

Tanzania



NAME:	United Republic of Tanzania
CAPITAL:	Dodoma & Dar es Salaam
LANGUAGE:	Swahili & English
RELIGION:	Christian, Muslim, Other
CURRENCY:	Tanzanian Shilling

Getting Started

When to Visit

[Tanzania](#)'s major climate variations are based on altitude. The coast can be hot and humid while the interior is cool and dry based solely on the difference in altitude. Additionally, the interior tends to maintain a much more consistent temperature year round, while the coast's temperature can vary to a greater degree.

The inland's average temperatures year round are about 50° F (10° C) at night and about 75° (24° C) during the days. In Dar es Salaam however, the average is about 82° F (28° C) and humid from December-February or March and sinks to an average of about 72° F (22° C) and fairly dry during July-September

The consistent in [Tanzania](#) is the rainy and dry seasons. The rainy seasons run from mid-March to May and again from November to late December or early January. These are the worst times to visit Tanzania if you have an interest in the wildlife. The dry season forces the animals to find water at streams, rivers, and lakes as the grasslands dry up, making wildlife spotting easier for you and your guide. Unfortunately, since the dry seasons are also the peak tourist seasons, hotel and safari prices tend to soar.

Travel plans can be disrupted on the coasts if you're there during Ramadan (ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which rotates every year compared to the Gregorian calendar). This Islamic holiday can close shops, restaurants, and coffee shops along the country's coast and on Zanzibar.

Weather

Although weather can be generalized based upon years past, for more up to date weather patterns and predicted future weather patterns, visit

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weather websites like weather.com; many local news sources also have information for international weather forecasts.

Tours & Cruises

If you're looking for a pre-arranged trip, that involves little effort on your part, then you should consider going on an organized tour or cruise. Organized tours and cruises vary from all expenses included to only daily tours and perhaps hotels included in the price, but all the options below will help you arrange all the details so you don't have to worry about finding the best deal or right hotel.

[Gap Adventures](#): Known best among young adults, Gap Adventures provides local transportation, housing, and food, which cuts costs and introduces the local culture, but can also be challenging for those seeking luxury.

[Intrepid Travel](#): Boasts more "off the beaten track" destinations; do your research though since some tours are very adventurous and involves camping and local hotels.

[Kensington Tours](#): Only offers personal tours for you and your family/friends, which allows greater flexibility, but also means slightly higher prices.

[Micato Safaris](#): Boasts an impressive list of "best tour operator" awards from a number of high end travel magazines; high end, luxurious, and expensive.

[Road Scholar](#): For older adults, Road Scholar offers tours with an educational emphasis; formerly known as Elder Hostel.

Guidebooks

If you are just traveling on business and have little free time or are already familiar with [Tanzania](#), you may not need anything more than this guide! However, if you need more detailed and up to date

information, there are a number of great country-wide, region-wide, and city-wide guidebooks available for travel in Tanzania.

[Fodor's](#): Good maps and information for the major tourist locations, but has little information for anyone heading off the beaten track. Great for those on organized tours.

[Frommer's](#): Incredible number of lists, which divide travel into various categories based upon your interests. Travelers looking to spend most of their time in a single location or on organized tours enjoy these books.

[Lonely Planet](#): Great maps and updated often with comprehensive housing information, restaurants, & transportation options. Backpackers and adventurers love these guidebooks.

[Rough Guides](#): Cover various aspects of travel from culture to getting by on the cheap.

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Culture

Personality, Culture, & Identity

[Tanzania](#) is a kindergarten classroom filled with kids from every ethnic background, but all of whom (for the most part) try to work together and unite to better themselves and each other. This, unfortunately doesn't translate to any sort of economic prosperity so much as it symbolizes the people's will to cooperate.

Like a new kid in school, they are also fairly welcoming of foreign concepts, ideas, influences, and cultures. Much of Tanzanian history is based on the Indian Ocean trading island of Zanzibar, which was ruled by the Portuguese, [Omanis](#), [Germans](#), and [British](#). Each of these outsiders have influenced [Tanzanian](#) culture from the Islamic coast to the predominantly Christian Chagga people living on the slopes of [Kilimanjaro](#).

Despite this seemingly cohesive country on the surface, most individuals still identify first with their ethnic group or religion (there are many fervent Christians) and only secondly with their nation.

