

Kenya – February 2019

Summary

For our first ever trip to Africa, we decided to go to Kenya. After much research, we decided to book through Porini and stay at their camps since we wanted to support the conservancy concept and the price was reasonable when compared to other options. With the help of our US based Porini contact we developed the following itinerary:

- Fly USA to Nairobi
- 1 night Eka Hotel
- 1 night Nairobi Tented Camp (Nairobi National Park)
- 3 nights Porini Amboseli (Selenkay Conservancy)
- 4 nights Porini Mara (Ol Kinyei & Naboisho Conservancies)
- 4 nights Porini Lion (Olare Motorogi Conservancy)
- Day room at Eka Hotel
- Fly Nairobi to USA

We were joined by two friends and had a private vehicle in all camps for the four of us. The weather was very nice. We had some rain most days but it seldom interrupted a drive for more than a few minutes. February was a great time to go since most animals had babies which made for great photos and behaviors. Overall, the trip was fantastic. It's rare that a location can live up to the hype let alone surpass it but Kenya did that for us.

Daily trip reports are available here: <http://focusedonnature.blogspot.com/search/label/Kenya>

A gallery of all photos is available here: <https://www.focusedonnature.com/Trips/Kenya-2019/>

Nairobi National Park:

This park is located on the edge of Nairobi and has a lot of different mammals species. The big draw for us was the chance to see rhino which would be unlikely at the other camps. We ended up having a distant look at white rhino but no black rhino. However, our traveling companions had good sightings of both species the day before we arrived. Also, the Nairobi Tented Camp is a great place to see both bushbuck and suni since they hang out in the camp regularly.

The food was very good and the tents were quite comfortable but they were not very tall. I had to stoop over to pee in the toilet (maybe too much information?).



Porini Amboseli

This camp is worth the visit for a couple of reasons. First is that a day trip to Amboseli National Park is included and it was there that we had our only views of african golden wolf, bohor reedbuck, and yellow baboon. Not to mention it's a haven for waterbirds. The second reason to visit this camp is to see that amazing gerenuk. We spotted them every day and they weren't skittish at all which allowed us to see them standing and eating on multiple occasions.

We also saw our first cheetahs and lions here but this camp is not known for big cat sightings. After dinner night drives are allowed and they did not use a red spotlight filter at this camp.



Porini Mara

This camp was the most picturesque camp of the trip and was located in a beautiful setting. The wildlife was really good as well. In fact, vervet monkey, waterbuck, bushbuck, and tree hyrax were all seen at the camp. The monkeys are quite adept at getting in tents though so be sure yours is zipped tight.

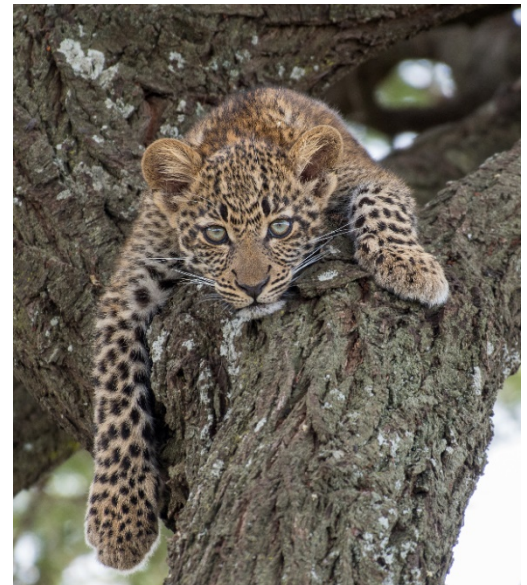
Guests take safaris in both the Ol Kinyei & Naboisho Conservancies so I wasn't sure where we saw what. But, suffice it to say that the wildlife was very abundant everywhere. This is the only camp where we saw hyrax otherwise most of the wildlife here can also be seen at Porini Lion. However, the scenery is much different and we had some tremendous wildlife encounters at this camp.



Porini Lion

Another great camp with great staff. We had tremendous big cat encounters here including seeing our only leopards. Other mammals only seen here include a common genet and senegal galagos during after dinner night drives (red filter used) and yellow-winged bats which added to dinner entertainment by swooping into the dining tent to pick off bugs while we ate.

As mentioned, the leopard and cub along with a pride of lions with 9 cubs provided endless photos and enjoyment. Both were true highlights of the trip and we forgone branching out too much and spent hours watching all these wonderful cats.





