



RUAHA NATIONAL PARK -GENERAL POINTS OF INTEREST

HISTORY

This area of Tanzania is steeped in history with the earliest known trade routes cutting through the middle of what is now the Park. The Arab trading caravans began using this route during the early 19th century. By 1830 these coastal traders began traveling on routes further north of the Park, but as they were continuously attacked by the Sangu people of the Usangu plains, these routes were abandoned. The traders continued pushing northwards, following a route through what is now known as Dodoma. Subsequently these routes were also used by Burton and Speke (1857-58) and other early European

In 1886 Tanzania came under German administration and was known as German East Africa. The Wahehe people led by the famous Chief Mkwawa were the dominant tribe around the Ruaha area. These people were infamous for their fierce and successful battle tactics against the German occupiers. It was during the German occupation in 1910 that part of what is now the Park was made into the Saba Game Reserve. Later, in 1946, the British declared that this area be extended and was called the Rungwe Game Reserve. Finally in 1964 the southern portion of this reserve was declared the Ruaha National Park, and in 1974 smaller section to the south east of the Great Ruaha River was added to complete the boundaries that exist today. The area is still surrounded by a vast wilderness called the Rungwe-Kisigo Game reserve to the north-west and the Usangu Game reserve to the south-west.

GEOGRAPHYRuaha National Park covers an area of about 10,300 square kilometers and is the second largest national park in Tanzania The whole eco-system including the adjacent Game Reserves covers an area of approximately 45,000 square kilometers. This area therefore, is large enough to continue uninterrupted as a whole ecosystem.

Ruaha Park is extremely interesting as it represents the transition zone where southern African and eastern African species of flora and fauna overlap. Due to this, Ruaha has a unique variety of animals, birds and vegetation. It boasts the most southerly protected area where Grants Gazelle, lesser Kudu and Striped Hyenas occur. Miombo woodland with its attendant fauna is common in central Africa but is not found further north in Tanzania. Plus, Ruaha enjoys a vast array of flora with over 1,650 species recorded so far. In comparison, Selous has about 830 species recorded and N.E Serengeti 410. The bird life here is also prolific with 529 species recorded. It is also now thought, after recent investigations into a remote western area of the park, that Ruaha may also represent the Eastern and Western convergence zone for

A small portion of the park, about 20% is along the Great Ruaha River; this is thought to follow an ancient finger of the Great Rift Valley system of Eastern Africa. This lowland area, approximately 1,000m above sea level, comprises mainly Combretum/Commiphora and Acacia woodland, interspersed with areas that are abundant with majestic Baobab trees. This is most likely to be the area you will be game-driving in, on your stay in the Park. It has outstanding game viewing possibilities and spectacular scenery.

The rest of the park, which forms the majority, is formed by a plateau which rises 100m or higher, to the north and west of the Rift Valley area. Here the dominant vegetation is Miombo Woodland. In the far western corner of the park, there are hills forming the Isunkaviola plateau area rising up to over 1,800m.

NATURAL HISTORY

The Great Ruaha River, (formally a perennial river) forms the focal point and the life line of the park during the dry season. Unfortunately, since 1993, due to excessive use of water in the catchments area, the flow of the Ruaha River has suffered and in turn so has the ecology of the Park. Nowadays during the height of the dry season when the water is most needed, the river dries up for several months at a time.

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REMEMBER THAT THESE ANIMALS ARE WILD, TAKE NO LIBERTIES WITH THEM. CONTACT INFORMATION

FEES ONCE PAID SHALL NOT BE REFUNDED

DO NOT KILL, HARASS, DISTURB, FEED OR INTERFERE WITH WILDLIFE OR VEGETATION. – Remember this Park belongs to the animals you are a visitor in their home.

DO NOT BE MORE THAN 25m OF YOUR CAR AND NEVER GET OUT OF IT WITHIN 200m OF ANY WILD ANIMAL. - This is in the interests of your own safety.