History

Modern-day [Tanzania](#) is truly the "Cradle of Civilization" given the incredible archeological finds in the country's Olduvai Gorge. This is where evolution seemed to begin for the human race and many of these biological changes have been found and proven here. Over time numerous African groups arrived to and settled in what's today Tanzania.

External influence on [Tanzania](#) began in the 700s with the spread of Islam along Africa's East Coast as cities sprung up. [European](#) influence then began in 1498 with the arrival of Vasco de Gama from Portugal. In the 1700s the Islamic influence returned when the [Omani](#)

Sultans took power over the coast and stationed their capital on the island of Zanzibar. This island became the center of the Indian Ocean's trade, including everything from [African](#) slaves and diamonds to European weapons and clothes.

In 1886 the [British](#) and [Germans](#) drew boundaries of their newly claimed African lands and what is the modern border between [Kenya](#) and [Tanzania](#) was one of these boundaries, with the Germans taking control of what is today Tanzania. After WWI the British took control of the region, but gave the people freedom to rule themselves in 1963.

At independence [Tanzania](#) was ill-prepared to rule itself due to its lack of education, economy structure, and political organization. It faced economic hardships and had to somehow educate its people, which has been a slow, hard struggle, especially considering the lack of financial support Tanzania received from foreign governments at first.

Searching for a solution, the [Tanzanian](#) government shifted to a one-party system and socialism. This seemed to have been initiated wholeheartedly and community development was led by the government, who themselves helped build schools and took a vow to not invest in private companies in order to secure their independence. However, with this change came government control over land, banks, and the government even dictated what occupations the people were to participate in. This created the mass movement of people within the country and led to discontent. The system failed, the people still found themselves in dire economic constraints, but at least the socialist government successfully gave their people greater access to healthcare and education.

In the 1970s [Tanzania](#) became a major recipient of international aid, but with the aid came suggestions on how to run the country and by the mid-1980s the country's economy was again a mess as the government became a slave of outside opinions and grew too big. It was at this time that the government completely ended their socialist tendencies and most government employees were released as government-owned buildings were sold well below value.

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Food

Since the mid-1980s the country has begun to work its way back upward, however with huge debts and shrinking education levels, little progress has been made. Additionally, as neighboring nations find themselves in internal conflicts, [Tanzania](#) has welcomed refugees, creating a number of refugee camps on their western and southern borders with Uganda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Mozambique.

Dress & Behavior

There are few dress or behavioral warnings to be aware of in [Tanzania](#) other than along the coast, where Islam dominates. The only warning everyone must be aware of in all parts of the country is that many local cultures believe having their picture taken is unlucky or that by having their picture taken, a part of their soul is stolen from them. For this reason never take pictures of the local people unless you first ask and are given permission.

In Muslim areas it is considered inappropriate for women to leave their hair uncovered, however this is loosely enforced, especially among foreigners. Women covering their heads will show great respect to their culture, however most Tanzanians understand if you don't cover your hair.

Again in these Muslim areas, both women and men are expected to cover their legs and shoulders; showing your knees can be very offensive. 3/4 length pants, like Capris and short sleeve shirts are only looked down upon by strict Muslims, however wearing full length pants and long sleeves at all times is the best course of action. Most seaside resorts allow these rules to be ignored, but follow the example of locals in these places.

Islamic law forbids pork products and alcohol. While the interior has no dietary restrictions, along the coast try to avoid drinking alcohol and eating pork. In these areas though, pork products are difficult to find so avoiding pork is easy due to its inaccessibility. To learn more about dining etiquette in [Tanzania](#), continue reading below.

Dining Etiquette

To fit in at a dining table in [Tanzania](#), you must be observant, because table etiquette here varies drastically from one house to the next. Differing socio-economic classes, location, and local ethnicity contribute far more in determining behavior than does anything else. Your best course of action is just to arrive open-minded and follow the lead of your hosts.

If invited to a local's house be ready to eat on the floor or on a mat on the floor. Also, since customs vary so much from one household to the next, use common courtesy by showing up on time, leaving your shoes at the door, and bringing a small gift like a dessert or flowers. These actions will be looked upon favorably by all locals.

