

ROAM & TELL

Special Issue:
The Safari Edition

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ROAM & TELL

EDITORS NOTES

I started this magazine as a way to slow down and remember what travel feels like beyond the highlight reel. It's a love letter to moments that don't always make the itinerary.

SAM MCKIBBEN

I am a Chicago-based traveler and storyteller who's endlessly curious about the world. So far, I've been lucky enough to visit 58 countries - each one teaching me something new about culture, connection, and myself.

I write, photograph, and design every part of this magazine as a creative outlet to capture those experiences and share them with others.

My goal isn't just to see new places, but to travel with intention: to slow down, listen, and find meaning in the moments between flights.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to *Roam & Tell*: a collection of stories, photos, and fleeting moments from around the world. I started this project to capture travel not just as movement, but as meaning: the people you meet, the quiet mornings, and the memories that linger long after the plane lands.

Travel, to me, has always been about connection. It's about noticing the details. From the way light hits a café window in Lisbon, to the laughter shared with strangers in the Sahara desert, to the calm of a sunrise run before a city wakes up. It's the small, unplanned moments that make each trip feel alive.

This magazine grew from a desire to slow down and reflect; to document not just where I've been, but how each place has shaped me. Every photo, paragraph, and layout here is created by hand. It's a love letter to exploration, creativity, and the beauty of paying attention.

My hope is that as you flip through these pages, you're inspired to explore more intentionally. To see the world with curiosity, to embrace imperfection, and to find meaning in the in-between... because sometimes the journey itself is the most beautiful part.

SMikibben

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

SPECIAL ISSUE: THE SAFARI EDITION



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM MCKIBBEN



Kenya sits on the equator, is famously the birthplace of the safari, and offers a huge range of terrain: from coastal coral reefs to the Great Rift Valley and highland forests. English and Swahili are both widely used; the country is warm year-round with the best safari months June–October (cooler, clearer skies, easier wildlife viewing).



Each region in Kenya tells its own story, from golden plains to pink-hued lakes and misty mountain views.

Maasai Mara

The country's crown jewel. A place where lions roam freely, wildebeest thunder across the plains, and every sunrise feels cinematic.

Lake Nakuru

Tucked in the Great Rift Valley, this shimmering lake draws countless birds (from flamingos to pelicans) alongside rhinos grazing on the shoreline.

Tsavo (East & West)

Vast, red-earth wilderness stretching endlessly toward the horizon. Remote, raw, and untamed: a reminder of Africa's ancient spirit.

Amboseli

Known for its sweeping views of Mount Kilimanjaro and its famous elephant herds, Amboseli captures that perfect balance between power and peace.

Meru

Lush, green, and less traveled. A quieter side of Kenya where rivers, forests, and open grasslands meet — ideal for those seeking solitude and storybook scenery.

Laikipia

Set on high plateaus and private conservancies, this region blends community conservation with intimate safari experiences — the modern heartbeat of wild Kenya.



UP CLOSE WITH THE BIG FIVE

The safari adventure begins long before the sun rises. Bundled in layers against the crisp early-morning air, warm water pouches pressed into your hands for extra comfort, you set out in a sturdy safari vehicle, the world around you still cloaked in darkness. There's a quiet anticipation in the air. Safaris are planned for these early hours and again at dusk, the times when the wildlife is most active, moving through the savannah in search of food, water, and each other.

As the first light stretches across the horizon, the landscape transforms. The grasses shimmer with dew, and the silhouettes of distant trees and hills seem almost magical in the soft glow. The stillness is profound. This kind of silence where even the smallest sound like a branch snapping or a bird calling feels amplified. You scan the plains, spotting the flash of a leopard's tail, the slow, deliberate stride of an elephant herd, the imposing bulk of a rhino grazing in solitude. Each encounter is a thrill, and the closer you get to these magnificent creatures, the more palpable the connection.

