



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

MAGICAL KENYA EXOTIC BIRDS & BIG GAME GALORE!

AUGUST 7–25, 2025

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As a child, I eagerly awaited each Saturday's installment of the British Broadcasting Corporation's natural history series. I was glued to my seat by the incredible footage from the savannas of East Africa—immense herds of big game, and all those fascinating predators, especially the big cats. David Attenborough's enthusiasm and fascinating narration are permanently engraved on my memory. I never doubted that one day I would experience the drama of those wildlife-packed plains myself.



A magnificent alpha male Lion © Andrew Whittaker

My first day in Nairobi National Park, in 2020, convinced me that anyone who loves nature MUST experience an African safari. As Hemingway once wrote, “I never knew of a morning in Africa when I woke up that I was not happy.”

Our exciting tour is scheduled to coincide with the Great Wildebeest Migration, in which endless columns of Wildebeests, zebras, elands, and gazelles stream onto the nutrient-rich grasslands of the Masai Mara. Though it is never precisely predictable, we will be in the best areas at the best time to witness this world-class spectacle. Along with these migrants, we have excellent chances at Leopard, Lion, and Cheetah, plus herds of African Elephants, Giraffes of three subspecies, White Rhino, Hippos, Buffalos, and an assortment of antelope and primates.



Wildebeest and Common Zebras © Andrew Whittaker



The iconic Secretarybird © Andrew Whittaker

Kenya is a mecca for birders, too. Tallying 1,150 species, Kenya boasts the richest avifauna in all of Africa. In the course of our trip, we can expect to enjoy over 400 species, representing such classic African groups as ostriches, turacos, wood hoopoes, and blood-loving oxpeckers. Kenya’s birds are very confiding, and our daily lists often exceed 100 species.

The Kenyan people are delightfully friendly. The country also boasts a great tourist infrastructure. Travel here is safe,

and the standard of food and accommodation is high. Our excellent eco-lodges are perfectly located in Kenya’s world-famous game reserves, Masai Mara and Samburu National Reserves and Lake Nakuru, Baringo, and Aberdare National Parks, all brimming with birds and big game. Even our midday breaks are a chance for some mouthwatering birding. At one

of our lodges, an elevated boardwalk leads to a blind overlooking a pool inhabited by Hippos. And, of course, you can simply relax at the lodge or take a refreshing swim in the pool while sipping a cool drink surrounded by wildlife.



A mother Serval hunting with her kitten © Andrew Whittaker

Our tour begins in Nairobi National Park, famous for its endangered White and Black Rhinos and a bird list of more than 500 species. A marvelous week in the Masai Mara follows, the crème de la crème of East African birding. In the delightful Rift Valley, we will explore three mid-elevation lakes, Nakuro, Bogoria, and Baringo. Another highlight is the highland forest of the Aberdare Range. The salt lick at the famous Ark is the site of constant mammal action right outside our rooms.

We finish in Samburu National Park. Especially notable among the mammals here are the Reticulated Giraffe, Grevy's Zebra, Bright's Gazelle, Kirk's Dik-dik, Greater Kudu, Gerenuk, and Galla (Beisa) Oryx. Some of the stars among the birds are the Somali Ostrich, Kori Bustard, Vulturine Guineafowl, Somali Bee-eater, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Golden-breasted Starling, and Golden Pipit.



Golden Pipit © Andrew Whittaker

“How can you explain the fascination of this vast, dusty continent, whose oldest roads are elephant paths? Could it be because Africa is the place of all our beginnings, the cradle of mankind, where our species first stood upright on the savannas of long ago?” – Brian Jackman

August 7–8, Days 1–2: Travel to Nairobi, Kenya. Participants departing the US on August 7 and flying by way of Europe will arrive at Nairobi’s Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (airport code NBO) the morning of August 8. Those wishing to minimize the risk of delays are encouraged to consider arriving a day early. On request, VENT will be happy to help you with additional lodging arrangements and transfers if you want to be sure of starting the tour well rested.



**The dashing Superb Starling
© Andrew Whittaker**

Nairobi, Kenya’s bustling, colorful capital, takes its name from the Nairobi River, called by the Masai “cool water.” At an elevation of almost 6,000 feet, the days are warm and evenings are pleasant.

You will be met at the airport by our local ground staff for the 15-minute transfer from the airport to our delightful hotel, where a room will be reserved in your name. From your private balcony overlooking famous Nairobi

National Park, you have a panoramic view of the savanna. During our scouting, we enjoyed observing—right from our room—a pride of Lions that had killed a Cape Buffalo.

The hotel restaurant overlooks an active waterhole, often teeming with birds. The rule here is never to be without your binoculars! The hotel gardens are home to Little Swifts, Rock Martins, Hadada Ibis, Yellow-billed Kites, Pied Crows, and colonies of Speke's and White-browed Sparrow Weavers. Abyssinian Thrushes and Cape Robin-Chats haunt the lawns, while bushes and scrub harbor African Paradise Flycatchers, Superb Starlings, sunbirds, and more.

NIGHTS

August 7, aboard aircraft on international flights

August 8, Emara Hotel Ole Sereni, Nairobi

August 9, Day 3: Nairobi National Park. An early start and a short drive will get us to the park just at opening time. Kenya's oldest reserve, established in 1946, occupies 45 square miles, with a road network giving access to all the major habitats. In addition to an astonishing variety of big game, the park boasts an incredibly diverse avifauna, with an all-time list exceeding 520 species. We can expect to encounter close to a hundred species today.

