

VARD AFRICA

The Vard Wild Experiences

Fourteen extraordinary encounters with Africa's wild places,
wild people and wild creatures — curated to the standard
that defines the Vard Africa name.

14	100%	24/7
wild experiences	bespoke & private	expert support

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EXPERIENCE 01

Wild Game Drives

The heartbeat of every African safari — from the golden first light to the electric darkness of a night drive.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
3–4 hrs per drive	Year-round	All Kenya circuits	All levels

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The game drive is three entirely different encounters wrapped in the same activity — each defined by the quality of light and the behaviour of wildlife at that specific hour. The dawn drive departing at 6am catches the landscape in the hour of greatest predator activity and greatest atmospheric beauty.

Where permitted — in private conservancies across Laikipia, northern Kenya and the Samburu ecosystem — the night drive opens the wilderness to the nocturnal community: aardvark, honey badger, porcupine, civet, zorilla and the specific drama of lion and leopard hunting in total darkness.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Dawn drives in private conservancies — no other vehicles, no shared sightings, 10,000+ acres to yourselves
- ♦ Night drives by electric vehicle at Ol Pejeta Bush Camp — silence allows the closest possible wildlife approach
- ♦ Personalised wildlife briefings from KPSGA-certified guides before every single drive
- ♦ Pop-up bush breakfasts and sundowners at guide-chosen positions mid-drive
- ♦ Vehicle tracking of collared lions and leopards with telemetry equipment where available
- ♦ Elevated open-sided vehicles optimised for photography and unobstructed sightlines

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED

Private vehicle, KPSGA-certified guide, park/conservancy fees, bottled water, snacks on drive

NOT INCLUDED

Specialist photography equipment, personal items

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

We always prioritise private conservancies over national reserves. On 10,000 acres with one vehicle, you are not sharing a lion sighting. You own it completely.

EXPERIENCE 02

Wild Authentic Walking Safaris

Africa at ground level — the most intimate, most physically engaged and most fundamentally honest wildlife encounter available.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
2–5 hrs	Jul–Oct, Jan–Feb	Laikipia, North Kenya, Samburu	Moderate

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The walking safari is the original form of safari — the way all wildlife encounters happened before the vehicle arrived. Walking returns the guest to the landscape as a participant rather than an observer. A buffalo at 40 metres on foot is categorically not the same as a buffalo at 40 metres from a vehicle.

Vard Africa offers walking safaris exclusively in private conservancies and the wild north — environments where the guide's expertise and the armed ranger's presence create the specific safety framework that genuine big-game walking requires.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Armed KPSGA-certified professional guides with deep conservancy-specific knowledge
- ♦ Tracking workshops — reading spoor, identifying droppings, ageing footprints in the sand
- ♦ Botanical interpretation — medicinal plants used by the Samburu, ancient cycads, habitat identification
- ♦ Cultural walking with Maasai or Samburu warrior guides in northern Kenya
- ♦ Half-day and full-day options; fly camping extensions for the most committed walkers
- ♦ Available at Il Ngwesi, Sarara, Koros, El Karama, Ol Pejeta and all Laikipia conservancies

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Professional guide, armed ranger escort, water, first aid kit, park/conservancy walking permit	Personal hiking boots — the single most important item to bring on any Kenya safari

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The walking safari is the experience we recommend to every returning guest who has mastered the vehicle. It is not only for the adventurous — it is for anyone who wants to feel what Africa actually is under their feet.

EXPERIENCE 03

Rhino Tracking

The most specific and most urgent conservation encounter in Kenya — including the last two northern white rhinos alive on Earth.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
2–4 hrs	Year-round	OI Pejeta, Sera, Borana, Lewa	All levels

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

OI Pejeta Conservancy is home to over 130 critically endangered eastern black rhinos — the largest single population in East Africa — as well as Najin and Fatu, the last two northern white rhinos alive anywhere on Earth. The Sera Community Conservancy in northern Laikipia is home to the first and most successful community-owned black rhino sanctuary in Kenya.

