

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Marriott International's luxury division debuts safari experience in Southwest Kenya

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Marriott's first safari lodge is shaped by local culture and sustainability. Image credit: Marriott International

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

JW Marriott, part of Marriott International's Bonvoy Hotel luxury portfolio, is debuting the company's premier safari offering.

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Located in southwestern Kenya on the Masai Mara National Reserve, guests will now gain the chance to see African wildlife in the wilderness all from the comfort of luxury tents. The namesake property opens today, marking a huge milestone for Marriott's adventure travel offerings.

"Fostering meaningful connections and nourishing the soul is at the heart of the JW Marriott brand, so entering the luxury safari segment is a natural next step," said Bruce Rohr, global brand leader of **JW Marriott**, in a statement.

"Offering our guests once-in-a-lifetime experiences and a deep connection to place, JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge balances the thrill of a game drive with thoughtful opportunities to switch off and take it all in," Mr. Rohr said. "We are excited to welcome travelers to a transformative and wellness-forward stay delivered with JW Marriott's legacy of extraordinary hospitality."

Advantages to adventure

Luxury adventure travel has experienced a huge boom in recent years, making this new opening an advantageous one for the company.

The JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge is situated on one of the most famous reserves in Africa, thanks to the Masai Mara National Reserve's sanctuary being home to such plentiful populations of leopards, lions, African bush elephants, buffalos and rhinos the "Big Five," as the brand calls it.

Initially announced in March 2022, the lodge offers guests guided safari tours in which they can observe this swath of savannah-dwellers, presenting local knowledge of conservation and African animal species ([see story](#)).



For honeymooners, the lodge offers a private pool and an expanded space for romantic excursions. Image credit: Marriott International

The site itself was built and is currently overseen, in part, by locals, who sourced materials sustainably and applied their ecological knowledge to responsibly-conducted planning and development phases, according to the brand.

JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge also donates to various regional projects including The Maa Trust a local-led endeavor that supports small startups. Given a percentage of each nightly rate, Marriott welcomes craftspeople to sell their beadwork pieces on-site at the lodge, as well as fruits, vegetables and other produce.

Additionally, Marriott hired 60 percent of the staff locally – the hotel is aiming to reach 70 percent – supporting gender equity through the Apprenticeship Program that specifically invites the surrounding community's women to apply.

The lodge claims to take care in handling factors such as water use, recycling systems and amenities – a water treatment plant repurposes and sanitizes water, wells are placed across the property for animals to drink from and food is composted.

Guests can learn skills from local conservationists such as responsible wildlife photography and Marriott uses funds to support The Mara Elephant Project and The Mara Protector Conservation Program, on top of other nonprofit contributions.

Lodge interiors are inspired by the savannah outside, and each of the tents has a terrace with views of the biodiverse River Talek, providing full immersion into the African landscape.

The JW Garden is cultivated in that same vein, allowing guests to gather outdoors while also spotting the ingredients that will make their way onto their plates and into their cocktails during meals at the Sarabi Restaurant, or on the savannah per the "Bush Breakfast" or dinner offerings. The space is also home to daily events such as live cooking demonstrations, tastings and farm-to-table lectures.

Guests and families with children who are older than six can book one of the 20 tents at the JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge for the nightly and all-inclusive rate of \$1,450 per person at the brand's [site](#).

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