

BIG FIVE

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



TANZANIA

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.



Arusha

Elevation: 4550 feet Latitude: 03 22S Longitude: 036 38E

Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	67	67.5	67	67	62	39	59	60	61.5	65.5	66	65.5
Average Precipitation												
inches	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	2.3	3.3	7	14.5	8.3	1.3	0.6	0.8	0.8	1.4	4.4	4

Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	82	82	81	79.5	78	75.5	74.5	74.5	75.5	78	80	81.5
Average Precipitation												
inches	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	2.8	2.5	5	10.6	7.2	1.3	1.1	1	1.1	1.9	3.3	3.7

Dar es Salaam

Elevation: 180 feet Latitude: 06 52S Longitude: 039 12E

WEATHER

The East African climate is surely one of the finest in the world. The area lies along the equator, so temperature varies little during the year, varying by region rather than by season. The climate is temperate and sunny year round with two rainy seasons. The "long rains" occur between April and June; the "short rains" in October and November. But even during these times, it is seldom overcast all day, and many experienced African travelers prefer these off season times of the year as there are fewer tourists and the country is green and flowering. The days vary little in length with sunrise about 6:20 A.M. and sunset about 6:30 P.M.

The temperature seldom varies from the mid- to upper 70's with evening lows near 60 degrees. It is somewhat warmer along the coast and drier bush country. It will be cooler in the upland areas, where it can actually be chilly at night.

December through March are the warmest "summer" months. July and August are considered their "winter" and are the coolest months. September and October are springtime and weather again gets a little warmer.

TIME ZONES & FLIGHT TIMES

Tanzania is Greenwich Mean Time +3 hours and EST + 8 hours. From Dar es Salaam to London is 11 hrs 15 min and from Kilimanjaro is 12 hours 30 minutes (excluding stopover).

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a US passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least two blank pages is necessary.

Visas: Many countries require that travelers obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Zierer Visa Service (ZVS) to process required visas for our passengers. The Visa Application Kit is included with your pre-trip confirmation packet. You can also download the visa forms from the website. Under the member section, user name is Bigfive and password is 55509.

Important: Please check your passport before you submit it for your visa to make sure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

CUSTOMS INTO TANZANIA

Duty-Free Items: Passengers 18 years and older may bring in 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 225g of tobacco, 0.5 liter of spirits, and a reasonable amount of perfume for personal use, 1 still camera and reasonable amount of film for personal use.

Prohibited Items: The import of fruit, plants and seeds, and imitation firearms is prohibited. The export of gold, diamonds and wildlife skins or game trophies not obtained from an authorized government department is prohibited. All narcotics are prohibited. International penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

US CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. Regulations frequently change. For up to date information contact your nearest

Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

LUGGAGE

For general international luggage information, please see information sheet provided in your pre-trip information. Remember that due to constantly changing rules, you should reconfirm with your international airlines prior to travel for restrictions.

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Since there is limited space on the safari vehicle, **one medium sized bag per person is allowed on safari vehicles, and one small shoulder or carry-on bag stays with you at your seat.** The small bag can hold cameras, binoculars, jackets, valuables, etc. The larger bag will be packed in the rear of the vehicle. **For flights to and from the game parks and reserves, baggage limitation is 32 lbs. per passenger.** Additional luggage or packages can be held in locked storage at your hotel in Nairobi and may be retrieved at the end of your tour. All luggage should be locked and have a piece of identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks operate Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. until around 4:00-4:30 p.m., and about 9:00 a.m. until about 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturdays. Business hours are generally from 8:00-8:30 a.m. to about 5:00 p.m. Only a few offices are open on Saturday mornings, shops follow almost the same hours.

CURRENCY / BANKING

Carry cash and traveler's checks in **small denominations** and travelers' checks should be from well-known sources. All East African countries have very strict exchange control regulations. Exchange money at authorized banks and exchange facilities only, and always save your exchange receipts in case they are checked by Customs when you depart.

