

Itinerary

DAY 1

En route

DAYS 2 & 3

Nairobi and the historic Norfolk Hotel

Soon after we land in Nairobi, Micato staff will whisk us away to the historic Norfolk Hotel. Now a jewel in the Fairmont crown, the Norfolk has been a reigning East African landmark since the early 1900s. For much of their history, Nairobi and the Norfolk have been nearly synonymous.

The next day, we'll head out for some city sightseeing in the capital, including visits to the National Museum, the Giraffe Centre (where we'll hand-feed endangered Rothschild giraffes), and Karen Blixen's home just outside of Nairobi. In 1937, Baroness Blixen (under the pen name Isak Dinesen) published *Out of Africa*, which many of us consider the most heart-stirring book ever written about the continent. And we'll lunch with Micato's founders, Felix and Jane Pinto, at their home in Nairobi's lovely Lavington district. We'll return to the Norfolk inspired by hospitality, good food, and fine conversation, eager and ready to embark on a classic African safari.

DAYS 4 & 5

Mingling with Amboseli's elephants

A morning flight from Nairobi's Wilson Airport takes us south to Amboseli National Park, dominated by gargantuan Mount Kilimanjaro, which rises suddenly to over 19,000 feet, 15,000 of them above Amboseli's acacia-dotted grasslands. (Local people didn't think that God, or gods, lived on Kilimanjaro. They more or less thought the mountain was God; casting your eyes on the still-glacier-topped behemoth, you can see why.) During our game drives out of wonderfully decorated Ol Tukai Lodge, we'll marvel at our first good looks at what is probably Africa's largest population of free-ranging elephants, along with the cape buffaloes, impalas, lions, cheetahs, hyenas, giraffes, zebras, and wildebeest who—in addition to two score or more other mammal species—make their domicile in and around the park.

DAY 6

Tarangire's baobabs and bountiful wildlife

Today we drive south into Tanzania for lunch at the bustling, very African town of Arusha, then fly to Tarangire National Park, celebrated for the diversity of its wildlife (which includes tree-snoozing lions), its world-class collection of more than 550 bird species, and its outlandishly towering termite mounds, which may not sound terribly impressive, but are just about guaranteed to elevate termites to the top of any traveller's pantheon of amazing insects. We'll enjoy a fine overnight at Tarangire Sopa Lodge, tucked away in a verdant valley, with enchanting views of Tarangire's trademark baobab-studded landscapes. (And we may spend a post-game drive afternoon basking in the Sopa Lodge's marvelous pool, set just above a nicely dramatic gorge.)

DAYS 7 & 8

Wending down into the Ngorongoro Crater

After a morning game drive and breakfast we make a memorable drive west, to the fabled Lost World of the Ngorongoro Crater, a volcanic bowl abounding with life and beauty, unknown to the outside world until 1892 (which helps account for its wealth of wildlife, everything from a burgeoning lion population to fine stands of flamingos).

Our lodge, the Ngorongoro Sopa, is perched on the gigantic crater's rim, allowing us to gaze at the flat, 100-square-mile crater floor hundreds of feet below. Ngorongoro is one of the world's largest volcanic calderas, and without a smidgen of doubt its most interesting, not to mention its most lively and lovely; Ngorongoro's floor, down to which we'll wend our way for a full-day game drive, is a mesmerizing, eventful place.

DAYS 9 & 10

The blue-sky Serengeti, "warm with life"

We'll stop by the Olduvai Gorge, a rocky spur of the Rift Valley, where the Leakey family's discoveries in the last century convinced the scientific world that humanity arose in East Africa. ("It's a splendid spot, Olduvai Gorge," Theo Cruz wrote, "but it's a good thing our ancestors wanted a peek at someplace else.") Then it's on to the Serengeti, a vast and fabled plain the great writer and roust-about Beryl Markham said was "as warm with life as the waters of a tropic sea." From our base at the airy Serengeti Sopa Lodge, deep in the heart of the world's most important large animal migration corridor, we make rolling forays into the plain, on the lookout for the 70 large mammal species who inhabit this most noble swatch of planet Earth.

DAYS 11 & 12

Natural extravagance in the Maasai Mara

We think of the Maasai Mara as the Africa of our imagination, brought to joyous life. Rolling grasslands, expressive acacia trees, sweeping vistas teeming with wildlife, and one of Africa's common and unforgettable sights: "the cumulus clouds that drift all day long across a sun-filled sky," Elspeth Huxley wrote in *The Flame Trees of Thika*, "remind[ing] me of huge swirls of whipped cream." (Those sunny skies and grand landscapes inspire us to consider a hot-air balloon option while we're in the Mara. We fly to the Mara via Arusha and Nairobi, and after unfailingly exciting game drives, we'll enjoy sundowners from our tented camp at either the Fairmont Mara Safari Club or Kichwa Tembo, looking out at the vital yet deeply pacific Mara.

DAYS 13 & 14

African elegance at the Mount Kenya Safari Club

We fly back to Nairobi and continue by air across the stunningly green Central Highlands—to Kenya's colonials, so reminiscent of their English countryside—to the Fairmont Mount Kenya Safari Club, entrancingly close to Africa's second-highest and most classically comely mountain, the glaciated, 17,000-foot Mount Kenya.

The Fairmont Mount Kenya Safari Club — created in the late 1950s by actor William Holden and a bunch of fellow Africaphiles—has been visited by innumerable dignitaries, stars, and panjandruns, and we'll feel rather stellar ourselves during our two nights in upgraded deluxe Club Level rooms. The Safari Club is a continental center of relaxation, and, if relaxing gets too relaxing, many activities are close at hand: golf, trout fishing, horsebacking, tennis, and much else. We'll also have a chance to visit the club's animal orphanage and the nearby Ol Pejeta Conservancy, home to a healthy coterie of rhinos, plus its Sweetwaters Chimpanzee Sanctuary (Kenya's only chimp haven), operated in conjunction with the Jane Goodall Foundation.

DAY 15

Day rooms in Nairobi for late night flights

We'll have day rooms for use prior to our late night flights homeward. And during the day, we can visit the Micato-AmericaShare Harambee Centre, do some shopping, or just kick back and savour the first, fresh memories of a classic African safari.

DAY 16

Homeward connections in Europe