

Masai Mara



Further Links

- One of the world's most famous wildlife reserves.
- Spectacular annual wildebeest migration.
- Excellent for big cats, especially lion and cheetah.
- Classic African savannah landscape.
- Exceptional species diversity.
- Good choice of accommodation both inside the park and in adjacent private concession areas.

Situation

The Masai Mara covers about 1800 km² in the south west of Kenya. It borders Tanzania where it is connected to the Serengeti.

Activities

Wildlife safaris by jeep, on foot, by hot air balloon, or on horseback; some camps offer cultural experiences and retreat-type experiences.

The Masai Mara National Reserve is probably one of the most famous wildlife regions in the world and provides the most diverse game viewing within Kenya. Such a reputation is with good cause as the Masai Mara plays host to the world's largest mass land migration, with around 2 million animals making the long and arduous journey from the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. Around this time (July-October) the reserve is awash with wildebeest, zebra and the big cat predators that they attract.

Even outside of the migration season wildlife viewing is still magnificent, with the Mara supporting substantial resident wildlife populations including the Big Five. A fascinating array of around 550 species of resident and migratory birds is also present within the Masai Mara.

The Masai Mara is a remote part of south western Kenya and benefits from a surprisingly varied landscape. The **Eastern Ngama Hills** are covered with acacia bush and numerous forested riverines. Valley and plains bushland is one of the few remaining black rhino habitats within the reserve. Vast grassy savannah plains dominate the central region and are interspersed with the odd thicket and bushland. It is this dotted covering of trees and shrubs that gave the Masai Mara its name - **mara** meaning spotted. Such grasslands provide sustenance for the herds of grazing herbivores whilst also giving cover for stalking

carnivores.

On the Western fringes of the park the **Siria Escarpment** (sometimes called Oloololo) marks the edge of the Great Rift Valley within Kenya while the Mara River provides this area of the park with lush forests and marshlands -giraffe, buffalo and elephants are particularly prevalent in these areas along with prides of lion. In addition the Sand and Talek Rivers water the east and the south of the reserve providing havens for thirsty wildlife during the dry seasons (December-March & June-October) consequently also offering great game viewing opportunities.

The Masai Mara National Reserve is inextricably linked with its traditional inhabitants, the cattle herding **Maasai people**. Historically cattle once provided all their daily needs -milk and blood for food, hides for leather and meat for ceremonial occasions. Now locally-owned conservation areas surrounding the National Reserve attempt to enable the communities to maintain their traditional way of life while also appreciating the positive impact that their environment can bring them.

The reserve is surrounded by **conservancies** which play an important part in the protection of the area. These conservancies are owned by local tribes people and camps that lease their lands contribute directly to the conservation and communities of the areas. Staying in a camp in the conservancies is a distinct advantage as there are less tourists giving you a more exclusive game viewing experience, plus you can enjoy night drives and bush walks in the conservancies which are not allowed in the national reserve. There are no fences so the animals roam freely the Masai Mara region.