Major credit cards (Diners Card is not widely accepted) are widely accepted in large shops, restaurants and at most of the lodges. In addition to credit cards, clients should bring US dollars and traveler's checks. Standard currency is the Tanzania Shilling, divided into 100 cents. Shillings are issued in notes of 200, 500, 100, 5000, and 10,000, and coins of 5, 10, 20, 50 and 1,000 Shillings.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Yellow Fever: The yellow-fever vaccination is no longer officially required when entering Tanzania, yet because the disease is endemic many doctors will recommend it as a precaution.

Malaria: Malaria exists throughout the year in all areas including urban areas. Resistance to Chloroquine is confirmed. Although you will have little exposure to malaria, it is better to be cautious. We strongly recommend that you consult your physician regarding these matters. It is highly recommended that you obtain a prescription for a malaria precaution. The best protection against malaria is to avoid being bitten by a mosquito. Mosquitoes typically feed between dusk and dawn, so it is advisable to wear long

clothing in the evening hours. Take along a good insect repellent and apply to all exposed skin.

Other: Other vaccinations that might be considered before you travel include typhoid, hepatitis A and B, meningitis, and tetanus. For more information, contact your doctor.

Medical Treatment: While traveling with Big Five, you are automatically enrolled in the Flying Doctors Society. This service is designed to bring first rate medical care to outlying remote areas. Should the need arise; you will receive prompt medical attention and transportation to the nearest medical facility.

Please Note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Visitors to Africa should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip protectant. **Travel insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.**

Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. You can also visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

SAFETY

While on a safari, lodges and camps are located in or near wildlife parks and reserves, and be aware that you may find wildlife wandering onto the grounds after dark. Remember that this is not Disneyland, these animals are wild. It is always best to follow the guidelines for each individual property with regard to safety guidelines. Incidents involving animals in East Africa are rare and are almost always the result of someone doing something they have been advised not to do.

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss. Leave jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, traveler checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. Most of the lodges, hotels, and camps have safe deposit facilities at the front desk for your valuables. Use them. These are the same precautions a visitor would observe in North American cities. Common sense is the best defense.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or at the Bureau of Consular Affairs' home page at <http://travel.state.gov>.

COMMUNICATION

The national language is KiSwahili, but English is widely spoken. Learning a few expressions such as *jambo* (hello) and polite forms of address helps make friends and foster good fellowship. If you show a little interest, you will no doubt have several

Jambo	Hello
Kwa heri	Goodbye
Tafadhali	Please
Ahsante	Thank you
Ndiyo	Yes
Hapana	No

people, such as your waiters, drivers or other staff members, tutoring you on the local phrases in Swahili.

Telephone: The international dialing code for calling Kenya is +254. International direct dialing is available at most hotels but remember that hotels levy a substantial surcharge on all calls. Public phones work with coins or with telephone cards that can be purchased post offices or from international call services in major towns. Most game lodges will have a central phone at reception but not individual phones in the rooms. Many hotels have facsimile machines, but often limit their access to guests; fax services are also available at office supply shops.

Internet: Major centers have Internet cafés, and Internet facilities are constantly being upgraded throughout the country. Several local companies offer computer Internet access, and charge by the hour.

ELECTRICITY

The electrical voltage in Tanzania is 220-240 volts, 50 cycle AC so you will need a step-down adapter. Most hotels have 110-volt sockets for shavers, as well as their normal three flat-pronged outlets. If you have a transformer and plug set, bring it along. Plugs are two thick round pins or three rectangular prongs. Converters and adapters may not work efficiently, so battery operated appliances are highly recommended. Power failures occur on occasion and generators are many times turned off during the night, so it's wise to take a small flashlight along.

FOOD & DRINK

Although hotels and restaurants in Nairobi will advise you their tap water is safe to drink, and the safari lodges will provide a thermos of "safe" water in every room/tent, the safest precaution is to purchase readily available bottled water. Traveler's diarrhea (TD) is common, and this is a simple step to help avoid it. You may wish to talk to your doctor about a general antibiotic or anti-diarrhea medication.

