

# NABOISHO CONSERVANCY

## A TALE OF TWO ALTERNATIVES



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**Top: A leopard feeding on an impala kill**

**MIDDLE: Giraffe browsing acacia.**

**BOTTOM: Lions with a kill with hyena, waiting their turn. The density of lions within Naboisho is one of the highest in the world, with a population of more than 70 identified lions who use Naboisho as their home territory.**

An amazing wildlife experience awaits those who find their way to the Mara Naboisho Conservancy. Whether you arrive as a VIP or a Volunteer, the 210 km<sup>2</sup> conservancy offers wildlife sightings without the crowds of the main Masai Mara National Reserve.

If rules are followed, only four vehicles are allowed close to any wildlife sighting, with other vehicles waiting their turn a distance away. Naboisho was not established for the masses, but high quality, low volume facilities are widely spaced to give guests the exclusivity they desire.

Vast open grassland plains are home to herds of topi, wildebeest, eland, hartebeest, impala, Thomson's and grants gazelle. Giraffe are abundant in acacia dominated bushland. Such a menagerie is a food source for lions, leopards and cheetahs, along with scavenging hyenas and jackals. Herds of elephants and buffaloes can be found in either habitat. VIP visitors can expect great sightings and the chance to watch animal behaviour at close quarters.

The abundance of big cats can have negative impacts on the wildlife; this is where volunteers play their part. The Big Cat Wildlife Research and Conservation, Kenya project run by African Impact, uses volunteers to monitor the number, movement patterns and behaviour of big cats. They also carry out wildlife counts across species, measure grass density, pull out invasive weeds and other activities that protect the health of the conservancy. And, volunteers enjoy great wildlife



PHOTO BY: AMALIA GIL-MERINO



PHOTO BY: FELIX PATTON







sightings while they work. While facilities at the research project are limited, just 500 metres away is Eagle View, one of four tourist facilities in Naboisho of provider Basecamp Explorer. Volunteers are welcome to view wildlife from the decks perched on a rocky outcrop overlooking a water hole and salt lick. They may also use the Wi-Fi system.

Volunteers work with the local community by giving some lessons at nearby primary schools. They also interact with 30 or so Maasai men and women trainee guides at the Koiyaki Guiding School, next door to the African Impact facilities on the conservancy. The guiding school offers an 18 month programme for potential guides which not only covers wildlife ecology but includes information technology, driving and foreign language training. This leads to an examination for the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Bronze Level award. Trainees also take turns to accompany volunteers on their game drive-based research.

**TOP: A herd of elephants viewed from Eagle View Lodge. Eagle View is located atop a natural hilltop, allowing for exceptional views of Naboisho Conservancy. The camp overlooks a waterhole, frequently visited by a variety of wildlife, including elephants.**

**BELOW: One of the wide variety of antelopes that can be found in the Conservancy.**



PHOTOS BY: FELIX PATTON

The Conservancy was created in 2010 when over 500 community landowners signed a 15-year lease to enable the land to be managed to the mutual benefit of the livestock pastoralists, tourism investors and conservationists. Grassland management is central to the success of Naboisho as it determines the diversity and abundance of the wildlife population while still enabling local Maasai to keep livestock, central to their traditional way of life.

To facilitate the formation of the conservancy, the landowners called on the Basecamp Explorer Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that works with local communities to safeguard nature. The Foundation is part of the Basecamp Explorer Group, a tourism provider which built their first Kenya facility in 1998 in the Masai Mara National Reserve. Now they have four more facilities - all within Naboisho. These, along with the other tourist providers Asilia, Hemingways,

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# CONSERVATION



PHOTO BY:AMELIA GIL-MERINO

Kicheche and Porini provide income to pay landowners their lease fees.

The lease fees, averaging 14,000 Kenyan shillings (about \$165) per month, are paid directly into the bank accounts of individual landowners. Communities also benefit from employment and trading opportunities that arise from tourism.

To prevent illegal grazing and poaching, security is essential to the success of the conservancy. Seiya Limited, with expertise in wildlife security, began to train rangers, set up outposts and patrols in 2010. There is now a staff of around 50, with dedicated vehicles and maram roads. A network of game drive tracks enables licensed lodge vehicles to get close to wildlife with minimum need for off-road driving (which is allowed in Naibosho, unlike in the National Reserve).

**TOP LEFT: Volunteers eradicating problem plants.**

**TOP RIGHT: Hippos at one of the river crossings.**

**BELOW: Visitors flying into the Conservancy.**



PHOTOS BY: FELIX PATTON

Naboisho Conservancy lies to the north east of the Mara National Reserve, abutting it at one section on its south west side to create a protected corridor, allowing animals to move between the two in search of food and water.

Safari operators offer game drives in the National Reserve as it is only a short drive away.

Naboisho is truly a Tale of Two Alternatives in many different ways - an exclusive wildlife experience as an alternative to the crowded National Reserve, a visit as a VIP or a Volunteer. ●

## ||||||| HOW TO GET THERE |||||

Naboisho Conservancy can be reached by road from Nairobi via Narok town; on the main C12 turn off at Nkoilale Town - a trip of some 5 hours. An alternative is to fly via Safarilink, Airkenya or Fly-SAX, landing at the Ol Seki airstrip, then take a game drive to your lodge. **For more information see: <http://maasaimaraconservancies.co.ke> and/or lodge websites.**

