earthwatch expeditions
by Nat Hab

Explore with Purpose



Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya

Join a Crucial Team Helping to Save One of Africa's Most Endangered Wildlife Icons

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Trip Details:

Days
10 Days / Jan–Feb, Jun–Aug & Oct

Price
From $18472 (+Air)

Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya

Join a Crucial Team Helping to Save One of Africa's Most Endangered Wildlife Icons

Beneath the towering slopes of Mount Kenya, a black rhino emerges from the brush. Look closely at the notches in its ears: Each pattern helps researchers identify an individual. At Ol Pejeta Conservancy, where black rhino numbers have climbed from just 20 in 1993 to more than 180 today, track these endangered giants by safari vehicle and on foot with Kenyan scientists. Survey the sweeping plains for lions, elephants and giraffes, and visit the world's last two surviving northern white rhinos at the conservancy.

Then fly north to the rugged Mathews Range and remote Namunyak Conservancy, where the focus shifts to rescuing and rehabilitating orphaned elephants. At Reteti Elephant Sanctuary, watch young elephants at feeding time, meet the Samburu keepers responsible for their daily care and hear the stories behind their rescues. Learn how the sanctuary prepares these calves for a return to the wild, and discover the close connection between local Samburu communities and the wildlife they protect.

Expedition Highlights

Track Kenya's Endangered Black Rhinos

Leave the safari vehicle behind and walk through Ol Pejeta's acacia woodlands and grasslands with Kenyan scientists, searching for black rhinos at eye level. Learn to recognize individuals by their distinctive ear notches and gather observations that reveal how these animals use their habitat.

Safari on the Plains Beneath Mount Kenya

Explore Ol Pejeta's sweeping plains in search of lions, elephants, giraffes and other safari wildlife. Enjoy a private visit to the world's last two northern white rhinos, gaining rare access to conservation experts working to protect endangered rhino populations.

Meet the Rescued Elephants of Reteti

Fly north to remote Namunyak Conservancy for a behind-the-scenes visit to Reteti Elephant Sanctuary. Watch orphaned elephants at feeding time, meet their Samburu keepers and hear the stories of their rescue and preparation for a return to the wild.

Research at a Glance



The Research Focus

Investigate whether Ol Pejeta's growing black rhino population has enough habitat to thrive. Study the plants rhinos eat, browsing pressure from elephants and giraffes and how habitat management can help protect and restore their food supply.