Rhino tracking combines on-foot tracking with radio telemetry, working with the conservancy's dedicated ranger and research teams. The encounter is not a game drive sighting. It is a purposeful search for a specific animal, conducted by people whose daily work is the protection of these animals.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Private visit to Najin and Fatu — the last two northern white rhinos alive anywhere on Earth
- ♦ Radio telemetry tracking sessions with OI Pejeta's Ecological Monitoring Department
- ♦ Black rhino individual ID — learning to recognise animals by ear-notch and body markings
- ♦ Baraka — OI Pejeta's blind black rhino — interactive feeding encounter, included in conservancy fee
- ♦ Sera Conservancy night rhino tracking with community rangers (seasonal availability)
- ♦ Live data contribution to population monitoring datasets running continuously since 1988

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Specialist guide, conservancy tracker, telemetry equipment where applicable, conservancy fees	Special activity fees at OI Pejeta for specialist tracking sessions (approx USD 60 per adult)

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

Book the northern white rhino visit on the last full day of an OI Pejeta stay — not the first. After four days of conservation immersion, the encounter with the last two of their subspecies lands with the full weight of everything you have learned.

EXPERIENCE 04

Wild Hot-Air Ballooning

One hour of silence above the African savannah at sunrise — the perspective that no game drive can replicate.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
1 hr + champagne breakfast	Jul–Oct peak, year-round	Mara, Amboseli, Laikipia	No requirement

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The balloon departs at approximately 6am, rising silently into the first light. For approximately one hour, guests drift at altitudes between 30 metres — low enough to see individual animals' expressions — and 300 metres, high enough for a full panoramic spread of the Mara's plains, rivers and escarpments. The silence is total. The wildlife below does not react.

After landing — at a position determined by the wind — a champagne bush breakfast is served on a fully laid table in the middle of wherever the wind has brought you. Freshly baked pastries, Kenyan coffee, seasonal fruits and sparkling wine under the shade of a single acacia tree.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Silent flight over the Maasai Mara at altitudes between 30 and 300 metres above the plains
- ♦ Great Migration aerial views July–October — thousands of wildebeest visible simultaneously
- ♦ Champagne bush breakfast at landing site — properly set table in the open wilderness
- ♦ Cameron balloons operated by fully licensed pilots with impeccable Kenya CAA safety records
- ♦ Private basket option — the entire basket exclusively for your group (up to 12 or 16 guests)
- ♦ Available in Amboseli for simultaneous Kilimanjaro and elephant family aerial views

PRICING GUIDANCE

Shared basket: from USD 530–650 per adult. Private basket: from USD 5,040–7,840 depending on season and basket size. Children aged 8–15: from USD 330. Minimum age 8 years; minimum height 1.2m.

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED

Return camp transfers, flight, champagne bush breakfast, landing fees, park/conservancy fees

NOT INCLUDED

Personal camera equipment, gratuities for the flight crew

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

Book the private basket for any group of six or fewer — the per-person cost difference is modest and the experience transforms entirely. September and October offer the same excellent wildlife as peak season with significantly fewer other balloons in the air.

EXPERIENCE 05

Wild Helicopter Safaris

The most dramatically beautiful aerial programme in East Africa — the Suguta Valley, Lake Turkana and the northern frontier seen from above.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
Half-day to full-day	Year-round	Northern Kenya, Laikipia, Coast	No requirement

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The Vard Africa helicopter safari programme, operated in partnership with Tropic Air Kenya, is the most specifically extraordinary aerial experience available from any DMC in East Africa. From Koros Camp in the South Horr Valley, the helicopter flies north into the Suguta Valley — over white volcanic sand dunes, ancient lava flows, Lake Logipi (pH 14, thousands of flamingos) and the jade expanse of Lake Turkana.

From any Laikipia lodge, the helicopter connects the conservancy circuit in 20-minute hops that would otherwise require 3-hour road transfers — transforming the logistics of a northern Kenya circuit into the most dramatically scenic transportation programme available.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Suguta Valley circuit — volcanic dunes, lava flows, Lake Logipi flamingos, Lake Turkana aerial
- ♦ Northern Kenya helicopter circuit — Sarara to Koros, Sasaab to Sarara, Desert Rose to Koros
- ♦ Mount Kenya summit overflight — the retreating Lewis Glacier and the summit peaks from above
- ♦ Maasai Mara migration river crossing aerial — wildebeest formations at 100 metres above the water
- ♦ Koobi Fora flight — the cradle of humanity on Lake Turkana's eastern shore
- ♦ Remote landing at positions inaccessible by any other means — fly camp drops, private picnics

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Private charter, licensed pilot, fuel, landing fees where applicable	Park or conservancy entry fees at destination, personal equipment

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The Suguta Valley helicopter excursion from Koros is the single most visually extraordinary aerial experience in the Vard Africa portfolio. Book it for the first morning — not the last. The landscape sets the register for the entire stay that follows.