When it comes to cuisine, travelers are surprised and delighted by the variety and quality that is served in Kenya. Food at the hotels, lodges, and tented camps is fresh, varied, well-prepared, and abundant. The British influence is evident in the type and style of meals. Indian cooking has also greatly shaped East African cuisine. Several Indian foods are today typical Kenyan dishes. For example, *chapati*, a flat bread, is a very common on Kenya's dinner tables. *Samosas*, tasty meat-filled fried dumplings, are sold everywhere, from street-side vendors to fast food restaurants. *Githeri* is a satisfying maize-and-bean stew that is often prepared with a variety of vegetables and sometimes meat. Goat meat is popular but for *nyama choma*, meat roasted over a wood or charcoal fire, beef is the choice. As with *samosas*, *nyama choma* can be found almost anywhere.

Fruits -- banana, papaya, passion fruit and pineapple, among others -- normally appear at breakfast and lunch buffets. Seafood is from mountain streams, lakes, and coastal regions. Beef, chicken, and pork are fresh and plentiful.

Breakfast usually consists of juices, fruits, cereals, eggs, toast, and meat. Lunch is normally a buffet-style with salads, soup, bread and rolls, cold meats and cheeses, hot dishes and desserts. Tea is served in the afternoon, while dinner usually consists of multi courses. Coffee and tea are served with meals; and beer, wine and soft drinks are available. The Kenya beer (Tusker) is made locally and an international favorite. Locally grown Kenyan coffee and tea are especially flavorful and strong. No discretion should be allowed with the water. Bottled mineral water is always

available for purchase. Food served in Tanzania is generally of a lesser quality and variety. Limited varieties of soft drinks are available, but diet drinks and decaffeinated beverages are not available. For more information and recipes you can visit <http://users.inr.net/~lizard>

CLOTHING

For general international luggage information, please see information sheets provided in your pre-trip information.

Located at the equator, the temperature does not vary more than 10 to 20 degrees year around. Most of Tanzania sits between 3,000 and 7,000 feet. Mornings and evenings are cool and days are warm. The coast is sea level, and it is typically tropical, warm and humid.

Dress for comfort. Safaris are basically informal -- cool, loose clothing for both men and women. It is not necessary to have special safari-type clothes, although lightweight, neutral clothing lend itself to color coordination, creating a varied wardrobe with fewer clothes. Avoid camouflage-type clothing. Bright-colored clothes are not recommended on safari because we want to blend in with the background. Knit shirts, T-shirts, or cotton tops, jeans, khakis, and shorts are satisfactory. Bring along a couple pairs of long pants and a sweater or a jacket. Comfortable walking or athletic shoes are a must. And, don't forget your swimsuit. Most lodges and tented camps have beautiful pools.

Although it is appropriate to change clothes for dinner at most of the safari lodges, it is no longer mandatory for men to wear a coat and tie. But it is still requested you dress for dinner. Women should also take along appropriate clothing (i.e., a skirt and top or dress and casual shoes or sandals).

Be prepared for cool weather as well as warm. Remember that the dawn and sunset game drives in open vehicles can be quite chilly. You will appreciate a lightweight jacket or sweater. You may start a game drive in darkness, wearing several layers of clothing, and then gradually peel off until you return for a late breakfast wearing only a T-shirt and shorts. Keep in mind that you can have laundry done at almost every lodge / tented camp. Service is reliable and reasonably priced, so don't over pack. Leave plenty of room for wonderful souvenirs you'll purchase along the way.

TIPPING

Big Five has included the basic hotel service/porter gratuities on every tour. Further tipping is not compulsory, nor are amounts fixed. The following, however, is a general guideline to assist you. Tipping is normally done at the end of the tour. If you are traveling in Kenya as well as Tanzania, you will exchange guides at the border crossing.

