



The Telegraph Magazine

Is  
Ben  
Ainslie  
the  
best  
sailor  
ever?

PLUS: Leather trousers on parade ... The anatomy of a murder ... Rose Prince's spring recipes ... Michael Deacon hits the mall



Sasha Slater

Sasaab Lodge mixes luxury with tradition – and species not seen elsewhere



THE THATCHED HUTS in Sasaab Lodge, outside the Samburu National Reserve, are palatial, with traditional touches. Instead of a Do Not Disturb sign for the door, you are handed a wicked-looking spear to drive into the ground. A Samburu tribesman will stick his spear into the outside wall of the hut of whichever of his three or four wives he is spending the night with, keeping the weapon close in case a lion or leopard goes for his goats.



## Fantastic beasts

Meeting rare creatures in the shadow of Mount Kenya

Our own spear was purely decorative: no large feline encroached on our sun deck, lapped from our plunge pool, or admired the view from our majestic mosquito-netted bed across the Laikipia Plateau to Mount Kenya. However, the hotel's three resident dik-diks – tiny deer with long whiffly noses – did come exploring round our outside bathroom looking to be fed cabbage leaves.

The wildlife that lured us to into the nature reserve itself was more dramatic. The reserve is uniquely home to several species, including a blue-legged ostrich, the reticulated giraffe (above, whose markings are much more pleasingly regular than your average giraffe's) and Grévy's zebras. This is not a landscape of wide plains and *Lion*

*King* panoramas, filled with migrating wildebeest. Instead, our driver, Dan, and our spotter, William, resplendent in a scarlet robe with beaded bracelets all up his arms and feathers cresting on his hennaed hair, took us down dusty, bumpy roads, across dried-up rivers and through scrub and forest to hunt for animals. We saw lionesses stalking passing warthogs, elephants feasting on fallen fruit, vultures, pearl-spotted owls and hundreds and hundreds of baboons everywhere, foraging for breakfast. Our own breakfast was much easier to come by – Dan and William cooked it on a lovely wood-encased stove as dawn broke over the park, and a herd of impala looked on as we ate pancakes and sausages.

Sasaab is not a traditional safari lodge – there's plenty more to do here than just watch game and doze by the infinity pool. There are camels to ride and quad bikes to race, massages to enjoy and shopfuls of trinkets to buy. And, most excitingly, we were able to explore a Samburu village.

Sasaab Lodge provides free school meals for the local children and financial aid for education and healthcare. In return, guests are welcomed to discover how they live, hear their songs and watch their dances. We were even invited inside the simple tents, dark and cool, with cow-hide matting, a ceiling so low you can't stand up, and walls against which a spear will once again stand when darkness falls.

**Scott Dunn** offers a seven-night itinerary in Kenya from £4,800 per person. This includes five nights at Sasaab and two nights at Giraffe Manor. This is based on a family of four travelling and includes international flights and private airport transfers. For more details visit [scottdunn.com](http://scottdunn.com); 020-8682 5070

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