

# Destination Tanzania

Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Kilimanjaro, Zanzibar... The names roll off the tongue like a roster call of Africa's most alluring destinations, all packed into one country. Resonating with hints of the wild and exotic, these four alone are reason enough to justify packing your bag and heading off to Tanzania. But the list isn't finished. Bagamoyo, Tabora, Ujiji – stops on the 19th-century caravan routes into the heart of what was then an unknown continent. Mafia and Pangani – once famed ports of call for merchant ships from the Orient. Kilwa – linchpin of a far-flung Indian Ocean trading network. Kigoma, Kalema, Kipili, Kasanga – bustling outposts along the remote Lake Tanganyika shoreline. Selous – Africa's largest protected area. Ruaha and Katavi – insider tips for serious safari-goers. Mahale and Gombe – prime destinations for seeing chimpanzees in the wild.

Within the space of several hours, it's possible to go from lazing on idyllic beaches to exploring moss-covered ruins of ancient Swahili city-states; from climbing mist-covered slopes in the Southern Highlands to trekking through the barren landscapes around Ol Doinyo Lengai, guided by a spear-carrying Maasai warrior. Yet, despite its attractions, Tanzania has managed for the most part to remain unassuming and low-key. It has also remained enviably untouched by the tribal rivalries and political upheavals that plague many of its neighbours, and this – combined with a booming tourism industry – makes it an ideal choice for both first-time visitors and Africa old hands.

Throughout, Tanzania offers travellers an array of options, set against the backdrop of a cultural mosaic in which over 100 ethnic groups amicably rub shoulders. While most visitors head straight for the famed northern wildlife-watching circuit, followed by time relaxing on Zanzibar's beaches, Tanzania has much more to offer anyone with the time and inclination to head off the beaten path. Follow the coastline south into a Swahili culture whose rhythms have remained in many ways unchanged over the centuries. Journey through rolling hill country along the Tanzam highway, detouring to Ruaha National Park. Admire ancient rock paintings around Kolo village. Explore the Lake Victoria shoreline, with its small fishing villages and tranquil islands. Experience the seldom-visited wilderness of Katavi, teeming with buffaloes and hippos.

If you're seeking creature comforts, stick to the northern safari circuit and Zanzibar, where there are sealed main roads and many hotels and restaurants. Elsewhere, and especially in the south and west, you'll soon find yourself well off the beaten path, surrounded by a Tanzania that's far removed from Western development.

Wherever you go, take advantage of opportunities to get to know Tanzanians. With their characteristic warmth and politeness, and the dignity and beauty of their cultures, it is they who will inevitably wind up being the highlight of any visit. Chances are that you'll want to come back for more, to which most Tanzanians will say '*karibu tena*' (welcome again).

## FAST FACTS

Population: 37.6 million

Highest point: Mt Kilimanjaro (5896m)

Lowest point: floor of Lake Tanganyika (358m below sea level)

Inflation: 5%

HIV/AIDS infection rate: 6.5%

Mainland population density: 40 per sq km

Zanzibar Archipelago population density: 400 per sq km

Female cabinet ministers: seven out of 29

Literacy rate: 76%

Elephant population in Ruaha National Park: c 12,000

# Getting Started

Tanzania has a fast-growing selection of hotels, safari lodges and restaurants, plus good air connections between major destinations, a wide array of tour operators and a range of amenities for midrange and top-end travellers. However, once away from popular destinations, or if you're travelling anywhere at the budget level, or to really get under the country's skin, you'll need to put in time on rough roads on crowded buses and staying in basic guesthouses.

Whatever your style, there's plenty to keep you busy – everything from trekking and safaris to lazing on the beach or watching local life. Costs are comparatively high, topping out especially for upmarket safari lodges and the popular northern safari circuit, although it's possible to keep expenses modest if you travel and dine local style.

While there's no problem with sorting out your itinerary once in-country, it's best to prebook safaris and accommodation for popular destinations during the high season. An exception to this is budget safaris and treks, where you can often save a bit by sorting things out on the ground.

