

N.Tanzania and Zanzibar January 2011

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The highlights of a 2 week self-drive trip visiting the Ngorongoro crater, Ndutu, the Serengeti and Zanzibar. We used a combination of lodges, camping and one permanent bush camp. The vehicle was hired from Shaw safaris, www.shawsafaris.com who have 4 well prepared and fully kitted land rovers perfect for the job. It came with tents, table and chairs, camp beds, a cooker and fridge. Shaw's owners Paul and Erica also run Twiga lodge set on the lower slopes of Mt. Meru and we spent the first night here.



Day 1

After buying water, beer and food supplies for the week we left Arusha mid – morning for the Ngorongoro area, a drive of around 4 hours on very good tarmac as far as the gates to the conservation area where we stopped to pay the park fees and the crater fee. More on that later. Park fees are us\$50 per person a day so with the family in tow, I was going to be shelling out 200US a

day for the next week. Once through the gate it was another hour to the public Simba campsite on the rim of the crater. We set up the tents and made some dinner and then kicked off the mammal list when 2 stropky elephants paid us a visit. They seemed to be weighing up whether to trash our tents or not so I quickly retrieved my camera bag.



Ashley and his new friend.



The Elephants decided not to upset our trip which was good as we were looking forward to the following morning and the day in the crater. Camping up here was extremely cold and I didn't really sleep but spent most of the night putting on more clothes.

Day 2.

Up and ready to leave at 5.30 we got to the crater gate by opening time at 6am to be the first vehicle in. We had been advised that you can't drive yourself in the crater without a guide so we loaded extra luggage inside the vehicle to take up all the space. This worked and we were allowed in on our own. It's a steep drop to the crater floor and we made a good start to the day with 2 Cheetahs at the bottom of the descent road.



We had a great day with many elephants, buffalo, eland, black rhino but not the wished for, Serval. Also many lions including a mating pair and 6 lionesses harassing a small herd of buffalo.



We made a lunch stop at the springs and it was nice to stretch legs and brew up some tea. You have to be out of the crater by 6pm so after the afternoon drive we headed for the ascent road and timed it to be the last car out.

A note on the crater fees – You have to pay this in advance at the NCA gate and its US\$200 per vehicle in addition to the park entrance fee and is supposed to be valid for only 6 hours. I only paid one fee and spent all day in there so was half expecting to be stopped at the exit gate. There was no-one there so guess I dodged that one.

Spent another cold night in the tent and there were a few Bush pigs around the campsite. Driving at night is usually a problem in East Africa but you can drive from the campsite to the lodges for a drink which gives a chance to do a bit of spotlighting. They sometimes see Serval around the campsite but no luck for us.

Day 3

After packing up camp we headed west and dropped down from the crater highlands towards Ndutu making a quick detour to Olduvai gorge where the

fascinating small museum shows some of the human and animal finds from the Leakey's and subsequent excavations. The horns of an extinct buffalo species were very impressive.

Onwards towards the short grass plains of the southern Serengeti and we came across increasing groups of Thomson's and Grants gazelles, wildebeest, zebra and the odd Hyaena, Golden jackal, Warthog and a single Scrub hare. On the approach to the lodge the track enters an area of acacia woodland and here we found a Steinbuck and Kirk's dikdik which proved to be common around the lodge.

We spent three nights at Ndutu safari lodge which is a great place to stay and one of the few reasonably priced lodges in the Serengeti area. The lodge grounds had many Unstriped Grass rats and Yellow-winged bats were flying round the chalets towards evening. The toilet block near the reception was also a day roost for a lone Mauritian Tomb bat.



Yellow-winged bat



Mauritian tomb bat

Unstriped grass rat



A Caracal with cub was being seen occasionally at the causeway, a mile or so from the lodge but we never saw it.

Day 4 and 5

We had advice that the areas known as Long Gulley and big marsh were the places to look for serval and striped hyaena and we concentrated on these places which always made for great game drives, many lions, Cheetah, bat-eared foxes, hartebeest and a plague of wildebeest. Driving is allowed from 6am but they weren't too strict on this and we got out a bit before this each morning. As it didn't get light till 6.30 we had a chance to do some spotlighting and found bright red eye-shine indicating many Greater Galagos in the area.

Day 6

After this morning's drive we returned for a late breakfast before leaving Ndutu for a drive across the Serengeti towards the Grumeti river where we were booked for a single night at Ikoma bush camp. I chose this camp as it's located just outside the park gates and they can offer a night drive.

The night drive started at 9pm after a very good dinner and lasted for 2 hours. We saw quite a lot – Spring hares, reedbuck, bat-eared fox, black-backed jackal, Galagos, and a genet but none of my real targets. Before going to bed I put some left-over fish outside the tent and this attracted a White-tailed mongoose and a couple of porcupines.

