

# EAST AFRICA TRAVEL GUIDE

KENYA, TANZANIA, UGANDA, RWANDA



WINDA

ISSUE 1-2023

Photo Credit: Mark Boyd, Maasai Mara National Reserve

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# Welcome To East Africa!

East Africa is an iconic, once-in-a-lifetime travel destination. Mother nature endowed the enthralling African region with stunning natural scenery.

Its dominant features include sprawling savannas, rolling hills, magnificent mountains (Africa's highest and second-highest mountains), Pearl-White beaches, and lush tropical forests. Moreover, East Africa is the ultimate safari destination, playing home to magnificent wildlife, including the big five and endangered mountain gorillas.

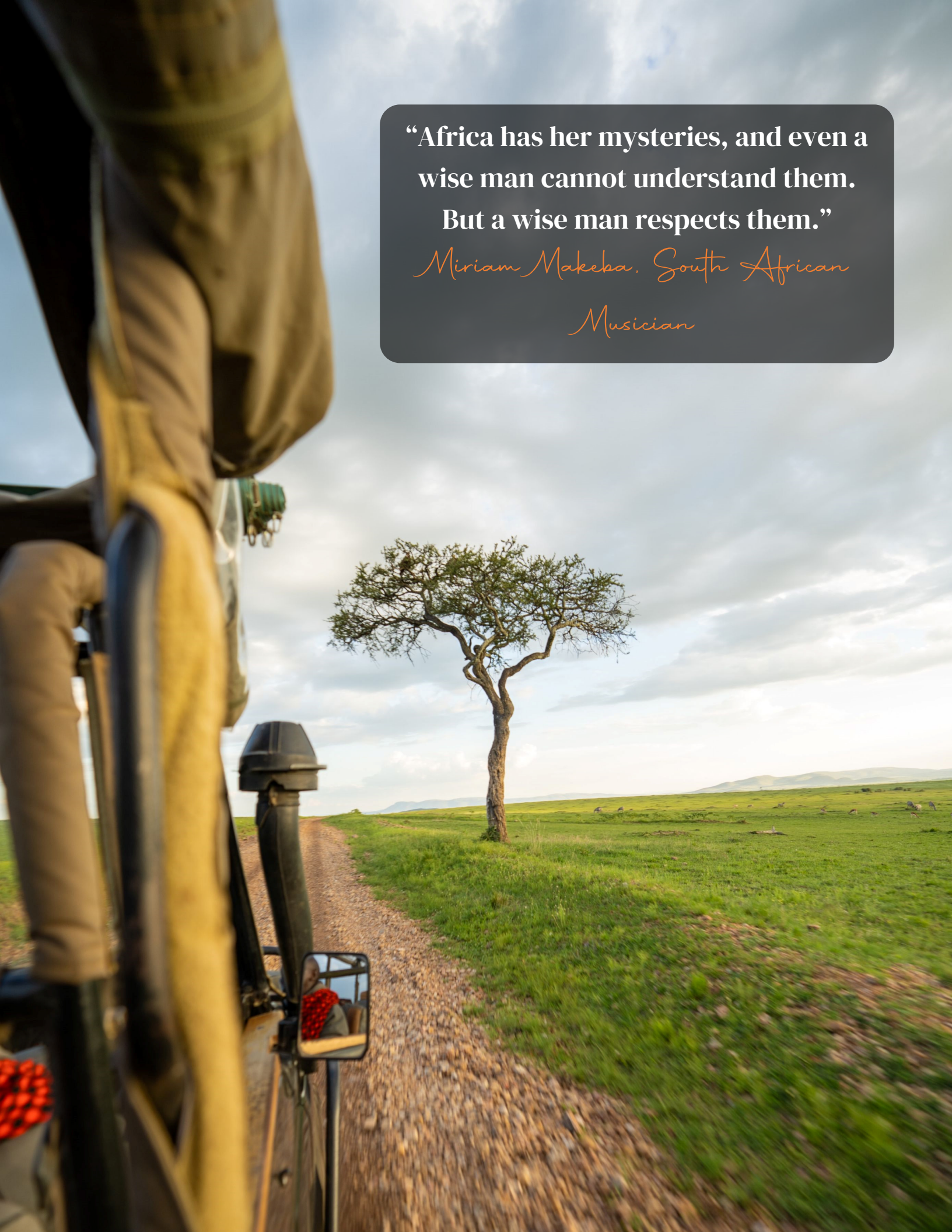
Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda are the proud African countries comprising the East African region. Below is an overview of each country and its must-visit attractions.

## ABOUT US

Winda means 'to hunt' in Swahili, it means that we have hunted for the best travel destinations, experiences, local guides, and transport so that you don't have to. We are a team of local travel guides who love exploring our country. We found it challenging to travel to new, lesser-known destinations as there was very little information about them, where to go, and what to do. We decided to spend some time exploring each travel destination, visiting lodges, camps, hotels, houses and seeing their offering.

We found a lot of local resources that existed but weren't well known. That's why we decided to aggregate travel partners at each step of the travel experience to make it easier for our customers to explore Kenya. We provide end-to-end travel solutions for individual, group, corporate and independent travelers. Given the breadth of knowledge we've amassed on our travels throughout Kenya, we want to share it with our customers so that they have the most unforgettable experiences. We vet and train our partners to ensure a high-quality standard of service that is consistent across every touchpoint.

Our vision is for all our customers to fully experience the breadth of what this beautiful country offers.



**“Africa has her mysteries, and even a  
wise man cannot understand them.  
But a wise man respects them.”**

*Miriam Makeba. South African  
Musician*

# 1. KENYA



Sergey Pasterev, Amboseli National Park, Kenya

Kenya is Africa's leading destination, hosting fascinating wildlife and magnificent landscapes, ranging from plateaus, forested hills, snow-capped mountains, and pristine, award-winning beaches.

The country has 15 national reserves, 24 national parks, six marine parks, and seven UNESCO world heritage sites to intrigue the adventurous traveler.

Additionally, it is a bird watcher's paradise, hosting 1103 indigenous, migrant, and endemic bird species (Africa's second-highest bird population after the Congo).

Besides its natural attractions, Nairobi, Kenya's capital, is East and Central Africa's leading business and innovation hub. Moreover, the thriving metropolis is an arts and culture epicenter with numerous art galleries, festivals, and institutes worth exploring during a trip to the country.

