

The Interview

Ask the Travel Expert: I Want to Go on Safari. Where Do I Even Begin?

by Eric Monkaba

I assume a lot of people go on safari hoping to see as many animals as possible. Is the migration the best time to visit?

It depends. First of all, the migration happens 365 days a year, not just at one time. They go in a clockwise circle between Tanzania and Kenya, through the Serengeti, up through the Mara, and then back down through the Serengeti. The Serengeti migration lasts for about nine months out of the year, and the Mara in Kenya gets the migration the other three months. The migration is a wildebeest migration — it's not a lion migration, not a cheetah migration — so that's something most people don't realize. If you're an avid photographer, then yes, basing your trip around the migration would mean having a good chance of taking incredible pictures. But it's still important to understand that nothing is a guarantee with wild animals: They go where they want to go, when they want to go. The best we can do is predict the paths their migration will take. That said, the best place to catch the action is in the northern Serengeti, at [Nomad Lamai](#).

And Tanzania?

In Tanzania, you'll find more mobile tent accommodations (don't be fooled, these are *very* glamorous tents), and a lot of properties will pick up and move entirely to follow the migration, improving your chances to spot game. If you've settled on Tanzania, there are basically two trip options: the essential, introductory itinerary that should include the Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti, or the less-trodden [Ruaha National Park](#) and the [Selous Game Reserve](#). Ruaha and Selous are perfect for people who truly enjoy being on safari all day, even if they're not spotting animals every second — you'll still see the big five here, but the game viewing isn't as dense. If you're looking for something completely different and more remote, then [Greystoke Mahale](#) on the white sand beaches of Lake Tanganyika is a great option (especially if you love wild chimpanzees).

Accommodation-wise, the Nomad brand has a circuit of camps located around the country in all of the best locations, including some mobile tents and the [only private house in the Serengeti](#). If money is no object, then look no farther than the Singita brand: they're the best of the best. No request is too large, no detail is overlooked, and their properties are the epitome of comfort. They're also the custodians of a 350,000 acre swath of land that they protect and preserve with their own anti-poaching unit.

Tanzania also offers one of the most epic climbs for the truly intrepid traveler. Mount Kilimanjaro is the tallest mountain on the African continent and the highest free-standing mountain in the world. It's usually accomplished in a six to eight-day day climb and can be topped off with a safari in Tarangire National Park using [Chem Chem](#) as a base. It's estimated that Tarangire is home to the highest density of elephants in Tanzania with some herds reaching more than 600 elephants!