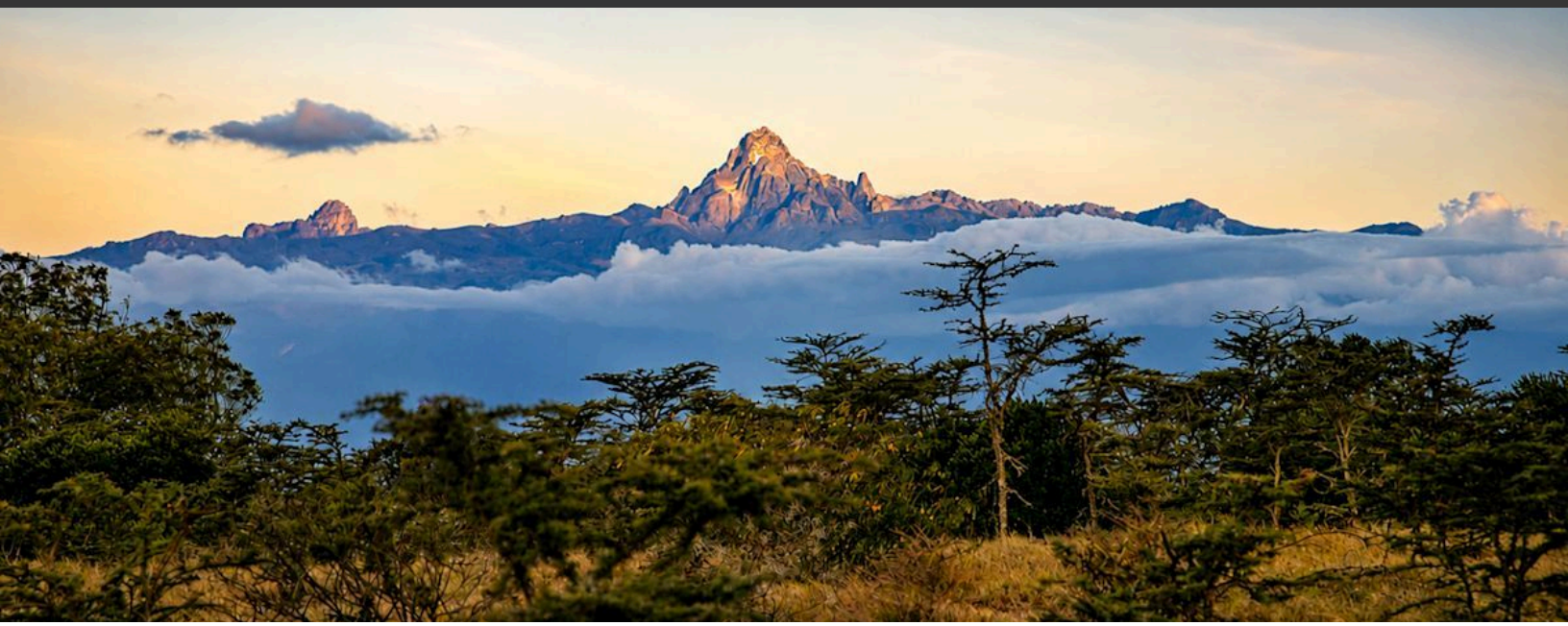
What You'll Do

Walk research transects through rhino habitat, identify individuals by their ear notches and record wildlife sightings and tracks. Measure trees and seedlings, assess browsing damage and examine camera-trap data to monitor wildlife movements.



Why It Matters

Ol Pejeta's rhino comeback raises a vital question: How many rhinos can the land support? Your field observations contribute to decades of research guiding habitat restoration, decisions about rhino population growth and recovery efforts across Kenya.

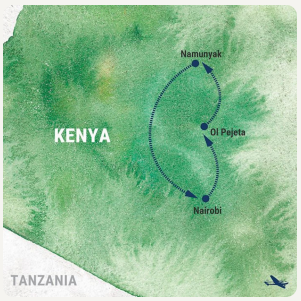


Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya Itinerary

Join a Crucial Team Helping to Save One of Africa's Most Endangered Wildlife Icons

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1	NAIROBI
Day 2	NAIROBI / OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY
Days 3–7	OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY
Days 8–9	NAMUNYAK CONSERVANCY / RETETI ELEPHANT SANCTUARY
Day 10	NAMUNYAK / NAIROBI



Day 1

NAIROBI

Gather in Nairobi for Your Kenyan Wildlife Expedition

- Arrive in Nairobi and transfer to Emara Ole Sereni
- Meet your Expedition Leader and fellow travelers
- Enjoy a welcome dinner before your journey into rhino country

Arrive in Nairobi, Kenya's bustling capital, set on the highlands at the edge of the Great Rift Valley.

Known as the safari capital of East Africa, Nairobi is a gateway to the country's extraordinary wildlife reserves and conservancies. Your journey begins here before heading north to the Laikipia Plateau, where endangered black rhinos roam the grasslands and acacia woodlands beneath Mount Kenya.

This evening, gather with your Expedition Leader and fellow travelers for a welcome dinner. Get to know your travel companions and hear about the journey ahead: tracking endangered black rhinos beneath Mount Kenya, exploring one of East Africa's most celebrated wildlife conservancies and visiting a community-led elephant sanctuary in Kenya's remote northern highlands.

Spend your first night at Emara Ole Sereni, an upscale hotel overlooking the wild grasslands of Nairobi National Park.

Day 2

NAIROBI / OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY

Fly to Rhino Country Beneath Mount Kenya

- Fly north to Ol Pejeta Conservancy on the Laikipia Plateau
- Search for rhinos, elephants, giraffes and predators on an afternoon safari
- Meet the Kenyan research team and prepare for your fieldwork

Fly north from Nairobi toward the Laikipia Plateau, where the broad slopes of Mount Kenya rise above acacia woodlands and open grasslands. Your destination is Ol Pejeta Conservancy, a stronghold for endangered black rhinos and home to lions, elephants, giraffes and a remarkable variety of other wildlife.

After arriving, head out on your first safari drive. Scan the sweeping plains for elephants and giraffes, watch for lions and other predators, and keep your eyes peeled for your first glimpse of an endangered black rhino.

Your home for the next six nights is Nat Hab's private Rhino Camp, a secluded, solar-powered retreat with spacious safari tents, en suite bathrooms and private verandas. This evening, meet the Kenyan scientists leading your field research and hear the story of Ol Pejeta's remarkable rhino recovery. Discover the challenge ahead: ensuring the conservancy has enough suitable habitat to support its growing population.

Days 3–7

OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY

Track Black Rhinos and Discover the Science Behind Their Recovery

- Search for black rhinos on foot and identify individuals by their distinctive ear notches
- Measure vegetation, document wildlife activity and investigate habitat restoration
- Explore Ol Pejeta, visit the last two northern white rhinos and meet a neighboring community

For five days, experience Ol Pejeta from a perspective few safari travelers ever have: on foot with Kenyan scientists, following research transects through acacia scrub and open grasslands. Scan the brush for black rhinos, examine tracks and dung, and learn to recognize individuals by the unique notches in their ears. Your observations contribute to long-running research into how rhinos and other large mammals use the conservancy.

