



GUIDED BUSH WALKS AT KILIMA CAMP

An unforgettable experience in the African bush...

Bush walks are becoming the speciality of Kilima Camp and are making us renowned in all the Mara area.

Being situated at the edge of the game reserve outside its official perimeter, we can offer you what most camps situated inside the protected area can not propose: experiencing the African bush on foot. Escape the confined space of a vehicle to encounter wildlife in a totally different way, under the expert guidance of your naturalist guide and Maasai escort.

This booklet describes the different walks offered to you during your stay at Kilima Camp, from a gentle stroll in the hills to more sportive hikes across the valleys or down the escarpment and along the Mara River.

All our walks are led in English by our experienced naturalist guides, who will tell you lots of interesting or surprising facts about the animals, birds, insects, shrubs and trees of the area. The walks are also excellent opportunities to learn more about the Maasai living in the Mara area.

You will also be escorted by an authentic Maasai *moran* (warrior): his perfect knowledge of the bush is essential, as to protect you against any close encounter with potentially harmful animals. He will also be happy to initiate you to the use of the traditional Maasai weapons: spear, bow and arrows. Would you be a good *moran*?

We wish you an exciting bush experience...

1) Observing wildlife on foot

Most large game species that you can observe during your game drives in the plains of the Maasai Mara are also present in the hills around Kilima Camp. Black Rhinos and Cheetahs are the obvious exceptions (they are absent), while the Cape Buffalo, the Reedbuck and the Redunca are rather rare apparitions in the wooded hills. Warthogs are present, but not as common as in the open areas of the plains.

The most common species usually encountered during the walks are the Maasai Giraffe, the Impala, the Topi, the Burchell's Zebra and the Olive Baboon. All show surprisingly little fear of humans: often, the animals show even an obvious curiosity towards White people passing by... With some luck, you can also come across groups of Coke's Hartebeest, Cape Eland, Thomson's and Grant's Gazelles... The Defassa Waterbuck and the African Elephant are more common in the densely wooded areas along the Mara River and the noisy Hippo is common in the water.

Monitor Lizards and Freshwater Turtles (*Pelomedusa*) are sometimes encountered along the river, as well as the occasional Leopard Tortoise on the hills. Crocodiles wait patiently in the river. Snakes are common, but very rarely seen.

Our guided bush walks also give you the unique opportunity of observing other mammals that are not so often encountered during the drives in the game reserve: the diminutive Kirk's Dik-dik, the elusive Ourebi, the rare Grimm's Duiker... The Bushbuck prefers more densely wooded areas, while the elegant Klippsspringer jumps from rock to rock on the slopes of the Siria Escarpment. Rocks are also ideal hideouts for the aptly named Rock Hyrax. The Cape Hare is often observed during our walks, as well as the Bush Squirrel. Black-backed and Striped Jackals are also present. Some guests are lucky enough to see the strange-looking Yellow-winged Bat hanging head below on a tree branch.

In the morning after the rains, traces (pugmarks) of the numerous animals that were active at night can easily be identified in the mud: Porcupine, Aardvark, Civet Cat, Genet Cats, Mongooses, Honey Badger, Serval Cat and even the Spotted Hyena.

Although many visitors may find it unlikely, big cats are sometimes present in the vicinity of Kilima Camp:



Lions have been encountered during our walks and the impressive pugmarks of the extremely shy Leopard can sometimes be found. Elephants visit our camp and its surroundings once in a while.

2) Kilima Walk (“Mountain” Walk)

A gentle walk across the hills surrounding Kilima Camp, on rather flat terrain. No specific hiking skill or experience needed. Leaving the camp, you will cross open areas of grass and some thicker bush, passing along (at a distance) a few Maasai settlements.

Your naturalist guide will explain you many interesting things about the wildlife in the area and the traditional life of the Maasai. Many shrubs and trees are still used today by the Maasai in their daily life, as medicines, etc. Your guide will identify for you some of the most interesting trees like the Wild Plum Tree, the Wild Olive Tree, the Wild Fig Tree, etc.

You will most probably encounter Maasai cattle herded by children, but also different wild animals such as giraffes, zebras, topis, baboons, an occasional hare...

You may end the walk by climbing a small hill from where you will have a very different view on Kilima Camp, from above, as well as on the endless Mara plains stretching up to the horizon.

The walk starts and ends at Kilima Camp.

Level of difficulty: very easy.

Duration: 1 to 1 ½ hour, depending on the breaks you will have underway.

2) Mwituni Walk (“Forest” Walk)

A longer and more strenuous walk across the hills surrounding Kilima Camp. Mostly on rather flat terrain, but also involving some descents and ascents on steeper slopes as well as crossing streams.