- **Hotel staff:** All hotel taxes and service charges have been included in the cost of your tour, so unless someone provides you with extra service like room service, you need not tip. Always check your bill first to see if a service charge has been automatically added.
- **Baggage Handling:** Handling of one piece of baggage is included. This includes porter's tips at airports, hotels, lodges and camps. If you wish to give an extra gratuity to hotel or lodge porters, we suggest \$1.00 for all baggage brought to your room.
- **Driver / guides:** Tips to driver / guides are not included and left up to the discretion of the client. One driver / guide accompanies each safari vehicle. The customary gratuity is \$3.00 to \$5.00 per person per day based on six passengers in a vehicle. If there are fewer passengers,

you might consider offering a little more in recognition of the individual attention that you receive.

SHOPPING

East Africa is a shopper's paradise. You will find many opportunities to buy souvenirs. Remember that you are expected to negotiate a price in bazaars and markets. Check with the larger shops like some of the gift shops in the lodges / hotels to establish a price range. Many times they have better quality merchandise, but their prices are fixed. Carry your purchases home with you. Air freight is not reliable.

Among the interesting souvenirs you will find are: Masai tribal ornaments, spears, hand-woven sisal baskets and bags, local books and maps, gemstones and jewelry, an array of batiks and paintings, beadwork, meerschaum pipes, camel-hair rugs, soap stone carvings, pottery, multicolored fabrics, safari outfits, T-shirts, and a variety of handmade and craft items. Of course, you'll find lots of wood carvings and masks in a variety of woods and quality of craftsmanship.

In Tanzania, certain items made from a wild animal including ivory, hides and skins, rhinoceros horn, elephant hair bracelets, crocodile handbags, etc. may be legally sold, provided an official permit is obtained at the time of sale. It is illegal, however, to bring anything made from exotic animals such as elephant, rhino, or crocodile into the United States. Such items are subject to confiscation.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BARGAINING

- Bargain, bargain, bargain! This should be fun! Sometimes it is helpful to establish prices before going out to bargain.
- When bargaining, your first offer should be much lower than the asking price. Establish a price in your own mind how much the item is worth to you, and what your top dollar price will be.
- Their first offer will normally be high; your first counteroffer should be low. The game is your move up in what you offer, while the seller moves down.
- Do not be afraid to walk away. The seller may drop the price.
- You will also get a better price per item if you buy several items from the same vendor.
- Again, remember, it's a game. Make it fun and both sides will have a good time and be satisfied with the transaction.

TRAVELER'S ETIQUETTE

You are guaranteed to come up against cultural differences between our modern society and that of Africa. Africans think and do things differently than Westerners. Different traditions and philosophies, some of which are very old, govern attitudes toward time, business, or politics. But this is at the heart of why we travel -- to experience the world through other cultures and other peoples.

Numerous national park regulations govern the behavior of visitors. This is for your safety as well as the safety of the animals. Be considerate of the habitat was well. Many of the heavily visited parks prohibit driving off-road, but this is seldom a problem in getting up close to the animals, as there is an intricate pattern of roads throughout the parks.

Big Five drivers are strictly prohibited from harassing or chasing the animals. While on a safari in the parks and reserves, try to make an effort to speak softly while near animals. Keep your head and arms in the vehicle area, don't make sudden moves or wave to try to attract attention.

The less you impact environment of the animals you want to see, the longer they will stay in your presence, and the better you'll be able to observe their natural behavior.

A safari is a very spiritually and emotionally stimulating experience. Even though many of the roads are rough and dusty, you will end each day tired but content.

Travel necessitates being a good-natured realist as well as a romantic. Being a genial traveling companion makes for an enjoyable travel experience for everyone and a great safari. Observing simple rules of common courtesy will better assure the success of your travel.

DRIVER / GUIDES

Big Five understands the tremendously positive affect a guide can have on the success and smooth operation of your tour. There is no area where we're more particular than in selecting the guides that accompany our clients. All of our guides and tour escorts have more than 10 years experience in the safari business. All our guides are English-speaking, highly educated, and experts in locating wildlife. They are eager to share their love of the land and their insights into the African culture, wildlife, flora, as well as the many discoveries that will make your safari a memorable one.

