



Mathews Safaris

Recommended Reading for East Africa

We maintain an extensive Africana library of more than 500 titles for use in our camps. Here are a few suggestions regarding books which may help you prepare for your African adventure.

Guide Books

There are several good guide books available in American book stores and almost all of them contain the same basic information. The very best include the following:

The Behaviour Guide to African Mammals, by Richard Estes. This is a great all around guide for amateur naturalists. ★★★★★

The Safari Companion, by Richard Estes. This book captures decades of experience watching animals in Africa and it offers first-hand insight on the behaviour of over 80 species of animals. A great resource for photographers. ★★★★★

The Kingdon Guide to African Mammals, by Jonathan Kingdon. The best of the traditional guidebooks. Great colour illustrations and easy to reference. ★★★★★

Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania, by Zimmerman, Turner and Pearson. The "one must have" book on the list, even for people who never thought they were interested in bird watching. ★★★★★

Portraits in the Wild: Animal Behaviour in East Africa by Cynthia Moss. Fascinating and highly readable. Highly recommended. ★★★★★

Signs of the Wild, by Clive Walker. A fun guide to tracks of African animals. Especially good to prepare young children for safari. ★★★★★

The Mountains of Kenya, a Walker's Guide by Paul Clarke. An excellent guide to the main peaks of Eastern Africa as well as the lesser-known mountains of the Rift Valley. ★★★★★

Snowcaps on the Equator, by Ian Allen and Gordon Boy. A easy to read, passionate and wonderfully illustrated celebration of the great mountains of eastern Africa. This will be a surprise for many mountaineers who dismiss southern peaks and the section on the Mountains of the Moon is spot on and especially magical. ★★★★★

Reptiles of East Africa by Spawls, Howell, Drewes and Ashe. The only truly complete listing of reptile species in the region with over 500 photographs. ★★★★★

Trees of Kenya by Tim Noad and Ann Bernie. A basic guide, whilst far more portable than Kenya Trees, Shrubs and Lianas. Slightly dated ★★★★★

Wildlife Photography

The most important “must-read” before coming on a photographic safari is sure to be the user’s manual for your camera. Know it inside and out and you will be far more free to relax and enjoy your adventure. Here, however, are some wonderful books which will help you prepare for the specific challenges of wildlife photography in Africa.

Essential Wildlife Photography Manual: Successful Digital & Film Techniques for Creative Photography, by Chris Weston. **A good and practical guide to help you rise to the challenges of filming wildlife. General enough to be useful back home in the USA. ★★★★★**

Serengeti, by Mitsuaki Iwago. Not a guide to wildlife photography per-se but a intriguing example of one photographer’s approach to a subject as big and overwhelming as the Serengeti. Wonderful to look at. ★★★★★

Mara-Serengeti, a Photographers Paradise by Jonathan and Angela Scott. A must for anyone serious about recording the Great Migration. An interesting foil to Iwago. ★★★★★

Safari Living

Safari Style by Christine Reiter and Angelika Tashen. A good, fully illustrated, introduction to the lodges and camps of Africa and the true style of safari. Great pictures ★★★★★

Simply Safari by Daryl and Sharna Balfour. Not just a favourite because the author is a fan of our private camp. More of the above but includes many camps from southern Africa. ★★★★★

Africa Adorned by Angela Fisher. A wonderful catalogue of jewellery and other adornments worn throughout Africa. Stunning! ★★★★★

Safari Living Recipes by Jafferji and Pitcher. Great recipes and photos taken from the kitchens of exotic Tanzanian camps from Ngorongoro to Mahale. ★★★★★

Accounts by Noted Conservationists

East Africa instills a great sense of commitment, passion and loyalty amongst those who strive to save its wildlife and wild ecosystems. These are some of the most vivid accounts by those who have dedicated their lives to the most charismatic species and the most threatened wild areas.