EXPERIENCE 06

Authentic Cultural Immersion & Craft Workshops

Africa's most compelling cultural encounters — with communities sharing their actual lives, not a performance of them.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
Half-day to full-day	Year-round	Across all Kenya circuits	All levels

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The Vard Africa cultural programme goes beyond the village visit. Craft workshops are conducted by the specific people who make the things: Samburu women whose beadwork carries 400 years of pattern knowledge; Il Ngwesi women whose VSO Jitolee cooperative produces beaded phone holders and lampshades; and the Maasai women of OI Lentille whose workshop is available only to conservancy guests.

Vard Africa books only genuinely community-based cultural encounters — properties where camp staff grew up in the communities guests visit, where fees go directly to the dancers, and where the encounter is a genuine homecoming rather than a curated show.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Authentic Maasai manyatta evening — hosted by community elders with a shared meal inside the compound
- ♦ Samburu Singing Wells ceremony — warriors singing water from the earth in a human chain (dry season)
- ♦ Beadwork workshop with Il Ngwesi, Samburu or Maasai women's cooperatives
- ♦ Cultural dance performance — up to 100 community participants; USD 670 paid directly to the dancers
- ♦ Community walk with Mr Kariuki at Olepangi Farm — knowledge of local social history described as "astonishing"
- ♦ Rain prayer ceremony at OI Lentille — when the seasons require it — one of the most sacred Maasai practices

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Community liaison, cultural guide, all applicable community fees, workshop materials	Craft purchases from cooperatives — proceeds go directly to the artisans who made them

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The most powerful cultural encounters happen where the guide's family lives in the village being visited. At Il Ngwesi, all 18 staff grew up in the surrounding Maasai communities. This is not a tour. It is a homecoming — shared with you.

EXPERIENCE 07

Wild Fly Camping Experiences

One night in the absolute wild — no walls, no lights, no sounds except the ones Africa makes itself.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
1–3 nights	Jul–Oct, Jan–Feb	Laikipia, North Kenya, Turkana	Moderate

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

Fly camping is sleeping in the African wilderness without a permanent camp between you and it. Everything is carried in. Everything is carried out. On South Island in Lake Turkana, Fiammetta delivers the group in the afternoon, the camp is set on the island's shoreline, and guests sleep to the sound of Nile crocodiles and flamingos on the lake's margins.

The sky tent innovation at El Karama — suspended in the forest canopy — elevates the standard fly camp experience into a tree canopy encounter: sleeping above the forest floor with the specific acoustic environment of the wilderness after dark, with Sophie Grant's renowned bush cooking served below.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ South Island fly camp — overnight on a UNESCO World Heritage volcanic island in Lake Turkana
- ♦ Suguta Valley fly camp by helicopter — sleeping in the most geologically active landscape in Kenya
- ♦ El Karama sky tents — suspended in the forest canopy, with Sophie's celebrated bush cooking
- ♦ Sarara fly camp in Namunyak Conservancy — the northern Kenyan night sky at 1,600m altitude
- ♦ Valley floor camp at Koros — two mountains on either side, total darkness and total silence above
- ♦ Professional setup — bedding, cooking, water filtration, dedicated chef, ranger security all night

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
All camping equipment, bedding, cooking equipment, water filtration, chef, ranger escort throughout	Personal sleeping attire appropriate for the specific altitude and season of travel

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The northern Kenya night sky at 800–1,600 metres, with no light pollution for 200 kilometres, is among the finest dark-sky environments available to any traveller on Earth. The Milky Way is a physical object above you. This is why we go.

