

**SAFARI IN KENYA...**copyright Geof Prigge  
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The fine dust of the Maasai Mara has settled as out of season rain falls gently upon everything in sight. We set up camp as soon as we arrive and then head straight out to the nearby Maasai Mara National Park where we are immediately enthralled by the captivating scenery. The grassy plains are encircled by mountain ranges and within half an hour we spot zebras, giraffes, gazelles, elephants, lions and some vultures feasting on a gnu that had been killed this morning. With a large kill like this it is the lions who give chase and perform the kill getting the good bits, then the vultures follow, digging deep inside coming and going in packs throughout the day, and then at around sunset the hyenas get stuck in. All that's left after dark is scraps for the insects. By morning it's just bones. Depending on the time of day you arrive, you are able to see part of the show.

The sun sinks low and turns the clouds above to liquid gold as a family of giraffes saunters off to find water. We return slowly to camp admiring stunning beauty in every direction.

As I write, the sounds are of giant elephants feasting on the tasty foliage of a nearby sausage tree (Olimunyoki). A lion growls in satisfaction of a full stomach about a kilometre away and the ever-present and near deafening sound of the abdominal song of the crickets reminds me of the similarity to our own cicadas back home. There's also a Maasai tribesman within a few metres of our tent periodically clearing his throat. He's our personal security guard carrying two rough wooden weapons (one is a spear and the other a rungu). These will assist him in chasing away unwanted wildlife that may pass through during the night. There are no fences here, and although lions are apparently too well fed to enter the campsite, elephants and hyenas do.

Tomorrow will be an early start and so we hastily prepare a meal and shortly afterwards take shelter in the tent as cool air wafts through the campsite, dropping the temperature and promising a good night's rest.

No further rain falls during the night, and next morning, as the pre-dawn light grows, we head off again into the park. We travel slowly along sandy tracks spotting more wildlife than we could previously have imagined. We find a pack of lions with an early morning kill. We stop the van metres from a zebra in the final throws of life as its belly is torn open and the lion's mate joins in. Others wait patiently nearby as the first rays of a golden sun cast long shadows and provide an opportunity for some memorable pictures.

Other vans and four-wheel drive vehicles pull up, and soon there's a crowd. It's always easy to see where the action is. A small group of vehicles soon grows and so we move on. Within a few minutes we spot a herd of elephants. Our

driver, Gichohi, tells us that the baby is less than three months old. Staying close to its mother, he seems playful and yet with a confidence that must surely be growing by the day. Now this small creature will consume only a fraction of what he will within a couple of years. An adult elephant will devour three hundred kilos of grasses and foliage per day. Some eat even more than this. We photograph the elephants eating and laugh at the playful antics of the young one.

Then we go in search of more wildlife. It rarely takes long to find something. A young serval (*tierboskat*) has killed a snake and oblivious to our approaching vehicle sits in the middle of the track slowly savouring the meal. It only moves on when again the number of onlookers grows.

By the end of our three hour search we have spotted all but one of what is referred to as the big five – lion, elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus and leopard, but within a day or so, that is rectified. We've spotted an array of others however...the ever-present zebras and gnus, giraffes, hyenas, gazelle and countless birds.

We return to our camp satisfied at what we've able to find. After a hearty meal prepared by our chef Mwali, we have a shower and rest, listening again to the sounds of the African bush.

Later in the morning we visit the nearby Maasai village where we are treated to a welcome dance by the men of the village followed by a wedding dance by the women. The dance of the men is enormously erotic, with the men performing their characteristic jumping to slow melodic chants and music provided by a single *lion-man*. This fantastic show lasts about twenty minutes followed by a walk around the traditional village. We are shown their methods of getting a fire going...the same as our Aborigines but not as fast, then a tour of one of their very basic and tiny houses. Built by the women, they consist of mud, cow dung and straw with earth floors and tiny windows. The women not only build the home. They also do the cooking, bring up the children and make most of the handicrafts. Each man, we discover, has up to five wives.

The men provide security and tend the animals. We make a point of mentioning the disparity. The man acting as our guide can see that we think the workload is a bit out of proportion, and smiles knowingly. Then he laughs and offers us a drink of milk from a gourd. We decline. Prior to departing the village, we are shown the commercial section, where all manner of jewellery etc is on display in rudimentary bark shelters.

After our tour, two of the Maasai join us in our van for the rest of the afternoon. At one point, the older one spots what he says are seven lions far off in the distance. After a fifteen minute rough ride through the bush, we are somewhat impressed to find that he is right...exactly seven lions basking in the sun on a

large open rock. From a distance, even with the help of our binoculars, we are at pains to spot three.

By sunset we have again found a large number of animals, even finally a leopard which is quite rare. We say our farewells and thank these two modern-day Maasai, returning to camp for our final night.

Talk around the fire includes star spotting. The Southern Cross is low. We are close to the equator.

Our sleep is deep when we finally decide to go. The night air in August is cool. We visit several more national parks over the following days, each time finding wildlife in astonishing numbers. Our final stop though is the coast, a dramatic contrast where even at this time of the year, the humidity averages 65% and most days are warm.

We decide to live it up after ten days of camping. We stay at the Alliance Hotel Group just south of Mombassa at Diani Beach. A choice of three hotels, the mid-range Jadini and Africana and the upmarket Safari Beach have an assortment of restaurants, bars and swimming pools set right on the sandy beach. Fine white sands and the clear Indian Ocean make for a wonderful relaxing break after the dust of the desert. This is a popular choice after a safari, to get to the coast and plunge into the sea.

