertile earth in all directions. Dozens of species, including 45 varieties of orchids, are endemic to the area, making the flora of Kitulo impressive in biodiversity as well as sheer volume.



**12 Wake up to the roar of lions:** There is no more enthralling feeling than sleeping in a tented camp on safari. With only a canvas wall between you and the great unknown, it provides an unparalleled sleeping experience. Nothing elicits these feelings more than a pride of lions stretching their legs each morning and letting their roars announce that the kings and queens of the land are awake.

**13 Learn about the powerful legacy of regional leaders:** Southern Tanzania's history is brimming with powerful leaders. A visit to Ruvuma district will educate you about the Maji Maji rebellion, when courageous leaders from the Matumbi, Ngoni, and Yao tribes led a German colonialism. To explore the life of Hehe tribe leader Chief Mkwawa, visit the Mkwawa Memorial Museum in Kalenga and/or the Iringa Boma Museum. His legend is so famous that his skull was written into the Treaty of Versailles.

**14 See how tea is grown, and then sip away!:** The scenic Rungwe region is what dreams are made of. Take a guided tour of the lush, green tea plantations that have been operating for nearly a century before sitting back to enjoy.

**15 See stars as you've never seen them before:** Tanzania's location just beneath the equator provides a breathtaking view of the Milky Way galaxy. The lack of human interference in these remote national parks means no light pollution. As the sun sets, watch the sky illuminate with millions of twinkling lights. Stay until dark to catch a glimpse of shooting stars.



Vikapu Bomba artisan

**16 Purchase some lifelong memories:** On top of the thousands of photos you'll have from your amazing trip, invest in some physical memories as well. The craft shops in local towns, and Neema and Vikapu Bomba in Iringa, will ensure you have unforgettable gifts and memories to take home with you.

**17 Learn something from a friendly Park Ranger:** Throughout your journey through Southern Tanzania's protected areas, you will cross paths with many park rangers from all around the country. Ask them about their efforts to crack down on poaching. They'll also be happy to point out their inside-scoop observations about animal movements that day!

**18 Feast on local, organic food:** As this region is home to many different groups, every one has its different cuisines and specialties. We encourage you to engage your fifth sense and taste your way through the region. From snacking on locally-grown, rich, flavourful cashews to waking up to bitter aromas of local arabica, you will also be supporting the agricultural industry.



# ITINERARIES

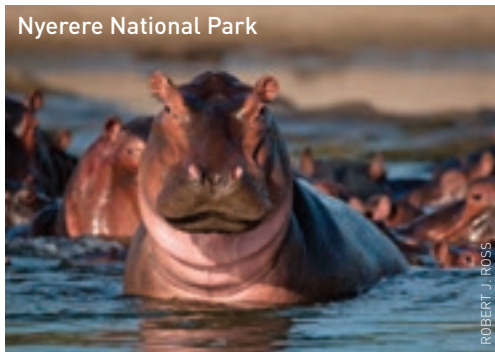
Need some trip inspiration?

These unique itinerary suggestions can help you make the most of your time:

## Best of Southern Tanzania

This itinerary hits on the four main anchor attractions of the Southern Circuit.

From **Dar es Salaam**, fly to **Ruaha National Park** to begin the circuit in the heart of Tanzania. A couple of days in Ruaha is a must for any Southern Circuit safari, and you are guaranteed to see abundant game in and around the baobab forests and cooling off by the Great Ruaha River. Your journey will begin its crawl eastward as you travel to **Mikumi National Park**. Spend a day on a game drive through the "Safari Next Door," and have a picnic at the hippo pool. From your lodge outside of **Mikumi**, take a day trip to **Udzungwa Mountains National Park**. In the eastern part of the park, endemic monkeys like the red colobus will swing in the canopy above you as you hike through dense jungle up to the picturesque Sanje Waterfall, and be sure to swim at the bottom, too! Finish the circuit in the newfound **Nyerere National Park** – the largest national park on the African continent. Enjoy a final game drive (or two) through the sprawling acacia woodlands and plains, and spend your last evening on a boating safari up and down the Rufiji River, featuring a sunset barbecue on a private island.



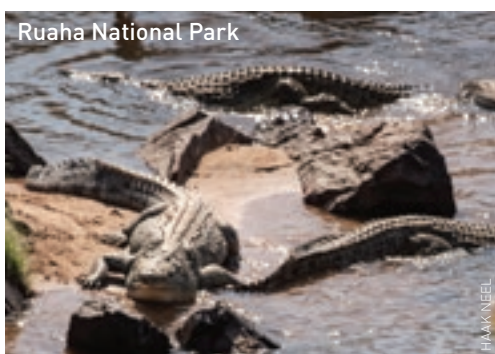
Nyerere National Park

ROBERT J. ROSS



Udzungwa Mountains National Park

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Ruaha National Park

HAAK NEEL



Mikumi National Park

HAAK NEEL





Kitulo National Park

## Complete Southern Highlands Adventure

The Southern Highlands is one of Tanzania’s most scenic regions, appealing especially to adventure loving tourists with several weeks available to explore:

From **Dar es Salaam**, head west to **Morogoro** for cultural tours and hiking, and to **Mikumi** with its easily spottable wildlife. From there, you head to **Udzungwa Mountains National Park** for hiking up the steep, lushly vegetated slopes or exploring the surrounding Kilombero area. Alternatively, continue from **Mikumi** to **Iringa**, which makes a relaxing base. From **Iringa**, a two- or three-night detour to **Ruaha National Park** is worth the effort, before heading down the Tanzam Highway to **Mbeya**. En route are several lovely spots to relax and take in the stunning nature. Once in **Mbeya**, there is plenty to do in the surrounding area. Options include hiking in the scenic hills around **Tukuyu** and canoeing, exploring, and hiking around pristine **Lake Nyasa**, using **Matema** as a base with its picturesque beach and lush mountains. End your trip hiking in lovely **Kitulo National Park**, with its vibrant wildflowers and wide vistas.



PHOTOS, TOP, BOTTOM RIGHT: DANIEL CHARLES MSIRIKALE  
SHAHI MJANJA

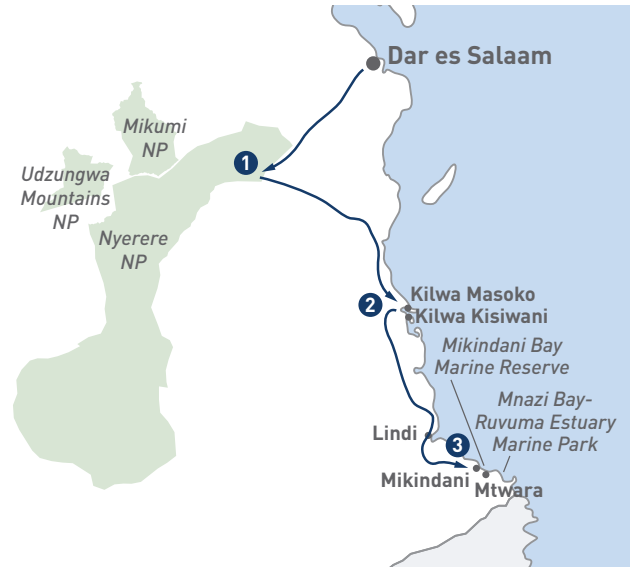


# Wildlife and Beach Combo

This itinerary is ideal for those wanting to get a glimpse of Tanzania’s wildlife and beaches away from the more standard northern circuit-Zanzibar combination.

From **Dar es Salaam**, there are several buses in the dry season that head to **Nyerere National Park**. There’s also a slow train and daily flights. **Nyerere National Park** is magnificent, and well worth at least three to four days enjoying its fine lodges, boat safaris, wildlife, and amazing night sounds, especially hippos grunting in the Rufiji River.

For travellers with more time and a taste for the offbeat, continue from Nyerere to Tanzania’s far south. Sleepy **Kilwa Masoko** makes a pleasant destination for a day or two. The town is also the springboard to the famed ruins at **Kilwa Kisiwani**, just offshore. Once you’ve finished exploring in the Kilwa area, continue by bus south via **Lindi** to the **Mtwara** area, Kasama where highlights are **Mikindani Town** with its coconut plantation and long history and the beach at Msimbati in the **Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park**. Spend a night here in the Mikindani Old Boma Hotel, a beautifully restored German fort with ocean views that doubles as a hotel and a free hospitality institute for local people.



Hippos in Nyerere National Park



Great Mosque at Kilwa Kisiwani



Mikindani sunset

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROBERT J. ROSS, FABIAN LEU, ECOZ DIVING, ECOZ DIVING

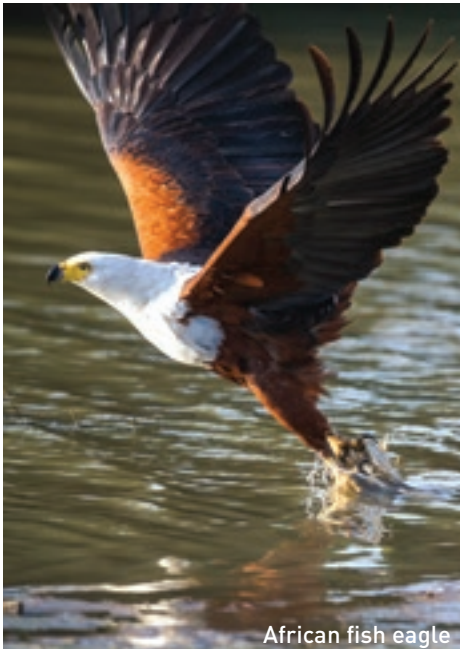


Coconut trees in Mtwara

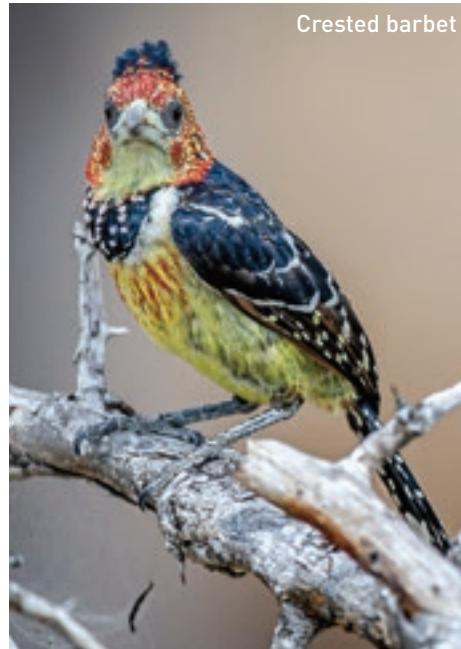




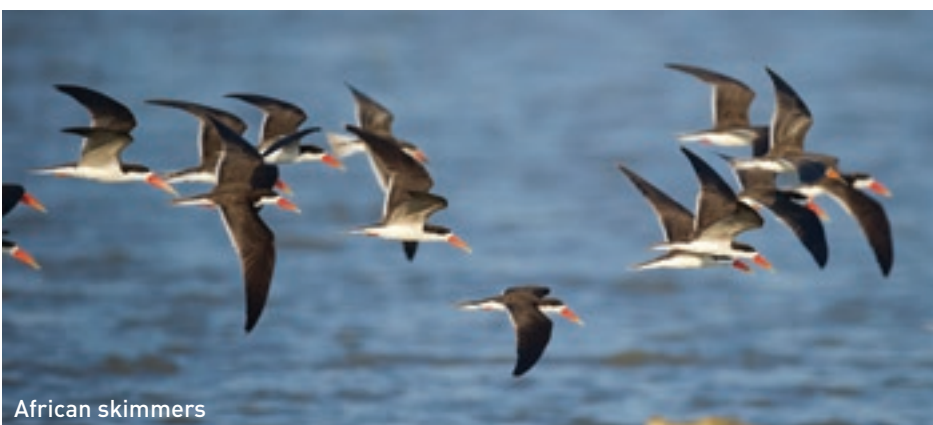
Northern carmine  
bee-eater



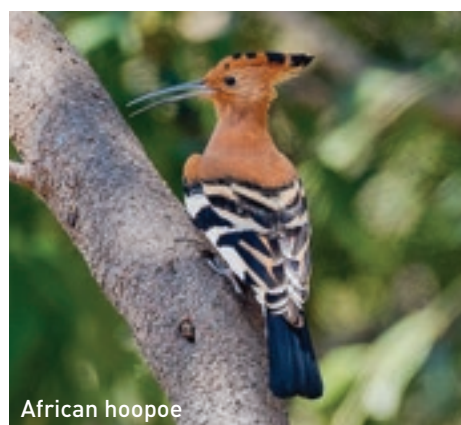
African fish eagle



Crested barbet



African skimmers



African hoopoe

ROBERT J. ROSS

## Bird Watching Highlights

This itinerary will take both amateur and professional birdwatchers and photographers to the best places in Southern Tanzania for birds.

From **Dar es Salaam**, plunge into the centre of the country and begin your expedition in beautiful **Ruaha National Park**. There are close to 600 species of birds living in **Ruaha's** baobabs – more than any other park in the country – including the abundant red-billed hornbill, made famous by Disney's Zazu in *The Lion King*. Turn southwards and climb into the mountains to **Kitulo National Park**. Among the bountiful wildflowers, you can observe hard-to-find birds like the rare Denham's bustard, the endangered blue swallow, the mountain marsh widow, the Njombe cisticola, and the Kipengere seedeater. Your journey will continue to the newly-opened **Mpanga Kipengere Game Reserve** to the immediate east. There you will continue your quest for endemic birds of the Southern Highlands, including the ultra-rare fufumka bird. From there, begin circling back to **Dar es Salaam** to the northeast and stop in **Udzungwa Mountains National Park**. Spend a couple of days trekking deep into the mountainous jungle, which is home to over 400 bird species and growing. Many rare, endemic species have been just recently discovered in the park, including the Udzungwa partridge and the rufous-winged sunbird. Finish your trip at **Nyerere National Park**, where a game



drive will yield similar bird species as **Ruaha**, in addition to some larger, four-legged animals. For a grand finale, take a sunset boating safari on the Rufiji River to observe various herons, kingfishers, raptors, and bee-eaters in their natural habitat.

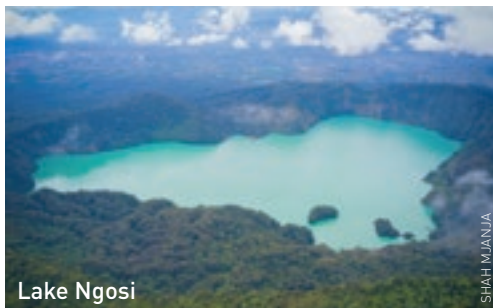
# Intrepid Traveller

This itinerary is for true adventurers, looking to get off the beaten path for a one-of-a-kind travel experience.

From **Dar es Salaam**, fly to **Mbeya** in the southwest corner of Tanzania. Make yourself at home here – **Mbeya City** will be the headquarters for this trip. Take advantage of day hikes up the Loleza and Mbeya peaks during time in the city. Pack your bags for an excursion to **Lake Ngosi**, the second largest crater lake in Africa, nestled in an erupted volcano. Your hike to the rim will undoubtedly feature a host of endemic colobus monkeys before you can gaze into the deep, emerald water of the lake. From **Lake Ngosi** travel to **Kalambo Falls** on the border of Zambia at the southeast corner of Lake Tanganyika.

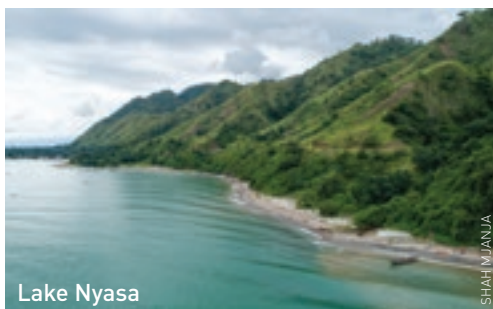
A grueling hike yields sublime views of the falls – the **Kalambo River** plummets over 220 metres in its final leg to Lake Tanganyika, making it the second highest single-drop waterfall on the African continent. Make your way back to **Mbeya City**, and spend a night there before continuing eastward to **Matema Beach Town** on the northern banks of beautiful **Lake Nyasa**. Spend a couple of days frolicking on the sandy beaches, playing watersports,

and hiking in the surrounding mountains. From the lake, head north into the mountains to **Kitulo National Park**. Traipse through miles of meadows coloured by millions of wildflowers and search for rare birds before driving east to the **Njombe Region**. There, enjoy the cool weather, go cycling through tea plantations, and learn about the local Bena people. Drive back to **Mbeya City** for one more night before flying back to **Dar es Salaam**.