Open-country birding is delightfully easy here, and birding and game watching from our specially designed open-top vehicles is superb. Sandbags stabilize our cameras for sharp images and excellent video right from the vehicle.

Big-game highlights should include Lion, Black-backed Jackal, Common Zebra, Hippo, Common Warthog, African Buffalo, Eland, and Kongoni (Hartebeest). We can also hope for Thomson's and Grant's Gazelles and Impala. But the park's outstanding specialty is the endangered White Rhino. If we are very lucky, we may encounter the much rarer Black Rhino, too.



A mammal highlight, the endangered White Rhino

© Andrew Whittaker

Among many iconic African birds, the savanna is home to such greats as the Common Ostrich and the much sought-after Secretarybird, pairs of which stride through the grass on long legs in search of snakes, which they stomp to death.

Damp areas hold the odd-looking Hamerkop, the subject of local superstition and myth. Just as sorcerers and witches require an object belonging to the person they plan to bewitch, Hamerkops collect all kinds of strange ornaments to decorate their immense domed nests, the largest of any African bird.

In the park's rich marshes, we can expect great studies of Blacksmith, Spur-winged, and Long-toed Lapwings while Three-banded Plovers scurry around on the shore. Forested islands provide perches for African Fish Eagles, African Darters, and Long-tailed (Reed) Cormorants, while Egyptian Geese and Red-billed Teal enjoy the open water. Pied, Malachite, and Gray-headed kingfishers hunt for a fish breakfast, while the banks are patrolled by Black-headed Herons, African Spoonbills, and African Sacred Ibis. With luck, we might even see our first Saddle-billed Storks or Gray Crowned Cranes.

Out on the grasslands, we should encounter our first bustards: Black, White-bellied, and the rare Hartlaub's bustard are all possible. Harsh calls may alert us to Yellow-necked or Shelley's francolin. Long-tailed Shrikes and Northern Fiscals are both fairly common. Today will also be our introduction to the cisticolas, tiny warbler-like birds with names like wing-snapping, singing, winding, croaking, siffling, and stout. The skies are home to White-backed Vultures, Tawny Eagles, Black-chested Snake-Eagles, and one of the finest of all buzzards, the striking Augur. Black-winged Kites hover over the grass in search of prey.

We may enjoy our picnic lunch or breakfast from a forested hilltop overlooking the plains. We'll keep a sharp eye out for raptors or for Crested Francolins feeding under the shrubs. We will encounter flocks of bickering Helmeted Guineafowl, and if we are lucky, White-crested Helmet-shrikes. Speckled Mousebirds and White-bellied Go-away-birds also await us here, each the representative of an endemic family. The go-away-birds, relatives of the turacos, often allow a close approach for excellent views and photography.

Little and Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters sally out from perches as Cape Robin-Chats and Red-backed Scrub-Robins hop through the grass. Equally colorful are the Fischer's Lovebird, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Pale White-eye, and Variable, Scarlet-chested, and Amethyst Sunbirds. Red-cheeked Cordonbleu and African Firefinch are among the many other possibilities.



The delightful Little Bee-eater
© Andrew Whittaker

NIGHT: Emara Hotel Ole Sereni, Nairobi

August 10, Day 4: Masai Mara National Reserve. After an early breakfast, we will check out and drive southwest to the Masai Mara. Our first stop will be at an overlook above the Rift Valley, where we will look for Golden-winged and Bronze Sunbirds, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters, Hunter's Cisticolas, African Citrils, and Baglafaecht Weavers. We may also run into our first Rock Hyrax.

The Mara's savannas are home to immense herds of big game, especially at this time of year, when up to 2 million large mammals are arriving. Together with the contiguous Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater Parks in Tanzania, these savannas cover a staggering 18,650 square miles.



A safari in the Masai Mara © Andrew Whittaker

After lunch, we'll settle into our rooms, with wild Africa literally at our doorstep. A well-constructed boardwalk raised six or eight feet above the ground winds for about half a mile through the forest to an extensive pool system and a large covered blind with glass windows. These pools are home to a hundred Hippos, and we can also observe waterbirds such as the Yellow-billed and African Open-billed storks and Black Crake. Bush Hyrax often sun in nearby trees. In the woodlands, we can look for Spot-flanked and Red-fronted barbets, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, honeyguides, Chin-spot Batis, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, African Paradise Flycatcher, and African Green-Pigeons.



The charming White-browed Robin-Chat
© Andrew Whittaker

Early breakfasts will allow us to be among the first visitors at the park's hotspots. We will spend at least one afternoon birding the hotel grounds and boardwalk, finishing on the lodge's shaded lawns and acacia groves. The grassy areas abound with birds—and sometimes grazing Common Zebras! We hope to enjoy Gray Kestrels and African Gray Hornbills alongside Violet-backed Starlings, Purple Grenadiers, both cordonbleus, or African Hoopoes. Lizards may include the spectacularly colored Mwanza Flat-headed Rock Agama. Groups of energetic Banded Mongoose regularly venture into the garden. Yellow-winged Bats are common here, too.

At dusk, we can relax with drinks on the veranda. The nightly chorus is dominated by the bizarre snorting, grumbling, and wheezing of the Hippos as they leave the water to graze.



