



KENYA
GREAT PLAINS
CONSERVING AND EXPANDING NATURAL HABITATS

SEASONAL GUIDE TO GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION

THE MAASAI MARA | MARA PLAINS AND MARA EXPEDITION
 WHAT IS GREAT ABOUT THIS MONTH?

JANUARY

You can expect lush green valleys and great animal sightings during January. The game is plentiful and the skies are beautifully clear, day and night. With fewer tourists, you'll feel that you have the Masaai Mara all to yourself! This is also the time of the lesser known "Loita" or northern migration which is predominantly a wildebeest and zebra migration into the Olare Motorogi and Mara North Conservancies, with the animals often remaining until March each year.

While the daytime temperatures are hot, the evenings and nights are comfortably cooler.

FEBRUARY

February is a time of clear skies and plentiful game, when the short-grass animals head to, and congregate, around the remaining permanent waterholes in our area, often attracting predators. Fewer tourists mean an "almost exclusive" feel to the Masaai Mara and the game viewing remains excellent.

The "Loita" wildebeest migration remains in the Olare Motorogi and Mara North Conservancies.

Daytime temperatures are hot and conditions dry - perfect game-drive weather.

MARCH

Widespread and plentiful game is what March is all about. Again, fewer tourists mean that the Masaai Mara is your "private playground" with the "Loita" wildebeest joined by additional zebra in the Olare Motorogi and Mara North Conservancies - this all a precursor to the larger herds heading northward from the Serengeti, which usually arrive toward late July.

Rivers are beginning to run lower, so waterholes are usually rich with wildlife of all kinds. Predators tend to focus on the wildlife congregating here, resulting in superb natural and dramatic photographic opportunities.

Daytime temperatures are hot, with evenings remaining nice and warm.

APRIL

April means our rain starts to arrive, resulting in the land transforming into a green and magical paradise.

Flowers blossom and life all around us is reborn, with frogs breeding in scattered pools of water, migratory birds arriving and dung beetles emerging.

It is a time of plenty with amazing game viewing.

The "Loita" wildebeest and zebra migration remains in full swing in the Olare Motorogi and Mara North Conservancies. The rain cools things down, with pleasant daytime and nighttime temperatures.



SUMMER/GREEN SEASON
DEC - FEB

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MAY	<p>We start to see topi returning to our areas now, and the black widow birds begin their courtship displays and castle-building to attract mates.</p> <p>By now the grass is beautifully tall, meaning the grazers are having a wonderful time!</p> <p>The "Loita" wildebeest and zebra are in full force within the Olare Motorogi and Mara North Conservancies by now. Occasional rain keeps the grasslands lush and filled with game.</p> <p>Temperatures are pleasant in the day and cool in the evenings.</p>
JUNE	<p>It is elephant time in the Masai Mara, with the start of the breeding season.</p> <p>Expect to see large concentrations of these magnificent animals, with lots of breeding herds being shadowed by large bulls.</p> <p>There is also excellent general game viewing and the occasionally cloudy sky offers the chance for great landscape photography.</p> <p>The "Loita" migration tends to depart the area now in preparation of the southern migration's arrival next month.</p> <p>Temperatures are comfortable both day and night.</p>
JULY	<p>The great annual or southern migration most often arrives in the Maasai Mara by mid to late July, so this is the chance to see those legendary wildebeest river crossings!</p> <p>The grass is low by now, which means great game viewing throughout the region.</p> <p>The temperatures are lovely and cool in the mornings and evenings.</p>
AUGUST	<p>August means wildebeest everywhere! This is the peak migration period, which sees the wildebeest rutting, with bulls fighting over females. Constant river crossings means a lot of predator action from crocodiles and lions shadowing the herds. The Olare Motorogi and Mara North Conservancies offer the chance to get away from the hustle and bustle. Lovely cool temperatures in the morning and evening.</p>
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OCTOBER

October sees the migrating wildebeest and zebra beginning to run back southwards towards the Serengeti, so it is a good time for more river crossings and continued predator action.

The general game viewing remains brilliant.

Day and night time temperatures are beginning to get a lot warmer, helped by the annual October berg winds.

NOVEMBER

It is the start of the short rains, which means lush grass, lots of babies, clear morning skies with stunning sunrises. With fewer tourists you once more feel that you have the area to yourself, with amazing game viewing par for the course. Although the southern migration has departed, resident antelope as well as predators remain ensuring fantastic wildlife sightings for guests.

The northern or "Loita" migration starts trickling back in to our area again from around the middle of the month. Temperatures are beginning to rise, both during the day and at night.

DECEMBER

The summer thunderstorms are here again ensuring lush, green grass, flowers of every hue and lots of baby animals. The game viewing is superb as they enjoy the flush of new grasses.