EXPERIENCE 08

Wild Stargazing Experiences

The night sky over Africa — one of the last genuinely dark skies available to any traveller anywhere on Earth.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
1–2 hrs	Year-round	All Kenya circuits	No requirement

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

Northern Kenya above 1,000 metres is among the genuinely dark-sky environments remaining on Earth. Light pollution does not reach these places. The Milky Way is visible as a physical cloud of light. The Southern Cross, Scorpius, Sagittarius and the Magellanic Clouds are visible simultaneously.

Vard Africa’s stargazing experience combines naked-eye observation with guided astronomical interpretation — the Southern Cross as a navigation tool, the Samburu and Maasai mythology of the night sky, and the identification of planets, constellations and satellite passes in real time.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Guided naked-eye observation with a guide who speaks the Samburu mythology of the night sky
- ♦ Telescope observation of Saturn’s rings, Jupiter’s moons and Andromeda Galaxy where available
- ♦ Meteor shower observation during peak annual events — the Perseids and Leonids are exceptional
- ♦ Astrophotography guidance — long-exposure technique, star trail composition, Milky Way framing
- ♦ Campfire and telescope combination evening — fire, sky, guide’s narration, total silence around you
- ♦ Mount Kenya high camps above 4,000m — altitude-enhanced stargazing of extraordinary clarity

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Astronomical guide, telescope where available, campfire, warm blankets, hot beverages	Personal binoculars — strongly recommended and available to borrow from most properties

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The finest stargazing in the portfolio is at Koros Camp — 800 metres altitude, zero light pollution, and a valley silence that makes the acoustic environment as extraordinary as the visual one. The fly camp on the valley floor adds a dimension the lodge terrace cannot.

EXPERIENCE 09

Wild Horseback Safaris

Wildlife encounters at equestrian height — the only safari experience where animals do not register your approach as a threat.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
Half-day to multi-day	Jul–Oct, Jan–Feb	Laikipia, Olepangi, El Karama	Beginner to advanced

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

Horseback safaris offer the most specifically intimate wildlife encounter available in Kenya — one that depends on a biological fact: most plains wildlife does not identify a horse-and-rider combination as a predator threat. A fully grown black rhinoceros can be observed from horseback at distances that no vehicle or walking safari typically achieves.

The Olepangi Farm programme, with 16 horses covering the Mount Kenya foothills, is one of Kenya's most beautiful highland equestrian environments. El Karama's programme operates across 15,000 acres with the Ewaso Nyiro River as the destination.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Riding alongside Ol Pejeta's black rhino population — the most specific horse-rhino encounter in East Africa
- ♦ Olepangi Farm highland morning rides — Mount Kenya foothills at dawn, tea and coffee included
- ♦ El Karama conservancy rides to the Ewaso Nyiro River — hippos and crocodiles at close approach
- ♦ Laikipia plateau rides with zebra, giraffe and elephant at equestrian proximity
- ♦ Multi-day horseback expeditions in the Samburu area (seasonal availability)
- ♦ All skill levels catered — beginners on farm paddocks, advanced riders on open wilderness routes

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Horse matched to rider ability, experienced equestrian guide, riding helmet, all equipment	Personal riding boots — strongly recommended; trainers accepted for beginners only

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

Olepangi Farm's 16 horses are its most celebrated asset. Elizabeth's specific care for the herd and the guides' knowledge of each horse's character ensure every rider is matched to the right animal before the first step is taken.

EXPERIENCE 10

Wild Camel Safaris

The original northern Kenya transport — the semi-arid landscape at the pace and from the height the Samburu and Rendille have always used.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
1–3 hrs	Year-round	North Kenya, Laikipia, Suyian	All levels

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The camel is not merely an activity vehicle in northern Kenya. It is a cultural statement — the specific animal through which the Samburu, Rendille and Turkana have navigated this landscape for thousands of years. Riding alongside a camel in the northern highlands is engaging with the specific logic of this landscape in a way that neither the vehicle nor the horse provides.

