



INSIDER'S GUIDE TO SAFARI'S

The following tips are for tourists who are going on safari and wish to:

- ensure their own personal safety
- protect the wildlife they are viewing
- avoid harming the protected area they are visiting
- show respect to the local communities that live in wildlife areas

• PLEASE DON'T SHARE YOUR LUNCH WITH WILDLIFE

Wild animals become habituated if fed, causing them to abandon normal hunting and feeding behaviours. They can then become aggressive and threatening towards humans, which may lead to them being destroyed.

• PLEASE DON'T TOUCH WILDLIFE

Wild animals may look cute and cuddly but all wild animals are unpredictable. If they harm you they will be destroyed. You can also pass on diseases to them (e.g. the common cold), which can prove fatal to some animals.

• EXPLORE

Encourage your guide to switch off his radio and explore the park. This prevents the crowding of animals by vehicles that have heard of a wildlife sighting on their radios. Even on the busiest of days large parts of the park are empty of people yet full of wildlife.

• KEEP IT REAL

Never encourage your guide to move so close to wildlife that your presence disturbs it or interferes with its natural behaviour. To see an animal behave naturally you must keep a good distance away. Any closer than 25 metres (roughly five vehicle lengths) will cause harassment of the animal.

• TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

In most protected areas off-road driving is strictly prohibited. In the few that do allow this, this is only permitted to move closer to a confirmed sighting of one of the Big 5. In this case, make sure your guide takes the shortest route from the track and stops 25 metres away from the animals. After your sighting you should return along the same route you came, straight back to the track.

• TAKE AN EVEN CLOSER LOOK

To get a better view of wildlife, use binoculars. Never put your guide at risk of being fined or banned from the protected area by asking him to drive too close to an animal.

• TWO'S COMPANY, THREE'S A CROWD

To avoid crowding and stressing animals there should be no more than five vehicles around an animal sighting at any one time. When there are already five vehicles at a sighting, your vehicle should hang back and wait at a distance of 100 meters away, only moving closer when one of the other vehicles has moved away. If you are one of the five vehicles viewing an animal, and other vehicles are waiting to view, you should limit your viewing time to 10 minutes and then move away to make space for one of the vehicles that is waiting to view.

• KEEP TO A WHISPER

Wild animals will move away or freeze if they hear human voices. To watch animals continue with their normal hunting, feeding and nursing activities you should lower your voice. Also, do not make any sudden movements when close to wildlife as this will alarm and frighten it.

• LET SLEEPING LIONS LIE

Respect the animals by not goading them into action by calling, clapping hands, banging on the side of the vehicle or slamming doors. If an animal shows avoidance tactics and tries to leave an area, neither block its path nor follow its direction.

• MOTHERS & TODDLERS

Vehicles can cause confusion and separate an animal from its young. Please always keep a good distance from young families, and never visit breeding sites such as dens, burrows and nests.



- **NO FLASHING!**

Be aware that the overuse of flash photography can alarm and disorientate animals leading to increased aggression, putting both the animal's and your own safety at risk.

- **ENJOY THE VIEW**

Safaris take place in some of the most beautiful places on earth; keep it this way by taking all litter away with you – including cigarette butts that are a fire hazard. If safe to do so, please ask your guide to pick litter up that you see in the park.

- **LEAVE THE PARK AS YOU FOUND IT**

Everyone wants to enjoy the wonders of the wildlife area you are visiting. Please, do not take any specimens with you; bones, feathers, stones, plants and flowers must all stay where they are.

- **SAY NO TO WILDLIFE SOUVENIRS**

Never purchase souvenirs that are made out of wildlife products e.g. wild animal skin (handbags, belts, drums, etc.), ivory, bush meat, parts of wild animals (bone, feathers, quills, teeth, etc.), tortoise shell, plant parts (seeds, roots, flower heads), etc. Buying legally produced wildlife souvenirs only serves to propagate the illegal trade in wildlife, leading to increased poaching and the killing of many animals.

- **KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE SUN & YOUR SPEED**

Most protected areas close for the night at sunset to avoid vehicles colliding with nocturnal animals, many of which are drawn towards headlights. Make sure you have left the park by sunset. Also check the speed limit operating in the park and keep to this to avoid killing wildlife.

- **PUTTING SOMETHING BACK**

If you have enjoyed your time on safari, consider making a donation to support conservation and community development efforts in the area - you should ask your tour operator or safari lodge how best you can do this.

- **MEET THE NEIGHBOURS**

Take up opportunities to exchange culture with local communities living in wildlife areas if they are happy for you to visit their villages. Ask your tour operator or safari lodge to brief you on any cultural sensitivities before you visit to avoid offending or upsetting community members. Also check with them to what extent the community benefits from your visit, as in some cases it is exploitative 'middlemen' who receive the majority of the income from your visit, not the community you are visiting.

- **HELP US IMPROVE**

Feedback any incidents where wildlife has been harassed, protected areas damaged, or local communities exploited to your tour operator, your safari lodge, the local conservation body managing the protected area, or to the Travel Foundation in the UK (www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk). Park rules are put in place both to protect the wildlife and the environment, and to also make sure that each person who visits protected areas can enjoy their stay - we are all responsible in ensuring the protection of wildlife areas, and we ask you to speak out should you observe park rules being broken.

JOINT COPY WRITTEN BY TRIBAL VOICE COMMUNICATIONS AND THE MARA CONSERVANCY, 2009.