

ASSOCIATED PRODUCT

FIRST-HAND FEEDBACK

August 2023

Ianka Van Wyk (Travel Designer) and Bavisha Budhia (Operations Specialist) recently travelled on a Nomad Tanzania educational, and shared their wonderful feedback.

Arusha Coffee Lodge

What an amazing ambiance as we arrived – we were greeted by the front desk manager with a delicious iced coffee. Once we checked in, we were taken to our rooms which were clean, well-equipped and stocked with all the necessary amenities. We spent three nights here, so had amazing meals at the restaurant serving Swahili and Indian cuisine. One has the option to book on a DBB or FB basis; drinks are for one's own account. They have a spa on site, which needs to be pre-booked, and offer a Coffee Tour (1 hour), day trip to the Ngorongoro or day trip to the bottom of Kilimanjaro or Mt Meru. The complimentary tour of the Shanga Workshop is a must to do! It's humbling and astonishing to see such amazing workmanship created with recycled goods, beadwork and scarves, blankets, and much more. A stopover for a night or two is definitely recommended – before or after a safari.

Kuro Tarangire

We set off at 09:00 from Arusha to Tarangire Reserve. This is a slow, comfortable drive; alternatively you can fly from Arusha to Kuro Airstrip. On arrival, we were met by Raymond and his all-male team. We were welcomed with warm wipes for our hands and taken to the main area for a briefing. Due to the long drive to the Tarangire gate, and game drive with a lunch stop en route, which was prepared by Arusha Coffee Lodge, from the gate to the camp we did not go out on an evening game drive. At 19:00 we enjoyed pre-drinks at the campfire and dinner at 20:00. This is a rustic feel of a camp, with bucket showers that took us back to our Wilderness roots (no washing hair ladies) and eco-flush loos; it was rather comfortable. Game drives were good, and our highlight was a pride of lions with a fresh kill. This is a good property to start a Tanzanian itinerary with.

Entamanu Ngorongoro

08:30 departure from Kuro Tarangire to Ngorongoro via Lake Manyara. This is a good 8 to 9 hour trip via road with stops in between – not an option we would recommend for people with back problems or elderly couples. One thing that amazed us was the way the climate changed, from cold Tarangire to extremely humid Lake Manyara. We stopped at Lake Manyara with great excitement, not knowing what to expect. However, this is a quick picnic spot that becomes overcrowded. It's a birder's paradise and we managed to see the blue monkey and lots of baboons. After lunch we headed toward Ngorongoro. Heading up to Entamanu Ngorongoro was not what we expected: it's a **NARROW** road shared by vehicles, trucks, buses and animals (baby buffalo to be specific) which was a little nerve-racking but a lovely experience with stunning views. We stopped at the lookout point which gives you a full view of the crater. On reaching Entamanu we did feel the change in climate, it was **FREEZING**, as we were approximately 2,000 ft. above sea level. We were welcomed by Jonathan and the team in the main area – currently still tented, and has two lounges with fireplaces – for the camp briefing. We stayed in the newly built rooms which have been changed from tented to solid structures due to the heavy winds. The room was comfortable, with a separate bathroom and an electric fireplace. It lacked amenities but we were notified this was only until renovations are completed. We had an interleading room which was separated by a bathroom door. The downfall to this is we could hear other guests next door from us in their bathroom. This room is best suited to families.

In the morning we opted to go for a walk with Joseph and Mookie to a local Maasai village; we started with breakfast and headed out by vehicle to a halfway point, where we then finished our walk to the village. This was an amazing experience, but one needs a moderate fitness level to walk the hills. Those who cannot walk the distance can be taken by vehicle to the village as well. We were welcomed in the village with an opening dance

followed by the male dominating game of who could jump the highest. If anyone does not know this, Maasai men are from one of the tribes who can jump impressively high. They showed us how to make a fire with cedar wood and a stick, what their huts were made off and also showed us the inside of one of their homes. The following day we descended into the crater at 05:00 as it gets very busy later. The Ngorongoro Crater has extraordinary game viewing – a spectacle all year round – unique microhabitats, a rich tapestry of small ecosystems, including a saline lake, swamps, plains, and forests.

Lamai Serengeti

We departed Entamanu at 08:30 for Lake Manyara Airstrip, which is just over an hour's drive, for the flight to Kogatende. There is no airstrip in Ngorongoro – you have to drive back to Lake Manyara Airstrip. On arrival at Kogatende we were greeted by Amos, our new camp guide, who paid our park fees. Then we were met by a Serengeti Balloon representative who gave us all our forms to sign for our hot air ballooning activity the following morning. The drive to camp was about an hour, and on arrival we were welcomed by Lawrence, Ester and Baraka. After a very detailed briefing we had lunch and headed to our room, which was the last room and far away from the main area. For elderly guests, request rooms close to the main area.



Accommodating guests in comfort and style, the camp features 12 rooms, thoughtfully divided between two properties. The Main Lodge comprises eight rooms, while the Private Lodge, perfect for exclusive bookings, offers four exquisite rooms. Additionally, two of the Main Lodge rooms are tailored to suit family needs. Designed with an open-front concept, all rooms provide unobstructed views of the Serengeti's vast plains, inviting you to witness the ever-changing African panorama. This camp closes for maintenance each year in April and May. Game viewing was good; however, due to the migration being almost three weeks late, the grass was long, and game was hard to spot. When predators are spotted, sightings become overly saturated with vehicles. We drove up quite a distance to spot some of the migration coming in so we were lucky enough to see approximately 300,000 wildebeest and zebra combined. In full season this will be a magnificent sighting.

