

Safari In Africa

This is a report on a visit to Africa in October 2023. This trip was an accident waiting to happen. Chris and Lou did survive, but at times, there were some UNFORTUNATE EVENTS. Chris thought the safari was wonderful with wild animals across a wide expanse of unpopulated territory. Lou would have preferred less excitement and unknown circumstances. Why did we even do this trip? Our trips have generally been to areas with more modern facilities and we had not been to central Africa. We wanted visit several countries with an assortment of native animals and less civilization. Somehow, Lou received an email from Kennedy in Uganda who offered us a private 4WD safari vehicle with driver, and we decided to take him up on the offer. This meant that we would explore three countries on our own: Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda and figure out what to do on the trip. The trip had major differences from what we had attempted to plan.

Around Lake Victoria: The initial plan was to start in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, and then drive around Lake Victoria in a clockwise direction. The distances were somewhat high, but what I failed to account for was the generally low-speed conditions of the roads. Most roads seemed to be targets for instant businesses along the road. There were therefore many people crossing the roads which led to speed limits in most areas, along with traffic circles, and bumps in the road to slow traffic. There were many other main roads that were poor condition dirt along with schools along them. To reduce the distance, I found a ferry crossing the lake from Mwanza to Bukoba which offered "first class" service and transport for our vehicle. The best rooms in the 1930s ship were two-person stacked bunks that were half my size. It rained heavily all night and bathrooms were down an unprotected hallway.

Congo Rebels: Our driver was using GPS direction with the same voice that is default in the USA. We were trying to get to Enjojo Lodge and the GPS failed. The driver cleverly talked to a kid on a motorbike and followed him across a very bad, puddled road to the lodge. The lodge was in the middle of a jungle with monkeys, birds, and next to the location with tree-climbing lions. The next morning, we had to leave, because the Congo rebels had crossed the Uganda border and killed some tourists and their driver about 10km from us in Queen Elizabeth National Park. Oh well, we were hoping for a balloon ride over Murchison Falls.

Animals We Did See: We arrived at the beginning of October and were hoping for the Great Migration crossing of the Mara River. The climate has changed; we were two months late. The river did have hippos and crocodiles. In the Masai Mara National Park, there were scattered bands of 100 zebra, 100 impala, 30 elands, 20 cape buffalo, 10 giraffe, 8 elephants, warthogs, gray monkeys, and 1000 flamingos in Lake Nakuru National Park where we also saw 2 black rhinos and 2 white rhinos, a leopard in a tree and several lion prides. No elephants here; they take out some trees. Exotic birds were everywhere. We saw one large cheetah following a group of impalas.

Animals We Did NOT See: We were hoping to see the very large mountain gorillas, but the gorilla Permit was \$800 and potentially a 10-20 kilometer walk through the jungle. Further into the park there were chimpanzees, for a \$500 permit fee and also a substantial trek. I was vainly hoping for the elusive okapi.

Places To Stay: We did not make reservations, there was a huge variety of places to stay and corresponding prices. Most of the places we stayed at had individual cottages around a dining room, with trees and lakes around the area. Mosquito nets were found around all the beds.

Food Choices: As we were driving around, the roads had adjacent farmers with stalls selling Irish Potatoes, all the same size, and Bananas of all sizes. Along the roads were herds of cattle, sheep, and goats. We only were offered goat meat. Lamb chops and steak were not found at any restaurant that we were at. We wanted to try the exotic meats that we were told were available at the "Carnivore" in Nairobi. All the choices there, except ostrich, are available at my local supermarket. The best roadside food was Tilapia caught fresh from Lake Victoria. Lou liked the passion fruit juice at every meal.

Airplane Flights: We got a great deal on Saudia airlines from LAX to Jeddah, which is close to Mecca. There were several pilgrims on the flight. Jeddah is an outstanding location for a new airport since it has close access to many points of interest. Fortunately for us, the outbound flight was cancelled, so we got to stopover in Qatar on the way to Nairobi. Each direction was about a 20-hour flight.