

## SELOUS GAME RESERVE

Covering an area larger than Switzerland (approximately 45,000km<sup>2</sup>) the Selous Game Reserve comprises wild grassy plains, riverine woodland, dense forests, and towering mountains. The Selous (pronounced 'Seloo') is one of Tanzania's seven World Heritage Sites. In the north, the Rufiji River flows from west to east, bisecting the park. Stemming from this is a network of channels, lakes and swamps that form one of the most outstanding ecological systems in East Africa. These waterways provide the lifeblood of the park.

The Selous has only a handful of safari camps, so when you drive out on safari you'll see few other vehicles. All offer trips through the park by boat, open 4WD vehicle and on foot. Boat safaris allow you to drift on the lakes and channels, approaching birds and animals closely. You pass pods of hippos and hundreds of crocodiles, whilst on the lakeshores baboons comb the Nile cabbage for insects.

Over 440 bird species have been recorded in the Selous. On the lakes you'll find pink-backed pelicans, African skimmers and giant kingfishers. The sandbanks are home to white-fronted bee-eater colonies, while ibises and palm thrushes nest in the borassus palms.



*Lionesses are better hunters than males and do most of the hunting for a pride*

### LAKE MANZE CAMP

Hidden away beneath a scattering of tall doum palms, **Lake Manze Camp** sits on the shores of its namesake. For many years, it has consistently proved to offer both great value and an excellent experience, especially for those wanting something slightly different.

Like its sister camp in Ruaha, Mdonya Old River Camp (page 197), Lake Manze Camp has ventured away from luxury and superfluous style and has tried to remain more natural in feel, impacting as little as possible on the environment. Despite this, it is a very comfortable camp with 12 en-suite walk-in tents – two of which can be

expanded to 'family' tents, sleeping up to four people – yet its unadorned décor, rustic style and lack of electricity (apart from in the camp's office) are reminiscent of older, traditional safari camps.

As a result of this simple approach, travellers are able to experience the bush as naturally as possible, with minimal separation between the camp and its surroundings. The volume of game that strolls through, including elephant, is an indication that Lake Manze is succeeding in its goal. It's amongst the most affordable camps in the Selous and we feel that it represents excellent value for money. For those looking for an adventurous stay at a reasonable price it's a great option.

### SELOUS IMPALA CAMP

Between Lake Mzizima and Lake Siwandu, **Selous Impala Camp** stands beside the Rufiji River in a grove of borassus palms and tamarind trees. It's one of the reserve's smallest camps, with just eight Meru-style tents, two of which are 'family' units with two tents sharing one wooden platform.

Impala is a sister camp of Lake Manze Camp and Mdonya Old River Camp (page 197). It's slightly more luxurious, but still retains a natural approach and uses good-quality materials and fabrics. Each comfortable tent is built on a raised wooden platform, affording views over the river. Inside, they are tastefully furnished in an old-Africa style, complete with a dressing area and an en-suite bathroom. The camp also has a lovely swimming pool for cooling dips.

Many of our travellers have commented on Impala's friendliness and personal approach, which is reflected in the flexible range of activities on offer, including game drives, walks and boat trips on the Rufiji River. Unlike most camps in the park, Impala has separate, rather than communal, dining for its guests.

Impala has established itself as a quality camp offering remarkably good value. It works well on its own for three to five nights, or as the first stop on a longer safari in southern Tanzania.



*Zebra patterns are as distinctive as human fingerprints. You can identify individual zebras by comparing patterns, stripe widths, colours and scars*

#### Selous Impala Fly Camps

For the adventurous traveller, a day or two at Selous Impala Camp's remote fly camp is a wonderful and exciting experience. With your specialist fly-camping guide and driver, explore the surrounding area by vehicle, or walk with an armed ranger, before returning to the camp where you can expect comfortable dome tents, hot bucket showers, inviting campfires and a real sense of wilderness. Fly camping at Impala is available from June to the end of October.