Above and beyond their role as a knowledgeable host, our guides are consummate professionals, experienced in dealing with hotel and government officials, experienced in smoothing the way through check-ins, entry formalities, and other procedures critical to your trip. We often Their caring professionalism is consistently commended by our travelers, and is a tradition on which we stake our reputation.

LODGES & TENTED CAMPS

Accommodations are excellent, and each lodge is unique with its own personality. Hotels, lodges, and camps are known for their ambiance, location, and service. Even in the tented camps, you'll enjoy fresh linens, elegant meals, and hot showers. Most tents in the permanent tented camps have cement floors and comfortable furniture. All accommodations have private bathrooms, including the tented camps, and most have large, clean swimming pools. Many lodges have water holes and salt licks that draw animals right to the outskirts of the lodge. Each property is personally inspected on a regular basis by our management team, who uses the strictest criteria for judging comfort, location, amenities, and overall atmosphere.

INTRODUCTION TO TANZANIA

Between Africa's highest mountain (Mount Kilimanjaro) and Africa's largest lake (Lake Victoria) lies one of the best game-viewing areas in the world. This region also includes the world's largest unflooded, intact caldera (Ngorongoro) and the most famous wildlife park (Serengeti). Further west is the world's longest and second deepest lake (Tanganyika). To the south is one of the world's largest game reserves (the Selous).

The United Republic of Tanzania was formed in 1964 out of the union of Tanganyika and the island of Zanzibar. A land of almost 370,000 square miles, twice the size of California, Tanzania is situated just south of the equator. Its relatively small population of about 30 million people comprises 128 different tribes. Bantu languages and dialects are spoken by 95% of the population. Kiswahili is the official and national language, while English is spoken in the larger urban areas.

One of the world's poorer countries if measured by GNP standards, Tanzania has set aside approximately 25% of its land mass (or 95,575 square miles) to be used exclusively for ecology and wildlife conservation. This is the

largest portion of protected land of any country in the world. It is therefore a country where for the most part nature still reigns and man gives way. Few places on earth can offer a wilderness so complete or tranquility so profound. Tanzania's great variety of wildlife can be partially attributed to its great diversity of ecosystems -- volcanic highlands, dense rainforests, vast savannas, and semi-desert wastelands with altitudes ranging from sea level to almost 20,000 feet. Temperatures are invariably determined by altitude.

NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES

Approximately a quarter of Tanzania's land mass (95,575 square miles) is made up of national parks, game reserves, and controlled areas. This is the largest portion of protected land of any country in the world. It is therefore a country where for the most part nature still reigns and man gives way.

The parks and reserves of Tanzania are less crowded than other parks in East Africa, but the tourist infrastructure is also less developed. Currently Tanzania is marketed in two circuits -- the northern safari circuit and southern safari circuit. The northern circuit visits such places as Lake Manyara, Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Tarangire and Arusha. The remote parks and sanctuaries in southern Tanzania are vast untouched tracts of bush. Not easily accessible and as yet undeveloped, their future potential is very great. The southern circuit typically covers Selous, Mikumi, and Ruaha National Parks.

Ngorongoro Crater: Formed by the collapsed cone of a Great Rift Valley volcano some three million years ago, the Ngorongoro Crater is a spectacular natural sanctuary to more than 30,000 animals. More than 350 species of birds have been recorded. Its steep, unbroken rim plunges 2,000 feet to a 102 square mile floor. It is known as the Eighth Wonder of the World. Its vastness and beauty are truly overwhelming. Many scientists suggest that before its eruption, this volcano was larger than Mt. Kilimanjaro. About 12 miles across, the Ngorongoro Crater is the largest undamaged caldera (collapsed volcano) in the world.

The crater itself is but a small portion of the 3,200-square-mile Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The conservation area covers the entire crater highlands as well as a good portion of the Serengeti Plains in its western region. Since this is classified as a conservation area, and not a national park, wildlife, humans, and livestock co-exist together.