## WHEN TO GO

Tanzania can be visited during all seasons. The weather is coolest and driest from late June to September, although in July and August, hotels and park lodges, especially in the north, are at their fullest. October and November are very pleasant, with fewer crowds and a slowly greening-up landscape as the short rains begin in many areas. From late December until February, temperatures are high, but not oppressive. Watch out for high-season hotel prices around the Christmas–New Year holidays, as well as during the July–August peak.

During the main rainy season (March to May), you can save substantially on accommodation costs, and enjoy landscapes that are green and full of life. However, some secondary roads may be impassable, and this is the time when many hotels close for a month or so, especially along the coast. Malaria risk, especially in coastal and low-lying areas, also tends to be higher at this time.

## COSTS & MONEY

Travelling in Tanzania is relatively expensive, especially for organised tours, safaris and treks. At the budget level, plan on US\$20 to US\$30 per day for a basic room, local food and public transport, but excluding safaris.

For more information, see  
Climate Charts on p335.

For tips on saving money  
see p341.

### DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

You can buy almost anything you'll need in Dar es Salaam or Arusha, except specialist trekking and sporting equipment, and certain toiletries such as contact lens solution. However, choice is limited and prices high. Some things to bring from home:

- binoculars for wildlife watching
- torch (flashlight)
- mosquito repellent and net (p365)
- zoom lens for wildlife shots
- shoes appropriate for beach walking
- sleeping bag and waterproof gear for trekking
- sturdy water bottle
- travel insurance (p339)

Midrange travellers seeking some comforts and Western-style meals should plan on US\$40 to US\$150 per day, excluding safaris. Top-end luxury lodge travel costs from US\$150 to US\$500 or more per person per day, with prices at the upper end of this spectrum usually for all-inclusive safari packages.

## LANGUAGE

While many Tanzanians, especially in tourist areas, speak English, knowing a few Swahili phrases can go a long way in smoothing your travels and giving you entrée into the culture. While the language may seem daunting at first, its structure is regular and pronunciation is straightforward, and it shouldn't take long to master greetings, numbers (useful for negotiating with market vendors and taxi drivers) and other basics. Greetings in particular are essential, and any efforts you make will be greatly appreciated. For more, see the Language chapter (p371). It's also easy to arrange language courses – see p335.

## SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

As tourism in Tanzania booms, it's increasingly important to give some thought to minimising the impact of your visit, and ensuring that your travels benefit local communities. When choosing a safari or trekking operator, do so with these goals in mind. Choose operators who give more than just lip service to general principles of responsible travel, who view their involvement as part of a long-term, equitable partnership with and investment in local communities and who are committed to protecting local ecosystems. (Also check out Lonely Planet's Greendex, p389.) Whenever possible, try to maximise your 'real' time with locals: take advantage of cultural tourism programmes where they are available, and choose itineraries that are well-integrated with the communities in the areas where you will be travelling. For more tips, see p78.

## PREDEPARTURE READING

For an alluring introduction to Tanzania, look for the coffee table-style *Tanzania – Portrait of a Nation* by Paul Joynson-Hicks or *Tanzania – African Eden* by Graham Mercer and Javed Jafferji. *Serengeti – Natural Order on the African Plain*, by Mitsuaki Iwago, is a photographic documentary of the rhythms of nature on the Serengeti plains.

In *The Tree Where Man Was Born*, Peter Matthiessen offers a timeless portrayal of life on the East African plains.

*The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior – An Autobiography* by Tepilit Ole Saitoti is a fascinating glimpse into Maasai life and culture.

Zanzibari Abdulrazak Gurnah brings WWI-era East Africa to life in his evocative coming-of-age story, *Paradise*.

In *The Gunny Sack*, Tanzanian-bred MG Vassanji explores Tanzania's rich ethnic mix through several generations of an immigrant Indian family. *Into Africa – The Epic Adventures of Stanley and Livingstone* by Martin Dugard is an adventurous and fast-reading account focused around the life and times of the renowned explorer and missionary.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) Includes summaries on travelling to Tanzania, the Thorn Tree bulletin board, travel news and links to other travel resources.

**Tanzania National Parks** ([www.tanzaniaparks.com](http://www.tanzaniaparks.com)) Tanapa's official website, with general information and beautiful photos of the parks.

