

Where to Go

There is a wide choice of destinations in Southern and East Africa. Your selection will be determined by a variety of factors: Your specific focus, the time at your disposal and your budget. Not every park offers the same variety of wildlife. For those with limited budgets self-service camps in national parks might be the answer while those with the financial means to pay the additional bucks should opt for private camps and lodges with expert guides.



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Chimpanzee at Mahale Mountains

Also be careful to make the distinction between game parks and game farms. The latter are private smaller fenced-in properties stocked with animals and not natural wildlife regions. However, some of these game farms can actually claim that they are restoration areas that reinstated the original wildlife decimated by human intrusion. A few attract clientele from overseas but most are aimed at locals. But the distinction needs to be made.

Animal Population

Game parks and reserves differ in their animal population. For example, Kruger National Park and Serengeti National Game Reserve—and their satellite

private game reserves—offer an almost complete range. Kruger might offer greater variety but no other park comes close to Serengeti in sheer numbers of wildebeest and zebra. Tens of thousands of these ungulates on the move with carnivores in pursuit is an unforgettable sight. Witnessing their treacherous crossing of the Mara and Grumeti Rivers with gigantic crocodiles lying in wait, is an unforgettable and, for some, a bone-chilling sight. Chobe in Botswana is known for its large elephant herds and its Okavango Delta offers wildlife at waters edge in a unique fashion. This is in stark contrast with the Kalahari and desert regions of Namibia.

Grevy's zebra and the reticulated giraffe are limited to East Africa and Burchell's zebra and common giraffe are mostly found in Southern Africa. Hluhluwe Park in South Africa is known for its thriving white rhinoceros population. It is here that it was nursed back from near extinction. The species is rarely encountered in East Africa due to excessive poaching. Etosha National Park in Namibia offers one of the best viewing of the black rhino but has no buffalo. St. Lucia in South Africa is a birders paradise and Lake Nakuru in Kenya turns into a sea of pink as two million flamingoes congregate in its soda-rich waters. The main focus in Uganda is on gorillas. Mahale Mountains Park and Gombe along Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania are known for their thriving chimpanzee population.

It should, however, be remembered that none of these destinations guarantees visitors a sighting of its resident types of animal during a three or four day period. These are game parks not zoos. Instead of being contained in camps or behind bars animals roam freely over thousands of square miles.

Successful safari

The secret of a successful safari does not merely lie in how many impressive animals one manages to tick off on the "seen" list. It behooves everyone to take time to get immersed in the many fascinating facets of the terrain and its creatures—large and small. Following a little male beetle rolling a ball of dung with its spouse hanging on for dear life can be as intriguing as witnessing a large herd of elephant strolling along the plains or a lioness at play with her cubs. *(See Nature's Wonders).*

Even non-birders soon become engrossed in the interesting things that nature's winged creatures do. *(See Birder's Paradise).*

Other considerations

For those who place comfort at the camp high on their wish list there are multiple choices of establishments that rate among the best small hotels in the world even though they are situated in and blend nicely with environment. *(See Bush Chic).* Young children are excluded from some establishments but there are plenty of alternative destinations across safari country that not only welcome youngsters but cater for them.

The Best Place

So what is the best place to go and “see the animals?” Listen to the chatter around the campfire at a boma in any of a multitude of camps and lodges in Africa's safari country and you get the picture. Someone saw “everything” at Camp A and “very little” at Camp B. The next person saw “it all” at Camp B and had a “disappointing experience” at Camp A.

In safari country you are very much at the mercy of nature, although your chances improve considerably in private concessions. While you are restricted to the road and trails in national parks expert field guides in private reserves can take you off-road in sturdy open vehicles close to the animals. Paying additional for the privilege of having a ranger of field guide capable of tracking animals. *(See Tracking)*

Spread the odds

It makes good sense, considering the distance that you travel to safari country, to spread the odds by combining several regions and even countries in one trip. Anyone who travels to Southern Africa should incorporate at least three out the six options—South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Malawi. (Mozambique is coming back as a contender with the aggressive reintroduction of animals in areas devastated during its prolonged civil war). In East Africa Tanzania's Serengeti and Kenya's Maasai Mara often serve as standalone destinations for those intent on experiencing the Great Migration. Still, it is prudent to include other parks in these countries for variety or even to venture into Uganda and Rwanda during the same trip.

