

Kenya & Northern Tanzania

Mammal Watching

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive Nairobi

We'll arrive late evening into Nairobi and spend the night in the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel close by the Airport.

Days 2 - 4

Arabuko Sokoke Forest

The next morning we'll fly to the coast for a three night stay at the Turtle Bay Beach Resort in Watamu. This excellent resort is right by the sea, has a nice swimming pool, and most importantly is close by the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest!

The Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, along with some relict coastal forests in Tanzania, form a biome with many unique species and yet covering only a small area. Mammals endemic to these coastal forests include Golden-rumped Giant Sengi and Four-toed Sengi, Harvey's and Ader's Duikers, Zanzibar Sun Squirrel and Sokoke Dog Mongoose. However unlike many of Kenya's mammals, this is a decidedly difficult bunch to connect with! That said we'll have no problem seeing the Golden-rumped Giant Sengi, these curious little insectivores buzz back and forth across the forest tracks well before it gets dark. Four-toed Sengi are less common but still pretty easy to find. Daylight will allow us to catch up with Sykes' Monkeys and the pretty little Zanzibar Sun Squirrels. Harvey's Red Duiker are tolerably common, Ader's Duiker is less easy to find. Once darkness falls the place is alive with Kenya Coast Galagos and we should also have no problem seeing Small-eared Greater Galagos. Blotched Genets will be seen regularly and we'll hopefully see Coastal Suni. Finding the Sokoke Dog Mongoose would be a highlight but is very much in the hoped for bracket as are Caracal, Side-striped Jackal and Aardvark, all of which are found within the forest but are shy and rather scarce. Four-toed Hedgehogs can be found around the hotel grounds.

The Arabuko-Sokoke Forest is a great place for bats. We'll visit two caves both with substantial bat colonies. Kaboga Cave is full of Striped Leaf-nosed Bats, African Sheath-tailed Bats and Least Long-fingered Bats, these flying in droves around us as we traverse the guano-covered floor of the cave. The bats are even more varied in Makahuru and the numbers even more impressive. Thousands of bats fly around us, some of the same species as at Kaboga, but also Sundeval's Roundleaf Bat, Little Free-tailed Bat, and orange African Trident Bat.

Days 5 & 6

Tsavo East National Park

Famous Tsavo East National Park is all about prime game-watching in a majestic Baobab-dotted savannah-scape. You need do nothing more than sit above the waterhole and watch as herds of Elephant, Cape Buffalo, Zebra and Eland come in to drink. Lions, Black-backed Jackals, Blotched Genet and Bat-eared Fox can all be seen from the lodge. We've every chance of seeing other cat species during our visit including Leopard, Cheetah, and the elegant ear-tufted Caracal. Serval can be found in the grasslands just northwest of the lodge though like the Caracal daytime sightings are not easy. Tsavo East is a great place to watch the antics of Gerenuk who are only too happy to show off their 'browsing walk'. Tsavo is one of the only places in the world where you can come across the super-rare Hirola, an elegant antelope whose wild population is down to a few hundred individuals. The tiny population in Tsavo is a translocated one but nonetheless important.

Other mammals we'll see include Coke's Hartebeest, Hippos, Fringe-eared Oryx and the beautiful Lesser Kudu. The local warthog is the Desert Warthog and sharing a similar distribution is the local variant on dwarf mongoose, the Somali Dwarf Mongoose, which is easily seen amongst the impressive termite mounds that dot the landscape. Families of Banded Mongoose are always fun to watch as they 'hoover' through the bushed savannah. Tana Gazelle, now split from Grant's Gazelle, are very common, and we'll see lots of Giraffe too. The latter offer an interesting taxonomic puzzle here as we are full square in the 'Galana River Hybrid Zone'. It is possible to see animals that look fully like Reticulated Giraffes and others that more resemble Masai Giraffes, and a range of intermediates too. Klipspringers step daintily across the rocks on a hill close to the lodge and around the lodge itself Yellow Baboons and Yellow-spotted Bush Hyrax are ever-present. And all that's before we start the nocturnal activities.

