



Travel Editor Jessica Gibson paid a visit to The Serengeti to check out the Four Seasons' first safari camp property based in Tanzania.

Words Jessica Gibson

Rising with the sun, setting at dusk and roaming amongst wild animals; going on safari is an experience that takes you back to primal basics. Leave your material possessions at the door, because survival of the fittest and basic instinct have never had more relevance than in The Serengeti.

Relatively new kid-on-the-plain, Four Seasons Serengeti opened in December 2012 and is offering an authentic Safari experience alongside understated luxury in a true African style.

Considering the rural setting of The Four Seasons Serengeti, it probably goes without saying that getting there is not the most direct of journeys. The closest landing pad to the resort is Seronera airstrip, which is accessible from Kilimanjaro airport via a small hopper plane. The tiny planes can accommodate about 12 passengers and whilst a shaky start is more than likely, it's worth it for the breathtaking views across the African plains. This is your first real sight of The Serengeti.

The Four Seasons experience begins the moment you step off that hopper plane. Four Seasons staff, full of energy and genuine smiles, welcome you from the plane and celebrate your arrival with a pop-up champagne reception and refreshing cold towels. Perfectly framed by the hopper plane and an impressive Four Seasons-branded safari jeep, the unexpected reception marks the start of your Serengeti adventure.

Hidden down a dusty lane without a single building in sight, arriving at The Four Seasons Serengeti is like a mirage. Beyond the baron



dirt track is a thriving hub of activity and hospitality, right in the heart of The Serengeti. Designed throughout with dark teak wood, earthy tones and African architecture, the safari lodge is perfectly in keeping with its magical surroundings. Front of House staff and the hotel's team of local Maasai tribe are ready at the reception to give a warm welcome for any arriving guests. After arriving at the lodge, it doesn't take long to spot the resort's point of differentiation and the real wow-factor; an infinity pool overlooking a natural elephant watering hole. The watering hole attracts a nearby family of elephants every day meaning up to 15 elephants could be seen drinking from it multiple times a day. Seeing the elephants arrive at the watering hole is an extraordinary moment as it's a stark reminder that despite being in the comfort of a luxury resort, you're still in the

middle of the rural Serengeti. One level up from the immaculate pool area is Maji Bar and Terrace, a casual outdoor seating area serving up breakfast, lunch and dinner. As a prime elephant-spotting location, it's the central hub of the lodge. At dusk the poolside and the connecting seating area is a magical place to enjoy a cocktail or a glass of wine overlooking a warm dusky-pink sunset. A calmness in the air and the background hum from the crickets is a comforting reminder that the Serengeti is alive and buzzing 24-hours a day. A deluxe suite provides you with a spacious retreat which includes a lounge area, bedroom, a four-poster bed, two bathrooms, a rainforest shower, a stand-alone bathtub and a decadent dressing room area. The rustic colours and African textures from the central lodge transcend beautifully into the

suites. Quirky handmade features such as a colourful beaded necklace for room keys and handmade pots in the bathroom bring local crafts into the suites. The best parts of the deluxe suites are the expansive balconies, which allow guests to stay immersed in their natural surroundings. Prepare to be blown away by spectacular views of the resort's watering hole, sumptuous outdoor sofas and a refreshing infinity plunge pool. Days at The Four Seasons Serengeti are, of course, centered around going on safari in search of animals out in the bush. All of the safaris can be organised and provided by the resort with staff guides that are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and hugely engaging. The guides ensure that the Four Seasons level of service stays consistent even when in the rural wilderness of The Serengeti as the jeeps are also kitted out to a 5 star level with chilled

refreshments, snacks, binoculars, plug points for charging phones and cameras and even Wi-Fi. Everything had been thought of in spectacular detail to keep you comfortable and connected on full day game drives. The Four Seasons Serengeti is also home to a remarkable destination spa that takes the concept of escapism to a whole new level. In keeping with the rest of the resort, the spa complex is built entirely on stilts. A main reception hut connects to the scattering of individual treatment huts, each with their own changing room, toilet, shower room and balcony overlooking a mountainous Serengeti backdrop. Treatment huts offer total privacy and feel a thousand miles away from anywhere. A welcome glass of lemon and ginger tea sets the tone for the treatments and the ritual foot scrub unwinds tired feet ready

for the treatment itself. The therapists are welcoming, patient and trained to the highest standards, but this comes as no surprise being a Four Seasons spa. I chose the Kina massage (Swahili for thorough) for an unwinding 60 minutes that will straighten out any tension or knots from your bumpy game drives. For something a little quicker, the safari-spa express massage (30 minutes back, neck and shoulder) is an entirely bespoke massage tailored to your problem areas and pressure preference. To feel completely cleansed, the 60 minute Africology facial is an unraveling and sensual experience that includes the best neck and head-massage you may ever experience. Extraordinary Safari experiences meet comforting five star luxury in an enchanting location. This is this is not just any Safari, this is The Four Seasons Safari.



Prices for a four night stay at Four Seasons Safari Lodge Serengeti start from 5,840 USD (approx £3740) on a full board basis, inclusive of round trip transfers to Serener Airstrip and daily game drives. Kenya Airways operates daily flights from Terminal 4 London-Heathrow to Nairobi with daily connections to Kilimanjaro. Prices for economy return ticket from £759 including taxes.

fourseasons.com/serengeti