However, Kenya's most magnificent resource is undoubtedly its people. The country is a cultural melting pot, playing home to 54 tribes, including the world-famous Maasai. Although cultural elements vary from tribe to tribe, hospitality permeates most Kenyan cultures. Therefore, Kenyans are the friendliest people, ready to welcome you to their country and meet you at your point of need.

Kenya has two official languages, Swahili and English, and most of its population can communicate proficiently in English. The country is along the Equator in the GMT+3 timezone and enjoys fantastic weather.

## 2. TANZANIA



K15 Photos, Arusha Tanzania

Tanzania, East Africa's largest country, plays home to the most extraordinary land formations. Such geological marvels include Africa's highest mountain (Mt. Kilimanjaro), the continent's largest caldera (Ngorongoro crater), and the world's second-deepest Lake (L. Tanganyika).

Second, Tanzania holds the global record for the highest animal population per square meter, including the world's largest lion population. Besides land animals, the country has the third-highest bird species population in Africa. Therefore, Tanzania is a dreamy safari destination offering a magical experience featuring splendid wildlife and stunning land formations.

Besides riveting safaris, Tanzania's Zanzibar island has Africa's finest beaches, as voted during 2022's World Travel Awards (WTA). Additionally, Tanzania has seven UNESCO heritage sites to indulge the history buff.

Like Kenya, Tanzania is a cultural melting pot, playing home to 120 distinct tribes, including the Maasai. Tanzania has two official languages, Swahili (spoken throughout the country) and English (spoken primarily in urban areas).



### 3. UGANDA



Keith Kasaija, Kasese District

Uganda, dubbed the Pearl of Africa for its alluring beauty, is another noteworthy stop along the East African trail. The country has outstanding flora and fauna, including plateaus, dense tropical forests, and mountain ranges. Moreover, the country has 165 fresh-water, salt-water, and crater lakes, including Lake Victoria, the Nile's source.

Like the previous East African countries, Uganda has multiple game parks and reserves. However, the county is primarily popular for gorilla and chimpanzee trekking; Uganda has the world's highest mountain gorilla population.

Besides its natural beauty, Uganda is home to three UNESCO heritage sites, including the cultural Kasubi tombs ( the traditional Kabaka ruling family burial site). Uganda has 56 tribal communities, and its official languages are English (spoken mostly among the literate population) and Swahili (since 2022), although most Ugandans speak Luganda, a local dialect. The country is the most affordable travel destination along the East African circuit.

## 4. RWANDA



Serah Galos, Lake Kivu

Rwanda, or the land of 1000 hills, is the smallest East African country but offers travelers an adventure-packed itinerary. The country's volcanic mountain ranges are home to 13 primate varieties, including the silverback gorillas.

Besides its landscape and wildlife, Kigali, Rwanda's capital, is Africa's cleanest city and a thriving cultural hub, dotting art galleries and murals along its streets.

Additionally, the country has numerous luxurious stays to host visitors.

Rwanda's hospitality stems from its people's culture. Other significant cultural elements include the graceful "Intore" dance, fabrics, jewelry, baskets, and other fantastic souvenirs. Rwanda's official language is Kinyarwanda, although pockets of the population speak some English, French, and Swahili.

# When is The Best Time to Visit East Africa?

East Africa is a year-round destination with favorable climatic conditions throughout the region. Besides the mostly-pleasant weather, the wild game in its ecosystem is also available for viewing all year round.

However, the peak safari season offers more animal sightings and other fantastic phenomena worthy of a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Below is an overview of the regions' peak, shoulder, and off-peak seasons to inform your itinerary curation process.



## PEAK SEASON (JUNE TO SEPTEMBER)

East Africa's peak travel season is from June to September. So, why June to September?

First, the great wildebeest migration in Kenya's Masai Mara occurs during these months. Dubbed the 7th natural world wonder, the great wildebeest migration is a natural spectacle featuring the planet's largest land mammal migration.

Millions of wildebeest and other ungulates (hooved animals) make the treacherous journey toward the Serengeti. Although the migration occurs gradually, it peaks between June and September. The hot, dry weather experienced on the Serengeti side of the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem triggers the migration. Additionally, Uganda's and Rwanda's rain forests experience dry weather between June and August, making gorilla trekking in the region less treacherous and the primates easier to spot due to less foliage.

East Africa's peak travel season coincides with the summer holiday in the northern hemisphere (North America, Europe, South America, and Asia). Consequently, most travelers from that side of the world vacation in East Africa and the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa between June and September. Therefore, consider booking in advance to get the best peak season deals.



Shripal Daphtary, Maasai Mara National Reserve

## SHOULDER SEASON (NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY)



Hendrik Cornelissen, Ngorongoro crater, Tanzania

As stated earlier, the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem's peak season is primarily hot and dry. However, the shoulder season ushers in the short rains. The Mara-Serengeti has two rainy seasons, the short and long rains, and each rainy season influences wildlife behavior.

Short rains refill water holes and help regenerate foliage and pasture after the dry season. Consequently, fewer animals come out to drink.

Although you won't experience the great wildebeest migration, the calving season in the south of Serengeti from mid-February to March is among the ecosystem's marvels. Therefore, you stand a chance to see a cow wildebeest give birth during the shoulder season.

Approximately 8000 wildebeest calves are born daily in the Serengeti during the calving season, replacing those that perish during the migration and completing the circle of life. Moreover, the vulnerable calves attract predators. Therefore, you are more likely to witness a hunt during calving season.

## OFF-PEAK SEASON (MARCH TO MAY)

The off-peak season in the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem coincides with the long rains. Days are primarily overcast and cool, and you can expect showers in the afternoon.

However, while rain injects a lease of life into the savannah's foliage, game drive trails become more slippery. Also, the wildlife takes cover from the rains, reducing sightings.

Nonetheless, the lush, stunning greenery makes off-peak season at the

Mara-Serengeti ecosystem the best time for birdwatching. Also, the off-peak season is ideal for postcard-like photography, thanks to the greenery and the stunning light. Lastly, accommodation is cheaper thanks to low tourist traffic.



