

PAUL McDOUGALL

wildlife photographer  photographic safaris

Masai Mara Great Migration + Lake Nakuru and Lake Naivasha

10N/11D Migration Safari

Accommodation: Hotel / Lodge with A/C rooms

Photo guide: Paul McDougall

Trip Duration: 10 nights and 11 days

Trip Cost: Available on request - no single supplement.

Private Trip Cost: Available on request

ITINERARY AT GLANCE

Date	Location	Accommodation	Meal Plan	Activity
Day 1	Arrival/Nairobi	Weston Hotel	B	LEI
Day 2	Masai Mara	Sopa Lodge	B L D	TRSF, AG
Day 3	Masai Mara	Sopa Lodge	B L D	FG
Day 4	Masai Mara - River	Serena Lodge	B L D	FG
Day 5	Masai Mara - River	Serena Lodge	B L D	FG
Day 6	Masai Mara - River	Serena lodge	B L D	FG
Day 7	Masai Mara	Sopa lodge	B L D	FG
Day 8	Lake Naivasha	Elsamere Conservation Centre	B L D	BT, LEI
Day 9	Lake Naivasha - Nakuru DT	Elsamere Conservation Centre	B L D	FG
Day 10	Nairobi	Weston Hotel	B L D	TRSF, LEI
Day 11	Departure			TRSF

B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner, MG - Morning Game Drive, Drive, AG – Afternoon Game Drive, TRSF –Transfer, FG – Full Day Game Drive, BT – Boat Trip, LEI - Leisure

Please note accommodation may be altered to an equivalent option dependent on availability.

Background

Masai Mara

Everything about this reserve is incredible. The wildlife is abundant, and the vast grasslands ensure that animals are rarely out of sight, and the Birdlife is impressive, over 450 species have been recorded.

Wildlife is not confined to the reserve and wanders freely in the surrounding areas where the Masai still tend their livestock. Centuries of close association have resulted in a relationship where wildlife and people live in harmony with one another.

The first sight of this natural wonderland is breathtaking. Here, great herds of elephant browse among the rich tree-studded grasslands, along with an occasional black rhino. Thomson's and Grant's gazelle, topi, eland and many more species of plains game offer rich pickings for the dominant predators – lion, leopard and cheetah – that hunt in this pristine wilderness. In the Mara River, hippos submerge at the approach of a vehicle, only to surface seconds later to snort and grumble their displeasure. Seemingly drowsy crocodiles sunbathe on the riverbanks, mouths agape, waiting with subtle cunning for prey at which to strike with lightning swiftness.

Although July, August, September and, usually, October are the months when the Mara plains fill with migrating wildebeest and zebra (and therefore tourists), there is plenty of resident wildlife year round. Apart from the better known species, there are numerous opportunities to add some rare and less frequently seen animals to your checklist; in the southwestern sector you may be lucky enough to see roan antelope (which are, regrettably, rare elsewhere in the country), bat-eared foxes peer from their burrows and there are thousands of Topi, an antelope not found in Kenya's other major parks – with the exception of Tsavo. There is also a great chance of seeing the shy Serval Cat, which becomes more active and easier to see with less vehicles around, the quieter times in Maasai Mara are also great for Caracal and Hyena. Numerous bird species will be seen hunting above the higher grassland.

The combination of gentle climate, amazing scenery and incredible numbers of wildlife makes the Masai Mara the most popular inland destination in Kenya.

The Masai Mara Game Reserve is often called simply “The Mara” which is the Maa word meaning “Mottled” – a reference to the patchy landscape. Both spellings “Masai” and “Maasai” are acceptable although the latter is more usual when referring to the people. The Masai Mara is a Game Reserve (sometimes called a National Reserve) although an inner area is treated as a National Park. Reserves are normally managed by local authorities and allow lodges, camp sites and the settling of some tribespeople with their cattle. National Parks are normally managed centrally and do not allow any human inhabitation other than for Park Rangers and people on safari.

Climate and Rainfall:

The vast Masai Mara reserve is located at an altitude of between 4,875 and 7,052 feet above sea level, giving it a damp climate and more moderate temperature than most of Kenya. Daytime temperatures run at 85°F (30°C) maximum and night temperatures can drop to around 60°F (15°C). Most rain falls between March and May and during the short rainy season in November and December. The park may be difficult to navigate at these times.

Between July and October the weather is dry, the vegetation is lush and the daytime temperatures are pleasant, making it the best time to see the park’s wildlife. The Masai Mara experiences the highest tourist numbers during this period. Hot temperatures peak between December and January while June and July are the coolest months at the park.