Hippos and blood-thirsty oxpeckers © Andrew Whittaker

NIGHT: Keekorok Lodge, Masai Mara National Reserve

August 11–15, Days 5–9: Masai Mara National Reserve. Designated a sanctuary in 1961, the Mara has expanded since then to protect almost 600 square miles of grassland and acacia woodland. Large predators such as Lions, Leopards, Cheetahs, and Spotted Hyenas are easily seen all year round, but the reserve truly blossoms from August to October, during the wildebeest migration.

We have five days in the Mara, longer than most tours spend here. The reserve is named for the Masai people, who call this expanse of land “Mara,” or “spotted,” for the acacia trees and wildlife dotting the plains. The Masai have retained many of their traditional rituals and lifestyle, living in harmony with the wildlife. Income from ecotourism directly benefits the Masai tribes, ensuring the survival of the reserve and its abundant wildlife.

The plains are scattered with zebras, Giraffes, Grant’s and Thompson’s gazelles, and Topi, while the Mara and Talek rivers are brimming with hippos and crocodiles. There’s no better place for the Eland, the world’s largest antelope. Our extra days also improve our chances at some more difficult or rarer mammals. With luck, these could include a Caracal or the delicate Serval, seen on our last tour. The termite-loving Bat-eared Fox was seen on our scouting trip, and the endangered Black Rhino in 2023.



Martial Eagle © Andrew Whittaker

The Mara is an exceptional birding hotspot. The king of the raptors here is the Martial Eagle; capable of bringing down a small antelope, this huge eagle also loves monitor lizards. Southern Ground Hornbills forage, preen, and sunbathe in family groups. Riparian forest may hold the strikingly beautiful Ross’s and

Schalow's turacos, Meyer's Parrot, Klaas's or African Emerald cuckoos, African Pygmy Kingfishers, or White-throated Bee-eaters. Open acacia woodland is home to the awesome Lilac-breasted Roller.

The striking Magpie Shrike, Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, and Gray-headed Bushshrike are also among our objectives. Brushy habitats hold the near- endemic Red-throated Tit, the recently split Usambiro Barbet, and Arrow-marked Babbler. Drier grassy areas are home to Coqui Francolin and Black-bellied Bustard, and we should also find the stunning Rosy-throated and Pangani Longclaws. Yellow-throated Sandgrouse live in the sparse, rock-strewn grassland. We will also search for Two-banded and Temminck's Coursers.

Our carefully timed visit provides a great chance to experience the Great Migration across the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem. This phenomenon cannot be predicted with total precision, but our previous trips have witnessed immense columns of wildebeest, zebras, and antelopes pouring into the Mara. At the Mara River, they mass on the banks before finally plunging into the raging waters to risk swift currents and waiting crocodiles.

A major goal in the Mara is quality time with East Africa's apex predators. We have extremely high chances at finding Lions, Cheetahs, and Leopards, which we have never missed. In 2023, we witnessed a Cheetah kill up close!



Cheetah with a Thompson's Gazelle © Andrew Whittaker

We can always dream of an encounter with the crepuscular Aardwolf or a Ratel, better known as the Honey Badger, famous for its ferocity.

The Mara is home to a large and photogenic lion population, each pride including 15 or more adults. African Buffalos are the usual prey here, but in this season of migration, Wildebeest and Common Zebra are often hunted as well. All of our past trips have observed a Lion pride at a kill.



Lioness and cub at a kill © Andrew Whittaker

Vultures still occur here in large numbers, making it easier for us to locate a kill. The speed with which these scavengers clean up after a big cat or hyena is almost incredible. Lappet-faced Vultures may be the first to arrive, followed by African White-backed and smaller numbers of Rüppell’s Griffons. Standing by on the sidelines are Hooded Vultures and Marabou Storks. Jackals also get their chance. Even a huge zebra can be reduced to bones and hide in less than an hour.

The park’s list of close to 50 raptor species includes the African Harrier-Hawk, Black-chested Snake-Eagle, African Crowned Eagle, Wahlberg’s and Tawny eagles, Lizard Buzzard, Black Goshawk, and Dark-chanting Goshawk. Bateleurs drift effortlessly against the blue skies like so many children’s kites.

Outrageously glossy starlings abound, among them the Violet-backed—common at our lodge—and Great Blue-eared. Quiet marshes are home to the elusive African Painted-Snipe, certainly one of the world’s top shorebirds, and to African Wattled Lapwings, Saddle-billed Storks, and Rufous-bellied Herons. With luck, we could even spot a Dwarf Bittern in the reeds.



The exquisite Saddle-billed Stork © Andrew



Immense Lappet-faced Vulture is the boss at Lion kill. © Andrew Whittaker

We schedule daily breaks in the heat of the day to rest up in your room or enjoy a cool dip in the hotel pool. And if you just can't get enough, you can bird the incredibly rich hotel grounds—or relax on the veranda and let the birds come to you.

NIGHTS: Keekorok Lodge (Day 11-12)
Mara Serena Safari Lodge (Day 13-15), Masai Mara Reserve

August 16, Day 10: To Lake Nakuru. As we leave the park early this morning, we will be keeping an eye out for the stunning Silverbird and the locally distributed Double-banded Courser, along with two very rare birds, the Southern Grosbeak-Canary and Karamoja Apalis. Along the way, we may also meet up with the Augur Buzzard, White-fronted Bee-eater, Abyssinian Wheatear, or, with luck, the near-endemic Jackson's Widowbird.

