

kenya trip report

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Kenya is a beautiful and diverse country, with lots of rare and unique animals. We traveled (me and my girlfriend noa) in the southern part of the country during the dry season at the end of September 2025; it was a week-long trip. It was our first trip abroad together. She is not a mammal watcher or a bird watcher but she is very curious about it and I hoped this trip would increase her interest in animals, and it definitely did. We've seen 51 mammal species and 295 bird species in the entire trip. Our itinerary included Aberdare, Samburu, Nakuru and Masai mara. During this trip report I will mark **mammals** in red, **birds** in blue and **reptiles** in green.

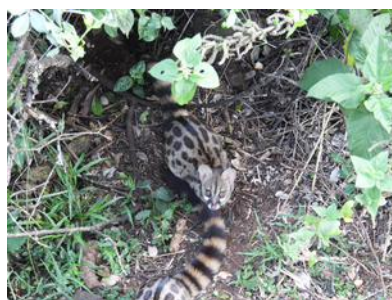
Aberdare

We first visited the Aberdare national park. We were a bit disappointed to understand that our plan for this reserve will be only to stay in the hotel and not to travel around even though it was promised to us in the plan. We started with a stop in the Aberdare Country Club where there were large grasseries and quite a few animals around. The main interest was a few friendly **bushbucks**, we also saw **sykes's monkeys**, **eland**s, **impalas**, **warthogs**, **baboons**, **ochre bush squirrels** and **vervet monkeys**. There were a few nice birds around as well, including a **violet backed starling**, **cinnamon chested bee eater**, a few **sunbird** species and a nice water pond that attracted a lot of **red cheeked cordon bleu**.





We came back to the ark lodge, were introduced to our rooms and were happy to find out that we can see the big water hole from everywhere around the hotel. There were a few **buffalos**, **forest hogs**, **bushbucks** and **warthogs** around the water all the time. We went on a short trip to the bridge of the lodge and were surprised to see quite a few mammals that came to eat the leftovers from the bird feeding - **sunis**, **slender mongoose (black morph)** and **large spotted genets**. There were also some good birds around the lodge including **golden winged sunbird**, **hartlaub's turaco**, **silvery cheeked hornbill**, **african crowned eagle** and more.



After sunset we stayed awake and watched the water hole but with no luck. **Forest hogs** and **buffalos** came very close to us, and we also saw the **genet** once again and a pair of **crowned cranes**, but we were not allowed to use flashlights nor leave the building to look around from the bridge. Before going to sleep, we checked the window in the end of the corridor leading to our room, and to our surprise there was

a **northern greater galago** just in front of us. In the following morning, we also saw a family of **southern tree hyraxes**.



Samburu national reserve

We spent two nights in Samburu and had 4 safari drives (2 morning safaris, 2 afternoon safaris). On our way to Samburu, after we passed beneath the beautiful mt. Kenya, we found ourselves in the middle of a scary incident. There was a big protest in the town nearby and people blocked the road and started to set a big fire on it, while throwing and rolling huge rocks. We were very close to it and there was a big mess of cars so it took our driver a few minutes to drive away from danger. After waiting for two hours things started to calm down (though we heard gunshots, so perhaps the police fired a few bullets in the air to stop the protest). Once it was over, we continued towards Samburu.



In the reserve, we saw many of the common mammals, some of them unique and can't be found in many other reserves across africa - **grevy's zebra**, **(reticulated) giraffe**, **gerenuk**, **grant's gazelle**, **impala** and **dik diks** (both **kirk's** and **gunther's**) were the most common. We also managed to find **beisa oryx**, **desert warthog**, **black backed jackal** and **unstriped ground squirrel** on a few occasions.



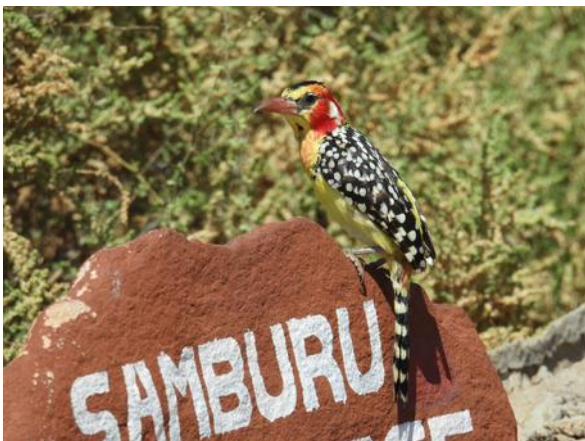


Most of the activity in Samburu was close to the river, where we saw lots of **elephants**, big herds of **giraffes**, **baboons**, **vervet monkeys**, **crocodiles** and one sighting of 2 male **lions**. In our first afternoon we also had a great encounter with a **leopard**.



