

VARD AFRICA | DESTINATION GUIDE

The Great Rift Valley, Kenya

Where the Earth Opened and Africa's Most Extraordinary Story Began

"To stand on the edge of the Great Rift Valley and look out across its floor the lakes shimmering in the distance, the volcanic mountains rising on the far escarpment, the Maasai cattle moving in long lines toward the water is to understand, in a way that no reading or study can produce, what it means that this is the cradle of humanity. Everything that matters in the story of our species happened here, in this extraordinary cleft in the earth's surface, and coming here is not merely a holiday. It is a homecoming." — Vard Africa, Destination Curators.

DESTINATION INTRODUCTION

The Great Rift Valley, Kenya

The Largest Valley in the World — Africa's Geological and Ecological Soul.

The **Great Rift Valley** is, by any measure, one of the most extraordinary geographical features on the surface of the earth. Stretching some **6,400 kilometres** from the Beqaa Valley of Lebanon in the north to Mozambique in the south and passing through the heart of Kenya with a dramatic, escarpment-lined width of 40 to 60 kilometres the Rift Valley is not merely a landscape. It is the living record of the geological forces that shaped the African continent, the ecological crucible that produced the greatest diversity of large mammals in the world, and, most profoundly, the birthplace of the human species itself.

Kenya's section of the Rift Valley from Lake Turkana in the far north to the soda lakes of the southern border is the most dramatic, most biologically significant and most scenically extraordinary portion of this extraordinary global feature. The valley floor, at roughly **1,800 to 1,900 metres above sea level**, is lined on both sides by escarpments of volcanic rock that rise to over **3,000 metres** the Mau Escarpment and Eburru in the west, the Aberdare Range in the east. Between these walls, the valley floor is dotted with a chain of lakes of wildly varying chemistry, each with its own character, ecology and extraordinary avifauna.

The valley's volcanic heritage is visible everywhere. **Dormant volcanoes** like Mount Longonot, Menengai Crater, Suswa and Eburu rise from the valley floor and escarpment edges their craters and slopes providing extraordinary hiking, the geothermal energy beneath them powering a significant portion of Kenya's electricity grid through the Olkaria Geothermal Complex within Hell's Gate National Park. **Obsidian outcrops**, volcanic plugs, geysers, hot springs and the characteristic black lava fields that give the valley its sometimes lunar quality are constant reminders of the geological forces that continue to shape this landscape the Rift is still actively widening, at a rate of a few millimetres each year, as the African and Somali tectonic plates continue their slow, inexorable separation.

The **lakes of the Kenyan Rift** are among the most remarkable natural features in East Africa. **Lake Naivasha** at approximately 50 square miles the largest freshwater lake in the valley sits at the valley's highest elevation and provides the ecological foundation for one of Kenya's most diverse and most beautiful lakeside environments. **Lake Nakuru**, within its eponymous national park, is the celebrated flamingo lake its alkaline waters supporting algae that feed vast pink flocks of both greater and lesser flamingo, and its surrounding habitat providing one of Kenya's finest concentrations of both black and white rhinoceros alongside lion, leopard, Rothschild's giraffe and a staggering diversity of birdlife. Further south, beyond the volcanic landscape surrounding **Lake Magadi**, the extraordinary soda lake that provides nesting habitat for flamingos and the livelihood for the local Maasai, the valley opens into the extraordinary **South Rift** a remote, wild, and largely unexplored region of savannah, escarpment, wetland and community conservancy that represents Kenya at its most authentically, purely wild.

The human history of the Rift Valley is as extraordinary as its geology. **Olduvai Gorge** just across the Tanzanian border and the shores of Lake Turkana in Kenya's far north have yielded some of the earliest human fossils known to science, establishing beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the Rift Valley is the physical origin point of our species. **Prehistoric tools** discovered at the Kariandusi site near Lake Elementaita date back over **1.4 million years** making the Valley not just metaphorically but literally the cradle of humanity. The **Maasai** who arrived in the Rift Valley in the 17th century following centuries of southward migration from the Nile Valley brought with them a culture of pastoralism, spiritual depth and warrior tradition that has shaped the Valley's human landscape ever since. Their cattle, their red shukas, their ornately beaded jewellery and their extraordinary relationship with the land they inhabit are as much a part of the Rift Valley's character as the flamingos on Lake Nakuru or the hippos in Lake Naivasha.

The **colonial history** of the Valley is equally fascinating and considerably more complicated. From the late 19th century, European settlers attracted by the temperate climate, the fertile soils and the extraordinary wildlife began to acquire vast ranches along the valley floor and its escarpments. Many of these ranches survive today as working agricultural estates that have evolved, over generations, into some of the finest private wildlife conservancies in East Africa Soysambu, Olerai, Loldia, the Oserian each with its own history, its own ecology and its own approach to the ancient tension between productive agriculture and wildlife conservation.

Today, Vard Africa considers the Great Rift Valley one of Kenya's most compelling and most transformative travel destinations not simply for the wildlife, though the wildlife is extraordinary, but for the totality of the experience: the geology visible in every volcanic cone and lava field, the ecology visible in every lake and every flamingo flock, the human history embedded in every Maasai warrior and every colonial homestead, the sheer and overwhelming scale of a landscape that reminds every visitor, daily and unmistakably, of their own smallness in the world.

THE LAKE NAIVASHA ECOSYSTEM

Lake Naivasha, Great Rift Valley

Kenya's Highest Lake — A Freshwater World of Extraordinary Beauty

Lake Naivasha occupies a singular position in the geography of the Kenyan Rift Valley. At **1,884 metres above sea level** making it the highest lake on the Rift Valley floor it is also the only significant freshwater lake in the valley chain, a distinction that gives it an ecological character entirely distinct from the alkaline soda lakes to the north and south. Where Nakuru, Bogoria, Elementaita and Magadi derive their biological identity from the algae-rich alkaline conditions that support their famous flamingo populations, Naivasha's freshwater ecology supports a completely different and equally extraordinary diversity of life.

The lake's name derives from the Maasai *Nai'posha* meaning "**rough water**" or "**turbulent lake**" a reference to the sudden squalls and storms that can arise on its surface with little warning, transforming the calm, papyrus-fringed shallows into a white-capped inland sea within minutes. These same papyrus beds great swaying forests of the tall sedge that once lined the Nile provide habitat for hippos, waterbuck and a remarkable diversity of wetland birds, while the yellow fever acacia woodland on the lake's shores supports giraffes, zebras, impala, bushbuck and, most spectacularly, colobus monkeys whose black-and-white capes sweep through the canopy with theatrical elegance.

The lake covers approximately **130 square kilometres** and is fed primarily by the Malewa and Gilgil rivers, whose delta creates one of the most beautiful and ecologically significant sections of the north shore the area where several of the finest private estates in this guide are located. Over **400 species of birds** have been recorded at and around Lake Naivasha, including **African fish eagles**, whose haunting double call across the water is one of the most evocative sounds in Africa, **great white pelicans**, **goliath herons**, **Malachite kingfishers**, **African jacanas** walking on lily pads, and the extraordinary nocturnal concentration of **waterfowl** that the lake attracts from across the Rift Valley.

The Naivasha basin sits within a landscape of considerable historical interest. The valley has been occupied by pastoral communities for millennia; the lake's shores attracted early colonial settlers whose presence left an architectural and cultural legacy the extraordinary **Djinn Palace**, Joy and George Adamson's **Elsamere** (now a conservation centre), and the string of private estates that have been in continuous family occupation for over a century that gives the north shore in particular a quality of historical atmosphere found nowhere else in Kenya's highland lakes.

The contemporary Naivasha landscape is a complex balance of conservation, agriculture and tourism. The **floriculture industry** Naivasha is Kenya's largest cut flower producing area, supplying a significant proportion of Europe's roses, carnations and other cut flowers coexists with wildlife conservancies, private lodges and community land in an intricate and sometimes contested arrangement. Vard Africa's properties in this guide are among those that have found the most eloquent and most sustainable balance between productive land use and wildlife conservation.

Our Accommodation & Trade Partners in Lake Naivasha

RUBI RANCH LAKE HOUSE

Moi North Lake Road, Lake Naivasha | The Contemporary Ranch Sanctuary

Location: Rubi Ranch Lake House sits on **1,200 acres of pristine working ranch** along **Moi North Lake Road** on the quieter, less-visited northern shore of Lake Naivasha beneath the quiet volcanic presence of **Mount Eburu** ("The Mountain of Steam"), an ancient volcanic peak that rises gently above the lake and surrounding plains. Located just 3 kilometres past the renowned Great Rift Valley Lodge and one gate past the celebrated Loldia House, the ranch touches the shores of Lake Naivasha, offering expansive views and raw, unmediated natural beauty in one of the most exclusive and private corridors on the north shore an area with only five ranches, ensuring that privacy is not a luxury but a fundamental condition of the experience.

Introduction & History

Rubi Ranch Lake House represents a new and distinguished chapter in the story of Lake Naivasha's finest private properties a **contemporary expression of lakeside ranch living** that brings to the north shore a level of design sophistication, spatial generosity and thoughtful guest experience that distinguishes it from the colonial-era estates that have long defined the area's character. Where Ajabu, Olerai and Loldia derive their identity from decades or centuries of accumulated family history, Rubi Ranch's collection of private stays which span hilltop seclusion and direct lakeside living offers a beautifully crafted contemporary response to the same extraordinary landscape.

The collection includes **Hyrax Hill** (named for the celebrated nearby prehistoric site) a horizon-facing hilltop retreat of considerable architectural beauty and panoramic Rift Valley view's alongside the **contemporary lake houses** that sit directly on the north shore, each blending natural materials (reclaimed timber, volcanic stone, handcrafted woodwork collected from across East Africa including Rwanda) with the generous, light-filled spaces of a thoughtfully designed contemporary home. The property sits within a **working ranch** that raises horses alongside its cattle and wildlife population morning rides across the dew-wet highland plains at 6,000 feet are one of the ranch's most celebrated pleasures.

The culinary philosophy at Rubi Ranch reflects a deep commitment to place: meals are prepared by a private chef from ingredients drawn from **volcanic soil and fresh lake waters** the organic productivity of the highland Rift Valley translated into cuisine of considerable quality. The private chef operates in consultation with each guest group; dietary requirements, preferences and occasions are accommodated with warmth and skill.

Ownership & Management

Rubi Ranch Lake House is **privately owned and managed** through a dedicated team that reflects the property's commitment to personal service and the authentic rhythms of highland ranch life. The owner's deep engagement with the Kenyan luxury travel sector informs every aspect of the guest experience from the careful sourcing of each piece of furniture to the design of the activity programme. The property does not accommodate bachelor or bachelorette parties.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Rubi Ranch Lake House's collection of **five private stays** spans multiple configurations:

Hyrax Hill — A four-bedroom retreat on the hilltop, designed around panoramic Rift Valley views, wood-burning fireplace and the specific quality of light and elevation that a hillcrest position above the lake provides. Locally sourced artworks, hand-carved wooden doors, bead-adorned sun catchers and Mazeras stone bathrooms with natural marble sinks tell a story of African heritage in every material choice. Sleeps up to 8.

The Lakehouses — Contemporary lakeside stays in which floor-to-ceiling glass and generous outdoor decking create an immediate, unmediated relationship with Lake Naivasha and its birdlife. Each lakehouse combines the architectural language of a modern Kenyan highland property with the natural materials uncut timber, cowhide accents, leather that connect it to the ranch landscape.

An **infinity pool** at each stay, designed to blend seamlessly with the surrounding landscape and to reflect the sky above the lake in a continuous visual flow. **WiFi** available but intentionally limited in some areas to encourage the digital detox that the ranch environment naturally promotes. Private chef. Laundry. Full ranch staff.

Amenities & Facilities

Equestrian programme — Chestnut horses available for dawn and evening rides through the ranch's private trails.

Boat access to Lake Naivasha for wildlife viewing and birdwatching — hippos, fish eagles, pelicans and colobus monkeys visible from the water.

Working ranch tours — the opportunity to observe and participate in the rhythms of a productive highland ranch, including the organic vegetable garden. Nature walks and birdwatching on the ranch's private trails. Cycling along Moi North Lake Road through the extraordinary highland Rift Valley landscape.

The **Great Rift Valley Golf & Resort** is 5 miles away.

Crater Lake Game Sanctuary — 7 miles.

Hell's Gate National Park — 19 miles.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ The ranch kitchen philosophy is built around **volcanic soil and fresh lake water** as the two fundamental sources the organic produce of the highland farm and the daily catch from the lake, prepared with skill and presented with the generosity and warmth that characterise the best private house dining in Kenya.
- ✓ Outdoor dining on the lakehouse decks, in the farm's natural settings or for special occasions on the lake shore itself.
- ✓ The **Leleshwa Vineyard** a short drive away offers intimate wine tastings that add a rare and delightful dimension to the Naivasha culinary experience.

