

## Tanzanian Safari by Bev Abbs (S. Cariboo)



On Jan. 19, 2013 I flew from Vancouver to London, England where I met my daughter, Karen, who now lives near Oxford with her husband. On Jan. 24 Karen & I left a cold, snowy England and began our journey to the Kilimanjaro airport in Tanzania where we were met by one of our tour leaders from ChrisCat Safaris. Our first night was spent at the Kilimanjaro Mountain Resort and we joined a group of 20 people mostly from the Vancouver area.

After a visit to the Chagga people, a local tribe who live in the area, we began our safari. Safari in Swahili translates into Long Journey, and a true journey we were about to start! The group travelled in 4 land rovers with roofs that could be removed for seeing the game better. After leaving the Chagga tribe, we made a brief stop in Arusha to try out our bargaining skills at a local market. Negotiating for the best price is not for the faint of heart, but we managed to pick up a few souvenirs at what was hopefully a fair price!

Leaving a hot and dusty Arusha, we travelled on to Lake Manyara Wildlife Lodge on the edge of the Rift Valley escarpment. The view from the Lodge

was stunning, looking out over the National Park where we saw many baboons, elephants, giraffes, hippos and the elusive tree climbing lions. We also learned our first lessons in animal safety after baboons tried to break into our neighbour's room and steal any goodies they could find.

After Lake Manyara, it was then time to head off into the legendary Serengeti with imaginings of dusty roads, wide expanses of plains filled with animals, and of course lions. We were not disappointed. The Serengeti is one of the most stunning parks in the world and consists of 12,000 sq. miles of endless plains. We spent 2 full days in the Serengeti and were fortunate to see a rare sight of a pride of 16 lions sitting in a dead baobab tree. We saw the Big 5 (lion, leopard, African buffalo, elephant & rhino) as well as hippos, gazelles, giraffes, cheetahs, zebras and many birds. We were also lucky to drive through herds of migrating wildebeest and zebras as they made their great trek from the south Serengeti north to the Massai Mara in Kenya and back south following the rains.

Our next stop was the Ngorongoro Conservation area and the Olduvai Gorge where we learned about Leakey and his discoveries of ancient man through 3 million year old footprints that have been preserved. We spent the night at a lodge on the rim of the Ngorongoro Crater and the next morning descended 2000 ft. into the crater, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, for a full day of game viewing. We saw the rare black rhino and thousands of flamingoes as well as a baby wildebeest being born. Baby wildebeest are the fastest mammal to be able to stand and run after birth, and they are up and running in 3 minutes to keep up with the herd, and avoid predators.

One of the most rewarding parts of our safari was visiting local tribes and school children. The education system in Tanzania faces a severe lack of funding and many schools don't have enough supplies or text books to be able to teach. The safari group was able to raise money to present several schools with text books, soccer balls and stationery which will greatly assist the children in their learning. The children were delighted with the books, and even more excited about the soccer balls! We also visited several local villages where

we were able to see traditional life of the Massai and the Hadzabe peoples. Many tribes in Tanzania are using tourism to preserve their traditional ways of life and it was a privilege to be able to dance, hunt and spend some time with them. The children were thrilled in being able to see photos of themselves, and the villagers were eager to engage in a little conversation, and of course bargaining over their wares!

A journey to Tanzania is never complete without seeing exotic Zanzibar, a predominantly Muslim island just off the coast of Dar Es Salaam, and this was the next stop on our trip. The heat, the smell of spices, the sway of the palm trees, the luscious fruits, the sounds of the Indian Ocean, and the call to prayer weave their magic when you land in Zanzibar. In Stone Town, we explored the narrow streets, shopped, and viewed the famous coloured doors which are covered in metal studs to keep the elephants away. After visiting a spice farm and learning about how spices are used both for seasoning food and traditional healing, it was off to our resort at Nungwi Beach on the northern tip of the island. Here we relaxed and swam in the Indian Ocean and in the evening took a sunset cruise on a dhow. It was the perfect end to a wonderful trip.



The group we travelled with was wonderful, everyone got along so well together. We are going to keep in touch, and a reunion is planned for the near future. We had an amazing 16 days in Tanzania filled with cultural experiences, and astounding animal sightings. It was a true safari, a journey that will stay in my heart and memory for many years to come. I returned to Canada on Feb. 12 and it was good to be home. Now we will re-live the memories with all the pictures we took and we will remember the beauty of Tanzania.