The camel safari at Ol Lentille is a 90-minute river ride led by Maasai warriors — the handlers' specific knowledge of the animals and terrain providing both safety and cultural depth simultaneously.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Ol Lentille 90-minute river camel ride led by Maasai warriors — the conservancy's signature activity
- ♦ Northern Kenya community camel treks connecting Samburu and Rendille pastoral landscapes
- ♦ &Beyond; Suyian camelback safari — kopje terrain and river woodland from camel height
- ♦ Wildlife observation from camel height — animals respond as though to a familiar neighbour
- ♦ Camel handling demonstration — traditional pastoral skills explained by the handlers themselves
- ♦ Cultural engagement with herders about the camel's essential role in northern Kenya's economy

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Camel, experienced handler, safety briefing, guide escort throughout the activity	Soft riding trousers recommended — camel saddles are specific in their physical demands

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The camel safari at Ol Lentille is simultaneously an encounter with the landscape, a cultural engagement with the Maasai warrior guides and a physical comedy of unexpected proportion — the dismount is universally and fondly described as "memorable."

EXPERIENCE 11

Conservation-Led Experiences with Rangers

Behind the conservation curtain — working alongside the rangers and researchers actually keeping Kenya's wildlife alive.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
Half-day to full-day	Year-round	Laikipia, North Kenya, Samburu	All levels

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The Vard Africa conservation experience is not about observing conservation. It is about participating in it. From the Reteti Elephant Sanctuary keeper programme — bottle-feeding and monitoring rescued elephant calves — to OI Pejeta lion tracking with VHF telemetry, guests contribute live data to population monitoring datasets.

These experiences are available because Vard Africa has built specific relationships with the conservation teams at each property — relationships that produce genuinely immersive encounters not available through the standard conservancy visitor programme.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Reteti Elephant Sanctuary — bottle-feeding rescued calves and monitoring alongside the keeper team
- ♦ OI Pejeta lion tracking with telemetry — VHF radio tracking, individual lion ID, live data contribution
- ♦ Bloodhound anti-poaching training at OI Pejeta — mock-poacher exercise with tracker dogs
- ♦ Sera Community Conservancy rhino ranger patrol — accompanying armed rangers protecting the sanctuary
- ♦ Elephant monitoring walk — ear vein ID, condition assessment, GPS logging on live conservation data
- ♦ Junior Ranger Programme for children aged 4–12 at OI Pejeta — full ranger oath and certification

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Conservation guide, safety briefing, relevant permits; specialist activity fees where applicable	Specialist activity fees at OI Pejeta for telemetry tracking sessions (approx USD 60 per adult)

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The bloodhound anti-poaching exercise is simultaneously the most educational and the most universally enjoyed activity in the portfolio. Children love it completely. Adults discover within five minutes exactly how effective these dogs are.

EXPERIENCE 12

Wildlife, Yoga & Wellness Retreats

The African wilderness as the world's finest wellness environment — altitude, silence, clean air, a landscape with no interest in your schedule.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
Daily or multi-day	Year-round	Across all Kenya circuits	All levels

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

Highland East Africa — with its altitude-enhanced air quality, its total absence of urban noise and its specific daily rhythm of dawn activity and midday restoration — is one of the finest wellness environments on Earth. Vard Africa curates wellness programming from sunrise yoga at Olepangi Farm to the cold plunge pool at &Beyond; Suyian to the most powerful wellness experience of all: Point Lenana at 4,985m at dawn.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Sunrise yoga at Olepangi Farm — on the terrace above the Mount Kenya foothills at 1,950m altitude
- ♦ &Beyond; Suyian wellness centre — cold plunge, steam room and shaded yoga studio in the kopje landscape
- ♦ Ol Lentille spa — Swedish massage, hot stone therapy, aromatherapy with the conservancy view below
- ♦ Post-Mount Kenya summit recovery at Olepangi — hot baths, kitchen garden meals, farm walks
- ♦ Wild swimming in mountain tarns at 3,500m — the most exhilarating cold-water wellness available
- ♦ Digital detox programmes at off-grid lodges — Kitich Forest Camp, Koros Camp, remote fly camps

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Instructor fees for guided sessions; spa treatments booked and priced separately per property	Personal yoga mat — available to borrow at all properties in the portfolio

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The most powerful wellness experience in the portfolio is not in a spa. It is on the summit of Point Lenana at 4,985m at dawn — altitude clarity, complete silence, 360-degree views and the physical achievement of the approach. No treatment room produces what a mountain produces.

