

Asilia Africa's new mobile camp, Kimondo, follows the movements of vast herds of animals.



## Tent Revival

*A handful of luxurious new camps are redefining the Great Migration safari, offering the chance to see the seasonal herds in some of the most remote savannas of Kenya and Tanzania.*

**EAST AFRICA** hasn't always lived up to its promise as a dream-safari destination, where each year millions of animals—zebras, wildebeests, and gazelles, trailed by lions and leopards—migrate across Tanzania and Kenya in one of the world's most thrilling spectacles of nature. Tourist overcrowding has plagued the national parks of the Serengeti in both countries; poachers have threatened wildlife populations; and accommodations have often been

a little too rustic. But in the last few years, new camps have begun to offer a higher level of design and amenities and to provide smart ways for guests to engage with the surroundings.

**"The thinking used to be that an old canvas tent was fine, and anything more than that was too extravagant," says Dennis Pinto, managing director of Micato Safaris, a popular outfitter that has seen an uptick in the number of clients booking trips to East Africa.**

**Pinto credits the increase not only to more-luxurious accommodations but also to the crackdown on poaching and to the opening of more-remote parts of protected lands to a carefully controlled number of visitors who are encouraged to get involved with conservation efforts.** Here are three of our favorite new properties that are putting a focus on social and environmental sustainability without sacrificing an ounce of style. —Andrew Sessa



The open plains of the Serengeti offer some of Africa's best game-viewing.

## SERENGETI PIONEER CAMP

*Moru Kopjes, Southern Serengeti, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania*

This new 12-bungalow tented camp has some of the most expansive views in the southern Serengeti, nestled as it is into the slope of a granite outcropping that overlooks a stretch of open savanna that wildebeests and zebras stream through every summer. The setup is temporary by design—the camp can pack up in just three days to follow the herds—but you'd never guess it: Campaign-style wood and leather furniture fills the tents, the bathrooms have copper taps, and there's a thatched-roof, open-air lounge with upholstered chaises and crystal barware. While Pioneer sits lightly on the land—it relies on solar power and local products as it pursues a zero footprint—the safari experience is high-impact. In addition to the migratory populations, big cats, antelope, and elephants abound. Managers Tom and Alison Mees and their team of 26 ensure that guests get a full immersion, which includes participating in the camp's conservation and community projects through anti-poaching programs and animal-tracking excursions.

255-27-250-0630; *elewanacollection.com*; doubles from \$650 per person per night.

## OLARE MARA KEMPINSKI

*Olare Motorogi Conservancy, Northern Masai Mara, Kenya*

It's run by Geneva-based Kempinski Hotels, but this new camp on the northern edge of Kenya's Masai Mara feels entirely local. Nearly half the staff of 38 are Masai, wearing traditional robes to greet guests and guide them around the lodge, which was originally built as a personal retreat for a Nairobi family, and the decor blends contemporary and traditional regional art, textiles, and artifacts. The 12 tents, all with teak decks, sit on the curve of a small river where hippos and wildebeests make their home and monkeys trail through the trees. The property was the last one allowed to open on the

private Olare Motorogi Conservancy, a 35,000-acre tract leased from the Masai and overseen by a nonprofit company that has nursed it back to health after decades of overgrazing and poaching. No more than three vehicles at a time are permitted at any wildlife sighting. The camp itself is solar-powered, it uses produce from its organic garden, and it offers programs that allow guests to plant trees and visit schools, villages, and (soon) local bee-keeping cooperatives.

254-70-304-9000; *kempinski.com*; doubles from \$435 per person per night.

## KIMONDO, ASILIA AFRICA

*Lamai Wedge and Southern Serengeti, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania*

This eight-tent roving camp visits some of the most remote stretches of the Serengeti. Through October, it will pitch up on the banks of the Mara River, a mecca for wildebeests, zebras, and the big cats that follow them. From December through March, it will relocate to the gentle grasslands of the southern Serengeti, where the herds come to calve; then in July it moves back north. As a mobile operation, the camp treads gently—it's entirely solar-powered, for example—but doesn't scrimp on comfort or design. The aesthetic is sort of safari meets souk: campaign furniture, Moroccan copper lanterns, bright Berber textiles. Each tent has hot running water and a flush toilet (not always the case), along with a breezy deck for stargazing. But the greatest luxury here is the solitude: Kimondo's owner, Asilia Africa, prides itself on choosing locations that are as remote as possible, where the animals far outnumber the people.

27-27-21-418-0468; *asiliaafrica.com*; doubles from \$660 per person per night.

## FOLLOWING THE BIG GAME