**Tanzania On-Line** ([www.tzonline.org](http://www.tzonline.org)) An intro to all things official, with links to the government site ([www.tanzania.go.tz](http://www.tanzania.go.tz)) and more.

**Tanzania Page** ([www.sas.upenn.edu/African\\_Studies/Country\\_Specific/Tanzania.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/Tanzania.html)) Heaps of links.

**Tanzania Tourist Board** ([www.tanzaniatouristboard.com](http://www.tanzaniatouristboard.com)) The TTB's official site.

**Zanzibar.Net** ([www.zanzibar.net](http://www.zanzibar.net)) An introduction to Zanzibar.

### HOW MUCH?

Midrange safari from US\$200/person/day

Plate of ugali: Tsh500

Serengeti National Park entry: US\$50/person

Papaya: Tsh300

Short taxi ride: Tsh2000

Also see the Lonely Planet Index, inside the front cover.

For a preview of what awaits you in Tanzania, check out [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lg8fuc1\\_d8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lg8fuc1_d8).

# TOP 10



## GREAT CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

There's nothing better than immersion for getting to know local life. For starters try:

- 1 sharing a plate of *ugali* (a staple made from maize or cassava flour, or both) and sauce with Tanzanians (p79)
- 2 celebrating Eid al-Fitr (p120) on Zanzibar
- 3 hiking in the Usambara Mountains (p168)
- 4 participating in a Cultural Tourism Program (p205)
- 5 spending the morning at a small-town market
- 6 listening to church singing
- 7 watching traditional dancing (p33)
- 8 taking local transport
- 9 sailing down Lake Tanganyika on the MV *Liemba* (p354)
- 10 travelling by Tazara train through the northern Selous and then on to Mbeya (p361)

## ALLURING PANORAMAS

Tanzania's topography ranges from lushly forested mountains to stunning tropical coastlines, and provides a magnificent backdrop for the country's diverse cultural palette. Some of the most impressive panoramas:

- 1 the wildebeest migration in the Serengeti (p216)
- 2 elephants wading into the Rufiji River (p311) against a backdrop of borassus palms
- 3 sunset over the rooftops of Zanzibar's Stone Town (p109)
- 4 the stark landscapes around Ol Doinyo Lengai (p227)
- 5 the patchwork quilt scenery of small farms and villages in the western Usambaras (p170)
- 6 views down into Ngorongoro Crater from the crater rim (p223)
- 7 sunset or sunrise from almost anywhere around Lake Victoria (p240), but especially from Lukuba Island (p243), Musoma (p241) or Rubondo Island National Park (p252)
- 8 impressive lush mountains rising up from the beach along the Lake Tanganyika shoreline near Mahale Mountains National Park (p267)
- 9 the rolling, open vistas in the highlands around Kitulo National Park (p290) or the countryside around Tukuyu (p297)
- 10 moonrise over one of the beaches on Zanzibar's east coast (p128)

## BEST THINGS TO DO AWAY FROM THE CROWDS

Break away from the trodden trails and discover Tanzania's hidden corners:

- 1 retrace history in Kilwa (p318), Mikindani (p326), Bagamoyo (p154) and Pangani (p160)
- 2 go on safari in Mahale Mountains (p267), Katavi (p270) or Ruaha (p286) National Parks or Mkomazi Game Reserve (p179)
- 3 visit the rock paintings around Kolo (p236)
- 4 explore the hidden corners of Mafia (p306) or Pemba (p142)
- 5 discover Zanzibar (p108) in the rainy season
- 6 bird-watch in Rubondo Island National Park (p252), or around Lake Eyasi (p228) or Lake Manyara (p212)
- 7 spend a few days in and around Iringa (p282), Mufindi (p289) or Njombe (p289)
- 8 travel overland between Mikindani and Songea (p301), and on to Mbamba Bay (p300)
- 9 explore the hills around Mbeya (p291) and Kitulo National Park (p290)
- 10 enjoy the beaches around Saadani National Park (p158), or around Pangani (p160)

