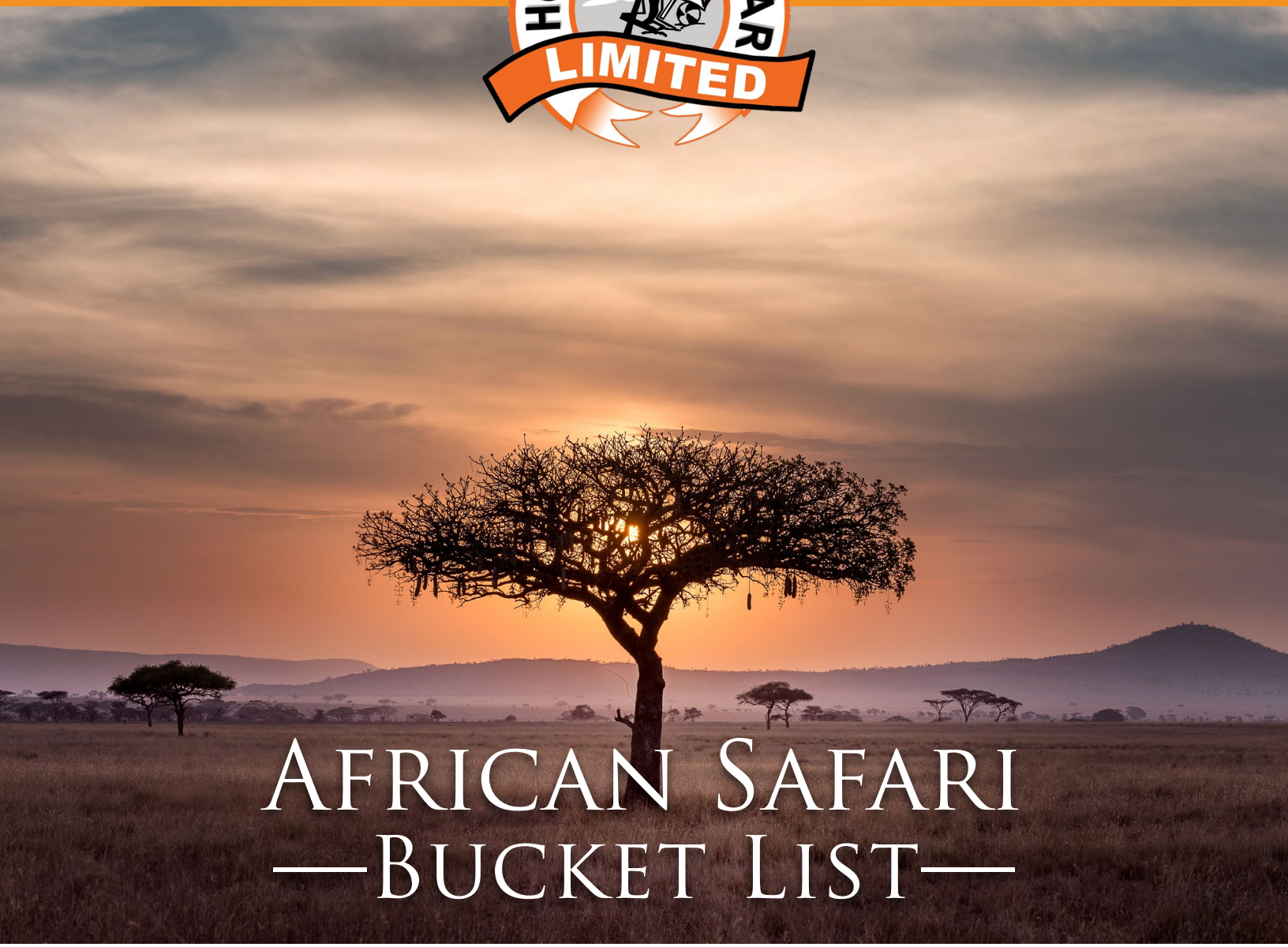
