

TRIP REPORT FOR KENYA AND TANZANIA Elia Valdovino and Anthony Radcliff

Over the past two years, I have been reading trip reports from all of our clients. I always imagine myself in their place as they vividly describe their adventures and sightings. Nothing, and I mean nothing prepared me for my very own experience in the dark continent.

Our first overnight was in Nairobi. We were tired and in bad need of a shower. The drive to the hotel from the airport was a real eye opener. It was an amazing experience all on its own. Never had I seen so many people, including young children and women walking alone in the streets at 11 pm at night. Not to mention police officers walking around with rifles in their hands. I asked our driver if there was a problem out in the street. He casually answered that “no everybody is just on their way home from work”. *Akuna Matata*-first time I heard that phrase outside of a Disney movie.



The drive to the **Masai Mara** was long and extremely exhausting, but thanks to our traveling companions-an Aussie couple and a British Dad and daughter, made the long drive less strenuous. Our guide Stephan was a bit quiet and non talkative at first, but we quickly started joking with him and brought him out of his shell. The first Swahili words he taught me (at my request) were “pole...pole”, I found myself saying this on a daily basis. His answer was always “Akuna Matata”.

On our very first afternoon game drive, the first animal we saw was a lioness!! Now I realized why our clients keep coming back over and over, the feeling of respect you get from being so close to such a magnificent creature is second to none.

We saw all the animals that were on our list, elephants, wildebeest, giraffes, zebra, lots of baboons, impalas and buffalo. In a way it kind of spoiled it for any future game drives as we found ourselves always comparing it to the Masai Mara.



The one animal we did not see in the Masai , but were lucky enough to see in **Lake Nakuru** was the black rhino. Our game drive was cut short due to bad visibility and floods. Fortunately enough, seeing the black rhino made up for the bad weather and other expectations.



Amboseli is a true gem, from our room, we had a perfect view of Kilimanjaro, it was truly an amazing sight to see.. Here we saw plenty of elephants and giraffes. We also had to be careful with the monkeys sneaking into our rooms, they were everywhere!



Lots of hugs, kisses and e-mail address were exchange at the end of this stay with our Aussie and British friends as we were all continuing in different directions.

We met Seif at the Nmanga border. From the very beginning I understood why he was AAC's Guide of the year for 2009. His passion, enthusiasm and knowledge of his country and job is extremely extensive.

Lake Manyara was our first stop. Here we were charged by an angry elephant who did not wish to be followed as we had been doing. We saw countless of giraffes, baboons, impalas, wildebeest, and many, many beautiful birds.



The drive **to Serengeti** was something to remember. We had given Seif the mission to find us some leopards as we only got a 2 second glimpse of one in the Masai Mara. He took this as a personal challenge.

The highlight of this drive was the mating of lions! We spotted two sleeping lions near the road. It was truly an amazing experience seeing up close and personal what can only be seen on television.



The game drive was great, we again saw many elephants, giraffes, and wildebeest and yes our sought after Leopard!!!

My itinerary also included a visit to a Masai Village and to an orphanage. The children were a delight. They sang for us and even invited us to join in their games.



Anthony and I left Africa with a new found appreciation for nature, and much respect for the people. Their incredible strength is amazing. Even thru the ir poverty, they always manage a most sincere smile.

Up to now, we have been lucky to have had the opportunity to travel all over the Caribbean, South America and Mexico, but somehow I kn ow that out of the countless vacations Anthony and I have experienced, this particular trip will be the most memorable and most talked about.