Our charts in the following pages provide an overview of what you can expect to encounter in the major safari destinations of East and Southern Africa.



© Mike Poliza

Sable in Namibia



Wildebeest migration

© Nomad

What's to see where

	Lion	Leopard	Cheetah	Elephant	Black Rhino	White Rhino	Hippo	Buffalo	Eland	Greater Kudu	Sable Antelope	Gemsbok/Oryx	Wild Dog
BOTSWANA													
Moremi/Okavango	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Rarely seen but present	Frequently seen	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen		Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally		Frequently seen
Linyanti/Selinda	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen			Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen		Frequently seen
Kwando	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen			Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen		Frequently seen
Central Kalahari	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen						Seen occasionally	Frequently seen		Almost always encountered	Frequently seen
Savute (SW Chobe)	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen				Rarely seen but present	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally		Rarely seen but present
Chobe (Northern region)	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally		Rarely seen but present
Tuli (Mashatu)	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen					Frequently seen	Frequently seen			
ZIMBABWE													
Hwange (Makalolo/Somalisa)	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen		Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present	Frequently seen
Matusadona	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Frequently seen		Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered		Frequently seen			
Mana Pools	Frequently seen	Frequently seen		Frequently seen			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen			Frequently seen
ZAMBIA													
South Luangwa	Frequently seen	Frequently seen		Frequently seen			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen			
North Luangwa	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally		Frequently seen			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen			
Lower Zambezi	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen		Frequently seen			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen			Rarely seen but present
Kafue (Busanga Plains)	Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present	Frequently seen	Rarely seen but present			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Almost always encountered		Seen occasionally
Kafue (Central)	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen			Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Almost always encountered		Seen occasionally
NAMIBIA													
Etosha	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen			Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered		Almost always encountered	
SOUTH AFRICA													
Kruger National Park	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally		Rarely seen but present
Private Kruger (Sabi)	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally		Seen occasionally
Phinda	Frequently seen	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen	Frequently seen			Almost always encountered		Frequently seen			
Kwandwe	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Seen occasionally	Frequently seen	Frequently seen	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen		Almost always encountered	

Almost always encountered
 Seen occasionally
 Frequently seen
 Rarely seen but present

What's to see where

	Lion	Leopard	Cheetah	Elephant	Black Rhino	White Rhino	Hippo	Buffalo	Eland	Greater Kudu	Sable Antelope	Gemsbok/Oryx	Wild Dog	Girollas	Chimpanzees	
TANZANIA																
Lake Manyara	Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present	Rarely seen but present	Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered								
Ngorongoro	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Frequently seen		Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered				
Serengeti (Southeastern)	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally			Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered				
Serengeti (North & Western)	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered				
Tarangire	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered				
Selous	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Rarely seen but present	Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present		Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered			Seen occasionally			
Ruaha	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present		Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally			
Mahale/Gombe															Almost always encountered	
Katavi	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally		Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered		Rarely seen but present		Rarely seen but present			
KENYA																
Amboseli	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally			Seen occasionally				
Tsavo	Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present		Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally			Seen occasionally				
Maasai Mara	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally		Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered							
Lake Nakuru	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present		Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered							
Samburu	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered				Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally		Almost always encountered				
Lewn Downs	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Seen occasionally	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered		Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present	Almost always encountered		Almost always encountered	Rarely seen but present			
UGANDA																
Queen Elizabeth	Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered		Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered								Almost always encountered
Murchison Falls	Almost always encountered	Seen occasionally		Almost always encountered			Almost always encountered	Almost always encountered								
Bwindi														Almost always encountered		
Kibale															Almost always encountered	
RWANDA																
Volcanoes N.P.														Almost always encountered		

Almost always encountered
 Seen occasionally
 Frequently seen
 Rarely seen but present