

Taste of Kenya in a Fortnight

Introduction

*This was a Safari was designed in 2005 for Country Club Chefs and their guests. The Safari showcased the best Kenyan cuisine, wildlife and landscapes and included the **Highlands, Masai Mara, Tsavo & Chulu Hills and the Indian Ocean Coast***

Getting to our Table

A feast for the senses may go sour if the trip to the table becomes too much of an expedition. The most civilized way to reach Kenya from the USA is to fly through UK or Europe. We find that a great meal and a night's sleep in London is just the thing to help reset your internal clock. This is Clair's territory and she can meet you at Heathrow to escort you to your hotel and on to some culinary treats. Spend the day exploring London or just relax; the because evening holds a special treat. Stroll to Saint James' with Clair to have a cocktail at Brook's, perhaps London's most exclusive club. Then move on to the private dining room at Westminster where you will be the guest of Clair's father, The Lord Geddes. The dining room is situated in the newly restored wine cellar beneath the Houses of Parliament. It is sublime experience and the dinner company is exceptional. The next leg of the journey is the 8 hour flight from London Heathrow to Nairobi where your safari staff will be waiting to greet you.



An Appetizer

Perhaps it is an acquired taste for some but, for the adventurous, the spice of Africa soon becomes a favorite. One of the most perfect ways to whet your palette for Africa is to take your first bite of Africa nestled in luxury on the high plains of Laikipia.

Settle into the African Bush and Sample the Best of Highland Ranch Cooking - Days 1-3

After landing in Kenya, join your charter flight to the Laikipia Plateau in Central Kenya. The flight is short and you will quickly be able to settle in for a few days in the area dubbed the "White Highlands" from a time when its beauty and cool climate lured the well heeled from throughout England and old Europe. Today its vast plains are divided into massive game ranches which are lorded over by Batian and Nelion, the snowy twin peaks of Mt. Kenya. A table is waiting at your home in the bush, a traditional settler's house set amidst one of the grandest game ranches in Africa.

This is your opportunity to be pampered a bit, shake off the jet lag and build up your appetite in the company of elephant, giraffe and cheetah. You can spend the days venturing out on traditional game drives, going on long walks with armed guides or exploring the hills on horseback. We will visit villages of the Samburu and Rendili tribes as well, nomadic warriors who thrive on a diet of milk and cow's blood. We will have the lodge and its kitchen to ourselves and the fare for the first few nights will feature the freshest of vegetables from the "shamba" (the ranch garden) as well as wild game such as yellow necked spur fowl, warthog, impala and eland. The theme will be traditional settler cooking with a thoroughly modern twist. Pioneering Englishmen, Greeks and Italians long ago fused their culinary traditions with that of the Swahili, Indian and Bantu, thus creating a strong foundation for modern safari cooking. Resident Chefs will share how they prepare the ranches' treasures in the simplest and most elegant fashion and a guest chef from one of Nairobi's finest restaurants can join us to guide you on a luxury tour of Kenyan cuisine.

Although your trip is exclusive, you will not be the only ones dining in the area. Friendly vegetarians in the form of rhino, Impala, Kudu and other plains game crowd the salad bar while some very impressive meat eaters dash in for a bite when they can! Family nights dominate the drier months when elephant ladies drop in by the ton with their young to dine on their trek to and from the forests of Mt. Kenya, followed closely by grumpy uncles and stately grandfathers.

By the time you leave the highlands you will be ready for a proper safari experience



The Main Course

By the time you leave the high plateau you should have an appreciation for the best cooking Kenya settler style. Now it is time to head deeper into the bush and back to basics. Leave the old stone walls and well timbered rooms of your bush home behind for nights under canvas and the freedom of a kitchen without walls.

Cooking under the Stars in East Africa's Wildest Parks - Days 4-7: Masai Mara, Days 8 & 9 Tsavo National Park. On the afternoon of the 4th day our aeroplane will return to carry us all to the world famous Masai Mara and your special cooking camp deep in the bush.

The Masai Mara, Kenya's most famous Reserve, is situated in the Southwest along the border with the Serengeti. The Mara is, perhaps, the quintessential African safari experience.

Jared and his crew will have trundled overland to build a special "camp" for you replete with large (30ft), fully-furnished sleeping tents with en-suite showers and bathrooms. The central feature of camp is the cooking and dining area - all under canvas. The camp will be in the ilk of Churchill and Roosevelt's luxurious expeditions but the real focus of the action will be split

between experiencing the wildlife and preparing wonderful meals in one of the wildest places on Earth. Our aim will be to de-mystify modern cooking and get back to basics. No fancy machinery, just fire, good humour and an iron box to serve as our oven.

