



MKURU CAMEL SAFARI Cultural Tourism Programme

As the tourism industry booms in Tanzania, the opportunities for sustainable travel have never been greater. By contributing directly to local communities, responsible travellers help protect cultural heritage, minimize the strain on the environment, and alleviate poverty. Mkuru Camel Safari is a cultural tourism initiative run by the Maasai community of Mkuru, at the foot of Mount Meru, and supported by the NGO Oikos East Africa, under the umbrella of the Tanzania Tourist Board. It is strongly committed to sustainable tourism and environmental conservation, while raising awareness about the Maasai community.

The cultural safari is aimed at anyone interested in living a truly unique experience with the fascinating Maasai people, away from the hordes of tourists doing conventional safaris. Mkuru has a local group of camel owners and guides who have learned English to share their culture with visitors. Discovering the breathtaking beauty of Tanzanian bush wilderness on camelback is a thrilling and eco-friendly way of travelling. Camel safaris range from 1 to 6 days and visitors are accompanied by guides and a personal cook, and have tents set up for them to sleep in the wild. Others can take part in various Maasai cultural activities and sleep at base camp, which runs on solar energy. All meals are provided by trained chefs, and water is heated on a fire for hot showers.

This booklet describes the various activities available at Mkuru. We would be happy to tailor your cultural experience to your needs and interests. All proceeds of MSC go directly to the Mkuru community. So when you book this unique, secluded vacation, you are also contributing directly to the development of sustainable tourism.

A word from the Chairman

Dear friends from all around the world,

My name is Isaya Shakweti, I was born 33 years ago in Mkuru, a Maasai village on the outskirts of Arusha National Park, Tanzania. I have spent my whole life grazing my father's cows and now my own. I have never been to school, but I have a great thirst for knowledge and I care deeply about my community and its development.

Around 10 ago my life changed: an American NGO came to Tanzania to start a project on sustainable development through the use of camels. Out of a hundred villages that received camels, only Mkuru managed to keep them, others either sold them or let them die, as camels were never part of Maasai pasturing habits.

At first we used the camels mostly to carry water, but one day we had the idea of using the camels for tourism activities around Mkuru. In the 1990s a Dutch NGO helped us start a community based tourism programme: that was the start of Mkuru Camel Safari. The project is now supported by an Italian NGO, Instituto Oikos and its local partner in Tanzania Oikos East Africa. Today Mkuru Camel Safari is a well established cultural programme, with income that is entirely spent in the community of Mkuru. It has brought employment for our people and education for our children. Today, as the chairman of the region of Mkuru, I welcome you to discover a different lifestyle in our beautiful natural surroundings.

Isaya Shakweti Laisar,
Coordinator and tour leader, Mkuru Camel Safari



Accommodation at Mkuru Camel Camp

With a spectacular view on both Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Meru, Mkuru Camel Camp is situated near the irrigated fields of Ngarenanyuki and the Momella gate of Arusha National Park. Maasai families live near the camp in traditional huts. The surrounding area is full of colourful birds and small mammals. Zebra and giraffe can sometimes be seen in the plains to the north, which is also a corridor for elephants travelling between the two mountains.

The camp is entirely supplied by solar energy and rain water is collected during the rainy season into large tanks. The camp offers clean toilet and showers facilities, hot water, a dining area, hot meals and an outdoor fire place. There are two kinds of accommodations. Most visitors prefer the large safari tents mounted on wooden platforms, which are fully furnished with comfortable beds. For those who like roughing it, we will mount ground camping tents. Visitors can also bring their own tents.

Cultural activities

Traditional medicine course

The traditional healer of Mkuru, Mzee Elias attracts Maasai people from many neighbouring regions. He will teach you which plants have healing properties and how they are used. Traditional medicine is still a core part of the country's healthcare. The walk to Mzee's village takes about 1 hour. We are also happy to organise for camels to take you there.

