

GEARING UP FOR A PHOTOGRAPHY SAFARI



African
Photography
Safaris

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Front cover, Lioness. Below, Male Lion



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our "Gearing up for a Photography Safari" mini-guide, created exclusively for our African Photography Safari guests and newsletter subscribers.

These bite-sized guides are designed to make your experience easier and more enjoyable before you even set foot on a photography safari. They don't replace our in-depth pre-departure packs, but they do tackle specific topics that often cause a bit of head scratching. This guide is all about gearing up for our Maasai Mara photography safari. What sort of clothing do we recommend? What photography equipment you may want to bring, and how to avoid the dreaded packing and airport security anxieties!

This guide is based upon how we actually manage and run *our* Maasai Mara photography safari because when it comes to travelling with photography gear, there are some very real advantages to travelling with us.

Our Maasai Mara photography safaris benefit from generous additional luggage allowances and well planned internal Maasai Mara flights already included in our headline price. Also, our 14 day FUJIFILM UK* complimentary loan scheme is a game changer if you don't already own suitable camera bodies or long lenses, or maybe you would just like to try something different.

Our goal is simple! To help you with smarter packing, fewer compromises, and more time and energy to focus on the wildlife, the photography, and the reason you're on a photography safari with us in the first place.

*UK Mainland resident guests only.



Chacma Baboon

CLOTHING

“... we are the antithesis of formality! Forget the need for any evening wear, that’s just not in our itinerary. Before dinner, it’s about beers, wine and safari cocktails with banter around the fire!”



First up, we’re not auditioning for an East African colonial-era drama! Contrary to popular belief, an overly starched belted tunic, knee-length brown leather boots and flowing neck scarf are not prerequisites of a safari.

Jokes aside though, there are valid reasons to give careful consideration to our clothing and often the result is fifty shades of National Geographic chic beige and khaki!

White clothing looks great for about 5 minutes until the dust arrives and ruins the illusion. However, it does reflect heat very well. Darker blues and black are often avoided. Tsetse flies are oddly enthusiastic about darker shades of blue and you don’t want a painful bite or worse, a dose of sleeping sickness. Darker colours also absorb heat. That said, Kaleel often wears a white t-shirt as he has his own micro climate and Alan often wears black as he's like a reptile that needs to warm up in the sun!

Many guidebooks will say avoid bright clothing, but take a look at the Maasai and their beautifully coloured clothing and shukas!

A quick but important note on camouflage patterned clothing. It is illegal in Kenya and several other African countries, so it’s best avoided altogether. And even where it isn’t prohibited, it’s completely unnecessary on safari anyway.

So this leaves us with the glamour of savannah and bush friendly neutral beige and khaki! There is a very good reason why guides and rangers stick to clothing like this. They are practical for the environment of dust, mud, sand and coffee spills and a good compromise for heat management. Function beats flair!

From a practical point of view, we recommend wearing a pair of “cargo” trousers which have multiple pockets for bits and pieces - batteries, memory cards, all-important bottle opener etc. For most of the day, a light t-shirt is usually sufficient. But, layers are key.

Maasai Giraffe



African Elephant

The Maasai Mara is over 1,500 metres above sea level. Do not underestimate how cold it can be in the mornings and later in the evenings. A fleece jacket or hoodie, maybe both, are a good idea as are a woolly hat and gloves. And, if you're as follically challenged as Alan is, a sunhat is absolutely essential!

The best solution is to dress in multiple layers which you can add or discard throughout the morning and afternoon as the temperature changes. Both of us have embraced the joy of a battery operated heated gilet. It's essentially a heated seat for your torso, complete with a quiet sense of satisfaction and a deeply deserved feeling of triumph thrown in!

Footwear is important. Boots are cumbersome and unnecessary but a comfortable trainer type of walking shoe that you can also wear on flights are a much better bet. Consider packing some sliders or crocs if you would like the opportunity to stand on the seats and shoot from the roof for higher angles.

Lastly, we are the antithesis of formality! Forget the need for any evening wear, that's just not in our itinerary. Before dinner, it's about beers, wine and safari cocktails with banter around the fire!

PHOTOGRAPHY GEAR & PACKING

“The golden rule is surprisingly simple! Anything that is critical to the photographic success of the safari, or valuable, stays in the camera bag.”

When deciding what gear to bring on a photography safari, the most important rule is simple: every item must earn its place.

Camera bags can get very heavy very quickly and sometimes, less is more. It's tempting to try and pack every lens, “just in case” but sometimes it can be a distraction from the experience.

The gear you choose should be reliable and versatile and meet your photographic goals. If not, then it doesn't deserve space in a camera bag where every centimetre of space and gram can be precious.

The caveat here is that everybody is different. Alan and Kaleel both have different gear preferences. But over many years of travelling the world with our gear we've learned a lot about how important it is to pack equipment strategically.

Anything that is critical to the photographic success of the safari, or valuable, stays in the camera bag. This is also our cabin bag (hand luggage). There are also Civil Aviation rules we need to follow when travelling with lithium batteries which *must* go in hand luggage.

Anything that is "nice to have", but not critical, goes into our larger checked, main luggage. This can also be a difficult decision inevitably, there are items which end up in our main luggage that we would prefer to have in our camera bags.

The first step is choosing the right camera bag. It must fit within your airline's hand luggage dimensions. Don't take any risks with this! It must also offer protection for your cameras and lenses, and include a dedicated laptop sleeve if needed.

