

Field Trip

“Into Africa”
by Mary Wilson

IPS periodically holds “field trips” for its members. One of this year’s trips was a little further afield than usual—5,000 miles from Washington.

The participants met in mid-June in Arusha (Northern Tanzania) for an eight-day photographic safari organized by Bassirou Sarr, the Center Coordinator for East-AFRITAC in Tanzania (and former Vice-President of the IPS) and his wife, Louise.



photo by José Cartas

The so-called safari-capital of East Africa, Arusha, is located on a plateau in the Great Rift Valley, in the foothills of Mount Meru. It lies amidst a host of natural wonders, including the Serengeti Plain, Lake Manyara, Ngorongoro Crater, Oldupai Gorge, Tarangire, and Mount Kilimanjaro National Parks. The area is also home to the Maasai people, many of whom maintain their traditional pastoral lifestyle.

Our photo safari began with Manyara National Park, home to 380 species of bird (e.g. Red Admiral, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Southern Red Bishop, and huge Ground Hornbills—which appear to defy gravity when perched in trees).

We stayed at a lodge where we were treated to a traditional Maasai tribal dance. While there,

we visited a functioning Maasai *boma* (homestead) to take photos—with the chief’s permission—of the people and their surroundings. This was a very powerful experience, witnessing close-up how they coped with the hardship of their lives. I will never forget visiting inside one of the huts, built by the women of the tribe using dirt and cow manure for the walls and grass for the roof. There were no windows and, inside, it was hot, smoky, and completely dark.

We also visited Oldupai Gorge, where, in the 1950s, Professor Luis Leakey and his wife Mary discovered the remains of 3.5 million-year-old hominoid footprints. The footprints can be seen at the small museum and Maasai jewelry can be bought on its grounds.



photo by Samuel Otoo



photo by Sigrid Vollerthun



photo by Bassirou Sarr

Ngorongoro Crater has been described as “one of the eight wonders of the world” the largest intact volcanic caldera in the world at 600 m deep and 265 sq. km wide and home to a permanent population of more than 25,000 wild animals. The beauty of the landscape in the early morning light simply has to be seen to be believed.



photo by Mary Wilson

During our visit we were lucky enough to see the “Big Five”—lion, leopard, rhinoceros, buffalo and elephant—some on many occasions, some only once or twice. Other wildlife we encountered included hippopotamus, crocodiles, zebras, giraffes, wildebeest, cheetahs, baboons, monkeys, ostriches, kirks dik-dik (a tiny deer-like creature), impalas, gazelles, flamingos, and many exotic birds. On one of our last nights, I was startled to come across a scorpion inside my tent. I summoned the courage to take a

photo before it was forcibly and carefully removed.



photo by Manuella Palmioli

At the end of our trip, we stayed at the most beautiful inn just outside Arusha with a spectacular view from the “English-style” garden of Mount Kilimanjaro. A lovely place to end a wonderful safari.



photo by Caroline Helou