How to Book the Best Safari in Tanzania

Intimate lodges and prime game-viewing are the hallmarks of this nine-day trip, bookable through the Travel + Leisure Great Adventure series with Butterfield and Robinson.

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Nothing can top the romance and magic of a safari in Tanzania, a destination marked by its rolling hills and expansive plains, and home to elephants, wildebeest, zebra, lions, and more. Indeed, this East African country has a remarkable diversity of wildlife, seen up close in the stunning Ngorongoro Crater, home to some 25,000 species; in the Serengeti National Park, renowned for its annual migration of nearly two million wildebeest; and Tarangire National Park.

On our nine-day Northern Tanzania trip, part of Travel + Leisure's bookable vacation program with luxury outfitter Butterfield and Robinson, you’ll get a chance to experience all of three of these places. We’ve combined traditional safari game drives with exciting nature walks (rather than standard driving-only safaris), allowing you far more time and access to up-close wildlife encounters. There are plenty of opportunities to spot the endangered black rhino, bull elephants, and the majesty of migrating wildebeest along the way.
Our editors have vetted this entire itinerary, and even selected a special activity for you: an evening game drive in Tarangire National Park. Seeing wildlife during the day is one thing, viewing them at night, well, is a whole other animal, as you get to see nocturnal species on the prowl.

Read on for a full day-by-day itinerary of our trip, and for availability or to book, contact Butterfield and Robinson. *From $7,995 per person, including most meals.*

**Day 1**

Welcome to Tanzania! Upon arrival at Kilimanjaro International Airport, your local guide will greet you and drive you to the Rivertrees Country Inn for a relaxing evening. Rivertrees provides the perfect setting to unwind after a long day of travel and is central to many of the local sites, like Arusha National Park at the base of Mt. Meru. Enjoy dinner at the inn this evening.

**Stay:** Rivertrees Country Inn, a collection of rustic cottages lining the riverbank, has the nostalgic air of a well-loved homestead.

**Days 2 and 3**

This morning, you will be driven to the airport for your scheduled flight to Tarangire National Park. Upon arrival, slowly game drive your way to your accommodation, Kuro Tarangire Lodge.

Named after the river that crosses through it, this 1,100-square-mile park is sometimes sadly missed by those heading for the more well-known national parks in Tanzania. The landscape here is diverse, with a mix of habitats that are unique to the area: hilly landscapes are dotted with baobab trees, dense bush, and high grasses. During the dry season, the river is the only source of water for many animals, with thousands migrating to it from the nearby Lake Manyara National Park every year. Herds of up to 300 elephants congregate here, whilst migratory wildebeest, zebra, buffalo, impala and eland can also be seen (with the accompanying predators following along behind). The swamps are where you will find over 550 bird species — the most breeding species found in one habitat anywhere in the world.
Over the next two days, you will explore this landscape in custom-built 4WD cars both during the day and under the night sky. On your first evening, enjoy a leisurely dinner before bed.

The following morning, rise and shine for a longer walking safari. You will have the opportunity to get up close and personal with large mammals such as elephant, giraffe, buffalo or even lions. (Not to worry, walking safaris are very safe!) You will return to camp for lunch and a rest before heading out in the vehicle for an afternoon game drive. Enjoy another evening around the campfire swapping stories with other guests. Then, once the sun goes down, head out on an exciting night drive — our editor’s pick activity — to experience the nocturnal world of the park.

**Stay:** For two nights, you’ll be at Nomad Kuro Tarangire, part of the Nomad group’s excellent collection of camps. The earth-toned suites have four-poster beds, gracious sitting areas, and en-suite bathrooms.
Days 4 and 5

This morning, you’ll head back to the airstrip and fly to Manyara, where you’ll meet your guide and head to your next camp, Entamanu Ngorongoro, perched on the rim of the Ngorongoro Crater. A UNESCO World Heritage Site sizing in at 102 square-miles, Ngorongoro is the world's largest unbroken, unflooded volcanic caldera. The floor is covered by grasslands with two small wooded areas and a seasonal salt lake in the center known by two names, Lake Magadi or Lake Makat. It formed when a giant volcano exploded and collapsed on itself between two to three million years ago, resulting in a natural enclosure for a very wide variety of wildlife — in fact, it’s one of the most well-known wildlife areas in the world. The Ngorongoro Conservation Authority area is part of the larger Serengeti ecosystem; it adjoins the Serengeti National Park, merging into the Southern Plains. The south and west of the area are volcanic highlands including Lake Natron, the active volcano Ol Doinyo Lengai (meaning 'Mountain of God' in the Maasai language) and the lesser-known Empakaai Crater. The other major water source is the Ngoitoktok, near the eastern crater wall.

Very early the following day, you’ll head out at dawn and drive to this legendary crater. Once you’ve descended to the bottom of the crater floor, you’ll embark on a search for black rhinos and massive bull elephants before stopping for a quick breakfast. Lions are also plentiful here, as are hyena and with the backdrop of the crater walls, the photography at sunrise is fantastic. After a few hours in the Range Rover following a picnic lunch in the crater, you can choose to either head back to camp or continue with an afternoon game drive.

Stay: For two nights, you’ll be at Nomad Entamanu Ngorongoro, an eco-sensitive refuge on the edge of the crater. The lovely, tented rooms have furniture made from sustainably sourced wood, by local Tanzanian artisans.

Days 6, 7, and 8

This morning, you will be driven back to the nearby Manyara airstrip to fly either up to the northern part of the Serengeti near the Mara River if you are traveling in the high season (June-October) or to the southern Serengeti if you are travelling in green season (December-March). In low season (April, May & November-mid-December) you will likely stick to the central Serengeti.
Tanzania’s oldest and most popular national park, also a World Heritage Site and recently proclaimed one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, the Serengeti is famed for its annual migration. Over a million wildebeest and about 200,000 zebras flow from the northern hills to the southern plains, then swirl west and north again. The wildebeest are one of the most important species in the Serengeti ecosystem. They spend the rainy season from December to June in the volcanic open plains below the previously visited Ngorongoro Crater, where the grass growth is abundant and high in nutrients. Only through migration can the wildebeest and zebra use the widespread resources of the ecosystem and grow to such large numbers. From roughly June to July, they pass through the area known as the Grumeti River before arriving in the Northern Serengeti. This landscape, dominated by open woodlands and the Mara River, is home to the migration from August to November. Afterward, these amazing animals once again find themselves in the endless grasslands of the south for the calving season.

During your time here, you will immerse yourself in the wildlife with two daily game drives — one in the early morning and one in the late afternoon. You’ll have time in the mid-afternoon to relax at camp or, depending on the time of year, take guided nature walks.

**Stay:** Rustic luxury at its finest, the Serengeti Safari Camp, another of Nomad’s properties, boasts Meru-style tents with en-suite bathrooms and safari-style bucket showers.

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**Day 9**

Depart camp after breakfast for the return trip to the Manyara airstrip. Board your onward flight from the Serengeti back to Arusha for connecting your flights home.