Health & Safety

- ✓ The lake and pools require supervision for younger children.
- ✓ The ranch's private road is rough in places — 4x4 vehicle access recommended.
- ✓ The property maintains close relationships with the local medical infrastructure and Vard Africa's emergency network covers all contingencies.

Why We Love Rubi Ranch

We love Rubi Ranch for the **quality of its contemporary vision** for the way it brings a new and entirely serious aesthetic sensibility to a landscape that has been defined for a century by colonial-era homesteads, and demonstrates that the north shore of Lake Naivasha has room for something genuinely fresh and genuinely beautiful.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Dawn horse riding on the ranch when the Rift Valley mist still fills the valley and the hippos are returning to the lake and the fish eagles are beginning their morning calling is one of the most quietly extraordinary experiences available from any Naivasha property.

Book the hilltop Hyrax Hill for groups who want both the spectacular view and the sense of historical connection to the prehistoric heritage of this remarkable place.

Families & Children

- ✓ Rubi Ranch Lake House is warmly welcoming to families.
- ✓ The horses, the ranch environment, the boat access to the lake and the proximity to Hell's Gate and Crescent Island make it a richly stimulating environment for children of all ages.
- ✓ Pool supervision required at all times.

AJABU HOUSE

Loldia Farm, Moi North Lake Road, Lake Naivasha | The Century Estate

Location: Ajabu House sits on the **Gilgil and Malewa delta of Lake Naivasha**, within the extraordinary **Loldia Farm** a 5,500-acre private farm and wildlife conservancy on the north-west shore of the lake. The property is accessed via **Moi North Lake Road**, 14 kilometres from the A104 Nairobi-Naivasha-Nakuru highway. Loldia airstrip just minutes from the house receives scheduled daily flights from Nairobi's Wilson Airport on Safarilink, reducing the journey from Nairobi to a remarkable **25 minutes by air**. By road from Nairobi, guests should allow approximately **2 hours**.

Introduction & History

Ajabu means "**a miracle**" in Kiswahili and the name is the most honest possible description of what this property is. Nestled beneath enormous spreading fig trees on a clifftop above Lake Naivasha, its manicured lawns and terraced gardens sloping down toward the water, looking out across the lake's extraordinary delta to the conical volcanic peak of Mount Longonot and the rolling shoulders of the Aberdare Range, Ajabu House is one of those rare places that stops conversation the moment you arrive.

The property was **built by Wilfred and Mairo Hopcraft in the early 1930s** and has been in the **JD Hopcraft family for over 100 years** a continuity of ownership that gives it the accumulated character, the deeply personal atmosphere and the quality of historical resonance that only genuine family homes can possess. Added to over the decades as the family grew and the farm evolved, the house today is a beautifully complex arrangement of original buildings and thoughtful additions, each carrying the mark of the people who have lived and loved here across five generations.

The **Siriane Guest House** the oldest of the outbuildings, constructed by **Italian Prisoners of War in the mid-1930s** carries its own extraordinary history. The word *siriane* means "*peace*" and the extraordinary historical irony of a place of peace built by men of war during the most violent conflict in human history gives this cottage a depth of human meaning that enriches the whole estate.

The farm itself is part of the **Loldia Conservation Area** a 5,500-acre private wildlife sanctuary in which nature has been allowed to reclaim the land alongside the working agricultural elements. The result is a property where zebra, waterbuck, impala, giraffe and colobus monkeys move through the same landscape as the family's farm, their presence as natural and unremarkable as the farmhouse itself.

Ownership & Management

Ajabu House is **owned by the great-grandchildren of the original Hopcraft settlers** and managed by the current generation of the family young Kenyans with a deep love for the place and a genuine commitment to the quality of guest experience.

- ✓ Loldia Farm has been in the family for over a century; the warmth and personal investment that generates is visible in every aspect of the property's management.

Intimate Luxury safari living — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements.

Ajabu House accommodates **up to 18 guests** across **8 bedrooms** in three distinct buildings:

- ✓ **Main House** — The original family home, comprising a **Master Bedroom** (a large ensuite room with an antique bath and stunning views across the lake delta, Aberdare Range and Mount Longonot), plus additional bedrooms, a drawing room, dining room, kitchen and the deep covered veranda that is the social heart of the estate. The main house has the accumulated character of a century of family life Persian rugs, watercolours, family photographs, the particular warmth of rooms that have been genuinely lived in.
- ✓ **Siriane Guest House** — The extraordinary 1930s Italian POW building: **2 spacious ensuite rooms** with views across the lake and its unique delta and Mount Longonot. One double, one double-or-twin. Named for peace; built in war; the most historically atmospheric building on the property.
- ✓ **The Muse Guest House** — Converted from the original farm offices and stables in 2014 into a family accommodation building of considerable charm. Comprising one family room (with shared bathroom — double bed in the parent section, bunk and queen in the children's section) and two separate double ensuite bedrooms. The Muse sits across from the main house with lovely garden views.

All rooms feature mosquito nets, quality linen and the character of their specific history.

The grounds are **exceptionally suited to families** — manicured lawns, terraced gardens, a wildlife wall surrounding the property, a clay **tennis court** below the house and a trampoline for younger guests.

Hippos graze the lower lawns at night; the morning tea service must sometimes wait for their unhurried return to the lake.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ A spectacular **wooden deck shaded by giant fig trees** overlooking the lake the setting for breakfast, lunch, sundowners and evening meals in all weathers.
- ✓ **Boating and fishing** on Lake Naivasha (fishing rods not provided, but can be arranged).
- ✓ **Birdwatching** — pelicans, kingfishers, fish eagles and over 400 species easily observed from the lake and grounds.
- ✓ A visit to the **organic vegetable garden**. **Tennis** on the clay court.
- ✓ A walk around the geothermal steam jets of **Eburu Farm** (45 minutes' drive).
- ✓ **Crater Lake Excursion** (park fees required).
- ✓ Day trips to Mount Longonot, Hell's Gate National Park and Lake Nakuru National Park all arranged through the family's driver network.
- ✓ WiFi access all through out.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

Ajabu operates on a **self-catering basis** the family provides a chef and full housekeeping team; guests provide and purchase their own food and drink.

- ✓ The great **Buffalo Mall** in Naivasha town and an excellent **Farm Shop and Butchery** on South Lake Road provide all supplies.
- ✓ The Naivasha town market offers the freshest local produce, lake fish and regional specialties.
- ✓ Meals taken on the lake-view deck beneath the fig trees are among the most pleasurable al fresco dining experiences available in the Rift Valley.

Health & Safety

- ✓ The Loldia Conservation Area contains buffalo and hippos; guests walking beyond the property boundary should do so with a guide.
- ✓ The lake and its banks require appropriate supervision for young children.
- ✓ The road access to Ajabu is steep and rough in sections; 4x4 is recommended.

Why We Love Ajabu House

We love Ajabu for its **irreplaceable authenticity** for the century of family history embedded in every room, for the Siriane Guest House and its extraordinary backstory, for the hippos on the lawn at dusk, for the view from the deck that encompasses the delta, the lake, Mount Longonot and the Aberdare Range in a single, panoramic sweep of Rift Valley beauty.

Why Our Guests Will Love Ajabu

Guests who respond to the particular quality of **lived-in history** the family photographs, the antique bath, the clay tennis court, the POW guest house and who want to inhabit a real family home in one of Kenya's most extraordinary settings will find Ajabu House deeply, lastingly satisfying.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Watch the hippos return to the lake at dawn from the deck they move through the garden in the grey light of early morning with a surpassing grace that their daytime wallowing never suggests. And take the boat out to the Gilgil-Malewa delta at sunset: the birdlife at the river mouth, with the Aberdares behind and the lake turning gold, is one of Naivasha's most beautiful spectacles.

Families & Children

Ajabu House is **exceptional for families** the grounds, the tennis court, the trampoline, the boating, the hippo-watching, the colobus monkeys in the fig trees above the house and the accommodation's flexibility for large, multi-generational family groups make it one of the finest family private house experiences in the Kenyan Rift Valley.

OLERAI HOUSE

Olerai Wildlife Sanctuary, North Lake Naivasha | The Conservation Estate

Location: Olerai House sits within the **300-acre Olerai Wildlife Sanctuary** on the north-west shore of Lake Naivasha approximately 120 kilometres north-west of Nairobi, accessible via a straightforward 2-hour drive (mostly good tarmac with a short murram stretch at the end) or a scheduled 20-minute flight from Wilson Airport on Safarilink to the nearby Loldia airstrip.

Introduction & History

Olerai House is, in the judgement of many who know Lake Naivasha's private landscape intimately, one of Kenya's best-kept secrets a property of considerable history, genuine warmth and extraordinary natural beauty, hidden away on a 300-acre estate that has been rewilded since 2001 to produce one of the most wildlife-rich private landholdings on the north shore of the lake.

The property has been in the **Rocco and Douglas-Hamilton families** for more than **90 years** the Douglas-Hamiltons, one of the most celebrated and most committed conservation families in African history, who have dedicated their lives to the study and protection of Africa's elephants. **Iain and Oria Douglas-Hamilton** world-renowned elephant researchers and the co-founders of **Save the Elephants** lived at Olerai for much of their remarkable careers, and the property carries the intellectual and moral weight of their extraordinary legacy. The house is today managed by their daughter **Saba Douglas-Hamilton** and the wider family, who continue to oversee its conservation mission with the same passion that has always animated the Douglas-Hamilton enterprise.

- ✓ The decision in **2001** to **turn the property back to nature** to cease the cattle ranching and crop farming that had occupied the land for decades and to allow the ecosystem to recover has produced, over 25 years, one of the most beautiful and most wildlife-rich private properties in the Naivasha basin.
- ✓ The farm is now shrouded in bougainvillea, the scent of wildflowers fills the warm air, and **giraffe, zebra, colobus monkeys, impala and buffalo** move freely through the grounds.
- ✓ Guests sharing the breakfast table with giraffe and watching colobus descend from the fig trees overhead are experiencing the tangible result of a conservation commitment that began years before most destinations had thought seriously about rewilding.

Ownership & Management

Olerai House is **owned by the Douglas-Hamilton family** and managed by **Oria Douglas-Hamilton**, who is intimately involved in the daily experience of guests and whose personal warmth and encyclopaedic knowledge of the lake's ecology and history transforms a stay at Olerai from a beautiful holiday into something genuinely enriching.

Intimate Luxury safari living — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

- ✓ Olerai House accommodates **up to 12 guests** across **6 individually decorated ensuite double rooms**, each named for an African animal: **Chui** (Leopard), **Swara** (Gazelle), **Twiga** (Giraffe), **Ndovu** (Elephant), **Kiboko** (Hippo) and **Nyati** (Buffalo).
- ✓ The rooms reflect the family's deep African sensibility: bright woven rugs, colourful florals, earthy tones and vibrant colours, art objects and craft pieces gathered from across East Africa's great conservation landscapes.
- ✓ The **Twiga and Ndovu rooms** (in a separate private house) offer unsurpassed views of hippos grazing in the evenings.
- ✓ The **garden** the estate's social heart stretches from the main house down to the lake in a series of beautifully maintained outdoor spaces, with picnic spots scattered under the acacia trees, an outdoor fireplace, long dining tables for communal meals and the constant company of the estate's remarkable wildlife.
- ✓ The **Olerai Dairy and Studio** two additional separate cottages available on the same estate can be added to accommodate larger family groups or multi-family bookings, extending total capacity and providing private spaces within the communal setting.

Amenities & Facilities

Guided walks through the sanctuary a deeply rewarding natural history experience in an environment where buffalo and hippo are present, requiring appropriate guidance.

- ✓ A **night game drive** in the Olerai conservation area. Use of the **swimming pool at Sirocco House** the Douglas-Hamilton family home on the same property, available to guests.
- ✓ **Boat safaris** on Lake Naivasha with the option of a flamingo boat ride to Lake Oloidien or a picnic excursion to Crescent Island.
- ✓ Horse riding at a nearby farm, Golfing.
- ✓ **Guided birdwatching** with a resident ornithologist.
- ✓ **Mount Longonot** hiking arranged on request.
- ✓ Day trips to Lake Nakuru National Park.
- ✓ Organic vegetables and fruits from the estate garden, prepared by the resident chef in consultation with each guest group.
- ✓ WiFi access all through the property.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ Olerai operates on a **farm-to-table philosophy** the estate's organic kitchen garden produces a significant portion of the fresh produce served at meals, and guests are welcome to explore the garden or participate in picking their day's fare.
- ✓ The breakfasts at Olerai are legendary: **homemade granola, yogurt, scones**, fresh fruit, juices, honey from the estate's own **apiary** and freshly baked treats set the standard for the day.
- ✓ Hot breakfasts and farm-to-table specials for lunch and dinner are available on advance order.
- ✓ Both omnivorous and **plant-based options** are offered with genuine enthusiasm at your new home.
- ✓ Meals are taken on the garden terrace or under the great acacia trees, with the lake as backdrop and the resident wildlife as company.
- ✓ Olerai's dining is not about culinary complexity; it is about the extraordinary pleasure of eating beautifully prepared, genuinely organic food in one of the finest natural settings in Kenya.