Two narrow, rocky tracks lead down into and up out of the crater. Both were built by hand by prisoners in the 1950's. Game viewing in the crater is extraordinarily good throughout the year. The animals are completely at home with vehicles, so you can get exceptionally close without disturbing their activities.

Here, Africa's highest concentration of lions may be viewed at astonishingly close range amid breathtaking rift-valley landscapes. Massive bull elephants are found, as well as buffalo, hippo, gazelle, giraffe and many other plains animals. Known as Africa's *Garden of Eden*, the crater is also one of the best places to find the endangered black rhino.

Lake Manyara National Park: The park rests at the foot of the escarpment of the eastern branch of the Great Rift Valley. This small park has a diverse ecosystem that supports a surprising array of animals. Five different vegetation zones are found within the park, and much of the wildlife is resident year round.

A series of small rivers provides permanent water to game and sustains the lush vegetation of Manyara's groundwater forest. With its giant trees and snaking lianas, this tropical woodland lends an extra touch of exotic to the park. It is as close to "jungle" as anything you'll encounter in

East Africa. The alkaline Lake Mantra covers two-thirds of the park. The level of the lake varies from year to year, and how close you can get to it depends on rainfall during the last rainy season.

Elephant, buffalo, zebra and giraffe are commonly found here, although the main focus of game viewing is the park's famed tree-climbing lions that seek cover in the cool shade of high acacia branches. This was once a celebrated hunting area, but the park's animals today permit excellent close-up observation. More than 380 bird species have been identified in the park.

Olduvai Gorge: Olduvai is a world-renowned site for research into our human origins. Situated between Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti National Park, the gorge has been the site of anthropological excavations since 1931 by the Leakey family, among others. This remote spot became famous when, in 1959, Dr. Mary Leakey discovered *Australopithecus Boisei*, the fossil skull of early man dating back 1.75 million years ago. It is now housed in the National Museum in Dar es Salaam.

A small on-site museum is located at the visitor center and has very informative displays about the geological formations and the nature of artifacts found at each level. Guides also lead lecture tours down into the gorge and some of the sites can be seen at close quarters. Archaeological work continues still in this area and is under the direction of the National Museum of Tanzania. To the north is Ol Donyo Lengai, a living volcano.

Serengeti National Park: Africa's most famous park is unequaled in its primitive natural beauty and fantastic abundance of plains game. At 5,600 square miles, the park itself is larger than the state of Connecticut, but it is only a portion of the 10,000 square mile overall ecosystem.

Both Serengeti and Masai Mara are renowned for the incredible annual migration when millions of wildebeest and zebra thunder across its endless plains in their pursuit of the season's freshest grasses. Naturally, hosts of predators follow along, while elephants, rhino, giraffes, buffalo as well as many other species make their habitat in the park's woodlands.

Many tourists set a goal of witnessing the long columns of wildebeest and zebra in their migrations. The migration in the Serengeti National Park is a continuous, all-year-round movement of slightly more than 1.5 million animals. The main east-west trek is twice yearly, but within these two streams are many mini-migrations.

The principal features of the Serengeti National Park are short- and long-grass open plains in the south; acacia savanna in the center; and hilly, densely wooded section in the north. The park also has extensive woodland and black-clay plains dominated by ranges of mountains in the western corridor.

Tarangire National Park: Tarangire National Park is situated in northern Tanzania in the Rift Valley. Its name comes from the river of the same name that meanders north through the entire park. Large numbers of baobab trees dot the terrain, giving the land a prehistoric look. The shallow soda lake, Burungi, attracts flamingos and pelicans in the rainy season. Pythons can often be seen in the trees near the swamps.

Nine distinct vegetation zones make up the park, each with its own appeal. The principal geological features include the lake, swamps, river, and rock outcrops. The river forms a dry season retreat for animals. Although stretches of the river are sometimes devoid of surface water during the dry season, enough pools remain to attract thirsty animals especially from July to November. It is the best park on the northern circuit to see elephants.

