

Best time to go

Even though some parks and lodges advertise themselves as good year-round destinations the fact that they offer high and low season rates indicates that it is not prime time all the time. Still, our chart should not be interpreted as the holy grail but merely as an approximation of best, good and not so good times to visit.

The rule of thumb is to go on safari during the dry winter season when foliage is sparse and animals can be spotted more easily. Wildlife gathers in large numbers around the remaining water holes. This means generally from May until September. (Being in the southern hemisphere seasons are opposite to those of North America and Europe).

There are two rainy seasons in East Africa. The first, the short season, is from late November through December. The second, known as the long rains, is from March to May. In Southern Africa, the rainy season is generally from November to March.

However, a visit during the summer rainy season has its own advantages. Animals are in peak condition and it is breeding season for many species. Also migratory birds are in evidence and plant life more vibrant and interesting. Some lodges and parks

such as Kafue, Katavi and Selous are actually closed during part of rainy season and in others certain areas may actually be inaccessible.

In contrast to other areas where wildlife are resident and sightings are merely affected by foliage and their need to gather around waterholes during dry months, the Great Migration in Serengeti and Maasai Mara sets its own parameters. The best period to see the migration from the Serengeti side is usually between June and August as the wildebeest assemble in large herds to cross the Grumeti River on their way north. Visitors to the Maasai Mara can expect to see the large herds arrive between August and September and remain until October or November before they move south again. As with the weather, however, these are approximations and not firm schedules.

Safarists who wish to enjoy other attractions in the host countries outside the game parks might have to compromise. In South Africa, for example, Cape Town with its spectacular scenery and great beaches is at its best during the summer months at the very time when game viewing is at a low point up north in Kruger National Park and adjoining private parks. Ultimately the choice will depend on availability and—if there are children involved—on school holidays. Keep in mind that rates are usually reduced during off-peak periods.



BEST TIME TO GO

AREA	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
BOTSWANA												
Chobe	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	◐	○	○
Linyanti/Selinda	○	○	○	○	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	○	○
Moremi Reserve	○	○	○	○	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	○	○
Okavango Delta	○	○	○	○	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	○	○
Central Kalahari	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	●
KENYA												
Amboseli	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
Maasai Mara	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
Meru/Samburu	●	●	●	◐	○	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
Tsavo	●	●	●	◐	○	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
MALAWI												
All parks	○	○	○	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	○	○
NAMIBIA												
Etosha	○	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	○
East Caprivi	○	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	○
Namib/Naukluft	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
RWANDA												
Volcanoes	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	●
SOUTH AFRICA												
Addo Park	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●
Kruger NP region	○	○	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	○
Hluwe/Phinda	○	○	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	○
TANZANIA												
Katavi	◐	○	○	○	◐	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
Lake Manyara	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
Mahale/Gombe	◐	◐	◐	○	○	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐
Ngorongoro	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐
Serengeti (SE)	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	●
Serengeti (NW)	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐
Ruaha/Selous	◐	◐	○	○	○	◐	●	●	●	◐	○	◐
Tarangire	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
UGANDA												
All parks	●	●	○	○	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	○	●
ZAMBIA												
Kafue	○	○	○	○	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	○	○
Lower Zambezi	○	○	○	○	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	○	○
South Luangwa	○	○	○	○	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	○	○
ZIMBABWE												
Hwange	○	○	○	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	○
Matusadona	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐

Prime time ● Good time ◐ Questionable ○ Closed ○