Health & Safety

- ✓ The sanctuary contains buffalo and hippos; all walks beyond the immediate garden require a qualified guide.
- ✓ Children must be supervised around the lake margin.
- ✓ Pool supervision essential all through your stay.
- ✓ Medical assistance accessible via Naivasha town, 2 kilometres from the property.

Why We Love Olerai House

We love Olerai for its **conservation soul** for the Douglas-Hamilton family's 90 years of commitment to this land and to the wildlife of Africa, for Oria's warmth and knowledge, for the giraffes at the breakfast table and the colobus in the fig trees above the house. This is a property that earns its beauty; the rewilding of the estate since 2001 is one of the most genuinely moving conservation stories in the Naivasha basin.

Why Our Guests Will Love Olerai

Guests who want to inhabit a **conservation legacy** to wake in the morning to the sounds of wildlife that 25 years of rewilding have restored to this extraordinary landscape, and to eat breakfast with giraffes, and to walk with a guide through a private sanctuary of 300 acres of recovered wildness will find Olerai House among the most deeply satisfying private house experiences in Kenya.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Ask Oria about the elephants. Her lifelong knowledge of Africa's elephant populations, accumulated across decades of field research with Iain, is among the most profound and most personal available from anyone in conservation and sharing it over dinner on the Olerai terrace is one of those conversations that guests carry home as among the most formative of their lives. Do not miss the garden pick: choosing the vegetables for your lunch from the organic garden, with the lake visible through the fig trees, is a small but genuinely moving experience.

Families & Children

Olerai is **outstanding for families**. The estate's resident wildlife, the birdwatching, the boat safaris, the lake margin exploration, the children's bedrooms in the private Twiga-Ndovu house, Oria's warmth with children, and the morning hippo watching from the garden create a family experience of exceptional range and depth. Children under 4 stay free.

LOLDIA HOUSE

North-West Shore, Lake Naivasha | The Governors' Collection Classic

Location: Loldia House sits on the **north-western shores of Lake Naivasha** within a **6,500-acre working farm** that is one of Kenya's oldest continuously occupied colonial estates established in **1939** and now operating as part of the prestigious **Governors' Camp Collection**. The property enjoys direct lakeshore access and extraordinary views across the water to the volcanic peaks of the Rift Valley escarpment. Loldia airstrip just minutes from the house receives scheduled daily flights on **Governors' Aviation** directly from Nairobi, with onward flights available to the Masai Mara.

Introduction & History

Loldia House is one of Kenya's most beloved and most historically grounded private safari lodges a property whose identity is inseparable from its **85-year history**, its **colonial-era architecture** and its extraordinary position on the shores of a lake that has been Kenya's most celebrated freshwater destination since the first European settlers discovered it in the late 19th century. Built in **1943** and faithfully maintained as an expression of the elegance and comfort of its era, the house combines **wide verandas, wooden floors, antique furnishings and cosy fireplaces** in an atmosphere that genuinely recalls the golden age of Kenyan country life without nostalgia, without museum-like stasis, but with the living warmth of a house that is genuinely used and genuinely loved.

The farm itself 6,500 acres of lake shore, yellow fever acacia woodland, open grassland and papyrus swamp supports a remarkable diversity of wildlife alongside its working agricultural operations. **Hippos graze the lawns at night**, leaving their distinctive tracks in the grass by morning. **Fish eagles call** from the acacia canopy at dawn. **Giraffe, zebra, waterbuck and impala** move through the estate with the ease of long familiarity. And across the lake, the volcanic silhouette of **Mount Longonot** provides the most iconic of all Naivasha backdrops for the famous lakeside breakfast service taken under the shade of a fig tree, with the lake reflecting the morning sky in a million silver fragments.

Loldia is part of the **Governors' Camp Collection** one of East Africa's most respected safari hospitality groups, whose portfolio includes the celebrated Governor's Camp, Little Governor's Camp and Il Moran in the Masai Mara. The Collection maintains the same standards of professional guiding, culinary excellence and conservation commitment at Loldia that have made its Mara camps famous worldwide. The daily **Governors' Aviation flight** connecting Loldia to the Masai Mara is one of the most perfectly conceived itinerary links in Kenyan safari tourism guests can experience the lake ecosystem's intimate, character-rich pleasures at Loldia before transitioning seamlessly to the vast, wildlife-dense plains of the Mara.

Ownership & Management

Loldia House operates as part of the **Governors' Camp Collection**, combining the intimacy and character of a historic private house with the professional standards and logistical excellence of one of East Africa's most experienced safari hospitality groups.

Awards & Recognition

Ecotourism Kenya Gold Rating the highest recognition available from Kenya's leading eco-tourism certification body, awarded for Loldia's exceptional environmental practices, community engagement and sustainability standards. Consistent listing by **Condé Nast Traveller**, **Travel + Leisure**, and multiple leading international luxury travel operators as one of the finest colonial-era lodge experiences in Kenya

Intimate Luxury safari living — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Loldia House offers **9 rooms** across its historic farmhouse and garden cottages all individually furnished and designed to provide comfort while maintaining the historical character of the estate.

The Master Bedroom (Main House) — An ensuite double room in the original 1943 farmhouse, with views across the lake and Mount Longonot through the veranda. The most historically atmospheric room on the property antique furniture, the wooden floors of the original house, the quality of light through the colonial-era windows.

3 Garden Cottages — Each housing **2 separate ensuite rooms** with their own individual verandas overlooking the lake and the expansive gardens. Ideal for couples or small family configurations seeking a degree of self-containment within the estate setting. Total of 6 garden cottage rooms.

2 Luxury Lakeside Suites — The most spectacular accommodation at Loldia: standalone luxury suites with **panoramic lake views**, king-size beds, contemporary finishes blended with the estate's historic character, and the most direct relationship with the lake of any room on the property. Particularly recommended for honeymooners and couples celebrating significant occasions.

All rooms feature the full Governors' Collection standard of quality linen, ensuite facilities and room service. **Interconnecting family configurations** are available; children of all ages are warmly welcomed.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ **Infinity pool** overlooking the lake.
- ✓ **Poolside spa** offering massages using **100% natural products by The Wild Herb Company** one of Kenya's finest artisanal wellness producers.
- ✓ **Guided boat safari** on Lake Naivasha the property's most celebrated experience, taking guests out across the lake in search of hippos, pelicans, fish eagles and the remarkable concentration of waterbirds that the Naivasha ecosystem supports.
- ✓ **Game drives** in open-sided vehicles through the 6,500-acre estate and to Lake Nakuru National Park.
- ✓ **Night game drives** on the private farm an activity not available in the National Park, producing encounters with nocturnal wildlife including leopard, serval, spotted hyena and the extraordinary range of owl species that inhabit the acacia woodlands.
- ✓ **Walking safaris** on the farm's fenced agricultural side.
- ✓ Crescent Island picnic excursion with walking safari.
- ✓ Horse riding at a nearby establishment.
- ✓ Golfing.
- ✓ Tennis.
- ✓ **Guided birdwatching** with the estate's expert guides.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ Meals at Loldia are served under the **shade of a fig tree** on the lake-view lawn a setting that has been described by many guests as the most beautiful al fresco dining experience in Kenya.
- ✓ The kitchen produces a range of international and Kenyan cuisine using fresh local produce and the lake's bountiful fishery; breakfasts taken on the veranda with the morning lake view and the fish eagle calls from the acacia canopy above are the stuff of lasting memory.
- ✓ The estate bar stocked with the Governors' Collection's characteristic generosity provides the perfect setting for sundowners as the Rift Valley light turns gold.

Health & Safety

- ✓ All activities are conducted by trained Governors' Camp Collection guides with full ecological knowledge and appropriate safety protocols.
- ✓ The lake and surrounding environment are managed for guest safety; comprehensive first aid is available at all times.
- ✓ The property's generator provides reliable power; solar panels supply 75% of requirements.

Why We Love Loldia House

- ✓ We love Loldia for the **completeness of its character** for the way in which 85 years of history, the professional excellence of the Governors' Collection and the extraordinary natural setting of the north-west lake shore combine to produce an experience that is simultaneously relaxed and deeply memorable.
- ✓ The breakfast under the fig tree, the boat safari, the night drive, the hippos on the lawn: each element contributes to a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Do not leave Loldia without a night game drive the nocturnal world of the Loldia farm, invisible from the national park's diurnal-only game drives, reveals a completely different ecosystem of leopard, serval, nocturnal birds and the extraordinary star field of the Rift Valley sky. And request the lakeside sunset dinner: a table set on the shore as the sun descends behind the escarpment is the finest evening in the Naivasha basin.

Families & Children

Loldia House is **outstanding for families**. Children of all ages are warmly welcomed; the boat safari is particularly magical for younger guests; and the estate's resident hippos visible from the veranda at dawn and dusk provide the most gentle and most child-appropriate wildlife encounter in the Rift Valley. Interconnecting family room configurations available on request.

CHUI LODGE

Oserengoni Wildlife Sanctuary, Lake Naivasha | Naivasha's Best-Kept Secret.

Location: Chui Lodge is positioned within the **private 18,000-acre Oserengoni Wildlife Sanctuary** elevated above the shores of **Lake Naivasha** and **Lake Oloidien** (the smaller volcanic crater lake connected to the main lake), with sweeping views across the Rift Valley escarpment from the lodge's garden cottages and waterhole. The sanctuary is accessible in approximately **2.5 hours by road** from Nairobi or **20 minutes by private charter flight** from Wilson Airport to Oserian Airstrip.

Introduction & History

Chui is Kiswahili for **leopard** named for the healthy leopard population that inhabits the Oserengoni Wildlife Sanctuary and which is one of the nocturnal encounters that night drives from the lodge most reliably produce. The name captures the property's essential character: wild, elegant, quietly extraordinary, existing on its own terms and entirely indifferent to expectations.

Chui Lodge was **designed and built by June Zwager** a woman of remarkable creative intelligence and deep love for the Kenyan landscape with the help of the **local community and skilled craftsmen**, using entirely **sustainable materials sourced from within the sanctuary**: bush stone, local acacia, olive and leleshwa woods, with a twisted marula roof that gives the lodge its most distinctive architectural signature. Every textile in the lodge is an **original batik artwork** done on site, whose warm shades enhance the earthy colours of the ochre-enriched walls. The dining

room, lounge and bar feature **pillars and murals with intricate African carvings**, African antiques and an amber-and-gold lighting quality that gives the public spaces the character of a private gallery.

The **Oserengoni Wildlife Sanctuary** was established by **Hans and June Zwager and their son Peter in 1995** with the joint aim of conserving the area's wildlife and managing human-wildlife conflicts to enable both local communities and animals to thrive. The sanctuary covers 18,000 acres of savanna, woodland and water sources, linking via wildlife corridors with **Hell's Gate National Park** and the shores of Lake Naivasha. Over **50 mammal species** inhabit the sanctuary, including lion, leopard, serval, Grevy's zebra, topi, impala and warthog; over **400 bird species** have been recorded.

All electricity at Chui Lodge is supplied by the **geothermal power station at Oserian** one of the most genuinely sustainable energy sources available at any Kenyan safari lodge, and an expression of the Zwager family's deep commitment to operating in harmony with the extraordinary geological heritage of the Rift Valley.

Ownership & Management

Chui Lodge is **owned and managed by the Zwager family**, whose personal investment in the sanctuary's conservation programme and the lodge's guest experience is reflected in every operational decision.

Intimate Luxury safari living — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Chui Lodge offers **8 ensuite individual bandas** individually designed, well-spaced and positioned across the garden for complete privacy between cottages, with views of the Rift Valley escarpment, the sanctuary landscape or the remarkable **waterhole** directly below the lodge, where giraffe, antelope and numerous bird species gather to drink throughout the day.

5 Standard Cottages — Each featuring magnificent **four-poster king-size olive wood beds**, roaring **log fires** for the cool highland evenings, artistically decorated artwork and hand-crafted furniture produced in the lodge's own onsite workshop making each piece genuinely unique. Ensuite bathrooms. Private verandas. Tea and coffee stations. Minibars (restocked daily).

3 Deluxe Cottages — Larger than the standard bandas, each with their own lounge area providing an additional private living space of considerable comfort. The most spacious and most independently complete accommodation at the lodge ideal for honeymooners, solo travellers or couples who want the greatest possible privacy.