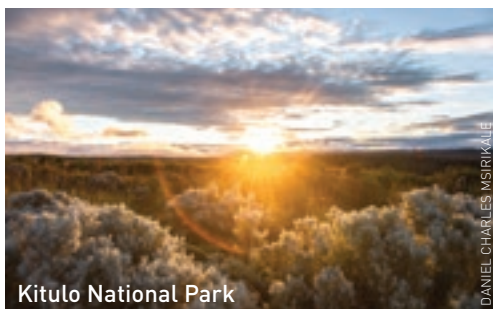
Lake Ngosi

SHAH NJANJA



Lake Nyasa

SHAH NJANJA



Kitulo National Park

DANIEL CHARLES MSIRIKALE



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# Rainy Season

This itinerary is for tourists travelling to Tanzania from November through April. The rains during these months makes many attractions impossible to access, but visitors seeking fewer crowds, blossoming foliage, and abundant bird life will be interested in this trip.

From **Dar es Salaam**, travel to **Mbeya City** in the southwest corner of the country for the first half of your journey. From your base in Mbeya, travel first to **Kitulo National Park**. Located high in the Kipengere Mountains, you'll be astounded by an endless landscape of millions of flowers, many of which are endemic, in full bloom. Native and migrant birds will fill the skies, completing the fairy tale landscape. From **Kitulo**, travel to **Kalambo Falls** on the southeast corner of Lake Tanganyika along the Zambia border. The hike up to the falls is difficult, but the view at the top is worth it. **Kalambo Falls** is



the second highest single-drop waterfall in Africa at 221 metres, and a rainy season visit will afford the best views of massive quantities of water gushing down en route to Lake Tanganyika. Pack your bags and strike into the centre of Tanzania for your next destination: **Ruaha National Park**. Although large game might be harder to find there during the rainy season, its thousands of baobabs will be in full bloom, and birds will be everywhere. Birdwatchers will be overwhelmed by the park's nearly 600 species, and the Great Ruaha River, which is dry for most of the year, will indeed live up to its name. From **Ruaha**, travel east to **Udzungwa Mountains National Park** - your final destination. Spend a couple of days trekking deep into the dense jungles and mountains of the parks, admire its many waterfalls, and try to spot the rare, endemic birds like the Udzungwa partridge and the rufous-winged sunbird.



Kitulo National Park



Udzungwa Mountains National Park



Ruaha National Park

# Southern Tanzania's Top Cultural Experiences

This itinerary is for travellers interested in learning about the unique cultures of Southern Tanzania.

From **Dar es Salaam**, travel to **Mbeya City** in the southwestern corner of the country to begin your trip. Spend a night exploring the city, which is mostly untouched by tourism, and its inhabitants before striking east to the **Njombe Region**. There, enjoy the cool weather and go on a cycling tour through tea plantations to learn about local agriculture. You'll be introduced to the Bena people in Njombe, and you will learn about them more at your next destination: the nearby **Nyumba Nitu Natural Forest**. The forest is home to an intricate cave system used as a hideout for the Bena during conflicts with the Hehe tribe in the late nineteenth century and the Germans during the 1905–1906 Maji Maji Uprising, and the Bena continue to use the site for sacrifices and rituals through the year. The preserved Mdandu slave market is located near the forest and is also worth a visit to learn more about German colonial rule. Say goodbye to the Bena people and travel north to **Iringa** to continue your cultural experience. At the Boma museum, learn about the Hehe and their military prowess under Chief Mkwawa, the most notorious adversary of German imperialism in Tanzania. Across the street, buy handicrafts made from local adults with disabilities at the Neema Crafts store.



Make your way eastwards to finish your journey in and around **Nyerere National Park**, the largest national park in Africa. In addition to enjoying the wildlife, visit villages bordering the park like Mloka to learn about the impact of popular tourism on local life. It will be an intimate, enlightening, and humbling finale.



Neema artisan

NEEMA CRAFTS



Cave system in Nyumba Nitu Natural Forest

TANZANIA TOURIST BOARD



An example of traditional pottery

ROBERT J. ROSS





Msimbati Beach



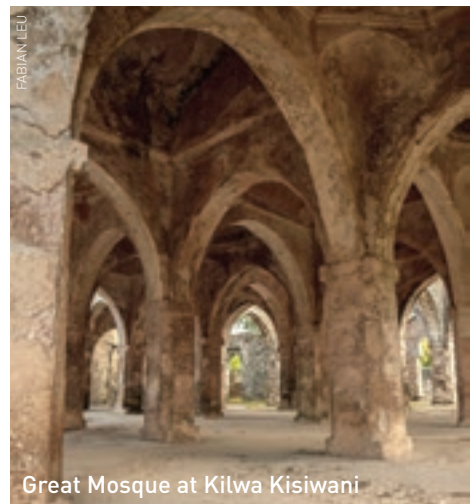
CHOLE MJIINI TREEHOUSE LODGE

Five of the seven marine turtle species can be found on the Tanzanian coast.



ECO2 DIVING

Sunset from a tree platform



FABIAN LEU

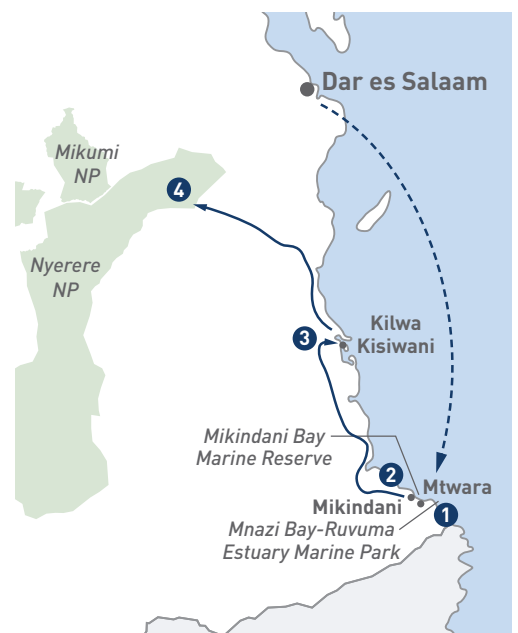
Great Mosque at Kilwa Kisiwani

## East Coast

This itinerary will take visitors to the major Southern Tanzanian attractions on the east coast of the country.

From **Dar es Salaam**, travel due south (by ferry or plane) to Mtwara in the southeast corner of the country. From there, travel to **Mnazi Bay and the Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park**. Divers and snorkelers at all levels will revel in the reefs offshore – the most biodiverse on the East African coast – and everyone will enjoy lounging on the white, sandy beaches. From **Mnazi**, make the short trip to **Mikindani**. Those who wish to continue exploring the reefs can continue to do so in **Mikindani Bay**, while others can explore the town, which, in addition to a thriving fish and spice market, features historical buildings like Dr. Livingstone’s former residence, an ancient mosque, and a preserved German fort from the colonial period. Afterwards, crawl up the coast to **Kilwa Kisiwani**. Located on the Kilwa archipelago, visitors will feel like time travellers while exploring the ruins of the ancient city-state. A thousand-year-old mosque, the oldest on the East African coast, dominates the scene with its perfectly preserved domes and vaults. Snap back to the 21<sup>st</sup> century for a trip north to the brand new **Nyerere National Park**, now the largest national park in Africa. Go on a game drive to observe lions, leopards, elephants, buffalo, giraffes, impalas, baboons, and more. End your trip with a sunset boating safari on the Rufiji River to get up close and personal with hippos and crocodiles. An optional final destination could be Mafia Island.

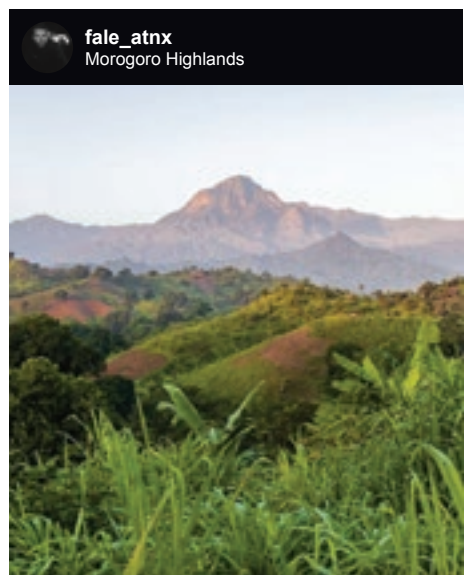
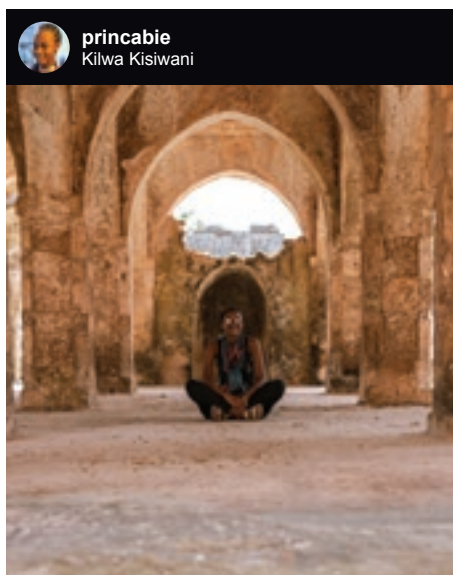
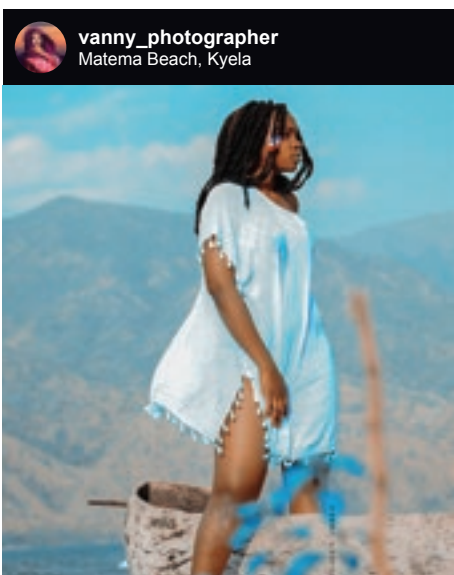
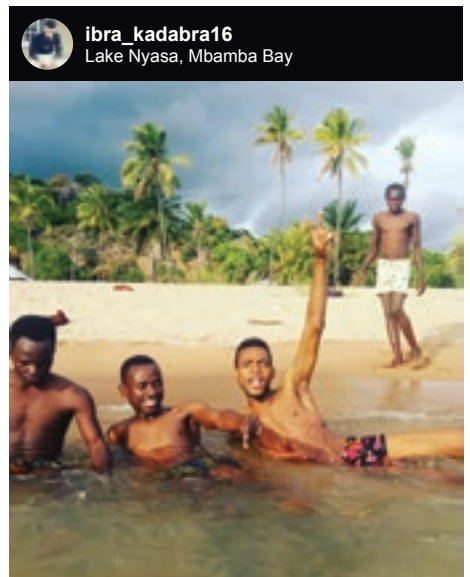
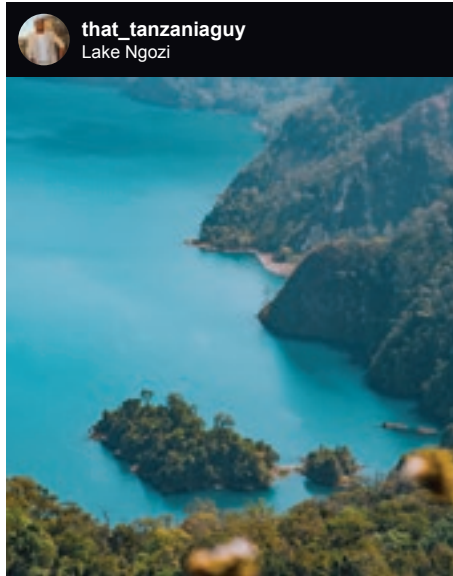
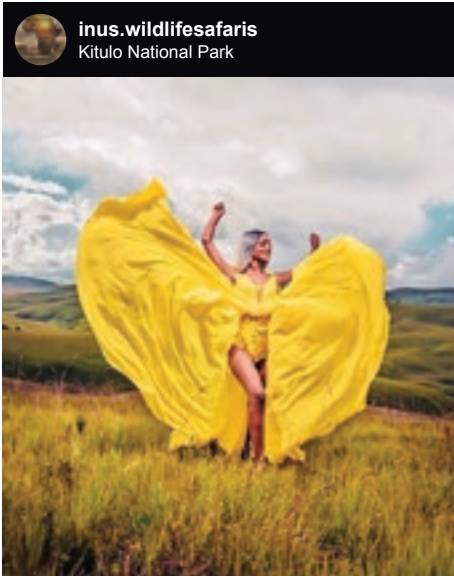
PHOTO: TOP: ECO2 DIVING





# Top Instagram Locations

The Southern Circuit incites wanderlust envy for days. Check at these top tagged locations from real travellers like you for top ideas.





# Postcards from the Southern Circuit

Hi Pierce,

I had no clue Tanzania had such beautiful beaches and marine life. I hear people talking all the time about safaris, but I have visited some of the most stunning beaches I have ever seen in my life, and I feel like I've stumbled across Africa's biggest secret! But don't worry ... it's not all laying on the beach! My days are filled with hiking, diving, snorkeling, sunset dhow rides, and yoga on the beach. I definitely picked the right place to volunteer for my gap year - I have never seen so many turtles and whale sharks in my life. I am directly contributing to the area's conservation efforts which is so rewarding. I really hope you can visit. Let's do a safari!

Lots of love,  
Leslie

(Gap year volunteer from Surrey, UK)

ECO2 DIVING



ROBERT J. ROSS



Dear Ms. Scott,

This is the best trip ever!! I packed the safari animal book you gave me last Christmas and I got to see many of the animals with my own eyes! I even saw a lion yesterday. It was so big and I saw it rear! Our car didn't even have walls so it was a little scary but super cool!

Even though we are little, the guides planned so many fun things for me and Blaine! We took an animal "scat" walk, played games in the pool, and went on an awesome boat ride. We made friends with the other kids at the lodge. We even got to talk to the national park rangers and I learned about something called poaching. I can't believe there are people out there who want to kill elephants for their tusks! I think I want to be a park ranger when I grow up! Or maybe a scientist. I learned so much about protecting animal and plant life.

I can't wait to go back to school and tell our class about the trip. Everyone is gonna be so jealous!

Love, Olivia

(13-year-old student from Wichita, Kansas)

Jambo Odliambo,

I am writing from our neighbour country, Tanzania. I decided to take a chance and venture to the south of the country, unlike most Kenyans. I thought the landscape was going to be very similar to what we have at home in our own country, but it is completely different. What a surprise. Imagine crystal blue lakes on top of mountains, wildflowers as far as the eye can see, and lush highlands. I spent my days kayaking, hiking, and swimming in freshwater. This was a refreshing experience, and I am going to encourage you and the rest of our family and friends to visit as well.

Wasalaam,  
Alice

(Kenyan traveller to the region)

FABIAN LEU



FOXES SAFARI CAMPS

Dear Mom,

Thank you for the super-zoom binoculars you gave as a wedding present. Natalie and I are writing from our safari honeymoon in Ruaha National Park where we have used them non-stop. Even all those African National Geographic documentaries you showed us when we were younger couldn't prepare me for the sheer thrill I experienced watching a wild lion chase a buffalo for lunch. I have chills just thinking about it. We picked a luxurious lodge complete with an infinity pool, 5-star meals, and a spa. Getting a massage while hearing roaring lions is an experience I'll never forget. We have our own private tent on a hill with a perfect view below. This was the perfect place for an unforgettable honeymoon. We have hundreds of pictures to show when we get back!

