

THE SECRETS OF THE SERENGETI

Skip the usual, touristy safari months to discover the spectacular, yet lesser-known wilds of East Africa during the off-season.

BY BRANDON PRESSER



A herd of wildebeests roaming the Lamai Serengeti safari camp.

Like Iguazu Falls or Australia's Red Centre, the Great Migration is one of the world's true natural wonders—a spectacular parade of creatures, both predator and prey. East Africa's safari season is largely pegged around the months from May to August when almost half a million wildebeest negotiate their treacherous riverine realm. But Tanzania's Serengeti National Park challenges the notion of off-season tourism by providing no discernable drawbacks to traveling during the quieter months.

After the Migration's main season, the animals continue their nomadic march through warmer weather and light rains—an unending circular pattern around the ecosystem, ensuring the survival of their species. They inhabit the entirety of the Serengeti, scattering across the mineral-rich lands that stretch from Kenya's Maasai Mara down to the Ngorongoro Crater.

In the southern plains, Asilia fully appreciates the circular nature of the Migration route and uses their tented camps to follow the herds. They switch locations three times a year as the thousands upon thousands of grazing creatures move through the tall grass in search of surface water. During the low season months—from January to March—the animals birth (or “drop”) their young in the grass, a sight that easily rivals the drama of the river crossings during the traditionally popular times of the year.

Despite the mobile nature of Asilia's camp, safari seekers won't want for creature comforts: flushing toilets, hand-woven rattan rugs and comfy quilts come standard. In fact, the design elements of Asilia's Olakira camps are so carefully curated that each tent feels like a quaint set for an African-themed Wes Anderson film.

The umbrella-shaped acacias are the hallmark of the northern Serengeti, a thirsty landscape that sweeps towards the turbid waters of the Mara, the natural boundary with neighboring Kenya. The borderland, once the territory of marauders, is now the domain of the reserve's permanent camps—luxurious upgrades from the tented accommodations further south. Lamai Serengeti sticks its head above the rest—both literally and figuratively—as an elegant and airy collection of villas strung across a hillock of boulders.

Nomad Tanzania's flagship property prefers to play with natural elements instead of the long-favored colonial lodge motif: adobe, teak slatting, wooden fertility idols and gossamer drapes flung around the sleigh bed. Rooms have three walls, the fourth being the infinite savannah and a lavender horizon—the perfect viewpoint to the ever-changing show that exemplifies the most basic laws of the wild.

Outside the traditional migration months, traveler infrastructure (like prop plane connections between camps), is thinner on the ground, making trip-planning services not just a luxury but practically a necessity as well.

East African safari operators work in tandem to provide the ultimate wildlife-watching adventure, but bespoke planning service Trufflepig takes the package holiday to the next level by customizing unforgettable experiences, such as setting off into the wild with Kakae, our trusty guide, who would narrate our animal encounters with cartoon-like voices: high-pitched squeezes for the scurrying mongooses and a drawling deep tone for the clomping elephants.



A natural rock swimming pool at one of Lamai Serengeti's lodges



A bedroom at Lamai Serengeti

PALACE IN THE GLENS



THE GLENEAGLES HOTEL is a world-renowned golf resort and spa set on 850 acres of rolling hills in the heart of the Scottish countryside. Established in 1924, Gleneagles is warmly regarded as "the palace in the glens" and continues to attract all ages in search of rest, relaxation and exhilaration.



WINE & DINE

Hospitality is the heart of the Gleneagles experience. Four restaurants set the highest culinary standards allowing lovers of gourmand-quality food, fine wines and superb whiskies. The array of dining choices include the grand formality of The Strathearn, the bustling vibe of Deseo, the clubby ambience of the Clubhouse Bar & Grill and the only two-Michelin starred dining experience in Scotland, Andrew Farlie, with its delightful nine-course tasting menu.



TEE TIME

Since its inception, golf has played a significant role in Gleneagles' history. Each of the three championship golf courses, feature generous fairways, big greens, challenges for all handicaps and superb views of the surrounding countryside. Next year, The PGA Centenary Course is set to host The 2014 Ryder Cup—which is regarded as one of the finest spectator courses in the world. In addition to the Jack Nicklaus designed PGA Centenary Course, Gleneagles also boasts The King's and Queen's Courses, designed by James Braid, a 9-hole par 3 course and The PGA National Golf Academy for those looking to brush up on their golf skills.

- Direct flights from the US to Edinburgh and Glasgow
- Only one hour's drive from both Edinburgh and Glasgow International airport and daily train from London King's Cross direct to Gleneagles train station.
- **EXCLUSIVE OFFER:** Three nights from \$1,593 per room based on two people sharing a Sovereign room and including a complimentary cellar tour and room upgrade at time of booking. *Based on current exchange rate inclusive of all taxes and there are no resort fees or service charges.
- To book your stay, contact your travel advisor, call Gleneagles on 1.866.881.9525 or visit www.gleneagles.com



SPA TIME

For those in search of pampering and rejuvenation, the award-winning Spa at Gleneagles by ESPA is a sanctuary within the hotel offering traditional spa therapies as well as ESPA Life, a holistic approach to health and wellness. The facility's personal trainers, naturopaths, acupuncturists and osteopaths will surely bring you back to tip top shape.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The Gleneagles Hotel boasts a rich array of outdoor pursuits in the Scottish tradition, including clay target shooting, archery, trout fishing, gundog training and falconry, as well as all-weather tennis, swimming, croquet, cycling and off-road driving, providing activities for all discerning visitors looking for a slice of country indulgence.

Gleneagles Hotel has won many awards and accolades, most recently, the Virtuoso award for Best of the Best Family Programme 2013, *Conde Nast Traveller* Reader Award for Best UK Hotel Spa 2013 and the *Daily Telegraph* Ultratravel Award for the Best Golf Resort in the World 2013.

