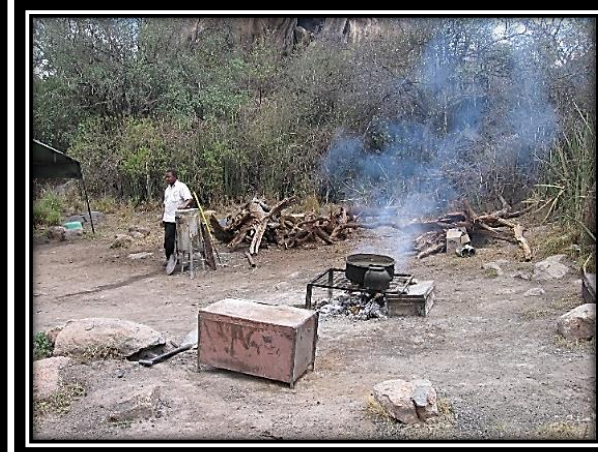


9. Serengeti Adventures

We were back in camp by 11:30 following our morning game drive, and this magnificent lunch appeared promptly at 11:45. You can imagine how eagerly we all tucked in! And yes, dear gentle reader, it was all just as delicious as it looks in these photos! After lunch I took the opportunity to take photos of the kitchen setup that allowed all this wonderful food to appear on our tables.





After lunch we were free until the next game drive, this one to be at 3:00 because our guides expected rain later. Myrtle and I washed some clothes out on our verandah, messed with our suitcases and cameras, and took a nap. A marvelous cacophony of birdsong woke us, and we decided to have tea on our verandah (which was, as you probably know, dear reader, simply a flap of canvas laid down outside the door to our tent). At the mess tent we ran into one of the women on another jeep, and she told us with a giggle to follow her around the corner of the mess tent. We did so, and she pointed up to a Vervet Monkey on a branch above us. “Keep watching him,” she said. In a few minutes that Monkey, continuing to watch us, turned a little to the side and displayed an engorged bright red penis against a brilliant blue scrotum. “Oh, gross!” squealed Myrtle. “That thing looks gross!” Well, Myrtle,” I said, “I think he has the hots for you!” We all erupted in giggles and fled. Myrtle said, “Well, dear heavens! The female certainly cannot miss THAT display!” Then she decided that the shock to our system was such that we needed something stronger than sugar in our tea, and, seeing no brandy or other suitable libation, she proceeded to pour some wine into our tea. I can tell you with certainty, dear reader, that you need not experiment with this. It was quite awful.



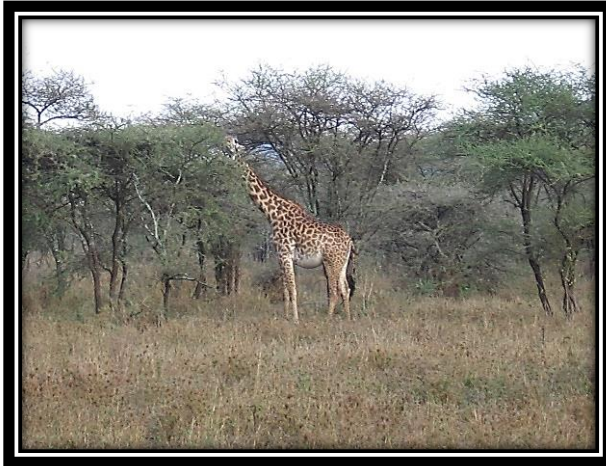
Shortly after we started on our game drive, we saw this gorgeous Secretary Bird just standing there, seeming to preen for us, and this equally gorgeous Egyptian Sacred Ibis. As I watched the stately walk of that Ibis, I reflected on how the ancient Egyptians revered the Ibis as the incarnation of

Thoth, the god of wisdom, who was the scribe of the gods and the inventor of writing and Egyptian hieroglyphs. Thank you, Thoth! Thank you, Sacred Ibis! We also saw these large Herons in a tree, and a family of Baboons. The weather was soon starting to grow cloudy, with stronger gusts of wind carrying little bursts of rain. We kept driving and saw Rock Hyraxes, a Mongoose watching us from on top of his safety rock, Vervet Monkeys (none of them with their spectacular appendages showing, thank heaven,) Egyptian Geese and a Crocodile, a lone Lion, a Hippo resting near a bush, a troop of Dik-Diks, some Impalas, more Baboons, and the lovely Marabou Storks. “There are about 14 of those Storks in that tree,” pointed out our guide. “They are getting ready to rest for the night, because the rains are coming in now. We are just on the cusp of the rainy season. As you saw, yesterday’s brief rain already brought new green growth in the savannah. Tomorrow we will go north toward the border of Kenya to check on the migration. The total migration is about two million animals, mostly Zebras and Wildebeests. We might see the tail end of the migration.”



