

Top tips for taking children on a safari holiday to Africa

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A safari holiday will be high on the bucket list for many families looking for an adventure trip of a lifetime.

There are fewer more wonderful sights for a parent than catching the shriek of excitement accompanied by a wide-eyed stare of amazement when a child spots their first elephant or lion in the wild. Both adventures are brimming with magical moments such as these for young and old alike, allowing you to view the striped back majesty of the wild through both your own and your child's perspective.



Following our key tips and advice below when planning a safari adventure with kids to Africa will help ensure the trip is both exhilarating and educational for the entire family.

Travel Counsellor Bev has travelled to different parts of Africa with her family and has some great tips. *Safaris are great for children of all ages but as all parents know each age range have different needs. I have two tips, firstly choose a lodge that specifically caters for kids, not a standard lodge that will accept children' and also speak to an expert, they are so many options you need to get it right!*

Picking your location

Undoubtedly the most important decision to make as a family before jetting off to Africa is deciding which nation offers the best facilities for children.

The well-trodden African safari regions of South Africa and Kenya are known for having a series of Big Five game reserves, providing an increased likelihood of children getting to see their favourite animals. It is important to find a family-friendly lodge that will welcome children with open arms, as these will ensure your kids are well occupied throughout your stay.

Many of these reserves are also malaria free zones, which gives you peace of mind when trying to organise everything else before you fly to the continent. *Bev's advice: Babies and tots - you may not want to give this age range malaria tablets as part of your holiday so stick to a malaria-free game park. South Africa has many of these and the reserves in the Eastern Cape, Kwa Zulu Natal, Pilanesburg and Madikwe are excellent options.*



Safari age restrictions

Families who have experienced a safari adventure with children state taking children over the age of six is generally a more rewarding experience. This is predominantly due to many lodge rules that children must be over six years old to join adult game drives, as younger children and tots struggle to cope with the four-hour plus drives and the requirement to sit still and be quiet when waiting for animals to appear!

When taking children under twelve, lodges may request that you take your own private car for drives, so make sure you check the age restriction guidelines before deciding on a lodge.



Plenty of rest

Children who haven't slept well may be restless companions during a safari drive, with the morning and evening itineraries requiring a lot of energy. It's important to ensure there is plenty of downtime factored in when recovering from a drive, while you don't have to worry about missing your children's favourite animals, as many hippos, elephants and giraffes can be seen accompanying meal times.

Bev's advice: Try and build in some time before or after your safari to relax and let the kids run riot. A stay in Mombasa or Zanzibar twins well with a safari in Kenya or Tanzania and a direct flight from Johannesburg to Mauritius makes this a fantastic twin centre for Southern Africa.

Pick lodges with kids programmes

South African safari lodges are particularly appealing for families with young children, while families with older children or teens will find several great options in Kenya, with a range of dedicated kids' programmes provided where they can learn more about the secrets behind the savannah.

Activities include 'bush bumbles' as part of mini-bush adventures which are simultaneously entertaining and insightful, with nature walks comprising insect spotting and even safari based storytelling, ensuring you can relax at the lodge in the comfort of knowing the kids are well looked after.



Capture the moment

If your kids are old enough to use a camera then it may be a good idea to make sure they have their own, allowing them to capture their own memories to look back on as all their animal picture books and cartoon characters are brought to life before their eyes. While you may be able to watch an elephant bathing itself for an hour or more, your kids may not be as enthralled, so ensure they have plenty of crayons and paper to hand for continued engagement with their surroundings.

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