Maasai women's art & crafts session

Visit the cultural boma and learn how to make Maasai jewellery! Women of Mkuru used to chop wood and sell charcoal to make a living. This had a tremendous impact on the local environment and deforestation had become a major problem. A few years ago, Isaya, the chairman of the region, had the idea that the "mamas" could use their jewellery making skills to sell souvenirs to foreigners. The jewellery project is now the women's main source of income and the threat of deforestation has dramatically declined. For this activity, a guide will accompany you to the cultural boma, where you will meet some of the mamas and learn how to make the beaded jewellery. If you choose to buy a few gifts to bring back, you will be contributing directly to this women's cooperative.

The young Maasai: a journey into adulthood

(2 people minimum)

In the morning you will be guided to Mkuru's local school, where you will meet teachers and students and learn about the local education system. After the visit, your guide will tell you the stories of how a young Maasai boy becomes a warrior, and thus an adult. In the afternoon you are free to book another activity, or to simply relax, walk around the camp and do some bird watching. After dinner you will be treated to a traditional youth dance, which the young Maasai practice together for big celebrations such as weddings.

Bush dinner

After a drink at sunset, indulge in a romantic candlelit dinner in the bush, under the legendary African stars. Wine and beer are available for your purchase; please let staff know in advance so that the bottles can be chilled.

Traditional Goat roast

(Must be requested at least 48 hours in advance, 2 people minimum)

Take part in an authentic Maasai celebration dinner: a whole goat roasted over a fire. You are welcome to witness the traditional slaughtering of the goat (if you so wish) before eating to your heart's content this delicious Maasai BBQ.

One-day treks & camel safaris

All treks and camel safaris can be done from base camp.

Baboon Cave Safari

The baboon cave is set amongst beautiful surroundings, and every night it hosts hundreds of baboons. In the cave, it you will see an example of dams built in colonial days. The cave is a special place for the Maasai: every year groups of men and boys come to this area for months at a time, and live away from home, with cows and goats to feast on during their stay. They eat only meat and drink no water during their stay. Your guide will show you where they slaughter the cows and store the meat, and how they sleep in the camp.

- Departure mid morning, lunch near the cave
- Afternoon: visit the area and learn about traditions
- Return mid afternoon.

If you wish to see the baboons as they return to the cave, you can stay until around 7 pm and walk back by moonlight to arrive at base camp around 8:30 pm for dinner. The baboons are not always punctual, but if you're lucky you might hear and see hordes of them.

Climbing Oldonyo Landare

A 3 hour trek from base camp. From the top of this mountain (Oldonyo Landare in Maasai language means Mountain of goats), you can enjoy panoramic views of Mount Meru, Mount Kilimanjaro, the Maasai Plains and Momella lake. The walk is steep, but the view is worth it!

- Departure in mid-morning, lunch on the mountain
- On the way down, you'll stop at a Maasai village and visit a boma
- Return to base camp in the afternoon.

Mguru archaeological trek

Take a jump back in time. On this walk you will learn about the colonial heritage of the region and the geological history of the landscape. You will come across bone fossils dating back from before Mount Meru erupted thousands of years ago. Near the remains of a colonial dam, you will discover natural water pools in deep canyons where the Maasai still collect water today.

- Departure mid morning, lunch near geological site
- Afternoon: visit the area and learn about traditions
- Return mid afternoon.

Long Camel Safaris (2-7 days)

Bush Camel Safari

2day/1night. Leaving from Mkuru Camel Camp and returning to Mkuru Camel Camp.

A short but intense adventure. You will pass by a baboon cave and plains towards Mount Longido, where you can see zebra and antelope. At night you will eat by a bonfire and sleep in the bush. You will be back at base camp in the afternoon of your second day.

Mount Longido Camel Safari

3day/2night from Mkuru Camel Camp to Longido village

Over three days, you will pass through the plains surrounding Mount Meru, where the landscape becomes wild. With Mount Longido as your guide, you can come across different kinds of antelope, zebra, giraffe, ostriches and many birds. After a cup of coffee at Mkuru Camel Camp, your luggage is packed on the camels and your safari starts. For the next two days you will have lunch and dinner in the bush along the way, and sleep in a comfortable mobile camp. The safari finishes midday at Longido village on the third day. From Longido, you can arrange your own transport by car, or reach Arusha by public transport. The bus ride from Longido to Arusha takes about 1.5 hours.

