

DESTINATION PROFILE: SAGALA LODGE, TSAVO, KENYA



Fact-file:

- Altitude: 150 -1,800 m (500 – 6000 ft)
- Area: 5,000 acres of private sanctuary
- 350kms (149 miles) from Nairobi
- 6 hrs by road from Nairobi, 2 hours from Mombasa
- Easy access with Tsavo East & West National Parks and Amboseli
- Accommodation in 24 Bandas in lush gardens
- Swimming pool, souvenir shop, lounge bar and restaurant
- Part of Kenya's wildlife stronghold
- Over 400 bird species recorded
- Direct community participation & benefits
- Activities include: Game drives, foot safaris, bush trekking, birdwatching, mountaineering, horseback safaris, paragliding
- Evening wildlife lectures and videos
- Night Gamedrives within the sanctuary
- Excursions to Sagala colonial Railway Station
- Views of Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain at 5,894m (19,340ft)

History:

Historically Tsavo is remembered with fearful reverence – in fact Tsavo is the local Kamba word for “slaughter”. At the turn of the 20th century the infamous “man-eaters” of Tsavo terrorized railway workers as they built the railroad from Kenya's coast to Uganda. These two, mane-less, man-eating lions ate at least twenty eight Indians and an unknown number of Africans before they were shot by railroad engineer Lt. Col. John Henry Patterson, who wrote a book about it – later made into a highly dramatized feature film.

In the nineteenth century, Mt Kilimanjaro, visible from many parts of Tsavo, would have been in Kenya had it not been for Queen Victoria's giving it as a wedding gift to the German Kaiser, thus permanently signing it over to what is now Tanzania.

When the first explorers arrived nobody believed Krapf and Rebmann with their stories of the ice-capped mountain. Later as the area opened up, new settlers glimpsed the vastness of Tsavo and often Kilimanjaro itself from their train carriages as they headed for the highlands. Hunting enthusiasts, including Karen Blixen's lover Denys Finch-Hatton, fell in love with the wildness of Tsavo.

In the 1970's and 80's poaching – particularly of elephant and rhino – reached shocking scales, but fortunately this is now kept under control and elephant numbers have increased significantly in Tsavo's vast wilderness.

Today:

Tsavo forms a continuous eco-system with Amboseli: a haven for the many elephant which pass between the two, and a major dispersal route for elephants crossing into Tanzania on its Southern borders.



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The park is easy to reach, bisected as it is by the main Nairobi-Mombasa road and railway. It offers tremendous views of mountains and hills, including the abruptly rugged Ngulia range, the gently rolling Chyulus and the more distant snowy peaks of Kilimanjaro.

Tsavo's diversity of habitats ranges from mountains, rocky ridges and outcrops, isolated hills, belts of riverine vegetation, palm thickets, mountain forest, open plains with savannah bush and semi-desert scrub, lakes and wooded grassland. Occupying a large part of the acacia mellifera-dominated Taru Desert, Tsavo National Park (encompassing Tsavo East and West) at 21,000 sq km (13,020 sq miles) is the largest

National Park in Kenya – and is also larger than Wales!

Divided into Tsavo East and West by the Mombasa-Nairobi road, both parks are characterized by the large herds of “red” elephants, colored by their dust baths in Tsavo's red earth. Another typical feature is the profusion of thick-trunked Baobab trees, which the coastal people believe were upended by an angry devil! The park is watered by two permanent rivers: the Athi River, which crosses a corner of the Park and the Tsavo River, which flows through Tsavo West. The two unite above the spectacular Luggard Falls to become the Galana River. These Falls are remarkable for the fantastic shapes and colours of the water-torn rocks and astoundingly narrow gorges into which the river forces its churning waters. The Voi River, to the south, is seasonal.

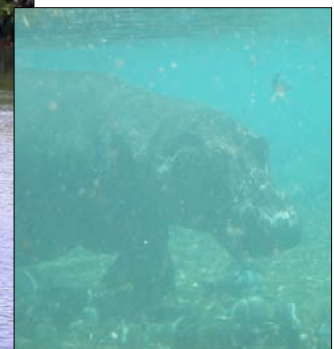
Mainly on account of the difficult and waterless nature of much of the terrain, parts of the park have not been developed for visitors: including the scrub desert north of the Galana River: a large and unspoiled area stretching up to the seasonal Tiva river with its shady tamarind trees and sleepy, sandy bends.

In Tsavo East the 220 km long Yatta Plateau, the longest continuous lava flow in the world, guards an area where you would have every right to consider yourself unlucky to see any other tourists in the course of your exploration.

