

TRAVEL

Meet the safari guide empowering women in East Africa

Leading the way for safari guides in the Greater Maasai Mara, Evalyn Sintoya Mayetu from Kenya is defying conventions in a male-dominated industry.



Evalyn Sintoya Mayetu was the first female guide in her country to attain the Silver Level qualification with the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association. [Read her story](#). She's currently working towards Gold Level.

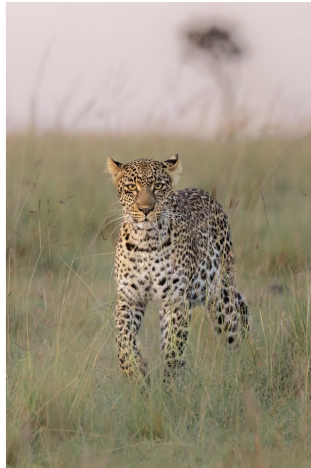
PHOTOGRAPH BY ASILIA AFRICA

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"It's something that's always been within me," smiles Evalyn Sintoya Mayetu, gazing at a herd of buffalo resting in the midday heat of the Kenyan plains. "Wildlife and me, we have a connection. I feel like I belong among these incredible animals. I don't know how to explain it. They inspire me, they excite me."

As a guide at Asilia Africa's newly refurbished [Nabesho Camp](#), set in the rolling grasslands of the Mara Nabesho Conservancy in the Greater Maasai Mara, Evalyn has more reason than most to relish the prospect of going to work. "If you have passion for what you're doing, if you enjoy what you're doing, every day is a gift," she says, explaining the thrill she still gets from watching wildlife like cheetahs, lions and elephants in the wild. "Guiding is what I've always wanted to do." Then she laughs. "I almost feel sorry for my managers, sitting in their offices every day. I don't think I would have the patience."

Several years ago, her dedication saw her become the first female guide in the country to attain Silver Level qualification with the [Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association](#), reflecting the level of her expertise in the field. Evalyn is now setting her sights on accreditation as a Gold Level guide — an achievement that would be monumental in what is a heavily male-dominated industry. Even today there are relatively few female safari guides — not only in Kenya but in Africa as a whole.



Due to their dry nature, leopards are one of the hardest animals to track in the wild. Safaris in the Greater Maasai Mara give travellers a chance to see the elusive cats in their natural habitat. [Read more](#). PHOTOGRAPH BY ASILIA AFRICA

Evalyn's story is more remarkable given her upbringing. Growing up in a rural herding community where the children were unschooled, she defied cultural convention by running away from home at the age of nine in search of an education. With the help of an aunt, she made it through both primary and secondary school, excelling in her studies and deciding against domestic married life. When she finished high school, her goal lay on the savannah.

"From the first day I opened my eyes as a baby, I was surrounded by the wild, so for me, training to become a guide felt natural," she says. Evalyn still recalls her very earliest childhood encounters with the warthogs and giraffes. "You know, for a child, a giraffe is such a magnificent animal. It's the tallest animal on the planet. When it's looking right at you, it's so beautiful."

Driven by a desire to prove that female guides could match their male counterparts, she gathered all the field experience she could while studying wildlife management, working part-time jobs to fund her own progress. When she landed a job on the conservancies — the sweeping, animal-rich plains where visitor numbers are far more regulated than in the main Maasai Mara National Reserve — it was a dream come true. She's now been part of the guiding team at Nabesho Camp since 2018.



Rebuilt in 2023, Nabesho Camp is based within a private conservancy adjacent to the Maasai Mara National Reserve. It's a starting point for night drives and exploring the Mara on foot. [Read more](#). PHOTOGRAPH BY ASILIA AFRICA

Around eight years after starting her role, each drive remains a joy, she tells me. "Every part of the day has its own magic, but I love the very early mornings. It's a new day, a new beginning, and the animals have a certain energy, as though they're giving praise that they survived the night. That time of day, at first light, it's so special."

Evalyn talks about the conservancy as "a paradise area" — an apt description for somewhere with a mere handful of camps scattered across over 500 miles of prime Kenyan wilderness. "It's full of wildlife, with one of the highest concentrations of lions in the world," she adds. "But also, I just love the spirit we have in the camp. It's a small camp with just nine tents, but that means we've been able to manage it and mould it into exactly what we want. There are times when I'm driving out from camp alone, I'll look around at the animals on the plains and just feel the tears of joy."

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