

Escape



RICHARD WAITE / FOUR SEASONS



Insider's East Africa

A luxury African safari is the greatest travel story ever told. *PBI's* travel editor, who has gone on 20 safaris in as many years, shares his advice for penning your own East African fairy tale.

BY PAUL RUBIO



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COMBINE WILDERNESS AND
LUXURY AT THE FOUR SEASONS
SAFARI LODGE SERENGETI.

Escape



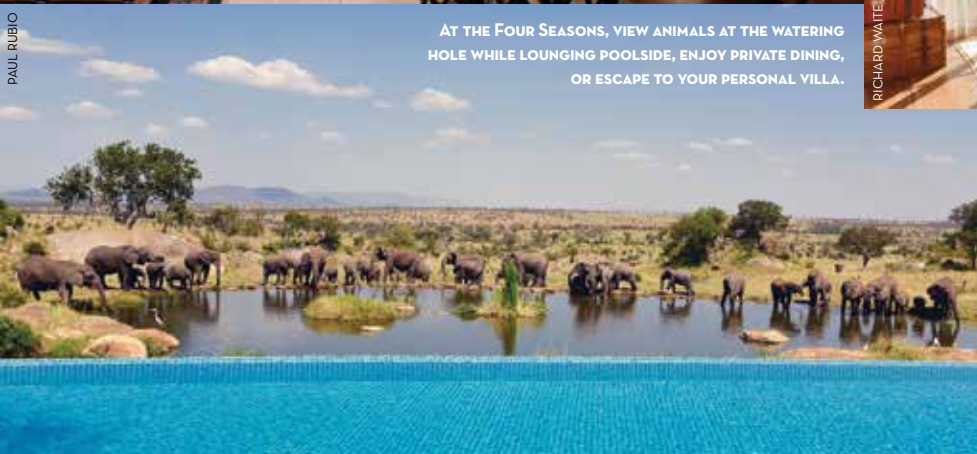
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AT THE FOUR SEASONS, VIEW ANIMALS AT THE WATERING HOLE WHILE LOUNGING POOLSIDE, ENJOY PRIVATE DINING, OR ESCAPE TO YOUR PERSONAL VILLA.



GUEST AREA AT ANDBEYOND KLEIN'S CAMP



HIPPO SPOTTING WITH MICATO SAFARIS

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1. TRAVEL WITH MICATO SAFARIS

When it comes to commingling ultra-luxury and extreme nature, Micato Safaris tops the East African food chain. Organizing and hosting epic African journeys for 50 years, Micato reigns as the world's most-awarded safari operator while remaining a small family business. Though scheduled group safaris are offered (with a maximum size of 12), the company's true specialty is the bespoke safari, which can accommodate any amount of guests. From the big-cat obsessed individual to the avid birder to the couple who prefers the romance of safari to the early-morning reality, Micato has everyone covered. In a continent where a seamless experience constitutes the ultimate luxury, expect a worry-free, highly personalized, and extravagant trip from beginning to end. (micato.com)

2. EXPERIENCE SAFARI'S NEW HAUTE STYLE

For decades, elite safari accommodations took shape as super-sized canvas tents erected in remote wildernesses and possessing myriad creature comforts yet requiring a welcomed touch of "roughing it." However, changing tastes have resulted in new incarnations of safari abodes with designer interiors and amenities like air conditioning, rain showers, and spas. Case in point: The Four Seasons Safari Lodge Serengeti, an enclave of 77 exquisitely appointed accommodations in the heart of the Serengeti National Park with luxuries previously unheard of on the safari circuit, like a full-scale gym, functioning Wi-Fi, and a choice of four bars and restaurants. It's a surreal feeling to float across a massive infinity pool as elephants and wildebeest splash around in their own natural watering hole a stone's throw away. It's even more surreal retreating to a veritable five-star villa on par with the Caribbean's finest yet secluded in a safari setting. (fourseasons.com/serengeti)

3. VENTURE BEYOND THE NATIONAL PARKS

While it's true that national parks host East Africa's greatest concentration of wildlife, the private lands surrounding them see their fair



STEVIE MANN

share of game, too, but face far fewer restrictions. Off-roading and night driving are permitted on these private concessions, and the number of vehicles is limited to the guests on the land, fostering more personal and extensive encounters with wildlife. On my latest safari to andBeyond Klein's Camp, for example, I alone was privy to an entire afternoon and night trailing a massive pride of lions as they stalked their prey, hunted, ate, and then rested, an hours-long coveted experience that would not have been possible within park lands. (andbeyond.com/kleins-camp)

4. WITNESS THE WILDEBEEST MIGRATION IN TANZANIA, NOT KENYA Each year between late July and early October, the spectacle of millions of wildebeest migrating in search of lush grasslands draws travelers in droves to Kenya's Maasai Mara. But the other nine months of the year, these same charismatic herbivores traverse Tanzania's Serengeti National Park in a largely predictable pattern that consists of mating, giving birth, and following the rains for fresh food. Witnessing the migration in Tanzania is more intimate—you won't have to crop out dozens of other vehicles from your photos—and more intense—you'll spend hours gawking at the river crossing that teems with dangers like rapid waters, hungry crocodiles, and quicksand-like mud. For the superlative wildebeest immersion head to andBeyond Grumeti Serengeti Tented Camp in the western Serengeti from late May until mid-July, when the wildebeest overtake the camp. Or follow the herd with the mobile andBeyond Serengeti Under Canvas, best appreciated in the southern



FOLLOW THE WILDEBEEST MIGRATION (BOTTOM) WITH ANDBEYOND SERENGETI UNDER CANVAS (ABOVE) OR AT THE ANDBEYOND GRUMETI SERENGETI TENTED CAMP (TOP RIGHT). FOR SEASIDE ADVENTURES, STAY WITH ANDBEYOND MNEMBA ISLAND.



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Serengeti during calving season from December to April. (andbeyond.com/grumeti-serengeti-tented-camp; andbeyond.com/serengeti-undercanvas)

5. BALANCE BUSH WITH BEACH In recent years, the Indian Ocean has become as much a part of the safari circuit as the wildlife-rich plains. The waters are arguably Earth's most turquoise, and the private island scene is spectacular. If heading on a shorter safari, it's wise to either begin or end the trip at one of Tanzania's or neighboring Mozambique's ex-



STEVIE MANN

clusive island paradises; on a longer sojourn, break up the leopard-spotting midway with a jaunt to an African beach. Consider andBeyond Mnemba Island, a sparkling, white-sand speck off the coast of northern Zanzibar. The 10 villas here seduce with an open-air design of glassless "windows," hollow walls, and whimsical picture frames that border panoramas of surf and sky. Delight in meals of just-caught seafood, watch the sunset from the comfort of a traditional dhow boat, and snorkel the island's surrounding coral reefs, often alongside the wild dolphin pods that inhabit this dream-
scape. (andbeyond.com/mnemba-island) <<