

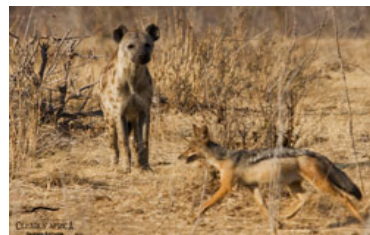
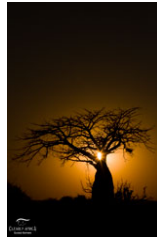
Kwihala Seasons

Choosing the “right” time of year or season to go on safari is entirely dependent on your preferences.

Let’s divide the Ruaha year into 2 distinct seasons, wet and dry.

The dry season is winter which usually starts in June and stretches till November. During this period very little to no rain falls and the Park becomes progressively drier the later it gets in the year.

The advantages of this season is that due to the lack of foliage on the trees and grasses dying down, visibility is increased which make for easier sightings of animals as well as facilitating good photographic opportunities as most vegetative obstructions are reduced. Another bonus is that as a result of the diminishing surface water, most animals concentrate around perennial water-points and don’t stray too far. The predators exploit this time as the herbivores are in a weakened state and regular kills are encountered. There is also a lot of dust and smoke in the air which creates spectacular orange sunsets.



Some less exciting aspects about the dry season is that there is very little colour as everything is drab. It can be very dusty and due to the haze of smoke adding to the suspended particle load in the atmosphere, the light is often “weak” and good clear images are difficult to get.

Now let us take a look at the wet season.

The wet or emerald season is summer and usually lasts from December till May. During this period there are some heavy down-pours on a regular basis but typically last only for short bursts.

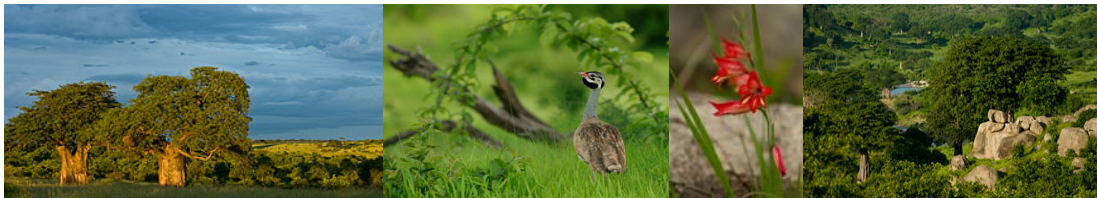


It is called the emerald season for a very good reason! The depth of every conceivable colour of the rainbow is so intense that it almost hurts your eyes. Initially there is a gradual transition from drab to fab. However with the onset of the rains in late Nov and early Dec the grasses take about 2 weeks to really respond with a sudden burst of green breaking through the monochromatic landscape. Carpeted with this emerald rug, the vistas seem surreal in their abundance! Herbivores rejoice in the arrival of desperately needed sustenance and the

dramatic cloud formations add splendour to the skies along with all the arriving summer migrants of the feathered kind.



As the rains continue, previously parched soil becomes drenched. Once saturated, all excess fall turns to run-off and the once dry river courses start flowing and frothing again, becoming the arteries of the landscape which conduit the nourishing liquid to distant extremities of this large organism... With ample water and nutrients available, the botanical wonder of summer manifests itself in a display of growth and colour represented by wild flowers, sedges, grass, shrubs, forbs and trees! Around every turn there is a sight which overwhelms you with a sense of wealth and wellbeing beyond comprehension. Obviously with all this LIFE there is an outburst of insects. The array of species is staggering and although sometimes annoying, they add an incredibly exciting dimension to the natural world out here.



A host of herbivores await this season of plenty to deliver their young. With enough fodder to nourish mom so she can produce sufficient milk, as well as good cover to hide the newborn from predators, it is a great time to witness the spectacle of birth.

Falling rain also collects on its way down, all the suspended particles in the sky effectively cleaning the air and increasing visibility and clarity. This is part of the reason colours display so vividly this time of year!

To some it might seem that I am slightly biased...maybe I am...

To tell the truth, any time of year is very special in its own particular way, sequentially revealing the multitude of dimensions which nature is composed of. It is a real privilege to be able to spend time out to witness ALL of them. My recommendation is to thoughtfully consider the various aspects available in each season and make an informed decision. Then think about returning on your next safari in the opposite season so the full spectrum is experienced.

Marius Swart