

welcome to East Africa



Wildlife & Nature

Mention East Africa and one of the first things that comes to mind is safaris. Wildebeest stampede across the Serengeti Plains. Chimpanzees swing through the treetops in Tanzania's lushly forested Mahale Mountains National Park and Rwanda's Nyungwe Forest National Park. Elephants stand silhouetted against the distant profile of Mt Kilimanjaro in Kenya's arid Tsavo National Park. Lions pad through the high grass in Tanzania's Ngorongoro Crater. And shoebill storks perch near Uganda's Murchison Falls. Wherever you go in the region, there are unparalleled opportunities to experience wildlife and nature at their most untamed.

Gorillas

The mist-covered Virunga mountains, on the borders of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; formerly Zaïre), are home to the world's last remaining mountain gorillas, and seeing these gentle giants at close range is a highlight. To get here, you will need to work, trekking up slippery, steep, densely vegetated slopes. But the thrill of suddenly finding yourself admitted into the gorillas' world more than compensates.

Beaches & Islands

East Africa's Indian Ocean coastline is magical, with its tranquil islands and sleepy villages steeped in centuries of Swa-

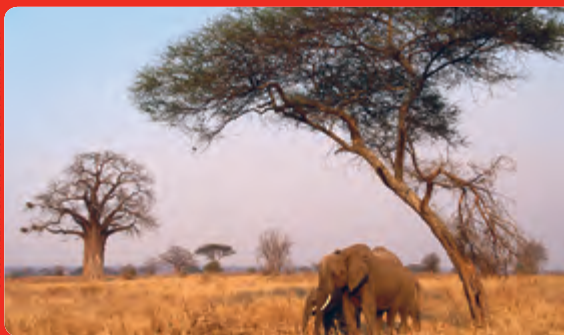
Gentle gorillas, stampeding wildebeest, snowcapped peaks, paradisiacal beaches and an amazing array of tribal cultures – all this and more await you in East Africa, one of Africa's most enticing corners.

(left) Maasai warriors
(below) Elephants in Tarangire National Park (p131), Tanzania



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hili culture. Travel back in time to the days when this part of the world was at the centre of a far-flung trading network, extending inland to the jungles of the Congo and eastwards to Persia, India and beyond. Relax on white-sand beaches, dive amid colourful fish and corals or sail on a dhow (ancient Arabic sailing vessel), with its sails billowing. Inland, laze on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, or explore the islands of Lake Victoria.

Captivating Cultures

Wherever you go, don't miss the chance to get to know East Africa's people. Explore the Masai Mara National Reserve guided by a red-shawled Maasai warrior. Experi-

ence the energy and artistry of Burundi's famous dancers, Les Tambourinaires. Stand in solidarity with victims of the genocide at the sobering Kigali Memorial Centre. Begin to understand the realities of daily life that lead to tragedies such as the overloading and subsequent sinking of the *Spice Islander* ferry between Zanzibar and Pemba. Take advantage of opportunities for cultural and community-based tourism. Immerse yourself in the everyday beauty, realities and vibrancy of East African life. In the end, it is East Africans themselves, with their warmth, hospitality and their unique way of looking at life, who are at the heart of the region's legendary allure.