

# Hi! LIVING

LUXURY BY APPOINTMENT

VOL 2 NO 8 MAY 2010 RS 150

## ART FERVOUR

Indian Modernists  
Rake In Millions

## BACKSTAGE HI-DRAMA!

Fashion's Glamorous  
Moods

## THE VINOUS TRAIL

Luxurious Wine  
Investments

## SLEEK & SCULPTED

Buick's Regal Sport  
Sedan

## DREAM CREATORS

The Magnificent  
Designs Of  
Sumant Jayakrishnan  
Sarosh Patel

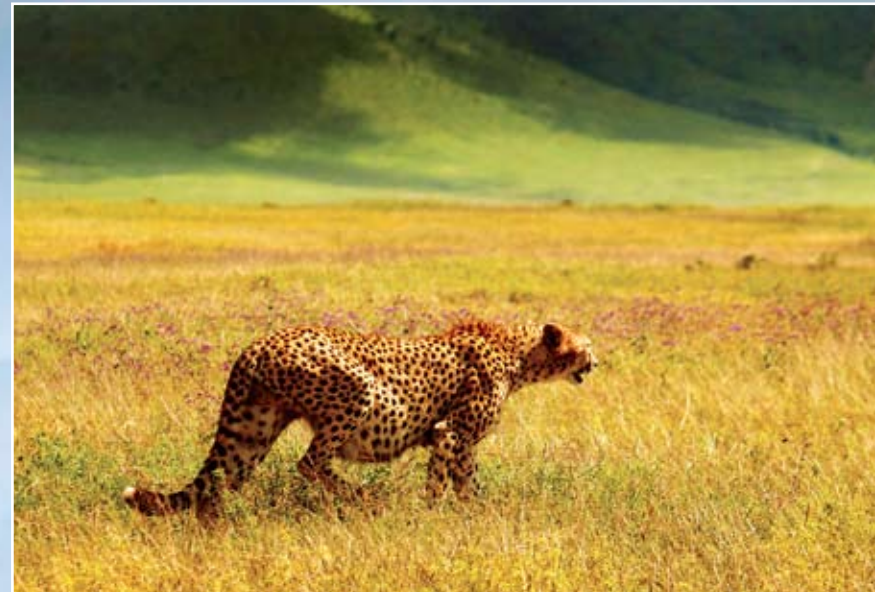
# Sushmita Sen

## HER UNIVERSAL APPEAL



# Safaris & Beyond

Visiting the game reserves of Africa, especially at the height of the annual great migration is a never-to-be-forgotten experience. LIVING visits the Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti National Park to witness some of the world's greatest spectacles.



It was 2am and the cabin was all dark except for our reading light. With our memory cards now transferring our precious safari photographs onto the laptop, we were too excited to sleep. As we put in our last card for transfer, our thoughts went back to the time when our flight landed at Kilimanjaro International Airport, Tanzania. We were here to visit the three outstanding game reserves of Africa: Ngorongoro Crater, Lake Manyara and the Serengeti National Park, all part of an eco-system translated as 'endless plain' from the Maasai word 'serengeti'. Nina, our guide and driver greeted us with some African coffee and the infectious Tanzanian ear to ear grin. We were not far from the Ngorongoro Crater and its exotic lodge run by Africa's leading safari operator, &Beyond.

Ngorongoro Crater, called the eighth wonder of the world, is one of the world's greatest natural spectacles. It covers an area of 8,288 square kilometres and has a dense population of lions. It boasts a blend of landscapes, wildlife, people and archaeology that is unsurpassed in Africa. The exquisite &Beyond lodge overlooks the crater, and although we were desperate to drive down even before checking in, we could not as the gates shut at 6pm. We had to settle for scanning the crater with our binoculars from the luxury of the verandah of our room with sparkling wine and refreshments.

Early morning sunlight bathed the crater floor as our vehicle rolled in. It was low season and we were the first

- A journey of giraffe by the lakeside
- A cheetah ready to charge at a wildebeest
- The exquisite &Beyond lodge overlooks the Ngorongoro Crater, and although we were desperate to drive down even before checking in, we could not as the gates shut at 6pm





■ We were crossing a place with big boulders and trees, and as Neil started to say that he had seen lions in this area last week, there lay the king of the jungle on one side of the rock and on the other, on a tree, was his queen




---

**Ngorongoro Crater, called the eighth wonder of the world, is one of the world's greatest natural spectacles. It covers an area of 8,288 square kilometres and boasts a blend of landscapes, wildlife, people and archaeology that is unsurpassed in Africa.**

---

to get in. Ngorongoro Crater is not only unique as it is the world's largest unbroken, unfolded volcanic caldera, but also because it co-habitats wild animals and Maasai people. It is quite possible to see humans, herbivores and predators all mingling with each other. And that is what we got to see next – a herd of zebra, cattle and Maasai at a small pond.

