

Northern Tanzania

Mammal-Watching

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive Nairobi

Day 2

To the Serengeti

After a night in the hotel close to the airport 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 3 – 6(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 6(pm) – 9(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 shy 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 9(pm) – 11(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 11(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 12

Arrive UK/Europe

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for the trip report 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.

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