We will arrive at our lodge in time for lunch. The feeders here attract Greater Blue-eared Starlings, Red-eyed Doves, and even Hildebrandt's Spurfowl. After a mid-afternoon rest, we will explore the grounds in search of the Vitelline and Speke's Weavers, African Hoopoe, White-bellied Tit, Black Cuckoo-shrike, Northern Puffback, African Golden Oriole, Arrow-marked Babbler, and more. An exciting drive into the park may find flamingos gracing the lakeshores, along with many Pink-backed and Great White Pelicans, White-breasted and Reed Cormorants,



Flamingoes, Lake Nakuru, Kenya © Vorobyev Dmitry/Shutterstock

Hadada and Sacred Ibis, and Cape, Red-billed, and Blue-billed teal. Among the shorebirds, we will be looking especially for the uncommon Kittlitz's Plover. Raptors may include Long-crested or Martial Eagle, Black Goshawk, and Lizard Buzzard. Taller woods harbor the sought-after Gray-crested Helmetshrike, Green Wood Hoopoe, Banded Woodpecker, and Little Rock Thrush.

The park is home to the very local Rothschild Giraffe (Baringo Giraffe), the tallest of the three species found in Kenya. The area also boasts a healthy herd of Southern White Rhinos.

Night: Sarova Lion Hill Game Lodge, Nakuru

August 17, Day 11: Nakuru to Lake Bogoria and Lake Baringo. After an early breakfast, we will check out and bird our way out of the park, perhaps catching up along the way with a Squacco Heron, African Jacana, Highland Rush Warbler, or Golden-backed or Grosbeak Weaver. We will stop for lunch at a pleasant lodge near Lake Bogoria, where White-billed Buffalo-Weavers are often common.

After a relaxing break, we will drive to Lake Bogoria National Reserve, the frequent site of one of the world's greatest natural spectacles, the gathering of half a million Lesser Flamingos. We may have to adjust our precise destination, as these birds can unexpectedly move from one lake to another, but wherever we find them, the experience will simply blow your mind.

After pulling ourselves away, we will drive to our air-conditioned lodge on the shores of Lake Baringo. Excellent birding starts right on our doorstep, where Beautiful, Eastern Violet-backed, and Hunter's sunbirds visit the flowering shrubs. The calls of White-bellied Go-away-birds and the beautiful songs of African Black-headed Orioles fill the air. As temperatures drop, the acacia scrub can come alive with birds. We have even seen the striking Gray Crowned Crane right on the lodge's waterfront.



Gray-crowned Crane and Yellow-billed Stork © Andrew Whittaker

NIGHT: Soi Safari Lodge, Lake Baringo

August 18, Day 12: Lake Baringo. At dawn, we will set out on a morning's boat trip exploring Lake Baringo. Working our way along the lake edge and through reed-clogged channels offers fabulous birding and photographic opportunities in the fine early morning light. Flashy Malachite and Pied kingfishers are numerous, and with luck, we may also find the uncommon Giant Kingfisher. The huge Goliath Heron, the world's largest, is a target, as is the iconic Gray Crowned Crane. Hamerkops can be numerous, and we should see their immense stick nests. African Harrier Hawks use their long, flexible legs to extract prey from tree cavities or birds' nests. Among the season's inter-tropical migrants, we should encounter Madagascar Bee-eaters visiting from the south.



Goliath Heron © Andrew Whittaker

Dainty African Jacanas skip across floating mats of reeds on incredibly long toes. African Darters and African Swamphens are common. We'll also keep an eye out for Northern Red Bishops, Chestnut and Village Weavers, Senegal Thick-knees, and colorful Greater Painted-Snipe as flocks of Wire-tailed Swallows swoop overhead.



An iconic African Fish-Eagle
© Andrew Whittaker

The local human fishermen are proud of their charismatic African Fish-Eagles, and we will certainly purchase some fresh fish for them. With cameras ready, we can enjoy incredible views as they fly in to swoop down right in front of our boats and expertly pluck the fish from the water.

Once back on land, we'll focus first on owls, ranging from the super-cool Northern White-faced Owl to the huge Grayish Eagle-Owl; our expert local guide knows their favorite roosting sites. The beautifully patterned Three-banded Courser, crepuscular and nocturnal in its habits, can be seen by day only at a roost. Their wonderful camouflage makes finding the birds very difficult, but with luck, there will be a pair of these dainty beauties roosting on the ground in the shade of the bushes.

We will make our careful way among the thorny bushes and cactus of open sandy and rocky areas in search of roosting Slender-tailed Nightjars and Spotted Thick-knees. Other East African Rift Valley specialties may include Gabar Goshawk, Rufous-crowned (Purple) Roller, Hemprich's Hornbill, Nubian Woodpecker, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Pygmy Batis, Brubru (a delicate shrike), and the brightly colored Green-winged Pytilia.

After our siesta, as temperatures fall, we will drive to the nearby Baringo Cliffs to explore this scenic area on foot. These cliffs are home to an incredibly high concentration of Rock Hyrax, the preferred prey of the rare Verreaux's Eagle. The echoing alarm calls of the hyrax are often the first sign of this magnificent raptor's presence.

Fan-tailed Ravens soar overhead, and if we're lucky, a caterpillar infestation in the acacias may attract Pied or Great Spotted cuckoos. Both Jackson's and Northern Red-billed hornbills (the latter perhaps representing an undescribed yellow-eyed form) can be fairly common in fruiting trees. Playback should pull in Black-throated Barbets or the tiny diurnal Pearl-spotted Owlet. This is a prime location for Bristle-crowned Starlings, Rufous Chatterer, Brown-backed Scrub-Robin, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Red-fronted Prinia, Somali Tit, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, and even perhaps the rare Gambaga Flycatcher. The loud, rolling duets and distinctive displays of the Red-and-yellow Barbet here remind your tour leader of certain dry-country puffbirds in South America.



