
A Guide to Tanzania and Zanzibar

Please click on the areas on the map for more information.



A GUIDE TO THE GUIDE

The idea of this guide is to help you decide where in Tanzania you should go. We know that clients can easily get bamboozled by too much information. We hope this short guide will be enough to set you on the right course, without being too detailed, and as such it is not meant to be definitive. For further details we strongly recommend that you look at our vast website which discusses all the national parks, beaches and islands and hundreds of different lodges, all with in depth reviews, prices, and often videos. Since we have personally visited every lodge in Tanzania we can really give you the best advice!

So saying, nothing beats the personal touch so we strongly recommend you either pop into our offices in Putney, London or phone to discuss. Alternatively we can give you a 'virtual presentation' which simply requires that you have access to a computer anywhere in the world!

Important considerations

When to go

The climate in Tanzania is equatorial, with little seasonal variation in temperature, however rainfall does vary considerably. The best time to travel is July to October, when Tanzania is hot, dry and sunny with low humidity, and the game viewing is great. The short rains come in November and the long rains in April and May; in between the rains (December to March) is another good time to travel.

Where to stay?

The next consideration is which park will offer the best game viewing and activities for your travel dates – this is especially critical if you want to witness The Great Migration. Each park has a good range of accommodation to choose from according to your budget and personal taste, including mobile camps, small tented camps, permanent lodges and large hotels. Tented camps can still be extremely luxurious (often with private plunge pools and all the bells and whistles), though the semi-permanent mobile camps that track the path of the migration do lack permanent plumbing.

Budget and timings

Safaris are not cheap, and although the beach hotels are considerably cheaper than the safari lodges, the beach hotels are quite expensive compared to other beach locations in, say, Asia. Roughly speaking, safari lodges in the South of Tanzania tend to cost between \$450 and \$1,000, those in the North between \$750 and \$1,500, and beach hotels between \$200 and \$600 - all prices in US dollars per person per night. *It is also important to note that safaris are tiring and we only recommend up to about a week on safari.*

Special occasions

Whether it is your honeymoon, holiday of a lifetime, birthday celebration, or a family reunion, we will plan it with you and ensure that it is a memorably superb trip. Hot-air ballooning over the plains of the Serengeti, diving with whale sharks, tracking lion on foot, chartering your private jet, or simply relaxing on a private island – whatever your dream, we can make it happen.

Tanzania is wonderful for romantic holidays and honeymoons for so many reasons; it is one of the easiest countries in Africa in which to combine a first-class safari with beach time on an idyllic Indian Ocean island, and its assorted highlights can be easily combined in a neat itinerary with minimal flying time.

Tanzania Overview

The National Parks and Reserves of Tanzania are the best in Africa for wildlife viewing, and most people choose to explore them for at least part of their stay. Most clients take their safari in either the parks of the North (Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Manyara, Tarangire) or the lesser known parks of the South (Selous, Ruaha, Katavi, Mahale) and the pros and cons of each are discussed below. Most visitors to Tanzania end their time at a beach lodge on one of Tanzania's islands (most commonly, Zanzibar) or on its Indian Ocean coastline.

Getting there and getting around

Dar es Salaam is the main hub and is served by a number of airlines from Europe including KLM (Delta), Swiss and Emirates - though not British Airways. If you cannot get to Dar directly the next best hub is Nairobi, both which is accessible with many airlines. It is also worth noting that KLM fly directly to Kilimanjaro, which can save a flight up from Dar.

There is a good western-owned network of flights connecting all the parks and islands with main hubs in Arusha, Dar and Zanzibar which makes travelling within Tanzania a breeze. As a very rough rule of thumb you should assume \$200 per flight, and with the exception of Katavi and Mahale there are several flights a day between the parks, hubs and islands.

Further afield

For other beaches, it is worth mentioning the islands in the Quirimbas archipelago of Northern Mozambique. These islands are a short (though expensive) flight from Dar and offer a truly 'barefoot luxury' experience with amazing untouched reefs and a real frontier feel. Mauritius and the islands of the Seychelles are accessible via Nairobi, although this often involves a 'dead night' in a city hotel.

The other countries of East Africa are a short hop from Dar, allowing good combinations with the Masai Mara in Kenya or Gorilla trekking in Rwanda etc. Southern Africa is accessible via Johannesburg (with daily flights from Dar), and there are flights to Victoria Falls a few times a week via Nairobi.

Northern or Southern Tanzania?

The big decision is: safari in the North or the South of Tanzania, and how long to spend on safari? The South of Tanzania (where the most popular parks are Selous and Ruaha) is far less visited than the parks of the North, and allows short or extended walking safaris, safaris by boat, as well as safaris by open-sided vehicle. The parks have small (usually tented) lodges which tend to be better value than the tented lodges of the north. Since it is cheap and easy to fly in and out of Selous due to the relatively short distance, it is perfect for a short (3 to 4 nights) and reasonably cheap safari. For those looking for a longer safari in the South, the combination and contrast of Selous and Ruaha is superb.