As always in Kenya, the staff are friendly. Everybody is. Kenya, in her many contrasts, has been outstanding.

**ZANZIBAR**...copyright Geof Prigge  
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Zanzibar, the enchanting spice island off the Tanzanian coast, is home not only to a wonderful selection of spices, but also to palm-fringed white sandy stretches of beach and a turquoise sea, the waters filled with dolphins, manta rays, marlin and sailfish. To top it off, there's a coral reef almost as spectacular as the world famous Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

As well, and perhaps because of these factors, it has become a home for expatriots from many European countries and beyond. The lesser known region of Paje on the east coast has in the past few years attracted a number of Italians, Swedish and British, keen to escape the cold of their homelands and able to establish businesses right beside the beaches of this near deserted region. Up until 1995, there was virtually no tourism as such here.

To the north, the popular resort area of Nungwi contrasts greatly with the laid-back Paje coast. Dozens of resort hotels, bars, restaurants and handicraft shops

lure tourists from afar in much the same manner as the ivory and spice trade used to in the past. Nungwi is known as a backpacker haven, but the proliferation of hotels and bars and so on, built right next to and on top of each other, makes the laid-back Paje region much more appealing for a true getaway. There is a variety of accommodation, but for the young and young-at-heart, Paje by Night with its eccentric Italian owner Marco is *the* place to be. Bungalows with private facilities and the best music and pizza on the island make this the number one choice around Paje.

Slightly more up-market is the Paje Ndade Village +255 747 865501 [www.ndame.info](http://www.ndame.info) where hosts Lisbeth and Jan make everyone feel at home.

To the north the Pongwe Beach Hotel +255 748 336181 [www.pongwe.com](http://www.pongwe.com) is a true oasis set in remote gardens and entirely on its own.

Further north at Matemwe Beach is the Matemwe Beach Village +255 242 238374 [www.matemwebeach.com](http://www.matemwebeach.com) Their motto is *no shoes - no news*, and this sort of says it all. Once you're there, the world seems a long way away.

The island has had a colourful history, much of it associated with the sea. For centuries dhows have sailed to distant lands with produce and returned with the goods needed for life on the island. In 1887 The German East African Company was established and began trading. Nowadays, dhows sail to Asia with grain and return with timber, fabrics and electronics.

As well as long trading voyages though, locals enjoy displaying their sailing skills by racing the dhow competitively between the mainland and the island. Some of the industrious sailors, in an attempt to earn good money, don snorkelling gear after the races and dive for octopus, using them as bait to lure lobsters which fetch high prices by the tourist hotels. Recently, 1500 year old Italian coins were found by such divers, and over the years Chinese ceramics too have been discovered lying on the seabed as the divers manoeuvre to catch their prey. Bringing such booty to the surface ensures the divers of a good bonus.

Zanzibar offers the visitor more than most people expect. From the labyrinth of streets and alleyways of Stone Town to the laid-back beach atmosphere of Paje, to the neighbouring islands of Pembe and Mafia, life here ranges from the culturally exotic to the simply stunning. Spice, sails and nature combine to make Zanzibar and her neighbouring islands a rich and heady mixture of history and culture in a setting of tranquil paradise.

Exotic wildlife is everywhere, in the sea and on land. The rare red colobus monkey can be seen not only in the Jozani forest, but elsewhere across the island as well.

Less than 10 kilometres off the shores of Stone Town, Zanzibar's capital, lies yet another gem, Chumbe Island, home to the first marine park in Tanzania and the first privately managed marine park in the world. Phone +255 242 231040 and website is [www.chumbeisland.com](http://www.chumbeisland.com)

By day, visitors can enjoy snorkelling amongst 200 species of pristine coral and over 400 species of fish, lobsters, turtles and dolphins. Ashore there are gardens of fossilised corals, giant baobab trees and lush mangrove forests. By night you can watch the antics of the world's largest crabs, the giant coconut crabs as they climb the coconut trees to the very top.

Everything on Chumbe Island is designed to protect the island's fragile nature. Beautiful palm thatched bungalows are constructed entirely of local materials and are eco-friendly. Each bungalow catches, filters and solar-heats its own water and has solar lighting. The park is a model for sustainability and has won several global tourism awards.

A visit to Zanzibar is not complete without a trip to Stone Town. Walk around the streets and alleyways and you'll see two millennia of history unfold before your eyes. Architecturally the mix is stunning, with Arabic, Indian, European and African influences. At night the wonderful Taarab music is not to be missed. Traditionally accompanied by an orchestra of at least twenty five musicians, Taarab singers recite from memory poems on love and romance in poignant and subtle verses.

For a truly memorable evening, visit Emerson and Green for the dinner of a lifetime...book at least one week in advance and if possible stay there as well. They have ten suites, all of them with special themes, like fantastic views from sunken baths! Every night the restaurant features different music, including Taarab. The owner is Francesca Bensa, an Italian who has lived in Africa for 17 years, firstly in South Africa, then Zimbabwe, Uganda and finally here in Zanzibar. Her email is [emerson&green@zitec.org](mailto:emerson&green@zitec.org) and website [www.emerson-green.com](http://www.emerson-green.com)

Often referred to as 'one of the most extraordinary eating venues of the world', the restaurant is set above the rooftops of Zanzibar looking one way to the harbour and the setting sun and to the east the rising moon.

Zanzibar, the name says it all – haven of peace.