Mark Boyd, Maasai Mara National Reserve

A leopard is resting on a thick tree branch, looking directly at the camera. The scene is illuminated by the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, creating a dramatic and serene atmosphere. The leopard's spotted coat is clearly visible against the dark background of the tree and the sky.

# East Africa Safari

## Bucket List

### Must-Do Activities In East Africa During Peak Travel Season

Below is an overview of East Africa's unmissable marvels for an extraordinarily memorable trip.

## 1. THE MASAI MARA'S GREAT WILDEBEEST MIGRATION

Wildebeest migration along the Mara-Serengeti circuit is a year-long process. The ungulates primarily move in small herds during off-peak season. However, the real action occurs when they converge in their millions along the Mara and Talek River crossings for the spectacular migration.



The Masai Mara's Great Wildebeest Migration  
Great Wildebeest Migration

Imagine a herd of two million ungulates running at speeds of up to 50 miles/hr with their hooves drumming hard and fast against the dry, hard savanna. The resounding rhythm changes into loud splashes as the first wildebeest attempts to cross the river, and others follow suit.

They dive head-first from a dangerously steep riverbed slope into the crocodile-infested river, swim across and attempt to climb up the equally steep slope on the other side. Research posits that the wildebeest have a unique capacity to detect rainfall up to 50 miles away and cross the river, following lighting flashes on the Serengeti side.

Besides the ungulates and the calculating Nile crocodiles, vultures hover above, forming a whirlwind-like spectacle. Marabou storks also line the river's bank waiting for a feast.

The wildebeest migration is the Mara ecosystem's lifeline and is arguably the greatest show on earth. It features up to 1000 herbivores per square kilometer, crossing the Mara and Talek rivers in clans of up to 10000 animals per three or so minutes. Visiting the Masai Mara during peak season guarantees you a front-row seat to this enthralling spectacle.

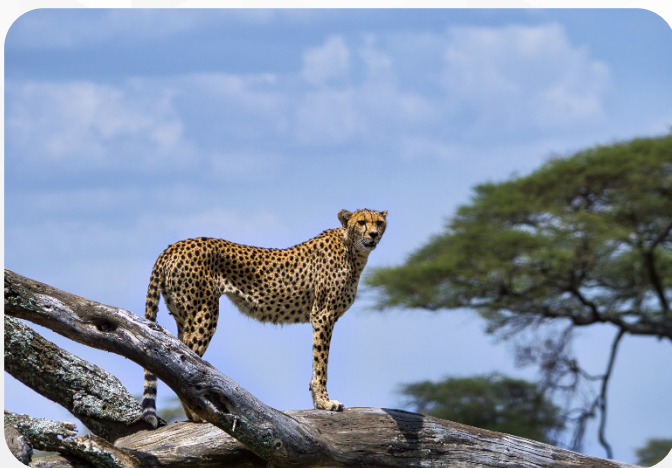
## FEES

Park entry fees into the Mara depend on nationality, age, and accommodation, as highlighted in the table below.

	Non-residents	
	Within the Mara	Outside the Mara
Adults	USD70	USD80
Children (below 12 years)	USD40	USD45
Children (below 3 years)	Free	Free
Students	USD 40	USD 40

Kenyan citizens, residents, and East African community citizens must present proof of residence to pay lower rates. Also, students in this context must be under 23 years, sponsored by a recognized learning institution, and possess valid student identification. Park authorities at the Mara accept cash payments (in Kenyan shillings and USD) and cashless payments, including credit cards, Mastercard and Visa debit cards, and mpesa (Kenya's mobile money transfer service). The entry fees specified earn you a single 24-hour entry into the park.

## 2. THE SERENGETI



Partha Narasimhan, Serengeti National Park

The Serengeti is a world heritage site, thanks to its unique, untainted ecosystem. Given that the Masai Mara and the Serengeti comprise the same ecosystem, the great wildebeest migration also occurs in Northern Serengeti.

However, the Mara side of the river crossing is more action-packed. Nonetheless, the Serengeti is ten times the Mara's size and, like the Mara, has plenty to offer beyond the great wildebeest migration.



First, as earlier stated, the Serengeti has the highest animal population per square meter globally, making spotting animals, including the big five, during game drives easier. It also has the highest predator population of all African Safari destinations, increasing your chances of witnessing a chase.



Aj Robbie

Second, the massive game reserve has incomparable land formations, including Ol Doinyo Lengai ( God's Mountain), an active volcano that produces low-temperature natrocarbonate lava. Another one-of-a-kind land formation in the Serengeti is the Ngorongoro crater; details coming up in the next segment. Taking in sweeping views of the untainted wilderness from its peak points is the most rewarding life experience.

Third, the Maasai people have lived in the vast Serengeti plains for millennia; the word Serengeti comes from the Maasai word "Sirngit," meaning endless plain. Like the exceptionally preserved ecosystem, their culture remains untainted despite western influences in the East African Region. Therefore, you can go on a cultural excursion and immerse yourself in this age-old culture.

## FEES

Serengeti National Park entry fees vary based on age, nationality, and travel season, as highlighted in the table below.

	Peak Season			Low Season		
	Above 16 Years	Age 5-15	Below 5 Years	Above 16 Years	Age 5-15	Below 5 Years
Foreign Residents	USD 70	USD 35	Free	USD 60	USD 30	Free
Foreign Non-residents	USD 20	USD 10	Free	USD 20	USD 10	Free

The Serengeti's park authorities do not accept cash payments at any entry point. Only cashless payments from credit cards and pay slips from bank payments are acceptable.

Besides individual park entry fees, visitors must pay vehicle entry fees. The park's authorities charge the vehicle fees based on the vehicle's weight, and the charges range from USD40-USD300. Open vehicles pay an entry fee 50% lower than the standard closed vehicle.

### 3. NGORONGORO CRATER

Dubbed Africa's garden of Eden, Ngorongoro crater is the world's largest caldera. Unlike most calderas that feature a giant lake at the bottom, the 600-meter deep Ngorongoro Crater is lush with foliage and water points and plays home to approximately 3000 animal species.



Ngorongoro Crater Dmitrii Zhodzishskii,  
Ngorongoro Crater

The animal species thriving in Ngorongoro Crater include the big five; Ngorongoro has the world's highest lion population. Moreover, the caldera is also home to numerous bird species, including a flamingo colony with roughly 1000 birds occupying the saline lake at its bottom. Ngorongoro Crater is a UNESCO world heritage site, and a game drive through the unique geological feature is beyond magical.