Game drives at night in Tsavo are superbly productive. We'll see African Civet, African Wild Cat, White-tailed Mongoose, and plenty of Spotted Hyenas. We have seen Serval, Aardwolf and Striped Hyena on night trips here too, though all three are uncommon and a sighting of any of these should be regarded as a bonus. Taterils and Grass Rats scurry across the track. Senegal Bushbabies peer at us from Acacia foliage.

Days 7 – 10(am) **Aberdares National Park**

East of the Great Rift rise the Aberdares, a highland area that is still largely forested, and which is home to a number of rare and local mammals. Unlike the open plains of many of Kenya's national parks the Aberdares makes the mammal watcher work much harder! But the rewards are great.

We'll have one night at the famed Ark. This lodge has an exceptional record of providing sightings for many sought-after species. Whilst the super-rare Bongo may not make an appearance (OK, perhaps I should rephrase that – it won't – it turns up once a year!) while we are there, we'll certainly see plenty of the impressive Giant Forest Hogs. Other hard-to-see species in the area include

Harvey's Duiker, Black-fronted Duiker, Lesser Cane Rat and Ochre Bush Squirrel. Both Duikers occasionally turn up round the lodge and we'll look for them along the forest tracks too in the daytime too. Spotted Hyenas visit the waterhole in numbers each night and you'll see White-tailed Mongoose and Genets too. Elephants provide endless entertainment while Waterbuck and beautiful Bushbuck are common. Brown Greater Galago and Marsh Mongoose are more rarely seen. You'll hear Southern Tree Hyrax but spotting them from the confines of the lodge at night is less easy. In daylight Mountain Suni crouch under the bushes around the lodge. Other common animals likely to be seen during the day around the park include Eastern Warthog, Bushbuck, Striped Ground Squirrel, Common Zebra, Slender Mongoose, Impala, Reticulated Giraffe, East African Eland and troupes of the elegant Mount Kenya Guereza.

We've chosen to spend one night at the Ark only as you are confined to the building at night there and there's no chance to walk or drive around. This is not the case at the Aberdare Country Club and indeed the grounds of this pleasant hotel, which are extensive and back on to conservancy land, have become well-known as a good site to see certain mammals. In daylight Ochre Bush Squirrels scamper around the hotel building whilst a sortie out onto the lawns even in daylight should reveal Harvey's Red Duiker, indeed we'll also see Zebra, Impala, Bushbuck and Warthogs too. At dusk Mountain Suni emerge and feed around the lawn edges and we'll see Scrub Hares and Southern Tree Hyrax, the latter much easier to see here. The weird and wonderful Maned Rat has recently started appearing in the grounds too. Up into the moorlands and bamboo forests above we'll find Sykes' Monkey and Mountain Reedbuck.

Day 10 (pm) to Nairobi

In the afternoon of Day 10 we'll descend to Nairobi and stay the night at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel close by the Airport.

Day 11 To the Serengeti

We'll start early for what will be a long day. Our route takes us down through the Athi River plains and whistling thorn savannah to the Tanzania border, Thompson's Gazelles and Zebra evident on the way. Once into Tanzania we'll pass through dry country initially, keeping an eye out for Gerenuk as we go, before skirting Lake Manyara and entering the great Serengeti ecosystem. Our first impressions will confirm the vastness of this country. Savannah, initially almost completely grassed, stretches to the horizon with no hint of man's interference. Lodges are scattered here and there through the landscape but almost all are carefully sited so that they don't impact on the landscape. We'll not have gone far before we'll be seeing large numbers of Gazelle and Western White-bearded Wildebeest, and likely we'll have seen Lions and quite possibly other cats even before we reach the lodge the dusk. This lodge has a most stunning setting amid bushed savannah. On a hilltop and hidden amongst the trees are lovely rooms and a

superb restaurant. We'll just have to go straight to the viewpoint by the swimming pool that overlooks a huge swathe of savannah and bushland in a wide valley to the west of us. Likely there will be tens of thousands of ungulates dotted across the landscape below us. It is an awesome sight.