Colin

(Honeymooner from Raleigh, North Carolina)





# Ruaha National Park

## Explore the Wondering Nature

**Overview** 130 km from Iringa in central Tanzania, you can find the sprawling Ruaha National Park. With the wild area land initially preserved in 1910 under the

German colonial administration, it is one of the region's fastest growing attractions. With recent acquisitions of the Usangu Game Reserve and other significant wetlands in the Usangu Basin, Ruaha is Tanzania's second largest park. Covering a whopping 20,226 km<sup>2</sup>, nature enthusiasts will marvel at the vast, untouched, and unexplored swaths of the Rungwa-Kizigo-Muhesi ecosystem that the park encompasses. Though low in the dry season, the park includes four mighty rivers: the Great Ruaha (for which it is named – "Ruaha" comes from the Hehe word for river, ruvaha), Mwangusi, Jongomero, and Mzombe.

**Wildlife** Between annual rainy seasons from the late fall to the spring, you will spot an impressive host of animals gathering along the rivers of Ruaha National Park. These include some of the usual suspects: lions, leopards, giraffes, zebras, hippopotamus, and impalas. But visitors will be thrilled to also catch a glimpse of a pack of rare and endangered wild dogs, or perhaps at the beautiful spiraled horns of the male greater kudu, which can be found at few other national parks in the country. It is also estimated that Ruaha National Park has the highest concentration of elephants in all of East Africa. Avian aficionados will delight at the park's nearly 600 bird species. These include the ubiquitous red-billed hornbill, which any Disney fan will recognise as Zazu from *The Lion King*.

**Weather and Climate** Ruaha National Park has a wet season from the late fall to the early spring and a dry season in the late spring, summer, and early fall.



**Getting Here** Ruaha National Park is accessible year-round by car or airplane. Passable roads connect the park to Iringa, the nearest city 130 km away (approximately 2–3 hours), and also Dar es Salaam, which is a significantly longer 625 km trek (expect 15–16 hours in the car). Ruaha National Park also has two airstrips at Msembe and Jongomero. Scheduled and chartered flights are available from Arusha, Dodoma, Kigoma, and Dar es Salaam.

**Best Time to Visit** Most visitors elect to visit Ruaha National Park during the dry season from June to October, when animals are most concentrated around the rivers in the park. Birders should consider going in the less-busy winter and early spring months (the wet season), as birds are most active then.



Ruaha is estimated to have the highest concentration of elephants in East Africa



One of Ruaha's many majestic baobabs





A leopard lounges during the heat of the day

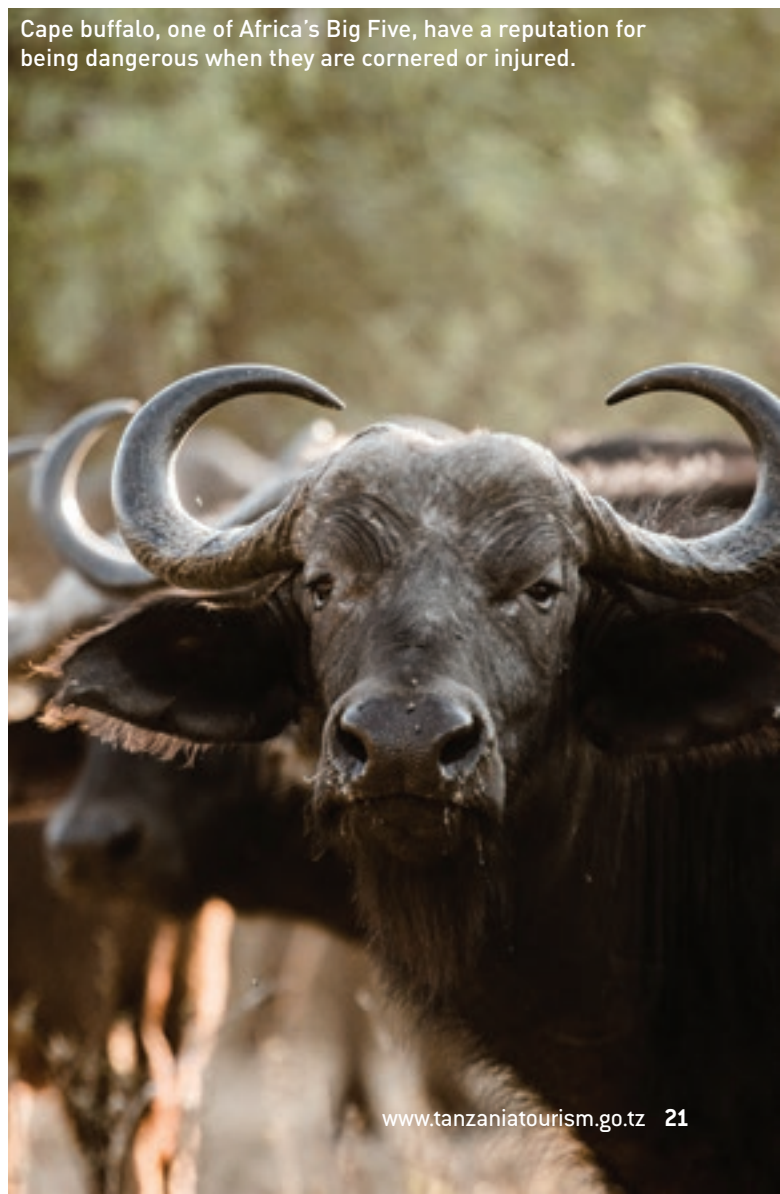
**Safaris** Tourists have a wide range of options for enjoying the biodiversity of Ruaha National Park. Guests can choose a variety of themed game drives and safaris depending on their specific interests. Considering the great size and lack of crowds in Ruaha, visitors will feel like true adventurers as they weave through the baobabs (of which there are thousands) along the Great Ruaha. Expect frequent stops for wildlife sightings as game can and will be found everywhere.

**Ethnic Groups** For hundreds of years, the area in and around Ruaha National Park was inhabited by the Hehe tribe. When Germans desired to conquer Tanzania in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Hehe fought back. Visitors can study the legacy of the Hehe rebellion by seeing the hideouts of famous Hehe warrior Chief Mkwawa and the grave of Chief Mapenza at Mpululu. To learn more about Hehe culture, Ruaha National Park also includes the rock paintings at Nyanywa and Ganga la Mafunyo, a traditional Hehe ritual site. Tourists can find out even more about Hehe culture in nearby town Iringa, especially at the Boma Museum.

**Highlights** Safari-goers should stay close to the Great Ruaha River. There, hippos and crocodiles are always a sure sight, and, especially around midday, tourists will see an impressive host of animals descend from the surrounding bush to cool off. Zebras and impalas often come to drink together, baby baboons cling to their mothers' backs as they wade in the water, and giraffes bend their long necks into the cool, blue water. All are wary of the ever-watchful leopards napping in nearby acacia trees.

PHOTOS: CALVIN KULAYA

Cape buffalo, one of Africa's Big Five, have a reputation for being dangerous when they are cornered or injured.







# Mikumi National Park

## Safari Next Door

**Overview** Nestled between the Uluguru and Lumango mountains, Mikumi National Park (est. 1964) covers 3,230 square kilometres. It is also

one of the most accessible parks on the Southern Circuit. Tourists in Dar es Salaam can make the 283 km journey to Mikumi in about five hours by following Highway A7 west. This is an ideal safari destination for those without much time.

**Wildlife** Aside from rhinoceros, guests at Mikumi can expect to see the Big Five animals. Visitors might even observe lions surveying their grassy kingdom from the tops of trees, as Mikumi is one of the only places in Africa where lions exhibit this unusual behavior. Herds of up to 300 elephants have been reported ambling across the Mkata Floodplain, which also happens to be the most reliable place in Tanzania for spotting the powerful eland, the world's largest antelope. Over 400 bird species call Mikumi National Park home, at least in some parts of the year, including a colourful host of lilac-breasted rollers, yellow-throated longclaws, and bateleur eagles.

**Weather and Climate** Mikumi National Park has a wet season from the late fall to the early spring and a dry season in the late spring, summer, and early fall.

**Getting Here** Highway A7 connects the park to Dar es Salaam. Tourists can drive or take buses from Dar to Mikumi in about four hours. Alternatively, flights are available from Dar es Salaam, Arusha, and Nyerere National Park.

**Best Time to Visit** Although Mikumi National Park is accessible year-round, it is most popular in the dry season from late June to October. This is the best time to view wildlife in the park, as that is when animals gather in large numbers at watering holes on the Mkata Floodplain to drink and cool off.



**Safaris** Various game drives criss-cross their way through the Mkata Floodplain not only in the daytime but also at night. Guests can also enjoy guided walking safaris and picnics at hippo pools, which provide close and safe access to the mud-loving beasts. Climbing into the surrounding foothills will afford tourists spectacular views of sunrise or sunset over the plain. Mikumi National Park's two- and three-day safari packages are perfect for weekenders. For those with more time, combine a trip to Mikumi with longer expeditions to Nyerere, Udzungwa Mountains, or Ruaha National Parks.

**Highlights** Most game drives will take tourists to Mkata Floodplain in the northwest section of the park. Nicknamed the "Safari Next Door", acacias and baobabs dot the rambling plain, and mountains loom on all sides. This picturesque landscape is the distinguishing factor of the park and certainly a must-see for any safari enthusiast.



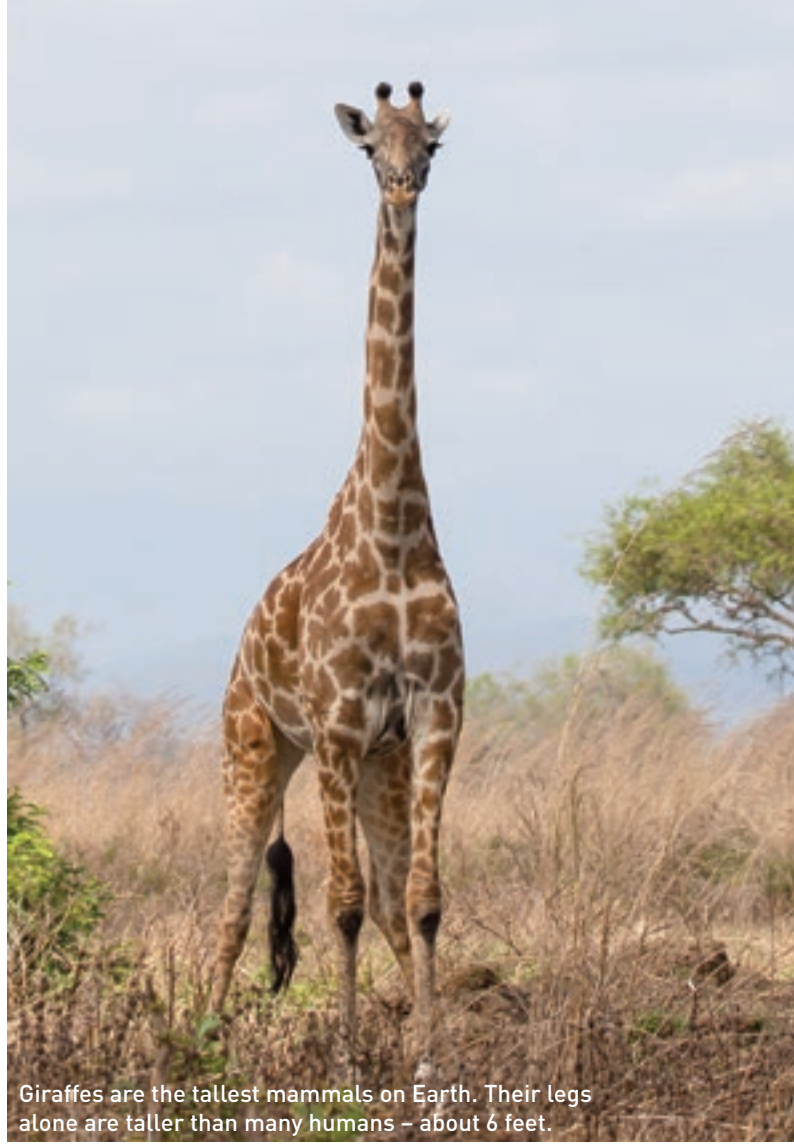
Lions are the only cats that live in groups, which are called prides.

HAAK NEEL  
FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT, TOP RIGHT, BOTTOM: OBERT J. ROSS





The eland is the world's largest antelope



Giraffes are the tallest mammals on Earth. Their legs alone are taller than many humans – about 6 feet.



An example of accommodations at Mikumi National Park

African wild dogs are intelligent, highly social, and hunt cooperatively.







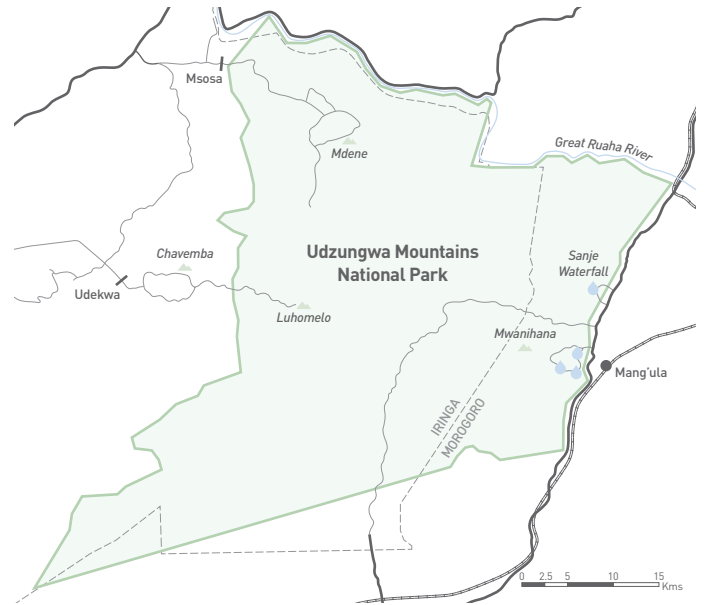
# Udzungwa Mountains National Park

## Tanzania's Biodiversity Hotspot

**Overview** 350 km from Dar es Salaam and just 65 km

southwest of Mikumi National Park, Udzungwa Mountains National Park is one of Tanzania's most breathtaking and pristine paradises. It is a unique and exciting wilderness with forests sitting tall over the land atop lofty mountains. It is one of only 34 "World Biodiversity Hotspots" and one of 200 ecoregions of global critical importance, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

**Wildlife** Unlike many other Tanzania national parks, Udzungwa Mountains National Park features a variety of biomes including mountain forests and tropical rainforests in the eastern half of the park and Miombo woodlands, grasslands, and steppe in the western part. These different habitats are the homes for hundreds of endemic plant and animal species that can be found nowhere else in the world, making the Eastern Arc Mountains and Udzungwa one of the most biodiverse attractions on the African continent. The flora and fauna of the larger Eastern Arc Mountain range cover only 2% of Tanzania's landmass but hold between 30 and 40% of the country's plant and mammal species. A quarter of the roughly 2,500 identified plant species in Udzungwa are endemic, most famously the African violet, and two of the six primate species in the park (the Iringa red colobus and Sanje crested mangabey) cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Dozens of unique bird species only occur in the Eastern Arc Mountains, and ornithologists have recorded over 400 species in Udzungwa Mountains National Park. Scientists continue to study the area, and discoveries of new endemic plants and animals are ongoing. Although Udzungwa is not a conventional game-viewing destination (don't expect to see the Big Five here), it is one of the greatest exhibitions of wildlife in Tanzania.



**Weather and Climate** The tropical rainforest of the eastern half of Udzungwa Mountains National Park features rainfall year-round, distinguishing the park from most other Tanzania attractions with annual wet and dry seasons.

**Getting Here** Travel to Udzungwa Mountains National Park via car or bus, as there are no airstrips nearby. The trip takes about five hours from Dar and is much shorter if you are starting at Mikumi National Park, which is only 65 km away. Most visitors combine Udzungwa with Mikumi on the same trip, generally choosing to stay in larger Mikumi with more options.

Welcome gate at Udzungwa Mountains National Park



Green woodhoopoe







Iringa red colobus are endemic to the Udzungwa Mountains.

**Best Time to Visit** Most tourists visit Udzungwa Mountains National Park during the dry season between June and October. And even then, be prepared. Udzungwa receives rainfall twelve months a year.

**Activities** Visitors will be enchanted by an intricate network of hiking trails weaving through the brooding and primeval forests of Udzungwa Mountains National Park. There is a hike for everyone, from the one-hour Sonjo trek to the strenuous six-day expedition up the Lumemo Trail. The most popular, however, is a half-day hike to the magnificent Sanje Waterfall, which plunges 170 metres into a picturesque jungle valley. Swimming at the bottom is part of the fun!