#### FEES

Foreign non-resident park entry fees into Ngorongoro national park vary depending on age and nationality, as highlighted in the table below.

	Above 15 Years	Age 5-15	Below 5 Years
Foreign Non-residents	USD 70.80	USD 23.60	Free
Foreign Residents	USD 35.40	USD 11.80	Free
East African Citizens	USD 5.05	USD 1.0	Free

The park fees earn you one 24-hour admission into the crater park, and all fees are inclusive of VAT. Besides park entry fees, visitors must pay a transit fee if they pass via the Ngorongoro conservation area en route to the Serengeti, despite not descending into the caldera. The fee is USD 295 per vehicle (not per person) for foreign non-residents and expats.

Ngorongoro crater park authorities do not accept cash payments at the gate. However, you can use credit cards, Visa cards, and Mastercard to pay the entry fees. Alternatively, you can deposit the fees at the bank and present the payslip at the point of entry.

## 4. GORILLA TREKKING IN UGANDA



Mark Boyd

Uganda is home to most of the planet's last 1000 mountain gorillas. The endangered primates live in the conservation areas in the country's Bwindi impenetrable forest and Mgahinga gorilla national park.

Consequently, gorilla trekking is Uganda's most popular travel activity. However, the delicate ecosystem in the conservation area means that only one group of eight people can participate in trekking daily. Visitors book a permit up to a

year in advance to participate in this intriguing activity.

The mountain gorillas in Uganda's dense tropical forests live in 18 unique clans. Therefore, gorilla trekking entails hiking the dense mountain forests and a chance to observe the gorilla families in their natural habitat.

Hiking may take several hours, but the group of eight can only track the gorilla clan for an hour. Second, the group can only track one clan.

The Bwindi impenetrable forest has four trekking trails; Ruhija, Buhoma, Nkuringo, and Rushaga, all reading to distinct gorilla clans. Therefore, consider booking accommodation closest to your designated hiking trail.

Besides gorilla trekking, you can book a separate pass to participate in gorilla habituation. Gorilla habituation is a three-year process that gradually gets the mountain gorillas acclimatized to human presence to facilitate research. The Bwindi impenetrable forest park authorities only allow four travelers to participate in the habituation process for four hours daily.

## FEES

A gorilla trekking pass costs USD 700 for foreign non-residents and USD 600 for foreign residents.

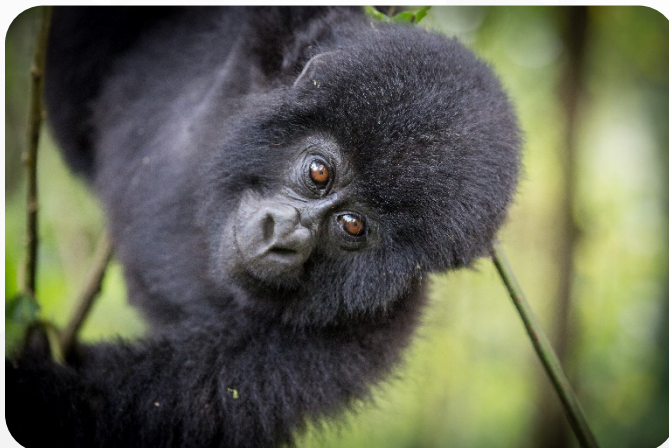
The pass covers park entry fees and armed guides who lead the trek to and fro. However, it does not cover accommodation, porters, hiking gear, or other secondary requirements. Nonetheless, 75% of the proceeds from the gorilla trekking permit facilitate the park's conservation efforts.

On the other hand, gorilla habituation costs USD1500 for foreign non-residents and USD1000 for foreign residents. Uganda's tourism authority set the age limit for gorilla trekking and habituation at 15 years, and pass costs are similar for minors and adults.

## 5. GORILLA TREKKING IN RWANDA

Gorilla trekking in Rwanda is primarily similar to the enriching Ugandan experience. For starters, the mountain range constituting the mountain gorilla habitat spreads across both nations.

Second, Rwanda has 12 gorilla families living in the conservation area within Volcanoes National Park. Third, like in Uganda, only eight people can go on a single gorilla trekking expedition, and they can only track one family for no more than an hour.



Mark Boyd

However, Rwanda's gorilla trekking passes cost USD1500. Second, Rwanda's mountain gorillas have undergone habituation; hence Volcanoes national park does not offer habituation permits. The pass covers park admission fees, expert trackers, and guides but not porter fees. However, one bonus activity worth looking forward to during peak gorilla trekking season is the annual "Kwita Inzina" gorilla-naming ceremony held annually in September. The national-level ceremony's primary purpose is to celebrate Rwanda's conservation efforts.

## 6. ENJOY SOME DOWNTIME AT THE BEACH

Besides enthralling safaris, Kenya and Tanzania are popular for their stunning beaches. Below is an overview of must-visit East African beach destinations.

### ZANZIBAR ISLAND (TANZANIA)



Crispin Jones

Zanzibar is a romantic, blissful archipelago along the Indian Ocean, constituting up to 50 islands. The world-famous beach destination combines alluring landscapes, culture, rich history, and tantalizing aromas.

Most travelers come to Zanzibar to indulge in its pristine beaches, crystal-clear azure waters, and quaint towns. Moreover, the island

has abundant marine life, coral reefs, and spectacular dive sites, facilitating numerous water activities.

Previously known as Spice Island, Zanzibar's history dates back to its role as a stop-off location for Persian, Arab, and Asian traders following the monsoon winds.

The Persians were the first foreigners to settle in Zanzibar's present-day Stone town (a UNESCO heritage site). They thrived on the infamous slave trade and ivory and spice trade. You can take a spice tour by visiting the island's spice farms.

Zanzibar has plenty to explore, including historical monuments like the House of Wonders and East Africa's first mosque. Its narrow streets spotting Persian, Arab, Swahili, Asian, and European influences, make exploring on foot easy. Besides exploring the streets, you can go island hopping.