Days 12 – 15(am) **The Serengeti**

The Serengeti National Park is home to one of the greatest wildlife spectacles on Earth, as more than one million Western White-bearded Wildebeest and nearly half a million Zebra annually follow the rains across the Serengeti's great grasslands. In total more than two million ungulates graze the Serengeti at this season. The Serengeti is vast and it is possible to hide even a million Wildebeest in it but likely they will be in the savannahs to the west and north of our lodge at this season. They follow the rains and that is not a simple process of south-north as rainfall is often patchy but they seem to know where it will be as they move in search of the short sweet grass.

Of course with all this food about the predators are numerous and obvious. Black-maned Lions sit about seeming to wait for their dinners and breakfasts to come to them. Leopards are as easy to see here as anywhere. Their prey is particularly numerous in wide low valleys where there are few trees and as a consequence one doesn't have to look in too many trees to find them! They have a particular liking for African Sausage Trees which are scattered here and there and it is possible to come across several Leopards in a day draped over the comfortable-looking branches. Even the Lions can sometimes be spotted posing in these distinctive trees. Cheetahs too are quite easy to find and their favoured prey, the Thompson's Gazelles, are super-abundant. They can be seen in groups numbering in their thousands the dominant males chasing unwanted intruders in their territories in what looks a complete chaos to us. Spotted Hyenas are very common. Black-backed Jackals and Bat-eared Foxes are numerous. The Serengeti is one of the best places to see the other African jackal species too. The uncommon Side-striped Jackal likes the savannah-bushland interface near our lodge and in the drier more open savannah to the east the Golden Jackal, or African Golden Wolf as it is often now called, is really quite common. We'll also do our best to find Serval, a very beautiful long-legged cat – the Serengeti is one of the very best places in Africa to watch them.

Large family groups of Bush Elephants stride across the savannah – one of the iconic images of the Serengeti. Aside from the multitudes of Wildebeest and Zebra other ungulates are many varied in the Serengeti. We'll see small herds of Coke's Hartebeest and equally the lovely Topi, a strikingly coloured animal with a coat of tan and dark yet with distinctly yellowish legs – beautiful. Stately Eland drift across the landscape in large herds and there's plentiful Robert's (Grant's) Gazelles in the more open areas. In the grounds of the lodge there's a couple of families of Cavendish's Dik-dik and they are numerous in the trees around. Impala are super-numerous and Giraffes too. We'll have the chance to study both Bohor Reedbuck and (Chanler's) Mountain Reedbuck.

Little groups of Banded Mongoose cavort across the grasslands like animated carpets and we'll see Dwarf Mongooses too, in the early mornings they often pose cutely together on top of their termite-mound homes. Slender Mongoose is rather common in the bushy savannah near our lodge. In common with most Tanzania lodges ours is not fenced and so the animals can come right to your door. You will be told not to walk with a security guard from the restaurant to your room at night as Defassa Waterbuck and more pertinently Cape Buffalo are often right by the rooms at night. However you will be able to get their help to do little night sorties round the property – Senegal Bushbabies are common and so too Yellow-winged Bat and Serval sometimes come into the grounds. Cute little Acacia Rats, looking not unlike mini-bushbabies, are also common in the grounds.

East of our lodge are some rocky kopjes where we'll find a nice little population of Klipspringer and there are Black-necked Rock Hyraxes and Bush Hyraxes on the same rocks.

Days 15(pm) – 18(am) Ngorongoro Crater

The Ngorongoro Crater is surely one of the natural wonders of the world. Nearly three million years old, the ancient caldera is the remnant of a huge volcano that is now one of the most beautiful wildlife havens in the world. We'll stay in a superb lodge amongst lichen-bearded forests seven thousand feet above sea level on the crater rim. Towering Euphorbias cling to the crater walls where there is a narrow band of beautiful montane forest. Elephants are common at this season and are often around the lodge itself, as are Waterbuck and the lovely Bushbuck. The normally elusive Bushpig can also be seen poking around in the bushes behind the rooms, this is really a most striking and surprisingly big pig! Bushy-tailed Mongooses may pop up on your verandah and Harvey's Duikers are rather shier in the forests surrounding the buildings. Blue Monkeys are in the trees too and Crested Porcupines visit the lodge each night.