Our lodge - Samburu Sopa Lodge, had a water hole and was also a hotspot for some animals, mostly **impalas**, **warthogs** and **ground squirrels**. During the night a **common genet** strolled nearby (and sometimes inside) the dining area. We also found a beautiful **white tailed mongoose** near our cabin on the second night. Our lodge was also a great place for birds and reptiles and we saw many **hornbills** and **rock agamas** around the pool, **lappet faced vultures** were flying above from time to

time, [lichtenstein's sandgrouses](#) came to drink from the water hole at dusk and [vulturine guineafowl](#) wandered around the rooms. In the reserve we also saw our main bird target - [golden breasted starling](#) and a few other nice birds including the [somali ostrich](#) and the [red crested bustard](#). Other nice birds included [white throated bee eaters](#), [red and yellow barbets](#), [secretary birds](#) and [rosy patched bushshrike](#).



Lake Nakuru National Park

We've done only two short safari drives (afternoon and morning) in the park, but they were both great! The area was just fabulous, everything was green and animals were everywhere in the grass. When we entered, we first noticed the big herds of buffalos, zebras and impalas. Between them there were many spotted hyenas, (Rothschild's) giraffes, and a few black backed jackals. We also found our first white rhino from a very close distance.



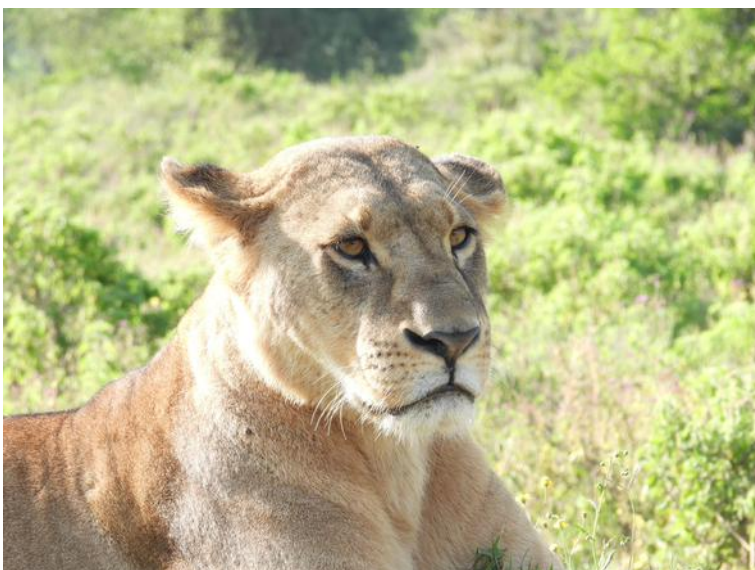
Around the lake, there were big concentrations of birds including many pelicans and sadly not too many flamingos, as well as several hippos, elands and waterbucks. Another nice birds sighting was of a big flock of white fronted bee eaters.



After dinner, we had a nice find of an african root rat in the Nakuru sopa lodge trails.



In the morning safari, activity was very high and we were the first to arrive at a family of lions being chased away by a big buffalo. They stayed around and gave us a very good observation. We also saw a herd of 6 white rhinos and one lone black rhino.

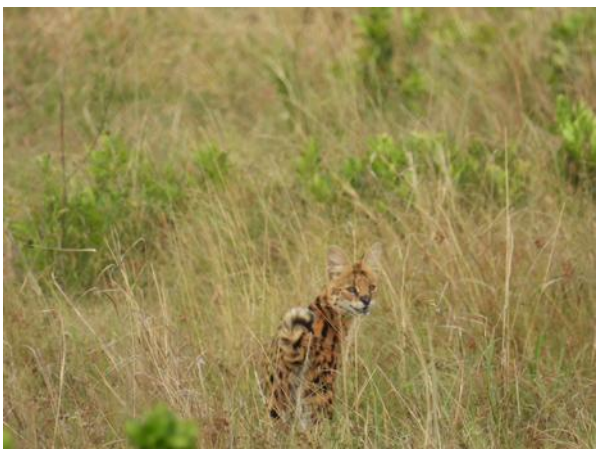


Masai Mara National Reserve

so we finally got to the climax of the trip, the Masai Mara! We only had a short afternoon drive and then a full day in this place, but they were wonderful safaris. After being in the Serengeti twice, I can say that we didn't have the best luck with animal numbers. Around this season most herds should be up north, but this year many herds started to return early to the Serengeti. There were a few herds still around, but we didn't see any crossings, though I am pretty sure that our guide was a bit lazy and unpassionate so he didn't try much while explaining to us that they all have already crossed. Anyway, the river crossing wasn't our main target, but the rare cats. Our short afternoon safari was bad and we didn't get to places with many animals, but our full day was an unforgettable safari day.