The research also draws your attention to the vegetation beneath your feet and overhead. Measure trees and shrubs that black rhinos browse, count seedlings and assess grass cover. Look for signs of feeding by elephants and giraffes, whose appetites also influence the landscape. Examine recovering vegetation and discover how long-term research has changed habitat management, from ending the use of fire to protecting areas where plants can regenerate.

Beyond the transects, examine camera-trap images for evidence of wildlife movements. Join nighttime surveys and, when available, view thermal drone footage that reveals animals hidden in the darkness.

Between research sessions, enjoy the wider spectacle of an African safari. Search for lions, elephants, giraffes and other wildlife on game drives across Ol Pejeta's sweeping plains. On a private visit to the world's last two northern white rhinos, hear from conservation experts about the challenges of protecting them and the reproductive science being used in efforts to save their subspecies.

Visit a neighboring community to meet residents and learn how rhino conservation affects local livelihoods, another important dimension of the research.

Each evening, return to Rhino Camp for meals prepared over the fire and time to share the day's discoveries beneath the African sky. The sequence of activities will depend on research priorities, wildlife movements and field conditions.

Days 8–9

NAMUNYAK CONSERVANCY / RETETI ELEPHANT SANCTUARY

Meet Rescued Elephants in Kenya's Remote Northern Highlands

- Fly north to Namunyak Conservancy beneath the rugged Mathews Range
- Visit Reteti Elephant Sanctuary and meet the Samburu keepers raising orphaned elephants
- Search for wild elephants on guided bush walks and game drives

After breakfast, we leave Ol Pejeta and fly north into a strikingly different region of Kenya. Rocky hills and rugged ridgelines rise above Namunyak Conservancy, where wild elephants travel through an important corridor beneath the Mathews Range.

Here, the focus shifts from rhino research to elephant rescue and rehabilitation. At Reteti Elephant Sanctuary, go behind the scenes of a project owned and operated by the local Samburu community. Watch orphaned elephant calves at feeding time and meet the keepers responsible for their daily care. Hear their rescue stories and learn how they're prepared for a possible return to the wild.

Outside the elephant sanctuary, explore Namunyak on guided bush walks and game drives, scanning the rocky terrain for roaming elephants and other wildlife. Between outings, enjoy the seclusion and comfort of Nat Hab's Elephant Conservation Camp amid the wild scenery of northern Kenya.

Day 10

NAMUNYAK / NAIROBI

Return to Nairobi After Your Kenyan Wildlife Adventure

- Leave Namunyak Conservancy and the Mathews Range behind
- Fly back to Nairobi
- Connect with your onward flight home

Our Kenya adventure comes to a close today, but you'll leave with memories of searching for black rhinos, following wildlife tracks across the savanna and watching rescued elephant calves.

Bid farewell to the rugged landscapes of Namunyak and fly south to Nairobi for your connecting flights home.



Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya Accommodations

Join a Crucial Team Helping to Save One of Africa's Most Endangered Wildlife Icons



Emara Ole Sereni

A contemporary Nairobi hotel overlooking Nairobi National Park, with floor-to-ceiling views, a heated rooftop pool, several dining venues and a full-service spa.



Nat Hab's Rhino Camp–Ol Pejeta

Offering a romantic safari experience reminiscent of bygone days, our deluxe mobile camp offers a host of amenities, even as we stay in remote areas far from tourist crowds where wildlife viewing is best.



Nat Hab's Elephant Conservation Camp

A solar-powered luxury camp in Namunyak Wildlife Conservancy, positioned along elephant migration corridors and co-managed with the Samburu community on their ancestral lands.

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/earthwatch-expeditions/kenya-rhino-research-trip/accommodations.

Meet the Scientists

Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya



Geoffrey Wahungu, Ph.D.

Chief Conservation & Programs Officer, Ol Pejeta Conservancy

Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya

Dr. Geoffrey Wahungu is Chief Conservation & Programs Officer at Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya, where he oversees conservation programs—bringing more than two decades of research on black rhino habitat to the management of one of East Africa's most important wildlife conservancies. An ecologist and wildlife management specialist, he has studied black rhino habitats at Ol Pejeta for more than two decades, and his career has also extended to national environmental policy: as Director General of Kenya's National Environment Management Authority from 2012 to 2019, he represented Kenya in major international environmental agreements. He has also served in the boards of UNESCO, Kenya Forest Service (KFS), National Biosafety Authority (NBA) and the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD).

Much of his research examines how vegetation and habitat management affect black rhinos and the ecosystems that support them. His findings at Ol Pejeta have helped shape how the conservancy manages black rhino habitats, from protecting and restoring acacia vegetation to reconsidering the use of fire and controlling the spread of invasive euclea shrubs. His research also contributed to the establishment of Ol Pejeta's Research and Ecological Monitoring Unit and the development of protocols that now guide research across the conservancy. Beyond Ol Pejeta, he has helped establish private and community conservancies in Kenya's Laikipia, Nakuru and Amboseli regions.