A gorgeous Red-and-yellow Barbet
© Andrew Whittaker

NIGHT: Soi Safari Lodge, Lake Baringo

August 19, Day 13: Lake Baringo to Aberdare National Park. After breakfast, we will move on to Aberdare National Park, perhaps with a stop along the way at a Cape Eagle-Owl roosting site. Rainforest, spectacular waterfalls, and wild moorlands make Aberdare a wildlife paradise, its cool climate and cold lakes and streams a world away from the sun-baked hills and savannas of other reserves. We expect to arrive in time for lunch at the Aberdare Country Club, with its superb flower gardens often hosting Moustached Tinkerbird, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, and a multitude of dazzling sunbirds. As we enter the park, we will keep our eyes open for Jackson's Francolin, Hildebrandt's or Scaly Spurfowl, Olive Ibis, African Crowned Eagle (seen twice on our first visit), Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, and Mountain Buzzard.

We will reach our lodge mid-afternoon. From the lodge's multi-tiered decks, we will enjoy mesmerizing views of matriarchal herds of African Elephants at the well-illuminated salt lick and waterhole below. Photo opportunities are superb, from above and from the ground-level "bunker," where animals can be extremely close.



Elephants at the Ark waterhole © Andrew Whittaker

Other regular visitors include the attractive Bushbuck, Giant Hogs, buffalo, and Spotted Hyena. But anything can turn up here: a Black Rhino, Golden Cat, or even the rarely seen Bongo, a forest-dwelling antelope.

NIGHT: The Ark Lodge, Aberdare National Park

August 20, Day 14: Aberdare National Park. The lush forests of Aberdare are home to several primates, including the striking Black-and-White Colobus and Sykes Monkey. They in turn make this the ideal home for one of Africa's most powerful raptors, the massive Crowned Eagle.



The magnificent monkey-eating Crowned Eagle © Andrew Whittaker

Other delights today may include Bar-tailed and Narina Trogons, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Blue-headed Coucal, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, White-starred Robin, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, and Malachite and Red-tufted Sunbirds.

NIGHT: The Ark Lodge, Aberdare's National Park

August 21, Day 15: Aberdare to Samburu National Park. After a full breakfast, we will devote the best birding hours to the search for the lovely Hartlaub's Turaco, along with other neat species such as the Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Sharpe's Starling, and Black-throated Apalis.

On our way out of the park, we hope to run into the Rufous-throated Wryneck, a bizarre but attractive woodpecker species. We will also bird dry sandy areas for Black-headed Lapwings, Fischer's Lovebirds, White-fronted Bee-eaters, and Nubian Woodpeckers.

Once at the Samburu Reserve, we will shift into safari mode, enjoying a variety of exciting new birds and mammals as we proceed to our lovely lodge for a late lunch. We may encounter our first Reticulated Giraffe or an immense Somali Ostrich, or a flock of Golden-breasted Starlings, certainly one of Africa's top birds.



Somali Ostrich © Andrew Whittaker

Our lovely lodge nestles into the ruggedly beautiful floodplain of the Ewaso Nyiro River, in the Great African Rift Valley. From our spacious, well-furnished rooms, we have fantastic views over the African plains. A large terrace faces the river valley, ideal for enjoying birds and herds of big game below.

A pathway, parts of it covered, leads through the gardens and scrub forest. There is always something to watch here, from the resident Pearl-spotted Owlet to Northern Red-billed Hornbills taking insects from the

ground. The secluded pool often hosts a group of Vervet Monkeys, and occasionally a troop of Olive Baboons or a Greater Kudu passes through.

After a terrific day, we can cool off with a dip in the swimming pool or take our places in the shaded lounge to watch the wildlife drinking at the lodge's watering hole.

NIGHT: Samburu Simba Lodge, Samburu National Reserve



Northern Red-billed Hornbills © Andrew Whittaker

August 22–23, Days 16–17: Buffalo Springs and Shaba National Reserves.

Between them, these two reserves protect more than a hundred square miles of rugged and arid terrain, bisected by a ten-mile stretch of the Ewaso Nyiro River. The river is the heart of the area, its densely vegetated banks attracting wildlife all year round. The reserves are famous for their red elephants, colored by the river mud they cover themselves with to keep cool and protect against parasites.

Several exciting new mammals await us here. The endangered Beisa Oryx shares the plains with Grevy's Zebras and Common Waterbucks. In the acacia groves, we may find Lesser Kudu and the odd-looking, long-necked Gerenuk. This secluded habitat is also favored by the shy and tiny Kirk's Dik-dik. The big cats are well represented here, with Lions, Cheetahs, and Leopards, and we'll watch for smaller cat species, too.



Leopard © Andrew Whittaker



Elegant Vulturine Guineafowl are fairly common. © Andrew Whittaker

Among the park's more than 400 bird species, the vividly colored Vulturine Guineafowl is common, found here in flocks of up to 30 individuals. The grasslands are also a stronghold of one of the largest of all flying birds, the elegant Kori Bustard; males can weigh up to 42 pounds and stand an impressive five feet tall. With luck, we could encounter a Harlequin Quail. Damp spots nearer the river are good for Greater Painted-Snipe and Gray Crowned Cranes and a favorite site for Reticulated Giraffes and Elands, which offer stunning photographic opportunities.



