



A TEENAGER IN TANZANIA

Young teenagers are the perfect age to take on an African safari: old enough to be responsible, but young enough to still be full of wonder at all they see and experience.

Above: Majestic cheetahs are one of the creatures you'll see on safari. Right: Lulu gets a taste of Maasai culture. All images © Carolyn Lockhart



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Just above our heads, perfectly camouflaged on the rough mottled bark, lies an enormous male leopard comfortably draped on a sturdy branch. We try not to gasp with excitement, knowing it's very rare to see these elusive animals at such close quarters. The leopard poses, undisturbed by the clicking of our cameras, although his dangling tail flicks in what seems like irritation.

There are just four of us, plus our driver-guide Emanuel, in the comfortable LandCruiser. We are on safari in Tanzania. Two grandmothers, who have been friends, colleagues and frequent travel companions for many years, with our teenage granddaughters, Lulu (13) and Skye (14). The girls had not met before this trip, but they bonded immediately.

Abercrombie & Kent and Sanctuary Retreats have arranged our long-awaited adventure. After flying from Australia via Doha, we relax for a few days in The Residence Zanzibar, a luxurious resort hotel set on a pristine white-sand beach lapped by the Indian Ocean. Zanzibar is now part of

Tanzania, one of several islands close to the African continent.

Three very different Sanctuary Retreats in different parts of the country are on our itinerary. It's almost guaranteed that we will see the 'Big Five' and a huge range of other animals and birds. At each camp we have our own local driver-guide to take us on daily game-spotting adventures.

IN THE PRESENCE OF GIANTS

We fly from Zanzibar to Arusha, a city in the northeast of Tanzania. Guide Siegfried meets us at the plane and takes us straight to an early lunch in a coffee plantation. We all choose to sample local dishes, enjoying the spicy native greens and bananas with beef, but the girls found the beloved staple Ugali, a type of maize porridge, was "a bit too bland".

On the drive from Arusha to Tarangire National Park we have our first wildlife encounter just inside the park gates: a huge tawny eagle lands on the road just in front of us, clutching a writhing snake in its talons.

By the time we arrive at the camp we have spotted herds of zebra, impala and giraffe,

Below: Wildlife-spotting on daily game drives. Right: Elephants on parade. Below right: Meeting the Maasai. All images © Carolyn Lockhart



and many elephants. Several warthog families come quite close to the road. We are to grow very fond of these ugly but amusing creatures, strutting in line with radar tails erect and an air of bustling self-importance.

It's dusk by the time we reach Sanctuary Swala. After a warm welcome and a cool drink, there is still time for a swim. Two mature elephants come to drink at a waterhole right next to the swimming pool. Lulu tells me how small and unimportant she felt in the presence of these towering animals.

Our spacious safari tent has cosy twin beds swathed in mosquito netting with a separate bathroom and outdoor shower.

At a briefing from the staff we are told to keep our tent doors zipped up or "naughty monkeys will steal your possessions". We must never go outside after dark without the

company of a Maasai warrior: "Just wave your torch and he will come." The dignified warrior who escorts us to dinner wears the traditional red checked blanket and big green gumboots.

WILDLIFE UP CLOSE

Sanctuary Ngorongoro Crater Camp is located on the rim of a vast extinct volcano. Towering walls frame a natural enclosure that contains an abundance of wildlife. "Just like Noah's Ark," says our guide, Gilbert.

On the early-morning drive we come so close to a big tumble of lionesses and their cubs feasting on the remains of a zebra that we can hear them crunching. From here we tick off a long list of different species from hippos and hyenas to wildebeest, buffalo, some rhino and dozens of different birds. Late in the afternoon, we visit a Maasai



village. We sit with a friendly family in a dark, smoke-filled hut and admire the beadwork worn by the shy young women. Gilbert tells us that the Headman of the village has 15 wives and 70 children, and that girls are still sold in marriage for cattle at a very young age.

We buy some beaded ornaments and reflect on our own privileged female lives.

MEMORIES OF AFRICA

Sanctuary Kusini is a permanent tented camp built around a massive rocky outcrop in the remote southern part of Serengeti National Park. In the evenings huge cushions are set on the warm rock so we can watch the sun setting over the Serengeti Plains.

It's here that we see the huge leopard in the tree and follow a cheetah family for several hours as the mother stalks a young

gazelle. She moves in quickly and it is all over in a flurry of dust as her four waiting cubs arrive for a rather bloody feast. The girls are curious rather than shocked, and we learn later that we are very privileged as few guests ever have this experience.

Lulu and I will always remember our special trip to Tanzania where she saw and learned so much. I know she will go back to Africa one day, but for the moment there are photographs, videos and a diary bursting with unforgettable memories. ★

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