

Our Glorious AFS Itinerary

Oct 7 – Depart USA

Fly USA to Nairobi. You can arrange your own air for flexibility or fly with group air. (TBA approx. 300 days out)

Oct 8 – JAMBO! Welcome to Nairobi! (Land portion begins)

The capital on Kenya is legendary for its colonial history. There's much to explore here including Nairobi National Park with its new rhino sanctuary. On airport arrival we are transferred to the nearby Sarova Panafric Hotel for 1 night. This beautiful classic property with its African themed rooms has recently been thoroughly renovated. You have two restaurants, the ever popular Flame Bar as well as a second bar adjacent to the sparkling pool. A short walk to Nairobi's Ururu and Central Parks, this elegant hotel is in a perfect location. Spend the rest of the day relaxing and getting prepared for our safari adventures ahead. Dinner is on your own.

Overnight: Sarova Panafric Hotel

Oct 9 – Sweetwaters Game Reserve *Let our safari begin!*

After breakfast, we head out in our safari vehicles for a 3-hour drive to the incredible **Sweetwaters Game Reserve**. Straddling the **Equator**, this 90,000-acre private wildlife conservancy is nestled between the magnificent snow-capped **Mount Kenya** and the foot hills of the **Aberdares**.

Waking Safari – we divide into smaller groups for an experience that will awaken your five senses for some close-up viewing and a new perspective. Local tribesmen - warriors - will act as our guides and show off their expert tracking skills as they take us on a 1 to 2-hour bush walk through the **OI Pajeta Conservancy**. You never know what you will spot! While our guides will be concentrating on showing us how to recognize flora, fauna and smaller animal species, they will also teach us how to track and identify spoor. It is not unusual to see larger animals such as giraffe and zebra on this trek. *Remember to wear long pants and closed shoes.* OI Pajeta is home to the Big 5 – lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard. It also hosts the only black rhino and chimpanzee sanctuaries in Kenya.

Later, we visit the world renowned **Jane Goodall Chimpanzee Centre**. Goodall has dedicated her life to the conservation of primates and helped open this center in 1994. Chimpanzees are not indigenous to Kenya and being able to see them here is a rare opportunity. Each of these chimps were orphaned, abused or abandoned. Here, they can be introduced, rehabilitated and taught to fend for themselves in a terrain that is similar to their natural living conditions. The center was expanded in 2016 to accommodate more chimps and now 36 of them call it home. We continue across the plains of Mt. Kenya to Sweetwaters.

This evening, we settle into the exclusive **Sweetwaters Tented Camp** to spend 2 glorious nights under canvas with accommodations that include everything you would expect from a premium hotel room...but in a luxury tent. Each of our homes away from home has its own veranda and overlooks a waterhole at the center of the camp to draw animals up close. Sit on your porch and relax while animals wander in to drink. If you can tear yourself away from the local animal activities, feel free to take a swim in the pool. The property has an original colonial farmhouse and farm to explore. All meals included at the Rhino Restaurant, then hang in the Waterhole Bar for unrivaled animal viewing.

Overnight: Sweetwaters Tented Camp (B, L, D)

Oct 10 – Sweetwaters Game Drives

Our morning starts with our first **Game Drive** out into the bush. Animals and their predators are most active in the early and evening hours and we will take advantage of both. The Ol Pejeta Conservancy boasts an astounding variety of animals, including the “**Big Five**” as well as hyenas, baboons, impala, spotted dik dik, Grevy’s zebra, Jackson’s hartebeest, cheetah and more.

Return to camp midday for some relaxation and perhaps a dip in the pool before heading back out again in the afternoon for more exploration. Dinner is back at our fabulous camp.

Overnight: Sweetwaters Tented Camp (B, L, D)

Oct 11– Game Drive and Lake Naivasha

The morning starts with an early **Game Drive** followed by a special hearty **Bush Breakfast**.