Trip Highlights

- Great service, staff, and food at all Porini camps
- Gerenuk standing and eating at Porini Amboseli
- The elephants at Amboseli National Park
- Watching hyenas chase and kill a baby wildebeest in the dark at Porini Mara
- Finally finding the tree hyrax at Porini Mara on the last morning
- Watching a lioness race past us chasing a cheetah at Porini Mara
- Leopard and cub posing on a fallen tree for endless pictures at Porini Lion
- Adorable high energy lion cubs at Porini Lion
- Awesome Flap-necked Chameleon “sway walking”
- Night drives were all great
- Sipping Gin and Tonics while watching big cats. Can it get any better?
- The people of Kenya were all amazingly welcoming and they wanted all our friends to visit them. So go!

Lowlights

- None. It was an absolutely amazing trip.

Mammals – (47 species, all lifers)

| Name | Location | Comments |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Impala | All 4 camps | Very common. Some large herds seen. |
| Thomson's Gazelle | All 4 camps | Very common |
| Hartebeest | Nairobi, Mara, and Lion camps | A couple small herds seen at most camps |
| Eland | All 4 camps | Sparse but seen at all camps |
| Grant's Gazelle | All 4 camps | Very common |
| Lesser Kudu | Amboseli camp only | Common but very shy. Great looking animal. |
| Bohor Reedbuck | Amboseli camp only | Seen in Amboseli NP not in the conservancy |
| Topi | Mara and Lion camps | Common at these two camps |
| Bushbuck | Nairobi and Mara camps | 1 resident at Nairobi camp and 2 at Mara camp |
| Waterbuck | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Sparse at all camps |
| Gerenuk | Amboseli camp only | Common and worth the trip alone |

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|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| African Buffalo | Nairobi, Amboseli, Lion camps | Sparse populations |
| Suni | Nairobi camp only | 1 individual resident around the camp |
| Kirk's Dik Dik | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Seen daily but very shy |
| Blue Wildebeest | All 4 camps | Very common |
| Plains Zebra | All 4 camps | Very common |
| Masai Giraffe | All 4 camps | Very common |
| Common Warthog | All 4 camps | Very common and great fun to watch |
| African Elephant | All 4 camps | Very common |
| Hippopotamus | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Common |
| White Rhino | Nairobi camp only | Tough to find but they are there |
| Yellow-spotted Rock Hyrax | Mara camp | Seen multiple times at different rocky locations |
| Southern Tree Hyrax | Mara camp | 1 seen at camp on last morning |
| Yellow Baboon | Amboseli camp only | Seen in Amboseli NP not in the conservancy |
| Olive Baboon | Mara and Lion camps | Large troops at both camps |
| Vervet Monkey | All 4 camps | Common |
| Senegal Galago | Lion camp | 1 seen in tree and then hopping great distances |
| Greater Galago | Mara and Lion camps | 1 sighting at each camp |
| African Lion | All 4 camps | Common |
| African Leopard | Lion camp | 3 seen including Fig and her cub |
| Cheetah | Amboseli and Mara camps only | 2 seen at Amboseli and 6 at Mara |
| Wild Cat | Amboseli and Lion camps | Seen during night drives. Multiple at each camp. |
| Bat-eared Fox | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Seen day and night. Awesome looking fox! |
| African Golden Wolf | Amboseli camp only | Seen in Amboseli NP not in the conservancy |
| Spotted Hyena | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Common |
| Black-backed Jackal | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Common |
| Common Genet | Lion camp | 1 seen during night drive |
| White-tailed Mongoose | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Seen during most night drives at all camps |
| Dwarf Mongoose | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Common |
| Banded Mongoose | Mara and Lion camps | Sparse but seen almost daily |
| Slender Mongoose | Mara and Lion camps | Sightings at both camps but very shy |
| Scrub Hare | Amboseli, Mara, Lion camps | Common on night drives |
| Spring Hare | Mara and Lion camps | Common on night drives and fun to watch |
| Unstriped Ground Squirrel | Amboseli camp only | Only saw a couple individuals |
| Yellow-winged Bat | Lion camp | Seen nightly in dining tent |
| Swamp Rat (sp?) | Amboseli camp | 1 seen around bird bath. Exact species unknown. |
| Spiny Mouse (sp?) | Amboseli and lion camps | Many seen at camps. Exact species unknown. |