EXPERIENCE 13

Guided Nature Walks

The intimate, unhurried, botanically rich alternative to the game drive — for guests whose curiosity extends beyond the mammals.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
1.5–4 hrs	Year-round	All Kenya circuits	Easy to moderate

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The guided nature walk is the most accessible activity in the portfolio and, for the right guest, the most deeply informative. The guide's knowledge of the botanical landscape, the bird species, the invertebrate community and the ecological relationships of a specific piece of land is knowledge that the game drive's focus on large mammals consistently overlooks.

At altitude on Mount Kenya, the nature walk becomes a botanical expedition through the most extraordinary plant community in Africa — giant lobelias, giant groundsels and Afro-alpine endemics found nowhere else on Earth.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Mount Kenya moorland botanical walks — giant lobelias, groundsels, Afro-alpine endemic species
- ♦ Laikipia conservancy tracking walks — medicinal plant ID and Maasai botanical knowledge
- ♦ Ngare Ndare ancient highland forest walk with swimming holes in crystal mountain streams
- ♦ El Karama organic garden walk with Sophie Grant — farm-to-table knowledge from the source herself
- ♦ Specialist bird walks — 400+ species accessible across the Vard Africa circuit
- ♦ Kitich Forest Camp forest walk — one of Kenya's most pristine montane forests, UNESCO Biosphere

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Certified nature guide, field guide references, bird list specific to the area visited	Personal binoculars — strongly recommended and available to borrow from most camps

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The nature walk is the experience most often overlooked in planning and most often described as a highlight in the post-trip debrief. The Samburu guide who identifies 47 bird species and explains the medicinal use of every plant is demonstrating a lifetime of accumulated knowledge.

EXPERIENCE 14

Iconic Out of Africa Bush Sundowners

The single most universally beloved moment of every Kenya safari — a private table in the wilderness as the African light performs its final act.

DURATION	BEST TIME	LOCATIONS	DIFFICULTY
1–1.5 hrs	Year-round	All Kenya circuits	No requirement

ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE

The Out of Africa sundowner is the guide's specific choice of position — the kopje top, the specific valley view, the escarpment edge as the sun drops — combined with the camp team's setup of table, chairs, ice and the guest's preferred drinks, and the specific silence that descends on the African savannah in the forty minutes before nightfall.

Vard Africa guides curate specific sundowner positions at every property — positions not in the tourist brochure, not shared with other vehicles, chosen for their quality on that specific afternoon based on where the day's wildlife activity has been.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ♦ Private positions selected by the guide on the day — never shared, never repeated, never the same
- ♦ Properly set table in the wilderness — not a vehicle tailgate but a complete outdoor living room
- ♦ Signature Vard Africa sundowner menu — house cocktails, local wines, freshly made canapés
- ♦ Rooftop bar at Ol Lentille Gallery — 270-degree conservancy view, finest elevation in Laikipia
- ♦ Koros Camp rock pool at dusk — the South Horr Valley in the late light, mountains on both sides
- ♦ Suguta Valley helicopter sundowner — landing at the dunes for the specific geological light at sunset

INCLUDED & NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED	NOT INCLUDED
Selected drinks and canapés, table and chair setup, guide transport to and from position	Premium spirits or vintage champagne — available at additional cost at most properties

VARD AFRICA INSIDER NOTE

The sundowner is the moment guests describe first when asked what they remember most. Not the lion sighting. The sundowner. The combination of light, cold drink, guide's story, company and the specific completeness of the moment — this is what Africa does that nowhere else does.

FREQUENTLY ASKED

Questions

Everything our guests need to know before stepping into the wild.

Q01 Which experiences are available year-round and which are seasonal?

Game drives, guided nature walks, cultural immersion, stargazing, sundowners, camel safaris, helicopter safaris and wellness activities are available year-round. Walking safaris and fly camping are most recommended in the dry seasons (July–October and January–February) when trails are firmer. The Singing Wells encounter is dry season only. Hot-air ballooning operates year-round but is most spectacular during the Great Migration (July–October).

Q02 Do I need prior experience for walking safaris or horseback safaris?

