

Family Adventure Holiday in the Maasai Lands of Tanzania

Trekking with the Maasai, 4WD off-road trails, and mobile bush camps



This unique family adventure holiday is ideal for those wanting to acquire knowledge of Maasai culture, whilst enjoying an exciting adventure away from the busy tourist trails. During the seven-day walking and 4WD driven tour you will be able to experience first-hand important aspects of the nomadic way of life—from traditional village life and rites of passage, to hunting and herding techniques, and use of plants for medicine and nutrition. There will not only be bush and mountain trekking but also 4WD off road driving in a sturdy Landcruiser, mobile camps with camp fires at night, and finally a visit to see the big game in the Ngorongoro Crater.

The location is within the Great African Rift Valley, northern Tanzania. The region where you will begin your tour is home to several Maasai communities and receives very few visitors—it is far removed from the main safari routes.

Beginning with a walk up to the viewpoint on Mt. Longido, a sacred Maasai mountain, you will then drive and trek across the floor of the Great Rift Valley, taking in sacred Maasai landmarks and viewpoints such as on the volcano Kitumbeine, and visiting authentic Maasai communities such as Gelai Village. Along the way you will see amazing geological features, such as the Sunken Crater and the escarpment of the Rift Valley. Antelope, zebra and giraffe can be seen in this beautiful, unspoiled landscape of bush and volcanic cones. Your ultimate destination is the magnificent mountain massif, the Crater Highlands, and the world famous Ngorongoro Crater. Here you will be able to see many of the major animal species of Africa, including lion, elephant, and antelope.

Walking distances will be adjusted to suit the family members, and a support 4WD vehicle will always be within radio contact. The adventure is suitable for families with youngsters from 8 years of age.

For one special week – lock away the mobile phones and computer games and explore the real Africa! This family holiday can be booked to run during the academic holidays as a private departure.

Day 01 Drive to Mt Longido and trek to Longido Camp B, L, D

Arrive Nairobi this morning and board the connecting flight to Kilimanjaro. After meeting your tour leader, depart by 4WD on the road towards Longido (approx. 2 hours' drive time), and here rendezvous with your Tanzanian support team. After a quick introductory briefing, we will begin the walk to our first camp, Longido Wild Camp, located in the foothills of the dramatic Mt. Longido. It's a one hour walk in the bush, and on reaching camp the team will begin preparing lunch.

In the afternoon, head out for a walk in the surrounding area to get a feel for the geography and to help further acclimatise you to the African bush. This is typical African acacia bush country, and a pleasure to explore on foot.



In the evening we'll gather around the campfire with our Maasai guides, who will introduce themselves and share more about their lives and customs.

Perhaps the most revered of the great African nomadic tribes, the Maasai originated in the Nile basin and migrated south through Ethiopia to Kenya and Tanzania in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were then known as the fiercest of warriors. Now they struggle to retain their modest lifestyle. Community tourism such as this helps to generate important income for the Maasai guides and their wider families. In addition, the wildlife and community fees we pay on your behalf all help sustain these fragile Maasai communities.

After sunset, be sure to look out for the incredible star canopy.

Day 02 To Longido Viewpoint, and on to Kitumbeine Camp B, L, D

Wake to an early breakfast at 6am, and then, for the more confident walkers, a tough trek up into the foothills of Mt Longido. We hope to trek up to a high view point (5,487ft), from where, if the weather is clear, you will have stunning views of Mt Meru and Kilimanjaro, and west across the floor of the Rift Valley to the Crater Highlands on the very distant horizon. The forested slopes of Longido are rarely visited and they are home to lots of wild game, including buffalo. It is important to remain close to your Maasai guides who know the mountain well.

After admiring the view from Longido's viewpoint, we descend to meet the 4WD vehicle. This will take us across the Arusha-Nairobi main road and onto a rough track. We then proceed further into the bush for around one hour, heading west to a picnic spot in the shade. After lunch, we drive a short distance and then leave the vehicle and proceed to walk to Kitumbeine Village and Kitumbeine Rocky Camp, two kilometres outside the village.