Also, Zanzibar holds multiple arts and cultural festivals between July and September. The island has diverse accommodation options to suit varying traveler needs. However, note its population is predominantly Muslim, so pay attention to cultural norms like modest dressing and avoiding public alcohol consumption.

## DIANI (KENYA)

Diani is a picturesque stretch of beach featuring pearl-white untainted beaches juxtaposed against green palm trees. The idyllic island is as tranquil as it is beautiful, featuring magnificent coral reefs and sand bars that enhance water activities.

Therefore, you can enjoy diving, snorkeling, or simply sailing in a dhow (traditional boat) while dolphins cheer you on; sundowners on a dhow are a must-try.

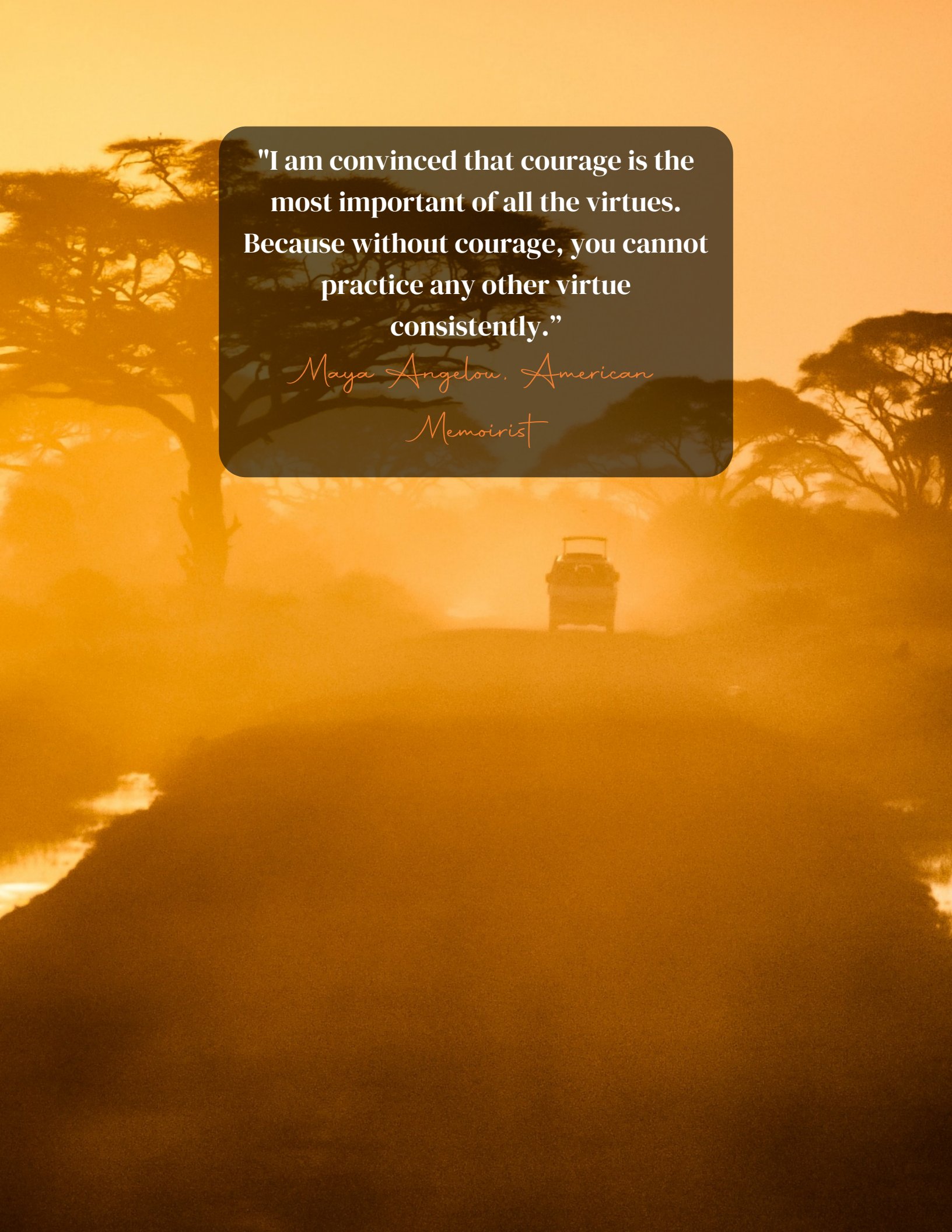


Sebastian Jermer

Besides receiving the accolade for Africa's best beach numerous times, Diani is home to the finest accommodations, including world-class, award-winning hotels. Moreover, it spots numerous hotels and coffee shops serving continental dishes and fresh seafood with a traditional coastal Kenyan twist.

Diani is mostly a quaint island, inducing relaxation and rejuvenation. However, it has a thriving nightlife, coming alive to punctuate a lazy day.

Also, you can explore the neighboring Wasini, Chale, and Funzi islands, accessible via boat, for a dose of Kenya's coastal culture. Diani's people are incredibly hospitable, making your trip to this slice of heaven more memorable.

A savanna landscape at sunset. The sky is a deep orange, and the silhouettes of acacia trees are visible against the light. In the center, a vehicle is parked on a small hill, facing away from the viewer. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

**"I am convinced that courage is the  
most important of all the virtues.  
Because without courage, you cannot  
practice any other virtue  
consistently."**

*Maya Angelou. American  
Memoirist*

## HOW MUCH DOES AN EAST AFRICAN TRIP COST?



Mark Boyd, Maasai Mara National Reserve

Although multiple factors influence travel costs along the East African circuit, accommodation is the most significant factor in determining travel costs. Therefore, below is a breakdown of trip budget estimates based on the accommodation category.



## LUXURY TRIP

Luxury accommodation in the Masai Mara and Serengeti ranges from USD600 to USD1500 per person sharing per night, depending on the lodge and the season. The cost is mostly all-inclusive, covering accommodation, game drives, private guides, food, and transport costs to and from the park. The luxury accommodation options in both parks typically include private houses, game lodges, and tented camps, offering better views, more amenities, exclusivity, and privacy.



Sasha Kaunas

Depending on the lodge's policy, the fee may include access to amenities like massage therapy. However, the cost often does not cover tips, which you should leave at the end of your trip, the cost of imported, top-shelf drinks, and bonus activities like a hot-air balloon safari.