Chefs everywhere have some stories to tell but our Wakomba Safari Chef will push the limit with tales such as such as the time he set a romantic table beneath an lone acacia tree, expecting two honeymooners for dinner, but then was forced to entertain a pair of fighting lions, somewhere between the glazed ostrich medallions and the whisky-mango flambé.

Much of our time in the Mara will be spent amongst the wildlife- following the track of the sun and the whims of the wildebeest. The traditional pace is to head out in the early mornings and the late afternoons whilst spending the heat of the day relaxing in camp. Evenings are spent by the fire, laughing and cooking and, perhaps, heading out late on a night-drive to rustle up some big cats.

On the seventh day we will bundle into the aeroplane and travel East to the Chyulu Hills to be guests at the exclusive Ol donyo Wuas retreat. The food and the setting, at the foot of Kilimanjaro, are breathtaking and Ol donyo Waus recently starred in a full segment of BBC Food's Safari Chef. The lodge will be quite a treat and there's plenty of opportunity to visit the resident pachyderms and other beasts on horseback, on foot, or by Land Rover.



A Little Something by the Sea

A Kenyan host would never be forgiven if the delicacies of the Indian Ocean coast didn't make it to the table. Seafood and Swahili culture are deeply intertwined and their magic is a treasure for the palate.

Sampling the best from the Indian Ocean - Days 10 - 13

From the Chulyu Hills we fly East to the Kenya Coast (30 minutes) to sample the best that the Indian Ocean has to offer. We reach the beach in the early afternoon and reward ourselves with a night at Tamarind Village. The Tamarind is the creation of East Africa's most clever entrepreneurs and has been repeatedly rated as one of the world's best restaurants. That evening we will be special guests for a truly sublime Swahili experience, The Tamarind Dhow. The 60 ft dhow is constructed in the same fashion that Arab traders have practiced for centuries. These graceful vessels have plied the waters from the Arabian Gulf to Zanzibar and beyond, carrying mangrove poles, spices and Persian carpets amongst other treasures. This particular dhow was specially constructed to take guests on evening cruises replete with traditional entertainment and outstanding seafood. We will organize a private Chef's Table for your group so you can sample mangrove crab and other delicacies as you sail.

The next morning we will head South towards Lunga Lunga and the Tanzanian Border. The Indian Ocean has a very warm and calm nature and the beaches are silky white. Our destination will be a private villa on the sea cliffs facing east. From there we will spend magical days

snorkeling the reefs, diving (for those who wish to learn) and cooking up dishes based entirely on what the sea provides each day. Local fishermen will be waiting attentively with their wares each morning on the palm-fringed terrace. We will have our choice of excellent snapper, rock cod, barracuda, parrot fish, prawns and changu, among other species. The mangrove crab are my favorite, cooked whole and prepared simply.

Culinary outings will be on offer including sampling of restaurants along the coast, a sailing visit to Wasini Marine Park and a day spent deep sea fishing for Marlin, Tuna, Swordfish and Sailfish. The sport fishing of the Pemba Channel is some of the world's best and we will have fun fighting for our dinner.

Nairobi and home. Day 14.

A Chef's Safari would not be complete without a brief stop in the Nation's capital. We will fly back from the coast on the scheduled flight to stay on the outskirts of town in Karen, in a private boutique hotel. We will visit the orphanage for infant elephants and rhinos whose mothers were killed by poachers. These animals are nurtured and released back into the wild by the Sheldrick Trust. Nairobi is a cosmopolitan city of 3 million and its culinary treats are so numerous that we will have to be choosy. Nairobi's Indian cuisine is some of the best in the world. Muthaiga Club is the premier private club in East Africa, having been established by English aristocrats at the turn of the last century. We can visit the club for a lazy lunch and the plummy atmosphere or we can make a stop in at the city market to see what vegetables and fruits are available and then go to the opposite extreme of dining at the Carnivore, rated as one of the 100 best restaurants in the world.

After a farewell dinner we will escort you back to the airport and your flight home. By the time you get on the plane you will have traveled from the highlands to the sea and experienced the best food and wildlife East Africa has to offer.

Notes: Wildlife viewing and visits to the sea are highly affected by seasonal factors. In the summer months (June-August) the bush cooking segment may be moved to the Masai Mara and Serengeti to take advantage of the Great Migration while at other times we may shift to Samburu or Meru. The Kaskazi tradewinds of the new year may also encourage us to move our seafood sampling to the Spice Islands of Zanzibar.