Once inside, again, just be observant. You may notice everyone washing their hands prior to eating or in some Muslims families men and women may dine separately. Plus, although there is great variety, few Tanzanians will serve drinks with a meal and many locals consider turning down very rude. If there is no cutlery (silverware) use your right hand to eat and never get up from the table until the meal is complete. Common courtesy and observation is the best course of action for dining in [Tanzania](#) so keep your eyes, and your mind open.

History & Influences

[Tanzanian](#) food has changed little over time; it has always been based on what is locally available, which means their diet primarily consists of grains, fruits, vegetables, and fish along the coasts, rivers, and lakes. Few people, even today can afford a meat-based diet.

Due to Zanzibar's status as the Indian Ocean's most important trading hub for decades there have been influences, however these

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introductions have rarely made much headway inland. The Arabs introduced many [Mediterranean](#) ingredients like citruses and garlic, while the [Indians](#) introduced a huge number of spices and increased the popularity of rice.

From before Zanzibar's rise to power, with the Portuguese arrival, to after their trading influence fell, [Tanzania](#) has received changes from colonizing [European](#) powers. Among these changes, tea, coffee, and cassava have been among the most important and influential introductions.

Staple Foods

Ugali: cornmeal cooked until it is a dough- or sticky rice-like texture

Rice: especially common among the [Indian](#) minority, but its popularity is spreading

Regional Varieties & Specialties

Indian Ocean Coast: more Muslims so no pork & more [Indians](#) so less meat in general

Drinks

As a result of being under foreign occupation for a number of years tea and coffee have become popular drinks in [Tanzania](#), some of which are grown locally.

Banana beer is growing in popularity in [Tanzania](#) and it tends to be a cheap alternative to imported or locally produced beers. Along the coasts and in primarily Muslim communities alcohol is either forbidden or simply unpopular.

Practical Information

Visas

Many foreign nationals need a visa to enter [Tanzania](#), however the requirements for citizens of different nationalities varies. To learn more about who need visas, what type of visa is needed, what requirements are needed to obtain a visa, and visa costs, please visit [Tanzania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official Website](#).

Health & Insurance

Every part of the world has different health concerns and diseases, including [Tanzania](#). Before traveling, consult with a physician to learn more about your destination and what steps you can take to prevent illness. At the time of writing, many countries required proof of having received a Yellow Fever vaccination if you are arriving from Tanzania. This proof is not required to enter Tanzania, however to return to your home country or travel onwards, most countries require that you show proof of having been vaccinated. Additionally, a number of other immunizations are strongly recommended, so visiting your physician prior to travel to Tanzania is essential.

Many health insurance providers don't cover health care that is provided outside your home country. Before going abroad check with your health insurance to see if they cover international care. If not, consider purchasing an international medical insurance option, preferably from a company that specializes in international medical insurance.

Transportation

Unless you're on an organized tour or working with a travel agent, you will have to arrange some transportation. The below links can greatly help you start your planning, first by finding a flight to [Tanzania](#), then

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with domestic airlines and car rental agencies. If you don't know where to begin, try the "Flight & Rental Car Search Sites" to learn competitor's prices during your trip.

Largest International Airlines: [Air France](#), [American Airlines](#); [British Airways](#); [Cathay Pacific](#); [China Southern Airlines](#); [Delta](#); [Emirates](#); [KLM](#); [LAN](#); [Lufthansa](#); [Qantas](#); [Singapore Airlines](#); [United Airlines](#).

Largest Tanzanian Airline: [Precision Air](#)

Largest Rental Car Agency in Tanzania: [Sixt](#)

Flight & Rental Car Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Farecast.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Housing

Housing options are numerous in most tourist destinations, but every individual seeks out something different when it comes to housing. The below links should help you get started, with low- to high-end hotels, hostels, and camping options.

Popular International Hotel Conglomerates: [Accor Group](#) (various price ranges); [Choice Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range); [Hilton](#) (various price ranges); [Hyatt](#) (high-end to resorts); [InterContinental Group](#) (mid- to high-price range); [Marriott Family](#) (various price ranges); [Starwood Hotels](#) (high-end); [Wyndham Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range).

Hotel Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Hostels: Although there are many hostel websites, some of the most popular and reputable include [hostels.com](#), [hostelworld.com](#), & [hostelbookers.com](#).

Camping: Camping is not recommended in Tanzania unless you're on an organized trek, since only the local guides will know which locations are safe to camp at.

