



# OUT OF AFRICA

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*The luxury traveler's guide to African safaris.*

**BY PAUL RUBIO**



Elephant herd in Kenya



The Fairmont Mara Safari Club, Kenya

**T**hink Africa and images of lions, giraffes, khakis and jeeps come to mind. But these components are just the beginning of a continent filled with diverse wildlife, countless natural wonders, rich culture and epic accommodations. The apex of experiential travel, a luxury African safari combines adventure, romance, excitement, pampering and enlightenment, often packed with a traveler's ultimate gratification: once-in-a-lifetime moments.

### TAILORING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Achieving your African fantasy first requires defining what exactly that fantasy is. The continent is vast, spanning 11.67 million square miles and 54 countries. The safari circuit centers principally on the seven countries with the greatest abundance of wildlife: Kenya and Tanzania in eastern Africa, and South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia in southern Africa. And within each of these countries, you can find various incarnations of the safari experience.

Some camps and destinations are more popular with Africa first-timers, who are eager to tick off that "big five" checklist. Others are more geared toward couples looking for romance in the wild, whose idea of safari is watching the silhouette of giraffes as the sun descends, cocktails in-hand, and spotting elephants by boat in the floodplains. Still, some cater to hardcore wildlife enthusiasts, who arrive in the field with the latest DSLR cameras, binoculars and field guides, ready to snap prize-worthy photos of big cats and rare species.

In any case, deciding the type of lodging, desired animal encounters and overall goals of your safari experience is the first step to structuring your personal African adventure.

### EAST AFRICA HIGHLIGHTS

Kenya and Tanzania are two of the most popular destinations on the East Africa safari circuit for good reason: The massive grasslands

buffering these two nations reveal the Africa of coffee-table books and "Big Cat Diaries." The crossroads of this wildlife rhapsody, known as the Masai Mara in Kenya and Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, is the foundation of the region's safari circuit, with plenty of top-tier lodges to prove it.

In the heart of the action on the Kenya side is the luxurious Fairmont Mara Safari Club perched along the Mara River, where territorial hippos bob up and down, crocs aplenty open up and say ah and hot air balloons take off for bird's-eye views of the savannah wildlife. Each of the 50 spacious canvas-covered tents has its own private veranda, four-poster beds and safari-chic furnishings and is equipped with fully functional bathrooms and electrical sockets and lamps. Also along the river, Sanctuary's Masai Mara Seasonal Camp provides a mobile camping experience during the Great Migration, the ultimate front-row seat to the wildebeest crossing from the end of June until October.

In Tanzania, Sanctuary's other mobile camp, the Serengeti Migration Camp, travels with the wildebeest herds, changing location seasonally. Ten temporary tents are erected in various locations of the Serengeti, each outfitted with a comfortable king-sized bed, en suite bathroom and bucket shower, mosquito net, in-room safe and a small sitting area where early-morning coffee and biscuits can be enjoyed before starting the day of incredible game viewing. Over in the most remote reaches of the southern Serengeti, Sanctuary Kusini provides superlative game-viewing year-round, with excellent chances of cheetah sightings during wildebeest calving season from December to March.

Outside of the Mara and Serengeti, lodges start to deviate from classic safari fare. Set on the slopes of Kenya's second-highest mountain, the colonial-inspired Fairmont Mount Kenya Safari Club allows guests to commingle game drives to smaller parks, while offering leisurely pursuits such as golf, horseback riding and hiking.

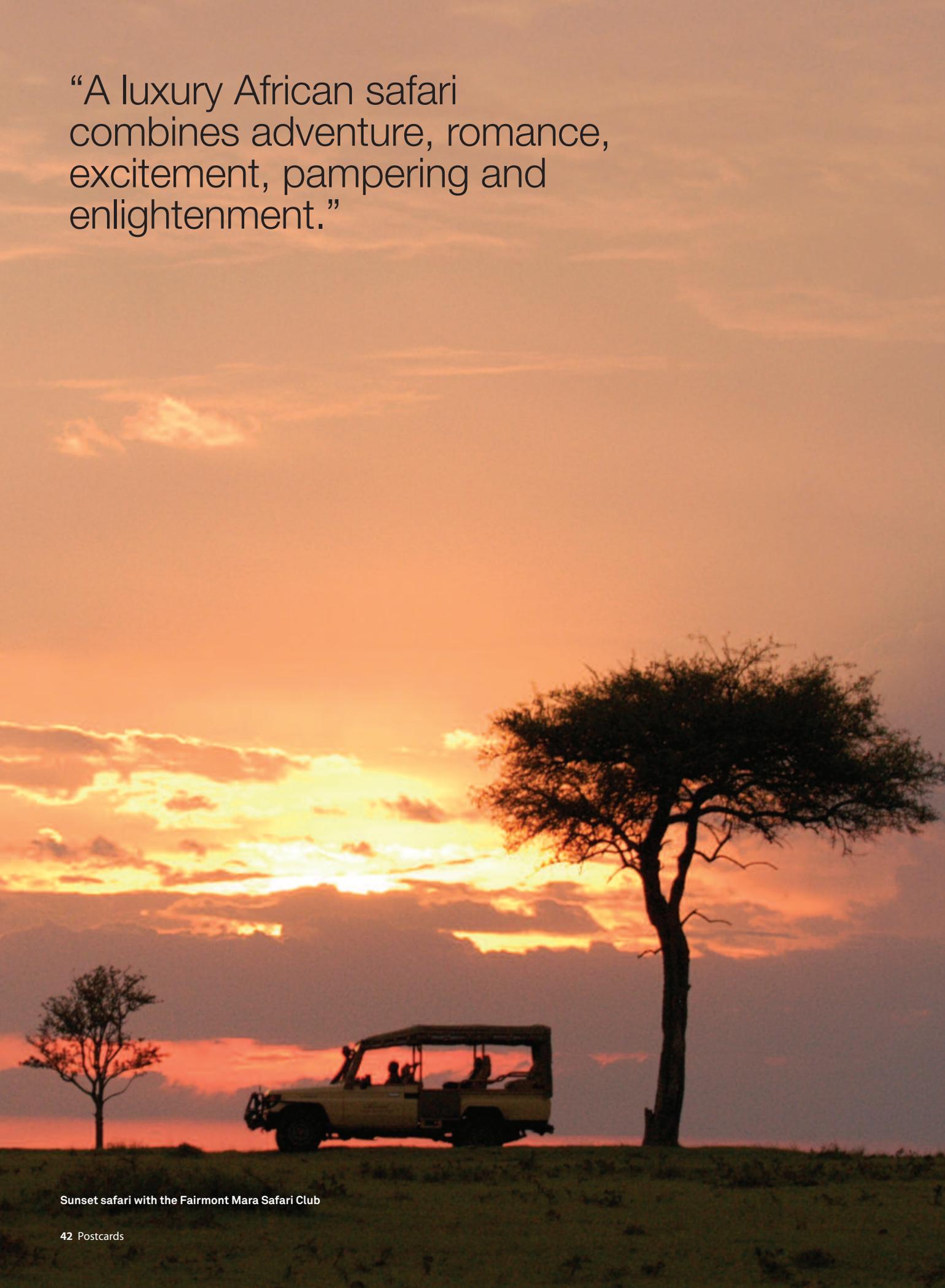
Other noteworthy camps include the Sanctuary Ngorongoro Crater Camp in Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area, which



