

Pat Arrowsmith - Kenya 2008

I was extremely fortunate to be invited by the Kenyan Tourist Board to be one of a group of 180 people from all over the World to visit Kenya with the sole purpose of encouraging tourists back to this beautiful country.

My itinerary was a flying, tented safari staying near the Aberdares, Samburu and the Maasai Mara. My hosts were Gamewatchers Safaris and the standard of service, accommodation, food and rangers could not have been better. Somak, Kuoni and Virgin all use the camps and services of Gamewatchers.

Our first camp after a short flight from Wilson airport was the Porini Rhino Camp. Porini are very eco-friendly and take their staff from the local communities as much as possible. The greatest advantage of staying in a private wildlife conservancy such as this, is being able to take night game drives in one of possibly only two jeeps. There is nothing more exciting than driving in complete darkness with the spotlights on looking for game, large and small.

Returning back to camp late to a welcoming hot drink, roaring campfire and a Maasai warrior to escort you to your tent where a hot water bottle is warming your bed is magical.



Our next camp, after another short flight saving many hours driving, took us to Samburu Intrepids in Northern Kenya. Although this was larger with 27 tents, it still had a very personal feel to it. This beautiful camp's location, deep inside the reserve, guarantees close encounters with its many species including elephant, leopard, reticulated giraffe, Grevys zebra and the majestic Beisa Oryx.

Each morning after an early personal wakeup call complete with tea or coffee and a guide to escort us to our jeep we would set off for a two or three hour game drive returning back for a delicious breakfast or stopping en route for a bush breakfast. After lunch and a rest we would head off again, later stopping for a sun downer and returning back to camp for dinner.

We were not fortunate to spot a leopard but did see the rest of the Big Five, including many cheetahs just after a kill which in reality was fascinating, unlike on TV where you want to tell the prey to run away!

Our final destination was the Mara Explorer which had its own landing strip in very close proximity, in the Maasai Mara National Reserve. This luxurious camp lies at the confluence of the Mara's four main game-viewing areas and enjoys prime views of the spectacular wildebeest migration between July and September. I had one of the only ten tents with its own private river frontage, complete with a Victorian bath on the veranda! If you ever go, request tent number four as I had my own resident hippo family in front of my tent, wonderful to watch their antics by day but very noisy at night!

Once again the elusive leopard proved to be just that. But again we saw everything else and to our delight a pride of four lionesses with six cubs, the sights and especially sounds of which I shall never forget.

The whole purpose of this trip was to try to reassure us that Kenya is a safe country to return to now with wonderful game viewing and friendly, helpful people. It was successful in its task.