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05 Dec 17	£1599pp	£1649pp	£1749pp	£1849pp	£2099pp	£2249pp	£2399pp	£2749pp	£3449pp
19 Dec 17	£2899pp	£2999pp	£3049pp	SOLD	£3249pp	£3399pp	£3699pp	£3899pp	£4599pp
02 Jan 18	£1699pp	£1799pp	£1849pp	£1949pp	£2149pp	£2199pp	SOLD	£2499pp	£3399pp
16 Jan 18	£1699pp	£1799pp	£1849pp	SOLD	SOLD	£2299pp	£2499pp	£2699pp	£3399pp
30 Jan 18	£1799pp	£1899pp	£1949pp	£2049pp	£2249pp	£2399pp	£2599pp	£2799pp	SOLD
13 Feb 18	£1799pp	£1899pp	£1949pp	SOLD	SOLD	£2399pp	SOLD	£2799pp	£3499pp
27 Feb 18	£1699pp	£1799pp	£1849pp	SOLD	£2149pp	£2299pp	£2499pp	£2699pp	£3399pp
13 Mar 18	£1849pp	£1849pp	£1999pp	SOLD	£2199pp	£2449pp	SOLD	£2849pp	£3549pp
27 Mar 18	£1799pp	£1799pp	£1949pp	£2049pp	£2149pp	£2449pp	SOLD	£2799pp	£3499pp

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Heathrow: VS131 Depart 11:45 Arrive 16:25
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- Saint George, Grenada (0900 - 1800)
- Roseau, Dominica (0900 - 1800)
- Fort de France, Martinique (0800 - 2300)
- Pointe a Pitre, Guadeloupe (0800 - 1900)
- Philipsburg, St Maarten (0900 - 1900)
- Road Town, Tortola, BVI (0700 - 1600)
- Kingstown, St Vincent (1200 - 1900)
- St John's, Antigua (0900 - 1900)
- Basseterre, St Kitts & Nevis (0800 - 1800)
- Fort de France, Martinique (0800 - 2300)
- Pointe a Pitre, Guadeloupe (0800 - 1900)
- Castries, Saint Lucia (0900 - 1800)

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Fly Barbados to Gatwick/Heathrow
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Heathrow: VS132 Depart 19:20 Arrive 07:00 (Day 16)

****Port order differs slightly for certain sailing dates****

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Departs	Bella Interior	Bella Balcony	Fantastica Balcony
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16 April 18	£599pp	£599pp	£679pp
23 April 18	£639pp	£639pp	£729pp
24 Sep 18	£639pp	£639pp	£729pp
01 Oct 18	£559pp	£559pp	£639pp
08 Oct 18	£559pp	£559pp	£639pp
15 Oct 18	£639pp	£639pp	£729pp

Departs	Bella Interior	Bella Balcony	Fantastica Balcony
24 May 18	£979pp	£979pp	£1099pp
14 June 18	£1019pp	£1019pp	£1159pp
19 July 18	£1099pp	£1099pp	£1239pp
23 Aug 18	£1019pp	£1019pp	£1149pp
13 Sep 18	£979pp	£979pp	£1099pp

Departs	Bella Interior	Bella Balcony	Fantastica Balcony
30 April 18	£999pp	£999pp	£1179pp
25 June 18	£1239pp	£1239pp	£1399pp
09 Aug 18	£1449pp	£1449pp	£1629pp

Departs	Bella Interior	Bella Balcony	Fantastica Balcony
14 May 18	£1069pp	£1069pp	£1189pp
09 July 18	£1099pp	£1099pp	£1239pp
30 July 18	£1149pp	£1149pp	£1279pp