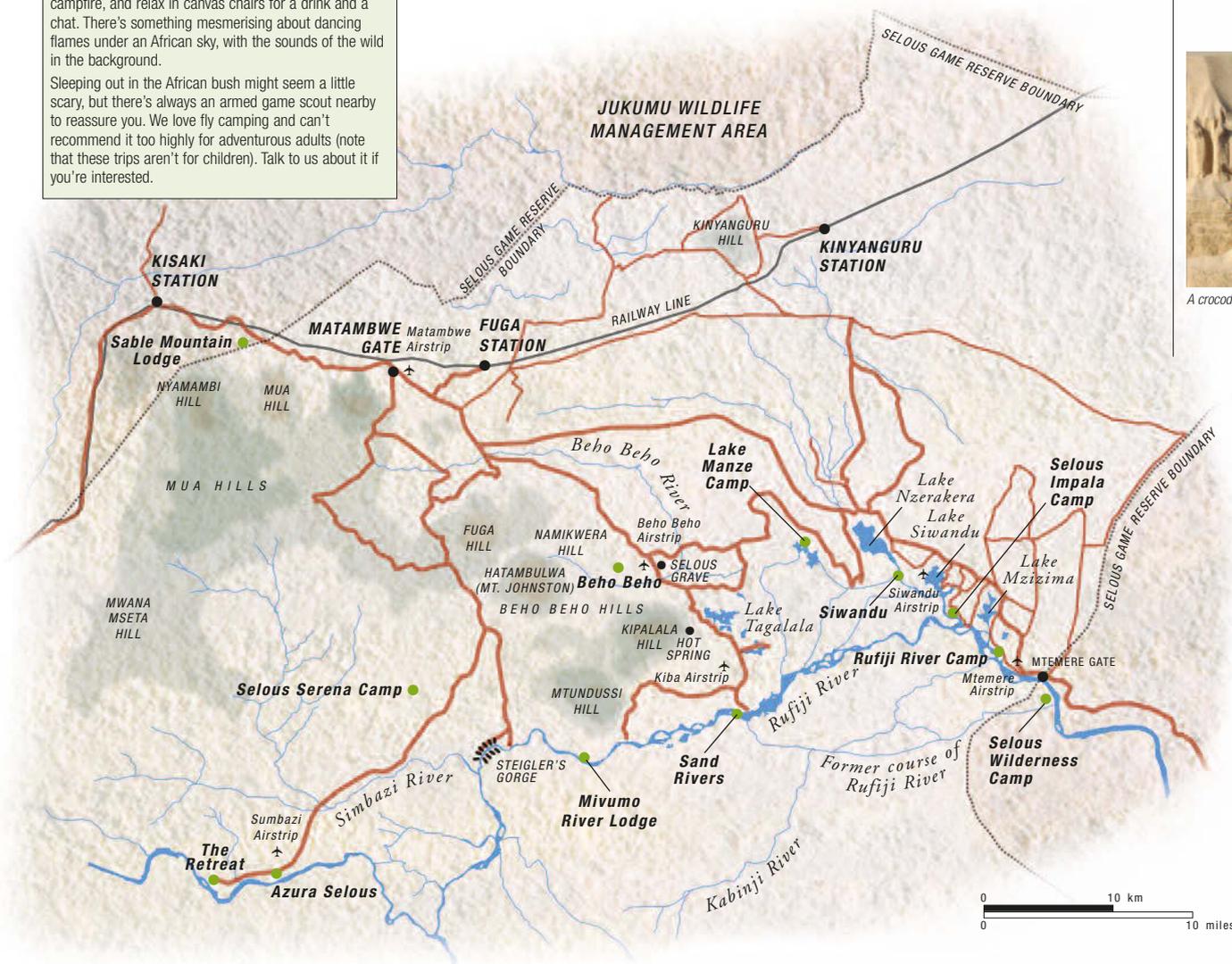
## Fly Camping

Several of the safari camps in the Selous (notably Impala Camp and Sand Rivers), as well as Kichaka, Jongomero in Ruaha and Chada in Katavi, operate fly camps. We're not sure where the name 'fly camp' comes from. It might derive from the term 'fly by night', as these are small, temporary camps. It might even come from the word 'flysheet', which describes the outer canvas of a tent. It's nothing to do with any winged insects though! Wherever the name comes from, a fly camp is a small, temporary camp. Staying in one is reminiscent of simple boy-scout camping, except that someone else cooks and does the chores for you! The tents vary: some are small dome tents, others are purpose-built out of mosquito netting. Dinner is cooked on an open fire and served nearby – after which it's natural to gather around the campfire, and relax in canvas chairs for a drink and a chat. There's something mesmerising about dancing flames under an African sky, with the sounds of the wild in the background.