By monitoring vegetation and studying how black rhinos use different habitats, Dr. Wahungu and his team can assess changes in the landscape and determine which management approaches best maintain suitable conditions for rhinos and other wildlife. At Ol Pejeta, his long-term knowledge of the landscape helps turn ecological research into practical strategies for protecting black rhinos and conserving the habitats they depend on.

Education

Ph.D. in Ecology, Griffith University, Australia
M.Sc. in Primate Ecology, Moi University, Kenya
B.Sc. in Wildlife Management, Moi University, Kenya

Supporting Scientists



Lucy Mureu, M.Phil.

Wildlife Ecologist

Wildlife Ecology and Climate Adaptation, Kenya

Research & Impact

Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya

A black rhino can disappear into a thicket of acacia almost as quickly as it appears. How do researchers track these elusive animals, and how many more can Ol Pejeta Conservancy's savanna support? The answers lie in the clues scattered across the landscape. Walk through rhino habitat with Kenyan scientists, searching for animals at eye level and reading the tracks, ear notches and other signs of their movements. Then look closer at the landscape, where browsed shrubs and emerging seedlings reveal the pressures on the vegetation rhinos depend on. Your observations help researchers understand what these endangered giants need to thrive.

Research Focus

Ol Pejeta's black rhino recovery has created a new scientific challenge: understanding how much suitable habitat remains for a growing population. Black rhinos depend on woody vegetation for food, sharing the savanna with elephants, giraffes and livestock that also influence how plants grow and recover. The question isn't simply how many rhinos the conservancy can protect, but how many its landscape can sustain.

Local scientists investigate these relationships through wildlife surveys, vegetation measurements and long-term habitat monitoring. By tracking plant growth, browsing pressure and animal movements, they can identify where food resources are under strain and which management practices help restore them. These findings guide decisions at Ol Pejeta and contribute to efforts to expand suitable rhino habitat elsewhere in Kenya.

Conservation Impact

Ol Pejeta's black rhino population has climbed from approximately 20 animals in 1993 to more than 180 today. Protecting that recovery requires careful decisions about habitat restoration, wildlife movements and the land's capacity to support more rhinos.

Field observations and measurements help inform decisions across five areas:

- **Rhino population records** document individual animals, their movements and changes in wildlife numbers.
- **Vegetation measurements** reveal how trees, shrubs and seedlings respond to browsing by large herbivores.
- **Habitat assessments** identify areas needing restoration and help estimate how many rhinos the conservancy can support.
- **Wildlife corridor monitoring** uses tracks and camera-trap data to identify routes animals travel through the landscape.
- **Community research** examines how rhino conservation affects neighboring livelihoods and informs improvements to Ol Pejeta's Community Development Program.

These findings help researchers plan habitat restoration, assess opportunities to expand suitable rhino range elsewhere in Kenya and understand how conservation affects the people living alongside wildlife. The work builds on decades of recovery while addressing the challenges of a growing rhino population.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-548-7555

Your Role in the Research

Experience the African savanna from a scientist's perspective, on foot and beyond the usual safari routes. Join Kenyan researchers in Ol Pejeta's acacia woodlands and grasslands, searching for black rhinos, following tracks and recording wildlife activity. Learn to identify individual rhinos, measure vegetation and examine camera-trap images for clues about animal movements.

Your observations contribute to long-running research into what Ol Pejeta's growing rhino population needs to thrive. Visit a neighboring community to learn how rhino protection affects local livelihoods, another important part of the research. Leave with a firsthand understanding of how wildlife sightings, field measurements and community perspectives guide decisions about Kenya's black rhinos.

Life in the Field

Mornings at Ol Pejeta begin beneath Mount Kenya, with the savanna stretching toward the horizon. On foot with scientists, you'll navigate dusty trails and thorny acacia scrub, scanning for black rhinos and pausing to examine tracks or vegetation. Fieldwork can mean hours under the African sun, punctuated by unexpected wildlife sightings and discoveries.

Back at Nat Hab's private Rhino Camp, enjoy the comforts of a spacious safari tent, meals prepared over the fire and evenings spent sharing stories beneath the stars. After dark, occasional nighttime surveys offer another chance to search for wildlife.

Later, fly north to the rugged Mathews Range, where the landscape and pace shift. At Reteti Elephant Sanctuary, watch orphaned elephants at feeding time and meet the Samburu keepers raising them for a return to the wild.

Field Conditions

Exploring Ol Pejeta on foot is one of the expedition's great rewards. Walk 3–5 miles a day through open grasslands, along dusty trails and across uneven ground dotted with thorny acacia, with opportunities to pause, examine wildlife signs and take in the landscape. Some research outings last four to six hours, offering time to appreciate details easily missed from a safari vehicle.