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TRAVEL

Edited by JANE MEMMLER

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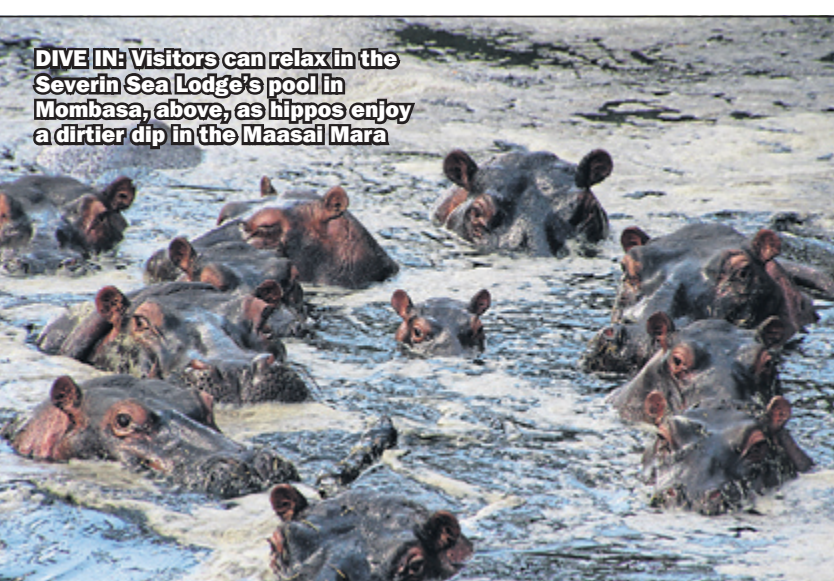
Adventures in animal magic

THE STENCH is overpowering. As we approach the pool of water in the Maasai Mara, Kenya, I spot what I take to be dozens of large stones. Except they are moving. We have come across a large pod of hippos, literally bathing in their own excrement. Usually it would not be quite such an assault on your senses, but with an unusually dry spell in the African nation, their territory – which they mark by doing their business in the water – has seriously shrunk.

It is one of the few occasions we are allowed out of our Jeep to stretch our legs while our Maasai guides, Jacob and Nelson, keep an eye on the beasts. Although hippopotami are herbivores, they are also the most dangerous mammal in Africa and apparently responsible for killing more people each year than lions, elephants, leopards, buffaloes and rhinos put together.

There are at least 30 of the animals submerged in the smelly pool, protecting them from the heat of the Kenyan sun and they are simply captivating to watch.

The national reserve in the south-west of the country is not the largest, covering the best part of



DIVE IN: Visitors can relax in the Severin Sea Lodge's pool in Mombasa, above, as hippos enjoy a dirtier dip in the Maasai Mara

PAULA MURRAY relishes her wildlife spotting – no matter how evil-smelling the hippos can be – on a safari visit to east African country Kenya

600 square miles of the vast land, but it certainly is the best known. We landed on a dusty airstrip some 30 minutes from the newest camp in the area, Porini Cheetah, which only opened in June.

With just six spacious tents in the private Ol Kinyei Conservancy, you are possibly going to be as close to nature as you can as there are no fences to keep the animals at bay. In fact, our short bush walk reveals tracks galore yards from our accommodation, proving that lions, hyenas, zebras, giraffes and such like are at close proximity even when we do not spot them.

Avid wildlife enthusiasts Jui and Nirmalya Banerjee abandoned the rat race of Nairobi and set up the camp to share their experiences of the bush with their guests. Each night visitors gather for refreshments around the campfire before enjoying a three-course

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FUTURE GUIDES: Maasai students of the Koiyaki safari guiding school taking a break with their visitors

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE
meal with the couple to talk of their day. The husband and wife team works closely with the Koiyaki safari guiding school, which trains young Maasai men – and increasingly women – in the art of game drives.

Jacob is a recent graduate from a couple of years back and loves his job. As he says he already knew just about everything there is to know about the wildlife – he just had to learn to explain it all in English.

According to the Banerjees, Maasais make the best safari guides as they know the land and its beasts like no one else. To honour their culture, the Porini guides wear the traditional tribe attire while on duty.

Although they do have wifi and Facebook in the bush, Jacob and Nelson tell us the tribal life is still about tradition and respecting the older generations plus the landscape around them.

Among our highlights are the hippos and, better still, lions. The majestic cats are just feet away from our jeep and keep us entertained for what feels like hours with the female ready to pounce on some wildebeest and the male wanting more than just a tasty snack.

An aerial view shows the cow-like animals are on the move for the annual migration season with huge clouds of dust revealing their direction of travel.

Even ordinary transport from the camp to our 12-seater plane becomes a safari run with at least 10 different mammals and an ostrich or two dotting the savannah.

It could not be more different from the shores of Lake Victoria, where we visit Rusinga Island. The banks of the vast lake, almost the size of Scotland, are the home to an 18 million-year-old skull which provided the missing link between apes and humans.

Paleontologists Mary and Louis Leakey made the discovery in the late 1940s and the site is still a goldmine of fossils and ancient bone fragments.

A massive, two centuries old baobab tree on the grounds of Rusinga Island Lodge marks the location the Leakeys camped during their historic journey.