This longer walk will enable you to experience the striking contrast between the open and sunny hills and the closed and shady world of the riverine forests stretching along the streams that flow down the deep valleys. This patchwork of very different natural habitats is one of the most interesting landscape features of the area. Down in the valleys, you can discover trees (like the East African Olive Tree, the Wild Olive Tree, the Giant Fig Tree, the Kenya Greenheart, the Manikara, the *Dispyros*...) and other plants that are more typical of the tropical forest than of the savannah, with their associated insect and bird life.

With some luck, you will come across animals typical for woodlands and forests, such as (among others) the Bushbuck, a superb medium-sized, rather shy antelope which can often be briefly observed during this walk. Elephants and buffaloes also use the forested valleys as hideouts. You will also enjoy superb scenery.

Please note that some sections of this walk involve steeper descents and ascents along cattle tracks, as well as crossing streams. The paths down and up the valley slopes can be compared to medium altitude mountain paths in Europe or North America, with no real difficulty for any walker in normal physical conditions. The streams are often almost dry during the long dry season (July to September); after heavy rains, you may have to cross them jumping from rock to rock (no major difficulty).

The walk starts and ends at Kilima Camp

Level of difficulty: easy to moderate (deep valleys).

Duration: 2 to 3 hours, depending on the itinerary and the breaks you will have underway.

3) Mara Walk (“River” Walk)

The longest of our guided bush walks (and our favourite!) will take you across the hills, along the Siria



escarpment and down along the Mara River. Mostly on rather flat terrain on the hills and along the river, but with some steep and rocky sections (downhill) when descending the escarpment.

The fantastic scenery of the Mara plains and the superb views on the river meandering across the wooded savannah and flanked by dense forest are the highlights of this walk. Leaving Kilima Camp, you will first cross a patchwork of open areas covered with short grass and more densely wooded areas across the hills; then you walk along the Siria escarpment before starting the descent through thicker bush and dry forest on rocky terrain. You end up along the beautiful river where numerous hippos and the occasional crocodile can be safely observed from the banks. The last stretch of the walk is along the river, across woodland and forest. The walk ends at the bridge over the Mara River, where one of the camp's vehicles will await you to bring you back to Kilima.

The animals you may observe are the same as on the other walks, but the descent down the escarpment may allow you to come across one or another Klippspringer or Rock Hyrax, both specialists of rocky hillside areas. Elephants are often present in the forest along the Mara River.

Though this is the longest of our guided bush walks, it is rather easy walking mostly on flat terrain. Only the descent down the escarpment is a little more strenuous, with numerous rocks. The cattle paths used to go down the escarpment can be compared to medium altitude mountain paths in Europe or North America.

The walk starts at Kilima Camp and ends at the Mara Bridge (where you will be picked-up by one of our vehicles).

Level of difficulty: easy to moderate (descending the Siria Escarpment).

Duration: 3 to 4 hours, depending on the breaks you will have underway.

4) Dupoto Forest

Dupoto Forest is the single largest block of (almost) intact primary forest left in the Mara area. This unknown and almost unbelievable forest stretches over about 50,000 hectares, less than 20 kilometres (as the crow flies) away from the world-famous Maasai Mara National Reserve.

Giant tress and lianas, a patchwork of dense vegetation and open areas along the valleys, lovely streams and this very special atmosphere of the closed world of the forest... all this awaits you during your day excursion to Dupoto...

Bird life is really prolific, with hundreds of species already recorded, of which many unexpected species typical for tropical forests. Animals are also present: numerous elephants retreat to Dupoto Forest when the wildebeests have invaded the plains of the Mara during their annual migration. Buffaloes are also present, as well as even more secretive, typical forest animal species such as the Kirk's Dik-dik, the Bushbuck, the Giant Forest Hog or the ever elusive Leopard. Smaller animals also abound, such as tree squirrels of different species. Watching animals remains rather difficult in the forest, however.

We suggest you to leave Kilima Camp early in the morning, as to be in Dupoto Forest before animals and birds retreat to their hiding places during the hottest hours of the day. We can arrange special bird watching trips or longer hikes through the forest. Picnic lunch and drinks are provided by Kilima Camp.

Our bush walks in Dupoto Forest actively support the 'Dupoto Forest Ecotourism Project' aimed at protecting the forest by providing financial incentive to the local Maasai communities involved in the project. You will be led in the forest by local Maasai (English speaking) nature guides.

We charge 30 US \$ for the day excursion to Dupoto Forest, including road transfers in our private vehicles, the entry fee in the forest, guiding by local Maasai nature guides, picnic lunch and drinks. Please note that bookings need to be made at least 24 hours in advance.

