

12 Reasons to Choose Micato Safaris For Your Next African Safari

JUNE 25, 2013 BY [JOHNNY JET](#)



One of the ultimate trips a traveler can take is an African safari. So many people, from an early age, dream of going on one, often inspired by movies (like *Born Free* and ahem, *Lion King*) or books (like *Out of Africa*). Safaris are not cheap and some people save for years to make it happen. A trip to Africa is not a trip to New York City so I highly doubt you'll just jump online, do a quick search and book. There's lots of planning involved so who are you going to call once you have all that money set aside? Who do you trust to help you co-ordinate the journey of a lifetime? Well, after [my wife](#) and I traveled to East Africa last week with [Micato Safaris](#), I can confidently say that you should be calling them (Tel: 212-545-7111).

If you happened to be following along with our travels in real-time via [my Facebook page](#) and/or our [Twitter feeds](#) (here's [Natalie's](#)) then you know we had an amazing and truly unforgettable experience. FYI: Our trip was sponsored but their prices begin at \$7,500 per person for a 10-day safari.

Below are 12 reasons why you would want to choose Micato Safaris for your next African safari.



1. Awards

Yes, sometimes magazine awards can be nothing but fluff since some companies hire good PR firms with connections. But it's not trivial when a company wins year after year and is recognized by not just one of the top magazines, but all. As you will see written on Micato's safari jeeps and the pins their guides wear, they have been voted the #1 World's Best Safari Outfitter by [Travel+Leisure](#) for a record nine times. They also have four [Condé Nast Traveler's World Saver Awards](#) and they've won three different best categories from [National Geographic Traveler](#): Best Outfitters on Earth, 50 Tours of A Lifetime and 10 Guides Who Make the Trip. Now that's impressive. But do keep reading since I haven't even gotten to the real reasons you should choose Micato Safaris for your next African safari.



2. It's a family business

Micato Safaris was started by Felix and Jane Pinto in 1966. The happy couple is from Kenya, they have been married for 58 years and they have lots of love for their homeland, which is apparent to anyone who meets them. You will no doubt witness this firsthand because every Micato trip includes a lunch or dinner at the Pinto's private home, usually the first day you arrive in Nairobi. Unfortunately, Natalie and I arrived a day late (she was working and I was attending the [naming ceremony of the Royal Princess with the Duchess of Cambridge](#)). But Felix and Jane came out to the domestic airport to meet us when we were transferring to Tanzania. These days, their son Dennis, along with his wife and sister, run the company.



3. Pre-trip goodies

I don't want to ruin the surprises for you but a Micato safari begins way before you even leave for Africa. Leading up to our safari we received four packages — everything from pre-tour documents (including step-by-step instructions on how to get your visas, what shots you need and a packing list) to suggested safari gear. There were also some gifts to amp up our excitement; they've definitely turned building anticipation into an art form.



4. Guaranteed departures

Some companies will cancel a trip if not enough people sign up. Not Micato. I was told they have *never* cancelled a trip. If you sign up for a published trip then you are going, even if no one else does. Every departure is 100% guaranteed, even if it's just you and your loved ones.



5. They don't sub-contract out

What's nice about Micato is that all of their staff actually work for the company, unlike many tour operators (especially safari companies), who merely act as booking agents and turn over the actual operations to local companies to handle the tours. You won't find any vehicles with Micato magnet logos that can be quickly replaced with another tour company because they own all of Micato's safari vehicles. Their logos are painted on and they have 300 employees who work for them and no one else.

6. Micato hires locals

One of the biggest assets Micato has is their local employees. They invest in the country so their employees are highly trained locals who speak multiple languages, are expert safari guides, trackers, drivers and tour leaders.



7. Knowledgeable safari directors

Micato was the first company to have a highly credentialed safari director to accompany every East African safari. They pick you up at the airport and are with you every step of the way until they drop you off at the airport for your journey home. Even if you're going to multiple countries or visiting national parks that require use of their own guides or rangers, Micato directors still go along for the ride. Our guide was named Philip and I could not stump him on anything. I asked him questions about every kind of animal and their habits, the trees, plants, you name it. He knew it all and then some. I noticed that everyone knew him in Kenya and Tanzania and I think part of that might be because of the little things he did for them ... like bring them the unopened in-flight meals so they didn't have to buy lunch. He's a great guy!

8. No tipping required

There's no tipping on a Micato safari — from beginning to end. All gratuities are included, from porters to waiters. That right there saves you an additional \$600-\$800.



9. First rate lodges

According to [Larry Olmsted from Forbes.com](#), “Micato has a longstanding relationship with the top luxury lodges. They also have a unique product called the ‘Bespoke Collection,’ accommodations consisting of private ranches, family homesteads and country estates throughout Kenya and Tanzania, many within private game reserves, to which Micato guests have exclusive access. Like many special touches Micato offers, this is only possible because of the Pinto’s deep roots and friendships in the African community. And from a strictly business perspective, ultra-luxe safari lodges like Singita, Royal Malewane, Londolozi, Ulusaba and Xaranna are far more likely to offer flexibility and upgrades to a company that does a large volume of business with them year in and year out.”

On our trip, we stayed in four different lodges and hotels. We stayed at Hemingways in Nairobi the first and last night of our trip. Then [Olare Mara Kempinski Masai Mara](#) followed by [Richard Branson’s Mahali Mzuri Kenya Safari Camp](#) (we were the first guests to stay there) and the new Four Seasons Serengeti in Tanzania (stay tuned for more on this but for now, here’s my post on [our incredible hot air balloon safari](#).)

10. They have lots of customers, including celebrities

Micato serves 5,000 to 7,000 customers a year, which says a lot right there. But you might also be impressed to learn that when many of Hollywood’s celebrities or Washington’s politicians want to go on an African safari, they choose Micato. They won’t disclose any names but after doing a quick Google search, I learned that Will Smith, President George W. Bush and family, Natalie Portman and others have all done Micato safaris.

11. Micato’s 24-hour concierge team

Want a security blanket? Micato has concierges available 24/7 in Nairobi, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Arusha. They are able to meet last minute, unexpected, and unusual requests. It also helps that they are on a first name basis with the best bush pilots, hot air balloon owners, naturalists, scientists and so on. When Natalie and I landed in Nairobi, we were greeted by one of their concierges the moment we stepped off the plane. She took our passports and escorted us past the line to baggage claim while she dealt with our entry stamps. That takes pull.



12. 1 for 1 program

Of course, I saved the best for last. Micato's non-profit arm AmericaShare has been around for 25 years. For every safari they sell, Micato pays all the expenses to send a child to school for 12 years. Yes, public schools in Kenya are free but children from the slums don't go because they can't afford the uniforms, books and other expenses. They also have other programs, which every safari guest to Nairobi will see firsthand.

Good to know:

- 50% of Micato's tours are bespoke.
- April and the first part of May is the rainy and low season, making it the cheapest time to go. June to October is the dry and high season in East Africa and the best time to view game.
- Once you get to Nairobi, Micato organizes everything else including three to six flights, which eliminates twenty hours of driving. They are referred to as "winged safaris."

Below are some of the images from our safari but there are plenty more in these stories:

- [In Search of the Big Five on a Micato Safari in the Masai Mara](#)
- [First Look at Richard Branson's Mahali Mzuri Kenya Safari Camp](#)
- [Serengeti Balloon Safari](#)