Vegetation:

The word Mara means ‘spotted’. This refers equally well to the landscape, which is patched with groves of acacia and thorn bushes. The vegetation in Mara consists, to a large extent, of Grassland, with Poaceae forming the main vegetation layer, interspersed with few annuals and perennials, and occasional trees and shrubs, mostly Acacia sp. These grasslands derive from Evergreen Bushland under constant grazing and fire pressure. Soils are mainly black cotton soils. Wooded Grassland shows a very similar appearance, however bush cover increases up to 40 percent. In Evergreen Bushland, shrubby vegetation and tree islands cover more than 40 percent of the ground.

Communities:

The Maasai are a herding culture tribe in Kenya and Tanzania. Their lifestyle reflects the harsh environment in which they live, with unpredictable rainfall and difficult agricultural conditions. The Maasai keep zebu as their primary cattle, but they also farm cows, sheep and goats, and occasionally chickens. Because of the wet and dry seasons—as opposed to summer and winter – they often have to

graze their herds far from their settlements to find water and vegetation. This job falls to the men.

The Maasai are one of the best known African tribes although not as politically powerful as the Luo or Kikuyu (despite the Maasai being dominant in some respects due to their warrior caste and effective organisation). Perhaps they are so well known because of their tall elegant muscular features or their fierce, brave, stubborn and arrogant reputation; or maybe because of their simple yet distinctive appearance with ochre-covered warriors proudly holding their spear and wearing their bright blood-red shoulder cloak (shuka) and the women wearing bangles and strings of coloured beads around their neck (both sexes wear earrings, taking pride in stretching large holes in their ear lobes). The men sometimes cover their braided hair with a fatty ochre paste and may wear an elaborate head-dress, perhaps of a lion mane or eagle/ostrich feathers, during some ceremonies; the women generally have shaved heads (head-shaving is a significant feature of some rituals, both for men and women).

They play a major role as part of tourism in the area due to their unique cultural experiences offered to visitors through traditional ceremonies, village visits, food, dances and sale of traditional crafts.

It's home to the big five:- Elephant (large herds), Lion (one of the highest densities in Africa), Rhino (A few black rhino), Leopard (Excellent chance of sightings), Buffalo (Large herds).

Other animals of interest are: Topi, Hartebeest, Grants Gazelle, Thompson Gazelle, Serval Cat, Wildebeest, Zebra, Cheetah, Spotted Hyena, Hippo, Serval, Caracal.

It also contains over 450 species of indigenous birds.



Lake Nakuru

Lake Nakuru National Park (188 km², 73mi²), created in 1961 around Lake Nakuru, near Nakuru Town. It is best known for its thousands of flamingos gathering along the shores. Although the population had declined and disappeared it is now starting to recover. The edge of the shallow lake is often covered in a mass of pink. The number of flamingos on the lake varies with water and food conditions and the best vantage point is from Baboon Cliff.

Also of interest is an area of 188 km around the lake fenced off as a sanctuary to protect Rothschild giraffes, Black rhinos and White rhinos. The park now has more than 25 black rhinoceros, one of the largest concentrations in the country, plus around 70 white rhinos. There are also a number of Rothschild's giraffe, again translocated for safety from western Kenya beginning in 1977.

Waterbuck are very common and both the Kenyan species are found here. Among the predators are lion and leopard, the latter being seen much more frequently in recent times, in fact Lake Nakuru has one of the largest densities of leopards in the whole of Kenya.

The park is also very good for hyenas, they can sometimes be seen hunting flamingos early in the morning along the lake shore. As well as flamingos, there are lots of other bird species that inhabit the lake and the area surrounding it, such as African fish eagle, goliath heron, hamerkop, pied kingfisher and Verreaux eagle.



