

Into the Maasai Lands

An expedition with the Maasai Tribe

Location: the African Rift Valley, Tanzania



This remote bush trek takes place in the Great African Rift Valley, northern Tanzania. The region is home to several Maasai communities. 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.

Beginning with a trek 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. Your 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. Your journey ends with an evening of celebration at a special bush camp near Laibone, overlooking Lake Manyara.

The ratio of walking to driving during this itinerary can be tailored according to the groups' ability.

Day 0 Night flight to East Africa

Depart UK evening and arrive East Africa next morning.

Day 1 Drive to Tanzania and trek to Longido Camp, Light Mobile Tent FBA

Arrive Nairobi 0630hrs. This morning you will either continue by air to Tanzania and then drive up to Longido, or you will depart by bus for the frontier at Nmanga (approx 3hrs), cross into Tanzania and then drive a further half hour to a rendezvous point with the Tanzania support team. On arrival, you will trek up to one hour to your first camp, located in the foothills of the dramatic Mt. Longido. Here you will have a welcome lunch and briefing.

You will then have an afternoon trek in the surrounding area to help further acclimatise you to the African bush, allow you to test your equipment, and also to give you a real insight into typical African acacia bush country. Up to 10kms trekking today. In the evening be sure to look out for the incredible star canopy.



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Day 2 **Trek to Longido Viewpoint, drive & walk to Kitumbeine Camp, Tent** **FBA**



Begin today with an early breakfast (0600hrs), and then a tough trek up into the foothills of Longido. We trek up to the view point (5487ft). If the weather is clear, you will have great views to Meru, Africa's 4th highest mountain, south-east to Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain, and west across the floor of the Rift Valley stretching to the Crater Highlands on the very distant horizon.

This will be your first African mountain on this expedition and learning walking security will be very important. The forested slopes of Longido are rarely visited and they are home to many wild animals including buffalo. It is very important to remain close to the local guides who know this mountain well.

Descend to meet the vehicles. Your transfer vehicles will take you across the Arusha-Nairobi main road and onto a rough track. You will drive

further into the bush for 1 hour heading west to a picnic lunch point in the shade. After lunch drive a short distance and then leave the vehicles and proceed to walk to Kitumbeine Village and Kitumbeine Rocky Camp, two kilometres outside the village. Alt. of camp 4070ft. Walking distance ranges from 10kms to 20kms today, depending on the strength and wishes of the group.

Your climb, drive and trek today will give you a real understanding of how hardy the Maasai, who walk these distances regularly, really are.

In this Maasai region you will see the traditional temporary villages with mud-built houses and thorn hedges, where young Maasai boys herd cattle and goats as their forefathers have done for centuries. In time 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 Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Meru. The Maasai were marginalised to areas outside the national parks and away from the town and their agricultural catchment areas. Their traditional lifestyle has been threatened by modern life. Your trek will bring important community funds to the Maasai regions you pass through. By displaying an interest in their culture, you will 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 trek, plays an important part.



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Day 3	Kitumbeine Mountain and Villages, transfer to Ngarirat Camp, Tent	FBA
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This morning you will trek part way up Kitumbeine Mountain to a viewpoint on a ridge at 6300ft. The trail is dusty and rocky to start, but soon leads onto a goat trail. Temperatures should reduce as you pass midday and gain altitude. Later you trek back down and meet the vehicles for a short drive to the Ngarirat swamp, a largely dry ancient swamp bed, where wild animals come to graze.

Later this afternoon enjoy a Game viewing trek across Ngarirat before heading to Ngarirat Camp for overnight. The views from the camp across the Rift Valley floor to the Maasai Mountain of Ol Doiyo Lengai are simply breathtaking. Up to 16kms walking today.

Day 4	Across Dustpans of Ngarirat to Gelai Camp, Tent	FBA
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Today you will trek to Gelai Village and our nearby camp. 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, and you will be fascinated by the nests of the weaver birds. The superb starlings, the “Go Away” bird, hoopoes and numerous raptors are also seen in the area.

Expect to be captivated by the sheer beauty of this region, which is known as “The Cradle of Mankind”. Tonight you will camp at Gelai Village Camp site.

Day 5	Trek & Drive to Sunken Crater Camp, Tent	FBA
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Today you will begin to pack up camp very early and trek west 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 for a late lunch, and will be camping overnight near the crater. Time allowing, you can explore some of the interesting features of the area including the volcanic cones; and even descend into the Sunken Crater. Evening temperatures drop.

Day 6	To Engaruka - approx 15-30kms (dependent on group strength), Tent	FBA
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This morning you will have an early breakfast, then start trekking under the lee of the Rift Escarpment towards Engaruka. You will cross the Ol Kerii Plain, passing by small settlements along the way, until you reach the final trek point.

Here will be a vehicle transfer to Engaruka village and the campsite, situated very near to the ruins of the ancient Engaruka settlement. Reckoned to be about 500 years old, the evolved Engaruka civilisation, which had stone built houses and an irrigation system, was probably wiped out by nomadic tribes moving into the area. It is worth walking with a local guide just beyond the boundaries of the camping place up into the rock outcrops above the camp, where are found the ruins of the ancient settlement.

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Day 7

To Ngorongoro Crater and then to Laibone, Tent

FBA



After a very early breakfast, you will drive transfer (2 to 3 hours) to Ngorongoro Crater, where you will enjoy a game drive. The views at the rim of Ngorongoro Crater are sensational. On the crater floor, grassland blends into swamp, lakes, rivers, woodland and mountains – all 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 too and large herds of elephant.

After approximately 4 hours in the Crater (with picnic lunch) you will head back to your last night in the bush at a special camp near Laibone for a celebration dinner and overnight.

We have selected a really special location for your last night in the bush in Tanzania. From your camping place there are views down to Lake Manyara, one of Africa's most famous Rift Valley lakes.

Day 8

Trek to viewpoint, lunch, and drive to airport for beach extension or flight home.

B/L

After breakfast, you can take a short trek to a magnificent viewpoint. From this viewpoint high above the camp you can look back across the area you have trekked over the previous week 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.

