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COMPLIMENTARY GUIDE · LEAD-CAPTURE ASSET

The Great Migration Calendar

A month-by-month guide to where the wildebeest are

Two million wildebeest, zebra, and gazelle moving in a year-round loop across the Serengeti. This calendar tells you where they should be — month by month, with the operator-honest caveats that matter for actually planning around them.

By the safari-tz.com team · 35 years of safari operations

THE WILDEBEEST MIGRATION · MONTH BY MONTH

2026

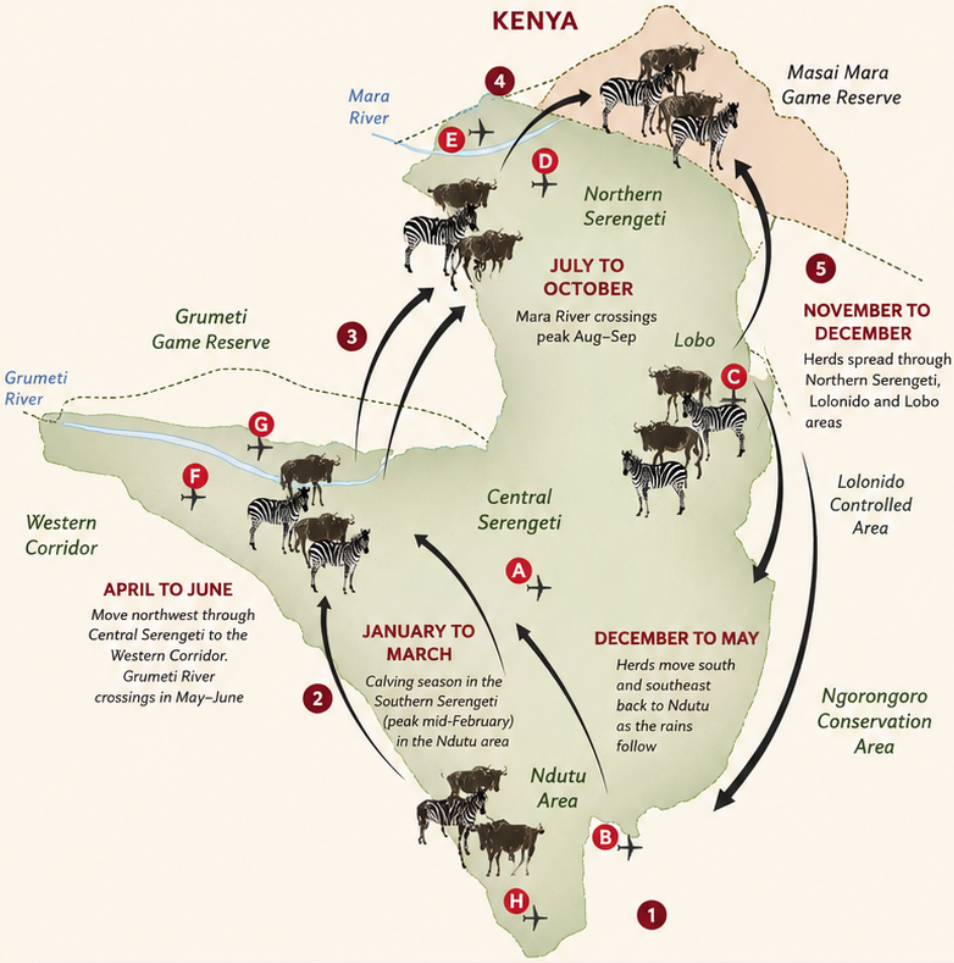
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GREAT MIGRATION CALENDAR · 2026

THE MIGRATION LOOP

Where the herds move — a year in one page



AIRSTRIPS

- A Seronera Airstrip
- B Ndutu Airstrip (Ngorongoro Conservation Area)
- C Lobo Airstrip
- D Kogatende Airstrip
- E Lamai Airstrip
- F Grumeti Airstrip
- G Sasakwa Airstrip
- H Serengeti South Airstrip

THE MIGRATION LOOP EXPLAINED

1. Ndutu Area (calving): mid-December to March
2. Southern Serengeti to Western Corridor: April to June (crossing the Grumeti River)
3. Western Corridor to Northern Serengeti: June to July
4. Northern Serengeti to Masai Mara: July to October (*Mara River crossings peak Aug–Sep*)
5. Masai Mara to Northern Serengeti, Loliondo and Lobo: October to mid-December

Migration follows rain, not the calendar — positions are approximate and shift year to year.