Then we saw a magnificent Topi, fastest of all the African antelopes, and an equally beautiful Hartebeest, but the rain sprinkles were gusting and I put my camera away. “The Topi is distinctively colored on its sides,” said our guide, “so it is easy to distinguish from the other antelopes.” The guides stopped the jeeps to close up the roof hatches, and the skies turned darker as the rains started coming down in earnest, becoming very heavy by 5:30. We made it back to camp about 6:00, with time for a shower and to wash some clothes before our evening briefing by the campfire

with a glass of wine followed by another excellent dinner in the mess tent at 8:00. Wakeup call the next day was at 6:00 and we would be on the road all day, traveling north to the border of Kenya to check on the annual migration. We were on the road by 7:15 and saw another beautiful sunrise.



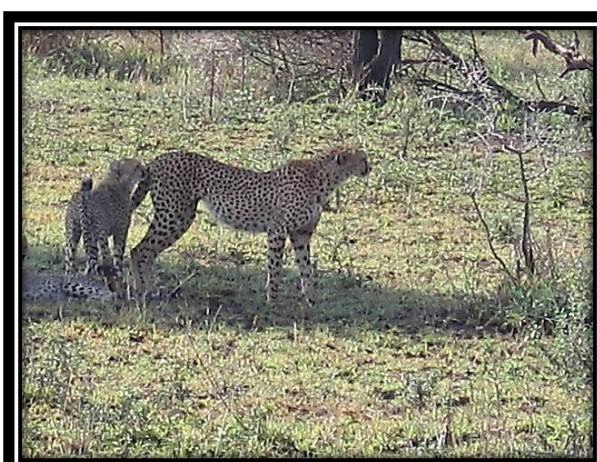
As we left camp, we saw a group of Banded Mongooses, which our guide told us is the Mongoose that kills the snakes. I told Myrtle it was not close to our camp, but she looked at me like, "Nice try!"

Almost immediately we saw four adult female Giraffes, impossibly tall, eating the thorny acacia trees happily, and then two huge male Lions about 8:00 am. The roads were muddy but passable. We saw a Fish Eagle and passed a large Hippo pond with lots of Hippos and visible poo in the water. It had a really awful smell. We saw another truly gorgeous Fish Eagle with its elegant white bib.



Then about 8:30 we saw something very exciting, a mother Cheetah and her 6-month old cubs. As we parked on the side of the road and quietly watched the Cheetahs, our guide said, "The mother is

going to teach her cubs to hunt. This is the time she starts to train them to hunt. Cheetahs are endangered because the other predators kill their cubs. Because of the Cheetahs' speed they are strong competition for the same food the other predators eat, and the other predators retaliate by killing their babies." As we watched silently, the mother rose into a stalking pose watching the Impalas across the road. One baby followed her example.

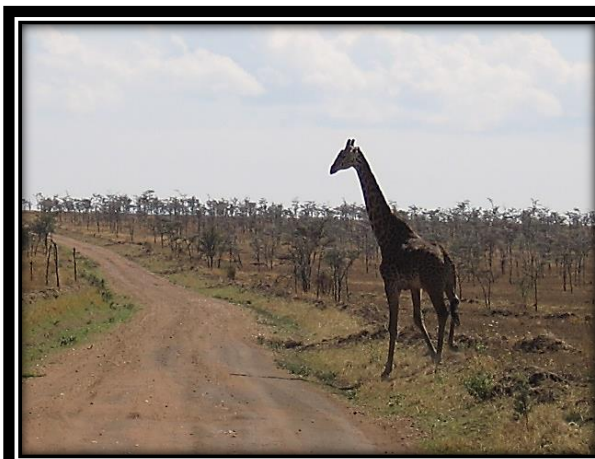




After about twenty minutes our guides decided the mother was not going to teach the babies today, and we continued on our way. The Impalas the Cheetahs were watching were a breeding herd, and the large male behind them remained on the alert all the while the females were grazing. He also herded the females away from the road by grunting at them, sort of like a low Mmmh sound.



“The Impalas are smart,” said our guide. “They know that the Cheetah is faster than they are on a straightaway, because of the Cheetah’s muscle mass, but the Impala can outrun a Cheetah by quick twists and turns in a denser environment. It is very agile.” We passed this Topi, and our guide said, “The Topi is built for speed. They are the fastest African antelope and have been clocked at 90 km per hour, 56 miles an hour.” Then we all caught our breath as this 17-foot-tall Giraffe came over the horizon, the size of it compared to the Impala in the foreground!





What an unbelievable animal!

To be continued . . .