Before becoming a national park, Tarangire was originally a popular hunting area. Today, it is regarded as one of the best wildlife areas remaining in East Africa. Game viewing is excellent during the dry season from July through October, which happens to be the worst months for viewing game in the Serengeti. Consequently, visitors to Tanzania during those months might consider substituting Tarangire for the Serengeti. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded in the park.

Selous Wildlife Reserve: Named after Frederick Selous, the Selous Wildlife Reserve in southern Tanzania is one of the largest wildlife areas left in the world. And just like other regions in Tanzania, the reserve has two rainy seasons: November to January is the period for short rains, while the long rains begin in February and end in May. The best time to visit therefore is between June and October, when the roads are passable, the weather is cool and less humid, and the animals can be seen easily.

The principal attraction of the Selous is wide-open space. Unexploited and largely unexplored, no human habitation is allowed in this virgin bush except for limited tourist facilities. The reserve has been spared encroachment by man because of the presence of tsetse flies that have prevented grazing of domestic animals and because the soil is too poor to farm.

The northern section of the park is reserved for animal viewing, boating, fishing and camping. Game is plentiful, but the wildlife is truly wild and it is more difficult to approach closely.

Walking safaris are a Selous specialty. With more than 350 species of birds and more than 2,000 species of plants, as well as an amazing concentration of large mammals, the reserve is the best natural laboratory in the world.

Ruaha National Park: One of Tanzania's best kept wildlife secrets and one of the least explored parks in East Africa is the Ruaha National Park. Inaccessibility has ensured that this paradise has remained virtually unchanged for centuries, unaffected by the ravages of mankind.

Divided from the Rungwa Game Reserve, Ruaha was made a separate national park in 1964. This big chunk of land gets its name from the great Ruaha River that flows along the entire eastern border of the park. It is from this river that Tanzania gets most of its electricity.

The landscape features gargantuan baobab trees and is rich in bird life. There are photography blinds to help you capture outstanding close-up photographs. Ruaha River is full of hippos, crocodiles and clawless otter that are seen playing in the water and on the banks. The park is also known for its concentration of lesser and greater kudu, sable antelope, and a large elephant population. Grants gazelle and ostrich also inhabit the park. Bird life here is prolific with more than 370 species being recorded, some of which are not found in northern Tanzania.

There are several ecological zones in the Ruaha National Park. Four main zones are: river valleys with their stands of tall fig trees; open, black-cotton grassland; Miombo woodlands, and undulating country that is dominated by baobab trees. Within these habitats are different animal species. Without any exaggeration, this area contains a vast tract of completely unspoiled Africa, and is one of Tanzania's largest elephant sanctuaries. Established 1964.

AFRICAN WILDLIFE

The infinite variety of habitat of East Africa is mirrored in its unparalleled wealth of plant and animal life. The fact that such a variety of species can coexist is reflected in a complex range of physical and behavioral adaptations.

Herbivores are divided into leaf-eating browsers and grass-eating grazers. Grazers help avoid competition by eating different types of grass. Even when consuming the same foods, animals often select different portions with varying ratios of leaf to stem. These differences in dietary habits are reflected in the structure of the animals' mouths. A zebra, for instance, has razor-sharp teeth in both upper and lower jaws, enabling it to chop down tall stems and seed-heads of taller grasses. The wildebeest has a broad muzzle with large, fleshy lips ideally suited for short leafy grass. A topi that has long, aquiline-type features adapted for picking off green leaves buried among the taller stems. The Thomson's gazelle possesses a narrow, pointed muzzle to clip new shoots unavailable to their wider-mouthed relatives.

Browsers are also separated according to their mouth anatomy and by the height at which they feed. The tallest is, of course, the 18-foot giraffe, which forages bushes and taller trees that are scattered across the plains. The smallest antelopes such as dik are no larger than hares and feed unnoticed beneath the outstretched branches of the thorn bushes.

Feeding alongside antelope and gazelle are families of warthogs, clipping the sweet young grasses close to the ground and rooting on their knees for tubers and other underground sources of food. Wandering among them are troops of baboons, omnivorous primates that eat both plants and animals. They scour the ground for edible plants and insects, even occasionally capturing a gazelle or impala calf.