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

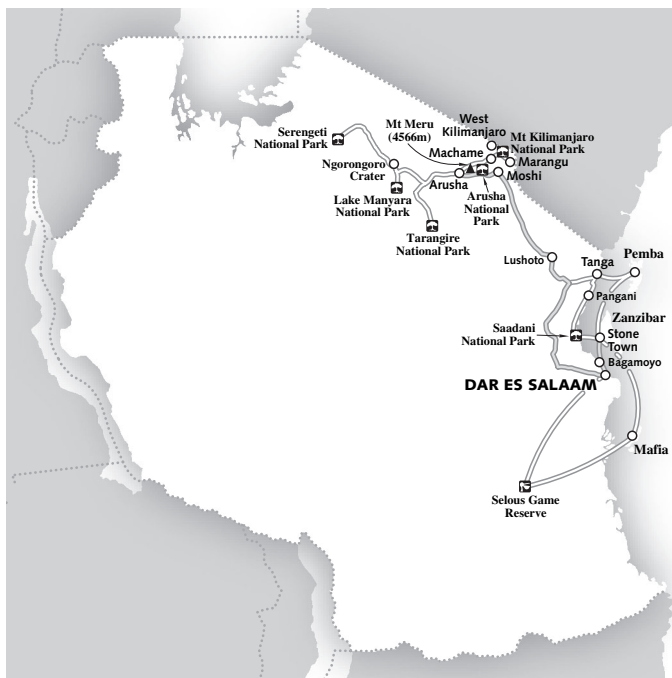
### SURF & SAFARI

#### Two to Three Weeks/Arusha to Zanzibar

From Arusha, explore the northern parks. Good combinations: **Serengeti National Park** (p216) and **Ngorongoro Crater** (p223); Ngorongoro plus **Lake Manyara National Park** (p212) and **Tarangire National Park** (p214); **Arusha National Park** (p207) and a **Mt Meru trek** (p209); and, a **Mt Kilimanjaro trek** (p191), or some hiking and cultural interaction in **Marangu** (p189), **Machame** (p187) or **West Kilimanjaro** (p194).

Head southeast via **Moshi** (p182) to **Lushoto** (p170) for some more hiking. Alternatively, continue straight to **Dar es Salaam** (p84) and the ferry or plane to **Zanzibar** (p109). With more time, travel from Lushoto to **Tanga** (p164), then down the coast via **Pangani** (p160) and **Saadani National Park** (p158) and over to Zanzibar via plane or dhow (from one of the beach lodges near Pangani, or from Saadani).

A less-travelled variant of this itinerary combines **Selous Game Reserve** (p311) with **Mafia** (p306) and Zanzibar's **Stone Town** (p112), although this will involve some flights. Besides Mafia, other post-safari destinations include the beach lodges in Saadani National Park, **Lazy Lagoon** (p158) near Bagamoyo, and the beach lodges near Pangani.



This 1000km journey (more with detours) combines Tanzania's best – wildlife, beaches and culture. Roads are generally good, and there are flights if time is limited. Two weeks is enough for an introduction, but allow three or more to begin to get under the surface.

## ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

Away from the Arusha-Zanzibar corridor, most of Tanzania is well off the beaten track. Do a grand circuit, or pick and choose from various smaller loops.

### THE GRAND TOUR – 1

**At Least Two Months**

From **Dares Salaam** (p84), head north up the coast to **Tanga** (p164), via **Bagamoyo** (p154), **Saadani National Park** (p158) and **Pangani** (p160), before continuing to the **Usambara mountains** (p168) and on to **Moshi** (p182) and **Arusha** (p195). For an off-beat detour, stop at **Mkomazi Game Reserve** (p179) en route. Once in **Arusha** (p195), visit **Ngorongoro Crater** (p223) and some of the northern parks before turning south to **Dodoma** (p231) and **Iringa** (p282) with stops at **Babati** (p235), **Mt Hanang** (p236) and the **Kolo-Kondoa rock art sites** (p236) en route. From Iringa, detour to **Ruaha National Park** (p286) before heading southwest towards **Mbeya** (p291). Time permitting, detour from Mbeya to **Tukuyu** (p297) – an ideal base for some low-key hiking – and to **Kitulo National Park** (p290) and then on to **Lake Nyasa** (p298) and a few days on the beach at **Matema** (p299). Backtracking a bit, make your way via **Njombe** (p289) to **Songea** (p301) and then east via **Tunduru** (p303) to **Mikindani** (p326) and **Mtwara** (p322). Continue north up the coast, with stops at **Lindi** (p320), **Kilwa** (p316) – including the ruins on **Kilwa Kisiwani** (p318) – and **Mafia** (p306). Wind up with time on **Zanzibar** (p108) and **Pemba** (p142) before finishing in Dar es Salaam.

