

There may never be a better time to witness the Great Migration – where and when to go

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The annual Great Migration is a natural phenomenon.

- **The Great Migration in the Masai Mara and Serengeti is one of the world's greatest natural shows.**
- **And if you know where to go, and when, it's possible to witness the spectacle throughout the year.**
- **Camps usually book out years in advance, but Covid-19 has meant there's still space at most lodges.**
- **Both Tanzania and Kenya are also currently open to South African travellers who meet basic Covid-19 protocols.**
- **Here's how to plan your trip.**
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The Great Migration is the planet's largest herd movements of animals, and contrary to what many think it's not a fleeting annual event. It's possible to experience this shifting mass of some 1.5 million wildebeest, zebra, and other antelope at any time of the year, if you know where to go. And with both Kenya and Tanzania currently open to South African tourists who meet Covid-19 entry requirements, it's also possible to see it right now.

Given that migrating animals move in a clockwise direction through the Masai Mara and Serengeti ecosystems, it's possible to plan a migration vacation regardless of when you go. Many consider the migration to only occur when animals make the crossing of the Mara River, but there are other locations to visit that can deliver equally spectacular migration experiences.

The timing has never been better. Although Covid-19 has devastated the tourism industry worldwide, and particularly lodges throughout Africa, Tanzanian guide Hamza Visram told Business Insider South Africa the pandemic has had some positive spinoffs for wildlife and game viewing.

"The ecosystem is healthier than it's been in a long time, the animals have been less hassled by the usual influx of vehicles, and it's a fantastic time for wildlife viewing as travellers will have wildlife sightings almost exclusively to themselves without any disturbance from other safari cars," says Visram.

Asilia co-founder and managing director Jeroen Harderwijk, who oversees the operation of several camps along the migration routes, also believes there's never been a better time to experience the migration.

"In a normal year, many camps are booked up 18 months to two years in advance for the peak river crossings in July and August. This year there is availability, great deals to be had and the added benefit of fewer safari cars and tourists crowding wildlife sightings," says Harderwijk.

"Getting tourism up and running again is also essential for the conservation projects tourism supports, the funding of the Serengeti National Park and Mara Reserve, and the local communities who work in the lodges and camps."

Here's how to structure a trip to the migration depending on the time of year you're able to visit.

December to March

In early December the large wildebeest herds start returning to the Ndutu region in eastern Tanzania, and by January thousands of females will give birth each day on the plains. It's a spectacular sight in its own right, with some estimates suggesting as many as 8,000 calves are born each day during these months. The mass births also attract predators, which target the newborns as they take their first steps. It's a dramatic circle-of-life spectacle to witness.

Where to stay:

Several mobile camps operate in the area to ensure the best chance of being close to the action. If witnessing the best of the migration is a key factor, then a roving camp is for you.

[Serian's Serengeti](#) opens between mid-December and May on the southernmost extremes of the Serengeti's grass plains, for the exact purpose of witnessing the birthing season. The colonial-style tents feature en-suite bathrooms with a flushing toilet and bucket shower.

[Olakira Migration Camp](#) is another mobile camp that follows the migration around the Serengeti, and from December to March they're based in the southern plains. Run by Asilia, this luxury camp has mesh-covered stargazing tents, en-suite bathrooms with flushing toilets, plus a mix of solar and generator power.

[Sanctuary Kusini](#) provides a more permanent offering. It's the only fixed camp of its kind in the region and offers spacious en-suite tents and year-round game viewing.

April to May

Between April and May, the herds begin the long journey north, and the wildebeest start to flood into Tanzania's central Serengeti. There are consistent wildlife sightings in this region throughout the year, but as the great migration reaches its peak it's an unrivalled experience. There are several areas to base yourself, including Seronera River, Seronera Valley, Simba, Moru, and Maasai Kopjes.

Where to stay:

[Dunia Camp](#) is a great base from which to experience the migration during the peak months - at times it may not be necessary to leave the camp to spot the herds and some lurking predators. It's also the only property on the continent staffed entirely by women.

[Four Seasons Serengeti](#) offers a more hotel-like feel and is also perfectly located as a base from which to witness the migration as it passes through the region.

June

By June most of the herd reach Grumeti. It's here where they have to cross the Grumeti River, so it's a good place to witness river crossing scenes that define the migration for many. Unlike the more famous Mara crossings, however, visitor numbers here tend to be lower.

Where to stay:

[Singita Grumeti](#) is situated adjacent to the Serengeti National Park and is a lavish base for the June migrations. Singita runs two lodges and a tented camp run in the region, each with high-end luxuries and the possibility of watching game from a swimming pool.

July to October

From July, the wildebeest start to move into the northern reaches of the Serengeti and the dramatic true river crossings begin. It's possible to base yourself on either the Tanzanian or Kenyan side of the river, each of which will deliver the iconic sight of millions of wildebeest desperately trying to make it to the other side.

Where to stay:

[Sayari Camp](#), on the Tanzanian side in the northern Serengeti National Park, is the closest property to the Mara River. It's considered a prime location from which to experience the migration, but also offers game viewing opportunities throughout the year, and is open from June to March.

[Richard's Camp](#), on the Kenyan side, serves as a superb base for the migration from July to October. It's a luxury camp located in the Mara North Conservancy with year-round game viewing opportunities, but it's at the peak of the migration that it truly comes to life.

[Serian's Serengeti](#) is once again a great option during the migration period. This luxury mobile unit follows the migration to the northern plains from mid-June to mid-November.

November and December

In a typical year, wildebeest will begin leaving the grasslands of the Masai Mara at the start of the seasonal rains, which usually occur in November. With the herds once again on the move it's possible to see them over a wider spread of the Serengeti - and by December, most will have returned to their starting point where they'll begin to prepare for the cyclical process all over again.