



Mathews Safaris

Responsible Tourism & Mobile Camps

Our Objective: As dedicated career conservationists and Professional Guides, our objective is to lead by example and assist the East African safari industry in moving to the forefront of responsible tourism.

Background: Mobile safari camping, if carried out properly, incurs significantly less damage to the environment than permanent or seasonal lodges and camps. The “footprint” of a mobile camp is extremely small and all traces of its existence disappear a few short weeks after the safari. Mobile camping is also able to access remote areas which otherwise would not receive income from tourism or associated benefits such as employment, improved communications and security. In short, mobile camps offer more benefits, per guests, while having minimal impact on the environment.

A truly temporary footprint- Mobile camps in East Africa are meant to be on site for no more than a few weeks, thus limiting stress to the environment, damage to roads and drain on water supplies & firewood supplies. There is a disturbing trend in East Africa to disregard camping time limits in search of greater profit. Mathews Safaris takes a public stand against this practice, preferring to operate on strong environmental ethics rather than short-term gain. Our guests can be sure that private camps set up for them will be removed from the fragile environment as soon as they depart to their next destination.

Utilizing local materials and skills- Sourcing “responsible” wood and other materials is a challenge in a region which has few natural resources and poor environmental management capacity. We endeavor to make the best use of local and renewable materials in the construction of our camps and we support the development of environmentally friendly local industry and appropriate technology. A good example of this is our support for SolaPak, an innovative local business which takes unemployed boys off the street to train them and produce inexpensive solar lighting.

Working with Local communities- Although our camps are transient by design, we try as much as possible to work with local communities in and around the parks and reserves we frequent. We maintain arrangements to lease camping areas from Maasai and invest in training, education and improvement of infrastructure. When choosing permanent camps and lodges for our guests, we show a strong preference for those with a strong environmental pedigree and those owned by or with local communities.

Culture- We promote a travel experience which looks beyond the *wildlife* safari and explores the broader, cultural, context.

Low Impact Safari Activities- We choose to immerse our clients into the environment by including trekking segments and game viewing on-foot in favor of more traditional vehicle-based experiences.

Green Power- Traditional camps and lodges rely upon fossil fuel-powered generators to provide electricity. These are highly inefficient and they produce harmful emissions while fuel and oil is often mismanaged, thus fouling the environment. We generate our power from a custom-built solar-powered system and we store energy in sealed batteries to reduce the risk of contamination. Guests are encouraged to take a strong interest in the management of their power and they can monitor how much power is generated each day and how much they are consuming.

We are currently aiming to maximize the expenditure of fuel in our vehicles by developing efficient *co-generation* systems to recharge camp batteries whilst on game-drives. In effect, while on game-drives you will simultaneously be generating power for your lighting and refrigeration of food and drink back in camp.

Eco-friendly Lighting- Its common practice to light camps and lodges using generator power, kerosene lamps, butane and disposable batteries. Mathews Safaris provides most area lighting from solar-power and we conserve power by using energy-efficient LED lights rather than incandescent or fluorescent bulbs. Our flashlights operate off batteries which are recharged from solar-power or by hand-cranked dynamo, thus greatly reducing damage to the environment through frequent battery disposal. Because each camp and campsite is unique in its layout, path lighting continues to be done with kerosene lamps. However, we are making great strides in replacing this fuel with clean alternatives such as candle tree oil.

Solar Refrigeration- Refrigeration drinks and food supplies is CFC free and powered almost entirely through solar panels and co-generation by the camp vehicles. We hope to be entirely solar by 2008 whilst, in some locations, we are able to make use of natural cooling sources such as wind-transpiration.

Low impact Heating/Cooking- We still use firewood. It is an integral part of the safari experience. We do, however, limit its use and obtain our wood from non-indigenous species and the most sustainable sources. For cooking, we have switched almost entirely to efficient gas stoves and the use of eco-friendly Chardust charcoal.

Water Conservation- All drinking water is supplied from an environmentally friendly source in Nairobi. We encourage our guests to practice water conservation and, dependent on our location, obtain our supply from the sources which are least threatened by overuse.

Waste Management- We follow the practice of carrying out everything that we carry in, with the exception of vegetable matter which is disposed with properly on site. We take great care in ensuring that waste food does not become accessible to curious animals such as baboons.

Carbon Offset and other Compensations to the environment- For many guests, especially those from the USA, there should be no illusions regarding the environmental costs of getting to and from Africa and many guests wish to give something back to the environment. Clair and Jared have a combined 32 years of experience working with the premier environmental and development agencies in Africa and abroad. They are well prepared to advise guests on how they can best contribute to the welfare the African environment, its people and its wildlife.