The experience should give you a good understanding of just how hardy the Maasai, who walk great distances along these trails every day, truly are. Today will also provide a chance to get a better feel for Maasai life. You will be walking in the Maasai heartlands, passing through the temporary villages with mud-built houses and thorn hedges, where young Maasai boys herd cattle and goats as their forefathers have done for centuries.



The Maasai have struggled to retain their lifestyle over the course of the last century. During the colonial era, the settlement into towns and the control of local government fell mainly to the Bantu tribes who prospered by virtue of their hard work in the rich agricultural lands around Mount Kilimanjaro and Meru. The Maasai were marginalised to areas outside the national parks and away from the towns and their agricultural catchment areas. Their traditional lifestyle has been threatened by modern life.

Your visit will bring important community funds to the Maasai regions you pass through. By displaying an interest in their culture, you will hopefully help encourage the Maasai in their wish to retain their traditions, while at the same time co-existing with other Tanzanians in an emerging economy and a developing education system. Maasai tradition must be allowed to exist alongside modernisation. It is a difficult goal to achieve, but community-based, eco-friendly tourism, such as your holiday, plays an important part.

Day 03 Kitumbeine Mountain and Village, transfer to Ngarirat Camp B, L, D



After an early start and breakfast, we drive and trek part way up Kitumbeine Mountain to a viewpoint on a ridge at 6,300ft. The trail is dusty and rocky to start, but soon merges with a well-trodden goat trail. Temperatures should drop as the day proceeds and we begin to gain altitude. The spot vehicle will be on hand for tired walkers. Later we trek or drive back down and head to our camp at Ngarirat, a mostly dry ancient swamp bed, where many wild animals come to drink and graze.

Late afternoon, enjoy a game viewing trek in the region around the swamp, before heading to Ngarirat Camp for overnight. The views from the camp across the Rift Valley floor to the Maasai Mountain of Ol Doinyo Lengai are simply breath-taking. You can expect to see more wild game today. In particular look out for zebra, gerenuk, and giraffe. The birdlife is rich along the entire route. The superb starlings, the “Go Away” bird, hoopoes and numerous raptors are seen in the area, as are weaver birds, with their fascinating nests.

Tonight we camp at Ngarirat Wild Camp.

Day 04 Visit Gelai Village, and continue to Sunken Crater Camp B, L, D

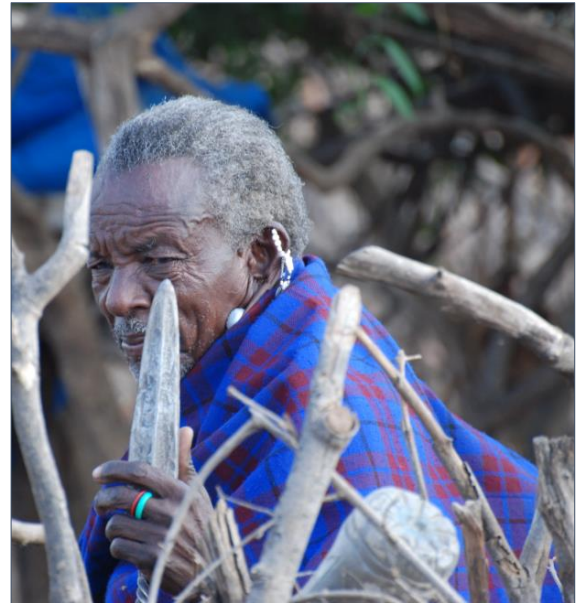
Be sure to be up early to admire the views of Ol Doinyo Lengai, known to the Maasai as the Mountain of God.

After breakfast in camp, we depart for Gelai Village, an important Maasai trading centre at the foot of the immense Gelai Mountain. There will be an opportunity to meet the Maasai people, especially the youngsters of Gelai Village.

