

Things to Do

Regardless of all the excitement for the upcoming African tour, there are certain things that need to be done, before and during the trip. Make sure to read through the entire summary of things-to-do, to ensure that you have an amazing experience on the trip.

1. Immigrations Protocol

- Apply for a Kenyan VISA, in case you haven't already. Keep copies of the e-VISA handy.
- Carry 2 passport-sized photographs and keep them handy along with your VISA and passport upon reaching NBO.
- If applicable, carry your Yellow Fever Certificate with you.
- Declaration of camera and lenses to the local customs officials is advisable.
- Carry photocopies of the passport to be handed over to the trip leader, if assigned.

2. Upon Arrival at NBO

- Post-custom clearance currency conversion to Kenyan Shillings:
 - Visit any of the conversion booths at the airport. The standard conversion rate is 1 USD = ~100 KSH.
 - It is recommended that you keep about 100-150 USD to cover costs for snacks/beverages, optional tour to Masai villages (~20-30 USD), sim-cards and the likes.
 - Most places accept VISA debit/credit cards, but it's better not to depend on those solely.
- Acquire data-enabled 3G/4G SIM-cards at the airport, unless you plan to travel on international roaming. *Airtel provides the best connectivity in these areas.*
- When given to you, collect the chauffer's information and get in touch with him.

3. Personal Items to Carry

- **Clothing & Cargo**
 - Early mornings are cold and windy. Carry some warm clothing, and most importantly, gloves to keep your fingers from freezing.
 - The climate is otherwise warm and you'll mostly require light clothing.
 - Make sure you carry light coloured or cameo clothes, so as to fit into the jungle's environment.
 - Carry comfortable, covered shoes that can be worn for long hours (about 8+ hours a day).
 - Carry facial masks, mosquito repellents, and strong sunscreen.
 - Sunglasses also come handy for times apart from when you are shooting.
 - Rides can often get bumpy. Make sure to secure your stuff properly.
- **Food & Drinks**
 - Food and beverage choices at the resort are limited and expensive. It's recommended that you acquire them at NBO.
 - Carry enough glucose or energy drinks.
 - If needed, ask for shopping stops.
- **Medicines**
 - Carry all your essential medicines with you.
 - Keep medicines for cold, cough, fever, malaria and for general first-aid.
 - Yellow fever vaccination is recommended.

4. Staying at the Resort

- Toiletries are provided, but you may carry your own if you like.
- Healthy and hygienic food is cooked at the hotel. Make sure to inform the chef about your allergies and also of any special requests you may have.

5. Electrical Requirements

- The resort wouldn't have power for 12 hours a day. Carry power banks to sustain during these hours.
- Carry a strong torch to navigate in the darkness.
- **North American or Asian type wall adapters do not work in Africa.**
Acquire [Type-C adapters](#) available online or at local stores.

6. Additional Precautions

- Travel with your guide/chauffeur for outings to Nairobi.
- Ask locals/hotel staff to accompany you while roaming about the resort in the dark. Wild animal intrusion into the resort compound is not uncommon.
- **DO NOT touch any wild plant, rock or animal carcass.** They are not only unhygienic but also poisonous at times.
- **DO NOT carry any form of animal remains.** It is illegal to do so.
- Do not entertain any request for special favours by any stranger or official.
- The tour price is inclusive of tips for resort staff, chauffeur and the guide. All other tips are personal expenses of the traveller.

7. Camera & Lenses

- **Camera**
 - A minimum of 2 bodies is recommended, take 3 if you aren't comfortable changing your lenses on the go. *Sunrise and sunsets demand wide-angle lenses, especially if you wish to print them.*
 - Carry adequate batteries and chargers, keeping in mind the 12-hour power outage. You can charge batteries during the 2-3 hour breaks if power is available.
 - Although they might be provided (if available), carry your own bean bags.

- The region is dusty but can also get rainy. Carrying proper [cleaning kits](#) and [rain protection](#) for your gear is recommended.
- **Lenses**
 - In order to achieve optimum results, you're recommended to carry:
 - i) Wide Angle (18-70 mm) lenses.
 - ii) Zoom lenses like 70-200 mm or 100-400 mm.
 - iii) Prime lenses like 400-500 mm. *Telephoto lenses are even better.*
 - iv) You'll need a 600 mm lens to shoot birds.
 - v) Teleconverters are useful, but their use is limited by the dust.
 - The trip cost is inclusive of all charges incurred for carrying photography gear into the forest.
 - We strongly discourage you to bring tripods. Firstly, they cause disturbances to others. Secondly, the essence of wildlife photography lies in taking handheld shots.
 - Binoculars are good for scouting. Carry them if you may.