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UNDERSTANDING THE MIGRATION

What this calendar is — and is not

The Great Migration is the longest overland mammal migration on Earth — roughly two million wildebeest, plus several hundred thousand zebra and gazelle, plus the predators (lions, cheetahs, hyenas, crocodiles) that follow them. The herds move in a continuous loop across the Serengeti ecosystem, crossing into the Maasai Mara in Kenya during the dry-season peak. They do not stop; the loop is constant.

This calendar tells you — month by month — where they should be, based on decades of operator observation and the seasonal rainfall pattern that drives their movement. It will not tell you exactly where they were last Tuesday, because we don't know that yet. The Migration follows rain, not the calendar, and recent years have seen patterns shift as East African rainfall has become less predictable. Plan around the windows — not the specific dates.

THE LOOP

The herds move in a continuous circle. There is no "start" — but calving in January-February is where most planners begin.

THE WINDOWS

Two iconic windows draw most traffic: calving (Jan-Feb) and the Mara River crossings (Jul-Oct). Both are excellent.

THE CAVEAT

Migration follows rain. Dates shift year to year. A live operator's intelligence is what fills the calendar's gap.

WHY MOST CALENDARS GET THIS WRONG

The herds don't read brochures

Most published Migration calendars present month-by-month positions as fact. The honest reality: positions shift week to week within each window. Calving usually peaks mid-February — but in unusually wet years it can shift two weeks. Mara crossings normally start mid-to-late July — but in dry years they begin earlier. Use the calendar as a planning framework. Use a live operator to confirm what's actually happening when you book.

THE MIGRATION YEAR — PART 1

January to June: Calving, Movement, the Western Corridor

Most safari planners begin with the calving season in January-February. The herds are concentrated in the southern Serengeti and Ndutu plains, calves dropping at peak around mid-February, predators concentrated with them. By April the long rains arrive and the herds begin moving north. By June they're in the Western Corridor approaching the Grumeti River — the year's first major crossings, smaller and less dramatic than the Mara crossings later but with massive Nile crocodiles.

January

NDUTU PLAINS · SOUTHERN SERENGETI

Calving begins. Herds concentrated on the short-grass plains south of Seronera and into Ndutu. Days warm (~28°C), nights cool. Peak predator action arrives mid-to-late January as newborn wildebeest draw concentrated lion, cheetah, and hyena activity.

Best base: Ndutu camps · Closest gate: Naabi Hill

February

NDUTU PLAINS · CALVING PEAK

The most concentrated calving window — around 8,000 calves born per day at peak. Mid-February is the connoisseur's favourite for predator concentration. Short dry season; game viewing excellent. Books early.

Migration phase: calving · Less crowded than July-August

March

TRANSITION · MOVING NORTHWEST

Calving tails off. Herds begin moving northwest into the Central Serengeti as long rains start to threaten. Early March often still excellent for game; by late month, rain risk rises. A transition month.

Long rains begin to influence movement

April

CENTRAL SERENGETI · LONG RAINS

Herds spread through the Central Serengeti. Long rains in full force. Dirt roads can become difficult. Many camps reduce operations or close. Lower season pricing reflects real tradeoffs.

Low season · Discount pricing

May

WESTERN MOVEMENT BEGINS

Late long rains. Herds begin the move toward the Western Corridor. By month-end, the front of the herd reaches the Grumeti area. Wet but easing. Lush, photographic, quiet.

Front herds approach Grumeti by late May

June

WESTERN CORRIDOR · GRUMETI CROSSINGS

Long dry season begins. Herds concentrate in the Western Corridor. Grumeti River crossings start — smaller than the Mara crossings later but with massive Nile crocodiles. Peak season pricing returns.

Migration phase: Grumeti crossings

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THE MIGRATION YEAR — PART 2

July to December: Mara River Crossings & the Return

July through October is what most international travellers picture when they think of "the Great Migration" — the herds in the Northern Serengeti, the Mara River crossings, the dramatic scenes that fill documentaries. The honest reality: crossings are unpredictable. They can happen on a given day or not happen for three days running. Planning a week in the right region is the practical strategy, not chasing a specific crossing date.

July

NORTHERN SERENGETI · MARA CROSSINGS BEGIN

Front of the herd reaches the Mara River. First crossings typically begin mid-to-late July. Peak season — books out 6-12 months ahead. Days mild (~24°C), nights cool. The most photographed month.

Best base: Kogatende, Lamai · Crossings begin

August

NORTHERN SERENGETI · CROSSINGS PEAK

Mara River crossings at their peak. Largest herds in the Northern Serengeti and adjacent Maasai Mara. Long dry season fully established — excellent weather and game viewing. Most expensive, most crowded.