The rising temperatures give way to occasional spectacular lightning storms and welcoming rain, heralding a new life cycle across the plains.

A great place to spend Christmas and New Year!



CHYULU HILLS | OL DONYO LODGE
 WHAT IS GREAT ABOUT THIS MONTH?

JANUARY	<p>January in the Chyulu Hills is a gentle time of expansive lush, green grass, trees in full bloom and grazing plains game and elephants, all in the shadow of the magnificent Mount Kilimanjaro. Perfect combination period to wildlife seen in the Masai Mara Reserve.</p> <p>Temperatures are hot during the day, but a lot cooler in the evenings and early mornings.</p>
FEBRUARY	<p>This is the calving season, which means lots of baby animals, and great game viewing, accompanied by clear skies and spectacular star-gazing. The clear skies mean great views of Mount Kilimanjaro.</p> <p>Temperatures are hot during the day, but cooler at night, making it the perfect time to try out your suite's "star beds"!</p>
MARCH	<p>A time of peace and tranquility, with great game viewing</p> <p>Hot days and great cloud build-up make for stunning landscape and scenic photography opportunities.</p> <p>Daytime temperatures are warm to hot, with night-time temperatures remaining comfortably warm.</p>
APRIL	<p>April means rain and new birth in the Chyulus! The area is beautiful and green, water is plentiful, and there are dramatic skies for cloud photography.</p> <p>The game is more dispersed due to increased ground water drinking pans but still plentiful and the daytime and night-time temperatures are cooling down nicely.</p>
MAY	<p>The green season continues into May, with water still plentiful everywhere and the occasional cloudburst making for wonderfully dramatic skies and great landscape photo opportunities. The game viewing is good, with animals spread widely across the plains below Kilimanjaro.</p> <p>Temperatures are cooler and very comfortable both day and night.</p>
JUNE	<p>With the onset of the dry season comes greater concentrations of game around the fewer more permanent waterholes which all adds up to amazing game viewing in the Chyulu Hills region.</p> <p>Now is the perfect time to enjoy the open air hide at the waterhole in front of Ol Donyo Lodge.</p> <p>Regular predator sightings and elephants aplenty.</p> <p>The temperatures are also much cooler in the day and at night.</p>



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JULY	<p>The plethora of game is astounding in July, with a wide range of animal species - especially elephant - in abundance, especially near permanent water sources (and our open hide).</p> <p>While the wind can increase marginally during July, the daytime temperatures are pleasant, with cool nights making it perfect "snuggling down" weather or sharing great stories around a roaring log fire.</p>
AUGUST	<p>August sees continued amazing wildlife and game viewing across the area, with large numbers of elephants and other plains game spotted on our scheduled game viewing activities including those of our open game drive vehicles, horseback out-rides and guided walking safaris.</p> <p>Although there may be a few overcast days, August is usually sun-filled, with comfortable mid-day temperatures and lovely crisp nights after sunset.</p>
SEPTEMBER	<p>More great game and elephant sightings make September a truly special month, as daytime temperatures begins to climb once more in the build-up to the rainy season.</p>
OCTOBER	<p>The build-up to the seasonal rains is under way, with good game viewing around waterholes, with regular elephant, good antelope and predator sightings.</p> <p>Daytime temperatures begin to rise in October, but nights still pleasantly cool.</p>
NOVEMBER	<p>Short rains mark the arrival of November and the start of the green season.</p> <p>Game viewing is great at this time of year and the new grass growth means food aplenty for the plains game and elephants. Predators take advantage of this time of year with some spectacular opportunities to view hunting of these on resident antelope species.</p> <p>Temperatures are getting much warmer now, both during the day and of an evening.</p>
DECEMBER	<p>Warmth and an abundance of lush greenery mark the "emerald" season, with incredible birdlife and great wildlife spread throughout the Chyulu Hills and surrounding plains.</p> <p>A great time for birding and for spending Christmas and New Year in a verdant wonderland.</p>



WILDLIFE NOTES

THE OLARE MOTOROGI, MARA NORTH CONSERVANCY AND GREATER MASAAI MARA RESERVE WILDLIFE VIEWING OVERVIEW

During January, February and March, there are usually fewer visitors in the Masaai Mara, thanks to the end of the festive season and the resumption of school terms around the world. This is now the perfect time to have the region “to yourself”. Wildlife is plentiful, with the rains turning the landscapes into lush, verdant pastures with good birding. The grass is short and very green, making it easy to spot predators, and there’s a wealth of wild flowers and baby animals, making this the perfect time for enthusiastic photographers. The predators are active, hunting for prey around active areas like waterholes and rivers. The annual northern or “Loita” migration of wildebeest and zebra, which arrive in late November and leave usually in June or July, can be seen in the Olare Motorogi and Mara North Conservancies. The Great Migration from Tanzania arrives in July, remaining until mid-to-late October. This means that almost 95% of the year sees a wildlife migration of some variety in the vicinity of Mara Plains and Mara Expedition Camps!

