



NUMBERS GAME

YOUR SHORTCUT TO GREAT ADVENTURES IN GREAT PLACES

5 'KIDYLLIC' HIDEAWAYS IN EAST AFRICA

Safaris with children needn't be a terrifying prospect.

Melissa Kay, an East African resident for almost a decade who has a young son herself, shares some of her favourite places to go and top tips for travelling with kids

With proper planning, young children can enjoy exploring Africa just as much as you. Avoiding long journeys is a good place to start. Safari vehicles may not have air-conditioning, roads are often uncomfortable and dusty, and loo stops are generally behind bushes.

But when you do need to spend time on the road, don't forget the obvious kit (toys, entertainment and games); and plenty of snacks and treats come in handy, too. Top tip: grab extra rolls, pastries and fruit at breakfast and bring them with you in the vehicle for munchies throughout the day.

When it comes to making reservations, plan to stay at least a few days in each place to avoid too many big moves (two destinations is ideal, perhaps combining beach and bush) and always go for accommodation with a swimming pool. The sun can really take it out of little ones and it does everyone good to have a refreshing dip at the end of a long and action-packed day.

There are hundreds of options in East Africa for family-friendly visits: it's a vibrant land of *Lion King* landscapes, fruit fresh from the trees, wild animals and calm seas. To help choose the location that's best for you, here are my top spots for adventures with kids.

NOMAD-TANZANIA.COM (2)



CARNELLEY'S CAMP

1

THE SERENGETI OR MIKUMI, TANZANIA

The famous Serengeti (pictured) is a key reason to visit Tanzania, but getting there and exploring this vast area means a lot of driving. One option is to fly in and base yourself at the new **Mkombe's House Lamai** (above), run by Nomad Tanzania. It's a private house designed specifically with families in mind. Alternatively, break from the pack and try a different park. Just a few hours from Dar es Salaam, **Mikumi National Park** is ideal. Here you are never far from a lodge when you need to stop; plus, there are plenty of picnic spots, viewing points and waterholes where wildlife can be observed from outside the vehicle.



2

NAIVASHA, KENYA

Just a few hours' drive from Nairobi, this stunning area is home to varied wildlife, flower farms and well-known tales such as *Born Free*. Here you can stay right among the animals without paying park fees. A walking safari on Crescent Island is a must – something even little ones can do. Rent a private house on the Lake, book a budget stay at **Carnelley's Camp** (above), complete with a fantastic pizza oven, or try one of the more exclusive venues such as **Naivasha Kongoni Lodge**, which also houses an animal sanctuary where kids can lend a hand. The property has its own land for safaris and offers night drives, a rare treat and well worth keeping the children up late for.

4

VIPINGO AND WATAMU, KENYA

Each bay along this coastline has a unique personality, but two that are great for families are **Vipingo** and **Watamu**. In Vipingo, **Neem Tree** is a great self-catering option with an infinity pool and its own stretch of beach. Some rooms have space for cots and bunk beds, and nearby, there's a small yacht club and a scenic golf course. Meanwhile, Watamu is famous for turtles, especially around hatching time, but families can also sail in glass-bottom boats, ride camels, visit the snake farm and enjoy some snorkelling. There is a number of child-friendly restaurants and a big pool with shallow water.

5

MAFIA ISLAND, TANZANIA

This is a little-known island in the Zanzibar archipelago, offering the perfect safe environment for children to explore. Stay at **Butiama Lodge** and get a room within earshot of the restaurant. They'll even place a guard on your verandah so you can enjoy dinner while the kids sleep. Long stretches of sandy beach and a protected marine park mean there's lots of fun to be had chasing crabs and swimming with wildlife. To top it off, the hotel's meal times and food options are brilliantly flexible and the ice cream is complimentary!

3

JINJA, UGANDA

Jinja, famous for its white-water rafting and extreme sports, is a great spot for families with teenagers, but there's also plenty for younger children to do. Go on the Nile River Explorers' **Family Float trip**, try jet-boating, or enjoy a sunset barbecue cruise. You can even take a helicopter ride. Stay at the comfortable **Wildwaters Lodge** on a private island surrounded by the rushing waters of the Nile, where kids can enjoy a bath on the balcony and watch monkeys by the pool – as much of a treat for you as it is for them.

WILDWATERS LODGE (2)

