

THE NOMAD EXPERIENCE: For a Change, Explore Someone Else's Backyard

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Photos by: Kitch Bain



Life in Africa is a many splendid thing. The seemingly endless diversity within the biosphere lurks in tall grass and behind every rock. It slithers and crawls, rustles tree leaves, and soars on thermals in the sun drenched sky. It gives birth. It takes life. And as it does, it brings the landscape – verdant or scorched – to life.

There is so very much on this glorious continent that dazzles the senses. And there is nothing more remarkable and resplendent than the countless wonders nature has wrought. So many species call this magnificent land home, and it is with great fortune that we are counted among them.

But isn't it curious? No matter how many marvels fill your own backyard, someone else's is always enticing. Like a festival meal, it somehow tastes a little better when someone else does the cooking and you just sit back and savour the results.

Nature is no different. A lion is just a lion. A gazelle, just a gazelle. But a savannah is not necessarily just a savannah! No matter how similar it is to those you have traversed, it is different, with mysteries to solve and secrets to reveal.

In your own backyard, you are the expert. You have lifted every rock and smelled every blossom. But in a new land, you are an outsider. The newness of a new place offers questions upon questions. You demand answers, and you know how to find them. You ask an expert, as one might ask you in your backyard.

Let us consider Tanzania, where there are so many unfamiliar rocks to lift and colourful blossoms to enjoy. There are ark-loads of mammals, reptiles, birds and other creatures, large and small, familiar and not. No matter what you've seen, you've never seen it quite like this before – the sights, sounds and smells of a new place that cries out to be explored.

With the glistening peak of Mount Kilimanjaro as a backdrop, the Serengeti presents a special safari experience. But you may think: Safari? Been there, done that. You've enjoyed steak, too. But then there's that new restaurant. People are raving, and they have also had steak. Tanzania is like that wonderful new restaurant. And Nomad Safaris is the restaurateur par excellence.

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Nomad Camps – Harmony with Nature

Located within and on the margins of the Serengeti, each tented safari camp offers simple elegance comingled with nature, sans the pretentious air of some of the insulated luxury lodges. In harmony with its environment, the camps and their staff are as much nature's protectors and they are your humble servants. A balance has been carefully struck between the wildlife, the Maasai culture, which has thrived here for more than a thousand years, and the Nomad Guides, who carefully expose visitors to the area's wonders without threatening the wonders they expose.

Celebs Meet the True Stars of Tanzania: The Nomad Guides

Nomad boasts of some of the best safari guides in the world and we decided to focus our story on them. We were hardly the first to place our pleasures in their hands. Thousands of people had preceded us, among them many celebrities. Virgin founder Sir Richard Branson chose Nomad to help celebrate his father's 81st birthday. He was so delighted, it was rumored that he was considering opening his own camp in the region.

Hollywood actor-comedian Robin Williams bought his then wife and two of his three children to Nomad late last year. Nomad respected his privacy and kept his expedition quiet.

Serengeti Safari Camp – The late Nomad Guide Mkombe Mniko
The Serengeti Safari Camp is on the edge of the vast plain. At certain times of the year, wildebeest by the millions descend on the savannah and bear their young. Many of the animals live out there lives right here. Lurking in the tall grass are a multitude of predators that shadow the migrating herds. For tourists, these present excellent opportunities for seeing lions, cheetahs, hyenas and wild dogs, who pass up the more dangerous elephants and rhinos to take down easier prey, the wildebeest among them. As observers, we thrill to the drama. To the animals, large and small, it's simply a daily struggle for survival. Bird life is particularly rich in the Serengeti, and many happily settle for what the carnivores leave over. It is one of the greatest spectacles to be seen anywhere on earth, played out on a stage unlike any other in the world.



Tarangire Mobile Camp – Nomad Guide Squack Evans

Nomad Tarangire is a real safari. A small but stylish camp with only four tents, it places each visitor thick of it, and in the middle of nowhere. But its minimalism fosters exciting innovation. From the setup of each safari tent, to the use of sulfurized water to shower with at the crack of dawn, to the inventive cuisine, tourists enjoy the best of everything within the limits of nature.

You might expect that each day's highlights would be sightings of elephants, leopards and cape buffalos, but the meals were truly highpoints (our eyes have seen the animals, but our palates have never tasted such imagination). It's amazing what can be done with fruits, vegetables and the right combination of herbs and knowhow.

Tarangire is Old Africa. Broken and weathered terrain makes this fascinating and diverse walking country. Tarangire National Park has a particularly dense wildlife population between June and October. Huge herds of elephants and other game congregate along the shores of the Tarangire River in the dry season. Exceptional birdlife contribute to the all-around Tarangire experience. Each couple, or group of guests, is provided with a private vehicle and an experienced private Nomad guide. Guests take their pick of daily adventures, from game drives in key game spots, to exciting walking safaris within the remote wilderness areas.

Nomad Safari Guide Squack Evans is a seasoned outdoorsman with a touch of Hollywood theatrics. He is bigger than life, with extensive knowledge, a gift



of gab, and a wonderful wit. The grandson of the Kenyan rancher and bush hand Jasper Evans, Squack has a rich family history. His ancestors pioneered camel safaris and conservancy in Kenya. He cut his eyeteeth as a safari guide in Zimbabwe, working for Wilderness Safaris in Hwange and Victoria Falls. But Nomad was his true calling. He arrived there in 2004 to run Chada Katavi and ranks among the best.

A Fitting Send-Off

The final day of a holiday can be so sad. As much as we love home and the surroundings in which we have grown so comfortable, we are about to leave something new, special and exciting behind us. On the evening before we departed, we were given a send-off to match the welcome provided by the Maasai. The sun was setting. The western sky was a vibrant red-orange watercolor. A mist of dust formed on the horizon, and within ten minutes a magnificent herd of over 50 elephants stood silhouetted against the twilight sky. They had, we surmised, come to say good-bye. We felt honoured.

No matter how many extraordinary sights we see in this world, the troupe of elephants who bade us farewell, along with the countless times we came face to face with the majesty and beauty of Tanzania, will sustain us for as long as we live. They will do the same for you. This backyard called Tanzania is unlike any you've ever seen before. And it's one you should not miss.

— With George Flowers