Sleeping out in the African bush might seem a little scary, but there's always an armed game scout nearby to reassure you. We love fly camping and can't recommend it too highly for adventurous adults (note that these trips aren't for children). Talk to us about it if you're interested.



Fly camping in the Selous from Sand Rivers



A crocodile nest on a bank of the Rufiji



Elephants are the only mammals, besides humans, that have chins

## SIWANDU

**Siwandu** is tucked away beside the beautiful Lake Nzerekera, noted for the towering borassus palms that rise from its waters. Approaching by boat, all you see of the camp over the treetops are the tall apexes of the main lounge/dining banda built on high stilts. Advancing more closely, you'll realise that the rest of the camp has been built within a terminalia woodland.

Siwandu is a professional operation that pays great attention to detail. The luxury tents are raised a few feet from the ground on wooden platforms, and are spacious and very private. All have an en-suite bathroom with double basin, flush toilet and a romantic open-air shower for admiring the stars as you rinse off the dust. At either end of these is a central dining room and a comfortable lounge/bar that is a great spot for relaxing – if you're not chilling beside the swimming pool.

Adjacent to the main camp **Siwandu Private Camp** is available for group or family bookings of four tents or more. There are just six tents, which are the same as those in the main camp. Each has high-quality fittings and is built in an octagonal shape; all open up to make the most of the breeze, whilst remaining very private. The Private Camp can only be booked on an exclusive basis, and has its own vehicles, boats, guides, dining area and swimming pool.

Activities from both include guided walking safaris, river cruises and 4WD safaris. There are also trips in East Africa's only pontoon boat, which start from just in front of camp and explore the area's network of lakes and waterways around Lake Nzerekera and the Rufiji River while you enjoy a sundowner.

Siwandu is the most luxurious tented camp in the Selous so for those looking to sleep under canvas without compromising on comfort then it's a great choice. We recommend booking this camp early because they have some great specials, particularly when combined with its sister properties Jongomero (page 198) and Ras Kutani (page 239) – but it's first come first served!

## AZURA SELOUS

Under new management, the indulgent **Azura Selous** (previously Amara Selous) is trumpeted as a 'luxury camp' and it has evidently been built with a designer's help. The 12 'tented villas' are part tent, part stone and were completely refurbished in 2014. They are elegantly designed with high-spec furnishings, along with modern comforts such as air-conditioning. In front of each chalet is a huge wooden veranda complete with comfortable sofas, sun

loungers and a private plunge pool, which overlooks the Ruaha River.

The main area of Azura is similarly stylish and the restaurant and bar have solid leather-clad furniture and chandeliers. The open sided lounge maximises its location with commanding views over the river. There's also a large infinity pool, which is one of the best in the whole reserve.

Azura should appeal to those whose priority is to relax and indulge, with a range of massages and beauty treatments on offer. It is a good option for honeymooners, as they will be made to feel very special by the butler and the rest of the staff who provide some of the best service that we have come across. What's more, the substantial nature of the rooms, the positive attitude of the owners and the extensive programme of activities for children aged six and over may also make this one of the best family options in the reserve. However, for those hoping for a game rich safari experience, Azura is unlikely to provide it. What little game there is around camp is less relaxed than the rest of the park and it is a long drive to the main game viewing area. One of the main attractions of the Selous is the opportunity to do boating safaris and it is worth noting that due to the low water level here, boating cannot be guaranteed all year.



The Selous has six great lakes

“The parks are quiet and the guides excellent. We particularly enjoyed the adventure camp experience and will definitely do this again. It was also the first time we have flown between parks, it made the trip more expensive but with our limited time it made sense and was a great experience. All our connections worked like clockwork and the overnight international flight helps to maximise time on holiday. What was great was that the day travelling between parks was set up to include two game drives so it didn't feel like a transit day and in fact included two of our most exciting sightings of leopard and lions.”