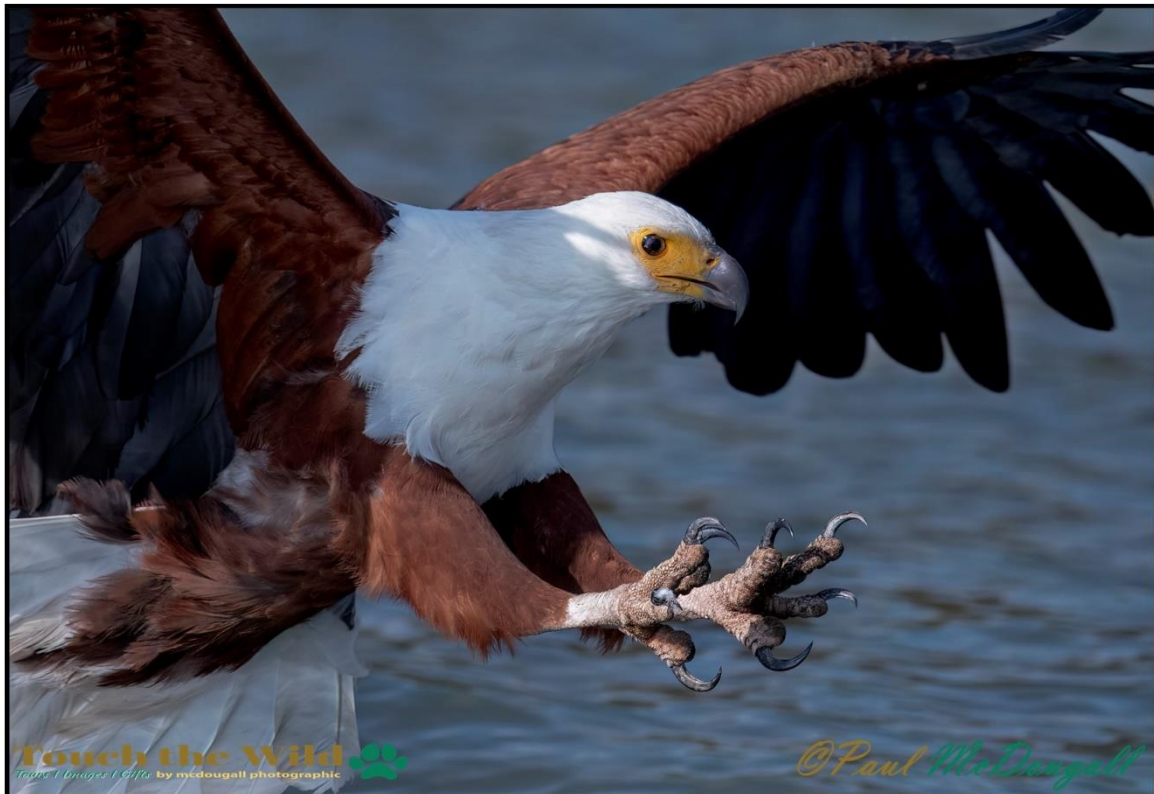
Lake Naivasha

Lake Naivasha is a beautiful freshwater lake, fringed by thick papyrus. The lake is almost 13kms across, but its waters are shallow with an average depth of five metres. Lake area varies greatly according to rainfall, with an average range between 114 and 991 sq kms.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, Naivasha completely dried up and effectively disappeared. The resulting open land was farmed, until heavy rains a few years later caused the lake to return to existence, swallowing up the newly established estates. Afternoon wind and storms can cause the Lake to become suddenly rough and produce high waves. For this reason, the local Maasai christened the lake Nai'posha meaning "rough water", which the British later misspelt as Naivasha. The lake and its surrounds are rich in natural bounty, and the fertile soils and water supply have made this one of Kenya's prime agricultural regions.

Much of the lake is surrounded by forests of the yellow barked Acacia Xanthophlea, known as the yellow fever tree. These forests abound with bird life, and Naivasha is known as a

world class birding destination. Highlights include the African Fish Eagle, which you can sometimes see swooping to catch fish, various kingfisher species including Pied and Malachite and various heron species including Goliath and Purple. The waters of the lake draw a great range of wildlife to these shores. Giraffes wander among the acacia, Buffalo wallow in the swamps and Colobus monkeys call from the treetops while the Lakes large hippo population sleep the day out in the shallows. The lucky observer can sometimes see Otters swimming through the reeds.



Itinerary

DAY 1

Pick up from Airport and transfer to Airport Hotel

Dinner and overnight will be an Airport Hotel (TBC)

DAY 2

After breakfast pick up from Hotel and then we will start our drive to Masai Mara. On the way we will stop at the Great Rift valley viewpoint for photographs and souvenirs. We will drive past small towns and villages and see some beautiful and colourful Kenyan landscapes. When we reach Masai Mara, we will check in to the lodge and have lunch. We will continue on our way to Maasai Mara and arrive late afternoon. After lunch we will do our first drive

in to Masai Mara. We will explore the areas close to the lodge and will particularly be trying to locate the local lion prides. We will exit the park and return to the lodge late afternoon/early evening.

Dinner and overnight will be at Sopa Lodge

DAY 3

There are 3 or 4 large lion prides close to lodge which are regularly seen. There are also several leopard territories and cheetah sightings in this area are also fantastic. The area is also very good for elephants, buffalo and giraffe. Generally we will focus on capturing images with the sun behind or silhouettes against the sunrise pre breakfast, then during the coolest time of day, when the predators are at their most active, we will focus on them. After breakfast we will search for all of the main species we have come to photograph, we will particularly focus on the varied birdlife, the hotter times of the day are a good time to photograph these. Then towards the late afternoon we will again be particularly looking for the big cats. We will travel as far as needed to find the wildlife we want to see, we will have radios so we can listen to where other sightings are being seen, we try to avoid chasing sightings as it can get very crowded around the “star” species. But the option is there if needed.