The main building houses the **comfortable lounge** (cushioned wood-framed seating around coffee tables, cozy fireplace, well-stocked bar), the **library and indoor dining room** (similarly styled, with outdoor dining on an adjacent patio), and the **heated swimming pool** with its extraordinary views across the wildlife waterhole and the sanctuary beyond.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ **Day and night game drives** through the Oserengoni Wildlife Sanctuary one of the few Naivasha-area safari operations offering the full 24-hour wildlife viewing experience, with nocturnal drives producing leopard, spotted hyena, black-backed jackal, aardvark and the remarkable owl populations of the sanctuary's acacia woodland.
- ✓ **Boat safari** on Lake Naivasha — the famous **"two-lake experience"** starting at Lake Oloidien (the volcanic crater lake) and continuing to Lake Naivasha, offering a boat-based exploration of one of the Rift Valley's most beautiful freshwater systems.
- ✓ **Guided walks** around the sanctuary and camp.
- ✓ **Birding** in the sanctuary and at Lake Naivasha with a guide able to interpret the 400+ species that inhabit the area.
- ✓ **Oserian Flowers** tour — a guided visit to the biggest flower producer in Kenya, offering an extraordinary insight into one of the country's most significant agricultural industries.

Day trips to **Hell's Gate National Park** and **Lake Nakuru National Park** available.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

Chui Lodge's culinary philosophy is built on its **own organic farm and dairy** produce grown on-site under the watchful stewardship of the lodge's kitchen team and prepared by chefs whose range extends from **wood-smoked beef fillets** to **homemade pizzas baked in charcoal ovens** to the full repertoire of international and Kenyan coastal cuisine.

Candlelit dinners under the stars, al fresco lunches by the pool or fireside suppers in the lodge's gallery-like dining room each setting adds a different character to meals of consistent and genuinely impressive quality.

Bush breakfasts following the morning boat safari set on a sandbar or a shaded riverbank with the lake spread out before the group are a Chui Lodge signature experience.

Why We Love Chui Lodge

- ✓ We love Chui Lodge for the **creative integrity** of its design every material, every carving, every piece of furniture and every batik textile is an expression of the Zwager family's specific vision, produced on-site by people who know and love this sanctuary.
- ✓ The result is a lodge that feels genuinely **one-of-a-kind**, impossible to replicate and impossible to compare.
- ✓ And for the waterhole, which delivers some of the finest and most spontaneous wildlife encounters available from any Naivasha property.

Vard Africa Insider Note

The best moment at Chui Lodge is the morning boat safari followed by a bush breakfast departing the lodge before dawn for the boat launch, watching the lake come alive as the light rises over the escarpment, arriving at the bush breakfast table as the first hippos disappear back into

the water. It is one of those sequences of experiences that defines what a private safari lodge should be. And book a night drive — the Oserengoni leopards are magnificent.

Families & Children

Chui Lodge welcomes **children over the age of 2**. The two-lake boat safari, the waterhole watching, the night drives and the lodge's warmth with younger guests make it a genuinely excellent family safari experience at this level of the Naivasha market.

WHAT TO DO AT LAKE NAIVASHA

Our Signature Vard experiences in Lake Naivasha.

1. EXPLORE CRESCENT ISLAND ON A GUIDED BUSH WALK

Walk Among Giants — Africa's Most Intimate Wildlife Encounter

Crescent Island is one of Kenya's most extraordinary and most ethically distinguished wildlife experiences a private sanctuary on an island in the heart of Lake Naivasha where guests can walk, quite freely and without barriers, among herds of **giraffe, wildebeest, zebra, impala, waterbuck, gazelle** and a remarkable variety of bird species, in conditions of complete safety and extraordinary intimacy.

The island's shape a wide crescent, visible from above gives it its name. Its history is equally evocative: **Crescent Island gained international fame in the 1980s** as one of the filming locations for the iconic "**Out of Africa**", when various animals were brought to the island to create an authentic African setting. Many of these animals remained; their descendants are the wildlife guests walk among today.

The island became, through this happy accident of film history, one of the most wildlife-dense small sanctuaries in Kenya containing, by some counts, more animals per acre than any other wildlife destination in the country.

There are **no predators on Crescent Island** a fact that makes the walking experience genuinely unique in East African wildlife tourism. The animals are accustomed to human presence; a giraffe may lower its long neck to your height and regard you with curious, liquid eyes from a distance of two metres.

Zebra graze within touching distance. The quality of intimacy the walking, the eye-level encounters, the absence of the vehicle that separates guests from wildlife in most safari experiences makes Crescent Island a profoundly different and profoundly more personal encounter with the African wildlife world.

Vard Africa arranges **private boat transfers** to Crescent Island from the nearest property the 30-to-45-minute boat journey across Lake Naivasha, with its own extraordinary birdwatching opportunities, is as much a part of the experience as the island walk itself.

A **private picnic lunch** on the island, overlooking Mount Longonot and the Aberdare Range, is the ideal midday pause in a day that combines some of Kenya's most extraordinary perspectives.

2. A BOAT SAFARI ON LAKE NAIVASHA

Glide Through One of Kenya's Most Beautiful Freshwater Worlds

A boat safari on Lake Naivasha provides a completely different perspective on one of Kenya's most remarkable wildlife environments approaching hippos at the waterline, scanning the papyrus beds for secretive marsh birds, watching fish eagles execute their spectacular aerial dives and circling among the great white pelicans that rest on the exposed sandbars at low water.

The lake's **hippo population** is one of the largest and most easily observable in Kenya these extraordinary animals, weighing up to three tonnes, gather in shallow-water pods that the boat can approach from an appropriate and respectful distance, providing photographs and memories of a quality that terrestrial game drives rarely achieve.

The **birdlife** is extraordinary by any standard. The African fish eagle Kenya's national bird and arguably its most recognisable calls from the acacia canopy at every turn of the shore. Great white pelicans, pink-backed pelicans, cormorants, herons, egrets, kingfishers, jacanas and ducks compete for the eye and the camera. For serious birdwatchers, a specialist guided boat safari with an ornithologist can produce species lists of 80 to 100 species in a single morning.

Vard Africa arranges **private boat safaris** with experienced local captains who know the lake's seasonal patterns, the hippos' territories and the best birdwatching positions on each section of the shore. The boat can be combined with a Crescent Island visit, a lakeside picnic, a sunset cruise or any combination of the above in a fully private, fully flexible day programme.

3. HELL'S GATE NATIONAL PARK

Where You Walk, Cycle and Climb Among the Wildlife — Africa's Most Adventurous Park

Hell's Gate National Park is unlike any other national park in Kenya and arguably unlike any other national park in Africa. Here, in a park named for a narrow break in the volcanic cliffs that was once a tributary of a prehistoric lake, the rules that govern visitor behaviour in Kenya's other wildlife areas are deliberately and delightfully suspended. **Guests walk, cycle and hike** through the park among the wildlife rather than observing from sealed safari vehicles. Zebra, gazelle, giraffe and antelope are encountered on foot, on bicycle, at eye level and within metres an experience that permanently changes the guest's understanding of what a safari can be.

- ✓ The **geological drama** of Hell's Gate is its defining character.

- ✓ The park's **68 square kilometres** established in 1984 and named by German explorer Gustav Fischer and British explorer Joseph Thomson during their rival expeditions in 1883 encompass some of the most spectacular and most accessible volcanic geology in East Africa.
- ✓ **Fischer's Tower** and the **Central Tower** two dramatic volcanic plugs that rise 25 and 60 metres respectively from the valley floor are the park's iconic landmarks and provide excellent **rock climbing** for experienced climbers.
- ✓ The **Hell's Gate Gorge** accessible on foot from the valley floor reveals towering red-and-black lava walls, a path descending to natural **hot springs** (reaching temperatures sufficient to cook eggs), sulphuric pools and the extraordinary sensory world of active geothermal geology.
- ✓ The **Olkaria Geothermal Complex** Kenya's most significant renewable energy infrastructure, visible from the park and accessible by guided tour operates on the volcanic heat beneath Hell's Gate and provides over 600 megawatts of the country's electricity. Understanding this extraordinary engineering achievement within the context of the geological landscape that surrounds it adds a dimension to the park visit that most guests find genuinely illuminating.
- ✓ Activities at Hell's Gate include: **walking safaris** with KWS guides; **cycling** (hire available at the gate) on the main valley road through grazing giraffe, zebra and gazelle; **gorge hiking** through the Hell's Gate Gorge to the hot springs; **rock climbing** on Fischer's and Central Tower; and visits to the **Maasai Cultural Centre** within the park.

THE LAKE NAKURU ECOSYSTEM

Lake Nakuru, Great Rift Valley

The Flamingo Lake — Kenya's Iconic Soda Rift

Lake Nakuru is, to many who have experienced it, the most visually dramatic of all Kenya's Rift Valley lakes. Set within its eponymous **national park** gazetted in 1961 and expanded in 1974 to include the surrounding woodland, savannah and escarpment habitats that give it its remarkable biodiversity the lake occupies the floor of a natural bowl in the Rift Valley floor, its alkaline waters fed by the streams that drain from the surrounding escarpment and by underground springs of volcanic origin.

The lake's most famous attribute is its **flamingo population** the vast flocks of **greater and lesser flamingo** that feed on the blue-green algae (*Spirulina*) that blooms in the alkaline shallows, their pink plumage creating the aerial perspective one of the most iconic wildlife images in Africa: a lake turned pink from horizon to horizon, the sound of thousands of wings audible from kilometres away. The flamingo population fluctuates dramatically from a few thousand to over a million, depending on the algal bloom but even in reduced numbers the spectacle is extraordinary.

- ✓ Beyond its famous flamingos, Lake Nakuru National Park is one of Kenya's finest and most important protected areas.
- ✓ **Four of the Big Five** are resident lion, leopard, buffalo and both species of rhinoceros (the park is a **major sanctuary for both black and white rhino**, with one of the highest rhino densities of any protected area in Kenya).
- ✓ **Rothschild's giraffe** among the most endangered giraffe subspecies in Africa were translocated here decades ago and now form a thriving population that has become one of the park's most celebrated sightings.
- ✓ The acacia woodland surrounding the lake supports **vervet monkey, olive baboon, Defassa waterbuck** and a remarkable diversity of smaller species; the lake attracts over **450 recorded bird species** including great white pelican, grey crowned crane, white-fronted bee-eater and the extraordinary concentration of raptors that the lake's small mammal populations support.

Our Accommodation & Trade Partners at Lake Nakuru

THE CLIFF NAKURU

Lake Nakuru National Park | The Most Dramatic Perspective in the Rift Valley

Location: The Cliff is positioned on the rim of a **100-metre-high rock face** within **Lake Nakuru National Park** an entirely singular position that provides guests with **180-degree panoramic views** of the lake, its flamingo populations, the surrounding woodland and the volcanic escarpment of the Rift Valley from the moment they arrive.

The park is approximately **160 kilometres north-west of Nairobi** a 2.5-to-3-hour drive via the Nairobi-Nakuru highway, or accessible by private charter flight to Naishi Airstrip (within the park) with a short road transfer to the lodge.

Introduction & History

The Cliff opened in **April 2018** as Lake Nakuru's most innovative and most visually spectacular addition to its accommodation landscape a property that defies conventional categorization, simultaneously embodying the qualities of a **safari lodge, a tented camp and a boutique hotel** in a single 10-suite package of considerable architectural ambition and operational excellence.

- ✓ The concept is almost impossibly simple in its design clarity: **10 tented suites**, each **100 square metres in size**, positioned at the rim of a 100-metre cliff with 180-degree lake views, their fronts opening completely to allow guests the most unmediated possible relationship with one of the most spectacular views in Africa.
- ✓ The result is a property that guests invariably describe in superlatives "*watching rhinos from your bathtub*", "*sipping wine under the stars with flamingos in the background*", "*yoga at sunrise with Lake Nakuru as the entire horizon*".
- ✓ These are not marketing phrases but the authentic responses of people who have experienced something genuinely extraordinary.

The Cliff is **owned and operated by the same group** behind the celebrated Entim Mara Camp in the Masai Mara a group with a consistent track record of creating properties of exceptional quality in Kenya's finest wildlife environments.

Ownership & Management

The Cliff is **privately owned and managed** by its founders with a professional management team whose standards of service and sustainability reflect the property's ambition to deliver one of Kenya's finest safari experiences in one of its most dramatic settings.

Intimate Luxury safari living — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

10 luxury tented suites, each **100 square metres** and positioned at the cliff's edge for uninterrupted 180-degree lake views. The tents are built onto solid foundations, ensuring structural stability while maintaining the canvas character and the natural ventilation that make tented accommodation so responsive to the African environment.

Each suite features: a **king-size bed** with premium linen; a **freestanding bath** positioned against the window overlooking the lake — the most celebrated detail at the property and the source of more guest photographs than any other element; a **private veranda** with table and two chairs for sunrise coffees and sunset cocktails; a **private lounge area** within the suite; and **modern amenities** including minibar, safe and WiFi. En-suite bathrooms with indoor and outdoor shower options.

The extraordinary quality of the views from the suite's private veranda with the lake surface visible at dawn turning from grey to gold to blue as the light rises makes the Cliff's bedrooms among the most atmospheric in any Kenyan property.