The North of Tanzania (where the most popular parks are the Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti) is much more visited than the South. It is possible to escape the crowds by heading to the far North of the Serengeti but otherwise you will see many other safari vehicles. The annual migration of the wildebeest in the Serengeti is justifiably one of the most spectacular sights on the planet and is seen year round in the Serengeti. The Serengeti is also one of the best parks in Africa in which to see the cats. Though very crowded, the Ngorongoro Crater is one of the seven natural wonders of the world. Price-wise the North is about 50% more expensive than the South and the flights are longer and more expensive. As a general rule not all the North camps offer walking safaris nor is it possible to do a boat safari.

As well as being expensive, safaris are tiring, often involving long days in a land cruiser starting before dawn and most clients tend to take a short 3 to 4 night safari in the South, or a 5 to 8 night safari either in the North or South. Longer safaris are possible but the experience can get a bit repetitive.



The North of Tanzania



The iconic Serengeti National Park, the Ngorongoro Crater and the Great Migration (which together comprise most people's idea of 'safari'), and Mount Kilimanjaro are all to be found in the North. However, so are plenty of tourists and as a result, prices are higher than in the South and it can be harder to achieve the authentic African wilderness experience. Activities in the North are constrained by National Park regulations and night drives, walking safaris and fly camping are not permitted (though as with all rules there are exceptions in some camps).

The Serengeti, where most people spend the majority of their time, is justifiably famous for its huge concentrations of game, especially predators, and of course the migration all year round. Huge expanses of short grass plains make game viewing exceptionally good. There are 4 main regions – the North, the Western corridor, the Central Serengeti and the Ndotu Plains, and where to stay will depend on the time

of year. A number of operators offer mobile camps that track the migration - please see our animating map.

The diverse and unique Ngorongoro Crater, though a 'must see', is surprisingly small and most people find that one day there is quite sufficient. You cannot avoid seeing many other vehicles, often bumper to bumper. The key decision is whether to stay on the rim of the Crater itself in one of the cheaper options such as large hotels, Sopa or Serena, the beautiful Entamanu or the expensive but heralded Ngorongoro Crater Lodge. All boast fabulous views. Your other option is to stay half way between Manyara and the Crater in an area of rolling hills and rich culture called Karatu, in a hotel such as Plantation Lodge or Ngorongoro Farm House; less busy and allowing for more activities including visits to local villages.

Tarangire is a great park in season (July to October), especially for elephants, though it is plagued by tsetse flies. Lake Manyara is a small national park worth visiting only for a morning en-route to somewhere else.

Where to stay

As mentioned, the lodges in the North tend to be more expensive than those in the South. At the top of the scale are fantastic lodges like the Crater Lodge and Sasakwa at about \$1,600 per person per night. Most of the good camps tend to be between \$800 and \$1,000, including Faru Faru, Sayari, Olakira, Nomads, Oliver's, and Serengeti Under Canvas.

In this price bracket are mobile tented camps (such as Olakira), permanent tented camps (such as Sayari), and permanent lodges (such as Klein's). It is hard to find any tented lodges cheaper than this, apart from Kirurumu, Chaka and Kiota which are fantastic value options. However, it is possible to take 'drive-in' itineraries where lodges do not have their own vehicles for about \$600 on the basis of 2 people and \$500 on the basis of 4 people. The camps here are not quite as atmospheric or as good quality as our other suggestions, but are great for budget travellers. See Kati Kati.

For more information including reviews, maps, slideshows and videos please click here.

The South of Tanzania



The South of Tanzania includes Selous Game Reserve and Ruaha National Park, each very different from the other but both of which offer outstanding game viewing and a fabulous safari experience. Fewer visitors here mean lower prices (in the region of \$400-\$700 per person per night), better value for money and plenty of isolated wildernesses where you won't see another person.

As the Selous is a game reserve rather than a national park, a wider range of activities is on offer including walking and boating safaris, game drives in open-sided vehicles, and fly camping. The parched red earth of Ruaha is a perfect contrast to the green and watery Selous. Even fewer visitors make it to Ruaha than to the Selous and it also offers game drives in open-sided vehicles, fly camping and walking safaris. As the South is always fly-in/fly-out, it is ideal for a short 3- or 4-night safari, although to visit both

Selous and Ruaha would require longer.

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Further West

Very few people venture further to the West of Ruaha, and for that reason we do not devote much space to the next two parks. First up is Katavi National Park; a huge wilderness with vast plains (similar to the Serengeti), huge herds of buffalo and many prides of lion. And finally on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, Mahale Mountains National Park is a unique location where one can trek with chimps in the morning and snorkel and sunbathe on the lake in the afternoon.

