

# All About



# Africa

## Families can bond on a safari in Africa

BY JANEEN CHRISTOFF

**'One of the biggest challenges is getting [to Africa] and the cost, but otherwise, for families who have the means, it's an excellent destination.'**

**T**aking the family on an African safari might not even make it onto some people's bucket lists as it may seem so far out of reach. But, in fact, there are a multitude of travel options for families desiring to travel to the continent.

Karin Jones, managing director of Anastasia's Africa, specializes in planning custom itineraries for travelers to Africa, and family travel planning is one of her specialties. In fact, she has recently seen a surge in interest in all travel to Africa, especially with families.

"Africa is an amazing destination for families," said Jones. "One of the biggest challenges is getting there and the cost, but otherwise, for families who have the means, it's an excellent destination."

Jones indicated that many of the families that she sends to Africa aren't first-time travelers nor are their children. In fact, families who might enjoy the continent the most are very well-traveled.

As far as age is concerned, Jones doesn't recommend taking children under the age of 8.

"While it may work in large family groups to have younger children, typical families traveling to Africa will get the most for the money if the children are at an age where they can most appreciate their surroundings and be able to participate in all of the activities," she said.

Another helpful tip from Jones is to find properties that truly welcome children and families. Her company works with agents to find the most appropriate accommodations that will meet the needs of each specific family.

"It's important to find properties that have specific programs geared toward families. It's also good for families to be surrounded by an atmosphere where the other guests appreciate the family-friendly nature of the property."

According to Jones, one of the best developments in Africa recently is that there are now more family-style lodgings available. Families can get the whole experience of staying in a tented camp rather than having the family split up with the mother and daughter staying at the lodge, for example, while the father and son sleep in a tent and then vice versa the following night. And it's, of course, not suitable to have children in a tent by themselves.

"Now, families can stay together with no connecting rooms," said Jones. "More and more camps are designed to sleep four or more in either a tent-like setting or a thatched-roof hut, where families can have the most authentic experience."

There are also private safari villas on location at many lodges and camps where families have a private lodge, a private pool and even a private vehicle, in some cases, for game drives. Villas can be as small as two bedrooms or



Children love viewing animals in their natural habitat. Opposite: Families can get up close to wildlife.

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# feature: africa safari

Booking a private lodge sometimes includes a personal vehicle for game drives.



even as large as eight.

"We are seeing a lot of families traveling together, some have older children leaving for college and some have younger kids, and these villas are a great option for them," said Jones.

When planning an itinerary with families, one of the goals for Jones is to tell them that they shouldn't move around too much.

"Staying about three nights in a destination is a good amount of time," she said.

In Kenya, Jones recommends Ol malo House, which is a privately owned game sanctuary on the banks of the Uaso Nyiro River in Kenya's Samburu Country.

"Guests have dinner with the family every night," she said. "Their son operates the game drives. It's a natural fit to have families here."

Another great location for a family safari is Campi Ya Kanzi. This camp, which was built in

partnership with the Maasai and located at the foot of the Chyulu Hills, is owned by an Italian family.

"They have a young daughter who has grown up at the lodge and speaks fluent Maasai, and she interacts with the children of the guests. It's really fun for the kids," said Jones.

Also, Africa isn't just about the safari. There is a lot of adventure to be had in its cities and coastal areas as well. And Jones recommends breaking up a trip with a combination of activities.

"Cape Town is a great location for families. There is so much to do. They can hike Table Mountain, there are the penguins at Boulders Beach, there's the aquarium and even Robin Island, which is best for older children."

And, after a safari, heading to the beach is a great way to relax, particularly after three or four days of early-morning game drives. One recommendation is the Alfajiri

Villas in Mombasa. The property is located in Diani at the beach and offers nannies for children.

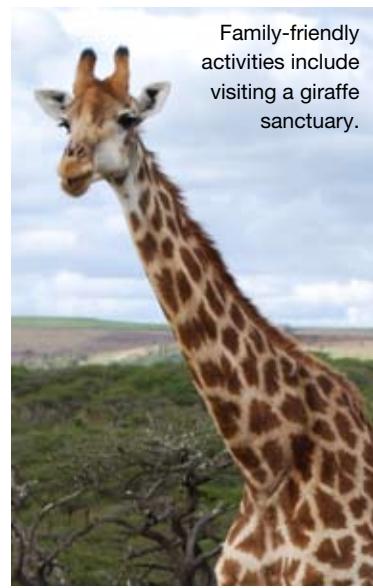
While Anastasia's Africa offers custom-built itineraries for families, other tour operators organize group travel for families on a more regimented itinerary. Intrepid Travel offers an East Africa Family Safari specifically geared toward multigenerational groups. Sales for the tour are up 250 percent according to Intrepid Travel's president, North America, Steve Larkin.

"This is a sure indication that families see the value and enrichment that this type of great trip provides," said Larkin.

The East Africa Family Safari is a 17-day trip from Nairobi to Dar es Salaam. It includes family-friendly activities such as visiting a giraffe sanctuary, camping in the Serengeti National Park and a visit to a school for disadvantaged kids.

In response to the growing interest in family travel to Africa,

Family-friendly activities include visiting a giraffe sanctuary.



## The Details

### Anastasia's Africa

[www.anastasiasafrica.com](http://www.anastasiasafrica.com)

### Collette Family Vacations

[www.collettevacations.com](http://www.collettevacations.com)

### Intrepid Travel

[www.intrepidtravel.com](http://www.intrepidtravel.com)

### Tauck Bridges

[www.tauck.com](http://www.tauck.com)

Intrepid has also added another East Africa family adventure this year: the 12-day Gorillas and Chimps itinerary. Originating in Entebbe, Uganda, it includes a visit to a chimpanzee sanctuary.

Its East Africa family program is complemented by two additional Family Adventures in Namibia and Botswana.

Tauck Bridges and Collette Family Vacations also offer family itineraries to Africa. Tauck Bridges' Tanzania: A Grand Family Safari offers views of Kilimanjaro, a visit with the Maasai, game drives to see the Big Five and more. Collette's Kenya Family Safari visits Nairobi, the Tenderfeet Education Center, The Ark Lodge, Kigio Conservancy, Lake Nakuru, Maasai Mara and more. ●