

Leleshwa Hiking, Loita Hills

Leleshwa

CAMP | MOBILE | HIKING



Beauty walks along the edge of opposites, between pattern and freedom.

Freya Stark



Past and present intertwine in Loita Hills with stunning drama and beauty. Constantly changing before your eyes, this region inspires you to explore and immerse yourself in one of the best wilderness areas that Africa has on offer.

Our sometimes strenuous, but splendidly rare, donkey-supported trek takes you over rolling hills, along perfectly preserved ancient elephant trails lavished with magnificent views, down into valleys of extraordinary fauna and flora. You won't find a more unique Kenyan safari than this hiking safari in the Loita Hills. Embarking on moderate to occasionally rigorous four to six hour hikes, ending up (with all of our gear, which is carried by donkeys) in carefully chosen, usually spectacularly sited fly camping sites. Under the African night sky, awash in a symphony of stars, this is fly camping at its ultimate.



Along the way we get acquainted with the traditional people of this land, the Maasai, who live in the glow of these superb hills and bask in their radiant beauty. Following in their footsteps they effortlessly guide you through everchanging eco-systems as pristine as they were when their ancestors walked them. Sacred forests filled with age old cedar, podo, strangler figs and indigenous orchids are set against a backdrop of impressive hills and valleys with spectacular waterfalls – this untouched wilderness will have your senses reeling. The emphasis is not on big game, though there's plenty of it about, but on the raw wilderness experience with some 2,000 colobus monkeys roaming the canopies. You're also likely to see or find evidence of elephant, buffalo, baboon, bushbuck, bush pig, leopard, hyena and maybe even hippopotamus. For birders, this is the birding Eden – brilliantly coloured Hartlaub's Turaco's flit from tree to tree as giant hornbills pause up in the canopy and red-fronted parrots peck away at fruits.

FIVE DAY LOITA HILLS HIKING ITINERARY



DAY ONE Maasai Walking Trail

On reaching Kanunka, the starting point of the Leleshwa Loita Hills Hiking Expedition, you will meet your Maasai walking guide as well as the porters and donkeys who will transport your gear and camping equipment. Day packs are provided by Leleshwa Camp, so you can pack only what you need for the hike; all other luggage will be transported to Leleshwa Camp to await you at the end of your expedition.

Leaving the villages and Maasai farmlands far behind you, you ascended into the hills where the stunning scenery unfolds before your eyes. With frequent wildlife sightings and the spectacular vibrancy and diversity of Loitas bird species you can't help but stop regularly to take it all in. In the late afternoon you start to enter into the 'sacred forest' and soon arrive into camp, where piping hot showers await you

before you settle in around the campfire to enjoy a sundowner. Darkness falls and by the warmth of the fire you'll enjoy a dinner beneath the most extraordinary night sky.
Total hiking time 6 hours, +/- 10 km

DAY TWO Maasai Walking Trail

Awoken by the early morning activity of birds, a bush breakfast awaits you before breaking camp and heading out on your days hike. You start by following a major waterway along the Suguta Valley, fed by a crystal-clear spring that transverses the valley floor. This ancient waterway is used by Maasai herdsmen in times of drought so there is every possibility that you may encounter some lone nomads during your mornings hike. These interactions are always fun and interesting for everyone as it is such a remote area. A picnic

lunch is served alongside the stream, a refreshing respite to the midday sun.

After relaxing lunch, a 1½ hour hike takes you further into the valley and up to the Naimeneki ridge, recorded in Maasai lore as being the site where a young Maasai girl was lost up in the hills, never to return home. Experience the delights of ancient and unique species of flora and fauna and along the way track wildlife with your Maasai guide. There is no experience like doing it on foot.

Your second secluded campsite, Alandabibi, is set in a glade in the forest overlooking a natural waterhole that is frequented by a variety of animals both during the day and at night, where our motion-activated cameras may catch a glimpse of rare nocturnal visitors.

Total hiking time 6-7 hours, +/- 7 km

DAY THREE Maasai Walking Trail

By now, we are thoroughly steeped in the solitude and silence of the wilderness—there is simply no match for the wonder of experiencing the African wild on foot. Today you set off on a long hike from Alandabibi campsite, along Miguu ya Mbwa Hill, to an amazing viewpoint, where, on a clear day, you can see some of East Africa's natural icons. Stopping for a bush lunch overlooking this extraordinary panorama you see the silver shimmer of Lakes Magadi & Lake Natron, the breeding ground for Africa's famous pink flamingos and the towering 6,600-foot Oldonyo Lengai, East Africa's most recently active volcano. You won't want to move. With the afternoon sun high in the sky we drop down into the coolness of the valleys and hike through pristine forest. The energetic and raucous theatrics of colobus monkeys high in the canopy and the bubbling of streams provide the rhythm to our hike.