Herps – (8 species, lifers in bold)

| Name | Location | Name | Location |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------|
| Black Mamba | Mara | Blue-headed Rock Agama | Mara |
| Leopard Tortoise | Mara | Nile Monitor | Lion |
| Flap-necked Chameleon | Mara | Striped Skink | Mara |
| Red-headed Rock Agama | Mara and Lion camps | Nile Crocodile | Mara |
| House Gecko (sp?) | Amboseli | | |

Birds – (148 species, all lifers)

| Name | Name | Name | Name |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Yellow-necked Spurfowl | White-bellied Go Away Bird | Black Cuckoo Shrike | Egyptian Goose |
| Ostrich | White-browed Sparrow Weaver | Lilac-breasted Roller | Brown Parrot |
| African Paradise Flycatcher | Fork-tailed Drongo | Yellow-throated Sandgrouse | Wire-tailed Swallow |
| Common Bulbul | Red-billed Firefinch | Northern White-crowned Shrike | Northern Wheatear |
| Tawny Eagle | Beautiful Sunbird | Bare-faced Go Away Bird | Black-backed Puffback |
| Buff-crested Bustard | Collared Sunbird | Secretary Bird | Red-capped Lark |
| White-headed Mousebird | Isabelline Shrike | Marabou Stork | Brown-throated Wattle-eye |
| Nubian Woodpecker | Two-banded Courser | African White-backed Vulture | Speckled Mousebird |
| Von der Decken's Hornbill | Grey-crowned Crane | Rupell's Griffon Vulture | Red-necked Spurfowl |
| Emerald-spotted Wood Dove | Lesser Flamingo | White-headed Barbet | African Cuckoo |
| Blue-capped Cordon-bleu | Saddle-billed Stork | Silverbird | Abyssinian Scimitarbill |
| European Roller | Malachite Kingfisher | Little Bee-eater | Yellow-billed Oxpecker |
| Black-shouldered Kite | African Fish Eagle | Dusky Nightjar | White Stork |
| Blue-naped Mousebird | Pied Kingfisher | Red-fronted Barbet | Bateleur |
| Red-billed Hornbill | Goliath Heron | African Grey Flycatcher | Spotted Thick-knee |
| Red and Yellow Barbet | Sacred Ibis | Egyptian Vulture | Fischer's Starling |
| Superb Starling | Glossy Ibis | Long-crested Eagle | Rufous Chatterer |
| Hamerkop | Greater Flamingo | Yellow-breasted Apalis | Laughing Dove |
| Long-tailed Fiscal | African Spoonbill | Wooly-necked Stork | Wood Sandpiper |
| Taita Fiscal | Great White Pelican | Arrow-marked Babbler | Grey-headed Silverbill |
| White-headed Buffalo Weaver | Long-tailed Cormorant | Yellow Bishop | Southern Black Flycatcher |
| Vitelline Masked Weaver | Common Squacco Heron | Baglafaecht Weaver | Brown Snake Eagle |
| Lesser Masked Weaver | Lappet-faced Vulture | Scarlet-chested Sunbird | Tawny-flanked Prinia |
| Helmeted Guineafowl | African Jacana | Holub's Golden Weaver | Winding Cisticola |
| Black-faced Sandgrouse | Black-winged Stilt | Grey-headed Kingfisher | Speke's Weaver |
| White-browed Coucal | Three-banded Plover | Black-headed Heron | Sooty Chat |
| Crested Francolin | Blacksmith Lapwing | Spectacled Weaver | Grassland Pipit |
| Black Crake | Long-toed Lapwing | Purple Grenadier | Pectoral Patch Cisticola |
| Crowned Lapwing | Kittlitz Plover | White-browed Robin Chat | Red-faced Cisticola |
| d'Arnaud's Barbet | Fischer's Sparrow Lark | Southern Ground Hornbill | Red-billed Buffalo Weaver |
| Crimson-rumped Waxbill | Verreaux's Eagle Owl | Black-headed Weaver | White-bellied Canary |
| Grey-headed Sparrow | African Black-headed Oriole | African Blue Flycatcher | Red-billed Quelea |
| Rosy-patched Bush Shrike | Kori Bustard | Ruppell's Long-tailed Starling | Little Sparrowhawk |
| Martial Eagle | Northern Pied Babbler | Grey-capped Warbler | Grey-backed Camaroptera |
| Namaqua Dove | Eastern Paradise Whydah | Pied Wheatear | Straw-tailed Whydah |
| Ring-necked Dove | Green Wood Hoopoe | Yellow-billed Stork | Eastern Chanting Goshawk |
| African Mourning Dove | Pygmy Falcon | Yellow-throated Longclaw | Slate-coloured Boubou |