Vegetable and plant sources contain only one-tenth of the nutritional value of meat, which helps to explain the marked difference in activity cycles between herbivores and carnivores. Due to the quality of their protein-rich diet, lions and cheetahs can afford to spend much of the day and night resting, while antelopes and gazelles must continue to feed up to 16 hrs a day.

Like herbivores, meat-eaters have also adopted strategies to reduce conflict. Some are nocturnal while others are diurnal, some are social while others lead a primarily solitary existence, and some are large while others are small. These adaptations, however, have only partially solved the

problems of competition. Yet regardless of how they kill or what they look like, predators and scavengers are all integral and vital parts of the ecosystem.

Some mammal, bird, fish or insect has evolved and adapted to fill every conceivable niche in the natural world. No opportunity is wasted. This is particularly evident when one considers herbivores, which are divided into browsers - which feed on leaves - and grazers - which feed on grass. Many of the grazers avoid competition by occupying different parts of the habitat and by eating different types of grass. Even when consuming the same species of grass, the animals often select different portions with varying ratios of leaf to stem. Some also prefer certain stages of growth to others.

These differences in diet are reflected in the structure of the animals' mouths. Zebra, for instance, have razor-sharp teeth in both upper and lower jaws, enabling them to chop down the tall stems and seed-heads of the longer grasses. Wildebeest have broad muzzles with large, fleshy lips, ideally suited for moving short leafy grass. Topis have long, aquiline features adapted for picking off green leaves buried among the taller stems. Thomson's gazelles possess narrow, pointed muzzles to clip the newest shoots unavailable to their wider mouthed relatives. The browsers are also separated according to their mouth anatomy and by the height at which they feed. The tallest is the 18-foot giraffe, which browses the bushes and taller trees scattered across the plains. The smallest antelopes such as dik that is no larger than a hare, feed unnoticed beneath the outspread arms of the thorn bushes.

Feeding alongside the antelope and gazelle are families of warthogs, clipping the sweet young grasses close to the ground and rooting on their knees for tubers and other underground sources of food. Wandering among them are troops of baboons, omnivorous primates that eat both plant and animal matter, scouring the ground for edible plants and insects, even occasionally capturing a gazelle or impala calf.

A word about our global commitment

Big Five is dedicated to projects around the globe that address the critical relationship between healthy local people and their environments. We actively seek partners who reinforce our philosophy of renewable resources and responsible tourism. These eco-alliances stand witness to Big Five's on-going commitment to support the well being of local peoples and environments in our host destinations. We are proud to support the following organizations and projects.

In Africa

St. Nicholas Community Development Center and Children's Home, Nairobi, Kenya

St. Nicholas Community Development Center was founded in 1986, under the auspices of the Anglican Church of Kenya. The center, located on 12 acres, has become home to more than 168 orphaned and abandoned children; some fresh from living on the streets, others victims of abuse, still others whose families have been devastated by AIDS. Children range in age from two to 20. Big Five and its staff in Nairobi have worked closely with the center over the years. Most recently, the company donated money to help build two new dormitories, which opened last year and now house 80 children.

In addition to food, shelter and medical care, the center also provides educational opportunities for both residents and children of community. The center runs a primary and secondary school, and is working to expand a vocational training center. St. Nicholas Center is also involved in a variety of outreach programs to help reintegrate children back into their communities. The center offers hope and help to some of Kenya's most forgotten children.

Mountain bongo repatriation project, Florida & Kenya

The Rare Species Conservatory Foundation, Florida, launched a project to restore a critically endangered flagship species - mountain bongos -- to self-sustaining levels in the wild of Kenya from captive U.S. zoo stock. The mountain bongo repatriation project represents a rare milestone in wildlife conservation. The repatriated bongos are founders for a long-term breeding effort at the Mt. Kenya Game Ranch, whose descendants will be gradually acclimated to the wild over future generations. Ultimately, the program seeks to restore a sustainable wild population within the Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site via close coordination with the Kenya Wildlife Service.