Temperatures typically range from 65–90°F, and at elevations around 6,000 feet, the African sun can be strong. Comfortable, sturdy walking shoes and sun protection will serve you well. You'll travel between research areas in 4x4 safari vehicles, with early starts and occasional nighttime outings offering opportunities to see wildlife at different hours.

Discovery in the Field

Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya

1. **Search for Black Rhinos Beyond the Safari Routes**
   Follow fresh tracks, examine dung and learn to read the signs black rhinos leave across the savanna. With Kenyan scientists guiding your search, discover how these clues help locate and identify animals that can vanish into dense brush.

2. **Escape to a Private Camp in Rhino Country**
   Stay at Nat Hab's secluded, solar-powered Rhino Camp, where spacious safari tents offer comfortable beds, en suite bathrooms and private verandas. Savor hearty meals prepared over the fire and gather beneath the African sky after days in the field.

3. **Explore Ol Pejeta After Dark**
   Join nighttime wildlife surveys and watch thermal drone footage as researchers search for animals hidden in the darkness. See how the technology reveals nocturnal activity that would be difficult to observe from a safari vehicle.

4. **Investigate What Black Rhinos Need to Thrive**
   Measure acacia trees, count seedlings and inspect vegetation browsed by rhinos, elephants and giraffes. See how these observations help researchers assess whether Ol Pejeta can sustain a growing rhino population.

5. **Meet the Experts Behind Ol Pejeta's Rhino Comeback**
   Spend time with the Kenyan scientists helping guide Ol Pejeta's remarkable black rhino recovery. Hear how they monitor wildlife, manage habitat and tackle the challenges of protecting a growing population of endangered rhinos.

6. **Uncover the Discoveries Changing Rhino Conservation**
   Explore findings from research underway since 1999, including why Ol Pejeta stopped using fire to manage habitat and established protected enclosures to help the shrubs and trees rhinos feed on recover.

7. **Visit the Last Two Northern White Rhinos on Earth**
   Accompany rhino conservation experts on a private visit to the last surviving members of this subspecies. Hear about the challenges of protecting them and the scientific efforts to give northern white rhinos a future.

8. **Connect With Communities Beyond the Conservancy**
   Meet residents of a neighboring community and learn how Ol Pejeta's rhino recovery has affected local livelihoods. Discover how researchers assess the social and economic effects of conservation to help improve community programs.

9. **Discover Reteti's Community-Led Elephant Rescue**
   Learn how Samburu keepers rehabilitate orphaned elephants at a sanctuary owned and operated by the local community. Explore how the project creates opportunities for people living alongside wildlife.

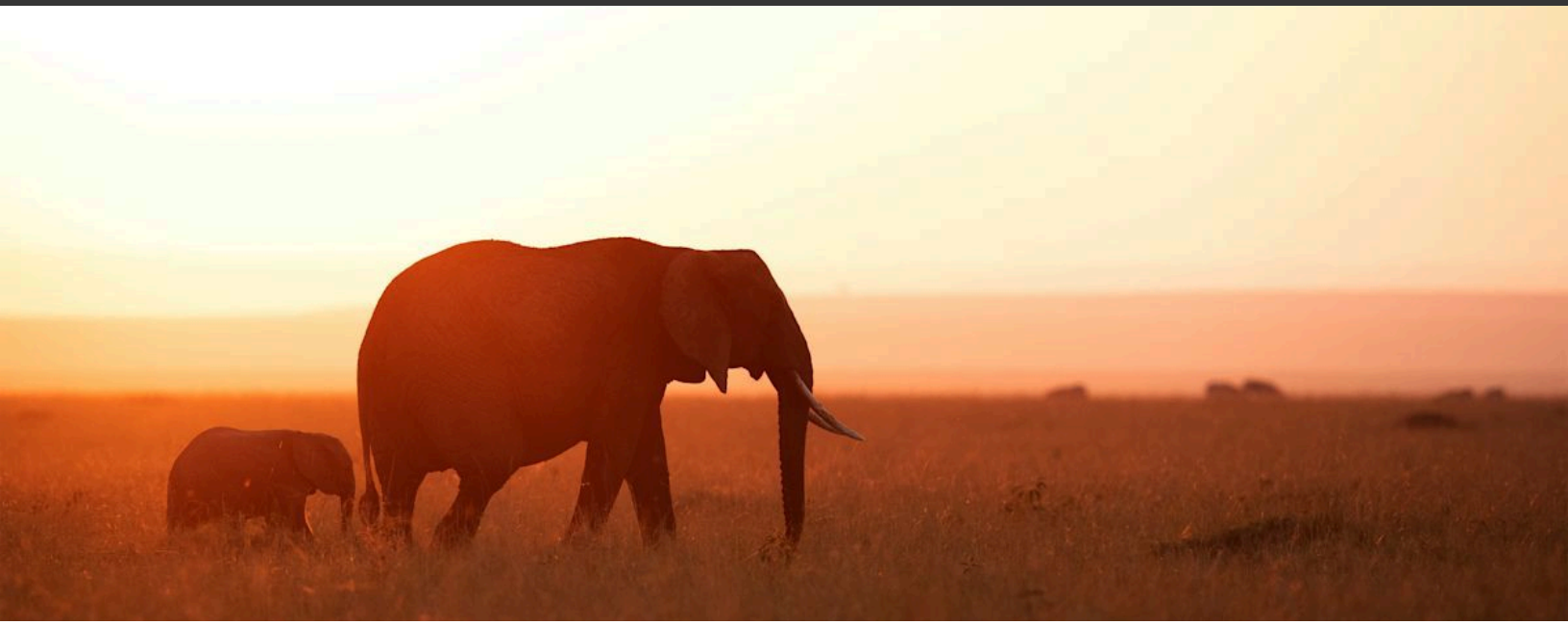
Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-548-7555