**Highlights** Everyone visiting Udzungwa Mountains National Park must take the Sanje Waterfall trek. The winding trail takes hikers up and through the jungle mountains, far from the sights and sounds of the villages below. Endemic but abundant red colobus monkeys swing through the canopy above, and their chatter adds to the chorus of bird and insect calls all around. Breathtaking vistas offer views of the magnificent falls from afar before hikers plunge ever deeper into the jungle. Trees unique to the Eastern Arc Mountains are labelled and described in Swahili and English to educate passersby. The view from the top of the falls is sublime, and swimming below is a perfect way to cool off after a long hike.

PHOTO: TOP: HAAK NEEL

Breathtaking Sanje Waterfall



MARC VERAART/FLICKE





# Nyerere National Park

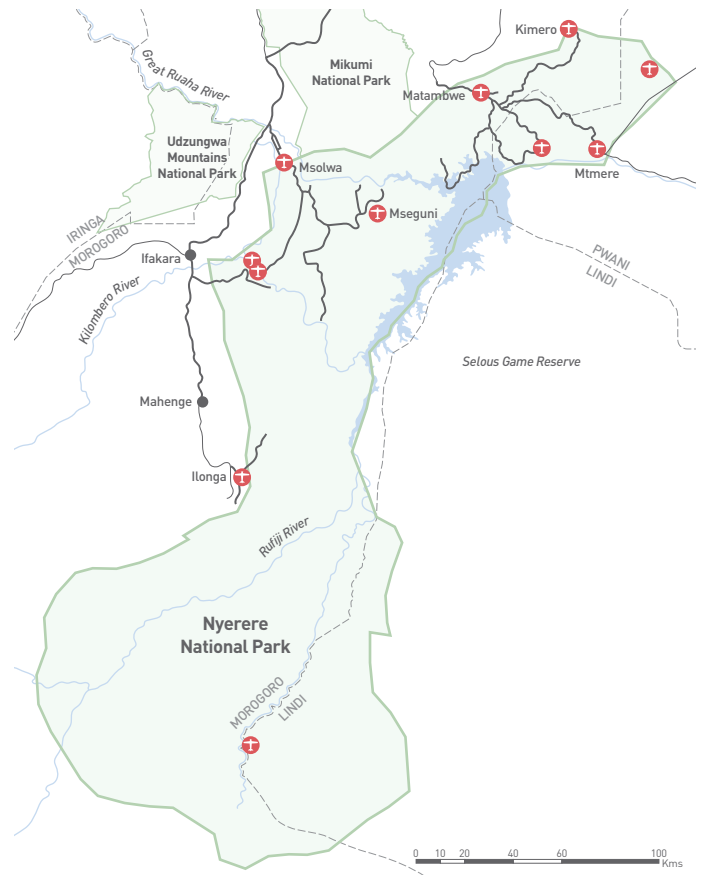
## Africa's Largest National Park

**Overview** Named after Tanzania's founder and first President Julius Nyerere, Nyerere National Park was established in November 2019

and is the newest in the nation. Carved out of a portion of Selous Game Reserve, the 30,000-square-kilometre Nyerere National Park surpassed Ruaha and is now the largest park not only in Tanzania but also on the entire African continent. The defining feature of the park is the Rufiji River, which runs from the surrounding highlands into the Indian Ocean.

**Wildlife** Various channels and lagoons break off the Rufiji River of Nyerere National Park to create a lush landscape with valuable water sources for animals in the dry season. There, many of East Africa's most recognisable animals compete for space to drink and cool off, and visitors in the dry season will be treated to high concentrations of game. These include thousands of buffalo, lions, wildebeests, giraffes, zebras, hippos, impalas, baboons, waterbucks, elands, leopards, crocodiles, and hyenas. Nyerere is also home to some rare species difficult to find elsewhere, like the African wild dog (there is currently an active pack in the Lake Manze area). The park boasts over 445 bird species, too. Along the lakesides, yellow-billed storks stalk their aquatic prey, the African skimmers fish in the deeper sections, and far overhead palm-nut vultures scan the landscape for carcasses to scavenge.

**Weather and Climate** Nyerere National Park has a wet season from the late fall to the early spring and a dry season in the late spring, summer, and early fall.



**Getting Here** As the biggest National Park in Africa, there are multiple ways to enter the vast Nyerere, depending on where in the country you are arriving from. In 2020, new road infrastructure from Dar has made Nyerere easier to reach than ever before. This new byway takes visitors to Nyerere's eastern Mtemere Gate through

A boating safari on the Rufji River is a must-do for visitors to Nyerere National Park.





the town of Kisarawe in roughly four hours. For a longer, more scenic route, travellers can reach Nyerere from Dar es Salaam by a route running through Morogoro and then south through Mikumi National Park until reaching Nyerere's northwestern Matambwe gate. Taking this longer scenic route allows visitors to create a joint visit with Mikumi and learn more about life, work, and culture in rural Tanzania. Alternatively, tourists can elect to take the TAZARA (Tanzania Zambia Railway) from Dar es Salaam to the Matambwe gate of Nyerere. This takes about the same length as the drive to the park and offers beautiful views of the rural bushland. Finally, the quickest (and priciest) way to Nyerere is by plane. Flights routinely depart from Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Zanzibar, and Ruaha National Park to the park's own airstrips. The flight from Dar only lasts about 45 minutes.

**Best Time to Visit** The best time to visit Nyerere National Park is during the dry season between late June and October. Most of the park's camps are located near the valuable water sources animals flock to during these months. Exercise great caution in the wet season, as heavy rains make the dirt roads in and around the park impassable. In February of 2020, the Rufiji River flooded so much that parts of many hotels (usually the guest tents) washed away.

**Safaris** Nyerere has more safari options than any other park in Tanzania. Like most other parks, Nyerere offers outstanding game drives, walking safaris, and birding tours. Beyond that, and most famously, visitors can take a boating safari down the Rufiji River and its tributaries. On the water, guests will be treated to up-close views of hippos, crocodiles, and various birds.

**Ethnic Groups** There are several local villages surrounding Nyerere National Park, and many, including Mloka, are open to tourists curious about local culture. There, tourists can eat traditional food, visit schools and places of worship, and learn about tribal medicine and witch doctors.

**Highlights** Nyerere National Park is one of the only places in Tanzania where tourists can go on a boating safari, and it should be at the top of any guest's bucket list. Cruising up and down the deep and fast Rufiji River, tourists will come very close to herons, kingfishers, and bee-eaters that burrow into the high, muddy banks. The eyes of dozens of crocodiles will follow the boat as it passes by, but the most terrifyingly thrilling aspect of the adventure is the hippos. While the river boat inches closer to a hippo pod, the amphibious behemoths dive underwater in an intense game of hide-and-seek. Tourists will sit on the edge of their seats, expecting the massive mammal to come crashing onto the deck in an open-mouthed assault. Of course, this never happens, but being in the river with the animals gives guests a memorable adventure. The boat captain will stop on an island in the middle of the river for a barbecue dinner and views of the deep orange sun slowly falling below the horizon on the western bank of the Rufiji. It is an experience no one will ever forget.



A lion's hunt ends unsuccessfully.

Maasai giraffes are one of the many species visitors may expect to see.



Massive hippos can give boating safari passengers a thrill.





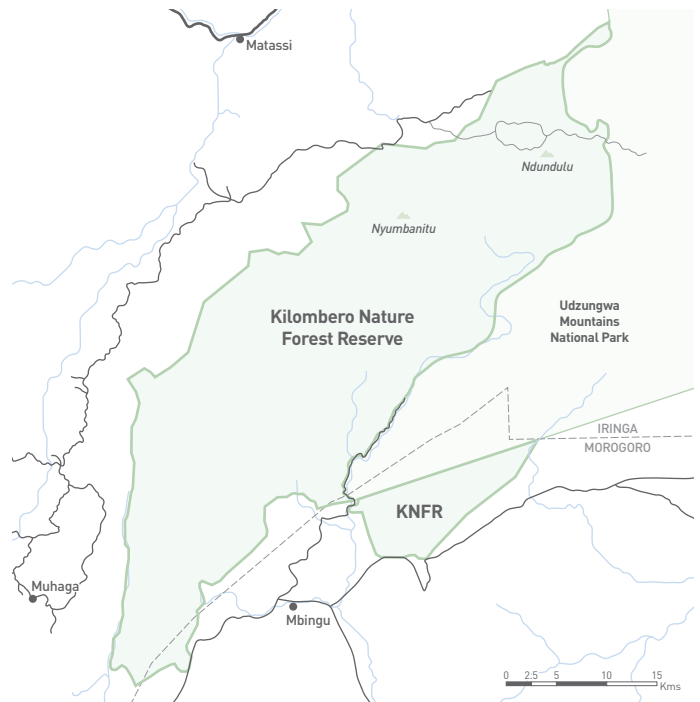


# Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve

The Land of Higher Biodiversity, Endemic Flora and Fauna

**Overview** Nestled in the heart of the Udzungwa Mountains, and extending across a series of forest-clad peaks, Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve was established in 2007 to conserve the area's unique ecosystem and protect its exceptional biodiversity for future generations. The reserve is a haven for at least 400 plant species, and 150 bird species including the rare Udzungwa partridge and the rufous-winged sunbird. Though it is not a national park, it is the second greatest level of protection as a state-owned forest reserve. This is a status only held by 12 other wilderness zones in Tanzania. These nature reserves offer the highest level of protection besides national parks, and are managed by the Tanzania Forest Services (TFS) Agency. Exploring Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve is an ultimate beaten path destination even for an already off the beaten path region.

**Wildlife** Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve is home to a wide range of flora and fauna, many of which are also found in next-door neighbor Udzungwa Mountains National Park. Most animals are rainforest creatures, residing high in the treetop canopies or beneath the fertile rainforest soil. This mountainous forest hosts 10 species of primates, including six cercopithecidae. The Sanje mangabey (*Cercocebus galeritus sanjei*) and the Iringa red colobus monkey (*Procolobus badius gordonorum*) are endemic to the area. Avian aficionados will fall in love with the feathered creatures behind the omnipresent squawking overhead. There are also big mammals such as elephants, lions, leopards, and buffalo in the reserve, though rare to spot. If you are more interested in botany, you will marvel at the unique rainforest habitat and the delicate natural order that weaves them all together. Plants here are among the world's most resilient, competing for the limited sunlight that beams its way through the dense treetop canopy.



**Historical Importance** Nyumba Nitu Forest, part of Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve, has small villages scattered throughout the property, indicative of tribes that used to live there. After the attack by the Germans on Iringa Kalenga (the Hehe tribe headquarters), many fled into the forest to organise resistance. Later, the famous Chief Mkwawa escaped from Kalenga to Nyumba Nitu site, which is now part of Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve. Nyumba Nitu Forest still remains important to the Hehe tribe for its forested worship sites: Mihiti, Ndundulu, Ihambigali, Ruipa Kimenya, and more. Visiting Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve illustrates the strength of these tribes, living in harmony with wild rainforest.



One of the many waterfalls in Kilombero Forest Nature Reserve



Sanje crested mangabey





**Highlights** The striking landmark of Ndundulu Peak (also called giraffe peak) towers over the whole area at an altitude of 2,000 metres. Climb four to five hours to the top and enjoy lofty, scenic views across all of Kilolo and Kilombero at the summit. You are guaranteed to pause several times to take in the sweeping views. Another top highlight is visiting the Magombelema Cave, an impressive 12-chambered rock formation into the earth. Besides these two main sites, you will find the greatest highlight is having this land completely to yourself. Kilombero is a hidden gem in an undiscovered region. How many other places can you come face to face with endemic species while not seeing another tourist for days? This is wilderness immersion to the max.

**Weather and Climate** Kilombero has a humid climate that reflects its rainforest habitat. Unlike many of Tanzania's national parks with severe dry spells, it rains frequently in Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve. In many cases, these are light drizzles, but one should always be prepared for a heavier storm, particularly around November, December, and January.

**Activities** The highlights of Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve are all about experiencing the rugged landscapes and wilderness of this lesser visited area through activities and adventures. If you are visiting, you should be prepared to journey by foot, as there are no vehicles or roads in the park. Additionally, accommodation options are still limited to canvas tent camping. This allows a visitor to have total wilderness immersion in the rainforest, giving you the opportunity to bird watch, learn about endemic plants, take a dip in the refreshing waterfalls/ rivers, and sleep in the thick of the woods under stars completely free from light pollution.

**Getting Here** The first access is from Iringa airport by road through Ipogolo in Iringa town via Kilolo district to Mhanga village via Kimala ward center about 80 km. The second access is through Ilula (small town) in Kilolo district to Udekwa village which is about 63 km. The third access is in Morogoro region through Mikumi town to Ifakara via

Mang'ula to Nawawala village all the way to Mbingu village about 160 km. Lastly is through Tanzania and Zambia Railway whereby Idete, Mngeta, and Ruipa railway stations in Nawawala, Mngeta, and Mpofu villages respectively are the nearest station to the reserve (about 1–3 km).

We strongly recommend contacting a tour operator who has experience in the area and can assist you in organising a multi-day hike. There are numerous reputable guides who will take you through the landscape and teach you interactive facts about local flora and fauna. They also are expert animal spotters, ensuring you do not leave the area before spotting some of the endemic species. Unguided trips to the reserve are not allowed.

**Best Time to Visit** The best time to visit Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve is during the Eastern Arc Mountains' dry season between June and October. And even then, be prepared as the area receives rainfall each month of the year. It is generally best to avoid the area during a period of rainfall as the trails will all be muddy.

**Conservation Efforts** There are many ways people are dedicated to protecting Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve and empowering the local community; here are five ways:

1. Forbidding the extraction of wood or animal parts in Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve. Activities in the area are limited to research, education, and nature-based tourism
2. Joint forest patrol with Villages Natural Resources Committee Members (VNRCs) to ensure there is no illegal activity
3. Manual clearing of trails for set tourism paths and to avoid fires. There is also routine consolidating of forest boundaries – KNFR has a total boundary length of 369 km
4. Joint forest management with 21 surrounding village communities in two council districts: Kilolo in Iringa and Kilombero in Morogoro
5. Supporting economic livelihoods to surrounding communities through beekeeping, tree planting, livestock, and fishing. Kilombero is home to 7.5 hectares of apiaries comprising about 397 beehives



# Land Animals

## A conversation with a local Safari Guide



Emmanuel Lema

Part of Tanzania's fame has been earned by the quality of guides who know the land inside and out, keeping their guests informed and entertained. Learn more from expert local guide Emmanuel Lema who has been leading tours to the Southern Circuit for more than two decades.



Leopard

ROBERT J. ROSS

### Why did you decide to be a guide?

Ever since I was born, I have always loved wildlife. I also grew up very close to Mount Kilimanjaro National Park. When I was going to school I saw a lot of different animals along the way such as bush pigs, elephants, monkeys, baboons, and colobus monkeys, as well as very beautiful birds! I was also very interested in seeing tourists coming close to our village to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, so the situation really captured my attention and I studied hard so I could be a tour guide. I maintained my passion until I successfully graduated and joined a wildlife college. I finally succeeded in fulfilling my dream of becoming a tour guide.

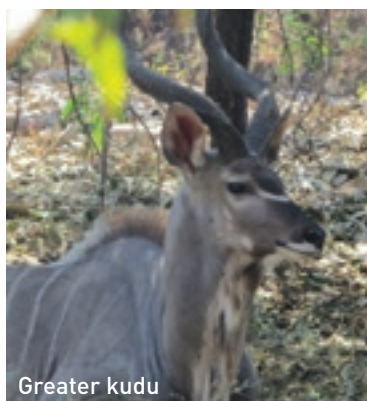
### What do you think is special about Southern Tanzania animals and what animals do you see the most?

Tanzania has a lot of animals compared to other parts of the world, and especially rare endemic bird species that are found only here. The avians attract thousands of tourists from all over the world to come and watch them!

The parks of southern Tanzania are very unique compared to other parks as they are huge and require experienced guides and time to enjoy them! Animals such as greater and lesser kudu, Roan and Sable antelopes, African wild dogs, large prides of lions, elephant herds, hippopotamuses and crocodiles, as well as endemics birds are some of the region's beauties and animals you will see the most.