We then depart for a sight filled 4-hour drive to the **Great Rift Valley** and the spectacular **Lake Naivasha**. This large fresh water lake is teeming with birdlife, including thousands of flamingos which create a large pink illusion on the blue waters. Yellow fever trees line the lake, luring an unimaginable number of birds. At 1,890 meters (6,200 ft) above sea level, the lake is at the highest point in the **Kenyan rift**, and is set in a complex geological combination of volcanic rocks and sedimentary deposits from a much larger Pleistocene era lake. The ancient lake used to drain into what was called Njorwa Gorge. As the gorge’s elevation changed over the centuries, Naivasha has been reduced in size. Still, its expanse is astounding. The gorge now forms the entrance to the **Hell’s Gate National Park** which contains some remarkable examples of water and weather-worn rock formations. There is also an abundance of flora and fauna including monkeys and some extremely rare Lammergeyers, otherwise known as Bearded vultures.

We go by boats over the hippo filled lake to **Crescent Island** for a rare opportunity to walk among the wildebeests, zebras, giraffes and elands that call the island home. Our guides will take us astoundingly close to these wild animals who have found sanctuary from predators on the island. This is where much of the movie “Out of Africa” was filmed and fans of the movie can try to spot the featured terrain.

We spend 2 magnificent nights at the amazing **Lake Naivasha Sopa Lodge**. Our two-storied guest chalets with their ingeniously thatched roofs, huge rooms and balconies. The lush grounds are beautiful and the views of the lake and its surrounding hills – breath-taking. At night, hippos awaken from Naivasha’s water to graze on the lawn of the lodge, so you’ll need to be escorted by armed guards. Enjoy sundowners (drinks) by the pool and delicious meals.

Overnight: Lake Naivasha Sopa Lodge (B, L, D)

Oct 12 – Half Day Trip to Kigio

After breakfast, we travel to the **Kigio Nature Conservancy** region and the village of **Langa Langa**. It’s the land of the Samburu people who hold tight to their traditions that are centuries old. Different clans can be identified by their colorful clothing. You’ll see great time is spent on personal adornment with feathered headdresses and strings of beads. Located between Lake Nakuru and Lake Naivasha, this village is a gathering point for surrounding communities. Here, we will get to know the tribes people and spend time with the **Langa**

Langa's women's group. These colorful women are known for their handmade beads and jewelry, most of which is made using donated supplies of materials such as magazines. Those of us who want to help the women in the endeavors can bring magazines to contribute.

Time permitting, we will also visit to the local school and meet with village elders. In the evening, enjoy the gorgeous lake views at the Lodge. Dinner is included at the Sopa Lodge.

Overnight: Lake Naivasha Sopa Lodge (B, L, D)

Oct 13 – Masai Mara Game Reserve

After a lodge breakfast, we head out to take in wonderful scenery and plenty of game along the 4-hour drive to the awe-inspiring **Masai Mara National Reserve**. As part of the Serengeti, the Mara is perhaps the only region left in Kenya where you can see animals in the same super-abundance as existed a century ago. The reserve is home to over 410 species of birds and 60 species of raptors. It is also renowned for its annual migration of literally millions of wildebeest – not to mention tens of thousands of zebras and gazelles – when they annually migrate north from the **Serengeti** from September to November. It's a spectacle to see the grasslands become darkened with countless migrating animals and predators chasing them.

We arrive for lunch at the Masai Mara Sopa Lodge and check in for the following 2 nights.

Located high on the slopes of the Oololaimutia Hills, the Mara Sopa Lodge was one of the first safari lodges to be built in the Masai Mara Game Reserve. This is why its gardens and trees are so lush and mature. All the buildings follow the design of traditional African round houses with conical roofs, and a beautiful swimming pool. With a river near the properties edge, you will likely hear the animals each evening as they come to feed and water.

This afternoon, the group will enjoy a safari game drive until sunset. Often after dinners the lodge presents cultural shows from local African dancers.