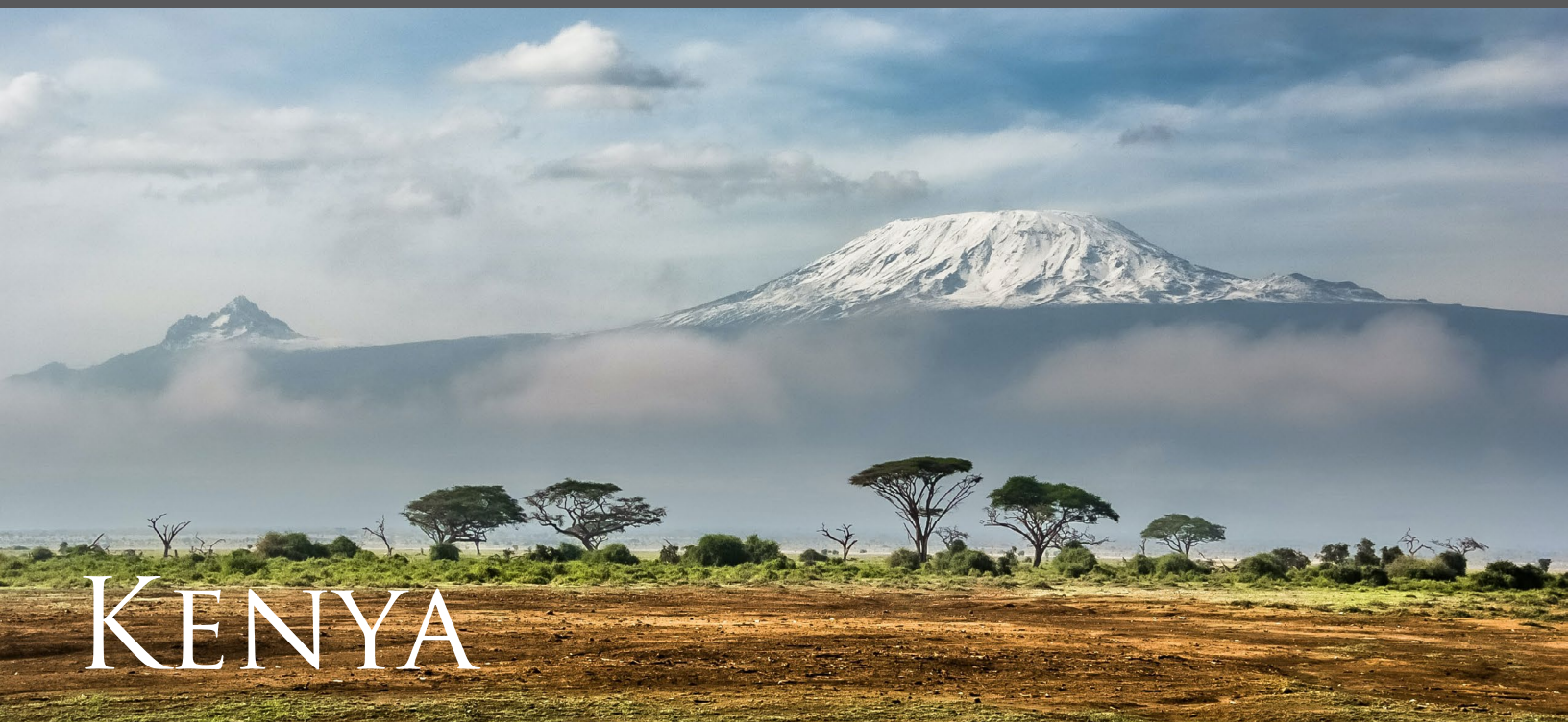


