



Big Cats of the Mara

Photographic tour with tour leader Ellie Rothnie

6th - 16th November 2027

Trip Overview



Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 6 guests.

Due to the nature of the trip we will have to take an interim payment of £1500 on the 26th February and this will be deducted off your final balance.

Cost includes:

All transfers including internal flight, park fees, game drives, meals, and accommodation in Kenya.

Cost excludes:

International flights, Kenya visa, sundry items, non- local alcoholic drinks (i.e., spirits) and tips/gratuities for camp staff and drivers and personal travel insurance.

Accommodation:

Our first night will be in a comfortable hotel in Nairobi after our late arrival there. After our morning transfer flight to the Masai Mara we will be staying in a very comfortable tented camp throughout the trip until our return to Nairobi and overnight return flights. Costs are based on a single supplement.

Level of fitness:

In a physical sense this is not an especially hard trip but there will be early morning and late afternoon/evening drives (but offset where possible by rest periods during the day) so it can be tiring.

LEVEL 2

Trip Overview

Without doubt one of the most popular destinations on most photographers list is to experience the sights and sounds of an East African Safari. The vast expanse of the open savannah with the huge numbers of game animals is a sight to behold and one the best experiences that you can witness in the natural world. This trip in Kenya's Masai Mara is designed by its very nature to concentrate on the big cats that prowl these open plains in search of prey.

We have run this special Safari in the conservancy area of Mara North for several years now and this area has so much to offer the wildlife photographer in terms of space, species and at this time of year is relative quiet. We will be based at the comfortable Offbeat Mara camp which will allow us a good base to explore this wonderful area of the Mara. We will have exclusive use of the camp for our entire stay and to experience the sounds of the African bush under a tented camp is a real highlight too.

The area we will be based in has excellent numbers of lion, cheetah, and leopard and these big cats will be the focus throughout, and we have the flexibility here to work off-road, from vehicles offering a row per photographer and without time pressures to get back to camp as the sun sets, so won't miss any beautiful light. The guides/drivers that we use know this area of the Mara well and know what we want to look for each day. Although we will come across and photograph other species along the way, this trip really is designed to maximise our time with the majestic big cats of the Mara.



Itinerary

Day 1: We will look to arrive in Nairobi in the early evening after our international flights and will transfer to the comfortable hotel in Nairobi for our short overnight stay. (We will send out the flight recommendations nearer the time).

Day 2: In the morning and after breakfast we will head to Wilson Airport for our 45-minute flight to our camp in the Mara North Conservancy, in time to settle in, meet our local drivers and guides. After lunch we will head off for our first afternoon drive returning to camp after sunset before relaxing in front of the campfire and enjoying our first camp-based dinner. We have arranged for additional cargo seats for our flights and will therefore have an enhanced 25Kg luggage allowance per person.

Days 3 – 9: This is a corner of Africa that is famous for its big cats – lion, leopard and cheetah which will be our main priorities for the week. The Conservancy is an excellent location to work with all these species, we have the flexibility to work off road and in terms of times we must be back at camp and so we will never have to leave a leopard up a tree in great light to get back. There is a great discipline here too at sightings which means relaxed subjects and quality photography opportunities as a result. The pattern to each day will be similar – we will embark on our first drive before sunrise to locate our subjects in time for the magical early morning light and will continue until late morning or longer dependant on animal activity and light conditions with a short break for a light breakfast and refreshment during this morning drive.



Itinerary

Every photographer will have a whole row of seats on each drive, ensuring ample space and flexibility for photography. On returning to camp there is time for lunch, a short rest, downloading images and time for some advice on your images and processing as you wish. We will return to our vehicles for an afternoon drive and return after capturing memorable silhouette shots as the sun sets before we look to relax by the campfire and ready for dinner. Each day will follow the same pattern, but we will concentrate on the main targets each drive and then work with them as the trip progresses, giving us maximum opportunities to produce a varied portfolio.

Day 10: We will have time for a final morning drive and a final breakfast before catching our return flight to Nairobi. We will have the chance to refresh at a comfortable airport hotel where we will base ourselves for the rest of the day and before our evening international flights home.

Day 11: We arrive home after our overnight flights.



Things to bring

Our accommodation consists of the comfortable tents typical of African safari lodges with pretty much everything provided. If you have any special dietary requirements, we can sort that out when we get to camp but if there is anything very unusual in that respect, please let us know in advance. Bottled water is always provided in the camp, and a personalised metal water bottle will be given to you on arrival too. The daytime temperature is typically around 20 - 25 degrees Celsius so in terms of clothing you'll obviously need lightweight and shower-proof clothing with a fleece or warm outer layer for the early morning drives and evenings around the campfire. Footwear needs to be just of the sensible outdoor variety. Sun cream, a hat, lip moisturiser and sunglasses are also recommended, as we will be exposed to the sun for long periods as the vehicles have an open hatch. Malaria tablets are recommended, and please liaise with your GP as to which to take and bring. Insect repellent is useful as they can occasionally be a nuisance and other items like aspirin and the like are good for peace of mind. Laundry is provided daily at camp. Shampoo, shower gel, shampoo and conditioner are in the showers if you don't want to take your own.

Finally in terms of tips for our drivers and camp staff, then the preferred denomination for this (and any expenditure generally) is US\$ and as a rough guideline \$15 - \$20 per day for the driver is advised and \$10 per day for the camp staff is advised and can be paid for on the last day. Other than this there should be no need to pay anything in the camp as all food, water, soft drinks, and local alcohol is included in the price; the only extra charge would be for non-local alcohol like foreign wines and spirits and for any souvenirs that you may want to buy.

Camera equipment

In terms of camera kit, it very much depends on your style of photography. Lenses of up to 400mm (assuming a full frame body) will suffice for 90% of your needs as the animals can get quite close: if you want to work on your bird photography while you are here a longer lens will be required though. Supplementary lenses for other opportunities such as a 24-70mm for wide-angle opportunities and an intermediate zoom (70-200 or 100-400) so that you don't miss the chance for some images that put subjects in more of a setting are also recommended. The camp is quite happy to fill a refillable beanbag so you could look to bring an empty one of these with you.

Tripods are not necessary as they are not vehicle compatible and even more so given their weight. If you want to use a tripod head, then it is possible to attach it to the vehicles, but you will need to have a clamp attachment to do so. If you have and wish to use a monopod then this is a further option, but a beanbag generally works best and offers the most flexibility. Bring plenty of compact flash cards with you as well because if you get a good drive, you will take a lot of images! With the extra cargo seats, we have pre-booked, the flights out to the Mara have a strict weight policy of 25kg so your camera kit and everything else that you take needs to meet that very strict maximum.

During the mid-day rests and evenings, we will have a chance to critique and look at individuals work if you so wish, so please bring anything you'd like to share on either a laptop or iPad. If you have any questions or concerns during the trip please ask, we are here to help.

There is power in the camp (although the generators are turned off overnight), 3G phone reception and Wi-fi too in the communal areas (although of the speed you would expect of a remote satellite-based system), so a laptop for storing/reviewing images is fine as a method of storing images as you go. Plugs are British conformation.



Useful Contact Information

My contact number for the build up to and for the duration of the trip is:

Ellie: +44 (0)7879 480143



Please don't hesitate to contact me even if you think it is a minor question, I am here to help.



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