### What is your favorite animal that calls Southern Tanzania home?

My guests often enjoy seeing large groups of greater and lesser kudu that live throughout the parks of southern Tanzania! African hunting dogs are easily seen, as well as large herds of elephants and prides of lions. Roan and sable antelopes are seen more frequently than in other areas.



Greater kudu

EMMANUEL LEMA

### If I want to see big game, what is the best type of safari for me?

If you want to enjoy successful game viewing in Southern Tanzania, you can pretty much embark on any tour, *but* you need to have enough time in every park! Three to four days in each park will be enough to complete in-depth game drives. Although to succeed in seeing animals you must arrive at the right time and be in the right place at the right time. Having an experienced guide also contributes to success. Timing is everything to a successful game drive.

### What are your must-do steps to find any animals?

Each guide has their techniques for the perfect search for animals during a game drive, but here are my best tips:

- Move in slow motion – loud and quick movements will scare away the game.
- Look carefully in shrubs for very small movements that represent the small and rare species.
- Bring or borrow some high-quality binoculars to better see.
- Track the habits of the day and learn about their behavior according to certain times of the day. When it is hottest, animals are by the river wanting to drink and cool off.
- BE PATIENT. If you wanted quick and easy animals, you would go to the zoo. These are wild animals and it takes time to successfully track them.
- Take lots of rest during your off time. Spotting animals is hard work and you want to ensure you are fresh to start a new day of spotting.

### Which animal's camouflage is the hardest to find?

The most elusive and secretive animal is the leopard. Every guest enjoys their safari when they manage to see a leopard. I also find my journey unsuccessful without seeing a leopard, a rare and elusive animal.

### How can we practice being expert animal spotters?

Loving and focusing on animals will give you a very early experience and success comes quickly and you will enjoy your work. The longer you practice, the more experience you have.

### Check out Emmanuel's social media:

Instagram: @african\_dream\_holiday

Facebook: @ExpertlyGuided

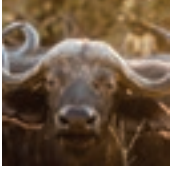
Website: [www.africandreamholidays.info](http://www.africandreamholidays.info)



# Distinguished Resident Checklist

This region is home to wondrous species found in your wildest dreams. Some of these animals you might recognise, and some of them you may be learning about for the first time. How many of these can you find on your safari? Cut out this page and take it with you!

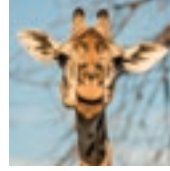
## Usual Suspects



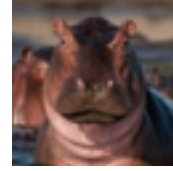
Cape buffalo



Elephant



Giraffe



Hippopotamus



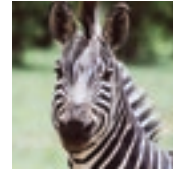
Impala



Lion



Nile crocodile



Zebra

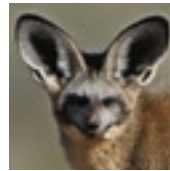
## Rarer Species



African wild dog



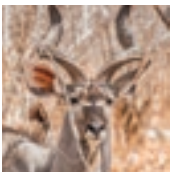
Angolan colobus



Bat-eared fox



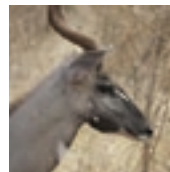
Black rhino



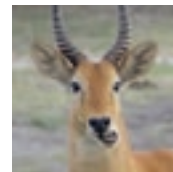
Greater kudu



Leopard

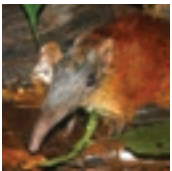


Lesser kudu



Puku

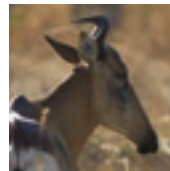
## Southern Specific Species



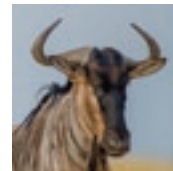
Grey-faced sengi



Iringa red colobus



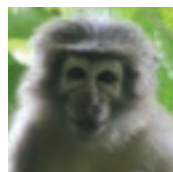
Lichtenstein's hartebeest



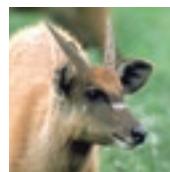
Nyasa wildebeest



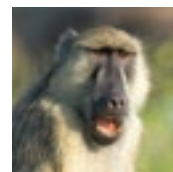
Ruaha topi



Sanje crested mangabey



Sitatunga

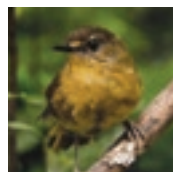


Yellow baboon

**Endemic Birds** With over 570 bird species in the area, it is no wonder that birders come from far and wide to see what they can find. Here are ten of our favorite endemic bird species:



Fülleborn's boubou



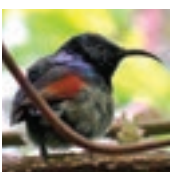
Iringa akalat



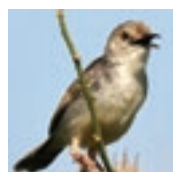
Kilombero weaver



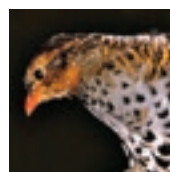
Ruaha red-billed hornbill



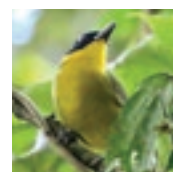
Rufous-winged sunbird



White-tailed cisticola



Udzungwa forest partridge



Uluguru bushshrike



# Birding Bonanza

Southern Tanzania is one of the world's top opportunities to witness bountiful bird biodiversity.

## Ruaha National Park

Like the conductor of a great symphony, the first glimpse of morning sun peeking over the acacias on the eastern horizon in Ruaha National Park gives the cue for a chorus of avian voices. Opening the show are the coos of the ring-necked doves: a steady rhythm in this natural orchestra. Enchanted by the beginning of the song of the day, or perhaps by the sound of you moving through the bush, a family of red-necked spurfowl contribute a series of frantic croaks and scurry across your path to a new hiding spot. Silhouetted against the slowly ascending orange orb, a red-billed hornbill lazily flaps its speckled wings before landing effortlessly on a nearby branch. It squawks a "good morning" and glares at you with a curious white eye. The chorus crescendos to a new peak with the addition of a posse of hadeda ibis, the loudest bird in Africa, announcing their departure from their roosts for a new day. Seemingly perturbed by such an outburst, a crowned lapwing walks swiftly in the opposite direction, its skinny, bright red legs shining brilliantly in the rising sun.

The symphony of birds does not end when the sun is up; it merely enters a new movement. As the sun gets higher, the birds get brighter. Behold the lilac-breasted roller

Bateleur eagles can be identified by their distinctive coloration, long wings, and short tail.



A male purple-banded sunbird feeds chicks while in flight.

in a nearby baobab. The sun strikes it in such a way that accents its blue, indigo, orange, green, and purple hues. Who can look away from its majestic turquoise and violet under feathers as it soars into the distance? Taking its place in the baobab is a monogamous pair of little bee-eaters. Their golden throats contrast elegantly with bright green bodies, and the keen-eyed observer will notice that both male and female have donned blue eyeliner for the occasion. The romance is not limited to bee-eaters, for among the most famous birds in Ruaha National Park is the yellow-collared lovebird. This endearing parrot has an inviting white-ringed eye on a black head, a green and yellow body, and a lipstick-red beak.

If the lion can be called the King of the Jungle, then Ruaha's birds are surely the court jesters. Their orchestra of chirps, calls, screeches, croaks, hoots, and squawks is the soundtrack of the park from dawn till dusk. Their variety of colours, shapes, sizes, and behaviors are guaranteed to strike the imaginations of everyone, from backyard birders to experienced ornithologists. Just as a jester brings life to the otherwise grim court of the king, birds bring an indispensable level of energy and beauty to Ruaha National Park.

## Nyerere National Park

You descend a rocky slope to the banks of the Rufiji River. Your last few steps to the boat are cautious ones on the wet stones. Not ten metres away, an unafraid white-crowned lapwing looks at you with pale, judging eyes. Its yellow wattles look like a handlebar mustache, and they shake when it turns its attention back to its macroinvertebrate dinner in the river shallows. Now seated in the boat, you watch the lapwing at work. Its ridiculous mustachios give it the resemblance of a crotchety old man, but its rapid and precise hunting technique are demonstrations of vitality and grace. It either isn't bothered or is too hungry to care when the boat hums to life, pulls away from shore, and begins its route upstream.

The trip travels directly into the setting sun. The evening rays send streaks of orange across the sky and



shine on the surface of the Rufiji. A yellow-billed stork, so often labeled among the more unfortunate-looking birds of Africa, flies across the horizon. Few would make the jump to ever calling a stork beautiful, but there is a certain, undeniable majesty about the bird as it glides above the river, and you can hear the methodical flapping of its great white wings as it passes the boat.

On the northern bank, thirty-foot cliffs of sand and rock rise vertically from the river. An hour ago you stood on those same cliffs, but only now on the water can you see the colony of cinnamon-chested bee-eaters that nest in burrowed holes on the sides. The cliff is riddled with their nests like cannonballs shot from the broadside of a ship, and you can see their green and yellow heads poke out of the holes. Some flutter out and land on the trees above. Their amber breast feathers flow in the evening breeze. It looks like they, too, are enjoying the sunset.

There is a small, sandy island in the middle of the river. A massive crocodile lays motionless as a log on the edge, its mouth ajar, soaking up the final bit of sun of the day. A goliath heron fishes nearby. Standing over a metre tall, the heron seems well aware that it would be a tasty dinner for the crocodile, and it keeps its distance from



Brown-headed parrots flock in wooded areas, with a preference for baobabs

the prehistoric predator. You compare the heron's hunting style to that of the lapwing you saw at the beginning of the tour. Whereas the lapwing was impulsive and frantic, the goliath heron is a slow, calculated killer. It stands frozen in the shallows, its neck arched just above the surface, the focus of its yellow eye never wavering. Just when you think it must be a statue, the heron's snakelike neck snaps forward with tremendous velocity, sending its harpoon of a beak into the water to stab its unfortunate prey. This time it comes up with nothing but a few drops of water. The hunt continues.

Your boat turns back downstream as the sun begins to dip below the horizon. Orange and pink hues fade to dark blue high in the sky. Flying low over the surface of the Rufiji is a trio of African skimmers. Without breaking their triangle formation, the birds descend to the level of the water and stick their extended lower mandibles



Malachite kingfishers sit motionless for long periods before flying down from their perch to catch aquatic prey.

in the water. They skim the surface of the river, leaving miniature wakes behind them, maintaining perfect balance and considerable speed in their route upstream. One of the skimmers pulls up with a small fish in its beak, and the others follow. Like a squadron of fighter jets, the three birds fly upwards in a calculated formation, perform a 180, and descend to the surface of the river again for another pass. Such is life for some of the most unique avian predators of Tanzania.

A malachite kingfisher catches your eye near the bank. The small bird is perched less than two metres above the surface of the river on a dead branch. Its brilliant blues and oranges make it the same colour as the evening sky, but it stares downward into the depths of the water like a fortune-teller into a crystal ball. Many call the malachite kingfisher cute. Its small stature, big eyes, bright colour, and goofy black and white hairdo certainly give it an endearing quality, but don't be mistaken: the kingfisher is a feared predator in the shallows of the Rufiji. When it finds its target, it will plummet down to the water with the agility of an Olympic diver, and it often comes up with a small crustacean to break open with its powerful red beak.

The boat heads for port as you watch the sun disappear under the horizon behind the wake. Acacias rustle in the breeze and a hippo complains noisily on the opposite bank. As you step off the boat, you realize the lapwing is no longer there, but a piercing cry is heard overhead. You look up and observe one of the great raptors of Nyerere National Park soaring against a pink cloud in the darkening sky: the bateleur eagle. In the fading light you can still see its red-orange legs hanging below its characteristically short tail. In its talons, you can make out a snake. Its chicks will not go hungry tonight.

Such a trip undoubtedly gives you an appetite for seafood. You stroll back to your lodge on the top of the cliff, not forgetting the bee-eater colony directly below you. You order kitoga, a delicious catfish fresh from the Rufiji, and you hope that the goliath heron caught one eventually, too.



# Sea Animals

## A conversation with a local Scuba Guide



Laurent Bedouret

Laurent Bedouret is an experienced French dive instructor who has traveled the world to explore underwater treasures. Before ending up in Mtwara, he worked as a guide in the Caribbean (Costa Rica, Curacao, Jamaica, Panama) and South East Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, Australia). After hearing about

the secret, world-class diving in Southern Tanzania, he created Eco2 Dive shop to provide exceptional ocean-based activities such as whale watching, scuba diving, snorkeling, and sunset dhow rides to adventurous tourists. We talked to him to understand more about this legendary, first diving shop in the region.

### How did you first get passionate about the ocean and diving?

My mom kept telling me how scared she was when, only six months old, my dad threw me in a pool “No worries, he will come back up”. And I did, with a big smile on my face. Since then, water was always part of my life. We always lived close to oceans and there was always an excuse to jump in. Growing up, I developed a passion for the underwater world and scuba diving was the key. Beyond the beauty, I am truly fascinated by the interactions between all these species and their ecosystems. Every dive is an opportunity to learn more, magical moments guaranteed.

### What do you think is special about Southern Tanzania marine life?

The situation here in the South is exceptional: from macro and pelagic to healthy corals, we are flirting with one of the best dive destinations in the world. In Southern Tanzania and specifically in Mtwara, we are lucky for two reasons: the first is that our sea bed goes very deep very close to shore; the second is that Mtwara is the area where the “Southern Equatorial Current” meets the African coast. The result is a constant flow of deep-sea water bringing nutrients and species from the whole Indian Ocean right to us. Just need to jump in, it is there waiting for you.

### What marine animals do you see most often?

The marine life here is abundant and various. For underwater photographs and macro lovers, our world-class muck dive allows us to regularly spot seahorses, frogfish, mantis shrimp, ribbon eels, leaf fish, and many species of nudibranchs. But also, hairy frogfish, harlequin pipefish, ghost pipefish, flying gurnard, cuttlefish, and much more. Otherwise, we usually spot rays and sharks, turtles and schools of trevallies among other pelagic. We are currently trying to bond with a couple of goliath

groupers and searching for the “nest” of the whale sharks we observe in the area.

### What is the coolest thing you have ever seen underwater here?

With no doubt, the sunfish. This fish, also called mola-mola, is very difficult and rare to observe as we almost know nothing about it. The humpback whale migration happens during summer and is always extremely impressive. And when a calf is involved, it's pure heaven. On another scale, the harlequin pipefish and the hairy frogfish are also a great treat. They are rare in the world and hard to spot! Observing one is a big moment of joy.



Ocean sunfish

ECO2 DIVING

### How does diving here compare to diving other places?

Each area around the world has its specificities: corals for some, macros for others, sharks, pelagics, etc. In Mtwara, we are lucky as the diving is various and great in all aspects: the macro life is astonishing and comparable to the best dive sites in South East Asia; the coral is healthy with over 250 different species; and the range of pelagic to be spotted is wide while including very rare ones. The cherry on top: our divers are the only ones in the water. No crowded dive sites, no big groups. Just you and nature. Paradise.

### What do you want the world to know about Southern Tanzania's waters?

Truly, I don't want everyone to know! The South of Tanzania is attractive because it is authentic, completely off-the-beaten-track and preserved from polluting human activities. We have to develop a form of sustainable tourism based on the protection of the environment and a strong development of the local communities. The government of Tanzania is doing a great job and already takes big steps to protect our hidden gem: marine park, prohibition of bomb fishing, campaigns against illegal fishing, etc. We all have to follow their lead. Local operators, hand in hand with tourists, have to set high standards to ensure this gem remains unspoiled for future generations.

### Check out Laurent's social media:

Instagram: @eco2\_diving | Facebook: @eco2tz  
Website: [www.eco2diving.com](http://www.eco2diving.com)



# Southern Tanzania through a Local's Lens



Calvin Kulaya

We turned to Tanzanian professional photographer Calvin Kulaya to learn more about capturing the region's beauty through images. Scrolling through his Instagram, it is clear that Calvin has a natural knack for perfectly portraying beautiful Tanzanian landscapes. Learn from a local about how your

photographs can best capture the essence of what makes Tanzania so remarkable.

