

ARUSHA

Arusha stands in the foothills of Mount Meru at an altitude of about 1,500m. It's a bustling town where every other vehicle is heading on safari. There are two airports nearby: Kilimanjaro International Airport, 40km north-east of town, and Arusha Airport, on the town's western fringes. Although Arusha is not usually a destination in itself, some travellers need to overnight here to make transport connections work.



Onsea House has beautiful views of Mount Meru

In the middle of a working coffee estate, **Arusha Coffee Lodge** is a ten-minute drive from Arusha Airport. The lodge has 30 spacious, split-level chalets with timber interiors. Each has French doors onto a raised deck, whilst inside is a wood-burning fire – great on cold evenings. The lodge's restaurant is popular with locals and expats, eating under parasols in the shady garden, or by the dining room's fire.

Thirty minutes north-east of Arusha, close to Kilimanjaro Airport, **Rivertrees Country Inn** is a rural haven, where lush gardens lend an air of calm and harmony. There are ten en-suite rooms, furnished in 'country' style: gingham fabrics, rocking chairs, vases of fresh roses and solid timber four-poster beds. Beside the water's edge, two River Cottages are larger, each with a comfortable lounge area, a log fire, a private deck and indoor/outdoor showers. Rivertrees also has a new, two-bedroom, exclusive-use villa with its own private garden – great for families.

Opposite Rivertrees, **Mount Meru Game**

Lodge & Sanctuary has accepted visitors since 1959 as a means to fund its animal rescue and rehabilitation scheme. There are 17 en-suite bedrooms in simple painted buildings and a few varnished log cabins. All are individual in style, featuring wrought-iron beds, white linen, natural mats and tasteful touches. Each room has its own small veranda, but meals and fireside nightcaps take place in the gardens.

Onsea House is a lovely option, owned by the Janssens-Onsea family who welcome you into their home as guests. Recent expansions have meant there are two different sections of this lodge, each with a slightly different feel.

The original 'Onsea House' comprises two buildings opposite one another. Both are simple in style, comfortable without being overly luxurious. The main house sits above the road and houses two bedrooms, plus the restaurant, bar and lounge. Below the road, a further house contains two rooms and, in the lush gardens, an outdoor pool.

Then the stylish and more luxurious

'Machweo' has been built on adjacent land, with an additional outdoor pool, a restaurant, a spa, three new 'honeymoon suites' and six cottage suites. Even with the increased number of rooms, the standards of service remain high, the atmosphere friendly and the food some of the best in Arusha.

On a recent trip to Arusha we discovered the delightful **Twiga Lodge**. Previously a family home, it was bought by an English couple in 2009 who turned it into a welcoming guest house. It's evocative of an old English country home yet its décor is an eclectic mix of African memorabilia collected from their travels. There are six bedrooms, all different. Four are in the main house; whilst the two in the separate cottage would be perfect for a family. In the gardens, a viewing tower overlooks the bordering Arusha National Park and makes a great sundowner spot!

ARUSHA NATIONAL PARK

Just outside Arusha, the beautiful Arusha National Park is often overlooked by travellers rushing to the more famous sights of the Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti. However, with a little time, Arusha National Park offers some lovely walking in the foothills of Mount Meru and canoeing on the Momela Lakes, plus gentle game drives. You can visit the park from Arusha, but it's better to stay here.

Hatari Lodge is a quirky and unique lodge located on the northern edge of Arusha National Park. It is named after the 1960s' blockbuster film, *Hatari!*, starring John Wayne, which was filmed in the surrounding area. In fact, one of the stars of *Hatari!*, Hardy Krüger, was so captivated by this area whilst filming that he bought a farm and lived here for 13 years.

Hatari Lodge now stands on the site of that farm, and its design faithfully follows a '1960s' retro theme. Its owners, Joerg and Marlies Gabriel live here, and it makes a great base for exploring the park. Every corner is filled with a unique piece of art or fantastic handmade piece of furniture. Separate to the main building, and amongst well-kept gardens, are nine bedrooms. Although they all share the same retro theme, each is different and two are larger honeymoon suites. Everything from the quality of the fittings to the food and service is of an impressively high standard.