Also, the number of days you spend at the lodge influences the overall safari cost. A two-night, three-day duration is ideal for a luxury safari in the Mara or the Serengeti.

On the other hand, a luxury gorilla trekking trip costs in Uganda range from USD300-USD3000 per person per night based on two sharing. The cost covers accommodation, an anglophone tour guide, meals, and private transport.

Lastly, Rwanda brands itself as a luxury gorilla-trekking destination, owing to the high number of luxury accommodations in the country, compared to Uganda. A single-day luxury trek in Rwanda costs approximately USD1900 per person, while a three-day trek can cost up to USD5000 in contrast to Uganda's USD 3000 three-day trek cost.

The cost covers the trekking permit, a guide, accommodation, private transport, and meals. Depending on your travel package, it may cover charter planes and helicopter transfers.

## MID-RANGE TRIP



BizBox, Maasai Mara National Reserve

A mid-range trip to the Mara costs approximately USD150 per person sharing per night in the low season and USD250 during peak season. The Serengeti's midrange costs lie within the same range, costing approximately USD300 per day per person

sharing. Such accommodations typically feature more people and include group game drives with up to six individuals per vehicle rather than private game drives. On the other hand, a mid-range gorilla-trekking trip to Uganda costs up to USD120, while a similar trip in Rwanda costs up to USD250. Both mid-range trips are exclusive of the gorilla-trekking pass but cover accommodation, a guide, food, and transport.

## BUDGET TRIP

Budget trips to the Mara cost approximately USD100 per night per person sharing and feature accommodation in a basic tent. Moreover, you can go even lower by setting up your camping gear in the Mara's designated campsites. Adult camping fees are USD30 per person per night for a public campsite and USD40 per person per night for a private campsite, while child camping costs are USD20 at either campsite.



Winda

The Serengeti's camping fees are within the same range costing USD30 per person per night for adults above 16 years and USD15 per person per night for children aged 5-15 years. However, the park waives camping fees for children under five years.

Lastly, a budget gorilla trekking trip in Uganda costs approximately USD30-USD50 per person per night based on two sharing. Rwanda's gorilla trekking budget trip rates are slightly higher, costing USD50 to USD70 person per night for two sharing.

*Traveling Within East Africa: How  
To Get Around*



## GUIDE-LED EXCURSIONS



Ashim D'Silva

A local tour guide is invaluable while traveling across the East African circuit, as highlighted below.

- Local tour guides double as private drivers, facilitating seamless movement from point to point, including hotel transfers. Unlike other travel destinations, most parts of East Africa lacks established transport systems, making scheduling travel challenging.

Second, most areas outside urban centers do not have street names, and the data on navigation apps like Google maps is often inaccurate. However, you can avoid such perils when a local guide drives you around the travel circuit.

Local tour guides understand the region's unspoken travel rules, from avoiding traffic to the history behind every monument and landmark. Therefore, besides offering insights that make the trip more meaningful, they give you assurance and peace of mind.

- Local guides have a wealth of local knowledge on the local culture and socio-economic issues in their locality. Therefore, they serve as interpreters, helping you overcome language and cultural barriers. Such interpretations help you to avoid insensitivities and connect more with the locals.
- They recommend the best local places to eat, shop, party, and engage in other hobbies while avoiding tourist traps.
- Tour guides also double as photographers, helping you capture beautiful travel moments.
- Lastly, local tour guides are a quintessential part of any adventure activity, like a safari game drive or gorilla trekking. They are familiar with the lay of the land and understand animal behavior, hence spot animals quicker than the untrained eye.

## INDEPENDENT EXCURSIONS



Moses Limo

While guide-led excursions have numerous benefits, they often feature restrictive itineraries. In contrast, independent travel gives you more flexibility with your itinerary. As an independent traveler, you can alter your itinerary on the fly to include emerging activities or extend your time at specific stops.

However, planning an East African trip independently takes significantly more effort than using a tour company. Second, it increases your vulnerability to travel scams.

## INDEPENDENT VS GUIDE-LED TRAVEL



Nina De Groot

So, which is the better option when getting around? Guide-led tours are better for first-time travelers to East Africa or the African continent. Safaris at the Masai Mara, Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, and any other game parks require travel guides.

However, other peak season itinerary activities, like gorilla trekking, do not necessarily require a tour guide. East Africa's beach destinations like Diani and Zanzibar are also more fun when explored independently.

## WHAT ELSE? BONUS ACTIVITIES TO ADD TO YOUR ITINERARY

The jam-packed itinerary from the Masai Mara to Zanzibar includes plenty of adventure at must-visit destinations. However, you can add the following activities to your itinerary in each country.

### KENYA'S BONUS ACTIVITIES

#### KENYA WHALE MIGRATION

Make a pit stop in Watamu for an unforgettable opportunity to view various whale species leap out of the water as they migrate toward Antarctica. Whales migrate northwards during mating and calving season and back to the Southern hemisphere, passing along the Kenyan coast between August and October. The country's marine reserve authorities report spotting humpback whales, killer whales, sperm whales, and Bryde's whales along the migratory route.



Thomas Kelley

## TRACK THE BLACK PANTHER IN LAIKIPIA

Laikipia County in Northern Kenya is home to the rare melanistic leopard, popularly known as the black panther. You can visit the researchers working on the leopard project and participate in tracking the rare black panther.

## RUNNING WITH KENYAN CHAMPIONS IN ITEN

Sports tourism is one of Kenya's best-kept secrets. Join elite marathon runners and coaches training in Iten, interact with fellow running enthusiasts, and train along the trails where the greatest runners of all time, including Eliud Kipchoge, train.



Justin Lagat



## KITE SURFING IN DIANI



Marcreation

Besides sun and sun, Diani beach has the right amount of wind to facilitate epic kitesurfing adventures. Stop by its kitesurfing centers for an adrenaline-driven escapade, or take a class if you are new to kitesurfing.

## LAMU YOGA FESTIVAL

Join fellow yoga enthusiasts in four days of celebrating yoga, fitness, and wellness through guided classes and workshops. The itinerary also includes a sunset dhow sail and a bonfire celebration. Proceeds from registration fees go into community projects, including availing sanitary period products to the girls in Lamu.