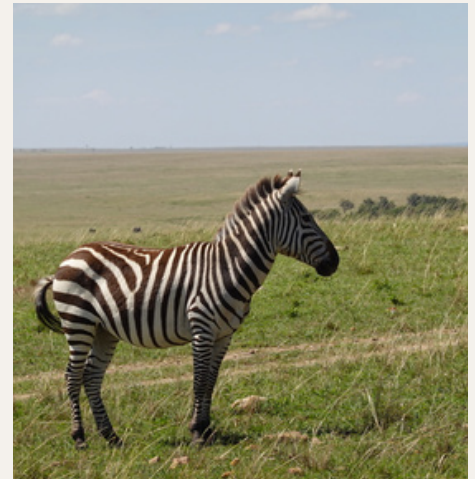
There's something humbling about seeing a lioness rise gracefully from her morning rest, or watching a buffalo herd navigate the land with quiet authority. Your breath catches as you realize you are witnessing life in its purest form: unfiltered, untamed, and breathtakingly beautiful. The combination of stillness, suspense, and sheer proximity leaves you with shivers. It serves as a reminder of both the power and the fragility of the natural world. A safari is not just about spotting animals; it's about experiencing their lives firsthand, feeling the pulse of the wilderness, and walking away forever changed by the intimacy of these encounters with the Big Five.



The “Big Five” refers to five of Africa’s most iconic and sought-after animals for safari-goers to see in the wild. The term was originally coined by big-game hunters, not for difficulty to spot, but for the danger and challenge in hunting them on foot. Today, it’s all about wildlife viewing.

The Big Five are:

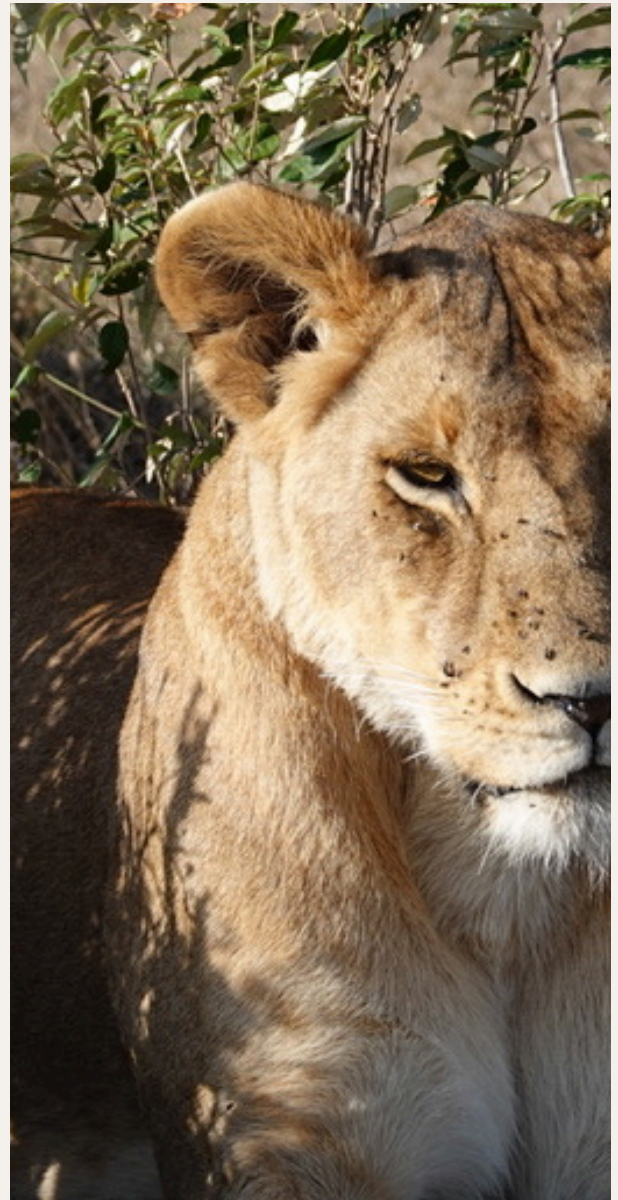
1. Lion
2. Leopard
3. Elephant
4. Rhinoceros
5. Cape Buffalo



THE GREATEST GLORY IN LIVING LIES IN WATCHING WILDLIFE INTERACT AND THRIVE.

