

A portrait of Christie Brinkley with long, wavy blonde hair and blue eyes. She is holding a large bouquet of pink and magenta flowers against her chest. She is wearing a white top with a black and white geometric pattern on the shoulder. The background is a bright, overexposed outdoor setting.

SOCIAL LIFE

JULY 21, 2017

in the hamptons with

CHRISTIE BRINKLEY

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CHRISTIE BRINKLEY



Drop earrings by GLENN BRADFORD
Cashmere macro paillette cardigan by BRUNELLO CUCINELLI

THE SAFARI COLLECTION

THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

By LIZABETH ZINDEL



Giraffe Manor

If you've been dreaming of a trip to Africa, The Safari Collection will create the adventure of a lifetime. Founded by Tanya and Mikey Carr-Hartley, in 2009, the company owns a portfolio of four luxury boutique camps and lodges in the finest locations in Kenya. They organize every detail of your safari, from the perfect accommodations to added experiences like hot air balloon rides and camel trekking. They also coordinate all private transfers by land and air, working closely with Safarilink, Kenya's premier safari airline (fhsafarilink.com). In June, we had the thrilling chance to visit two of their breathtaking properties.

GIRAFFE MANOR

Our trip began at The Safari Collection's Giraffe Manor, a 10-room ivy-covered lodge on the outskirts of Nairobi, where guests enjoy breakfast and afternoon tea with the herd of resident Rothschild giraffes. The hotel blends the captivating beauty of a 1930s Scottish hunting lodge with the uplifting experience of interacting with these beautiful creatures.

Our elegant room in the new wing of the Garden Manor featured delightful details like herringbone wood floors, a stained glass window with a giraffe motif, and a private entrance with outdoor seating.

For lunch, we dined in the enchanting courtyard decorated with lily ponds, palm trees, and sculptures of giraffes. Our gourmet three-course meal was gorgeously presented. The lime and cream cheese sorbet floating within a glass bowl filled with rose petals and ice mirrored the hotel's whimsical essence.

In the afternoon, we visited the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust the most successful orphan-elephant rescue and rehabilitation program in the world. At the core of the trust's work is the Orphans' Project, which rescues milk-dependent elephants and cares for them until they're ready for a return to the wild. During the visit, I adopted the elephant Enkesha, a symbol of strength despite the dangers of poaching. For more information on fostering elephants, visit dswt.org/foster.

Upon returning to the gorgeous manor, we enjoyed afternoon tea with the giraffes, followed by a delicious dinner in a romantic, wood-paneled dining room illuminated only by candles. In the morning, I opened my door to discover giraffes patiently waiting near the courtyard for their morning treats. Over sips of coffee and bites of scrambled eggs, we fed the adult and baby giraffes as they craned their necks through the open windows. It was a breakfast like no other, at one of the most magical hotels in the world.

SALA'S CAMP

Our next stop was Sala's Camp, The Safari Collection's sensational property in the Maasai Mara. Facing Tanzania and the Northern Corridor, the camp's prized location offers front row seats to the annual wildebeest migration. The Mara also contains a year-round concentration of the "Big Five" and 450 bird species.

We took a 55-minute flight from Giraffe Manor to the Mara on Safarilink. The excellent airline is the No. 1 regional carrier in Kenya and highly recommended. Safari planes prefer soft-sided luggage, and we found wonderful duffels by Filson (filson.com). Made with rugged twill and bridle leather, their timelessness and durability were perfect for a voyage to East Africa, where classic safari was born.

The seven, luxury tented-suites at Sala's Camp combine safari style from bygone days with understated luxury — always maintaining a connection to nature. We loved sleeping in the comfort of our beds while listening to the wild sounds of the Mara at night.

The property's gracious managers, Hattie and Henry Ramsen, welcomed us and informed us about The Safari Collection's impressive sustainability projects, which protect Kenya's wilderness and provide health and education programs to local communities.

As Sala's Camp resides on a private concession, we were permitted to venture off-road during game drives, getting impressively close to animals. Dan, our guide, and Mrefu, our spotter, shared a passion and knowledge for the Mara that enriched our experience. One day as we set out early in the Land Cruiser, Dan pointed out lion tracks. "Looking at fresh paw prints in the morning is like reading breaking news. It tells you who came to camp while we were in slumberland," he said. We followed the tracks, looking for Sala's pride, a group of more than fifteen lions that roam near the Sand River.



(Top) Dinner on the Sand River (Middle) Luxury Tent at Sala's Camp (Bottom) Solio Lodge

In addition to tracking lions, we savored breakfasts in the savanna, drank sundowners while the red orb slipped below the horizon, and danced with local Maasai villagers. One evening, Sala's Camp's caring staff surprised us with dinner in the dry banks of the Sand River. Lit by a bonfire, candles, and endless stars, it was one of the most sensational dinners of our lives.

The night reminded me of a line from a letter that Karen Blixen (aka Isak Dinesen, the author of *Out of Africa*) sent to her mother. She wrote, "Sitting [by a safari campfire] listening to the lions far out in the darkness was like returning to the really true world again — where I probably once lived 10,000 years ago."

We treasure the moments spent with The Safari Collection and dream of the day when we return to see our new friends — both human and animal. We also hope to explore The Safari Collection's two additional properties in Kenya — Sasaab, a Moroccan-styled lodge near Samburu National Park, with spacious suites that have their own private plunge pools, camel trekking, and excellent game viewing as well as the intimate Solio, the only guest accommodation on the incredible 45,000-acre Solio Game Reserve, the most successful private rhino-breeding reserve in Kenya.

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(Top) Perfect Safari Luggage Made by Filson

(Bottom left) David Sheldrick Trust (Bottom right) Leopard on safari with Sala's Camp