Mount Kilimanjaro Safari

3 day/2night from Mkuru Camel Camp to Ngare Nairobi village

This safari brings you to the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro, the roof of Africa. On your way, you will cross the elephant corridor between the Maasai Mara and Arusha National Parks. The flora, fauna and landscape of this expedition will give you the best and clearest impression of North-eastern Tanzania.

After a cup of coffee at Mkuru Camel Camp, your luggage is packed on the camels, and your safari starts. For the next two days you'll have lunch and dinner in the bush along the way, and sleep in a comfortable mobile camp. The safari finishes in the village of Ngare Nairobi, where you will have a lunch in front of Mount Kilimanjaro. Transport arrangements from Ngare Nairobi should be planned in advance.

Oldonyo Lengai Safari

5day/4night From Kitumbainei village to Oldonyo Lengai

Over 5 days on camelback, this adventurous journey will bring you to the Ngorongoro area through the big plains between Gelai and Ketumbainei Mountains. This Safari is rich in wildlife. At night you may hear the laugh of hyenas and during the day encounter groups of gazelle, zebra and antelope. In the evening, you will relax by the campfire and listen to the sounds of the savannah under a roof of stars.

Day 1: In the afternoon you reach Ketumbainei, a Maasai village on the West side of Longido. Lunch box in the bush. Accommodation is in comfortable mobile camp.

Day 2,3,4: Camel safari. Lunch in the bush. Accommodation is in comfortable mobile camp.

Day 5: The safari finishes midday, when you will reach the road that reaches Oldonyo Lengai, near lake Natron. Transport arrangements should be planned in advance.

Lake Natron Safari

7day/6night from Mkuru Camel Camp to Lake Natron

Lose your sense of time and civilisation, and experience a world of untouched natural beauty. On this adventure, you will pass by the Mountains of Ketumbainei and Gelai. The Oldonyo Lengai, the sacred Maasai volcano, rising majestically from the steppe, will be your orientation point for the last 3 days of the safari. At the end of your 7-day expedition, you will reach the stunning Lake Natron, painted pink with flamingos.

One day 1, after a cup of coffee at Mkuru Camel Camp, your luggage is packed on the camels, and your safari starts. For the next 6 days you'll have lunch and dinner in the bush along the way, and sleep in a comfortable mobile camp. On day 7, the safari finishes in at midday, when you will reach the road to Oldonyo Lengai, near lake Natron. Transport arrangements from Ngare Nairobi should be planned in advance.

All reservations should be made at: booking@mkurucamelsafari.com

How to reach Mkuru Camel Camp

- 1) The best way to reach the Mkuru Camel Camp is with a 4-wheel drive car. The camp is about 55 km from Arusha. From Arusha you need to follow the Arusha-Nairobi road in the direction of Nairobi for about 45 km. One km after Oldonyo Sambu village, turn right on a rough road (there is a small sign indicating Mkuru Camel Camp). Once you leave the main road, you are less than 15 Km from the Camel Camp. Simply follow the indication along the road.
- 2) We can also help you arrange transportation to the MCS camp. We work with trusted drivers in Arusha who will pick you up in a 4-wheel drive and take you to the Camp. The drive takes roughly 1.5 hours and cost \$150 one-way (for 1 to 5 people).
- 3) You can also reach the camp by public transport. A morning bus from Arusha will bring you to Oldonyo Sambu (the bus ride takes about 45 min), where your camel safari starts. We will pick you up by camel at around 10 am in Oldonyo Sambu and bring you to base camp (the camel ride takes around 3 hours). On the way, you will explore the beautiful wilderness that leads to the camp, and arrive at base camp in time for lunch.

Please let us know if you need help arranging your transportation.

Contacts

www.mkurucamelsafari.com

Information: info@mkurucamelsafari.com

Bookings: All bookings should be made through: booking@mkurucamelsafari.com

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