Where to stay

The cheapest good tented lodges are owned by Adventure Camps (Lake Manze in Selous and Mdonya Old River in Ruaha) at around the \$400 mark. Next up are the SSC properties (Siwandu in Selous and Jongomero in Ruaha), as well as Mwagusi in Ruaha at around the \$600 mark. And at the very top are lodges like Beho Beho and Sand Rivers (both in Selous) and Greystoke in Mahale at about \$1000.

Tanzania's beaches, islands and coastline



Of all Tanzania's islands the most famous is Zanzibar. Zanzibar has mile upon mile of beautiful white coral sand beaches, palm trees and wonderful warm turquoise water. A word of caution however: the beaches of Zanzibar are extremely tidal and though some beaches are superb, some are not - as a rule of thumb the best beaches are in the North and the South-East.

The other two main islands are Pemba and Mafia. However the beaches here are much less appealing than their Zanzibar counterparts, being both extremely tidal and more mangrove beach than white coral sand.

Most island hotels offer a range of non-motorised water sports including diving, kite surfing and snorkelling, either directly from the hotel (as at Ras Nungwi or Breezes) or from a nearby privately-run dive centre.

Finally, even though Tanzania has hundreds of miles of coastline all the way down to Mozambique, the coast remains gloriously undeveloped. The mainland coast lodges are thus much more private than the island lodges. They are also less tidal and tend to be good for boogie-boarding, unlike the islands.

Where to stay

On Zanzibar at about the \$200 mark, Pongwe and Sunshine are well-run small hotels with good beaches, and at the same sort of price is the much bigger Breezes Beach Club. The next level up, at about \$300, brings Zuri Zanzibar, Zawadi and Matemwe – all fantastic options. The top end of the scale sees many stunning options such as Palms, Baraza, Xanadu and White Sands. At the very top end into Bill Gates territory is the completely exclusive Mnemba Island and Thanda Island... For your slice of exclusivity without breaking the bank, see Fanjove.

Stone Town can be visited on a day trip from the beach (about 1 hour), or for those who want to stay overnight there are a number of small boutique hotels, of which our favourite is the Zanzibar Palace.

Off Zanzibar there is little choice; for Mafia we recommend Kinasi Lodge (about \$200), on Pemba we recommend Fundu Lagoon (about \$500), and if money really is no object then Mnemba island is the place to stay (about \$1500). On the mainland there are really only two choices - our absolute favourite lodge Ras Kutani (about \$300), and further North near Bagamoyo, the Tides (about \$250).

Why Tanzania Odyssey?

Booking a holiday or honeymoon is a time-consuming and potentially confusing business and it is vital to get the trip absolutely right. We believe that the best way of achieving this is with a **face to face presentation** (which we can arrange in the evenings and weekends). However, for those unable to visit our offices in Putney, London we now arrange **'virtual presentations'** where we 'share' our computer with you, and guide you through all the areas, parks, and lodges using all the maps, slideshows and video on our website. Otherwise we are always at the end of the phone!

About us

Independent advice from experts

We really know our stuff. We have been arranging luxury travel to Africa since 1999, and we have close relationships with all the suppliers. We have stayed at all the lodges many a time, so we can match an itinerary to your requirements very precisely. You may have come across a fabulous lodge on [Tripadvisor](#) – but if there's an even better (more intimate, more authentic, less expensive) one just round the corner, we'll tell you about it. And if anything goes wrong during your trip, we know who to call and how to get things sorted.

Independently owned and operated

We are not accountable to anybody but you. We don't work on commission. Our only objective is to arrange the best possible trip for you, within your budget, and to ensure that you have a wonderful time.

Industry credentials

Our MD, Marc, is a board director of the [Africa Travel and Tourism Association](#), the UK trade body covering all aspects of travel and tourism to Africa. He is also a judge of the highly respected [Good Safari Guide](#). One of our consultants, Annie, has written the Cadogan guidebook to Tanzania and Zanzibar, now in its 2nd edition.

Testimonials

Countless thousands of clients have been delighted with our service. Please see our reviews on [Trust Pilot](#)

Your Money

Our price promise

Booking through us will cost no more - and often considerably less - than booking the same trip with all the individual suppliers directly. We are able to negotiate excellent rates with suppliers, which results in savings for you. In the very unlikely event that you get a cheaper quote for the same trip from a reputable UK bonded tour operator, we will match that quote.

Financial protection

We are [ATOL](#) (ATOL 5397) so whatever might happen to us, your money is protected.

No surcharge for currency fluctuations

Once your trip is deposited we guarantee that we will make no surcharge for currency fluctuations, whatever happens to exchange rates before you actually travel.

In summary, we are able to package a holiday for less than you will be able to arrange directly, without any exchange risk, and you will benefit from our decades of experience in arranging similar trips, our impartial opinions, and the financial security that our ATOL bond offers!