Elephant Memories: 13 years in the Life of an Elephant Family by Cynthia Moss. The astonishing story of elephant families and their lives at the foot of Kilimanjaro. A very readable and memorable example of the type of animal behaviour studies being done in East Africa. ★★★★★

Serengeti Shall Not Die by Bernhard and Micheal Grzimek. Dated and out of print but still worth trying to find. A classic view of the Serengeti following it's birth as a conservation area. ★★☆☆

The Great Migration by Harvey Croze and Carlo Mari. A massive picture book about the largest land-based migration on earth. ★★☆☆

Through a Window, My Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe, by Jane Goodall. A striking account of the lives of the chimpanzees of Gombe and one woman's efforts to save them. *In the Shadow of Man*, also by Goodall, is a great companion piece. ★★☆☆

My Pride and Joy by George Adamson, a interesting read about the famous warden turned conservationist, his wife and their lions. ★★☆☆

In the dust of Kilimanjaro by David Western. This is a powerful account of conservation in Kenya over the past 3 decades. It is a dry and wonderful foil for Richard Leakey's works. ★★☆☆

The Sixth Extinction, by Richard Leakey. A manifesto on environmental crisis and the need for change by East Africa's most famous anthropologists. Heavy going at times but timely. ★★★★★

Wildlife Wars by Richard Leakey. More of the above and filled with impassioned accounts of the most challenging times for Africa's wildlife. ★★☆☆

I Dreamed of Africa, by Kuki Gallmann. A passionate account of one woman's love of Africa and the sacrifices she made to keep her land. ★★☆☆

I've been gone far too long by Borgelhoff-Mulder and Logsdon. Not specific to just Africa but still a great picture of the foibles of working and living in the bush. Very funny and puts you in a tropical frame of mind. ★★★★★

History and Politics

Books on African history are not always easy to find in American bookstores but they are worth the effort to find. Here's a few to whet your interests.

The White Nile by Alan Moorehead. The early exploration of East Africa and the discovery of the source of the Nile. ★★★★★

Kenya Pioneers by Errol Trzebinski. The first years in the development of the country, populated by some very astonishing characters. ★★☆☆

Lunatic Express by Charles Miller. The building of the railroad that led to the founding of Kenya. Very readable and interesting. ★★☆☆

Mau Mau by Robert Edgerton. The history of the rebellion that led to Kenyan independence. ★★☆☆

Dark Safari by John Bierman. A huge tome but a good read for those quiet hours in camp. The story of Henry Morton Stanley and his expeditions in Africa.

★★★★★

Scramble for Africa by Thomas Pakenham. More of the above but broad enough to go beyond Stanley to include most of the big names involved in the conquest of Africa between 1876 and 1912. ★★★★★

Empires of the Monsoon by Richard Hall. A fascinating, new, and powerful account of the invasion of the Indian Ocean states and its impact on the countries that border that exotic sea. The later chapters not for the weak at heart. ★★★★★

The Black Man's Burden, by Basil Davidson. A concise account of how the ways of the West turned Africa upside down and left it pompous. Compelling. ★★★★★

Novels and Short Stories from Africa

Out of Africa by Karen Blixen. A classic. ★★★★★

Isak Dinesen by Judith Thurman. A good account of the controversial woman who was Karen Blixen ★★★★★

The Zanzibar Chest by Aidan Hartley. A well written, yet sometimes portentous, account of the live of 4 generations of white Kenyans ★★★★★

West With The Night by Beryl Markham. A enchanting story of pioneering aviation and colonial life in Kenya. ★★★★★

Facing Mt. Kenya by Jomo Kenyatta. Kikuyu family life - written by Kenya's first president. ★★★★★

No Picnic on Mt. Kenya by Felice Benuzzi. The true story of Italian prisoners of war who escaped from a prison camp so they can climb Mt. Kenya, using a fruit can label as a map. Fun light reading ★★★★★

Out of the Midday Sun by Elspeth Huxley. With its two sequels, the story of growing up in colonial Kenya. ★★★★★

A Grain of Wheat, Weep not Child & Secret Lives, three titles by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, perhaps Kenya's most powerful writer. ★★★★★

Coming to Birth by Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, a powerful coming of age story at the time of Kenya's turbulent independence. A good companion piece to *Out of Africa*. . ★★★★★

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, a must read for those who wish to understand the struggle to maintain African customs and values in the face of westernization. . ★★★★★

Last orders at Harrods by Micheal Holman. Set in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, this novel paints an intriguing picture of the life of Kenya's underclass. ★★★★★

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Heavy, But Interesting, Reading About the Environment, Economics and Development

The Myth of Wild Africa, by Adams and Mcshane. ★★★★★

Why Big Fierce Animals are Rare, by Paul Colinvaux ★★★★★

Africa in Crisis by Lloyd Timberlake ★★★★★

At the Hand of Man by Raymond Bonnel. ★★★★★

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