Meandering across the hills we head towards the Enchipai Valley, one of Loita Hills largest with the name meaning 'peace' and 'serenity' in the Maa language. Here you feel as if you have descended into another world, protected by a canopy of giant figs, acacias and red cedar trees, where unique vegetation and wildlife flourishes.

Total hiking time 7-8 hours, +/- 10 km

DAY FOUR Maasai Walking Trail

Leaving camp this morning you will walk further into the Enchipai Valley on one of the most spectacular walks in Loita Hills. The walk down the valley leads to the Alarsu waterfall, a 300-foot drop into an enormous plunge pool below. Your Maasai walking guide, Robert Rerende, opened up this route as it has fond memories for him as a child. As a boy he used to go swimming there, a sneaky break from herding goats.

It is a difficult walk as you negotiate the rocky path down

the valley wall but once at the bottom the rewards are oh so sweet. Cooling off in the waters of the plunge pool is a welcome relief and, once immersed, you will forget all the effort. Here you enjoy a hearty picnic lunch at the base of the falls before beginning your climb back up to through the forest. The climb is not for the faint hearted and requires a degree of stamina and physical ability.

Returning to Enchipai Camp, you will be greeted by your Maasai crew who will have showers ready on your arrival. After freshening up settle in around the fire and enjoy the stunning sunset and the warmth of the raging campfire. With dinner under the stars you'll enjoy a special celebration tonight as your Loita Maasai hosts provide you with some fabulous spectacle. They proudly reveal to you their Maasai traditions through their traditional music and dance. Feel free to enjoy the event or why not join in the fun?

Total hiking time 7-8 hours, +/- 10 km

DAY FIVE Leleshwa Camp

After your last bush breakfast, it's time to begin your two-hour walk back to the civilized world of roads, vehicles and technology. Dropping in and out of the Loita valleys, you rise and fall with the terrain towards Moriji, which the end point of our expedition.

Once we reach the vehicles, we say a fond farewell to our Maasai guides, who have shared and shown us so much before driving in 4X4 safari trucks to Leleshwa Camp.

Total hiking time 2 hours, +/- 7 km

ALTERNATIVE ITINERARIES

Two Night Hiking Expedition – Strenuous

Starting and ending at Morijo, you spend two nights at the Enchipai campsite with a day hike down to the Alarsu waterfall.

Two Night Hiking Expedition – Leisurely

Starting and ending at Morijo, you spend two nights at the Enchipai campsite with a full day of exploring Miguu ya Mbwa Hill and the Naimenenkio ridge.

Three Night Hiking Expedition

Start and ending at Morijo, you spend your first night at Alandabibi campsite before having two nights in the Enchipai Valley with the full day there spent exploring as outlined in the two night expedition options.

Five Night Hiking Expedition

Rift Valley to Mara

Starting in the Great Rift Valley at the base of the Nguruman Escarpment, you hike up the valley wall and enter the forest from the east, spending two full days exploring that remote section of the sacred forest with different campsites.

On Day Three you join the Suguta Valley and camp at Alandabibi, before having the final two nights in the Enchipai valley.



LOITA HILLS FACTS

S | 45'
E 35 30'

Altitude 6,000 - 8,300ft above sea level

The Loita Hills are a 400 sqkm untouched indigenous forest located between the Great Rift Valley and the Maasai Mara in South-Western Kenya.

LOITA HILLS HIKING KIT SPECIFICATIONS

TENTS

2 x double (10' x 10' sleeping area)

2 x single or twin (10' x 8' sleeping area)

6' high in centre / straight side walls

All tents are made from light weight material with insect proof door and window linings

BED CONFIGURATIONS

Double beds (6' x 4'6")

Concertina Frame with 1' inflatable mattress

Single twin beds (6'x2'6")

Canvas cot bed with 3" foam mattress

Triple rooms are not possible

All beds have cotton linen, hot water bottles, sleeping bags & duvets (comforters) and blankets

LIGHTING

Solar powered overhead light

Handheld flash lights are provided

BATHROOM FACILITIES

Separate shared toilet and shower tents

Traditional 'dry earth flush' toilets with modern toilet seat

Piping hot bucket showers can be requested at any time

Canvas wash basin in front of each tent

MESS TENT

A dining table

Folding camping chairs

Bar table and cool boxes

Padded Maasai blankets for lounging



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