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An Insider's Guide to Travel: News, Tips, Information & Inspiration

Beyond the Beach: Planning an African Safari Honeymoon

Text and images by Sarah Pew for PeterGreenberg.com

If you spent the last few weeks of December celebrating something besides the holidays—like, let's say, an engagement—you may already be thinking about wedding planning. With weddings come honeymoons, and that means traveling. Contributing writer Sarah Pew explores an option beyond sipping cocktails on the beach—going on safari in Kenya.

"There is something about safari life that makes you forget all your sorrows and feel as if you had drunk half a bottle of champagne – bubbling over with heartfelt gratitude for being alive." –Isak Dinesen, Out of Africa, 1937.

I know the danger of assumptions, but let's just consider that you found the love of your life, had the wedding of the year, and now you're happily married and filled with more love than you ever thought possible. So what's next? Dealing with the premise—and the promise—of the honeymoon. You can do the usual and head off to a secluded beach, throw back the top of your chaise lounge chair, and sip cocktails for a week while reliving every moment of the wedding. But shouldn't your honeymoon be at least as memorable as your wedding?



What if it could create a deeper connection—deeper than bottomless mimosas? In my case, my fiancé and I were up for an adventure, and we began to fantasize and then plan a very special honeymoon—an African safari.

With over 1.5 million local and international visitors booking a safari each year, Africa is fast becoming a popular travel destination. There are different tours to fit any budget, but after doing some research, I found that the average honeymoon couple spends around \$3500 on their honeymoon package. It's important to note that this doesn't include extra expenses while you're on the ground. For example, some tours don't include meals, so be sure to know all the costs involved so you're left with only fond memories—instead of sticker shock—when you return home.

When to go?

After your wedding, you're going to be emotionally and physically exhausted. Safaris can keep you busy sunup to sundown, often moving you to a new location every couple of days. Consider waiting a few weeks after your nuptials before departing. Use this time to recharge your batteries and bone up on your Swahili—the locals will appreciate the effort.

What should we do today?

If you can dream it, you can do it in Africa. Not sure where to start? Take to the many Pinterest boards on African safaris to inspire your thinking. Regardless of your budget, make every effort to do as many game drives as you can. To break it up, see the game in a new way—on foot, bike, or horseback. Skip the activities that you can do on any vacation (like spa treatments, playing tennis, or golf) and instead opt for a



private breakfast or dinner in the bush for a few hundred USD. There is nothing quite like having a mimosa while listening to lions roar across the base of Mt. Kenya. African safaris provide extraordinary once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that are worth every dime. For example, for around \$500 per person, watch the sun rise from a hot air balloon above the Maasai Mara while getting a birds' eye view of elephants welcoming a new day. If you are an animal lover, there is nothing sweeter than getting up close and personal with orphaned baby elephants at the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust elephant nursery in Nairobi. Leave your mark (and your heart) by fostering a calf.

Tents, Lodges or Resorts?

Many safari companies will work with you to provide a range of accommodations to give you the full experience. Our luxury safari company, Micato Safaris, designed a safari maximizing our time and budget and accommodated our desire to try a few different options. Intimate locations are not hard to come by in Kenya, but for something a little extra-special, the ultra-luxurious Solio Lodge nestled atop a private conservancy is a must-see. At 1,200 square feet, the honeymoon suite boasts wall-to-wall views of the bush with exotic wildlife less than a few hundred yards away—sometimes in your own backyard. The small estate feels more like your best friend's home. Enjoy a “home-cooked” dinner in front of your in-room fireplace and retire with a glass of wine on the veranda watching the sun set over the African plains. Not to be outdone is the luxury tented camp overlooking a hippo-filled river in the Maasai Mara (Fairmont Mara Safari Club). You can't go wrong extending your budget to stay at any of the luxury Fairmont locations throughout Africa. They each offer a little something unique, like the animal orphanage at the Fairmont Mt. Kenya Safari Club with one-of-a-kind rare animals.

What to pack?

Now that you're married, the hope is that your spouse won't mind that you've worn the same pair of pants or t-shirt three days in a row. Bring one nice dinner outfit—a packable dress for women and slacks for men. A day pack is essential—use it as your carry-on luggage to save room. Plus, make sure your camera can capture that hyena preying on a wildebeest while being watched by the vultures.

Anything else we should know?

“Hakuna Matata”—it means don't worry be happy. It's more than just a line in *The Lion King*—it's a way of life. Don't get too caught up in everything you read. Be smart, get all your vaccines, and follow the doctor's orders. Know that every cough or sniffle doesn't mean you are going to get Ebola. Embrace the pure African spirit. Listen to your guides and don't be afraid to try something new. In the end, you'll look back at this experience and realize that it has created a deeper bond than any margarita or tequila shot ever could.

Safari Njema! (Happy Travels!)