## How did you first get interested in photography?

I enjoyed and learned to use computers early compared to other kids around me, then I gained interest in editing software like Photoshop. I started as a graphic designer and I had fun with editing pictures a lot which made me question myself if I can edit pictures why not take them and that was how I started to find my eye and here we are as a photographer.

## Being from North Tanzania, what surprised you about the South?

In the Southern part of my country, I have experienced richness in nature compared to what the north has. The natural resources in the South are greener, thicker, healthy, amazing, and more. I managed to see how the animals there enjoy their habitat because it is well-preserved and rich in nature. The air is fresher, the trees are greener, the mountains are bigger and of great heights and shapes. However, what remains the same about both parts is all Tanzanian people are welcoming and friendly.

## What is your favorite animal to take photos of?

Definitely leopards.

## What is your favorite shot from the region?

A picture of a golden jackal I took in Ruaha National Park definitely stands out. We were headed back to camp on one of the evenings inside the park and a jackal crossed our path. It was hard to take a picture because the sun was going down, so I had the problem of too much backlight but I tried regardless. Amazingly, I was able to take a good picture, and I believe it is the best shot I took in the region.

## What advice can you give to other young people hoping to break into the wildlife photography industry?

You need to have passion because it is not an easy task. Every day is a new day in wildlife photography, so experience will help you to be the best at it. Compared to other photography fields, wildlife also requires time.

## How is your photography connected to conservation and local communities?

Photography allows you to tell stories that grasp the public's attention about something they haven't known before. My wildlife photography helps show the importance of conservation in high-biodiversity areas. I am glad to be a part of raising awareness to the public and to be the one sending out a message to the public concerning this problem.

## Where in the region is your dream to shoot at?

Kitulo National Park. I've seen and heard stories about the park, and I really wish to go there and take pictures of all the stories I have been dreaming of.

## What do you want the rest of the world to know about Tanzania?

I want the world to know that Tanzania has almost everything and the place is beautiful, we have an ocean here, rivers, lakes, valleys, national parks, mountains, unique Tanzania-only animals, forests, waterfalls, minerals, and many more natural features. Finally, there is peace and people's attitude is mostly happy. You will be treated with nothing but kindness.

## Check out Calvin's social media:

Instagram: @\_calvin.k | Twitter: @calvin\_25k

LinkedIn: Calvin Kulaya



Leopard

CALVIN KULAYA

# 24 Hours in Riveting Ruaha

Ruaha National Park is a place where time feels frozen. All around are the sounds of the wild, beckoning you into them. Ruaha becomes many travellers' favorite place in the South, for the fantastic relaxation it bestows. Here is a day in the life of a Ruaha traveller, in a day that is thrilling and relaxing like no other.

**6:00** Awake slightly before dawn to the roaring sounds of lions vibrating your canvas walls.

**6:15** Enjoy your scrumptious, scenic breakfast with locally sourced fruits and coffee grown from the Mbeya region.



JENNIFER LUNDT

**6:45** Get into your private Land Cruiser and prepare for your game drive as the sun starts peaking over the nearby mountains. Don't forget your camera!

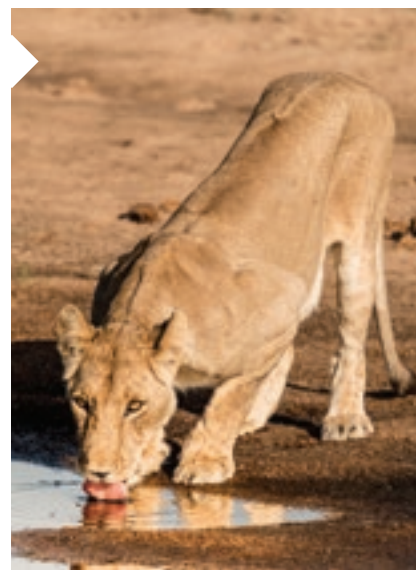


TANZANIA TOURIST BOARD

**7:00** You're off, cruising through the vast park. Keep track of the animals you see with the distinguished resident checklist found earlier in this guide.

**9:00** Break for a delicious snack and tea near the hippo pools. Stretch your legs and feel that famous Tanzanian sun beating down on you.

**9:30** Venture deeper into the park into more remote locations following the winding Great Ruaha River. As the sun comes up and more animals get thirsty, keep your eyes peeled by the river.



CALVIN KULAYA

**10:00** Wave hello to the friendly park ranger doing their job to ensure poaching stays out of the park.

**12:00** Stop for a perfectly crafted lunch prepared by the camp kitchen on your very own bush picnic in the shade of a giant baobab.

**13:00** Return to the game drive and as the day reaches peak temperature, enjoy an even more dazzling abundance of animals descending to the river to quench their thirst.

**16:00** Be welcomed back to the camp with freshly squeezed mango juice to unwind. If you want to experience peak relaxation, book a massage from the in-house massage therapist.

PHOTO: TOP: CALVIN KULAYA



**17:00** Go for a stupendous sunset dip in the infinity pool as you hear the nocturnal animals start to emerge from their deep slumbers.



JENNIFER LUNDI

**18:00** Catch the last wisps of sunset as you enjoy a delectable five-course dinner prepared by some of the finest chefs in Tanzania. Finish it off with a cup of Rungwe Tea.

**18:30** Enjoy a riveting traditional dance from performers from the nearby village.

**19:30** Wrapped in warm Maasai blankets and equipped with a spotlight and high-tech thermal imaging devices, head back into the Land Cruiser to explore the different side of the safari: the night. Cruise around, top down, and be awed by not only the animals, but the bountiful luminous galaxies twinkling over the landscape below.



HAAK NEEL

**22:00** Return to the camp in awe of the wonders experienced in one single day. As you settle into your plush bed, prepare for a deep slumber and your dreams will be filled with what tomorrow might have in store.

An infinity pool and panoramic view await guests after their adventures.



HAAK NEEL



# Love in the Wild

The idea of a romantic vacation has evolved beyond kicking up your feet on a palm-fringed beach. If you are an adventurous couple looking for a more active but equally intimate vacay, consider a journey to rugged, untamed Southern Tanzania. The magic and pure enthrallment that you will find here will undoubtedly contribute to your romance for years to come.

Your dream wildlife retreat should be equal parts breathtaking sights, extravagance, and leisure. The latter two are made especially possible by Southern Tanzania's excellent accommodation options. Whether a tented camp with your own personal wading pool or a lodge with an endless horizon of baobab trees, the ambiance you seek will be found. Nights in a luxury canvas tent will have you drifting into slumber by the gentle glow of lanterns and waking up with the trumpeting elephants and sonorous lions creating a safari symphony.

The food in these lodges is part of the romantic experience. Most dinners are more than three courses starting with a delicious soup made from organic vegetables, followed by a main meal from free-range meat, and an expertly crafted dessert. Every dish prepared by chefs is fresh and organic.

Imagine days zipping around national parks in your private Land Cruiser and cool nights lounging around award-winning safari lodges with frills galore. You can



AFRICASANA TOURS AND SAFARIS

steal a surreptitious kiss with your sweetheart standing in the vehicle aisle as the warm golden hour glow illuminates your face.

Best of all, Southern Tanzania ups the game from other safari destinations, providing you unparalleled privacy. As an up and coming destination, the parks remain relatively unknown. This private, first-to-explore feel is something visitors reflect upon for years thereafter. For a honeymoon, an anniversary, or rekindling a flame, all romantic expectations will be surpassed in Southern Tanzania.



HAAKWIJEL



# Children in the Southern Circuit

Did you know that it has been scientifically proven that international travel is a crucial part of a child's growth?

The benefits of travel for children are boundless – experiencing different ways of life, closer family bonds, trying new foods, hearing different languages, disproving stereotypes, and even inspiring new passions. Parents have the opportunity to give their children an unforgettable experience with memories that will stay with them as they grow older. As an added bonus, your child may be inspired to take up a new passion. The best trip you can take as a family with elements of environmental preservation, family bonding, and fun!

Here are some additional benefits of a family trip to Southern Tanzania:

- Meet and understand that different cultures have equally important ways of life: participate in cultural tourism activities to witness the beautiful traditions that make Tanzania truly unforgettable.
- Learn about and get inspired by conservation efforts of animals and plants: A tour of immense national parks manned by park rangers will illustrate the necessity of conservation for our planet. Your child will likely draw inspiration from this work and live life more sustainably.
- Unplug from technology and reconnect with what really matters: There is no better place for a technology detox than in the remote parks of Southern Tanzania. Leave the video games behind and step into a world filled with family activities.
- Experience ultimate relaxation: Life moves slowly here... there is no pressure to hurry to the next task. Spend quality time with your kids and create memories you both will have forever.
- Try new things! Whether it's new food or a hot air balloon ride, the region offers so many experiences to try. Broaden your child's horizon as they consistently find comfort in unfamiliarity
- Lucky for adults wanting a bit of alone time, many safari tours have organised children's activities for their entertainment. There also are children-trained guides who know the tricks to keep your kid's attention. While you are catching up on much-needed rest, your children are creating memories they will never forget.



ROBERT J. ROSS

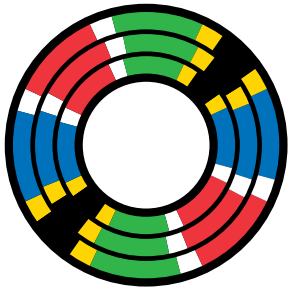


ECO2 DIVING



CHOLE MJINI TREEHOUSE LODGE





# TANZANIA CULTURAL TOURISM EXPERIENCES

*Visit the People*

From the Machinga on the aquamarine shoreline of the Indian Ocean to the Pogolo in the Eastern Arc Mountains, there are more than 35 tribes that call this region home. As such, there is unique local flavour in all corners of Southern Tanzania. The diversity and customs vary greatly across the land with traditions and livelihoods involving lakes, cities, mountains, agriculture, and the ocean. The landscapes are almost as diverse as the people who inhabit them. But one thing is the same: all of Tanzania's people are the world's most welcoming and approachable. Luckily for visitors, you have a direct opportunity to interact with the vibrant culture and traditions to experience this famed hospitality for yourself.

These Tanzania Cultural Tourism Experiences are one-of-a-kind opportunities, created entirely by locals to showcase their authentic culture and traditions. Not only do the experiences generate income for rural communities, but they also promote cross-cultural understanding and strong bonds that will last



Learn about traditional weaving

ROBERT J. ROSS

long after visitors return home. It is the best kind of tourism, experiences rooted in meaningful connections, empowering locals, and mutual respect.

This collection of cultural experiences has gone through a lengthy vetting process to ensure they are ethical, informational, and fun for you to enjoy. Regardless of where you go, you will find many unforgettable experiences in our region. Take a break from the game drive to stretch your legs and get immersed in regional treasures. In the verdant greens of the Southern highlands, the Nyakyusa will show you agricultural livelihoods that have been passed through thousands of generations. Explore their traditions while meandering through coffee and tea plantations. Dance to the beat of the ing'oma drum to continue your cultural exploration by following the deep booming of the Kisi, Bena, and Pangwa musicians through the ceremonial rhythm of their ancestral land. Glide across Lake Nyasa in a traditional boat while listening to thrilling folklore of the Matengo people. Nearby in Ruvuma district's capital Songea, get your groove to the beat of energetic music as you watch the vibrant traditional dancers in their colorful clothing.

Along the Indian Ocean, learn about Machinga traditional livelihoods interwoven for centuries with the sea as you partake in local fishing practices, sailing, and boat making. Further south, participate in the age-old Makonde creation myth, observing the intricate masks and sculpture carving, whose earthy onyx wood is stripped from the bark of the mpingo tree. If you are lucky, your trip will coincide with an unforgettable dancing ceremony that represents the coming of age for men.



PHOTO: FAR LEFT: AFRICANA TOURS AND SAFARIS





Songea traditional dance

On safari, interact directly with the people who have inhabited the national parks for millennia. Hear the secrets of how forefathers coexisted with carnivores out for their blood. Witness the traditional hunter-gatherer practices and sample the food made entirely out of organic, locally grown ingredients made by the Ngindo, Pogolo, and Mbunga peoples. Finally, connect with Tanzania's most famous tribe, the Maasai in settlements throughout the south. Though this group is more prominent in the north, you can still find these distinctively dressed semi-nomads migrating their livestock throughout the region. Called Maasai warriors, they have a wealth of knowledge to share about survival in the region. All of these cultural tourism experiences can be half-day excursions or customized to full days or overnight stays to immerse yourself in true local village experiences.



TANZANIA TOURIST BOARD

Learn how tea is harvested in the highlands



Experience village life, including traditional cooking techniques



TANZANIA TOURIST BOARD

Mang'ati warrior in Nyerere National Park



# To get a taste of local flavour ...

## Southern Tanzania's Tantalizing Taste Buds

Southern Tanzania cuisine: the intersection between tasty adventures and supporting local livelihoods



UTENGULE COFFEE LODGE

### Coffee

Caffeine aficionados rejoice! If you are dependent on your daily fix of caffeine, you have access to beans grown right next door. And really, drinking Tanzanian coffee can be an impactful act of service too. The Tanzanian coffee industry employs more than 270,000 people and consists of nearly \$60 million in annual revenue. Remarkably, only 10% of Tanzanian coffee is from large companies, while the rest comes from small, family-owned businesses.

There are four up-and-coming growing zones in the South. These farms are on the land around Southern cities of Morogoro, Iringa, Mbeya, and Songea have rich soil, conducive to growing quality Arabica coffee beans.

With local coffee experts born and raised in the growing, you will be guided to discover the detailed steps that go into your delicious morning cup: growing, picking, drying, roasting, and crushing beans in preparation for the final step: the brew! Your guides will even allow you to play a part in the process before taking home your personal packet of Tanzanian coffee! Your friends and family will love this full-flavoured luxury.

### Tea

If tea is your warm beverage of choice, Southern Tanzania also has you covered. In fact, tea is actually the drink of choice for most Tanzanians, and we agree slowly sipping the medium-bodied, pronounced citrus notes and full, lasting flavour of famous local teas is the perfect way to begin each day.

Out of the five main tea growing regions in the greater country, three of them are in Southern Tanzania due to the region's higher precipitation and greenery. Luckily for you, tea tourism here gives adventurers the chance to discover how and where delicious black tea leaves are grown while getting to sample new flavours.

The stunning scenery of the Southern Highlands can be experienced by wandering through the many tea plantations. Spend hours frolicking through the lush, emerald fields standing out strongly through the mist. Snap colourful shots and marvel at the dexterous tea-pickers hard at work to create the most quality cup. You can then witness the next step: return to the offices to learn how the tea is dried, rolled, and packaged. You're then ready for the next step: enjoying it! Take notes from the experts as they teach the perfect technique for steeping and brewing. Have fun discovering your new favorite blend – don't forget to leave space in your luggage!

### Honey

As Southern Tanzania is a wild land home to ancient elephant migratory routes, local villages have faced problems with wild elephants entering farms and trampling vegetation. As elephants move with the seasons between protected areas of Nyerere, Udzungwa Mountains, and Ruaha National Parks, human/wildlife conflict was flaring in the region. Conservationists from the Southern Tanzania Elephant Program decided the most humane way to ward off trampling elephants was through beehive fences. Thus with public and private sector cooperation, the perimeter of properties throughout Southern Tanzania became lined with African honey bees. And it was a smashing success! Not only did the beehives repel peckish pachyderms, they also provided an alternative livelihood for the people – organic honey! The Udzungwa Honey Collection Center was developed to monitor the collection and growth of honey in the region. This is an indulgence you can feel good about: the elephant-friendly honey is supplied to local lodges, used in restaurants, and even packaged for sale in Dar es Salaam and abroad. Since the installation of these hives, zero human/elephant conflict has been reported! Now that is beeyoutiful news.



ARWIN NEIL BACHHO/UNSPLOASH



## Cashew Nuts

The beloved cashew nut has rightfully gained popularity for its versatility. In addition to making a delicious snack, its creamy texture is perfect for making delicacies such as milk and yogurt as a dairy substitute. Tanzania is currently on track to be the world's biggest exporter of the tasty nut! You will find no shortage of tasty cashew nuts wherever you visit in the region, as farmers annually produce 290,000 tons for selling.

