

July 29, Day 14 - Wednesday: Fly to the Masai Mara via Wilson airport in Nairobi. Transfer to Amboseli airstrip for our flight to The Mara via Nairobi departing at 8:45 am. You will be met by Mara Intrepids camp vehicles and transferred to Mara Intrepids Camp for lunch.

July 29-31, Day 14, 15 & 16 – Wednesday, Thursday & Friday: Stay 3 nights at Intrepids.

Mara Intrepids Camp



Welcome to Mara Intrepids – the most talked about destination in the world’s most talked about wilderness. Sitting above a sweeping bend in the Talek River, at the confluence of the Maasai Mara’s four game-viewing areas, the camp enjoys one of the most spectacular locations in the entire Mara ecosystem. Intrepids is a short drive from the Mara River, where up to one-and-a-half million wildebeest and zebra make their perilous migration crossing every July and August.

Will we see a crossing?



I will bet on it.

The camp itself is divided into four distinct areas, with separate dining areas and ‘mess tents’ ensuring exclusivity for family groups travelling together. I have secured a cluster of tents (3-6) for us plus a family unit 1&2 along the Talek River.

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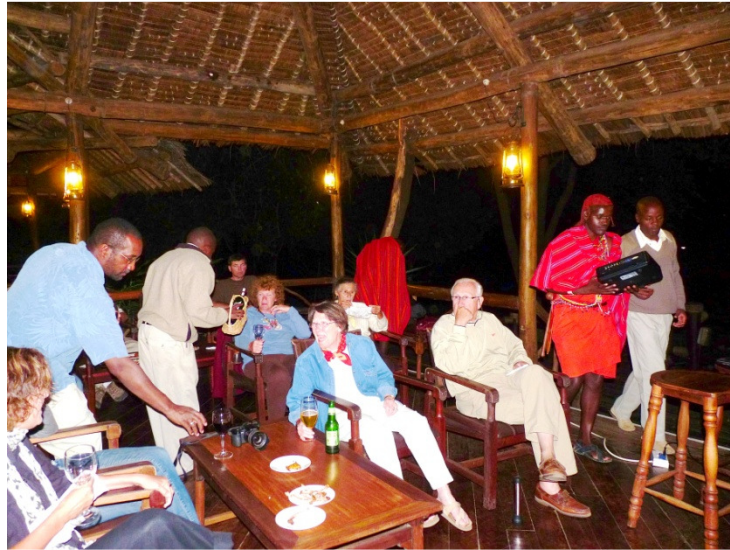
An Intrepids safari offers a unique game-viewing adventure, including three daily game drives with our experienced guides, educational outings and trips to Maasai villages where we support several community development projects. Heritage Hotels boasts some of the very best safari guides in East Africa. Our chosen 3 guides are James, Joseph and Kerore.



These guides, many having grown up near the properties where they lead safaris today, maintain an intimate knowledge and understanding of the bush and the wildlife there. Every month, our

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guides provide detailed reports on wildlife sightings so you can keep track of the wildlife even when you're not on safari. During the summer months the reports focus on the great Wildebeest migration and the rest of the year we track the ever enchanting Big Cats near Mara Intrepids and Mara Explorer. Here's the link to these reports by Paul Kirui, who spoke to us, the best guide in Kenya: http://www.heritage-eastafrika.com/migration_update.html

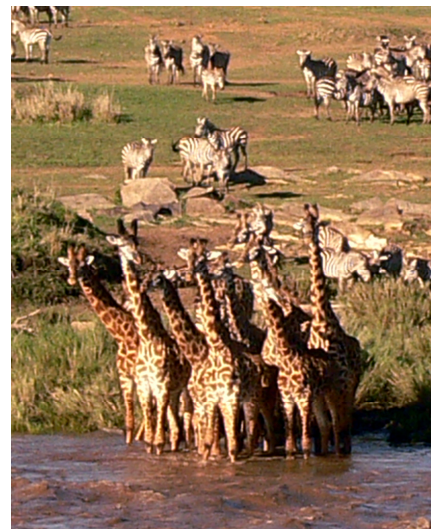


The Masai Mara Game Reserve

Africa's greatest wildlife reserve

The Masai Mara Game Reserve is often called simply "The Mara" which is the Maa word meaning "spotted" - a reference to the patchy landscape. Both spellings "Masai" and "Maasai" are acceptable although the latter is more usual when referring to the people. The Masai Mara is a Game Reserve (sometimes called a National Reserve) although an inner area is treated as a National Park. Reserves are normally managed by local authorities and allow lodges, camp sites and the settling of some tribes' people with their cattle. National Parks are normally managed centrally and do not allow any human inhabitation other than for Park Rangers and people on safari.

The Mara comprises 200 sq miles of open plains, woodlands and riverine forest. Contiguous with the plains of the Serengeti, the Mara is home to a breathtaking array of life. The vast grassland plains are scattered with herds of Zebra, Giraffe, Gazelle, and Topi.