Overnight: Mara Sopa Lodge (B, L, D)

Oct 14 – In the Midst of the Mara

This whole day will be spent in the **Masai Mara** with morning and afternoon game drives! The Mara is home to predators like the black-maned lion, leopards, cheetahs, rare wild dogs and its thousands of prey. This wildlife conservation area takes up an area of 1,510 sq. kms in south western Kenya and includes rolling hills, dense riverine forests, hills and a high, flat-topped escarpment that forms its western boundary. As part of the fabled **Serengeti National Park**, the Mara is owned and managed by the **Maasai people**. Because of their traditional respect for wildlife during the course of hundreds of years of their continued co-existence, the Masai have ensured that the wildlife splendor of the Maasai Mara exists today.

Afternoon visit to an authentic **Maasai Village**. See their traditional life as it was centuries ago and still is today. The Maasai people are an old nomadic tribe that lives in harmony with nature and are one of the few remaining tribes in Kenya that tries to hold on to its traditions. This will be your only opportunity to photograph these colorful people as it is forbidden to take their picture outside villages.

Optional: Hot Air Ballooning (Oct 14 or 15): Our past groups say there is nothing more thrilling than ballooning over the Mara plains teeming with animals. Rise early. At sunrise transfer to launch site for a briefing by our expert pilots. Climb aboard for some unforgettable panoramic Kodak moments. You won't miss anything.

Balloon safaris are a unique way to experience the wilderness of East Africa, as you gracefully and silently fly over the plains teeming with herds of wild life in the early morning. Arrive at the launch site and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea while you watch the balloons being prepared for take-off just before sunrise. The flight will last approximately one hour, depending on wind conditions. After your descent breakfast is set up on the picturesque savanna plains of the Mara, typically under the shade of a single acacia tree. Sit down to a full bush breakfast in the Kenyan style, complete with eggs-to-order, fresh juices, waiters in traditional Swahili attire, and, of course, champagne. After breakfast, enjoy a game drive back to your camp usually taking about one and a half hours. \$495

Overnight: Mara Sopa Lodge (B, L, D)

Oct 15 - Mara to Nairobi

After breakfast, we travel over **Masailand** and the **Great Rift Valley** back to Nairobi with rest breaks and a picnic lunch along the way.

You may want to dine tonight at the fun **Carnivore** restaurant where flamboyant chefs skewer exotic game meats over an open fire. This open-air meat specialty restaurant offers every type of meat imaginable including some wild game, roasted on the traditional Maasai Swords (skewers) over a huge charcoal pit. Maasai-warrior waiters carry these around the restaurant carving unlimited portions of meat onto sizzling plates. With a slogan of “all the meat you can eat,” you can also enjoy a traditional local drink called the Dawa (which means “magic potion” in Swahili).

Overnight: Sarova Panafric Hotel (B, L)

Oct 16 – Nairobi Sightseeing / Depart for Home

After breakfast, we visit to the **Giraffe Centre**, where the endangered Rothschild Giraffe are being raised and you may even have a chance to feed some of these incredible creatures. The center includes both adults and baby giraffes, some of which who were born at the Center. Climb up the platform for an eye-to-eye views and feed the giraffes.

Continue to nearby **Daphne Sheldrick’s Elephant Sanctuary**. Sheldrick works to help rehabilitate and raise orphaned elephants and baby rhinos. These adorable animals have been rescued from the wild, left on their own after their mothers were likely killed by poachers. This place will melt your heart watching the babies run to their bottles.

We wrap-up our day tour by visiting the **Karen Blixen Museum**. We drive into the Ngong Hills where the Danish author Blixen wrote her book chronicling her life in Kenya. Tour her house and museum made famous from “Out of Africa.”

Later transfer to airport home. All flights depart to USA in evening.

Oct 17 - Arrive back in USA

Fitness Level Two - I have no trouble walking and if necessary, can walk for 3+ miles. Uneven surfaces are not a problem. I do not need a cane or walking device.