Children under 12 are not permitted at the camp.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ **Infinity swimming pool** at the cliff's edge one of the finest pool views in Kenya, looking out across the lake from the same 100-metre elevation as the suites. **Wellness spa** offering **Africology treatments**, massages, facials and wellness rituals.
- ✓ **Gym** fully equipped with modern Technogym equipment.
- ✓ **Yoga and meditation** guided sunrise yoga above the lake is one of the property's most sought-after experiences.
- ✓ **Photography safaris** with professional guidance and access to the exceptional light and panoramic viewpoints that the cliff position provides. **Wifi access all throughout**.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

The **open-plan restaurant and cliff-top deck** provide the setting for meals of considerable quality overlooking Lake Nakuru.

The kitchen serves a **Mediterranean and international menu** using fresh, locally sourced ingredients vegan and gluten-free options available on prior request.

The cliff-top dining position with the lake and its flamingo populations visible at all times makes every meal a visual experience as well as a culinary one. **Private bush breakfasts** and **candlelit dinners** can be arranged on the cliff face itself.

Health & Safety

- ✓ All safety certifications appropriate to a cliff-top property in a national park environment.
- ✓ 24-hour security.
- ✓ Solar power provides primary energy.
- ✓ All game drives in the national park are conducted in accordance with KWS regulations.
- ✓ Medical assistance accessible via Nakuru town.

Why We Love the Cliff

We love The Cliff for the **audacity and the success of its concept** the idea of placing 10 tented suites on a 100-metre cliff above Lake Nakuru and giving each guest an uninterrupted 180-degree lake view from their bed, their bathtub, their breakfast table and their sundowner chair was, when proposed, a bold vision. In execution, it is one of the finest properties in the Kenyan Rift Valley.

Why Our Guests Will Love the Cliff

Guests who want **the most visually spectacular accommodation experience** at Lake Nakuru who want to wake up above the flamingos, to take their coffee on a veranda 100 metres above the lake, to lie in a freestanding bath and watch rhinos grazing on the plains below will find in The Cliff an experience that is genuinely and lastingly extraordinary.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Book the cliff-facing suite rather than the side-facing suite the 180-degree lake view from the cliff's direct face is the defining experience of the property. Arrange the morning yoga before the first game drive there is no better way to prepare for a day of wildlife than saluting the sun above Lake Nakuru's flamingo lake. And the afternoon photography safari, when the light is low and warm and the flamingo flocks are most active, produces images that guests consistently describe as the finest of their Kenya journey.

Families & Children

- ✓ The Cliff does not accommodate **children under 12 years**.
- ✓ Young adults aged 12 to 16 sharing with two adults are charged at 75% of the per-person rate.
- ✓ The property is best suited to adult couples, groups of friends and corporate retreats.

MBWEHA SAFARI CAMP

Congreve Conservancy, Soysambu, Lake Nakuru | The Conservancy Gateway

Location: Mbweha Camp sits on the **private 6,400-acre Congreve Conservancy**, nestled up against the **southern boundary of Lake Nakuru National Park** with commanding views over the **Eburru and Mau mountain ranges** of the western Rift Valley escarpment. The Congreve Conservancy forms part of the greater **Soysambu Conservancy** — one of the most significant private wildlife conservation areas in central Kenya, encompassing much of **Lake Elementaita** (a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Ramsar Site). The nearest airstrip Congreve Airstrip, just two minutes from the camp — receives private charter flights; the camp is approximately **2.5 hours by road from Nairobi**.

Mbweha is Kiswahili for **jackal** and the camp takes its name from the remarkable fact that all **three jackal species found in East Africa** the side-striped, silver-backed and golden jackal inhabit the Congreve Conservancy.

Introduction & History

Mbweha Camp is the finest expression of what a private conservancy safari camp should be a property that uses its position outside a national park not as a limitation but as a liberation. The activities that national park regulations prohibit **night game drives, walking safaris, mountain biking, gourmet bush lunches in the wilderness, visits to the Kariandusi prehistoric site** are precisely the activities that define and distinguish a stay at Mbweha. The camp's position bordering Lake Nakuru National Park gives guests access to the park's extraordinary wildlife; its private conservancy gives them freedom to experience it in ways and at times that the park's regulations do not permit.

The camp is built in the classic Kenyan bush stone and makuti thatch tradition **10 lava-stone cottages with thatched roofs** set within a grove of euphorbia candelabra, yellow barked acacia and other indigenous trees that provides both shade and the specific ecological habitat that makes the conservancy so rich in bird and mammal life. The main area an open-sided dining room and lounge with **a blazing central fireplace** surrounded by long white sofas topped with colourful cushions is the property's social heart, the setting for predinner drinks, post-drive storytelling and the kind of unhurried camp conversation that represents safari at its most human.

Mbweha is sister camp to the celebrated **Elephant Bedroom** in Samburu National Reserve, operated by the same Atua-Enkop group whose consistent standards of personal service, ecological expertise and conservation commitment are expressed at both properties with notable warmth and competence.

Ownership & Management

Mbweha Camp is **owned and operated by the Atua-Enkop group** the same organization that manages Elephant Bedroom in Samburu. The management team has built a reputation for the **quality of guiding** and the warmth of the staff team that is consistently cited in guest reviews as the most memorable aspect of a Mbweha stay.

Intimate Luxury safari living— Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

10 lava-stone cottages with thatched roofs, each individually styled with rustic African décor **beaded gourds, patterned pillows, hand-woven rugs** contrasting with gauzy white mosquito nets draped over large, comfortable beds. Each cottage features:

- Double or twin bed configuration with premium mosquito-netted canopy
- **En-suite bathroom** with shower, toilet and basin
- **Private terrace** with outdoor seating overlooking the indigenous garden
- Small sofa in the room for additional seating
- Some cottages feature **outdoor bathtubs** for al fresco bathing under the African sky one of the camp's most celebrated amenities
- Solar lighting and 24-hour mains charging available at specified hours

The main lodge building features the **dining room, lounge, well-stocked bar** and **fire pit with circular seating** for the after-dinner hour the social centerpiece of the camp's evening programme.

Amenities & Facilities

Day and night game drives — in Lake Nakuru National Park (20 minutes from camp) for the park's extraordinary wildlife, and in the Congreve/Soysambu Conservancy for the unique ecological diversity of the private land and its remarkable jackal population.

Night drives within the conservancy are one of Mbweha's most distinguished offerings the nocturnal world of the Kenyan conservancy, inaccessible from national parks, produces encounters with leopard, spotted hyena, aardvark, large-spotted genet and the remarkable range of night birds that the acacia and euphorbia woodland supports.

- ✓ **Walking safaris** in the conservancy. **Mountain biking** on the conservancy's trails. **Sundowners at Delamere's Nose** the striking rock promontory within Soysambu that provides one of the finest panoramic views of the Rift Valley floor and Lake Elementaita.
- ✓ **Visit to Lake Elementaita hot springs** a geological wonder accessible within a short drive of the camp.
- ✓ **Kariandusi Prehistoric Site** where tools used by early humans over 1.4 million years ago were discovered by the celebrated paleoanthropologist **Louis Leakey** in the 1920s; a visit to this extraordinary site adds a uniquely profound dimension to the Rift Valley experience.
- ✓ **Swimming pool. Spa treatments.**
- ✓ **Gourmet bush lunch** in the conservancy with views of Lake Nakuru National Park.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

Mbweha's kitchen produces consistently impressive results from a camp setting that prizes fresh local ingredients and honest bush cooking over culinary complexity.

- ✓ The **Indian-influenced menu** (reflecting the cultural background of some of the kitchen team) sits alongside international options and traditional Kenyan preparations in a daily rotation that keeps meals interesting throughout a multi-night stay.
- ✓ Breakfast is particularly generous and consistently praised.
- ✓ The firepit setting for evening drinks the fire crackling, the stars beginning in the vast Rift Valley sky overhead creates an atmosphere for dining that no formal restaurant can replicate.

Health & Safety

- ✓ Mbweha operates in an unfenced conservancy with large wildlife present; guests are escorted between cottages after dark.
- ✓ All game drives in the national park are conducted in accordance with KWS regulations; conservancy activities follow the camp's own safety protocols.
- ✓ 24-hour security.
- ✓ Solar provides 75% of power requirements.

Why We Love Mbweha Safari Camp

- ✓ We love Mbweha for the **freedom its conservancy position provides** the ability to walk, to drive at night, to picnic in the wilderness, to visit prehistoric sites and hot springs that the national park visitor cannot access.
- ✓ These freedoms, combined with the camp's warmth, the quality of the guiding and the extraordinary conservation heritage of the Soysambu Conservancy, make Mbweha one of the most complete and most distinctive Lake Nakuru experiences available.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Combine a morning in the national park arriving at the Nderit Gate as it opens for the best possible rhino and flamingo viewing with an afternoon sundowner at Delamere's Nose and a night drive through the conservancy.

This 24-hour programme gives guests the full range of what the Lake Nakuru environment offers, from the extraordinary lake panorama at dawn to the nocturnal leopard encounter under a million stars.

Families & Children

Mbweha Camp is welcoming to families. Children under 5 stay free; 6 to 11-year-olds at 50% of the adult rate.

The walking safaris, the prehistoric site visit and the conservancy's accessible wildlife make it a genuinely stimulating environment for curious children.

WHAT TO DO AT LAKE NAKURU

Morning and Evening Game Drives in Lake Nakuru National Park

Lake Nakuru National Park offers some of the finest and most reliably productive game drives in Kenya a compact park of just 188 square kilometres in which the concentration of wildlife is extraordinary and the range of habitats lake edge, papyrus swamp, yellow fever acacia woodland, euphorbia forest, open grassland and rocky cliff ensures a diversity of encounters that larger parks, with their vast and sometimes empty plains, cannot match.

Morning game drives from both The Cliff and Mbweha depart before dawn to catch the magical hour when the flamingos are most active at the lake margin, the predators are still moving before retreating to the shade, and the Rothschild's giraffe are beginning to feed in the acacia woodland. The specific qualities of the early morning light horizontal, warm and of extraordinary photographic quality make the first hour of a Nakuru game drive among the finest wildlife photography opportunities in East Africa.

Evening game drives catch the second movement of predators as the temperature drops and the day's prey species return to the water for their final drink. Lions in the woodland, leopards in the euphorbia trees at the park's southern boundary, the spectacular gathering of flamingos at the lake's alkaline margins as the setting sun turns their plumage from pink to crimson these are the wildlife encounters that the evening hour at Nakuru produces with remarkable consistency.

Vard Africa arranges **private game drives** for all Nakuru-area guests a dedicated vehicle and guide, no shared experiences, the freedom to stop as long and as often as the wildlife dictates. The experience of sitting in silence 10 metres from a pair of black rhinos grazing in the afternoon light, with no other vehicle in sight, is what private game driving at Lake Nakuru can provide.

THE SHOMPOLE & OLKIRIMATIAN CONSERVANCIES

The South Rift — Kenya's Most Remote and Most Wild Rift Valley Destination

Beyond the Tourist Map, Into the Heart of Maasai land

There is a section of Kenya's Great Rift Valley that most travellers never reach, that most itineraries never include, and that most guidebooks describe only in passing a vast, remote, volcanic and extraordinarily beautiful landscape in the **southernmost reaches of the Kenyan Rift**, where the valley floor opens into a world of alkaline soda lakes, dramatic escarpments, Maasai pastoralism and wildlife densities that rival anywhere in Kenya.

This is the **South Rift** the landscape surrounding the extraordinary soda lakes of **Magadi and Natron**, bordered by the **Nguruman Escarpment** to the west, the **Loita Hills** to the north-west and the imposing volcanic mass of **Mount Shompole** to the south. The region encompasses two adjacent community conservancies **Shompole** and **Olkirimatian** both owned and managed by the local Maasai community, both representing landmark achievements in the global story of community-based conservation, and both providing an experience of African wilderness of a depth, authenticity and raw beauty that Kenya's more accessible destinations cannot replicate.

The **Shompole Conservancy** — a 10,000-hectare area of community Maasai land in the most southerly section of the Kenyan Rift has been at the centre of the national and international conversation about community-based conservation since the original Shompole Lodge opened in 2000. The model has evolved considerably since then, with the community learning from both the successes and the failures of their early partnerships to develop a framework of land management the 35-year lease with Great Plains Conservation for the new **Shompole Lodge** (opening 2026), the smaller operator partnerships with **Shompole Wilderness** and **Ndoto House** that genuinely balances the community's economic interests with the wildlife conservation that makes the landscape valuable.

The **Ewaso Ng'iro River** — known in this southern section as the Southern Ewaso flows through both conservancies in a ribbon of gallery forest and riverine vegetation that provides water, shade and wildlife habitat in a landscape that would otherwise be semi-arid. The river supports **elephants, buffalo, hippos** (remarkable for a non-national park environment), lion, leopard, cheetah and the extraordinary range of birds over **450 recorded species** — that the combination of wetland, grassland, escarpment and volcanic lake habitats produces.

The **soda lakes** themselves **Magadi** (largely within Kenya, a working soda-ash extraction lake of extraordinary colour) and **Natron** (across the Tanzanian border, one of the most inhospitable and most hauntingly beautiful environments in East Africa) provide nesting habitat for hundreds of thousands of flamingos, their pink flocks visible from the escarpment positions of both Shompole and Lenton in seasonal concentrations of spectacular visual impact.