10 **Seek Out Wild Elephants in the Mathews Range**

Explore Namunyak Conservancy on game drives and guided bush walks, watching for roaming elephants in a rugged landscape that serves as an important corridor for their movements.

11 **Explore Wild Kenya With Just 12 Travelers and an Expert Leader**

Travel in a group of no more than 12 guests, guided by an expert Expedition Leader. Ask questions of the conservation team during field outings and discuss the day's discoveries back at camp.



Dates & Pricing Summary:

Price
From $18472 (+Air)

Group Size
Limited to 12 Travelers

Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya Dates, Pricing & Info

Join a Crucial Team Helping to Save One of Africa's Most Endangered Wildlife Icons

2028 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Prices not confirmed for 2028		
Feb 20 - Feb 29, 2028	**From $18472** +internal air	
Mar 10 - Mar 19, 2028	**From $18472** +internal air	
Jun 3 - Jun 12, 2028	**From $18472** +internal air	
Jul 6 - Jul 15, 2028	**From $18472** +internal air	
Aug 16 - Aug 25, 2028	**From $18472** +internal air	
Oct 23 - Nov 1, 2028	**From $18472** +internal air	

2029 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Prices and dates not confirmed for 2029		
Feb 16 - Feb 25, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Mar 23 - Apr 1, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Jun 15 - Jun 24, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Jun 29 - Jul 8, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Jul 13 - Jul 22, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Jul 27 - Aug 5, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Aug 10 - Aug 19, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Aug 17 - Aug 26, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Oct 12 - Oct 21, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	
Oct 19 - Oct 28, 2029	**From $18472** +internal air	

See https://www.nathab.com/earthwatch-expeditions/kenya-rhino-research-trip/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

Included

Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s), local guides and camp staff, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through lunch on final day, some alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

Not Included

Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, some alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees (if any), optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes (if any), required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. This is for the safety of all guests. We require that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least $250,000 in medical evacuation coverage. To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you

travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-548-7555.

Getting There & Getting Home

This trip begins and ends in Nairobi, Kenya. Because this is a long international journey, **we recommend that you arrive at least one night prior to Day 1** to rest from your travels and begin the trip refreshed. For guests who come in early, recommended hotels will be included in your pre-departure materials. You must arrive in Nairobi by 5 pm on Day 1 in order to attend the 7 pm welcome dinner.

You may depart Nairobi anytime after 6 pm on the final day.

Our Earthwatch Expeditions Travel Desk can best assist with your travel reservations, as our staff is familiar with the specific requirements of this program and can help arrange the most efficient itinerary. Please call us at 800-548-7555. While we offer the best available rates to us on airfare and additional nights' accommodations, you may occasionally find special web rates or lower fares online.

Know Before You Go

Tracking Black Rhinos in Kenya

Whether you're preparing for your upcoming expedition or simply want to learn more about **Kenya's rhinos and wildlife conservation efforts**, these resources offer a closer look at the species, landscapes and research that define this experience. Learn about endangered black rhinos and the challenges of protecting their habitat, discover the wildlife that shares Kenya's savannas and explore how scientists are restoring vegetation and helping growing rhino populations thrive.

Why Is Ol Pejeta One of the Best Places in the World to Study Black Rhinos?

Beneath the towering slopes of Mount Kenya, endangered black rhinos roam the acacia woodlands and open grasslands of Ol Pejeta Conservancy. Once reduced to approximately 20 individuals in 1993, the conservancy's black rhino population has grown to more than 180 today, making Ol Pejeta an important stronghold for the species. This remarkable recovery has created a new conservation challenge: understanding how many rhinos the landscape can sustain as their numbers continue to grow.

Black rhinos depend on woody vegetation for food, sharing the savanna with elephants, giraffes and other large herbivores that also influence how plants grow and recover. Kenyan scientists are investigating how browsing pressure, vegetation regeneration and habitat management affect the availability of food for rhinos. Through wildlife surveys, vegetation measurements and long-term monitoring, researchers are assessing where habitat is under strain and which restoration practices can help protect the shrubs and trees rhinos need.