Most cashew-lovers have no idea the lengthy process needed to prepare the nut for consumption, including that they are grown in a fruit similar to an apple. The several-step process includes growing, shelling, a double roast, and peeling of the outer layers. In recent years, different products have been produced ensuring that all the cashew fruit is used instead of wasted. This has led to delicious products such as cashew wine, cashew butter, and jam. Supporting these products is supporting Southern Tanzania's livelihoods and sustainability!



## Scrumptious Superfood

You've heard about Brazil's açai and Peruvian quinoa, but did you know that Southern Tanzania is also home to a powerful superfood? That's right, the baobab fruit is the latest health food trend that you can try on your visit.

The tangy fruit has been proven by scientists and nutritionists to support physical health and mental wellbeing. Grown under the radiance of Southern Tanzania's sun, the vibrant, yellow baobab fruit is cultivated from giant baobab trees and has been used for centuries as a source of vitamins, minerals, nutrients, and antioxidants. They are especially rich in vitamin C, calcium, and magnesium. The fruits can also be distilled into supplement powder, a delicious and nutritious additive to smoothies, oatmeal, or fruit salads. No wonder baobab-loving elephants and baboons have such a long lifespan!



## Social-Impact Shopping

Shopping for home decor and clothing options throughout the Southern Circuit can also have a positive impact on local communities. Keep these shops in mind as you search for the perfect souvenir for yourself or a loved one at home.

**Neema Crafts** is an Iringa-based craft shop, and one of the finest places in East Africa to get fashionable and affordable home décor and clothing items. Their storefront showcases chic traditionally patterned lampshades, bags, pencil cases, dresses, throw pillows, and more. However, we love them for a lot more than just their material goods, as they play a major role in advocacy for the region. Through their shop, they are transforming the lives of people with disabilities in Tanzania through employment and mentorship. Since their inception nearly two decades ago, more than 120 disabled Tanzanians have been hired and trained by the centre as artisans, weavers, painters, carpenters, tailors, printmakers, and style experts. As disability has been taboo, these hard-working employees would have otherwise been hidden away at home or forced to beg for a better life. Neema has given these people a new chance for life, more than simply a place to work. As if that wasn't enough reason to want to support them, they also incorporate exclusively eco-friendly materials in their production, including local trash, recycled paper, and even elephant dung. After you are finished being amazed at their product offering, you can

head upstairs to the Neema Cafe to enjoy a delicious snack sourced from local ingredients.



### Vikapu Bomba: Empowering women through basket weaving

Vikapu Bomba (VB) is an economic empowerment social enterprise located in the rural communities of Iringa and Njombe Regions in Southern Tanzania that employs over 120 women full-time and 155 part-time on the design and production of hand-woven fashion and home décor articles. For generations, weaving had been traditionally practiced in these communities, but it was abandoned by many due to poverty, lack of markets, and opportunities. Through VB, rural women in Iringa and Njombe communities are helped to formulate small artisan groups with help from lead artisans, trained to improve their weaving skills and designs, then get connected to both regional and international premium markets.

VB believes that apart from being fair, trade should also be transparent and personal. That's why each of our products comes with a label featuring each producer's portrait and short story of the woman artisan who produced the product to keep each product fully traceable.



# All Eyes on Iringa

Quickly becoming the hub of all things travel in Southern Tanzania, Iringa is an up-and-coming gem for in-the-know adventurers. Posted nearly a mile high atop a cliff in the Southern Highlands, the Germans built up Iringa in the 1800s as a strategic vantage point against the local Hehe tribe. Through the resistance of fierce Hehe warriors, the occupiers were eventually ousted, but many German buildings and cultural influences remain. Decades later, Iringa was a strategic city that hosted small battles in both world wars. The resulting regional capital is a small, agricultural town between Dodoma and Morogoro with a rich history filled with colonisation, resistance, and agriculture. In the last decade, it has gained international attention as a tourism attraction for its proximity to Ruaha and Mikumi National Parks, its refreshing climate in the mountains, and its historical sites.

Local markets will give visitors a taste of traditional culture. The Little Ruaha River flows alongside the town, and the mountainous terrain provides million-dollar vistas. Chief Mkwawa rallied his tribesmen at Gangilonga Rock just outside town, and tourists can still visit the spot today. There are also two museums in town: the Iringa Boma and the Kalenga Museum. Visit for an insider's perspective on life here. There are also numerous community tourism experiences, such as Neema Crafts, a craft store that trains and employs disabled locals. Your escape to Iringa will be spent hiking to stunning vistas, engaging with fascinating historical events, and connecting with locals. This is one of the most alluring regions of Tanzania, not to mention the setting for some of its most magnificent game reserves.

## Iringa Boma

As the tourist hub for Southern Tanzania, Iringa also serves as the cradle for the region's historical remembrance and preservation. Leading this important effort



IRINGA BOMA

to protect the stories from the south is the Iringa Boma, a regional museum and cultural centre in Iringa in the Southern Highlands. Through the extensive, well-curated exhibits, visitors can learn about the rich history of the region's customs, traditions, and ways of life. The Boma is one of the oldest remaining buildings in Iringa designed with German colonial architecture combining African, Swahili, and European styles. After the First World War, the British made it their regional administrative centre. From Tanzania's independence in 1961 until 2014 it was in use as a regional and district administration office, providing civil services. Beginning in 2014, the building was completely renovated and restored to its original design as part of the Fahari Yetu project under the University of Iringa. It was reopened in 2016, and is one of the top highlights of a visit to Central Tanzania, particularly for those who love history and culture.

## Kalenga Historical Museum

Also called the Chief Mkwawa Museum, this engaging display just outside of Iringa tells the story of Central Tanzania's most revered historical figure. Chief Mkwawa was a Hehe tribe dignitary who led the resistance to German occupation.



HAK NEEL

It was at this very site that he committed suicide, as he would rather die at his own hands than let the Germans take him hostage. After his death, the Germans took his skull back to Berlin where it remained until its return was included in a provision of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Amazingly, that portion of the treaty was upheld and the skull returned to the region to be displayed in this museum. Visit for a chance to see it up close and learn more about this legendary icon.



VERO.LOVANIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## Isimila Stone Age Site

The region's oldest display of historical significance has been a work-in-progress for millennia. The Isimila Stone Age Site was uncovered in the late 1950s by archaeologists who discovered a wealth of historical relics such as fossils, arrowheads, hammerstones, axe heads, flints, and scrapers. The incredible unearthed artifacts give insight into the life of Stone Age people, nearly 100,000 years ago. In addition to its historical relevance, the rock has been eroded to produce stunningly beautiful solo standing pillars of clay-coloured sediment ascending into the sky. Taking nearly one hour to reach the site, it is a lovely place for a walk. Supplement your experience through the small visitor museum on site. Though it is a paradise for visitors with a geological affinity, you do not have to have a background in earth science to be captivated by this attraction.

## Ilereke Rock Paintings

The Iringa region is home to several critical sites that provide insight into human evolution and ancient culture. One perfect example of the land's rich history is Igeleke Rock Paintings, perched on a stunning site west of the Dodoma road. The site is home to well-preserved Iron



Age cave paintings that depict humans, elephants, leaping eland, and giraffe shrouded in long grass. Local NGO fahari yetu understands the valuable opportunity for research and has committed to preserving the site in collaboration with the Department of Archeology and Heritage Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam. It is a magnificent place to marvel at the vast history of human kind, and support local conversation work in the process. Arrive here by taxi, or arrange a tour from Iringa town. It remains a hidden gem of Tanzania tourism, meaning a private opportunity to see a part of the world that has remained unchanged for thousands of years.



HACKMAN/DEPOSITPHOTOS

Igeleke Rock Paintings

## ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHERN TANZANIA

There are positively boundless opportunities for fun in Southern Tanzania. The region is internationally famous for its wild game, but that is not all there is to do here! Enjoy these top activities that have something for any type of traveller.

### Here's what you can do to ...

#### Spot wild animals

##### Game Drive

Waking up before the crack of dawn just in time to see the lions stretching their paws as the light of the new day falls on them, you'll wonder how this is real life. Game drives are the magic activity that make this happen. Don't be put off by the name "drive"; this quintessential safari activity is like no drive you've ever taken before. The agility of the all-terrain vehicle allows you to venture deep into the rugged corners of the park to see an unobscured view of animals in their natural habitat. Better yet, the top of the vehicle comes off, so you can stand up for a perfect 360-view of your surroundings. Enjoy a sun-kissed day of wild pursuits with wind in your hair. Galavant through the park from sunrise to sunset, tracking the animals through their daily routines.

##### Scuba Diving

The impressive diversity of animal species is not just limited to land, but also in water throughout the coastline, hugging Tanzania's eastern edge. If you want to experience remote and pristine waters in a truly undiscovered gem, a visit to Mtwara is a must. These rich waters boast some of the most biodiverse waters in Africa and diving businesses will take you to see them first hand.



CHOLE MJIINI TREEHOUSE LODGE

Choose from muck, deep sea, sunrise, or night diving and behold the fascinating creatures beneath the surface. If you have never dived before, no worries! You can experience a beginner's course to feel the sensations of scuba diving and test your underwater breathing in a completely safe environment.

##### Snorkeling

If staying close to the surface is more appealing, there are just as many incredible opportunities to get near the brilliantly coloured reefs. Through guided snorkeling tours led by knowledgeable professionals, you will get an up close look at the fascinating species residing in their tropical aquatic paradise. With multiple exemplary sites to choose from, you have the choice how much exploring you want to do.

##### Whale Watching

The behemoth humpback whales travel a massive 25,000 kilometres annually, between breeding and feeding grounds. As they embark on the long journey down to Antarctica, they break through the surface to wave hello to the coast of Southern Tanzania. Near the coast of Mikindani,



Humpback whale

ECOZ DIVING

you can see firsthand them breach firsthand. Massive quantities of these baleens between August and November make this a perfect place to spot one of the world's biggest animals in action.

##### Swim with Whale Sharks

Not to be confused with either a whale or a shark is the world's largest fish, the whale shark. Though their name may invoke fear, these massive 20 metres (65 feet) animals only consume plankton and small fish, making them completely harmless to humans. There are few sensations as humbling as gliding underwater alongside these friendly giants. The warm, tropical waters make Mafia Island a world's top-five destination for year-round whale shark interactions. Head out on a tour with local Mafians whose familial histories have been tied to these creatures for centuries. This true natural wonder is an ultimate bucket list activity you won't want to miss.

##### Walking Safari

There is no more exciting feeling than coming face to face with a wild animal. Walking tours operated by tour companies allow you to get your heart racing while being fully surrounded by wild creatures. Led by expert guides who ensure your safety, you can learn how to identify animal prints and bones. The most thrilling form of transportation is your own two feet.

##### Boating Safari

You have the opportunity to spot diverse wildlife from one of the largest rivers in East Africa, the roaring Rufiji River. Nyerere National Park is the only place in the region where you can do this, and a trip to the park is incomplete without it. With an expert guide, you race upriver in pursuit of enormous game, both in the water and perusing a cooling drink along the river banks. Watching gigantic hippos dive underwater next to your boat is an unforgettable experience. Better yet, stay and watch the setting sun watching the nocturnal hippos enjoying their breakfast in preparation the exciting night ahead.

# Spotlight on Kilwa Kisiwani

## Where historic UNESCO trading port meets idyllic beachfront paradise

The island of Kilwa Kisiwani sits just off the coast of Kilwa Masoko on Southern Tanzania's East coast, surrounded by deep aquamarine water and verdant mangroves presiding over white sand eternally kissed by the lapping tide. Sturdy baobabs stand guard over the island's land, historical protectors of this sun-drenched kingdom. It would be easy enough to slap on the title of "beach destination", but Kilwa Kisiwani's history is ever more rich and layered than the paradise's external beauty. Kilwa Kisiwani is only one of two Tanzanian destinations recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage site (the other is the Serengeti).

During the 14th century, thousands of daring merchants from around the world docked at the port town of Kilwa Kisiwani, seeking the most lucrative exchange for their far-transported wares: gold, ivory, rhinoceros horn, cotton, beads, cloth, spices, and other goods.

The traders headed to town to relax and intermingle: sipping spiced coffee, swapping advice, recounting tales of faraway lands, and walking through global innovations alongside fellow traders from dozens of nations and empires around the world. Through Kilwa Kisiwani, Shona kingdoms in modern-day Zimbabwe were linked to the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, India, and China. Further trade channels to Zanzibar and Sofala, Mozambique made Kilwa Kisiwani one of the world's most traversed, lucrative crossroads. At the city-state's peak, international traveller Ibn Batuta noted Kilwa Kisiwani is "one of the most beautiful and well-constructed towns in the world".

Though centuries have passed, remains of this historical heyday remain. Though not as bustling as it once was, it is still a site to behold. Visiting island Kilwa Kisiwani unilaterally affirms its contribution to world history. Take a wind-strewn stroll in the footsteps of Swahili traders as you meander throughout the historical area and imagine what life was like centuries ago.

Whether you are an imaginative dreamer, a lover of life's romantic moments, or passionate about rich history, we promise you will fall in love visiting the most significant ruins anywhere along the East African coast.

### Island Sites

One of the most impressive of the ruins is the Great Mosque, the oldest standing mosque on the East African coast, which has 16 domes supported by many arches and pillars. Another amazing site is the Palace of Husuni Kubwa, which overlooks the island from on high and was once the largest building in sub-Saharan Africa. Coral, often used as the bricks and mortar of many of the buildings, is omnipresent throughout the ruins. You are required to hire a guide from the Kilwa Islands Tour Guides Association who will provide you with all the information you would want to know about the island's history.

### How to Get Here

Most tourists want to arrive at Kilwa Kisiwani straight from Dar es Salaam or from a safari in Nyerere National Park. Kilwa Masoko, the port to Kilwa Kisiwani lies about 290 km (180 miles) south of Dar es Salaam along a road that is newly surfaced for all but 48 km (30 miles). The drive should take three to four hours in a private vehicle. From Nyerere, it is also a five-hour drive to the port. The island lies directly opposite the well-facilitated mainland port of Kilwa Masoko, a crossing that takes about 10 minutes by motorboat, or 20 minutes by dhow, depending on wind conditions. Visitors to Kisiwani tend to arrive on the shore beneath an impressive ancient fortress generally called the Gereza. This monumental stone edifice is a typical coastal fortress, looming above the rest of the island. Spend all day on Kilwa Kisiwani and take the last boat back to Kilwa Masoko. Enjoy one of the many wonderful accommodations here.

Gereza Fort

### Other Activities

The Kilwa islands (Kisiwani, Masoko, and Kivinji) offer more than a history tour – whether cooling off with a dip in the Indian ocean, learning about marine ecosystems in a paddle board tour through the mangroves, swimming face to face with friendly giant whale sharks, or soaking in the rays underneath Tanzania's powerful sun, your days can be filled with relaxation. Finish each sun-kissed day with a heaping portion of locally caught lobsters and crabs. We recommend taking your time to slowly take in what the Kilwa islands have to offer. This is one of the most impressive but under-visited destinations anywhere on the continent.



FABIAN LEU



# Legend of the Baobab

## The tree of life

Southern Tanzania's most striking symbol is the towering baobab (Bay-Oh-Bob), the barky giant that looms over the diverse landscapes. These ancient moon-like trees are among some of the largest in Africa and are omnipresent in the landscape of Ruaha National Park and other landscapes throughout the Southern region.

The baobabs are called "the tree of life" because they create entire self-contained ecosystems, hitting all of the criteria to support an abundance of life. Their trunks carry a massive 32,000 gallons of water. Elephants stay hydrated by eating the tree's bark, and bees build hives in the expansive labyrinth of branches. Birds build their nests high above their land-based predators and reptiles laze in their shadows. In return, animals give thanks by helping the trees thrive. Fruit bats and insects break from navigating the skies of Tanzania to pollinate the baobab fruit.

The baobab has been an integral part of East African culture, with the barky giant as a principal character in songs and folklore. Local tribes in the region have told origin stories about this astonishing giant that are as old as the tree. Passed through generations, some believe it was God's gift of survival to the African landscape, others believe it was planted by a magical force. Others still believe that trampling elephants across the land scared the roots out of the ground upside down, forming the unique shape of the tree. Whatever the story, one theme remains the same: the land's identity is intertwined with the tree.