-STEVE IRWIN

There's a humbling joy in observing wildlife as they move through their world. Lions resting in the shade, elephants striding across the plains, rhinos grazing with quiet authority, leopards slipping through the grasses, and buffalo navigating the land with steady purpose - all command awe and inspire deep respect for the natural world. Every glance, every subtle movement, is alive with wonder, offering intimate insights into their lives and the delicate balance that sustains them. Being so close, yet witnessing them in their own habitat, is both thrilling and reflective: a reminder of the extraordinary beauty and fragility of life on the savannah.



Photography by Sam McKibben



ABOVE THE SAVANNA

**FUN FACT: THE FIRST PASSENGERS OF A HOT AIR BALLOON
WEREN'T HUMANS, BUT RATHER A SHEEP, A DUCK, AND A
ROOSTER**



The world still slept when I arrived at the launch site, the sky just beginning to hint at dawn. My first hot air balloon ride made the 5 a.m. wake-up feel less like a chore and more like an invitation to witness something extraordinary. The crisp morning air carried a quiet anticipation as the balloon lay across the ground like a sleeping giant, waiting. As the balloon came alive, it stretched taller and taller, and my anticipation soared with it. The pilot ignited bursts of flame, sending us higher as the warm heat brushed my skin. Slowly, the ground slipped away, and the world beneath us began to shrink. We lifted silently into the sky.

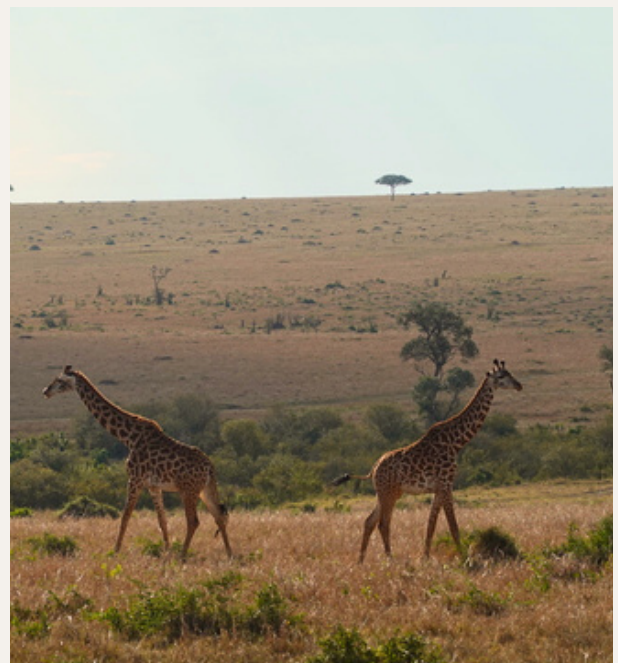
Below, the savannah revealed itself in all its glory: endless grasses rippling in the breeze, acacia trees punctuating the horizon, and herds of elephants, buffalo, and zebras moving like living patterns across the plains. From above, these creatures seemed almost miniature, yet I knew the true majesty of their size and presence. Every movement, every interaction, felt deliberate and alive, and I was acutely aware of the hidden life thriving in the grasses and shadows below: creatures going about their days in a world untouched by human hands.

Floating over this vast, golden landscape, there was a sense of quiet intimacy that contrasted with the sheer scale of the view. The silence was profound, broken only by the occasional hiss of the balloon's burners, and it amplified every sight, every rustle, every subtle motion of the wildlife beneath us. Time felt suspended; the boundary between earth and sky seemed to blur, and I found myself both exhilarated and deeply reflective. Seeing life from this vantage point, witnessing the delicate balance of the ecosystem and the resilience of its inhabitants, left me awed, humbled, and profoundly grateful for the opportunity to experience it.

By the time we descended, the savannah had fully awakened, golden light spilling across the plains and wildlife stirring in earnest. The flight was more than a thrill, it was a reminder of how vast, intricate, and beautiful the natural world truly is. Every glance downward carried a mixture of wonder and reverence, and I knew that the memory of floating above this extraordinary landscape, so close to life in its most authentic form, would linger with me long after my feet touched the earth again.