To get into Tanzania's pulse, allow at least two months to follow this 2500km-plus loop – longer including detours or for time out hiking and exploring. Main roads are tarmac. Elsewhere, expect lots of bumps and dust (or mud).



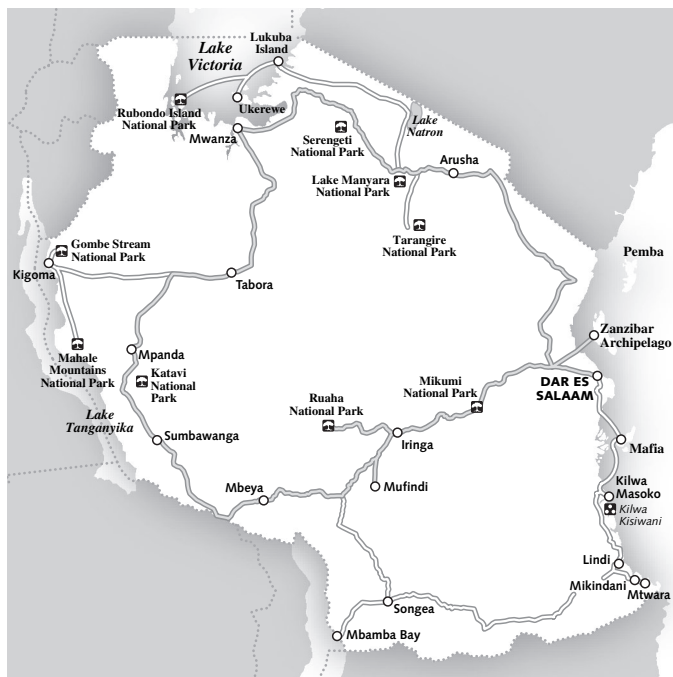
## THE GRAND TOUR – 2

### Two to Four Months

From **Dar es Salaam** (p84), journey through the Southern Highlands, stopping at **Mikumi National Park** (p278), **Iringa** (p282), **Ruaha National Park** (p286), **Mufindi** (p289) and **Mbeya** (p291). (A good alternative to the bus: take the Tazara line train through the Selous Game Reserve and on to Mbeya.) Continue north-west via **Sumbawanga** (p271) towards **Katavi National Park** (p270), **Mpanda** (p269), **Tabora** (p259), and then north to **Mwanza** (p244) via Nzega and Shinyanga. After exploring the Lake Victoria area, make your way through the western **Serengeti** (p216) to **Arusha** (p195), then southeast to **Zanzibar Archipelago** (p106) and the coast. Alternatively, from Tabora, head west to **Kigoma** (p262) and **Gombe Stream National Park** (p265) – or south via lake steamer to **Mahale Mountains National Park** (p267) before returning east. For a condensed version of this loop, fly from Ruaha National Park to Katavi National Park and/or Mahale Mountains National Park and Lake Tanganyika, then make your way east.

Another option from Dar es Salaam: follow the coast south, stopping at **Mafia** (p306), **Kilwa** (p316), **Lindi** (p320), **Mikindani** (p326) and **Mtwara** (p322) before continuing south to Mozambique, or west to **Songea** (p301). From Songea, travel up to **Mbeya** (p291) or southwest to Mbamba Bay and over to Malawi.

Two alternatives from Arusha: travel via the western Serengeti to Lake Victoria, and **Rubondo Island National Park** (p252), **Ukerewe** (p250) or **Lukuba** (p243) islands. Or, visit **Tarangire National Park** (p214) and **Lake Manyara National Park** (p212) before heading north to **Lake Natron** (p227) then west into the Serengeti. Spend as much time in and around the Serengeti as possible before continuing west to Lake Victoria. Fly back to Arusha or on to Dar es Salaam and the coast.