The active volcano **Oi Donyo Lengai** visible from Lenton on clear days towers above the Tanzanian side of the border, its distinctive ash-white eruptions a constant reminder of the geological forces that shaped this extraordinary landscape.

- ✓ The South Rift is not for every guest.
- ✓ The access is more complex (4 hours by road from Nairobi, or 25 minutes by charter aircraft), the environment is more demanding (heat, remoteness, limited facilities outside the camps) and the wildlife, while extraordinary, is less immediately accessible than the great national parks.
- ✓ But for guests who want to experience Kenya at its most authentically wild to be the only visitors in a landscape of 10,000 hectares, to walk with habituated baboons, to spend a night in a photography hide by a remote waterhole, to visit a Maasai family in their home, to swim in a river with no crocodiles and tube through the rapids with the Nguruman Escarpment rising above the South Rift is the most profound and most rewarding destination in the Kenyan Rift Valley.

Our Accommodation & Trade Partners in the Shompole & Olkirimatian Conservancies.

SHOMPOLE WILDERNESS.

Ewaso Ng'iro River, Shompole Conservancy | The Photographer's Dream

Location: Shompole Wilderness Camp is situated in a **shady grove of giant fig trees** on the banks of the **Southern Ewaso Ng'iro River** the main source of water for the Shompole region within the exclusive Shompole Conservancy on the floor of the southern Great Rift Valley. The camp is accessible by **charter flight** from Nairobi (approximately **25 minutes to the Ranger airstrip**, followed by a 25-minute transfer), or by road (approximately **4 hours from Nairobi** via Magadi).

The conservancy is flanked by **Lake Magadi** to the east, **Lake Natron** to the south, the **Nguruman Escarpment** to the west and the **Olkirimatian Group Ranch** to the north.

Introduction & History

Shompole Wilderness is the product of years of careful thought, planning and deep personal commitment to the Shompole community and its extraordinary land the life's work of **Johann and Sam du Toit**, a South African family who arrived in the South Rift with a vision of what community-based conservation and private luxury camping could be when they are genuinely and inseparably combined.

The camp opened in **2015** and has since established itself as one of the most distinctive and most creatively operated private camps in Kenya distinguished from its contemporaries not primarily by the scale of its facilities (these are deliberately and thoughtfully modest) but by the quality of its wildlife photography infrastructure, the depth of its community engagement and the extraordinary intimacy of the natural environment in which it sits.

The camp accommodates a maximum of **12 guests** in **6 spacious tents** and operates as an **exclusively-use property**, meaning that your group will be the only guests in camp during your stay. The du Toit family manages the camp together with their **local Maasai team** in a partnership of genuine equality and mutual respect a model that the camp describes, accurately, as a "*shining beacon for conservancy-based tourism*" in Kenya.

The **Shompole region** is home to **21 carnivore species**, all large mammal species except the rhino, and over **435 bird species** at last count. The Shompole Ranch is an important migratory corridor and dispersal range for elephants travelling between Shompole and the Loita Hills. The **Southern Ewaso Ng'iro River** remarkable for the fact that it supports no crocodiles or hippos, making it one of very few rivers in East Africa where swimming and water activities are genuinely safe provides the camp's most distinctive and most beloved activity environment.

Ownership & Management

Shompole Wilderness is **owned and managed by Johann and Sam du Toit and their children**, who are resident at the camp and personally involved in every guest's experience. This is the du Toit family's home as much as their business and the warmth, the personal attention and the specific quality of hosted intimacy that this creates is consistently cited by guests as what makes Shompole Wilderness unlike anywhere else they have experienced.

Intimate Luxury safari living— Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

- ✓ **6 spacious ensuite tents** set on **raised wooden decks** with large furnished verandas each positioned among the fig trees on the river bank with complete privacy between tents (you cannot see one tent from another). Each tent can be configured as a **double or twin**.
- ✓ The tents feature: spacious interiors with quality furnishings; **ensuite bathrooms with flushing toilet and shower; running water** (hot water heated during the afternoon by the generator for evenings); **solar lighting** throughout; and a large net windows maximizing air flow and river views.
- ✓ Two of the tents have the option of **adding a children's tent on the veranda** making them ideal for families travelling with younger children.
- ✓ A **swimming pool** overlooks the plains behind camp, providing a cool and private place for the midday heat.
- ✓ The **riverside lounge and bar**, the **airy dining room** and the camp's principal outdoor social spaces are shaded by the great fig trees that give the campsite its defining character.

Amenities & Facilities

The **Shompole Photography Hide** the camp's most celebrated and most distinguished facility.

Designed in consultation with world-renowned wildlife photographer **Will Burrard-Lucas**, the hide is located approximately 5 kilometres from camp, across the river requiring prior planning and a vehicle crossing.

Two hides operate: the **Plains Hide**, overlooking an active waterhole in the open savannah, and the **Bush Hide**, located 1.5 kilometres further, designed for intimate encounters with smaller and more elusive species wild cat, serval and caracal are regularly photographed here.

Both hides feature specialized night lighting and **overnight facilities** (three double beds, toilet, basin, refreshments) making it possible to spend a full night at the hide, watching the extraordinary parade of wildlife that comes to drink in the darkness.

- ✓ **Day and night game drives** through the Shompole Conservancy in open-sided vehicles with experienced guides.
- ✓ **River swimming, tubing and kayaking** on the Southern Ewaso Ng'iro one of the camp's most joyful and most distinctive activities, available when river levels allow.
- ✓ **Animal tracking and bird walks** on the conservancy's dusty paths the landscape is exceptional for tracking, and the guide's knowledge of spoor identification adds a forensic dimension to bush walking.
- ✓ **Bush walks** with local Maasai warriors.
- ✓ **Baboon walks** (see experience description below). **Cultural home visits** to local Maasai families.
- ✓ **Running in the wild** guided morning or evening runs across the open plains for guests who want to experience the Shompole landscape at speed and at ground level. **Scenic helicopter flights** (at additional cost).

Culinary & Dining Experiences

The camp kitchen produces meals of consistent quality and genuine warmth wholesome, delicious and always personal. The open-air dining room beside the river, the meals under the stars on the camp's central fire area, and the river-bank breakfasts during bush activities all carry the specific pleasure of food in extraordinary settings.

Dietary requirements are accommodated with warmth; guests describe the meals, consistently, as "*exactly right*" for the character of the camp.

Health & Safety

The Southern Ewaso Ng'iro has no crocodiles or hippos, making swimming genuinely safe and without the risk associated with most Kenyan rivers. The conservancy is open (unfenced) with large wildlife present; walking activities are always guided. The photographic hide activities require prior planning and appropriate vehicular support for safety. Medical assistance accessible via Nairobi by charter flight (25 minutes) in emergencies. Vard Africa's emergency network provides comprehensive coverage.

Why We Love Shompole Wilderness

We love Shompole Wilderness for **Johann and Sam** for the extraordinary quality of personal hosting that a family-managed camp of 6 tents can provide, and for the photographic hides, which represent the finest and most thoughtfully designed wildlife photography infrastructure at any private camp in Kenya. But most of all for the **river** for the freedom of swimming in it, tubing it, watching the sunset turn its surface to liquid gold and listening to its sound at night through the mesh windows of the tented bedroom.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Spend a full night in the Plains Hide if your group includes a wildlife photographer the images that the night lighting and the waterhole's extraordinary wildlife draw can produce are among the finest available from any private photography hide in Africa. And do the river tubing on the last afternoon of your stay floating through the fig-tree shade with the Nguruman Escarpment above you and the river's birdsong surrounding you is the most perfectly Shompole farewell possible.

Families & Children

Shompole Wilderness is **well-suited to family groups**.

The exclusively-use format means the camp is your own; the river activities, the animal tracking, the baboon walks and the Maasai cultural visits are deeply engaging for children and teenagers. Children's tent configurations on selected room verandas accommodate families of varying sizes.

THE REAL NDOTO HOUSE

Nguruman Escarpment, Shompole Conservancy | The Escarpment Vision

Location: The Real Ndoto House occupies a **remarkable position high on the Nguruman Escarpment** — overlooking the Shompole Conservancy's valley floor from above, with views that on clear days extend to **Mount Shompole**, the distant alkaline shimmer of **Lake Natron** and occasionally across the border to **Tanzania's active volcano Ol Donyo Lengai**. The property is managed by **Lentorre Lodge** and is available for **exclusive private hire** of the entire property for small groups of 6 guests.

Ndoto means "**dream**" in Kiswahili and the name is not hyperbole. Perched on the escarpment with the entire Rift Valley spread below, the house delivers a perspective on this extraordinary landscape that no valley-floor camp can replicate.

Introduction & History

Ndoto House was developed as part of the Shompole community's evolving approach to conservation-based tourism a **stone-and-thatch boutique property** on the escarpment that provides both an extraordinary accommodation experience and a direct contribution to the community's land management fund.

The house was built with the input of the local community and **managed by Lentorre Lodge** whose expertise in the Olkirimatian ecosystem and the South Rift's extraordinary wildlife and conservation story gives Ndoto's guests access to the full depth of knowledge that these extraordinary landscapes reward.

The property's design reflects the specific character of its escarpment position: **simple and simply beautiful**, as one expert guide has described it white concrete flooring, polished supporting trunks of wood, the odd well-chosen ornament, and everything bed, pool and seating area pointing toward those extraordinary views.

The design is about lines of sight, changing light and the exceptional perspectives that a 600-metre escarpment elevation above the valley floor provides.

Ndoto House's **photographic hide** built with input from professional photographer **Squack Evans** is described by expert wildlife guides as one of the finest in Kenya: air-conditioned, soundproofed, set up for six people with **six beds in an anteroom** for overnight stays.

Ownership & Management

Ndoto House is a **Shompole community property** leased to private operators and managed by **Lentorre Lodge**, with all proceeds contributing directly to the community's land management and development programme.

The locally-staffed team includes a manager, chef, room stewards, maintenance and security.

Intimate Luxury safari living — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

3 main bedrooms plus a fourth, smaller room suited to a guide or a couple travelling on a budget: each positioned along the ridge on either side of the main shared area, featuring a **double bed, ensuite bathroom, private plunge pool** and seating area. The same expansive white flooring and thatched roof supported by polished trunks everything pointing to the extraordinary valley views.

The **shared area** is open plan, with seating and dining areas, **two infinity pools** and the photographic hide built into the main compound. Total capacity: **6 guests** (exclusive use only).

Why We Love Ndoto House

We love Ndoto House for the **audacity of its position** for the way that sitting on the escarpment above the Shompole Conservancy changes the entire experience of the landscape. What the valley-floor camps experience as wilderness, Ndoto House reveals as geography the patterns of the plains, the river's silver course, the distant lakes and mountains made comprehensible from above. And for the community story that makes every night spent here a direct contribution to the long, complicated and ultimately hopeful story of Shompole's conservation journey.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Ndoto House is the ideal complement to a Shompole Wilderness stay the two together give guests both the valley-floor intimacy (the river, the fig trees, the hides) and the escarpment perspective (the panorama, the distant volcanoes, the changing light across the whole Rift Valley). Arrange the private helicopter flight between them 15 minutes in the air that condenses the entire geography of the South Rift into a single, unforgettable visual experience.

Families & Children

Ndoto House can accommodate families' children require full-time parental supervision given the escarpment location and the unfenced wildlife environment. The exclusive-use format makes it ideal for multi-generational family groups.

LENTORRE LODGE

Olkirimatian Conservancy, Great Rift Valley | The Maasai Oasis.

Location: Lentorre Lodge is set on a **spur of the Nguruman Escarpment beside a natural spring** in the heart of the **Olkirimatian Conservancy** a 25,000-hectare Maasai community-owned conservation area in the South Rift of Kenya, bordering the Shompole Conservancy. The lodge sits in a **natural amphitheatre** providing uninhibited views of **Mount Shompole, Ol Donyo Gelai** and the active volcano **Ol Donyo Lengai** in Tanzania. Accessible by road from Nairobi in **3.5 to 4 hours**, or by private charter flight to a nearby airstrip.

Lentorre — the name is drawn from the tamarind grove of venerable ancient trees that the **natural spring behind the lodge** feeds and sustains. These tamarind trees were the traditional meeting place where **Olkirimatian warriors came of age** a living connection to the Maasai warrior tradition that gives the lodge its roots in a specifically human history as well as a wildlife one.

Introduction & History

Lentorre Lodge represents one of the most successful and most genuinely community-owned luxury safari operations in Kenya a model of what community-based conservation can look like when it combines authentic Maasai ownership, world-class hospitality infrastructure and a conservation philosophy deep enough to have attracted the attention of **National Geographic** (whose documentary *The Plains* featured the Olkirimatian Conservancy as an example of conservation success) and **renowned Kenyan cinematographer Anna Campbell** (whose short film *Shall We Dance* documents the community's extraordinary achievement).