This journey of giraffes (in my picture here) followed by a dazzle of zebras is trying to decide whether to cross the Talek River or not.

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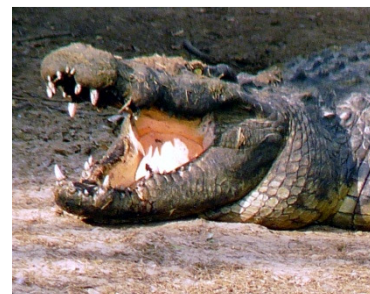
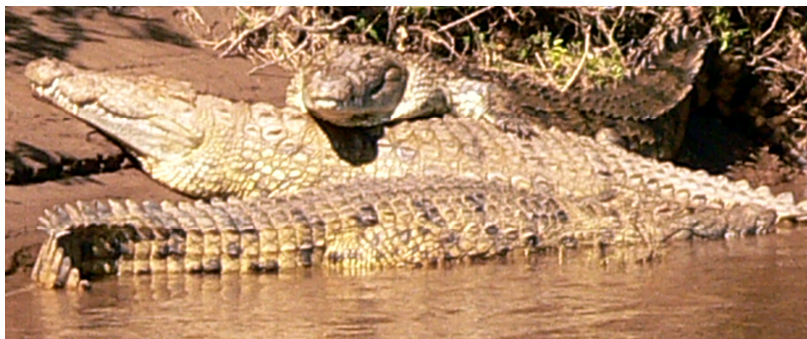
The Acacia forests abound with birdlife and monkeys. Elephants and buffalo wallow in the wide Musiara Swamp. The Mara and Talek rivers are brimming with hippos and crocodiles.

Each year the Mara plays host to the world's greatest natural spectacle, the **Great Wildebeest Migration** from the Serengeti. From July to October, the promise of rain and fresh life giving grass in the north brings 1.5 million wildebeest together into a single massive herd.



They pour across the border into the Mara, making a spectacular entrance in a surging column of life that stretches from horizon to horizon.

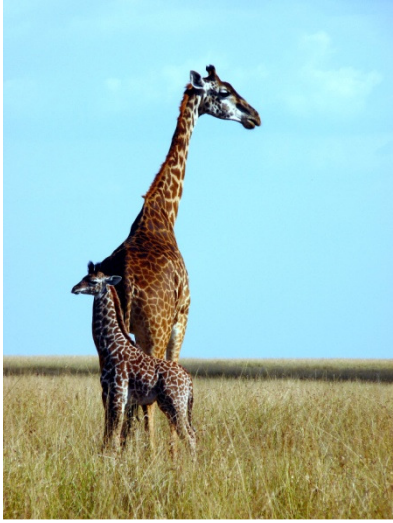
At the Mara River they mass together on the banks before finally plunging forward through the raging waters, creating a frenzy as they fight against swift currents and waiting crocodiles.



The wildebeest bring new life to the Mara, not just through their cycle of regeneration of the grasslands, but for the predators that follow the herds.

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**Let's see what we can see and enjoy what we see.
Every day is different.**



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July 30: A frequent activity in the Masai Mara is a **Hot Air Balloon Safari** along the Mara and the Talek rivers, above the plains to watch the big herds from the air. Nothing can describe the feeling of seeing the animals rise from the mist of this spotted landscape. You should know that this experience is astronomically expensive, at \$450.00 per person. However, this is without a doubt a worthwhile experience no matter what the cost is. You just must do it at least once in a lifetime over the Masai Mara or the Serengeti (or both). Several lodges and camps offer this activity, which always works in a similar way. You are picked up around 5-5:30am, long before sunrise and driven to the site where the lift-off will take place at sunrise.



The balloon blow-up is part of the show. Once the balloon rises, you have the chance to watch the sunrise high above the plains. The flight lasts from 60-90 minutes.



Upon landing a champagne bush breakfast awaits in the shade of a lone acacia tree. This is magical, seeing an elegant set-up from above with only animals around and the crew.



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The flights served by Victory at Fig Tree Camp and Little Governors' Camp are among the most popular. Balloon Safaris departing from Keekorok because of its location and the ruling winds usually fly at higher altitude, which is better for appreciating the whole landscape, but you won't have a close-up view of the animals. The Mara Serena also offers balloon safaris. All fly high and low wherever the prevailing winds dictate.

Hot Air Balloon Safari - The African Dawn! There is nothing quite like it on earth.

The absolute peace of immense vistas, muted colors and crisp fresh air...
and the ever present promise of something wild....
as the balloons float you silently above it all "like a dream come true"...



- The Balloons lift off at dawn (6:15am) after coffee and a flight briefing.
- The one hour flight will give you a birds eye view, of the best East Africa has to offer, in the magnificent setting of the Great Rift Valley.
- A champagne breakfast in the bush after you land, adds to the buzz you will get from the early morning air and the sights and sounds that only an eagle ever sees.
- Early morning is the ideal time to see wild animals on the plains. In the Masai Mara Game Reserve in Kenya it is an experience you will never forget.