**Displaying male Kori Bustard
© Andrew Whittaker**

We will also concentrate on finding the breathtaking Golden Pipit. In flight, this bird looks like a huge glowing birdwing butterfly.

The reserve is a bustard lover's paradise, holding both Black-bellied and White-bellied bustards. Drier, bushier habitats mixed with grass are home to the odd Buff-crested Bustard; its harsh calls often reveal its presence.

In more open country, we will pay particular attention to larks such as the Pink-breasted, Tawny, and Foxy. This habitat is shared with Red-headed Weavers and Straw-tailed Whydahs.

We should also encounter Desert Warthogs as they trot through the dry bush, tails held high and erect. We will hope to find the scarce Lichtenstein's or Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse; both are especially fond of water holes. Black-faced Sandgrouse are common here, and unlike most of the family, allow a close approach and great photographic opportunities.

A loud, far-carrying song could lead us to a pair of Rosy-patched Bushshrikes, their sandy-brown body plumage contrasting with a brilliant pink-striped breast and right pink rump. Somali Bee-eaters, solitary and shy, perch unobtrusively in the shade; Striped Kingfisher are usually much easier to spot. Hornbills are well represented by the Eastern Yellow-billed and Von der Decken's, and we'll scan the skies for African Hawk-eagles and rare Egyptian Vultures.



Black-faced Sandgrouse © Andrew Whittaker

Pairs of Pygmy Falcons search for prey from treetop perches in extensive semi-bush country. These delicate birds are so small that they can breed in the nests of White-headed Buffalo-Weavers.



A male Pygmy Falcon © Andrew Whittaker

We'll also keep a keen eye out for Scissor-tailed Kites. Other finds should include Fork-tailed Drongo, Pringle's Puffback (unsalted), Golden Palm Weaver, Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow-Weaver, and Red-collared Widowbird. Riparian specialties could include the uncommon Palm-nut Vulture.

Among the mammals, we'll be watching particularly for Dwarf Mongooses energetically foraging on the ground.

NIGHTS: Samburu Simba Lodge, Samburu National Reserve

August 24–25, Days 18–19: Return to Nairobi via Karimenu River Camp, and departures for home. After an early breakfast, we will set out for the drive back to Nairobi. Along the way, we will visit the charming Karimenu River Camp for some birding and a wonderful homemade lunch. The highly sought-after African Finfoot can sometimes be seen on the

small stream here. Noisy groups of the endemic Hinde's Pied Babbler are fairly common.

We plan to arrive at our comfortable Nairobi hotel by mid-afternoon. Private day rooms will be provided to wash, change, and pack before our final checklist and farewells. Our local ground agent will provide transfers to the airport for our flights with connections arriving in the USA on August 25.

DAY ROOM: Emaru Hotel Ole Sereni, Nairobi (August 24)
Return flights arrive August 25



A male White-bellied Go-away-bird bids us a fond farewell! © Andrew Whittaker

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 10 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Andrew Whittaker, with the assistance of local guides



Andrew Whittaker began his birding passion at the early age of seven in the UK (thanks to his parents). Andy is also a true all-around naturalist with an innate fascination for all aspects of the natural world; he loves sharing in the field his intimate bird, wildlife, and orchid knowledge in a fun and enthusiastic manner. Andy is a qualified ringer/bander trained by the late Dr. Clive Minton (fondly known as the father of shorebird studies). His lifelong fascination with bird migration has seen Andy working around the globe at several top bird observatories: Eilat, Israel; Long Point, Canada; and in the UK at Sandwich Bay and on Fair Isle, Scotland, as well as researching shorebirds in Borneo on their East Asian flyway. A senior member of the VENT staff, Andy has led VENT tours worldwide since 1993, from dense South and Central American rainforests to the great white

continent of Antarctica, and throughout Europe to the deserts of the Middle East. More recently, he has led tours in the bird-rich rainforests of West Africa to the mammal-rich savannas of East Africa, and to observe the cute Red Panda or exotic tragopan in the Himalayas of Nepal.

Andy was born in England; however, he considers himself Brazilian, having lived more than 30 years in this mega biodiverse country, first working for the Smithsonian Institution, studying Amazonian rainforest birds in Manaus. He is widely considered an authority on Amazonian birds, having authored numerous technical publications on the region's avifauna. Andy is also well recognized for his intimate knowledge of South American avian taxonomy and bird vocalizations, with over 800 hours of bird recordings housed in the British Library Sound Archive. This trait has enabled him to discover several exciting new bird species (such as the Cryptic Forest-Falcon in 2002), as well as rediscover others thought to be extinct. Andy is an excellent communicator and calm tour organizer and loves nothing better than finding and sharing a rare,

poorly-known skulker, or telling one of his many fascinating and fun birding and travel stories. His enthusiasm in the field is contagious, and these traits have made him a favored leader amongst participants. Andy had the honor of working with Sir David Attenborough in Brazil as a consultant for the prestigious BBC Life of Birds series. At present, Andy is working with Kevin Zimmer on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil to be published by Princeton University Press. Andy is an associate researcher at the Museum Goeldi, Belem; an active conservationist; and loves photography (with many of his bird images being used in books). He is also an avid football fan of Birmingham City FC and Real Madrid due to its worldwide mega star Jude Bellingham coming from his home team. Andy lives in Porto Alegre, Southern Brazil with his partner, Jaqueline, and their many orchids.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$17,995** per person in double occupancy from Nairobi. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 3 to breakfast on Day 18, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Nairobi and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based on group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,100**.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (January x, 202x). If you prefer to pay your deposits using a credit card, the deposits must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (March 10, 2022) prior to the tour departure date.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: It is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 209 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant's refund will be:</u>
210 days or more before departure date	Your deposit(s) minus \$500*
209 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A "**Force Majeure**" event means any act beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: It is impossible to predict the price of fuel costs at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based on the prices prevailing at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if fuel prices increase significantly, it may be necessary to impose a fuel surcharge.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your **hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, **waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion**, and a **“Cancel for Any Reason”** benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 14 days of making your tour deposit. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 14 days in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