Between March and June the “long” rains arrive, signalling the start of the rainy season. If you think that the Masaai Mara is “empty” during this season, think again! The game viewing remains excellent with lots of warthogs, topi, buffalo, elephant, hartebeest, eland and a range of gazelles to be seen, as well as hippo and crocodile. This is truly one of those secret seasons offering a truly special safari experience, with lions regularly targeting wily warthogs, which often dash to the safety of their burrows if they sense anything suspicious! Topis are also on the prey list of both lions and hyena. Indeed, this is the favourite time for hyenas to bring down these large antelope, which tend to sleep in the heat of the day, making them an easy target. It’s exciting to see a clan of hyena on a kill and the interaction between them and other predators and scavengers, especially when they take on lions, who, in this instance become the scavengers and the hyenas the hunters. There are flowers aplenty and lots of migratory birds such as storks and raptors making the Mara their seasonal home. The resident wildebeest and zebra migrants start heading to their respective calving grounds. This means that predators are also active, with a lot of kills witnessed during this season.

Mid June to December is migration time! Beginning at the end of June with the departure of the Loita wildebeest and zebra, followed closely by the arrival of the Great Migration from Tanzania, when the plains of the Masaai Mara are filled to capacity with animals, giving rise to one of the greatest spectacles on earth. By the end of September the first warthog and topi are beginning to give birth to their young, followed by the gazelles and zebras from November to December. The plains are alive with new life and, as always, the predator action is intense.

THE CHYULU HILLS WILDLIFE VIEWING OPPORTUNITY OVERVIEW

January to March tend to be the “hottest” months in the Chyulu Hills region and the perfect time for guests to relax by the poolside or retreat to their private plunge pools during the middle of the day and admire the views of Mount Kilimanjaro and wildlife in the area. Elephant sightings are good over this period as they all come to bathe and drink at the waterhole in front of ol Donyo Lodge. Indeed, in the build-up to the rains, most of the animals tend to concentrate around the waterhole, making for great sightings. The plains usually still have good grass cover following on from the December rains which draws plentiful plains game to the area from surrounding group ranches as well as nearby Amboseli and Tsavo West National Parks. A lot of animals also calve in this period so there are generally lots of baby animals around.

Dry terrain antelope such as oryx and gerenuk (which one does not see in the Masaai Mara region) come closer to the lodge and surrounding thicket in search of better browsing and water and cheetah spotting is good over this period, especially as the calving season arrives. Different migratory birds are also seen during this time as they pass through, heading south in search of the rains. Toward the end of the March some species of Acacia come into flower in anticipation of the approaching rains.

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April and May are considered the green season as Kenya's long rains kick-in, filling waterholes to capacity. New grasses sprout to cover the plains and plant life is amazing as trees and shrubs come into flower, creating beautiful landscapes with splashes of colour everywhere.

Out on the plains there is great game activity as animals take advantage of the green grass and abundance of water. The elephants tend to roam further afield over these months, but there are always a few of the local dominant and resident bulls around, and sometimes, if you are lucky, you can see herds of buffalo. Lion sightings are generally good in this season, as they tend to come out to the plains in search of water and prey. Cheetahs are a more common sighting as they are still taking advantage of all the plains game and young antelope. Photographically, this season definitely brings the most dramatic skies with big cumulonimbus rain clouds forming and showers on the horizons. The plains are full of green lush grass and flowers and landscape photography opportunities abound with lots of rainbows and impressive dark clouds.

From June to October the grass grows tall, following on from the rains. It starts to dry out over the season, leaving the plains with beautiful golden grass that "rolls" in the wind. Although considered our winter months, this time is perfect for keen photographer, as the Southerly wind picks up from the coast often bringing in low cloud and dramatic skies. Mornings can be chilly out on the plains but these are generally the best months for viewing wildlife and game from the lodge and our open game drive vehicles, as the wildlife tends to congregate around our waterholes, especially in front of ol Donyo Lodge itself. Herds of oryx, eland, zebra and impala are often seen sharing the water together. Elephants are a daily sighting during this season and lions and cheetah are regularly seen due to the abundance of prey species.

November and December bring short rains and see the plains start to blossom again, with fauna and flora spread out over the landscape. Temperatures start to build up to the January highs and the seasonal cycle begins again in full force, with excellent game viewing throughout the region.