The views from the lodge are sensational! One can see right down into the crater and the expansive grasslands that surround the central lake. We'll spend two days exploring the crater and enjoying a rich festival of wildlife. The populations of many of the ungulates are immense, with great herds of Zebra, Gazelle and Western White-bearded Wildebeest. Unlike their Serengeti brethren the latter do not undertake a big migration, merely moving seasonally from one side of the crater to the other. There are lots of Cape Buffalo and a truly dense population of Spotted Hyenas. Some of Africa's last Black Rhinos are still well protected in the crater. There are several prides of Lions within the crater and males here are particularly striking with pale tan coats and huge black manes. We've a decent chance of connecting with a Caracal or two in the grasslands where crater wall meets crater floor and in the open grasslands close to flamingo-dotted Magadi Lake we'll again see Serval. Giant-tusked Elephants roam fever-and-fig tree

forests where we'll look for more elusive mammals such as Honey Badger and Egyptian Mongoose.

Days 18(pm) – 20(am) **Tarangire National Park**

To the east of the great grasslands the landscape takes on a different character as huge baobab and acacia trees gradually increase in frequency. Here over two thousand square kilometres of beautiful habitat is protected by the Tarangire National Park. The river Tarangire threads its way through the length of the reserve. In the mammal watching world Tarangire shot to prominence when a group of mammal watchers did a 'big mammal day' there in February 2019 and recorded a remarkable 64 species of mammal in the 24 hours! We'll not push ourselves quite so hard. However we're sure to enjoy the huge concentration of Elephant, Impala, Robert's (Grant's) Gazelle, Giraffe, Reedbuck, Wildebeest (here the Eastern White-bearded form or species) and Buffalo that make this place one of the best wildlife areas in East Africa. Tarangire is a good place to connect with Steenbok. We'll look for Southern Tree Hyrax, Yellow-winged Bat and both Lesser and the beautiful Greater Kudu. Large troupes of Olive Baboons hunt along the rivers and Cheetah and Lions can often be found lounging in the shade one of the many huge Baobabs dotted about this sublime landscape. Epauletted Fruit Bats can be found in the trees around the lodge, Ochre Bush Squirrels in the restaurant and if we are lucky a Honey Badger might pass through.

Night safaris are not allowed in the Serengeti nor the Ngorongoro but here in Tarangire we can do them every night. And it is quite an experience. The animals seem never-ending. For sure we'll see some of the ungulates that we see during the day time but at night its mainly a different mammalian world. In particular we'll see Spring Hares in abundance- these little 'kangeroos' hopping all over the savannah-scape, sometimes four or five at a time! Each night we'll likely see several Common Genets, quite a few Scrub Hares, and a few White-tailed Mongoose too. Bat-eared Foxes can also be numerous and Senegal Galagos are frequent in the trees. We've a decent change of African Wild Cat, Bushbuck and Crested Porcupine during our stay. In the 'hoped for' category are Zorilla and Aardvark!

Day 20(pm) **To Arusha for flight to Nairobi. Night Departure from Nairobi**

After a final game drive in Tarangire we'll head to Arusha for a flight to Nairobi and have dinner there before catching the midnight flight out of Nairobi.

Day 21 **Arrive UK/Europe**

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for a trip report from our previous mammal watching trips to Kenya and from our reconnaissance trip to Northern Tanzania. If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

To Book a place on this Holiday please click on the 'Book this Tour' button found on the right-hand side of the page where you downloaded this itinerary, or fill in the booking form which you can download from <https://www.greentours.co.uk/booking/> (also found in the Greentours brochure) and post to Greentours, 8 Eliot Close, Armitage, Rugeley, WS15 4UP, UK. Tel +44 (0)1298 83563. After booking your place you'll receive a confirmation letter and a detailed information pack will be dispatched twelve weeks prior to departure. Mammal and bird checklists are available.