ROBERT J. ROSS

## ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHERN TANZANIA

### Explore your wild side

#### Hiking

Southern Tanzania's landscape has been graced by four different mountain ranges resulting from the Great Rift Valley: Uporoto, Range, Udzungwa, and Livingstone. The resulting landscape is rich in resources, vistas, and general ecosystems, providing life to abundant flora and fauna. From small hills to colossal peaks from

Lake Nyasa to the ocean, there is ample opportunity to find your favorite view. In Udzungwa Mountains National Park, visitors will be enchanted by an intricate network of trails weaving through the primeval forest. The complete absence of roads within the park means that hiking is the only way for guests to enjoy it. There is a hike for everyone, from the one-hour Sonjo trek to the strenuous six-day expedition up the Lumemo Trail. On overnight expeditions, pitch your tent knowing you are the only human life in the entire national park. A truly riveting wilderness experience.



JENNIFER LUNDT

#### Overland Safari

Join the spirit of first adventurers who camped their way through the land by joining an overland safari. During an exhilarating week, you have a chance to rely on nothing but your backs by getting off

the beaten path and forging one of your own. For up to seven days, you can trace the course of the Rufiji River by car, convening with the animals who also depend upon the river for survival. Days are elongated game drives, as your vehicle navigates the land of but one of thousands of mighty animals. The chilly nighttimes involve pitching the tent on top of your safari vehicle in the unobstructed wild. The riveting journey will eventually lead to the coast, where the great Rufiji empties into the Indian Ocean. You can soak up a different type of relaxation on a white-sand beach to cap off your wild week with some refreshing R&R.

#### Kayaking

Stunning views, island hopping, and wildlife observation are just a few of the things awaiting you on a Southern Tanzania Kayaking Tour. Though there are multiple navigable bodies of water, the most popular option is a beautiful paddle with the world's most biodiverse freshwater fish in Lake Nyasa. This third biggest lake in Africa is a thrilling playground of water-based activities, and kayaking is a great way to get a piece of it. With the verdant Livingstone mountains at your back and translucent waters ahead, it is impossible to get a bad view as you paddle. Make sure you keep an eye on the fish below as 10% of the world's freshwater fish species live here.



FELIX DANCE/FELIX

# Land of Blue Hues

Water is the root of everything here, sustaining wild game, vibrant aquatic animals, and myriad mankind. A common misconception about travel in Tanzania is the landscape is all arid bushland or desert, when the reality is quite the opposite.



Kalambo Falls

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**Kalambo Falls** Following the Kalambo River, which defines Tanzania's southern border with Zambia, for 5 km east of Lake Tanganyika will bring you to Kalambo Falls. They're hard to miss. At an astounding 221 metres high, Kalambo Falls is the second tallest single-drop waterfall in Africa (behind Tugela Falls in South Africa). Beyond its breathtaking beauty, Kalambo Falls is also one of the most important archeological sites on the African continent. Immediately above the falls, excavations in the middle of the twentieth century revealed Stone Age and early Iron Age human populations living along the river. Scientists unearthed hand axes, cleavers, and other tools up to 300,000 years old. Even more remarkably, the archeologists found fossilized charred logs, ashes, and charcoal. At the time of excavation, Kalambo provided the earliest evidence of manmade fire in sub-Saharan Africa. On account of its beautiful falls and archeological significance, Kalambo is on the tentative list for recognition as a protected World Heritage site.

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**Lake Nyasa** (also known as Lake Malawi) is one of the deepest lakes in the world. The area is of exceptional natural beauty with the rugged landscapes around it contrasting with the remarkably clear waters of the lake. The particular geological formation of the lake, resulting from the Rift Valley formation, makes it truly unique. It is often described as an inland sea, because it is vast and sandy, and resembles the coasts of the Indian Ocean. The many hundreds of cichlid fish here, nearly all of which are endemic to Lake Nyasa, display a significant example of biological evolution. Due to the isolation of Lake Nyasa from other water bodies, its fish have developed impressive adaptive radiation and speciation, and are an outstanding example of the ecological processes.

Referred to as the "Lake of Stars" in reference to the distant lanterns of fishing boats on the lake that look like stars from afar, Lake Nyasa is the third largest lake in Africa (after Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika). The body of water creates a border along southwest Tanzania, shared with Malawi and Mozambique. 550 kilometres long and 75 kilometres wide, it covers an area of more than 11,400 square kilometres and is as deep as 700 metres. Nyasa lies at the base of towering mountains: the forested Livingstone Range and the Nyika Plateau, providing magnificent views of the water for those in pursuit of some altitude.



Lake Nyasa

SHAH MUJANJA





Lake Ngosi

**Lake Ngosi** The stunning caldera of Lake Ngosi is a shimmering green lake walled by the rim of the extinct Ngosi Volcano. The peak is the highest point of the Uporoto Ridge Forest Reserve. This emerald lake dates from some time in the Neogene period. The water is slightly brackish, contains some fish, and is up to 75 metres deep. The lake has spiritual significance for the local inhabitants. As the second-largest crater lake in Africa, Lake Ngosi is the leading tourist attraction in the Rungwe district, hosting hundreds of visitors annually. It is located at an elevation of 2,600 metres above sea level in a thick, natural forest of the Uporoto Nature Reserve. Climbers looking to view this scenic lake are well rewarded with excellent views from the top of the sharp crater rim, from where the lake gleams below with an overwhelming tranquil air, and beyond the land are pocked with the points of smaller volcanic peaks.

The hike up to the crest is lushly vegetated, and you can see many of the rare endemic species that call these mountains home. Visitors have previously enjoyed seeing families of colobus monkeys swinging through the trees and hundreds of coloured birds soaring overhead. Additionally, microbiologists will rejoice at the fascinating micro life that exists within the caldera.

**Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Park** Like Mikindani Bay, the Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park has globally significant marine biodiversity. White sandy beaches, mangrove forests, and spectacular coral reefs define the park. Over 400 species of fish have been identified in Mnazi Bay as well as more species of coral than anywhere else on the East African coast.

Some of the best diving can be done at Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Park, and there are options for divers of all abilities. Beginners can take diving lessons, while more experienced visitors can go on single- or multi-day dive safaris. Snorkelling is also a popular activity. If you want an affordable beach vacay without sacrificing quality, check out the stunning Ruvula and Msimbati beaches.



CHOLE MJINI TREEHOUSE LODGE

Visitors to Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Park may have an opportunity to swim with a whale shark, the world's largest fish.

# South Means Sustainability

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 global pandemic, people are looking for more meaningful travel experiences. Southern Tanzania took the time without tourists to build up the infrastructure and institutions that reflect the region's commitment to conservation and protection of all life here. As a result, sustainability and Southern Tanzania are becoming increasingly interconnected. Being off the beaten track has attracted sustainably-minded lodges, tour operators, and travellers who all have the mission of preserving the vast animal and plant life. Here is a spotlight on organisations working hard to ensure that visitors will enjoy healthy wildlife for years to come:

The **Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA)** is in charge of all the national parks in the country and have done spectacular work to train park rangers to prevent animal poaching. A visit to any of the parks will grant you a meeting with these knowledgeable guides to hear about their conservation efforts. But preserving our earth has to be on the people too, which is why the region has seen several incredible conservation groups and initiatives take root here.

The **Southern Tanzania Elephant Program (STEP)** is an NGO headquartered in Iringa town that strives to protect wild elephants in the region. Through a team of knowledgeable local people who have grown up alongside these beloved gentle giants, STEP works to research and monitor elephant activity to better protect them. In addition to conservation, the organisation works to promote a healthy and positive coexistence between humans and elephants.

The **Ruaha Carnivore Project** works to protect large carnivores residing in the massive ecosystem of Ruaha National Park. There has traditionally been an animosity by local tribes towards the carnivores who consume their livestock, so this organisation tackles that issue by researching, monitoring, and creating community initiatives. One of their most noteworthy initiatives is park visit days for local people. Though they have lived on the land for centuries, many villagers have not had the opportunity to embark on a thrilling game drive. These educational programs promote an understanding and appreciation of wildlife which creates a stable environment for coexistence.



RUAHA CARNIVORE PROJECT

Locals on a park visit through the Ruaha Carnivore Project

Started in 2018 in Mtwara by experienced divers, **Eco2 Diving** is one of the only scuba dive operators in the region. They act daily to reduce their ecological footprint (no single-use plastic, use of local products and material, etc.) while also promoting the protection of the environment through various actions involving the local communities: beach cleaning, coral farming, replantation of mangroves, etc. Championing the connection between tourism and marine conservation, they are a perfect example of how to do things right.

To conserve the region's gems beyond plant and animal life, **Tanzania's Cultural Tourism Experiences** have contributed greatly to the sustainability of traditions and rituals practiced by local Tanzanian communities. With potential visitors and incomes, villages and ethnic groups have seen an immense value in continuing to pass along unique customs through future generations of descendants. Supporting community and cultural tourism initiatives directly influences the continued existence of historical practices.

## How can you make your safari more sustainable?

Being welcomed to one of the world's last truly wild places is a huge honor with significant responsibility. Safaris are by their very nature a lesson in conservation, seeing how animals live freely on the land. We asked our Tanzania conservationists to give us the top tips to be a responsible traveller:

- **Say no to single-use plastic!** Tanzanian experts say the biggest threat facing Tanzania's environment is plastic waste. Especially in remote areas such as national parks with minimal infrastructure, recycling is non-existent so plastic waste is either dumped or burned. Do your part as a visitor and refuse single-use plastic. In most cases, your tour company and accommodation will provide you with alternatives to bottled water.
- **Offset your carbon footprint:** travellers come from all around the globe to visit Tanzania and in the process may rack up a bit of a carbon footprint. Luckily, the incredible organisation Carbon Tanzania gives you a chance to directly give back to Tanzania's environment through investing in community projects, canceling out your



STEP research teams perform scientific monitoring for elephant conservation efforts.

STEP



carbon emissions in the process. Working in Tanzania's Yaeda Valley, Makame Savannah, and Ntakata Mountains, Carbon Tanzania has saved more than 2,000,000 trees from being cut down in these high-biodiversity areas.

- **Engage in cultural tourism:** Supporting the area's community tourism activities is an excellent way to make sure your wallet has an impact on the people who call this region home. Ask your tour provider/lodge if they can tailor your trip for immersive cultural activities.
- **Respect animals' space:** Never touch, feed, or purposefully block off an animal's path. These unique creatures have lived on this land without human interference for millennia. Let's keep the "wild" wild.
- **Eat all your meals fresh!** Not only are you supporting local businesses, but also local farmers.

- **Don't buy souvenirs made from local animals:** Although turtle shell and snake skin may seem fashionable, they are detrimental to the local environment.
- **Volunteer your time!** There are many ways to give back to the community through your own time. Join an English teaching session at a school in a local village or monitor and protect sea turtles along the coast.
- **Conduct research!** In determining which operator or hotel to choose, you should inquire about their commitment to sustainability and the local community. There are many historically restored properties (like the Mikindani Old Boma Hotel) and homestays where your money goes far in heritage conservation and improving local livelihoods.

## ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHERN TANZANIA

### Take in the sights

#### Visit a Marine Park

Right at the border with Mozambique, discover the MBREP (Mnazi-Bay and Ruvuma Estuary Park). This marine park is ideal to observe hippos and crocs in their natural habitat before chilling on Msimbati beach, a perfect and unspoiled wide sand beach. For a day or a sleepover, to bask in the sun or scuba dive the incredible reef, make sure you don't miss visiting heaven on Earth!

#### Hot Air Balloon Ride

It is difficult to take in the immensity of Ruaha National Park from ground level. With the looming baobabs and rugged landscape, the thick of the wild swallows you up. Well what if we told you it was possible to get a breathtaking 360-degree from the open sky? Join the 450 species of birds in Ruaha National Park as you take an exhilarating ride through. Enter the balloon at dawn, as you rise into the sky mimicking the sun's morning movement. Feel the deep oranges and reds spill across your face before they blanket the seemingly never-ending landscape in light. How many animals can you spot from these heights?

#### Sunset Dhow Ride

Looking for the most romantic way to finish an idyllic Tanzanian day? Consider a ride in a traditional carved wooden boat that represents the history of Tanzania as a trade hub between Africa and Arabia. With the giant triangular sail, your boat adventure is at the whim of the wind as you glide into the vast Indian Ocean, just like thousands of traders throughout history. All your senses are rewarded as you feel the gentle kiss of the wind on your face as you sip on a delicious cocktail. Watch the ethereal fiery ball sets over the boundless sea as your ears are treated to local taarab music, a Swahili fusion of African, Arab, Persian, Indian, and European rhythms. It is the romantic, quintessential Tanzanian coast experience.



CHOLE NJINI TREEHOUSE LODGE

#### Picnic in the Bush

After watching hungry game chow down all morning, you will work up quite an appetite. Instead of heading back to your lodge, try a truly wild experience by enjoying a feast in the open. Organised by guides, bush picnics are a time to disembark from your safari vehicle and enjoy a five-star lunch fully immersed in the wild. To feast next to giraffes or elephants will be the hardest decision you make all trip.



ROBERT J. ROSS

#### Photography Tours

Tanzania is a wildlife and landscape photographer's dream. The vast area of land is an empty canvass for you to immortalize the elements of an African's savanna intricate circle of life. Luckily, lodges and tour companies have adapted their practices to ensure you capture the images possible. From specialized photo tour guides to camera mounts in safari vehicles, you should be set with enough resources to compile the coffee book table you've always dreamed of. It is not if you will take photos, but how many.

#### Stargazing

Being far away from big cities and overtourism, Southern Tanzania's remoteness provides another major advantage. As soon as the sun sets on the day creatures, the sky is revitalized with millions of bright stars providing light for nocturnal creatures to emerge from their hiding. Due to Tanzania's location, the stars here are both brighter and clearer than any you can spot in the Northern hemisphere. The resulting dreamy ambiance inspires even novices to whip out the binoculars.

#### Stop at a Breathtaking Viewpoint

For those doing a self drive, add a few hours onto your estimated travel time to account for all the magnificent views you will pass along the way. Roads wind through mountainous passes, before descending to hug the curves of great rivers before eventually opening up to stretches where wild animals cross paths with the cars they dwarf. Have your camera ready to pull off the road at any time!





PHOTOS, PAGE 5, LEFT TO RIGHT:  
ROW 1: ROBERT J. ROSS, ROBERT J. ROSS, ECO2 DIVING, ROBERT J. ROSS  
ROW 2: ROBERT J. ROSS, ANITA RITENOUR/FLICKR, GREG SCHECHTER/FLICKR, ROBERT J. ROSS  
ROW 3: HAAK NEEL  
ROW 4: EMMANUEL LEMA, CALVIN KULAYA, ROBERT J. ROSS, SHAH MJANJA  
ROW 5: SHAH MJANJA, FABIAN LEU, ROBERT J. ROSS, SHAH MJANJA  
ROW 6: JENNIFER LUNDT, SHAH MJANJA, JUDY GALLAGHER/FLICKR, ECO2 DIVING  
ROW 7: HAAK NEEL, ROBERT J. ROSS, CALVIN KULAYA, OZZY DELANEY/FLICKR

PHOTOS, PAGE 29, LEFT TO RIGHT:  
ROW 1: CALVIN KULAYA, CALVIN KULAYA, CALVIN KULAYA, ROBERT J. ROSS  
ROW 2: CALVIN KULAYA, CALVIN KULAYA, EMMANUEL LEMA, DANIEL CHARLES MSIRIKALE  
ROW 3: ROBERT J. ROSS, ROBERT J. ROSS, DEREK KEATS/FLICKR, GERRY ZAMBONINI/FLICKR  
ROW 4: CALVIN KULAYA, DANIEL CHARLES MSIRIKALE, LIP KEE/FLICKR, ERDBEERNAUT/FLICKR  
ROW 5: F. ROVERO, HAAK NEEL, MARITZ/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, ROBERT J. ROSS  
ROW 6: ESRI, MARC VERAART/FLICKR, ROGER LE GUEN/FLICKR, ROBERT J. ROSS  
ROW 7: PER HOLMEN, FLEMMING P. JENSEN, DAUDI PETERSON, CALVIN KULAYA  
ROW 8: VALÉRY SCHOLLAERT, DAUDI PETERSON, DR. LOUIS HANSEN, HARLEY HESSE





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