The coronavirus pandemic has brought uncertainty for many people currently holding travel insurance policies or who are considering future travel and purchasing such insurance. Redpoint has added a **Coronavirus FAQ page** to its website that addresses questions and concerns regarding its travel insurance and the impact of COVID-19. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of topics such as policy coverage and limitations, policy modifications, cancellation, refunds, and more. Among the most important points: 1) Trip cancellation solely for concern or fear of travel associated with COVID-19 is not covered; 2) Should you request cancellation of your policy, a full refund of your premium is available only under a limited set of conditions; and 3) Should you request cancellation, you may be eligible to receive a pro-rated refund of the unused portion of your premium or a travel insurance credit. Travel insurance credit (“Premium Credit”) is for the value of the policy purchased and may be applied to future policies. Premium Credits have no expiration dates. Rules and regulations apply.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

Additionally, as countries begin opening up for travel, many are instituting an array of COVID-19 entry requirements, including mandates to purchase travel insurance covering medical expenses due to COVID-19 illness and accommodation in case of quarantine. Ripcord's comprehensive travel insurance plans are designed to satisfy the various country-specific travel insurance entry requirements. Those who purchase a Ripcord policy will receive a "letter of confirmation" that affirms that the policy satisfies such requirements.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. ***Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.***

BAGGAGE:

The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your airline to find out specific weight restrictions. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND INTERNET ACCESS: Accommodations throughout are very good: clean, comfortable rooms with private bathrooms, and all in lovely locations which offer excellent birding on the grounds. There are delightful swimming pools and well-stocked bars at all lodges (wonderful to hang out and have a refreshing cool dip), and good shops offering gifts, clothing, and practical items are found at the Mara, Samburu, and Nairobi lodges/hotels. Laundry service is available at all lodges. Excellent service. Internet is available at all lodges, though it may be slow or unreliable, particularly away from the central reception and dining areas.

TRANSPORTATION: The group will be traveling in excellent comfortable specially-built four-wheel-drive Land Cruisers (six window seats in each, so enough for everyone) with a driver/guide in each vehicle. Each vehicle has an excellent open-top system that is superb for birding and mammal watching, and protects from the sun. Sandbags are provided for photographers, and are magnificent at stabilizing for sharp images and excellent video. An ice chest is located in each vehicle, holding cold drinks at all times.

CLIMATE: The rainy and dry seasons have become less well defined and predictable in recent years. However, we are expecting mainly dry, cool to warm or maybe hot weather, with daytime temperatures ranging from 77° to 89° F. Lake Baringo daytime temperatures could be a little hotter. Evenings with clear skies are very pleasant but may become chilly when temperatures may be down to the mid-50s. Generally, the temperatures and climate are pleasant and comfortable—it can sometimes be hot, but never humid. However, during the hottest times of the day we plan to be relaxing in our lodges. **MANY of our early morning safari rides and our boat trip on Lake Baringo require a light windproof jacket**, especially if it's a little misty in low-lying areas or there is a cold front. Layers can always be shed easily and left in the safari jeep later as temperatures rise.

CLOTHING: Depending on the weather, which is variable, heat, and your susceptibility to the sun, you could bring a mix of T-shirts and long-sleeved and lightweight blouses or shirts, **PLUS one layer for cooler or cold temperatures.** Similarly, it is OK to wear shorts in most situations around the lodges, but lightweight, washable pants (especially those that convert into shorts by unzipping legs) are preferable, because they offer additional protection from sun, thorny plants, and biting insects. A light sweater or sweatshirt for cooler evenings and a light, easily packable rainjacket are recommended. **Neutral colors (grays, tans, and khakis) are most appropriate for birding.** Easily washable, quick-drying clothes are useful. All lodges have reasonable laundry services, so you can pack light. Alternatively, to lighten your load, you may consider bringing some clothes you plan to discard. These can be worn on the tour and left behind—and are very well received by local staff that we meet. Remember that all of our lodges have very nice swimming pools, so bring swimwear if you wish. There are few opportunities for any serious hiking, so lighter walking shoes should be adequate. **A sunhat/cap and sunglasses are strongly recommended.** Casual clothes are adequate throughout. Remember, please, to leave the fancy jewelry at home.