We started the day with a great observation on a big **leopard** with prey, that went down and up the tree, and of course many **lion** sightings. We went close to the Mara river, where we saw loads of huge **hippos** and **crocodiles**. Somewhere around 14:00 pm I decided that I had enough of our driver only following reports of **lions** and I asked him if we could try different, more remote areas. It is usually a very stupid idea to try and think that you can navigate to the animals better than the local guide, but honestly, after six days in which he found almost nothing, while we were the ones who found all the animals and had to explain him where to look, and after I never saw him using a binocular even once, I understood that this is our last chance to find some great animals and it will be a mistake to give him the credit that he can find them. I saw a movement of vultures in the sky and asked him to move towards there. I found there a kill of a big buffalo, with a few **hyenas** around, lots of **vultures** and a few **black backed jackals**. Then I scanned the far areas and I could tell that the area to the far south west had a big concentration of animals. Once arriving in the area we finally enjoyed some big herds of thousands of **buffalos**, **wildebeests** and **zebras**. After we finally managed to enjoy the big herds that the reserve is so famous for, we drove north when I asked to aim towards big flat grasslands with low numbers of lions. We scanned the area and very soon we found a beautiful, tired **cheetah** close to the road! We were so happy to finally see this magnificent cat which was one of our main targets, so we had only one target left. We scanned the most remote and empty areas with observing eyes, until I saw big ears between the grass nearby. **serval**! We had an amazing observation of a very beautiful individual with strong colors. We also got to see it jumping and catching rodents in the grass. amazing! With this observation we finished one of the best safari days I had ever had, in one of the best reserves, in perhaps the best country for safari in the world. After the safari, we found a weird looking **chameleon** in the hotel, and the day after we saw a dead aardvark on the road from the Serengeti to Nairobi, which was very sad. Thank you for reading! photos from a great day in masai mara and full list below.







full list

1. rock hyrax - nakuru
2. southern tree hyrax - aberdare
3. elephant - samburu, masai mara
4. african root rat - nakuru
5. olive baboon - all the reserves
6. vervet monkey - all the reserves
7. blue (sykes's) monkey - aberdare
8. northern greater galago - aberdare
9. ochre bush squirrel - aberdare
10. unstriped ground squirrel - samburu
11. cape hare - aberdare
12. scrub hare - samburu
13. black backed jackal - nakuru, masai mara
14. lion - samburu, nakuru, masai mara
15. leopard - samburu, masai mara
16. serval - masai mara
17. cheetah - masai mara
18. common genet - samburu
19. large spotted genet - aberdare
20. spotted hyena - nakuru, masai mara
21. slender mongoose - aberdare (dark morph), masai mara
22. white-tailed mongoose - samburu
23. banded mongoose - samburu
24. dwarf mongoose - masai mara
25. grevy's zebra - samburu
26. plains zebra - nakuru, masai mara
27. black rhino - nakuru
28. white rhino - nakuru
29. giant forest hog - aberdare
30. warthog - aberdare, nakuru, masai mara
31. desert warthog - samburu
32. hippo - nakuru, masai mara
33. giraffe - samburu, nakuru, masai mara (3 different subspecies)
34. buffalo - aberdare, nakuru, masai mara
35. bushbuck - aberdare
36. eland - nakuru, masai mara
37. suni - aberdare
38. steenbok - masai mara
39. kirk's dik dik - samburu, nakuru
40. gunther's dik dik - samburu
41. reedbuck - masai mara
42. grant's gazelle - samburu, nakuru, masai mara
43. thomson's gazelle - nakuru, masai mara

- 44. gerenuk - samburu
- 45. waterbuck - nakuru, masai mara
- 46. impala - all the reserves
- 47. topi - masai mara
- 48. hartebeest - masai mara
- 49. wildebeest - masai mara
- 50. beisa oryx - samburu