The **Olkirimatian Conservancy** has achieved something that very few community conservation initiatives in Africa can claim: a **lion density second only to the Masai Mara**. This extraordinary achievement lions and Maasai livestock coexisting in a single conservancy at the highest predator density outside a national park is the result of decades of careful community negotiation, habitat management and the progressive expansion of the conservation area from its initial **buffer zone** to the full 25,000-hectare extent of today's conservancy.

The lodge's infrastructure and management are **family-owned and owner-operated** designed specifically for the exclusive use of small private families or groups who want the full conservancy to themselves. With just **six villas and two-family units** (maximum 16 guests), and operating within a conservancy in which no other lodge exists, Lentorre provides a level of exclusivity that few properties in Kenya can match.

Ownership & Management

Lentorre Lodge is **family-owned and owner-operated** within the framework of the Olkirimatian community's land management programme. The lodge works in close partnership with the **South Rift Land Owners Association (SORALO)** on conservation initiatives linking Amboseli National Park and the Masai Mara Reserve, and supports the **Lale'enok Research Centre** owned by the women of Olkirimatian which provides the community with a forum for engaging with outside partners on conservation knowledge.

Awards & Recognition

The **Olkirimatian Conservancy** has received recognition from **National Geographic** and multiple international conservation bodies for its extraordinary achievement in balancing Maasai pastoralism with wildlife conservation to produce one of the highest predator densities in Africa. Lentorre Lodge is listed as one of the most distinguished and most authentic community-owned luxury safari operations in Kenya.

Intimate Luxury safari living — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Lentorre Lodge offers **6 spacious villas** and **2 family units** a maximum of **16 guests** at any time in an arrangement that ensures the conservancy feels genuinely private and the service genuinely personal.

4 Private Double or Twin Villas — Large, elegantly crafted from **wood, canvas and thatch**, each with its own **private plunge pool**, private veranda and panoramic views across the conservancy. Open-sided design allows constant airflow and the full visual experience of the landscape from inside the villa. Floor-to-ceiling glass fronts invite the wilderness in; private decks create perfect stargazing spaces after dark.

1 Family Villa — A larger configuration accommodating a couple and 2 to 3 children, with separate sleeping areas and the same quality of finish and view as the private villas.

1 Honeymoon Villa — The most intimate and most romantically designed accommodation at the lodge, positioned for the finest views of the Shompole mountain and with particular attention to the details of a romantic stay.

The main lodge is divided into **upper and lower levels**: the upper lodge, perched higher on the hill, houses the well-stocked bar and elegant dining space with spectacular conservancy views; the lower lodge, closer to the waterhole, houses the **air-conditioned sunken hide** a ground-level photography hide from which guests can observe wildlife gathering at the permanent waterhole in conditions of complete concealment and total silence.

Amenities & Facilities

The extraordinary **photography hide** overlooking the permanent waterhole the lodge's most celebrated facility, from which zebra, elephant, lion and a plethora of other wildlife and bird species can be observed and photographed at ground level with no intervening fence or barrier.

- ✓ **Day and night game drives** through the Olkirimatian Conservancy with the remarkable lion density ensuring that predator sightings are among the most consistently productive of any Kenyan conservancy outside the national parks.
- ✓ **Guided walking safaris** through the conservancy's extraordinary landscape.
- ✓ **River fishing** on the Ewaso Ngiro River the current camp record is an eleven-pound catfish, and catching is described as "**almost guaranteed**".

- ✓ **Star gazing** with the lodge's telescope the minimal light pollution of the South Rift produces a night sky of extraordinary density and beauty. **Scenic helicopter flights** over the escarpment, the soda lakes and the volcanic landscape (pre-arranged, at additional cost).
- ✓ **Access to the baboon walk programme** (see experience description below).
- ✓ **Bush dining** the lodge's chef produces culinary delights in some of the conservancy's most magnificent settings.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

Lentorre's kitchen is one of the lodge's most celebrated attributes a highly adaptable and genuinely talented culinary operation that accommodates any dietary requirement or request with warmth and skill, and that consistently surprises guests with the quality and creativity of meals produced in a remote bush setting.

The **well-stocked bar and wine cellar** complete a culinary programme of considerable generosity. Bush breakfasts, sundowner setups and **star-dining** under the extraordinary South Rift sky add the atmospheric dimension that the lodge's extraordinary settings demand and deserve.

Health & Safety

- ✓ The conservancy is unfenced with large wildlife present; all activities are conducted by experienced guides with full knowledge of the conservancy's wildlife patterns and appropriate safety equipment.
- ✓ River fishing requires attention to flow conditions; the guide team assesses safety daily.
- ✓ Medical assistance accessible via Nairobi by charter flight (approximately 40 minutes).
- ✓ Vard Africa's emergency network provides comprehensive coverage.

Why We Love Lentorre Lodge

- ✓ We love Lentorre for the **completeness of its community story** for the extraordinary achievement of the Olkirimatian community in creating a conservancy with the second-highest lion density in Africa, owned by the Maasai people, managed for their benefit and accessible to guests who want to understand what community-based conservation really looks like when it succeeds.
- ✓ And for the fishing. And for the stars.
- ✓ And for the view of Ol Donyo Lengai erupting in the distance as the sun sets over the escarpment.

Why Our Guests Will Love Lentorre

Guests who want the **most authentic and most deeply rooted community conservation experience** in the Kenyan Rift Valley who want lions at the waterhole and the hide at ground level, and fishing for catfish in the Ewaso Ngiro and star gazing with a telescope and the Maasai warriors who have protected this land for generations will find at Lentorre Lodge an experience that changes their understanding of what a safari can be.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Spend a full evening in the sunken hide overlooking the waterhole watching lions come to drink in the last light, then the zebra arriving after the predators depart, then the nocturnal species appearing as the stars emerge above the escarpment. It is one of those extended, unhurried wildlife experiences that the finest conservancy camps make possible and that the national parks, with their vehicle requirements and time restrictions, cannot. And go fishing with the guide the eleven-pound catfish record is worth attempting.

Families & Children

Lentorre Lodge is **excellent for families**.

The exclusive-use option ensures the conservancy is entirely your family's own; the children's activities (Maasai warrior training, water-fetching with the community, cattle tending) provide genuine engagement with the daily life of a traditional community; and the wildlife, the fishing, the stargazing and the walks create a family safari experience of extraordinary breadth and depth. Children aged 5 to 15 at 50% of the adult conservancy rate.

WHAT TO DO IN THE SHOMPOLE & OLKIRIMATIAN CONSERVANCIES

Our Signature Experiences in the South Rift

SHOMPOLE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES

The Shompole Photo Hide — *An Evening, a Morning or a Full Night in the Wild*

The **Shompole Photo Hide** is, in the considered judgement of some of the world's finest wildlife photographers, one of the most extraordinary wildlife photography facilities available at any private camp in Africa. Located approximately 5 kilometres from Shompole Wilderness Camp across the river, requiring a prior-arranged vehicle crossing the Plains Hide overlooks an **active waterhole** in an open area of savannah that is the primary drinking source for the wildlife of that section of the conservancy.

The hide is built into the earth **half underground** so that the camera lens is positioned at water level, at the eye height of any animal that comes to drink. This ground-level perspective transforms wildlife photography from a documentation exercise into a genuinely intimate encounter: the texture of an elephant's skin, the expression in a lion's eyes, the individual feather structure of a martial eagle all visible with a clarity and an intimacy that an elevated shooting position can never achieve.

Guests can spend a **single evening** at the hide (departing camp mid-afternoon, watching the golden hour and the sunset arrivals at the waterhole, returning to camp after dark), a **full early morning** (departing camp before dawn and returning by breakfast with the morning light's extraordinary photography potential), or the **entire night** using the hide's overnight facilities (three double beds, toilet and basin, cold drinks and

refreshments provided) to observe the full 12-hour nocturnal cycle of arrivals at the waterhole, which commonly includes **leopard, spotted hyena, aardvark, porcupine, serval, caracal, genets** and the extraordinary **wild cat** that is one of the rarest sightings in East Africa.

The **Bush Hide** — 1.5 kilometres further into the conservancy from the Plains Hide is designed for smaller and more secretive species, its positioning within denser vegetation and its closer proximity to the cover animals use when approaching water. The combination of both hides in a single extended visit provides the full spectrum of wildlife encounters that the Shompole waterhole system supports.

Day Game Drives and Night Game Drives in the Private Conservancy

- ✓ The **Shompole Conservancy's 21 carnivore species** an extraordinary concentration by any measure are the primary draw for game drives across the valley floor. Elephant, buffalo, zebra, giraffe, wildebeest, Grant's gazelle, impala, baboon, lesser kudu, waterbuck and bushbuck provide the backdrop of plains game; lion, leopard, cheetah, spotted hyena, wild dog, aardwolf and the three jackal species provide the predator drama.
- ✓ **Night drives** are Shompole's most distinctive game drive offering the nocturnal world of the conservancy, hidden during daylight hours, reveals itself in the sweep of spotlights across the plains.
- ✓ The **smaller nocturnal carnivores** wild cat, serval, caracal, genet, civet are among the most photographically rewarding wildlife encounters available at any Kenya camp, and Shompole's night drive guides have the knowledge and patience to find them consistently.

River Swimming, Tubing and Kayaking on the Southern Ewaso Ng'iro

The **Southern Ewaso Ng'iro River** — which carries the name "*brown river*" in the Maasai language, though its water is in fact remarkably clear is one of the great natural gifts of the Shompole experience. Unlike virtually every other significant river in Kenya, the Southern Ewaso has **no crocodiles and no hippos** a fact that transforms the relationship between guests and water from cautious observation to full physical engagement.

Swimming in the river particularly in the deep, green pools below the fig trees where the bank drops steeply into cold, clear water is an experience of extraordinary pleasure.

Tubing floating on inflated tubes through the river's stretches of gentle current, watching the fig tree canopy pass overhead and the Nguruman Escarpment rising beyond is one of the most joyful and most specifically Shompole activities available. Kayaking provides the more active version of the same river experience, with the additional pleasure of exploring the river's bends and eddies under your own power.

All water activities are subject to river level assessment by the guide team; safety is the first priority and activities may be modified or suspended when flow conditions make this necessary.

Understanding the Local Conservation Work

The Shompole community's conservation journey from the original lodge partnership of 2000 through the difficult years of 2012 to 2018, when the original lodge closed and the community renegotiated its relationships with external operators, to the current model of multiple smaller partnerships and a new Great Plains Conservation lease is one of the most honest, most instructive and most ultimately hopeful stories in global conservation. Working with **SORALO** (South Rift Land Owners Association), the community has created a model of conservation governance that is increasingly studied internationally as an example of what community ownership can achieve.

Vard Africa arranges **formal visits** to the **Lale'enok Resource Centre** the community-owned research and education facility where guests can meet community conservation officers, learn about the specific wildlife management challenges of the South Rift and understand the economics of conservation in a community context. This is not a tourist performance but a genuine engagement with the people and the ideas that have produced one of Kenya's most extraordinary conservation achievements.

Animal Tracking and Bird Walks in the Private Conservancy

The dusty paths and open plains of the Shompole Conservancy are **exceptional tracking environments** the soft volcanic soils preserve the overnight movements of every animal with remarkable clarity, allowing an experienced guide to read the previous night's wildlife activity from the morning's spoor with the specificity of a written record.

Vard Africa arranges **private guided tracking walks** with Shompole Wilderness's most experienced naturalist guides covering both mammal tracking (the five-toed pad of the hyena, the distinctive three-toed track of the secretary bird, the tiny, precise imprints of a serval) and **bird interpretation** (the Shompole region's over 450 species, ranging from the spectacular **Bateleur eagle** to the tiny **Hinde's babblers** in the riverine forest). The pace is the pace of tracking slow, attentive, frequently still and the rewards are the specific rewards of learning to read a landscape rather than merely seeing it.

The Bird Hide at Shompole Wilderness

The **in-camp bird hide** a small, ground-level structure with its own dedicated water source provides the most accessible and most immediately rewarding wildlife photography at Shompole Wilderness for guests who prefer the camp setting to the more remote Plains Hide. A morning spent quietly in the bird hide, watching the succession of species that come to the in-camp water point, can produce images of exceptional quality from a position of complete comfort.

Species regularly photographed at the in-camp hide include **rollers, bee-eaters, kingfishers, sunbirds, weavers** and a remarkable range of the smaller species that the in-camp vegetation supports. The hide is available throughout the day; early morning and late afternoon are the most productive periods.

Baboon Walks

The **Lale'enok Resource Centre** which sits at the intersection of the Shompole and Olkirimatian conservancies has, under the guidance of its research programme, **habituated a troop of baboons** that allows guests to accompany them through their natural daily activities with a local guide who knows the troop individually.

This experience requires an **early start** to reach the troop at dawn as they descend from their sleeping trees and begin the day's foraging, social interactions and territorial movements. The guide's knowledge of individual troop members their relationships, their hierarchies, their personalities transforms the baboon walk from an observation of animals into something closer to an introduction to a community with its own complex social life.

