

July 23, Day 8 - Thursday: Drive to Ngorongoro Crater and the Sopa Lodge with a picnic lunch; Migration Camp to Oldupai Gorge is a 4-6 hours drive including gate registration; Stop at a Maasai village and at the Oldupai Gorge Museum on the way; Oldupai to Sopa Lodge is 2-3 hours circling the crater rim. This is a long day; 1 night at Ngorongoro Sopa Lodge.



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Oldupai Gorge

The archaeological site of Olduvai Gorge is located in the eastern Serengeti in northern Tanzania within the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The gorge is a steep sided 4 to 8- km (30 mile) long ravine, which forms part of the Great Rift Valley. It is situated on a series of fault lines which, along with centuries of erosion, has revealed fossils and remnants of early humankind. Excavations in the early twentieth century by the famous archaeologist, Dr Louis Leakey, uncovered some of the earliest remains of fossil hominids at Olduvai. Seventeen



years after the first discovery of human forms, Leakey's wife, Mary, discovered the unmistakable fossilized footprints of a human ancestor who had walked along a riverbank three million years ago. Since then, excavators working in Olduvai have found skeletal remains of a number of ancient hominids – Homo Habilis, Homo Erectus and Australopithecus Boisei. Old campsites and what is believed to be a butchery site, as well as a loosely built circle of lava blocks was also found



suggesting that crude shelters were also built here. Other findings include hunting weapons, basic tools and remains of dead animals once killed by humans. There is also a museum where visitors can listen to lectures and see visual representation of the discoveries made in the region. The name Olduvai originated from a European misspelling of Oldupai, the correct Maasai word for this region of great historical importance – named after the wild sisal plant fiber growing in abundance in the gorge. The Kiondo bags are made from this plant. Olduvai is not terribly exciting, but if you are passing, it is of such significance that it's worth a couple of hours. Some good-quality jewelry and Masai artifacts are for sale at the small museum.



Ngorongoro Sopa Lodge

Sopa is the only hotel on the eastern rim and is also the only lodge from which you can enjoy a sunset over the crater.



It therefore offers guests unique and spectacular views down into the crater floor and of the sunsets over the western horizon. Another major advantage of this location is that guests can be in the crater within five minutes of leaving the lodge. The 92 rooms are all very spacious, comfortable and set below the main lodge, so views of the forest and crater are great. It's a well managed lodge with friendly staff and excellent cuisine.

Sopa has the added benefit of having a road that winds into the crater making for quick and easy forays to the floor.



Perched on the eastern rim of the world renowned Ngorongoro Crater, Ngorongoro Sopa Lodge offers some of the most impressive views of this extinct volcano. Housed under African style thatch, Ngorongoro Sopa Lodge has an elegantly designed main lounge and dining area, in which superb dining and relaxation are complemented by views of rolling hills and the mountains beyond. You can make the most of the sunshine in the lodge's

large swimming pool surrounded by spacious lawns.

The Ngorongoro Crater

If you were offered a single safari holiday in your lifetime; one chance in which to experience Africa, the Ngorongoro Crater is where you would want to go. Nowhere else in Africa, does such a varied cast of animals gather to graze, live and die. The Crater was formed by the collapse of

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one of Africa's volcanic giants over two million years ago. This was a volcano so high that it is likely that it would have overshadowed Mount Kilimanjaro if it had not blown up instead, covering the Serengeti in ash and collapsing to the crater floor.

Ngorongoro Crater is the world's largest intact volcanic caldera. On a game drive into the belly of the crater you will encounter some 30,000 animals over areas as diverse as swampland, open savannah, grassland, forest and lake; all of this within the steep rock walls that climb some 600m to the rim. A herd of 70 elephants haunt the forest of yellow fever trees; hippos inhabit the swamps; wildebeest and buffalo graze the grasslands in their thousands, and hundreds of flamingos live on the lake, much to the delight of some 400 scavenging hyenas and Golden jackals.



Ngorongoro also boasts the highest concentration of predators in Africa. One hundred black-maned lions, skittish cheetah and leopards stalk the crater floor, bellies full and grins wide as they pick and chose from thousands of potential victims.

To add to this surreal environment of wild harmony, Maasai tribesman - easily visible in their traditional scarlet robes - can be spotted guiding their cattle down the steep crater walls. The mythical Maasai graze their cattle within the crater, unshaken by the presence of so many predators, but they must enter and exit daily.

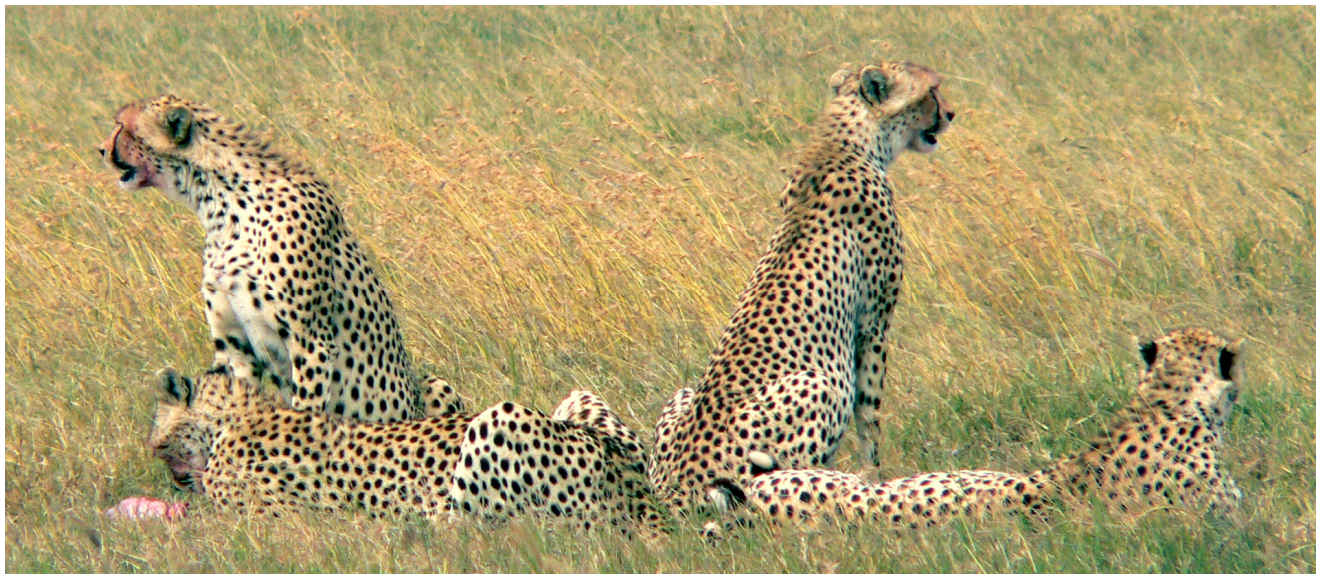
Accommodations on the Ngorongoro Crater rim are limited, but in most cases, with views so spectacular, it will definitely enhance your experience to stay there.

The crater plays host to almost every individual species of wildlife in East Africa. Even Africa's extremely rare black rhino has found refuge within the crater's walls.

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If you're seeking an African safari experience with masses of grazers, excellent sightings of predators and the mystery of the Maasai, all within one unique setting, the Ngorongoro Crater will satisfy.



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July 24 & 25, Day 9 & 10 – Friday & Saturday: Game drive in the crater the next morning



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Charles Bies, Makonde Woodcarver

Stop at Makonde woodcarver studio in Karatu: visit with Charles Bies.



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