To get in everything mentioned here, plan on at least three to four months and too many kilometres to count. Or, pick and choose from among the shorter alternate loops, each of which is a journey's worth in itself.

## TAILORED TRIPS

### SWAHILI SAMPLER

Exploring Tanzania's Swahili heritage brings you on a fascinating journey spanning centuries and cultures. A good place to start is **Dar es Salaam** (p84), where modern-day urbanity is only a thin veneer over the area's Swahili roots. Nearby is sleepy **Bagamoyo** (p154), a historical treasure trove. Don't miss the handful of carved doorways, or the chance to watch the day come to life at the town's bustling harbour. Crumbling **Pangani** (p160), once a major port on the Swahili coast, is best explored on a leisurely stroll from a base on one of the lovely beaches running north and south of town. **Zanzibar** (p108) and **Pemba** (p142) are essential stops, although to immerse yourself in things Swahili, you'll need to get away from the resorts and into the villages. The ruins on **Kilwa Kisiwani** (p318) carry you back to the days when this part of the coast was the centre of trading networks stretching to Persia and the Orient. Uncluttered and unfussed, **Mafia** (p306) is easily combined with Kilwa, and makes an optimal stop, with its clear, turquoise waters and plethora of small islands. Further south are pretty, palm-fringed **Lindi** (p320) and tiny **Mikindani** (p326), the epitome of a traditional Swahili village. Use any time remaining to follow old trade caravan routes inland to **Tabora** (p259), and then to **Ujiji** (p265), with its Swahili-style houses and flourishing tradition of dhow building.



### HIKER'S PATHS

Tanzania's forested mountains, dramatic peaks and Rift Valley escarpment combine with dozens of colourful tribal groups for wonderful hiking. Head first to **Lushoto** (p170) and the western Usambaras, with its cool climate, winding paths and picturesque villages. The nearby eastern Usambaras around **Amani Nature Reserve** (p169) are ideal for botanists and birders, and have an easy network of short trails, while the less-visited **Pare Mountains** (p176) are intriguing for their opportunities of cultural immersion. For something more vigorous, head to **Mt Hanang** (p236) – a straightforward climb offering views over the plains and an introduction to local Barabaig culture. To the south are the wild, forested slopes of the **Udzungwas** (p280), where you are guaranteed to be walking away from the crowds. For rugged beauty and Rift Valley vistas, it's hard to beat northern Tanzania's **Crater Highlands** (p221) and, for experienced trekkers, a climb up **Ol Doiyo Lengai** (p227). Also in the north is **Mt Meru** (p209), with its stately silhouette, sunrise views and classic trek to the summit. Topping it all off is **Mt Kilimanjaro** (p191), where you can wander through snowfields and heather before ascending to the moorlands capping the continent's highest peak.





# On the Road



## MARY FITZPATRICK

It had been a mostly very dusty and bumpy 180km from Makuyuni (where the tarmac ends) to Kolo, which would be a completely undistinguished village but for its proximity to the **Kolo-Kondoa Rock Art Sites** (p236) and the impressive carved door here at the Antiquities Office. And the 180km yet to go before reaching Dodoma promised to be just as dusty and bumpy. Yet, I was loving every minute of it here, near the centre of Tanzania. To the west, the vast hinterlands stretching off into **Lake Tanganyika** (p268). To the north, stampeding wildebeests, elephants, zebras and giraffe, the **Serengeti** (p216) and **Mt Kilimanjaro** (p191). To the south, rolling, green highlands and lively market towns; and to the east the Swahili coast, studded with idyllic beaches and moss-covered ruins. With its diversity and equanimity, Tanzania has a way of getting under your skin, and once you're hooked, it's hard to break free.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Originally from Washington, DC, Mary spent several years in Europe after graduate studies. Her fascination with languages and cultures soon led her further south to Africa, where she has spent over a decade living and working all around the continent, including extended periods in Tanzania. She has authored and co-authored many guidebooks on the region, speaks fluent Swahili and is convinced she holds the unofficial record for kilometres-travelled in Tanzania's buses.

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