

ABOUT TANZANIA

Tanzania is blessed with beauty and variety and for many this is the ultimate safari country. From the highest free-standing mountain in the world – Kilimanjaro at 5,895 m, to the plains of the Serengeti, the Ngorongoro Crater and the beaches of Zanzibar, Pemba or Mafia, the choices are immense. The national parks and various reserves cover approximately 30% of the country; Tanzania has more land devoted to wildlife than anywhere else in the world. Safaris can be combined with a visit to one of the coastal resorts and in addition to all this; the cultural and ethnic variety adds a heady mix, known as the Swahili culture.

Geography

Tanzania is located on the east coast of Africa and is bordered by Kenya and Uganda to the north; by Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west; by the Indian Ocean to the east; and by Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the south. The Tanzanian mainland is divided into several clearly defined regions: the coastal plains, the Maasai Steppe in the north, two prominent mountains, Kilimanjaro (Africa's highest peak) and Mount Meru, and the southern highlands towards Zambia and Lake Nyassa (Lake Malawi).

Over 53,000 sq km is inland water, mostly lakes formed in the Rift Valley and Tanzania's share of Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika, both on its western border. Lake Victoria covers 69,490 sq km, which is Africa's largest lake and 49% of it lies in Tanzania. With maximum depths of 1,470m, Lake Tanganyika is estimated to be the deepest lake in Africa; 41% of its area lies in Tanzania. The United Republic of Tanzania includes the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, about 45km (28 miles) off the coast to the northeast of the country.

Area

945,087 sq km (364,900 sq miles)

Population

59 million (2021 estimate)

Language

Kiswahili and English are the official languages. The terms Swahili and Kiswahili are used interchangeably, though the term Swahili normally refers to the people while Kiswahili refers to the language. Originating along the coast, Kiswahili is a Bantu language with many words derived from Arabic. Other African languages such as Bantu and those of Nilo-Hamitic and Khoisan origin are also spoken in more remote regions.

Religion

Christian, Hindu, Muslim and traditional beliefs

Electricity

220 volts AC 50Hz. Plugs are square three-pin, fused or unfused. Power cuts can be common in the rainy season, though most hotels and businesses have back-up generators. In some safari lodges electricity is not available during the night; it is best to check with the individual establishments prior to travel. If you have to have electricity through the night due to medical reasons it is very important to inform us as far as possible in advance.

Government

Federal Republic since 1964. Tanganyika gained independence from the UK in 1961. In 1964, Tanganyika joined with Zanzibar, which had been a British protectorate until 1963, and became Tanzania. The President is Samia Suluh Hassan since 2021. Zanzibar is semi-autonomous and has its own parliament and president (President Hussein Mwinyi).

Social Conventions

When meeting and parting, hands are always shaken; this applies throughout most the country in both rural and urban areas. In some Muslim areas a man will not shake the hand of a non-related woman. It is the convention to use the right hand, not the left, to shake hands or pass or receive anything. There is no fixed protocol to do with hospitality.

Photography

It is customary to always ask permission for taking photographs of people, especially the Maasai, who in some places charge visitors wishing to take photographs. Do not photograph government institutions without checking with your guide.

We recommend that you bring a few spare batteries and keep them charged, as well as enough memory cards. Replacements can only be bought in the cities of Arusha and Dar es Salaam, but not while on safari.

Passports & Visas

Government regulations change without notice, it is important to check regulations with the relevant authority prior to travel.

Passports

Passport valid for at least six months, with at least 2 free pages, is required by all nationals referred to in the chart above.

Visas

Required by all nationals. Visas can be purchase on arrival at most ports of entry but to avoid delays on arrival, you can apply for your visa in advance of arrival through the Tanzanian Consulate in your country or a visa service. Validity for single entry tourist visa is normally up to 3 months. Costs currently are U\$50 for most nationalities but a \$100 for US citizens.

Important: It is advisable to make a photocopy of your important travel documents and keep them separate from the originals. Such as your airline tickets and passport, including the front cover and your travel insurance document showing policy number and contact number. This will prove very helpful in the case of loss of any original documents.