In Tsavo West the “younger” volcanic zone includes many lava flows and cones, including the starkly impressive Shetani (Kiswahili for “devil”). Giant fingers of bare black lava extend into the surrounding bush country, formed about 600 years ago, unlike the older Yatta, which is covered in vegetation.

Another astonishing feature is Mzima springs, where some 50 million gallons of fresh, clear water gushes out daily from below a lava ridge – all created by the melting snows of Kilimanjaro, which flow underground and are joined by a subterranean river beneath the Chyulu Hills.

At Mizima it is a delight to watch Hippopotamus and shoals of Barbel from the glass windows of the submerged observation chamber. Downstream wild date and Raphia palms grow to immense sizes and crocodiles bask on the banks.



***Destination profile by journalist & author: Juliet Barnes; property notes from information supplied by the lodge owners**

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Tsavo West also extends to include sections of Lake Jipe, an extremely rich bird locality, as well as the Chyulu Hills. These volcanic hills rise from the surrounding plains to a series of rounded peaks and craters, some of fairly recent geological origin. The Chyulus are thought to have begun to form about the same time as Mt Kilimanjaro, 1 million years ago. Recognized for their importance as a water-collecting area, as well as one of natural beauty, they are a protected area.

Wildlife and birds:

Tsavo is one place to see the beautiful spiral-horned Lesser Kudu. Frequently sighted game includes Buffalo, Elephant, Common Waterbuck, Eland, Fringe-eared Oryx, Impala, Maasai giraffe, and small mammals including Mongoose, Rock Hyrax, Dik-dik and occasionally the

nocturnal Porcupine. Hippos are common at Mzima springs and along certain sections of the rivers.

Prolific birdlife includes the White-headed Buffalo Weaver, Golden-breasted Starlings, eight species of Hornbills, as well as birds of prey, Bustards, Sunbirds, Weavers, Starlings, Parrots, Barbets and Rollers. At Lake Jipe, Pygmy Geese and Black Heron are often seen.

RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATION: SAGALA LODGE, TSAVO

Only two hours drive from Mombasa and situated at the foothills of the Sagala mountain range lies the romantic Sagala Lodge conveniently located next to Tsavo East National Park boundary and only a few kilometres away from Tsavo West. It is based within the privately owned 5,000 acre Sagala Wildlife Sanctuary.

For decades, poachers were at large in the Ndara plains killing many thousands of animals with snares, poison spears and guns. Sagala Wildlife Sanctuary is one project that aims at protecting wildlife and help to repopulate the area. This project is sponsored by Sagala Lodge and Travel Trade Limited, that also aims at creating environmental awareness among visitors and local population.



The lodge has 24 *Bandas* scattered in the lush gardens complete with ensuite facilities. Each *Banda* has a private verandah, separate from the central mess/dining area.

Each *Banda* has its own unique style with custom made beds, personal africana collections and bead work decoration. The *Bandas* and the central mess/dining area overlook spectacular panoramic views of Mt Kilimanjaro, the Chyulu Hills, Tsavo West National Park, Ngulia Hill, the Yatta Plateau, and the Taita Hills.



In order to blend closely with the environment, Sagala Lodge is built using natural materials. Comfortable, spacious and relaxed areas are central to the style and there is a homely and down to earth atmosphere; the hosting is personalized and individual needs are willingly accommodated wherever possible. The cuisine is of high standard and consists of good quality cooking. Most of the

foods are sourced from the local market.

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Sagala Lodge has an informal atmosphere so guests may dress according to their comfort. A pair of binoculars, camera and extra film are highly recommended. A hat, sunscreen, good walking shoes and comfortable khaki/ bush coloured clothing on bush walks are essential.

Sagala Lodge has initiated several specialist community conservation projects targeting the local schools. The management is keen and dedicated to protecting the pristine natural habitat by working closely with wildlife and local communities.

The 'tourism for conservation' ethos of Sagala Lodge channels part of its annual income in supporting local community/conservation projects.

They conduct a Wildlife Education Program for schools and organized and specialized groups of visitors who are taught bush survival and navigation; environmental learning; about tracking and spoor identification; wildlife identification; approaching dangerous game; first aid in the bush; medicinal plants etc.

Besides, the lodge is involved in making elephant dung paper, a micro-enterprise project aimed at raising extra income to support the wildlife sanctuary.

Courses are conducted by specialized personnel and target children aged 12 and above.