African Safari —Bucket List—

Have you ever wondered...

... why so many nature documentaries are filmed in Africa?

The continent is known for the wide variety of different natural environments and an even wider variety of animals. There are more types of hoofed mammals - think zebras, antelopes, and giraffes - and freshwater fish than any other continent. There is always something new to find. A safari in Africa is unlike anything you will experience elsewhere in the world. African safari trips involve seeking the source of all human culture and history, sleeping under the stars, and trekking through jungles or deserts as you see wild animals in their natural habitat. No zoo could ever compare to this once in a lifetime experience. Here are our top Safari experiences across the continent.



KENYA

Kenya is famed for its vast plains and high plateaus. Often when people think of Africa, it is Kenya they see with giraffes and water buffalo wandering among the tall grasses under the watchful eye of a distant Mount Kilimanjaro. These picturesque landscapes are part of the reason it is the perfect entry point into the African safari. Photos are almost guaranteed to come out National Geographic worthy and you will definitely spot all of the Big Five. After your safari, head to one of Kenya's bustling coastal cities for a luxury stay at a resort and five-star dining experiences like you've never tasted.

Along with the beauty of the landscape, Kenya offers some of the most exciting animal encounters on the continent. The wildebeest migration is one of the largest in the world and the best way to see it is from above with a private hot air balloon tour. Begin by watching the sunrise over the horizon of the Serengeti before witnessing the full expanse of the wildebeest herd which stretches across kilometers of the open plain. You'll witness the individual drama of predator and prey. Lions and hyenas flock to the migration for easy hunting.

Uganda

Though Uganda is right next to Kenya, geographically they couldn't be more different. This landlocked country is made up of volcanic hills, high mountains, lush jungles, and deep crystalline lakes. The country also boasts Murchison Falls, one of the most powerful waterfalls in the world. Visitors can expect to find the Big Five roaming around Queen Elizabeth Park, but it's not just the lions that visitors come to see.

One of the biggest wildlife attractions in Uganda is a forest walk to see the primates. Follow a local guide through the mountainous jungle to the home of the chimps and gorillas. There are only two countries in Africa where you can see mountain gorillas. The trek to find them involves hiking through the mountains to reach the higher elevations, but it is more than worth it for the experience of watching a family calmly munching away on bamboo and grooming one another. Chimps are both easier and harder to find. They make their homes in lower altitudes but are much more mobile which makes finding them that much more exciting. Imagine a family of chimps - often unfazed by the presence of humans - whooping and swinging wildly through the trees above your head. They are there for just a matter of minutes before disappearing back into the vegetation. There is truly no experience in the world like it.

Tanzania

Home to the Massai and Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest free-standing mountain in the world. Mountaineers from around the world travel here just for the chance to make it to the top. Even if you aren't looking to summit this amazing mountain, there is still plenty of adventure to be had. The reefs off of the northern coast of Zanzibar is known as the "fish capital of Eastern Africa." The Ngorongoro Crater offers some of the best wildlife viewing in the world. The volcanic crater is home to the Big Five - elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, and rhino - as well as countless other species.

The Rift Valley offers an entirely different experience. Considered a natural wonder, this valley runs through Tanzania like a crack in the earth. The walls are steep and in many places very close together. Water flows from the high escarpments collecting into Lake Manyara. As the largest body of water in the area, the lake is the perfect place for wildlife viewing. You'll find all of the Big Five stopping for a drink, though the most photographed animals in the area are the flock of flamingos which call the Manyara home.

Botswana

Safaris in Botswana are entirely different from Safaris in other countries thanks to the Kalahari Desert. This savannah offers a wide range of habitats from waterless, sandy patches entirely devoid of plant life to a semi-arid high desert that is full of dry grasses and tough trees. The animals you'll find in these areas greatly vary as well.

Safaris in Botswana feature all sorts of animals like meerkats, African wild dogs, and cheetahs. While getting the opportunity to watch a cheetah reach maximum speed to take down an impala is something you won't soon forget, the main attraction in Botswana are the elephants. There are more elephants in this country than anywhere else in Africa. There are safari experiences that involve walking through the bush in the quiet company of two rescued elephants getting to know them personally and learning more about why so many elephants live in the Kalahari.