Then we head into the bush to visit a Maasai boma (a temporary settlement surrounded by thorn hedges) and see and meet the Maasai, who live there seasonally. This is a unique opportunity to enter an authentic Maasai boma, one that is used as a seasonal dwelling place by the Maasai and their flocks. There are many contrived Maasai villages on the main tourist circuit, but for the most part these exist only for tourists.

You will have a chance to explore the boma. Your Maasai guides will explain to you how the huts are built, how the cooking is done, where people sleep and eat, and the practice of bringing in the animals at night.

After exploring the boma, we walk and, when tired we drive, across untamed bush towards the Sunken Crater. You will cross a beautiful plain marked by dead volcanic vents, your journey bringing you ever closer to the escarpment of the Rift Valley, which rises from the bush up to the Ngorongoro Crater Highlands.



Today is likely to be hotter than previous days, so wear lots of sun block, reflective clothing and wide-brimmed hats.

We hope to reach the impressive Sunken Crater mid to late afternoon. After setting up camp, there will be time to explore some of the interesting features of the area, including the volcanic cones, and even descend into the Sunken Crater. Please only enter the Crater with one of your askari or guides.



Our camp tonight will be set just beyond the rim above Sunken Crater – a spectacular location!

Day 05 To Lake Natron and on to Engaruka B, L, D

Today we part trek and part drive to get a view of Lake Natron. The lake is a soda lake and home to numerous flamingoes. From there we may detour to the Ngare Sero Waterfall; but only if water levels are low enough to allow our party to make a safe visit. Then we continue by 4WD vehicle to Engaruka, site of an ancient settlement, which used advanced irrigation techniques to bring in water from the Crater Highlands. Mystery surrounds the

origin of Engaruka, and indeed why the settlement was deserted around the mid eighteenth century. We camp very near the ancient site and may later make a visit with the local guide.



Day 06 Early drive to Ngorongoro Crater and then to Mto Wa Mbu B, L, D

Wake to tea, coffee and biscuits at 5AM, before we begin the drive (around 3 hours) to the world-famous Ngorongoro Crater. The early start is in order to make the most of our time in the Crater, allowing much of the morning and early afternoon to explore its interior.

On the crater floor, grassland blends into swamp, lakes, rivers, woodland and mountains – a haven for a host of wildlife, including the densest predator population in Africa. The crater is home to up to 25,000 large mammals, mainly grazers - gazelle, buffalo, eland, hartebeest and warthog. There are a small number of black rhinos here and large herds of elephant.



After exploring the Crater (with picnic lunch), we drive to a camp near Mto Wa Mbu below the rift Escarpment. This will be our final night under canvas.

Day 07 Trek to viewpoint, lunch, and drive to airport for extension or flight home. B, L

After breakfast, you can take an optional trek to a magnificent viewpoint. From this viewpoint, high above the camp, you can look back across the area you have trekked over the preceding days, and down to Lake Manyara.

Then descend in time for lunch in camp, before driving to the airport for your connecting flight to the coast or your overnight flight home.



Cost: The cost of a family group of two adults and two youngsters is **£2,880** per adult (before international flights), including all transfers, accommodation, meals and experienced tour leader and guides. Discounted child rates apply for children under the age of 12, though please note that the savings on the adult rate are relatively modest. Please contact us for further information.

We also offer a more strenuous version of our Maasai Lands itinerary, involving additional walking. See our [Into the Maasai Lands itinerary page](#).

Extensions: Contact us for options to extend with a Serengeti safari and/or time on the mainland coast of Tanzania or on Zanzibar.

Gane and Marshall clients have supported a number of development projects in and around the Rift Valley region of Tanzania, including the development of a vocational training centre at Monduli.

That centre is now run by the International Collaborative, which also operates the Maasai Stoves Initiative. You can learn more on the [International Collaborative – Cypress Hill](#) page. We can arrange a visit on a half day trip from Arusha.

For more information: contact Jeremy Gane at jeremy@ganeandmarshall.com.