No prior experience is required for walking safaris — guides set a pace appropriate to the group. For horseback safaris, beginners are catered for at all equestrian properties with guided paddock sessions before open-terrain rides. Advanced riders can book multi-day wilderness expeditions. The Ol Pejeta horse-alongside-rhino experience is available to intermediate and advanced riders only.

Q03 What is the minimum age for each experience?

Hot-air ballooning: minimum 8 years, height 1.2m. Walking safaris in big-game areas: minimum 12 years recommended. Night game drives: all ages. Fly camping: minimum 8 years. Helicopter safaris: from 4 years. Horseback safaris: 6 years for farm riding; 14+ for open wilderness. Conservation Junior Ranger Programme at Ol Pejeta: 4–12 years.

Q04 Are the walking safaris genuinely safe?

Every Vard Africa walking safari in big-game territory is led by a KPSGA-certified professional guide and accompanied by an armed Kenya Wildlife Service or conservancy ranger. The safety record of properly guided walking safaris in private conservancies is exceptional. Your guide's pre-walk safety briefing is thorough and specific. We operate only in environments where the proper safety framework is established.

Q05 Can activities be combined in a single day?

Yes — Vard Africa designs multi-activity days as standard. A typical day might include a dawn walking safari (6–9am), guided nature walk (10am–12pm), lunch and rest, an afternoon game drive with bush sundowner (3:30–7pm) and an evening stargazing session (8–9:30pm). The itinerary is always calibrated to the group's energy, age range and specific interests.

Q06 What should I wear for game drives and walking safaris?

Neutral earth tones — khaki, olive, brown, beige. Avoid white, black, bright colours and camouflage (prohibited in some parks). Layering is essential: cold at dawn, warm by mid-morning. Closed shoes for walking safaris — sturdy hiking boots are ideal. Wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, SPF50+ sunscreen. On night drives, an additional warm layer is essential.

Q07 Is hot-air ballooning safe? What if weather is poor?

All operators used by Vard Africa hold Kenya Civil Aviation Authority licences and impeccable safety records. The pilot has final authority on go/no-go decisions — if conditions are unsafe, the flight is cancelled and rescheduled or refunded. The landing can be bumpy; guests with serious back conditions should consult a physician. Expectant mothers cannot fly.

Q08 Can we do night game drives at any camp?

Night drives are permitted in private conservancies (Laikipia, northern Kenya, Samburu ecosystem) but NOT in national parks and reserves including the Maasai Mara, Amboseli and Samburu National Reserve. Properties offering night drives in the Vard Africa portfolio include Sarara, Sasaab, Il Ngwesi, Ol Lentille, El Karama, Koros and all Laikipia conservancy lodges.

Q09 Do cultural visits feel authentic or staged?

The quality varies enormously across Kenya. The best encounters in the Vard Africa portfolio happen at properties where staff grew up in the communities being visited — Il Ngwesi (all 18 staff from surrounding Maasai villages), Koros Camp (all nine staff from Anderi village) and the Namunyak Conservancy properties. We book only genuinely community-based encounters.

Q10 How far in advance should experiences be booked?

Hot-air balloon safaris should be booked as early as possible — they sell out weeks ahead during peak season. The Ol Pejeta northern white rhino private visit and lion tracking have limited daily slots and should be pre-booked at time of camp booking. Fly camping, helicopter safaris and private cultural events require minimum 4–6 weeks notice. Vard Africa manages all advance bookings as part of the full itinerary planning service.

Q11 What is included in Vard Africa's experience fees?

Vard Africa's all-inclusive rates cover game drives, guided nature walks, bush sundowners, cultural visits and standard conservation experiences within the home conservancy. Hot-air ballooning, helicopter safaris, fly camping, specialist conservation activities and activities outside the home conservancy are priced separately. A complete all-in cost breakdown is provided for every itinerary before confirmation.

Q12 What is Vard Africa's policy on environmental impact?

Every Vard Africa-curated activity operates under the specific environmental standards of the conservancy or park it takes place within. We brief all guests on Leave No Trace principles for walking safaris and fly camping. 100% of Vard Africa's conservation activity surcharges are paid directly to the relevant conservancy trust. Our helicopter programme uses the minimum fuel required for each specific excursion.

Ready to design your wild experience?

Begin planning ›

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