South Africa & Namibia

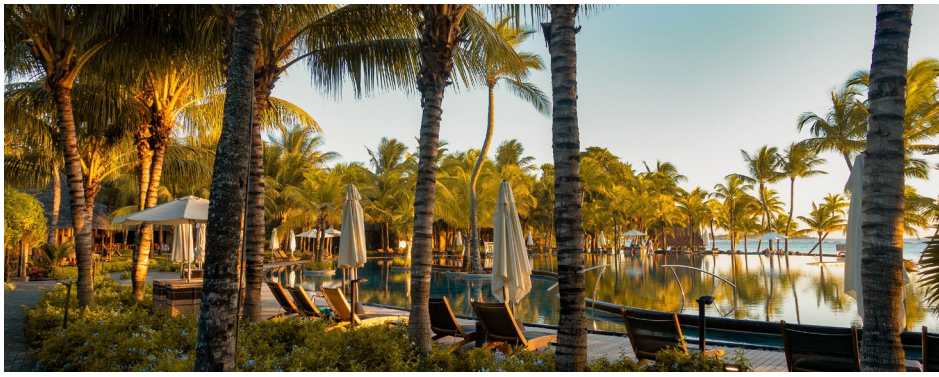
South Africa and Namibia are unique to this list because both offer an abundance of self-drive safari options. Between the two countries, there is a wide range of habitats to experience. Namibia is known for its wide-open spaces and the red sands of the Sossusvlei Desert. South Africa is more densely populated with an abundance of attractions outside of the game reserves. Picture finishing off a safari by spending a few days tasting your way from vineyard to award-winning vineyard.

Imagine spending a week driving from Windhoek, Namibia to Cape Town, South Africa. The drive would take you through endless expanses of red desert populated by gazelles, giraffes, and majestic lions. Nights are spent under the stars in safe campgrounds. As the desert slowly melts into wine country, take the opportunity to cycle through the hillside taking in the beauty of the vineyards. The trip would finish off with a couple of days spent in luxury in the cosmopolitan center of Cape Town.

Mauritius

Mauritius is an island nation which makes safaris here a little different than on the mainland. The islands are made up of breathtaking plateaus created by volcanic activity. The landscape is made up of sweeping verdant valleys ringed by high green peaks. Along with the expected safari animals like lions and giraffes, Mauritius offers something extra: tigers. These parge cats make their homes in the thick jungle found in areas of the country. Visitors can interact with rescued tigers and white lions at the Lion Park which offers a special walking with lions program.

Mauritius also has its luxurious side. Thanks to the stretches of white sand beaches, elegant hotels, and luxury resorts, the island nation is known as one of the world's top luxury destinations. It's unbeatable beauty combined with its sophistication make it a common choice for honeymoons and romantic getaways.



EGYPT

When people think of Safaris, they generally don't picture Egypt. The history and culture of the place should be enough to draw anyone visiting Africa, even if only for an extended layover. In just a two-day stop, you can see the Pyramids of Giza, the Valley of the Kings, and Luxor. That doesn't even account for the open-air markets and history museums find right in the center of Cairo.

If you have more time, Egypt offers a safari experience you won't find elsewhere. Imagine traveling the desert on camelback. As you travel, you come across nomadic Bedouin before making camp. A traditional Egyptian dinner is cooked over an open fire. You spend the night in a tent under the dazzling Milky Way uninhibited by light pollution. In the morning you watch the sunrise over the sands before heading out to the famous ruins of Alexandria.

Zimbabwe & Zambia

Zimbabwe and Zambia are both made up primarily of high plateaus, but their shared border makes up the basin around the Zambezi River. There are plenty of reasons to visit this area from the abundance of wildlife drawn to the river's banks to the unmatched scenery. But the main attraction will always be Victoria Falls.

The falls are located right on the border between the two countries making it easily accessible from either. Spreading across 1,708 meters, Victoria Falls is considered one of the largest waterfalls in the world. Standing at its base surrounded by the cool spray of water as thick as a cloud with the thundering crash of water so loud you can feel it rattling in your heart and your bones is an experience that can't be put into words. Forget safaris, the overwhelming beauty and power of Victoria Falls is something that everyone should experience at least once.

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