CURRENCY: There are opportunities to exchange small amounts of U.S. dollars for Kenyan shillings at some of the lodges, but you will not need large amounts. Almost all places (including souvenir and gift shops) accept U.S. dollars and major credit cards. There are ATM machines in Nairobi if required—bring your PIN number.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Nairobi is required. Visas are required for entry by United States citizens and may be obtained online. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: The world has been in the grip of a pandemic since early 2020, a result of the uncontrolled spread of SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the illness COVID-19. COVID-19 is transmitted through person-to-person contact, almost always through inhaling respiratory aerosols or droplets exuded from an infected person. Common signs of COVID-19 illness include fever or chills, fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, loss of taste or smell, and more. Based on what is known about the disease, COVID-19 is far more serious than seasonal flu. Few places in the world have been unaffected. The impact on travel has been substantial, as demonstrated by the fact that VENT did not operate a tour between late March 2020 and late April 2021. The development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, particularly in the United States, has allowed VENT to return to tour operations. We emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. **With this in mind, VENT instituted a COVID-19**

vaccination requirement. All tour participants and tour leaders must be fully vaccinated in order to travel with us while we are still in a declared public health emergency. In accordance with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), full vaccination is defined as an individual being 14 days beyond having received the required amount of vaccine for reaching full immunity to the degree specific vaccines confer. In the United States, so far, this means either the two-shot sequence for the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Proof of vaccination must be provided to our office at least one week before the start of the tour and kept with you while on the tour. Because the world is a very different place than it was before the pandemic, we've made a number of important adjustments to our processes to ensure that our tours can operate as safely as possible. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19>, where you may view our **COVID-19 Protocols for VENT Tours** document, which details the guidance VENT will follow in the operation of its tours in the time of pandemic. Our decision and policy are firmly rooted in the latest CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. As we move forward, VENT will continue to follow the latest information from the CDC and will update our policy accordingly. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION:

Departure Tax - None

Electricity - For Kenya, the associated plug type is G, which is the plug that has **3 pin rectangular**, unfused in a triangular pattern like the UK. Kenya operates on a 240V supply **voltage**

Language - Swahili and English are the official languages

Time - 9 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds:

Stevenson, T., and J. Fanshawe. *A Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. This is the one to buy if you do not already have the Zimmerman field guide. Well illustrated, up to date, and recommended.

Zimmerman, Dale A., Donald A. Turner, and David J. Pearson. *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania*. Helm Field Guides, 2001 (revised). This is a detailed, comprehensive, and well-illustrated field guide, very good for birding this region and no larger than the Stevenson guide. The smaller, paperback edition is more suitable for field use.

Mammals:

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. London: Academic Press, Harcourt Brace and company, 1997. A complete and informative guide to African mammals; full of information and good illustrations.

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Pocket Guide to African Mammals*. London: Christopher Helm, 2016 (second edition). A much smaller, lighter pocket version of the excellent field guide above, but still with excellent information and the same illustrations. Suggested if you are on a mission to reduce weight!

Stuart, Chris, and Tilde. *Southern, Central and East African Mammals: A Photographic Guide*. Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1998. For those wanting a much lighter reference, this is your book. Excellent photos and good brief text to most of the mammals we are likely to see in a very compact pocket-sized format.

Estes, Richard Despard. *The Behavior Guide to African Mammals*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. A splendidly detailed book with masses of information on the ecology of all the wonderful large mammals we shall see.

Reptiles:

S. Spawls, K. Howells, R. Drewes & J. Ashe. *A Field Guide to the Reptiles of East Africa*. Academic Press, 2002. A super-comprehensive, though large and heavy, guide to reptiles.

S. Spawls, K. Howells, & R. Drewes. *Pocket Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of East Africa*. Christopher Helm Publications (in UK), 2006. 144 pages, 230 color plates. This is a lightweight and portable guide, partly adapted from the popular and highly acclaimed field guide reviewed above. Covering the most prominent 150 reptiles and 80 amphibians found in the region (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi), with concise text, photographs and a map for each, this is a convenient and attractive pocket guide for a diverse and often conspicuous group of animals.

Branch, Bill. *A Photographic Guide to the Snakes, Other Reptiles and Amphibians of East Africa*. Struik, 2005. A very handy, slim yet fairly comprehensive little guide to reptiles and amphibians.

Plants:

Blundell, M. *Wild Flowers of East Africa*. New York: HarperCollins Pub Ltd, 1999. A handy field guide with good photographs for anyone especially interested in the botany.

General:

There is a wealth of material available for this region. Suggested good “general” reading about Africa, the wildlife, history and former lifestyles include:

Douglas-Hamilton, Iain. *Among the Elephants*. New York: Viking Press, 1975.

Grzimek, Bernard. *Serengeti Shall Not Die*. New York: Dutton, 1968.

Matthiessen, Peter. *The Tree Where Man Was Born*. Penguin Press, 1995.

Moss, Cynthia. *Portraits in the Wild: Animal Behavior in East Africa*. (2nd ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Packer, Craig. *Into Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Reader, John. *Africa: A Biography of a Continent*. Penguin, 1998.

Schaller, George. *Serengeti Lions a Study of Predator-Prey Relations*. 1976.

Zimmerman, Dale A. *Turaco Country*. Portal, Arizona: Sky Island Press, 2015. This recently published book is a masterfully written memoir of the author's 30 years of fieldwork in east Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda). Zimmerman writes extensively of birds, mammals, butterflies and plants, from both the perspective of a professional biologist and an accomplished birder and natural historian. Much attention is given to the author's early visits to the region in the early 1960s, and, as such, provides an evocative account of a time when visitors on safari could tent camp virtually anywhere. This book makes excellent pre-and-post-tour reading (and the photographic selection is remarkable), but it is too big and heavy to carry with you on tour.

TIPPING: NEW TEXT Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "**VENT**") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on January 5, 2023, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also

reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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