By joining this long-running research, participants help scientists investigate how Ol Pejeta's growing rhino population uses its habitat and how the landscape can continue to support their recovery. These findings guide habitat restoration, wildlife management and efforts to expand suitable rhino range elsewhere in Kenya.

Quick Facts: Black Rhino Conservation in Kenya

Location: Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Laikipia Plateau, Kenya
Research partner: Ol Pejeta Conservancy
Primary species: Eastern black rhinos
Key activity: Rhino identification, wildlife surveys, vegetation assessments and camera-trap monitoring
Conservation focus: Black rhino habitat restoration, population growth, wildlife connectivity and sustainable habitat management

What Wildlife Will I See on My Kenya Expedition?

Black rhinos are at the heart of this expedition, but the journey crosses some of Kenya's richest wildlife landscapes, from the savannas of Ol Pejeta Conservancy to the rugged hills and elephant corridors of Namunyak Conservancy. Wildlife sightings vary by location and conditions, with opportunities to encounter rhinos, elephants, predators, antelope and a remarkable diversity of East African birds.

Participants may encounter:

- **Black rhinos** roaming the acacia woodlands and grasslands of Ol Pejeta Conservancy
- **White rhinos** across Ol Pejeta's protected savanna habitats
- **The world's last two northern white rhinos** during a special conservation visit at Ol Pejeta
- **African elephants** on the plains of Ol Pejeta and in the rugged landscapes of Namunyak Conservancy
- **Giraffes** browsing among acacia trees and open woodlands
- **Lions and leopards** hunting across savanna and woodland habitats
- **African buffalo** grazing in grasslands and open areas
- **Zebras** across Ol Pejeta's plains
- **Antelope species** inhabiting grasslands, scrub and woodland habitats
- **Warthogs** foraging across the savanna
- **Hyenas** and other carnivores
- **A wide variety of East African birds and smaller wildlife** throughout the conservancies

At Reteti Elephant Sanctuary, participants also have the opportunity to observe orphaned elephants during feeding time and learn how Samburu keepers care for calves being prepared for a possible return to the wild.

Together, these species reveal the diversity of Kenya's wildlife landscapes and the importance of maintaining healthy, connected ecosystems for endangered rhinos and the animals that share their habitat. Wild animal sightings are never guaranteed, and encounters vary with wildlife movements and field conditions.

What Is the Climate Like During This Expedition?

Kenya's highland savannas experience generally warm days, cooler mornings and evenings, and seasonal rainfall. Conditions vary by departure date and location, with fieldwork taking place at elevations around 6,000 feet on the Laikipia Plateau. Strong sun exposure is common during research activities, while rain may bring wet or muddy conditions.

Conditions	What to Expect
Daytime Temperatures	Generally **65–90°F**, depending on season and location.
Overnight Temperatures	Typically **45–60°F**, with cooler conditions during early mornings and evenings.
Sun Exposure	Strong throughout the expedition, particularly during extended fieldwork on foot.
Rainfall	Seasonal rain may bring wet or muddy conditions, affecting trails and research activities.
Elevation	Research at Ol Pejeta takes place at approximately **6,000 feet** above sea level.
Overall Conditions	Warm days, cool mornings and evenings, strong sun and variable conditions depending on season and location.

Weather patterns vary from year to year, and temperatures can change considerably between daytime and nighttime activities. Participants should bring lightweight field clothing, layers for cooler mornings and evenings, sun protection and sturdy footwear suitable for uneven or occasionally muddy terrain.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need research experience?

No prior research experience is required. Kenyan scientists and field staff provide training and guidance in wildlife surveys, rhino identification, vegetation assessments and other research techniques used during the expedition. Participants learn how to recognize individual black rhinos by their distinctive ear notches, record wildlife observations and gather habitat data that contributes to long-term conservation research.

What type of research will I assist with?

Participants assist scientists investigating how Ol Pejeta's growing black rhino population uses its habitat and whether the landscape can support continued population growth. Activities may include walking research transects, identifying individual rhinos, recording wildlife sightings and tracks, measuring trees and shrubs, counting seedlings and assessing vegetation browsed by rhinos, elephants and giraffes. Participants may also examine camera-trap images, monitor wildlife movements and join occasional nighttime surveys.

What is the conservation impact of this research?

Data collected by participants contributes to decades of research into black rhino habitat use, vegetation recovery and wildlife population management. Researchers use wildlife surveys, vegetation measurements and habitat assessments to identify areas under browsing pressure, evaluate restoration practices and determine how much suitable habitat remains for a growing rhino population. These findings help guide management decisions at Ol Pejeta and support efforts to expand suitable rhino habitat elsewhere in Kenya.

How physically demanding is the expedition?