Dinner and overnight at Sopa Lodge



DAY 4

After breakfast we will check out of the lodge and do a game drive enroute to the river. We will then enter the Mara Triangle Conservancy and check in to our accommodation at Serena. We will have lunch at the lodge and then head out immediately to look for river crossing opportunities. We will return to the lodge at dusk for dinner and overnight.

Dinner and overnight at Serena Lodge



DAY 5 and Day 6

The focus of these 2 days will be on river crossings and capturing images of the huge herds of wildebeest and zebra. Our full days will be spent wherever the largest herds are and we will stay with them to see if we can get any crossing action. It will be a highly focused couple of days and we will use all of our experience and local knowledge to do our best to get river crossings.

Dinner and overnight at Serena Lodge



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DAY 7

We will do an early morning game drive and then return to the lodge for breakfast. After breakfast we will check out of the lodge and then we will either spend the majority of the day by the river or we will start driving back across the Masai Mara Reserve to Sopa Lodge doing a full game drive enroute and looking for any specific species that we may have missed. We will make this judgement based on sightings and take in to consideration all group members wishes.

Dinner and overnight at Sopa Lodge



DAY 8

After a later breakfast. We will pack and then leave for Lake Naivasha. We will drive North to Lake Naivasha aiming to arrive for a late lunch. After we have checked in to Elsamere Conservation Centre we will attempt to photograph the resident group of Colobus Monkeys. These monkeys are fed vegetable peelings and kitchen scraps, and really good images can be captured at a relatively close distance. Late afternoon we will take a boat trip on Lake Naivasha. We will be searching for the 3 main kingfisher species, The Pied Kingfisher, Giant Kingfisher and Malachite Kingfisher. We will also search for other water birds – herons, cormorants, and storks. The highlight of the trip though is the African Fish Eagle, and we will have a session with these incredible birds where they are fed locally sourced fish and swoop down near to the boat to take them off the surface.

Dinner and Overnight at Elsamere Conservation Centre.



DAY 9

Full day in Lake Nakuru NP

After an early breakfast we will leave for our drive North to Lake Nakuru. We will aim to arrive for late morning and will have a packed lunch in the park. We will do a full day game drive and we will focus on the lake shore and look for flamingos and pelicans and capture images of these beautiful birds. We will then take a drive around part of the lake looking for rhinos and buffalo on the lake shore. We will then return to via the yellow fever forests searching for lions and leopard.

Dinner and Overnight at Elsamere Conservation Centre.



Day 10

After a late breakfast. We will pack and then leave for Nairobi aiming to arrive mid afternoon. In between breakfast and departure the time is yours to do what you would like to do. You can do an additional boat trip or could spend time photographing the colobus monkeys and many resident birds. You should have around 3 hours to spend as free time.

On arrival in Nairobi. The rest of the afternoon and evening is to be spent at leisure.

Dinner and Overnight at Airport Hotel

Day 11 – Departure Day.

We will organise Airport Transfers. Nairobi National Park can be done on this day at an additional cost if you have an evening flight.



End of Tour

The Price includes:

- 2 nights accommodation in Airport Hotel. Full Board.
- 2 nights accommodation in Elsamere Conservation Centre. Lake Naivasha. Full Board.
- 3 nights accommodation in Sopa Lodge. Masai Mara. Full Board

- 3 nights accommodation in Serena Lodge. Masai Mara. Full Board
- 1 Boat Trips at Lake Naivasha as described
- Transport in 4x4 Landcruiser with pop up roof and large opening windows
- All park fees and government taxes.
- Services of a driver guide throughout.
- Services of a photographic guides throughout.
- Airport Transfers.

The price excludes.

- Any flights
- Tips and Gratuities
- Any drinks other than water.
- Travel Insurance.
- Optional Excursions as described.

To help with budgeting the following are correct to the best of my knowledge:

Masai Village Visit Masai Mara £50pp

Additional Boat Trip in Lake Naivasha for photography £50pp

Hells Gate NP Lake Naivasha £75pp

Nairobi NP £150pp

Nairobi City Tour £100pp

Camera Gear Needed:

Bridge with wide zoom range, DSLR or Mirrorless.

Wide Angle – Ideal for landscape and wide environmental portraits.

70-200 ideal for landscapes and environmental portraits.

100-400 ideal lens for most wildlife encounters

500-600+ ideal for birds and any wildlife that we need to view from a further distance due to off road constraints.

A zoom lens is ideal for a safari if you don't want to bring more than one body or constantly change lenses.

(Please Note accommodation options detailed above are subject to availability and may be changed).