Our jeep went slightly downhill and when we came up, we found three robust buffalo bulls grazing right next to the road. Nina informed us that such large bulls are generally left alone even by the lions, and as long as they stay together they are safe due to their bulk and brutal strength.

And then, a little further, we spotted two cheetahs. The well-fed cheetahs

were in their bright winter fur and made a lovely picture against the flowers.

It was two in the afternoon, and we were back on the road after some lovely salad by a lake infested by hippos. The light would soon fade and we still had to explore much of the crater and hopefully spot lions. With some urgency, Nina drove towards the north end of the crater as someone had told her at the lunch spot that they had seen some lions moving towards that area.

We travelled another half hour through some lovely landscape with lots of wildebeest, zebra, gazelle...till I saw one of the prettiest sights ever – millions and millions of flamingos at the huge saline lake almost in the middle of the crater. They were so many that it seemed like the water had turned pink.

The greater and lesser flamingos share the lake and do not compete with each other by eating different food. The

■ Millions and millions of flamingos at the huge saline lake in the middle of the crater. They were so many that it seemed like the water had turned pink

■ We were here to visit the three outstanding game reserves of Africa: Ngorongoro Crater, Lake Manyara and the Serengeti National Park, all part of an eco-system translated as 'endless plain' from the Maasai word 'serengeti'





Ngorongoro Crater is not only unique as it is the world's largest unbroken, unfolded volcanic caldera, but also because it co-habitats wild animals and Maasai people. It is quite possible to see humans, herbivores and predators all mingling with each other.



■ The luxurious &Beyond campsite in the heart of the Serengeti made us feel as though we had gone back in time and were royalty on a hunting safari

greater flamingo, a filter feeder, preys on invertebrates which it sifts from the bottom using its bent bill. The lesser flamingo, recognisable because of their darker bills, primarily eat spirulina, a blue-green algae found in the shallows.

#### Serengeti National Park

The luxurious &Beyond campsite in the heart of the Serengeti made us feel as though we had gone back in time and were royalty on a hunting safari. Neil, our next guide, waited at the jeep all eager to take us around. Within five minutes of leaving the camp, Neil stopped the jeep with a jerk and said "leopard". We looked around without seeing anything. Then we followed Neil's eyes behind our head onto a tree to see a huge leopard staring at us.

Leopards are fascinating as they climb trees with prey as large as themselves between their jaws to avoid being chased away by lions/hyenas. They are mostly nocturnal, and we were delighted to see this lovely cat in bright sunlight. Neil informed us that leopards and lions are in direct conflict as both cats climb trees in this part of Tanzania, and the leopards can't really escape the lions just by climbing trees.

The thundering hooves of hundreds of thousands of wildebeest and zebra at the height of the annual great migration create a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

We soon reached a point from where the thousands of black spots started to convert into wildebeest and zebras. It felt really special to be amongst such a huge number of animals. Some playing, some fighting, some feeding their young, and most constantly making noises to stay connected with the rest. Over two million animals participate in this great migration, with some 200,000 zebra ahead of and 500,000 Thomson's gazelle behind the main players – one and a half million wildebeest.