Peak Mara crossings · Crowded

September

NORTHERN SERENGETI · CONTINUING

Crossings continue throughout September as the herd moves back and forth across the river. Slightly less crowded than August. Many operators consider September the value sweet spot of high season.

Excellent · Slightly less crowded than August

October

NORTHERN SERENGETI TO CENTRAL

Migration begins moving back south. Last of the Mara crossings happen early-to-mid October. Hot, dusty, dry. Game concentrated at remaining water sources. Shoulder season tones start.

Migration moves south late month

November

CENTRAL SERENGETI · SHORT RAINS

Short rains arrive. Herds spread back through the Central Serengeti heading toward the southern plains. Game still good but lush. Lower season pricing returns. Often overlooked — manageable weather.

Short rains · Lower season pricing

December

SOUTHERN SERENGETI · NDUTU APPROACH

By late December the herds arrive back in the southern Serengeti / Ndutu area, ready for the next calving cycle. Christmas / New Year is high-demand despite mixed weather. Loop completes.

Returning to Ndutu · Cycle restarts

THE RIVER CROSSING REALITY

What "Mara crossing season" actually means

The Mara River crossings are the Migration's most dramatic moment and the single most-photographed wildlife event in Africa. They are also the most misunderstood by first-time visitors. The brochure version implies you arrive, find a crossing, watch it, and leave. The operator version is more honest: crossings are unscheduled and unpredictable. Sometimes the herds approach the river and wait three days. Sometimes they cross at 4pm. Sometimes at dawn. Sometimes 40 kilometres downstream of where they crossed last week.

What works: planning at least 5-7 days in the Northern Serengeti during the July-October window, basing in Kogatende or Lamai, accepting that you might see one crossing or three. What doesn't work: a single-day drive into the Mara region in August expecting guaranteed action.

THE HONEST CROSSING REALITY

Crossings are not on a schedule

A week in the right region during the right window gives you the best odds. A single day gives you a lottery ticket. We tell every client this honestly at the booking stage rather than at the riverbank. Most appreciate the calibration — and most of those who plan around the window rather than the date end up seeing what they came for.

WHAT THE CALENDAR MISSES

Live operator intelligence is the calendar's missing layer

A Migration calendar tells you the pattern. It does not tell you that the herds shifted three weeks early this year because the rains came early, or that the river crossings are happening 40 kilometres downstream of where they were last August. That intelligence comes from the radio network operators share daily during the high-movement months. Our named guides — Geoffrey Komba, William Mwasimba, Isaac Munuo — check those reports every morning during the peak window. When you book direct with an Arusha operator, you're buying that intelligence as much as the trip itself.

PLANNING YOUR MIGRATION SAFARI

Three ways to plan around the Migration

The Migration is one of many wildlife stories in Tanzania, not the only one. How you plan around it depends on what kind of experience you want — and accepting that the herds move with the rain rather than the calendar. Three honest planning frames help most travellers decide.

01

For the calving season

Book January or February. Base in Ndutu camps. Plan a 5-7 day safari. The combination of newborn calves and concentrated predator activity is what brings repeat visitors back. Lower demand than July-August means more flexibility with camps and pricing.

02

For the Mara River crossings

Book July, August, or September. Base in Kogatende or Lamai. Plan at least 5 days in the Northern Serengeti — single-day visits are lottery tickets. Book 8-12 months ahead for the better camps. This is the highest-demand window of the year, and the camps that watch the river fill up first.

03

For the broader safari experience

Migration is one wildlife story in Tanzania, not the only one. A well-built northern circuit safari — Tarangire, Ngorongoro, Serengeti, Lake Manyara — gives you year-round game viewing whether the herds are where you are or not. Many travellers plan around weather and price first, Migration position second.

READY TO PLAN A MIGRATION SAFARI?

Book direct with the team that watches the herds every week

If this calendar has helped you choose a window for your Tanzania trip, the next step is talking to an operator who actually watches the herds — not a booking platform that resells your details to whoever pays the highest commission. safari-tz.com is an Arusha-based operator with 35 years of safari operations, TATO-registered since 1991, with our own vehicles, our own named lead guides, and our own daily radio network linking us to camps across the Serengeti.

We do not run group departures. Every trip is built around your dates, your interests, and your Migration window. Send us your dates and your preferred Migration phase (calving, Mara crossings, or general safari) and we will send a tailored proposal within 24 hours — no platform markup, no third-party agent fees, no obligation.

SEND US YOUR DATES — WE'LL TAKE IT FROM THERE

A tailored proposal within 24 hours.
No platform markup. No agent fees.

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