

Africa: Day Nine

Stage two of the African Adventure was about to begin. With Kilimanjaro checked off of the list, the focus would now be shifted to SAFARI! One member of our group, Louise was due back in the States and was therefore unable to remain with us for the safari. While it was sad to lose Louise, we were glad to welcome Mindy, a friend of Jen's that had arrived in Moshi late the previous night. Our group of seven would be accompanied by one guide/driver and one cook.

I was abruptly schooled in the fine art of packing nine people, food, camping gear and luggage for a five day trip into a Toyota van. This process was anything but brief and my patience was once again tested as it seemed an eternity before we were on the road. A few hours into the drive we stopped for a potty break at a shop hawking a plethora of souvenirs including the infamous wood carvings synonymous with Africa. A few of the more stately pieces were relegated a price tag of merely \$35,000 U.S. dollars. With shipping cost levied at \$15.00/kg, I decided I

simply
must
order a
few...





YOU ARE NOW ENTERING
LAKE MANYARA NATIONAL PARK
WELCOME / KARIBU

We Squeezed back into the “Little Toyota That Could” and continued towards the location of our first safari, Lake Manyara National Park. The 127 beautiful square miles that make up this park are bounded by Lake Manyara on one side, and the 1800ft vertical mass known as the Rift Valley Escarpment on the other. Various trees were rooted here including: the fig, eucalyptus, baobab, acacia, mahogany and the Park’s namesake, the Manyara tree.





“Sausage Tree”



Manyara branches are used by the Masaai people to create a barrier to protect their village from predators.











This Dik-Dik is full grown and 18 inches tall.





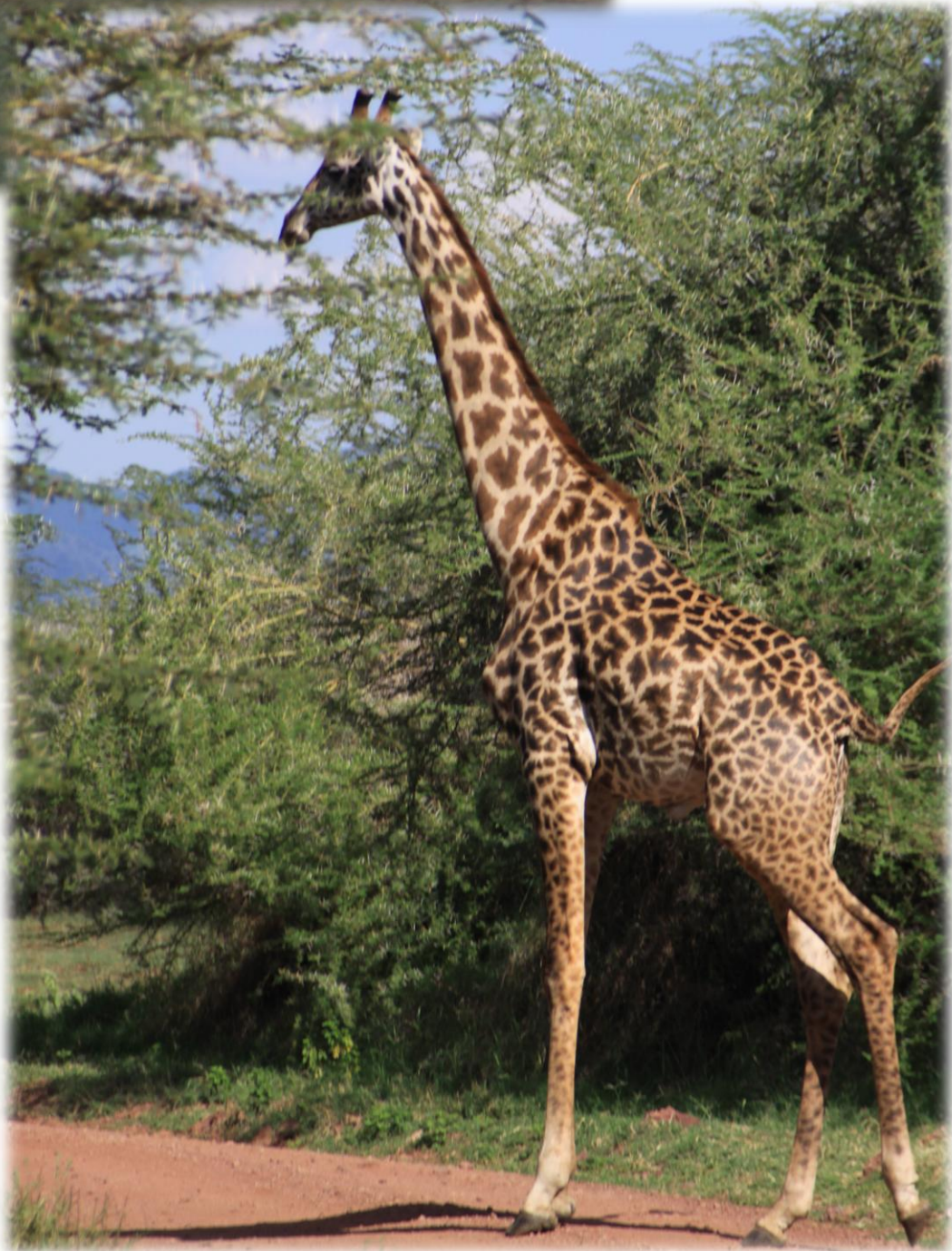
The hide of the Hippo is very sensitive. It is rare to see one in the daylight outside of the protection of the mud and water.





Tens of thousands of flamingos rest and feed in the alkaline Lake Manyara.

In a matter of only a few hours, we were afforded the privilege of many animal sightings. Our eyes were wildly searching for the next creature that would incite a flurry of photo taking. The only road through the park is a fifty mile loop that simply ended way too soon. Lake Manyara National Park displayed an abundant variety of living beings within intimate proximity. I felt like we had visited God's petting zoo. From what I have read, this park is quite underrated. It is a top-notch park, and we had a top-shelf experience!





Our guide Bernard pointed the little Toyota towards the Mto Wa Mbu (river of mosquitoes) village where we would stay the night at the Twigga (giraffe) lodge. The Twigga Lodge is actually a walled compound of tent sites and small buildings. The walls provided refuge from the throng of vendors desperate for a piece of our imported wealth. We enjoyed a meal of peppered steak before indulging in a warm shower and retreating to our mosquito net covered beds. Another amazing day in Africa!