Sandor Theron (Travel Designer) was recently invited by Inspirational Places to join a group of agents to explore Mosaic Lagoon Lodge.

Mosaic Lagoon Lodge

The group departed from Cape Town in style a la helicopter, operated by Cape Town Helicopters. They have a great fleet of helicopters that can take up to 6 pax. After a beautifully scenic flight (30 minutes) along the coastline we arrived at Mosaic Lagoon Lodge (in the Walker Bay area, greater Gansbaai). The Lodge looks lovely after some soft refurb, from the relaxing and inviting public areas to the individual lodges. There is one family suite that can accommodate two adults and two kids under 12 years. This lodge would definitely appeal to nature lovers, as you are surrounded by milkwood trees, on the shores of a beautiful lagoon. Knowledgeable guides can take you on nature drives or walks through the pristine fynbos, and it's great for bird watching. Additionally, they offer quad biking, beach excursions (beach lunches or sunset drinks can be arranged) and can take you on whale watching outings (in season). The lunch was delicious, and well presented, and the staff was very friendly.

Some of the Johannesburg Operations, Reservations, and Associated Product teams attended a full-day site inspection of the Johannesburg hotels and surrounds. Here is their feedback.

Our visit started at **African Rock Hotel**, a very small boutique hotel, which is about 10 km from OR Tambo International Airport, offering quick and easy access to Johannesburg, and the Sandton area, as well as the highway to Pretoria. The rooms are great and look comfortable. They also have a family room, which we did think was not that spacious, especially for smaller children – but everything else looks perfect. The hotel has a well-established, lush tropical garden, with a swimming pool and large patio to ensure relaxing outdoor living. Their restaurant offers fusion cuisine, where all meals are prepared by a top chef with fresh ingredients. We had a lovely snack here served near the fire looking over the pool. What is also nice was that they have an open-plan kitchen where you could sit and enjoy looking at the chef while he is preparing your meal. We really loved this hotel as it was very personalised.

Our next stop was the **City Lodge OR Tambo**, where we were met by the Sales Manager Rose and the GM, who took us through the hotel. The hotel is based at one of Africa's busiest airports, OR Tambo International Airport. It provides business and leisure for travellers with a home away from home, as accommodation here is comfortable and relaxed for those wanting to be very close to the airport, and traveling to and from Johannesburg. This hotel has all the amenities you would need, and caters for all guest requirements. There is a pool and a huge restaurant with lots of variety to choose from, as well as immediate access to the airport. It's a lovely big hotel, but you don't feel it; it's very clean with comfortable rooms and a friendly team that always smiles and greets you as you walk by. Rooms are spacious and air-conditioned, with queen or twin beds. They also manage group bookings very well here, as they have a spacious area with a separate check-in for them.



The **Intercontinental OR Tambo Hotel** is an incredibly well-positioned hotel. It is the closest to the airport, with a full-service restaurant, and professional, friendly staff. The welcome from the team outside was just incredible, and you already feel at home before you even enter the hotel. Lerato Rakgosi met us with a beautiful smile and took us through the updates and what is currently happening at the hotel. She then showed us the main areas, and the rooms, which looked very comfortable – clean with a very nice layout. The rooms are high-tech while the bathroom’s shower uses the space brilliantly and it’s surprisingly very spacious. Thereafter, Lerato showed us the meeting rooms, which also can be used for group check-ins, which you can see would be managed very well. We had lunch here and the restaurant is really amazing – from the vibe to the delicious food, and the service is impeccable. What was lovely was we didn’t even have to wait for the food, it was well prepared and there was lots of variety to choose from. The spa area at the swimming pool was not available during our site inspection, as it was under renovation. However, you wouldn’t even know there were renovations as it was very well managed.

Our second last stop was **Fireblade Aviation**, a complete, private aviation travel experience with a personal touch. Our welcome was really amazing. We met Shaun, and enjoyed a level of friendliness and service that is hard to find. We felt genuinely important, like we were there for a private charter, though we could not see the planes as most of them were out with guests. It’s just a short walk from the plane to their on-site customs and immigration facility. They have beautiful lounges as well as private day rooms for relaxing. What was also nice about Fireblade’s private aviation experience was that it offers the convenience of customised travel scheduling, for example, you get to choose the time you travel. Nothing is too much trouble here. They even have a Layover Lounge, which is known as the Pilot and Crew Room.

Federal Air was our last stop for the day, and we were ready to see how they handle their processes. Odie met us with a warm welcome and took us through their safety process. She then took us to the outdoor check-in area, where the team presented us with “boarding passes” for our flight, though in reality these were just generic cards for us as part of the site inspection process. We went through the full check-in process, which gave us an indication of what is entailed. Odie then took us through the process and showed us the entire lounge. There are indoor and outdoor areas where passengers can sit and enjoy the breeze while waiting for their flight. The lounge also has a selection of complimentary drinks and snacks. Everyone working in the lounge was super friendly as they showed us the different aircraft for different areas. It was amazing to understand why Federal Air always advises that they need soft-sided bags, important to note! Passengers must have soft-sided duffel bags (no frames or wheels).

Overall, it was a pleasant experience that helped us to understand the offering. The personalised and interactive experience we had was very useful, and it will be simple for us to match the appropriate product to the right guest in future.