Fieldwork involves walking approximately 3–5 miles a day through open grasslands, dusty trails and uneven terrain dotted with thorny acacia. Some research outings last four to six hours, with opportunities to pause, examine wildlife signs and collect observations. Participants should be comfortable spending extended periods outdoors in temperatures ranging from 65–90°F, with strong sun exposure at elevations around 6,000 feet. Travel between research areas takes place in 4x4 safari vehicles, and early starts and occasional nighttime outings are part of the experience.

Can weather affect research activities?

Yes. Heat, rain and changing field conditions can affect wildlife activity, walking conditions and research schedules. Seasonal rainfall may leave trails wet or muddy, while wildlife movements and research priorities can influence which areas are surveyed. Scientists adjust daily activities as needed based on weather, safety considerations and the needs of the research team.

What happens in case of an emergency?

Participant safety is a priority on all expeditions. Field staff follow established safety procedures during walking research transects, safari drives and other activities in wildlife habitat. If medical care is required, staff coordinate appropriate assistance and transportation to a medical facility.

Do I need travel insurance?

Travel insurance is strongly recommended and should include coverage for trip cancellation, interruption, medical expenses and emergency evacuation. Earthwatch provides travel medical insurance for participants.

What immunizations & travel vaccinations do I need?

Participants should consult a healthcare provider before travel and ensure routine vaccinations are up to date before visiting Kenya. Travelers should also seek destination-specific medical guidance regarding recommended vaccinations, malaria prevention and other health precautions. Because fieldwork involves extended periods outdoors, participants should prepare for strong sun exposure, insect bites and changing weather conditions.

What Should I Pack for My Kenya Expedition?

Participants should pack for warm days, cool mornings and evenings, strong sun and extended periods of fieldwork on foot. Research takes place across open grasslands, dusty trails and uneven terrain, with seasonal rainfall occasionally bringing wet or muddy conditions. Clothing and footwear should be suitable for walking research transects, wildlife surveys and safari drives.

Recommended items include:

- Lightweight, breathable shirts and pants
- Long-sleeved shirts for sun and insect protection
- Comfortable, sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots with good traction
- Lightweight layers for cooler mornings and evenings
- Warm jacket or fleece
- Lightweight waterproof rain jacket
- Wide-brimmed hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen and SPF lip balm
- Insect repellent
- Refillable water bottle
- Small daypack
- Binoculars
- Camera
- Lightweight clothing suitable for safari drives and camp activities

Temperatures can vary considerably throughout the expedition, especially between daytime fieldwork and cooler mornings and evenings. **Sturdy footwear, sun protection and breathable layers are particularly important for research outings**, when participants may spend several hours walking through exposed savanna habitats.

What Will I Experience During My Kenya Expedition?

This expedition combines close encounters with endangered rhinos and the opportunity to contribute directly to wildlife conservation research. Walk through Ol Pejeta's acacia woodlands and grasslands with Kenyan scientists, searching for black rhinos, following tracks and identifying individual animals by their distinctive ear notches. Measure vegetation, investigate

browsing pressure and discover how habitat restoration is helping protect the food resources these endangered giants depend on.

Beyond the research, explore Ol Pejeta's sweeping plains in search of elephants, giraffes, lions and other safari wildlife. Visit the world's last two northern white rhinos and learn about scientific efforts to save their subspecies. Meet members of a neighboring community to discover how rhino conservation affects local livelihoods and how community perspectives contribute to long-term conservation planning.

Later, fly north to Namunyak Conservancy beneath the rugged Mathews Range, where the focus shifts to elephant rescue and rehabilitation. At Reteti Elephant Sanctuary, watch orphaned elephants during feeding time, meet their Samburu keepers and learn how rescued calves are cared for and prepared for a possible return to the wild. Explore the surrounding landscape on guided bush walks and game drives, watching for wild elephants moving through this important wildlife corridor.

What Does Daily Fieldwork Look Like?

Research days at Ol Pejeta begin early, when cooler mornings offer opportunities to walk through rhino habitat with Kenyan scientists. Follow established transects across grasslands and acacia scrub, searching for black rhinos, examining tracks and dung, and recording wildlife sightings. Participants learn to identify individual rhinos by their ear notches while gathering observations that help researchers understand how these animals move through and use the conservancy.

Fieldwork also focuses on the vegetation that supports Ol Pejeta's growing rhino population. Measure trees and shrubs, count seedlings, assess grass cover and document browsing damage from rhinos, elephants and giraffes. Examine vegetation recovering inside protected enclosures and discover how long-term research has influenced habitat management, including the decision to stop using fire and protect areas where plants can regenerate.

Between field sessions, participants may review camera-trap images, join wildlife drives or take part in occasional nighttime surveys. When available, thermal drone footage provides another perspective on animals moving through the landscape after dark. Research schedules vary with wildlife activity, weather and project priorities, offering a firsthand look at how scientists gather the data used to guide habitat restoration and black rhino conservation in Kenya.



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