Clockwise from top left: Zebra herd in Kenya; locals in a Masai village; guest tent at Sanctuary Ngorongoro, Tanzania; Sanctuary Saadani River Lodge, Tanzania; lionesses with cubs in Masai Mara, Kenya; rhinoceros viewing on safari in Kenya.



“A luxury African safari combines adventure, romance, excitement, pampering and enlightenment.”





Sanctuary Sussi & Chuma, Zambia

straddles the rim of a stunning 2,000-foot-deep volcanic depression. At Sanctuary Saadani River Lodge, along the riverbanks of the Wami River, anticipate riveting boat safaris that feel like the real-life version of Disney's Jungle Cruise ride. You can then retreat to your private glass-encased, thatched-roof suite, flanked by an expansive outdoor river-view terrace. Over on Tanzania's coastline, Sanctuary Saadani Safari Lodge specializes in post-safari beachside detoxes, with equal opportunity for fun-in-the-sun or a final elephant encounter, as the lodge is located in Saadani National Park, the sole national park bordering the Indian Ocean.

### SOUTHERN AFRICA HIGHLIGHTS

Southern Africa's safari circuit is a gripping alternative to East Africa's. Tour packages here have traditionally been limited to just South Africa and Botswana, but are now including more under-the-radar destinations, where the experiences are anything but predictable.

In Zambia, for example, wildlife enthusiasts can connect with the animal kingdom through exhilarating walking safaris. At Sanctuary's Puku Ridge Camp in South Luangwa National Park, you can come face-to-face with some of Africa's gentler residents (think: giraffes and gazelles) and go deeper into the park for more Discovery Channel-like intensity. After time in the field, head back to your tent, which is equipped with a private outdoor shower,

deluxe bathtub and minibar, to enjoy a glass of Champagne overlooking the wild surrounds.

Continue to explore Zambia's natural wonders by heading south to Victoria Falls and checking into Sanctuary Sussi & Chuma, where you'll be in proximity to Earth's largest vertical cascade of water and all the adrenaline-inducing activities that go along with it. Explore the falls by foot or helicopter (or bungee-jumping), and enjoy game drives throughout the surrounding national park and boat cruises along the Zambezi River. Finish the day with drinks at the lodge's riverside bar or a quick dip in the stylish swimming pool, recharging for the next day's adventure in high style.

### THE DAILY AGENDA

In the most general sense, safari days are divided by two game drives: the first in the early morning, the second in late afternoon/early evening, each lasting between two and four hours. While some will wish these safari days will never end, for others, back-to-back drives can grow a bit exhausting. Those contemplating safaris of longer duration should consider breaking up the bush experiences with some beach time or a city retreat. Island destinations such as Zanzibar, Seychelles and Mauritius pair well with both the eastern and southern safari circuits, while Cape Town, South Africa, is Africa's evergreen of big-city sophistication. ■



### WHEN TO GO:

In a continent as large as Africa, the rainy and dry seasons vary by geographical location. Migrations of wildebeest and zebra are also seasonal. Be sure to get your timing and location right if seeking a specific migratory route or particular species sightings.



### GETTING THERE:

Make sure you are aware of the visa requirements and have sufficient passport pages before traveling to Africa. Each country has its own requirements. South Africa, for example, requires four blank pages in your passport to enter, and Tanzania mandates a \$100 visa on arrival for U.S. citizens.



### PACKING ESSENTIALS:

Within Africa, it's likely you'll be flying small charter flights, which restrict weight to as little as 33 pounds per person. Pack light, use a soft duffel bag (most hard-shell luggage is prohibited), and inquire beforehand if your lodges offer complimentary laundry (most do).

### CALL US

To book your African safari, contact our Travel Leaders agency today—our number is on the back cover.

LET'S  
GO

We're ready to start planning your luxury African safari today! Whether you're seeking adventure, pampering or romance, give us a call and we'll use our personal knowledge and international connections to recommend the perfect safari, resort, camp or tour for you. No matter what you're looking for, the experience of encountering the magnificent wildlife and natural beauty of Africa will stay with you forever. It all starts with just a phone call, so call us today.