Mr & Mrs D, Warwickshire,  
September 2015



## SAND RIVERS SELOUS

Deep inside the Selous, **Sand Rivers** overlooks a wide curve in the Rufiji River. The thatched lounge has sumptuous cushions, large sofas and chairs; beside this a curved swimming pool lies under a large baobab tree and offers panoramic views of the river and wilderness beyond.

Sand Rivers Selous has five Riverside Rooms, which are large thatched cottages with stone floors, king-size beds and spacious en-suite bathrooms. The front of each room is open, affording views of the riverine forest and river beyond. It's a lovely touch, encouraging a fresh breeze and allowing birds to fly in and out.

There are also three Hillside Suites, which offer a little more space than the Riverside Rooms; each has its own lounge area and private plunge pool.

**Kiba Point** is a satellite camp, a few kilometres from Sand Rivers. It is available only for the exclusive use of one family or group of up to eight people. There's a

private guide and chef on hand and, in addition to a central swimming pool, each of its four cottages has its own private plunge pool.

The varied activities include motorboat trips through the towering Steigler's Gorge, as well as walks and 4WD safaris that explore the plains and lakeshores. Often you will combine a 4WD trip with a short walking

safari, and a spot of fishing is also possible, or a relaxing soak in the Tagalala Hot Springs. The standard of guiding at Sand Rivers is generally very high, thanks in part to a positive approach to on-going guide training. It is one of the best lodges in Selous and combines particularly well with its sister camp Kigelia in Ruaha (see page 198).



*Crocodiles have 48 teeth; designed to tear, not chew. They therefore swallow stones that grind food inside their stomachs and aid digestion*

*Hippos are extremely territorial*

### Fly Camping from Sand Rivers Selous

It's easy to prearrange a night of fly camping from Sand Rivers. When fly camping, you'll set off with your guide in the afternoon, usually mixing driving with walking. Around dusk you'll arrive at your fly camp, generally on the banks of a dry riverbed. It will be set up in advance by the camp's team, with a fire, hot water for bucket showers and cold drinks at the ready! A high quality three-course dinner is cooked on the fire. Later you'll retire to your comfortable bedroll under a cube of mosquito gauze; your armed guide will be sleeping close by. The (shared) toilets are long drop and the team also brings a dome tent, in case anyone feels nervous!



*A large herd of Buffalo in Selous*

## BEHO BEHO

High on a hill, **Beho Beho** was the first camp in the Selous and it still has a unique position. Over the past decade it has established itself as one of Africa's best camps. It's been updated and refurbished over the years, though it has always retained its same homely signature style. It is privately owned with the air of a smart, slightly eccentric home – where else in this park would you find a slate-bedded billiards table?

Each of Beho Beho's eight spacious stone-and-thatch bandas is rustic, yet stylish and very comfortable. All have airy bathrooms with good showers, flush toilets and twin basins. The bedrooms have romantic, canopied king-size beds, fans, WiFi and 24-hour electricity. Each has a separate area that is part lounge, part veranda, and open at the front. Like the rest of the camp, these verandas all have panoramic views of a verdant valley and the plains beyond.

The food is excellent, amongst the best we've had on safari, and is served imaginatively in various locations – including the elegant dining area and the pool-side sundeck.

However, to dwell on the high-quality comforts here is to miss the point. Beho Beho's team of accomplished guides currently includes two 'Level 3' guides – the top level awarded by the highly

regarded Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA). Hence the camp's focus is firmly on its expert wildlife guiding, with activities including 4WD game drives, boat trips on Lake Tagalala and superb walking safaris.

Recently, Beho Beho added a private house, **Bailey's Banda**, named after the camp's owner, Charlie Bailey. With two beautiful bedrooms, and an open-sided lounge-cum-dining area overlooking its private swimming pool, it feels very homely and similar in style to the main camp. Operating as a separate entity, guests here

have more flexibility in setting their daily schedule with the added bonus of spectacular views over the hippo pool and valley below!