Kike Vega

## UGANDA'S BONUS ACTIVITIES

### NILE RAFTING IN JINJA

Adventure beacons at Jinja in Uganda (dubbed East Africa's adventure capital) for white water rafting enthusiasts. Indulge in the ultimate adrenaline rush, featuring class 5 turbulent rapids of the Nile.



Angga Indratama

## CHIMPANZEE TREKKING IN CHIBALE NATIONAL PARK

Like gorillas, chimpanzees are endangered; hence, they live in the Kibale National Park reserve protected area. A chimpanzee trekking permit costs USD200 for foreign non-residents and USD150 for foreign residents, so consider adding the equally rewarding experience to your Kibale forest Itinerary.



Mark Boyd

## BOAT RIDE TO THE END OF MURCHISON FALLS

Enjoy a three-hour boat ride and take in the scenic Murchison falls, the world's most powerful waterfall. Private cruises, sundowners, and birding river excursions are also available.



Axp Photography

## TANZANIA BONUS ACTIVITIES

### SPOT THE TREE-CLIMBING LIONS OF LAKE MANYARA

Enjoy the rare spectacle of lions on a tree as the tree-climbing lions of Lake Manyara observe prey and escape the savanna heat by climbing on acacia and sycamore trees.

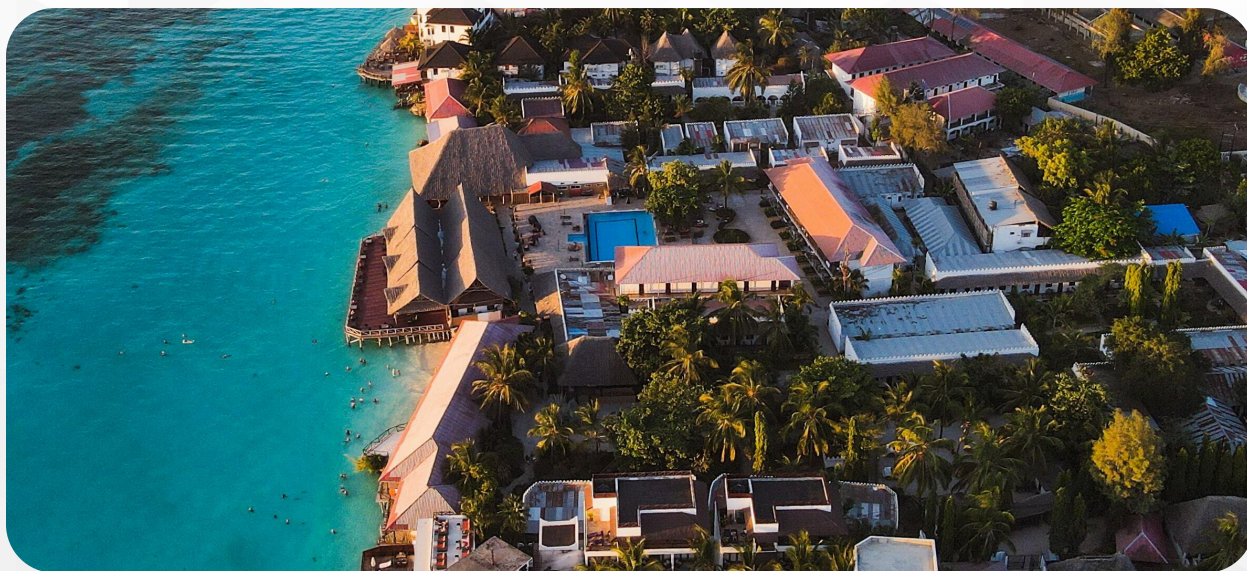
### ZANZIBAR INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (ZIFF)

The Zanzibar International Film Festival, or the Festival of The Dhow Countries, is an annual film festival showcasing African films, including those from the African diaspora. Besides African films, the festival includes films from dhow countries (Persian Gulf, India, Iran, Southeast Asia, Pakistan, and The Arab Peninsula).

Activities at the film festival include up to 70 film screenings, workshops, masterclasses, and debates.



<https://www.facebook.com/ZanzibarInternationalFilmFestival>



Dmitry Limonov

# NON-RESIDENT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR EAST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

## KENYA FOREIGN NON-RESIDENT TOURIST ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

All foreign non-residents with a permanent residence outside Kenya must have a Kenyan Evisa or an East African visa to enter the Republic of Kenya. The country's [Directorate of Immigration Services](#) has the mandate to issue Kenyan Evisas and issues five different visa types, depending on the visa holder's nature of travel.

Travelers must also possess a valid travel document (passport) valid for at least six months from the date of travel and with at least two blank back-to-back pages.



Below is an overview of each visa type, including validity duration.

- **Single-entry visa:** Remains valid for 90 days from the issuance date, although the visa holder can apply for a 90-day extension. The visa application cost for a single-entry Kenyan visa is USD51.
- **Multiple-entry visa:** Eligibility for this visa is frequent travel to Kenya, and the visa remains valid for 3-12 months. A multiple-entry visa application costs USD101.
- **Transit visa:** Applies to travelers who stop in Kenya for a maximum of 72 hours en route to other destinations. The transit visa costs USD21 and allows the holder to leave the airport legally.
- **5-year multiple-entry visa:** Exclusively eligible to US citizens traveling to Kenya frequently, and costs USD 161.

- **East African tourist visa:** The visa allows the holder to travel through the East African Community (EAC) i.e., Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, on a single visa. It costs USD100, is valid for 90 days, but is single-entry, meaning it expires once you leave the EAC counties.



Image Source: Facebook

## KENYAN Evisa APPLICATION PROCESS

- Visit Kenya's immigration department's [evisa portal](#) and create an account
- Click on the Evisa application tab and fill in the prerequisite form (form attachments include a passport photograph, travel itinerary, hotel bookings, and a return ticket).
- Pay the associated visa-handling fee using a Visa Card, Mastercard, or any other debit or credit card.
- Wait for a verification from Kenyan immigration authorities approving your visa (this should take two working days).
- Download the approved Evisa and print it out.
- Present the Evisa to Kenyan immigration officers at the point of entry.

- Parents traveling with children under 16 years can apply for their children's evisa using their accounts after receiving their Evisa confirmation.

