

Szilvia Hegyi – Best of Tanzania 2009

I was very excited about my first visit to Tanzania. After a long flight we finally arrived and were greeted by our guide, Jadim. Jadim was a fantastic guide, very knowledgeable and a great ambassador for his country. Throughout the safari he shared his incredible knowledge with us about wildlife, history and culture.

This trip is our *signature Africa Adventure Company group scheduled safari program, the 12-day Serengeti Explored safari* which can also be done on a private basis.

We spent our first two nights at **Ndarakwai Ranch**. The camp was the perfect start to our safari offering a wide variety of activities including walking, day and night game drives and visit to a local Maasai boma. The camp is located on a privately owned Ranch with views of both Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Meru and is in close partnership with the local community. The Ranch was built by and staffed by people from local villages. On our first morning we enjoyed a walking safari. During our walk we came across zebras, elands, waterbucks and followed giraffes on foot which was really exciting. Walking is a fantastic way of learning about the natural habitat, plant and animal behavior. Francis, our walking guide was great and we enjoyed every minute of our walk with him. Later that afternoon we visited a local Maasai village which was a really educational experience especially because our guide was also Maasai and knew their culture very well. It was great to learn about the structure and daily life and responsibilities of the family members in the village. On our last night we went out on a night game drive where we saw many nocturnal animals such as bush babies, spring hare and bat-eared foxes.



We continued our safari to Tarangire National Park. Tarangire was one of my favorite parks. The scenery was amazing and we saw hundreds of elephants (lot of babies!), zebras and wildebeest. We encountered our first lions here when we found four lions chest deep in the water with a zebra kill. We spent two nights at **Tarangire Treetops Camp** which was a fantastic camp. Great service, great food and the tents are built up in the trees to provide a true 'tree house' experience. The watering hole in front of the camp provides the possibility to see animals up close while having a cold beer in the main lounge. A truly incredible experience!



Our next stop was the Ngorongoro Crater, the world's largest unbroken, unflooded caldera. En route to the crater we stopped by at Mto-wa-Mbu village where we got to taste our first banana beer. Very refreshing!

We enjoyed lunch at Gibbs Farm. Lovely place and we had the best coffee here (straight from the ir coffee farm)! We spent one night at **Ngorongoro Sopa Lodge** on the rim of the crater and watched the sun setting over the crater from our room. Spectacular sight! Next morning we woke up early and departed with a packed breakfast. Early morning the crater is not crowded, so this is really the best way to experience it. We saw lots of wildebeest, zebras, a lioness with two cubs and we were fortunate to see black rhino surrounded by wildebeest during our game drive. What a treat!



En route to Serengeti National Park we stopped at Oldupai Gorge, one of the most important prehistoric sites in the world and also made a side trip to the Shifting Sands, a volcanic ash dune that dances around the plains covering approximately 17 yards a year.

Another huge highlight of our safari was the two nights we spent in a **luxury mobile tented camp in the Serengeti**. This is really as close as you get to the animals, a definite do not miss experience! During our bush dinner at the camp we suddenly heard lions roaring not very far from us. It was a thrilling experience. The roaring then continued throughout the night mixed with zebra and hyena sounds, music to our ears! Next day we woke up early morning for a balloon safari. Seeing the Serengeti Plains from the balloon provided a very unique view. We saw girafes, lions, hippos and buffalos, yet it was rather the scenery, a different perspective on the plains that made the hour and fifteen minutes trip an experience of a lifetime. The balloon ride was followed by a lovely champagne bush breakfast.





Our game drive after the balloon safari included three different leopard sightings within one hour and we also got to see a lioness hunting for warthogs. The hunt was unsuccessful as the lioness pulled her muscle and started to limp. We also saw our first serval cat here. Our second camp in the Serengeti was **Migration Camp**. During our sundowner a 'resident' genet cat visited us on the terrace. At night we listened to the hippos grazing around our tent. Great camp!



As an extension to the 12-day Serengeti Explored safari our last two nights were spent at **Sayari Camp** located in the extreme North of the Serengeti where we were fortunate to witness the Great Migration with thousands of wildebeest. We headed to the Mara River to see the amazing sight of wildebeest crossing the river. It was really incredible and we were fortunate to see two river crossings during our time at the camp. We also saw lions, leopard with cubs, three different serval cats, a topi family, a hyena den with approximately thirty hyenas. Fantastic game area and a great choice between July and October to have a chance to see river crossings.





Tanzania absolutely exceeded our expectations with its beauty and abundance of game. Seeing the Great Migration was fantastic! At the end of our trip it was difficult to say good bye to our guide Jadim, who was a vital part of our adventure.