

JW Marriot Masai Mara Lodge opens in Kenya

JW Marriott, part of Marriott Bonvoy's global portfolio of 30 hotel brands has opened JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge, Kenya, marking the company's debut in the luxury safari segment.



Source: Supplied

JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge is a 30-minute drive from Keekorok Airstrip and a 25-minute drive from Sekenani Main Gate.

Sitting within the Masai Mara National Reserve in southwestern Kenya, one of Africa's most renowned wildlife and wilderness conservation regions, the lodge is a sophisticated and thoughtful sanctuary from which to discover nature and breathtaking vistas in harmony.

Guided game drives offer guests the opportunity to observe the "Big Five" that Masai Mara is home to, including lions, leopards, buffalos, rhinoceros, and elephants. Between June and September, the reserve is host to the annual great wildebeest migration, which sees more than 10 million animals travel a distance of 1,800 miles from the Serengeti in neighbouring Tanzania.

"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, JW Marriott. "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. We are excited to welcome travellers to a transformative and wellness-forward stay delivered with JW Marriott's legacy of extraordinary hospitality."

Inspired design

The lodge's elegant interiors, designed by Kristina Zanic Consultants, seamlessly blend the savannah inwards, drawing inspiration from the elements with soft, warm tones, natural materials and textures, and native colours thread through its design.

Each of the lodge's 20 private tents provides a peaceful sanctuary to recharge and reset and features terraces overlooking the River Talek, a water source and habitat for many wildlife. The tented honeymoon suite offers a private plunge pool, while two interconnecting king and twin suites are ideal for families with children over the age of six (the minimum age of guests at the lodge).

Wellbeing and mindful practices

In keeping with JW Marriott's ethos of mindfulness, the lodge is home to a number of thoughtfully designed spaces from the cosy Adventure Lounge full of books to get lost in and a space for young adults to take time for themselves, to the Cultural Deck where guests can gather around the fire pit to share tales of the day's exploration.

Capturing the essence of rejuvenation, the Spa by JW emulates the serenity of the reserve and offers tailored experiences and signature treatments which blend locally inspired techniques and therapies. These are complemented by natural and organic products by renowned African skincare brand, Healing Earth, also available as in-room amenities.

Guests can enjoy spa treatments from the comfort of their tented suite, accompanied by the sounds of the wilderness. Extending beyond body to mind and spirit with guided yoga, treatments include a 'Masai Celebration' incorporating local botanicals and therapies.

Nourishing culinary journeys

At the heart of the camp is the JW Garden - an outdoor space for guests to spend time discovering home-grown, organic ingredients, including the lodge's signature rosemary. The garden's produce is used by the lodge's chefs to craft personalised dishes, cocktails, and mocktails.

The garden will host daily programming, including live cooking, interactive cocktail mixology, and chef-led talks for a true farm-to-table experience. A relaxing gathering place, Fig Tree Lounge offers panoramic views of the surrounding plains from the indoor and outdoor bar and serves refreshing cocktails and mocktails infused with seasonal ingredients from the lodge's garden.

An indoor and alfresco dining experience at Sarabi Restaurant takes guests on a nourishing epicurean experience guided by JW Garden ingredients and local culinary heritage. Guests can venture out into the reserve with the lodge's guides to enjoy a freshly prepared 'Bush Breakfast' or dinner while sipping sundowners and soaking in the breathtaking savannah vistas.

Connection to the locale

The lodge's community programming provides an authentic insight into meaningful local projects, including The Maa Trust, an organisation empowering local people by promoting small business start-ups. The lodge donates a percentage of the nightly rate per person to the organisation and provides a space for craftspeople to retail Maa Beadwork and produce.

Guests can also visit The Maa Trust to meet with local artisans and forge a deeper connection to the people in the area.

Currently, 60% of the lodge's team are locals, with plans to reach 70%, ensuring the hotel's contribution to the socio-economic development of the region. As an ongoing initiative, JW Marriott Masai Mara's Apprenticeship Programme invites young women from the community to diversify their skills and broaden their experience to kick-start their careers in the hospitality industry. Partnership with the community began during the early development process of the lodge.

Developed on land committed to a tourism project so as not to unduly disturb the surrounding environment, much of the construction was undertaken by local experts overseen by technical specialists, with build materials sourced from sustainable suppliers. The lodge has rehabilitated access roads to the property, installed power to the area, and provided access to clean drinking water for locals through a water treatment plant.

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