We prefer camera bags with wheels! Yes, it adds to the bulk and weight but we're not getting any younger! Carrying a heavy camera bag around airports can get tiring very quickly.

Leopard



“At African Photography Safaris, we buy extra weight allowances which we share with our guests...”

The next step is to select your bag for your main, checked luggage. Again, consult each of your airlines for size and weight limitations. Be aware, many internal safari flight operators such as SafariLink in Kenya specify soft-shelled luggage only. This became strictly enforced in 2025 so do not use hard or rigid suitcases.

At African Photography Safaris, we buy extra weight allowances which we share with our guests. Normally, SafariLink has a 15 Kg luggage weight limit per person. This is for *all* of your luggage, camera bag and suitcase! It's simply not enough for a photography safari. Fortunately, we purchase extra luggage allowances for the whole group so you can bring as much on these safari transfer flights as your international flights.

For the avoidance of doubt, we neither use nor recommend separate road transfers for luggage. This approach carries an increased risk of theft or baggage interference and is not something we want our guests to have to worry about when travelling through international airports.

Next, get your shoe horn ready! It's time to see what *we* usually take in our camera bags, and just as importantly, why.

Lilac-breasted Roller



Equipment	Notes
Camera Body 1	
Camera Body 2	It's a good idea to take a second camera body to save changing lenses or to use as a back-up.
Lenses	Sometimes larger aperture telephoto lenses are just too big and heavy to carry in hand luggage and may need to be transported as luggage. If so, invest in a good quality protective case and contact your insurers and airline for further advice.
Memory cards & card reader	You probably can't use your camera without these!
Lithium Camera Batteries	Civil Aviation Authority rules state lithium batteries must be packed in cabin baggage.
Chargers	If your camera batteries have dedicated charger units you're going to need these. Many modern cameras can be charged with a generic USB-C cable which is a great space saver.
Action Camera	E.g. Insta360 etc. Even if not critical, they're valuable and contain a lithium battery.
Trailcam/s	Lithium batteries again!
DJI Osmo	Valuable and contains a lithium battery.
Field Monitor	Not critical but valuable and very useful for tuition
Dust Covers	Very useful to keep cameras and lenses clean and they're also extra padding for equipment in bags.
Torch	Essential for moving around safely in the dark. Power outages can occur in remote camps and lodges.
Documents	Passport, boarding passes, visas, tickets, insurance, itineraries, medical...
Camera Cleaning Kit	Lens cloths, dust brushes, blowers and lens wipes. We wouldn't like to be without these on a dry dusty day so they earn a place in our camera bags.
Laptop	Your airline may allow a small laptop sleeve as a second item of hand luggage.
Hard Drives	For backing up photographs from memory cards. Never rely on wifi / cloud backups!
Cables and Plugs	Chargers, laptops, hard drives, card readers etc. all need connectivity for power and use.
Personal Medication	Anything prescribed or recommended such as anti-malarial tablets, anti-sickness etc.
Change of Clothes	A spare t-shirt and underwear in case you want to change on longer flights or your main luggage is delayed.
Currency, Bank Cards etc.	
Contact Lenses, Spectacles	We can't see much without them! Sunglasses too.
Smartphone	Remember the charger and cable too!



Common Hippopotamus

A monopod is useful when you're holding a heavy telephoto lens for a period of time waiting to photograph a moment of action or specific behaviour. They collapse down for storage in main, checked luggage and in the safari vehicles. When used, they don't take up much space in their floor 'footprint'. A tripod is out of the question for safari vehicles unless you have it all to yourself. Remember to take any connecting heads, plates and hex keys / tools etc.

We often carry a shemagh on safari. This is one of those Arabic-style headscarves. They have multiple uses, firstly to keep you warm on cold mornings and evenings. Secondly, a useful camera / lens cover throughout the day and thirdly if we have room in our camera bags, it is also extra padding.

When packing our camera bags we are advocates of good organisation. Multiple layers of airport security can be stressful at any time, but with a badly packed camera bag full of expensive, fragile and easy to misplace items, it can become unnecessarily stressful. Use pouches for batteries and memory cards. Tie up loose cables in elastic bands or use dedicated cable holders. Leave a small gap in your camera bag to transfer anything from pockets, e.g. coins, wallet, smartphone, passport etc. This means you don't have to empty your pockets of these items at airport X-ray checks.

You may have to unpack larger lenses, cameras and laptops for scanning. Packing efficiently will be a great aid to re-packing after you have passed through security, especially if your bag is hand checked. Please note, Kenya has a strict and comprehensive ban on all single-use plastic carrier bags. Avoid at all costs!

All of this information, along with much more, is covered in our in-depth pre-departure packs which we send to guests a few weeks ahead of their safari.

GOOD TO KNOW

We hope this mini-guide has given you a head start on gearing up for a photography safari and inspired a little less packing stress.

[Click here](#) to find out more about our August & September Maasai Mara photography safari in the private Lemek Conservancy.

If you have any questions or need advice on any aspect of our photography safaris, we're always here to help.

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For more information, [click here](#).

APTS

African Photography Safaris Ltd
MEMBER NO 6355

Thanks to our partnership with the team at FUJIFILM UK, our safari guests who are resident on the UK mainland can enjoy complimentary access to a wide range of Fujifilm X and GFX mount cameras and lenses for use on our wildlife photography safaris.

For more information, [click here](#).



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