The private retreat has seven thatched cottages overlooking the world's second largest freshwater lake. A short distance away is Mwangaza Kay Academy for orphaned children and a fishing village, where the ground is covered in the previous nights' catch of small, silvery fish known as omena.

During the night dozens of boats head out using nets and battery-operated lights to haul in the fish, creating an illusion of towns in nearby shores. In reality, the water stretches as far as the eye can see with no buildings marring the scenery.

Back in the day it was a hotbed of recreational fishing, with huge Nile perches exceeding 200lbs the main prize. However, overindulgence means the largest specimens are long gone.

The lodge, which is nearly 3,718 feet above sea level, is a mere 80 miles west of the Maasai Mara and easily accessible by air with its own landing strip.

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Kenya: History and drama make picture-perfect fit



Bird Island with lizards and numerous feathery friends on display.

On the other side of the country lies the Indian Ocean and Kenya's second largest city, Mombasa.

After the cooling breeze from the lake, Mombasa's tropical climate feels suffocating and the rains, desperately needed elsewhere, bring no relief.

The city has a distinctively Arab feel to it thanks to its long history of Omani rule and continues to have a large Muslim population.

With the new multi-billion pound Madaraka Express railway linking the capital city of Nairobi and the main port, it is expected to benefit from inland visitors seeking a change of scenery.

Fort Jesus on Mombasa Island is one of only two world heritage sites in Kenya. Built in the 16th century, it boasts a bloody history of battles between the east and the west.

The Portuguese initially maintained the base but over the centuries it was captured by the Omani and recaptured by the Europeans at least nine times before falling under British rule in 1895 and becoming a prison.

Some 80 cannons, many of them by Carron Iron Works in Falkirk, dot the walls of the human-shaped fort boasting European and Arabic influences.

A short walk away is the Old Town with its narrow streets, and across the creek there is East Africa's first Marina resort, English Point Marina, and luxury flats costing up to £1.5million – or more than 200m Kenyan shillings. In

contrast, the roads leading to the city's Moi Airport are an experience in themselves with ramshackle shantytowns lining the bumpy ride with cows and goats weaving through heavy traffic.

But off the main stretch is Akamba Handicraft cooperative which started in 1963 – a year before Kenyan independence from Britain – and has grown from just 100 carvers to a membership of about 2,800 people.

They produce beautifully finished bowls, masks, instruments and statues sold in their own shop and transported all around the country for sale.

On our visit, a handful of men are busy making wooden Kenya signs using a simple axe and what looks like a carpet knife to complete the more intricate details.

They are sheltering from the midday heat under a makeshift hut which is surprisingly cool despite its metal roof.

With our bags full of carvings, it is time to head back to our base at Severin Sea Lodge, on Bamburi Beach, for a final swim and scrumptious dinner at its award-winning Imani Dhow restaurant set inside a restored Zanzibar trading boat, before we head back to Nairobi and home.

Kenya and her people have certainly made a lasting impression. As they say in Swahili: Asante sana (thank you).

GETTING THERE
Kenya Airways operates daily overnight flights from London Heathrow to Nairobi. Economy return

flights start from £510, including taxes. Connecting flights from Nairobi to Mombasa start from £125. Visit kenya-airways.com.

Safarilink flies into all major game parks and coastal resorts plus operate charter flights throughout Kenya. Check out flightsafarilink.com.

Southern Cross Safaris is a specialist Africa operator offering a range of safaris and experiences across Kenya. Visit www.southerncrosssafaris.com.

A cottage room on full board at Rusinga Island Lodge starts from about £285 per person per night based on two sharing. See www.rusinga.com.

Porini's two-night fly-in package staying at Porini Cheetah Camp in Ol Kinyet private conservancy in Maasai Mara starts from about £900 per person based on two sharing, including return flights from Nairobi, return airstrip transfers, full board, shared game drivers and all conservancy and entrance fees. Visit www.porini.com.

A standard room at Severin Sea Lodge on Bamburi Beach, Mombasa, starts from around £38 per person per night based on two sharing on a half-board basis. Excursions, including an Out of Africa safari in Tsavo West National Park, a Secrets of the Coast tour and a city tour of Mombasa visiting the old town and historic Fort Jesus, are available for guests to book during their stay. Check out www.severinsealodge.com.

For inspiration and information, visit www.magicalkenya.com.

UNWIND: It's time to relax at Rusinga Island, left, before a warm welcome from the orphan children of Mwangaza Kay Academy, right



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FEEDING TIME: We encountered hyenas eating at Ol Kinyet Conservancy

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