## UGANDA FOREIGN NON-RESIDENT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

All foreign non-residents entering Uganda must possess a Ugandan visa before gaining access at any entry point. Moreover, Ugandan immigration authorities do not issue visas on arrival.

Therefore, travelers to the country must either apply for the visa online or at the Ugandan high commission or embassy in their native county. You can apply for a Uganda Evisa by visiting the [Ugandan Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control's website](#).



*Image Source: Facebook.com*

The visa types available include a single-entry tourist visa, an East African visa, and a multiple-entry visa.

Besides a Ugandan visa, foreign non-residents visiting the country must also possess a passport valid for at least six months from their travel date. The passport must have at least two blank back-to-back pages for stamps.

Moreover, parents traveling with children must complete a visa application for each child and carry a copy of the child's birth certificate.

Uganda's online visa application process is pretty similar to Kenya's once you log onto the portal. Ugandan immigration authorities will respond to your application within 2-3 working days.

## RWANDA FOREIGN-NON-RESIDENT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

All foreign non-residents must possess a Rwandese visa to enter the country's borders. Rwanda's immigration authorities issue visas on arrival without prior application.

However, you can apply for the visa online via [Rwanda's Directorate of General Immigration and Emigration website](#) and retain the option to pay the visa-handling



Image Source: Facebook.com

fee while applying or on arrival. Also, Rwanda waives visa application fees for foreign non-residents from Commonwealth, La Francophonie, and other select countries staying in the country for 30 days.

Rwanda has multiple visa classes, including a tourist single-entry visa, a multiple-entry visa, and an East African visa. Single-entry visas cost USD50, while multiple-entry visas cost USD70. Besides a visa, travelers

must have a passport valid for at least six months from the date of travel and with at least one blank page.

## THE EAST AFRICAN VISA

The East African visa allows foreign residents and non-residents to travel through three East African Community (EAC) countries, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. It functions as a multi-entry visa, allowing you to move back and forth among all three countries.

However, it expires the moment you travel outside the EAC zone, regardless of its expiry date. Also, an East African passport is valid for 90 days and is non-renewable.

You can apply for the East African visa in any of the three countries at a standard USD100 visa-processing fee. A tourist single-entry visa costs USD50 in each EAC country, meaning an East African visa saves you USD50 on visa-processing fees. However, your journey through the East African circuit must commence from the country where you made your application.





Image Source: Facebook.com

## TANZANIA FOREIGN NON-RESIDENT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Geographically-speaking Tanzania is part of the EAC. However, it is the only EAC country that does not issue an East African visa or grant entry to those bearing the visa.

All foreign non-residents must possess a Tanzanian visa to enter the country's borders and must [apply for the e-visa](#) before traveling to the country. Tanzania has multiple visa classes but recommends the ordinary/single-entry Tanzanian visa for non-American foreign non-residents. On the other hand, American passport holders traveling to Tanzania on holiday should apply for a multiple-entry visa.

An ordinary Tanzanian Evisa costs USD50, while a multiple-entry visa costs USD100. Tanzanian authorities take approximately ten working days to process the visa, although the process can take longer.

Therefore, they recommend applying for the visa at least two months before your travel date. Second, they also recommend checking your e-visa account if the recommended ten working days lapse without any communication. Besides a Tanzanian visa, you must have a passport no less than six months old with at least one blank page.



Image Source: Facebook.com

Only apply for visas to east African nations on the specific country's immigration authority's official website (hyperlinked above). Avoid third parties because they will charge you more than the government-sanctioned visa-processing fee. Second, the third part could be a scam syndicate targeting unsuspecting travelers.

## VACCINATIONS/ HEALTH TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

All travelers above 12 years entering Kenya's borders at any point of entry must show proof of COVID-19 vaccination. Alternatively, they can present a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours from their last point of departure. However,

fully-vaccinated travelers are exempt from PCR tests; you can read more about the country's COVID-19 vaccination requirements and updates [here](#).

Uganda's vaccine requirements are somewhat similar, dictating that all travelers above six years old must show evidence of full COVID-19 vaccination before gaining entry into the country. Fully vaccinated individuals can enter Uganda without taking a PCR test.

On the other hand, travelers without evidence of full COVID-19 vaccination must present a negative PCR test taken within the last 72 hours. Besides COVID-19, expect to undergo temperature checks and screenings for other diseases.

COVID-19 testing before boarding a flight to Rwanda or on arrival at its points of entry is no longer necessary. However, [Rwanda's COVID-19 travel requirements](#) may change, so keep up with government updates.

On the other hand, travelers above 12 years destined for Tanzania must present a valid COVID-19 vaccination certificate featuring a QR code for verification.

Moreover, the [Tanzanian health authorities](#) positioned along designated entry points only accept COVID-19 certificated with WHO-approved vaccines that Tanzania's Ministry of Health ratifies. Travelers who are not fully vaccinated must present a negative PCR or NAAT test with a QR code taken within the last 72 hours.

Besides COVID-19, travelers with an East African visa must show proof of yellow fever vaccination at all entry points into Kenya, Uganda, or Rwanda.

## CASH CUSTOMS DECLARATIONS

Travelers can carry currency cash notes equivalent to USD10000 or Ksh (Kenyan shillings) 100000 without making custom declarations. However, they must declare cash amounts exceeding the stipulated amount to customs authorities on arrival into the country and during departure. They must fill out declaration [form F88](#), available on the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) website, before jetting into the country.

Uganda, Rwanda, and Tanzania also set the cash declaration limit at above USD10000, although they don't restrict how much foreign currency you can bring into the country. The cash declaration measures are in place to curb money laundering in the region.

## RESOURCES

<https://www.masaimara.travel/>

<https://www.bwindiforestnationalpark.com/gorilla-trekking-uganda-bwindi-safari.html>

<https://www.tanzaniaparks.go.tz/uploads/publications/en-1647862168-TARIFFS%202022-2023.pdf>



## CONTACT US

East Africa, an iconic travel destination, beckons to feed your wanderlust. Follow your heart and heed this call by contacting us via any of our platforms for a consultation.

At Winda.guide, we have an extensive network of partners and resources to curate memorable luxury, mid-range, and budget trips across the East African circuit. Our curated itineraries make planning the holiday of a lifetime 100% stress-free.

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