Level of difficulty: easy to moderate according to the itinerary, the activity and its duration.



Duration: full day (special half day excursions can also be arranged on request: please contact our staff on duty). Depart from Kilima Camp: you reach Dupoto Forest after a road transfer of about 45 minutes.

5) Special Bird Watching Walks

Excepted for the *Mara Walk*, our guided bush walks are also ideal bird watching walks. The unique patchwork of different natural habitats (open areas covered with grass, thicker woodland, dense riverine forests) is home to a prolific bird life, with species typical for the open or bushy savannah living along others more typical for the dense forest, among which the beautiful Ross's and Livingstone's Turacos, the true bird "gems" of Kilima.

Our guides will take you across the hills, spending more time at specific spots where you will have the best chances of observing a maximum of different birds. The forest edges as well as the places where you overlook the canopy of the tallest trees in the valleys are some of the ideal spots for keen bird watchers.

The distance covered is less important. The ideal time for starting the special bird watching walk is the early morning, when birds are the most active: as from 9 a.m., bird activity usually declines, depending on the temperature and general weather conditions (please note that Kilima Camp will not allow any of its guests to be out on foot in the bush before 7 a.m., for safety reasons).

Our day excursions to Dupoto Forest are also ideal for enthusiastic bird watchers. Bird life is incredibly rich in this dense forest and unexpected species can often be encountered. Leave Kilima Camp early as to enjoy the best hours for spotting bird in the dense and closed world of the giant trees...

Level of difficulty: easy to moderate, depending on the itinerary.

Duration: 1 to 4 hours (with numerous and long stops for watching the birds present); full day (Dupoto Forest).

6) Practicalities

Bush walks are preferably conducted in the morning, ideally starting at 8.00 a.m. (after breakfast), when the air is still pleasantly cool and the traces of many animals can better be observed and identified by your guide. Also, the probability of rain showers is less in the morning, clouds building usually up in the late afternoon.

The shorter walk (*Kilima Walk*) can be arranged at any time, even between your morning and afternoon game drives, as it is a shorter activity. For the other, longer walks, our guests need to choose between a walk and a game drive, as it is not possible to combine both activities in a single and same half day.

Our manager will discuss with you in the evening your programme for the next day and will take all necessary arrangements for a walk if you express the wish to take part to it the next morning.

Bring sufficient drinking water (bottles are available at any time at camp). Also take your sun cream, sun hat and sun glasses: the sun can be fierce up on the hills! If the weather looks uncertain, it is preferable to take some kind of raingear. Strong walking shoes are strongly recommended, at least for the longer walks. And... do not forget your camera, of course!

Maasai walking sticks are available to help you during the walk: if needed, please ask our staff on duty before departure.

8) Safety Rules

Our walks do not request any particular hiking skill and are accessible to any person in normal physical conditions. Please note however that some sections of the longer walks do involve walking on very rocky terrain, ascending and descending steeper slopes or crossing streams.



Your guide always carries a mobile phone to call Kilima Camp if necessary.

The general safety rule is that your Maasai escort will walk in front of the group and your naturalist guide (or a second, additional Maasai warrior, depending on the size of the group) behind it. Never stray alone far away from the group. In case you need to stop briefly for a quick “bush toilet”, please inform the guide: do not stay alone behind.

Most of the time during the walks, you will be crossing open areas of grass with scattered bushes and trees. Some short sections however involve crossing thicker bush or even dense forest. It is there where potentially dangerous animals could mostly be encountered (elephants, hippos and even lions have already been encountered during our walks!). All participants should stay behind, together with the guide, before entering the bush or the forest, as to allow your Maasai escort to clear the way. He knows better than anybody how to check for the presence of large animals and how to avoid them. By making a wide loop around the animals and leaving them an “escape gate”, the risks are reduced to almost nothing (not a single participant to our walks has been injured up to now). In the unlikely event of a close encounter with potentially dangerous animals, stay close together, do not make noise and **do never run away**.

Please note that it is not possible to come back on your own to Kilima Camp at any one point of the different guided bush walks, in case you would feel tired or for any other reason. All participants must constantly be accompanied by our guide and Maasai escort, for obvious security reasons.

Poisonous snakes and other poisonous creatures are not a hazard at all: you would be really lucky to see a single snake during the whole walk!

Ticks are present in the bush: though the risk of infection is very limited, it is better to check on your body (when taking a shower at the end of the day or before going to bed in the evening) is none of these unpleasant creatures jumped on it during your walk...

Enjoy your walks at Kilima Camp !