Opening Hours, Expenses, & Tipping

[Tanzania's](#) business world is theoretically on the same time schedule as much of [Europe](#), but local shop and restaurant hours vary dramatically. Shops tend to open at about 9:00-10:00 am and close at about 5:00 pm, but inconsistencies are everywhere. Many factory workers put in much more than 40 hours a week, banana farmers never have a regular schedule, and shops may open late, close early, or shut down mid-afternoon based upon whose working that day and what their personal schedules look like. Having said that, most major tourist attractions are natural, and safari and tour companies are excellent at catering to the client and know the best times for wildlife viewings in various locations. Weekends in Tanzania are Saturdays and Sundays.

One thing to be aware of if you plan to spend time on the coast is that during the Islamic holiday of Ramadan (ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which rotates every year compared to the Gregorian calendar), fasting is required from sunrise to sunset. Due to this Islamic requirement, most shops in predominantly Muslim areas close down and it can be difficult to find an open restaurant anywhere outside major hotels catering to tourists.

The cost of tourism in Tanzania varies greatly by what amenities you are willing to forgo and what kind of wildlife guides you hire. Living in small cramped quarters with shared toilets, taking public transportation, eating at local markets, and hiring the wildlife guide you find on the street corner whose friend has a car (which is probably a scam) will cost pennies, while staying in nice safari lodges, hiring reputable guide companies, eating at ethnic restaurants, and taking a hot air balloon ride over the Serengeti can cost hundreds of dollars a day.

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The first expense you'll encounter on the way to Tanzania is transportation to the country, which can be quite high from most locations (1,200 shillings (\$800) from [Europe](#), typically double that from [North America](#)). However, once on the ground, local and city transportation is very inexpensive, although safari tours (which come with transportation) are often times about 150 shillings (\$100) a day, but include transportation, guides, and sometimes food. Food costs also vary from about \$1 for a meal to well over 75 shillings (\$50). Likewise, housing costs can vary from about 10 shillings (\$7) to well over 300 shillings (\$200) for a nice safari lodge.

Tipping is not common among Tanzanians and if you're eating in local restaurants and visiting local sites you don't have to worry about tipping. In most restaurants catered to the tourist a gratuity is often included; if it's not, about 10% is standard.

The real expense in tipping adds up in safari tours and trekking expeditions. For safari tours, you are expected to tip your guide, driver, cooks, and porters and they depend on these tips for survival (most of them can't make a living on their base salaries alone). Due to the need for tips, most guides, porters, and cooks provide excellent service, but if they neglect you and treat you poorly tipping will only encourage them to continue their bad service to future clients. Depending on the length of your safari and the service offered, anywhere from \$1 a day for porters to \$5-10 a day to a guide is appropriate.

On treks, such as hiking [Mt. Kilimanjaro](#), a similar tipping scale should be used. Each porter should receive \$1 a day and cooks should receive about \$10 a day in tips (per group). Guides, especially good guides should receive more, particularly about \$5-10 a day per person. These tips (\$150-200 in tips per person for a 6-day Kilimanjaro trek) should be in excess of what you are already paying for the expedition, which may double the expense of the trek if you directly hire a local company. Many people, however chose to go through [Mt. Kilimanjaro](#) travel companies located in their home countries. These tours tends to be more expensive, but many tend to have better cancellation policies,

offer at least one guide from your country, have excellent safety records, and (due to Tanzania laws) hire all local porters, cooks, and at least one local guide so you're still helping the local Tanzanian economy.

Crime & Safety

[Tanzania](#) can be intimidating to a minority traveler and wearing western clothes can immediately attract followers (although many locals wear western clothes from donation centers). There is little active violence or aggression towards foreigners in Tanzania, however violence does exist in the region bordering Burundi, Rwanda, and Islamic extremists from Somalia can seep into the country, best seen with the bombing of the American embassy in Dar es Salaam (1998).

Crime in [Tanzania](#) is common place and the best ways to prevent the loss of valuables is to leave them at home. The next best tactic is keeping an eye on your belongings and using common sense. Most of these crimes are petty theft like pick pocketing and bag snatching and running (especially in large crowds), however at night in the cities the chances of armed robbery increase, so cities are best avoided at night.

Beggars are also a common encounter in the cities. These people (often times children) are typically harmless, however be careful of group ploys and never give them money, since you don't know where it'll end up. If you want to help these people wait until after your trip and make a donation to a reputable organization like Red Cross or the United Nations.

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