

# Sarara Camp



- Highlights**
- Samburu cultural activities including visits to the singing wells when appropriate.
  - Stunning setting flanked by the Mathews Ranges and the Sarara river.
  - Opportunity to explore this wilderness on foot or hike in the mountains.
  - The range of habitats means game viewing is a varied and often surprising experience.
- Situation** Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust is at the southern corner of the Mathews Mountain Range of Northern Kenya.
- Activities** Game drives; escorted bush walks; hiking into the Mathews rainforest; fly camping safaris; moonlit bush dinners; sundowners.

Sarara Camp is a very special place situated on 75,000 acres of Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust land. Sarara camp and land is owned by the local community which numbers about 12,000 Samburu people. It is mostly dry plains, but the Sarara River flows through, and is flanked by the Mathews Ranges, giving it a truly stunning setting and a good range of habitat. This varied landscape means that there is good wildlife to be spotted here, mostly either browsers or predators, including thousands of elephants, dik-dik, impala, lesser and greater kudu, gerenuk, giraffe, hyena, buffalo, civets, servals, cheetah, leopard and wild dog. The area around Sarara Camp is also good birding country.

Probably the best way to enjoy this territory is on foot, but game drives (day or night) are part of the experience, as is fly-camping in the midst of the wilderness if you fancy a really wild night. You can also go into the mountains, either for a climbing challenge or a more gentle mountain walk.

Samburu culture is also a strong part of your Sarara experience. You can visit a manyatta (this is not a tourist product, it is a real village) and one of the most magical things about this place is a visit to the Singing Wells. When the Sarara River is not flowing, but underground, the local people dig wells in the riverbed. Sometimes these are 6-men deep, and the Samburu warriors hoist up bucketfuls of precious water for themselves and their livestock, accompanied by evocative songs which their lead cattle apparently recognise. When the song changes, it is another herd's turn for water. Very few people see this

happening, and no allowances are made for visitors -this is life in a harsh place, but a part of life which the community has decided they are happy for respectful visitors to watch (no cameras). It happens from about mid-January to end of March, and again from about end-June to October.

Sarara Camp itself would perhaps be best classed as a luxury eco-lodge, though the double rooms are large tents with proper beds, and a good bathroom with shower and flush loo. These are private to each tent, but not exactly en-suite -you have to walk down a short path. The views from the tents (and bathrooms!) are amazing.

There is a main lounge and dining area, and a gorgeous swimming pool. The food is excellent, and some of it is grown in their organic garden. Your hosts are Hilary and Piers, and their team of guides are very professional.

#### Fair Trade / Responsible Tourism

Up to the 1980's the area around Sarara Camp was rife with poaching. Harnessing the local community, with backing from various places including Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and Tusk Trust, plus the energy and passion of many individuals, Namunyak Wildlife Conservation has become an incredible success story. Rangers keep poaching down to almost nothing, wildlife is flourishing, and the local people get an excellent income from the lodge through bed night fees and conservation fees. Water pumps, schools and health projects have been some of the benefits from this income.