About the Ballons - Stand 10 Stories Tall

Made by Cameron Balloons of Bristol, England, the balloons last about 400 flying hours in the fierce African sun, which means they must be replaced every 2 years. They are twice the size of Double Eagle II, the balloon the Americans used to successfully cross the Atlantic in August 1978.

Specs

The larger of the balloons, the Cameron A315, stands as high as a ten storey building, measures 100 feet across at it's equator and has a volume of 315,000 cubic feet or 9000 cubic meters. The A315 is among the largest operational balloons in the world. At sea level it has a lift capability of over two tons (2000kgs), although in Africa they carry only a maximum of up to 16 passengers and the pilot.

The balloon 'envelope' is made of a nylon based fabric superior to that of a spinnaker sail. The basket is made of woven cane and willow by expert craftsmen in the Royal Workshops for the Blind in Bristol. The design has not been surpassed in over a hundred years of balloon flight as there are few other materials that combine strength with resilience for so little weight.

Flight Control - one of the safest forms of flight

The balloon's lift comes from hot air which is slightly lighter than the surrounding cold atmosphere. The hotter the balloon the faster it rises. As the balloon cools it slowly descends. The pilot can control the balloon to brush the grass or the tops of trees, yet could if he wished, go as high as 15,000 feet. However, the flight is kept more down to earth. they do not fly the

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balloons in winds greater than 15 mph (30kph) so the calm African mornings are the perfect time for the flights. The balloons must go where the winds take them but, as winds at varying heights often have varying directions, the pilot can choose his height and hence his direction.

Fuel

The balloon is "powered" by ordinary cooking gas to heat the air in the envelope.

The fuel system is duplicated in every respect to prevent failure of the burner. If all power should be lost however, something which has, in fact, never happened, the balloon would enter a stable cold descent with the envelope acting as a parachute. This feature of the balloon makes it one of the safest forms of flight.

The Pilot

To pilot a balloon, it is necessary to gain a pilots license exactly as with other forms of aircraft. There are a set number of hours of instruction and the same theoretical exams to pass as any fixed wing pilot. Also like their fixed wing counterparts, balloon pilots keep log books, carry out pre-flight checks and monitor the weather conditions for safe flying. In addition, all Balloon Safaris pilots have undergone extensive professional training and worked as commercial balloon pilots around the world. For them to fly balloons in the Masai Mara is a long sought after privilege. Therefore, these pilots tend to be the most experienced in the world.



I have booked the balloon safari on the first morning we're in camp; this is in case the winds are angry that day and we have to abort. This way we have the option to reschedule and fly the next day.



August 1, Day 17 - Saturday:

After a final morning game drive and lunch you will transfer to the airstrip for the Safari Link flight to Nairobi departing at 2:00 pm.

Say goodbye to Tom & Kristina, who will remain in the Masai Mara for 3 more nights.

You will be met on arrival at Nairobi's Wilson airport and taken for a farewell dinner at the Pampa Churrascaria Grill before being dropped off at the Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta International Airport for your flight to Amsterdam.



South Brazil is known for its unique Churrascaria that are spread out all over Brazil and abroad. Churrascaria is a meat roasting house, where people gather to eat **Rodizio** (eat as much as you can). Pampa Churrascaria in Kenya was the brain child of two good friends who had visited and stayed in Brazil and experienced the Churrascarias there, only to bring forth the idea and open the only Churrascaria in East Africa. Pampa Churrascaria was registered in 2004 and was officially opened in May 2005 in Panari Sky Centre, 1st floor on Mombasa Road, Nairobi, very close to the airport.

The menu is varied and filling. Pampa Churrascarias is offering something very unique to the discerning palates of Kenya and East Africa. Our chefs welcome you to choose from the very impressive buffet selection of fresh salads, seasonal vegetables and some particularly Southern Brazilian dishes such as Feijioda, which are an attraction for our vegetarian guests. This sumptuous buffet is enjoyed by vegetarians and meat lovers alike.

This is followed by a mouth watering selection of more than 15 cuts of a variety of excellent grilled meats served on a skewer at your table by our experienced meat waiters. All this is accompanied by our traditional side dishes of fried cassava, fried banana, fried onion rings and French fries.

There is a large selection of international wines, including Brazilian, to accompany the meal. Then it is time for one of our succulent desserts, and this to be followed by special freshly brewed coffee by one of our highly experienced baristas.

The above, together with our attentive service, will make your farewell dinner very special. And once you have tasted meat grilled the churrasco way, you will not want it any other way! Brazilian steak house experience here in Nairobi.

KLM 566 / Northwest Airlines 8566

10:10pm. Depart Nairobi - Arrive Amsterdam 5:30am. (8hr 20min flight)

August 2, Day 18 - Sunday: arrive Amsterdam & USA / Northwest or KLM Airlines

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