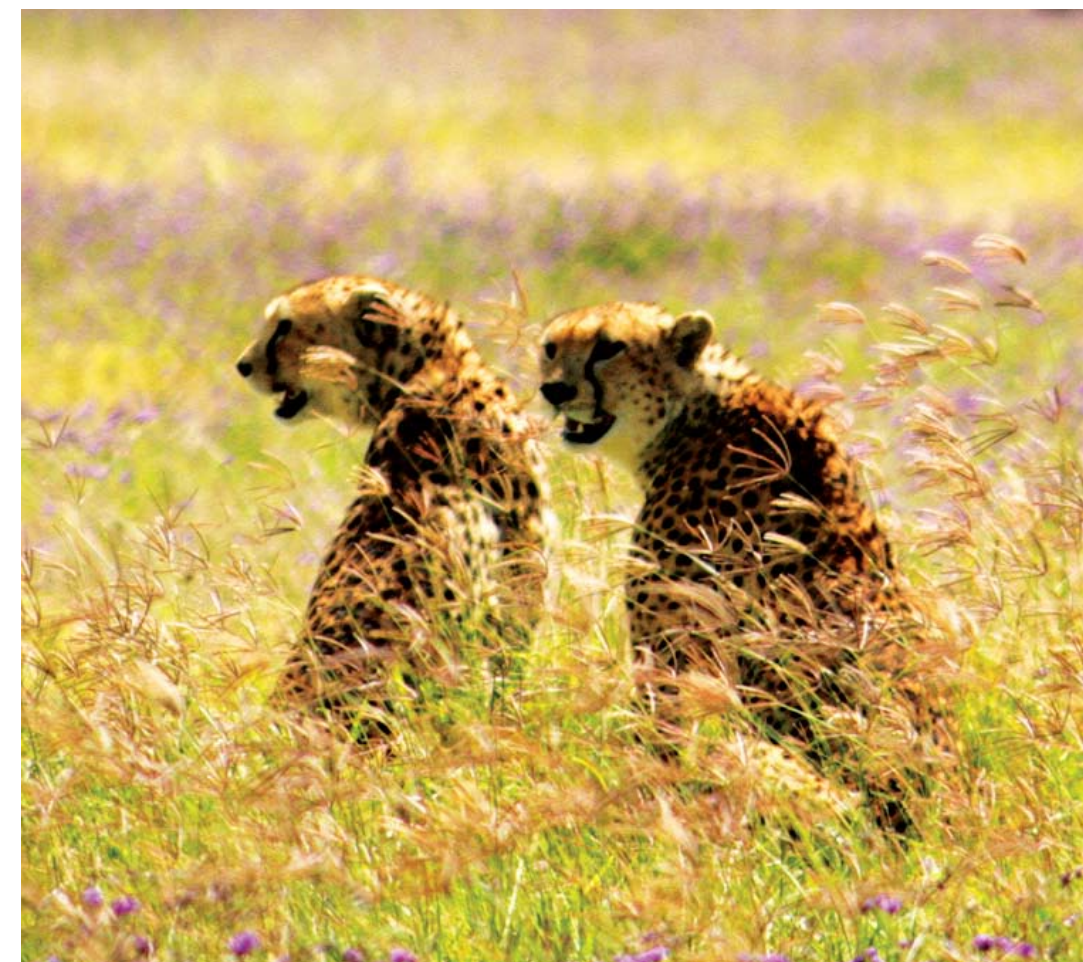


Then without any warning or previous sign, a cheetah appeared from the grass and charged at the wildebeest with his eyes focused on a calf.

The herd ran for a bit and sensing that the predator had come too close for comfort, suddenly stopped and circled the young one. A bunch of fully grown wildebeest in an attacking stance seemed too much for the hungry cheetah who slowly turned direction and disappeared again into the tall grass. We missed out on witnessing a hunt, but still seeing what we saw was special.

As we drove along, we told Neil that we were jealous of him and his job as he got to spend so much time in such a great environment. He agreed and told us that besides game drives, he actively works with his employer &Beyond's conservation team and loves his and his company's contribution to the area. He informed us that they all had invested over US \$70,000 in the community and conservation projects which include educating children about conservation, building schools, providing electricity to clinics and schools, maintaining an ambulance for the local people.

We were crossing a place with big boulders and trees, and as Neil started to say that he had seen lions in this area last



■ Buffaloes and elephants in the crater have no enemies and are increasing in numbers and size. In fact one of the elephants had the longest tusks ever recorded in whole of Africa

■ A little further, we spotted two cheetahs. The well-fed cheetahs were in their bright winter fur and made a lovely picture against the flowers



---

We soon reached a point from where the thousands of black spots started to convert into wildebeest and zebras. Over two million animals participate in this great migration, with some 200,000 zebra ahead of and 500,000 Thomson's gazelle behind the main players – one and a half million wildebeest.

---

week, there lay the king of the jungle on one side of the rock and on the other, on a tree, was his queen.

We watched the powerful body of the lion and the agility of the lioness in awe. Our day's experience erased all our doubts about the preservation of this reserve. Apart from rhinos that have been decimated by poachers and the slowly declining number of hunting dogs, the Serengeti is alive and well. The wildebeest and buffalo populations have multiplied benefitting the main predators – lion, cheetah, leopard and hyena. For the time being at least, the Serengeti shall not die! □

Copy and Photographs: Sanjay Gupta



■ A herd of zebra, cattle and Maasai at a small pond