MATEMBEZI

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Time: GMT + 3 hours

Communication

Generally speaking, communications in Tanzania is not what you are accustomed to at home. Connections can be bad to nonexistent, in addition to being costly. In case of emergency our offices can pass a message to the safari vehicle. Cellular phones have reception intermittently throughout the safari. It is possible to buy local SIM cards, with Data packages, but they will also work intermittently throughout the safari. Some hotels and lodges have WIFI service.

Security

Tanzania is, overall, a safe country to visit. This is even more so if your visit is primarily an organized safari. As with many third-world countries, theft and muggings do happen, but most incidents are in cities like Dar-es-Salaam and Arusha. Take sensible precautions to protect yourself and your belongings. Walking alone around the city is not recommended. An overnight stay at a reputable hotel or an organized visit to one of the many attractions in or around the city is fine.

Wildlife

Lodges are located in wild areas, where wildlife roams freely, and are unfenced. Please do not walk un-escorted after dark even on lodge grounds. Do not feed wildlife however tame it might seem. Always stay away from wildlife when on foot. In case of any doubt, call lodge security to escort you to your destination. Always follow your guide's instructions as to how to deal with wildlife.

Temperature/Weather

Tanzania is located just below the equator and does not seem to have a winter although it depends on what safari you are doing – Kilimanjaro is snow capped for example!!

In December, day time temperatures range from 70° to 90°F (21 – 32° C) and drop about 5-7 degrees at night. Later in the year, day and night temperatures can range a bit more but depends on altitude too. June & July can be a bit chilly, especially riding on the safari vehicles in the early mornings but temperatures usually warm up by about 10am, so dress in layers to adapt!

Tanzania's weather is unpredictable, but one can generally count on two rainy seasons each year. The "long rains" typically last from the end of March until June and the "short rains" typically occur in October and November.

Money matters

The currency in Tanzania is the Tanzanian Shilling. There is no black market and currency may be changed at banks.

It is advisable to carry some US Dollar cash in small bills (fives, tens, and twenties to value of approximately Us\$200 per person) for personal expenses, bar bills, gratuities, etc. However, it's a good idea to change some US Dollars into local currency as soon as you arrive as this is more widely accepted.

Its advisable to carry your spending money in cash, but do not rely heavily on credit cards or ATMs for cash as they are few and far between and don't always work! Payments by credit card attract a comm of 4%.

Most safaris are on a full board basis so you shouldn't need much more than Us\$200-300 spending money and a credit card as back up in case of medical emergency or flight bookings.

Please note that USD notes prior to 2006 are not accepted in Tanzania, and that small denominations (20Us\$ and less) have a lower exchange rate; make sure all notes are new from the bank and are from 2006 series and onwards.

Tipping

Tipping for services during group activities varies. Work on approximately 10% of the bill for restaurant meals when not on a guided safari (but check the bill, some add it anyway). Taxi drivers generally do not expect tips but a small tip can be given at discretion. Porters work on approx. Us\$1 per bag and only in hotels. Most safari camps have a general tip box or you can consult the manager/ess for the best procedure. For your guide plan on US\$10 per guest per day if on a guided safari. Tipping is NOT compulsory; these are simply guidelines and a suggestion for a 'thank you' if the service is good.

Curios and shopping

This is often cheaper in the big cities than at the safari lodge shops of the curios shops on the safari circuits. You will be approached often by vendors; a polite and firm NO THANK YOU usually works. Be careful of touts offering cheap safaris and excursions, always book through a recognised tour operator.

Haggling

Haggling is a way of life in Tanzania in the markets and rural areas. Shops and department stores normally have fixed prices. Your guide can usually assist you when you are bargaining and if you think the object is worth the amount asked for, then that is the correct price. Not all artisans put the price up 10 fold when they see tourist approach, but some do so it's worth checking.

Begging

You may encounter sad cases of wide eyed children in the towns or on safari who hold their hands out. It's advisable to give pens and fruit rather than sweets or money that only worsens the problem. It may seem hard hearted but again, it's best to check with your guide before responding to these soulful pleas.

Special Dietary requirements

There is a large variety of food served by safari lodges and camps, prepared to suit international tastes, and following western hygiene standards. Most dietary requirements are easily catered for, as long as you inform us of those well in advance, allowing us to liaise with lodges in good time.