UPDATE: TANZANIA

East Africa's largest country now boasts a handful of lodges and camps with comforts undreamed of just a few decades ago.

CHRISTINE AJUDUA REPORTS

Above, left: a Maasai tribesman of the Serengeti in traditional dress; *right*: acacia trees dot the dramatic landscape around the Mara River Tented Camp in the Lamai Triangle

Whether it's Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak, or the annual wildebeest migration, often described as the "Greatest Show on Earth", Tanzania is a land of superlatives whose natural splendours are now complemented by a new crop of lodge openings.

Consider **Four Seasons Safari Lodge Serengeti** (*fourseasons.com*), the Canadian hotel group's first sub-Saharan property. It launched in December with 77 terraced rooms and villas featuring local artwork as well as floor-to-ceiling windows – so you can keep your eyes on the bush while having a bubble bath. Meanwhile, the central infinity pool overlooks two watering holes that attract elephants and buffaloes.

Operating the only resort in the middle of Tanzania's most famous national park comes with an obligation to help protect it. Hence the Discovery Center, set to open this autumn, will offer educational exhibits and events. "Right now, most of what you learn on safari comes from game drives," says GM Jim Kostecky, "and when you return to your lodge, there are no additional resources available." We want to change that. In November, in the Lamai Triangle, a secluded 98,000-acre stretch at the Serengeti's northernmost tip, Singita unveiled its **Mara River Tented Camp** (*singita.com*), a property comfortably situated outside the box. Literally off the grid – it is entirely solar-powered – the camp includes ▸

PHOTOS FROM LEFT: ANDY MAHR/GALLERY STOCK, MARK WILLIAMS

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TANZANIA'S TOP OUTFITTERS
WHO TO BOOK WITH AND WHY

JOURNEYS BY DESIGN: After spending 25 years in six African countries, environmental scientist and wildlife guru Will Jones returned to the UK to launch his niche safari company, crafting – and often guiding – high-end, bespoke itineraries. No one itinerary is the same, though you could expect to go well off the beaten path. *journeysbydesign.com*

MICATO: Renowned for its top-notch service, the Nairobi and New York–based outfitter is raising the bar again with its new Private Invitation Safari. It's all about on-the-spot personalisation, and camps are reserved for only a handful of travellers, so it's like you're being hosted at a friend's bush home. *micato.com*

NOMAD TANZANIA: Fancy kayaking or deep-water swimming in Lake Tanganyika? How about chimping in Greystoke Mahale? This is one for the adventurers. Its latest: ballooning trips in the remote northern Serengeti. *nomad-tanzania.com*

SUN, SEA AND SAND
A WATERSIDE HANDBOOK

LUPITA ISLAND: With 13 open-plan villas and a holistic spa set on the 130-acre private-island resort on Lake Tanganyika, fishing trips to helicopter tours over Kalambo Falls or Kilimanjaro can also be arranged. *firelightexpeditions.com*

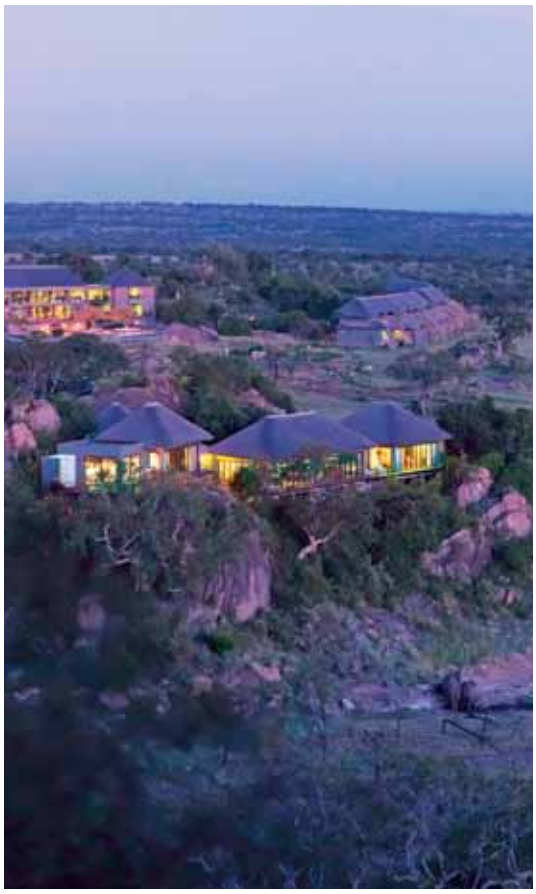
MNEMBA ISLAND: A 1.5km atoll off the northern tip of Zanzibar, &Beyond's exclusive resort attracts divers and honeymooners alike. White-sand beaches, pristine coral reefs, ten thatch-roof bandas – think barefoot luxe. *mnemba-island.com*

PEMBA: When it opens in late 2013, the whitewashed, Mykonos-style Muyuni Resort will surely make a splash on this lesser-known of the Spice Islands (aka the Zanzibar archipelago). For now, stay at the super-luxe, 18-room **Fundu Lagoon** (*fundulagoon.com*), which offers sunset dhow cruises as well as "canoe safaris" through the mangroves lining Pemba's coast.

RAS KUTANI: Flanked by a freshwater lagoon, Selous Safari Company's Indian Ocean resort stands out for its 13 stylish cottages and suites, not to mention its island-inspired "kitchen safaris" and activities like horseback riding on the beach or in the bush. $ *selous.com*

RUBONDO ISLAND CAMP: Late last year, Asilia Africa opened the only camp on this forested Lake Victoria island, a historic haven for wild chimpanzees, uninhabited for decades. Also home to crocodiles and hippos, it's not your typical beach retreat – but with its eight chalets, swimming pool and sundecks, you can be as active or lazy as you'd like. $ *rubondoislandcampproject.com*

From top: the remote environment can be explored during a game drive from the Mara River Tented Camp; the Four Seasons Safari Lodge; view from the veranda at the Mara River Tented Camp



six indoor-outdoor tents built using recycled materials (canvas, leather, stone, wood) and then done up by Cape Town-based design firm Cécile & Boyd's with local textiles and vintage trunks.

Even more recently, **Singita Serengeti House** opened on Sasakwa Hill, behind a watering hole near the company's colonial-style Sasakwa Lodge. African *objets d'art* fill the four spacious suites, which – along with an infinity pool, a tennis court, a personal chef and a private safari guide – are available for exclusive hire.

Meanwhile, Elewana – Anantara's African counterpart – recently launched the rustic-luxe, "zero-footprint" **Serengeti Pioneer Camp** (*elewanacollection.com*), perched on a kopje in the southern Serengeti. Designed in homage to the mobile camps of the 1930s – think campfire dining and ten tented, solar-powered suites – it affords panoramic views of the Moru Kopjes, not to mention butler service.

Next up? This July, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its iconic, eco-pioneering Oliver's Camp, Asilia Africa is set to open a sister site, **Little Oliver's** (*asiliaafrica.com*), surrounded by baobab trees in the remote southeast corner of the Tarangire National Park, where its five thatch-roof tents will offer spacious private decks with sweeping vistas of a Minyonyo Pools flood plain. Like Oliver's, the focus will be walking safaris, from morning game hikes to multiday treks complete with fly camping – for those who still want to try "roughing it".

PHOTOS FROM TOP: MARK WILLIAMS, ADRIAN HOUSTON, MARK WILLIAMS

For a closer look at Tanzania's shoreside hotels, visit ***CENTURION-MAGAZINE.COM***