DO NOT BLOW YOUR CAR HORN OR MAKE ANY UNNECCESARY NOISE - Take time to listen and enjoy the noises of nature, everything has its own language don't disturb them!

DO NOT REMOVE ANY ANIMATE OR INANIMATE OBJECT FROM THE PARK. - Everything has a function and a role within this ecosystem, by removing items you will be upsetting the natural balance.

STAY ON THE AUTHORIZED ROADS AND TRACKS - OFF-ROAD DRIVING IS NOT ALLOWED. - Driving off the road destroys natural habitat fast, don't be guilty of this!

NIGHT DRIVING IS NOT ALLOWED - 6.00 am to 7.00 pm. (Except within your lodge or place of overnight stay).- The animals need to rest too!

NO PETS OR GUNS ARE ALLOWED INSIDE THE PARK

KEEP YOUR LITTER INSIDE YOUR VEHICLE – The animals have managed to keep Ruaha Park clean for centuries – let us keep it that way!

SPEED LIMIT IS 40kph - For optimum viewing the best game-driving speed is 25kph.

SAFETY THESE RULES ARE THERE FOR YOUR OWN COMFORT AND

PARK RULES AND REGULATIONS

Usually between September and December. This ecological disaster is of grave concern and it is hoped that action will be taken by the government to reverse the situation. The availability of surface water inside the park is of great importance, and until 1993 the Ruaha River was the main source during the dry season. However there are other springs and small water sources dotted over the park. The Mzombe River on the northern boundary is also an important water source, though it also does not flow all year round. One of the special attractions to Ruaha Park is that visitors are able to see both lesser and Greater Kudu and Sable and Roan antelope in the same area. In addition to this Ruaha boasts a healthy population of Wild Dogs, which are fast becoming a rarity in other areas. Leopard, lions, buffalo, and elephant are also abundant, not to mention all the other species, of which there are a plentiful supply.

Birds, as stated above are rich in their diversity. The great cross-section of vegetation types and altitude help to contribute towards this plus of course the geographical location of Ruaha ensures it is visited by both southern and northern migrants. Hence the best time for keen bird watchers to visit is between December and April. Though at any time of the year the abundance of bird life is something that cannot be ignored even by those who are not particularly interested in avifaunal

Ruaha Park enjoys only one rainy season, usually from the end of November to the end of April. The average rainfall in Ruaha varies from 500ml around the Msembe HQ area in the Rift Valley, to 800ml in the western high plateau area of the Park. Thus the dry season is long, the park getting no rain at all for more then seven months. Certainly, rainfall plays a huge role in the ecology of the Park. Each year varies from the next depending on the rainfall, sometimes the rain falls heavily and the Park flourishes in every direction, other years the rainfall is low and times are lean, which is reflected in the vegetation, and the movements of the animals alike. The coolest time to visit Ruaha is normally around the end of June, early July when the temperatures range from a max of 30°C during the day dropping to as low as 8°C at night. The temperature slowly increases over the next few months resulting in the hottest time, which is generally just before the rain begins to fall in November and December, with daily highs of 40°C and a night-time low of approximately 25°C. WEATHER Ruaha Park

TOURISM SERVICES AND PARK MANAGEMENT

The Tourism Warden can provide well trained guides for visito

The best time to visit the park is in the dry season from March to Decen

Ruaba Park is 120Km from Iringa by road wbich is easily possible all year round.

A 4x-wheel drive vehicle is highly rec

of accommodation available inside the park. It is advisable to book in advance for the private camps and lodges. Contact your travel agent.

are a few Tourist Bandas located at Msembe HQ which offer limited facilities. You are advised to book these in advance. Contact Ruaha National Park < kudumse@botmail.com> or TANAPA HQ

There are four public campsites with limited facilities. A long-drop toilet and fire wood is provided

Special campsites are available. It is advisable to book these well in advance of your stay.

Camping and Lodge facilities are also available outside the park near Tungamalenga village