The primatological depth that **Dr Shirley Strum's** research legacy brings to the interpretation of baboon behaviour at Lale'enok gives this experience a scientific dimension that is genuinely enriching for curious guests.

Cultural Home Visits — Entering a Maasai Home

The Shompole Maasai who have owned and managed this extraordinary land for generations, who have navigated the complex negotiations with international lodge operators and who have created the conservation model that protects the wildlife the guests have come to see are among the most welcoming and most generous people in Kenya.

Cultural home visits arranged through Shompole Wilderness allow small groups of guests to spend a morning or an afternoon with a local family, learning about the daily rhythms of Maasai life: the construction and maintenance of the *boma* (homestead), the management of cattle and goats, the preparation of food, the roles of men and women within the community, the extraordinary beadwork traditions that encode identity and clan membership in colour and pattern.

These visits are not performances for tourists but genuine encounters with real families who extend genuine hospitality in the Maasai tradition. The experience requires respectful engagement and an open curiosity; what it returns is an understanding of this community's relationship with their land that no amount of reading can provide.

Run in the Wild

For guests who want to experience the Shompole landscape at the pace and the sensory intensity of a run the wind, the ground underfoot, the sound of their own breathing and the vast open plains Shompole Wilderness guides offer **accompanied running excursions** across the open grassland in the early morning or late evening hours.

- ✓ Running must be done at cooler times to avoid heat exhaustion; a vehicle accompanies the runner throughout for both safety (wildlife) and support (exhaustion).
- ✓ The experience of running across the Rift Valley floor with the Nguruman Escarpment rising on one side and the volcanic peaks of the south on the other is one of those experiences uncommon in organised safari tourism that guests who take it report as among the most visceral and most memorable of their Kenya journey.

LENTORRE LODGE EXPERIENCES

Day Game Drives and Night Game Drives — The Second-Highest Lion Density in Africa

The **Olkirimatian Conservancy's lion density** second only to the Masai Mara in Kenya is the most immediately remarkable fact about this extraordinary community-owned wildlife area, and the evidence of it is dramatic and consistent. Game drives through the conservancy regularly encounter multiple lion prides, whose coexistence with the Maasai community's cattle creates the defining tension and the defining ecological achievement of the entire Olkirimatian model.

Night drives reveal the nocturnal world of a conservancy that is fully alive after dark leopard hunting in the acacia woodland, spotted hyena coursing across the plains, the extraordinary concentration of owls that the Nguruman Escarpment's thermal gradients support, and the occasional extraordinary encounter with a **Aardvark** or **African civet** that makes a night drive across the South Rift one of the most unpredictable and most rewarding after-dark wildlife experiences in Kenya.

Guided Walking Safaris in the Conservancy

Lentorre's walking safaris led by guides with intimate knowledge of the Olkirimatian landscape's wildlife, ecology, geology and human history provide the most direct and most personally engaging encounter with the South Rift environment. The walks range from **gentle escarpment walks** with spectacular views to **longer plains traverses** that cross the conservancy's open grassland and riverine vegetation in search of specific wildlife or simply in appreciation of the extraordinary landscape.

Birdwatching — 350 Species and Two of Africa's Greatest Soda Lakes

The **Olkirimatian Conservancy** and the adjacent soda lakes of **Magadi and Natron** together create one of the most diverse birdwatching environments in the Kenyan Rift Valley over **350 species** recorded, ranging from the extraordinary flamingo concentrations of the soda lakes to the specific escarpment raptors, the riverine forest specialists and the open-plains grassland birds of the conservancy interior.

The flamingo concentrations at **Lake Magadi** and with a helicopter or extended road excursion **Lake Natron** are among the most spectacular bird aggregations in East Africa: hundreds of thousands of pink birds in a landscape of extraordinary volcanic colour, the alkaline flats shimmering in the heat, the volcanic peaks of the border as the backdrop.

For birders who have seen flamingos at Nakuru or Bogoria, the Magadi-Natron system offers a completely different quality of encounter rawer, more remote, more scientifically significant and more visually otherworldly.

Star Gazing with a Telescope

The **minimal light pollution** of the South Rift far from any significant human settlement, in a landscape where the nearest city is hours away — produces a night sky of extraordinary density and clarity.

The **Milky Way** is visible as a solid band of light; the **Magellanic Clouds** are clear without optical aid; and the specific star field of the equatorial African sky different from what northern hemisphere visitors have ever seen contains objects and patterns of considerable beauty.

Lentorre provides a **quality telescope** for guest use on clear nights, with a guide able to interpret the celestial objects visible at the lodge's latitude. The combination of the extraordinary landscape, the complete silence of the South Rift at night and the extraordinary star field overhead creates a contemplative and profoundly beautiful experience that guests consistently describe as one of the most memorable moments of their Africa journey.

Authentic Cultural Community Visits

The **Olkirimatian Conservancy** exists entirely because of the commitment, the courage and the extraordinary management skill of the Olkirimatian community Maasai men and women who chose to protect their land for wildlife and for their future, rather than to sub-divide it for agriculture in the way that has destroyed so many other great East African ecosystems.

Lentorre Lodge arranges **authentic community visits** that give guests a genuine understanding of this choice and this achievement. Walking with the cattle herders as they bring the animals home at dusk. Visiting a Maasai village and participating in the daily rhythms of the homestead. Purchasing beadwork jewellery directly from the women who made it each piece encoding the specific clan and regional identity of its creator. Meeting the rangers who patrol the conservancy's borders and who represent the community's front-line conservation investment.

Children's activities are particularly designed within this cultural programme children are offered the experience of **being a Maasai for the day**: helping to fetch water from the spring, assisting with the morning cattle move, learning the Maasai warrior tradition's basic cattle-herding calls. For young travellers, this immersion in a genuinely different way of life is among the most educational and most durably influential experiences that a Kenya journey can provide.

Bush Dining

With the **Nguruman Escarpment as the backdrop**, the volcanic plains as the foreground and the extraordinary South Rift sky as the ceiling, Lentorre Lodge's bush dining programme creates culinary experiences of a theatrical beauty that conventional restaurant settings cannot approach.

The lodge's **chef** prepares menus of genuine quality in the bush from languid midday feasts on the escarpment with cold wines and a view extending to Tanzania, to intimate candlelit dinners at the waterhole as nocturnal animals begin their evening arrivals, to dawn breakfasts on the plains after a morning game drive with the first light turning the volcanic landscape gold. The specific setting for each bush meal is chosen in consultation with the guest group and changes daily "**a variety of amazing locations scattered across the conservancy**" ensuring that no two meals occupy the same backdrop or deliver the same experience.

Visits to Lake Magadi and Lake Natron

Lake Magadi — one of the most visually extraordinary lakes in East Africa, its alkaline waters producing the natural soda-ash that has been commercially extracted here for a century offers the closest and most accessible soda lake experience from Lentorre Lodge. The lake's surface, variously pink with flamingos, white with crystallised soda, terracotta with the iron-rich volcanic soils of its shore and blue with the open sky, creates a colour palette of considerable painterly beauty. The flamingo nesting grounds on the lake's islands when active represent one of the most significant flamingo breeding sites in the East African Rift.

Lake Natron — across the Tanzanian border, accessible by helicopter from Lentorre or by extended road expedition is a more demanding and more extreme environment: its waters reach temperatures of 60°C, its alkalinity is lethal to most organisms (and legendarily to large animals that attempt to drink from it), and its extraordinary red-and-pink surface colouration is the result of the specific algae (*Arthrospira*) and bacteria that have adapted to these conditions. The **flamingo colony** at Natron the largest in Africa, where the majority of the world's 3.5 million lesser flamingos are born makes it one of the most important single wildlife sites on the continent, and a helicopter flight over the nesting grounds in season is an experience of almost otherworldly scale and beauty.

Fishing on the Ewaso Ng'iro River

The **catfish fishing** on the Ewaso Ng'iro River with the camp record of an eleven-pound specimen as the target and the guide's local knowledge of the best pools and the best times as the advantage is one of Lentorre's most distinctive and most unexpectedly pleasurable activities. Fishing in a wild African river, with the escarpment above you and the sounds of the conservancy around you, is a meditative and quietly joyful experience that offers a different pace and a different relationship with the landscape from the game drive and the walking safari.

Access to a Photography Hide

Lentorre Lodge's **sunken ground-level photography hide** air-conditioned and overlooking a permanent waterhole provides a genuinely remarkable wildlife photography facility within the main lodge compound. The permanent waterhole draws wildlife throughout the day and night, with the specific concentration of species varying by hour: morning arrivals of prey species, midday bird activity, late afternoon predator movements and nocturnal visits from the smaller carnivores and the extraordinary array of nocturnal bird species that Lentorre's escarpment position supports.

The hide's **air conditioning** makes extended daytime sessions genuinely comfortable even in the South Rift's considerable heat; its **soundproofing** ensures that camera movements and minor conversation do not disturb the approaching wildlife; and its **ground-level positioning** delivers the eye-level photographic perspectives that the finest wildlife images demand.

Walking with Baboons

The **Lale'enok Resource Centre** — which sits at the intersection of the Shompole and Olkirimatian conservancies and is accessible from Lentorre as well as Shompole Wilderness has, under the guidance of its long-term research programme and the legacy of **Dr Shirley Strum** (one of the world's leading experts on baboon behaviour and social organization), habituated a troop of baboons to human presence.

The baboon walk experience departing early enough to intercept the troop as they descend from their sleeping trees at dawn provides an encounter with primate social life of extraordinary depth and intimacy. The guide's specific knowledge of individual animals, their personalities, their relationships and their positions in the troop's hierarchy transforms the observation of baboon behaviour from a wildlife sighting into something closer to a visit with a complex community. The parallels with human social organisation the politics, the alliances, the infant care, the territorial movements are visible throughout and deeply illuminating.

GETTING THERE & LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Air Access:

Lake Naivasha is served by **Loldia Airstrip** — receiving daily scheduled flights from Nairobi's **Wilson Airport** on **Safarilink** (25 minutes). Private charter aircraft can also land at Loldia, and at the **Oserian Airstrip** near Chui Lodge (10 to 15 minutes from the lodge).

Lake Nakuru is accessible by road from Nairobi (2.5 to 3 hours) or by private charter to **Nakuru Airport (NUU)**, just 15 minutes from The Cliff. Lake Nakuru National Park can also be reached via **Naishi Airstrip** inside the park.

The South Rift Conservancies are best accessed by **private charter flight** — approximately **25 minutes from Wilson Airport** to the Ranger Airstrip (Shompole) or nearby strips for Lentorre. Road access is approximately 4 hours from Nairobi via the Magadi road — a rewarding journey through the increasingly dramatic southern Rift Valley landscape, but not recommended for guests with limited time or mobility considerations.

Road Access:

Lake Naivasha — 1.5 to 2 hours from Nairobi on the A104/A8 highway. **Lake Nakuru** — 2.5 to 3 hours from Nairobi via the same highway. **South Rift** — 4 hours from Nairobi via the Magadi road. All transfers in comfortable, air-conditioned private vehicles with experienced Vard Africa drivers.

Vard Africa Logistical Support

Vard Africa provides comprehensive end-to-end logistical support for all Rift Valley journeys, including flight bookings, private road transfers, property meet-and-greet, all activity coordination, 24-hour in-destination support and emergency protocol coverage via our AMREF/Flying Doctors network.

Best Time to Visit

- ✓ **January to March** — Dry season. Excellent wildlife viewing. Good for photography with clear light. Best for South Rift conservancies.
- ✓ **June to October** — Long dry season. Outstanding game drives across all properties. Lake Nakuru flamingo concentrations often at their most spectacular. Best for Mara combination journeys via Loldia.
- ✓ **November to December** — Short rains bring the landscape to green brilliance. Excellent birdwatching. Wildlife remains good; the South Rift conservancies are particularly beautiful after the first rains.
- ✓ **April to May** — Long rains. Loldia and Naivasha properties remain open; South Rift properties may close or offer reduced access. Dramatic green landscape and excellent birdwatching for those who don't mind the occasional shower.

A VARD AFRICA FINAL NOTE

The Great Rift Valley is not one destination but many each ecosystem with its own character, its own wildlife, its own human story and its own specific quality of beauty. Lake Naivasha's freshwater world of hippos and fish eagles and colonial homesteads.

Lake Nakuru's flamingo lake and dramatic cliff-top camp. The South Rift's remote, wild, community-owned conservancies where the lion density rivals the Masai Mara and the photography hides deliver encounters that the national parks cannot.

Come to the Rift Valley. Come for the flamingos and the rhinos and the lions. Come for the colonial homesteads and the Maasai communities and the photography hides. But come also for what the Rift itself provides the reminder, available nowhere else on earth with such geological immediacy, that this is where our story began. And that the best way to honour that beginning is to protect, as faithfully and as completely as we can, what remains.