Day 7

We had to leave Ikoma early for the 10 hour drive back to Arusha and passing elephants, giraffe and even a lion at 40mph is not the way to enjoy the Serengeti. We did however have an hour to spare to check out a leopard which had been lying in a branch all morning. We arrived just as it was walking away and had a good view for a minute or so.

Day 8

Today we were due to fly to Zanzibar but on arriving at Arusha airport were informed that Precision air were now flying from Kilimanjaro international an hour and a half away and they hadn't gotten round to telling our booking agent. Despite the best efforts of our taxi driver the result was missing the flight and we were re-scheduled for the following day. This was annoying as it cut down our already short time in Zanzibar and meant I would miss a forest trip to look for Ader's duikers that was arranged for the following morning. I contacted Charles Foley who had set-up my forest visit and luckily he was able to re-arrange it for a day later. Charles and his wife Lara live near Arusha and offered to put us up for the night. This was really appreciated and as Charles knows loads about the mammals of Tanzania we had plenty to talk about. He is preparing a book on the distribution of mammals in Tanzania and was able to help me ID some of the smaller stuff I'd seen. We were also shown a White-bellied hedgehog that was found in the garden by the night-watchman.



I was now secretly pleased at having missed the flight.

Day 8

Today we made it over to Zanzibar and had a 1 hour drive to the Karamba resort at Kizimkazi on the south coast where we would be staying for the last 3

nights of the trip. Spent the rest of the day relaxing and swimming and then had a nice dinner served to us on the beach.

Day 9

Today I took a taxi to mtende village about half an hour away for a visit to Mtende forest where there is a small population of the extremely rare Ader's duiker and also a chance to see Black and rufous elephant shrews. I met the village headman at 8.30 am and there was a guide who spoke a little English and two other helpers. We then drove for about 10 minutes down a coast track and then the 5 of us set off into the forest which is more of a thorn thicket set on the coral rag. It was a long, hot day and we never saw a duiker, just signs of where they had passed but as compensation we did see 4 or 5 of the elephant shrews. It was disappointing not to see the duiker but many thanks to Charles Foley and Said Fakih for setting this up for me.

Day 10

Today we planned to just relax and swim and do a bit of snorkelling – saw a nice Moray eel but there were plenty of jellyfish floating about which I wasn't too sure about. By mid-afternoon I was getting restless and figured I had time to visit Jozani forest so I booked a taxi at short notice and headed off. This was to be a great decision. I arrived around 4.30 and the park was closing at 5 but with the help of a phone call to Said, I managed to get permission to go back into the forest with a guide after dark. Around the park entrance were several troops of the endemic Zanzibar Red Colobus monkeys and these are quite habituated. I was assigned a guide named Bakari and he was excellent and very knowledgeable on the mammals. We spent the remaining daylight with a walk on the coral rag and were eventually rewarded with a beautiful Red-bellied coast squirrel catching the sun on top of a coral wall. We then headed back into the forest and managed to find a Zanzibar Sun squirrel just before it got dark.

Later in the forest we had a good look at a couple of Zanzibar Galagos and I was then really pleased to spot a Bushy-tailed mongoose close to us on the

trail. We then went to Bakari's village to do some more spotlighting where some mango trees were in fruit and we watched a few feeding Egyptian fruit bats.

If anyone gets to Jozani its worth asking for Bakari as the guide – I'm sure he'd have been happy to stay out all night.



Zanzibar red colobus.

Day 11

This morning me and Ashley were on the beach at 6am to get a boat out beyond the reef and a chance to snorkel around a pod of bottle nosed dolphins. It was great to see them clearly under water rather than the usual brief glimpses you get on the surface.

The rest of the day was given over to relaxing before our flight home.

Full trip list

Vervet monkey

Blue monkey

Red colobus

Elephant

Wildebeest

Zebra

Thomson's gazelle

Grant's gazelle

Impala

Hartebeest

Topi

Steinbuck

Kirk's dikdik

Golden jackal

Black-backed jackal

Spotted hyaena

Bat-eared fox

Warthog

Cheetah

Lion

Leopard

Common genet

Yellow-winged bat

Mauritian tomb bat

Egyptian fruit bat

Hildebrandt's horseshoe bat

Unstriped grass rat

Greater galago

Short eared galago

Zanzibar galago

Eland

Black rhino

Giraffe

Olive baboon

Buffalo

Hippo

Banded mongoose

Dwarf mongoose

White-tailed mongoose

Common duiker

Bohor reedbuck

White-bellied hedgehog

Yellow-spotted hyrax

Scrub hare

Spring hare

Black and rufous elephant shrew

Zanj sun squirrel

Red-bellied coast squirrel

Bushy-tailed mongoose

Bottle nosed dolphin.

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