Beho Beho is smart and luxurious, but friendly rather than pretentious; the food's excellent; the accommodation very high quality, but not flash; and, perhaps most importantly, the guiding is first-class. Even more surprisingly, despite comments like this – it still usually manages to exceed expectations. Beho Beho's only downside is a high price tag, although this can be offset by long-stay reductions.

### Beho Beho's Treehouse

Travellers who stay for a minimum of four nights at Beho Beho can opt to spend one of these in a 'treehouse', with room for just two people. You'll take a late afternoon walk with an armed guide, ending up on the edge of a dry riverbed. Here, set a few metres up in a giant ancient leadwood tree, is your bed for the night. This is opulent camping, with first-class meals, a stylish, candlelit open-sided wooden house with a proper double bed (which can remain under the roof, or wheeled out under the stars), and a hot ensuite shower and toilet.



*The seating area in one of the suites at Sand Rivers*

## OTHER CAMPS IN AND AROUND THE SELOUS

On the northern boundary of the park, **Sable Mountain Lodge** consists of four simple stone 'cottages' and five more luxurious tented suites. It's one of the few camps which can be booked on a full-board basis, without activities – so is good for those on a budget. However it's a long drive from the best game-viewing areas, so it is best combined with a camp deeper in the park.

**Rufiji River Camp** is situated on the banks of the Rufiji river, with impressive views across to the plain the other side. It's a well organised, unpretentious and relaxed camp, with 13 secluded tents, two of which are suites, all shaded by thatch roofs. Each tent has two king-size beds, a private veranda, and an outdoor seating area with views up the river. Rufiji River's guides are experienced Tanzanians, most of whom have been guiding here for years, and who previously worked as game scouts. They know the bush well, and through chatting with them you can glean insights into their various cultures.

Rufiji River Camp offers a good-value, simple safari in a great wilderness area – for a down-to-earth stay in the Selous, it's a good choice. The camp is clean and comfortable with a pleasant, unpretentious air and reasonable prices, plus a beautiful view over the Rufiji River.

Outside the eastern side of Selous' Mtemere Gate, **Selous Wilderness Camp** is a pleasant camp with surprisingly spacious tented rooms, each with a private



*Boating on the Rufiji River is one of the big attractions of Selous*

seating area overlooking the river. There's a decent-sized swimming pool by the bar and armchair-filled lounge, while starlit dinners are served in a range of open-air locations. It offers a comfortable base for budget-conscious travellers wishing to explore the Selous.

Located to the west of the park's best game-viewing areas are three camps whose emphasis is definitely more on luxury than on a true wilderness experience. Note that you'll need to be prepared for full-day game drives from these camps to get the best out of the park

and reach the areas where game is most concentrated.

**The Retreat** consists of three separate private units, each with its own bar, restaurant and infinity pool. There are 12 luxurious cream-canvas tents in total, decked out with solid wooden furniture and billowing silk fabrics. Half the tents are set atop a hill; four are on the banks of the Ruaha River and two are 2km away in an area named 'Hippo Point'. The lodge's central area is built in the style of a fort, with stone walls, tiled floors, and furniture and fittings from the Middle East. To top it off, there is a newly refurbished spa offering a variety of treatments. The Retreat is a beautiful place to relax for a few days, however for those seeking high quantities of game, it is not going to be the right choice.

**Selous Serena Camp** has 12 tents, which are not overly spacious, although they are very comfortable with carpeted floors, phones – and even chandeliers! Sister camp **Mivumo River Lodge** stands on the banks of the Rufiji River, not far from Steigler's Gorge and has lovely views. The 12 conventional, hotel-style rooms are decorated in colonial style, each with glass windows, air conditioning, WiFi and a minibar; you could forget that you were in the bush if it were not for the impressive views of the river from the outside hot tub and shower.

### Rufiji River Fly Camps

If you're visiting Rufiji River Camp for more than a few nights, then consider adding a night or two at a satellite fly camp. When fly camping here, you'll head out with your own guide, perhaps walking or driving, to a simple camp beside one of the lakes.

These fly camps use good-sized A-frame tents, a hot bucket shower and a toilet, yet they retain a very remote feeling. They need to be booked in advance.



*A sundowner following a game drive from Siwandu*