8. Memory Devices

- Carrying a minimum of 128 GB of card space is recommended. The more the better!
- Carry more than one card for safety and ease of action.
- Carry hard-disks (two of them, to ensure safe storage in case of loss or damage) and a laptop for file transfers.
- 1 TB of HDD space is recommended.
- *Note - Internet connectivity would be too slow for cloud uploads. Plan your memory requirements accordingly.*

Tentative Itinerary and Communication with Guides/Locals

Note - Make sure to strictly adhere to all timings to ensure smooth movement of the group.

Arrival at Nairobi

- Contact the chauffeur and have your dinner or lunch (personal expense) at a restaurant.
- Rest for the day at the hotel.

Flight to Mara

- Early in the next morning, be ready to embark on a lovely, short flight to Mara.
- Report at Wilson airport by 9:00 am as the flight leaves at 10:00 am.
- Coordinate with your chauffeur for the meeting time at the hotel lobby.
Travelling 8 km from Ibis to Wilson through the Nairobi traffic might take some time.
- Tag your luggage properly (including the cameras) for checking them in at the Wilson airport.
- Consider keeping a wide-angle lens and body in the hand luggage for shooting during the flight. The flight is low and as expected, the scenery is beautiful.

Arrival at Mara

- The drive starts immediately after you land on the unpaved airstrip in the Mara reserve.
- If need be, ask for a toilet break. *Make sure you don't wander off for you might encounter wild animals.*
- You'll arrive at the resort slightly past lunch time.

Morning Game Drives

- Usually, the drive would start early every morning, at around 5:00-6:00 am and might change depending upon the destination. Make sure you're ready to leave on time.
- Prepare yourself for the chilled air.

- Breakfast will be packed for the drive and there are breaks provided for breakfast somewhere along the drive.
- The group will return to the lodge by 10:30 am.

Evening Game Drives

- Rest for a while and do the needful after returning from the morning trip.
- The evening drives start at 3:00 pm.
- Prepare yourself for cold evenings.
- Carry insect and mosquito repellents.
- You can expect to be back at the resort by 7:00 pm.

Dinner

- Although accommodative otherwise, the resort is quite strict about dinner timings. Make sure to have your dinner before the restaurant closes at 10:00 pm.
- Campfires will be arranged for gatherings and discussions. You could also visit the bar if you like.
- The tented-cottages have patios, which might be used for spending some lazy time, pondering upon the experience of the trip.

Return

- We would have a 6:00 am drive on the day of our return, with packed breakfast as usual.
- After completing the morning drive by 10:00 am, the group will have breakfast before heading back to the airstrip.
- On reaching Nairobi, you may visit the Masai markets, if time permits.
- You may have your lunch (personal expense) and then we will head to NBO.

Guides & Vehicles

- Despite good command over English, Masai guides might have a difficult accent. You're requested to co-operate.
- All the drivers are highly skilled and have in-depth knowledge about the ways of the jungle. You are safe with them.
- **DO NOT argue with the locals.** In case of any dispute, please report to us and let us deal with the matter.
- Be polite with the locals and greet them by saying, "Jambo".
- You'll travel in an open-top Toyota Land Cruiser, in groups of four including the guide, unless discussed otherwise.
- Vehicles in a group must follow the same route (as discussed the previous night) and have radios for inter-communication.

Possible Issues & Things to Note

- Do not panic if your driver abruptly accelerates or drives off the road. Usually, they would do it only if there are reports of some sightings.
- **You can opt this out if you choose, by communicating the same with your guide.** However, it might mean that you would miss a sighting or lag behind the group.
- The drivers are trained in assisting photographers and take all the necessary steps. Yet, you must realize that the jungle is often unpredictable and things might not work out even after putting maximum effort.
- At times, you might be paired with strangers from other groups. If uncomfortable, communicate your concerns to us and we would do the needful.