



Kenya: A Taste of Africa

January 2009

Tour Report

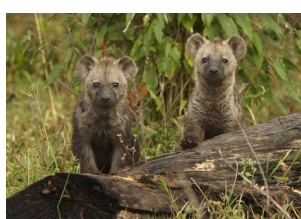
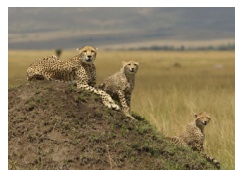
In January 2009 Peter Smart, Wild Arena's photographic guide and tour leader, accompanied two groups to Kenya (with two couples joining both weeks) on our regular **Kenya: A Taste of Africa** safari to the Masai Mara.

On our first game drive following our arrival in the Mara we immediately met up with Supuu, a female leopard we have come to know well over the years. Her latest pair of cubs were still thriving and it appeared the attractive young girl and the huge young boy (at just over a year old) might be considering going off on their own. We saw all 3 leopards on many of our game drives over the next 2 weeks although a rarely together. On one memorable evening following Supuu for the whole drive until it was dark, twice seeing her hunting and several times sitting by our vehicles! The sightings were all within half an hour of our camp, often much closer, and makes it one of the best places in Africa to get close to these beautiful Big Cats.



The local lion pride continues to increase in numbers with over 20 lions being seen together on occasion, while some new arrivals of just a couple of months were also regularly seen. All these hungry mouths meant the lionesses were kept busy at night and on many occasions our morning drives from camp were soon punctuated by the sight of a pride finishing their breakfast with attendant hyenas, jackals, vultures and eagles waiting in the wings to finish any remaining food.

We were delighted to find Shakira, the Cheetah mother, with her three cubs (featured in BBC's *Big Cat Live* shown a few months earlier) were all doing well. We saw them and also the 3 boys who featured in the same programme on several occasions along with several more of these delightful cats. On one morning having seen a total of 7 Cheetahs we were informed that a Black Rhinoceros had been. Slightly dubious as I had not seen these rare mammals in that area of the Mara for many years, we drove over a rise and there he was!



Hyenas often seem to get a bad press but a group of youngsters kept us amused one morning and became founding members of their "Hyena Appreciation Society"! A wide-range of other mammal and bird species provided a great variety of photographic opportunities to keep the cameras clicking! On a number of occasions we faced difficult photographic challenges with the light - sunsets for example - and composition, and these were covered during informal discussions in the vehicle and back at the camp. We

also found time to visit a Masai village, the local town on market day together with the school we have been supporting over the last few years which gave us a wider appreciation of how the local people successfully co-exist with the wildlife.



After a turbulent year politically, it was great to see that Kenya is once again attracting people to view their fantastic wildlife. We will of course be returning in January 2010 and for 3 safaris at the height of **The Great Migration** in September. A Gallery showing a selection of photographic highlights from each of the safaris may be viewed at:

http://www.petersmartwildlifephotography.co.uk/wa/tour_gallery/ky2009ap/

The *Overview* folder contain a selection of images showing the wide range of animals, birds, people and landscapes that were seen. An additional folder contains more images of the Big Cats. All photographs were taken by Peter Smart using a range of Canon cameras and lenses.

Peter Smart, June 2009

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