Hot air balloon safaris offer a unique perspective on the African wilderness, allowing travelers to glide silently over the savannah at dawn or dusk. From above, herds of elephants, buffalo, zebras, and other wildlife can be observed moving naturally across the landscape, often in patterns invisible from the ground. The soft morning or evening light paints the terrain in golden hues, revealing the vastness of the plains and the subtle rhythms of the ecosystem. Balloon safaris are typically timed for early morning departures to take advantage of the calm winds and the animals' most active hours, making it an unforgettable combination of adventure, wildlife viewing, and breathtaking scenery.



HEART OF THE MARA

In the heart of the Maasai Mara, tradition and daily life unfold across the sunlit plains. The Maasai open their world to visitors, offering a rare glimpse into a life intimately connected to the land and its rhythms.

I arrived in the Maasai Mara with little knowledge of the Maasai way of life, but stepped into a world that would teach me more in a few hours than I could have imagined. From the moment we were greeted with a vibrant welcome dance, the energy, rhythm, and joy of the Maasai drew me in completely. Their striking outfits, brightly colored shukas wrapped gracefully, adorned with intricately beaded necklaces, bracelets, and ornaments told stories of heritage, resilience, and identity with every color and pattern.

We were invited into the homes they had built by hand, simple yet deeply connected to the land, and introduced to their cattle, the lifeblood of their community. Children approached shyly, then with wide-eyed curiosity, offering smiles and warmth as we wandered through the village. Every detail sparked awe and appreciation: the artful jewelry displayed proudly, the careful tending of the animals, the quiet strength and pride in their daily routines.

Through song, dance, and conversation, I began to understand the depth of their connection to the land and each other. What started as a brief visit became a lesson in humility, tradition, and the beauty of a life lived in harmony with nature. By the time we left, I carried with me a newfound respect and admiration for the Maasai—a community whose stories, culture, and spirit linger long after you leave the plains.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM MCKIBBEN



The Maasai are a semi-nomadic people who have lived in East Africa for centuries, primarily in Kenya and northern Tanzania. Known for their striking red shukas, intricate beadwork, and rich oral traditions, the Maasai maintain a deep connection to the land and their livestock, particularly cattle, which play a central role in their culture and economy. Their villages, called enkangs, are built by hand and organized around communal life, reflecting a lifestyle that has harmoniously coexisted with the savannah for generations.

Built by hand from mud and cow manure, this Maasai home shelters a family of six and reflects a way of life deeply connected to the land.



WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Kenya is not only a haven for wildlife but also a leader in conservation efforts across Africa. From anti-poaching initiatives to community-led wildlife programs, the country works tirelessly to protect endangered species like elephants, rhinos, and big cats. Visiting these protected areas offers a firsthand look at the dedication and collaboration required to safeguard the savannah's rich biodiversity, reminding travelers that every encounter with wildlife carries both wonder and responsibility.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM MCKIBBEN



These efforts are not only about protecting individual animals, they are about preserving the intricate balance of entire ecosystems. By supporting local communities, Kenya's conservation programs ensure that people and wildlife can coexist sustainably, creating a future where generations to come can experience the same wonders of the savannah. Rangers, scientists, and volunteers work tirelessly behind the scenes, often in challenging conditions, to monitor wildlife populations, restore habitats, and educate visitors about the fragility and resilience of these environments.

For travelers, witnessing these efforts firsthand deepens the safari experience. It's a reminder that every sighting (a herd of elephants crossing the plains, a rhino grazing quietly, a lioness watching over her cubs) is made possible through careful stewardship and collaboration. Conservation in Kenya is a living, breathing commitment, one that ensures the majesty of its landscapes and the richness of its wildlife endures, leaving visitors with not only memories but a profound appreciation for the ongoing work to protect this extraordinary natural heritage.

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THANK YOU

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Thank you for joining on this journey. Stay tuned for the next issue, where more adventures and stories await.

